

The Grandparent's Navigator: A Survival Guide for Kinship Caregivers



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Central Illinois Agency on Aging, Inc.



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Forward

“The Grandparent’s Navigator: A Survival Guide for Kinship Caregivers” has been developed to provide grandparents in this care-taking role with information as well as local, state and national resources to aid them in their new parental role. These resources are listed with the topic to which they appear to be the most relevant. It is very likely that resources listed within a particular section may also be pertinent to other sections in this survival guide.

This handbook is a continuous work in progress and the resources listed are current as of the date of publication.



Introduction

Grandparents are an important resource for both parents and children. They routinely provide child care, financial assistance and emotional support. However, sometimes they are called upon to provide much more including temporary or full-time care and responsibility for their grandchildren.

An increased number of children in the United States live in households headed by a grandparent. This trend may be due to divorce, substance abuse, child abuse and/or neglect, abandonment, teenage pregnancy, death, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, incarceration, mental health problems, and most recently, military deployment. The reasons why

grandparents raise their grandchildren are varied, but all result in a great deal of responsibility for the grandparent who takes on the task.

In many of these homes, neither of the child’s biological parent is present. In most cases, children taken care of by grandparents move in with them as infants or preschoolers and remain with them for five years or more. These grandparents are a diverse group ranging in ages from the thirties to the seventies or older.

Many grandparents in the care taking role underestimate or are unaware of the added burdens their new role as “parents” will place upon them.

Your Troubled Grandchild

Grandparents who are charged with raising their grandchildren already have enough on their minds without adding to the mix the inevitable onslaught of endless childhood demands and the agony of adolescent acting out. But let us not forget that children who are taken in by their grandparents have begun their life's journey in a deficit situation. Feeling abandoned and cast aside before they reach their grandparents' door, their defense systems are solidly in place at a very early age.

Depending on the age of the children at the time they're dropped off at their grandparent's door, they arrive already depressed, angry, resentful, frightened, mistrustful, or in emotional turmoil. The older the children, the more emotional baggage they'll have had a chance to collect and will no doubt pack for their journey to your home.

Children of alcohol- and drug-addicted parents, as well as children of parents who are unstable for other reasons, will bring with them more than their share of physical and emotional problems. Some have been born suffering the aftermath of parental chemical abuse, which can have a wide variety of long-lasting effects. These may take the form of physical disabilities, mental or emotional disturbances, or perceptual, learning, or attention deficits. So on top of becoming parents without preparation, the grandparents who inherit these children also inherit the legacy of the parent's poor judgments, negligence, impulsiveness, and indulgences.

Those children who escape physical damage often suffer emotional scars that are much deeper and more difficult to

detect. Some emotional problems may be readily apparent, while others may not surface until later in the child's development. What all of these children have in common, however, is some form of simmering hostility toward what their parent has or has not done. This animosity may have many faces and may take many forms.

By responding with love and reassurance, you can provide a sense of security and perhaps give your grandchildren, for the first time in their lives, the chance to experience that the limits surrounding them can be trusted and are not subject to change without notice. Troubled children are not bad children in search of discipline, but rather lost children in search of direction. The way you respond to them will determine if your role in their lives will be that of a warden or that of a teacher.

From "To Grandma's House, We ... Stay,"
by Sally Houtman, M.S.



Children and Grief

When a family member dies or leaves, children react differently from adults. Preschool children usually see death or loss as temporary and reversible. Children between five and nine begin to think more like adults about the loss, yet they still believe it will never happen to them or anyone they know.

Kinship caregivers should be aware of normal childhood responses to a loss in the family, as well as signs when a child is having difficulty coping with grief. It is normal during the weeks following the loss for some children to feel immediate grief or persist in the belief that the family member is still around. However, long-term denial of the death or avoidance of grief can be emotionally unhealthy and can later lead to more severe problems.

Once children accept the loss, they are likely to display their feelings of sadness on and off over a long period of time, and often at unexpected moments. Anger is a natural reaction. The anger may be revealed in boisterous play, nightmares, irritability, or a variety of other behaviors. Often the child will show anger towards the surviving family members.

Children who are having serious problems with grief and loss may exhibit an inability to sleep, loss of appetite, withdrawal from friends, or experience a sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school. If these signs persist, professional help may be needed.



Children and Family Moves

Moving to a new community can be a very stress-producing experience. Frequent moves or even a single move can be especially hard on children and adolescents.

Moves interrupt friendships. To a new child at school, it may at first seem that everyone else has a best friend or is securely involved with a group of peers. The child must get used to a different schedule and curriculum, and may be ahead in certain subjects and behind in others. This situation may make the child stressed, anxious, or bored.

In general, the older the child, the more difficulty he or she will have with the move because of the increasing importance of the peer group. Some youngsters may not talk about their distress, so grandparents should be aware of the warning signs of depression, including changes in appetite, social withdrawal, a drop in grades, irritability, sleep disturbances or other dramatic changes in behavior or mood. Children who seem depressed by a move may be reacting more to the stress they are experiencing rather than the relocation.

To make the move easier on children, you may want to take these steps:

- Familiarize the children as much as possible with the new area.
- Describe advantages of the new location that the child might appreciate.
- After the move, get involved with the children in activities of the local church or synagogue, PTA, scouts, YMCA, etc.
- Help children keep in touch with friends from the previous neighborhood through telephone, letters, e-mail, or personal visits.

Children and Lying

Lying that is probably not a serious problem: Young children (ages 4-5) often make up stories and tell tall tales. This is normal activity because they enjoy hearing stories and making up stories for fun.

An older child or adolescent may tell a lie to be self-serving (e.g., avoid doing something or deny responsibility for their actions). Grandparents should respond to isolated instances of lying by talking with the child about the importance of truthfulness, honesty, and trust.

Some adolescents discover that lying may be considered acceptable in certain situations. Other adolescents may lie to protect their privacy or to help them feel psychologically separated and independent from their caregivers.

Lying that may indicate emotional problems: Some children tell elaborate stories which appear believable. Children or adolescents usually relate these stories with enthusiasm because they receive a lot of attention as they tell the lie.

Other children, who otherwise seem responsible, fall into a pattern of repetitive lying. They often feel that lying is the easiest way to deal with the demands of grandparents, teachers, and friends. This repetitive pattern of lying becomes a bad habit.

There are also some children who are not bothered by lying or taking advantage of others. Some teens may frequently use lying to cover up another serious problem.

What to do if your child or adolescent lies: Grandparents are important role models for children. When a child or adolescent lies, you should take some time to have a serious talk and discuss:

- the difference between make believe and reality, lying and telling the truth;

- the importance of honesty at home and in the community; and
- alternatives to lying.

If a child or adolescent develops a pattern of lying which is serious and repetitive, then professional help may be indicated.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Facts for Families
www.aacap.org

Parenting Troubled Kids

What do grandchildren need from the grandparents who are raising them?

- Grandchildren need positive reinforcement. Patting children on the back when they do something good can inspire them to do more good things. It can also help them feel good about themselves.
- Grandchildren need consistency. It's best to set ground rules that are clear. That way there are no questions about what is right and what is wrong. Do your best to enforce those rules in the same way every day.
- Grandchildren need to feel safe. If you have to punish them, do it calmly. Do not use physical or emotional violence.
- Grandchildren need to know you care. Make sure they know that their bad behaviors will never make you stop loving them.



Behaviors You Can't Control

Are you having trouble getting through to a grandchild? Do your efforts at discipline fail time after time? Your grandchild could have a condition that you can't control. He or she may need help from others.

Some medical disorders can cause a child's behavior to change. If you think this is happening to your grandchild, talk to your health care providers. They can screen your grandchild. The child may have a behavior disorder, a mood disorder or an anxiety disorder. If so, medication and therapy may work. See the child's doctor or mental health provider. Don't wait to get help. Most disorders are easier to treat when you catch them early.

"Dealing with Grandchild's Difficult Behaviors"
<http://www.aarp.org/family/grandparenting>

LOCAL RESOURCES

Counseling, Research & Training Clinic
Bradley University
1501 W. Bradley Ave.
Peoria, IL 61625
(309) 677-3189

Catholic Charities
4806 N. Sheridan Road
Peoria, IL 61614
(309) 682-6258
1-800-852-4292

Behavioral Health Advantages
7210 N. Villa Lake Drive
Peoria, IL 61614
(309) 589-1011
1-800-837-3041

Counseling & Family Services

1821 N. Knoxville Ave.
Peoria, IL 61604
(309) 682-4621

Counseling & Family Services (cont'd)

330 SW Washington
Peoria, IL 61602
(309) 676-2400
1315 Court Street
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 346-5890

Children's Home Assn. of Illinois
2130 N. Knoxville Ave.
Peoria, IL 61603
(309) 685-1047
<http://www.chail.org>

Tazwood Mental Health Center, Inc.

3248 Vandever Ave.
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 347-5522

East Peoria Clinic
100 N. Main, Suite L100
East Peoria, IL 61611
(309) 694-6462

Eureka Clinic
109 E. Eureka
Eureka, IL 61530
(309) 467-3770

STATE RESOURCES

Illinois Psychological Association
203 N. Wabash Avenue, Suite 1404
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 372-7610
<http://www.illinoispsychology.org>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
(202) 336-5500
1-800-374-2721
<http://www.apa.org>



Your Grandchild and the School

In *Relatives Raising Children*, Marianne Takas says, “In some ways, helping a child to learn may be one of the most important things you do.” There are several things you can do to help your grandchildren learn:

A good first step is meeting with the teacher as soon as and often as necessary. Introduce yourself and briefly explain the situation. Ask how you can help. Taking the first step lets the teacher know you want to participate in your grandchild’s education and helps make the teacher your ally. Ask to meet the principal. Let him/her know as well that you want to be an active part of your grandchild’s education and ask what you can do to help.

If the school has a counselor, talk to him/her, too. Knowing that a student has challenges outside of school helps the counselor (and the teacher) understand and deal more effectively with your grandchild.

Talk with your grandchildren. Help them emphasize their strengths and recognize their weaknesses. Remind them that everyone has trouble with something and that it’s not an excuse to quit trying. Most of all, remind them that what you expect from them is their best and that their best is good enough.

Participate in school activities as much as you can. Join the parent-teacher organization if there is one, and do your best to attend meetings. Go to whatever sporting events, plays, concerts and other school activities you can and are interested in. Being a “room mother” is an active way to help and teaches your grandchild’s friends about different kinds of families at the same time.

Seek out peer activities for your grandchild. Extracurricular and recreational activities help children develop social skills in ways classroom activities can’t. Ask the school about available scouting organizations, after-school clubs, and athletics.

Talking with the Teacher

Your grandchild’s teacher could be your strongest ally during the school year. Introduce yourself to this teacher early in the year. Ask the teacher to give you ideas about how you can support your young student.

It’s okay to tell the teacher about your grandchild’s family background. But don’t feel that you have to reveal every detail. Just tell the teacher what you feel comfortable sharing. This information will help the teacher understand your grandchild.

Your grandchild may need some extra help as he or she adjusts to living with you and going to a new school. Ask your grandchild’s teacher about tutoring or after-school programs that can help the child keep up with school work. Find out if the school offers counseling and other services to help your grandchild cope with his or her feelings about what has happened in your family. Don’t hesitate to use these services. Emotional issues play a big role in school success. It’s best to address them early.



Interaction with Schools, Teachers, Counselors and Staff

- **Get to know your grandchild’s teachers.** Inform teachers that you are raising your grandchildren. Teachers will want to send things home to “grandma” instead of “mom.” Let the teacher know you want to be informed of your grandchild’s progress.
- **Attend open houses and meetings.** Try to attend all parent-teacher conferences. Schedule personal meetings with teachers and counselors to talk about your grandchildren. If you cannot make face-to-face contact, arrange for a telephone conference.
- **Get help with homework if needed.** Teachers may be able to get your grandchildren extra help with homework or tutoring. This may take place at the school or in the community. Let them know if you are having trouble finding time or simply do not understand the homework well enough to help your grandchildren.
- **Do not be embarrassed or ashamed** if you do not understand your grandchildren’s homework. Many adults have trouble with reading, writing, math, computer work, and other subjects.
Remember: It is in the best interest of your grandchildren to ask for help.



Helping Your Grandchild Succeed in Education

Being a parent at any age or stage in your life is challenging, but these helpful tips can help guide you to better assist your grandchild to success in education.

Support the Child, Support the Teacher You want to help your child in school? Let go of anxiety and move on to success!

- **Do Make Time to Talk.** If the teacher calls you when you can’t give her/him your full attention, ask whether you can call back at a more convenient time.
- **Do Take Notes.** Teacher suggestions are easier to remember if you write them down.
- **Don’t Interrupt.** Teachers think long and hard before making a phone call, and they want to express their concerns completely.
- **Do Share Your Ideas.** No one knows your child as well as you do, so if you have strategies that the teacher can use to help your child, s/he wants to hear them.
- **Don’t Look For a Quick Fix.** Take time to digest what the teacher has said and talk it over with your family and your grandchild.
- **Don’t get Defensive.** The conversation should focus on helping your child, not on blaming anyone. The teacher needs your support to resolve the issue.

Issues that can’t be dealt with by the school may need the attention of someone at the district level. Matters of policy, for example, are best dealt with by the district, but only after the school has done what can be done at the school level. The school

should be able to tell you how to contact the district and who to talk to.

An excellent source of information about your grandchild and the school is other grandparents who have “been there, done that.” The Central Illinois Agency on Aging offers a support group for grandparents raising grandchildren as well as other services to help you. Please call 674-2071 for more information.



Tips to Help a Special Needs Child

Some possible disorders that your grandchild could be dealing with by being away from their natural parent or guardian, include:

- **Anxiety** (i.e., having worry or fears attending school, complaining of stomach aches)
- **Depression** (feelings of despair constantly occur that interfere with a child’s ability to function)
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** (a child who experiences a catastrophic event such as being the victim of abuse or being a witness to violence).

Creating a healthy and safe environment both physically and emotionally is vital if we are to help these children know how valuable they are as human beings and help them piece their lives back together again. Plenty of good activities that

will allow them to learn new ways of living and seeing things are invaluable.

Positive interaction with our grandchildren, especially when they are experiencing behavior problems, can be a challenge, but it is something that is very important to develop. As we set boundaries for the children and find that balance of love and discipline, the children need to know that we believe they are incredibly talented and special. A good motto when dealing with children is “Firm yet Kind” with an emphasis on kindness. Children must learn acceptable behavior in order to function properly in society, but we must teach that lesson in kindness.

“Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Helping Them Succeed in Education,” Katherine Young
Peoria School District 150
Manual High School
3/9/07

Preparing Your Child for Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is more than just a phase kids go through. It is a powerful reality that can lead to crazy hairdos (or hair colors), body piercing, tattoos or worse, experimentation with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

While it might seem like your grandchild no longer cares about your opinion, studies show that parents and other caregivers have a tremendous influence on their children - especially teenagers. No matter how old your child is, never feel helpless about trying to counter the negative impact of peer pressure. Here are some things you can do:

- Nurture strong self esteem. A strong self esteem helps children and adolescents make decisions and follow them even if their friends do not think their decision is cool. The stronger your grandchild’s self esteem, the more likely he or she is to say no to peer pressure.

- Let young children know that it is okay to seek an adult’s advice. Talk with them about adults besides you, that they can talk to - a teacher, minister, parent of a friend, etc.
- Remind your grandchildren that there is strength in numbers. When they are going somewhere where they anticipate stressful peer pressure, it helps to bring friends for support.

Talk to your grandchildren about how to avoid undesirable situations or people who break the rules. Children and teens who are not in situations where they feel pressure to do negative things, are far less likely to do them. Likewise, those who chose friends who do not smoke, drink, use drugs, steal, or belong to a gang are less likely to do those things.

*“Preparing Your Child for Peer Pressure”
Kinship Care News
www.saginawcounty.com/COA/kinship_care_news.htm*

Bullying

Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis.

Bullying behavior can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victims. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target.

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to endure such harassment and punishment.

Children and adolescents who bully thrive on controlling or dominating others. They have often been the victims of physical abuse or bullying themselves. Bullies may also be depressed, angry or upset about events at school or at home. Bullies often choose children who are passive, easily intimidated, or have few friends. Victims may also be smaller or younger, and have a harder time defending themselves.

If you suspect your grandchild is bullying others, it’s important to seek help for him or her as soon as possible. Without intervention, bullying can lead to serious academic, social, emotional, and legal difficulties.

If you suspect your grandchild may be a victim of bullying, ask him or her to tell you what’s going on. You can help by providing lots of opportunities to talk with you in an open and honest way.

If your grandchild becomes withdrawn, depressed, or reluctant to go to school, or if you see a decline in school performance, additional intervention may be required. Seeking professional assistance earlier can lessen the risk of lasting emotional consequences for your grandchild.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Facts for Families
www.aacap.org



LOCAL RESOURCES

You may be in any of the 123 school districts in our service area. The chart below shows how many school districts are in each county:

Fulton County	7
Marshall County	5
Peoria County	18
Stark County	2
Tazewell County	18
Woodford County	9

If you're not sure which school district you and your grandchildren live in or have a problem that can't be resolved at the school district level, you can contact the Regional Superintendent of Schools for your county.

Fulton County

Louise Bassett
P.O. Box 307 100 N. Main
Fulton County Courthouse
Lewistown, IL 61542
(309) 547-3041 Ext.27/28
lbassett@roe22.net

Marshall County

Ronda Bangert
117 South Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 340
Washburn, Illinois 61570-0340
(309) 248-8212
rbangert@roe43.k12.il.us

Peoria County

Gerald M. Brookhart
Peoria County Courthouse
324 Main St., Room 401
Peoria, Illinois 61602
(309) 672-6906
gbrookhart@peoriaroe48.net

Stark County

Bruce Dennison
107 S. State Street
Atkinson, Illinois 61235
(309) 936-7890
bdenniso@bhsroe.k12.il.us

Tazewell County

Rob Houchin
414 Court Street
Tazewell Building, Suite 104
Pekin, Illinois 61554
(309) 477-2290
rhouchin@roe53.net

Woodford County

Ronda Bangert
117 South Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 340
Washburn, Illinois 61570-0340
(309) 248-8212
rbangert@roe43.k12.il.us

STATE RESOURCES

Illinois State Board of Education
100 N. 1st Street
Springfield, IL 62777
1-866-262-6663
(217) 782-4321
<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
1-800-872-5327
<http://www.ed.gov/index.html>



Gangs

Street gangs are not, as many believe, strictly an urban problem. Gangs are not only everywhere, but continuing to increase in size and sophistication. Gang members are not necessarily teenage boys: they are being recruited at younger and younger ages, some as young as 6 years old. Female gangs account for 5-10% of the 750,000 to 850,000 gang members in the United States and are more likely to use extreme violence against other female gangs than male gangs.

Preconceptions about gangs and gang members prevent people from recognizing gang activity in their children, their schools, and their neighborhoods. While many gang members dress in ways that identify their affiliations, many do not and many and many young people have adopted “gangsta” style clothing in an attempt to be “cool.”

Gangs appeal to young people who are searching for love, structure and discipline, who want a sense of belonging and commitment or who feel the need for recognition and power.

Other factors include companionship, excitement, and activities, Gangs may also provide a place of acceptance. Children and young people unable to live with their parents (for whatever reason) are especially vulnerable to these appeals.

Children do not get involved in gangs overnight. Be aware of what your grandchild is wearing, who s/he is associating with, changes in attitude or language, and pay attention to what others say.

Many school districts also offer gang awareness resources. Check with your school district to see if they do. If the school doesn't offer gang awareness

training for parents or in the classroom, consider asking them to do so.

Your local police department may have gang awareness information or be able to refer you to someone who can provide it. Law enforcement agencies, though, are frequently not able to provide citizen education, so other sources must be used. The following list contains local, State, and national sources.



LOCAL RESOURCES

Your local police force non-emergency number _____.

Your local public and school libraries are good sources for information on any topic. If they don't have information in their own collections, they can borrow material from other libraries.

Sheriff's Offices:

Fulton County

P.O. 269

268 W. Washington

Lewistown, IL 61542

(309) 547-2277

<http://www.fultonco.org/sheriff.html>

Marshall County

520 Sixth St

Lacon, Illinois 61540

(309) 246-2115

<http://www.usacops.com/il/s61540/index.html>

Peoria County

Peoria County Courthouse
324 Main Street
Peoria, IL 61602
(309) 672-6056
<http://www.peoriacounty.org/sheriff.php?dept=sheriff&page=index>

Stark County

130 West Jefferson
Toulon, IL 61483
(309) 285-2541
<http://starkco.illinois.gov/countyOffice.php?officeID=60>

Tazewell County

101 South Capitol St.
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 346-4141
<http://www.tazewell.com/Sheriff/TCSD.html>

Woodford County

111 E Court St
Eureka, Illinois 61530
(309) 467-2375
<http://www.usacops.com/il/s61530/index.html>

The Peoria Police Department offers a 35-40 minute presentation they describe as “a comprehensive program explaining the origin of gangs and how they have evolved.” Topics covered include gang signs, clothing markings, territory, and what parents need to look for in their own children. The program is available all year, by appointment. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call Community Service at 309-494-8207 or e-mail at caffairs@ci.peoria.il.us. For more information, go to the website at <http://www.ci.peoria.il.us/pdservices>.

STATE RESOURCES

The Nineteenth Judicial Circuit of the State of Illinois has put out an excellent online handbook by Adult Probation Officer Stephen L. Sachs. The handbook is called [Gang Awareness for Parents/Educators/Law Enforcement](http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/faqs/gangwise.htm). There are links at the end of the handbook to other sources of information. <http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/faqs/gangwise.htm>

Another online publication of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit is Gang Alert, which includes a list of clues and warning signs for families and suggestions for taking a proactive approach. It can be found at the following website: <http://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/bkshelf/gangalrt/gangalrt.htm>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Gangs OR Us has a website for parents and others who have questions or who want to share their experiences in dealing with anyone they know or suspect to be involved in gangs:

<http://www.gangsor.us.com/parents.html>

The National Youth Gang Center of the Institute for Intergovernmental Research website (<http://www.iir.com/nygc/>) provides up-to-date information on gangs as well as resources for families and neighborhoods, including a parents’ guide to gangs.



The Drug Epidemic at Home

The Bureau of Justice of the U.S. Department reports that in a study conducted in 2005, “25% of all students in grades 9 through 12 reported someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property. In the same study, 83.9% of respondents reported that they could easily obtain marijuana. For other drugs, such as amphetamines, cocaine and barbiturates, more than 40% of students reported easy access.

Your grandchildren are susceptible to all of the influences that cause other children and young people to abuse drugs and may be more susceptible because of their unique living arrangements (just as they are to gangs).

Local police and schools are likely to have drug prevention programs and should be the first place you look for help. Remember that the school counselor is likely to have special training in this area and may also be able to provide referrals to programs or organizations best suited to your grandchildren and you. Your County Health Department may also be able to provide assistance.

How To Keep Your Grandkids Off Drugs

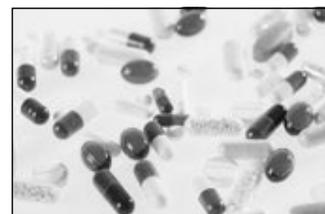
The tween and teen years can be tumultuous for many kids. As they become more interested in spending time with friends, and less interested in sharing their thoughts with parents or grandparents, it’s only natural to worry if they might be experimenting with drugs or alcohol. You may want to say something to them - to warn them of the dangers of drugs, or to urge them to resist peer pressure - but if they’re maintaining their distance, it can

seem hard to approach them.

Even if you grandkids aren’t talking, they’re listening. Here are steps for delivering your drug-free message to them:

- **Educate yourself.** The use of “street” drugs may be declining among young people, but marijuana and cocaine are far from the only risks kids face. Increasingly, children as young as 12 have turned to prescription drugs to get high. They can readily find these drugs in many home medicine cabinets (including yours) or buy them through online pharmacies. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America reports that one in five teens has abused a prescription pain medication, such as Vicodin, and one in ten has abused a prescription stimulant, such as Ritalin. Teens have also abused over-the-counter medications, such as cough medicines with the ingredient DXM (commonly found in Robitussin).

“Huffing,” or attempting to get high on inhaling household products such as air freshener, nail polish remover, spray paint, and glue, also continues to be a risk for kids. According to a recent report by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, one in five children will abuse such inhalants by the eighth grade.



You'll gain credibility with your grandchild if you know as much about what's out there as they do, so before you sit down to talk with them, learn all you can about the most recent trends and facts. The following groups' websites can help you: The Partnership for a Drug-Free America; The National Institute on Drug Abuse; Parents: The Anti-Drug; and, for information on inhalants, The Alliance for Consumer Education.

- **Start early.** Tweens and teens often fall into drug addiction because they're unaware of the dangers. For example, they may think that prescription drugs aren't nearly as harmful as marijuana or cocaine, says Tom Hedrick, senior communications officer at The Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Or they may be totally unaware of the addictive, sometimes lethal effects of inhalants. That's why Hedrick believes it's important to start educating kids about all types of drugs before they enter middle school. If your grandkids are in their last year of elementary school and no one has sat them down to talk about drugs, it's time.
- **Don't stop talking.** Continue your conversations about drugs throughout the preteen and teen years. Check in with your grandchildren in middle school, by asking in a calm, nonjudgmental way, "Do you know anybody who has taken drugs?" or, "Has anyone ever offered you drugs? What would you do if someone did?" Take the opportunity to help your grandchild come up with his or her own strategies for

resisting peer pressure - and ultimately saying no to drugs - while still fitting in with friends. Clinical psychologist Lisa Boesky of San Diego, the author of *When to Worry: How to Tell If Your Teen Needs Help*, says, in high school, you might ask some of the same questions, while being especially attentive to any rough patches in your grandchild's life, either personally or within their immediate family. Teens may be more susceptible to experimenting with drugs during emotionally difficult times, Hedrick says.

- **Never underestimate your influence.** In February 2002, Janna Zuber's 16-year-old son, Justin, died from inhaling air freshener. Today the 56-year-old mother of five and grandmother of two in Mitchellville, MD, has become an advocate for inhalant awareness. "So often, children - even good kids - think they're invincible, and try drugs out of curiosity," Zuber says. "They don't know about the real risks, because no one has told them. "Grandparents can and should step up and play an important role by educating their grandchildren about drugs, being their for kids during tough times, and always keeping the lines of communication open.

<http://www.grandparents.com>



NATIONAL RESOURCES

National Institute on Drug Abuse
National Institutes of Health
6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 5213
Bethesda, MD 20892-9561
(301) 443-1124
<http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDAHome.html>

D.A.R.E. America
9800 La Cienega Blvd.
Suite 401
Inglewood, CA 90301
(800) 223.DARE
<http://www.dare.com/home/default.asp>

LOCAL RESOURCES

Health Departments

Fulton County Health Department
700 East Oak Street
Canton, IL 61520
(309) 647-1134
<http://www.fultoncountyhealth.com/>

Marshall County contracts with the Peoria City/County Health Department (listed below)

Peoria City/County Health Dept.
2116 N. Sheridan Road
Peoria, IL 61604
(309) 679-6000

Henry & **Stark County** Health Dept.
4424 US Hwy 34
Kewanee, IL 61443
(309) 852-0197
<http://www.henrystarkhealth.com/>

Tazewell County Health Department
21306 Illinois Route 9
Tremont, IL 61568-9252
(309) 925-5511
<http://www.tazewellhealth.org/>

Woodford County Health Department
1831 South Main Street
Eureka, IL 61530
(309) 467-3064

STATE RESOURCES

IL Dept.of Human Services Bureau of
Customer and Provider Assistance
100 South Grand Avenue East
Springfield, Illinois 62762
800-843-6154 (Automated helpline)
<http://www.dhs.state.il.us>



Children and Media Influences

Children and TV Violence

American children watch an average of three to four hours of television daily. Television can be a powerful influence in developing value systems and shaping behavior. Unfortunately, much of today's television programming is violent. Hundreds of studies of the effects of TV violence on children and teenagers have found that children may:

- become "immune" or numb to the horror of violence;
- gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems;
- imitate the violence they observe on television; and
- identify with certain characters, victims, and/or victimizers.

Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness. Sometimes, watching a single violent program can increase aggressiveness. Children with emotional, behavioral, learning or impulse control problems may be more easily influenced by TV violence. The impact of TV violence may be immediately evident in the child's behavior or may surface years later. Young people can even be affected when the family atmosphere shows no tendency toward violence.

While TV violence is not the only cause of aggressive or violent behavior, it is clearly a significant factor. Grandparents can protect grandchildren from excessive TV violence in the following ways:

- pay attention to the programs your grandchildren are watching;
- set limits on the amount of time they spend with the television;

- for younger children, point out that the people in the show are only actors, and that the actor has not actually been hurt or killed. Such violence in real life results in pain or death; and
- refuse to let your grandchildren see shows known to be violent, and change the channel or turn off the TV set when offensive material comes on, with an explanation of what is wrong with the program.

Kinship caregivers can also use these measures to prevent harmful effects from television in other areas such as racial or sexual stereotyping. The amount of time children watch TV, regardless of content, should be moderated because it decreases time spent on more beneficial activities such as reading, interacting with friends, and developing hobbies.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Facts for Families
www.aacap.org



Children and the Internet

Computers have traditionally been trusted by both children and adults as reliable and accurate sources of information. The rapid growth of online services and internet access has added a new dimension to modern computing. Through a modem and phone line, children now have access to an almost endless supply of information and opportunity for interaction. However, there can be real risks and dangers for an unsupervised child.

Most online services give children resources such as encyclopedias, current events coverage, and access to libraries and other valuable material. They can also play games and communicate with friends. The ability to “click” from one area to another appeals to a child’s natural impulsivity and curiosity and needs for immediate gratification or feedback.

Most parents teach their children not to talk with strangers, not to open the door if they are home alone, and not to give out information on the telephone to unknown callers. Most parents also monitor where their youngsters go, who they play with, and what TV shows, books, or magazines they are exposed to. However, many parents don’t realize that **the same level of guidance and supervision must be provided for a child’s online experience.**

Parents cannot assume that their child will be protected by the supervision or regulation provided by the online services. Most “chat rooms” or “news groups” are completely unsupervised. Because of the anonymous nature of the “screen name,” children who communicate with others in these areas will not know if they are “talking” with another child or a child predator pretending to be a child or teen.

Some of the other risks or problems include:

- children accessing areas that are inappropriate or overwhelming;
- online information that promotes hate, violence, and pornography;
- children being invited to register for prizes or to join a club when they are providing personal or household information to an unknown source; and
- hours spent online is time lost from developing real social skills and from physical activity and exercise.

In order to make a child’s online experience more safe and educational, adults should:

- make sure that the computer the child uses is in a family use area rather than his or her bedroom;
- limit the amount of time a child spends online and “surfing the web”;
- teach a child that talking to “screen names” in a “chat room” is the same as talking with strangers;
- teach a child to never give out any personal identifying information to another individual or website online;
- teach a child to never agree to actually meet someone they have met online;
- remind a child that not everything they see or read online is true;



- make use of the parental control features offered with your online service, or obtain commercially available software programs, to restrict access to “chat lines,” news groups, and inappropriate websites;
- provide for an individual e-mail address only if the child is mature enough to manage it, and plan to periodically monitor the child’s e-mail and online activity;
- monitor the content of a child’s personal webpage (homepage) and screen name profile information;
- insist that a child follow the same guidelines at other computers that they might have access to, such as those at school, libraries, or friends’ homes.

Parents should remember that communicating online does not prepare children for real interpersonal relationships. Spending time with a child initially exploring an online service and periodically participating with a child in the online experience gives parents an opportunity to monitor and supervise the activity. It is also an opportunity to learn together.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Facts for Families
www.aacap.org

LOCAL RESOURCES

To find out how to operate parent controls on your television, contact your local cable television or satellite provider. This information is found on your bill under contact information.



To report a suspected internet violation, contact your local police department or one of the following:

Illinois State Police
District 8
1265 Lourdes Road
Metamora, IL 61548-7710
(309) 383-2133
(Marshall, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell and Woodford Counties)

Illinois State Police
District 14
1600 N. Lafayette Street
Macomb, IL 61455-9194
(309) 833-4046
(Fulton County)

STATE RESOURCES

To report online child exploitation, contact:

Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children
Deputy Chief Michael Sullivan
100 W. Randolph, 12th Floor
High Tech Crimes Bureau
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 814-3762
<http://www.illinoisicac.org>

Internet Crimes Unit
Illinois State Police
PO Box 19461
Springfield, IL 62794-9461
1-888-702-7463
<http://www.isp.state.il.us/icu>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

To report child pornography, internet fraud, or harassment:

FBI - Springfield
900 E. Linton Avenue
Springfield, IL 62703
(217) 522-9675
<http://Springfield.fbi.gov>

<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/reporting.htm>

Grandparents and the Law

As a grandparent raising your grandchildren, you might not have imagined being involved with the legal system. But if your grandchildren live with you for a long time, you may eventually need legal support and advice to provide the best care for your grandchildren. It's important for you to understand laws affecting grandparents raising their grandchildren.

This handbook is **not** intended to substitute for actual legal advice. If any of these legal issues affect you, your first step is to seek advice from a qualified attorney.

Communication Is Key. If your grandchildren's parents are still involved in their lives, it's important to communicate with them about legal issues that affect their children. As a grandparent raising your grandchildren, you need to be able to register your grandchildren for school and take care of their medical needs. But unless you have legal custody of your grandchildren, their parents are still legally responsible for those decisions. Talk with the parents, and try to agree on how to handle these issues. Remember that what's best for the children is most important!

Legal Custody. In order to share legal responsibility, you need to get some type of legal custody of your grandchildren while they are in your care. Legal custody gives you more rights in relation to your grandchildren's care. The courts will make custody and visitation decisions based on what they think are the best interests of the children.

Reaching an Agreement on Custody. Any type of custody is simpler if parents and grandparents agree. No matter what type of custody the grandparents are

seeking, family conflict can be reduced or eliminated if parents and grandparents sort out custody issues together. Custody is easy to decide in some cases, but in others parents and grandparents have trouble coming to an agreement. Keep in mind that what's best for the children should guide all of your discussions and decisions.

Remember to consult your lawyer before you sign any agreements.

Types of Legal Custody

Custody Orders: A custody order from a judge is the most common way to get legal custody of your grandchildren. When you get a custody order, you are responsible for the child's day-to-day care, including seeking medical treatment and enrolling them in school. With a custody order, the children's parents continue to have a legal relationship with the children. The parents have the right to visitation (unless a judge denies or limits the visits), and could request custody again some day.

Many families like custody orders because they are relatively easy to get and still allow the parents to play a legal role in the children's lives. A custody order may be a good choice if there is a chance that the parents will take the child back. If there is a problem with a parent, ask your lawyer to make sure court records state why the parents could not care for your grandchild.



Legal Guardianship: With legal guardianship, similar to a custody order, you accept day-to-day responsibility for the children but the parents retain some rights. The main difference is that legal guardianship is usually granted in probate court. Probate court has different rules and standards than family court, where custody orders are usually decided.

If you are trying to decide between a custody order and legal guardianship, consider asking your lawyer the following questions. Considering these questions can help you decide which type of custody is better for your family.

- Which type of custody would cost more, take longer, and require return trips to court?
- How would each choice affect cash benefits (such as TANF or food stamps) or health insurance coverage for your grandchildren?
- How would each choice affect the parents' ability to visit the children?
- How would each choice affect the parents' ability to ask that the children return to their custody?

Adoption: Adoption is a permanent arrangement. If you adopt your grandchildren, you become their legal parent in every way, and the legal relationship between the grandchildren and their parent ends. If you adopt, the parents cannot request custody later. It may sound strange to adopt your own grandchildren, but sometimes it may be the best choice. Adoption is the only legal way to ensure that you will raise your grandchildren permanently. The major reason to choose adoption is to give your grandchildren the safety and security of knowing that you will care for them permanently.

Choosing a Lawyer

An experienced lawyer can advise you about the consequences of different types of legal custody and help you decide what would be best for your family. Your lawyer can help you work out agreements with the parents and will represent you in court when you seek custody. Shop around for a lawyer who meets your needs.

If You Can't Afford to Pay. Remember that paying a lawyer to represent you is a good investment. But if you need a lawyer and can't afford to pay one, you still may be able to get good legal help. Legal services or legal aid are government-sponsored law offices that help low-income people with common legal problems.

In some cases, you might be able to find a **pro bono lawyer** - a lawyer who will work on your case for free, especially if the case will help more than one family.

"Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Legal Issues in Caring for Your Grandchildren"
Diane Bales, Extension Human Development Specialist
June 2003



LOCAL RESOURCES

Prairie State Legal Services, Inc.
Peoria Office
331 Fulton Street, Suite 600
Peoria, IL 61602
(309) 674-9831
1-800-322-2280
<http://www.pslegal.org>
**(Marshall, Peoria, Tazewell, Stark,
and western Woodford)**

Bloomington Office
316 W. Washington Street
Bloomington, IL 61701
(309) 827-5021
1-800-874-2536
<http://www.pslegal.org>
(eastern Woodford)

Galesburg Office
1614 E. Knox Street
Galesburg, IL 61401
(309) 343-2141
1-800-331-0617
<http://www.pslegal.org>
(Fulton)

Peoria County Bar Association
411 Hamilton Blvd., Suite 1618
Peoria, IL 61602
(309) 674-6049
<http://www.peoriabar.org>

STATE RESOURCES

Illinois State Bar Association
Springfield Office
Illinois Bar Center
424 S. Second Street
Springfield, IL 62701-1779
(217) 525-1760
1-800-252-8908
<http://www.illinoisbar.org>

Chicago Regional Office
20 S. Clark Street, Suite 900
Chicago, IL 61603-1802
(312) 726-8775
1-800-678-4009
<http://www.illinoisbar.org>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

American Bar Association
740 - 15th Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20005-1019
(202) 662-1000

Service Center
321 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60654-7598
(312) 988-5522



Child Protection and the Dependency System

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

The goal of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is to protect children by strengthening and supporting families.

DCFS is committed to acting in the best interest of every child it serves and to helping families by increasing their ability to provide a safe environment for their children and by strengthening families who are at risk of abuse or neglect.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Regional Office
5415 N. University
Peoria, IL 61614
(309) 693-5400

Peoria Field Office
2001 NE Jefferson
Peoria, IL 61605
(309) 671-7900

Pekin Field Office
1 S. Capitol Street
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 347-5978

Canton Field Office
45 East Side Square
Canton, IL 61520

STATE RESOURCES

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

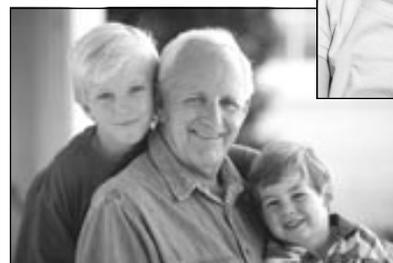
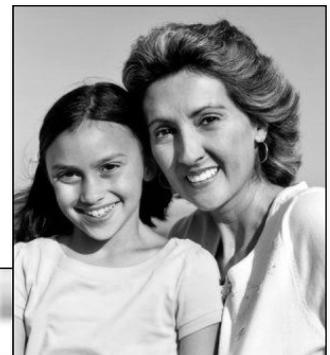
Chicago Headquarters
100 W. Randolph Street, #6-200
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 814-6800

Springfield Headquarters
406 E. Monroe
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
(217) 785-2509
Child Abuse Hotline: 800-252-2873
Foster Parent Hotline: 800-624-5437
<http://www.state.il.us/dcfs>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

National Resource Center for Child Protective Services
925 #4 Sixth Street NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 345-2444
<http://www.nrccps.org>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Wang International Children's Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3175
24-hr. Hotline: 1-800-843-5678
<http://www.missingkids.com>



Government Aid & Public Assistance

Depending on the type of custodial arrangement a grandparent has for their grandchild, there may be different sources of financial assistance available to help with the costs of raising the grandchild.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) administers the TANF program. TANF provides financial assistance to help families care for children who need financial help. You do not need to be the legal custodian or guardian of the minor child to receive TANF assistance. You have to meet certain financial eligibility criteria in order to qualify for TANF assistance. If you wish to receive cash assistance for your grandchild but not yourself, DHS will not count your income and assets when determining eligibility for this kind of a grant, called a child only TANF grant.

Food Stamps

The Food Stamp Program gives out coupons or debit cards to families that have limited incomes. You use your coupon or card to buy food for your family. The amount of help you get depends on the income of everyone in your household. It also depends on the size of your family.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

WIC can help you buy food for eligible grandchildren in your care. The child must be five years old or younger. He or she must also be at risk for poor nutrition. Does your grandchild get help from TANF? Then he or she will probably be eligible for WIC, too. The child must see a health

professional first. This could be a doctor, nurse or nutritionist. This professional will decide if the child is at risk for poor nutrition. This exam is free. It takes place at a WIC clinic.

All Kids

The All Kids program offers Illinois uninsured children comprehensive healthcare that includes doctors visits, hospital stays, prescription drugs, vision care, dental care and medical devices like eyeglasses and asthma inhalers. Parents pay monthly premiums for the coverage, but rates for middle-income families are significantly lower than they are on the private market. For instance, a family of four that earns between \$42,000 and \$63,000 a year pays a \$40 monthly premium per child, and a \$10 co-pay per physician visit. The program officially began on July 1, 2006.



FamilyCare

FamilyCare offers healthcare coverage to parents living with their children 18 years old or younger. FamilyCare also covers relatives who are caring for children in place of their parents. Like All Kids, FamilyCare covers doctor visits, dental care, specialty medical services, hospital care, emergency services, prescription drugs and more.

Parents can get FamilyCare if they live in Illinois and meet the FamilyCare income limits. They must be U.S. citizens or meet immigration requirements. All Kids or FamilyCare health benefits will not affect your immigration status unless you receive services in a nursing home or mental health facility.

Immunizations

The Illinois Department of Public Health runs an immunization program. You can bring your grandchild to free clinics for immunization shots regardless of whether you have custody or guardianship of the child.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

The Social Security Administration administers the SSI program. This program provides financial assistance for low income, elderly, blind or disabled people (including children). A grandchild may qualify for assistance if he/she is blind or disabled and meets the income requirements. Grandchildren can also qualify based on a mental disorder, mental retardation, or a physical handicap.



Social Security Benefits for Dependent Grandchildren and Step Grandchildren

If you are a grandparent or step grandparent caring for a grandchild under age 18 (or under age 22 for a full-time student) and you receive Social Security Retirement or Disability benefits, the child may be eligible to receive a dependent child's benefit too. The child's parents must have been deceased or disabled and the child must have been dependent on you at the time you became eligible for the Social Security benefits. The child is dependent if you provided at least half of his or her support and he or she was living with you for one year before you became eligible for benefits. The benefits can be very significant, half of your primary insurance amount, unless you have other dependents who are eligible to receive benefits. The amount is not taken from your benefit. It is an additional benefit for the child.

If the child was living with and dependent on a parent, step-parent, grandparent or step-grandparent when that person died, the child may be eligible to receive a child's benefit on the deceased's Social Security Account.

Foster Care Payments

In certain circumstances, guardians and grandparents can receive foster care payments from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. To do so, there must be a case in juvenile court to determine whether the child is abused, neglected, or a dependent in need of supervision. In addition, you must be a licensed foster care provider. The foster care payment is to be used to cover the cost of the child's food, clothing, and personal allowance. The amount of the payment is based on the child's age and any special needs.

Adoption Assistance Payments

A child may be eligible for adoption assistance if parental rights have been terminated as a result of a court finding; the child is a resident of Illinois; the child cannot or should not be returned home as evidenced by a judicial finding of abuse, neglect or dependency or reason to believe that the child is abused, neglected or dependent; and the child has been determined by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to have special needs, which make it highly unlikely that he/she can be adopted without adoption assistance.

The factors or conditions which may be considered "special needs" include: age, membership in a sibling group, documented medical conditions or physical, mental or emotional disabilities.



LOCAL RESOURCES

Many municipalities offer assistance to residents or can refer residents to other sources of help. Contacting your town, village, or city office can get you in touch with these services.

Township offices often have funds to help residents as well. You may be in any of the 102 townships in our service area. The following is a list of the number of townships in each county of our service area:

Fulton County	26
Marshall County	13
Peoria County	20
Stark County	8
Tazewell County	18
Woodford County	17

Additional local resources include:

Illinois Department of Human Svcs. Region 3 and Peoria County Office

2301 NE Adams Street
Peoria, IL 61603
(309) 686-8790 (Region 3)
(309) 686-8700 (Peoria County)

Fulton County

Family Community Resource Center
1329 N. Main Street
Lewistown, IL 61542
(309) 547-3755

Marshall County

Family Community Resource Center
511 School Street
Henry, IL 61542
(309) 364-2376

Stark County

Family Community Resource Center
213 W. Main St., PO Box 326
Toulon, IL 61483
(309) 286-2021

Tazewell County

Family Community Resource Center
200 S. 2nd Street, Suite 20
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 347-4184

Woodford County

Family Community Resource Center
107B N. Major
Eureka, IL 61530
(309) 467-2358

Illinois Department of Public Health

Regional Office
5415 N. University St.
Peoria, IL 61614
(309) 693-5360

Social Security Administration

Peoria Office
815 W. Pioneer Parkway
Peoria, IL 61615
(309) 689-1330
1-800-772-1213

Pekin Office
2801 Broadway
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 347-6622
1-800-772-1213

STATE RESOURCES

Illinois Department of Human Services

Administrative Offices - Chicago
401 S. Clinton St.
Chicago, IL 60607
1-800-843-6154
Website: <http://www.dhs.illinois.gov>

Administrative Offices - Springfield
100 S. Grand Avenue E.
Springfield, IL 62704
1-800-843-6154

Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services

201 South Grand Avenue East
Springfield, IL 62763-0001
(217) 782-1200
Website: <http://www.hfs.illinois.gov>

Illinois Department of Public Health

535 W. Jefferson Street
Springfield, IL 62761
1-800-252-4343
Website: <http://www.idph.state.il.us>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

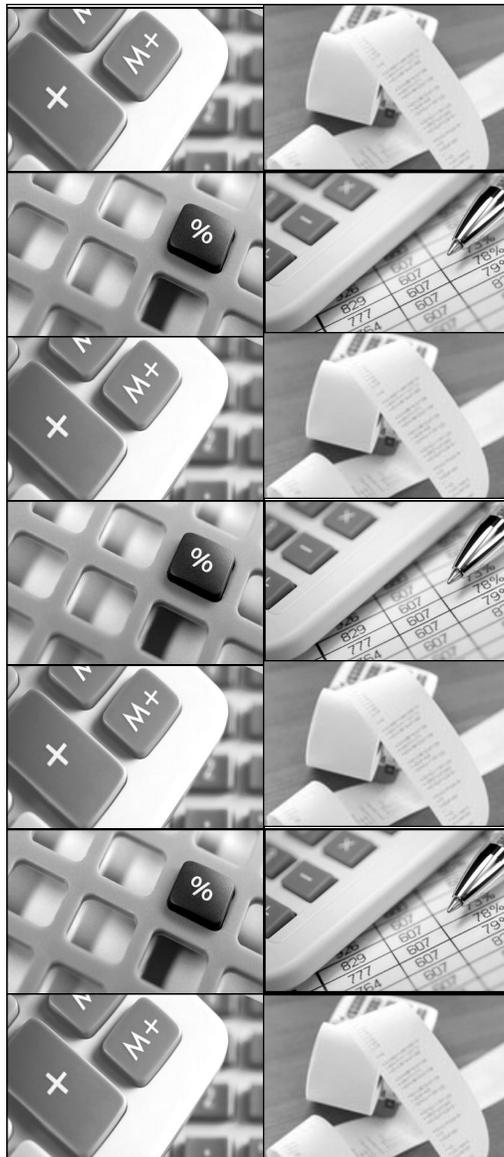
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 619-0257
1-877-696-6775
<http://www.hhs.gov>

Social Security Administration

Website: <http://www.ssa.gov>

AARP Foundation has a new online tool that can help grandparents raising children connect with key public benefits programs for which they or the children they are raising might be eligible.

http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/raising_grandchild/benefits_quicklink_for_grandfamilies.html



Special Education and Early Intervention

Many children being raised by their grandparents face special challenges because of the circumstances that led to their present living arrangements. Children who have been neglected, abandoned, abused, exposed to parents' substance abuse, and those who are suffering from the devastating emotional effects of separation from their parents for whatever reason are at high risk for learning problems.

Help for Babies (0 to 3)

The birth of a child is an exciting, life-changing event. A beautiful baby comes to your house, a neighborhood. It is a time for celebration.

But what happens when this new child has a disability? What if there are health problems? What if, as time goes by, it seems as if the child isn't learning and progressing as quickly or easily as other children?

There are many supports available for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities, thanks to the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Early intervention is an effective way to help children catch up or address specific developmental concerns as soon as possible in their lives.

"Help for Babies (0 to 3)"
<http://www.nichcy.org/babies>

Learning About Disabilities

Learn as much as you can about your grandchild's condition. This will help you cope with what is happening. A number of conditions can affect young children. Each has its own causes and treatments. Some of the more common disabilities include:

Down syndrome. Children with Down syndrome have an extra chromosome 21. This gives them some physical traits that are easy to recognize. Children with Down syndrome grow at a slower rate than other children. They usually are small. Many suffer from mild or moderate mental retardation. Most have problems with hearing and heart disease. Children with Down syndrome do best in a caring home. They can benefit from special services and learning programs.

Autism. Autism is a very complex brain disorder. It usually appears by age three, and the causes are largely unknown. Autism affects the way a child interacts with others and his or her world. Many children with autism have trouble socializing with others. They may be slow to talk. They may be very sensitive to sound or to being touched. Some therapies can help children with autism. The sooner these therapies begin, the better a child will do.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Unborn babies can develop FAS when their mothers drink alcohol while they are pregnant. This hurts the child's central nervous system. Children with FAS grow at a slower rate than other kids. They also can suffer from mental retardation. Some may have learning disabilities. They often have serious behavior problems. There is no cure for FAS. But special services can help these children cope.



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Children with ADHD have trouble sitting still or paying attention. Some experts say that these children may not have enough of certain brain chemicals that help everyone pay attention and control their behavior. Medication, counseling and various therapies are used to treat ADHD. Your grandchild probably won't "outgrow" ADHD. But he or she can learn to adapt to it and do well in school.

Learning Disabilities. A learning disability may make it hard for your grandchild to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do math. One of the most common learning disabilities is dyslexia. People with dyslexia have trouble reading and understanding words, sentences and paragraphs. Learning disabilities don't go away. People live with them their whole lives. But children who get the right support can become good students and successful adults. That support includes tutoring and various therapies.

Early intervention and special education services are key to helping your grandchildren overcome these barriers. In an article on About.com, Terri Mauro defines early intervention as "services given to very young children with special needs, generally from birth until the child turns three." The hope is provision of these early services will address delays in development and allow the child to "catch up" with his/her peers. She suggests that if you have a concern about your grandchild you consult the child's pediatrician for a referral to early intervention providers in your area. Your local health department is another excellent source for identification and referral.

The term "special education" covers any educational service designed for students with special learning needs. These needs can be caused by physical challenges, learning difficulties, mental health problems, or other circumstances. Generally, special education services are provided through local school districts to children three years of age or older who live within the district's boundaries.

You can also do a few things to help yourself cope with your grandchild's disability. Even if you are not raising the child, it's important to stay as involved as you can in the child's life. This will help you become more comfortable with his or her condition. Talk to other grandparents who have grandchildren with disabilities. Join a support group for families of children with disabilities. You will feel better when you can share your feelings with people who know what you're going through. You can learn more about the disability. You may also pick up some tips on how to support your family.

"Special Needs"
<http://www.aarp.org/family/grandparenting>



LOCAL RESOURCES

Easter Seals, Peoria, IL
507 East Armstrong Avenue
Peoria, IL 61603
(309) 686-1177
<http://www.ci.easterseals.com>

Special Education Assn. of Peoria Cnty.
6000 S. Adams Street
Bartonville, IL 61607
(309) 697-0880
<http://www.seapco.org/>

BMP Tri-County Special Education
Co-Op (Bureau, Marshall & Putnam)
526 Bureau Valley Pkwy
Princeton, IL 1356-2538
(815) 875-2645

STATE RESOURCES

Illinois Department of Public Health
535 West Jefferson Street
Springfield, Illinois 62761
(217) 782-4977
<http://www.idph.state.il.us/>

Child and Family Connections
Springfield, IL
1-888-594-8364
<http://www.childandfamilyconnections.org/>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Easter Seals, Inc.
233 South Wacker Drive
Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60606
1-800-221-6827
[http://www.easterseals.com/site/
PageServer](http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer)

National Dissemination Center
for Children With Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013
1-800- 695-0285
<http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

National Early Childhood Technical
Assistance Center
Campus Box 8040, UNC-CH
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8040
(919) 962-2001



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Groups

The Caregiver Program provides emotional support to grandparents raising grandchildren and helps them to cope with their caregiving roles, and/or develop and strengthen their capacities for better social and personal adjustments.

Assistance with challenges such as shopping, transportation, nutrition, and finding medical/dental services is available. Group and individual services are available.

All services are FREE!

PEORIA

Central Illinois Agency on Aging
700 Hamilton Blvd., Peoria, Illinois
1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month
1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Join us if you are a grandparent who is raising a child under the age of 18.

HISPANIC SUPPORT GROUP

Friendship House
800 NE Madison, Peoria, Illinois
Fourth Wednesday of every month
1 - 2:30 p.m.
309-677-3189

Group in Spanish for grandparents raising children under the age of 18.

Co-sponsored by Central Illinois Agency on Aging and Bradley University

FREE COUNSELING AVAILABLE!



Additional Resources

Illinois Taskforce on
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
c/of Illinois Department on Aging
421 E. Capitol, #100
Springfield, IL 62701-1789

Boys & Girls Club of Peoria, Inc.
806 E. Kansas
Peoria, IL 61603
(309) 685-6007

Boys & Girls Club of Pekin
1101 Veerman
Pekin, IL 61554
(309) 346-6304

Girl Scouts of Central Illinois
Peoria Regional Service Center
1103 W. Lake Avenue
Peoria, IL 61614
(309) 688-8671
<http://www.girlscouts-gsci.org>

W. D. Boyce Council
Boy Scouts of America
614 NE Madison Avenue
Peoria, IL 61603
(309) 673-6136
<http://www.wdboyce.org>

Tri-County Urban League
317 S. McArthur Hwy.
Peoria, IL 61605
(309) 673-7474

South Side Mission
1127 S. Laramie Street
Peoria, IL 61605
(309) 676-4604
<http://www.southsidemission.org>

Illinois Central College
#1 College Drive
East Peoria, IL 61635
(309) 694-5011
<http://www.icc.edu>



Notes



**Serving Older Adults and Their Caregivers,
including Relatives as Parents,
in Our Six-County Service Area of
Fulton, Marshall, Peoria, Stark,
Tazewell, and Woodford Counties.**



Central Illinois Agency on Aging, Inc.

700 Hamilton Boulevard

Peoria, IL 61603

Telephone: (309) 674-2071

Toll Free: 1-877-777-2422 (from outside the Peoria Metro Area)