

# Kinship Care in NYS: Overview of Population and Services

## 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 care for their children. The majority of these households in NYS (over 95%) do not receive supports from the foster care system.

## What are the Causes and Circumstances of Kinship Care?

Children live with kin for similar reasons as to why they might enter foster care with non-relatives, namely parental abuse/neglect, substance abuse (see NY Times article on heroin epidemic [here](#)), incarceration, and other safety concerns. Children in these homes experience similar special needs as children in foster care, such as 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 analysis of the 2010 Census data in a 2016 report by the Council on Children and Families, in New York, more than 130,000 families are grandparent-headed households where grandparents are primary caregivers. Higher estimates, based upon research that suggests that grandparents make up 65% of non-parent caregivers, indicate that there are as many as **200,000 kinship households** in NYS.

NYS Kinship Navigator data (N=11,000) indicates there are 1.6 children per kinship household, putting a liberal estimate of as many as **320,000 children** in kinship care in NYS.

## What Services are Available for Kinship Care Families?

New York State funds a statewide Kinship Navigator (information, referral, advocacy, and education services) and 22 localized kinship service providers (case management and support groups) administered by the Office of Children and Family Services. Responsibility for meeting the needs of kinship families primarily falls local kinship services in 22 counties and to the Kinship Navigator in the remaining 40 counties.

In FY 2016-17, the executive budget provided \$338,750 for OCFS local kinship programs and \$220,500 for the Kinship Navigator, with the legislature adding \$1.9 million for local programs and \$100,000 for the Kinship Navigator, totaling \$2.5 million for kinship services in NYS.