



Support Relatives Caring for Children

Executive Summary

The Family Voices United campaign surveyed birth parents, kinship caregivers, foster/resource and adoptive parents, and young people with experience in the child welfare system across the country to compile their lived expertise on prevention services for families prior to interaction with the child welfare system.

Four priorities were identified across all lived experience roles as essential steps in order to best address prevention with families:

Kinship care can provide children with the opportunity to stay **connected to their family and cultural heritage**, which can be an important factor in their overall well-being. By living with relatives or family friends, children in kinship care may have access to a support system that can help them navigate the challenges of the foster care system.

1

"Every aspect and every division of CW diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility needs to be implemented with measurable goals."

-Birth Parent, CT

Studies have shown that children in kinship care are more likely to have **longer-lasting placements and a stronger connection to their community** and culture. This can be especially important for children who have experienced trauma or other difficulties, as kinship care can provide a sense of stability and security.

2

"Valuable input comes straight from the 'trenches.' This is where families and youth live out their frustrations and struggles as well as their celebrations. It's the best place to find out what works, and what creates barriers rather than solutions."

-Resources Parent, MD



Supporting Relatives in Care with Children

Executive Summary

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Four priorities were identified across all lived experience roles as essential steps in order to best address prevention with families:

3

Kinship care can help reunify children with their parents, prevent abandonment issues, and reduce the chances of re-entering foster care. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, kinship caregivers can help children to maintain important relationships with their parents and other family members.

"Training and professional development is also something that is extremely beneficial when working with youth and trying to understand their needs, but also how to communicate and teach them while being sensitive and empathetic."

-Youth in/from care, NY

4

Kinship care can provide a natural and supportive environment that can help them to develop a strong sense of cultural identity and maintain placement in a stable home. By living with relatives or family friends, children in kinship care may be better able to maintain a sense of continuity and stability in their lives.

"Train ACS to talk to parents better and to not remove children just ask the parents what they need and what they can support them with services"

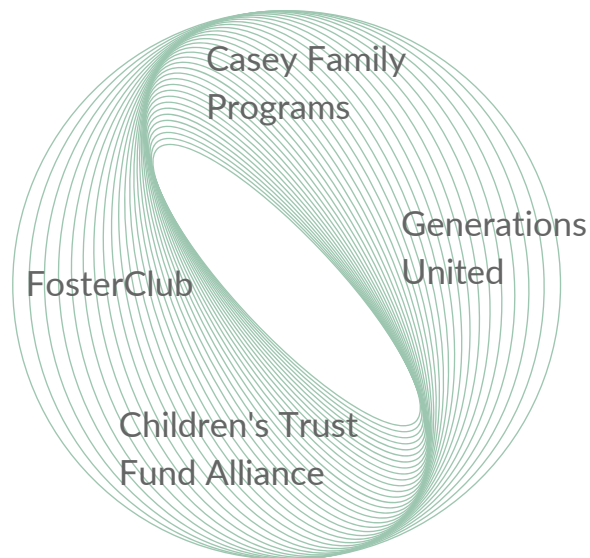
-Birth Parent, NY



Supporting Relatives Caring for Children

Framing

Family Voices United is a collaborative project with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Generations United, FosterClub, and Casey Family Programs.



Together, we work to elevate the voice and perspective of **young people, birth parents, and kinship/relative caregivers** (known collectively as **constituents**), to stakeholders, partners and organizations who make decisions about the child welfare system.

In order to make informed decisions that benefit children, young people, and families, lived experience voices and expertise must be not only heard, but must be centered in decision making.

Share Your Perspective Campaign

Family Voices United launches regular "Share Your Perspective" questions on timely topics relating to child welfare. Currently, the campaign centers these questions around 5 rotating central themes:



Race Equity in Child Welfare



Older Youth & Congregate Care



Supporting Relatives Caring for Children



Expectant and Parenting Youth



Prevention: Strengthening Families & Averting Crises



March 2023 "Share Your Perspective" Question:

"What are the positive outcomes of placing youth in Kinship care?"



Identified Priorities from Lived Experience Leaders

On Prevention Supports for Families

#1

Kinship care can provide children with the opportunity to stay **connected to their family and cultural heritage**, which can be an important factor in their overall well-being.

#2

Studies have shown that children in kinship care are more likely to have **longer-lasting placements and a stronger connection to their community and culture**.

#3

Kinship care can help reunify children with their parents, prevent abandonment issues, and reduce the chances of re-entering foster care.

#4

Kinship care can provide a natural and supportive environment that can help them to develop a strong sense of cultural identity and maintain placement in a stable home.



Quotes from lived experience voices

Kinship care can provide children with the opportunity to stay connected to their family and cultural heritage, which can be an important factor in their overall well-being.

Kinship can also help a child maintain their family's history too. Meaning, hearing stories about their parent(s), family members and even their upbringing, can possibly alleviate the concerns or worries about the family they are a part of and come from.
- Youth or alumni of foster care / Florida

Kin are best at fostering a child's racial and cultural identity. - Community partner, Family Engagement Specialist / Michigan

All of our cultural behaviors also are in grained. These uninterrupted connections to family, culture and immense love from all iLife has given them a sense of belonging and not lacking. - Relative or Kinship Caregiver / Montana/Cherokee- Texas

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Had the opportunity been presented, those stable family members would have taken me in - and without needing to be reliant on a stipend or support from the state. - Youth or alumni of foster care, Relative or Kinship Caregiver, Community partner, Adoptive Parent, Child Welfare Professional / Pennsylvania



Quotes from lived experience voices

Studies have shown that children in kinship care are more likely to have longer-lasting placements and a stronger connection to their community and culture.

Youth placed in kinship care can provide many opportunities for children to have a higher chance to be loved and nurtured by a loved one. This can range from grandparents all the way to teachers. - Youth or alumni of foster care / Florida

Children in kinship care generally have better outcomes as adults as well as better behavior problems. - Birth Parent, Advocate / Texas

The positive of placing youth in kinship care is that they get to have a sense of normalcy. They get to be around people who love them. Versus with complete strangers. - Birth Parent, Community partner / Texas

This is 'my honor' and utmost responsibility as the head of the family to be there for better or for worse. Just a little over a year ago, I finally received guardianship through family court. - Relative or Kinship Caregiver / California

Keeping kids within their family network is not only more likely to ensure they have a long lasting placement, but it also ensures they stay connected to their culture and community. Youth in foster care are so often ripped away from all things that are safe and familiar to them and keeping them in kinship care prevents much of this loss. - Foster/ Resource Parent / Michigan



Quotes from lived experience voices

Kinship care can help reunify children with their parents, prevent abandonment issues, and reduce the chances of re-entering foster care.

We took our grandson part time and eventually wound up adopting him. Today she and my granddaughter live a healthy life and are very much a part of our lives including her son. - **Relative or Kinship Caregiver / Colorado**

My family knew my parents and were able to comfort me with stories about them. My family was familiar to me, and although the transition was difficult, I felt safe in knowing that I was at least living with "my people. - **Community partner, Foster/ Resource Parent, Former child in family guardianships which were overseen by the state and social workers / Idaho**

Both of my children have gone with my parents both of the times they were in foster care.....I had my recovery support to guide me in my recovery journey and help to live again. It has been almost 12 years since my kids came home and we now have a trusting and loving relationship. - **Birth Parent, Community partner / Oregon**

There is a better chance of being returned to the birth parents. And they're more than likely bonded with the person of kinship. - **Birth Parent / Indiana**

When I went home my Tūtū encouraged my Mom, she came to visit, checked on me, reminded my Mom that she needed to give me time and not to expect things to be the same. - **Youth or alumni of foster care / Hawaii**

PRIORITY #4



Support Relatives
Caring for Children

Quotes from lived experience voices

Kinship care can provide a natural and supportive environment that can help them to develop a strong sense of cultural identity and maintain placement in a stable home.

When children are removed from their homes by CPS or family intervention, placement of kinship care can avoid additional trauma for the children. When family members step forward to assume responsibility for the children, a sense of security may be added back to the lives of the children who have lived in a disruptive environment. Court-Appointed Non-Parental Managing Conservator / Texas

One of the biggest benefits of having the children in the home of relatives was this promoted sibling ties; they did not separate the children and each still bonded with each other in which I believe minimized the trauma of not having the biological parents in their lives. -

Birth Parent, Community partner / Texas

They already know the people they will be placed with. They are able to ask about their past, and family. They know they have a "family" that loves and cares for them. -
Relative or Kinship Caregiver / Colorado

Kinship families keep all of those traditions alive in the hearts of the foster kids. They make sure that these kids learn about great grandparents and all of their cousins as well. - Youth or alumni of foster care / Texas

He is thriving in our care, has frequent contact with his siblings, and knows he has brothers.... He is still young (5) and his more of his story will unfold for him as he gets older, but since he was a baby, we have felt good about knowing he is loved and cared for by his own family, and that this is the best place for him to get the best care and be as connected to his family, siblings, and birth parents as possible. - Relative or Kinship Caregiver, Foster/ Resource Parent / Oregon

How to Use this Report

Share with your Networks

The themes and priorities from this report can help others gain further insight into the child welfare system from the perspective of those who have lived experience. It may also help those in your networks to better support constituents in their work.

Elevate to Policymakers

The people making laws and decisions must hear from those who have experience with the systems they impact with their actions. Nothing about us without us.

Highlight to Lived Experience Leaders

Creating community amongst lived experience leaders starts by sharing stories and identifying common experiences. Please share this report with constituents you work with or others in your networks with lived experience.

THANK YOU TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE, BIRTH PARENTS & KINSHIP CAREGIVERS, AND CHILD WELFARE COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR ANSWERING OUR "SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE" QUESTION, AND FOR PROVIDING YOUR LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERTISE TO THE FIELD OF CHILD WELFARE.

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