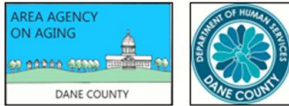


# Relatives As Caregivers

Wisconsin Caregiver Coordinator  
Statewide Meeting

May 13, 2026



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Specialist

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Specialist, Greater Wisconsin Agency  
on Aging Resources

# What Is Kinship Care?



[National Institute on Aging](#) offers this broad definition

*“Grandparents and kin caregivers, other relatives, or close family friends who are raising children when parents are unable to do so.”*

# National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)

According to the DHS [Family Caregiver Support Manual](#), Kinship, Grandfamilies or RAPP are “Grandparent(s), other relative caregiver or step-grandparent(s) of a child, or relative of a child by blood, marriage or adoption who is younger than 18 years of age and for whom all the following are true:

- The caregiver lives with the child.
- The grandparent or other relative caregiver is the primary caregiver for the child because the biological or adoptive parents are unable or unwilling to serve as the primary caregiver.
- The caregiver has legal guardianship of the child or is raising the child informally.”



# Why Kinship Care Matters

Kinship care is increasingly recognized at the federal level as a best practice for supporting children when parents are unable to care for them. ([ACL](#))

- Greater stability and permanency
- Stronger connections to family, culture, and community
- Better mental and behavioral health outcomes
- Improved long-term outcomes into adulthood

[Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network](#) and [American Bar - Kinship](#)

# An Underserved Population

- According to [Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network](#) 2.5 million children are being raised in these types of families, nationwide
- The Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization of 2020 removed the 10% maximum spend on grand/kinship families
- Goal to increase use of the [National Family Caregiver Support Program](#) or NFCSP to support families

# Role of the Caregiver Specialist

- Dane County AAA – in 2025 served 10 grandfamilies/older relative caregivers for 16% of grants awarded
- Connected with families through local organizations including Rainbow Project. AAA of Dane County Contracts with them to run a Grandfamilies Support Group with childcare
- Referrals from Kinship Care Newsletter





# What NFCSP Can Support



- Summer camp, daycare, or other extracurricular programs
- Sports uniforms, equipment, fees
- Music, dance, art lessons
- Academic programs and tutoring



# Youth Sports Grants - All Kids Play

- Provides individual grants to families in need for youth athletes in grades K-12.
- Provides organizational grants for non-profit organizations in low-income communities that provide community-based recreational level sports for kids in grades K-12 on a case-by-case basis.





# NFCSP Support for All Family Members

- Respite - Family/friend/primary CG can receive payment/stipend
- Home modifications to split a room for kids or expand space
- YMCA membership, local pool membership, or passes (can sign on extended family)



# Sustaining Older Relative Caregivers of Children

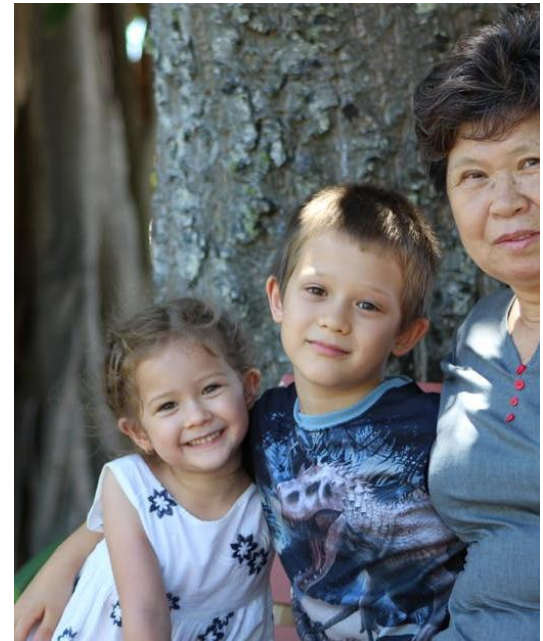


- Therapeutic yoga, meditation, massage, bodywork, exercise classes
- Transportation for children while they are at work
- Help with cleaning and chores at home



# Kinship Care in Wisconsin

- Kinship Care is available to families involved in the child welfare system (Child Protective Services, Youth Justice, & Guardianship) *and* those who are caring for their relatives informally (family arranged plan, voluntary guardianship)
- Eligible kinship care families receive \$384 per child, per month (2026)



# Eligibility Basics



- The basic needs of the child can be better met with the relative or **like-kin** caregiver than with the parent
- The placement is in the best interest of the child
- The child currently or might meet the requirements to need protection or services if the child were to remain with his or her parent(s) (abuse or neglect).
- Caregivers may apply for the Kinship Care payment via their local county or tribe

# Wisconsin Foster Care System Changes



- Effective Dec. 1, 2025: Updates to DCG 56 streamline licensing for relative & “like-kin” caregivers
- Faster licensing process to increase timely kinship placements
- Expanded caregiver definition to include close family friends (2023 Act 119)
- More equitable financial support for kin caregivers
- Reduces reliance on non-relative foster care placements

# Kinship Navigator Grant

- Administration of Children and Families (ACF) awards the Department of Children and Families (DCF) federal fiscal grants to supports counties, tribes, and nonprofits in helping kin caregivers access services, benefits, and education.
- Relative Caregiver Workgroup: Advises DCF on resources, supports, and training for kin caregivers in Wisconsin
- Resulted in creation of: [Kinship Navigator Portal](#)



# Kinship Navigator Grant

- Examples of what funds can be used for: support groups, zoo & YMCA members, “brief” legal services, and concrete supports.
- **Families Like Mine Conference** is an annual event only open to relative caregivers and is planned with their input.
  - 2025 – 2026: [You Spoke, We Listened: Families Like Mine Goes Regional](#)



# Kinship Navigator Portal



- Central resource hub for relative caregivers
- Guided 211-style search
- Helps families navigate the Child Welfare system
  - [Relative Caregiver Learning Pathway](#)
  - [Relative Caregiver Support Group Kits](#)
  - [Webinar Recordings](#)
  - [Virtual Resource Kit for relative caregivers](#)
  - [KINnect Support Group](#)



# Key Takeaways

- Kinship caregivers often step into the role unexpectedly
- Kinship Families have complex needs and one size never fits all!
- Respite must be flexible
- Leverage existing partnerships
- Our role is connection and access

[Toolkit for Starting a Kin Caregiver Respite Program](#)

# Questions



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