



FULTON COUNTY JOB & FAMILY SERVICES

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FULTON COUNTY CELEBRATES SEPTEMBER AS KINSHIP APPRECIATION MONTH

September 2, 2016 (WAUSEON-OH) September 2016 is Kinship Appreciation Month in Ohio. Kinship refers to relatives or close friends who are caregivers of children when their own parents are not able to care for them. This can include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and older siblings. It can also include friends, neighbors, coaches, Sunday school teachers, etc., according to KinshipOhio. Nearly one hundred thousand Ohio grandparents are raising their grandchildren according to the 2010 Census. In 2012, it was reported that there were 354 grandparents raising grandchildren in Fulton County.

Amy Metz-Simon, Fulton County Job and Family Services Director states "Fulton County is founded on the belief that family matters. We see this in the response grandparents and other relatives have when faced with either placing a child in foster care or taking on the responsibility of raising the child themselves. Most selflessly take on the responsibility of a kinship placement. In fact, the majority of our current placements are kinship placements."

According to KinshipOhio, Kinship families are unique because the caregivers were not necessarily planning to raise the children in their care, but have agreed to do so. There are costs associated with caregiving which include the cost of child care, clothing, groceries, school fees/activities, etc. These costs, especially when unexpected, can create both financial and emotional strain. Kinship families are more likely to have a higher level of knowledge and interaction with the birth parents. Research has indicated that kinship caregivers can have good outcomes including more regular school attendance, better grades and fewer community problems than others in unrelated foster care.

Kinship can be a temporary, or a more permanent arrangement. There are many resources available to those in a kinship situation. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services offers a Kinship Permanency Incentive Program which provides time-limited incentive payments to families caring for their kin. To date in 2016, Fulton County has 14 children being supported by this incentive. More information on this program can be obtained at https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/kinship_care.stm.

There are also a wide variety of statewide policies and supports that can be found on the KinshipOhio website at www.kinshipohio.org. Locally, Fulton County Children Services is dedicated to assisting kinship families who are caring for a relative child. They are able to assist families with community referrals, as well as determine eligibility for KPI funds and other resources such as food stamps, Medicaid, cash assistance (OWF), Children Services, Child Support, etc. Tiffany Roloff is the Fulton County Kinship Navigator and may be reached at 419-337-0010 or toll free at 1-800-344-3575.

Additional resources include the Ohio Grandparent/Kinship Coalition (www.ohiograndparentkinship.org), Ohio Resource Guide for Relatives Caring for Children (<http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/file.asp?id=1779&type=application/pdf>), and the Ohio Family Care Association (<http://ofcaonline.org/>).