

# VDSS Kinship Care Presentation



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# Improve permanency outcomes by embedding family engagement practice model

Improved Outcomes

## Practice Model Family Engagement

Family Meetings

Family Search

Family Support

Kinship Care

## Division Infrastructure

### Leadership

- Policy development
- Best practices
- Collaboration

### Support

- Training
- Tools & resources
- Local guidance
- Local flexibility

### Accountability

- Data management
- Continuous Quality Improvement



# VDSS Kinship Involvement



## **Private Kinship Care (Informal)**

- No child welfare involvement unless family requests services for the child
- Support committees, provide information, respond to constituent requests
- Diversion from Foster Care

## **Public Kinship Care (Formal)**

- Diversion from Foster Care
- Relative Foster Homes
- Subsidized Custody to Relative – *Proposed*
- Subsidized Relative Adoption
- Independent Living placements

# Diversion Study



- In the fall of 2009, the Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis Unit (OBRA) of DFS conducted a study to measure the number of children diverted from foster care and placed with kinship providers.
- Chose a sample of referrals from August 2009.
  - Total Referrals 08/09 = 2,168
  - Confidence Level 95% and Confidence Interval 3%
  - Sample size = 326
  - 406 total after oversampling to account for non-response

# Findings



- **OBRA received responses from 49 LDSS and on 86.9% of the sampled cases (361 total)**
  - 11 of the 361 children referred came into DSS custody (3%).
  - 42 of the 361 referrals were placed in another home on an informal basis (11.6%).
  - Of the 42 referrals that were placed in another home on an informal basis at least 30 were placed with blood relatives (71.4%). The other 12 were placed in a category of “other” which include fictive kin.

# Findings



- As a result of this study, OBRA calculates that the percent of children diverted to relatives ranges from 8.3% - 11.6%.
  - If this percentage is applied to the total population of referrals for the month of August, between 179 and 251 children were diverted from foster care and placed with kin. If applied over 12 months then **LDSS could potentially be diverting anywhere between 2,148 and 3,012 children** from foster care via informal kinship placement.



## Relative Foster Care

Virginia has one of the lowest rates of kinship (relative) foster care in the nation.

Currently, and for many years, the rate of relative foster care has hovered around 5% of the placements.

Possible reasons:

- Values around “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”
- Values regarding paying relatives to care for “their” children
- Difficulties in approving relatives who may have an individual in the home who has committed a “barrier crime” or are unmarried couples



# Placement with Relatives with Subsequent Custody Assistance



- Supported by the Fostering Connections Act of 2008
- An Advisory Committee to DFS recommended implementation of this Permanency Option by January 2011

- Requirements:
  - Child in care at least 6 months with this family
  - Other permanency options assessed as inappropriate
  - Relative foster parent agrees to commit
  - Child agrees if mature enough to consult

# Subsidized Adoption



- Often relatives are reluctant to adopt – changes the family structure, hierarchy, relationships
- Relative may see adoption as giving up hope for the birth parent to change
- In FY2009 of 668 finalized adoptions (of children in FC), 35 or 5.24% were adopted by relatives



## **Independent Living Arrangements**

VDSS data are not conclusive about how many older youth may be placed with relatives in an independent living situation -- where a family offers room and board and some guidance, but the home is not an approved foster home

- **Foster Teens may find their own placement**



# Current Initiatives



- **Kinship Care Focus Groups**
- **Prevention Committee**
- **Diligent Family Search and Engagement**
- **Placement with Relatives with Custody Assistance**
- **Resource Family Guidance and Training**