

# 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 is 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 care 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.

## PROJECT PLAN

### Phase I – October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019

- 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.
- 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 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

- What we did; Solicited for a community organization who had the capacity to build the Kinship Navigator Basic Service Center. Awarded Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc.. who is a community provider with a footprint in multiple counties in Oregon with a large emphasis on Eastern Oregon and underserved area. This award is for a 2 year contract. By February 2020 the website and beginning support system has been created and launched. <https://oregonkinshipnavigator.org/>
- What we learned; 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.



### Phase III- October 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021

- What we did; The Department has the opportunity to apply for year 3 federal funding in April 2020, and the department intends to proceed with this request. This phase will focus on stable funding beyond the federal grant period, integration within DHS systems, research and evaluation of programming. \*
- What we learned; To be determined

\*Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse has yet to approve any Kinship Navigator models at this time. (March 2020), each program reviewed has been determined “does not meet criteria”. The Department is closely monitoring this process and will respond and potentially pivot toward a model that is identified effective.

## FEDERAL PROGRAM

The federal grant opportunities does identify several components that are deemed necessary in a Kinship Navigator model. In Oregon, we have defined these components as a Basic Service Center model. Once established we when then look toward other interventions and services that may be added on once interest, funding, and capacity are developed. Add on’s such as; Peer to Peer Support, one on one advocacy, in person support groups, as examples.

*Title IV-E agencies may use these funds to develop, enhance or evaluate kinship navigator programs, as described in section 427(a)(1) of the Social Security Act, as follows:*

*(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—

(A) shall be coordinated with other State or local agencies that promote service coordination or provide information and referral services, including the entities that provide 2–1–1 or 3–1–1 information systems where available, to avoid duplication or fragmentation of services to kinship care families;

(B) shall be planned and operated in consultation with kinship caregivers and organizations representing them, youth raised by kinship caregivers, relevant government agencies, and relevant community-based or faith based organizations;

(C) shall 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) shall provide outreach to kinship care families, including by establishing, distributing, and updating a kinship care website, or other relevant guides or outreach materials;

(E) shall 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 and other individuals who are willing and able to be foster parents for children in foster care under the responsibility of the State who are themselves parents to promote better services for those families;

## DATA

Current 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.

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				

## POTENTIAL ARRAY OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

- Community Outreach and education, resource materials, referrals
- Support Groups for Caregivers, Family Mediation, Counseling,
- Education access and advocacy
- Health Care access and advocacy
- Public Assistance; Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Caregiver Respite, Health Care for Child,
- Legal; Temporary Power of attorney, Guardianship, Adoption
- Child Welfare; Safety, Case management

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