

Supporting San Diego's Kinship Families

The YMCA Kinship Navigator Program completed its third year of its federal demonstration project. This brief provides an overview of the program's findings and results to date.



"The program fits everybody's needs. There is always something they can help you out with."

- Kinship Caregiver

The YMCA Kinship Navigator Program, a three-year federally funded demonstration project, is designed to build a regional navigator system to support San Diego's kinship caregivers. Kinship caregivers (relatives and non-relatives) assume full-time care of children when the child's biological parents are unable to care for them. As of May 2010, the program has been evaluating the effectiveness of navigator services in supporting kinship families and improving outcomes for children.

YMCA's Navigator Service Model

As a demonstration project, the YMCA Kinship Navigator program aims to impact kinship caregivers, service providers, and the overall system of care.

Level	Service
Kinship Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess caregiver level of need Connect caregivers to existing community resources Provide short-term case management Assist caregivers to advocate for self Educate caregivers on policies, services, and navigating the child welfare and other associated systems.
Kinship Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to providers who may serve kinship families Increase capacity of providers to serve kinship families
System of Social Service Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build regional collaboratives of kinship providers to strengthen referral and case management processes.

Results for Kinship Caregivers:

As of October 31, 2012, Kinship Navigators had provided direct services to 1,052 caregivers across the County of San Diego Health and Human Services (HHS) regions.

Percentage of Caregivers Served by HHS Region



Profile of Families Served

Kinship caregivers seeking services tend to be older, female, English speaking, and of diverse ethnic background:

- + Average age of primary caregiver is 51.09 (range 18 to 84 years)
- + 9 out of 10 are female (90.8%)
- + 71.7% report English as their primary language
- + Reflect the diversity of San Diego County (46.6% Latino/a; 30.2% Caucasian; 17.6% African American; 2% Asian American; 2.7% Other)
- + Almost half report having an informal kinship care arrangement (49.4%)
- + Over half of the caregivers are grandparents (56.3%)

Supporting San Diego's Kinship Families: Summary Results from YMCA Kinship Navigator Program

Identified Kinship Caregiver Needs

YMCA Kinship Navigators screen kinship families at intake using the Family Needs Scale (FNS) to determine the type of support and referrals that are most appropriate for families. Among the caregivers who completed the FNS, the following top 10 core needs emerged.

Top 10 Needs Reported by Caregivers

Reported Need (All Regions)	Ranking (Highest =1)
Information for services, programs, or resources	1
Help accessing services	2
Someone to talk to about difficulties	3
Money to buy necessities such as food and pay bills	4
Respite care	5
Information on available community activities	6
Help understanding or dealing with government agencies	7
Dental Care	8
Childcare	9
Services for children to deal with emotional or behavioral needs	10

Impact on Kinship Families

A level of need was calculated using the FNS to determine the kinship caregiver case plan. A higher level of need led to more intensive services. Three months after receiving services, kinship caregivers were re-assessed to determine their level of need at that time. Among the caregivers that were contacted, findings indicate that **caregiver needs decreased** after receiving kinship service. Close to half of caregivers (48.3%) reported a lower level of need at three month follow-up as compared to the intake.

Child Status

A goal of this project was to assess whether placement stability can be improved for the children under the care of kinship caregivers, especially as it relates to obtaining guardianship or adoption. At intake **49.4%** of the children were under informal kinship arrangements compared to **19.3%** at three month follow-up. The following trends are noted:

Kinship Child Status at 3-month	Percent
Informal Arrangement	19.3
Guardianship	47.9
Adopted	7.6
Reunification with parents	4.2
Guardianship pending	10.9
Adoption pending	10.1

Developing a System to Support Kinship Caregivers: Key Partnerships

In the past three years, the YMCA has engaged various agencies to streamline the process for intake, referrals, and case management services. A Social Network Analysis that measures collaboration on a five point scale from no interactions (agencies do not know about each other) to collaboration (agencies share ideas, share resources, etc) was conducted. Social Network Analysis of the relationships between agencies serving kinship families in San Diego County at the beginning and end of the YMCA Kinship Navigator program yields informative findings in the progression of collaboration within this network.

- At every level, the current network of service providers is more dense and includes more reported interactions than it did at baseline.
- Over the past two years, the kinship network has grown both in number and strength.
- Of note is the great difference between the baseline and current maps at the Collaboration level (the highest level of collaboration)
- The YMCA Kinship Navigator is identified as having a key role within the network by other service providers.

The YMCA has partnered with various organizations, including:

- Casey Family Programs-** They collaborate to provide emergency assistance to kinship caregivers, staff office space at the Casey Family Programs Youth and Family Transition Center, and professional training and development seminars for YMCA of San Diego County staff.
- Child Welfare Services (CWS)** – They partnered to provide outreach and training to CWS staff about the needs of kinship caregivers and services available through the YMCA. CWS was also a major referral source for the YMCA Kinship Navigator Program and YMCA staff worked closely with social workers and Team Decision Making Meeting facilitators to provide comprehensive services to kinship caregivers raising children with open dependency, voluntary and prevention cases.
- Ageing Independence Services (AIS)** – The YMCA of San Diego County receives funding to administer Respite services to kinship caretakers over the age of 55.
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG)-** Led by Pam Smith, Deputy Director of AIS with the County of San Diego, this taskforce focuses on the unmet needs of kinship caregivers in San Diego County.