



KINSHIP MATTERS TO

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

INTRODUCTION TO KINSHIP FAMILIES & GRANDFAMILIES

Kinship families, also known as grandfamilies, are families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. Reasons kinship/grandfamilies form include parental alcohol and other substance use, military deployment, incarceration, mental or physical illness, deportation, and death. Family Resource Centers (FRCs) often serve kinship/grandfamilies yet may not provide tailored services specifically for them.



2.5 million children

in the U.S. are being raised by a grandparent, other relative, or close family friend, without a parent living in the household



**For every 1 child
being raised by kin**

in foster care, there are
18 children being raised
by kin outside of foster care



31 percent

of children in
grandparent-headed
households are living
below the poverty level

Being part of a kinship family benefits both kin caregivers and the children in their care. Compared to children living in foster care with non-relatives, children with relatives experience **greater safety, stability, and well-being**. Kin caregivers report feelings of **satisfaction, pride, and meaning in their role**. However, these caregivers also face an array of challenges. They may lose their peer group; feel socially isolated; and/or experience guilt, deep concern, and/or grief related to their own adult child or relative who cannot parent. These emotional challenges are compounded by the stress of needing to meet the child's basic needs, including their nutrition, education, and health care, all without the automatic legal authority that parents have.



KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

Kinship/grandfamilies typically form unexpectedly, and resources and support can have an enormous, positive impact to smooth what can be a sudden transition. FRCs, as welcoming hubs of supports, services, and opportunities for families, are well-positioned to assist kinship families and grandfamilies.

FRCs can educate their staff about kinship/grandfamilies, including by familiarizing them with the current data, the issues the families commonly face, and which resources are available to support these special families. FRCs can also develop specific programming to welcome, engage, and support kinship/grandfamilies.

FRCs can help kinship/grandfamilies with concrete supports, such as food, clothing, and housing assistance. FRCs may provide these resources directly, or help families navigate access to them.

Through supports such as workshops, support groups, parenting education classes, and home visiting, FRCs can provide kinship/grandfamilies with tools, resources, and strategies to help raise the children in their care. This is especially important for grandparents who are taking care of children in a landscape that may feel very different than the one in which they raised their children. An excellent resource is the free **Grand Connections** workshop series curriculum developed by ZERO TO THREE.

By connecting kinship/grandfamilies with each other, and other families, such as through support groups and family activities, FRCs can help families build the protective factor of social connections. Being part of the FRC community helps them to form friendships, access peer-to-peer support, feel less isolated, and reduce their stress.

By inviting kin/grandfamily caregivers to serve on its Parent Advisory Committee, an FRC can ensure that it is listening to and responsive to this important caregiver group, and it can partner with them in the shared leadership of the program.



KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES INTERACT WITH MANY SYSTEMS

Kinship/grandfamilies interact with many systems, including aging, child welfare, disability services, education/schools, housing, Medicaid/Medicare, nutrition providers, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Dealing with multiple systems is time-consuming and emotionally draining. FRCs can help by supporting individual families as they navigate this challenging landscape. Networks of FRCs can partner with systems to coordinate support for kinship/grandfamilies.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Recognizing a growing number of grandparents caring for their grandchildren, an FRC in Phoenix, Arizona developed specific programming to support them, including a kinship parenting class, a kinship support group, and a kin kids group.

New Hampshire leveraged its network of FRCs across the state as the base for its **Kinship Navigation Program**. FRCs promote and provide the program to eligible families in their communities. Kinship navigators, based at the FRCs, connect kin caregivers to the services and supports specific to their family's needs.

THE GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK CAN HELP

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network and its subject matter experts at the National Family Support Network offer **no-cost assistance** to state, tribal, and territorial government agencies and nonprofit organizations to empower them to better serve kinship/grandfamilies. Access tip sheets, reports, webinar recordings, and more, all free of charge, on our website, **GKSNetwork.org**.



Sign up at **GKSNetwork.org** to receive our monthly newsletter, which contains the latest resources and information from the Network and around the field.

GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK

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