

The Aging Network's Support of Kinship Families; No-Cost Tips for Starting/Enhancing Services

**2026 USAging Conference
July 19, 2026**





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Kinship Families: who they are and their strengths and challenges



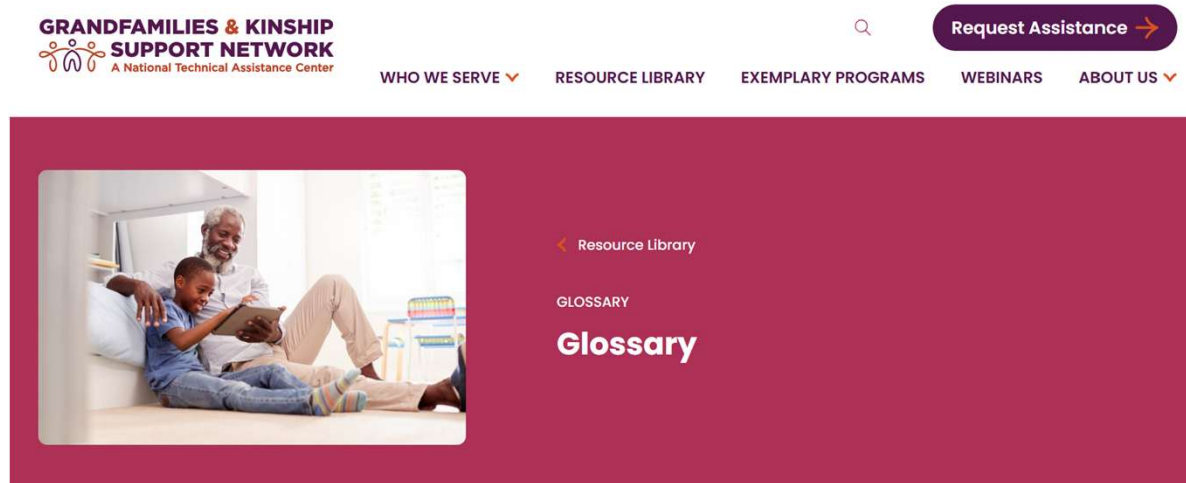
How the Aging Network helps; how the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network helps the Aging Network



How the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network helped us

Kinship Families = Grandfamilies

We use the terms “kinship/grandfamilies,” “grandfamilies,” and “kinship families” to refer to - families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so





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Parental Causal Factors Creating Kinship/GrandFamilies

Substance use

Death

Disabilities &
Mental Health
Challenges

Detainment or
Deportation

Military
deployment

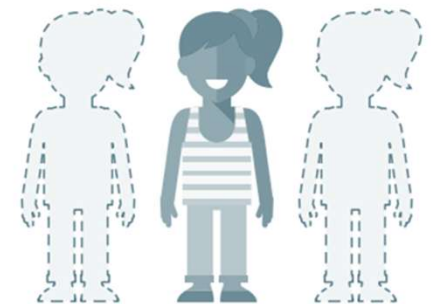
Incarceration

COVID

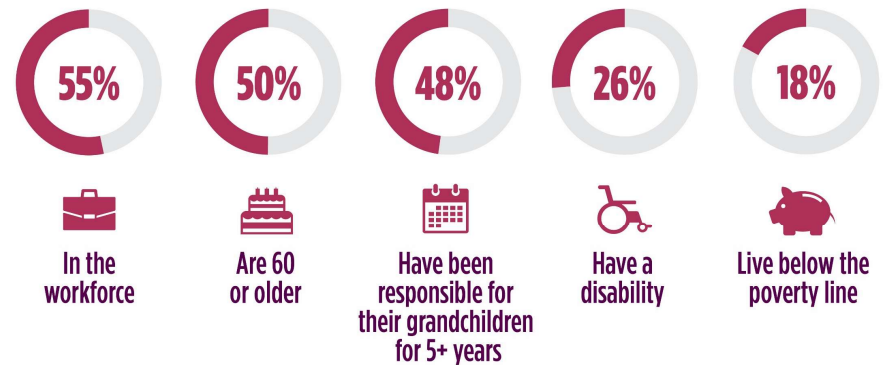
Abuse &
Neglect

Poverty &
Homelessness

More than **1/3**
of all children
placed in foster care
because of parental
substance use are
placed with
relatives.*



Grandparents Responsible for their Grandchildren



2+ MILLION

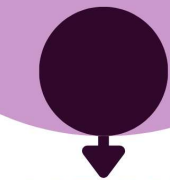
Children in Kinship/Grandfamilies

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



**about
2.5 million**

children are being raised by a relative or close family friend, with no parent living in the household



127,449

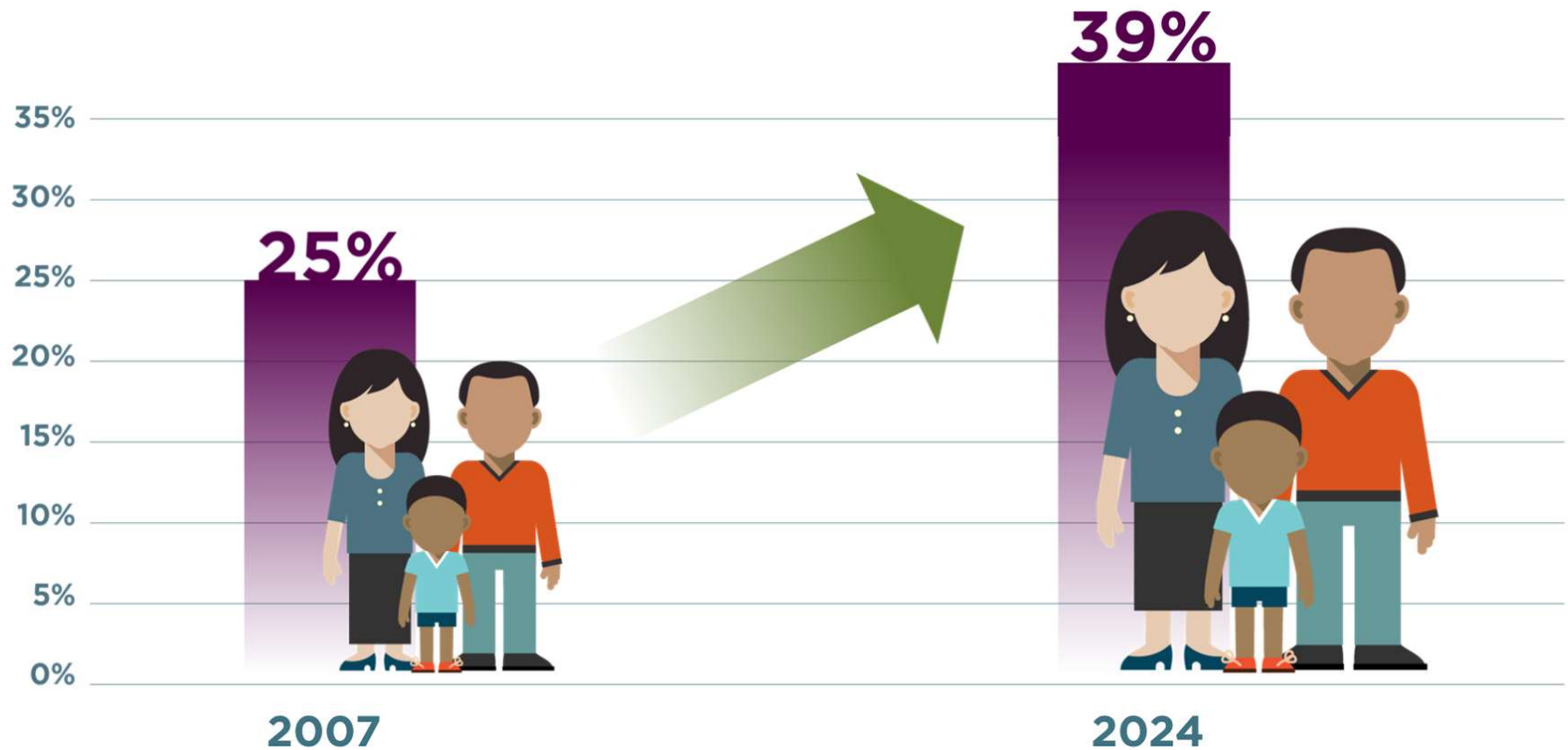
children in foster care are being raised by kin

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See: www.gksnetwork.org/resources/grandfamilies-kinship-families-strengths-challenges/ and www.gksnetwork.org/kinship-data/

Percentage of Children in Foster Care Being Raised by Relatives



Kinship Strengths: Children Thrive



Legal Authority

If the child is in foster care with kin providing the care, the agency has legal custody of the child and can help access services:

- For **licensed/approved kin homes**, the child receives monthly foster care maintenance payments and a case worker
- In **unlicensed/unapproved kin homes**, the child may or may not receive financial support and a case worker

For the vast majority of grandparents and other kin, the parents initially still have legal custody of the child. Kin caregivers, unlike parents, do not have an automatic legal relationship to the child:

- Getting such a legal relationship can be very costly and take a long time
- Without it, grandfamily/kin caregivers may not be able to access services and supports for the child

Similar Challenges Regardless of Path

Challenges

Unexpected
responsibility for
more children

Caregiver feelings
of guilt and shame
&
caregiver health

Access to accurate
information &
mistrust of
“systems”

Solutions

Housing, financial,
nutrition

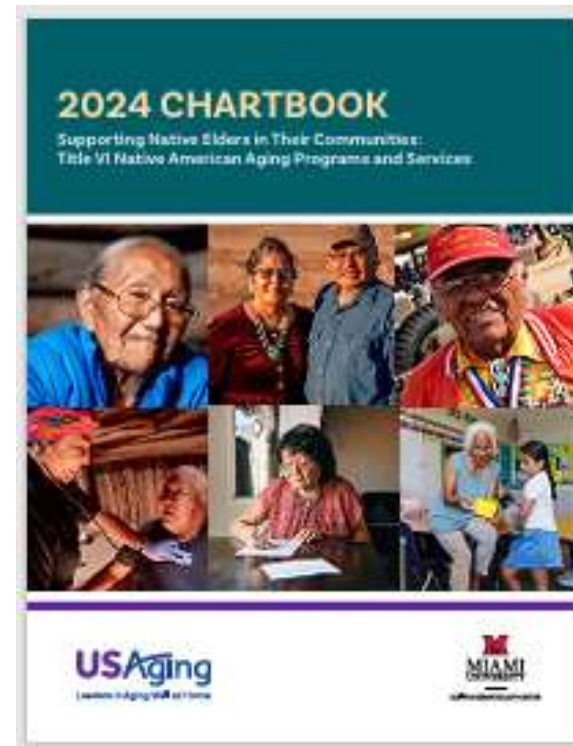
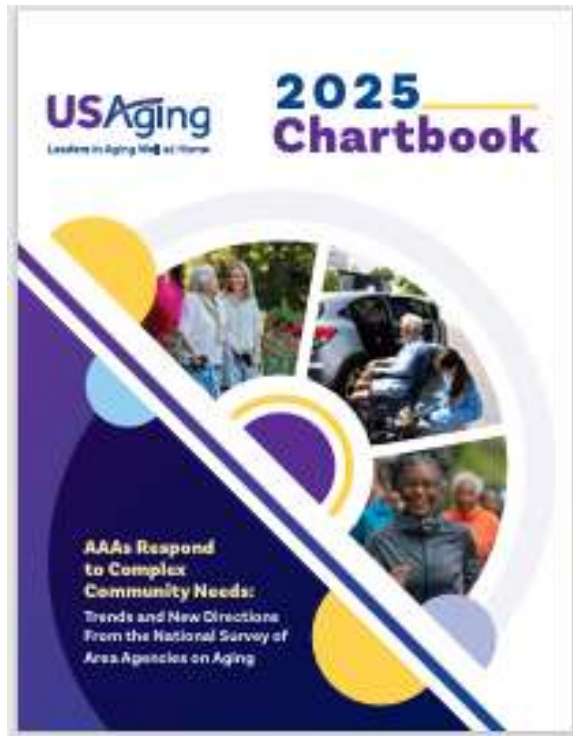
Peer support
groups,
respite services

Trained I & R staff,
kinship navigators

Aging Network's Support for Kinship Families



USAging's Nationally Representative Surveys of AAAs and Title VI Programs



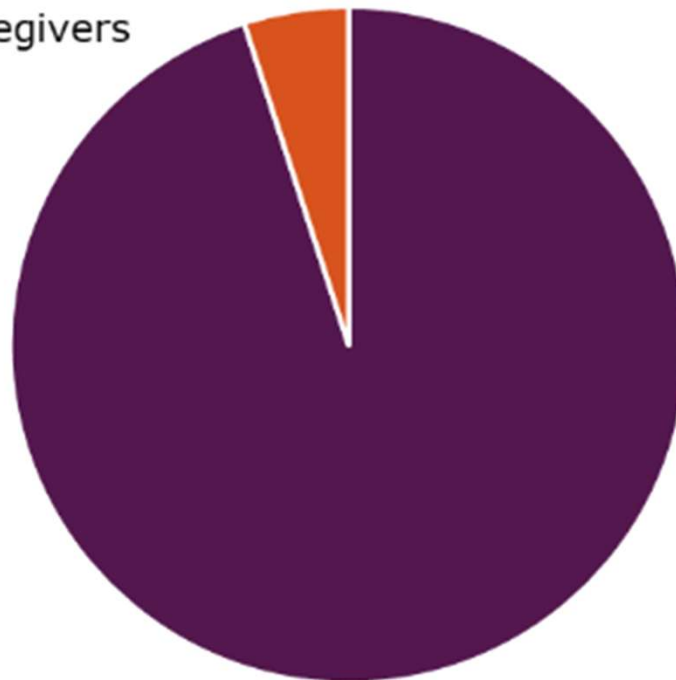
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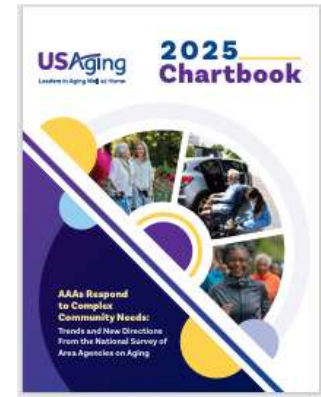
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[Using.org//Files/24-TitleVI-Chartbook-508-fnl.pdf](https://using.org//Files/24-TitleVI-Chartbook-508-fnl.pdf)

Kin Caregiver Services Offered by 95 percent of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)

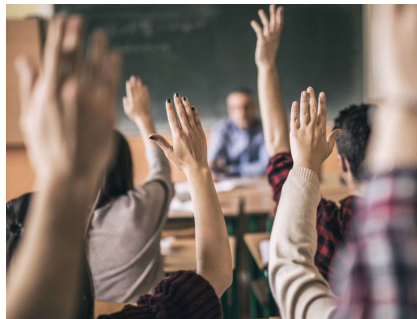
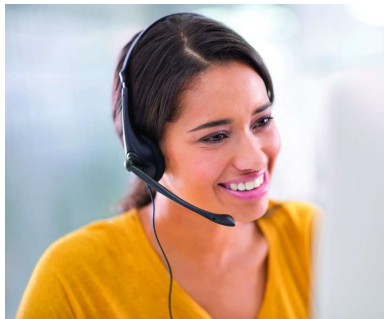
5% of AAAs do not offer services to older kin caregivers



95% of AAAs offer services to older kin caregivers

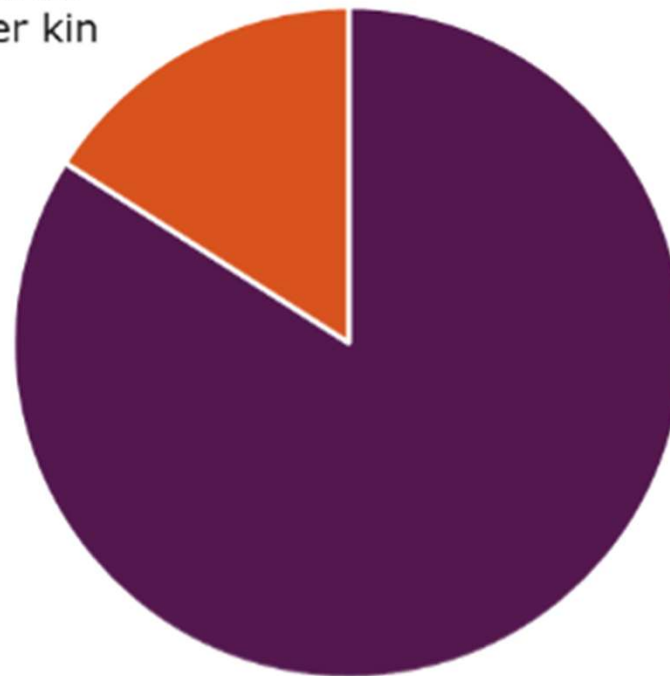


Kin Caregiver Services Provided by AAAs	Percent of AAAs
Information & Referral	69%
Assistance accessing services	54%
Training/education	52%
Respite	45%
Support groups	44%
Caregiver counseling	41%
Legal services	37%

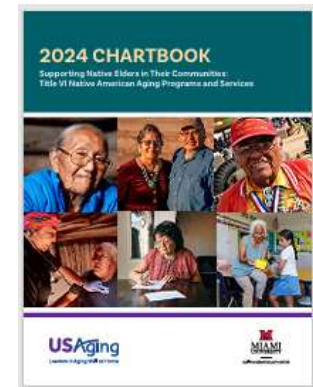


Kin Caregiver Services Offered by 84 percent of Title VI Native American Aging Programs (Title VI programs)

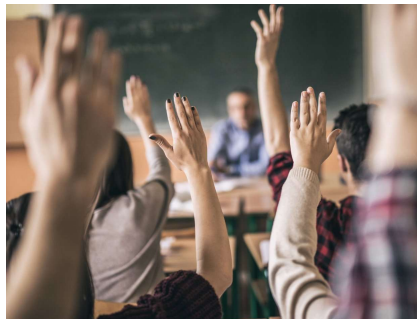
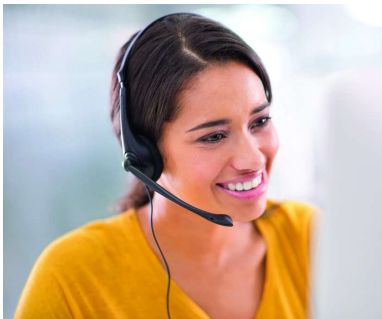
16% of Title VI programs do not offer services to older kin caregivers



84% of Title VI programs offer services to older kin caregivers



Key Services Provided	Percent of Title VI Programs
Information & Referral	61%
Assistance accessing services	55%
Training/education	46%
Respite	44%
Caregiver counseling	37%
Support groups	34%



Top Challenges in Supporting Kin Caregivers

Title VI Programs

1. Limited funding
2. Not enough staff to support elders caring for children
3. Providing respite services (e.g., childcare for children when offering supports/services to the elder caregivers)
4. Caregiver distrust or fear of the system
5. Finding families/outreach

AAAs

1. Limited funding
2. Kinship families don't know about us
3. Outreach – Difficulty identifying kinship families
4. Not enough staff to support kin caregivers
5. Helping kin caregivers navigate the educational and supports system (e.g., school enrollment, nutrition benefits, immunizations)

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Top Challenges in Supporting Kin Caregivers

2022 AAA nationally representative survey (unpublished data)

Needs Assistance to Start a Kin Caregiver Service

13 percent

Title VI Programs

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Tips for Starting or Enhancing Services

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**Overcoming
Barriers to
Connecting
with Kinship
Families**

**OUTREACH
LEARNING
COMMUNITY**

Key takeaways from the first of five sessions for social service professionals who want to improve outreach to kin caregivers

Expert: Gail Engel is a GRAND Voice caregiver advocate with Generations United who has raised her now 17-year-old grandson since infancy. She is the very active founder of the Grand Family Coalition, Inc., a Colorado nonprofit that provides services to and advocates for kinship families. Gail is also a member of the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network management committee and is subject matter expert for the Network.

Why This Topic Is Important: Connecting with grandfamilies and kinship families can be fraught with challenges. Misroot, crowded schedules, logistical problems, stigma, social barriers, and privacy concerns may keep caregivers from seeking outside help. Many simply do not know about the services and programs available to them or that "kinship" applies to them. Having tips and ideas about where to start can help service professionals feel less daunted by this crucial task.

How to Connect with Kinship Families

- Promote your organization to stakeholders throughout the community.
 - State and local government agencies, family courts, schools, and other



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Funding Kinship Programs & Services: Tips & Resources

June 25, 2024

- We will begin at the top of the hour
- Please type in the **chat box** - your name, state, tribe (if applicable), and role
- Type questions in the **chat box** at any point during our time together
- All participants will receive a link to the slides and recording in the next day or two

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USAgging
Look for us at the 2024 National Conference on Aging

**Leveraging
Partnerships to
Better Support Kin
Caregivers**

**Starting a Kin Caregiver
Support Service**
Learning Community Insights
TOPIC 5 OF 5

Community partners can benefit your new kin caregiver support service in a variety of ways. They can expand your reach, reduce gaps in services, lower per-capita costs, and increase revenue. This resource explores how community partners can help, how you can help them, and where to look for partners, and it provides tips on developing partnerships.

How Community Partners Can Help

Kinship/grandfamilies encounter many organizations in their daily lives: schools, childcare providers, youth clubs (e.g., scouts, 4-H, etc.), public benefit offices (e.g., Medicaid, nutrition support, etc.), senior centers, and more. These organizations use a variety of funding streams to support families in different but often complementary ways. Some support younger kin caregivers, while others support older ones. Many have contiguous or overlapping service areas. Partnerships among these organizations can expand each organization's reach, increase participant numbers, and reduce gaps in services. Consider these examples:

- East Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and University of Tennessee** in Johnson City, TN, uses Older Americans Act Title II funds to provide an evidence-based training to kin caregivers ages 55 and older. Their local university extension program uses state and U.S. Department of Agriculture funds to offer a complementary training to kin caregivers of all ages. By partnering to offer shared training, both FTAAG and the university expand their reach, lower per-capita costs, and stretch their federal funding dollars.
- The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma's Title VI Indian Grandcare Access Program (Title VI program)** runs a successful congregate meal program that welcomes both kin caregivers and the children they are raising. However, many grandfamilies living in remote regions of the tribal nation have difficulty getting to the program. The Title VI program partners with their tribal public transportation provider to assist these families.

Other Ways Partners Can Help and How You Can Help Your Partners

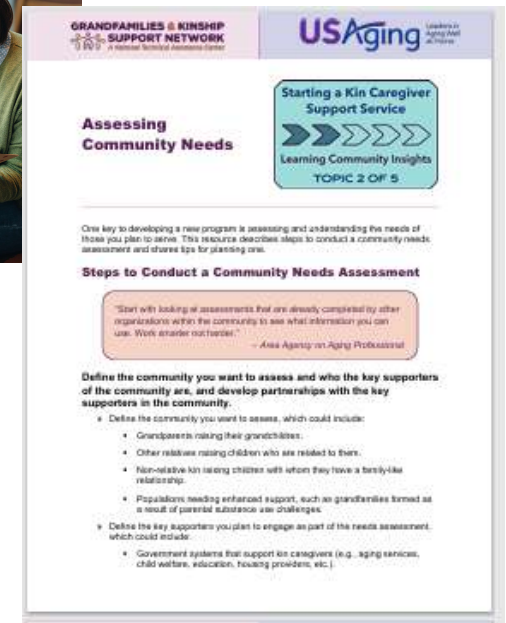
Partnerships are a two-way street. Some organizations, especially smaller ones, may think they don't have anything to offer potential community partners. However, mutually beneficial

Top Tips for Starting and Enhancing Kin Caregiver Services

1. Conduct a community needs and resources assessment.
2. Involve kin caregivers in program/service development and delivery.
3. Use root cause analysis, change theories and logic models.
4. Develop a mix of funding streams
5. Leverage partners to increase capacity.

Top Tips for Starting and Enhancing Kin Caregiver Services

1. Conduct a community needs and resources assessment.



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gksnetwork.org/resources/kin-support-learning-community-topic-2/

Top Tips for Starting and Enhancing Kin Caregiver Services

2. Involve kin caregivers in program/service development and delivery



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Tips to Include Kinship/Grandfamilies in Programmatic Decision-Making

Increasingly, government and nonprofit leaders are recognizing the value of engaging individuals with lived experience when creating and enhancing programs and services. Programs and services are more effective, trusted, and used when they intentionally draw on the perspectives of those they seek to serve.

This resource offers tips for engaging with caregivers, youth, and parents with lived experience in kinship/grandfamilies so that they can meaningfully contribute to programs and services intended for them. The term "kinship/grandfamilies" refers to all families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. The terms "grandfamilies" and "kinship families" can be used interchangeably to refer to these families.

What is the value of engaging kinship/grandfamilies in the creation and enhancement of programs and services?

- **Greater Trust and Use:** Families are more likely to trust and use services and programs when they know that the offerings have been guided by their peers who may use the services themselves.
- **More Effective:** Services and programs that are informed by individuals who use them are more effective than those that have not been peer informed.
- **Improved Relationships and Better Outcomes:** When kinship/grandfamilies experience positive, meaningful engagement with government agencies and nonprofit organizations, it can repair or strengthen family relationships with those agencies and organizations, leading to better outcomes.

How do I prepare to engage kinship/grandfamilies?

- **Be Clear about Roles, Responsibilities, and Goals while Remaining Open to Feedback and Change:** Develop a written plan that lays out the roles, responsibilities, and goals of the engagement. This plan is a way to establish an understanding of the work and build trust with each other. Do not consider this plan



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gksnetwork.org/resources/engaging-lived-experience/

Top Tips for Starting and Enhancing Kin Caregiver Services

3. Use root cause analysis, change theories and logic models.





Starting a Kin Caregiver Support Service
Learning Community Insights
TOPIC 4 OF 5

Root Cause Analysis, Change Theory, and Logic Models

Would you like to start a program that is efficient with dollars and staff time while meeting community needs? While root cause analyses, change theories, and logic models cannot guarantee a successful program, they can increase its likelihood. This resource explains what those tools are, how they can help, and how to use them.

What is Root Cause Analysis?

Let's say your community needs assessment (see [Topic 2](#)) indicates that many kin caregivers in your community report persistent, high levels of stress. Your supervisor suggests starting a support group, reasoning that it will give kin caregivers the opportunity to share their worries and receive mutual support from their peers, thereby relieving their stress. You and your team find space for the group, hire a facilitator, post fliers, and buy food for the first meeting. The only problem: no one comes. Later, you learn that the kin caregivers in your community don't have time or are too tired to come to the meetings because they work multiple jobs to make ends meet. What's more, you learn that they're working multiple jobs because they can't afford basic necessities on just one income. It is only after you've spent time and money on planning the support group that you and your supervisor realize the reason kin caregivers in your community are stressed is because they're worried about money.

Conducting a root cause analysis can help avoid this scenario. A root cause analysis offers the opportunity to consider whether the need you observe is the true cause of a problem or only a symptom.

How to Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

Sometimes an observed need is simply a symptom of a deeper issue. Treating the symptom will not resolve the issue, much like treating a medical symptom won't cure a disease.

To conduct a root cause analysis, try to remember what it was like when you were a child and wanted to learn the reason behind everything. Why is the sky blue? Why do dogs bark?

Now, apply this to your observed need. For instance, the supervisor in the above scenario might have asked herself, "Why are kin caregivers in my community experiencing stress?" After brainstorming possibilities and reviewing the community needs assessment, she realizes



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Top Tips for Starting and Enhancing Kin Caregiver Services

4. Develop a mix of funding streams.



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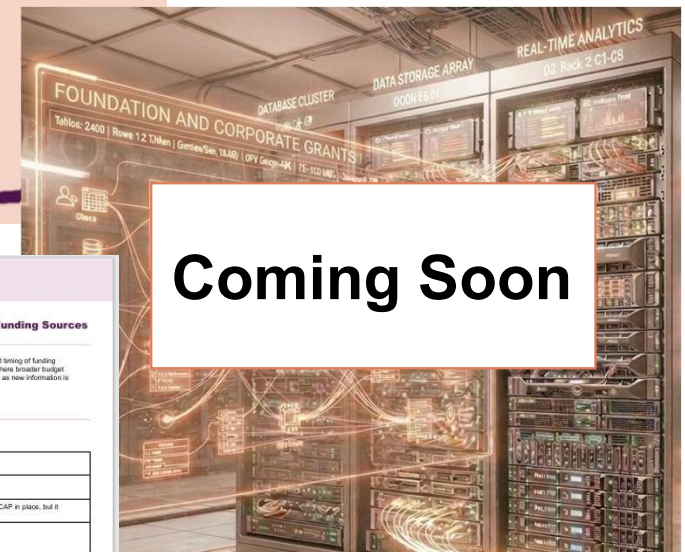
Funding Kinship Services: Risk and Status Dashboard for Federal Funding Sources

Risk ratings reflect a combination of proposed budget changes, legislative and administrative actions, and the nature and timing of funding commitments. Programs with multi-year cooperative agreements or mandatory funding status may be rated Safe even where broader budget uncertainty exists. Ratings represent the best available assessment based on current sources and are subject to change as new information is released, including Congressional appropriations actions. Check back for updates.

Last Updated: **May 2025**

Formula Grants

Name of Grant	FY2026 Funding Amount	Risk/ Stability	Risk Notes
Crisis Welfare Services (Title IV-E, Subpart J)	\$268.739M	Safe	N/A
Continuously Based Child Abuse Prevention Grants	\$70.680M	Some Risk	The FY2027 President's Budget proposes keeping CBICAP in place, but it imposes a reduction in funding for the program.
Enhanced Medical Assistance for Children with Disabilities (Section 1110)	Not line-itemed	Safe	N/A
National Family Caregiver Support Program	\$222M	Safe	N/A
Miss M. Lousie 21st Century Community Learning Centers	\$1.38B	At Risk	The FY2027 President's Budget proposes eliminating the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program as a standalone funding stream.



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gksnetwork.org/resources/kinship-funding-primer/

Top Tips for Starting and Enhancing Kin Caregiver Services

5. Leverage partners to increase capacity.

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Leading in Aging Well at Home

Lessons from the Field: Leveraging Partnerships to Address Staff and Infrastructure Needs and Extend Reach



Introduction

Partnerships are foundational to the work of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Title VI Native American Aging Programs (Title VI programs). Whether they improve outreach, increase revenue, or spur innovation, partnerships help AAAs and Title VI programs better achieve their mission. In fact, a 2007 [USAg survey of AAAs](#) found that, on average, AAAs partner with 17 different types of organizations to support older adults and caregivers, including kin caregivers. [USAg's 2016 survey of Title VI programs](#) found that Title VI programs partner with a similar variety of organizations.

This set of case profiles builds upon the work of a learning community hosted by the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network, a National Technical Assistance Center (Network) and USAg for AAAs and Title VI programs interested in starting new kin caregiver supportive services at their organizations. [Links from the learning community](#) are available and can be used by any agency or organization with an interest in starting a program to serve kinship/grandfamilies.

Some of the challenges learning community participants discussed included outreach difficulties, limited funding, and limited staff in care for children while kin caregivers are receiving services. Among the potential solutions they considered was leveraging partnerships – which could help address staff and infrastructure needs, boost funding, and increase reach. These three uses of partnerships are highlighted in the two case profiles in this resource. Profiles of potential solutions to another challenge identified (learning community participants are highlighted in [Lessons from the Field: Overcoming Transportation Barriers in Supporting Kinship/Grandfamilies](#)).

It is our hope that sharing these case profiles will encourage AAAs, Title VI programs, and others to explore innovative ways to better support kinship/grandfamilies.

Kin caregivers are grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends who are raise children whose parents are unable to do so. The families they form with the children: their care are known as kinship families, grandfamilies, or kinship/grandfamilies.

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Pathways to Partnerships: Tips for Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American Aging Programs to Improve Support for Kinship/Grandfamilies



Nationwide, grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends are raising over 2.5 million children whose parents are unable to do so. While research shows that both [children](#) and [adults](#) benefit from being in kinship/grandfamilies, studies also indicate that these families are disproportionately impacted by financial instability, disability, and trauma and that the well-being of all family members improves when they receive appropriate services. Currently, [95 percent](#) of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and [84 percent](#) of Title VI Native American Aging Programs (Title VI programs) offer at least one service for older kin caregivers. Some also partner with community-based organizations (CBOs), like food banks and [transportation providers](#), which offer complementary services or help AAAs and Title VI programs [increase their capacity](#).

This tip sheet provides AAAs and Title VI programs with ideas for initiating community partnerships to support kinship/grandfamilies. It covers a broad range of partnerships, from formal partnerships, such as initiatives to co-develop programs, to informal partnerships, such as informal relationships. It identifies types of connections with whom AAAs and Title VI programs can build relationships.

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Aging Network and Child Welfare Collaborations to Support Kinship/Grandfamilies

March 18, 2025

- Welcome, we will begin at the top of the hour
- Please type in the chat box - your name, state, tribe (if applicable), and role
- Type questions in the chat box at any point during our time together
- We will provide a separate meeting link for a 30-minute Q&A with panelists starting in one hour, at 3 ET
- All participants will receive a link to the slides and recording by the end of the week

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Leveraging Partnerships to Better Support Kin Caregivers



Starting a Kin Caregiver Support Service
Learning Community Insights
TOPIC 5 OF 5

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- The Nation of Oklahoma's Title VI Native American Aging Program (Title VI)** runs a successful congregate meal program that welcomes both kin and the children they are raising. However, kinship/grandfamilies living in some of the tribal nation have difficulty getting to the program. The Title VI partners with their tribal public transportation provider to assist these families.

Partners Can Help and How You Can Help

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* Kin-Specific Licensing Standards Webinar and Resources →

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The First-Ever National Technical Assistance Center for those who Serve Kinship/Grandfamilies

We help government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children.



Bridging Systems in San Diego County

Lina Nasr, Administrative Analyst

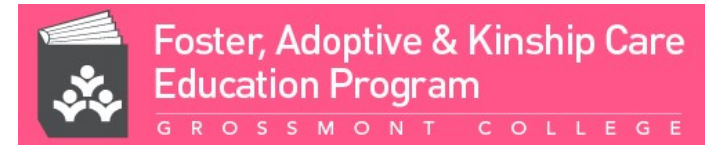


Kinship Families in San Diego County

- **Over 20,000 grandparents** who are primarily responsible for the basic needs of grandchildren living in their household, with or without a parent present.
- **About 18,000 kids** are currently being raised by grandparents



Partners



History

Family Enrichment Events

- Nature Hikes, Kinship Corners, Campouts

Education

- Symposiums, Handbook, Educational Sessions, e-Newsletters

Supportive Services

- Respite Care, Emergency Fund, Support Groups

Other Partnerships

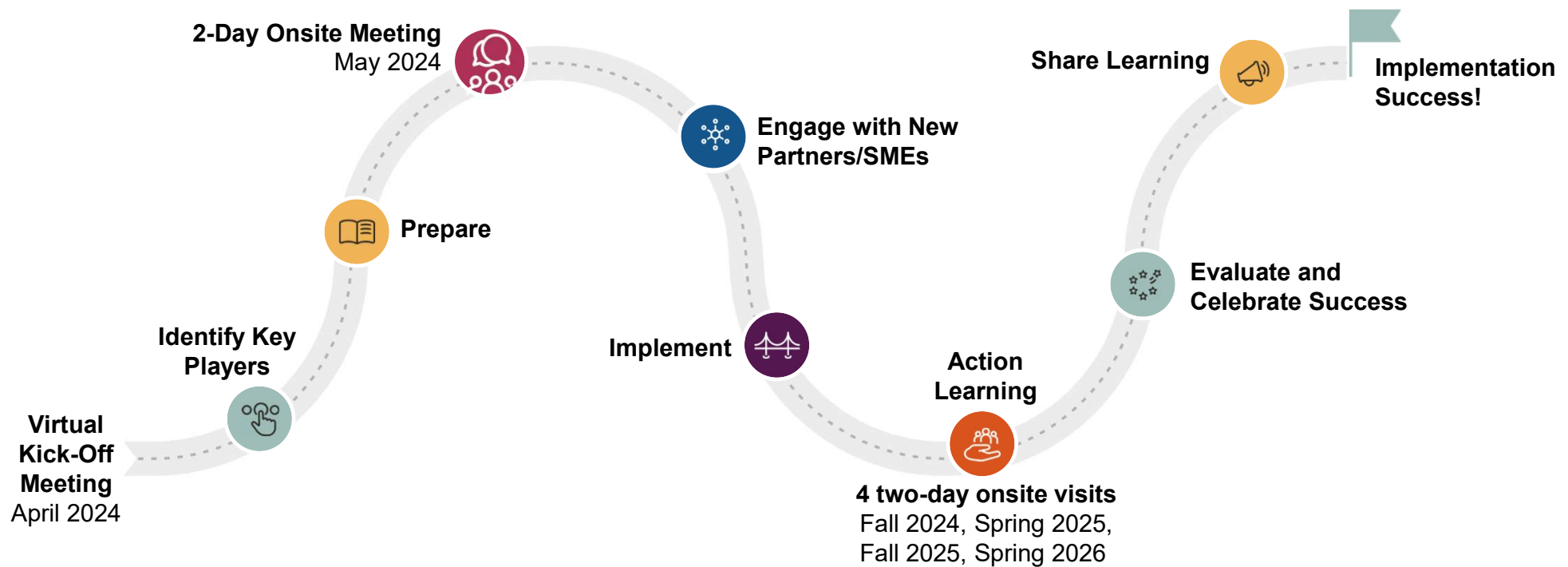
- Museum Passes
- Quarterly GRG Workgroup



Opportunity Knocks!



Bridging Systems Timeline



Our Goals

Goal #1:



Single - Point Support

Goal #2:



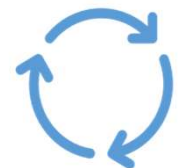
Peer Mentors

Goal #3:



Community Education

Goal #4:



Continuity

Goal 1: Central Kinship Website

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- + Age Well San Diego
 - Aging Roadmap
- Intergenerational
 - Kinship Families**



Kinship Families

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In 2011, the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) initiative was launched to provide resources and assistance for grandparents and other kinship caregivers raising children on their own. The County of San Diego and its partners work together to expand services and support for

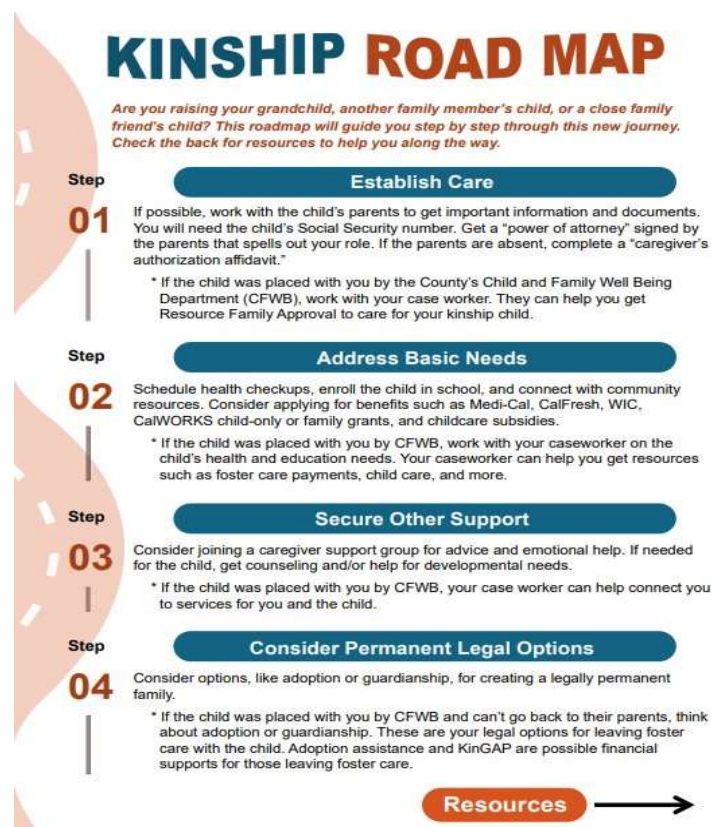





LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO



Goal 1: Kinship Roadmap



ROAD MAP RESOURCES

County of San Diego GRG (211) – Connect with local resources and support for kinship caregivers in San Diego – <https://211.my.site.com/s/?targetpop=YK-6500.3600>

YMCA Kinship Support – Connect with a kinship navigator who can help you find tailored resources. They can help you join a kinship support group near you – <http://shorturl.at/ttZLa>, call 877-YMCA-4-KIN (877-9622-4-546) or email kinshipyfs@ymcasd.org

Establish Care

Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit to obtain the authority to enroll the child in school and get medical care – www4.courts.ca.gov/documents/caregiver.pdf

Power of Attorney form – <https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/guardianship/other-options>

Address Basic Needs

BenefitsCal – Information on applying for CalFresh, CalWORKS child-only or family grants, Medi-CAL, WIC, and other programs – <https://benefitscal.com/>

Childcare eligibility information – <https://childcaresandiego.com/>

Feeding San Diego – Locate food banks – <https://feedingsandiego.org/>

Secure Other Support

San Diego Access & Crisis Line – Immediate help from experienced and multi-lingual counselors – (888) 724-7240

Project KEEP – Support groups and training – <https://shorturl.at/OvqH0>

FAKCE/Grossmont College – Training for kinship caregivers – <https://fakce.org>

San Diego Regional Center – Support for children with developmental disabilities – <http://www.sdrcc.org/>

To learn more, scan the QR code with your phone



Consider Permanent Legal Options

Information on obtaining guardianship through probate court – <https://sdcourt.ca.gov/sdcourt/probate2/guardianship> AND <https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/guardianship>

San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program – (619) 235-5656 – <https://sdvlp.org/>

Information on adoption – <https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/independent-adoption>

Chart for kinship resource families that compares guardianship and adoption. It also shows differences in financial support for each – <https://shorturl.at/CbaP3>

Produced in partnership with the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center; for more information, visit www.GKSNetwork.org

GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK
A National Technical Assistance Center

Goal 3: Promotional Toolkit

Bridging Systems for Kinship Families San Diego

Promotion Campaign Toolkit

**GRANDFAMILIES & KINSHIP
SUPPORT NETWORK**
A National Technical Assistance Center



- Talking points
 - Kinship Caregivers
 - Service Providers
 - Broader Community
- Kinship Resources
- Outreach Resources

Goal 3: Kinship Family Video



Goal 3: Speaker's Bureau



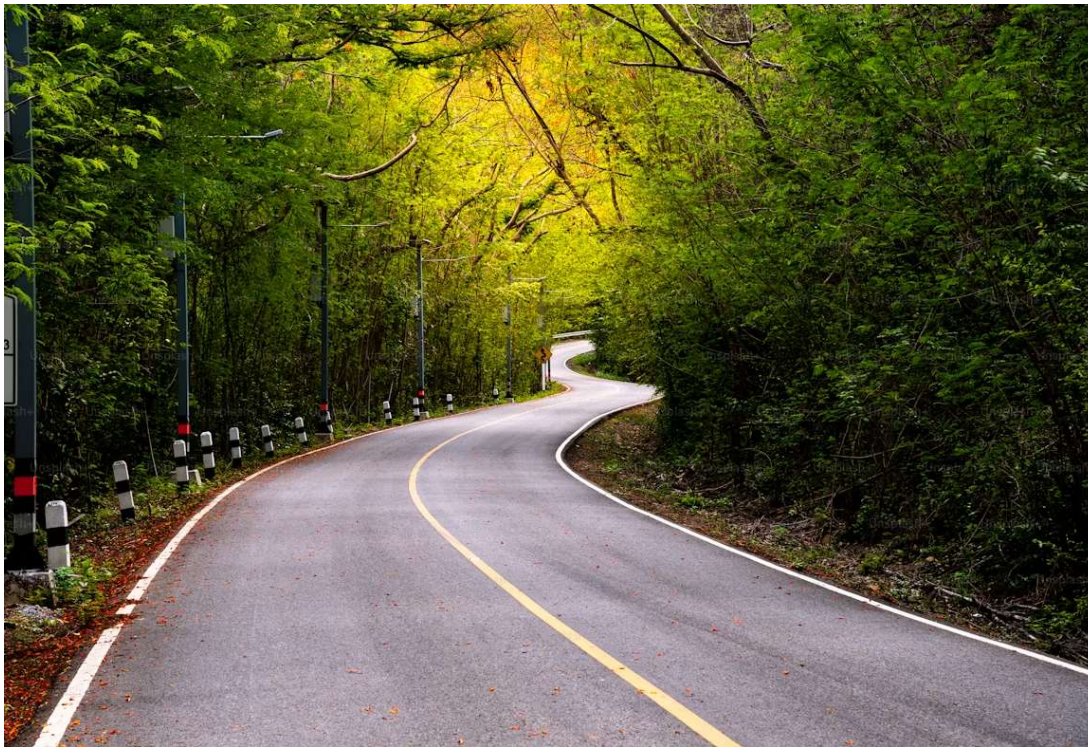
Goal 3: Public Awareness



Goal 2: Peer Mentor Program



Goal 4: Continuity





“We are definitely making strides, but we can still do better. ”



THANK YOU!

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Questions?

Thank you!



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