

“Relatives as Parents” Resource Guide for Tompkins County

2004

Although this guide often refers to “grandparents raising grandchildren,” it is designed to help any older person who has assumed the role of parenting the child of a relative.

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Special Thanks to

Tompkins County Office for the Aging, Caregiver Resource Center

For editing and publishing this guide.

Family Service of Westchester

For developing the model resource guide from which this guide was adapted. Their funding was provided by the IBM Fund for Dependent Care Initiatives.

Gerald Wallace, Esq.

For his generosity and editing expertise.

The New York State Office for the Aging

For technical assistance in the production of this resource guide.

The Institute on Law & Rights of Older Adults

Brookdale Center on Aging of Hunter College

For their contributions to the legal section of this guide.

I. Introduction

In the United States, nearly a million grandparents are responsible for the day-to-day care of over 1.5 million grandchildren without help from the children's parents. According to the last census, four percent of Caucasian children, six percent of Hispanic children, and twelve percent of African-American children live with their grandparents.



Grandparents come to caring for their grandchildren for a variety of reasons, most of which revolve around issues related to the child's parent(s). Increasing numbers of grandparents are providing permanent care to their grandchildren as a result of divorce, substance abuse, child abuse, neglect or abandonment, incarceration, death, physical and mental health problems, and teenage pregnancy. Clearly, the reasons are varied, but all result in a great deal of responsibility for the grandparent who is left to take on the task of parenting.

Parenting the second time around, as it is often called, has been found to have its ups and downs. Some grandparents have said that raising small children at this stage in life can be "youthening" or that it's "like being given another shot at life." Of course, there are also many challenges. Often times, grandparents feel that their dreams of relaxation and freedom from work are destroyed. Furthermore, grandparents find that having young children around the house means that they no longer fit in with friends their own age who no longer have children at home. They often feel resentment for being thrust into such situations. These grandparents may also feel guilty because they think they have failed their own children.

Additionally, grandparents who are raising grandchildren are faced with a myriad of legal, financial, educational, healthcare, and child-rearing questions. Given the weighty decision-making and child-rearing responsibilities of these grandparents, linkage with community resources can be a valuable component to successful second-time parenting. In preparing and offering this resource manual, we hope to provide adequate information that will help steer grandparents, third party caregivers, and social service providers to available resources.

Please note that a monthly **Grandparents' Support Group** meets at Family and Children's Service, which provides an ongoing opportunity for grandparents to help one another with the stresses of caring for their grandchildren. Call 273-7494 or see their website, <http://www.fcsith.org>

II. The Issues

A. Legal Options For Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

In New York State there are several legal options for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren: Informal or Legal Custody, Kinship Foster Care, Guardianship, Standby Guardianship, and Adoption. This section of the guide will help answer your questions about which arrangement is best for your grandchild and will also refer you to useful resources for additional legal questions.

1. Custody

In general, there are two types of custody: **legal custody** is ordered by the courts, while **informal custody** does not involve the courts. Both types of custody mean the custodian has physical custody of a child.

In **informal custody** arrangements, the grandparents have few legal rights to make decisions for their grandchild. The grandchild's parents maintain the right to make decisions about the child's medical and educational needs, the right to visit the child, and the right to take the child away from a grandparent who has informal custody. There is no court order needed for informal custody.

Legal custody exists when a judge awards a grandparent the legal right to care for the child. A grandparent should seek legal custody when he/she wants clear legal authority to care for the child, but does not necessarily want permanent responsibility for the child. It is important to note that **legal custody is not permanent and can be changed**. Also, a judge may limit the authority of a custodian or award a joint custody with a parent. A grandparent who wants legal custody must get the parents' consent or go to court and prove to the judge that the parents are not able to care for the child.

Not all grandparents will need a lawyer's help to apply for legal custody of a grandchild. If the child's parents agree that you should get custody, you can usually make out a simple petition form at your local family court. However, if the parents do not agree that you should get custody, you will have to show the court that there are **extraordinary circumstances** that make it necessary for the court to decide whether to remove the child from the parents' custody and give you custody of your grandchild. **Extraordinary circumstances** is a legal term. It includes abandonment, persistent neglect, unfitness, abuse, and other extraordinary circumstances like an extended disruption of parental custody. The parents will have the right to a lawyer, and a lawyer (called a law guardian) may also be appointed to represent your grandchild in order to determine which legal arrangement is in the **best interests of the child**.

For residents of Tompkins County, petitions for legal custody are filed in the Tompkins County Family Court. (See Appendix C for a listing of the address and telephone number for the Tompkins County Family Court).

2. Guardianship

Guardianship is a legal arrangement granted to you by a court giving you the legal right to act on behalf of your grandchild when the child's parents are not able to care for the child. In New York State, there are two types of guardianship: guardianship of the person where the guardian has the legal right to make all daily decisions concerning a grandchild including his/her education, medical care, and where he/she will live; or guardianship of the property whereby the guardian is placed in charge of the grandchild's property and finances.

Generally speaking, guardianship and legal custody are very similar. However, there are some differences. **Guardians** usually have the authority to:

- **make medical decisions** on behalf of the child; and
- **designate a successor guardian** (See Section A.3) who can take care of the child in the event the guardian is not able to do so; and
- **add a grandchild to some insurance plans.**

Those with **legal custody** may have more limited authority:

- they may not always make medical decisions for the child;
- they cannot designate another person as standby guardian; and
- they usually cannot add the child to their insurance plans.

Some of the benefits of a guardianship are that the child's parents can no longer make decisions for the child and they cannot take your grandchild away from you at any time unless a court ends your guardianship.

However, the responsibility and rights of the parents do not end if you become the guardian of your grandchild. The parents are still responsible for the financial support of your grandchild and, if the court orders, they may also be allowed to visit their child and, as in legal custody, the parent may still have a right to raise their child if they become fit.

You may want to be appointed guardian of your grandchild if:

- the parents of the grandchild are dead;
- you are having trouble getting necessary medical care for the child and
- do not know where the child's parents are; or
- the child's parents are abusing the grandchild, are in jail or are
- otherwise not able to care for the child.

Both Family Court and Surrogate's Court may appoint a guardian. It is recommended that interested parties call the Family Court first before going to file a petition to get more information on how to proceed (See Appendix C. for a listing of telephone numbers and addresses.)

3. Standby Guardianship

New York, like some other states, has a standby guardian statute which allows a parent or legal guardian to choose another person who is standing by, ready to become the guardian when the parent or guardian becomes incapacitated, debilitated or dies.

The Standby Guardianship statute, Surrogate's Court Procedure Act S. 1726, has two very different ways to name a successor guardian:

Option One: If a parent or legal guardian is chronically ill or dying, they can go to court with the person chosen to be the standby guardian and ask the court to appoint or name that person as the standby guardian. Upon incapacity or death, the standby guardian becomes an active guardian, but he/she **must go to court within ninety days for confirmation of the appointment.**

When a parent or legal guardian goes to court to have the court appoint the standby guardian, they make sure that the person chosen as standby guardian will be appointed by the court to act as the child's guardian when the parent or legal guardian dies or is no longer able to take care of the child, but they do not give up their current exclusive right to make decisions for the child.

Contact the Tompkins Family County Court for information on petitions for standby guardianship.

In some instances you will be referred to the **Surrogate's Court** for filing a petition.

(See Appendix C.)



Option Two: Any parent or guardian can designate or choose a standby guardian by writing and signing a document in front of two witnesses who are at least 18 years old that states:

- the name of the parent or legal guardian;
- the name, address, and telephone number of the proposed standby guardian;
- whether the authority of the standby guardian will be to make decisions for the daily needs of the child, the child's finances and property, or both; and
- whether the authority or the power of the standby guardian should begin when the parent or guardian becomes debilitated, incapacitated, or dies.

When a parent or legal guardian designates a standby guardian in writing, they are recommending a person to be the child's guardian. If the court agrees, the court will appoint or name that person as the child's guardian. When a parent or guardian makes such a designation they do not give up their current exclusive right to make decisions for the child.

4. Foster Care

Children who are abused or neglected by their parents may be placed in the legal custody of the State Commissioner of Social Services after a court has decided that the children cannot be properly cared for by their parents. Children who are removed from their homes are placed in a foster family home, a group home, a child care institution, a health care facility or with relatives.

The goal of foster care is to find a permanent home for the child. The Commissioner of Social Services, through the child welfare agency, will try first to reunite the parent and child. If this cannot happen, the agency may go to court to request that the rights of the parent be terminated so that a permanent home can be found for the child. The agency will then want to find a home for the child with people who will want to adopt the child

If your son or daughter is being investigated for abuse and neglect, the Family Court will want to know whether there are suitable relatives like you available to take care of the child. Your son or daughter can tell the court that you are available to care for the child; and you should go to court and let the court know that you are available to take care of your grandchild.

5. Kinship Foster Care

When there is an abuse or neglect proceeding or when a parent places a child in foster care voluntarily, New York State's Social Service Law requires that the Commissioner of Social Services or the child welfare agency look for relatives to become foster parents.

Kinship foster care is foster care given by a **grandparent or another relative** of a child until the parent and child are reunited or until a permanent home is found for the child.

A kinship foster care parent has temporary physical custody of the child, **not legal custody**. Legal custody of that child remains with the state or agency acting for the state. This means that the kinship foster care parent takes care of the child's daily needs but **cannot make any major decisions regarding the child** without first obtaining the consent of the agency that acts for the state.

An advantage to kinship foster care is that you may be able to receive kinship foster care payments to assist you with the care of your grandchild if your grandchild is placed with you. These payments are considerably more than other forms of government assistance. Some grandparents choose not to become kinship foster parents because they prefer to take care of the child without the state agency's supervision and interference in their home since the state agency's continuing custody of the child means the grandparents cannot make major decisions regarding the grandchild without approval of the state agency. The law regarding kinship foster care is changing rapidly because of the need to place foster children in permanent homes, so it is necessary to check if the law has changed.

If grandparents do not become a foster home, they may still be able to receive public assistance support for the child *without regard to their income*. The amount will be less than the foster care rate.

6. Adoption

Adoption is a permanent legal arrangement granted by a court. In adoption, the rights of the child's natural parents are terminated and the adoptive parent obtains all the parental rights and responsibilities of the original parents. Once you have adopted a grandchild, you will be the child's legal "parent" and the child's birth parents will no longer have any rights to the child.

If you adopt your grandchild, you will be financially responsible for the care, education and support of your grandchild. Adoption subsidies are available to children in foster care who are adopted and have special needs, such as children who are hard to place in an adoptive home or children who are disabled. Another special feature to adoption of foster care children is the chance for the natural parents to make an agreement with the adopting parents for continuing contact with the child.

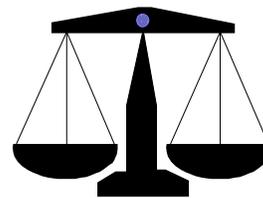
In New York State, adoption is sought at the Family Court in the jurisdiction where the grandchild resides. **For residents of Tompkins County, all adoption petitions must be filed at the Tompkins County Family Court in Ithaca** (See Appendix C. for the telephone number and address of this court).

7. Legal Assistance

Although it is not always necessary to get an attorney, **it would be beneficial to speak with an attorney about whether it is better to file for guardianship, custody, or adoption**. Following are some lawyer referral services that may be able to help locate an appropriate attorney for you.

In Tompkins County:

- Cornell Legal Aid sometimes assists residents of Tompkins County with custody and guardianship court cases. Intake is done only at the beginning of the semesters (September and January). Call (607) 255-5196.
- The New York State Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service at 1-800-342-3661 provides free referral information on attorneys who specialize in family law and have experience with grandparents raising grandchildren. No more than \$25.00 will be charged as a consultation fee by the attorney for the first 30 minutes. Fees for any additional time spent with the attorney are set by the individual attorney.
- The Community Dispute Resolution Center (CDRC) in Ithaca offers mediation sessions to help parties resolve disputes and work out voluntary custody and visitation agreements. Call 273-9347.



8. PINS Supervision

PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) provides court-ordered intervention and services for children under the age of sixteen who are habitually engaged in conduct which, while not necessarily criminal, demonstrates that the child is incorrigible, ungovernable or habitually disobedient and beyond the lawful control of a parent or other lawful authority. For more information, in Tompkins County call the Probation Department at 273-5380 and ask for the Intake Officer.

9. Grandparent Visitation

Legal Visitation is not a form of custody, but it is an important issue when the custody of a child changes. Nearly every state has some kind of grandparent visitation statute. They do not give grandparents the legal right to visit the child, but to *petition* for visitation. The court then decides on the merits of the case.

- *Who May Petition.* Most states only allow grandparents to petition for visitation, however, New York extends the privilege to siblings and other relatives and sometimes even friends with whom the child has had an important relationship. The Court will decide based on the well-being of the child.
- *Know the Law.* Visitation laws vary by state. Since 1966, New York has given statutory right for grandparents to seek visitation in Family Court or at the time of divorce or certain other matrimonial actions. Grandparents (and others) may obtain visitation rights even though their child is not deceased and the nuclear family is intact. If they have had a meaningful relationship in the past with the child, the court usually awards visitation. For a further commentary on NY law, refer to Law and the Family New York, Joel Brandes, Vol. 4 (Child Custody), pp. 91, 1997.
- *Consider Alternatives to Legal Action.* Litigation is expensive, time-consuming, and can damage already fragile family relationships. Once a lawsuit starts, people cling to their own side of the story and stop listening. Would family counseling address the parent's unwillingness to allow visitation? Also, consider mediation services available through Community Dispute Resolution Center (CDRC) in Ithaca. Call 273-9347 for details.
- *Take Heart.* Although the law once gave complete weight to the rights of the parents, public opinion concerning the rights and well-being of the child has influenced the courts. Increasingly, courts are realizing that a child's well-being may involve a stable relationship with grandparents and others relatives.

(Note: A more comprehensive guide to legal issues in New York written expressly for grandparents raising grandchildren can be downloaded for free from the Brookdale Foundation web site: Title: Help for Grandparent Caregivers: <http://www.brookdale.org/gpc/index.html>.)

A. Finances: *Programs Available to You and Your Grandchild*

1. Financial Assistance

One possible consequence of a grandparent raising a grandchild is a change for the worse in the grandparent's financial situation. There are a number of government programs that provide financial assistance for low income and/or financially needy children. These include:



- a. **Family Assistance (formerly known as AFDC)** is cash assistance for needy children and their families to help pay for basic needs like food, clothing, and rent. Eligibility is based on the number of people in the family unit, family income and assets. This program applies to any close family member who cares for low-income children.
- **Child Only Grants.** Unfortunately, complex eligibility rules coupled with a difficult application process sometimes keep eligible grandchildren from receiving Family Assistance benefits that they are eligible for. For example, grandparents should be aware that their income does not count in determining eligibility unless they are applying for **Family Assistance** with their grandchild or if they have adopted their grandchild. You may apply for a **Child Only** grant in which you would be considered a "non-needy caretaker."
- **Family Assistance with Grandchild.** If you also meet the criteria for welfare benefits, you may apply with your grandchild as a family unit. In this case, your income and assets will be counted in determining eligibility. Recipients of Family Assistance are required to participate in work activities, job training or community work experience as a condition for receiving cash assistance. There are certain categories that are exempt from the work requirement. These would include anyone over the age of 60.

It is important to know that the New York State Welfare Reform Act of 1997 has imposed a cumulative five-year time limit on Family Assistance benefits. At this point, the time limit does not apply to Child Only grants in New York.

All Family Assistance recipients are automatically eligible for Medicaid. For more information, see section C.1.a in this guide.

b. Food Stamps are checks or coupons that can be used in the grocery store like money. Food Stamp eligibility is based on the income of everyone in a household. For instance, if a grandchild is income eligible for Family Assistance but the grandparent does not qualify, it is unlikely that the family unit would be eligible for Food Stamps.

c. Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a nutrition education and supplemental food program for low-income

mothers, infants, and children who are at health risk. In New York State children from birth to five years of age are eligible. Re-certification is required every 6 months and is based on income and residency. Grandparents are not eligible for these benefits but grandchildren may qualify. The income standard for WIC is higher than that for Food Stamps, Medicaid, or TANF. If you are not eligible for any of these programs you may still be eligible for WIC. To apply, contact the WIC office listed in Appendix B. It is recommended that you make an appointment first.

d. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is cash assistance and health care services for children who are poor, blind or disabled. For information call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213.

e. Social Security Benefits are monthly cash benefits for unmarried children under the age of 18 (or full-time students under 19 and older disabled children) whose parents have died. The parent in question must have worked, paid Social Security taxes, and earned enough credits to generate benefits. Application should be made to the Social Security office located at 171 E. State Street in Tompkins County (256-3651). You will need original documents or certified copies of the child's Social Security card and birth certificate, the parent's Social Security number, the parent's death certificate, and the deceased parent's W-2 forms or Federal tax return (if self employed) for the most recent year.

2. Tax Benefits

In addition to financial assistance, there are also certain **Tax Benefits** for which grandparents raising their grandchildren may be eligible. Since some of the following benefits have names that sound similar, be sure you read their descriptions carefully.

a. The Child Tax Credit of \$500.00 for each child under the age of 17 can be claimed by grandparents, foster parents, and step parents for children that are otherwise claimed as dependents when filing income tax. This is used only to offset your tax and is not refundable to those who pay no income tax.

b. The Dependent Care Tax Credit is a benefit for *working* people with children who pay for someone else to care for the children while they are working. In a single parent family, the single parent must be working. In a two-parent family, both parents must be working. In order to qualify, the child must be either less than 13 years old or older than 12 and physically or emotionally unable to care for themselves. The child must have a social security or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number and must live with the parents or grandparents. Credit is based on the cost of the child care. For one child the maximum is \$2,400 per year and for two or more children, the maximum is \$4,800 per year. The parent must provide the child care provider's social security or ID number, the name of their organization and the address.

c. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC) is a special benefit for low and moderate income *working* people including grandparents who are raising children.

The EIC program provides working grandparents with additional income because they are raising a grandchild who resides with them. EIC is a *tax credit program* that is administered by the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It differs from other tax credits because it provides grandparents with a cash payment (in the form of a check) even if they do not owe any taxes. In most cases, the EIC does not affect eligibility for benefits like TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, SSI or public or subsidized housing. The only way for you to get the EIC is to file an income tax return with Form 1040A or 1040 and fill out and attach Schedule EIC. You can file an income tax return even if you have low or no income. For more information you may call the IRS and ask for Publication 596.

d. Employee Dependent Care Accounts. A growing number of employers allow employees to have up to \$5,000 a year in pretax dollars taken directly from their paycheck. This is known as a **Dependent Care Account**. The money is then used to reimburse expenses for child care or elder care. Grandparents should be aware that money in the plan that is not used can be lost, so be sure you know exactly how much to have deducted.

e. Free Tax Information and help completing the necessary forms is available to grandparents. You can call the IRS office at 1-800-829-3676 for forms. You can also call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 for further information and help in preparing forms.

Additionally, the **RSVP Tax Aide Program** with its local sites that operate from February 1st to April 15th can help you complete the appropriate forms. You can contact the RSVP Tax Aide Program at 277-4545 to find the site location nearest you.



C. Your Grandchild's Health Care

1. Health Insurance Coverage

Grandparent caregivers may find it difficult to find health insurance coverage for their grandchildren. Grandparents in the paid work force that have employer-provided group insurance still run into problems because employer provided group health insurance is generally unavailable for children in kinship care arrangements. Sometimes the policy does provide coverage even for legal custodians so you will need to insist that the insurance company find out for sure what coverage you have.

Grandparents who are retired and on Medicare are either forced to buy an individual policy or to try and qualify their grandchild for State Medical Assistance.

a. Medicaid

In New York State the medical assistance program is called Medicaid. It is a program funded by the state and federal governments which helps people who are receiving public assistance and/or have a low income pay for doctor and hospital bills and some medication. **You may apply for Medicaid on your grandchild's behalf at the Social Service Office in the county where your grandchild resides** (Appendix A is a listing of Social Service Offices in Tompkins County). **Make sure you apply and sign the application form as soon as you realize you need Medical Assistance because payment for medical expenses can only go back 3 months from date of application.**

- **Eligibility**

Federal law requires states to provide Medical Assistance benefits to individuals who receive Family Assistance (formerly AFDC) grants or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and children in foster care.

Note: Even if you have grandchildren in your care who, for any reason, are not eligible for Family Assistance or SSI, you should still apply for Medicaid on their behalf by going to your local Social Service Office (See Appendix A).

- **Medicaid Managed Care Plans**

If your grandchild or yourself are granted Medicaid benefits, you can choose to enroll in a Medicaid Managed Care program. Medicaid Managed Care offers Medicaid recipients a chance to select a health plan. Managed Care plans focus on preventive health care and provide enrollees with a “medical home”.

For any questions about Medicaid Managed Care, you can call the Tompkins County Social Services Managed Care Unit at (607) 274-5667.

b. Child Health Plus

New York State offers free or low-cost health insurance for children up to age 19 called Child Health Plus. Even if your family income is high, you can enroll your grandchild in the program (although you will have to pay more for your coverage). The fees for Child Health Plus are based on family size and income. For example, a family of four with annual gross income of \$40,000 would pay \$108 per child per year. The same family making \$45,000 per year would pay \$180 per child per year. If the family made \$30,000 or less per year, it would cost them nothing to insure their children.

Excellus (formerly Blue Cross/Blue Shield) provides Child Health Plus coverage to families in Tompkins County.

You may call Excellus directly to request an application, (800) 282-0068, or you may contact one of the following organizations for assistance in enrolling:

Catholic Charities: (607) 272-5062, ext. 20

Mothers and Babes Perinatal Network: (800) 231-0744



2. Medical Consent

Under New York State law, **only parents or legal guardians** can give consent for the medical, dental, health and hospital care of a child under age 18. Generally, grandparents do not automatically have the legal right to consent to necessary medical care on behalf of a grandchild in their care. However, many medical providers let grandparents consent to care even though medical providers do not have a legal obligation to honor their consent. A statement from you, the parent, or from a social worker that shows your relationship to your grandchild may help you get medical care for your grandchild.

New York State law does allow **grandparents** and older sisters and brothers to **consent to a young child's immunizations**.

In case of an emergency, take your grandchild to the emergency room of a hospital. You do not need legal guardianship of your grandchild to get emergency medical treatment for your grandchild. In an emergency, the doctor will decide whether the child needs immediate medical attention. If there is not time to get consent from the parent and the life and health of your grandchild would be in danger if the child does not get medical treatment, then the doctor can treat the child without the parents' permission.

If a grandparent is having difficulty obtaining medical care, legal guardianship may be necessary. See p. 5 in this guide to find how to file a petition for guardianship. In some cases a lawyer should be contacted. For free referral information on attorneys who specialize in grandparents raising grandchildren, call: Lawyer Referral Service (*see p. 8*).

3. Children's Health Care Services

In addition to your grandchild's pediatrician or family physician, the Tompkins County Health Department offers many low and no cost health services for children residing in Tompkins County. (See Appendix B for a listing of Health Department Offices.).



The following services are offered by the Tompkins County Health Department:

a. Maternal Child Health

The Maternal Child Unit at the Health Department offers health assessments, health teaching and clinic services to women, infants and children residing in Tompkins County

- **MOMS (Medicaid Obstetric and Material Services)** assists pregnant women with accessing medical care. Trained health professionals act as the pregnant woman's authorized representative in the Medicaid application process. Additional service provided include nutrition assessment and counseling, psychological assessment and counseling, health education, HIV counseling and testing, mechanisms to retain the pregnant woman in care, assistance with transportation needs and referrals for other services such as income support, housing, child care and substance abuse treatment services.
- The **Home Visiting Program** provides home visits to pregnant women (all ages), new mothers and babies, small children, and children with medical diagnoses needing nursing assessments and/or health teaching. Home visits are billed to the client's insurance or Medicaid. The family is **not** billed for home visits. Grandparents raising grandchildren can call 274-6604 and speak to a Community Health Nurse for guidance regarding health issues or available community services.
- **The Immunization Clinic** provides **free childhood immunizations** to infants, children and adolescents under 19 years of age which protect against the following diseases: Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (Whooping cough), Haemophilus Influenza type b (Hib), Hepatitis B, Measles, Mumps, and Rubella. (See page 17 of this guide for a chart on immunization scheduling). **Walk-in immunization clinics** (no appointment necessary) are available at the Tompkins County Public Library (1st Tuesday every month, 4:30-6:30 PM), the Tompkins County Health Department (3rd Tuesday every month, 4:30-6:30 PM) and Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) (4th Tuesday, four times a year, 3:00-5:00 PM). Call 274-6616 for more clinic information.
- **Influenza and Pneumococcal Clinics** provide influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations to eligible persons (especially those 65 and older and chronically ill children and adults). For more information on clinic sites, call 274-6616.

b. Services for Children with Disabilities

The ChildFind Program is the primary referral source to the Early Intervention Program for children ages birth up to age three. Through Child Find, children who are suspected or at risk for developmental delay or disability are monitored and screened. The Child Find-Early Intervention staff works closely with your child's primary care provider to monitor your child's developmental progress. If a potentially qualifying disability or delay is identified, your child will be referred to our Early Intervention Program for evaluation.

Early Intervention Program—Upon entering the Early Intervention Program, your child will be evaluated for developmental delay. If your child qualifies, services can be provided for your child in your home free of charge. Services include further evaluation, if needed; vision and hearing, speech, physical and other therapies; child development groups and family counseling. These services are provided to help your child grow and develop, and to help you care for your child. An infant/toddler who qualified will receive Early Intervention services at no cost to the family. To speak with an Early Intervention staff member, please call 274-6644.

The Preschool Education Program (PEP) is available to help parents and guardians of children 3-5 years with special needs to learn about support services and educational options within the community. Preschool children with special needs may be eligible to receive services via their school district which may include: Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Special Education. A preschool child who has been found to have special needs will receive services at no cost to the family. Contact the school district in which you reside for information on obtaining these services.

The Children with Special Health Care Needs Program provides assistance to families of children with special health care needs, birth through age 21, who need help in accessing various health care professionals and other community resources. They will also help you to access appropriate health care coverage such as Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Medicaid. The Family Outreach Worker is a certified social worker who will work one-on-one with families to help meet their needs. To learn more, call (607) 2764-6644.

The Physically Handicapped Children's Program (PHCP) provides financial assistance to families with children, birth to 21 years of age, who have or are suspected of having a chronic and/or disabling medical condition. The program is available to Tompkins County residents who meet the medical and financial criteria. To speak with a PHCP staff member, please call 274-6644.

(*It may also be helpful to contact your local hospitals and inquire about the services they offer in their pediatric clinics and immunization centers.)

4. Tips For Raising Healthy Grandchildren

Immunizations

Immunizations are shots that protect children from many contagious diseases. It is important for your grandchildren to get their shots at the right times in order to prevent them from getting sick with fevers and rashes or diseases that can cause more serious problems such as brain damage, heart problems, crippling, deafness, and blindness. School districts and daycare centers require proof of immunizations before a child can be enrolled. Following is a chart for all major childhood immunizations and the correlating recommended ages for each:

RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE FOR ROUTINE ACTIVE VACCINATION OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN NY State Department of Health, Childhood Immunization Schedule December, 2003

(We were not able to copy the Vaccination Schedule into the electronic version of this guide. To view the guide at the New York State Department of Health, go to:

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/immun/immunization.htm>

Click on “Immunization Schedule and Guidelines” – the “for parents” version.)

Lead Poisoning

Many American children are at risk of lead poisoning. One out of every six American children has too much lead in their blood. The biggest source of lead in the home is lead-based paint used on walls, floors, and radiators in some older homes. Children with high levels of lead in their bodies can suffer from brain damage, hearing loss, or developmental delays.

Guidelines for Keeping Your Grandchildren Safe from Leaded Paint in the Home

- * Let your tap water run for a few minutes in the morning before using it for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula. *Use cold water only.* Hot water or water that has been sitting in the pipes for hours may contain high levels of lead.

- * Look out for any chipping, peeling, or flaking in your apartment or rental house; report it in writing to your landlord and telephone the Tompkins County Health Department 274-6604 to report the flaking of lead-based paint in your home.
- * Store your food and beverages in plastic, glass (*not lead crystal*), or stainless steel containers *only*.
- * Keep cribs and beds away from painted radiators.
- * Wash your grandchild's hands often.



SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant under one year of age. SIDS, sometimes known as crib death, strikes nearly 5,000 babies in the United States every year. Doctors and nurses don't know what causes SIDS, but they have found some things you can do to make your baby safer.

One of the most important things you can do to help reduce the risk of SIDS is to put your healthy baby on his or her back to sleep. Do this when your baby is being put down for a nap or to bed for the night. This is new information since you may have been told that babies sleep on their tummy. Now, doctors and nurses believe that fewer babies will die of SIDS if most infants sleep on their back.

Some babies have health conditions that might require them to sleep on their tummy. If your baby was born with a birth defect, often spits up after eating, or has a breathing, lung or heart problem, be sure to talk to a doctor or nurse about which sleep position to use.

Although back sleeping is the best sleep position, your baby may be placed on his or her side. Side position does not provide as much protection against SIDS as back sleeping, but it is much better than placing your baby on his or her tummy.

Other Things You Can Do To Help Reduce the Risk of SIDS

- * **Bedding** - Make sure that your grandbaby sleeps on a firm mattress or other firm surface. Do not use fluffy blankets or comforters under the baby. Do not let the baby sleep on a waterbed, sheepskin, a pillow, or other soft materials. When your grandchild is very young, do not place soft stuffed toys or pillows in the crib.
- * **Temperature** - Babies should be kept warm, but they should not be allowed to get too warm. Keep the temperature in your baby's room so that it feels comfortable to you.
- * **Smoke-free** - Create a smoke-free zone around your grandbaby. No one should smoke around your grandbaby.
- * **Doctor or Clinic Visits** - If your grandbaby seems sick, call your doctor or health clinic right away. Make sure your grandbaby receives his or her shots on schedule.

If you have any questions about your grandchild's sleep position or health, first talk to your doctor or nurse. For more information, call the New York State SIDS Helpline at 1-800-336-SIDS.

D. Your Grandchild's Education

Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren will need to enroll them in school. Boards of Education determine the guidelines about who can enroll a child in school or see a child's school records. These guidelines vary depending on where the grandchild lives. New York State law says that a parent or person *in parental relation* to the child may enroll a child in school. In New York, a person *in parental relation* includes:

- the child's father or mother
- the child's adopted father or mother
- the child's step-father or step-mother
- the child's court appointed guardian
- the child's custodian

New York State Education Law defines a custodian as a person who does not have a legal relationship to the child but is caring for the child as if he or she is the child's parent because the parent or legal guardian:

- has died or is in prison
- is mentally ill or is in an institution
- has abandoned the child or is absent and has disappeared
- is living outside the state

1. School Enrollment

Schools in New York require that you fill out forms stating that you are the child's grandparent and the reason you are caring for your grandchild. Schools will also request documents that prove where the grandparent and grandchild live. Suitable documentation includes: a utility bill, driver's license, medical insurance card, a letter from the Department of Social Services etc.



Following the above procedure should allow you to enroll your grandchild in school, see your grandchild's school records, and make decisions about your grandchild's education.

Note: You may need to educate your school administrators to help them understand that legal guardianship of your grandchild is not required for you to enroll him or her in school.

2. Special Education Services

Any student with a disability is entitled to receive a "free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment". If you feel that your grandchild has a disability and would benefit from special services you must request this in writing. Send a letter to the Committee on Special Education in your school district or to the principal of your neighborhood school. Your letter should include your reasons for making this request and any details that describe your grandchild's areas of difficulty. Date the letter and keep a copy for your records.

The Committee on Special Education will send you a plan for an evaluation. The evaluation must include a physical examination, an individual psychological evaluation (when necessary), a social history, an observation of the student in the classroom and appropriate educational evaluations and assessments relating to the areas of suspected disability. Once you agree upon the appropriate tests, sign and return the plan.

In New York, the school district has 40 school days from the date of the grandparent's original letter or within 30 school days from receipt of the signed consent to complete the evaluation. Although the Committee on Special Education is responsible for making all the arrangements for the evaluation, you also have the right to bring or send additional information about your grandchild to the Committee. The results of the evaluation are used to determine what your grandchild's individual needs are and **if** your grandchild has a disability.

If the evaluation determines that your grandchild requires special education, the recommendation will:

- identify the disability and describe your grandchild's strengths and areas of need,
- list goals that your grandchild should reach in a year's time,
- include short-term instructional objectives to be mastered or major accomplishments to be gained that will lead toward reaching the annual goals,
- and identify the types of programs and services that your grandchild will receive.

All of this information will be included on your grandchild's Individualized Education Program (**IEP**). You will be set a copy of the IEP and as your grandchild's guardian, you must approve it. Read it carefully to make sure it does what it is meant to do. Consider the following. Does the IEP cover all areas of your grandchild's development including behavior, socialization, communication, self-help, academic and motor skills? Does it state specifically how goals and objectives will be measured? Is it realistic? Does it encourage growth at a reasonable rate? Is it written in language that you can understand and discuss? Once your grandchild has begun the IEP process, he or she will be reviewed annually and reassessed at least every three years.

The needs of many children with disabilities can be met in a public school setting with peers who are not disabled. Alternative programs should be considered only when the student's needs cannot be met within the regular school setting. The success of any student's educational program relies on the active participation of all persons responsible for the student. Your involvement, as a grandparent raising your grandchild, is essential.



E. Child Care For Your Grandchild

The early years are a time of rapid growth and development for your grandchild. There will be new ideas to explore, skills to master and many new people to meet. A good early childhood program should nurture your grandchild's development on all levels.

1. Types of Child Care Available

The following are the types of child care that are available for full time or regular, part time care. For help in finding child care based on your family's individual needs contact the Day Care and Child Development Council listed at the end of this section.

a. Child Care Centers - These are full or part day programs in public or private locations. They include day care centers, Head Start programs (free part day program for income eligible children), nursery schools and before/after school programs. Children are grouped according to age.

b. Family Child Care Homes - Care for children in the home of another family. Children of various ages can be accommodated in a small group setting and flexible hours can be arranged. The number of children allowed in the care of any family child care home is regulated by the state.

c. In-Home Care - This is care in a child's own home by a person hired specifically for that purpose.

d. Summer Day Camps - Camps offer summer activities usually for school-age children. Programs vary from number of hours per day to number of weeks in a session.

2. Choosing Suitable Child Care

Before deciding what type of child care best suits your needs, you should visit several potential programs and/or providers. During your visit, consider the following questions:

- **Do the adults:**

- ...appear warm and friendly?
- ...seem calm and gentle?
- ...hold and touch each child in a caring manner?
- ...have experience working with children?
- ...treat each child as an individual?
- ...share your methods of guiding and controlling behavior?



- **Is there ample opportunity for your child to enjoy:**

- ...good quality picture books?
- ...manipulative toys?
- ...creative materials which a child can use in his/her own way?
- ...active play indoors and outside?

- **Do children:**
 - ...receive individual attention?
 - ...work alone as well as in small groups?
 - ...have a balance between vigorous outdoor play and quiet indoor play?

Now that you've found child care, how can you maintain a good relationship between you and your child care provider?

The most important thing you, as a grandparent, can do to deal with problems that may arise with your caregiver is to work on establishing and maintaining a good relationship. The following are a few suggestions:

- ✓ **Keep your side of the contract.** Pay tuition and fees on time, provide all requested items for your child, and be prompt for pick-up and drop-off time.
- ✓ **Talk things over.** A short talk each day with the provider will be all you need. You might want to mention anything that has happened in your grandchild's life that might be affecting his/her behavior in care.
- ✓ **Consider the caregiver's feelings.** Show the caregiver that you appreciate what she is doing. Don't just wait for problems to arise before you provide feedback to your caregiver.
- ✓ **If you disagree with the caregiver's child care methods** discuss these differences with her. State how you would like things done and reasons for it. Listen to her reasons.

3. Where To Get Help

A community based Child Care Resource and Referral agency can help you find child care based on the individual needs of your family. In Tompkins County, you can call:

The Day Care and Child Development Council: 273-0259

They may also be able to help you determine if you are eligible for financial assistance to help pay for child care or direct you to the agencies that can.

What if you have concerns about your child care program or provider?

In New York State the Department of Social Services maintains a state-wide, toll free Child Complaint Line at 1-800-732-5207 for complaints of possible regulatory violations in a child care program.

To report suspected cases of Child Abuse or Maltreatment in New York State call toll free: 1-800-342-3720.

F. Your Grandchild's Mental Health Needs

Several community agencies have programs to help children and adults who care for them get timely mental health care.

Family and Children's Services (273-1129) is a community mental health center which offers a range of services to families including:

Counseling for youth and adults,

Youth Services,

A Child Crisis Team,

The Zero to Five Project, which services families with young children, and a

Grandparents Support Group, which provides ongoing monthly meetings at which grandparents help one another with the stresses of caring for their grandchildren.



The Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic (274-6200) operates a *Children and Youth Clinic*, a full service mental health clinic serving Tompkins County children and adolescents including psychotherapy, play therapy, medication, assessment and testing and family therapy.

A **listing of Private Psychotherapists** with their specializations can be obtained from the Mental Health Association (273-9250) or viewed at their website: <http://www.mhaedu.org/>

There are Several Other Programs - in addition to the services mentioned above, that support young children and/or adolescents in an effort to prevent emotional and mental health crises or to cope when they occur. **See Appendix D** for a listing of these programs and their sponsors.

III. Suggested Reading for Grandparents & Grandchildren

When someone you love dies or is gone for a long period of time the natural reaction is grief. Anyone old enough to love is old enough to grieve. Even before children are able to talk, they grieve when someone they love dies or is absent. These feelings about death become part of them forever.

How adults respond when someone loved dies has a major effect on the way children react to the death. Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and who are willing to talk openly about the death or prolonged absence of the child's parent will help the children understand that grief is a natural feeling. Children need adults to confirm that it's all right to cry and be sad, and that the hurt they feel now won't last forever.

A child's questions about death need to be answered in language they can understand. Adults shouldn't worry about having all the answers. The most important thing is to answer as best you can and in a caring way.

The following is a list of books for children that deal with losing someone you love and/or being raised by a grandparent:

1. BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

General

Author: Martha Whitmore Hickman
Title: *Robert Lives With His Grandparents: A Concept Book*
Ages: K - 4th grade
Date: 1995

(Robert's parents are divorced and he lives with his grandparents. When his grandmother decides to attend Parents Day at his school, he is afraid of what the other kids will think of him.)

Author: Jeanne Warren Lindsay
Title: *Do I Have a Daddy?*
Ages: Four to Eight
Date: 1991

(This story provides a model for how to respond to children's questions about a parent they have never seen.)

Author: Jennifer Bartoli
Title: *Nonna*
Ages: Four to Seven
Date: 1975

(A boy tells the story of the death of his grandmother, portraying how young children respond to the death of a loved one.)



Author: Norma Simon
Title: *The Saddest Time*
Ages: Four to Eight
Date: 1986

(Losing a loved one is the subject of these three gentle stories.)

Author: Jill Krementz
Title: *How It Feels When a Parent Dies*
Ages: Eight to Thirteen
Date: 1981

(18 children, ages 7 through 16, tell how it feels to lose a parent through death.)

Author: Ruth White
Title: *Belle Prater's Boy*
Ages: Elementary School
Date: 1996

(When Woodrow's mother disappears suddenly, he moves to his grandparents' home in a small Virginia town. He befriends his cousin and together they find the strength to face the terrible losses and fears in their lives.)

Author: Marilyn Sadler
Title: *Zenon: Girl of the 21st century*
Ages: Elementary School
Date: 1996

(Because Zenon creates trouble at her space station home somewhere in the Milky Way, her parents send her to her grandparents' farm on Earth for the summer.)

Author: Tololwa Mollel
Title: *Kele's Secret*
Ages: Elementary School
Date: 1997

(A young African boy who lives with his grandparents on their coffee farm follows their hen in order to find out where she is hiding her eggs.)

Author: Margaret Stevens
Title: *When Grandpa Died*
Ages: Four to Eight
Date: 1979

(A little girl learns to accept the death of her grandfather.)

Author: Donna O'Toole
Title: *Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope*
Ages: All ages
Date: 1988

(An aardvark's delayed grief over the loss of family begins to heal through the support of a caring friend.)

Author: Jill Hastings & Marion Typpo
Title: *An Elephant in the Living Room*
Ages: Seven to Twelve
Date: 1984

(This book helps children from alcoholic homes learn about alcoholism, and teaches new ways to handle feelings.)

Author: Wendy Lichtman
Title: *Blew and the Death of the Mag*
Ages: Ten and up
Date: 1975

(After her mother dies, a young girl explores her feelings of love, fear, anger and understanding.)

Author: Dan Millan
Title: *Secret of the Peaceful Warrior*
Ages: Five to Eleven
Date: 1991

(A young boy who is harassed by the school bully learns that he cannot overcome fear by running away or by becoming a bully himself. This book teaches children how to resolve conflicts peacefully and how to live as "peaceful warriors.")

Divorce

Author: Richard A. Gardner
Title: *The Boys and Girls Book about Divorce, With an Introduction for Parents*
Ages: Pre-Teen through Adolescence
Date: 1992

(A warm reassurance and honest answers to questions frequently asked by children of divorced parents.)

Author: Laurene Krasny Brown, Marc Brown
Title: *Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families*
Ages: Five to Twelve
Date: 1986

(Dinosaur characters depict the range of experiences and feelings encountered by children whose parents have divorced. Simple, direct text and lively pictures encourage young readers to acknowledge and express their own fears and reactions to this experience.)

Author: Brigitte Weninger
Title: *Good-Bye Daddy!*
Ages: Four to Nine
Date: 1995

(After spending the day with his daddy, a young bear is sad and angry that his father has to leave. The bear comes to learn that even when a father has to live in another home, the love and caring never go away.)

Author: Eric Rofes (Editor)
Title: *The Kids' Book of Divorce: By, For and About Kids*
Ages: Grades Four to Eight
Date: 1982

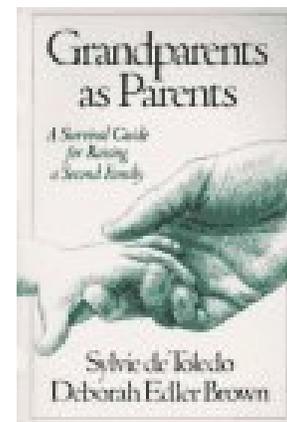
(Twenty school children, fourteen of whose parents are divorced, discuss the various aspects of divorce and give advice on coping with the feelings, fears, and problems caused by divorce and its aftermath.)

2. BOOKS FOR ADULTS

General

Author: Sylvie De Toledo
Title: *Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family*
Date: 1995

(A classic guidebook for any grandparent who is raising a grandchild.)



Author: Sally Hartman
Title: *To Grandma's House, We....Stay*
Date: 1999

(Opinions, advice, guidelines in a way that is humorous and intelligent. A practical guide that reassures families that children nurtured by grandparents can become happy, successful, well-adjusted adults.)

Author: Deborah Doucette-Dudman
Title: *Raising Our Children's Children*
Date: 1997

(The social, legal and emotional issues faced by grandparents as parents, such as custody battles, housing issues, and prior mistreatment of the children.)

Author: Lillian Carson
Title: *The Essential Grandparent: A Guide for Making a Difference*
Date: 1996

(An easily readable book that honors grandparenthood, dispelling grandparenting myths and helping readers develop their own grandparenting strategy.)

Author: Arthur Kornhaber
Title: *Contemporary Grandparenting*
Date: 1996

(A synthesis of current knowledge about grandparents and their role in families and society. Includes a chapter on grandparents raising their grandchildren.)

Author: Eda J. Leshan
Title: *Grandparenting in a Changing World*
Date: 1997

(Insightful, witty advice on such topics as grandparents who remarry, grandchildren who live far away, grandparents raising their grandchildren, and more.)

Author: Katherine Gabel
Title: *Children of Incarcerated Parents*
Date: 1995

Author: Barbara Hermie
Title: *Coping when a Parent Has AIDS*
Date: 1993

Author: John J. La Valle
Title: *Coping when a Parent Is In Jail*
Date: 1995

Author: Jim Fay
Title: *Grandparenting With Love & Logic: Practical Solutions to Today's Grandparenting Challenges*
Date: 1994

Appendix A

Social Service Offices

Tompkins County Department of Social Service Offices

Human Service Building (607) 274-5336 or 274-5337
320 W. State Street Fax: (607) 274-5666
Ithaca, NY 14850 (800) 342-3720 (24-hour Child Abuse Emergency)

Adoptive Services/Foster Home Finding: (607) 274-5259

Child Support Unit: (607) 274-5336

Children's Intake and Protective Services: (607) 274-5321

24 Hour Child Abuse Emergency Number: (800) 342-3720

Families in Crisis: (607) 274-5251 Commissioner's Office
(607) 274-5321 (Children's Intake and Preventive Services)

Services for Adolescents and their Families: 274-5320

Temporary Assistance and Food Stamps: (607) 274-5345 (Information)
(607) 274-5289 or 274-5336 (Appointments)

Appendix B

Health Department and WIC Offices

Tompkins County Health Department

401 Harris B. Dates Drive (607) 274-6674 (Administration)
Ithaca, NY 14850 (607) 274-6680 (Administration Fax)

(Dental Clinic; HIV counseling & Testing; Home Health Nursing Services; Immunization Clinic; Lead Poisoning Testing; Pediatric Treatment Center; Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic; TeenCare; Tuberculosis/Chest Clinic.)

Children with Special Needs: (607) 274-6644

Fees: Insurances are billed. No one denied services

Eligibility: **Infant/Child Health Assessment Program (ICHAP)** and **Early Intervention Program** – birth to age 3

Physically Handicapped Children's Program – under 21 with suspected disability or chronic illness

Immunization Services: (607) 274-6616

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – (607) 274-6630

Supplemental Nutrition Program (Education and Food Vouchers)

Eligibility: Pregnant Women, infants and children up to age 5.

Appendix C

Tompkins County Courthouse

TOMPKINS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850

Family Court: (607) 277-1517
(607) 277-5027 (Fax)

Surrogate Court Clerk: (607) 277-0622



Appendix D

Parenting Programs Offered by Other Local Agencies

For a description of each of these programs and information on how to contact the sponsoring organization,

Call the Information and Referral Service at (607) 272-9331.

Adolescents/Families in Crisis, Hillside/Bridges for Youth and Families
Adolescents/Persons in Need of Supervision, Designated Assessment Service, Probation
Adoptive Services, Family and Children's Service
Babies First Loan Program
Citizen's Coalition for Children, Inc.
Community School, T-S-T BOCES
Career, Family and Life Skills Program, T-S-T BOCES
Day Care Programs, Ithaca and Cortland Franziska Racker Centers
Head Start, Early Childhood Dept., Tompkins Community Action
English as a Second Language, T-S-T BOCES
Even Start Family Literacy Program, T-S-T BOCES
Family/Parenting Education, Parenting Skills Workshop Series, Cooperative Extension
Family Resource Program, Respite Program, Franziska Racker Centers
Family Support Services, Respite Program, Mental Health Association
Farm Families, Farm-Net
Home Services/Service Coordination, Franziska Racker Centers
Mental Health Services, Franziska Racker Centers and Family and Children's Service
One-to-One Program, Youth Bureau, Ithaca
Parent Advocate Program, Parent Advocate Network
Parent-Teen Program, Community Dispute Resolution Center
Substance Abuse Program, T-S-T BOCES
Support Group:Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Family and Children's Service
Teen Pregnancy/Parenting, Day Care and Child Development Council
Working Families Transportation Assistance Program, Department of Social Services

Appendix E

New York State and National Sources of Support

BROOKDALE FOUNDATION

The Brookdale Foundation Group
126 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022

Contact: Kevin Brabazon
212-308-7355

Website: <http://www.brookdalefoundation.org>

The Brookdale Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) offers start-up grants to develop or expand services for grandparents or other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of surrogate parenting.

AARP GRANDPARENT INFORMATION CENTER (GIC)

601 E. St., NW

Washington, DC 20049 (202) 434-2296

This organization provides local support-group referrals to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Available publications include: Parenting Grandchildren: A Voice for Grandparents; Tips for Grandparents: Finding Help Untangling the Web of Public Programs.

CENTER ON CHILDREN AND LAW

American Bar Association

740-15th Street N.W. #200 South

Washington, DC 20005 (202) 662-1720

FOUNDATION FOR GRANDPARENTING

Box 26

Cohasset, MA 02025

Publications include: *Vital Connections* Newsletter. Send a self-addressed business size envelope with 58 cents in postage for a copy of this newsletter.

GENERATIONS UNITED

Suite 310

440 First St. N.W.

Washington, DC 20001-20856 (202) 662-4283

A coalition of over 100 national organizations that deals with intergenerational issues and programs. Publications include: *Generations United* Newsletter.

GRANDPARENTS' RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

New York State Chapter

P.O. Box 121

Kinderhook, NY 12106 (518) 758-1229

A nonprofit organization that provides grandparents with information necessary to work effectively for their own rights and the rights of their grandchildren.

NATIONAL COALITION OF GRANDPARENTS (NCOG)

137 Larkin

Madison, WI 53705 (608) 238- 8751

A coalition of grandparent caregivers who work for legislation and other policy changes in support of relative caregivers.

NATIONAL INFORMATION CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES (NICHCY)

P.O. Box 1492

Washington, DC 20013 (800) 695-0285

NICHCY is a clearinghouse for free information on disabilities and disability-related issues involving children and youth. NICHCY publications include explanations of special education laws and school services for children with disabilities, state resource sheets, and information on individual disabilities.

R.O.C.K.I.N.G. (Raising Our Children's Kids: An Intergenerational Network of Grandparents, Inc.)

P.O. Box 96

Niles, MI 49120

An organization that (1) links support and advocacy groups of grandparents raising grandchildren; (2) provides telephone counseling to caregivers; (3) helps relative caregivers access support groups and resources; (4) helps relative caregivers develop new support groups; (5) advocates for legislative change, especially on kinship care issues.

Appendix F

Grandparent Caregiver Internet Addresses

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

<http://www.aarp.org>

American Association of Retired Persons, Grandparent Information Center.

<http://www.grandsplace.com>

“A web site by and for grandparents and special others raising children we did not give birth to.”

<http://www.grandparentagain.com>

Another web site with contributions by grandparents and other relatives raising the grandkids.

<http://www.fosterparents.com/index30raisinggrch.html>

The Foster Parent Community homepage.

Legal Issues

<http://www.brookdale.org/gpc/index.html>

The Grandparent Caregiver Law Center at the Brookdale Center on Aging. Free

download of *Help for Grandparent Caregivers Guide* by Melinda-Perez Porter,J.D.