

# Overview of the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe Kinship Parenting Program

Child & Family Services  
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**Note:** This resource is intended to elevate the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe (PGST) Kinship Parenting Program. Other tribal nations and service providers can utilize the outlined practices as a guide as they develop or modify their own programming that best aligns with their community values, needs, and resources.

## Program Mission

“The mission of the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe Kinship Parenting Program is to recognize our responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for our children while providing necessary services to our kinship families.”

## Program Description

PGST established its Kinship Parenting Program, commonly known as a [Kinship Navigator Program](#), in 2016 to serve kin caregivers caring for PGST children in Kitsap County, Washington. A tribal member who is also an elder and a kin caregiver in the community provided instrumental leadership in the early development of the program and the implementation of feedback from grandfamilies and kinship families from the community. The Kinship Parenting Program was informed by a tribal needs assessment, and the program is currently working with an evaluator to ensure that the program is aligned with identified community needs. The assessment was made possible through the relationships that the tribal elder established with the community. Community members trusted her and invited her into their homes to talk about their experiences and needs. This approach to hiring trusted community members to serve PGST children, their families, and kin caregivers continues today. As a result, the program was built from and continues to amplify the voices, ideas, and needs of the PGST community for the PGST community.

## Population Served

The PGST Kinship Parenting Program provides outreach and support services to kin caregivers and their families in Kitsap County. PGST defines kinship care as full-time care and protection of a child by relatives. A kin caregiver may be a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, cousin, or any person recognized by the child's family to have a significant relationship with that child. Kinship care may include formal or informal placement of the child. A formal placement occurs when the child is removed from their parents/guardians by a court order and placed out of the home through a tribal or state child welfare program. An informal placement is a mutual agreement between the parents/guardians and an identified relative without court or child welfare involvement. The PGST Kinship Parenting Program emphasizes the importance of placement with kin caregivers, as children placed in kinship families are more likely to carry on family traditions, maintain cultural customs, and build relationships that will continue throughout the child's lifetime than children placed with non-kin foster families.

## Intake & Kinship Needs Assessment

Kinship families can access services by calling, emailing, or texting the PGST Kinship Parenting Program. The PGST kinship navigator will receive the message and follow up with an [intake process](#), which includes use of the [kinship needs assessment](#) to help identify the needs of the family and develop a plan to address those needs.

PGST worked closely with Washington State to redesign and adapt the state kinship needs assessment to align with PGST values and practices. Part of this adaptation included the omission of certain questions from the assessment tool, such as the question about the caregiver's sexual orientation, which was deemed not necessary to assess a family's need for support. This supportive and collaborative relationship with the state played an important role in PGST creating a culturally adapted program that works for PGST families.

Part 1 of the needs assessment invites kin caregivers to share information about any income assistance the household receives, details about the PGST children in their care (e.g., demographics, physical and behavioral health, and education), and the caregiver's view of their own health. Part 2 of the needs assessment asks kin caregivers what services they have received and what services are needed to support the caregiver and the PGST children in their care (e.g., housing, concrete goods, food assistance, public assistance, transportation, school supports, medical care, childcare, respite, behavioral health/counseling, groups/networking support, training for kin caregivers, language services, legal services, and in-home family services). The assessment then prompts kin caregivers to rank the top three to five needs from the services outlined in the kinship needs assessment. After completing the assessment,

the kin caregiver will work with the kinship navigator to set goals that align with the service needs of the kin caregiver and the PGST children in their care.

## **Program Services and Accessibility**

Kinship navigators assist kin caregivers and their families in accessing tribal, state, and federal resources and services. Kinship navigators can help kin caregivers and their families identify, connect to, and engage with an array of services, which include but are not limited to alcohol and substance abuse services; childcare services; Indian Child Welfare; community/tribal health clinic services; housing; mental health programs; respite care; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), including TANF non-needy (child-only) grants that are paid per child; assistance with Social Security Income, school, and court paperwork; parenting classes for groups and individuals; cultural classes for kinship families; and training opportunities. Some services, such as training, are open to all kin caregivers, regardless of whether the relative child in their care is in child welfare custody or not. Additionally, with all PGST human services housed in one department, the PGST Kinship Parenting Program has the flexibility to help families access an array of supports, such as help paying for driver's education courses for PGST youth or covering uniform costs. The flexibility this program offers is paramount to ensuring PGST children, their families, and kin caregivers can access and utilize the necessary support resources to thrive.

The PGST Kinship Parenting Program offers several annual outreach events as a fun way to bring families together to connect and share food. These events are open to all kinship families in the community, both those that are involved in the child welfare system and those that are not. The program also regularly offers classes that include cultural activities such as beading, weaving, and food sovereignty (e.g., cooking/smoking, harvesting, canning, and prepping). Program activities focus on maintaining cultural connectedness, which is a critical protective factor for children and youth in out-of-home care. Additionally, kinship families are invited to attend monthly support sessions, both in-person and virtually, that focus on topics such as wellness, child development, trauma, and educational needs. This is an opportunity for families to discuss how these topics impact their lives, share personal experiences, and receive support from peers. Weekly cultural activities, such as song and dance, are also available and open to non-Native attendees, serving as an opportunity for non-Native service providers to learn from the PGST community and build trust with community members to support service delivery.

## **Testimonial**

“This program has helped me care for my niece & nephews in so many ways. Through guidance, encouragement, goods & services. Our family was able to flourish. I feel incredibly blessed to have an amazing support system.”

## Coordination with State and Other Tribal Programs/Services

Kinship navigators have expert knowledge of federal, tribal, state, and local resources and services to facilitate a wraparound approach to serve kin caregivers, PGST children, and their families.

## Funding

PGST primarily utilizes state and federal funds, along with some tribal funds, to operate the Kinship Parenting Program. This includes funds from Title IV-B, subpart 2 of the Social Security Act (FY23 \$25,000) and funds appropriated by the legislature for kinship navigator programs in Washington State (FY24 \$130,000).

## Contact Information

Star Hagen, Kinship Care Program Coordinator  
PGST Children & Family Services Program  
Email: [starla@pgst.nsn.us](mailto:starla@pgst.nsn.us)

## Other Resources

The [PGST GrandFacts Fact Sheet](#) includes national data and information on Port Gamble S’Klallam tribal-specific programs that can assist kinship/grandfamilies. Below are a few programs that are accessible to kinship families in need of support.

### Career and Education Department

**Website:** <https://pgst.nsn.us/career-and-education/>

**Phone:** 360-297-6317

**Email:** [rcox@pgst.nsn.us](mailto:rcox@pgst.nsn.us)

**Service Area:** Kitsap County, WA

**Description:** Provides support for professional, educational, and employment enhancement, weaving in S’Klallam culture and traditional practices. Serves grades K-12, higher education, and career.

### Early Childhood Education

**Website:** <https://pgst.nsn.us/early-childhood-education/>

**Phone:** 360-297-6300

**Email:** [jhaight@pgst.nsn.us](mailto:jhaight@pgst.nsn.us)

**Service Area:** Kitsap County, WA

**Description:** Provides a healthy, nurturing, and safe learning environment that promotes cultural values for children, expectant parents, families, and the PGST community. Serves babies and children from birth to age five and their caregivers.

## **Elder Services**

**Website:** <https://pgst.nsn.us/elder-services/>

**Phone:** 360-297-9630

**Email:** [shanna@pgst.nsn.us](mailto:shanna@pgst.nsn.us)

**Service Area:** Kitsap County, WA

**Description:** Provides services, assistance, and support to improve the overall health and quality of life of senior community members. Services include lunches for elders (provided during the work week), monthly activities and group trips, dinners, and events.

## **Foster Care**

**Website:** <https://pgst.nsn.us/foster-care/>

**Phone:** 360-979-6021

**Email:** [channa@pgst.nsn.us](mailto:channa@pgst.nsn.us)

**Service Area:** Kitsap County, WA

**Description:** Offers foster home licensing, coordinates respite care, supports foster parents and children, and provides culturally relevant foster parent training and kinship support services.

## **Health Services**

**Website:** <https://pgst.nsn.us/health-services/>

**Phone:** 360-297-2840

**Service Area:** Kitsap County, WA

**Description:** Provides wraparound services including health, dental, wellness (mental health, behavioral health, and chemical dependency), counseling (mental health, behavioral health, and chemical dependency), community health services, massage, physical therapy, and a workout gym.

## Housing

**Website:** <https://www.pgst.nsn.us/tribal-programs/tribal-entities/port-gamble-housing-authority>

**Phone:** 360-297-6346

**Service Area:** Kitsap County, WA

**Description:** Offers rental units, rental assistance, down payment assistance, and Section 184 buyer assistance.

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The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit [www.GKSNetwork.org](http://www.GKSNetwork.org).

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