



ILLINOIS

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

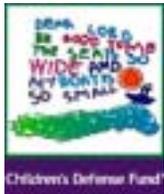


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The Brookdale Foundation

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 Illinois, there are 213,465 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.6% of all children in the state). There are another 75,362 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.3% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Illinois, 119,676 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 Illinois, 103,717 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [41,328 in Chicago and 1,576 in Rockford]: 41% of these grandparents are African American; 16% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are Asian; and 39% are White. 28% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

Additional Information

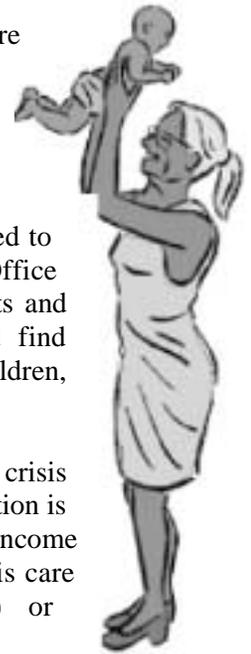
- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available 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 Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project of the Illinois State Department on Aging*** offers information, resources, and referrals to grandparents and other relative caregivers. The Senior Help Line (1-800-252-8966) provides a single contact point for grandparents and other relatives raising children. The state also offers a resource guide, Starting Points for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, available on-line at [http:// www.ebvonline.org/starting.pdf](http://www.ebvonline.org/starting.pdf). The Department provides a statewide newsletter, Tele-grand, referrals to support groups, and informational tip sheets, also available on-line. Illinois also has a task force that is active in statewide kinship care issues. *Contact:* Barb Schwartz, Project Director, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Illinois State Department on Aging, at (217) 524-5327 or barb.schwartz@aging.state.il.us.
- ***The Guardianship Help Desk*** is available to Illinois kinship caregivers over the age of 18 who are raising a child. The program offers help in filing for guardianship in the probate court, obtaining a TANF child-only grant, and accessing other local kinship care services. The dependent child does not need to be a ward of the court. *Contact:* Rose Hale, Circuit Court of Cook County, Guardianship Department for Minors, at (312) 603-0135.
- ***The Illinois Department on Aging, IAAA For LincolnLand, Inc., and Parents Place*** have collaborated to pilot a Guardianship Advocacy Project. The project places a trained “grandparent advocate” at the Office of the County Clerk in Sangamon County. The advocate is there two hours a day for appointments and walk-ins to help grandparents seeking guardianship fill out paperwork, answer questions, and find information and referrals. *Contact:* Barb Schwartz, Project Director, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Illinois State Department on Aging, at (217) 524-5327 or barb.schwartz@aging.state.il.us.
- ***Diamonds in the Ruff Children’s Society*** is a non-profit organization that is developing respite and crisis care services for caregivers, including kinship caregivers, in under-served Chicago areas. The organization is helping to design state and federal legislation to increase respite and crisis care services in lower-income neighborhoods. It also educates local communities about the benefits of and need for respite and crisis care services. *Contact:* Jacqueline Davis, Executive Director, at (773) 268-1500 (ext. 169) or jdavis@diamondsintheruff.info.
- ***Lutheran Social Services of Illinois*** provides grandparents taking care of grandchildren with incarcerated parents monthly transportation to the jails for visits. The organization also provides a support group for parents at the jails and a social worker and speakers familiar with the corrections system to address the concerns of caregivers and their children. *Contact:* Pat Davis, RAPP Coordinator, at (773) 476-1452 or pat.davis@LSSI.org.
- ***The Winnebago County Health Department***, in collaboration with Family Support Center, Children’s Home and Aid Society, Saint Anthony and many others, provides support group meetings, educational seminars and resources for grandparents raising grandchildren. The meetings are free with child care and meals or snacks provided by the Children’s Home and Aid Society. The program offers additional support through its resource center, a yearly one day seminar for grandparents raising grandchildren, and quarterly newsletters and education forums. *Contact:* Beverly Darsie, Parents Again Facilitator at (815) 720-4265.
- ***The Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois*** is actively involved in providing financial support to local agencies offering services and resources to local organizations and kinship caregivers. Services offered by the Children’s home and Aid Society of Illinois (800-467-9700) include case management, respite, emergency gap-filling funds and an annual conference for kinship caregivers and the children they are raising. The Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance foundation, Inc. (618-271-9140) provides assistance in obtaining guardianship, adoption, and other legal needs. *Contact:* The Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois (800) 316-3221 or www.answeronaging.com.
- ***The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group***, operated by Evanston/Skokie Valley Senior Services, provides support and recreational activities to grandparent caregivers and the grandchildren in their care. Participants determine for themselves what they would like to do at their monthly meetings, with past activities including the attendance at musical festivals, and holiday parties. *Contact:* Mary Signator or Jolene Whiting at (847) 864-3721.



- **The Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging** sponsors grandparent support groups in Boone and Winnebago counties. Grandparents can find assistance, direction, and receive emotional support. The Agency also helps to coordinate the Parents Again Coalition in collaboration with several other groups. The Coalition offers meetings, educational seminars, and resources for grandparents raising grandchildren. The meetings are free and child care is provided. *Contact:* Teresa Colvin at (815) 226-4901 or niaaa@nwilaaa.org.
- **The Macon County Relatives as Parents Program** is a new initiative that provides help for family and friends raising children not their own. The program offers these families the opportunity to meet, share ideas and concerns, develop networks of friends with similar needs and access educational information and programs relevant to the issues they are most interested in. The program is funded by the Brookdale Foundation and is the result of collaborative efforts between the University of Illinois Extension in Macon County, Macon County Mental Health Board, Heritage Behavioral Health Center, Main Street Church of the Living God, Old King's Orchard Community Center, and St. Thomas Church. The Program is open to any individual in Macon County who is acting as the parent of a child not their own. *Contact:* Teresa Easterly-Adams, Macon County Extension, at (217) 877-6042 or easterly@uiuc.edu.
- **The Rockford Housing Authority** offers a bi-weekly Parents Again support group that offers educational speakers, resources and referrals in addition to an opportunity for kinship care families to get together with one another. In addition, the Housing Authority offers a quarterly newsletter, a resource center, and a variety of other helpful information. The Housing Authority also collaborates with the following agencies: Children's Home and Aid Society, Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, Zion Lutheran Church, N.I.A.A.A., Swedish American Hospital, Lifescapes Community Services, and Winnebago County Health Department. *Contact:* Beverly Darsie at (815) 720-4265 or bdarsie@wchd.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 Illinois, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of March 4, 2005, there were 18,161 children in substitute care under DCFS’s supervision. Of these children, 6,827 were in kinship foster care.

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. DCFS also offers the Extended Family Support Program (EFSP) to relatives caring for children. An array of services is provided to kinship care families through collaboration with the probate court, the Department of Public Aid, the State Central Register, and the public schools. The focus of the program is short-term, home stabilization intervention to help relatives continue to provide quality care. The program assists families in obtaining guardianship, getting public aid, enrolling in school, and provides a small cash assistance program. Call John Egan, Coordinator at (312) 814-1878.

Kinship care licensing: There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards 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. Illinois’ Subsidized Guardianship Program, the largest subsidized guardianship program in the country, provides a subsidy for children who have been transferred from the Department’s custody to the guardianship of a relative caregiver. The subsidy rate is the same as the state’s foster care and adoption subsidy rates. Eligible children include children living with kin and children over age 12 not living with kin. The Department must rule out return home and adoption before a child can become eligible for this program. A post-guardianship program is also available to provide resources and referrals to guardians and stabilization services, as needed. Call Leslie Cohen, Project Director, Subsidized Guardianship, at (312) 641-2505, ext. 21, or email lcohen@uiuc.edu.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster care should be directed to Mary Sue Morsch, Deputy Director of Placement and Permanency, Department of Children and Family Services, at (312) 814-8626 or mmorsch@idcfs.state.il.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 payments may be available to children who live with a relative through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program:

- A “child-only grant” is for the child and based *only* on the child’s income. Guardianship is not required.
- The child will also receive medical assistance. An adult caregiver may also be included in the grant subject to work requirements and time limits. Working caregivers who choose to be included in the grant may receive free child care.

Call (800) 843-6154 or log on to www.state.il.us/agency/dhs/.

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) 843-6154 or log on to www.state.il.us/agency/dhs/.

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 Illinois’ KidCare program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call (866) 687-5437 or log on to www.kidcareillinois.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) 662-3568. 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 Law

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

Standby Guardianship (IL Rev. Stat Ch. 755 § 5/11a-3.1): This law allows a parent to designate a standby guardian to assume the day-to-day care of a child in the event of a parent’s inability to function as a parent. It does not limit the rights of other living parents.

¹ *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 |
| 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 |

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| 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@arp.org. Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.