

15 TYPES OF SUPPORT SERVICES

for Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Care Families

Providing post-placement support is critical to achieving the goal of finding and maintaining a pool of stable families for children and youth, as well as helping families succeed and thrive. Many states, tribes, and territories offer supports to foster, adoptive, or kinship care families, with the services typically fitting into the 15 types outlined below. You can read more and review sample programs in [Chapter 3](#) of *Support Matters: Lessons from Field about Services for Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Care Families*.^{*} (Please note that page numbers referenced below refer to pages within the full *Support Matters* publication.)

Although programs typically offer services along a continuum and services may not fit neatly into distinct categories, below we have grouped them into categories to help clarify ways to think about various kinds of support services. In general, basic services are those offered most often, enhanced services are the next most common, and intensive services typically serve a smaller population of children and families with more serious or challenging needs.

Basic Services

- 1. Child or youth assessment**—To ensure children and youth have the best chance to succeed, a thorough, trauma-informed assessment helps identify their strengths, their needs, and services their family may need to help them heal and grow. Whenever possible, the professionals conducting the assessment should meet with caregivers to explain the results and help connect the family to needed services. In *Support Matters*, see the [Children’s Trauma Assessment Center \(page 114\)](#) and the [Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Family Services Department \(page 178\)](#).
- 2. Information**—A common approach for providing information is through a website with fact sheets, articles, parenting tips, and links to resources on key issues in adoption, foster care, and kinship care. Websites may include searchable databases of effective local resources. Many programs also offer newsletters, fact sheets, or libraries to help parents build their knowledge and skills. For example, [Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections \(Support Matters page 83\)](#) runs three large lending libraries.
- 3. Navigation, advocacy, and referral**—Many family support programs have staff or volunteers who answer questions, provide support, and make referrals to known, trusted, and culturally responsive services in the local community. Staff or volunteers also help parents advocate for assistance the family needs, such as special education services and medical or mental health care. In *Support Matters*, see [Washington State’s \(page 198\)](#) and the [Edgewood Center for Children and Families’ \(page 125\)](#) kinship support programs.

* <http://www.nrcdr.org/develop-and-support-families/support-matters>



4. **Training and other development**—In-person or web-based training for parents may cover topics such as core child welfare issues, common disabilities and behaviors, helping children and youth heal, race and culture, the effects of trauma, and accessing available services. Some programs also offer training to professionals who serve children, youth, and families in adoption, foster care, and kinship care, as well as to extended family members and community members. See [Tennessee Adoption Support and Preservation \(page 78\)](#) and [KEEP \(Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained\) \(page 149\)](#).
5. **Birth family mediation and adoption search**—Information, advice, and counseling can help adoptive, foster, and kinship care parents feel more comfortable working with birth family members and building connections designed to improve outcomes for children and youth. [Kennedy Krieger \(page 153 of Support Matters\)](#) trains its treatment foster parents to support the relationship between children and youth and their birth family members.

Enhanced Services

6. **Peer support**—Whether through parent liaisons or navigators, mentoring, buddy programs, online and in-person support groups, or social activities, children, youth, and parents benefit from spending time with their peers in similar situations. Birth parents can also benefit from gathering with their peers. See the program profiles of [Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parent Association \(page 145\)](#), [The Children’s Home \(page 108\)](#), and [Adoption Network Cleveland \(page 71\)](#).
7. **Mentoring**—Although parents are often mentored by their peers, children and youth are most often mentored by adults, including those who have personal experience with foster care or adoption and other adults who serve as safe and healthy role models. See the [Fostering Healthy Futures program \(page 135\)](#), the [Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association \(page 157\)](#), and [UCLA TIES \(page 193\)](#).

Key characteristics of support services

To be most effective, services provided to adoptive, foster, and kinship care families must embody certain core principles or values. The services should be:

- Trauma-informed and trauma-responsive
- Adoption- or permanency-competent
- Child-centered and family-focused
- Relationship-based
- Strengths-based
- Culturally responsive
- Flexible and accessible

8. **Other services for children and youth**—Many support programs offer children and youth cultural activities, recreational opportunities, job training, and employment support. See the [Yakama Nation Kinship Program \(page 203\)](#) and [Bridges to Health \(page 96\)](#).
9. **Case management**—Through case management, a professional or team of professionals works with the family to identify strengths, protective factors, and challenges. Then the case manager partners with the family to implement a family-specific plan to improve family functioning and reduce problems. Often offered as a time-limited service, case management provides families with support to identify the issues they need to address, connect with effective service providers, develop their skills, and improve outcomes. See the [Seneca Family of Agencies' Adoption/Guardianship Wraparound Program \(page 182\)](#) and the [Child Wellbeing Project \(page 104\)](#).
10. **Education support and advocacy**—Educational services include tutoring, mentoring, and helping develop an IEP (individualized educational program) for a child. In addition, families often require assistance transferring school records and benefit greatly from information and support provided by other families with similar experiences. See [Treehouse \(page 188\)](#) and [Placer County Support Services \(page 170\)](#).
11. **Respite**—Respite care (planned or for crisis situations) provides a needed rest or break for parents—and children—who are struggling from the effects of trauma or with disabilities. In many cases, respite programs give children the chance to build relationships with other children and to participate in meaningful activities that increase their skills and resources. See [Bridges to Health \(page 96\)](#) and the [Mockingbird Society \(page 161\)](#). (For more information about respite care, see AdoptUSKids' [Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Respite in Your Community](#) and [Creating and Sustaining Effective Respite Services: Lessons from the Field](#).)

- 12. Camps or retreats**—Periodic special events can include camps or retreats that serve the entire family, just the parents, or just children and youth. See [Camp to Belong \(page 101\)](#) and [A Second Chance \(page 173\)](#).
- 13. Financial or material supports**—Some programs offer financial supports to meet families' needs for specialized medical equipment, payments for youth activities, emergency funding for child care, or other day-to-day living expenses. Others offer low-cost or free school supplies, books, or clothing. See [Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association \(page 157\)](#), [Yakama Nation's Kinship Program \(page 203\)](#), and [The Choctaw Nation \(page 118\)](#).

More Intensive Services

- 14. Therapeutic services, including in-home and community-based services and access to residential treatment**—Access to affordable, competent, effective, and trauma-informed therapeutic services is necessary for many adoptive, foster, and kinship care families. Some children and youth may need time-limited residential care to address more serious mental health concerns. Many of the programs in *Support Matters* offer therapeutic services, including [Bethany ADOPTS \(page 92\)](#), [UCLA TIES \(page 193\)](#), and [DePelchin's CPS Post-Adoption Program \(page 121\)](#).
- 15. Crisis intervention**—Crisis services include 24-hour hotlines staffed by trained professionals who can make emergency referrals, provide advice, and help families access services. Other crisis services include emergency respite care and in-home crisis response teams. See [Anu Family Services \(page 88\)](#) and the [Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition \(page 130\)](#).

Contact the [National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids \(NRCDR@adoptuskids.org or 303-755-4756\)](#) to find out how we can assist your child welfare system in applying insights from the *Support Matters* publication as part of your recruitment, development, and support of families.



More free resources at:
adoptuskids.org

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