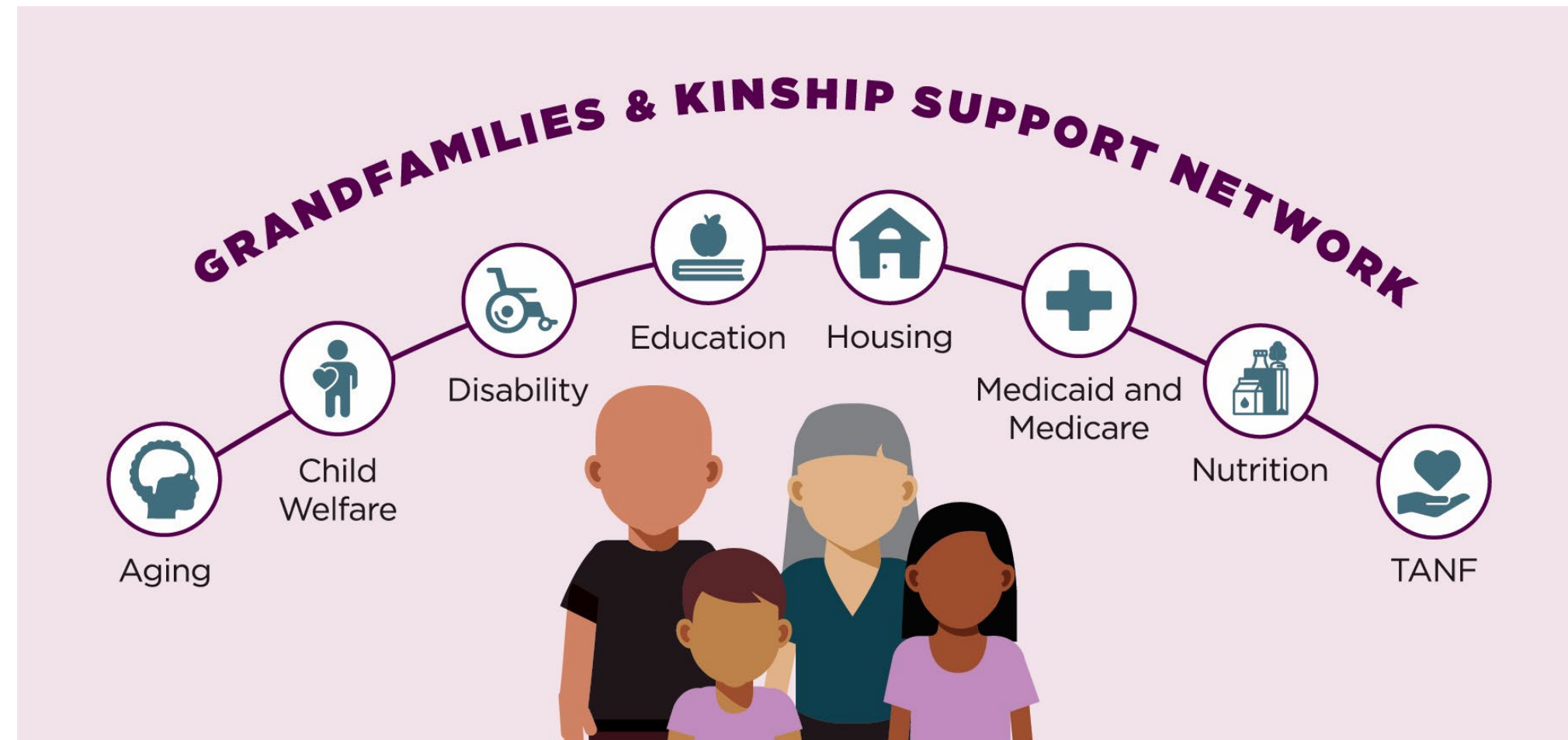


# **Kin-Specific Foster Care Licensing: Implementation Progress**

**February 25, 2025**

- Welcome, we will begin at the top of the hour
- Please type in the **chat** box - your name, state, tribe (if applicable), and role
- Type questions in the **chat** box at any point during our time together
- **We will provide a separate meeting link for a 30-minute Q&A with panelists starting in one hour, at 2 ET**
- All participants will receive a link to the slides and recording by the end of the week

- Since 2021, Generations United, in cooperation with the US Administration for Community Living, has operated the first-ever federally funded technical assistance center on kinship/grandfamilies
- Purpose is to provide technical assistance to the array of state, territorial, and tribal government agencies and organizations so they can better serve the families by working across systems and maximizing resources



# How We Help



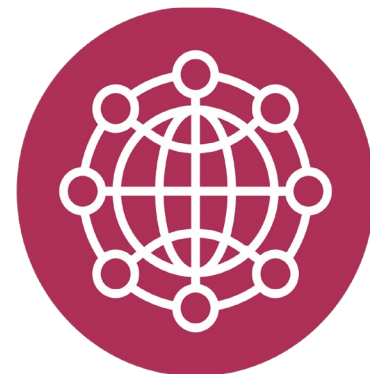
## Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts webinars and facilitates learning collaboratives.



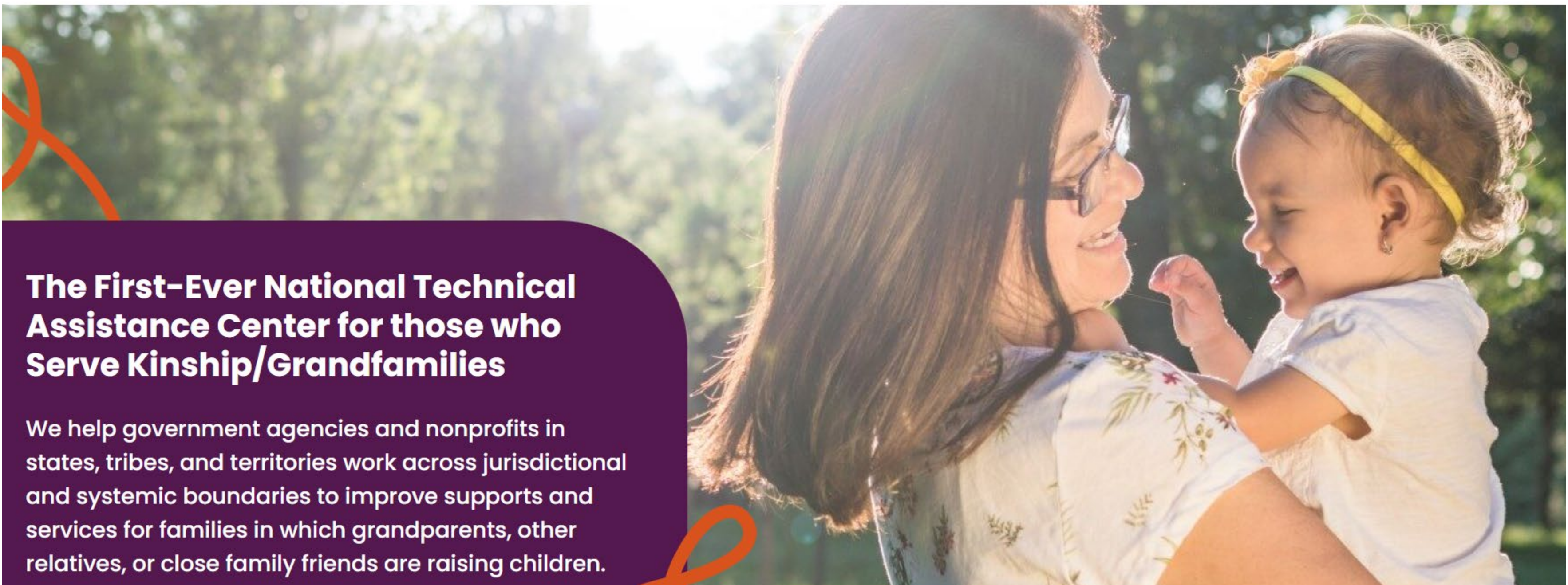
## Individual Assistance

We respond to individual requests for help from government agencies, kinship navigators, and community-based nonprofits.



## A Centralized Hub

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

# Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards

[www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards 2025.pdf](http://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards 2025.pdf)

## Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval

Recommended  
Standards  
of National  
Organizations



**ABA** AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION  
Center on Children  
and the Law

**A SECOND CHANCE** INC.  
Kinship Care

**CHILDREN'S  
RIGHTS**

**generations  
United**  
Because we're stronger together®

**GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP  
SUPPORT NETWORK**  
A National Technical Assistance Center

**nara** National Association for  
Regulatory Administration

**child welfare  
playbook**

**think of us**



< Resource Library

FACT SHEET

## Final Rule & Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) concern the **Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards** ↓. These questions were collected during two Network webinars and through technical assistance requests. The Kin-Specific Standards are the only national model of such standards and were developed to help states take the federal option to implement separate, tailored foster care licensing standards for kinship families. They were created by an array of national organizations, including the Network, and informed by child welfare agencies and kin caregivers.

The answers have been updated as of January 2025.

### Relevant Webinars:

# Welcome our Presenters and Panelists

- **Marina Nitze**, Child Welfare Playbook
- **Heidi Redlich Epstein**, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law
- **Sonya Silva**, Bloom Works
- **Jessica Bodell**, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- **Lindsay Coleman**, Tennessee Department of Children's Services
- **Cheryl Miller & Joylina Gonzalez**, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
- **Rebecca Rice**, Maryland Department of Human Services

# Apply for our Two Latest Opportunities!

Our **Storytelling Learning Community**, taking place over four weekly sessions in April, will build your skills in using storytelling to help your organization connect with potential partners, clients, funders, etc.

**Learn More and Apply by March 7:**

<https://www.gksnetwork.org/grandfamilies-kinship-support-network-storytelling-learning-community/>

The **Exemplary Kinship Practice Designation**, welcomes the submission of practices that have anecdotal or empirical evidence of success. Practices may be kin-specific or more general and implemented in a way that specifically helps kinship/grandfamilies.

**Learn More and Apply by April 22:**

<https://www.gksnetwork.org/call-for-exemplary-kinship-grandfamilies-practices/>

# Join Us for our Next Webinar!

## Aging Network and Child Welfare Collaborations to Support Kinship/ Grandfamilies

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**  
**2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET**

**Register Here**



# Stay Connected & Access Support

## Request assistance

For the latest updates, follow the Network on LinkedIn!





The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

# Kin Licensing / Approval 101

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February 25, 2025



# Where We Started

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- Federal rule required foster home licensing standards to be **the same** for relatives and non-relatives
- Agencies could make **case by case** exceptions for non-safety standards
- Nationally, **most** kinship caregivers were unlicensed; they had placement of children but **no or less financial support**
- **Prevented kin placement** in some places

# Federal Rule Overview

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As of December 1, 2023, title IV-E agencies have the **option** to have a kin-specific licensing or approval process that recognizes the unique needs of kinship caregivers.

Payments to these licensed or approved kinship caregivers are eligible for title IV-E reimbursement (for an otherwise-eligible child).

# Federal Rule Requirements

---

The Act requires **only** that licensing or approval standards established by the state or tribe **are reasonably in accordance with recommended standards of national organizations for foster family homes**

and that the caregiver fully meet federal requirements under section **471(a)(20)** of the Act (concerning criminal background checks for all foster parents).

# Federal Rule Requirements

---

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and that **the caregiver fully meet federal requirements under section 471(a)(20) of the Act (concerning criminal background checks for all foster parents).**



# New Model Standards

# New Kin-Specific Model Standards

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Written by:

- A Second Chance Inc.
- American Bar Association Center on Children & the Law
- Children's Rights
- CWPolicy
- Generations United and its Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center
- National Indian Child Welfare Association
- National Association for Regulatory Administration
- Think of Us

# Kin-Specific Model Standards

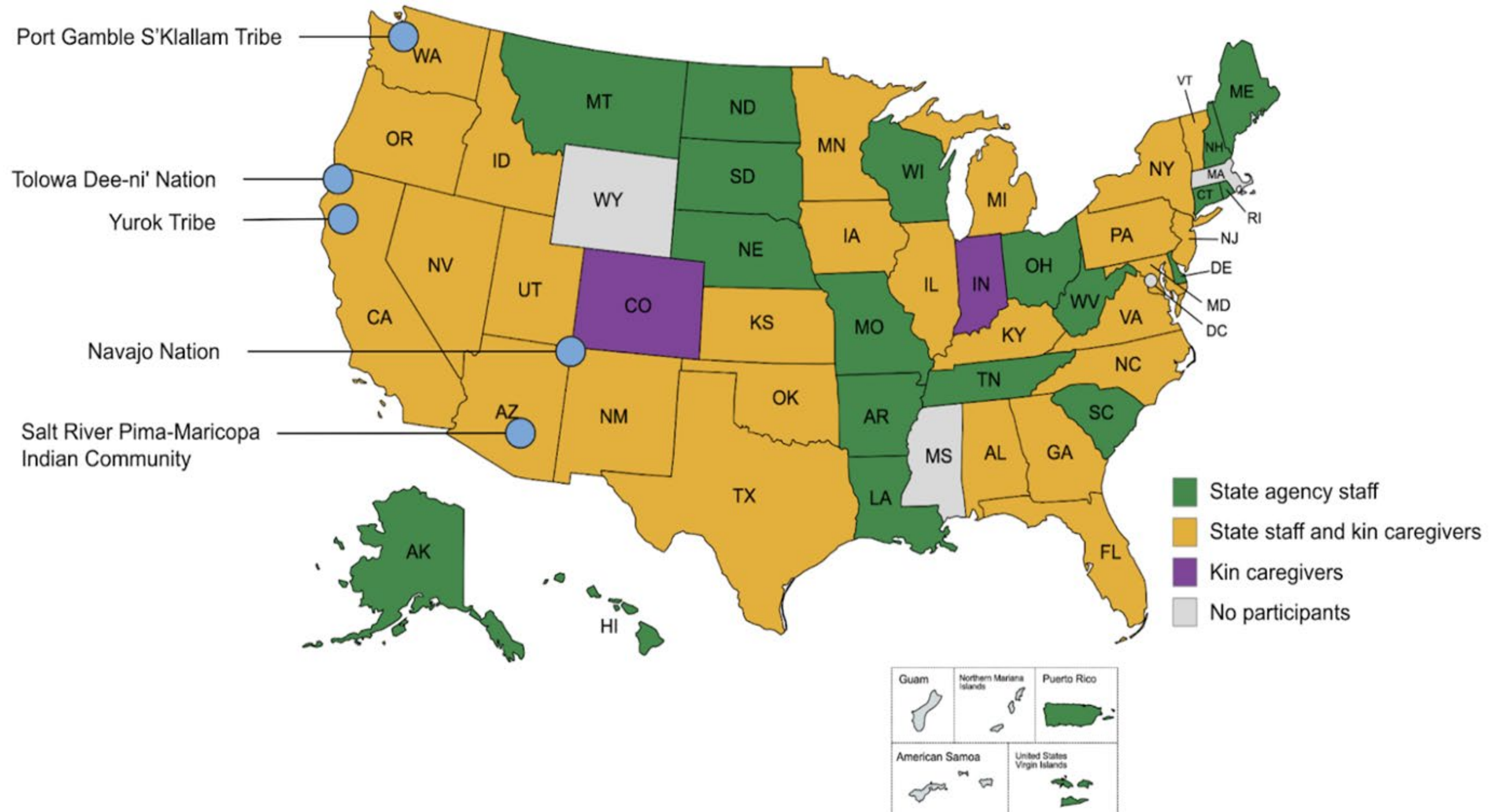
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1. Required background checks
1. Caregiver suitability assessment (similar to what you already do at placement)
1. Safety and needs assessment of the home

[Link to the standards](#)

[Link to the crosswalk tool](#)

- **Goal: 100% certification on same day as placement with kin.**
- The standards include implementation guidance and example template forms.
- They were co-designed with 100s of agency employees and kin caregivers.



# Expected Benefits

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- 100% equitable support for kinship caregivers with placement
- No more unsupported placements
- More kin placements
- More kin guardianship
- Staff can focus their time on higher priorities and supports

# 417(a)(20)

---

For each kinship caregiver you seek to certify:

- ☐ Send fingerprints to the FBI
- ☐ Check the child abuse and neglect registry of any state where that caregiver lived in the last 5 years

For each adult living in the kinship caregiver's home\*:

- ☐ Check the child abuse and neglect registry of any state where that adult lived in the last 5 years

\*CAPTA or Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act may require you to fingerprint

# Model Standards

---

For each kinship caregiver you seek to certify:

- ❑ Send fingerprints to the FBI
- ❑ Check the child abuse and neglect registry of any state where that caregiver lived in the last 5 years
- ❑ Check sex offender registry
- ❑ Conduct name-based in-state background check

For each adult living in the kinship caregiver's home\*:

- ❑ Check the child abuse and neglect registry of any state where that adult lived in the last 5 years
- ❑ Check sex offender registry
- ❑ Conduct name-based in-state background check

\*CAPTA or Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act may require you to fingerprint

# Federally Disqualifying Crimes

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Permanently disqualifying:

- ☐ felony conviction for child abuse or neglect
- ☐ felony conviction for spousal abuse
- ☐ felony conviction for a crime against children (including child pornography)
- ☐ felony conviction involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery

Disqualifying if a **felony conviction in the last 5 years:**







- ☐ physical assault
- ☐ battery
- ☐ a drug-related offense

# Crosswalk

	A	B	C
	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Alignment</b>	<b>Source of Agency Standard</b> <i>Indicate the citation (statutes, regulations, administrative codes, policies, etc.)</i>
1			
47	Agency can conduct a name-based background check for individuals without fingerprints (such as those missing fingers, or those who no longer have fingerprints due to age, exposure to chemicals, etc.).		
48	<b>Additional Implementation Recommendations: Fulfilling Out-of-State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Requests</b>		
49	Agency uses the recommended out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry request template.	Aligns using modified version of template	
50	When fulfilling out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry request checks, respond within one week.	Aligns	
51	When fulfilling out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry request checks, do not charge a fee.	Aligns	
52	When fulfilling out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry request checks, do not require a witnessed or notarized signature.	Aligns	
53	When fulfilling out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry request checks, accept electronic requests to a centralized email or portal.	Aligns	
54	When fulfilling out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry request checks, accept attestation from the sending agency that they received consent; do not require a copy of the consent or a new consent form.	Aligns	

# Fulfilling Out of State Child Abuse/Neglect Registry Checks

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- ☐ No notary 
- ☐ No witnessed signature 
- ☐ No fee 
- ☐ Accept electronic requests 
- ☐ Accept attestation of consent on file 
- ☐ General inbox 

- ☐ Check your agency's status on the progress dashboard!

<https://www.childwelfareplaybook.com/compare/background-checks/>

# Kin-Specific Licensing Progress and Documents

For purposes of this document:

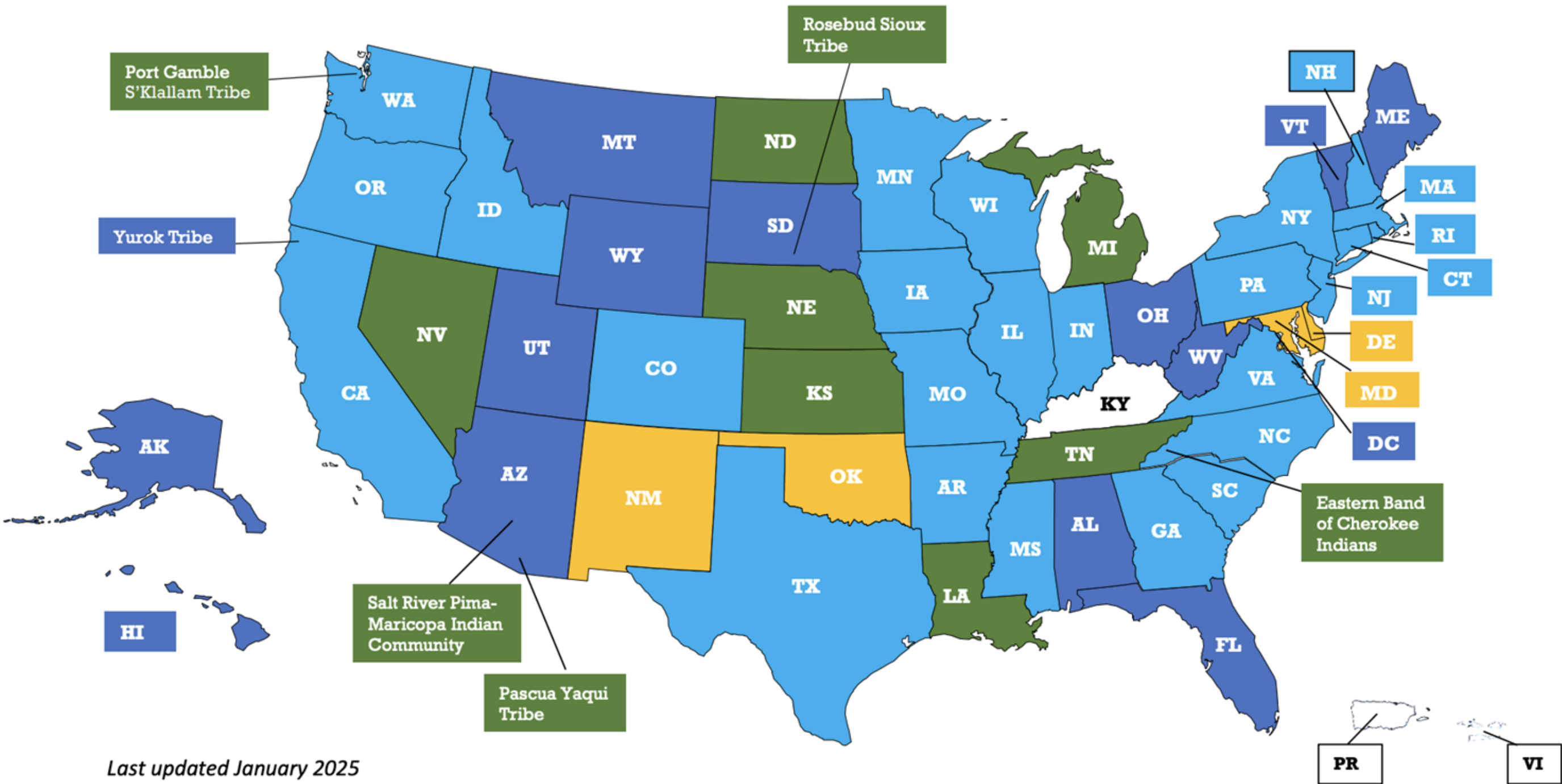
**“Approved”** indicates that the Children’s Bureau approved the jurisdiction’s plan.

**“Submitted”** indicates that a jurisdiction has submitted a plan to the Children’s Bureau.

**“Committed to Implement”** indicates that a jurisdiction has decided to implement kin-specific licensing and is in the process of making an implementation plan.

**“Interested”** indicates that a jurisdiction is exploring kin-specific licensing.

- Approved
- Submitted
- Committed to implement
- Interested
- No response



# Kin Caregiver Assessment Forms

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February 25, 2025

!≡ BLOOM WORKS

**BETTER SERVICES START WITH  
PUTTING ~~TECHNOLOGY~~ FIRST.**

^ PEOPLE

## Overview

- Co-design of forms
- Background checks
- Kin caregiver assessment

# Co-designing for equity: elevating lived experience

# Goal



To enable more kinship families to be approved, licensed and provided with financial support.



It's always been very focused on how are you meeting or not meeting our standards versus how can we support you and take care of this?"

- 
- Child welfare professional on the support offered with the forms

# Background checks

# Background checks: what we learned from kin caregivers

- Understand how the background check process **can help protect them** and keep the child with them
- **Know what to expect** throughout the process, and how sensitive information would be used
- Give **written consent** to how their information will be used and shared
- **See and have a record** of all information collected
- To have all necessary information collected **at once, ideally within 1 day**

## Application form

### Instructions

This form is used to apply to [Agency] to get approved as a formal kin caregiver. If you have any questions about this form, please contact your caseworker for assistance. Please print clearly when completing this form. Questions about gender, race, and ethnicity are collected for statistical purposes.

### Section 1: Child information

#### Child 1

First name	Middle name (write "none" if no middle name)	Last name (include Jr., Sr., etc.)
Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	Gender (how they identify)	Race or ethnicity (how they identify)
Tribal affiliation (if any)	Relationship to caregiver (Applicant 1)	

#### Child 2

First name	Middle name (write "none" if no middle name)	Last name (include Jr., Sr., etc.)
Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	Gender (how they identify)	Race or ethnicity (how they identify)
Tribal affiliation (if any)	Relationship to caregiver (Applicant 1)	

- For agency staff to fill out with the kin caregiver
- Cover page is for caregiver to keep – it details what to expect
- Instructions explain why demographic information is collected
- Recommend sharing a list of disqualifying crimes up front

## Consent

### Consent to Background Checks

By signing below:

1. I agree to undergo a criminal background check and be fingerprinted.
2. I agree to undergo a child protection registry check.
3. I agree to undergo a National Sex Offender Registry check.
4. In order to complete the above checks, I must provide valid and unexpired photo identification.
  - Note: If you have a social security number or a tax ID number (ITIN), we recommend sharing it to get the fastest background checks results.
5. I understand that I have the following rights:
  - I do not have to consent to the release of this information. However, if I do not consent, I will not be able to go through this process.
  - State and federal privacy laws protect my records.
  - I give consent to the [Agency] to share any information listed above with agency representatives, caseworkers, and other decision makers in the kin caregiver approval process.
  - I must give written consent to the [Agency] to share my information with anyone outside of the kin caregiver approval process.

I have reviewed this form as it applies to me. I give permission for [Agency] to verify any or all information I have provided.

- For kin caregiver and each adult in the home to fill out
- Form explains what checks will be completed and their rights
- Share a copy with each person who signed
- Caregivers sign one consent form to cover all background check forms

# Criminal history evaluation

## Criminal History Evaluation Form

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Use this form to evaluate whether to waive a criminal history for a kin caregiver applicant or another adult living in the home. **Federally disqualifying crimes may not be waived.**

### Section 1: Applicant Information

Full name

Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY)

Applicant's role in child's care:

- ☐ Kin caregiver applicant
- ☐ Other adult living in the home
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Visitation supervision
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Background check purpose:

- ☐ Kinship care
- ☐ Foster care
- ☐ Adoption
- ☐ Guardianship
- ☐ Other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Background check type:

- ☐ In-State
- ☐ Fingerprint

Case number

Date submitted

### Section 2: Evaluation Criteria

Even if the background check results reveal a criminal conviction for the kin caregiver applicant or any other adult living in the home, the agency may approve them so long as there is proof that the conviction will not affect the child's safety and well-being. The agency may consider the following factors:

- The type of crime
- The amount of time that has passed since the crime
- The individual's age at the time of conviction
- The seriousness of the crime
- Evidence of rehabilitation since conviction (may include completion of treatment, court-ordered classes, community service, character references, etc.)
- The total number and types of crimes, and ages at the time they were committed

- Form for evaluating non-automatically disqualifying crimes
- For agency staff to fill out, based on conversation with the kin caregivers or other adults in the home
- Evaluation criteria are based on input from agencies and caregivers

## Denial & appeal letter

### Your rights and next steps

You have the right to ask [Agency] to appeal this decision. An appeal is a request to the [agency and/or court] to reconsider their decision. Keep in mind that the [Agency making final call / Family Court] is responsible for making the final decision which may not be the outcome you want. To appeal the decision, follow the steps below.

If you do not understand this letter, or would like to discuss this decision further, please contact me at the telephone number or email address below.

Sincerely,

Name of representative

Job title

Email address

Phone number

- Notification form explaining the denial of a kin caregiver application
- Guides kin caregivers on starting the appeal process if eligible
- Meant to supplement, not replace, critical conversations between applicants and caseworkers

# Kin caregiver assessment



When I went from 3 to 7 kids, it required more food. Had they asked me if I was able to provide food to all the kids I would have said yes. I would have never told the caseworker I need help because of fear. I went to get SNAP.”

---

– Kin caregiver on support needs

# Kin caregiver assessment: what we learned

- Assessments of the home and the caregiver happen at the same time
- The intersectionality of identities is important to take into account
- Ask kin caregivers what they need and provide support
- Experiencing tension, friction, and discomfort can be productive to form development
- Test questions and forms before wider roll outs

# What does the assessment include?

## Caregiver discussion questions

- Caregiver's communication needs
- Caregiver's relationships and needs
- Children's needs
- Caregiver's parenting approach
- Caregiver's health

## Physical home safety questions

- Conditions of the home
- Hazardous material storage
- Emergency preparedness
- Sleeping arrangements

# Templates designed for child welfare agencies

- ✓ Kin Caregiver Assessment form
- ✓ Agency Training Guide
- ✓ Assessment "Question Bank"

## Kinship Caregiver Assessment

Last updated July 26, 2024


### ? How to use this form

Use this form when conducting a kinship caregiver assessment which your agency might refer to as a home study. Give potential kin caregivers a copy of this form in advance. Inform them it is not for caregivers to fill out, but to prepare them so they know what to expect during the assessment.

### GOALS

- ✓ Support and strengthen families to keep children with their kin
- ✓ Prepare a kin caregiver's home and family for the placement of children
- ✓ Identify help needed to ensure a kin caregiver's ability to care for the children, meet their needs, and keep them safe

## Kin caregiver assessment form

**Caregiver's relationships and needs** 

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Relationship with the children and their parents

**How would you describe the history of your relationship with the children and their parents?**

*Your answer might include strengths in your relationships (e.g., we are very close, we always get together during the holidays) or any concerns you have about the children's safety (e.g., there are lots of family disagreements or anger issues, I'm concerned the parents overstep the children's boundaries).*


As a follow-up to the previous question, if you had concerns about your relationships with the children and their parents, what would help you feel supported?

**Here are some examples:**

- Family mediation (to solve conflicts)
- Family counseling (to improve communication, work through disagreements, and develop


- Assess kin caregivers during home studies as part of licensing process
- To be filled by agency staff, and shared with kin caregivers in advance
- Identify what caregivers are already capable of, and how to support placements
- How to meet caregiver and children's needs equitably

## Agency training guide

**Caregiver's communication needs** 

---

Paperwork completion

 **Annotation**

Explain that asking for help in various formats is normal and expected. If agencies require caregivers to complete paperwork digitally, provide assistance or access to a device for caregivers who may not be able to use or afford a device on their own.

How do you generally prefer to fill out paperwork?  
*Write down all that apply.*

**Here are some examples:**

- On paper
- Digitally (on a cell phone, tablet, computer, or laptop)
- Have someone help read and write out answers for me
- No preference
- Other (write in the blank space)

If you prefer to fill out paperwork digitally, do you have access to a device to fill out the required paperwork?

- Annotated questions with explanations
- Created for staff training and to provide guidance on how to conduct the kin caregiver assessment
- For internal use, copy does not need to be provided to kin caregivers

# Assessment “Question Bank”

## Caregiver discussion questions

### 🗨️ Caregiver’s communication needs

Preferred methods for communication

**What are your preferred methods of communication?**

*If you prefer phone calls, texts, or email, tell us the best phone numbers and email addresses to reach you.*

Here are some examples:

- Phone call
- Text message / SMS
- Email
- Scheduled video calls
- No preference
- Other (write in the blank space)

**Annotation:** Caregivers may need different communication methods depending on their level of access, comfort, and tech skills. Discuss the different communication methods available to them to build trust and empower them to engage with the agency. Though not all agencies can offer all the methods listed, it's important to meet caregivers where they are.

Paperwork completion

**How do you generally prefer to fill out paperwork?**

*Write down all that apply.*

Here are some examples:

- On paper
- Digitally (on a cell phone, tablet, computer, or laptop)
- Have someone help read and write out answers for me
- No preference
- Other (write in the blank space)

- Google Doc that can be copied and edited
- Can be used by agencies wanting to select and edit questions to update their own kin caregiver assessments
- Includes all the annotations and guidance in the training guide
- Includes questions excluded from the assessment

# How you can use the forms

# How to implement form changes

- Use kin model standard form templates to customize a version
- Use plain language for questions that you are required to add for clarity and understanding
- Pilot and test forms and documents with the different groups you work with like:
  - Kin caregivers
  - Community partners
  - Fellow child welfare staff
- Continue to center the lived experiences and feedback of the kin caregivers you work with

# Want to learn more?

1. [National kin model standards](#)
  - a. [Background check forms](#)
  - b. [Kin caregiver assessment materials](#)
    - i. [Kinship caregiver assessment form](#)
    - ii. [Agency training guide](#)
    - iii. [Question bank](#)
2. [Child welfare playbook](#)

*Links in chat to the materials discussed!*

# Thanks!

[bloom-kinship@bloomworks.digital](mailto:bloom-kinship@bloomworks.digital)

# Definition of kin for licensing/approval purposes

# Federal Definition of Relative and Kin

- What is the definition of relative for the title IV-E program?
- As stated in the February 2023 NPRM and reinforced in the answer to [Question 8, Section 8.3A.11, of the Child Welfare Policy Manual](#):
  - Title IV-E agencies have the discretion to define “relative” and “kin” for purposes of determining who qualifies for the kin-specific foster home approval process.
  - The Children’s Bureau encourages agencies to define relative and kin in a way that is inclusive of tribal custom and to adopt a broad definition of relative and kin for licensing/approval purposes.
- For purposes of kin-specific foster home approval, the definition of “relative” or “kin” need only be included in a title IV-E agency’s State Plan and need not be in statute.

# Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Recommendations

- The Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards recommend the following broad definition of kin or relatives for licensing/approval purposes:
  - “Individuals related to a child by blood, marriage, tribal custom, and/or adoption and other individuals who have an emotionally significant relationship with the child or the child’s parents or other family members (often referred to as ‘fictive kin’).”
- Must recognize the great diversity in Indian Country and the sovereign authority of tribal nations to develop their own definitions of “relative”
- Relationships should not be restricted by degree of consanguinity nor denied by the fact that a parent’s rights may have been terminated
- All kin should be eligible for the kin-specific foster home approval; however, agencies may prioritize certain categories of kin over others

# Jurisdictional Definition of Relative and Kin

- An agency's definition of “relative” for purposes of kin-specific foster home approval does not need to match definitions of “relative” used for other child welfare purposes.
  - Agencies are allowed to and often do use different definitions for various child welfare laws and policies, for example to satisfy the Fostering Connections Notice Requirement
- The definition also does not need to mirror definitions used by other agencies outside of child welfare, such as for child-only TANF purposes.
- Note that modifying your definition of “relative” or “kin” may require a change in statute, regulation, administrative code, or policy, depending on your state’s current structure.

# Kin Standards Implementation Tool

## How to Adopt and Effectively Implement Kin-Specific Foster Care Licensing

ABA Center on Children and the Law

Generations United

This tool provides 5 steps to support title IV-E agencies and collaborative partners in the implementation of the new federal rule allowing for kin-specific foster care licensing.

- 1 Familiarize yourself with the new federal kinship licensing rule;
- 2 Analyze what needs to change in your jurisdiction;
- 3 Examine how these changes need to happen;
- 4 Continue to collaborate and partner to create change; and
- 5 Evaluate progress regularly through data collection and analysis.

1

### Familiarize Yourself with the New Federal Kinship Licensing Rule

On September 28, 2023, the U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF) published a rule granting title IV-E agencies flexibility to respect the unique circumstances of kin caregivers of children in foster care. This rule gives states, territories, and tribes (operating their own IV-E program) the option to implement separate, commonsense licensing or foster home approval processes for kin, thereby increasing the number of children safely cared for by people who know and love them. This rule also requires that jurisdictions provide children in licensed or approved kin foster family homes with the same foster care maintenance payments (FCMP) they would receive in non-kin foster homes. For summaries of the rule, model kin-specific foster home approval standards, a map tracking state progress, and additional materials visit <https://www.grandfamilies.org/Resources/Foster-Care-Licensing/Kin-Specific-Foster-Care-Licensing>.

Specifically, this new ACF rule:

- Five steps to guide title IV-E agencies in developing and implementing kin-specific foster home approval standards.
- Five key steps include:
  - Familiarize yourself with the federal rule
  - Analyze your existing laws, regulations, and policies to identify areas requiring change
  - Determine whether changes must occur in statute, regulation, or policy and understand your process
  - Identify and collaborate with key partners
  - Evaluate progress through data
- Available at:  
[https://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Kin\\_Licensing\\_Implementation\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Kin_Licensing_Implementation_Tool.pdf)