



OhioKAN

Washington: Kinship Navigator Program

Research Summary

Title of Program: Kinship Navigator Program Washington State

Years of Operation: 2004-present

Number of Families Served: Washington's Kinship Navigator Program serves kinship families in 30 counties and 8 tribal communities across the state.⁶

Cost of Program: Washington State has access to \$1 million in state funds to provide short term support to kinship families for hard good necessities (e.g. beds and school supplies). The Kinship Navigator Program is funded with an additional \$1.1 million in state funds.⁷

Funding Source: In 2004, initial funding for pilot implementation in two counties was provided by Casey Family Programs, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, and the Aging and Long-Term Support Administration.² Currently, kinship support programs focus on kinship families who are not involved with the child welfare system and are funded through the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.⁷

Description of the Program: Washington's Kinship Navigator Program started as a pilot project in July 2004 with initial site locations at Casey Family Programs field offices in King and Yakima Counties.² Within a year, two additional program sites began in the same counties at contracted agencies, Catholic Family and Child Services of Yakima and Senior Services of Seattle-King County.² Initial evaluation of the pilot program after 16 months demonstrated that kinship caregivers gained a more thorough understanding of local and state supports available for them.⁵ Most importantly, 690 children were placed with kin, which diverted them from entering foster care.²

As of 2019, Washington's Kinship Navigator Program has 8.5 full-time kinship navigators serving 30 of 39 Washington state counties⁵. The principal program goal is to keep Washington's children out of the public child welfare system.⁴ The Washington State Kinship Navigator Program is currently involved with an evaluation process through the Family First Prevention Services Act with the objective to be rated by the Family First Title IV-E Clearinghouse once the evaluation is complete.⁷

Six major components comprise Washington State's Kinship Navigator program:

- I. The kinship navigator, a human service professional, is hired to provide services and supports to kinship families within a single or multi-county area or within Tribal Services.⁴ More specifically, the kinship navigator provides information and assistance to

caregivers to help them access state benefits and other local resources and support.⁵ The kinship navigator mediates between caregivers and complex systems and models self-advocacy by accompanying caregivers to court and to other state and local service providers.⁵

2. The kinship navigator uses earmarked state kinship funds to provide families with short-term hard goods such as cribs or school supplies.⁵
3. The kinship navigator provides “supportive listening” and emotional care to kinship families.⁴
4. The kinship navigator provides outreach to kinship families throughout the state and provides information about resources and supports available to them.⁷
5. The kinship navigator is tasked with developing collaborative relationships with agencies and other local groups that serve kinship families.⁵ Additionally, the kinship navigator educates the community about the distinct needs of kinship families and what local and state resources are available to them.⁵
6. Currently, the kinship navigator provides follow up as needed, with kinship families in the counties where the navigator serves.

Who benefits from the program? Formal and informal kinship caregivers and their children in 30 counties and in participating Tribal communities in Washington State benefit from the Kinship Navigator Program.⁷

What services/benefits do they receive? Kinship families have the opportunity to meet with the kinship navigator in their local area. The kinship navigator provides access to state and local resources including financial assistance, legal information and services, healthcare, support groups, caregiver trainings, and urgent-need funds.⁷ In some areas, kinship programs have developed clothing banks, retreats, special events to raise awareness (e.g., a “kinship day” at a children’s museum), support group partnerships, and kinship legal clinics. The kinship navigator also provides such intangible benefits as emotional support, mediation, and advocacy. A statewide website: www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare along with printed and online materials are also available.⁷

How do they receive the benefits/services? Families receive services both at home and in community based agencies.

Where are the services provided? Homes, community agencies, state agencies, schools, and other community locations.

Sources:

1. Abramo, A. (2018, August 18). As Kinship Caregivers Struggle Washington’s Foster Care System Benefits. *Investigate West*. Retrieved from: <https://crosscut.com/2018/08/kinship-caregivers-struggle-washingtons-foster-care-system-benefits>
2. Casey Family Programs: Kinship Navigator Pilot Project Replication Manual, Tri-West Group, December 2005: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/AL TSA/hcs/documents/KinshipNavigatorReplicationManual.pdf>
3. Casey Family Programs: Final Pilot Evaluation Report July 2004-November 2005, Tri-West Group, December 2005: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/CA/pub/documents/Kinship%20Navigator%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>

4. CEBC Washington State Kinship Navigator Program Submission (February 2009)
<https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/kinship-navigator-program/>
5. Grandfamilies Kinship Navigator Programs Summary and Analysis- Washington State
<http://www.grandfamilies.org/Topics/Kinship-Navigator-Programs/Kinship-Navigator-Programs-Summary-Analysis>
6. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Website, Kinship Care 2019
<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services-kinship-care/kinship-care>
7. Interview conducted by Roxana Bell with Hilarie Hauptman and Rosalyn Albers, Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, May 15, 2019.

Other Washington State Kinship Resources⁷

- Consent to Health Care for the Child in Your Care: A Kinship Caregiver's Guide (DSHS 22-1119x) This brochure explains a new law passed by the 2005 WA State Legislature which spells out a relative's rights and responsibilities.
English, Cambodian, English, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese. (PDF)
- Grandparents and Relatives Do you know about the services and supports for you and the children in your care? (DSHS 22-1120x) This six-page pamphlet provides a comprehensive list of various resources, benefits, and support services available to relatives raising children.
English, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese (PDF) (English and Spanish copies can be ordered)
- Legal Voice has an updated edition of Options for Grandparents and Other Nonparental Caregivers: A Legal Guide for Washington State English or Spanish