

Kinship Care in NYS: A Brief Summary

What is Kinship Care?

Kinship care refers to non-parents (predominantly grandparents, as well as other relatives and close family friends) who care for children when parents are unable or unwilling to do so. The majority of kinship households in NYS (95%) do not receive supports from the foster care system.

What are the Circumstances of Kinship Care?

Children live with kin for similar reasons as to why they might enter non-relative foster care, such as: parental abuse/neglect, substance abuse, incarceration, and other safety concerns. Children in these homes experience the same special needs as children in foster care: emotional and behavioral disorders, educational disabilities, trauma, and loss. Caregivers tend to be single, older, and are more likely to be disabled and on a fixed income.

How Prevalent is Kinship Care?

According to American Community Survey data, more than 130,000 families are kinship families where grandparents and other relatives are primary caregivers. NYS Kinship Navigator data, coupled with OTDA data on Child Only Grants indicates there are 1.4 children per kinship household, putting an estimate of as many as **195,000 children in kinship care in NYS**. Roughly 7,400 of these children are in foster care with a kinship caregiver, leaving over 185,000 children with limited support.

What Services are Available for Kinship Care Families?

New York State funds a statewide Kinship Navigator (information, referral, advocacy, and education services) and 14 localized kinship service providers (which cover 25 counties, and provide case management, respite, and support groups) administered by the Office of Children and Family Services. Responsibility for meeting the needs of kinship families who are not in foster care primarily falls to the 14 local kinship services and the Kinship Navigator.

The 2021-22 Executive Budget provided \$322,000 for local kinship programs and \$210,000 for the Kinship Navigator. We are asking that the legislature add \$1.9 million for local programs and \$100,000 for the Kinship Navigator, totaling \$2,532,000 in total for all kinship services in NYS. **Federal funds are available for up to 100% match of any money spent by NYS on kinship services.**