


**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
311 W. SARATOGA STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201**

**DATE:** August 1, 2014

**POLICY #:** SSA – CW # 15-2

**TO:** Directors, Local Departments of Social Services  
Assistant Directors of Services

**FROM:**   
Deborah Ramelmeier, Acting Executive Director  
Social Services Administration

**RE:** Kinship Navigator Services

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED:** In-Home Services, Out-of-Home Placement Services and  
Resource Development

**ORIGINATING OFFICE:** Child Welfare Training and Organizational Development

**ACTION REQUIRED OF:** All Local Departments

**REQUIRED ACTION:** Implement Policy and Procedures

**ACTION DUE:** August 15, 2014

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**PURPOSE:**

This policy provides guidance for statewide implementation of Kinship Navigator Services in Maryland.

**BACKGROUND:**

Kinship Navigator Services were adopted as a pilot project to support the *Place Matters* initiative by identifying appropriate relative resources to divert out-of-home placements and provide in-home services for relatives who are able to help children achieve permanency.

In 2009, the Children's Bureau awarded DHR/SSA a Fostering Connections Demonstration Project which was piloted among 7 jurisdictions (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, Washington and Baltimore City). Kinship Navigator services were one of the interventions used for the demonstration project that aligned with the Place Matters goals and the core family-centered practice values. In an effort to support and promote the safety and well-being of children in Maryland, services and resources were offered to kinship caregivers providing care for a relative minor child. A requirement of the grant was to develop a statewide replication plan to sustain the program based on the lessons learned during the demonstration project. Offering statewide Kinship Navigator services will enhance the continuum of services to relatives and improve the subsequent permanency outcomes for children and youth.

Kinship Navigator implementation has begun in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's, Somerset, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties, and Baltimore City. Input from those practice experiences in the pilot jurisdictions provided the framework for policy that will guide the continuation of both established practice as well as the expansion to the replication sites. SSA will continue to offer technical assistance during bi-monthly Implementation Team Meetings, a format that started during the demonstration project. Local departments will be invited to designate representatives to join these bi-monthly meetings as implementation begins in the remaining jurisdictions. Staggered implementation in the remaining jurisdictions will begin July 1, 2014. SSA and the current Kinship Navigators will be available to provide technical assistance to local departments to assist in assessing resources and strategies to support the kinship needs of their respective communities.

**ACTION:**

Local departments shall designate child welfare staff or procure services from a community vendor to serve as local or regional Kinship Navigators. The Kinship Navigator should be accessible as an information and referral resource for relative caregivers who contact local departments with questions to help them care for their minor relatives. The Kinship Navigator should be knowledgeable about community resources to share with other local department staff, such as Child Support, Family Investment, and other child welfare programs. Referrals may also come from SSA and community agencies.

### *Role of the Kinship Navigator*

The Kinship Navigator will be responsible for identifying, coordinating, and disseminating information about community-based outreach services and resources for kinship caregivers within their respective jurisdictions. Kinship Navigator services may be delivered by a case worker designated by the local department or vendor contracted to provide the services.

The role of the kinship navigator shall include:

- Developing information and referral resources;
- Facilitating regular support groups for kinship care providers;
- Documenting client services in MD CHESSIE;
- Developing community partnerships and resources to support relative caregivers;
- Assessing risk and safety concerns and referring to Child Protective Services when appropriate;
- Promoting safety, well-being, and permanency for children and youth in informal kinship arrangements.

The Kinship Navigator should have a familiarity with community resources and services available in their respective jurisdictions. Local departments should assess the needs of their communities to develop targeted outreach to community agencies and kinship caregivers. Particular attention should be given to services that are low in cost or free, as many of the families to be served will have limited financial resources.

Local departments may choose to develop a family advisory board. Potential members may be kinship caregivers, representatives from the local aging agency, Family Investment Administration, Department of Education, or the Local Management Boards. Regular caregiver support groups should be arranged to address the relevant needs of the kinship caregivers. Provisions should be made to offer day, evening, or weekend support groups to accommodate the availability of the caregivers. Support groups should meet at least monthly. The Child Welfare Academy (CWA) will offer quarterly regional workshops based on the topics generated by the support groups.

To support community outreach efforts, the Kinship Navigator shall develop and maintain resources guides that will include information on the following:

- Educational resources such as school enrollment, special education procedures, free and reduced lunch program, and counseling services;
- Access to medical services such as physical health, mental health, and substance abuse;
- Entitlement services, Temporary Cash Assistance, medical assistance and food stamps;
- Community resources such as food pantries, energy assistance, and housing assistance;
- Child care services;
- Legal services; and /or,
- Applying for case management and family support services.

### *Case Management Services*

Kinship caregivers should be referred to the Kinship Navigator to provide information about community-based services if there are no risk and safety concerns for the children placed with relatives. If abuse or neglect of a child is suspected, an internal referral should be made to CPS. Local departments may include the Kinship Navigator in case rotation as the respective administrators deem appropriate to manage the job functions. Case management may also be provided within the established local protocol for assigning cases. If a family requires more intensive services over a longer period of time beyond 3 months, a referral for ongoing Consolidated In-Home Services should be initiated. The requirements for in-home case management services are described in **SSA #12-39 Consolidated In-Home Services Policy**. Low risk caregivers may be referred voluntarily for Level 3 Stabilization services as the caseloads permit within any particular local department.

During the 3 month period, the Kinship Navigator will provide services including:

- Assessing the client's current situation and challenges;
- Providing information, resources, and referrals;
- Advocating for the client;
- Facilitating coordination of care; and/or,
- Helping the client navigate various systems.

A safety assessment must be completed for cases referred by the Kinship Navigator. This should include a safety assessment for every child in the household within 7 working days of case acceptance. A risk assessment must be completed within 30 days of case acceptance. A risk assessment must be completed prior to closing the case. Relatives should be given timeframes for services and clear expectations for safety, well-being and permanency planning for the children placed in their care by the local department. The service plan should use non-ambiguous language so that relatives understand the scope of their responsibilities. They should be provided with information and financial resources as appropriate to assist with establishing permanency for the children diverted to their care. All interested kinship caregivers may participate in the kinship care support group.

### *Responsibility of the Social Services Administration*

SSA has designated a Kinship Navigator Coordinator to support kinship care practice with the local departments and community. SSA is available to provide technical assistance to the local departments to implement and sustain practice for the Kinship Navigators. In addition to the bi-monthly Kin Connections Implementation Team Meetings, SSA will be available to offer orientation technical support, and to facilitate peer consultations with other local departments. Specialized training for the Kinship Navigators will be offered by the Child Welfare Academy. SSA will help to establish and coordinate regional advisory boards as deemed necessary by the local departments. SSA will attend quarterly statewide Kinship Navigator Peer Support Group Meetings to exchange information and address practice challenges or emerging trends in serving

the kinship care population. In addition, SSA will maintain links to kinship care websites and statewide resource materials.

### **MD CHESSIE DOCUMENTATION:**

All Kinship Navigator case activity should be documented in MD CHESSIE in order to track service delivery, to ensure the ongoing safety of children, and to provide better service linkage if families have subsequent requests for help within the child welfare continuum. Training and access to MD CHESSIE will be given to contracted agencies providing Kinship Navigator Services. All written correspondence to families should be placed in the File Cabinet.

### **Case Management and Services**

Cases that will require ongoing case management services, utility or payment assistance, or continued correspondence shall be opened as a service case and assigned to the Kinship Navigator. Follow the steps to start the Non-CPS referral. Send referral to supervisor for approval and have the supervisor open a service case. The service case should then be assigned to the Kinship Navigator for tracking and service delivery.

Both adults and children must be registered in MD CHESSIE as clients to use the service log. All paid services should be paid on behalf of the child, not the adult caregiver. If a family requires Kinship Navigator services for longer than 3 months, a consolidated in-home services case must be opened.

The primary funding code for Kinship Navigator services are:

- **7154** for direct client services in MD CHESSIE
- **0309.70, G2930** in Local CW Administrative Accounts for non-child specific charges

## NEW REFERRAL – DEMOGRAPHICS SCREEN

Select “New Referral” from home page to enter demographics screen

The screenshot shows the MD CHESSIE Referral Information screen for a client named Rachel L. Jones. The interface includes a navigation pane on the left with categories like Referrals, Child Protective Services, and Service Cases. The main area displays client details and intake information.

Client Information:

- Non CPS MD CHESSIE Referral ID: 9003920
- Demo: Non-CPS

Person ID	Name	DOB	SSN	Status	MD CHESSIE ID	Provider ID
2009560	Rachel L. Jones	02/15/1985	000-00-0000			

Client Details:

- Prefix: [Dropdown] First Name: Rachel Middle: L Last: Jones Suffix: [Dropdown]
- Type of AKA: [Dropdown]
- Address: [Text Field] Contact Info: [Text Field]
- Home: (410) 542-2222 Work: [Text Field] Ext: [Text Field]
- Gender: Female SSN: 000-00-0000
- DOB: 02/15/1985 Approximate DOB: [Text Field]
- Marital Status: [Dropdown]
- Primary Race: Alaskan Native + Ethnicity: Yes, No, Unable to Determine
- Secondary Race: [Dropdown]
- Tribal: [Dropdown]
- Substance-Exposed Newborn: [Text Field]
- Substance Class: [Text Field]
- Other Substances: [Text Field]

Role in Intake:

- Casehead
- Participating as Child
- In Household
- Reporter Does Not Want an Acknowledgement Letter
- Reporter Wants to Remain Anonymous
- Unknown Reporter

Buttons: Search, CIS Address History, Acknowledgement Letter

1. Under the “Demo” tab, user completes **all** client detail fields.
2. Select the hyper link under Role in intake and choose an option– Note: It is mandatory that the caller is identified as the Casehead; however more than one option may be selected).
3. Information should be entered for the caller and the relative child.
4. Select “search” to determine whether caller is registered in MD CHESSIE, to register client and to prevent duplication.
5. Once client is registered, user selects “screen complete.”

## NEW REFERRAL – NARRATIVE SCREEN

Select “Narrative” tab to enter “Narrative” Screen

Training - Referral - Referrals (#9003920)

Referrals > Jones, Rachel L (#9003920) > Referral Information

Non CPS MD CHESSIE Referral ID: 9003920

Demos: Narrative Non CPS

Name of Screener: Seaborn, Keith Screener Jurisdiction: Cecil Office Location: Cecil County

Date/Time Received: 10/01/2013 02:06 PM Date/Time Recorded: 10/01/2013 02:06 PM

Type of Contact: Phone Jurisdiction of Incident: [ ]

Reporter: [ ]

Communication Assistance Required (see Referral Information) [Narrative](#)

History Clearance Information: [ ] [Edit](#)

Select Referral Type:

CPS  IMR  RGA CPS

Non CPS  CPS Hist Choc  Private Adopt

1. Complete the Date/Time received field.
2. Select the Type of Contact from the drop down box.
3. Information regarding biological parents can be entered in the “History Clearance” box.
4. User should complete any other relevant information.
5. Under “Select Referral Type” user must select “Non CPS”, which will create a “Non CPS” tab.

**NEW REFERRAL – NON CPS SCREEN (Not referred for Additional Services)**

Select the “Non CPS” Tab to open the “Non CPS” screen.

The screenshot shows a web-based application window titled "Training - Referral - Referrals (#9003920)". The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with categories like "Referrals", "Child Protective Services", "Service Cases", "Adoption Cases", "Finance Management", "Provider Referrals", "Providers", and "Staff Management". The main content area is titled "Referrals > Jones, Rachel L (#9003920) > Referral Information". It features a "Non CPS" tab and a "MD CHESIE Referral ID: 9003920". Below this, there are sections for "Type of Non CPS Referral" (Kinship Navigator - Inform), "Type of Service Requested" (Day Care, Education, Legal), and "Suggested Type of Resources". There are radio buttons for "Referred for Local Dept. Services" and "Not Referred for Local Dept. Services", with the latter selected. A text box contains the reason: "Ms. Jones was not referred to the local department for services as she was referred to Catholic Charities." At the bottom, there is a "Comments" field and a "396 Form Administrative Override Approval" button.

1. Under “Type of Non CPS Referral” Drop down menu select Kinship Navigator Information and Referral.
2. Choose type of service(s) requested by selecting hyperlink under “Type of Service Requested.”
3. If client is not being referred for services, select the appropriate radio button and indicate the reason for non-referral in highlighted section.
4. Select the “approval” hyperlink to submit for supervisory approval.

**\*\* If this client is being referred for services continue to the next screen shot.\*\***



**NEW REFERRAL – NON CPS SCREEN (Referred for Additional Services)**

Select the “Non CPS” Tab to open the “Non CPS” screen.

The screenshot displays the 'Training - Referral - Referrals (#9003920)' application window. The left sidebar shows a navigation tree with 'Referrals' expanded to 'Jones, Rachel L. (#9003920)'. The main content area shows the 'Non CPS' form for 'MD CHESIE Referral ID: 9003920'. The form has two tabs: 'Diagnosis' and 'Narrative', with 'Non CPS' selected. The form fields include:

- 'Type of Non CPS Referral': Kinship Navigator - Informa...
- 'Type of Service Requested': Day Care, Education, Legal (highlighted in yellow)
- 'Suggested Type of Resources':
- Radio buttons for 'Referred for Local Dept. Services' (selected) and 'Not Referred for Local Dept. Services'.
- 'Reason for Not Referring for Services':
- 'Comments': Ms. Jones contact the agency because she was in need of daycare and information on obtaining custody of her nephew.

At the bottom of the form, there are links for '396 Form', 'Administrative Override', and 'Approval'.

1. Under “Type of Non CPS Referral” Drop down menu select Kinship Navigator Information and Referral.
2. Choose type of service(s) requested by selecting hyperlink under “Type of Service Requested.”
3. If client is being referred for services, select the appropriate radio button and indicate the reason for referral in comments section.
4. Select the “approval” hyperlink to submit for supervisory approval.