

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROJECT

Across every generation and culture, grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends have stepped forward to raise children whose parents can no longer care for them. This time-honored tradition, known as kinship care, helps protect children and maintains strong family, community, and cultural connections. When children cannot remain safely with their parents, other family and friends can provide a sense of security, positive identity, and belonging.

Stepping Up for Kids; what government and communities should do to support kinship families. Annie E. Casey Foundation 2012

PURPOSE

Oregon Department of Human Services has been developing a Kinship Navigator program that is accessible statewide and used as a Prevention service well before families become involved in crisis requiring public system intervention. The belief is that families who caring for other family members children at times need access to information which should be free, open to the public, and not requiring any eligibility criteria. In doing so families can make informed decisions about their family.

PHASE I – OCTOBER 1, 2018 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

- A. What we did; Contracted with Portland State University - Center for Improvement of Child & Family Services and talked to Relatives who are or have provided Kinship caregiving through a series of focus groups. Consulted with multiple community groups who advocate for Relatives; ICWA Advisory, Oregon Refugee Advisory, other child serving organizations, community groups such as AARP and DHS staff. Researched Kinship models around the country.

- B. What we learned;
 - a) Kinship Navigator model will best serve people if it is NOT a government run program. ***"Put it into the community"*** respondents reported.
 - b) Child Welfare is not Always the Answer:
"We just want to be compliant."
"So, we stopped telling them anything or asking for anything."
 - c) Having a model that is Trauma Informed is critical to the success;
"No one feels sorry for you when the loss is for a child who is a drug addict. To us the loss is great and there is no support. No one understands we are caring for a child and trying to repair a family."
 - d) To provide a statewide resource that is consistently applied statewide a virtual Service Center model may be best resourced.

- e) If Kinship Navigator model is to be a Prevention model it must be moved upstream to support relatives before they become involved in the Child Welfare system.

PHASE II - OCTOBER 1, 2019 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

A. What we are doing;

1. Oregon made the decision to create a Kinship Navigator Basic Service Center that incorporates the required tenets of the Kinship Navigator program as described by the federal Social Security Act 427(a)(1).
 - a kinship navigator program to assist kinship caregivers in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet the needs of the children they are raising and their own needs, and to promote effective partnerships among public and private agencies to ensure kinship caregiver families are served, which program will;
 - a. coordinate with other state and local agencies such as 211Info, and other services systems.
 - b. develop a Kinship Advisory Committee to better inform, provide guidance and direction for Oregon.
 - c. establish information and referral systems that link (via toll-free access) kinship caregivers, kinship support group facilitators, and kinship service providers to
 - i. each other;
 - ii. eligibility and enrollment information for Federal, State, and local benefits;
 - iii. relevant training to assist kinship caregivers in caregiving and in obtaining benefits and services; and
 - iv. relevant legal assistance and help in obtaining legal services;
 - d. provide outreach to kinship care families, including establishing, distributing, and updating a kinship care website, and other relevant guides or outreach materials;
 - e. promote partnerships between public and private agencies, including schools, community based or faith-based organizations, and relevant government agencies, to increase their knowledge of the needs of kinship care families.
2. The states intention here is to meet the basic service needs of the grant opportunity and to be poised to add additional components once long-term funding is established and more clear understanding of the required Evidence based program requirements. If the basic tenants could be determined as a stand-alone federally funded program as required by the act, then a state could add an additional "intervention" to be evaluated as an evidence-based model. Such as a future state may include;
 - a. Oregon providing a Kinship Basic Service center and adding a Peer-to-peer consultation component that could be evaluated with the rigor for Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse standards. Only the Peer-to-peer intervention would be evaluated. Or;

- b. Oregon provides a Kinship Basic Service center and adding an in-person support groups that could be evaluated with the rigor for Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse standards. Only the in-person support groups would be evaluated.

Oregon believes separation of the Kinship Navigator modeling into a Basic Service Center and adding an Intervention component may be a good long-term strategy both for Oregon and for additional consideration by the Children’s Bureau as a long-term strategy to meet the intention of FFPSA. If the basic tenets have already been determined as effective by listing them in the “*Approved Activities*” of the Program Instruction, then there is little value in evaluation of those tenets that have already been approved. Emphasis for evaluation can then be focused on the added; *Interventions (Peer-to-Peer, Support groups, etc...)*.

3. Oregon solicited through a statewide Request for Proposals for a community organization who had the capacity to build the Kinship Navigator Basic Service Center. This was solely based on the guidance provided by Kinship families during Phase I.
 - a. In fall 2019, the Department awarded Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. (GOBHI) a 2-year contract to develop and operate Oregon Kinship Navigator program. GOBHI is a community provider with a footprint in multiple counties in Oregon with a large emphasis on Eastern Oregon an underserved area. The desire was to make this program as “stand-alone” as possible so a Relative did not need to go through the standard GOBHI website to access Kinship Navigator.
 - b. By February 2020 the website and beginning support system has been created and launched. The contractor is required to use research on website development for adults over age 45 which reduces the amount of distractions many websites now include with pictures, rotating screens and advance search needs. This website is focused on easily accessible information, readable color schemes, font size, etc... Future modifications will continue to include Kinship family’s feedback.



- o <https://oregonkinshipnavigator.org/>
- o <https://www.facebook.com/OregonKinshipNavigator/>
- o info@oregonkinshipnavigator.org

- B. What we are learning; Identifying diverse audiences is challenging and having a strong word of mouth is effective. Intersecting with other groups such as Seniors, Community and other organizations, etc. who have their established networks, services and supports requires intentionality and commitment. We are still learning in this phase and seeking opportunities for more engagement. The next steps over the next six-months will focus on;

1. Launching online Facebook support groups.
 2. Establishing Kinship Advisory committee by connecting to a pre-existing group of professionals and advocates for Kinship but adding Kinship families to the group.
 3. Further developing website and response system based on Kinship family's guidance, feedback and response.
 4. Kinship families need access to affordable and accessible Legal Assistance has been a consistent theme as we have launched this Kinship resource.
- C. The Department is considering how best to move toward evaluation of Kinship Services in Oregon along with the development of the Family First Prevention Services State Plan (Spring 2020). The expressed intention remains to use the Kinship Navigator program as Prevention service focused and accessible to relatives well before public system intervention into their family is necessary.

PHASE III- OCTOBER 1, 2020 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

Oregon's intention for grant opportunity; **ACYF-CB-PI-20-05** is to meet the components outlined here in Phase III.

- A. What we plan to do;
1. Implementation and Support of the Basic Service Center which is a virtual center for Kinship families. This includes maintenance and ongoing modifications to an interactive website, response process for individual consultation, information and referral. Kinship Advisory committee to seek guidance, direction and affirmation. Online support groups hosted through Facebook. Increased outreach efforts and ongoing updated resource materials.
 2. Deeper engagement into the community with the utilization of the Kinship Advisory committee, and the Relative as Parent Partners (RAPP) which is a group of mostly professionals and advocates for Relative caregivers outside the Child Welfare system.
 3. Coordinated connection within the Departments Child Welfare system, Self Sufficiency and Adults and People with Disabilities to create a continuum of care, support and information for relatives inside and outside the Department of Human Services systems.
 4. Add an Intervention component with an evaluation if this approach becomes acceptable as a means to move toward Evidence based practices. The most often requested intervention component in Oregon is Peer-to-Peer connection. Oregon has a lot of experience in Peer-to-Peer models and is poised to include this intervention.
 5. This phase will focus on stable funding beyond the federal grant period, integration within DHS systems, research and evaluation of programming.

B. What we hope to learn and achieve;

1. Kinship Navigator Basic Service Center; increases utilization and access, what is working, what is not and what modification can be made to meet the needs of Kinship families.
2. Active engagement strategies for Kinship families and communities for deeper engagement and support.
3. How a more cohesive and coordinated approach across the Department of Human Services for; Title IV-B, TANF and Older American Act can more effectively support Kinship families in Oregon.
4. Evaluation of an added Intervention to the Basic Service Center.
5. Long-term stable funding for Kinship families in Oregon.

NATIONAL KINSHIP NAVIGATOR CONNECTIONS AND LEARNING

Oregon remains connected to several National Kinship Navigator opportunities to learn, for outreach, support and sharing of information and resources.

1. Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, website and material review
2. Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative - Center for States; specifically, the 2018 series on;
 - o It's all relative; Kinship Care series of articles, videos, guides and tools
3. Kinship Navigator list serv; skeplinger@childwelfare.gov
4. Peer Kinship Network; Tiffany Allen, Research Director - ChildFocus, Inc.
5. Generations United
6. Casey Family Programs – FFPSA Learning Collaborative

If other groups are available Oregon would appreciate a referral for these other groups, learning and networking opportunities.

DATA

Oregon looks forward to the 2020 Census and the recount of Relatives caring for children in Oregon. It is our belief these numbers will rise as a result of the Opioid and family crises in Oregon. The most recent estimates in Oregon range from 30,000 to approximately 35,000 children that are being cared for by relatives based on various data collection models. Approximately 3-4% of all children in Oregon may be living with relatives in a formal or informal arrangement.

Utilizing this data is the basis for the Oregon Kinship Navigator program to focus on Kinship families within Oregon communities who are NOT engaged with the public Child Welfare system. The collective belief as stated earlier in this report is that families who are caring for other family members children at times need access to information which should be free, open

to the public, and not requiring any eligibility criteria. In doing so families can make informed decisions about their family.

If the Oregon Kinship Navigator program can support these 30,000 – 35,000 children and families then the public Child Welfare offices can focus on the 3,000 who need additional support from public system involvement.

Age Group	Data Type	Oregon Child Pop. Estimate 2017	Oregon Kinship Estimate 2017	Oregon Child Welfare Involved – Kinship 2017
0-4	Number	235,968	9,439	
	Percent	27		
5-11	Number	342,815	13,712	
	Percent	39		
12-14	Number	146,440	5,857	
	Percent	17		
15-17	Number	148,396	5,936	
	Percent	17		
Total			34,944	2,761
U.S. Census Bureau – 2017 Child Population Estimates				

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