



CONNECTICUT

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

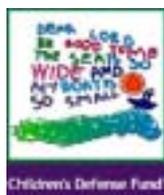


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The Brookdale Foundation

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 Connecticut there are 39,797 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.7% of all children in the state). There are another 12,406 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.5% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Connecticut, 21,123 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 Connecticut, 18,898 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [2,157 in Hartford and 1,757 in Bridgeport]: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 19% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are Asian; and 47% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

Additional Information

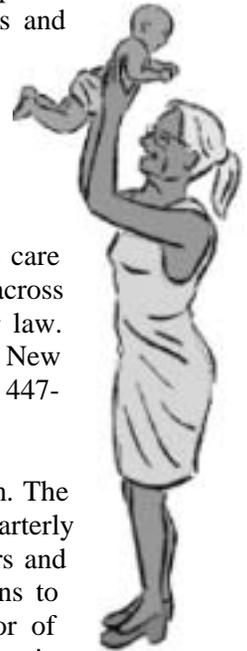
- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available 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 Connecticut Department of Social Services, Elderly Division*** provides a Grandparents as Parents Support (GAPS) program for kinship caregivers throughout the state. The network consists of more than 100 agencies and organizations that provide services to kinship care families. While it does not provide direct services, the network provides education, technical assistance, and information and referrals to a range of different service providers and programs. *Contact:* Donielle Rooks, Caregiver Support Coordinator, at (860) 424-5862 or Donielle.Rooks@po.state.ct.us.
- ***The Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)*** provide services to grandparent caregiver families through the National Family Caregiver Program initiated by Older American Act funds that are administered in conjunction with the Department of Social Services Elderly Services Division. *Contact:* North Central Area Agency on Aging (860) 724-6443, Southwestern Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (203) 333-9288, Western Connecticut AAA (203) 757-5449, South Central Connecticut Area Agency (203) 785-8533, Senior Resources of Eastern Connecticut (860) 887-3561.
- ***The Meriden Grandparent's Connection*** meets once a month at the Meriden Senior Center, 22 West Main Street, Meriden, Connecticut, 06450. It also offers education, support, and social activities. *Contact:* Julianne Johnson at (203) 630-4244 or jcondren@ci.meriden.ct.us.
- ***Bridgeport Grandparents Raising Grandchildren:*** The Child Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport in collaboration with the Bridgeport Social Services Department provides support group meetings and parenting classes for grandparents and other relatives raising children, the Parenting the Second Time Around Program. The class focuses on such topics as discipline, self-esteem, communication and encouragement. Child care and supper are provided. *Contact:* Suzanne Wallace at (203) 394-6529 (ext. 3025) or swallace@cgccb.org; or Iris Molina at (203) 576-7471 or molini0@ci.bridgeport.ct.us.
- ***Connecticut Legal Services*** offers legal education and outreach to support groups for kinship care families, and individual legal representation and advice to eligible kinship care families across Connecticut in the areas of family, housing, SSI, public benefits, special education, and elder law. Connecticut Legal Services currently has offices in Bridgeport, New Britain, Middletown, New London, Stamford, Waterbury, and Willimantic. *Contact:* Karen Sears, Staff Attorney, at (860) 447-0323 x109 or ksears@connlegalservices.org.
- ***The Consultation Center of New Haven*** offers the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program. The program provides a monthly support group with child care, information and referrals, a quarterly newsletter, respite activities for children and grandparents, and education programs for caregivers and the community. In addition, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren works with other organizations to promote legislative changes for kinship care families. *Contact:* Barbara Abraham, Coordinator of Elderly Programs, at (203) 789-7645 or babraham@theconsultationcenter.org. The website is www.theconsultationcenter.org.
- ***The Village Grandparents Support Group*** offers a support group at the Varick Family Life Center in New Haven. *Contact:* Doris Little at (203) 407-3172 or doris.little@uconn.edu.
- ***New Haven Board of Education Social Development Department*** sponsors a support group called Grandparents on the Move that meets every month at the East Rock Magnet School. *Contact:* Carolyn Jackson at (203) 946-7444 or carolynojackson@yahoo.com.
- ***The Kith & Kin Caregiver Programs*** offered by the Early Learning Center of the New Haven Public Schools offers three programs to grandparent and relative caregivers and the children they are raising. Mornings at the Museum is a series of field trips for caregivers and children to play and learn at the Connecticut Children's Museum. *Contact:* Sandy Malmquist at (203) 562-5437. Children and Parents Succeeding (C.A.P.S.) provides a link between families and child care providers for children ages zero to three. *Contact:* Stephanie Singly at (203) 946-6170. Stay & Play, funded by the



Early Learning Opportunities Act, helps caregivers provide guided learning experiences for children. *Contact:* Elizabeth Shack (203) 946-5151

- *CIWI (Coordinated Interventions for Women and Infants)* program offered by Yale Child Study Center provides outreach and counseling to relative caregivers who qualify for the program and also offers a support group at the Westville Senior Center. *Contact:* Betty Ellis at (203) 785-6862 or betty.ellis@yale.edu.
- *The City of Hartford Human Services Department* offers the Grandparent Program. The program provides support services to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. These services include monthly educational workshops, counseling, case management, and referral services. The City recently established a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission, the first of its kind in Connecticut. The Commission advises the City concerning the issues surrounding grandparents raising their grandchildren. Hartford is also building the Hartford Grandparent Network, a network of support services for grandparents raising their kin. It will incorporate social service providers, mental health services, emergency assistance programs, and family resource centers. The Hartford Grandparent Network also has a list of several additional support groups in the area, including ones at the Institute for the Hispanic Family, the Charter Oak Family Resource Center, East Hartford Elderly Services, and the Mary Hooker Family Resource Center. *Contact:* Elby Gonzalez-Schwapp, Coordinator, at (860) 547-1426 x7572 or at EGonzalezSchwapp@ci.hartford.ct.us.
- *The Salvation Army Community Services Department* sponsors the Parents the Second Time Around Program. The program provides support groups, educational workshops, counseling and case management services, youth services, respite, family recreation, and a monthly newsletter for kinship care families. The program has also recently been involved in legislative advocacy, primarily related to the issue of subsidized guardianship legislation. *Contact:* Brenda Downing, Director, at (860) 543-8413 or at brenda_downing@use.salvationarmy.org.
- *The Family Resource Center* offers services and supports to parents, relative caregivers and children in Southwest Hartford. Some of the services provided include tutoring for children, conferences, and classes for parents and kinship caregivers, and support to help grandparents become more involved with Parent Teacher Organizations. The Family Resource Center has Spanish-speaking staff and serves a largely Latino population. *Contact:* (860) 695-3760.

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 Connecticut, the Department of Children and Families reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of February 28, 2005, the Department of Children and Families had a total of 6,286 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 1,128 were placed with kin.

Preferences for kinship care: State policy requires that kin be sought out and given preference as a placement option when an out-of-home placement is needed for a child under the Department’s care.

Kinship care licensing: There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. In general, kin have to meet the same licensing standards and requirements as non-kin foster parents, except for the training requirement, which the department can waive on a case-by-case basis. Kin and non-kin foster parents receive the same foster care payment rate

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. Connecticut’s subsidized guardianship program is available for a child placed for at least 12 months with a licensed or certified relative upon recommendation of the permanency placement team (DCF Policy 41-50-3 and Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-126). The subsidy is not available to families outside of the child welfare system. Call Sandra Matlack, Program Supervisor, DCF Office of Foster and Adoption Services, at (860) 550-6392 or sandy.matlack@po.state.ct.us.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster care placements should be directed to Sandra Matlack, Program Supervisor, DCF Office of Foster and Adoption Services, at (860) 550-6392 or sandy.matlack@po.state.ct.us.

Training and support for kinship foster parents: Relative caregivers are expected to receive 15 hours of pre-licensing training and are currently invited and encouraged to attend post-licensing training. Each relative also has an assigned DCF Support Worker who will work with them to obtain support services, if needed, and assist them with negotiating the foster care system. In addition, the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (CAFAP) provides additional support services for relative and non-relative caregivers. For more information, contact Jean Fiorito at (860) 258-3400 or jean.fiorito@cafap.com.

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 Safety Net program, Connecticut's welfare reform 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) 842-1508 or log on to www.dss.state.ct.us/welfare.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 (800) 842-1508 or log on to <http://www.dss.state.ct.us/svcs/nutrit.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 Connecticut HUSKY Program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free Medicaid coverage. For more information about how to apply for HUSKY, call 1-877-CT-HUSKY (1-877-284-8759) or log on to <http://www.huskyhealth.com>.



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) 662-3 568. 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:

Educational Consent (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-253): This law states that children living with relatives and non-relatives can receive the same educational services as all other children in the school district. The district may require documentation that the child's residence with the relative is "permanent, provided without pay, and not for the sole purpose of obtaining school accommodations provided without pay."

Standby Guardianship (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 45a-624): This law states that a parent or guardian can name a standby guardian or person who will take over the care of a child if and when a parent becomes mentally incapacitated, debilitated, or dies.

Kinship Foster Care Program (Public Act No. 03-42; Senate Bill No.291): This law directs the Department of Children and Families to establish, with available appropriations, a kinship foster care program. Such a program would ensure that

when the Department determines that it is in the best interests of the child to be placed with a relative for foster care, the department would inform the relative regarding procedures to become licensed as a foster parent.

¹Laws 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.