

WELCOME

Unique Dynamics of Shared/ Co-Parenting in Kinship Families

Presented by Dr. Joseph Crumbley
March 14, 2023

- We will begin at the top of the hour
- Please type in the **chat** - your name, state, tribe (if applicable), and role
- We'll pause for questions throughout – you can ask in the **Q and A box** at any time

GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK

A National Technical Assistance Center

- 5-year (2021-2026), \$10-million cooperative agreement with the Administration for Community Living
- Generations United has worked on behalf of and with kinship/grandfamilies since 1997
- Purpose is to provide technical assistance to the array of government agencies (aging, child welfare, disability, education, housing, Medicare and Medicaid, nutrition, TANF) and organizations that serve kinship families
- Not designed to help the families directly – working to improve systems for families



How We Help



Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts [webinars](#) and facilitates learning collaboratives.



Individual Assistance

We respond to [individual requests for help](#) from government agencies, and nonprofit organizations.



Targeted, Specialized Support

For jurisdictions that want and are ready for a larger investment of effort, the Network will help optimize their collaborative approaches and improve their services. Solutions will be replicable for others.



A Centralized Hub

The Network is elevating exemplary kinship/grandfamily practices and programs from around the country on its new accessible website, www.GKSNetwork.org.



The First-Ever National Technical Assistance Center for those who Serve Kinship/Grandfamilies

We help government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children.

GrandFacts: Fact Sheets

The GrandFacts fact sheets for grandfamilies include data and programs as well as information about public benefits, educational assistance, legal relationship options and laws for each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.





< Resources

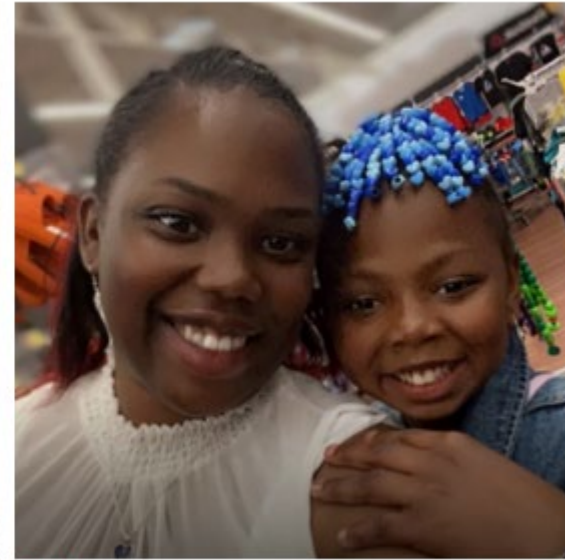
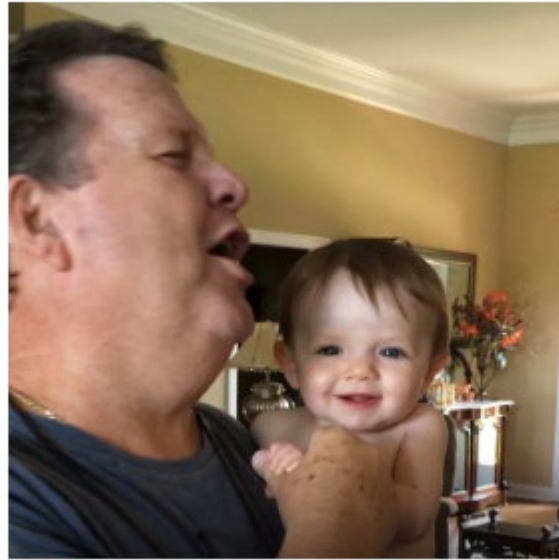
FACT SHEET

Kinship/Grandfamilies: Strengths and Challenges

Download This Resource

Imagine you are a child. In the middle of the night, your mom drops you off at your grandma's house to live. Your mom and dad can't care for you anymore. Their alcohol use has made it impossible to parent. You're glad to be with your grandma because it feels safe and comfortable at her house, but you're worried about some things. Where will you go to school? How will you get your asthma medicine? Can your grandma get it for you? Will your mom and dad be okay?

Caregiver Videos





< Resources

TIP SHEET

Tips to Include Kinship/Grandfamilies in Programmatic Decision-Making

[Download This Resource](#)

Increasingly, government and nonprofit leaders are recognizing the value of engaging individuals with lived experience when creating and enhancing programs and services. Programs and services are more effective, trusted, and used when they intentionally draw on the perspectives of those they seek to serve.



< Resources

TIP SHEET

Legal Options for Grandfamily & Kin Caregivers

Download This Resource

A Network Monthly Resource: February 2023

When a child comes into your care, there are so many practical needs to deal with right away. Food, clothing, school, a place to sleep. You may also have concerns about legal issues and the paperwork you need to access supports for the child. Here are some issues caregivers often think about, and where to go for help.

Stay Connected & Access Support

Sign up for our monthly newsletter, which will provide you with updates on new Network resources.





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CO-PARENTING WITH BIRTH PARENTS

IN KINSHIP CARE

Presented by

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Shared/Co-Parenting

- the sharing of parental responsibilities, roles and tasks by various caretakers:
 - birth parents
 - extended family members
 - relative caregivers and adoptive parents
 - secondary providers

Goals and Reasons for Engaging Birth Parents

- maintaining parent/child connections in case of reunification during childhood or adulthood

- minimizing the loss, grief and separation experienced by the child
- assisting the youth in adjusting to and transitioning into the kinship family
- insuring consistency and clarity in roles, messages and parenting by the various care providers
- lessening the child's confusion or manipulation due to inconsistent parenting

PRE-REQUISITES FOR BIRTH PARENTS IN ORDER TO HAVE INVOLVEMENT

1. Acknowledgment/Validation of Caregiver's or Adoptive Parent's Authority
 - “Your aunt ,uncle or adoptive parent are now responsible for taking care of you”
 - “They're going to be able to take good care of you and be there when you need them”
2. Differ Authority to the Caregiver amd Adoptive Parent
 - “They're going to take care and protect you the same way I would”

- “When they speak, they speak for me”
- 3. Give Child Permission to Accept Their Caregiver’s and Adoptive Parent’s Authority
 - “I want you to trust and obey them, the same way you would trust and listen to me”
- 4. Be Consistent
 - “The same rules you follow in their home are the same rules you’ll follow when you’re with me”
 - “We both want what’s best for you and for you to be happy and safe”

5. Give Child Permission to Bond with and Trust Their Adoptive Parent and Caregiver
 - “I want you to ask for help with problems the same way you asked me”
 - “You can trust them to help you and care for you the same way I love you”

CAREGIVER OR ADOPTIVE PARENTS STATEMENTS/DIALOGUE WITH THE BIRTH PARENT

1. “It will mean more to the children if they hear you say . . .”
2. “The children need to know that it’s OK with you before they will . . .”
3. “Your child will feel better if you say . . .”
4. “The children will listen a lot better to me or their teacher if you tell them . . .”
5. “They’ll trust me more if you say . . .”

These types of statements by the caregiver or adoptive parents redefines a shared parenting relationship with the birth parent by:

- validating the birth parent's role with the child
- acknowledging the birth parent's influence and significance as a parent
- re-defining a collaborative relationship between the birth parent, caregiver or adoptive parents

PARENTAL ROLES

Contact Person: maintains contact with the child in order to provide a parental connection (i.e. phone calls ,e-mails letters, photos)

Supportive Friend: provides positive and supportive feedback to the youth around activities and events in the child's life

Brainstorming/Confidant: listens to the youth's situations or problems, and directs them to sources of information, advise, solutions and answers

Parental Roles

Advisor/Problem-solver: provides advise, recommendations, opinions and alternatives the child might use in solving problems or making decisions and choices

Disciplinarian: involved in deciding limits, structure and consequences for their child's behavior; also teaches and admonishes the child (i.e. values, morals, expectations, responsibilities and appropriate behaviors)

Supervision: responsible for the emotional/physical welfare of their child, by making appropriate decisions and providing adequate attention, limits and boundaries

Provider/Protector: responsible for the total care and well-being of their child by providing or accessing the shelter, food, protection, medical, educational and spiritual resources, necessary in parenting a child

GUIDELINES FOR CO-PARENTING

1. Don't belittle or put each other down in front of the child.
2. Don't send messages to each other through the child.
3. Don't change or contradict each other's rules or decisions without contacting each other first.
4. Don't collude or side with the child against each other.

5. Help the child re-frame and re-direct their issues or feelings to their birth parent, relative caregiver or adoptive parent

- Have consistent rules and expectations in both homes.
- Follow-thru and carry-over with consequences and rewards in both homes.
- Provide the child a hierarchy for permission and of authority (i.e., “You have to ask your grandmother first for permission.” “What did your uncle and aunt say?”)
- Don’t compete for, or try to buy the child’s love, loyalty or forgiveness.

CAREGIVER AND BIRTH PARENT'S TASKS

Caregiver/Birth Parent Dyad

Caregivers and birth parents may still need to interact as a dyad even if there is no history of conflict or unresolved issues. The interaction may still be necessary in order to minimize and manage the child's confusion, manipulation or resistance to the placement, change and difference in households.

1. redefining, interaction and activities with each other and the child (i.e., disciplining, nurturance, church, school, recreation, holidays). "Who does what?"

2. identifying methods of decision-making, conflict resolution and problem solving that does not triangulate the child. “How do we keep the child out of the middle?”
3. identifying and minimizing each other’s projections and transference resulting from past unresolved issues or current conflicts. “We can bring up the past only if we’re going to talk about how we’re going to do things different to avoid repeating past mistakes.”
“Don’t bring up the past to embarrass or hurt each other.”

4. identifying and de-escalating each other's competition or sabotage "how not to compete or sabotage each other's roles and authority"
5. sharing and "reality testing" mutual fantasies. "I hope so, but if not, then what?"
6. engaging in a loss and grief process related to their relationship and the child. "I wish things could have been different, but this is what we can do now to make things different in the future."
7. establishing future goals for the child and joint methods for accomplishing them (i.e., education, health, and psychological development).

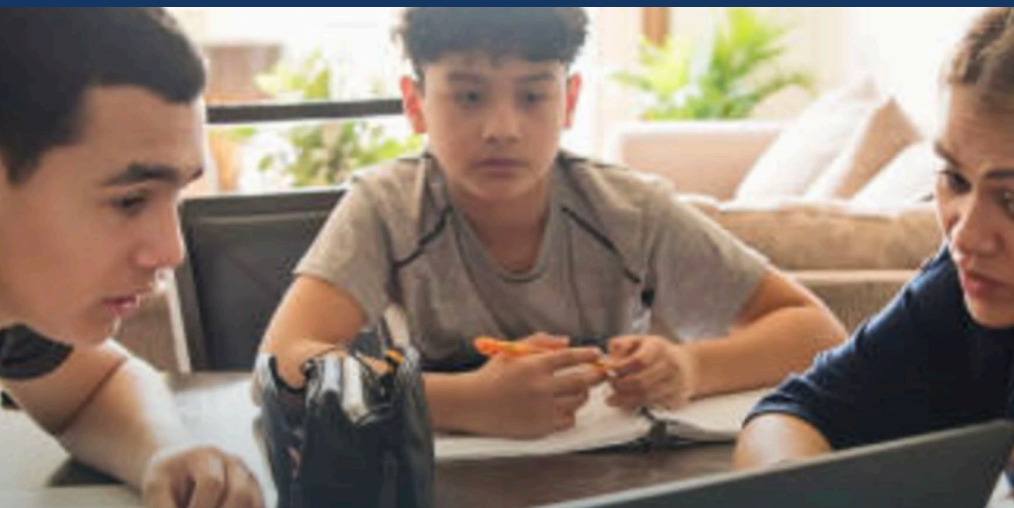
CAREGIVER, BIRTH PARENT AND BIRTH CHILD'S TASKS

Several triads exist that involve the child. These triads include: 1) the caregiver, child and birth parent, 2) the caregiver, child and professionals, 3) the birth parent, child and professional. There are tasks that are common to the three subsystems; they are:

1. clarifying to the child the roles, relationships, responsibilities and authority the adults have to each other. “Who does what with the child?”

2. clarifying the hierarchy of authority, responsibility and decision-making in relationship to the child. “Who has the final word and authority?”
3. identifying to the child how decisions will be made and conflicts resolved in order to minimize splitting and triangulation. “Who does the child go to with questions about what to do or who to listen to?”
4. reviewing structural issues with the child (i.e., roles, methods of disciplining, rewards and scheduled) so that the child observes the adults in agreement and not vulnerable to splitting or manipulation.

5. the adults validating and reassuring each others roles and authority by dialoging with the child in each other's presence
6. demonstrating to the child the adult's abilities to:
 - not be threatened, compete or sabotage each other
 - put aside unresolved issues from the past
7. additional goals prior to meeting with the child would be:
 - developing techniques and strategies for the adults, on how to present a unified coalition when with the child
 - addressing those issues that would sabotage the coalition.



The Inherent Strengths in Kinship Families

DrCrumbley.com

Module 6: Co-Parenting

The Inherent Strengths in Kinship Families



Co-Parenting in Kinship Care

Learning Objectives:

Define co-parenting specific to kinship families

Identify the strengths of co-parenting in kinship families

Provide approaches for caregivers to engage and involve birth parents in co-parenting

Definition

Co-Parenting

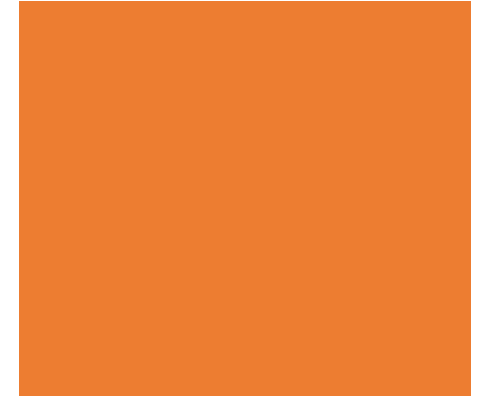
The shared responsibility of parenting between the kinship caregiver and the birth parents as well as extended family members.

Strengths of Co-Parenting in Kinship Families



- Pre-existing relationships are the basis for co-parenting between the caregivers and birth parents. They don't have to get to know each other and they have a personal relationship.
- Both the caregiver and birth parents have a personal relationship with the child. The child then feels a personal relationship with the caregiver and birth parents.
- The caregiver and birth parents are mutually accessible to each other as family members. Accessibility is not limited by professional boundaries.
- Children can maintain relationships and support with the caregiver after reunification with their birth parents.
- Co-parenting can continue if the children are not re-unified with their birth parents.

Parental Roles for Biological Parents



Supervisor

Responsible for the emotional and physical welfare of child by making appropriate decisions and providing adequate attention, limits, and boundaries.

6



Contact Person

Maintains contact with the child in order to provide a parental connection -- ie phone calls, email, letters, and photos.

1



Disciplinarian

Involved in deciding limits, structure and consequences for the child's behavior. Teaches values, morals, expectations, responsibilities and appropriate behaviors.

5



Provider/Protector

Responsible for the total care and well-being of their child by providing or accessing food, shelter, protection, medical, educational and spiritual resources necessary to parent a child.

7



Supportive Friend

Provides positive and supportive feedback to the child around activities and events in the child's life.

2



Advisor/Problem Solver

Provides advice, recommendations, opinions and alternatives the child might use in solving problems or making decisions and choices.

4



Brainstorming Confident

Listens to the child's situations or problems, and directs them to sources of information, advice, solutions and answers.

3

- When biological parents are not able to take on the traditional responsibilities of parenting, there are different roles they can assume to match their abilities that allow them to maintain a positive connection with their children
- Biological parents do not have to stay in one role.
- They can change roles as their capabilities and circumstances dictate.

Approaches for Co-Parenting



Approach	Scripts
Identify Common Goals	<p data-bbox="580 739 1724 911">“You’re in need of a family for your children until you’re able to care for them again. I want to be the family to care for your children until you’re able to.”</p> <p data-bbox="580 982 1671 1153">“Your needing a family and we are wanting to be that family for your children is what we have in common.”</p> <p data-bbox="580 1225 1714 1339">“I want to be there for my grandchildren, and I also want to be there for you as my son/daughter.”</p>



Approaches for Co-Parenting

Approach	Scripts
Acknowledge the Birth Parents' Power, Influence, Importance	<p>“This will be easier if you use your power and influence with the children.”</p> <p>“This will be easier if you decide to accept our help in caring for your children.”</p> <p>“The children need to see your influence and involvement in how they are being raised and cared for.”</p>



Approaches in Co-Parenting

Approach	Scripts
Elicit Birth Parents' Buy-In (benefits them and the children)	<p>“The children can be in a home where you can monitor their safety and well-being. And you can have input into their care.”</p> <p>“You’ll have the time to do what you need to do to show you are able to care for your children.”</p>



Approaches in Co-Parenting

Approach	Scripts
Identify and Dismantle Past Barriers	<p>“Since the children have been with me, we haven’t been able to be... Caring Cooperative Respectful</p> <p>“Because of our past history, we haven’t been able to be... Caring Cooperative Respectful</p>



Approaches for Co-Parenting

Approach	Scripts
Initiate Positive Interactions	“From now on, I’m going to be courteous to you, respectful, civil and caring. Because I know you care, I’m going to call and text you on a regular basis about how the children are doing and what they are up to.”



Approaches to Co-Parenting

Approach	Scripts
Establish a Partnership and Guidelines for Co-Parenting	<p>“We’ve got to be ok for the the kids to be ok. We’ve got to be stable in order for the kids to be stable.”</p> <p>“The children need to see us cooperate as a team so they’ll feel safe and stable.”</p> <p>“Let’s set up guidelines for handling conflicts that keep the children out of the middle or make them feel confused.”</p>



Approaches to Co-Parenting

Approach	Scripts
Acknowledge Birth Parents' Losses and Your Willingness to be a Support	<p data-bbox="580 668 1742 759">“I can only imagine how hard it must be to not have your children with you.”</p> <p data-bbox="580 816 1742 908">“Use this time to take care of yourself so you can then take care of the kids. You’ve got to be ok for the kids to be ok.”</p> <p data-bbox="580 965 1742 1113">“Let us help the kids out while you take care of yourself and get things in place (ie shelter, income) for the children’s return.”</p> <p data-bbox="580 1170 1742 1319">“Please remember I not only want to support you in your role as the children’s parents, but I also want to support you in my life as my son/daughter/brother/sister, etc.”</p>



Summary



Summary

The Strengths of Co-Parenting in Kinship Families

- ❑ Pre-existing relationships are the basis for co-parenting between the caregivers and birth parents.
- ❑ Both the caregiver and birth parents have a personal relationship with the child.
- ❑ The caregiver and birth parents are mutually accessible to each other as family members.
- ❑ Children can maintain relationships and support from the caregiver after re-unification with their birth parents.
- ❑ Co-parenting can continue if the children are not re-unified with their birth parents.



Summary

Approaches in Co-Parenting

- Identify common goals
- Acknowledge the birth parents' power, influence, and importance
- Elicit the birth parents' buy-in
- Identify and dismantle past barriers
- Establish a partnership as co-parents
- Acknowledge the birth parents' losses and your willingness to support them





The Inherent Strengths in Kinship Families

For More Information

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