



Affirm Me Family Specialist

Organization: [Kinnect](#)

Program: Chosen Affirming Family Program

Reports to: Program Director

Job Location: Cleveland, OH

Salary: commensurate with experience

Benefits: Medical, Dental, Retirement

Program Description

Kinnect is seeking a Family Specialist with a degree in social work, psychology, or clinical counseling with current licensure. Experience working with youth and families involved in child welfare is preferred. Experience providing support to high at-risk youth is strongly preferred. Knowledge and experience assessing relevant public and community resources in Cuyahoga County is preferred. Ability to develop positive relationships with youth and families, colleagues and supervisors; ability to work with a variety of families and youth; ability to talk to families who have not been affirming and help them move towards acceptance of their youth's sexual orientation or gender identity. Skills and experience working in multicultural settings and through an intersectional lens.

Kinnect, in partnership with Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services, A Place for Me, and Case Western Reserve University, was awarded a four-year federal grant to develop evidence informed/evidence based practices promoting positive outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth who experience the child welfare system. Youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are over represented in the foster care system. LGBTQ+ youth who experience foster care are more likely (than non-LGBTQ+ youth in care) to experience homelessness, rejection, physical and verbal abuse, and higher rates of suicide and depression. Long-term foster care is not a solution for children who have been rejected and/or removed from their biological families. Emancipating youth from care without permanent connections leaves them with higher rates of depression, suicide, illegal drug use, and high rates of STD's and HIV. Youth have a right to leave child welfare with a robust network of supports and it is our job to help create those for them. Healing happens in relationships hence building social networks is the crucial intervention.

The initiative involves three primary strategies: (1) safe identification of youth in foster care who identify as LGBTQ+; (2) creation of a PRIDE Network of foster caregivers and a PRIDE Youth Board to advocate and educate professionals, caregivers and administrators on the unique needs of LGBTQ+ youth; and (3) implementation of the Chosen Affirming Family model to provide youth acceptance work with biological family members, to move toward reunification and/or legal permanency with a lifelong family. Family Finding is part of the Chosen Affirming Family model. The Family Specialist conducts Family Finding on behalf of youth in foster care, and supports the youth restore, form and grow relationships with biological family, kin and important individuals in order to develop connections that will result in relational and legal permanency.

As part of this work, the Family Specialist will work with the Program Director, Family Advocate and Program Coordinator to ensure evaluation and program deliverables are met.



Essential Function:

- Execute the 7 steps to Family Finding for youth to build network of affirming relationships.
- Maintain strict fidelity to the program model.
- Implement all family finding efforts, including mobility mapping, family engagement, and tracing tools.
- Ensure youth are connected with their family, kin and significant individuals when found.
- Support youth navigate their identity journey
- Work with youths' families and other caregivers to form, restore and grow relationships and provide support and education as needed when there are challenges for family members in regards to the youth's sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Provide support to youth and family, kin and significant individuals throughout the relationship building process
- Coordinate and facilitate youth-driven permanency planning meetings.
- Partner with youth and youth's team to create relational and legal permanency plans.
- Establish relationships with local partner agencies
- Maintain database, progress notes, genogram, placement trail, and other connections tracking tools for youth.
- Complete reports and other required updates
- Provide families with appropriate resources and services.
- Conduct home visits with family members and accompanies case worker and others on the team on home visits as needed.
- Provide consultation to case worker and other providers regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ensure Kinnect is affirming and supportive of permanency work for youth with diverse SOGIE
- Attend TDMs, Family Meetings, and Permanency Meetings for youth.
- Embrace and supports a culture of continual improvement.
- Participate in ongoing program development
- Other duties as requested.

Essential Skills:

- Able to engage youth, families and professionals in a helping process
- Able to build rapport with youth and youth's network/team
- Establish supportive and genuine cooperative working relationships with family members who have a family member with diverse sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Sound knowledge base of the public child welfare system
- Practice cultural humility: has a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of ethnic and cultural differences and the role they play in individual, family and community functioning
- Relentlessly curious in identifying youths' family, kin, chosen family and important people
- Assess family member's level of acceptance of the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Demonstrate resourcefulness and relentlessness; can find new ways to help; focuses on what it takes to get the job done.



- Able to navigate both the public and private provider networks within the child welfare system
- Excellent verbal skills in order to communicate in a clear, concise and respectful manner to resource families
- Able to motivate a team
- Comfortability with public speaking
- Focus on meeting deadlines and ensuring contingency tasks are completed in a timely manner
- Able to self-initiate and work independently
- Collaborate with community organizations and community partners
- Network with national partners regarding LGBTQ permanency work
- Committed to the success of Chosen Affirming Family program and to providing services that meet the program's guiding principles and goals.
- Attentive to detail, organized and planful.

Additional skills/competencies necessary to carry out services to the service population's culture and socioeconomic characteristics:

- Demonstrate a cultural awareness that results in a clear understanding of the worldview that directs individual interactions with people of other backgrounds
- Ability to identify needs unique to various diverse populations including those of different gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic group, race, and physical or mental capacity and address those needs with community resource referrals
- Locate appropriate resources to communicate with Limited-English-proficient individuals or those with hearing impairment
- Assist other professionals and team members in understanding the unique needs/characteristics of diverse populations

Department Specific / Non-essential Functions:

- Demonstrate commitment to the organization's mission and vision
- Answer and respond to phone calls and emails in a timely manner
- Keep work calendar current and maintain records
- Participate in agency meetings, functions, and activities as required
- Complete ongoing education as approved by or assigned by supervisor
- Other duties as assigned

Minimum Requirements:

- Degree in social work, counseling, psychology, or related
- Current licensure in good standing preferred
- 5+ years child welfare experience
- Demonstrated LGBTQ+ competency required to help individuals navigate negative feelings around LGBTQ identities, to include providing in-depth education on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Working Conditions

In office daily with some travel to local and out-of-county meetings and periodic travel to out-of-state meetings



Reliable transportation required (mileage, per diem and incidental expenses covered)

DISCLAIMER:

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by employees assigned to this classification. They are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and skills required of employees assigned to this position.

Please send cover letter with salary requirements and resume to hr@kinnectohio.org. Include the position title in the subject line.