



NEW JERSEY

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



October 2003

Across the United States, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives as parents struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship, divorce, domestic violence, and other serious problems. These family members (or “kinship caregivers”) are caring for children both inside and outside the foster care system. This fact sheet provides information and resources to help with the challenges they face.

National and State Data*

The Children

- Nationally, 4.5 million children are living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children under age 18). This represents a 30% increase from 1990 to 2000.
- There are another 1.5 million children in the United States who are living in households headed by other relatives (2.1% of all children under 18).
- In New Jersey, there are 127,263 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.1% of all the children in the state). There are another 44,132 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.1% of all the children in the state).

The Grandparents

- 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White.
- In New Jersey, 58,789 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [4,832 in Newark and 2,996 in Jersey City]: 38% of these grandparents are African American; 20% are Hispanic/Latino; 4% are Asian; and 34% are White.

Additional Information

- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children is available on AARP’s website at <http://www.aarp.org/contact/grandparents/census2000.html>.

* These data are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics:2000.
** This number represents persons 30 years of age and older.

The Brookdale Foundation



Programs That Can Help

- **The New Jersey Kinship Navigator Program** is a centralized, statewide service that provides information, referrals and follow-up services to grandparents and other relative caregivers through a toll free number: 1-877-816-3211. The Navigator Program provides information on a wide variety of services including: grandparenting and other family support groups, TANF, medical coverage and services, child care, tutoring, and child support. The Navigator Program also provides referrals to wraparound services such as housing assistance, legal services, and respite care for low-income kinship caregivers. *Contact:* Rosemarie Wales, RAPP Coordinator, at (609) 588-0187 or rwales@dhs.state.nj.us.
- **The Atlantic County Grandparents Raising Children Initiative** at the Uptown Family Center provides a support group, counseling and legal services, parenting classes, economic assistance, and after-school child care for kinship care families in the Atlantic County area. *Contact:* Rosalind Norrell-Nance, Director, Uptown Family Center, at (609) 345-1994 or liznn@aol.com.
- **The Salvation Army Grand Parent Program** provides services and supports kinship care families in Essex County and across New Jersey experiencing stress related to the absence or loss of the child(ren)'s parents. Support is provided through group meetings and a variety of social and recreational opportunities. The program offers a social and legal advocacy initiative to represent the needs of kinship care families on an individual and policy level. The Salvation Army also runs a summer respite camp for caregivers and children. Kinship caregivers are given the opportunity to enjoy seven days of Senior Camp R&R, while their children spend the same seven days in a supervised, residential camp. *Contact:* Louise Eagle, Coordinator, at (973) 623-5959 or tsanewarkhsb@aol.com.
- **The Burlington County Community Action Program Head Start** offers monthly Grandparent Support Group meetings for kinship caregivers between the months of September and June. Information is also provided at these meetings on various services, including the Kinship Navigator Program and legal options available to kinship caregivers. *Contact:* Sue Dietz, Disability Services Coordinator, at (609) 261-2323.
- **Family Connections** offers a program called Caregiver Connections that provides in-home free counseling for grandparents and other adult relatives over the age of 60 who are raising children in their home. *Contact:* Miriam Taunean, Program Coordinator, Caregiver Connections, at (973) 675-3817 ext. 382. You can access Family Connections' website at <http://community.nj.com/ccfamilyconnections>.
- **The New Jersey Self-Help Group Clearinghouse** is an information service that can provide kinship caregivers with information on local community support groups. *Contact:* (800) 367-6274.
- **The Grandparents as Parents (GAP)** program, is a network of health and human service professionals, grandparents, agency representatives, and elected officials. The purpose of GAP is to identify the needs of non-parental adults raising children, recommend programs, identify public policy issues, and recommend legislative changes. *Contact:* The Institute for Creative Aging, William Patterson University, at (973) 720-3690, or oskinskim@wpunj.edu. In addition, there is the Patterson Relative Caregiver Support Program, a program of Patterson Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, that provides a Family Support Worker for necessary interventions. The caseworker also connects caregivers to available services in the community. *Contact:* Patterson Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, at (973) 881-6927, or dturner@nnjm-chc.org.
- **Rutgers Cooperative Extension's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program** offers quarterly group meetings for grandparents and the children they raise led by Rutgers faculty members and featuring presenters on various topics affecting grandparents raising grandchildren. They distribute a quarterly newsletter and have two fact sheets on grandparents raising grandchildren. You can access the fact sheets "Grandparents as Parents:



Concerns, Challenges, and Directions for Support’ at www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/fs255.pdf. *Contact:* Marilou Rochford, Associate Professor, Rutgers University, at (609) 465-5115 ext. 609, or rochford@aesop.rutgers.edu.

Children in Foster Care

Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kinship care.” In New Jersey, the Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of January 4, 2002, there were 10,607 children in out-of-home placements under DYFS’s supervision. Of those children, approximately 1,911 (18 %) live in relative/family friend foster homes.

Preferences for kinship care: State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under DYFS’s care.

Kinship care licensing: There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. However, in rare situations, the court may consider exemptions to certain licensing requirements for kinship foster parents that do not affect safety.

Subsidized guardianship programs: New Jersey’s Relative Care Permanency Support (RCPS) Program is limited to children who have been removed by DYFS for risk and safety factors (protective service reasons) and placed with relatives or family friends.

The program provides time-limited financial support of \$250/month for up to 15 months, with exceptions for special circumstances. *Contact:* Linda Holland, Supervising Program Support Specialist, at (609) 942-5559 or linda.holland@dhs.state.nj.us, or log on to www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dyfs/index.html.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Linda Holland, Supervising Program Support Specialist, at (609) 942-5559, or linda.holland@dhs.state.nj.us.

Training and support for kinship foster parents: The Foundation of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is a private, non-profit corporation located in Newark. Through the Foundation’s Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center, the Foundation provides support group services, directs referrals to community resources, and identifies and helps to address the health related concerns and needs of caregivers and their children. *Contact:* Call (973) 972-4830.



Public Benefits

Children are often eligible for state and federal benefits even if their caregivers do not have legal guardianship or custody. These programs include:

Financial Assistance: Cash assistance may be available to children and their grandparents and other relative caregivers through Kinship Care Monthly Subsidies Program.

- A “child-only grant” is for the child and based *only* on the child’s income.
- An adult caregiver may also be included in the grant — based on their income and subject to work

requirements and time limits.

Call (877) 816-3211 or log on to www.state.nj.us/humanservices/sp&i/Kinnav.html.

Food Stamps: Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet their children’s food and nutrition needs. For more information, call (877) 816-3211 or log on to www.state.nj.us/humanservices/sp&i/Kinnav.html.

Health Insurance: Grandparents and other relative caregivers may apply for free or low-cost health insurance on behalf of the children they are raising through the Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid or NJ FamilyCare, call (800) 701-0710 or log on to www.njfamilycare.org.

Other Benefits: Other state and federal benefits may also be available to eligible children, such as child care subsidies, disability benefits, and special education services. For more information about these, download CDF’s benefit guides for grandparents and other relatives raising children at www.childrensdefense.org or call (202) 662-3568. For more information on the federal benefits that may be available to caregivers, log on to the National Council on Aging’s Benefits CheckUp website at www.benefitscheckup.org.

State Laws

The following state laws may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children¹:

Educational Enrollment (NJ Stat. Ann. § 18A: 38-1): This law allows a New Jersey public school to enroll any child who is living in the home of another person who resides within the school district and is caring for the child without cost under certain conditions.

Kinship Legal Guardianship (NJ Stat. Ann. § 3B: 12A-2): This law allows a relative caregiver or family friend who has been providing care and support for a child for at least 12 consecutive months (due to parental incapacity) to petition the court to become legally responsible for the care and protection of the child.

¹ Laws change and are subject to different interpretations. These general descriptions are not intended as legal advice in any particular situation.

National Resources

AARP Grandparent Information Center	(800) 424-3410	www.aarp.org/grandparents
Adoption Information Clearinghouse	(888) 251-0075	www.calib.com/naic/pubs/r_grand.cfm
The Brookdale Foundation Group	(212) 308-7355	www.brookdalefoundation.org
Child Welfare League of America	(202) 638-2952	www.cwla.org
Children’s Defense Fund	(202) 628-8787	www.childrensdefense.org
Generations United	(202) 638-1263	www.gu.org
Grand Parent Again		www.grandparentagain.com
GrandsPlace	(860) 763-5789	www.grandsplace.com

National Aging Information Center	(202) 619-0724	www.aoa.dhhs.gov
National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights	(866) 624-9900	www.grandparentsforchildren.org
The Urban Institute	(202) 833-7200	www.urban.org

Fact sheets are updated once a year. Suggested additions should be emailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at gic@aarp.org. Please write "State Fact Sheets" in the subject line of your email.