

GrandFacts

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Montana

March 2008



The Brookdale Foundation
Group
www.brookdalefoundation.org



The AARP Foundation, The Brookdale Foundation Group, Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and Generations United have partnered to produce fact sheets for grandparents and other relatives raising children that include state-specific data, programs, and public policies. Fact sheets are updated annually. Updates can be sent to gic@aarp.org. This and other state fact sheets can be viewed and printed from www.grandfactsheets.org. Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.

In Montana...

- There are 9,526 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.1% of all children in the state). Another 2,381 children live in households headed by other relatives. Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Montana, 5,161 are living there without either parent present.
- 6,053 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them (419 in Billings): .02% of these grandparents are African American; 2% are Hispanic/Latino; 35% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 61% are White. 40% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 70% are under the age of 60; 20% live in poverty.
- Additional data on grandparents raising children are available from the United States Census at <http://factfinder.census.gov> or <http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/phc-t17.html>.

Programs That Can Help

AARP Montana

Contact: AARP Montana
Phone: 1-866-295-7278
Email: mtaarp@aarp.org
Web: <http://www.aarp.org/states/mt/>
Service Area: Statewide

Services Offered:

- Training for support group leaders and grandparents
- Legislative advocacy
- Public benefits outreach
- Education about Medicare, prescription drugs, other issues

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG)

Sponsoring Organization: Montana State University Extension Service; Brookdale Foundation, Montana Children's Trust Fund, Kappa Omnicron Nu, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, USDA Children, Youth and Families At-Risk Program

Contact: Sandy Bailey, Family and Human Development Specialist

Phone: 406-994-6745

Email: baileys@montana.edu

Service Area: Statewide

Services Offered:

- Awareness and support services to kinship care providers through statewide partnerships
- Training and resources to develop education and support groups for kinship care providers
- Support groups available in Billings, Bozeman, Browning, Colstrip, Glendive, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Lewistown, Livingston, Missoula, Poplar and Wolf Point, Ravalli County, Rocky Boy Reservation and Townsend.
- Newsletter published three times a year
- Booklet of statewide services
- Listserv for support group facilitators
- Annual conference for grandparents raising grandchildren

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren - Kalispell

Sponsoring Organization: The Nurturing Center

Contact: Michelle Wheat

Phone: 406-756-1414

Email: michelle@nurturingcenter.org

Web: www.nurturingcenter.org

Service Area: Northwest Montana - Flathead, Lake, Lincoln and Sanders Counties

Services Offered:

- Monthly support/ resource group meets at Northridge Lutheran Church in Kalispell

Children in Foster Care

Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. These placements are often called "kinship care."

Numbers – March 2008

- There were 1,640 children in out-of-home placements.

Preferences

- The Montana Department of Health and Human Services, Children and Family Services Division is required to place a child with the child's extended family whenever it is in the best interests of the child and the department approves the home of the extended family member.

Kinship Care Licensing

- There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin must meet the same licensing standards and training requirements and receive the same foster care payment as non-kin foster parents.
- Training requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis.

Subsidized guardianship programs

- Guardianship is an option for kinship caregivers and may be subsidized through the Title IV-E Demonstration Project or through the state general fund.
- Subsidy provided to caregivers of children who have a physical, mental or emotional disability, belong to a minority group, or are part of a sibling group for whom guardianship has already been established.
- Subsidized guardianships also available to children under tribal court jurisdiction.
- Subsidized Guardianships and Kinship Care Contact – Betsy Stimatz, Foster Care Program Officer
 - Phone: 406-444-1675
 - Email: bstimatz@state.mt.us

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 the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
 - Phone: 406-444-1917
 - Web: <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/tanf/tanfeligibility.shtml>

Food Stamps

- Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet their children's food and nutrition needs.
 - Phone: 1-800-332-2272
 - Web: <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/> (Look under "Programs and Services")

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 Montana's Medicaid and Child Health Insurance Plan (CHIP) programs.
- In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid.
 - Phone: 1-877-543-7669
 - Web: <http://chip.mt.gov/index.shtml>

Benefits QuickLINK

- Screens you and/or the children you are raising for 15 major public benefits for older adults and families with children

- Web: www.aarp.org/quicklink

Other Benefits – child care, disabilities, special education, older adult benefits, etc.

- Children’s Defense Fund benefit guides for grandparents and other relatives for information about state and federal benefits
 - Phone: 202-662-3568
 - Web: www.childrensdefense.org (Kinship Care Resource Kit)
- National Council on Aging – Benefits CheckUp www.benefitscheckup.org

State Laws

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

Caretaker relative and continuing custody affidavit

Montana Senate Bill 31 - MT Code § 40-6-602

- Allows grandparents and other relative caretakers continued custody of a grandchild following the voluntary surrender of the child by a parent under circumstances indicating abandonment

Caretaker relative consent to medical care

Montana Senate Bill 48 - MT Code § 40-6-502

- Provides means for grandparents and other relative caretakers to seek and approve medical care for children who have been voluntarily put in the caretaker’s custody by a parent

School enrollment by relative caretaker

Montana Senate Bill 49 - MT Code § 20-5-502

- Allows grandparents and other relative caretakers to enroll children who have been voluntarily put in the caretaker’s custody in school, to discuss school-related matters, and to consent to school-related medical care

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

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