



# MARYLAND



## A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

September 2005

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 Maryland, there are 98,836 children living in grandparent-headed households (7.3% of all children in the state). There are another 30,651 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 Maryland 54,323 are living there without either parent present.

#### The Grandparents

- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grand-children 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 Maryland, 50,974 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [13,707 in Baltimore]: 56% of these grandparents are African American; 3% are Hispanic/Latino; 3% are Asian; and 36% are White. 34% 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](http://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/](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/).

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

The Brookdale Foundation



## Programs That Can Help

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- ***The Kinship Care Resource Center of Maryland*** provides information, referrals, and support services for Maryland kinship care families through a central data bank. The Kinship Care Resource Center assists caregivers and the organizations that serve them in developing support groups. It also identifies the most pressing needs and concerns of kinship caregivers by maintaining kinship care information and statistics for legislators and other policy makers. *Contact:* Dr. Earlene Merrill at (410) 951-4177, (888) 951-4177 or emerrill@coppin.edu.
- ***The Maryland Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration*** supports new and existing kinship care support groups throughout the state. These support groups offer an array of services and activities for adults and children. *Contact:* Cynthia Harlee-Williams at (410) 767-7788 or charlee@dhr.state.md.us.
- ***Maryland's Kinship Care Program*** has a website that provides information on resources and services for formal and informal kinship care families. The website is informational and gives an overview of kinship care in Maryland. The program also offers a quarterly newsletter, *Kinship Care Connections*. The same information can be obtained by phone. *Contact:* log on to [www.dhr.state.md.us/ssa/kinship/ini.htm](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/ssa/kinship/ini.htm) or call (410) 767-7521 for the kinship care program office.
- ***The Statewide Kinship Care Multidisciplinary Committee*** meets once a month to discuss kinship care issues and new trends and to serve as advocates for kinship care families. The committee consists of kinship caregivers from the community, State legislators, representatives from public and private agencies, and other professionals. *Contact:* Cynthia Harlee-Williams at (410) 767-7788 or charlee@dhr.state.md.us.
- ***The Grandparents Resource Directory*** was developed by the Maryland Department of Human Resources and the Department of Aging to provide information about social services, support groups, educational programs, legal services, child care, health services, and recreational activities. *Contact:* log on to [www.mdoa.state.md.us/gparentdir.pdf](http://www.mdoa.state.md.us/gparentdir.pdf).
- ***Progressive Life Center Kinship Care Program*** is designed to provide counseling and supportive services to families caring for relative children in Prince George's County. The goal of the program is to assist families and caregivers in reducing dependence and involvement on public assistance by linking them to community resources and referrals. Progressive Life Center's Kinship Care Program offers regular visits with a caseworker, spiritually- and culturally-focused case management, parent support groups, family and team meetings, youth groups, and respite care. It also provides psychiatric consultation, mental health services, 24-hour crisis intervention and information and referrals. *Contact:* Evette Maranda, Project Director, at (301) 773-1701 or evette@ntuplc.org.
- ***Grandparents as Parents of Howard County*** meets monthly to discuss various issues affecting kinship care families, such as behavior and discipline problems, communication with the parents, and legal options. GAP also provides children's activities while the grandparents are meeting. *Contact:* Ellen A. Willingham at (410) 719-8871 or (410) 313-1940 or willinghan@msn.com.
- ***The National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights*** has a Maryland Chapter located in Frederick County. This organization is represented by every state and is involved in legislative changes within their respective states and on the federal level. *Contact:* Pat Owens at (301) 898-8023 or owespat@aol.com.
- ***Family Matters Grandparents & Other Relative Caregivers Support Group*** provides monthly educational and support meetings for grandparents and other relatives who are caring for children. Guest speakers are invited to provide information on specific topics such as financial assistance, advocacy, adoption, and substance abuse. Child care is provided while the kinship caregivers are meeting. Family Matters has three sites: Johnson Square Day Care, Cherry Hill, and Westport Academy. *Contact:* Sharon McKinley, Deputy Director, at (410) 235-3220 or shamckinley@aol.com.
- ***The Family Tree*** provides family education and support to grandparents and other relatives who are caring for children.



Guest speakers are invited to provide information on specific topics such as financial assistance, advocacy, adoption, and substance abuse. *Contact:* Carolyn Finney, Director of Programs and Services, at (410) 889-2300 or carolynfinney@familytreemd.org.

- ***Grandparents Supporting Grandparents*** is a support group sponsored by Baltimore County Department of Social Services for grandparents and other relative caregivers who are raising children. The monthly meetings provide an opportunity for kinship caregivers to discuss common problems and share their experiences. Through the use of guest speakers, information is provided on various topics related to concerns identified by the participants. *Contact:* Ann Abramson at (410) 853-3888 or aabramson@dhr.state.md.us; Marty Zimmerman at (410) 853-3903 or mzimmerm@dhr.state.md.us.
- ***Relatives as Parents*** offers monthly meetings, advocacy, and information and referrals to grandparents and other relatives who are caring for their kin in the Eastern Shore area. *Contact:* Helen Johnson at (410) 742-0505 or hjohnson@intercom.net.
- ***YWCA of Annapolis & Anne Arundel County West County Family Support Center*** offers kinship care support groups in Odenton and Annapolis. They offer parent education, resource sharing, and access to numerous support services including transportation, child care and respite services. *Contact:* Rachel Griffin, Program Director, at (410) 551-2411 or rgriffin@ywca.org.
- ***Catholic Charities-Seton Center Relatives as Parents Program*** provides community-based supportive services, advocacy, information, and resources to grandparents and other relatives responsible for the primary care of children. As a rural community/neighborhood center, Catholic Charities has been providing direct service, outreach and advocacy through a variety of programs. The goal of the program is to support and strengthen relative caregiver families through partnerships with other agencies working on behalf of families and children. *Contact:* Sister Diane Moore at (410) 651-9608 or setoncenter@comcast.net.
- ***Rockville Grandparent Support Group*** which is sponsored by the Rockville Senior Center provides monthly educational and support meetings to grandparents and other relatives who are caring for children. Guest speakers are invited to provide information on specific topics such as financial assistance, advocacy, adoption, and substance abuse. *Contact:* Lorraine Schack, Coordinator at (240) 314-8812 or lschack@rockvillemd.gov.

## Children in Foster Care

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Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kinship care.” In Maryland, the Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, reports:

***Number of children in kinship care:*** As of January 2001, there were 9,937 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 2,353 children (23.7%) were placed with kin who have been licensed as restricted foster parents.

***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. The relative caregiver must provide a safe environment for the child and meet all the state’s child protection standards.

***Kinship care licensing:*** Relative caregivers in Maryland can participate in the Kinship Care Program or become licensed as foster parents in the “restricted foster care” program. All kinship caregivers must go through a formal approval process, which includes child abuse and neglect clearance, health and sanitation check of the home, and the fingerprinting of all adults in the home. Caregivers must be able to provide a safe environment for the child and meet all the state’s child protection standards. If relative caregivers are licensed as foster parents, they must adhere to the same licensing and training requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-relative 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. Maryland was awarded a



federally-funded waiver to establish a subsidized guardianship program as a five-year demonstration project to provide funding for children who have been transferred from the supervision of the foster care system to the legal guardianship of relative caregivers. The subsidy includes medical assistance for the child. The children must have been in the legal custody of the state for at least six months and living with a relative prior to the guardianship arrangement. Reunification with the birth parents and adoption must be ruled out.

**State kinship care contact:** Questions about kinship care should be directed to Cynthia Harlee-Williams, Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, at (410) 767-7910 or [charlee@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:charlee@dhr.state.md.us).

## Public Benefits

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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 Maryland Family Investment - Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) 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 (800) 332-6347 or log on to [www.dhr.sailorsite.net/how/cashfood/index.htm](http://www.dhr.sailorsite.net/how/cashfood/index.htm).

**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) 332-6347 or log on to [www.dhr.sailorsite.net/how/cashfood/index.htm](http://www.dhr.sailorsite.net/how/cashfood/index.htm).

**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 Maryland Medicaid and Maryland’s Children Health Program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for both programs, call (800) 332-6347 or log on to [www.dhr.sailorsite.net/how/medical/index.htm](http://www.dhr.sailorsite.net/how/medical/index.htm).



**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](http://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](http://www.benefitscheckup.org).

## State Laws

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The following state laws may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children<sup>1</sup>:

**Medical and Educational Consent (SB 31 and SB 32):** These laws allow, respectively, for a grandparent or other relative providing “informal kinship care” to complete an affidavit that allows them to consent to health care on behalf of a child. The affidavit also explicitly provides that relatives providing care may apply for medical and public assistance entitlements for which the child is eligible. The educational consent bill provides that an informal kinship caregiver may enroll the child in the school district where the caregiver lives. The public funding used to pay for that child’s education follows the child from the parent’s school district to the new one.

**Standby Guardianship (Md. Est. & Trusts Code Ann. §§ 13-903 and 13-904):** This law allows a parent to file a petition for the judicial appointment of a standby guardian of a minor to care for the child in the event of the parent’s incapacity or death. The authority of the standby guardian becomes effective upon the incapacity or death of the minor’s parent.

**Relative Notification by Child Welfare Agency (not yet codified - HB935):** mandates the notification of grandparents and certain other relatives within a stipulated period of time after a child comes into state custody; requires efforts to locate and place the child with qualified relatives before an alternative foster care placement is made; enforces documentation of reasonable efforts for the courts regarding such searches.

<sup>1</sup> *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	<a href="http://www.aarp.org/grandparents">www.aarp.org/grandparents</a>
Adoption Information Clearinghouse	(888) 251-0075	<a href="http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/">http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/</a>
The Brookdale Foundation Group	(212) 308 -7355	<a href="http://www.brookdalefoundation.org">www.brookdalefoundation.org</a>
Child Welfare League of America	(202) 638-2952	<a href="http://www.cwla.org">www.cwla.org</a>
Children’s Defense Fund	(202) 628-8787	<a href="http://www.childrensdefense.org">www.childrensdefense.org</a>
Generations United	(202) 289-3979	<a href="http://www.gu.org">www.gu.org</a>
GrandsPlace	860) 763-5789	<a href="http://www.grandsplace.com">www.grandsplace.com</a>
KINship Information Network	(772) 501-0502	<a href="http://www.kinsupport.org">www.kinsupport.org</a>
National Aging Information Center	(202) 619-0724	<a href="http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov">www.aoa.dhhs.gov</a>
National Committee of Grandparents For Children’s Rights	(866) 624-9900	<a href="http://www.grandparentsforchildren.org">www.grandparentsforchildren.org</a>
The Urban Institute	(202) 833-7200	<a href="http://www.urban.org">www.urban.org</a>

*Fact sheets are updated quarterly. Changes or additions should be e-mailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at [gic@aarp.org](mailto:gic@aarp.org). Please write “State Fact Sheets” on your e-mail subject line.*

