

# EMPOWERING KINSHIP FAMILIES

Resources for Opioid Recovery & Prevention



## KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Grandparents & Relatives Raising Children

Living at Age 60+ or Caring for an Aging Loved One?  
**We Can Help You Do It**

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LONGER**™

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**(419) 382-0624**

[www.AreaOfficeOnAging.com](http://www.AreaOfficeOnAging.com)  
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## Foreword & Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to every individual, family, caregiver, & child whose life has been touched by opioid use. Whether you are walking the path of recovery yourself, supporting a loved one, or adjusting to changes within your family, we honor your courage, your perseverance, & the hope you carry—sometimes quietly, but always bravely.

Opioid use affects more than one person; it reaches into homes, relationships, & generations. Yet so does recovery. Healing is not limited to a single moment or a single individual. It unfolds through the strength of families, the dedication of caregivers, the resilience of children, & the support of communities that refuse to give up.

Within these pages, you will find information, reassurance, & resources designed to lift you up—no matter where you are in your journey. This booklet is a reminder that you are not alone, that recovery is possible, & that hope can be rebuilt one step, one choice, & one day at a time.

To everyone affected: your story matters, your strength is seen, & your future holds amazing possibilities.

### *The Kinship Navigator Program*



Published December 2025

## Introduction

Welcome to our new publication, ***Empowering Kinship Families: Resources for Opioid Recovery & Prevention***. This guide raises awareness of the impact of the opioid crisis on families & provides kinship caregivers with practical tools & resources for support & recovery. Contributors & Advisors for this publication include Justin Moor, Arcelia Armstrong, Marsha Rose, & the staff at the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.

This publication was made possible by the **OneOhio Recovery Foundation**. The OneOhio Recovery Foundation, a nonprofit established by Ohio's state & local leaders, manages 55% of the state's opioid settlement funds. The OneOhio Recovery Foundation partners with local communities to strengthen prevention, treatment, & recovery efforts across Ohio.

## What is Kinship Care?

When children cannot live with their parents, kinship caregivers, relatives, or trusted family friends step in to provide stability, support, & guidance. Kinship care may result from parental death, illness, incarceration, substance use, mental health issues, domestic violence, abuse, neglect, or other challenges. Kinship Care can take many forms, including informal care, legal custody, foster placement, or adoption. Regardless of the arrangement, kinship caregivers make a courageous, life-changing commitment to the children they support.

## Kinship Quick Facts

The rise in heroin & other opioid use has left many parents unable to care for their children, due to death, incarceration, addiction, or treatment, leading relatives & close family friends to step in. Most children being raised by relatives live outside the formal foster care system.



(Continued on page 2)



| Nationally                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ohio                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Trends & Projections                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over <i>2.5 million children</i> are raised by relatives or family friends outside the formal foster care system.</li> <li>For every <i>1</i> child in foster care with kin, <i>19</i> children are cared for by kin outside of foster care.</li> <li>About a <i>third</i> of all children in foster care are living with relatives.</li> <li>These kinship &amp; grandfamilies <i>save taxpayers \$10.5 billion annually</i> by reducing foster care placements (Generations United, 2025).</li> <li><i>325,000 children</i> live in foster or kinship care due to parental opioid use.</li> <li><i>1.4 million children</i> live with a parent with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD).</li> <li><i>170,000 children</i> have OUD themselves or have accidentally ingested opioids.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>238,921 children</i> live in homes headed by relatives.</li> <li>For every <i>1</i> child in foster care with kin, <i>34</i> children are cared for by kin outside of foster care.</li> <li><i>Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) diagnoses doubled</i> between 2021 &amp; 2024, straining the child welfare system &amp; increasing the number of children in kinship care.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster care entries due to parental opioid use <i>rose from 13% to 32.2%</i> from 2012 to 2015.</li> <li>By 2030, <i>up to 5.3 million children</i> may be affected by the opioid epidemic.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1029 632 1338 953"> </div> |

#### **Mental Health, Addiction, Recovery, & Support**

Adult Children of Alcoholics: (310) 534-1815  
 Al-Anon/Alateen: (888) 425-2666  
 Brightview: (888) 502-4571  
 Fresh Attitude Adolescent Substance Use Program:  
 (866) 720-3784  
 Harbor: (419) 475-4449  
 Lucas County Sheriff's Office D.A.R.T.  
 (Drug Abuse Response Team): (419) 213-6582,  
 AOoA D.A.R.T. Officer Jeff Medere: (419) 382-0624  
 Mental Health & Recovery Services Board of Lucas Co:  
 (419) 213-4600  
 NAMI Toledo: (419) 243-1119  
 Nar-Anon: [www.nar-anon.org](http://www.nar-anon.org)  
 New Concepts: (419) 531-5544  
 Ohio Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services:  
 (877) 275-6364  
 Ohio RISE (Resilience through Integrated Systems  
 Excellence: (833) 711-0773  
 PAL Group: [www.palgroup.org](http://www.palgroup.org)  
 Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration:  
 (800) 662-4357, [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
 Toledo-Lucas County Health Dept.- Overdose Prevention,  
 & Lucas Co. Substance Use Response Coalition:  
 (419) 213-4010  
 Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC):  
 (419) 242-9955  
 Unison Health: (419) 214-4673  
 Urban Minority & Drug Abuse Outreach Program:  
 (419) 255-4444  
 UTM- Kobacker Center: (419) 383-5695  
 Zepf Center: (419) 841-7701

“Sometimes the  
 smallest step in the  
 right direction ends  
 up being the biggest  
 step of your life.  
 Tiptoe if you must,  
 but take the step.”  
 – Naeem Callaway





## About the Kinship Navigator Program

*Strong families. Supported Caregivers.*



**Globally & nationally recognized & designated as “Exemplary”** by the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network (A National Technical Assistance Center), our Kinship Navigator Program has supported grandparents & relative caregivers in Lucas County for 25 years, serving over 1,300 families annually. The Kinship Navigator Program has rich community partnerships that extend the program’s reach & offer added support for kinship families. Our Kinship Navigators connect caregivers with services & resources to meet the needs of both the caregivers & the children they’re raising.

### Services:

- **Support & Guidance:** Ongoing help for grandparents & relatives raising children.
- **Information/Referral & Assistance:** Access to local services & resources.
- **Education & Support Groups:** Evidence-based programs, caregiver education & peer support with limited respite.
- **Club Meetings & Events:** Community resource sharing & access to items like school supplies, coats, meals, sports tickets, & camp scholarships.
- **Podcast:** *Roots of Resilience: Empowering Kinship Families Amid Opioid Recovery* is part of the AOoA *Living Better & Longer* podcast through WGTE Public Media.
- **Publications:** *Parenting Smarts Resource Guide, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition*, *Empowering Kinship Families: Resources for Opioid Recovery & Prevention*, Quarterly Newsletter, & twice-monthly E-Newsletter.

## Eligibility

- Live in Lucas County, Ohio.
- Be the primary caregiver for a child (birth–18) with no parent in the home.
- No age, income, custody, or child welfare requirements.

 **Enroll or refer today (419) 382-0624**  
**[KinshipMailGroup@AreaOfficeOnAging.com](mailto:KinshipMailGroup@AreaOfficeOnAging.com)**



## Kinship Navigator Program Offers Support for Opioid Impacted Families



### Parenting Smarts Resource Guide



Our popular **FREE** 64-page guide for kinship & grandfamilies was updated in September 2025, with expanded resources for opioid impacted families. Call the AOoA Kinship Navigator Program to request your copy at (419) 382-0624.

### Podcast: "Roots of Resilience: Empowering Kinship Families Amid Opioid Recovery"



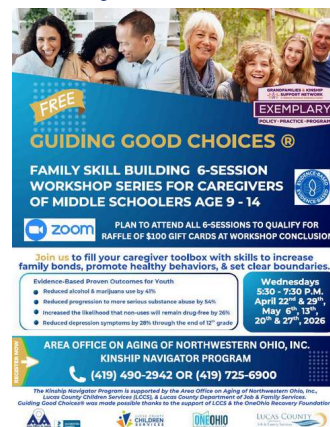
Part of the AOoA **Better & Longer** podcast, "**Roots of Resilience**" offers support, resources, & hope for families affected by opioid use. Listen & watch episodes at WGTE Public Media ([www.wgte.org](http://www.wgte.org)).

### Food Assistance "Families in Recovery Sticking Together"



**Seagate Food Bank's F.I.R.S.T. Program** provides grandparents & relative caregivers raising children due to opioid or substance use disorders with monthly, supplemental food assistance. A referral is required & the AOoA Kinship Navigator Program can provide one. For details, call (419) 382-0624.

### Evidence-Based Guiding Good Choices®



A **FREE 6-session family skill-building workshop for kinship caregivers of youth ages 9-14**. Led by certified Kinship Navigator Program staff, this proven program strengthens family bonds, promotes healthy habits, sets clear boundaries, & reduces risky behaviors of drug & alcohol use. Call the AOoA Kinship Navigator Program to register for 2026 workshops at (419) 382-0624.

## Children Thrive in Grandfamilies



Grandfamilies raising children affected by substance use face social, financial, & health challenges, yet research shows children thrive in their care. Those raised by relatives or close family friends experience greater safety & stability than in non-relative placements; however, kinship caregivers often lack access to the support and services needed to help children heal from trauma and its physical, mental, & behavioral effects.

## Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

**What is SUD?** SUD is a mental health condition that affects the brain & behavior, making it hard to control drug or alcohol use. It ranges from mild to severe, with addiction as the most serious form. People with SUD may keep using despite harm & often experience depression, anxiety, or trauma. While genetics can raise risk, education & mental health support can help prevent it—no one is “destined” to develop SUD.

**What Causes SUD?** SUD isn’t a lack of willpower or morals—it’s a brain disease. Substances alter brain chemistry, making quitting difficult even when someone wants to stop. It often begins in adolescence as a way to cope with stress, pain, or emotions. Over time, alcohol, marijuana, opioids, & other drugs create tolerance & withdrawal, driving continued use & loss of control.

**Is There a Cure?** There’s no cure, but recovery is possible with treatment & ongoing support. Because addiction is chronic & relapsing, lasting recovery often involves therapy, medication, recovery meetings, & stable housing. Healthy routines, supportive friendships, & employment strengthen long-term success.

### Recovery Support for Families:

- **Seek Support:** Join *Al-Anon*, *Nar-Anon*, or [PALgroup.org](http://PALgroup.org) for guidance & connection. Families learn they didn’t cause, can’t control, & can’t cure addiction.
- **Heal Relationships:** Family therapy rebuilds trust & eases tension. Support recovery by helping with childcare, transportation, or routines that make treatment easier.
- **Relapse & Resilience:** Relapse can be part of recovery. Have a plan, use resources, & never lose hope—recovery is always possible.



## Impact of Opioids on Children

- **Children at Risk:** When a parent struggles with SUD, children may suffer neglect, lack of structure, or exposure to dangerous substances like heroin or fentanyl. They may also witness violence or criminal activity. Without intervention, these children face serious trauma or harm, sometimes requiring relatives to seek emergency custody.
- **Infants Born with Addiction:** Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) occurs when babies are exposed to opioids in the womb. One baby is diagnosed with NAS every 25 minutes—about 2–7 per 1,000 births. Symptoms include tremors, fever, excessive crying, poor feeding, & seizures. NAS infants often have low birth weight & require lengthy hospital stays.
- **Children in Limbo:** In Ohio, children of parents with opioid addiction make up nearly one-third of all children in custody, spending a median of 240 days in care. Relapses can prevent reunification, leading to a permanent custody loss. Generational addiction has also made it harder for relatives to step in as caregivers.
- **Disrupted Development:** The *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)* study shows that exposure to substance abuse, neglect, or separation from caregivers increases lifelong risks for behavioral, emotional, & physical health problems. Children affected by these traumas often display challenging behaviors, making caregiving more difficult. Learn more about **ACEs** at [www.acesaware.org](http://www.acesaware.org).
- **Long-Term Effects of NAS:** Children with NAS may face lasting challenges, including developmental delays, behavioral issues, growth & memory problems, & hearing or vision difficulties.



***States with the highest opioid prescribing rates also have the most grandparents raising grandchildren. Over one-third of children entering foster care due to parental substance use are placed with relatives. As states allocate opioid settlement funds, grandfamilies are too often overlooked.***

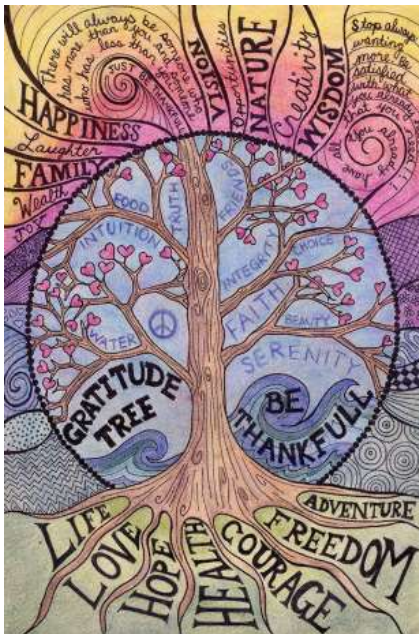


## Impact of Opioids on Kinship Families

The opioid epidemic has deeply affected child welfare, leading many grandparents & relatives to unexpectedly become full-time caregivers after a loved one's addiction or death.

- **Caregiver Burden:** Relatives step in to raise children with little preparation or support.
- **Emotional Strain:** Grief, trauma, & stress affect both caregivers & children.
- **Financial Hardship:** Many face added expenses without legal custody or financial aid.
- **Legal Challenges:** Navigating child welfare, courts, & public benefits is complex.
- **Health Impacts:** Older caregivers often experience stress-related health decline.
- **Social Isolation:** Stigma & exhaustion can lead to withdrawal from community & peers.
- **Children's Trauma:** Children often show emotional, behavioral, or developmental issues.
- **Educational Struggles:** Caregivers must advocate for children facing trauma-related learning challenges.
- **Resource Gaps:** Access to respite care, counseling, financial assistance, or addiction-related support is limited.

## Daily Gratitude Practices for Kinship Families



- **Shared “gratitude moments” at meals or bedtime.**  
*Benefit:* Strengthens emotional connection & helps children feel secure.
- **Keep a family gratitude journal.**  
*Benefit:* Encourages positive reflection & builds resilience over time.
- **Create a gratitude board or jar.**  
*Benefit:* Provides a visual reminder of good things, boosting optimism.
- **Send thank-you notes or messages together.**  
*Benefit:* Teaches appreciation & improves social bonds.
- **Practice one small act of kindness each day.**  
*Benefit:* Increases feelings of purpose & reduces stress.
- **Acknowledge “small wins” aloud.**  
*Benefit:* Builds confidence & helps reframe stressful moments.
- **Take brief mindful moments (deep breaths, notice something good).**  
*Benefit:* Calms the nervous system & promotes emotional regulation.

## Community Resources

### **Kinship, Foster, & Adoption Support**

AOoA Kinship Navigator Program:  
(419) 382-0624  
Adopt America Network- OAKS Program:  
(419) 265-4383  
Generations United: [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)  
Grandfamilies.org: [www.grandfamilies.org](http://www.grandfamilies.org)  
Lucas County Children Services (LCCS):  
(419) 213-3200  
LCCS- Family Help Center: (419) 213-3833  
National Council for Adoption:  
(703)-299-6633  
Ohio Grandparent/Kinship Coalition:  
[www.ohiograndparentkinship.org](http://www.ohiograndparentkinship.org)  
OhioKAN: (844) 644-6526

### **Childcare**

YWCA CCR&R: (419) 255-5519

### **Crisis**

Crisis Care Helpline- Division of Zepf:  
(419) 904-2273  
Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741  
LCCS (Report Child Abuse or Neglect):  
(419) 213-2273  
Lucas County Emotional Support Line  
(419) 904-2273  
National Suicide Prevention Line: Dial 988

### **Disability Services**

Ability Center of Greater Toledo:  
(419) 885-5733  
Compass Rose Disability Advocates:  
(419) 688-5922  
Lucas County Board of DD:  
(419) 380-4000  
National Center for Learning Disabilities:  
(301) 966-2234  
Toledo Public Schools Special Ed:  
(419) 671-0001

### **Early Head Start**

Clever Bee Academy: (866) 313-9864  
Educare Academy: (419) 704-2009  
Great Lakes Community Action  
Partnership: (800) 775-9767  
NW Ohio Help Me Grow: (419) 665-3322  
Lucas Co. Family & Children First Council:  
(419) 725-6175

### **Education**

Khan Academy: [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)  
Penta Career Center: (419) 661-6182  
School Choice Ohio: (614) 223-1555  
STARS: [www.starsprep.net](http://www.starsprep.net)  
Toledo Public Schools: (419) 671-0001

### **Financial**

LCCS (KPI, KSP, KGAP, Foster):  
(419) 213-3200  
Lucas County Dept. of Job & Family  
Services (OWF Child Only, Cash  
Assistance, Medicaid, PRC, SNAP):  
(419) 213-8800  
Ohio Dept. of Children & Youth (Benefit  
Info): [www.childrenandyouth.ohio.gov](http://www.childrenandyouth.ohio.gov)  
Pathway, Inc.(Utilities): (419) 242-7304

### **Food**

Connecting Kids to Meals: (419) 720-1106  
Food for Thought: (419) 654-0235  
Helping Hands of St. Louis: (419) 691-0613  
Lutheran Social Services: (419) 243-9178  
SeaGate Foodbank: (419) 244-6996  
SNAP Benefits (LCDJFS): (419) 213-8800  
Toledo NW Ohio Food Bank: (419) 242-5000

### **Grief Support**

Good Grief of NW Ohio: (419) 360-4939  
Monarch Grief Center: (567) 331-8601

### **Housing**

AOoA- Housing Search:  
[www.areaofficeonaging.com](http://www.areaofficeonaging.com)  
Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority:  
(419) 259-9448  
Neighborhood Properties: (419) 473-2604  
United Way 2-1-1 (shelters): Dial 2-1-1

### **Legal**

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality:  
(419) 255-0814  
Legal Aid of Western Ohio: (419) 724-0030  
ProSeniors: (800) 488-6070

### **Medical & Dental**

Neighborhood Health Association:  
(419) 720-7883  
Ohio Department of Medicaid:  
(800) 324-8680  
Toledo/Lucas County CareNet:  
(833) 628-4467  
Toledo-Lucas Co. Health Dept.- Shots for  
Tots & Teens: (419) 213-4100

### **Parenting Support**

Annie E. Casey Foundation: [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)  
Jockey Being Family Foundation:  
[www.jockeybeingfamily.com](http://www.jockeybeingfamily.com)  
PC-CARE Caregivers & Children Together:  
[www.pccarelearningcenter.com](http://www.pccarelearningcenter.com)  
TripleP Positive Parenting: [www.triplep.net](http://www.triplep.net)

### **Recreation**

Boys & Girls Clubs of Toledo: (419) 241-4258  
Metroparks Toledo: (419) 407-9700  
Toledo-Lucas County Public Library:  
(419) 259-5200  
Toledo Museum of Art: (419) 255-8000

### **Trauma**

National Childhood Traumatic Stress  
Network: [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)  
ProMedica Toledo Children's Hospital- Cullen  
Center: (419) 281-4681  
Sophia Center: (419) 882-4529

**"Caregiving often  
calls us to lean  
into love we didn't  
know possible."  
- Tia Walker**

For more comprehensive resources, call the AOoA Kinship Navigator Program at (419) 382-0624 & request a *Parenting Smarts Resource Guide*. Resources herein are provided as a service to support families impacted by opioids & other substance use disorders. These resources have been cross-referenced & phone numbers verified as of November 2025. The AOoA of Northwestern Ohio, Inc. assumes no responsibility for omissions or errors & assumes no responsibility for the services provided by resource agencies.





Area Office on Aging  
of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.

## KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Grandparents & Relatives  
Raising Children



Read about our  
Exemplary Designation  
at [www.gksnetwork.org](http://www.gksnetwork.org)



GET OUR **FREE** SERVICES  
CALL (419) 382-0624

- ✓ INFORMATION & REFERRAL
- ✓ ONGOING ASSISTANCE
- ✓ SUPPORT GROUPS
- ✓ CLUB MEETINGS
- ✓ EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS
- ✓ CAREGIVER EDUCATION
- ✓ SPECIAL EVENTS
- ✓ QUARTERLY RESILIENCY RAFFLE
- ✓ QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
- ✓ TWICE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
- ✓ PARENTING SMARTS RESOURCE GUIDE
- ✓ ACCESS TO AOOA PROGRAMS & EVENTS

### KINSHIP QUICK FACTS

**2.5 million children** in the US live with grandparents or other relatives without parents in the home.

**100,000 children** in Ohio live in homes where the head of household is a grandparent or other relative (4% of children in the state).

For every **1 child** being raised by kin in foster care, there are **19 children** being raised by kin outside of foster care.

**\$10.5 Billion** - The amount grandparents & other relatives save taxpayers each year by raising children & keeping them out of foster care.

Source: Generations United  
2025 State of Grandfamilies Report

2155 Arlington Ave. Toledo, OH 43609

[www.AreaOfficeOnAging.com](http://www.AreaOfficeOnAging.com)

(419) 382-0624

The Kinship Navigator Program is supported by the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc., Lucas County Children Services, Lucas County Department of Job & Family Services, & the OneOhio Recovery Foundation.



"You don't have to  
see the whole  
staircase, just take  
the first step."

- Dr. Martin Luther  
King Jr.



"When everything  
seems like an uphill  
struggle, just think of  
the view from the  
top."

- Anonymous

# KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Grandparents & Relatives Raising Children



**Area Office on Aging  
of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.**

To learn more about our Kinship Navigator Program

Call: (419) 382-0624 or 1 (800) 472-7277

Fax: (419) 382-4560

Email: [KinshipMailGroup@AreaOfficeOnAging.com](mailto:KinshipMailGroup@AreaOfficeOnAging.com)

[www.AreaOfficeOnAging.com](http://www.AreaOfficeOnAging.com)



*The Kinship Navigator Program is supported by the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc., Lucas County Children Services, & Lucas County Department of Job & Family Services. This publication was made possible thanks to the support of the OneOhio Recovery Foundation.*