Do You Know How Many of Your Students Are Being Raised by Their Grandparents?

What do we know about the children?
More than 4.5 million children are being raised in grandparent-headed households in all ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels and locations. They represent over 6% of all children under the age of 18. Another 1.5 million children are being raised by other relatives. These figures are up 30% since 1990.* Half of these children are under the age of six, and at least one-third have no health insurance.

What do we know about the grandparents?
There are 2.4 million grandparents who say they are responsible for most of the basic needs of grandchildren who live with them. About one-third (34%) are raising these children without a parent present in the home. They are more likely to live in poverty than other families with children.* Many are unaware of the help that is available to them and their grandchildren. They often feel alone and isolated.

Why are so many children being raised by grandparents?
There is usually a crisis or a chronic problem in the family that causes grandparents, or other relatives, to step in and raise these children. Substance abuse is a leading cause. Others include mental illness, incarceration, HIV/AIDS, divorce, death of a parent, poverty, child abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, unemployment, and family violence.

How does this growing trend affect your students?
In some cases, grandparents may have difficulty enrolling their grandchildren in school because they don't have legal custody or guardianship. Grandparents may be afraid to communicate with the school for fear of losing their grandchildren. These families may face legal, financial, health, insurance and housing problems that can negatively affect the well-being of your students and their ability to learn and participate. Grandparents in this situation are often overwhelmed and unaware of their grandchild's educational needs. Your students may be experiencing anger, fear, grief, and loss that can result in behavior problems.

*Source: Census 2000

AARP Grandparent Information Center
www.aarp.org/grandparents
There may be a higher incidence of chronic health problems, learning disabilities or attention deficit disorder among these children.

**How can you help?**

- Recognize the unique needs of children and grandparents in this situation.
- Start support groups for grandparents and/or for the children.
- Offer before/after-school care.
- Refer grandparents to agencies providing free early intervention services for children who show signs of having medical problems or developmental delays.
- Include grandparents in the Multifactored Evaluation/Individualized Education Program (MFE/IEP) process.
- Assist grandparents who are unfamiliar with current education methods. Help them to understand their grandchildren’s educational needs so that they can support their grandchildren’s success in school.
- Provide information about free or reduced breakfast/lunch programs.
- Provide training for teachers so they fully understand the challenges these families face.
- Offer the support of school counselors/psychologists.
- Help grandparents find other types of assistance in the community.
- Encourage grandparents to feel safe in allowing the school to know they are raising the children.

**For more information, contact:**

AARP Grandparent Information Center (GIC)
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
Phone: 1-800-424-3410
Email: gic@aarp.org

Check out AARP GIC’s For Grandparents Web site at www.aarp.org/grandparents for:

- Tips for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Support groups and agencies in your city/state that can help grandparents and the grandchildren they are raising.

Plus, much more useful help and information

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; engage in legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy; assist members in serving their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These include AARP The Magazine, published bimonthly; AARP Bulletin, our monthly newspaper; AARP Segunda Juventud, our quarterly newspaper in Spanish; NRTA Live and Learn, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our Web site, www.aarp.org. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.