

## *It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Connections*

### A Place to Call Home

Becky and Kim were contacted in February 2016 for possible kinship placement of Sierra. Sierra wanted to stay in Indiana to pursue her education and attend college. The Department of Children's Services had initially reached out to a teacher in her school with whom Sierra was very close, but the teacher felt that there may be better options for Sierra. She stated she would talk to other staff members at the school and later provided Becky's information. Becky was familiar with Sierra. Sierra would need a supportive placement so that she could attend school, graduate from high school, and move on to college. Becky and Kim agreed to have a meeting with Sierra. The meeting went very well, and we went over all the questions they had regarding medical coverage, rules, and what their role as a host home/kinship placement would be. They stated they did not want to receive the funding that comes with Sierra's placement because they were not in it for the money. They agreed to be Sierra's host home, and she moved into their home in March 2016. Since then, they have provided Sierra with a very safe, stable, nurturing, supportive, and family-oriented home environment. She had her own room, and they included her as a member of their family, taking her on trips, taking her to family gatherings, and getting her involved in their church and community.



Over the past 2 years, Kim, Becky, and Sierra have become a very close and bonded family of three. They helped her get her driver's license and gave her access to a car so she could get back and forth to school and work. Sierra was able to return to the high school where Becky works and graduate with her friends and classmates in May of 2016. They held a graduation party for Sierra when she graduated from high school. They were very supportive of her and encouraged her to attend college at Ivy Tech her first year while she lived at home with them. They saved up her host home per diem over the course of more than 1 year and purchased her a 2015 Dodge Dart. During monthly visits, it was very evident that Sierra was at home and not just "in a placement." Sierra often expressed how much she loved Becky and Kim and how great they were to her. She often stated that she felt like she was a member of their family. Sierra expressed that she wanted to move into the dormitory at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis for her sophomore year of college, and the kinship family was very encouraging and supportive. While at college, Sierra still has her room in their home and is able to return home on college breaks and holidays. They have supported her move into the dorm and have taken her and her roommate out to dinner. Becky and Kim are amazing examples of kinship caregivers. They stepped up and supported a youth not knowing much about her except that she was very smart, excelled in school, and was a hard worker. They knew that she would truly excel if she had the safe, stable, nurturing, and supportive environment every teenager needs. We could not have asked for a better or more supportive home for Sierra!

To learn more about kinship care in Indiana, visit <https://www.in.gov/dcs/fostercare.htm>.



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