

Children & Family Services / KINSHIP CARE

Nationwide, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives. Of those 6 million, 2.5 million children are living in households without any parents present.

The mission of Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department, Children and Family Services (CFS) is to promote the well-being and safety of children, families, and communities. As such, CFS recognizes the value of supporting children and youth on family arrangements such as kinship care as a community-based alternative to out-of-home placement. CFS also recognizes the importance of providing support to kinship families to better enable kinship caregivers in providing a caring and supportive environment for the children and youth in their care.

The Kinship program provides community based family support services to relative caregivers so that children can remain with their extended families and avoid placement in the foster care system. They also provide post-permanency services to relative caregivers who have become the legal guardian or adoptive parent of formerly dependent children. By its very nature, kinship care is a method of family preservation. It preserves the family by maintaining the child within the family group and by facilitating the maintenance of family connections.

Kinship services are free and available countywide, through centers in Antioch, Concord, and Richmond.

More than 500 families participate in the Contra Costa County Kinship Care program each year. These families consist of relative caregivers who provide full time care for children in the County. Children do not have to be in the Children & Family Services Department for families to get services. All services are provided by community based nonprofit organizations.

Services include:

- Respite care,
- Therapeutic support groups,
- Educational forums,
- Tutoring for children,
- Case management,
- Recreational activities for caregivers and youth,
- Limited emergency assistance, and
- Legal services.

For more information

- **about accessing services, call** Antoinette Harris at FamiliesFirst, (925) 602-1750
- **about program development, email** [Rhonda Smith](#) at the Employment & Human Services Department or call her at (925) 313-1696.

Typical Family Profile

"When I first showed up for a support group I really didn't think I wanted to be involved. There was a little box of tissues and a circle of about 15 chairs and I thought to myself, 'the last thing I need is a cold from these grandparents.' Ten minutes later I was crying like a child and wishing that little box of tissues was bigger; I haven't missed a support group session since," said Wanda Johnson to a crowd of legislators and county staff at a recent kinship care event.

Ms. Johnson, a 57 year old grandmother provides a home, hot meals, and a lot of love to her three grandchildren, but she often feels overburdened and alone. A friend got her involved with the Contra Costa County Kinship Care program and she is now a regular participant. Her kids get tutoring and a snack at the kinship center two days a week while she enjoys the support and camaraderie of the many other relative caregivers.

"I really enjoy coming to the kinship center and having a hot chocolate and talking with other grandmothers in my position," Ms. Johnson declared. There are three Kinship Center's in Contra Costa County and any relative caregiver is eligible to participate in the program.