

# *Adapting to the needs of our community for 110 years*



## ACH offers a continuum of care that addresses today's most urgent issues

When ACH was founded in 1915, it provided a safe home and hope for a good future for orphans and destitute women with children. Today, ACH stays true to its mission of protecting children and preserving families, but in many new and different ways.

This is because today's youth and families face a myriad of complex challenges. In the past 10 years alone, the percentage of foster children displaying higher levels of mental health and behavioral issues—issues requiring therapeutic care—has doubled. Those suffering from complex developmental needs, extreme aggression and even thoughts of suicide, have tripled.

Simultaneously, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings who find themselves taking care of a relative's child. When parents are too young, victims of substance abuse, or negligence, other family members – and even close family friends – step up to the challenge of raising the children.

### ***ACH has developed innovative programs to address the changing needs of children and families in our community.***

For youth with intense, high-level needs, ACH created the Robert and Jane Ferguson Residential Treatment Center. Treatment teams work to help teens transition to living with a family or a setting that offers continued growth with less restrictive care.

While our Pat O'Neal Youth Emergency Shelter is available 24/7 to youth who are runaways, homeless, or trafficking victims, it's not ideal for youth suffering from extreme behavioral issues. That's why ACH designed the Secure Assessment Facility last year, the only one of its kind in Texas. Those in the child welfare or mental health systems, ages 5-17, experiencing a crisis or transition between placements now have a safe setting for treatment as they await longer-term placement.

### ***And because it keeps families together, Kinship Care is our preferred placement.***

ACH strongly promotes the philosophy and practice that when children cannot be with their parents safely, the next best option is a relative or close family friend, also known as fictive kin. Research shows that kinship placements provide a sense of stability, identity and belonging during a time of crisis and help preserve the child's cultural identity and relationship to their community.

To support success, ACH created two programs—one to serve those in the child welfare system, and one for families outside the system. We'll describe those programs in depth.

### ***Thanks to the generosity of those who share our mission, ACH is able to design and develop programs that help children—and families—overcome life's challenges.***



# Keeping children safely with their families when they can't safely stay with their parents

**Kinship Connections:** Last year, through the generosity of the Rees-Jones Foundation, Kinship Connections served 375 homes and families caring for children in the conservatorship of Child Protective Services.

Kinship Connections offers voluntary assistance to help families in the child welfare system adapt to their new, and usually completely unexpected, role as caregivers. Our staff provides intensive case management for kinship placements made as a result of formal legal intervention. Services include:

- Concrete supports like Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) training, in-home services, community referrals, and need-based financial support
- Support groups co-facilitated by other kinship caregivers who can share their experiences
- Licensing for eligible families, including an expedited foster/adopt licensure process including one-on-one guidance and support designed specifically for kinship caregivers



**Kinship Navigator:** Last year, Kinship Navigator provided more than 841 warm handoff referrals to kinship families, 160 families received case management services and 1,083 people received program information at outreach events.

The 2020 census found that for every child in kinship foster care in Texas, 24 children are being raised outside the system by informal kinship caregivers (more than 260,000 in total). Kinship Navigator provides access to resources and services by building a community committed to kinship care through:

- Connection to a variety of resources and services, including support of basic financial needs, food, clothing, support groups and legal aid
- Assistance with legal forms such as power of attorney, school enrollment, and applications for eligible State services

Our team also assists those who haven't raised young children in many years to overcome the hurdles of school enrollment and the necessary documentation for daycare, school and healthcare.

Informal kinship caregivers save Texas taxpayers millions of dollars every year as they care for children who would otherwise enter the foster care system. More importantly, caregivers offer love and stability to many of the state's most vulnerable children.

**Learn more about Kinship Care at [ACHservices.org/Kinship-Care](https://ACHservices.org/Kinship-Care) and [ACHservices.org/Kinship-Navigator](https://ACHservices.org/Kinship-Navigator)**