

Kinship Navigator Program



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Wow! It's hard to believe it's the beginning of the new year!

Families First Kinship Navigator Program is very proud to have completed our first year of programming. Our team feels blessed to have had the opportunity to partner with all of you in keeping children safe and connected to their families. We have hit the ground running on year two and are excited to continue to develop as a program.

One of our primary goals this year is to increase participation in our support group meetings. We know caregivers have extremely busy schedules and many responsibilities. We also know, that feeling supported and connected is imperative during these times. Support groups meet that need perfectly. These gatherings are a time for kinship caregivers to come together, building relationships and establish a network of support with other families dealing with similar situations. Our team would like to extend an invitation to attend our next Kinship Support Group on February 11, 2020 from 5:30pm-7pm. Meetings are held at the Families First office, 411 3rd St. SE, Suite 160, Cedar Rapids. Children are encouraged to attend and will be able to participate in enrichment activities led by Kinship Specialists, as well as have the opportunity to build new friendships.

As always, our appreciation for all you do is great and we look forward to continuing to provide services to your family.

Happy New Year!

Amber Busch

Kinship Navigator Program Supervisor

For more information contact:

kinship@families-first.net

or visit

www.families-first.net/kinship-resources

We are pleased to share with you some of our success stories from our initial year of service!

Families First Kinship Navigator Program staff are excited to share a few successes we have seen through the first year of programming. As many of you know, each family we work has varying strengths, needs and supports. As a program we like to celebrate success both big and small, although for us they are all big successes as we keep children connected to their families and communities. Below you will find a few of our stories that make us proud to be serving kin caregivers here in Iowa.

A grandmother received placement of her biological grandson on 3/27/19. When the Kinship Specialist first met with grandma she was overwhelmed and stated, "what did I get myself into". Our Kinship Specialist was able to support her through the process and assist her in seeing all the good that comes from her grandson being in her care as his biological grandmother as opposed to being with strangers. The Kinship Specialist was able to provide grandma with emotional support by understanding the child's behaviors and then making appropriate referrals to the services he needed like therapy and BHIS. In addition, our Kinship Specialist worked with the caregiver on building a positive relationship with her daughter, which they did not have. The caregiver and her daughter were able to recognize their unhealthy relationship was creating undo stress on not only themselves but the child. Slowly they began having healthy, positive communication which assisted the entire family to focus on reunification. The child was able to be successfully reunited with mom on 10/25/19 due to the caregiver supporting her daughter and them learning to work together.

When the caregiver received placement of the child, the family was a few months behind on child care payments, which resulted in the caregiver being forced into catching up the bill. The daycare eventually indicated that if childcare assistance wasn't provided quickly, they would be forced to discharge the child from their center. The caregivers could not afford to pay the past due amount and stated they would be forced to give up the child and disrupt the placement. The Kinship Specialist was able to assist the family with getting all of their child care assistance documents completed and submitted to DHS. After communication with the DHS Case Manager regarding the imminent child care issue, the child care application was approved. The placement was able to remain stable which greatly reduced the caregivers stress.

Our Kinship Specialist worked with the caregivers on enrolling in the Family Connections Program and beginning to prepare for permanency of the children in their home. Throughout the case the Kinship Specialist was able to assist them with managing behaviors of the children by using our Nurturing Parenting curriculum as well as articles and readings that provided insight into the behaviors they were experiencing in their home. The Kinship program was able to help provide financial support (gas cards for transportation,) as well as emotional support. The children were able to reunify with their parents after being placed in kinship care and our programming provided additional support during that transition.

We would like to take this time to share our gratitude and appreciation for all of the agencies who have partnered with our program and families we are serving. This great work could not be accomplished without you all.



Sincerely,

The Families First Kinship Navigator Team

Winter Family Fun Activities

- * Plan a family movie night.
- * Go sledding together.
- * Hold an art contest .
- * Visit your local library.
- * Make your own Valentines.
- * Visit your local recreation center.
- * Hold a family baking day.
- * Have a Spa Day at home.
- * Plan a family game night.
- * Visit your local movie theater.
- * Hold a family dance party.
- * Make a sensory bottle.
- * Build an indoor fort.
- * Make your own comic.



Upcoming Events

♦ Kinship Caregiver Support Group

- * February 11, 2020 @ 5:30pm
- * March 10, 2020 @ 5:30pm

*Please RSVP to your Kinship Specialist or to Amber at 563-212-5266.

*All of the above meetings will be held at the Families First Office: 411 3rd Street SE, Suite 160, Cedar Rapids.

