



**Kinnect**  


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# Mission

To build and strengthen kinship connections and inclusive support networks for families, young people, and children.

# Vision

Young people and families have a sense of belonging, the essential resources, and relationships to thrive.



# Core Values

## We believe:

- » childhood well-being is a fundamental human right.
- » families and young people are capable of finding solutions to challenges they face.
- » all young people and children, especially those marginalized by systems, deserve safe, stable families, and meaningful supportive relationships.
- » Young people and children in foster care, separated from their families, must be connected to their kin and community in the shortest time possible.
- » in hope, possibility and informed innovation.
- » everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.

## Kinnect's Commitment to Equity

*Kinnect strives to be a catalyst for change, thought partner and leader in bridging the work of systems innovation and disruption, anti-racism, and transformation of how children and families are served and supported. We foster belonging by committing to effectively centering the voices of those who have been historically and are presently marginalized. As a learning organization, we pledge to ongoing and sustained work in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through collaboration with families, communities, and other stakeholders. Kinnect will be transparent and accountable in this endeavor.*

## Guiding Principles:

-  **Innovation**
-  **Integrity**
-  **Partnership**
-  **Outcome-Focused**
-  **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access**

# KinFirst Culture and Approach

**Kinnect's purpose, vision, and guiding principles center family and kinship and promote KinFirst culture in every aspect of our service delivery and advocacy efforts for families, young people, and children. Kinship is family, family is kinship, and whether relationships involve relatives or chosen family connections, a KinFirst culture is the way we work and live each day.**

**KinFirst** is an approach and mindset for organizations and systems involved in the lives of families, young people, and children. This is driven by a belief that all families have strengths and will be honored as experts of their situation.

**KinFirst culture** requires a mutual understanding that families, young people, and children deserve a sense of belonging. Building a KinFirst culture requires equitable investments, expectations, training, coaching, policies, practices, and partnerships that prioritize family and kin. This community commitment and vision is guided by values and behaviors that recognize the power of family and connections to strengthen outcomes for social determinants of health and to build networks of support.





Timely kinship connections and inclusive support networks



Family search and engagement and kinship support



Support youth in building lifelong connections and legal permanency



Keep youth safe with their families of origin or seek permanency with affirming caregivers



Direct, personalized referrals to services such as food and shelter, childcare, housing, health care, and legal services



Direct, personalized referrals to services such as food and shelter, education, career counseling, childcare, health care, and legal services



New training, consulting, and program replication branch

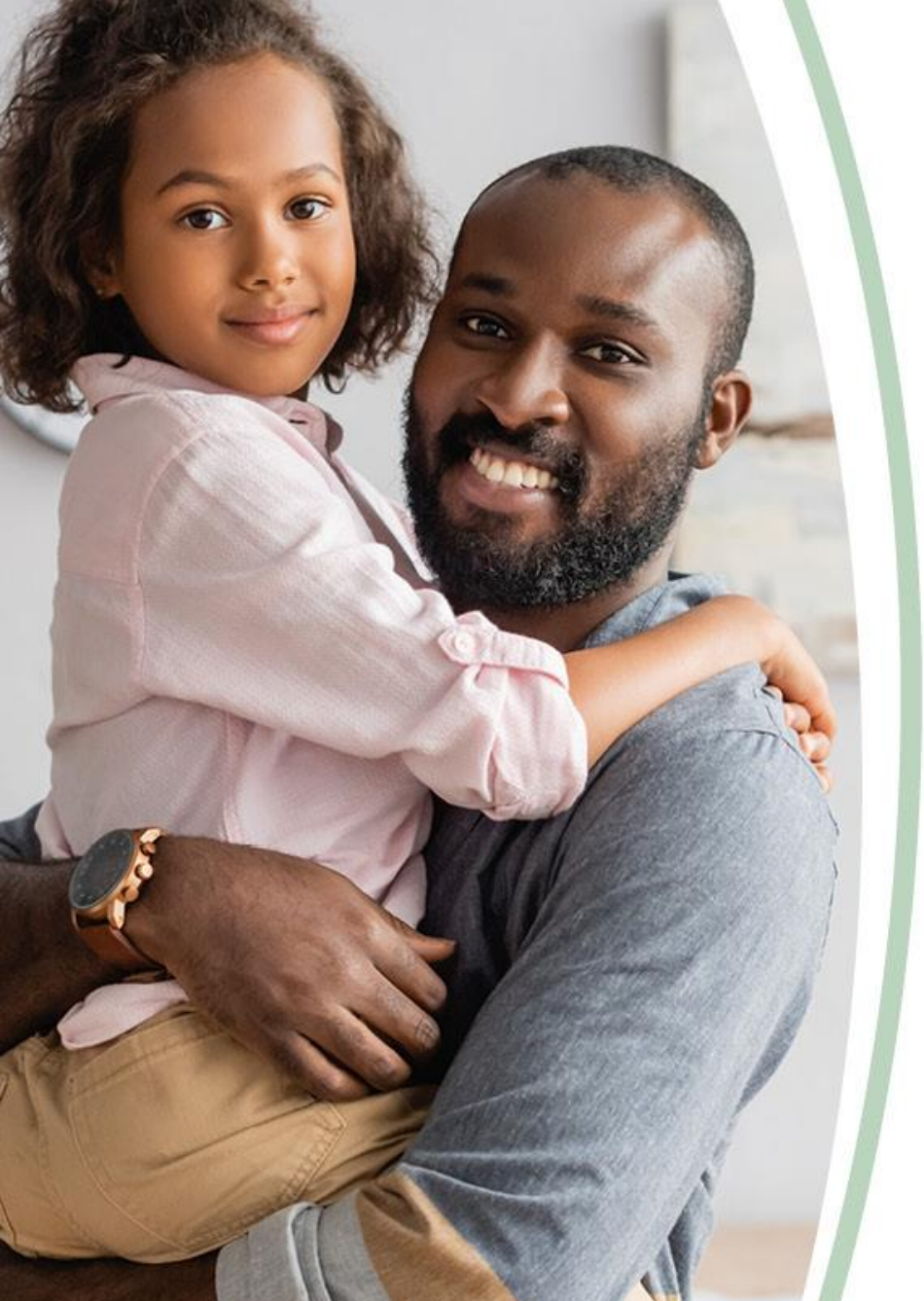
[Kinnect.org](http://Kinnect.org)





# Overview: Chosen Affirming Family

## August 15, 2024



# Shared Values Across Programs

- The voice of **family and kin are valued** in ensuring safety and permanency of children and youth
- **We believe families** and youth are experts in what they need to ensure safety and well-being
- A family's community, culture, heritage, and affirmed SOGIE are intrinsically important to **well-being**
- **Collaboration and innovation** in child-serving systems with families and stakeholders are essential in supporting families individualized needs
- **Connections and permanency** for all children involved in child serving agencies is urgent and nonnegotiable



# Values

- All young people have a right to develop a robust network of supports.
- Lesbian, gay, trans, queer, and gender expansive young people thrive and succeed when families, schools, and communities support and nurture their evolving identities
- Rejecting parents or families can become accepting and affirming of their LGBTQ+ children with appropriate support



# Values

- Variations of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are part of the normal spectrum of human diversity. The increased risks faced by LGBTQ+ young people are not inherent to their identities but stem from the stresses of prejudice, discrimination, rejection, and mistreatment
- Efforts to change a young person's sexual orientation or gender identity are harmful, unethical, ineffective, and unnecessary

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# What We Know About LGBTQ+ Youth



**Victimization**



**Rejection**



**Runaway and Homeless**



**Physical and Mental Health Disparities**



**Isolation**



**30%**

of youth in **child welfare** identify as LGBTQ+

**9.5%**

of youth in **U.S. population** identify as LGBTQ+





**120%**

Increased risk of homelessness



**8x** higher rates of attempted suicide



**6x** higher levels of depression



**3x** higher risk for HIV and STD & STI's



**3x** higher use of illegal drugs

# LGBTQ+ Youth In Child Welfare



## What we know:

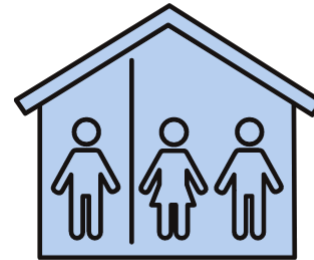
Children and youth with diverse SOGIE are **disproportionately** more likely than their heterosexual and cisgender peers to experience:



**Greater health challenges**



**Enter into the child welfare system**



**Have more placements in both foster homes and group homes**



**Experience homelessness**



**Have lower rates of reunification with their families of origin**

# LGBTQ+ Young People need Permanent, Accepting Relationships





# 92%

of LGBTQ+ young people in **extremely accepting** homes believe they can be happy as an LGBTQ+ adult.

# Goals

Through partnerships with families and systems and co-creation of solutions:

Young people and families:

Increase acceptance and decrease rejection of a young person's unique SOGIE

Young people increase their overall physical and emotional health and well-being

Increase family and caregiver use of LGBTQ+ resources and supports

Develop a network of accepting and affirming emotional supports

Safely increase affirming family connections and chosen family relationships with the goal of establishing relational permanency

Provide LGBTQ+ youth in foster care an opportunity for legal permanency through reunification or placement with accepting and affirming kin or other adults



# Goals

Through partnerships with families and systems and co-creation of solutions:

Communities and systems build capacity:

Create collaborative partnerships with community providers to effectively support the needs of LGBTQ+ young people and their families and caregivers

Child serving systems align with principles and values of Affirm Me

The logo for 's.ay' is located in the top right corner. It features the lowercase letters 's.ay' in a purple font. The period after 's' is a yellow dot, and the period after 'y' is a green dot. A registered trademark symbol (®) is positioned at the top right of the 'y'.

# Practice & Intervention Elements

## Roadmap for Families

- Youth Acceptance Project
- Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF)
- SOGIE for Caregivers

## Roadmap for Systems

- CAFF
- Safe Identification
- SOGIE 101 & 102
- Cultural Adaptations



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# *Chosen Affirming Family Finding*



Building a robust network of **affirming** individuals who provide belonging, emotional and potentially legal permanency.



# Outcomes & Impacts

Reduced entry into child-serving systems

Decreased unnecessary congregate care placements

Increased permanency outcomes (reunification, guardianship, adoption, legal and relational)

Decreased disparate outcomes experienced by LGBTQ+ in child welfare

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# PROJECT DELIVERABLES



- **Implementation manual**
- **Intervention manual**
- **Training series**
- **Policies & procedures for safe identification**



## Ohio Data

**In Foster Care...**

**30%**

**Of young  
people  
identify as  
LGBTQ+**



**That's 1,290 out of 4,301  
youth in foster care in Ohio**



# MODEL FRAMEWORK AND EVALUATION PLAN



- **Training**
- **Technical assistance**
- **Coaching permanency**
- **Partnership**



# Metrics

- Increased placement with affirming kinship caregivers
- Increased permanency
- Increased well-being



# MEASURABLE OUTCOMES



- **Caseworkers to assess for diverse SOGIE**
- **Increase awareness of and access to LGBTQ+ supportive services**
- **Reduce incidents of abuse, neglect**



**Any Questions?**

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