

Finding Family and Beyond: Supporting Kinship Families for Success



Kinship care is better for children

Improves
Placement
Stability

Keeps
Siblings
Together

Creates
Sense of
Belonging

Decreases
Behavior
Problems

Leads to
Permanency

Maintains
Cultural
Connection

Maintains
Family Ties
and Bonds

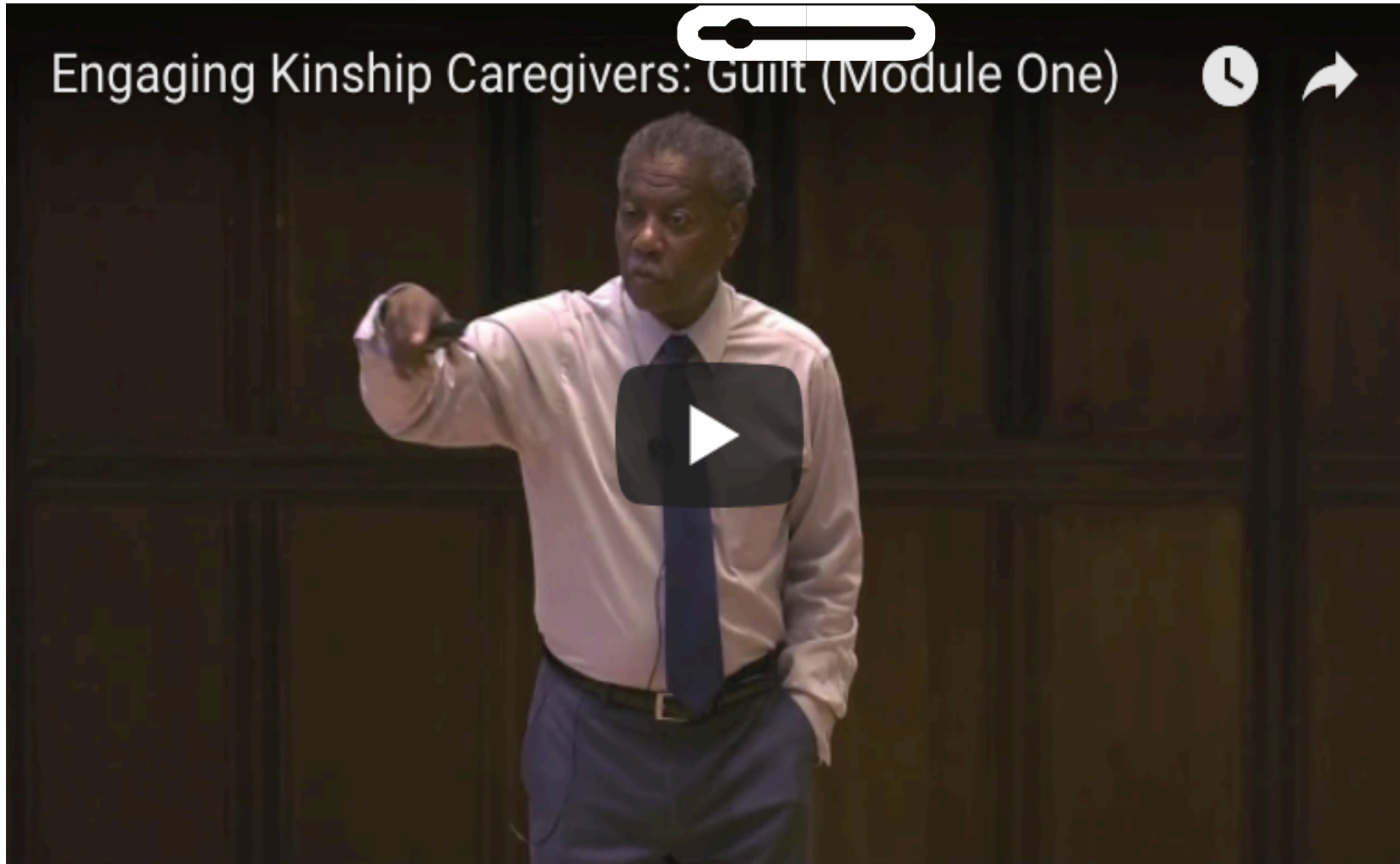
Six Steps to Creating a Kin First Culture



1. Begin identifying family at first contact
2. Make the first placement a kin placement
3. Explore kinship as an alternative to or step down from group care
4. Explore kinship as connection, not just placement
5. Understand differences between kin and non kin
6. Respect history and tradition of kinship for families of color

Non-Kinship Caregivers	Kinship Caregivers
Decision to become a caregiver is planned and voluntary	Decision to become caregiver is unplanned and in crisis
Preparation for caregiving roles and support already in place before child is placed in home	Limited preparation for caregiving
Requirements to become foster or adoptive parent are anticipated	Unanticipated requirements to become a foster or adoptive parent
Limited knowledge of family dynamics	Knowledge of family dynamics
Celebration of a new family	Mixed feelings about loss of parent to child
Strengthens new family relationships	Redefines existing family relationships
No guilt over birth parent problems	Guilt over birth parent problems
Feelings that they are saving the child	Ambivalence over taking over parental role for child
Feelings that they are displaying loyalty and commitment to child by assuming legal relationship	Perception that they are betraying birth parent by assuming legal relationship
Motivated to demonstrate attachment that is as strong as attachment with birth parent	In competition with birth parent if child becomes attached to relative
High motivation to legalize relationship	Split loyalties and hesitation to legalize relationship

Dr. Joseph Crumbley Video Series:
An Excellent Primer on the Kinship Caregiving Experience





Jefferson County Department of Social Services

Kristy Trimper
Senior Caseworker
Specialized Children's Services
Unit

Sarah Gee
Homefinder/Recruitment and
Retention Specialist

Kinship and Family Finding

Jefferson County DSS's Approach
to Connecting Children and
Youth with Family

Kicking Off Kinship

When we started Kinship practices we didn't have any set policies or procedures

We didn't have a set person Kinship resources could go to for support

We didn't have any tracking systems for Kinship placements or certifications

THAT HAS ALL CHANGED!!!

Developing Policies and Procedures and Tracking

Jefferson County DSS has worked tirelessly to develop and implement Kinship Policies and Procedures

All children that need placement are referred to the Homefinding Unit

Recruitment and Retention Specialist

The Jefferson County Recruitment and Retention Specialist is a Caseworker that has had additional training specific to Kinship Foster Care and Family Finding

The Recruitment and Retention Specialist was involved in the development of the Kinship Policies and Procedures

The Recruitment and Retention Specialist works with the Family Resource Specialist

Family Resource Specialist

The Family Resource Specialist is a Foster Parent that JCDSS contracts with to assist with Family Finding and Kinship

The Family Resource Specialist contacts identified resources and explains the options available for placement

The Family Resource Specialist also works with birth parents to help identify possible resources for children placed in foster care

The Family Resource Specialist contract is being funded by the grant from RHF

Family Finding Referral

The Family Finding Referral was created internally to be completed by the CPS Caseworker removing a child/children.

[FAMILY FINDING-RELATIVE PLACEMENT
REFERRAL.docx](#)

Once the referral is reviewed by the Supervisor it is assigned to the Family Resource Specialist and the Recruitment and Retention Specialist to begin the work.

Resource Options

If an identified resource is unable to help a child that resource is asked if they are aware of any other possible resources

If an identified resource would like to apply for Article 10 custody of a child the resource is directed to file for custody in court and a home study and background check is completed

If an identified resource would like placement under kinship foster care the Recruitment and Retention Specialist begins the process of Emergency Certification

Supporting Families

- ▶ Kinship foster families are treated as equal to our Non-Kin homes
 - ▶ Support within the Agency
 - ▶ Access to on-call and after-hours supports
 - ▶ Invitations to all of our Foster Parent support group meetings
 - ▶ Access to our Foster Parent Facebook Group page



Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services

Christy Vaughn, Supervisor
Triage Team

Meghan Paoletti, Supervisor
Homefinding



Onondaga County
Supporting Kin

Presenters:

- Christy Vaughn- Supervisor of the Triage Team
- Meghann Paoletti-Supervisor of the Homefinding Unit



Looking Back: Where We Were in 2016

- Less than 1% of Children in Foster Care Were in Kinship/Approved Relative Homes
- The County Favored/Preferred the Use of Custody and V-Docket when working with Relatives
- Did not look for Fathers and Relatives
- Culture of “apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” within Child Welfare and with Stakeholders

Time for a Change....

- Agency moved to making identifying and supporting kin a top priority
- Form the Triage Team: a small group of CW's who have the time to invest in kin at the time of the removal- Crisis oriented
- Triage to support and inform kin of their options
- Formulate partnerships with outside agencies to support kin: Salvation Army FFT, Hillside Family Finding, Kinship Navigator
- Emergency certify whenever possible





Triage Team: A Removal Is An Emergency!

Identify and Locate	Identify and locate fathers and kin
Meet and Educate	Meet with kin and provide them with their options regarding caring for a child: Foster care vs. 1017 placements
Provide and Support	Provide necessary items: pack n play, car seat, diapers, formula, clothes, stroller, bed, dresser, etc
Assist	Assist with the certification application or the grantee application
Schedule	Assist kin with scheduling schools, WIC, medical appts, visits with parents

Foster care certification



Triage hands off the certification to the homfinding unit

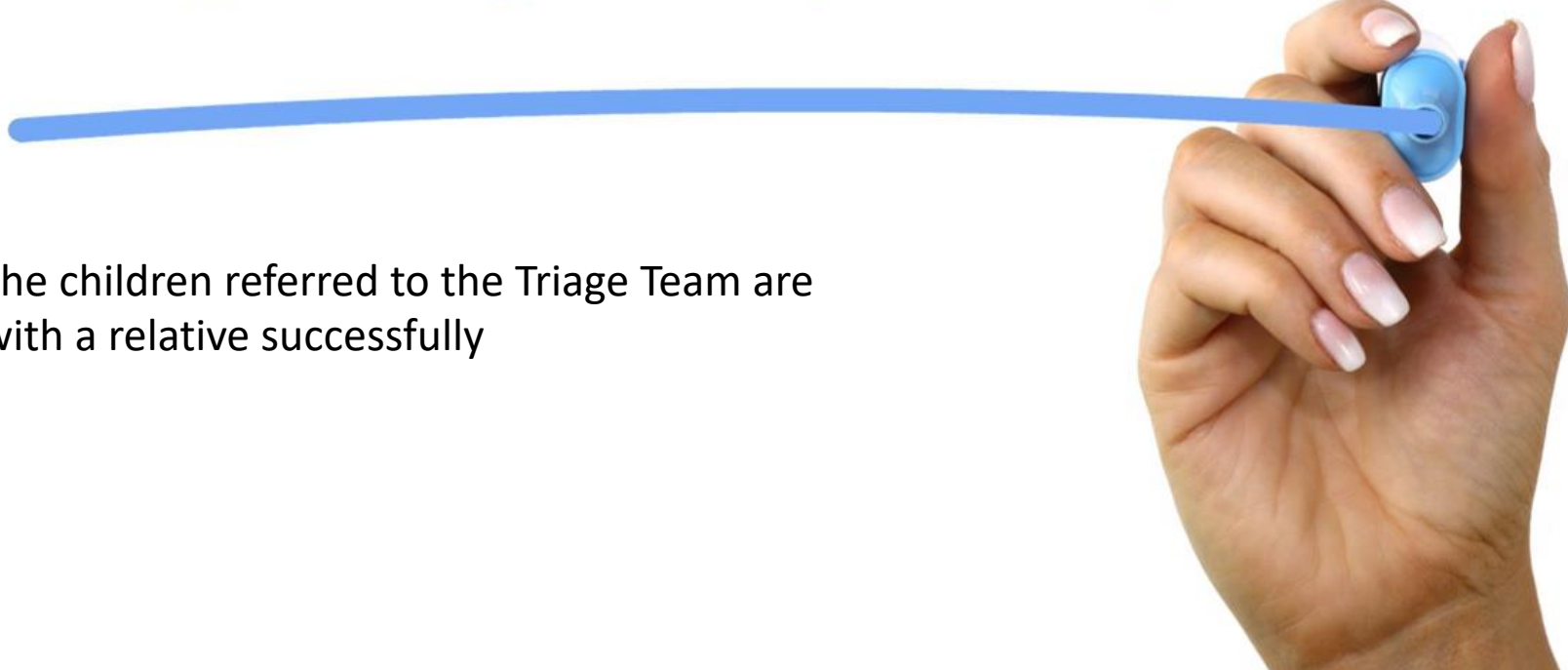


Homefinders assist relatives in completing the certification in 90 days



Relationship with Hillside for training

RESULTS



- 75% of the children referred to the Triage Team are placed with a relative successfully

In Care Summary Report
as of Sep 30, 2016
for **ONONDAGA**

[Go to Detail Report](#)

		In 24 Hrs Care	Absent
Total Number of Children in Foster Care		411	3
Race	White	180	0
	African-American	153	3
	Asian	7	0
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	7	0
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0
	Other	0	0
	Multiple	45	0
	Unknown	19	0
Hispanic Origin	Yes	45	0
	No	366	3
Status	In 24 Hrs Foster Care	411	0
	In Absence Status	0	3
Facility Type	Foster Boarding Home	200	1
	Approved Relative Home	3	0
	Congregate Care	115	2
	Institution	81	1
	Group Residence	1	0
	Group Home	5	1
	Supervised Independent Living	13	0
	Agency Operated Boarding Home	15	0
Other		93	0

In Care Population as of September 30, 2016

Approved Relative Homes= 3 (>1%)

Congregate Care = 117 (28%)

Overall Foster Care Population= 414

In Care Summary Report
as of Sep 30, 2020
for **ONONDAGA**

[Go to Detail Report](#)

		In 24 Hrs Care	Absent
Total Number of Children in Foster Care		527	11
Race	White	198	4
	African-American	222	7
	Asian	3	0
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	6	0
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0
	Other	0	0
	Multiple	85	0
	Unknown	13	0
Hispanic Origin	Yes	56	1
	No	471	10
Status	In 24 Hrs Foster Care	527	0
	In Absence Status	0	11
Facility Type	Foster Boarding Home	272	2
	Approved Relative Home	172	2
	Congregate Care	70	7
	Institution	38	3
	Group Residence	0	0
	Group Home	10	3
	Supervised Independent Living	16	1
	Agency Operated Boarding Home	6	0
Other		13	0

In Care Population as of September 30, 2020

Approved Relative Homes= 175 (33%)

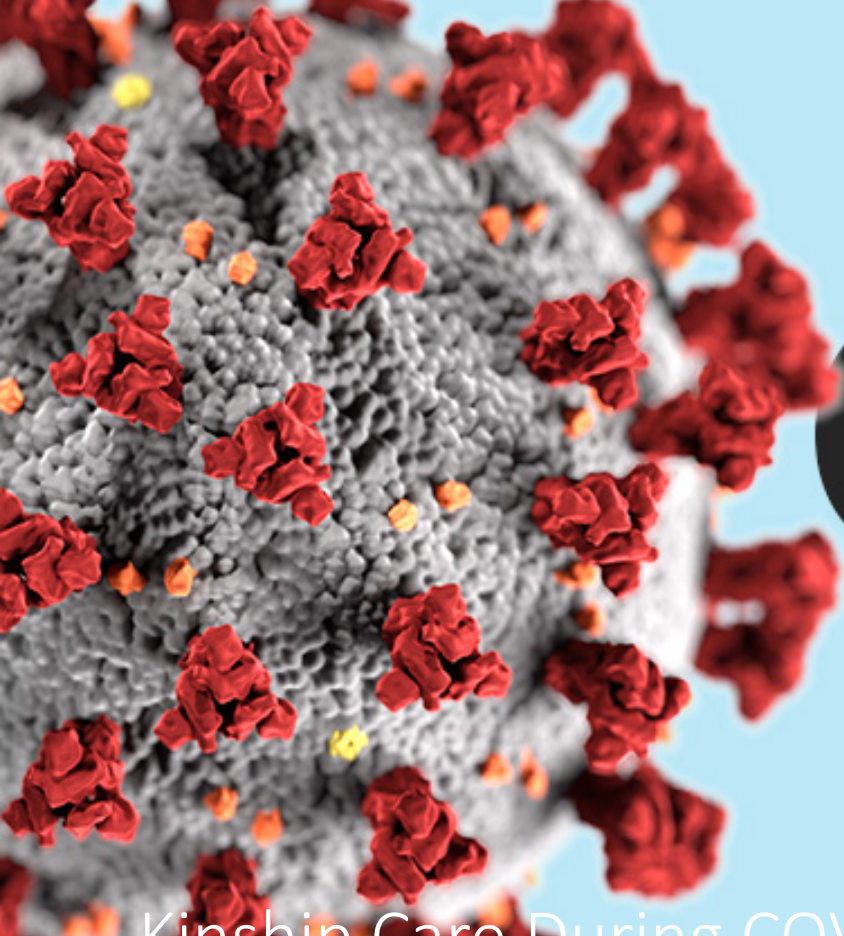
Congregate Care = 47 (9%)

Overall Foster Care Population= 538



Kinship Care Supporting Reduction in Congregate Care

- During the same time the County increased the certification of kin and relatives as foster homes, the County also saw a decrease in the use of Congregate Care
- Increasing Kinship and Relative Certified Homes created actual openings in our regular foster homes which assisted in keeping kids from accessing higher levels of care simply because there were not enough homes



COVID-19

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Kinship Care During COVID-19

- Triage Continued and was Deemed Essential During COVID to continue placing children with relatives and kin during a time when many foster homes were unable to take children
- With Courts Closed, Kinship Care Arrangements were supportive of continued visitation and parenting time safely
- Onondaga County saw a decrease in use of higher levels of care while the foster care census increased significantly during COVID thanks to the Kinship Work and the work of Triage, Home Finding in collaboration with CPS

Still making improvements



- Kin feels “drop off” of support when case is transferred from Triage to Permanency
- DP Triage to identify/locate kin before the removal
- Continue Working on Meeting 90 Day Licensing for Emergency Certified Homes