

Training **MATTERS**



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- NC Division of Social Services
- NC Association of County Directors of Social Services
- Appalachian Family Innovations
- Center for Family and Community Engagement at NC State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (Jordan Institute for Families)
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine
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We Want to Hear from You!

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This issue of *Training Matters* was produced by Tiffany Price and John McMahon of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

Culturally Competent Practice with Kin Caregivers: Learning Resources

There is an incredible diversity among kinship caregivers in terms of cultural norms, family configuration, and approach to life. Although this diversity can be a tremendous strength that helps families meet children's needs, it can also be a challenge for child welfare practitioners.

To effectively support and engage kinship care providers, child welfare professionals must be culturally competent. This issue of *Training Matters* points you to resources for learning how you and your agency can strengthen your practice in this area.



Building Awareness and Cultural Competency, a three-day interactive, foundational training offered by the NC Division of Social Services, is one learning

resource to help in this area. This course facilitates self-reflection on the part of social workers and supervisors, enhancing their sensitivity when working with culturally diverse individuals and families. This course is part of the core curriculum that all child welfare workers must receive and is mandatory for all new staff during their first year of employment. Experienced staff are also encouraged to participate in this training. To learn more or for course times and locations, log in to your account on www.ncswLearn.org.

Practitioners and agencies may also appreciate the following learning resources as they seek to enhance their work with kinship families:

A Focus on Cultural Competency. FOCUS:

Newsletter of the Foster Family-based Treatment Association (Summer 2008). Look to this issue for a wealth of articles ranging in topic from eth-



nic identity and foster youth, to the culture of foster care, to culturally competent organizations. The feature article provides practical tips for foster parents—everything from honoring children's given names to being curious and supportive in listening when children and youth talk from their point of view about racism or ethnic differences. Use the checklist from the "Culture of Foster Youth" on page ten as you consider how your practice can help more young people experience the "privilege of family." www.ffa.org/publications/focus_archives/2008_summer.pdf



Parenting Across Cultures

by Sara Harkness and Charles M. Super (*SGI Quarterly*, January 2009).

This brief but insightful article will draw readers into taking a closer look at one's own culturally-influenced notions of what is "normal" or desirable for children and will increase awareness of the variety of ways different cultures view and care for children. The authors use compelling examples, including something as basic as a child's "sleep," to highlight the influence of culture in family practices and child development. www.chhd.uconn.edu/SGIQuarterly.pdf

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Promoting Healthy Parenting Practices Across Cultural Groups.

by the USDHHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008). This research brief asserts the importance of taking into consideration cultural norms when introducing parenting programs or strategies. Findings from the CDC's Healthy Parenting Cultural Norms Study suggest some commonalities in child-rearing values and approaches across the sample of cultural groups and subgroups, but also highlight some cultural preferences in how misbehavior is addressed. This brief affirms the strengths of diverse cultural groups in their parenting practices. <www.cdc.gov/ncipc/images/DVP/Healthy_Parenting_RIB_a.pdf>

What Are the Important Differences among Kinship Foster Families? by Chapin Hall (2010). Are all kinship families basically alike? Is a child as likely to do equally well in a placement with grandparents as with an aunt and uncle? What kind of outcomes might that child have if there are other related children being cared for in the home?

Authors of a recent Chapin Hall study explored these questions. Using survey data collected from caseworkers in Illinois, the authors identified four distinct types of kinship families according to (1) the caregiver's relationship with the child and (2) family composition with respect to other children cared for in the home. The findings challenge assumptions about the homogeneity of kinship families and raise questions about how differences impact outcomes. <www.chapinhall.org/research/inside/what-are-important-differences-among-kinship-foster-families>



We Are Still a Family. In this film created as part of a 2003 federal grant, Clark County, Nevada highlights the kinship care experience, sharing the inside story from those who know it best. In the 52-minute film, relative caregivers and youth cared for by kin discuss their experiences and insights in the hopes that others will find strength through their stories. Their insights answer such questions as:

- How did caring for the children affect your other family relationships?
- What was your relationship like with your caseworker?
- What would have made your experience better?

The narratives highlight the diverse family compositions that characterize kinship caregiving—aunts, great aunts, grandparents, and others who step up to help the children—including a grandfather caring for his infant grandson, who notes, "I'm Mom, Dad, Grandpa...everybody." Family members describe the pain, comfort, and joy within their families, as well as the acute strain of financial limitations. As one relative caregiver points out, "I'm feeding four people on the same income I had to feed one." The film's participants appeal to those who work with families to have compassion and sensitivity for caregiving relatives. Through the film, those who work with families will be able to identify actions they can take to better support kinship caregivers and youth.

In their concluding statements the caregivers reassure others in similar circumstances: "It's almost like starting your life all over again. It's not easy, but it's worth it. Kids give you back so much."

Visit the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections to view the film: <www.nrcpfc.org>

Identifying Strengths and Helping Traditions

The following questions may be helpful in identifying strengths and helping traditions in your own family and in the families that you serve. It is useful to answer these questions for yourself with respect to your own family and family experiences. This is one way of becoming aware of the biases you have about how families should function. More importantly, these questions may help you identify family strengths and helping traditions with the families you serve—and to do so from their perspective.

- Who is included when you and your family celebrate happy occasions?
- Who is included when you and your family need comfort on sad occasions?
- How has your family solved problems in the past?
- Who in your family has been helpful to you when you needed support or help in solving a problem?
- Are there others who have been helpful to you and your family when you needed help?
- Who are the leaders in your family? Do different people provide leadership in different types of situations in your family?
- Who are the persons that help settle arguments and disagreements in your family?
- Who are the people in your family that are most willing to help other members of the family? Are there many people who help out?

Excerpted from Bonecutter, F. & Gleeson, J. (1997). *Achieving permanency for children in kinship foster care: A training manual*. Univ. of Illinois at Chicago: Kinship Care Practice Project at the Jane Addams College of Social Work. www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/kinicare/curriculum_videos/curriculum_videos.html