

# OHIO

## Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

A State Fact Sheet

August 2003

Across the country, more than six million children -- approximately 1 in 12 children -- are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. Ohio has nearly 193,000 children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. In many of these households, grandparents and other relatives are the primary caregivers ("kinship caregivers") for children whose parents cannot or will not care for them due to substance abuse, illness and death, abuse and neglect, economic hardship, incarceration, divorce, domestic violence, and other family and community crises.

In response to the growing numbers of these kinship care families, state legislatures, public and private agencies, and grassroots coalitions in Ohio and across the country have begun to expand services and supports for children living with kin inside and outside of the foster care system.

### A Look at the Numbers: Kinship Care in Ohio

The data below show the numbers of grandparents who are living in households with at least one grandchild under the age of 18, as well as the numbers of grandparents who are the primary caregivers for these grandchildren.

These numbers were reported by the 2000 U.S. Census and are available for every place (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau) in the country, including cities, towns, villages, and boroughs, on the U.S. Census website.\*

	Grandparents Living in Households with One or More Own Grandchildren Under 18	Grandparents Responsible for Meeting the Basic Needs of Grandchildren
Location	#	#
<b>United States</b>	5,771,671	2,426,730
<b>Ohio</b>	185,443	86,009
<b>Columbus city</b>	12,324	6,263
<b>Cleveland city</b>	14,528	7,039
<b>Cincinnati city</b>	6,087	3,202

\*These data are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics: 2000. The U.S. Census website is <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>. Detailed instructions on how to access this data can be found at [http://www.casey.org/cnc/quick\\_facts/kinship\\_care\\_state\\_data.htm](http://www.casey.org/cnc/quick_facts/kinship_care_state_data.htm).



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## Kinship Care Initiatives in Ohio

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In Ohio, public and private agencies and grassroots coalitions of grandparents and other relative caregivers have begun working together to expand the services available to kinship caregivers who are caring for children outside of the foster care system.

Several of the major kinship care programs and supports are listed below. Additional support groups can be found through the AARP Grandparent Information Center Database. Call 1-800-424-3410, e-mail information requests to [gic@aarp.org](mailto:gic@aarp.org), or search AARP's online kinship care support group database at <http://www.aarp.org/grandparents/searchsupport/>.

Additional state and national kinship care resources and supports are available on the Generations United website at <http://www.gu.org>, and at <http://www.grandsplace.com> and <http://www.grandparentagain.com>, two websites coordinated by grandparents raising grandchildren.

*Statewide Information and Referrals for Kinship Care Families:* **The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family** has established the **Kinship Care Navigator Program**. The program provides kinship caregivers with assistance in obtaining information about benefits and services, including child care, support groups, respite care, training on how to care for children with special needs, and legal services. The program also has published a self-help manual, *Relatives Caring for Children: Ohio Resource Guide*. For more information on county-specific programs and services, **Contact:** Barbara Turpin, at (614) 466-9274, or [turpib@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:turpib@odjfs.state.oh.us).

*Problems and Concerns of Ohio Kinship Care Families:* **The Ohio Department of Aging's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Task Force** has developed a comprehensive strategic agenda to support kinship care families across the state. Submitted to the Ohio General Assembly in 1999, the *Ohio Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Task Force Report* summarizes the task force policy recommendations. A copy of the report can be found at <http://www.state.oh.us/age/grandparents.pdf>. **Contact:** Chuck Wilson, Ohio State Department of Aging, at (614) 466-5390 or [cwilson@age.state.oh.us](mailto:cwilson@age.state.oh.us).

*Statewide Initiative:* **Wright State University Kettering Center** has developed the **GrandParent GrandChildren Initiative (GPGCI)**. This program encourages local organizations to develop new programs to meet the needs of kinship caregivers and to remove barriers in accessing services. **Contact:** Dionne Henderson, at (937) 775-1116, or [Dionne.Henderson@wright.edu](mailto:Dionne.Henderson@wright.edu).

*Grassroots Coalition of Kinship Caregivers:* The **Ohio Grandparent Coalition** is a statewide group comprised of kinship caregivers, child welfare agencies, and service providers. The purpose of the group is to identify kinship care issues and propose solutions to government and other agencies. A quarterly newsletter is published and made available to kinship caregivers. **Contact:** Dionne Henderson, at (937) 775-1116, or [Dionne.Henderson@wright.edu](mailto:Dionne.Henderson@wright.edu).

*Advisors on Kinship Care Policy:* **Kinship Care Advisory Council** is a statewide group comprised of local and state agencies representatives and kinship caregivers. The group reviews state kinship care policy and provides advice and input to the Director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. **Contact:** Barbara Turpin at (614) 466-9274 or [turpib@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:turpib@odjfs.state.oh.us).

*Various Resources for Kinship Caregivers:* **The Ohio State University Human Development and Family Sciences Extension Program** offers a variety of resources for kinship caregivers and their families. Caregivers can access the program's quarterly newsletter, *The Hotline*, which has been developed by the Extension's Senior Services Team. Each issue contains articles on topics of interest to older adults and their families. You can also access the *Senior Services Fact Sheets* on different issues, including care giving. **Contact:** (614) 247-6047, or [hdfsext@hec.ohio-state.edu](mailto:hdfsext@hec.ohio-state.edu). You can access their web site at <http://www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife/aging/index.htm>.

*Directory of Resources:* **The Ohio State University Extension of Sandusky County** offers a Directory of Resources on child care, clothing, education, employment, family support services, financial assistance, health care, hunger, housing and homelessness, and legal issues. This Directory was developed to assist grandparents

who need help raising their grandchildren. **Contact:** Sharon L. Mader, Ohio State University Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences, Sandusky County, at (419) 334-6340, or [sand@postoffice.ag.ohio-state.edu](mailto:sand@postoffice.ag.ohio-state.edu), or access the Directory's web site at <http://www.sandusky.osu.edu/gparent/gparent.htm>

*Support for Kinship Care Providers:* **Guernsey County Children's Services** provides the **Guernsey County Kinship Support Group** for grandparents and any other relatives who are providing kinship care. The group offers community speakers and a licensed social worker to address the needs and concerns of the kinship caregivers. The program also organizes outings,

family events, and kinship conferences. **Contact:** Jolene McClay, Kinship Coordinator, at (740) 439-5555, or [mclap01@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:mclap01@odjfs.state.oh.us).

*Reentering as Parents (REAP):* **The Ohio Parents and Resource Center's REAP Program** was created to offer support, information, resources and to build a network of community leaders for grandparents raising their grandchildren. *REAP* addresses issues from feelings of guilt to dealing with personal health challenges. Group members meet monthly. The group also features experts to present on issues of concern for kinship care families. **Contact:** Vandelia Todd at 1-(800) 686-1738 or [vtodd@lys.org](mailto:vtodd@lys.org)

## **Kinship Care and Ohio's Foster Care System**

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Sometimes children in the care of the states are placed in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. In Ohio, the Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Family Services reports:

**Number of children in kinship foster placements:** As of March 2002, there were 20,765 children under the Department's supervision in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 4,000 (20%) were placed with kin.

**Preference for kinship placements:** State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the Department's care.

**Licensing for kinship foster parents:** There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Relatives have to meet the same licensing standards but are not required to attend all the training sessions that non-relative foster parents are required to attend. Relative foster parents receive the foster care payment rate from Ohio Works First, which is a different rate than the rate received by non-relative foster parents.

**Subsidized Guardianship:** 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. Ohio does not currently have a statewide subsidized guardianship program.

However, several counties now offer their own subsidized guardianship programs. Each county develops its own eligibility guidelines. **Contact:** Barbara Turpin, Kinship Division, Bureau of Family Services, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, at (614) 466-9274 or [turpib@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:turpib@odjfs.state.oh.us).

**State foster care contact:** Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Carrie Anthony, Placement Section Chief, at (614) 466-9274 or [anthonc@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:anthonc@odjfs.state.oh.us).

**Training and support for kinship foster parents:** **The Ohio Family Care Association** addresses the needs of foster, adoptive and kinship families by linking caregivers to referrals and services. **Contact:** Dot Erickson at (614) 268-7776 or [ofca@aol.com](mailto:ofca@aol.com). The website is <http://www.ohiofamilycareassoc.org>.

**Community-based services for kinship foster parents:** **Licking County Department of Job and Family Services** offers support services for relative caregivers through its **Kinship Navigation Program**. Through their "It's All Relative" support group, caregivers raising children in foster care are provided with information on legal options, resource referrals, parenting skills, and respite care. Child care is also available during support group meetings. **Contact:** Sandy Williams, Kinship Navigator, at 740-349-6237 or [willis09@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:willis09@odjfs.state.oh.us).

## Other Supports for Ohio Kinship Care Families

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Children raised by kinship caregivers are often eligible for a range of state and federal programs. In most cases, kinship caregivers may apply for these programs on a child's behalf even though they are not the child's parents or legal guardians. Some examples of these programs include:

*Cash assistance:* Cash assistance may be available to children and their grandparents and other relative caregivers through the **Ohio Works First (OWF)** program. Kinship care families may also be eligible for **food stamps** to help meet their children's food and nutrition needs. For more information about these

programs, call (614) 466-6282 or log on to [http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/owf/plan\\_new.stm](http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs/owf/plan_new.stm).

*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 **Ohio's Healthy Start** program. The state offers a Healthy Start brochure geared specifically to kinship care families. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call 1-800-324-8680 or log on to <http://www.state.oh.us/odjfs>.

## State Laws and Policies

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Sometimes kinship caregivers find it difficult to obtain services their children need, such as medical care or education. In addition to the state's child guardianship and custody laws, the following law may be helpful to kinship caregivers<sup>1</sup>:

**Educational Consent (Oh. Rev. Code Ann. § 3313.64(11)):** This law allows relatives raising children to exercise authority in school issues under certain circumstances.

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