Kinship Connections: Bridging Policy & Practice in Relative Care
Two initiatives to support kinship/grandfamilies

- National Center on Grandfamilies
  - GRAND Voices- national group of caregiver advocates
  - Federal advocacy on behalf of grandfamilies
  - Resources including annual State of Grandfamilies Report
  - gu.org and grandfamilies.org
- 5 year cooperative agreement in September 2021, overseen by the Administration for Community Living (ACL)
- Purpose is to provide technical assistance to the array of government agencies and organizations that serve kinship families
- Not designed to serve families directly

Sign up to access the Network:
Challenges

There are at least 2.4 million children growing up in grandfamilies in the United States today.
Children Thrive in Grandfamilies

When children cannot stay with their parents, they do best in grandfamilies. Youth in kinship care always showed more positive changes in their social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes than youth in non-relative foster care—especially when their caregivers experienced a reduction in depression over time or were never depressed.
National & State Data

- Scan to download the report
Final Rule

• Encourages title IV-E agencies to establish kin-specific standards limited to long-standing federal law that requires title IV-E agencies to:
  
  o Conduct criminal and child abuse background checks under the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(20)
  o Align their standards “reasonably in accord with recommended standards of national organizations… which shall permit the use of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard” 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(10)(A)
Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval: National Nonprofit Partners

- A Second Chance, Inc.
- American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law
- Children’s Rights
- CWPolicy
- Generations United and its Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center

- National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA)
- National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)
- New America’s Resource Family Working Group
- Think of Us
Standards & Tribal Country

• The new rule is not applicable to tribes that do not operate a title IV-E program

• We – the national nonprofit partners – recognize the great diversity in Indian Country with 574 federally-recognized tribal nations with sovereign authority to develop their own licensing standards
Focus on Federal Requirements Only

Developed with input from:

100+ Kin Caregivers  45 Title IV-E Agencies  Subject Matter Experts

Serve as “recommended standards of national organizations” Standards for Kinship Caregivers
Kin-Specific Model Standards

• Required background checks (plus local background + sex offender registry checks)

• Caregiver suitability assessment (similar to what’s already done at placement)

• Safety and needs assessment of the home

That’s it!
What the Standards Don’t Include

• Tuberculosis tests
• Medical exams
• Financial reviews
• Pet registrations
• and other barriers - like not enough rooms or misdemeanor criminal charges from 20 years ago - that have kept children in foster care from living with people who love them
What Else Is Included

Implementation guidance

- Offer solutions for all identified issues
- Provide material goods and support to the best of the agency’s ability
- Exercise flexibility and make accommodations based on child’s needs
- Communicate with transparency by providing context about the importance of requirement(s) during the assessment and if possible, share the checklist ahead of visit

Example template forms for optional agency use, to make it as simple as possible to adopt the standards.
Adoption of Kin-Specific Licensing: States

“Submitted Plan for Approval” indicates that a jurisdiction has submitted a plan to the Children’s Bureau.

“Implementing” indicates that a jurisdiction has decided to implement kin-specific licensing and is in the process of making an implementation plan.

“Interested” indicates that a jurisdiction is exploring kin-specific licensing.

* Map as of April 15, 2024
### Adoption of Kin-Specific Licensing: Title IV-E Tribes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keweenaw Bay Indian Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navajo Nation</td>
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<td>Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniitsoq Association</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits of Implementing Kin-Specific Standards

• Greater and equitable support for children, including the disproportionate numbers of children who are Black, Indigenous, and/or in living underserved rural areas

• Significantly expedited timeframe for receiving title IV-E reimbursement for foster care maintenance payments (FCMPs) to kin caregivers

• Increase in the use of, and a faster path to, title IV-E guardianship assistance, because the six-month clock can now begin far sooner

• Reduced administrative burden for families and employees

• Implementation of this process could lead to further examination of unnecessary/unintended barriers for licensing of non-kin too through NARA Model Standards
A Network Monthly Resource: November 2023

An important federal rule for title IV-E child welfare agencies around the country has changed to support kinship families in the foster care system. Here we’ve outlined some of

Kin-Specific Licensing: Progress So Far
April 4, 2024

Download the presentation
View the webinar recording
Kin-Specific Model Approval Standards
Crosswalk tool
Kin-Finding Toolkit

www.gksnetwork.org/events/kin-specific-licensing-progress-so-far/
Stay Connected & Access Support

Sign up for our monthly newsletter which will provide you with updates on new Network resources.

For the latest updates, follow the Network on LinkedIn!
The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and $523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.
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Special thanks to The Annie E. Casey Foundation for making this agenda possible.

Scan the code with your smartphone camera to access the agenda.
DEVELOPED WITH BROAD & INCLUSIVE INPUT

- Initial convening- caregivers, youth, parents & national organizations (including FFTA!)
- Over a third of convening participants have lived expertise
- Public input period with intentional outreach
- Caregiver focus groups
- Virtual release event
- Opportunities for involvement in working groups
COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITIES

• **Equitable Financial** and other supports.
• Policies that meet kinship families’ **Basic Needs**.
• Fully integrate **Lived Experience** into policy, review, design and implementation
• **Racial/Cultural Equity** and respect and support **Tribal Sovereignty**
• **Child Welfare System** respects, values, and fully supports kinship families
• Affordable high-quality **Legal Representation**
• Strategies to change **Public Narrative** on kinship care
• **Specialized Programs** to meet the unique needs of kinship families
• **Social Science Research** on all kinship families to better address inequities
TAKE ACTION

• **Sign up** to receive alerts and stay up to date on ongoing opportunities to help move the agenda forward.

• **Tell us** what you are doing! This will help us honor and coordinate our collective work.

• **Volunteer** to join or lead a working group to go deep on one of the priorities.

• **Mark your calendar** for annual updates on our collective progress and ways to keep moving forward together in support of grandfamilies.
Think of Us is a research & design lab for child welfare, driving systems change so that the youth and families most impacted by the system have the greatest power and opportunity to reshape it.

We publish groundbreaking research, work with cities, states, and tribes to build and implement solutions to long-standing challenges, and advise federal and state policy makers on effective, bipartisan solutions.
Six Conditions of Systems Change

Think of Us is focused on shifting the six conditions of change that keep systematic outcomes in place. Every system outcome is dependent upon a combination of these six conditions.
Our Priorities

Prevention  Kinship  Older Youth
Away from Home: Youth Experiences of Institutional Placements in Foster Care

*Away from Home* is a TOU participatory research project that examined the experiences and perspectives of young people who recently lived in institutional placements in foster care. It revealed shocking patterns of abuse, isolation, neglect, overmedication, and traumatization in environments that were unloving, punitive, and prison-like.

Following publication, twenty-two states committed to ending the need for group home placements.

Since 2021, Think of Us has worked with multiple jurisdictions to make this commitment a reality, including by prioritizing kin and culturally-responsive placements instead of institutions. This has shifted the national conversation around the institutionalization of youth and demonstrates the power of lived experience data to shift mental models and drive systemic change.

“I just had to do my time. I guess because it felt like a mini prison.”

(MP-LT-MI-01)
National Convening on Kinship Care

Together with the U.S. Children’s Bureau, Think of Us co-hosted a National Convening on Kinship Care. The event brought together advocates and administrators from across the country to:

- Celebrate the progress of the kinship movement
- Build momentum behind the new kin licensing
- Shift mental models around kinship care
- Imagine kin support beyond licensure
Virtual Support Services (VSS) is a resource navigation model that uses tech-enabled strategies to give young people and families direct access to resources and create a clearer pathway to meet their basic needs.
“I lost contact with all friends once I was in residential for over 2 years. I didn't have a phone my whole stay and the only people I knew were the ones I interacted with at the house, or the residential placement school. It was a small world that affected me once I aged out because once I went back to society I was in shock. Scared. I had been in residential for 2 years and I didn't know what the heck to do with all these people on the outside world who had no understanding of my bubble.”

(MP- MT- KS- 01)
North Carolina
KTFC Pilot Update

Training, Coaching and Beyond:
1. Assessing Agency Culture
2. Overcoming Bias and Maintaining Kin Culture
3. Developing Kin Specific Training for Staff
4. Developing Kin Focused Training for Caregivers
5. Supporting Staff and Kinship Caregivers Beyond