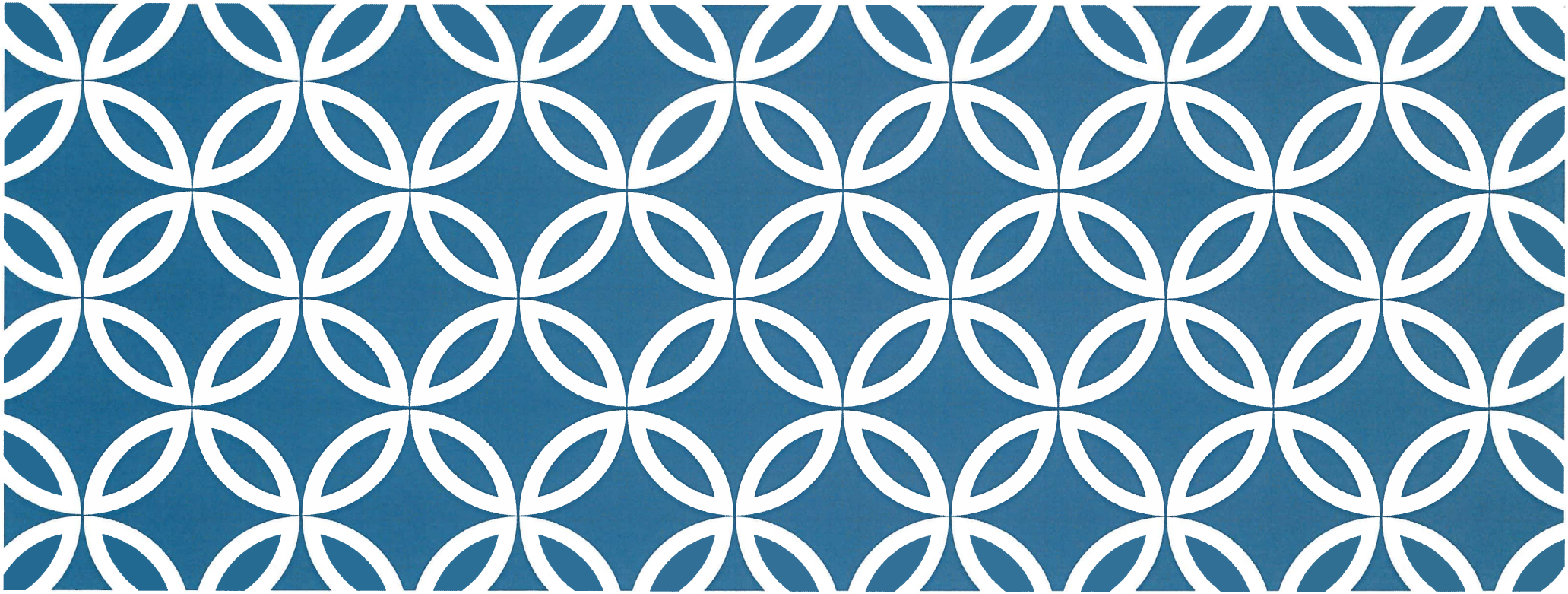


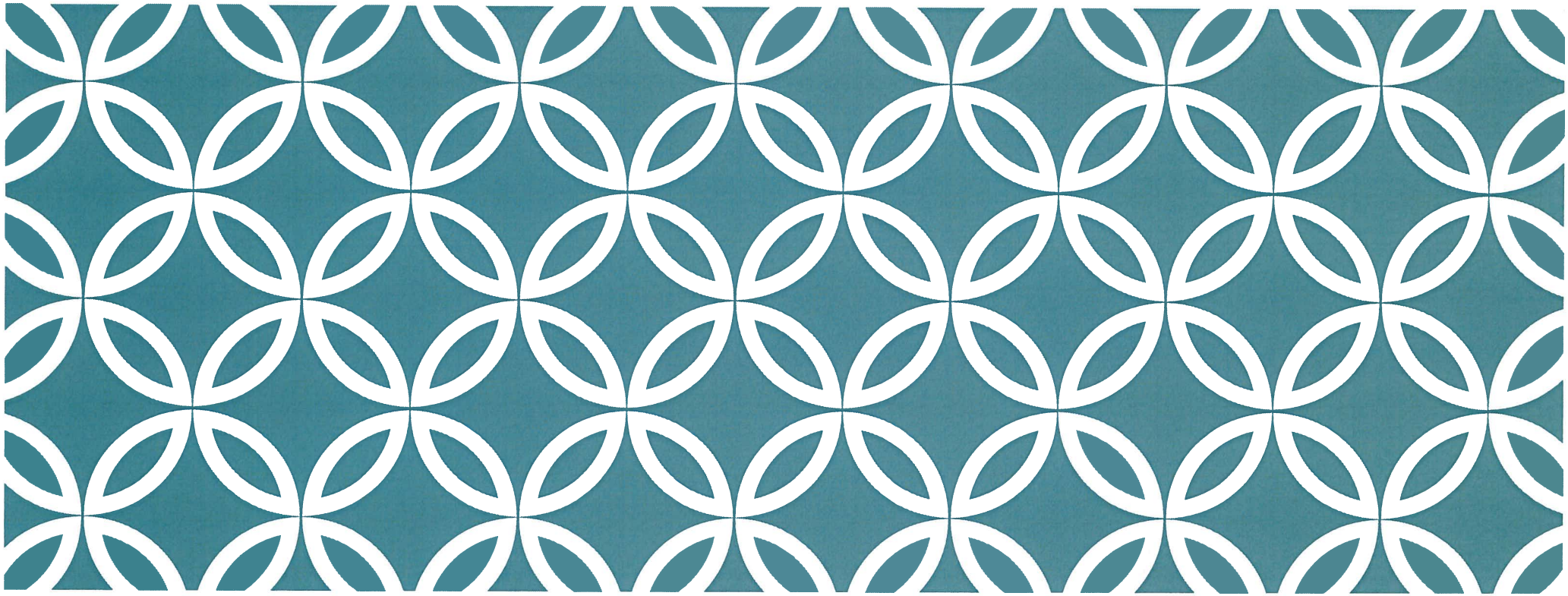
MICHIGAN'S KINSHIP PERSPECTIVE

Testimony before Michigan House of Representative's Committee on Families, Children, and Seniors

MICHIGAN KINSHIP COALITION

Members include kinship caregivers and supporters of kinship families.

Our mission is to work with caregivers to inform and educate legislators as well as working with agencies on kinship care issues to strengthen the kinship family unit henceforth improving the lives of children.



THE KINSHIP EXPERIENCE

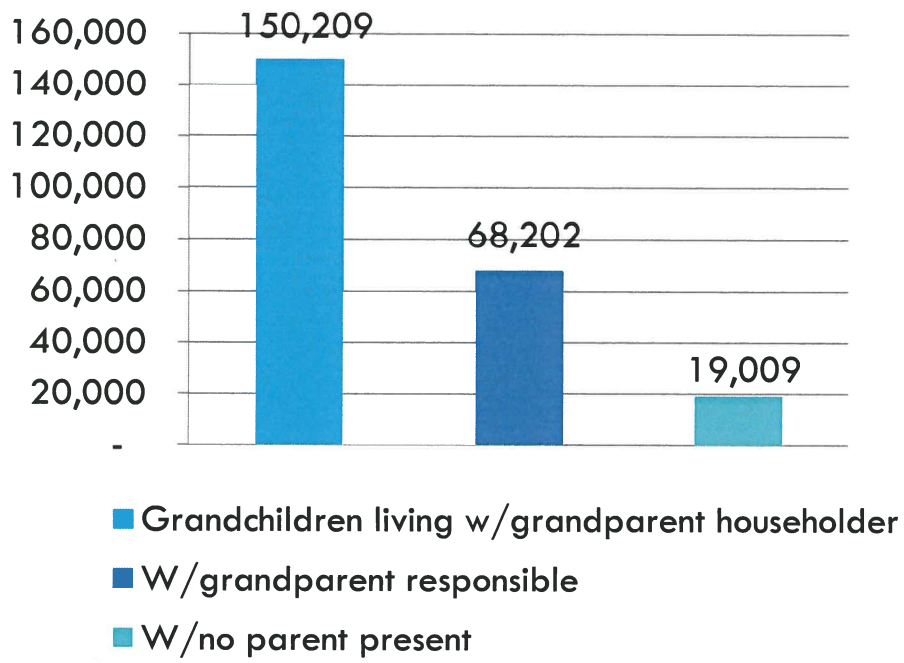
Children and their relative caregivers

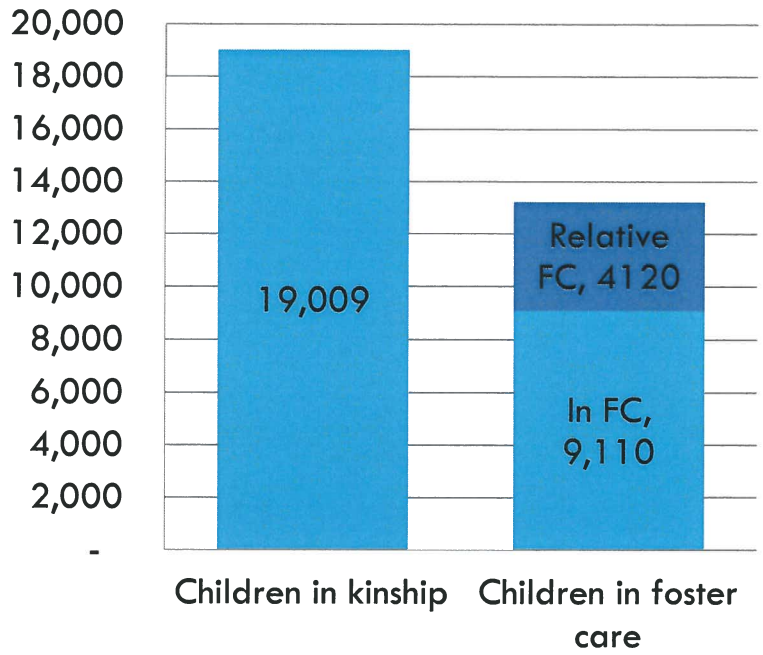
A COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Relatives who have guardianship can become licensed and receive support through foster care services for the children in their care.

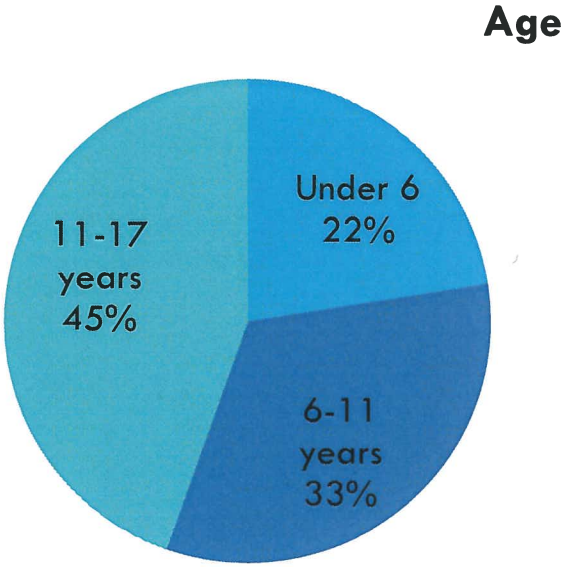
The Truth: Once a relative takes on a Guardianship under the Estates and Protected Individuals Code (EPIC), they are not able to revert to a foster care case. That door is almost always closed to them.

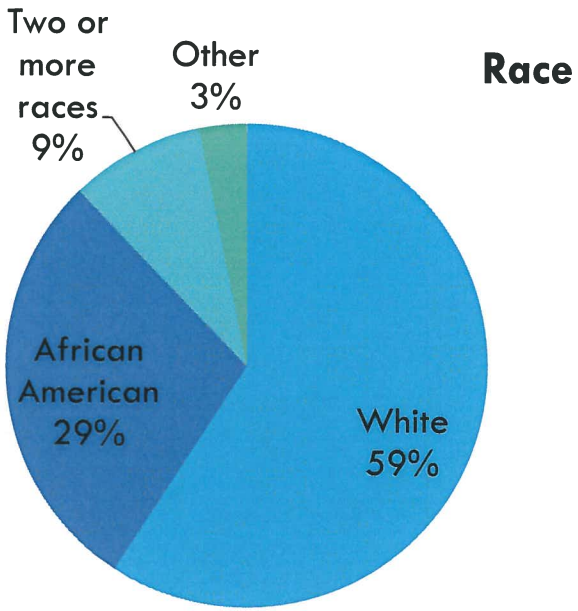
THE CHILDREN



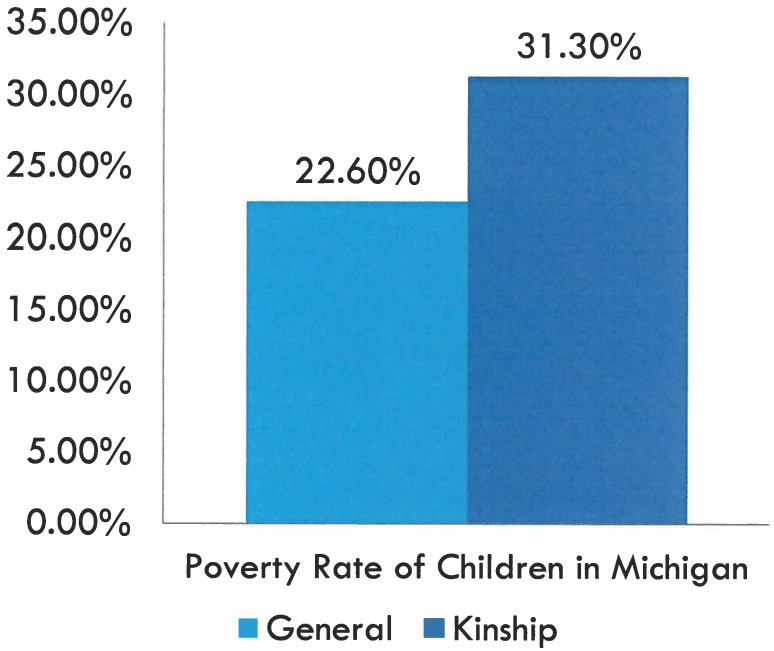


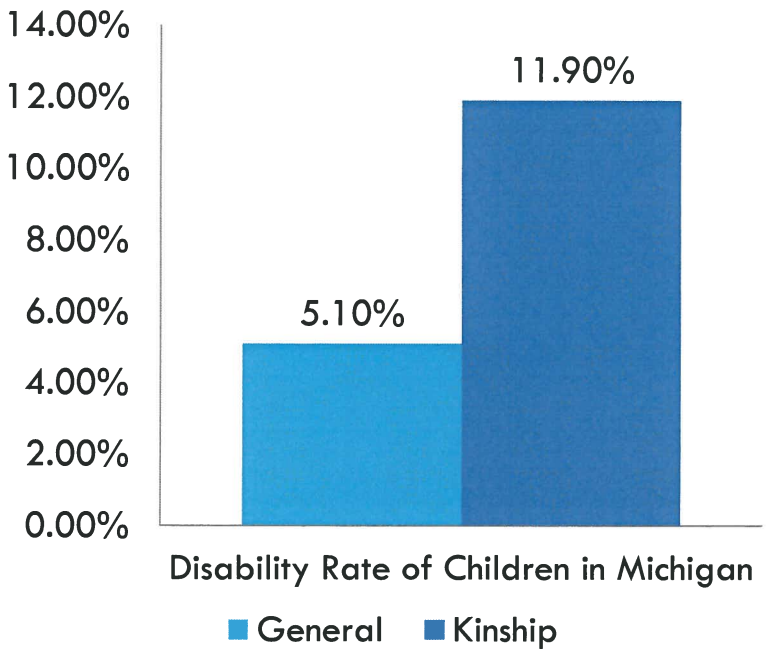
THE CHILDREN – AGE AND RACE





THE CHILDREN - POVERTY AND DISABILITY





THE CAREGIVERS

62,483 grandparents are the primary person responsible for their grandchild

19,869 grandparents are raising 19,009 children without any biological parent involvement

Most are married (66%)

Most are working (55.3%)

Most are women (61.3%)

47% are between the ages of 30-59, 53% are over age 60

20% of younger grandparents and 36% of older grandparents are living with a disability

36% of grandparents have been responsible for their grandchild for 5 years or more

The median income for kinship households is 57% of the average median income for family households

Note: These statistics do not include any information on other relatives raising relative children nor do they include the grandparents who have adopted their grandchildren.

HOW DID OVER 19,000 CHILDREN END UP IN KINSHIP CARE

Outside of Child Welfare

- Abuse, neglect, abandonment
- Parental homelessness/poverty
- Parental substance abuse/mental illness
- Parental incarceration
- Parental death/disability
- Parental move out of area for work/education
- Parental deployment

Within Child Welfare

- Abuse, neglect, abandonment
- Parental homelessness/poverty
- Parental substance abuse/mental illness
- Parental incarceration
- Parental death/disability

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT CHILDREN IN KINSHIP CARE FACE

Outside of Child Welfare

- Emotional, social, physical, and educational delays
- Physical, educational, and mental disabilities
- Fetal exposure to drugs/alcohol
- Grief, loss, and abandonment
- Trauma
- Shame

Within Child Welfare

- Emotional, social, physical, and educational delays
- Physical, educational, and mental disabilities
- Fetal exposure to drugs/alcohol
- Grief, loss, and abandonment
- Trauma
- Shame

WHAT SUPPORTS MIGHT CHILDREN IN KINSHIP CARE RECEIVE

Outside of Child Welfare

- Maximum $158/month financial support
- Annual oversight by the court (if under guardianship)

Within Child Welfare

- Minimum $482/month financial support
- Quarterly oversight by the court
- Monthly visits with a caseworker
- Legal representation by Lawyer Guardian ad Litem
- Facilitated access to mental health services
- McKinney Vento support services (first 6 mos.)
- Youth in Transition/Educational Training Vouchers (if age out)
- FOCUS ON PERMANENCY

WHAT SUPPORTS MIGHT CAREGIVERS RECEIVE

Outside of Child Welfare

- Some access to support groups depending on where you're located
- Access to the Kinship Care Resource Center via phone or email

Within Child Welfare

- Access to a foster care navigator
- Access to licensing supports to create a safe home
- Access to a caseworker for questions/home visits
- Additional financial support through determination of care depending on child's need for extra care
- Access to free training
- Access to support groups through child placing agencies
- No cost to adopt your relative child if approved for adoption

REQUESTS

Recognize September 2016 as Kinship Care Month in Michigan

Support a study to identify kinship family challenges and supports in Michigan

- Use outcomes to identify best policy practice

Fund a Michigan Kinship Navigator program

A SAMPLE OF POLICY PRACTICE

- Public notice of fee waiver for filing guardianship paperwork (Georgia)
- Simplification of benefit application system for grandparents and other kinship caregivers (Georgia)
- Education and medical waivers for kinship caregivers who do not have guardianship (Georgia, Kentucky)
- State level administrator to direct services to kinship caregivers (Georgia)
- Kinship Navigator program (Washington State)

REFERENCES FOR DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

U.S. Census Bureau (2016). Grandchildren characteristics, *2014 American Community Survey 1-year estimates*. Retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_1YR_S1001&prodType=table

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