

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research shows that kinship care for children in the child welfare system often leads to better outcomes for children than when they are placed in non-kinship care. Specifically, kinship care generally leads to fewer placements, greater stability for children, and more contact with parents, siblings, and other kin. In addition, children in kinship care generally have better mental and physical health, fewer behavior problems, higher levels of competence, higher levels of placement satisfaction, and better outcomes as adults.

Government institutions often pose obstacles to kinship care. In some states, the regulatory framework makes it difficult for kinship caregivers to become licensed or approved as foster parents for their related children. Kinship caregivers often have difficulty understanding and processing the paperwork necessary to access financial and other benefits, and they are often ineligible for certain benefits or financial supports. Compounding these problems, kinship caregivers – particularly grandparents – often have limited financial resources prior to taking on a caregiving role. Because kinship caregiving often arises on an emergency basis, caregivers often lack access to childcare, respite care, or other services. Counsel for parents and children who support the kinship caregiving arrangement should consider advocating for, and helping the caregivers to obtain, necessary benefits, supports, and services to assist in ensuring a successful placement.