



Ohio & Kinship Care: The Challenge for Grandparents & Other Caregivers

Kinship care is defined as a situation where a family member or close friend provides temporary or permanent care because the parent is unable or unwilling to do so. Children may be placed in kinship care for a variety of reasons, ranging from abuse or neglect of the child or death of a parent, to a parent who is incarcerated or dealing with substance abuse or mental health issues. These relationships may be formal, with the court and children services deciding that it is in the best interest of the child to be separated from the parent, or informal, where the relative or friend is asked by the parent to take on the daily care of the child.

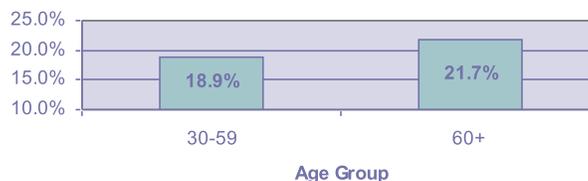
Studies have shown kinship care is generally a better alternative than foster care for children whose parents are unable to fulfill that role.¹ Kinship care allows the child to maintain relationships with the parent and other family members, resulting in a less traumatic transition and helps the child grow and develop to their full potential. They are moved fewer times than children in foster care, are frequently able to stay in the same community and school, and also experience less government intervention, thus providing a more secure environment. Overall, children in kinship care have greater stability in their placement, go to school more often, perform better academically, and have fewer disciplinary problems.

Nationally, more than 6 million children are living in households headed by grandparents (4.5 million children) or other relatives (1.5 million children). The U.S. Census 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) shows that 2.5 million grandparents are taking on the primary responsibility for their grandchildren's basic needs.² In many of these homes the parent of the child is absent. According to the 2005 ACS for Ohio, an estimated 88,100 grandparents are responsible for approximately 87,000 grandchildren under 18 years and of these, 40,000 are with no parent present.

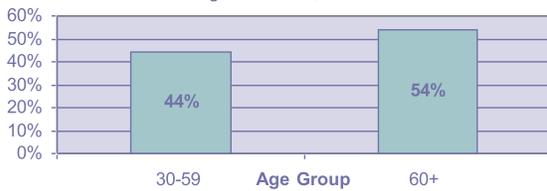
The Face of Kinship Care in Ohio THE CAREGIVERS

Despite the positive effect kinship care has on the children it serves, the caregivers face a variety of challenges. They are often older adults such as grandparents and may be on a fixed or limited income. They did not anticipate the responsibility of additional children and had not planned for the financial burden. These friends and family members have generously chosen to help the children in their care, but they do not always have the means to do so. Many of the caregivers are on fixed incomes which do not adjust for the unexpected addition of a child. In fact, 19.7 percent of all grandparents

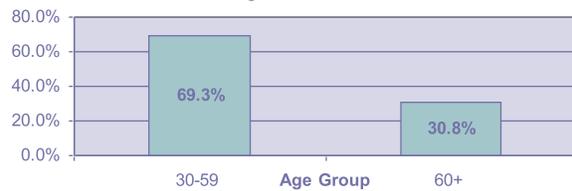
2005
Percent of Ohio Grandparents Responsible for
Grandchildren in Poverty By Age
Total # Ages 30-59: 62,737
Total # Ages 60+: 25,388



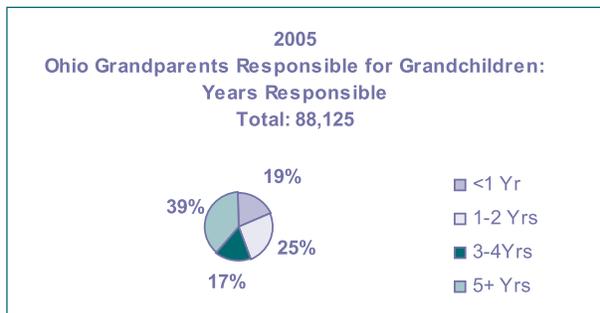
Ohio
Percent of Ohio Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren with No Parent Present by Age
 Total # Ages 30-59: 67,737
 Total # Ages 60+: 25,388



2005
Percent of Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren in Labor Force By Age
 Total # Ages 30-59: 62,737
 Total # Ages 60+: 25,388

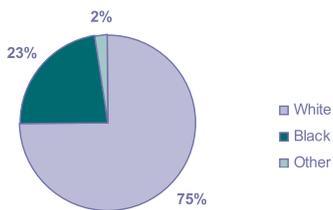


raising their grandchildren are living in poverty and the median income is \$31,769 for households with no parent present.³ The average age of grandparent caregivers is 55 years⁴ with many of them being employed, and needing safe, reasonable, child care while they are at work. They also must deal with legal issues such as establishing custody, in order to have the authority to make decisions regarding the welfare of the child. Many of these arrangements are long term with 39 percent of grandparents being responsible for their grandchildren for 5 or more years. Consequently, these kinship caregivers are in need of many forms of aid, especially financial assistance to cover the unexpected costs of raising children, legal advice to obtain documentation for school and medical purposes, affordable child care so they can continue to work, emotional support from others encountering the same obstacles, and assistance accessing the services available.

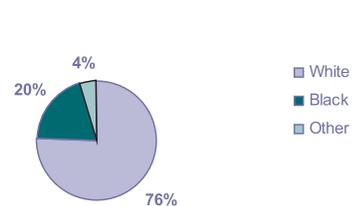


According to the 2005 ACS, 84 percent of Ohio's total population is White, 12 percent is Black, and 4 percent other races. Data for the same period shows that of the 88,000 Ohio grandparent caregivers, the racial makeup is 75 percent White; 23 percent were Black, although making up only 12 percent of the total population, and 2 percent other races. Of the total number of grandparent caregivers, 60 percent are female and 67 percent are married.

2005
Ohio Grandparents Aged 60+ Responsible for Grandchildren by Race
 Total: 25,388



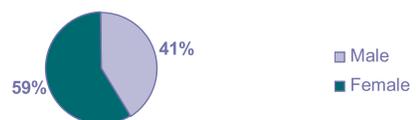
2005
Ohio Grandparents Aged 30-59 Responsible for Grandchildren By Race
 Total: 62,737



2005
Ohio Grandparents Aged 30-59 Years Responsible for Grandchildren by Gender
 Total: 62,737



2005
Ohio Grandparents Aged 60+ Years Responsible for Grandchildren by Gender
 Total: 25,388



2005
Percent of Ohio Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren By Age & Marital Status

Total # Ages 30-59: 67,737
 Total # Ages 60+: 25,388



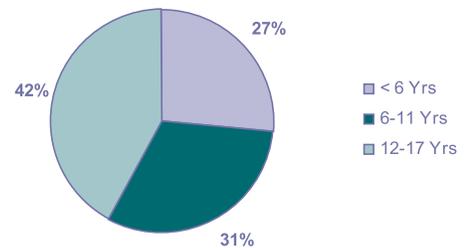
THE CHILDREN

In 2005, over 40,000 children lived with grandparents with no parent present. Over 20 percent of these children came with physical, emotional, educational and mental challenges for which the caregivers must try to find appropriate help and support. Sixty percent of the children were ages birth to 11. Although only 12 percent of Ohio's population is Black, almost three times as many of the children living with grandparents were Black.⁵

The 2005 ACS also reported that 39 percent of Ohio children with grandparents were receiving public assistance (SSI income, cash public assistance income or Food Stamps) and 31 percent were living in families below the poverty level which was an income of \$19,350 for a family of four.⁶ The number of child only recipients of monthly public cash assistance payments in June 2007, was 86,957.⁷ This is more than half of the total number of cash assistance recipients for the month.

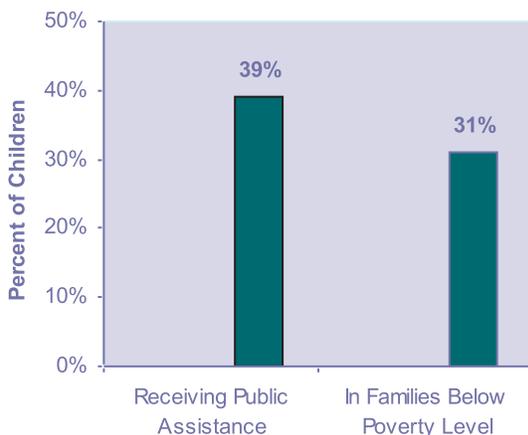
2005
Ohio Grandchildren Living with Grandparent with No Parent Present by Age

Total: 40,283



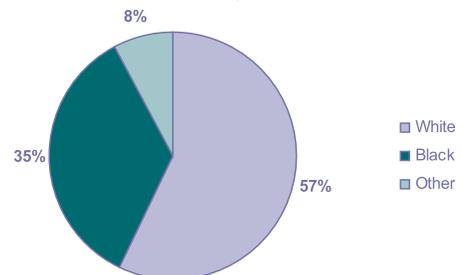
2005
Ohio Grandchildren Under 18 Years Living with a Grandparent with No Parent Present: Economics

Total: 40,283



2005
Ohio Grandchildren Living With Grandparents with No Parent Present By Race

Total: 40,283



County Kinship Profiles

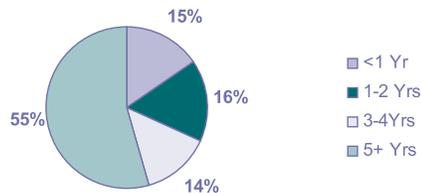
The following data and charts provide information on grandparents as kinship caregivers in the larger Ohio counties:⁸

Cuyahoga County

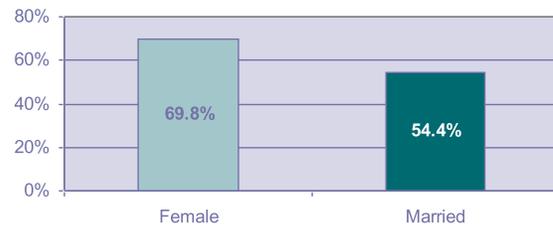
Number of grandchildren living with grandparents – 21,518

Number of children in receipt of OWF Child Only cash assistance for June 2007 – 14,137

2005
Cuyahoga County: Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren: Years Responsible
Total: 10,399



2005
Cuyahoga County: Characteristics of Grandparents Responsible For Grandchildren
Total: 10,399

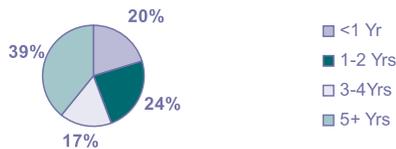


Franklin County

Number of grandchildren living with grandparents – 15,125

Number of children in receipt of OWF Child Only cash assistance for June 2007– 11,498

2005
Franklin County: Grandparents Responsible For Grandchildren: Years Responsible
Total: 9,049



2005
Franklin County: Characteristics of Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren
Total: 9,049

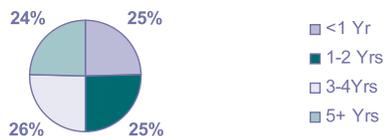


Hamilton County

Number grandchildren living with grandparents – N/A⁹

Number of children in receipt of OWF Child Only cash assistance for June 2007 - 7,680

2005
Hamilton County: Grandparents Responsible For Grandchildren: Years Responsible
Total: 6,259



2005
Hamilton County: Characteristics of Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren
Total: 6,259



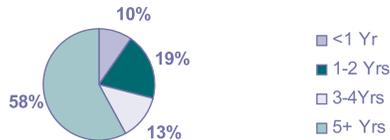


Lucas County

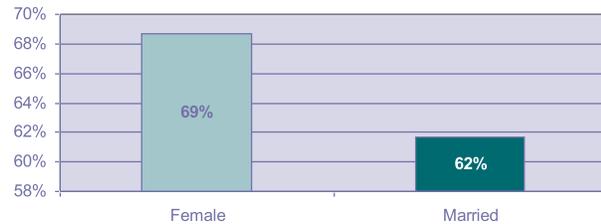
Number of grandchildren living with grandparents - N/A

Number of children in receipt of OWF Child Only cash assistance for June 2007 - 5,844

2005
Lucas County: Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren: Years Responsible
Total: 2,764



2005
Lucas County: Characteristics of Grandparents Responsible For Grandchildren
Total: 2,764

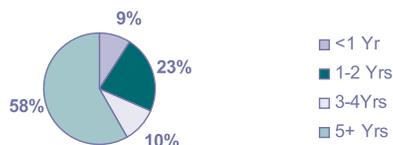


Montgomery County

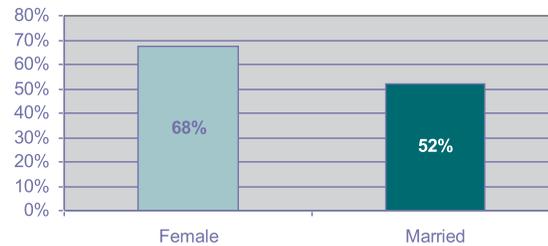
Number of grandchildren living with grandparents - N/A

Number of children in receipt of OWF Child Only cash assistance for June 2007 - 5,567

2005
Montgomery County: Grandparents Responsible For Grandchildren: Years Responsible
Total: 5,023



2005
Montgomery County: Characteristics of Grandparents Responsible For Grandchildren
Total: 5,023

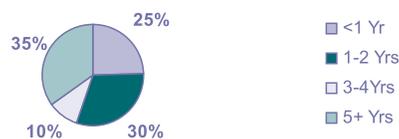


Summit County

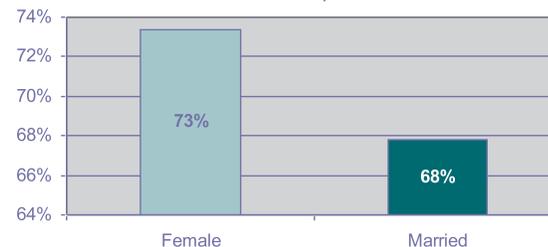
Number of grandchildren living with grandparents - N/A

Number of children in receipt of OWF Child Only cash assistance for June 2007 - 4,410

2005
Summit County: Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren: Years Responsible
Total: 2,839



2005
Summit County: Characteristics of Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren
Total: 2,839



Is There Help?

There are a variety of supports and resources available to kinship caregivers in Ohio.

- The Ohio Grandparent/Kinship Coalition is the statewide nonprofit organization comprised of caregivers and agency representatives who provide support to kinship caregivers. Quarterly meetings are held to discuss and recommend solutions addressing kinship care issues, a statewide newsletter and annual conference are current activities of the coalition. Membership is open to anyone interested in kinship care. Contact the Children’s Defense Fund at (614) 221-2244 for more information.
- The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Kinship Care Advisory Board is made up of kinship caregivers and representatives of state and private agencies. The group meets quarterly and provides recommendations to the Director of ODJFS on kinship policy. For more information, contact ODJFS at (614) 466-1213
- The Grandparent Caregiver Power of Attorney (POA) and Grandparent Caregiver Authorization Affidavit both give authorization to grandparents to access healthcare and enroll children in school without having to have legal custody. The POA is authorized by the parent; the Authorization Affidavit is available when the whereabouts of the parent is unknown. These documents can be obtained by contacting the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office for Children and Families at 614-466-1213, Children’s Defense Fund – OH at (614) 221-2244 or on the Public Children Services Association of Ohio web site www.pcsao.org.
- Kinship caregivers have access to Kinship Navigator Programs at the county level which help caregivers access support services. These programs that help caregivers make their way through the “systems”, vary from county to county, but they may facilitate local support groups, respite services, legal help, and provide information and referrals to other programs. These begin to provide support for kinship caregivers, but those that are contingent on the caregiver’s income prevent many needy kinship households from accessing them. Furthermore, the Kinship Navigator Program does not exist in all counties and the extent of its services varies from one location to another, as does the level of support it provides to caregivers. Contact the county public children services agency to find out if there is a Kinship Navigator Program in your county.
- In addition to the receipt of TANF benefits, kinship caregivers may also be eligible for assistance through the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (KPI). This program, supported by TANF dollars, provides payments to eligible caregivers for the child(ren) in their care. To receive these payments, the caregiver must have been awarded legal custody or guardianship on or after July 1, 2005; have a household income of no more than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$40,860 for a family of two); complete a site and safety audit through a child welfare agency; and receive criminal background checks for all of the adults in the household. The potential maximum payment is \$3,500 over a three year period for each child living with the caregiver, with an initial payment of \$1,000, and an additional \$500 every six months. This program provides limited support for those who qualify, but many needy households do not meet the requirements. Furthermore, those who do meet the requirements only receive funding every six months rather than on a monthly basis, and the funding ends after three years, even if the child is still in kinship care. Thus, the program attempts to assist with the initial needs of the child’s care, but fails to provide adequate support for the ongoing costs of raising a child. These funds, when provided, are also significantly less than those provided for the care of children in foster care, with an average ongoing monthly payment of \$600 instead of every six months, resulting in a significant disparity between the two programs. The requirement that the custody or guardianship be awarded on or after July 1, 2005 prevents children who were placed before this point, in informal rather than formal arrangements, from receiving any of this aid. To apply for KPI benefits, contact your county public children services agency.



- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credits (CTC) are tax credits for low-to moderate-income working families and individuals who file a federal tax return. The refund amount depends on income level, marital status and the number of children in care. If the caregiver qualifies, they will owe less in taxes and may receive cash back. If no taxes are owed, the entire amount will be received. For questions contact the IRS at (800) 829-1040 or CDF at (614) 221-2244.
- Child support may be available from the parent. Contact the county child support enforcement agency for more information.
- Adoption assistance provides a monthly cash benefit and medical coverage for the care of the child if a caregiver makes the decision to adopt and the eligibility requirements are met. For more information about adoption and adoption assistance, contact the county children services agency.

Applications for the following programs can be made at the county department of job and family services.

- Ohio Works First provides kinship caregivers with monthly TANF Child Only cash assistance payments. These benefits are \$245 per month for the first child, plus \$91 for each additional sibling and the benefit may be received until the child's 18th birthday. Eligibility is not based on the caregiver's income and there is no work requirement. While this is a much needed resource for kinship caregivers, each child is costly and \$91 falls far short of meeting the needs of additional children.
- Children in kinship care qualify for health insurance through Ohio's Healthy Start and Healthy Families programs.
- All preschoolers in receipt of Child Only cash assistance and in kinship care are eligible for the Early Learning Initiative, which combines early childhood education with childcare.
- Kinship caregivers with low incomes may be eligible to receive child care subsidies, PRC Emergency Funds, and Food Stamps.

Ohio has taken some positive steps towards assisting kinship households, but greater support still must be provided for caregivers to help them overcome the challenges they face. CDF-OH recommends the following policy implementation:

- Rather than funding caregivers every six months for three years, the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program should be improved to give monthly and ongoing assistance to each child as

long as they are in kinship placement or until they reach the age of 18. This change would assist caregivers in meeting the continual costs of childcare and provide support for each child in the household.

- The Kinship Permanency Incentive Program eligibility date of July 1, 2005, should be eliminated. The program should support informal care arrangements that allow caregivers to care for the child with the intention of the child returning to the parent when he or she is able to fulfill that role. Temporary care giving is a better alternative than foster care for children in these situations, and these caregivers should be given enough financial support to provide for the child in the parent's absence.
- If the child is eligible for subsidized child care or food stamps in the home of the parent, that eligibility should follow the child to the kinship home. These children are needy regardless of their location, and any aid they are receiving should remain with them.
- The Kinship Navigator program should be funded as a line item in the state budget to increase county provision of this service.
- De Facto Custodianship should be legalized. This form of custodianship would allow caregivers who have been responsible for the primary support of the child for a given period of time to gain legal custody of the child without governmental intervention, granting them the same legal standing as the parents. De Facto Custody would provide kinship caregivers with more rights regarding the care of the kinship child, but would be less disruptive to the child's life.

Investing adequate federal and state financial supports to caregivers, such as the subsidized guardianship, child care and food stamps, will allow more family members and friends to take on the role of a kinship caregiver and result in fewer children in foster care. The number of children under age 18 in foster care at any time in the year in 2004 was 28,976.¹⁰ If all of the children in kinship care were to be placed in foster care, the system could not support them. Children in the care of kin experience greater placement stability, more interaction with their parents and family members, better academic performance, and fewer disciplinary problems within their community than children in foster care, thus demonstrating that kinship care is a better alternative than foster care, and an area worthy of greater investment by the state of Ohio.

References

Ohio Kinship Supports: <http://www.pcsao.org/KinshipSupports.htm>

Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care: <http://www.pewfostercare.org>

IV-E Guardianship Evaluations:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs_fund/cwwaiver/agissue/execsum.htm

Generations United: <http://path.gu.org/Grand8101303.asp>

Fostering Results "Family Ties": http://www.fosteringresults.org/results/reports/pewreports_10-13-04_alreadyhome.pdf

AARP Ohio. "A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children." <http://www.aarp.org>

"Preventive" Subsidized Guardianship Programs An Emerging Option for Kinship Care.

Cornerstone Consulting Group Inc. Houston, Texas. December 2006.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Fact Sheet. "Ohio Works First." <http://jfs.ohio.gov/factsheets/OWF.pdf>

Children's Defense Fund- Ohio: www.childrensdefense.org

Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT: www.kidscount.org



Acknowledgements

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Footnotes

- 1 2005 American Community Survey
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=
- 2 Children and Family Research Center *Fostering Results* "Family Ties"
http://www.fosteringresults.org/results/reports/pewreports_10-13-04_alreadyhome.pdf
- 3 2005 American Community Survey http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=
- 4 1998 University of Cincinnati Institute for Policy Research Grandparents Raising Grandchildren report
- 5 2005 American Community Survey
- 6 2005 Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines; *Federal Register*, Vol. 70, No. 33, February 18, 2005, pp. 8373-8375
- 7 Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, Office of Research and Evaluation; June 2007 Ohio Works First Child Only Cases
- 8 2005 American Community Survey
- 9 This data is not available for Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery or Summit counties due to low population thresholds.
- 10 The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2007 KIDS COUNT Data BookChart .



Children's Defense Fund-Ohio