



# LOUISIANA

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 Louisiana, there are 117,859 children living in grandparent-headed households (9.7% of all children in the state). There are another 26,691 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.2 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Louisiana, 64,866 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 Louisiana, 67,058 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [9,478 in New Orleans and 3,633 in Shreveport]: 57% of these grandparents are African American; 2% are Hispanic/Latino; and 38% are White. 34% 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](http://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/](http://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

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- *The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana* offers support and information to help caregivers become aware, knowledgeable and informed. The center offers legal support and referrals, monthly support group meetings, an annual statewide conference, a quarterly newsletter, an information resource center and much more. *Contact:* Dot Thibodeaux or Danna Spayde at (225) 355-6499 or lagrparinfo@yahoo.com.
- *The Relative Caregivers Program* which serves Lafayette and all parishes in Acadiana, supports kinship care families by holding public workshops, running a network of support groups, providing respite care, organizing child care swaps between grandparents, and offering an information line, resource library, and newsletter. *Contact:* Katherin Boudreaux at (337) 237-0508 or katherin.boudreaux@

## Children in Foster Care

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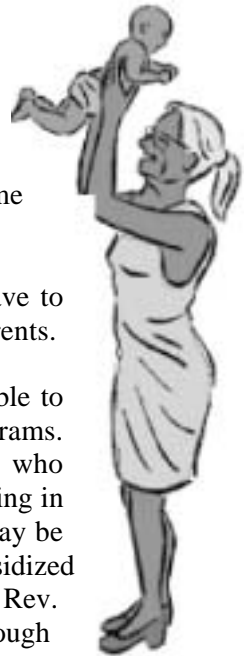
Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kinship care.” In Louisiana, the Department of Social Services reports:

*Number of children in kinship care:* As of January 2005, there were 4,200 children under the Department’s supervision in out-of-home placements. Of these children, slightly over 1255 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 care licensing:* There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.

*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 guardianship programs. Louisiana has a Kinship Care Subsidy Program that provides cash assistance for eligible children who reside with qualified relatives other than parents who have legal custody or guardianship of a child living in their home. If the relative does not have legal or guardianship at the time of application, assistance may be still begin for a period of one year before the guardianship is finalized. Unlike many other state subsidized guardianship programs, a child does not need to be in state custody to qualify for this program (La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 46.237). As of March 31, 2005, there were 8,805 children receiving cash assistance through the Kinship Care Subsidy Program. *Contact:* Martha Walton, Program Specialist, at (225) 342-4069, mwalton@dss.state.la.us, or [www.dss.state.la.us/departments/ofs/Kinship\\_Care\\_Subsidy\\_Program.html](http://www.dss.state.la.us/departments/ofs/Kinship_Care_Subsidy_Program.html).



*State kinship care contact:* Questions about kinship foster care should be directed to Jean Pittman, Foster Care Program Director, at (225) 342-4006 or jpittma1@dss.state.la.us.

## 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 Louisiana’s Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP).

- 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.

For more information, call your local Office of Family Services office or log on to [www.dss.sate.la.us/departments/ofs/cash\\_assistance.html](http://www.dss.sate.la.us/departments/ofs/cash_assistance.html). Louisiana also has a Kinship Care Subsidy Program for qualified relatives who have legal custody or guardianship of the children they are raising (see information in the “child welfare” section above). For more information, call (225) 342-4051.

**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 (225) 342-4051 or log on to [www.dss.state.la.us/departments/ofs/food\\_stamp\\_program.html](http://www.dss.state.la.us/departments/ofs/food_stamp_program.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 Louisiana’s LaCHIP program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free health coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for LaCHIP, call (877) 2-LACHIP or log on to [www.lachip.org](http://www.lachip.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](http://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 website at [www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org).

## State Laws

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

**Education and Medical Consent (La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 9:975):** This law permits designated caregivers without legal custody or guardianship to consent to medical and educational services on behalf of a child in their care.

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

*Fact sheets are updated quarterly. Changes or additions should be e-mailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at [gic@aarp.org](mailto:gic@aarp.org). Please write “State Fact Sheets” on your e-mail subject line.*