

**We would like to introduce ourselves...**



### **Our roots run deep in kinship care...**

In 1994, the kinship care model of A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) became *the strategy* – not just a strategy for our partnership with Allegheny County in Pittsburgh, PA.

### **Our calling is kinship care...**

We often hear of writers, musicians and artists who believe that they are answering a calling. At A Second Chance, Inc., we say that we have been answering the call of kinship care and that by answering that call, we found our vision and mission.

### **Our purpose is kinship care...**

Experts agree that typically the best insights for any industry come from pioneers and founders. Thus, the personal story of Dr. Sharon McDaniel - the founder, CEO and president of ASCI is also the story of A Second Chance, Inc. Raised in kinship care her story further drives and informs our purpose.

### **Our roots, our calling and our purpose are reflected in a value for family which drives our model of kinship care.**

As a promising practice, moving towards evidence-based, ASCI is the only known organization in our nation that exclusively provides Kinship Care case management and support services to the entire kinship triad (children/youth, birthparents and caregivers).

The agency is recognized as a national kinship model in the delivery of kin services and its work has been cited by organizations including The Urban Institute, Children's Defense Fund, Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Currently, the agency works with well over 1,500 children and their families on a daily basis.

Our data clearly aligns with national studies that indicate children in Kinship Care typically experience better outcomes in safety, permanency and well-being than those in traditional foster care.

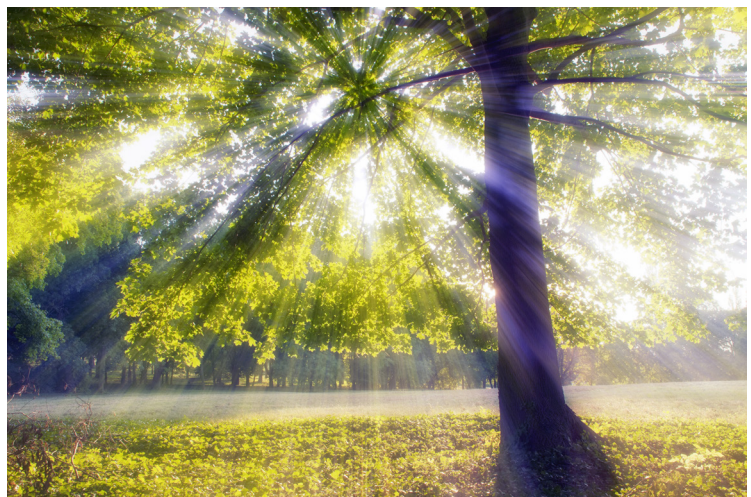
Family, not the system, must drive kinship care. Dr. Howard Thurman, philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader wrote:

**“It is the family that gives us a deep private sense of belonging. Here we first have ourselves defined for us.**

In kinship care, that sense of belonging can only be achieved by working with the kinship triad. **The triad is the family core that defines our model, gives us purpose and guides our perspective.**

*We invite you to peruse the following pages which provide snapshots of some of our kin-specific programming.*

**We believe that Kinship Care is transformational. We look forward to a continued conversation with you.**



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## We know that when given the choice, Kinship Care is the strongest answer to foster care.

A nationally recognized model, pioneer and leader in the provision of Kinship Care. A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) is the only known organization in the nation that exclusively provides kinship case management and support services to the entire kinship triad of the child, caregiver and birth-parent.

- We believe that the best placement for children is with relatives, family friends or others with whom the child has an existing positive relationship, when they are unable to remain in the home of their birth-parent's due to abuse or neglect - this is Kinship Care.
- We believe that the most effective design of Kinship Care incorporates the Kinship Triad - child, caregiver and birthparent into all services and case management.
- The agency's work has been cited by organizations including The Urban Institute, Children's Defense Fund, Casey Family Programs and The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- **Point of Contact (POC)** is our nationally recognized full-service case management Kinship Care model. The model takes the family on a personal journey of empowerment to ensure safety for the child, maintain their well-being and plan for permanency, all while ensuring the placement meets the requirements of the respective federal, state and local oversight authorities.
- Our **Kinship Cares Curriculum™** is data-driven and tested. It is designed for Kinship families entering the child welfare system and addresses the kin-specific needs that require the use of diagnostic enrichment tools that speak directly to Kinship Care.
- **Standards for Assessing and Recognizing Kinship Strengths (SARKS)™** is our experienced-based curriculum developed specifically for Kinship Caregivers. SARKS™ addresses the behavioral, psychological, educational, social and emotional well-being of the kin-family. It provides strategies, resources and tools needed for a Kinship Care program.
- The **Kinship Strength Assessment (KSA)™** is our tool used to assess and plan for the permanency needs of the child. We designed the tool so as to evaluate the Kinship Triad from a strength-based approach. Using the tool is vital in helping the family identify their strengths.

### Our numbers speak to the strength and permanency outcomes of the ASCI Kinship Care model:

- We have serviced over **32,000 children**
- We have serviced over **8,000 Kinship Caregivers**
- We have serviced over **6,000 Birthparents**
- **60%** of our children reach **reunification** within the first year of service
- **22%** of our children have closed to **adoption**
- **7%** to **Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship**
- **4%** to **independent living**
- **3%** had their caregivers become **legal custodians**

“Kinship care is not a practice model;  
rather it is a value for family.”

Dr. Sharon McDaniel, President and CEO, A Second Chance, Inc.

## Why a kinship care values training?

Inspiring a values-based culture in kinship care is essential in child welfare. Often there is a lack of framework to even start a dialogue about the importance of valuing kinship care. Child welfare systems and private providers must begin with a value for kinship care if they are to acquire a collective buy-in for the practice.

The Kin2You™ training has been designed to communicate that value and build ownership in the practice of kinship care.



## What is the aim of this kinship care values training?

This curriculum is intended to be part of either a pre-service or ongoing training within a child welfare organization. It builds upon the A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) tenets of the role of kinship care in child welfare. **Importantly, this curriculum focuses on the foundational element of the Kinship Triad (child, birth family, caregiver), as the Triad provides the most valuable perspective for creating a meaningful and relevant framework for kinship care.**

Child welfare rests on a commitment to the value of family. It also requires those working in the field to have the ability to use their knowledge about kinship care to strengthen the relationships that are responsible for the safety, well-being and permanency of all children and youth.

## How do you build a values-based culture for kinship care?

- You prepare child welfare professionals for work in kinship care. This includes developing an awareness of the importance of valuing kinship care.
- You assist child welfare professionals to recognize their own culture and family/kinship experiences and to gain knowledge and perspective to engage people from cultures, ethnic groups and family compositions different from their own.
- You assist child welfare professionals to understand the interface between personal beliefs about family and their professional responsibilities in social work, and to be able to make appropriate applications of each.

## Why is the values training layered?

Values influence decision-making in child welfare. There are multiple layers in this decision-making process. Our approach considers 3 important layers; *foundational*, *central* and *peak*.

The *foundational layer* addresses the concept of creating value - it is the core knowledge. The *central layer* connects this core to kinship care. The *peak layer* applies the foundational and central layers to the larger macro-system.

### Overview of the Training Layers

#### Foundational:

- Creating Value
- Valuing Family

#### Central:

- Valuing Kinship Care
- Valuing the Kinship Triad

#### Peak:

- Valuing Kinship Care Systems
- Valuing Kinship Care Over Time
- Valuing Kinship Care Workers

## Training Format:

We believe a 2 -2.5 day retreat reaps the most beneficial learning experience as it best facilitates a reflective learning process. We can also accommodate an abbreviated 1-day training that preserves the critical core elements of the training model.

### A Framework for **PERMANENCY**

*A value-for-family, has us serve as a broker of services to link the family to other natural or system supports that result in permanency.*

### What is “A Framework for Permanency” ?

Guided by a value for family, we approach our permanency work from a framework reflective of both cultural and family values. Over the years, our focus groups have suggested that only when a family is ready to make the choice of adoption or guardianship, will it be lasting. This foundational value of *choice* is reflected in a permanency framework that operates concurrently with casework. In kinship care, the family constellation can only shift when the family has reconciled the same. As an example, *when grandma wants to just be grandma*, the legal structure that forces her to sever the legal rights of her son or daughter may not be the best fit for her. The foundational option of choice allows her to see permanency through another lens where she can just be grandma, but favorably exit the system through perhaps another option such as, subsidized guardianship. **The framework has five practices:**

1. We create a casework mindset where permanency is valued.
2. We work intentionally with the kinship triad in our pursuit of permanency
3. We use an integrated engagement model to strengthen permanency work.
4. We use a phased strategy called *Steps To Permanency (STP)* to broaden our permanency services.
5. We utilize a specialized model of permanency to address the needs of older youth.

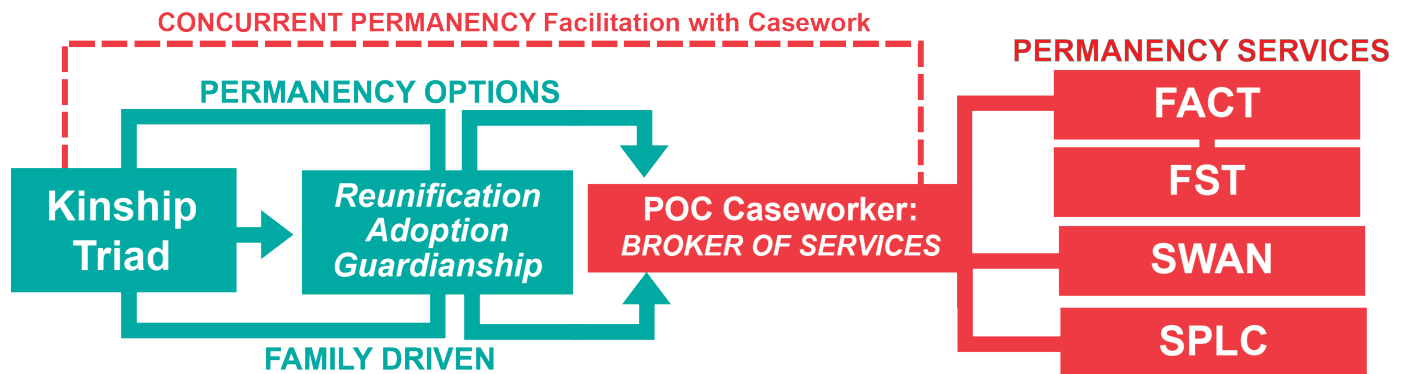


Figure 1: Diagram of brokerage process of permanency

### What do you mean by a “broker of services” for permanency?

As a **broker of permanency services**, we act as the interface between the triad and the permanency option of their choice. We provide information to educate the triad on permanency options and offer support in order to ensure communication among members of the triad. Our **Point-of-Contact caseworker** is the central broker. Services include:

**Family and Children Together (FACT) reunification** program. A specialist that provides intensive services to birth-parents to attain the necessary goals needed to achieve reunification with their children.

The **Family Service and Transportation Worker (FST)** is typically already in relationship with members of the triad. As such, they are able to better distribute information and obtain documents needed for permanency services.

Through the **StateWide Adoption Network (SWAN)**, we assist the family with the formal processes related to adoption.

**Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship (SPLC)** is similar to adoption; however, parental rights are not terminated. If this service is selected by the family, it is coordinated between ASCI and the Department of Human Services (DHS).



### Why is a Kinship Navigation program needed?

Our approach to Kinship Navigation is to facilitate a process where the family can accumulate knowledge, confidence and thus, self-determination for the planning of out-of-home care plan for a child. It is a collaborative and multi-dynamic process that empowers the entire triad, the child/youth, caregiver and birth family - every voice is heard.

Kinship Navigators not only facilitate improved location of family members, they are essential in improving access, quality and advocacy for families coming into the system. The Kinship Navigator program creates synergy between the provider and family to offer a holistic approach to case management and thus can focus beyond locating kin, but also coordinate and oversee educational, physical and social aspects of kinship in the context of child welfare.

## KINSHIP NAVIGATOR

Purposely pointing in a kinship direction!

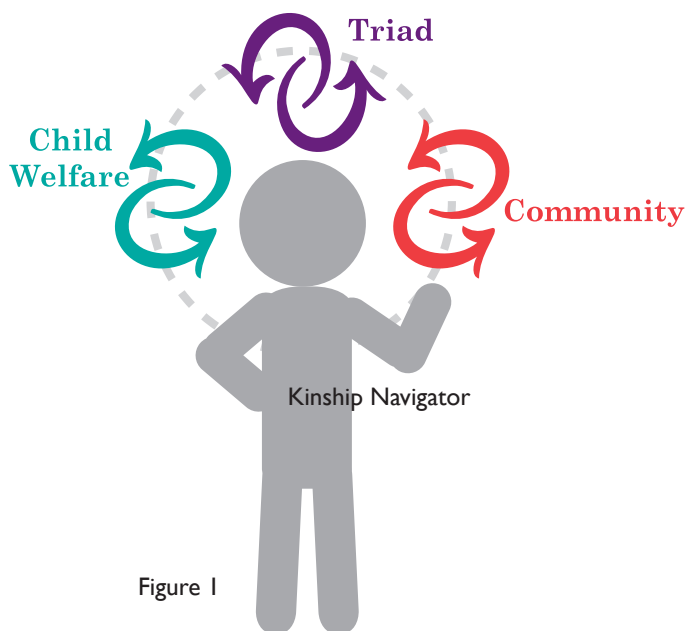


Figure 1

### ***Kinship Navigator Feedback Loop:***

***Triad Loop - coordination between the child, caregivers, and birth family between each other and all systems.***

***Community Loop - coordination between both stakeholders and resources for the triad.***

***Child Welfare Loop - coordination between the private provider and governmental identity.***

### How does the Kinship Navigator program operate?

At its most functional level, the Kinship Navigator is using tools such as Family Finding and interviewing to provide a more intense and deliberate structure to value family through finding a kinship placement.

Communication facilitation is key for the Kinship Navigator position. The Navigator keeps three distinct feedback loops in motion in order to improve speed and quality of service. (See Figure 1). The Navigator in essence, automates the process of locating kin.

The Kinship Navigator program is not meant to be an isolated or add-on program, but instead one that is part of a continuum of care that is seamless and thus reduces the often-disruptive interventions of the child welfare process.

From a system's perspective, our Kinship Navigator program is a tool that can reduce racial and economic disparities in child welfare because it is a stabilizing factor for families that is more reflective of a natural family response, rather than a prescribed antidote or imposed directive. Furthermore, Kinship Navigators are:

- The first line of customer-service for kinship families enter the child welfare system. They can assist and address the needs of kinship families in real-time.
- An important source of feedback, helping to identify how well programming, systems, policies and procedures are supporting a value for family.



**A Casework Framework for Kinship Care:** We believe that the relationship between the triad (child/youth, caregiver and birth family) and the front-line caseworker is a pivotal feature in distinguishing kinship care casework from that of traditional foster care. In particular, our value of family strategically shapes our family-agency interface.

A **value-for-family** better serves kinship care by facilitating a casework model that is triad-centric and links the family to natural or system supports and services. With intention, we invite the *entire kinship triad* to make the decisions that are best for them. Our model recognizes three central points of departure from traditional foster care:

1. The **cultural significance of the family** is more influential to casework than the traditional competency-based approach in traditional foster care.
2. The **individual cultural strengths of the family** guide practice, as opposed to the standardized service delivery of traditional foster care which typically operates from a deficit and prescriptive mindset.
3. The **innate strengths of families** drive casework as opposed to using the risk appraisal assessments of traditional foster care models which operate from a pathological framework where it is assumed that something is wrong with the family.

## Casework Practices:

Our models of casework maintain a strengths-driven, family-centric, outcomes-based practice of kinship care service delivery through three central practices.

- **We create** a casework mindset where family is valued.
- **We engage** families in a culturally responsive manner, meaning that the family's unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured so that the family feels empowered when working both within and outside of the child welfare system.
- **We measure** our family engagement through data-informed introspection that allows the entire case management team to maintain a deliberate agility and responsiveness to the triad.

## Operationalizing the Framework

Our **value-of-family** is operationalized in casework through the facilitation of conversations and activities that allow the family's voice to be heard and directly impact all decision-making. Our central casework models are:

- A phased strategy of casework called **Point of Contact (POC)** to identify the touch points needed to establish the services and engagements that will be of most value to the family. POC is a full service model of case management. The model takes the family on a personal journey of empowerment to ensure safety for the child, maintain their well-being and plan for permanency, all the while ensuring the placement meets the requirements of the respective federal, state and local oversight authorities.
- **Kinship Emergency Response (KER)** is our modified POC model for those seeking assistance to stabilize the placement and license a family, but then transfer the case to another service provider for on-going case management. Our KER model addresses emergency situations so that Kinship Caregivers can bring their homes into compliance and safely provide for children. There is initial case management in order to address the immediate needs of the child/youth, caregivers and the kinship home.

*NOTE: Our case management models are designed so that we could work together with any government or community agency to implement and/or modify programs to meet specific needs.*

### What is the FACT - Families and Children Together - program?

Family reunification in child welfare refers to the process of children/youth in out-of-home care, returning to their home and reconnecting to their biological family. Our FACT program, was established to assist birthparents in attaining the goals needed to reunify with their children. It grew out of the doctoral work of founder, Dr. Sharon McDaniel in applied learning as she noticed that adoption was an option for many of the children coming into kinship care, but reunification with their birth parents was not. Her goal was to give children and youth a continuum of care that would lead them back to their homes.



**The road to reunification  
in kinship care!**

***Kinship Dynamics:** From the child's perspective, approval of the reunification effort from the kinship caregiver is often sought, as the child, especially in a kinship situation, has probably developed a greater attachment to their caregivers than in non-kinship cases. (See Fig. 1)*

### How is FACT distinguished from traditional foster care reunification?

Our foundational value-for-family is reflected in our FACT program. FACT stresses the rebuilding of the family structure as opposed to isolating reunification as a procedural process to return children home. This focus on a family-driven process is hallmarked by intentional triad participation - the child/youth, birthfamily and kinship caregiver. The values-based lens for family is more inclusive and better reduces the chance of re-entry into the system. Additionally, we see reunification as a continuum and thus consider pre- and post-reunification services essential for success.

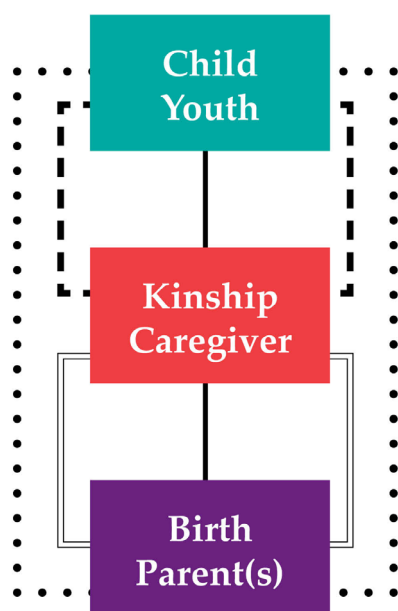


Figure 1: Dynamics of Relationships in Kinship Care Reunification

### What are the 3 pillars of the FACT strategy?

**One: Purposeful Triad Connection** - We intentionally provide the triad with the proper tools, skills, therapy, and other services on a continual basis, in order to successfully achieve reunification. The involvement of the kinship caregiver in the process is important, as they can be influential in easing the transition for the child and assisting the biological parents in rebuilding the family structure.

**Two: Engagement** - Family meetings bring in family and extended family in a safe environment to talk about providing a safe and nurturing place for children. Families are empowered to share their exit planning, visitation, and, finally, reunification. This process is critical to understanding the end-goal of having the children returned home and have every stakeholder moving in the same direction.

**Three: Integrated Service Delivery** - FACT staff work in collaboration with both the kinship caseworker as well as the caseworker representing the County/Public agency to provide short-term, intensive services to birthparents and their children. Importantly, the triad is seen as part of the integrated service not separate from it.



## What is the Kinship Care Strengths Assessment - Professional Version?

The goal of The Kinship Care Strengths Assessment - Professional Version (KSA-PV) is for a jurisdiction or private provider agency to acquire a better understanding of the trends and drivers that are impacting their current kinship care programming and/or the development of future kinship-related programming.

These trends and drivers are uncovered by a systematic exploration of the jurisdiction or private provider agency's internal and external environments. This systematic exploration is accomplished through an environmental scan that is guided by a rubric. (See Figure 1)

Following the environmental scan there is a subsequent interpretation of the trends and drivers discovered in the internal and external environments. The entire process lays the foundation for a high quality, strategic approach to kinship care practices and programming.

## KINSHIP CARE Strengths Assessment



*The practice of kinship care must be a continuous learning experience. As such, it can be assessed, evaluated and monitored for success.*

## What is an environmental scan for kinship care?

An environmental scan is similar to a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Rather than being conducted internally for self-examination, our team works with your staff in identifying areas of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat, as they relate to kinship care.

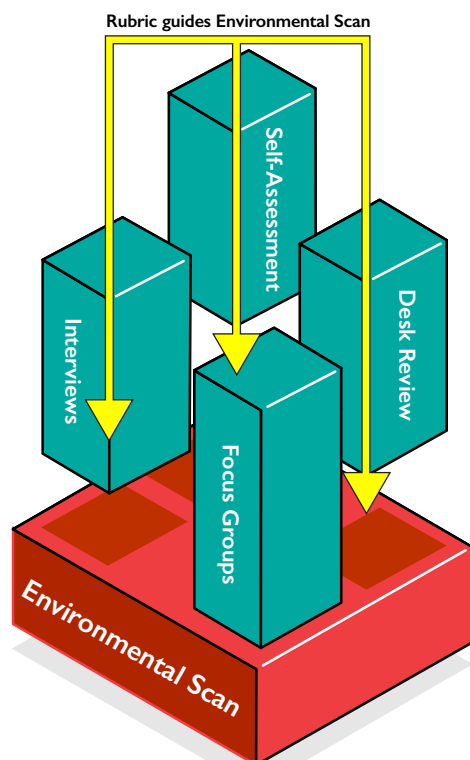


Figure 1: Diagram of KSA-PV process

Our environmental scan is a collaborative process where we value your input and respect your culture. The process is interactive and seeks to collect data and qualitative information that represents various perspectives on kinship care. Methods used include: interviews, focus groups, a desk-review and self-assessment.

## What is the Kinship Care Readiness Rubric?

Our kinship care readiness rubric is a measurement tool that articulates expectations that are reflective of best practices in kinship care. The best practices are categorized so that they construct criteria that can be used to express levels of competency and quality in kinship care. The rubric examines macro-criteria such as family value but utilizes a micro-lens to assess criteria such as licensing and permanency.

Although the rubric is an evaluative device, it is also designed to promote thinking and learning. It is a two-way, strengths-based tool that communicates expectations, provides feedback and identifies levels of capability and capacity.

The kinship care readiness rubric is not a checklist or a rating scale. The rubric has two important characteristics; criteria and descriptors of performance levels. A checklist or rating scale typically lacks any descriptions of performance quality.



Training, Consultation and Resource Materials  
for Servicing Kinship Caregivers

## What is SARKS™?

**SARKS™** (Standards for Assessing and Recognizing Kinship Strengths) is a comprehensive kinship foster care curriculum directed towards training and licensing kinship caregivers. It was developed by **A Second Chance, Inc.** - the only agency in the country that exclusively delivers services to the entire kinship triad (child, caregiver, and birth parents).

## How is SARKS™ distinguished from other kinship care curriculum?

**SARKS™** is not an adaptation or supplement to traditional foster parent trainings. It is the response to the need for a specialized kinship care curriculum that does not rely on the axioms of traditional foster care for its philosophy and relevancy. The curriculum is founded on academic research and data relevant

to kinship care. The uniqueness of the curriculum, however, lies in the practical experience that A Second Chance, Inc. has gathered over 22 years while working along side of kinship caregivers, caseworkers, and trainers.

## Is the SARKS™ curriculum adaptable to any state?

**SARKS™** is compatible with the requirements of other states and highly adaptable to any region or jurisdiction in the nation. It is fully compliant with federal requirements under Title IV-E regulations.

## Curriculum Themes:

- Strengths and Benefits of the Kinship Care Practice
- Roles & Commitments of Kinship Care Families
- The Impact of Loss, Grief, & Trauma on Children & Families
- Stages of Child/Adolescent Development
- Understanding the Child Welfare System

## Skill-Building:

- Developing Positive Coping Skills
- Empathizing with Children's Feelings
- Managing Challenging Behaviors
- Advocating for Children
- Obtaining Resources
- Permanency Planning
- Supporting Transition

## Scope and Sequence:

Session 1: Orientation: Building the Foundation  
& Strengthening Relationships

Session 2: Roles & Self-Care

Session 3: Loss, Grief & Trauma in the Kinship Care Family

Session 4: Trauma & Attachment: Infants & Toddlers

Session 5: Trauma & Attachment: Middle Childhood;  
the School Age Child

Session 6: Trauma & Attachment: Adolescents  
and Young Adults

Session 7: Managing Feelings & Behaviors

Session 8: Permanency in Kinship Care

Session 9: Special Needs & Advocacy



*Every child touched by A Second Chance, Inc. has a right to be safe and must thrive.*

Dr. Sharon L. McDaniel, MPA, Ed.D.  
Founder, President and CEO

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