Kinship Process Mapping

A Guide to Improving Practice in Kinship Care

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

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About this Guide

Many child welfare agencies are seeking effective strategies to identify and engage extended family networks to care for and protect children who cannot safely live with their parents. This guide provides a step-by-step method public child welfare agencies can use to identify barriers to placing children with kin and to develop recommendations for removing those barriers.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

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About this Guide

Kinship Process Mapping (KPM) is a form of analysis recently adapted from business to help child welfare agencies increase their efficiency and effectiveness in working with kinship families. Designed for use by child welfare directors and agency staff who oversee kinship care, this guide aims to help agencies align their kinship values and practices with national priorities to support kinship care. It can also help agency leaders more closely integrate the agency's work with kin — from the identification of relative caregivers through the provision of supports to help both youth and their parents reach their full potential — into the broader context of the agency's policies and practices.

> When used most effectively, KPM can help to pinpoint and eliminate barriers that impede work with kinship families. It also enables organizations to develop and formalize kinship care practices that promote and support child safety, permanence

For agencies that have made a decision to use KPM, this guide contains practical step-by-step instructions for documenting and assessing how you currently identify, approve and support kin families for children involved with the child welfare system. The guide also provides a clear process you can use to identify gaps and develop solutions that will position the agency to achieve better outcomes for children and youth.

The guide is divided into three sections, which correspond to the three phases of KPM:

- **Section I: Preparing for KPM sessions.** This section covers how to assemble a KPM team, which will have primary responsibility for preparing for and evaluating your KPM activities. It also covers how to determine goals and articulate assumptions about potential barriers that may impede your organization's efforts to work with kin families. Guidance on how to use the customizable KPM templates provides you with baseline steps for mapping your organization's kinship care processes. Your KPM team can tailor this information to fit your organization's policies and practices around kinship care. The KPM team will use these customized templates when facilitating KPM sessions, which will enable you to gather more detailed information about your processes.
- **Section II: Facilitating KPM sessions.** This section contains information about what occurs during the KPM sessions. The facilitator conducting the KPM sessions will work with you to clarify the details behind the high-level steps represented in the tailored KPM templates. They will document and label practices, and learn about the roles and responsibilities required to complete these areas of work. Through this process, the KPM team will learn about barriers to working with and supporting kin at all major points within your system or organization. They will also elicit ideas from professionals who work with kinship families about solutions for overcoming those barriers.

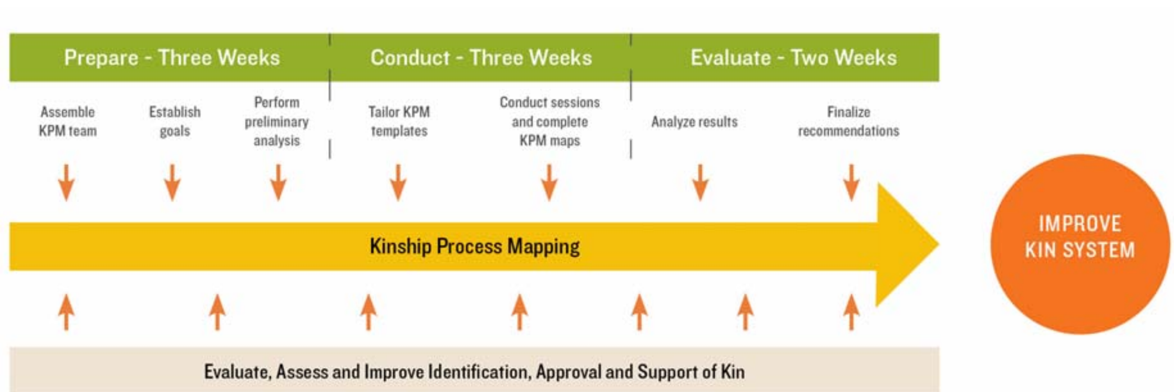
- **Section III: Analyzing results and developing solutions.** The third and final section of the guide covers how to use the information your team has collected. By this point, your KPM team will have created detailed documentation of your current kinship care practices, which will position you to proceed with improvements to your child welfare system.

All three phases of KPM take approximately *eight weeks*. This period includes the time required to prepare for and facilitate the KPM sessions, as well as the time required to complete the analysis and develop recommendations related to the KPM team's findings.

To support the KPM process, the guide also contains examples of templates designed to help you consider alternative ways for managing kinship care within your organization. These templates are available online, and can be downloaded and customized to your jurisdiction.

By closely following the KPM process outlined in this guide, you will develop a deeper understanding of your kinship care practices and increase the likelihood that the solutions you develop will lead to better outcomes for children and youth.

Figure 1: Estimated timeline for implementing KPM



**Timeframes may vary depending on the objectives of your KPM, number of KPM sessions conducted, etc.*

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING KPM

- **Leadership support and buy-in.** KPM requires diligence and support from leaders and staff at all levels to understand how kin caregivers are identified, approved and supported. Ensure that your leadership is committed to KPM before you begin the process, because sustained support from executive management is necessary to encourage the ongoing involvement of KPM participants.

Executive-level support typically begins with the initial decision to proceed with the sessions. While leaders are not expected to participate in KPM sessions, they play a vital role in the process, which includes the following:

- understanding the purpose of KPM;
- championing the value of KPM across the agency;
- communicating the relationship between KPM and other initiatives designed to improve outcomes for children and families;
- supporting the work of a kinship team assigned to prepare for, conduct and analyze the results of KPM;
- sharing the analysis and resulting decisions about policy and practice; and
- providing leadership and guidance on changes needed to improve kinship services.

- **An open environment for feedback.** Leaders play a fundamental role in creating an open environment for staff participating in KPM sessions. Managers, supervisors and frontline staff will need to hear that the organization's leaders encourage them to share their thoughts and opinions about barriers or improvements to kinship care practices without restrictions. Creating an open environment for feedback also requires skilled facilitation. Facilitators should assure KPM participants that their insights are valued, while also honoring their confidentiality and freedom of expression.
- **Commitment to using KPM results for policy and practice reform.** KPM sessions are part of an ongoing process to help child welfare organizations stay in step with leading practices, and a commitment to upholding recommendations is vital to achieving results. If you use KPM recommendations to improve kinship care practices, you will find it easier to engage staff in future improvement processes related to their everyday responsibilities.

Section I – Preparing for Kinship Process Mapping Sessions

The following activities will help your organization prepare for KPM sessions:

- Create a small KPM team to oversee the process.
- Define the problem(s) to be solved.
- Conduct preliminary analysis of your kinship care practices.
- Re-evaluate problems, articulate assumptions and confirm goals.
- Tailor the KPM templates.
- Develop an interview protocol.
- Finalize plans for KPM sessions.

STEP I: CREATE A KPM TEAM

To begin KPM, a senior program manager or director should convene a small KPM team to oversee its implementation from beginning to end. While that leader is not involved in day-to-day KPM implementation, he or she serves as an advisor and a champion to keep KPM participants engaged in the process. The leader also helps develop meaningful recommendations once findings are available

The leader should select a KPM coordinator to keep the team organized and to manage preparations for the KPM sessions. The coordinator reports regularly to the convener who authorized the team.

The KPM team will be responsible for the three phases of KPM, which include preparing for and conducting KPM sessions, analyzing results and developing recommendations based on the findings. There is no one formula for establishing team membership, but conveners should consider the following guidelines:

Sample KPM Team

- A KPM coordinator
- A facilitator
- Kinship care policy expert(s)
- CPS frontline staff
- Foster care support staff
- A public information officer or communications specialist

- **Identify kinship champions.** At this early stage, the KPM team should include individuals who are committed to developing a strong kinship care system and genuinely want to understand the barriers. While skeptics will need to be involved in KPM sessions, those individuals are not productive at this early stage.

- **Keep it small.** Six to seven key members who are willing to lay the groundwork should be sufficient for KPM preparation.
- **Understand the time commitment.** KPM team members will spend approximately 3-4 hours per week preparing for and evaluating findings after the KPM sessions. Team members' supervisors should be informed of the time commitment in advance, because team members will need to prioritize KPM preparation to prevent delays in completing the process.
- **Include data and policy experts.** The group should include an individual who knows how to find and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data and can access the full range of policies that govern your organization's kinship care practices.
- **Include a communications specialist or public information officer.** This person can help the team think about the best way to communicate the need for KPM and obtain buy-in from staff at all levels of the organization.
- **Choose your facilitators.** The team should include two staff or consultants to facilitate and document the KPM sessions.

Who facilitates KPM sessions?

You will need at least two facilitators: one to manage the conversation and another to document the discussion during the session. If possible, include a third person to take notes on a computer.

Select facilitator who can gain the trust of your staff to gather accurate information about your organization's processes and practices. Facilitator must be knowledgeable about child welfare and the process by which a child enters and exits the system. Facilitators must also be flexible and allow discussion outside of the established interview protocol if necessary.

If possible, consider contracting with independent facilitators who do not have supervisory authority over individuals who are interviewed and do not have a stake in the results. If you choose internal staff to facilitate KPM sessions, however, candidates should include individuals who work on special projects or who have the most responsibility for kinship care issues.

Facilitation Skills

- **Flexible and adaptive.** Able to modify their approach to accommodate the dynamics of the discussion and the participants involved.
- **Responsive.** Listens to participants and makes changes as needed to support productive discussions during the sessions.
- **Engaging and supportive.** Approaches participants in an upbeat, supportive manner and values participants equally. They are not afraid to use humor to break down barriers to get work done.
- **Respectful and inclusive**. Encourages full group participation and remains open to all perspectives while marginalizing monopoly of conversation.
- **Resilient.** Does not personalize differences; rather, views differing opinions and debate as a constructive means of getting to the heart of an issue.

STEP 2: DEFINE THE PROBLEM(S) TO BE SOLVED

Leaders within an organization use KPM to identify and resolve a problem or set of problems related to kinship care. Once a KPM team is formed, the leaders should take time to brainstorm issues they want to address through KPM, and also allow the team to identify the problem(s) they see within the system.

Common problems identified within kinship care are as follows:

- Few children are placed with kin in the initial stages of the placement process.
- Identified kin cannot be licensed because of criminal backgrounds, space issues, etc.
- A large percentage of children are living in unlicensed kinship care.
- Lengthy processes are required for kin to become licensed and receive benefits that are important to meet the needs of the child.
- Children placed with kin are diverted from custody, and their parents do not receive services required for reunification.
- Kin need greater support to assume responsibility for children involved in the child welfare system.
- Children living with kin are not reaching permanence within federally-mandated timeframes.

To the extent possible, the team should use data to inform its definition of the problem(s) and through all stages of KPM. Using data will increase the credibility of the team's findings and recommendations, as well as the staff time required to uncover the barriers to achieving safety and stability for children with extended family members.

If data are not available in these early stages of the process, communicate that the team will use KPM to test their assumptions about the problems they think are occurring. In the information-gathering stage, the team will begin to unearth quantifiable data to determine whether a problem exists or that the team's assumptions were wrong.

At the end of this step, the KPM team should have a clear statement about the problem or problems that they are trying to solve. The team should acknowledge that this statement is not the final word on the issues they want to address, but the beginning of a process to understand their kinship care practices. They must keep an open mind because new problems will be identified as the process unfolds.

STEP 3: CONDUCT PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF YOUR KINSHIP CARE PRACTICES

Once the KPM team has developed a clear statement of the problems they seek to resolve, they can gather and analyze additional information about kinship policies, programs and data. While a KPM session will test assumptions based on the direct experience and insights of staff responsible for day-to-day work, other sources of information can help the KPM team and facilitators gain a more in-depth understanding of kinship care, the range of factors guiding staff decisions, and the data you collect about children's experiences living with kin.

Policy analysis

A policy review can help the team understand the agency policies that govern decision-making related to kinship care. Gaps between policy and practice often become evident during KPM, and a foundational understanding of the organization's policies can shed light on valuable findings as the KPM unfolds. Policy analysis can include the following activities:

- a review of statutes pertaining to kinship care; and
- an examination of state policy, administrative guidance and/or policy bulletins in the following areas:
    - identification of kin, also referred to as diligent search, and notice to relatives when a child is removed from their parents' care;

- policies for initial, provisional or emergency approval of a kinship home, including criminal background and CPS history checks, fingerprinting, home environment and other assessment criteria;
- policies for full licensure, certification or approval of kinship homes, including home study procedures and training requirements;
- policies and procedures governing waivers for or variances to licensing standards;
- full disclosure of options for kin, including options to care for children who are not in state custody or to become foster parents, assume guardianship or adopt a child;
- permanency options for children living with kin, including reunification, adoption and guardianship; and
- support for children living with kin, including subsidies (TANF and/or foster care subsidy), kinship navigator programs, community-based services, support groups, etc.

The KPM team should develop a list of policies governing kinship care practices to reference during KPM sessions and as they begin to develop strategies to reduce barriers.

Program and funding analysis

Information about specific programs for kin and how these programs are funded provides the team with a basic understanding about existing supports for kinship families and the funding streams used to support those programs.

A preliminary analysis of the tools used to support these programs can provide invaluable information about possible barriers to kinship care and strategies to overcome those barriers. First, consider tools frontline staff use in discussions with parents, youth and/or kinship caregivers. These tools may include assessment packets, educational pamphlets, handbooks, genograms, family search tools and resource guides. They also may include materials provided by other organizations, such as kinship navigators, support groups, family or probate courts, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) agencies and community providers.

Questions to Consider

- Is the information provided accurate?
- Is the information provided in the tools current and up to date?
- Are the available tools used consistently?
- Is the content reflective of your organization's values and messaging concerning kinship care?

Funding information may include budget information, programmatic guidelines and eligibility requirements. It is helpful to understand the history of funding streams to know which are stable and which may be vulnerable to budget cuts.

After this review, the KPM team should have funding information and a list of tools that support efforts to identify, approve and support kin families.

Data analysis

Data analysis is critical to help the KPM team test assumptions about what is or is not happening to support kinship care. Data enables the team to gain additional insights that contribute to the development of core messages for staff. Data can also be used to determine whether children living with kin are achieving positive child welfare outcomes or to compare the experiences of children living with kin to the experiences of children in traditional foster care. Share data related to the specific problems that KPM is trying to resolve during KPM session to elicit staff insights as to why the data appear the way they do. This data will form the basis for the team's initial description of what is going on within the kinship system.

Questions to Consider

- Do the data show how regions within the state compare to each other on selected measures?
- Is the data disaggregated by age and race of the child?
- Can data for kin be compared to data for non-kin
- How much lead-time is needed to obtain necessary information?

Appendix A includes a benchmarking worksheet that can be used to track the following essential kinship data:

- # and % of children diverted to kin without entering custody;
- # and % of children diverted to kin without entering state custody who enter care within one year;
- # and % of children initially placed with kin statewide and by region, county or district;
- # and % of children in foster care placed with kin;
- Average length of stay for children in kinship care vs. non kinship care;
- # and % kinship homes that are licensed vs. unlicensed within 90 days of placement;
- # and % of children initially placed with kin vs. non-kin with 1-2 placement moves;
- # and % of children placed with kin as last placement reunified with parents;
- # and % of exits to adoption by a relative; and

- # and % of exits to guardianship.

Additional indicators may include the following:

- # and types of waivers issued for non-safety licensing standards for kinship foster parents;
- length of time to license kinship foster parents;
- # and % of children placed with kin after initial placement at specific intervals, including 30 days, 60 days, through 1 year;
- length of time to permanency for children living with kin as compared to non kin; and
- disruption in kinship foster care, adoption and guardianship placements.

One State's Approach to the Re-Evaluation Process

A state forms a KPM team to learn why so many kinship caregivers are unlicensed. They are concerned that unlicensed kin cannot receive foster care subsidies to meet the needs of the children in their care. They assume that kin are not licensed because staff do not use the flexibility afforded to them when assessing kinship homes, including the ability to use waivers for non-safety standards. They further assume that staff do not take the time to license kin because they do not value kin as placements for children in custody.

After a careful review of the policies, however, it becomes evident that agency policy is not clear about the flexibility that staff have to grant waivers for non-safety licensing standards. In fact, the policy does not articulate who is responsible for granting waivers of licensing standards or what standards can be waived. Following this review, the KPM team elicits feedback from staff about the barriers to licensing kin as foster parents, what they know about existing policies that allow flexibility in licensing standards for kin, and how policy should be constructed to allow more kin to be licensed.

STEP 4: RE-EVALUATE PROBLEMS, ARTICULATE ASSUMPTIONS AND CONFIRM GOALS

The re-evaluation process uses data from the analysis to establish clear goals for the KPM sessions. This information will help the KPM team develop clear messages about why they are focused on a particular problem or set of problems, assumptions about why the problems exist, and how the KPM process will be used to improve outcomes for children and kinship families. To re-cap using the example above:

- **Initial problem.** Not enough kin are licensed as foster parents, and therefore are ineligible for a foster care subsidy to care for the child.

- **Initial assumptions.** Staff do not value kin and do not use the flexibility afforded to them to license kin.
- **Revised problem based upon policy and data review.** Not enough kin are licensed as foster parents; in fact, 30 percent of kin caring for children in state custody are unlicensed and not receiving a subsidy to support children in their care.
- **Revised assumption.** Staff do not use the flexibility afforded to them because the policy is not clear and staff do not value kin.
- **KPM goal.** Understand staff knowledge and perceptions of kinship families, barriers to licensing kinship foster parents, and flexibility in kinship licensing standards, and gather ideas for how policy can better support the process for granting waivers and allowing more kin to become licensed.

While the team may clearly articulate the outcome they want to achieve at the outset of KPM implementation, KPM sessions may uncover additional barriers, gaps or information that may need to be addressed through future implementation activities.

Confirm goals

Kinship process mapping will be most productive if the team clearly articulates what they want to improve. Clear goals help keep the discussion focused on kin families so that sessions do not become a forum for venting about every problem associated with the child welfare system and/or the organization.

Child welfare agencies should consider these sample goals as they work to improve their kinship systems:

- Strengthen the processes for finding kin early in a child’s involvement with the child welfare system and support families that can be possible placement resources.
- Increase the percentage of children initially placed with kin.
- Reduce or eliminate the percentage of children living with unlicensed foster parents.
- Reduce the time it takes to license kinship foster parents.
- Reduce the time it takes for children to achieve permanence with kin.
- Strengthen community-based and agency supports for kinship families.

At the end of this step, the team should have a clear message about the problem they are trying to solve and the goals for KPM. With the help of a communications specialist or public information officer, they can develop a consistent KPM message, as shown on the next page.

Sample KPM Message

The Deputy Commissioner has asked us to learn why there are so many unlicensed kinship caregivers in our state. Currently, 305 of children in state custody — approximately 30 percent— are living in unlicensed care. We are concerned because these families are not eligible for subsidies to support the children in their care. If the children cannot return home, these families, many of whom are grandparents on fixed incomes, will not be eligible for subsidized guardianship. We have ideas about why these families are not licensed, and we hope kinship process mapping will help us learn what is getting in the way of licensing from staff with firsthand knowledge. We will ask staff about barriers to licensing and solutions to overcome those barriers. The information will be used to develop new strategies to increase the percentage of kinship caregivers who become licensed to care for children.

STEP 5: TAILOR THE KINSHIP PROCESS MAPPING TEMPLATES

The four kinship process mapping (KPM) templates included in Appendix A of this guide depict the high-level steps and processes many child welfare systems use to identify, approve and support kin. The KPM team is responsible for tailoring these templates to reflect the process in your specific state, county or jurisdiction.

First, choose the templates that reflect the problems you are trying to solve from the list below:

- identifying kin as resources for children involved in child welfare;
- approving kin for children in state custody, both licensed and unlicensed;
- approving kin for children diverted from state custody, including those who are court involved and those who are not court involved; and
- supporting kin inside and outside the child welfare system

The process flows depicted in the KPM templates are not meant to be prescriptive or "one size fits all." Instead, they provide a general framework for discussion and lay the foundation for customizing your jurisdiction's specific practices and policies. They also incorporate national best practices to ensure that systems using this guide consider practices or procedures that may not be in place in their current system.

Second, work with the KPM team to determine how the templates are similar or different from the procedures in your child welfare system. Then, tailor the template by modifying the flow to reflect your process or making changes in language (e.g., “licensure” instead of “certification”). Review the descriptors for each step in the process to see which ones may be missing and whether you should consider them for your jurisdiction.

Note: *The KPM templates can be created using Microsoft Office programs, such as PowerPoint, Word or Visio. Using Microsoft Office or other software tools provides a more portable way for you to share the step-by-step details of the work. This information is recorded in documents that can be uploaded, stored, shared and referenced at a future point. The enclosed KPM templates were created using Microsoft PowerPoint, but any commonly available software program that uses “shapes” will work.*

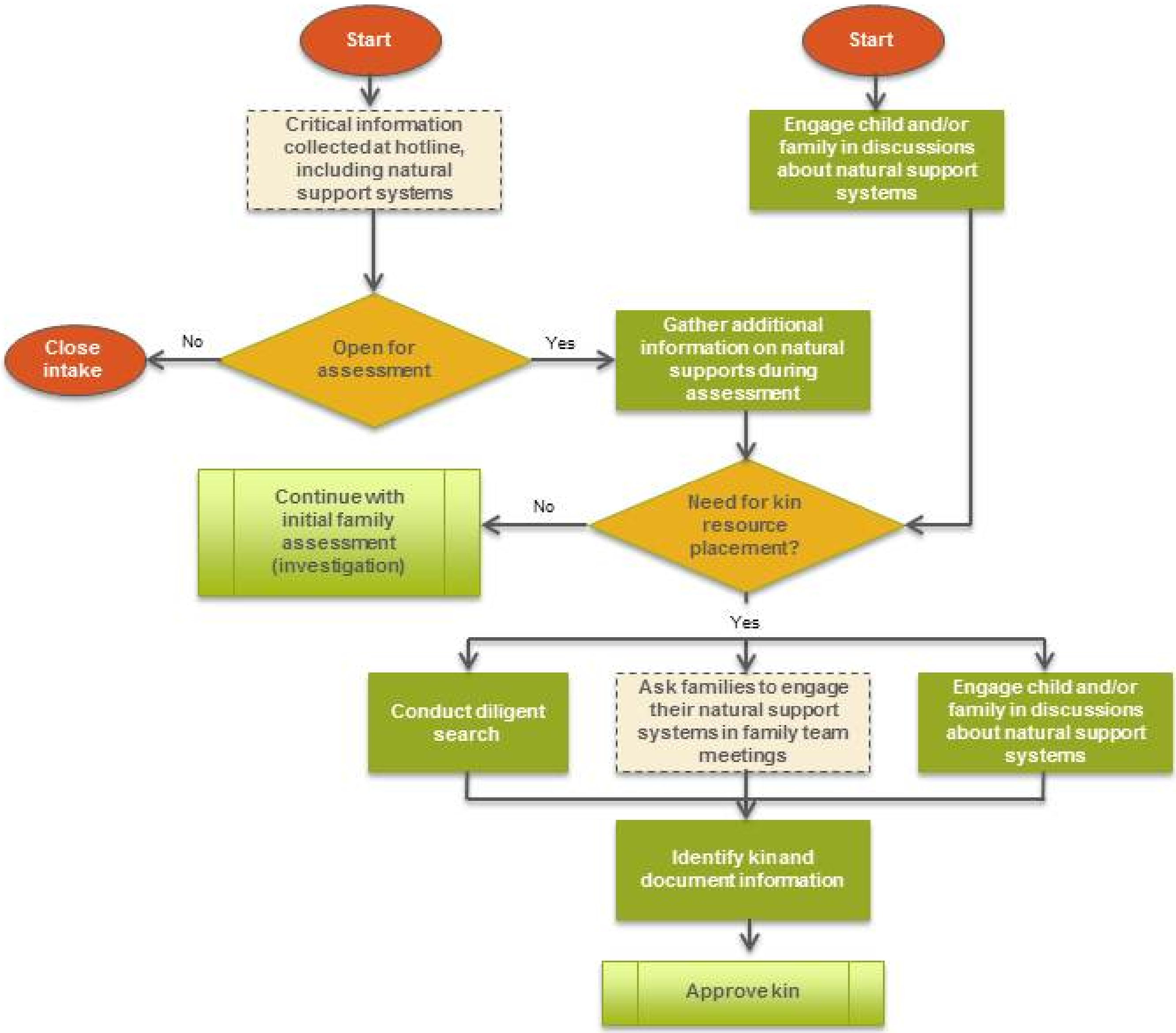
The facilitators will use the revised templates in the KPM sessions as a starting point for understanding the detailed process flows that include roles, activities, decision points, timelines and barriers. The templates reflect the facilitators’ understanding of how the process is supposed to work; the KPM sessions shed light on the way things actually work.

The facilitators will need to make a decision about whether or not to distribute the templates based on personal preferences and style of facilitation. Facilitators may want to try both strategies and see which works best for them. Facilitators have two choices:

1. Distribute the tailored templates and use them to stimulate conversation about the way the system really works.
2. Keep the templates for their own reference throughout the KPM session.

Each step in the KPM templates includes a descriptor and key questions for consideration that can form the basis for the interview protocol described in Step 6.

Identifying Kin



Plain boxes represent procedural or routine steps in this process.

Diamonds represent key decision points in the process. Note that each diamond will include "yes" and "no" pathways that will determine next steps for proceeding with a given activity.

Ovals are used to represent the start or end of the portion of the process.

Boxes with dotted lines represent practices that may not be commonly used nationally but are highly recommended to be in line with best practice.

Double-lined boxes represent processes that may cross walk with steps in other KPM templates

KPM template I: Identifying kin

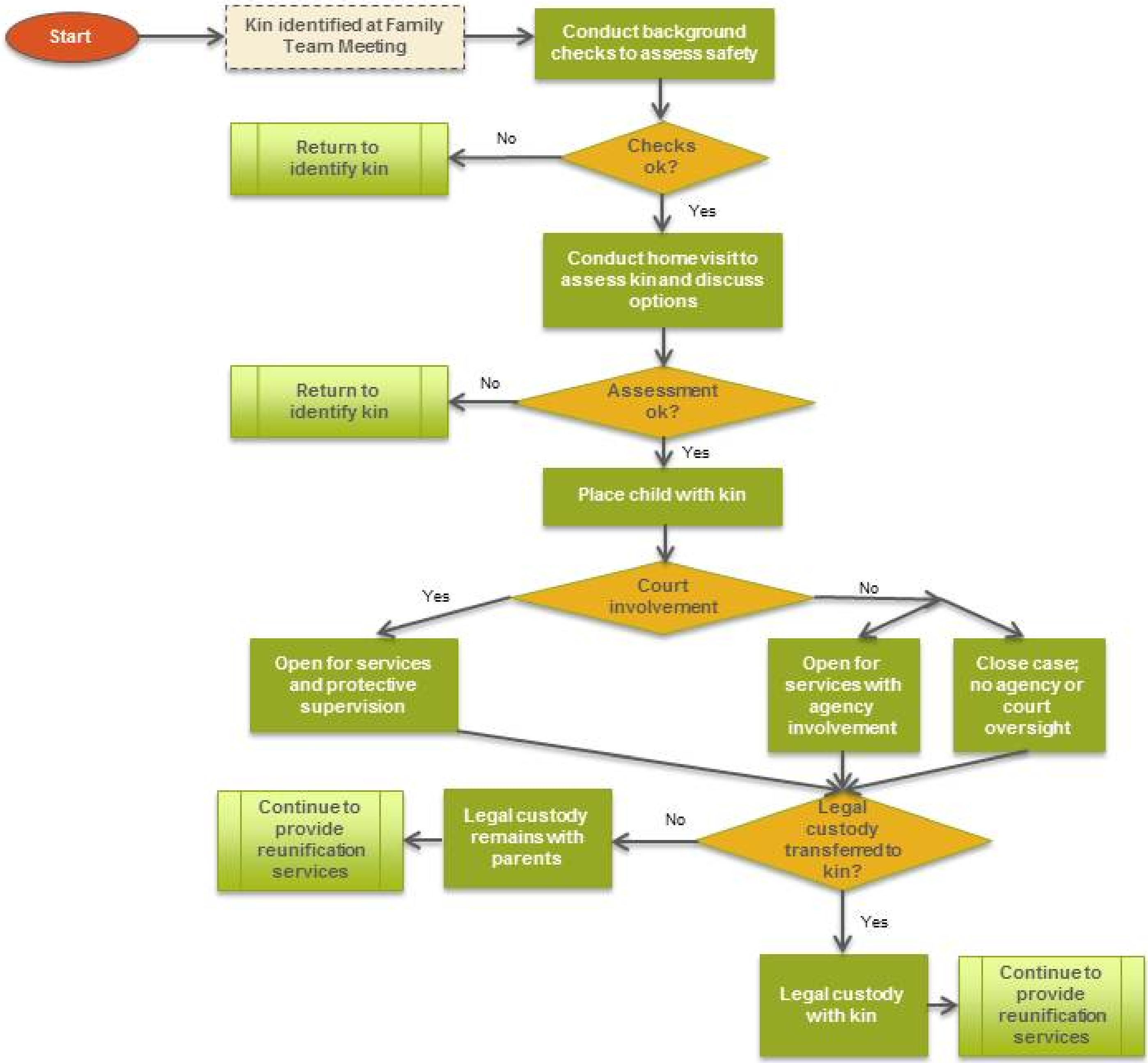
The template for identifying kin includes the high-level steps that typically occur when frontline staff need to locate kin for a potential placement. Because the process of identifying kin is ongoing, these steps can be repeated as needed until legal permanence is achieved for a child through reunification, guardianship or adoption. This template includes two pathways: one when a case is first opened and kin are identified and another at other points during the life of a case.

Key Steps in Identifying Kin	Questions to Consider
Collect information on a family's natural support systems during hotline/intake process. Traditionally, information on a family's natural support system is not collected until there is an emergency in a case (e.g., consideration for a removal or after a removal has occurred). In some jurisdictions, this information is collected during the hotline/intake interview, which provides a head start on identifying future sources of support and placement, if needed.	• What types of information about natural support systems does the hotline collect and for which types of cases? • If information is collected, where is it documented?
Gather additional information on natural supports during assessment. In this step, frontline staff (typically child protective services investigators) use what they have learned from the hotline to assess the family and determine the level of risk to the child. Additional information can be gathered about the family, which should include who they rely on to support them in their parenting role.	• What types of critical information about natural support systems do you collect when assessing the family for risk and safety? • If information is collected, where is it documented?
Engage child and parents in discussions about natural support systems. Child welfare workers often say that the most effective means of identifying relatives begins with engaging the family and children in discussions about their support system. This step is essential for finding kin who may become a placement	• Does staff identify maternal and paternal resources? • Are previously identified family resources for a child documented? • How are questions about family resources asked?

Key Steps in Identifying Kin	Questions to Consider
resource or a source of support for the family during the permanency planning process. This step can take place at several different points in the life of the case, from intake and initial assessments (investigations), when removal is imminent or has already occurred, or through ongoing and permanency services. Some of the guiding principles in identifying kin include the following: • Families are experts on their own strengths and can tell you who they turn to in times of stress. • When families are reluctant to name their kin resources, it is often due in part to shame or embarrassment at being in a situation that has led to child welfare involvement. • Families are more likely to identify family resources if the conversation is focused on the needs of the child and not just in the context of an imminent removal. Questions such as "Who does your family rely on in times of need?" may be more effective than "Where can your child stay in case of a removal?"	• Are youth engaged in discussions about who is important to them in their life?
Conduct diligent search activities. Diligent search is the technical term used to describe all the strategies used to ensure that identification of kin resources is as thorough as possible. Agencies may use a variety of tools to conduct diligent searches for kin resources, including diligent search checklists, eco-grams, genograms, school contact information, neighbors, notice letters and online search engines	• What policy guides diligent search? • What tools do you have available to search for relatives? • Are maternal and paternal resources identified? • Where are relative resources documented in the case record? • How is the question about family resources asked?
Conduct a family meeting. Family meetings are typically used with families whose children face an	• How does your agency encourage families to bring their natural

Key Steps in Identifying Kin	Questions to Consider
initial removal, change of placement or a decision regarding reunification or other permanency plan. These meetings are an excellent opportunity to identify and engage extended family networks. These meetings are designed to gain support and buy-in for the agency's decisions from the family, extended family and the community, and to develop individualized interventions for children and families. Family meetings are implemented in various jurisdictions around the country, but some agencies still do not have such a process. Your KPM team may consider skipping this step or advocating for a comparable procedure within your organization**.**	supports to these meetings and how successful is this? • How are the meetings used to further identify kin? • Is there documentation of who attends and kin resources identified during the meeting for future reference?
Document information about kin. Whenever kin resources are identified, caseworkers can document names, addresses, contact information, relationship to the child and other critical information in the electronic case file or child welfare information system. This record of the child's natural resources ensures that information is available should kin need to be contacted at a different point in the case. Documenting the results of background checks and/or home assessment information is also important when approving kin.	• Where is information about kin resources documented? • What type of information is documented? • How useful is the information to others who may refer back to it at different points in the life of a case?

Approving Kin for Children not in Agency Custody



Plain boxes represent procedural or routine steps in this process.

Diamonds represent key decision points in the process. Note that each diamond will include "yes" and "no" pathways that will determine next steps for proceeding with a given activity.

Ovals are used to represent the start or end of the portion of the process.

Boxes with dotted lines represent practices that may not be commonly used nationally but are highly recommended to be in line with best practice.

Double-lined boxes represent processes that may cross walk with steps in other KPM templates

KPM template 2: Approving kin for children not in agency custody

This template is designed to walk you through each of the steps in circumstances when the child welfare agency recommends placing the child with kin outside of state custody. These situations may continue to have an open case with court oversight, an open case without court oversight, or no further agency involvement or court oversight.

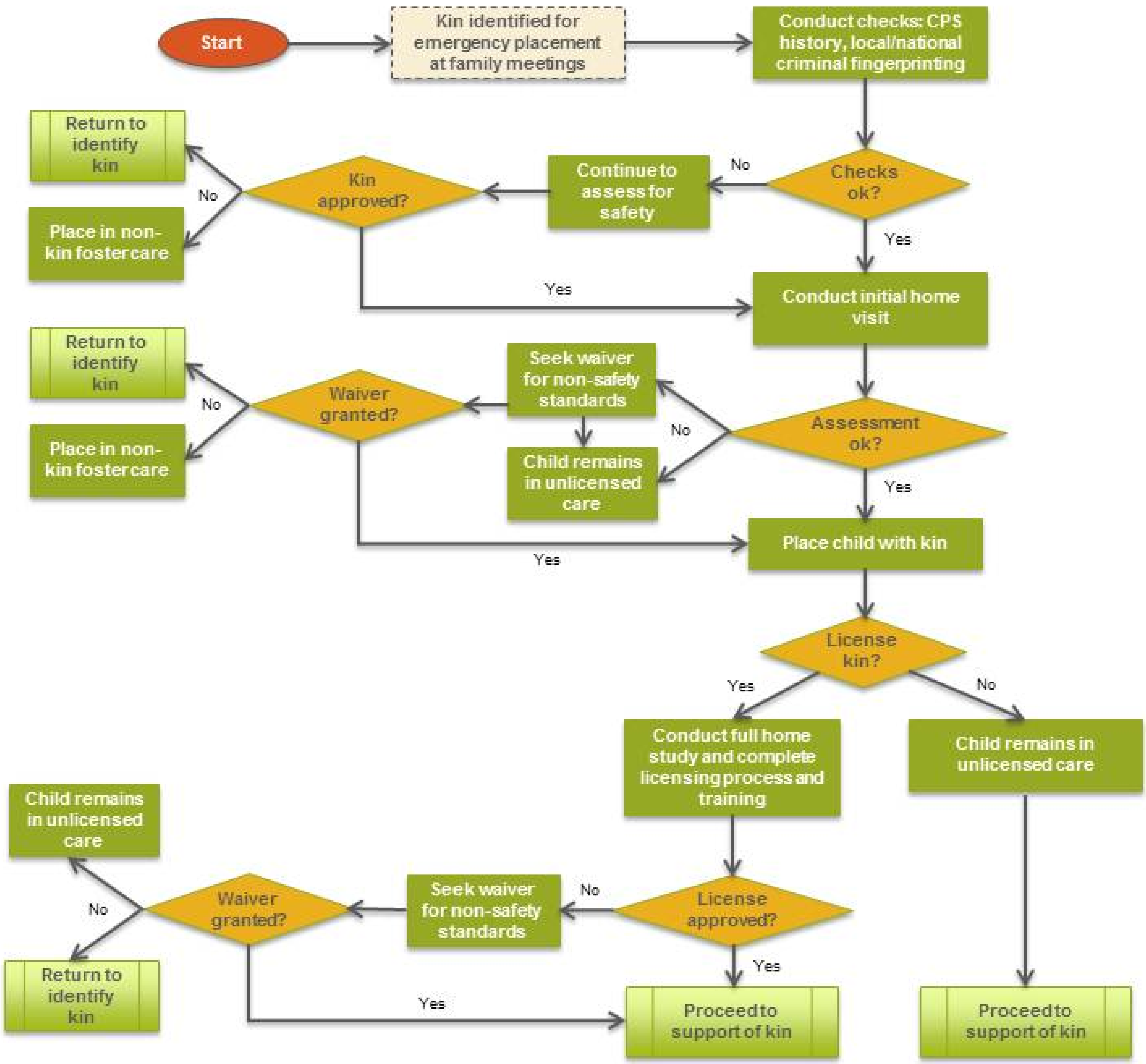
Key Steps for Approving Kin for Children not in Agency Custody	Questions to Consider
Kin identified at family meeting. Family meetings are typically used with families whose children face an initial removal, change of placement or a decision regarding reunification or other permanency plan. This meeting is an excellent opportunity to identify and engage extended family networks. These meetings are designed to gain support and buy-in for the agency's decisions from the family, extended family and the community, and to develop individualized interventions for children and families. Family meetings are implemented in various jurisdictions around the country, but some agencies still do not have such a process. Your KPM team may consider skipping this step or advocating for a comparable procedure within your organization.	• How does your agency encourage families to bring their natural supports to these meetings and how successful is this? • How are the meetings used to further identify kin? • Is there documentation of who attends and kin resources identified during the meeting for future reference?
Conduct local and national background checks. For a child who is not entering state custody, agencies typically complete background checks to determine whether the kin placement is safe and appropriate. While agency practices differ, these checks often include criminal background checks, CPS history and fingerprinting.	• Which checks are completed for kin being considered as caregivers for children not in state custody? • Who conducts the checks? • What are the barriers to conducting the checks? • How do you determine whether to place a child when information on checks comes back?
Conduct the initial home visit to assess kin and discuss options. An initial visit to the home of a	• What takes place at the initial home visit?

Key Steps for Approving Kin for Children not in Agency Custody	Questions to Consider
prospective kin caregiver for a child is essential. The purpose of the visit is to assess the kin's capacity to care for the child, which includes the relative's attitude toward the child and family, their willingness to meet the needs of the child, and their ability to maintain safe boundaries with the birth parent. When conducting an emergency placement, it may not always be possible to observe the kin caregiver and the children together prior to the actual placement. For non-emergency placements, however, it is recommended that these pre-placement observations occur. Whenever kin caregivers assume primary responsibility for a child involved with the child welfare system, it is important to educate them fully about this role. Kin families should be informed of their legal options, their rights and responsibilities, and services that may be available from the agency or in the community.	• How is the attachment between the kin and child/ren observed? • How are observations from the home visit documented? • Are kin caregivers informed of legal options, including the option to become a foster parent? • What information is provided to kin families about resources available, including TANF?
Open for services and protective supervision. In some cases, agencies may not take custody of a child but will keep the case open with court oversight for a period of time to continue working with the birth parent When courts are involved, it adds an extra layer of protection and oversight to ensure that parents receive the help they need to provide safe care for their children. When cases are open for protective supervision and agency involvement, legal custody may or may not be transferred to the kinship caregiver.	• How long does a case typically stay open when working with a parent whose child is living with kin outside of state custody and there is court involvement? • Do birth parents receive services? • What types of services and/or supports do kinship families receive, including assistance with obtaining legal custody?
Legal custody is transferred to kin. When legal custody is transferred to the kin, it may be temporary	• Who makes the decision to transfer custody to the kin?

Key Steps for Approving Kin for Children not in Agency Custody	**Questions to Consider**
legal custody or permanent legal custody, depending upon the family's situation and the law governing third party custody in the state. In some cases, the agency remains involved and provides services to parents to help the child safely return home. Typically, the court does not continue legal involvement in these situations.	• What factors are involved in that decision? • What types of custody options are available to kin and how do they learn about them?
Legal custody remains with parent. In this instance, custody remains with the parents and the kin caregiver, and parents determine mutually when it is safe for the child to go home. In some cases, the agency remains involved and provides services to parents to help children safely return home. This is sometimes referred to as a "safety plan" or a "family arrangement" that is done outside court jurisdiction.	• Who makes the decision that custody can remain with the parent and families can decide when the child returns home?
Open for services with no court involvement. Children who are placed with kin outside state custody may still have an open case, but no court oversight. In these cases, birth parents and their children may receive services but there is no court enforcement of a case plan. Typically, cases that are open for services with no court oversight are low-risk situations in which the agency has determined that parents are motivated to provide safe care for their children and can work with the agency and the kinship caregiver to determine when it is safe for the child to return to his or her parents.	• How long does a case typically stay open with no court oversight? • Do parents continue to receive services? • What types of services and/or supports do kinship families receive, including assistance with obtaining legal custody?
Closed case with no agency or court oversight. Children who are placed with kin outside state custody may have neither agency nor court oversight in the kinship arrangement. These situations may be referred to as "family arranged care" in which the	• What types of service and/or supports does the agency help the kinship family access when cases are closed, including access to TANF, legal assistance, etc.?

Key Steps for Approving Kin for Children not in Agency Custody	Questions to Consider
family has decided that this is the best arrangement so that the parent can take some time to deal with the issues that brought them to the attention of the child welfare system. These types of kinship arrangements should only happen in low-risk situations in which the agency has full confidence and the parent and kinship caregiver can determine when it is safe for the child to return to his or her parents.	• Does the agency track these cases to learn how children are doing? • Do these cases typically come back to the agency for attention, either because the child is back with the parent or because the kinship family is having difficulty meeting the needs of the child?

Approving Kin for Custody-Licensed and Unlicensed Care



Plain boxes represent procedural or routine steps in this process.

Diamonds represent key decision points in the process. Note that each diamond will include "yes" and "no" pathways that will determine next steps for proceeding with a given activity.

Ovals are used to represent the start or end of the portion of the process.

Boxes with dotted lines represent practices that may not be commonly used nationally but are highly recommended to be in line with best practice.

Double-lined boxes represent processes that may cross walk with steps in other KPM templates

KPM template 3: Approving kin for children in custody, licensed and unlicensed care

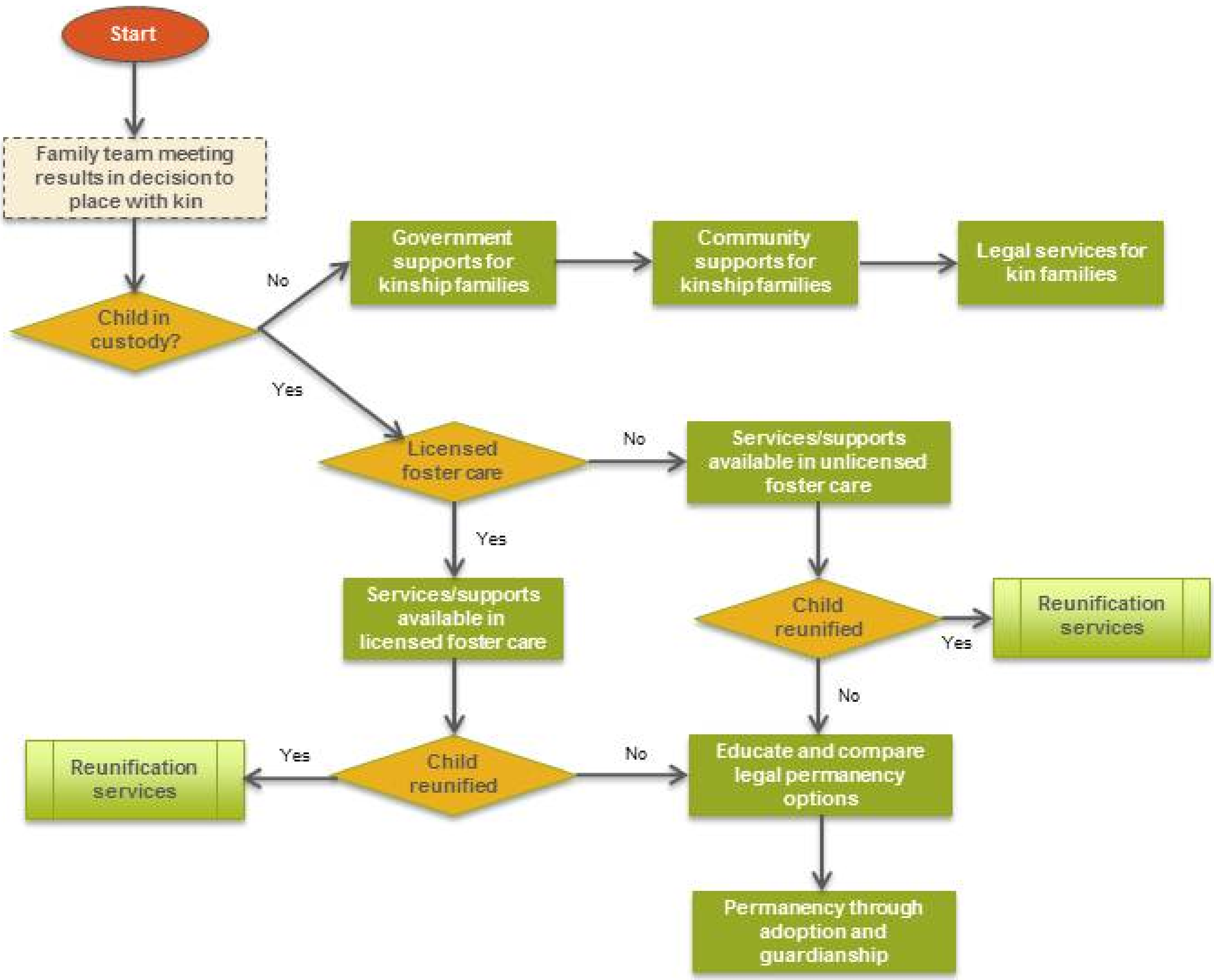
This template is designed to walk you through the steps that typically occur when children are removed from the home and brought into agency custody. This includes situations in which the kinship caregiver becomes a fully licensed foster parent, as well as those in which the kin caregiver is approved to care for a child but does not become a licensed foster parent (referred to as "unlicensed care").

Key Steps for Approving Kin in Agency Custody, Licensed and Unlicensed Care	Questions to Consider
Kin identified for emergency or expedited placement. Many jurisdictions have expedited or emergency placement policies that enable them to place a child with an identified kinship caregiver pending a more comprehensive assessment of the home and licensing. These policies detail what checks need to be completed prior to visiting the home and what type of assessment is done during an emergency or expedited home visit. Jurisdictions that do not have emergency placement policies generally wait until a kin home is completely licensed before placing a child, which often takes months to complete. Expedited placement policies help to achieve initial placement with kin whenever possible.	• What does the expedited policy require before a child is placed in a potential kinship home on an emergency basis? • Does the expedited process detail who does what when it comes to approving the kinship home?
Conduct background checks. The federal Adam Walsh Act requires states to conduct a fingerprint-based check of the national crime information database for all prospective foster and adoptive parents and to check child abuse and neglect registries checks in any states where adults residing in the home have lived for the past 5 years. Jurisdictions have different rules about placing a child with a family if anything comes up on the background check, but best practice indicates that a visit to assess the family's capacity to care for the child should be conducted unless a serious and recent offense has occurred.	• Who completes the criminal background checks? • Who completes the fingerprinting process and how does it occur? • Who conducts CPS checks? • How long does each of these processes take? • What happens if unfavorable information is found in the process of conducting these checks?

Key Steps for Approving Kin in Agency Custody, Licensed and Unlicensed Care	Questions to Consider
Continue to assess for safety. Increasingly, jurisdictions are exploring the appropriateness of kin resources even if something comes up on the background check. Sometimes other people living in the kinship home have a criminal or CPS history from many years ago. Kin might also have a criminal history or misdemeanors that are not indicative of a safety threat. Many jurisdictions will continue to explore the appropriateness of kin resources even if something is found in the course of conducting background checks, particularly if these are families with whom the child has a significant bond.	• To what extent does staff continue to assess for kin if something comes up on a background check? • What are the barriers to learning more about the nature of criminal or CPS history?
Conduct initial home visit and assessment of kin. The purpose of the initial home visit for a child in state custody is to assess the kin's capacity to care for the child, including the relative's attitude toward the child and family, their willingness and capacity to meet the needs of the child, and their ability to maintain safe boundaries with the birth parent. When conducting an emergency placement, it may not always be possible to observe the kin caregiver and the child together prior to the actual placement. For non-emergency placements, however, it is recommended that these pre-placement observations occur.	• What assessment criteria are used during the initial home visit? • Are all adults in the kin's home observed and interviewed? • If non-emergency, are interactions between the child and kin observed? • How are observations from the visit documented?
Seek waivers for non-safety standards. Federal law enables states to issue waivers for non-safety licensing standards on a case-by-case basis. Jurisdictions differ significantly on the extent to which they grant these waivers, the time at which they grant the waivers, who has the authority to grant the waiver and whether or not the child can be placed in the home before a waiver decision has been made. More and more,	• To what extent are waivers considered for kin? • Who has the authority to waive licensing standards? • How long does it take to get authority to waive standards? • What types of things are routinely waived?

Key Steps for Approving Kin in Agency Custody, Licensed and Unlicensed Care	Questions to Consider
jurisdictions are waiving standards for bedroom space, misdemeanor charges dating back several years, and other standards that appear unreasonable to impose on an otherwise appropriate placement resource.	• How are waivers documented?
Remain in unlicensed care. Some jurisdictions do not require kin caring for children in state custody to be licensed. This might be because they think kin do not want to go through the licensing process, because they do not believe kin can meet the state's licensing requirements, or because they want to wait until reunification has been ruled out to begin the process, which can be time consuming and intrusive to families. Unfortunately, when kin are not licensed, they are not eligible for foster care subsidies and might miss out on other training, services and supports that are available to licensed foster parents.	• What is the rationale behind unlicensed care? • For which services and supports are unlicensed caregivers ineligible? • Do children in unlicensed care receive the same attention, services and supports as those in licensed care?
Conduct full home study and complete licensing process and training. In order to receive the benefits to which every foster parent is entitled, a kin home for a child in custody must be fully licensed (also may be called certification or approval). This process includes a complete home study to ensure that all safety issues have been resolved since the placement was made, as well as caregiver participation in training.	• How long does the full licensure process typically take? • What type of training is available and does it cover unique issues for kinship caregivers or is it the training all foster parents receive?

Supporting Kin Families



Plain boxes represent procedural or routine steps in this process.

Diamonds represent key decision points in the process. Note that each diamond will include "yes" and "no" pathways that will determine next steps for proceeding with a given activity.

Ovals are used to represent the start or end of the portion of the process.

Boxes with dotted lines represent practices that may not be commonly used nationally but are highly recommended to be in line with best practice.

Double-lined boxes represent processes that may cross walk with steps in other KPM templates

KPM template 4: Supporting kin

The template for supporting kin is different from the other templates, because it helps you define what services and supports your child welfare system and communities offer for kin families. This template also helps you understand differences in the supports available for children living with kin who are in state custody compared to those who are not in state custody.

Supports and Services for the Kinship Triad	Questions to Consider
Team Decision Making (TDM) or Family Team Meeting (FTM) results in decision to place with kin. As articulated in the identifying kin process flow, family meetings are excellent forums in which to make the decision about whether or not a child needs to be brought into state custody and to identify potential kin resources when children are not able to safely remain with their parents. The supporting kin flow begins where the decision has been made to place a child with kin and examines the services and supports available for children in both custody and non-custody placements.	• When children cannot safely stay at home and are placed with kin, how do kin families learn about the services and supports available to them? • Are the differences between services and supports offered to custody vs. non-custody placements explained?
Government supports and services for kinship families. For children placed with kin without bringing the child into state custody, certain government benefits and programs are available to help support the child. This may include continued child welfare support, TANF child only benefits, if eligible, and legal assistance through probate courts, Medicaid and other government programs.	• What child welfare and other government resources are you aware of that can help the kinship caregiver support the child? • How do kinship families learn about available government resources?
Community supports and services for kinship families. In many communities, supports and services are available for kinship families through kinship navigator programs, community-based organizations, churches and the like. Support groups that empower kinship caregivers to share resources and the strengths and challenges of raising children are very beneficial.	• What community resources are you aware of that can help the kinship caregiver support the child? • How does the family learn about community resources available?

Supports and Services for the Kinship Triad	Questions to Consider
Legal services for kinship families. Kinship families caring for children who are not in state custody have a range of legal options, depending upon their particular jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions encourage kinship families to seek legal counsel and refer them to legal resources that can help. It is essential that legal options are clearly explained to kin families so that they understand their legal rights and responsibilities.	• In general, how do families learn about their legal options?
Services and supports available in licensed foster care. As the percentage of kin caring for children in foster care increases, it is critical to ensure that they have access to all the resources available to foster parents and that they are aware these resources exist. Resources include financial benefits, mentors, respite care and training. In most jurisdictions, foster parents must wait until they are fully licensed to receive a financial subsidy, but some agencies provide assistance to kin families even before they are fully licensed to address any immediate needs of the child.	• Can the kin family access any financial or other resources prior to becoming licensed? • How long does it take for kin foster parents to become licensed and receive a foster care subsidy? • Are kin eligible for the same subsidies, services and supports as other foster parents?
Services and supports available in unlicensed care. Children living in unlicensed kinship care generally are not eligible to receive foster care subsidies. While kinship families may be eligible to receive other benefits available to licensed foster parents, the services and supports are more likely to be similar to those received by families caring for children who are not in state custody. Although unlicensed caregivers typically cannot receive foster care subsidies, they are generally subject to the same requirements as licensed foster parents, including court hearings, monthly caseworker visits and visitation with parents.	• What financial benefits are available to unlicensed foster parents? • What other services and supports are available. • Do unlicensed kinship families caring for children in custody receive the same attention and support as those in licensed foster care?
Educate and compare legal permanency options. When children cannot return home to their birth	• How do kin families learn about the differences between adoption and

Supports and Services for the Kinship Triad	Questions to Consider
parents, other legal permanency options must be pursued. Adoption is the most legally secure form of permanency and an appropriate option for many kinship families. However, some kinship families are not comfortable with the requirement that the child's birth parents' rights must be terminated for adoption to occur. In these cases, guardianship might be the most appropriate option for legal permanency. Regardless of which option a kin family pursues, it is important that kin caregivers, children and youth, and birth parents fully understand the implications of each of these options before making a final decision about which is in the best interests of the child.	guardianship? • Is there a tool that compares the options and explains the differences between the two?
Permanency through adoption or guardianship. Once a family chooses guardianship or adoption, they have committed to permanent care and protection of the child. However, most jurisdictions provide some level of financial subsidy and other support for the ongoing needs of the child until age 18, and in some cases, through age 21. These benefits should be the same for kin families as for all other foster parents. In addition, benefits for adoption and guardianship should not differ at all, given that both are intended to meet the needs of the child in a permanent living arrangement.	• Are adoption benefits available to kin families the same as adoption benefits available to all foster parents? • Are guardianship subsidies available and if so, are they equal to the adoption subsidies? • How long is assistance provided? • For both adoption and guardianship, are benefits such as tuition waivers, Chaffee services, etc. available to kin families?

STEP 6: DEVELOP AN INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview protocol is a document that outlines questions facilitators may want to ask about the processes for identifying, approving and supporting kin. The interview protocol starts with a "script," or set of talking points that facilitators use to introduce the KPM sessions. The script helps the KPM team stay on the same page about what they are trying to accomplish and can be drawn directly from the KPM statement developed in Step 4. The script used during the KPM sessions should clearly outline who has authorized the KPM sessions, the background of the session facilitators, the key problems the sessions are trying to address, the goals for the KPM sessions, and what will be done with the information following the sessions. KPM facilitators may refer to the script at key intervals in the process to ensure that most of the questions are addressed.

The main body of the protocol consists of key questions designed to generate discussion about your kinship care system. The information in the "Questions to Consider" boxes that accompany the templates above can be customized to your jurisdiction to form the interview protocol.

Questions to Consider

- Who is responsible for the most critical aspects of the process?
- What is the typical timeframe in which this happens?
- What levels of approval are needed to move forward?
- What works about this process?
- What gets in the way of making this process work efficiently?
- What can be done to make this process better?

STEP 7: FINALIZE PLANS FOR THE KPM SESSIONS

A KPM coordinator should be appointed to organize logistics for the session. Logistics entail inviting representatives from selected program areas, organizing the schedule, finding a room and being available during the day to ensure participation in the KPM sessions. Some tips for handling logistics include:

- Give at least two weeks lead time to staff so they can put the date on the calendar and make arrangements to attend the sessions.
- Follow up with regular reminders leading up to the day of the session.
- Use the script to describe the goal of the KPM sessions to staff. Be clear that the KPM sessions are not training, but rather an opportunity for staff to share their insights about what works and what does not work about the existing kinship system.
- Share the KPM session time commitment, which is approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.
- Schedule approximately four sessions per day, each for 1.5 hours. Depending upon how many groups you want to interview, sessions might take place over the course of 2-3 days.

- Allow 30 minutes between sessions to allow for late starts and to give facilitators time to set up for the next group.
- Choose a room in which KPM flowcharts can be taped or hung on the walls.

Who should be involved in the KPM sessions?

The groups that should be interviewed as part of the KPM may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but in general, they include frontline staff with responsibility for the day-to-day work with families involved in the child welfare system. Supervisors and groups of mid-level managers also can provide critical perspectives about what is going on in the kinship system. While it may be tempting to omit certain groups or units because of time constraints, allow time to hear multiple perspectives about the problems you are trying to solve. The involvement of multiple groups will help facilitators identify the inconsistencies and gaps across the system that create barriers to kinship care.

Groups with Critical Perspectives on KPM	Other Groups to Include
• Hotline • Intake • Investigative • Professionals who work with families on their case plans (ongoing, treatment, in home, etc.) • Permanency • Adolescent • Foster care • Adoption • Licensing • Foster parent trainers • Case or administrative review • Supervisors and mid-level managers	• Kinship caregivers • Advocates • Agency attorneys • Parent attorneys • Judges and administrative court officers

Frontline, supervisory and managerial staff should participate in separate sessions so that all participants feel free to express their viewpoints without fear of repercussion. Separation of frontline staff from their supervisors creates an environment more conducive to open and honest feedback about barriers. As much as possible, try to interview separate units as a group, because it can be difficult to facilitate the process when staff from different units are each trying to describe the kinship process from their perspective. If groups must be combined, combine groups whose roles and functions are most similar.

The KPM team can also decide whether and how to include other groups with important insights into the kinship care system. These participants may not have the detailed knowledge necessary to map out the full process flow, but they can provide feedback on different issues and add value to the perspectives agency staff. If the KPM team decides to interview additional stakeholders such as kinship caregivers, they should tailor the discussion to those issues that the caregivers will have detailed knowledge about. The KPM team might want to develop a separate set of questions depending upon who is being interviewed. In addition, external stakeholders such as caregivers, providers and judges are particularly important to include as solutions are developed.

CHECKLIST FOR SECTION I

	Yes	No
Does your KPM approach have a clear champion and leader?		
Have you defined the problem to be solved and are the goals of the project clear?		
Have you created the KPM team and designated a coordinator, facilitator(s) and note-taker?		
Have you conducted and reviewed the results of a preliminary analysis of your kinship care system?		
Have you customized the KPM templates for your organization?		
Have you developed an interview protocol?		
Have you made arrangements for logistics and ensured that staff is available for the KPM sessions?		

Section II – Facilitating the Kinship Process Mapping Sessions

Section II of the KPM Guide provides information concerning how to facilitate and document the KPM sessions:

- Introduce the KPM sessions.
- Manage the KPM discussion.
- Document the KPM.
- Close the KPM.

STEP I: INTRODUCE THE KPM SESSIONS

The purpose of the KPM sessions is to gain detailed insights into processes around key aspects of your kinship care system. This is the point in the process where you focus on understanding practices and policies while identifying barriers and suggestions for improvements.

At the opening of each KPM session, everyone should briefly introduce themselves. If the facilitators are external, they will need to share information about their background and expertise and how they became involved in the KPM. Following the introductions, the facilitator shares the goals and objectives of the KPM effort, along with an explanation of how results of the KPM sessions will be used.

Confidentiality in the KPM sessions

In order to fully understand the dynamics in the organization in relation to the kinship care system, it is vital that participants feel that they can be as candid as possible. While ideas that surface during the KPM will be shared with others, participants should be assured that information shared won't include names of those interviewed and will be compiled and recorded in a non-identifying manner.

Tips for Introducing the Sessions

- Clearly define the goals and expectations of the session
- Share the length of time for each session
- Mention the step(s) of the kinship care system to be discussed
- Provide an overview of how the discussion will be facilitated
- Note confidentiality, including an explanation of how the information will be used, and with whom and how it will be shared
- Share the next steps

Use of kinship data in the KPM sessions

Performance data is often a key impetus for organizations to examine their processes, particularly when "the numbers" indicate an area of concern. Sharing applicable data and discussing participants' reactions and insights provides an opportunity to gain understanding of the practices in the field that may be contributing to the numbers reflected in your data. As you go through the KPM, staff can provide theories as to why the data appear the way they do and brainstorm strategies to improve or better capture the data.

STEP 2: MANAGE THE KPM DISCUSSION

The facilitator plays a critical role in guiding session participants through the KPM. As the discussion leader, the facilitator will need to support productive discussion and conversation around kinship practices. Inevitably, discussion will include other important aspects of the child welfare system such as initial assessments, ongoing services, etc. The facilitator must keep the discussion centered within the intended boundaries of the KPM. You will want to encourage discussion to get at the core of issues; at the same time, make the best use of frontline staff's time in the sessions by keeping the discussion on topic and in line with the stated goals.

Facilitators should allow for periods of general venting and frustration by session participants who are doing the day-to-day work with families and can most accurately inform the KPM process. This dialogue provides an opportunity for staff to talk about issues and uncover steps and procedures that may negatively affect the kinship process within your organization. However, the facilitator may need to remind participants to stay focused on barriers that impact the ability of children to be placed with or stay connected to their kin. To do this, facilitators will need to skillfully redirect discussion to stay on track with the purpose of the process.

Tips for Managing the Discussion

- Maximize session time by keeping the discussion focused on the stated goals
- Define and understand current processes thoroughly before rushing to improvements or solutions
- Make sure frontline staff are always in the session(s) and empowered to play a role in developing solutions to identified issues

The meeting notetaker will document the general conversation and capture more in-depth information than what is documented on the flip charts during the KPM sessions. In addition to capturing clarifying narrative in relation to more complex aspects of the discussion, the notetaker keeps a log of "parking lot" issues that cannot be resolved in the session or may need further clarification from others at a later date.

STEP 3: DOCUMENT THE KPM

The manner in which you document the KPM process has a significant impact on the analysis and review phase, and the information gleaned from the sessions provides insights that drive your findings and recommendations. The interview protocol and customized KPM templates include questions designed to capture the level of detail needed to clearly define, analyze and make recommendations for your kinship care system. Questions may include:

- Who is involved at each step of the process, including hand-offs from one unit to another?
- What is being done at each step, including tools used?
- When does this step occur and how long does it typically take to complete the activities?
- What are the local, state or federal policies and regulations involved with the process?
- What are the real or perceived barriers to starting or completing?
- Where are the opportunities for improvements?

These questions help guide the discussion, which feeds into the documentation of how the work logically flows at each point or step in the process.

Put thoughts to paper: Capturing information in the KPM sessions

Prior to beginning the KPM session, the facilitators take time to understand the key steps from the customized KPM templates referenced in Section I of the KPM Guide. During the session, the facilitators use the interview protocol and the key steps from the customized KPM templates to lead discussion and obtain detailed information about practices and policies. Consider providing participants with a printed copy of the customized KPM templates so that they can see all of the actions involved with completing the process. Jot down the main points from the discussion on the banner paper (as described below) while the notetaker captures more detailed information.

At first glance, it may appear that the information contained in the customized template created prior to the KPM sessions is the same as the information collected during the sessions. The important distinction is that the customized template illustrates how the process should work according to policy and best practice guidelines. The information documented during the sessions, however, illustrate how the process actually works, including barriers that stand in the way, as well as recommendations for improvement. Once you begin defining each of these steps in detail and answering the

Tips for Documenting the KPM

- When documenting the KPM information, remember that the content is more important than the style or medium being used to record the information.
- You may choose from a number of documentation tools ranging from flip chart to a software program.
- The most important part of this work is to ensure that you capture the process flows with enough detail to support review and analysis once the session has finished.

questions from the interview protocol related to responsibilities, barriers and policies, you will find that these maps become filled with detail about the existing kinship system, some of which may look very different from the way things are supposed to work. Each map is also a reflection of how individual units or groups of workers view the system, which makes it easier to identify inconsistencies or differences in perception between groups.

Banner paper is posted on a board or a wall so that KPM session participants can follow along with the facilitator as processes are defined for each step. The banner paper then serves as the place to gather information from participants about the process, barriers and potential improvements. There are a number of benefits to using the banner paper, one of the most practical being that it allows for faster documentation of information shared by KPM session participants. It also allows the participants to actually validate the information you are recording and make any necessary changes in real time. Banner paper can be bought at an arts supply store (such as A.C. Moore) or can be created by taping flip chart paper together.

Identify barriers

At each step of the process, the facilitator guides participants in a discussion to identify and understand any barriers that are impeding effective practices. Barriers are assessed in three different categories: policy, practice and perception barriers. Participants should try to determine what type of barrier it is, but the facilitator should not dedicate time trying to discern the category because it will slow the flow of the discussion. Barriers are documented on a single color of Post-it notes, which are then placed on the flip chart below the relevant step in the flow chart. You can also choose to have each type of barrier represented by a different color Post-in note, but it can sometimes be difficult to discern which barriers are real or perceived during a session. The primary goal is enabling participants to see the barriers that are getting in the way of desired practices and outcomes.

Color-coded Post-it notes are also used to identify which unit is believed to be responsible for a particular process or for causing a certain barrier. Additional Post-it notes can denote recommendations or strategies for improvement. As participants identify barriers and recommendations, the number of Post-it notes will increase until all key steps within the kinship process have been addressed.

Three Types of Barriers

- **Policy barriers:** An existing policy (or lack of policy or protocol) that slows or impedes the progress of a desired outcome
- **Practice barriers:** The way work is currently done that slows or impedes progress toward a desired outcome
- **Perception barriers:** A belief or opinion that is not substantiated by specific policy or concrete practice but slows or impedes progress toward a specific outcome

Understanding Barriers: Real Examples

Example:
Desired Outcome: Placing more children with kin at the initial stage of the placement process

Key step: Identifying kin
Participants from an Ongoing Unit report:

- Role: Investigative Unit is responsible for identifying kin during the initial stages
- Practice barrier: Investigators do not ask questions in a way that gets parents to provide names of kin
- Perception Barrier: Parents do not want to give investigators information about their kin

Key step: Supporting kin

- Responsibilities: The licensing unit provides training and support to kin
- Policy/Protocol Barrier: The training for kin has to be the same as it is for other foster parents for kin to get subsidy
- Perception barrier: Kin do not want to participate in training

STEP 4: CLOSE THE KPM

At the end of the KPM session, you will have documented processes, sub-processes, barriers and suggested improvements, as shown in the following photos. Allow participants time to walk around and view the documentation to validate the information you have collected.

KPM session map for "identify kin" and "approve kin" steps

Example of the full KPM kinship map

Restate the importance of confidentiality in the sessions. KPM discussions are often frank and may bring to light information about practices that may need further assessment or improvement. The facilitator should reiterate that the information collected in the sessions will be used to build and strengthen your kinship system, not for punitive purposes. The facilitators will not use identifying information when sharing what is learned from the sessions, and should ask participants to do the same. The facilitators can close the session with an overview of the next steps in the process, including how you will use the information to move forward toward meaningful analysis and improvements.

CHECKLIST FOR SECTION II

	Yes	No
Did you clearly define the goals and expectations of the session?		
Did you validate the information captured in the KPM session with participants?		
Have you finished recording the information in a tool that will enable sharing and review of the session notes for analysis and evaluation?		
Did you share with participants what will happen next in the process of improving the agency's kinship care system?		

Section III – Analyzing Results and Developing Solutions

Section III of the KPM Guide helps your child welfare agency analyze results of the KPM and develop solutions for improvement through the following activities:

- Compile information.
- Reconvene the KPM team to analyze results and develop solutions.
- Share results with high-level leadership.
- Implement results-oriented solutions.

STEP I: COMPILE INFORMATION

This step includes activities related to compiling all of the available information to analyze the results and recommend solutions. The feedback you have received from staff in the KPM sessions is an invaluable source of information and represents the best of what you know about how your kinship process works. In particular, the visual KPM map is a comprehensive picture of the role-based flow of the process, the barriers identified by the participants, and their ideas for improvement. The facilitators will need to gather the information from all the sessions to complete the preliminary analysis. As the facilitators review the information gathered from each template for the participating groups/units, they will undoubtedly find themes that run throughout each, as well as divergent issues and views. These common and divergent themes should be documented along with any other notes or recommendations made during the sessions.

Document barriers

Since the information about barriers has been categorized on the detailed KPM flow, compilation should be fairly easy. As you consider what to document, keep in mind the following:

- **Inconsistent viewpoints.** Document widespread inconsistency in views about how a particular process should work. Sometimes these inconsistencies are the result of misperceptions, and can lead to practice that is not reflective of how you want the kinship care system to work.
- **Communications breakdowns.** KPM sessions often reveal areas where information is not shared between staff or where a lack of understanding about a particular policy or practice creates barriers for kinship families.

- **Time delays.** If time delays negatively affect the process, kin families may be denied the urgent attention they need to ensure safety, permanence and well-being for the child.
- **Lack of clarity about roles.** Role conflict is common in most large bureaucracies and can lead to duplication of efforts and in turn, wasted resources. Role conflict can also lead to gaps in things that need to get done for families.

Document ideas for improvement

Throughout the KPM, the facilitators elicit ideas for improving the kinship process based upon identified barriers, which in turn lay the foundation for developing solutions and strategies. Document these ideas in one place and build them into your step that involves matching solutions to identified barriers.

STEP 2: RECONVENE THE KPM TEAM TO ANALYZE RESULTS AND DEVELOP SOLUTIONS

You will now want to reconvene your original KPM team to share the results of the KPM sessions, begin to prioritize those barriers that can be addressed, and brainstorm about strategies to overcome them.

At this stage, the KPM team needs to look at the information and analyze it in the context of the problems and goals identified during the preparation stage. It is likely that many barriers have been identified, some of which impact the problem you are trying to solve and others that raise new problems you had not originally identified. The key at this stage is to analyze in detail all of the barriers that have been identified and to begin brainstorming about which are the most important to address, particularly in light of the outcomes you are trying to achieve.

Although the KPM team may be tempted to work off of their own assumptions about why things are the way they are, they must resist that urge and use the actual information gathered throughout the KPM process to test those assumptions. This will ensure that when solutions are identified, they are grounded in the reality of the barriers that exist.

Now that you have analyzed the results, it’s likely that you have a long list of barriers identified. Most public child welfare agencies will not be in a position to address each and every barrier, making prioritization critical. The KPM team must negotiate among themselves as to which priorities are the most important to address and which can be addressed later.

Considerations for Establishing Priorities

- Which barriers most heavily impact positive outcomes for children?
- Which barriers have the greatest impact on goals set for the team at the onset of KPM implementation?
- Are there barriers that were consistently mentioned throughout the KPM process?
- Which barriers can you control in a public child welfare system?
- Can you begin work on the most critical barriers immediately and build less critical barriers into a future work plan?

Example: Moving from Assumptions to Insights

One assumption that many people make as to why frontline workers divert children out of custody to live with kin is because they don't want to have the family on their active caseload and they do not want to pay kin to be foster parents. In one jurisdiction that conducted a KPM session, however, frontline staff said that the agency leaders encourage them to keep children out of state custody and that the practice of diversion is philosophically aligned with a focus on reducing the number of children in foster care. In this case, the KPM team realized that leadership needed to more clearly reinforce the message that safety is always the primary consideration, and that some children who come to the attention of the child welfare system need the oversight that can only be achieved by bringing the child into custody, even when they are placed with kin.

Develop solutions: Getting from the "as is" to the "to be" state

A very useful approach in the process of developing solutions is an "as is" and "to be" analysis. In the "as is" analysis, the KPM team looks at your system in its current state. The "to be" analysis envisions where you want to move that system in the future based upon the values of the organization and the outcomes you want to achieve. In short, you are helping your agency answer the questions: How are we partnering with and supporting kin now? Where do we want to be? Solutions can then be aligned to help move the system from one state to the other. The table on the opposite page demonstrates practical application of this approach in the field.

Your kinship system today (As is)	Proposed solutions to barriers	Your improved kinship system (To be)
Kin are not identified beyond the CPS investigation stage	Create a tickler system in the SACWIS system that requires kin identification at key intervals	Kin are identified at key intervals such as: • Every three months post placement • Every placement disruption /transition • When reunification is no longer the permanency goal

Your kinship system today (As is)	Proposed solutions to barriers	Your improved kinship system (To be)
CPS investigators do not have enough time to adequately assess relative resources during emergency placements	Develop a teaming approach that pairs CPS investigators with others who can assess kin homes while CPS meets the immediate needs of the family	Children are placed with appropriate kin resources at initial placement whenever possible
Kin cannot become licensed because of restrictive licensing standards	Enable the system to more proactively promote the use of waivers for non-safety related foster parent licensing standards	Adoption of a flexible approach toward licensing relative families that ensures safety
Children living with kin do not achieve timely permanency	Agency tracks time to permanency for kin families and implements guardianship assistance program	Children living with kin achieve timely permanency through reunification, adoption or guardianship
Children are diverted away from custody to live with kin with no supports or services	Agency develops a practice model for diversion to prevent future re-entry into care and basic oversight and protection	Children diverted from custody to live with kin have a basic level of support needed to ensure safety, stability and well-being

In thinking about solutions, consider a variety of strategies that may include the following:

- changes in how staff are deployed for various tasks;
- changes in roles and responsibilities for existing staff;
- creation of a new position and/or unit to take on different processes that will help overcome barriers;
- new documentation requirements;
- training of frontline staff in new or existing practices, policies or procedures;
- mentoring and coaching for new or existing practices and policies;

- reinforcement of different ways of doing things in supervision;
- administrative policy change; and/or
- legislative change.

Remember that your KPM Team does not have to have all the answers. Rather, as you prepare to share the results with leadership, identify options for consideration. Leaders may have additional ideas about how to overcome barriers that the team has not considered.

STEP 3: SHARE RESULTS WITH HIGH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

It is now time to share the results of the KPM sessions with senior leaders in your organization who can help you further brainstorm about strategies and give you the go ahead to implement solutions. If possible, the entire KPM team should participate in the presentation of the findings to convey to leadership the collaborative nature of the project and to ensure that the full expertise of the team is on hand to explain goals, objectives, results and solutions identified. When presenting to leadership, frame the conversation with a reminder that the barriers and solutions come directly from the frontline staff that are the most familiar with the processes.

The findings of the KPM can be presented in a simple PowerPoint presentation that lays out the following:

- **Problem you are trying to solve.** This includes the problems as identified at the beginning of the KPM process and any refinements made along the way. The script you developed in Chapter I can serve as the basis for defining the problem to be solved and goals of the KPM
- **Who was involved in the KPM sessions.** Provide information on which staff participated in the KPM sessions and who else did you rely on to get information about barriers and solutions (i.e. legal staff, caregivers, etc.).
- **Major barriers.** Identification of barriers should include those barriers that most directly match the problem you are trying to solve
- **Additional barriers**. These include additional problems you might have uncovered in the course of the KPM.
- **Options for solutions to overcome barriers.** These solutions are identified by staff and refined by the KPM Team. As stated previously, this should include immediate solutions

to overcome barriers, as well as longer term solutions that may take more time or resources to address.

Additional handouts may include the following:

- customized KPM templates so that senior leaders understand everything staff do to identify and approve kin and what their systems offer in terms of services and supports;
- a version of the master KPM map illustrating barriers and solutions; and
- the "as is/to be" analysis with more detailed information about how they can use the information to transform their kinship system.

The goal of the presentation and discussion with leadership should be to gain a common understanding of viable solutions and next steps to implement some of the high-priority solutions. As such, there should be ample time set aside to discuss solutions with leadership and agree on a plan moving forward.

STEP 4: IMPLEMENT RESULTS-BASED SOLUTIONS

Your leadership team has heard the findings from the KPM and you have discussed and debated a range of solutions. By the time your presentation is over, you should have a clear sense of which solutions you have the authority to implement. As you approach implementation, consider the following:

- **Forum for implementation.** What is the best forum to oversee implementation activities? Should it be the work of the KPM Team? Do you need a separate workgroup made up of multiple levels and types of staff?
- **Value and principles for implementation.** Are identified strategies aligned with values, policies and practices? If not, what strategies can be employed to align them?
- **Locus of change.** Which recommendations require state, county or local government level action and which can be done at the frontline, supervisory or unit level? Depending upon your answer to this question, you might need multiple levels of participation in implementation activities.
- **Timing of implementation.** How can implementation be phased in so that you can make mid-course corrections and learn as you proceed?

Clarifying KPM Results

The KPM process should produce:

- a full understanding of the detailed processes that drive your kinship care system;
- a clear sense of the barriers that are getting in the way of performing those processes; and
- approval from your leadership to implement solutions that will help you achieve better results for children and families.

- **Involvement of stakeholders**. Are there other parties you want to talk to before finalizing implementation of solutions, i.e. kin caregivers, attorneys, judges, advocates?
- **Communication with staff.** How will you keep staff informed of the process and how their feedback has influenced policy and practice changes?

As the KPM process has shown, solutions must be matched to real barriers. Equally important, however, is that solutions are results-based so you can assess if they are indeed working to meet your objectives. As with any systems change, solutions must lead to a measurable result so you know whether you have achieved the goal of the entire KPM process: improved outcomes for children and families.

CHECKLIST FOR SECTION III

	Yes	No
Have you reconvened the KPM Team?		
Have you documented barriers?		
Have you documented ideas for Improvement?		
Have you analyzed the results and established priorities?		
Have you developed solutions to overcome barriers?		
Have you shared results with high-level leadership?		
Have you implemented results based solutions?		
Have you put the KPM results into action?		

Conclusion

This guide presents child welfare agencies with a unique application of traditional business process mapping to the field of child welfare, and specifically to improvements in the way your organization identifies, approves and supports kinship caregivers. It helps you understand how to prepare to conduct KPM so that you can gain insight into the detailed steps that drive your system and the barriers staff encounter along the way. It also provides you with practical guidance about facilitating KPM sessions and templates you can use to map processes in your own jurisdiction. Finally, the guide presents some suggestions for compiling and analyzing the results of the KPM, presenting them to leadership and jointly developing solutions.

Although the KPM process may seem complicated at first glance, the KPM Team and staff who attend the sessions will become even more invaluable to your agency as they help you refine your kinship system.

As you consider how your organization will use the results of the KPM, remember that solutions to barriers in your system cannot be based upon assumptions about the way things are. Your staff has the knowledge and insight to identify and remove these barriers. Kinship Process Mapping is an ideal instrument to support your agency in making systemic changes that can lead to better results for children living with kin.