



GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

2023 Leader's Guide with Hearth Fire Series # 63

Written by Jennine Marrone, KAFCE State EPC

Although it is never the ideal situation, some grandparents find they need to raise their grandchildren. Sometimes it is short term until the parents will be in the position to care for them again. Sometimes it is due to financial circumstances, sometimes unsafe conditions, whatever the reason more grandparents than ever are stepping up to the plate.

Education Goals:

- Identify and understand the problems of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.
- Look at the numbers and reasons for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.
- Know how to find numbers and resources for Kansas.

Community Activities:

- Check with your area Foster Care organization to see where they need help.
- Look for private groups who help Foster Care to see what you can do
- Check with children's Service League for volunteer possibilities.

Two and half million Grandparents every day are taking on the responsibilities required to raise grandchildren. There are 1 million children today that have grandparents as their sole parental influence. About 150,000 are raised by grandfathers alone. 55% are raised by grandmothers under 55. Average age is 50. One-fifth of grandparents live below the poverty level.

Grandparents 60 or over in labor force 399,876 and 694,361 not in labor force. Those 30 to 59 years of age 930,878 are in the labor force and 375,996 are not in the labor force. The average income of grandmothers raising grandchildren is less than \$20,000 per year. The one advantage is that most but not all own their own home, and provide a stable living environment for children. Families that have a grandparent involved daily makes up 7% of households in the United States with children under 18 and who have not graduated from high school. Forty-nine percent of grandmothers are unemployed with about 34% of grandfathers unemployed. The number of children being raised by grandparents has been steadily rising for the past 40 years, doubling the amount of households in 2010 when compared to 1970. Two events have contributed to the spike: the recession between 2007 and 2009 and behavioral and emotional problems. Behavioral issues may come up but with the right resources these can be solved. Boys are more likely to have external behavioral problems. Girls will have internal problems. Children raised by grandparents starting between 2 and 6 years of age had the same levels of emotional development as other children but may lack some academic skills. Children living with a grandparent-led household are six times more likely to have a parent who served time in jail and four more times more likely to live with someone who has a drug or alcohol problem Other problems include divorce,

observing physical violence and living with someone who is mentally ill. They are twice as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD.

Grandparents have to deal with false promises that parents make and sometimes the primary issue is children's behavior instead of grandchildren's. 36% of grandparents who are raising grandchildren have done so for 5 or more years. One-quarter of children placed are with another relative. With 1 in 5 households living in poverty, it is essential for grandparents and relatives to be given access to community resources.

WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE?

Blood relatives can apply for cash assistance as well as medical assistance. Applying for cash assistance means the grandparent will need to cooperate with child support enforcement. This is at times a problem as the grandparent doesn't want to put another obligation on their child if money is the reason grandchildren are living with the grandparents. The entire household has to be eligible for USDA'S Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly known as Food Stamp Program). Other services that are not done by Department of Children and Families (DCF) include social security benefits if eligible. Women, infants and children (WIC), if low income. This adds milk, juices, eggs, cheese, cereal and peanut butter to the household. WIC has an age limit of 5 years. Households may apply for reduced or free school lunches, which has a higher income level than SNAP. Other services include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for blind or disabled children, Guardianship thru the court system or Kinship thru adoption support services. For kinship, the grandparent has to pass several steps just like foster parents. They are then paid a daily rate.

Kansas Children's Service League provides lots of resources to parents, grandparents and other relatives as well as foster parents. Some of these are tip cards for child abuse prevention, adoption and foster care, behavioral issues, bullying prevention, early childhood, kinship, parenting school age and adolescents. Most are in English as well as Spanish.

Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) Healthy Families Kansas is a free, reliable support to help families with stress. A home visitor will meet with the family regularly for families from pregnancy through children age 5. They operate this service in 30 counties in the state. KCSL has many services and all can be found on their website: Kansas Children's Service League.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

Many churches and organizations help needy families with food, utilities, rent, and clothing, as well as Christmas and birthday presents. Letting others know that you have a need is the first step in receiving help for the household. School supplies, clothing and gift cards could be a big help to Grandparents and other relatives.

Web sites: Grand Magazine, AARP, Kansas Legal Services, Kansas Children's Service League

Books for help: "*Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family*" by Sylvia Toledo and Deborah Edler Brown, The Guilford Press, New York, 2013.

"*Raising Our Children's Children*" by Deborah Doucette with Dr. Jeffrey R. LaCure, Taylor Trade Publishing, New York, 2014.

"*To Grandma's House, We Stay*" by Sally Houtman, Studio 4 Productions, 2003.