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 A SECOND CHANCE^{INC.}



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News, Networking & Information for
Kinship Care Professionals & Advocates

National Child Abuse Prevention Month Protecting our Children, Strengthening Families

All children deserve to grow up in a safe, stable, caring and nurturing environment, but across the U.S. hundreds of thousands are neglected or abused each year, often suffering lasting consequences. For a growing number of children, the responsibility for raising them is increasingly falling to grandparents and other relatives when their parents can no longer care for them.

Family First: To Offer Millions Prevention and Early Intervention

For kinship caregivers who take on the responsibility of caring for children and youth, their new role often comes at a moment's notice, and during a crisis. The new challenges they face can be even more jolting when the children in their lives have been abused, neglected, abandoned, or have experienced other forms of trauma. But the research shows that placement with relatives and kin is restorative—and works.

While kinship caregivers prove that they can ensure that children are kept safe and healthy and are able to thrive, ensuring the safety of all children must be a national priority. With early intervention, says Dr. William C. Bell, president and CEO of Casey Family Programs, keeping children safe and nurtured is possible, but it also requires “addressing the well-being of their families and their communities.” That is

what The Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) will do for more than 2.5 million children and their caregivers.

Family First, the landmark child welfare law passed in early February as a part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, aligns with the principle that children do best in families. The long-awaited law offers prevention and early intervention services that will keep children safe, strengthen families and reduce the need for foster care whenever it is safe to do so. Among its provisions, there will be federal provisions to support up to 12 months of services to children, birth parents and caregivers of children who are at risk of entering the foster care system. Services will include mental health, substance use treatment and prevention services, and in-home skill-based services.

Delivering Trauma-informed Education for Families, Second Acts

As we observe National Child Abuse Prevention Month, April is a time to celebrate the important role that families, communities, child welfare advocates, and child welfare systems can play in protecting our children. We have the power to stop child abuse and protect children, and must have the will. Understanding the issue is the first step. At A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI), prevention begins by educating our families.

For many new kinship caregivers, raising children is a second act and playing multiple roles a juggling act. But whether these caring adults are parenting again or for the first time, ASCI ushers them in with specialized education and preventative training that includes handling difficult child behaviors and understanding the distinction between discipline and punishment.

Standards for Assessing and Recognizing Kinship Strengths or SARKS, “our process and procedure for how we orient our kinship caregivers, is very trauma-informed” says Tara Skibieli, senior vice president of Child and Family Services. SARKS training, together with the many supportive group services the agency offers for the kinship triad, provides forums to talk and process concerns and emotions before they fester and escalate into some form of abuse. “We create safe spaces where everyone’s voice can be heard and opportunities for our families to learn effective techniques to parent and deal with stress.

ASCI families also know that if a caregiver-child crisis erupts, they have a lifeline. Even after hours, families can speak to a live, on-call supervisor; have a caseworker who will be dispatched to help diffuse tough situations or provide respite; and have access to a trained clinical team.

National and International News Roundup:

PENNSYLVANIA: [Opioid crisis creating 'grandfamilies,' a need for more resources](#)

"We need a one-stop-shopping resource" of federal resources for grandparents, is what U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) told several dozen attendees at a round table held at the Pittsburgh headquarters of A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) earlier this month. Joined by grandfamilies, Sen. Casey discussed his new bipartisan legislation, the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act (S.1091). Marc Cherna, director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, U.S. Rep.-elect Conor Lamb, D-18, Mount Lebanon, and Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald also spoke at the event.

U.S.: [Casey Expands on His Law to Protect Opioid Dependent Infants, Introduces New Bill to Ensure Plans of Safe Care for All Affected Infants](#)

To further support the growing number of children born with neonatal abstinence syndrome, or are otherwise affected by substance abuse, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) also introduced the Supporting Infant Plans of Safe Care Implementation Act of 2018.

PENNSYLVANIA: [Wolf backs measures to help 'grandfamilies'](#)

The House Children and Youth Committee approved a bill Tuesday that would create a navigator program to help grandparents find all the help available to them. The committee also approved a measure that would grant short-custody to grandparents who are trying to help care for grandchildren while one of their grandchildren's parents is in drug rehab.

KENTUCKY: [Kentucky Senate's budget proposal sets aside millions for child welfare and social workers](#)

Abused and neglected children and the state social workers who try to help them all fared well under the Senate budget proposal outlined by a legislative

conference committee earlier this month.

KENTUCKY: [Kentucky owes this grandmother thousands in Kinship Care payments it cut off, court says](#)

A court restores thousands of dollars in “Kinship Care” payments owed to a Western Kentucky grandmother who is caring for her three grandchildren. Her payments were cut off in 2014 because she missed an application deadline.

OHIO: [Grandparents get help in parenting their grandchildren](#)

For the growing number of grandparents in Bowling Green who are raising their grandchildren; there is a new support system and group made up of organizations from the Girl Scouts to Job and Family Service.

TEXAS: [Nurturing foster children through ‘normalcy’](#) Placing children in kinship care — custody of relatives such as grandmothers, aunts and uncles — as opposed to traditional foster homes is one of the best ways to nurture foster children and produce well-rounded adults, according to a first-of-its-kind study released by the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing at the University of Texas at Austin.

AUSTRALIA: [Cost of keeping a child in residential care hits \\$670k a year](#) The annual cost per child for state-funded residential care in South Australia is climbing as the country struggles with a critical shortage of caregivers.

UNITED KINGDOM: [Kinship carers 'left poor and homeless by welfare changes'](#) Caregivers who agree to give up their jobs outside the home to raise relative children, are struggling financially and some are becoming homeless as a result of welfare rules.

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