



## OhioKAN

### Ohio: Kinship Navigator Program

#### Research Summary

**Title of Program:** Ohio's Enhanced Kinship Navigator Program

**Years of Operation:** Ohio's Enhanced Kinship Navigator program operated from 2009 to 2012 in the initial seven grantee counties. As part of ProtectOHIO, Lorain, Richland, and Ashtabula counties have been able to keep the program running since 2012.

**Number of Families Served:** From 2009-2012, 945 cases were managed with 1,516 children being served during the initial grant period.<sup>3</sup>

**Cost of Program:** Up to 1 million dollars in federal grant funds was awarded to grantees in seven Ohio counties.<sup>3</sup>

**Funding Source:** Funding for the Enhanced Kinship Navigator Program was provided through the federal Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008.<sup>2</sup>

**Description of the Program:** From 2009 to 2012, seven Ohio counties were awarded federal Fostering Connections grants to design, implement, and evaluate an Enhanced Kinship Navigator program for Ohio kinship families, with support from the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI).<sup>3</sup> Participating counties were Ashtabula, Crawford, Clark, Hardin, Lorain, Portage, and Richland representing demographically diverse communities in both urban and rural locales.<sup>2</sup>

Program implementation varied due to the location of the Kinship Navigator staff. Two models developed during the grant period: internal and external. Four counties (Ashtabula, Clark, Crawford, and Hardin) housed Kinship staff within existing public child welfare agencies, while three counties (Lorain, Portage, and Richland) housed Kinship staff externally in other community human service agencies and non-profit organizations<sup>1</sup>. Internally placed Kinship staff worked primarily with kinship families who had an open child welfare case.<sup>1</sup> Externally placed Kinship Navigator staff worked in contracted organizations with pre-existing links to the Public Children's Service Agency (PCSA), but worked with all referred families regardless of their involvement with the PCSA.<sup>1</sup> Eligibility criteria for kinship families varied due to the program location of the kinship navigator in each participating county.

The Enhanced Kinship Navigator Program comprised seven main components:

1. The kinship navigator positions were placed either within the PCSAs or other community agency locations. The kinship navigators served as the point-person for kinship families within their community.
2. Kinship navigators and other community workers received calls from 211 and other community referral sources and offered immediate information and referral (I&R) for kinship caregivers.
3. Kinship navigators provided case management, including utilizing the Services and Supports Needs Assessment and the Family Resource Scale in identifying strengths and needs for the kinship family at the initial home visit.
4. After those tools were administered, the kinship navigator aided families with service linkage to both local and state resources while providing ongoing emotional support.
5. Kinship navigators also facilitated support groups for kinship families and children.
6. In addition to direct service, kinship navigators and staff advocated for and raised awareness about kinship families through outreach efforts and through the formation of Local Advisory Groups (LAGs).
7. Kinship navigators created and used Community Mapping to locate community resources, identify strengths, and work through challenges. The community map also served as a continually updated resource guide for kinship families.<sup>2</sup>

**Who benefited from the program?** Kinship families and their children involved in the child welfare system and informal kinship families without system involvement benefited from the program.

**What services/benefits did they receive?** Kinship families received both immediate I&R and/or intensive case management. Families that participated in case management received a detailed Needs Assessment and a personalized Support Plan. Families then received direct assistance with linking to supports and resources in the community, including state/local financial assistance, child and respite care, assistance with court processes, and to other general support groups.

**How did they receive the benefits/services?** Families received benefits through face-to-face home visits, visits to the child welfare agency, visits to other non-profit organizations, through participation in support groups, and via telephone.

**Where were the services provided?** Services were provided in homes, public child welfare agencies, community non-profits, and in other various community locations.

#### **Sources:**

1. Ohio's Fostering Connection Grant: Enhanced Kinship Navigator Project Implementation Report (January 2012, p. 1-35)
2. Ohio's Fostering Connection Grant: Enhanced Kinship Navigator Project Final Report (December 2012, p.ii-64)
3. Ohio's Fostering Connection Grant: Enhanced Kinship Navigator Project Executive Summary & Recommendations (December 2012, p.1-63)
4. Kinship Care Kinship Navigator Replication Manual (October 2012, p. 1-17)