

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT KITH AND KIN CHILD CARE

What is kith and kin child care?

Kith and kin child care is care provided by family (kin) and friends and neighbors (kith). It is also referred to as license-exempt care, because relatives are exempt from regulation in all 50 states, and many states exempt non-relatives as well. In some cases, kith and kin care may also be called informal care, implying that the child care arrangement is a casual one, although research shows that kith and kin child care arrangements are stable.ⁱ

How many children are in kith and kin child care?

Nationally kith and kin care represents up to half of child care arrangements for children under the age of five whose parents are working,ⁱⁱ but the proportion of children in these arrangements varies by state. Kith and kin care also constitutes a significant proportion of the subsidized child care arrangements in some states, such as Connecticut, and in several major American cities--New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago.ⁱⁱⁱ

Which families use kith and kin child care?

Kith and kin care is used by families at all income levels. It is more commonly used by families with incomes at, or below, 200% of the federal poverty level^{iv} as well as African-American and Latino families.^v

Why do parents choose kith and kin child care?

Parents choose a kith and kin caregiver because they are looking for someone whom they know and trust to care for their child. This is particularly important for the parents of infants and toddlers.^{vi} Parents also choose kith and kin care because it is flexible, and fits their evening, night, weekend and shift work schedules.^{vii} Shared language, culture and values is another reason for the choice of a kith and kin caregiver.^{viii}

What is the nature of the child care arrangements?

On average, there are one to two children in kith and kin child care, but some studies show an average of three children.^{ix} The majority of children are infants and toddlers, but school-age children and children with special needs also represent a significant proportion. Many caregivers provide care during off-hours--evenings, nights and weekends.^x

Who are kith and kin caregivers?

Most kith and kin caregivers are relatives.^{xi} Ages range from late teens to seventies.^{xii} There is also a broad range of educational levels: some caregivers

have less than a high school degree while others have completed graduate school.^{xiii}

What kind of services do kith and kin caregivers want?

Kith and kin caregivers are interested in obtaining materials and equipment^{xiv} as well as in learning more about supporting children's development.^{xv}

Commonly requested topics include:

- health;
- safety;
- nutrition;
- child development;
- activities to do with children; and
- working with parents

How can programs support kith and kin caregivers?^{xvi}

There are several different strategies that programs across the country use to meet the needs and interests of kith and kin caregivers. The most common are:

- Distributing materials and equipment^{xvii}
- Providing training through workshops^{xviii}
- Offering support groups
- Providing technical assistance through home visits
- Developing and distributing written materials^{xix}
- Integrating kith and kin caregivers into systemic efforts such as career development systems and tiered reimbursement.^{xx}

How can programs recruit kith and kin caregivers?^{xxi}

Experience shows that local programs in the caregivers' community are most effective in recruiting kith and kin caregivers. Successful programs are often those that collaborate with schools and community-based organizations that kith and kin caregivers know and trust. Recruitment strategies include:

- Using subsidy lists
- Reaching out to part-time child care programs such as Head Start and pre-k
- Making presentations at schools
- Collaborating with grass roots organizations as well as cultural groups
- Leafleting and other community organizing techniques
- Reaching out to other services provided by the agency

What are the distinctive features of kith and kin child care?

There are some significant differences between kith and kin care and other forms of child care

- Many caregivers, especially relatives and close friends, are not interested in a child care career. They want support rather than training.
- Caregivers are often related to, or close friends, of the parent of the child in care, which means that relationship issues are an important factor in these child care arrangement

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ⁱ Layzer, J., & Goodson, B. (2004, April). *Care in the home: A study of family child care providers and the low-income families that use them*. Child Care Bureau, Child Care Policy Research Consortium, Washington, DC.

ⁱⁱ Brown-Lyons, M., Robertson, A., & Layzer, J. (2001). *Kith and kin—informal care: Highlights from recent research*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

ⁱⁱⁱ Anderson, S. G., Ramsburg, D. M., & Rothbaum, B. (2003). *Illinois study of license-exempt child care: Interim report*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

^{iv} Casper, L. (1997). Who's minding our children? Fall 1994 Update. *Current population reports, household economic studies, P-70, no.62*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.

^v Casper, 1997

^{vi} Porter, T. (1998). *Neighborhood child care: Family, friends and neighbors talk about caring for other people's children*. New York: Bank Street College of Education.

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^{vii} Anderson et al., 2003

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^{viii} Emlen, A., Koren, P. E., & Schultze, K. H. (1999). *From a parent's point of view: Measuring the quality of child care*. Portland, OR: Portland State University.

^{ix} Drake, P. J., Unti, L., Greenspoon, B., & Fawcett, L. K. (2004). *First 5 California informal child caregiver support project focus group results*. Scotts Valley, CA: First 5 California Children and Families Commission and ETR Associates.

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Anderson et al., 2003; Brandon et al., 2002;

^x Anderson et al., 2003; Brandon et al., 2002; Drake et al., 2004.

^{xi} Anderson et al., 2003; Brandon et al., 2002;

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^{xii} Anderson et al., 2003; Welch, 2001.

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^{xiii} Layzer & Goodson, 2003

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^{xiv} Brandon et al., 2002; Porter & Habeeb, 2002

^{xv} Porter, 1998

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^{xvi} Stahl, D., Sazer O'Donnell, N., Sprague, P., & López, M. (2003). *Sparking connections; Community-based strategies for helping family, friend and neighbor caregivers meet the needs of employees, their children and employers*. NY: Families and Work Institute.

^{xvii} Massachusetts in-Home Relative Provider Program; New York State Informal Provider Quality Enhancement Project

^{xviii} Alabama Kids and Kin Project; Arizona Kith and Kin Project; Crystal Stairs Kith and Kin Project; HRA/CUNY Informal Family Child Care Training Project

^{xix} Hawaii's Getting Children Ready to Succeed

^{xx} Child Care and Adult Food Program; Illinois' Career Lattice, Early Head Start Enhanced Home Visiting Program

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