

# Kinship Connections

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## DCYF KINSHIP FAMILY PEER-TO-PEER MENTORING PROGRAM

Kinship Caregivers are **a critical resource for our children** when their parents or guardian cannot care for them. A kinship placement is often an emergency, leaving no time to prepare or make an informed decision about whether to take placement, and the unique relationship dynamics between kinship caregivers and the child's family of origin lead to strong emotions felt by all involved. These factors and supporting the needs of children can lead kinship families to feeling overwhelmed. Kinship caregivers need immediate support to stabilize the children in their care, gain access to services and supports for their families, and maximize the safety and wellbeing of the children. **Rhode Island recognizes the value and contribution of kinship caregivers and understands the vital need to build supports to surround kin families.**

## ABOUT THE KINSHIP CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

The **Kinship Connections Program** is a statewide peer support program designed for kinship caregivers formally involved in the child wellbeing system. Peer mentoring is one of the most powerful ways families can support each other through periods of intense stress, especially in the time immediately after children are placed. Kinship Connections Peer Mentors help kinship families navigate a time filled with loneliness, fear, and frustration by sharing their lived experience and providing tangible support by:

- Providing emotional support and empathy to kinship caregiver families experiencing the challenges of maintaining the safety and wellbeing of children in their care and providing advice on navigating familial relationships.
- Helping kinship families to understand and access the array of supports, services, and resources available to them within the community.
- Coach and advise kinship caregivers in how to advocate for themselves and the child(ren) in their care.
- Convey the experiences and needs of kinship families in support of making system level adjustments.



Referrals to the **Kinship Connections Program** can be made by social caseworkers, kinship caregiver trainers, community support group facilitators, licensing workers, or the families themselves.

To refer a kinship caregiver to the **Kinship Connections Program**, please complete the referral form at <https://forms.gle/aAdkYPADWdUmVg4s8> or contact **DCYF's Recruitment Development Support** team at (401) 952-0262 or [DCYF.RDS@dcyf.ri.gov](mailto:DCYF.RDS@dcyf.ri.gov).

