

GrandFacts

State fact sheets for grandparents and other relatives raising children

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. Visit www.grandfactsheets.org to find this and all **GrandFacts** state fact sheets.

Massachusetts

The Children

- 102,103 children under age 18 live in homes where the householders are grandparents or other relatives (7.2% of the children in the state.) (*U.S. 2010 Census*)
 - Of these, 76,441 live with grandparents who are the householders (5.4% of the children in the state) and 25,662 live with other relatives who are the householders (1.8% of the children in the state). (*U.S. 2010 Census*)
- 28,079 children live in homes with grandparent householders where grandparents are responsible for them*
 - Of these children, 8,753 have no parents present in the home.*

The Grandparents*

- 30,182 grandparents are the householders and are responsible for their grandchildren living with them. Of these:
 - 66% of the grandparents are White and not Hispanic, 15% are Black/African American, 5% are Asian, and 14% are Hispanic/Latino, and may be of any race.
 - 31% have no parents of the children present in the home.
 - 65% are under age 60.
 - 13% live in poverty.**
- 3,536 grandparents in Boston are the householders and are responsible for their grandchildren living with them.

*Comparable data are not currently available for homes where other relatives are the householders.

**100% of poverty level.

Data not specifically cited are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Detailed Table B09006 and Subject Tables S1001 and S1002. Additional data on related topics and sub-state areas can be found on the Census Bureau website at <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Programs That Can Help

Local programs that provide support, resources and assistance to grandfamilies can often be found by contacting your local school, area agency on aging, community center, faith-based organization or children's services office.

The AARP GrandCare Support Locator is a free online service where programs can self-list their services and resources. Search by your city, state or zip code. www.giclocalsupport.org

Key Programs in Massachusetts

Family Caregiver Support Program – Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands

Contact: Beth Gilmore, Program Manager
Phone: 508-394-4630, Extension 450
Email: caregiver@escci.org
Website: www.escci.org
Service Area: Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket
Description: Information, referrals, help in creating a care plan and grandparent support groups

Family Caregiver Support Program – South Shore Elder Services, Inc.

Contact: Eleanor O'Neil
Phone: 781-848-3939, Extension 327
Email: honeil@sselder.org
Website: www.sselder.org
Service Area: South Shore
Description: Support, information, services to grandparents (over 55), Family Caregiver Specialist will help to create individual support plan and assistance in linking to other community resources

GrandFamilies House

Contact: Stephanie Chacker, Director of Housing Services, Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation
Phone: 617-436-0394
Email: schacker@nuestracdc.org
Website: www.nuestracdc.org
Service Area: Boston
Description: Housing designed for grandparents raising grandchildren; assistance securing child care vouchers and enrollment in nearby preschool/school-age programs

Arlington Grandparent Support Group – Town of Arlington: Council on Aging & Arlington Youth Center

Contact: Lourie August, COA Social Worker
Phone: 781-316-3410
Email: laugust@town.arlington.ma.us
Service Area: Arlington and surrounding towns
Description: Monthly daytime support group

Grandparents as Parents (GAP) – Bourne Council on Aging

Contact: Lois Carr
Phone: 508-759-0654
Email: lcarr@townofbourne.com
Website: www.bournecouncilonaging.org
Service Area: Cape Cod and surrounding area
Description: Monthly support groups, information and referral, parenting workshops, intergenerational activities, and a resource library

Grandparents as Parents Program (GAP) – Chicopee Council on Aging and Senior Center

Contact: Jim Leyden, Program Coordinator
Phone: 413-533-7333
Email: jleyden@chicopeema.gov
Website: www.chicopeema.gov
Service Area: Chicopee
Description: Support groups, help-line, legal task force, respite fund, social activities, case management, workshops on various topics, and special outreach to Latino communities in Lawrence and Lowell

J.J. Referral Services

Contact: Joanne Stephen
Phone: 781-572-0219
Email: joannejstp@aol.com
Service Area: Statewide
Description: Helps grandparents navigate the human services system to obtain basic services and provides information and referrals

McInerney Parent Services – Berkshire Children and Families, a United Way agency

Contact: Kelley DeLorenzo
Phone: 413-448-8281, Extension 17
Email: kdelorenzo@bcfcma.org
Website: www.berkshirechildren.org/bcf_parenting.html
Service Area: Pittsfield, North Adams
Description: Offers support services for child rearing issues

Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP)

Contact: Lynn Girton, Chief Counsel
Phone: 617-423-0648
Email: lgirton@vlpnet.org
Website: www.vlpnet.org
Service Area: Boston
Description: Pro bono and staff representation in uncontested guardianships/adoptions, legal representation for caregivers, and community legal education training to kinship caregivers

Children in Foster Care

- Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. This is often called “kinship care.”
- Federal law requires states to notify all known relatives within 30 days of children’s removal from their parents.

In 2009 in Massachusetts:

- 8,024 children/youth spent some time in out-of-home care
- 1,618 of these children/youth were placed in certified/licensed relative/kinship care
- 6,406 of these children/youth were placed in non-certified/unlicensed relative/kinship care

Placement Policies

- State policy requires that kin be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child under the care of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS)
- There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents and kin have to meet the same licensing standards and requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents.
- The state licensing board has allowed DSS to issue a waiver on certain space requirements for kinship homes only.
- Kin also are strongly encouraged to participate in the same training as non-kinship foster families.

Subsidized Guardianship

Massachusetts has 2 guardianship subsidy programs:

(1) A state funded program provides subsidies to children whose prospective guardian is a licensed kinship, child-specific or unrestricted resource family home. State funded subsidies may extend to age 22 at the discretion of the Department;

(2) A federally supported program under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act that provides subsidies to children who are kin of their prospective guardian who is licensed as a family resource by DCF or by a provider under a DCF contract. Guardianship subsidy is available until the child reaches the age of 18 years. Beginning in October 2010, federal support subsidies may be extended to age 21 if certain conditions are met.

Massachusetts Foster Care and Relative/Kinship Care Contacts

Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

Health and Human Services

Joy Cochran

617-748-2000

www.mass.gov

Public Benefits

Federal and state public benefits programs can help with income, food, healthcare, home energy, telephone and other needs for those who are eligible. Eligibility requirements vary with each public benefit and sometimes are different from state to state. Some benefits are for the family and others are for children or older adults individually. Children are often eligible for public benefits even if their caregivers do not have legal guardianship or custody. Grandparents may become eligible for benefits programs when their household size increases.

Help with Public Benefits

AARP Foundation's [Benefits QuickLINK](http://www.aarp.org/quicklink)

A free and private way to find out if relatives or the children they are raising qualify for programs that pay for food, increase income and cover home and healthcare costs (listed below). It gives quick results, application forms and the address and phone number of the closest office.

www.aarp.org/quicklink

Public Benefits for Older Americans:*

- Medicare Savings Programs
- Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage
- Medicare Rx Extra Help
- State Pharmaceutical Assistance programs (SPAP)
- Medicaid for Aged, Blind, and Disabled
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- State Property Tax Relief/Rebates
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Telephone Assistance (Link-Up and Lifeline)

Public Benefits for Families Raising Children*

- Medicaid for Children
- State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
- TANF-Child Only Grants
- Supplemental Security Income for Children

*Some of these programs may have age and income restrictions.

Eldercare Locator

The National Eldercare Locator service helps you find your local area agency on aging and other state and local resources that can help with public benefits, local programs and other services for older adults.

1-800-677-1116 (toll-free)

www.eldercare.gov

Key Public Benefits

Income

Each state administers federal funds that provide cash assistance to families in need. Some states also offer other forms of financial assistance.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Cash assistance may be available to eligible children and their relative caregivers.

Massachusetts Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC)

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

617-348-8500

www.mass.gov/dta/assistance

Social Security

A multigenerational program, Social Security provides income benefits to adults, older adults and children. In addition to [Retirement](#) and [Disability](#) benefits, [Survivor's Benefits](#) are based on a child's parent's earnings and may help if a child's parents die. The [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI) program pays benefits to disabled [adults](#) and [children](#) who have limited income and resources. SSI benefits are also payable to people 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial limits.

Online Directory – To find your local Social Security Administration office.

1-800-772-1213 (toll-free)

www.socialsecurity.gov/locator/

Nutrition

Relative caregivers and their families may be eligible for assistance with groceries, meals, infant formula and nutrition education. These are some of the key nutrition benefits programs and resources.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is the new name for the federal Food Stamp Program. It helps low-income individuals and families buy the food they need for good health. Although SNAP is the national name, your state may use a different name.

Massachusetts Food Assistance Program

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

1-866-950-3663 (toll-free)

www.mass.gov/snap

Food and Nutrition Services of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- **Child Nutrition Program** - The schools, early childhood education programs, child care centers, afterschool programs or other programs that children attend may offer free or reduced meals through the federal Child Nutrition Program, which provides breakfast, lunch, snacks, summer meals and milk. Contact the school or program to ask if they participate in any of the child nutrition programs and ask how to apply. Relative caregivers should inform the program that they are raising the child and whether or not they are doing so through a court order.

Online State Directory - To find your state office that manages the Child Nutrition program.

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm

- **Women, Infant and Children (WIC)** - States administer federal funds for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Online State Directory - To find your state office that manages the WIC program.

www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/statealpha.HTM

Foodbanks - Organizations that provide free food and sometimes other items, such as diapers to families in need. Feeding America is an organization that fights hunger and has a food bank locator.

Online State Directory - To find local food banks.
1-800-771-2303 (toll-free)
www.feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx

Health Care

Relative caregivers and the children they are raising may be eligible for health insurance and help with prescription drugs. **Benefits QuickLINK** can help you find these benefits.

Health Insurance for Children

Relative caregivers may apply for free or low-cost health and dental insurance for the children they are raising through the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Although CHIP is the national name, your state may use a different name.

MassCHIP

MassHealth

Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services
617-624-5629 or 1-888-MAS-CHIP (toll free in Massachusetts)
masschip.support@state.ma.us
www.mass.gov/dph/masschip

Education

- **U.S. Department of Education** - Offers a **Parent Site** that has a wide range of helpful information for parents *and* caregivers regarding children's education from early childhood through college, special needs, disabilities, language challenges and gifted students.
1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327 – toll-free)
www.ed.gov/parents
- **State Department of Education** - Relative caregivers may find helpful information about the education of children they are raising
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
781-338-3000
www.doe.mass.edu

Educational Enrollment

Relative caregivers can contact their local school district's administrative office or their local school to find out how to register the child and what paperwork is needed. Caregivers may need birth records, health records or previous school records. Some states have laws that allow relative caregivers to enroll children they are raising in school. These laws are often called "education consent" laws, but may be called something else in your state.

Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center

Online Directory - To find out if your state has an education consent law.
www.grandfamilies.org

Early Intervention, Special Education and Related Services

What you need to know:

- **The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)** - From birth to age 21, children who have learning disabilities, physical disabilities or other special needs may be able to get special early intervention, preschool and special education services in school through the federal IDEA. Services may include speech, physical, and occupational therapies.
- **Child Find** – A part of the IDEA that requires states to identify, locate and evaluate children in the areas of cognitive and physical functioning, hearing and vision, speech and language and social and emotional development as early as possible. Once the Child Find evaluation team, which includes a child's caregivers, has decided if a child is eligible for early intervention or preschool special education services, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP; birth to three years of age) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP; three to five years of age) is developed and services begin shortly at no cost.

Where to find help for children with special needs:

- **Massachusetts Department of Education- Special Education**
(781) 338-3375
specialeducation@doe.mass.edu
www.doe.mass.edu/sped
- **Massachusetts Early Intervention Program** – Massachusetts Department of Education service available to families of children between birth and three years of age. Children may be eligible for EI if they have developmental difficulties due to identified disabilities, or if typical development is at risk due to certain birth or environmental circumstances.
617-624-5901
Email: Ron.Benham@state.ma.us
www.mass.gov/dph/earlyintervention
- **The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities** guides caregivers to organizations and resources in each state and offers both English and Spanish language information.
Online State Directory – To find state and other disability organizations in your state.
1-800-695-0285 (toll-free)
www.nichcy.org/pages/statespecificinfo.aspx
- **Parent Centers** across the country provide information to help parents *and* caregivers with children who have special education needs and disabilities.
Online State Directory – To find Parent Centers in your state.
National Parent Technical Assistance Center 1-888-248-0822 (toll-free)
www.parentcenternetwork.org/parentcenterlisting

Early Childhood Education

- **Head Start and Early Head Start** – Early education programs for eligible children.
Online Directory – To find Head Start or Early Head Start centers in your state.
1-866-763-6481 (toll-free)
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>

- **The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)** - Information, resources and connection to local Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (CCR&R) that help you find local child care through the Child Care Aware program.
Online Directory – To find your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency.
1-800-424-2246 (toll-free)
www.childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians

Educational Activities

Verizon Thinkfinity - Support a child's success in school with fun learning activities and interactive games you can do together using this free online resource.

www.thinkfinity.org

State Laws

Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center

Provides an up-to-date online listing of state laws, policies and legislation that affect grandfamilies. A collaboration between [Casey Family Programs](#), the [American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law](#) and [Generations United](#), the website includes a searchable database of current laws and pending legislation by state, including:

- Adoption
- Care and Custody
- Education
- Financial Assistance
- Housing
- Kinship Navigator Programs
- Medical
- National Family Caregivers Support Programs
- Relative Foster Care
- Subsidized Guardianship
- Notification of Relatives

Online Directory – To find your state's laws affecting grandfamilies.
www.grandfamilies.org

GrandFacts Updates

If you have an update or a resource to be included in this or any of the other GrandFacts fact sheets, please visit www.grandfactsheets.org to submit updates or email grandfacts@aarp.org. Fact sheets are updated regularly.

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