



# Kinnections

Newsletter for kinship caregivers and service providers



1-800-535-1218



School of Social Work  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

**Mission:** Our mission is to support and empower all of Michigan’s kinship families through responsive information and referral services, education and training, and outreach and engagement with caregivers, service providers and communities to ensure that children in kinship families are safe, healthy, nurtured and loved.

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## Help is just a phone call away...



Figure 1-Unknown Author licensed under CC BY-SA

The Kinship Care Resource Center (KCRC) is proud to offer the Kinship Navigator program. Kinship Navigators are experienced kinship caregivers themselves, who offer guidance, understanding and personal knowledge to support kinship families.



Navigators (from left to right,) Terry Loynes and Tracey DeFeyter

Families who contact the KCRC will be connected with a Navigator to help guide them through their questions or needs. Navigator services are free.

Navigators are dedicated, knowledgeable mentors with years of parenting experience, resource and service-finding skills, knowledge about foster care, adoption,

guardianship and the full assortment of programs and supports available to kinship families.

If you are interested in working with a Kinship Navigator, please call 1-800-535-1218.

## Clothing

Keeping up with growing kids, their clothing and seasonal outer wear is an ongoing challenge for every family! Michigan is home to many non-profit organizations that provide new and gently used items for children, especially those in foster or relative placements.



Figure 2-Photo by Irene Wong on Unsplash

Typically referred to as “foster closets,” these organizations receive donations and are independently operated by volunteers. Many foster closets are run by foster or relative caregivers themselves. Foster Closets often stock clothing, toys, shoes, baby equipment, hygiene items, blankets and bedding, and sometimes furniture that is 100% free for children and families that meet the eligibility criteria.

Availability varies depending on the area, so contact a Kinship Navigator at 1-800-535-1218 for location and eligibility information.

## Michigan 211

Michigan 211 is a free, comprehensive directory of services that connects Michigan residents to agencies and resources within their communities. Resources can include, but are not limited to, childcare, food, clothing, and utility assistance. Michigan 211 can be accessed by dialing “211” on a telephone, texting the resident’s zip code to “898211”, chatting live with a representative on the 211 website (mi211.org), or searching the website’s data base (mi211.org.) Any Michigan resident can access this service for free and the help received is confidential. Visit <https://www.mi211.org/><sup>1</sup> to learn more.

## IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) grant program is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) initiative designed to provide free tax preparation services for families through various partner organizations. This service helps low- to moderate-income individuals, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and limited English speakers file their taxes each year. For more information, visit the [Free Tax Return Preparation for Qualifying Taxpayers](#)<sup>2</sup> page. You can contact the help line at **1-800-906-9887** or email at [partner@irs.gov](mailto:partner@irs.gov). In addition, you can call 2-1-1 or visit their website [www.mi211.org](http://www.mi211.org)<sup>3</sup> to find the nearest VITA location near you.

## AARP Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)

Most AARP TCE sites are operated by the AARP Foundation's Tax Aide program. To locate the nearest AARP TCE Tax-Aide site between January and April use the [AARP Site Locator Tool](#)<sup>4</sup> or call **888-227-7669**.

Taxpayers also have an option to prepare their own basic federal and state tax return for free using web-based tax preparation software with an IRS-certified volunteer to help guide you through the process.

## Financial Resources for Eligible Kinship Families

There are several types of financial supports available to relative caregivers who have assumed responsibility for raising relative children.

### Unlicensed Relative Caregivers

Unlicensed relative caregivers are often new to caring for a child through the child welfare system. Relative children may have been placed in their care for a number of reasons and are often placed as temporary wards of the court due to abuse/neglect.

While it may seem strange for family caregivers to think about themselves as foster parents, they may be eligible to receive foster care maintenance payments, which provide a daily rate of care for each eligible child.

### Child Only Grant

While most of the assistance programs available through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) are based upon a caregiver’s (head-of-household) income, the Child Only Grant is not. The Child Only Grant (also referred to as an Ineligible Grantee Award) is available for children who are being raised by a relative who is not a biological parent. This financial assistance is based upon the child’s income and assets; not the caregiver’s.

The Kinship Care Resource Center does not make determinations or disperse funds for these programs, but Navigator can provide support and assistance in applying. Contact a Kinship Navigator to learn more about eligibility for these and other supports at 1-800-535-1218.

### Sign up to receive Kinnections Monthly

Please send an email to [kinship@msu.edu](mailto:kinship@msu.edu) or use our **Contact Form**.<sup>5</sup>

## URLs for links embedded in this newsletter:

1 Michigan 211 Program: <https://www.mi211.org/>

2 IRS VITA Program: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers>

3 Michigan 211 Program: <https://www.mi211.org/>

4 AARP Locator Tool: <https://secure.aarp.org/applications/VMISLocator/searchTaxAideLocations.action>

5 KCRC Contact form: <https://kinship.msu.edu/Contact>



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