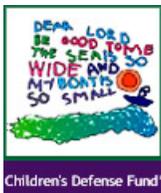




### The Brookdale Foundation



Children's Defense Fund



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 West Virginia, there are 24,276 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.0% of all children in the state). There are another 3,940 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.0% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in West Virginia, 10,809 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 West Virginia, 16,151 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [431 in Huntington and 417 in Charleston]: 7% of these grandparents are African American; .4% are Hispanic/Latino; and 90% are White. 42% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 72% are under the age of 60; 23% 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/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 West Virginia Relatives as Parents Program*** is a multi-service program for West Virginia kinship caregivers raising children outside of the foster care system sponsored by the West Virginia Office of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Resources, Mission West Virginia, Legal Aid of West Virginia, the West Virginia University Extension Services and the West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities. The program offers support groups across the state, informational workshops, a Listserv, annual training conference, social activities, and referrals to community resources. Its objective is to create and expand supportive, community-based services for kinship caregivers, improve community and state agency responses to kinship care families and raise community awareness. *Contact:* Allison Nichols, West Virginia University Extension Services, at (304) 293-2796 (ext. 3451) or [ahnichols@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:ahnichols@mail.wvu.edu); Ashley Daniels, Mission West Virginia, at (304) 562-0723 or [adaniels@missionwv.org](mailto:adaniels@missionwv.org); Laura Lou Harbert, Department of Health and Human Resources, at (304) 558-4303 or [lauraharbert@wvdhhr.org](mailto:lauraharbert@wvdhhr.org).
- ***The REACHH-Family Resource Center (FRC)*** offers comprehensive family services to grandparents and other relatives who are raising children in Summers County. The REACHH-FRC offers support groups and a Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker program that provides information on child development and available resources to caregivers of children ages three and under. It also offers educational materials specifically for grandparents, a licensed, curriculum-based child care center, and a multidisciplinary team facilitation for caregivers of children who are in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems or who have special needs, and advocacy and counseling for victims of child abuse and domestic violence. *Contact:* Kristal Straub at (304) 466-2226 or [evonstraub@hotmail.com](mailto:evonstraub@hotmail.com).
- ***Grandchildren/Grandparents, Inc.***, is a grassroots organization of West Virginia parents, grandparents and other relatives raising grandchildren. The group has helped to establish support groups around the state and also works with state legislators and agency representatives to improve services for kinship care families. *Contacts:* Bill and Lola Bailey, at (304) 652-4587 or [webailey@rcvideo.com](mailto:webailey@rcvideo.com) or [LolaBailey@netscape.com](mailto:LolaBailey@netscape.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 West Virginia, the Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Children and Families reports:

***Number of children in kinship care:*** As of February 28, 2007, there were approximately 3,606 children in out-of-home placements under the Bureau's supervision. Of these children, 276 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 Bureau's care.

***Kinship care licensing:*** Kinship/relative foster parents have to meet the same licensing standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kinship/relative foster parents.

***Subsidized guardianship programs:*** The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Children and Families, provides an ongoing subsidy for eligible children in the West Virginia foster care system whose qualified adult caregivers become their legal guardians. To receive a subsidy on behalf of the child, the guardian must show that there is a strong emotional tie with the child and that the child is not likely to be adopted or otherwise placed without the subsidy. The State will determine the amount of the subsidy awarded as well as the frequency of payments. The subsidy can be in the form of funding for services or stipends. *Contact:* Christina Bertelli, Program Specialist for Foster Care, Department of Health and Human Resources, at (304) 558-7980 or [cbertelli@wvdhhr.org](mailto:cbertelli@wvdhhr.org).



**State kinship care contact:** Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Christina Bertelli, Program Specialist for Foster Care, Department of Health and Human Services, at (304) 558-7980 or [cbertelli@wvdhhr.org](mailto:cbertelli@wvdhhr.org).

## 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 West Virginia Works 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 1-800-642-8589 or log on to [www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family\\_assistance/wvworks.asp](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family_assistance/wvworks.asp).

**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 1-800-642-8589 or log on to [www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family\\_assistance/fs.asp](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family_assistance/fs.asp).

**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 West Virginia’s Medicaid and the West Virginia Children’s Health Insurance Program (WV CHIP) program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call (877) WVA-CHIP or log on to [www.wvchip.org](http://www.wvchip.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](http://www.aarp.org/quicklink).

## State Laws

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

**Standby Guardianship (W. VA. Code § 44A-5-1 – 8):** This law allows parents to name an alternate adult caregiver or “standby guardian” to care for their children in the event of death, illness, or incapacity through other means. To be valid, the appointment must be accepted by the chosen guardian and approved by the court.

<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.*