



TENNESSEE



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.

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 Tennessee, there are 101,510 children living in grandparent-headed households (7.3% of all children in the state). There are another 24,774 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.8 % of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Tennessee, 56,682 are living there without either parent present.

The Grandparents

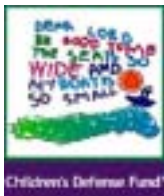
- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 19% live in poverty.
- In Tennessee, 61,252 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [9,660 in Memphis]: 31% of these grandparents are African American; 1% are Hispanic/Latino; and 66% are White. 42% 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 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.

The Brookdale Foundation



Programs That Can Help

- **The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS)** established the Relative Caregiver Program to support children, in need of out-of-home care, and their relative caregivers in order to prevent those children from entering or re-entering state custody. Relative caregivers are required to be related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption and have at least temporary legal custody of the child. The program provides supportive services for children and relative caregivers including Support Groups, Children's Activity Groups, Respite and Recreation, Information and Referral, Family Advocacy, Material Assistance, and Educational Workshops to help caregivers understand and access services available in their communities. The program is administered through a public-private partnership between the Tennessee Department of Children's Services and private agencies in 16 counties in Tennessee. The Department is working to expand the program statewide. *Contact:* Shalonda Cawthon, Director, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children's Services at 615-253-2342 or Shalonda.Cawthon@state.tn.us.
 - Family & Children's Service is the lead agency for the Relative Caregiver Program based in Nashville, TN that provides services to all of Davidson County. *Contact:* Andrea Boddie, Program Director at 615-226-4917 or Andrea.Boddie@fcsnashville.org.
 - Upper Cumberland Development District is the lead agency for the Relative Caregiver Program based in Cookeville, TN that provides services to all of the Upper Cumberland region; Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White counties. *Contact:* Patty Jones, Program Director at 931-432-4111 or pjones@ucdd.org.
 - University of Tennessee Boiling Center for Developmental Disabilities is the lead agency for the Relative Caregiver Program based in Memphis, TN that provides services to all of Shelby County. *Contact:* Juanita Williams, Program Director at 901-448-3926 or jawilliams@utmem.edu.
- **Families First Kinship Care Pilot Program** is a pilot program that is a collaborative effort between the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS). The goal of the program is to encourage placements with relatives for children who are at-risk of removal from their home and placement in state custody. This pilot program allows DCS to offer eligible kinship families an additional payment to supplement the Families First Child-Only grant offered by DHS. The pilot will take place in sixteen (16) counties; Shelby, Davidson, Macon, Dekalb, White, Fentress, Cumberland, Putnam, Jackson, Smith, Warren, Van Buren, Pickett, Overton, Cannon, and Clay. Though the Families First Kinship Care Program will only offer financial assistance, families will be referred to the Relative Caregiver Program to receive supportive services. *Contacts:* Shalonda Cawthon, Director, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children's Services at 615-253-2342 or Shalonda.Cawthon@state.tn.us and Betty Smith, Coordinator, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children's Services at 615-253-2397 or Betty.X.Smith@state.tn.us.
- **Tennessee State Kinship Advisory Board** was established in April 2002 by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services and funded by the Brookdale Foundation. The Advisory Board is comprised of a group of policy makers, lawmakers, child welfare professionals and relative caregivers who are working together to build support for kinship families throughout the state of Tennessee. *Contacts:* Shalonda Cawthon, Director, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children's Services at 615-253-2342 or Shalonda.Cawthon@state.tn.us and Betty Smith, Coordinator, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children's Services at 615-253-2397 or Betty.X.Smith@state.tn.us.
- **The Senior Neighbors-Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) of Chattanooga** sponsors a network of monthly support groups for kinship care families – one at a senior center, one based in a large city elementary school, and one at a rural Head Start center. RAPP provides recreational and respite care activities for caregivers. Respite events include holiday parties, brunches, field trips and a number of Saturday afternoon "Book Club" meetings. RAPP also implemented "Book Club" activities for children and adolescents. The program serves Chattanooga and the surrounding areas. *Contact:* Joyce Clem, Director of Intergenerational Program at 423-755-6105 or interg@bellsouth.net.



- **Knoxville's Knox County Community Action Committee Office on Aging RAPP Program** provides bimonthly newsletters, support groups, transportation, group recreational activities (field trips, plays, and carnivals) and computer training with internet access for kinship caregivers in Knox County. *Contact:* Edna Eickman, Coordinator at 865-524-2786 or eeickman@knxcac.org.
- **The McMinnville Warren County Senior Center** offers the Warren County Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP). The program provides kinship caregivers with parenting classes and educational programs that address issues regarding raising children today. It also hosts social events and activities for the grandparents and children to attend. *Contact:* Cheryl Mingle, Executive Director at 931-473-6559 or wacosrctr@blomand.net.

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 Tennessee, the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of January 2005, there were 9,914 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 1,329 were placed with relatives.

Preferences for kinship care: State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child DCS’s care. There is an expedited placement process in order to place children with relatives and kin. However, kin do not receive foster care board payments for the child until they have completed all requirements approving them to become foster parents.

Kinship care licensing: There are no separate approval standards for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same approval processes and requirements 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. Most of these pro-grams offer ongoing subsidies to children who have left foster care to live permanently under the legal custody or guardianship of relatives. Tennessee will submit a proposal to the federal Department of Health and Human Services for a IV-E waiver to demonstrate a subsidized guardianship program. *Contact:* Shalonda Cawthon, Kinship Support Network, Department of Children’s Services, at (615) 253-2342 or shalonda.cawthon@state.tn.us.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Julie Flannery, Director, Foster Care Adoption and Kinship Care, Department of Children’s Services at (615) 532-6351 or Julie.flannery@state.tn.us.

Training and support for kinship foster parents: Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent, including kinship caregivers, is required to attend a 30-hour pre-service training program called PATH (Parents As Tender Healers). *Contact:* Servella Terry, Director, Recruitment, Retention, and Support, Department of Children’s Services at (615) 532-5616 or servella.terry@state.tn.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 Families First.

- 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 (866) 331-4287 or (615) 743-2000 or log on to www.state.tn.us/humanserv/famfir.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, call (866) 311-4287 or log on to www.state.tn.us/humanserv/famfir.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 the Tennessee Medicaid and TENNCARE programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid and TENNCARE, call (800) 669-1851 or log on to www.state.tn.us/tenncare/.

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:

Power of Attorney (Public Acts, Chapter No. 71, Senate Bill 526): This law states that any parent who cannot care for his or her child due to hardship may grant any state resident the power of attorney to be legally responsible for their child. This authority may be delegated without the approval of a court by executing in writing the power of attorney on a form provided by the Department of Children’s Services.

Permanent Guardianship (not yet codified): This law allows the court to consider any adult, including a relative, foster parent, or another adult with a significant relationship with the child as a permanent guardian under certain circumstances.

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

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.