

October 1, 2025

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator  
DCF Area Administrators  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Group Home Providers  
Private Child Placing Agencies  
Residential Care Center Providers  
Shelter Care Providers  
Tribal Chairpersons

From: John Elliott  
Administrator



Re: **2026 Federal Fiscal Year Relative & Like-Kin Caregiver Support Funding Opportunity**

## PURPOSE

Across the state of Wisconsin **only 40%** of children in out of home care are being raised by their relatives and like-kin. Research shows that children experience better child welfare outcomes including greater placement stability, higher levels of permanency, better behavioral and mental health outcomes when they are cared for by their relatives and like-kin. Providing relative and like-kin caregivers with direct support and equitable financial assistance is key to achieving these outcomes.

The purpose of this memo is to inform county agencies, tribal agencies, and community non-profit agencies of a grant opportunity to assist relative and like-kin caregivers throughout the state in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet their needs and the needs of the children they are caring for.

## BACKGROUND

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) operates Wisconsin's Title IV-B Kinship Navigator program and applied to the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) for continued funding in June 2025.

## INFORMATION SUMMARY

ACF awarded DCF \$190,196 to use between October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. Part of this funding will be allocated to support county agencies, tribal agencies, and community non-profit agencies in developing plans to provide activities designed to assist relative and like-kin caregivers in learning about, finding, and obtaining benefits and services to meet their needs and improve their caregiving.

The Kinship Navigator grant allows DCF to reimburse county agencies, tribal agencies, and community nonprofit agencies for qualifying expenses that may include:

- Costs associated with connecting relative and like-kin caregivers with one another (e.g., support groups, etc.)
- Costs associated with connecting relative and like-kin caregivers to relevant training.
- Costs associated with connecting relative and like-kin caregivers to relevant legal assistance and help in obtaining legal services.
- Costs associated with providing outreach to relative and like-kin caregivers.
- Costs for any other activities designed to assist relative and like-kin caregivers in obtaining benefits and services to improve their caregiving.

Interested agencies may apply independently, develop a consortium identifying a lead agency, or utilize a subcontractor for services. Agencies shall apply for the grant by submitting a complete Application for Relative Caregiver Support Funding Federal Fiscal Year 2026.

All applications must be submitted to the Kinship Care Specialist via [DCFDSPKinshipNavigator@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFDSPKinshipNavigator@wisconsin.gov) **no later than 11:59 p.m. on December 1, 2025.** Applications received after the deadline **will not** be considered.

Priority will be given to proposals that develop activities based on consultation with and input from relative and like-kin caregivers, youth raised by relative and like-kin caregivers.

Agencies that are awarded this grant will be expected to sign a contract and shall submit an annual summary report to DCF that outlines the grant programming activities for that time period and their effectiveness as measured by the agency. Agencies that are awarded this grant must agree to document expenses in SPARC monthly. Agencies that receive grant money shall use the funding received by September 30, 2026.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Kinship Care Specialist  
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care  
[DCFDSPKinshipNavigator@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFDSPKinshipNavigator@wisconsin.gov).

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

ATTACHMENTS: [Application for Relative & Like-Kin Caregiver Support Funding Federal Fiscal Year 2026](#)