

# Family Resilience in Black Kinship Care: Perspectives of Children, Caregivers, and Birth Parents

**April 8, 2026**

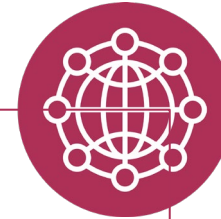
- Welcome, we will begin at the top of the hour
- Please type in the **chat** box - your name, state, tribe (if applicable), and role
- Type questions in the **chat** box at any point during our time together
- **We will provide a separate meeting link for a 30-minute Q&A with our presenters, starting in an hour, at 3 PM ET**
- By the end of the week, all participants will receive a link to the slides and the recording

# Who We Are & How We Help



## Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts webinars and facilitates learning collaboratives.



## A Centralized Hub

The Network is elevating exemplary kinship/grandfamily practices and programs from around the country.



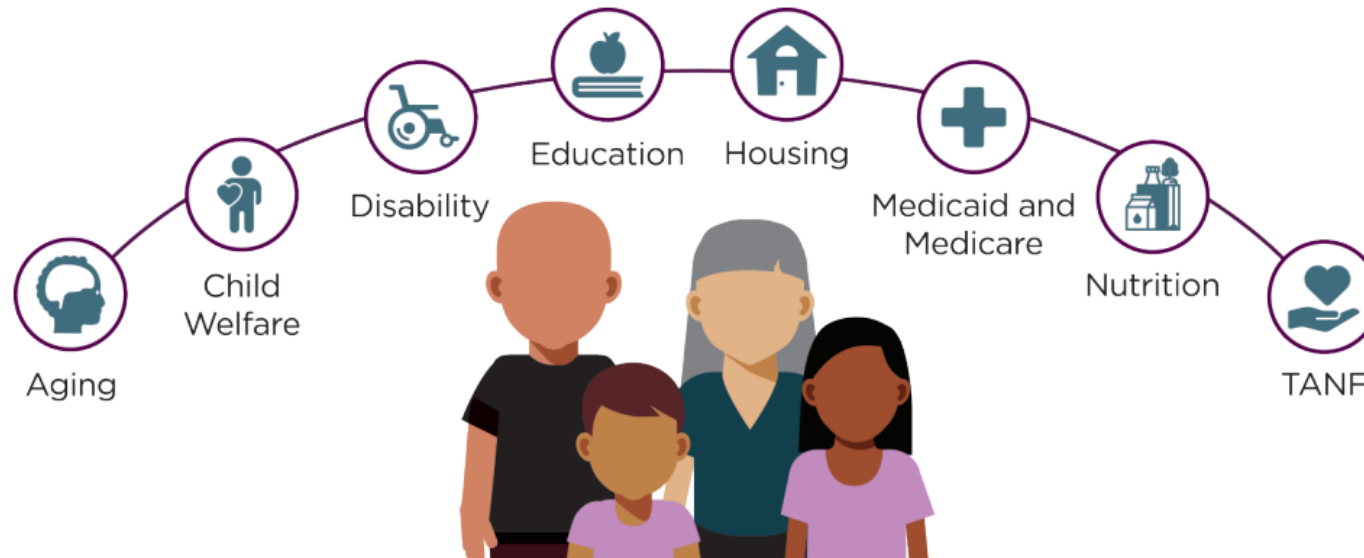
## Bridging Systems for Kinship Families

The Network is helping Idaho, San Diego County, and Oneida Nation of Wisconsin optimize their collaborative approaches and improve their services. Solutions will be replicable for others.



## Individual Assistance

We respond to individual requests for help from government agencies and nonprofit organizations.



# Welcome Our Presenter

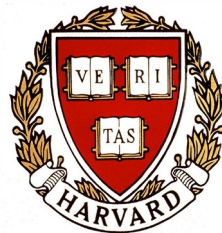


**Dr. Tyreasa Washington**  
Subject Matter Expert with the  
Grandfamilies & Kinship Support  
Network at Generations United

# Family Resilience in Black Kinship Care: Perspectives of Children, Caregivers, and Birth Parents



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Agape Therapeutic Services, PLLC, President and CEO



Agape Therapeutic Services



# Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1

Describe

Describe the unique use of kinship care in the Black community

2

Identify

Identify family-level factors that contribute to positive outcomes for children

3

Understand

Understand the impact of caregiver stress on health

4

Recognize

Recognize the influence of birth parent involvement in kinship care families

# Presentation Outline

01

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## Personal Journey

hands-on practice, scholarly inquiry, and personal personal connection to kinship care.

02

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## Understanding Kinship Care

Definitions, national statistics, and demographic demographic context for African American/Black American/Black families.

03

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## Cultural Strengths & Unique Challenges

Historical foundations, systemic inequities, and the and the enduring resilience of Black kinship care care families

04

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## Promotive & Protective Factors

Family-level factors supporting academic, social, and behavioral/mental health behavioral/mental health for Black children in kinship care (including birth birth parents' role)

05

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## Caregiver Well-Being

Perspectives from kinship caregivers & opportunities for support

# My Journey with Kinship Care Families

## Hands-On Practice

Years of direct clinical support helping kinship caregivers navigate complex issues. Children w/ kin tended to do better. better.

## Research Involvement

Examining protective and promotive factors in kinship care families — specifically African American/Black families — mainly through community-engaged scholarship.

## Personal Connection

Within my own family, and through witnessing countless stories of resilience, sacrifice, and unconditional love that fuel my commitment to kinship care advocacy.

📄 **Every family has a story of strength.**





# What is Kinship Care?

## Definition

The care of children by relatives or close family friends when parents are unable to serve as the primary caregiver due to various circumstances.

## Types of Arrangements

- **Informal:** Private family arrangements outside of child welfare oversight
- **Formal:** Supervised by and through the Child Welfare System
- Many families do not use the term "kinship care" to describe their arrangement

## Includes "Fictive Kin"

Non-relatives who share strong emotional bonds and a deep commitment to a child's well-being — such as church members, longtime family friends, neighbors, or mentors..

# All Kinship Care Families in the United States

2.5M

Children in Kinship Care

Raised by a relative or close family friend with no parent living in the household.

127K

In Foster Kinship Care

Children in foster care who are specifically specifically being raised by kin.

19:1

Outside vs. Inside Foster Care

For every 1 child in formal kinship foster care, 19 children are raised by kin outside of the foster care system.



# Demographics: African American/Black Children in Kinship Care

## Share of Grandfamilies

Of the approximately 2.5 million children living in kinship care, about **26% live in grandfamilies — grandfamilies** — families headed by grandparents as the primary caregivers (Generations United). (Generations United).

## Racial Breakdown of Grandfamilies

Children with grandparents as primary caregivers are approximately: **45% White, 26% African American/Black, 24% Latino or Hispanic, 3% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 2% Asian** (GU).

## Lifetime Likelihood for Black Children

**1 in 5 Black children** will spend time in kinship care over their lifetime — compared to 1 in 11 for to 1 in 11 for the general population. This means approximately **20% of all Black children will children** will experience kinship care (Casey & Harden).

# Demographics: African American/Black Children in Kinship Care

## Kinship Care

### Overrepresentation in Grandfamilies

Despite comprising just **14% of all children in children in the United States**, Black children children **almost double this percentage of all of all children in kinship care** (Generations United) — a significant and persistent disparity.

### Overrepresentation in Foster Care Care

Black children represent approximately **23% of 23% of all children in foster care** (ABA), basically reflects a disproportionate disproportionate concentration in formal kinship care.

### Geographic Concentration

Black kinship care families are heavily concentrated in the Southern states, where where nearly **60% of the total Black U.S. population** resides.

# Racial Disparity in Child Welfare (includes formal Kin-Care)

Research and national data consistently demonstrate that Black children face systemic inequities at every stage of the child welfare process. Black children are more likely to be:

## → Reported & Investigated

Reported to and investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS) at disproportionate

## → Adjudicated as Victims

Formally adjudicated as victims of child abuse or neglect

## → Removed from Families

Removed from their homes and placed into foster care at higher rates than children of other racial groups (AI have similar rates).

## → Permanently Separated

Legally and permanently separated from birth families through Terminations of Parental Rights.

See also: American Bar Association report on [Racial Discrimination in Child Welfare as a Human Rights Violation](#)

# Demographics for All Kinship Caregivers

2.4M

Total Caregivers

Majority are grandparents, with an additional 1 million aunts, uncles, siblings, siblings, and close family friends serving as primary caregivers.

63%

Women Caregivers

Of grandparent caregivers are women, often managing caregiving responsibilities alongside their own health and financial needs.

60+

Over Age 60

A significant share of kinship caregivers are raising children later in life, facing life, facing unique challenges of aging while parenting.

26%

Living with Disabilities

Of grandparent caregivers live with one or more disabilities while simultaneously providing full-time care for children.

❏ Kinship caregivers are more likely to be single, less formally educated, unemployed, and living in poverty than the general population — underscoring the urgent need for targeted policy and support.



# Economic Realities of Kinship Care Care Families

Financial vulnerability is a defining feature of kinship care — particularly for informal arrangements that fall outside of formal child welfare support structures.

## Child Poverty in Grandfamilies

**23% of children being raised by grandparents** live below the federal poverty level, compared to approximately **16% of all U.S. children** (GU 2025 Grandfamilies Factsheet).

## Economic Strain by Caregiver Type

**49.8% of informal kin caregivers** and **34.1% of formal kin caregivers** report moderate to moderate to high economic strain in the past 12 months — compared to only **10.5% of only 10.5% of nonrelative caregivers** (Annie E. Casey Foundation).

# Demographics of Black Kinship Caregivers

## Racial Composition of Grandparent Caregivers

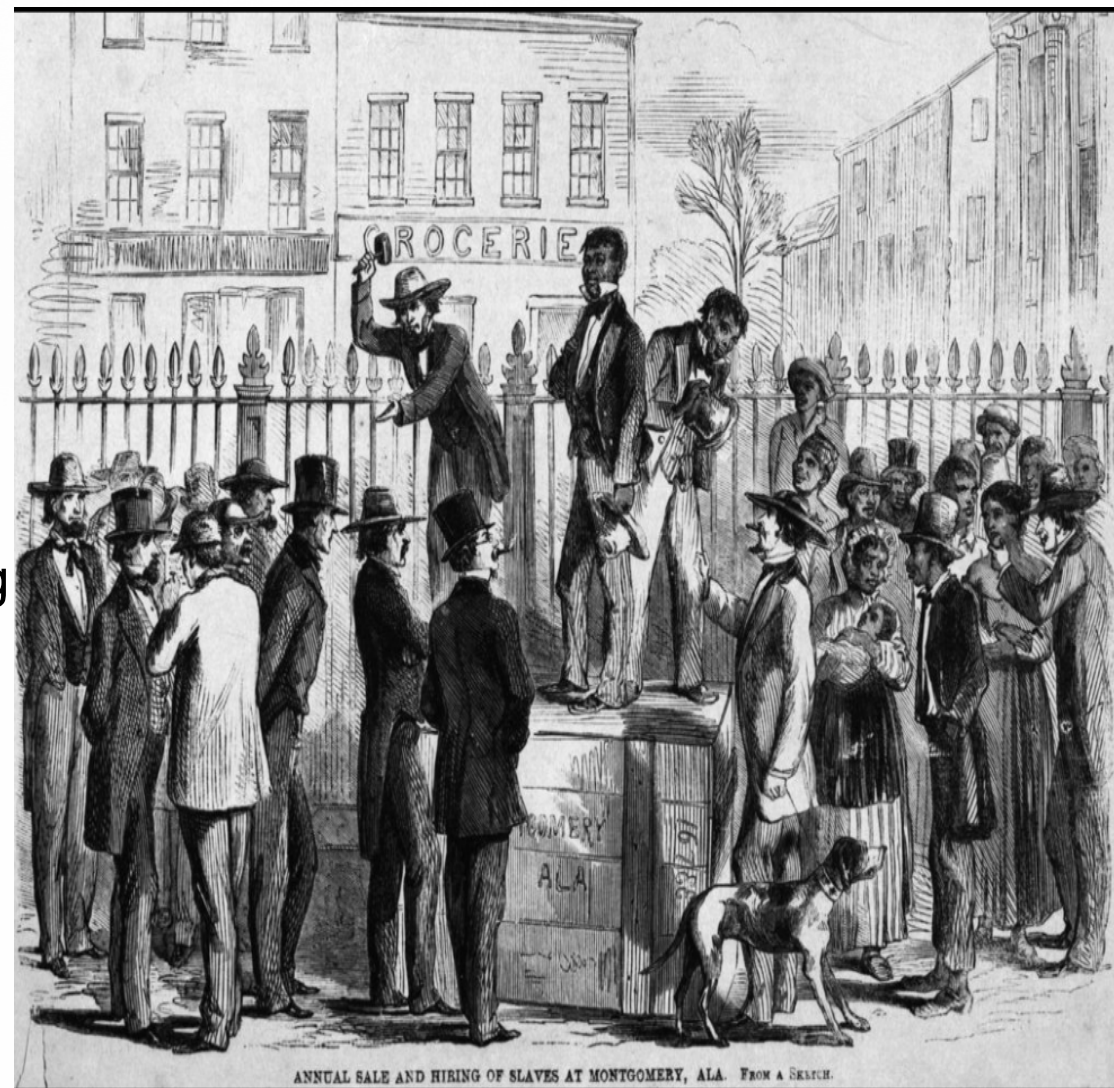
Of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren nationally: **56% are White, 20% are Black or African American, 20% are Latino or Hispanic, Hispanic, 4% are Asian, 2% are American Indian and Alaska Native, and less and less than 1% are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander** (Generations United).

## Compounding Economic Disadvantage

White Americans hold **9.2 times more wealth** than Black Americans (Pew Americans (Pew Research). Black kinship caregivers are more likely to reside to reside in areas with concentrated poverty, limiting access to financial financial capital, community resources, and service systems.

## Kinship Care: A Cultural Strength in the African American Community

Rooted in a legacy of strength and survival, kinship care in America reflects how Black families have long protected and sustained one another in the face of racial and economic oppression—starting with the forced separation of children from parents during slavery



ANNUAL SALE AND HIRING OF SLAVES AT MONTGOMERY, ALA. FROM A SKETCH.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

## Kinship Care During the Great Migration

During the Great Migration, as Jim Crow laws and racial violence pushed many Black families northward and westward in search of safety and opportunity, African American relatives in the South lovingly stepped in to raise children whose parents had to leave. Exemplified resilience in the face of systemic racism.

# Kinship Care as an Act of Resilience Today

Today, kinship care in the African American community continues as a powerful expression of love and collective responsibility. Families and community members step forward every day to raise children in the face of profound contemporary challenges:

## Incarceration

Mass incarceration — shaped by racially disparate enforcement of drug policies (i.e., war on drug) has separated Black parents from their children at alarming rates.

## Mental Health & Substance Use

Parental mental illness and substance use disorders can lead to kinship placements

## Economic Hardship

Poverty, housing instability, and unemployment continue to strain Black families — creating conditions where kinship care becomes both necessary

# Multi-Systems That Negatively Impact Black Americans

Kinship care does not exist in a vacuum — it is profoundly shaped by deeply entrenched systemic inequities across multiple institutional domains.

## IRS Audits & Tax System

Black taxpayers are **3–5 times more likely** to be audited than non-Black taxpayers, diverting time, financial resources, and emotional energy from families already under strain.

## Home Valuation & Housing

Homes in Black neighborhoods are valued **21–23% lower**, and are **1.9 times more likely** to be appraised below contract price — systematically limiting the wealth-building capacity of Black families and communities.

## Criminal Sentencing

For similar crimes, Black males face higher odds of incarceration, **20% longer sentences**, more in-prison disciplinary infractions, lower odds of parole, and greater odds of the death penalty being introduced — with direct consequences for family separation and kinship care placement.

# Kinship Care Across History: A Cultural Timeline



# Culturally Grounded Conversations & Perspectives

Effective, culturally responsive practice with African American kinship care families requires that clinicians, researchers, and caseworkers be genuinely willing to engage with the dimensions of faith and history that are central to these families' lived experiences.

## **Spirituality and the Black Church**

Faith and spiritual community play a foundational, sustaining role in many African American kinship care families — offering not only spiritual support but also practical resources, social connection, and connection, and community accountability. Understanding how families draw on these networks is essential to essential to effective partnership.

## **Impact of Culture**

Both historical and contemporary perspectives acknowledge how systemic inequity shapes the challenges Black kinship families face, as well as how this family type is a strength in the Black community. This recognition is foundational to trust-building and culturally responsive practice.

# The Value of Kinship Care in General



## Family Connection

Keeps children connected to their family roots, including siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, birth parents, cultural heritage, and community ties.



## Trauma Reduction

Significantly reduces trauma and emotional disruption compared to placement with non-relative foster families.



## Placement Stability

Children in kinship care experience fewer placement disruptions compared to non-kinship foster care arrangements.

# Research on Children's Outcomes in Kinship Care

## Documented Strengths

- **Better Behavioral & Academic Outcomes:** Children in kinship care show improved behavioral regulation and academic performance compared to non-kinship placements.
- **Reduced Risk of Re-abuse:** Lower rates of maltreatment recurrence in stable kinship environments with family oversight.
- **Safer, More Secure Environments:** Enhanced feelings of safety and security within familiar family contexts.

Challenges: 1) Possibly negative effects from family conflict, exposure to risk factors prior to kinship care, and disconnection from birth parents still may cause trauma 2) behaviors in kinship care

# Family-Level Factors That Contribute Contribute to Positive Outcomes for for African American/Black Children Children in Kinship Care

The following section presents key findings from longitudinal and mixed-methods research research examining the specific family-level factors.



# Social & Academic Competence Among African American American Children: My Central Findings

## Study Overview

**Purpose:** Identify the family-level promotive factors of of African American kinship care children's social and and academic competence.

**Sample:** 143 African American informal kinship care families families in Chicago area across 4 waves of longitudinal data longitudinal data collection.

## Two Key Family-Level Promotive Factors

### Family Resources

Adequate access to food, clothing, rest, rest, and basic material necessities — — foundational to children's ability to to focus, learn, and thrive.

### Family Functioning

Warm, cohesive, and communicative communicative family relationships, etc...

# Birth Parents Matter for Children's Social & Academic Competence

A central and often underappreciated finding from this body of research is that **birth parents continue to play a significant role** in the lives and outcomes of children in kinship care — even when they are not the primary caregiver.

## Fathers' Impact

The quality paternal involvement — even when limited by incarceration, incarceration, substance use treatment, or other barriers — can serve as a meaningful protective factor.

## Mothers' Impact

Warm and positive birth mother-child relationships contribute to children's social and academic engagement.

# African American Families & Kinship Care Lab



Mixed-Methods Study

## Children's Outcomes Study

This NIH-funded study provides crucial insights into the unique strengths within African American kinship care families



*Eunice Kennedy Shriver*  
National Institute of  
Child Health and  
Human Development

# Caregiver and Birth Parent Influences on Depression and Anxiety in African American Children in Kinship Care



# NIH Studies: Key Findings on Relationships

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Power of Relationships

- **Caregiver-Child Bonds**  
Stronger relationships between children and kinship caregivers correlate with fewer conduct problems and improved mental health outcomes, including reduced depression.
- **Birth Parent Connections**  
Positive relationships between children and their birth mothers help prevent conduct problems and enhance child mental health when appropriately maintained.

# NIH Studies: Key Findings on Caregiver Stress

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Academic Performance

In households where caregivers experience **lower lower levels of stress**, children demonstrate significantly higher academic achievement and greater school engagement — underscoring the link between caregiver well-being and educational success.

### Social Development

Lower caregiver stress levels link directly to **better social skills** in children, improving their interactions with classmates, peers, and adults in both home and school settings.

### Behavioral Challenges

Higher caregiver stress correlates with **increased behavioral issues** — including conduct disorders and mental health problems — in children, creating a cycle that can be interrupted through intentional caregiver support.

# NIH Studies: Racial Pride and Cultural Identity as Protective Factors

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Emerging research within African American kinship care families highlights the role of **racial pride and positive Black identity** as meaningful promotive and protective factors for children's development and resilience.

### Black Legacy Encouragement

Caregivers who intentionally share and celebrate Black history, cultural heritage, and family legacy contribute to children's academic achievement

### Preparation Against Racial Bias

Caregivers who proactively prepare children to recognize, name, and respond to racism have fewer conduct problem and mental health issues.

# Research on the Strengths and Opportunities to Support Black Kinship Caregivers

This section centers the perspectives and experiences of kinship caregivers themselves — themselves — drawing on both quantitative data and qualitative narratives to illuminate what it means to raise children under these conditions, and what support structures support structures are most urgently needed.



# Making a Way Out of No Way: Financial Instability Among African American Kinship Care Families

## Study Purpose & Design

This study aimed to develop a rich understanding of the financial characteristics, challenges, and coping strategies of informal kinship care families using an exploratory sequential mixed-method pilot study and the National Financial Capability Study.

## Key Findings from Pilot Study

- Most families were **struggling financially** and reported their household resources were only seldom or sometimes adequate to cover basic needs.
- Many caregivers were **unaware of public benefits** and community resources available to kinship families.
- Caregivers reported significant **difficulties navigating service systems** — including child welfare, Medicaid, SNAP, and housing assistance.

# Financial Instability: National Comparison Findings

Analyses of data from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households, compared with a demographically matched sample of informal kinship care kinship care households, revealed that families providing informal kinship care were significantly **less financially secure** on three key indicators:

## Covering Household Expenses

Informal kinship care families were **less able to cover their usual household expenses** month to month — a basic marker of financial stability that the majority of these families could not reliably achieve.

## Income Exceeding Expenses

These families were **less likely to report that their income exceeded their expenses** — meaning many are consistently spending more than they earn, often depleting savings or accumulating debt to meet children's needs.

## Emergency Savings

Informal kinship care households were **less likely to have any emergency savings** — leaving them extremely vulnerable to financial crises precipitated by unexpected expenses such as medical bills, home repairs, or childcare costs.

# African American Families & Kinship Care Lab



Mixed-Methods Study

Caregivers' Outcomes Study



*Eunice Kennedy Shriver*  
National Institute of  
Child Health and  
Human Development



## Caregivers' Voices

# The Heart of Kinship Care

## Joy and Financial Struggles

### Enriched Lives Despite Challenges

Overall, kinship families were thriving despite facing significant obstacles. Many caregivers described how having the children enriched their lives immeasurably.

*"It's having them with me. That's the biggest joy because I know I'm going to make sure the day is good. I want to protect them and make sure nobody messes with them, make sure they have food to eat and go to school and get their health stuff in check."*

### Financial Strain Reality

Despite their dedication, financial concerns emerged as a persistent, significant challenge across kinship families.

*"We went through the whole winter with no heat because I couldn't afford to fix the heating and cooling unit, despite having a homeowner's warranty."*

# Caregivers' Health Challenges

1

## Physical Health Issues

Various health problems were reported among caregivers, including high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and mobility limitations that impact their caregiving capacity.

2

## Mental Health Concerns

Isolation/depression and stress (caregivers who often prioritize children's needs over their own well-being).

3

## Lack of Support Systems

Many caregivers reported having limited to no support in managing caregiving responsibilities alongside their own health challenges.



**“And then the lack of support - that's been a challenge my entire experience with caregiving, so I know that's a big factor in my health.”**

# Opportunities Ahead (understanding CG's needs)



→ Housing Instability

Many kinship families struggle with adequate, affordable housing that accommodates larger family sizes.

→ Healthcare Access

Complex insurance and healthcare navigation challenges for both caregivers and children.

→ Educational Advocacy & Daycare

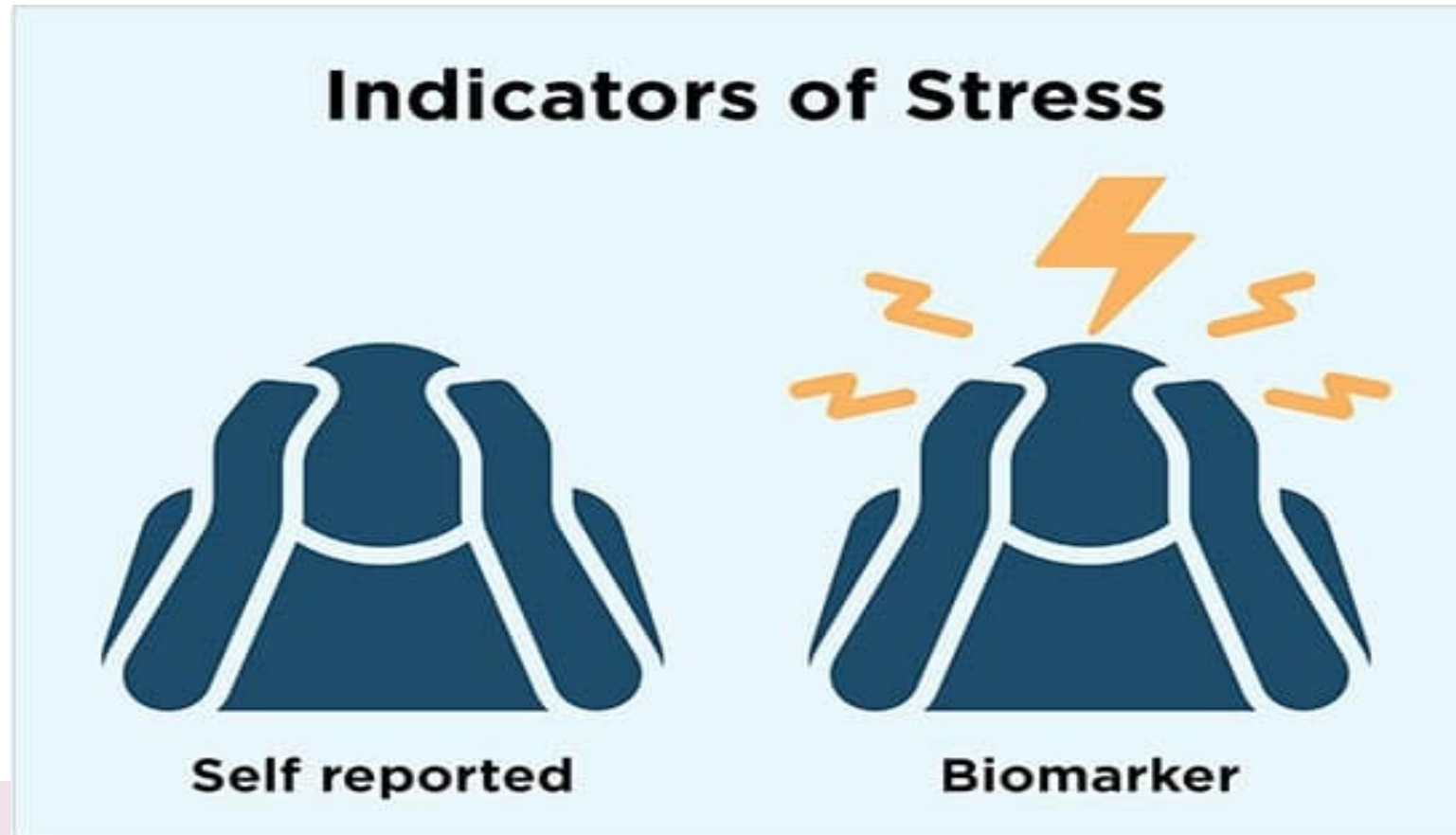
Need for stronger educational support and advocacy services; daycare, after school.

## Additional Future Opportunities

- **Awareness of Support By Caregivers:** (e.g., siblings assistance)
- **Community Support:** Increase community awareness and expand the range of support services available to better meet caregivers and families' needs and enhance their overall well-being.
- **Policy Changes:** Advocate for policies to improve financial support and resources for caregivers.

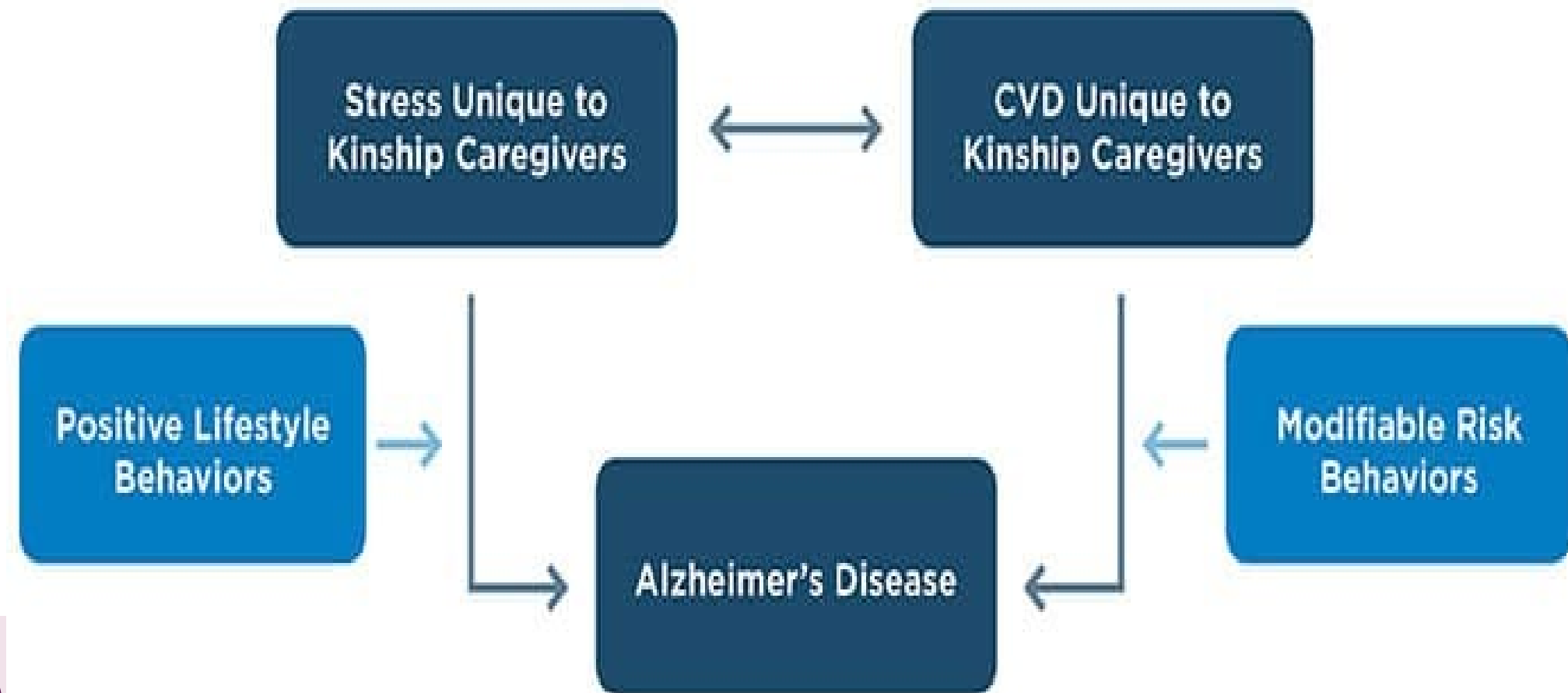
# Opportunities for Future Inquiry

Perceived versus biomarkers stress among Black caregivers



## Opportunities for Future Inquiry

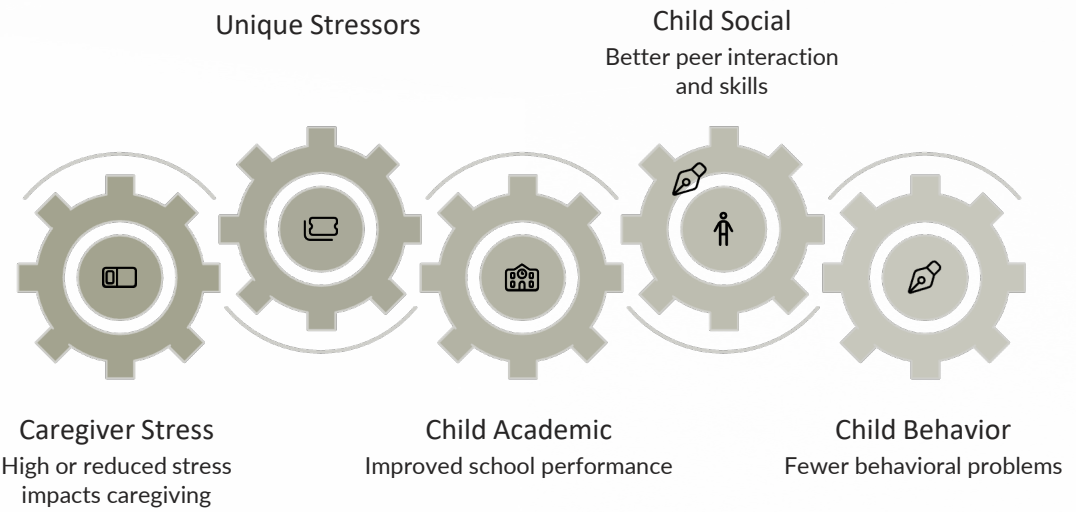
### The Impact of Positive Lifestyle Behaviors and Modifiable Risk Factors on Alzheimer's Disease





# The Ripple Effect of Stress

## How Caregiver Well-being Shapes Child Outcomes



These findings underscore a critical truth: supporting kinship caregivers directly benefits the children in their care. Investment in caregiver mental health, stress reduction, and support services creates a positive cycle of improved outcomes for the entire family system.



# Thank You!

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## Questions & Answers

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# Join Us for our Next Webinar!



## How Family Dynamics are Unique in Kinship Families

*Presenter:  
Dr. Joseph Crumbley*

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET

Register Here



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