

# Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren

## DEFINITION

*Grandparents caring for grandchildren* is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a grandparent who is financially responsible for food, shelter, clothing, day care, etc. for any or all grandchildren under 18 years old living in the household.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Grandparents can provide continuity and family support for children in vulnerable families. Children may be in grandparent care because they have a parent who is unemployed, abusive, neglectful, incarcerated, ill, or has a substance abuse problem.<sup>1</sup>

Grandparent caregivers are at risk of living in poverty since many have fixed incomes. In fact, grandparent caregivers are more likely to live in poverty than other grandparents.<sup>2</sup>

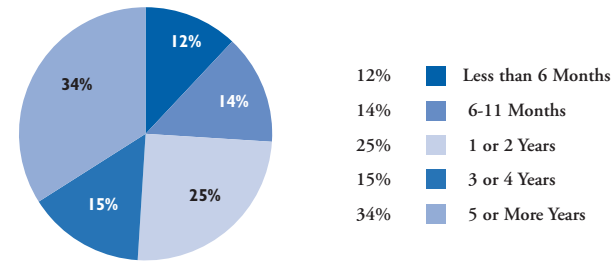
Often, grandparent caregivers do not receive the support or services that they need and for which they are eligible. Nearly all grandparent caregivers are eligible for either foster care payments or child-only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) payments, as well as Medicaid for the children in their care, but few receive this assistance.<sup>3</sup> In 1999 in the U.S., 29% of children in grandparent care received

foster care or TANF payments and 47% received Medicaid.<sup>4</sup>

Grandparent caregivers are at risk for poor physical and mental health.<sup>5</sup> They may face legal barriers when enrolling children in school, or when seeking health insurance or medical care for the children.<sup>6</sup> Grandparents make up the largest percentage of relative caregivers, but other relative caregivers, including aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings, may face similar obstacles.<sup>7</sup>

The majority of children in relative care are in private care, meaning that they have not been involved with a child welfare agency. For this reason, relative caregivers receive less training, information, and supervision than licensed non-kin foster parents.<sup>8</sup> Studies indicate that kinship caregivers are more likely to be poor, single, older, and have less education than non-kin foster parents.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, kinship caregivers may require more services than non-kin foster parents. Children in relative care are less likely to obtain permanent status such as adoption or guardianship; many relatives do not receive guidance on these issues.<sup>10</sup>

  
**Rhode Island Grandparents Financially Responsible for Their Grandchildren, by Length of Time Responsible, 2000**



*n* = 5,060

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

- ◆ In Rhode Island, the 5,060 grandparents financially responsible for their grandchildren make up 4% of all family households with children. Nationwide, grandparents financially responsible for their grandchildren make up 7% of family households with children.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Nearly half (49%) of Rhode Island grandparents who are financially responsible for their grandchildren have been responsible for the children for three or more years.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ Grandparent caregivers account for 30% of grandparents living with their grandchildren in Rhode Island. In 2000, there were 16,957 grandparents living in households with their grandchildren under the age of 18. This is 14% of all family households with children in the state. Nationwide, grandparents living with grandchildren make up 17% of family households with children.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Rhode Island regulations state that the Department of Children, Youth and Families must give priority to kin when placing a child in out-of-home care.<sup>14</sup> In April 2002, 21% of Rhode Island's children in out-of-home placements were with kin.<sup>15</sup> This is the highest percentage of kinship placements in New England.<sup>16</sup>

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Table 3.

Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren, Rhode Island, 2000

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	GRANDPARENTS IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH THEIR GRANDCHILDREN UNDER AGE 18		GRANDPARENTS FINANCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR GRANDCHILDREN UNDER AGE 18	
		NUMBER	% OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN	NUMBER	% OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN
Barrington	2,421	176	7%	59	2%
Bristol	2,345	373	16%	88	4%
Burrville	2,037	175	9%	53	3%
Central Falls	2,607	313	12%	81	3%
Charlestown	899	126	14%	49	5%
Coventry	4,375	569	13%	89	2%
Cranston	8,873	1,283	14%	386	4%
Cumberland	4,049	614	15%	149	4%
East Greenwich	1,796	72	4%	27	2%
East Providence	5,562	839	15%	189	3%
Exeter	792	135	17%	79	10%
Foster	553	79	14%	0	0%
Glocester	1,351	115	9%	20	1%
Hopkinton	1,043	124	12%	29	3%
Jamestown	667	66	10%	0	0%
Johnston	3,113	491	16%	165	5%
Lincoln	2,691	333	12%	71	3%
Little Compton	409	29	7%	0	0%
Middletown	2,300	178	8%	54	2%
Narregansett	1,506	206	14%	69	5%
New Shoreham	101	7	7%	2	2%
Newport	2,643	309	12%	137	5%
North Kingstown	3,630	305	8%	92	3%
North Providence	3,214	796	25%	195	6%
North Smithfield	1,226	258	21%	118	10%
Pawtucket	9,179	1,264	14%	317	3%
Portsmouth	2,225	211	9%	70	3%
Providence	20,174	3,322	16%	1,219	6%
Richmond	1,019	117	11%	44	4%
Scituate	1,367	172	13%	29	2%
Smithfield	2,133	349	16%	69	3%
South Kingstown	3,155	320	10%	95	3%
Tiverton	1,797	290	16%	109	6%
Warren	1,290	204	16%	75	6%
Warwick	9,731	1,389	14%	376	4%
West Greenwich	746	56	8%	0	0%
West Warwick	3,496	344	10%	71	2%
Westerly	2,790	268	10%	120	4%
Woonsocket	5,532	680	12%	265	5%
Core Cities	43,631	6,232	14%	2,090	5%
Remainder of State	81,236	10,725	13%	2,970	4%
Rhode Island	124,867	16,957	14%	5,060	4%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

## References

- <sup>1,2</sup> United States Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services web-site: [www.aoa.dhhs.gov/Factsheets/grandparents.html](http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/Factsheets/grandparents.html). (February 2001).
- <sup>3</sup> Geen, R. et al. (September 2001). *On Their Own Terms: Supporting Kinship Care Outside of TANF and Foster Care*. Washington, DC: The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>4</sup> Andrews, C. et al. (August 2003). *Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Children in Grandparent Care*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- <sup>5</sup> Burnette, D. (2000). *Grandparents as Family Caregivers*. Retrieved October 30, 2003, from <http://aging.state.ny.us/explore/project2015/artgrandparents.htm>.
- <sup>6</sup> Children's Defense Fund web-site: [www.childrensdefense.org/ss\\_kin\\_overview.php](http://www.childrensdefense.org/ss_kin_overview.php). (October 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> *Children in Kinship Care*. (October 2003). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- <sup>8</sup> Gordon, A. et al. (2003). A First Look at the Need for Enhanced Support Services for Kinship Caregivers. *Child Welfare, Journal of Policy, Practice and Program*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.
- <sup>9</sup> Geen, R. (April 2003). *Foster Children Placed with Relatives Often Receive Less Government Help*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- <sup>10</sup> Child Welfare League of America web-site: [www.cwla.org/programs/kinship/kinshipaboutpage.htm](http://www.cwla.org/programs/kinship/kinshipaboutpage.htm) (December 2003).
- <sup>11,12,13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3.
- <sup>14,15,16</sup> *Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children*. (August 2002). Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.