

Kinship Care in Pennsylvania:

Support for Families with Grandparents
and Other Kin Raising Children



PENNSSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences
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Publication Overview

One in ten grandparents has been the primary support of a grandchild at some time in their lives. Nationally, 5.5 million children are living in households headed by grandparents and other relatives. Pennsylvania ranks seventh among the states in terms of number of children living in grandparent-headed households, with over 164,000 children fitting into this category¹.

Kinship caregivers, particularly grandparents, face a host of emotional, legal, and daily living challenges as they unexpectedly find themselves in the position of raising a second family. Many factors contribute to the dramatic increase in the number of kinship care families, including:

- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Teenage pregnancy
- HIV/AIDS
- Incarceration
- Divorce

On a positive note, exciting initiatives are taking root in Pennsylvania. In some counties, human service agencies are coming together, sharing ideas and resources, and offering innovative services designed to support grandparents and other relatives raising children.

This publication addresses kinship care challenges and highlights promising programs and resources available to assist grandparents and other relative caregivers and the children they are raising.

Audience

- Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children
- Human Service Agencies and Service Providers

Objectives

- Enhance public awareness about the importance of kinship care issues.
- Provide kinship care families with encouragement and information about resources they can draw upon.
- Provide kinship care guidance and tools for service providers who serve as referral sources.
- Promote the idea of collaboration and resource sharing between community agencies in support of kinship care families.

¹U.S. Census Bureau. *American Community Survey: 2003 Multi-Year Profile for United States. Table 2 Selected Social Characteristics.*



Introduction to Kinship Care Issues

This section provides a brief snapshot of kinship care families in Pennsylvania and highlights the importance of learning about caregiving issues.

Did you know that in Pennsylvania . . .

- nearly 202,000 children live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives?
- more than 80,000 grandparents in Pennsylvania are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their children?
- grandparents and other relatives in many of these households are the primary caregivers for children whose parents cannot or will not care for them due to substance abuse, illness and death, abuse and neglect, economic hardship, incarceration, divorce, domestic violence, and other family and community crises?

Why Is This Important?

- Grandparents and other relatives help keep children safe, situated in families and communities known to them.
- The need for programs and services for kinship caregivers and children spans all life stages.
- By learning more about these families and their unique needs, communities can better coordinate a continuum of service options.
- Offering a variety of easily accessible supports and services provides a safety net to some of our most vulnerable children and older adults.

What Is Pennsylvania Doing about This Important Issue?

To meet the unique needs of kinship care families in Pennsylvania, exciting ideas are taking root. In some counties, human service agencies are coming together, sharing ideas and resources, and offering innovative services to kinship care families. Some examples are listed below.

Philadelphia

- Grand Central, Inc., operates a resource center that provides information, referrals, family support, educational seminars, and support groups for kinship care families.
- Grandma's Kids, at the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University, is an after-school program for children being raised by grandparents or other alternative caregivers aimed at preventing violence and substance abuse.

Allegheny County

- A Second Chance, Inc., provides a full range of kinship foster care, adoptive, and support services for kinship care families. The organization’s monthly newsletter provides a summary of state/national legislation and programs pertaining to the health, education, and welfare of children in kinship care families.

Indiana County

- Grandparents as Partners, a support group established by a local task force of human service agencies, promotes legislative change to improve the legal standing of grandparents and other relatives who are the primary caregivers of children.

For more information on Pennsylvania programs, see “Section 4: Innovative Program Ideas.”

Conclusion

While services to support kinship care families are available in some parts of the state, these services still only exist on a small scale. To expand programs and services and adopt broader supportive legislation, public awareness must increase. Human service professionals can facilitate this goal by joining together (e.g., forming local kinship care task force groups), sharing ideas and resources, and mobilizing to address the unmet needs of kinship care families.

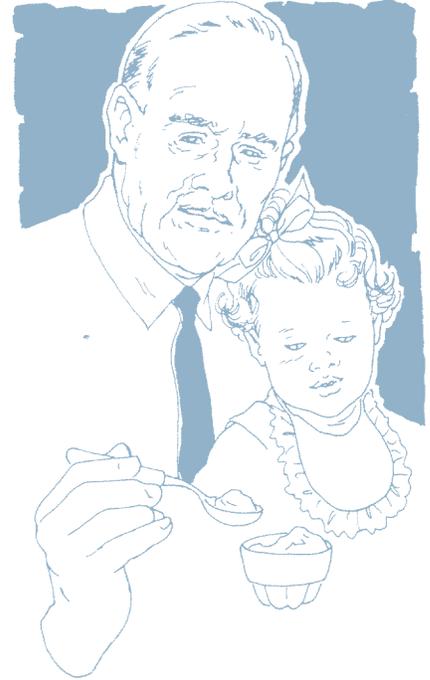


Kinship Care Support Groups

This section highlights some of the benefits of belonging to a kinship care support group and describes the basic steps involved in organizing support groups.

Why Might Kinship Care Families in Pennsylvania Go to a Support Group?

The challenges faced by Pennsylvania kinship caregivers can be physically and emotionally overwhelming. Older caregivers are frequently stressed and may experience a sense of isolation as they watch their peers participate in adult activities. Support groups are ways for kinship care families to assist one another. The groups tend to offer social and emotional support for members by providing advice and understanding. Some support groups also take on a proactive and political component as they work toward making improvements in local or state policies.



Benefits of Belonging to a Kinship Care Support Group

Support groups can be very beneficial to Pennsylvania families because:

- They have been shown to help reduce caregivers' stress and improve health, resulting in greater physical and emotional stability for caregivers.
- Many caregivers in support groups express the idea that just knowing there are others in the same situation is very helpful.
- When caregivers' needs are met, they can fully focus on the best interests of the children in their care and create a safer, more stable, and consistent living environment for children.

Finding a Support Group

Contact the Area Agency on Aging in your community by visiting <http://www.aging.state.pa.us/aging/cwp/view.asp?A=275&Q=177138> or call your local information and referral service at 411.

Organizing a Support Group

If a kinship care support group does not exist in your area, you can start your own with the following steps:

- Gather information about other kinds of support groups; if possible, attend a neighboring group meeting to watch, ask questions, and borrow ideas.
- Determine the best time of day to hold your first meeting; the evening may be better if caregivers are working during the day.

- Find a convenient and safe meeting place for a one- to two-hour meeting, such as a library, community center, faith-based group, hospital, social service agency, YMCA/YWCA, bank, or fraternal organization.
- Contact school officials and human service professionals working with older adults, families, or children and request that they refer kinship caregivers to you.
- Publicize meetings through posters, flyers, press releases, ads, announcements or letters-to-the-editor in newspapers, local TV, and radio.

At Your First Meeting

- Keep it simple and start small; two or three people in the beginning afford a good start. Allow one to two hours for the meeting. Let the group decide the time, length, and place of future meetings.
- Introduce yourself and share your story; invite others to share their stories, but do not require anyone to talk before they feel comfortable. All personal information discussed should be kept confidential within the group.
- Collect contact information from all who attend.
- Ask for volunteers to help plan and run future meetings. Assign specific roles such as finding a guest speaker on an area of special interest to the attendees.
- Provide refreshments.

Other Things to Consider

- Choose a name and decide the purpose of your support group. Some group organizers choose to avoid the phrase “support group” in their titles. Instead, they prefer names like “coffee club” or “relatives as parents” to avoid any stigma some associate with being in need of support.
- Try to organize the group so it provides both an informal support (self-help) function as well as a bridge to formal services in the community. Support groups are important for resource sharing.
- Decide what kinds of activities and speakers you would like to have. Topics could include legal, financial, health, insurance, school, childcare, emotional, substance abuse, stress, and discipline issues for both the children and their adult caregivers.
- Determine who is eligible to attend and whether transportation assistance is needed.
- Plan your meeting schedule—at least monthly is recommended.
- Decide how you will handle any group expenses. How will refreshments be provided? Will dues be necessary?
- Create a plan for childcare or teen activities. Check to see if one of the participating agencies has the expertise and resources to organize activities—perhaps even conduct a support group for children and youth that can take place at the same time your meeting does.
- Plan for a phone network. Exchanging phone numbers or setting up a phone tree for emergencies or for personal support can be very helpful.
- Remember to celebrate the triumphs and the rewards of raising children. People tend to come back when they leave with a smile.



Innovative Program Ideas

This section describes some exciting program models for kinship care families that can be found in Pennsylvania and provides contact information to learn more about these innovative initiatives.

Second Time Around Parents

Conducted by Family and Community Service of Delaware County, this program offers a wide platform of services for families with grandparents caring for their grandchildren, including bi-monthly support group meetings for grandparents, support groups for grandchildren between the ages of 5 and 12, workshops on parenting, individual and family counseling, training in advocacy (so families can serve as advocates for their own rights) and a “Grandparent Stop-In Center” for less formal peer support. **Contact:** Kathy Schank, 610-566-7540; **Web site:** <http://www.fcsdc.org/>

Intergenerational Wellness: A Faith-Based Approach

Offered by Generations Together at the University of Pittsburgh, this program serves relative caregivers and the children whom they are raising in Allegheny County. The program addresses the unique needs of kinship care families by incorporating emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of wellness. Topics covered include stress management, relaxation techniques, massage therapy, nutrition, low impact exercise, and parenting skills, interspersed with spiritual components. Activities for adults, children, and youth are included. Program partners include the Department of Health, Physical, and Recreation at the University of Pittsburgh, a local congregation, the Parental Stress Center, and the Parish Nurses of Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh. **Contact:** Generations Together, 412-648-7150; **Web site:** <http://www.gt.pitt.edu/>

The Point of Contact Program

Offered by A Second Chance, Inc., this program was established to provide direct services to families serving as kinship foster homes in Allegheny County. Program services include: certification, orientation, and training of kinship foster families; monitoring and assessment of participating families; after-care assistance; and respite care. This is the first program in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to offer such services to kinship foster families through a private, nonprofit entity. **Contact:** A Second Chance, 412-665-2300; **Web site:** <http://www.asecondchance-kinship.com/>

GRANDFamilies

A program sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension and Generations Together in Allegheny County, this series of workshops is designed to help kinship care families with school-age children discover what makes their families special. Family-strengthening sessions focus on family communication, problem solving and anger management skills, and life skills education. To conclude the series, families plan and conduct a GRANDFamily celebration. **Contact:** Nancy Crago at 412-473-2540; **Web site:** <http://allegheny.extension.psu.edu/>

Caregiver Family Retreat

A support respite experience for Western Pennsylvania kinship caregivers and the children ages 3 to 18 in their care. Families spend the weekend participating in family-strength-building and recreational activities in a natural setting. Workshops for kinship caregivers and grandchildren include topics on stress management, conflict resolution, parent education, and life skills education. **Contact:** Nancy Crago at 412-473-2540.

Grandma's Kids

An after-school program offered by the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University for elementary school children in kinship or foster care in Philadelphia. The goal is to improve children's ability to resist substance abuse and violence, while strengthening the family system and developing the skills of school personnel to address the needs of kinship care families. The program is housed at four locations in schools where Family Centers have offices. The program provides homework help, tutoring, life skills and educational enhancement lessons, cultural and recreational activities, group counseling, and support group sessions for caregivers. **Contact:** Sannah Ragsdale, 215-204-31305;
Web site: <http://www.temple.edu/cil/Grandmaskids.htm>

Stitching Stories: The Story of Quilts and the African American Experience

A three-part workshop series offered by Grand Central, Inc., in Philadelphia, this program provides kinship caregivers and their female youth (age 12 and older) with the opportunity to "explore their creative side, heal their souls and feed their spirits through quilt making." In the first part of the series, participants hear stories about African-Americans' experiences in quilting. Participants then learn to hand quilt under the guidance of a famous African American hand-quilter. **Contact:** Sandy Cross, Grand Central Kinship Care Resource Center at 215-557-1554.

Conclusion

While these programs are unique to their respective communities, they all emerged from a desire to enhance the well being and outlook for kinship care families. Where no dedicated services previously existed that addressed the unique needs of grandparent and other relative-headed households, staff at these agencies and organizations set out to expand or enhance their existing services. The same thing can happen in your community. Hopefully, the successful program ideas described in this section will inspire people to network and partner with others in their communities across the state to gain support for the creation of more programs to help kinship caregivers and their family members.



Legal Issues

Beyond the social and economic difficulties some caregivers face, kinship care providers must deal with a complicated set of legal issues, particularly when they do not have legal custody of the children. This section provides information about current kinship care laws in Pennsylvania and where families can go for help.

It is important to keep in mind that law and policies change and are subject to different interpretations. These general descriptions are not intended as legal advice in any particular situation.

Pennsylvania State Laws and Policies

In addition to the state's child guardianship and custody laws, the following laws may be helpful to kinship caregivers:

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.

In Pennsylvania, the Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth, and Families has a policy that requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the Department's care. However, in terms of licensing for kinship foster parents, caregivers receive no special treatment, must meet the same approval standards, and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents in their county.

It is also worth noting that in Pennsylvania, kinship caregivers face certain legal challenges not encountered by caregivers in some other states. In particular, Pennsylvania has no laws relating to financial and support services for kinship care, nor does the state have a law specifically relating to educational consent for children in a kinship care situation. By informing legislators and policymakers about these concerns--in meetings with caregivers in their offices or at support groups, sending e-mails and letters, and attracting media attention--kinship caregivers and their supporters can help promote the change needed to further strengthen and safely maintain kinship care families in Pennsylvania.

Where to Go for Legal Help

Because the legal issues surrounding a kinship care arrangement can be quite complicated, caregivers may want to contact a lawyer for consultation, advice, and/or representation. Sometimes just a little advice, especially when applying for public benefits or talking to the child's school about special education, can provide a caregiver with the tools to handle a situation on his or her own. In other instances, hiring a lawyer may be the best route to follow.

A good place to start is the Pennsylvania Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service. The PBA LRS operates Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and can be reached by calling 800-692-7375 or 717-238-6807. Caregivers may also be able to get good legal help even if they cannot afford to hire a lawyer. Contact Pennsylvania Legal Services at 800-322-7572 or 717-236-9486 or visit them on the Web at http://www.palegalservices.org/map_of_pa.htm.

Conclusion

In Pennsylvania, laws surrounding kinship care are in an evolutionary stage. Lawmakers are becoming increasingly aware of the extent of the kinship caregiving situation, and in particular, they are learning that this is not just an urban concern—kinship caregivers reside in every county in Pennsylvania, not just in the big cities. Nevertheless, kinship caregivers and the organizations that represent them must work harder to ensure that lawmakers know the many challenges and joys the caregiver families experience, particularly in areas where Pennsylvania law can be improved to promote the best interests of the child and family.



Kinship Care and Relationships with Others

This section explores what happens to adult and family relationships when a grandparent or other relative caregiver becomes the primary caretaker of children. Several suggestions for coping are provided.

Changes and the Effects on Relationships with Others

Becoming a kinship care provider may happen suddenly, and it can prove very difficult to adjust to the changes that occur. The new responsibilities of caring for children demand more of the kinship care provider's time, energy, and financial resources. This often means spending less time and attention on a spouse or partner, other children and adults in the family, and friends. Further, kinship care providers or their friends may feel they no longer share common interests with each other. Both may feel some discomfort having children with them in certain social situations. When such changes occur, there are steps kinship care providers can take to help themselves and others cope and maintain healthy relationships. Let's take a closer look at specific relationships and describe some suggestions for strengthening them.

Relationships with the Children's Parents

Often, when a family situation gets to the point that a relative must assume parenting responsibilities, there are profound feelings of disappointment and even anger associated with the biological parents' inability to fulfill their parental roles. Such feelings often contribute to adversarial relations between the caregiver and the parent; such a state of affairs is typically not in the best interests of the child, particularly when the children are likely to have an ongoing relationship with their parent(s).

If you are a kinship care provider, stepping in when the biological parents are unable or unwilling to safely uphold their primary parental responsibilities:

- Try to show feelings of compassion towards the parent for missing the joys of parenting. Keep in mind that they are probably not happy or proud of their behavior.
- Set limits when you feel you must, and make sure that the parent understands what you will accept and not accept.
- Communicate what will happen if the rules are not followed. When there is a question of trust, monitor the parent's behavior to be sure they are not doing anything to hurt the child or you.
- Avoid being a messenger between the parent and child. As appropriate, encourage the mother and/or father to talk directly with the child, even if it means paying close attention to what is being said and what is happening during the interaction.

Relationships with Children in Your Care

It is normal for children to miss their parents and want their mother and father to resume primary care of them. Find ways for the children to constructively express their feelings of anger or hurt in age-appropriate ways.

- Talk with them about how they feel.
- Help them adjust to the present situation by reminding them that they are living with someone who loves them and wants to keep them safe.

- Regardless of how you feel about the child's parent, never talk about the parent disrespectfully in front of the child. This may hurt the child or they may model your behavior and start to talk about their parent in the same way. Save the expression of such feelings for a close friend, a spiritual advisor, a counselor or other professional, at a time and place where the children won't hear you.

Relationships with Spouse or Partner

Strong relationships don't just happen, they take work. Look for ways to continue to nurture your relationship with each other.

- Remember those little actions that show caring, such as hugs and kisses, a "Thank You," and stories or words shared by the two of you that carry special meaning.
- Set aside "couple's time" by scheduling time alone and going out on dates when the children's needs have been met or responsible child care has been secured.
- Attend a retreat or other activity designed for kinship care providers and the children in their care.
- Talk with your spouse or partner about ways to help with the children's care, and be willing to accept help when it is offered.

Relationships with Extended Family and Friends

The extended family can include other adult children and grandchildren, aunts and uncles, and even other grandparents. Kinship care providers may wish they had more time to give to these persons. Aunts and uncles or grandchildren may be jealous of the time and attention given to the children in kinship care.

- Give attention to these persons by remembering them with cards or telephone calls.
- If they live close, invite them over for a family dinner. Let each family member bring a favorite dish. Let every person know that they are special to you. Make time to visit with other grandchildren.
- Ask for help. Your family and friends care about you and may be willing to help, but you may have to ask.

Relationships with Helping Professionals

Sometimes the best person to talk to may not be a family member or a friend. Because they care so much or have an interest in a particular outcome, those closest to the family may not be objective in their support or advice. Other times, caregivers may feel so overwhelmed or depressed that a helping professional should be contacted. Spiritual advisors and medical doctors known to the family are a good place to start. They can make referrals to counselors and psychologists, or you can visit the Pennsylvania Counseling Association at <http://www.pacounseling.org/refer.htm> to find a professional in your community. And always, in the event of an immediate emergency, dial 911 or visit <http://suicidehotlines.com/pennsylvania.html> to find the numbers for the suicide and crisis hotline in your county.

Conclusion

Becoming a kinship caregiver can happen suddenly. Caregivers, other family members, or their friends are often unprepared for this change. With careful planning and assistance, kinship care providers can develop skills in coping with this new situation, while strengthening their relationships with other family members and friends.



Getting Help When You Need It

This section shares tips and information on how kinship caregivers can work with service providers and human service agencies at the state and national levels.

Navigating the System

What is “the system?” Although it varies in each community, the system consists of governmental agencies, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, and other nonprofit entities that are designed to provide direct assistance to people in need. Access to the system typically begins with a phone call to one of the organizations to explain the problem and seek advice. Learn what services are available to you and what services you need. If you don’t find what you need, keep looking. Talk with others who are experienced in getting services.

Start Early

Once you decide that you may benefit from contacting an agency, do not put it off. Some agencies are overworked and understaffed, and getting an appointment or referral may take some time. Putting off the initial call may unnecessarily delay your getting help.

Be Organized

Make a separate folder for each grandchild (kin member). Write your grandchild’s date of birth, Social Security Number, health care information, important telephone numbers, etc., on the inside of the folder. Use this folder to store all your notes and records about your grandchild. Include, for example, last known addresses of the child’s parents when petitioning for custody.

Do Your Homework

- Find out as much information about an agency as possible. Learn what services the agency provides, how to apply for services, and what information and documents will be needed. Learn who is in charge of the services you need.
- Make a written agenda of your questions and what you want to learn. Review the list just before you talk with the person. Write down all the answers and check off each item as you go.
- For meetings, know where you have to go and when, and be there on time. If you think you need help, take a friend or someone who knows the system.

Be Persistent

It’s possible that the issues you may be facing will be new to the first agency you contact. In this case you may be told that they can’t help you. This is your opportunity to ask for referrals.

- Request the names and phone numbers of other organizations that may help. Don’t give up. If you call a referral and find out that person is no longer there, simply ask for the person who took their place. After the initial contact, don’t wait to hear back. Some agency workers are overwhelmed and may not get back to you right away. Plan on contacting them weekly.
- Try calling early in the morning or late in the day when supervisors may answer the phone.
- If you are not satisfied with the progress you are making, try calling at different times, or ask to speak to a supervisor if you can document that your efforts to go through the proper channels have been unsuccessful.

Don't Isolate Yourself

People want to help but can't if they aren't aware of your need. Friends, family, neighbors, and church members can be powerful sources of support. If they are not able to help, they may know someone who can. Make contact with others via support groups.

Keep Your Own Records

Although agencies are required to keep records, you should keep your own copies. An agency worker may leave, files may get misplaced, or you may relocate your residence.

- Keep records of the dates and times you make phone calls. Note if the line is busy, when no one answers, or you leave a message and no one returns your calls.
- Take notes of phone conversations and appointments. Write down or record information rather than rely on your memory. Get names, titles, agency names and phone numbers of everyone. Ask for business cards.
- Write down your own thoughts and questions to ask when it is your turn to talk. After the conversation is ended, immediately review your notes for understanding and confirm with the person what each of you will do.

Agency Workers Are on Your Side

Although it may not always seem like it, agency workers are there to help you navigate the system. They are trained in state/local policies, legislation, and how to be your ally.

Free Statewide Phone Numbers for Getting Help

Financial Assistance for limited incomes	(Voice) 1-800-692-7462 (TTY) 1-800-451-5886
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	(Voice) 1-800-772-1213 (TTY) 1-800-325-0778
Healthy Kids	(Voice/TTY) 1-800-986-5437
Special Kids Network	(Voice) 1-800-986-4550 (TTY) 1-800-986-5432
Legal Assistance for low income families	1-800-322-7572
PA Hunger Action	1-800-366-3997
Child Care Works	1-877-472-5437
PA Adoption Network	1-800-585-7926
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	1-800-986-KIDS http://www.ins.state.pa.us/ins/cwp/view.asp?a=1279&q=527075&insNav= /
PA Area Agencies on Aging (PA Department of Aging):	1-717-783-1550 http://www.aging.state.pa.us/aging/cwp/view.asp?a=275&Q=177124/

Conclusion

You can develop skills in negotiating systems to get the help you need. If initial attempts are unsuccessful, keep trying. Be polite but persistent in your efforts to get the resources you need for yourself and the children in your care.



Kinship Care Resources

This section provides information on Web sites, pamphlets, and resources developed by organizations working closely with kinship care families and issues.

National Resources

AARP Grandparent Resource Center (GIC)

Provides information about services and programs that can help improve the lives of grandparent households. The GIC serves grandparents in a variety of ways including: website tip sheets; print publications (some are also available in Spanish); a free newsletter for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren; information and referral to local support groups for grandparent caregivers through a national database, referral to legal services; technical assistance and networking with local, state, and national organizations; research on key legislation and public policy issues; co-sponsorship of local, state, and national grandparent events to share information and raise awareness about various grandparent issues; and advocacy in collaboration with AARP's State Affairs and Legal Advocacy groups. Web site:

http://www.aarp.org/life/grandparents/grandparentresources/ **Contact:** AARP Grandparent Information Center, 601 E Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20049. **Fax:** 202-434-6470. **Phone:** 202-434-2296. **E-mail:** gic@aarp.org

Generations United (GU) National Center on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Seeks to improve the quality of life of kinship caregivers and the children they are raising. As an organization focused on promoting intergenerational programs and policies, GU addresses the issue of relatives raising children from the perspectives of both the young and old. As a result, GU is a national leader in a growing field of organizations working to support these families. For a wealth of information on kinship care, visit **http://www.gu.org/projg&o.htm**.

Contact: Generations United, 1333 H Street NW, Suite 500 W, Washington, D.C. 20005. **Phone:** 202-289-3979. **E-mail:** gu@gu.org.

National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)

Under the provisions of the National Family Caregiver Support Program, Area Agencies on Aging provide supportive services to grandparents and other relatives age 60 and over who are raising a relative's child. Types of support include information about available services for caregivers; assistance in accessing services; individual counseling; organization of support groups; and training in decision making, respite care, and supplemental services to caregivers. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging at

http://www.aging.state.pa.us/aging/cwp/view.asp?A=275&Q=177138/ to learn what services are available through the NFCSP.

Local/State Resources

State Fact Sheets

The Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children in Pennsylvania state fact sheet (developed jointly by the Child Welfare League of America, AARP, The Brookdale Foundation, Generations United, and the National Center for Resource Family Support—Casey Family Programs); **Web site:** **http://www.gu.org/projg&ostates.htm**. Also see the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Pennsylvania: How Do Our Laws Work? fact sheet developed by the AARP Pennsylvania state office; **Web site:** **http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/Docs/PALaws.pdf**

Penn State Cooperative Extension's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Pennsylvania Resource Directory

<http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/GRG.html>

This Web-based database is sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension, AARP—Pennsylvania State Office, and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging. Visitors to this Web site can get county-specific information about helpful resources for kinship care families offered by local organizations. To add information to the directory, go to <http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/GRG/survey.asp>. Additionally, extension educators in county extension offices, located in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, are a resource for educational publications, programs, newsletters, and individual assistance on topics including parenting, nutrition and wellness, child care, and other related areas. Phone numbers and addresses of county offices can be found in local directories and at the **Web site:** <http://www.extension.psu.edu/extmap.html>. **Contact:** Matthew Kaplan, The Pennsylvania State University, 814-863-7871; **E-mail:** msk15@psu.edu

KinKids

Generations Together at the University of Pittsburgh is the lead agency for KinKids. Located in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, it is designed to provide support and services to help kinship care families remain functional and healthy. KinKids offers: a resource directory; a training curriculum for human service professionals who work with relative caregivers and their families; a GRANDFamilies intergenerational program for relative caregivers and the children whom they are raising; a relative caregiver database; and a Warmline (412-641-4546) for telephone reassurance, support, and referral. **Contact:** Generations Together, 412-648-7150; **Web address:** <http://www.kinkids.pitt.edu/>

Grand Central, Inc.

Grand Central, Inc., is Philadelphia's kinship care resource center, which consists of a consortium of community-based and public agencies, family members, and community leaders. Grand Central provides information and referral assistance, develops neighborhood training and support groups, and advocates for system change by identifying the unmet needs of kinship care providers and ensuring that systems and services for kinship care families are accountable. **Contact:** Sandra Cross, executive director, 215-557-1554.

Resources on the Web

Brookdale Center on Aging Grandparent Caregiver Law Center

Offers a page with a law chart for grandparents and professionals as well as a grandparent-caregiver guide that can be downloaded free of charge.

Web address: <http://www.brookdale.org/gpc/index.html>.

The Brookdale Foundation

The Brookdale Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) is designed to encourage and promote the creation or expansion of services for grandparents raising grandchildren. **Web address:** <http://brookdalefoundation.org/>. For information on the Brookdale RAPP program, click on "Relatives as Parents."

Child Welfare League of America—Kinship Care in Child Welfare Webpage

Contains services, initiatives, and publications for kinship foster families. Also provides information on kinship adoption, financial resources, substance abuse, stress management, and advocacy for kinship families. **Web address:** <http://www.cwla.org/programs/kinship/default.htm>.

United for Children's Rights

Provides information for families about the process of obtaining custody of children in foster care. **Web address:** <http://grc4usa.org/>

National Alliance for Caregiving

Provides support for family caregivers and connects families with information on caregiver resources and local services. **Web address:** <http://www.caregiving.org/>

Census Data

Additional U.S. Census data on grandparents and grandchildren:
Web address: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html>.

University of Wisconsin Extension Resources

- **“Through the Eyes of a Child: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren”**
A series of 9 fact sheets to help grandparents raising grandchildren learn more about what to expect and where to turn for support. **Web address:** <http://www.uwex.edu/relationships/>
- **Grandparenting Today**
This Web site provides numerous resources for professionals and relative caregivers.
Web address: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/index.html>
- **Cooperative Extension Resources to Address Relative Caregivers' Needs and Concerns**
A list of diverse resources including examples of extension leadership and participation in statewide networks and needs assessments, as well as materials such as curricula, fact sheets, and newsletters. **Web address:** <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/61804readinglist.pdf>

The Arizona Governor's Advisory Council on Aging--Support Group Training Manual

Downloadable manual for kinship caregivers and grandparents raising grandchildren, with sections on starting, leading, and conducting a support group.

Web address: <http://www.de.state.az.us/gaca/pdf/grandparentsmanual.pdf>

Conclusion

Kinship caregivers have access to all sorts of valuable resources. The number of national, state, and local organizations that provide information and support to help kinship care providers continues to grow. Sources of additional information and resources are available by contacting these organizations or by accessing links found on the Web sites listed throughout this publication.

Acknowledgments

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