



INFORMATION FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

The theme for this edition of Nuts & Bolts is "**Kinship**". And for your convenience, Nuts & Bolts is also available on the SAFE website, so you can revisit it as often as you'd like! Much of the information we share in Nuts & Bolts comes from questions we receive from staff. So, please email the appropriate program administrator if you have questions or need clarifications around practice, or if you have practice tips or ideas that you'd like to share. Thank you!

This Month's Articles:

- [It All Begins with CPS](#), by Darren Burdette, CPS Program Administrator
- [DV Notes](#), by Del Bircher, Domestic Violence Program Administrator
- [Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#), by Savania Tsosie, Indian Child Welfare Program Administrator
- [All Roads Lead Home - Tips for In-Home Cases](#), by Angela Robbins, In-Home Services Program Administrator
- [Kinship Care](#), by Judy Hull, Kinship Program Administrator
- [Permanency Pointers](#), by Tanya Albornoz, Permanency Program Administrator
- [TAL Tips](#), by Jane Lewis, Transition to Adult Living Program Administrator
- [Adoption Advice](#), by Marty Shannon, Adoption Program Administrator

IT ALL BEGINS WITH CPS

By Darren Burdette, CPS Program Administrator

Do you remember the challenge from last month? Now, I want you to tell me more about what information Intake and CPS workers have been able to get by spending an additional 5 minutes on each case engaging and getting to know the family. Hopefully, you have been able to recognize the benefits that can come to your work by making this small investment.

One of the obvious benefits of engaging and getting to know a family is that it allows you to begin forming a relationship with them...and when there is a relationship, the family is more likely to share additional information about what is really going on and what their needs are. In some cases, this allows us to resolve the concerns by merely connecting them to appropriate resources that will address those needs. However, in other instances, it allows us to gather more information about who the family sees as their supports. We can then begin to involve these supports as part of a team to increase the protective capacities of the parent(s) or caregiver or as potential kinship placement options.

So, let's continue to focus on those additional 5 minutes on each case in order to gather information that will help us to identify supports for the family, because it all begins with CPS.

I would love to hear of any tips that you have used in your CPS casework or if you have any questions about your work, so please email me at DBURDETT@utah.gov.

DV NOTES

By Del Bircher, Domestic Violence Program Administrator

This is just a reminder that we may not often think about the need for us to look at kinship when working with Domestic Violence (DV) cases. However, there is always a need to consider concurrent planning when working with all of our families.

According to Domestic Violence Practice Guidelines [Section 600](#):

“The Child and Family Services domestic violence program staff will always assess the need to develop differential treatment activities for the adult clients (cohabitants) based on individual assessments of those clients, with careful consideration given to the client's cultural needs and beliefs.”



I believe these guidelines are also directly related to the needs of the children. In our assessment of the family, it may be helpful to note any family/kin that may be a support in the event the children are not able to remain in the home.

What a great group of committed people work with our families. I appreciate all that you do. Please email me with any creative ideas or suggestions you may have related to your work with DV. I can be contacted at DBIRCHER@utah.gov.

THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT

By Savania Tsosie, Indian Child Welfare/Diversity Program Administrator

Native American Kinship and ICWA

The purpose of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is to preserve and strengthen Indian families and Indian culture. **For tribal communities, kinship care represents an important preference for keeping Native American children with their family and/or tribe.** For it is through the children that the elders' teachings, values, language, unique practices, and traditions are passed on and preserved.

Extended family members and other members of the tribe play a vital role in parenting and discipline. In the Native American community, the belief is that a child has a right to a quality of life within the tribal culture with Native American parents, caregivers, or extended family - thus, giving the entire extended family the child rearing responsibility.

The best interests of Indian children are inherently tied to the concept of **belonging**, which is key to the theme of temporary and permanency planning. **Belonging** can only be realized for Indian children by recognition and enhancement of the support networks that exist in the child's extended family, clan, or tribal systems. **Permanency develops from identification with these systems through a sense of connectedness.**

Child and Family Services workers shall follow the requirements as specified in ICWA, the Intergovernmental Agreements, and the Memorandum of Understandings for foster and pre-adoptive placement preferences: **(1) member of the child's extended family,** (2) foster home licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's tribe, (3) Indian foster home licensed or approved by an authorized non-Indian, and (4) an institution for children approved by an Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization that has a program suitable to meet the child's needs. **(Please see ICWA Practice Guidelines, [Section 705](#).)**

Please email me at STSOSIE@utah.gov if you have any questions or suggestions about ICWA or other diversity matters. Thank you.



ALL ROADS LEAD HOME - TIPS FOR IN-HOME CASES

By Angela Robbins, In-Home Services Program Administrator

Successful In-Home cases include a strong informal support system for the family. What better informal supports than family and kin? At times families may be hesitant to share their involvement with Child and Family Services with their family members, but as you continue to engage with family members and build a good relationship with them, you can continue to encourage the further development of the team through the inclusion of family and kin members.

Most healthy families with children have a plan for what would happen to their children if they were not able to care for them. When we explain this concept to the families we work with and help them in developing their own concurrent plans, we can stress the importance of involving these other family members and friends in the teaming processes.

CHALLENGE: Review the concurrent plan for each of your cases. Does the team identify specific relatives as the concurrent placement? Are these relatives/friends part of the Child and Family Team? How can each family you are working with include more of their own family/kin in their team as a support?

Do you have “new” ideas to freshen up casework? Do you have any “out of the box” tips that other In-Home workers can try? I’m looking for tried and true ideas from the field to share with other caseworkers. Please send any of your engaging, teaming, assessing, planning, intervening, or organizational tips to AROBBINS@utah.gov. Thank you in advance!

KINSHIP CARE

By Judy Hull, Kinship Program Administrator

The number one most frequently asked question for the month is, “What is House Bill 36 and how will it affect kinship practice?” HB36 is a legislative bill sponsored by Wayne A. Harper addressing background checks and placement provisions for placing children with kinship caregivers. It passed through the house and senate and now awaits the Governor’s signature to sign it into law. The administrative rules and practice guidelines to help implement the changes in kinship practice are being drafted at this time and we will be seeking input from regions in the next few weeks. There will be statewide training to implement these guidelines coming your way in the next few months. Please stay tuned!

I would love to hear from you about your work with kinship families. Please email me at JUDYMILLER@utah.gov.



PERMANENCY POINTERS

By Tanya Albornoz, Permanency Program Administrator

I want to start out by acknowledging the fantastic job that you are doing. I have had many opportunities to learn about the excellent practice going on in each of the regions, and I respect and appreciate the tremendous efforts that you put into your work every day.

I have received several requests to clarify what our responsibility is regarding “preferential consideration” for kinship placements, especially as it applies to a child who is already in an out-of-home placement. [Practice Guideline 503\(C\)](#) states:

“Preferential consideration of a relative for placement of a child may be given if it is in the best interest of the child. Any preferential consideration expires 120 days from the date of the shelter hearing. After that time period has expired, a relative who has not obtained custody or asserted an interest in a child may not be granted preferential consideration by Child and Family Services or the court. The relative needs to be assessed and considered in the same manner as all other potential placement resources.”

Utah Law (78A-6-307 8[c]) further states “Prior to the 120-day period... the following order of preference shall be applied when determining the person with whom a child will be placed, provided that the person is willing, and has the ability, to care for the child:

- (A) a non-custodial parent of the child;
- (B) a relative of the child;
- (C)... a friend of a parent of the child, if the friend is a licensed foster parent; and
- (D) other placements that are consistent with the requirements of law.”

Please note that the non-custodial parent, if appropriate, should be given preference above any other type placement. This applies when the non-custodial parent has unsupervised visitation rights with the child. If the non-custodial parent does not have visitation rights and/or the visitation rights are limited to supervised visits, we are not required to give them preferential consideration.

If a relative expresses an interest in having a child placed with them within 120 days of the shelter hearing, we have a responsibility to ensure that the process is initiated immediately. All efforts made by the caseworker towards a kinship placement should be clearly documented in activity logs and on the Child and Family Assessment, so we may demonstrate that we have made appropriate efforts to locate kin. We also have the responsibility to regularly inform the kinship family of where we are in the process and what the outcome of their kinship application is. If the kinship family is denied as a placement for the children,



we need to inform them of the reason why they were denied and take time to answer any questions they may have regarding the process.

As the Practice Guideline states, if a non-custodial parent or relative “asserts an interest” in having a child placed with them within the 120 days, we will give them preferential consideration above other placements (foster placements). If there is a delay in the processing of the kinship application and the 120 days expire, we are still responsible to ensure that they are given “preferential consideration”. The kinship provider should not be penalized for delays in our own system.

In addition, even though a kinship provider should come forward after the 120 days, we still have a responsibility to make a determination, with the Child and Family Team, as to whether it would be in the child’s best interest to be placed with the kinship provider rather than remain in a foster home. We should continually assess whether a kinship caregiver would be better suited than other out-of-home caregivers to meet the child’s need for permanency and stability. This is especially true for our TAL youth. (Please refer to TAL Tips below for more information on this issue.)

If you have any questions regarding “preferential consideration” or any other out-of-home issues, please email me at TALBORNO@utah.gov.

TAL TIPS

By Jane Lewis, Transition to Adult Living Program Administrator

The extended family has long played a role in caring for children whose parents were unable to do so – a practice commonly referred to as kinship care. Youth in transition are a vulnerable population of the foster care system. How do we engage birth families and kin systems in the transition planning? We all know living independently without community and family support is a myth. Even with solid life skills training and practice, these young people need a family support system when they exit care that allow for life long connections.

The process of reconnecting a youth in long-term foster care with family and significant others represents an important step toward emancipation and solidifying the young person’s identity. Several studies have found that connections with birth families and kin systems can be beneficial for youth. Even when preservation of the family unit is not possible, preservation of ties and attachments can be in the best interest of the youth. Kin and birth families can be part of the youth’s network, recognizing that it is not necessary for a relative to provide a permanent home in order to be a natural resource for the youth for youth in long-term foster care.



As kinship care expands, it is important to reexamine the family systems for youth in transition who have been in care for extended periods of time. It is important to recognize that for some young people the only families with which they will leave foster care will be the ones with which they entered – their birth families.

Please share your casework ideas, successes, and struggles related to TAL Services by emailing me at JHLEWIS@utah.gov.

ADOPTION ADVICE

By Marty Shannon, Adoption Program Administrator

Every child, whether they are 3 or 17 years old, needs to have a family who is committed to their future well-being. Many sad telephone calls come to the state office in which a child's caregiving relative was receiving protective supervision services, the court then gave the relative permanent custody and guardianship of the child, and the case was closed. The relative family was given little preparation for how to deal with future conflicts with the child's parents and issues that may come up for the child. When the relative later pursues adoption to provide a permanent family for the child, the relative is responsible for the financial and emotional costs of pursuing the termination of the parents' rights and the adoption. The relative caregivers have also lost any help that may have been available to them through adoption assistance, such as Medicaid or financial subsidy.

In order to best meet a child's long-term needs when the child comes into care due to safety concerns, the child must be taken into protective custody. Taking the child into protective custody allows Child and Family Services to help the child and family in the short-term and in the long-term. It allows time for Child and Family Services to assess the relative family and identify needed supports so the relative family is successful in parenting the child during the time the court is supervising the case, as well as being able to assess the most beneficial permanency goal for the long-term. When the court has given the relative caregiver temporary custody and guardianship and later it is determined that the child should permanently live with the relative family, we need to carefully assess whether adoption, instead of permanent guardianship, is the best long term option for the child. If so, before the case is closed, we should assess the child for adoption assistance and our assistant attorney general should pursue the termination of the parents' rights. **We have a very complicated system, and relative families need our help in determining the best long-term permanency options for their relative child.**

If you have any other information you'd like to share with everyone related to adoption services, or if you have any questions, please email me at MSHANNON@utah.gov.

