

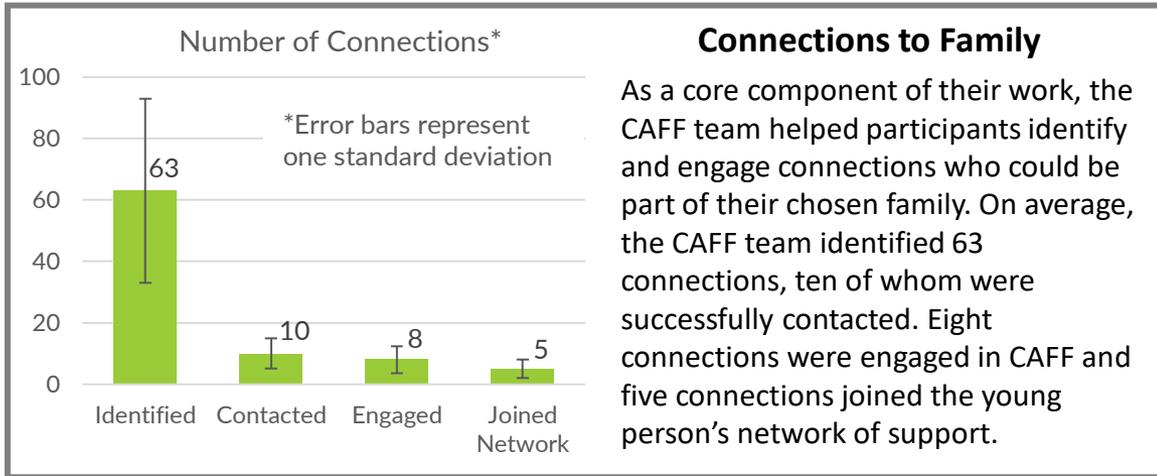
# Chosen Affirming Family Finding Cuyahoga County, OH 2019-2021

Chosen Affirming Family Finding (CAFF) is a program developed and implemented by Cuyahoga County Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and Kinnect from 2019 to 2021 as part of the QIC-LGBTQ2S. CAFF was created with the intent of helping older LGBTQ+ youth in foster care build relational permanency by identifying and engaging connections who could act as permanent and affirming sources of support.

The purpose of this document is to summarize data on the initial evaluation of CAFF for Kinnect and DCFS. Due to the small number of cases, concrete conclusions cannot be drawn about the impact of the program; further study of the CAFF program with a larger sample size could better establish the impact on participant outcomes.

## Program Implementation & Participation

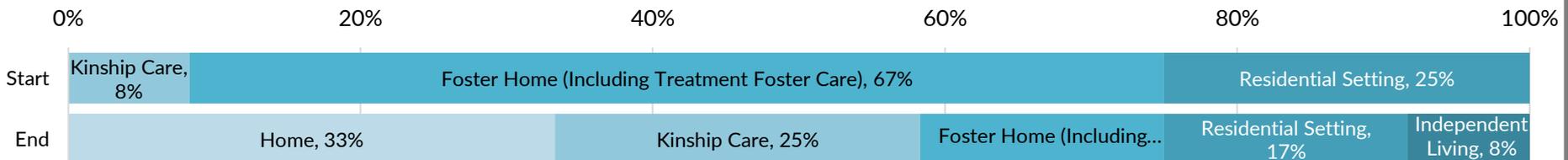
- 32 youth were referred to the program. 19 youth started CAFF services and 12 cases were successfully closed.
- Among the 12 successfully closed cases, youth were enrolled for 0.9 to 2.5 years (average = 1.7 years). There were, on average, 84 completed contacts and 20 attempted contacts between the CAFF team and the youth, family, and others.
- *Demographics:* On average, youth who completed CAFF were 16.5 years old. Youth identified as Black/African American (78%), Multiracial (11%), and White (11%).



## Connections to Family

As a core component of their work, the CAFF team helped participants identify and engage connections who could be part of their chosen family. On average, the CAFF team identified 63 connections, ten of whom were successfully contacted. Eight connections were engaged in CAFF and five connections joined the young person's network of support.

**Placement Type at Start and End of CAFF:** At the start of services, nearly all youth were living in a foster home (67%) or residential setting (25%). At the end of CAFF services, the majority of youth were living at home (33%) or in kinship care (25%). The remaining youth were living in a foster home (17%), a residential setting (17%) or independent living (8%).



**Survey Data:** Survey was collected before and after participation. Due to the small number of responses, hypothesis testing could not be conducted. Descriptively, there was a slight decrease in belongingness, a slight increase in types of support, and very little change in psychological distress. Several other measures were added mid-way through the project, however due to insufficient data, these measures are omitted.

**Qualitative Data:** Interviews were conducted with 12 youth who participated in CAFF. An analysis by Kaye Implementation & Evaluation (2022) found that all youth expressed that they had found or deepened connections with family during CAFF. Most youth entered the program hoping to strengthen and repair family relationships, though many youth also had fears about rejection or having their voices ignored. Nearly all youth reported having a voice in permanency planning during CAFF. Youth had positive things to say about the Family Finders, stating that they helped identify family and friends while reinforcing the youth's authority and role in making decisions about their own lives. Youth also reported Family Finders were affirming of their LGBTQ+ identities.

*...It was always uplifting...I always left the meeting with something as far as what to do next, as far as getting to the next step in my, my goals.... those meetings they were honestly about the best moments I've, I could have.... being able to express the fact that I, I am going through something in those meetings or that I, I need help with something and actually have someone to help me through it was like amazing. Because I never really had someone care so much to help me. So, it helps a lot...I was able to open up ... without feeling like I'm saying something wrong...It helped me actually get better with my communication skills.*

*[It] did help relationships and understanding a lot more than what was going on before...it was helpful with getting certain family that I really didn't talk to helping me with the fact that I could actually talk to them about emotions and stuff. And how I truly felt, and just opening up overall without the fact of having to think that I'm being judged...have stronger bonds with them over to- the period of time that I was in Kinnect.*

**Summary:** 12 young people completed CAFF, with an average enrollment length of 1.7 years. On average, 63 potential connections were identified via CAFF, 5 of whom joined the young person's network of support. Prior to the start of services, most youth were living in foster homes or residential settings while after services most youth were living at home or in kinship care. Due to the small sample size, hypothesis testing for surveys could not be conducted. Descriptively, there was a slight decrease in belongingness, a slight increase in support, and very minimal change in psychological distress. However, due to the small amount of data, concrete conclusions cannot be drawn about the impact of the program; further study of the CAFF program with a larger sample size could better establish the impact on participant outcomes.

Changes in Number of Types of Support (n=7)



Changes in Psychological Distress (n=9)



Changes in General Belongingness (n=8)



## History of the QIC-LGBTQ2S

The National Quality Improvement Center on Tailored Services, Placement Stability, and Permanency for LGBTQ2S Children and Youth in Foster Care (QIC-LGBTQ2S) was a program lead by The Institute for Innovation and Implementation, at the University of Maryland School of Social Work (The Institute). The project was funded by The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau to improve permanency, stability, and wellbeing for youth in foster care who identified as LGBTQ+.

Over the course of 5 years, the QIC-LGBTQ2S partnered with four child welfare agencies as Local Implementation Sites in: Allegheny County, PA; Michigan Tri-County, Cuyahoga County, OH; and Prince George's County, MD. Together, the sites, program purveyors, and the Institute developed, implemented, and evaluated several best practices and programs for LGBTQ+ youth and their families. The result of the five-year effort was the development and refinement of 9 manualized and evidence-informed interventions that can now be replicated in similar settings. In addition to developing these programs, sites also engaged in several initiatives to create affirming child welfare policies and SOGIE data collection projects.

## Funding Statement

This project was funded by the National Quality Improvement Center on Tailored Services, Placement Stability and Permanency for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Two-Spirit Children and Youth in Foster Care (QIC-LGBTQ2S) at the Institute for Innovation and Implementation, University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work. The QIC-LGBTQ2S is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau under grant #90CW1145. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funders, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

