



Office of Children and Family Services

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

52 WASHINGTON STREET
RENSELAER, NY 12144

Sheila J. Poole
Commissioner

Administrative Directive

Transmittal:	21-OCFS-ADM-15
To:	Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies
Issuing Division/Office:	Child Welfare and Community Services
Date:	July 13, 2021
Subject:	Kinship Champion Training
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Social Services Adoption Supervisors Child Welfare Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Home Finder/Agency Workers Home Finder/Agency Worker Supervisors CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	Section VI
Attachments:	None

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
20-OCFS-ADM-18 17-OCFS-ADM-02		18 NYCRR §430.11(c)(4)	FCA §1017 and 1055; SSL §384-a101		

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Directive (ADM) is to inform local departments of social services (LDSSs) and voluntary agencies (VAs) of the requirement to identify a Kinship Champion

to attend the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Kinship Champion training.

II. Background

New York State (NYS) statute and regulation require specific actions to identify, notify and engage kinship resources when a child is removed from their home. Requirements are as follows:

- Within 30 days after removal of a child from the custody of the child's parent or parents, or earlier where directed by the court or as required by section 384-a of the Social Services Law, LDSSs must exercise due diligence in identifying the child's relatives in accordance with the criteria and standards as set forth in 18 NYCRR §430.11(c)(4). The LDSSs must provide the child's relatives with notification that the child has been or is being removed from the child's parent or parents, that explains the options through which the relatives may provide care for the child, including both foster care and non-foster care options and the options that may be lost by the failure to respond to such notification in a timely manner.
- In abuse or neglect proceedings under Article 10 of the Family Court Act (FCA), when the court determines that a child must be removed from their home pursuant to FCA, or placed pursuant to FCA §1055, the LDSSs must conduct an investigation to locate any non-respondent parent and any relatives of the child, including all of the child's grandparents, and all relatives or suitable persons identified by any respondent parent or any non-respondent parent and any relative identified by a child over the age of 5 who plays or has played a significant positive role in the child's life. The LDSSs must inform such individuals, in writing, of the pendency of the proceeding and of the opportunity to care for the child through various placement options.

OCFS has issued policies and guidance over recent years to meaningfully effectuate the above legal requirements, including requiring that

- potential kinship resources be provided with informational materials to meaningfully inform them of their options for providing care
- LDSSs and VAs submit kinship policies outlining their procedures for identifying, notifying and engaging kinship resources; and
- LDSSs and VAs establish a Kin-First Firewall practice to exhaust all efforts to achieve kinship care before a non-kin placement may be made.¹

The above requirements have helped to increase safe and appropriate kinship care across the state. Concerns have been expressed, however, of the lack of a dedicated staff person(s) to help engage kin, explain their options and provide ongoing support. To address this concern, OCFS has developed a Kinship Champion training curriculum. The goal of the training is to equip at least one staff person from each LDSS and VA with the knowledge and skills to support kinship care at all stages in the life of a case. This person is called a Kinship Champion. The training was

¹ [20-OCFS-ADM-18](#)

piloted with several LDSSs in November 2020 and will be made available and required of all LDSSs and VAs in the summer of 2021. LDSSs and VAs will be able to register for the training via the Human Services Learning Center (HSLC).

After attending this training, each LDSS and VA will have one or more dedicated Kinship Champions with the knowledge and skills to engage and support kinship caregivers. This ADM provides information on the role of a Kinship Champion and sets forth training requirements to establish a Kinship Champion in each LDSS and VA statewide.

III. Program Implications

A Kinship Champion is an LDSS or VA staff member who has taken the OCFS Kinship Champion training and whose role is to help implement the LDSSs or VAs goal to increase safe and appropriate kinship placements (including placements with both relatives and suitable persons with a positive relationship to the child or child's family). Kinship Champions act as information resources, advocates for kinship placement and liaisons to the community. The responsibilities of a Kinship Champion will vary across LDSSs and VAs, but may include the following duties:

- Search, engage and assess potential kin caregivers
- Help caregivers make informed decisions
- Collaborate with community service providers
- Provide guidance and tailored support to kin who choose to become foster parents
- Serve as on-site experts for colleagues
- Advocate for kin-first policy and practice guidelines

A successful Kinship Champion is one who is versed in NYS rules, regulations and processes related to the different types of kinship placements. This person(s) has extensive knowledge of the options and supports for kinship caregivers, and values and recognizes the unique needs of kinship placements. Achieving safe and stable kinship care is a process rather than an event. Therefore, a Kinship Champion should work to identify and meet the needs of kinship caregivers on an ongoing basis. The OCFS Kinship Champion training is a required training that is designed to prepare Kinship Champions across the state to take on such roles and responsibilities.

IV. Required Actions

Each LDSS and VA must identify at least one staff person to fill a Kinship Champion position within the LDSS or VA within the next 12 months. The LDSS or VA must require that this person attend the OCFS Kinship Champion Training, which will be rolled out at the end of August 2021.

LDSSs and VAs have discretion to choose one or more new or existing staff member(s) best suited to fill the Kinship Champion position. For example, this person may be an existing home finder or kinship specialist who will fill the Kinship Champion responsibilities as part of, or in addition to, their normal responsibilities.

V. Systems Implications

None.

VI. Contacts

Any questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate OCFS regional office, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services:

Buffalo Regional Office – Amanda Darling (716) 847-3145
Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov

Rochester Regional Office – Christopher M. Bruno (585) 238-8201
Christopher.Bruno@ocfs.ny.gov

Syracuse Regional Office – Sara Simon (315) 423-1200
Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov

Albany Regional Office – John Lockwood (518) 486-7078
John.Lockwood@ocfs.ny.gov

Westchester Regional Office – Sheletha Chang (845) 708-2498
Sheletha.Chang@ocfs.ny.gov

New York City Regional Office – Ronni Fuchs (212) 383-4873
Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov

Native American Services – Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123
Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov

VII. Effective Date

This policy directive is effective immediately.

/s/ Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu

Issued By:

Name: Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu

Title: Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Division of Child Welfare and Community Services