

2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-S-24GA

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Georgia

Assign Program Category (applicant): Training and Development OR Workforce Development (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name
Kinship Care Navigator Program
2. Administering Agency
Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Aging Services
3. Contact Person (Name and Title)
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Kinship Care Navigator Program is an innovative program which provides grandparents raising grandchildren the opportunity for subsidized training and part-time (or full-time) employment as a *Kinship Care Navigator*. The Kinship Care Navigators are older adults who are trained to assist and mentor relative caregivers, particularly grandparents raising grandchildren, who are seeking information and assistance with accessing community resources through the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR).

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

The program became operational July 1, 2005.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, there are an estimated 92,000 grandparents and other relatives raising their grandchildren in Georgia. There are another 53,785 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.5% of all children in the state). The Kinship Care Navigator Program was created to assist and mentor grandparents raising grandchildren navigate, locate, and access the sometimes complex system of public services and benefits. Furthermore, it was created to extend the provision of employment for older adults.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

1. In a coordinated effort between the Division of Aging Services (DAS) and the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the Kinship Care Navigator program was developed jointly at the request from the DHR Commissioner. The Commissioner's vision was to have caregivers, preferably grandparents raising grandchildren, employed in DFCS offices, assisting other grandparents access or navigate the system of resources available to them, resources both within DFCS and available through DHR and other organizations.
2. To implement this vision, DAS patterned the program after a model used by the federally-funded Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP). In this instance, the model recruits and places persons in subsidized employment for a specific period of time, during which time they are trained to do a specific job.
3. Applying the model to this situation, DAS, in conjunction with DFCS, selected the sites where trainees will be recruited and trained. DAS contracts with Jewish Family and Career Services (JF&CS), a SCSEP provider, during which time trainees are recruited and selected to work at the selected DFCS sites. After the end of the specified on-the-job training period, which is six months or shorter, DFCS then hires the Navigator as a DFCS employee on their payroll.
4. The program model has been expanded to other DHR Divisions and Offices (*see question #15*)

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The program is unique due to the fact that it is beneficial to the community in two ways:

- Provides mentorship, continual support and assistance to grandparents raising grandchildren; and
- Provides paid training to the participants in the program with the opportunity of permanent employment. Navigators mentor the grandparents through the DHR system of services and as a result increase and strengthen the family unit. Grandparents raising their grandchildren move toward self-sufficiency when connected with community resources and referrals that enhance their ability to raise their grandchildren such as appropriate child care resources, applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamp assistance, mental health counseling connections and preventive health care facilities (doctors, dentist, etc).

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

JF&CS was able to use existing staff. One Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Coordinator, one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Manager to provide program oversight and an Accounting Department to provide assistance with processing the Navigators payroll checks while in training.

Computer training classes and employment workshops were provided at JF&CS to increase the Navigators skill set in the workplace. Travel costs included community outreach and marketing and staff training for DHR site offices.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The annual budget for the program is \$70,000 per year. The budget covers 10 Navigator Trainee wages, marketing and resources, personnel, Navigator supportive services, technical training and workshops, and staff travel.

16. How is the program funded?

The program is currently funded through a Social Services Block Grant.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

In 2005, DAS received new state funding from the Georgia General Assembly to establish statewide kinship care resource networks. In collaboration with the DHR Commissioner, DAS earmarked and allocated state and federal funding specific to this program.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The Program Coordinator utilizes the desktop computer at JF&CS with standard software and programs. The Accounting Department at JF&CS administers the Navigator payroll and the JF&CS Coordinator tracks demographic and outcomes through monthly reporting to DAS.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

The concept of this program was developed by Georgia Department of Human Resources

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20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

While other states (Washington, New Jersey, & New York) offer navigator programs (relative to information and assistance) to grandparents and other relatives raising children, Georgia's Kinship Care Navigator Program is unique in that it includes a paid training for the Kinship Care Navigators and a mentoring component for relative caregivers needing assistance.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The Kinship Care Navigator Program has been fully implemented.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples:

The Kinship Care Navigator Program has been extremely effective by providing mentors, guidance and direction to grandparents raising grandchildren. In addition, the program provides paid training to individuals who have the opportunity to connect grandparents raising their grandchildren with community resources and move towards self-sufficiency. The following are some of the responses and comments from employed Kinship Care Navigators from a program evaluation telephone survey completed in the first year of the program:

- *This program is going very well and is much needed. Grandparents raising grandchildren need an advocate and have needed them for a long time. It is good to provide a 'one stop' for answers.*
- *Overall, I am grateful and find it humbling to be a part of this program serving these forgotten people.*
- *The program is really helping grandparents by giving them someone to talk to.*
- *The Navigator training program is valuable as relatives raising grandchildren need assistance from this type of program.*
- *The program needs more hours and funding.*
- *This program has been especially positive experience for DFCS, and the Navigator has been very supportive to the clients.*

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

2005-2006 (Year One)

In June 2005, DAS allocated \$70,000 to implement the program. DAS executed a contract in October of 2005 with the Atlanta Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging (ARC); they subcontracted the project to JF&CS.

DAS contractors (ARC and JF&CS) have worked closely with staff in the metropolitan-Atlanta county DFCS offices to identify and place 10 trainees in metropolitan-Atlanta DFCS offices. Ten Navigators were trained and hired in the DFCS offices.

2006-2007 (Year Two)

In year two, DAS allocated \$70,000 directly to JF&CS to implement the Navigator Program. We have expanded the scope of working with other DHR offices and Divisions to place Navigator enrollees in their metropolitan county offices. DFCS, the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) and the Division of Public Health (DPH) worked with JF&CS during the six-month training process of the enrollees. Three Navigators were hired into permanent positions; one Navigator in DPH and two with OCSS.

2007-2008 (Year Three)

DAS again contracted directly with JF&CS and allocated \$70,000 to coordinate the program. The program has expanded into the Public Health Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Offices and the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) by using a consumer of mental health services, who is also an employee of MHDDAD. The program has also grown outside of the metropolitan Atlanta area and into other counties, including rural regions within Georgia.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

- Some states may have the ongoing challenge of being able to absorb (permanently hire) the Navigator trainee into their budget after successful training has been completed.
- Some states may have the challenge of expanding the program outside their metropolitan population and into its rural areas.