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How One Individual Can Help Kinship Care Families

Encouraging Others in Your Community to Lend a Hand

“You know, it makes you feel really good that somebody cares about you. Just for someone to call you [and say] ‘how did your day go?’ or ‘how are you doing?’”

— A grandmother raising her grandchildren, Edgewood Center for Children and Families, Kinship Support Network, San Francisco, Calif.

Grandparents and other relative caregivers often say that they don’t need much to raise their children, just a helping hand now and again to help lighten their load. In addition to organizing support groups, respite care centers, and other programs, community and faith-based organizations also can encourage their members, staffs, and volunteers to spend time with individual families. This can be particularly helpful for kinship caregivers, who often say that they will only trust their grandchildren to people they know.

Kinship caregivers may get so caught up in the daily responsibilities of raising a child that they don’t have time to ask for help. They may be so overwhelmed that it’s hard to figure out what kind of help they need the most. Some kinship caregivers may be afraid that if they accept an offer of help, they will have to reveal too much about their personal lives. Whatever the reason, community and faith-based organizations often can break down these barriers by offering help in a variety of ways.

What is the best way to encourage individuals to help kinship care families?

You first need to educate individuals in your organization, congregation, or community about the unique struggles that kinship care families face. Second, you need to give them concrete, realistic suggestions about how they can help. To assist you, CDF has created a special flyer (on the back of this page) “Ten Ways to Say Thank You to Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children.” You also need to continue to reinforce the importance of what just one individual can do to help kinship care families. Don’t forget to involve the teens in your organization or congregation in this effort.

What are some creative ways to use “Ten Ways to Say Thank You to Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children”?

The flyer on the back of this page can be used in many different ways to educate your organization’s members, staff, or volunteers about kinship care and encourage them to reach out to individual kinship care families. You may want to adapt the flyer to your own community. If you would like to use it the way it is, feel free to copy and distribute the flyer and encourage others to do the same. If you work with non-English speaking populations, you can ask one of your volunteers to translate it.

There are numerous ways to use the flyer:

- Post the flyer on your bulletin board.
- Take the information contained in the flyer and reprint it in your newsletter, church bulletin, or other mailings and handouts.
- Share the flyer with those who have contact with local newspapers or TV and radio stations and encourage them to do a local interest story on kinship care in your community.
- Briefly highlight your efforts to thank kinship caregivers at the beginning or end of your organization’s regular meetings, potluck dinners, and leadership conferences or retreats.



Ten Ways to Say Thank You to Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Did you know that more than one in 12 American children are living in homes headed by grandparents and other relatives? In many of these homes, “kinship caregivers” are raising the children by themselves, with little outside support. Some of these grandparents thought their days of raising children were over long ago. Now, suddenly, they find themselves changing diapers and helping children with homework all over again.

It’s hard for any family to raise children, but it can be especially hard for grandparents and other relative caregivers. They may be older individuals with health problems of their own. The children they are bringing up may have special needs. It’s exhausting and expensive to raise grandchildren, but these “silent saviors” say they wouldn’t have it any other way. By raising their grandchildren, they are raising the community’s children. It’s a labor of love.

By giving just an hour or two of your time, you can say “thank you” to one of the many kinship care families in your community:

- 1. Run errands or help around the house:**
Raising children is a job in itself. Offering to pick up groceries or help clean the house can give a tired caregiver a badly needed break.
- 2. Offer to baby-sit:** Offer to watch the children while the caregiver takes care of personal business or has an afternoon out. If the caregiver doesn’t want to leave the children, offer to watch the children while she is in the home doing laundry or other projects around the house.
- 3. Give the family a night out or a meal in:**
Cooking after a long day is enough to drive any parent crazy. Offer to take a kinship care family out for dinner or bring a meal to them.
- 4. Tell them how much you appreciate them:**
Recognize and honor caregivers’ efforts and sacrifices on behalf of their children by telling them how proud you are to know them.
- 5. Volunteer your talents and professional services:** Are you a seamstress, a beautician, a plumber, a lawyer, or do you have other professional talents or personal gifts? Offer to share them with a kinship care family.
- 6. Drop by their house with a surprise:** A batch of cookies or flowers from your back yard can make a caregiver’s day. Drop by with an unexpected treat.
- 7. Go with them to important appointments:**
Caregivers may find it difficult to attend all the meetings with teachers, social workers, government workers, and others that are necessary to get vital services and benefits for the children they are raising. It’s easier when they don’t have to go alone. Offer to go with them.
- 8. Provide transportation for kinship care families:**
Caregivers say that they sometimes have trouble getting their children to and from appointments and social events. Volunteer to drive the children to and from school or the caregiver to and from a doctor’s appointment.
- 9. Invite them to events with their children:**
Caregivers want to have fun with their grandchildren in a place where they can relax and be with other families. Help a kinship care family feel less isolated by encouraging them to come to special events and outings or to spend an evening or a Saturday with your family.
- 10. Be a sounding board:** Like all parents, relative caregivers may need someone to talk to about concerns and difficulties with their grandchildren. Tell them often that they can call you if they just need to hear a voice on the other end of the phone.

Together We Can Help Care for the Caregivers!



**LEAVE
NO CHILD
BEHIND[®]**

How to Start a Support Group

Letting Kinship Care Families Know They Are Not Alone

“At first I felt that I didn’t need a support group, but I kept coming. I was amazed at what the other members of the group were talking about — they were talking to me! I understand that people are afraid of the child welfare system and don’t want their children taken away. I want families to know that there is help and support out there. Caregivers should know that there are other people out there with the same problems they have.”

— Grandparent caregiver and support-group leader

Many grandparents and other relatives count on a time, later in life, when they can take a break from some of life’s hectic demands. For kinship caregivers, that time never comes. Unexpectedly, they are asked to raise children for the second time around, often without adequate family, financial, or community supports. As a result, kinship caregivers commonly report that they feel alone in their struggles. They lose touch with old friends who don’t have the same caregiving responsibilities. They may no longer have the time and energy to stay active with local community or faith-based organizations. This sense of isolation can become overwhelming for some kinship caregivers, making it even more difficult to care properly for themselves and for the children they are raising.

Your community or faith-based organization can help reduce the isolation that many kinship caregivers feel by linking them with kinship care support groups in your community. If there are no existing groups appropriate for the kinship care families you serve, your organization or congregation may consider organizing one or lending your facilities to a kinship care support group. By spreading the word about an existing group or starting a new one in close consultation with the kinship caregivers you serve, your organization or congregation can play a vital role in connecting kinship caregivers with other families who are experiencing similar challenges.

Support groups for kinship caregivers are extremely important, and your community or faith-based organization can help get them started.

What is a support group, and why is it valuable?

A support group allows participants to share their personal experiences with others who are in similar situations and are experiencing the same types of issues. This forum can provide a productive way to accept and work through problems as a group and make the participants feel less alone in their struggles.

A key function of support groups is to provide reinforcement and encouragement through the “give and take” of the group members.¹ A kinship care support group, for example, might meet to discuss common problems, such as how to deal with government agencies or substance abuse by the children’s parents, or how best to guide the behavior of the children they are raising. Additional support group goals may include providing information and resources, inviting experts to talk about issues of interest to kinship caregivers, or learning coping skills.² In a sense, a support group can provide an “extended family” for kinship caregivers, many of whom develop friendships with other support group participants that may continue long after the support group ends.

Are there different types of support groups?

There is no one recipe for a successful support group. If there is no appropriate support group for kinship caregivers in your community, your organization or congregation should start by assessing the most immediate needs of those you expect to participate. Talk to the kinship caregivers you know about what kind of support group structure would be most



helpful to them. Next, your organization will have to evaluate the capabilities and talents of those available to lead the support group activities.

In structuring the support group that works best, you might want to consider the following models, keeping in mind that many groups incorporate elements of all three. The focus of a support group also may change over time as participants become more familiar with one another and begin to work through the issues that are most important to them.

- **Emotional support.** The primary purpose of this type of support group is to allow members to share their collective experiences and provide a network of caring and peer support for caregivers. Your organization or congregation may choose to develop this type of support group if the kinship caregivers in your community say they need an outlet for stress and the constant demands of parenting.
- **Education and information referral.** The primary purpose of this type of group is to link participants with useful resources, information, helpful organizations, and experts in relevant issue areas. If the kinship caregivers in your organization or congregation say their biggest problem is accessing benefits and services, this type of support group might be the most useful to consider.
- **Outreach and advocacy.** Participants in this type of support group work together to identify and bring about solutions to common problems. This structure might work best for kinship caregivers whose main goal is to bring community, media, and policy-makers' attention to the issues they face. In many situations, a support group initially may be organized for emotional support and then later decide to take on more of an advocacy role.

What questions should my organization or congregation ask before directing a caregiver to a support group in the community or before starting a new one?

What population of kinship caregivers will your support group serve?

It is important to tailor the structure of a support group to suit the needs of the individual members it will serve. Because the needs of kinship care families can be quite different, you may need to narrow the

population that will benefit from your organization's or congregation's support group. Are you going to invite caregivers who are raising children both inside and outside of the foster care system? Are you going to include kinship care families of different ages or income levels? Should your support group be conducted in English or in another language? Will you pay special attention to one particular issue, such as substance abuse or raising children with disabilities? These types of questions will help you better address the needs of participants.

Who should facilitate the support group?

While there is no one "right" way to run a support group, there are several considerations to keep in mind. Some experts believe that it is important to have professional facilitators, such as therapists, clergy, or licensed social workers run a support group. They argue that professionals will be able to provide better referrals, offer more expertise in handling potentially serious mental health issues, and maintain objectivity that other group participants do not have. Others argue that it is beneficial to have other kinship caregivers as facilitators because they are better able to appreciate what group participants are going through. After speaking with the kinship care families you intend to serve and deciding on the group's purpose, your organization or congregation must decide who should facilitate the group. You also may talk to the leaders of other effective support groups in your area before you decide. You may choose to have co-facilitators — one who is a caregiver and the other with professional experience.

How often should the support group meet?

This decision should be left to the support group participants, although most support group facilitators agree that groups need to meet at least once a month in order to provide a consistent, supportive presence in caregivers' lives. Attention also must be paid to making child care and transportation available for the support group meetings.

Should children be included in the support group?

Your community or faith-based organization may choose to have a separate support group for children in kinship care families or to have children and caregivers meet separately for the first half of the meeting and then come together for the second half.



For more information about support groups for children, see “How to Set Up Activities for Children in Kinship Care Families,” included in this resource kit.

If there is a need for a new kinship care support group in my community, how should my organization or congregation get started?

Before your organization or congregation starts a new support group for kinship caregivers, it should first determine if there are other kinship care support groups in your area. In addition to asking your local networks about already existing groups, you also may contact the AARP’s Grandparent Information Center at 1-800-424-3410, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EDT for a list of local support groups. You also can send e-mail inquiries to gic@aarp.org or search AARP’s online support group database at www.aarp.org/grandparents/searchsupport, or write AARP at 601 E Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049. AARP also offers its own booklet on “How to Start a Grandparent Support Group.”

If you want additional information on how to start a support group, you also can contact the Grandparent Resource Center (GRC) in New York City. The GRC provides quarterly workshops and a curriculum on how community-based agencies can start kinship care support groups. It also supplements its curriculum with bimonthly trainings of support group leaders. If you live outside the New York area, you can hire GRC staff consultants to come train your organization

on how to start a kinship care support group. For more information, call 212-442-1094 or visit www.ci.nyc.nyus/html/dfta/html/grc.html.

If a kinship care support group does not already exist in your area, you might think about other organizations that might want to partner with you in establishing one. These other local organizations also may be able to assist you by providing a place for the group to meet, transportation services, child care, or refreshments. They also might be helpful in getting the word out to the kinship care families they serve about the availability of a new support group.

Does my organization need funding to start a support group?

There will be costs associated with running a support group. Your organization or congregation should consider providing child care, transportation, and light refreshments for participants. There also may be minimal costs attached to providing space or staff to facilitate the support group. Fortunately, many of these goods and services can be donated, making the support group one of the most cost-effective ways to support kinship care families in your community.

If you need additional funding to offset the minimal costs of running a support group, your organization or congregation may be eligible to apply for a two-year seed grant from The Brookdale Foundation’s Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP). RAPP provides funding to both state and community-based agencies

Reaching Out to Rural Caregivers

Some grandparents and other relative caregivers feel especially isolated because they live in a rural area. The Upper Cumberland Development District Agency on Aging in Tennessee decided to reach out to kinship caregivers living in rural locations because there were no services available. Pat Jones, program director, explains, “The kinship caregivers felt isolated and alone. They were afraid to ask the Department of Social Services for help or to speak out about their problems because they feared that their children would be taken away from them.” With the help of grant funding, three support groups serving 14 rural Appalachian counties in Tennessee have been established. They have become the most important and beneficial services available to the kinship caregivers in the area. The meetings are held in a restaurant, and a private company gives a yearly Christmas party for grandparents. The group meets at least once a month and provides time for caregivers first to share issues alone and then later in the session with the children they are raising. Ms. Jones offers the following advice for organizations or congregations planning to start a support group: “Don’t be discouraged if people don’t show up at first. The numbers will grow when you build trust with the individuals who do participate, and the word will spread.” **Contact:** Patty Jones, Program Director, Upper Cumberland Area Agency on Aging at 931-432-4113 or pjones@ucdd.org.

Grandparents as Support Group Leaders

Out of the knowledge gained from their own experiences, a group of grandparent caregivers from the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia began the “Grans as Parents” (GAP) support group. According to Eileen Brown, president of the organization, the program is run solely on a volunteer basis. “The staff here work from their hearts to help kinship caregivers. Their reward is helping to create success stories. No matter how many times the kinship caregivers fall or feel that they cannot continue, the volunteers at GAP help pick them up until they can stand on their own.” Ms. Brown believes that the success of the support group stems from the fact that her employees and volunteers all work together. “From the custodian to the bus driver to the support group leaders, we are all a team. No volunteer or staff member is more important than any other.” In structuring a kinship care support group, Ms. Brown emphasizes that “you must be flexible and willing to make changes in your program to address the needs of the individuals in your group.” Today, GAP has become an independent nonprofit agency that provides a drop-in center five days per week for grandparents who need assistance with custody and school problems, children’s behavioral issues, and basic subsistence issues. The agency also continues to offer a support group each month, collaborating with other organizations in the community for referrals and support. **Contact:** Eileen Brown, president, Grans as Parents, 215-236-5848.

to start support groups and other related kinship care support programs. To obtain more information about funding opportunities through the RAPP program, call 212-308-7355 or log on to www.brookdalefoundation.org.

How should my organization or congregation encourage participation in a kinship care support group?

Your organization can promote the visibility of your kinship care support group by passing out flyers and other information about it through other local community and faith-based agencies and service providers. In addition, you can advertise the support group through local newspapers, on TV and radio stations, Web sites, and community bulletin boards. The AARP Grandparent Information Center suggests posting signs in hair salons, grocery stores, and senior centers. The AARP Grandparent Information Center’s Web site also allows your organization to add information about your kinship care support group to its national list by logging on to www.aarp.org/grandparents/searchsupport and following the simple instructions.

Resources to help get you started:

AARP Grandparent Information Center

601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2296
202-434-6470 fax
www.aarp.org/contact/programs/gic.html

The AARP Grandparent Information Center provides information and referrals to local support groups, legal service organizations, and other local organizations that help kinship caregivers. It also provides additional information on how to start a support group.

The Brookdale Foundation Group Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP)

126 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022
212-308-7355
212-750-0132 fax
www.brookdalefoundation.org

The Brookdale Foundation’s Relatives as Parents Program awards two-year seed grants to local nonprofit organizations and state agencies that provide support groups and other direct services to kinship care families.

New York City Department for the Aging Grandparent Resource Center

2 Lafayette Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10007-1392
212-442-1094
212-442-3169 fax
www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/grc.html

The Grandparent Resource Center provides technical assistance to individuals and organizations wishing to set up support groups and other services for kinship care families in New York City and across the country.

¹ Cox, C., *To Grandmother’s House We Go and Stay* (New York: Springer) 2000, p. 235.
² Schopler, J.H., and Galinsky, M.J., Support Groups as Open Systems: A Model for Practice and Research, *Health and Social Work*, 19 (1993), pp. 195-207.

How to Set Up a Respite Care Program

Giving Kinship Care Families a Break

“I’d love to just lay down and sleep because physically I’m worn out. Seems like my energy just got up and went out the door. It’s all the up and down, this and that, getting up at night, never a break.”¹

— A grandparent raising her two grandchildren

Sooner or later, all kinship caregivers need a break from the children they are raising. And children need a break from their caregivers. Before setting up a respite care program, it is important to take a step back and identify what kind of respite care services already are available in your community. If there are not enough services in your area to serve local kinship care families, you might work with other partners in the community to set up a respite care program for the caregivers. This will give kinship caregivers the time they need to worship, go to the grocery store, or take care of their own health needs.

The following information will help you get started in creating a respite care program for kinship caregivers in your community.

What is respite care?

For families providing intensive, ongoing care to a family member who requires a lot of energy and attention, rest is important to keep everyone healthy. Respite care gives grandparents and other relative caregivers a temporary break from the daily stresses of looking after a child. There are many ways you can provide respite to a caregiver. Volunteers can look after the caregiver’s child a few hours each week, in emergency situations, or on a more regular basis. Volunteers also can watch the child while the caregiver is in the home. The most important thing is to talk to the caregivers in your community or congregation who need help and ask them what kind of arrangements would work best for them.

Why may kinship caregivers need respite care?

Grandparents and other relative caregivers often are under a lot of stress. Some are older individuals without much money or extended family support who thought their child-rearing days were over. They may have health problems. In addition, the children they raise may have disabilities or other special needs. These challenges require incredible energy and lots of rest — rest caregivers cannot get without extra help and support.

How can respite care help kinship caregivers and the children they raise?

When a familiar, trusted adult looks after a child, the kinship caregiver finally has a chance to take care of other family responsibilities without worrying. When caregivers take care of themselves, they can take better care of the children they are raising. Respite care also gives the children they are raising the chance to develop strong relationships with other caring adults in their communities.

Why should my organization or congregation provide respite care?

Parents don’t trust their children to just anyone. It’s no different for grandparents and other relative caregivers. They may be reluctant to ask others for help because, like all of us, they are uncomfortable about letting strangers into their lives. They may be afraid to admit they could use some temporary relief out of fear that it will be interpreted as their inability to care for the children and put the children at risk of being taken away from them. Others are reluctant to talk about the painful reasons that they are raising their grandchildren in the first place. That is why it is so important that kinship care families get respite care from those they know and trust, such as their



Reaching Out to Elderly Kinship Caregivers

In the early 1980s, the staff of the Adult Well Being Program in Detroit, Mich., noticed that more and more of their senior clients were seeking services with their grandchildren in tow. “You can become easily isolated when you’re older, when you’re lower-income, and when you can’t get access to transportation,” says Karen Schrock, executive director of the program. “Add three to five grandchildren you are raising, and you’re really isolated.”

In response to this growing population of older caregivers, the Adult Well Being Program started a respite care program designed specifically for low-income grandparents raising children full time. It gives caregivers a break by providing tutoring, field trips, and after-school activities for the children. Using trained volunteers from Catholic Charities, the program sends senior companions into the home to give caregivers “concentrated breaks.” The grandchildren also receive memberships to the Boys and Girls Clubs, so they can participate in a wide range of activities. **Contact:** Adult Well Being Program at 313-924-7860. Their Web site is www.awbs.org.

neighbors, or members of their church or community center. It also will be easier for the kinship caregivers to return the favor by helping and supporting others.

What are the different kinds of respite care?

One of the great things about building a respite program is that you can decide what works best for those you are seeking to help and for your organization and its team of staff and volunteers. Here are just a few types of respite care for you to think about:

- **In-home respite.** A volunteer or staff member looks after a child while the kinship caregiver stays in the home or leaves the home for an agreed-upon period of time. Your organization might choose to provide this type of respite care while the volunteer or staff member, the child, and the caregiver get to know each other better.
- **Community site-based respite.** The caregiver can drop off the child at a volunteer’s home or with staff members at your organization’s facility while she goes to an appointment or does errands. The advantage of this type of care is that the child can play with other children, and staff and volunteers can look after the children along with other adults.

- **Group respite.** A team of volunteers or staff members can take a group of children to the movies or another planned activity while their kinship caregivers handle other tasks. You also may be able to make arrangements for a group of children being raised by grandparents and other relatives to participate regularly in special children’s activities run by a local Boys and Girls Club or other child-serving organization.
- **Crisis nursery.** If your community or faith-based program already has a nursery, you might consider starting a “crisis nursery.” Caregivers without other family supports could drop off their children for care while they deal with medical or other personal emergencies.
- **Camps and recreation programs for school age children.** Camps and other recreation programs can provide invaluable experiences for the children they serve as well as a break for their caregivers.

If your organization or congregation’s respite care program is taking care of children with disabilities and other special needs, keep in mind that volunteers and other staff members will need special training.



Family Friends

Cheryl is a single grandmother raising her 4-year-old grandson, Darius. Leona is an 80-year-old volunteer from the neighborhood. Through the Family Friends Program at Philadelphia's Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University, Leona began volunteering to help Cheryl care for Darius. In the process, the two women developed a strong personal friendship. "What is unique about our respite program," explains Adam Brunner, Family Friends' project director, "is that when we create a match, we intend it to last forever — like family." The Family Friends Program places senior volunteers with children 12 years of age and younger, all of whom have special needs. The senior volunteer and the caregiver also develop a strong bond. "For the grandparent caregiver, the experience of having another adult care about her child seems to help her feel less isolated, alone, and burdened," says Brunner. **Contact:** Family Friends, Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University, at 215-204-3196 or abrunner@nimbus.temple.edu. Their Web site is www.temple.edu/cil/familyfriendshome.htm.

How can my organization start a respite care program?

Your best starting point is the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center. ARCH is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It gives free advice to organizations that want to offer respite to members of their community and provides the following resources:

- "Bringing Respite to Your Community: A Start-Up Manual" is a "how-to" book. It gives you basic information.
- Fifty-six free fact sheets provide information on various aspects of respite care programs, including one on respite programs for grandparents and other relative caregivers.
- A lending library of useful books on respite care and related issues covers everything from designing your program to training your volunteers. You can contact ARCH toll-free at 1-800-473-1727 or by visiting www.archrespite.org.

How can I find out about other respite care programs in my state?

Many states have their own state respite coalitions. These groups have had a lot of experience setting up respite care programs. They can give you practical advice about how to tap into programs that already

exist in your community, how to start your own, or how to get in touch with other people in the state who are interested in the same issue. Some states, such as Nebraska and Oregon, provide state funding for respite services. A list of state respite coalitions is listed in the resource section below. If your state doesn't have its own respite coalition, ARCH has a National Respite Locator Service that provides a state-by-state list of more than 2,000 respite care programs. You can get a copy the list by calling 1-800-473-1727 or by visiting www.respitelocator.org/index.htm.

"A National Review of Respite for Grandparents and Kinship Caregivers" is another useful publication that will tell you about several programs across the country that focus on grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children. Get your own free copy by contacting the Washington Department of Aging and Adult Services at 360-493-2559 or by e-mailing askdshs@dshs.wa.gov.

Does it cost money to start a respite care program?

If your organization or congregation has a dedicated group of volunteers or available staff members, you don't need much money to start a respite program. Sometimes there are expenses that you may not expect, like transportation costs for volunteers, participants, and caregivers, or snacks for the children. In these cases, you can organize a special fundraising event such as a bake sale or a raffle to support your respite



care project. If you are providing all-day or overnight respite or serving children with special needs, greater costs may be involved. It depends on the size of your program and the responsibilities you undertake.

If you do anticipate costs, you can apply to local community groups such as the United Way for startup funds. You also can partner with another community- or faith-based organization and share costs. You also might be able to get specific donations, such as food and equipment, from local organizations and businesses. In some cases there are government programs that might help fund your respite care program. ARCH's "Guide to Federal Funding for Respite and Crisis Care Programs" can help you find out more about these sources. ARCH's contact information is listed in the resource section below. There also may be some respite funding available through your local Area Agency on Aging under the National Family Caregiver Support Program for grandparents 60 and older raising grandchildren. (For more information, see the resource pages on the National Family Caregiver Support Program included in this resource kit).

Does my organization need liability insurance to have a respite care program?

Whenever an organization starts a new program where volunteers or paid service providers care directly for children — even for two or three hours

a month — it should consult an attorney or other expert about the type of liability insurance it needs. Liability insurance helps protect the organization and its staff, both paid and volunteer. Even though your community or faith-based organization *already* has liability insurance, you should check to make sure the new activities will be covered under the existing policy.

Resource to help get you started:

ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center

Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project, Inc.
800 Eastowne Drive, Suite 105
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
1-800-473-1727
www.archrespite.org

¹ Minkler and Roe, *Grandmothers as Caregivers: Raising Children of the Crack Cocaine Epidemic* (Newbury Park: Sage) 1993, p. 69.

Creative Ways to Show Respect and Recognition for Kinship Caregivers

Honoring Their Commitment to Children

“I didn’t know how to act because I never experienced anything like that in my life. It felt so good to be honored because we have struggled so much.”

— Jo Mary Peoples, a great-grandmother raising seven great-grandchildren, honored as Colorado’s “Grandparent of the Year”

Grandparents and other relative caregivers make tremendous sacrifices for their families and the children they are raising. Providing a child with continuous care can be physically and emotionally draining. Providing ongoing financial support may put a caregiver’s own economic future at risk. When juggling the demands of parenting, many grandparents and other relative caregivers also find themselves giving up the activities that they looked forward to in their older years, such as traveling, taking classes, changing careers, or just relaxing. As one kinship caregiver describes her caretaking responsibilities, “You give up self interests to invest time and money in your loved ones.”¹ Community and faith-based organizations can support grandparents and other relative caregivers by recognizing their selflessness, strength, and extraordinary commitment to their children and their community.

How can your organization or congregation help recognize and honor kinship caregivers and their children?

Giving the kinship caregivers in your community an extra reminder that their job is important and worthwhile can go a long way toward making them feel supported and appreciated. In recognizing their dedication, courage, and commitment, you can provide encouragement that will keep these caregivers afloat during challenging times.

In honoring kinship caregivers, recognition events do not have to focus on the caregiver alone. Planning events for the whole family can facilitate unique bonding experiences revitalize both the caregiver and the child. Your organization or congregation can recognize caregivers and their families in a variety of ways:

- **Proclamations.** Request that the mayor of your city issue a public pronouncement in recognition of a specific individual or group of kinship caregivers in your community or congregation. September 9 is National Grandparents’ Day and may be a good time for such announcements. Mother’s Day or Father’s Day also provide special opportunities for recognition of kinship caregivers roles.
- **Tributes.** Encourage the children in your organization or congregation to create and present a tribute to their kinship caregivers, such as a poem, letter, drawing, or other piece of artwork.
- **Plaques or certificates of appreciation.** Order a plaque or certificate celebrating a caregiver’s efforts.
- **Flowers.** Send flowers unexpectedly to kinship caregivers with a card of appreciation. If your congregation has flowers left over from a religious service or other event, give them to a kinship caregiver.
- **Award ceremonies or dinners.** Invite kinship caregivers and their children to a dinner or awards ceremony in their honor, with music, speakers, and other surprises.
- **Respite.** Provide care for children while the caregiver enjoys a gift certificate for a dinner and a movie, Sunday brunch, or a trip to the hairdresser or nail salon. (Please see “How to Set Up a Respite Care Program” included in this resource kit.)
- **Corporate donations.** Find corporate sponsors to donate vacations and other gifts in recognition of kinship care families.
- **Media profiles.** Encourage your local papers, radio, and TV stations to showcase a committed kinship caregiver or to cover your organization’s



or congregation's recognition event. Make sure to check with the caregiver first to see if such attention is welcome.

What are some examples of recognition events that other organizations and congregations have organized for kinship care families?

The following are examples of recognition events other communities have created for their kinship caregivers. Your community or faith-based organization can organize similar events to help grandparents and other relative caregivers feel appreciated and special.

Grandparent Recognition Day

In honor of grandparent caregivers, the Brooklyn Grandparents Coalition held a day of respite, relaxation, and recognition. Seventy grandparents enjoyed inspirational gospel singing that highlighted both the struggles and the joys of raising grandchildren. Before the day was over, the grandparents were presented with proclamations from state and city officials. Prizes and certificates were given in recognition of the grandparents' commitment to their grandchildren. As Deborah Langosch, chairperson of the Grandparents Coalition, explained, "We wanted to give them (grandparent caregivers) acknowledgement because often what they do, the sacrifices they make to take care of their families, is a thankless job. Part of our job is to show them that they are appreciated and to thank them for what they have done." **Contact:** Brooklyn Grandparents Coalition, Chairperson, c/o Bensonhurst Guidance Center, at 212-632-4760, or write to 8620 18th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11214.

Grandparents Fun Day

The Grandparent Resource Center, a Colorado organization that offers a variety of services to grandparents raising grandchildren, started their annual Grandparent's Fun Day in 1995. A day of picnicking, games, and dancing, the Fun Day recognizes all grandparent caregivers and honors one caregiver in particular. The Colorado Grandparent of the Year is someone who has done exceptional work in the community or who has persevered through an exceptional situation. **Contact:** The Grandparent Resource Center at 303-980-5707, e-mail mailbag@grc4usa.org, or write to P.O. Box 27064, Denver, CO 80227.

Grandparents Dinner Social

The Second Time Around support group for grandparent caregivers in Port Chester, N.Y. invited other local support groups to a Grandparent's Dinner Social. More than 50 grandchildren were entertained with fun projects in a side room at the Ossining Community Center while the grandparents had dinner, coffee, dessert, and lively discussion about their experiences as grandparent caregivers. **Contact:** Family Services of Westchester, at 914-937-2320, visit www.fsw.org, or write to One Gateway Plaza, Port Chester, NY 10573.

Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular

To show its support of grandparent caregivers, Family Services of Westchester provided 30 grandparents and grandchildren with donated passes to the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall. Lori Connolly of Family Services noted, "Grandparents really want these recreational opportunities because they are given the chance to expose their children to things they otherwise could not afford, and having other children and families around gives the grandparents a needed break." **Contact:** Family Services of Westchester at 914-937-2320, visit www.fsw.org, or write to One Gateway Plaza, Port Chester, NY 10573.

Grandparents Week

The Edgewood Center for Children and Families in San Francisco celebrates grandparent caregivers in a week-long series of events leading up to National Grandparent's Day on September 9. Activities include a Mystery Night in which the center surprises the grandparents with a night out on the town. There also is a museum trip planned and a luncheon to celebrate National Grandparents Day. **Contact:** Edgewood Center for Children and Families at 415-681-3211 or www.edgewoodcenter.org, or e-mail info@edgewoodcenter.org.

¹ Poe, Lenora M., The Changing Family: Psycho-Social Needs of Grandparents Parenting a Second Shift, *Parenting Grandchildren: A Voice for Grandparents*, Spring 2000.

How to Plan a Wednesdays in Washington and at Home® Event

Help Kinship Care Families Make Their Voices Heard

“We wanted the delegates to hear and see us. We ended up stuck in the elevator with one senator who must have thought we were a sewing circle. We made it clear we were not. We are advocates for children. We are not here to complain, but we want something done, and we will be back.”

— Kinship caregiver participant in Wednesday at Home at the state capitol in Richmond, Va.

In addition to creating new programs and services for kinship care families, your community or faith-based organization is invited to join the Children’s Defense Fund’s (CDF) Leave No Child Behind® Movement to help kinship care families make their voices heard by local, state, and federal policy-makers. By joining this important Movement, your organization can play a vital role in ensuring that all children get the support they need to become healthy, productive members of society. Together we can and must build the civic and spiritual will of enough citizens and political, faith, youth, and community leaders to protect and invest in all our children. It’s time to do better! We hope you will help build the Movement to Leave No Child Behind to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful transition to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

What is the Mission of the Leave No Child Behind® Movement?

As we enter the 21st century, America’s strength reflects our courage, our compassion, our hard work, our moral values and our commitment to justice. Today, we *can* extend the American dream of our forefathers and foremothers to every child and family. We have the know-how, the experience, the tools, and the resources. And we have the responsibility as mothers, fathers, grandparents, and concerned and sensible people across the country.

We *can* build a nation where families have the support they need to make it at work and at home; where every child enters school ready to learn and leaves on the path to a productive future; where babies are likely to be born healthy, and sick children have the health care they need; where no child has to grow up in poverty; where all children are safe in their community and every child has a place to call home — and all Americans can proudly say “We Leave No Child Behind.”

Our mission and vision in the months and years ahead is to do what it takes to meet the needs of children and their parents by building on the strengths and sense of fairness of the American people, learning from the best public and private ideas and successes, and moving forward to a renewed commitment to all our children.

What are Wednesdays in Washington and at Home?

Wednesdays in Washington and at Home® events (WIW/WAH) are a centerpiece of CDF’s efforts to mobilize a critical mass of people from all walks of life to demand action from our leaders to protect and invest in *all* of our children. We seek to build a persistent, powerful voice and witness of presence for children on Wednesdays somewhere in America, including visits, e-mails, phone calls, and faxes to members of Congress in Washington and in their local offices. We also seek to engage state and local public officials in support of our vision and specific annual goals to Leave No Child Behind. Your community or faith-based organization can gather a group of kinship care families and other concerned citizens to plan a WIW/WAH event to highlight the



struggles kinship care families face and outline ways that legislators and policy-makers can help make their lives better.

WIW/WAH were inspired by the 1964 “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” a moral witness of women during the Civil Rights Movement. Black and White women from the north traveled to Mississippi to develop relationships with southern women, bear witness for racial justice, and build bridges of understanding between Black and White women across income and racial lines. WIW/WAH also were inspired by the New Testament parable describing an unjust, powerful judge who ignored a powerless widow’s pleas for justice. But she did not give up. “Because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice so that she may not continue coming forever and wear me out,” the judge finally said. So must we wear out our leaders with our relentless insistence until they commit and act to *truly* Leave No Child Behind.

Your organization can help kinship care families in many ways.

CDF offers several programs to help your community or faith-based organization become more involved in the Leave No Child Behind® Movement, such as:

- Organizing a WIW/WAH.
- Helping political, media, and community leaders see and feel firsthand the needs of children in your community and what they can do by organizing a Child Watch visit.

To learn more about these or other ways you can help build the Leave No Child Behind® Movement, call Children’s Defense Fund’s Campaign to Leave No Child Behind at 202-628-8787, or visit www.childrensdefense.org.

“We’ll Keep Trying Until They Get It Right”

A bitter cold February day didn’t stop a group of 50 kinship caregivers from a long-planned trip to their state capitol in Richmond, Virginia, for a Wednesdays at Home™ event with CDF, under the leadership of Reverend Clifford Barnett and Brighton’s Solid Rock, a service provider for kinship care families in Portsmouth, Va. A dedicated band of caregivers sat in on a legislative training offered by CDF staff followed by meetings with key state representatives. “One legislator told us this is a family affair,” said one participant, “but we’ll show him these children are everyone’s business.” **Contact:** Reverend Clifford Barnett at 757-393-0570, or e-mail portsmouthgap@yahoo.com.

How to Set Up Activities for Children in Kinship Care Families

Making Sure Children Get the Special Support They Need

“Our group has lots of fun. We go on exciting trips, play educational games, and have different people come in and teach us new crafts. Grandma’s Kids is helping me improve my reading and my behavior.”

— Participant in the Harrison School Grandma’s Kids, a program for children being raised by kinship caregivers

Like all children, children in kinship care families need love, nurturing, and special attention to resolve the unique challenges they face. In addition to the guidance of their caregivers, they need positive role models and support from their communities. Children in kinship care families may struggle with a variety of challenges. Some may experience emotional problems as a result of the abandonment of a parent. Others have special needs due to the substance abuse or neglect of their parents. Common feelings experienced by these children may include anger at their parents — and sometimes at their caregivers — guilt, fear, abandonment, and confusion about their situations. Support groups, mentoring programs, and other activities specifically designed to address the needs of children in kinship care families can help them sort through these emotions and learn how to better deal with them. These activities also can help them have some fun.

What kinds of activities can your organization offer to children in kinship care families?

Children being raised by grandparents and other relatives can benefit from many of the same activities as children being raised by their parents. Participating in sports activities, going on field trips, and attending entertainment events will help children raised in kinship care families stay involved in their community and feel a sense of belonging, even when they feel their families are different. It is especially important that these children have the opportunity to meet and interact with other children being raised by grandparents or other relatives. This will help them know that they are not alone in the challenges they face.

The following are suggestions for types of activities that your community or faith-based organization can offer these children.

- **Set up support groups for children.** Just as adult caregivers struggle with their new child-rearing responsibilities, many children in kinship care families are dealing with their own unique set of issues. They may feel abandoned by their parents, be coping with special mental or physical disabilities, or fear losing the kinship caregiver who is currently caring for them. Others may blame themselves for the fact that their parents are no longer raising them. Your organization or congregation could provide a qualified therapist or social worker to help children discuss their concerns and issues with other children in the same situation. You already may have therapists or social workers in your organization or congregation who would be willing to volunteer to run a support group for children. If your resources are more limited, consider using your state and local community network to refer children and their families to already established support groups for children from kinship care families in your area. However, be sure they understand the unique needs of kinship care families.



- **Offer tutoring and homework help.** Volunteers from your organization or congregation may choose to provide tutorial assistance to help children in kinship care families complete their homework assignments or get special help in challenging areas. Many children will benefit from getting help with basic math and reading skills. In Nashville, Tenn., for example, the state's Family and Children Services Agency offers a tutoring program called Y.E.S. (Youth Excellent Summer) to two different groups of children raised by grandparents or other relatives, twice a week for three hours. The ages of children served range from 5 to 14. The groups focus on math and reading skills. Problem solving, critical evaluation, cooperation, and responsibility also are taught in this program.
- **Provide training on basic life skills.** Prior to living with their kinship care families, some children have lacked role models to guide them in the fundamentals of growing up, such as how to improve their social skills, resist peer pressure, and build their self-confidence. You can help these children by teaching them basic personal and social skills. Involving other young people to provide peer support and peer interaction also helps children in kinship care families apply these skills to real life situations.
- **Encourage participation in cultural and recreational activities.** Give children in kinship care families the opportunity to participate in recreational, art, and other expressive activities. These may include painting, storytelling, dance, rap, and singing, depending on the skills and interests of volunteers in your organization or congregation. Simple and inexpensive field trips may include trips to the zoo, bowling, swimming, roller-skating, picnics at the park, or a night at the movies. Help the children have some fun.
- **Help provide transportation.** Some children in kinship care families just need help getting to and from school or other community events. You can create a program in which "friends" are matched with children to provide assistance, including taking children to social and recreational activities and providing transportation to and from medical or other appointments. Make sure those who are driving have the insurance coverage they need for the children and themselves and that those providing transportation have permission from the caregivers.
- **Organize and supervise special weekend trips.** If your organization or congregation has additional resources available, you can create family recreational activities or weekend camps such as The Grand-Families Camp and Camp Hope. These opportunities give both caregivers and the children they are

Hope for Kinship Care Families

The Volunteers of America's No Empty Nest program in Alaska offers two free camping opportunities for kinship care families. The Strengthening of Grandfamilies Family Camp is a three-day camp in which grandfamilies are offered a variety of workshops, crafts, activities, recreation, and support to meet the needs of every member of the family. "The Grandfamilies Camp," says Pat Cochran, director of prevention services, "brings grandparents and grandchildren together to break the isolation and helps them to feel a part of a community. It is a tremendous relief for children who find out that there are lots of kids just like them. They can let go of some of those heavy burdens and just be kids!"

In the summer, 10 "camperships" also are earmarked for grandchildren being raised by grandparents to attend Camp Hope. This unique six-day prevention camp targets young children whose lives have been impacted by parental substance abuse. Combined with traditional camp activities, a specialized curriculum helps these children better understand their parents' disease and how it has affected them. They explore their feelings, learn healthy coping skills, and find out about their own increased risk of alcoholism and addiction. **Contact:** Pat Cochran, Director of Prevention Services at 907-522-9866 or 907-279-9646 or voa-allstars@gci.net. The Web site for this program is www.grandparentagain.com/community/support_alaska.html.

Services for Children Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives

Grandma's Kids is a school-based project in Philadelphia coordinated by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning and funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Services address the needs of both the children in kinship care families and their older caregivers. It is also an after-school program and summer camp offer tutoring assistance, life skills training, and counseling. Grandparents can go to support meetings as well as workshops on managing finances, finding housing, resolving legal issues, and improving parenting skills. Teacher training also is provided through Grandma's Kids, so teachers can become more aware of the unique challenges facing both the children in kinship care families and their caregivers. Project volunteers also coordinate with classroom teachers so that the after-school program builds on classroom lessons. **Contact:** Sannah Ragsdale, project coordinator, Grandma's Kids, at 215-204-3105. The Web site for the program is www.temple.edu/CIL/grandmaskids.htm.

raising the opportunity to relax and interact with other kinship care families who are experiencing many of the same challenges.

- **Provide job opportunities and guidance.** Have your organization or congregation create job opportunities for children in kinship care families, such as lawn mowing or working at a bake sale. These opportunities help children become more responsible and self-sufficient and build self-esteem.
- **Participate in or create a mentoring program.** All children need caring adults in their lives. Adult mentors can help kinship caregivers enhance a child's learning skills and build their self-esteem and self-control. Mentors also can provide emotional support and guidance on topics children may not be comfortable discussing with their caregivers. Many mentoring programs have been proven to increase educational achievement and social development for children and to help prevent other problems like substance abuse. To be effective, however, the mentor/mentee relationships need to be consistent and committed. Mentoring relationships actually can do more harm than good if they are short-lived or sporadic. Too many children living with kinship caregivers already have been disappointed by adults in their lives.
- **Organize a toy/clothing exchange.** "Hand-me-downs" can be a blessing for kinship care families with tight budgets. Your organization or congregation might create a toy/clothing exchange to give these families toys or clothes they otherwise would not be able to afford. Equally important, an exchange gives kinship care families the ability to give back to the community when the children they are raising outgrow their clothes and toys.
- **Award or support scholarships:** Some children in kinship care families can only dream of going to college, due to their family's limited resources. By creating college scholarships for children in kinship care families, you can help defray the costs of a college education for children raised by kinship caregivers living on fixed incomes. Your organization or congregation also can help by supporting existing scholarship programs and linking eligible children to them.



How can I find existing activities in my community that could help children in kinship care families?

You should begin by checking the Kinship Care Fact Sheet for your state. These fact sheets are available online at www.childrensdefense.org/childwelfare/kinshipcare/fact_sheets/. They list local organizations and programs that specifically serve kinship care families. Hard copies of the fact sheets can be

requested by contacting CDF's Child Welfare and Mental Health Division at 202-662-3568. Try connecting with your local school system and community organizations, such as the YMCA, YWCA, the Urban League, the United Way, Boys and Girls Clubs, or Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Your local Child and Family Services Department or Department on Aging also may be good places to find out what child-specific services are offered.

How to Set Up Parenting Education Programs for Kinship Caregivers

Improving Parenting Skills the Second Time Around

“In addressing the needs of grandparents, it is easy to overlook their unique strengths ... grandparent empowerment training can build on these strengths, increasing the grandparents’ skills while enabling them to become community resources reaching out to other grandparents in need of support and information.”

— Carole B. Cox, author, *To Grandmother’s House We Go and Stay*

While many consider parenting to be a natural skill, “parent education” or “parent empowerment” programs have demonstrated that parents and caregivers can learn how to be even better parents. More importantly, these programs have proven wrong the stereotypical notion that parenting education is for “bad parents.” Parenting education really only works for caring parents who feel that continuing to learn and change are important parts of life. An increasing number of programs provide parenting education to teach parents and other caregivers how best to care for the children they are raising.

Why is parenting education important for kinship caregivers?

For grandparents and other relative caregivers who have not raised children for many years, parenting education provides a “refresher course” on the newest and most effective parenting techniques. Some grandparents and caregivers say that parenting classes are especially useful because they feel out of touch with today’s youth. Parenting education can provide training on appropriate ways to communicate with children of different ages and support children’s development in a positive way. It also can teach caregivers about new disciplinary techniques or how to talk about sex, drugs, or violence.

Parenting education helps grandparents and other relatives become better caregivers and also can help them find valuable resources in the community to assist them in their parenting roles. For example, grandparents with children with disabilities needs can learn about alternative programs available to address their children’s unique needs. Some parenting education programs also help grandparents find legal assistance and surmount bureaucratic hurdles to obtain government benefits and services for their children. Most importantly, parenting education programs can help caregivers feel that they are not alone in their struggle to be the best parents they can be to their children.

Are there different types of parenting education programs?

Parenting education programs should be customized to the individual needs of a particular group of parents or caregivers. If you have a group of grandparents raising children with special needs, for example, parenting classes can focus on building the specific caregiving skills to best meet children’s physical and emotional challenges.

The following are just a few of the ways in which you can design a parenting program for the kinship caregivers in your community:

- **Implement a pre-existing parenting education curriculum.** There are hundreds of parenting education courses that have been effective in educating different populations of parents. These courses are tailored to parents of different cultures, parents of children with special needs, and parents of children of different ages. Although many of these curricula are not focused specifically on grandparent and other relative caregivers, they are universal enough in their application to be useful and easily adapted to this population.



Parenting the Second Time Around

In designing a parenting education program, it is important to use or develop a curriculum that reflects contemporary parenting practices. It also is important to be sensitive to cultural differences and teach disciplinary techniques that are mindful of these differences. It is helpful to make the sessions relevant to the experiences of grandparents and other relative caregivers. Three parenting groups in New York offer six weeks of parenting classes that provide kinship caregivers with a basic understanding of child development and children's needs, teach positive disciplinary techniques, and suggest ways that caregivers can partner with schools to ensure that their children's educational needs are being met. Child care is provided on-site. **Contact:** Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County, Educational Center, at 845-344-1234, e-mail at orange@cornell.edu or www.cce.cornell.edu/publications/catalog.html.

- **Locate a family support program that offers parent education classes.** There may be a family resource center or other family support program in your community that already is offering parent education classes as part of a broader range of support services for families. The family support program may be willing to start a special class for kinship caregivers or to involve caregivers in its ongoing classes. These programs also can be useful in connecting kinship care families to other resources in the community.
- **Design your own parenting class.** Because of the specific needs of the kinship caregivers you are serving, your community or faith-based organization may wish to design its own parenting education curriculum. One option, for example, might be to survey the grandparents and other relative caregivers in your community to find out what kind of training would be of greatest benefit to them. Your organization can then use this information to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of this population. Your organization also might choose to work with parenting education professionals locally or nationally who have designed curriculums to help customize your kinship care training.
- **Choose a support group or empowerment model.** The support group model of parenting education helps grandparents and other relative caregivers cope with the emotional difficulties and challenges of raising children while also teaching them how to strengthen their abilities to parent. The empowerment model of parenting education groups focuses on the challenges that grandparents and

other relative caregivers face and encourages caregivers to advocate for themselves. It is important to mention that these models are not mutually exclusive. Some parenting education groups incorporate elements of both to meet the comprehensive needs of their participants.

How much does it cost to start a parenting education program?

The cost of parenting education programs varies based on the type of parenting education your organization chooses. If your organization designs its own parenting course based on the needs of the kinship care families and the knowledge of others in your community, the cost may be minimal. To use a curriculum that has been designed by others, it may be necessary for you to pay for training and materials. This cost can range from hundreds to several thousands of dollars. Regardless of which curriculum you use, there may be small additional costs, such as publicity, refreshments, child care, and transportation, although it is possible to reduce these costs through the use of volunteers and donations.

Where can I obtain funding to start a parenting education program?

One way to obtain funding for your parenting education program is to contact your local or state office on aging. This office may offer grants for these programs or be able to connect you with funding sources in your community. Most states have created Children's Trust Funds (related to their child abuse prevention efforts) that also may provide funding for parent



education programs. You also may try partnering with another community or faith-based organization to start a parenting education program.

There are foundations that provide startup grants for grandparent caregiver programs, such as the Brookdale Foundation in New York. In addition, there are community foundations that support local parenting programs. For example, the Philadelphia Foundation, the Kansas City Foundation, the Baltimore Community Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, and the Boston Foundation all have supported parenting programs.

A third method of obtaining funding for your parenting education group is through corporations. Some of the corporations that have shown interest in funding parenting education programs are AT&T, Proctor and Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Hasbro, McDonald's, Stride Rite, and Metlife.

Finally, it may be useful to contact your state Department of Education or Department of Health to inquire whether they have funding available for parenting education programs for kinship caregivers.

How can my organization encourage kinship caregivers to participate in parenting education programs without making them feel like they are “lacking” as parents?

Any materials or advertisements for your organization's parenting education programs should emphasize that even the best parents can improve their skills, and how good parents are most likely to benefit from parenting education because they are always looking for new ways to help their children. This is especially important for kinship caregivers who may feel they are to blame for their adult children's behaviors and are afraid of repeating the same mistakes the second time around. Even those caregivers who feel confident about their parenting skills may feel judged by their family, friends, and others.

Does my organization need a parenting expert to teach these classes?

It depends on what your focus will be. Before providing parenting education, your organization should think carefully about what will be included in the training and how to provide it in the most responsible way possible. If you can involve an experienced parent educator, it can be very helpful. At a minimum, ask parenting experts in your community to look over and provide advice on your training plans and the materials you propose to use.

Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Empowerment training focuses on strengthening the parenting skills of grandparents as well as enabling them to become active advocates and resource people for others with the same concerns. Empowerment training differs from a support group as it follows a set curriculum. One empowerment curriculum, which focuses on both general parenting issues and advocacy, consists of 14 classes. At the conclusion of the parenting empowering sessions, a graduation ceremony held in formal recognition of the grandparents' accomplishments. The curriculum is available in English and Spanish. **Contact:** Carole Cox, Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service, at 212-636-6649 or ccox@fordham.edu.

Training for Caregivers Raising Children with Special Needs

Raising children with developmental disabilities can present unique challenges to grandparents and other relative caregivers. To provide caregivers with the skills needed to effectively parent these children, five programs in New York offer training curriculums tailored to this population. They include information on how to obtain key resources, how to address potential long-term care needs, and anger management and disciplinary techniques. The curriculum often works best in a support group setting, where grandparents can meet others struggling with the demands of raising children with special needs. **Contact:** New York State Office of Aging at 518-474-5041, or visit www.aging.state.ny.us/caring/grandparents.

Selected Parenting Resources

Although the following resources are not specifically tailored to a kinship care audience, they may be good places to start in shaping a parenting education program. If there is no ongoing parenting education program for kinship caregivers in your community, your organization should see if any of the following programs are already offered locally and might be adapted for kinship caregivers.

MELD. MELD is a community-based education program designed to meet the needs of specific populations, such as: 1) parents with children up to age 3 who are chronically ill or disabled; 2) new parents; 3) young mothers with new babies; 4) growing families; and 5) Latino and Southeast Asian families. MELD offers a five day training to parent facilitators, who are recruited from the community, and provides follow-up support services to them. The training takes place in Minneapolis and costs approximately \$15,000. MELD's curriculum emphasizes health, child development, child guidance, family management, use of community resources, home and community safety, balancing work and family, and other issues related to the parenting needs of the target group. MELD's facilitated parent education groups meet for two years, typically twice a month or as often as once per week. **Contact:** MELD at 612-332-7563 or info@meld.org.

Avance. Avance is a community-based program that targets low-income Latino parents with infants and young children. It has 80 family centers throughout Texas and in Kansas City and provides weekly, three-hour parenting education classes that

last for nine months, play groups and child care for children, toy-making classes for parents, adult education, and bimonthly home visits. Services are preventive in nature. Facilitators of the groups are usually graduates of the program and live in the same community as the parents whom they are serving. The curriculum is culturally sensitive and bilingual. **Contact:** Avance at 210-270-4630 or www.avance.org.

Parents as Teachers National Center (PAT). The PAT National Center develops curricula and trains and certifies parent educators to provide parenting support and information. There are more than 3,300 PAT programs worldwide. The PAT National Center also trains Early Head Start, Even Start, and other program staff, who conduct home visits with parents. The core components of the PAT programs consist of personal visits, group meetings, developmental screenings, and linkages to a network of community resources. **Contact:** Parents as Teachers National Center at 314-432-4330 or www.patnc.org.

Family Support America (FSA). FSA serves as a clearinghouse and resource center in family support. It offers program and practice expertise and training and technical assistance in all types of family support. Family support centers, one type of family support, are places in the community where families turn for help and assistance and to share experiences. They often offer parenting education programs. FSA also has an online database of thousands of family support programs. **Contact:** Family Support America at 312-338-0900 or www.familysupportamerica.org.