

# Do kinship navigation programs impact permanency and equity for youth?

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## What can we learn from this study?

Research demonstrates the benefits of kinship care for children who must be removed from their parents, yet nationally fewer than 1 in 3 children in foster care live with relatives. Kinship navigation programs help locate relative caregivers and provide them information, education, and support. This article examines permanency outcomes for youth in the kinship navigation program of [A Second Chance, Inc. \(ASCI\)](#), in Allegheny County, Pa., compared to youth served by other agencies without kinship navigation.

### Study details:

- **Population:** 1,108 children removed from their homes (471 receiving kinship navigator services through ASCI; 637 served through other agencies/programs)
- **Data source:** Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Families
- **Methodology:** cross-tabulation and multiple logistic regression
- **Dates:** January 2017-March 2020

## What are the critical findings?

A core tenet of kinship care is family preservation. Children receiving ASCI kinship navigation services had higher rates of family-centered permanency through permanent legal custodianship and increased racial equity in permanency rates between African American and white youth when compared to a similar population of children in kinship and non-relative foster care who did not receive kinship navigation services:

- While most children in both groups returned home (78.9%), among children who do not return home, permanent legal custodianship is often the desired outcome as it offers children a permanent home without requiring that ties with their parent(s) be legally and permanently severed. Children receiving ASCI kinship navigation services had significantly higher rates of permanent legal custodianship (13.2%) than the comparison group (3.9%). In contrast, fewer children in the kinship navigation group were adopted (3.9%) compared to those not receiving the service (12.1%).
- African American and white families who received kinship navigation services achieved similar rates of permanency, while non-kinship-navigation services provided the comparison group were associated with significantly lower rates of permanency for African American children.

## Why is this important for our work?

When children must be separated from their parents, everything possible should be done to keep them with those who know them best: family. Kinship navigator programs have the potential to achieve that outcome. About 70 kinship navigation programs operate nationwide, but the current research base is limited. This study fills that research gap, offering insight about the benefits of the culturally relevant, family-focused, and child-centered kinship navigation program of ASCI, and it potentially being a model for other jurisdictions to replicate.

This summary synthesizes the findings from a single research study. To learn more about the importance of kinship care, please review a collection of resources on [kinship care](#).

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