

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Summary of Significant Trends:

The number of grandparents and other kin raising children has increased substantially in the last decade, due to the increasing incidence of substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, abandonment, health problems, incarceration and other problems faced by young parents. About 5.8 million grandparents live with their grandchildren, and about 2.4 million of these are responsible for the needs of their grandchildren. Looking at this from the child side, estimates are that 4.5 million children under age 18 live with grandparents. Over the past 25 years, the numbers of children living in grandparent-headed households has increased dramatically with the largest increase coming in the numbers of children being raised in grandparent-headed households with no parent present.¹

Emerging Trends and Issues:

According to the 2000 Census, over 160,000 grandparents in NC live with and approximately 80,000 have primary responsibility for grandchildren.² Although some of grandparent/relative caregivers are young, the median age is 57, with at least 21% of them being over the age of 65.³ The typical grandparent caregiver is female, married, white and in the work force. Although the grandparents report a great deal of satisfaction from taking on this role, many also experience

depression, health problems, legal challenges, financial problems, role conflicts in their marriage and work as well as social isolation and stigma. Children in these families experience many of the stresses and consequences of disrupted family life such as grief and loss and are at higher risk for behavioral and social problems as well as health problems. As the number of grandfamilies/kinship care families increases, there is a growing need for community organizations and informal networks to provide services and supports to both the grandparents and the grandchildren.

Relevance of trends for county programming:

Cooperative Extension is one of the first organizations in North Carolina to address the issue of grandparents raising grandchildren. Since 1996, we have been working closely with the NC Division of Aging on the Brookdale Foundation-funded Relatives as Parents Program which encourages formation of statewide connections and local support groups; in 2001, Brookdale authorized us to become the Division's official partner in this effort. At the county level, a number of county faculty provide leadership or support to efforts at community awareness of kinship care issues and educational programs for grandparents on topics as wide-ranging as legal issues, financial issues, emotional/develop-

mental/relationship issues and parenting. There are many opportunities to collaborate with our state's 17 regional Area Agencies on Aging in implementation of the Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) which authorizes up to 10% of FCSP funds to be used for addressing kinship care issues, and to work with the range of organizations which serve children in this special situation.

References:

1. Generations United (2002). Fact sheet: Grandparents and other relatives raising children: Challenges of caring for the second family. http://www.gu.org/Files/ChallengesSheetfinal10_02.pdf
2. US Census Bureau (2002). Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000 (Table DP-2) <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2002/sumfile3.html>
3. Carbonell, J. (2003). Addressing Challenges and Opportunities Across the Generations. Remarks before the Alliance for Children and Families. http://www.aoa.gov/press/speeches/2003/02_Feb/speeches_archive_02_10.asp

Sources of Supporting Data:

US Administration on Aging

<http://www.aoa.gov/naic/notes/grandparents-grandchildren.html>

AARP Grandparent Information Center

<http://www.aarp.org/grandparents/#raise>

Kinship Care in North Carolina (at Generations United website; developed by national team with substantial input from state agencies, including NC Cooperative Extension)

<http://www.gu.org/states/pdf/NC%20-%20final2.pdf>

Primary contact: Luci Bearon, Ph.D.
luci_bearon@ncsu.edu

2003



Family & Consumer
SCIENCE S