



# FLORIDA

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

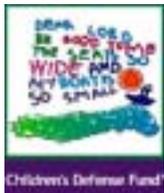


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The Brookdale Foundation

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 Florida there are 258,982 children living in grandparent-headed households (7.1% of all children in the state). There are another 86,152 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.4% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Florida, 151,492 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 Florida, 147,893 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [8,695 in Jacksonville and 4,810 in Miami]: 35% of these grandparents are African American; 19% are Hispanic/Latino; 1% are Asian; and 43% are White. 35% 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](http://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/](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/).

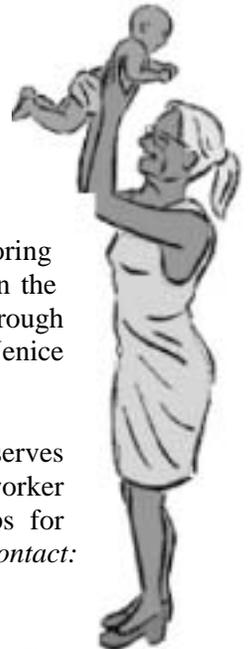
\* These data are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics: 2000.



## Programs That Can Help

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- ***The Florida Kinship Center*** at the University of South Florida School of Social Work provides programs and services that benefit relative caregivers across the state. The Kinship Care Warmline (800) 640-6444 provides caregivers statewide emotional support, information, and links to community resources such as support groups, child care, health care, transportation, financial assistance, and where available, legal assistance. It is available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and messages can be left 24 hours a day. In addition to a quarterly newsletter and the [flkin.org](http://flkin.org) website, the Center provides training to service providers and caregivers. The Center also develops and maintains the Florida Kinship Community Collaborative and Florida Kinship Support Group Network (FLKIN), a resource for kinship care support groups across the state. The “Kinship Care Connection” is the Center’s school-based intervention providing children’s support services, while connecting kinship caregivers with the school system through support groups, personal advocacy, and linkages to services and resources. The Center has also helped develop “Kin as Teachers,” a home-visiting program to provide kinship caregivers with support and information to raise their developing children from birth to kindergarten entry. *Contact:* In-state (800) 640-6444 or out-of-state (813) 974-1328 or [kinfo@flkin.org](mailto:kinfo@flkin.org) or [www.flkin.org](http://www.flkin.org).
- ***Jacksonville Legal Aid*** assists low-income caregivers and caregivers over 60 with court filings and establishing the legal status of children to the caregiver through guardianship. Assistance is provided to caregivers in Duvall, Clay, Baker, St. Johns, and Nassau Counties. *Contact:* Call (904) 356-8371 or log on to [www.jaxlegalaid.org](http://www.jaxlegalaid.org) to make an appointment with an attorney.
- ***Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast, Inc.***, located in Venice, Florida, is a one-to-one mentoring program that matches volunteers with children either in the school setting (Bigs in School) or in the community (Community Based). Its mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported one-to-one relationships. *Contact:* Sharon Hamant, Site Director, Venice Office, (941) 488-4009 or [shamant@bbssun.org](mailto:shamant@bbssun.org).
- ***The Kinship Care Connection***, another program sponsored by the Florida Kinship Center, serves kinship caregivers in Hillsborough County. It is a school-based intervention that places a social worker in the local schools to help caregivers navigate the school system, facilitates support groups for caregivers and children, and conducts workshops to educate school staff about kinship care. *Contact:* Caroll Gossage, Program Coordinator, at (813) 974-4921 or [cgossage@cas.usf.edu](mailto:cgossage@cas.usf.edu).
- ***The Relatives as Parents Program of Jacksonville (RAPPJAX)*** offers educational support groups each month to kinship care families. Past groups have addressed such issues as financial assistance, stress management, and behavioral problems. RAPPJAX also offers workshops featuring professionals from the Duvall County community. Prior topics have included age-appropriate discipline methods, a relaxation workshop, and talking to children about sexuality issues. Referrals are also provided for financial and legal assistance. RAPPJAX serves Duvall County. *Contact:* Christina Crapse, Program Coordinator, at (904) 807-1200 or [RAPPJAX@urbanjax.com](mailto:RAPPJAX@urbanjax.com).
- ***Florida Legal Services, Inc. (FLS)*** is a legal support center that provides technical consultation to legal services programs to ensure that people with low incomes (including relative caregivers) have access to civil legal services statewide. *Contact:* Visit the FLS website at [www.floridalegal.org](http://www.floridalegal.org) or call (850) 385-7900 to find a local legal services provider in your area.
- ***Florida Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*** is an online resource center that helps grandparents find resources to assist them in raising their grandchildren, nieces or nephews. It addresses health issues, lifestyle changes, issues such as child care. *Contact:* <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FloridaGRG/>.
- ***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group*** is offered once a month in the communities of Overtown, Coconut Grove, and Liberty City within the city of Miami. Topics covered: parenting, peer support, community building, education and advocacy. *Contact:* Saliha Nelson, V.P. of Operations, Urgent, Inc. at (305) 576-3084 or [saliha@urgentinc.org](mailto:saliha@urgentinc.org). Log on to [www.urgentinc.org](http://www.urgentinc.org) for more information.



- ***Osceola County Council on Aging*** sponsors a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group, which focuses on providing educational information on subjects such as parenting, community resources, coping with stress, and assistance in the school system. *Contact:* Warren Hougland at (407) 846-8532, ext. 227.
- ***The Intergenerational Community Assistance Network (I-CAN)***, sponsored by Informed Families/Florida Family Partnership, offers support groups/educational workshops throughout Central Florida. Participants engage in conversation, parenting skills workshops, lectures, educational seminars, use of the resource library, home visits, family bonding activities and grandparent socials. Babysitting and self-esteem workshops are provided for grandchildren during grandparent meetings. *Contact:* Leah Bradley at (321) 689-9272 or lbradley@informedfamilies.org.
- ***The Kinship Services Network (KSN) of Pinellas*** is a joint initiative of The Children's Home, Inc., Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Pinellas County, Catholic Charities Diocese of St. Petersburg, and others through a grant from the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County. The KSN is designed to assist relative care families in accessing and using a range of resources and services, including case management, support groups for youth and adults, educational workshops, mentoring, and follow-up services. *Contact:* Larry Cooper, The Children's Home, Inc., at (813) 864-1420 or lcooper@tampachi.org.

## Children in Foster Care

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Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grand-parents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kin-ship care.” In Florida, the Department of Children and Families reports:

***Number of children in kinship care:*** As of January 2005, the Department of Children and Families had more 29,360 children under supervision in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 14,776 were placed with kin. Of the 53% of children placed with kin, 13,453 children were in the Relative Caregiver Program. During January 2005, 18,639 children received the Relative Caregiver Program payment which is more than a TANF Temporary Cash Assistance payment, but less than a foster care payment. Most of the 14,776 children under supervision in out-of-home placements receive the Relative Caregiver Program payment. Therefore, not all of the 18,639 children who receive the payment are under department supervision, as eligibility for the payment continues following the termination of agency supervision.

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

***Kinship care licensing:*** In some instances, a kinship caregiver becomes a licensed foster parent for the child in their care. When this occurs, there is no separate licensing program for kin foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.

***State kinship care contact:*** Questions about kinship foster care placements should be directed Nelson Simmons, Out-of-Home Care Specialist, Department of Children and Families, Child Welfare and Community-Based Care Program Office, at (850) 922-0375 or nelson\_simmons@dcf.state.fl.us.



***Training and support for kinship foster parents:*** Children’s Home Society of Florida in West Palm Beach provides a monthly support group for relatives raising kin who are in foster care or at risk of entering the foster care system. In addition to the support group, caregivers receive information on public benefits, resources, permanency options, and parenting skills. Child care is available during the support group. Contact: Darlene Levy, Program Director, at (561) 844-9785.

## Public Benefits

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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 Florida’s Temporary Cash Assistance 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 (850) 488-3271 or log on to [www.dcf.state.fl.us/ess/tanf.shtml](http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/ess/tanf.shtml).

**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 (850) 488-3271 or log on to [www.dcf.state.fl.us/ess/foodstamps.shtml](http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/ess/foodstamps.shtml).

**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 Florida’s KidCare program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage through Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for KidCare program call (888) 540-KIDS (5437) or log on to [www.floridakidcare.org](http://www.floridakidcare.org).

**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

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The following state laws may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children<sup>1</sup>:

**Medical Consent (Fla. Stat. ch 743.0645):** This law allows a grandparent, adult aunt or uncle, adult brother or sister, or stepparent (or any person with power of attorney) to consent to medical care on behalf of a child: (1) after the treatment provider has made a reasonable attempt to contact the child’s parent or legal guardian and that person cannot be contacted; and (2) if the parent or legal guardian has not given the treatment provider notice that they oppose the treatment.

**Standby Guardianship (Fla. Stat. ch. 744.304):** This law allows that a guardian may be temporarily appointed by the court after petition or consent of the parents. The standby guardian assumes his/her duties immediately upon the death or incapacitation of the last surviving parent of the minor. Such guardianship is not a requirement for children in Florida’s foster care system, but may be pursued by the caregivers of these children.

**Relative Caregiver Program (Fla. Stat. ch. 39.5085):** This law contains the eligibility requirements for relatives who can participate in the Relative Caregiver Program, which provides financial assistance to kinship caregivers. Eligible participants in the Relative Caregiver Program include relatives who are within fifth degree by blood or marriage to the parent or stepparent and who are caring full-time for the child. A half-brother or half-sister of the child is also eligible if he or she has been adjudicated dependent and court-ordered into the same placement. In addition, program eligibility for the Early Learning program is amended to include children for whom the state is paying a relative caregiver payment.

<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

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AARP Grandparent Information Center

(888) 687-2277

[www.aarp.org/grandparents](http://www.aarp.org/grandparents)

Adoption Information Clearinghouse

(888) 251-0075

<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/>



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>
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>
The Urban Institute	(202) 833-7200	<a href="http://www.urban.org">www.urban.org</a>

*Fact sheets are updated quarterly. Changes or additions should be e-mailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at [gic@aarps.org](mailto:gic@aarps.org). Please write “State Fact Sheets” on your e-mail subject line.*

