Across the country, more than six million children -- approximately 1 in 12 children -- are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. Indiana has more than 100,000 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 Indiana 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 Indiana

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Grandparents Living in Households with One or More Own Grandchildren Under 18</th>
<th>Grandparents Responsible for Meeting the Basic Needs of Grandchildren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>5,771,671</td>
<td>2,426,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>96,169</td>
<td>48,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis city</td>
<td>15,152</td>
<td>8,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Wayne city</td>
<td>3,483</td>
<td>1,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary city</td>
<td>4,679</td>
<td>2,408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kinship Care Initiatives in Indiana

In Indiana, 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.

One major kinship care program is 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, or search AARP’s online kinship care support group database at http://www.aarp.org/grandparents/searchsupport/.


Statewide Partnership for Kinship Care Families: The Indiana Bureau of Aging and In-Home Services and the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service established The Relatives as Parents (RAPP) State Initiative Program. The program, funded by the Brookdale Foundation, initiated several kinship care support groups across the state. It also formed the RAPP Steering Committee with representatives from more than 39 state and local service providers and agencies.

In partnership with the University of Wisconsin Extension, Purdue Extension co-developed two national videoconferences on grandparents raising grandchildren, both of which included local sites in Indiana. Contact: Carole Surratt-Bradley, Indiana Bureau of Aging and In-Home Services, at 1-800-545-7763 or csurratt-bradley@fssa.state.in.us or Dr. Dena Targ, Purdue Extension, at (765) 494-2937 or targd@cfs.purdue.edu.

Kinship Care and Indiana’s Foster Care System

Sometimes children in the care of the states are placed in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. In Indiana, the Family and Social Services Administration reports:

Number of children in kinship foster placements: As of June 2000, there were 11,305 children in out-of-home placements. Of these children, 1,345 children (13%) 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 Administration’s care.

Licensing for kinship foster parents: There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.

Assisted 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. Indiana has an Assisted Guardianship Program for children under the Administration’s supervision who have been placed with a relative who assumes legal guardianship of the child. The program is generally available to eligible children over the age of 13. The relative seeking legal guardianship must also meet certain requirements (including the ability to provide for all the child’s needs except for the financial and medical subsidy). (Ind. Admin. Code Title 470 r.3-10-5). Contact: Stephanie Beasley-Fehrman, Indiana Family and Social Services
**Other Supports for Indiana Kinship Care Families**

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 Indiana’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). 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 (317) 232-4919 or log on to [http://www.in.gov/fssa/families/tanf/index.html](http://www.in.gov/fssa/families/tanf/index.html).

- **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 Indiana’s Hoosier Healthwise program. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for these programs, call 1-800-889-9949 or log on to [http://www.in.gov/fssa/healthcare/](http://www.in.gov/fssa/healthcare/).

**State Laws and Policies**

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 laws may be helpful to kinship caregivers:

- **Educational Consent (Ind. Code § 20-8.1-6.1-1):** This law states that a caregiver may enroll a child in school without being the child’s legal guardian. The caregiver must provide proof that the child is supported by, cared for by, and living with the caregiver. The caregiver also must sign a “Custodial Agreement Form” indicating that he or she is responsible for the child.

- **Medical Consent (Ind. Code § 16-36-1-5):** This law states that a person acting in place of a parent may consent to health care on behalf of a child if no guardian has been appointed for health care purposes or the guardian is unavailable, refuses to act, or is unknown to the health care provider.

- **“De Facto” Custody (Ind. Code § 31-9-2-35.5 et seq.):** This law applies to a grandparent or other relative who has been the primary caregiver of a child for six months (if the child is under three years old) or 12 months (if the child is over three years old). Grandparents and other relatives raising children who meet these criteria shall be entitled to apply for custody and may be awarded custody if a judge deems that to be in the best interest of the child.

**Questions about this fact sheet or recommendations for additions to future versions should be submitted to Amy Goyer, AARP Grandparent Information Center, at (202) 434-2296 or gic@aarp.org.**

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