ACF Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Administration on Children, Youth and Families	
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	3. Originating Office: Children's Bureau	
	4. Key Words: MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program; Family First Prevention Services Act; Kinship Navigator Programs	

PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

TO: State, Tribal and Territorial Agencies Administering or Supervising the Administration of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act

SUBJECT: Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Title IV-B, subpart 2 Funding Available to Develop and Enhance or to Evaluate Kinship Navigator Programs

LEGAL AND RELATED REFERENCES: Public Law (P.L.) 117-103, Division H of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022*, enacted March 15, 2022.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Program Instruction (PI) is to provide guidance to state, territorial and tribal title IV-E agencies on the actions required to apply for title IV-B, subpart 2 funding to support the development, enhancement or evaluation of kinship navigator programs. These are federal fiscal year (FY) 2022 funds, provided in P.L. 117-103, Division H of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022*, enacted March 15, 2022.

BACKGROUND: The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), enacted as part of Public Law (P.L.) 115-123, amended the Social Security Act (the Act) to allow title IV-E agencies to receive funding for kinship navigator programs that meet certain criteria. The amendment at section 474(a)(7) of the Act authorized title IV-E agencies to claim 50 percent Federal Financial Participation (FFP) for allowable kinship navigator program costs beginning no earlier than October 1, 2018. On November 30, 2018, the Children's Bureau issued ACYF-CB-PI-18-11 providing guidance on the requirements for participating in the title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program.

As enacted in FFPSA, the law requires that programs funded under the title IV-E Kinship Navigator program must meet practice criteria of promising, supported, or well-supported in accordance with HHS criteria and be approved by the Title IV-E Prevention Services

Clearinghouse (section 471(e)(4)(C) of the Act).[1] The Prevention Services Clearinghouse website[2] includes information on the kinship navigator program models that have been reviewed and rated. The Ohio Kinship Supports Intervention/ProtectOhio has been determined to meet the promising practice criteria needed to meet section 474(a)(7) of the Act for allowable claiming under a title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program. The Prevention Services Clearinghouse is continuing to review additional models.

To help title IV-E agencies prepare to participate in the title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program while kinship navigator program models eligible for title IV-E reimbursement are being identified, the Congress, through annual appropriations bills, set aside $20 million[3] in discretionary funding appropriated under title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Social Security Act in each of FYs 2018 - 2022. The funds are available to all states, as well as to territories and tribes directly operating the title IV-E Foster Care, Adoption Assistance and, if applicable, optional Guardianship Assistance and Prevention Services programs. The funds are to be used to develop, enhance or evaluate kinship navigator programs. The Children's Bureau previously issued guidance on how to apply for funding in each of FYs 2018 – 2021. This PI provides guidance on how to apply for FY 2022 title IV-B, subpart 2 Kinship Navigator funding.

INFORMATION ON FY 2022 TITLE IV-B, SUBPART 2 KINSHIP NAVIGATOR FUNDING:

Eligible Applicants: States, territories, and tribes, directly operating a title IV-E program are eligible to apply for the FY 2022 title IV-B, subpart 2 annual appropriation to develop, enhance or evaluate kinship navigator programs. Eligible applicants are listed in the allotment table in Attachment A. Please direct any questions regarding eligibility to the appropriate Children's Bureau (CB) Regional Office (RO).

Estimated allotments: Grants will be distributed by formula to all title IV-E agencies that apply for funding, using allocation statistics also used for the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families program, authorized under title IV-B, subpart 2. See Attachment A for estimated allotments. If any eligible applicants choose not to apply, funds will be reallotted by formula to all other eligible applicants approved for funding.

> States and Territorial Title IV-E Agencies: The allotment is based on the average monthly number of children receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, with a minimum award of $200,000.
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> Tribal Title IV-E Agencies: The allotment is based on the tribal population count of children and youth under age 21, with a minimum award of $25,000 per tribe. ACF will use the tribal population counts already received and approved for the FY 2022

[1] Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 included a section that temporarily modified the requirements for participating in the title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program, including a provision temporarily waiving the evidence-based standards. Those provisions expired on September 30, 2021.

[2] Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse website https://preventionservices.abtsites.com.

[3] Five percent, ($1 million) of the appropriation is reserved for federal research, evaluation and technical assistance activities, leaving $19 million available for kinship navigator grants.

title IV-B grant awards, so there is no need for tribes to submit new population counts for this award.

Approved Activities: Title IV-E agencies may use these funds to develop, enhance or evaluate kinship navigator programs, as described in section 427(a)(1) of the Social Security Act, as follows:

> (1) a kinship navigator program to assist kinship caregivers in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet the needs of the children they are raising and their own needs, and to promote effective partnerships among public and private agencies to ensure kinship caregiver families are served, which program—
>
> (A) shall be coordinated with other State or local agencies that promote service coordination or provide information and referral services, including the entities that provide 2–1–1 or 3–1–1 information systems where available, to avoid duplication or fragmentation of services to kinship care families;
>
> (B) shall be planned and operated in consultation with kinship caregivers and organizations representing them, youth raised by kinship caregivers, relevant government agencies, and relevant community-based or faith-based organizations;
>
> (C) shall establish information and referral systems that link (via toll-free access) kinship caregivers, kinship support group facilitators, and kinship service providers to—
>
> (i) each other;
>
> (ii) eligibility and enrollment information for Federal, State, and local benefits;
>
> (iii) relevant training to assist kinship caregivers in caregiving and in obtaining benefits and services; and
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> (iv) relevant legal assistance and help in obtaining legal services;
>
> (D) shall provide outreach to kinship care families, including by establishing, distributing, and updating a kinship care website, or other relevant guides or outreach materials;
>
> (E) shall promote partnerships between public and private agencies, including schools, community based or faith-based organizations, and relevant government agencies, to increase their knowledge of the needs of kinship care families and other individuals who are willing and able to be foster parents for children in foster care under the responsibility of the State who are themselves parents to promote better services for those families;
>
> (F) may establish and support a kinship care ombudsman with authority to intervene and help kinship caregivers access services; and
>
> (G) may support any other activities designed to assist kinship caregivers in obtaining benefits and services to improve their caregiving.

CB also reminds title IV-E agencies that these funds may be used to provide concrete supports and brief legal services for families, consistent with section 427(a)(1) of the Act, as follows:

- CB has clarified that kinship navigator funds appropriated under title IV-B, subpart 2 may be used for concrete supports, such as to purchase bus tokens or passes, gas vouchers or grocery store cards, when necessary to fulfill the purpose of the program to help caregivers access existing benefits and services to meet the needs of the children they are raising and their own needs.

- CB has also determined that grantees may use kinship navigator funds provided under title IV-B, subpart 2 to provide brief legal services to "assist kinship caregivers in learning about, finding and using programs and services to meet the needs of the children they are raising and their own needs," which may include "support[ing] any other activities designed to assist kinship caregivers in obtaining benefits and services to improve their caregiving."

Project Period: The FY 2022 Title IV-B, subpart 2 Kinship Navigator Grant must be spent on activities conducted between October 1, 2021 and September 30, 2023. Funds must be liquidated by December 30, 2023.

Match: There is no match requirement.

Financial Reporting Requirements: Title IV-E agencies are required to submit an electronic SF-425 for the Kinship Navigator Grant through the Payment Management System (PMS). For more information on gaining access to and using the PMS system, please contact the PMS Help Desk at 1- 877-614-5533 or for more information see https://pms.psc.gov.

Title IV-E agencies must submit the SF-425 for expenditures under the title IV-B, subpart 2 Kinship Navigator Grant at the end of each 12-month period (October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022 and October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023) of the two-year expenditure period. Each report is due 90 days after the end of each federal fiscal year (December 30). The SF-425 covering the first 12-month budget period is the interim report and the report covering the entire grant period is the final report. The title IV-E agency must obligate the funds by September 30, 2023 and liquidate them by December 30, 2023. Note that while the Kinship Navigator Grant funding was provided through the appropriation for title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Act, these reports must be submitted separately from reports filed for the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. A negative grant award will recoup any unobligated and/or unliquidated funds reported on the final SF-425 for the Kinship Navigator Grant.

INSTRUCTIONS: Each title IV-E agency applying for funds must submit the following information to CB by **no later than May 20, 2022.**

- *FY 2022 Kinship Navigator Funding Request Form*: Complete the FY 2022 Kinship Navigator Program Funding Request Form (Attachment B), signed by an authorized official from the state or tribe. Please also include information on an agency representative to contact for any programmatic questions on the submission.

Kinship Navigator Program Narrative. Provide a brief narrative outlining the activities that will be carried out using the FY 2022 title IV-B, subpart 2 Kinship Navigator Grant funds. The funds may be used to develop, enhance and/or evaluate kinship navigator programs, consistent with the specifications described in section 427(a)(1) of the Act.

If using funds to develop or enhance kinship navigator programs, please describe:

- The agency's outreach strategies and efforts to promote equitable access to services by reaching out to underserved populations of kinship caregivers.

- Efforts to connect families to high quality, culturally competent, language appropriate services aimed to address the unique needs of kinship families in the jurisdiction.

The Children's Bureau also encourages agencies to consider how funds might be used to enhance the evidence base available for kinship navigator programs. Title IV-E agencies choosing to use these funds to evaluate a kinship navigator program are urged to ensure that the evaluation is appropriate for consideration in the review of kinship navigator programs by the Prevention Services Clearinghouse (see *Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures*[4]). Title IV-E agencies are encouraged to document the evaluation[5] methodology, study design and findings of its kinship navigator program. The Reporting Guide for Study Authors[6] details the information in studies that the Prevention Services Clearinghouse uses to determine eligibility for review, assign design and execution ratings, and determine program or service ratings, as well as other recommended practices for research reporting. The Prevention Services Clearinghouse reviews and assesses studies on the basis of study design, overall and differential sample attrition, the equivalence of intervention and comparison groups at baseline (as applicable), and when necessary, procedures accounting for clustering. The Prevention Services Clearinghouse will also review how the study accounts for confounding factors and examines at least one "target outcome" (see ACYF-CB-PI-18-11, Attachment C, Study Eligibility Criteria) using a measure that is reliable and achieves face validity. Domains of kinship navigator program target outcomes include (a) Child Safety, (b) Child Permanency, (c) Child Well-Being, (d) Adult Well-Being, (e) Access to Services, (f) Referral to Services, and/or (g) Satisfaction with Programs and Services.[7]

Additionally, to be eligible for the review by the Prevention Services Clearinghouse, kinship navigator programs must also have a book, manual, or other available documentation that specifies the components of the practice protocol and describes how to administer the practice.

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[4] *Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures*
https://preventionservices.abtsites.com/themes/ffc_theme/pdf/psc_handbook_v1_final_508_compliant.pdf

[5] ACYF-CB-IM-19-04. This Information Memorandum provides an Evaluation Plan Development Tip Sheet to assist with developing an evaluation plan. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/im-19-04

[6] Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse Reporting Guide for Study Authors
https://preventionservices.abtsites.com/themes/ffc_theme/pdf/reporting_guide_study_authors_april_2021.pdf

[7] Operational definitions for the eligible target outcomes are provided in Section 4.1.5 in the *Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook and Procedures*

For additional information on designing and conducting child welfare evaluation, the Child Welfare Evidence-Building Academy[8] includes 15 modules to guide child welfare professionals through the process of choosing a method of evaluation to match the target population and implementing experiments to answer specific questions about child welfare casework practice.

- *Submissions*: Submit electronically (by email) the FY 2022 title IV-B, subpart 2 Kinship Navigator Grant Funding Request Form (Attachment B) and the narrative on the planned use of funding to the appropriate Children's Bureau Regional Office. Please note that the Children's Bureau has created resource email boxes for each CB Regional Office to receive plan submissions (e.g., CBRegion1@acf.hhs.gov; CBRegion2@acf.hhs.gov; etc.) Please submit the FY 2022 Kinship Navigator application to the new resource mailbox, rather than sending to the personal email address of the Regional Program Manager or other staff. Please also send a copy to Liliana Hernandez in the Children's Bureau Central Office at liliana.hernandez@acf.hhs.gov.

- *Progress Reporting*: Title IV-E agencies will also be required to provide an update on their use of these funds and accomplishments in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) submission that will be due June 30, 2023.

Paperwork Reduction Act:

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. The Control Number for this OMB approved information collection is 0970-0426, approved through September 30, 2023.

Inquiries To: Children's Bureau Regional Program Managers

/s/

Cheri Hoffman
Acting Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth
and Families

Disclaimer Language
The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way, unless specifically incorporated into a contract. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law.

Attachment A: Eligible Applicants and Estimated Allotments
Attachment B: FY 2022 Title IV-B, Subpart 2 Kinship Navigator Funding Request Form

[8] Child Welfare Evidence-Building Academy: A Training on Rigorous Evaluation Design and Implementation | The Administration for Children and Families (hhs.gov) https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/training-technical-assistance/child-welfare-evidence-building-academy-training-rigorous