

# Ohio's Fostering Connection Grant: Enhanced Kinship Navigator Project

Implementation Report



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# Introduction

In September 2009, seven Ohio counties and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) began a collaborative effort to enhance supports for kinship caregivers in their local communities. Referred to as Ohio's Enhanced Kinship Navigator project, this effort is supported by funding from the federal Fostering Connection to Success Act of 2008.

Recognizing the importance of kinship caregivers and the challenges they face, each of the seven counties worked with PCSAO to develop a Kinship Navigator program. These programs help caregivers access existing supports and services to meet their own needs and the needs of the children in their care. A wide range of services are offered, such as support groups, child and respite care, assistance with court processes, and financial support. The Navigator programs also communicate and collaborate with local providers and other stakeholders to develop effective partnerships and raise awareness of kinship care in the general population.

Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) is currently conducting an evaluation of these Kinship Navigator programs. One objective of the evaluation is to examine caregiving services and the experiences of kinship caregivers and the children in kinship care. The other objective is to analyze child, kinship caregiver, and organizational outcomes in these counties compared to seven other demographically similar Ohio counties without Navigator programs<sup>1</sup>.

This report primarily examines implementation activity in the seven counties with Kinship Navigator programs from September 2009 to July 2011, the first half of the grant period. The report provides an overview of the background of kinship supports in Ohio and then describes the activities that were involved in developing and enhancing the Navigator programs. The report then describes how Navigator programs provide services to individual caregivers and promote the development and awareness of kinship supports in broader communities.

The primary sources of information for this report are implementation reports, site visits, Kinship Informational Data System (KIDS) data, and Ohio state-sponsored websites. In the early months of the project, each Kinship Navigator county prepared monthly implementation reports, designed to reflect the major elements of program implementation. In 2010, HSRI conducted site visits that included structured interviews with key Kinship Navigator staff and child welfare staff who work with the kinship programs. KIDS included information on the characteristics of families who utilize Navigator services, the types of supports and services provided to them, and the responses to family and local program staff surveys. The state-sponsored websites provided county demographic and child welfare characteristics.

<sup>1</sup> The seven comparison counties for this study are Allen, Brown, Butler, Columbiana, Fairfield, Greene, and Jackson.

## The Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008

The Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008 is groundbreaking legislation for the field of child welfare and more importantly for all the kinship families who struggle to support and provide appropriate care for children. The Act calls for policy and programmatic improvements focused on preventing removal of children from kin and reconnecting children to kin when they exit foster care. The Act includes a provision for funding which resulted in 24 grants of up to \$1 million each for family group decision making, residential treatment, family finding, and Kinship Navigator programs. It is under this provision that seven Ohio counties received their grant funding.

*Ohio's Fostering Connections  
Kinship Navigator Counties:  
Ashtabula, Crawford, Clark, Hardin,  
Lorain, Portage, Richland*

# Background

## History of Kinship Supports in Ohio

The Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator project occurs in a historical context of public support for kinship caregivers in the state of Ohio. This state has long been at the forefront of national efforts to support kinship caregiving. This commitment and experience made Ohio public agencies ideal partners in the federal initiative to improve connections between children and their extended families. Over the years, the state has gradually built a comprehensive set of kinship caregiving policies, as a result of studying the types of kinship caregiving arrangements, the needs of kinship families, and the feasibility of various strategies of support. Table 1 provides a timeline of Ohio’s kinship policies and programs.

Table 1: Timeline of Kinship Support Policy in Ohio

Year	Event	Result
1997	Welfare reform legislation	Guarantee of TANF child-only cash assistance without work requirement or time limitation
	Dept. of Aging Grandparents Raising Grandchildren report	Research with thousands of grandparent families provided the field with information on characteristics and needs of grandparent caregivers
1999	Kinship Navigator Program established	Kinship caregiver access to services is improved via designation of Kinship Navigator staff in all Ohio counties, supported by TANF funding
	Kinship Caregiver Advisory Board established	Strategic plan to continue to assess needs, educate the public, further policy development, and otherwise advise the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) on kinship programming
2003	House Bill 130 passed state legislature	Created tools for kinship caregivers without legal custody of children in their care: Caregiver Authorization Affidavit (CAA) and Power of Attorney (POA); provides Kinship caregivers legal authority while still allowing birth parents to reassume all rights at anytime
2004	ODJFS approved the Relative and Non-relative Approval Process	Created regulations for kinship home approval focused on basic health and safety standards, including criminal background checks, without rigid foster care licensure requirements for foster care per diem payments to kinship caregivers
2004	2 <sup>nd</sup> Waiver period of ProtectOhio 2004 – 2010	18 county PCSAs participate in IV-E waiver demonstration, adopting kinship supports as one of four key strategies.
2005	Kinship Permanency Initiative (KPI)	Statewide program consisting of a series of payments over 36 months to kinship caregivers who have assumed legal custody, supporting over 6,000 children in permanent kinship homes
2009	Fostering Connections Grant awarded to a group of seven counties & PCSAO	Grant provided funding for seven counties to develop or enhance existing Kinship Navigator Programs
2009	HB 197	HB 197 extends the POA forms to the caregiver chosen by parents and CAA to a qualified relative, incorporates a 30-day relative notice provision, sibling placement provision, and parent locator tool from the Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008; also calls for a feasibility study of the Relative Guardianship Program option

As Table 1 indicates, there is a substantial history of initiatives and programs designed to support kinship caregivers in the state of Ohio. In order to better understand Ohio’s Kinship Navigator program, a fuller description of a few of these efforts is warranted.

★ *Original Kinship Navigator Program*

Legislation in 1999 established a Kinship Navigator program in all Ohio counties to assist kinship caregivers with information and assistance on services and benefits including publicly funded child and respite care, training related to caring for special needs children, and legal services. However, funding cuts in 2006 forced most counties to eliminate or reduce their Kinship Navigator programs, and only a small proportion of counties continued to fund kinship efforts in their communities. As a result, the seven counties receiving funds from the Fostering Connections grant either were not operating Kinship Navigator programs or were doing so at various levels prior to the start of the grant.

★ *ProtectOhio Kinship Strategy*

The ProtectOHIO Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, which began in 1999, is currently in its third Phase. In this Phase, 18 Ohio counties are implementing the kinship strategy as one of two core intervention strategies. The purpose of the strategy is to expand and enhance activities to support kinship placements for children being served by the public child welfare system, including location and identification of kin, assessments of home safety and kinship family needs, home visiting, and the purchase and provision of services (e.g., legal services and child care) for children and kinship caregivers. While this strategy may appear similar to efforts under the Kinship Navigator grant, there is an important distinction: only children who are actively involved in the child welfare system are eligible to receive services under ProtectOhio. This means that services under ProtectOhio are time-limited and restricted to a subset of kinship caregivers.

All seven of the Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator counties also participate in ProtectOHIO and thus implementation of the kinship strategy in these counties may be enhanced as a result. In particular, Kinship Navigators regularly gather current information on services and contacts in the county; may provide case management or information and referral services to families participating in ProtectOHIO; conduct monthly support group meetings in which ProtectOHIO families can participate; and develop and disseminate newsletters that may be received by these families. In addition, if the kinship family resides outside the county where they are receiving PCSA services, the Kinship Navigator program may be another resource for them.

★ *Kinship Permanency Incentive*

Implemented in 2006, the Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI) seeks to provide financial support for children in the legal and physical custody of grandparents, relatives, or other non-relative caregivers who have a long-standing relationship or bond with the child and/or family. The program does not require the child welfare agency to ever have held custody of the child and receiving the money does not prevent these families from receiving TANF benefits. Initially, eligible kinship families received a first payment of \$1,000 per child, followed by \$500 per child every six months thereafter for a total 36 months. Unfortunately, KPI funds have been reduced by about 50 percent for 2012, resulting in a first payment of \$450 per child and subsequent payments every six months of \$250 per child for a total of 36 months. This reduction in funding is viewed as a great loss for support to kinship caregivers - the program provides a consistent source of financial support for kinship caregivers with legal custody, when few other financial supports are available to these families.

★ *Other Flexible Funding Sources*

Two other sources of flexible funding are often accessed to support kinship caregivers: Ohio's Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) Program and the Title IV-B Emergency Services Assistance Allocation (ESAA) program. The PRC program is funded by a TANF block grant and provides for nonrecurring, short-term, crisis-oriented benefits and ongoing services for needy families, including kinship families. Examples of allowable PRC benefits and services include funding home repairs, employment services, and family

counseling. The ESAA program is designed to provide direct support to at-risk children and their families with the goal of prevention or reunification. Both funding sources are often accessed by child welfare agency staff to pay for hard goods and services for kinship families that enable these families to care for children who might otherwise need to be placed out of home.

## Understanding the Needs of Kinship Caregivers

Kinship caregivers serve as parents for children whose birth parents are unable to care for them. They may be grandparents, aunts or uncles, other relatives, or close family friends. Kinship caregivers are viewed as an extremely valuable resource in communities, both as supporters of the emotional well-being of children, as well as an alternative to placements within the child welfare system. However, they face unique issues and challenges that are important to understand prior to describing the nature of services available to them in the seven Ohio counties with Kinship Navigator programs. During HSRI site visits and interviews, child welfare staff members described some of the most salient issues and challenges facing caregivers:

*Financial constraints:* The most common challenge for kinship caregivers is the need for financial resources to help assist in caring for these children, primarily because kinship caregivers are typically grandparents on fixed incomes.

*Limited community resources:* Coinciding with a lack of financial resources, kinship caregivers often describe a need for other types of community resources, such as transportation, mental health services, respite, and employment opportunities. Day care is also a common issue, with caregivers encountering challenges (e.g., income guidelines and not having legal custody of the child) around qualifying for day care assistance.

*Economic hard times:* With the current economic environment across the country, local counties are facing much tighter budgets. At the same time, the need for public services to address such issues as hunger and unemployment is increasing. As a result, agencies have had to curtail services and focus on serving only mandated populations. Kinship caregivers get caught in these shifts. Specifically, while child welfare agencies understand the importance of supporting informal kinship placements as an alternative to formal foster care, the flexible agency funds to support these placements are much more difficult to access. With decreasing supply and increasing demand, caregivers are among a much larger population trying to access limited community resources.

*Nature of kinship caregivers:* Working with and supporting kinship caregivers is unlike working with other caregivers in the child welfare system. Kinship caregivers have different strengths and concerns than foster parents. In some ways, kinship caregivers can be easier to work with as they may be better advocates for the children and more flexible and willing to assist with issues like transportation. On the other hand, these caregivers are often less familiar with the child welfare system and have received less information and training on issues that arise in the child population. For example, kinship caregivers may be less familiar with dealing with emotional and behavioral issues than foster parents. Further, kinship caregivers are less familiar with the child welfare system and may be reluctant to attend trainings and support groups and share information with child welfare staff (for fear that the child might be removed from their family). Finally, kinship caregivers may struggle with changing their role from a grandparent or relative to a caregiver who is fully responsible for the well-being of the child.

*A **Kinship Navigator** is a person who provides information & referral, case management, or other supports for kinship caregivers and their families.*

***Kinship Caregivers** are relatives and non-relatives who have a connection (biological, familial, community, cultural, etc) to a child in their care.*

## Ohio Enhanced Kinship Navigator Project

In October 2009, seven counties in Ohio were awarded a contract to provide Kinship Navigator services under the Fostering Connections grant. Led by PCSAO, these counties implemented and enhanced services and supports for kinship caregivers in their communities. The Kinship Navigator programs are intended to provide formal and informal

supports to kinship caregivers and their families, regardless of child welfare involvement or child custody status. The Kinship Navigator staff provides a wide range of supports and services, including emotional support, assistance with court processes, financial supports, etc. The Kinship Navigator programs also seek to enhance the supports available to kinship families throughout their communities by educating, communicating, and collaborating with local providers and the local population.

In applying for Fostering Connections funding, the consortium of seven Ohio counties proposed to enhance efforts to strengthen the bonds between children and their kin, appealing to a professional sense of ‘best interests’ to help maintain children at ‘home’ with familiar caregivers, and preventing children from bouncing from one foster home to another. The common goals across the seven counties are to create integrated, comprehensive systems of services and supports for kinship families; provide better support to kinship families; and demonstrate that increased support to kinship families reduces use of foster care and keeps children safe.

To achieve these goals, the seven county agencies proposed to provide enhanced Kinship Navigator services to a broad population of kinship caregivers. Both caregivers known to the local child welfare agency and those not known are expected to benefit from the proposed project. Kinship Navigator programming includes:

- ★ increased staffing to assure adequate capacity to perform both case-level and system-level functions, including outreach
- ★ improved information about and access to needed services & supports for kinship families, especially legal assistance, support groups, respite care, financial assistance, and short-term child care
- ★ strong system-level collaborative planning via advisory groups, to both guide the project and create more effective interagency partnerships, which will strengthen and sustain the service delivery system supporting kinship families.

Through conversations with grantees about their vision of the Kinship Navigator programs and expected outcomes, HSRI developed a logic model to clearly define the intended impact of this project and offer a framework for the evaluation. This logic model is included in Appendix A.

## Snapshot of Ohio Enhanced Kinship Navigator Counties

The seven Ohio counties with Fostering Connections funding vary in their demographic and program characteristics, impacting the development of each of the seven Kinship Navigator programs. Table 2 provides a snapshot of select characteristics in the seven grantee counties in 2007. Most notable is the variation in overall county population, including three counties, Ashtabula, Hardin, and Crawford, with relatively small populations and high proportions of rural land area relative to the other four counties. Rural counties often have fewer community referral resources for caregivers, indicating a need for the Kinship Navigators to be more creative in meeting their needs. It is also interesting to note the variation among counties in the proportion of children who have a relative assume legal and permanent custody, perhaps indicating a difference in local court stances toward giving caregivers custody. Ultimately, the court’s stance within a given county may affect the types of support a Navigator is able to provide. This information provides a context for understanding the implementation of the Kinship Navigator programs and the impact these programs may have.

In addition to county demographics, the last two rows in Table 2 also show Kinship Navigator program characteristics in each of the counties. Four counties had existing Kinship Navigator programs at the start of the grant. In terms of the location of their Kinship Navigator programs, four counties have Kinship Navigator programs within their county child welfare agencies (internal location), while three counties have their programs in community-based agencies (external location).

Table 2. Characteristics of the Kinship Navigator counties in 2007.<sup>1</sup>

Characteristic	Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator Counties						
	Ashtabula	Clark	Crawford	Hardin	Lorain	Portage	Richland
# of people	101,141	140,477	44,227	31,650	302,260	155,869	125,679
% rural	93.1%	79.1%	95.2%	95.7%	73.3%	87.2%	88.5%
# of grandparents raising grandchildren per 1,000	9.0	10.0	6.4	8.7	8.9	5.6	8.4
% total population under 18 years of age	23.8%	23.5%	23.1%	22.4%	24.3%	21.3%	23.0%
% population under 18 living in poverty	22.7%	23.3%	16.9%	16.4%	16.7%	12.9%	17.8%
% children in custody who had a relative assume legal and permanent custody	5.7%	1.3%	8.2%	2.3%	14.4%	16.7%	8.8%
Existing Kinship Navigator program at grant start date	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kinship Navigator location	Internal	Internal	Internal	Internal	External	External	External

<sup>1</sup>With the exception of the proportion of children living in poverty, which was calculated for the year 2005

It is also interesting to note that the seven comparison counties show similar variations in these characteristics (see Appendix B for a table of the demographic characteristics of the seven comparison counties). This is not surprising, given that HSRI selected the seven comparison counties because they are demographically similar to the Kinship Navigator counties.

### PCSAO Role

The efforts to develop and implement Ohio’s Kinship Navigator program were led by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). The PCSAO director has been active in promoting the state’s efforts to support kinship caregivers in recent years, and thus the role as lead for the grant was natural. PCSAO efforts on this project have included:

- ★ providing grant oversight (leadership and administrative functions)
- ★ coordinating initial trainings for Kinship Navigators during the implementation period
- ★ developing a statewide website for kinship caregivers to identify potential supports and gather local resource and contact information
- ★ collaborating at both the state and local levels to plan and provide oversight of the project
- ★ encouraging media and legislative efforts to promote the program and advocate for kinship policy advancements.



## Kinship Navigator Consortium

While this grant involves a group of seven diverse counties, staff in several counties commented on the benefit of working together to develop and enhance their community services for kinship caregivers. At the beginning of the grant, representatives from the seven counties, PCSAO, and HSRI met monthly via conference calls and quarterly in-person meetings, providing a forum for counties to learn from each other, share common struggles and challenges, and discuss new approaches that might not have otherwise been considered (i.e. how to increase participation in support groups, marketing the program, engaging key partners). This was especially helpful in the counties that did not have a Kinship Navigator position prior to the grant. Following the initial months of the grant, the monthly phone conversations ceased; however, the individuals involved in this grant consider the quarterly in-person meetings to be an invaluable opportunity to share information and network with others.

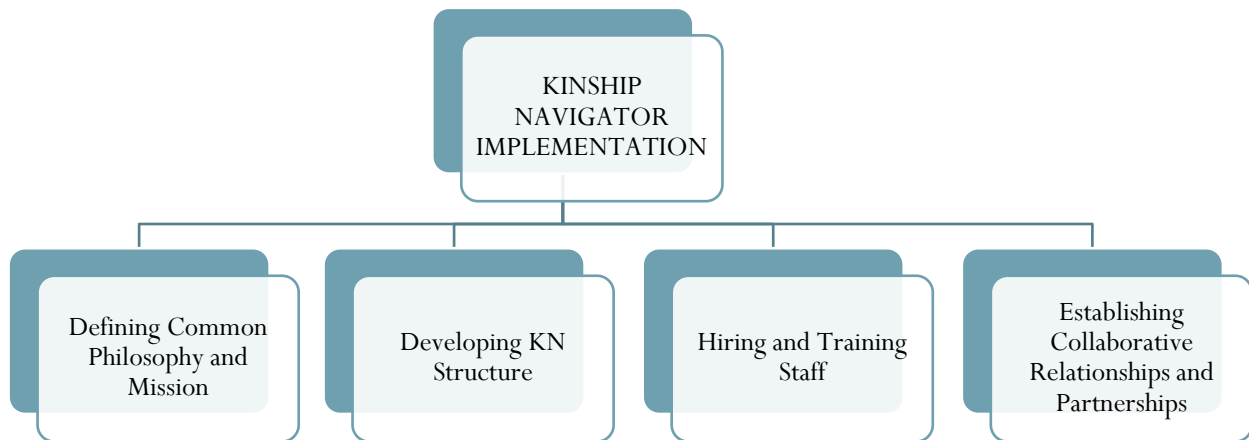
*“Sitting around the table with the other project counties is really interesting — makes it really clear that our communities are different (in service availability, kinship caregiver needs, etc) and that our programs can’t all be identical.”*

# IMPLEMENTATION

Beginning in September 2009, the seven Kinship Navigator grantees spent several months planning and implementing new Kinship Navigator programs or expanding existing Kinship Navigator programs in their communities. Reflecting on the implementation activities that took place during these early months, these Ohio counties are able to share their experiences and suggest useful considerations to others who are interested in developing a Kinship Navigator program. Exploring implementation activities also provides the context for understanding how Kinship Navigator services vary across these counties and the potential impact on key outputs and outcomes.

*Our goal is for kids to be safe and do what is in the best interest of the children. What is almost always best for children is being with someone they know, love and trust and someone who can provide stability for them.*

During site visits, HSRI explored several key aspects of implementation, as displayed in the diagram below. Each of these implementation components involved critical decisions being made and activities completed which ultimately impact the basic structure of the Kinship Navigator program in each county.



## Common Kinship Philosophy/Mission

Across Ohio and the entire country, child welfare agencies view kinship caregivers as an important resource for supporting children at risk of abuse/neglect. The belief is that placing children in the least restrictive setting is best for both the children and the child welfare agency. Several common themes are noted:

- ★ In all seven Kinship Navigator counties, public child welfare agency (PCSA) staff articulate a philosophy of locating kinship caregivers and keeping children with these families. There is a common priority of keeping children in their own home first, then relatives, then foster care.
- ★ For some Kinship Navigator counties, this priority was established within the last year or two; for other counties, this has been a longstanding philosophy of the PCSA.
- ★ In both Kinship Navigator and comparison counties, PCSA staff describe similar agency philosophies: a focus on keeping children with their family, quickly identifying relatives when children are removed to avoid foster care placement, recognizing that it is usually more financially advantageous to place children with relatives, and supporting caregivers in order to improve placement viability.

The Kinship Navigator staff in the seven Ohio Fostering Connections counties acknowledge that many counties throughout Ohio have a similar mission and philosophy regarding kinship care giving. However, the Fostering Connections grant provides these counties with the impetus and dedicated financial resources to support this mission and philosophy. In particular, the grant:

- ★ Provides financial resources to develop or expand Kinship Navigator positions and supports. Examples include hiring a Kinship Navigator, developing a support group, and expanding hours of availability.
- ★ Provides vital funds in hard economic times. With communities facing tighter budgets and limited flexible funds (i.e. PRC, ESAA, and KPI) to support kinship caregivers, the grant provides resources and supports to families who might otherwise be unable to care for children.
- ★ Encourages networking and development of peer support within and across child welfare agencies. One agency staff member pointed out that, “it’s nice to be in a group of likeminded people and dramatically increase the power. It’s an opportunity to network with other folks and set an example for what is available. It really is best practice.”
- ★ Allows Kinship Navigator programs to expand the populations served. The grant enables Kinship Navigators to serve families who are not in formal kinship placements in a child welfare system. Reflecting a desire to reach out and support more caregivers in the community, several counties described how the grant has enabled them to support kinship caregivers outside the child welfare system, which would not be possible without this grant. By working with these cases, Kinship Navigators can prevent cases from opening and provide ongoing supports after a child welfare case has closed.

*We have been pro-kinship for a long time; we always wanted to place children with kin as opposed to foster care. It is part of our culture and we are very passionate about it.*

## Developing Kinship Navigator Structure

As counties configured their Kinship Navigator programs under the Fostering Connection grant, two distinct models emerged. Both models include a unified commitment to work with child welfare agencies to serve kinship caregivers. Each is described in more detail below.

### INTERNAL KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAMS – FOUR COUNTIES

This type of Kinship Navigator program is defined by several key characteristics:

- ★ The Kinship Navigator position is housed within the child welfare agency.
- ★ The Kinship Navigator primarily works with kinship caregivers who are caring for children with open child welfare cases.
- ★ Internal Kinship Navigator staff may be better able to assist kinship caregivers in accessing public human services than external Navigator staff. For example, three of the four child welfare agencies with internal Kinship Navigators are combined with Job and Family Service agencies.
- ★ Internal Kinship Navigators were all previously child welfare case workers and most have been with the agency for many years and have a substantial amount of experience.

There are variations in the configuration of services across the four counties with an internal Kinship Navigator:

- ★ The single Kinship Navigator in each of the two smallest counties also carries additional child welfare responsibilities, such as conducting Family in Need of Services (FINS) assessments, addressing delinquency, supervising visitations, and providing other family support responsibilities. In the other two largest counties

with internal Kinship Navigators, the Kinship Navigators have the sole responsibility of supporting kinship caregivers.

- ★ In three of the four internal Kinship Navigator programs, birth parents are supported by traditional caseworkers, while kinship families are supported by Kinship Navigators.
  - In one of these counties, cases are usually referred to a Kinship Navigator when the kinship caregiver is approaching legal custody so that the Kinship Navigator can support them beyond case closure.
  - In the other two counties, the Kinship Navigator supports kinship caregivers throughout the duration of the case, with the child welfare caseworker supporting the birth family and the Kinship Navigator serving as a resource for the kinship caregivers.

The fourth internal program has a slightly different structure: the Kinship Navigators serve as the primary caseworkers, supporting both birth parents and kinship caregivers. In this county, the Kinship Navigator does not serve cases that have a plan of reunification, a birth parent in disagreement about the kinship placement, or a custody dispute.

The internal Kinship Navigator program configuration has several implications:

- ★ Being located within the child welfare agency, the Kinship Navigators work closely with PCSA caseworkers who have a thorough understanding of child welfare system processes and case expectations. However, for cases with a goal of reunification with the birth parent(s), these Kinship Navigators may find it difficult to both support the kinship caregiver, as well as the goal of reunification.
- ★ Because kinship caregivers may view internal Kinship Navigators as being a part of the child welfare system, kinship caregivers may be less willing to work with them out of fear of being reported. Consequently internal Kinship Navigators may need to focus harder on gaining their trust and assuring them that they can share their needs and ask for support without fear of further child welfare intervention.
- ★ Frequent communication between caseworkers and internal Kinship Navigators is likely. All four sites with an internal Kinship Navigator reported positive communication between the Kinship Navigators and caseworkers. Further, in three of these counties, caseworkers and Kinship Navigators also share case responsibilities. In these three counties, caseworkers expressed that they are very knowledgeable about the Kinship Navigator program, having worked jointly with the Kinship Navigator on cases where children are placed with kinship caregivers. In the one county where cases are not shared between caseworkers and Kinship Navigators, workers report less communication and knowledge of the program.

#### EXTERNAL KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAMS – THREE COUNTIES

This type of Kinship Navigator program is defined by several key characteristics:

- ★ Kinship Navigator services are provided by local human service agencies under contract with the child welfare agency - an Area Office on Aging and two family and community service agencies, all with an existing relationship with PCSA.
- ★ The Kinship Navigators are physically located within the contracted community agency.
- ★ The Kinship Navigators work with any family referred to the program, regardless of whether or not the family is actively involved in the child welfare system.

As is the case with the internal Kinship Navigator programs, variation exists in the configuration of the external programs.

- ★ The number of Kinship Navigators in the external program range from one to three individuals, most likely due to the anticipated volumes of kinship families to be served by the Navigator program.

- ★ One county has established a structure in which communication between Kinship Navigators and caseworkers goes through a single PCSA manager, while in the other external Navigator programs, the child welfare workers and Navigators interact directly with each other.
- ★ In one county, child welfare workers refer any case to the Kinship Navigator program in which a child is living with someone other than their birth parent, whereas in the other two counties, child welfare workers make fewer referrals to the program.

This external configuration has several implications:

- ★ Kinship caregivers may be more comfortable approaching the Kinship Navigator because the program is not part of the child welfare agency.
- ★ Kinship Navigators tend to have experience working in the community and a background in the human services arena (e.g., mental retardation/developmental disabilities, probation, head start, Guardian Ad Litem). In addition, some external Kinship Navigators have been kinship caregivers themselves. Their experience and background provide kinship caregivers with a wealth of knowledge about local agencies and resources and enhances their ability to empathize with the caregivers.
- ★ Communication with child welfare workers is less frequent in external Kinship Navigator programs compared to internal programs. This is partly because Kinship Navigators in external programs are working with fewer kinship caregivers who are child welfare involved (71% of children in counties with an external Kinship Navigator program have been involved in child welfare compared to 83% of children in counties with an internal program). In spite of less frequent communication,
  - Child welfare staff and Kinship Navigators in these counties express support for each other and report that their relationship is strong and that both parties are responsive to the communications and requests of others.
  - The external Kinship Navigators have made formal presentations to child welfare staff to introduce the Kinship Navigator program; these presentations are usually integrated into a broader presentation by the contracted agency to educate PCSA staff of other services available at the community agency.
  - It is important to note that the partnerships between child welfare and these Kinship Navigator programs have been strengthened due to participation in this grant (e.g., participating in the proposal writing process and quarterly in-person meetings). According to both child welfare staff and the Kinship Navigator's for these programs, their participation has encouraged closer relationships than probably would have happened outside of this grant opportunity.

Table 3 summarizes the kinship staff characteristics of the Fostering Connection Kinship Navigator grantees and the seven comparison counties. While four comparison counties have a structure similar to the Kinship Navigator counties, three counties do not have a position dedicated to addressing the needs of kinship caregivers on an ongoing basis in their community.

Table 3: Staff Characteristics of Fostering Connection Kinship Navigator Counties and Comparison Counties

	<i>Fostering Connection Kinship Navigator Counties</i>	<i>Comparison Counties</i>
Designated Staff (other than PCSA case workers)	7 Counties	7 Counties
External Kinship Navigators	3 External Kinship Navigator	3 External Kinship Navigator
Internal Kinship Navigators	4 Internal Kinship Navigators	1 Internal Kinship Navigator
Counties with no formal Kinship Navigator position		3 comparison counties have PCSA staff who provide KPI and/or Kinship Home Studies, who also provide I&R

## Hiring and Training Kinship Navigator Staff

The Fostering Connections Grant provided funding for the seven counties to either establish new Kinship Navigator positions or to continue existing Kinship Navigator positions. Four of the seven counties had existing Navigator programs at the time of the grant award and hired additional Navigators and/or continued to fund existing Navigators positions. The other three counties did not have existing Kinship Navigator programs and, thus, utilized the Fostering Connections funding to create and staff Kinship Navigator positions.

### Hiring

- ★ Six of the counties hired new staff or increased full time employment with grant funding; all positions were filled by staff already within the Kinship Navigator organization (i.e. the PCSA or the contracted agency).
- ★ Five counties had staff in place by December 2009, while the other two had staff in place by April 2010. Three counties experienced some staff turnover at the beginning of grant, creating some challenges in staff transitioning.
- ★ One county restructured its staff to create a Kinship unit within the PCSA.
- ★ Three counties hired aides or are utilizing interns to support Kinship Navigator positions.

Kinship Navigator managers described a variety of characteristics and skills that are viewed as important in the selection of staff for a Kinship Navigator position, included in the table below.

Table 4: Considerations for hiring a Kinship Navigator

Qualifications/ Skills/ Experiences	Vital Characteristics
Social work qualifications and skills	Team player, willing to partner with other providers
Social work prior experience	Don't try to be 'the fix,' help find 'the fix' – teach self sufficiency
Education requirements	Flexible, creative problem-solver
Community knowledge	Able to relate to kinship caregivers – good listener
Administrative skills (marketing, networking, development skills)	Learn from others
Experience as a kinship caregiver	Patient and persistent
	Straightforward about what Kinship Navigator can/can't do
	Compassion and empathy
	Passion for working with families
	Community resource knowledge
	Hands-on

## Training

Because the seven counties had vastly different histories of providing Kinship Navigator services prior to the grant, there was substantial variation in the types of trainings provided to the Kinship Navigators in these counties. The training opportunities broadly consisted of training Kinship Navigators on how to support kinship caregivers as well as training child welfare staff on the services provided by the Navigators.

### TRAINING KINSHIP NAVIGATORS

In the first six months of the grant, a variety of training opportunities were made available at the Kinship Navigator in-person meetings including the following:

- ★ Assessing and Supporting Kinship Caregivers (provided by the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program)
- ★ Community Building, Outreach, and Evaluation
- ★ Using KIDS
- ★ Benefit Bank

*“The (first) training was very informative for both experienced navigators and those who may be implementing programs.”*

In at least three counties, supervisors and/or directors attended these trainings. Unfortunately, in two counties, Kinship Navigator staff did not attend because they had not yet been hired.

In addition to training offered to the consortium of seven counties, a wide range of training opportunities were provided to Kinship Navigators in some of the seven individual counties, including trainings regarding GAL programs, food bank, ‘what a client goes through’, proposal/grant writing training, and other general trainings offered to children services staff.

### TRAINING PCSA STAFF

One component of Ohio’s statewide caseworker core training curriculum is to provide instruction on how to identify and support kinship caregivers caring for children in the child welfare system. In addition to the core training, the seven Kinship Navigator grant counties worked to better inform PCSA staff of services and supports available through the Navigator program:

- ★ Five Kinship Navigator counties conducted some form of training with PCSA staff early in the implementation stages of the project, at minimum introducing them to the program and the process of referring kinship caregivers to the Kinship Navigator. Two counties have integrated information regarding the Navigator program into regular staff meetings.
- ★ Most often, Kinship Navigator staff shared information about their programs informally through conversations with caseworkers or brief overviews provided during agency-wide staff meetings.
- ★ Several counties added a brief overview of the Kinship Navigator program to their county-specific ‘new employee’ training process.

Counties noted the continuing challenge of ensuring that ALL staff, new and existing, fully understand the Kinship Navigator program and how to refer families to it.

## Establishing Collaborative Relationships and Partnerships

One key component of the Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator program involves engaging the larger community to support the kinship caregivers; this includes increasing community awareness of the kinship caregiving population and their needs, as well as working with community partners to enhance the services and supports available to these

families. In the implementation phase of this project, grantee members worked to establish the framework for this collaboration.

## Local Advisory Group

A key element of the original request for proposals was for each county to develop a Local Advisory Group (LAG) to provide guidance to the development of Kinship Navigator services in each of these seven communities. The original intent of the LAG is described in the proposal:

- ★ The LAG would help provide collaborative planning and oversight, to support the creation and ongoing operation of the Kinship Navigator project.
- ★ With the help of the Kinship Navigator, the LAG members would engage all stakeholders in a community mapping process to systematically identify formal and informal resources to address the needs of kinship caregivers.
- ★ LAG members would be able to develop greater awareness of kinship families' needs and best practices in serving kinship families, and would thus be primed to guide the project and advocate for expanded kinship supports.

The LAGs were established in almost all counties during the implementation period, and development of LAG membership was ongoing.

- ★ Free-standing LAGs were created in five counties, most often meeting quarterly. In the other two counties, rather than create a new advisory group, Kinship Navigator staff participate in standing community partner meetings (i.e. Family and Children First Councils) to share information regarding the Kinship Navigator program.
- ★ Interviewees described how it took time to establish these groups; by spring 2010, several only had one meeting or were still coordinating for the first meeting.
- ★ Most counties have been able to find kinship caregivers to participate and, in at least one county, a kinship child attended a LAG meeting.
- ★ Some counties struggle to have regular attendance at LAG meetings.

Key players in the LAG describe its role in a variety of ways. Table 5 provides the results of a survey completed in early 2011 by the Kinship Navigator and LAG members in each county. From this table, it appears that there are varying perceptions about the role of the LAG, both among counties, and between the Navigator and their LAG members within individual counties. This lack of clarity on the role and function of the LAG is perhaps indicated further by an overall perception of the value of the LAGs. In talking with the Kinship Navigator consortium, there appears to be a general sense that the LAGs have not had a significant impact on the Kinship Navigator programs: as one Kinship Navigator said to potential members, "this is something we are required to do, are you willing to be a part of it?" and most people agreed.



Table 5: What is the Primary Role and Focus of LAG? (Spring, 2011)

	Reporting	Advocacy	Advising	Building Resource network	Other	Unknown
Ashtabula: KN Response (n=1)	1					
LAG Response (n=11)	4		1	2		4
Clark: KN Response (n=1)	1	1				
LAG Response (n=11)	1	2		3		5
Crawford: KN Response (n=1)					1 (501c3 status)	
LAG Response (n=3)				1		2
Hardin: KN Response (n=1)			1			
LAG Response (n=6)		1	3			2
Lorain: KN Response (n=1)				1		
LAG Response (n=7)	2	1	1	3		
Portage: KN Response (n=1)				1		
LAG Response (n=5)	1		3	1		
Richland: KN Response (n=1)	1		1			
LAG Response (n=2)	1			1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 KN 9 LAG</b>	<b>1 KN 4 LAG</b>	<b>2 KN 8 LAG</b>	<b>2 KN 11 LAG</b>	<b>1 KN</b>	<b>13 LAG</b>

### State Advisory Group

To complement the LAG role in each county, the project established a State Advisory Group (SAG) to encourage the development of supports and services for kinship caregivers at the state level, through education of legislators and key stakeholders and promotion of policy enhancements. The SAG was incorporated into the already existing state-level Kinship Advisory Council. This group meets three times per year in Columbus, with approximately ten people in attendance and others participating on the phone. Staff members from three of the Fostering Connection Kinship Navigator grant counties have participated in these meetings, along with the PCSAO director. The agenda traditionally involves updates on state-level activity, advocacy work with regard to kinship supports (legislation, budgeting, etc) and presentations by special guests.

*SAG/Kinship Advisory Council Members:*

<i>PCSAO</i>	<i>Family &amp; Children First Councils</i>	<i>PCSAs</i>
<i>Children's Defense Fund</i>	<i>Area Agency on Aging</i>	<i>Kin Navigators</i>
<i>University system</i>	<i>KCGs</i>	<i>ODJFS</i>

Through the participation of the Kinship Navigator counties, the Kinship Advisory Council receives regular updates regarding the Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator grant activities, including research and evaluation updates. The SAG has involved the Kinship Navigator counties in broader state level discussions but has thus far not offered specific advice or feedback to the Kinship Navigator grantee group. The participants are still determining the best relationship between the SAG and grantee counties.

### Community Engagement and Mapping

By February 2010, all Kinship Navigator grantee counties had begun to educate and collaborate with community partners around their Kinship Navigator programs, recognizing that these efforts are needed to continue throughout the life of the project. Key lessons learned regarding early engagement of community partners include:

- ★ The importance of initiating discussions about developing services not currently available for kinship caregivers: key services include legal services, respite programming, social activities and events for families, and support groups. Further exploration will indicate whether these efforts have resulted in development or enhancement of these services.
- ★ The importance of building relationships: in particular, identifying key individuals from local agencies to establish direct linkages to services for kinship caregivers.
- ★ Kinship Navigator is a community program: everyone needs to invest and be involved in it, building relationships with other resources and community providers and leaders, need to ‘partner, partner, partner’.
- ★ The importance of having Kinship Navigator staff that are knowledgeable about community resources.

*Key Community Partners:  
Family and Children First Councils  
Mental Health,  
Schools, Job and Family Services, Faith-  
based services, Legal Services*

#### COMMUNITY MAPPING

In an effort to create an integrated, comprehensive system of services and supports for kinship families, grantees assessed community capacity to support kinship caregivers. A few key characteristics of the community mapping process include the following:

- ★ The approach is rooted in community building and community organizational efforts to understand assets and resources that can be used for system building.
- ★ The process is intended to help the counties identify assets and resources that can be used for system building, as an alternative to processes that assess the needs or deficits of local communities.
- ★ More than yielding a resource guide, the process itself connects individuals in communities and encourages stakeholders to look at community assets (local institutions, community-serving organizations, individuals and groups of people).
- ★ The process leads to deeper understanding of community and opportunities/challenges within the community, strengthened relationships, discovery of unknown resources and assets.
- ★ In this process, there is an understanding that relationships are central; there is a need to work across typical boundaries to develop shared visions, goals, strategies and outcomes.



During the February 2010 Kinship Navigator in-person meeting, the evaluation team led the group through a community mapping exercise to identify existing resources for kinship caregivers and develop a plan for enhancing relationships with local partners. Through small group discussions, KN staff and county representatives had conversations about their existing community environment, potential efforts to utilize this process, as well as how to involve kinship caregivers in the process and a brainstorming session of potential community assets. These conversations were intended to set groundwork for each county to continue on their own. In future conversations with sites, HSRI will explore if this mapping process occurred in any of the Kinship Navigator sites and determine the outcomes of these efforts.

## Implementation Reflections

This report is designed to help the Kinship Navigator programs be as effective as possible during the final months of the grant period and to foster successful continuation and/or replication of Kinship Navigator programs in the future. Noteworthy progress has occurred in six key areas; these are summarized below, along with recommended next steps.

- ★ *Training and Community Orientation:* Regardless of the experience of individuals selected to serve as Kinship Navigators, these individuals should receive training on the role and responsibility of the Kinship Navigator. Further, it is important that child welfare staff and other community partners receive an orientation regarding the Kinship Navigator program and referral process.
- ★ *Local Advisory Group:* The LAG can be a very useful component of a Kinship Navigator program, but, in the first half of the grant, this component appears to have been underutilized. Where counties seem to lack clarity regarding the primary role and function of the LAG, this should be promptly addressed.
- ★ *Structure of the Kinship Navigator Program:* Two viable structures have been implemented in the seven Ohio counties: *internal* Kinship Navigators who are located within the child welfare agency and *external* Kinship Navigators located within local provider agencies. These two approaches will continue to operate and evolve, and evaluators will continue to explore whether these two structures result in different outputs and outcomes for kinship families.
- ★ *Services to Individual Kinship Caregivers:* In the first half of the grant, Kinship Navigator programs have reached out and served a large number of individual kinship families by providing I&R, case management, and support group facilitation. This has been a primary focus of the program and represents a real success.
- ★ *Supports and Services:* Under this grant, the Kinship Navigators have had expanded capacity to help individual caregivers access a variety of services and supports, which in turn enables caregivers to continue to care for children.
- ★ *Outreach:* In the first half of this grant, Kinship Navigators conducted numerous outreach activities to inform and educate the community about the services provided by the Kinship Navigator program. Further efforts should be made in this area, to not only spread information more thoroughly but also to generate community support at both policy and service delivery levels.

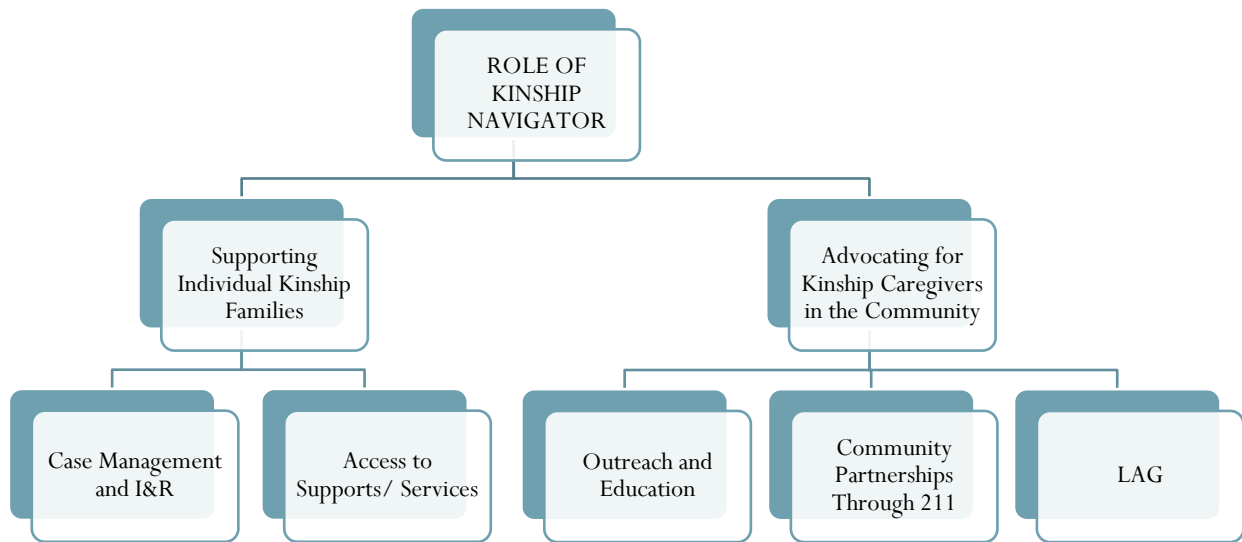
It is important to remember that this report summarizes information gathered in the first half of the grant period. Since that time, Kinship Navigators have continued to work on both the individual and the community levels. Through further site visits and surveys, the evaluation team will continue to examine how Kinship Navigator programs enhance the supports provided to individual caregivers as well as encourage the development of new supports through community education and collaboration. The final evaluation report will assess progress toward desired outputs and outcomes, contributing to the understanding of the overall success of the Fostering Connections Kinship Navigator program in Ohio.

# PROGRAM PROFILES

Within the first months of 2010, the seven Kinship Navigator programs began to provide supportive services to kinship families under the Fostering Connections grant. This section discusses the key components of the Kinship Navigator service delivery model, providing a description of practice; where possible, this information is supplemented by qualitative data from KIDS<sup>2</sup>. In this chapter we describe both the commonalities and variations in ways that the Kinship Navigator programs serve kinship caregivers. The latter part of this chapter also describes the impact of the local juvenile court on Kinship Navigator programs and highlights the advocacy and leadership role of PCSAO.

The diagram below presents the roles and responsibilities of Kinship Navigators, as laid out in Ohio’s Fostering Connection proposal. This diagram frames the subsequent description of how Navigators serve and support kinship caregivers.

*“Don’t recreate the wheel, find the wheel and send them to it”  
“Help them navigate the system”*



## Supporting Individual Kinship Families

Kinship Navigator programs in the seven counties are similarly structured, with a designated person or persons who are responsible for working directly with kinship caregivers to assess their needs and to ensure that these needs are addressed. The Kinship Navigator interacts with individual families in three main ways: offering information and referral, providing more intensive case management services, and facilitating ongoing group supports. Each of these is described below.

### INFORMATION AND REFERRALS CALLS

Some families come to the Kinship Navigator with relatively few needs, requiring only a brief interaction with the Kinship Navigator program to obtain needed information and referrals (I&R) to community resources. In the period of February 2010 to February 2011, in the seven Kinship Navigator counties, I&R was provided to 370 families; the range among counties was 0 to 23 I&R calls per county, with an average of six calls per month. Table 6 below shows the types of needs identified in the I&R calls and the number of calls received for each.

<sup>2</sup> KIDS data is reported on data collected through March 31, 2011.

Table 6: Non-Case Management I&R calls handled by Kinship Navigator:  
Information Provided to Caller (February 2010 – Feb 2011)

Legal Services	77
Food/Clothing/Other Basic Need	70
Becoming a kinship caregiver	67
Financial Supports (including OWF)	61
Grandparents Rights	57
Other Community Provider Services/ Contact Info	52
Support Groups/Counseling	51
Utilities Assistance	24
Other Resources	20
Medical	19
School/Education	18
Shelter/Housing Services	9
Childcare	9
Visitation	4
Respite	1

#### CASE MANAGED CASES

While some kinship families simply need I&R, other families require more in-depth involvement from the Kinship Navigator. For these families, the Navigator assesses the family’s needs and then provides ongoing case management, helping them ‘navigate’ the system. Families with ongoing contact with the Navigator are referred to as ‘case managed’ cases. Between February 2010 and the end of February 2011<sup>3</sup>, the KIDS system collected case-level data on 388 cases (families).

*Referral Source:* As can be seen in Table 7, below, 59% of the case managed cases came from Children Services, significantly more than from any other referral source (i.e. other kinship caregivers, other community provider, DJFS, Court, local 211).

Table 7: Referral Source

	Cumulative Feb 2010 – Feb 2011	
	Number	Percent
Children Services	196	59%
Other Kinship Caregiver	26	8%
Other Community Provider	24	7%
DJFS	18	5%
Court System	16	5%
Local 211/I&R Agency	1	< 1%
Other	52	16%
Total	334	100%

<sup>3</sup> Of the 388 cases for which data was collected in KIDS, 334 families provided informed consent allowing for further use of data on these cases.

*Family Needs:* Prior to the Fostering Connections grant, the seven Kinship Navigator counties conducted kinship family assessments rather informally and inconsistently; some counties used a formal assessment tool (i.e. the FINS<sup>4</sup> assessment process), while others informally gathered information from the family regarding their current situation. However, inadvertently, with the development of KIDS, a more formal assessment process for case managed families was created. The initial assessment in KIDS provides data needed for the evaluation, but also provides the Kinship Navigator with information to assess the needs of the family. KIDS requires the entry of information about the referral source, the kinship family and the children living in this family, as well as requiring use of the Family Resource Scale, which assesses caregiver needs.

Table 8 below summarizes the initial needs of kinship families receiving case management. The evaluation will examine the extent to which the needs of these families are met over time.

Table 8: Type of Service NEEDS for Kinship Families at Initial Assessment  
(Cumulative Feb 2010 – Feb 2011) N=334 kinship families

Job and Family Services (83%)	Medicare (32%)	Employment Assistance (13%)
Medicaid/ Healthy Start (81%)	KPI (31%)	Recreation (11%)
Financial/ Cash Assistance (72%)	Child Behavioral Health (MH/SA) (28%)	Transportation (10%)
Medical Care – child (67%)	I&R 211 hotline(28%)	Help Me Grow (8%)
Legal Assistance/ Custody (63%)	Shelter/ Housing (25%)	Caregiver Behavioral Health (MH/SA) (6%)
Children Services (55%)	Juvenile Court (23%)	Special Need Services (MR/DD) (6%)
Medical Care – caregiver (55%)	Child Support (20%)	Early Intervention (6%)
Food Stamps (54%)	Benefit Bank (19%)	Respite (5%)
Support Groups (49%)	Utilities (19%)	Area Agency on Aging (5%)
Food (Pantry or site) (48%)	Short-term Assistance (17%)	Family and Children First Council (4%)
Clothing (47%)	Education (MFE, IEP, Tutoring) (17%)	Domestic Violence (1%)
	Child Care (16% <sup>5</sup> )	Ombudsman (1%)

*Type of Contact:* As Kinship Navigators work closely with case managed kinship families, they may interact with the families in a variety of ways. They may initially meet at the Kinship Navigator office, but subsequently talk over the phone or meet at the kinship home. The Navigator may also make collateral calls to others at the request of the caregiver. Table 9 summarizes the type and number of each contact.

Table 9: Contacts between Kinship Navigators and Kinship Caregiver  
(Families with Follow Up Complete = 179)

	Total Contacts	Average contacts per family
Home Visit	342 (22%)	1.9
Office Visit	271 (18%)	1.5
Telephone Contact	687 (45%)	3.8
Advocacy on Behalf of Kinship Caregiver	83 (5%)	0.5
Other	149 (10%)	0.8
Total	1,532	8.5

#### GROUP SUPPORTS

The third way that Kinship Navigators support kinship families is by creating opportunities for caregivers to attend kinship support groups. During the first year of the project, development of new support groups (four counties) or

<sup>4</sup> FINS- Family In Need of Services

<sup>5</sup> Type of contact is not a required field in KIDS, and thus the number of contacts may be greater than is reflected in Table 8.

enhancement of existing support groups (three counties) was a major system level focus for all Kinship Navigator sites. Eighty-seven support groups were held between the beginning of February 2010 and the end of February 2011; average attendance was 12 people, with a maximum of 64 people in one group.

*Methods to Encourage Participation:* Counties describe several factors that encourage participation in support groups: day care, activities for kids, food (especially homemade baked goods), speakers (i.e. Job and Family Services, fire dept, tutoring, benefit bank, tax information), a cohesive group of attendees, consistent time and location, reminders in flyers and newsletters, involving kinship caregivers in setting the agenda, and offering attendees opportunities during the support groups to share resources with each other.

*Facilitation:* Sites varied significantly in who led the Kinship Navigator support groups. Two counties had outside facilitators (i.e. a therapist in community). In one county, support groups are lead by the kinship caregivers themselves, while in another county, the support group is co-lead by the Kinship Navigator and the kinship caregivers. In another county, the Kinship Navigator encouraged the caregivers to take the lead, but found it difficult to get the caregivers to step forward and lead the group without taking over the meeting. As a result, the Kinship Navigator remained involved by setting the agenda and facilitating the meeting (having an agenda helps decrease the individual story telling).

*Sustainability:* Several Kinship Navigators indicated a desire to have the caregivers take responsibility for leading the group so that it can continue after the grant ends. Kinship Navigators in several counties expressed a desire to have the support group become a 501c3 entity; by gaining the tax-exempt status, these groups would be eligible to apply for sustainability grants.

*Support Group Successes (as reported by Kinship Navigators):*

- ★ Rich discussions about service needs and availability of community resources leading to other activities being planned, such as trips and events.
- ★ The development of kinship caregiver leadership within groups.
- ★ Development of a cohesive of group of people who regularly attend, creating a support system for these families.

*Support Group Challenges (as reported by Kinship Navigators):*

- ★ Attendance: several counties struggled to get caregivers to attend the support groups at first, stating that caregivers indicated that they did not have time or the need to attend the group meetings. One county offered a \$100 gift card at the beginning to encourage participation. Another county sent a survey to all child-only TANF families to find out why they were not coming (e.g., was the time inconvenient?).
- ★ Facilitation: Support groups in several counties struggled with group dynamics, especially the tendency for some caregivers to dominate the conversation when telling their personal stories, rather than creating a sharing experience for all.

Overall, Kinship Navigators expressed that they want to continue to focus on strengthening their support groups by increasing attendance, making plans for sustainability, and continuing to work to develop caregiver leadership roles in facilitating these groups.

*RESPIRE: While not explored explicitly during the site visits, it is clear that respite is a valuable support for kinship caregivers:*

- *Four counties indicated some respite services are available; for example, one county had respite available at a local church once a month*
- *Three counties indicated a desire to develop respite supports for their caregivers*
- *Formal and informal nature of respite: available at a community crisis house (although kinship caregivers are not always eligible), purchase of YMCA membership for caregivers or their children, use of community centers with education programs (i.e. free after-school programs), provided by foster parents, scheduled kinship group events/activities*

## ACCESS TO SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

In supporting individual kinship families in the three ways discussed above, Kinship Navigators depend heavily on access to concrete services and community resources. A significant benefit of the Fostering Connections grant is the ability to use grant funds to meet the needs of the case management families, as described below.

A wide variety of services and supports are provided by the Kinship Navigator program to address the needs of individual caregivers. These include:

- ★ Gift cards, vouchers, and purchase orders.
- ★ Purchases of hard goods or services (i.e. car repair, furniture, home modification/safety equipment).
- ★ Reimbursement for legal fees (i.e. pro se filing).
- ★ Transportation: transporting caregivers or children themselves or vouchers (i.e. buses, taxis).
- ★ Access to food and clothing banks.
- ★ Respite programming.

While most child welfare agencies are able to occasionally provide some of the above mentioned supports to kinship caregivers (i.e. to address an immediate crisis), the additional resources made available through the Fostering Connections grant have enabled the Kinship Navigator to provide a broader array of services than might otherwise be possible. In particular, the grant funding has:

- ★ Created a pot of flexible funds in each county designated specifically to support kinship caregivers.
- ★ Allowed resources to be used to support a broader population of caregivers, including caregivers who are not involved in the child welfare system.
- ★ Encouraged the development of contracts with local providers: two Kinship Navigator programs describe contracts they developed with community providers to create services specifically for kinship caregivers; these included a contract with a pediatric/mental health facility to provide direct linkage to services for kinship caregivers and a contract with a mental health therapist to counsel kinship families and children.
- ★ Provided funding for the Kinship Navigator positions; in turn, these Navigators are able to find creative solutions to address the kinship caregiver needs. As one Kinship Navigator described; through “creative ideas and working together, (the Kinship Navigator can work) in the community to resolve the issues that families are facing, such as employment and financial assistance.” One Kinship Navigator described how she was able to advocate on behalf of a kinship family to obtain a sizable donation for car repairs.

While the Fostering Connections grant has provided vital resources for addressing the needs of kinship caregivers, Kinship Navigators describe several areas for future development of services and supports for kinship caregivers:

- ★ More activities for families and kids, in addition to support groups (i.e. baseball games, circus, zoo, which in turn provide respite for the kinship caregiver).
- ★ Legal support money for court fees, use of agency attorneys for guardianship cases, and finding attorneys; this was a service that was most often mentioned as needing development in most of the Kinship Navigator sites.



★ In general, more financial resources to address the needs of kinship caregivers - ‘there is never enough money.’

In summary, the focus of Kinship Navigator efforts has been to assess the needs of the caregiver and provide I&R and/or additional support as needed. In this capacity, the Kinship Navigator is able to work with these families on an ongoing basis to help them access services and supports in the community that enable kinship placement viability. Kinship Navigators describe how they are both able to listen to the caregiver, advocate on their behalf, and link them with services and supports they or their children need. Kinship Navigators feel that the Fostering Connections grant has allowed them to think creatively in addressing the needs of these families and, in turn, support these placements. This has contributed to more stable placements, and sometimes, avoidance of involvement in the child welfare system altogether.

### Kinship Family Survey Results

To understand the kinship caregiver’s perspective regarding their interactions with the Kinship Navigator, case managed kinship families are asked to complete a family survey after they have been working with the Navigator for a period of time<sup>6</sup>. The Kinship Navigator Family Surveys include a series of questions asking about the caregivers’ perspective on family well-being, their satisfaction with the Kinship Navigator program and staff, and their feelings about the Kinship Navigator program’s impact on their ability to provide long term or permanent care for the kinship children in their home. Most questions are answered with either a ‘yes’, ‘somewhat’ or ‘no’.

Table 10 provides the answers to some of these questions so far. The findings indicate that Kinship Navigators have enabled kinship caregivers to continue to care for their children by listening to them and addressing their current needs. Overall, caregivers appear to be quite satisfied with the help they received from the Kinship Navigator, and a large proportion believe that their family has been generally healthier and happier as a result. The evaluation team will be exploring these findings in conjunction with other outcomes and process variables and will include those findings in our final report.

Table 10: Family Survey Responses (n = 174)

Question	Number of responses	Percentage of each response		
		Yes	Somewhat	No
<i>Did you feel better after talking to the Kinship Navigator?</i>	172	93.6%	2.9%	3.5%
<i>Did the Kinship Navigator help you to get what you needed?</i>	171	85.4%	10.5%	4.1%
<i>Did the Kinship Navigator make being a kinship caregiver easier?</i>	168	88.7%	6.5%	4.8%
<i>Did the Kinship Navigator help the child(ren) be able to live with you permanently?</i>	152	61.8%	5.3%	32.9%
<i>Overall, do you feel better able to care for the child(ren)?</i>	166	86.7%	8.4%	4.8%
<i>Overall, do you feel your family is healthier now?</i>	165	82.4%	13.9%	3.6%
<i>Overall, do you feel your family is happier now?</i>	164	78.7%	15.2%	6.1%
<i>Overall, are you satisfied with the help you got from the Kinship Navigator?</i>	171	92.4%	4.1%	3.5%

<sup>6</sup> Families are asked to complete the family survey when a KIDS case managed case is marked as closed, no contact history has been entered for over 30 days, or more than six months have elapsed since date of referral.

## Advocating for Kinship Caregiving in the Community

While working directly with individual caregivers is a major piece of the work Kinship Navigators do, the Kinship Navigators are also responsible for program and policy development in their local community, including educating the community about the existence and needs of kinship caregivers and developing a broader array of supports and services for this population. This section of the report examines efforts made in this area, including outreach and education, developing community partnerships through building the 211 system, and creating the local advisory groups.

### OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

All seven Kinship Navigator sites have made serious efforts to educate the community, both families and providers, about the existence of supports for kinship caregivers. Among the approaches used during the implementation period were the following:

- ★ hosting community events or participating in events organized by other groups
- ★ establishing and maintaining support groups for kin caregivers
- ★ offering presentations and trainings at community organizations, or meetings of providers, reaching such important groups as school staff, mandatory reporters, church leadership, and legal aid
- ★ developing fliers, brochures, and information packets to reach providers and kin alike
- ★ utilizing media coverage: radio time or newspaper for advertising, publicity (an Ohio family from one Fostering Connections county was named Grandparent of the Year)
- ★ developing or expanding newsletters specifically for kin caregivers
- ★ expanding website information (PCSAO)
- ★ developing billboards

The KIDS data system compiles information on the specific number and types of outreach efforts that have been conducted in the seven Kinship Navigator counties. From this data, it is evident that outreach is most often provided during meetings and through the distribution of written materials about the program, while other methods include phone calls, presentations and press releases. Table 11 indicates the number of outreach activities conducted by the main result of the activity for each activity.

Table 11: Number of Outreach Activities conducted by Main Goal of Activity (Feb 2010-Feb 2011)

Promotion of Kinship Navigator program	165
Provision of information/technical assistance	15
Advocating for kinship caregiving community	8
Collaborating with other community partners to develop / enhance services for kinship families	80
Other	15
Total outreach activities which this data is available	274
Total outreach activities	283

Most notable in these findings is that the outreach efforts appear to primarily involve efforts to inform community members about the program, while about half as many activities resulted in collaboration to develop or enhance services for kinship caregivers. This is not surprising given that the findings reflect activities conducted in the first year of the project. It will be interesting to explore if this trend shifts as there is less need for education and, as a result, programs may shift to focus on developing new services for caregivers.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS SURVEY

To gain a better understanding of the community’s perception and knowledge of the Kinship Navigator program (and the impact of the outreach and education efforts described above), a community survey<sup>7</sup> was completed by Kinship Navigators, LAG members and community partners in the spring of 2011.

Table 12 provides an overview of the responses to a few of the questions included on this survey. While most Kinship Navigators feel there are adequate services in their communities for caregivers, it appears there is a desire for continued education and outreach efforts. LAG members and community partners vary in their knowledge of and communication with the program; it is interesting to note that almost forty percent of community partners surveyed expressed a desire for information about the program, with almost twenty-five percent of the LAG members expressing the same opinion. In terms of frequency of communication, it is unclear what the ideal level of communication would be, although one would expect to see more communication with LAG members than community partners, which does not appear to be the case.

Table 12: System Network Analysis Survey: Questions on Perception of Kinship Population and Navigator Program

1) How available and accessible are services for kinship caregivers in your community?	Kinship Navigator Perspective (n=7)	
Very Available/accessible	4 Counties	
Moderately available/accessible	3 Counties	
Inadequately available/accessible	0 Counties	
2) How knowledgeable do you feel with regard to the needs of kinship families in your community?	LAG (n=45)	CP* (n=43)
★ Very knowledgeable – I am well versed in this populations needs and could be regarded as a resource for information about kinship families	6 (13%)	6 (14%)
★ Knowledgeable – I am comfortable with my level of understanding of this population and their needs	28 (62%)	20 (47%)
★ Somewhat knowledgeable – I know something about this population and their needs, but might like more experience or training	7 (16%)	13 (30%)
★ Not very knowledgeable – I do not know much about this population and their needs	4 (9%)	4 (9%)
3) How often and in what ways do you communicate with the Kinship Navigator program staff?	LAG (n=46)	CP* (n=42)
★ Frequently (i.e., almost daily or more than once per week)	2 (4%)	4 (10%)
★ Regularly (i.e., weekly or several times per month, but with some regularity)	17 (37%)	15 (36%)
★ Occasionally (i.e., not at regular intervals or not very often)	16 (35%)	12 (29%)
★ Rarely	8 (17%)	7 (17%)
★ Never	3 (7%)	4 (10%)

\* Community Partner

Several of these survey questions will be repeated toward the end of the grant cycle, enabling the evaluation team to examine if community partners and LAG members feel more informed over time and explore the impact of outreach and education efforts conducted later in the project.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH 211

Another goal of the Kinship Navigator program is to improve county-level support systems for kinship caregivers through increased communication and coordination among relevant organizations and groups in the community. The federal Fostering Connections grant announcement specifically mentioned the importance of a centralized Information

<sup>7</sup> These questions were asked as part of the System Network Analysis survey.

& Referral (I&R) service for the county, which would reduce duplication and fragmentation of services available to kinship caregivers and increase referrals between community agencies. Early in the project, Kinship Navigators began to develop or work with existing centralized I&R systems in their communities, often known as 211 systems. In Ohio, this service is often provided by the local United Way or a similar community organization; by dialing “211”, community members can obtain I&R for a wide range of services in their communities. Kinship Navigators were expected to create a linkage to the local 211 and assure that the 211 system was familiar enough with the Kinship Navigator program to make appropriate referrals, especially of families not currently involved in the child welfare system. Progress has varied:

- ★ Five counties have centralized I&R providers (211), most of whom began coordinating with 211 providers by May of 2010.
  - Four counties have met with and provided information and informal or formal training to 211 providers.
  - A fifth county was working to plan coordination with a 211 due to launch in late spring/summer 2010.
  - By contrast, only one comparison county had a local 211 system.
- ★ Of the five counties with a 211 system, two counties intended to provide pre-screening at 211 to identify kin caregivers for referral to Kin Navigator program.
- ★ Three counties have a 211 representative on their LAG
- ★ One county is providing a small incentive payment to their local 211 provider to ensure coordination and provision of evaluation data regarding referrals.
- ★ The two counties with no current or pending 211 system have been unable to identify resources to launch such a service thus far. Both continue to advocate for this resource, but cite budget limitations, lack of leadership for the effort, and the more rural nature of the counties as challenges.

Beginning in May 2010, four of the Kinship Navigator program sites were able to collect tallies of referrals from their 211 provider. From this data, it is quite clear that few referrals are being made from 211 to the Kinship Navigator program. Of over 85,000 calls to 211 in four counties, only 130 referrals were made to Kinship Navigator, not nearly as many as the project sites had anticipated, indicating that this collaboration has not yet developed into a fruitful relationship. In recent conversations during Kinship Navigator meetings, it appears that there are no significant efforts planned to continue to focus on the development of the 211/Kinship Navigator linkages.

#### LOCAL ADVISORY GROUP (LAG)

As discussed above, each Kinship Navigator program developed a Local Advisory Group (LAG) to collaboratively support the creation and ongoing operation of the Kinship Navigator project; the broader goal of the LAG was to engage community stakeholders in identifying services and supports in the community for kinship caregivers, and develop a greater awareness of kinship family needs. As describe above, in the spring of 2011, the evaluation team conducted a survey of the Kinship Navigators and LAG members in each county, exploring the perceptions of the role of the LAG in their community. Table 13 provides the results of this inquiry. The categories used in this table were created by the evaluation team, based on conversations among Kinship Navigators regarding the range of responsibilities of the LAG.

In examining Table 13, it is first interesting to note the variation in the perception of the role of the LAG across the seven sites, perhaps indicating that the LAGs do play different roles in different counties. It is also interesting to note that both Kinship Navigators and LAG members most commonly view reporting, advertising, and building resource networks as the role of the LAG, with advocacy less often cited. This may reflect the view of the LAGs role as it is first being formed: to share information about the program and build a network of supports for kinship caregivers. It will be interesting to see if, over time, the LAGs take on more of an advocacy role. A final notable trend is the number of LAG

members (13 or 29%) who indicated that the role of the LAG is ‘unknown’, again perhaps a reflection of the earlier stages of the project. As stated above, the evaluation team will explore if these trends change as the project draws to a close.

Table 13: What is the Primary Role and Focus of LAG?

	Reporting	Advocacy	Advising	Building Resource network	Other	Unknown
<b>Ashtabula</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)	1					
LAG Response (n=11)	4		1	2		4
<b>Clark</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)	1	1				
LAG Response (n=11)	1	2		3		5
<b>Crawford</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)					1 (501c3 status)	
LAG Response (n=3)				1		2
<b>Hardin</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)			1			
LAG Response (n=6)		1	3			2
<b>Lorain</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)				1		
LAG Response (n=7)	2	1	1	3		
<b>Portage</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)				1		
LAG Response (n=5)	1		3	1		
<b>Richland</b>						
Kinship Navigator Response (n=1)	1		1			
LAG Response (n=2)	1			1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 Kinship Navigator</b>	<b>1 Kinship Navigator</b>	<b>2 Kinship Navigator</b>	<b>2 Kinship Navigator</b>	<b>1 Kinship Navigator</b>	<b>13 LAG</b>
	<b>9 LAG</b>	<b>4 LAG</b>	<b>8 LAG</b>	<b>11 LAG</b>		

“Reporting” - the LAG has primarily received reports of Kinship Navigator progress

“Building a resource network” for kinship caregivers via making the community more aware of service needs, availability, and leveraging relationships to grow or create services to meet needs

“Advocacy” for Kinship Navigator program (promotion, PR)

“Advising” Kinship Navigator program (such as in direction for development, assistance with implementation)

In talking with Kinship Navigators, there are mixed impressions on the degree to which the LAG has been able to move the Kinship Navigator program forward. Some Kinship Navigator programs report they were able to build on relationships developed through their LAG; these counties report that the LAG members who represent community providers are now more engaged in understanding the Kinship Navigator program and supporting kinship caregivers more because of their participation in LAG. These counties report that their LAGs have so far been key to reaching out to community providers. Other Kinship Navigator programs have had more difficulty determining what the role of the LAG should be and getting consistent participation in the group.

### Balancing Kinship Navigator Roles: A Time Study

To complement the interviews and KIDS data profiled above regarding Kinship Navigator roles and responsibilities, in the fall of 2010, HSRI conducted a time study to document how Kinship Navigators spend their time. The data helps reveal the amount of time Navigators spend on various responsibilities, in particular, highlighting their time spent serving individual caregivers vs. advocating for caregivers in the community. The evaluation team worked with the Kinship Navigator staff to develop a list of core activities and to choose a set of dates that would allow staff to document a ‘typical’ week.

Twenty five staff from the seven project sites documented a total of 510.5 hours of time spent on Kinship Navigator tasks<sup>8</sup> over the period of one week<sup>9</sup>, an average of 73 hours per county<sup>10</sup>. As Chart 1 below shows, the largest allotment of time, 39%, was spent on case management related tasks. Staff spent 21% of their Kinship Navigator time on documentation & data entry.

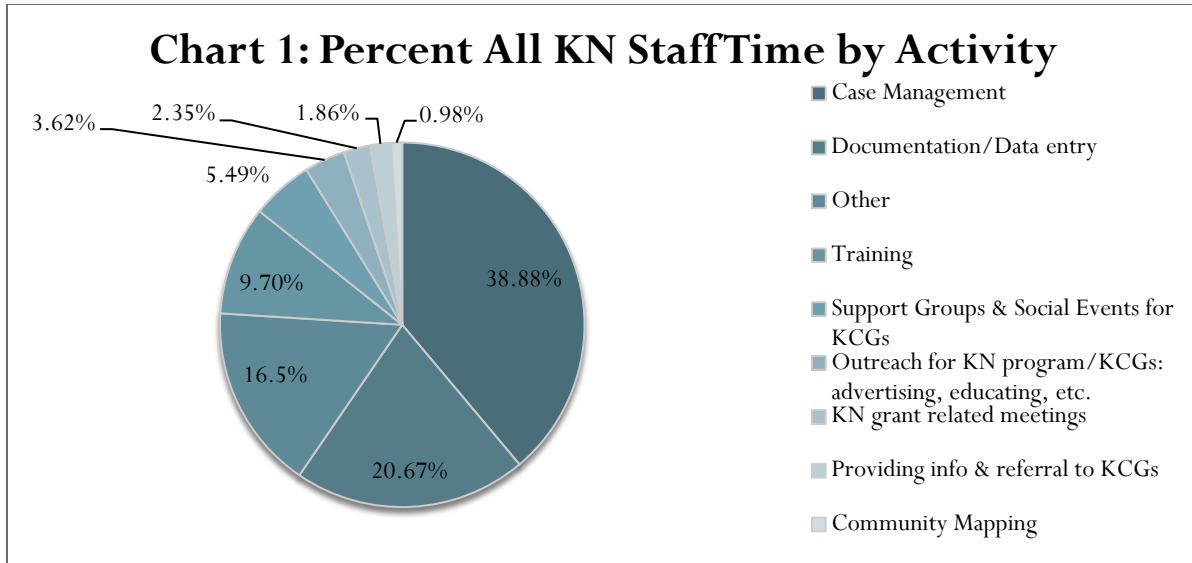
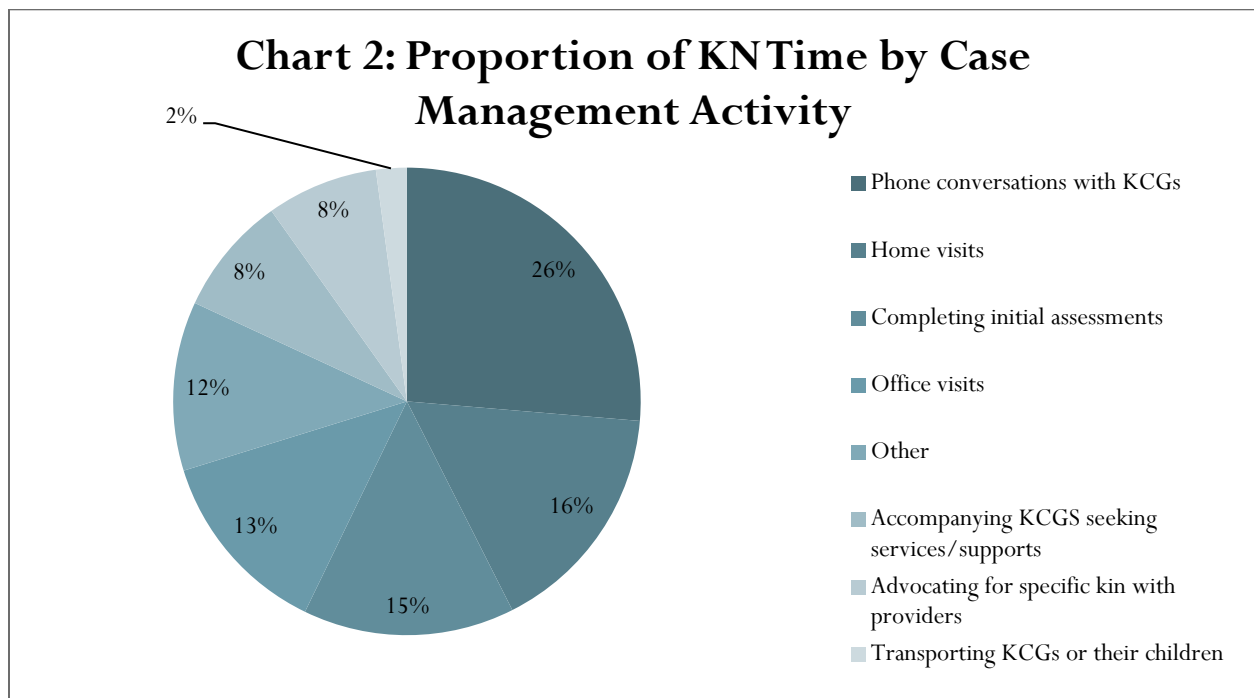


Chart 2 offers more detail about the time spent on the primary task, case management:



While this data simply provides a snapshot of a single week of time during the first year of the grant, it does suggest that Navigators were, at this point in the project, spending more of time providing services to individual caregivers, with

<sup>8</sup> Excluding time spent on non-Kinship Navigator related tasks.

<sup>9</sup> Staff chose one of three possible weeks in which to complete their time study – they were instructed to choose the most ‘typical’ week whenever possible.

<sup>10</sup> Program size and staffing level vary greatly by county.

less time spent conducting outreach and building community connections. The evaluation team will explore if there is a shift over the course of the grant, or if this represents the true nature of Kinship Navigators services over time.

## Other Kinship Navigator Program Components

In describing the Kinship Navigator programs in Ohio, two other topics are important to highlight: the role of the court in the lives of kinship families and efforts by the PCSAO to promote the programs. Both are described in more detail below

### A KEY PLAYER IN SERVING CAREGIVERS: THE COURT SYSTEM

One of the biggest challenges for kinship caregivers who have taken a permanent role in caring for their kin is gaining the legal status that enables them to make decisions for the children in their care. Kinship Navigators recognize one of the greatest needs for the kinship population is resources to help caregivers gain legal custody, which in turn enables them to not only make critical decisions, but also apply for financial supports which are otherwise unavailable to them. In discussing the Navigators interactions with their local court system, several issues emerge:

- ★ *Court stance on use of kinship families varies:* Interviewees in some counties expressed frustration that some courts are uncomfortable with children in the child welfare system being placed with kinship caregivers; these court systems would rather give custody to the child welfare agency and place the child in foster care than place a child with a kinship caregiver. In other counties, judges are referring caregivers to the Kinship Navigator program. Such wide variation in court practice has significant impact on the experience of caregivers in different counties pursuing custody of a child in their care. In general, there was a common feeling that there was a need for training of legal professionals regarding the Kinship Navigator program and the need to address inconsistencies in court decisions. PCSAO plans to bring these issues to the attention of the Supreme Court of Ohio for consideration.
- ★ *Desire to develop a broader array of legal supports for kinship families:* Legal support available to caregivers varies across the project sites. Some counties can reimburse for some legal support for kinship caregivers to get legal custody, or have attorneys on hand (either PCSA attorneys or pro bono services) to help caregivers obtain custody. Other counties express a frustration at the lack of legal supports available for kinship caregivers. Some have found creative ways around this (e.g., helping the family with utility bills through other funding streams to free up funds for the family to pay for legal services). The Fostering Connections grant has provided resources which can be used for helping caregivers obtain legal services.
- ★ *Need for education of caregivers on legal process and terminology.* The legal process is often confusing and intimidating for kinship care givers. Kinship Navigators help caregivers understand the system and may even attend court proceedings to make the process less daunting for these families.

### PCSAO EFFORT AT THE STATE LEVEL

Serving as the lead agency for the Ohio Fostering Connection Kinship Navigator grant, PCSAO has been active in not only providing ongoing project management and oversight of this grant, but also in continuing its history of advocating for a focus on supporting kinship caregivers at the state level. PCSAO has long played a leadership role in the area of kinship policy in Ohio and at the national level. PCSAO works to ensure a broad continuum of policy, services and supports for both kinship families outside of the child protective and judicial arenas, and those formally involved in those systems. Thus, it has been active with the kinship community, a variety of child and family serving systems, the media, policy makers, and state and county administrators. PCSAO wields its influence within the Ohio General Assembly and Ohio's Congressional delegation, educating and advocating for enhanced policy development related to kinship families.



In its role leading the grant, PCSAO has been active in disseminating information and promoting policy change that improves supports for kinship caregivers. As documented in the April 2011 Semi-Annual Kinship Navigator report, PCSAO has regularly highlighted the Kinship Navigator grant in a variety of venues:

- ★ Statewide Training and Outreach Activities – The Kinship Navigator counties presented a workshop about their programming at the annual PCSAO Conference on Oct. 7, 2010. Thirty individuals attended the workshop, with excellent evaluations.
- ★ As project manager of the Kin Navigator Project, PCSAO was invited to speak at the two day ProtectOhio IV-E Waiver retreat in March (90 child welfare professionals), focused on the waiver progress thus far. This provided an opportunity to review our trend to better identify and engage kin families for children in need – a key contributor to Ohio’s 42% Safe Reduction in Paid Foster/Group care.
- ★ In addition to sharing issues and activities related to kinship caregivers in the PCSAO electronic Weekly Update, the PCSAO Thanksgiving 2010 Progress Report highlighted kinship care; both are widely distributed and can be found on the PCSAO home page, <http://www.pcsao.org/>. Kinship was discussed at the PCSAO Executive Membership Strategic Planning meeting (50+ execs) in December, 2010. It was highlighted as a key to our good outcomes, in the Executive Membership (60+ execs) March 2011 meeting, focused on budget issues and child welfare reform. It is also highlighted in District meetings with county leadership (usually 15 or 20), at a New Execs Orientation (30 new or potential execs) and in various statewide committees.
- ★ Kinship has been highlighted with State policy makers – March 2011 PCSAO Annual Legislative Breakfast (50 State Legislative Offices attended, about half Members, and half lead staffers); also discussed in testimony with the Ohio House Health and Human Services Finance Subcommittee (6 legislators, 75 audience, media) and the full House Finance Committee (31 legislators, 75 audience, media), also during individual meetings with state Legislators.
- ★ PCSAO also had the pleasure to testify to the US Senate Finance Committee, at the invitation of Chairman Max Baucus (committee members, 40 national advocates in audience). The topic was to discuss Innovations in Child Welfare related to IV-E Waivers. The hearing afforded the opportunity to highlight the Fostering Connections Kin Navigator Grant in Ohio, and related enhanced services to kin caregivers as a key to better child outcomes.

## Program Profiles Reflections

Several themes emerge from this examination of Kinship Navigator activities:

- ★ SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES: Throughout the course of interviews with Kinship Navigators, it became apparent that the primary role of the Kinship Navigator is to support individual kinship caregivers and their families. Kinship Navigators have had contact with a significant number of families in the first year of the grant, providing I&R, case management, and support groups to a large number of caregivers in the seven Ohio counties. There is a strong belief that the Fostering Connections grant enabled these counties to provide such services to individual caregivers that would not have been possible otherwise: hard goods and services, financial support, staff positions have designated person to work with kinship caregivers.
- ★ ADVOCATING FOR KINSHIP CAREGIVERS IN THE COMMUNITY: The seven Kinship Navigator counties focused a considerable amount of attention in the early months of the project playing a policy/advocacy role by informing community members about the Kinship Navigator program and building relationships with local resources, and staff have continued to educate the community through presentations and media coverage. However, Kinship Navigator programs have been less successful in creating linkages to 211 systems and utilizing their LAGs to support the creation and ongoing operation of Kinship Navigator programs.



- ★ The time study supports this pattern, indicating that more of the Kinship Navigator time is spent supporting individual caregivers, compared to the time dedicated to building community awareness and resources around kinship supports.

After a period of several months of program development and enhancement, Kinship Navigator counties have well-established programs for supporting caregivers at the individual and system level. The evaluation team will continue to explore whether the focus of the programs shifts as the grant draws to a close and the need for sustainability becomes more pressing.

## APPENDIX A: OHIO KINSHIP NAVIGATOR LOGIC MODEL

Target Population		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kinship Caregivers (KCGs) of children with child welfare involvement</li> <li>KCGs of children not formally involved in child welfare</li> <li>Network of community agencies providing human services and informal supports</li> </ul>		
Problem/Need		
State and local public agencies	KCGs	Children in kinship care/in CW case
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient services for kinship families</li> <li>Economic status/state funding cuts (KPI, TANF, MH)</li> <li>Poorly linked services &amp; collaboration</li> <li>Multiple unrelated system access points</li> <li>Incomplete information on available supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial, physical, and emotional challenges of KCGs</li> <li>KCGs lack of awareness and access to needed supports</li> <li>Inadequate preparation of KCGs for meeting the needs of children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unnecessary use of FC</li> <li>Fewer resources available to kinship homes than to foster care</li> <li>Poorer outcomes for children in FC compared to kinship care</li> </ul>
Inputs/Resource		
<u>Population Demographics/Characteristics:</u>	<u>Kinship Navigator Program Characteristics and Capacity</u>	<u>Community/System Characteristics</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children population: race, age, child welfare status/history, child needs, sibling groups</li> <li>KCG population: race, age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing Kinship Navigator program staffing levels, configuration, activities</li> <li>Staff experience and skills (i.e. education, trainings, knowledge of community, FTM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing network of services &amp; supports</li> <li>Existing collaborative efforts, advocacy resources</li> <li>Existing I&amp;R function</li> </ul>
Case Level		System Level
Activities/Process	Needs Assessment (for case management cases) Case Management: referrals, advocacy, assistance in navigating and accessing community systems (i.e. respite, day care, clothing closets, food, and legal assistance), and interagency services planning/FTM. I&R for KCGs with few needs (non-case management cases) 'Being there for KCGs'/Relationship building: creating support network, creating trust, empowering KCGs, advocating	Acting as resource for human services professional (i.e. child welfare, mental health, TANF case managers) Develop relationship with individual community partners (i.e. employment specialist) Support to kinship caregiving community: trainings and skill-building events, support groups, speakers, family events, mailers, newsletter Outreach to inform broader community of Kinship Navigator program: mailers, rallies, newsletter, informal communications, presentations, training, other PR activities. Community mapping Kinship Navigator grantee meetings, LAG and SAG meetings Development of Centralized I&R
	# children & families receiving Kinship Navigator support Time spent by Kinship Navigator with kinship family Amount and types of services & supports received by kinship families in Kinship Navigator program %/# kin using power of attorney/caregiver affidavit	# agencies on collaborative group, quality of involvement # services and supports available to KCGs (hard services and soft services, requested and received) Availability of a Resource Directory # people contacting Kinship Navigator to learn about becoming a KCG New system linkages (measure of relationships among agencies, community mapping used as baseline) # active support groups and other activities for KCGs # media efforts (i.e. press releases, billboards, other media efforts) Time spent doing non-case level activities
Outputs		

	Case Level	System Level
Outcomes	<p>Well-Being Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KCGs increased satisfaction with caregiver role: perceptions of empowerment, self-esteem, support system</li> <li>Diversion from PCSA (difficult to measure, track PCSA referrals, self-report, changes in PCSA stats?)</li> </ul> <p>Safety Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in number of re-reports: Safety Outcome 1.2</li> <li>Decrease re-entry to out of home care: Safety Outcome 2.3</li> </ul> <p>Permanency Outcome 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shorter time away from biological home</li> <li>Decrease # days and children placed in foster care</li> <li>Shorter time between removal and permanency</li> <li>Increase proportion of KCGs taking permanent custody of child (LC, LG, PC-adoption)</li> </ul> <p>Permanency Outcome 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease # changes in kinship placements (disruptions)</li> <li>Increase # children placed with &amp; exiting to kin</li> <li>Increase time KCGs remain committed to caregiving</li> </ul> <p>Disproportionality: Demographic variables such as race will be use in the exploration of impact of Kinship Navigator on child welfare outcomes. If possible, we will also look at families receiving Kinship Navigator services and how their experience may vary based on race.</p>	<p><u>High-level outcomes:</u> More difficult to impact and measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teen pregnancy, teen parenting, employment, behavioral issues</li> <li>Improved well-being (medical care, mental health, education (enrolled, attending, on track)Medicaid card</li> <li>Community Awareness</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINSHIP NAVIGATOR COMPARISON COUNTIES IN 2007<sup>1</sup>

Characteristic	Comparison County						
	Allen	Brown	Butler	Columbiana	Fairfield	Greene	Jackson
# of people	105,233	43,956	357,888	108,698	141,318	154,656	33,314
% rural	82.2%	97.0%	87.2%	94.5%	91.7%	78.2%	98.9%
# of grandparents raising grandchildren per 1,000	7.8	8.7	7.7	7.1	5.0	6.1	9.7
% total population under 18 years of age	24.7%	25.0%	25.0%	21.9%	25.0%	21.8%	24.1%
% population under 18 living in poverty	18.2%	20.6%	14.3%	22.7%	10.2%	11.3%	23.7%
% children in custody who had a relative assume legal and permanent custody	7.0%	0.0%	13.6%	12.4%	1.7%	5.0%	8.1%

<sup>1</sup>With the exception of the proportion of children living in poverty, which was calculated for the year 2005.