

Helping Kinship Families Thrive with Respite Services

April 3, 2025
2025 National Lifespan Respite Conference

Terms

Grandfamilies = Kinship Families

Grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends who raise children when parents cannot



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GLOSSARY

Glossary

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network urges government agencies, nonprofits, and tribal organizations to work across systems (e.g., child welfare, education) to best support kinship/grandfamilies. Doing so can be challenging, in part because each system uses different terms and acronyms. This glossary seeks to help professionals understand each other better so that they can collaborate more effectively. We are grateful to our partners at USAging for suggesting this resource and supplying the definitions for the aging terms.

Use the letter links below to jump to a specific letter of the alphabet, or use your browser's Find function to search for a specific term or acronym. Please note that we are publishing this glossary now in the hopes that it will be helpful, but it is still a work in progress, and we will be adding more terms. Please reach out to us at info@gksnetwork.org → if you would like to recommend additional terms for inclusion.

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#) <#>

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



How We Help



Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts webinars and facilitates learning collaboratives.



Individual Assistance

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



A Centralized Hub

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



ESPAÑOL

Request Assistance →

WHO WE SERVE ▾

RESOURCE LIBRARY

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

EVENTS

ABOUT US ▾

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

We help government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children.



Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren

- **Over 2 million grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren:**
- **60% are aged 60 and over** – up from 47% in 2012
- **5 years or more** - most common length of caregiving time
- More likely to live in the **South and Midwest**
- Nationally, 18.3 percent live in **poverty** - in the South, more common to live below the poverty line
- About 63 percent are **women**

See: www.gksnetwork.org/kinship-data/

For every **1 child** being raised by kin in foster care, there are **19 children** being raised by kin outside of foster care



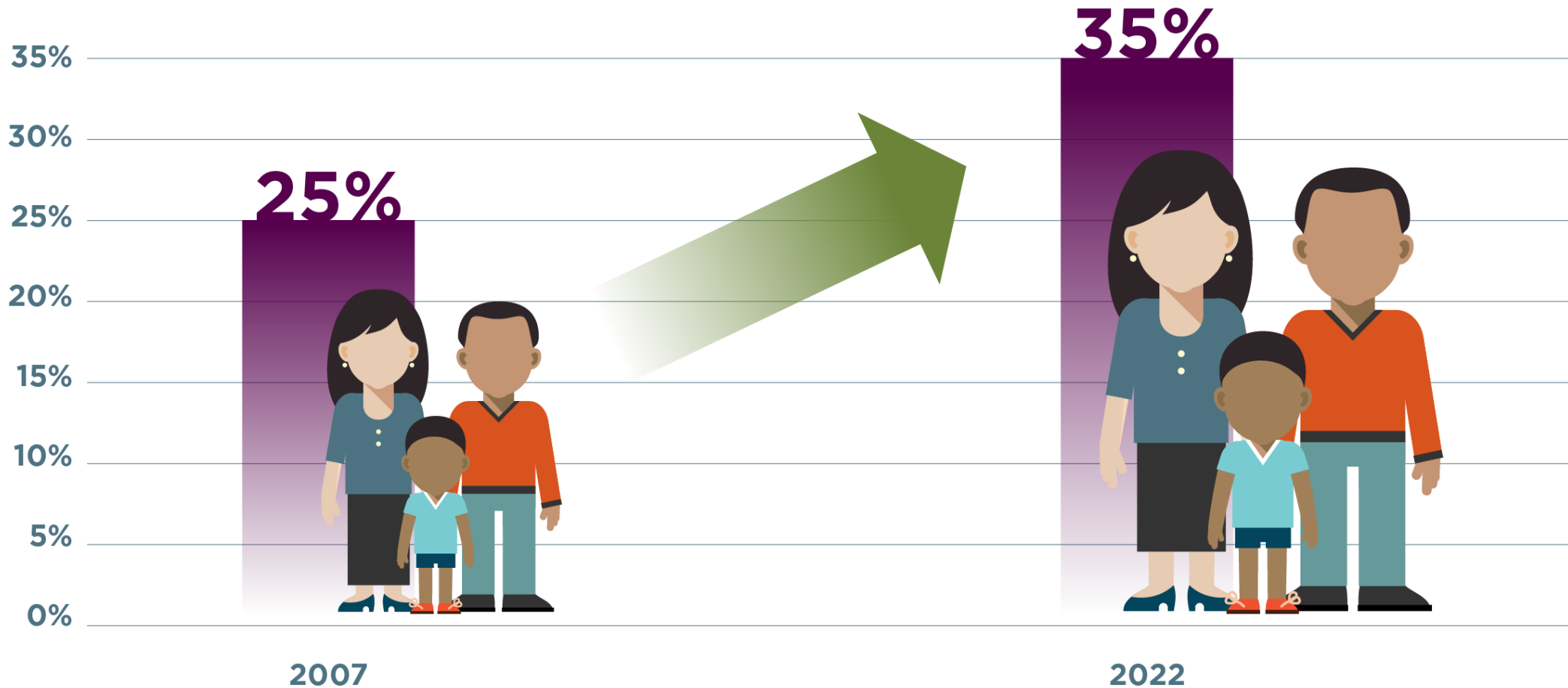
about 2.4 million children are being raised by a relative or close family friend, with no parent living in the household

123,294

children in foster care are being raised by relatives

Children in Kinship/Grandfamilies

Percentage of Children in Foster Care Being Raised by Relatives



This data does not distinguish between children in licensed/approved foster homes and those who are in unlicensed homes. The majority of these children are in unlicensed/unsupported homes.



**GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP
SUPPORT NETWORK**
A National Technical Assistance Center

Respite for Kin Caregivers





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TOOLKIT

Toolkit for Starting a Kin Caregiver Respite Program

[Download This Resource](#)

This toolkit offers tips and no-cost resources for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Title VI Native American Aging Programs (Title VI programs), and other organizations (both inside and outside the Aging Network) to develop new or expand existing respite programs or services for kin caregivers and their families.

Starting or Expanding Respite to Kin

- Asset map/meet with the kin caregiver respite programs and services that currently exist in your community
 - [Kinship Navigators](#)
 - [GrandFacts sheets](#)
- Talk to caregivers to find out the kinds of programs or services that caregivers want that are still needed
 - [Meaningful engagement](#)

Types of Respite for Kin

Consider what type of respite service/program you may be able to offer or partner to offer:

- Support groups for kin caregivers and/or children, with childcare provided
- Supervised recreational activities for children, including afterschool programs, social clubs, and summer camps
- Childcare
- One-on-one mentoring for children
- Tutoring for children
- Help with household chores, errands, and/or transportation
- Vouchers or cash assistance permitting kin caregivers to choose their own respite provider

Partner with Community Providers

Partner with community partners to serve kin:

- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- YMCA
- Extension offices
- Tutoring providers
- Childcare providers
- AmeriCorps Seniors
- Area Agencies on Aging/Title VI Programs
- For profit businesses

Help Partners Use Alternatives to Prove Family/Caregiving Relationship

- School, hospital, health care provider, and/or social service agency records listing the kin caregiver as child's contact
- Kin caregiver's private health insurance showing that the child is covered as a dependent
- Statements that the kin caregiver receives a public benefit on behalf of the child
- Kin caregiver's income tax return listing the child as a dependent
- A private lease showing that the child lives in the kin caregiver's home (without the child's parents)
- Other proof that the child lives in the kin caregiver's home, like school or other non-personal mail to the child at that address (but this would need to be combined with something else to avoid capturing multigenerational households)
- A letter from a social worker, school/childcare staff, religious leader, or other professional stating that the kin caregiver is raising the child

Exemplary Kinship Programs - Respite Examples



High Country Caregivers (HCC) North Carolina

Eyes in the Wild

- A nine-month nature adventure program for children and teens being raised by kin
- Four-hour monthly hikes, and an overnight backpacking trip and a two- to three-night camping trip
- The overnight camping trips are led by therapeutic counselors and supported by HCC staff and other vetted volunteers
- These trips provide caregivers with respite and youth with outdoor experiences in nature and time to connect with peers who are also being raised by relatives or close family friends



Project GRANDD, ISDD Atlanta, Georgia



- Contracts with a business Your Respite
- Provides respite to caregivers through specialized childcare for children with disabilities

Area Office on Aging Northwestern Ohio



- During in-person workshops and events, kin caregivers can access onsite respite provided by childcare workers who care for children and youth while kin caregivers participate in activities
- The Kinship Navigator Program hires the childcare workers and secures additional support through the [AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Program](#)

Self-Directed Voucher Programs for Kin



Basics of These Vouchers

- Families select who provides respite and it can include family and friends
- Payment can be made to family caregivers or agencies/providers
- Statewide Voucher Programs: <https://archrespite.org/ta-center-for-respite/respite-voucher-programs/apply-for-state-lifespan-respite-voucher-programs/>

Examples of Self-Directed Voucher Programs for Kin

- **New York:** www.nyscsrc.org/help-paying-for-respite-care
- **Florida Children's Home Network, Caregiver Support Services:** www.childrenshomenetwork.org/css
- **Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe:** www.gksnetwork.org/resources/overview-of-the-port-gamble-sklallam-tribe-kinship-parenting-program/
- **Virginia:** www.vda.virginia.gov/vlrv.htm
- **Washington:** www.lifespanrespitewa.org/

Additional Resources



Nine Steps to Respite for Grandfamilies

Available in English and Spanish

<https://archrespite.org/library/nine-steps-to-respite-for-grandfamilies/>



9 STEPS TO RESPITE CARE for Grandfamilies

A Pathway to Get the Break You Deserve

If you are a grandparent or other relative caring for your grandchildren, nieces, nephews or other related children, you may be considered a "grandfamily." The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is often a very special one. For a growing number of grandparents, grandparenting really means full-time parenting for a second family.

As a grandparent or family member providing care for your grandchild or another child in your family, you may engage in multiple roles in supporting their development and overall quality of life and that includes being a caregiver. You are called a caregiver if you provide care or support for a child in your family, whether you help full-time or as time permits. Typically, caregivers are parents, but can include other family members, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings who are providing care.

▶▶▶ **What is respite?** Respite is a temporary break from caregiving responsibilities, from taking care of the children in your home so that you can get a break, enjoy yourself, connect with friends and other family members, take care of your health issues, recharge your batteries, or just rest.

Undertaking the full-time responsibility for raising a grandchild or other relative causes major changes in one's life. This new role often includes physical, emotional, social, legal and financial challenges that were not present when you raised your own children. Respite, a temporary break from the ongoing responsibilities of caregiving, can provide a much needed break from these responsibilities, giving time to balance caring for your grandchildren with caring for yourself.

Grandfamilies often face unique legal and financial challenges. Most grandparent and other relative caregivers step into the parenting role without legal custody or guardianship and may lack the necessary authority to consent to medical care, access education, or obtain larger, affordable housing to accommodate the new family members. The cost of raising children is also something that can cause a tremendous burden and financial

▶▶▶ The 2018 **Children Thrive in Grandfamilies** fact sheet by Generations United provides important data on how children in the care of relatives have positive experiences compared to children in non-relative care: www.gu.org/resources/children-thrive-in-grandfamilies/

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For the latest updates, follow the Network on LinkedIn!



Questions?

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