

Five Actions for Supporting Students and Caregivers in Kinship/Grandfamilies:

A Toolkit for K-12 School Professionals and Kinship Service Providers

January 30, 2025

- 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 and A with panelists starting in one hour, at 3 ET
- All participants will receive a link to the slides and recording tomorrow

- Since 2021, Generations United, in cooperation with the US Administration for Community Living, has operated the first-ever federally funded technical assistance center on kinship/grandfamilies
- Purpose is to provide technical assistance to the array of state, territorial, and tribal government agencies and organizations so they can better serve the families by working across systems and maximizing resources



How We Help



Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts webinars and facilitates learning collaboratives.



Individual Assistance

We respond to individual requests for help from government agencies, kinship navigators, and community-based nonprofits.



A Centralized Hub

The Network is elevating exemplary kinship/grandfamily practices and programs from around the country on its accessible website, www.GKSNetwork.org.



ESPAÑOL

Request Assistance →

WHO WE SERVE ▾

RESOURCE LIBRARY

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

EVENTS

ABOUT US ▾

The First-Ever National Technical Assistance Center for those who Serve Kinship/Grandfamilies

We help 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.



Thank you to our Speakers

Jamarl Clark - Assistant Director, National Center on Grandfamilies, Generations United

Victoria Gray - Generations United GRAND Voice & Executive Director, Grey Nickel, Arizona

Rainie Jueschke, CFRE - Executive Director, ISDD, Georgia

Emily Peeler - Senior Attorney, ABA Center on Children and the Law

Laurie Tapozada - Generations United GRAND Voice & Kinship Development Consultant, The Village for Rhode Island Foster and Adoptive Families

Angela Tobin - Founder/Director, Kinship Caregivers Connect, Ohio



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

K-12 Education Support for Kinship and Grandfamilies



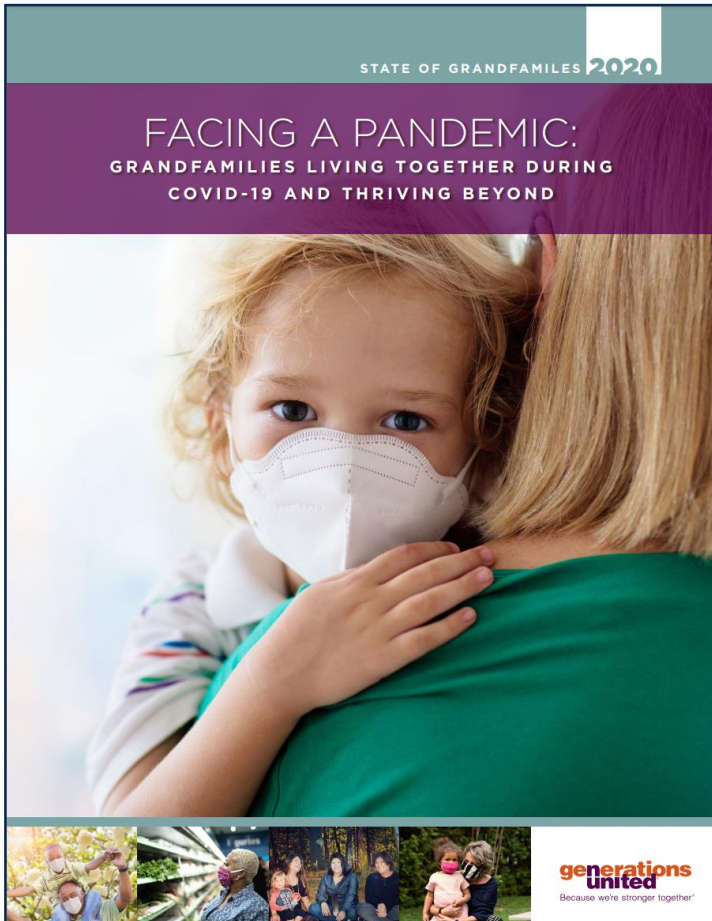
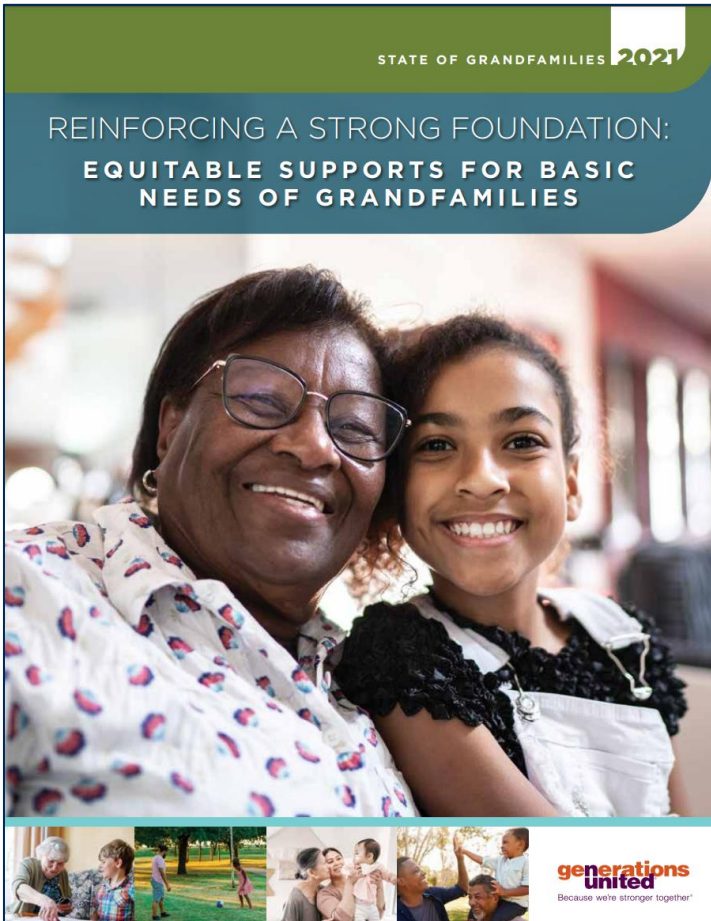
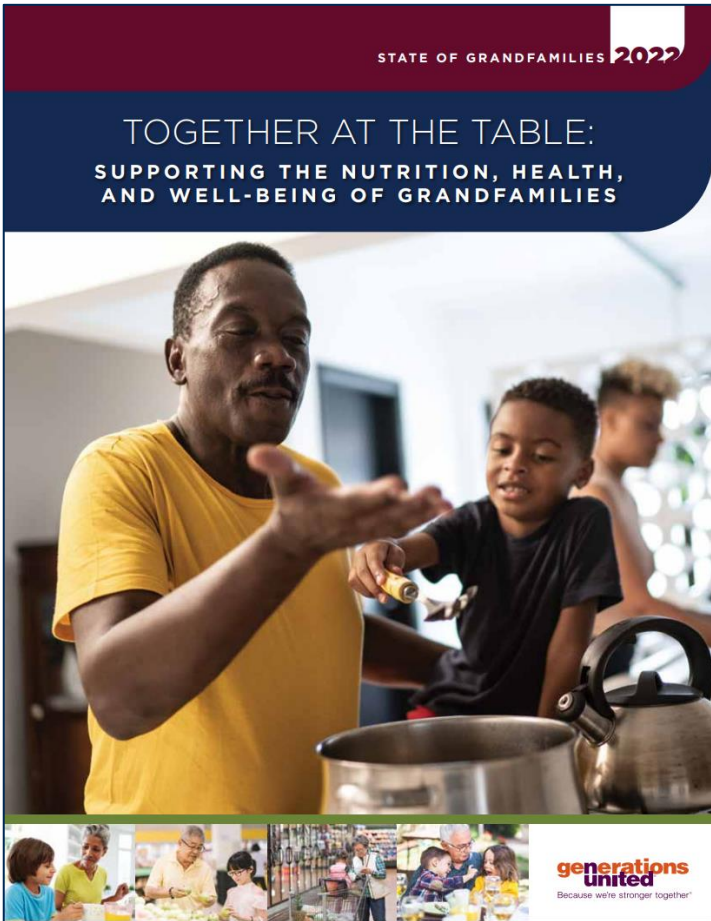
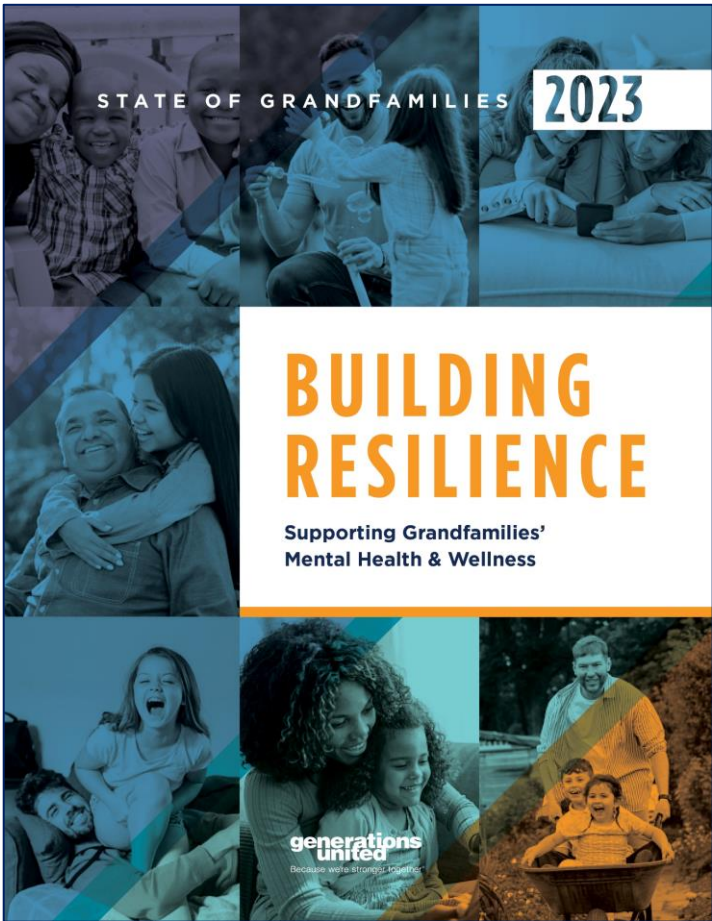
generations united
Because we're stronger together®



SCAN TO ACCESS THE REPORT

www.gureport.org

State of Grandfamilies & Kinship Care in America Annual Reports



SCAN FOR ALL PAST REPORTS



CHILDREN THRIVE IN GRANDFAMILIES, ESPECIALLY WITH SUPPORT

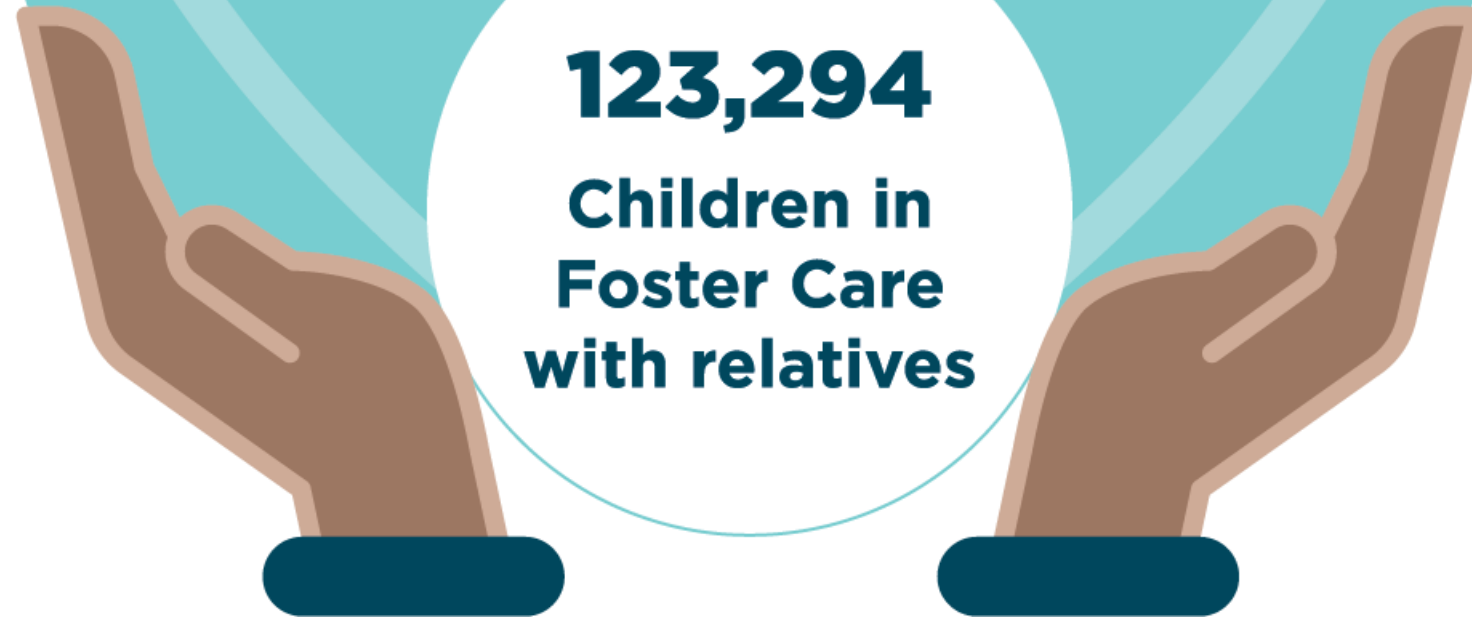
Children in Grandfamilies and Kinship Care

**ABOUT
2.5 MILLION**



**Children living with
grandparents or other kin
without parents in home**

123,294
**Children in
Foster Care
with relatives**



Key Themes

1. Grandfamily caregivers face **overwhelming barriers** to supporting the education of children in their care.
2. Children in kinship care have **better academic outcomes** than children raised in foster care with non-kin.
3. And when grandfamilies get access to **critical supports**, the children's **academic outcomes can soar**.



**MEETING
BASIC
NEEDS**

**ADDRESSING DISABILITIES
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

**MANAGING
EFFECTS OF
TRAUMA**

**ADDRESSING
LEGAL
BARRIERS TO
EDUCATIONAL
ENROLLMENT**

Educational Challenges

Grandfamilies often face serious challenges that can affect the children's education success

**OVERCOMING
COMMUNICATION
BARRIERS
BETWEEN
SCHOOLS
AND KINSHIP
CAREGIVERS**

For every

1 CHILD

being raised by kin in
foster care, there are

19 CHILDREN

being raised by kin
outside of foster care.





Children being raised by kin outside of foster care are less likely than those raised by kin foster caregivers to receive school-based services and other supports which may help them thrive academically.

Academic Outcomes



Children living in grandfamilies and kinship families do better academically than children in foster care with non-kin. Children in foster care with kin do better academically and are more likely to receive supports and services than children raised by kin outside of foster care.



“These kin caregivers offer the love and stability children need. They know the children, their history, and their needs. They should be supported as they raise them.”

Dr. Michael Robert

Superintendent of the Osborn School District in Phoenix, Arizona

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Schools should **create and implement plans** to regularly share information about available services for grandfamilies.
- Title I schools (those with high poverty rates) should **engage grandfamilies in decision-making processes** about federal and local funding.
- Schools should be positioned as **central hubs for wraparound services**.



See the report for a full list of recommendations.

INTERACTIVE WEBSITE & TOOLKIT

- Visit & share the report's interactive website www.gureport.org.
- New toolkit, created by Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network with practical strategies and tools for professionals in the field.





FIVE ACTIONS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND CAREGIVERS IN KINSHIP/GRANDFAMILIES

A Toolkit for K-12 School Professionals and Kinship Service Providers



ABOUT 2.5 MILLION CHILDREN
are being raised by their
grandparents, other relatives,
or close family friends, such
as godparents, because
their parents cannot.



**THAT'S AN AVERAGE OF
15 CHILDREN IN EACH
K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL**
in the U.S. who are being raised in
these families, known as kinship
families or grandfamilies.

We developed this statistic using [Annie E. Casey Kids Count data](#) from 2022-2024, which reports that 3% of all children in the U.S. are being raised in kinship families, along with 2022 [data from EducationWeek](#), which reports that the average public school enrolls 514 students. It is important to stress that this statistic is an *average*. Public school sizes vary considerably, and many factors may influence the number of children who are living in kinship/grandfamilies and enrolled in any given public school.

5 Actions

1. Ensure school enrollment forms explicitly include children raised by kin.

2. Using enrollment information, welcome each kinship family with tailored language and materials.

3. Use inclusive language in all school communications and activities.

4. Include children and their grandparent and other kin caregivers in the individual education program (IEP) process and in the development of 504 plans.

5. Consider providing school-based supports tailored to kinship families.

Legal Authority

- **No legal relationship or legal paperwork** (Appendix B to the Toolkit - McKinney-Vento Act)
 - **A signed educational consent form** (Appendix C to the Toolkit)
 - **A parental power of attorney** granting educational authority to the kin caregiver
 - **Legal custody or guardianship** or another term used in your state
 - **Status as a foster parent**
- * **Many kin adopt the children – they are parents**

Action 1 - Enrollment

- ✓ **Review school enrollment forms** and ensure that they align with the possible ways that kin caregivers can enroll the children.
- ✓ **Ask for specific relationship information** on the enrollment form so that the school knows which children are raised by grandparents or other kin and can tailor outreach and support to the families.
 - Allow for multiple selections: many adoptive parents are grandparents and other kin.
- ✓ **Amend or include a relationship choice on the enrollment form for “foster parent,”** with two options: (1) foster parent who is not related or kin to the child, and (2) foster parent who is related or kin to the child.

If Amending Your Enrollment Form is Not Possible

Form created by Virginia Family Engagement Network and Formed Families Forward

Linked in the [Toolkit](#)

School Checklist for Working with Caregivers

Are you working with families of students living with extended family or relatives who are not their parents? This checklist is for school staff who work with kinship caregivers and clarifies key information for both the school and family.

Best contact information for caregivers and name/title of caregiver

◦ Contact info: _____

◦ Name/title of caregiver: _____

Who is legally able to make general educational decisions? _____

Who is legally able to make health/medical decisions? _____

Who is able to pick the student up from school? _____

Who is NOT allowed to pick the student up from school? _____

What communication approaches work best and is preferred for the caregiver? (Text, phone, social media)

In what language does Caregiver prefer information to be communicated? _____

In what language does student prefer information to be communicated? _____

• Does caregiver have access to the internet?

Yes

No

• Does caregiver know how to access electronic portal for assignments and grades? (ParentVUE, Blackboard, etc.)

Yes

No

• Does caregiver know how to access teacher/class information such as assignments, syllabi, etc.?

Yes

No

• Has caregiver applied for free or reduced price meals?

Yes

No

Find Kinship resources and questions to ask in [Raising and Working with Children and Youth in Foster Care or Living with Kin: Your Guide to Resources in Virginia](#) at <http://vafamilysped.org/fostercare>



Bonus Tip!

There are other ways, short of requiring court orders, that grandparents or other kin can prove they are raising children

Options:

- Health care and/or social service agency records listing the kin caregiver as the child's contact
- Records from the previous school year showing that the caregiver is the child's responsible adult
- Statements showing that the kin caregiver receives a public benefit on behalf of the child
- Kin caregiver's income tax return listing the child as a dependent
- Private lease showing that the child lives in the kin caregiver's home
- Kin caregiver's private health insurance information, showing that the child is covered as a dependent
- Letter from a social worker, school/childcare staff, religious leader, or other professional stating that the kin caregiver is raising the child
- Other proof that the child lives in the kin caregiver's home, like non-personal mail to the child at that address

Action 2 – Welcome Each Kinship Family

- ✓ Devote a section of the school district website to kinship/grandfamilies, with local resources and tip sheets designed for them.
- ✓ Consider creating a [checklist and resource list for kinship families](#), as was developed by the Virginia Family Engagement Network and Formed Families Forward.
- ✓ Consider linking to, posting on your website, and/or downloading/copying and widely disseminating – free of charge – relevant resources that are linked in the [toolkit](#).

Kinship Providers: reach out to schools

Letter from The Village for Rhode Island Foster and
Adoptive Families

Included in the [Toolkit](#)



APPENDIX A

Sample Outreach Letter to Schools from a Nonprofit Service Provider

Dear _____,

We hope this letter finds you well. We would like to bring to your attention to an increasingly significant demographic in your school district that may require additional support: kinship families. Kinship families, comprising of relatives, close family friends or anyone who has a preexisting relationship with the family or child, who have assumed caregiving responsibilities for children when their parents are unable to do so, are an integral part of our community. Over the past few years, there has been a notable increase in the number of kinship families; in the nation, in our state, and within our schools, and this trend shows no sign of abating. In RI, there are over 18,000 children/youth being raised in Kinship families, the majority of those being grandparents.

It is important to recognize that kinship families play an extremely important role in providing a safe, secure and loving home to these children. Research has shown that children and youth do best when placed with kin, rather than in a traditional foster home. While these families play such an important role in the well-being of the children they care for, there are many challenges. Kinship families have unique needs that differ from those of traditional nuclear families.

The dynamics and circumstances surrounding kinship care can present challenges that impact the educational experience of the children involved. Therefore, we believe it is essential for us to proactively support these families to ensure the academic success and well-being of the

Action 3 - Inclusive Language

Instead of:	Use:
Mother, father, parents	Caregiver, family member, grownup, adult
Son, daughter	Child, children, student
Husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend	Partner
Members of a household	Family members
Immediate and extended family	Family
Parent-teacher conferences	Family-teacher conferences

**The table above is a re-created version of a table that appears in [Welcoming All: How Educators Can Use Inclusive Language with Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies](#), from Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia.*

Action 4 – Special Education

- ✓ Accept referrals from grandparent and other kin caregivers for requests to assess the children they raise for special education services
- ✓ Include caregivers in the process of developing these services.
- ✓ Provide plain language resources to all families, including kinship families, on the IEP and 504 plan process. Understood.org is a good resource.



The term parent means -- ... (4) An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; or (5) A surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance...

34 CFR 300.30(a)

Action 5 – School-Based Supports

- ✓ Explore the possibility of partnering with Family Resource Centers (FRCs).
- ✓ If your state has a federally-funded statewide family engagement center, consider partnering with them.
- ✓ Consider designating the school district's homeless liaison and foster care point of contact as the kinship liaison.
- ✓ If you oversee or work at a Title I school, intentionally reach out to grandparent and other kin caregivers and their service providers to get their input on how Title I funds should be used.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of developing a school-based support group for kin caregivers and children raised by their grandparents or other kin.

Stay Connected & Access Support

Sign up for our monthly newsletter with kinship resources, funding opportunities, and other news:



For the latest updates, follow the Network on LinkedIn!





The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.