

## Media Relations

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### **Abused Children Likely to be Placed Voluntarily with Other Family Members, UNH Carsey Institute Finds**

DURHAM, N.H. – Abused children who are removed from their homes are likely to be placed voluntarily in the homes of other family members instead of other placement arrangements, according to new research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

The new research is presented in the Carsey Institute brief “Informal Kinship Care Most Common Out-of- Home Placement After an Investigation of Child Maltreatment” conducted by Wendy Walsh, research associate professor of sociology at the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center and research associate at the Carsey Institute.

Walsh looked at placement patterns nationally in both rural and urban areas. She evaluated whether abused children were placed in foster care, formal kinship care (state has legal custody and places the child with a family member), informal kinship care (a parent voluntarily places a child with a family member), or group homes or other out-of-home settings, such as emergency shelters or residential programs.

“Kin care placement can be beneficial for children because they already know the caregivers and therefore have more placement stability. However, research has found that informal kin caregivers often receive fewer services, including financial assistance, than other types of substitute caregivers,” Walsh said.

“Some kin caregivers prefer an informal placement because they do not want to upset the parent or weaken family relationships with them; sometimes they also distrust the protective agency or fear that the child will be removed from their home. But other kin caregivers would rather have the financial benefits—and Medicaid coverage for the child—associated with formal placement,” she said.

Walsh found:

- Informal kinship placement settings, where a parent voluntarily places a child with a family member, were the most common out-of-home placement in both rural and urban areas. Informal placements involve children who are in physical custody of a relative but may remain in legal custody of a parent.
- Children aged 3 to 5 with a child maltreatment report in rural areas and those in very poor rural households (incomes less than 50 percent of federal poverty level) were more likely to be in informal kinship settings than similar children in urban areas.

“These findings point to the need to develop ways to better support informal kin, especially among very poor households. Although kin caregivers play an important role in caring for maltreated children, research shows they are less likely to receive services, including financial assistance, than other types of substitute caregivers,” Walsh said.

“In many states, innovative models, such as the Kinship Navigator program, are emerging to help kinship caregivers access supports and services. Kinship families will benefit from further development of programs that enhance comprehensive access to community-based and government services, such as access to stable housing, affordable legal representation, and financial assistance,” she said.

*The complete Carsey Institute report about this research is available at <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publication/702>.*

This analysis is based on data from the second National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II).

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. The institute gives policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. For more information about the Carsey Institute, go to [www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu](http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu).

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

#### **GRAPHICS**

[http://www.unh.edu/news/img/kincare\\_carsey.jpg](http://www.unh.edu/news/img/kincare_carsey.jpg)

Out-of-home placement settings after maltreatment report and 18 months later.

Source: Carsey Institute at UNH

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