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Invited Kinship symp - Specific risks for young in kinship care in North of France.

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Background/objectives/methods: The longitudinal study on young people leaving care (ELAP) sought to learn more about 17–20-year-olds in child protection care. The study examined risks and supports for kinship care youth at majority through questionnaires and interviews. Data collection components included:

- A first wave (V1) survey yielded representative results from a sample of 1,622 cared-for-youth between the ages of 17 and 20 in seven departments of two major French regions.
- A second wave (V2) of the survey was conducted 18 months after the first (V1), with a subsample consisting of all 17-year-olds from V1.
- These two waves of quantitative survey were supplemented by qualitative research consisting of approximately 100 interviews with young people.

Results: Some particularities of kinship care can create risk in the life course of young people in kinship care. It can disadvantage them in comparison to other children in out-of-home care:

- The "judge of children" grants custody to kinship carers and renews the decision every year. Even though these children are included in child protection, they receive fewer services because they are frequently viewed as separate.
- Few young people (8% in out-of-home care) do not have a referring social worker in the department in charge of child protection.
- Consequently, kinship caregivers are often unaware of their rights during caregiving. For example, 12% do not receive the allowances.
- ELAP suffered another consequence of marginalisation. Most of these kinship-cared for youth left care unaware of their rights at majority. They were unaware of the "Young adult contract" (contrat jeune majeur), which provides allowances to 18–21-year-olds. This contract is reevaluated every six months and requires continued education by most "departments."
- Moreover, for some of those who heard about a possible allowance after the age of 18, social workers often imposed an additional prerequisite for receiving the allowance: living in an independent residence. Faced with this dilemma (staying at home without allowance or searching for housing with a short-term lease), these young people decided to stay with their kinship carers and find other ways to continue their studies (e.g., getting a part-time job), delaying when they would leave home compared to others their age.

Conclusions/implications: Even though the child protection system in France sometimes undermines the stability of kinship care due to its emphasis on biological parents, we found that many kinship carers are still able to provide long-term out-of-home care. The stability of kinship placements is, however, counterbalanced by several disadvantages that, collectively, may be viewed as a unique risk of kinship care.

A large part of this risk is attributable to poor knowledge of social workers regarding kinship care, perpetuated by it being voluntary and its low frequency. This impacts carers' and young people's knowledge of their rights and access to services and allowances. Fortunately, recent legislation (7/02/23 on the protection of children) attempts to manage these issues and examine the complementary assets of kinship care. Policymakers and practitioners should also be provided with additional training and understanding.