



## Kinship Caregiver Handbooks

In the event that a child must be separated from his/her parents' care, it is imperative that family connections are preserved for that child. One way to ensure that this occurs is through placement of children or youth in a home with a kinship caregiver. The NCCWE has compiled this state-by-state listing of free online handbooks. These handbooks assist kinship caregivers in navigating the child welfare system, provide answers to common questions, and list available resources.

**Title:** *Kinship Caregivers and the Child Welfare System*

**Description:** A number of grandparents and other relatives find themselves serving as parents for children whose own parents are unable to care for them. Sometimes, the arrangement (referred to as "kinship care") is an informal, private arrangement between the parents and relative caregivers; in other situations, the child welfare system is involved. This factsheet developed by The Child Welfare Information Gateway is designed to help kinship caregivers—including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives caring for children—work effectively with the child welfare system. It addresses a number of topics relevant for kinship caregivers such as: Different types of kinship care, including private, voluntary, and formal care; How and when the child welfare system becomes involved in kinship care; What kin caregivers might expect from the child welfare system; Services that may be available and how to access them; Involvement of the courts; Permanent living arrangements for the children; and, Resources. (December 2010)

**Link:** [http://www.kinkconnect.org/images/f\\_kinshi.pdf](http://www.kinkconnect.org/images/f_kinshi.pdf)

**Title:** *GrandFacts*

**Description:** AARP, The Brookdale Foundation Group, Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and Generations United have partnered to produce state and national GrandFacts fact sheets for grandparents and other relatives raising children. The state fact sheets include state-specific data and programs as well as information about foster care, public benefits, educational assistance and state laws.

**Link:** <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts-sheets/>

**State:** Alaska

**Title:** *A Guide to Child Protective Services for Relatives*

**Description:** This guide from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services - Office of Children's Services is a resource for relative caregivers that helps explain the child welfare and child protection process. It is designed to help relatives understand the reasons children come into the care of the Office of Children's Services, the responsibility of the State, the role of the court, the importance of relatives, and the options available to relatives. (August 2007)

**Link:** <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/Publications/pdf/relativeGuide.pdf>

**State:** Arizona**Title:** *Kinship Foster Care for Relatives Caring for Children in CPS Custody*

**Description:** This booklet explains Arizona's Kinship Foster Care Program and details the financial, emotional and practical assistance that is available through CPS, other parts of the Department of Economic Security (DES), and from the State's community partners. (2010)

**Link:** <https://www.azdes.gov/InternetFiles/Pamphlets/pdf/ACY-1081APAMPD.pdf>

**State:** Arkansas**Title:** *A Resource Guide for Kinship Caregivers in Arkansas: What Every Grandparent or Relative Caregiver Needs to Know, When a Parent is Arrested, Incapacitated, or Involved in a Dependency-Neglect Proceeding*

**Description:** This guide produced by Arkansas Voices for the Children Left Behind will help family caretakers understand some of the complicated choices they may face and find the resources they need. At the end of this guide are examples of forms, form letters, and petitions that may need to be filled out during the process of becoming a relative caregiver. (2010)

**Link:**

[http://www.arkansasvoices.org/uploads/1/4/9/2/14920838/handbook\\_for\\_kinship\\_caregivers.pdf](http://www.arkansasvoices.org/uploads/1/4/9/2/14920838/handbook_for_kinship_caregivers.pdf)

**State:** Colorado**Title:** *Navigating Kinship Care: A Resource Guide for Kinship Caregivers!*

**Description:** The purpose of this navigation guide is to provide information to Colorado kinship caregivers who raise children and youth when parents are unable or unwilling to care for them. This Navigation Guide provides local and statewide information about organizations and programs that may be useful for kinship caregivers. Information is available about public benefits, legal options and processes, access to education, medical, dental and mental health services, childcare, and information about who to call or where to locate help. The resource information is intended for informational purposes and does not imply endorsement by the Colorado Department of Human Services. The guide is adapted from the Colorado Kinship Care Resource Guide written in 2000 by Margaret "Bunny" Nicholson, M.S.W., Cassie Spencer, M.S.W., and Charlotte Lilliedahl, M.A., of Nicholson, Spencer and Associates

**Link:** [http://www.cokinship.org/navigation\\_guide/](http://www.cokinship.org/navigation_guide/)

**State:** Florida**Title:** *Kinship Care Legal Handbook: A Guide for Relative Caregivers*

**Description:** Kinship care includes the full-time care, nurturing, and protection of a child by relatives, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with the child. Some people define kinship care more narrowly to include only blood relationships. The term most often in Florida is "relative caretaker" or "relative caregiver." Whatever the label, relative caregiving has become a growing form of family life that needs to be supported. This handbook by the Florida Kinship Center focuses on the legal issues most commonly

encountered by relative caregivers and on the public benefits and services for which relative caregivers might be eligible. (2008)

**Link:**

<http://www.communitypartnershipforchildren.org/zupload/user/kinshipcarelegalhandbook1.pdf>

**State:** Georgia

**Title:** *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*

**Description:** The Georgia Department of Human Services is reaching out to grandparents raising grandchildren by providing more access to resources through all of its services/programs. This website includes resources and services that are available statewide or countywide and will serve as a place for grandparents to get further referrals for their individual needs. It includes financial, health, and social services available for grandparents raising grandchildren.

**Link:** <http://dhs.georgia.gov/grandparents-raising-grandchildren?vnextoid=d0fe8bfa3ba02110VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD>

**State:** Indiana

**Title:** *Kinship Caregiver Handbook: A Guide for Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, and Any Relatives Who Are Raising a Child*

**Description:** Are you an aunt, uncle, grandparent, or someone who is raising a child that is not your own? Have you decided or been asked to take on the difficult responsibility of providing a loving and nurturing home for a child who is not yours? Then you are what is referred to as a kinship caregiver. You are not alone as a kinship caregiver, and there are resources and information that may be helpful to you. The purpose of this pamphlet by Kids' Voice of Indiana is to help caretakers understand the situation that they are in and to provide resources and information to guide them as a kinship caregiver.

**Link:** <http://www.kidsvoicein.org/documents/Kinship-Care-Booklet.pdf>

**State:** Iowa

**Title:** *Raising Relatives' Children*

**Description:** This publication from the Iowa Foster & Adoptive Parent Association (IFAPA) was developed to assist Iowa kinship families considering an Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) placement of a child to work effectively with Iowa DHS and juvenile court. It includes information on family involvement with DHS and juvenile court, types of kinship care, and financial assistance and community resources, as well as questions to ask DHS when considering the placement of a child and questions to ask the DHS social worker regarding long-term kinship placements. Additional information and suggestions are provided on the following issues: birth parent visits, talking with children about their birth parents, understanding caregiver feelings, understanding children's issues, parenting and discipline, educational issues, transracial parenting, internet safety, preventing an abduction, children's mental health services, mental health issues, and dealing with one's own aging. A list of websites, books, and additional reading for relative caregivers is also provided.

**Link:** [http://www.ifapa.org/pdf\\_docs/RaisingRelativesChildrenBookw.pdf](http://www.ifapa.org/pdf_docs/RaisingRelativesChildrenBookw.pdf)

**State:** Kentucky

**Title:** *Help: A Handbook for Kentucky Grandparents and Other Relative Caregivers*

**Description:** Each year thousands of grandparents and other relatives in Kentucky assume the responsibility of raising children for biological parents who are unable or unwilling to be parents. The care provided by these caregivers impacts the lives of the children for a lifetime. The caregivers are confronted by many legal and financial issues. The purpose of

this handbook is to offer basic information and guidance to the most common legal issues and information about programs and benefits that may help the caregivers in the role of parent. This handbook was produced by The Bluegrass Area Development District Bluegrass Area Agency on Aging. (2007)

**Link:** <http://www.bgadd.org/pdf/aging/HELP-A%20Handbook%20for%20Kentucky%20Grandparents.pdf>

**State:** Louisiana

**Title:** *Louisiana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Resource Guide*

**Description:** This guide provides information to assist grandparents who are raising their grandchildren with basic legal and social services information. The first edition of this resource guide was developed by the Northwest Pro Bono Project with assistance from Legal Services of North Louisiana.

**Link:** <http://goea.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/Grandparentsbooklet.pdf>

**State:** Maryland

**Title:** *Kinship Care Fact Sheet*

**Description:** This brief Fact Sheet by The Maryland Department of Human Resources provides caregivers with information regarding available benefits, kinship care advocates, and contacts for additional services. (2009)

**Link:** <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Kinship-Care-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

**State:** Massachusetts

**Title:** *A Resource Guide for Massachusetts' Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren*

**Description:** This guide was developed by The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services to assist grandparents and other kinship caregivers with locating and obtaining needed resources. This guide provides basic information and program descriptions of relevant state agencies and offers suggestions about accessing other public and private resources. It contains information about who to call for assistance, offers practical suggestions, and answers some frequently asked questions. This guide is organized into subjects that encompass a variety of the challenges for grandparents caring for their grandchildren. Whenever possible, the guide provides both telephone numbers and links to websites for relevant state agencies, community organizations, and national resources. (October 2013)

**Link:** <http://www.mass.gov/elders/docs/caregiver/grandparents-raising-grandchildren.pdf>

**State:** Michigan

**Title:** *Relative Caregiving: What You Need to Know*

**Description:** This guide from the Michigan Department of Human Services provides basic information about resources available for individuals caring for related children in foster care. Foster care provides temporary care and supervision for children who are unable to live with their parents. Whether a relative caregiver or a licensed foster parent, providing temporary foster care for a child will be challenging. This guide helps caregivers understand Michigan's child welfare system while supporting them in meeting the needs of the child(ren) placed in their home. (2014)

**Link:** [http://michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-Pub-114\\_346655\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-Pub-114_346655_7.pdf)

**State:** Montana

**Title:** *Considering Kinship Care*

**Description:** This handbook was developed by the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services Children and Family Services Division to help families understand Kinship

Care. When the state or tribe has determined that a child is unable to live in his/her own home, Kinship Care is often the best option for the child. A child will be placed with the child's family when it is in the best interest of the child, and when the home is approved by the Department. For Native American children under The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), specific placement preferences are required, with placement with members of the child's extended family as the first option. Although the majority of families care for their children without legal intervention, this handbook focuses primarily on those situations where formal legal action is required in order to insure the safety and well-being of the children involved. (July 2012)

**Link:** <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publications/CFS-056ConsideringKinship.pdf>

**State:** Nevada

**Title:** *Raising Your Relative's Kids: How to Find Help*

**Description:** This informational guide from the University of Nevada – Cooperative Extension was created for the assistance of caregivers and children in kinship families, social service agency heads and staff, educators, and residents concerned about the many families living in these not-so-unusual circumstances. It covers topics such as: Taking Care of You; Guardianship, Adoption & Related Legal Issues; Birth Certificates and Social Security Cards; Medical Insurance and Care; Education; Leisure Activities; Financial Assistance, Benefits, and Income Taxes; Housing; Child Care; Behavioral and Emotional Issues; Juvenile Court Services; Child Protective Services; Transportation; Family and Medical Leave Act; Youth Employment; Immigration Issues; and, Important Documents. (2013)

**Link:** <http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cy/2009/sp0905.pdf>

**State:** New Hampshire

**Title:** *A Resource Guide for New Hampshire Relative Caregivers*

**Description:** In New Hampshire, there are more than 10,000 children living in grandparent-headed households. Over 4,500 grandparents reported that they were responsible for their grandchildren who were living with them. There are over 2,300 children living in households headed by other relatives. Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in New Hampshire, more than 4,000 are living there without either parent present.

Children and their caregivers are often eligible for state and federal benefits; however, finding those benefits can often be confusing and frustrating. This booklet can guide you in the right direction, help you ask the right questions, and help you find the answers you need. It was developed in partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' Division for Children, Youth and Families, Division of Family Assistance, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services, UNH Cooperative Extension, NH Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) and Lutheran Social Services of New England. (2010)

**Link:** <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/documents/relativecaregivers.pdf>

**State:** New York

**Title:** *Know Your Permanency Options: The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program*

**Description:** Sometimes children are placed in the care of relatives because they cannot stay at home with their parents. When the local child welfare agency decides to remove a child from the home, the agency will notify relatives and ask if they are interested in caring for the child. This handbook helps relatives understand the NY/NYC KinGap program and the associated benefits

**English Link:** <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/pub5108.pdf>

**Spanish Link:** <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub5108-S.pdf>

**State:** New York

**Title:** *New York State Kinship Navigator*

**Description:** This program offers a comprehensive information and referral network for caregivers to learn more about services and to obtain referrals to legal, financial, educational, health/mental health, support group and housing resources in their area. Information provided includes answers to frequently asked questions and addresses eligibility requirements for public assistance, tax credits and childcare; access to official records; facts sheets on laws; and forums for service providers.

**Link:** <http://www.nysnavigator.org/>

**State:** New York

**Title:** *Having a Voice & a Choice: New York State Handbook for Relatives Raising Children*

**Description:** Developed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) in partnership with the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), *Having a Voice & a Choice: New York State Handbook for Relatives Raising Children* was written for relatives who are raising, or considering raising, children in need of a stable home because their parents are unable to take care of them. The handbook discusses the various options available to relatives so they can make the best decisions for their own situations. Chapters cover topics such as how children come into the care of relatives, legal arrangements, financial support for nonparent caregivers and foster parents, health care and health insurance, and school-related issues. At the end is a list of websites and other resources. (2009)

**English Link:** <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5080.pdf>

**Spanish Link:** <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/Pub5080-S.pdf>

**State:** Ohio

**Title:** *Ohio Resource Guide for Relatives Caring for Children*

**Description:** Developed by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, this booklet provides useful information for kinship caregivers. The topics covered in this resource include: Meeting the child's needs; Common problems; Services that can help; Applying for cash benefits; Making decisions about legal issues; and Services for children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned.

**Link:** <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/file.asp?id=1779&type=application/pdf>

**State:** Pennsylvania

**Title:** *Kinship Care in Pennsylvania: Support for Families with Grandparents and Other Kin Raising Children*

**Description:** This publication by Penn State addresses kinship care challenges and highlights promising programs and resources available to assist grandparents and other relative caregivers and the children they are raising. (2005)

**Link:** <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ui383.pdf>

**State:** Tennessee

**Title:** *Relative Caregiver Brochure*

**Description:** This brochure provided by the Tennessee Department of Children Services explains the options available to relatives considering caring for family. The following questions are answered in this resource: Why Can't The Child Stay at Home?; What are the Benefits of a Related Child Being Placed with Me?; What are Some Things I Need to Consider in Having a Child Placed with Me?; What is Family Planned Care?; What is Legal Custody?; What is Kinship Foster Care?; What is a Power of Attorney for Care of a Child?; What is Adoption?; What is Permanent Guardianship?; What is the Relative Caregiver Program?; and, What Type of Financial Assistance Can I Get?

**Link:** <http://www.tn.gov/youth/childsafety/RelativeCaregiverbrochure.pdf>

**State:** Texas

**Title:** *Kinship Manual*

**Description:** This booklet is provided by Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This booklet informs relatives about what to expect while caring for a child who is in CPS's legal custody due to abuse or neglect. (2011)

**Link:** [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/documents/Child\\_Protection/pdf/KinshipManual.pdf](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/documents/Child_Protection/pdf/KinshipManual.pdf)

**State:** Texas

**Title:** *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*

**Description:** The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) offers several programs to help grandparents provide for the basic needs of the grandchildren living in their home. This resource provides a brief listing of these available programs in both English and Spanish.

**Link:** [http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/032608\\_Grandparents\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/032608_Grandparents_Brochure.pdf)

**State:** Vermont

**Title:** *Vermont Resource Guide for Relatives Caring for Children*

**Description:** Regardless of the circumstances that make kinship care necessary, all caregivers share a common bond: the need for information, resources, and support. This guide can help! It includes information about: The legal issues you may face and resources that can help; Programs and services that can help with the cost of caring for the child; and Other resources that can help, from blogs to support groups. This guide was produced by the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) in partnership with Vermont Kin as Parents (VKAP). (2013)

**Link:** <http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/KinshipCaregiversResourceGuide.pdf>

**State:** Vermont

**Title:** *A Guide for Foster & Kinship Foster Families in Vermont*

**Description:** This guide by the Vermont Department for Children and Families will help parents in their day-to-day life with the child in their care. It includes an overview of the foster care system, court process, and resources available, as well as practical tips to help parents welcome a child into their home, care for the child, work with DCF, and more. (2012)

**Link:**

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/pf/Resource\\_Guide\\_for\\_Foster\\_Parents.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/pf/Resource_Guide_for_Foster_Parents.pdf)

**State:** Virginia

**Title:** *To the Child Kinship Care Means "Home"*

**Description:** Kinship care is a term defined in the Code of Virginia as "the full time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives." This brochure by the Virginia Department of Social Services outlines the legal options for those relatives when a child can no longer live with his or her parents.

**Link:**

[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro\\_page/kinship\\_care/related\\_brochures/B032-01-0200-00-eng.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/fc/intro_page/kinship_care/related_brochures/B032-01-0200-00-eng.pdf)

**State:** Virginia

**Title:** *Grand Parents Caring For Grand Children*

**Description:** As a grandparent, you may unexpectedly find yourself as the primary caregiver for one more of your grandchildren. While this change may bring joy and fulfillment to you, it may also create stress and uncertainty. Identifying the financial, educational, legal, medical, and emotional resources you need to assist you can be difficult, especially if you find yourself in this role for the first time. This guide by the Virginia Department of the Aging has been developed to help address any concerns you may have, and direct you towards services you may need as you begin to provide a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for your grandchild.

**Link:** <http://www.vda.virginia.gov/pdfdocs/Grandparents.pdf>

**State:** Washington

**Title:** *A Resource Guide for Relatives as Parents*

**Description:** While each family's situation is unique, kinship care families share the critical need for information, services, and resources. This guide helps caregivers find answers to the financial, emotional, legal, and or medical questions they may have. This guide is a project of the Washington State Relatives as Parents Program and the DSHS Kinship Task Force. (June 2008)

**Link:** <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/Publications/22-996.pdf>

**State:** Washington

**Title:** *Did You Know about the Following Services and Supports for Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children*

**Description:** This six page pamphlet provides a comprehensive list of various resources, benefits, and support services available to relatives raising children. It is available in English, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. (2012)

**Link:** <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/Publications/22-1120.pdf>