

# Grandparents Raising Grandchildren\*

Draft

## The Data

- **Millions of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.**

Since 1990, the number of children living in households maintained by grandparents has increased by 30%.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, 5.8 million grandparents were living with one or more grandchildren.<sup>2</sup> Of these, 2.4 million grandparents were solely responsible for meeting the basic food, shelter, and clothing needs of their grandchildren.<sup>2</sup> Such grandparents keep families together when parents are unable to care for their children due to factors such as drug abuse, child abuse and neglect, poverty, incarceration, or mental or physical illnesses including HIV/AIDS. In 2001, 1.4 million children (1.9% of all children) were living in their grandparents' homes without their parents present.<sup>3</sup>

- **Relationship with the Foster Care System.**

Although some grandparents care for grandchildren under the auspices of the foster care system, most do not. If even half the children raised by grandparents and other relatives were to enter the formal foster care system, taxpayer costs would increase by more than \$6.5 billion per year.<sup>4</sup>

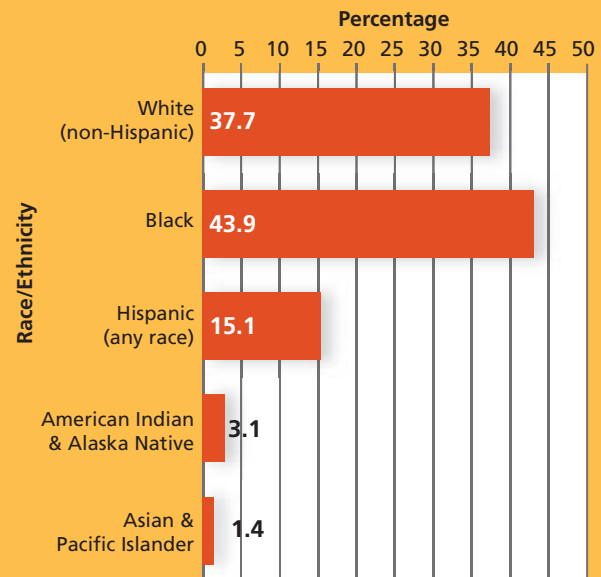
- **Race/Ethnicity.** A disproportionate percentage of grandparents and grandchildren in these families are African-American. In 2001, 43.9% of grandchildren living with grandparents without parents present were African-American.<sup>3</sup>

- **Poverty and Access to Public Subsidy Programs.** Almost one-third of children cared for by their grandparents live in poverty, but only 17% receive public assistance and only 18% receive food stamps.<sup>5</sup>

- **Age and Health Status of Grandparents.** Close to 30% of grandparents caring for grandchildren are over age 60.<sup>2</sup> More than half report at least one limitation in activities of daily living, such as difficulty in climbing a flight of stairs.<sup>6</sup> Caregiving grandparents are more likely to be depressed than non-caregiving grandparents (25.1% versus 14.5%).<sup>6</sup>

- **Age, Health Status, and Life Success of Grandchildren.** Children being raised by grandparents, about one-quarter of whom are age 5 or under,<sup>5</sup> face challenges often due to their poverty status and to the experiences that led to their grandparents taking on their care.

Race/Ethnicity of Grandchildren Living with Grandparents, Without Parents Present (2001)



Source: Kreider & Fields (2005).<sup>3</sup> Survey of Income Program Participation

More than one-third do not have health insurance,<sup>5</sup> and more than one-quarter under 6 years of age had no well child care in the past year.<sup>7</sup> About twice the percentage of children cared for by relatives (including grandparents) as by their own parents suffer limiting physical health conditions (14% vs. 8%) and are in only poor or fair health (7% versus 4%).<sup>8</sup> About 9% of 6-17-year-olds being raised by grandparents have high levels of behavioral or emotional problems.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, among children in the foster care system, those raised by relatives (including grandparents) are better off than those raised by non-relatives, perhaps because they are more likely to remain connected to their siblings, relatives, and culture.<sup>9,10</sup> They are less likely to be placed in special education, to repeat a grade, or to be truant, delinquent, or run away,<sup>11</sup> and their lives are more stable: they are more likely to stay within the same community and school system.<sup>10</sup>

\* This issue brief focuses on grandparents caring for grandchildren without parents present in the household.

continued

Draft

## The Issues

- **Legal Arrangements.** Grandparents raise grandchildren under a variety of legal and custody arrangements, which result in differing legal rights, eligibility for financial subsidies, and relationships with birth parents. Depending on their legal arrangements, grandparents may have difficulty registering children for school or accessing benefits for them such as health insurance,<sup>1</sup> and they may need legal services to help and guide them.
- **Needs for Health and Social Services.** Both grandparents and grandchildren may have greater than average needs for mental health, physical health, and supportive social services, and they benefit when they receive them.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, they may not always be able to receive the services they need<sup>8</sup> – especially if they are outside the formal foster care system – and they may feel lonely and isolated.<sup>1</sup>
- **Affordable Housing.** Taking in grandchildren can mean crowded housing conditions, which can hamper grandparents' ability to gain legal custody or lead to eviction, if grandparents are living in places where the number of tenants is restricted or children are not allowed. Federal legislation (the 2003 LEGACY bill) to create public housing demonstration projects for multigenerational families has not yet been fully funded.<sup>4</sup>

## Options for Philanthropy

- **Support kinship navigator programs (hotlines or help desks)** that help grandparents learn for which public programs they may be eligible, and where they can find support and services. Connect these hotlines to follow-up service programs.
- **Flexible programs, comprehensive services, affordable housing, and social support.** Support (1) affordable housing; (2) flexible, in-home and community-based legal, physical and mental health, and social services for grandparents and grandchildren; (3) support groups, informal supports, and social networks; (4) respite programs for grandparents who may need time off from caring for their grandchildren; and (5) child care services to help working grandparents.
- **Support advocacy for policies** such as: (1) affordable housing; (2) enhanced eligibility for physical and mental health services, Food Stamps, and TANF (cash assistance); (3) subsidized guardianship programs for children who are in the foster care system (such programs provide income support to grandparents and more permanency for children without severing relationships with biological parents or requiring continued oversight by the foster care system); and (4) "preventive" subsidized guardianship arrangements to help keep children from entering the foster care system.<sup>13</sup>

## Resources

### Background

AARP: <http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/>

Administration on Aging: [http://www.aoa.gov/prof/notes/notes\\_grandparents.asp](http://www.aoa.gov/prof/notes/notes_grandparents.asp)

Child Welfare League of America: <http://www.cwla.org/programs/kinship/>

Children's Defense Fund: [http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research\\_publications\\_kinship\\_care](http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_publications_kinship_care)

Generations United: [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)

The Annie E. Casey Foundation: <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/lmcl/readingroom/documents/Kincare.pdf>

U.S. Government: <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Grandparents.shtml>

### Program Models

Grandparent Family Connections: [http://family.umaryland.edu/community\\_services/gfc.htm](http://family.umaryland.edu/community_services/gfc.htm); [fstriede@ssw.umaryland.edu](mailto:fstriede@ssw.umaryland.edu)

Edgewood's Kinship Support Network: <http://www.edgewoodcenter.org/programs/>

GrandFamilies House and housing issues: [http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/GU\\_Housing\\_Actionfinal.pdf](http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/GU_Housing_Actionfinal.pdf)

The Brookdale Foundation's Relatives as Parents Program: <http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/relativesasparents.htm>

Prepared by Deanna S. Gomby and Lisa W. Deal for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Design by Craig Snelgrove, San Francisco. To recommend amendments, please contact [clyerly@aecf.org](mailto:clyerly@aecf.org).

# Reference List for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

1. Hayslip, B., & Kaminski, P.L. (2005). Grandparents raising their grandchildren: A review of the literature and suggestions for practice. *The Gerontologist*, 45(2), 262-269.
2. Simmons, T. & Dye, J.L. (October 2003). *Grandparents living with grandchildren: 2000*. Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR-31. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-31.pdf>.
3. Kreider, R.M., & Fields, J. (July 2005). *Living arrangements of children: 2001*. Current Populations Reports, P70-104. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C.
4. Generations United. (2005). *Grandparents and other relatives raising children: An action agenda to create affordable housing opportunities*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
5. Fields, J. (June 2003). *Children's living arrangements and characteristics: March 2002*. Current Population Reports, P20-547. U.S. Census Bureau.
6. Minkler, M. & Fuller-Thomson, E. (Sep 1999). The health of grandparents raising grandchildren: Results of a national study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 89(9), 1384-1389.
7. Scarcella, C.A., Ehrle, J., & Geen, R. (August 2003). *Identifying and addressing the needs of children in grandparent care*. Series B, No. B-55. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
8. Ehrle, J. & Geen, R. (June 2002) *Children cared for by relatives: What services do they need?* Series B, No. B-47. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
9. Billing, A., Ehrle, J., & Kortenkamp, K. (May 2002). *Children cared for by relatives: What do we know about their well-being?* Series B, No. B-46. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.
10. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2005). *Basic Data: Kinship Care. Elders as Resources: Fact Sheet*. Available at: <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/md/readingroom/documents/FactSheet.pdf>.
11. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (June 2000). *Report to the Congress on kinship foster care. Part I: Research Review. Part II: Secretary's Report to the Congress*. Available at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/kinr2c00/full.pdf>.
12. DePanfilis, D., Lane, M.D., Girvin, H., & Strieder, F. (2004). *Family Connections. Intervention Manual: Helping families meet the basic needs of their children*. 4th ed. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland.
13. Robison, S., Miller, J., & Bissell, M. (December 2006). *"Preventive" subsidized guardianship programs: An emerging option for permanent kinship care*. Houston, Texas: Cornerstone Consulting Group, Inc. Available at: [http://www.cornerstone.to/images/guardship\\_prev\\_state\\_progs.pdf](http://www.cornerstone.to/images/guardship_prev_state_progs.pdf).

Prepared by Deanna S. Gomby and Lisa W. Deal for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Design by Craig Snelgrove, San Francisco. To recommend amendments, please contact [clyerly@aecf.org](mailto:clyerly@aecf.org).