## Chapter 1 : Introduction

# Background

Kinship and adoptive families face unique challenges that have been neglected in the traditional service systems designed to support foster families. Kinship navigation programs and post-adoption programs have attempted to meet the gaps but have done so with mixed success. Moreover, due to low rigor in the research design of evaluations of kinship navigation programs, the field lacks robust evidence about these programs' effectiveness. The demand for evidence-based programs to support kinship families has been exacerbated by rising kinship placements as a result of the U.S. opioid epidemic [1] . In the state of Ohio, nearly 9% of all children are being raised by kinship caregivers [2] .

Federal directives that impact funding have opened new opportunities for the development and evaluation of kinship navigation programs. In February of 2018, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was enacted, allowing states to receive federal matching funds for the provision of prevention services implemented by a federally approved kinship navigator program. To qualify for approval, these programs must be evaluated according to rigorous criteria established by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and demonstrate positive outcomes in specified domains [3] . As of March 2022, three kinship navigator programs have been rated by the Clearinghouse, including Ohio's Kinship Supports Intervention/ProtectOHIO which has been rated as "promising," and therefore is eligible for federal Title IV-E funding. In addition, the Clearinghouse rated both the Children's Home Society of New Jersey Kinship Navigator Model and the Kinship Interdisciplinary Navigation Technology-Advanced Model (KIN-Tech) as "does not currently meet criteria" [4] .

In response to the increased demand for kinship and post-adoption services and to the new legislation, the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) set out to develop a statewide kinship and adoption navigation program that would be well-positioned for a rigorous outcome evaluation according to FFPSA standards. Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator (OhioKAN) is the result of this initiative, which was established in partnership with over 90 stakeholders. These stakeholders collaborated extensively to identify gaps in kinship and adoptive families' access to support and services in the state of Ohio and to generate strategies to address these gaps.

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1    Waite, D., Greiner, M. V., & Laris, Z. (2018). Putting Families First: How the Opioid Epidemic Is Affecting Children and Families, and the Children Services Policy Options to Address It. Journal of Applied Research on Children, 9(1), 4.

2    Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). (2019, March). Fact Sheet: Kinship Care. Retrieved from https://jfs.ohio.gov/factsheets/KinshipCare.pdf

3    Wilson, S. J., Price, C. S., Kerns, S.E., Dastrup, S. R., &. Brown, S. R. (2019). Title IV-E Prevention

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4    Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. Retrieved from

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