



# WYOMING

## A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children



September 2005

The Brookdale Foundation

Across the United States, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives; 2.5 million children are in these households without any parents present. As the children's parents struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship, divorce, domestic violence, and other challenges, these caregivers provide a vital safety net to children inside and outside of the foster care system. This fact sheet provides important information and resources for the grandparents and other relatives raising children in your state.

### National and State Data\*

#### The Children

- Nationally, 4.5 million children are living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children under age 18). This represents a 30% increase from 1990 to 2000.
- There are another 1.5 million children in the United States who are living in households headed by other relatives (2.1% of all children under 18).
- In Wyoming, there are 5,150 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.0% of all children in the state). There are another 1,229 children living in households headed by other relatives (1.0% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Wyoming, 2,738 are living there without either parent present.

#### The Grandparents

- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 19% live in poverty.
- In Wyoming, 3,582 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [340 in Cheyenne and 267 in Casper]: 1% of these grandparents are African American; 10% are Hispanic/Latino; 13% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 2% are Asian; and 73% are White. 38% of these grandparents live in households without the children's parents present.

#### Additional Information

- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available at [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html).
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children is available on AARP's website at [www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/).

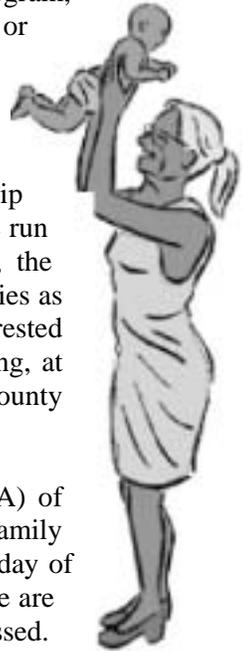
\* These data are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics:2000.



## Programs That Can Help

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- ***The Wyoming Department of Health, Aging Division*** is responsible for the National Family Caregiver Support Program, a federal program which provides services to grandparents who are the guardians of children 18 years of age or younger. These services include respite care, counseling, information and referrals. This program serves every county in the state. *Contact:* Dorothy Thomas, Program Manager, National Family Caregiver Support Program, Wyoming Department of Health, Aging Division, (800) 442-2766, (307) 442-2766 or dthoma@state.wy.us.
- ***The Wyoming Department of Family Services*** in collaboration with Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming is in the process of establishing a statewide Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) under a grant from The Brookdale Foundation. The program will create five new support groups for kinship care families raising children outside of the child welfare system across the state. The groups will be run in partnership with social service agencies in local communities. In addition to support groups, the Department also plans to develop a service network of local organizations serving kinship care families as well as to offer kinship care trainings for members of the professional community and other interested individuals. *Contact:* Carrie Harmsen, Education Programs Manager, Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming, at (307) 637-8622 or charmsen@pcawyoming.org; or Zaffer Sharif, Program Manager with Laramie County Department of Family Services, Cheyenne, Wyoming, at (307) 777-6203.
- ***The Kinship Care Project*** is a collaborative effort of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Laramie County and Casey Family Programs, with support from the Wyoming Department of Family Services. Monthly conversations and dialogues are open to kinship care families on the third Thursday of each month at the Senior Activity Center in Cheyenne from 6:00-8:00 p.m. A free meal and childcare are included. Issues such as medical assistance, legal matters, childcare, and financial resources are discussed. *Contact:* Alice Carter at (307) 638-2564, x-283 or jackson6197@msn.com or Terry Kenny at (307) 638-2564, x-278 or brrami@aol.com.



## Children in Foster Care

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Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kinship care.” In Wyoming, the Department of Family Services (DFS) reports:

***Number of children in kinship care:*** As of June 2005, Wyoming DFS had a total of 1,371 children in all types of out-of-home placements (including juvenile justice placements). Of these children, 204 were placed with kin.

***Preferences for kinship care:*** State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for an abused or neglected child.

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

***Subsidized guardianship programs:*** 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. Most of these programs offer ongoing subsidies to children who have left foster care to live permanently under the legal custody or guardianship of relatives. In Wyoming, if family financial concerns are the only barrier to legal guardianship, DFS may negotiate a subsidy with the family caring for the child. The amount of the subsidy will be negotiated between the family and the local field office staff, similar to an adoption subsidy. The subsidy may be initiated once the guardianship is ordered. Funding for the program is contingent upon the availability of state money and is subject to termination at the annual review if funds are not available. *Contact:* Zaffer Sharif, Social Services Consultant, Wyoming Department of Family Services, at (307) 777-6203 or zshari@state.wy.us.

***State kinship care contact:*** Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to Maureen Clifton, Social Services Consultant, Wyoming Department of Family Services, at (307) 777-3570 or mclift@state.wy.us.

## Public Benefits

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Children are often eligible for state and federal benefits even if their caregivers do not have legal guardianship or custody. These programs include:

**Financial Assistance:** Cash assistance may be available to children and their grandparents and other relative caregivers through Wyoming’s Personal Opportunities With Employment Responsibility (POWER) program.

- A “child-only grant” is for the child and based *only* on the child’s income.
- An adult caregiver may also be included in the grant — based on their income and subject to work requirements and time limits.



Call (307) 777-7290 or log on to <http://dfsweb.state.wy.us/POWER.html>.

**Food Stamps:** Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet their children’s food and nutrition needs. For more information, call (307) 777-6786 or log on to [www.dfsweb.state.wy.us/foodstampinfo.html](http://www.dfsweb.state.wy.us/foodstampinfo.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 the Wyoming Medicaid and Kid Care programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free coverage under Medicaid. For more information about how to apply for Medicaid, call (800) 251-1268 (in Cheyenne, call (307) 772-8403) or log on to <http://wyequalitycare.acs-inc.com>. For information about Kid Care, call (877) 543-7669 or log on to <http://kidcare.state.wy.us>.

**Other Benefits:** Other state and federal benefits may also be available to eligible children, such as child care subsidies, disability benefits, and special education services. For more information about these, download CDF’s benefit guides for grandparents and other relatives raising children at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org) or call (202) 662-3568. For more information on the federal benefits that may be available to caregivers, log on to the National Council on Aging’s Benefits CheckUp web site at [www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org).

## State Laws

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The following state law may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children<sup>1</sup>:

**Standby Guardianship (WYO. STAT. § 3-2-108):** This law allows a child’s parent or legal guardian to appoint a standby guardian to assume the care of the child upon the death or incapacity of the parent or guardian.

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

## National Resources

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AARP Grandparent Information Center	(888) 687-2277	<a href="http://www.aarp.org/grandparents">www.aarp.org/grandparents</a>
Adoption Information Clearinghouse	(888) 251-0075	<a href="http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/">http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/</a>
The Brookdale Foundation Group	(212) 308 -7355	<a href="http://www.brookdalefoundation.org">www.brookdalefoundation.org</a>
Child Welfare League of America	(202) 638-2952	<a href="http://www.cwla.org">www.cwla.org</a>
Children’s Defense Fund	(202) 628-8787	<a href="http://www.childrensdefense.org">www.childrensdefense.org</a>
Generations United	(202) 289-3979	<a href="http://www.gu.org">www.gu.org</a>

GrandsPlace	860) 763-5789	<a href="http://www.grandsplace.com">www.grandsplace.com</a>
KINship Information Network	(772) 501-0502	<a href="http://www.kinsupport.org">www.kinsupport.org</a>
National Aging Information Center	(202) 619-0724	<a href="http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov">www.aoa.dhhs.gov</a>
National Committee of Grandparents For Children's Rights	(866) 624-9900	<a href="http://www.grandparentsforchildren.org">www.grandparentsforchildren.org</a>
The Urban Institute	(202) 833-7200	<a href="http://www.urban.org">www.urban.org</a>

*Fact sheets are updated quarterly. Changes or additions should be e-mailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at [gic@aarp.org](mailto:gic@aarp.org). Please write "State Fact Sheets" on your e-mail subject line.*