



KINSHIP MATTERS TO

AGING

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. Your organization or agency likely already serves kinship/grandfamilies, yet may not provide tailored services specifically for them.



**2.4 million
grandparents**
in the U.S. are
raising their
grandchildren



1 million other kin
such as aunts and
uncles, also raise
relative children



66 percent
of grandparent
caregivers are
age 55 or older



**For every 1 child
being raised by kin
in foster care, there
are 18 children** being
raised by kin outside
of foster care

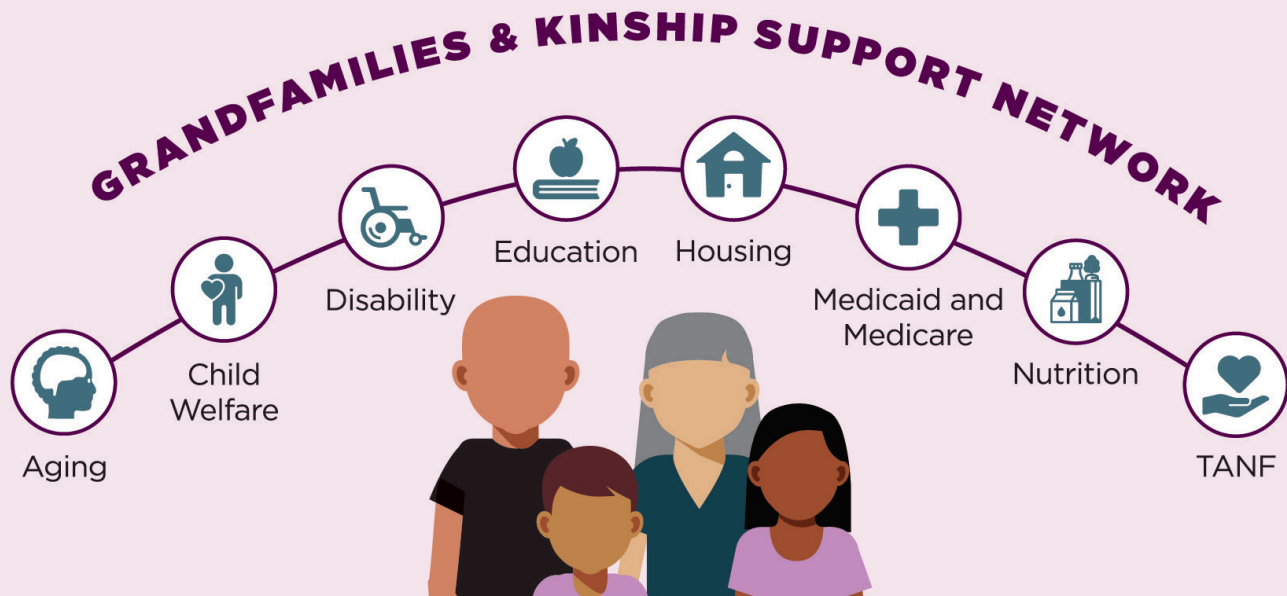
Being part of a kinship family benefits both kin caregivers and the children in their care. Compared to children living in foster care with non-relatives, children with relatives experience **greater safety, stability, and well-being**. Kin caregivers report feelings of **satisfaction, pride, and meaning 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 education and health care, all without the automatic legal authority that parents have.



KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES & THE AGING NETWORK

Kinship/grandfamilies typically form unexpectedly, and resources and support can have an enormous, positive impact to smooth what can be a sudden transition. The Aging Network – comprised of the U.S. Administration on Aging, State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Title VI Native American Aging Programs (Title VI programs), and community-based provider organizations – offers a range of services that can support kinship/grandfamilies. With funding from the Older Americans Act’s National Family Caregiver Support Program and Native American Caregiver Support Program, many AAAs and Title VI programs support kin caregivers ages 55 and older who are raising children under the age of 18. Some also serve kin caregivers younger than age 55. The services AAAs and Title VI programs offer to kinship families include connections to local resources, caregiver trainings and educational opportunities, and support groups.

AAAs and Title VI programs also support many kin caregivers through services for those age 60 and older. These services include meals, health and wellness classes, and other supports such as transportation and legal assistance. For ideas on how you can serve the families, see our report, **“Kinship/Grandfamilies: The Role of Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American Aging Programs,”** which includes profiles of several AAAs that provide services to kinship/grandfamilies.





KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES INTERACT WITH MANY SYSTEMS

In addition to the Aging Network, kinship/grandfamilies interact with many other systems, including 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. The Aging Network can help by facilitating cross-system collaboration and coordination and by supporting individual families as they navigate this challenging landscape. Aging providers can also leverage services offered by other systems to extend their reach and/or increase their capacity.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Aging and Independence Services, a AAA, partners with the county Parks and Recreation Department to offer no-cost camping trips for grandfamilies.

The Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc. partners with local government child support services, mental and public health offices, public libraries, and public schools to acquire a variety of in-kind gifts and pro-bono services for the kinship/grandfamilies they support.

THE GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK CAN HELP

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network and its partner USAging 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

A National Technical Assistance Center



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