

DANE COUNTY KINSHIP CARE

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STANDING UP FOR OUR KIDS: BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness and strengthen our commitment to helping all children feel safe, valued, and included. For children in kinship or foster care, the topic of bullying can feel especially important — and personal. These children may already have experienced changes, losses, or challenges that make them more vulnerable to teasing or exclusion.

As kinship caregivers, you play a powerful role in helping the children in your care build confidence, resilience, and safety — both at home and in the community.

UNDERSTANDING BULLYING

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. It can take many forms:

- Physical: hitting, pushing, or damaging property
- Verbal: name-calling, teasing, or threats
- Social: spreading rumors, excluding others, or embarrassing someone
- Cyberbullying: using texts, social media, or gaming to hurt or humiliate

Children in kinship or foster care might be teased about family differences, living situations, or things outside their control. Recognizing bullying early allows caregivers to take action before it causes long-term harm.



HOW CAREGIVERS CAN HELP

1. Listen and Believe – If a child shares that they're being bullied, thank them for telling you. Listen calmly and let them know it's not their fault. Kids often stay quiet because they fear they won't be believed.
2. Build Confidence – Help children focus on their strengths and interests — whether that's art, sports, music, or helping others. Confident children are less likely to be targeted and more likely to speak up for themselves and others.
3. Stay Connected – Know your child's friends, teachers, and online activity. When children feel supported by caring adults, they're better able to handle challenges.
4. Work with the School – If bullying happens at school, reach out to teachers, counselors, or administrators. Schools have policies and programs in place to protect students and promote kindness.
5. Model Kindness and Respect – Children learn how to treat others by watching us. When they see empathy and calm problem-solving at home, they're more likely to respond the same way in tough situations.

REMEMBER

Every child deserves to feel safe — at home, at school, and online. As a kinship caregiver, your steady presence and unconditional support can make all the difference. By listening, encouraging, and advocating, you help children grow stronger, more confident, and more compassionate.



RESOURCES

- StopBullying.gov: Tools, resources, and guidance for families and schools
- PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center: www.pacer.org/bullying
- Local Schools & Community Centers: Many offer anti-bullying workshops or youth support groups
- Suicide Prevention – Dane County Crisis: ph 608-280-2600



HONORING NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATING FAMILY, CULTURE & CONNECTION

Each year, from September 15 to October 15, we celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month — a time to recognize the history, traditions, and contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans who have enriched our communities and our nation. For kinship caregivers, it's also a special time to reflect on how culture and family traditions help children feel grounded, connected, and proud of who they are.



FAMILY: THE HEART OF HERITAGE

Family is central to Hispanic and Latino cultures — and kinship care beautifully reflects that value. When relatives step in to care for children, they are continuing a long tradition of love, responsibility, and community. By keeping children connected to their families and cultural roots, kinship caregivers help preserve identity, belonging, and stability during times of change. For children, knowing where they come from and understanding their cultural background builds pride and resilience. Whether it's sharing stories about grandparents, cooking favorite recipes, or celebrating family milestones, these small acts carry big meaning.

WAYS TO CELEBRATE CULTURE TOGETHER

You don't need to be Hispanic or Latino to celebrate this month — it's a time for everyone to learn, honor, and appreciate the richness of our shared community. Here are a few simple ways to celebrate and connect:

- Share traditions: Cook a favorite Hispanic meal together — tacos, empanadas, arroz con pollo, or tamales — and talk about where the dish comes from.
- Explore music and art: Listen to Latin music, explore local art exhibits, or watch a family-friendly movie that highlights Hispanic culture.
- Read together: Visit the library for children's books by Hispanic authors, such as *Drum Dream Girl* by Margarita Engle or *Islandborn* by Junot Díaz.
- Learn together: Look up the countries represented in Hispanic Heritage Month — Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean — and discover something new about each.

HONORING EVERY CHILD'S STORY

If the child in your care identifies as Hispanic or Latino, honoring their culture can be a healing and empowering part of their journey. Encourage them to share what's meaningful to them — favorite foods, songs, sayings, or traditions — and celebrate together.

As one caregiver shared: "Keeping our family's traditions alive helps my grandkids feel proud of who they are. It reminds them they're part of something bigger — a family, a history, a culture that's full of love."

THE HEART OF KINSHIP

At its core, kinship care is about love, connection, and continuity — values deeply rooted in Hispanic culture. This month, and all year long, let's celebrate the families who embody those values and the children who carry their heritage with pride and hope.

LOCAL RESOURCES & INFORMATION

- PBS Documentaries for Hispanic Heritage Month: <https://www.pbs.org/articles/celebrate-hispanic-heritage-month>
- Virtual Exhibits and Articles From the In-Development National Museum of the American Latino: <https://latino.si.edu/>
- 8 Reasons Why and How We Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month: <https://learninglab.si.edu/news/top-8-reasons-why-and-how-we-celebrate-hispanic-heritage-month>





CAREGIVER UPDATES

This newsletter, and past editions can be found on our website:
<https://www.danecountyhumanservices.org/Children-Youth-and-Family/Out-of-Home-Care/Kinship-Program>

CAREGIVER SUPPORTS



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Navigating school relationships as a parent or caregiver can feel overwhelming. A partnership between home and school is essential for a child's success and well-being.

Be Proactive and Prepared – Reaching out early to your child's school and teachers sets the tone for a positive partnership. Consider requesting an in-person or virtual meeting to share relevant information about your child's background, needs, and how trauma may affect their learning or classroom interactions. You don't need to overshare, but providing helpful insights can assist educators in better supporting your child.

Additionally, researching the trauma-informed practices the school utilizes may be helpful. If you have valuable resources, such as tips, strategies, or articles, feel free to pass those along to the teacher and school staff who regularly interact with your child. Trauma-informed practices are good for all students, not just students who have experienced trauma.

Open and Ongoing Communication – Some parents find establishing a structured communication plan with the teacher is helpful. This can look like a weekly email, a daily checklist, or a notebook passed between home and school. Choose a format that works for you and the teacher to ensure consistent and meaningful updates. Open communication shouldn't focus exclusively on challenges. Sharing successes, changes in routines, or upcoming events creates a well-balanced dialogue and strengthens the home-school connection.



Excerpt from: The Coalition for Children, Youth and Families

FALL ROUTINES FOR STABILITY & CALM

1. Keep Consistent Schedules – Shorter days can throw off kids' rhythms. Keep meal, homework, and bedtime routines steady.
2. Prepare for School Changes – Check in on school schedules, after-school plans, & transportation as activities shift.
3. Plan for Rest & Downtime – Fall can get busy! Build in quiet evenings or family time to help kids recharge.
4. Stay Connected – Talk about daily plans and feelings. Changes in daylight or weather can affect mood and energy.
5. Celebrate the Season – Enjoy simple traditions together, like: apple picking, pumpkin carving, or cozy movie nights. Make fall feel special and predictable.



TAKING A BREAK: HOW TO ASK FOR RESPITE CARE

Caring for a child can be deeply rewarding — and also demanding. Every caregiver needs time to rest and recharge, and respite care is designed to provide just that. Taking care of yourself is part of taking care of the child — a rested caregiver is a stronger caregiver.

1. Know It's Okay to Ask – Everyone needs a break. Respite helps you rest & recharge so you can continue providing strong, loving care.
2. Plan Ahead When Possible – If you know a busy time is coming, request respite early.
3. Share Important Info – Provide the child's routines, preferences, and any medical or behavioral needs to help ensure a smooth stay.
4. Return Recharged – Use your time to rest, connect with friends or family, and care for yourself — it benefits both you and the child.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

WI HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (WHEAP)



Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) assists eligible households with their heating and electric bills. It is funded by the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Public Benefits (PB) program.

- Apply online: <https://energybenefit.wi.gov/OnlineApps>
- For more information call: 1-866-HEATWIS (432-8947)

MMSD FOOD PANTRIES/FOOD MARKETS



- MMSD, in partnership with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin.
- For the MMSD School Market Distribution Schedule:
<https://www.madison.k12.wi.us/food-service/mmsd-food-pantries>



FREE BLANKETS

- Contact Emily Jo Peterson for FREE Blankets. There is a wide variety of options!



WAYFORWARD – CREATING FOOD SECURITY & HOUSING STABILITY

- WayForward Resources provides access to nutritious food for people throughout Dane County and support that helps people stay in their homes in Middleton, Cross Plains, and parts of west Madison. Link: <https://www.wayforwardresources.org/>



LUKE'S CLOSET

- Dane County's only clothing closet for foster, adoptive and kinship kiddos.
- Free Shoe, Shop & Eat Event – Nov 8, 2025
- Pre-registration Link:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfQShYiwxNdl4miSjy2w2zPMe72PnJUq65OG1s3wqymHQj6dw/viewform>



PARENT SUPPORT GROUP @ FOCUS CHURCH

- 1st Tuesday of each month
- Childcare provided – RSVP for this.
- Address: 411 N Thompson Rd, Sun Prairie, WI 53590
- Phone: (608) 837-9500



HOLIDAY RESOURCES

THANKSGIVING BASKETS



Registration for Thanksgiving Baskets opens in late October. Read on to learn more about how registration and pick-up works.

- Who can register for a Thanksgiving Basket? Registration is open to all Dane County residents. Baskets are limited to the first 4,000 households registered.
- How do I get my basket? After registering for a Thanksgiving Basket, you will receive a postcard in the mail. Postcards will arrive the week before basket pickup. You must bring this postcard with you to pick up your basket.
- Basket Distribution Please check back for more info. – <https://www.goodmancenter.org/get-involved/events/thanksgiving-baskets/thanksgiving-basket-recipients>

KOATS FOR KIDS



Distribution of coats will take place on Friday, October 24th, 2025 at these locations:

Allied Family Center
4619 Jenewein Road,
Fitchburg, WI

The Erica & Anthony
Fleming Boys & Girls Club
2001 Taft Street
Madison, WI

McKenzie Family Club
232 Windsor St,
Sun Prairie, WI

TOYS FOR TOTS



Since 1947, Toys for Tots has distributed 708 million toys to 314 million children.

- Connect with your local Toys for Tots Chapter to apply for Toys. They partner with the United Way of Dane County, a handful of non-profit organizations and local school districts.
- Toys for Tots Coordinator in Madison is Edward Perez
- Call 211

THANK YOU TO ALL KINSHIP CAREGIVERS FOR
KEEPING FAMILY AT THE HEART OF YOUR CARE.



UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING

OCTOBER 11, 2025 – KINSHIP PARENTING

This 2-hour instructor led theme, specifically developed for relative caregivers, acknowledges the complexities associated with caring for children who are related including: divided loyalties, redefining roles and relationships, setting boundaries with parents and other relatives, and the range of emotions including anger, resentment, guilt and/or embarrassment that caregivers can feel. Strategies for how to manage family dynamics and conflicts, identify triggers and effectively manage stress are shared.

OCT 22, 2025 OR NOV 1, 2025 – BUILDING PARENTAL RESILIENCE FOR KINSHIP CAREGIVERS

This 1.5-hour instructor led theme, specifically developed for relative caregivers, helps participants understand the importance of self-care and practical ideas for how to do it. Participants will understand signs of stress and burnout and recognize the importance of maintaining their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. This theme describes parental resilience, why resilience is important, and covers how caring for children who have experienced trauma, separation, or loss can impact a caregiver's own well-being. This theme also covers the behaviors that foster a protective environment for parents and children.

OCT 28, 2025 – INHERITED WOUNDS: THE LEGACY OF TRAUMA AND ADOPTION ACROSS GENERATIONS

Free, virtual. learn how trauma passes from one generation to the next.

Registration: <https://www.championclassrooms.org/courses/live-webinarinherited-wounds-the-legacy-of-trauma-and-adoption-across-generations>



SAVE THE DATE – JUNE 6, 2026 – FAMILIES LIKE MINE CONFERENCE

Families Like Mine has a brand-new format for relative caregivers and like-kin caregivers. Join us for a day of fun at the Henry Vilas Zoo. Resources will be provided, fun family activities will occur, and families will have the opportunity to network with other kinship care families. Stay tuned for additional details and registration information!

Thank You, Kinship Caregivers

Thank you for opening your hearts and homes to the children in your families. Your love, stability, and commitment make all the difference. You step in during times of need and provide the comfort of family, the strength of connection, and the healing power of belonging. Every day, in big ways and small, you show what family truly means. Because of you, children know they are not alone — they are loved, valued, and home.



Dane County Kinship Care

CONTACTS

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DANE COUNTY RELATIVE KINSHIP RESOURCE GROUP

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/2318412981742488](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2318412981742488)



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