Over the past 10 years, the Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA) has promoted kinship treatment foster care (TFC) as a common-sense approach to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and youth in foster care. FFTA is helping private agencies, and their public agency partners, remove barriers to kinship TFC and create the tools, strategies and partnerships needed to implement the intervention.

Kinship care is known to have multiple benefits for children and youth in foster care, including greater stability, a stronger feeling of family belonging, better permanency outcomes, and greater odds of having siblings placed together. Federal and state policy affirms a preference for placement with kin when children are removed from their parents. Treatment foster care is an intervention that provides foster parents with specialized training and support to care for children and adolescents, for those with emotional, behavioral, or social issues and/or medical needs. TFC is an important alternative to residential treatment and affords children and youth the opportunity to be in a family setting with the full range of services and supports to address the trauma they’ve experienced, promote permanency, and ensure their well-being.

When combined, we believe that kinship care and treatment foster care is a win-win for children and families. Children and youth remain in their family network with adults who receive the hands-on support they need to meet social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Kinship treatment foster care can help states and counties meet their federally mandated performance outcomes. It is also a critically important option for children in foster care in consideration of FFPSA that limits the use of federal funds for residential treatment if children can remain safe and stable in families.

Piloting Kinship TFC in North Carolina
In 2019, FFTA was awarded a $950,000, three-year grant from The Duke Endowment to work in partnership with public and private partners in North Carolina to address the therapeutic needs of children and youth being cared for by kinship caregivers through kinship treatment foster care. In 2023, FFTA was awarded a second three-year grant of $1,025,000 from The Duke Endowment to continue work with the selected 3 private agencies and 3 county agencies to continue implementation. The initial demonstration project was comprised of staff training in kinship care, family search and engagement and developing a kinship caregiver curriculum for use by the agencies in their training and support of kinship caregivers. Pilot partners will continue to utilize the training and tools developed in the initial project to help support their ongoing work. FFTA will also explore early engagement of kinship families and leadership engagement as variables supporting the effectiveness of Kinship Treatment Foster Care.

In addition, FFTA will continue to support a Learning Community for participating agencies to reinforce the knowledge acquired in training, and provide support, technical assistance and coaching throughout the pilot. The project is being evaluated by Child Trends, a leading research organization focused on improving the lives of vulnerable children and families.

FFTA is committed to sharing its learnings from this demonstration project with all FFTA members and others in the sector with the hope that these strategies will be replicated in additional jurisdictions across the country. If you are interested in learning more about this project, other FFTA initiatives, or are interested in discussing ways FFTA can help your communities/jurisdictions advance kinship care, please contact Erica Burgess at Eburgess@ffta.org.