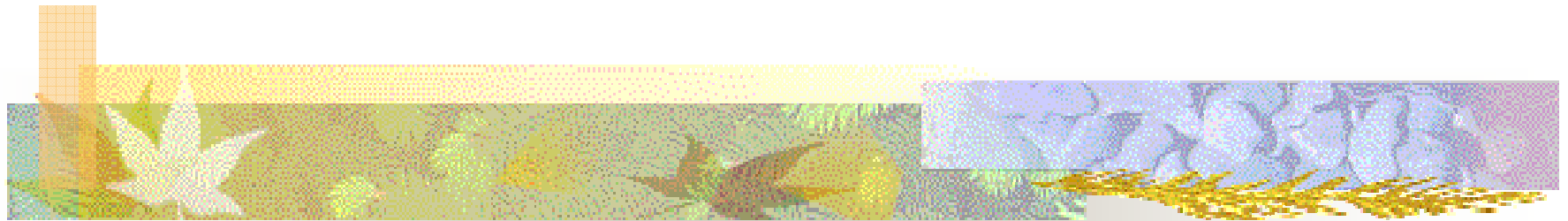


# Kinship Care in Colorado



Colorado Department of Human Services  
2011



# Different Types of Kinship Care in Colorado

- Kinship Family Foster Care
- Non-Certified Kinship Care
- Informal Kinship Care



## Kinship Family Foster Care

- A relative or person with a significant relationship to the family that has met the same certification requirements as a foster parent.
- The county department of human/social services has custody of the child.
- Kinship foster families are eligible for foster care reimbursement.



## Non-Certified Kinship Care

- A relative or person with a significant relationship to the family that has not met the same certification requirements as a foster parent or has chosen not to pursue the process.
- Kinship caregiver is awarded temporary custody by the juvenile court.
- Non-certified kinship families are not eligible for foster care reimbursement, but can apply for TANF.



# Colorado Statewide Assessment of Non-Certified Kinship Care

- 32 Colorado counties
- 491 individuals interviewed
- Purpose:
  - Identify needs
  - Learn about innovative programs and practices used to meet the needs of non-certified kinship families
  - Obtain recommendations



# Key Themes in the Statewide Assessment

- Child welfare and TANF play a critical role in supporting kinship families
- Kinship caregivers face significant stressors and are often unprepared physically, emotionally, and financially to care for additional children/youth
- Children and youth in kinship care may have a range of issues that need to be addressed
- Policies and practices regarding kinship care vary widely by county



# Promising Practices: Kinship Caregiver Support

- Orientation sessions for kinship caregiver
  - Provide information about child welfare practices, policies, legal issues, and available resources
- Use of family meetings to engage relatives and other significant adults in case planning
  - Name of family meetings vary by county



# Promising Practices: Kinship Caregiver Support

- Intake packets
  - May include information on kinship support groups, community legal clinics, Child-Only TANF, and certification options
  
- Resource room within county departments
  - Child Welfare- Grandparent resource center with books, videos, and a resource person available to answer questions
  - TANF- A resource room staffed by TANF technicians to assist families in completing their TANF applications



## Promising Practices: Children and Youth Services

- Encourage kinship caregivers' use of local parenting education opportunities to understand and manage children/youth's developmental, behavioral, and emotional needs
- Access intensive family therapy through Core services
- Use of a mentoring program to provide community based services to at-risk youth
- Provide support for caregivers to understand and address a child/youth's special academic needs and rights



## Promising Practices: Financial

- Creative use of available funding to stabilize placement
- Collaborative Management Programs in 10 of the counties interviewed provide services to families through cost sharing and minimizing service duplication
- Use of TANF funds to provide supplemental payments in addition to the \$128.00 minimum monthly Child-Only TANF benefit



## Promising Practices: Use of Staff

- Liaison between Child Welfare and TANF to improve communication between divisions and ensure kinship caregivers receive available services
- Paired team approach to share knowledge of the case and ensure continuity of services
- Specialized kinship unit within child welfare department



# Recommendations

- Streamline processes
  - Child-Only TANF
  - Medicaid
  
- Improve communication
  - Between Child Welfare and TANF
  - Between counties



# Recommendations

- Training
  - Increase training for child welfare and TANF staff about the needs of kinship families
  - Increase opportunities for youth in non-certified kinship care to learn independent living skills
- Support
  - Use Kinship Coordinators to provide support to kinship caregivers, similar to those counties who currently provide this support to foster families
  - Create support groups for children and youth in kinship care



## Next Steps

- Continue sharing findings of replicable, promising practices currently used by different counties
- Strategic plan to consider implementation of the statewide assessment recommendations
- Technical assistance to county departments
- Kinship curriculum was piloted in March 2011
- Dissemination of a kinship brochure



## Diligent Search

- County departments must conduct a relative search of grandparents and all adult relatives for children/youth removed from their home and be provided with notification of the following:
  - The child or youth has be removed from the home
  - Options to participate in the care or placement of the youth
  - Options that may be lost by failing to respond
  - The requirements to become a foster parent, and services and supports available to the child placed in the foster home



# Notifying Kinship Caregivers of Their Options

- Kinship caregivers must be advised of all support options available to them through the county department, including:
  - Family preservation services
  - Certification for kinship family foster care
  - The Relative Guardianship Assistance Program

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# Kinship Trends in Colorado

Based on 2008-2010 Out-of Home data:

- The number of out of home placements decreased from 12,737 to 11,772.
- The number of kinship family foster placements decreased from 948 to 809
  - Remained steady at 7% of out-of-home placements
- The number of non-certified kinship placements rose from 3,225 to 3,696
  - A 6% increase in non-certified kinship placements
  - Accounts for 31% of out-of-home placements



# Current Resources for Working with Kinship Families

- Navigating Kinship Care: A Resource Guide for Kinship Families in Colorado
- Colorado Kinship Connection website  
[www.cokinship.org](http://www.cokinship.org)
- Kinship Toolkit



## For More Information

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