

1 AN ACT concerning children.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Kinship Navigator Act.

6 Section 5. Definitions. In this Act:

7 (1) "Department" means the Department of Human
8 Services.

9 (2) "NPO" means a not-for-profit organization.

10 (3) "Municipality" has the meaning ascribed to it in
11 Section 1-1-2 of the Illinois Municipal Code.

12 (4) "Kinship care" means, as defined by Child Welfare
13 League of America, the full time care, nurturing, and
14 protection of children by relatives, members of their
15 tribes or clans, grandparents, godparents, stepparents, or
16 any adult who has physical custody and a kinship bond with
17 a child. This definition is designed to be inclusive
18 without age restrictions on the kinship caregiver and
19 respectful of cultural values and ties of affection. It
20 allows a child to grow to adulthood in a family
21 environment.

22 (5) "Kinship Navigator" means a statewide program
23 designed to ensure kinship caregivers the necessary

1 resources for the preservation of the family.

2 Section 10. Legislative findings and intent.

3 (1) Caregivers often provide kinship care without
4 compensation or support systems.

5 (2) Kinship caregivers are crucial to avoiding
6 institutionalization of children and saving taxpayer
7 dollars.

8 (3) Kinship caregivers are frequently under
9 substantial physical, psychological, and financial stress.
10 Unrelieved by support services available to the caregiver,
11 this stress may lead to premature or unnecessary
12 institutionalization for the care recipient or
13 deterioration of the health condition and family
14 circumstances of the kinship caregiver.

15 (4) Sudden responsibility for children often precludes
16 kinship caregivers the opportunity to plan basic day to day
17 responsibility.

18 (5) The Kinship Navigator shall be seamless,
19 statewide, and coordinated among the Department of Human
20 Services, Department on Aging, Illinois Housing Authority,
21 Department of Children and Family Services, Department of
22 Corrections, and federal and local governments as well as
23 other public and private sources.

24 (6) Additional services provided under the Kinship
25 Navigator shall be: organizing diverse, enriched, and

1 culturally conscious kinship support groups and
2 counseling; assisting with applying for benefits within
3 the Illinois Department of Human Services' Family
4 Community Resource Centers for those who qualify;
5 publishing monthly newsletters; coordinating respite and
6 crisis care services; assisting kinship caregivers with
7 job readiness, job search, and job retention; and providing
8 technical assistance to start up kinship support groups.

9 Section 15. Kinship Navigator conferences: promotion. The
10 Department shall arrange for the conduct of 2 conferences, one
11 in Cook County and one in Sangamon County, and provide for
12 exhibits and activities for kinship caregivers and social
13 service providers.

14 Section 20. Kinship Navigator administration. The
15 Department, subject to appropriation, shall administer the
16 Kinship Navigator through a contract with an NPO that has
17 worked statewide with kinship families. The contract shall
18 require that the program created by this Act will be
19 coordinated with (i) the grandparent child care program
20 administered by the Department of Children and Family Services
21 under Section 34.11 of the Children and Family Services Act,
22 (ii) the Department of Children and Family Services under
23 Section 39.1 of the Children and Family Services Act, and (iii)
24 the Department on Aging under Section 92 of the Family

1 Caregiver Act.

2 Section 25. Rules. The Department shall adopt the rules
3 necessary for the implementation and administration of this
4 Act.

5 Section 90. The Children and Family Services Act is amended
6 by changing Section 34.11 and adding Section 39.1 as follows:

7 (20 ILCS 505/34.11)

8 Sec. 34.11. Grandparent child care program.

9 (a) The General Assembly finds and declares the following:

10 (1) An increasing number of children under the age of
11 18, including many children who would otherwise be at risk
12 of abuse or neglect, are in the care of a grandparent or
13 other nonparent relative.

14 (2) The principal causes of this increase include
15 parental substance abuse, chronic illness, child abuse,
16 mental illness, military deployment, poverty,
17 homelessness, deportation, and death, as well as concerted
18 efforts by families and by the child welfare service system
19 to keep children with relatives whenever possible.

20 (3) Grandparents and older relatives providing primary
21 care for at-risk children may experience unique resultant
22 problems, such as financial stress due to limited incomes,
23 emotional difficulties dealing with the loss of the child's

1 parents or the child's unique behaviors, and decreased
2 physical stamina coupled with a much higher incidence of
3 chronic illness.

4 (4) Many children being raised by nonparent relatives
5 experience one or a combination of emotional, behavioral,
6 psychological, academic, or medical problems, especially
7 those born to a substance-abusing mother or at risk of
8 child abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

9 (5) Grandparents and other relatives providing primary
10 care for children lack appropriate information about the
11 issues of kinship care, the special needs (both physical
12 and psychological) of children born to a substance-abusing
13 mother or at risk of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment,
14 and the support resources currently available to them.

15 (b) The Department may establish an informational and
16 educational program for grandparents and other relatives who
17 provide primary care for children who are at risk of child
18 abuse, neglect, or abandonment or who were born to
19 substance-abusing mothers. As a part of the program, the
20 Department may develop, publish, and distribute an
21 informational brochure for grandparents and other relatives
22 who provide primary care for children who are at risk of child
23 abuse, neglect, or abandonment or who were born to
24 substance-abusing mothers. The information provided under the
25 program authorized by this Section may include, but is not
26 limited to the following:

1 (1) The most prevalent causes of kinship care,
2 especially the risk of (i) substance exposure, (ii) ~~or~~
3 child abuse, neglect, or abandonment, (iii) chronic
4 illness, (iv) mental illness, (v) military deployment, or
5 (vi) death.

6 (2) The problems experienced by children being raised
7 by nonparent caregivers.

8 (3) The problems experienced by grandparents and other
9 nonparent relatives providing primary care for children
10 who have special needs.

11 (4) The legal system as it relates to children and
12 their nonparent primary caregivers.

13 (5) The benefits available to children and their
14 nonparent primary caregivers.

15 (6) A list of support groups and resources located
16 throughout the State.

17 The brochure may be distributed through hospitals, public
18 health nurses, child protective services, medical professional
19 offices, elementary and secondary schools, senior citizen
20 centers, public libraries, community action agencies selected
21 by the Department, and the Department of Human Services.

22 The Kinship Navigator established under the Kinship
23 Navigator Act shall coordinate the grandparent child care
24 program under this Section with the programs and services
25 established and administered by the Department of Human
26 Services under the Kinship Navigator Act.

1 (Source: P.A. 88-229; 88-670, eff. 12-2-94; 89-507, eff.
2 7-1-97.)

3 (20 ILCS 505/39.1 new)

4 Sec. 39.1. Kinship Navigator Act. The Kinship Navigator
5 established under the Kinship Navigator Act shall coordinate
6 the child welfare services administered by the Department in
7 relation to kinship care for children and families receiving
8 services under this Act with the programs and services
9 established and administered by the Department of Human
10 Services under the Kinship Navigator Act.

11 Section 95. The Family Caregiver Act is amended by adding
12 Section 92 as follows:

13 (320 ILCS 65/92 new)

14 Sec. 92. Kinship Navigator Act. The Kinship Navigator
15 established under the Kinship Navigator Act shall coordinate
16 the services administered by the Department under this Act with
17 the programs and services established and administered by the
18 Department of Human Services under the Kinship Navigator Act.

19 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
20 becoming law.