



A Tapestry Of Love & Caring

THE EVOLUTION OF KINSHIP SERVICES

Ohio Statewide Kinship Conference 2019

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Who is CHSofNJ?

- ▶ **We save children's lives and build healthy families.**

Founded in 1894, The Children's Home Society of New Jersey is a nonprofit organization that helps at-risk infants, children, youth, and families achieve their potential. We protect abused or neglected infants and children, strengthen families, and strive for stable, permanent, and loving homes. The Children's Home Society of New Jersey gives parents the knowledge they need to help their children and themselves long after our active services have ended.

Background

- ▶ The Kinship Navigator Program was implemented in **January 2000**, to help caregivers “navigate” their way through government programs and to find local support and resources.
- ▶ In New Jersey there are **180,227 children** living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives (U.S. 2010 Census).
- ▶ Across the United States, almost **7.8 million children** are living in homes where grandparents or other relatives are the householders (U.S. 2010 Census).

These family members are called
Kinship Caregivers.

Kinship Navigator Program

- ▶ The overarching goal of the Kinship Navigator Program is to partner with Kinship Caregivers who are raising non-biological children to help them provide a stable and permanent home environment and keep them out of the child welfare system.
- ▶ The program provides resources and linkages to services and supports that will enrich the lives of children residing in households headed by grandparents, other relatives, or friends.
- ▶ The Children's Home Society Kinship Navigator serves 7 counties in central New Jersey

Kinship Navigator Program Goal

The overarching goal of the Kinship Navigator Program is to partner with Kinship Caregivers raising non-biological children to provide a stable and permanent home environment through services and supports that will enrich the lives of children residing in households headed by grandparents, other relatives, or friends.

Defining Kinship Care



- ▶ **Kinship care** refers to the care of children by relatives or, in some jurisdictions, close family friends.
- ▶ Relatives are the preferred resource when children must be removed from their birth parents because kin placement maintains the children's connections with their families.
- ▶ Kinship care may be formal - arranged by the child welfare agency and involve a training and licensure process for the caregivers, monthly payments to help defray the costs of caring for the child, and support services.
- ▶ Kinship care also may be informal - arranged by the relatives involved. Little or no monthly payments are made to these caregivers.

Kinship Navigator Program: What we DO

- ▶ Kinship Wrap Around Services
- ▶ Kinship Legal Guardianship
- ▶ Kinship Legal Guardianship Subsidy
- ▶ Information and Referral (including but not limited to):
 - ▶ Family Support Groups
 - ▶ Work First New Jersey/TANF/ SNAP
 - ▶ Medicaid Coverage and Services
 - ▶ Educational Issues
 - ▶ Housing/Utility Assistance

History of the NJ Kinship Navigator

- ▶ In 1980'S & 90'S New Jersey had a high number of pediatric HIV-AIDS patients; many of these children were cared for by relatives, mostly grandparents.
- ▶ Accessibility to services (financial, health, counseling, legal) was widely inconsistent across the state.
- ▶ Several groups stepped forward in those years to lobby and advocate for services: Orphans of Aids Committee chaired by Association for Children in New Jersey, Grandparents Coalition, Hyacinth Foundation.
- ▶ January 2000 the NJ Assembly Task Force on Grand parenting issued a report and recommendations.

History of the NJ Kinship Navigator

- ▶ The state Division of Family Development (DFD) created a unit of Kinship Navigators which fielded calls statewide providing information and resources for kin.
- ▶ DFD awarded 4 regional agencies contracts to provide “Wraparound” services statewide to kin.
- ▶ In 2002 the legislature created the Kinship Legal Guardianship program for kin caregivers.



History of the NJ Kinship Navigator

- ▶ **Since January 2001**, CHSofNJ's Kinship Wrap Around and Kinship Legal Guardianship Programs serve 7 of 21 New Jersey counties
- ▶ Kin families can access information and referral help throughout the year, through a statewide 2-1-1 directory, or through a toll free number for each Kinship agency.
- ▶ Helps caregivers 'navigate' their way through government programs to find local support and resources by providing I&R services for a wide range of needs including: financial help, Medicaid and health coverage, child support, housing assistance, custody and legal questions, child care, educational issues, etc.

Kinship Wrap Around Services

- ▶ Assists Kinship Caregivers with essential services or items not available through existing programs.
- ▶ Provides a **\$500** (per family/year) stipend to pay for basic needs (including but not limited to):
 - ▶ School Supplies
 - ▶ Clothing/Linen
 - ▶ Hygiene Products
 - ▶ Furniture
 - ▶ Extra Curricular Activities
 - ▶ Senior Year Expenses

Eligibility for the Kinship Navigator program

- ▶ The biological parents must not be residing in the kinship caregiver's home.
- ▶ The caregiver must not have an open case with the Division of Child Protection and Permanency.
- ▶ The caregiver must meet the income eligibility.
- ▶ The caregiver must be able to proof blood-relationship to the child or have a Kinship Legal Guardianship of the child.
- ▶ The caregiver needs to proof that the child resides with them on a full time basis.

Kinship Wrap Around Services: Counties Serviced

- ▶ 7 Central Jersey Counties

- ▶ Hunterdon
- ▶ Mercer
- ▶ Middlesex
- ▶ Monmouth
- ▶ Ocean
- ▶ Somerset
- ▶ Union

There are Kinship Navigator Services
in all 21 counties of NJ.

Kinship Legal Guardianship

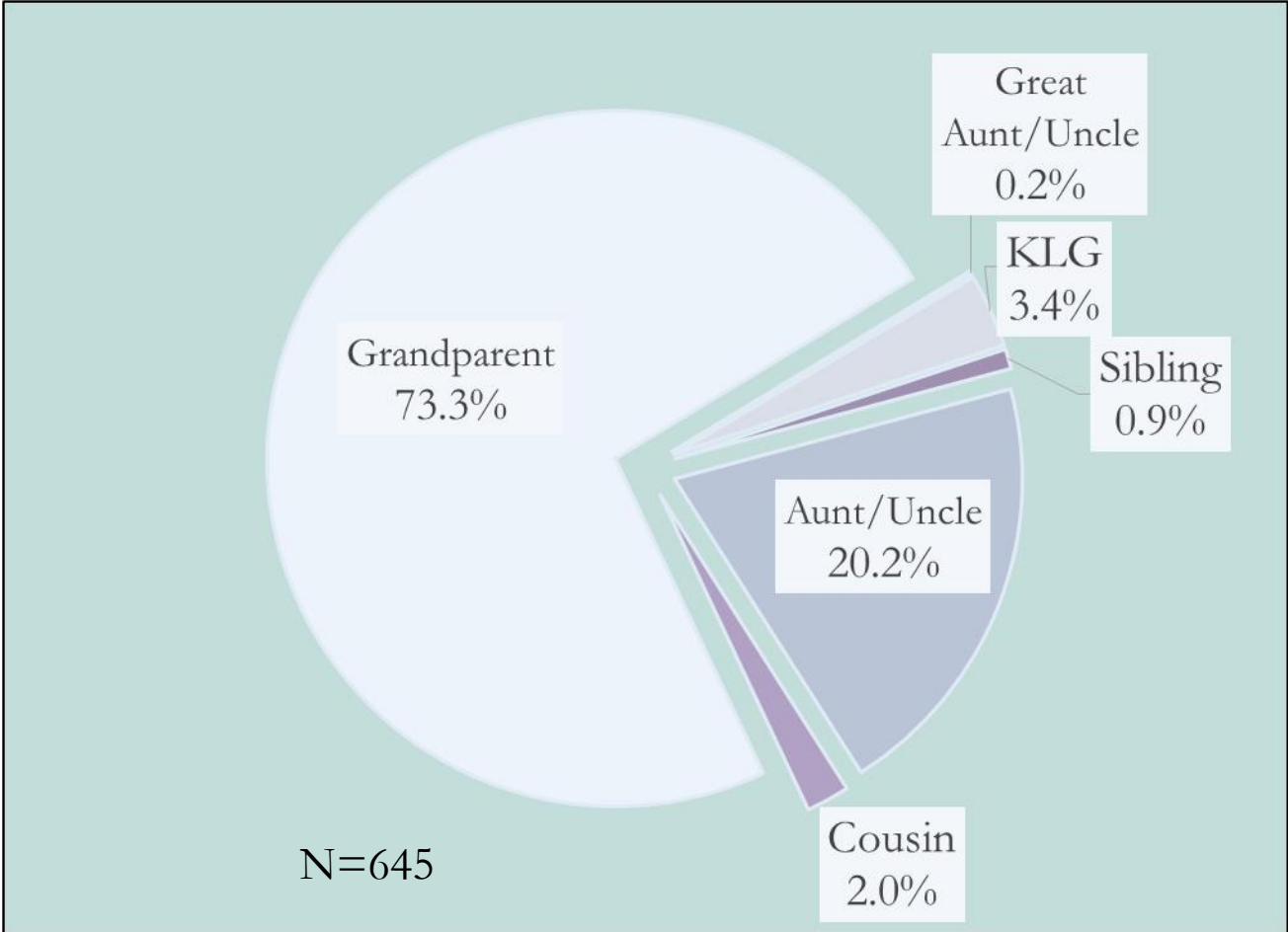
- ▶ KLG is a form of legal guardianship for caregivers who have been taking care of their relative children for 12 months or more.
- ▶ Kin who apply must have a criminal history and child abuse check for all adults in the home over age 18; the court also does a Domestic Violence check.
- ▶ A home safety checklist and evaluation is done; if the child is 12 and older they may be interviewed.
- ▶ Children's school and health records are checked.
- ▶ Biological parents must be notified of the pending KLG hearing and have a right to object.

Top 10 Needs of Families

- ▶ Having money to buy necessities and pay bills
- ▶ Paying for the special needs of child
- ▶ Information about where to get help
- ▶ Getting furniture, clothing, toys
- ▶ Getting a mentor (big brother/sister) for child
- ▶ Exploring future educational options for child
- ▶ Expanding my education, skills and interests
- ▶ Traveling/vacationing with child
- ▶ Getting a job
- ▶ Getting counseling for child

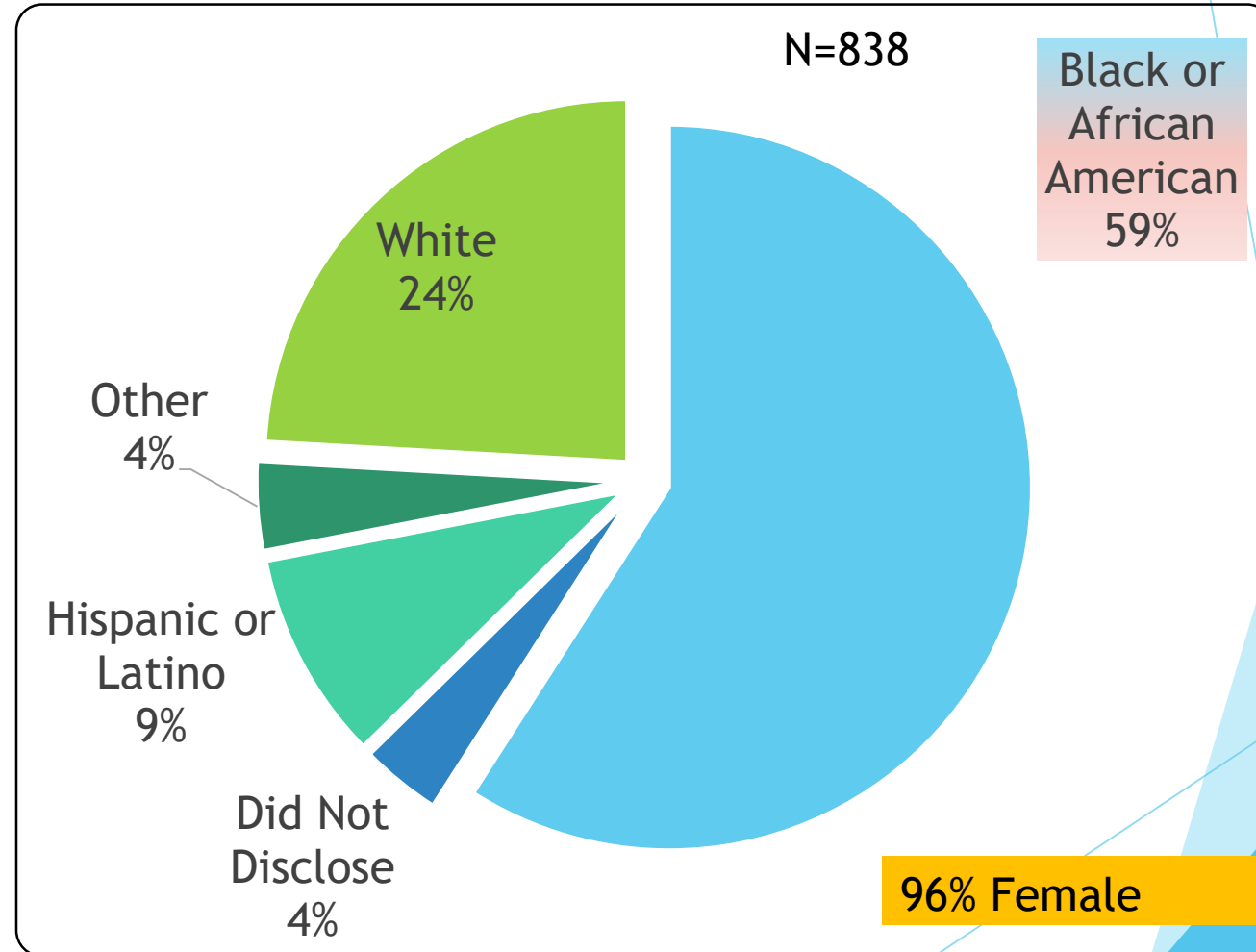
Profile of Kinship Caregivers

► Relationship to the Child



Profile of Kinship Caregivers

Race/Ethnicity & Gender



Profile of Kinship Caregivers

Age

- ▶ Median age of the primary caregiver was 54 years old (22-89)
- ▶ 37 percent are 60 or older

Secondary Caregiver

- ▶ There is a second caregiver in 257 of the 945 homes (27 percent)

Household Size

- ▶ Median Household Size = 3 (2 to 11)
- ▶ Median Number of Kin Children = 1 (1-9)

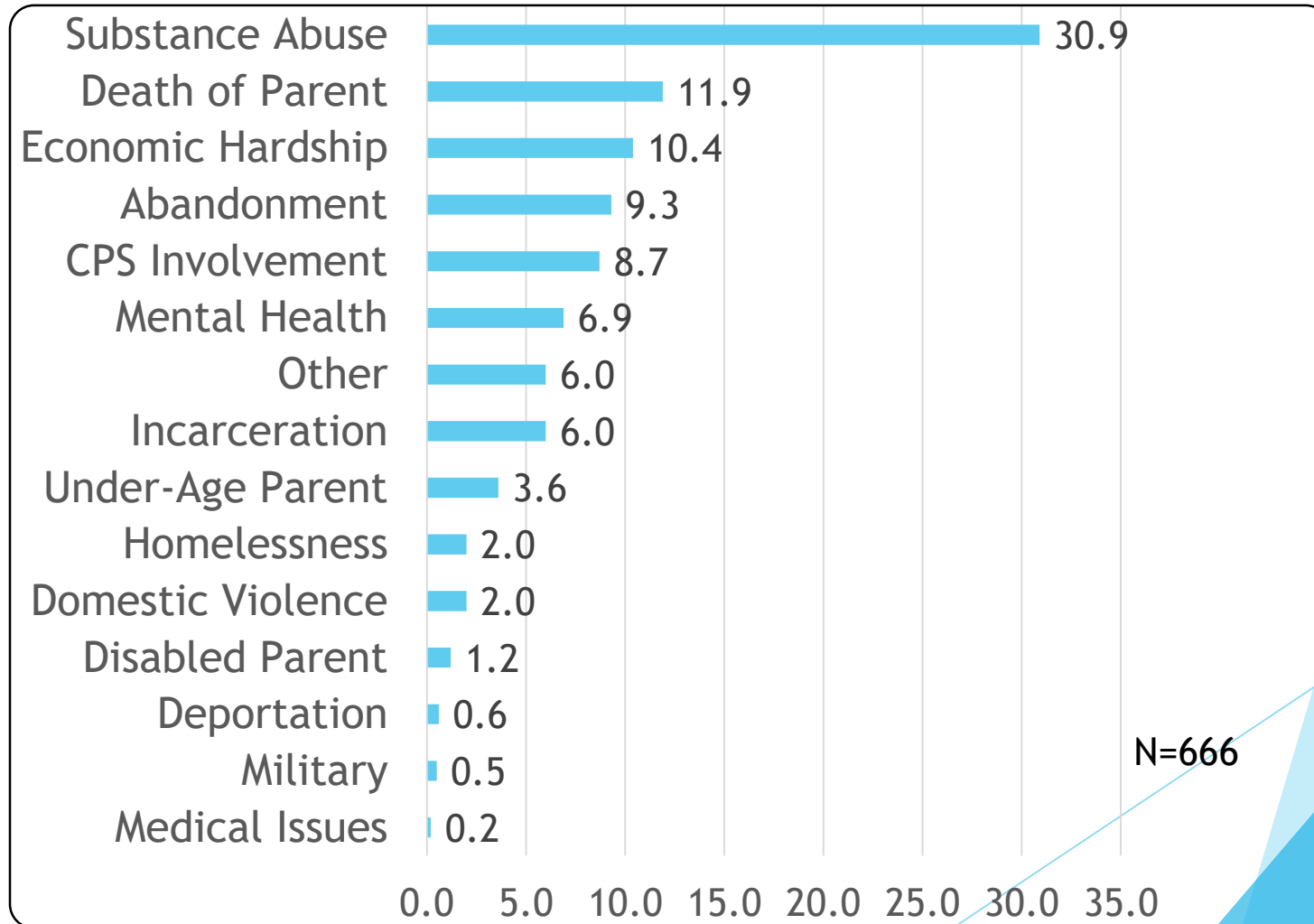
Annual Household Income

- ▶ Median Household Income = \$26,674



Profile of Kinship Caregivers

Primary Reason for Placement (Percent)



Marketing the Kinship Navigator

- ▶ Boards of Social Services
- ▶ Family Success Centers
- ▶ Division of Child Protection and Permanency
- ▶ Social Service providers
- ▶ Community events
- ▶ NAMI- National Association of Mental Illness
- ▶ Childcare centers
- ▶ WIC
- ▶ Head Start Programs
- ▶ Early Head Start Programs
- ▶ Churches
- ▶ Civic Organizations
- ▶ Boys and Girls Clubs
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Grandparents Association

Kinship Wrap Around Services: Eligibility Requirements

- ▶ Kinship caregivers must prove they are Kinship Legal Guardians or biologically related to the child.
- ▶ Kinship caregivers must prove the child resides with them.
- ▶ Biological Parents cannot reside in the Kinship caregiver's home.
- ▶ No DCP&P involvement.
- ▶ Financial eligibility is based on the Kinship caregiver's age, family size and gross household income.

Kinship Legal Guardianship

- Services Provided:
 - ▶ KLG is a form of legal custody granted to caregivers who have been caring for non-biological children for 12 months or more.
 - ▶ Assist caregivers in petitioning the court to appoint him/her as the legal guardian of a non-biological child residing in his/her home when the child's parents are unable to care for the child.
 - ▶ Agency completes home-study, background checks, parent locators and notification to biological parents.
 - ▶ Agency submits petition to the court on behalf of the caregiver.

Kinship Legal Guardianship

- ▶ Parental rights are not terminated; visitation can be included in the KLG order.
- ▶ The Judge makes the final determination for KLG
- ▶ KLG is free to caregivers that meet the low income guidelines. Caregivers that exceed income limit requirements pay \$400 Petition/Application fee.
- ▶ Families may qualify for TANF subsidy once KLG is granted

Information and Referral

- ▶ Helps caregivers ‘navigate’ their way through government and community programs to find local support and resources for a wide range of needs
- ▶ Provided to Kinship caregivers:
 - ▶ Provide the contact information to caregivers for a needed resource or support.
 - ▶ Contact a third party to advocate for the caregiver to receive a needed resource or support.
 - ▶ Connect caregivers with local Family Success Centers.
 - ▶ Establish and maintain relationships between caregivers, public and private service providers and informal supports.

What Have We Learned?

- The needs of kinship caregivers are often financial. - 1/3 have incomes below the federal poverty level. Many kin families have no financial cushion when anything happens; they often cycle in and out of crisis.
- There is also a need for social and educational services on behalf of the children.
- Almost a third of the caregivers characterize their health as poor or fair. Forty percent admitted to some limitation in their daily activities.

What Have We Learned?

- Poverty is a major issue for many kin families, leaving them no cushion when anything happens; they often cycle in and out of crisis.
- Services to kinship children are lacking in the ‘informal’ kinship network: there is a need for support groups for kin children who are dealing with trauma and loss of parents, separation from siblings, abusive, incarcerated or substance using parents.
- Kinship parents are experiencing loss, also—they are out of sync with their age group, they are experiencing role shift, loss of their biological children (to death, drugs, prison, abandonment).
- Kinship parents have conflicted feelings about their adult children: grief, anger, guilt. Sometimes they have to choose the safety of the grandchild or relative child over their biological child, or sibling.

CHSoF NJ Kinship Enhanced Services

- ▶ The Mercer County GrandFamily Success Center is a community based center for grandparents and other family members who are raising their relative children. The Children's Home Society has re-designed services for the Mercer County GrandFamily Success Center to focus more intensively on supporting the health and behavioral health of caregivers and children, while provide linkages to community services, providing supportive education groups and individual support.

CHSofNJ Kinship Enhanced Services

- ▶ *Kinship Cares* staff work more intensively with caregivers through service planning, information sharing and assessment, referrals for services, crisis prevention and intervention, and advocacy. Older kin caregivers, and those facing health, financial or other personal problems while now raising a second family, often do not receive adequate community and emotional support services. As a result, these caregivers may be at increased risk of asking the state to take their kin children into placement, thereby disrupting young lives and family constellations, and imposing an increased financial burden on the state.

CHSoF NJ Kinship Enhanced Services

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- ▶ Kinship Connection a federally funded enhanced program which the motality of family group decision making

What Have We Learned?

- The challenge of offering intergenerational services means paying attention to the developmental needs and stages of both caregiver and kin children.
- Program outcomes are dependent on hiring the right staff who are knowledgeable and comfortable about working with older adults.
- Three important service strategies are: 1) arranging/providing financial assistance; 2) case management/advocacy; and 3) support and education groups.
- Having a core service center such as a drop-in “Grand Family Center” appears to be a cost effective approach to providing the above resources along with sustaining support to Kinship Caregivers.

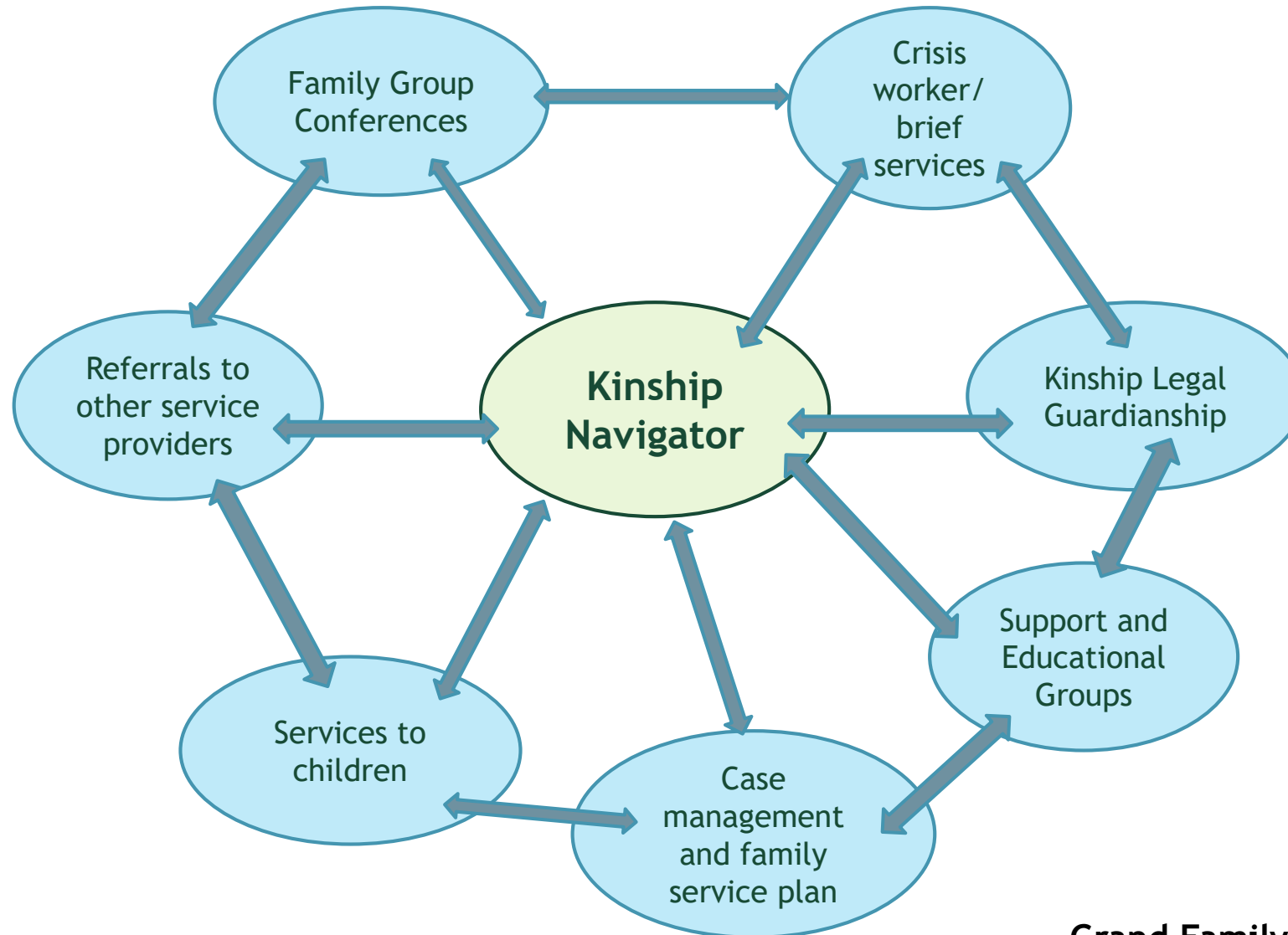
Elements of a Successful Model

- **Flexibility and comprehensiveness in service provision:** be prepared to meet the varied and frequently emergent needs of kinship families.
- **Client input:** focus groups when starting, advisory councils with client participation.
- Service could be provided at a **community-based** drop-in center.
- **Community outreach:** need grass-roots effort for referrals including reaching out to other community service providers.
- **Collaboration with service providers:** particularly when starting a program, educate and share agency resources among all with a kinship population, joint trainings among staff, MOU's.

Requirements under Federal Law for Kinship Navigator Programs

- ▶ Must be coordinated with other State or local agencies that promote service coordination or provide information and referral, including 2-1-1 or 3-1-1 where available
- ▶ Must be planned and operated in consultation with kinship caregivers, organizations representing them, youth raised by kinship caregivers, relevant government agencies and community-based or faith-based organizations
- ▶ Must establish information and referral systems that link (via toll-free access) kinship caregivers, kinship support group facilitators, and kinship service providers:
 - ▶ to each other
 - ▶ eligibility and enrollment information for Federal, State, and local benefits
 - ▶ relevant training to assist kinship caregivers
 - ▶ relevant legal assistance and help obtaining legal services

Elements of a Comprehensive Kinship Model



Grand Family Drop-in Center

How to contact the Kinship Navigator Program

Dial **2-1-1**

or

CHSofNJ

1-800-396-4573

Contact Information



- ▶ Email: Dbryant@chsofnj.org
- ▶ Phone: 609-695-6274
- ▶ Website: <https://www.chsofnj.org>

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