

Rooted in Kinship: Strengthening Supports for Grandfamilies and Kinship Caregivers

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Generations United

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“We formed Generations United to argue for a caring society.”

- Jack Ossofsky

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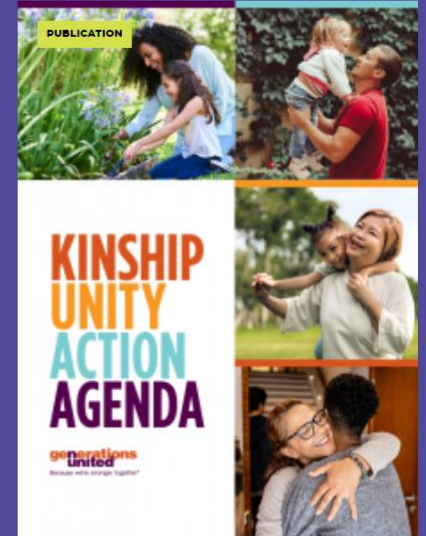
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We believe in a world that values and engages all generations.

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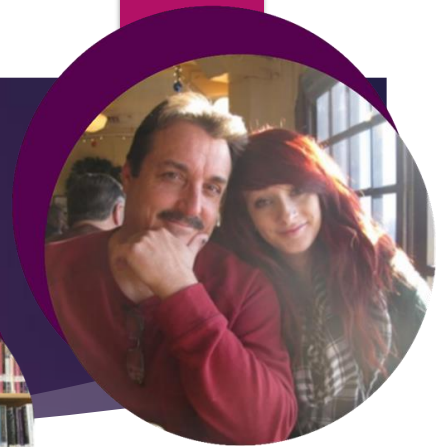


The National Center on Grandfamilies

Generations United has TWO initiatives to support kinship/grandfamilies:

National Center on Grandfamilies

- GRAND Voices - a national group of caregiver advocates
- Federal advocacy on behalf of grandfamilies/kinship families
- Resources including the annual State of Grandfamilies Report
- gu.org and grandfamilies.org



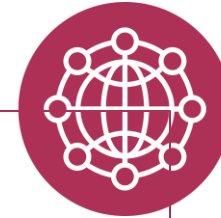
GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK

A National Technical Assistance Center



Learning Collaboratives and Information Dissemination

The Network hosts webinars and facilitates learning collaboratives.



A Centralized Hub

The Network is elevating exemplary kinship/grandfamily practices and programs from around the country.



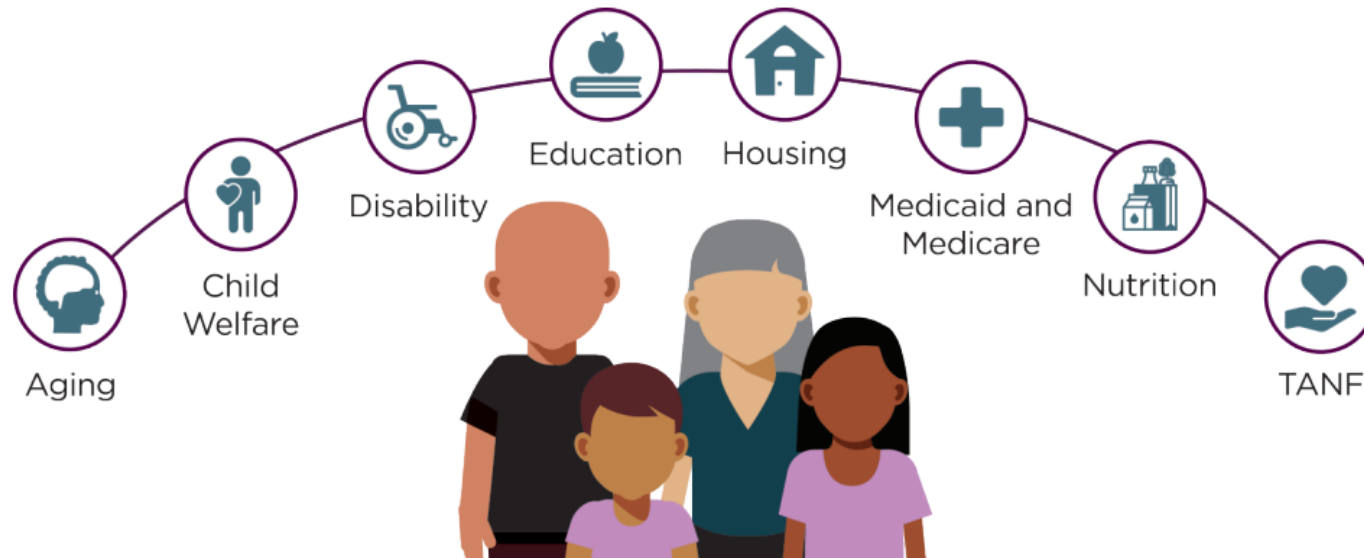
Bridging Systems for Kinship Families

The Network is helping Idaho, San Diego County, and Oneida Nation of Wisconsin optimize their collaborative approaches and improve their services. Solutions will be replicable for others.



Individual Assistance

We respond to individual requests for help from government agencies and nonprofit organizations.



GKSNetwork.org



Question for You:

If you suddenly couldn't care for your child anymore, where would you want them to go?

If your relative/friend suddenly couldn't care for their child anymore, where would they want them to go?



- **Grandma or Grandpa**
- **Relative**
- **Friend**
- **Foster Care?**



Question for You:

If you received a call today that a child is coming to live with you tonight... indefinitely, are you ready?

What would you need?

What questions do you have?

Definition of Relative/Kin

“Individuals related to a child by blood, marriage, tribal custom and/or adoption and other individuals who have an emotionally significant relationship with the child **or** the child’s parents or other family members.”

NOTE: Can have different definitions of relative/kin for different purposes, such as identification and notification of relatives/kin.

Children in Kinship/Grandfamilies

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



about 2.5 million children are being raised by a relative or close family friend, with no parent living in the household

127,449

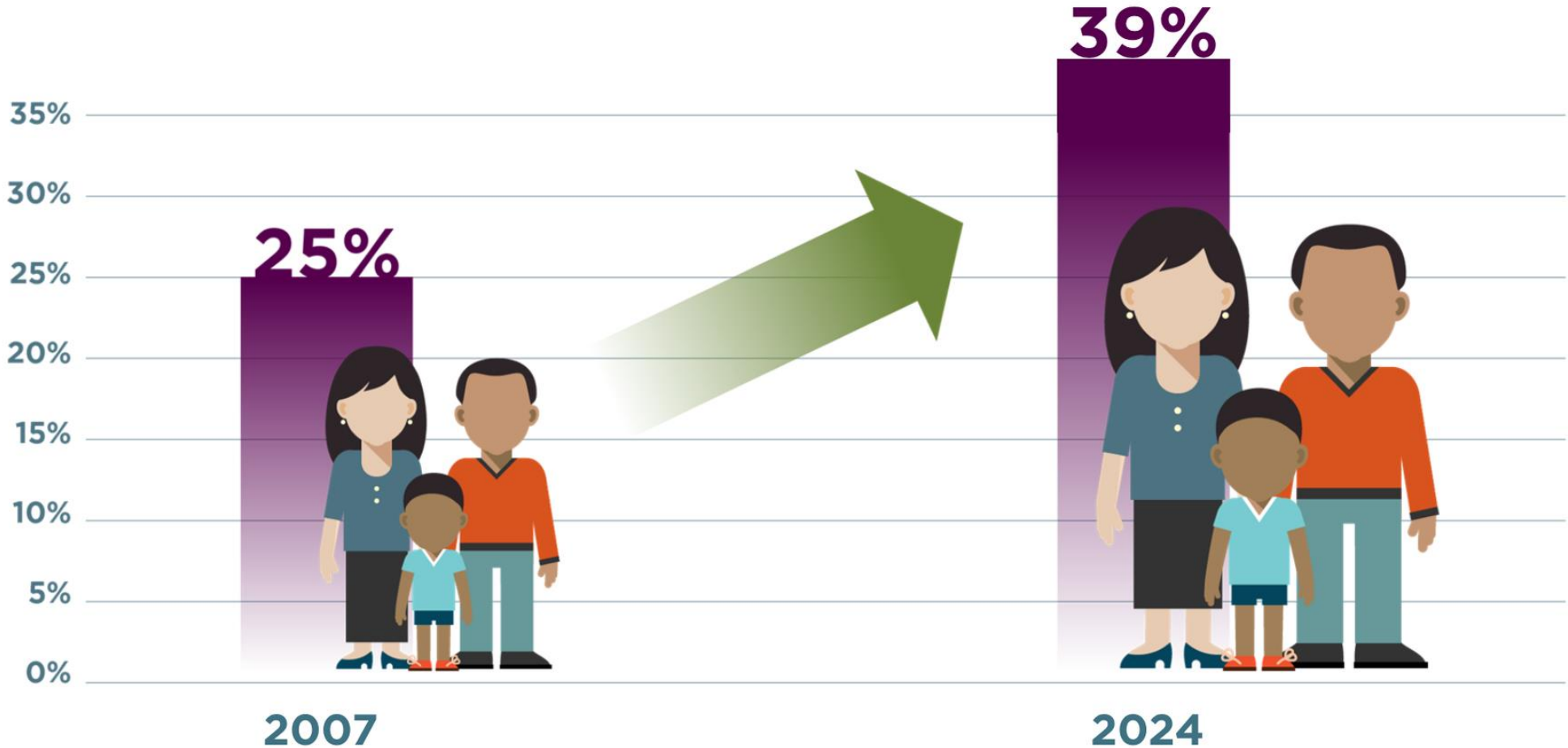
children in foster care are being raised by kin

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

Percentage of Children in Foster Care Being Raised by Relatives



Almost half of all children placed with kin – about 56,000 children – were living in unlicensed/unapproved homes in 2024. These kinship families are subject to the rules and restrictions of foster care, but typically do not receive foster care maintenance payments and don't have a pathway to Guardianship Assistance.

Children in Louisiana Kinship/ Grandfamilies

- 45,000 (4 percent) of children in Louisiana are being raised in kinship care
- 1,889 (43 percent) of children in foster care in Louisiana are with relatives

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

Parental Causal Factors Creating Kinship/GrandFamilies

Substance use

Death

Disabilities

Detainment or
Deportation

Military
deployment

Incarceration

COVID-19

Mental health

More than **1/3**
of all children
placed in foster care
because of parental
substance use are
placed with
relatives.*



Grandfamilies

Strengths and Challenges



Observations

What strengths do the child and caregiver show?

What challenges do they face?

What emotions are they each facing?

What helps? What brings hope?





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Kinship Strengths: Children Thrive



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This Kin-Finding Toolkit features promising practices that have been helping child welfare agencies across the country increase their kin placement rates. Every practice comes with the necessary real-world tools, such as sample policy language and forms

www.gksnetwork.org/resources/kin-finding-toolkit/

Kin-Finding Toolkit



Scan the QR code to
access the toolkit

Challenges

Legal

Family Dynamics

Caregiver & Child
Mental Health

Navigation

Food & Nutrition

School Enrollment

Grief

Financial

Child's Behavior
Issues

Role Confusion

Isolation

Health Care

Child
Care/Respite

Caregiver
Health/Disability

Housing

Grandfamilies Challenges: Mental Health

- Model: Peer and Individualized Mental Health Supports Model Program:
 - Grandfamilies & Kinship Care- Children's Service Society of Utah
 - Access at www.gksnetwork.org/resources/grandfamilies-kinship-care-at-childrens-service-society-of-utah/
- Caregiver Peer Support Groups
- Youth & Child Support Groups/Activities
- Onsite mental health provider for individualized counseling
- Robust mental health referral program
- Educational workshops: trauma, self care, youth mental health, grief, kinship family dynamics

Grandfamilies Mental Health Resource



[← Resource Library](#)

GUIDE/REPORT

Guide for Providers: No-Cost Training Resources on Kinship/Grandfamily Mental Health Needs

[Download This Resource](#)

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USAging Leaders in
Aging Well
at Home

Grandfamilies Challenges: Family Dynamics

[← Events](#) [← Upcoming Events](#)

How Family Dynamics are Unique in Kinship Families

April 22, 2026



[Download the presentation ↓](#)

[View the webinar recording ↗](#)

[Kinship Care: Adjusting to Changes in Family Dynamics ↓](#)

Access at www.gksnetwork.org/events

Opioids and Other Substance Use



[Practicing Self-Care](#)

[Addressing Childhood Trauma](#)

[Preventing Harmful Drug Use by Children](#)

[Engaging with Birth Parents](#)

[Talking with a Child about their Birth Parent](#)

[Where to Begin When Children are Suddenly in Your Care](#)

[Understanding the Impact of a Parent's Substance Use Disorder on the Child](#)

[Maintaining Your Mental Health as a Caregiver](#)

[When A Child Returns to the Care of Their Parent or the Parent is More Fully Integrated into the Child's Life](#)

[Understanding a Substance Use Disorder and How to Support Your Loved One in Recovery](#)



Opioid Settlement Funds

- Peer to Peer Advocacy Group
- Tip Sheets
- Advocacy Resources
- At least six states using funds for kinship families: AL, AK, MA, NV, OH, WV

Take Action – Opioid Settlement Funds for Grandfamilies

More than 3,000 state and local governments have sued opioid corporations in hopes of recouping the money spent in dealing with the opioid crisis. In 2022, a nationwide agreement was reached to resolve all opioid settlement litigations made against major US pharmaceutical companies, resulting in a \$26 billion settlement to assist states with their opioid recovery efforts. Currently, decision-makers across the country are determining how the funds will be allocated; however, grandfamilies – families where children reside with, and are raised by their grandparents, relatives, or close family friends – risk being overlooked. Advocacy is essential to ensure that funds are allocated to helping affected grandfamilies. This guide provides specific action steps you can take to advocate for the inclusion of grandfamilies/kinship families in the allocation of opioid settlement funds.



Research

Search the internet to learn about opioid settlement funds in your state. For example, search “opioid settlement funds Maryland.” Seek out public meetings, names of agencies in charge of distributing funds, and advisory council members in charge of making decisions on the use of funds. For example, search “opioid settlement funds advisory council/board in Pennsylvania.” The following links may be helpful:

- This [article](#) lists which state council and council members control opioid settlement funds in each state.
- This [tracker](#) describes how funds are being allocated in different states.

Practice Making Your Pitch

Pull together essential statistics, a compelling story about an affected family, and relevant resources to leave behind after your meeting. The following reports from Generations United may be helpful:

- [Raising the Children of the Opioid Epidemic: Solutions and Supports for Grandfamilies](#)
- [Building Resilience, Supporting Grandfamilies' Mental Health and Wellness](#)
- This [infographic](#) from the 2023 State of Grandfamilies Report includes data related to grandfamilies' and parental substance use.
- The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network also has a resource page on accessing grandfamilies data points in different states, specific data

Send a Letter

Draft a letter to your governor, state attorney general, and/or other key decision makers in your state, making the case for including supports for children and grandfamily caregivers in the use of opioid settlement funds. As part of this letter, request a meeting with the governor's office, attorney general, or other key decision maker.

Develop a Specific Ask

Decide which grandfamily supports and services you want the money to go toward. Examples include trauma training, support groups, emergency assistance, support for kinship navigators, or other local kinship support programs. Consider building on a successful model or program that was helpful to you or other grandfamilies you know and scaling it up or enhancing it.

Connect with Allies

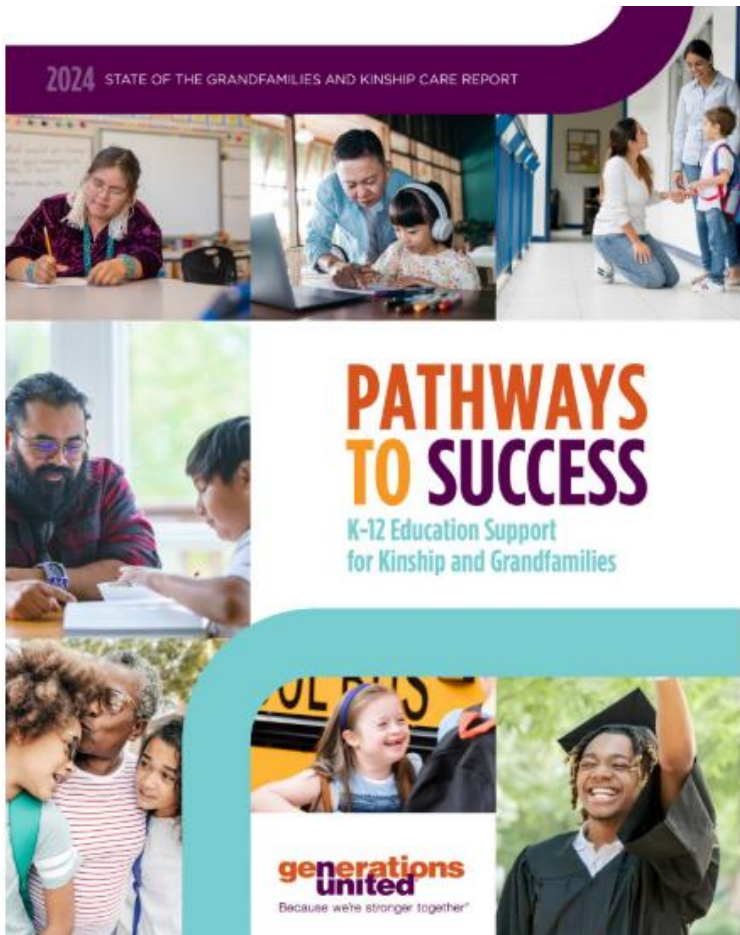
Contact allies in your state who are informed on this topic, such as state representatives, mayors, or other community leaders. Ask if they can advocate for including grandfamilies in opioid settlement funds or if they can connect you with key people to make the case on your behalf.



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Working with Schools



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TOOLKIT

Five Actions for Supporting Students and Caregivers in Kinship/Grandfamilies

[Download This Resource](#)

A Toolkit for K-12 School Professionals and Kinship Service Providers

This toolkit contains five actions for K-12 school professionals and kinship service providers to better support students and caregivers in kinship/grandfamilies. The five actions each include specific steps and embedded tools to help children and their caregivers thrive in K-12 settings, and is a companion piece to *Pathways to Success: K-12 Education Support for*



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Grandfamilies Challenge: Legal



- Legal Workshops: **Louisiana-Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana**
- *Kin Care Primer –Texas* and others
www.gksnetwork.org/resources/resource-guides-kinship-caregivers/
- Effective use of McKinney Vento & **Washington State’s LAARK** (Free legal advice over the phone).
- Assistance Securing Guardianship/Adoption- Illinois
- Education and health care consent and authorization laws

Adoption and Guardianship Comparison Charts

www.gu.org/resources/adoption-and-guardianship-for-children-in-foster-care/

- National chart, individual charts for all 50 States, and the District of Columbia.
- Include state-specific information:
 - Rights and Responsibilities
 - Financial and Legal Assistance
 - Public Benefits
 - Health Insurance
 - Federal and State Tax Credits
 - Caregiver Successor Planning and Death Benefits for Children
 - College and Independent Living

CHART

Adoption and Guardianship for Children in Kinship Foster Care:
Comparison Chart for Louisiana

This chart is designed to help kinship foster parents compare adoption and guardianship as two options that you and the children in your care can pursue to exit foster care and create permanent families in Louisiana.

While this chart is directed at kinship foster parents, it is also intended as a tool to help child welfare and other case workers assist kinship foster parents. Birth parents and older children may also find it helpful to review as part of their decision-making.

Generations United created this chart in collaboration with the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana. It is developed from Generations United's National Comparison Chart and accompanying Brief on Adoption and Guardianship for Children in Kinship Foster Care, which are available at www.grandfamilies.org. The content on this chart should not be considered legal advice, but rather general information to help guide your decision. Anyone considering adoption or guardianship should consult with a local legal professional.



RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	ADOPTION	GUARDIANSHIP
<i>What are my legal rights and responsibilities for the child?</i>	You will become the parent in the eyes of the law forever. You have all rights and responsibilities for the child.	You will have most of the rights and responsibilities that come with caring for a child until the child reaches adulthood or the guardianship ends.
<i>What are the birth parents' rights and responsibilities for the child?</i>	The birth parents' rights are forever terminated.	Birth parents keep the rights to visit the child and to consent to adoption and/or name change. Birth parents have an obligation to financially support the child if ordered by the court to pay child support.
<i>Do I have authority to access services for the child?</i>	As an adoptive parent, access to services for the child is the same as for any birth parent.	As a guardian, access to services for the child is typically the same as for any birth parent.



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Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

Grandfamilies Challenge: Finances

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) child-only grants:
 - Difficult to access
 - **Massachusetts** [grants good cause exemptions](#) for assigning child support to the state to all kin/grandfamily caregivers applying for TANF child-only grants
 - **Nevada-** [Foster Kinship program streamlines access to public benefits](#)
- State supports:
 - **Louisiana's Kinship Subsidy Program** [monthly subsidy](#) for child living in home of qualified relative who has legal custody or obtains it within a year.
 - **District of Columbia's** [Close Relative Caregiver Program](#) – *in addition to TANF child-only*
- Within foster care, new federal rule allowing kin-specific licensing standards – see www.gksnetwork.org/resources/new-federal-rule-supports-kinship-families-in-foster-care/ . Louisiana has been approved.




Grandfamilies Challenge: Health & Nutrition

- Tailored food distribution/pantries [Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana](#)
- [The National Family Caregiver Support Program & The Native American Caregiver Support Program](#)
Visit the eldercare locator: eldercare.acl.gov
- **Minnesota's** [Family Investment Program](#) - child-only SNAP with TANF



Nutrition Resources

- School Breakfast and Lunch
- Summer Nutrition
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- Other Federal Nutrition Programs
- Promising Practices for Ensuring Access to Food Assistance




◀ Resource Library

FACT SHEET

School Breakfast and Lunch Programs for Grandfamilies and Kinship Families

Download This Resource

Ver la versión en español de la página. 

View the Spanish version of the page.



Health

2026 State of Grandfamilies & Kinship Care Report Coming this Fall!

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

Project Healthy Grandparents - Georgia State University →

Project Healthy Grandparents (PHG) is among the oldest continuously operating programs for grandparents raising grandchildren in the United States.

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

Project GRANDD (Grandparents Raising And Nurturing Dependents with Disabilities) →

Project GRANDD collaborates with an array of partners to maximize its reach and support of kinship families and is continuously improving by listening to their caregiver clients.



Cross System Work

- **Kinship Navigator Programs**
 - Guides/informational websites: [Louisiana Kinship Navigator Guide](#)
 - Individual assistance from a peer caregiver: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana (Additional model - Florida Children's Home Network)
 - Kinship Navigator Programs Across US: www.gksnetwork.org/resources/kinship-navigator-programs-around-the-united-states/
 - The Family First Prevention Services Act authorizes ongoing federal reimbursement
 - New [federal opportunity](#) to apply for funds to help states transition to an evidence-based program,
- **Federal [Advisory Council on Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren](#)**
- **Cross System Work underway in many states –**
 - [Massachusetts](#)
 - [Michigan](#)
 - [Washington](#)

GrandFacts Caregiver Resources

<https://www.grandfamilies.org/State-Fact-Sheets>

GRANDFACTS

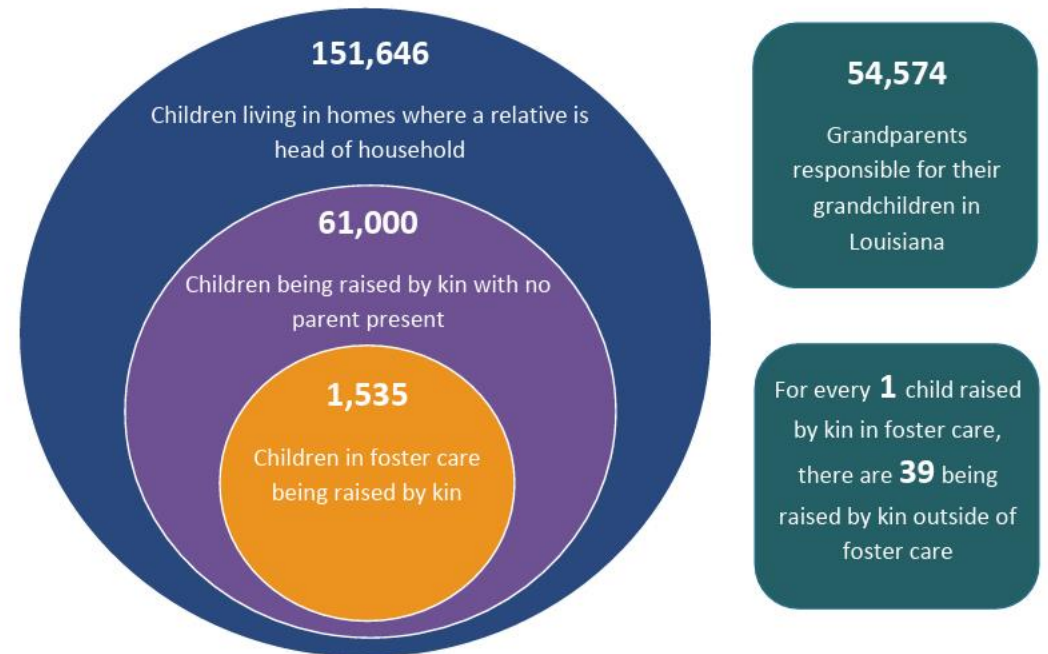
STATE FACT SHEETS FOR GRANDFAMILIES



The GrandFacts state fact sheets for grandfamilies include state-specific data and programs as well as information about public benefits, educational assistance, legal relationship options and state laws. Visit www.grandfamilies.org to find this and all GrandFacts state fact sheets.

Louisiana

Grandfamilies Data



Strengthen Services & Support



**American Indian & Alaska
Native Grandfamilies:
Helping Children Thrive
Through Connection to
Family and Cultural Identity**

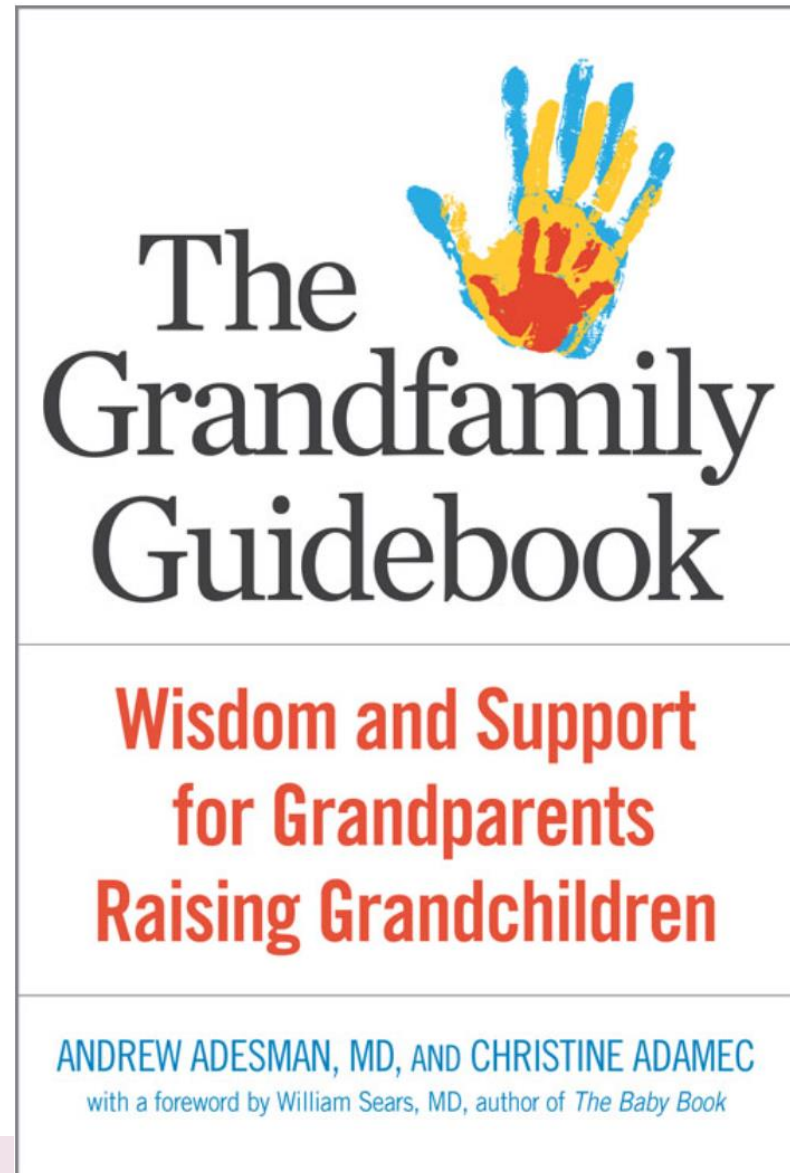
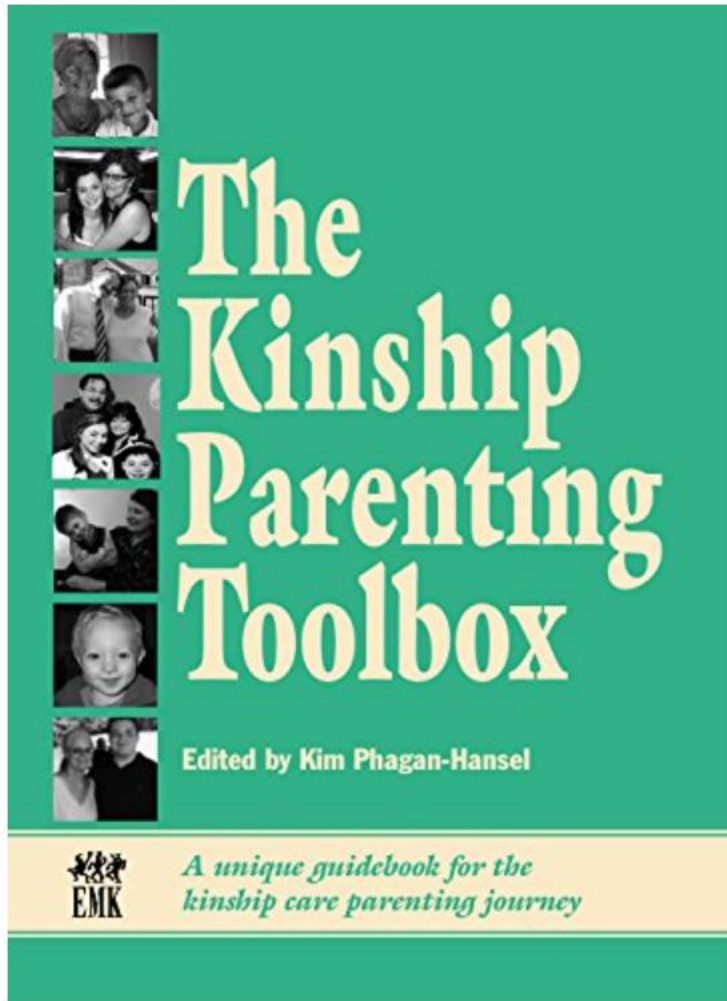


**African American
Grandfamilies: Helping
Children Thrive Through
Connection to Family and
Culture**

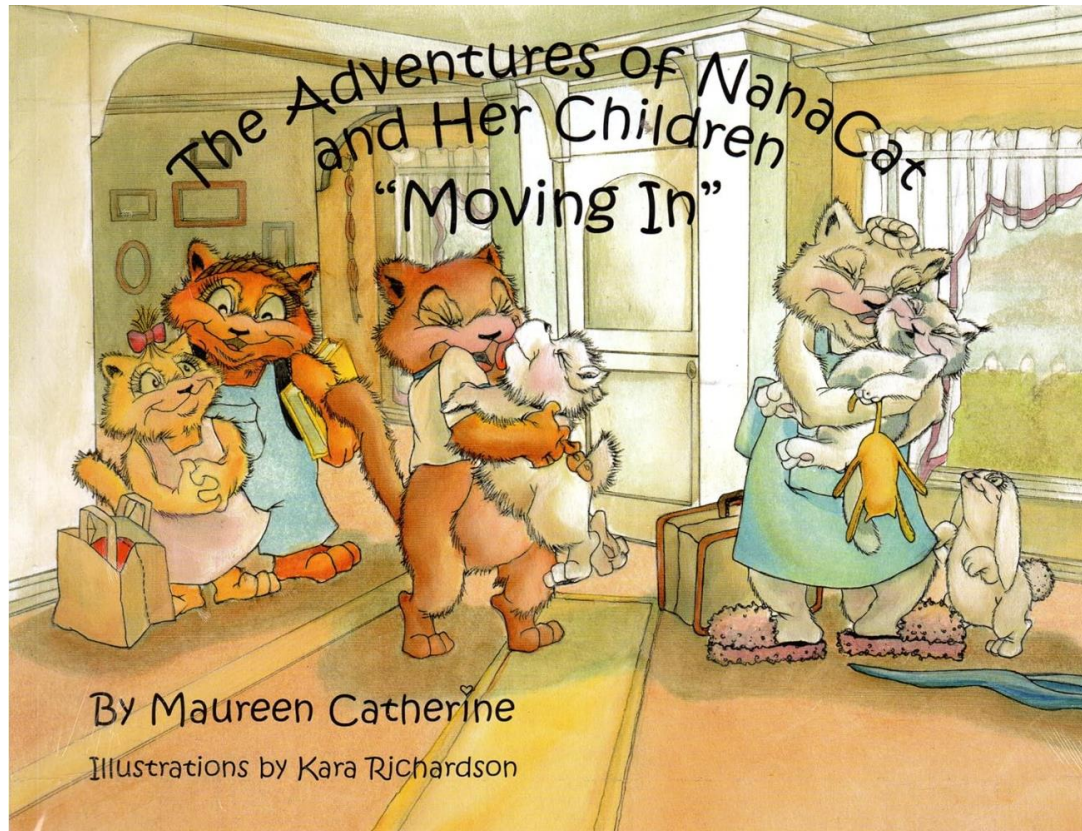


**Latino Grandfamilies:
Helping Children Thrive
Through Connection to
Culture and Family**

Guidebooks



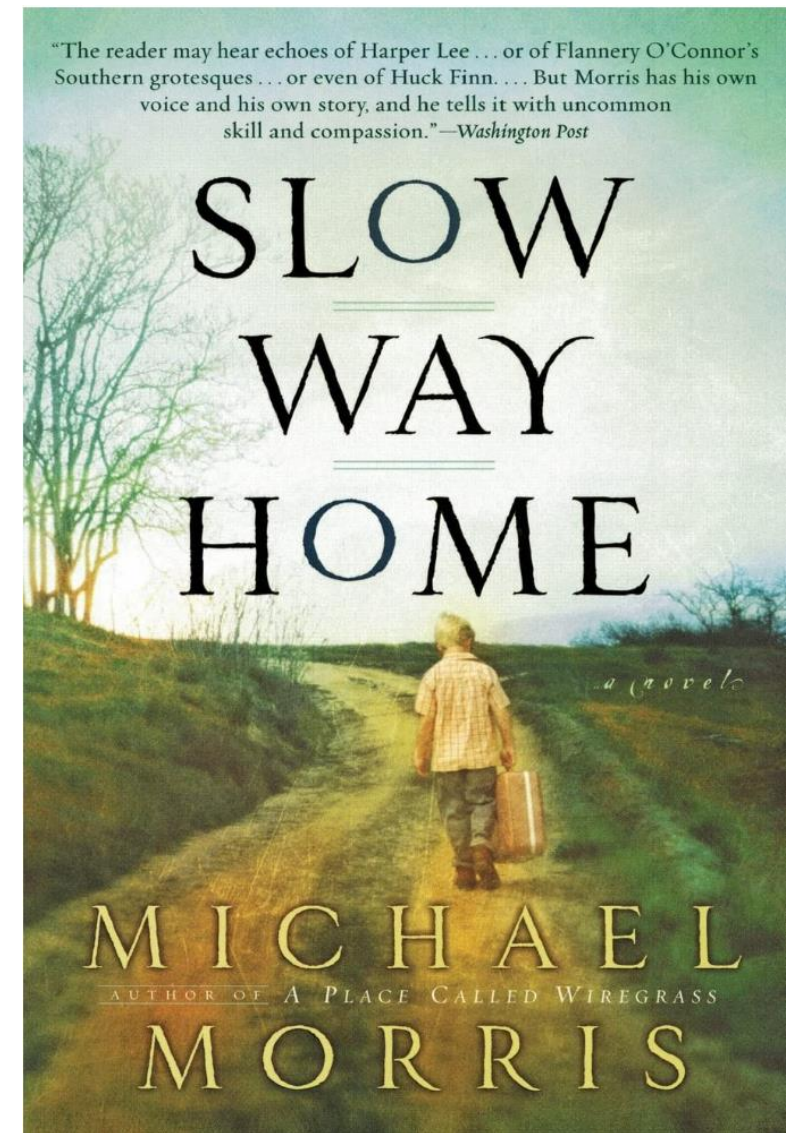
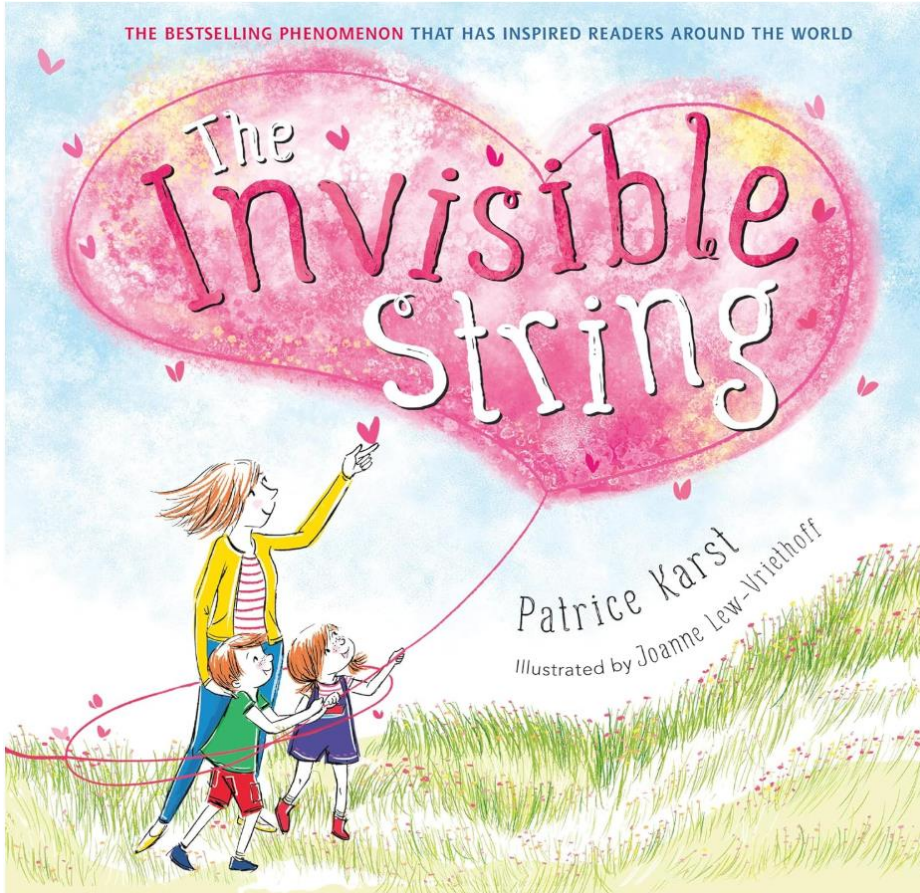
Children's Books



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Children's Books & Novels



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Question for You:

What action can you take to in your organization or community to strengthen support for kinship families?

Stay Connected & Access Support

[Sign up](#) for our monthly newsletter which will provide you with updates on new kinship resources.



[Request assistance](#)

For the latest updates, follow the Network on [LinkedIn!](#)



Download the Presentation





The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.