

NJ Kinship Connections

A Publication of the NJ Kinship Legal Guardianship Resource Clearing House



A PROGRAM OF CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

Spring 2025

Strengths of Kinship Families

Kinship care is the full-time parenting of a child or children by a relative or a close connection to the child. This includes grandparents raising grandchildren, aunts and uncles raising family members, adult siblings caring for younger siblings, and more. Kinship care can extend beyond biological ties to include close family friends and neighbors, offering a wide network of care for the child.

At its core, kinship care provides children with a sense of belonging, helping them stay within familiar family circles and maintain connections to those who love and understand them. It promotes emotional security and allows children to retain their ties to extended family, siblings, and their community. These connections are vital to reinforcing a child's sense of identity and self-esteem.

Kinship care helps children feel connected to

their family, which positively impacts their emotional and psychological development. By staying within the family unit, children are more likely to feel secure, loved, and valued. Children in kinship care are more likely to have a stronger sense of who they are and where they come from, boosting their self-esteem and confidence.

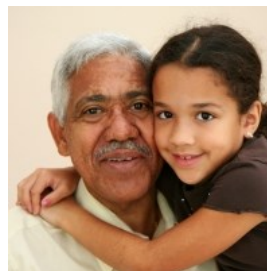
Research shows that children placed with relatives tend to exhibit fewer behavioral challenges. The familiarity and support of family members provide stability, which can make the child's adjustment easier.

Children placed with relatives have a more positive outlook on their placement and experience fewer disruptions in their care. They are less likely to face multiple placements, which enhances their sense of safety and security.

Furthermore, kinship care often allows children to

remain with their siblings, which can reduce feelings of isolation and stress. Importantly, kinship caregivers benefit from having a support system composed of extended family and close family friends. This network can be invaluable in providing emotional, financial, and social support for both the child and the caregiver.

Overall, kinship care not only helps maintain children's family bonds but also contributes to their healing and growth. Kinship care offers children a stable, familiar environment with strong emotional support. By keeping children within their family circle, kinship care ensures they maintain connections to their roots, building a foundation for a stronger sense of self and a better future.



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No PC?
No Problem!

Contact a KinKconnect warm-line representative at 877-KLG-LINE ((877) 554-5463) to request a book or ask a question about statewide resources!

Touched
by Adoption?

Visit the
NJ Adoption Resource Clearing House at
www.njarch.org



NJ Kinship Connections

DID YOU KNOW?

ARE YOU CARING FOR A CHILD/GRANDCHILD WHO HAS A BEHAVIORAL ISSUE, DEVELOPMENTAL OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND/OR NEEDS SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SERVICES?

CONSIDER CONTACTING PERFORMCARE:

PERFORMCARE HELPS FAMILIES ACROSS NEW JERSEY BY OFFERING SERVICES TO ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SUCH AS:

- IN-HOME THERAPY
- FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES
- BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS
- MOBILE RESPONSE
- CARE MANAGEMENT
- OUT-OF-HOME TREATMENT
- SUMMER CAMP ASSISTANCE AND MORE

CALL

1-877-652-7624

24 HRS A DAY/ 7 DAYS
A WEEK

PerformCARE



Know the Signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

What is PTSD?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in children occurs when a child has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event and develops lasting emotional and psychological symptoms. These events might include abuse, neglect, natural disasters, accidents, or exposure to violence, among others. PTSD in children can manifest in ways that differ from adults, and understanding these symptoms is critical for early intervention.

What are the signs of PTSD in children

- Complaints of feeling sick to their stomach
- Sleep disruptions, including too much or too little
- Aggressive behaviors towards people, animals, and/or toys
- Acting younger than their age, such as bedwetting, thumb sucking, wanting to be fed
- Complaints of headaches
- Withdrawal from family, friends, and things they used to enjoy.
- Difficulty focusing, feeling nervous, jittery, or alert

How to help your child?

- Be supportive and understanding
- Get counseling: (check out **PerformCare** & **AKLG** services listed on this page)
- talk to your child's health care provider
- Reach out to your child's school
- Learn more about PTSD. please visit:

[Post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\) - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)

[Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) in Children - Stanford Medicine Children's Health](#)

Adoption and Kinship Legal Guardianship (AKLG) Clinical Services

Free treatment is available for pre- and post- adoptive and kinship families with children 20 years old and younger who live in New Jersey and were placed through New Jersey's Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) agency.

The goals of AGLG Clinical Services are for children to gain relationship experience to grow and heal emotionally and for families to build stronger relationships with increased feelings of attachment, trust, and safety.

Therapists are trained in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, an attachment-focused treatment for families with kinship, foster or adopted children. This therapy emphasizes families working together with the therapist to help their children who experienced neglect, abuse and trauma while with their birth families. Weekly sessions will take place in your home.

For more information please contact the program coordinator at 551-224-2711 or email

AKLGprogram@cafsnj.org.



NJ Kinship Connections

Our Library “Kin” Korner Review

Welcome readers!

We have three kinship-related books to share with you this month. Be sure to check out our free lending library!

Violet & Me: A Kinship Adoption Story by Claudette Larson, LICSW, R-PT is an insightful and compassionate children’s book that tells a story about two siblings’ journey through childhood trauma and their healing process. Written by a play therapist, this book offers young readers a relatable and thoughtful story about the challenges—such as substance abuse and adjusting to new circumstances—and the triumphs of kinship adoption. The author uses language and situations that can enable children to understand and help process their own journey.

This book can be valuable for young readers who may be going through similar experiences, helping them feel less isolated and more understood. The focus on healing and resilience is key. This book can be a helpful resource for caregivers navigating kinship, adoption, or trauma-related challenges with their children. This story

can provide comfort, validation, and encouragement for children and families going through similar transitions. (25 pages, Ages 4+)

Counting by 7s by Holly Goldberg Sloan is a heartfelt exploration of grief, self-discovery, and healing. This is a story about Willow Chance, a truly unique and intelligent middle school girl. Her journey is far from simple. After losing her adoptive parents in a tragic accident, she’s forced to navigate the world on her own. Her new school friend, Mai, persuades her mother to welcome Willow into their home.

This book beautifully captures Willow’s remarkable journey as she learns to cope with loss, discovers her sense of belonging, and ultimately, finds her new family. The book shows how, even in the darkest times in life, we can find connection and healing through others. (378 pages, Ages 10+)

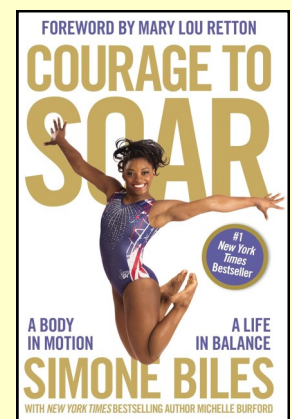
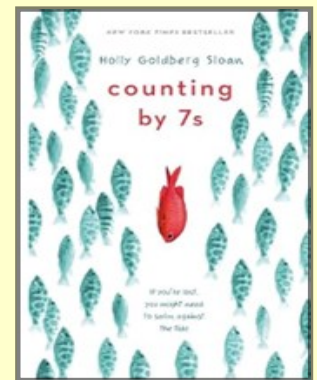
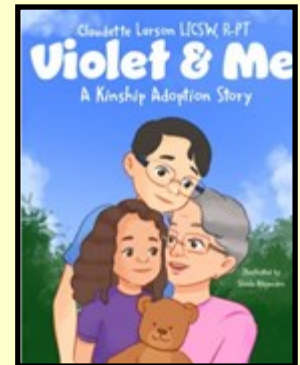
Courage to Soar: A Body in Motion. A Life in Balance is the autobiography of Simone Biles, one of the most decorated

gymnasts in history. With the joy and enthusiasm that she lives her life, Simone takes readers on the journey of her childhood. She begins with her early memories of living with her birth mother, her move to foster care and eventually her adoption by her grandparents.

She shares her honest thoughts about her birth mother and highlights the unconditional support and love of her grandparents and siblings. She writes, “When it comes to how things turned out, I’m not sorry. I’m part of a beautiful family that is closer and more loving than any I could’ve chosen.” Simone’s book explores the journey of a girl from experience in foster care to Olympic gold medalist. As she explains, the most amazing part isn’t the medal but “how I got there – or more accurately, who got me there – that is most miraculous.” Simone tells her story of how faith and family gave her the courage to embrace her dreams and make them come true. (256 pages, Ages 7+)

The KinKonnnect Free Lending Library has hundreds of books to borrow and handbooks to download!

To find out more call us at
1-877-KLG-LINE
(1-877-554-5463)





Looking for a Summer Camp?

Now is the time to check them out and reserve your spot!



Did you know?

Family Success Centers seek to provide a warm and welcoming home-like environment that provides family friendly activities and resources within communities to strengthen families. There is no cost to access services and they are located in every county.

Visit our website
www.kinknect.org or
call us at
877-KLG-LINE
(877-554-5463)
for a list of
summer camps and Family
Success Centers.

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New Jersey Community Resources



Garden State Community Outreach Program

In September 2024, New Jersey Governor, Phil Murphy, and the state Legislature launched the **Garden State Community Outreach program**, aimed at connecting residents to a wide range of state services designed to support individuals and families. This outreach initiative focuses on making it easier for residents to access essential programs such as healthcare, mental health services, utility costs, food assistance, and more.

The Program Finder tool allows users to easily identify which programs they may be eligible for based on their specific needs and circumstances. For New Jersey residents interested in learning more about the available programs or determining their eligibility, they can visit the official website at <https://gardenstateoutreach.us/>



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

New Jerseyans are able to access immediate support for mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug-use concerns by dialing **988** to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. 988 is available for calls, texts, or chats for help during difficult moments anytime day or night. Reach out for yourself, a loved one or a friend. Skilled counselors offer judgement-free compassionate support.

The aim of 988 is to improve access to crisis services in a way that meets the country's growing suicide and mental health-related crisis care needs. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline network provides de-escalation and support as well as linkage to mental health and/or substance use services.

For more information, please visit <https://988lifeline.org/>.



NJ 2-1-1

NJ 211 is a statewide nonprofit organization with a call center that is available 24/7 for New Jersey residents facing a crisis or dealing with a disaster. 211 specialists listen and guide callers to health and human resources and services around the state. 211 refers callers to resources that can assist with housing, food, healthcare, legal services, childcare, and kinship navigators. In times of crisis, 211 is able to pivot and provide preparedness, safety, shelter, food, water and other essential human services needed during a disaster. For more information, check out: <https://nj211.org>



NJ Kinship Connections

Staff Updates

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) Update for 2025

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for more than 72.5 million Americans will increase 2.5 % in 2025.

The 2.5 % cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to nearly 68 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2025. Increased payments to nearly 7.5 million SSI recipients will begin on December 31, 2024.

Some of the same people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits.

The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) was increased to \$176,100.

The earnings limit for workers who are younger than "full" retirement age (66 – 67 depending on your date of birth) increased to \$23,400. Social Security deducts \$1 from benefits for each \$2 earned over \$23,400.

The earnings limit for people reaching their "full" retirement age in 2025 increased to \$62,160. Social Security deducts \$1 from benefits for each \$3 earned

over \$62,160 until the month the worker turns "full" retirement age.

There is no limit on earnings for workers who are "full" retirement age or older for the entire year.

As of December 2024, Social Security COLA notices are available online to most beneficiaries in the Message Center of their "my.Social Security" account.

For more information on the Cost of Living Increase, please visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/cola/>



KinKonnnect has experienced some changes in the new year. We wish Dana Fried a wonderful retirement after years of dedication to KinKonnnect and we welcome Cindy Lapidus as the new Assistant Director and Cecelia Gaines as the Warm Line and Training Specialist. Along with our other incredible staff (Maria Munoz, Greg Cwynar, and Doris O'Connor) we are happy to support the kinship community!



NJFC Scholars: New Jersey Foster Care Scholars

The NJFC Scholars Program provides funding for eligible youth who have experienced a CP&P out-of-home placement, CP&P independent living arrangement or transitional living program and are seeking a post-secondary degree at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, or a career/technical school.

Eligible Students:

- Have been in the care and custody CP&P in an out-of-home placement for a cumulative

of 9 months or more following the youth's 16th birthday

- Have been in an out-of-home placement for a cumulative of 18 months or more following the youth's 14th birthday
- Reside in or have resided in an independent living arrangement, or Transitional Living Program. The facility or program must be established, operated or approved for payment by New Jersey CP&P, the federal government

www.KinKonnnect.org

pursuant to the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act, or the New Jersey Homeless Youth Act.

- Be adopted through New Jersey CP&P following the youth's 12th birthday.
- Have been in a CP&P out-of-home placement and left to enter KLG following the youth's 16th birthday.

How to apply?

Contact Embrella at www.embrella.org or 800.222.0047

FOR THOSE WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS

FEDERAL APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) DEADLINES VARY BY COLLEGE. CHECK WITH THE COLLEGES YOUR CHILD IS APPLYING TO FOR THEIR DEADLINES. CONTACT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL FOR DETAILS.



NJ KINSHIP LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP
RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE



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A PROGRAM OF CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

WWW.CAFSNJ.ORG

Children's Aid and Family Services
76 South Orange Avenue, Suite 209
South Orange, NJ 07079

KLG Warmline: 877-KLG-LINE
877-554-5463

E-mail: warmline@kinkconnect.org
Visit us at: www.kinkconnect.org

Founded in 1899, Children's Aid and Family Services is one of northern New Jersey's leading non-profit human service agencies. Our mission is to empower individuals, strengthen families, and support healthier communities.

DISCLAIMER

While NJ Kinship Legal Guardianship Resource Clearing House (KinKconnect) or Children's Aid and Family Services makes every effort to present accurate and reliable information, neither KinKconnect nor Children's Aid and Family Services guarantees the completeness, efficacy or timeliness of such information. In addition, reference herein to any specific product, process, service, organization, or viewpoint does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation or favoring by KinKconnect or Children's Aid and Family Services.



Affordable health coverage. Quality care.

Affordable health coverage. Quality Care.

NJ FamilyCare, a federal and state-funded health insurance program created to give qualified New Jersey residents of any age access to affordable health insurance. NJ FamilyCare is for people who do not have employer insurance. That means qualified NJ residents of any age may be eligible for free or low-cost healthcare coverage that covers doctor visits, prescriptions, vision, dental care, mental health and substance use services, and even hospitalization.

Easily navigate the online NJ FamilyCare application with:

- ◆ New menus, subheadings and smart technology.

Applicants can register to:

- ◆ Save partially completed applications
- ◆ View submitted applications, and
- ◆ Receive future Medicaid notifications electronically.

The entire application process can be completed online at <https://njfamilycare.dhs.state.nj.us/apply.aspx> or call **1-800-701-0710**; multi-lingual operators are available.

Who is Eligible?

NJ Family Care includes: children, pregnant women, parents/caretaker relatives, single adults and childless couples. Financial eligibility will be determined by the latest federal tax return which, when filed, will be electronically verified.

Children under 19 are eligible with higher incomes up to 355% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (\$9,230/month for a family of four). Parents still need to renew the coverage each year. Children can qualify regardless of their immigration status.

Adults age 19-64 with income up to 138% FPL (\$1,732/month for a single and \$2,351/month for a couple). In general, immigrant adults must have Legal Permanent status in the U.S. for at least five years in order to qualify for NJ FamilyCare. Some immigrant adults can qualify if they are lawfully present, regardless of when they entered the U.S. (refugees and asylees, and others.) Immigrants 19 and 20 who are lawfully present and have very low income (\$509/month for a single person and \$805/month for a family of 2) can also qualify.

Pregnant Women up to 205% FPL (\$5,330/month for a family of four). Pregnant women who are lawfully present can qualify regardless of the dates they entered into the U.S.

People over 65, blind or permanently disabled, including long term care, please visit: <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmahs/clients/medicaid/abd/index.html>

For more information, please visit <https://njfamilycare.dhs.state.nj.us/>