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NEWS RELEASE

PCSAO Launches KinshipOhio.org Website

Columbus, OH— As part of a Kinship Navigator Grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services, received by seven Ohio counties, in collaboration with Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), the KinshipOhio website www.KinshipOhio.org was launched today.

The KinshipOhio website provides a wealth of information for and about kinship caregiver families. The site includes pages on Statewide Supports, County Profiles, Advocacy, News, and Resources. Its primary goal is to ensure all kin caregivers are directed toward, and able to access available and needed supports. The website not only offers a description of who kinship families are, but also takes the time to explain key differences between Kinship families and other families including biological families, foster families, and adoptive families.

“Research shows that children and youth fortunate enough to be raised by a safe familiar kinship caregiver have better outcomes than those children in unrelated foster care” says Crystal Ward Allen, Executive Director of PCSAO “More regular school attendance, better grades and fewer behavior problems. And they are less likely to move from home to home. “

An important component of the new website is the Statewide Supports section. This section offers an understandable explanation of the numerous resources available to kinship caregivers. From seeking financial assistance, to accessing legal documentation for school enrollment and routine / emergency medical care, to obtaining SNAP (Foodstamps), caregivers are given understandable direction on how to obtain the needed resources to provide for their “extended families”.

Of course, since most all services are local, the site also includes a County Profiles clickable map of Ohio. Initially loaded with pertinent local information for the seven Kinship Navigator grant counties, who are actively developing and expanding services for kinship families, PCSAO invites and hopes to include local information for all other Ohio counties.

The 2000 US Census counted Grandparents Raising Grandchildren for the first time ever. At that time, 2.4 million grandparents were the primary caregivers for children in our country; in Ohio, the number was 86,000 grandparent caregivers. Remember, this only counts grandparents, not other kin caregivers, and many of these families involve sibling groups of children. These children are being cared for by familiar faces, and have avoided the foster care system. We are anxious to see new numbers from the 2010 Census, as it is believed the numbers have increased.

“While the child protection system works to safely strengthen families that are struggling to positively care for their own child, kinship care offers an important option when the child cannot safely remain in their own home,” says Crystal Allen. “This is one of a variety of strategies Ohio has steadily embraced, to safely reduce the number of children in out of home care, which is a traumatic and costly action.”

ABOUT US: PCSAO is a membership driven association serving Ohio's 88 County Public Children Services Agencies through the support of program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families and supportive communities. We do this through member dialogue, active sharing of information, building partnerships, research, training and technical assistance, and advocacy at the state and federal level.

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