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 **A SECOND CHANCE**
INC.



National Kinship Review

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



Mental Health Care: Strengthening Children and Families for the Journey

Every day, a lean team of highly trained mental health care providers works to meet the needs of those we serve at A Second Chance, Inc.—children who cannot remain with their parents, the caring relatives and close family friends who step up to raise them, and birth parents. They are known as the “kinship care triad.” For them, mental health clinicians work alongside the agency’s caseworkers,

providing direct services like in-home crisis intervention and short-term treatment when needed.

Kinship care, along with these kinds of supports, helps to keep our families well and our children strong and resilient. Living with relatives, not strangers in foster care, and being able to call a familiar place home, can provide the stability that children and families need in mental health situations. The agency's mental health care providers are not only credentialed and highly trained; they understand kinship care, something that many in the mental health community lack. Each spring, during National Mental Health Awareness Month, our clinical team reminds us of the role that mental health plays in the lives of these children and families. The recent and high profile suicide deaths this month of fashion designer Kate Spade, who built a billion-dollar brand of luxury handbags and accessories, and Anthony Bourdain, celebrity chef, storyteller and global trekker, hit all of us. They offer another reminder of the importance of mental health care and treatment to our lives—no matter who we are.

A Village Model of Care

For our adolescents and teens growing up in kinship foster care, the already turbulent process of coming of age is compounded. Many grapple with feelings of abandonment and loss, and for them, life can be a struggle. We don't ever want our children and youth to feel that suicide, a long-term solution, is the only recourse they have for coping with the temporary problems and challenges they face. Tapping into a village model of mental health care has been our approach. It brings together all the players to the table who can help support and strengthen a young person for their journey—kinship caregivers, birth parents, teachers, mentors, coaches and other caring adults in their lives.

The week that Spade and Bourdain took their lives we learned from

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that suicide rates in the nation increased in nearly every state from 1999 through 2016. And while we often see mental health conditions as the only cause of suicide, it's not. More than half (54 percent) of people who died by suicide did not have a known mental health condition at the time of death. Then why do people kill themselves? Researchers who study the issue say that while there are different contributing factors in each case, excessive stress, often associated with such things as relationships, housing, substance use, physical health, a job, and money, is a known risk factor for suicide overall.

While the names of children and youth who commit suicide may never land in the headlines, there is a troubling trend among some groups. African-American children are taking their lives at roughly twice the rate of their White counterparts, according to a new study that shows a widening gap between the two groups. The 2001-2015 data, published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics* in May 2018, confirm a pattern first identified several years ago when researchers at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Ohio found that the rate of suicides for African-American children ages 5 to 12 exceeded that of young White children. The results were seen in both boys and girls. Some researchers have concluded that part of this rise is because Black children are "likely to be exposed to violence and traumatic stress, and they are more likely to experience an early onset of puberty, which can increase the risk of depression and impulsive aggression."

Don't Suffer in Silence

To help prevent suicide, adults and children need better access to mental health care, says Jill Harkavy-Friedman, the vice president of research at the American Foundation For Suicide Prevention. But what can we do today? It may sound simple, but helping those who are suffering know they are not alone is one step toward suicide prevention, say researchers. Be concerned about the friends, family, neighbors and even strangers around us who "suffer in silence"

because of the unfortunate and unreasonable stigma attached to mental health care and mental illness. Each of us has had a low day that we've shrugged off as nothing but "the blues." But be mindful. The clinical term for the "blues" is called "depression," a mental condition that can range in severity from mild to severe.

Our mental health and overall health are closely linked with multiple quality of life issues. Having access to medical and mental health care is critical to keeping people and communities healthy. The research shows that if you're poor and don't have access to health care, you get sick more often. In turn, the impact is wide. When people are sick and poor, so are their communities; and when communities are sick and poor, so are the people who live there—families falter and children don't thrive. That's why at A Second Chance, Inc. we ensure that children, families and communities are stronger together. We offer a continuum of care that includes urgent and in-home clinical care, aftercare, and mental health services that don't end when a child's case is closed and they find a permanent home. We want our children to make a smooth transition. And we need our families to be well.

What We're Reading: News Roundup:

U.S.: [Giving Group Homes a 21st Century Makeover](#)

Recognizing that children fare best when they're living at home with a family, child welfare officials have pushed to minimize the use of group homes. And a new federal law — the biggest reboot of the foster care system in nearly 40 years — will place even greater restrictions on their use.

OHIO: [LGBTQ Youth are at Increased Risk of Negative Outcomes in the Foster Care System](#)

Three to five percent of all youth identify as LGBTQ, according to estimates.

That number is far higher – 19 percent –for youth in child welfare.

LGBTQ youth are at a greater risk for physical and emotional abuse. These problems are accentuated for kids in the foster care system, who also face a wide range of additional negative outcomes. Cuyahoga County is on the front lines of finding a solution.

U.S.: [HRC Foundation Announces Groundbreaking LGBTQ-Inclusive Resources for Child Welfare Agencies](#)

The new All Children – All Families project promotes LGBTQ inclusive policies and affirming practices among child welfare agencies and formally recognizes those agencies that are leading the field with innovative approaches to inclusion.

PA: [Pennsylvania lags in developing a plan of protection for infants affected by drugs](#)

While it remains worthy work at any time, the federal legislation requiring states to develop these 'plans of safe care' was passed 15 years ago. The effort is only recently picking up steam as the state, and the nation, find themselves in crisis mode over the opioid epidemic.

U.S.: [Immigration Officials Can Now Deport Hosts of Migrant Children](#)

A new federal policy will allow federal agents to investigate, and possibly arrest and deport, families who step up to host children found at the border. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will now screen families seeking to host children, including others living in the home, checking their immigration status "to identify and arrest those who may be subject to removal" - meaning deportation - the new policy states.

OK: [State Turns to Urgent Placement of Foster Kids with Relatives, Friends](#)

Keli and John Tointigh only saw their oldest foster child twice before the Department of Human Services arrived with him and his sister.

International

UK: [Children's services 'overwhelmed' and permeated by 'blame, shame and fear', major review finds](#)

Record numbers of children are entering a child welfare system that is “overstretched and overwhelmed,” said more than 2,000 participants surveyed across England and Wales, including frontline workers, senior sector figures, children and families involved with social services and academics.

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