

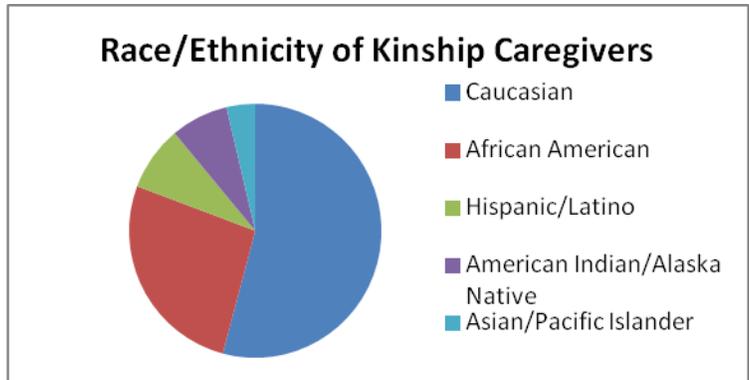
## Frequently Asked Questions: Kinship Caregivers Support Program

### **Q: *What do we mean by kinship caregiver?***

A: Kinship caregivers are relatives, generally grandparents, who are raising children whose parents are unable to care for them. In WA State there are over 40,000 children being raised by their grandparents or other relatives. For every child placed with a relative through the formal foster care system, more than 10 children are being raised by relatives outside of the formal system.

### **Q: *What is the Kinship Caregivers Support Program (KCSP)?***

A: Children rarely arrive at grandma's home with the clothing, beds, car seats, cribs, or diapers necessary to care for them. The KCSP is a program administered by the Aging and Long Term Support Administration at DSHS. The funds, \$2.1 million/biennium, are distributed through the Area Agencies on Aging or a contracted community based organization. The funding addresses something the relative needs right away to take a child into their home, or meets other emergent needs of the child(ren) as they arise. DSHS specifies how the funds can and cannot be used, and closely monitors the program. Kinship caregivers may apply to the KCSP one time per year. The average amount of support received by the caregiver is roughly \$290 per child. In 2012, the program served more than **3,300 children** who were being raised by 2,200 grandparents and other relatives. And 83% of kinship caregivers who received KCSP services had an average annual household income below \$30,000 for a family of four.



### **Q: *Who can access the KCSP?***

A: Kinship caregivers (grandparents and other relatives) who are raising children who are not involved with the formal child welfare system may be eligible for help through the KCSP. The caregiver must verify their relationship with the child and be low income. **Other payment sources must be exhausted in order for relatives to receive support from the KCSP.** KCSP supports relatives who are at risk of not being able to continue caregiving without help from the program.

***Q: Does the KCSP duplicate support that kinship caregivers can access from other existing state programs?***

A: No, the KCSP helps grandparents and other relatives who, in most situations, do not have legal custody of the child they are caring for, nor are they eligible for or receiving the services or supports available through the formal child welfare system. No other program offers the quick help relatives need to provide a child with something essential, like a bed, car seat, formula, diapers, or transportation to their current school – items that help ensure that the child does not have to return to an unsafe situation.



***Q: Why don't these kinship caregivers become licensed foster parents?***

A: While a caregiver can try to get licensed as a foster parent, a claim of abuse or neglect would have to be filed with CPS related to the child. But, once the child is with a relative the child is no longer seen as at risk of abuse or neglect.

***Q: Why don't these caregivers access child only TANF or the AREN program?***

A: While a number of kinship caregivers do access child only TANF (eligible if they are under 300% FPL), many are reluctant to “be on welfare”, have an immediate need (for the child) that cannot wait until their TANF child-only application goes through, or have other concerns about applying for TANF. With respect to the Additional Requirements for Emergent Needs (AREN) Program which provides assistance for shelter-related costs, only TANF recipients are eligible for the program. And this program has also been cut – recipients can get up to \$750 in a lifetime.

***Q: How would the foster care system be impacted if the KCSP were eliminated?***

A: Currently there are approximately 40,000 children in WA State being raised by grandparents or other relatives outside of the formal child welfare system. Of these, approx. 3,300 accessed the KCSP in 2012. If even 25% of the children whose relatives accessed the KCSP were unable to continue living with their relatives the cost to the system would be tremendous. Imagine, 825 additional children coming into foster care. At minimum the cost to the state per child per month (based solely on the avg. per child foster care payment) is approx.\$545.00 or \$6,540 annually. That equals \$5.395 million per year -- versus a program that prevents children from entering the child welfare system that costs about \$1 million per year or \$2.1million per biennium.

***Q: How would TANF be impacted if all eligible relative caregivers began receiving TANF?***

A: In 2012, approximately 8000 kinship caregivers were receiving child only TANF. It is estimated that there were over 14,000 additional caregivers who were eligible but did not apply.

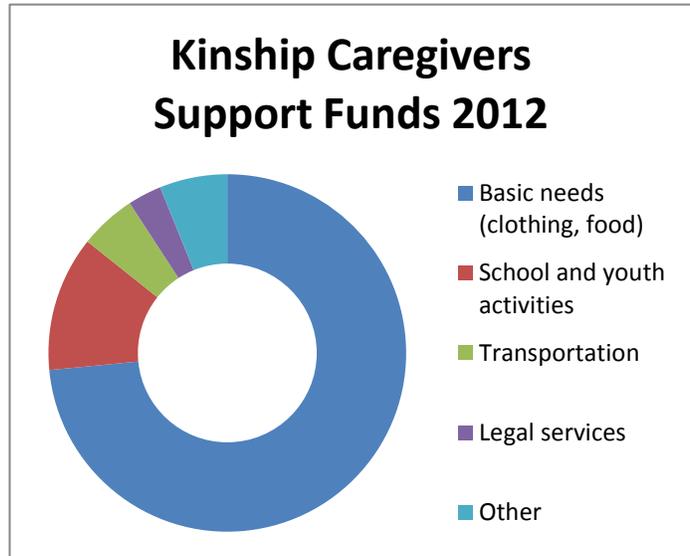
If even one quarter of the eligible caregivers decided to apply and receive child only TANF, it would cost roughly \$13.650 million per year or \$27.3 million per biennium (the average grant per household is \$325/month).

**Q: How can KCSP funds be used?**

A: KCSP funds can be used for items or services, such as, diapers, clothing, school activities, transportation, legal assistance, and counseling. KCSP is not an ongoing source of assistance for the caregiver; it is available to meet emergent needs.

**Q: Why should the State support Kinship Caregivers?**

A: In many situations, relatives are living on fixed incomes and are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. They have just enough money to provide for themselves, when suddenly they have children dropped into their lives. Sometimes these individuals, who've never asked for anything, need to apply for assistance to provide for the grandchildren thrust into their lives. Sometimes retired folks have no choice but to return to work to provide for their new dependents. Most often, these individuals need to make substantial sacrifices in order to care for the children. And even more often, they sacrifice their own health to do what's best for their children. These children are given a loving, secure home with family. And, by living with kinship caregivers, they save the state money now as well as down the road.



**This funding is vital. We cannot afford to fail children being raised by grandparents and other relatives.**

**For more information contact:**

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## **Examples: The Kinship Caregiver Support Program Makes a Difference**

### **Mary**

When Mary's two grandchildren were dropped at her house in the middle of the night with only the clothes they were wearing, her life changed immediately. Mary, who lived on a fixed income, had supported only herself since her husband passed away a few years ago. Suddenly, she had to buy clothes, diapers, food, and beds (thrift stores do not sell second hand mattresses). Mary hadn't needed to worry about children for many years since her adult children left home. Although Mary was overwhelmed with the array of new responsibilities, she was also determined to take excellent care of her grandchildren. But how could she even get started with the basic needs? Her budget wouldn't stretch far enough. She needed assistance, and she needed it immediately.

This is what KCSP is for.

### **Robert**

Robert, a grandfather has dedicated himself to raising his 3 year old grandson, Joe, who badly needed a safe home. He is proud and not one to ask for help but recently reached out to the local Kinship Navigator. Robert explained that he successfully completed all of the paperwork for a third party custody arrangement for his grandson. Unfortunately his limited income could not afford the \$275 court filing fee. When Robert learned that this legal fee could be paid through the KCSP his eyes welled up with tears and he shared how tremendously grateful he was to finally find a way to ensure greater permanence for his grandson.

This is what KCSP is for.

### **Don and Vi**

After taking in their grandson, David, Don and Vi had to start diverting their limited funds so they could buy school clothes and supplies for him. They've made sure that David is as happy as possible in his new situation, and they take good care of him. After receiving some recent high medical bills, the strain on their funds meant that this month they would have to choose between paying the oil heating bill and paying the rent. They're already falling behind on other bills, and they're determined that David not feel the stress they're experiencing.

This is what KCSP is for.

### **Jeanine**

Jeanine's grandson just moved into her small one bedroom apartment with her because his parents are unable to raise him due to their multiple life challenges. The small home was more than enough for Jeanine for several years, but now with a 12 year old living with her, one bedroom just won't work. She just learned that there's a two bedroom apartment available in the complex down the street, but she needs to be able to pay first and last month's rent to move in, and there's no way she can afford that on her social security checks.

This is what KCSP is for.

