



Navigating the Child Dependency System: When Grandparents Become Caregivers

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Introduction

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Work History
- ▶ Interest in Topic



Video: When Grandparents Raise Grandchildren



Statistics


The Grandchildren

- ▶ 7.8 million children live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. These households include those where the children's parents may or may not be present.
- ▶ 2.7 million children (4%) of all U.S. children are being raised in grand families or kinship (blood relative) care situations.
- ▶ Children placed with relatives make up over a quarter (26%) of all children in the foster care system.
- ▶ For every child being raised in the foster care system, nearly 25 are being raised by grandparents or other relatives outside the system.

The Grandparents

- ▶ 2.7 million grandparents are responsible for most of the basic needs of their grandchildren.
- ▶ 60% of these grandparent caregivers are in the workforce.
- ▶ 21% live below the poverty line.
- ▶ 36% have provided care for the children for more than 5 years.
- ▶ Grand families save tax payers more than \$6.5 billion each year by keeping children out of foster care.



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- ▶ Florida has one of the highest numbers of grandchildren living in grandparents household
 - ▶ A child is deemed dependent when they have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent.
 - ▶ Family with dependent children receive ongoing supervision by a caseworker from a local Community Based Care (CBC).

Florida Dependency System

- ▶ If the Department of Children and Family Services has taken a child into custody due to a finding that the child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned, the department shall review the facts supporting the removal with an attorney representing the department.
- ▶ If probable cause is found, a shelter petition is filed.
- ▶ If the facts of the shelter petition is sufficient and the child has not been returned to the custody of the parent or legal custodian, a hearing has to be held within 24 hours after removing the child.
- ▶ While awaiting the shelter hearing, the department may release the child to a parent, legal custodian, responsible adult relative, or the adoptive parent of the child's sibling who shall be given priority consideration over a licensed placement,
- ▶ A responsible adult approved by the department if this is in the best interests of the child.
- ▶ When a child is taken into custody, the department shall request that the child's parent, caregiver, or legal custodian disclose the names, relationships, and addresses of all parents and prospective parents and all next of kin of the child, so far as are known.

Definition of A Relative

Each State defines “relative” differently, including relatives by blood, marriage, or adoption ranging from the first to the fifth degree. Generally, preference is given to the child’s grandparents, followed by aunts, uncles, adult siblings, and cousins. For Indian children, nine States allow members of the child’s Tribe to be considered “extended family members” for placement purposes.



Requirements for Relative Placement

Placement of a child that is not in a licensed shelter must be preceded by a criminal history records check.

The court may place the child with a fit and willing relative as a permanency option if:

- The child has been in the placement for at least the preceding 6 months.
- The relative has made a commitment to provide for the child until the child reaches the age of majority and to prepare the child for adulthood and independence.
- The relative is suitable and able to provide a safe and permanent home for the child.
- The relative agrees to give notice of any change in his or her residence or the residence of the child by filing a written document with the clerk of court.

Relative caregivers must be capable, as determined by a home study, of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for the children under their care. They must assure that the children's well-being is met, including, but not limited to, the provision of immunizations, education, and mental health services as needed.

Stat. §§ 39.401; 39.5085; 39.6231

	Description	Grandparent's Rights	Parent's Rights	Best Choice if...
Court-Ordered Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents have physical custody DCF mandates ongoing supervision CBC provider has supervising authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents can make day-to-day decisions about grandchild. Grandparents are provided with needed services by a CBC caseworker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent can work on case plan to get child back. Parent is provided with needed services by CBC caseworker. Parents will have to sign for major medical procedures for the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You believe parent is working hard and is committed to following the case plan to get child back.
Temporary Custody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents have court-ordered legal custody. DCF mandates ongoing supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents can make important decisions about grandchild with minimal CBC supervisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent has visitation rights. Parent can work on case plan to get child back. Parents will have to sign for major medical procedures for the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are uncertain if parent will follow through with required case plan.
Long-Term Legal Custody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option granted after 6 months of CBC supervision with temporary legal custody More secure and permanent arrangement than placement or temporary legal custody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents have full authority over grandchild. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can regain custody if they can prove that the situation that caused them to lose custody has changed and that living with parents is best for the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent consents to grandparents having long-term legal custody. Parent's rights have been terminated. Parent does not follow case plan as instructed.
Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most permanent legal custody Can happen when parent consents or court has terminated parental rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents have all authority over the child. Grandparents no longer eligible for state benefits unless they are income eligible or the child was adopted through the state, in which case the grandparents may become eligible for an adoption subsidy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents lose their rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grandparents are determined to have the most secure, permanent custody for the child. Parent's rights have been terminated.

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Case Study

► The Brown Family: Caring for a Grandchild with Disabilities

Mr. and Mrs. Brown are raising their grandchild, Maria, who has severe disabilities. Maria uses a wheelchair and is developmentally delayed. The Browns gained custody of Maria after the Department of Family & Children's Services investigated Maria's parents for physical abuse and environmental hazard. Maria had been living in filth, was malnourished, and was being punished physically by her parents. Maria is currently eleven years old, and has been residing with her grandparents for the past seven years. Her grandparents reports that she is a happy child.

The grandparents are in their sixties and are starting to experience health problems. The only source of income for the family is their social security check, and a retirement check from Mr. Brown's 40 year employment with the State. Last year, Mr. Brown suffered a stroke and has some paralysis. Since then, Mrs. Brown has been struggling with Maria's care because she is becoming physically mature and her care is becoming more difficult for the couple.

As a result of this situation, Mrs. Brown is becoming depressed. She feels helpless and worries about Maria's care if something should happen to her. She is also responsible for the care of her husband; such as helping him dress, and assuming the driving for the family. Although Ms. Brown has been feeling more run down lately, she refuses to see a doctor because she is afraid of what would happen if she deemed unfit to continue to care for her husband and Maria.

ASSISTANCE



Relative Caregiver

In order for States to receive Federal payments for foster care and adoption assistance, Federal law under title IV-E of the Social Security Act requires that they “consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards.” Title IV-E further requires States to exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents) regarding (1) the fact that the child has been or is being removed from the custody of his or her parents, (2) the options the relative has to participate in the care and placement of the child, and (3) the requirements to become a foster parent to the child.

Relative Caregiver Program

The Relative Caregiver Program provides financial assistance to relatives who are within the fifth degree, by blood or marriage, to the parent or stepparent of a child and who are caring for the child fulltime as a result of a court's determination of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment. If a court finds that reunification or adoption are not in the best interests of a child, the court may place the child with a fit and willing relative. Relatives who qualify for and participate in the Relative Caregiver Program are not required to meet foster care licensing requirements.

Relative Caregiver Program

- ▶ Cash assistance and Medicaid is provided for a child who is placed by the court with a relative under certain circumstances.
- ▶ The monthly payment provides financial help for the relative who would not be able to afford to care for the child without assistance.
- ▶ The monthly payment may vary based on the child's age or other circumstances. If needed, the child may also be eligible for subsidized child care. This part of the program is for caregivers who work outside the home and requires a small monthly payment.

Specified Degree of Relationship

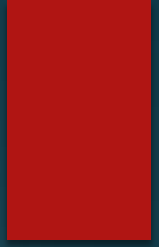
Fifth Degree

- Blood or Marriage to Parent or stepparent of child
- Step parents and relatives of the stepparents within 5th degree
- Siblings and half siblings including their spouses
- Aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparent, great grandparent
- Cousins & their spouses-First cousin once removed to the parent or step parent

Exception to the Rule

- Half-siblings not related to a caregiver who resides with a half-sibling who meets relative caregiver placement criteria is eligible for a relative caregiver payment.

Monthly Payment Amounts



Child's Age	Amount Per Child
0-5 years	\$242
6-12 years	\$249
13-17 years	\$298

Case managers assigned to your child must provide Relative Caregiver Communication Form 5233

EMOTIONS



happy



surprised



angry



excited



bored



sad



loving



sad

Impact on Physical and Emotional Health of the grandparents.

Grandparents face the emotional, physical, and financial strain of raising children who are suffering the traumatic experience of being removed from their parents, and after being victims of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. At times these grandparents are not given the needed tools so as to successfully navigate the system and alleviate emotional stressors.

- ▶ Some grandparents reported stressors such as lack of access to support services and financial issues
- ▶ Many grandparents are retired and are forced to return to work so as to ensure that there is enough income in the household.
- ▶ Some grandparents are forced to quit their jobs because the cost of childcare/aftercare is high.

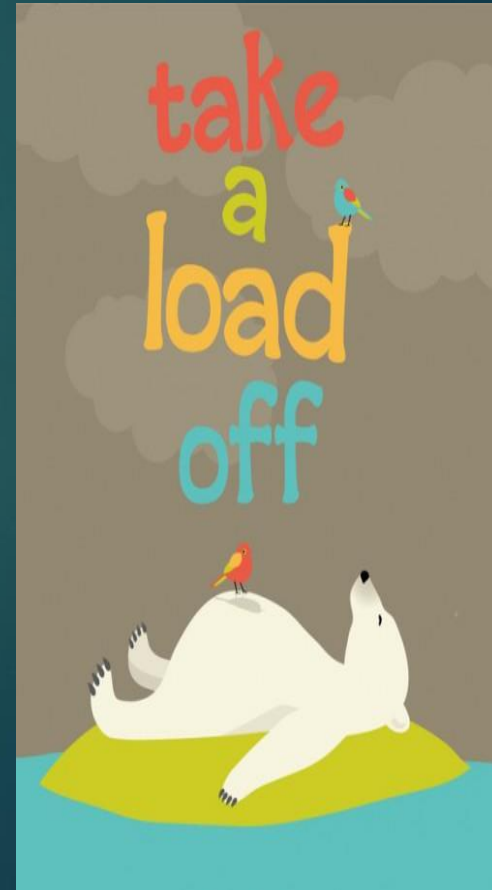
Emotional and Physical Impact on Grandparents

- ▶ Grandparents who were raising grandchildren with emotional symptoms or conduct problems were much more likely to experience greater levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. (Doley, Watt & Simpson;2015)
- ▶ Social isolation and inadequate social supports are significant problems for custodial grandparents. Many grandparents report that taking on full-time responsibility for their grandchildren results in social isolation from their same-aged peers and grandparents raising grandchildren with emotional, behavioral, or learning problems are particularly at risk for inadequate social support (Doley, Watt & Simpson;2015)

Self -Care

It is important for grandparents who are taking care of their grandchildren to also take care of themselves.

- ▶ Visit doctor regularly
- ▶ May need to seek out mental health services as an individual or as a family.
- ▶ Join support groups
- ▶ Ask questions pertaining to getting additional financial assistance with after care and day care.
- ▶ Speak with your CBC case manager on a regular basis and do not be afraid to ask questions.
- ▶ Attend court hearings
- ▶ Have some “me” time



Community Resources

► National Family Caregiver Support Program

- ❖ Grandparents and other relatives (not parents) 55 years of age and older providing care to children under the age of 18; and
- ❖ Grandparents and other relatives (not parents) 55 years of age and older providing care to adults age 18-59 with disabilities.

Call the Elder Helpline at **1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337)**

Monday to Friday 8:00am to 5:pm

<http://browardliving.org>

<http://www.unitedwaybroward.org>

<http://www.browardhealth.org/kinshipcares>

Questions



References

Rebekah Doley, Ryan Bell, Bruce Watt & Hannah Simpson(2015) Grandparents raising grandchildren: investigating factors associated with distress among custodial grandparent, Journal of Family Studies, 21:2, 101-119,

<http://www2.gu.org/OURWORK/Grandfamilies/GrandfamiliesStatistics.aspx>

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). Placement of children with relatives. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau

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Chapter 39, Florida Statutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryd2YUPCyZE>