



Grandfamilies 101

Professional Development

What is a Grandfamily?

The terms “grandfamily” and “kinship family” are used interchangeably to describe families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children because their parents cannot.



Who Are You?

How frequently do you connect with kinship and grandfamilies?

In what capacity?

- Courts
- Public benefits offices
- Schools or other organizations serving youth
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Family Resource Centers
- Food pantries
- Community-based or cultural organizations
- Faith-based organizations



Who Are We?



We provide information and assistance to state, tribal, and territorial government agencies and non-profit organizations that serve kinship families.

www.GKSNetwork.org



Why Are We Here?

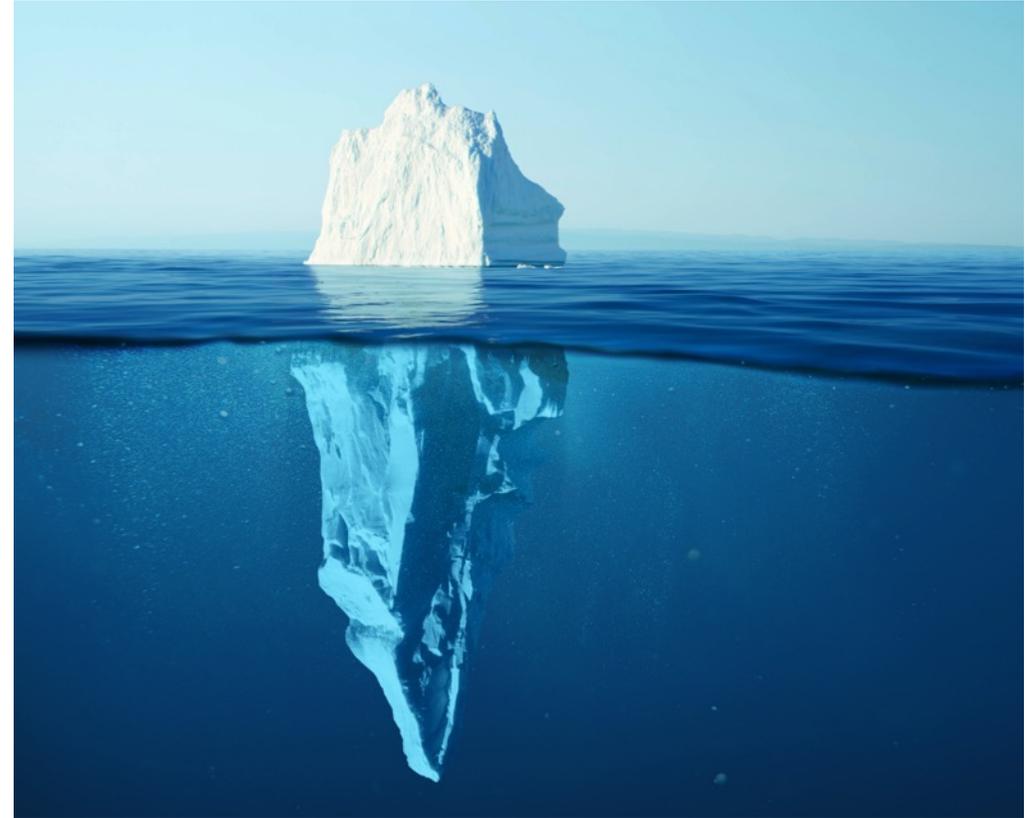
- Recognize how common it is for grandparents/kin to be primary caregivers for children and teens
- Understand grandfamilies' needs
- Identify resources to help grandfamilies address needs in these areas:
 - Legal
 - Educational
 - Financial



Grandfamilies in Foster Care: Just the Tip of the Iceberg

For every child in a grandfamily in the foster care system . . .

There are 17 children being raised in grandfamilies trying to manage on their own.



What do Grandfamilies Need?



“

For me, the perfect support would be building a relationship to make us feel comfortable, to help break the stigma of, *if I let you in too close, I might say something to get the kids removed from me.*

It's really, really hard to put yourself out there. So it's important to take the fear away, to come in with no biases, with understanding and compassion.”

SANTANA LEE

GRAND Voice, adoptive parent of 3 cousins



Emotional Support

- Under what circumstances do kids join a grandfamily?
- What's the emotional impact on children?



“

Two days after [our granddaughter] was born, there was a knock on the door from the Alabama Department of Human Resources who gave us a choice that we could either put the children in our care or they could go into foster care. Well, there was no choice. We knew what we were gonna do.”

Keith Lowhorne

GRAND Voice, adoptive parent of 2 grandkids



Practical Support



Legal Options



Educational Support



Financial Assistance

Legal Options



A Balancing Act

Kin caregivers

- Want to provide a safe and loving home where a child can grow and thrive, and
- Worry that circumstances might jeopardize this arrangement.



Legal Options

- Informal Arrangements
- Power of Attorney
- More Permanent Options



Video: Legal Assistance



Legal Options

Type of Arrangement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Informal Arrangement		
Power of Attorney		
Guardianship/ Adoption		

Legal Options

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Informal Arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't require parental involvement • In some places, school enrollment and health care can be accessed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves kin caregivers in a vulnerable position if parents want to resume caregiving • In some places, school enrollment and/or health care can be challenging to access
Power of Attorney		
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Power of Attorney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes the parents' legal directives clear and can be done without a lawyer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires parental cooperation and can be revoked at any time Is often time limited
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Guardianship/ Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides long-term stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually requires a lawyer and can be expensive Adoption terminates parental rights, which may also make kin caregivers ineligible for assistance like child-only TANF On the other hand, adoption may be the only vehicle for a child to access their kin's private health insurance or any Veteran's benefits

Educational Support



Questions About School

- How do I enroll my grandchild (niece, cousin, family friend) in school?
- How and to whom do I disclose my relationship to this child?
- It's been so long since I've been in school or had kids in school. What do I need to know?
- The child I'm caring for has been through a lot. How do I make sure they're developing as they should, and what support is available if they're not?



Video: Educational Supports and Services



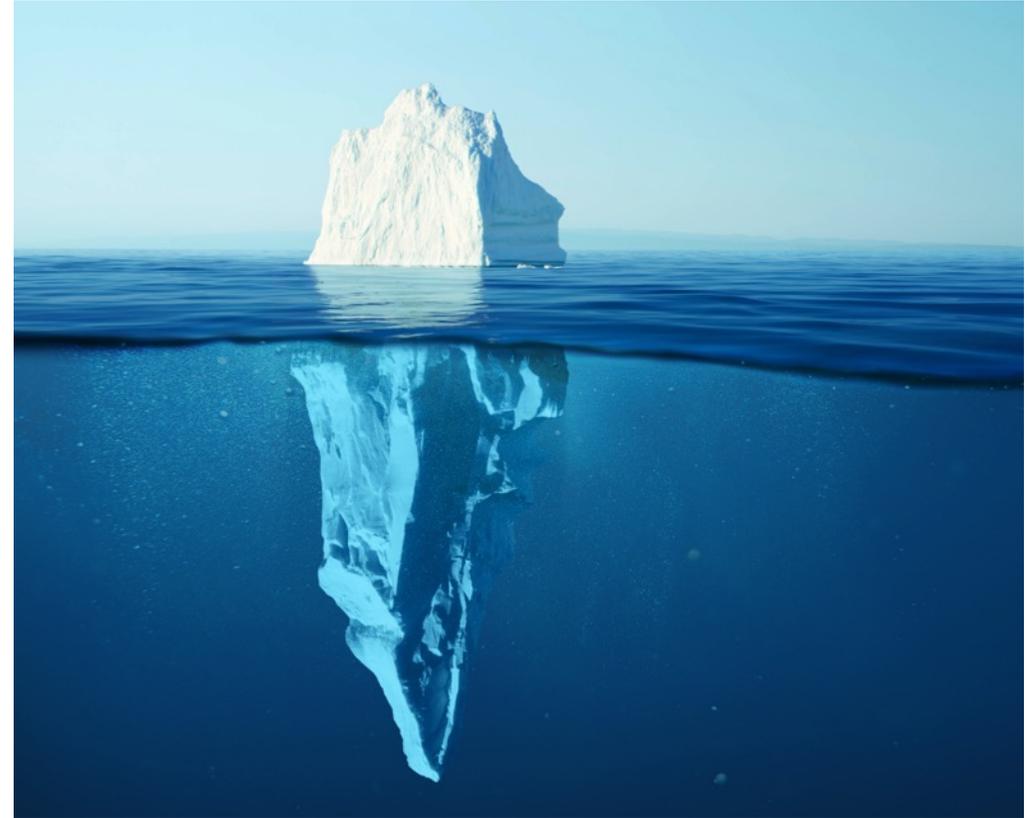
Financial Assistance



What We Don't See

Grandfamily caregivers inside the foster care system who are licensed as foster parents should get a monthly stipend to help with expenses.

Those outside the foster care system may receive little or no help – and may struggle financially.



Video: Financial Support



Financial Help

Stacia is 40 years old and caring for a niece and nephew, an infant and a toddler. She's been unable to work due to lack of child care and is struggling financially. What referrals might you make to assist her?

Tanya is 57 and caring for three grandchildren, ages 2, 3, and 7, who were brought to her home in the middle of the night. She's a teacher and lives in a comfortable one-bedroom apartment. What referrals might you make to assist her?

Please share:

- **Something you learned**
- **One local resource you'd like to explore further**



Next Steps

You might:

- [Sign up](#) for the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network's monthly newsletter.
- [Reach out](#) to the Network re: specific issues you need more help with.
- Find additional information in our resources list, arranged by topic.
- Form a learning community to explore solutions with others in the group.



Developed with generous support from:

the David &
Lucile Packard
FOUNDATION

GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK

A National Technical Assistance Center

The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources.

The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.