

Chapter 5 : OhioKAN Service Delivery

Completing the Initial Support Plan

A written procedure guides the completion of the OhioKAN Support Plan which is co-created with families who are asking for additional support in addition to referrals, also called the Collaborate Service Level. The goal of the Support Plan is to engage OhioKAN Families in planning and making decisions about the support they receive from OhioKAN, it also serves as a mechanism to communicate the planned activities and track progress towards goals. The initial version of the Support Plan should be co-created with families and then updated regularly at scheduled meetings.

Time for Support Plan Completion

Navigators should schedule 45-60 minutes to create a Support Plan. Depending on the number and type of needs, the actual conversation with the family takes 15-30 minutes and can be done over the phone, via virtual meeting, or in-person. The remaining time is used to prepare before the meeting, finalize the Support Plan, send follow up communication to the family, and complete documentation or other action items. The Support Plan is co-developed with the caregiver or parent and may require providing additional referrals.

Child Participation

This process may also involve the child(ren) if it is appropriate to the age of the child, the needs of the family, and relational dynamics of the situation. Before beginning the Support Plan conversation, Navigators discuss with the parent or caregiver whether the child should be involved in the planning conversation. If the parent or caregiver and the Navigator determine it is appropriate to involve the child, the Navigator describes the Support Planning process. The caregiver and Navigator decide together how best to engage the child and which part(s) of the process the child will be involved in. Some families will have multiple service episodes. The Navigator should not take child participation in a prior service episode to mean that child participation is always appropriate for the family. Instead, the Navigator should check with the parent or caregiver to determine how that child should be involved at the start of each new service episode and revisit the conversation as needed throughout the advocacy relationship. There are no circumstances where it is appropriate to involve the child in OhioKAN conversations or Support Planning without the parent or caregiver's consent. See the *Discussion Guides For Co-Developing the Kinship and Adoptive Family Collaborative Support Plan with the Family* in the Appendix for further practice guidance on engaging children in the Support Plan.

Developing the Support Plan

The Navigator builds rapport and trust with the parent or caregiver, asks follow-up questions based on what was shared in the BASICS, and learns more about the family's circumstances to co-develop a tailored Support Plan. The Navigator's role in co-developing the Support Plan with the caregiver or parent is to facilitate their exploration of ways to address their identified needs, recognize their strengths and abilities, and identify what family and community supports they already have. The primary skills used may include appreciative inquiry and motivational interviewing. Navigators engage with families with a warm empathetic tone and the practices established in the OhioKAN Navigator Practice Profile. The *Discussion Guides For Co-Developing the Kinship and Adoptive Family Collaborative Support Plan with the Family* in the Appendix offers practical guidance and suggested questions.

The Support Plan is organized into five sections and is intentionally organized so that the family's strengths and key relationships are discussed first to inform the development of the Support Plan. While co-creating the Support Plan with the family the Navigator works with the family to specify which additional supports the family needs in addition to service referrals.

Image



Figure 5. A brief overview of each of the sections of the support plan completed with families.

Additional Support Options to Include in the Support Plan

While developing the Support Plan with the family, discuss the range of options available for additional support. Considerations in selecting the type of additional support include the unique needs and goals of the family. Navigators may offer any of the following additional support to families:

- **Warm hand-off referrals**
 - You can offer to call an agency with a family on the phone, or call an agency on a family's behalf to make the initial introduction.
- **Assistance with an application**
 - You can offer to assist a family with an application for a social service benefit (SNAP, childcare, SSI, etc.) virtually or in person if there are barriers to completing the application virtually.
- **Flexible Funds and Hard Goods**
 - If a family needs hard goods like clothing, beds, car seats, etc., for their kinship or adoptive children, you can offer to directly link families to organizations and agencies for short-term assistance in obtaining these items, and follow up support.
 - If you have exhausted all community-based options for a family to meet a need for funds or hard goods, you can apply for flexible funds and hard goods through OhioKAN.
- **Benefits coordination**
 - If the family has questions about eligibility, a benefits appeal process, or would like support with an application, or other benefits challenges that require more specialized expertise, you can offer to connect them with the OhioKAN Benefits Coordinator.
- **In-person services**
 - In select situations, you can offer to join a family in a meeting with the child's school, social worker, etc. in the community to provide extra advocacy for the family.
 - If there are barriers to providing virtual support, you may also offer to visit the family in their home to assist with applications, etc.
- **Collaboration with caseworker, state, or local agencies**
 - You can offer to coordinate with the family's case worker, if they have one, or reach out to local/state agency contacts to advocate alongside them.

Some of these supports are further described below with additional information, context and eligibility.

Flexible Funds and Hard Goods

Flexible Funds provide one-time and/or short-term financial assistance to families with needs that the community cannot immediately address and meet. This assistance can be delivered in the form of payments to third parties on behalf of families, gift cards, and access to available hard good inventory. Flexible Funds are another tool in OhioKAN's suite of navigation services to better partner with families and respond to their immediate needs. Navigators, through their engagement with families and community providers, have a first-hand view of the community's available and accessible service array. Flexible Funds provide an opportunity for OhioKAN to help bridge the gap within communities where capacity to serve kinship and adoptive families is still growing.

A written procedure guides decision-making for Flexible Funds and includes an approval process to ensure appropriate use, specific exclusions (e.g., legal fees, ongoing childcare expense, etc.), and defined funding thresholds that require additional review and approval by regional directors or program leadership.

Using Flexible Funds in Practice

Navigators initially assess for appropriateness of Flexible Fund assistance during the BASICS assessment as they learn about the family's strengths and needs. Flexible Funds are only provided as part of the Collaborate-level of service when families develop a Support Plan with navigators. Through their conversations with families, navigators consider the following with regards to the appropriateness of Flexible Funds to meet the family's needs:

1. Are there available community resources that could provide services or resources for the identified need(s)?
2. If yes, have the available community resources been exhausted and no other community supports exist to support the need(s)?

Once approved, Flexible Funds are documented in the Support Plan, and the navigator and family co-develop goals and action steps to further build the family's confidence to access services and resources they need and their connections within the community for continuous support.

Benefits Coordination

Many kinship and adoptive families who engage in Collaborate Service Level qualify for local, state, or federal benefits programs, but are unaware of the programs or need support navigating the eligibility, application, and/or appeal process. The OhioKAN Benefits Coordinator provides expert support to increase access to public benefits for kinship and adoptive families

The role of the Benefits Coordinator:

- Work directly with families to navigate benefit programs and appeals
- Train Navigation staff on the basics of federal, state, and local benefit programs that support kinship and adoptive families
- Integrate benefits work throughout the program

The Benefits Coordinator assists kinship and adoptive families in finding benefits for which they may be eligible and assisting the family by navigating the application, submission, and appeal processes. The Benefits Coordinator often joins Support Plan calls along with the Navigator to listen to families' needs and offer knowledge and support around benefit programs. The Navigators can also schedule a call between a family and the Benefits Coordinator to specifically talk about benefit programs that the family needs additional support navigating. The Benefits Coordinator uses their state-wide connections, knowledge of the legal aid system, and nuances of benefit program processes to support the family in resolving their questions and needs.

The Benefits Coordinator also works to train Navigators as they are the first response to families when they call the program. The benefits Coordinator facilitates Navigators' basic understanding of public benefit programs and thereby empowers Navigators to provide direct assistance to families with routine benefits matters. Specifically, the Benefits Coordinator trains and coaches Navigators so they can learn the language and basic details of the most common public benefits programs and help families access applications. Since there are some benefit programs with complex applications and various nuances at the county level, it is difficult for Navigators to become experts in all

the benefits that may support Families. When Navigators need additional support helping a Family with benefits, they can bring in the Benefits Coordinator to work directly with the Family for this process.

The Benefits Coordinator researches and tracks all the local, state, and federal benefit programs that support kinship and adoptive Families. They study programs that specifically target kinship and adoptive families, and those like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), etc., that may support these Families as well. They take time to schedule informational interviews and develop partnerships with legal aid organizations throughout the state that often support the appeals process, and benefit staff at state and county offices. The Benefits Coordinator creates overview documents of each benefit to support Navigator learning, and documents that can be sent to families as they work to apply and appeal programs.

In-Person Services

Navigators may offer in-person and in-home meetings to Families in the Collaborate Service Level to Families who face barriers in accessing resources and need support to connect and receive services from a community provider. The in-person meetings occur face-to-face in the community such as at a partner site, library, school, local community providers, restaurants, etc. The in-home meetings occur face-to-face in the Family's home. As with every aspect of the OhioKAN program, in-person and in-home meeting services are offered to Families in an equitable manner throughout the state.

Eligibility

All Families utilizing Collaborate Service Level are eligible to receive OhioKAN's services in-person and in-home, but a Navigator may only offer in-person or in-home meetings to Families who face significant barriers to accessing resources. When in-person and in-home meetings are scheduled, the Navigator consult with their Coach about preparation, details of the case, and plans to communicate before and after the meeting. Coaches consult with the Regional Director about each in-person and in-home meeting. Navigators have the discretion to offer in-person and in-home meetings based on the need of the Family, and the Navigator's availability to conduct these types of visits.

In-Person Meetings

An in-person meeting is offered to a kinship or adoptive caregiver who faces a barrier to accessing services or has a need that can only be addressed by meeting in-person in the community with a Navigator. In-person meetings take place at a partner site location, or another neutral community location (library, school, court, local county office, restaurant, or other convenient location for the family). A partner site location, if available and applicable to the need, is the preferred option. The Navigator can offer an in-person meeting without approval by a Coach. A Coach may be asked to join the Navigator during an in-home meeting for training and supportive purposes. If a caregiver visits a partner office site unscheduled and asks to meet in-person with a Navigator who is working in the office, the Navigator starts a service episode with that individual in-person. No additional criteria needed.

In-Home Meetings

During, or at any point after the Support Plan discussion, Navigators may offer in-home meetings to Families who indicate that it would be a significant barrier to accessing services if a Navigator could not meet in their home. In-home meetings are offered secondary to in-person community meetings and need approval by a Coach.

Providing the Support Plan to the Family and Completing Documentation

The Support Plan is completed and provided to the parent or caregiver within two business days of the contact where the Support Plan was developed. Any additional referrals or relevant documentation such as activity logs should be completed within the same timeframe. The Support Plan should be sent via the parent or caregiver's preferred method of communication (email, text, or mail) and Navigators are advised to include the date and time of the next scheduled contact in the body of the message so that the parent or caregiver can reference it quickly without having to open the file.

Frequency of Support Plan Revisions

The Support Plan is updated after each scheduled contact with the parent or caregiver and sent to them via their preferred contact method. The Support Plan is saved in a secure location as specified by the program.