**A Real-World Problem**

* Every month in North Carolina, almost 500 children experience abuse and neglect and are placed in foster care.
* Some are placed with their relative caregivers, the most family-friendly out-of-home placement.
* Although most of these caregivers are of low-income status, only 8% qualify for the level of financial support offered to traditional, licensed foster parents.
* The Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP), a new permanency option, will provide relatives with long-term financial assistance to support the children in their homes and reduce the number of children in foster care.

**Project Aim**

The project aims to demonstrate and build knowledge of a licensing process adapted for relative caregivers and its prospects for:

1. Increasing the number of relatives who are licensed as foster parents and qualify for the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP),
2. Improving relatives’ perceptions and awareness about GAP, and
3. Increasing workers’ knowledge and awareness about GAP.

**Project Objectives**

1. Roll out a three-part integrated intervention—
	1. A customized licensing process,
	2. Permanency support services to help relative foster parents become legal guardians and qualify for gap supports, and
	3. Workforce engagement
2. Document changes in licensure rate and uptake of GAP, and specific attitudinal changes about gap among relatives and workers, and
3. Use project-generated knowledge and findings to foster awareness of and inform action on GAP among social service providers, scholars, and policymakers.

**Three Research Questions**

1. What innovative strategies provide the supports relative caregivers need to achieve foster parent licensing and if appropriate, legal guardianship? (E.g. transportation, child care).
2. Does the provision of training and other educational materials to agency workers and administrators increase awareness and knowledge of GAP among workers and relatives?
3. What are relative caregivers’ attitudes towards applying for licensure and participating in GAP, and do those attitudes change after they participate in a licensing process centered on relatives’ needs?

**Project partners**

1. The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill School of Social Work
2. Children’s Home Society of North Carolina
3. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services,
4. Four County Department of Social Services (Beaufort, Catawba, Iredell, and Mecklenburg).

**As the implementation specialists on the project, how would you guide the project teams to apply the following co-learning activities to achieve the project goals?**

Understand the system and organizational context and culture.

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Create spaces for new ideas to emerge.

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Negotiate, build trust and respect for all perspectives.

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Communicate and listen for mutual understanding and collaborative integration of different knowledge perspectives.

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Seek ways to introduce and get buy-in for an implementation science approach that fits with existing programs, practices, and processes in the counties.

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