

NJ Kinship Connections

A Publication of the NJ Kinship Legal Guardianship Resource Clearing House



A PROGRAM OF CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

Spring 2024

What is a Kinship Caregiver?

Kinship caregivers are grandparents, relatives, close family friends and people with a significant connection to the family, sometimes referred to as “fictive kin” - without parents present in the home. These caregivers are raising children as a result of parental death, substance use, military deployment, incarceration, or other issues. These families are called kinship families, grand families and/or Kinship Legal Guardians.



head of the house and for every one (1) child raised by kin in foster care, there are about 28 being raised by kin informally, outside of the foster care system.

Many challenges faced by kinship/grandfamilies can be similar to those encountered by parent-headed families, but there are two fundamental differences. Unlike parents, who have automatic legal rights and responsibilities for their children, kinship caregivers do not. Moreover, they most likely did not plan or expect to be parenting. They often step in to raise children at a moment's notice – sometimes in the middle of the night – and usually due to a family

Kinship caregivers are represented in every socioeconomic level, race, ethnicity, and geographic area in the country. These unsung heroes are essential to so many children and families.

In the United States, at least 2.4 million children are being raised by kinship caregivers. In NJ alone, over 183,000 children are living in homes where a relative is

crisis. Despite challenges, decades of research has proven that there are many benefits to children being raised by kin, rather than by caregivers who do not know them, their culture, or their roots.

To help support Kinship families, we need to acknowledge their strengths, and address their challenges. There are many resources that kinship caregivers can tap into throughout the state. To start, the NJ Kinship Care Clearing House- KinKconnect website has many NJ resources that can assist families. Be sure to check out the website at www.kinkonnect.org. Another excellent resource, especially for the grandparents raising their grandchildren or relative is the Grandfamilies website at www.grandfamilies.org.

Please continue reading to see more NJ resources and information that may be helpful to your family.

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No PC?
No Problem!
 Contact a KinKconnect warm-line representative at 877-KLG-LINE ((877) 554-5463) to request a book or ask a question about statewide resources!

FOR THOSE WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS
FEDERAL APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) DEADLINES VARY BY COLLEGE. CHECK WITH THE COLLEGES YOUR CHILD IS APPLYING TO FOR THEIR DEADLINES. CONTACT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL FOR DETAILS.



NJ Kinship Connections

New Adoption and Kinship Legal Guardianship (AKLG) Clinical Services Launched! Helping Families Develop Positive Relationships

DID YOU KNOW?

ARE YOU CARING FOR A CHILD/GRANDCHILD WHO HAS A BEHAVIORAL ISSUE, DEVELOPMENTAL OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND/OR NEEDS SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SERVICES?

CONSIDER CONTACTING PERFORMCARE:

- PERFORMCARE HELPS FAMILIES ACROSS NEW JERSEY BY OFFERING SERVICES TO ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SUCH AS:
- IN-HOME THERAPY
 - FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES
 - BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS
 - MOBILE RESPONSE
 - CARE MANAGEMENT
 - OUT-OF-HOME TREATMENT
 - SUMMER CAMP ASSISTANCE AND MORE

CALL

1-877-652-7624

24 HRS A DAY/ 7 DAYS

PerformCARE



Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, or abandonment while in the care of their birth families often suffer from the effects of trauma. Their early experiences with loss cause them to struggle to feel safe with a parent or caregiver. As a result, they may behave in ways that appear unpredictable, oppositional, and even extreme at times.

These behaviors may make it harder for adoptive parents and kinship caregivers to connect emotionally with their child. Providing supportive, empathetic care within families is crucial to help children recover

from trauma and encourage healing.

Now there is help. If you live in NJ, your children are under 20 years of age, and you are currently involved with and/or your children were placed through the through New Jersey's Child Protection agency (DCP&P) you may be eligible for this free counseling service.

The goal of this new program, Adoption Kinship Legal Guardianship (AKLG) Clinical Services, is for children to gain relationship experience to grow and heal emotionally and for families to build stronger relationships with increased feel-

ings of attachment, trust, and safety. Therapists are located throughout NJ and trained in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, an attachment-focused treatment for families with kinship, foster or adopted children. This therapy emphasizes families working together with the therapist to help their children who experienced neglect, abuse and trauma while with their birth families. Sessions will take place in your home. For more information please contact the program coordinator at 551-224-2711 or email AKLGprogram@cafsnj.org.

Kinship Navigator Programs:

Dial 2-1-1

By dialing 2-1-1, eligible kinship caregivers can get help addressing immediate problems, and they will also be referred to a local New Jersey kinship agency which will work with caregivers to access additional services.

The local kinship agencies serve three functions. First, staff from the agencies help caregivers "navigate" other forms of government assistance. Secondly, kinship agencies determine if the caregiver's family is eligible for Kinship Navigator program benefits and help with short-term expenses for the relative child, such as furniture, moving expenses, and clothing. Finally, the kinship agencies provide technical support and guide the family through the process of Kinship Legal Guardianship if the caregiver wishes to make a legal commitment to the child.

Have other Kinship-related questions? Call KinKconnect at 877-544-5463.



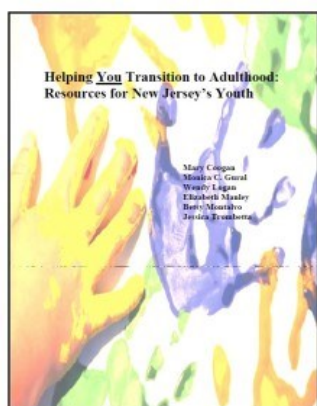
Looking for a Summer Camp?

Now is the time to check them out and reserve your spot!

Visit our website or call our KinConnect Warm Line at 877-KLG-LINE (877-554-5463) for a list of summer camps

Touched by Adoption?

Visit the NJ Adoption Resource Clearing House at www.njarch.org



NJ Kinship Connections

Supports for Relatives Raising Relative's Children

Are you raising your grandchild, your niece/nephew or other relative? The services below may help you find some emotional support and help answer some questions and gain additional confidence.

embrella: Most NJ counties offer support groups for those who have adopted or are currently licensed foster parents and/or Kinship Legal Guardians (KLG) through the Division (DCP&P). To locate a group in your area, contact embrella at 1-800-222-0047 or visit their website at www.embrella.org.

Family Support Organizations (FSO's): Family-run, county-based organizations that provide direct family-to-family peer support, education, advocacy and other services to family members of children with emotional and behavioral problems. For a list by county, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/families/support/support/> or call 1-877-652-7624.

Parent2Parent Support Group: Family Support Organization of Bergen County. In-person meetings for parents and caregivers. For more information visit www.fsobergen.org/copy-of-parent2parent

Rutgers Cooperative Extension: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program, Cape May. 609-465-5115 x 3609.

Family Success Centers (FSC's): A network of centers operated by non-profit agencies which provide resources and support before families fall into crisis. There is no cost to access services. For a list by county, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/families/support/success/>

Need more resources? Contact us at warmline@kinkconnect.org or call 877-KLG-LINE (877-554-5463) to help find a resource for you family.

Helping Youth Transition to Adulthood

Are you parenting or caring for a teen/young adult or know of someone who needs some assistance in learning how to become more independent? Consider checking out this excellent handbook entitled **"Helping You Transition To Adulthood: Resources for New Jersey's Youth."**

This guide will give you and your young adult some structure on setting short and long term goals, tips in how to start a bank account, obtain car insurance as well as many helpful resources. Created by several organizations including the Advocates for Children of NJ (ACNJ), foster care youth groups, Youth

Advocacy Board members and more, this handbook offers tips on how young adults can become more independent.

To download this handbook, please visit KinConnect's Top 15 Handbooks at:

<https://kinkconnect.org/kinkconnect-top-15-downloadable-handbooks/>

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) Update for 2024

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for approximately 70 million Americans increased by 3.2% in January 2024.

The 3.2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) began with benefits payable to more than 66 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2024. Increased payments to more than 7.5 million SSI beneficiaries began in December 29, 2023.

Some of the same people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits.

The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) was increased to \$168,600.

The earnings limit for workers who are younger than "full" retirement age (66 – 67 depending on your date of birth) increased to \$22,320. Social Security deducts \$1 from benefits for each \$2 earned over \$22,320.

The earnings limit for people reaching their "full" retirement age in 2023 increased to \$59,520. Social Security deducts \$1 from benefits for each \$3 earned over \$59,520 until the month the worker turns "full" retirement age.

There is no limit on earnings for workers who are "full" retirement age or older for the entire year.

For more information on the Cost of Living Increase, please visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/cola/>

Taking Care of Yourself

Caregivers worry they are being selfish if they take care of themselves. But taking care of yourself is not selfish, it's necessary, especially when you are dealing with stress and changing circumstances.

Like on an airplane during an emergency when you are instructed to put on your oxygen mask first before helping others, you need to take care of yourself first before you can take care of others. Practicing self-care allows caregivers to meet their own needs so they in turn can meet the needs of the child (ren) in their care.

Here are some tips to help practice self care:

- Think about how you can meet your physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs, and try to do them.

- Identify where your personal stress comes from and see if there are ways to cut out or reduce them.

- Communicate effectively when talking about your needs with others. Be clear what you are asking for and try not to minimize your request by adding phrases like "if you can."

Other examples of self care include:

- Saying NO to things you cannot or do not want to do

- Taking time off (or time to yourself) without feeling guilty

- Talking with a loved one or trusted friend

- Sleeping regularly and for long enough

-Stretching/ exercising

- Reading a good book and/or writing in a journal.

www.grandmagazine.com/2019/02/self-care-for-grandfamilies/

www.KinKonnnect.org

DID YOU KNOW?

IF YOUR CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY SERVICES AND UNDER THE AGE OF 21, THEY MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR A CAMP SUBSIDY THROUGH THE CHILDREN'S SYSTEM OF CARE (CSOC)?

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

WWW.PERFORMCARENJ.ORG/FAMILIES/DISABILITY/SUMMER-CAMP.ASPX

**Are you or do you know someone who is dealing with a mental health crisis or thinking about suicide?
Call 988 to speak to an experienced counselor.**





NJ KINSHIP LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP
RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

WWW.KINKONNECT.ORG

A PROGRAM OF CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

WWW.CAFSNJ.ORG

Children's Aid and Family Services
76 South Orange Avenue, Suite 209
South Orange, NJ 07079

KLG Warmline: 877-KLG-LINE
877-554-5463

E-mail: warmline@kinkconnect.org
Visit us at: www.kinkconnect.org

Founded in 1899, Children's Aid and Family Services is one of northern New Jersey's leading non-profit human service agencies. Our mission is to strengthen families and empower individuals—children and adults alike—to reach their fullest potential.

DISCLAIMER

While NJ Kinship Legal Guardianship Resource Clearing House (KinKconnect) or Children's Aid and Family Services makes every effort to present accurate and reliable information, neither KinKconnect nor Children's Aid and Family Services guarantees the completeness, efficacy or timeliness of such information. In addition, reference herein to any specific product, process, service, organization, or viewpoint does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation or favoring by KinKconnect or Children's Aid and Family Services.



Affordable health coverage. Quality care.

Affordable health coverage. Quality Care.

NJ FamilyCare, a federal and state-funded health insurance program created to give qualified New Jersey residents of any age access to affordable health insurance. NJ FamilyCare is for people who do not have employer insurance. That means qualified NJ residents of any age may be eligible for free or low-cost healthcare coverage that covers doctor visits, prescriptions, vision, dental care, mental health and substance use services, and even hospitalization.

Easily navigate the online NJ FamilyCare application with:

- ◆ New menus, subheadings and smart technology.
- Applicants can register to:
- ◆ Save partially completed applications
 - ◆ View submitted applications, and
 - ◆ Receive future Medicaid notifications electronically.

The entire application process can be completed online at <https://njfamilycare.dhs.state.nj.us/apply.aspx> or call **1-800-701-0710**; multi-lingual operators are available.

Who is Eligible?

NJ Family Care includes: children, pregnant women, parents/caretaker relatives, single adults and childless couples. Financial eligibility will be determined by the latest federal tax return which, when filed, will be electronically verified.

Children under 19 are eligible with higher incomes up to 355% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (\$8,875/month for a family of four). Parents still need to renew the coverage each year. Children can qualify regardless of their immigration status.

Adults age 19-64 with income up to 138% FPL (\$1,677/month for a single and \$2,268/month for a couple). In general, immigrant adults must have Legal Permanent status in the U.S. for at least five years in order to qualify for NJ FamilyCare. Some immigrant adults can qualify if they are lawfully present, regardless of when they entered the U.S. (refugees and asylees, and others.) Immigrants 19 and 20 who are lawfully present and have very low income (\$509/month for a single person and \$805/month for a family of 2) can also qualify.

Pregnant Women up to 205% FPL (\$5,125/month for a family of four). Pregnant women who are lawfully present can qualify regardless of the dates they entered into the U.S.

People over 65, blind or permanently disabled, including long term care, please visit: <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmahs/clients/medicaid/abd/index.html>

For more information, please visit <https://njfamilycare.dhs.state.nj.us/>