

CWLA 2011 National Conference

Sunday, March 27th, 2011 - 11AM-4:30PM

A NATIONAL KINSHIP SUMMIT
A Voice for the Nation's "Informal" Kinship Care Community

Three million children live in "informal" (non-foster) kinship families. This private system of care is playing an increasingly crucial role in the nation's child welfare response. Yet state and federal policies have yet to provide a system of supports for "informal" kinship families.

The National Kinship Summit unites the grassroots voices of kinship families and the professionals who work with them. Its purpose is educate policy and law makers about the issues faced by "informal" kinship families and to make recommendations for better policies and practices.

The recent surge in grandparent care (5% growth during 2007-08, caused by the economic crisis (Pew Research Center), as well as national surveys proving that informal kinship families provide children at risk with a great opportunity to succeed, emphasize the urgent need for better utilization of this great natural resource. Given the costs/benefits of kinship care in comparison to foster care, it only makes sense that now is the time for policies and practices that strengthen the role of "informal" kinship inside the nation's child welfare system.

CWLA in partnership with *The National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights* sponsors this National Kinship Care Summit to provide both kinship caregivers and experts with the opportunity to draw upon their collective knowledge and experience, and make recommendations that will remove barriers to successful kinship care.

Following the format of New York State's Kinship Summits, participants will first hear from a panel of caregivers and kinship experts about gaps in services, best practices, and current literature and research. Thereafter, participants will join a "breakout" session where they will collaborate in identifying key issues and making recommendations regarding:

- utilization of kinship families by child welfare agencies
- increasing kinship family access to support services and benefits

- establishing services tailored to the needs of informal kinship families inside and across systems

A summit report will be developed summarizing the discussion and final recommendations. The report will be available to support local and national advocacy efforts.

Draft Agenda:

11:00 - 1:00 Opening Plenary with Facilitated Panel of experts representing research, policy, practice, literature, academics

1:00 – 3:00 Working lunch with Breakouts:

- utilization of kinship families by child welfare agencies
- increasing kinship family access to support services and benefits
- establishing services tailored to the needs of informal kinship families inside and across systems
- Others to be identified

3:00 – 4:00 Report on Breakouts

4:30 Wrap Up

*Sponsored by The National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights
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