



### The Brookdale Foundation



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 Tennessee, there are 101,510 children living in grandparent-headed households (7.3% of all children in the state). There are another 24,774 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.8 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Tennessee, 56,682 are living there without either parent present.

### The Grandparents

- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren 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 Tennessee, 61,252 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [9,660 in Memphis]: 31% of these grandparents are African American; 1% are Hispanic/Latino; and 66% are White. 42% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 74% are under the age of 60; 20% 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/socdemo/cen2000/briefs.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/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.

## Programs That Can Help

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- ***The Tennessee Department of Children's Services' (DCS) Relative Caregiver Program*** is a public/private collaboration designed to support children who are not able to be raised by their parents, and are being cared for by grandparents, aunts, uncles and other extended family members. DCS contracts with community based agencies to provide services in each of the 12 regions. Families are eligible for the program by meeting the following standards:
  1. The relative caregiver must have primary care and control of the child through informal family arrangements or through legal custody or guardianship.
  2. The child must be age 18 or under; age 19, if the child will complete high school or any equivalent vocational/technical training before age 20.
  3. The relative caregiver and their spouse must take part in an in-home assessment and provide supporting documentation verifying program eligibility. The caregiver must agree to accept support services.
  4. The caregiver must be able to provide a safe home for related child and be committed to providing that home as long as is necessary and appropriate, until the child reaches the age of majority. The child must reside in the home with the relative caregiver and this must be the child's primary residence.
  5. The relative caregiver must be related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption.
  6. In order to receive Emergency Financial or start-up Assistance from RCP, the relative caregiver family must not be in receipt of any type of kinship payment or subsidy (i.e. Foster Care Board Payment, Families First Kinship Care Payment, or Subsidized Guardianship) and the household income cannot exceed twice the current Federal Poverty guideline.

Services Offered include:

- Family Advocacy / Short-term Case Management
- Youth / Teen Activity Groups
- Emergency One Time Financial or Start-Up Assistance
- Educational Workshops
- Information & Referral
- Respite & Enrichment Services
- Caregiver Support Groups
- Material Assistance
- Whole Family Enrichment
- Tutoring
- Mentoring

The Program's Community Partners are:

***Shelby County*** (901)448-3133 at UT Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities: [www.utmem.edu](http://www.utmem.edu)

***Knox, East, Northeast Regions*** (865)483-9111 at Foothills Care Inc.: [www.foothillscare.com](http://www.foothillscare.com)

***Davidson County*** (615)226-4917 at Family & Children's Service: [www.fcsnashville.org](http://www.fcsnashville.org)

***Hamilton County & Southeast Region*** (423)-226-5781 at South East Development District

***Upper Cumberland Region*** (931)432-4111 at Upper-Cumberland Development District: [www.ucdd.org](http://www.ucdd.org)

***Northwest & Southwest Region*** (731)772-8378 at Exchange Club-Carl Perkins Center: [www.carlperkinscenter.org](http://www.carlperkinscenter.org)

**Mid-Cumberland Region** (615)473-3006 at New Visions Inc.

**South Central Region** (931)684-4676 at The Center for Family Development

For more information, contact Robert Matthews,, Director, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children’s Services at 615-253-2342 or Robert.l.matthews@state.tn.us.

- **Tennessee State Kinship Advisory Board** was established in April 2002 by the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services and funded by the Brookdale Foundation. The Advisory Board is comprised of a group of policy makers, lawmakers, child welfare professionals and relative caregivers who are working together to build support for kinship families throughout the state of Tennessee. *Contact:* Robert Matthews,, Director, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children’s Services at 615-253-2342 or Robert.l.matthews@state.tn.us.
- **Knoxville’s Knox County Community Action Committee Office on Aging RAPP Program** provides bimonthly newsletters, support groups, transportation, group recreational activities (field trips, plays, and carnivals) and computer training with internet access for kinship caregivers in Knox County. *Contact:* Edna Eickman, Coordinator, at 865-524-2786 or edna.eickman@knoxcac.org.
- **The McMinnville Warren County Senior Center** offers the Warren County Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP). The program provides kinship caregivers with parenting classes and educational programs that address issues regarding raising children today. It also hosts social events and activities for the grandparents and children to attend. *Contact:* Cheryl Mingle, Executive Director at 931-473-6559 or emingle@srctr.org or Veronica Solomon at (931) 473-6559 or rapp@srctr.org..
- **The Tipton County Grandparent Wellness Group**, sponsored by the Tipton County Commission on Aging provides a support group, information and referrals and other services for grandfamilies in the Tipton County area. *Contact:* Anita Feuring, Program Director, at (901) 476-3333 or tccaprograms@covingtones.com.
- **The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Society at the Campora Family Resource Center** offers a support group as well as information and referrals for grandfamilies in the Winchester area. Transportation is provided to support group meetings. Conferences and other workshops with local professionals are also available. *Contact:* Tabitha Curtis at (931) 967-0626 or curtist@k12tn.net.
- **TennesseeGrands** is a grassroots support and advocacy group offering support groups meetings and information and referrals to grandfamilies across the state. *Contact:* Brenda Lequire at (865) 856-7174 or nannasbabe@aol.com.

## 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 Tennessee, the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) reports:

**Number of children in kinship care:** As of March 31, 2007, there were 6,636 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 854 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 DCS’s care. There is an expedited placement process in order to place children with relatives and kin. However, kin do not receive foster care board payments for the child until they have completed all requirements approving them to become foster parents.

**Kinship care licensing:** There are no separate approval standards for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same approval processes and requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.

**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. Most of these pro-grams offer ongoing subsidies to children who have left foster care to live permanently under the legal custody or guardianship of relatives. Tennessee has a waiver from the federal government for a IV-E waiver to demonstrate a subsidized

guardianship program which began in December 2006 in Davidson, Shelby, and Upper Cumberland counties. *Contact:* Odessa Krech-Helmer, Children’s Services Program Coordinator, at (615) 253-6906 or [odessa.krech-helmer@state.tn.us](mailto:odessa.krech-helmer@state.tn.us).

***State kinship care contact:*** Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Julie Flannery, Director, Foster Care and Adoption. Department of Children’s Services at (615) 532-6351 or [Julie.flannery@state.tn.us](mailto:Julie.flannery@state.tn.us).

***Recruitment, training and support for kinship foster parents:*** Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent, including a kinship caregiver, is required to attend a 30-hour pre-service training program called PATH (Parents As Tender Healers). *Contact:* Julie Flannery, Director, Foster Care and Adoption. Department of Children’s Services at (615) 532-6351 or [Julie.flannery@state.tn.us](mailto:Julie.flannery@state.tn.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 Families First.

- 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 (866) 311-4287 or log on to [www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/afs\\_tanf.htm](http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/afs_tanf.htm).

***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 (866) 311-4287 or log on to [www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/afs\\_fsp.htm](http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/afs_fsp.htm).

***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 Tennessee Medicaid and TENNCARE programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid and TENNCARE, call (866) 311-4287 or 1-800-722-7474 for help with other health-related care or log on to [www.tennessee.gov/tenncare/](http://www.tennessee.gov/tenncare/).

***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>:

***Power of Attorney (T.C.A. 34-6-301 et seq.):*** This law states that any parent who cannot care for his or her child due to hardship may grant any state resident the power of attorney to be legally responsible for their child. This authority may be delegated without the approval of a court by executing in writing the power of attorney on a form provided by the Department of Children’s Services.

***Permanent Guardianship (T.C.A. 37-1-801):*** This law allows the court to consider any adult, including a relative, foster parent, or another adult with a significant relationship with the child as a permanent guardian under certain circumstances.

<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@aarp.org](mailto:gic@aarp.org). Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.*