

GrandFacts

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



The Brookdale Foundation
Group
www.brookdalefoundation.org



Massachusetts

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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. 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 Massachusetts...

- There are 67,781 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.5% of all children in the state). There are another 19,721 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.3% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Massachusetts, 30,615 are living there without either parent present.
- 27,915 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [4,142 in Boston]: 14% of these grandparents are African American; 16% are Hispanic/Latino; 5% are Asian; and 62% are White. 32% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 70% are under the age of 60; 16% 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

Family Caregiver Support Program – Cape Cod

Sponsoring Organization:	Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands
Contact:	Josie Bouvier, Manager
Phone:	508-394-4630 x 181
Email:	caregiver@escci.org
Web:	www.escci.org
Service Area:	Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket

Family Caregiver Support Program – Cape Cod – cont.

Services Offered:

- Support, information/resources for grandparents and other relatives age 55 or older
- Help in creating a care plan
- Support groups:
- Bourne Council on Aging – Contact Lois at 508-759-0653
- Barnstable Senior Center – Contact Madeline at 508-862-4750
- Children’s Place Eastham – Contact Cindy at 508-240-3310

Family Caregiver Support Program – South Shore

Sponsoring Organization: South Shore Elder Services, Inc., Executive Office of Elder Affairs
Contact: Eleanor O’Neil and Kathleen Capuzzo
Phone: 718-848-3910
Email: oneil@sselder.org and kcapuzzo@sselder.org
Web: www.sselder.org
Service Area: South Shore

Services Offered:

- Support, information and services to grandparents over 55 raising grandchildren under age 18
- Family Caregiver Specialist works with grandparents individually to create support plan
- Assistance in linking to other community resources

GrandFamilies House

Contact: Stephanie Chacker, Director of Housing Services,
Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation
Phone: 617-436-0394
Email: schacker@nuestracdc.org
Web: www.nuestracdc.org
Service Area: Boston

Services Offered:

- Housing designed for grandparents raising grandchildren – 26-unit apartment resident (2-4 bedrooms)
- Assist grandfamilies in securing child care vouchers and enrolling in nearby preschool/school-age programs

Grandparent Support Group - Arlington

Sponsoring Organization: Town of Arlington, Council on Aging, Arlington Youth Consultation Center (funding from Minuteman Senior Services)
Contact: Lourie August, COA Social Worker
Phone: 781-316-3410
Email: laugust@town.arlington.ma.us
Service Area: Arlington and surrounding towns

Services Offered:

- Support group with speakers
- Information/referral

Grandparents as Parents (GAP) - Bourne

Sponsoring Organization: Bourne Council on Aging
Contact: Lois Carr
Phone: 508-759-0654
Email: lcarr@townofbourne.com
Web: www.bournecouncilonaging.org
Service Area: Cape Cod and surrounding area
Services Offered:

- Monthly support groups
- Information and referral
- Parenting workshops
- Intergenerational activities
- Resource library

Grandparents as Parents Program (GAP) - Chicopee

Sponsoring Organization: Chicopee Council on Aging and Senior Center
Contact: Jim Leyden
Phone: 413-534-3698
Email: jleyden@chicopeema.gov
Web: www.chicopeema.gov
Service Area: Chicopee
Services Offered:

- Services for kinship caregivers regardless of age
- Monthly support groups with child care
- Resource guide
- Social events and educational programs
- Information and referral
- Case management

Grandparents as Parents Program - Merrimack

Sponsoring Organization: Catholic Charities
Contact: Dotty Duval
Phone: 978-459-3242
Email: GAP_Lowell@ccab.org
Web: <http://www.ccab.org/services/elder/grandparents-as-parents.html>
Service Area: Merrimack Valley
Services Offered:

- Grandparent support groups
- Help-line
- Legal task force
- Respite fund and social activities
- Case management
- Workshops on such topics as medications, guardianship/adoption, finances, housing
- Special outreach to Latino communities in Lawrence and Lowell

Grandparents and Grandchildren Growing Together

Sponsoring Organization: North Suburban Family Network, a community benefits program of Hallmark Health; Melrose, Stoneham and Wakefield Councils on Aging (funding from Kappa Delta Psi, Melrose and Mystic Valley Elder Services)

Contact: Kathy Harlow
Phone: 781-662-2722
Email: [nsfamilynet@hallmarkhealth.org](mailto:nfamilynet@hallmarkhealth.org)
Web: www.hallmarkhealth.org
Service Area: Everett, Malden, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Stoneham, and Wakefield

Services Offered:

- Support group for relatives bringing up children who are not their own. Held at Stoneham Senior Center, Stoneham
- Speakers and other activities for participating grandparents or caregiver

J.J. Referral Services

Contact: Joanne Stephen
Phone: 781-572-0219
Email: joannejstp@aol.com
Service Area: Statewide

Services Offered:

- Helps grandparents navigate the human service system to obtain basic services such as food, clothing, housing, employment, emotional support
- Information and referral

Kin Caregivers Group

Sponsoring Organization: Berkshire Children and Families (a United Way agency)
Contact: Pam Clark
Phone: 413-584-5690
Email: pclark@bcfcma.org
Web: <http://www.berkshirechildren.org/>
Service Area: Hampshire County area

Services Offered:

- Parent education and support group for kin caregivers, located at 220 Russell St, Suite 200, P.O. Box 343, Hadley, MA 01035
- Activities for children
- Guest speakers

McInerney Parent Services

Sponsoring Organization: Berkshire Children and Families (a United Way agency)
Contact: Kathy Gaspardi
Phone: 413-499-3556 x 14
Email: kgaspardi@bcfcma.org
Web: http://www.berkshirechildren.org/bcf_parenting.html
Service Area: Pittsfield, North Adams

McInerney Parent Services – cont.

Services Offered:

- Support groups in Pittsfield (Pittsfield Senior Center), North Adams (Mary Spitzer Senior Center)
- Activities for children
- Guest speakers

Raising Our Children's Children (ROCC)

Contact: Harriet Jackson-Lyons

Phone: 617-541-3561

Service Area: Boston

Services Offered:

- Support groups
- Social activities for caregivers
- Teaches self-advocacy

Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP)

Contact: Lynn Girton, Chief Counsel

Phone: 617-423-0648

Email: lgirton@vlpnet.org

Web: www.vlpnet.org

Service Area: Boston

Services Offered:

- Pro bono and staff representation of grandfamilies in uncontested guardianships/adoptions
- Legal representation for caregivers regarding public benefits, child support, home ownership, financial issues, etc
- Community legal education training to kinship caregivers

Worcester Senior Center

Sponsoring Organization: Support from Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Contact: Donna Mezynski

Phone: 508-799-8072

Email: MezynskiD@ci.worcester.ma.us

Service Area: Worcester

Services Offered:

- Support group (meets in the evening, child care provided)
- Access to summer camp programs

Children in Foster Care

Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives.

Numbers – March 2006

- 10,261 children in out-of-home placements

- Of these children, 3,489 were placed with relatives

Preferences for kinship care

- State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the care of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS).

Kinship care licensing

- There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents.
- Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. The state licensing board has allowed DSS to issue a waiver on certain space requirements for kinship homes only.
- Kin also are strongly encouraged to participate in the same training as non-kinship foster families.
- Kinship and Child Specific Training and Resource Guide available for kinship care providers

Subsidized guardianship

- Massachusetts has a guardianship subsidy program for eligible children in Massachusetts Department of Social Services custody for whom guardianship is the most appropriate permanent plan.
- Children in this program are eligible for the same payments and medical assistance as they were in foster care.
- Contact: Kathleen D'Entremont, Adoption/Guardianship
 - Phone: 800-835-0838 or at 617-748-2234

State kinship care contact

- Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to
 - Mary Hynes at Mary.E.Hynes@massmail.state.ma.us or
 - Susan Tucke at Susan.Tucke@massmail.state.ma.us or
 - Phone: 617-748-2000

Training and support

- Kid's Net, run by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children through a contract with DSS, provides training, respite, support and camp scholarships for kinship foster parents caring for children in DSS care.
- The Connections program also provides training to kinship caregivers who have permanent custody or have adopted their children but are not currently involved with DSS.
- Contact: Michelle Benkis, Kid's Net and Connections Director
 - Phone: 617-587-1500
 - Email: mbenkis@mspcc.org
 - Web: www.mspcc.org (See Kid's Net under Programs-Adoptive/Foster Parent Support)

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 Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC).
 - Phone: 617-348-8500

- Web: www.state.ma.us/dta/

Food Stamps

- Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet their children's food and nutrition needs.
 - Phone: 866-950-3663
 - Web: www.state.ma.us/dta/

Health Insurance

- Grandparents and other relative caregivers may apply for free or low-cost health insurance on behalf of the children they are raising through the MassHealth program.
- In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid.
 - Phone MassHealth: 800-841-2900
 - Web: www.state.ma.us/dma/

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.childrendefense.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:

Standby Guardianship (Mass Gen. L. ch. 201, § 2B)

- Allows a parent or legal custodian of a child to designate, in writing, an adult person or persons to be appointed as standby guardian(s) of a minor to take over the care of the child if the parent is no longer able.

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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