



# WASHINGTON

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



July 2006

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 Washington, there are 61,905 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.1% of all children in the state). There are another 24,086 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.6% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Washington, 35,761 are living there without either parent present.

### The Grandparents

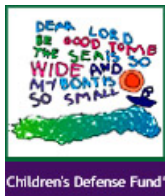
- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 19% live in poverty.
- In Washington, 35,341 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [2,180 in Seattle and 1,856 in Tacoma]: 6% of these grandparents are African American; 10% are Hispanic/Latino; 5% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 6% are Asian; and 70% are White. 39% of these grandparents live in household without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 13% live in poverty.

### 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/cen2000/briefs.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs.html).
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children are available on AARP's website at [www.aarp.org/grandparents](http://www.aarp.org/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

---

*Washington State Kinship Care Website* provides specific resources for relative caregivers and children including: financial, child care, health, food, foster care, kinship navigators and support groups. In addition, links to online applications for some services along with information on related books and websites, legislation and free publications are available. Go to: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare/>.

*Benefits CheckUp (BCU)* is the nation's most comprehensive online service to screen for federal, state, and some local public and private benefits for adults ages 55 and over that can help them pay for prescription drugs, health care, utilities, and other needs. BCU also provides a detailed description of the programs, contacts for additional information, and materials to help successfully apply for each. Specific resources (listed under "Other Programs Available") have been included on the BCU website for relative caregivers. Visit the website at: <http://www.benefitscheckup.org/link/rapp>

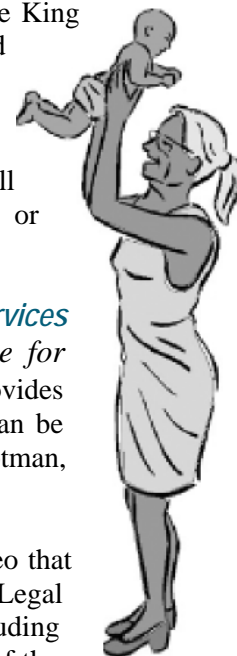
*Washington's Kinship Caregivers Support Program (KCSP)* is for kinship caregivers who are not involved with the formal child welfare system. The program is designed to help grandparents and other relatives (of any age) who are raising children with financial help for items like clothes, food, car seats, etc. The program also helps to link these caregivers with other sources of financial support such as TANF child only, utility discounts, etc. To find out the local county point of contact for the KCSP, call the Aging and Disability Services Administration at (800) 422-3263 or go to <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare/>.

*The Cooperative Extension-Washington State University, the Aging and Disability Services Administration and the State Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Coalition* developed a Relatives as Parents website in 2001. This site contains information on the 45+ grandparent and relative support groups in Washington, Kinship Navigators, legal resources, legislative reports, kinship media coverage, links to other related websites, kinship care events, a video lending library, articles on how to start and maintain support groups, and access to new resource guides. Visit this site at <http://parenting.wsu.edu/relative/index.htm>.

*Columbia Legal Services and the Northwest Justice Project* are statewide programs that provide legal assistance to kinship caregivers. The Northwest Justice Project serves all of Washington except King County, which is served by Columbia Legal Services. Kinship caregivers in the King County region may receive assistance in the areas of family law, benefits, housing, education, and at-risk youth through Columbia Legal Services after a case assessment and determination that the office has the resources to represent the caregiver. Kinship caregivers in the King County region may also go to the Northwest Justice Project website, [www.nwjusticeproject.org](http://www.nwjusticeproject.org), and look under the King County Legal Resources site for further information on legal resources available to them. Kinship caregivers in the remaining counties in Washington State may call the Northwest Justice Project CLEAR Line at 1-888-201-1014 to have their case assessed and receive information and referrals. If you are aged 60 and over, regardless of income and county, you may call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111. *Contact:* Columbia Legal Services at (206) 464-5911 or [www.washingtonlawhelp.org](http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org).

*The Aging and Disability Services Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services* along with the State RAPP Coalition has compiled *Relatives as Parents: A Resource Guide for Relatives Raising Children* (publication number DSHS 22-996[x]- Revision 9/05). This guide provides numerous community, state, and federal resources to help relatives who are raising children. It can be downloaded from [www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/topics/caregiving/kinship.htm](http://www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/topics/caregiving/kinship.htm). *Contact:* Hilari Hauptman, Aging and Disability Services Administration at (800) 422-3263 or e-mail: [hauptp@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:hauptp@dshs.wa.gov).

*Legal Options for Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children in Washington State*, is a video that showcases a presentation by Rebecca Morrow, former Kinship Legal Fellow with Columbia Legal Services in Seattle. The video lasts one hour 25 minutes and explains the various legal options including third party custody, guardianship, adoption, etc. available to relatives in Washington State. Copies of the video, along with handouts, can be obtained by contacting the Relatives as Parents Program at (800) 422-3263, or by emailing [hauptp@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:hauptp@dshs.wa.gov).



*Mediation for Kinship Caregivers: An Alternative to the Courtroom* is a ten minute video, developed by the State RAPP Coalition in partnership with the Dispute Resolution Centers of Washington State that educates viewers (e.g. relatives, support group leaders, mediators, and parents of children) on how mediation can work to resolve family conflicts. It is available for purchase at \$27.00. *Contact:* Aging and Disability Services Administration, P.O. Box 45600, Olympia, WA 98504 5600., Attention: Hilari Hauptman or call (800) 422-3263 or [haupthp@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:haupthp@dshs.wa.gov).

*The National Family Care giver Support Program (FCSP)* offers support groups, parenting classes, information about available services, respite care, and a family counseling service to relative caregivers over age 60 who are caring for children under age 19. The programs are offered in many areas around the state and can be accessed through local Area Agencies on Aging. Certain eligibility rules apply, and services vary by geographic area. Additionally, for family or other unpaid caregivers caring for someone 19 years of age and over, additional services are available throughout the state through the FCSP. To find out more, log on to [www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov/topics/caregiving/kinship.htm](http://www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov/topics/caregiving/kinship.htm).

*The Washington State Kinship Oversight Committee* is a legislatively mandated coalition of roughly 40 public and private organizations, kinship advocates and caregivers designed to address issues facing kinship caregivers across the state, as well as develop information and public awareness. The Kinship Care Oversight Committee is a collaboration of kinship caregivers, child advocates, legislative staff, foster parents, and representatives of state agencies, non-profit providers, tribes, and the legal community. *Contact:* Barbara Bofinger, Foster Care & Kinship Care Manager, at (360) 902-7986 or [boba300@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:boba300@dshs.wa.gov).

*The Northwest Washington Area Agency on Aging* has a Tribal Outreach Coordinator who is heading up a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren project. In addition, an information and resource guide entitled, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, is available. This guide includes a summary of the Indian Child Welfare Act, self-care tips, information on children, and grief and chemical dependency in the family. The guide is being distributed to the six tribes in the two-county area. Assistance with locating accessible legal assistance is also available. Local tribes interested in starting a Kinship Talking Circle can contact the Coordinator. *Contact:* Sharon Wolf, Coordinator, Northwest Regional Council, at (360) 676-6749 or [wolfs1@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:wolfs1@dshs.wa.gov).

*The East County Senior Center* runs a Grandparents Support Group for kinship caregivers and their families in East Snohomish County. The program provides support group meetings twice a month with child care, respite activities for children and grandparents, and education opportunities for caregivers within the community. A free dinner is also provided. The Center also provides speakers at support meetings to address the needs and concerns of the caregivers. *Contact:* Krysta Gibson or Jacob McGee at (360) 794-6359 or [programs@eastcountyseniorcenter.org](mailto:programs@eastcountyseniorcenter.org).

*The Casey Family Grandparents Reparenting Group* meets at the Casey Family Program Seattle Division every Wednesday from 12:30 -2:00. The group meets weekly for a series of meetings and then skips two weeks before beginning a new series (thus caregivers should call before attending to ensure that there is a meeting scheduled for that week). This support group is very well-established and welcomes new members. Childcare is offered during the support group upon request. Expert speakers are invited from time to time to address various issues. *Contact:* Abbey Moon at 206-731-2557 or [abbey.moon@metrokc.gov](mailto:abbey.moon@metrokc.gov), or Casey Family Programs.

*The Family Support Center in Olympia* offers a variety of supportive services to relative caregivers and the children they are raising, including the following:

- The Kinship Support Group is an on-going support group for grandparents and relatives raising children. This weekly group provides emotional support, peer support, and focuses on issues such as grandparent advocacy, preparing children for school, after-school and summer activities, etc. This group is free with childcare available for children up to 12 years of age.
- Kinship Comfort is a monthly respite service that is FREE for relative caregivers. As part of a partnership between the Family Support Center and the Hands On Children's Museum, relative caregivers can bring their children to the museum on the second Saturday of the month, at no charge. The caregivers can drop the children off and come back to pick them up, taking a needed break in between. Caregivers must pre-register for Comfort Nights by calling the Children's Hands On Museum at (360) 956-0818.

- Kinship Navigator Services provide individual support and referrals to kinship families including, when needed, accompanying relative caregivers to community service agencies, legislative hearings, and other community events and forums.
- The Kinship Navigator program also conducts "Parenting a Second Time Around" education for Kinship care providers to address common issues, learn important information on child development and talk about other parenting issues.

*Contact:* Patty Gregory, Kinship Navigator at (360) 754-2629 (ext. 2).

*The Pierce County Relatives Raising Children* program provides support, education, and advocacy to relative caregivers living in Pierce County. Partnering with community service providers, schools, faith community, and Pierce County Aging and Long Term Care has strengthened the program and has resulted in unique program offerings. PCRRC is the only countywide, staffed program in the state of Washington. *Contact:* Edith Owen, Coordinator, PCRRC at (253) 565-4484, Ext. 104 or edith@cfgcpc.org.

*Parents Again: Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Relative Children* organizes support groups and provides monthly newsletters, information and referrals, and a library of kinship care materials. It coordinates children's therapy groups and provides advocacy services to relative caregivers in Clark County. It also has contact with groups in adjoining Cowlitz County and has some respite care services. *Contact:* Viola Hansel, Program Coordinator, at (360) 695-1325, or violah@chs-wa.org.

*Casey Family Programs Yakama Division Office* has partnered with the Yakama Nation to support kinship caregivers through case management. This program works with caregivers to help them take advantage of available services in their community. It utilizes a culturally-integrated curriculum designed by tribes in South Dakota for its monthly support meetings and for the development of educational materials. A community-based advisory committee provides feedback to the program to help improve services and supports and to identify additional needs. *Contact:* Bessie Bell, Casey Family Programs, at 1-800-877-3065 or (509) 877-3065 or bbell@casey.org. or Jenece Yeahpau Howe at (509) 865-1895, or jhowe@casey.org.

*The Relatives Raising Relatives* program at the Children's Home Society in Spokane is a nine-year-old program that provides twice-monthly support groups, counseling services, and information and referral services. With a grant from the Brookdale Foundation Group's Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP), services have been expanded to include speakers on a variety of topics affecting kin caregivers, respite care, activity days, activities and social events for relative caregiver families. *Contact:* Betsy Blake at (509) 747-4174 or betsyb@chs-wa.org.

*The Kinship Care Solutions Project* is a program of the King County Bar Association. The project screens cases for referral to volunteer attorneys to represent the petitioner in Nonparental Custody cases. Clients must be income eligible and either reside in King County or have a case pending in King County Superior Court. *Contact:* Judy Lin, King County Bar Association, (206) 267-7023 or judyl@kcba.org.

*Kent Youth and Family Services* provides the Relatives as Parents Project for grandparents and other relatives raising children in the Kent area. In addition to support group meetings, the program offers information and referral via telephone, child care or youth activities while caregivers attend support group meetings, a regular newsletter, and conferences, workshops and other training for grandparents and professionals. *Contact:* Kristie Lund, Kent Youth and Family Services, at (206) 371-6642

*Catholic Community Services in Mount Vernon, Washington* offers a regular support group for grandparents and other relatives caregivers in addition to information and referral via telephone, child care and youth activities during support group meetings, respite care opportunities and a regular newsletter. *Contact:* BJ Johnson at (360) 416-7546 or bette@miravistarehab.com.

*The Olympic Area Agency on Aging* offers a regular support group for grandparents and other relatives raising children in the Port Angeles area. In addition, the program offers information and referral, telephone support, and other services and guest speakers who speak on a wide range of issues. *Contact:* Carolyn Lindley at (360) 452-3221 or grg@parentingmatters.org.

*The Children's Home Society and Aging and Adult Care* offers a regular support group for grandparents and other relatives caregivers in addition to information and referral via telephone, child care and youth activities during support group meetings, respite care opportunities and a regular newsletter. *Contact:* Juanita Echelbarger at (509) 886-9027 or jechelbarger38@aol.com.

*Family Education and Support Services* offers the Kinship Care Support Program for grandparents and other relatives raising children in Lewis, Thurston and Mason Counties. The program offers adult support groups (along with activities for children and youth). A Kinship Navigator Program is also available to provide resources and referrals for families. *Contact:* Shelly Willis, Program Director, at (303) 754-7629 or olympiaparented@aol.com.

*King County Kinship Collaboration* In 2005, Casey Family Programs (CFP) invited key community providers and resources to work together to more effectively address issues relating to kinship, to provide comprehensive and coordinated services, to improve existing resources and access to such resources, and to better educate the community regarding such issues and resources. Eleven key agencies signed a charter and 35 organizations along with kinship caregivers and support group leaders participate in a variety of work groups. *Contact:* Nalani Linder, Coordinator, at (253) 761-1084 or NPLinder@aol.com

*Snohomish County Relatives Raising Children Coalition* is a coalition of local families, agencies and organizations was formed in 2006 to better serve kinship care/relatives as parents-both "in" and "out" of the formal child welfare system. A Kinship Care Resource Kit is under development as well as regional trainings. *Contact* John Peterson at (425) 388-7307 or j.peterson@co.snohomish.wa.us.

*Clark County Kinship Care Coalition* is a new coalition of local agencies designed to provide a forum for information sharing and networking, to encourage "no wrong door" referrals, to identify gaps in kinship care services and to assure that those who work with families in a wide variety of settings are aware of the various resources and support for families who take kin into their care. *Contact:* Bridget McLeman at (360) 695-1325.

*Voices of Children Annual Kinship Care Children's Contest* Started in 2004, the contest is for children (living with a relative now or in the past) to express how living with a relative(s) has made a positive difference in their life. Children 5-7 can draw and add some words, while children of all ages (from 5-19) can enter original poems or essays. The first 200 entries receive special gifts. The top two entries in each age division receive \$100 from Twin County Credit Union. All entries are published in an annual book called *Voices of Children-Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives*. *Contact* Shelly Willis at 1-877-813-2828 or OlympiaParentEd@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 Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration reports:

*Number of children in kinship care:* In July 2005, there were approximately 15,000 children in out-of-home placements in Washington State. Of these children, 5,902 were placed with kin.

*Preferences for kinship care:* Washington law and policy requires that when an out-of-home placement is necessary, the preference of the Department is to place the child with relatives, as long as safety concerns and the best interest of the child are primary considerations.

*Kinship care licensing:* There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and training requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. The Resource Family Training Institute also offers training opportunities to relative and kinship caregivers as well as 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 programs offer ongoing subsidies to children who have left foster care to live permanently under the legal custody or guardianship of relatives. Washington does not have a subsidized guardianship program.

**State kinship care contact:** Questions about kin foster care placements should be directed to Barbara Bofinger, MSW, Foster Care & Kinship Care Program Manager, at (360) 902-7986 or boba300@dshs.wa.gov.

**Resource guide for kinship foster caregivers:** The Children’s Administration of the Washington Department of Social and Health Services has developed *A Relative’s Guide to Child Welfare Services* (publication number DSHS 22-492X, 5/01). This guide was developed to help extended family members meet the needs of children when their parents are unable to care for them. It is focused on those relative caregivers who are working with Child Protective Services or Child Welfare Services on behalf of a child in their family. **Contact:** The Department of Printing, fax is (360) 586-8831 or jenn@prt.wa.gov. Provide the publication number, quantity wanted, your mailing address, and phone number.

**Training and support for kinship foster parents:** The Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS) provides programs and supports to foster parents, including kinship foster parents. A goal of FPAWS is to work collaboratively with individuals and organizations on issues relating to kinship or foster placement. **Contact:** (800) 391-2273 or info@fpaws.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 Washington’s 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 grant — based on their income and subject to work requirements and time limits.

Call (800) 737-0617 or log on to [www1.dshs.wa.gov](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov).

**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) 737-0617 or log on to [www1.dshs.wa.gov](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov).

**Health Insurance:** Children who receive a TANF grant automatically receive medical coverage. Children who are not eligible for or do not apply for a TANF grant can receive free or low cost medical coverage from Children’s Medical Programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage. For more information about how to apply, call Healthy Kids Now at (877) 543-7669 or log on to <http://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/maa/index.html>.

**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 web site at [www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org).

## State Laws

---

**The Washington State Kinship Oversight Committee:** is a legislatively mandated coalition of roughly 40 public and private organizations, kinship advocates and caregivers designed to address issues facing kinship caregivers across the state, as well as develop information and public awareness. The Kinship Care Oversight Committee is a collaboration of kinship caregivers, child advocates, legislative staff, foster parents, and representatives of state agencies, non-profit providers, tribes, and the legal community **Contact:** Barbara Bofinger, Foster Care & Kinship Care Manager, at (360) 902-7986 or boba300@dshs.wa.gov.

**To access the 2004 and 2005 Washington State Kinship Care Oversight Committee Report to the Legislature,** go to <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/legrel/LR/CIYA.shtm>, and scroll down until you see the Kinship Care Oversight Committee Report, dated December 2004 and 2005 and click on it.

**Washington's Kinship Navigator Program** was created by a subcommittee of the Washington State Kinship Oversight Committee. Casey Family Programs funded two pilot programs for 18 months – one Navigator program in Yakima and the other in Seattle. An evaluation report and replication manual of the pilot projects developed by the Tri-West Group can be accessed from <http://parenting.wsu.edu/relative/index.htm> under legislation and reports. The Navigator programs provide an array of services to kinship families and assist in navigating the system of services for children in out-of-home care including information and referral, advocacy, and support. For more information about the Kinship Navigator Program, contact Hilari Hauptman at [hauptm@dsos.wa.gov](mailto:hauptm@dsos.wa.gov) or (800) 422-3263.

**Kinship Caregivers' Consent for Mental Health Care of Minors (H.B.3139)** clarifies that a “competent adult representing himself or herself to be a relative responsible for the health care of such minor patient or a competent adult who has signed and dated a declaration under penalty or perjury” of law is able to consent to the mental health care of children in their care in the same way they are able to consent to health care.

**Washington's Kinship Care Medical Care**, Substitute House Bill 1281 (Chapter 440, Laws of 2005) was unanimously passed on July 24, 2005. It allows relative caregivers to access appropriate medical care on behalf of the children in their care, by permitting them to give informed consent to medical care for those children.

**Tribal Foster Care Licensing (H.B. 3182)** sponsored by Rep. Pettigrew, HB3182 states, "The state of WA recognizes the ability of the Indian tribes within the state to enter into agreements with the state to license agencies located on or near the federally recognized Indian reservation to receive children for control, care, and maintenance outside their own homes, or to place, receive, arrange the placement of, or assist in the placement of children for foster care." As amended, HB3182 modifies the definition of agency and permits Indian Tribes that do not have reservation land to license foster care homes within their service district.

<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

---

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>
Grandfamilies of America	(866) 272-3761	<a href="http://www.grandfamiliesofamerica.com">www.grandfamiliesofamerica.com</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>

*Fact sheets are updated annually. 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.*