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Governor

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
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Informational Letter

Transmittal:	07-OCFS-INF-05
To:	Commissioners of Social Services Executive Directors of Voluntary Authorized Agencies Youth Bureau Directors
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Development and Prevention Services
Date:	June 26, 2007
Subject:	NYS Kinship Navigator Program
Suggested Distribution:	Directors of Services Case Workers Youth Bureau Directors
Contact Person(s):	See Page 2
Attachments:	Flier
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Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Informational Letter (INF) is to inform local departments of social services and voluntary authorized agencies of the availability of the New York State Kinship Navigator Program. Developed jointly by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and lead agency Rochester Catholic Family Center, the program is designed to creatively assist kinship caregivers and children in their care to gain access to information and community sort services. Any caregiver residing in any part of the state is able to utilize a toll-free phone line or website to identify kinship care related services in his/her home locale.

II. Background

In New York State, it is estimated that more than 140,000 grandparents are raising their grandchildren and over 400,000 children are living in households headed by a grandparent or other relative. This growing trend is reflected nationally, as an estimated 6.5 million children live with grandparents or other relatives apart from their birth

parents. While these “kinship” caregivers exhibit a wide variety of strengths, they often face a number of challenges in accessing health, education, financial, and legal services for the children in their care.

As a result, in 2006, the New York State OCFS created the *New York State Kinship Caregiver Program* to assist persons caring for related children. A statewide network of 14 programs supports kinship placements and promotes household stability and permanency for those families. The New York State Kinship Navigator Program is among the 14 programs funded through OCFS. The Navigator Program assists kinship caregivers and the children in their care to gain access to kinship-related information or referral services, including:

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| - counseling | - case management | - education advocacy |
| - respite | - legal information | - housing assistance |
| - caregiver support groups | - academic tutoring services | - parenting skills |

III. Program Implications

The New York State Kinship Navigator Program will make it easier for caregivers to identify local programs, including those funded directly by OCFS, for assistance and support services. To date, an estimated 20 counties have a program specifically targeting the multiple needs of kinship caregivers and the children in their care. However, the Navigator Program will identify kinship-related services in all counties as well as those projects that are specifically designed to target this population.

The Kinship Navigator Program consists of an interactive website (www.nysnavigator.org) that utilizes mapping that allows the user to click on a caregiver’s county for a current list of resources. Also on the website is an interactive chat room for kinship caregivers, as well as “Contact Us” links to a kinship specialist to answer relevant questions. Under the supervision of a skilled lawyer, the specialist will be able to provide information on state and federal laws governing kinship care, special needs issues, and permanency.

IV. Contact Information

Any caregiver residing in any part of the state can reach the Navigator Program by contacting **877-4KinInfo** (877-454-6463) toll free or navigator@nysnavigator.org via e-mail. Kinship specialists are available on staff to assess caregiver needs and develop a plan of action. Any questions concerning the Kinship Navigator Program or requests for posters or additional fliers should be directed to:

- Gerard Wallace, Executive Director, at Kinship Navigator, Catholic Family Center, 30 N. Clinton Ave., Rochester, NY 14604 or navigator@nysnavigator.org

Information on other programs funded by OCFS as part of the NYS Kinship Caregiver Program can be obtained through Bob Resnick, Project Coordinator, at 518- 402-6775 or Robert.Resnick@ocfs.state.ny.us

Issued By: /s/ Jane G. Lynch
Name: Jane G. Lynch
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Division of Development and Prevention Services



NYS Kinship Navigator

Statewide Information and Resources

877-4KinInfo (877-454-6463) 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

