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A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



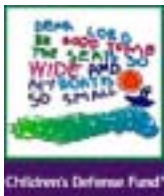
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Across the United States, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives; 2.5 million children are in these households without any parents present. As the children's parents struggle with substance 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 Maine, there are 9,276 children living in grandparent-headed households (3.1% of all children in the state). There are another 2,078 children living in households headed by other relatives (.7 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Maine, 4,326 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 Maine, 5,074 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [257 in Portland]: 1% of these grandparents are African American; 1% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are Asian; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native and 93% are White. 51% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

Additional Information

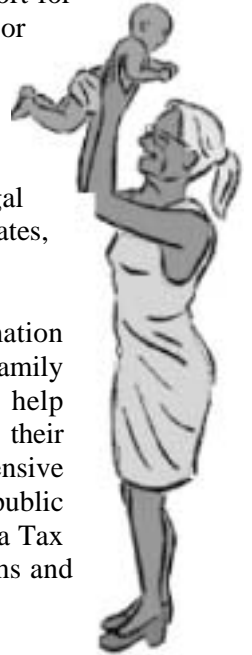
- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available 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 University of Maine Center on Aging and School of Social Work*** in partnership with Family Connections has been instrumental in establishing a unique framework for statewide collaboration among child welfare, aging, and other human service organizations and professionals to address the mental health and support issues faced by older adults who have assumed kinship care roles. A critical component of this statewide framework has been the establishment of the Maine Relatives as Parent Program (RAPP) Task Force, the first of its kind in the state. The Center on Aging also recently published a white paper, *Supporting Maine Families: Recommendations from Maine's Relatives as Parents Project*, which it is sharing with the public through workshops and distribution to key state opinion leaders. The white paper can be downloaded from the website at www.umaine.edu/mainecenteronaging. For more information about the RAPP Task Force and network, please visit our website or *contact* Dr. Lenard W. Kaye at the University of Maine Center on Aging at (207) 581-3444 or len.kaye@umit.maine.edu. For more information about support for parenting relatives, *contact* Barbara Kates, Family Connections, at (866) 298-0896 or bkates@kinshipconnections.org.
- ***Families And Children Together*** offers the Family Connections Program, providing services throughout the state including information, referrals, consultation, support groups, training, a resource library, assistance with navigating systems, help finding child care and respite, and legal information and access to services. Log on to www.kinshipconnections.org. *Contact:* Barbara Kates, Director of Family Connections, at (866) 298-0896 or bkates@kinshipconnections.org.
- ***The Maine Area Agencies on Aging and the Bureau of Elder and Adult Services*** provide information and assistance to adults 60 and older. Caregiver Resource Specialists, funded by the National Family Caregiver Support Program, are available to provide individual counseling and support to help grandparents and other relative caregivers in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiving roles. Elder Advocates at the Area Agencies on Aging can conduct a comprehensive assessment, discuss options, and assist grandparents and other relative caregivers in obtaining public benefits to which they may be entitled such as the Healthy Maine Prescription Low Cost Drug Card, a Tax & Rent Refund, Food Stamps, Medicare Savings Programs, and Medicaid, as well as other programs and services for older adults. *Contact:* Bureau of Elder and Adult Services, at (800) 262-2232.
- ***Angel on My Shoulder*** is an organization started by a grandmother raising her grandchild to help others in the same situation. The organization offers a 24-hour crisis hotline, monthly support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren, information and referrals, and emotional support in court advocacy proceedings. *Contact:* Marijane Vincent, Founder/Director, at (207) 676-9621 or aoms@maine.rr.com.
- ***The Family Resource Center in York County*** holds monthly support group meetings for grandparent and relative caregivers. Dinner and child care is provided for members during meetings. In addition, professional speakers inform members on a variety of issues including education, legal rights, and parenting. Please call in advance to secure child care. *Contact:* Marsha Kennedy, Coordinator, at (207) 451-9291 or FRCLH@aol.com.



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 Maine, the Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Child and Family Services reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of February 2005, 2,700 children were in out-of-home placements under the Department’s supervision. Of these children, approximately 18% were placed with kin.

Preferences for kinship care: State law and policy require that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the Department’s care.

Kinship care licensing: Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. Eligible kin also may be reimbursed for caring for children under the Department’s supervision without being formally licensed, as long as basic health and safety standards are met. DHS provides foster care and adoption training through the Maine Child Welfare Training Institute. Call or email Leslie Rozeff, Director for Adoptive, Foster Family, and Provider Training, at (207) 626-5218 or leslie.rozeff@state.me.us. The Institute’s website is www.cwti.org.

Subsidized guardianship programs: In addition to foster care payments and other benefits available to kin raising children in foster care, some states also have subsidized guardianship 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. Although Maine currently does not have a subsidized guardianship program, there is a current proposal pending with the Federal government for a waiver to implement such a program.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Dan Despard, Director of Child Welfare Practice and Policy, Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Child and Family Services at (207) 287-5060 or daniel.r.despard@maine.gov.

Training and support for kinship foster parents: The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Child and Family Services in partnership with two private child placement agencies, has developed a pilot program to speed the assessment of potential relative caregivers for children under the Department’s supervision and to expand the range of supports for these kinship families once the placement occurs. One of the Bureau’s reform goals is to increase the safe use of kinship care placements by 25% in the next two years. All districts of the Maine Bureau of Child and Family Services have designated in-house kinship care specialists to provide support to children in kinship placements. For more information, contact Dan Despard, Director of Child Welfare Practice and Policy, Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Child and Family Services at (207) 287-5060 or daniel.r.despard@maine.gov.

The Maine Association of Child Abuse and Neglect Councils advocates and educates to prevent child abuse. The organization provides information to all parents and caregivers, including grandparents and other relative caregivers in Kennebec County. Call Staci Fortunato, Executive Director at (207) 626-3428 or email at augusta@familiesfirstcan.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 payments may be available to children and their grandparents and other relative caregivers through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program:

- 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 TANF grant — based on their income and subject to work requirements and time limits.

Call (207) 287-2826 or log on to www.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/TANF.htm.

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 about these programs, call (207) 287-2826 or log on to www.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/Food_Stamps.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 MaineCare (formerly Medicaid and Cub Care). In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call (877) 543-7669 or log on to www.maine.gov/dhhs/bfi/cubcare/cubcare.htm.

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:

Standby Guardianship (ME REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 18-A, §§ 5-202, 5-204): This law allows a parent who is in fear of an imminent threat to his or her health to appoint an alternate or standby guardian to care for his or her child. The guardian must accept this appointment for it to be valid.

Limited Guardianship (ME REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 18-A, § 5-105): This law allows courts to grant limited guardianship whereby the guardian takes custody of the minor but does not have the full range of authority of a guardian. It is up to the court to determine the exact nature of the guardianship relationship.

¹ *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	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.