

Chapter 1 : Introduction

Kinship and Adoptive Families in Ohio

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services estimates that there are 227,862 (9%) children living in kinship households in the state ¹⁰ . Almost 100,000 grandparents in Ohio are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren, often caring for multiple children in the household ¹¹ . Of these grandparents, 67% are under the age of 60, 58% are in the workforce, 22% are in poverty, and 27% have a disability ¹² . Additionally, well over 4,000 adoptions were processed through Ohio's probate courts in 2018, and more than 3,000 permanent custody cases were disposed in the state's juvenile courts that same year.

Given that informal kinship families may have little to no contact with the courts, less is known about their circumstances. However, of the informal kinship caregivers that received information and referral services from four rural sites in Ohio in a span of six months, 76% were white and 86% were female ¹³ . The median age was 54 years, but caregivers ranged from 19 to 74 years of age. Most had a high school education or lower and lived in low-income households ¹⁴ . As for children living in formal kinship households that received kinship support services in Ohio in recent years, about a third were under the age of 2 years, whereas another third were adolescents ¹⁵ . Of these youth, 59% were white, 29% were Black, and 4% were Hispanic. The vast majority (75%) were living in low-income households, as indicated by their eligibility for Title IV-E provisions.

Considering these national and local patterns, Ohio stakeholders met to discuss various sources of information to identify the most pressing needs faced by kinship and adoptive families. These sources included review of the research literature, national and Ohio-based kinship and adoption navigator programs, and data from caregivers and professionals in Ohio. Based on this information, stakeholders identified five primary needs that would be targeted by OhioKAN. The following section describes the national research literature regarding the identified needs.

¹⁰ Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). (2019, March). Fact Sheet: Kinship Care. Retrieved from <https://jfs.ohio.gov/factsheets/KinshipCare.pdf>

¹¹ Burroughs, V. & Dinehart, S. (2019, November). OhioKAN Design Workgroup Sessions. Presented at the OhioKAN Design Team meeting, Columbus, Ohio.

¹² Burroughs, V. & Dinehart, S. (2019, November). OhioKAN Design Workgroup Sessions. Presented at the OhioKAN Design Team meeting, Columbus, Ohio.

¹³ Scale Strategic Solutions. (2019) Kinship navigator program evaluation: Year one final evaluation report.

¹⁴ Clone, S. (2019, November). Overview of Ohio Kinship Navigator Evaluations. Presented at

the OhioKAN Design Team meeting, Columbus, Ohio.

15 Human Services Research Institute, Westat, & Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. (2016). ProtectOHIO Final Evaluation Report: Ohio's Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project Covering the Third Waiver Period, 2010-2-15. Retrieved from <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/ProtectOHIOThirdWaiverPeriod2010-2015FinalEvaluationReportFebruary2016.stm>