



KINSHIP MATTERS TO NUTRITION

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



2.5 million children
in the U.S. are being raised by a grandparent, other relative, or close family friend, without a parent living in the household, and without child welfare system involvement

Poverty and food insecurity are prevalent in grandparent-headed households with no parent present:



31% of children
in these households are living below the poverty level



1 in 4 of these households
experience food insecurity



Only 42% of these households
with low incomes participate in SNAP

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 nutrition, education, and health care, all without the automatic legal authority that parents have.



KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES & FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Kinship/grandfamilies often form unexpectedly, and this sudden expansion of the family can result in financial struggles, including challenges putting food on the table. Families need information on what programs are available, who is eligible (especially for means-tested programs), and how to access these programs through different agencies, service providers, and community partners. Federal nutrition programs are especially important resources for kinship/grandfamilies because caregivers are not required to have legal custody of the children for the families to participate, and most of these programs are available without waitlists or participation caps.

There is an important array of federal nutrition programs, all of which can help kinship/grandfamilies:

- Afterschool and Summer Nutrition Programs
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- Older Americans Act Senior Nutrition Programs
- School Meals
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

These federally-funded nutrition programs are administered by **state and local agencies**, such as departments of social/human services, aging, education, and health. Schools, Area Agencies on Aging, childcare providers, houses of worship, and other nonprofit partners (such as anti-hunger organizations, food banks, and providers of home-delivered meals), among others, also play essential roles in connecting families to programs and meals. These stakeholders can form a strong network of nutrition program expertise and collaborate to help kinship/grandfamilies access proven-effective nutrition programs.

Check out the **GKSNetwork.org** resource library for fact sheets on federal nutrition programs and kinship/grandfamilies.



KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES INTERACT WITH MANY SYSTEMS

In addition to nutrition programs, kinship/grandfamilies interact with many other systems, including aging, child welfare, disability services, education/schools, housing, Medicaid/Medicare, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Dealing with multiple systems is time-consuming and emotionally draining. Nutrition program stakeholders can help by facilitating cross-system collaboration and coordination and by supporting individual families as they navigate this challenging landscape.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

D.C. Hunger Solutions in Washington, DC tailors **materials** and outreach to help eligible kinship/grandfamilies access WIC for infants and children up to age five.

The **U.S. Department of Agriculture recently urged** state SNAP agencies to strengthen partnerships and outreach to reach more SNAP-eligible older adults and specifically grandfamilies.

THE GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK CAN HELP

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network and its subject matter experts at the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) 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

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