

# KINSHIP CARE AND ADOPTION OR LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP: ISSUES FOR ASSESSMENT, DISCUSSION, AND INTERVENTION



## ACT

Participant  
Resource  
Notebook

Family  
Constellation  
Challenges

Practice  
Tools

### Legal status of children

- Who has legal custody of the child?
- What are the plans for permanency and what are the responsibilities of the placing agency, the birth parents, the current caregiver, and extended family to achieve a legal status for the child that is intended to be permanent?

### Financial supports

- What financial supports are available for the child?
- How can these supports be accessed for the adopting caregiver? What are the implications if the adopting relative will receive more financial support than the birth parent did?

### Family relationships

- What are the birth parent and extended family strengths in supporting the kinship adoption, and what are the concerns?
- What services and supports may be available now, and over time, to address concerns?
- Crumbley and Little (1997) suggest several questions to ask when assessing the kinship caregiver's ability to provide an emotionally stable environment when there is birth parent involvement:
  - (a) Is the caregiver able to comply with any legal stipulation determining the parent's involvement (or restricted involvement), regardless of his or her personal feelings?
  - (b) Is the caregiver able to avoid triangulating the child (i.e. encourage or discourage the child's involvement with the parent)?
  - (c) How will the caregiver restrict or allow the parent's involvement (i.e. decision-making, disciplining, nurturing activities)?
  - (d) What is the quality of the caregiver/parent relationship (past and present)?
  - (e) What is the potential for the caregiver and parent to resolve past or present issues and renegotiate parental roles? (pp 41 – 42).

### Health and mental health care

- What are the health and mental health care needs of the child and of the adopting caregiver?
- What are the mutual responsibilities of the placing agency and adopting relative to meet these needs?

### Education/school

- What is the child's educational/school status?
- What services and support are needed to ensure educational ability and school consistency?



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### Child behavior/management

- What behaviors of the child may be problematic?
- What supports and services may be need now, and over time?

### Fair and equal treatment

- In what ways may the kinship caregiver experience discrimination (age, ethnicity, caregiver status, etc.)?
- What interventions could address these issues?
- What issues require special cultural competence, and how will that cultural competence be demonstrated? (It should be noted that cultural competence is inclusive not only of ethnic and cultural differences, but sexual orientation differences as well.)

### General satisfaction and recommendations

- In what ways can the kinship caregiver and the child welfare professional be satisfied with their work together to ensure the ASFA outcomes of child safety, child well-being, and permanency?
- What are their recommendations for improvement?

\* Adapted from:

Pasztor, E.M., Goodman, C., Potts, M., Santana, M., & Runnels, A. (2002). *Kinship caregivers and social workers: The challenge of collaboration – An evidenced-based curriculum*. Berkeley: California Social Work Education Center.

In addition, Crumbley and Little, in their 1997 CWLA publication, *Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care*, suggest the following issues should be considered, discussed, and assessed:

### Motivation

Address the specific reasons and the implications regarding why a person is considering raising a relative's child. Motivating factors may include: loyalty, guilt, a sense of obligation, a "rescue" fantasy, an already formed relationship with the child, or anger at the birth parent or the child welfare agency.

### Household residents and all potential caregivers

Consider the other individuals living in the home. Often kinship households are multigenerational in nature, with members moving in and out of the home; who will be the primary caregivers? Also, some families have members with past histories of arrests and incarcerations. Some families have members who are not documented. Each state jurisdiction has specific laws addressing these issues. Adoption professionals must work carefully with families to be sensitive to these challenges.

### Family legacies, cycles, and patterns

Areas to consider include: Maladaptive tendencies, such as substance abuse and family violence, child-rearing practices, etc. Is the kinship caregiver able to "break" destructive cycles and teach healthy coping skills or access supportive services?



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## **Alternative permanency plans**

This is especially essential for more senior relatives who will be adopting.

### Reference

Crumbley, J., & Little, R.L. (1997). *Relatives raising children: An overview of kinship care*. Washington, D.C.: CWLA Press, pp. 38-44.

Pasztor, E.M., Goodman, C., Potts, M., Santana, M., & Runnels, A. (2002). *Kinship caregivers and social workers: The challenge of collaboration – An evidenced-based curriculum*. Berkeley: California Social Work Education Center.