

FFTA



**Family
Focused
Treatment
Association**

KINSHIP THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE

North Carolina Pilot
Evaluation Findings

FFTA's Kinship Philosophy

- All children belong in families, preferably their own families.
- When children cannot safely live with their parents, they should have every opportunity to live safely with relatives or those with whom they have a family-like relationship

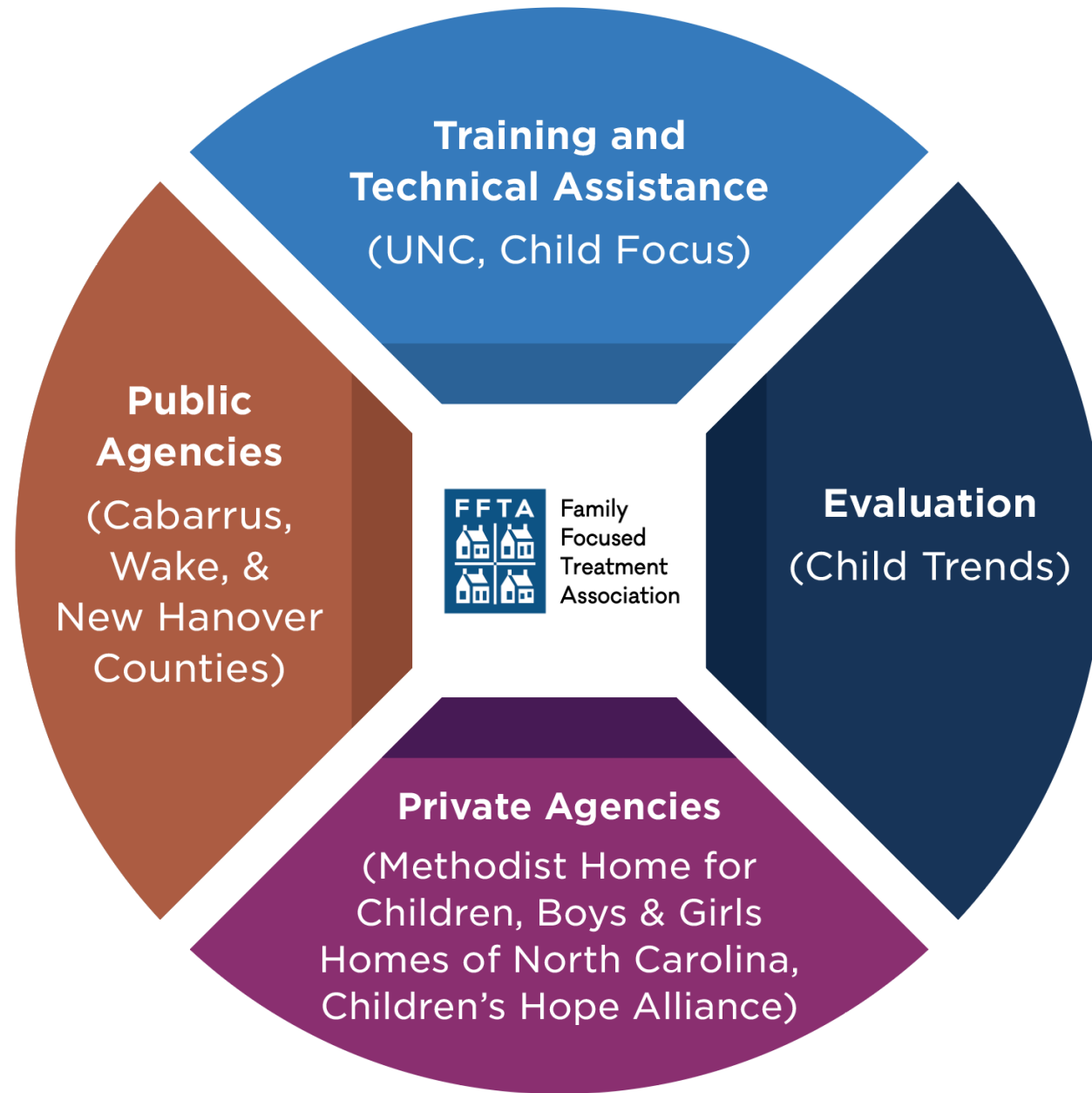


FFTA's Vision for Kinship Treatment Foster Care (KTFC)



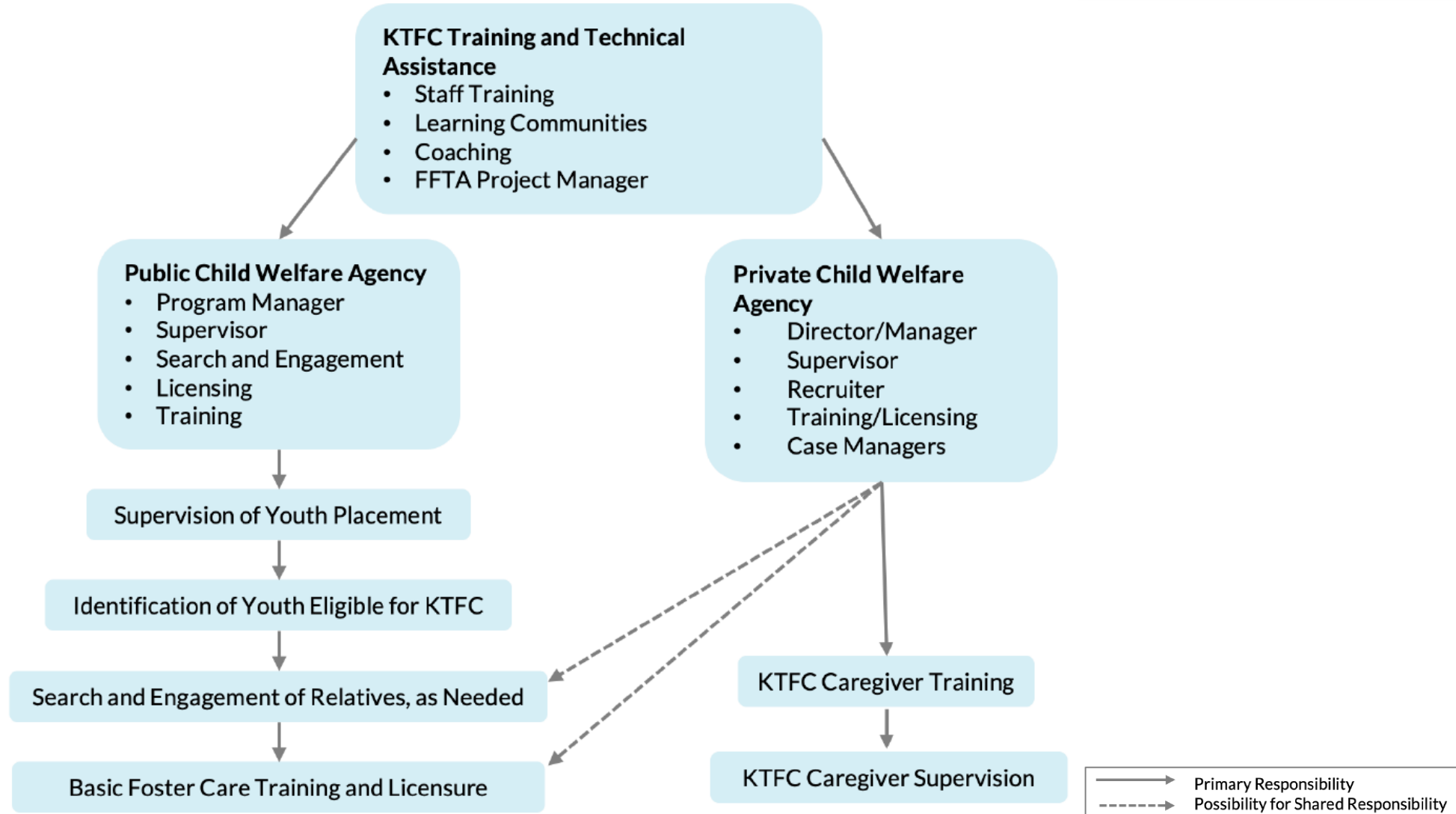
- Children in out-of-home care with treatment needs can have those needs met by relatives or those with whom they have a family-like relationship.
- KTFC can help children stay safe, achieve permanency, and thrive when their kinship caregivers have access to the full array of training, services, and supports available through treatment foster care.
- Combined, kinship care and treatment foster care benefits both children and families.
 - Children and youth remain in their family network with caring adults.
 - The families receive the level of support they need to meet the children's social, emotional and behavioral needs.
 - Kinship treatment foster care can help states and counties meet their federally mandated performance outcomes.

KTFC Overview



KTFC Project Partners

Public and Private Agency Partner Roles



KTFC Model Components

KTFC families maintain a therapeutic foster care license under state licensing regulations

KTFC caregivers and staff have weekly face-to-face contact

Weekly 1-hour team supervision provided by trained staff

KTFC agencies implement an evidence-based or well-supported intervention, e.g. "Caring for Our Own"

24/7 crisis support is available

Coordinated access to specialized therapeutic services and respite services is available as needed

Qualified professionals supervise 8-10 youth and complete KTFC training

Staff provide families with linkages to medication management as needed

Staff and kinship caregivers participate in the service planning process

KTFC Training and Technical Assistance

FFTA, Child Focus, and UNC developed a comprehensive approach to KTFC implementation training and technical assistance

- Training for staff and kinship caregivers
- Learning communities, and coaching for staff
- Supervision for kinship caregivers

Training and Technical Assistance Overview

- **Training**
 - Administered prior to engagement in the pilot evaluation
- **Learning communities**
 - Intended to reinforce and extend staff training
 - Led by FFTA, Child Focus, & UNC
 - Occurred 4 times in 2021 (7 hours each) and 8 in 2022 (2 hours each)
- **Coaching**
 - Public/private agency pairs met with a coach every other month to review their individualized coaching plans

Staff Training, Learning Communities, and Coaching

Training Topics

Session 1

- Define kinship care and articulate the benefits for youth and youth in foster care
- Articulate the values and beliefs that guide attitudes and action on behalf of kinship families
- Understand how implicit bias and structural racism may impact efforts to achieve positive and equitable outcomes for youth and youth of color
- Identify how personal mindsets and organization's culture impact engagement of kinship families

Session 2

- Articulate the differences between traditional foster care and kinship care
- Name the policies and practices that help address the unique needs of kinship families and those that might impede engagement with the kinship triad (the youth, birth parents, and kinship caregivers)

Session 3

- Identify the unique dynamics of the kinship triad and how it is impacted by the new caregiving relationship
- Articulate strategies to identify and address changing family dynamics of kinship care to mitigate risk
- Assess unconscious and conscious biases related to the kinship triad
- Recognize and articulate how trauma impacts the caregiving relationship and how kinship families engage with the agency and how family members engage with one another

Session 4

- Identify and describe the providers in the region that engage and offer services and supports to meet the holistic needs of kinship families as well as informal community stakeholders who can offer support
- Identify methods used to engage kinship families, which include personal perspectives, experiences, and ideas, in the co-design of services and supports
- Identify the benefits and barriers of a public/private partnership and articulate strategies to mitigate challenges

Staff Training Learning Objectives

- Basic foster parent training
- Licensure as therapeutic foster care parents
- Additional 10-hour KTFC training
- Weekly supervision sessions with private agency KTFC staff

Kinship Caregiver Training and Supervision

Module	Kinship Caregiver Training Objectives
Module 1: The Role of the Kinship Therapeutic Foster Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The roles and responsibilities of a KTFC provider • The kinship triad • The treatment team • The person-centered plan
Module 2: Safety Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of safety plans • Establishing rules and setting boundaries • Utilizing safety plans
Module 3: Trauma Informed Behavior Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic kinship care is different parenting • Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) • How trauma impacts child development • Signs of trauma at different ages • Identifying triggers • Positive reinforcement
Module 4: Trauma and Mental Health: Common Diagnoses, Treatment and Behavior Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health stigma prevents help • Your role as an advocate • Trauma informed professionals • Treatments and behavior management of attachment; anxiety; depression; attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; oppositional defiant disorder; conduct disorders; PTSD
Module 5: Substance Misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prevalence of substance misuse • The stigma of substance misuse • The effects of substances on the brain • Commonly misused substances and their effect on parenting • Effective treatment • Supporting family members
Module 6: Crisis Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a crisis • Recognizing the warning signs • Escalation and the crisis event (maintaining safety) • De-escalating the crisis • Processing our response

Kinship Caregiver Learning Objectives

Key Findings

Key Findings Summary

- Importance of effective partnership and collaboration
- Context matters, including size of county and support of other agencies
- Commitment of leadership
- Influence of a program champion
- Influence of attitudes and beliefs about kinship care
- Adequate resources, including staffing
- Effective training for staff and kinship caregivers
- Technical assistance is a critical component
- Essential need for robust search and engagement
- More youth placed with kin who are trained in KTFC
- KTFC cost-effective option for youth needing therapeutic levels of care
- Effective partnership strategies
- Effective implementation strategies
- Challenges to implementation

- KTFC requires regular communication among staff at partner agencies
- Communication must be transparent, consistent, and frequent
- Key collaboration factors also include shared responsibility, trust, and established processes and procedures
- Establish clear understanding of staff roles and responsibilities, as well as goals central to implementation



“We share different ideas and each agency is open to listening to the other. They’re a perfect blend.” - **Staff**

Importance of Effective Partnership and Collaboration

Context Matters, Including Size of County and Support of Other Agencies

- A medium-sized agency with sufficient staff to take on KTFC responsibilities is the optimal environment for successful KTFC implementation
- An agency that dedicates time to meet with and educate staff on KTFC across and outside the agency promotes the importance of supporting kinship caregivers and their families



- KTFC implementation is most successful when middle managers feel supported by top leadership and have latitude to make decisions, create expectations, and support staff



Commitment of Leadership

- A staff member who has the passion, ability, influence, and support to promote and champion the program is helpful and can make a big difference
- The program champion does not have to be in a top leadership role, but does need clear support of top leaders to be effective and successful



Influence of a Program Champion

- Most staff saw the benefits of KTFC, but some staff and court personnel were still skeptical of the need for supports and services, including financial support, for kinship caregivers
- Work needs to be done to counteract these attitudes and combat stigma faced by kinship caregivers when they seek assistance



"I believe in this program, I love that it's therapeutic-based because a lot of our kids [are high-needs, and] what we can provide as family foster care, we can't provide that support." - **Staff**

Influence of Attitudes and Beliefs About Kinship Care

- Adequate agency resources, including workers dedicated to kinship care support without competing demands on their time, create conditions for success



Adequate Resources, Including Staffing

Caregiver Training

- Kinship caregivers expressed positive opinions about and gained knowledge from the training
- Kinship caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that the:
 - Knowledge and skills learned in training are reinforced by staff
 - Training addressed training needs and provided skills to use in the home
 - Orientation helped them anticipate many of the difficulties later experienced as a kinship caregiver

As of 12/7/2022	Total
Completed basic training and KTFC	23
Licensed as foster parents	17
Licensed as therapeutic foster parents, provided KTFC	12
Completed 6-month KTFC program (6 families)	8

Effective Training For Staff and Kinship Caregivers

- Both staff and kinship caregivers gained knowledge and skills in kinship care and the family system through their respective KTFC trainings
- Effective trainers incorporate feedback and adjust materials to strengthen content and presentation of future trainings



“As a grandmother I assumed responsibility, and through training saw other things that are affecting kids and how other people in the team helped what the kids were going through. It [the training] was pretty thorough.” - **Caregiver**

Effective Training For Staff and Kinship Caregivers

Staff Training

- Training increased staff knowledge and understanding of kinship care and kinship therapeutic foster care, including the unique experiences faced by kin
- Staff developed greater understanding of how to approach trainings to be more inclusive of kinship caregivers and to incorporate the use of appropriate language in trainings

Effective Training For Staff and Kinship Caregivers

- Technical assistance includes training staff, providing coaching individually and in pairs, and offering opportunities to learn together as a community
- Technical assistance should be an integral part of any attempt to replicate or scale-up KTFC in other jurisdictions



Technical Assistance Is a Critical Component

- KTFC provided tools and training for staff to bolster their skills related to search and engagement of kin for youth in care
- More work is needed to ensure this piece is routinely done at the start of a case and at frequent intervals when a youth is in out-of-home placement
- More work is needed to support private and public agency staff so that they can partner on effective search and engagement practices



“The kinship triad [child, parent, and kinship caregiver] helped us really get an understanding of why kinship placements are more difficult. So just more of an understanding of -- putting yourself in their shoes kind of thing. So I think that was helpful for us to realize when we are calling relatives and they're not calling us back or they're hesitant, it makes us a little more understanding.” - **Staff**

Essential Need For Robust Search and Engagement

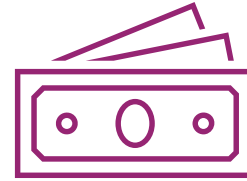
- Over the course of the pilot, the number and percentage of youth identified as eligible for KTFC increased, demonstrating a shift to increased consideration of kinship care as an option
- 23 kinship families were trained in KTFC
- Kinship caregivers who participated in KTFC reported satisfaction with and benefits from the program



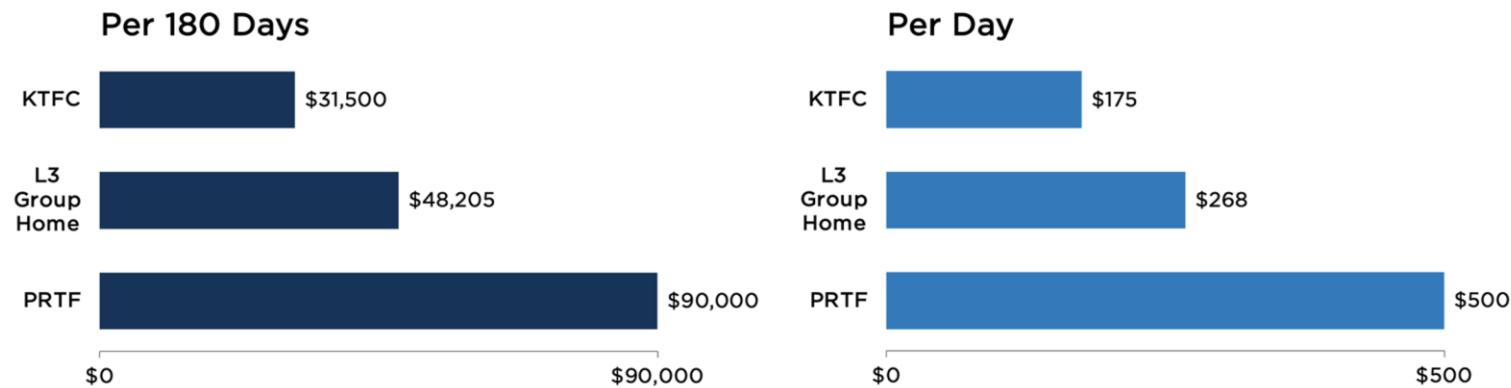
“The whole experience has really been great for us. I know if I think back to almost two years ago when we first got the kids, it was very different--I just remember feeling so overwhelmed I didn't know what to do at all. And without this program I still don't know where we would be. So I'm very thankful for that.” - **Caregiver**

More Youth Were Placed With Kin Who Are Trained In KTFC

- KTFC appears to be a cost-effective option for youth needing therapeutic levels of out-of-home care
- More information is needed regarding the costs associated with KTFC



Cost Saving of TFC Over Higher Levels of Care



*Therapeutic foster care provides the same service as KTFC, but to non-relative caregivers

Costs of KTFC

Effective Partnership Strategies

- Ensure leadership is committed to the partnership and address concerns as they arise
- Select staff who have the time, energy, and desire to work collaboratively
- Quickly develop a schedule of regular meetings to foster open, transparent conversation
- Discuss roles and responsibilities from the outset and revisit periodically
- Share responsibility for tasks, such as relative search and engagement, whenever possible
- Honestly evaluate capacity and limitations and discuss challenges as they arise
- Share attitudes and beliefs about kinship care and find areas of common ground

Effective Implementation Strategies



- Support staff who are passionate about kinship care and give them the authority to champion the program
- Develop small teams with specific assignments and clear roles
- Ensure staff have the resources they need to do their work, including training, dedicated time, support of leadership, supervision, and coaching
- Collaborate with outside expert technical assistance providers who can help facilitate and guide the work
- Encourage open dialogue about attitudes and beliefs around kinship care and educate all staff about the importance of supporting kinship caregivers and youth in their care
- Work collaboratively with partners around caregiver engagement to facilitate easy transitions to training and licensure
- Ensure adequate training opportunities, in multiple formats, are available for kinship caregiver training
- Include kinship caregivers and youth in decision making and planning around kinship care supports and services

Challenges To Implementation

- Staff turnover, burnout, stress, and overload resulting in less search and engagement of kin as potential placements for youth
- Attitudes and beliefs around kinship care, such as family should not need financial support to care for their own, which leads to less supports for kinship caregivers and more stress for caregivers and their families
- Pressure to make placements “permanent” through guardianship or adoption before the kinship caregivers are ready and before they receive the full training and support KTFC offers

To learn more about the North Carolina KTFC Pilot, connect with FFTA via email (ffta@ffta.org), the FFTA website (<https://www.ffta.org/>), or on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn).



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Thank you!