

<h1>ACF</h1> <b>Administration</b> <b>for Children</b> <b>and Families</b>	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration on Children, Youth and Families	
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	<b>3. Originating Office:</b> Children’s Bureau	
	<b>4. Key Words:</b> Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program; Family First Prevention Services Act; and Kinship Navigator Programs	

**PROGRAM INSTRUCTION**

**TO:** State, Tribal and Territorial Agencies Administering or Supervising the Administration of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act

**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Year 2018 Funding Available for Developing, Enhancing or Evaluating Kinship Navigator Programs

**LEGAL AND RELATED REFERENCES:** Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018; Title IV-B, subpart 2 and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law 115-123, the Family First Prevention Services Act within Division E, Title VII of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, enacted February 9, 2018.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Program Instruction (PI) is to provide guidance to state, territorial and tribal title IV-E agencies on the actions required to apply for one-time funding to support the development, enhancement or evaluation of kinship navigator programs. These are federal fiscal year (FY) 2018 funds, provided as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, enacted March 23, 2018, and must be awarded before September 30, 2018.

**BACKGROUND:** The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) within Division E, Title VII of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, amended title IV-E of the Social Security Act to allow title IV-E agencies the option to receive title IV-E funding for kinship navigator programs that meet certain criteria, including operating in accordance with promising, supported or well-supported practices (as those terms are defined for the new title IV-E Prevention Services option, also established by FFPSA). The amendment at section 474(a)(7) of the Act authorizing use of title IV-E for kinship navigator programs becomes effective on October 1, 2018. For more information on this and other FFPSA provisions, please see Information Memorandum [ACYF-CB-IM-18-02](#), issued April 12, 2018.

To assist title IV-E agencies in preparing to participate in the newly authorized title IV-E kinship navigator funding option, the Congress, through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, set aside \$20 million<sup>1</sup> in funding appropriated under title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Social Security Act. These funds are available to all states, as well as the two territories and nine tribes currently operating directly the title IV-E Foster Care, Adoption Assistance and, if applicable, optional Guardianship Assistance programs. The funds are to be used to develop, enhance or evaluate kinship navigator programs.

Research has found there are many benefits to placing children with relatives or other kinship caregivers, including increased stability and safety, as well as the ability to maintain family connections and cultural traditions. For instance, the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW), a longitudinal survey of children and families who have been the subjects of investigation by Child Protective Services sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), has found that, overall, children in kinship care experience greater placement stability and safety than children in non-kinship foster care. Children in kinship care are more likely to stay with their kin caregivers, and overall, they are subject to fewer child welfare system placements.<sup>2</sup>

Kinship navigator programs assist grandparents and other relatives who take primary responsibility for the care of children who are in need of a safe and stable placement. As more parents struggle with opioid addiction and other substance use disorders, as well as other issues that affect their ability to parent their children, it is important for title IV-E agencies to develop resources to support kinship caregivers in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet their own needs and the needs of the children they are raising.

In the past, kinship navigator programs have been funded by the Children's Bureau through competitive Family Connections grants. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 reserved \$5 million annually in FYs 2009–2013 for Family Connection grants to implement kinship navigator programs. (Other Family Connection grants focused on family finding, family group decision making [FGDM] and residential family treatment programs.) The Children's Bureau funded 48 Family Connection grantees, 20 of which had a kinship navigator component; seven kinship navigator grants focused on improving coordination between Child Welfare and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) agencies to better support families providing kinship care.

There are various different models of kinship navigator programs that link kinship care families with appropriate services in their communities. A 2013 [cross-site evaluation of the Family Connection grants](#), conducted by James Bell Associates under contract to the Children's Bureau, found that the kinship navigator projects used several service models to assist formal and informal caregivers in learning about, locating, and using existing programs and services to meet caregiver needs and the needs of the children they were raising. All grantees offered information and referral services, emotional support for caregivers, case

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<sup>1</sup> Five percent, (\$1 million) of the appropriation is reserved for federal research, evaluation and technical assistance activities, leaving \$19 million available for kinship navigator grants.

<sup>2</sup> See Attachment D for NSCAW references and other resources.

management, and outreach to families. Knowledge of local resources and outstanding interpersonal skills were the most commonly cited characteristics of successful service providers. Information and referrals were given for parent education and training programs; child care and respite programs; legal assistance; medical, dental, and mental health services.

For more information on kinship care and kinship navigator programs, please see Attachment D: Kinship Navigator Program Resources.

### **INFORMATION ON FY 2018 KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM FUNDING:**

*Eligible Applicants:* States, territories and tribes directly operating a title IV-E program are eligible to apply for the FY 2018 Kinship Navigator Program funding. Eligible applicants are listed in the allotment table in Attachment A. Please direct any questions regarding eligibility to the appropriate Children’s Bureau (CB) Regional Office (RO) (see Attachment C).

*Estimated allotments:* Funding is to be distributed by formula to all title IV-E agencies that apply for funding, using allocation statistics also used for Promoting Safe and Stable Families grants, authorized under title IV-B, subpart 2. See Attachment A for estimated allotments.

States and Territorial Title IV-E Agencies: The allotment is based on the average monthly number of children receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, with a minimum award of \$200,000.

Tribal Title IV-E Agencies: The allotment is based on the tribal population count of children and youth under age 21, with a minimum award of \$25,000 per tribe. ACF will use the tribal population counts already received and approved for the FY 2018 title IV-B grant awards, so there is no need for tribes to submit new population counts for this award.

*Approved Activities:* Title IV-E agencies may use these funds to develop, enhance or evaluate kinship navigator programs, as described in section 427(a)(1) of the Social Security Act, as follows:

(1) a kinship navigator program to assist kinship caregivers in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet the needs of the children they are raising and their own needs, and to promote effective partnerships among public and private agencies to ensure kinship caregiver families are served, which program—

(A) shall be coordinated with other State or local agencies that promote service coordination or provide information and referral services, including the entities that provide 2–1–1 or 3–1–1 information systems where available, to avoid duplication or fragmentation of services to kinship care families;

(B) shall be planned and operated in consultation with kinship caregivers and organizations representing them, youth raised by kinship caregivers, relevant government agencies, and relevant community-based or faith based organizations;

(C) shall establish information and referral systems that link (via toll-free access) kinship caregivers, kinship support group facilitators, and kinship service providers to—

- (i) each other;
- (ii) eligibility and enrollment information for Federal, State, and local benefits;
- (iii) relevant training to assist kinship caregivers in caregiving and in obtaining benefits and services; and
- (iv) relevant legal assistance and help in obtaining legal services;

(D) shall provide outreach to kinship care families, including by establishing, distributing, and updating a kinship care website, or other relevant guides or outreach materials;

(E) shall promote partnerships between public and private agencies, including schools, community based or faith-based organizations, and relevant government agencies, to increase their knowledge of the needs of kinship care families and other individuals who are willing and able to be foster parents for children in foster care under the responsibility of the State who are themselves parents to promote better services for those families;

(F) may establish and support a kinship care ombudsman with authority to intervene and help kinship caregivers access services; and

(G) may support any other activities designed to assist kinship caregivers in obtaining benefits and services to improve their caregiving.

*Project Period:* The FY 2018 Kinship Navigator grant must be spent on activities conducted between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2019.

*Match:* There is no match requirement.

*Financial Reporting Requirements:* Title IV-E agencies are required to submit an electronic SF-425 for the Kinship Navigator grant through the Payment Management System (PMS). For more information on gaining access to and using the PMS system, please contact the PMS Help Desk at 1- 877-614-5533 or for more information see <https://pms.psc.gov>.

Title IV-E agencies must submit the SF-425 for expenditures under the Kinship Navigator grant at the end of each 12-month period (October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2018 and October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019) of the two-year expenditure period. Each report is due 90 days after the end of each federal fiscal year (December 29). The SF-425 covering the first 12-month budget period is the interim report and the report covering the entire grant period is the final report. The title IV-E agency must obligate the funds by September 30, 2019 and liquidate them by December 29, 2019. Note that while the Kinship Navigator funding was provided through the appropriation for title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Act, these reports must be submitted separately from reports filed for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. A negative grant award will recoup any unobligated and/or unliquidated funds reported on the final SF-425 for the Kinship Navigator grant.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Each title IV-E agency applying for funds must submit the following information to CB by **no later than July 20, 2018.**

- *FY 2018 Kinship Navigator Funding Request Form:* Complete the FY 2018 Kinship Navigator Program Funding Request Form (Attachment B), signed by an authorized official from the state, territory or tribe. Please also include information on an agency representative to contact for any programmatic questions on the submission. Please use the Estimated Allotment Table at Attachment A as a guide in requesting funds. If not all eligible title IV-E agencies apply for funding, funds will be re-allotted among approved applicants. Therefore, we encourage agencies to also include an estimate of any additional funds they wish to receive if they become available.
- *Kinship Navigator Program Narrative.* Provide a brief narrative outlining the activities that will be carried out using the FY 2018 Kinship Navigator funds. The funds may be used to develop, enhance and/or evaluate kinship navigator programs, consistent with the specifications described in section 427(a)(1) of the Act. Because some title IV-E agencies may not have previous experience in operating kinship navigator programs and will use funds to begin developing or enhancing capacity, programs supported using the FY 2018 Kinship Navigator funds need not meet every aspect of the description contained in section 427(a)(1) during the project period, as long as the programs are designed to ultimately fulfill the 427(a)(1) requirements. (Programs will be required to meet all of the section 427(a)(1) requirements in order to qualify for title IV-E funding under the FFPSA amendment to Section 474(a)(7) of the Act that becomes effective Oct. 1, 2018.) Please propose activities that are consistent with the level of funding provided and the limited time period for use of the funds (i.e., funds must be obligated by September 30, 2019). The Children’s Bureau also encourages agencies to consider how funds might be used to enhance the evidence base available for kinship navigator programs.
- *Submissions:* Submit the FY 2018 Kinship Navigator Funding Request Form (Attachment B) and the Kinship Navigator Program Narrative electronically (by email) to the appropriate Children’s Bureau Regional Office (see Attachment C for list of Regional Program Managers) with a copy submitted to Liliana Hernandez in the Children’s Bureau Central Office at [liliana.hernandez@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:liliana.hernandez@acf.hhs.gov)
- *Progress Reporting:* Title IV-E agencies will also be required to provide an update on their use of these funds and accomplishments in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) submission that will be due June 30, 2019.

**Paperwork Reduction Act:**

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. The Control Number for this OMB approved information collection is 0970-0426, approved through January 31, 2021.

**Inquiries To:** Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers

/s/

Jerry Milner  
Acting Commissioner  
Administration on Children, Youth  
and Families

Attachment A:

Eligible Applicants and Estimated Allotments

Attachment B:

FY 2018 Kinship Navigator Funding Request Form

Attachment C:

CB Regional Program Managers

Attachment D:

Kinship Navigator Program Resources