

2024

STATE OF THE GRANDFAMILIES AND KINSHIP CARE REPORT



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

K-12 Education Support
for Kinship and Grandfamilies



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Acknowledgments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Imagine a 9-year-old girl living with her grandmother after her parents died in a car crash. The grandmother, now her primary caregiver, loves her deeply but faces a significant challenge: enrolling her in school. Without formal legal custody, they find themselves in a “gray area,” navigating unique and systemic hurdles that limit their access to essential educational services, resources, and opportunities. This “gray area” makes it difficult for the grandmother to secure the necessary documents and permissions, delaying the child’s enrollment and disrupting her education. Despite the grandmother’s best efforts, these barriers make it nearly impossible to ensure a smooth transition into school. This is just one of many stories reflecting the challenges faced by families where grandparents or other kin step forward to raise children across the country.

About 2.5 million children across the United States are being raised in grandfamilies,¹ families in which grandparents, other adult relatives, or close family friends are raising children with no parents in the home. These are also known as kinship families, and we use these terms interchangeably in this report. When children cannot remain in the care of their parents, research consistently shows that they do best in kinship/grandfamilies.² Indeed, **studies confirm that children in kinship/grandfamily care experience better academic outcomes than those in non-kin foster care** (See infographic [page 9](#)).^{3 4 5 6}

Even though children thrive in kinship/grandfamilies, they often face serious challenges that can affect their educational success and are not easily overcome without appropriate, equitable services and support. Kinship/grandfamily challenges that impact education include:

- **Meeting basic needs**, which is critical for children to be able to learn,⁷ including attaining financial security, accessing healthcare and mental health services, obtaining safe and affordable housing, securing transportation, and maintaining healthy and adequate nutrition.
- **Enrolling children in school** when kin/grandfamily caregivers do not have a legal relationship giving them authority to do so.⁸ This may also make it difficult to manage day-to-day education decisions for the children they are raising.

- **Overcoming communication barriers with schools**, which can result in missing essential notifications from the school and being excluded from education planning, such as the creation of individualized education plans (IEPs) and 504 plans for the children.
- **Obtaining support for learning differences and other special needs**, which are more common among children in kinship/grandfamilies than the general population⁹ and can lead to academic challenges without appropriate support.
- **Managing the short- and long-term effects of trauma**, which most children in kinship/grandfamilies experience before living with kin.¹⁰ These experiences can significantly impact their ability to learn.

Additional factors magnify the challenges that kinship/grandfamilies face:

- **Children in kinship/grandfamilies often have a lower socioeconomic status (SES) than their peers** due to a higher likelihood of being poor than children in other family types¹¹, lower education levels among kin/grandfamily caregivers who are grandparents,¹² and significant numbers of their caregivers no longer being in the workforce.¹³ Although there are always exceptions, students from higher SES backgrounds tend to perform better academically, and the difference can begin to be seen at an early age.¹⁴
- **Education inequities among children of color have historically led to unequal academic outcomes.**¹⁵ While kinship/grandfamilies form across all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic levels, ages, and regions, children in African American,¹⁶ American Indian and Alaska Native,¹⁷ and some Hispanic communities¹⁸ are more likely to live in kinship/grandfamilies.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic** disrupted the social-emotional and academic outcomes of all children as their families adapted to virtual schooling, isolation, job/income changes and more. However, kinship/grandfamilies may have experienced heightened challenges due to factors that make them disproportionately affected by disasters like the pandemic,¹⁹ including the advanced age of many grandfamily caregivers (nearly half of whom are 60 and older),²⁰ a greater likelihood of lower SES, and the pandemic's disproportionate impact on families of color. These increased challenges may be making it more difficult for them to recover from this period.

Schools can serve as hubs of support for kinship/grandfamilies by providing wraparound services to connect them to needed benefits and supports. However, schools often lack staff trained on the unique strengths and needs of kinship/grandfamilies and/or do not have the resources, such as social workers and counselors, to provide the additional support necessary for the children's educational success.

Given the millions of children raised by kin, addressing kinship/grandfamilies' educational challenges is crucial. Collaborative partnerships between schools, child welfare systems, community organizations, and kinship/grandfamilies are essential to providing equitable support. These alliances help ensure that, regardless of legal relationship or child welfare involvement, all children have equal opportunities to learn, thrive, and positively contribute to society.

Key Facts and Findings

- About 2.5 million children are being raised by a relative or close family friend and do not have a parent living in the household.²¹
- About 34% (123,294 out of 368,530) of children in foster care are being raised by relatives.²²
- For every child being raised by kin in foster care, there are 19 children being raised by kin outside of foster care.²³
- Kinship/grandfamilies often face serious challenges that can affect the children’s educational success and that are not easily overcome without appropriate, equitable services and supports. These challenges include meeting basic needs, overcoming communication barriers between schools and kinship caregivers, addressing disabilities and special education needs, managing effects of trauma, gaining legal custody of the children, and enrolling children in school.^{24 25 26}
- 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.^{27 28 29}
- Children thrive in kinship/grandfamilies when they get the support they need. Children living in kinship/grandfamilies do better academically than children in foster care with non-kin.^{30 31 32} They have fewer school changes, better attendance, better school safety, more chances for involvement in school activities, lower rates of disciplinary action, lower likelihood of repeating a grade, and fewer experiences with bullying compared to children in foster care with non-kin.^{33 34}
- Children raised by kin within the foster care system do better academically and are more likely to have access to supports and services than those raised by kin outside of foster care.^{35 36 37 38}



Key Recommendations

Policy Recommendations:

- **Information Distribution:** Require schools to create and implement plans to regularly share information about available services for kinship families during enrollment and through ongoing outreach.
- **Kinship Navigator Programs:** Support the expansion and sustained funding of kinship navigator programs that connect caregivers to public benefits, legal services, and mental health support. Federal funding should be allocated to help states, tribes, and community organizations develop and evaluate these programs based on evidence-based standards.
- **Financial and Basic Needs Support:** Advocate for broader investments in equitable supports for kinship families, including a caregivers' tax credit, enhanced access to programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), foster care maintenance payments, housing, nutrition assistance, healthcare, respite care, childcare, and transportation.
- **Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network:** Continue funding the national technical assistance center that helps improve cross-system collaboration and support services for kinship/grandfamilies, fostering greater coordination between agencies.
- **Research on Kinship/Grandfamilies Educational Outcomes:** Support a national research study of educational outcomes for children in kinship/grandfamilies, including collecting data that can be disaggregated by race and socio-economic status.



Practice Recommendations:

- **Partnerships with Schools:** Encourage kinship navigator programs to build strong relationships with schools to facilitate referrals and ensure both caregivers and schools are informed about laws and policies related to educational access.
- **Title I Fund Allocation:** Encourage Title I schools (those with high poverty rates) to engage kinship families in decision-making processes about how federal and local funding should be used to support tailored services.
- **Schools as Support Hubs:** Position schools as central hubs for providing wraparound services, ensuring all children, including those in kinship care, arrive at school prepared to learn and thrive.

Children in Grandfamilies and Kinship Care

ABOUT 2.5 MILLIONⁱ

Children living with grandparents or other kin without parents in home

123,294

Children in Foster Care with relativesⁱⁱ

For every

1 CHILD

being raised by kin in foster care, there are

19 CHILDREN

being raised by kin outside of foster care.ⁱⁱⁱ



MEETING BASIC NEEDS

ADDRESSING DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

MANAGING EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

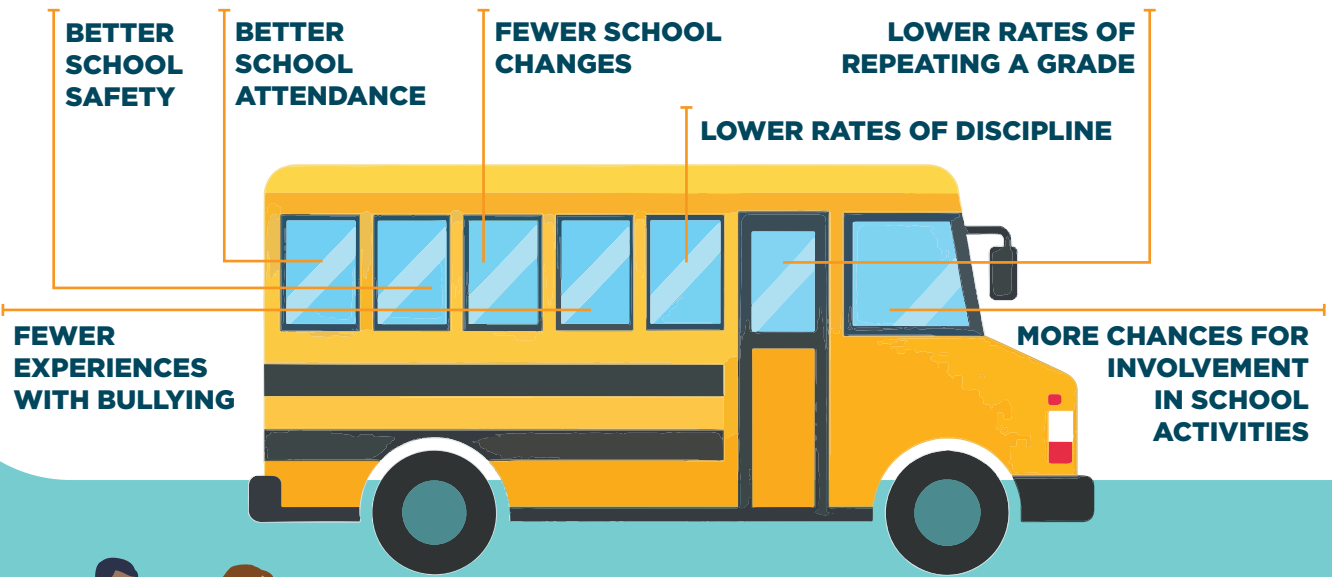
Educational Challenges

ADDRESSING LEGAL BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ENROLLMENT

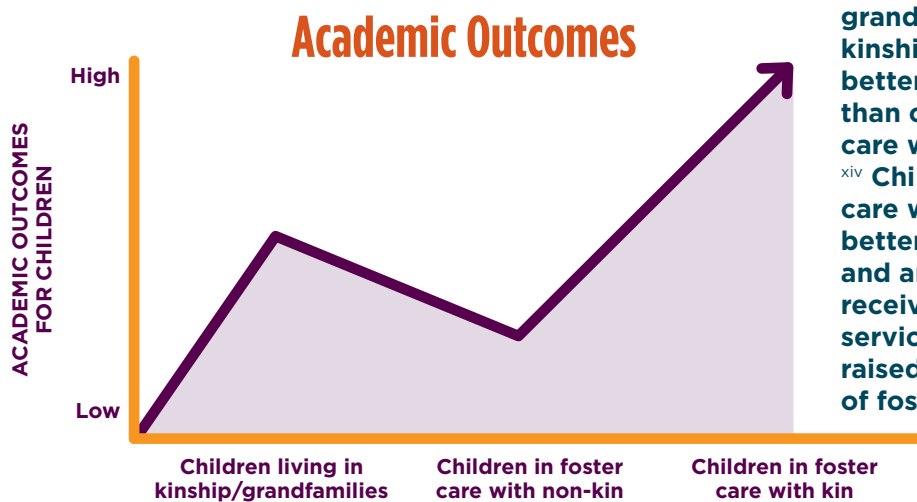
Grandfamilies often face serious challenges that can affect the children's education success^{iv v vi}

OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS

Benefits of Children in Kinship/Grandfamilies Compared to Children in Foster Care with Non-Kin^{vii viii}



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.^{ix x xi}



Children living in grandfamilies and kinship families do better academically than children in foster care with non-kin.^{xii xiii}
^{xiv} 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.^{xv xvi xvii}

INTRODUCTION

“ There’s nothing I can do to repay my grandma for everything. She is the backbone of the whole family. She’s been on my team 100%, every step of the way, learning about therapists and schools that helped me with my ADHD and anger issues and getting my 504 plan. She has been very supportive and trying to encourage me. I found that I excelled in my computer class in high school – that was the first A I’ve had in years on my report card because it was the one class that I actually took seriously. With ADHD, you find if there’s something you like, something you’re really interested in, you will do anything to focus on it. Now I’m going to go to college in Alaska. I’m interested in cybersecurity, and they have a very good scientific program. I may even be able to work with NASA!

— Keonte Jones, age 21, raised by his grandmother

About 2.5 children across the United States are currently being raised in kinship/grandfamilies.³⁹ We believe these data may represent an undercount due to the difficulties in data gathering associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. These are families in which grandparents, other adult relatives, or close family friends are raising children with no parents in the home. There can be many reasons for the absence of parental care, including substance use, incarceration, military deployment, severe disability, deportation, teenage pregnancy, and death. When children cannot remain in their parents’ care, research shows they do best in kinship/grandfamilies.⁴⁰

Helping children in kinship/grandfamilies achieve strong educational outcomes is critical to their overall well-being, future financial security, and ability to contribute to society. Yet they face myriad barriers to connecting with both direct educational support and resources to support basic needs, which are also critically important to success in school, as highlighted in this report.

One key reason for this disconnect is that, while some children in kinship families are in the foster care system (with kin as their designated foster caregivers) and thus have access to a range of helpful supports and services, the majority of them are not in the system and have a much more difficult time connecting with these crucial supports.

Notably, due to multiple reasons outlined in this report, kinship/grandfamilies are more likely to experience a lower socioeconomic status (SES), which is perhaps the most significant factor affecting school success for any child.^{41 42}

Given the millions of children raised by kin, addressing kinship/grandfamilies' challenges with education is crucial. Collaborative partnerships between schools, child welfare systems, community organizations, and kinship/grandfamilies are essential to providing equitable support. These alliances help ensure that, regardless of legal relationship or child welfare involvement, all children have equal opportunities to learn, thrive, and positively contribute to society.

Despite millions of children in the U.S. being raised by kin and attending public schools, the current K-12 public education systems often do not recognize, understand, and adapt to the unique needs of these kinship/grandfamilies.

This report seeks to inform local, state, and federal policymakers, school decision-makers (such as superintendents and principals), and kinship/grandfamily advocates about how kinship/grandfamilies' challenges affect the education of millions of children and how the many strengths of grandfamilies can be leveraged to improve education outcomes. We provide clear recommendations for action steps that can be taken to improve school support and wraparound services for them, thus improving their educational experience.

Ultimately, our goal is to stimulate changes that will help improve academic outcomes for children raised in kinship/grandfamilies, providing them with a stronger foundation for a safe, healthy, and productive future.



BACKGROUND AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

“ Kids of all ages and grades must have what they need to learn each day, such as enough food and sleep and a safe way to get to school, as well as the additional resources they might need to perform at their highest potential and thrive, like tutoring and mental health services. Our policies and priorities have not focused on these factors in preparing young people for the economy, short-changing a whole generation.

— Lisa Hamilton, president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation⁴⁵

Children Do Better Academically When Raised by Kin Versus in Non-Relative Foster Care

When their parents cannot care for them, children thrive in many ways, including academically, when raised by kin instead.⁴⁴ Studies consistently show that children in kinship/grandfamilies do better in school than children who are in non-relative foster care:

- **This higher academic success rate is evident in test scores, particularly in math.**^{45 46}
- **The academic performance of children raised by kin is better for those in foster care than those outside of foster care.** Researchers believe that the addition of resources that accompany foster care – not more involvement of and supervision by the child welfare system – is the reason kinship/grandfamilies’ involvement with foster care seems to support the academic performance of these children.⁴⁷
- **Children in kinship/grandfamilies are more likely to give their best effort and have fewer school changes, better attendance, better school safety, greater chances for involvement in school activities, lower rates of discipline, lower rates of repeating a grade, and fewer experiences with bullying** compared to children in foster care with non-kin.^{48 49}

While children in kinship/grandfamilies generally achieve better academic outcomes compared to those in non-kin foster care, there are significant overarching factors that contribute to a wide range of challenges for these children.

Due to the multiple factors outlined below, children in kinship/grandfamilies routinely have unmet service needs. Children raised by kin outside of foster care are less likely than children in kinship foster care to receive school-based services and other support that may contribute to their educational success.^{50 51 52}

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Studies consistently find that SES, typically defined by students' and/or their families' income, occupation, education, and perceived social standing, is a significant predictor of academic success.^{53 54} While there are always exceptions, students from higher SES backgrounds tend to perform better academically, and the difference can begin to be seen at an early age.⁵⁵

Children in kinship or grandfamilies may experience a lower SES compared to other children due to several factors, including:

- They are more likely to be poor than children in other family types.⁵⁶
- Kin/grandfamily caregivers who are grandparents have a higher rate of not completing high school. A Pew Research Center study found that 26% of grandparent caregivers do not have a high school diploma, compared to 16% of all people ages 50 and older.⁵⁷
- A considerable proportion (45%) of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren are no longer in the labor force.⁵⁸

Students' SES can affect their opportunities and access to resources (such as books, computers, private tutoring, and learning activities beyond the classroom), academic services, and enriched learning environments and approaches.⁵⁹ SES may impact various educational outcomes, such as standardized test scores, graduation rates, and overall academic progress,⁶⁰ and students with a low SES may leave school and enter the labor market at an earlier age than students with a higher SES.⁶¹

Inside or Outside of the Foster Care System

Children do better academically with kin than they do in non-kin foster care, and they have even higher success in kinship foster care due to greater access to resources and support, such as financial assistance, academic counseling, preparation for a GED (General Educational Development Test), tutoring, help with homework, study skills training, literacy training, help navigating the educational system, and more.⁶² However, most children in kinship/grandfamilies are not in foster care, yet all need and deserve equitable services.



Children being raised by kin outside the foster care system may be less likely to utilize school services than those in kinship foster care, non-kin foster care or institutionalized foster homes/group homes.⁶³ Ensuring access to critical support for *all* kinship families, regardless of foster care involvement, is crucial for improving academic outcomes.

Racial/Ethnic Inequities

Kinship/grandfamilies form among all races, socioeconomic levels, ages, and in all regions of the country. However, African American,⁶⁴ American Indian and Alaska Native⁶⁵ and, in some instances, Hispanic children⁶⁶ are more likely to live in kinship/grandfamilies. This prevalence is in part due to cultural strengths and values emphasizing extended family connections and reflects the resilience of long-held traditions of families stepping in to care for each other in the face of adversity and oppression.

The societal conditions that contribute to the overrepresentation of specific marginalized communities among kinship/grandfamilies create disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes as well. Racial inequities in education can lead to disparities in academic achievement, access to resources, and overall school experience.^{67 68 69}

Child Trends reports, “In the United States, children of color have long faced inequitable conditions for learning and disparate academic outcomes. These inequities are due in large part to ongoing bias, discrimination, and community segregation, resulting in unequal distribution of privileges and resources that foster student learning.”⁷⁰ An example of these disparities can be seen in reading proficiencies: amongst fourth graders, 16% of Black children and 18% of American Indian or Alaska Native children were proficient in reading, compared with 41% of white children in 2022.⁷¹

Additionally, children of color have higher rates of chronic absenteeism.⁷² The COVID-19 pandemic worsened these disparities, with Black and Hispanic students experiencing the most significant drops in reading and math scores.⁷³

Culturally responsive education approaches are not always used in schools, but research shows they are highly beneficial for children of color.⁷⁴ This is an especially important issue for kinship/grandfamilies because these approaches affirm children’s cultural identities and develop a sense of belonging, which can be diminished for children not being raised by their parents. Culturally relevant education also supports family engagement by building on traditional values, such as interdependence and community, as strengths. This is particularly significant for kinship/grandfamilies of color and fosters a stronger connection between the home and school environments.⁷⁵

Research shows that children who are American Indian and Asian-Pacific Islanders in particular benefit significantly from educational practices incorporating their cultural traditions, languages, and histories. These practices can help mitigate the effects of historical trauma (see [page 15](#)) and promote resilience and academic success.^{76 77 78 79}

Improving racial equity in schools and providing culturally responsive support is crucial for closing gaps in academic outcomes and supporting kinship/grandfamilies.

The Ongoing Impact of Boarding Schools on the Education of Native American Children

Boarding schools were established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to systematically eliminate American Indian and Alaska Native cultures. These schools, often run by the federal government or religious organizations, forcibly removed children from their families and communities, suppressing their languages, cultural practices, and identities. The harsh discipline, neglect, illness, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse many children experienced in these institutions left lasting intergenerational scars on individuals and communities.

The legacy of these boarding schools continues to affect the education of American Indian and Alaska Native children today. This trauma manifests in multiple ways in contemporary education, including distrust of educational institutions, lower academic achievement, and higher dropout rates among American Indian and Alaska Native students. Furthermore, the historical erasure and stigmatization of their native languages and cultures have left many students and their families feeling alienated in mainstream schools that fail to reflect or honor their identities and histories.

Educational environments that are culturally relevant and trauma-informed are crucial for American Indian and Alaska Native children – children who are more likely to live in kinship/grandfamilies compared to the general population.⁸⁰ By incorporating native languages, traditions, and perspectives, educators and policymakers can acknowledge and begin to heal the historical wounds of boarding schools. This can help rebuild trust and empower youth to succeed academically while staying connected to their cultural heritage. By recognizing and addressing the ongoing impact of boarding schools, educators and policymakers can better support the educational success and well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native students.^{81 82 83}



The COVID Pandemic

The pandemic and the adjustments to the delivery of education and participation in school had a negative effect on all children, resulting in poorer academic outcomes:⁸⁴

- Only 32% of fourth graders were at or above proficient in reading in 2022, compared to 34% in 2019 prior to the pandemic.⁸⁵
- In 2022, 26% of eighth graders were at or above proficient in math, compared to 33% before the pandemic.⁸⁶

While all children require support to recover from the educational setbacks caused by the pandemic, children in kinship/grandfamilies may have faced heightened challenges⁸⁷ due to factors that make them disproportionately affected by disasters like the pandemic,⁸⁸ including the older age of many kinship or grandfamily caregivers (more than half of whom are aged 60 and older),⁸⁹ a greater likelihood of lower SES, and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on families of color. These challenges may be making it more difficult for them to recover.

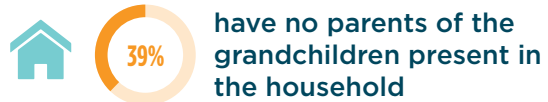
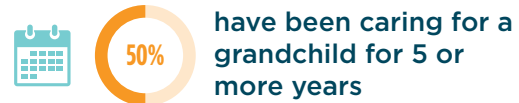
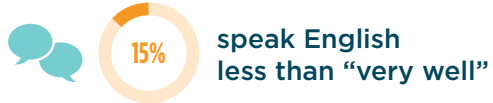
Additional Factors

- **Complex family relationships:** Children and caregivers often have complicated and/or inconsistent relationships with parents.
- **Lack of support and training for kin/grandfamily caregivers:** Kin/grandfamily caregivers often lack knowledge of their rights to specific supports and are unaware of school systems' education services and policies.
- **Technology challenges:** Kin/grandfamily caregivers often need technology training to access school information and other online information as well as to help the children in their care with learning tasks and school activities. A study found that during the pandemic, "Grandchildren are disadvantaged when they need school-related technological assistance from their primary caregivers."⁹⁰
- **Physical limitations:** About 52% of all grandparents responsible for their grandchildren are age 60 and older.⁹¹ Older kin/grandfamily caregivers may be more likely to face health or mobility issues that make it difficult to attend school meetings and events or participate actively in the school community without supportive accommodations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 27% of civilian grandparents who are living with and responsible for their minor grandchildren have a disability.⁹² In comparison, researchers have found that about 10 percent of parents who live with their children have a disability.⁹³
- **Lack of school system readiness for kinship/grandfamilies:** School systems are not adequately designed to support children in kinship/grandfamilies, focusing primarily on parent-headed households. School staff often lack training on the unique needs of kinship/grandfamilies and there are insufficient universally available wraparound services to support the children.
- **Lack of trust:** Kinship/grandfamilies' distrust of government systems, including schools, sometimes results in their lack of transparency about the kinship care situation, hindering schools' support efforts.

Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren^{xviii}

MORE THAN 2 MILLION

grandparents are responsible for caring for their grandchildren living with them



CHALLENGES

The contributing factors mentioned above must be kept in mind as we dive deeper into the challenges that can negatively affect the education outcomes of children living in kinship/grandfamilies. Those factors magnify the following five challenges that rise to the top of concern for these families: meeting basic needs, gaining a legal relationship and enrolling children in school, addressing learning disabilities and other special education needs, understanding and treating trauma, and achieving effective communication and participation in education planning.

Basic Needs

Research shows that children in kinship/grandfamilies who receive services and support that ensure their basic needs are met experience better outcomes than those who don't.⁹⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation's [2024 KIDS COUNT® Data Book](#), ranks states based on 16 indicators in four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors. This publication determines "to meet educational milestones, kids of all ages and grades must have what they need to learn each day, from enough food and sleep, to a safe way to get to school, to support such as tutoring and mental health services."⁹⁵ However, many kinship/grandfamilies are unaware of or lack access to these crucial services. Children in kinship/grandfamilies may struggle with critical basic needs, including:

Financial security

Like all families, kinship/grandfamilies need the financial means to meet basic needs so that children in their care can have access to educational resources such as books, computers, and private tutoring, as well as participate in school activities such as out-of-classroom learning activities, sports, music, and extracurricular activities. Yet, children in kinship/grandfamilies are more likely to be poor than children in other families.⁹⁶ Many kinship/grandfamilies live on fixed incomes, such as social security or pensions. Children in foster care with unrelated caregivers receive monthly foster care maintenance payments, but many children in foster care with kin/grandfamily caregivers do not receive these payments.⁹⁷ Further, most children being raised in kinship/grandfamilies are outside the foster care system entirely. Kin/grandfamily caregivers, both inside and outside the foster care system, often rely to meet the needs of the children in their care. There can be significant challenges faced to access these grants, and they are considerably smaller than foster care maintenance

payments. Additionally, unlike foster care maintenance payments, which are allocated on a per-child basis, child-only TANF grants increase only incrementally when there is more than one child in a household.⁹⁸

Healthcare and Mental Health Services

Both caregivers and children in kinship/grandfamilies face physical and mental health issues (such as behavioral and emotional challenges) to a greater degree than the general population.⁹⁹ Children in kinship/grandfamilies often experience health issues brought on by the difficult situations and ongoing trauma that caused them to live with their kin/grandfamily caregiver. Poor health in childhood affects other critical aspects of children's lives, such as school readiness and attendance.¹⁰⁰

Housing

Kin/grandfamily caregivers often begin caring for children without warning or preparation, and they face unique problems concerning housing. Many kin/grandfamily caregivers live in small apartments and houses that are not suitable for children. Caregivers living in public senior housing with children may be wrongfully evicted because of the children, and the presence of children may violate private lease agreements. If caregivers do not have legal custody of the children, they are often unable to convince the housing authorities to recognize their need for larger apartments.¹⁰¹ The location of a caregiver's home can also create school instability if the school system requires children to attend a different school after moving to the caregiver's district.

Transportation

Some children in kinship/grandfamilies are in kinship foster care and, therefore, may have access to transportation assistance to school in certain circumstances, and others may qualify for school transportation assistance via McKinney-Vento services¹⁰² (see description on [page 24](#)). However, many others may struggle with transportation, hindering access to schools, healthcare, and essential services. Limited finances make it hard to afford reliable transportation or maintain a vehicle. Kinship/grandfamilies may live in areas with inadequate public transportation, especially in rural areas, which can force long journeys to schools and services. Managing schedules for multiple children, including those with special needs, further complicates transportation logistics. Some caregivers consider charter or private schools better suited to their children's needs but face challenges transporting them safely, especially via public transit.

Nutrition

One in four grandparent-headed households experiences food insecurity.¹⁰³ The food insecurity rate among grandparent-headed households with grandchildren is 25%, a more than 60% increase over the 15% rate for all households with children.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, children in kinship/grandfamilies may have experienced hunger and food insecurity before living with their kin caregiver.





Grandfamily Spotlight

Nafeis Robinson

26 year-old Nafeis Robinson of Philadelphia is raising his three younger siblings, ages 6, 14, and 16. “My mom passed away on December 28th, 2023,” says Nafeis. “But I’ve been taking care of them since I was 17 years old. We struggled to keep things going at times.” After his mom’s death, he became their kinship foster care provider. Nafeis, who works full-time at a hospital, finds kinship foster care supports, including financial assistance, very helpful. “Yes, everybody is probably not that fortunate. If they aren’t in the foster care system, they don’t get payments; they don’t get food support. They don’t get a lot of these things. When you get in Kinship, that’s different. I feel like that’s more.” The children receive free school breakfasts and lunches, and Nafeis provides dinner. “My baby brother in first grade eats a lot – he eats better than anybody else! He gets way better nutrition.”

Nafeis is disappointed with the support his siblings’ public schools offer compared to the Catholic high school he graduated from, which provided immediate counseling and support for losses like his family’s recent one. His siblings’ schools did not reach out when their mom died. Fortunately, being in the foster care system means he has case managers who help navigate paperwork and find services and support for his siblings.

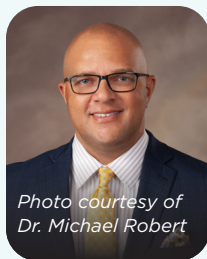
Persistently advocating for children is a strong value for Nafeis. “I do feel as though the public schools lack on getting kids that extra help that they need, honestly,” he says. “You have to be transparent. A lot of parents send their kids to school and they’re not vocal. They’re not there. You know, you have to really be there, can’t just send your kid to school with no voice behind them.” He calls the teachers even if he can’t attend school meetings in person. “I’m in contact with them,” says Nafeis. “They have my cell phone number and can shoot me a text. I have Zoom. I’m a full-time worker, so I’m busy, but if it comes down to it, I can make time for the kids. That’s not a problem. I’m there if I’m needed.”

Summing up his experience as a kin caregiver, Nafeis says, “It’s a challenge, but it’s your family. You take care of your family. You know, you’re supposed to help your family. I don’t look at something as too much. If it’s the people you love, you have to make the sacrifices and you go through trials and tribulations.” He adds, “If I ever might get frustrated it’s just, ‘I’m going through the trials right now.’ Like that’s it. I don’t look at it as ‘oh, this is too much,’ or it’s overwhelming. I just got to get through it. Honestly. Just got to get through it.”

Schools Can Help Kinship/Grandfamilies with Wraparound Services

Schools can serve as a vital hub for kinship/grandfamilies, offering essential information and referrals to educational services, financial assistance, legal assistance, health benefits, and mental health services. They may also be able to direct families to resources that can help ensure a safe and stable home environment, such as access to food, transportation, housing, before- and after-school programs, and more. These wraparound services can help ensure all children arrive at school rested, healthy, and prepared to learn.

While some schools effectively provide these wraparound services, many do not, missing a critical opportunity to support all children, including those in kinship/grandfamilies. Additionally, as is emphasized throughout this report, kinship/grandfamilies may not receive information about wraparound services, and the services may not be tailored to their specific needs.



*Photo courtesy of
Dr. Michael Robert*

A School Administrator's Viewpoint: Dr. Michael Robert, superintendent of the Osborn School District in Phoenix, Arizona

Dr. Robert has 30 years of experience working with kinship families in school settings, including 12 years as a teacher in public Montessori, bilingual, dual language, and early childhood settings in California, Arizona, and in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, before becoming an assistant principal, principal, and ultimately superintendent.

He admires kin/grandfamily caregivers, saying he knows it's not easy to step in and take over raising a child. "These kin caregivers offer the love and stability children need. They know the children, their history, and their needs," Dr. Robert explains. "They should be supported as they raise them."

Describing his school district, Dr. Robert says each school has a team that includes the principal, school psychologists, behavioral intervention specialists (whose primary goal is to help children be successful in the classroom), and teachers. In recent years, when the school safety grant came up, instead of school resource officers, they applied for master's-level social workers for the schools so they could be available to connect families to helpful services and benefits and provide other services like behavioral health small groups or classes. "I will partner with anyone I can to provide services to the children. We've also partnered with local federally qualified health centers (FQHC) to provide clinical behavioral health services on our campuses for children who qualify for Medicaid."

Dr. Robert acknowledges that the most important thing is to hire teachers and other professionals who live by the district's core values and support them, providing training and helping them problem-solve and connect with resources for their students. "I'm hiring people that have job competencies, but also people that have the heart, that bring integrity, relationships, a desire to see joyful children, a sense of equity and recognizing that not everybody gets the same opportunities, and we're looking to change that so that there aren't just equal outcomes, but there are equal opportunities for those outcomes."

School-Based Programs: Family Resource Centers

There are more than 3,000 Family Resources Centers (FRCs), also known as Family Centers, Family Success Centers, Family Support Centers, and Parent-Child Centers, nationwide, and more than 1,000 of them are school-based.¹⁰⁵ FRCs provide families with free or low-cost community-based supports. They are essentially “one-stop shops” that address family needs, such as parent/caregiver skills training, peer support groups, after-school programs, tutoring, literacy supports, health and wellbeing programs, respite care, services for children with learning differences and special needs, assistance for caregivers as they navigate education and government systems, help with IEP meetings, aid with housing, food, clothing, and more.¹⁰⁶

FRCs develop programs responsive to the specific needs, cultures, and interests of the communities and populations served.¹⁰⁷ In fact, some FRCs offer kinship navigator programs to help kin/grandfamily caregivers connect with information, education, and referrals to a wide range of services and supports.¹⁰⁸ Another example of how FRCs can be helpful to kinship/grandfamilies is that some provide trained advocates to attend school planning meetings, helping them understand their rights and navigate the system.

In some states, many or all FRCs are school-based, particularly in rural areas, because, in general, regardless of how geographically isolated families may be, everyone knows where the school is. FRCs are also often included in the development of community schools, which are public schools that act as community hubs and provide collaborative services and supports based on the unique academic, health, nutrition, and other needs of students in their communities. Community schools may also change school policies and systems as they respond to their community. The community-building and interdependence approach used by FRCs and community schools can be especially appropriate for kinship/grandfamilies because it can be culturally responsive to families of color (which are disproportionately represented among kinship/grandfamilies) with strong traditions of working collectively to support children.

Since developing school-based FRCs more than 30 years ago as part of statewide education reform legislation, Kentucky now has more than 850 FRCs in more than 1,200 schools¹⁰⁹ and has seen vast improvements in children’s educational success. In a ranking of states with the best and worst school systems (in terms of factors like academic performance, funding, safety, class size, and instructor credentials), Kentucky moved from 45th place in 1990¹¹⁰ to being in the top 21 school systems in the country in 2024.¹¹¹

For more information, contact the [National Family Support Network](#) and the [Family Resource Center Coalition](#).



Legal Relationship and Enrollment

Navigating the legal system can be daunting for kinship/grandfamilies, and is compounded by financial constraints, hesitations to create an adversarial relationship with the children's parents and cultural considerations. Therefore, many kin/grandfamily caregivers lack the legal relationship that would give them decision-making authority for the children they raise, hindering their ability to manage crucial education issues effectively.¹¹² It is essential that kinship/grandfamilies have affordable legal assistance to gain custody or guardianship. They also need support to advocate effectively for the education rights of the children in their care, even if they are not the children's legal guardian. However, schools don't always have policies, practices, or resources that are sensitive to and supportive of these needs and challenges.

Challenges in obtaining legal custody or guardianship can disrupt a child's education in various ways, including:

- Delayed school enrollment and gaps in schooling. In addition to the learning challenges created by gaps in schooling, these gaps may be misreported as chronic absenteeism.
- Interruption of school stability and continuity when there is confusion or disagreement about which school the child should attend, and/or when school policies don't support the child in attending their original school when it's in the child's best interest to do so.
- Impeded access to essential services if a parent or legal guardian is required to sign documents.
- Missed vital school communications and notifications, such as disciplinary actions and grades, as well as lack of access to school records.
- Inability to participate in field trips and extracurricular activities if a parent or guardian is required to sign permission slips.

Kin/grandfamily caregivers who are foster parents of the children they are raising generally are permitted to make day-to-day education decisions for a child, such as signing permission slips for field trips or extracurricular activities, authorizing a child to stay home from school when necessary, requesting academic support services, participating in planning for re-entry following any disciplinary action, and making other time-sensitive decisions to ensure the child has a school experience that is as typical as possible, even if they do not have legal guardianship and the child is in the custody of the state.¹¹³ However, the vast majority of children in kinship/grandfamilies are not in the foster care system, so their caregivers don't automatically have these abilities.¹¹⁴

Some, but not all, states have education consent laws or other legal avenues that allow kin/grandfamily caregivers to enroll children in school and/or manage day-to-day education decisions such as requesting educational resources, providing permissions for field trips and extracurricular activities, managing disciplinary actions, etc. However, even in states with them, awareness and implementation of these laws varies.

Some states and school systems accept letters or affidavits from parents designating kin caregivers as the primary contact with the authority to enroll the children and interact with schools. If parents cannot be located, proof of attempts to find them may be required. In some cases, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,¹¹⁵ (see below) a federal law providing for the education of homeless children, may be used to allow students cared for by kin (without legal custody or child welfare involvement) to remain in their schools of origin OR immediately enroll in a new school, even if they do not have records required for enrollment.¹¹⁶

Superintendent Dr. Michael Robert says that when kin/grandfamily caregivers don't have the legal status needed to manage the education of the children they are raising, the school can't communicate with them. "We'll do everything in our power to help the grandparent establish their ability to be our contact," he says. "We will have conversations with the biological parent urging them to give the grandparent the legal ability to communicate with us. Honestly, not manipulatively. I'll tell them, 'All you have to do is say I allow my mom to be able to access school records and make educational decisions, independent of me being present. It doesn't mean you're giving up on being a parent.' I'll bring out my laptop. I'll type it up for them, get signatures and witnesses, and get it notarized. But if they don't have it formalized, I can't break the law."

McKinney-Vento

Students who are not in the legal custody of the child welfare system and are living with kin may qualify for McKinney-Vento services. Under this law, children who lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" are eligible for services. For a child living with a kin caregiver, this qualification may depend on the intended or unknown duration of the stay. A child who qualifies may receive the following services:

- Immediate enrollment in a new school even without typically required documents.
- Continued enrollment in their school of origin if it is in their best interest, with transportation if necessary.
- Access to academic and extracurricular activities.
- Free school meals.¹¹⁷





Grandfamily Spotlight

Laurie Tapozada, Rhode Island

Laurie Tapozada is 63 years old and raising her nine-year-old son. “At first, it threw a kink into everything I was planning to do,” says Laurie. “But now it’s the best thing that ever happened to me. The hugest blessing, seriously.”

Laurie’s daughter gave birth to the child but struggled with mental health issues. After living with the baby and Laurie for eight months, she left and did not return for many months and has since been in and out of his life.

Laurie initially became his foster parent and later adopted him. She adores him. “He’s a huge goofball,” she explains.

“He’s very kind, thoughtful, and considerate. He has ADHD, so he’s very active and strong. He’s just the best.” Laurie notes that he has struggled with learning from the beginning and has also experienced trauma. He has had a 504 plan (see next section), but she thinks they may be moving toward an IEP as he has slipped a bit academically. However, Laurie says the public school system has been very helpful. “They were understanding and worked with me and him in a very loving way,” she says. “I have been very lucky.”

Laurie supports other kinship families through her work with The Village for Rhode Island Foster and Adoptive Families and says her experience is not the norm. “It’s terrible sometimes to get these things in place because schools don’t want to do them,” she explains. “IEPs and 504s call for resources they might not have, so it really is a battle to get them in place for many families.”

She also notes that many grandfamilies struggle with legal relationship issues. “The challenges are not just around the children and their academics and how they are treated and perceived. The challenge starts from day one with the way people register for school. It can be difficult for families because not every kinship family has a legal status,” she explains.

“Just getting the school to include them in these processes can be a challenge,” says Laurie. “They always ask if you are a parent or guardian. I might say yes, I’m a parent, but that doesn’t reveal to the school that I’m a kinship family. So, they have no idea how many kinship families are in their schools. They are not aware of the many challenges kinship families face, the supports they might need, or the resources that kinship families might access.”

Laurie has developed a training presentation called “Working Effectively with Kinship Caregivers.” “I developed it for social workers and other internal child welfare staff in Rhode Island who work directly with kinship families and have also delivered it to other community organizations,” Laurie shares. “I am working to adapt it to a school team because it is so needed.” The training provides important insights and understanding around the sensitivities of working with kinship/grandfamilies and compassion for their situation and challenges. “I believe this should be a standard in the ongoing training of teachers and other school personnel, especially the social workers and counselors.”



Photo courtesy of
Laurie Tapozada

Learning Disabilities and Other Special Needs

In 2022, 8.6% of grandchildren aged 5-17 living in their grandparents' house had disabilities, compared to 6.3% in the general population.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, compared with children in parent-led households, those in grandparent-led households have increased physical health conditions and are more likely to have emotional, mental, behavioral, and developmental health conditions, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, learning disabilities, and special health care needs.¹¹⁹

The prevalence of disabilities among children in kinship/grandfamilies may be influenced by several factors, including their prenatal, infant, and early childhood care experiences, all of which can cause or exacerbate learning disabilities and impact their behavior and emotional regulation in school.¹²⁰ Children with disabilities are at increased risk for maltreatment, abuse, or neglect,¹²¹ which can worsen existing conditions or contribute to the development of new ones and may contribute to the decision to be raised by kin/grandfamily caregivers.

Children with disabilities and learning differences living in kinship/grandfamilies face compounded education challenges:

- **Financial limitations:** Kin/grandfamily caregivers often face financial challenges, partly because they didn't expect to take on the cost of raising children. Many are living on a fixed or retirement income. Limited resources make it difficult to afford tutoring, targeted therapies, and other educational supports that are needed but are not provided by the school system.
- **Missing available supports:** Schools may not recognize grandfamily situations and, therefore, may not coordinate with primary caregivers.
- **Lack of continuity:** School changes due to parental instability disrupt consistent support for disabilities.

Without adequate support, these challenges can lead to a cycle of academic struggles, decreased self-esteem, and children not achieving their full potential.

Students eligible for special education can receive an IEP, which should be collaboratively developed by families and professionals and may include extra classroom support, supplementary services such as occupational therapy, and/or a special education classroom.¹²² If a child's disability affects classroom participation but does not require an IEP, a 504 plan can provide necessary accommodations for learning in a typical classroom setting.¹²³

While children may have a right to these plans, many kinship/grandfamily caregivers need information about these and other options, help navigating the systems, and assistance advocating for the support the child needs.





Grandfamily Spotlight

Keonte Jones, Washington, DC

Twenty-one-year-old Keonte Jones is preparing to go to college in Fairbanks, Alaska, far from his current home with his grandma in Washington. He has always lived with his grandma, whom he calls “the backbone of the whole family,” despite his parents being in his life.

Keonte has ADHD and anger challenges. He started school in South Carolina, where he struggled with academics and peer relationships. “Kids will always be kids,” he says. “Trying to find things to pick on you when you’re at your lowest and make fun of you when you don’t know the answer.” By second grade, he had loud outbursts; he felt he didn’t fit in and would never catch up. “It was a semi-tough time,” he recalls. “Luckily, the assistant at the school found me helped me navigate through those things.”

When he was in fifth grade, Keonte and his family moved to Washington, DC. “I remember crying on my first day because I was super homesick,” he says. The new school lacked the support he had in South Carolina, making his time there the roughest period of his school life. “I was getting bullied, wasn’t doing much homework, and my anger issues went through the roof,” he explains. Attending a support group offered at the school helped him manage his anger and survive the year.

Keonte’s next school, a private institution focused on helping children with attention difficulties and other special needs, changed his life. He received a 504 plan, therapy, before- and after-school programs, and other educational support. “The teachers really cared about the students,” he says. “I can never repay what those teachers did for me.”

Keonte now has hopes and goals for his future. “Knowing that I can be fully independent without relying on my grandmother is the ultimate goal,” he shares. “I want to make my grandma, my parents, and the people – the teachers who supported me through all the years of my education – proud.”



*Photo courtesy of
Keonte Jones*



Trauma

According to Generations United's 2017 State of Grandfamilies and Kinship Care Report, [*In Loving Arms: The Protective Role of Grandparents and Other Relatives in Raising Children Exposed to Trauma*](#), most children in kinship/grandfamilies experience trauma before living with relatives. More than half of children in the child welfare system have faced at least four adverse childhood experiences (ACEs),¹²⁴ making them 12 times more likely to have negative health outcomes than the general child population.¹²⁵ These experiences can significantly impact their ability to learn.

Trauma-inducing issues like parental substance use, incarceration, mental health issues, and instability, as well as child maltreatment, may be the reason a child lives in a kinship/grandfamily. Virtually all children in kinship/grandfamilies experience the trauma and ambiguous loss of a "normal" relationship with their birth parents. School Superintendent Dr. Michael Robert says he has experienced difficulties when an absent parent has visitation or re-enters a child's life temporarily. "The grandparent gives that sense of security, and great turmoil comes up. It's a time of academic, emotional, and behavioral hardship. Established relationships with the principal and their teacher are really thrown because there's that uncertainty that comes in with the parent; they do not have a sense of security that they are going to be there tomorrow, even though they want them there desperately," he explains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added further trauma, as outlined in Generations United's 2020 State of Grandfamilies and Kinship Care Report, [*Facing a Pandemic: Families Living Together During COVID-19 and Thriving Beyond*](#).¹²⁶

Children who experience and are in the process of healing from trauma face added layers of learning difficulties. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network notes that complex trauma can make a child easily distracted and impair clear thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, attention, and curiosity, often resulting in deficits in language development and abstract reasoning skills. Children who experience trauma frequently need academic support to succeed in school.¹²⁷

School professionals need training in trauma-informed approaches to help them support students and families. Training can also help school professionals accurately interpret and diagnose trauma-induced behaviors, preventing the harmful misinterpretation and misdiagnosis of trauma-induced behaviors as other disabilities or discipline problems.



Grandfamily Spotlight

Iona Jenkins, South Carolina

Iona Jenkins' granddaughter was born at 25 weeks, weighing only one pound and nine ounces. "She was so small she could fit in my hand," recalls Iona. After a lengthy hospital stay, her care was initially taken over by her brother's grandmother, Nanna. A paternity test later confirmed Iona's son as the father, and Iona took over her care, with Nanna nearby, close and supportive.

Iona has legal guardianship, and her granddaughter is not in the foster care system. "Now she's 12 years old, and I'm 62 and retired," Iona explains. Her granddaughter, diagnosed with asthma, ocular motor dysfunction, and ADHD, is on medication that helps her focus in school. She has greatly benefited from various therapies, including speech, physical, and aquatics, that Medicaid has covered, and is currently in occupational and vision therapy (which is not covered by Medicaid but has proven beneficial in helping her see, read, and do schoolwork).

A charter school specializing in learning disabilities helped initially, but its closure after two years made their educational journey more challenging. Now in 7th grade at a public school, her IEP is regularly revised, and she receives extra help for reading and math. Iona also pays for additional tutoring not covered by the school system.

Trauma has been a constant part of their journey, starting with being born prematurely and entering kinship care. "We almost lost her twice," Iona shares. Additionally, they have endured significant grief from the recent loss of multiple close family members. "We're working with a grief support group," says Iona, who is seeking more training on trauma to better support her granddaughter.

"She's a beautiful, thoughtful, caring child, and her differences impact her learning," Iona says. "I love her and will advocate for her because she needs someone to do that for her."

Communication and Education Planning

Kin/grandfamily caregivers often express frustration as they struggle to be included in school communications and participate in the education of the children they are raising. Grandfamily/kin caregivers may not receive notices about education planning meetings, disciplinary actions, activities and field trips, or other things taking place at school, which impedes their ability to fully support the education of the children in their care.

At the same time, kin/grandfamily caregivers may not communicate openly with school personnel about the challenges the children in their care are facing. According to Superintendent Dr. Robert, communication and transparency with kin/grandfamily caregivers are key to supporting the children in their care in school. For example, if a child has had or is about to have a stressful or traumatic experience, a grandparent caregiver should feel comfortable letting the teacher know and vice versa; the school may identify patterns of behavior or emotional dysregulation that points to something going on with the child, and help the caregiver learn how to deal with the behaviors. "That's when you want to have the wraparound services, such as behavior coaches or counselors, and make sure

they are more available,” he explains. But that can’t happen if the communication isn’t open, and many kin/grandfamily caregivers don’t feel safe or heard when communicating with the school.

One of the crucial repercussions of these communication challenges is that kin/grandfamily caregivers may be excluded from essential education planning, such as developing IEPs and 504 plans. Children in kinship/grandfamilies often have disabilities or other needs,^{128 129} making them eligible for special education services and IEPs or 504 plans. These plans should be developed collaboratively by professionals and family members. However, grandfamily caregivers may be excluded from these planning meetings due to communication issues or legal authority issues previously mentioned. Even when caregivers are included, they may not be familiar with the terminology, concepts and systems involved in the process, and poor communication may result in a lack of awareness that they can have the assistance of a child advocate or school ombudsman. The result is that they and the children in their care may not have a voice in their education planning.

In addition to the legal authority reasons previously mentioned, reasons for the communication challenges may include:

- **Kin/grandfamily caregivers might not disclose their status as the primary caregivers for the children due to fear of losing them** if they do not currently have a legal relationship with them, making schools unaware of the need to communicate with them about educational issues.
- **Educators and school administrators may not be adequately trained** to understand and address the unique needs of kinship/grandfamilies and communicate with them appropriately. For example, a teacher may be aware that the children’s grandparents pick them up from school, but they may not realize that these children are being raised by their grandparents.
- **Most school systems persist in the exclusive use of the term “parents” or “guardians”** when referring to meetings with caregivers (e.g., “parent-teacher conferences”). This language excludes grandfamily caregivers who do not specifically have “guardianship” of the children they are raising. They may not have a legal relationship, or they may have custody or another status, therefore feeling that they don’t fit into either “parent” or “guardian.”



Grandfamily Spotlight

Marisa Van Zile, Michigan

Marisa Van Zile, 43, lives in Michigan and is a member of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community, Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. She has raised her nine-year-old son, a member of Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, since birth and adopted him at age two. Born to her relative, he experienced prenatal alcohol and drug exposure and was diagnosed at two months old with multiple disabilities, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), and learning disabilities. He uses a wheelchair and struggles with social anxiety and sensory issues. Despite these challenges, he wants to have friends and go to school.



*Photo courtesy of
Marisa Van Zile*

Marisa actively advocates for her son's education and ensures he participates in the planning process. He has had an IEP since Early Head Start, but Marisa has faced resistance from the school, which once held an IEP meeting without her. "I made it very clear to them that I am going to be a part of this process," she recalls. She has had to educate herself on her son's rights and ensure the school complies with legal requirements.

Advocating for a child with multiple disabilities is challenging, and Marisa feels schools are unprepared for neurodivergent children. For instance, a teacher's tickling and a paraprofessional's comments about her son's wheelchair and school schedule caused him distress. It was difficult for her son to watch other students be treated differently from himself and to understand why. He has since found his voice and learned how to better advocate for himself. She homeschooled him for part of the year when her requests for a different paraprofessional and mediation were denied. Marisa feels that she and her son were denied respect and dignity throughout their past and recent experiences with the school. He is still awaiting the speech, occupational, and physical therapy services for which he is eligible.

Marisa believes schools should partner with families rather than see them as adversaries. "The school is not supposed to be the enemy; they are supposed to be partners with families, children, parents, and caregivers, but I feel like they might look at us like we are trying to make it harder for them. I think it's a two-way street - they need to understand that when we get upset, it is justifiable: these are our children."

Living in a small rural town, she also acknowledges the school's challenges, such as staff retention and transportation. For example, the school didn't initially have transportation for her son and eventually developed a paid contract with her son's Tribe to provide a driver and use an accessible shuttle vehicle.

She says she wants to give the school grace but believes that understanding should go both ways. "We need to have a healthy partnership with schools and families, and I feel like that is missed," Marisa explains. She also doesn't think the school understands how to navigate the rules and laws. "I have a full-time job and two part-time jobs; why do I have to spend so much time making sure things are done correctly?"

Program Profile: Kinship Caregivers Connect, Ohio (Statewide)



Angela Tobin was pursuing a doctorate degree in occupational therapy at Ohio State University when her grandparents became kinship caregivers for her five-year-old cousin. Seeing the impact this had on them and determined to support kinship caregivers like her grandparents, she created [Kinship Caregivers Connect \(KCC\)](#).

Started as a support group during the COVID-19 pandemic, KCC offers two weekly online support meetings for 50-60 participants and serves nearly 300 caregivers now four years later. Angela says providing peer support is critical for kinship caregivers. KCC also provides:

- A website with [training videos and other resources for kinship caregivers](#).
- Bi-annual in-person gatherings with meals, childcare, and pampering for caregivers.
- A weekly newsletter with resources and tips about child-rearing and self-care.
- Ongoing group messaging via the GroupMe app.
- A growing [social media](#) presence.
- A platform for kinship care advocacy, via [sharing caregivers' stories](#) and offering presentations such as founder Angela's [TedX talk](#).

Helping caregivers navigate the education system is a top priority. “I find that many schools don’t inform kinship caregivers about their rights and available supports,” says Angela. “For example, most caregivers are unaware they can have an advocate in IEP and other school meetings.” KCC helps connect them with advocate programs, like [Ohio’s Parent Mentor Project](#), which matches parents and caregivers with others experienced in caring for children with special needs. Partnering with various organizations, KCC also provides kinship caregivers with [training and resources about school topics](#), including:

- Understanding children’s education rights.
- Advocating for children in schools.
- Navigating the school system.
- Raising children with special health care needs.
- Connecting with educators.
- Ensuring cybersecurity.

Emphasizing schools’ powerful and consistent role in kinship families’ lives, Angela says children in kinship families are not all involved in other support systems like foster care. “Sometimes, schools are the only line of support that families have, which is why school counselors and nurses can be so helpful. It’s not just in the classroom,” she explains.

“School professionals have a lot to deal with,” Angela acknowledges. “The disconnect between caregivers and the schools seems to be more of a systems and resources issue,

not a lack of interest on most schools' part.” KCC bridges the gap between kinship families and schools through consultations, events, and [training for school professionals](#) developed in partnership with the [Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center](#) on a range of topics, including:

- Understanding kinship care.
- “Get to Know Your Kinship Families” tool.
- Legal issues for kinship families.
- Partnership opportunities between schools and kinship families.
- Linking trauma and behavior and use of trauma-informed approaches.
- Organizing and leading kinship caregiver support groups.



Photos courtesy of Angela Tobin

POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the challenges kinship/grandfamilies face that affect the children’s educational experiences and outcomes will require a multifaceted approach, including federal, state, and local policy changes and research to increase knowledge of specific issues. It will also be key to invest in and implement innovative programs and practices that increase support and resources for kinship/grandfamilies and to enhance training for school staff and educators to help them better understand and accommodate the needs of these families.

Overarching Recommendations:

- **Support the development and sustained use of quality kinship navigator programs** that link caregivers and the children they raise, whether inside or outside the foster care system, with public benefits, direct goods, legal services, and behavioral and mental health supports. Provide multi-year federal funding to help states, tribes, and community-based organizations develop, operate, and evaluate kinship navigator programs that meet evidence-based standards.
- **Promote culturally responsive education and strategies that support recruitment and retention of racial diversity among school teachers and administrators.** American Indian, Alaska Native¹³⁰, and Black¹³¹ children are more likely to grow in kinship/grandfamilies compared to the general population of children. Research shows that cultural education is supportive of native students and could be a protective factor for children being raised by relative caregivers.¹³² Studies shows that students having same-race teachers in the early grades is associated with a decrease in the rate of high school dropout and an increase in college matriculation rates for Black students.¹³³
- **Continue federal funding for the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network, the national technical assistance center** that helps government agencies and nonprofits across systems to improve supports and services for kinship/grandfamilies. The Network’s activities promote cross-system collaboration, including education support and services.

Basic Needs

Policy Recommendations:

- **Require and provide support for schools to develop and implement plans to distribute information about available services for kinship/grandfamilies via registration and enrollment materials and processes and through regular outreach.**
- **Promote broader federal and state investment to ensure financial equity for kinship/grandfamilies**, such as through the creation of a caregiver tax credit, improving adequacy of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and increasing access to foster care maintenance payments for children in kinship foster care. Financial assistance should be based on the reasonable calculation of the cost of raising a child regardless of the source of funding, including enhanced rates for special needs, when appropriate.
- **Protect and improve access to key benefits that help kinship/grandfamilies meet their basic needs to ensure they have what they need to learn each day.** This includes Medicaid, Medicare, Children’s Health Insurance Programs (CHIP), Free and Reduced Priced School Meals Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and other energy assistance, federal housing assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), respite and child care assistance, and Social Security.
- **Invest in federal programs that fund out-of-school time and wraparound supports and highlight ways they can be tailored to support kinship/grandfamilies, including increased investments in Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grants.** By offering a wide array of services in one location, these schools aim to strengthen communities and help students succeed in school and life. Examples include:
 - » **21st Century Community Learning Centers:** federally funded programs that provide academic enrichment and extracurricular activities (such as tutoring, homework help, and recreational activities) before or after school, especially for students in high-poverty, low-performing schools
 - » **Full-Service Community Schools grants:** schools that serve as hubs for a range of educational, health, and social services for students and their families, like health care, mental health support, after-school programs, adult education, and family engagement activities. The goal is to address the holistic needs of students and their families, improving both academic outcomes and overall well-being.
 - » New demonstration programs in tribal communities that focus on wrap around service models that work collaboratively to support children and families in line with restorative justice models increasingly used in tribal courts rather than more common adjudication models.
- **Support a research study of educational outcomes for children in kinship/grandfamilies, including collecting data that can be disaggregated by race and socioeconomic status.**
- **Support a research study of school-based family resource centers and community schools and promote and invest in strategies that increase the availability of these models.** This study should include gathering information on ways school-based family resource centers and community schools can be used to help kinship/grandfamilies and to provide information, concrete resources, and support to prevent unnecessary involvement of families with the child welfare system.

Practice Recommendations:

- **Encourage kinship navigator programs to develop strong partnerships with schools** to provide referrals and support to help kinship/grandfamilies get helpful benefits and supports. Kinship navigators can also help to ensure that both caregivers and schools are equipped with information about laws and policies that help address educational access issues related to the caregiver's legal relationship with the child. This includes the use of [permission to contact forms](#), which allow caregivers to give schools permission to share their contact information with the navigator so that the navigator staff will contact the family.
- **Encourage Title I schools to have open and widely communicated processes for making decisions about how to use Title I funding, including tailored services to help kinship/grandfamilies.** Title I schools are those with poverty rates of 35% or higher.¹³⁴ The federal government provides funds in combination with state and local resources to enhance the education program of Title I schools and raise the academic achievement of all students. Local jurisdictions make decisions about how the funds will be used to reach this goal. School systems should actively engage kinship/grandfamilies and their advocates in decision-making processes to consider how investing in supports for kinship/grandfamilies could help.
- **Encourage schools to serve as hubs for providing wraparound services for children,** including those in kinship/grandfamilies, to ensure they arrive at school rested, healthy, and prepared to learn. Consider leveraging Medicaid or Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program funds to support wraparound services.

Legal Relationship and Enrollment

Policy Recommendations:

- **Encourage states to implement education and health care consent laws to ensure that all kin caregivers have the ability to enroll the children they are raising in school and participate in educational decision-making.** Many states do not require a caregiver to have legal custody or guardianship to enroll a child in school but do have residency requirements that require children to be in the school district for a “legitimate” purpose, i.e., not solely to attend school. Some local school districts require caregivers to show documentation of legal custody or guardianship to enroll the children. Education consent laws generally allow a caregiver without legal custody or guardianship of the children to complete an affidavit under penalty of perjury that they are the primary caregiver of the children, which then allows them to enroll the children in public school without requiring a parent's signature. Health care consent laws ensure that caregivers can access health care and medical records for the children to support their well-being and to provide required health documentation for school enrollment.
- **Require schools to share information about available education and health care consent laws, other legal arrangements, or legal assistance that may help address barriers to enrolling the children in school.**
- **Encourage schools to develop policies that allow a kin caregiver to make day-to-day education decisions,** such as signing permission slips for field trips or participation in extracurricular activities, requesting tutoring or other academic supports, or authorizing a child to stay home from school when necessary. Emphasize that the reasonable and prudent parenting standard applies to children in kinship foster care.

- **Promote the use of and investment in federal dollars for legal services and supports for grandfamilies and kinship families**, such as through the National Family Caregiver Support Program, kinship navigator programs, Title IV-B funds, and Title IV-E prevention services and administration funds.
- **Issue a communication from the U.S. Department of Education that explains that the McKinney-Vento Act can apply to children who are outside of foster care being raised by kin who do not have a legal relationship to the children.**

Practice Recommendations:

- **Ensure all schools and health care providers are aware of existing laws and policies that enable kin caregivers to obtain health care and public education.** [See Generations United's Educational and Health Care Consent Laws brief.](#)
- **Encourage schools to make available and inform families about:**
 - » **Educational and health care consent forms.**
 - » **How the McKinney-Vento Act could help kinship/grandfamilies.**
 - » **How kin/grandfamily caregivers can advocate for their children's education even if they are not the legal education decision-maker.**
 - » **The rights of children and caregivers in families in which the kin caregiver is a foster parent of the child as it relates to:**
 - The right of the child to remain in the same school if it is in their best interest.
 - Immediate enrollment, even without typically required records, when school changes are necessary.
 - A kinship foster parent's ability to make day-to-day education decisions for the child, per the reasonable and prudent parent standard.¹³⁵



Learning Disabilities and Other Special Needs

Policy Recommendations:

- **Require local education agencies to develop and implement plans to create more efficient record sharing between schools and school districts to prevent enrollment delays. Develop school policies with required timeframes for requesting/transferring records.**
- **Encourage states to expand school stability protections** (such as those in McKinney-Vento or the Every Student Succeeds Act) beyond students who are homeless or in foster care to a broader group experiencing residential instability, including those transitioning to kinship families.

Practice Recommendation:

- **Educate kinship/grandfamilies on education protections to ensure they are upheld.** Children and youth with learning delays and disabilities are entitled to the protections outlined in federal and state law, including timelines for evaluations, implementation of an IEP, and placement in the least restrictive environment, even when they change schools.

Trauma

Policy Recommendations:

- **Encourage local education agencies to use Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program funds to support trauma-informed practices and training that help children impacted by trauma, including those being raised in kinship/grandfamilies.** The SSAE program is intended to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of local educational agencies (LEAs) and local communities. It seeks to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for student learning, and enhance the use of technology to raise all students' academic achievement and digital literacy.

Practice Recommendations:

- **Improve the availability of and access to quality, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate mental health services for all kinship/grandfamilies.** This includes in-school support, such as peer support groups for caregivers and children/youth in kinship/grandfamilies. Ensure that schools and first responders are aware of mental health supports available to kinship/grandfamilies in their communities and are trained on when and how to provide referrals. Encourage schools to partner with local federally qualified health centers (FQHC) to provide clinical behavioral health services for children who qualify for Medicaid.
- **Provide training through schools:**
 - » **For educational professionals** on the impact of trauma on children, including the academic impacts, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) among children being raised in kinship/grandfamilies, and the unique experiences of kin/grandfamily caregivers and youth.
 - » **For caregivers** on the impact of trauma on children's behavior and learning.

Communication and Education Planning

Educational Planning

Policy Recommendations:

- Urge schools to provide support to kinship/grandfamilies to help them meet the IEP requirements, such as assistance with navigating special education systems including the evaluation process, participating in the IEP process, and advocacy when services are not met.
- Provide federal investments to support American Indian and Alaska Native education personnel in schools that can be of assistance to tribal children in public schools. These individuals can participate in IEP or 504 plan meetings to guide Native students in advocating for educational assistance they may not be aware of, including access to culturally responsive education, activities and supports to the relative caregiver.
- Highlight the availability of Title IV-E dollars to pay for education attorneys for children in foster care with kin. Explore the potential for using Title IV-E Prevention Services funds to support educational advocacy for children living with kin outside of foster care.
- Issue a Dear Colleague Letter from the U.S. Department of Education to school superintendents and chief state officers making clear that kin/grandfamily caregivers should be given access to records, are allowed to participate in education planning, and can make decisions related to education needs when acting in the place of the parent.¹³⁶

Practice Recommendations:

- Encourage schools to reach out to kin caregivers to invite them to share their thoughts and insights with the child's education team, including in cases where the kin caregiver does not have authority to make education decisions for the child but is the full- or part-time caregiver for the child. Kin caregivers' perspectives can be valuable in all aspects of the child's educational planning, including special education planning, parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, and other school-related events and services.
- Provide training for kin caregivers on effective ways to advocate for the education of children in their care, including for special education evaluation and services.
- Ensure all children and youth, who are developmentally able, are engaged in their education planning, including IEP, and 504 plan processes.



Communication

Policy Recommendation:

- **Develop federal, state, and local policies that include outreach to kin/grandfamily caregivers (even if they are not the education decisionmaker for the child) to make them aware of resources that may support the child’s education and allow them to give input about the child that may assist with the child’s learning.**

Practice Recommendations:

- **Use inclusive language in school policies and explicitly encourage it in school communications.** Where possible, specifically name grandparents, other kin caregivers, and custodians (not just guardians) when getting the word out about family engagement opportunities. This is especially helpful for activities that are not obviously inclusive of grandparents, such as Parent-Teacher Association meetings.
- **Be intentional about outreach to kinship/grandfamilies when using technology/portal systems.** When appropriate, send communications to caregivers, not just parents, and offer technology assistance to ensure that caregivers understand how to use the systems. Ensure that “parent” portals and technology systems include enough space to list the kin/grandfamily caregiver as a contact to receive communications, such as those related to academic progress, attendance, discipline, and additional education and enrichment opportunities.
- **Acknowledge and affirm the presence of kinship/grandfamilies** in schools, such as by creating and sharing resources that describe who kinship/grandfamilies are and the availability of services for them, and by holding celebratory Grandparents’ Day or Kinship Month events.





CONCLUSION

Children do better academically when raised in kinship/grandfamilies than in non-kin foster care.¹³⁷ However, kinship/grandfamilies often face severe challenges in meeting their basic needs, gaining a legal relationship, addressing the disabilities and special needs that are common among children in kinship/grandfamily care, managing the effects of trauma, and overcoming communication and education planning barriers. All these challenges can affect the children's academic success and are not easily overcome without appropriate equitable services and supports. Compounding these challenges, children of color face,¹³⁸ and African American,¹³⁹ American Indian and Alaska Native,¹⁴⁰ and, in some instances, Hispanic¹⁴¹ children are more likely to live in kinship/grandfamilies. Additionally, kinship/grandfamilies faced heightened challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic,¹⁴² especially in accessing academic services, making their recovery from education setbacks more difficult.¹⁴³

Kinship/grandfamilies need education services to assist the children and wraparound services to address their overlying challenges. Schools could be well-positioned to provide or refer families to needed services; however, many lack staff trained on the unique needs of kinship/grandfamilies and/or the resources to provide the additional supports necessary for their educational success.

Addressing kinship/grandfamilies' educational challenges is crucial, given the millions of children being raised in these families and the potential for improvements with proper support.¹⁴⁴ Partnerships between schools, child welfare systems, community organizations, and kinship/grandfamilies are needed. Partnerships will help ensure that, whether or not they have a legal relationship, and whether they are inside or outside the foster care system, kinship/grandfamilies have supports and the children have equitable opportunities to learn, thrive, and contribute to society.

GLOSSARY

Education-Related Terms

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development. Components of ADHD may include inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Types include ADHD, inattentive and distractable; ADHD, hyperactive/impulsive; and ADHD, combined.^{145 146}

504 Plan: Section 504 is a part of a federal law that is designed to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. A 504 plan outlines accommodations schools provide to students with disabilities so they can access the general education curriculum and succeed academically. The name comes from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a federal law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal funding, such as public schools. A student's 504 plan may or may not be a written document, and may include accommodations, such as allowing a student with test anxiety or reading difficulties extra time to finish a test or allowing the use of audiobooks instead of paper text. Other modifications might include fewer homework assignments, grading adjustments, or behavior intervention plans.^{147 148}

Individualized Education Program (IEP): Students who need extra help and support in school due to a wide range of special needs, such as autism, ADHD, developmental delays, and/or other physical or learning disabilities, may be eligible for an IEP that provides for special education services. This is a free program for children in public schools and outlines the goals and any support services that may be needed for a child to succeed in school. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that eligible students, along with their "parents" – which includes all types of kin caregivers – should join educators and other key professionals on the team that evaluates, creates, monitors, and adjusts the plan as needed. Sometimes the services outlined in an IEP can be provided in a general classroom, while other times they are provided in a specialized classroom. The plan may include supportive services such as physical or occupational therapy, speech/hearing therapy, nursing services, vision therapy, counseling, or other needed services.¹⁴⁹

Title I: Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA), offers additional financial support to school districts serving children from low-income families. The goal is to ensure that all children have meaningful access to a fair, equitable, and high-quality education by using federal funds to support education programs and services to close achievement gaps.¹⁵⁰

General Term

Socioeconomic Status (SES): A composite measure that reflects an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on a combination

of factors, typically including income, education, occupation, wealth, and perceived social status/class.¹⁵¹

Kinship and Grandfamilies-Related Terms

Foster Care System: The foster care system is a component of the child welfare system. Foster care (also known as out-of-home care) is a temporary service provided by states and tribes for children who cannot live with their parents because it is not safe. Children in foster care may be formally placed with unlicensed or licensed kinship foster caregivers or with non-kin foster parents. Foster care can also refer to placement settings such as group homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, and supervised independent living.¹⁵²

Kinship Families and Grandfamilies: We use the terms “kinship families,” “grandfamilies” or “kinship/granfamilies” interchangeably throughout this report to mean families in which kin are raising children with no parents in the home. “Kin” includes grandparents; other adult family members, such as great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings; and family friends, sometimes known as “fictive kin,” who have a close emotional relationship with the child or the child's parents, e.g., godparents, aunties, uncles, teachers, coaches, and others who are not related by blood/birth, marriage, or adoption. These families can be either inside or outside the child welfare system. The caregiver may or may not have a legal relationship (such as guardianship) to the child. A common type of grandfamily consists of grandparents and grandchildren and is often referred to as “grandparents raising grandchildren.”

Kinship Foster Care: Foster care is intended to be the temporary, court-monitored care of children whom the government has removed from their parents due to substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect. The children are in the legal custody of the government and in the physical custody of their relatives or other kin who provide daily care for the children. Who is included in the definition of “relative” or “kin” varies by state, territory, or tribe. In this arrangement the children are typically assigned caseworkers to work with their family to connect them to supportive services and arrange visitation with the children's parents.

Grandparent-Headed Households: Households in which the grandparent is the householder or “household reference person”¹⁵³ and there is at least one grandchild under the age of 18 living in the home. This category includes both grandfamilies and multigenerational households in which grandparents, parents, and children all live together.

Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren: Grandparent householders who report being responsible for a grandchild living with them.

Kin Caregiver, Kin/grandfamily caregiver, or Grandfamily Caregiver: Terms that are used interchangeably to describe the adult kin raising children in a kinship/grandfamily. They are also sometimes referred to as “extended family members.” “Grandparent caregivers” is often used if the grandfamily caregiver is a grandparent.

Legal Relationships: There are numerous types of legal relationships between kin/grandfamily caregivers and the children they are raising, including legal custody, guardianship, and adoption. Terminology surrounding these legal relationships varies from state to state. Please see [Grandfamilies.org](https://www.grandfamilies.org) ([Care and Custody](https://www.grandfamilies.org)) for more details about the “care and custody” laws that govern the continuum of legal relationship options – adoption, guardianship, legal custody, power of attorney and consent laws – that may be available to grandparents and other kin and the children they raise.

Non-Relative or Non-Kin Foster Caregiver: A licensed or certified foster caregiver who is not a relative, family friend, or other kin (as defined by the child welfare system) of the child whom the child welfare system has placed with them. The non-relative foster caregiver receives payments from the child welfare system, and the child is in the custody of the state child welfare system.¹⁵⁴

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPSS): The RPSS is included in the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183) and includes a set of guidelines for foster parents, including kinship foster parents, and other caregivers to make decisions about the activities of children in their care, prioritizing the child’s health, safety, and best interests, while also supporting their emotional and developmental growth. It provides more decision-making discretion for caregivers regarding issues like school or community-based sports and other activities, volunteering, attending community events, phone and computer use, and social activities.¹⁵⁵

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): TANF provides cash assistance for families with low incomes. Eligibility for TANF is determined by residency and income and, in most jurisdictions, assets.¹⁵⁶ Some kinship/grandfamilies may qualify to receive benefits as a family. Alternatively, grandfamily caregivers can apply for child-only benefits for the children. Eligibility for child-only benefits is based on the child’s income only (such as child support, work, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security survivor’s benefits, etc.), until they are 18.¹⁵⁷



RESOURCES

Generations United

[gu.org](https://www.gu.org) »

Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center

[GKSNetwork.org](https://www.gksnetwork.org) »

- [Getting the Child You Love the Educational Support They Need](#) – Tip sheet for grandfamily caregivers to help them find the supports the children they are raising need to succeed in school.
- [Supporting Educational Access for Kinship/Grandfamilies](#) – Tip sheet designed to help direct-service professionals assist caregivers in ensuring the children they raise have the educational experiences needed to thrive.
- [Use of McKinney Vento Act for Children Raised in Kinship & Grandfamilies](#) – Presentation by a supervisor from the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; made available by the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network. Provides an overview of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and its education provisions.

National Center on Grandfamilies

[gu.org](https://www.gu.org) »

- [Grand Resources: A Grandparent's and Other Relative's Guide to Raising Children with Disabilities](#) – A guide to help grandfamilies navigate supports for children with disabilities.
- [2021 State of Grandfamilies Report. Reinforcing a Strong Foundation: Equitable Supports for Basic Needs of Grandfamilies](#) – A report outlining inequities among kinship/grandfamilies, including in education services and supports.

Grandfamilies.org

[grandfamilies.org](https://www.grandfamilies.org) »

- [Education](#) – Summary and analysis of legal terms and law related to kinship families and education, along with numerous helpful resources, briefs, and fact sheets, including:
 - » [The Role of Kin Caregivers in Education](#) – Tip sheet for kin caregivers to learn to advocate for educational needs; discusses the kin caregiver's role in various education decisions.
 - » [Policy Brief - State Educational and Health Care Consent Laws: Ensure that children in grandfamilies can access fundamental services](#) – Provides an overview of these laws and includes specific examples from the states with education and health care consent laws.

Legal Center for Foster Care and Education (LCFCE)

fostercareandeducation.org »

A grant-funded project of the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law. LCFCE advances its mission of transforming systems and improving law and practice to create better outcomes for children in foster care by providing: a strong national voice for the education of children in foster care, a centralized source of information on foster care and education, facilitation of networks for education advocates and child welfare professionals, and training and technical assistance across the country.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

nctsn.org »

NCTSN provides tools and materials to help educators, school staff, and administrators understand and respond to the specific needs of traumatized children, including:

- [Child Neglect and Trauma: A Fact Sheet for Providers](#)
- [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#)
- [Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework](#)
- [NCTSN Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment \(TIOA\) Course](#)
- [Q&A For Helping Educators & School Providers to Provide Guidance & Support For Parents & Caregivers Of LGBTQ Students](#)
- [Supporting Trauma-Informed Schools to Keep Students in the Classroom: A Focus on Trauma-Informed Practices](#)



APPENDIX

State Data: Children in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies)

State	% of All Children in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2022-2024 ¹⁵⁸	# of All Children in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2022-2024 ¹⁵⁹	% of Children in Foster Care Who Are in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2021 ¹⁶⁰	# of Children in Foster Care Who Are in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2021 ¹⁶¹
Alabama	4%	40,000	15%	797
Alaska	4%	7,000	26%	739
Arizona	4%	57,000	52%	7,160
Arkansas	6%	39,000	32%	1,438
California	4%	298,000	36%	17,028
Colorado	2%	29,000	27%	1,097
Connecticut	1%	10,000	37%	1,274
Delaware	4%	8,000	15%	67
District of Columbia	5%	7,000	17%	85
Florida	4%	162,000	42%	9,813
Georgia	3%	85,000	22%	2,301
Hawaii	5%	15,000	49%	690
Idaho	2%	10,000	37%	589
Illinois	2%	60,000	45%	9,220
Indiana	4%	69,000	36%	4,810
Iowa	1%	9,000	42%	1,751
Kansas	3%	23,000	35%	2,467
Kentucky	5%	48,000	14%	1,189
Louisiana	4%	46,000	32%	1,063
Maine	3%	8,000	38%	828
Maryland	5%	69,000	45%	1,592
Massachusetts	3%	45,000	28%	2,539
Michigan	3%	55,000	45%	4,333
Minnesota	2%	27,000	40%	2,726
Mississippi	8%	57,000	33%	1,176
Missouri	3%	36,000	40%	5,336
Montana	4%	9,000	42%	1,310

State	% of All Children in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2022-2024 ¹⁵⁸	# of All Children in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2022-2024 ¹⁵⁹	% of Children in Foster Care Who Are in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2021 ¹⁶⁰	# of Children in Foster Care Who Are in Kinship Care (Grandfamilies) 2021 ¹⁶¹
Nebraska	1%	6,000	34%	1,332
Nevada	4%	30,000	40%	1,668
New Hampshire	4%	10,000	30%	327
New Jersey	2%	45,000	40%	1,282
New Mexico	9%	40,000	36%	659
New York	3%	103,000	32%	4,687
North Carolina	4%	84,000	25%	2,671
North Dakota	3%	6,000	25%	365
Ohio	4%	99,000	21%	3,233
Oklahoma	4%	43,000	32%	2,388
Oregon	2%	19,000	35%	1,823
Pennsylvania	2%	62,000	44%	6,010
Rhode Island	2%	3,000	38%	684
South Carolina	5%	60,000	15%	594
South Dakota	4%	9,000	25%	410
Tennessee	4%	55,000	12%	1,090
Texas	4%	269,000	34%	9,457
Utah	2%	22,000	31%	666
Vermont	3%	4,000	33%	350
Virginia	4%	68,000	10%	476
Washington	3%	50,000	34%	3,068
West Virginia	6%	21,000	54%	3,842
Wisconsin	2%	24,000	40%	2,692
Wyoming	3%	3,000	39%	329

ABOUT

Generations United



Because we're stronger together®

Founded in 1986, Generations United's mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

[Generations United's National Center on Grandfamilies](#) is a leading voice for families headed by grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends. The Center's work is guided by GRAND Voices, a national network of grandfamily caregiver advocates. Through the Center, Generations United leads an advisory group of caregivers and organizations that set the national agenda to advance public interest in support of these families. Center staff conduct federal advocacy, provide training and tailored assistance to practitioners and advocates, and support kinship/grandfamilies to elevate their voices to improve policies and practices that impact them. The Center raises awareness about the strengths and needs of kinship/grandfamilies through media outreach, weekly communications, and awareness-raising events. It offers an annual State of Grandfamilies & Kinship Care report and a broad range of guides, fact sheets, and tools for kinship/grandfamilies, which cover issues from educational and health care access to financial and legal supports and can be found at [gu.org](#) and [grandfamilies.org](#).

Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center



Generations United created the [Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center](#) to help those who serve grandfamilies and kinship families. The

Network assists government agencies and nonprofit organizations in states, tribes, and territories, working both individually and across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for kinship and grandfamilies. With funding from a five-year cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living (ACL), Generations United operates the Network with four managing partners: the National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, USAging, and ZERO TO THREE. A fifth partner, Child Trends, evaluates our work. With our partners and a cadre of subject matter experts, including lived experts, we provide individual assistance, create practical written and video resources for service providers, and offer monthly webinars and regular collaborative learning communities, all free of charge. For more information, visit our website, [GKSNetwork.org](#). Request no-cost technical assistance at [gksnetwork.org/request-assistance](#).

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Endnotes for Infographics

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