

Supporting Kinship Placements and the Pathways to Licensure

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“Kinship caregivers play a critical role in helping traumatized children to heal. By maintaining ties to family, community, and culture, children are spared additional losses. Being sheltered in the loving arms of a familiar adult is an invaluable first step on the road to healing.”

-Dr. Sarah Springer, Chair, American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Foster Care, Adoption and Kinship Care

Training Goal and Objectives

- Understand the strengths and benefits of kinship care
- Acknowledge the systemic practice of separating children from their kinship relatives
- Learn how the recent legislative decisions reflect a cultural shift in placement practices
- Learn about available supports and resources for kinship caregivers





Research shows that children removed from their parents fare better when placed with extended family over nonrelated foster parents.



Historical practice of separating families under the guise of child welfare

Orphan Trains

1854-1929

Native American Boarding Schools

1860-1960

Indian Adoption Project

1958-1967

By 1926, 83% of school-aged Indian children were in boarding schools

Between 1941-1967, one-third of all Indian children were separated from their families

Overrepresentation of American Indian/Native Alaskan Children in Foster Care

American Indian and Native Alaskan Children

- AI/NA children make up 1% of children in the United States but are 2.7% of all children placed into foster care
- Overrepresentation 2.66x greater than their proportion to the population

Caucasian/White Children

- Caucasian/White Children make up 53% of children in the United States and are only 51% of all children placed into foster care.
- Underrepresentation 0.93x lower than their proportion to the population

Prior to the ICWA of 1978, 80% of families living on a reservation had lost at least one child to the foster care system.

Corrosive Myths about Families

Myth: “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

Reality: Kin provide unique protective factors to children.

Myth: “It’s their moral responsibility.”

Reality: Love and morals don’t pay the bills.

Myth: “Kinship care is not as stable.”

Reality: Children experience fewer placement changes and are less likely to re-enter foster care.

Children Thrive in Kinship Care

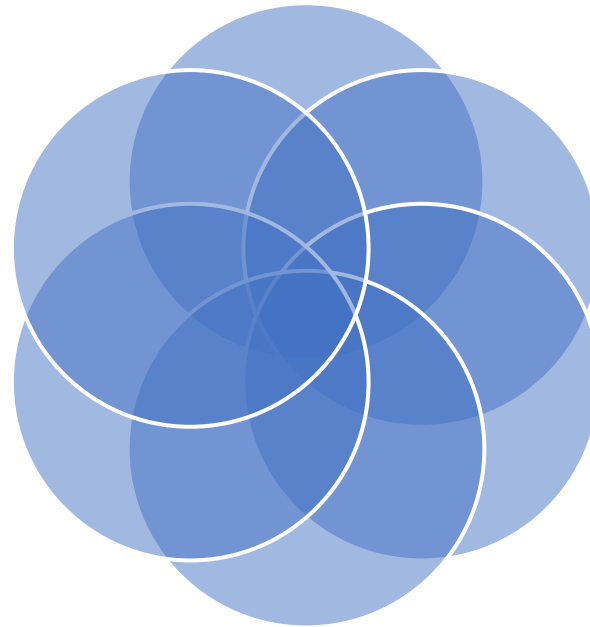
Cultural Identity &
Community Connections

Permanency

Placement
Stability

Safety

Connection
to Siblings



Well-Being

Relative care was not considered during the formalizing of child welfare.

- Prior to 1980's placement with relatives was practically unheard of.
- In 1997, guardianship first became formally recognized as a permanency option. (ASFA)



Significant Initiatives and Legal Decisions

- Multiple research Initiatives
- **SB [5151](#) DCYF bill re: foster care and child care licensing (2021)**
- **HB [1227](#) Keeping Families Together Act (2021)**
- HB [1747](#) Reaffirms relatives are the priority and GAP expansion (2022)
- *In re [Dependency of K.W.](#)* (2022)
- **SB [5683](#) Indian Children Child-Specific Foster Care Licensing (2023)**



Moving Toward a Kin First Culture

2019

≈ 45% of children placed with kin

≈ 12% of kinship homes licensed

Today

≈ 57% of children placed with kin

≈ 38% of kinship homes licensed



90% of new kinship placements are going through licensing

HB 1227 Initial License

- Child specific for relative or suitable person (kinship) caregivers
- “Driver’s permit” of licensing
- Provisional 90-day maximum payment (state funds)
- Minimal (placement) requirements for approval
- Non-renewable
- Funding stops at the 90th day



SB 5151 & 5683 Kinship (Child-Specific) License



- Follows Foster Home rules
- Child specific
- For kinship caregivers
- Placed on voluntary no-referrals
- Reassessment needed if additional children join the home
- Reduce barriers via non safety waivers and offering services

We must ask: How do we support this family

- The child is already here
- It is unlikely that the child will move unless there is a safety issue that cannot be mitigated
- What can we do to mitigate any safety concerns
- Shift of thinking to how can we help this family meet criteria



Addressing the Needs of Caregiver

Caregiver Supports

via Alliance CaRES

Vouchers/Services

via Caseworker

Concrete Goods

via Licensor



- Clothing
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Community resources

- Smoke detector
- Furniture
- Car Seat
- Locks



Maximizing Use of Non-Safety Waivers

- Current federal guidelines allow waivers for non-safety standards for relatives
- Review of all Washington Administrative Codes (WACs)
 - Equal to requirements for unlicensed homes
- 26 of the 74 WACs have partial or full waiver
- Expanded use to suitable others (state funds)

Assessing the Needs of the Child - Waivers

- Use the DCYF 15-411G Kinship License Non-Safety Exemption/Waiver (Licensed Home)
- Used for relatives and suitable others equally
- Expected to use all waivers that are safe for the child
 - Administrative (age of applicant or income)
 - Health (immunizations)
 - Pets (rabies)
 - Home/Environment (bedroom requirements)
 - Training



Automated Referrals and Online Application

- Placement triggers referral
- Workers are kinship specialists
- Link sent to kinship caregivers
- Default to kinship license
- Built in requirements





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Caring for the Caregiver

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Alliance CaRES Program

Vision Statement

We believe caregivers thrive when **connected** to each other, practical resources, and the broader community.

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The CaRES Program Elements



**Support Through
Licensure**



**Support at Key
Points**



Support Groups



Special Events



**Any time
Support**



**Support During
Investigations**

CaRES Mentors and Specialists

15 Mentors and
9 Specialists
statewide

Medically
Complex
Specialist

Culturally
Conscious
Caregiving
Specialist

LGBTQIA+
Specialist

Spanish
Speaking
Community
Specialist

Trauma-
informed
Caregiver
Specialist

FEATURED TEAM MEMBER
Meet a CaRES Mentor



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MARY ROBINSON
CaRES Mentor: Region 1



Community Connectors

Community Connectors are also part of the CaRES team. They plan and maintain regular local in-person groups. These could be hosting support groups, park playdates or coffee meet ups.

Support Through Licensure

***It's All Relative:
Kinship Support***

**1st Thursday from 7:00 - 8:00 pm
via zoom**

Drop by for kinship resources, help with
licensing, and answers to your kinship questions



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While You Wait

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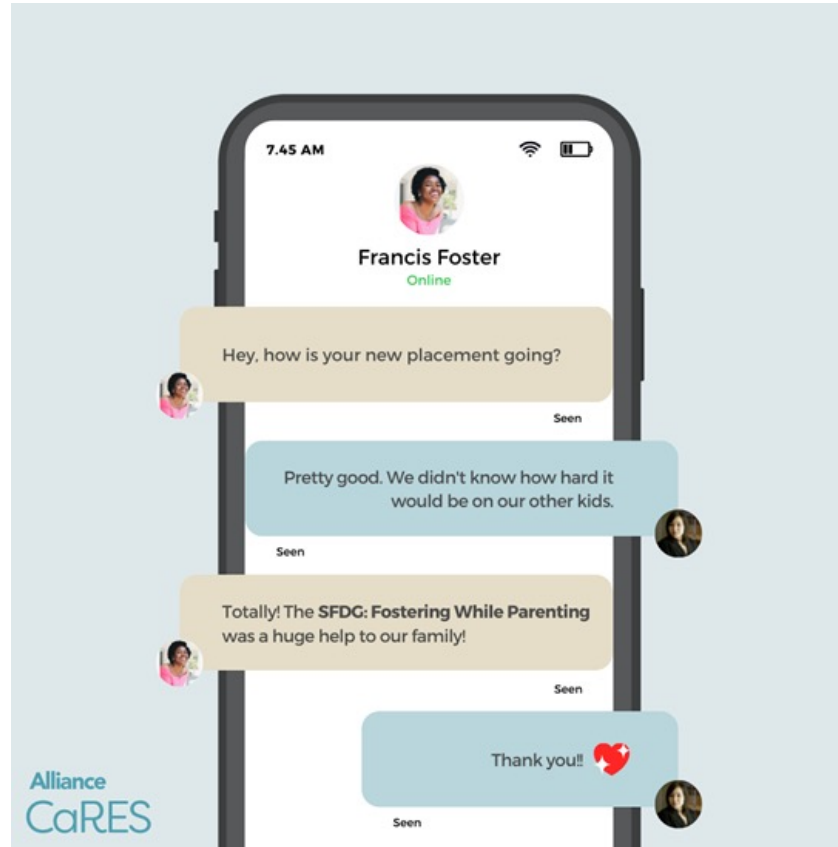
**A series of supportive facilitated
discussions while you wait for your
first placement**

- ✓ — 1: Preparing for Change
- ✓ — 2: Making Placement Decisions
- ✓ — 3: Transitioning a Child into Your Home
- ✓ — 4: Meeting Children's Cultural Needs

www.alliancecarescommunity.org/supportgroups/

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Support at Key Points



- Prospective kinship caregivers
- Time of licensure
- Upon kinship placement
- One month and six month point of placement
- At any point in the journey

Support Groups

Transition

Behavior changes

You aren't alone!

Challenges

Uncertainty

CaRES invites you to join other caregivers for a supportive facilitated discussion:

Grief and Loss in Your Fostering Journey

Family stress

Permanency Changes

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Caregiver Calendar

Week of October 2

Monday | October 2

5:30 p.m. | Topic Support Group: TBRI Connected Child Book Club (4 of 4)

Tuesday | October 3

3:00 p.m. | Topic Support Group: Fostering as Part of a Team (1 of 3)

Wednesday | October 4

7:00 p.m. | Topic Support Group: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth in Foster Care (1 of 2)

Thursday | October 5

7:00 p.m. | It's All Relative: Kinship Support
7:00 p.m. | Topic Support Group: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth in Foster Care (2 of 2)

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JOIN FELLOW CAREGIVERS FOR A SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION OF:

"TRYING DIFFERENTLY RATHER THAN HARDER"
BY DIANE MALBAIN



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Community Groups

CAREGIVERS
JOIN CARES AT THE PARK!

Foster friendships!
Connect with other local caregivers
while your children play.



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Walk with CaRES!

Join local caregivers and kids to
build connections while getting
the wiggles out!



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CAREGIVER COFFEE

**GRAB A CUP AND JOIN
ALLIANCE CARES FOR A TIME OF
CONNECTION AND SUPPORT!**

A ONE-HOUR LOCAL MEET UP FOR
KINSHIP AND FOSTER CAREGIVERS
HOSTED BY ALLIANCE CARES


Special Events



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Join us for Story Time!

A family activity with a new story every month! Find the zoom link, story, and date on our website: alliancecares.org



Washington State Department of CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Washington Office of Superintendent of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

AllianceCaRES

treehouse

EDUCATION RESOURCE WEDNESDAYS

Join us the 3rd Wednesday every other month 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Expert-led discussion, time for questions, and caregiver connection

ZOOM:
979 4221 7041

CONNECT WITH
Alliance CaRES



AllianceCaRES.org



alliancecares@uw.edu



@AllianceCaRESCommunity
@AllianceCaRESKinship



@TheAllianceOfWA

November Happenings with CaRES!



At CaRES, we believe caregivers thrive when connected to each other, practical resources, and the broader community.

We have support groups that fit your schedule!
Find a calendar of CaRES events plus a map with your local events
on our website: AllianceCares.org.

All groups, trainings and events are open to all families under the umbrella term of "caregiver." Whether you are a relative (also called kinship), foster, fictive kin, guardianship, or adoptive parent, we are here for you.

*Below you will find all CaRES' offerings for November.
Beyond the initial summary are in-depth explanations of each program or event.*

During Investigations: FIRST Line

Alliance CaRES provides support to caregivers during allegations and investigations through its confidential FIRST Line.

1-866-393-6186



How can you support the caregiver?

- Ask kinship caregivers if they've applied for child-specific TANF or if they've begun the licensing process
- Help connect them to local and statewide resources
- Inquire what barriers they have in connecting with resources
- Familiarize yourself with support groups and trainings available to caregivers
- Make a referral for a CaRES mentor or specialist



Referring a caregiver for a mentor

To refer a caregiver for mentor contact, send an email or leave a voice mail with:

- the caregiver's contact information
- info about the general areas of support needed
- whether language support is needed
- whether the caregiver is expecting a call from us

alliancecares@uw.edu 206-221-4913



Questions?

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