

FACT SHEET

GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN: INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE SERVICES



INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census 2000, more than six million children across the country are living in households maintained by grandparents or other relatives.¹ More than 2.4 million grandparents have the primary responsibility for meeting the basic needs of these children.² Factors such as parental substance abuse, incarceration, HIV/AIDS, death, poverty, and even military deployments are causing growing numbers of grandparents and other relatives to step forward to keep families together.

THE NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)³ was created in 2000 as an addition to the Older Americans Act (OAA). Administered by the Administration on Aging (AoA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the NFCSP calls for all states, working in partnership with Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and local community-service providers to offer five categories of support services for grandparents and other relatives aged 60 and older who are relative caregivers of children, and family caregivers of individuals aged 60 and older.⁴

SUPPORT SERVICES

The five categories of support services include:

- (1) Information to caregivers about available services;
- (2) Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to the services;
- (3) Individual counseling, organization of support groups, caregiver training;
- (4) Respite care; and
- (5) Supplemental services to complement care provided by caregivers.⁵

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Information and Assistance (I&A) services are provided through the first two categories of the NFCSP. They are intended to help caregivers determine their needs, find information about available services, and gain access to the most appropriate services available. Information and assistance systems are the vital link between caregivers who need services and those individuals in the community who can provide them.

Growing numbers of grandparents and other relatives raising children need relevant and specific information. Relative caregivers must deal with complicated systems of child welfare, education, health care, and the aging network. They must traverse issues related to maintaining financial resources for the children in their care, enrolling the children in school, accessing health care and insurance, and obtaining adequate housing.

Grandparents and other relatives raising children are in a particularly unique situation in that they may be able to access services from both the aging network and agencies serving children. Twenty-nine percent of grandparent caregivers are over the age of 60.⁶ Therefore, they may have access to services through the NFCSP. Further, relative caregivers of all ages may also be able to access aging network services available through other funding sources, in addition to services available through agencies serving children. However, caregivers often need help understanding what services are available and whether they qualify as they face many overlapping federal and state programs and different eligibility requirements.

National non-profits, government agencies, State Offices/Units on Aging (SUA), Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), and other state and local service providers operate I&A programs to help relative-maintained families. This fact

sheet highlights specific national I&A services, which can be accessed by relative caregivers, from around the country. It also describes innovative state and local I&A programs, which may serve as model state programs.

NATIONAL INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE RESOURCES FOR RELATIVE CAREGIVERS

Generations United (GU)- GU is the only national non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote intergenerational public policies, strategies, and programs. GU's National Center on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children provides training and technical assistance to the aging network and other service providers. GU's Center works with providers to implement and design services for relative caregivers. GU also offers its own user-friendly publications and other materials, including state fact sheets, which are a collaborative effort to identify relative caregiver support services in each state. For further information, contact GU, 202-289-3979 or email gu@gu.org. GU's website is www.gu.org.

AARP Grandparent Information Center (GIC)- The GIC provides information about services and programs that can help improve the lives of grandparent-headed households including Spanish-language publications. Grandparents and other relatives raising children can search the National Database of Grandparent Support Groups at www.aarp.org/grandparents/searchsupport for a support group near them. For further information, contact the GIC at 601 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20049, 800-434-3410 or email member@aarp.org. The AARP website is www.aarp.org/grandparents.

The Brookdale Foundation Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP)- RAPP is a national network of support groups for relatives raising children informally. RAPP offers seed grants to local and state agencies and currently has programs in 45 states. RAPPs create collaborative partnerships with community organizations and other service systems to ensure that relative caregivers obtain information about available services in a number of ways, including: educational forums and seminars; resource directories; newsletters with information on legal issues, legislation, health and available benefits; community trainings; local and state conferences on relative caregiving; websites; and chat rooms. For further information, contact Brookdale at 950 Third Avenue, 19th Floor, New York, New York 10022, 212-308-7355. The Brookdale Foundation website is www.brookdalefoundation.org.

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF)- CDF provides information and resources on issues facing children raised by relatives, inside and outside of the child welfare system, with special emphasis on how community and faith-based organizations can support these families. CDF's publications, including guides directed to caregivers covering issues such as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), are available on its website. For further information, contact CDF at 25 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, 202-628-8787. CDF's website is www.childrensdefense.org.

The Eldercare Locator- The Eldercare Locator is a national toll-free service of the Administration on Aging that helps caregivers and older persons find necessary, convenient services and resources in their own communities or throughout the country. Anyone from around the country can call the toll-free number, 800-677-1116, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.- 8 p.m., (Eastern Time). Additionally, an on-line version of the Eldercare Locator, www.eldercare.gov, provides users with 24-hour access to community assistance resources for seniors. By using the county, city name, or zip code of the person in need of assistance, users can access databases containing general agency

information, hotlines, and special services offered by state or area agencies on aging, tribal organizations, community organizations, or private organizations. For further information, the AoA's website is www.aoa.gov.

Grand Parent Again- The Grand Parent Again website offers information about education, legal support, support groups, and other organizations for grandparents raising grandchildren. The website is www.grandparentagain.com.

GrandsPlace- The GrandsPlace website is www.grandsplace.com. It is dedicated to supporting grandparents and other relatives raising children. It is open to members and non-members of GrandsPlace, and provides opportunities for grandparents to offer comments and gather information.

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)- NACCRRA is the national network of community-based childcare resource and referral agencies. For further information, contact NACCRRA at 1319 F Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004-1106, 202-393-5501. The NACCRRA website is www.naccrra.net.

National Council on the Aging (NCOA) BenefitsCheckUp- NCOA's BenefitsCheckUp is a free Internet-based service to help all older Americans and their families, including relative-headed families, identify state and federal assistance programs. The service is confidential, and takes only a few minutes to complete. Visit www.benefitscheckup.org

211- Although not available nationwide, the 2-1-1 program is designed to be the national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services information and referral when finally operational. While services that are offered through 2-1-1 vary from community to community, 2-1-1 provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for every day needs and times of crisis. Proposed federal legislation would authorize \$200 million annually to assist states with implementing and sustaining 2-1-1 statewide.

STATE AND LOCAL PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Michigan- The Kinship Care Resource Center serves the entire state of Michigan. Services for relative caregivers include a toll-free hotline to answer legal questions and provide information and referrals related to finances, support groups, and other community resources. The Resource Center provides workshops and organizes a conference for both caregivers and agency professionals statewide. The Center also provides written information on support group curricula and workshops, in addition to an information booklet for relative caregivers that includes resources listed by county. For further information, contact Kimberly Clementz, 517-355-9600 or kimberly.clementz@ssc.msu.edu. You can also call the Hotline, 800-535-1218.

New Jersey- The New Jersey Kinship Navigator Program is a centralized, statewide service that provides information, referrals, and follow-up services to grandparents and other relative caregivers through a toll free number, 877-816-3211. The Navigator Program provides information for a wide variety of services, including support groups, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families' grants, medical coverage and services, childcare, and child support. This Navigator Program also provides referrals to wraparound services such as housing assistance, legal services, and respite care for low-income relative caregivers. For further information, contact Brunilda Luciano, RAPP Coordinator, 609-588-0187 or email bluciano@dhs.state.nj.us.

Ohio- The Ohio Kinship Care Navigator Program, established by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, is a statewide information and referral service for relative-headed families. The program provides relative caregivers with assistance in obtaining information about benefits and services, including child care, support groups, respite care, and training on how to care for children with special needs, and how to access legal services. The program also has published a self-help manual, *Relatives Caring for Children: Ohio Resource Guide*. For further information, call "Help Me Grow," a telephone help-line for grandparents and other relative caregivers, 800-755-4769.

Pennsylvania- Grand Central Kinship Care Resource Center offers comprehensive support for Philadelphia's relative-headed families. It is Philadelphia's first and only Kinship Care Resource Center, offering a variety of services and supports. Services include providing information and referrals, family support services, educational seminars, and support groups. Grand Central also provides on-site technical assistance to the staff of Philadelphia's eighteen community-based Family Center sites. The Center's staff facilitates needs assessments to determine the general demographic profile of relative caregivers in targeted family centers. This helps the sites articulate their needs, and bridge the information gaps of the workers around such needs. The Center's bilingual liaison accommodates the language diversity in the program and conducts special outreach to the Latino community. For further information, contact Sandra Cross, 215-557-1554 or email campbelljackson11@msn.com. The Grand Central Inc. website is www.grandcentralinc.org.

CONCLUSION

Information and Assistance programs provide the essential connection between relative caregivers and services to assist them and support their families. The growing numbers of relative caregivers has increased the demand for information and assistance services that help them determine their needs, find information about available services, and gain access to the most appropriate services available. While nationally there is no single place for relative caregivers to get comprehensive I&A, a network of information services is available through a variety of departments and organizations on the national, state, and local levels. Model programs like the Kinship Navigator programs in New Jersey and Ohio offer examples of what types of I&A programs are possible and what works best. These programs are made possible through creative funding from federal and state resources. As these financial resources diminish, efforts are underway to provide support to navigator programs through federal legislation that would support additional demonstration programs. The successes and lessons learned from these and other comprehensive model service programs make the case for the need for federal support to establish and expand these services.

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For further information, please contact: Generations United, (202) 289-3979, fax: (202) 289-3952, e-mail: gu@gu.org. The GU web site at www.gu.org contains additional information about grandparents and other relatives raising children.

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on promoting inter-generational strategies, programs, and policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans. It is the only national organization advocating for the mutual well-being of children, youth, and older adults. GU serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and older adults to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

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- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Summary File 1, Table P28, Relationship by Household Type for Population Under 18 Years.
- 2 U.S. Census 2000. DP-2, Grandparent Caregivers in the United States, the 50 States, and the District of Columbia.
- 3 Public Law 106-501. Section 316.
- 4 For further information about the NFCSP, please go to www.gu.org for a fact sheet and user guide about the program or to the AoA website at www.aoa.gov
- 5 Public Law 106-501. Section 373(b)(1-5).
- 6 U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000. 1-Percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) file.