



# **KINSHIP CARE IN NEW YORK: KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER**

## **2010 KINSHIP SUMMIT REPORT**

### **Special Section: COST BENEFIT OF KINSHIP SERVICES**

*This report is based on recommendations from the New York State KinCare Coalition  
2010 Kinship Caregiver Summit held on June 23, 2010*

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FOR LIMITED CIRCULATION  
(The entire report is available at the New York State Kinship Navigator:  
<http://www.nysnavigator.org/sf/providers.ph>)*

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## SUMMARY OF COST BENEFIT OF INFORMAL KINSHIP CARE FOR FY2011-12

### Average Cost of Kinship Foster Care

Annual overall costs of foster care = \$1,376,000,000 (OCFS foster care budget).

Number of children in all foster care placements = 24,541<sup>1</sup>

Average cost of all foster care placements = **\$56,060** per child per year;

Annual cost of one child placed in regular foster care (OCFS official estimate, where regular foster care is basic foster parent payment plus administrative cost) = **\$21,535**.

### Average Cost of Informal Kinship Care

Annual cost of one child in a OCFS kinship program (\$140,000 per program, over 300 children served per year) = **\$466**.

Annual average cost of public assistance per child (OTDA payment plus administrative costs) = **\$6,024**.

Total cost per child of informal kinship care = **\$6,490**.<sup>2</sup>

### Average Difference in Cost

Difference between average cost of children in foster care (\$54,060) and the cost for children in informal kinship care (\$6,490 - including a public assistance grant) = **\$49,570**.

Difference for a child placed in regular foster care with a foster parent = **\$15,045**.

### Fiscal Year 2011-12 Savings

If the OCFS Kinship Programs are not funded:

- If **60** children enter all foster placements = the entire \$3 million for full funding of the OCFS Kinship Program.
- If **200** children entering regular foster care = the entire \$3 million for full funding of the OCFS Kinship Program;
- Without these programs, an estimated **475** children will leave informal kinship care and enter foster care during FY2011-12. At an increased cost between **\$23,545,750** (foster care placements minus informal cost) or **\$7,146,375** (regular foster parent care minus informal cost).

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<sup>1</sup> Includes all foster care placements, including institutional, special and exception needs foster parents, etc. Includes administrative costs.

<sup>2</sup> Not all informal kinship families receive grants. However, for simplicity the calculation assumes that they do.

## Facts on Kinship Care in New York

- An estimated 250,000 to 300,000 children live with grandparents or other relative caregivers in New York State. This system of care is termed “informal” or “private” kinship care.
- New York spends \$1.37 billion dollars on foster care. New York spends approximately \$3 million on private kinship care for the Office of Children and Family Services Kinship Program (statewide Kinship Navigator and 21 regional programs). The FY2011-12 funding for the Kinship program is cut to about \$1 million.
- Kinship programming provides case management, respite, benefit and legal information, advocacy, and other supports, that enable children to stay out of foster care.
- Without these programs, conservative estimates are that at least 475 children will leave private care and enter foster care during FY2011-12. To place these children in foster care, it will cost the State between *\$7,146,375 (for children entering regular foster parent care) to \$23,545,750 (for all foster care placements).*
- At an average cost of \$15,045 to \$49,570 per child, if 200 children enter regular foster care or if only 60 children enter all foster placements, the cost equals the funding of \$3 million for the OCFS Kinship Program.
- Children live with grandparents and other relatives for the same reasons that children enter foster care – parental abuse, neglect, mental illness, abandonment, and for other reasons such as military deployment, illness, and temporary relocations.
- A representative sample of private kinship families shows that 60% of the children in private kinship families served by the programs had contact with Child Protective Services, either informally or pursuant to Article Ten neglect proceedings (690/1152). These contacts led to placements in private kinship families who were supported by the OCFS Kinship Program.
- According to the 2000 Census, 143,000 grandparents are solely responsible for children in their care - 58% are in the metropolitan area, with the other 42% living upstate (ACS shows 7% growth in last three years). Grandparents make up 61% of non-parent caregivers, other relatives make up 29%, and non-relatives or fictive kin, which includes foster parents, are 10% of non-parent caregivers.
- According to the Council on Children and Families Kids Well-Being Indicators Clearinghouse, in 2008 25,925 children were in foster care in New York State, with 6,192 placed in kinship foster care (5,565 in NYC; 627 in the rest of the state).
- National studies prove conclusively that children who live with grandparents and other relatives achieve more permanency, better well-being, and better outcomes than children in foster care.
- National studies also show that children who live with grandparents and other relatives have significant special health needs, including psychological and emotional, similar to children in foster care.

## I. Cost / Benefit Analysis of Kinship Care in New York State

The fact that informal kinship care provides better outcomes for children<sup>3</sup> than foster care is no longer the compelling justification for funding kinship services in New York State. Given New York's budget crisis, the only compelling reason to continue funding is a demonstration that kinship services save budget dollars in the next fiscal year. Fortunately, kinship programming demonstrates such a benefit.

In the next year, without kinship services more caregivers will be unable to provide care and more children will enter more expensive foster care.<sup>4</sup> Based upon conservative estimates, this could cost the state an additional \$7 million to \$23 million dollars. In contrast, continuing the funding for kinship programming would cost just \$3 million dollars.

The difference between the cost of informal kinship care (including a public assistance grant)<sup>5</sup> and the average cost of all children in foster care is \$49,570 per child; the difference for a child placed in regular (or basic) foster care with a foster parent is \$15,045.

Depending upon which cost basis for foster care is used (\$49,570 or \$15,045), if 475 children left informal kinship care and entered foster care, that would equal \$23,545,750 or \$7,146,375 dollars. This is a significantly higher cost than the approximately \$3 million that is costs to fund for the NYS Kinship Navigator and the 21 regional kinship programs.

### A. Average Cost of Foster Care

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) expends \$1.376 billion for foster care annually.<sup>6</sup> The overall funding is a combination of federal, state, and local contributions, involving 43 federal funding streams, wherein federal funding accounts for about half of the total expenditure. The largest federal program funding foster care is Title IV-E, which covers mostly foster care costs.

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<sup>3</sup> Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, June 2008. Demonstrating for the first time on a nationally representative sample of children from the National Survey of Child & Adolescent Well-Being that children in kinship care are not only more likely to attain early stability in out-of-home care than children in general foster care, but are also less likely to have behavioral problems than children in foster care three years later. See Appendix B in 2008 Summit Report. All three kinship summit reports provide examples of program supports that increase the well-being and stability of kinship families.

<sup>4</sup> The cost savings include administrative costs. However, actual administrative costs will depend upon staff case loads, re-assignment, and other administrative factors or the use of a contracting agency. While it is fair to say that the total direct and indirect costs for one child average over \$50,000 - for a child who leaves informal kinship care and is placed in foster care, the real cost savings are the amount that transfers to foster parents plus whatever real administrative savings would actually be incurred. Real administrative costs may only occur when a sizable increase in cases results in a case worker being hired or when payments to an outside contracting agency are made.

<sup>5</sup> Not all informal kinship families receive grants. However, for simplicity the calculation assumes that they do.

<sup>6</sup> Total annual expenditures for child welfare are \$2.7 billion.

Because of federal eligibility requirements, only 45% of children in foster care qualify for federal Title IV-E assistance.<sup>7</sup>

Federal Title IV-E pays 50% of the cost for an eligible child and the balance is paid by state and local funds. State matching funds are limited to the annual appropriation under the foster care cap. Counties also use TANF funds for foster care, and for the residential costs for special education placements, the funding is comprised of 40% from the state, 40% from the local social service district, and 20% from the local school district.<sup>8</sup> The complex funding streams and formulas plus the wide variety of foster care placements make it virtually impossible to generalize the costs associated with foster care placements. However, by dividing the number of foster children into the cost of foster care, it is possible to state an average cost per child.

***Overall costs of foster care (\$1,376,000,000) divided by the total number of children in foster care (24,541) = \$56,060 child per year.***

The average cost of a child in foster care is based upon a range of foster care placements from institutional care with very high costs to placements with foster parents with relatively modest costs.<sup>9</sup> Assuming that children in informal care would be placed across the full spectrum of foster care,<sup>10</sup> for every child in informal kinship care who enters foster care, the average cost is the same as the average cost of one child in foster care - over \$56,000 per child.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “The State of Child Welfare in New York: Shaping Things to Come”, OCFS publication p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> In 2006, federal Title IV-E funding to NYS was \$585,236,149. Child Trends: “Federal, State, and Local Spending to Address Child Abuse and Neglect in SFY 2006”, December 2008, Appendix A.

<sup>9</sup> Institutional placements average \$81,441; group emergency \$98,747; and “hard-to-place” \$81,441. Foster parents caring for children with exceptional needs are paid significantly higher maintenance. The exceptional rate can be as high as \$1,449 per child per month, a yearly cost of \$17,388 for maintenance. See Appendix G in 2005 Report.

<sup>10</sup> The number of children in informal kinship care who may fit into these categories is unknown. Numerous studies claim high rates of disabilities for kinship children. See, Kinney, J., McGrew, K., Nelson, I. (2003). *Grandparent Caregivers to Children with Developmental Disabilities: Added Challenges*. New York: Springer Publishing Company. Smithgall, C., Mason, S., Michels, L., LiCalsi, C., & Goerge, R. (2006). *Caring for their Children’s Children Assessing the Mental Health Needs and Service Experiences of Grandparent Caregiver Families* Chapin Hall Center for Children: Summary Sheet 103. A study conducted in 1994 found that 70 percent of grandparents reported caring for a child with one or more medical, psychological or behavioral problems. Lai, D. & Yuan, S. (1994). *Grandparenting in Cuyahoga County: A report of survey findings*. Cleveland, OH: Cuyahoga County Community Office of Aging. “Over a quarter of the caregivers (27.5%) indicated that the child had a disability.” Gleeson et al. (2008). *Individual and social protective factors for children in informal kinship care*. Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago.

<sup>11</sup> Additional indirect costs could actually amount to more than \$50,000 per year. Indirect costs include investigations, forensics, etc, plus costs not attributable to the child welfare agency (e.g. a family court judge’ average salary \$120,000 per year, attorney for the child hourly rate \$75 per hour, plus court personnel, legal services, law enforcement, criminal investigations, incarceration, etc).

## **B. Placement with Foster Parents**

However, most children entering foster care will be placed with foster parents, and thus provides a lower cost calculation. According to OCFS, regular foster parent placement costs an average of \$9,855 annually, with average administrative costs of \$11,680.<sup>12</sup> Based on these figures, a child in informal kinship care who does not require specialized services would cost a total of \$21,535 per year if placed in foster care.<sup>13</sup> Since approximately 60% of children in kinship care reside in New York City where administrative costs are passed through to contracting agencies, for New York City and for other counties using contracting agencies, the actual cost would also be \$21,535 per year.<sup>14</sup>

*Annual Cost of One Child Placed in Regular Foster Care = \$21,535.*

## **C. Cost of OCFS Kinship Program**

The Office of Children and Family Service funds the statewide Kinship Navigator and 21 direct service kinship programs serving 33 counties in the state (see Appendix C for list of all NYS kinship programs).<sup>15</sup>

In 2005, New York appropriated \$1.4 million for nine regional kinship programs. Later, the state added another \$750,000 for four more regional programs and the statewide Kinship Navigator. In 2009, another nine programs were funded, bringing the total funding to just under \$3 million. But in the FY2011-12 budget, TANF funding is cut from \$1,998,000 to \$250,000 and the general funds are cut over 11%. Funding provided in the FY2011-12 budget for kinship programming is less than one million dollars (for comparison, we are using \$3 million as the cost of OCFS kinship program).

Prior to the 2011-12 cuts, the average cost of a regional program was about \$140,000. With more than 300 kinship children served by each program (as well as caregivers), the average cost of a kinship program per child is about \$466 per year.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Over 12% of children placed with kinship foster parents receive the specialized or exceptional rate. OCFS data, April 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Kinship foster children = 6,573, of which 5,853 are in NYC, 720 upstate; with 5,777 non-specialized, 575 specialized, 221 exceptional. OCFS data, April 2009.

<sup>14</sup> See discussion on contracting agency cost savings, “For counties that now pay administrative overhead fees to contract foster care agencies, the administrative cost savings resulting from the LOS reduction could be as much as \$18.8 million (= \$32.87 x 573,000) over the full four years.” Pursuing Permanence for Children, Mark F. Testa, PHD, Univ. of School of Social Work, Univ. of North Carolina, June 2010, p. 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> New York’s Area Agencies on Aging provide kinship services via discretionary “Caregivers Support Act” funding, administered by the Office of Aging. About 22 counties have programs.

<sup>16</sup> The 13 original programs serve an average of 300 children per year. The Navigator serves over 3,500 children. The eight new programs started up operations in December 2009. Annual data is not yet available. The report’s cost analysis relies on the average number of children served and average cost in the 13 regional programs.

*Annual Cost of One Child in a Kinship Program = \$466.*

**D. Cost of Public Assistance (TANF) Child-Only Grants**

Children in informal kinship care are very likely to qualify for a special public assistance grant based only upon their income and resources. The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) estimates that of its 53,000 child-only cases, 24,600 are these special non-parent cases. Non-parent cases are invariably informal kinship families (See Appendix C for OTDA data). According to OTDA, the average monthly payment for a kinship family with two children is \$600. The average administrative cost per case is \$404.11 per month. Together the cost is \$1,004, which is an average cost per year of \$12,048 (two children) and \$6,024 per child.<sup>17</sup>

*Annual Average Cost of Public Assistance Per Child = \$6,024.*

When adding \$6,024 cost per child of public assistance together with the \$466 average cost per child in a kinship program, the annual total cost per child for informal kinship care services is \$6,490.

*Funding for Non-Parent Public Assistance Grants: New York's Share*

In New York, the federal TANF dollars pay half of the Child-Only public assistance grants, while the state pays 25%, and the local district pays 25%.

**E. Summary of Costs Differences**

Subtracting the cost of informal care from the cost of foster care, the annual cost difference between the two equals \$49,570 for each foster care placement or \$15,045 for each regular foster care placement with foster parents.

<b>Foster Care</b>	<b>Informal Kinship Care</b>	<b>Cost Difference</b>	<b>Cost for 475 Children to Leave Informal Kinship care and Enter Foster Care</b>
<b>\$56,060</b>	<b>\$6,940</b>	<b>\$49,570</b>	<b>\$23,545,750</b>

<b>Regular foster care</b>	<b>Informal Kinship Care</b>	<b>Cost Difference</b>	<b>Cost for 475 Children to Leave Informal Kinship care</b>
<b>\$21,535</b>	<b>\$6,940</b>	<b>\$21,535</b>	<b>\$7,146,375</b>

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<sup>17</sup> Over 36% of caregivers calling the NYS Kinship Navigator have two or more children in their care.

While the differences are substantial, the real cost of informal kinship care is lower than \$6,490 and the real cost of all foster care or of regular foster care is higher. Not every child in informal kinship care receives public assistance, since some families choose not to apply, while others have children who are on SSI or who have other types of income, and others receive Social Security dependent benefits.

For foster care, the real costs are higher because there are indirect costs attributed to other state agencies that are very significant (e.g. courts, law enforcement, corrections, etc). Lastly, since children remain in kinship foster care for an average of 2.65 years,<sup>18</sup> the actual cost for each child who leaves informal kinship care and enters foster care should be multiplied by the length of stay in foster care.

#### **F. More Children will Enter Foster Care**

Kinship advocates and caregivers are certain that many more children, possibly thousands more, would be in foster care were it not for the intervention of family caregivers. However, proof of this fact is only indirectly available via statistical and anecdotal evidence.

In a Kinship Navigator sampling of OCFS kinship programs,<sup>19</sup> out of 1,152 children, 690 (59.9%) had past or current contact with Child Protective Services.<sup>20</sup> While a report to CPS does not necessarily result in the removal of children (in 2009, there were 24,591 children in foster care and approximately 170,000 CPS reports),<sup>21</sup> a caregiver's *contact* with CPS is likely to result in a placement with kin. Kin become a resource and children are placed with them via one of three methods: "temporary placements" prior to removals, "1017" placements post removals (also called diversion), and Article Six private court placements post removals.

#### *Temporary Placements*<sup>22</sup>

Because there is no formal removal of children from the home, temporary placements are not statistically tracked by OCFS. Such placements typically happen when CPS is called in to investigate and attempts to find a "temporary" placement in order to avoid an Article Ten proceeding. Parents are asked if there is a relative who can care for the children, a call is made –

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<sup>18</sup> Pursuing Permanence for Children, Mark F. Testa, PHD, Univ. of School of Social Work, Univ. of North Carolina, June 2010, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> Aggregate data from the 21 OCFS kinship programs is available from the NYS Kinship Navigator. Catholic Family Center in Rochester operates the Navigator program and has instituted a web-based data collection system (ETO or Efforts to Outcomes) which is utilized by all the OCFS kinship programs.

<sup>20</sup> NYS Kinship Navigator aggregate data on OCFS kinship programs.

<sup>21</sup> "The State of Child Welfare in New York: Shaping Things to Come", 2010 OCFS publication.

<sup>22</sup> See McKinney's commentary to Family Court Act 1028-a for a discussion on local district tactics to avert foster care placements.

often by CPS or some professional familiar with the children's circumstances, and the relative is asked to take the children into their care.

### *Diversion*

Diversion is a common practice in upstate counties and while there are no absolute clear statistics for the number of children involved, OCFS estimates that over 2,400 children were placed using "direct" custody pursuant to Article Ten.<sup>23</sup> Diversion refers to FCA 1017 where courts can order a child to be placed in foster care or in the "direct custody" of a relative but pursuant to the Article Ten proceeding. Since outside of New York City there are roughly 600 children in kinship foster care (out of the approximately 6,000 in kinship foster care in the state), child welfare agencies admit that diversion is a common practice in upstate counties. This fact is confirmed by numerous interviews with local district workers, family court attorneys, and kinship programs.

### *Article Six Placements*

Private custody orders pursuant to Family Court Act § 1017 are another way in which children may have contact with CPS and be placed in informal kinship care (See also Family Court Act § 1089-a and 1055-b), where children in foster care may exit to private care via an Article Six custodial proceeding.

### *Local Districts Increasingly Rely on Kinship Programs*

In all three instances, local districts are increasingly referring kin to the OCFS kinship programs. For instance, Chapter Law 518 of 2010 Laws of New York mandates that local districts advertise these programs; OCFS's "Having a Voice & a Choice" booklet advises kin to contact kinship services; the newly published OCFS "Know Your Options" brochure suggest that kin contact the NYS Kinship Navigator.

The result is that the OCFS kinship programs are more embedded in the child welfare response and are the most likely resource for kin to rely upon when seeking to become informal caregivers.<sup>24</sup>

### *Number of Children Entering Foster Care if not for Informal Care*

Considering that a majority of the kinship families served by OCFS's kinship programs had contact with CPS, it is likely that many of their children would become foster children were it not for the placement with kin. For the twelve months ending in October 2010, the Kinship Navigator served over 3,500 children and the 21 regional programs served over 6,000 children. If as few as five percent of these children entered foster care, these numbers would increase by 475.

Additionally, there is no statistical data comparing informal kinship care recidivism in counties without an OCFS kinship program versus the counties with a program. The only evidence is the

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<sup>23</sup> Connections database, April 2009.

<sup>24</sup> The implementation of KinGap (kinship subsidized guardianship) in April 2011 will eventually lead to more kinship foster children leaving foster care and being served by the OCFS kinship programs.

assertions of caregivers served by the programs. Many declare unequivocally that they could not continue to care for children without the assistance of the OCFS kinship program. (See Appendix D for testimonials).

**475 children entering foster care equals \$23,545,750 or \$7,146,375 in additional costs to the state, and a far greater expense than the approximately \$3 million in funding for the NYS Kinship Navigator and the 21 regional kinship programs.**

### **G. Conclusion**

Public assistance and kinship services provide a cost effective alternative to foster care. But without kinship services, many children would very soon exit informal care and enter foster care. A conservative estimate that at least 475 children will enter foster care will cause a significant increase in child welfare costs in the next fiscal year.

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## Appendix C: OTDA Data on Average Temporary Assistance Grant<sup>25</sup>

<b>Average Temporary Assistance Grant</b> (based on 4 budget scenarios: room and board, rent with electric, gas and oil)			
<b>County</b>	<b>1 child</b>	<b>2 children</b>	<b>3 children</b>
Albany	446	566	742
Erie	434	555	724
Suffolk	541	699	879
Schoharie	439	581	731
<b>Average</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>769</b>

New York State has approximately 53,000 Child Only Cases and of those approximately 24,600 are Non-Parent Caregiver cases.

To arrive at the average TA grant per case:  $465 + 600 + 769 = 1834 / 3 = 611$

To arrive at an Approximate Monthly Administrative Cost:  $9,954,332 / 24,600 = 404.65$

Total TANF costs associated for one case per month:  $611.00 + 404.65 = 1015.65$

Total TANF costs statewide for one month:  $24,600 \times 1015.65 = 24,984,990$

### APPROXIMATE STATEWIDE TANF COSTS FOR ONE MONTH:

50% Federal	\$12,492,495.00
25% State	\$6,246,247.50
25% Local	<u>\$6,246,247.50</u>
	\$24,984,990.00

<sup>25</sup> The calculations of cost in this paper are “per child” not per case. The per child cost is defined as the average cost of two children (\$600 per month) plus the administrative cost of one case (\$404.65) divided by 2 (i.e., average cost per year of \$12,048 (two children) and \$6,024 per child).

## **Appendix D: Testimonials**

### **Testimony of Marya Gilborn Director, Second Time Around Program of The Family Center February 10, 2010**

For over 6 years, my organization, The Family Center of New York City, has provided comprehensive legal and social services to kin caregivers throughout the 5 boroughs of New York City. With funds from the New York City Department for the Aging and from New York State Office of Children and Family Services, we have supported some of New York City's frailest families, from Edwina M., a 19-year old who is caring for two younger siblings after her mother's death from cancer last summer, to Lila D. an 85 year old who has raised her three grandchildren for over 10 years due to parental substance abuse.

As a social worker, it is difficult to imagine a more rewarding population to work with than kin caregivers. As an advocate, I feel equally fortunate for the tremendous network of organizations that work together to support these families. With leadership from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, the New York Chapter of AARP and the NYS Navigator program run by Catholic Charities of Rochester, we have been able, over the past 5 years, to coordinate services, share resources and develop best practices, supporting high-quality services in rural, suburban and urban communities around the state.

The Family Center's Second Time Around program is just one of many fantastic programs around New York State. Our comprehensive service package includes individual, couple and family counseling, caregiver peer support groups, case management, benefits and entitlements assistance, and legal representation in areas of custody and guardianship, advanced directives, housing, and permanency planning services. All of our services are free, provided in multiple languages, and available in clients' homes throughout New York City.

The families that we serve are among New York's most profoundly challenged. While the losses that necessitate family members to become kin caregivers (drug abuse, premature death, mental illness) cut across race and class lines, they disproportionately impact families that are already unstable due to poverty, low educational achievement, immigration status and social disenfranchisement.

Our clients have stepped forward when nobody else in a child's life is willing and able to care for them. Younger relatives put their own personal and educational goals aside, working caregiver risk their jobs to attend court dates and public benefits screening appointments, older caregivers neglect their own emotional and health needs in order to meet the needs of their grandparents. In the vast majority of cases, kin caregivers make these sacrifices completely outside of the formal child welfare system. They do so at great cost to themselves and with tremendous benefit to society.

I would like to share brief vignettes of just a handful of the families that my organization has served in the last year, not to showcase the work of The Family Center, but rather to exemplify the range of challenges and needs faced by families being served by the network of care provided by the KinCare programs around New York State.

**Berlene A.** is a 65-year old Haitian grandmother living in Brooklyn. She came to New York from Haiti in 2004 after her daughter died of AIDS. Berlene moved to a foreign country to raise six grandchildren she barely knew and who had been raised in a culture she did not understand, by a daughter from whom she was estranged. It was only after her daughter's death that she learned of her daughter's HIV status, as well as the fact that one of her grandchildren, Sarah, was also living with HIV. Berlene was referred to TFC in 2007 by Sarah's medical provider. Berlene's case was assigned to a Creole Speaking social worker who has worked with the family now for three years. The social worker has helped Berlene manage her own feelings of loss and anger with her daughter and separate those feelings from her anxieties related to her grandchildren. In addition to providing individual support to Berlene, the social worker has provided family counseling session and individual support to Sarah as her grandmother prepared to tell her about her HIV status. Berlene has also received case management support to help her navigate confusing systems, including the special education, public benefits and specialized medical services. Three of the teens have participated in various teen groups, including an HIV peer education program, and the two younger children have been matched with adult mentors through TFC's Buddy Program.

**Gladys R.** sought services from TFC in October 2008. At 62, she had guardianship of her two grandchildren, ages 10 and 12, and was undergoing treatment for colorectal cancer. Gladys's two grandsons had been removed from their mother, Jean, when the younger child was born with drugs in his system. After spending 9 months with a foster mother, they had been placed in Gladys care and she had become their guardian. Now, faced with a life-threatening cancer diagnosis, she needed help planning for what would happen to her grandsons in the case of her death. Although the boys mother had reportedly been sober for 8 years, she had never expressed an interest in taking over their care and Gladys did not believe that this was a viable option because she felt her daughter was emotionally unstable, was in an abusive relationship, and shared no bond with her children. In recent years, Gladys's grandsons had refused to visit their mother, citing that they didn't like spending time in her home and that her boyfriend was often drunk. Gladys had two other potential caregivers in mind, Ethan, the father of the boys' older half-brother, and Reina, the foster mother who had them as infants and had maintained a close connection to the family although she lived across the city. With help from TFC staff, Gladys was able to evaluate her options and, after a meeting with Ethan, Reina and her TFC social worker, Gladys decided that her preference would be for both boys to live with Ethan because, as he was a neighbor, it would minimize the disruption to their lives and schooling. Gladys met with an attorney who put her wishes for her grandsons in writing and also helped her complete a Power of Attorney, Health Care Proxy and Living Will. The social worker continued to provide Gladys with support as she went through continued treatment for her cancer, which was rapidly progressing. After going in to hospice care in early January, Gladys died last week. The social worker has already met with **Ethan (48)** to reaffirm that he is prepared to take on the care of the boys and he plan to petition for guardianship this week. Over the coming months, Ethan will require a lot of support. He will need a lawyer to help him through what could be a complicated court case. He will need assistance getting benefits in his name. He will need to familiarize himself with the boys' schools, therapists and doctors. He has already spoken to his employer about the need to take some time off from his job to get through these appointments. Ethan may also face a legal challenge from the boys' mother. While it seems clear that being placed with Jean would not be in the boys' best interest and we don't believe she would be likely to be granted guardianship, Jean has the right to contest Ethan's petition and therefore has the potential to cause the court case to draw out, leaving the boys in emotional limbo.

*Albert (24) and Manuel (26), two brothers, were referred to TFC in 2008. Their mother had just died of cirrhosis and they were living in a shelter with their two younger sisters, age 15 and 17. Their father had died only a year before, also of health issues related to long-term substance abuse. They were in crisis, absolutely unsure about how to hold their family together. They were assigned quickly to both a social worker and an attorney. While the attorney helped them to make a decision about which one of them would petition for guardianship, the social worker began offering bereavement counseling to the siblings both individually, and at times, as a family grouping. In addition to their recent loss, these young people were struggling to reorganize their family and redefine relationships as Albert and Manuel transitioned from being peers to being parent figures. Meanwhile, their housing was unstable. Manuel, who had been living out of state before his mother's death, was being told that he couldn't stay in the family shelter, because he hadn't been part of the family composition when the family entered the shelter. As a result, Manuel had to seek shelter through the single men's shelter system where he was also enrolled in a mandatory work program. Meanwhile, Albert and his siblings were working with shelter staff to seek permanent housing. In the year after their mothers' death, one of the sisters became pregnant and then lost the baby and the other struggled with alcoholism. Through all the struggles of the last year, these young people continue to show up and to demonstrate tremendous resourcefulness and empathy for one another. Albert and Manuel participated in a kick-off event for a support group for male caregivers, but, due to their work schedule, were unable to join the group on an ongoing basis. It is our experience that families headed by young adult siblings are among the most vulnerable Kinicare families. The Vargas family has been an exception, and 18-months into our work with them, I am proud to say that they are doing remarkably well. Albert and Manuel are both working. The older sister, now 19 is getting ready to graduate from high school and hopes to enter a two-year college. The younger sister, now 17, is still in school, though there are concerns about truancy and behavior. Albert and his social worker continue to work together and to coordinate with school staff to try to keep her on track.*

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the programs that are being funded by OCFS to support families like these. We understand that New York's legislators are faced with very difficult decisions about how to allocate shrinking resources. I hope that these vignettes will help to illustrate the myriad ways in which caregiver programs ultimately save public dollars. They do this, most notably, by keeping children out of the foster care system, but also by providing essential stabilizing services that help keep at-risk families out of the homeless system, help working caregivers hold on to their jobs, and help high-risk youth to get and stay on track towards a healthy and productive adulthood.

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