

# **Kinship Peer Liaisons: Harnessing Lived Experience to Support Families**

**March 18, 2026**

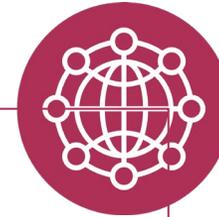
- Welcome, we will begin at the top of the hour
- Please type in the **chat** box - your name, state, tribe (if applicable), and role
- Type questions in the **chat** box at any point during our time together
- **We will provide a separate meeting link for a 30-minute Q&A with our presenters, starting in an hour, at 3 PM ET**
- By the end of the week, all participants will receive a link to the slides and the recording

# Who We Are & How We Help



## Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts webinars and facilitates learning collaboratives.



## A Centralized Hub

The Network is elevating exemplary kinship/grandfamily practices and programs from around the country.



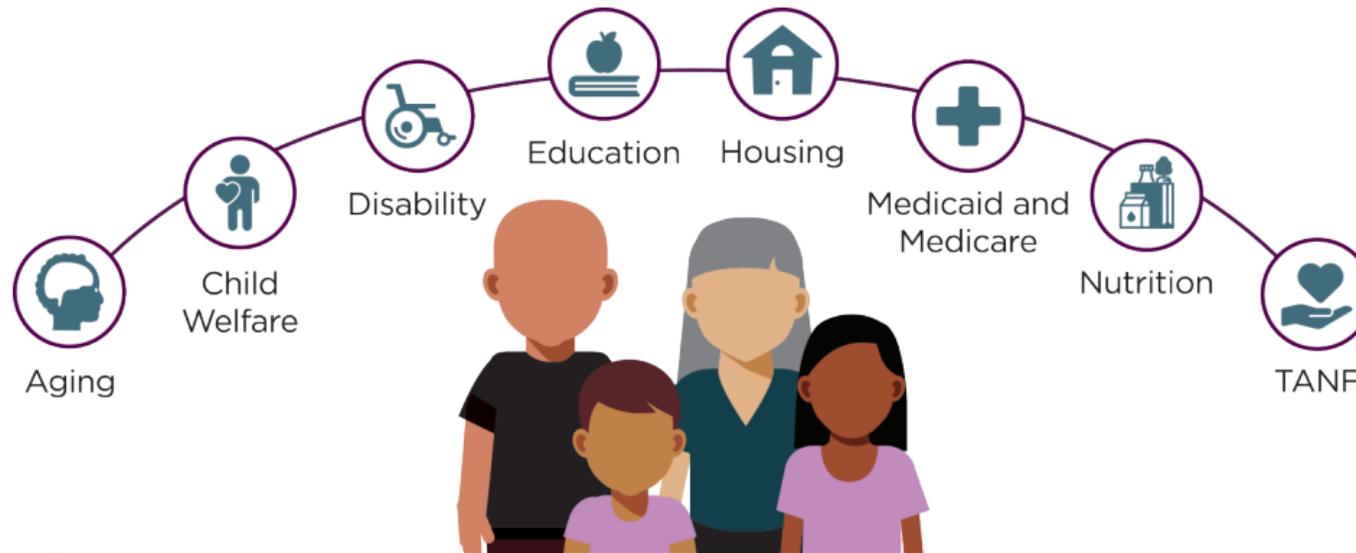
## Bridging Systems for Kinship Families

The Network is helping Idaho, San Diego County, and Oneida Nation of Wisconsin optimize their collaborative approaches and improve their services. Solutions will be replicable for others.



## Individual Assistance

We respond to individual requests for help from government agencies and nonprofit organizations.



# Welcome Our Presenters



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# Kinship Peer Liaisons: Harnessing Lived Experience to Support Families

**Ramona Denby, Ph.D., Angela Tobin, OTD, Tamra Scott,  
MS BSW, Charlene Ingram MSW**



# Roadmap

Overview of peer liaisons



KinCarolina program example



Implementing peer liaison model



Supervision and coaching



THE Liaison curriculum

# What is a Peer Liaison?

*A peer liaison is a mentor with lived experience who works one-on-one with caregivers to provide:*



*Emotional support*



*Informational support*



*Connections to relevant resources*





*Peer liaisons can help strengthen caregivers' knowledge, skills, and capacity by addressing their well-being.*



# Assumptions: Peer Support vs. Formal Services for Kinship Caregivers

Kinship caregivers can face high stress, encounter complex service systems, and experience emotional burden inherent with the caregiving role

Peer support and formal services play important roles, but they offer different types of benefits

Peer support models may not be the best course of action or not the first resource that is explored

Caregivers can simultaneously avail opportunities from peer support and formal service systems

# Why Peer Support: Five Core Reasons

## **#1: Lived Experience Creates Authentic Trust, Emotional Validation, and Can Reduce Isolation**

This may foster:

- Immediate rapport between the peers
- Reduced fear of judgment
- Greater emotional safety
- Normalizes and validates caregivers' experiences
- Reduces isolation which is a major predictor of caregiver burnout

# Why Peer Support: Five Core Reasons

## #2: Practical, Easy to Implement, and True to Life Guidance

Peers provide concrete, experience-based strategies such as:

- How to navigate case plans
- What to expect in court or from formal service entities
- How to manage interactions with agencies
- Tips for advocating for services
- Support of navigating complex child and family dynamics and managing conflicting emotions

# Why Peer Support: Five Core Reasons

## **#3: Strengthens Empowerment and Encourages Self-Advocacy**

Peers help caregivers build confidence and voice:

- Strengthening advocacy in service meetings
- Encouraging participation in decision-making
- Helping caregivers understand their rights and the process
- Builds confidence and self-efficacy

# Why Peer Support: Five Core Reasons

## #4: Culturally Responsive Support

When matched appropriately, peers often have shared cultural, community, or linguistic backgrounds, which can:

- Increase trust
- Reduce stigma
- Improve engagement
- Align support with family values
- Viewed as a collectivist/communal approach often more compatible with families' culture

# Why Peer Support: Five Core Reasons

## #4: Lower Barriers to Engagement

Peer support is:

- More flexible
- Less bureaucratic
- Often available outside traditional work hours
- Less intimidating than formal clinical services
- Though *therapeutic*, it is not therapy which can reduce the stigma associated with formal help seeking

# Benefits of Peer Support

Peer modeling

Increased trust and engagement in services<sup>1</sup>

Decreased caregiver depression and increased social support<sup>2</sup>

Increased knowledge of and access to resources<sup>1</sup>

Trauma-informed and culturally responsive approach<sup>3</sup>

1. Denby, 2011; 2. Strozier, 2012; 3. SAMHSA, 2026

# Introduction to KinCarolina



# About Us



**Ramona Denby-Brinson,  
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Catholic University of  
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**Nancy Mendoza, Ph.D.**  
The Ohio State University



**Joyce Lee, Ph.D.**  
The Ohio State University

# Project Overview

Funded by The Duke Endowment, **KinCarolina** aims to provide targeted, evidence-based supports to kinship caregivers raising children with disabilities and/or special health care needs in the Midlands and Lowcountry regions of South Carolina.

*Formal and informal caregivers are eligible; child diagnosis is not required to qualify*

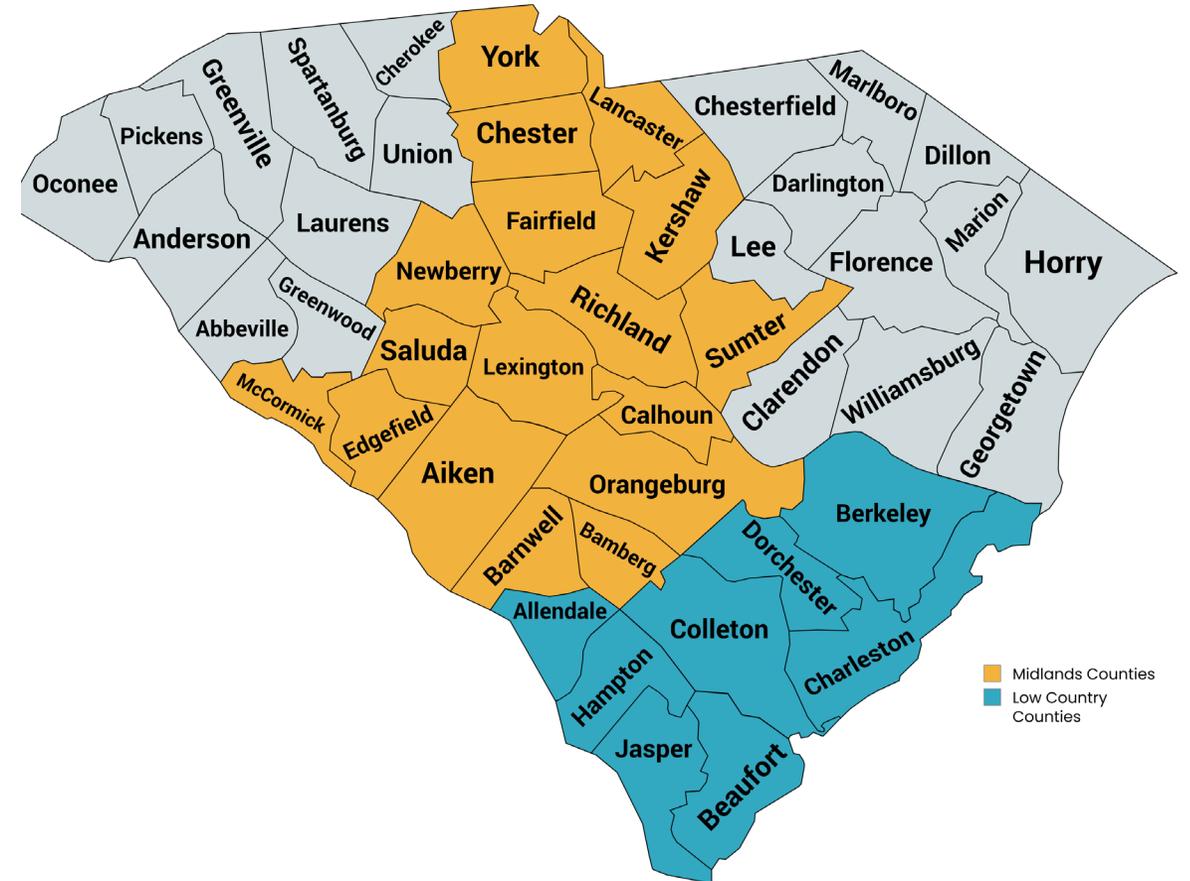
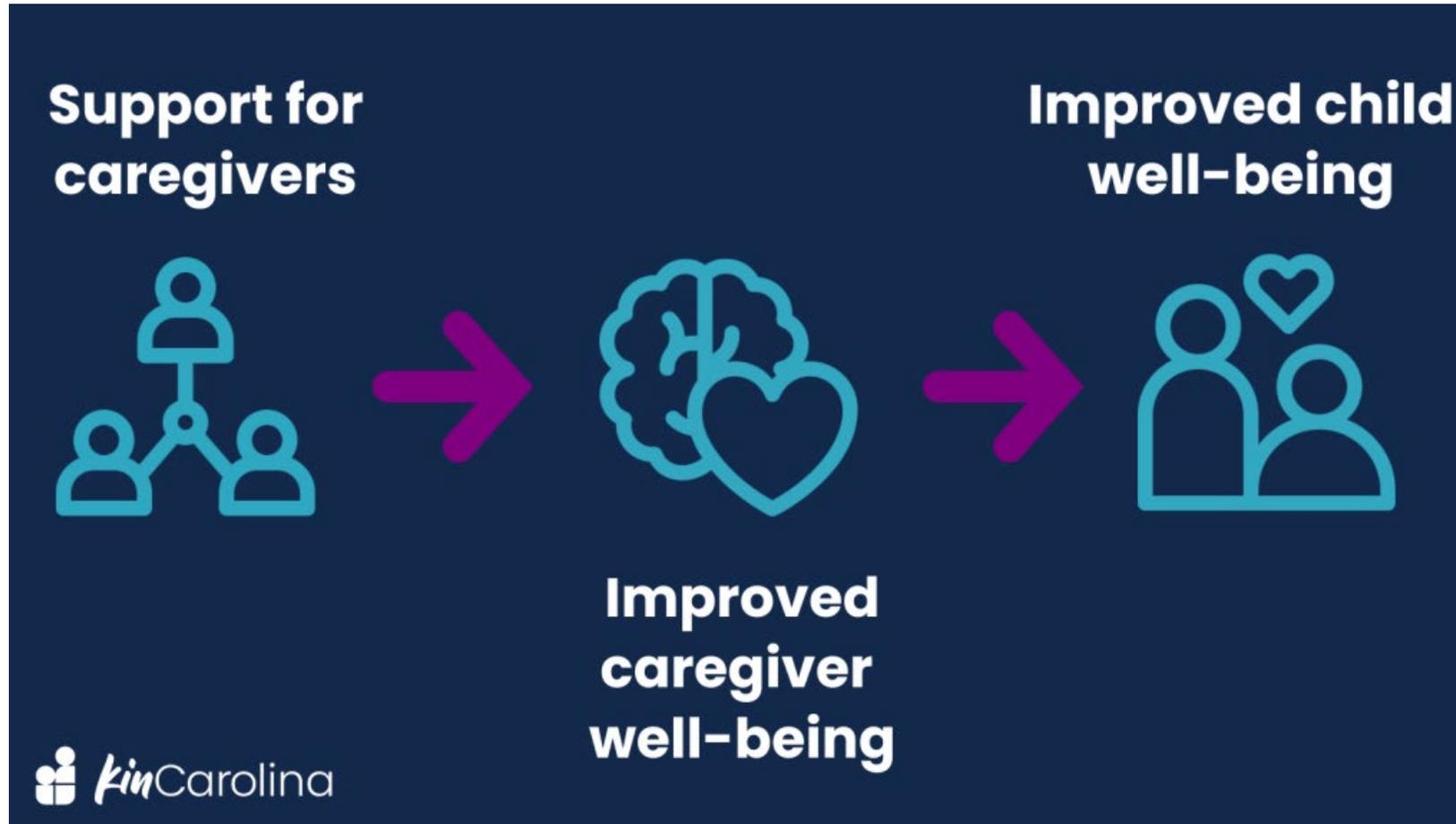


Image: <https://www.scdot.org/inside/feasibility-reports.aspx>

# Our Core Belief





[www.kincarolina.org](http://www.kincarolina.org)

# The KinCarolina Model

## Therapeutic Components

Peer liaisons

Support groups

Information Sessions

1:1 mentorship from a kinship caregiver with lived experience

Sharing of experiences and support from peers in a facilitated virtual group

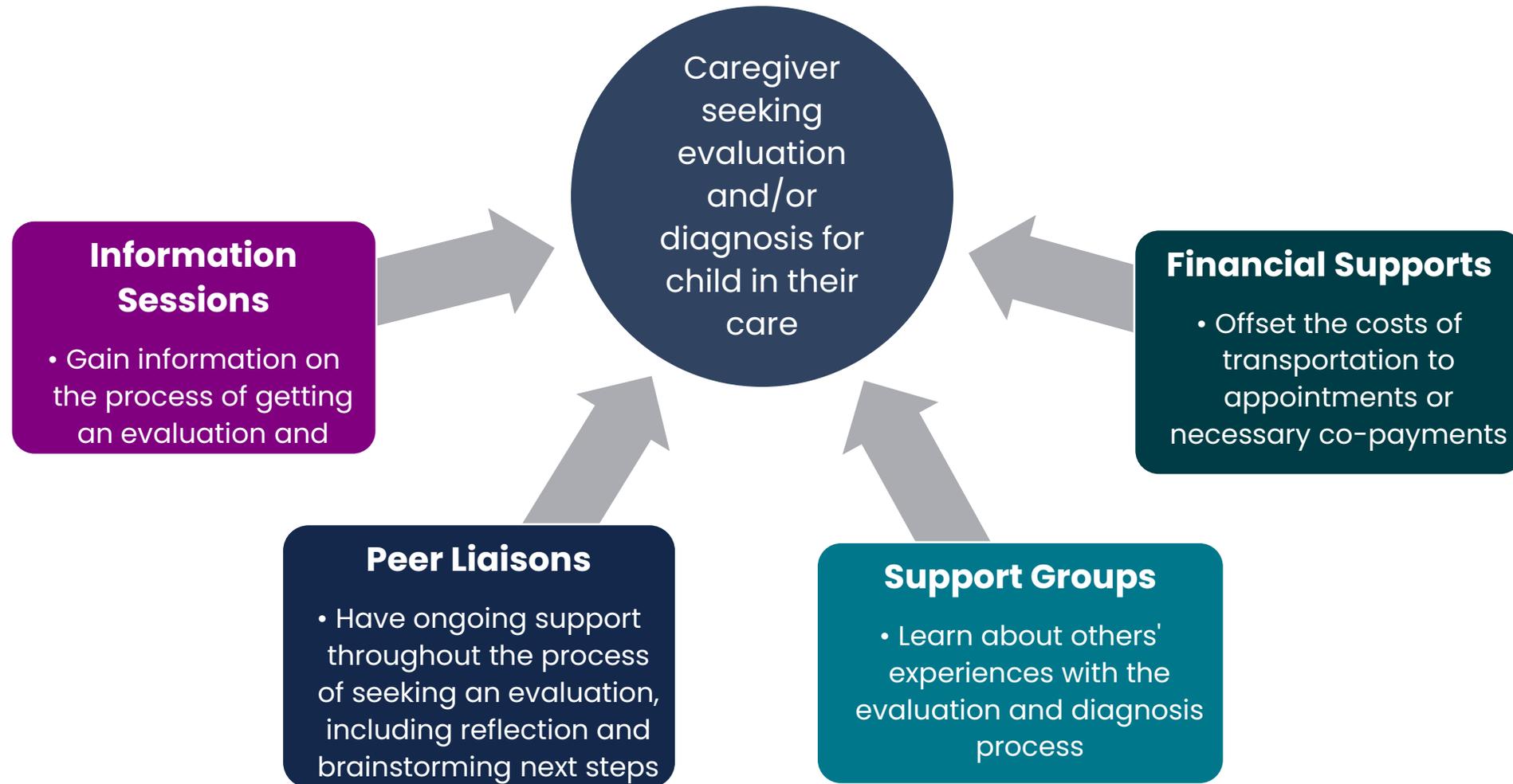
Trainings and therapeutic experiences related to children with disabilities and caregiver self-care



Financial Supports

Monthly stipend of \$450 during the six-month intervention; benefits consultations; and support fund for emergencies

# How the Supports Work Together



# How We Are Making Sure It Is Effective

KinCarolina is studied through a **randomized control trial** to:

- Understand its impact on kinship families
- See if there is a difference in kinship family well-being based on program participation

**Eligible caregivers who decide to participate will be assigned at random to one of two groups:**

**TREATMENT  
GROUP:**

The  
KinCarolina  
program

**OR**

**CONTROL  
GROUP:**

Resource  
guide for  
services in the  
community

# Caregiver Recruitment

**We are actively recruiting for caregiver participants!**

Recruitment and enrollment will continue on a rolling basis.

**Interested caregivers should visit [www.kincarolina.org](http://www.kincarolina.org) to complete an eligibility screening or referral form.**



**WE ARE NOW  
ACCEPTING  
REFERRALS!**

**CLICK THE BLUE "MAKE A REFERRAL" BUTTON ON OUR WEBSITE**

Help us spread the word about KinCarolina! To make the process easier, KinCarolina has added a referral page to our website! This means providers and community members can now directly refer families through the screening form.



Make a referral on our website  
<https://kincarolina.org/referral/>



# Roles of Peer Liaisons



# Ways to Support Mentee

- Mentoring
- Coaching and Advocacy
- Promote help seeking through information and referral coordination
- Networking building and socioemotional support
- Promote self-care practices

# Mentoring



General Check-ins and follow ups with caregivers

Strategies and support regarding child's needs and/or behavior

Problem solving

# Coaching and Advocacy



Explanation of caregivers' rights and responsibilities

Encouraging caregiver advocacy

Accompany caregiver to appointment

# Network Building and Socio-Emotional Support



Provide emotional support (i.e. active listening)

Encourage (and follow-up) with caregivers to participate in KinCarolina programming activities

Attend a community event

# Information and Referrals



Provide information or resources directly to caregiver

Support system navigation

Connect to other community agencies for support

Refer caregiver to benefits specialist as needed

# Self-Care



Recreational activities

Self-care planning and strategies

Create a family safety/well-being plan

# What is **outside** of the peer liaison role?

- Specific legal or medical advice
- Therapy/mental health/professional interventions
- Crisis intervention



# Key Components Peer Liaison Process



# Onboarding Process

- Peer liaison outreach and recruitment
- Structured hiring process
  - Minimum eligibility criteria
  - Application and interview
  - Decision making scales/criteria
  - Sharing requirements/expectations upfront
  - Hiring timeframes (as applicable)



# Onboarding Process (cont.)

- Orientation and ongoing training
  - In-depth onboarding including both role logistics, knowledge, and skill-based information
  - Topics include overview of program/role, therapeutic use of self, boundaries, and caregiver and family wellbeing/safety
- Annual refresher training
  - Topics led by current needs/ideas of peer liaisons and supervisor

# Compensation

- Fair compensation is critical for honoring the time and expertise of peer liaisons and formalizing role
- Compensation models can vary:
  - Contract: hourly or compensation per family on caseload
  - Salary: enough caregivers to build a full caseload
- Transparent and timely compensation processes

# Additional involvement of peer liaisons

- Peer liaisons as key stakeholders
  - Advisory council members and expert consultants
- Assist with program recruitment and outreach
- Co-lead other programming and assist with new peer liaison on-boarding

# Peer Liaison Matching Process

- **Intentional Matching for Relational Safety, Trust, and Sustainable Support**
- Peer Liaison matching is a structured process designed to:
  - Promote trust and psychological safety
  - Align lived experience and caregiver needs
  - Support trauma-informed engagement
  - Strengthen long-term caregiver outcomes

# Supervision/Coaching Peer Liaisons



# Peer Liaison Supervision and Support

Definition of supervision as related to the role of Peer Liaisons

Supporting theoretical concepts

Major functions of supervision

Knowledge, methods and skill

# Definition and Characteristics of Supervision

- There are various definitions of supervision that can relate to specific services being provided to a specific population.
- Supervision of Peer Liaisons providing support to kinship caregivers can be described as a collaborative activity during which a Peer Liaison receives guidance and support in:
  - ✓ Provision of competent and ethical delivery of services,
  - ✓ Personal learning and development, and
  - ✓ Peer Liaison use of personal experience in understanding the experience of others.

# Supporting Theoretical Concepts

- Mutual respect in partnership development
- Parallel process and reciprocal learning
- Reflective supervision
- Self-assessment
- Supervision and coaching relationship

# Supervisory Functions

Leadership

Planning

Organizing

Coaching

Supporting

Evaluating

# Knowledge, Method, and Skills

## Knowledge:

- Understanding of peer support practice and guiding principles
- Understanding of adult learning
- Understanding of the relationship between coaching and supervision
- Understanding secondary traumatic stress
- Understanding and acknowledging diversity



# Knowledge, Method , and Skills

## Method

- Critical thinking
- Active listening
- Respect and inclusion
- Seeking and obtaining feedback
- Building trust



# Knowledge, Method, Skills

## Skills

- Clear communication: written and verbal
- Organizing
- Decision-making
- Conflict resolution
- Willingness to learn
- Identifying and supporting the strengths of others
- Time management



# Self-awareness + Accountability

- What is supervisor self-assessment?
- Importance and benefits of self-assessment



# Real-Life Practice: Peer Liaison & Caregiver Dynamics

- Personality differences can create communication difficulties.
- Differing views on parenting require respectful, thoughtful dialogue.
- Immediate caregiver needs may contrast with long-term practice standards.
- Reflection shifts engagement from correction to curiosity.
- Discernment guides when to support, validate, or step back.
- **Effective peer support balances empathy, professionalism, and respect for diverse caregiving journeys.**

# THE Liaison Model



# Peer Liaison Curriculum

## **THE Liaison Model:** *Together Harnessing Lived-Experience Liaison Model*

- **Primary audience:** Organizations/entities serving kinship caregivers; curriculum includes materials and training for:
  1. Peer Liaisons
  2. Trainers
  3. Supervisors
  4. Family-facing professionals and community members
  5. Evaluators
- Interdisciplinary, ready-to implement, and adaptable to organizations
- Materials include: training content, facilitator's guide, virtual case studies, handouts, research publications, assessments

# Peer Liaison Curriculum

## THE Liaison Model Key Components

Peer Liaison  
Training

Comprehensive and  
interactive training  
for peer liaisons

Train the  
Trainer  
Curriculum

Training materials for  
leading peer liaison  
training and applying  
supervision and  
coaching model

Supervision +  
Coaching  
Model

Trauma-informed  
and culturally  
responsive model

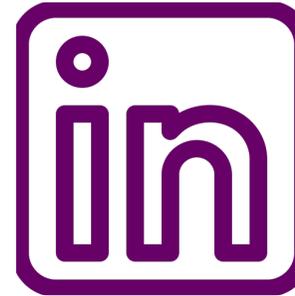
Standards of  
Practice

Program fidelity,  
Implementation  
science principles,  
and evaluation

# Reach Out to Us!



Visit our website:  
[www.kincarolina.org](http://www.kincarolina.org)



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Email us at  
[kincarolina@unc.edu](mailto:kincarolina@unc.edu)



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Watch our videos on  
[YouTube](#)

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# Recommended Presentation Reference

- Denby, R., Tobin, A., Scott, T., & Ingram, C. (2026, March). *Kinship Peer Liaisons: Harnessing Lived Experience to Support Families*. Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network. Virtual.

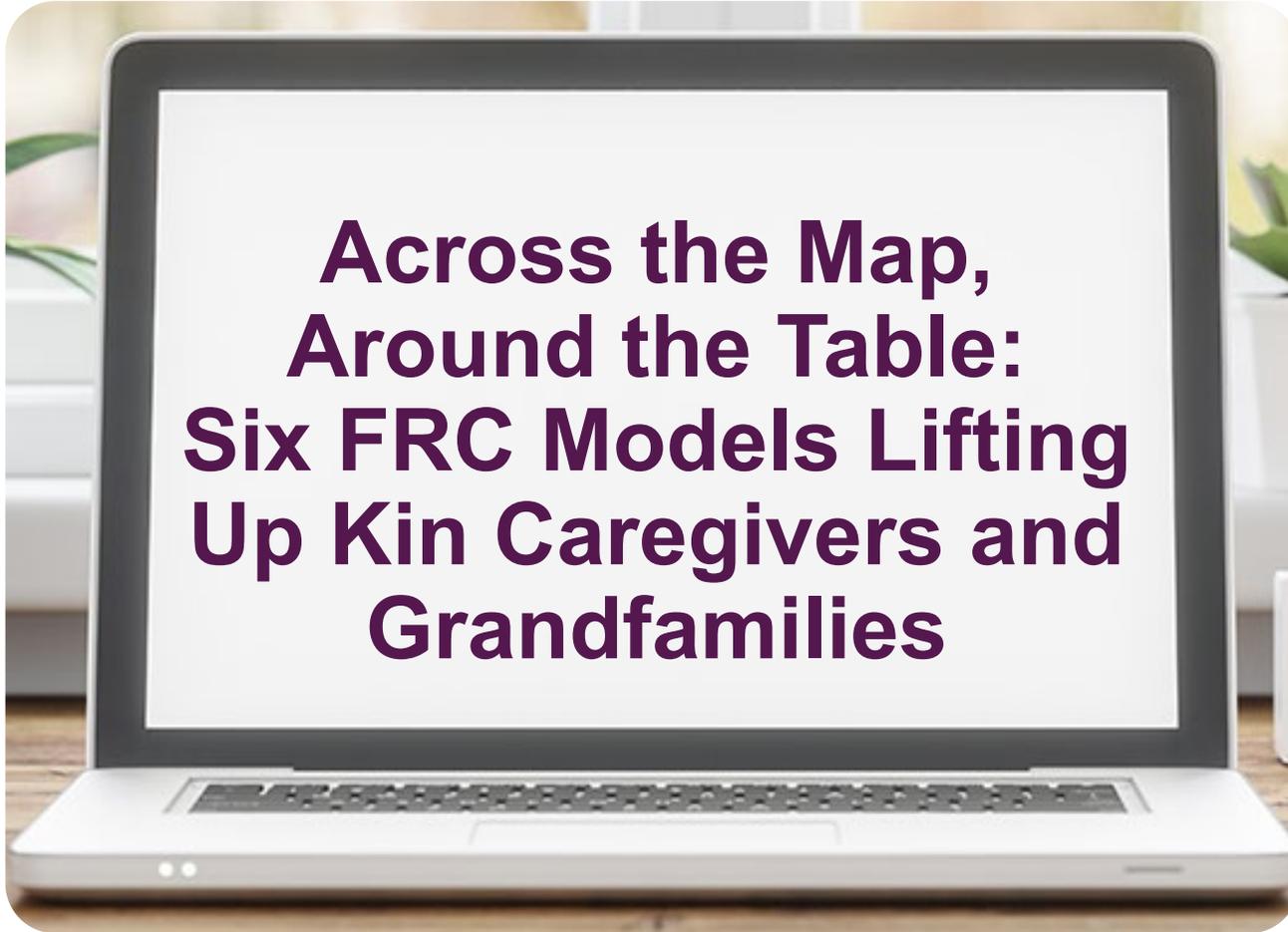


# Thank you!

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# Join Us for our Next Webinar!



Wednesday, March 25, 2026

2:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. ET

Register Here



# Connect & Access Support

## Request assistance

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For the latest updates, follow the Network on [LinkedIn](#)





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