

Washington State Kinship Care Accomplishments

1998 – House Bill 1121 - Permanent Legal Custody. The bill was passed and signed into law. It created an option for relatives to go into court and get custody, drop the dependency and not have to terminate parental rights.

1999 – Senate Bill 5210 - Relative Placements. The bill was passed and signed into law. It directed the DSHS to place children with relatives, unless issues of safety precluded such placements

2001 – Washington (WA) State Legislature appropriated \$1,000,000 (biennial budget) in TANF funding to Children’s Administration (CA)/Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to create the *Relative Support Services Fund* for kinship care families involved with the child welfare system.

WA State Legislature appropriated \$50,000 to Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to study the issue of kinship care in WA State and to make recommendations. Statewide kinship survey implemented.

2002 – The WSIPP legislative report, *Kinship Care in Washington State: Prevalence, Policy and Needs* (which included results from a statewide kinship survey) was presented to legislature.

Substitute House Bill 1397 (sponsored by Representative Kip Tokuda) authorized a Kinship Care Work Group to develop and prioritize recommendations based on the WSIPP report to make kinship care “a robust component of the out-of-home placements spectrum”. Later in 2004 the group’s legislative report included 23 recommendations to improve services or policies in the areas of financial, legal, social services and systems change.

2003 – Substitute House Bill 1233 passed (sponsored by Representative Pettigrew) which required the development of a stronger relative search process for families involved with the child welfare system, the creation of a statewide kinship oversight committee to oversee kinship care activities, and the development of two Kinship Navigator pilot projects through a public and private collaboration.

2004 – The Legislature appropriated \$500,000 (annual budget) for the creation of the *Kinship Caregivers Support Program (KCSP)* for kinship caregivers who are not involved with the child welfare system. Administered by Aging and Disability Services Administration(ADSA/DSHS and the Area Agencies on Aging the program provides financial assistance for items like clothing, food, car seats, school activities and transportation.

Two pilot *Kinship Navigator Projects* were funded by Casey Family Programs and operated for 18 months in Seattle-King County and in the Yakima County region. An extensive evaluation of the projects and a replication manual were developed by the Tri-West Group.

The Navigator programs provide an array of services to kinship families and assists in navigating the system of services for children in out-of-home care including information and referral, advocacy, and support.

Voices of Children-Annual Kinship Care Children's Contest was designed for children, ages 5-19, (living with a relative now or in the past) to express (in drawing or words) how living with a relative(s) has made a positive difference in their life. The six winners receive \$100 from Twin County Credit Union along with tickets to a Mariners baseball team and a chance to meet the Governor. All entries are published in a booklet.

The ***Kinship Care Solutions Project*** began and continues to be a model kinship legal program sponsored by the King County Bar Association. The project screens cases for referrals to volunteer attorneys to represent the kinship caregivers in Nonparental Custody cases. Clients must be income and location eligible.

2005 – Substitute House Bill 1280-continued the ***Washington State Kinship Oversight Committee***, a coalition of roughly 40 public and private organizations, kinship advocates and caregivers designed to address issues facing kinship caregivers across the state, as well as develop information and public awareness.

Substitute House Bill 1281, *Washington's Kinship Care Medical Care*, (Chapter 440, Laws of 2005), sponsored by Representative Pettigrew was unanimously passed on July 24, 2005. It allows relative caregivers to access appropriate medical care on behalf of the children in their care, by permitting them to give informed consent to medical care for those children.

Two ***Kinship Navigator Projects*** were funded by the legislature (\$100,000 per year). ADSA contracted with two AAAs (Aging and Disability Services-Seattle/King County and SE WA AAA in Yakima) to sponsor two kinship navigator positions in FY 2005 that are currently supported by Casey Family Programs.

2006 – Annual Kinship Care Regional Conferences held throughout the state. In 2006, six conferences were held in Seattle, Tacoma, Yakima, Everett and Vancouver along with one that focused on Tribal Kinship Care in Bellingham.

Kinship Caregivers' Consent for Mental Health Care of Minors (H.B.3139) sponsored by Representative Pettigrew clarifies that a “competent adult representing himself or herself to be a relative responsible for the health care of such minor patient or a competent adult who has signed and dated a declaration under penalty or perjury” of law is able to consent to the mental health care of children in their care in the same way they are able to consent to health care.

The Legislature doubled the funding for the ***Kinship Caregivers Support Program*** to one million/year.

A statewide Kinship Care web page, <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare/>, located on the DSHS website provides easy access to resource and service information.

DSHS sponsored a statewide kinship care video conference, *Helping Children-Supporting Kinship Families Through Collaboration*. It was televised to 12 sites around the state and provided important cross-training for staff working with children and families throughout the public and private service system.

Other Activities

- ***Annual Kinship Care Regional Conferences held throughout the state.*** In 2006, six conferences were held in Seattle, Tacoma, Yakima, Everett and Vancouver along with one that focused on Tribal Kinship Care in Bellingham.
- ***Annual Governor's Proclamation for Relatives Raising Children's Day*** since 1995.
- Approximately 50 support groups focused on grandparents and other relatives raising children operate in 21 counties.
- Annual training, ***Parenting a Second Time Around, Facilitator Training***, ADSA collaborates with Washington State University, Extension Services.
- Regional Kinship Care Coalitions have formed in King, Snohomish, Pierce, Clark and Yakima counties to better collaborate services between service providers.
- Through the **National Family Caregiver Support Program**, funded by the Older Americans Act, approximately \$260,000 is spent annually to support relatives raising children over the age of 55 through support groups, resource guides, trainings etc.

Print and Media Resources Available

- ***Relatives as Parents: A Resource Guide for Relatives Raising Children (fourth edition).*** This guide produced by ADSA provides numerous community, state, and federal resources to help relatives who are raising children.
- CA developed ***A Relative's Guide to Child Welfare Services.*** to help extended family members meet the needs of children when their parents are unable to care for them.
- ***Video: Legal Options for Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children in Washington State***, showcases Rebecca Morrow, former Kinship Legal Fellow with Columbia Legal Services in Seattle explaining the various legal options including third party custody, guardianship, and adoption, distributed by ADSA..
- ***Video: Mediation for Kinship Caregivers: An Alternative to the Courtroom***, developed by the State Relatives as Parents Program Coalition in partnership with the Dispute Resolution Centers of Washington State educates viewers how mediation works to resolve family conflicts, distributed by ADSA.