


The Heart of the Matter

Supporting Families Through Kinship Care



Pat Hunt, Director of Child & Family Resiliency Services

Why we chose kinship care


- It is a Child Welfare opportunity - contract
- It can facilitate access to mental health care for children and families
- It honors the lived experiences of children, youth, siblings and parents
- Helps to avoid other out of home options -
- Offers opportunity for young people stay in their community of family
- Helps strengthen families to stay engaged

Kinship Care

Kinship care is the full time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child. This definition is designed to be inclusive and respectful of cultural values and ties of affection. It allows a child to grow to adulthood in a family environment.

Child Welfare League of America

Types of Kinship Care



Partners - *families are the given*

During development -

- Community Based Care Partnership - Magellan Health Services and the CBC of Seminole
- Brevard Family Partnership (formerly Community Based Care of Brevard)

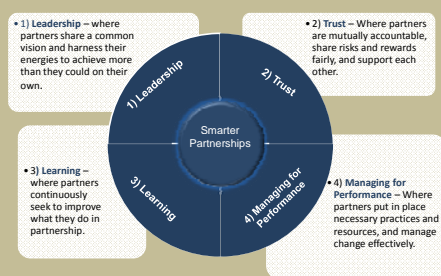
During Implementation -

- Added the Florida Kinship Center

Value added throughout the project-

Center for Health Care Strategies' Child Welfare Quality Improvement Collaborative - This collaborative offered assistance with CHCS BCAP Quality Framework, Content Area Expertise, COI Technical Assistance, Individual Team Consultation & Peer-to-Peer Resources

What did it take?



Partnership toolkit designed by [EDuce Ltd](#)
Smarter Partnerships website: www.igpartnerships.com

Goals

- Build mutual trust with caregivers
- To assist caregivers to understand, navigate and access the systems of care, supports and services for children who are out of their homes.
- Use mutual discovery to assess most urgent needs and barriers
- Maintain family preservation – prevent 'burnout'

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Learning from caregivers

Questions for kinship focus groups

We are creating a new position called a Kinship Navigator. What do you think the function or role of this person should be?	Looking back, what is the most important thing you wish you would have known prior to having a child come to live in your home?	What did you need during the first few weeks of providing care?	What would have made the transition for the youth coming into your home easier?	What will make the transition for the child or youth leaving your home be easier?	What type of things do you think our Kinship Navigators should be asking about when they call you?
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What caregivers said

"We want a Navigator WHO":

- Listens
- Follows through on time
- Doesn't give up on us
- Knows what services and benefits are available
- Will communicate with me
- Is respectful
- Is trustworthy
- Is persistent
- Has empathy
- Is a relationship builder
- Is polite
- Is dependable
- Follows through on time
- Keeps us informed
- Is aware of our culture
- Is honest (even when the news is 'bad')
- Knows the system
- Will troubleshoot
- Will check back and check-in
- Recognizes our family's strengths
- Knows the rules
- Knows what we are going through

"We want a Navigator TO":

- Spend time in conversation and get to know us
- Educate us and community providers about resources and supports that are available
- Help us know how to get the services and supports we need, including mental health assessments
- Returns our calls
- Bring pertinent information to us
- Include us in the discussion – not do it for or about us
- Keep us informed and answer our questions
- Ask questions rather than making assumptions
- Help us make and keep relationships with parents, service providers, informal and formal supports
- Help us early on with transitions
- Provide education about kinship care to others who need it
- Help us know the rules and what to expect
- Advocate for services and resources for children and families
- Help us be connected to other families who are going through similar things
- Collect data and use it to help improve our system

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That means kinship caregivers often

- Find it difficult to access services
- Need information and support before situations become crises (reducing human and financial costs)
- Need connections to the support of peers

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Striking the Balance

- What we hear from parents and families
- What we know from research
- What we learned from kinship caregivers

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Efforts to Meet Our Goals

From May 2008 through June 2009:

- **197 families (271 children)** were referred for enrollment in the our Kinship Navigator program
- **76 families (114 children)** enrolled in our Kinship Navigator program
- **394 encounters** occurred during which information, support, education, referrals/linkages and advocacy were provided regardless of enrollment status
- **8 training sessions** were held for kinship caregivers, families, and other professionals within the kinship sector

Program Impact and Key Outcomes

- **100%** of children whose kinship caregivers enrolled in the Kinship Navigator program remained with the kinship family and/or returned to the family of origin
- **100%** of kinship caregivers reported high confidence in their ability to be an effective kinship caregiver after receiving KN services
- **97%** of kinship caregivers reported they were satisfied with the Kinship Navigation services they received

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Assure that all partners enjoy a shared vision, values and philosophy
- Programs need to focus on biological (not in residence) and non-relative fathers as viable kinship placement options
- Promote training events far in advance. Promotional materials should clearly show the value of training
- Develop a glossary to promote consistent use and understanding of program terms and expressions
- Develop formal communication channels and processes for the Kinship Navigator and the local child welfare caseworker to improve coordination
- Navigators who come from the community they serve are readily available and understand the nuances of the area

Tools for success

• Key roles and responsibilities

Adept coordination of the efforts of numerous stakeholders insured program success. By providing stakeholders with specific guidelines that defined roles and responsibilities beforehand, we were able to be clear about expectations.

• Script and format

By providing the Kinship Navigator with a "script" we able to make sure all caregiver needs were consistently identified and expectations were accurate. Use of the script promoted the gathering of reliable data and feedback for program administrators so monitoring and quality processes could be enacted. Our script was designed to be used with a certain amount of flexibility to allow for differing caregiver relationships.

• Tips for engaging families

Family engagement was crucial to program design and to helping families remain intact. Caregivers were supported to develop the skills to become proficient and confident to participate in services and negotiate systems. Our "tips" provided strategies for engaging families and were derived from Targeted Parent Assistance (Keys for Networking, KS).

• Strengths: *A Family Affair*

This tool gave caregivers and family members an opportunity to reframe their views of one another to reduce natural bias.

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Sustainability

• New federal focus and resources

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act
 - Supports children to live with birth families, other relatives, kinship and adoptive families.

• Explore emerging opportunities in the state

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To find out more about the partners:

- ✓ www.magellanhealth.com
- ✓ www.brevardfp.org
- ✓ www.flkin.org/

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