

# GrandFacts

## A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

**Ohio**

**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. This and other state fact sheets can be viewed and printed from the website at [www.grandfactsheets.org](http://www.grandfactsheets.org). Fact sheets are updated annually. Updates can be sent directly from the website via email. Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.

### In Ohio...

- There are 157,298 children living in grandparent-headed households (5.4% of all children in the state). There are 35,333 children living in households headed by other relatives. Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Ohio, 76,794 are living there without either parent present.
- 86,009 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them (7,039 in Cleveland and 6,263 in Columbus): 27% of these grandparents are African American, 2% are Hispanic/Latino; and 68% are White. 40% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 73% are under the age of 60; 15% 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

#### Area Agency on Aging – District 7

**Contact:** Merritt Sessor  
**Phone:** 1-800-582-7277  
**Email:** [msessor@aaa7.org](mailto:msessor@aaa7.org)  
**Service Area:** Adams, Brown, Callia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties

#### Services Offered:

- Monthly support group
- Information and referral for legal services, custody, respite services, educational materials, Medicaid and TANF
- Recreational activities

## Ashtabula County Children's Service Board

**Sponsoring Organization:** Family and Children First Council

**Contact:** Katie Lane, Kinship Coordinator

**Phone:** 440-998-1811 x 160

**Email:** [LaneK02@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:LaneK02@odjfs.state.oh.us)

**Service Area:** Ashtabula County

**Services Offered:**

- Information and referral to agencies that provide health support, educational services, financial resources, child care, legal services, home visits and telephone support
- Benefits assistance such as TANF, Healthy Start, Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI)
- Court advocacy
- Home studies
- Quarterly Newsletter

## FirstLink

**Sponsoring Organization:** Franklin County Children Services

**Contact:** Debbie Barsamian, Kinship Assistance Coordinator

**Phone:** 614-221-6766 x 127

**Service Area:** Franklin County

**Services Offered:**

- Rent or mortgage assistance
- Bus passes and food cards
- Beds and clothing for children
- Services provided to relatives who are legal caregivers of non-biological children in their home
- RSVP, Foster Grandparent, Kinship Navigator programs

## Grandparent/Kinship Care Program – Cuyahoga County

**Sponsoring Organization:** Cuyahoga County Department of Senior & Adult Services

**Contact:** Maridell Couture, Program Officer

**Phone:** 216-348-3978/Intake at 216-420-6772

**Email:** [coutum@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:coutum@odjfs.state.oh.us)

**Web:** [www.dsas.cuyahogacounty.us](http://www.dsas.cuyahogacounty.us)

**Service Area:** Cuyahoga County

**Services Offered:**

- Advocacy at state and national levels
- Community navigators provide short-term service coordination  
Financial assistance through Ohio Works First Child-Only Cash Grant or Ohio Kinship Permanency Incentive Program
- Legal Assistance for individuals or in a group setting at a legal workshop (guardianship, custody, adoption, foster parenting, divorce, wills, housing, bankruptcy)
- Caregiver education luncheons held monthly with discussions on children with special needs, counseling opportunities, coping with stress  
Respite provided up to 8 hours per week; maximum of 64 hours per calendar year; respite provided by licensed adult professionals

## Grandparents Support Group – Walnut Hills

**Sponsoring Organization:** Mercy Neighboring Ministries  
**Contact:** Dennis Berling  
**Phone:** 513-221-1189  
**Email:** [denberl@hotmail.com](mailto:denberl@hotmail.com)  
**Service Area:** Walnut Hills Area

**Services Offered:**

- Resources and referrals to empower kinship caregivers
- Two support groups that meet twice a month, one in the afternoon, one in the evening
- Grandparent and licensed social worker from the leadership team

## Guernsey County Kinship Support Group

**Sponsoring Organization:** Guernsey County Kinship Support Group  
**Contact:** Nancy Gress, Kinship Coordinator  
**Phone:** 740-439-5555  
**Email:** [gressn@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:gressn@odjfs.state.oh.us)  
**Service Area:** Guernsey County

**Services Offered:**

- Community speakers
- Licensed social worker to address needs and concerns of kinship caregivers
- Organized outings, family events, kinship conferences
- Kinship Permanency Incentive (see below)

## Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program

**Sponsoring Organization:** Ohio Department of Job and Family Services  
**Contact:** Kristen Burgess, Ohio Dept of Job and Family Services  
**Phone:** 614-752-1329  
**Email:** [kristen.burgess@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:kristen.burgess@jfs.ohio.gov)  
**Service Area:** Several counties in Ohio

**Services Offered:**

- Information and referral to agencies that provide health support, educational services, financial resources, child care, legal services, support groups, respite care
- Some programs sponsor specialized services for caregivers and children

## Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

**Contact:** Help Desk, Office of Children and Families  
**Phone:** 1-866-886-3537, option 4  
**Web:** [http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/Planning\\_Council.stm](http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/Planning_Council.stm)  
**Service Area:** Statewide

**Services Offered:**

- Resource guide – Relatives Caring for Children: Ohio Resource Guide available by phone
- Kinship Care Advisory Board
- Help Me Grow helpline 1-800-755-4769

## Ohio Family Care Association

**Contact:** Pinkie Thomas  
**Phone:** 614-222-2712  
**Email:** [pinkie@ofcaonline.org](mailto:pinkie@ofcaonline.org)  
**Web:** [www.ofcaonline.org](http://www.ofcaonline.org)  
**Service Area:** Statewide

### Services Offered:

- Advocacy, education and support organization for kinship, foster and adoptive families
- Educational conferences
- Individual phone support
- Agency contacts and training resources (see online)

## Ohio Grandparent/Kinship Care Program

**Sponsoring Organization:** Cuyahoga County Department of Adult and Senior Services  
**Contact:** Maridell Couture  
**Phone:** 216-348-3978  
**Email:** [coutm@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:coutm@odjfs.state.oh.us)  
**Service Area:** Statewide

### Services Offered:

- Advocacy, education and support organization for kinship, foster and adoptive families
- Educational conferences
- Individual phone support
- Agency contacts and training resources (see online)

## Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition

**Contact:** Maridell Couture, Co-President  
**Phone:** 216-348-3978  
**Email:** [coutum@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:coutum@odjfs.state.oh.us)  
**Contact:** Denise Harris, Co-President  
**Phone:** 216-348-3978  
**Email:** [dstephie@wowway.com](mailto:dstephie@wowway.com)  
**Web:** <http://www.summitkids.org/about.aspx>  
**Service Area:** Statewide

### Services Offered:

- Group includes kinship caregivers, child welfare agencies and service providers
- Identifies kinship care issues and proposed solutions to public and private agencies
- Quarterly newsletter available to kinship caregivers
- Issue advocacy – the coalition is the voice for Ohio's kinship caregivers

## Ohio State University Extension – Sandusky County

- Contact:** Sharon L. Mader, Ohio State University Extension, Sandusky County Extension  
Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences
- Phone:** 419-334-6340
- Email:** [sand@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:sand@cfaes.osu.edu)
- Web:** <http://sandusky.osu.edu/family-consumer-sciences/grandparents-raising-their-grandchildren>
- Service Area:** Sandusky County
- Services Offered:**
- Directory of resources on child care, clothing, education, employment, family support services, financial assistance, health care, hunger, housing and homelessness, legal issues

## Parents Helping Parents

- Contact:** Barbara Laraway and Brenda Brake
- Phone:** 419-242-9001
- Email:** [help@parentshelpingparents.net](mailto:help@parentshelpingparents.net)
- Web:** <http://www.parentshelpingparents.net>
- Service Area:** Lucas County (Toledo)
- Services Offered:**
- Weekly support groups in several locations
  - Information and resources

## Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO)

- Web:** [www.pcsao.org/KinshipSupport.htm](http://www.pcsao.org/KinshipSupport.htm)
- Service Area:** Statewide
- Services Offered:**
- Public policy development, including improving supports and policies for kinship caregivers inside and outside the child welfare system
  - Online resources and information

## Statewide Kinship Caregivers Advocacy Council

- Contact:** Kristen Burgess, staff to the Council
- Email:** [kristen.burgess@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:kristen.burgess@jfs.ohio.gov)
- Service Area:** Statewide
- Services Offered:**
- Quarterly meetings of leaders across the state representing kinship caregivers, child welfare administrators, policy makers, service providers, public community educators, advocates

## Wright State University Center for Healthy Communities

**Contact:** Dionne Simmons  
**Phone:** 937-775-1116  
**Email:** [dionne.henderson@wright.edu](mailto:dionne.henderson@wright.edu)  
**Service Area:** Statewide  
**Services Offered:**

- Supports Ohio Kinship Caregiver Coalition – 40 community agencies and caregivers
- Develops programs to meet caregiver needs
- Advocates for children in kinship care
- Trained kinship navigators available to listen, answer questions, navigate through systems to find resources and remove barriers for kinship families.

## Children in Foster Care

- Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. This is often called “kinship care.”

## Numbers – January 2006

- There were 17,112 children under the care of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Family Services in out of home placements. Of these, 3,000 children were placed with relatives.

## Preferences and licensing

- State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the Department’s care.
- There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents.
- Kinship caregivers may choose to go through a less stringent approval process focused on basic health and safety criteria. These approved (but not licensed) caregivers receive support services with a lower cash benefit.

## Subsidized Guardianship

- Ohio does not have a statewide subsidized guardianship program but some counties offer their own programs
- Contact: Help Desk, Office of Children and Families
  - Phone: 866-886-3537, option 4
  - Email: [help-desk-ocf@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:help-desk-ocf@odjfs.state.oh.us)

## Kinship Permanency Incentive Program

- Limited incentive payments to families caring for relative children who are judged by the court to have been abused, neglected, dependent or unruly.
- Caregivers who have been awarded legal custody or guardianship of a child on or after July 1, 2005 are eligible to apply
- Maximum award is \$3,500 over 2-1/2 years; these payments are in addition to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits for eligible families.
- To receive cash payments, eligible families must not earn more than 300% of federal poverty

guidelines, must apply through their county public children services agency, complete a family home study and criminal background check.

## Public Benefits

### Financial Assistance

Cash payments may be available to children and their grandparents through Ohio Works First (OWF) Program

- Contact:
  - Phone: 614-466-6282
  - Web: <http://jfs.ohio.gov>

### Food Stamps

Kinship care families may be eligible for food stamps to help meet the needs of children in their care.

- Contact:
  - Phone: 614-466-6282
  - Web: <http://jfs.ohio.gov>

### Health Insurance

Free or low-cost health insurance may be available for children through the Ohio's Healthy Start program.

- Medicaid 1-800-324-8680
- Web: [www.jfs.ohio.gov](http://www.jfs.ohio.gov)

### 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](http://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](http://www.childrensdefense.org) (Kinship Care Resource Kit)
- National Council on Aging – Benefits CheckUp [www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org)

## State Laws

The following state law may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children<sup>1</sup>:

### Educational Consent

#### Oh. Rev. Code Ann. § 3313.64(11)

- Allows relatives raising children to exercise authority in school issues under certain circumstances.

### Grandparent Power of Attorney and Caregiver Affidavit forms

#### Oh. Rev. Code Ann. § 3109.65 – 3109.73

- Creates legal documentation to assist grandparent caregivers who have physical custody of their grandchildren but have not been judicially awarded custody. These forms assist grandparents in enrolling grandchildren in school and accessing routine and emergency medical and dental care.

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

#### **Disclaimer:**

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