

**KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAMS**



**Kinship Navigator Programs-  
Are We Making Progress?**

# Presentation Overview



Over 7.6 million children in the United States live in a house where a relative is the head of the household. Nearly 6 million of these children live with Grandparent householders and 1.75 live with other relatives. The percentage of children living in foster care with relatives has increased from 26% to 34% in 2020. (US Census Bureau, Children Characteristics, 2022).



7.6 million children in the United States live in a house where a relative is the head of the household



6 million children in the United States live in a household where the grandparent is head of household



1.75 million children live with other relatives



The percentage of children living in foster care with relatives has increased from 26% to 34% in 2020

## KINSHIP FAMILY PLACEMENT VS. NON-FAMILY PLACEMENT

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Today, I will share information with you about “why” kinship families appear to be much more successful than non-family placements.



REASONING “THE WHY”

# The Child Welfare Information Gateway describes Kinship Care as:

“The full-time care, nurturing, and protection of a child by relatives, members of their tribe or clan, godparents, step-parents, or other adults who have a family relationship to a child”.



WHAT IS KINSHIP CARE?



*KINSHIP*  
*“Not just relative  
care”*

As you can see, kinship involves not just relative care, but also any other responsible adult with a family relationship or fictive kin relationship with a child.

# THE PURPOSE for *KINSHIP CARE*

## Purpose

The purpose of kinship is to ensure that a child remains raised in comparable cultural and emotional linkages with their family of origin.

## Louisiana

Louisiana adopted the Kinship Care Subsidy Program in 1999. Still, the program has greatly expanded with the integration into Families First programming and the proliferation of Kinship Programs through the Family Resource Centers across the state.

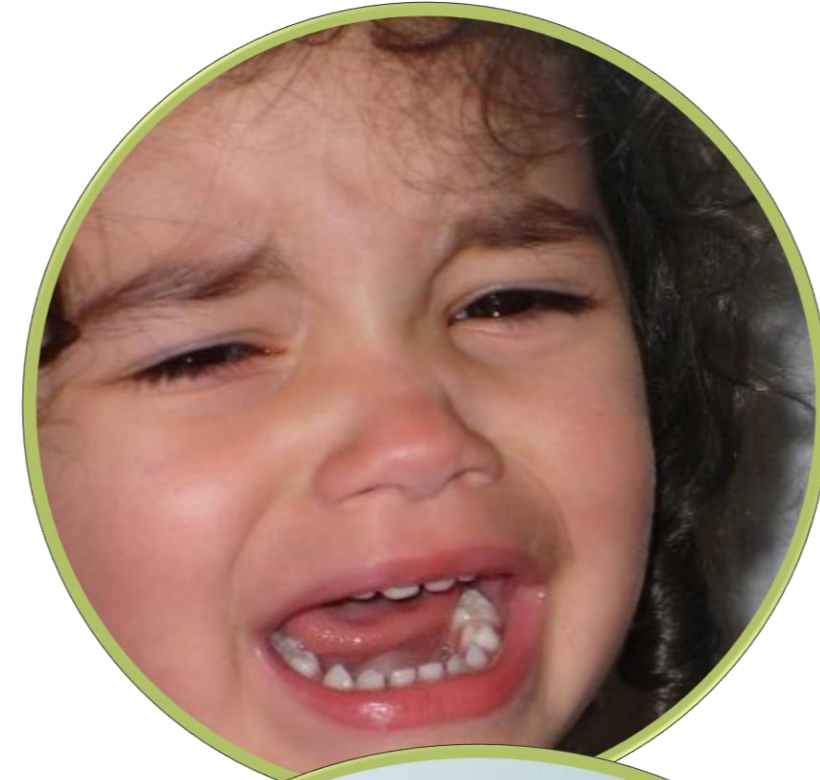
## Evidence

There is empirical evidence that this works – children in kinship placements experience improved placement stability, higher levels of permanency, and decreased behavior problems.

## Discovery and Renew

Discovery and Renew Family Resources Centers began the first Kinship Program in the Spring of 2020 (about the same time COVID hit).

# TYPES OF KINSHIP CARE



## ❖ INFORMAL

Where relatives take in their kin children without involvement of the child welfare system; legal custody remains with the parents. This may present problems in getting children into school or providing authorization for medical care. They may be eligible for TANF in some instances.

## ❖ VOLUNTARY

Involves a situation in which children live with kin, the child welfare agency is involved and the state does not take legal custody.

## ❖ PHYSICAL OR LEGAL CUSTODY

Can be voluntary or formal; typically, children are in the custody of the state and the child welfare agency places the child with a relative.

## ❖ FORMAL KINSHIP PLACEMENT

Where the child is placed with kin legally; they may have access to more financial support. In this situation, the child welfare agency is responsible for ensuring the child/children receive health care and attend school.

# KINSHIP NAVIGATOR MODELS

Kinship Program Models vary:

- ❖ The model your agency implements is dependent on staffing capabilities, funding, and the overall needs of the population you serve, in addition to other resources available in the community.
- ❖ Some Kinship Programs primarily offer assistance with resources – helping the family obtain what they need to ensure placement stability. Much of this assistance also depends on whether the child welfare agency is involved or not.
- ❖ For the Family Resource Centers across the state, DCFS is typically involved. Yet, the FRCs are also involved with supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) and many of the GRG families want minimal to no involvement with the state. With the Families First philosophy becoming more widespread, the FRCs are in a position to help many families, regardless of DCFS involvement. This has been encouraged, especially with the integration of My Community Cares into our programming.





# RESOURCES AND THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION

## KINSHIP MODEL CONT.

Another Kinship Model includes both assistance with resources and therapeutic intervention. One Kinship Worker (usually a Coordinator) assesses needs and helps with resource development. A second employee is a Kinship Specialist, who is a licensed social worker or counselor.

# SERVICES NEEDED BY KINSHIP FAMILIES

Each family has a unique set of needs. However, almost every family will need some type of financial assistance first and legal/placement assistance second.

## Kinship Coordinator

The role of the Kinship Coordinator is crucial:

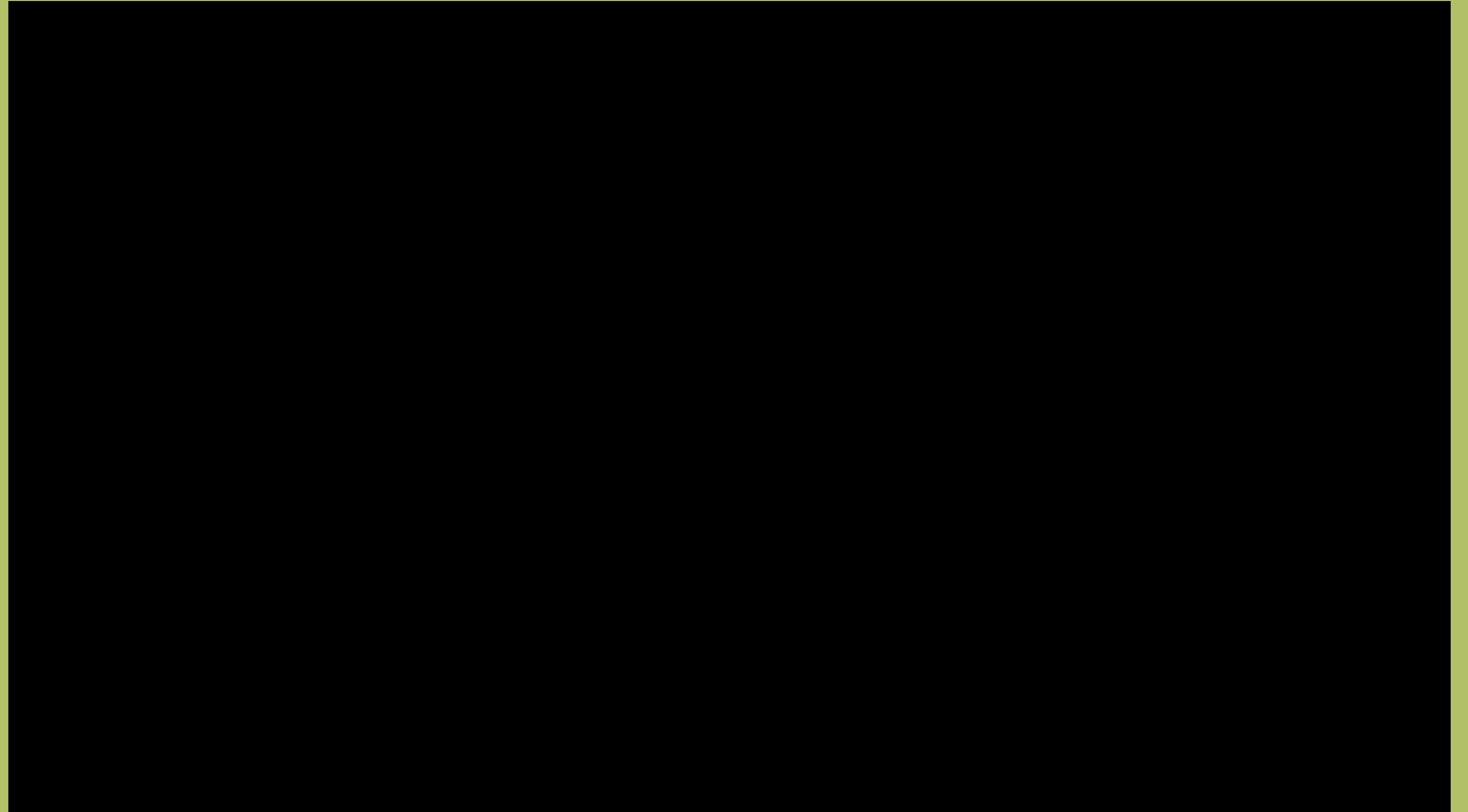
- ❖ The Coordinator meets with the family, with or without the social worker, depending on the seriousness of the case.
- ❖ The Coordinator assesses the family's needs and prioritizes what to do first.
- ❖ The Coordinator is familiar with TANF policies, SNAP, foster-care payments, the Title IV-E Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP), SSI, and eligibility for FRC “basic needs” funding.
- ❖ The Coordinator will have an idea from the initial meeting if a child is traumatized and in need of therapeutic intervention or if it looks like family counseling is needed.



# DISCOVERY/RENEW

- ❖ At Discovery/Renew, we have found that Kinship Parents often need a therapeutic relationship more than anyone else.
- ❖ They need a support system and help with problem-solving. If the child appears to be seriously emotionally damaged, we refer to a child therapist.
- ❖ Resource needs have run the gamut from bedding, beds, clothes, food, school uniforms, mortgage payments, bills, utilities, window repair, car repair, and almost anything imaginable.
- ❖ The FRCs have access to some funding for “basic needs”.
- ❖ Additionally, our FRC can raise private money that can be placed in the Southeastern Foundation for use with our families.

**DISCOVERY/RENEW**



# RESEARCH OUTCOMES ON KINSHIP SERVICES

First, it is important to know that Kinship caregivers are less likely to ask for help than the typical foster care placements. Sometimes, it is because Kin caregivers are afraid if they ask for too much, the state will remove the children. Other times, it is because they do not want what they perceive as “the state” mandating how they will care for their relative kin. Yes, Kinship families probably need more assistance than the other types of settings.

The “influences” on a kin caregiver’s decision to ask for help include:

- ❖ Child behavior problems
- ❖ Caregiver's mental health status
- ❖ Resources available
- ❖ Provider characteristics
- ❖ Caregiver perceived need
- ❖ Social support

Again, research shows that families typically need help, but may be resistant to asking for it (Coleman, K., 2015).



# BENEFITS OF KINSHIP CARE:

- ❖ Minimization of trauma – moving into the home of a relative is less traumatic than moving to a house of strangers with different values and practices. Additionally, often sibling groups are kept together.
- ❖ Improves children's well-being- measured by increased placement stability, with fewer placement changes decreased likelihood of disruption, and not as many school changes.
- ❖ Increases permanency for children – Children re-enter the system less frequently when they live with relatives; relatives are more likely to provide a permanent home through guardianship, custody, or adoption. In some states, there is funding attached to subsidize permanency options through the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP).
- ❖ Improves behavioral and mental health outcomes – Children in kinship homes have behavioral and mental health outcomes. The data suggest that children who have experienced multiple non-family placements do not fare as well as the children who are immediately placed with family members.
- ❖ Promotes sibling ties – Kinship placements increase the likelihood of staying connected with siblings.
- ❖ Preserves children's cultural identity and community connections – children placed with relatives tend to stay connected to their culture, preserving their identity and relationship with their extended family and community.
- ❖ Bridge for older youth – relative care promotes a greater sense of self-sufficiency and permanency, so adolescents can continue on a healthy path to reaching adulthood.

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, relative placements show so much promise, there are efforts being made through several states and private foundations to increase efforts to recruit, support, and utilize relatives by promoting kinship adoption and subsidized guardianships.

- ❖ **We are making progress, but we need to support subsidized funding that will allow relatives to care for their kin children.**

# RESOURCES

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Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2022). Kinship Care and the Child Welfare System. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov>

Coleman, K. Factors Associated with Kinship Caregiver's Formal Service Use: Systematic Review. SSWR Presentation. (1/7/2015)

Epstein, H.R. (July 2017). Kinship Care is Better for Children and Families. [https://www.amerianbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law-practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care](https://www.amerianbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law-practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care)

Generations United, 2022. Fact Sheet: Grand families and Kinship families: Strengths and Challenges. <https://www.gu.org/resources/grandfamilies-strengths-and-challenges-fact-sheet/>

[www.grandfamilies.org](http://www.grandfamilies.org)

[www.grandfactsheets.org](http://www.grandfactsheets.org)





**THANK YOU**