



2021 Policy Initiatives for New York State's Kinship Families



Establish the Term “Kinship Caregiver”

Kinship Caregiver is the accepted term for grandparents, relatives, and family friends caring for children. The term should be defined in SSL §371 to ensure uniformity of usage in statutes, administrative directives, and in determining eligibility for services.

2020-21 Bill Numbers:

A3496 (Hevesi)	S52 (Persaud)
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Reinforce the Good Cause Exemption

Prohibit child support collection enforcement when good cause exemptions are claimed and proven by kinship caregivers who are seeking TANF Non-Parent child only grants

2020-21 Bill Numbers:

Pending (Hevesi)	S2586 (Brisport)
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Extend Kinship Caregiver Rights

Amend DRL § 72 to empower all kinship caregivers, not just grandparents, to have legal standing to petition for visitation or custody when they have cared for a child for more than 12 months.

Ensure Safety in Kinship “Safety Plans”

Alternative living arrangements (aka “safety plans”) place children with kinship caregivers via informal arrangements initiated by Child Protective Services in order to avoid formal removal proceedings. The practice is commonly used but not adequately monitored or regulated, threatening the potential safety and permanency for the youth and kinship caregivers:

1. Determine when “Alternative Living Arrangements” may be used
2. Collect data on these arrangements
3. Enact a pathway into foster care

Enable Data-Informed Decisions

Data on kinship arrangements from Family Court and OCFS are missing key elements needed to inform best practice. Need to:

1. Collect Family Court data on orders of custody and guardianship involving kin as parties.
2. Collect OCFS data on permanency achieved through kinship custody or guardianship pursuant to neglect or abuse cases.

Commemorate “Kinship Care Month”

Since 2014, the Legislature have passed resolutions and the Governor has issued proclamations declaring September as Kinship Care Month in recognition of the families who sacrifice to keep children safe in their homes. We request this be done again in 2021.