

AUTISM CONNECT 2026

April 7th

Thank You!



TO ALL OF OUR PLATINUM SPONSORS!





CONNECTING KINSHIP CARE

THE QUEST FOR A COLLABORATIVE SERVICE ARENA

TUESDAY, APRIL 07, 2026

AUTISM CONNECT 2026

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER
THROUGH INTENTIONAL COLLABORATION

WHEN PARENTS CANNOT CARE FOR THEIR CHILDREN, WHO USUALLY STEPS IN FIRST?

- Grandparents
- Aunts
- Uncles
- Older siblings
- Family friends
- Godparents

Term...Something New!

Experience...Well known!

WHAT IS KINSHIP CARE?

Federally Defined

Commonly defined as "the full-time care, nurturing, and protection of a child by relatives, members of their Tribe or clan, godparents, stepparents, or other adults who have a family relationship to a child" (childwelfare.gov, 2016)

SC DSS Defined

Temporary or permanent arrangement, in which a relative or non-related adult (also known as fictive kin) has assumed full-time care of a child whose parents are unable to do so (SCDSS.gov, 2013)

Types

Informal- Child Welfare System nor Court Process involved

Formal- Child Welfare System and/or Court has been involved at some point.
(DSS- utilization of Kinship Caregivers)

INTRODUCTION

KIMBERLY JANHA, PH.D.

- The Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer for Kindred Hearts of South Carolina
- Kinship Care Lived Experience- Older two brothers/first cousins; two nieces and three nephews
- Committed to heightening the awareness of the age-old phenomenon of kin caring for their kin and build a community that is purposed to support this population
- Serve through the belief that intentional collaboration is a potent ingredient for thriving families and a “well” community
- Therefore, I passionately explore partnerships to strengthen the network of service providers for kinship caregivers



KINSHIP CARE (NATIONAL AND STATE)

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION (SEPT. 2025)

Location	Data Type	2018 - 2020	2020 - 2022	2021 - 2023	2022 - 2024	2023 - 2025
United States	Number	2,682,000	2,529,000	2,426,000	2,463,000	2,566,000
	Percent	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%

Location	Data Type	2018 - 2020	2020 - 2022	2021 - 2023	2022 - 2024	2023 - 2025
South Carolina	Number	69,000	57,000	57,000	60,000	74,000
	Percent	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%

Using the relationship to householder items on the **Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement**, children are identified in kinship care when a parent is not present in the household and the child is either related to at least one other person in the household (e.g., sibling, grandchild, niece/nephew) or is listed as a nonrelative of the householder (e.g., a family friend).

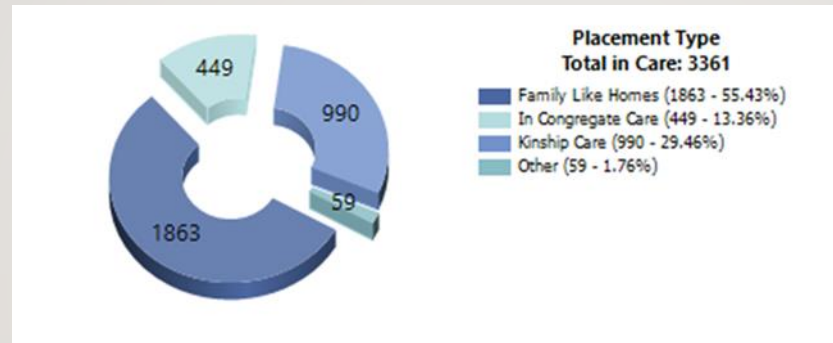
KINSHIP CARE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

SC DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)/GRANDFAMILIES AND KINSHIP SUPPORT NETWORK

SC CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE/KINSHIP FOSTER CARE

MARCH, 2026

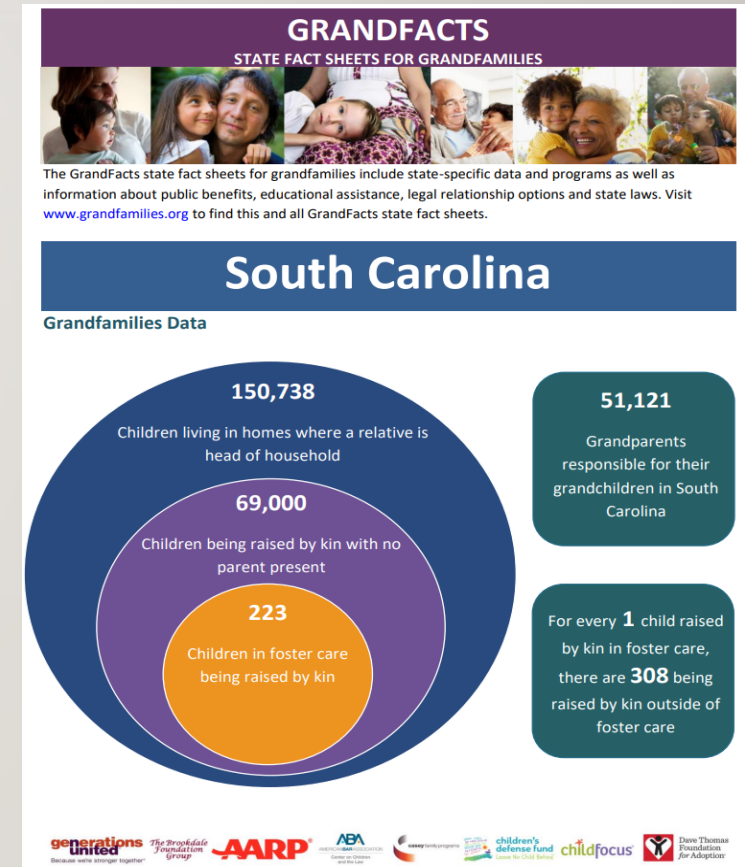
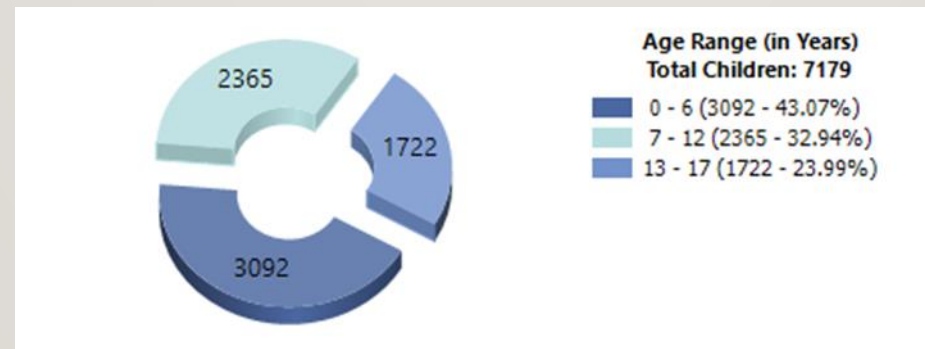
(3361/990)



Family Preservation Services

March, 2026

(7179)



KINSHIP CARE BENEFITS/CHALLENGES

Benefits

- Less child trauma
- More contact with birth parents/siblings
- Maintain family history and culture
- Greater placement stability
- Better Management and/or Fewer disruptions for children with disabilities
- Lower re-abuse rates with kin

Challenges

- Financial Resources
- Social/Community Support
- Basic Need Resources
- Legal Services
- Awareness
- Managing Risk Factors in Kinship Care

***Evaluating/Vetting Very Imperative!**

Dr. Joseph Crumbley, LCSW, presented to Human Service Professional in Charleston, SC. May 2016

KINSHIP CARE

(Understanding Risk Factors of Kinship Care Across Disciplines)

- Loss
- Roles/Boundaries
- Guilt
- Embarrassment
- Loyalty
- Child-Rearing Practicing
- Stress-Management/Physical Limitations
- Bonding and Attachment
- Anger and Resentment
- Morbidity and Mortality
- Fantasies
- Overcompensation
- Competition
- Intrusion

Note:

- Risk factors seen in child's behavior
- Caregivers' willingness (lack) to address or communicate behaviors, challenges

CONNECTING KINSHIP CARE & AUTISM

SHARED FOUNDATION: STABILITY AND ATTACHMENT

- Both kinship care and autism support rely heavily on consistency, trust, and secure relationships.
- Children in kinship care may already be coping with trauma, and children with autism often depend on predictable environments, making stability even more critical.

TRAUMA-INFORMED + NEURODIVERSE CARE

- Many children in kinship care have experienced adverse events.
- When combined with autism, caregivers must balance:
 - Trauma-informed approaches
 - Understanding of sensory needs and communication differences
- This requires specialized knowledge most kinship caregivers were never formally trained for.

BENEFITS

OF KINSHIP CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

- Familiarity and Emotional Security
 - Remaining with family can reduce anxiety and behavioral disruptions.
 - Known caregivers often better understand the child's history, triggers, and personality.
- Cultural and Family Continuity
 - Maintains identity, traditions, and family bonds important for social and emotional development.
- Increased Advocacy
 - Kinship caregivers are often deeply invested and more persistent in navigating systems (education, healthcare).
- Flexibility and Commitment
 - Family members may go above and beyond formal expectations, providing individualized care.

CHALLENGES OF KINSHIP CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

- **Lack of Training**
- Many caregivers are not equipped with:
 - Autism-specific strategies
 - Behavioral management tools
 - Communication supports
- **Financial Strain**
 - Limited access to foster care stipends or services
 - High cost of therapies, evaluations, and specialized care
- **Navigating Systems**
 - Education systems (IEPs), healthcare, and disability services can be overwhelming
 - Caregivers may face barriers due to **legal custody limitations**
- **Caregiver Burnout**
 - Many kinship caregivers are older adults or managing multiple children
 - Increased stress when balancing trauma and developmental needs
- **Limited Access to Services**
 - Delays in diagnosis or intervention
 - Lack of awareness about available autism resources

KINDRED HEARTS SC- THE ORGANIZATION

- A kinship navigation program
 - Serve whole families; but will work most directly with caregivers such as grandparents, aunts & uncles, older siblings, and other relatives or fictive kin to ensure they have access to information, tangible resources, and services.
 - Promote co-created spaces where caregivers share and support each other
 - Emphasize the idea of a strong community network to provide resources as they are identified
 - Encourage caregivers to advocate for themselves by sharing their stories and requesting resources in settings that include elected officials and other policy makers.
- Spawned from an outreach initiative composed by current and former SC Citizen Review Panel
- Serving South Carolina with Ambassadors in Clarendon, Dorchester, Laurens, Chesterfield/Marlboro, and SC Midlands Area. Intentionally collaborating to host and/or support services in all SC Counties.

ORGANIZATIONAL SIGHTS AND CORE PRINCIPLES

VISION

A connected and service-focused society, which ensures that all persons who choose to take care of their kin have access to essential resources needed to maintain a healthy, safe and well-functioning living experience.

MISSION

To serve persons who are taking care of their kin by building a community of collaborative organizations that are intentional in providing services to meet the needs of caregivers and the persons who are being provided care.

VALUES

FAMILY

INTEGRITY

COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP

EMPOWERMENT

EDUCATION



KINSHIP NAVIGATION PROGRAM

THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

KINSHIP CIRCLES

Listening Sessions

A co-created space for caregivers to candidly share their experiences, needs, and recommendations for improved community awareness/support.

Listening Circles are held in concert with Learning Circles.

Learning Sessions

-In response to the resources and informational needs identified in the listening sessions, the activities in this phase focus on providing caregivers with information and resources relevant to their experiences. Learning circles will be hosted by KHSC, as well as existing partners and new partners identified through community outreach efforts.

Community Outreach/ Education/Advocacy

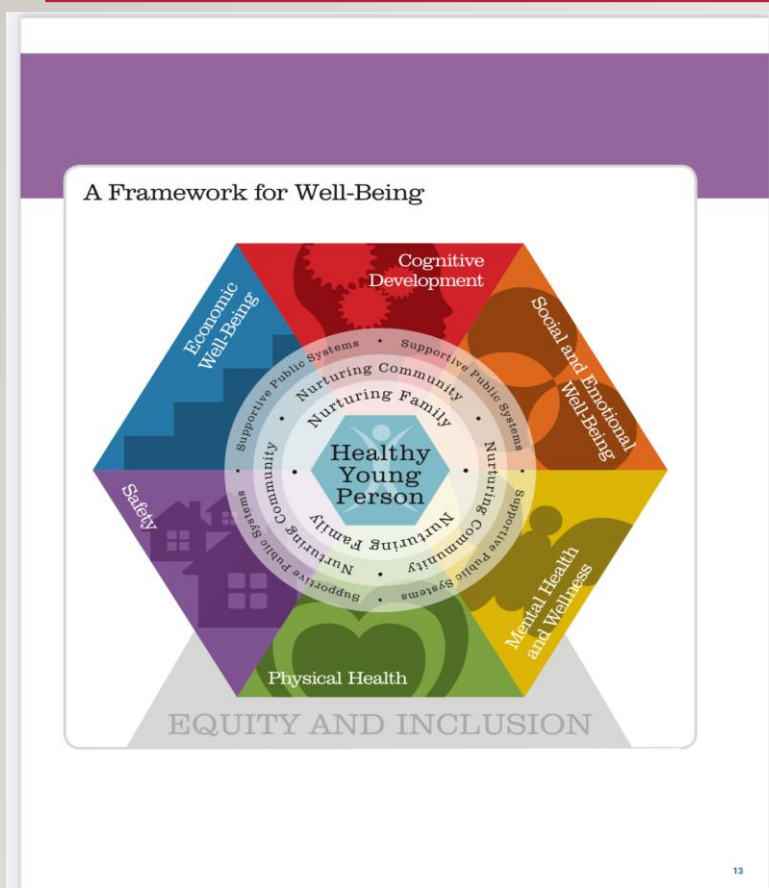
Organization conducts community outreach efforts to local organizations and small businesses, to create educational and resource hubs for caregivers as well as to help prevent caregiver distress by empowering the community to identify signs that a caregiver is in need.

Volunteer-Driven Case Management

Students and professionals/community volunteers; in the human services, social work, and/or counseling disciplines serve as case-managers to families; tutors; interns; service learners



WELL-BEING DOMAINS FOR YOUNG (ALL) PEOPLE...



Cognitive Development	Social Support and Emotional Wellness	Mental Health and Wellness	Physical Health	Safety	Economic Well-Being
— to maximize their individual growth and development.	-to cultivate a strong, resilient - clear self-identity; as well as supportive and nurturing relationships.	-to manage their mental health and wellness	-to maximize physical health, strength and functioning	-to be physically and psychologically safe and free from violence, abuse, and neglect.	-to obtain and retain steady employment that provides a living wage, a career path, and housing that is safe, stable, and affordable.

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IT'S ALL RELATIVE...

Social & Emotional Intelligence Summit

Building Communication, Connection & Emotional Wellness for Our Children

Earn Social Work CEUs and DSS Approved Credits
for Foster Parents, Kinship and Adoptive Parents



Saturday, April 11



8:25 AM – 1:30 PM

Midlands Technical College–Airport Campus
Student Center
1260 Lexington Drive, West Columbia, SC

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- ✓ Keynote Speaker
- ✓ Panel Discussions
- ✓ Breakout Sessions
- ✓ Effective Communication Strategies

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

- Parents & Caregivers
- Educators & School Administrators
- Social Workers & Counselors
- Law Enforcement & Legal Professionals
- Elected Officials
- Community Leaders

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS:

- Check-In 8:25 - 8:55 AM
- Keynote Address 9:15 - 9:40 AM
- Panels & Speakers: 10:00 AM - 12:15 PM
- Lunch 12:30 - 1:30 PM



Register Now!

\$20.00 to register



Because when it comes to our children...

It's All Relative. ♥



Children's Trust
OF SOUTH CAROLINA



College of Social Work
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



Caring for the Caregivers Through Intentional Collaboration

**SCAN TO
REGISTER**



Kindred Hearts
of South Carolina

Caring for the Caregivers Through Intentional Collaboration

YOU ARE APPRECIATED

Dr. Kimberly Janha

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Session Survey



Carolina B 11:00-12:00