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## Memo in Support of Using the Word “Kinship” in Federal Legislation

This Memorandum is authored by the New York State Kinship Navigator and is supported by the New York State KinCare Coalition in order to support the use of the word “kinship” as the term of art in policy and law and to avoid the use of the word “grandfamilies.”

Many federal, state, and local laws and regulations use the term “kin” or “kinship” or “kinship care” or “kincare” to reference the over 2.7 million children living with kin, *i.e.*, grandparents, relatives, and family friends who are raising children in the absence of their parents. In New York, as well as around the country, research and state databases show that about 65% of all kinship care families are grandparents raising grandchildren. This percentage is confirmed by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2017*, as well as by federal and state Temporary Assistance to Needy Families data. The percentage has fallen over the last decade due to the expansion of state and federal regulations that consider other relatives and family friends as valuable placement resources for children.

An enormous amount of sources, including organizations, laws and regulations, research papers, websites, programs, published guide books, and promotional materials use the term kinship. In 2019, Ohio provided \$8 million for a kinship navigator and adoptions program, the most state funding in the nation; the program is called OhioKAN for Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator, see <https://search.yahoo.com/search?fr=mcafee&type=E211US1079G0&p=ohiokan>. Also See use of word kinship examples in Appendix A and B. In comparison, there are relatively few programs, literally no laws or regulations, and only a handful of organizations, research and policy papers that use the word “grandfamilies.” See use of word grandfamilies examples in Appendix C.

Despite the current and past usage of “kinship” as the term of art for federal legislation, in 2019 Congressional legislators introduced the “The Grandfamilies Act” and the “Help Grandfamilies Prevent Child Abuse Act.” Despite the fact that since 2015, the U. S. Senate has issued three proclamation declring September as “Kinship Care Month.” **The effort to codify grandfamilies as a term of art will cause enormous problems for the nation’s efforts to support kinship families, and we urge legislators to consider avoiding commitment to this term.**

The consequences are real, complicated, and far reaching. Federal funding streams dedicated to kinship navigators and other kinship services will need to incorporate references to the other term. Statutory and regulatory pronouncements will need to be clarified. Programs will need to revise their titles, websites, and guides. Federal and state policies, including manuals, advisories, and administrative directives will have to be revised or clarified to identify the new term.

The consequences go beyond revisions and clarification. Programs that are funded as kinship navigators and other programs using the term “kinship” in their outreach will be inconsistent with programs that derive from the “grandfamilies” legislation. The result is that caregivers may not recognize services that are available to them.

Kinship families, especially those caregivers who are not grandparents, may not view the term grandfamilies as referring to them. Grandparent caregivers who identify with the term “grandfamilies” conversely may not understand that the term “kinship” includes them.



Up until the introduction of these bills, there have been various organizations who have advocated for their favored term to be adopted as the universal term. However, the differences were essentially inconsequential. **But with the potential codification of a new term, and its use by congress to present helpful information for kinship families, the unintended consequence is significant, it becomes a hindrance to the advancement of assistance for kinship families, leading away from establishing one consistent terminology.**

Most of the literature, and certainly The Children’s Bureau, already assumes that kinship is the accepted term of art. With limited opportunity to survey nationally the use of the two terms, Appendix A offers examples of the use of kin and/or kinship; Appendix B offers examples of Child Welfare League of America publications and conferences use of kinship care; Appendix C offers examples of the use of grandfamilies.

Finally, associating the prefix “grand” with the word “families” to describe all non-parent (kin) families is inappropriate because it implies that the experience is enjoyable. While caregivers love their children, they care for them because of parental neglect, abuse, abandonment, drug use and other unfortunate circumstances. The families are torn asunder with tragedy and children are often traumatized. It is not grand.

For the above reasons, the word “kinship” should be preferred over the word “grandfamilies.” The introduction of a new term is an unnecessary policy and practice complication with enormous implications and it should not be codified as a term of art.

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## Appendix A: Samples of Kinship Usage

### Federal Laws that use “Kinship” (Asterisk References Kinship)

1. 1994 when Congress passed, which introduced the concept of Waivers for certain requirements of titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act, Public Law 103–432 (1994): including **subsidized guardianship**: [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/subsidized\\_0.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/subsidized_0.pdf)\*
2. The **Adoptions and Safe Families Act (1997)** required a report to Congress on kinship care. The 2000 final report defined public and private kinship care and made recommendations for reforms to kinship foster care.\*
3. **National Family Caregiver Support Act (2000)** does not use the term kin but provides discretionary funding for older grandparents and “relative caregivers” who are caring for children.
4. The **Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (2008)** provisions for kinship guardianship and kinship navigator demonstration projects.\*
5. **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (2017)** refunds Kinship Navigators demonstration projects.\*
6. **The Families First Prevention Services Act (2018)** provides Title IV-E funding for kinship navigator services.\*
7. **Ombudsman Appropriation Act (2018)** \$20,000,000 for kinship navigator pilot in each state (funded approved for second year and possibly third year).\*
8. **Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act (2018)**: Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations – page 955



(\$20,000,000 for kinship navigators); refunded for second year, and possibly third year.\*

9. **Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act (2018)** creates federal Agency Advisory Council.\*

## Congressional Bills That Reference Kinship

1. The **Kinship Caregiver Support Act**, sponsored by Senators Clinton and Snowe (2004). This bill described kinship navigators and was the first federal use of the phrase.
2. **Supporting Kinship Connections Act (H.R.7012)** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/7012>
3. **Kinship Care Month Resolutions**: adopted in at least 12 states and by the U. S. Senate, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/264>

## Federal Agencies' Using "Kinship"

1. **Children's Bureau** Child Welfare Information Gateway Website: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/kinship/>
2. **Families First Prevention Services Act**, subsequent appropriations funded kinship navigator pilot projects in over forty states.

## Papers, Councils, Organizations, Model Laws, States

**Child Welfare League of America** has published on kinship care since early 1990's, including volumes on kinship navigators, kinship policy, etc.

**Noted Authors:** Jim Gleeson, Mark Testa, Elaine Paztor, Ramona Denby, Eunju Lee are a few well-known academics whose work uses the term.

**American Legislative Exchange Council:** The Kinship Care and Fictive Kin Reform Act:

<https://www.alec.org/modelpolicy/the-kinship-care-and-fictive-kin-reform-act/>

**National Council of State Legislatures:** <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/the-child-welfare-placementcontinuum-what-s-best-for-children.aspx>

**Casey Family Programs:** <https://www.casey.org/tag/kinship-care/>

**Government TANF grants:** Nevada: [https://dwss.nv.gov/TANF/Kinship\\_Care\\_Program/](https://dwss.nv.gov/TANF/Kinship_Care_Program/) State

**Child Welfare Agencies:** New York State: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/kinship/default.asp>

**Virginia Code Defines Kinship Care:**

[http://dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro\\_page/kinship\\_care/related\\_brochures/B032-01-0200-00-eng.pdf](http://dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/kinship_care/related_brochures/B032-01-0200-00-eng.pdf)

**Pennsylvania: Kinship Care Permanency Services** (Allentown, Easton, Bethlehem, Wind Gap):

<https://pbfalv.org/programs/>



**Philadelphia:** [https://village1877.org/programs-services/foster-care-resource-parents/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwitPnBRCQARIsAA5n84nv92pQGh4YurE-uGHLD0JDeMpGgRbcYAa-SZnDttqO0GTz8mjRTIaAtWkEALw\\_wcB](https://village1877.org/programs-services/foster-care-resource-parents/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwitPnBRCQARIsAA5n84nv92pQGh4YurE-uGHLD0JDeMpGgRbcYAa-SZnDttqO0GTz8mjRTIaAtWkEALw_wcB)

**Pittsburgh:** <http://www.asecondchance-kinship.com/>

**Film: The Face of Kinship Care:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78zjHYG6Z-Q&t=7s>

**KinCare Today:** published by the Chronicle of Social Change, <https://fosteringmediaconnections.org>.

**What Is Kinship Care?** The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2019)

**NYS Kinship Navigator logo:**



## **New York State All Programs - Many Use the Word “Kin” or “Kinship”**

NYS **Kinship** Navigator, all counties

NYS **KinCare** Coalition, since 2005

New York City **Kincare** Task Force, since 1992

Brooklyn Grandparents’ Coalition, since 1994

Grandparent Caregiver Resource Center, NYC

New Alternatives for Children (NAC) **Kinship** Care Program, Bronx County

Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country, Family Forever! Adoptive and **KinGAP** Families of the North Country, Essex/Clinton/Hamilton Counties

Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth – **KFACT** Program, Erie County

Catholic Family Center, KIN (**Kinship** Integrated Network), Monroe County

Catholic Charities of Buffalo, **Kinship Preventive Services**

Cayuga Seneca Community Action Agency (CSCAA) **Kinship** Care Program, Cayuga County

Chautauqua Opportunies, Chautauqua County

Center for Elder Law and Justice, Erie County, **Kinship** Care Legal Services Program

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. **Kinship** Care Program, Madison County

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP), Dutchess County

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP), Orange County



Cornell Cooperative Extension, Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP), Ulster County)  
 Family Center: Family Ties, Kings County  
 Family Enrichment Network: **Kinship** Caregiver Program, Broome County Gateway-Longview  
**KinCARES** Family Support Program, Erie County  
 Jewish Board of Family And Children’s Services :**Kinship** Care Program  
 Leadership Training Institute’s **Kinship** Caregiver Program, Nassau and Suffolk Counties  
 Liberty Resources – **Kinship** Caregiver Program, Oswego County  
 MFY Legal Services **Kinship** Caregiver Law Project, NYC  
 Neighborhood Center, Inc. “**Kin** and Kids” program, Oneida County  
 New Directions Youth and Family Services, **Kinship** Support Group, Niagara County  
 Neighborhood Center Inc. **Kinship** Care Management, Montgomery County  
 New York Council on Adoptable Children: **Kinship** Care Program  
 Presbyterian Senior Services, PSS **Kinship** Caregiver Services, Bronx County.  
 Family Service Society of Yonkers: **Kinship** Support Program, Westchester County  
 Family and Children’s Services of Ithaca, **KINECT** (**Kinship** Education, Counseling, and Training) Thompkins County  
 Utica **Kin** Caregivers Support Network, Oneida County  
 Volunteer Counseling Services of Rockland: Enhanced Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Rockland County.

**Sample Programs in Other States:**

<i><b>Kinship Terminology Use by State</b></i>		<b>Terminology Used</b>					
State	Name of Program	Kinship Care	Grandfamilies	Relative Caregiver	Family Caregiver	Kinship Families	Non-Parent Caregiver
Alabama	Alabama Foster & Adoptive Parent Association - (AFAPA)	x					
Alaska	Volunteers of America Grandfamilies Network Project		x				
Arizona	Arizona's Children Association	x					
Arkansas	Arkansas Voices For Children Left Behind	x					
California	Kinship Center	x					
Colorado	Colorado DHS - Kinship Connection	x					
Connecticut	Department of Rehabilitation Services - Grandparents as Parents Support				x		
Delaware	Delaware Health and Social Services - Kinship Care Program	x					

Florida	The Children's Home Network - Kinship			X			
Georgia	Kinship Care Resource Center	X					
Hawaii	Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center						
Idaho	Relatives as Parents Program	X					
Illinois	The Guardianship Help Desk						
Indiana	Kids' Voice of Indiana						
Iowa	Iowa Adoptive and Foster Parents Association					X	
Kansas	Kansas - Department for Children and Families			X			
Kentucky	Kentucky Family Caregiver Program and Kinship Program	X					
Louisiana	Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information						
<b>State</b>	<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>Kinship Care</b>	<b>Grandfamilies</b>	<b>Relative Caregiver</b>	<b>Family Caregiver</b>	<b>Kinship Families</b>	<b>Non-Parent Caregiver</b>
Maine	Maine Kids-Kin	X					
Maryland	Baltimore County Kinship Navigator Program	X					
Massachusetts	Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Massachusetts						
Michigan	Michigan State University - Kinship Care Resource Center	X					
Minnesota	Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota - Kinship Family Support					X	

Mississippi	Grandparent Raising Grandchildren - Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP)		X				
Missouri	MU Extension's Grandparent Warm-Line		X				
Montana	The Department of Public Health and Human Services	X					
Nebraska	Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association					X	
Nevada	The Children's Cabinet						
New Hampshire	New Hampshire - Department of Health and Human Services			X			
New Jersey	NJ Department of Children & Families - Kinship Navigator Program	X					
New Mexico	New Mexico Guardianship Project of Advocacy, Inc.						X



New York	New York State Kinship Navigator	X					
North Carolina	Relatives as Parents Program	x					
North Dakota	Department of Human Services	x					
Ohio	Public Children Services Association of Ohio	X					
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Department of Human Services - Grandparents Initiative		X				
Oregon	Oregon Department of Human Services - Family Caregiver Support Program				X		
Pennsylvania	Penn State extension Support for Kinship Families	x					
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Partnership for Family Connections						
South Carolina	Department on Aging - Family Caregiver Support Program				X		
South Dakota	SD Department of Social Services	x					
Tennessee	Tennessee Department of Children's Services - Relative Caregiver Program			X			
<b>State</b>	<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>Kinship Care</b>	<b>Grandfamilies</b>	<b>Relative Caregiver</b>	<b>Family Caregiver</b>	<b>Kinship Families</b>	<b>Non-Parent Caregiver</b>
Texas	Casey Family Services (Austin) Kinship Care Coalition	X					
Utah	Department of Social Services	x					
Vermont	Vermont Kin as Parents					X	
Virginia	NewFound Families Virginia	X					
Washington	Catholic Community Services of Western Washington Kinship Care Navigator	x					
West Virginia	WV - Bureau for Children & Families	x					
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Department of Children and Families - Kinship Care	X					
Wyoming	Community Action of Laramie County			X			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

**Sample Source:** <https://kinship.msu.edu/Resources/State-Programs>

See also list of state kinship navigators in KinCare Today, published by fosteringmediaconnections.org.

## Appendix B: Sampling of Child Welfare League of America Publications and Events

### Publications

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Focus</b>
<i>Kinship Care: A Natural Bridge</i>	1994	Kinship care as a child welfare service; current policy and practice; framework for the future
<i>Child Welfare, Special Issue Kinship Care. Volume LXXV, Number 5</i>	1996	Kinship care policy; research in kinship care; best practice; support and advocacy
<i>Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care Edited by Joseph Crumbley &amp; Robert L. Little</i>	1997	Benefits and challenges of kinship care; clinical concepts; assessment and intervention; case management; race and culture; legal relationships; and federal and state policy and program issues
<i>Kinship Care: Improving Practice through Research James P. Gleeson and Creasie Finney Hairston, editors</i>	1999	Building knowledge about kinship care as a child welfare service; facilitating permanence; issues related to children and parents, and kinship caregivers;
<i>CWLA Standards of Excellence for Kinship Care Services</i>	2000	Kinship Care as a child welfare service; assessment in kinship care; social work practice in kinship care; supports and services; administration and organization of services



<b><i>Traditions of Caring: Information, Resources and Support for Kinship Families</i></b>	2003	Training curriculum for social workers, caregivers, and assessment guide. Covers topics such as understanding the child welfare system, supporting healthy development and managing loss, assessment, maintaining family connections, finding and using resources, and permanence
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<b><i>National Kinship Care Summit: A Voice for the Nation’s Informal Kinship Care Community, Report on Summit Recommendations</i></b> <b>Note: Hosted by CWLA, CWLA National Kinship Care Advisory Committee, National Committee of Grandparents for Children’s Rights, NY Navigator Gerard Wallace</b>	2011	Summit findings (kinship family engagement, increasing access to services, services tailored to the needs of families in informal system; recommendations related to centralized information, federal and state functions, collaboration across systems, and vision for the future
<b><i>Collaborating with Kinship Caregivers: A Research-toPractice Competency-Based Training Program</i></b>	2014	Trainers guide, Carebook for caregivers <u>Note:</u> Currently under revision as a model of practice and updates the 2003 publication; includes 9 topics identified by caregivers as important to them such as finances, legal issues, and children’s access to educational services
<b><i>Child Welfare, Special Issue Kinship Care and Child Welfare: New Directions for Policy and Practice. Volume 95, Number 3 and 4</i></b>	2017	Health and well-being of children in kinship care; kinship caregiver supports such as kinship navigator programs for private and voluntary kinship caregivers; new directions for kinship care policy and practice

## Events

Event	Date	Topic/Focus
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<b>National Kinship Care Conference</b> <b>Note: the first national conference</b>	1997 San Francisco	Kinship care as a child welfare service, policy, and practice
<b>National Kinship Care Conference</b>	July 30-Aug. 1 2003 Philadelphia	
<b>National Kinship Care Conference</b>	July 25-27 2000 Chicago	
<b>National Kinship Care Summit: A Voice for the Nation's Informal Kinship Care Community</b>	March 2011 Washington D. C.	Kinship families in informal arrangements: service access, collaboration across systems, kinship caregiver support
<b>National Kinship Care Conference:</b>	September 2014 New Orleans	Kinship care policy, practice, and research to enhance services and supports, models of support, and identification of areas for research
<b>Kinship Care Summit</b> <b>Note: partnership with New York State Albany, and New York Navigator</b>	September 2016 Albany, NY	Services, research, and practice related to families in informal and voluntary kinship arrangements

## Appendix C: Sampling of Grandfamilies Usage

Grandfamilies.org, home page talks about kinship care: <http://www.grandfamilies.org/>

Generations United, home page talks about kinship care: <https://www.gu.org/explore-our-topics/grandfamilies/>

AARP: <https://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.html>

Grantmakers in Aging: <https://www.giaging.org/issues/grandfamilies/>

ABA: New Resources for Kinship Families, also uses Grandfamilies:

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/new-resources-and-developments-for-kinship-advocates/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/new-resources-and-developments-for-kinship-advocates/)



Grandfamilies Journal: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/grandfamilies/>

Note: Most Grandfamilies related sites are associated with D. C. advocacy organizations and partners. There are few independent programs and research articles that use the term. There is no federal law and state law usage.

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