



NYS Kinship

A FAMILY'S RIGHT TO CARE

GRANDPARENTS WHO ARE NOT CAREGIVERS SHOULD HAVE THE:

- *OPPORTUNITY* to care for their grandchildren when parents cannot care for their children and/or when grandchildren are in foster care.
- *CREDIBILITY* when reporting to authorities that they fear their grandchild is suffering abuse or neglect.

GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER NON-PARENT CAREGIVERS NEED:

- *RECOGNITION* by both policy makers and the systems that serve caregivers;
- *AUTHORITY* to make medical and school related decisions for children in their care;
- *SECURITY* of knowing that children will not be taken from them without due process; and, if needed,
- *FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND OTHER SERVICES.*

RECOGNITION means that law guardians, judges, child welfare and public assistance personnel need training in order to eliminate biases towards grandparent caregivers and to better understand that these caregivers are working to save the lives of children.

RECOGNITION also means that grandparents and other caregivers are informed by DSS about the opportunity to become foster parents and their eligibility for public assistance.

AUTHORITY means that informal caregivers and legal custodians have the ability to make medical and school-related decisions for children.

SECURITY means clear and reasonable standards regarding what “extraordinary circumstances” will mandate a judicial inquiry into the best interests of a child when deciding custody disputes between a de facto custodian and a parent or DSS.

SECURITY also means that relative caregivers have heightened protection when they serve as foster parents.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT means that when children in the care of grandparents are eligible for a "non-parent" TANF grants, they are able to understand the application process, and that a specially trained intake person is ready to assist them.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT also means knowing that kinship foster children can exit the child welfare system and still receive support via subsidized guardianship.

OTHER SERVICES means access, when needed, to information and referral, legal assistance, counseling, mediation, support groups, respite, childcare, transportation, housing, health care, psychotherapy, education, and other appropriate assistance

FACTS:

According to a statistical study of 50,000 families, in a wide range of behavioral categories, children in the care of grandparents score *as well or better* than children raised by parents. Researchers cite as reasons for the success of grandparent caregivers: emotional maturity, a life stage which is more dedicated to the future generation, and the ability to provide unconditional love. See keynote address at April 6th Albany law school conference by Dr. Glenn Saltzman.

In New York, according to the U. S. 2000 Census more than 143,000 grandparents are financially responsible for children living in their homes.

Nationally, the number of grandparent headed households is increasing at a rate of 30% per decade.

Nationally, 130,000 children are living in kinship foster care. Over fourteen times that number are living with relative caregivers outside the foster care system.

Nationally, the child welfare care system spends 11 billion dollars per year on the half million children in the foster care system.

Approximately 75% of all baby boomers are grandparents.

The University of California at Berkely estimates that one in ten grandparents will become a primary caregiver for a grandchild.

Four out of every ten grandparents see their grandchildren every week.

The median age of grandparent caregivers is 57 years old.

Close to 20% of grandparent caregivers are living below the poverty level.

NOTES:

The category “non-parent caregivers” includes grandparent caregivers. However grandparents have a unique relationship to their grandchildren that warrants special legal recognition. Just as parents are the natural guardians of their children, grandparents should be recognized as the *natural substitute guardians* of their grandchildren.

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A Program of Catholic Family Center

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