



Kin Families 101

Presented by the **Kin Support Program – Haa Yaitx'u Saiani**
with Support From



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

Who We Are

The **Kin Support Program – Haa Yaitx’u Saiani** launched in July 2024 to help families where relatives are caring for kids outside the foster care system.

We support families in the Southeast region regardless of background or income. We provide legal and therapeutic support, connection to resources, and promote cultural connection.

We are grant supported and services are free for families.



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What We Will Cover

- Recognize how common it is for relatives to be primary caregivers for children and youth, and how it upholds cultural traditions
- Understand kin family needs
- Identify resources to help kin families address needs in these areas:
 - Financial
 - Legal
 - Educational
 - Emotional



Thanks to Generations United, GKSN, and Zero to Three for creating the template for these slides.

What do Kin Families Look Like in Southeast Alaska?



Cultural Traditions of Caregiving



Extended family caregiving is woven into Southeast Alaska Native traditional values.

Historically, families lived in clan houses and had natural supports of their family.

Aunties, Uncles, Grandmas and Grandpas helped raise their little relatives.



Cultural Traditions of Caregiving

Colonialism disrupted traditional caregiving. Government authorities separated Native families through boarding schools and involuntary adoptions to non-Native families. These practices led to generations of trauma and ongoing separation.

Kin Caregivers today face challenges that are culturally foreign and often overwhelming.



Cultural Traditions of Caregiving



Supporting kin families reconnects us to a cultural tradition of extended family caregiving in Southeast, and honors this longstanding practice.



“Supported kinship is the bridge to equity, particularly for African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, and other communities of color.”



**KINSHIP
UNITY
ACTION
AGENDA**



What is a Kin Family?

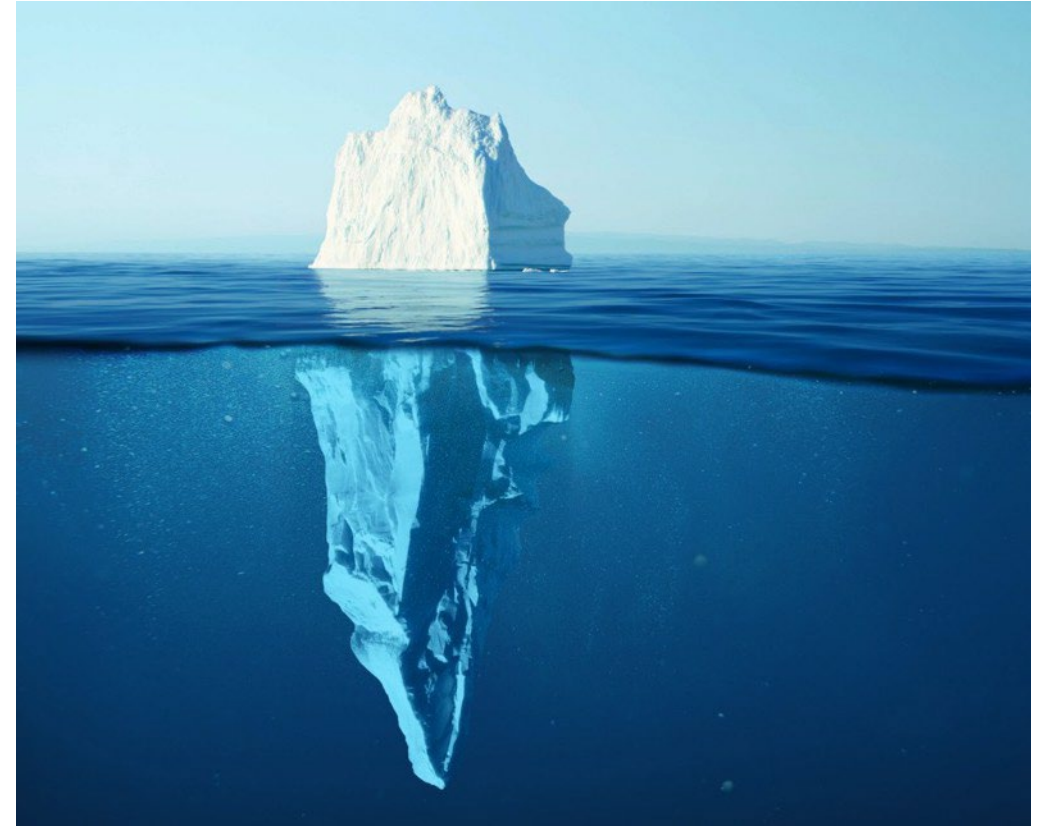
The terms “kin family” and “grandfamily” are used interchangeably to describe families where grandparents, other relatives, or trusted adults who are like family are raising children because their parents are struggling or otherwise unavailable to care for them. Parents may be in the relative’s home full time, part time, or not at all.



Kin Families in OCS Foster Care: Just the Tip of the Iceberg

For every child living with family in the state foster care system . . .

There are 17 children being raised by family members trying to manage on their own.

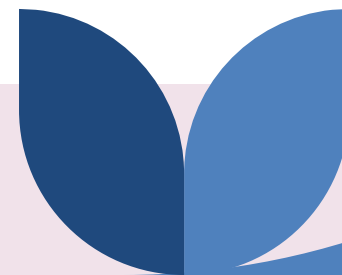


Southeast Kin Families by the Numbers

1 in 20 children in Southeast are being raised by relative other than a parent

Over **90%** of these kin families exist outside the state foster care system.

We estimate that **500** unsupported kinship families in Southeast Alaska would benefit from services.





Across the US, about 4% of children living with kin are protected by some kind of legal authority – guardianship or custody order, or power of attorney.

In Alaska, that figure is 3%.

Outdated Court Policies Can Leave Children Without a Legal Guardian

States can improve court access and effectiveness for families in need of stronger caregiving arrangements



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SUPPORT NETWORK**
A National Technical Assistance Center

 **ZERO TO THREE**
Early connections last a lifetime

Hidden Foster Care

Child protective services follow up on a report that a child is coming to kindergarten hungry, and neighbors describe the child's single parent being under the influence most days.

The state social worker knows that the child spends time with a grandparent in town and talks with the family about the child living with their grandparent until things improve.



Foster Parent vs Informal Kin Caregiver Supports

OCS Foster Parent

MONTHLY STIPEND up to \$1,415 per child

- Assigned social worker (and ICWA)
- Legal representation for parents
- Connection to ACRF training
- Referrals to services
- Clothing & special needs vouchers, travel
- Supervised visits with parents
- If licensed, there's subsidy for guardianship or adoption & attorney

Informal Kin Caregiver

MONTHLY Child-Only TANF \$452 per child



What is the Value of Family Autonomy?

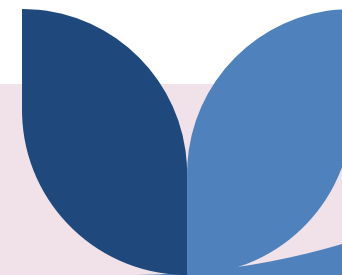


Placement

Contact with Mom &
Dad

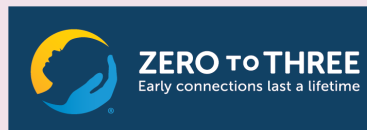
Using family's expertise

Freedom from
Termination Timeline



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What do Kin Families Need?



“

For me, the perfect support would be building a relationship to make us feel comfortable, to help break the stigma of, *if I let you in too close, I might say something to get the kids removed from me.*

It's really, really hard to put yourself out there. So it's important to take the fear away, to come in with no biases, with understanding and compassion.”

SANTANA LEE

GRAND Voice, adoptive parent of 3 cousins



Emotional Support

- Trauma
 - Isolation
 - Interfamily Dynamics
- ↓
- Peers and Community
 - Goal Setting via Case Mgt
 - Culturally-Centered Healing
 - Multigenerational Support



Financial Support

- Informal caregivers don't get what foster parents get
- Available supports are limited: TANF, social security, tax credits
- Child Support is a Common Barrier
- Family Specialists can help target resources and help with applications



Legal Support

- Informal Arrangements
- Power of Attorney
- Guardianship, Custody, Adoption
- Negotiating with help from Kin Legal Advocate & independent Parent Legal Advocate



Educational Support

- How do I enroll my young relative in school?
- How much do I have to say about why they're with me?
- It's been so long since I've been in school or had kids in school. What do I need to know?
- The child I'm caring for has been through a lot. What kind of help can they get at school to help them cope?



How to Get Started

Family members, including caregivers, parents, and youth can self-refer.

Community agencies can refer clients.

There is no written application or financial screening

Call or email to share your situation and we will provide whatever we can: information, referrals, or full services.

ALL SERVICES ARE FREE

Contact Us

Kin Support Program – Haa Yaitx’u Saiani
“Our Precious Children”

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<https://southeastkin.org>

