

Toolkit to Raise Awareness and Celebrate Kinship Families



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united**
Because we're stronger together®

**GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP
SUPPORT NETWORK**
A National Technical Assistance Center

Introduction

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network at Generations United has created this toolkit with customizable resources, which can help you raise awareness about both the strengths and unique needs of kinship families.

Please join us in sharing the vital role of kinship families in keeping children safe, supported, and loved.



Visit www.GKSNetwork.org for resources, webinars, and more.



Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for the latest events, news, resources, and more.

Contents

KEY MESSAGES.....	3
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS <i>(with downloadable graphics)</i>	4
NEWSLETTER COPY.....	15
EMAIL SIGNATURE.....	16
ZOOM BACKGROUNDS.....	17
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	18
VIDEOS.....	18
FACT SHEETS, DATA, AND RESEARCH.....	19
OUTREACH BROCHURES.....	20

Key Messages

Here are simple, compelling messages that you can use to educate your community about kinship families. Please feel free to use and adapt this language according to your needs.



Nearly 2.5 million children in the U.S. are growing up in kinship families.

Kids in kinship families are being raised by grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends. These families keep children safe and loved, yet often go unseen and unsupported.

Research is clear: when children can't stay with their parents, they do best with kin.

Kinship families offer greater stability and permanency, stronger connections to cultural identity, better mental health and behavioral outcomes, and deeper community links than non-kin foster families.

Kin caregivers face unique challenges.

Unlike parents, they do not have automatic legal rights—and they often step in unexpectedly, during a crisis, to raise a child they did not plan for.

Kinship families are strong—but systems weren't built with them in mind.

Too often, kin caregivers face barriers enrolling kids in school, accessing health care, or securing stable housing. It's inequitable and unjust. It's time to redesign systems to recognize, respect, and support kinship families.

Social Media

Use and follow [#KinshipCare](#) and [#Grandfamilies](#) when sharing these posts. These hashtags link toolkit users to the broader kinship community and help elevate our collective impact and visibility.

Of course, please share content of your organization's choice. If you need social media posts, simply copy and paste the ones on the following pages. We've also included graphics to download for Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X.

You can find kinship families in every:



Socioeconomic Level Racial and Ethnic Group Geographic Area

Kinship families are common, yet often invisible. Help them be seen.

"We have friends who are retired who are always telling me about their next cruise to Hawaii. I tell them I go on cruises every day. I cruise to school, I cruise to the doctor's office, I cruise to the skateboarding park. Joey is my 'cruise to Hawaii' and you know what, I wouldn't trade my cruise for theirs."

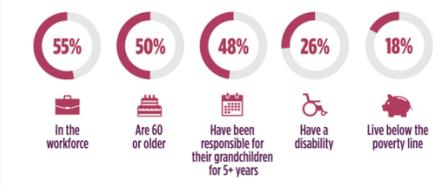


Adrian Charniak,
Generations United GRAND
Voice and Caregiver Advocate
Illinois

The Strengths of Grandfamilies



- ✓ Deep Bonds
- ✓ Cultural Connection
- ✓ Lasting Stability



2+ MILLION

grandparents are responsible for raising their grandchildren



\$10.5 BILLION

Without grandparent and other kin caregivers, the foster care system would be totally overwhelmed. Foster care maintenance payments alone would cost taxpayers at least \$10.5 billion each year.

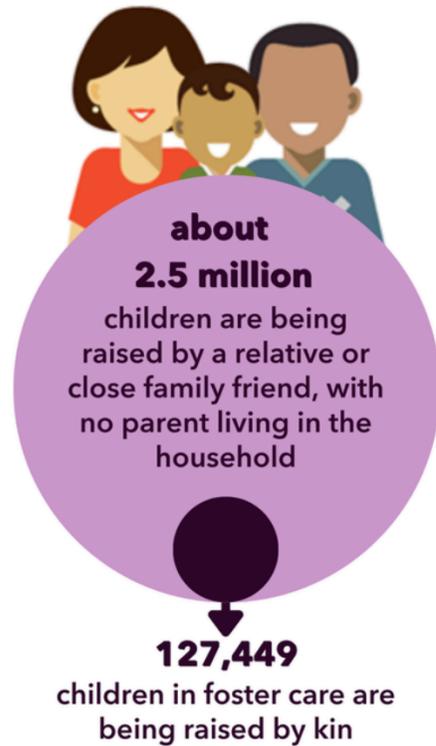
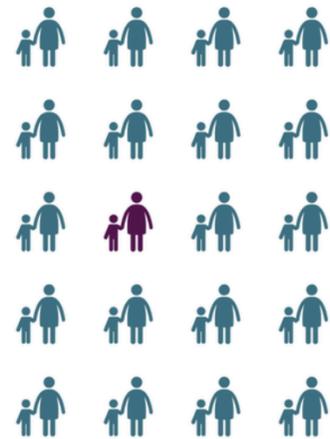
For every **1 CHILD** being raised by kin in foster care, there are **19 CHILDREN** being raised by kin outside of foster care.



generations United GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK

Scale of Need

For every **1 child** being raised by kin in foster care, there are **19 children** being raised by kin outside of foster care



generations United **GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK**
Because we're stronger together* A National Technical Assistance Center

Download this graphic for

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- [X \(Twitter\)](#)



Kin caregivers — relatives or close family friends who step in to care for a child when the child's parents are unable to do so — face unique challenges.

Unlike parents, kin caregivers don't have automatic legal rights — and they often step in unexpectedly, during a crisis, to raise a child they didn't plan for.

They show up anyway. Let's show up for them. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Unlike parents, kin caregivers don't have automatic legal rights.

Most didn't plan for this — they step in during crises, often overnight.

They show up. Let's show up for them.



#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Scale of Need

You can find kinship families in every:



Socioeconomic Level



Racial and Ethnic Group



Geographic Area

Kinship families are common, yet often invisible. Help them be seen.

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Grandparents and other kin caregivers play a critical role in communities across the country.

According to the latest U.S. Census data, they are raising about 2.5M children — keeping kids connected to family and out of an already overburdened foster care system. Research shows that when we invest in meaningful supports for grandfamilies, children do better and are less likely to enter foster care in the first place.

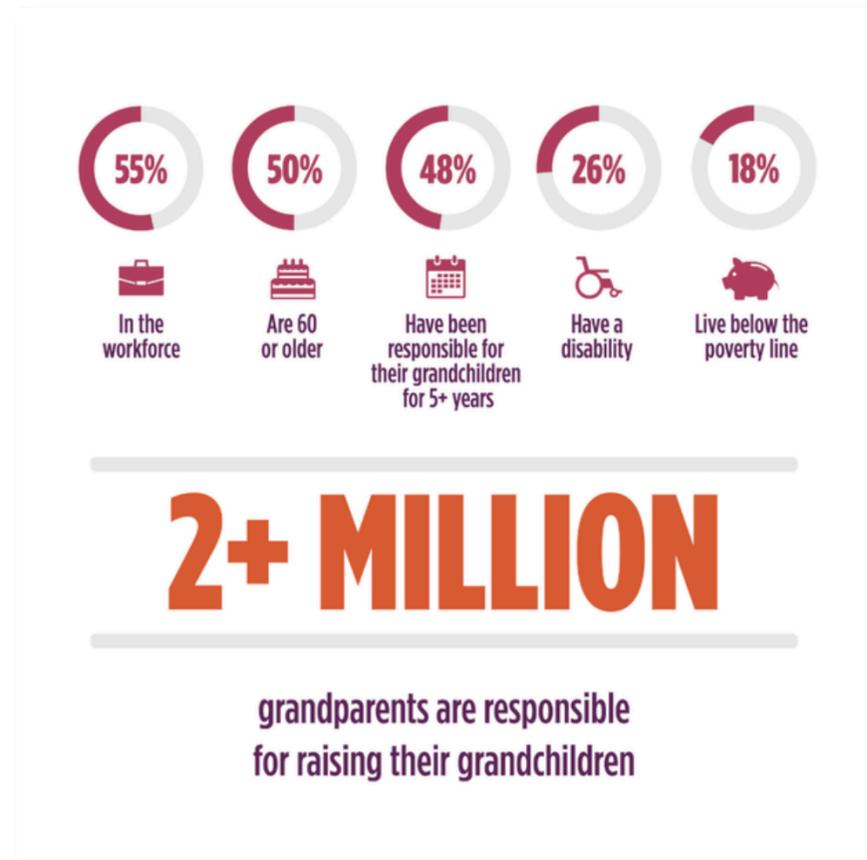
#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies



About 2.5M children in the U.S. are being raised by grandparents and other kin. These caregivers keep kids with family and out of foster care—and research shows that supporting grandfamilies helps children thrive.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Scale of Need



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Did you know? More than 2M grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

They are keeping kids safe and loved, yet these grandparents often go unseen and unsupported — despite having unique needs of their own.

We see them, and we're listening. By working alongside grandparents who are kin caregivers, we can better support them and their families. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies



👴👵 Did you know more than 2M grandparents are raising their grandkids?

These kin caregivers keep children safe and loved—but often lack support, despite having needs of their own.

We're committed to listening to and standing with kin caregivers. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Scale of Need



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Did you know?
For every child raised by kin in foster care, 19 more are raised by relatives outside the system.

Why does this matter?
Because most kinship families are navigating caregiving without access to foster care supports.

When families lack support, they can feel isolated and unseen — even when they simply need help enrolling a child in school or accessing food, housing, child care, transportation, or health care. Families deserve support without being forced into foster care to receive it.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies



For every 1 child raised by kin in foster care, 19 are raised by kin outside the system. These families often feel invisible.

Kin caregivers take on a huge responsibility. We should help ensure they have resources to meet children's needs in return.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Strengths



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📊 Research is clear: when children can't stay with their parents, they do best with kin.

Kinship families offer:

- ✓ Stability & permanency
- ✓ Cultural identity
- ✓ Resilient mental health and behavioral outcomes
- ✓ Community connections

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

When kids cannot live with their parents, they thrive with kin. Kinship families = stability, safety, identity, and belonging. The research backs it. 💜

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Strengths



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♥ Kinship families — families in which children are being raised by relatives or close family friends instead of their parents — have powerful strengths. Their deep bonds, cultural ties, and resilience help children feel safe, stable, and seen.

With the right support, kin caregivers raise children with better mental health outcomes, stronger senses of identity, and lasting feelings of belonging — outcomes that outpace those of children placed in non-kin foster homes.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies



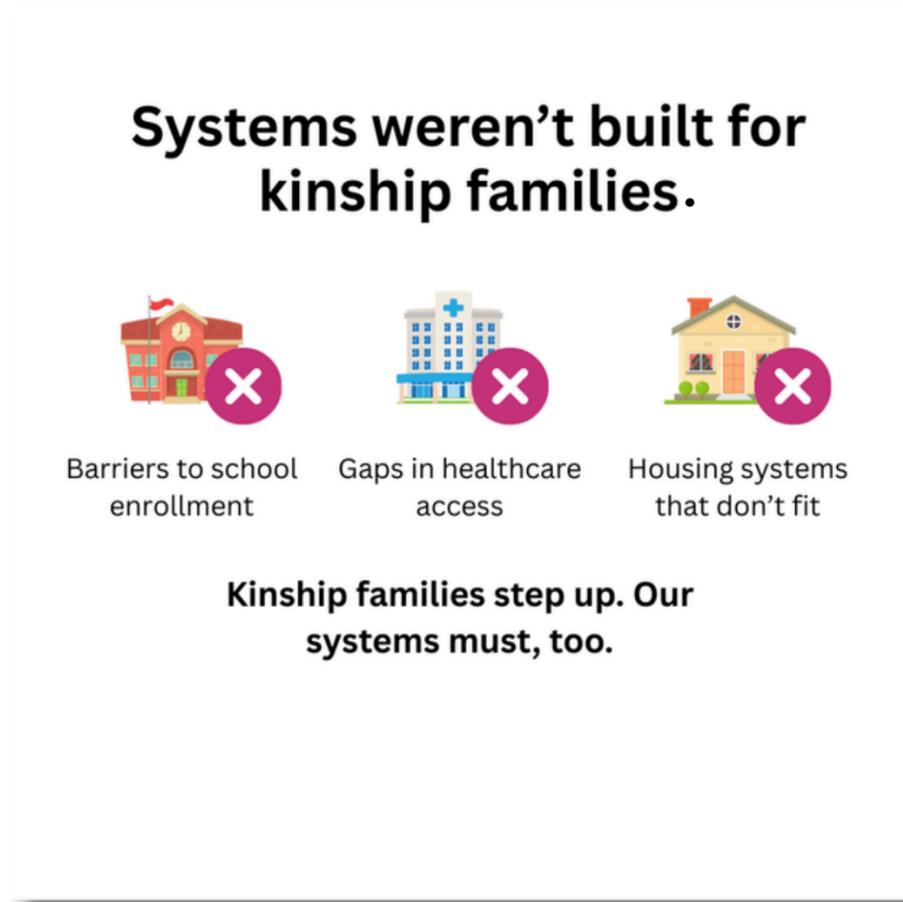
Kinship families have powerful strengths. ♥

Their deep bonds help children feel safe, stable, & seen.

With the right support, they foster better mental health, stronger identity, & more lasting belonging than non-kin foster families.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Systems



Download this graphic for

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♥ Kinship families — families in which children are being raised by relatives or close family friends instead of their parents — are strong. But, systems meant to support families weren't built with them in mind. Too often, kin caregivers face barriers enrolling kids in school, accessing health care, or securing stable housing.

That's not just inconvenient — it's unjust. It's time to connect systems to recognize, respect, and support kinship families.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Kinship families are strong—but systems weren't built for them.

School enrollment, doctor visits, and housing support are often out of reach.

That's not just hard — it's unjust. It's time for change. ♥

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Economics



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Kin caregivers save taxpayers \$10.5 billion every year by keeping children safe, loved, and with family. Without them, our foster care system would be completely overwhelmed.

But these caregivers take on this responsibility at great personal cost.

Many live on fixed incomes and step in with little warning to care for children who have experienced trauma, parental opioid and substance use, or loss. They stretch every dollar to provide stability — yet most receive little to no support.

Kin caregivers already do so much. Children should not have to enter foster care just to access basic services.

It's time we show up for the caregivers who show up for our kids.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

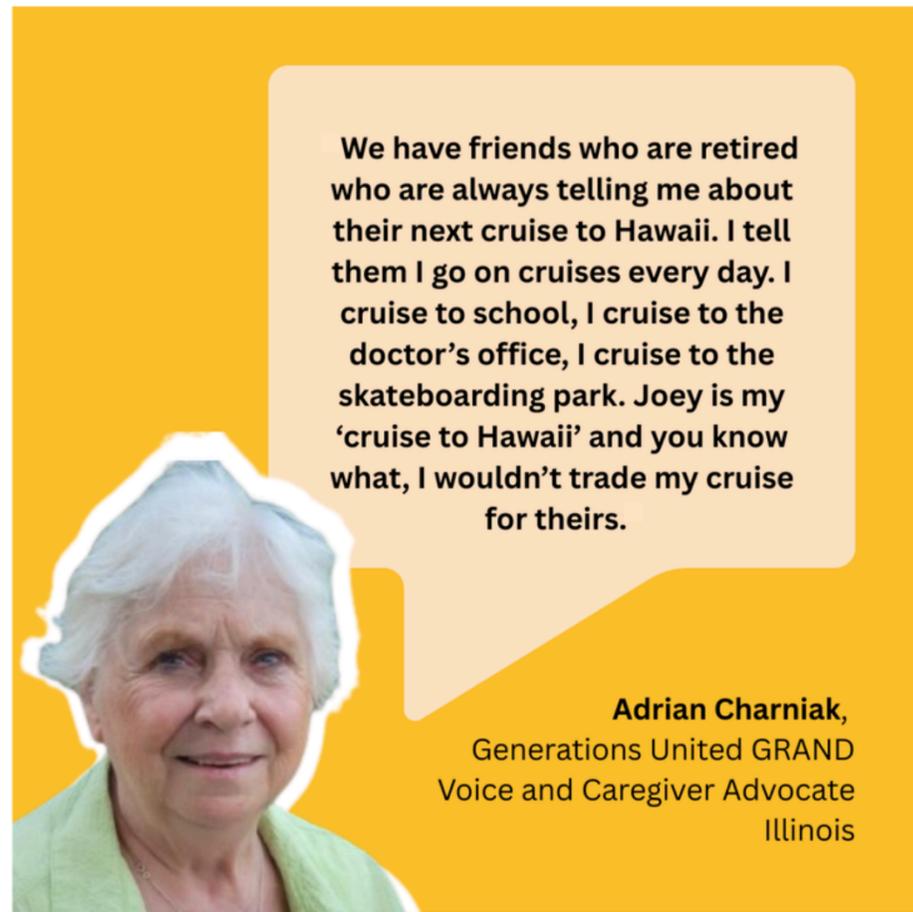


Kin caregivers save taxpayers \$10.5B/yr by keeping kids with family. Without them, foster care would be overwhelmed.

These caregivers take on this responsibility at a personal cost. It's time we show up for the caregivers who show up for our kids.

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Story



Download this graphic for

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“I didn't plan to raise my grandchild, but I wouldn't change it for the world.”

So many families are formed by love, not legal titles. Were you raised by a grandparent, other relative, or close family friend—or are you raising a child that way now?

We'd love to hear your story. Tell us about it in the comments below. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

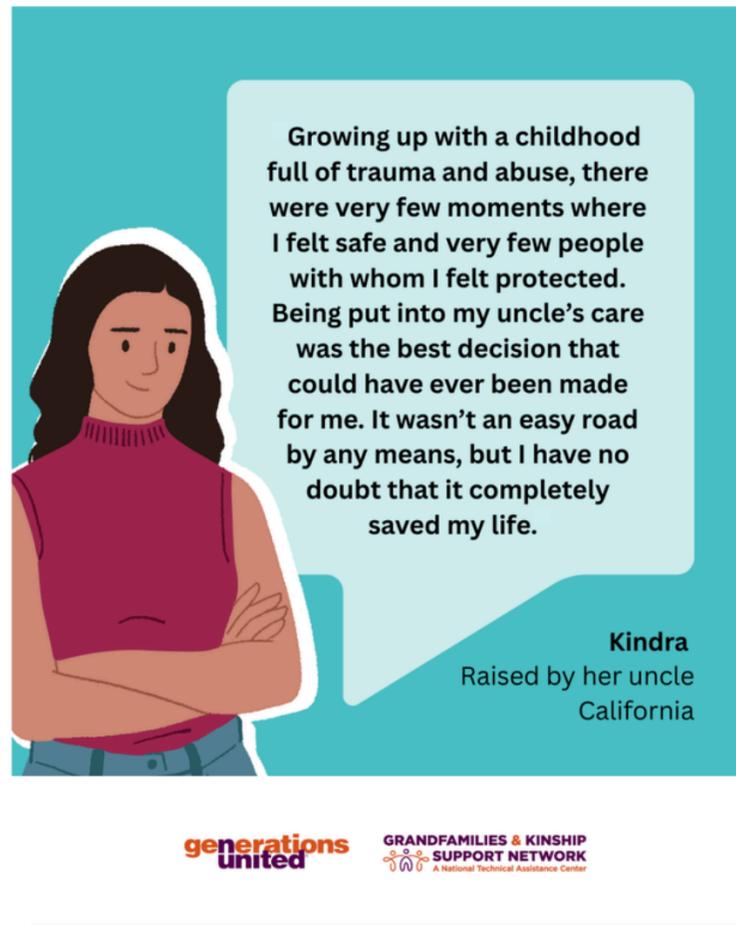


“I didn't plan to raise my grandchild, but I wouldn't change it for the world.” Families are built by love, not legal titles.

Were you raised by kin? Or are you raising a child that way now? Share your story below. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Story



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Kinship families form in moments of crisis.

When parents are unable to care for their children—due to parental opioid and substance use, incarceration, military deployment, serious illness or disability, teenage parenthood, or death—grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends step in to keep families together. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies



Kinship families form in times of parental crisis—

- ✝️ Death
- 🤒 Serious Illness
- 🚓 Incarceration
- 🏆 Deployment

When relatives step in, families stay together. ❤️

#KinshipCare #Grandfamilies

Newsletters

**Do you have a newsletter?
Include this!**



Newsletter Copy

About 2.5 million children in the U.S. are growing up in kinship families—being raised by grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends when their parents cannot care for them. These families provide stability, love, and cultural connection, but too often, they do so without the recognition or support they deserve.

Subscribe to the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network's newsletter at www.gksnetwork.org and follow #KinshipCare and #Grandfamilies on social media to learn more.

Email Signature

Re-vamp your email signature,
which will let those who work
with kinship families know
where they can find support.

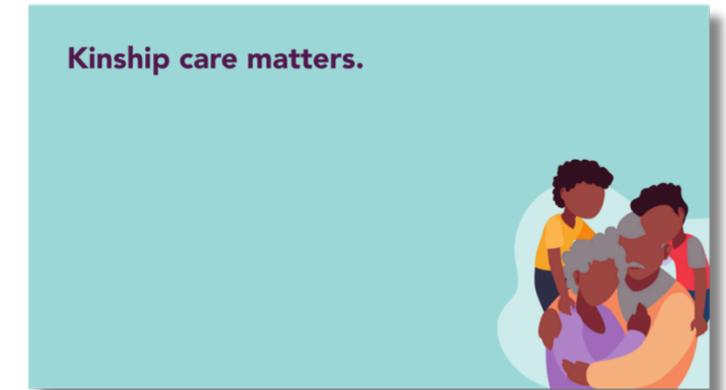
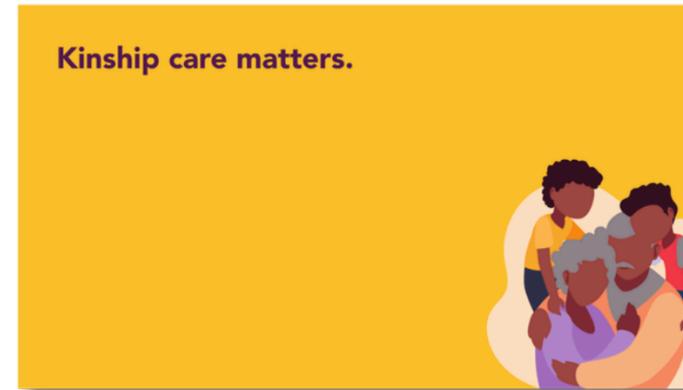
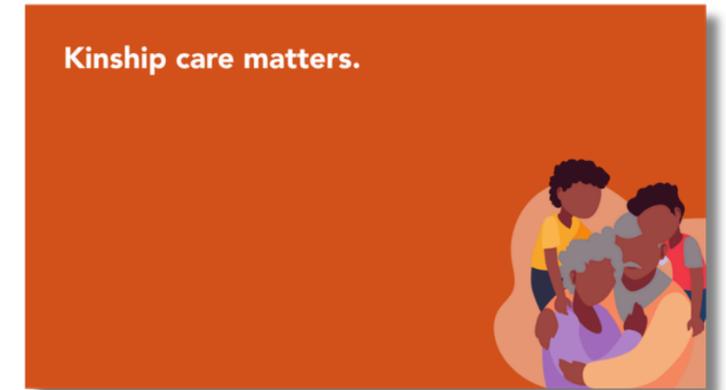
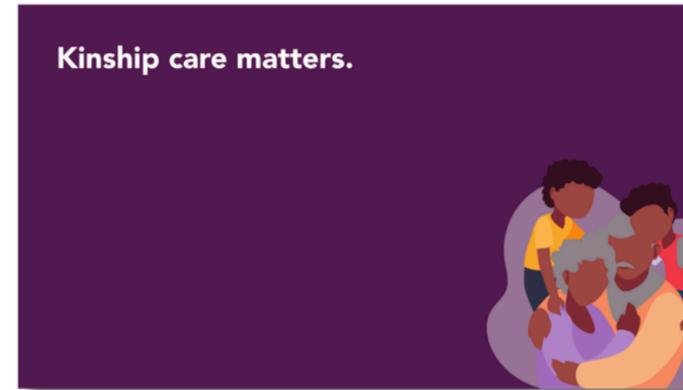


Email Signature

Do you work with kinship families? Please check out the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network at www.gksnetwork.org. There, you can access free resources, request one-on-one support, sign up for webinars and more! Follow the Network on LinkedIn and subscribe to their newsletter.

Zoom Backgrounds

If you are attending a meeting at which you are representing kinship families, please use one of these Zoom backgrounds.



[Download the backgrounds.](#)

Additional Resources

Videos

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network produced several videos that help build awareness of who kinship families are, including their strengths and needs. Three of the videos share real stories from actual kin caregivers. Find more videos on the Network's [YouTube channel](#).

Who are Kinship Families & Grandfamilies?

Two-minute video introducing grandparents and other kin who raise children when parents can't. It also provides a brief overview of the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network.

Kinship/Grandfamilies Thrive with Perseverance

Grandmother Rosalie Tallbull speaks about raising her grandchild: "I don't want other grandparents to go through what we went through."

Kinship/Grandfamilies Thrive with Peer Support

Grandfather Keith Lowhorne speaks about raising his grandchildren: "This could happen to anyone."

Kinship/Grandfamilies Thrive with Love

Santana Lee speaks about raising her cousins: "I understood the assignment."

Additional Resources

Fact Sheets, Data, and Research



National Kinship Data

Compiled by the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network

GrandFacts

Fact sheets for each state and several Tribes and territories that provide kinship families with program information specific to where they live

Summary of National Research

Shows that children thrive in kinship families

Strengths and Challenges of Kinship/Grandfamilies

Fact sheet available online and for download

Additional Resources

Outreach Brochures

You can introduce kinship families to professionals in many of the systems and organizations that touch their lives — aging, child welfare, education, Family Resource Centers, nutrition/food programs, and TANF — by sharing these system-specific brochures.

[Kinship Matters to Aging](#)

[Kinship Matters to Child Welfare](#)

[Kinship Matters to Education](#)

[Kinship Matters to Family Resource Centers](#)

[Kinship Matters to Nutrition](#)

[Kinship Matters to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#)

Thank you for helping to raise visibility for kinship families!

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, Tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit www.GKSNetwork.org.

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