



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

September Declared Kinship Care Month in New York State

MARTIN J. GOLDEN March 25, 2015

Legislators in the Senate unanimously passed a resolution earlier this year declaring September 2015 as Kinship Care Month, and members of the Assembly are set to vote on the same resolution today.

Kinship care refers to the more than 200,000 families in New York State who are relatives raising the children of other family members. Children who enter into the care of relatives often do so for the same reasons they might enter into foster care, because their parents are unable or unfit to care for them. Though the challenges are similar for kinship families compared to foster families, only about 5% of kinship caregivers receive the support and financial benefits that come with being in the foster care system.

According to a study published by the Center for Disease Control in 2014, children in nonparental care were more likely to have experienced adverse family experiences.

“Compared with children living with two biological parents, children in nonparental care were about 1.5 times as likely to be living in a household in which it was often difficult to afford basics, five times as likely to have ever lived with a mentally ill caregiver or parent, six times as likely to have witnessed neighborhood violence, fifteen times as likely to have witnessed caregiver or parent violence, eleven times as likely to have lived with a caregiver or parent with an alcohol or drug problem, and seventeen times as likely to have experienced caregiver or parent incarceration” (Radel & Bramlett, 2014).

Kinship caregivers overcome these conditions. They are a natural resource for vulnerable children, with many caring for children who've experienced trauma from experiencing abuse, neglect, and parental loss. Research has shown that children who live with relatives after being removed from their parents often have better outcomes than children who enter foster care with strangers.

State Senator Marty Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn) was among the legislators who joined in support designation of September 2015 as Kinship Care Month in the State of New York. His quote and the press release issued yesterday follows.

Senator Marty Golden, who likewise introduced the resolution in the Senate, stated, "I am proud to join in supporting efforts to adopt Kinship awareness here in New York State in order to recognize those who have stepped up to the care for a family member. The New York State Legislature has adopted this Resolution for the second year in a row as a tribute to the more than 200,000 families here in the Empire State who care for the children of other members of their families. These New Yorkers are making a lasting difference in our communities, and mindful of this, we must advance awareness, funding and support of Kinship."

New York State is a national leader in recognizing the efforts of kinship caregivers who step up and raise at-risk youth. For the second year in a row, representatives in both the Senate and Assembly have signed on in support of this resolution as a key step in raising awareness about kinship families and the need to provide them with services and supports.

Statewide and local kinship programs currently funded in New York State help kinship families to access vital services available to them as they take on the responsibility of raising their relative children. With services like case management services, support groups, legal referrals, and advocacy, these programs help caregivers receive the services they need to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for children in kinship families.

Currently in New York State, there are 10 funded programs that are specifically targeting kinship families. Kinship supporters are advocating that the legislature add an additional \$500,000 over last year's budget to help increase the reach of local county programs in the state, and \$100,000 to aid the statewide Kinship Navigator to continue its outreach into unreached communities.

With the passage of this New York State resolution, New York's Legislature is setting the precedent for the rest of the nation in recognizing the kinship families. Efforts have begun in states like Virginia, California, Nevada, and Vermont to recognize kinship families by passing similar resolutions. Subsequently, New York State will be leading the way in recognizing kinship families at the federal level.

For more information on kinship families, services, or September's upcoming events, visit the Kinship Navigator's website at www.nysnavigator.org.