



KINSHIP NAVIGATION PROGRAM

Kinship & Relative Caregiver Guide



*a program of
New Hampshire Children's Trust*



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

Dear New Hampshire Parents and Caregivers,

As a father of three, I can attest to the incredible joys of parenting as well as its many challenges. Navigating everyday stresses as a family can be difficult, yet when I look across the Granite State, I see children thriving and growing into healthy and resilient adolescents who are the future of our state.

Thank you for your patience, diligence, and incredible resilience during these unprecedented times.

I also want to thank the thousands of New Hampshire grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives stepping up to care for children whose own parents cannot. Welcoming a child into your home is joyful, but it can be stressful and financially burdensome. Navigating legal, school, and healthcare systems is trying even on the best of days, but these important efforts minimize trauma and improve a child's overall well-being.

To meet the unique challenges of kinship care, we have brought together family support agencies and organizations from across New Hampshire to create a relative caregiver support network called the Kinship Navigation Program. Rooted within NH's Family Resource Centers, the Kinship Navigation Program connects grandparents and other relative caregivers to the services and supports that promote independence and enhance family well-being.

In the *Kinship & Relative Caregiver Guide* that follows, you will learn of this network and the many free, voluntary, and completely confidential resources available throughout the Granite State.

It is because of the hard work of New Hampshire's parent leaders, community stakeholders, and family support agencies, there is a Kinship Navigator at the ready in your community.

Sincerely,

Christopher T. Sununu
Governor



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Am I a Kinship Caregiver?..... 3

By the Numbers 4

Kinship Navigation Can Help 5

NH Kinship Navigators 6

Benefits of Kinship Care 7

Challenges of Kinship Care.....8

Caregiver Self-Care..... 9

Frequently Asked Questions 10

Additional Resources11

Am I a Kinship Caregiver?

Kinship caregivers are grandparents, aunts, uncles or other relatives, or even close family friends such as godparents, who are raising children that are not their own.

Kinship caregiving happens when a child's parents are unable to meet their family's needs. Relatives or close family friends are an important resource because kinship care helps children maintain connection to family members, and in some cases even schools and communities, and increases child well-being until the situation at home improves.

Kinship care arrangements may be **formal** and involve a legal process, payments to help with the costs of caring for the child, and other support services. Some kinship care arrangements are **informal** and involve an assessment process to ensure the safety of the new home along with supportive services for the child and caregivers.

Kinship care is also called **kincare, relative care, or grandfamilies** (referring to families where grandparents are raising grandchildren).

If you're a kinship caregiver, turn to **page 6** to find support for the children in your care.

Types of Kinship Arrangements

Informal Arrangement: An informal arrangement is when a relative is raising a child *without* the involvement of a court or child protection agency. Because the law does not recognize informal caretaker arrangements, caretakers may find themselves without the legal ability to make certain decisions for the child, such as enrolling them in school or consenting to medical treatment.

Legal Guardianship: Caretakers can acquire custody and legal guardianship of a child, which gives caretakers the right to make certain decisions for the child, such as enrolling them in school or consenting to medical treatment, and they may qualify for State financial assistance.

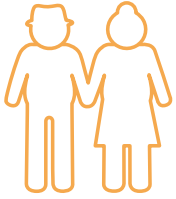
Foster Care/DCYF Placement: In New Hampshire, when a child is determined unsafe in their home because of abuse or neglect, they may be removed from that home and placed in care of others. In this situation, parents are required to work towards reunification with their child.

Adoption: Adoption is when the Family Court grants full custody and guardianship of a child to an adopting caregiver. Relative adoptions are a permanent and legal arrangement, but the child's parents must either voluntarily surrender their parental rights through the court process or the court must terminate their parental rights.

For more information on the formal process, please visit www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/adoption

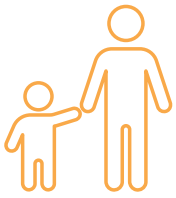
BY THE NUMBERS

You are not alone. In New Hampshire:



17,594 children under 18 live in homes where householders are grandparents or other relatives.*

14,887 of these children live with grandparents.



2,707 of these children live with other relatives.

8,000 children live with a relative with no parent present.



In 2016, **1,200** children/youth were in out-of-home Child Protection Services (CPS) or Juvenile Justice Services (JJS) placement.†

DCYF receives more than **20,000** reports of suspected child abuse and neglect each year.‡

DID YOU KNOW?

Almost half of grandparent caregivers are age 60+ and at greater risk for **COVID-19**. Because of the pandemic, **grandparents** and relative caregivers experience heightened need for support relating to housing, food security, and alternative care plans for the children.*

Additionally, many grandparents and **relative caregivers** face increased hardship given changes to their caretaking role that include: virtual-learning technology barriers and balancing academic obligations with increased caretaking responsibilities.

While the strain on kinship families has increased because of **COVID-19**, help is available. The Kinship Navigation Program can provide crucial supports to kinship caregivers during the pandemic. Learn more about our **NH Kinship Navigation Program** on the following page.

*From [Grandfamilies.org](https://www.grandfamilies.org)

†From *New Futures, Kids Count Data Center*

‡From the *NH Department of Children, Youth and Families*

*From the *2020 State of Grandfamilies in America Annual Report*



KINSHIP NAVIGATION CAN HELP

What is the Kinship Navigation Program?

In partnership with New Hampshire's Family Resource Centers (FRCs), the **Kinship Navigation Program** provides free, voluntary, and confidential services throughout New Hampshire, linking kinship caregivers to the program and supports like food assistance, gas to get to appointments, school supplies, respite care, additional financial assistance, and much more.

What do Kinship Navigators do?

Kinship Navigators offer emotional support, education and guidance, and provide information, referral and follow-up services that make kinship families strong, safe, and successful.

- Help kinship caregivers understand community supports and services specific to their family's needs.
- Ensure that kinship caregivers have access to supports by guiding families through benefits & eligibility applications.
- Provide emotional support to kinship caregivers in times of need.
- Serve as an advocate for both kinship caregivers and children as they navigate a complex network of programs and benefits.

How do I find a Kinship Navigator?

For more information regarding available Kinship services in your community, please visit www.fsnh.org to contact the Family Resource Center nearest you, *OR* refer to page 6 of this guide to contact your local Kinship Navigator directly.

Family Support New Hampshire (FSNH) is New Hampshire's network of Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and Family Strengthening Programs. FSNH allows FRCs to share best practices and better provide for Granite State families. Visit www.fsnh.org for more information and to locate the **FRC nearest you**.



NH KINSHIP NAVIGATORS

Access free, voluntary, and completely confidential Kinship Navigation services through the Family Resource Center (FRC) nearest you.

Lauren Kidder

Children's Unlimited Inc.
182 Main St.
Conway, NH 03818
lkidder@childrensunlimitedinc.org
603-447-6356

Pat Carroll

Children's Unlimited Inc.
182 Main St.
Conway, NH 03818
pcarroll@childrensunlimitedinc.org
603-447-6356

Michelle Kolias

Community Action Partnership
of Strafford County
577 Central Ave.
Dover, NH 03820
mkolias@straftfordcap.org
603-605-4194

Jo Ann Clement

Families First Health
& Support Center
100 Campus Dr., Suite 12
Portsmouth, NH 03801
jclement@familiesfirstseacoast.org
603-422-8209

Hilary Stark

Greater Tilton Area FRC
5 Prospect St.
Tilton, NH 03276
Serving Franklin & Tilton
hstark@gtfrc.org
603-286-4255

Tricia Eisner

Greater Tilton Area FRC
5 Prospect St.
Tilton, NH 03276
Serving Tilton
peisner@gtfrc.org
603-286-4255

Brittany Daley

Healthy Starts at HCS
312 Marlboro St.
Keene, NH 03431
bdaley@hcsservices.org
603-352-2253

Melissa Shadden-Cyr

Lakes Region
Community Services
719 North Main St.
Laconia, NH 03246
603-524-8811

Whole Village Family
Resource Center
258 Highland St.

Plymouth, NH 03264
603-536-3720

Serving Belknap County,
Grafton County & Town
of New Hampton

melissa.shadden-cyr@lrccs.org

Sara Dillingham

Salem Family Resources
24 School St.
Salem, NH 03079
sara.dillingham@gmail.com
603-898-5493

Alicia Babbitt

The Family Resource Center
138 East Milan Road
Gorham, NH 03570
Serving Gorham
and Berlin DOC
alicia.babbitt@frc123.org
(603) 752-0397

Diana Merrick

The Family Resource Center
123 Main St.
Gorham, NH 03581
Serving Coos & Northern
Grafton County
diana.merrick@frc123.org
603-466-5190

Shannon Lavertu

The Family Resource Center
123 Main St.
Berlin, NH 03581
Serving Gorham & Berlin
shannon.lavertu@frc123.org
603-466-5190

Rosemary Nugent

The Grapevine
4 Aiken St.
Antrim, NH 03440
rosemaryn@grapevinen nh.org
603-588-2620

René Couitt

TLC Family Resource
Center
1 Pleasant St.
Claremont, NH 03743
rene@tlcfamilyrc.org
603-542-1848 ext. 302

Mandy Carter

The River Center
9 Vose Farm Rd., Suite 115
Peterborough, NH 03458
acarter@rivercenter.us
603-924-6800

Seren Elizabeth

The Upper Room
36 Tsienneto Rd.
Derry, NH 03038
selizabeth@urteachers.org
603-437-8477 ext. 28

Alicia Angove

Waypoint
113 West Pearl St.
Nashua, NH 03060
angovea@waypointnh.org
603-518-4211

Jennifer Conn

Waypoint
464 Chestnut St.
Manchester, NH 03105
Serving Manchester,
Nashua, & Concord DOC
connj@waypointnh.org
603-518-4388

MaryLou Beaver

The Children's Place
& Parent Education Center
27 Burns Ave
Concord, NH 03301
beaverm@waypointnh.org
603-226-0507



Family Resource Centers (FRCs) provide family supports, parenting programs and groups, home visiting, child development screening, and information and referral to community resources that empower families to be successful and resilient.

BENEFITS OF KINSHIP CARE

For Children and Families

Research shows that living with relatives is better for children and benefits them in several ways.

Minimizes trauma: When children are separated from their birth parents, they often experience a sense of loss. Placing a child with relative caregivers helps preserve family culture, reducing the trauma of removal. Family members are more likely to take sibling groups, live in the same or nearby neighborhoods, and provide the additional comfort of living with someone where a relationship already exists.

Enhances well-being: Children in kinship care are more likely to benefit from Protective Factors that improve overall well-being. They experience increased stability, social connections, and support with basic needs from their relative caregivers that helps children develop social and emotional competence and build resilience during a challenging time.

Increases permanency for children: A child is less likely to enter foster care when they're placed with kin because relative caregivers are more likely to provide a permanent home through guardianship, custody, or adoption. **Youth who spent 100% of their time placed with family while in out-of-home care transition to legal permanency significantly faster and at a higher rate.***

Improves mental and behavioral health: Children in kinship care have better mental and behavioral health outcomes. Through increased permanency, children can develop close relationships through pre-existing ties with their relative caregiver, allowing for safe, stable, and social and emotional growth.

Promotes sibling ties: Children in kinship care are more likely to be placed with or stay connected to their siblings. Family members are often willing to caretake large sibling groups, reducing trauma and minimizing loss.

Provides a bridge for older youth: The connection to family or another supportive adult is critical for older youths. Adolescents and teens who have emotionally sustaining and committed relationships with positive role-models increase resiliency and self-sufficiency.

Preserves cultural identity and community connections: Children in kinship care are more likely to stay connected to their extended family and maintain their cultures and customs. Family and community connections are critical to healthy child development and fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Your Kinship Navigator can HELP!
See [page 6](#) of this guide to find a Kinship Navigator near you.



CHALLENGES OF KINSHIP CARE

For Caregivers*

Depending on their kinship arrangement, relative caregivers may need additional supports.

Financial assistance: Kinship caregivers often face financial hurdles when they add new members to their family. For example, kinship caregivers may be grandparents who are retired with a fixed income. Financial planning or assistance can help kinship families stay strong and resilient.

Legal assistance: Many caregivers need affordable legal assistance when making decisions around the custody of the child. For example, they may want to know whether to pursue legal guardianship. Birth parents have a role in many of these family situations, and caregivers need to be informed of their options for protecting the child.

Counseling resources/Emotional support: Children in kinship care often need help with trauma, understanding their new living situation, or behavioral challenges that result from separation and/or prior abuse or neglect. Additionally, relative caregivers may need their own respite time, recreation, counseling, and emotional support from others. Emotional support is often cited as the most important long-term need of many caregivers in Kinship Navigation Programs.

Child care: Finding affordable child care that meets the family's needs can be a challenge for kinship caregivers. Because a large share of caregivers work outside the home, or require respite time from the demanding role of caring for a child, reliable and affordable child care is critical.

Transportation: Transportation can also be a challenge for kinship caregivers. In some cases, caregivers may be unable to participate in alternative program activities or get children to medical appointments because they do not have access to reliable transportation.

Tutoring for the child: Some kinship caregivers may feel out of practice with parenting and have difficulty assisting children with certain aspects of their homework. These caregivers might need assistance with tutoring the child for fear that the child's academic performance could suffer.

Health insurance for the child: Health insurance for relative children is an issue for kinship caregivers with and without health insurance. Even if a caregiver has health insurance, not all relative children are eligible under the caregiver's health plan. Some kinship caregivers may not have health insurance themselves and worry about the cost of health insurance for the child.

Shame: Remember our child's behavior is not a mirror reflecting a report card back to us of how we did as a parent. A parent's job is to take responsibility for his or her own actions. You cannot possibly be responsible for your child's choices; you can influence them, but ultimately you can't control them. You need to be there for your child in good or bad times, get help when necessary, and be a helpful guide. Most importantly, simply keep showing up.

CAREGIVER SELF-CARE

What is Caregiver Burnout?

Caring for a child when their parents cannot is both rewarding and challenging. Along with its many joys, kinship care can also include various stressors, the emotional impact of which could escalate without proper self-care and support.

If the stress of caretaking isn't properly managed, it can have a profound effect on *your* health, relationships, and state of mind, eventually leading to burnout—a state of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion, affecting both you and the child or children in your care.

Meeting your own physical and emotional needs is just as important as meeting the needs of others. Developing self-care routines and fostering resilience depends on establishing healthy coping mechanisms, maintaining connections with people who support you and your caregiving, and knowing where to turn for help when needed.

Signs and symptoms of caregiver stress and burnout:

Knowing the signs and symptoms of caregiver stress and burnout is important because it allows you to recognize and address the problems at hand before the situation for you and your family becomes worse.

Common signs and symptoms of caregiver stress:

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Cutting back on leisure activities

Common signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout:

- You have much less energy than you once had
- It seems like you catch every cold or bout of flu that's going around
- You're constantly exhausted, even after sleeping or taking a break
- You neglect your own needs, either because you're too busy or you don't care anymore
- Your life revolves around caregiving, but it gives you little satisfaction
- You have trouble relaxing, even when help is available
- You're increasingly impatient and irritable
- You feel helpless and hopeless

Recognizing when help is needed and knowing where to find it is an essential part of developing and maintaining resilience as a caregiver. While caring for a loved one will never be stress-free, help is available through NH's Kinship Navigation Program. Visit www.fsnh.org for more information and to locate the **FRC nearest you**.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I contact a Kinship Navigator?

The Kinship Navigation Program and related services are community-based. Kinship Navigators can be contacted directly through the contact information provided in the “NH Kinship Navigators” section of this guide ([page 6](#)). Kinship caregivers in need of services may also contact their local Family Resource Center by visiting www.fsnh.org or dialing **2-1-1** from any phone in NH to speak with a Referral Specialist.

What types of referrals will my Kinship Navigator provide?

Referrals are comprehensive and fall under categories such as financial assistance, legal assistance, mental and physical health services, child development and parenting education, food assistance, and more. Please contact your local FRC or Kinship Navigator ([page 6](#)) to find out what referral or provider services are available to you and your family.

How much will this program cost me and my family?

Nothing. Kinship Navigation services are FREE, voluntary, and completely confidential.

How long can I receive kinship services?

As long as necessary if the child is under the age of 18 and in your primary care.

I am already receiving kinship services and need the phone number of my local agency. Can you help?

Yes. Kinship Navigators can be contacted directly through the contact information provided on [page 6](#) of this guide. You may also find contact information for your local Family Resource Center by visiting www.fsnh.org or dialing **2-1-1** from any phone in NH to speak with a Referral Specialist.

Does the child have to live with me to qualify for the Kinship Navigation Program?

Yes. The child must reside with you full-time. If there’s any doubt whether or not you qualify, please reach out to a Kinship Navigator or your local FRC.

Must I be related to the child?

No. Kinship caregivers can be licensed foster parents, relatives, or others with whom the child has a close, familial relationship. However, the child must be in your care full-time and the child’s parents must not be living in the same house. When in doubt, call your local Kinship Navigator.

I am a social worker or family support professional. How do I make a referral for a kinship family?

Please contact Joelyn Drennan, Senior Program Director at New Hampshire Children’s Trust, at jdrennan@nhchildrenstrust.org to make a referral for a kinship family.

**Anyone who suspects that a child is being
abused or neglected is required by NH Law to call:**

DCYF Central Intake Unit: 800-894-5533 (In-state only), 603-271-6562

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NH Government Resources:

NH Department of Health & Human Services.....	www.dhhs.nh.gov
NH Department of Education.....	www.education.nh.gov
NH Bureau of Family Assistance.....	www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/index.htm
NH Division for Children, Youth and Families.....	www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf
NH Office of the Child Advocate.....	childadvocate.nh.gov/

Resources that Connect:

NH Children's Trust (NHCT) Kinship Navigation Program	www.nhchildrenstrust.org/kinship
NH Care Path	www.nhcarepath.dhhs.nh.gov
Service Link.....	www.servicelink.nh.gov
NH 211.....	www.211nh.org
NH Easy	www.nheasy.nh.gov

Concrete Supports:

NH Food Bank.....	nhfoodbank.org
New Hampshire Housing.....	www.nhhfa.org
New Hampshire Legal Aid.....	nhlegalaid.org
Disability Rights Center-NH	drcnh.org
Child Care Aware of New Hampshire	nh.childcareaware.org
New Hampshire Homeschooling Coalition.....	nhhomeschooling.org
NAMI NH.....	www.naminh.org/find-support/mental-health-centers
CASA NH.....	www.casanh.org

Parenting Resources:

Family Support New Hampshire.....	www.fsnh.org
NH Foster & Adoptive Parents.....	www.nhfapa.org
Step Up Parents.....	www.stepupparents.net
NH Family Voices.....	nhfv.org
Parent Information Center of NH	picnh.org
Parenting NH.....	www.parentingnh.com
Macaroni Kids.....	national.macaronikid.com
Vroom.....	www.vroom.org
Zero to Three	www.zerotothree.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Recreational Resources:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of NH.....	www.bbbsnh.org
Boys and Girls Clubs in NH.....	nhclubkids.com
New Hampshire Recreation & Parks	www.nhrpa.com
YMCA Programs in NH.....	ymcasofnh.org
YWCA Programs in NH.....	ywcanh.org
Stay Work Play NH.....	stayworkplay.org

Grand Families Specific Resources:

Generations United.....	www.gu.org
GrandFamilies.org	grandfamilies.org
Granite State Independent Living.....	www.gsil.org
ServiceLink NH Family Caregiver Support.....	www.servicelink.nh.gov/about-us/nhfcsp.htm

COVID Resources:

NHCT Parent & Caregiver Guide to COVID-19	www.nhchildrenstrust.org/covid-19
NH DHHS COVID-19	www.nh.gov/covid19
CDC COVID-19.....	www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

Recovery Resources:

Granite Pathways.....	granitepathwaysnh.org
New Hampshire Recovery Hub.....	nhrecoveryhub.org
NH Alcohol and Drug Treatment Locator.....	nhtreatment.org
The Doorway NH	www.thedoorway.nh.gov

Additional NH Kinship Care Guides:

AARP:

www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.html

DHHS Resource Guide for NH Relative Caregivers:

www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/documents/relativecaregivers.pdf

Waypoint Grandfamilies Resource Guide:

waypointnh.org/assets/documents/GrandFamResGuide

NEW HAMPSHIRE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS



GREATER SEACOAST COMMUNITY HEALTH

Goodwin
Community Health

Families
First

Lilac City
Pediatrics

the family
resource center



