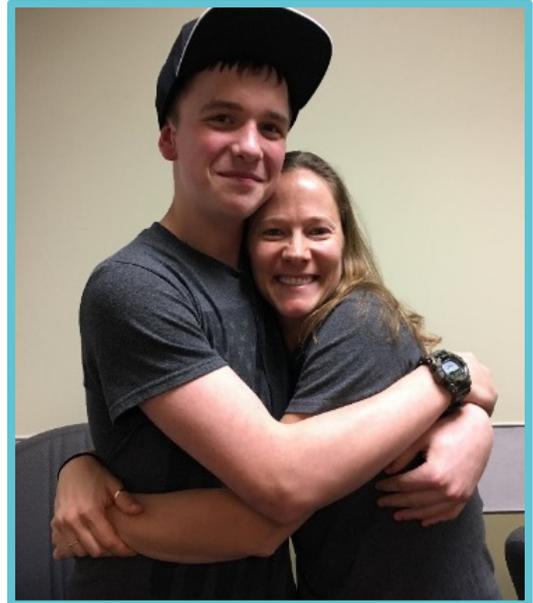


It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Connections

Maintaining Important Connections: Kole's Story

Kole came into care due to neglect by both parents. At age 12, his mother sent him across the country to live with his father, whom he had never met. The day he was placed in foster care was the last contact Kole had with his father or stepmother. Kole's mother remained involved for a while, although she lived on the other side of the country and was not willing to care for him. Kole bounced from placement to placement and, for a time, was homeless and on the run.

Kole became involved with services through the Leveraging Intensive Family Engagement (LIFE) program, and work began to identify and engage family resources. The LIFE coordinator searched for family members through the case file, social media, and various databases to identify as many relatives as possible. Although multiple family members were identified, no one was able to care for Kole. Although his mother was not willing to work toward reunification, she reluctantly provided the name of Kole's godmother, Vicki, to the program's family engagement facilitator. Kole's mother and Vicki had a falling out years earlier, and Vicki had not been in contact with the family for several years. Vicki's whereabouts were unknown, but the LIFE coordinator was able to find contact information for her. The phone number was no longer working, but a letter sent reached Vicki and she called immediately. Vicki shared that when she learned Kole had been sent to his father, she tried unsuccessfully to contact him through social media. She had been worried about Kole and was glad to know he was safe. Vicki quickly became involved in the case and worked to reconnect with Kole and learn about his needs. She planned several cross-country trips to visit Kole and support him, even surprising him with a visit on his birthday. Vicki began participating in monthly LIFE case-planning meetings, treatment meetings, and participated in counseling with Kole by phone. She completed the lengthy foster care certification requirements and became approved to care for Kole. He now lives with Vicki and is doing very well.



Although Vicki was no longer in contact with Kole's mother, she was in contact with the father of Kole's younger brother. Because of this, Kole has been able to spend time with his brother and continue the relationship with both his brother and brother's father. Vicki also lives near Kole's maternal grandmother and, although this relationship has been difficult, has worked hard to help Kole maintain this important connection.

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To learn more about Leveraging Intensive Family Engagement, please visit

<https://sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/oregon-s-title-iv-e-waiver-leveraging-intensive-family-engagement/home>.



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