

Kin and Kids Outreach & Support

Most of life is learning & growing, falling & getting back up, forgiving & forgetting, accepting & going on. Families are not perfect, but all families have strengths and the ability to overcome life's adversities. A change in the family structure could result in a kinship arrangement, leaving children to be cared for by a grandparents, relatives or other non- adult caregivers. When a non-parent adult takes on the responsibility of caring fulltime for children, it is a strength that must be recognized and affirmed. Kinship arrangements consist of challenges that are related to their unique situation such as a change in the caregiver's role, family and household structure, income & financial resources. Children are not only also face with unique challenge of not being with their parents but are face to deal with a change in residence, school and friends.

Family Enrichment & Family Preservation

TRANSITIONS

Depending on the child, the kinship arrangement may result in various feelings and reactions such as but not limited to grief, loss anger, depression, feelings of no control, confusion of where loyalties should be, abandonment and rejection, self-esteem, and trust. Explore and acknowledge the child's feelings about the transition to your home.

- *Reinforce to the child that they are not responsible for the kinship arrangement and have no control over their parent's choices
- *Always be honest and talk openly with your child
- *Depending on the child's age encourage journaling
- *Encourage your child to connect with other children that are experiencing kinship living arrangement
- *Foster family connectedness by sharing family history and stories, and talk openly about your family heritage

BEHAVIOR & CONFLICT

Examine and be open minded about a child's behavior. A behavior could be a trigger response linked to a life event, transition, loss or trauma that the child has been faced with.

- *Pick and choose your battles. Prioritize! Prioritize! Prioritize!
- *Try not to overreact to situations and behaviors.
- *Try not to compensate with giving in and buying items
- *Having clear expectation and a few enforced rules that are age appropriate will reduce conflict
- *Keep the focus on what the child can do opposed to what they cannot do.
- *Give the child an opportunity to make choices and affirm the positives

VISITATION

Visitation is important in order to foster, strengthen and maintain the parent – child bond especially to ensure future reunification. When deciding on visitation there are many factors to consider such as location, time, frequency of visits, child's age, and the relationship between parent and child.

- *Explore how the child feels about visitation
- *Foster and maintain open communication lines with the parents
- *Don't question the child's loyalty to the parents or make the child feeling guilty of wanting a relationship with the parents
- *In the presence of the child always treat the parent with respect and do not engage in any conflicts with the parents.
- *Children should never be place in the in the position of being messengers
- *To alleviate stress help the children to come up with things that they can talk about during the visit such as school.
- *If a face to face visit is not possible consider phone calls, letter writing, drawing pictures, or video taping

CARING FOR A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

- *If your child has a disability Show the child that he/she is loved unconditionally
- *Join a support group for families with special needs children
- *Take an interest in the child's programs and counseling
- *Learn as much as you can about the disability