



WEST VIRGINIA

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



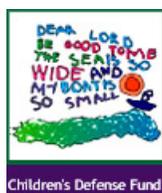
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The Brookdale Foundation

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 West Virginia, there are 24,276 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.0% of all children in the state). There are another 3,940 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.0% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in West Virginia, 10,809 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 West Virginia, 16,151 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [431 in Huntington and 417 in Charleston]: 7% of these grandparents are African American; .4% are Hispanic/Latino; and 90% are White. 42% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

Additional Information

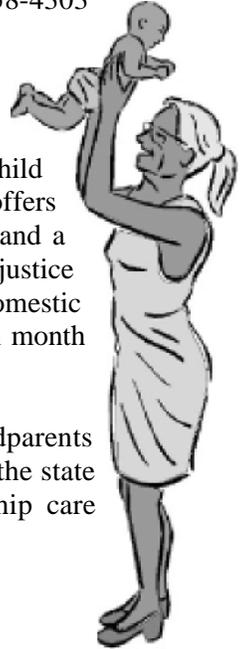
- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available 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 West Virginia Relatives as Parents Program*** is a multi-service program for West Virginia kinship caregivers raising children outside of the foster care system. Initiated by the West Virginia Office of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Resources in partnership with Mission West Virginia, a state faith-based initiative, the program also works together with the West Virginia University Extension Services and the West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities. Supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and The Brookdale Foundation, the program offers support groups across the state, informational workshops, a Listserv, annual training conference, social activities, and referrals to community resources. Its objective is to create and expand supportive, community-based services for kinship caregivers, improve community and state agency responses to kinship care families and raise community awareness. *Contact:* Allison Nichols, West Virginia University Extension Services, at (304) 293-2697 or ahnichols@mail.wvu.edu; Doug Parks, Mission West Virginia, at (304) 204-9898 or rapp@mission.wv.org; Laura Lou Harbert, Department of Health and Human Resources, at (304) 558-4303 or lauraharbert@wvdhhr.org.
- ***The REACHH-Family Resource Center (FRC)*** offers comprehensive family services to grandparents and other relatives who are raising children in Summers County. The REACHH-FRC offers support groups and a Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker program that provides information on child development and available resources to caregivers of children ages three and under. It also offers educational materials specifically for grandparents, a licensed, curriculum-based child care center, and a multidisciplinary team facilitation for caregivers of children who are in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems or who have special needs, and advocacy and counseling for victims of child abuse and domestic violence. A Relatives as Parents information and support group meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:00-7:30PM. *Contact:* Peggy Rossi at (304) 466-2226.
- ***Grandchildren/Grandparents, Inc.,*** is a grassroots organization of West Virginia parents, grandparents and other relatives raising grandchildren. The group has helped to establish support groups around the state and also works with state legislators and agency representatives to improve services for kinship care families. *Contacts:* Bill and Lola Bailey, at (304) 652-4587 or webailey@rcvideo.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 West Virginia, the Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Children and Families reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of September 30, 2002, there were approximately 3,220 children in out-of-home placements under the Bureau’s supervision. Of these children, 161 children were placed with kin.

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 Bureau’s care.

Kinship care licensing: Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.

Subsidized guardianship programs: The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Children and Families, provides an ongoing subsidy for eligible children in the West Virginia foster care system whose qualified adult caregivers become their legal guardians. To receive a subsidy on behalf of the child, the guardian must show that there is a strong emotional tie with the child and that the child is not likely to be adopted or otherwise placed without the subsidy. The State will determine the amount of the subsidy awarded as well as the frequency of payments. The subsidy can be in the form of funding for services or stipends. *Contact:* Christina Bertelli, Program Specialist for Foster Care, Department of Health and Human Resources, at (304) 558-7980 or cbertelli@wvdhhr.org.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Christina Bertelli, Program Specialist for Foster Care, Department of Health and Human Services, at (304) 558-7980 or cbertelli@wvdhhr.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 the West Virginia Works 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 (304) 558-2400 or log on to www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family_assistance/fs.asp.



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 (304) 558-2400 or log on to www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/family_assistance/fs.asp.

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 West Virginia’s Medicaid and the West Virginia Children’s Health Insurance Program (WV CHIP) 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 (877) WVA-CHIP or log on to www.wvchip.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 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:

Standby Guardianship (W. VA. Code § 44A-5-1 – 8): This law allows parents to name an alternate adult caregiver or “standby guardian” to care for their children in the event of death, illness, or incapacity through other means. To be valid, the appointment must be accepted by the chosen guardian and approved by the court.

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