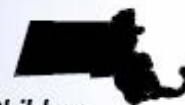




MASSACHUSETTS

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 Massachusetts, there are 67,781 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.5% of all children in the state). There are another 19,721 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.3% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Massachusetts 30,615 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 Massachusetts, 27,915 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [4,142 in Boston]: 14% of these grandparents are African American; 16% are Hispanic/Latino; 5% are Asian; and 62% are White. 32% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

Additional Information

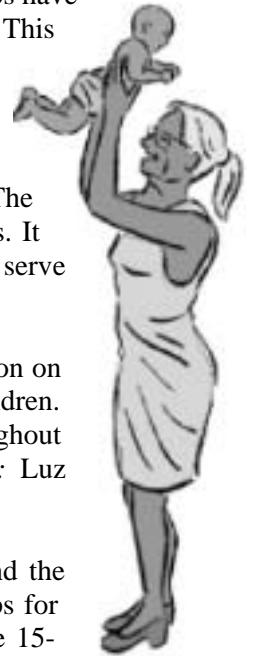
- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available 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

- **Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.**, a participant in the Brookdale Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP), provides support groups and a variety of other services to grandparents and other relatives raising children, including case management, referrals for summer jobs and after school programs, educational programs, and information about public benefits. *Contact:* Ruth Blackman at (617) 357-6000 (ext. 6340) or Blackman@bostonabcd.org.
- **The Massachusetts Grandparent Resource Network** is a statewide resource coalition of support groups and public and private agencies. Regular meetings provide a forum to share information and discuss issues and concerns of kinship families. *Contact:* Sheila Donahue King, Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, at (617) 222-7421 or Sheila.Donahue-King@state.ma.us.
- **The Grandparents as Parents Program** is funded by Catholic Charities and provides a network of grandparent support groups, a help-line, a legal task force, a respite fund, workshops, and social activities. Past workshops have covered topics such as psychotropic medications, guardianship and adoption, finances and housing. This network also does special outreach to and works with the Latino communities in the Lawrence and Lowell areas. *Contact:* (978) 459-3242 or www.ccab.org/gap.htm.
- **Raising Our Children's Children (ROCC)** is a group of grandparents and other relatives raising children in the Boston area. ROCC provides support groups and social activities for caregivers. The goal of the group is to teach grandparents and other relative caregivers to advocate for themselves. It also works with other agencies in the city and state to encourage the provision of in-kind services to serve the specific needs of kinship care families. *Contact:* Harriet Jackson-Lyons at (617) 541 - 3561.
- **The Haverhill Latino Grandparents as Parents Social Network**, a service of the Haverhill Coalition on Aging, offers a support and resource group for Latino grandparents and other relatives raising children. In addition to guest speakers and other resources, the Network also provides social activities throughout the year in addition to transportation, babysitting (during meetings) and ESL classes. *Contact:* Luz Roman at (978) 374-2390.
- **From Roots to Wings** is a program that serves grandparents, other relatives raising children, and the children in these families in the greater Boston area. The program provides separate support groups for grandparents and grandchildren facilitated by clinical social workers. It also provides an intensive 15-week course on Effective Black Parenting for grandparents. In addition to this course, workshops and regular seminars are held to help teach grandparents how to advocate for themselves and the children in their care. Guest speakers are invited to speak on a variety of topics, based on the needs and requests of the families. *Contact:* Cheryl Harding, Founder and Executive Director, at (617) 287-1638.
- **The Women's Service Club in Boston** offers a comprehensive Grandparents as Parents program that has a support group and organizes a range of activities for grandparents raising children. The program also brings in expert speakers on issues facing kinship care families. *Contact:* Dorothy Juana at (617) 262-3935.
- **The GrandFamilies House** in Boston, Massachusetts, which opened in 1998, is the nation's first housing facility specifically designed and built for grandparents raising their grandchildren. GrandFamilies House is a 26-unit apartment residence, offering 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom apartments. The building includes design features to support children and elders, such as grab-bars and child-safe windows, a playground, elevators and ramps. The building also provides many support systems that help grandparents to parent their grandchildren, including an on-site preschool, a summer camp, after-school programs for kids, and a computer-learning center operated by the YWCA - Boston. *Contact:* Stephanie Chacker, Director of Housing Services, Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation, at (617) 436-0394 or schacker@nuestradc.org.
- **Grandparents as Parents**, run through the Chicopee Council on Aging, serves kinship care families in the Holyoke and Chicopee areas. The program offers support groups and receives funding from The Brookdale Foundation's Relatives as



Parents Program (RAPP) and the Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs to provide educational programs, a quarterly newsletter, recreational activities, respite opportunities, social events, a website, and a local resource guide for kinship care families. *Contact:* Jim Leyden at (413) 534-3698.

- ***The McInerney Parent Center***, a program of the Berkshire Center for Families and Children (a United Way agency) in Pittsfield has a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program in collaboration with the Pittsfield Senior Center. The program, which is partially funded by a grant from the Children’s Trust Fund, offers regular support group meetings including an activities group for children. The group routinely invites speakers to the meetings who provide information and referrals as needed. *Contact:* Susan Dawdy at (413) 499-3556 ext. 14 or sdawdy@bcfma.org.
- ***The Bourne Council on Aging*** runs a Grandparents as Parents program. The program provides support groups, hosts parenting workshops in collaboration with local schools, organizes intergenerational activities, and operates a resource library for kinship care families. *Contact:* Lois Carr at (508) 759-0654.
- ***The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP)*** administers a program for persons who are providing care for related children. VLP has both pro bono and staff capacity to represent such persons in uncontested guardianships and adoptions, and in certain circumstances, contested proceedings. VLP is also able to provide legal representation to caregivers in other areas, such as public benefits, child support, home ownership, bankruptcies, landlord-tenant, and planning issues. VLP also has materials for caregivers and provides community legal education trainings to kinship caregivers. *Contact:* Lynn Girton, Chief Counsel, Volunteer Lawyers Project at (617) 423-0648 or lgirton@vlpnet.org.

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 Massachusetts, the Department of Social Services (DSS) reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of December 31, 2001, the Massachusetts Department of Social Services had a total of 10,682 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 1,996 (18.7%) 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 requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. DSS is currently working with the state licensing board to get a waiver on certain space requirements for kin, but it has not yet been approved. Kin also are strongly encouraged to participate in the same training as non-kinship foster families.



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. Massachusetts has a guardianship subsidy program for eligible children in DSS custody for whom guardianship has been determined to be the most appropriate permanent plan. Children in this program are eligible for the same payments and medical assistance as they were in foster care. *Contact:* Kathleen D’Entremont, Adoption/Guardianship at (617) 748-2234 or kathleen.d’entremont@massmail.state.ma.us.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Patricia Autori at (617) 748-2000 or Patricia.Autori@massmail.state.ma.us.

Training and support for kinship foster parents: Kid’s Net, run by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children through a contract with DSS, is the state foster parent association. The association advocates for and supports parents caring for children who are or have been in placement through DSS, including foster, kinship, and

adoptive parents. Kid’s Net also provides training opportunities specifically designed for kin-ship foster parents. *Contact:* Charity Bell, Kid’s Net Director, at (617) 983-5800 or cbell@mspcc.org.

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 the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC).

- 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 (800) 249-2007 or log on to www.state.ma.us/dta/.

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 (800) 249-2007 or log on to www.state.ma.us/dta/.

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 MassHealth program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for MassHealth, call (800) 841-2900 or log on to www.state.ma.us/dma/.

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 law may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children¹:

Standby Guardianship (Mass Gen. L. ch. 201, § 2B): This law allows a parent or legal custodian of a child to designate, in writing, an adult person or persons to be appointed as standby guardian(s) of a minor to take over the care of the child if the parent is no longer able.

¹ *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 |

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| 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.