

How can kinship navigation services support family resource needs?

SCHMIDT, M. C., & TREINEN, J. (2017). USING KINSHIP NAVIGATION SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY RESOURCE NEEDS, CAREGIVER SELF-EFFICACY, AND PLACEMENT STABILITY OF CHILDREN IN INFORMAL AND FORMAL KINSHIP CARE. CHILD WELFARE, 95(4), 69-89.

What can we learn from this study?

Kinship families often have difficulties accessing eligible resources to help them provide for the children in their care. This study examined whether kinship navigation services can decrease family needs, increase caregiver self-efficacy, and improve safety and placement stability among children in informal and formal kinship placements.

Study details:

- **Population:** 63 caregivers and 134 children receiving kinship navigation services in Arizona
- **Data source:** Standardized assessment measures (adapted from the Family Needs Scale); state child welfare administrative data
- **Methodology:** Pre-test and post-test with measures administered at baseline (case opening) and every six months up to 24 months after case opening; placement stability assessed seven to 32 months after case opening

What are the critical findings?

- Kinship families had a statistically significant decrease in need in four key areas after receiving services:
 - Paying for utility bills like water, electricity, and air conditioning/heat
 - Getting special travel equipment for child or children (e.g., car seat)
 - Having time for self-care
 - Finding future care for child or children
- The majority of children (87%) remained with their original kinship caregiver or were reunified with parents
- 93% of children had no subsequent allegations or reports filed with the Arizona Department of Child Safety during the study follow-up period
- Kinship caregivers participated in many services, including: legal services referral and support (57%), peer-led support groups (57%), and basic needs support (materials and goods) (51%)
- Saving money for the future remained the highest area of need

Why is this important for our work?

Previous studies have indicated that kinship caregivers underutilize available financial resources. Kinship navigator programs address this gap by strengthening cross-system collaboration with state child welfare, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and other agencies to provide families with information about eligible resources and access to them. Given the promising outcomes observed in this and other evaluations, policymakers should prioritize the allocation of federal and state dollars to support kinship navigator programs. This allocation of funds is especially crucial given that states typically emphasize kinship care as the first option for out-of-home placements when children cannot remain in the care of their biological parents.

This summary synthesizes the findings of a single research study. To learn more about kinship navigator programs in child welfare, please review the following resources: [What are kinship navigator programs?](#) and [How have some states developed and funded kinship navigator programs?](#)

For additional information, [see the journal](#) or email KMResources@casey.org.