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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 Virginia, there are 107,602 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.2% of all children in the state). There are another 31,076 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 Virginia, 56,663 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 Virginia, 59,464 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [3,603 in Virginia Beach and 2,825 in Norfolk]: 40% of these grandparents are African American; 3% are Hispanic/Latino; 3% are Asian; and 52% are White. 40% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 15% 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 http://factfinder.census.gov. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available at 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.

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

Programs That Can Help

- *The Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA) Kinship Care Initiative Statewide Task Force & Information Network*, funded in 2000, includes local Brookdale Foundation grant recipients, private entities, area agencies on aging and other state agencies. The VDA continues to support the role of grandparents and other relatives raising children through its revised *Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren Resource Guide.* Future work of the Kinship Care Initiative will focus on defining programs of benefits to kinship caregivers in Virginia, building task force membership, forming partnerships with state agencies and private entities and starting new support groups as needed. *Contact:* Ellen Nau, Virginia Kinship Care Initiative, at (804) 662-9340 or ellen.nau@vda.virginia.gov.

- *Catholic Charities of Hampton Roads* provides the following services for grandparents and other relatives raising children: support groups; educational seminars; case management, advocacy, quarterly respite care activities, mediation, resource library, information and referral services, emergency resources, counseling, parenting plans and cooperative parenting . *Contact:* Director of Older Adult Services, Catholic Charities of Hampton Roads, at (757) 533-5217 or olderadults@cceva.org or Kathy Dial at (757) 533-5217 or kdial@cceva.org.

- *Mountain Empire Older Citizen's Inc.'s KinCare Program* helps kinship caregivers in Lee, Scott, and Wise counties and in the city of Norton with a wide range of social service needs in collaboration with other community and faith-based organizations. KinCare provides two support groups as well as mental health services, advocacy, a warmline, and child and family activities. Those interested in becoming a member of KinCare must participate in an intake process. *Contact:* Carol Moore, KinCare Program, at (800) 252-6362 or cmoore@meoc.org.

- *Brighton's Solid Rock, Inc.* offers a number of kinship caregiver support groups throughout the Portsmouth area. The groups are run in the local elementary schools. Based on the popular demand of the groups, Brighton's Solid Rock plans to have a support group in all 17 Portsmouth elementary schools. Many of the groups also offer children's activities during the meetings. *Contacts:* Reverend Clifford Barnett or Suzette Leathers, Brighton's Solid Rock, Inc., at (757) 393-0570 or pgap@brightonrock.hrcoxmail.com.

- *The Grandmomdaddy Program* of the Family Service of Roanoke Valley provides a variety of services for grandparents and other relatives raising children in the Roanoke Valley. These services include individual and family counseling, educational resources, and information and referrals. A resource guide is also available. *Contact:* Cathy Thompson at (540) 563-5316 or cthompson@fsrv.org.

- *The Strong Families/Great Youth Coalition* in collaboration with Rockingham Memorial Hospital and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board, offers GrandPEAS, Grand Parenting Education and Support Program, to grandparents and other relatives that are raising children. The organization has three active GrandPEAS groups, two in Rockingham County that are school-based and one in the city of Harrisonburg that collaborates with the program for pregnant and parenting teens. Two Hispanic groups will also be conducted in Spanish for Latino families, thanks to support from a Brookdale Foundation grant. One will be a school- based program held in Rockingham County and the other one will be held at the Harrisonburg site. Support groups meet once a month and include informal support and formal education. A monthly informational letter is created and given to members who attend a group. The letter includes information about the GrandPEAS program as well as local resources; listings of other support groups; information servicesand tips to help grandparents cope. Children's programs are offered during the GrandPEAS program. Children are given information, activities and instruction on a variety of Safety Topics. Three annual events are also held, including a picnic in July, a holiday party in December and a respite opportunity in May. *Contact*: Millie Tirado at (540)564-7388 or mtirado@rhcc.com

- *Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now)* offers a support and education group twice a month for grandparents and other relatives raising children. A group for children meets at the same time. *Contact:* Melissa McGinn, Family Support Coordinator, at (804)257-7226 or MMcGinn@grscan.com.

- *AIDS Care Center for Education and Support Services (ACCESS)* offers HIV-related support services with a family-centered focus for children, teens and their caregivers. ACCCESS provides case management, children's services, transportation, support groups, permanent supportive housing, emergency rental and utility assistance, HIV testing, outreach, and referrals for medical services and medication assistance. ACCESS provides community HIV prevention education for youth and "at risk" teens. Services are available in Norfolk, Hampton, Newport News, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Suffolk,Virginia Beach, etc. *Contact:* Stacie Walls Beegle at (757) 640-0929 or Stacie@accessaids.org.

- *The Crater District Area Agency on Aging* offers a caregiver support group on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at its office in Petersburg, Virginia. They also provide information and referrals, and if eligible, caregivers can participate in other programs offered through the organization. *Contact:* Helen Terry at (888)732-7020 or hterry@cdaaa.org or Mattie Robertson at (804)861-3185 or FGPINC@aol.com.

- *The Alexandria Department of Human Services* provides information and referral to services and supports for grandparents and other relatives raising children. Brochures and pamphlets about resources in the community are available. *Contact* Linda Cotton, Information and Referral Specialist at (703) 838-0900 or LindaCotton@AlexandriaVA.gov

- *The Fairfax County Kinship Care Committee* offers grandparent support groups twice a month, sponsored by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and Fairfax County Public Schools. For locations and to register, contact Robin Hamby at (703)277-2640, Betsy Pugin at (703)324-5401 or Colleen Turner at (703)324-5489. The Committee also offers Grandparents Day Off in which grandparents and other relatives receive respite while the children enjoy programs. For information on these planned events, call (703)324-3517. The Committee also offers a free guide entitled *Kinship Care Resource Guide for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children*. The guide can be ordered by calling (703)324-5870 or on the web at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs. *Contact:* Betsy Pugin, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging at (703)324-3517 or Betsy.Pugin@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Children in Foster Care

Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements "kinship care." In Virginia, the Department of Social Services reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of December 31, 2006, 8,150 children were in out-of-home placements under the Department's supervision. Of these children, 372 children were placed with kin.

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 foster care provider standards: Kinship caregivers have to meet the same approval standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-related foster parents.

Subsidized guardianship programs: In addition to foster care payments and other benefits available to kinship caregivers raising children in foster care, some states also have subsidized guardianship programs. Most of these programs offer ongoing subsidies to children who have left foster care to live permanently under the legal custody or guardianship of relatives. Virginia has been approved for a federal waiver for subsidized guardianship. Implementation is expected to begin July 1, 2008.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Therese Wolf, Foster Care Program Manager, at (804) 726-7522 or therese.wolf@dss.virginia.gov.

Other state kinship care services and supports: Under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, local departments of social services can provide services to kinship care families that include counseling, youth mentoring, tutoring, parent training, psychological assessments, case management, and information and referral. *Contact:* Lyndell Lewis, Family Preservation Supervisor, at (804) 726-7531 or lyndell.lewis@dss.virginia.gov.

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 Virginia's 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 (804) 726-7000 or log on to www.dss.state.va.us/benefit/index.html.

Food Stamps: Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet the family's food and nutrition needs. For more information, call (800) 552-3431 or log on to www.virginia.gov/benefit/foodstamp.html.

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 Virginia's Medicaid or Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS) Plan. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under the Medicaid plan. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call (866) 873-2647 or log on to www.famis.org.

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.

State Laws

The following state laws may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children[1:]

Medical Consent (Va. Code § 54.1-2969): This law allows a custodian, conservator, or other person standing in loco parentis to authorize medical treatment or surgery for a minor who has been separated from the custody of his parent or guardian.

Standby Guardianship (Va. Code § 16.1-349 – 352): This law authorizes a parent to designate an alternate or "standby guardian" to act temporarily on the parents' behalf regarding the child's personal care, custody, and support in the event that his or her parent becomes debilitated or dies.

Disclosure of Information in Records (Va. Code §32.1-271): This law provides that the state registrar or city or county registrar shall issue a certified copy of a birth certificate of a child to the child's grandparent upon written request based on evidence of need as prescribed by regulation.

[1] *Laws change and are subject to different interpretations. These general descriptions are not intended as legal advice in any particular situation.*

National Resources

AARP Grandparent Information Center	(888) 687-2277	www.aarp.org/grandparents
The Brookdale Foundation	(212) 308 -7355	www.brookdalefoundation.org
Child Welfare Information Gateway	(800) 394-3366	www.childwelfare.gov
Child Welfare League of America	(202) 638-2952	www.cwla.org
Children's Defense Fund	(202) 628-8787	www.childrensdefense.org
Generations United	(202) 289-3979	www.gu.org
Grandfamilies of America	(866) 272-3761	www.grandfamiliesofamerica.com
GrandsPlace	(860) 763-5789	www.grandsplace.org
National Aging Information Center	(202) 619-0724	www.aoa.dhhs.gov
National Committee of Grandparents For Children's Rights	(866) 624-9900	www.grandparentsforchildren.org
National Eldercare Locator	(800) 677-1116	www.eldercare.gov

Fact sheets are updated annually. Changes or additions should be e-mailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at gic@aarp.org. Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.