



Kinship Caregiving

By Dr Julie Wood, Optum Idaho Medical Director

Kinship caregiving is a term we're hearing more and more. However, Kinship caregiving is not anything new. In fact, families have been helping raise relative children for decades but kinship caregiving or kin care, for short, has been receiving more attention in recent years. Kinship care includes relationships developed through informal arrangements, legal custody, guardianship order, a relative foster care placement or kinship adoption.

It is estimated that 1 in 11 children lives in kinship care at some point before turning 18.¹

¹<https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-is-kinship-care>

It's estimated that 2 million children are in some sort of kin care relationship and that 1 in 11 children lives in kinship care at some point before turning 18.¹ The organization, Grandfamilies, reports over 10,500 grandparents in Idaho are responsible for their grandchildren and for every 1 child in foster care, there 13 children being raised by family outside of the foster care system. Many of these families are doing this informally and without additional support.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, research shows that placement of a child with a known family member has many benefits. Some of these benefits include: 1) less difficulty adjusting, 2) less likely to experience school and social disruptions, less likely to experience new or worsening mental health problems and are more likely to stay with siblings as well as maintain lifelong-family connections. Placement with relatives also improves overall stability with fewer moves and lower re-abuse rates. So, while kinship caring can have many benefits to the child and family, raising a loved one's child or children can also bring unexpected and difficult challenges.

Over the last few years, federal and our local governments have been creating new laws and grant funding to help ease some of the hurdles caregivers face. Optum Idaho wants to support our members and their families, by providing the following kin care resources. These local resources are packed with information about everything from navigating education, legal, tax and funding supports.

(Continued on the following page.)



See more
about kinship
caregiving in our
Fall 2023 issue
of Member
Matters.



“There is no right way to do kinship care; every family and situation is unique.”

Tricia Ellinger



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Local Kin Care Resources

These resources are easy to navigate and can provide information to help ease the transition for both the child/children and relatives.

- Grandfamilies.org – Quick Facts about Idaho available [here](#).
- Idaho Department Health and Welfare Kinship and Caregiving [resources](#)
- 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine [resources](#) (800-926-2588)
- Idaho Caregiver Alliance [resources](#)
- **Family Caregiver Navigator** through Idaho Caregiver Alliance (208-426-5899)
- Grandparent Grant in Idaho – Temporary Assistance Family in Idaho (TAFI) [resources](#)
- **Children’s Medicaid**
- Idaho Relatives as Parents | [Facebook](#)

Helpful Tips from a Caregiver

We understand that life can get busy and you can feel overwhelmed despite having resources. One of our member’s that’s been in a similar situation also wants you to be aware of these helpful tips:

- Don’t be afraid to ask for help from friends, other family members.
- Join a kinship support group.
- Consider taking a parenting class especially if there is one dedicated to managing challenging youth or youth that have had trauma.
- Don’t forget self-care. Remember to eat right, exercise and get plenty of sleep.
- Seek counseling for yourself to help you cope with the new responsibilities and expectations of raising a child today.
- Don’t forget about **Respite**. This can be formal through an agency that offers respite services and or informal with family and friends.

Most of all remember “there is no right way to do kinship care; every family and situation is unique. No one will judge you for your actions taken from a place of love” (Tricia Ellinger, Optum Member Advisory Committee member, and a kinship caregiver and adoptive parent to three child relatives).

See our **Fall 2023 Member Matters newsletter** for more information about kinship caregiving, respite services, tips for foster parents, ways to help kids manage stress and mental health challenges in teens.