FINDING KIN & KITH
The Kinship Search Program, Children's Aid Society of Toronto:
Service Model Review ~ Sept/12-May/13

For:
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Photograph: Permanency T-Shirt created by Chatham-Kent Children's Aid Societytaken at "*The Great North American Race to Find Relatives/Kin*" seminar at the North American Council on Adoptable Children conference 2013.

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.

~**Jane Howard**

Child Welfare Institute, July 21, 2014

The review of the
Kinship Search Program
at Children's Aid Society of Toronto
was done in part by using the words and experiences
from the generous individuals who took the time to work with
and talk to the CWI evaluation team.
Good evaluation is about good partnerships and this evaluation
is a stellar example of the good work that can come from working together.

We would also like to acknowledge the
KinshipTeam
It takes courage to ask hard, tough evaluation questions about service that you deliver.
We hope that the findings from this evaluation inform and are helpful to
you as you strive to improve the service and exceed expectations
in achieving excellence in the kin search process.

Many thanks go to the
CAS workers
who diligently documented their work.
Records, documents and file reviews were also included in this evaluation.
Numbers, like words, can tell an important story about a service but only if
methodically detailed. Without the documentation completed by
CAS workers much of this information would not be available to analyze.

Special thanks goes to our
Translation Services
for providing verbal translation services.
Your assistance is greatly appreciated.
It allowed participants to be included in this evaluation,
that would have otherwise been unable to do so.

Child Welfare Institute, July 21, 2014

KINSHIP SEARCH PROGRAM ~ *SERVICE MODEL REVIEW* 2012/13
Executive Summary

Background: The Children's Aid Society of Toronto's (CAS-Toronto), Kinship Search Program commenced in June 2003 with two part-time researchers. The Program was the first of its kind in Ontario child welfare. Over the past 10 years, the Program has developed a six-step approach for searching and engaging kin/kith. The steps include:

(1) Identifying kin/kith,   (3) Contacting kin/kith,   (5) Educating kin/kith,
(2) Locating kin/kith,   (4) Engaging kin/kith,   (6) Supporting kin/kith.

Purpose: As a leader in the area of kin searching, the Kinship Search Team partnered with the Child Welfare Institute, CAS-Toronto to conduct an evaluation of their service model. The objective of the evaluation was: **To better understand what works within the model and what might require further improvement?** The evaluation incorporated a review of the cases referred to the Kinship Search Program over a nine-month period: September 1, 2012 to May 31, 2013. The evaluation methodology included seven (7) areas of inquiry:

- Inquiry 1: What types of cases are referred?
- Inquiry 2: What activities are involved in the search?
- Inquiry 3: What are the perceptions of engagement with kinship families?
- Inquiry 4: What are the perceptions of satisfaction of the Kinship Search Program?
- Inquiry 5: What are the case outcomes?
- Inquiry 6: What recommendations are there regarding program improvement?
- Inquiry 7: What occurred three-months after closing the Kinship Search case?

A total of 15 cases underwent an in-depth, comprehensive review. The range of cases included *Early Service Cases* (those referred from Intake and Ongoing Services, n=13) and *Crown Ward Cases* (youth who are Crown Wards of the Society, n=2).

Methodology: A mixed method evaluation design was used and included:
- ❖ Key informant interviews (e.g., kinship applicants, referring CAS workers, kinship researchers)
- ❖ Review of Program forms (e.g., Referral form, Search logs, Closing Summary Report)
- ❖ File Reviews

Findings: The findings from this evaluation are divided into the seven areas of inquiry.

Inquiry 1 – *What types of cases are referred to the Kinship Search Program?*
Findings Inquiry 1: While generalizability is limited due to the small sample size, the in-depth review of 15 cases did not find referrals are limited to a specific case type.

Inquiry 2 – *What types of activities are involved in the search?*
Findings Inquiry 2: The kinship researchers appear to use a variety of strategies to conduct a search. These include: *file mining, searching through social media links,* as well as *outreach* and *engagement* with the kin being sought. Approximately one-third of the kinship researchers' time was spent communicating with kin/kith, with the remaining time doing tasks, such as communicating with various CAS workers/supervisors.

Inquiry 3 – What are the perceptions with kinship families regarding CAS Toronto engagement?

Findings Inquiry 3: The kinship researchers' approaches were described by the kinship applicants, the newly found kin (non-kinship applicants) and the CAS referring staff (e.g., Early Service and Crown Ward)as positive. Words used to describe the kinship service were: *"understanding"*, "*respectful"*, *"very helpful"*, *"excellent"* and *"efficient".* This feedback suggests the kinship researchers were able to quickly engage with families. In doing so, they were able to quickly move the process along in both searching for kin, as well as being able to efficiently navigate the complexities of the different family systems.

Inquiry 4 – What are the perceptions of satisfaction by users of the Kinship Search Program?

Findings Inquiry 4: Overall, the various stakeholders provided positive perceptions about the Kinship Program.

Inquiry 5 – What are the case outcomes?

Findings Inquiry 5: Search methods included a variety of strategies, including: Internet searches, file mining, communication with youth, family, kin/ kith, and workers, and written correspondence. Although this review was limited to 15 cases the in-depth examination found great consistency across the cases on a key outcome: ability to locate kin/kith. In short, the kinship researchers were very successful in locating kin/kith. For the Early Service cases (n=13) the number of kin/kith located ranged from 3 to more than 30. For the Crown Ward Service cases (n=2) the searches yielded 27 to over 150 kin/kith. Analysis of the outcomes of those searches finds locating kin/kith results in at least one of three options: (a) new placement option, (b) reconnection to kin/ kith for the children/ youth, and/or (c) expanding the family support system.

Inquiry 6 – What recommendations are there regarding program improvement?

Findings Inquiry 6: Overall, the recommendations from the stakeholder groups (e.g., kin applicants, kin researchers, referring CAS works, searchees) regarding how to improve the kinship service at CAS-Toronto were: (a) To increase awareness of the *Kinship Search Program* at CAS-Toronto; (b) To increase search resources; and (c) To continue searching for kin, even after kin has put a plan forward or the child is returned back to their parents.

Inquiry 7 –What occurs three monthsafter closing the Kinship Search cases?

Findings Inquiry 7: Analysis of the 15 cases yielded suggestive but not generalizable information. For the first three-months immediately post closure of the Kinship Search file the analysis found the 15 children/youth remained in their current placements. A review at six-months or twelve-months is suggested to allow a greater time span for process and legal changes to be processed, to implement potential placement changes and to institute the development of new relationships.

Recommendations:

Informed by the findings from this review the recommendations for the Children's Aid Society of Toronto are:

1) To increase awareness of the effectiveness of the Kinship Search Program both within our Society and with our community partners as it is a key component in strengthening Family-Based Care;
2) To enhance a quicker turnaround time with the Early Service cases;
3) To build into service expectations that the Crown Ward cases may have longer timelines for service;
4) To ensure successful outcomes with the Crown Ward cases recognize the making of family (re)connections;
5) To consider, within the current climate of fiscal restraint, optimizing resources within the Kinship Search Program;
6) To continue to evaluate the program regarding its ability to meet stated goals and objectives.

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1.0 KINSHIP SEARCH PROGRAM EVALUATION

1.1 BACKGROUND: KINSHIP SEARCH AT CAS-TORONTO

Family should be defined broadly and should be defined by the perspectives of the family.

~ Kevin Campbell

The Kinship Program at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAS Toronto) started as a pilot project in June 2003. At that time, two part-time Kinship Researchers were hired as part of the Kinship Team complement. In 2003, no other child welfare agency in the Province of Ontario had a similar position.

The Kinship Researcher role was originally created to assist CAS Toronto case workers in completing thorough file reviews and in conducting searches for kin/kith. At the time of its genesis, the Kinship Researchers sought specific information within the file and had access to specialized searching tools. An informal survey of Children's Services Workers within CAS Toronto's Child and Youth Services (CYS) Branch took place during the planning stages of the Kinship Program; the survey findings noted that at least 27 CYS children/youth could benefit from a kinship search and another 22 could benefit from a search to locate kin/kith.

In the initial construction of the Kinship Researcher position, the goal was to have an assigned position conduct active searches for kin/kith of the children/youth in CAS Toronto's care where the aim was establishing new access, contact or placement options. Kin/kith were identified and located by reviewing case documentation, conducting internet searches and interviews with relevant people. The information obtained was provided to the referring worker to then make contact. The Kinship Team has been instrumental in obtaining access to specialized searching tools, such as the Ministry of Transportation database and, more recently, Seneca Searches through the National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness in the United States.

The Kinship Researcher role has evolved over time as evidence-informed practice, worker skill, and more advanced search strategies informed program capabilities and case need. Through continued program refinement it was determined that a six-step approach to searching for and engaging kin/kith was the preferred model.

(1) Identifying kin/kith,	(3) Contacting kin/kith,	(5) Educating kin/kith,
(2) Locating kin/kith,	(4) Engaging kin/kith,	(6) Supporting kin/kith.

Currently, the optimal approach is when the kinship researcher takes on a more "*neutral party*" role, where the focus is on obtaining more comprehensive information from family members. In sum, the kinship researcher role is intended to be a dedicated position that allowed for the time necessary to locate and make direct contact with kin/kith and then support them to make informed decisions regarding how they could be involved in a child/youth's life. It is not a position with case management decision responsibilities.

In 2005, meetings occurred with representatives from the Ontario Child Welfare Secretariat who were interested to learn more about Kinship Research. They gathered information about searching for kin which aided in the development of the Ontario Kinship Service Standards in 2006, where Standard One is: ***Searching for Kin: Collaboration with Extended Family and Community.***

Other agencies within the Province of Ontario started to learn about CAS Toronto's unique Kinship Research position. There was keen interest in the work that was being done and the Kinship Researchers were invited to meet with staff from many agencies across the Province. Formal presentations were developed and presented to staff in Kingston, Chatham-Kent, Haldimand-Norfolk, Peel, and York. In time, those agencies began to develop family finding/research positions in their agencies. Additionally, staff from children's aid societies (CAS) in Algoma, Hamilton, Halton, Dilico-Anishinabek, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington, London, and Nippissing and Parry Sound met with CAS-Toronto's Kinship Research staff to consult and assist in the development of *family finding* in their agencies. As well, documents that were created for use by the Kinship Researchers, such as referral forms, consent forms, and search logs, were also shared along with the specific search techniques used. And finally, the Kinship Researchers prepared and organized two separate full-day Provincial training sessions through the Child Welfare Institute (CWI), CAS-Toronto. Both days were well attended and extremely well received. Of equal importance has been the work the Kinship Researchers have done in highlighting the program's abilities within CAS Toronto. Examples include participating in many internal learning opportunities, such as attending team meetings, branch meetings and foster parent cluster groups.

In 2008, one other CAS hired a "*family finder*". Since then several other CAS's followed suit and currently there are 50 family finders across Ontario CAS's.

In January 2012, the first Ontario provincial meeting of "*Kinship Search/Family Finders"* occurred. This Workgroup meets quarterly in conjunction with the Kinship Resource Managers Group and reports to the Kinship Resource Managers Group.

In the spring of 2013, CAS Toronto partnered with the Central Zone CAS's to provide a provincial training day with Kevin Campbell, the founder of the American agency, *Family Finding*.

"Our purpose in Family Finding is to restore the opportunity to be unconditionally loved, to be accepted, and to be safe in a community and a family."

- Kevin Campbell

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1.2 HISTORY OF REFERRALS

Table 1 documents the annual number of kinship search referrals to the *Kinship Search Program* between 2006/07 to 2012/13. The average number of annual referrals to the program is 44.71, rounded up to 45.

Table 1: History of referrals

Year	Annual # Searching Referrals
Apr 2006 – Mar 2007	49
Apr 2007 – Mar 2008	51
Apr 2008 – Mar 2009	34
Apr 2009 – Mar 2010	44
Apr 2010 – Mar 2011	38
Apr 2011 – Mar 2012	40*
Apr 2012 – Mar 2013	57

Note: there was a period of time in 2012 that referrals were "on hold" due to the impending pilot project

1.3 CONTINUED GOALS OF KINSHIP SEARCH PROGRAM

The *Kinship Search Program* continues to strive towards the following goals/objectives:

- ✓ *Encourage families to consider and rely on their own family members as resources*
- ✓ *Enhance children/youth's opportunity to stay connected to their own communities*
- ✓ *Promote community responsibility for children and families*
- ✓ *Strengthen the ability of families to give children/youth the support they need*
- ✓ *Enable children/youth to live with persons they know and trust*
- ✓ *Reduce the trauma children/youth experience when they are separated from their family*
- ✓ *Reinforcing child/youth's sense of identity and self-esteem which flows from knowing their family history and culture*

Kinship Researchers are able to achieve these goals through their roles and responsibilities, which include:

- Conducting a thorough review of relevant case files to assist in identifying potential kin/kith for referred children/youth;
- Conducting interviews with referred child's caregivers, relatives, or the child themselves to assist in the identification of kin/kith;
- Attempting to locate identified kin/kith through the use of various search techniques;
- Responding to requests for information about the *Kinship Search Program*;
- Maintaining records/statistics related to service activity; and presenting on behalf of the Kinship *Search Program* to key constituents both within and outside of CAS-Toronto.

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2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN PLACED WITH KIN/KITH

According to the research, there are many positive effects for children and youth who need to be placed in out-of-home care due to various child protection concerns and live with kin/kith. The preponderance of the studies find that children placed in kinship homes (e.g., Testa, 2001) are more likely to live with their siblings (e.g., Shlonsky, Webster&Needell, 2003), are less likely to re-enter foster care (e.g., Courtney &Needell, 1997), are less likely to have behavioral problems (e.g., Shore, Sim, Le Prohn, & Keller, 2002; Vanschoonlandt, Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, De Maeyer&Andries, 2012), and are more likely to have a positive effect on placement stability (e.g., Koh, 2010).

2.2 KINSHIP SEARCHING

Three different models of kinship searching have emerged: 1) Family Finding, 2) Extreme Recruitment, and 3) 30-Days to Family. Each type of search provides a slightly different approach. Depending on case need, CAS Toronto's Kinship Researchers have used methods from each of the types of searching strategy. A brief summary of each approach is noted below. For more details, please refer to the appropriate references.

Family Findingis a model designed to,

> *"…build or maintain the youth's Lifetime Family Support network for all youth who are disconnected or at risk of disconnection through placement outside of their home and community. The process identifies relatives and other supportive adults, estranged from or unknown to the child, especially those who are willing to become permanent connections for him/her. Upon completion of the process, youth have a range of commitments from adults who are able to provide permanency, sustainable relationships within a kinship system, and support in the transition to adulthood and beyond. Keeping safety at the forefront and using a family-driven process, families are empowered to formulate highly realistic and sustainable plans to meet the long-term needs of children and youth"* (National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness, 2013).

Extreme Recruitment was initially carried out by the Missouri Department of Social Services. It is,

> *"…intensive 12-20 week individualized recruitment effort that includes: preparing the child for permanency; conducting diligent searches to reconnect the child with kin; achieving permanency through general, targeted, and/or child-specific recruitment; connector services for recruitment resources to the services necessary to make placements successful; and evaluation of the project to determine effectiveness in meeting the project goals"* (AdoptUSKids, 2013).

30-Days to Family is done at the start of service when a child enters care. It is,

> *"…a short-term intervention to diligently search for a child's relatives and kin to identify potential placement options and supports. The initial search is for parents, grandparents, and siblings, but the goal is that at least 80 additional relatives will be identified and explored"*(Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, 2013).

2.3 EVALUATIONS ON KINSHIP SEARCHING

It was reported in a Seneca Training Institute Organization webinar in August 2013[1], that there are rigorous evaluations of American Kinship Search Programs that are completed or nearing completion.Recently finalized ones include: "*Family Finding for Children and Families New to Out-of-Home Care: A Rigorous Evaluation of Family Finding in San Francisco*" by Malm, Allen, McKlindon & Vandivere (July 2013) and *"A Rigorous Evaluation of Family Finding in North Carolina"* by Malm, Vandivere, Allen, Williams & McKlindon (2014). These most recent findings are noteworthy as they underscore the need to evaluate the different service models and test projected objectives against actual outcomes. Do these programs do what they say they can do? How well do they do it? For how long?

Advancing knowledge is key. For example, the 2008-2011 San Francisco study (Malm et al., 2013), which employed strong rigor using a random sampling method to obtain a "service as usual/control group" (n=123) vs. a "treatment/Family Finding" group (n=116), which focused on the experiences of cases at the start of service (Front-End). The "Family Finding" cohort did have a higher percentage of reunified cases (57%) compared to the "Control" (47%) group but it was <u>not</u> at a statistically significant level; additionally, while the "Family Finder" cases were significantly more likely to reunify – they were also more likely to return to care post reunification. That risk or unintended consequence needs to be better understood. Does this occur with all case types or all ages of youth? The study's qualitative data highlighted the challenges to a full implementation of the 6-step Family Finding model.

The North Carolina study (Malm et al., 2014) also used a random sampling method but examined a very different cohort of youth: youth in longer-term care. The study authors examined the experiences of 532 North Carolina youth in care, aged 10 or older, who were in long-term foster care, who did not have a goal of reunification, and lacked an identified permanent placement. In other words, youth who had been "disconnected from their family members" (pg. 2). On a positive note, the Family Finding intervention did create family connections which resulted in contact with relatives, this in turn resulted in a higher frequency of contact with family for the Family Finding cohort vs. the control group. However, on a key outcome – placement status change - neither the Family Finding nor the service as usual groups experienced a "step-down" in their placement.

In sum, the extant literature and field learning to date in the area is in the early stages. More empirical studies are needed regarding understanding the short-term effects and long-term impact of the kin search function for the different cohorts of children in care. These include but are not limited to children/youth in short-term care vs. long-term care, children with complex needs, use of the model with different age groups of children (e.g., under 5, ages 6-12, ages 13-18, ages 13-21), examination of gender effects, and how at-risk groups experience the model (e.g., LGBTQ).

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1 Seneca Training Institute Organization (August 15, 2013). *Family finding: What have we learned?*

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3.0 EVALUATION OF CAS-TORONTO KINSHIP SEARCH PROGRAM

This evaluation of the *Kinship Search Program* is timely within CAS-Toronto, as it parallels the emerging evidence within the field of kinship searching across North America. The main objective of this evaluation was a data-driven approach: ***to explore the Kinship Search Program at CAS-Toronto in order to better understand what works and what may need further improvement.***

This evaluation explored cases referred to the *Kinship Search Program* from September 1, 2012 and closed no later than May 31, 2013. An exception was made with the two (2) Crown Ward cases because their service interventions appeared to take longer than those cases referred during the Early Service segment (i.e., Intake and/or Family Services). This time period provides a snapshot of services and does not necessarily reflect the full caseloads of the Kinship Researchers during this time. For instance, if a case opened in February 2013, but did not close by May 31, 2013, then this case would be excluded from this evaluation.

The focus of this evaluation was contained to seven (7) areas of inquiry:

- *Inquiry 1: Types of cases referred to pilot*
- *Inquiry 2: Activities involved in the search*
- *Inquiry 3: Perceptions of engagement with kinship families*
- *Inquiry 4: Perceptions of satisfaction of pilot services*
- *Inquiry 5: Perception of case outcomes*
- *Inquiry 6: Recommendations*
- *Inquiry 7: Three month follow-up*

Refer to Appendix A for the Pilot Evaluation Plan that was used to guide this evaluation.

This was a non-funded, internal CAS-Toronto evaluation. The evaluation plan was developed in conjunction with the Kinship Team and the Child Welfare Institute (CWI), CAS-Toronto research team. The plan was pre-approved by the Director of Resources for Children and Youth.

It is important to indicate that while the Kinship Team was involved in the evaluation design process, they were not involved in the data collection or data analysis process. This would have resulted in a conflict of interest, as well as increasing the possibility of tainting the results. The CWI research team had no restrictions on how the exploratory findings were reported within this document.

3.1 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the areas of inquiry, a mixed methodology was used to capture a variety of sources of data. Primary and secondary data were collected. The data collection methods were used to explore various outputs related to the *Kinship Search Program*. The outputs explored:

- ❖ Family factors,
- ❖ Amount of communication with kin/kith,
- ❖ Amount of communication with referring CAS workers,
- ❖ Kinship Researcher's approach,
- ❖ Perceptions of the *Kinship Search Program*,
- ❖ Summary of search efforts/ methods used
- ❖ Summary of family found,
- ❖ Impressions of changes,
- ❖ Perceptions of what did not work,
- ❖ Suggestions/ recommendations,
- ❖ Status of referred child/ youth 3-months post closure from *Kinship Search Program* (see Appendix A).

As this evaluation of the *Kinship Search Program* explored effectiveness and efficiency and impact of the model a control or comparison group was not used. The review identified specific types of cases:

- ❖ *Early Service Cases* (Intake and Family Service cases),

- ❖ *Crown Ward Cases.*

The "early service cases" focused on referred youth who had recently entered the care of CAS-Toronto. The "crown ward cases" were referred children/ youth who were Crown Wards at CAS-Toronto and have been in the care of CAS-Toronto for more extended periods of time.

3.2 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Primary data collection included the key informant interviews with five (5) key stakeholder groups: 1) *kinship applicants (the kin applicants found through the search process who desired to present a plan for the child/youth); 2) non-kinship applicants (new kin/kith found through search process); 3) CAS referring workers (Early Service); 4) CAS referring workers (Crown Ward Service)*; and 5) *kinship researchers*. Interviews with stakeholders were conducted to explore the experiences from the diverse perspectives. More details about the interviews are described below.

The Kinship Team and CWI carefully considered the risks and benefits to including referred children/ youth as one of the key stakeholder groups to be included in the data collection process. After careful consideration it was decided to obtain exploratory findings about the pilot before connecting with youth. It is believed that future evaluations may be able to include referred youth and the questions asked to them would be more specific and more youth-friendly. In addition, as a non-funded evaluation, there were no financial resources available to provide honorariums to participants. It was felt that if youth participated that they should receive some form of honorarium for their time and efforts in participating in an evaluation.
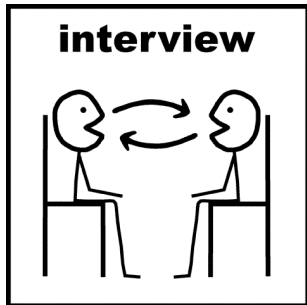
Key Informant Interviews (n=23)

The Kinship Researchers identified 27 potential stakeholders to be contacted for this evaluation by the CWI team. The breakdown was: 4 kinship applicants, 7 non-kinship applicants, 14 referring CAS workers, and 2 kinship researchers. From May 27, 2013 to August 13, 2013, over 80 telephone attempts occurred with the purpose to connect with these 27 stakeholders. The final results: 23 of 27 stakeholders (85% response rate) provided consent and completed the interview process.

*4 of 4 kinship applicants,	*12 of 14 referring CAS workers,
*5 of 7 non-kinship applicants,	*2 of 2 kinship researchers.

The interviews explored stakeholders' perceptions of the *Kinship Search Program* and

(a) how it engaged with kinship families,   (c) impressions about referral outcomes,
(b) the level of satisfaction with the service, (d) any recommendations.

All stakeholders were assigned a non-identifying code. Data from the telephone interviews (i.e., kinship applicants, non-kinship applicants, referring CAS workers) and the in-person interviews (i.e.,kinshipresearchers) were transcribed verbatim during the interview. CWI analyzed the data for emerging themes using elements of the Grounded Theory Approach. Refer to Appendix B for the interview guide.

3.3 SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

Secondary data collection included the CWI team reviewing the *Kinship Family Finder Referral Forms, Search Log Forms, Closing Summary Reports,* and *File Reviews*. Details about these forms have been described below.
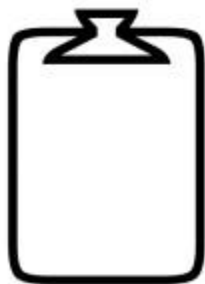
Kinship Family Finder Referral Form (n=15 cases)

The Kinship Family Finder Referral Form is a standardized document that Kinship Researchers complete. This CAS-Toronto specific document provides details about the *Worker Information, Child(ren)'s Information, Records and Documents, Parents/ Kin/ Kith Information, and Details of the Request.* The quantitative elements of this document were inputted into the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) v20 computerized software and were analyzed by the CWI team. The qualitative elements were also coded by the CWI team using elements of Grounded Theory Approach.

Search Log Forms (n=15 cases)

For this segment of the evaluation, the Kinship Researchers were asked to document in detail their working time spent on *Kinship Search Program* cases. A specific Search Log Form was created for this purpose. The data collected were analyzed using Excel. The Search Log categorized the researcher's time according to:

a) *File mining* (e.g., CAS-Toronto, other CASs, court and other documents);
b) *Communication with workers* (e.g., Family Service Workers, Children's Service Workers, Resource Workers, Supervisors, and the alike). This included communication with workers that may have consisted of in-person/ phone/ email, meeting with workers (e.g., Individualized Service Plan conferences, branch conferences), and correspondence (e.g., letters, closing summaries, case notes, genograms);
c) *Communication with children/ youth* (e.g., in-person or on the phone), *Communication with foster caregivers*; and *Communication with kin/ kith* (e.g., applicants and non-applicants);
d) *Tools used* consisted by the researchers included, *Internet searches* (e.g., Facebook, Obituary, Google, VSLine), *Ministry of Transportation of Ontario*, and *International searches* (e.g., Seneca);
e) *Travel*

Closing Summary (n=13 "Early Service" cases)

CAS Toronto's Closing Summary form is a standardized document that Kinship Researchers complete that provides details about the summary of the search efforts, the methods used, a summary of the found family, and case outcomes. CWI coded the data using elements of Grounded Theory Approach.While the Closing Summary data only included the 13 "early service" cases as the"crown ward"service cases did not yet have closing summaries, the Kinship Researcher did provide summary notes about the cases progress with the crown ward cases, which was included in this analysis.

**Three month follow-up file reviews (n=13 "Early Service" cases)**
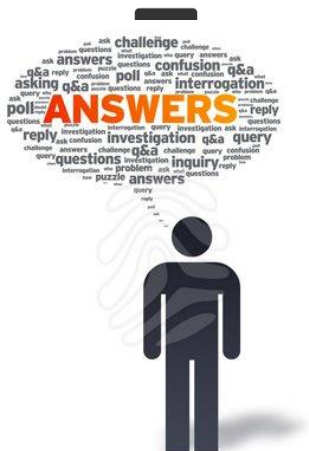
The 13 "early service" cases that were closed to the *Kinship Search Program* were followed up three months post closure. The variable explored was: *status of the child*. This data were extracted from the CAS-Toronto service system and inputted into an excel file and then analyzed by the CWI research team.

3.4 LIMITATIONS TO THIS EVALUATION

As with all evaluations, there are limitations that impede the proposed evaluation design. One limitation is that many of the data collection tools were narrative-based. Thus, it is possible that information relevant to the evaluation was available but not included in the report or that information was not available. Another important limitation to note is that this is not a longitudinal review but a cross-sectional 'snapshot' of a period of time. Furthermore, there were many changes that occurred during the review period: September 2012 to May 2013.

- *Staffing*: The *Kinship Search Program* initially had two (2) part-time employees who worked 17.5 hours per week from September 2012 to January 2013; in February 2013, one research position switched to full-time for a 12-month period; thus the Search function was able to increase the number of accepted cases.

- *Targeted cases:* Initially, the *Kinship Search Program* was targeted to specific teams within CAS-Toronto; however, it was decided to expand the service to other teams.

- *Knowledge transfer:* The Kinship researchers were actively involved in many knowledge transfer activities during the *Kinship Search Program* period (e.g., launching the Kevin Campbell training in March 2013).

- *Documentation:* Modifications to the *Kinship Family Finder Referral Form, Search Log Form,* and *Closing Summary* were occasionally made throughout the evaluation period, requiring the data to be transferred into the revised forms to maintain documentation consistency for the evaluation.

All of these implementation changes noted above were done in order to enhance the service for all stakeholders involved. Based upon the findings from this evaluation, further implementation changes may occur.

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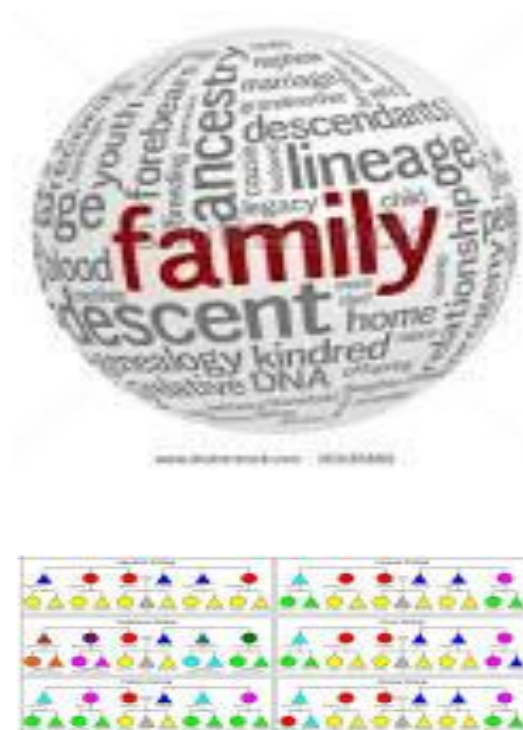
4.0 FINDINGS BY DATA COLLECTION METHOD

In this section, the findings generated by the various data collection methods are reported. The next section will summarize and analyze how these responses influence the seven areas of inquiry of this evaluation.

4.1 KINSHIP FAMILY FINDER REFERRAL FORMS

According to the *Kinship Family Finder Referral Forms* completed by the Kinship Researchers from September 2012 to May 2013 on the cases referred and assigned, there were 15 cases identified during this time. These forms were divided into different sections – *Referrals, Children's Information, Records/Documents, Parent/Kin Information, and Details of Request*. Each of these sections will be explored in more detail below.

Referrals

In regards to the 13 Early Service cases, 10 cases disclosed when the case was referred and when it was assigned. The waitlist time ranged from the same day of the referral (0 days) to 229 days with a median of 24.5 days (SD=74.55). The two Crown Ward Service cases were referred and assigned on the same day (0 days).

Children's Information

The 13 Early Service cases represented 20 children/youth, while the two (2) Crown Ward Service cases represented six (6) youth.

Summary

❖ *Early Service cases*

There appeared to be more male children referred to the pilot than females. The average age of the children were 6 years old and had been in care from less than a month to over two years. Many of the children held the legal status of either Society Ward or Temporary Care and Custody. Children identified with special needs were predominately related to behavioral and/or academic issues. Few assessment or treatment plans were in place at the time of the referral to the *Kinship Search Program*. Most of the children placed in care were either in a foster home or an outside paid resource.

❖ *Crown Ward Service cases*

With only two cases reviewed, there were too few cases to identify any demographic trends.

Table 2 provides a summary of each group of referred children/ youth to the *Kinship Search Program*.

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Table 2: Describing the children/ youth from the 15 cases reviewed for the review of theKinship Search Program

Variables	Early ServiceCases	Crown Ward ServiceCases
# Cases	13	2 *Note: Sample size too small to analyze*
Total # Children/Youth	20	6
Gender	Male (n=15; 75%) Female (n=5; 25%)	Male (n=3; 50%) Females (n=3; 50%)
Age	Mean age = 6.18 years (SD=4.505) Age range = >1 to 13 years	Mean age = 17 years (SD=1.4505) Age range = 15 to 19 years
Average # of Months in Care	11 months (SD=8.16) Range = >1-24 months. Note:4 youth were not in care 4 youth unknown length	Unknown. Data not provided at review point *Note:6 youth unknown length*
Current case goals	None identified (n=9; 45%) Crown Wardship (n=6; 30%) Return to parent (n=4; 20%) Unknown (n=1; 5%)	In care until 18 years (n=3; 50%) Independent living (n=2; 33%) Foster care (n=1; 17%)
Status of Child in Care	Society Ward (n=7; 35%) Temporary Care & Custody (n=5; 25%) Not in care (n=3; 15%) Not available (n=3; 15%) Apprehension (n=2; 10%)	Crown ward with access (n=6; 100%)
Special needs of referred child/youth**	Medical (n=2) Emotional (n=0) Social (n=4) Behavioural (n=5) Academic (n=5)	Medical (n=1) Emotional (n=0) Social (n=0) Behavioural (n=1) Academic (n=1)
Assessment or treatment plan**	Not available (n=12) Psychological assessment (n=2) IPRC (n=1) IEP (n=1) Depression (n=1) Anxiety (n=1) Suicidal ideation (n=1) ADHD (n=1) Aggressiveness (n=1) Under assessment (n=1)	Not available (n=6)
Current placement *Note: data not reliable*	Foster home (n=8; 40%) Outside Paid Resource (n=8; 40%) With parent (n=3; 15%) Kin Service (n=1; 5%) *Note: 1/3 of the data are missing*	Foster home (n=2; 33%) Outside paid resource (n=3; 50%) Private boarding (n=1; 17%) *Note: Sample size too small to analyze*

** Youth could be in more than one category

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Parent/ Kin/ Kith Information

With the Early Service case referrals (n=13) there were 42 parents, kin, or kith identified with an average of 3.23 individuals identified per case. The majority of the 42 individuals were parents (n=23), in particular, mothers (n=12, mean age of 34.5 years old) and fathers (n=11, mean age of 31.5 years). Other individuals included: grandparents (n=5), siblings (n=3), uncles (n=2), kith (n=2), and step-parents (n=1).

The Crown Ward Service cases (n=2) had 7 individuals identified, with an average of 3.5 individuals per case. They were either mothers (n=2, mean age of 44 years) or fathers (n=2, mean age of 65 years) or siblings (n=3).

Details of the Request

The details of the request were written as a narrative in the *Kinship Referral Forms*. This means that while some information has been included, other information may have inadvertently been excluded within the document, or the information was simply missing. Thus, the descriptive findings presented in this section are only based upon the information included within the reports.

This section was to explore eight areas. However, throughout the analysis, it became apparent that typically four areas were predominately used. The findings from these areas have been included below.

➕ *1. Reasons and Circumstances Leading to Admission to Care?*
A variety of reasons were noted for why children/ youth entered care. Similarities were found between the Early Service and Crown Ward Service cases. Examples of the protection concerns included: parent abandonment; parent's mental health and/or substance misuse issues; concerns with parent's functioning ability; parent's physical health issues; parent's transient lifestyle; parent's inability to provide for their children's needs; unsafe living conditions; parents not seeking medical treatment for their child; and/or child exposed to domestic violence.

➕ **2. Significant Kin/Kith Relationships and Contact Information?**
All of the forms in the Early Service and Crown Ward Service identified someone and their relationship to the referred child.

➕ *3. Are Birth Parents Supportive of the Search for Kin?*
Very few forms (n=5) clearly indicated whether or not the parents were initially supportive of the search for kin. While the small sample limits any generalizations, the breakdown by category is noted.

   *Parent(s) not supportive of kin search (n=2 cases)   *Parent(s) were supportive of kin search (n=1 case)
   *Parent(s) not aware of kin referral (n=1 case)   *Parent(s) were aware of kin referral (n=1 case)

➕ *4. Is Child/Youth in Agreement to the Kinship Researcher?*
Only a small number of the forms clearly indicated whether or not youth were a) informed and b) in agreement of the search for kin. While a few children were aware of the referral (n=2 cases), another form stated that the child was too young to speak with the Kinship Researcher (n=1 case).

The four other data areas that may have been included within the forms are noted below, however, they did not present any emerging themes within this analysis.

5. If charges involved, any outstanding court hearings or bail conditions
6. Are parents receptive to CAS's services
7. Can the Kinship Researcher contact directly with the parents and/or kin
8. What are the issues the Kinship Researcher needs to be aware when contacting the parents and/or kin.

Frequency of Cases Referred
During the nine-month review period (September 1, 2012 to May 31, 2013) a total of 43 cases were referred.


4.2 CASES REFERRED (N=43)~SEARCH LOG FORMS

4.2.1 Search Log Hours for Early Service Cases (Intake & Family Services; n=13)
From the population of cases available during the review period (N=43), a sample of 15 cases was selected to conduct the comprehensive, in-depth review.

According to the *Search Log Forms* filled out by the Kinship Researchers from September 2012 to May 2013 on the identified Early Service pilot cases for this evaluation (n=13), a variety of search activities took place on each of the cases. Examples of activities include: file mining, communication, tools used, and travel. Refer to Figure 1 for an overview of the search log forms.

Figure 1: Overview of the Search Log Forms for the Early Service Cases (Sept 2012 – May 2013)
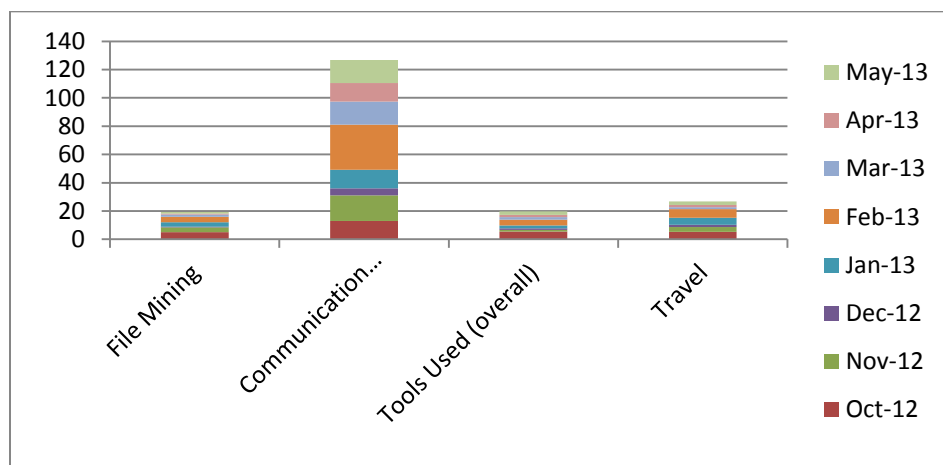
From Figure 1, it is clear that the majority of the Kinship Researchers' work hours were spent communicating with workers (e.g., Family Service Workers, Children Service Workers, Resource Workers, Supervisors, etc.), children and youth, foster caregivers, and with kin/kith. Over the nine-month evaluation period, Kinship Researchers spent two-thirds (66%) of their total time in communication; this equates to 126.77 hours reported across the 13 cases. Approximately two-thirds of their time was spent communicating with workers (n=85.58 hours; 68% of their time), followed by approximately one-third of their time spent communicating with kin/kith (n=37.94 hours; 30% of their time). The least amount of communication occurred with the child/youth (n=2.5 hours; 2% of their time) and the foster caregivers (n=.75 hours; 1% of their time).

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Refer to Figure 2 for a breakdown of the communication hours by the different team members for the Early Service cases.

Figure 2: Overview of Communication Hours with Stakeholders for the Early Service Cases (Sept 2012 – May 2013)
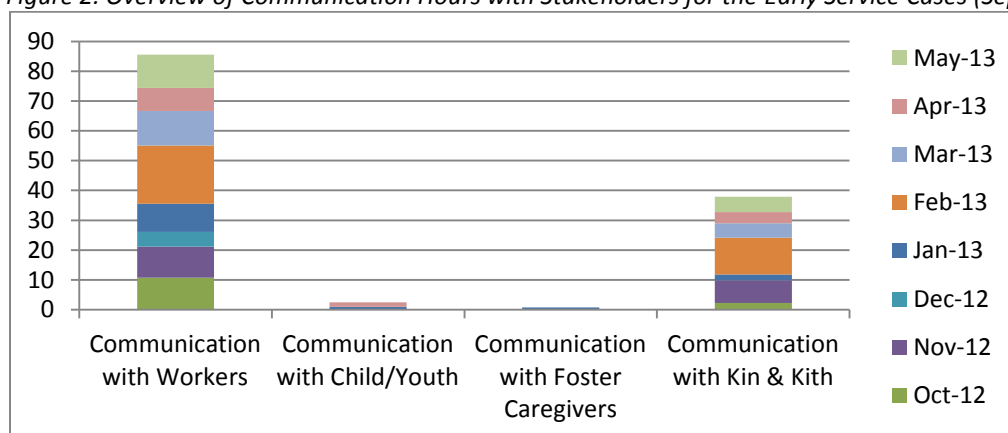
This section breaks down the Kinship Researchers *communication patterns* with workers into three types: (a) in-person/phone/ email, (b) meetings with workers, and (c) correspondence. Figure 3 provides a visual illustration of how the hours communicating were broken down for the Early Service cases.The majority of time was spent communicating in-person via the telephone or email (n=38.17 hours; 43% of their time) or correspondence (n=36.38 hours; 41% of their time). The rest of the time was spent in meetings with workers, such as Integrated Planning Conference (n=15.17 hours; 17% of their time).

Figure 3: Overview of the Communication Hours with the Workers (Sept 2012 – May 2013)
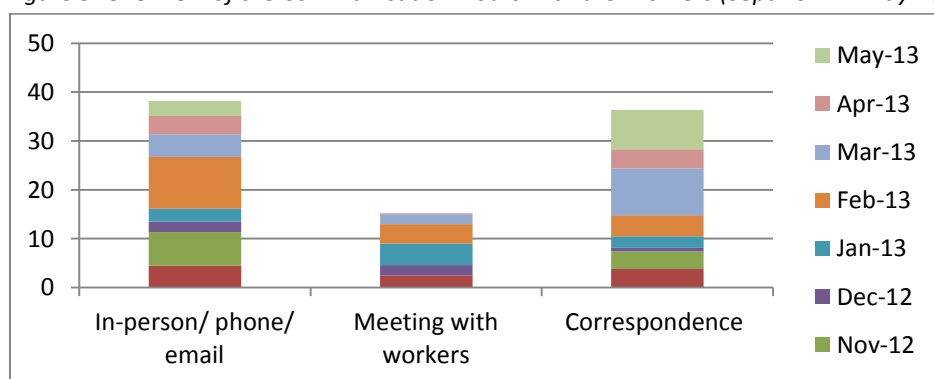
Overall, the Kinship Researchers reported that their second most frequent indicator on the Search Log Forms was *travel* (refer back to Figure 1), which accounted for 14% of their time on the Early Service cases (n=26.75 hours).

The next most frequent activity was *file mining* (10% of their time, n=19.25 hours) which included activities such as review CAS-Toronto documentation and court documents. The Kinship Researchers also spent 10% of their time using *search tools* (n=19.85 hours); the tools were categorized into three types: (a) internet searches (e.g., Facebook, Obituary, Google) and other online searches, such as LSLine, Seneca Search; (b) Ministry of Transportation (MTO), and (c) International Searches.

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For an illustration of how many hours were used for each tool, please refer to Figure 4. It is apparent that the majority of the Kinship Researchers' time was spent using the Internet as a *search tool* (n=16.86 hours; 85% of their time), followed by using the *International Search tools* (n=3 hours; 15% of their time). No hours were reported on the Search Logs for the use of MTO on these pilot cases.

Figure 4: Overview of the Tools Used for the Early Service Cases (Sept 2012 – May 2013)
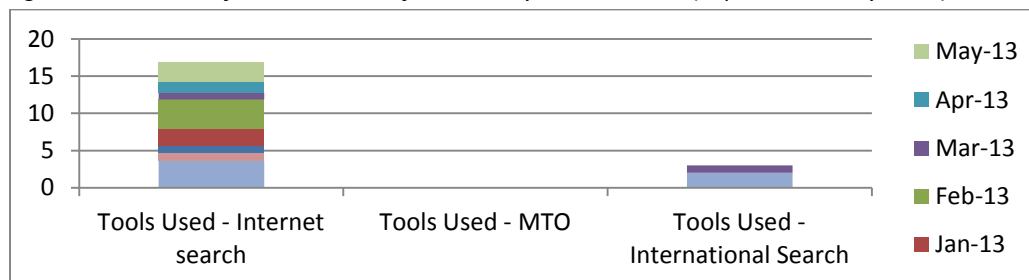
4.2.2. Search Log Hours for Crown Ward Service Cases (Crown Wards; N=2)

The data collected for this section were analyzed but are not reported given it is based on only two cases.

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4.3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

According to the *key informant interviews* with kinship applicants, non-kinship applicants, CAS referring workers, and kinship researchers, there are four key areas of inquiry explored for this evaluation:

- Perceptions of engagement with kinship families
- Perceptions of satisfaction of pilot cases
- Perceptions of case outcomes
- Recommendations

Each stakeholder group and their responses are explored in-depth. Each area of inquiry is presented with an analysis of the responses with supporting non-identifying quotations from participants. A summary of the emerging themes are included in Table 3.

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Table 3: Overview of emerging themes by stakeholder groups by Question

Stakeholder Group	QI3. Perceptions of engagement with kinship families	QI4. Perceptions of satisfaction withservice	QI5. Perceptions of service outcomes	QI6. Recommendations
	Outputs: *I3.A – Kinship researchers' approach*	*Outputs:* *I4.A – Perceptions of pilot*	*Outputs:* *I5.D – Impressions of changes* *I5.E – Perceptions of what did not work*	*I6.A – Suggestions/ recommendations*
Kinship Applicants* (n=4)	**I3.A1 – Appreciation of respectful and open communication of the Kinship Researchers**	**I4.A1 – Positive experience with pilot by Kinship Applicants** **I4.A2 – Perceptions of CAS in general tended to positively change for Kinship Applicants due to the pilot**	**I5.D1 – Happy to be included in part of the plan for the identified child** **I5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with pilot**	**I6.A1 – Recommendation: Kinship search should occur earlier within the CAS process**
Kinship Non-Applicants* (n=5)	**I3.A1 – Valuing the role of the Kinship Researcher**	**I4.A1 – Positive experience with pilot by Kinship Non-Applicants** **I4.A2 – Perceptions of CAS in general tended to be mixed for Kinship Non-Applicants as a result of the pilot**	**I5.D1 – Involved in widening the kinship network for the identified child** **I5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with pilot**	**I6.A1 – Recommendations were proposed**
EARLY SERVICE CAS referring workers (n=12) (Intake & Family Service)	**I3.A1 – Thorough kinship search approach by Kinship Researchers** **I3.A2 – Successful communication between Kinship Researcher and kin**	**I4.A1 – Positive experience with pilot by CAS referring workers** **I4.A2 – Increased knowledge of goals and benefits of kinship for CAS referring workers** **I4.A3 –Communication with kinship researcher was effective, efficient, and detailed** **I4.A4 – Helpful that Kinship Researchers have time to focus on the kin search**	**I5.D1 – Located kin/kith** **I5.D2 – Helpful tool was the genogram** **I5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with pilot**	**I6.A1 – Recommendations were proposed**
CROWN WARD SERVICE CAS referring workers (n=2) (CYS)	**I3.A1 – Thorough kinship search approach by Kinship Researchers** **I3.A2 – Successful communication skills in connecting with youth and family**	**I4.A1 – Mixed experiences with pilot by CAS referring workers** **I4.A2 – Mixed knowledge of goals and benefits of kinship for CAS referring workers** **I4A.3 – Effective communication by Kinship Researchers to referring CAS workers**	**I5.D1 – Located kin/kith** **I5.D2 – Helpful tool was the genogram because it illustrated what the youth's family looks like** **I5.D3 – (re)Connecting youth with kin were still at the planning stages when pilot case closed** **I5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with pilot**	**I6.A1 – Recommendations were proposed**
Kinship Researchers (n=2)	**I3.A1 – Neutrality of the Kinship Researchers' role helpful for engaging with kin, as well as CAS referring workers** **I3.A2 – Individualized approach when engaging with kin by Kinship Researchers**	**I4.A1 – Unique experience with kinship search depending upon type of CAS referring workers** **I4.A2 – Believed CAS referring workers increased their knowledge of the benefits of searching for kin** **I4.A3 – Difficulties experienced in communicating with CAS referring workers by Kinship Researchers**	**I5.D1 – Located kin/kith** **I5.D2 – Helpful tool ~ Genogram- many reasons** **I5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with pilot**	**I6.A1 – Recommendations were proposed**

Kinship Applicant: *are kin applicants found through the search process who desired to present a plan for the child/youth*

Kinship Non-Applicant: *are new kin/kith found through search process*

No noted differences between *kinship applicants* and *kinship non-applicants* responses by case type: Early Service or Crown Ward case.

Kinship Applicants (n=4)

AREA OF INQUIRY:	PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE
OUTPUTS:	QI3.A – KINSHIP RESEARCHERS' APPROACH

Theme QI3.A1 – Appreciation of respectful and open communication of thekinship researchers

Four kinship applicants were interviewed. They appreciated the kinship researchers' understanding attitude and their respectful and open communication with them and their families.They also appreciated being approached by the child welfare agency to either provide care or a home for the identified children.

Kinship Applicant: *"She was understanding, respectful, and caring about what was going on with me and my life. Before that, I felt sick about the whole situation. When I spoke with her she opened up a whole new set of doors for me."*

Kinship Applicant: *"I got good information. When I called her back she would answer my questions."*

Kinship Applicant: *"(The Kinship Researcher) advised that I can keep them (the children) here until all the papers go through and that was very helpful."*

Theme QI4.A1 – Positive experiences with pilot by kinship applicants

Overwhelmingly, the kinship applicants expressed a positive perception of the *Kinship Search Program*. Specifically, kinship applicants felt it was positive because they were being acknowledged and contacted as an important individual within the identified children's lives. They were glad to offer a source of (re)connection or placement for the child. Many kinship applicants expressed a desire to prevent the identified children from being placed in CAS care. As the kinship search is a relatively new concept in child welfare for the public, some kinship applicants were unclear of why they were being contacted, but after it was explained, they were happy that they were approached. Some kinship applicants indicated that they felt that the kinship researcher created opportunities for them to be a part of the process; thus, making it a positive experience.

Kinship Applicant:	*"Everyone else I had to deal with didn't care about me. Their first priority was the child and I completely understand that, but when they are looking at me taking (the child), I felt that me and my family should be treated a little differently. When I spoke to (the Kinship Researcher) it was a world of possibility and she talked to me like a normal human being."*
Kinship Applicant:	*"We wanted (the kids) and we didn't want them in the system. When (the Kinship Researcher) called me I was ecstatic."*
Kinship Applicant:	*"I thought it would be a quicker process. I thought we would have (the child) here already. (We) had been in touch with CAS a year ago when there was a threat and said we would take (the child) then. (The child) did end up in foster care and we were not contacted."*

Theme QI4.A2 – Perceptions of CAS tended to positively change for kinship applicants due to the kinship service

Many of the kinship applicants indicated that their involvement in the *Kinship Search Program* had a positive impact on their attitude towards CAS in general. There was a sense that the kinship researchers were looking out for the best interests of the identified child through locating kin/kith. There was one participant who felt that she had a positive experience with the *Kinship Search Program* however it didn't influence her overall attitude about CAS.

Kinship Applicant:	*"The (CAS) worker was a great worker but all about the kids. For me I needed someone to come along side me and support me and I didn't get that until I heard from the Kinship Worker."*
Kinship Applicant:	*"Yes, somewhat because I thought CAS was there to take kids away from you but they can assist you with different problems and can help and assist as well with other aspects of family life."*

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Theme QI5.D1 – Happy to be included in part of the plan for the identified child

The majority of the kinship applicants indicated that they were happy to be a part of the plan for the identified child. In addition, they were pleased with the direction of the plan when the kinship matches were successful or they perceived the plan to be a positive one for the child. The factors related to what a positive plan was for the child were not provided by these participants. In cases where the child was not placed with kin, kinship applicants perceived these situations as a non-positive outcome for the child unless the child was in transition to being moved back home with their biological parents or kin/kith.

Kinship Applicant:	*"Yes, dramatically, she brought us together. We didn't even know where the kids were. She looked for family members and worked extra hard to move forward to get the kids into the house."*
Kinship Applicant:	*"Everything was going as planned, we set dates for (the child) to come, and had a crib here and everything, but then I got sick. If I hadn't gotten sick, I would have followed through, and I would have (the Kinship Researcher) to thank."*

Theme QI5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with Kinship Search Program

As with any pilot project being implemented within a child welfare agency, there will always be challenges/ barriers to the intervention process. While most of the kinship applicants did not identify any challenges, others did indicate some challenges but these examples were case-specific. Some challenges identified by kinship applicants were: travel expenses from their town/city to Toronto area for numerous appointments, or language barriers and/or accents. To overcome these barriers, kinship applicants recommended that CAS workers should be able to have meetings within the city/town of the kinship applicant. No recommendations were provided about the language barriers. On a separate note, it was highlighted by some kinship applicants that it would have been more advantageous for the child if CAS had of connected with them much sooner.

Kinship Applicant:	*"Nothing. There were no problems. Everything ran smoothly. She was quick and helpful."*
Kinship Applicant:	*"In my situation it would have been nice to come down to (my area) but I totally understand."*
Kinship Applicant:	*"I don't know how it works normally. This is my first and hopefully only experience with it. Her job was to find a relative and she did that and now it is out of her hands."*

Theme QI6.A1 –Recommendation: Kinship search should occur earlier within the CAS process

The majority of kinship applicants recommended that the one improvement to the CAS-Toronto Kinship Search Service is the need to contact families sooner in the process.

Kinship Applicant: "*We could have been contacted sooner, long before (the Kinship Researcher) got involved. The (CAS) knew the kid's father's number and we were never called*."

Kinship Applicant: "*The Kinship Search should be the first and foremost thing CAS does before they look at foster home… Look at family first and go forward with kinship first and foster care as last resort*."

Kinship Applicant: "*I went a whole year before kinship even contacted me. I wish we could have done this earlier.*"

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Kinship Non-Applicants (n=5)

AREA OF INQUIRY:	PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE
OUTPUTS:	QI3.A – KINSHIP RESEARCHERS' APPROACH

Theme QI3.A1 – Valuing the role of the kinship researcher

The majority of the kinship non-applicants found the kinship researchers' approaches to be helpful and enjoyable. These participants felt that the kinship researcher's role was to assist the children with their plans to connect and live with other family members. Participants saw their role as a valuable one. The kinship researchers' approach was not valued when the kinship non-applicants felt pressured to connect with estranged family members because the kinship researcher wanted the information.

Kinship Non-Applicants:	"*I was thankful for her call to me in (another country) about her concern with my daughter and her children.*"
Kinship Non-Applicant:	"(*The Kinship Researcher) was very understanding about my ill feelings toward the Society. She was polite, determined and excellent at what she does. She went through a great deal of trouble to find me. She was very efficient.*"
Kinship Non-Applicant:	"*She might be trying to do her job but you don't do that (contact family that don't know the child exists).*"

AREA OF INQUIRY:	PERCEPTIONS OF SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE
OUTPUTS:	QI4.A – PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE

Theme QI4.A1 – Positive experiences with service by kinship non-applicants

The kinship non-applicants indicated that when contacted by the kinship researchers, their initial experiences were, for the most part, positive. In general, they stated that they understood why they were being contacted as the Kinship Search Program was attempting to find kin/kith to take the identified child out of the child welfare "*system*".

Kinship Non-Applicant:	"*When I spoke with (the Kinship Researcher) she was very helpful. I wanted my nieces and nephews to stay here. (The Kinship Researcher) said she would help. She did help me.*"
Kinship Non-Applicant:	"*I had a [relative] and spoke with her and [my relative] said yes, to taking the kids. That was as far as my involvement went.*"
Kinship Non-Applicant:	"*I wasn't expecting anything would happen (from the call from the Kinship Researcher). I didn't know who she was. She explained she was looking for someone to take (the child) to get them out of the system.*"

Theme QI4.A2 – Perceptions of CAS was mixed for kinship non-applicants as a result of the kinship service

Responses to this question varied across the kinship non-applicants regarding whether their involvement in the *Kinship Search Program* changed their perceptions of CAS. While the small sample size precludes generalizations, three applicants felt the search service had improved their attitude towards CAS through seeing positive changes with their kin/kith (e.g., reunification) and the other two indicated their views of CAS had not been altered, despite the positive experience within the search service.

Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"With CAS, I was very thankful and appreciate what they did to help my daughter and her kids. Very thankful."*
Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"(The Kinship Researcher) is a different part in CAS. She was very polite, nice and did her job to help locate who was there. Why was her time wasted when our number should have been on the papers? It has been 1 ½ years so why did it take so long to get in touch with us? (The child) has been in care for quite some time."*
Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"(The Kinship Researcher) is only one person. I got run over by a whole team."*

AREA OF INQUIRY:	**PERCEPTION OF SERVICE OUTCOMES**
OUTPUTS:	**QI5.D – IMPRESSIONS OF CHANGES**
	QI5.E – PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT DID NOT WORK

Theme QI5.D1 – Involved in widening the kinship network for the identified child

The majority of the time, kinship non-applicants disclosed that they were a part of the kinship planning process.Some shared that they were directly involved in widening the kinship network. In these cases, these kinship non-applicants were pleased to be a part of the process towards moving the child to a kinship placement.

Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"My [child] called my [relative] and she agreed to kinder-ship."*
Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"(The Kinship Researcher) asked me if I could help with the kids and asked what was best for the kids."*
Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"I believe it was because (the Kinship Researcher) made more the attempt to call the worker to say why you are not contacting the family. She moved things along. (The child) is still in foster care. He will be going to [relative's] house."*

Theme QQI5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with Kinship Search Program

The challenges identified by the kinship non-applicants tended to be case-specific. Analysis did not find themes overlapped. Caution is needed given the small sample size and presenting examples are meant to be illustrative not exhaustive. Noted challenges were: the inability of the kinship researcher to share specific information and feeling the search for kin/kith took too long. Some felt the persistency of the kinship researcher was not always helpful. Recommendation for change included searching for kin/kith more quickly and listening to the kinship non-applicants regarding estranged family members.

Kinship Non-Applicant: *"(The Kinship Researcher) was pretty good. I got a letter, which was how I was found. Yet, all our numbers were given [to CAS]... I am not sure why it took so long to contact us?"*

Kinship Non-Applicant: *"I understood her intentions and I know she was trying to do what was in the best interest of the child but it was a little over board. (The Kinship Researcher) was not listening. I had to tell her deep dark secrets of my family to get her to believe I am not lying to her but she wouldn't get it."*

Kinship Non-Applicant: *"(The Kinship Researcher) never made any promises. That was good. There was nothing she did that I didn't like. She was honest with me from the start. I believe she did her job and didn't pick sides. I don't think there is any room for improvement."*

AREA OF INQUIRY: RECOMMENDATIONS
OUTPUTS: **QI6.A – SUGGESTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS**

Theme QI6.A1 –Recommendations proposed

Overall, the kinship non-applicants indicated they had a positive experience with the *Kinship Search Program*. When asked for suggestions on how to improve the service, all participants made comments about CAS-Toronto interventions in general and did not have any specifically about the *Kinship Search Program*. Recommendations were made about foster care and to increase CAS worker knowledge about mental health issues.

Kinship Non-Applicants: *"The kinship search I have no problems with. It is the other section and they need to go into people's homes they are placing people in."*

Kinship Non-Applicants: *"I think, based on the experience, all CAS workers should have more knowledge on mental issues that people experience."*

Kinship Non-Applicants: *"CAS was good. People were friendly and doing their best to help the children in need. Their support was good for the kids. They were happy, clean, and well taken care of."*

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CAS Referring Worker ~ Early Service Cases (n=12)

AREA OF INQUIRY: PERCEPTIONS OF KIN SEARCH PILOT
OUTPUTS: Q I3.A – KINSHIP RESEARCHERS' APPROACH

Theme QI3.A1 – Thorough kinship search approach by kinship researchers

The majority of referring CAS workers (Early Service) found that the search approach taken by the kinship researchers was beneficial. Referring CAS workers noted that the kinship researchers used a variety of search methods that they themselves did not have access to or knowledge about. Most indicated they appreciated the time the kinship researchers were able to dedicate to the pursuit of kin/kith. Some workers identified reasons why the search was terminated, such as: the identified children were reuniting with their parents or other family networks. In other cases, CAS referring workers shared that they wished that the search was more extensive.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"Her approach is different. I don't know her secrets. She found all those people and we couldn't*."

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"She took the time to do the family tree and got kids to connect to family…. She helped the kids understand who was in their family*."

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"I was hoping for more digging*."

Theme QI3.A2 – Successful communication between kinship researcher and kin

The majority referring CAS workers with the Early Service cases indicated that communication between the kinship researcher and kin was a key aspect of their success. Workers found that the kinship researchers were skilled at engaging families by building a safe and trusting relationship and doing so in a very short time period. This resulted in moving the process along more quickly than anticipated. As a result of the kinship researchers' successful communication with kin, they were able to navigate the complexities of the family system.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"It was not an easy family and she formed relationships with all the players. It was great for me because it deflects the relationship with me and it was nice to have someone alongside*."

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"I think the family was a little closed to the idea of reaching out to the (other) family members initially. They didn't disclose they had family until they were ready but (Kinship Researcher) was persistent*."

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"They immediately trusted her right away, more than other workers. (The Kinship Researcher) was the first worker who spoke to them and was able to get valuable information about another possible kin*."

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Theme QI4.A1 – Positive experiences with kinship search service by CAS referring workers ofEarly Service cases

The majority of the Early Service referring CAS workers indicated that the kin search process was positive. These participants highlighted the fact that the kinship researchers were *helpful, resourceful*, and *successful* at locating kin. They experienced the kinship researchers as being passionate about their jobs and respectful with families. Areas that made the experiences less positive for the CAS referring workers were in relation to (a) the sometimes long waitlist for service and (b) once kin/kith were located, no additional kin were sought and the case was closed.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"It was positive over all. I think I was impressed with her perseverance. That was the core of what she was doing. She pushed, explored all options. She was digging and attending all school meetings."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"She [kinship researcher] was fantastic. She was committed and professional. I didn't have to chase her. She was very helpful. We had loads of conversation about the kid's history and worries."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"I couldn't believe all the people she found. Obviously they have time to do that and we don't. I wish we can have (the Kinship Researchers) all the time and that when a child comes into care we can make a referral concurrently."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"When grandma came forward to say she would step up, the search ended. It would have been better if the search continued."*

Theme Q I4.A2 – Increased knowledge of goals and benefits of kinship for CAS referring workers (Early Service)

These front-line workers acknowledged that the kinship search process takes considerable time and that an important element of that time is the kinship researcher developing a trusting relationship with families in order to obtain information needed to find kin. The workers'appreciated both the dedication of the kinship researchers to do that job well and that the referring CAS worker would not be able to do that service due to their schedules and timelines. Additionally, while many of these CAS workers noted they were already familiar with the goals of kinship, most said that from this experience they developed a better understanding of the kinship search service. That said, a number of workers felt that there is not enough awareness and understanding about the kinship program and more specifically, the kinship search service.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"Yes I did (gain a further understanding of the goals/benefits of the kin family finder search). I would be interested in finding out more. I think there was not enough awareness from the CAS workers and even some of the supervisors. It would be good if they could know more."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"To be honest I didn't really feel I had a great understanding of it, but have a preliminary understanding of it now. Having not gone through the whole process, I am still unfamiliar of the exact nature and specifics of it."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"Definitely, I didn't know how much leg work she would actually give in facilitating possible kin plan with someone out of the county and she was really able to help with this process. I was not aware how much she would actually be able to do."*

Theme QI4.A3 –Communication with kinship researcher was effective, efficient, and detailed

All of the 12 referring Early Service CAS workers said they were satisfied with the level, type and frequency of communication from the kinship researchers. Much of the communication occurred by email or in-person and was reported as *effective, efficient*, and *detailed*, and the availability of the kinship researcher was seen as *excellent*.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"(The Kinship Researcher) was very effective. She was excellent. She was great and there were lots of very detailed emails which was very helpful."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"10/10. She always emailed updates and I got phone updates. I never had to chase her. She was keen to be involved and worked with the team."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"There was a call at the beginning and a call several months later when they were able to find someone. The communication was sufficient."*

Theme QI4.A4 –Helpful that kinship researchers have time to focus on the kin search

The Early Service referring CAS workers tended to express that the *Kinship Search Program* was a helpful resource because it was focused on the kinship search. In particular, the pilot allowed kinship researchers the time needed to dedicate to do an in-depth kinship search (e.g., requiring perseverance and the specialized skills to do a thorough search).These referring CAS workers felt that kin search was helpful in different types of case scenarios, for example, conducting a kinship search concurrently with team planning. Overall, the kinship search was perceived as having a positive impact on case planning and connecting children with kin/kith.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"She comes up with a number of different possibilities and can expand out the options. When we have probed the list of family what we come up with was limited. She was able to expand it."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"The possibility to have someone who can dedicate themselves to look for kin is great. This is not something a protection worker can do. This gives the family a sense of dedication that CAS has to find a permanent home for the child."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"The genogram and perseverance helped the family become open to connecting with other family."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"They were able to fill in the blanks that I couldn't."*

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AREA OF INQUIRY:	**PERCEPTION OF CASE OUTCOMES**
OUTPUTS:	**QI5.D – IMPRESSIONS OF CHANGES**
	QI5.E – PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT DID NOT WORK

Theme QI5.D1 – Located kin/kith

Most of these 12 Early Service referring CAS workers indicated that kin/kith were located as a result of the kinship search. For cases where *Placement was Found,* outcomes included: 1) a kin placement found and explored inside/outside of Canada, or 2) relatives travelled to Canada to assist in the childrearing process. For cases where *Connections were Found,* outcomes included: 1) expanding the family support systems to increase the likelihood for success. For cases where *Referral to Kinship Search was Discontinued Prior to Search Commencing* it tended to because, a)the family declined to plan for the identified child or b) the child was reunified with her/his parents.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"The family declined service and made their own arrangement as they was no protection concerns to warrant CAS involvement. We didn't continue to plan with this family."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"She found a large number of people. Sometimes they find people that are not good (match), but she found many people who could actually care of the child. The child is in process of reunification but it has taken almost a year. This is not wasted work. We have a family group conference and we can use the family as a resource to help the family around reunification and to help provide support."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker:*"Yes, they were able to find extended family in Canada. It looks like the family might work out."*
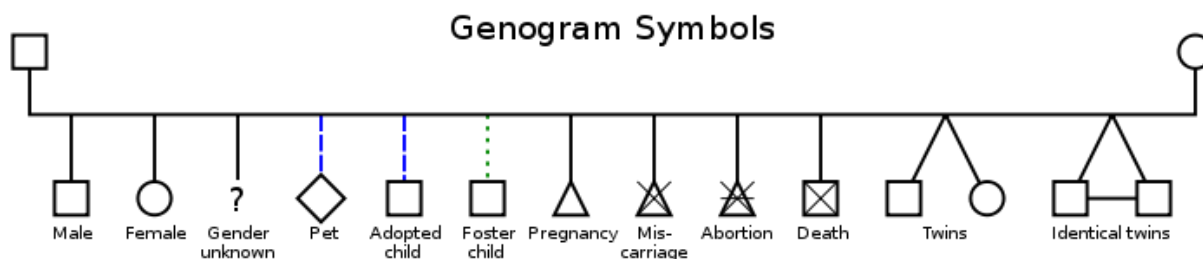
Theme QI5.D2 – Helpful tool ~ The Genogram

While the referring CAS workers generally made positive remarks about the genogram, there was a range of responses about its usefulness. Positive statements about the genogram occurred when workers experienced it as helpful (e.g., used in case management planning in the future). More neutral views about it were made when the referral ended before a more extensive genogram could be created. Most concerning was a few workers indicated they did not receive a copy of it. Overall, the genogram was perceived as a helpful tool.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"I am a new worker, and it (genogram) was helpful to me. I have always loved the genogram."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"The genogram was elaborate. It made mine look like a kindergarten version to the PhD version."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"(The genogram) was not unhelpful."*

Genogram Symbols: Male, Female, Gender unknown, Pet, Adopted child, Foster child, Pregnancy, Mis-carriage, Abortion, Death, Twins, Identical twins

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QI5.E1 – Experienced some challenges with pilot

The referring CAS workers for these Early Service cases did identify some challenges. For example, the waitlist was viewed as too long, which made case planning difficult, especially in light of that fact that permanency planning has legislative timeframes. Another illustration of an identified challenge centered on the physical location of the kinship researchers, was the referring worker and case were in a different location from the kinship researchers. Another challenge flagged by staff was the kinship search stopped after a placement was located or the children were returned back to their parents – so if the placement broke down at some point in the future – the search would need to be resumed instead of having a completed search ready to go as needed. A final challenge noted by workers was no case updates are provided when the kinship researcher was away.

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"It took too long to open the file. I already knew about [identified relative] and needed a much deeper search."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"I think it was important for her to persist. Even though at times I was impatient because of my own workload. Ultimately it was a benefit, so in the end I am happy she did what she did."*

AREA OF INQUIRY:	RECOMMENDATIONS
OUTPUTS:	QI6.A – SUGGESTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme QI6.A1 –Recommendations were proposed

Overall, the referring CAS workers indicated that they had a positive experience with the *Kinship Search Program*. When asked for suggestions on how to enhance the service, a variety of examples were included:

- *REDUCE* **wait times**
- *INCREASE* **awareness** of the *Kinship Search Program* to CAS-Toronto
- *INCREASE* **training opportunities** for referring CAS workers on how to expand their own kinship searches
- *EXPAND* **eligibility criteria** so that the service is available to all children, whether in the community or in care, in order to develop stronger networks for the children
- *INCREASE* **the number of kinship researchers**
- *CONTINUE kin search* even after kin/kith has put a plan forward or the child is returned back to their parents. The additional searching would allow for contingency plans, should the initial plan breakdown.
- *CONTINUE* **with the flexibility of the kinship researcher** to come to the referring CAS worker's location for meetings

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"Open up their referral criteria; they would likely need more staff. She did so many hours to get that information. They are like detectives… I wish they can do (kinship search) for every kid that comes into care. That is my dream."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"It would be helpful to widen the inclusion criteria to include families experiencing crisis but the kids are still in the home, in an attempt to be proactive instead of reactive."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"People don't know too much about it. Even though I have made a referral, it would be helpful to have a clearer understanding of what the program is all about, what the process is and what you can expect."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"There is a long waitlist …. We have our timelines we have to follow. More resources are needed."*

CAS Referring Workers ~ Crown Ward Service (n=2)

NOTE: The data and findings in this section need to be treated with caution as the sample is limited to two referring workers. Thus, the views, responses and experiences may or may not be reflective of the broader population of workers who serve Crown Wards.

AREA OF INQUIRY: PERCEPTIONS OF KIN SEARCH PILOT
OUTPUTS: QI3.A – KINSHIP RESEARCHERS' APPROACH

Theme QI3.A1 – Thorough kinship search approach by kinship researchers

The two referring CAS workers' who provide service to the Crown Wards cases included in this review, identified that it was not their role/responsibility to find kin/kith for children who were crown wards. Thus, they indicated that their search approaches were very different compared to the kinship researchers. Referring CAS workers found the kinship researchers' approaches to be successful and valuable in engaging with the youth and their kin/kith to expand the family's connections.

Crown Ward Service CAS Referring Worker: *"(Kinship Worker's) search was dedicated. My search with my other duties and caseload I certainly wouldn't have had the time to do that kind of search."*

Crown Ward Service CAS Referring Worker: *"That is not my role to look for kith or kin. I deal with their immediate family members."*

Theme Q3.A2 – Successful communication skills in connecting with youth and family

The two referring Crown Ward Service staff described the kinship researchers as skilful in conducting searches and engaging with the youth and kin, as well as being aware of inter-relationship dynamics. These skills were seen as the reasons for the kinship researchers' successful connections with youth and their family.

Crown Ward Service CAS Referring Worker: *"(Kinship Worker's) was very thorough, very good, and very aware of the fact that sometimes she was opening into a web of conflict and she had to be careful with that because of the family history."*

Crown Ward Service CAS Referring Worker: *"She did a good job gathering information from (the youth)."*

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Theme QI4.A1 – Mixed experiences with pilot by CAS referring workers (Crown Ward Service)

The two referring Crown Ward Service staff shared a mixture of experiences related to their satisfaction with the *Kinship Search Program*. Both indicated that kin/kith was located and good communication between the kinship researchers and the referring CAS worker occurred. There was some frustration when there was a disconnect between the kinship researcher and the referring CAS worker about the goal of the referral. Further, these participants were not fully prepared for the increased workload that resulted due to the kinship search process.

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: "*The process was pretty good. We had a phone meeting to provide information about the family and about the youth to let her know about his wishes.*"

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: "*The process needed more work in the initial stage in helping me to understand what was going to be entailed.*"

Theme Q14.A2 – Mixed knowledge of goals and benefits of kinship for CAS referring workers

There was some knowledge growth about the benefits and goals of kin searching. This knowledge developed throughout the searching process for the referring CAS worker serving the Crown Ward case. With one case the referring CAS worker felt confused about the purpose of the referral. More specifically, the confusion arose when only family (kin) was searched for, instead of including non-family (kith).

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: "*We knew the bio family would be able to adopt him but were hoping kinship would look outside the family as well. The time seemed to be wasted focused on family.*"

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: "*As time went on I was able to get a better understanding of what the goals were and a better understanding of what was involved and the impact and ramifications for the pilot.*"

Theme QI4.A3 – Effective communication by kinship researchers to referring Crown Ward Service case worker

The two referring CAS workers with the Crown Ward Service cases were satisfied with the communication between them and the kinship researchers. The kinship researchers' communication was described as *diligent and effective*.

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: "*(Kinship Worker) was awesome at her job. She is very thorough and very diligent in finding family members and was good at communicating to me when she found someone or about a latest development.*"

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: "*There was a lot of communication.... but I struggled with was style....I have to balance my caseload. I found myself having to say to her, I will do it but I need to do this other casework first...*"

Theme QI5.D1 – Located kin/kith

The two referring staff from the Crown Ward Service cases noted that kin/kith were successfully located. This resulted in youth being connected to family members in some situations. These (re)connections also illustrated that youth may choose to interact with the found kin/kith differently. This may include: being motivated to connect and forge relationships; being happy for the information and potential connections, but do not want to pursue permanency planning with these kin/kith; or being emotionally challenged by the process of learning about kin/kith. The outcomes of the kinship search highlighted for the referring CAS workers that each youth may require a different kind of support throughout the kinship searching process.

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: *"(Finding kin) has had its challenges for (the youth). Each of them is not embracing this the same way."*

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: *"(The Kinship Worker) did find some extended family members. (The youth) is on Facebook with a lot of them. He did go to a reunion and met a handful of them. He is happy for the communication."*

Theme QI5.D2 – Helpful tool was the genogram because it illustrated what the youth's family looks like

The genogram created by the kinship researchers was shared with the referring CAS workers and sometimes shared with youth and family members. The two referring CAS workers said they found the genogram was helpful to both worker and the identified youth. It helped the referring CAS workers see the breadth and depth of family connections visually. Some genogram's were quite complex and it was helpful that the kinship researcher simplified it by showing sections of it at a time to both the referring CAS worker and youth.

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: *"It helped because it laid out the picture of the family from both sides. She did it with him (the youth) and it helped him to see the big picture."*

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: *"It assisted me because it helped me to see what the family looks like."*

Theme QI5.D3–(re)Connecting youth with kin were still at the planning stages when pilot case closed

Having the kinship researcher include all team members in the communication process (e.g., youth, foster parents, group home staff, referring CAS worker) was seen as helpful by the referring workers. They noted their perspectives were broadened, where the focus was not solely on permanency, but equal attention was paid to increasing the youth's support network through connections with kin, which in turn, impacted case outcomes. The referring workers used the information shared by the kinship searcher and were currently in the planning stages of assisting the youth to connect with family. While permanency placements were not yet realized for these two youth, both positive and new family connections were forged through the kinship search process.

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: *"You are looking at building relationships and (for) a potential placement, (and try to understand the) impact on these kids... while dealing with all this."*

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker: *"He is fine to wait until he is 18 (to have contact with kin)"*

Theme QI5.E1 –Experienced some challenges with pilot

Notwithstanding the many positive attributes associated with the *Kinship Search Program*, some challenges were noted by these referring workers. Three main challenges were noted by the referring CAS workers.

Challenge 1*:* Referring CAS worker was frequently unaware of the magnitude of the additional workload that came with kin searching (e.g., arranging meetings with multiple stakeholders, safe checks/assessments).
Solution 1: Kinship to inform the referring CAS workers in advance about the workload requirements.

Challenge 2*:* Referring CAS worker in juggling full caseload demands also pressured to meet the timeline demands of the kinship researchers.
Solution 2: Allow kinship researcher to visit the youth, similar to adoption workers.

Challenge 3*:* Referring CAS workers felt there was a disconnection between the goals of the referral by the kinship researcher and the referring CAS worker.
Solution 3: Ensure there is a meeting at the start of the kinship search process to clarify goals and identify any timeframe barriers (e.g., kinship researcher out of the office).

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker:*"The adoption program didn't know anything about the Kinship Search Program. I found it odd that the two departments are doing similar work but they are not aware of what each other are doing."*

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker:*"[Kinship Search Program] is a lot of work. As a front line worker with a client considered for this pilot, additional work must be stated up front."*

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker:*"We had a different goal… A meeting should be held to make sure everyone is on the same page for why the referral is a made. If we had known that this was the road they would have gone down I would have saved everyone a lot of time and had gone [another service]."*

AREA OF INQUIRY:	**RECOMMENDATIONS**
OUTPUTS:	**QI6.A – SUGGESTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS**

Theme QI6.A1 –Recommendations were proposed

Overall, the two referring Crown Ward Service workers indicated that the *Kinship Search Program* is worthwhile in that it: a) helps youth understand how they fit into their family tree, b) helps the youth learn about their heritage and culture, and c) fosters opportunities for the youth to make (re)connections with kin/kith now or in the future. This is achieved by allowing the youth to have the central voice within the kin search process. Suggestions on how to enhance the service included:

- *ENSURE* Kinship Search Program goals are agreed upon by kinship researcher and the referring CAS worker;
- *INCREASE* awareness of the *Kinship Search Program* to CAS-Toronto;
- *CLARIFY* roles and responsibilities of the kinship researcher vs. other workers (e.g., Early Service, Crown Ward Service, adoption, kinship assessment) as well as departments;
- *BE TRANSPARENT* about the workload issues for referring CAS workers.

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker:*"You have to team up in sharing information and unpacking the information with the foster family and group home staff and the kids and amongst the kids. It can get out of control if you are not working together."*

Crown Ward Service Referring CAS Worker:*"Everyone has to be on the same page from the beginning."*

Kinship Researchers (N=2)

Theme QI3.A1 –Neutrality of kinship researcher's role helpful for engaging with kin and referring CAS worker

As there are only two Kinship researchers, the data from both are included. When asked about the quality of the communication, both indicated that they had positive and respectful communication with the various stakeholders. Achievement of this was through a strengths-based approach, with the aim of creating a trusting relationship with the kin/kith that could then foster opportunities to search for more family members. This process is similar to the approaches used by the referring Early Service workers.

An element that is essential to the effectiveness of the kinship search function and a key difference between the referring CAS worker role and the Kinship worker role is that the kinship researchers' embrace a neutral position/perspective. This "neutral" stance allows the kinship researchers to engage the various stakeholders using a team-based approach. This includes not only the kinship applicants and non-kinship applicants but the referring CAS workers too. More specifically, in taking a neutral approach, this allows the kinship researchers to provide education, work through barriers, and develop team goals. Access to a variety of search tools (e.g., Seneca Search, MTO database) further adds credibility to their roles and responsibilities. Kinship researchers also reported their work with staff includes being able to distil myths about kin/kith (e.g., '*the apple doesn't fall far from the tree*'), and exploring the feelings of referring CAS workers about what happens if kin/kith are located and potential barriers that may arise.

Kinship Researcher:	"*The common theme is that we work from a strength based neutral perspective and with a fresh set of eyes, and we help them realize that. We are trying to develop relationships with families and workers. We are setting a relationship of trust, respect and purpose*."
Kinship Researcher:	"*Getting the cooperation from the kin is very important because we are able to get information. Being a neutral party (is important)… we are not there to judge …. We are just trying to find the strength of this person and family.…*"

Theme QI3.A2 – Individualized approach when engaging with kin by the kinship researchers

The kinship researchers emphasized how important it is to take an individualized approach when engaging with kin/kith. This individualized approach included validating and dealing with their feelings related to the kin searching process (e.g., guilt, loss, grief). In order to establish a trusting relationship with kin/kith, the kinship researchers shared that it was critical for them to be responsive to the kin/kith's emotions and to complete the task requirements (e.g., follow through with plans, follow-up with kin/kith).

Kinship Researcher:	"*Once you are on the same page, they (family) are very motivated*."
Kinship Researcher:	"*Each family is unique. The place you start is also unique*."

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Theme QI4.A1 – Unique experience with kinship search depending upon type of referring CAS worker

Three types of referring CAS workers were involved in the study:
  i)   Children's Service workers (Crown ward cases) [original cohort of specifically selected referring CAS workers],
  ii)   Intake workers [Early Service cases]
  iii) Family service workers [Early Service cases]

The nature of the work for the kinship search workers by the different types of referring worker was hypothesized:

Children's Service workers [Crown Wards cases]
Posited: Focus of kinship researcher would be on (re)connecting with kin/kith to establish a support network for foster children, in particular those who are aging out of the system.
Actual: These cases tended to be about exploring and expanding family networks, developing relationships between the youth and their kin/kith, and/or developing permanency plans or potential placements.
Focus of case: Permanency or (re)connections

Intake workers [Early Service cases]
Posited: Emphasis will be on placement issues due to the early service focus (e.g., apprehensions, timelines for investigations)
Actual: Kinship researchers found it nearly impossible to meet with intake workers due to Intake workload demands and limited time with the case
Focus of case: Placement or permanency

Family Service workers [Early Service cases]
Posited: Work will be more on (re)connecting with kin/kith since they were involved with families for longer periods of time.
Actual: Kinship researchers found these workers had more time to communicate about the search process.
Focus of case: Permanency

Overall, given the weight of this review has been on the Early Service Cases, the preponderance of the case priorities examined to date has been on finding placements with less focus on establishing and expanding connections and/or support networks for the child/youth, regardless of the case type. Recommendations from the kinship researchers is that equal priority should be given to searching for potential placements and searching for family networks and potential relationships.

Kinship Researcher: "_In some of the cases I got to meet with (the referring CAS workers) and lay the ground work. It makes a big difference to lay out our roles and goals, what we are doing, but to explain how it fits into case outline and purpose._"

Kinship Researcher: "_I found (the referring CAS workers) to be helpful, but also background work with documents was needed. It was important to ensure I had everything._"

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Theme QI4.A2 –Perceived referring CAS workers increased their knowledge of the benefits of searching for kin

Kinship researchers indicated that they thought that the referring CAS workers had increased their knowledge of the benefits of searching for kin as a result of their participation within the pilot. From their perspective, it was observed that the amount of knowledge increase depended upon how open the referring CAS workers were to kin/kith. A few times kinship researchers found that debunking myths about kin/kith was an element of the work with the referring worker, as well as discussing the worker's fears about the kin search. The kinship researchers strongly emphasized the importance of both kin searching for permanency as well as (re)connection. This area of work and knowledge transfer to referring CAS workers is flagged as very important.

Kinship Researcher:	*"There was a lot of work with families and each worker to help them understand whether hand selected or not, there was a barrier with engaging the kin. (Workers sometimes think) the apple doesn't fall far from the tree or they will live in poverty. We educate through the process."*
Kinship Researcher:	*"Certainly we did increase knowledge from the beginning. Education included explaining the benefits, hesitation, what is the issue, what are you worried about, what are the concerns, what are the risks to the child, worried that the child is going to another county. How do we come up with a common goal?"*

Theme QI4.A3 –Difficulties experienced in communicating with referring CAS workers by kinship researchers

The kinship researchers noted that communication with referring CAS workers was frequently a challenge due to other demands on them and the limited amount of time the workers had available. Additional challenges were noted by the increase in workload for the kinship researchers, themselves. Regardless of these factors, kinship researchers shared that the communication with the referring CAS workers improved once a trusting relationship was established and this tended to only occur throughout the kin search process.

Kinship Researcher:	*"This is very important in particular the front end cases because there are so many changes with court cases, mom's situation changes that really needs a lot of communication. If there is no clear communication with our roles it results in confusion."*
Kinship Researcher:	*"At the beginning of the pilot we stopped accepting referrals until the cases were closed, so I had more time to communicate with workers. The smaller caseloads were easier."*

AREA OF INQUIRY:	**PERCEPTION OF CASE OUTCOMES**
OUTPUTS:	**QI5.D – IMPRESSIONS OF CHANGES**

Theme QI5.D1 – Located kin/kith

The kinship researchers indicated that kin/kith were successfully located within all referred cases. The outcome of finding kin/kith was perceived as an affirmative and for some youth – it has had a life-changing impact on the children and their families referred to the pilot.

Kinship Researcher:	*"Many times I say to myself that if I don't make a call this child will go for adoption."*
Kinship Researcher:	*"With the contact with the Kin and kith we change the trajectory of the child's life."*

Theme QI5.D2 –Helpful tool was the genogram for numerous reasons

Similar to the referring workers perception of this tool, the kinship researchers found the genogram a powerful tool. Reasons included were: 1) genogram was used to engage the family (e.g., icebreaker), b) genogram provided a visual map on how and where the child connects to their family, and, c) genogram provides a useful method to keep information organized.

Kinship Researcher: "*It is helpful in understanding complex families.*"

Kinship Researcher: "*Kids without and stability, they can picture who they are and how family is related.*"

AREA OF INQUIRY	PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT DID NOT WORK
OUTPUTS:	QI5.E –CHALLENGES

Theme QI5.DE –Experienced some challenges with pilot

Having done this role for a number of years, both kinship researchers were able to share their common experiences and identify challenges they have found in conducting the search approaches. For example,

- **Stopping Search Once Potential Placement is Identified:** From the kinship service lens, this can be a disservice to the child as the search is in fact incomplete, which limits the benefits that occur from a full search and complete information. One ramification is there may not be a "back-up" kinship placement if the identified one does not work.

- **Stopping Search When Plan is to Reunite Child with Parents**: The point above is reiterated here. If, however, the search continues, it can offer the children/ youth, families, and referring CAS workers with a backup plan if the child/family struggles with the placement or it breaks down. The identification of kin/kith through the kinship search allows for the strengthening and supporting of the family unit. Suggestions to address this included: additional staff to help reduce the waitlists and to increase the search tool options/ resources

- **Equal Priority Between Finding Placements <u>and</u> Making (Re)connections**: Although a priority on placement was the norm for most cases, the kinship researchers both viewed finding placements and making (re)connection as equal in importance. Both workers recommend increasing the scope of the kinship search process at CAS-Toronto to realize that dual focus. Suggestions included: creating a CAS-Toronto search policy encompassing a mandatory search process for all children/ youth in-care and educating supervisors, referring CAS workers, judges/ lawyers, etc. on the importance of kinship searches.

- **Resistance from Referring CAS Staff**: Both kinship researchers experienced resistance from referring CAS staff. It was felt by the kinship workers that the kin search process was perceived by the referring workers as an additional burden and/or added drain on their workload and timelines. One suggestion to address this issue included creating knowledge transfer initiatives to occur at CAS-Toronto to debunk the misconceptions about kin/kith (e.g., training opportunities, development of content champions at all levels within CAS-Toronto).

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AREA OF INQUIRY:	RECOMMENDATIONS
OUTPUTS:	QI6.A – SUGGESTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme QI6.A1 –Proposed Recommendations for Kinship Researchers

Both kinship researchers provided a variety of suggestions that in their experience would improve the *Kinship Search Program*. These suggestions included:

Agency-wide
- *Create* kinship search champions at all levels within CAS-Toronto
- *Include* kin searching as part of the New Worker Training modules

Kinship Search
- *Develop* clear policy, procedures, and expectations of the program
- *Develop* more structured approach to the referral process (e.g., mandatory referrals)
- *Expand* the kinship search process to allow for a complete search to occur
- *Increase* the opportunities for coaching/ training initiatives at CAS-Toronto about kinship searching
- *Increase* the financial resources to the *Kinship Search Program* so that kinship researchers can purchase/ access search tools that require payment (e.g., Seneca Search was an excellent tool at a reasonable cost)
- *Decrease* waitlists for kinship searches
- *More* staff as needed.

4.4 CLOSING SUMMARY FORMS

At the end of each case, the Kinship Researchers complete a standardized *Kinship Researcher Closing Summary* document. In analyzing the data within these reports, especially the **Summary of Service** and **Summary of Found Family**, five themes emerged:

Theme 1:	Exploring….. What is included within searches for kin/kith by researchers?
Theme 2:	Exploring….. Who was the kin/kith found throughout the searching?
Theme 3:	Exploring……Why plans were presented by kin/kith?
Theme 4:	Exploring……What occurred that certain plans were not accepted?
Theme 5:	Exploring……Why the Kinship Researchers closed their files?

These thematic areas were gathered from and predominately predetermined by the structure of the recording document. While reliance on one source document is a limitation it nevertheless provides valuable insight into these sample cases. Additionally, the predominant focus of this analysis is the Early Service cases (Intake and Family Services) as only two Crown Ward cases were reviewed and were still receiving services/ supports, and thus, no *Closing Summary* forms were available at the time of the review.

According to the analysis of **Closing Summary** forms, the Kinship Researchers tended to conduct searches for kin through four main methods. They are: i) file mining, ii) communication with a variety of individuals involved in the case (e.g., CAS-Toronto workers, birth parents, children/ youth), iii) Internet searches, and iv) letter writing to selected individuals who may be able to provide placements or (re)connections with the identified child.

🞣   *i) File mining included reviewing all CAS-Toronto case documents (e.g., case files, court documents). These searches often provided a history of the known family members. It also highlighted some kin that should not be contacted (e.g., an individual listed on the Child Abuse Registry).*

🞣   *ii) Communication with various CAS-Toronto workers and non-CAS-Toronto workers, including Intake Workers, Family Service Workers (e.g., current and former FSWs), Resource Support Workers, Foster Care Resource Worker, Children's Service Worker, Kinship Assessment Worker. The meetings with workers included conversations via telephone or in-person, along with the Kinship Researchers attending Integrated Service Planning Conferences, and Branch Planning Conference.*

    *Communication with the parents and children (if age appropriate) to explore who they might know, **along with other kin or kith**, including but not limited to the biological, adopted, half, or step: grandparents, great aunts/uncles, aunts/uncles, cousins, past romantic partners, trusted friends, and foster parents. Communications with kin tended to occur in-person (e.g., one-to-one meetings, family meetings), over the telephone or email, or via social media forums. These conversations occurred with individuals from around the world (e.g., Canada, Antigua, Ireland, Jamaica, North Korea, United States).*

🞣   *iii) Internet was used in a variety of creative methods to locate kin. Some searches included using Google, Facebook (and other social networking sites), Canada411, People Search, Obituaries today, USA Church listings, various telephone directories (e.g., United States, New York, Antigua and Barbuda), and various community/ business/ government websites (e.g., Jane/Finch Community, DeMarco funeral home, Antigua tourism, Ireland immigration/ social services). Of particular interest, the first ever use of the Seneca Search occurred. This method provided alternative legitimate ways to search for kin.*

🞣   *iv) Letters were also sent to potential kin addresses in the community, nationally, and/or internationally in an attempt to connect with kin at their late known address.*

According to the *Kin Family Finder Referral Form* in the 13 cases reviewed, it appears that many of the CAS referring workers had limited case and contact information about parents/kin/kith. Generally the information that was available included: birth mother, birth father, grandparents, godparents, cousins, adult siblings of the identified child, and family friends. Analysis found:

	Prior to Kinship Search	Post Kinship Search
Early Service cases	info on 1 to 5 kin/kith	added info on 0 to 30+ kin/kith per case
Crown Ward cases	info on 2 to 5 kin/kith	*data not available*

Refer to Figure 9 for a visual representation of the number of kin/kith located on Early Service cases.

Figure 9: Frequency of family found per Early Service case
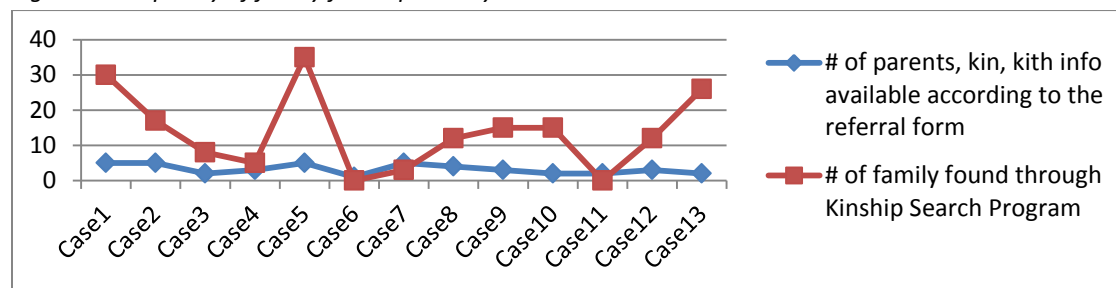
While only two Crown Ward cases were reviewed and thus findings are not generalizable, an outcome similar to the Early Service cases was replicated with the Crown Ward Service cases. In short, referral form data provided little information on the youth's parents/kin/kith (averages 2 to 5 individuals) [see blue line in Figure 10]. The kinship search process remained active for these two cases yet the result of the kinship search process was location of an additional 27 to 151+ kin/kith [see red line in Figure 10]. Located individuals included: aunts/uncles, grandparents, cousins, siblings (full, half, step), and foster parents. Refer to Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Frequency of family found re-two Crown Ward Service cases reviewed
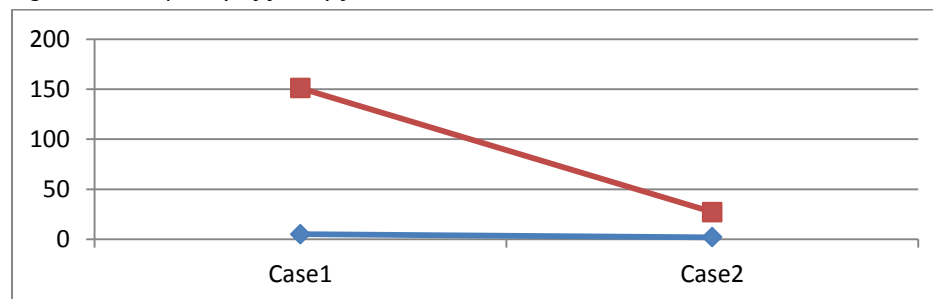
THEME 3: Exploring…. Why plans were presented by kin/kith?

Prior to exploring the plans presented by kin/kith, the Kinship Researchers indicated that it was not uncommon that the first need was to address issues prior to exploring potential plans. Examples of kin issues included doubts towards CAS-Toronto and raised emotions/feelings related to the process. Analysis of the data from the perspective of the Kinship Researchers regarding "why" kin presented plans finds the following reasons: i) goal of reunification, ii) kin/kith explored their worries/hesitations with the Kinship Researcher and then felt more comfortable putting a plan forward, iii) kin/kith asked to be caregivers, and, iv) kin/kith presented a plan out of concern for the child's well-being.

Kinship Search Case: "*The case goal was reunification…*"

Kinship Search Case: "*[Grandmother] was concerned about how she would manage financially and also about [child's] long term development considering he was exposed to alcohol and drugs in utero… [after discussion with Kinship Researcher]… she decided to present a plan*"..

Kinship Search Case: "*At the time of the search for kin, [child's] maternal grandfather and grandmother requested to be considered as kin caregivers for their three grandchildren.*"

Kinship Search Case: "*[Child's father and wife] reported having no idea [child] was in care and were concerned for his well-being. The couple planned a trip [to Canada] to see [child].*"

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THEME 4: Exploring….What occurred that certain plans were <u>not</u> accepted?

Some kin/kith indicated an interest in putting a plan of care forward for the identified child but barriers prevented them from having their plan accepted by CAS-Toronto. While there were many reasons that precluded a plan being considered, many kin/kith were able to provide support and (re)connection to the identified child. Identified reasons for plans not proceeding were:

- *No Longer in a Position to Care:* some kin/kith advised they were no longer in a position to care for the child (e.g., long work hours was not conductive to child rearing or already caring for an ill relative);
- *No Reason Given:* some kin/kith did not report their reasons for withdrawing their plans;
- *No Longer Eligible:* some kin/kith were found to be ineligible by the Service Team to plan for the child (e.g., previous child welfare involvement or proposed plan was not a viable option);
- *Newcomer Circumstances:* some kin/kith identified immigration and newcomer issues as preventing them from planning;
- *No Contact Wanted with Kin:* some kin/kith were clear they did not want contact with specific kin/kith;
- *No Interest in Planning:* some kin/kith said that they really were not interested in planning for the child.

Kinship Search Case:	"[Birth father] siblings were *engaged in the manicure and pedicure service business, which involved long hours, they could not present a plan*."
Kinship Search Case:	*"[Aunt] stated that she could not care for him given that all of her time was devoted to caring for her husband, who has Alzheimer's disease. [Aunt] stated that she would be thrilled if [child] could visit her at her home and spend time with the family."*
Kinship Search Case:	*"[Grandmother]… presented a plan of care, however, this plan was later withdrawn."*
Kinship Search Case:	*"[Family friend] was living in Toronto. She was not able to present a plan to care for the two children. She was new to Canada and felt she was not stable enough."*

THEME 5: Exploring…. Why the Kinship Researchers Closed Their Files?

Based upon the closing documents, it appears that many of the 13 cases reviewed were closed when a potential kin plan was identified. Ergo, at that point, the kinship search function is stopped and the case from the kinship side of service is closed. The following case illustrates the: *"Start kin referral- child placed with kin –stop kin search process":* Step 1) a kin member is found through search; Step 2) the child welfare worker initiates a kin assessment referral to be completed; Step 3) access visits between children and located kin/kith are positive, the initial assessment is completed, and children are placed; Step 4) Kin search of other kin ceases and kinship researcher closes case. Other reasons for case closure include: *"Inappropriate kin referral"* (e.g., cases referred to the program, but children are not in CAS-Toronto care or birth parents already had a permanency plan in place). These referrals did not receive kinship search services.

Kinship Search Case:	*"A potential kin plan had been identified. Further kin search on this case was put on hold and the file is to close at this time."*
Kinship Search Case:	*"[Birth mother] stated that she simply wanted help finding daycare for her son and that she had already determined a permanent plan for her son. Given that there were no protection concerns identified and that [birth mother] had many supports and a plan for her son, there is no need for continued [kin search] services with this family."*

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4.5 FILE REVIEWS

To begin to explore some of the longer-term impacts of the *Kinship Search Program* a follow-up on the cases was done three-months after the case closure on the 13 Early Service cases only. The Crown Ward cases were not included in the segment of the evaluation as the primary goals/ objectives for these cases were (re)connection and not placement and the cases were still open to the *Kinship Search Program* at the end of this evaluation period.

The follow-up reviews on the Early Service cases were conducted with one objective in mind - to see if the placement status of the identified children/ youth had changed as a result of the kin search. Some system issues confounded the ability of this review to obtain the follow-up case data. More specifically, recordings were due or overdue and information was not current, and for two cases, no file data were available. Due to these limitations, the information within this section should be treated with considerable caution. Analysis of the data at the three-month, post closure mark suggests no placement change occurred. This may be attributed to a number of reasons:

- Case circumstances
  Reasons include having to wait for the appropriate child welfare mechanisms to be completed (e.g., court dates or home study must first be completed);

- Kin circumstances
  Reasons include the kin placement plan is still in process or the kin changed their minds or their circumstances changed;

- Study circumstances
  It could be that the three-month post review period is too short a time to realistically see if placement change occurred. A review at the 9th month or 12th month maybe a more reasonable follow-up period.

Figure 11: Exploring the placement of the Early Service cases identified children/ youth after the Kinship Search Program

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5.0 SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN AREAS OF INQUIRY

In this section, the findings are summarized by how the responses influence the evaluation's seven areas of inquiry. To recap, there were 13 Early Service cases (representing 20 children/youth) and 2 Crown Ward Service cases (representing 6 children/youth) reviewed during this evaluation period. The heavier weighting of the Early Service cases (n=13, 87%) vs. the Crown Ward cases (n=2, 13%) limits any comparisons of the data between the two case types. The findings are presented for information only and no generalizations should be made.

Inquiry 1:	**Type of Cases Referred to the Kinship Search Program**
Outputs:	*1.A – Children's information*
	1.B – Records/ documents
	1.C – Parent/kin information
	1.D – Details of request

Utilizing the information available within the *Kinship Referral Forms,* a description of the types of cases referred to the *Kinship Search Program* from September 2012 to May 2013 can occur. The overall review of all 15 cases does not find a specific type of case is referred to the Kinship Program.

1.A – Children's information
The children's information had slight differences between the Early Service and Crown Ward Service cases.

- Early Service Cases
  Analysis of the 13 Early Service cases (n=20 children) finds it was predominately male children and the average age of the child was 6 years. Range of time in care varied from less than a month to over two years. Placements were typically an internal foster home or an outside paid resource.

- Crown Ward Cases
  Review of the two Crown Ward cases (n=6 children) found they were on average 17 years old and held a legal status of *Crown Wards with Access*. Placements of these youth were in an outside paid resource, internal foster home, or a private boarding situation.

1.B – Records/ documents
Output Is Not Available
The records and document section provided information on any previous CAS-Toronto (or other CAS) records on file, any previous kin home-study referred or completed, and any documents that verified the identity of the parents. The preponderance of this information was not available for analysis.

1.C – Parent/ kin information
The parent/ kin information had similar demographic information across both case types: Early Service and Crown Ward cases. The 13 Early Service cases consisted of 42 identified individuals (mean score= 3.23 per case) where most identified were parents; similarly, the 2 Crown Ward cases identified 7 identified individuals (mean score = 3.5 per case) and they were predominately parents or siblings.

1.D – Details of the request
There were no overarching details of the request to identify specific types of cases referred to the *Kinship Search Program*. For instance, the reasons and circumstances that lead to the child or youth`s admission to care varied (e.g., parents' mental health issues/ functioning ability). All forms indicated a significant parent/ kin/ kith relationship to the identified child/ youth. It was unclear from the forms whether the parents were supportive of the search for kin and if the child/ youth were in agreement to the kin search.

Inquiry 2:	Activities Involved in the Search
Outputs:	*2.A – Amount of communication with kin/kith*
	2.B – Amount of communication with referring CAS worker

Analysis of the *Search Log Forms* found the majority of the Kinship Researchers' time was spent communicating with various stakeholders. Specifically, CAS workers, children/youth, foster caregivers, and kin/kith. Of particular interest in this evaluation was the amount of communication with kin/kith and the referring CAS Worker.

2.A – Amount of communication with kin/kith

🞣 *Early Service Cases: 30% of the Kinship Researchers' Time was with Kin*
Over the eight-month evaluation period, the Kinship Researchers spent two-thirds of their time per case (66%) in communication (n=127 hours); approximately one-third of that time was spent communicating specifically with kin/kith (n=37.94 hours; 30% of their time). Communication with kin/kith ranged from 0 hours per month to 13 hours per month, with an average of 4.74 hours per month over the 13 cases.

🞣 *Crown Ward Service Cases: 39% of the Kinship Researchers' Time was with Kin*
Over the eight-month evaluation period, the Kinship Researchers spent nearly three-quarters of their time per case (70%) in communication on the 2 Crown Ward Service cases (n=34 hours); of that time, 39% was spent communicating with kin/kith (n=13.4 hours). Communication with kin ranged from 0 hours per month to 6 hours per month, with an average of 1.67 hours per month over the two cases.

2.B – Amount of communication with referring CAS worker

🞣 *Output Is Not Available.*
The *Search Log Forms* recorded communication with all workers. The data did not distinguish between the referring CAS worker and other workers. Communication through in-person/ phone/ email, correspondence, and meetings was reported by CAS referring worker, as well as others (e.g., Intake, FSW, CSW, supervisors).

Early Service cases: As noted above, the Kinship Researchers spent 66% of their total time in communication on the 13 Early Service cases (n=127 hours). Of which approximately two-thirds of their time per case was spent communicating with a variety of workers (n=85.58 hours; 68% of their time). Communication was defined as (a) in-person/ phone/ email, (b) meetings, or (c) correspondence. The majority of the kinship workers' time was spent either communicating in-person, via telephone or email (n=38.17 hours; 43% of their time) or correspondence (n=36.38 hours; 41% of their time). The remainder of their time was spent in meetings with workers, such as Integrated Planning Conference (n=15.17 hours; 17% of their time).

Crown Ward cases: Kinship Researchers spent 70% of their total time in communication on the 2 Crown Ward Service cases (n=34 hours). Of which almost half of their time was spent communication with a variety of workers (n=16.93; 49%). The majority of the hours spent were in communicating in-person, via telephone or email with the workers (n=7.95 hours; 47% of their time) or correspondence (n=5.62 hours; 33% of their time). The remainder of their time was spent in meetings with workers (n=3.33 hours; 20% of their time).

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Through key informant telephone interviews with kinship applicants, non-kinship applicants, CAS referring workers, and Kinship Researchers, this evaluation explored the approaches taken by the Kinship Researchers when engaging with kin/kith.

3.A – Kinship Researchers Approach

Overall, the CAS referring workers and the kinship/non-kinship applicants' perceptions on the kinship researchers' approaches to engaging with the kinship families was positive. Descriptions of the kinship researchers' approach included: "*respectful*", "*helpful*", "*beneficial*", "*valuable*", "*individualized*", "*neutral*" and having "*an understanding attitude*". The kinship and non-kinship applicants as well as the CAS workers' viewed the role of the kinship researchers' roles/ responsibilities as valuable and beneficial. In addition to thoroughly searching for kin/ kith, the kinship search role requires the researchers to be able to quickly engage with families and build a safe and trusting relationship in order to promptly move the kin search process along. These skills take place will the researchers navigate the complexities of the different family systems.

Kinship Applicant: "*She [kinship researcher] was understanding and respectful and caring about what was going on with me and my life. Before that, I felt sick about the whole situation. When I spoke with her she opened up a whole new set of doors for me.*"

Kinship Non-Applicants: "*I was thankful for her call to me in (another country) about her concern with my daughter and her children.*"

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: "*They immediately trusted her right away, more than other workers. (The kinship researcher) was the first worker who spoke to them and was able to get valuable information about another possible kin.*"

Children's Service Referring Worker: "*(Kinship worker) was very thorough, very good, and very aware of the fact that sometimes she was opening into a web of conflict and she had to be careful with that because of the family history.*"

Kinship Researcher: "*The common theme is that we work from a strength-based, neutral perspective and with a fresh set of eyes. We help them realize that. We are trying to develop relationships with families and workers. We are setting a relationship of trust, respect and purpose.*"

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Kinship applicants, non-kinship applicants, CAS referring workers, and Kinship Researchers who participated in the key informant telephone interviews shared their perceptions of satisfaction with the *Kinship Search Program*.

I4.A – Perceptions of kinship search service

The majority of the 21 key informants (not including the 2 kinship researchers) indicated that they held positive perceptions about the *Kinship Search Program*. The major reasons for the positive perceptions included: i) acknowledgment of the importance of kin/kith for finding kin/kith for the identified child; ii) including kin/kith within the process; iii) transparency on communicating why kin/ kith were being contacted; and iv) kinship service was experienced as helpful, resourceful, and successful in locating kin primarily due to *effective*, *efficient*, *diligent*, and *detailed* communication between all stakeholders.

Kinship and non-kinship applicants ~ through the kinship search process this cohort felt acknowledged, were perceived as important contacts to provide a placement for the identified child or were offered as a source of (re)connection to the child or felt they could contribute through identifying other kin who may be able to provide support for the child.

Referring CAS workers' (Early Service and Crown Ward) ~ shared that through the process of the kinship search service it increased the workers' knowledge of the goals and benefits of kinship. Additionally, the detailed communication from the kinship researcher, their easily accessibility, and the time they took to focus on searching for kin, all strongly contributed to the referring CAS workers' positive perceptions of the kinship service. Limitations noted with the program included the long waitlist for service, concerns that once kin/kith were located, then no additional kin were sought and the case was closed, variance in case goals/ objectives between the kinship researcher and worker, and the increased workload associated with initiating the kinship search process.

Kinship researchers ~ their perceptions of their service varied depending upon the case type (i.e., Early Service or Crown Ward). Perceived benefits included increasing the other stakeholders' knowledge of kinship service benefits for the referred child/youth. Identified challenges were the difficulties in communicating with referring CAS workers (e.g., via email, telephone) although they noted that the communication improved once trusting relationships were established.

Kinship Applicant: *"Everyone else I had to deal with didn't care about me. Their first priority was the child and I completely understand that, but when they are looking at me taking (the child), I felt that me and my family should be treated a little differently. When I spoke to her (the Kinship Researcher) it was a world of possibility and she talked to me like a normal human being."*

Kinship Non-Applicant: *"I had a [relative] and spoke with her and [my relative] said yes, to taking the kids. That was as far as my involvement went."*

Early Service CAS Referring Worker: *"I couldn't believe all the people she found. Obviously they have time to do that and we don't. I wish we can have the Kinship Researchers all the time and that when a child comes into care we can make a referral concurrently."*

Children's Service Referring CAS Worker: *"As time went on I was able to get a better understanding of what the goals were and a better understanding of what was involved and the impact and ramifications for the pilot."*

Kinship Researcher: *"In some of the cases I got to meet with (the referring CAS workers) and lay the ground work. It makes a big difference to lay out our roles and goals, what we are doing, but to explain how it fits into case outline and purpose."*

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Inquiry 5:	**Perceptions of Case Outcomes**
Outputs:	*5.A – Summary of search efforts/ methods used*
	5.B – Summary of found family
	5.C – Outcomes
	5.D – Impressions of changes
	5.E – Perceptions of what did not work

Drawing upon the *Closing Summary Form* and *Key Informant Interviews* the perceptions of case outcomes were explored. Specifically in regards to the search efforts, the families found, the outcomes at the time the case closed, the impressions of changes due to the kin search, and the perceptions of what did not work.

5.A – Summary of search efforts/ methods used

In general, the activities involved in the kinship search are tailored to the specific needs of each case. Searches included one or more of the following strategies:

➕ *Internet Searches*
Google, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), Canada411, People Search, Obituaries today, USA Church listings, various telephone directories (e.g., United States, New York, Antigua and Barbuda), and various community/ business/ government websites (e.g., Jane/Finch Community, DeMarco funeral home, Antigua tourism, Ireland immigration/ social services), Seneca Search.

➕ *File mining*
CAS-Toronto case documents (e.g., case files, court documents), Child Abuse Registry, non-CAS Toronto documents.

➕ *Communication with various CAS-Toronto workers and non-CAS-Toronto workers*
Intake Workers, Family Service Workers (e.g., current and former FSWs), Resource Support Workers, Foster Care Resource Worker, Children's Service Worker, Kinship Assessment Worker.

➕ *Communication with the parents and children*
Including but not limited to the biological, adopted, half, or step: grandparents, great aunts/uncles, aunts/uncles, cousins, past romantic partners, trusted friends, and foster parents.

➕ *Letters*
Sent to kin in the community, nationally, and/or internationally.

5.B – Summary of families found

A key goal of the *Kinship Search Program* is to locate kin/kith for the referred child/ youth. The kin/kith may be able to provide (re)connections, permanency placements, or simply may be able to increase the child's knowledge about their family.

➕ *Early Service cases*
Eleven of the 13 Early Service cases successfully located a range of 3 to 30+ kin/kith. For the two cases that did not find kin/kith it was because the cases closed before the search was initiated.

➕ *Crown Ward cases*
Both cases had successful searches where a range of 27 to 151+ individuals were located for the two youth. The located individuals from the kin search tended to include aunts/ uncles, grandparents, cousins, siblings (full, half, step), and foster parents.

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5.C – Outcomes

The *Closing Summary Reports* suggested that there were three outcomes as a result of the searches:

➕ *Outcome 1 ~ Plans were presented by kin/kith for a variety of reasons*
There were a variety of reasons why plans were presented by kin/kith. Some of the reasons identified included: i) kin's desire for reunification; ii) kin was empowered by the kinship researcher that they were able to handle the plan; iii) kin wanted to be caregivers to the identified child; and iv) kin were concerned for the well-being of the identified child.

➕ *Outcome 2 ~ Certain plans by kin/kith were not accepted*
There were some situations that prevented certain kin/kith from putting a plan forward or having their proposed plan be accepted at CAS-Toronto.For the kin's perspective, some individuals disclosed that they were not able to care for the child/ youth (e.g., already caring for an ill relative; no reasons provided). Other kin/kith were concerned that immigration or newcomer issues would prevent them from planning. From the service team's perspective, some identified kin/kith presented plans that were not viable options (e.g., kin previously had child welfare involvement).From the child/ youth's perspective, they did not want contact with some of the identified kin/ kith.

➕ ***Outcome 3 ~ Kinship researchers closed their files***
Many of the cases were closed when a potential kin plan as identified. A few kinship search cases closed because the search was no longer required (e.g., child moved back with their parents).

5.D – Impressions of changes

Many of the stakeholders indicated that they perceived the changes that resulted due to the *Kinship Search Program* to be positive ones.Kinship applicants and non-kinship applicants were both appreciative of being able to participate in the kin search process. If a placement was provided, these individuals tended to perceive placements with kin/kith as optional choices, instead of non-kinship placements unless the child was transitioning back to their biological parents or kin/kith. Referring CAS workers (Early Service and Crown Ward cases) perceived the changes due to the *Kinship Search Program* from a case management perspective. They indicated that kin/kith were successfully located. Once located, this resulted in either kin placement found, (re)connecting child/ youth with kin, or expanding the family support system. Further, the genogram was perceived as a helpful tool for the referring CAS workers (Early Service&Crown Ward Service) because it was able to be used during case management planning in the present and the future. Kinship researchers perceived the genogram as a powerful tool because it assisted in engaging kin (e.g., acting as an icebreaker), providing a visual on the child's connections to their family, and providing a useful method to keep the information organized.

Kinship Applicant:	*"[Kinship researcher] looked for family members and worked extra hard to move forward to get the kids into the house."*
Kinship Non-Applicant:	*"(The Kinship Researcher) asked me if I could help with the kids and asked what was best for the kids."*
Early Service CAS Referring Worker:	*"She found a large number of people. Sometimes they find people that are not good (a match), but she found many people who could actually care of the child. The child is in process of reunification but it has taken almost a year. This is not wasted work, we have a family group conference and we can use the family as a resource to help the family around reunification and to help provide support."*
Children's Service Referring CAS Workers:	*"It assisted me because it helped me to see what the family looks like."*
Kinship Researcher:	*"[The genogram] is helpful in understanding complex families."*

5.E – Perceptions of what did not work

As with any service being implemented within CAS-Toronto, there are always challenges that emerge throughout the service process. While challenges were noted, many of the kinship applicants, non-kinship applicants, and referring CAS workers (Early Service and Crown Ward cases) did not indicate any challenges. When challenges were identified by the different stakeholder groups, they tended to be case-specific. There were no overarching themes that emerged. Table 4 provides an overview of stakeholder's perceptions of what did not work and any recommendations on how to minimize or eliminate these issues.

Table 4: Perceptions of what did not work and ideas to minimize these issues by stakeholder group

Stakeholder	Perceptions of ~ WHAT DID NOT WORK	Stakeholder Suggestions of HOW TO ADDRESS WHAT DID NOT WORK
Kinship applicants	(KA1) Costly travel expenses from their town/ city to Toronto area for numerous appointments	*Kinship researchers/CAS workers should be able to have meetings within the city/town of the kinship applicants.*
	(KA2) Language barrier and/or accent of kinship researcher made it difficult to communicate	***No suggestions provided***
	(KA3) CAS-Toronto should connect with kin sooner	*CAS-Toronto should search for kin at the earliest part of the child welfare process*
Non-kinship applicants	(N-KA1) Inability of the kinship researcher to share specific information about kin located	Non-kinship applicants understood the confidentiality issues on why kinship researchers were not able to share specific information on kin located. ***No suggestions provided***
	(N-KA2) CAS-Toronto should connect with kin sooner	CAS-Toronto should search for kin at the earliest part of the child welfare process
	(N-KA3) Persistency of the kinship researcher may be unwanted	Kinship researchers should listen and believe what kinship non-applicants are saying about estranged family members
Referring CAS worker (Early Service case)	(W-ES1) Waitlist was too long sometimes	***No suggestions provided***
	(W-ES2) Physical location of the kinship researchers at CAS-Toronto	***No suggestions provided***
	(W-ES3) Kinship search stopped after a placement was located or children were returned back to their parents	***No suggestions provided***
	(W-ES4) No case updates when the kinship researcher was away	***No suggestions provided***
Referring CAS worker (Crown Ward case)	(W-CW1) Lack of awareness about the additional workload that came with kin searching	Referring CAS workers and their supervisors should be informed ahead of time about the potential workload issues that may arise
	(W-CW2) Pressure to meet the timeline demands of the kinship researchers	Kinship researcher be able to take on more responsibilities, such as visiting with the identified child/ youth
	(W-CW3) Differences between goals of referral by kinship researcher and referring CAS worker	Have a meeting at the beginning of the kinship search process to clarify goals/ timeframes
Kinship researchers	(W-KR1) Perceived stopping search once a potential placement is found	CAS-Toronto develop a policy, procedure, and expectations of the Program
	(W-KR2) Perceived stopping a search when a child is identified to be reunited with their parents	More resources are needed within the Kinship Search Program (e.g., more staff to reduce waitlists)
	(W-KR3) Perceived focus is on prioritizing the search for kin specifically for placement, and not a focus on (re)connections	CAS-Toronto creates a policy encompassing a mandatory search process for all children/ youth
		Educating supervisors, referring CAS workers, judges/ lawyers, etc. about kinship search
	(W-KR4) Perceived resistance from referring CAS staff	CAS-Toronto develop an initiative to debunk misconceptions about kin/kith (e.g., apple doesn't fall far from the tree)

Inquiry 6:	Recommendations
Outputs:	*QI6.A – Suggestions and recommendations*

Across the two broad stakeholder groups (kinship and CAS staff) and the five sub-cohorts, all provided suggested **recommendations to improve the *Kinship Search Program*.** The recommendations are summarized within this section. It is not the intent of this report to advocate for or exclude any of these recommendations. The purpose of listing all the recommendations is to provide a possible starting point in future discussions regarding changes. With each recommendation there are other considerations or factors. Examples include but are not limited to: workload issues, staffing and program costs (e.g., travel), and advertisement expenditures. Participants were encouraged to make recommendations that they felt were necessary to improve the *Kinship Search Program*, from their experience without having to take into consideration individual and agency-level restrictions.

Four of the five stakeholder cohorts provided recommendations on their suggested improvements to the *Kinship Search Program.* The exception was the non-kinship applicant cohort which provided suggestions to improve services at CAS-Toronto in general but not the kinship service specifically. Across the four (4) stakeholder cohorts, the three (3) recommendations were made by two or more of the three cohorts from the Staff group. They were:

(a) Increase awareness of the Kinship Search Program at CAS-Toronto;

(b) Increase the number of kinship researchers; and

(c) Continue searching for kin, even after kin has put a plan forward or child is returned back to their parents.

Refer to Table 5 for a list of all recommendations proposed throughout this evaluation.

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Table5: Recommendations by stakeholder group

#	Recommendations	KINSHIP STAKEHOLDER GROUPS		CAST STAFF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS		
		Kinship Applicants	Non-Kinship Applicants	CAS Worker ~ Early Service	CAS Worker ~ Crown Ward	Kinship Researcher
1	CAS-Toronto needs to initiate kinship search process earlier in the child protection case	✓				
2	CAS-Toronto should look for kin/ kin prior to placing a child in care	✓				
3	Reduce wait times			✓		✓
4	**Increase awareness of the Kinship Search Program at CAS-Toronto**			✓	✓	
5	Increase training opportunities for referring CAS workers on how to expand their own kinship searches; include kin searching as part of the New Worker Training modules			✓		✓
6	Expand eligibility criteria so that the service is available to all children, whether in the community or in care			✓		
7	**Increase the number of kinship researchers**			✓		✓
8	**Continue searching for kin, even after kin/kith has put a plan forward or the child is returned back to their parents (e.g., contingency plans)**			✓		✓
9	Continue the flexibility of the kinship researcher to come to the referring CAS workers' locations for meetings			✓		
10	Ensure that the goals/ objectives of the kinship search are agreed upon by both the kinship researcher, as well as the referring CAS worker				✓	
11	Clarify roles/ responsibilities of the kinship researcher compared to other workers and departments				✓	
12	Be transparent about the workload issues that may result for the referring CAS workers				✓	
13	Develop more clear policy, procedures/ expectations of program					✓
14	Develop a more structured approach to the referral process (e.g., mandatory referrals)					✓
15	Increase financial resources to Kinship Search Program so kinship researchers can purchase/ access search tools that require payment					✓
16	Create kinship search champions at all levels with CAS-Toronto					✓
17	Expand kinship search to other departments at CAS-Toronto, such as legal services and adoption practices					✓

*Note: Highlighted areas in yellow indicate that more than one of the staff stakeholder cohorts made this recommendation

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| **Inquiry 7:** | **Three Month Follow-Up** |
| *Output:* | *QI7.A – Status of identified child(ren) three-months post Kinship Search Program* |

The main goals/ objectives of the *Kinship Search Program* are to:

- ✓ Encourage families to consider and rely on their own family members as resources
- ✓ Enhance children/youth's opportunity to stay connected to their own communities
- ✓ Promote community responsibility for children and families
- ✓ Strengthen the ability of families to give children/youth the support they need
- ✓ Enable children/youth to live with persons they know and trust
- ✓ Reduce the trauma children/youth experience when they are separated from their family
- ✓ Reinforce child/youth's sense of identity/self-esteem which flows from knowing family history and culture

While the file reviews yielded much rich information they did have limitations. More specifically, the file reviews did not provide details on the number of (re)connections to kin/ kith for the identified children/ youth. This information can be located in *Kin Family Finder Referral Form*.

The purpose of the file reviews was to explore the following question. ***Did the placement status change of the identified children/ youth three (3) months after the Kinship Search Program closed their file (Early Service cases) or the progress of the Crown Ward Service cases up (which were still receiving services) up until August 2013?*** We found there were a number of limitations in conducting a file review at a 3-month post-review period. Issues included, one, the file review methodology could not easily answer the question because recordings were outstanding; two, the sample size (n=13 Early Service cases) was small, and therefore, findings were not generalizable; three, external legal and procedural factors adversely impacted an expedited kinship placement (e.g., court orders, waiting for home study to be completed); and four, the three-month time frame appears to be much too short a time period to allow both process and change to occur. Further research is still required to better understand what time period for follow-up review is reasonable.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations:

Informed by the findings from this review the recommendations for the Children's Aid Society of Toronto are:

1) To increase awareness of the effectiveness of the Kinship Search Program both within our Society and with our community partners as it is a key component in strengthening Family-Based Care;
2) To enhance a quicker turnaround time with the Early Service cases;
3) To build into service expectations that the Crown Ward cases may have longer timelines for service;
4) To ensure successful outcomes with the Crown Ward cases recognize the making of family (re)connections;
5) To consider, within the current climate of fiscal restraint, optimizing resources within the Kinship Search Program;
6) To continue to evaluate the program regarding its ability to meet stated goals and objectives.

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APPENDIX A –

EVALUATION PLAN

Project Working Title:

Exploring the Kinship Research Search Services at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto

KINSHIP SEARCH EVALUATION PLAN

Review Period: September 2012 – September 2013

Objective	Areas of Inquiry	Data Collection Method	Outputs	Timeline
The main objective of this evaluation is to explore the kinship research search services at CAS-Toronto in order to better understand what works and what may need further improvement. NOTE: This evaluation will only explore cases referred from September 1, 2012 to May 31, 2013. This will also include a three-month follow-up in September/October 2013.	Type of cases referred to pilot	*Kinship Family Finder Referral Form*	✓ Children's information ✓ Records/documents ✓ Parent/kin information ✓ Details of request ✓ Frequency (#) of cases referred	Sept 2012 – June 2013
	Activities involved in the search	*Search Log Form*	✓ Amount of communication with kin/kith ✓ Amount of communication with referring CAS worker	Sept 2012 – June 2013
	Perceptions of engagement with kinship families	*Key Informant Telephone Interviews* with: Kinship applicant; Non-kinship applicants; CAS referring workers; and Kinship researchers	✓ Kinship Researchers approach	June 2013 – August 2013
	Perceptions of satisfaction of pilot services	*Key Informant Telephone Interviews* with: Kinship applicant; Non-kinship applicants; CAS referring workers; and Kinship researchers	✓ Perceptions of pilot	June 2013 – August 2013
	Perception of case outcomes	*Closing Summary v.2*	✓ Summary of search efforts/ methods used ✓ Summary of found family ✓ Outcomes	May 2013 – July 2013
		Key Informant Telephone Interviews with: Kinship applicant; Non-kinship applicants; CAS referring workers; and Kinship researchers	✓ Impressions of changes ✓ Perceptions of what did not work	June 2013 – August 2013
	Recommendations	*Key Informant Telephone Interviews* with: Kinship applicant; Non-kinship applicants; CAS referring workers; and Kinship researchers	✓ Suggestions/ recommendations	June 2013 – August 2013
	3-month follow-up	*File Reviews*	✓ Status of identified child(ren)	Sept 2013 – October 2013

APPENDIX B –

SAMPLE OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

> *Instructions to Researcher*:
> Only read the questions to the participant. The "themes" are noted for reference purposes only and will be used during the data analysis stage.

Thank you. I will start with the questions now. I hope that you find my questions to be respectful and non-judgmental.

1. **THEME: Perception of Kin Family Finder Pilot**
   - When you received your first contact with (Barbara or Juanita) what were you thinking or expecting would happen?

2. **THEME: Perceptions of the kinship researcher's search approach (engagement)**
   - What was <u>most helpful</u> about the (Barbara or Juanita's) approach?
   - What was <u>least helpful</u> about the (Barbara or Juanita's) approach?

3. **THEME: Impressions of changes due to the Kinship Search Pilot**
   - Did your involvement with Barb or Juanita help improve the child/youth's situation? Please explain.
   - Has your work with Barb or Juanita influenced your attitude towards CAS in general? Please explain.

4. **THEME: Perceptions of what did not work in the Kinship Search Pilot**
   - What are some of the challenges you experienced with working with Barb or Juanita?
   - What could Barb or Juanita done differently?

5. **THEME: Suggestions**
   - We are always looking for ways that could improve the service, what other suggestions would you like to make in general about kinship search?

6. **Do you have any other comments?**

Thank you kindly for taking the time to answer our questions!