

Child Welfare Policy

Session 9

Kinship/Relative Care as a Permanency Pathway

Kinship Care

Film: Why Can We Be A Family Again?

Required Reading:

Stand By Me Guardianship

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/guardianship.pdf>

Overview of Kinship Care

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care-is-better-for-children-and-families/

Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement – APPLA

<https://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Blob/113530.pdf?w=+NATIVE%28%27recno%3D113530%27%29&upp=0&rpp=10&r=1&m=1>

Session 9

Kinship Care

Policies and Practices Related to Kinship Care

- History and Purpose
- Definitions of Kinship Care
- Different types of Kinship Care

Session 9

Kinship Care

Definition of Kinship Care

Kinship care, where relatives and fictive kin step in to care for children when parents are unable, has a long history, predating formal child welfare systems, but gained prominence in the 1980s as a child welfare practice, with increased recognition and support in the 1990s and beyond.

Session 9

Kinship Care

History

Pre-Formal Child Welfare:

- Kinship care existed long before formalized child welfare systems, with relatives often stepping in to care for children when parents faced challenges – Primarily in African-American and Caribbean American families, also within Latino family structures – compadrazos, compadres

Session 9

Kinship Care

History

- **Child Welfare System Integration:**
- In the 1980s, child welfare agencies began recognizing and utilizing kinship caregivers as foster parents for abused or neglected children, marking a shift towards formalizing kinship care within the system.

Session 9

Kinship Care

History

Legal and Policy Changes:

The Supreme Court case, *Miller v. Youakim*, (1979) determined that states must make the same payments to kinship caregivers as non-kin foster parents receive

Session 9

Kinship Care

History

1980s & 1990s:

The 1980s saw increasing pressure on the care system to provide placements, leading to a "pre-emergence" phase for kinship care, and the 1990s witnessed changes in law, policy, and practice that further solidified its role.

While the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 formed the basis of federal foster care policy, kin were rarely formally designated as foster parents for related children. It was expected that kin would not need to be compensated.

Session 9

Kinship Care

History

Rise of Kinship Care:

Child welfare agencies increasingly considered relatives as the first placement choice when foster care was needed, recognizing the many benefits of maintaining family connections and cultural ties.

Session 9

Kinship Care

History

Family First Act:

The Family First Act aimed to support kinship caregivers by providing funds for Kinship Navigator programs and requiring states to document how their foster care licensing standards accommodated and assisted relative caregivers.

Session 9

Kinship Care

Key Developments & Trends:

Formalization of Kinship Care:

Kinship care became a formal part of the child welfare system, with caseworkers turning to a child's kin to foster children when they were removed from their home(s).

Kinship Foster Care:

Placements with relatives are now referred to as kinship foster care.

Session 9

Kinship Care

Key Developments & Trends:

Focus on Permanency:

Kinship care is increasingly viewed as a pathway to permanency, with kinship adoptions becoming more common.

Research and Policy Shifts:

Research continues to explore the benefits of kinship care, and policies are evolving to better support kinship caregivers and children.

Session 9

Kinship Care

Key Developments & Trends:

Kinship care is often referred to as "kinship diversion" or "relative care," as it aims to keep children out of the foster care system and with their relatives whenever possible.

Fictive Kin:

Some states have expanded the definition of "kin" to include "fictive kin," or people who are not directly related to the child but have a close family-like relationship.

Session 9

Kinship Care

Key Developments & Trends:

Kinship Guardianship Assistance (KinGAP):

In New York State, KinGAP allows relatives to become the legal guardians of a child, making all necessary decisions for the child, including medical and educational decisions.

Challenges:

Kinship caregivers still face challenges, including financial difficulties, emotional and psychological strain, and legal and custody issues.

The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree Argument

The saying "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" has historically been used to justify overlooking kinship care, but child welfare systems increasingly recognize the value of relatives in providing safe, stable, and permanent homes for children, often leading to better outcomes than non-kin placements.

Types of Kinship Care

Children may come to live with their grandparents or other relatives in a number of ways, and only some of these ways involve the child welfare system. Kinship care arrangements fall roughly into three categories:

- (1) informal kinship care,**
- (2) voluntary kinship care, and**
- (3) formal kinship care.**

Benefits of Kinship Care

Stability and Permanency:

Children in kinship care often experience greater stability and permanency compared to those in non-kin foster care, as they remain connected to their family and community.

Reduced Trauma:

Kinship care can help reduce the trauma associated with family separation, as children are placed with relatives they know and trust.

Improved Outcomes:

Research indicates that children in kinship care settings have better outcomes in areas such as behavioral development, mental health, and placement stability.

Cultural and Identity Preservation:

Kinship care can help children maintain their cultural identity and connections to their heritage.

Challenges of Kinship Care

Identifying and Engaging Kin:

Identifying and engaging potential kin caregivers can be challenging, as some relatives may not be aware of their options or may be hesitant to come forward.

Financial Support:

Relatives who become kinship caregivers may need financial support to cover the costs of caring for a child, and it's important that child welfare systems provide adequate resources.

Overcoming Bias:

It's important to address the biases and misconceptions that can prevent relatives from being considered as potential caregivers.

Supporting Kinship Families:

Child welfare systems need to provide ongoing support and resources to kinship families, including counseling, training, and advocacy.

Questions?

What was your knowledge of Kinship before this class?

How has your knowledge changed?

What has your experience been with kinship care?

Film

Why Can't We Be a Family Again? is a 2002 American short documentary film directed by Roger Weisberg and Murray Nossel about two African American brothers living with their grandmother in Brooklyn and struggling to reunite with their mother, a recovering substance abuser. It was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short

Next Session – Foster Care

Foster Care Services
Family Foster Care
Residential Care

Film: "Foster Parents Speak"

Required Reading:

Overview of Family Foster Care

<https://cornerstonesofcare.org/Our-Services/FosterCare-Adoption/Become-a-Foster-Parent/Types-of-Foster-Care>

Residential Care

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/06/14/giving-group-homes-a-21st-century-makeover>