

Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program



What is a Kinship Caregiver Navigator program?

Parenthood. The most challenging and rewarding role for any of us. Imagine taking on the role of parent when you have already raised your own children and are close to retirement age. Or parenting a child of a relative or close friend when you have never been a parent yourself. Hard to imagine? Yet this is the reality for tens of thousands of Pennsylvania grandparents and other kin who step up and care for children whose own parents are unable raise them. While some of these children are living in kinship foster care, many others are not. Grandparents and other kinship caregivers sometimes need support navigating the challenges that come with their new role. **Kinship caregiver navigator programs offer help to these families by providing information and referral services to grandparents and other kin raising children who are not known to the child welfare system.**

The opioid crisis has led to more grandparents and other kin stepping in to care for children avoiding foster care placements.

Nearly **82,000** grandparents are caring for over **89,000** grandchildren in PA

Did you know? Kinship foster care placements already receive support services from their county Children & Youth agencies, but families not known to the child welfare system can have similar needs but nowhere to go for help.

Several other states have implemented kinship navigator programs for those raising children not known to the child welfare system such as Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Nevada and Washington.

In 2016, the number one reason children were removed from their homes by county Children & Youth agencies was parental substance abuse.

Research shows kinship navigator programs help prevent the need for foster care, while strengthening family bonds and ensuring continuing relationships with a child's immediate biological family. Foster care is costly, and a kinship caregiver navigator program would be a wise investment of state resources and would likely save us money by reducing the need for additional foster care placements.



The average Pennsylvania foster care placement cost is nearly **\$25,000 per year** - the commonwealth pays **60% of the cost.**

A 5-year evaluation of a Florida kinship navigator program demonstrated that over 99% of children living in families who accessed the program did not enter foster care at the one-year follow up.

Here's how the program would benefit kinship caregivers – or prospective kinship caregivers – and the children they are raising:



Provide grandparents and other kin who are not known to the child welfare system with guidance and information about services and supports available to help raise the child or children in their care.



Establish a website with resources available to kinship caregivers including federal and state programs, support groups, financial aid, legal aid, respite services for caregivers and education and support services for children.



Create a 24/7 toll-free hotline to help offer guidance to kinship caregivers.



Provide for the training of Kinship Caregiver Navigators staffing the hotline to help ensure the success of kinship caregivers by connecting them with information about federal, state and local supports.



Develop a statewide marketing campaign to educate the public about the services and supports available to kinship caregivers.

The Department of Human Services will release an RFP for statewide services and contract with an entity that will administer this program.

How Can You Support Kinship Caregivers in PA?

Support House Bill 2133 to create the statewide Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program.



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