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 Georgia there are 164,423 children living in grandparent-headed households (7.6% of all children in the state). There are another 53,785 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.5% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Georgia, 98,773 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 Georgia, 92,265 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [5,947 grandparents in Atlanta and 2,572 in Columbus]: 52% of these grandparents are African American; 3% are Hispanic/Latino; 1% are Asian; and 24% are White. 36% of these grandparents live in households without the children’s parents present. 74% are under the age of 60; 20% 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.
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children are available on AARP’s website at www.aarp.org/grandparents.

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

**AARP Georgia’s Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Warm Line/Resource Center** provides information and assistance via the internet to grandparent caregivers at the Grandparents Resource Center located at the Helene S. Mills Senior Multipurpose Facility, 515 John Wesley Dobbs Avenue in Metropolitan Atlanta. Information and assistance are provided through a Warm Line that links relative caregivers to community resources such as support groups, child care, health care, transportation, and other services along with an understanding ear from grandparents and other relatives who have “been there.” Contact: Call (404) 523-6305 or e-mail aarp.warmline@co.fulton.ga.us.

**The Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Aging Services**, through the Georgia General Assembly, approved Governor Sonny Perdue’s requested state funds to develop a statewide Kinship Care Initiative. Services provided in all 12 Area Agencies on Aging regions (effective July 2005) are: information and assistance, that provides resources for relative caregivers, support groups, and community education. In addition, some Area Agencies on Aging in Georgia are providing summer camp scholarships for children, tutoring grandparents and grandchildren in reading and other school activities, and providing case management and individual counseling. Contact: Leslie McKee, Kinship Care Coordinator, Division of Aging Services, at (404) 657-5336 or lemckee@dhr.state.ga.us.

Kinship care specialists are placed in the following 12 Area Agencies on Aging:

- Atlanta Regional Commission – Mary Lou Vergara at (404) 463-3524 or mvergara@atlantaregional.com
- Central Savannah River – Georgia Jopling at (706) 210-2000 (x 147) or gjopling@csrardc.org
- Coastal Georgia – Sharon Dickol at (912) 264-7363 (ext. 231) or sb dickol@dhr.state.ga.us
- Coosa Valley/Northwest Georgia – Karen Carter at (706) 295-6485 or kbcarter@dhr.state.ga.us or Irma Garcia Rose at (706) 291-8496.
- Georgia Mountains – Julia Jessee at (770) 538-2650 or jcjessee@dhr.state.ga.us
- Heart of Georgia Altamaha – Kathy Keith at (912) 367-3648 or kbkeith@dhr.state.ga.us or Kerrie Sirmans at (912) 367-3648 or klsirmans.dhr.state.ga.us
- Lower Chattahoochee – Cecelia Adams at (706) 256-2943 or cadams@dhr.state.ga.us or Misty Jamieson at (706) 256-2910 or mdjamieson@dhr.state.ga.us
- Middle Georgia – Natalie Brown at (478) 751-6466 or nbrown@mgrpdc.org
- Northeast Georgia – Michele Farley at (706) 369-5650 at mdfarley@dhr.state.ga.us
- Southeast Georgia/South Georgia – Katie Flynn at 1-888-732-4464 or (912) 285-6097
- Southern Crescent – Gloria Sanford at (706) 407-0021 or gdsanfor d@dhr.state.ga.us
- Southwest Georgia – Nancy Harper at (229) 432-1124 or neh Harper@dhr.state.ga.us or Doris Long at (229) 432-1124 or dhlong@dhr.state.ga.us.

**Georgia State University’s Project Healthy Grandparents** offers multiple services to enhance the physical and emotional well-being of grandparents raising grandchildren 16 years of age or younger. Services include monthly home visits by a registered nurse and social worker, monthly grandparent support groups, parent education classes, transportation to meetings, early intervention services, and legal services referrals. All services are free. Contact: Judy Perdue, Community Partnerships Coordinator, at (404) 651-0341 or jperdue@gsu.edu. Visit the Project’s website at http://www.gsu.edu/phg.

**Jewish Family Career Services** provides individual and group support for grandparents and other relatives raising children.
Contact: Rhoda Margolis at (770) 677-9400 or rmrgolis@jfcs-atlanta.org.

The Relative Caregiver Program provides case management services, home health care evaluations, information and referrals services, support groups, parent education, parent/child group activities, and other supports to relatives caring for children of family members in Sumter, Schley, Macon, and Dooly counties. Contact: Kathy Arnold, Case Manager, at (229) 931-2238 or karnold@canes.gsw.edu.

Project Kincare in Gainesville provides monthly support group meetings, educational seminars and recreational activities with transportation and childcare provided as needed. These activities will provide respite for grandparents, introduce the kinship care families to others with a similar family structure and provide families with instructive support. Contact: Linda Kirkpatrick, Program Director, at (770) 503-3330 or lkirkpatrick@gainsville.org.

The Relative Caregiver Program at Georgia Southwestern University provides support services to grandparents and other relatives raising dependent children. The program provides in-home family assessments, health care screening, and follow-up services, home-based parent education, center-based support groups, individual counseling, crisis intervention services, and family outings. Contact: Laura Bauer at (229) 931-2034 or lbauer@canes.gsw.edu.

The Rockdale County Kinship Care Program offers services for grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children in Rockdale County. Services include case management, support group meetings, educational/information sessions, information and referral, respite care, material aid, and recreational activities. Contact: Claudia Cian at (770) 922-4633 or Claudia.cian@rockdalecounty.org.

Choices for Children, Inc. has started a program to reach grandparents and other relative caregivers in the Newton County area. The program features a support group where caregivers can come together and share information about services they have discovered to assist them in the care of their grandchildren or other child relatives. The support group meets once a week. The participants determine what the agenda will be. In addition, Choices for Children staff meet with new caregivers who come to the program to assess their service needs and find appropriate resources. Choices for Children offers parenting classes, legal advocacy, and a referral system. Contact: Jeanette Perry at (770) 385-7450 or alcovycasa@aol.com.

Clayton County Kinship Care Resource Center services grandparents and relative caregivers and their families in Clayton County. It is also a demonstration site for the Atlanta region and the rest of the state. Programs include support groups, case management, information and referral services, computer classes, celebrations, field trips, and a “clothes closet.” The Center, a program of the Clayton County Department of Aging, is staffed by a full-time care manager, a part-time receptionist, and a host of volunteers. Contact: Angie Burda at (770) 477-3417 or aburda@bellsouth.net.

National Center on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren has been established at Georgia State University through a grant from Hasbro Children’s Foundation. The Center focuses on issues associated with intergenerational families. The activities of the Center include professional education for social workers, nurses, psychologists, lawyers, and other professionals involved with grandparents raising grandchildren, coordination of research and policy related to grandparent caregivers, and national replication of the Project Healthy Grandparents (PHG) model, a successful comprehensive service program that supports grandparent-headed families. The Center also has additional PHG pilot sites: two at the University of Georgia in Athens and at one at Valdosta State. Contact: Dr. Dorothy Carrillo, Assistant Director of Operations, at (404) 651-0435 or dcarrillo@gsu.edu.

Grands Who Care at Mercy Senior Care, Inc. in Rome is a support group for grandparents and other relatives raising children that meets twice a month. Workshops are held on various topics such as working with the school system, parenting skills, problem solving, grandparents’ rights, and stress management. Contact: Irma Rose, LCSW at 706-291-8496 or irose@sjha.org. In addition, there is a regular kinship care support group held each week at St. Elizabeth’s Episcopal Church in Dahlonega. Contact: Jocelyn Joaquim at (706) 864-2768 or JayWolfSister@aol.com.

The Kinship Care Center at the Medical College of Georgia’s School of Nursing in Augusta serves grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children in the 14 county CSRA. Services include counseling, legal counseling and child custody issues, monthly support group meetings for Augusta families, a monthly newsletter, summer respite for some caregivers, and information and referral to community resources. Contact: Mike Patton at (888) 284-2273 (outside Augusta) or (706) 721-9626 in Augusta.
Project GRAND-D (Grandparents Rearing and Nurturing Dependents with Disabilities), a project of Institute for the Study of Disadvantage and Disabilities, is a program for grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren with special needs. It is comprised of 10 monthly scheduled group meetings addressing various needs including emotional, economic, educational, medical, developmental, legal, respite, and daycare. Part of each meeting is dedicated to family counseling provided by a licensed family therapist. Participants are asked to attend the monthly meetings held at Hughes Spalding Children’s Hospital. Contact: Janice Nodvin at (678) 595-4854 or jnodvin@aol.com

The Relative Caregiver Hotline is a project of the Georgia Senior Legal Aid Hotline that provides statewide legal advice and handles questions about caring for a relative child such as medical and educational decisions, legal relationship to the relative child, public benefits and living wills. Contact: Statewide hotline 1(888) 257-9519

The Kinship Care Project of the Georgia Legal Services Program provides critical legal help and outreach to low-income grandparents and other relative caregivers of children who need stable loving homes. The project can assist families with obtaining financial assistance to help them raise their relatives’ children. Additionally, families may get legal assistance with housing, education, and consumer issues. Contact: The Kinship Care Project of Georgia Legal Services Program at (800) 498-9469.

Atlanta Legal Aid sponsors the Grandparent/Relative Caregiver Project, which assists low-income relatives in the Metro-Atlanta area who want to adopt minor children. The Project also handles a limited number of custody cases and administrative hearings for denials of adoption assistance benefits. Services provided through both programs are free. Contact: Lindsay C. Verity, Director, Grandparent/Relative Caregiver Project, at 404-614-3953 or lcverity@atlantalegalaid.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 Georgia, the Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services reports:

Number of children in kinship care: As of December 2005, there were 15,119 children in out-of home placements under the Department’s supervision. Of these children, 2,682 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 Department’s care if the relative caregiver can provide safe environment for the child and meet all the state’s child protection standards.

Kinship care licensing: There is no separate licensing program for kinship 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.

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. Georgia has a Relative Care Subsidy Program for children transferred from the legal custody of the Department to the permanent custody of an approved relative caregiver and for whom the court has issued a non-reunification order. Caregivers’ homes are reviewed annually by the agency and every 3 years by the court. The Relative Care Subsidy Program uses Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds to support the program. (Social Services Manual, April 2001, Chapter 1000, pp. 10-19). Contact: Renee King, Policy Specialist, Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services at (404) 657-3403 or irking@state.ga.us.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Renee King, Policy Specialist, Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services at (404) 657-3403 or irking@state.ga.us.
Training and support for kinship foster parents: Any person applying for a foster care license must complete 30 hours of pre-service training. In addition, a minimum of 15 hours of in-service training is required each year for license renewal.

Contact: Renee King, Policy Specialist, Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services at (404) 657-3403 or irking@state.ga.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 and their grandparents and other relative caregivers 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.
- An adult caregiver may also be included in the TANF grant — based on their income and subject to work requirements and time limits.

Call 1-800-869-1150 or 404-651-6316 or log on to www.dhr.georgia.gov.

Food Stamps: Based on the family’s income, kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet food and nutrition needs. For more information about these programs, call 1-800-869-1150 or 404-651-6316 log on to http://www.dhr.georgia.gov.

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 Right from the Start Medicaid and Peachcare for Kids programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid, call 1-800-809-7276 or log on to http://dch.georgia.gov. For more information about Peachcare for Kids, call 1-877-GAPEACH or log on to www.peachcare.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:

Medical Consent (GA Code Ann. § 31-9-2): 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.

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
Fact sheets are updated annually. 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.