



Kentucky can...

Prioritize investments for children who have experienced abuse and neglect by supporting kinship caregivers

When children cannot remain safely with their parents, relatives and close family friends often step up to help raise them. This situation is commonly known as kinship care—or in the case of a close family friend raising children, “fictive kin.”

Kinship care has substantial benefits for kids:

- Reduce trauma often faced upon removal from their home
- Experience fewer behavioral and mental health problems and educational disruptions
- Maintain connections to culture, family traditions, and siblings

For every **6** Kentucky kids who enter foster care

An estimated **10** additional kids enter kinship care

When relative and fictive kin are asked by the Department of Community-Based Services (DCBS) to take in children, it is often without notice or preparation. Undertaking the full-time responsibility for raising a child who has experienced trauma often includes physical, emotional, social, legal and financial challenges for the caregiver. **These challenges have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- Difficulty with Non-Traditional Instruction due to inadequate access to computers, high-quality internet, and technology support
- Mental and behavioral health challenges, such as insufficient access to services and lack of respite care
- Heightened vulnerability of elderly caregivers to falling ill with COVID-19
- Difficulty navigating complex systems, such as inconsistent guidance on visitation and case delays due to limited court hearings

Kentucky has two opportunities to provide commonsense resources to support kinship families:

- 1. Prevention and preservation investments** need to be focused on the front end of the child welfare system to ensure services and supports, such as respite care, are available for relative and fictive kin caregivers.
- 2.** Kentucky provides a one-time financial support, known as the **Relative Placement Support benefit**, to purchase essential items, such as clothing, bedding, formula, and school supplies. Not all eligible caregivers are receiving this support. The commonwealth can maintain investment in this crucial support and ensure DCBS provides it to all eligible kinship caregivers.

Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children Solution:

Prioritize kinship and fictive kin care by sustaining investment in critical services and financial supports.