



# PENNSYLVANIA

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



May 2007

Across the United States, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives; 2.5 million children are in these households without any parents present.

As the children's parents struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship, divorce, domestic violence, and other challenges, these caregivers provide a vital safety net to children inside and outside of the foster care system.

This fact sheet provides important information and resources for the grandparents and other relatives raising children in your state.

### National and State Data\*

#### The Children

- Nationally, 4.5 million children are living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children under age 18). This represents a 30% increase from 1990 to 2000.
- There are another 1.5 million children in the United States who are living in households headed by other relatives (2.1% of all children under 18).
- In Pennsylvania, there are 164,354 children living in grandparent-headed households (5.6 % of all children in the state). There are another 37,499 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 Pennsylvania, 76,356 are living there without either parent present.

#### The Grandparents

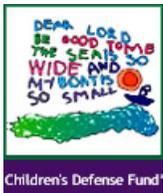
- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grand-children living with them: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 19% live in poverty.
- In Pennsylvania, 80,423 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [21,123 in Philadelphia]: 28% of these grandparents are African American; 6% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are Asian; and 62% are White. 35% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 69% are under the age of 60; 19% live in poverty.

#### Additional Information

- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov). Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available at [www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/html).
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children is available on AARP's website at [www.aarp.org/grandparents](http://www.aarp.org/grandparents).

\* These data are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics: 2000.

The Brookdale Foundation



## Programs That Can Help

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- *The Pennsylvania Department of Aging* has contracted with the Penn State Cooperative Extension, Penn State University and Generations Together at the University of Pittsburgh to develop a series of kinship care information sheets with primary focus of grandparents raising grandchildren. The fact sheets have been completed and are available on the website at [www.aging.state.pa.us](http://www.aging.state.pa.us). *Contact:* Bob McNamara at (717) 783-6207 or [rmcnamara@state.pa.us](mailto:rmcnamara@state.pa.us).
- *Philadelphia Department of Human Services, Division of Community-Based Prevention Services (CBPS)* is responsible for planning and implementing the DHS goal of “front-loading” services to families at risk in order to prevent new or subsequent DHS interventions, due to child abuse or neglect and/or delinquency. These services include adolescent violence prevention services, prevention case management, after school programs, parent education, truancy prevention activities, positive youth development opportunities, services to children with substance-involved mothers, school-based behavioral health support, early delinquency prevention programs, supports for youth in foster care, reunification services, community leadership development, and ongoing family referral and linkage to community resources. *Contact:* Ellen C. Walker, CBPS Divisional Director at (215) 683-4010, or [ellen.walker@phila.gov](mailto:ellen.walker@phila.gov). For linkage to services contact (215) 683-4000 or [Michele B Preston@phila.gov](mailto:Michele B Preston@phila.gov).
- *Kids n’ Kin at Philadelphia Society for Services to Children (PSSC)* offers direct service to kinship families that are not part of the foster care system and do not have an open case with DHS. Kids n’ Kin social workers are trained to understand family dynamics for kinship families and to assist in accessing benefits and resources. Additional services include: family therapy; workshops and caregiver support groups; legal support through collaboration with the Support Center for Child Advocates; therapeutically supported trips to Muncy State Correctional Facility; and support groups for children with incarcerated parents. PSSC recently initiated The Kinship Institute, which complements the direct service offerings of Kids n’ Kin by promoting policies and programs that benefit relative caregivers. The Institute accomplishes this by: 1) advocating for policies and legislation that benefit kinship caregivers 2) networking existing programs and 3) offering technical assistance for program development. *Contacts:* Carla Neal, Kids n’ Kin Team Leader, 215-875-4961, [carla@pssckids.org](mailto:carla@pssckids.org); Sarah Gaines, Director of The Kinship Institute, 215-875-4977, [sarah@pssckids.org](mailto:sarah@pssckids.org).
- *Grand Central* is one of the nation’s most comprehensive resource centers for grandparents and other relatives raising children with a bank of neighborhood, city, and national resources for legal, legislative, housing, physical and mental health and social services assembled within several resource guides for providers and families. Caregivers are provided specialized, individual and peer-to-peer support, help with appointments, paperwork completion, , and specific resource and referrals to community-based services. Those families needing ongoing case management assistance become part of the agency’s short-term caseload . Grand Central has established a comprehensive collaborative of networking partners to offer public information and education, develop support groups and resources for faith and community-based agencies, and sponsor conference and workshop venues that disseminate information on mental health/health, legislation, educational resources and assistance with entitlements and benefits for caregivers and kinship care provide agencies.. *Contact:* Sandra Cross, Executive Director, at (215) 557-1554 or [grandcentralinc@msn.com](mailto:grandcentralinc@msn.com).
- *Children’s Choice, Inc.* provides community-based, specialized services to children and families in the Philadelphia area. The agency’s Kinship Care Program provides intensive casework services, emergency on-call support, and extensive training opportunities to kinship caregivers. Children’s Choice works in cooperation with the Philadelphia Department of Human Services. *Contact:* Carolyn Eberwein, CEO, at (610) 521-6270 or 1-800-LA-CHILD or [caechoice@aol.com](mailto:caechoice@aol.com).
- *The Office of Community Family Support* helps prevent child abuse and neglect and fosters family stability through exemplary neighborhood programs that target the most vulnerable children and families, including kinship care families. Philadelphia’s 19 Family Centers provide one-stop access to a range of social services. Each Family Center offers six core services designed to help strengthen the family’s capacity to reach the goals that have been set for their children and community. These include case management, information, referral and linkage, parenting education, after-school programs, summer programs, and positive youth development activities. *Contact:* Ellen Walker, Administrator of the Office of Community Family Support, at (215) 683 -4DHS or (215) 683-4006 or [ellen.walker@phila.gov](mailto:ellen.walker@phila.gov).

- ***A Second Chance Inc. (ASCI)*** is a non-profit corporation that works in cooperation with the office of Allegheny County Children, Youth & Families to provide a full range of kinship foster care, adoptive, and support services to Allegheny County children. Some of the agency's services include, but are not limited to EPSDT (medical screening), intensive kinship care training, crisis intervention, information and referral services, continuity of services, counseling and other support services. ASCI offers support group sessions, seminars and activities for youth, kinship foster parents, and birth families. It also has an after-school program for kids. The agency also operates a clothing bank. ASCI was the first program in the state to exclusively offer such services to kinship families through a private, not-for-profit entity. *Contact:* Lisa Walker, Vice President of Child and Family Services at (412)342-0600 or [lisaw@asecondchance-kinship.com](mailto:lisaw@asecondchance-kinship.com). The website is [www.asecondchance-kinship.com](http://www.asecondchance-kinship.com).
- ***SeniorLAW Center*** provides advocacy, legal representation, advice, information, and referral services for kinship caregivers 60 years of age and older in Pennsylvania. Seniors in Philadelphia can call SeniorLAW Center's intake line (215-988-1244), walk in without an appointment (Monday –Wednesday 9am-1pm), or visit one of our 6 community legal clinics. Seniors in the rest of Pennsylvania can call the statewide SeniorLAW HelpLine, 1-877-PA SR LAW, a toll-free service available Monday-Friday 9am-1pm. All of SeniorLAW Center's services are free. In addition to custody and family law matters, SeniorLAW Center serves the needs of seniors and older caregivers in the areas of housing, consumer protection, domestic violence, financial exploitation, and advance planning. It also offers community education and training for grandparents and other relatives who are raising their kin, and for professionals working with caregivers. Multi-lingual staff and interpretation services are available to serve those with Limited English Proficiency. Please note: Direct legal representation in court is limited to seniors in Philadelphia County who have limited resources or other vulnerabilities. *Contact:* Karen C. Buck, Executive Director, at (215) 988-1244 or [kbuck@seniorlawcenter.org](mailto:kbuck@seniorlawcenter.org). The website is [www.seniorlawcenter.org](http://www.seniorlawcenter.org).
- ***Allegheny County's Penn State Extension*** offers several resources for kinship caregivers, including an annual treat, publications on issues affecting kinship caregivers, and presentations to community groups to raise awareness about the need for services and supports for kinship caregivers. Information is also available through the intergenerational website at [www.agexted.cas.psu.edu/fcs/mk/GRG.html](http://www.agexted.cas.psu.edu/fcs/mk/GRG.html). *Contact:* Nancy Crago at (412) 473-2540 or [NXA3@psu.edu](mailto:NXA3@psu.edu).
- ***All of Us Care*** sponsors the Grandparents Raising Children of Substance-Addicted Parents group, a support group that meets weekly on Monday nights at 6:30 p.m. in their offices in Sharpsburg. To register, contact: (412) 782-6855.
- ***The Salvation Army*** in Pittsburgh offers the God-Sent Grandparents Support Group every Friday from 11-1 from September through June. Grandparents and other relatives receive support through life experience, speakers, field trips and more. Activities are provided for the children. Support groups are also available at the McKeesport and Broadhead Manor branches of Salvation Army, but times differ. *Contact:* Frances Lewis at (412)394-4885 or [frances\\_lewis@use.salvationarmy.org](mailto:frances_lewis@use.salvationarmy.org).
- ***Lycoming County Department of Human Services, Family Support Center*** offers the Grams and Pops as Caregivers (GAPAC) support group on the last Thursday of every month from 1-2:30 pm. Speakers present information to caregivers on custody, adoption, financial issues, services for children and more. The group meets at the library in Williamsport (The Family Place). *Contact:* Judy Hawkins at (570) 326-7895 or [jhawkins@joinder.org](mailto:jhawkins@joinder.org)
- ***Caring Hands and Open Hearts*** offers a support group for grandparents and other relatives raising children in the Pottstown, PA area. The group meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the First Baptist Church in Pottstown and offers free child care. Participants bring refreshments. Guest speakers are invited. *Contact:* Rose Marie Thees, Founder, at (610)327-4621 or [theeslabs@aol.com](mailto:theeslabs@aol.com).
- ***Family Support of Central Pennsylvania*** offers the Grandparents Together program, a free support and education group for grandparents raising grandchildren. Groups meet at local churches in Perry County (Newport) on Monday afternoons and in Dauphin County (Middletown) on Tuesday evenings. *Contact:* Deborah Liddle, (717)541-0828 or 1-800-984-9923 or [deb@familysupportcentralpa.org](mailto:deb@familysupportcentralpa.org).

- *The Northeast Pennsylvania Intergenerational Coalition and The Community Involvement Network* offer two support groups for grandparents and family caregivers raising grandchildren. The Second Time Around support groups are held in Wilkes Barre on the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30 – 8:00 pm at Child Care Information Services. Child care is available at the Catholic Youth Center. The group in Hazleton is held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at Catholic Social Services and child care is available at the Hazleton area YMCA/YWCA. For more information, contact Ruth Kemmerer at the Family Services Association of Wyoming Valley at (570) 823-5144, ext. 309 or fsawv.ruthkemmerer@verizon.net
- *Penn State Cooperative Extensive in the Northwest Region* organizes kinship care teams to facilitate support groups at the county level. They also organize retreats and publish a quarterly newsletter with information of interest to grandparents and other relatives raising children. The county support groups include Erie, Venango and Lawrence Counties. In Lawrence County, the group works with Challenges, Options in Aging. For more information about county support groups in the Northwest Region, contact Janice Alberico at (724) 654-8370 or jma2@psu.edu.
- *Parent-Child Home Program* is a home visiting program that helps caregivers prepare young children for school in Central Pennsylvania. The emphasis is on early literacy and play. Books and toys are available. *Contact:* Shelley Panebaker at (717) 633-3547 or panebakers@hanoverhospital.org.
- *The Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University-Grandma's Kids* provides after-school services to children in Philadelphia who are in out-of-home placements (kinship, foster care, group homes, etc.). The primary goal of Grandma's Kids is to enhance the capacity of children to resist substance abuse and violence, while strengthening the family system and improving the ability of school personnel to address the needs of this very special population. The primary population is elementary school children, ages 7 to 12. The programs are housed in the schools where Family Centers have offices. The programs offer tutorial assistance, life skills, and educational enhancement lessons, cultural and recreational activities, events, guest speakers, group counseling, and caregiver assistance support. *Contact:* Joy Woods-Jones, Project Coordinator, at (215) 204-3105 or joyjones@temple.edu.
- *Challenges, Options in Aging* offers a free monthly support group through the Lawrence County Area Agency on Aging. The group offers a light supper and child care to group participants at no cost. If a grandparent participant is 60 or over, the agency can provide therapeutic counseling and respite through the federally funded Family Caregiver Support Program. It also has a small private grant to help with some legal costs. *Contact:* Marjorie McKissick at (724) 658-3729 or mmckis@ccpgh.org.
- *The Family and Community Service of Delaware County* runs a Second Time Around Parents program for grandparents taking care of their grandchildren and aims to build a stable and healthy relationship between grandparent and grandchild. The program offers bi-monthly support group meetings for relative caregivers as well as support groups for grandchildren between the ages of 5 and 12. Grandparents can also take advantage of parenting workshops, individual and family counseling, and a "Grandparent Stop-In Center" for less formal peer support. Second TimeAround Parents also offers a drug and alcohol abuse prevention program for grand-children. In addition, community outreach, informal seminars, and recreational activities reach out to otherwise isolated grandparent caregivers. The program empowers grandparents to help themselves by advocating their rights and offers education in advocacy. You can also log on to their website at [www.fcsdc.org](http://www.fcsdc.org). *Contact:* Marilou Coleman at (610) 566-7540 or mcoleman@fcsdc.org.
- *Butler County Area Agency on Aging* provides support to relative caregivers who are 60 and over, including information and referral for services, a support group, and financial reimbursement for costs related to caregiving. *Contact:* Jo Donaldson at (724)282-3008 or jdonalds@co.butler.co.us
- *Jefferson County Area Agency on Aging* provides a Family Caregiver Support Program to provide support to grandparents and other relatives raising children. Some of the funding for that program can be used for grandparents who are caring for disabled grandchildren, including medical supplies. The program is a reimbursement program under which the family can be reimbursed up to \$200/month, depending upon the household income. *Contact:* Emily Slater, 1-800-852-8036 or e-mail Cheryl Muders at [jcaamuders@alltel.net](mailto:jcaamuders@alltel.net).

- **Mifflin-Juniata Area Agency on Aging** offers financial reimbursement of up to \$100/month for grandparents and other relatives 60 and over. The reimbursement can be for caregiving expenses that benefit the caregiver and/or the child, including respite, enrichment activities, counseling, etc. Caregivers must live in Mifflin or Juniata County. *Contact:* Diane McCallister at (717)242-0315 or dmccallister@mjaaa.com.
- **The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging** offers services through the Family Caregiver Support Program and its Grandparenting Program for grandparents and other relatives 60 and over, with services offered on a cost sharing basis, depending upon income. Financial assistance is available for respite care, supplies, medical equipment and the like. Services include assessment of caregiver and child needs, counseling, training, and benefits outreach. *Contact:* Toni McGovern, 724-830-4444 or tmcgover@co.westmoreland.pa.us.

## Children in Foster Care

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Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kinship care.” In Pennsylvania, the Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth, and Families reports:

**Number of children in kinship care:** As of March 2006, there were 21,102 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 4,198 children were placed in licensed kinship homes.

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

**Kinship care licensing:** There is no separate approval policy for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same approval standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents in their county.

**Subsidized guardianship programs:** In addition to foster care payments and other benefits available to kin raising children in the foster care system, some states also have subsidized guardianship programs. Pennsylvania has established the Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship (SPLC) Program to provide financial assistance to eligible children living with family members and other kin who obtain permanent custody of them from Pennsylvania’s foster care system. Adoption and reunification with the parents must be ruled out as a permanency goal before children are eligible for the program. *Contact:* TaWonda Jones-Williams, Fiscal Policy and Support Unit, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at (717) 787-5199 or tjoneswill@state.pa.us.

**State kinship care contact:** Questions about kin foster care should be directed to Grace E. Gross, Program Specialist, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at (717) 705-2908 or ggross@state.pa.us.

**Training and support for kinship foster parents:** Anyone seeking to become a foster parent, including kinship caregivers, must participate annually in six hours of agency approved training. *Contact:* Grace E. Gross, Program Specialist, Office of Children, Youth and Families, at (717) 705-2908 or ggross@state.pa.us.

## Public Benefits

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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 Pennsylvania Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program.

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

and time limits.

Call the Welfare Helpline at (800) 692-7462 or log on to [www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/Cash/](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/Cash/).

**Food Stamps:** Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet their children’s food and nutrition needs. For more information, call the Welfare Helpline at (800) 692-7462 or log on to [www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/FoodStamps](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/FoodStamps).

**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 Pennsylvania Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free health coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid, call (800) 692-7462 or log on to [www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/MedAssistance](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/MedAssistance). For more information about CHIP, call (800) 986-KIDS, toll free in Pennsylvania, or log on to [www.ins.state.pa.us/ins/](http://www.ins.state.pa.us/ins/).

**AARP Foundation Benefits QuickLINK:** Other state and federal benefits may also be available to eligible children and caregivers, such as disability benefits, prescription drug coverage and support from other programs. To help connect grandfamilies with the programs that are right for them, the AARP Foundation Benefits Outreach Program offers Benefits QuickLINK, a free and easy-to-use on-line tool at [www.aarp.org/quicklink](http://www.aarp.org/quicklink).

## State Laws

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

**Medical Consent (11 PA Cons. Stat. §§ 2511-2513):** This law allows a child’s legal guardian/custodian to permit a relative or family friend to consent to medical, surgical, dental, developmental, mental health or other treatment for the child.

**Standby Guardianship (23 PA Cons. Stat. §§ 5601-5612):** This law allows a parent or legal guardian to authorize a co-guardian to assume the care of the person or property for a child upon the parent’s incapacity, debilitation, or consent. A custodial parent or legal guardian may designate a standby guardian by means of written consent unless the child has another parent or adoptive parent: (1) whose parental rights have NOT been terminated or relinquished; (2) whose whereabouts are known; and (3) who is willing and able to carry out the day-to-day child-care decisions concerning the child.

**Background Checks (23 PA Cons. Stat §§ 6344a):** This law requires families wishing to become approved resource or adoptive families for kin to include all individuals in the household ages 14 and up in the background clearance requirements.

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

## National Resources

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AARP Grandparent Information Center	(888) 687-2277	<a href="http://www.aarp.org/grandparents">www.aarp.org/grandparents</a>
The Brookdale Foundation	(212) 308 -7355	<a href="http://www.brookdalefoundation.org">www.brookdalefoundation.org</a>
Child Welfare Information Gateway	(800) 394-3366	<a href="http://www.childwelfare.gov">www.childwelfare.gov</a>
Child Welfare League of America	(202) 638-2952	<a href="http://www.cwla.org">www.cwla.org</a>
Children’s Defense Fund	(202) 628-8787	<a href="http://www.childrensdefense.org">www.childrensdefense.org</a>
Generations United	(202) 289-3979	<a href="http://www.gu.org">www.gu.org</a>
Grandfamilies of America	(866) 272-3761	<a href="http://www.grandfamiliesofamerica.com">www.grandfamiliesofamerica.com</a>

GrandsPlace	(860) 763-5789	<a href="http://www.grandsplace.org">www.grandsplace.org</a>
National Aging Information Center	(202) 619-0724	<a href="http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov">www.aoa.dhhs.gov</a>
National Committee of Grandparents For Children's Rights	(866) 624-9900	<a href="http://www.grandparentsforchildren.org">www.grandparentsforchildren.org</a>
National Eldercare Locator	(800) 677-1116	<a href="http://www.eldercare.gov">www.eldercare.gov</a>

*Fact sheets are updated annually. Changes or additions should be e-mailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at [gic@arp.org](mailto:gic@arp.org). Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.*