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\$2.5 MILLION GRANT WILL SUPPORT KINSHIP CAREGIVERS IN KING COUNTY

SEATTLE – Jan. 13, 2022 – A new \$2.5 million five-year federal investment in kinship families will support children and families experiencing out-of-home care in King County. Local nonprofit Amara and its partners, the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the University of Washington School of Social Work (UWSSW), are one of five partnerships across the country chosen to implement this program. This partnership is expected to bring systemic change to the way kinship families are supported and increase the likelihood that children entering foster care are placed with kinship caregivers.

The partners expect this investment and collaborative work will improve outcomes for children by increasing the stability of their placement with kin, reducing the stress in kinship households during the initial adjustment period, and thus decreasing the need for multiple foster care and congregate and/or emergency placements. Placement changes and congregate and/or emergency placements are associated with negative outcomes for children and youth.

The grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families seeks to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Increase the well-being of children in formal kinship care and their caregivers by forming an innovative, hybrid preparation and support model between DCYF and Amara;
- 2) Improve parent engagement and parent-caregiver relationships by promoting shared parenting principles that are centered on what is best for each child;
- and 3) Utilize current partnerships and existing kinship and

family support services in King County by developing a centralized network of services that promote kinship caregiving whenever possible.

“We know that when children cannot live with their parents it is often best for them to be cared for by people who love and know them well – extended family members or close family friends. Kinship caregiving provides children with familiar social connections and environments that help children adapt faster to the changes they have experienced and to begin to heal from trauma. Yet despite kinship placements often being better for many children, existing supports for kinship caregivers are not at levels comparable to traditional foster care. This leaves many kinship caregivers with few resources and support to meet the needs of their growing families. Furthermore, since 71% of King County children in out-of-home kinship placement are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), robust support for kinship caregivers, who tend to be of the same race and ethnicity as the children they care for, is necessary work rooted in equity,” said Trey Rabun, Amara’s Associate Director of Programs-Kinship Services.

Amara and DCYF will collaborate on a hybrid foster care licensing model that will provide a streamlined pathway for kinship caregivers. Once licensed, kinship caregivers become eligible for monthly cash payments, such as those received by licensed foster parents, and other state supports, creating greater stability for the child and family. Amara will also provide wrap-around and resource navigation services to kinship caregivers, promote shared parenting strategies between parents and kinship caregivers, and improve community resource coordination. All work will be informed by an Advisory Council comprised of diverse stakeholders and people with lived experience in the child welfare system. The University of Washington will lead evaluation efforts designed to assist Amara and DCYF to develop an evidence-based program with proven results that will increase the number, stability, and permanency of children placed in kinship care homes.

Amara is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit working to improve the lives of children experiencing foster care, their parents, foster and kinship families, and adoptees and their families. We provide direct support to youth and families via case management, resource navigation, trainings, support groups, family visits, and

more. We advance racial and LGBTQIA+ equity and are certified by the Human Rights Campaign as a Recognized Leader in Supporting and Serving LGBTQIA+ Families. Amara celebrated 100 years in 2021. Learn more at <https://amarafamily.org/> and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @theamarafamily.

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