



# Grandfamilies 101

## Professional Development

# What is a Grandfamily?

The terms “grandfamily” and “kinship family” are used interchangeably to describe families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children because their parents cannot.



# Who Are You?

How frequently do you connect with kinship and grandfamilies?

In what capacity?

- Courts
- Public benefits offices
- Schools or other organizations serving youth
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Family Resource Centers
- Food pantries
- Community-based or cultural organizations
- Faith-based organizations





# Who Are We?



We provide information and assistance to state, tribal, and territorial government agencies and non-profit organizations that serve kinship families.

[www.GKSNetwork.org](http://www.GKSNetwork.org)



# Why Are We Here?

- Recognize how common it is for grandparents/kin to be primary caregivers for children and teens
- Understand grandfamilies' needs
- Identify resources to help grandfamilies address needs in these areas:
  - Legal
  - Educational
  - Financial



# Grandfamilies in Foster Care: Just the Tip of the Iceberg

For every child in a grandfamily in the foster care system . . .

**There are 17 children being raised in grandfamilies trying to manage on their own.**





# **What do Grandfamilies Need?**



“

For me, the perfect support would be building a relationship to make us feel comfortable, to help break the stigma of, *if I let you in too close, I might say something to get the kids removed from me.*

It's really, really hard to put yourself out there. So it's important to take the fear away, to come in with no biases, with understanding and compassion.”

**SANTANA LEE**

GRAND Voice, adoptive parent of 3 cousins





# Emotional Support

- Under what circumstances do kids join a grandfamily?
- What's the emotional impact on children?



“

Two days after [our granddaughter] was born, there was a knock on the door from the Alabama Department of Human Resources who gave us a choice that we could either put the children in our care or they could go into foster care. Well, there was no choice. We knew what we were gonna do.”

**Keith Lowhorne**

GRAND Voice, adoptive parent of 2 grandkids



# Practical Support



**Legal Options**



**Educational  
Support**



**Financial  
Assistance**



# Legal Options



# A Balancing Act

## Kin caregivers

- Want to provide a safe and loving home where a child can grow and thrive, and
- Worry that circumstances might jeopardize this arrangement.



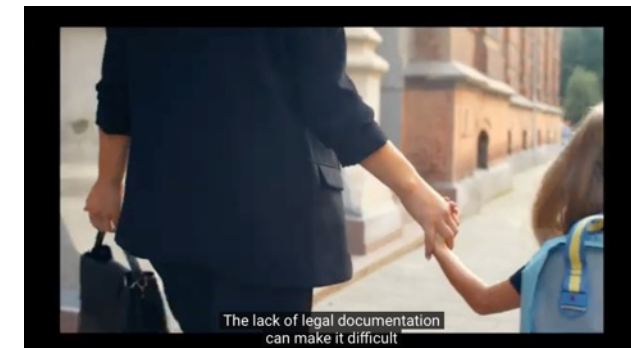
# Legal Options

- Informal Arrangements
- Power of Attorney
- More Permanent Options





## Video: Legal Assistance



# Legal Options

Type of Arrangement	Advantages	Disadvantages
Informal Arrangement		
Power of Attorney		
Guardianship/ Adoption		

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<b>Guardianship/Adoption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides long-term stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually requires a lawyer and can be expensive</li> <li>Adoption terminates parental rights, which may also make kin caregivers ineligible for assistance like child-only TANF</li> <li>On the other hand, adoption may be the only vehicle for a child to access their kin's private health insurance or any Veteran's benefits</li> </ul>

# Educational Support





# Questions About School

- How do I enroll my grandchild (niece, cousin, family friend) in school?
- How and to whom do I disclose my relationship to this child?
- It's been so long since I've been in school or had kids in school. What do I need to know?
- The child I'm caring for has been through a lot. How do I make sure they're developing as they should, and what support is available if they're not?



## Video: Educational Supports and Services



# **Financial Assistance**





# What We Don't See

Grandfamily caregivers inside the foster care system who are licensed as foster parents should get a monthly stipend to help with expenses.

Those outside the foster care system may receive little or no help – and may struggle financially.





## Video: Financial Support



# Financial Help

**Stacia** is 40 years old and caring for a niece and nephew, an infant and a toddler. She's been unable to work due to lack of child care and is struggling financially. What referrals might you make to assist her?

**Tanya** is 57 and caring for three grandchildren, ages 2, 3, and 7, who were brought to her home in the middle of the night. She's a teacher and lives in a comfortable one-bedroom apartment. What referrals might you make to assist her?

# **Please share:**

- **Something you learned**
- **One local resource you'd like to explore further**



# Next Steps

## You might:

- [Sign up](#) for the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network's monthly newsletter.
- [Reach out](#) to the Network re: specific issues you need more help with.
- Find additional information in our resources list, arranged by topic.
- Form a learning community to explore solutions with others in the group.





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