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GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK
A National Technical Assistance Center

A Guide to Using Data to Identify Barriers in Your Kinship Process

As jurisdictions place increasing emphasis on kinship placement for children in out-of-home care, they are **urgently seeking to improve kinship processes**. While the goal is clear, knowing *how* to bring about improvement becomes the challenge. Uncovering the specific barriers to kinship placement is a crucial first step, and **this guide gives simple data points you can use to identify barriers in your kinship process.**

1

Search & Engagement

Data to use:

- What percentage of youth had a kin search completed?
- What percentage of searches resulted in a response?
- What percentage of kin were interested in placement?

What to look for: Many children may not be with kin simply because a search was not completed, or because methods for outreach led to low response rates from kin.

Why it's important: Kinship placements can't happen if they aren't sought out. This is especially important for children in stable non-kin settings and for those who have been in care for a long time, as searches often prioritize new removals.

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2 Approval & Placement

Data to use:

- What percentage of interested kin were approved?
- What are the most common reasons for non-approval?
- What percentage of kin searches resulted in placement?

What to look for: Children may not be placed with kin because of differing approval standards, reluctance to move a child from a stable placement, or coordination challenges between different agency teams.

Why it's important: Approval practices, licensing barriers, or reluctance to move placements not only prevent stable, safe kin placements, they also limit the availability of scarce non-kinship homes for children who do not have kinship options.

3 Stability & Support

Data to use:

- What percentage of kinship placements disrupt?
- What percentage of disruptions were addressable?
- Percentage of days in care spent with kin

What to look for: Many children may not be with kin because initial placements disrupted from a lack of caregiver supports, and limited ongoing kin engagement can then prevent new kinship placements.

Why it's important: Kinship families often step into fostering unexpectedly and may need different support than non-kin foster families to make placements work long-term. Using data here can help decipher what supports they need most.

You might be thinking...

“We don’t track this data anywhere”

Start small! You can track each of these steps for **one month** in a simple spreadsheet and see what sticks out. One quick and informal exercise can yield significant learnings!

“We have barriers at every single step”

You don’t have to solve them all at once. Find the step where the most families are getting stuck, start there, and learn as you go. Track **one measure** over time to see if things change.

While data can help jurisdictions identify barriers to kinship placement, no single measure can tell the full story of why children are or are not placed with kin. Alongside the measures listed in this guide, it’s **crucial to engage** with staff to understand the daily challenges that they face.

Looking across the above categories can **break each step of the kinship process into addressable stages**. Together, these measures can reveal where policies and practices may unintentionally be getting in the way. **Use what you learn to challenge those barriers, change practice, and make kinship the first and best option for children in care.**

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