

# KARE Family Center, Tucson, Arizona

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

### Summary

The Kinship Adoption Resource and Education (KARE) Family Center opened in Tucson, Arizona, in 2002 and has served 5,480 families with programs designed to strengthen support for relatives who are caring for their related children. While some of these families are already formally involved in the child welfare system, the majority are not. The KARE Center is a one-stop, multiservice center where grandparents and other kinship caregivers, as well as adoptive families, receive support and services to help raise children successfully.

KARE is a collaboration between Arizona's Children Association, Casey Family Programs, and other organizations including Pima Council on Aging, The Pima County Cooperative Extension, and the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

Services at the KARE Center include individual counseling, grandparent support groups, therapeutic groups, art programs, learning enrichment activities and opportunities for respite care. Youth, young adults and caregivers participate in job preparation classes and adult education programs are available. The KARE Center provides multiple opportunities for youth and caregivers to contribute meaningfully to their community.

The programs and services at the KARE Center offer a dual return on investment (ROI):

- » Social: Anticipating, preventing and solving problems related to the breakdown of families
- » Economic: Saving taxpayer dollars by keeping children out of the state foster care system.



## Cost Analysis

The State of Arizona Department of Economic Security indicates that the average 2007 payment to a foster home was \$1,004 per month or \$12,048 per year. The estimated costs of case management, ancillary (non-medical) and administrative costs add an additional \$6,000 per year to the cost of foster care and yield an annual per child cost of approximately \$18,048.

KARE services cost an average of \$381 per child. Additionally, slightly less than 40 percent of the relative caregivers qualified for and received a TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) payment from federal and state funds. When the average KARE Family Center cost is added to the TANF payments of \$267 per month or \$3,204 annually, the annual cost per child served is \$3,585.

In 2007, KARE served 2,100 children. About 30 percent (630) were in court supervised care and living with relatives (some who may become licensed as a foster home). The other 70 percent or at least 1,470 children served by KARE did not enter foster care.

Relative caregivers frequently report that KARE services are the principal reason they remain able to provide informal kinship placements. If KARE services helped prevent formal foster care placements in just 1 in 5 of the 1,470 informal kinship children served by KARE, the savings or avoided costs in Pima County are more than \$4.2 million each year.

Most of these referred families do not go on to become involved in regular foster care, because their needs are being met through KARE. They maintain involvement for extended periods using support and casework services.

These figures reflect December 2008 approximate costs, however, recent state budget cuts due to the economic downturn may cause these figures to fluctuate.

## Future Benefits

- » Preventing youth from relying on expensive programs to stabilize their mental health, employment, and education issues while in out-of-home care.
- » Strengthening families to prevent them from relying on state assistance.
- » Improving outcomes for youth transitioning out of care to reduce incidents of unemployment, crime, substance abuse, mental health issues, and homelessness which create an additional strain on the state's resources.

*KARE's mission is to provide basic services to keep families stable. KARE believes that relative or kinship caregivers deserve the same basic supports and services as those found in formal foster care, and that providing those supports will create social well-being in children.*

KARE Family Center  
4710 E. 29th Street, Building #7  
Tucson, Arizona 86711

520.323.4476