**What is Kinship Parenting?**

“Kinship parenting is a broad term used to identify families of caregivers who are caring for children to whom they are related, , such as grandparents caring for grandchildren, and aunts or uncles caring for nieces and nephews. says Maggie Bayerl, Kinship Services Coordinator for Family Support Center of Barry County. “The work that we do here in our Kinship Program is to bring Kinship Families together through peer support programs, family education, and respite opportunities for caregivers and children in kinship care.” The Family Support Center also provides services such as the Diaper Depot, Parenting Education, Mandated Reporter training for professionals, Family Resource Guides, education on sexual abuse prevention, and safe sleep resources through the C.R.I.B. program.

Kinship Care has existed since the beginning of families but is not well-known terminology in the community. Children are in kinship placements for various reasons including parental work situations, substance abuse disorders, military deployment, poverty, illness, or the death of a parent. Due to the unique composition of Kinship families and the often-informal nature of kinship placements, there is a limited understanding from community members and a lack of resources available to many kinship families. The Michigan State University’s Kinship Care Resource center states, “Currently, about 36% of the foster care placements in Michigan are with relatives.” Kinship placement is a tremendous benefit to children as research suggests it can provide greater stability than alternative out-of-home placements.

The Family Support Center of Barry County works tirelessly to increase awareness of Kinship families, provide concrete and social supports to Kinship families, and implement prevention programs to reduce the need for out-of-home placements for children. In addition, the Family Support Center collaborates with many community and statewide agencies to foster community support for families across Barry County. To learn more about our programs, please call 269-945-5439 or email maggie@familysupportbarry.com.