



KINSHIP UNITY ACTION AGENDA

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LIVED EXPERIENCE TESTIMONIALS



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Santana Lee



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Meg Dygert



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PRESENTATION OF PRIORITIES



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Think of Us

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Ensure that kinship caregivers receive equitable financial and other supports

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure that kinship caregivers receive equitable financial and other supports

- Require children in kinship foster care receive the equitable financial assistance and other supports as soon as they move into the home.
- Ensure all financial supports for children in kinship care be based on the reasonable calculation of the cost of raising a child regardless of funding source, including for kinship families outside of the foster care system.
- Promote best practice TANF policies to support kinship families.
- Expand access to the Social Security child's benefit for children in grandfamilies and restore Social Security survivors benefit for students enrolled in college or alternative vocational school.
- Urge states to adopt different approval/licensing standards for kin caregivers through [new final rule](#).
- Do not require citizenship for foster care licensure or other financial supports for kinship caregivers.
- Ensure availability of statewide kinship navigator programs and other outreach programs.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Ensure policies that meet kinship families' basic needs

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure policies that meet kinship families' basic needs

- Trauma-informed physical, mental, and behavioral health supports for children, parents, and caregivers.
- Expand specialized **housing** for kinship care families.
- Expand access to **educational resources** for kinship families, including technology support.
- Improve adequacy and grandfamilies' access to **Federal Nutrition Programs**, including SNAP, WIC Special Supplementary Nutrition Program, and free healthy school meals.
- Refundable kinship caregiver tax credit at the federal and state levels and Child Tax Credit.
- **Child care** benefits for kinship families.
- Kinship care exemption in child support collections.
- Equitable **financial assistance** to support kinship families that prevent entry into foster care.
- **Education for kinship caregivers** on services and benefits available to them.
- **Training and resources** caseworkers and providers about supporting kinship families.
- **Collaboration** across systems to increase access to existing services.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Fully integrate lived expertise into policy review, design, and implementation

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Fully integrate lived expertise into policy review, design, and implementation

- Change federal and state hiring practices to properly weigh lived expertise.
- For government-supported programs, fund authentic engagement of lived expertise and pay lived experts for their time.
- Require that government-funded research and evaluation integrates lived expertise.
- Develop policy guidance on how to fully and authentically engage lived expertise to guide policy change.
- Educate the field & provide training to federal, state, and local government and nonprofit staff serving grandfamilies on authentic, respectful trauma-informed engagement of lived experts.
- Support lived experts engaged in practice or policy work, including through peer-to-peer supports and investing in programs led by individuals with lived experience.
- Support families in communicating in their preferred language to fully engage them as experts.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Ensure racial/cultural equity, and respect
and support tribal sovereignty

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure racial/cultural equity, and respect and support tribal sovereignty

- Support policy that recognizes and builds on strong cultural traditions of kin and extended family.
- Fund community-based, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive services and supports.
- Require cultural awareness and race equity training for all child welfare and other grandfamilies stakeholders incorporating members of the various communities as trainers.
- Require states redefine maltreatment and revise living standards when assessing a home to take into account the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities among the impoverished, cost of living, and real-life circumstances.
- Ensure services for kinship families are available in the language spoken by the caregivers and youth.
- Provide federal funding directly to tribes to provide culturally sensitive supports to kin, and work with tribal leadership on implementation.
- Reform the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse to address barriers that prevent programs and services developed by and for Native communities and communities of color that are overrepresented in child welfare from being approved for federal reimbursement.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Ensure that the child welfare system respects, values, and fully supports kinship families

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure that the child welfare system respects, values, and fully supports kinship families

- Enhance prevention resources to prevent crisis before they occur, support kin in being part of prevention plans.
- Streamline and address barriers to interstate placements.
- Invest in funding for jurisdictions to conduct family finding, engagement, and support when a child first comes to the attention of the child welfare system.
- Require caseworkers placing children with kin to educate caregivers about their care arrangement options and any supports or benefits that may be available for each option.
- Require policies that place all children removed from parents with safe and appropriate kin placements by default, with consideration of the youth's preferences.
- Ensure specialized supports are available to kinship caregivers, children in kinship families, and parents.
- Allow, encourage, and support kin to maintain the family bond and connection to culture even if they are not able to care for the child full-time.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Provide affordable, high-quality legal representation for kinship families

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide affordable, high-quality legal representation for kinship families

- Expand federal, state, and local funding for free and low-cost legal representation for all families, including kinship caregivers outside of the child welfare system.
- Require that kinship caregivers receive free legal representation in the child welfare system as a condition of federal funding.
- Ensure caregivers are educated on when they or their family may need legal representation.
- Provide funding to develop and incentivize training for attorneys to better understand grandfamilies and ensure quality representation.
- Incorporate kinship families' lived experience into legal training to educate attorneys on the unique family dynamics and diverse circumstances of these families.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Support effective strategies to change
the public narrative on kinship care

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Support effective strategies to change the public narrative on kinship care

- Use public opinion research & messaging to push against negative stereotypes.
- Highlight why kinship is the best option for children when they cannot remain with their parents, including research that demonstrates stronger outcomes for children in relative care.
- Acknowledge that no family is perfect, nor do they have to be.
- Normalize help-seeking and destigmatize the need for assistance.
- Ensure it is clear that government and public systems should consistently support, not undermine kinship networks and families.
- Recognize that caring for children in kinship care is complex as families navigate changing family dynamics, emotions, and circumstances.
- Promote community awareness about grandfamilies and work towards shifting public perceptions to normalize grandparents and other relatives raising children through kinship care.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Develop specialized programs to meet the unique needs of kinship families

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop specialized programs to meet the unique needs of kinship families

- Expand kinship navigator programs and promote best practices for supporting kinship families inside and outside the child welfare system.
- Support specialized programs and training for younger caregivers & older caregivers parenting for the first time in years.
- Ensure that kinship caregivers have full access to become therapeutic foster parents.
- Invest in programs that meet kinship families' mental health, social, and emotional needs, including peer programs.
- Ensure that kinship families have full access to programs and services to provide an affirming home for LGBTQIA+ children and youth.
- Establish robust federal, state, and local respite networks and programs for kinship families.
- Develop flexible funds to meet urgent family needs and fund innovative programs to meet grandfamilies' unique needs.
- Leverage existing resources for kinship families and coordinate services with existing programs.
- Ensure the inclusion of kinship families in permissible uses of federal and state opioid settlements.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY

Enhance social science research on all kinship families to better address inequities across systems

COLLECTIVE ACTION PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance social science research on all kinship families to better address inequities across systems

- Fund research on the stability, permanency, health, and well-being outcomes for caregivers and children in kinship families.
- Collect more demographic data about all kinship families to inform services and supports.
- Analyze and disaggregate the racial data of grandfamilies both inside and outside the foster care system.
- Track children who have come to the attention of the child welfare system but are diverted from that system.
- Collect longitudinal data tracking the well-being of children being raised by their relatives after they turn 18 and into adulthood.
- Prioritize researchers with lived experience and involve and fund minority-serving institutions and scholars of color.
- Develop evidence-based tools to help evaluate inequities of grandfamilies.
- Leverage alternative data sources to compile and analyze data on grandfamilies whenever feasible.
- Promote research that is strengths-based and highlights family resilience.
- Emphasize the importance of ensuring the process is not overly intrusive and facilitated in a dignified and respectful manner.

Thank You

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TAKE ACTION

- **Sign up** to receive alerts and stay up to date on ongoing opportunities to help move the agenda forward.
- **Tell us** what you are doing! This will help us honor and coordinate our collective work.
- **Volunteer** to join or lead a working group to go deep on one of the priorities.
- **Mark your calendar** for annual updates on our collective progress and ways to keep moving forward together in support of grandfamilies.



SCAN TO TAKE ACTION

JOIN THE MOVEMENT



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KINSHIP UNITY ACTION AGENDA

**generations
united**
Because we're stronger together®



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think of us
Driving Systems Change
in Child Welfare