

# KINSHIP CARE

2020

## the basics

### What is “Kinship Care?”

“Kinship Care” is a way to describe a circumstance where children are living with or being raised by members of their family, or close friends of the family, in place of – or in addition to – their parents.

#### A “Kinship Care” household could look like:

- ▶ Grandparents who have temporary custody of their grandchildren while the family works toward reunification of the child with their parents, with support from the Division of Child and Family Services.
- ▶ An aunt who is letting her sister, and her sister’s child, live with her in order to support them while her sister is out of work and unable to afford rent, groceries and other necessities on her own.
- ▶ A close family friend who has agreed to take care of three children, who are as close to him as his own nieces and nephews, while their mother is serving a short jail sentence.

### How many Utah children are living in Kinship Care?

This is a surprisingly tricky question to answer! According to the US Census’ American Community Survey for 2018:

- ▶ **5.6%** of all Utah children live in the household of their grandparent(s).
- ▶ **1.9%** live with another type of relative
- ▶ **1.3%** are in foster care or some other arrangement with non-relatives.



**52,010**

Utah children live in their grandparents’ household

**17,646**

Utah children live in the household of other relatives

**12,074**

Utah children live in foster care or with other non-relatives.

The 2018 ACS also reports that somewhere between 59,361 and 69,771 Utah grandparents are living with their own grandchildren (under age 18). Not all grandparents who are living with their grandchildren, however, are primarily responsible for raising those children. And some grandparents don’t live with their grandchildren, but shoulder a great deal of the responsibility of raising them.

You can see why it is very difficult to quantify exactly how many Kinship Care families and households exist in Utah in a given year!

*Kinship Care arrangements can be temporary, unconventional, “below the radar,” and/or hard to describe to others (such as a census worker or other public servant).*

Additionally, different organizations and data entities define “Kinship Care” in different ways. That is why you will sometimes see different estimates of how many Kinship Care households or “Grandfamilies” exist in Utah.

### Why do so many Kinship Care households exist in Utah?

The ways in which data is collected and reported on “Kinship Care” households makes it difficult to say whether Utah has substantially more “Kinship Care” families by population now, when compared to ten or twenty years ago. Anecdotally, however, advocates report receiving more requests from kinship families, with more complex needs, than ever before.

The top reason that children are not able to be raised primarily by and/or with their parents, as reported by kinship families in Utah, is substance abuse by the parent(s). Other issues that necessitate Kinship Care arrangements include: poverty and economic challenges, death (of the child’s parent(s)), incarceration and persistent mental health issues.

# How Can Legislators Help Kinship Care Families?

**RECOGNIZE** the growing community of kinship families in Utah, the important work these families are doing, and the many community benefits that Kinship Care households bring to our state.

**MEET & TALK** with Kinship Care families in your district to learn more about their unique strengths and needs. To identify Kinship Care families in your area, contact the Children's Service Society of Utah or the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS).

**SUPPORT** legislative appropriations requests for organizations and programs that provide critical support for kinship families in Utah, such as the Grandfamilies Kinship Care program.

**INVITE** Kinship Care advocates (like the members of the Utah Kinship Coalition) to present to policy-making bodies (such as legislative interim committees or district school boards) when they are considering laws and policies that may impact Kinship Care families.



**Utah's Kinship Care families need support from all of us!**

Utah's many Kinship Care families face some unique challenges, and they often need extra support. Compared to foster families, for instance, Kinship Care families are less likely to receive financial, legal and emotional support.

Kinship caregivers may suddenly need to figure out how to:

- ▶ arrange child care;
- ▶ enroll a child in school;
- ▶ sign a child up for health insurance; and
- ▶ cover all the costs associated with having one or more children!

This can be especially difficult for grandparents who, already having raised children in a different era, must quickly learn how to navigate complicated modern systems of education, medical care, child care and mental health.

Children who find themselves in the care of non-parent family members, or of close family friends (sometimes referred to as "fictive kin"), almost always have endured some trauma that has led to their current situation. That means Kinship Care families typically are caring for one or more children with complex emotional and mental health needs. Both the kinship caregiver and the child need support, education, new skills and financial stability to weather the challenges.

Fortunately, some programs exist to provide support to kinship families. However, the reach of these programs are limited, and kinship families still need a lot of support from their neighbors, church community, local schools and others.

## The Utah Kinship Coalition includes:

2-1-1 of Utah  
Utah Foster Care  
University of Utah  
Voices for Utah Children  
Children's Service Society of Utah  
Utah Division of Indian Affairs  
Grandfamilies Kinship Care

LDS Family Services  
Utah Division of Aging and Adult Services  
Utah Division of Child & Family Services  
Kinship Care Family Members  
....and many more!