



MINNESOTA

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

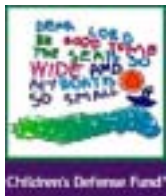


September 2005

The Brookdale Foundation

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.

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 Minnesota, there are 33,975 children living in grandparent-headed households (2.6 % of all children in the state). There are another 14,008 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.1 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Minnesota, 19,053 are living there without either parent present.

The Grandparents

- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grand-children 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 Minnesota, 17,682 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [2,250 in Minneapolis and 1,514 in St. Paul]: 10% of these grandparents are African American; 6% are Hispanic/Latino; 5% are Asian; 7% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; and 70% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

Additional Information

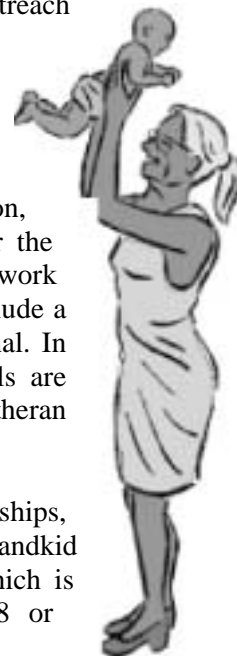
- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available at www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html.
- 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 Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association (MKCA)*** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise public awareness about kinship issues and to provide education, support, advocacy, and information and referral services to caregivers who are raising children. MKCA's statewide service delivery model includes six "Regional Service Agencies" to provide a broad continuum of services to kinship caregivers in every region of the state. Through these agencies, MKCA provides information on how to obtain legal authority, financial and health benefits, and other services. MKCA also provides education and support services to address the emotional and behavioral issues encountered by kinship care families. In addition, MKCA offers a legal resource manual and a general resource manual especially designed for kinship care families. *Contact:* Sharon Durken, Statewide Outreach Director, at (651) 917-4642 or Sharon@mkca.org.
- ***Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota*** is a statewide multi-service agency operating from 200 sites across the state. Its Grandparents & Others Raising Relatives' Children program provides services for kinship caregivers in the following counties: Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Scott, Ramsey and Washington. The program provides individual consultation, group support, and educational events for relative caregivers and supportive play groups for the children they are raising. LSS is part of the Brookdale Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Network and the Generations United/Brookdale Mental Health Initiative has expanded its program to include a therapeutic support group for teens, which is facilitated by a licensed mental health professional. In addition, LSS holds a winter and fall retreat for its kinship care families. Resource manuals are available on the website at www.lss.mn.org. *Contact:* Connie Booth, Program Manager of Lutheran Social Service, at (612) 879-5351 or cbooth@lssmn.org.
- ***Grandkidsandme*** provides a variety of opportunities that support intergenerational relationships, including three programs to accomplish its mission: Grandkidsandme Grandparent Camps, Grandkid Days, and a variety of publications and a monthly electronic newsletter "The Gathering" which is distributed to more than 1500 local families. *Contact:* Dona Schmitz at (651) 695-1988 or don@grandkidsandme.com.
- ***The Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota*** offer the *Kinship Caregiver Resource Manual*. Funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, it contains statewide information about legal options for kinship caregivers, permanency planning, visitation, and public assistance programs. It also provides a list of legal services, social service agencies, support groups, national organizations, information and referral services, and other appropriate Minnesota agencies. *Contact:* Greg Marita, Kinship Expert, Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis, at (612) 746-3608 or gmarita@midmnlegal.org.
- ***Raising Our Children's Kids (ROCK)*** offers educational/networking meetings for kinship care families and professionals in Northern St. Louis County. ROCK links new and experienced caregivers through a peer counseling network to help provide support and guidance. In addition, ROCK provides information, counseling, crisis assistance, referrals, and family-oriented recreational activities and improves the well-being of children in kinship care families by linking them to youth development opportunities. ROCK also increases the awareness of legal, educational and social service professionals regarding kinship care issues by providing an educational forum and participating in the annual St. Louis County Human Services Conference and other informational sessions. It also circulates a quarterly newsletter. You may also log on to their website at www.aeo.org. *Contact:* Marcia Mehle, ROCK Coordinator, at (218) 748-7354 or mmehle@aeo.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 Minnesota, the Department of Human Services, Children's Services, Foster Care Division reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of December 2004, there were 6,955 Minnesota children in out-of-home

placements under the Department’s supervision. Of these children, 1,668 were placed with kin.

Preferences for kinship care: State policy requires that kin be considered first for an out-of-home placement.

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

Relative custody assistance: 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. Minnesota has a Relative Custody Assistance program that provides an ongoing permanency assistance payment to eligible children in the foster care system whose relative caregivers become their legal guardians. Adoption or a return to the child’s parent must have been ruled out before a child can be eligible for this program. **Contact:** Paulette Lunzo, Program Advisor for Adoption Assistance and Relative Custody Assistance, at (651) 297-3636 or Paulette.Lunzo@state.mn.us.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kin foster care placements should be directed to Deborah Beske-Brown, Department of Human Services, Family and Children’s Services Division, at (651) 296-4309 or deborah.beske.brown@state.mn.us.

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 General Assistance Program or the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) Child-Only Grant.

- 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 (651) 297-3933 or log on to www.dhs.state.mn.us.

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 (651) 297-3933 or log on to www.dhs.state.mn.us.

Health Insurance: Grandparents and other relative caregivers may apply for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare on behalf of a child they are raising. The Medical Assistance Program, which is administered at the county level, has a slightly more comprehensive benefits package than Minnesota Care. Kinship caregivers may also be eligible for health insurance under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for Medical Assistance, call (800) 657-3659 or log on to www.dhs.state.mn.us. To apply for Minnesota Care, relative caregivers should call (800) 657-3672. To learn more about both programs, kinship care families may log on to www.dhs.state.mn.us/hlthcare/.



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 website at www.benefitscheckup.org.

State Laws

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

Stand-by Guardianship (Minn. Stat. § 257 B): This law allows parents with legal and physical custody or legal custodians to provide written documentation designating another adult as the standby or alternate custodian of their child, in the event of death or incapacity. The stand-by custodian is given the same responsibilities and has the same standing in court as a parent. The alternate custodian assumes the rights and responsibilities of the stand-by custodian if the stand-by custodian were to become unable or unwilling to fulfill the obligation of custodian.

De Facto Custodian (Minn. Stat. § 257C): This law gives certain third parties who have assumed the full-time care of a child the opportunity to approach the court in a custody case on an equal basis with parents when certain criteria are met.

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.