

Wolf Administration Launches Helpline for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Other Kinship Care Families

Pennsylvania departments of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller and Aging (PDA) Secretary Robert Torres today announced a helpline for families in kinship care situations, including grandparents raising their grandchildren because of the opioid crisis. The KinConnector helpline can help kinship care families access local, state, and federal resources.

KinConnector was created by Act 89 of 2018, which established a kinship navigator program for Pennsylvania. KinConnector will be the bridge that helps families identify resources that can ease this process for the entire family.

The KinConnector helpline is staffed by Kinship Navigators – compassionate, knowledgeable social service professionals prepared to help families locate, understand, and access resources that may be able to help them. Kinship Navigators will connect grandparents and other relatives who are raising children with resources such as health, financial, and legal services, support groups, training, and parenting advice. They will help families locate physical or behavioral health services, enroll the child in school, find support groups, and other services designed to help caregivers.

They will also be available to help families apply for federal, state, and local benefits such as Social Security, public assistance, or CHIP.

And the helpline is just the beginning. A website of resources is set to launch later this year.

Why Kinship Care Matters

Kinship care is becoming more common in Pennsylvania, with grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings often stepping in to fill the role of parents who are seeking treatment or, in the most tragic cases, have died from the disease of addiction.

Kinship care guardians often make a selfless choice to care for a young relative and ensure that they receive care and support from a family member they know and trust, even when processing their own emotions around their family's situation.

Children being cared for by relatives are less likely to end up in foster care and will experience better outcomes when they are living with a relative or someone they know. KinConnector will help ease the burden on these families and give them all the tools and resources they need to be successful.

KinConnector can be reached by calling 1-866-KIN-2111 (1-866-546-2111.) Help is available Monday - Thursday 9 a.m.- 10 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

For more information on resources available for kinship families and grandparents raising grandchildren, visit dhs.pa.gov.