



**Family
Focused
Treatment
Association**

FFTA Kinship Consultation Services

Today, more than ever before, there is consensus in the child welfare field that kinship caregivers are a critical resource for children at risk of or already involved in the foster care system. Kinship care is not only more stable for children, but also less traumatic than being placed outside of a child's extended family network. Federal and state law is clear that kinship care is the preferred option for children who can't safely live with their parents and the Family First Prevention Services Act, authorized in 2018, further affirms the importance of support for children in kinship arrangements.

FFTA has developed a menu of consultation services that are available to all FFTA members that want to be successful in providing quality services and supports for kinship families. Each of these services can be individually tailored to the unique needs of FFTA agencies. FFTA members with experience working with kinship families are also available for consultation as appropriate.

Menu of Consultation Services

1. Develop a kinship treatment foster care program

Several FFTA agencies have developed partnerships with their public systems to offer kinship families the opportunity to be licensed as treatment foster parents for children and youth with specialized needs. FFTA works with a team of agencies and independent consultants who are available to help jurisdictions implement a kinship treatment foster care (TFC) program for children at different stages in their involvement with the child welfare system. Consultation includes learning how kinship TFC is being implemented in other jurisdictions, identifying the barriers to implementing kinship TFC, and creating a plan to overcome barriers and pilot a kinship TFC program.

2. Learn family search and engagement skills

Consultants will help agency staff embed the necessary values and beliefs and learn critical skills for identifying, locating and engaging extended family members for children in foster care. This practice supports early and ongoing identification of family and kin who can offer a range of support and connection. Consultation includes use of concrete tools for talking to families and youth about family connections, partnering with public agencies for search and engagement, and preparing to help youth and families establish or re-establish safe relationships. On-going coaching and case consultation is also available.

3. Create kinship foster parent training curriculum

Curriculum developers and training experts are available to work with members and their public systems' partners to create kin-friendly foster parent training curriculum. This may include creating a new curriculum or adapting/streamlining existing curricula to meet the needs of kin families.

4. Develop staff competencies to work effectively with the kinship triad

Dr. Joseph Crumbley's free online videos serve as the foundation for developing staff expertise in working with kinship families and understanding the differences between working with kin and non-kin foster families. This highly interactive training is geared toward staff with little experience working with kin families or those who need a refresher on what it takes to address the unique family dynamics and clinical considerations for caregivers, children and youth, and their parents.

5. Create meaningful support services for kinship families

Consultants are available to help FFTA agencies assess their existing support services and make recommendations for tailoring them to the unique needs of kin families. This may include recommendations to ensure that kinship families have access to the resources needed to meet the needs of the child, that agencies create the staffing structures to effectively engage kin and meet their support needs, and that kin families have all the information available to make an informed decision about their legal and financial options. Recommendations for the creation of kinship navigator programs and kinship support groups are also available.

6. Develop licensing systems that work for kinship families

Consultants will help FFTA agencies and their public partners remove barriers to helping kin become licensed as foster parents. Consultation includes developing emergency licensing approval processes, creating a process to grant waivers for non-safety standards, and assessing existing licensing standards against the Model National Foster Parent Licensing Standards developed by the National Association of Regulatory Authorities, the American Bar Association, and Generations United.

7. Engage public systems, philanthropy, and boards of directors in partnerships for kinship care programs and policies

Agencies interested in doing more to identify, engage and support kinship families must develop the best strategies to engage their public partners, funders, and Board members in support for kinship care. This includes making the case for kinship care as a critical component of an agency's business model, educating stakeholders on how kinship care can improve outcomes for families involved in the child welfare system and making the case for private agency help in supporting kin families. Consultants may include former commissioners of child welfare, CEOs of private agencies, and funders who are committed to increasing the use of and outcomes for kinship care.

8. Respond effectively to state and local requests for proposals

State and local agencies are increasingly seeking private partners to help them more comprehensively meet the needs of kinship families. Consultation is available to help FFTA members develop winning proposals that include program models, staffing structures, and budget needs for highly effective kinship programs/services.

FFTA recognizes that there is no cookie cutter approach to consultation services. Toward that end, if there is an area of technical assistance that is not identified above, we are happy to work with members to identify the right strategy to help agencies strengthen their approach to kinship care.

Cost Considerations

FFTA will work with its members to find a cost-effective package of consultation services, which will depend on the unique nature and length of each engagement. Consultants will be paid a daily rate or product fee, plus any travel or other expenses, and will be paid through FFTA. FFTA member agencies will provide pro bono consultation where appropriate. For trainings and other multi-agency gatherings, in addition to consultant fees agencies will be responsible for paying for local venue rentals, food, A/V needs, etc.

We strongly encourage members to consider cost sharing arrangements with other agencies in your state or surrounding states or to join forces with an FFTA chapter in your state, if applicable. It's possible that there are local foundations that will be interested in supporting these initiatives in your jurisdiction.

To express interest in consultation services, please contact Melissa Devlin at mdevlin@ffta.org or (800) 414-3382, ext. 113. We look forward to working with you!