

Finding and Paying for Child Care

Long waitlists, high costs, and limited choices make finding child care a challenge for most families. For the 56% of kin caregivers who are in the workforce, and didn't plan or expect to raise the children in their care, this task can be even more difficult. Your help with navigating the child care system will save kin caregivers time and stress—and possible lost income. Many grandfamilies have an immediate need for child care and no idea where to turn.

“The cost of child care is outrageous. And there were no provisions to put my granddaughter in child care while I was working. ... I got a grandchild that's half a day, she's in preschool. So I had to jump up and run and grab her and bring her back to my office and have her sit in my office.”

– Sonya Begay, adoptive parent of three grandchildren

Finding Child Care

- ▶ **Let the grandfamilies in your program be your guides.** Experienced grandfamilies will know what the path to local child care looks like, what centers or family child care providers might have openings, what programs are most affordable, etc. They might also have a handle on informal options, often described as Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care.
- ▶ **Getting a handle on the local child care landscape in your area will help you connect grandfamilies with resources right away. Reach out to county/state child care agencies to ask about emergency options** and other resources (e.g., child care assistance eligibility requirements) that can help families. Consider community and recreation centers and faith-based organizations. Additionally, these resources should help:
 - [ChildCare.gov](https://www.childcare.gov) – This national site allows users to search by state for child care programs, with options to find child care and access more resources.
 - [ChildCareAware.org](https://www.childcareaware.org) – Use this national resource to locate a Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) organization in your area.
- ▶ **Head Start (ages three to five) and Early Head Start (ages six weeks to two years)** – Families, including kinship/grandfamilies, qualify for these no-cost programs if their household income is at or below the [poverty level](#) and/or they receive public assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and/or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)). Families caring for children in foster care or children who are considered homeless also qualify regardless of income.

Note that not all [locations](#) have Early Head Start services, and not all programs have openings. Be sure to advise families to apply as early as possible; if there is no space for the child when a family first reaches out, they can ask to be placed on a waitlist.

Paying for Child Care

- ▶ **State Subsidies** – Financial assistance for child care varies widely by state. In some states, child care subsidies are available to kin caregivers raising children who are involved with foster care, through their Department of Children’s Services. There’s a wealth of information on child care subsidies and financial assistance [here](#).
- ▶ **Public Preschool** – It’s rare, but [some states](#) offer publicly funded preschool to all four-year-olds; some include three-year-olds as well. If your state has public pre-kindergarten, contact the registrar/enrollment director to ask about enrollment requirements, school boundaries, and transportation.

“The social worker told me, ‘You have temporary custody, and we do not pay for child care.’ And I said, ‘I don’t want child care, I want him in preschool so he’ll be ready to join his peers in elementary school.’ ... Preschool was the best thing that ever happened to him.”

– Rosalie Tallbull, adoptive parent of her grandson

- ▶ **Care for School-Age Children** – Explore scholarships for afterschool programs, summer camps, and other enrichment activities. Look into other recreational options for children in your area that are not necessarily fee-dependent—like programs run by your local municipality, the YMCA, and Boys and Girls Clubs. School resource staff and kinship service providers can help kinship/grandfamilies by sharing these resources with them.

Bottom line? High-quality, reliable, and affordable child care is hard to find. You can help ease this burden for grandfamilies by learning about public and private options and eligibility requirements, raising awareness of kinship/grandfamilies among child care providers, and building connections with local providers and programs.

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.

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