



HONORING AND SUPPORTING GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP FAMILIES

IN YOUR CONGREGATION

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

NKBA
Living Longer - Aging Better

IN THE U.S., APPROXIMATELY 2.5 MILLION CHILDREN ARE BEING REARED BY A GRANDPARENT OR OTHER RELATIVE BECAUSE THEIR BIRTH PARENTS ARE UNABLE TO CARE FOR THEM.

Chances are there are a few (or several) such families in your congregation, quietly and nobly navigating circumstances that were, in most cases, unforeseen, often abrupt, and sometimes precipitated by tragedy.

FACT:

60% of these caregivers are grandparents; the remainder are aunts, uncles, older siblings or fictive kin (close family friends).

FACT:

The vast majority of kinship households operate outside the child welfare system.

The challenges for these grandfamilies and kinship families can be daunting, including the following, all of which are exacerbated when the child or the caregiver has disabilities or a mental health issue:



- Increased costs for food, clothing, utilities, transportation, and medicine
- Inadequate accommodations (bedding, bathrooms, free space)*
- Trauma caused by relocation and absence of birth parent(s)
- Time management for school needs, medical appointments, social commitments, work obligations
- Help with homework, school projects
- Caregiver's own mental and physical health needs
- Legal options and requirements
- Transportation

** In some instances, housing covenants or regulations do not allow multigenerational residency, forcing kinship families to relocate.*

RESOURCES

Who Are Kinship and Grandfamilies?



Kinship/Grandfamilies: Strengths and Challenges



HONORING AND SUPPORTING THESE SPECIAL FAMILIES DOES NOT REQUIRE ELABORATE OR EXPENSIVE PLANNING.

Your new ministry for grandfamilies and kinship families can begin with a simple recognition of their sacrifices, devotion, and commitment to the young people in their care. Perhaps you could designate a “Kinship Family Day,” whereby you acknowledge and praise these families, followed by a reception or coffee hour after worship service. The annual “Grandparents Day”—celebrated each year on the Sunday after Labor Day—may provide the perfect opportunity to honor grandfamilies by recognizing them during worship services, followed by a coffee hour or reception afterward. Fellowship with others in similar situations alone can be soul-refreshing and could be the ideal inaugural for regular get-togethers—a

support group whereby caregivers can share ideas, information about resources, and more. Understandably, caregivers crave respite—even brief episodes can be rejuvenating—and providing access to your building for regular gatherings is an easy way to do a lot of good.



YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE WHAT'S NEEDED TO GROW YOUR GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP FAMILIES MINISTRY.

How much expertise is sitting in your pews? For example, do you have teachers, accountants, artists, lawyers, athletes, fitness trainers, and healthcare professionals in your congregation? Recruit them to share their know-how with caregivers and their children.

A Sampling of Support Services You Can Provide:

- Tutoring for school-age children
- Babysitting during caregivers' support or respite group
- Presentations on healthcare, mental health, budgeting, tax preparation, legal matters, nutrition, exercise and self-care
- A pocket guide to local government and private resources

Toolkit for Starting A Kin
Caregiver Respite Program



Grandfamily Support Groups:
Seven Tips for Getting Started



OTHER IDEAS TO PLAN AND EXPLORE

PLAN: Field trips (amusement parks, museums, bookstores, sporting events) **EXPLORE:** Free or discounted admissions and concessions

PLAN: Game nights and/or arts & crafts sessions

EXPLORE: Volunteer artisans to lead the activities, donated materials from local craft stores or individuals

PLAN: An annual special event, such as a banquet or awards luncheon

EXPLORE: Corporate sponsorships, plaques or certificates, gifts or gift cards for honorees



An honoree and her grandchildren at a church event celebrating grandfamilies in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



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KNOWING THERE ARE OTHER FAMILIES OUT HERE, I DON'T FEEL AS LONELY AS I DID FINDING THAT COMMUNITY MADE IT A LITTLE EASIER TO MAKE THAT TRANSITION TO "THIS IS THE NEW NORM FOR YOU: YOU WENT FROM A SINGLE WOMAN TO A MOM OF TWO."

— TIFFANY J., REARING HER LATE SISTER'S SON AND DAUGHTER IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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Things to Keep in Mind When Working with Grandfamilies



Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network

