

WELCOME TO THE KINSHIP AFFILIATE NETWORK

We are glad you are interested in learning more about starting a Kinship affiliate in your community. This informational guide attempts to answer some of the most common questions and concerns about developing a local Kinship program. Since we recognize that every community's situation is unique, Kinship offers a program model that can be adapted to your community's individual needs and resources.

If you need help, contact the National Kinship Affiliate Network Office c/o: David Downing, Executive Director, PO Box 642, Brainerd, MN 56401, 218-270-4112, info@kinshipinc.org

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT KINSHIP: What is Kinship?

Kinship is a community program that matches carefully-screened adult volunteers with boys and girls who, for a variety of reasons, need a special relationship with an adult who cares. Some Kinship affiliates, depending upon other types of program services locally available, also provide services to the elderly or developmentally disabled.

Each week, the volunteer shares an agreed upon amount of time with the child or vulnerable adult, arranging activities that both can enjoy. One week they might go fishing, or to a movie, and the next week they might just bake cookies, or take a walk.

Though the activities themselves are not as important as the time the volunteer and child or vulnerable adult spend together. Activities that emphasize safe, healthy fun, enrichment, education, and community responsibility and participation are encouraged and supported by Kinship.

What types and ages of children should be matched?

This is up to you and your Board of Directors or Advisory Council. Some Kinship affiliates accept and match any child with a need, but most feel that they must set some guidelines. National Kinship policy encourages local affiliates to match most children. Younger affiliates may feel they do not have the experience to serve children with severe problems. Your local Kinship policies can be changed and the population you serve may expand as your affiliate grows and acquires staff expertise.

What start-up help can the National Kinship Network provide?

As you begin planning and organizing your affiliate and later, as it develops and expands, you will no doubt have more detailed questions. The National Kinship

Network has compiled information on many topics and acts as a clearinghouse coordinator for Kinship information, assisting you in starting up, and providing assistance thereafter. To use the Kinship name you must apply for affiliation to the National Kinship Affiliate Network and adhere to established Kinship standards, especially volunteer screening and follow-up of mentor-matches.

Available resources include:

Manual - When your group has organized a steering committee and is about to start a Kinship affiliate, we will forward a comprehensive operational manual that contains information in great detail.

National Publicity Materials - Kinship can assist you in developing brochures, posters, bulletin inserts, videos, and volunteer appreciation items.

National Kinship Representatives - Experienced Kinship affiliate staff will also help you get going. The director of an established affiliate near you will assist you in the training and development stages and serve as your mentor as your affiliate grows. The National Kinship Network administrator will introduce you to your experienced contact.

National Kinship Affiliate Network List Serve – The List Serve is an email tool to communicate with other Kinship affiliates. For example if you have a question about volunteer screening practices you can ask for and receive feedback from other members of the National Kinship Network.

Annual Conference & regional/state affiliates meetings – A one and a half day training conference is held annually for National Kinship Affiliates. Samples workshops include; donor development, training mentors, mentor recruitment, successful fundraising events, working with social media, board development and training. In addition state affiliate and regional affiliate meetings occur on a regular basis to keep you up to date on Kinship and mentoring best practices.

GETTING STARTED

A STEERING COMMITTEE – (Develop a core group of interested resource persons representative of the community)

The steering committee is a small group of individuals willing to play a key role in establishing Kinship locally. The importance of a strong, dedicated steering committee cannot be over stated. They will be the early backbone of the Kinship program.

There are many ways to establish a steering committee. The following two examples are common. In both instances, the procedure is begun by an impetus

person or persons. Special attention may or may not be given to including special experts like psychologists, lawyers, school social workers, county nurses, or judges. However, special expertise should not be required of everyone serving on the committee -- only dedication.

Example One: The impetus person or persons contact several people in the community on a one-to-one basis and explain the Kinship concept. These people are asked to commit themselves to working on beginning the groundwork for forming a Kinship affiliate.

Example Two: The impetus person or persons call on several people and very simply explain the Kinship concept. These people are then invited to come to an informational meeting with no implied obligation. At the meeting, details are given on the groundwork needed to establish and sustain a Kinship program. The National Kinship video is often shown. Those present are then asked to make a commitment as:

- Steering committee member
- Future volunteer
- Secretary/receptionist, assistant case worker or bookkeeper
- Subcommittee member, fund raiser organizer, grant writer

After formation, the steering committee will increase in size to continue the work on the basic groundwork of goals and objectives. Many of these early members *may* form the first Board of Directors or Advisory Council.

STEERING COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

Once the steering committee is formed, there are some basic steps which should be accomplished in order to lay strong groundwork. Some common possibilities:

- Make sure that the need for a Kinship program is recognized and shared. This should be done by contacting appropriate community agencies for specific statistics demonstrating the characteristics of the "at-risk" population you intend to serve and the extent to which their needs are presently unmet by the mentor-match services of existing service agencies. This documentation is essential in order to enlighten and convince people about the need, and to avoid duplication of programming. Surveys can be taken of the general community, organizations, youth needs, and sources of existing resources. Try any of the following areas that apply in your community:
 - Police department or sheriff's department
 - Social service agencies/state department of social service -- Mental health clinics -- Runaway Centers
 - Visiting nurse/hospitals/health department
 - Schools
 - Ministerial committees

- County government
- Definite boundaries of the community to be served need to be set -- city, county, school system, etc. The resources of the committee and the linkages to various churches and community organizations will help determine the scope of the geographical spread. It is a good idea to start with an area that can be reasonably managed. Determine the age range of the children to be served.
- Personally contact people from the community who need to know that the Kinship program is starting. These community contacts should provide a wide base of support for the program:
 - Social services/human services, youth programs, school counselors
 - Churches, private counselors, women's shelters, service organizations
 - Businesses, police, city and county government agencies, corporations
 - college volunteer programs, potential donors, parents groups
- Now is the time to determine the basic structure of the affiliate. The Steering Committee acts as "founders" or incorporators, establishing a standalone non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation or they negotiate the sponsorship of an existing "umbrella" organization. They assimilate themselves into the structure, along with interested people from the community. In the case of a corporate structure, the steering committee would nominate the first Board of Director candidates. Under an existing sponsor organization, the steering committee would nominate the Advisory Council who are directly responsible for Kinship activities. Generally, children served are of school-age, but some affiliates make carefully considered exceptions, generally based upon a child's early maturity or the likelihood of match relationship benefits to a young vulnerable adult. Most children are from single- parent families, some from families that have experienced problems with domestic abuse or abuse of drugs and alcohol and some have emotional problems or physical handicaps. When you define your client population, it is important to consider the resources you will have for training and supporting volunteers to work effectively with these individuals.

Where do we find volunteers?

Volunteers can be found everywhere! Churches, businesses, service organizations, unions, and the general public can provide potential volunteers. Pursue many different avenues. Kinship volunteers are of all ages and come

from all walks of life. Check with colleges, retirement clubs, professional groups, corporations, and the local media, for opportunities to explain the program and recruit volunteers. Many affiliates seek volunteer couples for family matches for children, in addition to the traditional individual volunteers. While many children may crave the one-on-one attention of an individual volunteer match, an only child or children with little or no extended family can benefit from the extra contact provided by a couple or family. Allowing people to volunteer together also enlarges the pool of potential volunteers because it does not demand as much time away from a volunteer's family.

How do children find Kinship?

Be sure that schools, welfare agencies, legal and police agencies, and churches all know about Kinship. It is best to have representatives from many child care agencies involved in the initial planning stages -- this will help with the needs assessment and also insure that children in need will get involved. A good collaborative network with other agencies is invaluable in starting and maintaining a viable Kinship affiliate.

How much are parents involved in Kinship?

This again depends upon the individual agency's guidelines and goals, but strong support and involvement from client parents almost always helps insure a stronger affiliate and may enhance client family functioning. Some parents are the prime movers behind the beginning of a new Kinship affiliate, but even if this is not the case, provide ways to engage and involve the parents, giving them some responsibility for supporting Kinship.

Once in a while, particularly when a child has been referred by someone other than the parent, a parent may feel insecure, exhibiting jealous or resentful behaviors toward the volunteer. This can be alleviated in many ways. Be sure the interviewer points out that the parent is in charge at all times and the volunteer is a friend, not a replacement for the parent.

Is Kinship a non-profit organization?

Kinship is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, established in Minnesota, in 1989, for the purpose of assisting communities developing Kinship affiliates. The names Kinship, Kinsmen, and Kinswomen were applied to the mentor-matches of seminarians paired with adolescent juveniles in the early 1950's in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Today, the National Kinship Affiliate Network consists of the Board of Directors, working committees and state Kinship associations. Together these groups provide technical assistance, consulting services, coordinates networking

between affiliates, organizes periodic training conferences, publishes a newsletter, manages a resource materials lending library and distributes logo items for Kinship affiliate use.

Donations to Kinship, Incorporated, are tax deductible and are much appreciated. The corporate tax status of the National Kinship Affiliate Network does not affect or include local Kinship affiliates. Kinship affiliates are expected to comply with IRS 501(c)(3) guidelines.

Individual Kinship affiliates are self-governing, independent, and establish their own funding. However, it is important to understand that to use the Kinship name, a local program must be affiliated with the National Kinship Affiliate Network, submit an annual report with a nominal re-affiliation fee, and adhere to the National Kinship Affiliate Network "Minimum Standards of Practice and Procedures."

This helps insure that Kinship programs operate in a professional manner, enhancing the safety and welfare of the children and vulnerable adults served, while protecting the integrity and reputation of all Kinship affiliates. Intentional disregard of these standards would be reason for expulsion from the National Kinship Affiliate Network.

How much funding is needed to start a Kinship Affiliate?

Much of this is up to you and your local Board of Directors or Advisory Council. The amount of money you need will be determined by the size, scope, staffing and organization of your local affiliate. Generally, it is best to develop a broad base of financial support within your community. Don't be surprised if it is more difficult to raise funds in the beginning. Large agencies like the United Way prefer to allocate funds to established organizations -- so start small and work up. As your reputation grows, so will your financial base of support.

Experts point out that many small donations form a better financial base than a few large donations. Grants by national and state government, corporations and foundations, although great in the short run, tend to be very competitive. Developing a large group of reliable supporters is the most stable way to go. Do apply for large and ongoing local grants and substantial perennial sources of support funding like your community United Way campaign. Some affiliates also contract with county governments to provide mentor-match services. Most affiliates' funds do come from a combination of sources.

Possible ideas include asking corporations and service organizations for a yearly pledge, or asking for specific items or amounts: like the amount needed to cover your postage for one year, or the estimated amount needed to match and serve a certain number of children enrolled in your Kinship affiliate.

What about liability insurance for volunteers?

The National Kinship administrator can provide policy information.

STRUCTURE DECISIONS

Under both structures (board of directors or advisory council) the following decisions must be made:

- **TIME LINES** - It is often a helpful guide to develop approximate time lines which show what you hope to accomplish by a particular point in time. (i.e., When will we have our regular meetings? By what date will we have our first program presentation, first volunteer orientation, first match?).
- **HOME BASE** - For any organization to function there must be a contact point, contact person, office address, phone number -- that is, a home base from which to operate. Perhaps this is a church office, or donated space in a public building. It may not necessarily require full-time secretarial support, but a phone number and answering machine are minimum requirements to keep the information flowing.
- **STAFF** - A member of the steering committee may volunteer. Depending upon your finances, all or part of your staff may volunteer or be paid in the beginning. Someone has to act as the main contact person for the organization. During the planning stages of budgeting for staff, this person often acts as a promoter, chairperson, organizer, secretary, grant writer and fund raiser.

A SAMPLE MODEL

Develop a board - Most Kinship affiliates have an executive director and a working board. Although the executive director can be paid or volunteer, particularly at the beginning, Kinship encourages local affiliates to have as an eventual goal the hiring of a paid director. This helps insure professionalism, continuity, and a strong, accountable program.

The board can be either a true board, with the power to "hire and fire," or an advisory council with less responsibility for program operations. A working board can be an affiliate's most important asset. The board can provide a base of community support, a pool for ideas and talents, and another source of unit continuity. Many boards are divided into committees to better utilize meeting time and individual talents. Some examples of committees are fund-raising, screening, publicity, personnel, and activities.

KINSHIP AFFILIATES AS PART OF OTHER AGENCIES OR ORGANIZATIONS AGENCY or INSTITUTION

With some affiliates, Kinship is part of another agency, often human services. The director is a government or institutional staff employee, and may work with other youth programs in addition to Kinship.

CHURCH or MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION - Several churches have started Kinship programs as part of their outreach effort. An existing staff member may direct the program or the church may hire a director or ask for a volunteer. There are many different ways to start and run a Kinship program. The most successful models involve a broad base of community support and many different sources of funding.