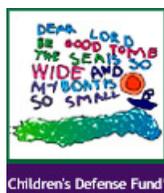




### The Brookdale Foundation



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 Wisconsin, there are 46,461 children living in grandparent-headed households (3.4% of all children in the state). There are another 14,704 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.1 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Wisconsin, 25,373 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 Wisconsin, 23,687 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [7,052 in Milwaukee]: 25% of these grandparents are African American; 7% are Hispanic/Latino; 3% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 2% are Asian; and 61% are White. 35% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 77% are under age 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](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.

## Programs That Can Help

---

- ***The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Partnership of Wisconsin*** is a statewide network of kinship caregivers and service providers that work together on issues and concerns facing grandparents raising grandchildren. Spearheaded by staff working with kinship support groups, the State of Wisconsin Bureau of Aging & Disability Resources, and the University of Wisconsin Extension, the GRG Partnership provides information on local services available to kinship care families, including social and legal services, and public benefits. The partnership also has developed a statewide network of support groups and trainings on how to support kinship care givers. Newly released publications include nine fact sheets written from the child's perspective on being raised by a grandparent. The series, *Through the Eyes of a Child: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* can be downloaded at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/relationships/>. Another publication, *Grandparents Caring for Children* describes issues and concerns of grandparents and provides county specific data. It can be found at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/demographics/grandparents.cfm>. The GRG website offers a list of Wisconsin grandparent support groups, fact sheets, and a resource guide, updated in 2006, called *Grandparents/Relatives Raising and Nurturing Dependent Children (GRAND)*. *Contact:* Mary Brintnall-Peterson, University of Wisconsin – Extension, at (608) 262-8083 or [mary.brintnall-peterson@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:mary.brintnall-peterson@ces.uwex.edu) or Barbara Robinson, Bureau of Aging & Disability Resources, at (608) 266-7498 or [robinbj@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:robinbj@dhfs.state.wi.us).
- ***AARP Wisconsin*** is committed to helping grandparents throughout the state find the resources they need in their area where ever possible. Their office is a hub for information and resources that pertain to aging, but specifically around the topic of grandparents raising grandchildren. AARP Wisconsin is connected with a myriad of grandparenting resource agencies around the state and can put individuals in touch with the right agency to help address needs and concerns. They have also developed a state specific legal guide for grandparents that outlines what their rights are around specific topics such as adoption, custodianship, informal living arrangements, grandparent's visitation rights, etc. It also outlines what financial resources the caregiver may qualify for in each situation. This guide is free and may be ordered by calling 866-448-3611 and leaving a message (name and address) at extension 6310. *Contact:* Jeanne Benink at 866-448-3611 or [jbenink@aarp.org](mailto:jbenink@aarp.org).
- ***The Grandparent Network of Winnebago County*** is a collaborative effort to provide support for grandparents and their grandchildren. Along with monthly support group meetings, child care is provided for grandchildren during meeting times, and supper is provided for both grandparents and grandchildren. Professionally-led education programs on a variety of issues ranging from parenting skills to legal rights are available as well; topics are chosen based on requests from members. A quarterly newsletter provides updates and information to members and an informational packet is available to grandfamilies as well. The program also offers outreach programs to community groups to help them learn more about grandfamilies and their needs. *Contact:* Chris Kniep at (920) 232-1973 or [christine.kniep@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:christine.kniep@ces.uwex.edu).
- ***The Wisconsin Extension*** in Polk and Burnett counties prints and distributes an informative state-wide quarterly newsletter on topics ranging from disciplining your grandchild and parenting skills to managing stress and grandparent's legal rights. See website at [www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/polk](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/polk). *Contact:* Marilyn Kooiker, Burnett County at (715) 349-2151 or [marilyn.kooiker@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:marilyn.kooiker@ces.uwex.edu).
- ***The Area Agency on Aging of Dane County*** collaborates with other organizations to offer a free support group, a warm line for caregivers, and a newsletter. The group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month at 10:00 at the Rainbow Project Child and Family Counseling and Resource Clinic in Madison and covers topics such as guardianship, custody and adoption, grandparents rights, grief and loss, stress relief, child development, etc. The website is [www.co.dane.wi.us/aging](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/aging). *Contact:* Claire Culbertson, Caregiver Program Coordinator at (608) 261-5679 or [Culbertson@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:Culbertson@co.dane.wi.us).
- ***The Racine Kin Connection*** holds a support group for grandparents and other relatives raising children the second Tuesday of each month. The group provides an opportunity for caregivers to share their experiences and information. The group provides child care and a light supper. *Contact:* Diane Gautsch, Next Generation Now, at (262) 635-1920 or

dgautsch@nextgenerationnow.org. The website is [www.geocities.com/racinekinconnection](http://www.geocities.com/racinekinconnection).

- ***Grandparents Parenting Again*** is a support group at the Women's Center in Waukesha for grandparents who are parenting or playing a significant role in raising their grandchildren. This free group offers support and encouragement in meeting daily challenges. The group meets Thursdays from 1:00 – 3:00 and free childcare is available. The website is [www.twcwaukesha.org](http://www.twcwaukesha.org). *Contact:* Karen Bresneham, The Women's Center, Inc. at (262)547-4600 or [karenb@twcwaukesha.org](mailto:karenb@twcwaukesha.org).
- ***In Their Best Interests, Inc.*** has two programs for kinship care families in the Milwaukee area. When children who are crime victims, victims of trauma, have lost a parent due to homicide or when children who have experienced domestic violence are placed with a kinship caregiver, the Fostering Healing Program provides targeted in-home support for the child and the caregiver. The program also helps kinship care families apply for crime victim compensation. Fostering Family Ties for Children is a joint effort with the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Legal Action of Wisconsin, Inc. The project provides volunteer attorney assistance to grandparents and other family members raising children in the areas of guardianship, kinship support, access to medical insurance and health care, school matters, and some Supplemental Security Income (SSI) questions. *Contact:* Henrietta Brown, Co-Director, at (414) 344-1220 (ext. 12) or [itbi.brown@sbcglobal.net](mailto:itbi.brown@sbcglobal.net).
- ***The Vilas County Commission on Aging*** offers a program for grandparents and other relatives raising children four times per year at different locations in the Vilas County area. Children and relatives over the age of 60 attend the program together, which includes social activities, as well as a support group. A facilitator presents information on issues that affect them and provides opportunities for them to learn from each other. *Contact:* Sue Richmond at (715)479-3625 or (800)374-1123 or [surich@co.vilas.co.wi.us](mailto:surich@co.vilas.co.wi.us)
- ***Waupaca County Department of Health and Human Services*** offers the Kinship Care Program through its Aging and Disability Resource Center. The program assists caregivers with obtaining access to the State Kinship Care subsidy, which is a monthly payment to relatives caring for children. To apply and obtain the necessary background checks. *Contact:* (715) 258-6300.

## 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 Wisconsin, the Department of Health and Family Services reports:

***Number of children in kinship care:*** As of December 2006, there were 6,128 children in foster care in Wisconsin and 1,496 in court ordered relative care.

***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 licensing program for kinship foster parents who are eligible for Title IV-E foster payments. IV-E eligible kinship foster parents have to meet the same licensing standards and training requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. Kinship Care relative caregivers who are not licensed are eligible to receive a kinship care payment of \$215 but they must meet basic eligibility criteria, including a criminal background check, before a kinship care payment is approved.

***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 guardian-ship 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. Wisconsin has been granted a waiver from the federal foster care requirements to offer this subsidy program to relative caregivers who want to assume legal guardianship. This program is limited to relatives who are licensed foster parents and caring for children from Milwaukee County, and who were under the jurisdiction of the Milwaukee County Children's Courts.

***State kinship care contact:*** Questions about Kinship Care should be directed to Holly Telfer, State of Wisconsin



Department of Health and Family Services, at (608) 226-6464 or [telfehr@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:telfehr@dhfs.state.wi.us). Questions about foster care should be directed to S. Kate Johnson, State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, at (608) 266-6874 or [johnssk@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:johnssk@dhfs.state.wi.us).

**Training and support for kinship foster parents:** Support services for kinship foster parents are offered by the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association. A quarterly newsletter and two conferences educate and inform kinship caregivers on a variety of important issues. You may log on to their website at [www.wfapa.org](http://www.wfapa.org). *Contact:* Sherry Benson at (715) 735-3879 or [tbwcrew@cybrzn.com](mailto:tbwcrew@cybrzn.com).

## 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 Wisconsin's Kinship Care Payment Program. To find your local contact go to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/Children/Kinship/CTYKIN!/kinmap.htm> or call (608) 2266-2464 (in Milwaukee, (414) 220-7035) .

**Food Stamps:** Kinship care families may also be eligible for the Food Shares program to help meet their children's food and nutrition needs. For more information, call (800)362-3002 or log on to [www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/feligibility.htm](http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/feligibility.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 Wisconsin's Medicaid and BadgerCare programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free health coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call (800) 362-3002 or log on to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/badgercare/index.htm>.

**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

---

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

**Standby Guardianship (WIS. Stat. A. § 48.978):** This law allows a child's parent or guardian to designate a standby guardian to oversee the daily care of a child if the parent dies or is incapacitated.

<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

---

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.*