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4th Annual Virtual  
**Kinship Care  
Symposium**

hosted by the Michigan Kinship Care Coalition

**Friday, September 19, 2025**  
9am-12pm

In partnership with



For more information please contact Lisa Grodsky at 248-372-1915  
or Anita Rothert at 734-785-7705 x7035.

*"Hope anchors the soul."*

## Program

### 9am Welcome and Introductions

### 9:30–10:15am Key Note Presentation

#### **Child Safety in America Means Turning to Family First: How Men Have Stepped Up as Primary Caregivers**

Historically the obligation to care for and to keep safe one's child was deemed a private matter, not subject to government regulation or interference. In 1875 the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC) was founded, and since then the focus of US child welfare policy has oscillated between removing children from unsafe homes and stressing family preservation. The confusing legal and social services system envelopes grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, neighbors and friends from all walks of life. Keeping children with family is indisputably a noble goal. But meeting that child's needs, and the needs of their new families, is the hard part, and the part we have thus far largely failed to rise to.

Presented by Joseph Kozakiewicz, JD, MSW  
*Director of Michigan State University Chances at Childhood Clinic  
Michigan State University*

### About the Keynote Speaker



Joseph Kozakiewicz, JD, MSW has a law degree from Columbia University and a master's in social work from Grand Valley State University. He has served as the Family Division Referee for the Ottawa County Circuit Court, and later as the Director of the Ottawa County Friend of the Court. In 2003, he became the Director of the Michigan State University Chance at Childhood Program, which provides classroom training and clinical experience to students in the MSU School of Social Work and College of Law, focusing on cases most directly impacting the interests of children in Michigan. He continues to serve as a contract referee with the Ottawa County Court. Mr Kozakiewicz believes more than ever that children must have a voice whenever a judge is making a decision that affects them.

## Program

### 10:15–11:15am Breakout Sessions (please choose one)

#### **1. Helping Caregivers Manage Stress**

Caregivers supporting children and youth often experience stress. In order to best support the children in our care and ourselves, we need to be aware of our own stress and how to manage it. This workshop will cover common causes, signs, and symptoms of stress, as well as strategies for managing stress and creating balance in your daily life.

Presented by Courtney Aldrich  
*Program Instructor, Child and Family Development  
Michigan State University Extension*

#### **2. Is Foster Care Traumatic?**

Discussions around trauma have increased in recent years, but what is considered trauma and how should we respond when a child has been exposed to trauma? Learn more about how childhood traumatic stress impacts a child's behaviors, development, and relationships. We will share strategies for becoming a more trauma informed caregiver while building stronger relationships with the children you love and care for.

Presented by Melissa Gonzales, LMSW  
*Mental Health Supervisor, The Guidance Center  
Noelle Lehrke, LLMW, Mental Health Therapist  
Kids-TALK Children's Advocacy Center, The Guidance Center*

### 11:15am–12pm

#### **Your Mental Health Matters**

Mindfulness can help reduce stress-related symptoms like anxiety, depression, and physical tension, and support the management of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. Whether you're navigating workplace stress, balancing personal demands, or seeking greater calm, this session offers brief, practical mindfulness techniques to deepen your practice and move forward with intention.

Presented by Lisa Tams, LMSW, ACSW  
*Social-Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programs  
Michigan State University Extension*