

STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE  
**5.0 - KINSHIP SERVICES**

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**5.0 KINSHIP SERVICES PROGRAM STATEMENT**

A kinship connection is someone who has a positive relationship with a child by blood or circumstance. Kinship ties can provide support and be a resource for the family and child. To reduce risk to children, kinship connections can be utilized for multiple reasons, such as, but not limited to: respite, transportation, mentoring and placement. Kinship connections help reduce the trauma and stress to the child and family; reduce child abuse and neglect; maintain connections to family and community; increase the possibility of reunification; and achieve permanency and stability.

To be most effective in reducing the trauma and stress to the child, it is best when a kinship connection is located in the same community as the family or as close to the community as possible. Whenever utilizing a kinship connection, it is important that the family's and child's comfort level with the relationship be considered.

For kinship connections to be supportive and effective, the agency should work with the kinship family to determine their needs and respond to their requests. Services and supportive resources may include, but not be limited to: recreational, respite, training, medical, educational, psychological, and financial.

Kinship services are family-centered, maximizing the level to which children are cared for by those with whom they have a significant relationship. Kinship services build on the strengths of families by identifying individuals who are willing to support the birth parents, helping parents regain confidence and stability, and be parent mentors in providing care to the children.

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**5.1 IDENTIFYING KINSHIP CONNECTIONS**

**Council on Accreditation Standards**

The Council on Accreditation Standards S21 (Foster and Kinship Services); S21.24 (Kinship Family Assessment); S21.28 (Kinship Care Homes) and G9 (Service Delivery) link to and support Standard 5.1 *Identifying Kinship Connections*.

**Administrative Code**

The Ohio Administrative Code Rule 5101:2-39-073 (Kinship Care, Family Preservation, Supportive Services) addresses Standard 5.1 *Identifying Kinship Connections*.

**I. Philosophy**

Child and Family Services Agencies (CFSAs) believe it is in the child's best interest to locate and utilize kinship connections. This helps reduce the stress and trauma and aid in increasing support to the child and family. Kinship resources:

- provide CFSAs an opportunity to partner with families and communities to build on strengths, diversity, and resources;
- provide CFSAs an opportunity to work with the family as a cohesive unit whenever possible;
- strengthen families to prevent unnecessary separation;
- reduce the trauma experienced by children who would otherwise be placed with persons they do not know;
- reinforce children's sense of identity and self-esteem which comes from knowing their family's culture and history;
- facilitate children's connections to their siblings and strengthen the ability of families to give children the support they need; and
- decrease the number of placement disruptions.

Locating kinship connections begins at the initial contact and continues throughout the life of the case to assure the greatest involvement and support for all family members.

**II. Outcome**

Every child and family referred to the CFSA will link with and maintain active kinship connections.

### III. Evaluation

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- documentation exists on each Face Sheet stating that efforts were made to identify kinship connections through genograms, ecomaps and conversations with a variety of individuals;
- the number of family case conferences per family/child case held prior to removal and especially with extended family attending;
- the number of family case conferences per family/child case after removal until case is closed and especially with extended family attending;
- the number of children placed with kinship caregivers and/or relatives.

### IV. Standards for Implementation

- 1) CFSA assists the family in identifying kinship connections by completing the Genogram/Ecomap and considering the following:
  - a. mother, father/alleged father;
  - b. the child and siblings;
  - c. extended family, maternal and paternal;
  - d. step-family;
  - e. school personnel;
  - f. neighbors;
  - g. friends;
  - h. churches;
  - i. community agencies;
  - j. public agencies, such as Child Support Enforcement Agency, Department of Job and Family Services, Department of Health.
- 2) If the family is in disagreement about using a potential kinship connection, the worker should further explore their concerns prior to contacting the kin individual(s) and/or scheduling a Family Case Conference or Team Decision Making Meeting (if placement-related decision is required). When appropriate, the worker should assist the family in understanding the importance of these relationships in the life of the child.
- 3) The worker should assess the kinship connections identified by the agency and family as much as possible, prior to the scheduling the appropriate family and community meeting. Assessment of the connections should include, but not be limited to:
  - a. current status of relationship with regards to birth family;
  - b. willingness and availability to participate and support family;
  - c. feelings and beliefs regarding the reason for agency involvement;
  - d. relationship with birth family;
  - e. appropriateness to care for child (if needed);
  - f. relationship with child; and
  - g. discussion of roles and responsibilities.
- 4) The agency should discuss with the kinship connections the need to conduct record checks. The extensiveness of the record check should be based on the level of involvement the kinship connection will have with the family. Record checks might include, but not be limited to:

- a. children protective services;
  - b. city and county law enforcement;
  - c. BCI and I;
  - d. DMV; and
  - e. completed juvenile record check on all children in the household age 10 and over.
- 5) Family Case Conferences (see Standard 3.9, *Family Case Conference*) should be held to:
- a. discuss the kinship connections identified and available;
  - b. determine the roles and responsibilities of the kinship connections (such as, serve as a supportive resource for the family, provide respite, provide encouragement, mentoring, possible caregivers);
  - c. discuss how the kinship connections can assist the birth family in remedying circumstances and reducing risk to children; and
  - d. educate participants on the developmental and behavioral issues associated with child abuse and neglect.
- 6) The worker documents all attempts made to locate kinship connections (including the distance to the family's home/community). On the Face Sheet, the worker documents the addresses and all phone numbers of the connections. The Face Sheet should be continually updated with new information.

## **V. Financial Implications**

Costs associated with Standard 5.1, *Identifying Kinship Connections* would include such activities as child and family contact, collateral contacts, kinship contacts, court contacts, travel, documentation, holding a family case conference for a total of:

16 hours x \$85.23/hour = \$1,363.68 per instance of identifying kinship connections

Plus additional cost of clerical support, supplies, cost of room (if in community) and the Family Case Conference facilitator rate (if not included in the above).

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**5.2 EMERGENCY PLACEMENT WITH KINSHIP CAREGIVERS**

**Council on Accreditation Standards**

The Council on Accreditation Standards S21 (Foster and Kinship Services) and S21.24 (Kinship and Family Assessment) link to and support Standard 5.2 *Emergency Placement with Kinship Caregivers*.

**Administrative Code**

The Ohio Administrative Code Rules 5101:2-39-073 (Kinship Care, Family Preservation, Supportive Services) and 5101:2-42-05 (Selection of a Placement Setting) address Standard 5.2 *Emergency Placement with Kinship Caregivers*.

**I. Philosophy**

Kinship care should be the first option considered when a child needs to be removed from his/her home. It helps to reduce stress and trauma to the child and family. In making an assessment of the child's risk and safety, the CFSA should make a determination as to whether the child can be placed in kinship care without instituting a change in custody.

Appropriate assessment of the kinship home is paramount to insuring the child's safety in the environment where the child will reside. Assessment regarding the caregiver's ability to provide for the safety and needs of the child should be expected.

When appropriately assessed, planned for, and supported, kinship care reflects the very best of child-centered, family-focused practice.

**II. Outcome**

In emergencies, children are safely placed with kinship caregivers.

**III. Evaluation**

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- the number of children placed in a kinship placement during an emergency removal;
- number of children moved from an emergency foster home to a kinship placement after an emergency removal;
- number of children moved from a kinship placement to a foster home after an emergency removal;
- the number of kinship homes that meet requirements for placement vs. the number of kinship homes that do not meet requirements;
- the number of family case conferences and/or team decision making meetings with family and extended family held after emergency removal to discuss placement options and service needs.

#### **IV. Standards for Implementation**

##### **A. Emergency Kinship Placement Assessment**

The following steps should be taken when making an emergency placement:

- a. obtain parents' recommendation for an emergency kinship placement;
- b. obtain child's recommendation for an emergency kinship placement;
- c. contact kinship placement for approval to accept emergency placement;
- d. staff or agreed upon professional (e.g., police officer) conducts preliminary safety audit to assure the kinship placement can provide for basic needs, supervision and protection;
- e. conduct an agency record check and, when viable, a criminal record check, on the kinship placement providers; and
- f. obtain and share with the kinship providers as much information about the child as possible, such as medical problems, medications, allergies, and pediatrician.

##### **B. Follow-Up to Emergency Kinship Placement Assessment**

After the emergency placement, the following steps should be taken:

- a. The staff and facilitator conduct a Team Decision Making meeting one day after the emergency removal to discuss the placement-related decision (see Standard 3.10, *Team Decision Making*);
- b. The staff should visit the kinship placement the following day and assess the willingness of the kinship family to accept the child into the home, as well as the ability and desire of the kinship parent to protect the child from further abuse or other maltreatment;
- c. Staff should assess the safety of the home, exercising flexibility and prudence in determining whether or not the home is safe. The CFSA should conduct a safety audit, which includes, but not be limited to the following:
  - i. maintenance, safety and sanitary condition of the home and all structures associated with the home;
  - ii. available water source;
  - iii. adequacy of heat, light and ventilation of home;
  - iv. access to adequate food supply;
  - v. lack of observable fire hazards;
  - vi. access to functioning bathroom facilities;
  - vii. access to help in emergency situations;
  - viii. there is secure storage and child inaccessibility of firearms, air rifles, hunting slingshots or other projectile weapons in the home or on the grounds with ammunition stored separately;
  - ix. there is a functioning smoke alarm(s) and fire extinguisher as approved by "Underwriter's Laboratory";
  - x. when present, there exists "Underwriter's Laboratory" approved vented kerosene heaters;
  - xi. safe storage of bleach, cleaning, other poisonous or corrosive household chemicals, flammable and combustible materials, medications;
  - xii. potentially dangerous tools or utensils, and electrical equipment or machinery in or on the grounds of the home;
  - xiii. each child has adequate sleeping arrangements; and
  - xiv. presence of animals which could be a health hazard to some children.

**C. Assessment of a Kinship Family Home**

In assessing a kinship family home, the CFSA should be flexible regarding requirements related to the number of bedrooms, size and structure of the home, and amount of furniture. The CFSA should, in relation to those requirements, offer services and supports, as appropriate, to assist the kinship family in adapting the home to meet the child's needs.

**D. Psycho-Social Dynamics**

Staff should assess the psycho-social dynamics, which include, but not limited to the following:

- any family dynamics in the kinship home related to domestic violence, abuse or neglect of any children (a review of agency records should be completed);
- indications of alcohol abuse or other drug activity in the kinship home;
- the nature and quality of the relationship between the family of origin and the kinship caregiver;
- the kinship family's willingness and ability to cooperate with the agency with a clarification of expectations and responsibilities;
- the number of children already being cared for by the kin, and the status of other children in the home, including their medical conditions;
- the needs of the child for privacy and space;
- the physical and mental health status of the kinship parents(s); and
- a discussion regarding disciplinary practices and alternatives to physical discipline.

**E. Background Checks**

Staff conducts a criminal background check, including BCI and I, FBI, local records on all adult household members, reviews juvenile and Children Services records on all children members in the household age 10 or older.

**F. Service Needs of the Child and Kinship Home**

The CFSA should identify and document the service needs of the child and the kinship home through face-to-face contact with the kinship caregiver and the child.

**G. Case Transfers**

If transferring the case, refer to Standard 3.11, *Internal Case Transfer*.

**V. Financial Implications**

Costs associated with Standard 5.2, *Emergency Placement with Kinship Caregivers* would include such activities as preparation, initial visit, child and family contact, collateral contacts, kinship contacts, court contacts, emergency services, records check, travel, documentation, and holding a family case conference for a total of:

12.5 hours x \$85.23/hour = \$1065.38 per emergency placement with Kinship Caregivers

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**5.3 ONGOING PLACEMENT AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR KINSHIP CAREGIVERS**

**Council on Accreditation Standards**

The Council on Accreditation Standards S21 (Foster and Kinship Services); S21.27 (Support to Kinship Caregivers) and S21.9 (Caregiver Education) link to and support Standard 5.3 *Ongoing Placement and Supportive Services for Kinship Caregivers*.

**Administrative Code**

The Ohio Administrative Code Rules 5101:2-39-06 (Preplacement Preventative Services, Reunification Services and Life Skill Services); 5101:2-39-07 (Supportive Services); and 5101:2-39-073 (Kinship Care, Family Preservation, Supportive Services) address Standard 5.3 *Ongoing Placement and Supportive Services for Kinship Caregivers*.

**I. Philosophy**

Kinship services are family-centered, maximizing the level to which children are cared for by those with whom they have a significant relationship. Kinship services build on the strengths of families by identifying individuals who are willing to support the birth parents, help parents regain confidence and stability, and be parent mentors in providing care to the children.

Kinship helps to: reduce the trauma and stress to the child and family, reduce child abuse and neglect, maintain connections to family and community, increase the possibility of reunification, and achieve permanency and stability. It is important for the kinship caregiver to be supported by the agency and community.

The agency must work with the child and kinship family to mutually assess the needs of both and develop a plan to address those needs. Services and supportive resources may include, but not be limited to: recreational, respite, training, medical, educational, psychological, and financial.

**II. Outcome**

While placed with kinship caregivers, children remain safe.  
Kinship caregivers receive supportive services to meet the needs of the child and kinship family.

**III. Evaluation**

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- the number of visits that occur within the first 3 days of placement where the agency staff assesses the kinship family's immediate and future needs;
- the number of ongoing face-to-face contact visits with the kinship caregivers and child monthly;
- the number of ongoing face-to-face contact visits within the kinship caregiver's home every other month;

- the number of children that were in a kinship placement and were reunified with their family (versus the number of children in a foster home placement and reunified with their family);
- the number of children adopted or legal guardianship established by their kinship placement (versus the number of children adopted by their foster family);
- the number of children who recidivate within 12 months of exiting care (comparing those that were originally in a kinship placement vs. a foster family placement);
- the number of formal annual reassessments of the kinship family's ability to care for the child.

#### **IV. Standards for Implementation**

##### **A. Assessment of Kinship Family's Needs**

Within the first 3 days of placement, the CFSA with the kinship family should assess the kinship family's immediate and future needs (emotional, supportive and material), and their ability to respond to those needs. Needs assessment is an ongoing process as long as the child's case is open.

- 1) Emotional needs should be assessed, which include, but not be limited to:
  - a. kinship family's feelings and beliefs regarding the reason for removal;
  - b. life changing adjustment of the kinship family, including kinship family's biological children;
  - c. kinship family's relationship with birth family and establishment of roles and expectations regarding such issues as visitation and contact;
  - d. child's relationship with the kinship family members;
  - e. child's ability to deal with divided loyalty, separation and loss;
  - f. kinship family's ability to deal with divided loyalty; and
  - g. kinship family's ability to understand and cope with the corresponding developmental and behavioral issues associated with child abuse and neglect.
- 2) Supportive Services needs should be assessed, which include but not be limited to:
  - a. respite services;
  - b. counseling;
  - c. child care;
  - d. legal information and representation;
  - e. tutoring;
  - f. stress reduction programs;
  - g. support groups;
  - h. educational training (formal and informal), such as child abuse and neglect, development, discipline, attachment issues, separation and loss issues;
  - i. navigating systems, such as child welfare, education, mental health, human services, health;
  - j. health care and education, if applicable;
  - k. recreational and social activities; and
  - l. information and referral.
- 3) Material Resources needs should be assessed, which include but not be limited to:
  - a. financial, such as:
    - i. income to support the child,
    - ii. medical coverage (insurance),
    - iii. child care expense,
    - iv. educational costs;

- b. household furnishings, such as:
  - i. beds,
  - ii. dressers,
  - iii. cribs,
  - iv. chairs,
  - v. tables;
- c. transportation;
- d. clothing, personal items;
- e. food;
- f. utilities; and
- g. housing (i.e., lack of space).

**B. Providing and Linking Services to Identified Emotional, Supportive and Material Needs**

After the CFSA has assisted the kinship family with assessing their needs for emotional, supportive and material services, the agency should provide, refer and/or assist the family with locating the services/supports in their community.

**C. Ongoing Contact with Kinship Family**

- 1) The CFSA should have ongoing face-to-face contact with the kinship caregivers and the child monthly, and at least every other month in the caregivers' home.
- 2) The agency should work with the kinship family and birth family to facilitate reunification as appropriate. Concurrently, the agency should work with the kinship family to prevent/eliminate multiple placements and to become a permanent home (see Standard 3.4, *Reasonable Efforts*, B, C, and D).
- 3) For open kinship cases, the agency should conduct a formal reassessment annually regarding the kinship family's ability to continue to care for the child and identify future services needed to maintain placement (see Standard 5.2, *Emergency Placement with Kinship Caregivers*, A and B, and Standard 5.3, *Ongoing Placement and Supportive Services for Kinship Caregivers*, A).
- 4) Visitation between the child and birth family will be determined by the birth family, kinship caregivers and agency (see Standard 3.13, *Visitation*). Family Team Meetings are a way for visitation plans to be established (see Standard 6.10, *Family Team Meeting*).

**V. Financial Implications**

Costs associated with Standard 5.3, *Ongoing Placement and Supportive Services for Kinship Caregivers* would include such activities as preparation, family contact, child contact, assessment of risk, court contact, case plan update, documentation, and travel for a total of: 25.2 hours x \$85.23/hour = \$2147.80 per kinship caregiver and child

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**5.4 CRITERIA FOR CASE CLOSURE**

**Council on Accreditation Standards**

The Council on Accreditation Standards S21 (Foster and Kinship Services); S21.27 (Supports to Kinship Caregivers) and G9 (Service Delivery) link to and support Standard 5.4 *Criteria for Case Closure*.

**Administrative Code**

The Ohio Administrative Code Rules 5101:2-34-33 (PCSA Requirements for Conducting Intrafamilial (non stranger) Child Abuse and Neglect Family Assessments/Investigations); 5101:2-39-02 (Case Records for Children Services); 5101:2-39-073 (Kinship Care, Family Preservation, Supportive Services); 5101:2-39-08 [Requirements for PCSA Case Plan for In-Home Supportive Services (no court order)]; and 5101:2-39-08.1 (PCSA Case Plan for Children in Custody or Under Court Ordered Protective Supervision) address Standard 5.4 *Criteria for Case Closure*.

**I. Philosophy**

Once the goal for reunification is not attainable and the decision has been made for the child to remain in the kinship placement, the CFSA, along with the kinship family, needs to determine the type and duration of the services and the level of involvement with the family. CFSA involvement with the kinship family will be terminated when the children in the family are receiving care and support which meets their minimum needs. The kinship family also needs to demonstrate a sustained ability to protect, care, and provide permanency for the children on their own and/or with support from their community.

**II. Outcome**

The kinship family provides a safe, stable and permanent home that meets the child's needs.

The kinship family is aware of, and able to access, needed services and supports.

**III. Evaluation**

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- the risk assessment is thoroughly completed at point of entry, key decision-making points, case transfer excluding adoption and PPLA;
- documentation that areas of risk are discussed at each home visit with the family and kinship family;
- the number of team decision making meetings held to discuss and update the child, family and kinship family assessment at key decision-making points with the family, kinship family, service providers, family support persons and agency staff present;

- services are provided for a minimum of 60 days from the date the child is placed into the permanent setting;
- the number of children reunified with their family;
- the number of children who recidivate within 12 months of exiting care;
- the median length of stay for children prior to returning home, emancipation or prior to legal guardianship/adoption finalization.

#### IV. Standards for Implementation

##### A. Criteria for Closing a Kinship Care Case

- 1) The CFSA should close a case when at least one of the following conditions has been met:
  - a. the kinship family has demonstrated the ability to provide a safe and nurturing home;
  - b. a risk assessment is completed to include parents as well as the kinship family (see #2);
  - c. the kinship family does not wish to continue receiving services; the agency is in agreement and provides a list of supportive community resources the family may access in the future;
  - OR
  - d. the child is settled in a permanent non-adoptive placement (excluding Planned Permanent Living Arrangements) with services provided for a minimum of 60 days from the date the child is placed in the permanent setting, with no reports of abuse and neglect, or other care or safety concerns for the child.
- 2) The following factors involved in a thorough risk assessment should be evaluated when planning to close a case:
  - a. type and degree of acts or conditions to which children have been exposed;
  - b. frequency of acts or conditions to which children have been exposed;
  - c. child characteristics;
  - d. characteristics of all adults in the household;
  - e. adult, child relationship;
  - f. socio-economic factors;
  - g. alleged perpetrator access and responsibility for care of child; and
  - h. community supports.
- 3) The family, extended family, kinship family and all other professionals actively involved in the case should be contacted and consulted and their observations requested prior to case closure. This should occur by holding a family case conference with all involved (See Standard 3.10, *Team Decision Making*). When a professional actively involved in the family's case does not concur with the decision to close, the staff should list the concerns and reasons why the professional is in disagreement. The staff should document the rationale for the CFSA decision to close the case. If the CFSA reconsiders its decision and keeps the case open, the staff should document the reason for doing so.
- 4) Prior to closing the case, the CFSA refers and/or arranges community resources and supports for the family.

- 5) The agency should confirm that all court involvement is terminated and documentation has been received.
- 6) The genogram and ecomap are updated upon case closure.
- 7) Upon case closure, the following elements should be included in the family's file:
  - a. the reason for opening the case;
  - b. the current level of risk to the child;
  - c. the services provided and outcomes;
  - d. the securement of community supports and services;
  - e. the reason for closing the case;
  - f. the family's utilization of services and/or resources;
  - g. the family's perception of their progress and agency's involvement; and
  - h. the date of case closure.

The case should not be considered closed until after the documentation has been completed.

- 8) When the CFSA closes a case, the family is notified in writing within 5 working days of closure. Part of the notification should include that the family would be able to contact the CFSA for additional support and assistance.
- 9) When the CFSA closes a case, all service providers who are actively involved with the case should be sent written notification of the CFSA decision to close the case within 5 working days of closure.

#### **V. Financial Implications**

Costs associated with Standard 5.4, *Criteria for Case Closure* would be:

8 hours x \$85.23/hour = \$681.84 per each case closure