



## Family Engagement in Child Welfare Video Series

**Supporting Kin Caregivers** • Clark County, Nevada

Discussion Guide

## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

### Background on Systems of Care

In 2003 the Federal Children's Bureau funded nine demonstration grants, across 18 communities, to test the efficacy of a system of care approach to improving outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system. This 5-year initiative, entitled *Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care* (Systems of Care), focused on infrastructure development to strengthen the capacity of human service agencies to support families involved in public child welfare through a set of six guiding principles:

- Interagency collaboration
- Individualized, strengths-based care
- Cultural and linguistic competence
- Child, youth, and family involvement
- Community-based approaches
- Accountability

In the evaluation of the Systems of Care initiative, one of the guiding principles in particular—child, youth, and family involvement—was found to have a transformative effect on child welfare agencies.

In Systems of Care communities, families adopted new roles and participated more actively in their own case planning, in peer-to-peer coaching, and as advocates in systems change activities. As a result, child welfare agencies were better prepared to improve the fit between their services and families' needs. At the same time, families felt more supported and motivated to adopt active roles in working toward change.

## Introduction

Family involvement is increasingly recognized in the child welfare field as a critical path to more effectively meeting the needs of children and families. Agencies across the country are looking at new strategies for involving family members in decision-making and service delivery.

Communities participating in the Children's Bureau *Improving Child Welfare through Systems of Care initiative* (see sidebar) made significant strides in advancing family involvement efforts. The Family Engagement in Child Welfare Video Series was developed to share their experiences, lessons learned, and guidance with others in the field working to engage and empower families. The series showcases two promising peer-to-peer family involvement programs:

- **Kinship Liaison Program in Clark County, Nevada**—in which the child welfare agency integrated current and former kin caregivers into its workforce as paraprofessionals to offer guidance and support to other kin caregivers.
- **Parent Partner Program in Contra Costa County, California**—where parents who had been involved in the child welfare system now serve as mentors and resource guides to other parents currently receiving child welfare services.

The videos, and the digital stories contained within, present administrators, supervisors, caseworkers, and family members speaking candidly about the programs—the achievements and successes as well as the fears and challenges. They offer unique insight into the key elements and real-life strategies needed to make peer-to-peer family engagement programs successful.



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### Purpose of the Video Series and Discussion Guides

The videos are intended to be used as tools for building the capacity of State and local child welfare administrators and program managers to develop and manage family involvement programs. They also may serve as learning aids for supervisors and caseworkers responsible for implementing such programs.

The video discussion guides promote reflection and generate a deeper understanding of the video content through guided questions. While primarily aimed at supporting training programs, they may also be used in coaching and other professional development activities.

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#### The sections that follow address:

- Organization of the Video Segments and Discussion Guides
  - Tips for Using the Guides
  - Training Objectives
  - 1.0 Core Segment Discussion: Supporting Kin Caregivers
    - 1.1 Quick Cut Discussion: What Does It Take to Be a Kinship Specialist?
    - 1.2 Quick Cut Discussion: Overcoming Fears and Resistance
    - 1.3 Quick Cut Discussion: Keeping Families Together: Personal Stories
  - Wrap-up Discussion
- 



Introduction

Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

## Organization of the Video Segments and Discussion Guides

The video series explores two peer-to-peer family engagement programs developed under the Systems of Care initiative. For each program, there is a core video with a program overview and several “quick cuts,” which highlight specific implementation issues and personal stories.

### Family Engagement in Child Welfare: Supporting Kin Caregivers, Clark County, NV

#### Core Video:

- Supporting Kin Caregivers (7.34 minutes)

#### Quick Cuts:

- What Does It Take to Be a Kinship Specialist? (2.45 minutes)
- Overcoming Fears and Resistance (2.47 minutes)
- Keeping Families Together: Personal Stories (4.16 minutes)

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All 10 videos, the two discussion guides, and related resources are available online at [www.childwelfare.gov/familyvideos](http://www.childwelfare.gov/familyvideos).

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### Family Engagement in Child Welfare: Parents Helping Parents, Contra Costa, CA

#### Core Video:

- Parents Helping Parents (8 minutes)

#### Quick Cuts:

- What Does It Take to Be a Parent Partner? (1.38 minutes)
- Changing the Culture of the Agency (1.46 minutes)
- Overcoming Fears and Resistance (2.07 minutes)
- Building and Sustaining the Program (1.50 minutes)
- Parent Partners: Personal Stories (3.31 minutes)

This discussion guide focuses on the first group of Supporting Kin Caregivers (Clark County, NV) videos, while a companion discussion guide addresses the second group of Parents Helping Parents (Contra Costa, CA) videos. For each video segment, the discussion guides present:

- A short synopsis of key points and background information
- Questions for administrators and managers focused on program development and oversight
- Questions for supervisors and workers related to integrating family involvement into day-to-day practices
- Related resources for more information



Organization of the  
Video Segments and  
Discussion Guides

Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

## Tips for Using the Guides

The family engagement videos and discussion guides are intended to be customizable training tools and capacity-building resources. The series can be watched and discussed in its entirety, or videos can be selected to meet specific needs. For example, some audiences may be interested in a comprehensive overview of how to develop a child welfare program to support relative caregivers and will watch and discuss the core Supporting Kin Caregivers video and the three associated clips; other audiences may be specifically interested in overcoming the fears and resistance of frontline workers toward family involvement and will focus on the two related clips (one from each community). In addition, for some it may be more effective to begin with the overview and then view the clips as sequenced, while for others it may be more powerful to watch the personal stories first. Tailor your use of the materials to best meet your audience's needs and training objectives.

The guides present suggested questions for:

- Administrators and program managers
- Supervisors and caseworkers.

These questions offer a starting point for discussion. Feel free to mix and match questions, or modify, or expand them, to generate thought-provoking dialogue and learning among your audiences.



Tips for Using  
the Guides

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## Training Objectives

As a result of watching the videos and responding to questions in the discussion guide, audiences are expected to:

- Develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the value and benefits (to family members, to caseworkers, and to the agency) of peer-to-peer family involvement
- Increase receptivity and openness to the possibility of working with kin caregivers in paraprofessional roles

- Identify strategies for overcoming common family involvement challenges and obstacles
- Improve capacity for program development, implementation, and sustainability.

Each trainer also may have their own specific objectives reflecting particular audiences and their needs.



Training Objectives

## 1.0 Core Segment Discussion: Supporting Kin Caregivers



### Key Points

- The child welfare agency pairs new relative caregivers<sup>1</sup> with Kinship Specialists<sup>2</sup> who:
  - Have first-hand experience caring for children in the child welfare system
  - Are full-time, paid employees of the child welfare agency
  - Work side-by-side with caseworkers and licensing workers
- Kinship Specialists serve as coaches, trainers, and advocates for kin caregivers by:
  - Supporting the transition from extended family member to caretaker
  - Building an understanding of the child welfare system and its processes (e.g., foster care licensing, reunification)
  - Providing information on available resources in the community (e.g., social service programs, bus passes, diapers)
  - Offering emotional support and help in navigating family dynamics

- Making connections among kin caregivers in the community
- Reporting kin caregiver needs to the agency and representing the kin “voice” at meetings
- The Kinship Liaison Program “makes a difference that matters” through:
  - Increased support for and enhanced coping abilities among kin caregivers
  - Increased and expedited licensing of relative caregivers
  - Improved stability of placements
  - Improved child safety

### *i* Background Information

- Following placement of a child with a relative, Kinship Specialists:
  - Send introductory letters and resource guides (*Raising our Relatives’ Kids: How to Find Help*)
  - Make phone contact and conduct face-to-face and home visits
  - Provide information and referral services
  - Help with applications and forms
  - Offer training and assistance with the licensing process
  - Educate on permanency issues

<sup>1</sup> The terms *relative caregiver* and *kin caregiver* are used interchangeably.  
<sup>2</sup> Kinship Specialists are also referred to as Kin Care Specialists and Kinship Liaisons.



Core Segment  
Discussion: Supporting  
Kin Caregivers

## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

- Participate in Child and Family Team meetings
- Provide ongoing support and services, as needed

Source: Hesser, T., Lindsey, V., and Blackwell, T., *Family Involvement: Supporting Kin Caregivers* Presentation Slides for March 10, 2011 Webinar

- Evaluation of the Kinship Liaison Program demonstrated:
  - High satisfaction rates with the program among relative caregivers
  - Improvements in coping abilities among kin caregivers, increased awareness of permanency options, and willingness to serve as permanent resources for children in care
  - Increase in placements with kin (from 16 percent to 32 percent of the Clark County child welfare population between 2004 and 2008)
  - Reduction in re-abuse of children placed with relative caregivers (from 13 percent in 2005 to 4 percent in 2008)

Source: Denby, R., *Clark County Department of Family Services Kinship Liaison Program: A Small Program Making a Huge Difference*

### ? Questions for Administrators and Program Managers

- How does the Kinship Liaison Program reflect prevailing child welfare philosophies and values?
- Based on the various perspectives you heard in the video, what do you consider the most valuable contributions of the Kinship Liaison Program? How do participants define success? What would you consider success of a kinship program?

- Why is it important to have dedicated positions for Kinship Specialists as employees of the child welfare agency? How would Kinship Specialist positions fit within the existing structure of your agency?

### ? Questions for Supervisors and Caseworkers

- Listening to the various perspectives presented in the video, what do you consider the most valuable contributions of a Kinship Liaison Program?
- Why does it make a difference that Kinship Specialists have “been there, done that?”
- How do participants define success of the program? What would you consider success of a kinship program?



### Related Resources

- *Clark County Department of Family Services Kinship Liaison Program: A Small Program Making a Huge Difference*, R. Denby, 2009. [library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Blob/67834.pdf?w=NATIVE%28%27SIMPLE\\_SRCH+ph+is+%27%27Kinship+Liaison%27%27%27%29&upp=0&rpp=25&order=native%28%27year%2FDescend%27%29&r=1&m=2](http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Blob/67834.pdf?w=NATIVE%28%27SIMPLE_SRCH+ph+is+%27%27Kinship+Liaison%27%27%27%29&upp=0&rpp=25&order=native%28%27year%2FDescend%27%29&r=1&m=2)
- *Family Involvement in the Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care Initiative*. National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2010.

Section  
1.0



Core Segment  
Discussion: Supporting  
Kin Caregivers

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- *Full Findings Report*. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/FamilyInvolvement\\_Report.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/FamilyInvolvement_Report.pdf)
- *Appendix E: Clark County, NV, Family Involvement Profile*. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/FamilyInvolvement\\_Appendix.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/FamilyInvolvement_Appendix.pdf)
- *Family Involvement: Supporting Kin Caregivers*, Webinar, March 10, 2011 (Audio, transcript, and PowerPoint presentation). [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/ntaec.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/ntaec.cfm)
- *Kinship Liaisons: A Peer-to-Peer Approach to Supporting Kinship Caregivers*. R. Denby, 2011, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, pp. 217–225

### Section 1.0



### Core Segment Discussion: Supporting Kin Caregivers

## 1.1 Clip Discussion: What Does It Take to Be a Kinship Specialist?

### Key Points

- Kinship Specialists:
  - Support relative caregivers, child welfare caseworkers, licensing workers
  - Help sustain the placement of a child with a relative
  - Bridge gaps in communication between the child welfare agency and the relative caregiver
  - Help empower relatives and make them feel valued
- Kinship Specialists *do not*:
  - Make placement decisions for children
  - Create case plans
  - Get involved with what parents have to do to reunify with their children

- Access to transportation and ability to work nights/weekends
- Pass criminal background check
- Knowledge of child welfare system
- Ability to serve as caregiver advocate (mentor, engage in respectful manner, motivate)
- Qualities that help establish positive interpersonal relationships with co-workers, community partners, and family members (integrity, honesty, open mind, positive approach, team spirit)
- Ability to provide caregiver support services (assist, follow up, support, collaborate)

Source: Clark County, *Kinship Liaison Performance Factors*

### Background Information

- Kinship Specialist qualifications and performance factors, include:
  - Current or past caregiver with minimum 1 year experience<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Initially, the Kinship Liaison Program operated in partnership with a local nonprofit agency, which hired only prior or current kin caregivers as Kinship Specialists. Over time, the program was relocated into the child welfare agency and the original Kinship Specialists remained with the program. While kinship experience is still a valued asset of the position, the Clark County child welfare agency cannot require such experience as a prerequisite for hiring new Kinship Specialists.

### Questions for Administrators and Program Managers

- Why is it important for relative caregivers to “have someone in their corner?”
- How do Kinship Specialists help the relative caregiver? The child? The caseworker? The agency?
- From what you heard in the clip, as well as from your own experiences, what qualifications and skills are needed to be an effective Kinship Specialist? What questions might you ask to identify a strong candidate for a Kinship Specialist position?



Clip Discussion:  
What Does It Take to  
Be a Kinship Specialist?

## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

### ? Questions for Supervisors and Caseworkers

- Why is it important for relative caregivers to “have someone in their corner?”
- How does the role of a Kinship Specialist differ from the role of a caseworker? How does it complement the caseworker’s role? How can Kinship Specialists help in the work you do?
- From what you heard in the clip, as well as your own experiences working with families, what does it take to be an effective Kinship Specialist?



### Related Resources

- *Kinship Liaison Performance Factors*, Clark County, NV. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/soctoolkits/resources/NV\\_KinshipLiaisonJobDescription.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/soctoolkits/resources/NV_KinshipLiaisonJobDescription.pdf)
- *Building Family Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*. Action Brief. National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2011. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingFamilyCapacity.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingFamilyCapacity.pdf)

## Section 1.1



Clip Discussion:  
What Does It Take to  
Be a Kinship Specialist?

## 1.2 Clip Discussion: Overcoming Fears and Resistance



### Key Points

- Overcoming fears and resistance among frontline workers is a common challenge in implementing family involvement programs.
- Resistance among caseworkers can stem from:
  - Bringing relatives to work in the agency alongside caseworkers
  - Having yet another person involved in their cases
  - Lack of understanding about roles
- Buy-in increases as a result of:
  - Leadership in convincing, proving, cheerleading, and selling
  - Clearly defined and communicated roles and boundaries
  - Worker recognition that Kinship Specialists are there to help with things they can't or don't have time to do
  - Time



### Background Information

- Common concerns to address with child welfare staff during family involvement training and coaching activities:
  - Concerns that family representatives do not have the skills to work with other parents

- Concerns that family involvement programs might result in greater workloads for case managers
- Fears that family representatives cannot be trusted
- Anxieties about speaking freely in the presence of family representatives
- Worries that family representatives will not maintain appropriate boundaries

Source: National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, *Family Involvement in the Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through System of Care Initiative*

- Systems of Care communities used the following strategies to gain critical support of frontline caseworkers and supervisors:
  - Clearly and repeatedly communicating the importance of family involvement, the benefits of peer-to-peer support, and the implications for day-to-day practice
  - Clarifying the roles of participating family members
  - Highlighting success stories
  - Holding discussion sessions among program leaders, staff, and family members
  - Conducting staff training and professional development to prepare caseworkers for the culture shift of family involvement and to help dispel misconceptions



Clip Discussion:  
Overcoming Fears  
and Resistance

## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

- Leveraging “champions” of new programs to gain buy-in among more resistant staff
- Helping supervisors to become effective coaches

Source: National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, *Building Agency Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*

### ? Questions for Administrators and Program Managers

- Why might staff be apprehensive about working with current/former kin caregivers in paraprofessional positions?
- What can be done to allay fears, “cheerlead” for the program, and gain widespread buy-in?
- What else can you do in your agency to foster the necessary culture shift to embrace peer-to-peer family involvement?

### ? Questions for Supervisors and Caseworkers

- Why might staff be apprehensive about working with current/former kin caregivers in paraprofessional positions?

- What can help ease those fears? What can be done to build trust?
- What specifically can supervisors do to address worker concerns and help support ongoing partnerships with Kinship Specialists?



### Related Resources

- *Building Agency Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*. Action Brief. National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2011. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingAgencyCapacity.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingAgencyCapacity.pdf)
- *Family Involvement in the Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care Initiative*. National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2010. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/FamilyInvolvement\\_Report.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/evalreports/reports/FamilyInvolvement_Report.pdf)

## Section 1.2



Clip Discussion:  
Overcoming Fears  
and Resistance

## 1.3 Clip Discussion: Keeping Families Together: Personal Stories

### Key Points

- The personal stories of kin caregivers involved in the child welfare system are complicated and inspiring.
- Kinship Specialists:
  - Are passionate about their work
  - Understand what families are going through
  - Can relate to the range of emotions experienced (fear, embarrassment, shame, stress)
  - Support both the families and other workers

### Questions for Administrators and Program Managers

- What do the personal stories tell you about the Kinship Specialists? About their potential roles in the agency?
- How can Kinship Specialists help kin caregivers address the multitude of emotions and high stress levels associated with caring for a relative's child in the child welfare system?

### Questions for Supervisors and Caseworkers

- What do the personal stories tell you about the Kinship Specialists? About their potential roles in the agency?
- How can Kinship Specialists help kin caregivers address the multitude of emotions and high stress levels associated with caring for a relative's child in the child welfare system?



Clip Discussion:  
Keeping Families Together:  
Personal Stories

## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

### Wrap-Up

#### Key Points

- The Supporting Kin Caregivers Video Series presents persuasive evidence of the transformative power of peer-to-peer family involvement.
- Building and sustaining an effective Kinship Liaison program requires:
  - Openness in working with kin caregivers in paraprofessional roles
  - Program infrastructure and supports (staffing, training, guidelines, supervision, funding, etc.)
  - Nurturing the program as it evolves
  - Long-term commitment

#### Background Information

- Stakeholders in Clark County's Kinship Liaison Program recognized the following elements as essential to overcoming the challenges of a peer-to-peer family involvement program:
  - Developing realistic timelines
  - Valuing peer workers by providing them salaries and benefits (i.e., not treating them as volunteers)

- Building relationships and earning trust to enable meaningful engagement with caregivers, peer staff, and agency partners
- Being flexible and adapting to individual needs
- Demonstrating honesty and openness
- Learning to address data limitations and use outcome data effectively
- Remembering the big picture

Source: Hesser, T., Lindsey, V., and Blackwell, T., *Family Involvement: Supporting Kin Caregivers* Presentation Slides for March 10, 2011 Webinar

- Key action steps for building child welfare agency capacity for family involvement:
  - Designate staff to coordinate family involvement activities
  - Conduct research and needs assessments
  - Develop and communicate guidelines
  - Conduct staff training and outreach
  - Provide ongoing supervision and feedback mechanisms
  - Integrate family involvement into policies
  - Evaluate and refine activities

Source: National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, *Building Agency Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*



Wrap-Up

## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

- Key action steps for engaging and supporting family members while implementing family involvement activities:
  - Develop clear requirements for families to participate
  - Recruit candidates and assess readiness
  - Communicate clear roles and responsibilities
  - Provide training and development for family members
  - Offer compensation and reimbursement
  - Provide routine supervision, feedback, and support

Source: National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, *Building Family Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*

### ? Questions for Administrators and Program Managers

- How did the videos change your perspective or understanding of a Kinship Liaison Program?
- Do you think a Kinship Liaison Program with former kin caregivers serving as paraprofessionals is a good fit for your agency? Why or why not?
- What are your agency's existing strengths/facilitators for implementing a Kinship Liaison Program? What do you expect to be the biggest challenges or barriers? How can you build on the strengths and overcome the challenges?

- What are the next steps in building an effective and sustainable Kinship Liaison Program in your agency? What role can you play?

### ? Questions for Supervisors and Caseworkers

- How did the videos change your perspective or understanding of Kinship Liaison Programs?
- How can Kinship Specialists, who themselves have cared for children in the child welfare system, best be integrated into your workforce? What supports will be needed for the Kinship Specialists and for workers to make the program a success?
- What are the next steps for setting the foundation and overcoming obstacles for a Kinship Liaison Program in your agency? What role can you play?



### Related Resources

- *Building Agency Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*. Action Brief. National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2011. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingAgencyCapacity.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingAgencyCapacity.pdf)



Wrap-Up



## Supporting Kin Caregivers • Clark County, Nevada

- *Building Family Capacity for Family Involvement in Child Welfare*. Action Brief. National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2011. [www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingFamilyCapacity.pdf](http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/reform/soc/communicate/initiative/actionbriefs/briefs/BuildingFamilyCapacity.pdf)
- *Organizational Self Study on Family Engagement*. National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections. [www.nrcpfc.org/fewpt/self\\_study.htm](http://www.nrcpfc.org/fewpt/self_study.htm)

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### For More Information:

[www.childwelfare.gov/familyvideos](http://www.childwelfare.gov/familyvideos)

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Wrap-Up