

# **Testimony**

*presented by*

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## **Division of Budget Hearings on the Executive Budget State Fiscal Year 2008-2009**

**Common Council Chambers, Syracuse  
November 27, 2007**

## **Provision of Kinship Services To Help KinCare Families Raise Children Successfully**

I respectfully address this testimony to the Division of Budget in my capacity as a representative of the NYS Kincare Coalition.

I am the director of the NYS Kinship Navigator at Catholic Family Center in Rochester. The Navigator is part of a wide range of aging/family services provided by Catholic Family Center. I also have a education program on kinship legal issues for professionals at the Government Law Center at Albany Law School.

The NYS Kin Care Coalition includes over eighty organizations and individuals with a special interest in kinship families. More particularly, it includes service providers from across the State who have experience with the needs of kin caregivers. The Coalition, with funding from a New York Life grant administered by AARP NY, provides its members with access to best practices and meets regularly to decide what state actions would best assist kin caregivers. Recently, the Kincare Coalition hosted a kinship summit in Albany. The Summit's recommendations, as well as past recommendations of the Coalition, form the basis for today's testimony (A Coalition membership list is available from AARP NY).

The purpose of my testimony is to discuss the next steps in implementing a comprehensive system of services to kinship families. The current system centers on the NYSOCFS programs along with NYSOFA county programs, serving twenty and twenty-two counties respectively. Over the next four years, it is the hope of the Kincare Coalition that New York will expand services to all kinship families, with a focus on best practices, better access to services, and more specialized services.

To help inform policy makers about these service issues, on November 13<sup>th</sup>, the Kincare Coalition's Summit, "Kincare in New York: A Five Year Framework for Action," hosted professionals from across the state in order to gather their recommendations about kinship services. The final recommendations will be published in January. I've had the opportunity to review the first draft and am here today to outline the first steps in the Summit's plan.

For the upcoming budget year, our recommendations are:

- Sustainability for the thirteen programs, funded under the New York State Office of Children and Families Kinship Caregiver Program - \$1,900,000.
- Sustainability of Catholic Family Center's Kinship Navigator, funded under the same New York State Office of Children and Families Kinship Caregiver Program - \$250,000.
- Increased funding for the thirteen programs, to increase capacity and to expand into contiguous counties - \$1,300,000.
- Increased funding for the Kinship Navigator to expand services and to coordinate research data for all programs - \$150,000.
- Additional funding for four new Kinship Caregiver Programs - \$600,000.

- Expansion of kinship services under the NYSOFA federal Caregiver Support Program into all counties.
- Initial funding to assist the existing NYSOCFS and NYOFA programs to implement a single research and data collection system.
- Coordination of services between the Offices of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Children and Family Services, and For the Aging.

### **Benefits of Kinship Families**

Kinship care is a successful, cost effective compliment to the child welfare system.

- Kinship caregivers provide services that would cost billions in formal care.
- Research conclusively demonstrates that children receive tremendous benefits by being raised in kinship families.

### **NYSOCFS Recommendation**

In NYS, the NYSOCFS provides funding for thirteen regional programs and one statewide "Navigator." These programs are already exceeding anticipated outcomes.

- The nine original regional kinship programs (four more were later added) provided direct services to 1,148 caregivers and 1,500 children in 2005/06.
- In its first ten months (January 1 to October , 2007), the Kinship Navigator information and referral service served 563 callers (412 caregivers; 136 professionals; 18 others) from 56 of New York's 62 counties, and had 11,976 unduplicated visitors to its web site.

The total cost of these programs is \$2.15 million. The thirteen regional programs covering 20 counties receive \$1.9 million and the statewide Navigator receives \$250,000.

Given the success of this system, the NYSOCFS kinship program should be expanded by added funding to the thirteen current programs (now serving 20 counties) and by funding four new programs. The regional programs would expand into neighboring counties and four new programs would serve new counties, adding at least 17 new counties for a total of 37 counties.

The Kinship Navigator will need to expand to meet the expected growth in callers and requests. The Navigator would add another intake specialist, complete a statewide web-based research database that includes all NYSOCFS kinship programs, and initiate new support services for both caregivers and professionals.

### **NYSOCFS Kinship Programs - New Costs**

Four additional programs	\$ 600,000
Expansion of thirteen programs	\$1,300,000
Growth of Navigator	\$ 150,000
Total additional funds	<b>\$2,050,000</b>

### **NYSOCFS Kinship Programs - Total Costs**

Total additional funds	\$2,050,000
Existing funding	\$2,150,000
2008-09 Total	<b>\$4,200,000</b>

### **Development of Kinship Services**

When parents are unable or unwilling to parent because of substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, absence, or other reasons, relatives are the first line of defense. According to the U. S. Census in 2000 more than 143,000 New York State grandparents were responsible for children.<sup>1</sup> These grandparents and other relative caregivers are the alternative child welfare system, keeping children with families and out of foster care, and substantially decreasing overall child welfare costs.<sup>2</sup>

New York State has recognized the importance of grandparents and other relatives who are raising children. Additionally, New York has enacted progressive laws that provide some rights and authority to kinship caregivers. The enactments of the past four years (*See* Chapter Law 632 and 691 the Laws of 2003 and Chapter Laws 119 and 671 of the Laws of 2005) and the budgeting for services to kinship families are a good start.

Initially, New York funded nineteen kinship programs in 2001 with 1.5 million dollars, the following year funding was reduced to one million dollars, and in the third year, only \$100,000. Unfortunately, the decreases and final cessation of funding left kinship caregivers without any supportive services. Many outstanding programs did not survive the cessation of funding.

In 2005, Governor Pataki provided \$250,000 for a statewide model kinship caregiver program and the Legislature provided \$1.15 million in TANF dollars. The two budget items were then utilized together, permitting the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYSOCFS) to fund nine programs, three in New York City and one each in Long Island, Orange County, Albany, Binghamton, Rochester, and Buffalo, with an average of \$155,000 for each program's provision of direct services over an eighteen month period. Since then, four more programs and the statewide information and referral service were added. *See* attached list of programs and flyer for the Navigator.

In the last budget, for the first time the Executive Budget included full funding for the NYSOCFS programs. We applaud Governor Spitzer's recognition of the importance of services to kinship families. In prior years, it was the Chairs of the Committees for Children and Family Services and the members of the Legislature who led the effort to assist kinship caregivers. By providing funding in his budget, kinship programs are one step closer to stability, and kinship families are closer to the establishment of a permanent system of services.

Twenty counties are served by the current NYSOCFS Kinship Caregiver Program. Many highly regarded programs receive no state assistance. For examples, Family Place in Utica, Cornell Cooperative Extension in Canandaigua, and Family Service Society in Yonkers. And

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<sup>1</sup> AARP Grandparent Information Center Fact Sheet. AARP.org.

<sup>2</sup> Generations United Fact Sheet. GU.Org.

in numerous regions of the state, particularly in rural areas, there is neither a private nor public program dedicated to kinship caregivers.

As described in the AARP/Coalition white paper, "Enabling Kin caregivers to Raise Children" (which contains the recommendations of the November 2004 Kin Care Summit in Albany) both sustainability of programs and expansion of services are necessary. The recent summit re-emphasized these recommendations. They remain at the core of services for kinship families.

New York also has kinship programs provided by a number of local offices on aging, funded through the federal Administration on Aging. These programs target aging kinship caregivers.<sup>3</sup> Since use of the allocated ten percent of caregiver program funding is discretionary, only twenty-two local offices for the Aging use the funds for aging kinship caregivers, and in those counties that do, the funding is used primarily for support groups (See attached list of county programs). It is our recommendation that this federal funded program become an integral part of all county area offices on aging's services.

Sustained and expanded funding for the NYSOCFS and NYSOFA programs will provide core direct services. However, an integral part of these services is access to existing services and coordination of the local response. The latter issues need the coordinated focus of county agencies, particularly social services and aging. Because kinship families are not just an aging issue and not just a children's issue, services must target a range of aging, family, and children's issues.

### **Other State Responses**

New York, like many other states, increasingly recognizes that kin are the sole large scale resource for children. States are already acting to fully utilize this resource. Aside from assistance programs, at least six states have enacted "de facto" custody laws that guarantee that relatives who are primary caregivers for a defined period of time should not have to return children automatically to absent parents. Many states have similar bills under consideration. Almost all states have increased the authority of non-parent caregivers to make medical and schooling decisions. Many other specially tailored laws have been enacted or are under consideration.

*However, the core need for caregivers is access to existing services and to specialized services that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for children.* Permanency, the overarching goal for children at risk is defined in the Adoptions and Safe Families Act as adoption or legal guardianship with relatives. Yet, permanency also refers to the quality of care. For children, emotional and physical stability are increased by remaining with loving family members. The direct and indirect cost benefits to society and to state coffers that kinship care provides are indeed very substantial.

Under Governor Christine Todd Whitman's leadership, New Jersey began a "Kinship Navigator Child Care Program in 2000. This program is one of many approaches to

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<sup>3</sup> National Family Caregiver Support Program, part of the renewal of the Older Americans Act, provides funds for relative caregivers of children. P.L. 106-501 Part E, Sec. 373(a)(2) (2000), amending 42 U.S.C. § 3030s-1.

assistance for kinship caregivers. New Jersey also has a subsidized guardianship program that is available to both private and foster kinship caregivers. Many other states have statewide, regional, and local initiatives that target kinship caregivers. At the recent summit, directors of kinship navigators from Florida, Minnesota, and Washington State presented a wide array of strategies for kinship services. Yet, all acknowledged the overwhelming need for more services.

Other state programs use a combination of TANF funds, available for direct services to help preserve families, and state funds for indirect services or for TANF ineligible families, as well as federal Caregiver Support funds. Yet, despite New York State's research on kinship care,<sup>4</sup> the State's response still extends to less than half of its counties.

### **NYSOCFS Programs**

We urge that the current programs be sustained and that additional programs be funded under the New York State Office for Children and Family Service's Kinship Program. The thirteen current programs are funded thru the end of May 2008. The Kinship Navigator is funded thru November 2008. All programs need to be sustained. Funding to expand the existing programs and to start new efforts in areas like Syracuse and Westchester, could eventually reach at least thirty-five counties and bring New York a step closer to comprehensive coverage.

### **NYCOCFS State Wide Program**

Even with sustainability and expansion of local NYSOCFS programs, grandparents and other relative caregivers in many counties will remain without any specialized kinship services or resources. Some of this void can be filled by NYSOFA programs expanded to all counties. The Coalition recommends the use of federal Caregiver Support dollars by every local office for the aging.

All these programs can benefit from a central depository of information and best practices. Currently, both NYSOCFS and NYSOFA programs report a significant reliance on the statewide Kinship Navigator for referrals and for legal information. The Navigator is less than one year old, but clearly the program is moving towards a central role in kinship services. Expansion will add services that would include on line trainings, coordinated data collection, assistance in the formation of local coalitions, and extensive publications.

Throughout the state, in counties with and/or without any services, the most fundamental need is for access to information, assistance in the coordination of existing services, and a mechanism for increasing the awareness of local public agencies to the needs of kinship caregivers. Where programs exist they do not have the resources for these actions. Where

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<sup>4</sup> Dunifon, Rachel et al., "An Examination of Child-Only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Cases in New York State." College of Human Ecology, Cornell University, November 2004; Wulczyn, Fred et al., "Relative Caregivers, Kinship Foster Care, and Subsidized Guardianship: Policy and Programmatic Option." Report to the Governor and Legislature, Prepared for the NYS Office of Children and Family Services by Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, February 2003; Office of Comptroller, Department of Social Services, Kinship Foster Care, Report 95-S-106.

they do not exist, nothing happens. The Kinship Navigator is the one stop source for information about kinship care for both professionals and caregivers from across the entire state.

#### **NYSOFA Programs**

We also recommend that the NYSOFA fully utilize its federal Caregiver Support Program funding to establish local programs dedicated to kinship families in all counties.

### **KINCARE COALITION – BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS State Fiscal Year 2008-2009**

#### **Recommendations**

For these reasons, the New York State Kin Care Coalition urge the Governor and the Legislature to provide the following funding:

#### **I. Sustain Funding for the current Kinship Caregiver Program**

We recommend sustained funding for the nine NYSOCFS Kinship Caregiver programs that are currently funded.

**\$1,900,000**

#### **II. Add Funding for additional NYSOCFS Kinship Caregiver Programs**

We recommend increased funding for the NYSOCFS Kinship Care Program in order to fund additional programs that would serve other parts of the State.

**1,900,000**

#### **III. Sustain and Expand the State Wide Network or “Navigator” Program**

We recommend that the “statewide network” model program, be continued and expanded.

**\$250,000 PLUS \$150,000.**

**TOTAL - \$4,200,000**

#### **IV. Expand NYSOFA federal Caregiver Support Program into All Counties**

Counties now decide whether to use Caregiver Support funds for kinship services. NYS should mandate kinship services.

**No State Funds**

#### **V. Fund Data Collection**

Initial funding to assist the existing NYSOCFS and NYOFA programs to implement a single research and data collection system. The Kinship Navigator could provide centralized data collection.

**\$100,000**

#### **VI. Coordination of Services**

The Offices of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Children and Family Services, and for the Aging should coordinate their services.

**Cost Unknown**

## KINSHIP CAREGIVER PROGRAM RESOURCE LIST

Organization/Agency	Program Name Location/Counties Served	Contact Name/Address	Service Overview (a sample of services offered )
<b>Catholic Charities of Buffalo</b>  <b>CO-24355</b>	<b>Catholic Charities of Buffalo Kinship Caregiver Program</b>  Located in Erie County Also serves Niagara, Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties	Kate Hacker 716-856-4494 <a href="mailto:kate.hacker@ccwny.org">kate.hacker@ccwny.org</a>  525 Washington St. Buffalo, NY 14203-1796	Utilize a family intervention model along with services such as outreach, case management, advocacy, and education workshops.
<b>Catholic Charities of Diocese of Rochester, Inc (Catholic Family Center)</b>  <b>CO-24356</b>	<b>Kinship Caregiver Resource Network</b>  Located in Monroe County	Mary Penet 585-232-1840 ext. 354 <a href="mailto:mpenet@cfcrochester.org">mpenet@cfcrochester.org</a>  30N Clinton Ave Rochester 14604	Utilize the local Kinship Care Resource Network as a single point of entry to provide case management, legal assistance, counseling, support activities, enriched housing, mentoring, education and emergency assistance.
<b>Catholic Charities Support Services</b>  <b>CO-24346</b>	<b>Kinship Care</b>  Located in Albany County Also serves Rensselaer County	Rene Benson 518-449-2001 <a href="mailto:ReneB@ccalbany.org">ReneB@ccalbany.org</a> 100 Slingerland St Albany, NY 12202	Provide group and home-based services focusing on counseling, skill development, support groups and therapeutic recreation.
<b>Child Care Coordinating Council</b>  <b>CO-24733</b>	Located in Clinton County Also serves Franklin County	Jamie L. Basiliere, Exec. Director 518-561-4999 <a href="mailto:Jamie@Primelink1.net">Jamie@Primelink1.net</a>  194 US Oval, PO Box 2640 Plattsburgh, 12901	Support coordination with local family resource centers, through provisions for respite, support groups, educational programs, and counseling for caregivers and children.



Organization/ Agency	Program Name  Location/Counties Served	Address	Service Overview (a sample of services offered )
<b>Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange Co. Comm Campus</b>  <b>CO-24347</b>  <b>CCE-Dutchess</b>  <b>CCE-Sullivan</b>	<b>Hudson Valley Regional RAPP Program</b>  Located in Orange County  Located in Dutchess County  Located in Sullivan County	Denyse A. Variano 845-344-1234 <a href="mailto:dav4@cornell.edu">dav4@cornell.edu</a> Brenda Reynolds <a href="mailto:Br23@cornell.edu">Br23@cornell.edu</a> 1 Ashley Ave Middletown, NY 10940  Pat Healy 845-677-8223, ext 137 <a href="mailto:pah37@cornell.edu">pah37@cornell.edu</a> 2715 Rte 44, Suite 1 Millbrook, NY 12545  Debbie Worden 845-292-5250 <a href="mailto:dlc35@cornell.edu">dlc35@cornell.edu</a> 64 Ferndale-Loomis Road Liberty, NY 12754	Expand kinship services through a regional approach that includes Dutchess and Sullivan counties as well as Orange County. A range of services including case management, referral, legal information, support groups and counseling is provided.
<b>The Family Center</b>  <b>CO-24348</b>	<b>Family Ties</b>  Located in New York  Serves all Five Boroughs	Marya Gilborn 212-766-4522 x 114 <a href="mailto:Mgilborn@thefamilycenter.org">Mgilborn@thefamilycenter.org</a> 66 Reade Street NYC, NY 10007	This program addresses the caregiver needs of children whose parents have died of AIDS. Bilingual and in-home services are provided and may include case management, legal services, support groups, counseling, mediation, and benefit rights.
<b>Family Enrichment Network</b>  <b>CO-24357</b>	<b>Kinship Caregiver Program</b>  Located in Broome County	Deborah Faulks Special Projects Coordinator 607-723-8313 x 821 <a href="mailto:dfaulks@familyenrichment.cc">dfaulks@familyenrichment.cc</a>  Diane LaTorrey <a href="mailto:dlatorrey@familyenrichment.cc">dlatorrey@familyenrichment.cc</a> PO Box 997 24 Cherry St. Johnson City, NY 13790	Work in tandem with the local Grandparents / Relative Caregiver's Coalition and provide outreach, referral hotline, support groups, counseling, respite, legal rights and education workshops.

Organization/ Agency	Program Name  Location/Counties Served	Address	Service Overview (a sample of services offered )
<b>Liberty Resources, Inc.</b>  <b>CO-24732</b>	<b>Kinship Caregiver Program</b>  Located in Onondaga County but serving Oswego County	Carl M. Coyle, Exec. Director 315-425-1004, ext. 255 <a href="mailto:ccoyle@liberty-resources.org">ccoyle@liberty-resources.org</a>  Donna Carini Program Manager 315-425-1004, ext. 201 <a href="mailto:Dcarini@liberty-resources.org">Dcarini@liberty-resources.org</a>  1065 James Street Syracuse, NY 13203	This program provides training, therapeutic interventions, case management, non-residential respite, outreach, and a limited wrap-around fund for asset building. The types of service, intensity and duration is determined through planning meetings between the Case Manager, child and family, and significant others.
<b>Mid-Erie Counseling &amp; Treatment Services</b>  <b>CO- 24730</b>	<b>NYS Kinship Caregiver Program</b>  Located in Erie County	Elizabeth Mauro Acting Director 716-895-7167, Ext. 129  Diana Kachurka 716 – 895 – 7167 x 106 <a href="mailto:Kachurka@Mid-Erie.org">Kachurka@Mid-Erie.org</a>  1526 Walden Avenue, Suite 400 Cheektowaga, NY 14225	This program, located at the Erie County Family Court, facilitates referrals directly from the Family Court judges, Erie County Department of Social Services and the larger community. The team navigates a family through both the legal process until their custodial decisions and arrangements have been made.
<b>National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights</b>  <b>CO-24358</b>	<b>Long Island Kincare Connection</b>  Located in Suffolk County  Also serves Nassau County	Brigitte Castellano, Exec Dir 631-444-3160 516-446-1539 <a href="mailto:abcast@optonline.net">abcast@optonline.net</a> Sara Taylor-Dunn <a href="mailto:Sass4God@hotmail.com">Sass4God@hotmail.com</a> School of Social Welfare, HSC, L2, Room 093 Stony Brook University Stony Brook, NY 11794-8231	Provide a toll-free phone line along with volunteer caregivers to serve Long Island kinship care families through case management, referral, legal information, support groups, counseling, and family group conferencing.

Organization/ Agency	Program Name  Location/Counties Served	Address	Service Overview (a sample of services offered )
<b>NY Council on Adoptable Children, Inc. (COAC)</b>  <b>CO-24350</b>	<b>Kinship Connections</b>  Located in New York  Serves all Five Boroughs	Pat Haynes <a href="mailto:Phaynes@coac.org">Phaynes@coac.org</a> (212) 475-0222  Joann Buttarro, Program Director <a href="mailto:jbuttarro@coac.org">jbuttarro@coac.org</a>  Beatrice Sanchez Program Coordinator <a href="mailto:Bsanchez@Coac.org">Bsanchez@Coac.org</a>  589 Eighth Avenue 15 <sup>th</sup> Floor New York, NY 10018	Provide in-home family counseling along with case management and a range of support services for kinship caregivers and their families.
<b>Presbyterian Senior Services</b>  <b>CO-24349</b>	<b>PSS Kinship Caregivers Program</b>  Located in New York  Serves the Bronx and Manhattan	Katherine Martinez 718-620-1262 X1211 <a href="mailto:Kmartinez@pssusa.org">Kmartinez@pssusa.org</a>  Michelle Chapple <a href="mailto:Mchapple@pssusa.org">Mchapple@pssusa.org</a>  2095 Broadway, NYC, NY 10023 (Billing) Or 951 Prospect Ave, Bronx NY 10459 (Program)	Provide a range of services including case management, legal assistance, support groups, counseling, and after-school enrichment located in a new Grandparent Family Apartment building specifically designed to meet the needs of kincare families.
<b>Volunteer Counseling Services of Rockland</b>  <b>CO- 24733</b>	<b>Enhanced Relatives as Parents Program</b>  Located in Rockland County	Deborah Murnion, Exec. Director 845-634-5729 <a href="mailto:Dmurnion@VCS-inc.org">Dmurnion@VCS-inc.org</a>  77 South Main Street New City, NY 10956	The program provides information, referrals and support groups for the kinship caregivers. Advocacy and supportive services are provided to successfully retain their kin until they can safely return to their parents.

From SFY 2007-08 AIP data, data run 4/30/07

**Optional Components of Title III-E Caregiver Support Programs  
AAAs that provide:**

<b>CGs of DD Over 60</b>	<b>Grandparents of children 18 or younger</b>	<b>Grandparents of children 18 or younger w/ developmental disabilities</b>
	Albany	Albany
	Chemung	Chemung
		Cortland
		Delaware
	Dutchess	
	Erie	
	Fulton	Fulton
	Lewis	
	Madison	Madison
	Monroe	Monroe
	Oneida	Oneida
	Onondaga	Onondaga
	Orange	Orange
	Oswego	
	Otsego	Otsego
	Rensselaer	Rensselaer
	Rockland	
	Schenectady	
	Steuben	
	Ulster	
	Washington	
	Wayne	
	Wyoming	
	NYC	
<b>Totals: -0-</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>



# NYS Kinship Navigator

## Statewide Information and Resources

877-4KinInfo (877-454-6463) [www.nysnavigator.org](http://www.nysnavigator.org)

### Grandparents and Relatives Caring for Children:

- Do you want financial assistance?
- Do you know your rights?
- Are you worried about how to care for a child?
- Are you looking for respite?

### We can tell you about:

- Kinship Law
- Your Rights
- Financial Assistance
- Special Resources

## Our Kinship Specialists want to help!

The New York State Kinship Navigator is funded by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services to provide a statewide information and referral service for kinship caregivers.



Clip here to keep our contact information handy.

### A Program of Catholic Family Center

30 N. Clinton Ave ~ Rochester, NY 14604

Phone: 877-4KinInfo (877-454-6463)

Fax: 585-454-6286

[www.nysnavigator.org](http://www.nysnavigator.org)

