

AN ACT concerning children.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Kinship Navigator Act.

Section 5. Definitions. In this Act:

(1) "Department" means the Department of Human Services.

(2) "NPO" means a not-for-profit organization.

(3) "Municipality" has the meaning ascribed to it in Section 1-1-2 of the Illinois Municipal Code.

(4) "Kinship care" means, as defined by Child Welfare League of America, the full time care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, grandparents, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has physical custody and a kinship bond with a child. This definition is designed to be inclusive without age restrictions on the kinship caregiver and respectful of cultural values and ties of affection. It allows a child to grow to adulthood in a family environment.

(5) "Kinship Navigator" means a statewide program designed to ensure kinship caregivers the necessary

resources for the preservation of the family.

Section 10. Legislative findings and intent.

(1) Caregivers often provide kinship care without compensation or support systems.

(2) Kinship caregivers are crucial to avoiding institutionalization of children and saving taxpayer dollars.

(3) Kinship caregivers are frequently under substantial physical, psychological, and financial stress. Unrelieved by support services available to the caregiver, this stress may lead to premature or unnecessary institutionalization for the care recipient or deterioration of the health condition and family circumstances of the kinship caregiver.

(4) Sudden responsibility for children often precludes kinship caregivers the opportunity to plan basic day to day responsibility.

(5) The Kinship Navigator shall be seamless, statewide, and coordinated among the Department of Human Services, Department on Aging, Illinois Housing Authority, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Corrections, and federal and local governments as well as other public and private sources.

(6) Additional services provided under the Kinship Navigator shall be: organizing diverse, enriched, and

culturally conscious kinship support groups and counseling; assisting with applying for benefits within the Illinois Department of Human Services' Family Community Resource Centers for those who qualify; publishing monthly newsletters; coordinating respite and crisis care services; assisting kinship caregivers with job readiness, job search, and job retention; and providing technical assistance to start up kinship support groups.

Section 15. Kinship Navigator conferences: promotion. The Department shall arrange for the conduct of 2 conferences, one in Cook County and one in Sangamon County, and provide for exhibits and activities for kinship caregivers and social service providers.

Section 20. Kinship Navigator administration. The Department, subject to appropriation, shall administer the Kinship Navigator through a contract with an NPO that has worked statewide with kinship families. The contract shall require that the program created by this Act will be coordinated with (i) the grandparent child care program administered by the Department of Children and Family Services under Section 34.11 of the Children and Family Services Act, (ii) the Department of Children and Family Services under Section 39.1 of the Children and Family Services Act, and (iii) the Department on Aging under Section 92 of the Family

Caregiver Act.

Section 25. Rules. The Department shall adopt the rules necessary for the implementation and administration of this Act.

Section 90. The Children and Family Services Act is amended by changing Section 34.11 and adding Section 39.1 as follows:

(20 ILCS 505/34.11)

Sec. 34.11. Grandparent child care program.

(a) The General Assembly finds and declares the following:

(1) An increasing number of children under the age of 18, including many children who would otherwise be at risk of abuse or neglect, are in the care of a grandparent or other nonparent relative.

(2) The principal causes of this increase include parental substance abuse, chronic illness, child abuse, mental illness, military deployment, poverty, homelessness, deportation, and death, as well as concerted efforts by families and by the child welfare service system to keep children with relatives whenever possible.

(3) Grandparents and older relatives providing primary care for at-risk children may experience unique resultant problems, such as financial stress due to limited incomes, emotional difficulties dealing with the loss of the child's

parents or the child's unique behaviors, and decreased physical stamina coupled with a much higher incidence of chronic illness.

(4) Many children being raised by nonparent relatives experience one or a combination of emotional, behavioral, psychological, academic, or medical problems, especially those born to a substance-abusing mother or at risk of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

(5) Grandparents and other relatives providing primary care for children lack appropriate information about the issues of kinship care, the special needs (both physical and psychological) of children born to a substance-abusing mother or at risk of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and the support resources currently available to them.

(b) The Department may establish an informational and educational program for grandparents and other relatives who provide primary care for children who are at risk of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment or who were born to substance-abusing mothers. As a part of the program, the Department may develop, publish, and distribute an informational brochure for grandparents and other relatives who provide primary care for children who are at risk of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment or who were born to substance-abusing mothers. The information provided under the program authorized by this Section may include, but is not limited to the following:

(1) The most prevalent causes of kinship care, especially the risk of (i) substance exposure, (ii) ~~or~~ child abuse, neglect, or abandonment, (iii) chronic illness, (iv) mental illness, (v) military deployment, or (vi) death.

(2) The problems experienced by children being raised by nonparent caregivers.

(3) The problems experienced by grandparents and other nonparent relatives providing primary care for children who have special needs.

(4) The legal system as it relates to children and their nonparent primary caregivers.

(5) The benefits available to children and their nonparent primary caregivers.

(6) A list of support groups and resources located throughout the State.

The brochure may be distributed through hospitals, public health nurses, child protective services, medical professional offices, elementary and secondary schools, senior citizen centers, public libraries, community action agencies selected by the Department, and the Department of Human Services.

The Kinship Navigator established under the Kinship Navigator Act shall coordinate the grandparent child care program under this Section with the programs and services established and administered by the Department of Human Services under the Kinship Navigator Act.

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(Source: P.A. 88-229; 88-670, eff. 12-2-94; 89-507, eff. 7-1-97.)

(20 ILCS 505/39.1 new)

Sec. 39.1. Kinship Navigator Act. The Kinship Navigator established under the Kinship Navigator Act shall coordinate the child welfare services administered by the Department in relation to kinship care for children and families receiving services under this Act with the programs and services established and administered by the Department of Human Services under the Kinship Navigator Act.

Section 95. The Family Caregiver Act is amended by adding Section 92 as follows:

(320 ILCS 65/92 new)

Sec. 92. Kinship Navigator Act. The Kinship Navigator established under the Kinship Navigator Act shall coordinate the services administered by the Department under this Act with the programs and services established and administered by the Department of Human Services under the Kinship Navigator Act.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.