In Loving Arms
Supporting Grandparents and Other Relatives
Raising Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

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Generations United
National Center on Grandfamilies


• Since 1999, the National Center on Grandfamilies has provided:
  - Wide variety of resources
  - Technical assistance and training to service providers and professionals
  - Education to policymakers on adopting supportive public policies and programs

www.gu.org
www.grandfamilies.org
NICWA works to support the safety, health, well-being, and spiritual strength of American Indian/Alaska Native children along the broad continuum of their lives. Our programming is centered on how to address structural risk—the conditions, like poverty and untreated parental mental health issues, that put families at risk for child abuse and neglect. In addition to prevention, we influence and inform the policy and practices of the tribal and state systems that respond to child abuse and neglect: child welfare, law enforcement, family support, and physical and behavioral health. Finally, as well-intentioned as systems’ interventions are, there are real consequences for children and families to the way that systems respond to child abuse and neglect. Our work includes addressing potential outcomes of system intervention through providing support and technical assistance in children’s mental health and juvenile justice programs and systems.
NICWA’s Work

NICWA promotes building tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect through positive systems change at the state, federal, and tribal levels. This includes:

• Serving as a resource to individual families
• Providing technical assistance and training
• Advocating on policy issues
• Leading tribal child welfare research
• Empowering youth
• Fostering relationships across Indian Country

These are just a few examples of the programs and services we offer. NICWA strives to be responsive to the communities we serve, and our work in community evolves.
Allegheny Family Network (AFN)

Ruth Fox, CEO 425 N. Craig Street Pittsburgh, PA 15213

- **AFN is Family Run Organization:** All staff are parents or caregivers who have “lived experience” raising a child/children with Mental Health or Behavioral Health needs and support parents who are experiencing the same concerns with their children.

- **AFN Statistics:** AFN is currently supporting 350 families with one on one support to parents/caregivers and approximately 525 – 575 total which includes Family Support Groups, Trainings, Focus Groups, Events and Activities.
  - Approximately 9% of the families AFN supports are grandparents.
  - AFN has 49 staff which includes 11 leadership, 3 administrative & 35 Family Support Partners (6 staff are grandparents raising grandchildren).
  - AFN has a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group starting in August 2018.
“For my 50th birthday ........
........I got a two-year old.”

- Pamela Livengood, grandparent caregiver
Causal Factors

- Substance abuse
- Death of a parent
- Child abuse and/or neglect
- Teenage pregnancy
- HIV/AIDS
- Military deployment
- Unemployment
- Incarceration
- Divorce
- Mental health problems
- Family violence
- Poverty
Opioid Epidemic

More than $\frac{1}{3}$ of all children placed in foster care because of parental substance abuse are placed with relatives.
Children Thrive in Grandfamilies


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For every child in foster care with relatives, there are 20 children being raised by grandparents or other relatives outside of the foster care system.
7.7 million
Number of children who live with a relative who is the head of the household

2.6 million
Number of children who are being raised by a relative or close family friend and do not have a parent living in the household

139,017
Number of children being raised by relatives who are also foster parents
Ruth’s Story

• Christmas Eve 2015 our life changed
• My son who was a loving caring father was gripped by addiction
• Torn between helping my grandchildren and maintaining a relationship with my son
• Mourning the loss of the life I dreamed for my son
  - Child Welfare involvement
  - Testifying against my own son
  - Children morning the loss of Daddy
• Parenting again at this stage of our lives
  - Physical Health concerns
  - Working with the school (IEP)
  - Children’s trauma concerns
  - Your social life totally changes
  - Concerns about childcare
• Incarceration
• Children’s conflicted feelings
• Continuing to hold HOPE
• Financial concerns – working longer
• Feeling overwhelmed – when it’s the time of life to relax & enjoy
• Thinking about your age when the children graduate
• How to balance time with other grandchildren
• Plans for alternative care should you be unable to continue

#LEADINGCHANGE
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) of Children in Child Welfare System Compared to General Population:

- No ACEs: 1% in Child Welfare, 36% in General Population
- 4 or more ACEs: 51% in Child Welfare, 13% in General Population

Children in foster care in the U.S. are at least 5 times more likely to have anxiety, depression and/or behavioral problems than children not in foster care.
38% of children under 3 in the child welfare system have 4 or more ACEs.

Children Under Age Three
Impact on Children

“I thought because my grandkids were babies (6 month, 1 ½, 2 ½) they were not going to have any problems. Boy was I wrong! They had problems with separation anxiety; it was so painful to see them go through this. I had to tell them a hundred times a day how much I loved them and was never going to leave them”

– Delia, grandmother raising her grandchildren
Children’s Mental Health/Social Issues

- Trauma
- Attachment
- Abandonment
- Stigma/Feeling Different
- Loss/Separation from Friends
- Cognitive Issues
- Fear about Caregiver’s Health
- Weight/Responsibility/Fear/Guilt about other Family Members
- Multiple Loyalties
Protective Role of Grandparents
Benefits of Grandfamilies

- Positive Child-Caregiver Relationships and Adults who Model Healthy Relationships
- Relationships with Extended Family
- Stable Living Environment
- Safety, Belonging & Feeling Loved
- Brothers / Sisters & Cultural Identity
- Stability & Permanency
Grandparents

Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren (2015)

In the U.S. 2,572,146 grandparents are responsible for grandchildren.

- 1,458,407: 57% of them are in the workforce.
- 1,022,872: 40% of them are over 60.
- 509,285: 20% of them live below the poverty line.
- 642,739: 25% of them have a disability.
- 1,070,885: 42% of them have provided care for 5 years or more.
Amount grandparents and other relatives save taxpayers each year by raising children and keeping them out of foster care.

Cost Savings
Caregiver Mental Health & Social Issues

• **Grieving the Loss of:**
  - Adult Child
  - Expected Life of/Relationship with Adult Child
  - Expectation of “Healthy” Grandchild
  - Traditional Grandparent Role
  - Peer Friendships
  - Expected Retirement Experience
  - Retirement Savings/Financial Security

• Feeling Embarrassed or Ashamed

• Dual Loyalties

• Rock of the Family
Other Challenges

- Children’s physical health
- Caregiver’s physical health
- Inadequate supportive services/respite
- Financial
- Housing
- Legal Issues Educational and medical consent
- Information/navigation services
Strengths of Grandfamilies
Chad Dingle

“...most people go to grandma’s house and get spoiled but for me it was the only safe place I had...getting to live with grandma was like ‘going to grandma’s house’ all the time. I had more love there than anywhere else in my life.”
Children Thrive in Grandfamilies

- Higher Levels of Permanency
- Greater Safety
- Better Behavioral and Mental Health Outcomes
- More Positive Feelings About Where They Live
- Increased Likelihood of Living With or STAYING Connected to Siblings
- Greater Preservation of Cultural Identity and Community Connections

See the “Children Thrive in Grandfamilies” fact sheet, available at www.grandfamilies.org and www.gu.org
Blessings

“I feel blessed to have this boy in my life. He is a treasure, and most likely, I would not be here without him. He gave me something positive to focus on, rather than the heartaches and sadness and grief. I have a renewed sense of hope, that I’m doing something worthwhile.”

- Seelye, 2016
Simone Biles- a Grand Success

“IT IS A WONDERFUL THING. IT GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENRICH THE LIFE OF YOURSELF AND THE CHILD, AND ENRICH EVERYONE WHO IS INVOLVED IN YOUR LIFE.”

- RON BILES, SIMONE’S MATERNAL GRANDFATHER AND FATHER, SAID OF ADOPTION
Considerations for American Indian/Alaska Native Families
Your turn....

• What types of supports and services exist in your community that could be helpful to grandfamilies?
• What gaps in supports and services exist?
• How existing services in your community be adapted to better support grandfamilies?
Policy Opportunities

• Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act
  ➢ Federal Task Force (public input)
  ➢ Information on Federal Supports

• Family First Preventions Services Act
  ➢ Prevention Services
  ➢ Kinship Navigator Programs
  ➢ Licensing Relatives
Resources from Generations United

www.gu.org
• Sign up for e-alerts at www.gu.org
  ➢ Generations This Week (GTW) – Weekly Intergenerational News
  ➢ The Grand Voice – Quarterly Grandfamilies News

• Helpful Publications/Fact Sheets
  ➢ Annual State of Grandfamilies Reports- Trauma, Opioid etc.
  ➢ Grandparents’ and Other Relatives’ Guide to Raising Children with Disabilities
  ➢ Fact Sheet to Help Grandfamilies Access TANF
  ➢ Grand Successes: Stories of Lives Well-Raised
  ➢ Children Thrive in Grandfamilies Fact Sheet
  ➢ Grandfamilies Research Annotated Bibliography
Resources from NICWA

- Latest Child and Family Policy Update
- Effective Leadership for Tribal Child Welfare
- Online ICWA Course
  https://www.nicwa.org/online-icwa-course/
- The Heart of ICWA
  https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRRmU68lh20mEwUnSKnSavA
• Attachment and Bonding in Indian Child Welfare

• A Guide to Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act

• ICWA Training and Technical Assistance Opportunities
  https://www.nicwa.org/technical-assistance/
Additional Resources

• Generations United, National Center on Grandfamilies  www.gu.org
• Children’s Defense Fund  www.childrensdefense.org
• Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center  www.grandfamilies.org
• Fact sheets for each state with data and resources  www.grandfactsheets.org
• Extension  www.extension.org/category/family_caregiving_grandparents_raising_grandchildren
• National Kinship Alliance for Children  http://kinshipalliance.org/
• Annie E. Casey Foundation  www.aecf.org
• Casey Family Programs,  www.casey.org
• ChildTrends www.childtrends.org
• Brookdale Foundation Group www.brookdalefoundation.org/
• AARP – www.aarp.org
  ➢ Grandfamilies Guide -
• SAMHSA Wellness Strategies -
  https://www.samhsa.gov/wellness стратегии
Any Questions?