

## Leveraging Partnerships to Better Support Kin Caregivers

### Starting a Kin Caregiver Support Service



Learning Community Insights

TOPIC 5 OF 5

Community partners can benefit your new kin caregiver supportive service in a variety of ways. They can expand your reach, reduce gaps in services, lower per-capita costs, and increase revenue. This resource explores how community partners can help, how you can help them, and where to look for partners, and it provides tips on developing partnerships.

### How Community Partners Can Help

Kinship/grandfamilies encounter many organizations in their daily lives: schools, childcare providers, youth clubs (e.g., scouts, 4-H, etc.), public benefit offices (e.g., Medicaid, nutrition support, etc.), senior centers, and more. These organizations use a variety of funding streams to support families in different but often complementary ways. Some support younger kin caregivers, while others support older ones. Many have contiguous or overlapping service areas. Partnerships among these organizations can expand each organization's reach, increase participant numbers, and reduce gaps in services. Consider these examples:

- ▶ [First Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability \(FTAAAD\)](#) in Johnson City, TN, uses Older Americans Act Title III funds to provide an evidence-based training to kin caregivers ages 55 and older. Their local university extension program uses state and U.S. Department of Agriculture funds to offer a complementary training to kin caregivers of all ages. By partnering to offer shared training, both FTAAAD and the university expand their reach, lower per-capita costs, and stretch their federal funding dollars.
- ▶ The [Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Title VI Native American Aging Program \(Title VI program\)](#) runs a successful congregate meal program that welcomes both kin caregivers and the children they are raising. However, kinship/ grandfamilies living in remote regions of the tribal nation have difficulty getting to the program. The Title VI program partners with their tribal public transportation provider to assist these families.

### Other Ways Partners Can Help and How You Can Help Your Partners

Partnerships are a two-way street. Some organizations, especially smaller ones, may think they don't have anything to offer potential community partners. However, mutually beneficial

activities don't have to be big, and they don't have to cost a lot of money. Here are some ways that community partners can help your organization and that you can help them.

- ▶ Refer kinship/grandfamilies and/or accept referrals.
- ▶ Promote one another's services in newsletters and/or share one another's literature with families.
- ▶ Offer physical space for one another's services.
- ▶ Provide volunteers and interns, or provide opportunities for volunteers and interns.
- ▶ Share tips/learnings or hold joint staff trainings.
- ▶ Provide funding, fundraise for one another, or hold joint fundraisers.

When asked to consider ways they could help potential partners, one Learning Community participant wrote, **"We were surprised to see how many activities [we are] already providing to our potential partners."**

## Where to Find Community Partners

A [community needs assessment](#) is a great way to identify potential community partners. Look for organizations that already work with kinship/grandfamilies or are likely to do so, such as: [child welfare agencies](#), [kinship navigators](#), [schools](#), [childcare providers](#), and [Family Resource Centers](#). Some organizations, such as [Community Action Agencies](#) and [HeadStart and Early HeadStart programs](#), are required to partner. Others, like [Community Schools](#), actively seek community partnerships because it's central to their mission. If you don't know where to start, see the [Community Provider/Resource Finding Tools](#) section of the suggested readings for Topic 2.

"Don't be afraid to reach out to your current partners to help you brainstorm who you might collaborate with ... to develop a kinship/grandfamily program in your region."

– Area Agency on Aging  
Professional

## Partnership Tips

### Prepare to Partner

1. Define your goals: What needs will this partnership address? Grow referrals? Fill service gaps? Increase funding? Expand footprint?

2. Determine how you can help a potential partner as well as how they can help you.
3. Research potential partners: Is there mission alignment? How are they perceived in the community? Do they compete with a current partner?
4. Decide what level of partnership you need: [Formal or informal](#)? Will you want a [memorandum of understanding](#)?
5. Consider costs: Will the partnership require funding? How much staff time is needed?

## With Your Partner

1. Develop shared goals.
2. Define roles and responsibilities.
3. Establish communication channels and frequency.
4. Make time to evaluate the partnership.

## Suggested Readings

### Partnership Development Resources

- ▶ [Collaboration Strategies for Tribes, or Non-Native Service Providers Working with Tribes, to Support Kinship/Grandfamilies](#), from the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network (Network) – This 90-minute recorded webinar, featuring Dr. Terry Cross (founder of the National Indian Child Welfare Association), provides guidance on why and how Tribes can collaborate with non-Tribal service providers.
- ▶ [Engage Community-Based Organizations and Businesses](#), by the School-Based Health Alliance – Though written for schools, this interactive webpage explains how partnering with community-based organizations and businesses can expand services and yield in-kind donations and funding.
- ▶ [Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start](#), from the U.S. Administration for Children & Families' Head Start Early Childhood & Knowledge Learning Center – Though written for Head Start and Early Head Start programs, this publication includes partnership strategies and tools that can be used by any organization. The publication also describes how community needs assessments impact community partnerships.
- ▶ [How Nonprofits Can Build Partnerships with Businesses](#), from Candid – This article explains how partnerships with businesses benefit nonprofits, what nonprofits have to offer businesses, and how nonprofits can research which businesses with which to partner, and it provides tips for building and maintaining partnerships.

- ▶ [Identifying and Engaging Untapped Partners to Support Kinship/Grandfamilies](#), from the Network – This tip sheet identifies organizations that may make good community partners, explains how those organizations may support kinship/ grandfamilies, and suggests ideas for engaging with organizations. See also the related [recorded webinar](#).
- ▶ [Local Partnerships Planning Guide: A Guide to Developing Partnerships that Create Impact](#), from the Boys & Girls Clubs of America – Though written for Boys & Girls clubs, this publication provides practical guidance on developing and maintaining partnerships and includes worksheets and checklists.
- ▶ [Navigating Successful Partnerships: Benefits and Strategies](#), from the YouTube channel of the U.S. Administration for Community Living’s Nutrition and Aging Resource Center – This 51-minute video provides strategies for starting and maintaining community collaborations and partnerships.
- ▶ [Strategies for Partnering with Child Welfare Agencies](#), from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement within the U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start – Though written for Head Start programs, this resource provides practical advice on things to consider when partnering with child welfare.
- ▶ [Title VI and Title III Grantee Collaboration Study](#), from the U.S. Administration for Community Living – This publication covers best practices for collaboration between Title III and Title VI grantees and provides case examples.

## Partnership Examples

- ▶ [Elevating Exemplary Kinship Programs and Practices](#), from the Network – This webpage includes links to profiles of 16 programs identified by the Network as Exemplary. Each profile includes a section on “Key Partners,” which identifies the program’s community-based partners and how each partner helps the program. For example, see page six of this [description](#) of the Kinship Navigator Program of the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio.
- ▶ [‘Gramping’ Event Tightens Family Bonds](#) (2 ½ - minute video), from the County of San Diego’s YouTube channel – This video features footage from a County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Aging & Independence Services overnight camping trip for kinship/grandfamilies, which they call “Gramping.” A description of a partnership that makes this event possible starts at 0:37.
- ▶ [Southwest Idaho Area Agency on Aging’s Kinship Program: A Holistic Support for the Whole Family](#) (14-minute video), from USAging and the Network – This video describes wrap-around kinship/grandfamily services provided by the Southwest Idaho Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Descriptions of the AAA’s various partnerships appear at the 7:50- and 10:16- minute marks.

## Organizations and Programs Actively Seeking Partnerships

For various reasons (including funding requirements and regulations), some organizations and programs actively seek community partnerships. A few of these organizations are identified below, along with descriptions of how they may interact with kinship/grandfamilies.

- ▶ [Community Action Agencies](#) (CAAs), also known as Community Action Programs, coordinate various services to support low-income individuals and families, some of whom may be kinship/grandfamilies. One of the [standards \(2.1\)](#) by which CAAs operate is to partner with community-based organizations. [Find a CAA](#).
- ▶ [Community Schools](#) provide wrap-around services for both students and their families (some of whom may be kinship/grandfamilies). They do so by partnering with community-based organizations. In 2023, the U.S. Department of Education provided grant funding for the development of these schools. Some state education agencies also support the development of community schools, including those in [Kentucky](#), [Ohio](#), and [Virginia](#).
- ▶ [Head Start and Early Head Start Programs](#) provide no-cost preschool, early learning, health, and supportive services to low-income infants, toddlers, and young children and their families, some of whom may be kinship/grandfamilies. These programs are [required](#) to partner with community-based organizations to strengthen support for their target population. [Find Head Start and Early Head Start Program locations](#).
- ▶ [Kinship Navigator Programs](#), like the Information and Referral or Information and Assistance services offered by the Aging Network, help kinship/grandfamilies navigate local resources. Some serve all kinship/grandfamilies; others only serve those involved with child welfare. All [must](#) coordinate with external agencies and organizations.

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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](http://www.GKSNetwork.org).

*The Network is supported by the U.S. 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 percent funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percent 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.*

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