



NEW JERSEY

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



September 2005

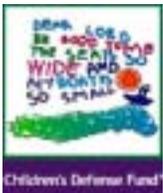
Across the United States, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives; 2.5 million children are in these households without any parents present. As the children's parents struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic 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.

The Brookdale Foundation

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 New Jersey, there are 127,263 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.1% of all children in the state). There are another 44,132 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.1 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in New Jersey, 63,514 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 New Jersey, 58,789 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [4,832 in Newark and 2,996 in Jersey City]: 38% of these grandparents are African American; 20% are Hispanic/Latino; 4% are Asian; and 34% are White. 27% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

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/grandparents.html.
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children is available on AARP's website at www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/.

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



Programs That Can Help

- ***The New Jersey Kinship Navigator Program*** is a centralized, statewide service that provides information, referrals and follow-up services to grandparents and other relative caregivers through a toll free number: 1-877-816-3211. The Navigator Program provides information on a wide variety of services including: grandparenting and other family support groups, TANF, medical coverage and services, child care, tutoring, and child support. The Navigator Program also provides referrals to wraparound services such as housing assistance, legal services, and respite care for low-income kinship caregivers. *Contact:* Sonya Jackson, Program Director, at (609) 588-2171 or sonya.jackson@DHS.state.nj.us.
- ***Atlantic County Grandparents Raising Grandchildren/Caregivers of Atlantic County*** at the Uptown Family Center provides a support group, counseling and legal services, parenting classes, economic assistance, and after-school child care for kinship care families in the Atlantic County area. *Contact:* Lois M. Holloway at (609) 804-0770 or liznn@aol.com.
- ***The Salvation Army Grand Parent Program*** provides services and supports kinship care families in Essex County and across New Jersey experiencing stress related to the absence or loss of the child(ren)'s parents. Support is provided through group meetings and a variety of social and recreational opportunities. The program offers a social and legal advocacy initiative to represent the needs of kinship care families on an individual and policy level. The Salvation Army also runs a summer respite camp for caregivers and children. Kinship caregivers are given the opportunity to enjoy seven days of Senior Camp R&R, while their children spend the same seven days in a supervised, residential camp. *Contact:* George Jones, Coordinator, at (973) 623-5959 or george_jones@use.salvationarmy.org.
- ***The Burlington County Community Action Program Head Start*** offers monthly Grandparent Support Group meetings for kinship caregivers between the months of September and June. Information is also provided at these meetings on various services, including the Kinship Navigator Program and legal options available to kinship caregivers. *Contact:* Sue Dietz, Disability Services Coordinator, at (609) 261-2323 or suedietz@aol.com.
- ***Family Connections*** offers a program called Caregiver Connections that provides in-home free counseling for grandparents and other adult relatives over the age of 60 who are raising children in their home. *Contact:* Miriam Taunean, Program Coordinator, Caregiver Connections, at (973) 675-3817 ext. 382 or mtaunean@familyconnections.nj.org. You can access Family Connections' website at www.familyconnections.org.
- ***The New Jersey Self-Help Group Clearinghouse*** is an information service that can provide kinship caregivers with information on local community support groups. *Contact:* (800) 367-6274.
- ***The Grandparents as Parents (GAP)*** program, is a network of health and human service professionals, grandparents, agency representatives, and elected officials. The purpose of GAP is to identify the needs of non-parental adults raising children, recommend programs, identify public policy issues, and recommend legislative changes. *Contact:* The Institute for Creative Aging, William Patterson University, at (973) 720-3690, or okinshkim@wpunj.edu. In addition, there is the Patterson Relative Caregiver Support Program, a program of Patterson Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, that provides a Family Support Worker for necessary interventions. The caseworker also connects caregivers to available services in the community. *Contact:* Patterson Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, at (973) 881-6927, or jlannaman@nnjm-chc.org.
- ***Rutgers Cooperative Extension's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program*** offers quarterly group meetings for grandparents and the children they raise led by Rutgers faculty members and featuring presenters on various topics affecting grandparents raising grandchildren. They distribute a quarterly newsletter and have two fact sheets on grandparents raising grandchildren. *Contact:* Marilou Rochford, Associate Professor, Rutgers University, at (609) 465-5115 ext. 609, or rochford@aesop.rutgers.edu.

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 New Jersey, the Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and



Family Services (DYFS) reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of January 1, 2005, there were 12,223 children in out-of-home placements under DYFS's supervision. Of those children, approximately 3,960 live in relative/family friend foster homes.

Preferences for kinship care: State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under DYFS's care.

Kinship care licensing: There is no separate licensing program for kin-ship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.

Subsidized guardianship programs: New Jersey has two separate Kinship Legal Guardianship programs. In order to be eligible for DYFS Kinship Legal Guardianship, children must be in the care of a relative for a minimum of twelve consecutive months and the courts must find that adoption is neither likely nor feasible. The DYFS program is limited to children who have been removed by the agency for safety or risk factors. There is no income limitation for caregivers. The New Jersey Kinship Navigator has a subsidy program for cases which have not been involved in the child welfare system. This program has an income test for caregivers.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Linda Holland, Supervising Program Support Specialist, at (609) 942-5559, or linda.holland@dhs.state.nj.us.

Training and support for kinship foster parents: The Foundation of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is a private, non-profit corporation located in Newark. Through the Foundation's Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center, the Foundation provides support group services, directs referrals to community resources, and identifies and helps to address the health related concerns and needs of caregivers and their children. *Contact:* Call (973) 972-4830.

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 Work First New Jersey.

- 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 1-800-792-9773 or log on to www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/wfnjws.html.

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 1-800-792-9773 or log on to www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/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 the Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid or NJ FamilyCare, call (800) 701-0710 or log on to www.njfamilycare.org.

Other Benefits: Other state and federal benefits may also be available to eligible children, such as child care subsidies, disability benefits, and special education services. For more information about these, download CDF's benefit guides for grandparents and other relatives raising children at www.childrensdefense.org or call (202) 662-3568. For more information on the federal benefits that may be available to caregivers, log on to the National Council on Aging's Benefits CheckUp web site at www.benefitscheckup.org.



State Laws

The following state laws may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children¹:

Educational Enrollment (NJ Stat. Ann. § 18A: 38-1): This law allows a New Jersey public school to enroll any child who is living in the home of another person who resides within the school district and is caring for the child without cost under certain conditions.

Kinship Legal Guardianship (NJ Stat. Ann. § 3B: 12A-2): This law allows a relative caregiver or family friend who has been providing care and support for a child for at least 12 consecutive months (due to parental incapacity) to petition the court to become legally responsible for the care and protection of the child.

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 | www.aarp.org/grandparents |
| Adoption Information Clearinghouse | (888) 251-0075 | http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/ |
| The Brookdale Foundation Group | (212) 308 -7355 | www.brookdalefoundation.org |
| 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 |
| GrandsPlace | 860) 763-5789 | www.grandsplace.com |
| KINship Information Network | (772) 501-0502 | www.kinsupport.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 |
| The Urban Institute | (202) 833-7200 | www.urban.org |

Fact sheets are updated quarterly. 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.