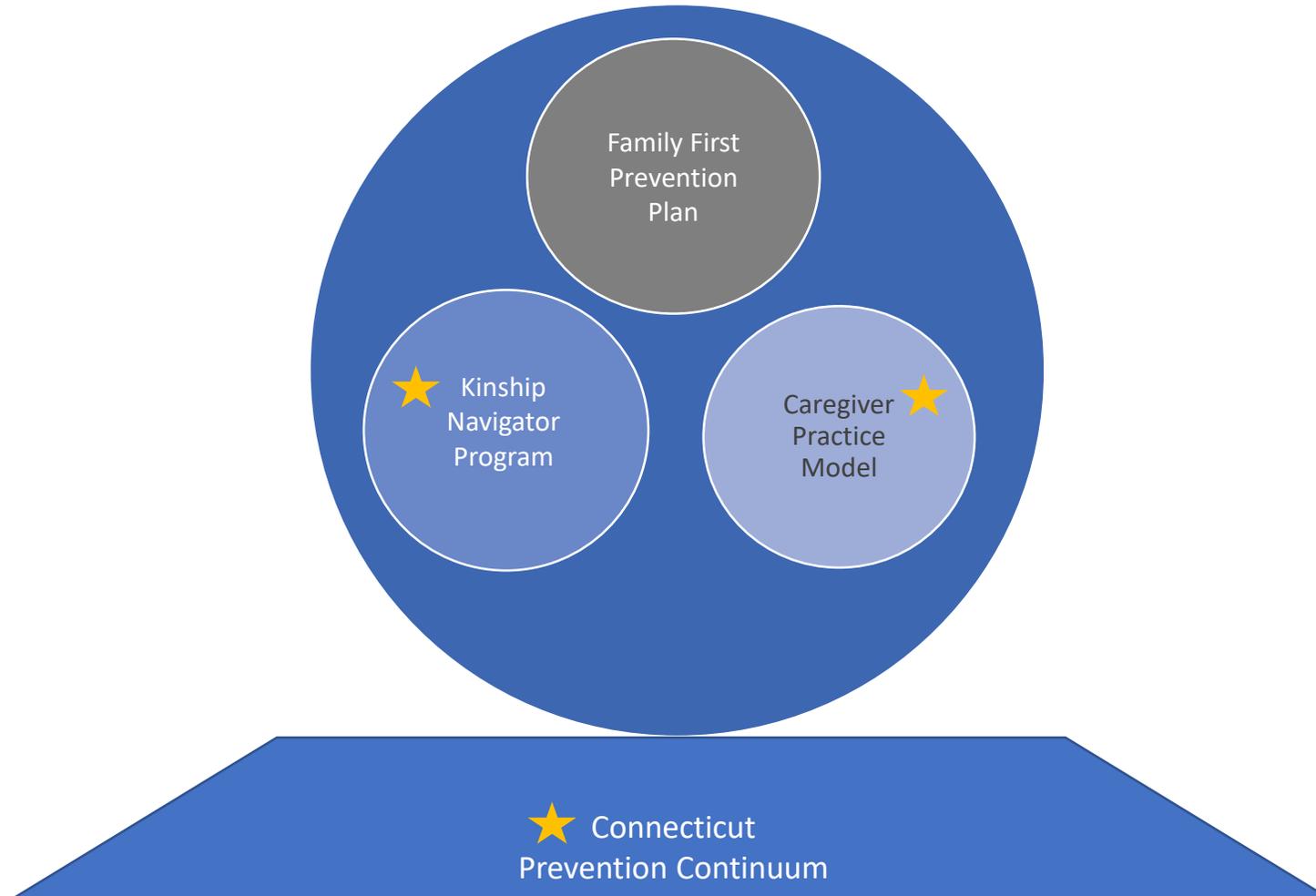




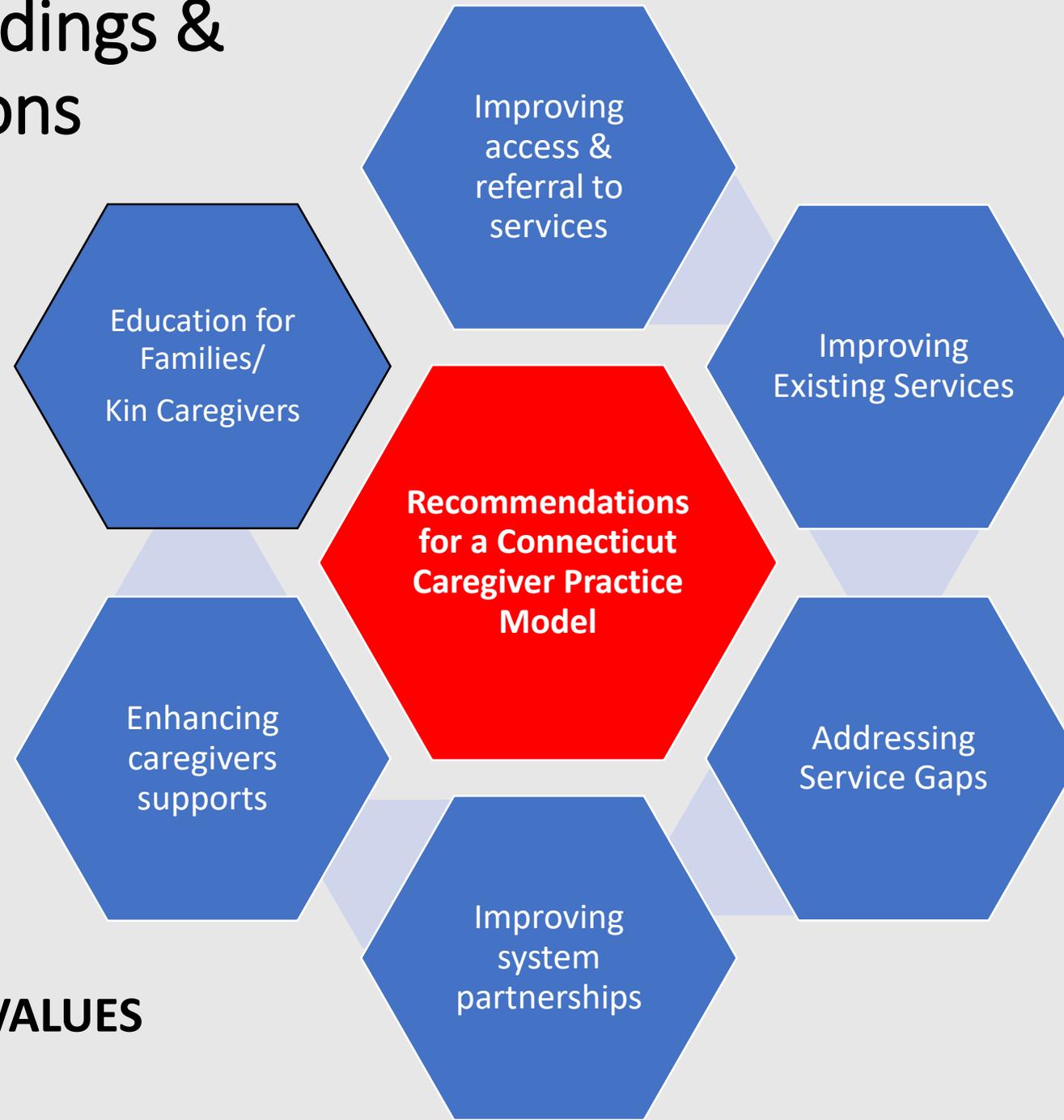
Kinship and Foster Care Workgroup Synthesis and Recommendations for the Governance Committee

November 19, 2020

★ Role of Kinship and Foster Care Workgroup: Findings and Recommendations for Connecticut's Transformation



Focus of our Findings & Recommendations



CORE VALUES

Findings & Recommendations

- Develop written policy regarding service referral process for kinship
- Develop positive communication strategies to reduce stigma of accessing services
- Develop strategies to expand community understanding of available services
 - Conduct outreach with families to determine how families currently seek services or find out about resources like 211
- Strengthen provider and Careline workforce referral capacity
 - Skillset in triage
 - Knowledge of existing services that families can be referred to
 - Develop protocol for updating program information
- Improve the referral accessibility
 - Consider an alternative format (e.g., app, electronic referral, social media, etc)
 - Accessible in multiple languages
 - Accessible to rural communities and in every region
- Coordinate between referral pathways
 - Finalize the list of prospective referral pathways (e.g., AAP, United Way, 211, etc)
 - Determine what training, outreach, messaging, interagency agreements are needed



Findings & Recommendations

- Ensure Careline is a resource even if a family does not have an accepted case
- Reexamine service eligibility that requires DSM-5 diagnosis
- Expanded access to services during times that work best for children and families e.g. before/after work, summer, after-school (12+), and summer employment
- Expand services beyond post-DCF transition and for older youth specifically around post-secondary education
- Ensure services are available both in-home or community and in an office setting.
- Ensure equitable regional access
- When a family moves, ensuring their services and service providers follow them.
 - Develop written policy regarding provision of service for kinship, including a coordinated handoff when worker changes
- Update and improve accessibility and equity of service provision



Improving
Existing
Services

Findings & Recommendations

- Build specific expertise in provider workforce and/or continuum
 - Family-Focused services (wraparound, etc.)
 - Culturally responsiveness and racial justice expertise
 - Trauma-informed
 - Language-Access
 - Rural/Regional-Needs
 - Adoption-competent
 - Navigate relationships with bio family following adoption
 - Workforce Readiness to support kinship and foster families
- Develop statewide structure for legal assistance
 - Characteristics: Expanded opportunities for representation from attorneys who have family-serving systems knowledge
 - Potential strategies: Embed family specialist in all courts; and attorney on retainer for soft touch consultation
- Funding
 - Expand subsidies for families that go through probate court
 - Increase funding for Adoption Assistance programs



Addressing
Service Gaps

Findings & Recommendations

- Build partnerships and/or agreements that enhance regular communication
- Build **partnerships with service partners**
 - Determine what training, outreach, messaging, interagency agreements are needed
- Build **Interagency coordination** through website applications (e.g. United Way, Telehealth, Ayana app etc.)
- Build **partnerships with referral partners** (e.g. 211, schools, law enforcement, faith-based organizations etc.)
- **Coordinate services** with providers and stakeholders (e.g. community resources, urgent care, Recovery Red Cross, 11 Caps, Circle of Security etc.)



Improving
system
partnerships

Findings & Recommendations

- Establish the Quality Parenting Initiative statewide
- Center family's needs as the focal point when developing support plan - avoid one size fits all
- Develop different entry points for assistance
- Change criteria definition for services to meet family needs (age barriers to access services, length of time to respond to voluntary services)
- Develop written policy regarding *service referral process* for kinship
- Develop written policy regarding *provision of service* for kinship (a coordinated handoff when worker changes)
- Develop structure for legal assistance for families, for example statewide legal services (family specialist in all courts) and attorneys on retainer for soft touch consultation
- Expand service hours and timeline to meet family needs
- Integrate services, DCF, SW, and providers should follow the family even across regions
- Consider services that extend beyond post-transition
- Update, shorten, and improve (streamline) the Voluntary Services packet
- Reexamine service eligibility criteria that requires DSM-5 serious diagnosis



Enhancing
caregivers
supports

Findings & Recommendations

Education for all caregivers:

- Trauma-informed
- Focused on permanency
- Focused on bio family and foster family relationships
- Consider offering trauma-focused training to all families of youth in care

Education for families/kin caregivers:

- Not *'training'* or *'education'* – but rather *'support'*, *'guidance'* etc.
- Consider a team approach comprised of peer mentor, care-case manager, and clinician
- Revise intake process to be more conversational and relational
- Seek family-system focused service provision rather than emphasis on one family member
- Must be accessible in multiple languages
- Must be accessible to rural communities and in every region
- Determine whether they should develop a website to search behavioral health specialist with kinship-specific expertise



Education for
Families/
Kin
Caregivers

Findings & Recommendations

CORE VALUES

- Ensure practice and policy is **flexible to be responsive to a family's circumstance**
- Family's needs as the focal point when developing support plan - avoid one size fits all
- Meet, recruit, and engage with families *outside of DCF-locations* (for example in libraries) to **increase access and eliminate stigma**
- **Share and coordinate knowledge** of system, services, and stakeholders to help the family
- The navigator/case manager guides the family
- **Ensure racial equity** in recruitment of caregivers as well as in the workforce supporting families
- Coordinate and collaborate across partnerships in order **to eliminate siloes and streamline processes** (between DCF, DOE and other departments/stakeholders etc.)
- Prioritize **preservation of kinship family relationships**
- Navigator/Case manager help to distinguish legal responsibilities or state decisions separate from relative caregiver responsibilities
- **Embed restorative practice** principles into caregiver practice model

Thank You & Next Steps

- Governance Committee Meeting on Recommendations
- Additional opportunities to join Family First workgroups
- Continue following Family First website