

DESCRIPTION OF GRANT PROGRAM
OFFICIAL COMPILATION OF THE RULES AND REGULATIONS
OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

- I. Name of Grant Program: Civil Legal Services to Kinship Care Families in Georgia (Short name: Kinship Care Project).
- II. Legal Authority: O.C.G.A. §15-5-24 and Supreme Court of Georgia Order of January 15, 1981 relating to the duties of the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts.
- III. Definition: This is a statewide project designed to provide civil legal services to kinship caregivers and children living with caregivers who need support to maintain stable homes and care.
- IV. Scope: Kinship care refers to full-time, non-parental care of children by grandparents, relatives, and sometimes family friends, without the assistance of parents.¹ Studies show that the benefits of kinship care are substantial. A Georgia House of Representatives study committee noted that “[k]inship care families provide a safe, stable, and nurturing home for children suffering from the trauma of parental separation and other hardship.”² It is estimated that informal kinship caregivers save U.S. taxpayers \$4 billion annually by caring for children who would otherwise fall into state custody.³ Many kinship families are low-income households and face complex issues. Relatives and other caregivers often struggle to care and provide for new members of the household, who often arrive in their care following trauma or crisis. This Project will provide civil legal services to this target population to help caregivers create safer and more sustainable households and equip caregivers with resources to stabilize the lives of the children in their care.
- V. Purpose: The purpose of this project is to provide civil legal assistance to kinship care families. Such legal assistance helps keep at risk children out of the foster care system and supports them in homes by providing holistic civil legal representation. Legal services can help secure legal custody, financial benefits, healthcare support, educational support, and safe housing.

¹ *Private Kinship Care: An Underutilized Child Welfare Resource*, Testimony of the National Committee of Grandparents for Children’s Rights and the Empire Justice Center for the June 16, 2011 Ways and Means Hearing Record on Improving Programs Designed to Protect at Risk Youth, available at <https://empirejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/private-kinship-care.pdf>

² Final Report of the Georgia House of Representatives Study Committee on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Kinship Care, 2015, Report prepared by the Georgia House Budget and Research Office, available at http://www.house.ga.gov/Documents/CommitteeDocuments/2015/Report%20of%20the%20House%20Study%20Committee%20on%20Kinship%20Care_signed.pdf

³ Id.

A. Eligible Services

Eligible civil legal services for kinship families include:

1. Formalizing the relationship between the child and the kinship caregiver;
2. Services related to the family's economic security and stability including housing issues, employment-related issues, problems with access to education, and health care.
3. Helping families access home, school, and community-based support for children who are living with disabilities; and
4. Helping families with estate planning to protect the child's stability if the kinship caregiver passes away.

B. Excluded Services

Certain services are specifically excluded from this program, including:

1. Class action suits;
2. Criminal defense;
3. Deportation proceedings;
4. Juvenile delinquency;
5. Indirect legal services such as attorney training;
6. Matters to be adjudicated in courts outside of Georgia; and
7. Other proceedings not related to the safety, stability, or economic security of the at-risk child or kinship care family.

C. Eligible Clients

Eligible clients are kinship care families in need civil legal services related to the safety, stability, or economic security of the child or kinship care family.

D. Eligible Grantees

1. Eligible grantees for these funds are non-profit corporations registered and in good standing with the State of Georgia with at least ten years of experience providing kinship legal services or similar civil legal services in the State.
2. Recipients must also demonstrate they have the personnel and expertise necessary to deliver the services required, that their service delivery structure can adequately provide coverage throughout the geographical area for which the services are proposed, and that they have sufficient administrative

recordkeeping capabilities to fulfill reporting requirements necessary for the evaluation of these projects.

3. Community partnerships are critical to achieving success with this program. The applicants must show broad community support and the support and cooperation of local programs. Letters of support or other evidence establishing these relationships should accompany applications.

VI. General Terms and Conditions: Grants will be awarded for a one-year term. Each of Georgia's forty-nine circuits will be included. The amount of funds available for distribution to grantees may change each year based on the amount of funds appropriated to the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts and the cost of the administrative oversight of these funds. The grant awards are generally announced in July.

Grantees will be required to report to the Administrative Office of the Courts every six months detailing how the grant funds were specifically used to assist kinship care families throughout Georgia. The required reporting form is supplied by the Administrative Office of the Courts and will be posted at www.grants.georgiacourts.gov

VII. Criteria for the Award of Grants: The total poverty population in each county served by the grant recipient will be considered. This number is based on the most current estimates from the U. S. Census Bureau.

In no event shall a grantee provide legal services to a client whose income exceeds 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Special needs categories (such as homelessness, or rural counties with fewer than ten attorneys) will also be considered.

VIII. Directions and Deadlines for Application: Applications for grant funds **must be submitted via email** to the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts at grants@georgiacourts.gov.

Comments may be submitted to the Judicial Council/Administrative Office of the Courts at grants@georgiacourts.gov or (404) 656-5171.