

# Kinship Care

## A National and State Overview

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A Caregiver's Story  
Mildra Kelly and Grandson  
October 11, 2019  
Fox News 8 Cleveland, Ohio

<https://fox8.com/2019/10/11/i-was-not-going-to-see-my-grandbaby-be-a-statistic-grandparents-stepping-up-amid-the-opioid-crisis-in-ohio/>

# What is Kinship Care?

Kinship care is a centuries old tradition that has existed among most cultures before it ever had a name. Even now, many families don't know that they are kinship families, they just know that they are doing what they feel is the right thing to do. It is raising children by grandparents, other extended family members, and adults with whom they have a close family-like relationship such as godparents and close family friends because biological parents are unable to do so for whatever reason. Legal custody of a child may or may not be involved, and the child may be related by blood, marriage, or adoption, or not related at all.

Studies have shown that kinship care is the best placement option for children by keeping them out of the child welfare system and achieving permanency and stability in their lives. It is for these reasons that supporting the needs of kinship families is so important.

# Types of Kinship Care

## ➤ Informal

1. A child is placed with a kinship caregiver with no court or child welfare agency involvement. Custody is not necessary.
2. Grandparent Power of Attorney authorized by the parent(s) for the grandparent to be able to enroll the child in school and obtain medical care. Filed with the court for a year. Parent can revoke it at any time.
3. Caregiver authorization. When the grandparent doesn't know the whereabouts of the parent to be able to enroll in school and obtain medical care. Filed with the court.

## ➤ Formal

1. A kinship caregiver files for custody and is granted custody of the child by the court. The court must approve return of the child to the parent.
2. A child welfare agency removes the child from the parents, assumes custody and places the child with an approved relative. The agency may return the child to the parent or ultimately petition the court to award custody to the caregiver; at which time, the agency closes the case. The court must approve return of the child to the parent.
3. Licensed Foster Parent: The kinship caregiver can become a licensed foster parent through the child welfare agency. The caregiver must complete all requirements to become licensed, the same as a foster parent.

# History of Kinship Care in Ohio

- Late 1980s and early 1990's the rise of heroin and crack/cocaine epidemic resulted in rising numbers of children entering the child welfare system.
- In order to reduce the numbers of children in formal foster care, which is costly and not the best place for children, increased efforts to place children in and support kinship care placements began.
- 1992 - Ohio Department of Human Services established a Kinship Preservation Program, as part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family Program. Relatives were eligible for a onetime cash payment of \$500 or 6 months of services (i.e. for beds, clothing, etc.)
- 1997- Ohio General Assembly directs the Ohio Department of Aging to develop a report on Grandparents raising their relative children (former Representatives Barbara Boyd and Joan Lawrence led the effort)

- 1998 - Ohio Department of Aging Report on Needs of Older Adults Caring for Relative Children is released
  
- Simultaneously, the Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition is created by a group of concerned individuals focused on the needs of grandparents and other relatives caring for their relative children
  
- 1999 - Ohio Department of Job and Family Services convenes a statewide shareholder's process. Over 1300 individuals participated in a process of reviewing programs and social service needs
  - Recommendations addressing kinship needs:
    1. Creation of a Navigator Program
    2. Information & Referral Line
    3. Statewide Resource Guide
    4. Kinship Advisory Council
    5. Separate unit within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office for Children and Families
  
- 2000 - Ohio Kinship Navigator Program is created

# Ohio's Kinship Navigator Program 2000

- \$3M allocated in 2-year state budget for each year to implement statewide kinship navigator program through the Ohio Dept. of Job & Family Services
- 77 of 88 counties implemented a navigator program.
- Most counties located the navigator in private social service agencies vs. public child welfare agencies i.e. 211 call centers, Area Agencies on Aging
- Next budget cycle did not earmark funds for navigator. Allocation went to county agencies as general revenue for discretionary use. Most of the counties could not sustain the navigator program. A few counties have maintained a navigator program in a variety of locations: AAA's, child welfare. Lorain Co. (Helene Stone); Lucas Co. (Katina Gaston); Richland Co. (Tim Harless); Muskingum Co. (Patrick Donovan); Franklin Co. Clintonville Resource Center (Louanne Zipfel); Montgomery Co. (Sandy Bryant)

# Federal Legislation

- Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First Act) enacted Feb. 9, 2018, includes many child welfare system reforms that support children, parents, and kinship caregivers.
  1. Provides prevention services to children, kinship caregivers, and parents to keep children safely out of foster care. i.e. mental health and substance use treatment, in home parent skill-based services
    - Federal child welfare funds for up to a full 12 months of prevention services to help entire kinship family to keep children out of foster care
  2. Reduces licensing barriers to increase the use of kinship foster homes.
  3. Encourages kinship navigator programs to assist kinship families.
  4. Promotes family engagement for children who live in group settings.
    - Family-based aftercare supports required for at least 6 months after the child leaves group care.



➤ Family First Transition and Support Act of 2019 introduced by Senators Sherrod Brown and Debbie Stabenow: Provides states with resources and funding flexibility to transition to Family First by enhancing support for parents and relatives to care for their children.

1. Eliminate outdated Federal Title IV-E requirements to make more children eligible
2. Expand funding for kinship support services: childcare, transportation, legal to meet the families needs and keep children in their homes

# State Legislation

- H.B. 166 2020-21 State Budget Kinship Navigator Program
  - ❖ ODJFS \$25M allocation for multi system youth program and funding
  - ❖ An appropriation to the Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services of \$8.5M in each fiscal year to be used to support the Kinship Care Navigator Program and may be used to match eligible federal Title IV-E funds.
- H.B. 14 Mandatory Kinship Navigator Program, Sponsors: Reps. Boyd and Baldrige
  1. Requires rather than permits the Dept. of Job and Family Services to establish a statewide kinship navigator program (OKAN)
  2. Expands definition of “kinship caregiver” any nonrelative adult the child identifies as having a familiar and long-standing relationship or bond which will ensure the child’s social ties
  3. Current status: Passed by the House; September 11, 2019 referred to Health and Human Services Committee (no scheduled hearings)

# Caregiver's Needs

- Financial support
- Medical support
- Childcare
- Legal
  - Custody
  - Planning for future of child
- Access to appropriate mental health services for child and caregiver family (trauma informed treatment)
- Access to appropriate counseling services
- Educational services (special ed., tutoring)
- Recreational activities (ongoing, summer vacation, school breaks etc.)
- Respite
- Affordable Housing/Community support (Ex. Griot Village, Cleveland)

# Kinship Facts

2017

- Across the United States, more than 7,416,698 (10.1%) of all children under 18 are being raised in households headed by grandparents or other relatives; 2.5 million (3%) children are in these households without any parents present; 5.7 million (7.7%) of these children live with grandparents; 1.8 million (2.4%) of these children live with other relatives. As the children's parents struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship, divorce, domestic violence, and other challenges, these caregivers provide a vital safety net to children inside and outside of the foster care system. This fact sheet provides important information and resources for the grandparents and other relatives raising children in your state.

## *The Children*

- **Nationally:** 5,654,315 (7.7%) children are living in grandparent-headed households. There are another 1.6 million (2.4%) children in the United States who are living in households headed by other relatives.
- **Ohio:** 227,800 (8.6%) children under 18 who live in homes where householders are grandparents or other relatives. 124,000 (5%) children live with a relative with no parent present. 185,469 (7%) children live in grandparent-headed households. There are another 42,400 (1.6%) children living in households headed by other relatives. Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives, 124,000 (5%) are living there without either parent present.

## *The Grandparents*

- **Nationally:** 2.7 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them: 891,000 (33%) of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 1.7 million (63%) are under the age of 60; 563,900 (21%) live in poverty. 1.6 million (58.7%) are in the workforce; 668,000 (24.9%) have a disability; and 800,000 (29.8%) are unmarried.
- 1.4 million (52%) are White; 574,600 (21%) are African American; 542,400 (20.2%) are Hispanic/Latino; 53,000 (2%) are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 85,900 (3.2%) are Asian; 8,000 (0.3%) are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 53,700 (2.0%) are multiracial; 115,700 (5.8%) are some other race.
- **Ohio:** 100,000 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them. Of these, 40,000 (40%) do not have parents present. 66,400 (66.5%) are under the age of 60; 57,500 (57.6%) are in the workforce; 22,100 (22.1%) live in poverty; 26,700 (26.7%) have a disability; and 31,800 (31.8%) are unmarried. 76,100 (76.2%) are white (not Hispanic or Latino); 19,300 (19.3%) are African American; 2,800 (2.8%) are Hispanic or Latino origin; 400 (0.4%) are Asian; 300 (0.3%) are American Indian or Alaska Native; 100 (0.1%) are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 1,300 (1.3%) are multiracial; and 800 (0.8%) are some other race.

## Data Sources

Grandfamilies.org  
Generations United  
United States Census Bureau

### *Additional Information*

United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

Additional data and resources for caregivers and children can be found on the following websites:

[www.grandfamilies.org](http://www.grandfamilies.org)

[www.benefits.gov](http://www.benefits.gov)

[www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)

[www.ed.gov/parents](http://www.ed.gov/parents)

<https://education.ohio.gov/>

[www.ohiograndparentkinship.org](http://www.ohiograndparentkinship.org)

Support groups can be found on the OGKC website by county.

# Happy Halloween

