



**State of Kinship Care in Ohio**  
**Grandparent/Kinship Survey Report**  
**Part I**  
**September 2023**



## Introduction

Kinship care is a temporary or permanent arrangement in which a relative or a non-relative adult who has a relationship or bond with a child or the family, has assumed full-time care of a child whose parents are unwilling or unable to care for them. Kinship care includes relationships established through an informal arrangement, a legal custody or guardianship order, a relative or non-relative foster care placement, or a kinship adoption. Studies have shown that kinship care is the best option for a child who cannot remain with their parent.

In the late 1980s and early 1990's the rise of heroin and crack/cocaine epidemic resulted in rising numbers of children entering the child welfare system. To reduce the numbers of children in formal foster care, which is not the best place for children and is costly, increased efforts to place children in and support kinship care placements began.

Currently, Ohio has a significant number of children living in homes where caregivers are relatives and non-relatives. The U.S. Census Bureau does not capture non-relatives but only the number of children residing with relatives who are responsible for their care. The following data, for Ohio, is from the U.S. Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey:

- 297,000 children live in homes where caregivers are relatives
- 189,000 children live with grandparents
- 86,000 children live with grandparents responsible for their care
- 45,000 grandparents have cared for their grandchildren for five years or more

The Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition (OGKC) is the statewide organization, created in 1998 by a group of grandparent caregivers. OGKC is comprised of relatives or others who are raising children whose parents are unable or are unwilling to care for them; professionals working with and for kinship caregivers; and other advocates.

OGKC advocates for, educates, engages, and empowers caregivers and others to be able to increase awareness and understanding among legislators, policy makers and stakeholders about the needs of grandparents and other kinship care providers.

OGKC sent a survey to agencies and caregivers to update the needs and data regarding kinship families in January 2023, with 94 surveys completed. The intention of the survey was to address the demographics, needs, and recommendations for supporting caregivers - both caregivers and agencies were asked about their needs and circumstances.



## Survey Results

14 agencies/organizations and 80 kinship caregivers completed the survey. Major findings are as follows:

### *Demographics*

#### Geographical Data

- 2 out of 14 agencies/organizations provide statewide services.
- 44 counties in Ohio are being served: the most common ones being Franklin (5.8%), Darke (3.8%), Greene (3.8%), Montgomery (3.8%), and Muskingum (3.8%).
- 39.7% of kinship caregivers who completed the survey reside in Franklin County. Other commonly noted counties were Brown County (5.1%) and Cuyahoga County (5.1%).

#### Kinship Caregivers

- 97.5% of kinship caregivers who completed the survey identify as female; 2.5% identify as male.
- The ages of kinship caregivers who completed the survey range from 28 to 75 years old.
  - o The average age of kinship caregivers is about 57 years old.
- The least amount of time an individual has been a caregiver is 6 months. The longest amount of time is 28 years.
  - o On average, kinship caregivers who completed the survey have been caregivers for about 6 years.

#### Number of Children in Care

<b>1</b>	52.6%
<b>2</b>	25.6%
<b>3</b>	17.9%
<b>5</b>	3.8%

- Most kinship caregivers who completed the survey are caring for one child.

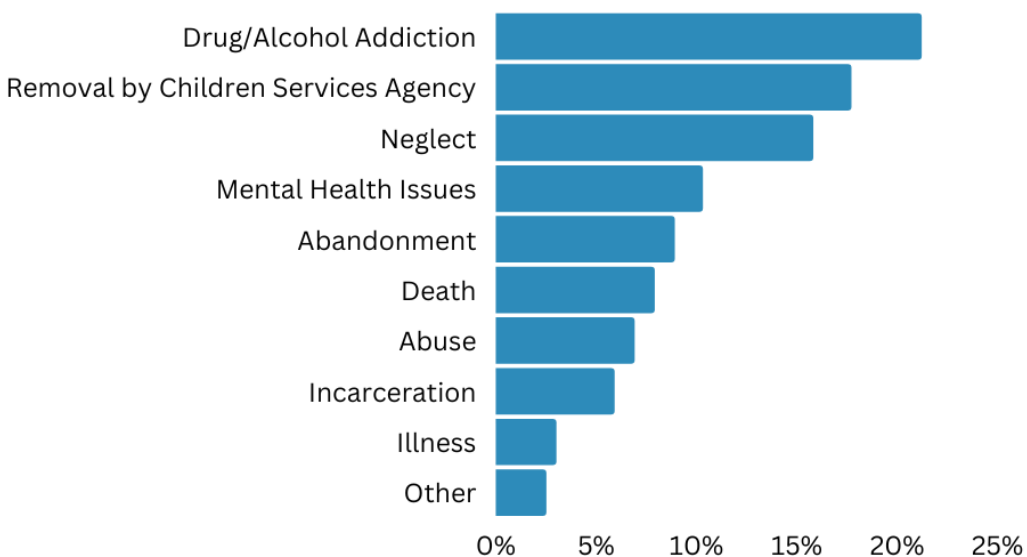
#### Ages of Children in Care

<b>1</b>	2.2%
<b>2</b>	5.9%
<b>3</b>	8.1%
<b>4</b>	4.4%
<b>5</b>	5.9%
<b>6</b>	4.4%
<b>7</b>	8.8%
<b>8</b>	3.7%
<b>9</b>	4.4%
<b>10</b>	4.4%

<b>11</b>	2.9%
<b>12</b>	8.1%
<b>13</b>	5.9%
<b>14</b>	10.3%
<b>15</b>	5.1%
<b>16</b>	7.4%
<b>17</b>	4.4%
<b>18</b>	2.9%
<b>19</b>	0.7%

- The ages of children being raised by kinship caregivers range from 1 to 19 years old.
- The average age of children in care is 9.73 years old.
- The two most common ages are 14 years old (10.3%) and 7 years old (8.8%).

### Reasons in Care



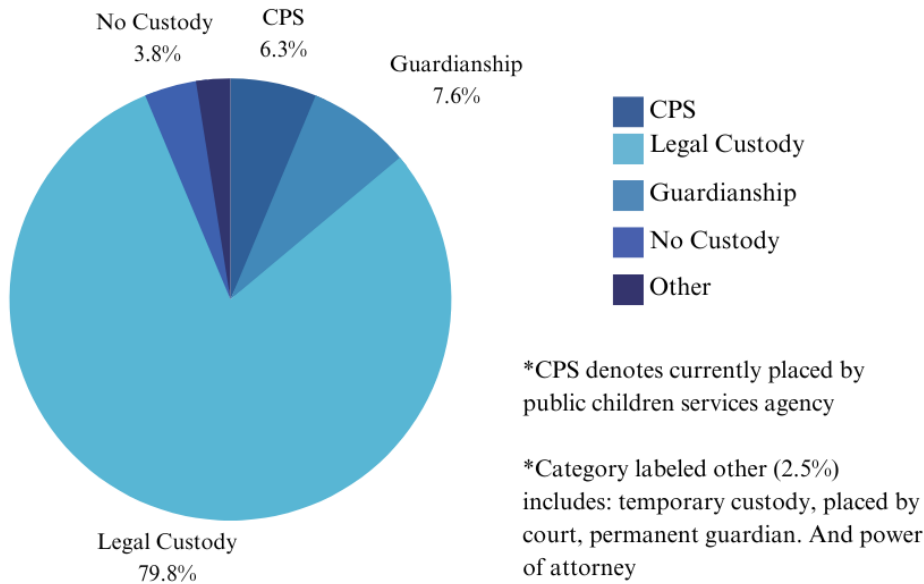
### Relationships

#### Caregiver Relationship to Children

<b>Aunt</b>	12.5%
<b>Cousin</b>	2.5%
<b>Grandparent</b>	77.5%
<b>Great-Grandparent</b>	1.3%
<b>Sibling</b>	1.3%
<b>Uncle</b>	1.3%
<b>Non-Relative</b>	3.6%

- The majority of kinship caregivers who completed the survey identify their relationship as grandparents.

### Legal Relationships



- Most respondents have legal custody of the children they are caring for.

### Agency/Organization Services

#### Number of Kinship Caregivers Served in 2022

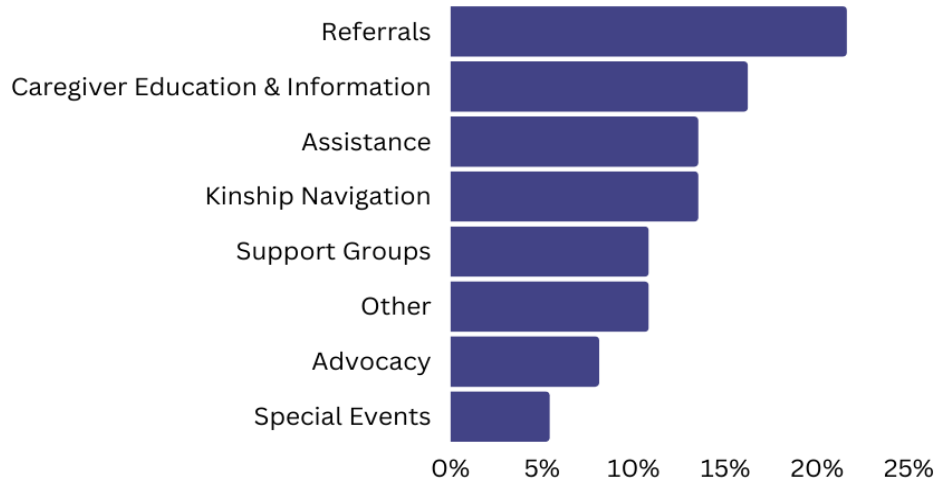
<5	11.1%
<b>5-20</b>	44.4%
<b>20-100</b>	11.1%
<b>101-500</b>	22.2%
<b>1,000</b>	11.1%

- About 45% of agencies/organizations served 5 to 22 caregivers in 2022.



## Services Provided

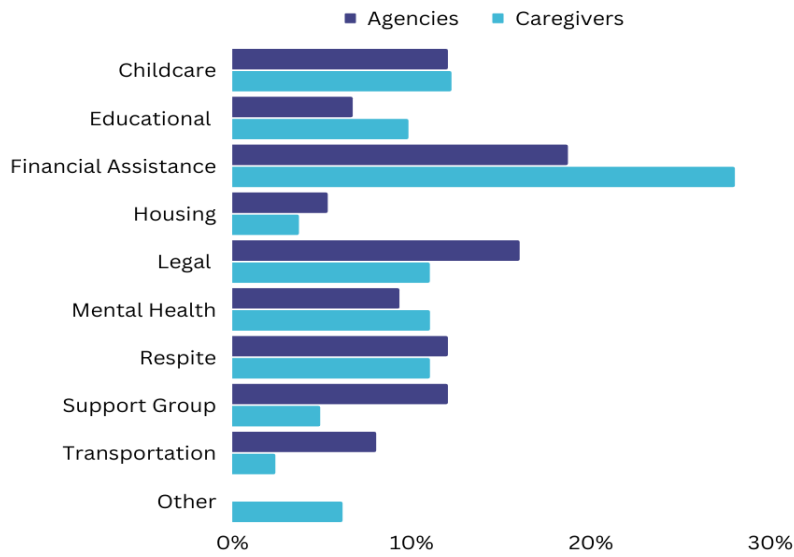
- Services provided by agencies/organizations were grouped by themes: referrals, caregiver education & information (e.g., newsletters and workforce development), advocacy, kinship navigation, assistance (e.g., distributing local donations, food pantries, and physical and/or mental health needs), support groups, special events (i.e., holiday events), and other (i.e., senior program and support calls). The following shows which services were most common among agencies/organizations who completed the survey.



Most agencies/organizations provide referral (21.6%) and caregiver education and information (16.2%) services.



## Identified Needs



Agencies/organizations reported financial assistance (18.7%) and legal (16%) as the top two most important needs. Kinship caregivers reported financial assistance (28%) and childcare (12.2%) as the top two most important needs.

No significant association was found between counties served by agencies and the agencies' most important needs.

No significant association was found between caregivers' county of residence and the caregivers most important needs

No significant association was found between caregivers' county of residence and the number of needs selected per caregiver.

No significant association was found between the number of needs selected per caregiver and the number of children in their care.



## *Suggested Meeting Topics*

Prominent themes, along with examples from survey responses, that arose in meeting topics suggested by individuals who completed the survey are shown below. These can also be seen as common concerns of both agencies/organizations and kinship caregivers.

Agencies/Organizations





## Kinship Caregivers



- Resources and support were two themes that were most frequently identified.
- Financial aid and teens were also common themes.

### *Additional Comments & Feedback*

Individuals who completed the survey had the opportunity to provide OGKC with comments and/or any feedback on how to support kinship families. The following are main ideas from responses.

#### Agencies/Organizations

All comments were positive. Many respondents praised the work OGKC is doing and believed the organization has been helpful to the community.

## Kinship Caregivers

Main ideas that were identified in comments and feedback from caregivers were:

- Many respondents provided positive comments, saying the organization is helpful and does a good job in supporting kinship families.
- Information: Many respondents requested OGKC provide caregivers with more information (e.g., legal and county specific information). Multiple suggested newsletters to access this information.
- Advocacy: respondents requested disability awareness and opportunities to advocate for kinship families
- Resources: individuals requested resources and how to access them. For example, resources for children in care, teens, childcare, and disabled children.

### *Summary*

The *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Report*, which was submitted to the Ohio General Assembly in September 1999, highlighted the problems and concerns of Ohioans raising children who could not be with their parents. Unfortunately, twenty-four years later, the problems and concerns identified in the 2023 OGKC survey results remain the same, with the needed supports identified as: increased financial assistance, adequate and affordable legal services, assistance with child care costs, and access to mental health supports.

In addition to the important daily contributions and sacrifices kinship caregivers make by providing a loving, safe, and stable home to the thousands of children who cannot live with their parent and preventing them from entering the already overwhelmed child welfare system, Ohio benefits from the financial savings that result from caregivers accepting responsibility for the care of these children.

According to the Public Children Services Association of Ohio *Factbook, 2022 Edition*, the average monthly cost for a child in a licensed foster home is \$5,937; annual cost for total number of children in foster care is \$206,821,103. Based on the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services January 2023 public assistance data, the monthly cost of a child in receipt of Ohio Works First Child Only cash assistance is \$352; annual cost of total number of children in receipt of OWF cash assistance is \$12,327,744 – a significant savings to the counties and state of Ohio.



## *Recommendations*

Based on the findings provided in this and the 1999 report, it is imperative that Ohio does better to support the needs of kinship families. It is strongly recommended that steps are taken to formally recognize kinship caregivers as having the primary parenting responsibility, by providing them with easier access to the benefits and support systems available to biological parents, adoptive parents, and non-related foster parents:

- Ensure resources provided meet the cultural needs of caregivers
- Investments/resources to promote the creation and/or expansion of programs and policies that support informal and formal caregivers in their efforts to keep their relative children out of the formal foster care system:
  - Resources to develop and provide education/training opportunities for caregivers
  - Remove income eligibility requirement for child care
  - “Child Only” Ohio Works First cash assistance increase to the payment amount and equal payments per child in the case
  - Support for adequate and affordable housing
- Expand the Grandparent Power of Attorney and Caregiver Affidavit to all caregivers
- Provide financial support to develop a caregiver assistance program which includes formal and informal caregivers, like the foster care and adoption assistance programs.
- Adequate investments to address substance abuse and mental health needs of children, parent, and kin caregivers
- Direct state policymakers to promote and foster collaborations between local, regional, and statewide groups to join in the effort to expand the use of kinship care and availability of resources to all kinship families, i.e., affordable recreational activities, caregiver, and children's support groups

