

# Kinship Care in Michigan: An Overview

## Kinship Care Definition

Kinship care can be defined as the provision of full time nurturing and protection of children by adults other than parents who have a family relationship bond with the children (Child Welfare League of America, 1994). Most of the time, extended family members including grandparents, other extended family members, and fictive kin such as close family friends provide this nurturing and protection. A safe kinship placement can provide stability and permanency for children, keep siblings together, and allow children to stay connected with biological family members.



## Kinship families form as a result of issues relating to biological parents such as:

- Death
- Incarceration
- Mental and physical illness
- Child abuse and neglect
- Unplanned Pregnancy
- AIDS
- Military Leave
- Poverty

## Michigan Kinship Statistics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau:

- 183,621 children were being raised by a relative.
- 143,523 children were living with grandparents.
- 70,044 grandparents reported being responsible for their grandchildren.

## Nationally, there are:

- 4.5 million children living in grandparent-headed households.
- 1.5 million children in the U.S. living in households headed by other relatives.



## Informal Care

In an informal arrangement, family members become caregivers for relative children without the involvement of the court or a social service agency.

## Formal Care

Formal arrangements are made with the court and the assistance of an agency such as Child Protective Services, which may maintain limited contact with the kinship caregivers over time, e.g., kinship foster care.

## Resources

- The Kinship Care Resource Center-School of Social Work at Michigan State University provides statewide support for kinship families. Please call the Kinship Care Resource Center at 800-535-1218 or 517-355-9600.
- Financial assistance available for kinship families includes the Family Independence Program, Foster Care Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Adoption Assistance, WIC Program, Medicaid, and day care assistance.
- Legal assistance for kinship families is offered by Chance at Childhood, a legal clinic specializing in child welfare. Chance at Childhood can be reached at 517-432-8406
- Statewide support groups are available to assist kinship families. Please contact the Kinship Care Resource Center-School of Social Work-Michigan State University to be referred to a support group in your county.
- "You Are Not Alone: A Resource Guide to Raising Children in Michigan, is a comprehensive booklet that is distributed free of charge to relative caregivers for children and kinship professionals through the Kinship Care Resource Center. "You Are Not Alone" contains information on kinship statistics, financial assistance, legal assistance, nutritional assistance, support groups, health programs, educational resources, kinship legislation, and much more.

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