

A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Oklahoma

April 2008



The AARP Foundation, The Brookdale Foundation Group, Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and Generations United have partnered to produce fact sheets for grandparents and other relatives raising children that include state-specific data, programs, and public policies. This and other state fact sheets can be viewed and printed from the website at www.grandfactsheets.org. Fact sheets are updated annually. Updates can be sent directly from the website via email. Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.



In Oklahoma...

- There are 57,601 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.5% of all children in the state). There are another 14,825 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.7%). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Oklahoma, 34,185 are living there without either parent present.
- 39,279 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them (5,218 in Oklahoma City and 3,482 in Tulsa): 13% of these grandparents are African American, 5% are Hispanic/Latino; 12% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; and 65% are White. 61% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 20% live in poverty.
- Additional data on grandparents raising children are available from the United States Census at <http://factfinder.census.gov> or <http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/phc-t17.html>.



Programs That Can Help

Family Circles: Relatives as Parents

Sponsoring Organization: New Covenant Christian Church
Contact: Debbie Keith
Phone: 405-722-7445
Email: pastoralasst.nccc@coxinet.net
Service Area: Oklahoma City
Services Offered:

- Support group on 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month – light meal followed by separate adult and children's activities; no charge for any activity



Grandparents Raising Children Again Foundation

Contact: Brigitte Byrd, support group facilitator
Phone: 580-536-3338
Email: brigittebyrd@sbcglobal.net
Service Area: Lawton

Services Offered:

- Support group (child care available at no charge)
- Speakers from local and state organizations address topics of relevance to grandparents and relative caregivers.

Grandparents Initiative

Sponsoring Organization: Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) – Aging Services Division
Contact: Claire Dowers-Nichols - State Conference, Resource Guide
Phone: 405-522-4510
Email: Claire.dower@okdhs.org
Contact: Diana Everett, Lifespan Respite Program
Phone: 405-522-6241
Email: Diana.garland@okdhs.org
Service Area: Statewide

Services Offered:

- Statewide Conference for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in partnership with Oklahoma Dept of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Disabilities Council, Oklahoma Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, the Older Women’s Initiative and AARP Oklahoma.
- Resource guide – Starting Points for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- Grandparent’s Information Clearinghouse :
- Oklahoma Area-wide Service Information System (OASIS) 1-800-42-OASIS
- Lifespan Respite Program for family caregivers, including grandparents – voucher to purchase respite services from provider of their choice for eligible caregivers

Senior Services Law Center

Contact: Catheryn Koss, Attorney at Law
Phone: 405-528-0850
Email: info@OklahomaSeniorLaw.org
Service Area: Oklahoma City Metro area

Services Offered:

- Legal information and services
- Free information through online resource center (www.OklahomaSeniorLaw.org)
- Presentations
- Legal services provided on sliding fee scale
- Assistance for grandparents raising grandchildren plus estate planning, guardianship, financial exploitation

Tulsa Area Agency on Aging Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Contact: Sandie Sullivan
Phone: 918-596-7680
Email: ssullivan@cityoftulsa.org
Service Area: Tulsa

Services Offered:

- Bi-monthly support group meetings for kinship caregivers (free child care with pre-registration)
- Educational sessions with speakers from different kinship caregiver support organizations

Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma

Contact: Dari Ann Hunnicutt
Phone: 918-678-2297 x 253
Email: DAHunnicutt@wyandotte-nation.org
Service Area: Wyandotte Nation

Services Offered:

- Monthly support group (child care and youth groups available during meetings)
- Database of local support groups
- Information and referral by telephone
- Direct legal advice
- Special events – conferences, workshops, social activities

Children in Foster Care

- Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. This is often called “kinship care.”

Numbers – April 2008

- There were 11,648 children under the care of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Children and Family Division. Of these children, 3,884 were placed with relatives.

Preferences and licensing

- State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the Department’s care.
- There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents.
- Payment for relatives is the same as for foster parents providing non-kinship care.

Training and support

- Children and Family Services Division provides OKPRIDE (Oklahoma Parents Resource, Information, Development and Education) - training, assessment and selection of prospective kinship, foster and adoptive resource parents.
- Contact: Margaret Linnemann, Foster Care Programs Manager
 - Phone: 405-521-4368
 - Email: Margaret.Linnemann@okdhs.org

Contacts

- Kinship foster placements – Margaret Linnemann, Foster Care Programs Manager
 - Phone: 405-521-4368
 - Email: Margaret.Linnemann@okdhs.org
- Foster Parent Statewide Hotline 1-800-376-9729

Supported Permanency

- Supported permanency is available to relatives within the fifth degree of relationship who have been caring for an eligible child in child welfare custody and who are receiving a foster care payment; program also provides assistance with the costs of filing for guardianship.
- Contact: Mark Carson, Permanency Planning Programs Manager
 - Phone: 405-521-3778
 - Email: Mark.Carson@okdhs.org

Public Benefits

Relative Support Program

- Provides assistance statewide to eligible relatives within the fifth degree of relationship to a child for whom they are caring on a full-time basis, regardless of the legal status of the child to the relative
- Flexible voucher program aimed at preventing child welfare involvement
- Funds available for Medicaid, child care, school supplies, activity fees, clothing, shelter-related expenses, legal issues related to obtaining guardianship or legal custody, counseling services for child or caregiver
- Contact:
 - Phone: 405-521-3646 (Main Switchboard)
 - Web: www.okdhs.org (Find your local office)

Financial Assistance

- Cash payments may be available to children and their grandparents through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program
 - Phone: 1-866-411-1877
 - Web: www.okdhs.org

Food Stamps

- Kinship care families may be eligible for food stamps to help meet the needs of children in their care.
- Contact:
 - Phone: 1-866-411-1877
 - Web: www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/gfood/docs/faq.htm

Health Insurance

- Free or low-cost health insurance may be available for children through SoonerCare or Medicaid.
 - SoonerCare – 1-800-987-7767
 - Web: www.ohca.state.ok.us

Benefits QuickLINK

- Screens you and/or the children you are raising for 15 major public benefits for older adults and families with children
 - Web: www.aarp.org/quicklink

Other Benefits – child care, disabilities, special education, older adult benefits, etc.

- Children’s Defense Fund benefit guides for grandparents and other relatives for information about state and federal benefits
 - Phone: 202-662-3568
 - Web: www.childrensdefense.org (Kinship Care Resource Kit)
- National Council on Aging – Benefits CheckUp www.benefitscheckup.org

State Laws

The following state law may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children¹:

Medical Consent

Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 10, § 170.1

- Allows a parent or other person with legal custody or guardianship to authorize, in writing, any adult person caring for the child to consent to medical or dental treatment
- The affidavit is not valid for more than one year, unless the relative has legal custody

Preference for Grandparents and Other Suitable Relatives

Okla. Stat. Ann. Tit. 10 § 22

- Children who have been abused, dependent or neglected or whose parents are unwilling to provide care for them are best served when they can be cared for by grandparents or other suitable relatives instead of placing those children in foster care
- Requires the state government to conduct an interim study on the needs of grandparents and other relatives raising children and explore those measures appropriate to address them

Education Consent

Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 70, § 1-113

- Each school district may allow for the establishment of a child’s residency by affidavit.
- The child may be enrolled in school when an adult who resides in the school district and has assumed permanent care and custody of the child files an affidavit with the school district.
- The adult does not have to have formal legal custody of the child.

¹Laws change and are subject to different interpretations. These general descriptions are not intended as legal advice in any particular situation.

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