



KINSHIP CARE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE REPORT



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Executive Summary

The annual Kinship Care Oversight Committee (KCOC) report for September 2019 through August 2020 is required by RCW 74.13.621.1. The KCOC was formed in 2003 to provide guidance to the Legislature in identifying, supporting, and strengthening kinship care families. Kinship care includes relatives and unrelated kin raising children. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Aging and Long Term Support Administration (AL TSA) and Economic Services Administration (ESA) staff participate in the KCOC, with kinship caregivers, child and caregiver advocates, non-profit service providers, tribes, and legal community representatives.

Introduction

KCOC meets quarterly, providing a forum to exchange information about state policy changes, local initiatives and concerns, and to monitor, guide, and report on kinship care recommendations and implementation activities. Achievements this past year include:

- The development of a KCOC meeting structure that best meets the needs and interests of the kinship community.
- Kinship Navigator grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families awarded to DCYF. The grant is for an additional year of funding for DCYF to partner with AL TSA to support implementation of an evidence-based Kinship Navigator program as required under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), and to build state infrastructure to support kin.

KCOC Activities

Development of a KCOC Meeting Structure that Best Meets the Needs and Interests of the Kinship Community

During the reporting period of September 2019 through August 2020, the KCOC was convened three times. During these meetings, DCYF staff discussed how it could best support the KCOC and listened to the feedback and interests of KCOC members. Based on these discussions, it became clear that member's value:

- **The opportunity to network and share resources.** The KCOC includes numerous individuals who support informal kinship caregivers (families who are not involved with the child welfare system). These individuals rely on the networking that occurs during KCOC meetings to help support kinship families. KCOC members frequently share a resource or event that sparks an idea for another KCOC member. This web of kinship-specific resources does not have another forum; thus, the information shared is vital to supporting kinship families across Washington State.
- **Including representatives and agencies that serve the formal and informal kinship care community.** Based on data from the Annie E. Casey Kids Count data center and 2020 FamLink data, for every one child in kinship care under DCYF's supervision, there are 11 children being cared for by kin without

¹ RCW 74.13.621 can be viewed [here](#).

DCYF's involvement.² The distinctions between these groups are not fixed and kinship caregivers may find themselves being described as a "formal" kinship caregiver one day, and an "informal" kinship caregiver days later. It is important for kinship caregiver discussions and recommendations to include and be representative of both experiences and the unique needs that align with them.

- **The KCOC's unique ability to elevate the voices and interests of the kinship community.** Current and past members discussed the importance of the KCOC and its ability to elevate the experiences and needs of kinship families. Members remain vested in the KCOC's future and functioning.

Kinship Navigator Program Evaluation

The FFPSA created opportunities for states and tribes to use Title IV-E matching funds for qualifying services aimed at prevention. One of the populations highlighted as needing support were kinship caregivers. To use Title IV-E matching funds to support a Kinship Navigator program, the program must be evidence-based and included in the federal Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. Currently, no Kinship Navigator programs meet the evidence-based standards.

In May 2018, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) issued a program instruction announcing a new grant opportunity to support states in their ability to enhance, evaluate, and develop Kinship Navigator programs that meet evidence-based standards. DCYF, in collaboration with ALISA and the University of Washington's Partners for Our Children, applied for and was awarded funding for Federal Fiscal Years 2018, 2019, and 2020. Funds are being used to strengthen and support evaluation of Washington State's Kinship Navigator program to work toward meeting the evidence standard and to develop and support infrastructure that serves all kinship families regardless of involvement with DCYF.

A KCOC sub-committee was established to inform, guide, and vet evaluation-related materials. In 2018 and 2019, the sub-committee provided vital feedback that helped shape a needs assessment implemented in two Kinship Navigator pilot sites. During this reporting period, the subcommittee has not met due to a combination of factors including impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing development of the KCOC.

The Future of KCOC

In 2021, DCYF will hold quarterly KCOC meetings, with Kinship Navigator Evaluation and KCOC legislative subcommittees holding additional meetings. We also plan to collaborate with a smaller, representative group of KCOC members to establish a charter and goals. DCYF believes this approach will help us move in a direction that strengthens the committee's identified purpose of supporting the diverse range of Washington State kinship caregivers.

² Data from the Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT data center available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>, and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting Systems; INFOFAMLINK Relative Versus Non-Relative Placements, January 29, 2020. Data reflects the number of children in out-of-home care as of January 29 of the indicated calendar year.