

Talking Points, DOME DAY 2025

DOME DAY 2025 is a statewide advocacy and awareness event that will spotlight the needs and experiences of kinship caregivers in Michigan. Its goal is to inform policymakers and the public about the unique challenges these families face and push for better recognition, support, and policy reforms—especially for informal caregivers who operate outside the traditional foster care system.

Who We Are – Michigan Kinship Care Coalition (MKCC)

- A statewide coalition started by **Michigan State University School of Social Work**.
- Partners include:
 - Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency
 - The Guidance Center
 - Fostering Forward Michigan
 - Michigan's Children
 - NASW Michigan Chapter
- Mission: To support grandparents and relatives raising children through resources, advocacy, and policy change.

Obstacles We Face

- **Lack of Recognition:** Many caregivers don't identify as "kinship" families, leading to missed services.
- **Terminology Barriers:** Terms like "informal caregivers" downplay their critical role.
- **Limited Data:** Inadequate research on the number and needs of informal kinship families.
- **Educational Gaps:** Children often lack school-based support or advocacy.
- **Housing Instability:** Many caregivers struggle to afford stable housing.
- **Policy Exclusion:** Informal caregivers are often left out of laws and service structures.

Positive Outcomes of MKCC

- Created a **statewide network** advocating for kinship families.
- Increased **awareness** of informal caregivers' challenges.
- Advocated for **policy reforms** and **expanded support systems**.

- Helped amplify the voices of kinship families to state leaders and agencies.

What is Kinship Care?

Kinship care refers to children being raised by relatives or close family friends (fictive kin) rather than entering the foster care system. This includes:

- **Formal kinship care:** Recognized by the state and supported through welfare agencies.
- **Informal kinship care:** Private family arrangements without state involvement.

Kinship care preserves family connections and provides stability for children but often lacks the same level of support as formal foster care.

State of Kinship in Michigan

- **49,000+ children** live in informal kinship care (outside the system).
- **4,500 children** are formally placed with relatives.
- **Major challenges** include legal, emotional, and financial barriers with minimal support structures.
- A Kinship Advisory Council **gaps and barriers** analysis launching in April 2025 will help shape a more inclusive and effective support system for all kinship caregivers in Michigan.

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