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A SECOND CHANCE INC.



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**News, Networking & Information for
Kinship Care Professionals & Advocates**



Public-Private Partnerships: At Work for Kinship Families

Coming together around a cause and to accomplish what neither side can do alone, is what most public-private partnerships do, no matter the sector. In child welfare, that cause is children and families.

These public-private partnerships enable providers to meet child and family needs. Strength in numbers? In a way, yes. When it comes to kinship families, partners working together have a greater capacity to

provide a comprehensive and flexible mix of services that can be tailored to fit their strengths and meet their needs.

There are no one-size-fits-all partnerships. And they all aren't unwieldy and complex contracts between government and businesses. Today, innovation is a driver in ensuring that children who require out-of-home care can remain connected to family in a safe environment, and where they can thrive. A recent public-private, child welfare partnership in Los Angeles County, for example, banded together 13 local foundations to help improve the well-being of vulnerable children. And to solidify this collaboration, the county launched the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships, a first-of-its-kind office squarely focused on child welfare.

Through public-private partnerships in child welfare, we increase the breadth and depth of service through capacity building, expended services and increased accessibility of resources for children and their families. These successful partnerships, however, consider the roles each plays, their shared vision and avenues to work through potential obstacles that can convolute, instead of streamline services for kinship families.

In this Q&A interview, we asked Philadelphia's **Vanessa Garrett Harley, Esq.** and **David Fair** about public-private partnerships and kinship care:

Q: When you consider public-private partnerships in child welfare, why are they an essential relationship in the practice of kinship care? What does success look like?

Vanessa Garrett Harley, Esq. is Philadelphia's Deputy Managing Director for Criminal Justice and Public Safety. She previously served as Chair of the Social Services Law Group in the Philadelphia Law Department. Garrett Harley also previously served as Commissioner of the Department of Human Services in Philadelphia.



Garrett Harley: When done correctly, public-private partnerships can work extremely well to benefit children and families. The government is the partner that has the legal authority and enforcement power; and therefore, an obligation to children and families that a private agency does not have. At the same time, in many instances, a private agency has the ability to get things done on behalf of children and families at a much quicker pace than a governmental partner. Also, private agencies that serve particular neighborhoods or communities are familiar with the people who live there and the needs of the community, as well as available resources in the community. As a result they are able to link the kinship family to necessary resources that are more easily accessible. For an example, one of the benefits of having a Community Umbrella Agency (CUA) office located in the neighborhood that they serve is that by having a presence, families can develop relationships and see them as a trusted resource.

In addition, CUA's and private providers like A Second Chance, often have social workers and others on staff who build meaningful and trusting relationships with families that they are servicing. In turn, often families are more comfortable asking the private provider for the services and resources that they need than they would be in asking the public governmental agency. Families are often intimidated by public agencies because they fear government involvement and ultimately are afraid that any interaction with the

government can lead to their children being taken away.

Kinship care placements are often the result of an emergency situation and are usually unexpected and thrust upon relatives and kin. Private agencies are equipped to assist children and kin with some immediate needs. Relationships, that private agencies like A Second Chance, develop with kin families are integral in helping the families to navigate the challenges that come with taking on the role of kinship caregiver and ensuring that they are successful. Private agencies are essential in supporting kin families with meeting certain state regulations and licensing standards needed to ensure the safety of the child in their home. For most families, this is a heavy lift and the assistance provided by the private agency is welcome.

The other huge benefit of public-private partnerships in kinship care is in regards to visitation. While the public agency obtains the legal authority for visitation for the child and the birth parents to take place, the private provider is often in a better position to facilitate an opportunity for the child to have increased visits with the birth parents and thereby enhancing the relationship between the child and their birth parents.

Public-private partnership can blend well and do work to ensure that a child is safe and secure and can be placed with kin whenever possible, thus lessening the amount of trauma that child experiences when they cannot remain with their birth parents.

David Fair is Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Turning Points for Children in Philadelphia. Among other positions, he previously served as Deputy Commissioner for Community-Based Prevention Services and as a Senior Vice President at United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania.



Fair: In Philadelphia, where I work, there has been an enormous increase in the reliance on relatives to take care of children involved in the foster care system. For the first time recently, it was announced that over half of children in foster care in Philadelphia were in “kinship” homes, which have been shown to result in better outcomes for children in care than those placed in “stranger” foster care.

This has happened because after years of resistance to kinship foster care, a new and visionary leadership in our Department of Human Services has recognized that keeping children who have been subjected to abuse and neglect close to their families and close to their schools and social networks (except when that is not safe for the children) means that children are healthier, less traumatized, and have shorter lengths of stay in placement. For years, public policy and inertia discouraged kinship foster care in Philadelphia, and this was to the detriment of the missions of both government and community agencies to preserve families and assure that the safety, health and well-being of the children in our care.

The shift to greater reliance on kinship care in Philadelphia and the strong collaborations between private sector agencies and public agencies has also resulted in fewer placement disruptions and higher rates of permanency. Why are public-private partnerships in

the practice of kinship care essential? The answer is simple: it's the only way it works. And as a society, we owe it to our children and families to make the system work for them.

News & Information You Can Use:

U.S.: ["Who Cares: A National Count of Foster Homes and Families"](#)

Fostering Media Connections released [the results](#) of their investigation into America's capacity to house the children taken into foster care, data they said the federal government does not track very well. During that investigation, the media outlet also "put numbers to a steady, long-running outrage" over the treatment of kinship caregivers. According to the report, federal data shows that in 23 states, more than half of these families receive no assistance from the foster care system. If it weren't kinship caregivers, the report concluded, "the whole system would be in utter crisis."

KENTUCKY: [Kentucky has highest rate in nation of children in care of relatives, says new Census Bureau data](#)

In 2016-2018, nine percent of Kentucky children were being raised by a relative, which is more than double the national rate of four percent.

U.S. [Reps. Bass, Marino Introduce Legislation to Develop and Enhance Kinship Navigator Programs](#)

Kinship Navigator programs support family caregivers through complex legal and administrative systems, help avert crises, prevent multiple child placements, and avoid the need for more costly services.

NORTH DAKOTA: [North Dakota Wants to Curb Foster Care Use, Emphasize Kinship Care](#)

With about 1,600 children in foster care, North Dakota is launching a new initiative to encourage earlier engagement with families of children who enter the system.

PENNSYLVANIA: [Grandparents-raising-grandchildren legislation signed into law](#)

Legislation signed late this month by Gov. Tom Wolf is being signaled as a major victory for grandparents raising grandchildren across Pennsylvania.

U.S: [NIJC Joins with National Coalition to Launch New Comment Tool to Stop Child and Family Detention](#)

As the U.S. government continues to accept comments on proposed regulations which would allow the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to jail children and families indefinitely and roll back basic requirements for how they are treated in custody, the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) has joined FWD.us and the Families Belong Together campaign to launch a new online tool to allow Americans to speak out to defend children and families.

U.S: [Battle Over TANF Family Cap Intensifies](#)

States were given the option to adopt this rule with 1996's welfare reform, which drastically changed the benefits program to focus on, in the words of lawmakers, "personal responsibility." As such, 22 states implemented the family cap policy, with the reasoning that it would disincentivize poor women from having more children to receive extra TANF money. The policy has sparked considerable debate ever since, not only about the ultimate consequences of capping benefits but also about the thinking that inspired it, which many advocates say is based on stereotypes of women in poverty, especially women of color.

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA: [Why children in institutional care may be worse off now than they were in the 19th century](#)

The prime minister issues an apology to the victims of child sexual abuse, "an admission of the country's failures to protect children from abuse in institutions ranging from churches and schools to orphanages and foster homes."

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