



EVERY TEXAN

# KINSHIP CARE IN TEXAS

BENEFITS CHILDREN AND SAVES  
THE STATE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

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Many Texas children are cared for by extended family members or close friends when their parents are unable to. These "kinship care" arrangements often involve grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, or trusted family friends stepping in to provide stability and support. While some kinship care arrangements are established through formal processes like court orders or foster care, most are informally arranged without the involvement of state authorities.

These informal kinship caregivers save the state millions annually in foster care costs while simultaneously offering children love and security during difficult times. Despite their vital role, many kinship caregivers struggle to meet the financial demands of raising these children and are often without access to meaningful state assistance. Strengthening support programs — like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — is an essential step to help these families thrive. By raising benefit levels and removing outdated eligibility restrictions, Texas can better fulfill its promise of helping kids stay with their families.

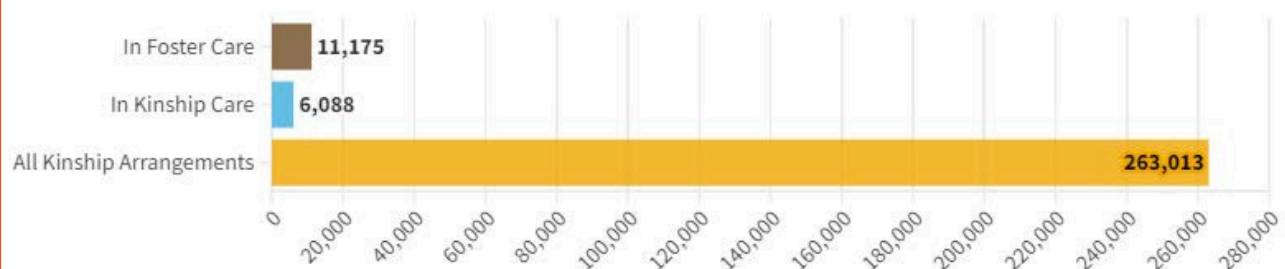
## CURRENT STATE OF KINSHIP CARE IN TEXAS: A SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

As of 2023, there are an estimated **263,013 children** living in kinship households in Texas, informally, voluntarily, and formally. According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, in 2023 there were 6,088 children formally placed through state-supervised kinship care and 11,175 placed in paid foster care.

### Children Living Apart From Their Parents in Texas

Living Arrangements Including Formal and Informal Kinship

■ In Foster Care ■ In Kinship Care ■ All Kinship Arrangements



Source: Texas Department of Family Protective Services Data Card, 2023 & Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplemental Data via IPUMS • All kinship arrangements are calculated using CPS ASEC sample and therefore do not distinguish between TX DFPS formalized kinship arrangements and informal kinship arrangements.



Of the 263,013 Texas children in kinship care, approximately 40% are living with a grandparent. Out of the total estimated number of children in kinship care, 3-in-10 live in a household below 150% of poverty level line, the largest share of which live with a grandparent.

### Caregiver Relationships for Texas Children in Kinship Households 2023

	Total Children in Kinship Households ▲	Percentage Total	Children Living in Kinship Care Households Below 150% of Poverty	Percentage in Poverty
Brother/sister	27,579	10.50	20,577	26.60
Other relative	64,647	24.60	14,510	18.70
Nonrelative without relatives	66,955	25.50	15,905	20.50
Grandchild	103,832	39.50	26,499	34.20
	263,013	100.00	77,491	100.00

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2023, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

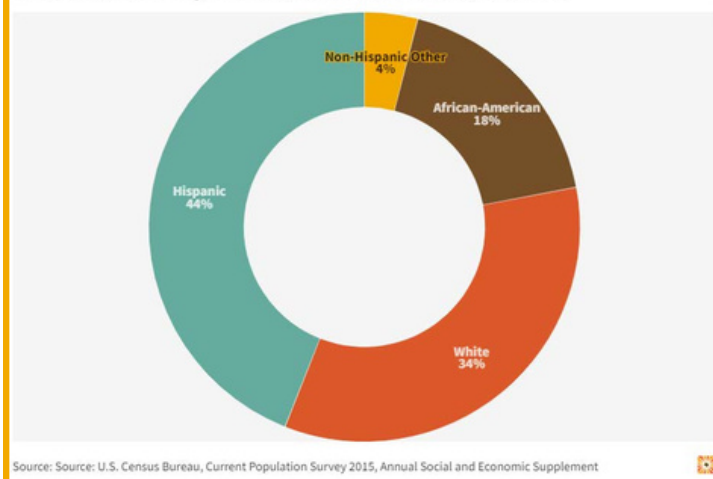


Most children living in kinship arrangements are children of color (66%). Hispanic children make up the largest share of children of color in kinship care households (44%), followed by African American children (18%), and finally non-Hispanic children of another race (4%). White children make up 34% of all children in kinship care households in Texas. This demographic breakdown highlights the need to address the

specific challenges faced by children of color in kinship care, as they make up most of the population and require targeted support to ensure their well-being and stability.

The number of children in kinship care households in Texas has fluctuated over time. In the last three years, Texas has experienced an overall increase in the number of children in kinship care households. While the number of children in kinship care dropped from 2021 to 2022, there was an increase of more than 51,000 children in kinship care from 2022 to 2023.

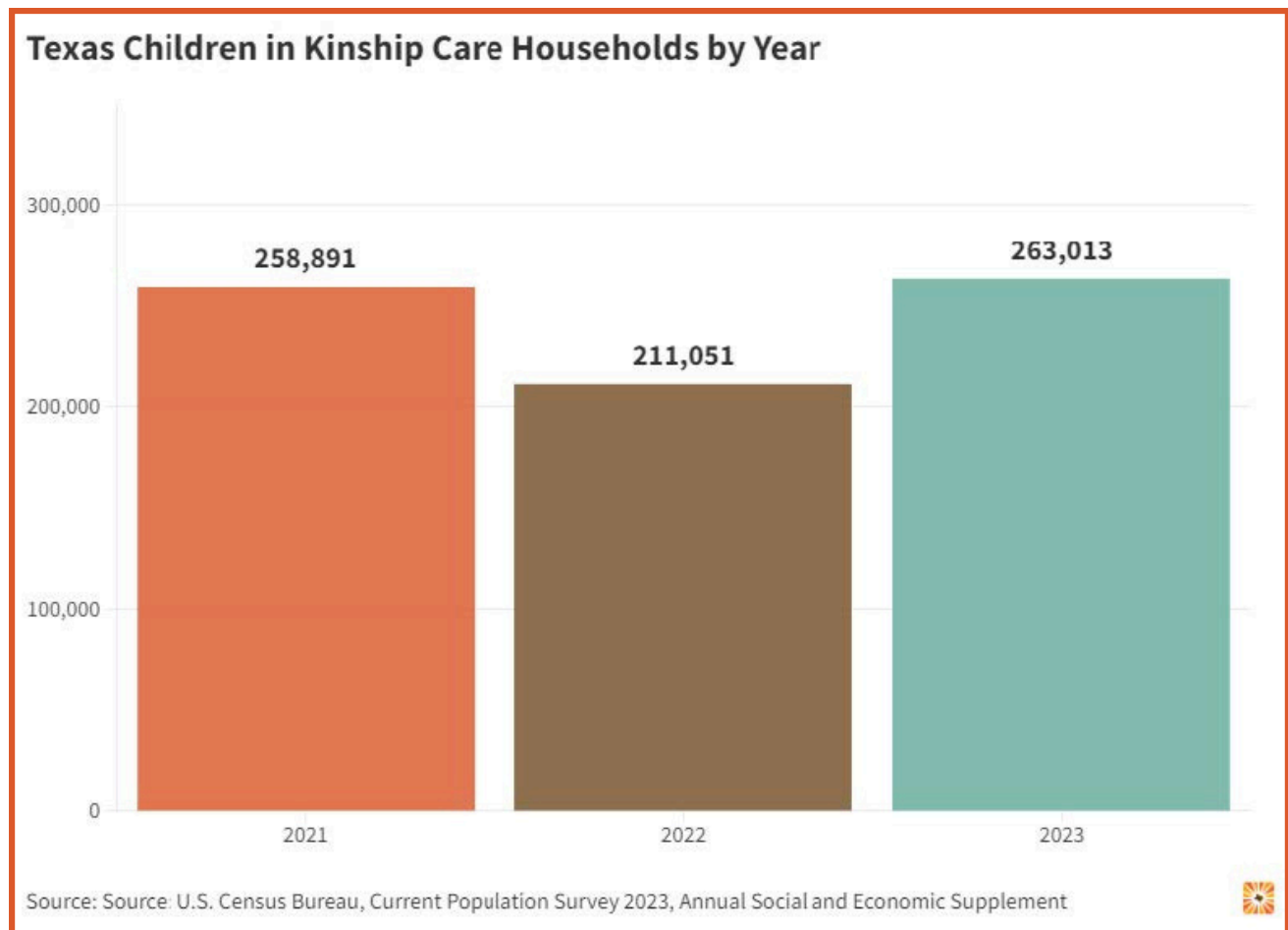
### Texas Children Living in Kinship Care Households by Race 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2023, Annual Social and Economic Supplement



This significant rise may be attributed to various factors, such as the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, or shifts in family dynamics that have caused more children to be placed with relatives. The increase highlights the growing reliance on kinship care arrangements to support vulnerable children and underscores the need for greater support and resources for families stepping into caregiving roles.

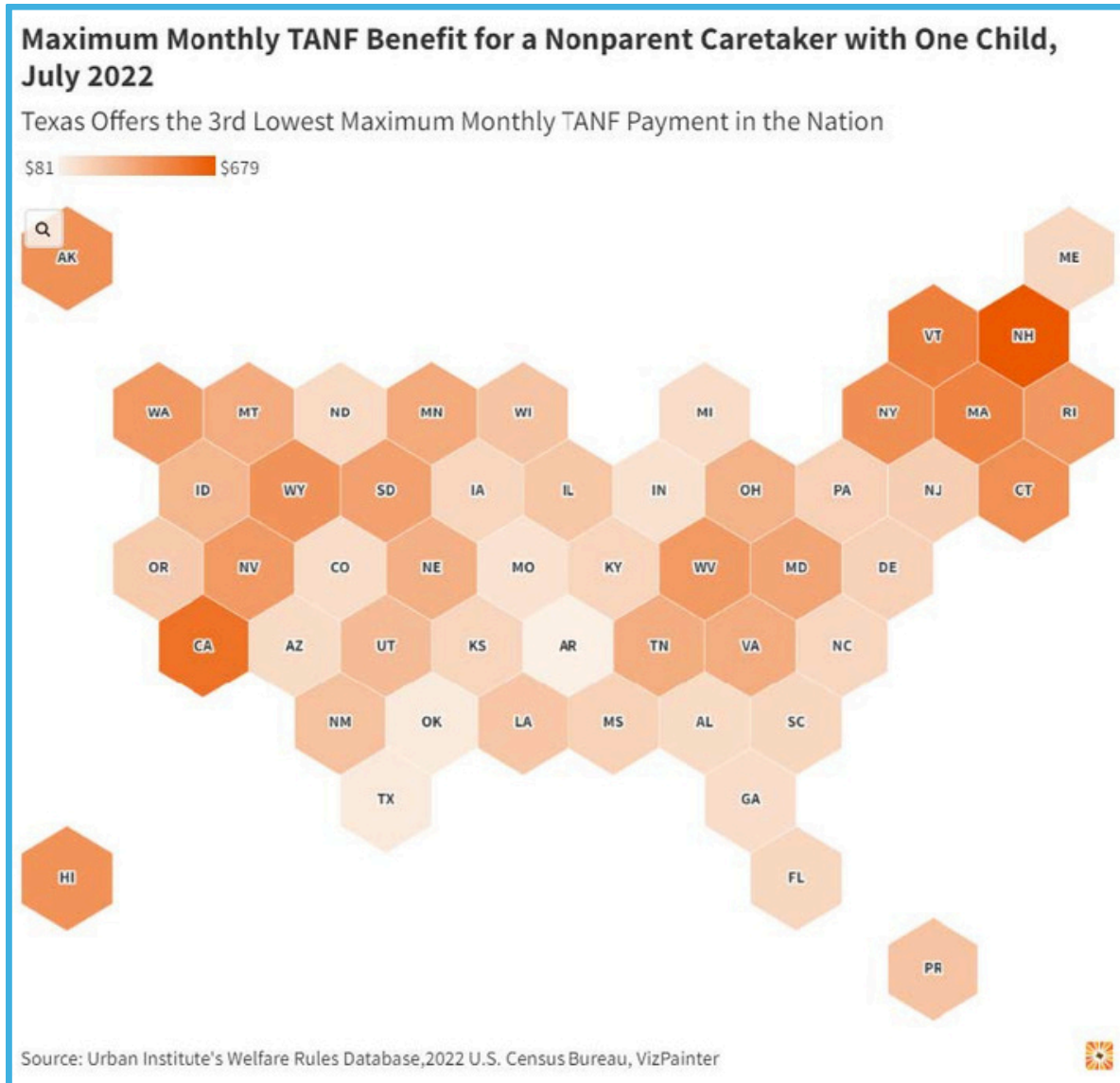


### **EXISTING STATE SUPPORT IS INSUFFICIENT FOR ALL FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING KINSHIP**

TANF was designed to help children in need remain in their own homes or the homes of relatives; however, in Texas, the program continues to fall short. As of July 2023, the maximum monthly TANF benefit for a family of three in Texas rose by just \$15 to \$327. This minimal increase leaves Texas among the states with the lowest TANF benefits, and these payments remain well below the federal poverty line, covering only 15.8% of the necessary amount.<sup>1</sup> This minimal \$4 increase since 2021 reflects the state's inadequate adjustments in the face of rising costs, leaving families struggling to cover essential needs like rent, utilities, and groceries. With inflation disproportionately impacting low-income families, particularly Black and Latinx households, these insufficient TANF payments make it difficult for Texas families to maintain financial stability and meet their basic needs. The state must consider substantial increases in TANF benefits, along with mechanisms to prevent future erosion due to inflation, to ensure that families in need can survive and thrive.



According to the Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database, ***the maximum monthly TANF Benefit for a kinship provider or a child-only unit with one child in 2022 was \$107 (approximately \$3.50 per day.)*** Despite slight increases, this remains one of the lowest TANF amounts in the nation, landing Texas third from last ahead of Oklahoma and Arkansas.

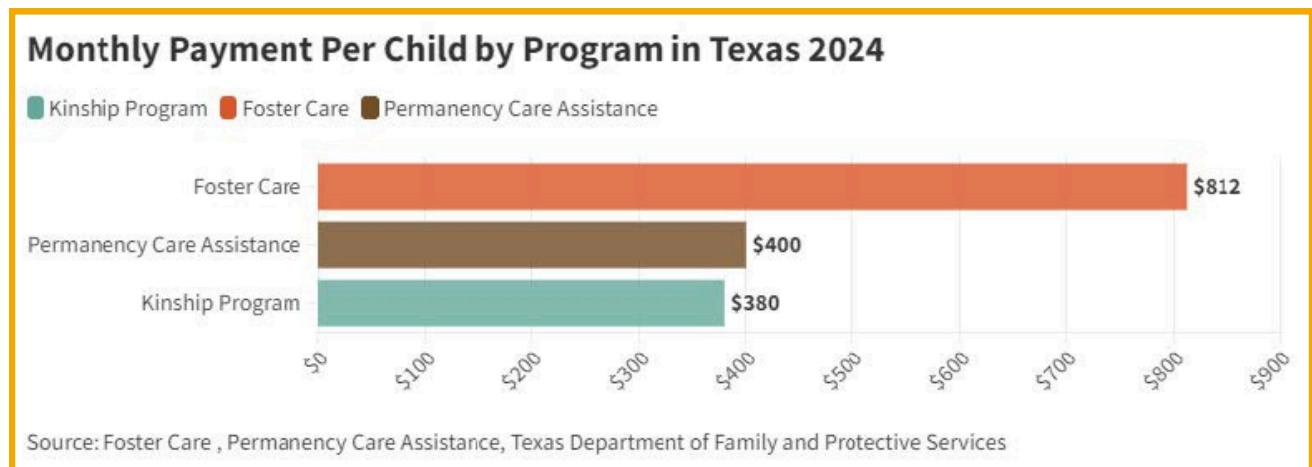


Meanwhile, the national average for the maximum monthly TANF Benefit for a kinship provider with one child is \$287. In Texas, grandparents and great grandparents might be able to get a one-time cash payment of \$1,000 — only given once no matter how many children live in the home or if other related children move in.



## **Bridging the Financial Gap for Texas Kinship Caregivers**

Outside of TANF, kinship caregivers are eligible for monthly reimbursement payments through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) if they are formally verified as kinship foster parents. As of 2024, kinship foster parents can receive up to \$12.67 per day per child (about \$380 per month.) For comparison, foster parents in Texas receive a significantly higher rate of \$27.07 per day per child (approximately \$812 per month.) Additionally, kinship caregivers who obtain Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) are eligible for an annual \$500 payment to help with child-related expenses, which can be received for up to three years or until the child turns 18.



Despite the critical role they play, many informal kinship caregivers in Texas — those who care for children without state involvement — receive little to no financial support. Even for those eligible for kinship care payments, the current rates fall short of meeting the actual cost of raising a child, particularly when compared to the support given to foster parents. This disparity underscores the need for Texas to increase financial support for kinship caregivers, both to acknowledge the vital role they play and to ensure that children in kinship care receive the same level of care and stability as those in the foster care system.

Without substantial changes to the state's kinship care policies, many caregivers will continue to face financial difficulties that undermine the stability of these caregiving arrangements and ultimately put Texas children at risk.

## **KINSHIP CARE SAVES TEXAS MILLIONS IN FOSTER CARE COSTS**

Kinship caregivers play a critical role in reducing the financial burden on Texas by providing care for children outside of the traditional foster care system. When children are placed with kinship caregivers instead of foster families, the state saves a significant amount of money each year. With a daily reimbursement rate of \$12.67 per child for kinship caregivers compared to \$27.07 for foster families, the state incurs an annual cost of about \$4,625 per child in kinship care versus \$9,881 in foster care. With over 6,000 children currently in formal kinship care, Texas saves approximately \$51.7 million each year.



**IF ALL CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN FOSTER CARE WERE PLACED IN FORMAL KINSHIP CARE, THE STATE COULD SAVE OVER \$58 MILLION ANNUALLY. THESE SAVINGS UNDERSCORE THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING KINSHIP CARE ARRANGEMENTS, WHICH ALSO PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH A STABLE ENVIRONMENT AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS.**



**KEEPING FAMILIES  
TOGETHER**

**\$58M**

**IN SAVINGS TO THE STATE**

**Texas Could Save Over \$58 Million  
Annually If Children Currently in Foster  
Care Were Placed With Kin.**

Note: Calculation is based on number of children in foster care as of the 2023 Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Data Card.

## **SOLUTIONS**

In order for more kinship families to access TANF benefits, the Legislature should remove the state's \$1,000 liquid asset limit and \$4,650 vehicle value limit for TANF, which prevent all but the most destitute of caregivers from applying for help for themselves. The current limits are so low that receiving social security payments or owning a functional car are enough to disqualify a household.

The Legislature should also create a kinship carve-out within the existing TANF program — similar to the Louisiana Kinship Care Subsidy Program. By freeing the program of the stringent income and work requirements of the general TANF program while raising the benefit levels, a kinship specific program would come closer to reflecting the true cost of raising a child. The program would be available to both informal and voluntary low-income kinship caregivers who step up to care for a related child.

In 2017, legislation was passed to enhance monetary support for those providing kinship care. Instead of an initial payment of \$1,000 plus \$500 per year, families receive \$380 per month per child. This change not only helps children in formal kinship placements through Child Protective Services, but also the majority of children who are living with a relative and not officially part of the kinship care system.

### Texas Children Living in Kinship Care Households by Race/Ethnicity 2023

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
African-American	46,679	18
Hispanic	115,612	44
Non-Hispanic Other	11,729	4
White	88,993	34
Total	263,013	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2023, Annual Social and Economic Supplement



i Every Texan analysis of 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

ii Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Data Card Fiscal Year 2023:  
[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About\\_DFPS/Data\\_Book/documents/DFPS\\_Data\\_Card.pdf](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Data_Book/documents/DFPS_Data_Card.pdf)

iii Diana Azevedo-McCaffrey and Tonanzih Aguas, 2024. Continued Increases in TANF Benefit Levels Are Critical to Helping Families Meet Their Needs and Thrive. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:  
[https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/continued-increases-in-tanf-benefit-levels-are-critical-to-helping#\\_ftn1](https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/continued-increases-in-tanf-benefit-levels-are-critical-to-helping#_ftn1)

iv Texas Department of Health and Human Services. Help Raising Children Related to You.  
<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/help-raising-children-related-to-you.pdf>