



601 E Street, NW | Washington, DC 20049  
202-434-2277 | 1-888-OUR-AARP | 1-888-687-2277 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598  
www.aarp.org | twitter: @aarp | facebook.com/aarp | youtube.com/aarp

January 29, 2020

Administrator Lance Robertson  
Administration for Community Living  
330 C St SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Robertson:

On behalf of AARP's nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, thank you for the opportunity to offer information to assist the Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in the development of an initial report to Congress.

AARP helps empower people to choose how they live as they age and fights for the issues that matter most to families. AARP provides information and resources to grandparents raising grandchildren and advocates for a number of federal programs that support caregivers, including grandparents stepping in to care for their grandchildren.

Grandparents can be a stabilizing force for their grandchildren. Nationwide, nearly 2.6 million people are raising grandchildren. Grandparents raising grandchildren face unique challenges, such as trying to navigate legal, financial, health, work, housing, and social challenges.

While grandparents may find their new role rewarding, it can have implications on their health and financial security. Many grandparents are financially responsible for meeting the day-to-day expenses of caring for a grandchild. For some, the new parental role may come at a time in life when they are saving for or living in their retirement years and consequently relying on a modest or fixed income. A little help can go a long way toward helping grandparents raise the children in their care.

Below, in response to the request for information, we offer information on resources and programs to help grandparents, other relatives, kinship caregivers and the children they care for.

**Please tell us about any existing information, resources, programs and/or best practices that help grandparents, older relatives and/or kinship caregivers do the following:**

- **Meet the mental/physical health, educational or nutritional needs of those for whom they provide care**

Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Carolina | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Puerto Rico | Rhode Island | South Carolina | South Dakota | Tennessee | Texas | Utah | Vermont | Virgin Islands | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming

AARP's [GrandFamilies Guide](#) provides tips, tools, and resources for the services and support grandparents need to take care of themselves and their family. Specific to meeting the mental/physical health, educational or nutritional needs of those for whom they provide care, the guide includes the following:

- Health: Information on health insurance, medical care, and programs to help with the nutrition needs of children and families with lower incomes.
- Education and child care: Information on options for child care, financial assistance for child care, enrolling grandchildren in school, and assistance for school lunches.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), administered by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), provides grants to states and territories to fund a range of supports that directly address the needs of families in their caregiving role. A portion of funding for NFCSP can be used to support grandparents or older relatives caring for children or adults with disabilities. States and territories in partnership with Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and local service providers offer five core services including information for caregivers about available services, assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services, caregiver education/training, individual counseling, and support groups, respite care, and supplemental services. These categories of support services are broad and flexible so that they can be responsive to the needs of the caregivers being served. For example, respite could include in-home services, providers taking the children on outings, or day or residential camps for the children. Support services may also include school supplies, children's clothing, eye glasses, medical/dental services, and legal assistance.

**Please tell us about any existing information, resources, programs and/or best practices that help grandparents, older relatives and/or kinship caregivers do the following:**

- **Address other concerns such as legal assistance, financial support and affordable housing associated with this population of caregivers and care recipients**

AARP's [GrandFamilies Guide](#) referenced above also provides information on finding assistance to locate or improve a home in order to care for a child. The guide also provides answers to some frequently asked questions around legal issues.

As stated above, NFCSP provides support services that may include financial assistance and legal support.

**Please tell us about any existing information, resources, programs and/or best practices that help grandparents, older relatives and/or kinship caregivers do the following:**

- **Maintain their own physical and mental health, and emotional and financial wellbeing**

In addition to the above areas AARP's [GrandFamilies Guide](#) addresses, the guide also provides information on the following:

- Getting started: Answers to initial, key questions such as what documents the grandparent may need, who they should talk to and what questions to ask them, and a list of phone numbers to have on hand.

- Support: Answers to questions about finding support to ensure that grandparent caregivers have the support system they need to help them with the tasks at hand.
- Finances: Information on public benefits that the grandparent or grandchild may qualify for.
- Work: Guidance on what to consider, and where to find career advice and assistance in finding the right job while caring for a child.
- Family challenges: When grandparents or other relatives step in to care for children, there is often a family crisis or chronic problem. The guide provides information and advice for dealing with the family challenges.

AARP also offers a variety of resources, tips, and tools for family caregivers of all types at its [Family Caregiving site](#), including resources to help with caregiver life balance as they juggle work, relationships, family challenges, and isolation.

In 2013, AARP Kansas, in coordination with the project’s partnership groups, opened a [grandparents park](#) in Wichita, KS. Since the area is home to numerous older residents, many of whom care for grandchildren during the day, the park project was seen as a way for adults to get exercise while providing a fun outdoor activity for children. The park houses an exercise station geared toward people age 50 and older and a playground for children. There is also a paved walking trail, park benches, and a drinking fountain.

AARP, in collaboration with Generations United, The Brookdale Foundation Group, ABA Center on Children and the Law, Casey Family Programs, ChildFocus, Child Trends, Children’s Defense Fund, and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption produces [state fact sheets](#) for grandparents and other relatives raising children. The state-specific fact sheets include data, key state and local program and resources, public benefits, educational assistance, legal relationship options, and state laws.

Unfortunately, food insecurity among older Americans is all too common. Households with grandchildren are nearly three times as likely to be food insecure. Food insecurity is linked with poor health outcomes. A number of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition programs provide critical food assistance for low-income households, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Additionally, AARP Foundation—the charitable affiliate of AARP—is working to bring the problem of senior hunger out of the shadows. The Foundation’s food security team is building philanthropic support, helping older adults apply for SNAP benefits, and making it easier to shop for good, nutritious food on a limited budget.

The Lifespan Respite Care Program, administered by ACL, helps family caregivers of children and adults of all ages with special needs by providing respite services, training respite workers and volunteers, providing information about and assistance in accessing services, and better coordinating services.

**Please tell us about any existing information, resources, programs and/or best practices that meet the needs of:**

- **Native American tribes**

The Native American Caregiver Support Program provides grants to enable tribal organizations to provide multifaceted systems of support services to meet the needs of the caregivers including grandparents caring for grandchildren. Similar to NFCSP, support services include information and outreach, access assistance, individual counseling, support groups and training, respite care, and other supplemental services.

**Please share any additional recommendations you have for supporting grandparents and older relatives caring for children?**

While the following are not recommendations, we thought it would be helpful to share research that can inform the work of the Council. In 2012, AARP produced a report, [Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents](#) that highlights the results of two grandparenting studies conducted in 2011. The report provides a snapshot of the experiences, triumphs and challenges of grandparents age 50+ as described by in-depth interview of participants, by summarizing the current research on grandparents age 50+, including topics such as grandparents raising grandchildren. When grandparents raising their grandchildren were asked what types of information or service they think grandparents raising grandchildren need, they listed a variety of things including information on:

- Communication with grandchildren at various ages, particularly during adolescence
- Developmental issues—physical, mental, emotional (e.g., peer pressure, bullying)
- Drugs and alcohol
- Autism
- How to parent as a grandparent
- Modern technology, including use of social media, texting and email abbreviations (e.g., BFF, LOL)
- Age-appropriate activities to do with grandchildren
- Information to help grandchildren with their school work
- Grandparents' rights
- Financial planning for college

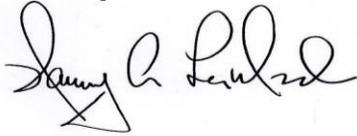
Grandparents in the quantitative study who were primary caregivers listed similar informational needs:

- How to cope with the stress of raising children
- Grandparents' legal rights
- The latest information on childcare/rearing
- How to pay for college
- How to get child help with homework
- Age appropriate activities for grandchildren
- How to prepare a healthy diet for kids/prevent obesity
- Medical insurance

Additionally, AARP recently released a report, [2018 Grandparents Today National Survey: General Population Report](#). While the study looked more broadly at grandparents, and not specifically at grandparents raising grandchildren, it did find that one in ten grandparents are living in the same household with their grandchildren, and 5 percent of those are the primary caregiver.

Thank you for your leadership in helping to support families led by grandparents or other relatives. We look forward to working with you on this and other issues important to older Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy A. LeMond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "L".

Nancy A. LeMond  
Executive Vice President and  
Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer