



**PROPOSAL
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PERMISSION TO CONTACT PROCEDURE**

In its eleventh year of operations, the Kinship Navigator (KN) provides information, referral, and advocacy for kinship families across New York State. Based upon the KN's three-year federal Children's Bureau Kinship Navigator Demonstration Project County Collaboration, KN seeks to establish collaborative and/or mandatory agreements with social services agencies with the goal of identifying kinship families who are contacted by social services agencies and connecting them to KN, and through KN, to local resources. In the federal demonstration project collaboration, implementation in five counties (Tioga, Broome, Orange, Ulster, and Dutchess), referrals increased by nearly 600% (49 families in 2011, versus 424 in 2014), resulting in many more kinship families connected to resources. Contacted kinship caregivers received services from KN (needs assessments, information, consultations, advocacy, and referrals to local kinship programs) that then provided support groups, respite, and other specialized services.

Current Services and Unmet Needs

In New York, estimates of the total number of kinship children (living with grandparents, relatives, family friends, not with parents) range 153,000 to over 300,000. In contrast, state child welfare data shows that less than 5,000 children are in foster care placed with relatives.

For non-foster care kinship families, the primary source of financial assistance is a federal Non-Parent Caregiver TANF Grant. Only 15% of eligible kinship families are receiving this assistance. In addition to previously demonstrated needs for financial assistance and mental health services, there are unmet needs in the following areas: legal assistance, specialized health services, and housing.

The low TANF utilization rates, combined with the high use of non-foster care placements, particularly in upstate counties, highlights the need for outreach to kinship families. The below table shows 2015 admissions/placements:

Admitted - Foster Care		Admitted - Kinship Foster		Section 1017 Placements	
NYC	ROS	NYC	ROS	NYS	ROS
3905	4866	1025	351	149	2023

Note that Section 1017 placements occur when children are placed with kin who are not foster parents and whose only financial assistance is the TANF grant. These families are similarly situated to children in foster care but without foster care services.

More at-risk kinship children could be connected to kinship services by increasing referrals from local social services agencies to the KN via the permission to contact procedure.



Permission to Contact Procedure Targets Kinship Children and Their Caregivers

The procedure reaches kinship caregivers and the children in their care who are engaged by local social services agencies, both by public assistance and child welfare personnel. The procedure especially targets children who are temporarily "placed" with relatives by Child Protective Services but are not "removed" or subject to Article Ten proceedings, and who are placed pursuant to Family Court Act Section 1017.

Permission to Contact Procedure

Social services staff inquire if a kinship caregiver wants to be contacted by the KN. If the answer is yes, then the worker will provide them with the two page document titled, "Kinship Navigator Permission to Contact," and then the staff person:

1. Reviews the form with them
2. Asks them to fill in the contact information and sign on the 2nd page
3. Verifies to make sure contact information is legible and complete
4. Verifies best phone number and preferred times to reach caregiver
5. Provides them with a copy of the completed form if they request it
6. Completes the section below the dotted line "Instructions for Staff"
7. Faxes contact information to Kinship Navigator immediately or within 24 hours at 585-456-1676.

The form contains contact information for the Kinship Navigator at navigator@navigator.org or by phone at 877-454-6463.

Improved Outcomes

Contact with KN insures that the KN and 22 local kinship services providers covering 22 counties administered by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) will provide services to kinship families. Such services address core needs: access to temporary assistance non-parent (child-only) grants, legal assistance, and local kinship program services. The collaboration avoids foster care placements and improves outcomes for kinship families, providing at risk children with increased family stability, permanency, and well-being.

Proposal

- Implement the permission to contact procedure in upstate counties via either 1) encouraging voluntary collaborative agreements or 2) mandating implementation.
- Increase funding by \$89,500 for the Kinship Navigator to hire a full time intake person and for ancillary supports and training of social services staff.
