

# Kinship Navigator Program Manual



# **Families First Kinship Navigator Program**

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## Agency Overview and History

Families First is a private, for-profit social service agency that offers a broad range of services to children and families. We are authorized and licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services and accredited by the Council on Accreditations (COA) and Chapter 24. Families First strives to be in the forefront of providing outstanding services to the children and families served. Families First will accomplish this through employees, as they are the key to the history of success, growth, and uncompromising quality and care for the people we serve.

### Mission Statement

Families First is dedicated to the process of partnering with families today to help foster growth and success for tomorrow.

### Agency Values

- **Dignity** - Families First values the dignity of all individuals and seeks to establish and maintain positive relationships with its clients in order to reinforce the self-worth of each person. Families First employees will work to enhance the clients' capacity for self-determination and provide therapy and skills to allow each individual to become a healthy and productive member of our society.
- **Service** - Families First places service to those in need of assistance above the needs of the agency. We believe in treating the individual and not the symptom and are dedicated to doing our best to serve our clients.
- **Integrity** - Families First places an emphasis on behaving in a trustworthy manner that is consistent with the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers. Our employees are expected to act in a manner that demonstrates that they are honest, responsible and respectful. •
- **Competence** - Families First is dedicated to providing opportunities for personal growth and development as well as ensuring that its employees practice within their areas of competence. Families First provides opportunities for trainings to assist in meeting the requirements for continuing education

### Ethical Practice

In order to earn and sustain public trust through honest and responsible transactions and

relationships with all individuals, communities and stakeholders, Families First shall maintain open communication with all entities and shall diligently pursue ethical operations in all aspects of the agency. All professional employees of Families First are expected to adopt the code of ethics of their own particular profession. Families First aspires to achieve and maintain programs that are consistent with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Families First eliminates barriers to practicing ethically by providing every employee a copy of the Code of Ethics via the Associates Page and every employee is required to attend an ethics training every year which clearly delineates an expectation for all employees to adhere to the principles and standards identified in the code. In addition, Families First expects that all employees will meet the guidelines set forth in the “Statement of Beliefs and Expectations” and perform their jobs satisfactorily.

**Statement of Beliefs and Expectations:**

1. Propriety - All staff members will maintain high standards of ethical personal conduct in the community as well as in the work place.
2. Concern for Moral Issues - Staff members will show respect for community standards in their public behavior.
3. Primacy of Clients’ Interests - The primary responsibility of staff members at all levels and classifications will be to the clients Families First serves.
4. Confidentiality - All staff members will respect the privacy of clients and coworkers. All staff members will hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of providing services.
5. Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy - All staff members will treat their colleagues and clients with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.
6. Non-Discrimination - Staff members will not discriminate with regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, gender, familial status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender identification, national ancestry, disability, military or veteran status, or any other classification protected by law. Families First does not tolerate unlawful discrimination or harassment by any of its employees towards coworkers or clients, or anyone else in connection with staff members’ employment at Families First.
7. Role Models - Staff members are role models for the clients served. As such, staff members have the right and responsibility to promote/teach/model societal values, and 7 to set expectations accordingly. However, staff will not impose their own personal, political, religious, philosophical or sexual beliefs on clients.

8. Abuse - Staff members will not subject clients to sexual, physical, mental, or emotional abuse. If staff members suspect such mistreatment, they are obligated to report it to a supervisor immediately.
9. Staff and Client Relationships - Staff members will establish and maintain relationships with clients based upon and consistent with their professional role. Families First recognizes the vulnerability of clients. Staff members must ensure their behavior does not carry personal or sexual overtones that could be interpreted as indicating interest in something other than a professional relationship.
10. Empowerment - Staff members will assist clients in the identification of their internal strengths and the acquisition of necessary external resources in order to enhance the process of self-determination.

## **Kinship Navigator Program Overview**

### **Kinship Navigator Program Values and Goals**

- Create a safe, stable, supportive home environment for children
- Keeping children within their natural supports
- Early identification of needs for additional services for children
- Understanding gaps and delays with service delivery to Kinship Caregiver families
- Maintain and engage Kinship Caregivers using a strength-based approach
- Kinship placements increase
- Decrease lateral movements

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### **Service Philosophy**

The Kinship Navigator Program provides individualized services which incorporate the voices of children, families, kin and “fictive kin” families and community partners in order to achieve positive outcomes for children and their families. Inclusivity is a primary goal of our programming. Services are structured to adequately meet the needs of Kinship Caregivers while supporting placement stability, reunification and child safety. Our partnerships with children, their families, Kin and “fictive kin” Caregivers and collaborating providers is the foundation of our programming. Kinship Caregivers are encouraged to vocalize their own needs and goals which allows them to play an integral role in the direction of service provisions. The Kinship

Navigator Program supports standards and goals established by the Department of Human Services.

### **Program Description**

The Kinship Navigator Program Team is comprised of the Families First Counseling Services' Kinship Specialist, the Kinship Caregivers, the Department of Human Services, the Family Centered Service (FCS) providers, the identified child/family, and other community partners. Services are trauma informed and focused on providing support to the Kinship Caregiver. The Kinship Navigator Program provides comprehensive and quality services tailored to be culturally responsive and supportive to individuals of all race, religion, age, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, social economic status and/or physical or mental health. Services include the following:

- Assessment of the Kinship Caregiver's needs related to how to best support them (the Kinship Caregiver) and the child(ren) in their care.
- Development of a Kinship Care Plan with action steps specific to identified outcomes. These could include: support with identifying affordable child care; accessing medical, dental, and mental health services; ensuring basic needs such as clothing, beds/cribs/furniture, and food are met; and providing gas cards.
- Opportunities for parent education are offered to provide guidance on a variety of topics including; 1,2,3 Magic, Nurturing Parenting and Safe Care. Kinship Specialists provide opportunity for education on the possible impact of trauma on child development and behavior.
- Providing an outlet for shared communication and emotional support via monthly Kinship Caregiver Support Group and peer to peer support groups.
- Connecting with supplemental resources such as food assistance, child care assistance, FIP, medical insurance and/or legal aid.
- Providing education utilizing training from Casey Family Program regarding emotional barriers to kinship caregiving including: loss and ambivalence, guilt and hope and denial.
- Facilitating honest and consistent communication and collaboration with children, families, kin and "fictive kin" placements, court professionals and collaborating partners.

Service delivery is targeted towards accomplishing program goals. These goals include: increased placement in Kinship Care, reduced placement in stranger foster care, supporting

placement stability, reducing repeat maltreatment. Program goals and outcomes are continually measured and evaluated. Additionally, data is collected via participant satisfaction survey.

### **Important Definitions**

- **Kinship Caregivers**– for purposes of this project, kin or fictive kin willing to
- **Kin**– someone’s blood relative or family
- **Fictive Kin**– someone who is not related by blood, adoption or marriage but has a strong and supportive connection with that individual

### **Kinship Specialists Qualifications and Training**

Kinship Specialists begin their employment at Families First with an initial two-day orientation. Day One includes education on agency information. Day Two’s agenda relates to sharing the values and goals of the Kinship program (i.e. keeping children within their natural supports, supporting home environments for children, using a strength-based approach with families). Other training areas will include; understanding trauma, engagement expectations with the Kinship Caregiver, service expectations, collaboration competencies and expectations (i.e. Family Centered Services, Family Connections, other community partners), family finding strategies, contractual goals, Child Welfare 101 for Kinship Caregivers, Juvenile Court 101 and performance outcomes.

On day three Kinship Specialists watch a series of videos and then answer questions as a follow up. A Kinship Supervisor reviews video materials through the series of questions to ensure information is retained and any further questions are answered. Those videos include:

Welcome to Families First

Safety vs Risk

Introduction to Child Welfare

Family Interaction

Kinship Specialists receive additional knowledge through job shadowing Family, Safety, Risk and Permanency Care Coordinators, attending Family Team Decision Making meetings and shadowing opportunities with other Kinship Specialists.

Families First continues to ensure all employees receive 24 hours of training during their first



year of employment and a minimum of 12 hours per year thereafter. Families First developed a series of trainings which are required for all staff to be completed. Those trainings include but are not limited to:

- HIPPA and Confidentiality
- Child Abuse/Dependent Adult Abuse Mandatory Reporting Training
- Incident Reporting/Accident Reporting
- Documentation Training
- Ethics
- Non-violent Crisis Intervention
- Cultural Diversity
- First Aid, CPR and Car Seat Safety
- Emergency Response & Preparedness

Within the first 90 days of employment our Kinship Specialists receive parenting education training which will include the Nurturing Parenting Program & 1-2-3 Magic.

## **Program Components**

### **Intake**

Referrals are completed by The Department of Human Services and submitted to regional intake mailboxes as detailed below.

**Cedar Rapids Service Area - [intakefcscedarrapids@families-first.net](mailto:intakefcscedarrapids@families-first.net)**

**Eastern Service Area - [intakefcseastern@families-first.net](mailto:intakefcseastern@families-first.net)**

**Northern Service Area - [intakefcsnorthern@families-first.net](mailto:intakefcsnorthern@families-first.net)**

Once received, referrals are assigned a Kinship Specialist. The identified Department of Human Services Social Worker is notified of the Kinship Specialist assigned. Kinship Navigator Program cases assigned to Families First Counseling Services for Family Centered Services (FCS) will have the assigned FCS Family Support Specialist notified of the start of Kinship Navigator Services via intake email.

Kinship Specialists maintain consistent contact with Kinship Caregivers to ensure placement stability, engagement and promoting well-being of the family unit. During initial face-to-face the Kinship Specialist details agency policies including Client's Rights and Responsibilities, Grievance and Appeals Procedure, Policy on Non-discrimination, HIPPA, Confidential Communication forms and Behavioral Support and Management policies. Kinship Caregivers provide signatures documenting their willingness to consent to services and receipt of the above documents. Ongoing contact occurs no less than twice a month totaling two hours of time. These contacts can occur in the community or in the Kinship Caregivers home.

### **Program Engagement**

Kinship Navigator Program Services are voluntary, allowing Kinship Caregivers choice in whether they participate with programming. If caregivers elect not to participate during initial contact a follow up call will be made thirty days later to confirm. When caregivers choose to not participate DHS is immediately notified and a Termination Summary is submitted within 10 days of the identified service ending date. Termination summaries are provided to the Kinship Caregivers as well.

### **Assessment/Screening**

Kinship Specialists complete the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale General Services and Reunification (NCFAS-G+R) based upon the Kinship Caregiver home. The NCFAS- G+R is an evidenced based, full ranged family functioning assessment tool for families using Child Welfare Services. It assesses for intact families and those with children in out-of-home placement throughout the "Life of the Family's Case". The NCFAS-G+R includes five domains of the NCFAS (Environment, Parental Capabilities, Family Interactions, Family Safety, and Child Well-Being), three additional domains of the NCFAS-G (Social/Community Life, Self-Sufficiency, and Family Health), and the two domains of the NCFAS-R (Caregiver/Child Ambivalence and Readiness for Reunification).

The original NCFAS (Reed-Ashcraft, Kirk, & Fraser, 2001) was developed in the mid-1990s to allow caseworkers working in intensive family preservation services (IFPS) to assess family functioning at the time of intake and again at case closure. Subsequent versions were developed by Dr. Kirk in cooperation with National Family Preservation Network. The 70-item instrument was designed to assist caseworkers in case planning, monitoring of progress and measuring outcomes. The NCFAS-G+R, completed by trained care coordinators, provides ratings of family functioning on a six-point scale ranging from "clear strengths" to "serious problems" in the following domains: (1) environment, (2) parental capabilities, (3) family interactions, (4) family safety, (5) child well-being, (6) social/community life, (7) Self-Sufficiency, (8) Family Health, (9) Caregiver/child ambivalence and (10) family health. These domains include facets which aide in the determination of if there are any substance abuse, domestic violence, or

mental health issues directly impacting the safety, permanency and well-being of the children and assist the family in achieving their goals and reaching safe case closure.

### **Initial Two-Day Contact with Kinship Caregivers**

The assigned Kinship Specialist makes phone contact with the Kinship Caregiver within two business days from date of referral. Kinship Specialist will ensure the following occurs during this phone contact:

- Introduction of Kinship Specialist including specialist name, provider agency name and identification of who the referral was received from. Kinship Specialist will ensure the Kinship Caregiver(s) is provided with their contact information. Kinship Specialist should provide multiple options for contact to each caregiver.
- Share Kinship Navigator Program description; specifically, how our program can be supportive.
- Explain frequency of contact expectations.
- Kinship Specialist will confirm they have the correct phone and address information for the Kinship Caregiver family.
- Kinship Specialist will identify any immediate needs of the Kinship Caregiver.

### **Initial Two-Day Contact with DHS**

Kinship Specialist submits an email detailing this contact to the referring DHS worker. At the time of initial phone contact a face-to-face meeting is scheduled. This must occur within five business days. Kinship Specialist will complete a phone contact with the assigned DHS worker within two days of referral. This phone contact will include discussion regarding interaction planning, safety planning, any known case updates and expectations DHS has for the current Kinship Caregiver. Kinship Specialist will begin completing the Kinship Caregiver Interaction Guideline form utilizing information reported from the assigned DHS worker.

### **Initial Two-Day Contact with Family Centered Services Family Support Specialist**

Kinship Specialists will include the FCS Family Support Specialist (if identified at time of contact) in the initial phone contact email submission. Kinship Specialist will complete a phone contact with the assigned FCS Family Support Specialist within two days of identifying this provider's name. This phone contact will include discussion regarding interactions planning, safety

planning, any known case updates and expectations FCS has for the current Kinship Caregiver.

### **Five Day Contact with Kinship Caregiver**

Kinship Specialist will complete a face-to-face contact within five business days with all Kinship Caregivers identified on the Kinship Navigator Program referral. Ideally this contact is completed in the Kinship Caregiver home, but can occur in an office or public setting at Kinship Caregiver request. Kinship Specialist will complete the following agency paperwork at this initial contact: Kinship Navigator Program Consent for Service, Release of Information, Families First's HIPPA Packet and Families' First's Client Rights and Responsibility. Kinship Caregivers will be provided Kinship Caregiver Resource Folders. These folders include the following:

- Kinship Navigator Program Welcome Letter
- Entitlement Applications
- Child Physical Forms
- Notice to Relative Form
- Local Resource Guides
- Blank Copies of Interaction Plan form
- Court Expectations for Individuals Supervising Interactions
- Family Interaction Observation Checklist
- Four Oaks Family Connections Information

Kinship Specialist will complete Kinship Navigator Program pre-surveys with all Kinship Caregiver identified on the Kinship Navigator Program referral. Kinship Caregiver will be provided with a business card for their assigned Kinship Specialist along with information to access Families First's Kinship webpage, public Facebook group and private Facebook group. Kinship Specialist will ensure they provide support for any of the immediate needs identified by the Kinship Caregiver during initial phone contact. Kinship Specialist will establish a list of any concrete good needs identified. Kinship Caregivers will be allowed the opportunity to choose whether Kinship Specialist complete entitlement applications alongside them during initial contact or if they prefer to complete these themselves between the initial and second contact. Kinship Caregivers may also elect to not complete and submit these forms if not necessary to meet family needs.

### **Initial Month of Service**

Kinship Specialist will provide a family assessment to the Kinship Caregiver home in the form of the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale General Services and Reunification (NCFAS-G+R). Kinship Specialists utilize Eco Mapping as a tool to assist Kinship Caregivers in identifying both formal and informal supports for themselves and their kinship placements. Kinship Specialist complete this form utilizing a series of open-ended questions to identify and pull out any supports which could assist Kinship Caregiver through support physically, emotionally or financially. This includes identifying potential options for respite care opportunities. Kinship Caregivers and DHS will be provided a copy of developed Eco Mapping to utilize in case planning decisions. Kinship Specialists utilize information compiled through NCFAS-G+R assessment, Eco Mapping and Kinship Caregiver input to compose a Kinship Care Plan to guide service provisions. Kinship Caregivers and DHS will be provided a copy of this Kinship Care Plan upon completion. Kinship Care Plans will identify, at minimum, two Care Plan goals for the Kinship Caregiver home. Kinship Care Plan goals will be Kinship Caregiver oriented and established in conjunction with the family team. Goals will be identified to address any scores identified as baseline or below during completion of the NCFAS-G+R. Kinship Caregiver will be offered continued support addressing concrete good needs throughout the initial thirty days of service. Kinship Specialist will utilize NCFAS-G+R scoring results to identify needed community resource and service referrals. Kinship Specialist will offer support to Kinship Caregivers through attendance at Family Team Decision Making Meeting and Juvenile Court proceedings as requested by Kinship Caregivers. Kinship Specialist will complete at least two face to face contacts with Kinship Caregivers during the initial month of service. Kinship Specialist will continually assess whether more frequent contact is necessary to appropriately meet case needs. Families First Kinship Navigator Program believes best practice would be maintaining once monthly contact with children placed in the Kinship Caregiver home whenever possible.

### **Family Time**

It is our program philosophy that family time can be facilitated in the most frequently, consistently and meaningful manner when facilitated by kinship supports. Kinship Specialists detail the role of Kinship Caregivers for family interactions in their Kinship Care Plan to assist in ensure family and child access to consistent and meaningful contact. This can be supporting parent-child interaction, sibling interactions, or interaction time with identified parties. Kinship Specialists support Kinship Caregivers in feeling comfortable and well equipped to facilitate these interactions. In an effort to promote and support collaboration between biological parents and kin or “fictive kin” placements Kinship Specialist contact the assigned Department of Human Services Social Worker to discuss interaction planning. This discussion includes the following: requesting approval for caregivers to facilitate contact between parents and their

children, development of a plan for training caregivers to supervise, addressing any limitations to supervision and establishment of partnership in communicating expectation changes. Kinship Specialist utilize the following questions to begin these conversations at the start of a Kinship Navigation case:

- Is there a current interaction plan?
- If yes, Can I be provided a copy?
- If no, when will one be developed?
- Can the Kinship Caregiver supervise interactions?
- If no, what are the concerns or barriers to this occurring?
- Are you comfortable with the Kinship Specialist working with the Kinship Caregiver to overcome these?
- If yes ask the following questions:
  - Is there anyone that cannot be at the interaction?
  - Are there stipulations on when and where these can occur?
  - Is there anything else we should know.
- What is the plan for communicating any changes in expectations that may occur to the Kinship Caregiver and Kinship Specialist?

Following administration of these questions, Kinship Specialist devise a plan to communicate expectations to Kinship Caregivers and ensure understanding. Kinship Specialists continue to provide support and understanding to caregivers as they navigate their role as family time supervisors. In instances where concerns are present that are preventing approval for caregivers to supervise family time and/or caregivers feel uncomfortable with that role, Kinship Specialists work with the caregivers to overcome concerns and plan for barriers to success in supervising. Kinship Specialists remain in consistent communicate with members of the team to move forward towards overcoming these concerns and apprehensions.

### **Eco Mapping**

Eco- Maps are completed within the initial 30 of services in collaboration with Kinship Caregivers. This process allows Kinship Caregivers the opportunity to identify supportive resources, formal supports, as well as informal supports that they can access on a regular basis. Kinship Specialist utilize targeted questions to assist in the identification of Kinship Caregiver

supports. When appropriate Eco-Mapping may be completed with older children to identify supports. Eco Mapping is provided to the assigned Department of Human Services Social Worker.

### **Kinship Care Plan**

Kinship Care Plans are completed by Kinship Specialist collaborating with Kinship Caregivers within thirty days of referral date. Kinship Specialists ensure that Kinship Caregivers are active in the process and have a voice in developing their Kinship Care Plan goals. Kinship Caregivers are encouraged to vocalize how services can be of benefit given their specific strengths and needs, as well as strengths and needs of the children placed in their care. Kinship Specialist utilize the NCFAS-G+R to guide goal development that supports the needs identified through this assessment tool. Kinship Specialists detail the role of Kinship Caregivers for family interactions in their Kinship Care Plan to assist in ensure family and child access to consistent and meaningful contact. Kinship Care Plan goals and objectives are developed so that they are measurable and easy to understand.

A copy of the families Kinship Care Plan is provided to Kinship Caregivers and goals are reviewed monthly with Caregivers to assess for progress and/or fluctuating needs. The assigned Department of Human Services Social Worker also receives a copy of the developed Kinship Care Plan within the first thirty days of services.

## **Ongoing Service Targets**

### **Emotional Support**

Families First directs our Kinship Specialists and the Kinship Caregivers to access and utilize training that is offered through the Casey Family Programming for Kinship and Fictive Kin Placements. This programming is specific to Kinship Caregivers and addresses topics related to loss and ambivalence, guilt, hope, and denial. Families First's Kinship Specialists partner with the Kinship Caregivers to provide them support and encouragement as they work to maintain healthy relationships with the birth parents. Our program works to provide support and information to Kinship Caregivers and facilitate communication between members of the team throughout the process. Kinship Specialist work to support and educate caregivers on how transition can have an impact on family routine, how children may react and behave as they adjust to these transitions and changing family roles. Kinship Specialists also work to facilitate

communication between team members and the Kinship Caregivers to ensure that all parties are notified, in advance, of the timeline when transition is imminent. Kinship Specialist help ensure Kinship Caregivers understand their role during this transition and once the child(ren) is returned home.

Once the child(ren) is returned home, our Kinship Specialists reach out to the Kinship Caregiver to offer an additional session before our services are closed. Kinship Caregivers can elect whether to participate in that session or not, although participation is encouraged.

### **Information and Referrals for Assistance**

Kinship Specialist provide each Kinship family with a Welcome packet at the time of initial sessions. This packet provides them with local resource and service lists specific to their residing county. Kinship Specialists provide additional referrals to additional services based upon Kinship caregiver request and results of the NCFAS assessment. Kinship Specialists complete the necessary Release of Information to adequately complete the referral process for the agency we are referring children and their families to. Each Families First office has local brochures and resource information that Kinship Specialist and caregiver families have access to as well.

Members of the Kinship Navigator team remain active in local community meetings including Decatorization meetings, CPPC groups and are BSC team members.

### **Parent Education**

Kinship Specialist provide opportunities for parent education on a variety of topics including 1,2,3 Magic, Nurturing Parenting and Safe Care. Kinship Specialists provide opportunity for education on the possible impact of trauma on child development and behavior. Parent Education needs are identified through NCFAS assessment, caregiver reports and collateral contact reports.

### **Support with Entitlement Applications**

All Kinship Caregivers are provided support in completing and submitting entitlement applications this support includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing physical forms
- Assistance in completing documentation
- Education on program requirements and qualifications
- Assistance submitting necessary documentation to the appropriate facilities

### **Access to medical, dental, and mental health**



Kinship Specialist collaborate with Family Support Specialist to understand medical, dental and mental health needs that exist for the child (ren). Kinship Specialist ensure the children obtain a physical upon entry to assess for any medical needs. Kinship Specialists provide assistant with coordinating efforts between the birth family and Kinship Caregivers to obtain medical care, when necessary. Kinship Specialist can provide support to Kinship Caregivers in scheduling, organizing and arranging transportation for these appointments when needed.

Kinship Caregivers are provided training and support in planning for safe responses to emergency situations. Emergency situations include accidents, serious illnesses, fires, and natural and human-caused disasters. Kinship Specialists provide education and support regarding appropriate medical responses. This includes ensuring Kinship Caregivers have access to the any specialized medical training and support as needed to meet the needs of children in their care.

### **Legal Assistance**

Kinship Caregivers are referred to Iowa Legal Aid for assistance with legal representation and advice. When available, Kinship Specialist provide caregivers with names of local attorneys who provide discounted or free legal services to Kinship Caregivers.

### **Case Management**

Families First will support Kinship Caregivers by helping them navigate the caregiver process and/or Kinship Care Plan. State and local resources are utilized to help Kinship Caregivers meet their and their family's needs. This support includes training and education, financial services and support groups. Families First works to ensure the Kinship Caregivers have safety and stability in their home while providing effective tools for dealing with the child's trauma, behavioral and emotional problems and supporting them with the implementing these tools. Kinship Specialists partner with Kinship Caregivers to support and educate caregivers through the Child Welfare and Juvenile Court processes. Kinship Specialists act as a bridge in facilitating and enhancing communication between team members, birth parents and Kinship Caregivers.

### **Local Resources**

Kinship Specialist provide each Kinship family with a Welcome packet at the time of their initial session. This packet provides them with local resource and service lists specific to their residing county.

### **Concrete Goods**

Kinship Specialist provide support in meeting basic needs as identified through the Kinship Careplan. Examples of concrete supports include:

- Clothing allowance
- Beds/Cribs/furniture
- Gas Cards
- Grocery Gift Cards

## **Support Groups and Additional Training**

Kinship Support Groups allow additional time for education and fostering peer-to-peer relationships among Kinship Caregivers. These support groups include training opportunities for caregivers. Kinship Caregivers in attendance are encouraged to exchange contact information and develop supportive relationships amongst themselves. Families First has established a Kinship Navigator Program Facebook page (Public), as well as a private group for Kinship Caregivers to establish an electronic peer-to-peer network for supporting one another, sharing resources and establishing relationships.

Families First Kinship Navigator program provides Kinship Caregivers support in training to ensure their ability to care and support the children placed in their home. This is achieved through monthly support groups, newsletters and use of technological advances. Families First has utilized technology to develop online support groups, access to websites for resources and information specific to Kinship Caregivers and through the development of an online peer-to-peer community. Kinship Caregivers are provided with additional opportunities for local training as they come available.

## **Stability Staffing**

Kinship Specialists utilize stability staffing's to mobilize the family team during times of instability. These meetings provide a forum for careful, targeted planning to support additional deficits in meeting caregiver needs for continued placement. Also, Stability Staffing's can assist in identifying continued training and support needs specific to Kinship Caregivers and their current kin placements.

## **Respite Support**

Kinship Specialists utilize Eco Mapping as a tool to assist Kinship Caregivers in identifying both formal and informal supports for themselves and their kinship placements. Kinship Specialist complete this form utilizing a series of open-ended questions to identify and pull out any supports which could assist Kinship Caregiver through support physically, emotionally, or financially. This includes identifying potential options for respite care opportunities. Although we do not receive any formal funding for respite programming, respite care options is important to assist in reducing caregiver stress and supporting child safety and well-being. To facilitate this support, Kinship Specialist provide facilitate utilizing these informal supports for respite by assisting in receiving approval from The Department of Human Services through background checks, exploring with Kinship Caregivers how they can recognize when to access respite, developing a plan for utilizing these supports for respite in emergency/high need situations and continuing to monitor the above listed items on an ongoing basis. Kinship Specialists work to identify, plan for and overcome any current and/or potential barrier to

accessing informal supports for respite. The Kinship Navigator Program encourages respite supports to not have more than six children (total) per caregiver at a time.

## **Policy for Attendance at Additional Meetings**

### **Solution Focused Meetings**

Kinship Specialist may participate in Family Team Decision Making Meeting's when invited by the Kinship Caregiver and the Parent consents to our attendance. Kinship Specialist attend these meetings as supports for the Kinship Placements. Kinship Specialists may assist caregivers in communicating their strengths and needs. Kinship Specialists may provide the team information regarding Kinship Care Plan goals and service targets. Team members may utilize this time to communicate to the Kinship Specialist and Kinship Caregiver items they would like addressed through services and expectations for family time.

### **Juvenile Court Proceedings**

Kinship Specialists may attend Juvenile Court Proceedings alongside Kinship Caregivers involved in our program. Kinship Specialists will act only as emotional support to Kinship Caregivers in these instances and will attend when requested to do so by the Kinship Caregiver.

## **Case Closure**

Cases served through the Kinship Navigator Program will close successfully when the following occurs: children are returned to their parental home, Kinship Caregivers successfully complete TIPS-MAPP coursework and become licensed, Kinship Caregivers and Kinship Specialist agree the Caregivers have received the appropriate level of support and resources to successfully maintain the Kinship placement without continuation of services and/or four months of duration. When this occurs Kinship Specialists and caregivers will establish and implement an aftercare plan to ensure continued positive outcomes and access to necessary services can continue at the close of the Kinship Navigator case. In these instances, DHS will also be notified and a Termination Summary is provided within ten days of the identified service ending date. Termination Summaries are provided to the Kinship Caregiver as well.



## **Families First Kinship Navigator & Four Oaks Family Connections**

### **Shared Process**

#### **Membership/Attendance:**

Families First Kinship Navigator Supervisor & Director, Four Oaks Family Connections, Supervisor & Director, Family Connections Program Support, Family Connections Quality & Performance Improvement, Service Area 4 DHS Licensing Supervisor. DHS, Nancy Swanson, Mindy Norwood & Laura Leise joined the quarterly meetings.

**Development:** Initially, the teams met monthly which progressed to meeting every six weeks and then to quarterly meetings with on-going communication as needed.

#### **Roles:**

Supervisors supported their Kinship Specialists and Caseworkers as they guided families through the licensing process.

Family Connections Program Support communicated directly with the Kinship Supervisor and/or Kinship Specialist regarding the inquiry process, orientation, and initial paperwork, such as background checks, etc.

Directors assisted by streamlining the process, & developing meeting agenda's.

Quality & Performance provided data on the status of the families in the licensing flow. Please note data was pulled by hand.

Families First Supervisor provided the list of families to cross reference with Family Connections.

DHS Licensing Supervisor: Assisted in follow up with preservice waivers and provided guidance/decisions with licensing issues that may prevent the Kinship family from becoming licensed, such as bedroom space.

**Communication Flow:**

- Kinship Specialists will assist Caregivers who want to become licensed foster/adoptive parents with the application process.
- Kinship Specialists will ensure Caregivers fill out the inquiry form and if needed assist them with completing orientation.
- Kinship Specialists will take the completed packet to the Kinship Supervisor. The Kinship Supervisor will deliver the completed packet to the Family Connections Program Support. The Kinship Specialists assigned will be listed on the packet.
- Family Connections Program Support will send a follow up email with what packets are completed or incomplete.
- Every other month Families First will send a list of Caregivers with assigned Kinship Specialists to Family Connections regarding who have completed packets.
- If record check evaluations are missing, Family Connections Program Support will notify Kinship Supervisor.
- When the family selects a preservice class and/or if DHS waives classes a Family Connections Caseworker is assigned by Family Connections, Supervisors.
- Each month the Kinship Specialist and Family Connections Caseworker will have a conversation via phone, email and/ or in person. Family Connections Caseworker will inform Kinship Specialist of any licensing concerns. This discussion may occur with the Caregiver. Items to discuss include; current caregiver dynamics, where they are at within the licensing process, etc.
- Week 2 of Class or Week 2 of Waived class. Family Connections Caseworker will alert their supervisor, DHS licensing worker, Kinship Navigator Specialist/supervisor and the DHS worker for the children placed in the foster home of any licensing concerns.
- Week 3. Family Connections Caseworker initiates the Front End Planning Phone conference with the Kinship Navigator Specialist/Supervisor, DHS licensing, and the DHS worker as a follow up to the licensing concerns.
- If the Caregivers become licensed while the Kinship Navigation case is open there will be a joint supervisory meeting to transition the case to Family Connections. This transition could include a joint meeting between all supervisors, workers and the Caregivers. The team will decide and make a plan for the Kinship case to close within 60-90 days after licensure occurs.



A.

*Partnering with Families today to help  
Foster growth and success for tomorrow.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

I acknowledge that I received a copy with a verbal explanation and that I understand Families First Counseling Services of Iowa's policies regarding: •Notice of Privacy Practice •Client Rights and Responsibilities •Client Grievance and Appeals Procedure •Behavior Support and Management.

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Kinship Caregiver Signature

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Date

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Kinship Caregiver Signature

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Date

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Witness

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Date

## CONSENT FOR SERVICES

I hereby acknowledge that I am willing and without coercion to participate in the Kinship Navigator Program providing: • Emotional Support • Information and Referrals • Legal Assistance • Case Management • Parenting Education • Concrete Goods and other services as mutually determined by the professional staff at Families First Counseling Services and myself.

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Kinship Caregiver Name(s) (Please Print)

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Date

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Kinship Caregiver Signature

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Date

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Kinship Caregiver Signature

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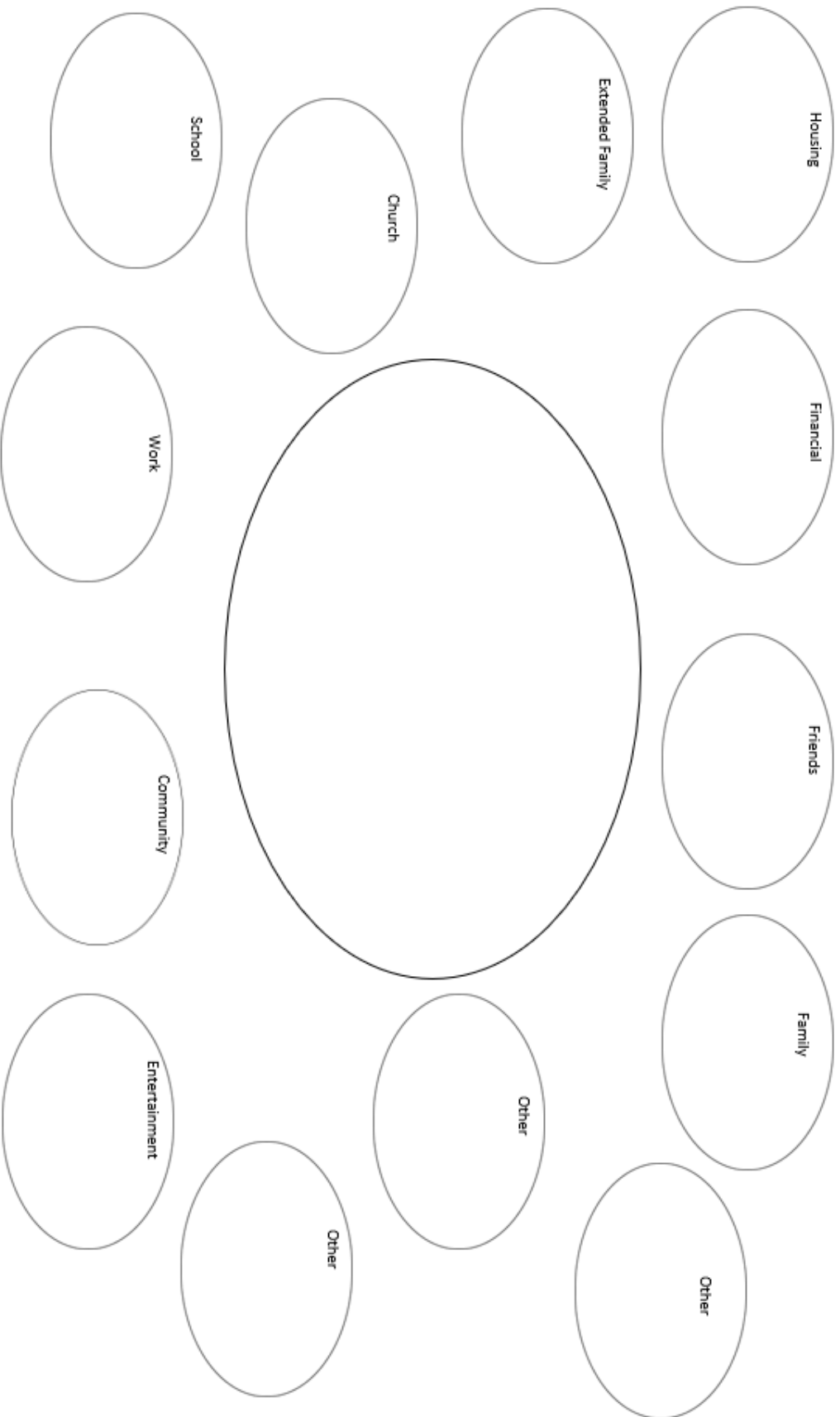
Date

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Witness Signature

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Date



**B.**



C.