

Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices into Kinship/Grandfamilies Services

Many nonprofits and government agencies incorporate [diversity, equity, and inclusion \(DEI\) goals](#) into their mission statements. Here, we discuss what DEI might look like when partnering with and serving kinship/grandfamilies.

- ▶ **Hire staff members who reflect the community and partner with diverse community leaders.** Having staff members who share your families' culture and/or background is important. Staff and partners with strong community ties will help you reach diverse kinship/ grandfamilies, earn their trust, and serve them appropriately.
- ▶ **Serve all kinship/grandfamilies in your community.** Ensure your services are as accessible and inclusive as they can be. As possible, do not create unnecessary eligibility requirements, such as limiting services to kin caring for children in foster care.
- ▶ **Collect, disaggregate, and analyze data** to identify inequities and gaps. Work to address inequities and close gaps through advocacy and/or internal changes to policies, practices, and/or programs.
- ▶ **Ask current, potential, and previous kinship/grandfamilies what barriers keep them from participating in group and/or individual meetings.** Try to remove these obstacles. Common barriers to attendance include, but are not limited to, work obligations during meeting times, unfamiliar meeting technology, the location (due to commuting time, the cost of gas, and/or the availability of public transit), a lack of child care, and the venue (e.g., government buildings, including schools, can be stressful and traumatic places for many people; other buildings may not be accessible for individuals with disabilities).
- ▶ **Make room for everyone to speak**, those who are quiet as well as those who are eager to contribute, by creating opportunities—both formal and informal—to seek

Common Areas of Diversity to Consider

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Child welfare involvement
- ◆ Country of origin/citizenship
- ◆ Disability
- ◆ Ethnicity
- ◆ Gender identity
- ◆ Language
- ◆ Lived experience in kinship/grandfamilies
- ◆ Race
- ◆ Religion
- ◆ Sexual orientation
- ◆ Socioeconomic status
- ◆ Tribal affiliation

feedback and tailor your services to the needs of the families you partner with. Create a community council, and [include caregiver voices](#) as an integral part of every programming discussion and decision. Establish [clear guidelines](#) on how members of a group will interact and resolve disagreements so that everyone feels comfortable. Conduct an annual survey to assess your effectiveness; be transparent about the results and how they will be used.

- ▶ **Match your program communications with kinship/grandfamilies' preferences.** Do families prefer printed resources or content delivered to them electronically? Ask your community council to provide input and review your resources. Consider presenting and sharing materials in multiple ways to reach the diversity of kinship/grandfamilies. Develop [Plain Language](#) resources, translated into the languages of the communities you serve. Avoid acronyms and jargon specific to your profession. (Even “grandfamilies” and “kin caregivers” are unfamiliar terms for many.) Be sure photos and illustrations represent the families you work with.
- ▶ **Recognize your own biases.** [We all have them.](#) An easy rapport with those who share our regionalisms, political party, or favorite sports team. A skepticism about those who are “different” from us in some way. It is especially important to be alert to biases toward families who are struggling, and any inclination to blame rather than accept or empathize. Notice when you are having a strong reaction to a family or situation. Consider the source of your response. Ask yourself what choices were available to you in the moment to build a stronger relationship with the individual(s) involved. To explore the notion of unconscious bias (holding a bias that one is not aware of), consider taking [one of the many online assessments available](#). It can be helpful to discuss and address bias as a team and in support groups. Be curious, acknowledge mistakes, and be open to learning new ways of thinking about the world.

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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