



Taking Care of Your Grandchildren

Legal Issues

Find out what the rules and regulations are within your state before making any decisions. For example, in some instances, signing a form with a child welfare agency accepting sole responsibility for a child may end your rights to any foster care payments. Always remember to ask yourself and the involved professional; "What will happen if I...."

Parents and relatives have the legal right to make an informal child care arrangement. If there is a dispute or the parent does not want to give you authority, you will need legal help and court involvement.

You may need some kind of legally recognized status, such as custody, guardianship, or adoption. Look for help at:

Local Department of Social Services
Foster Care, Adoption, & Family Service Agency
Legal Aid Society

Financial Issues

There are a variety of programs that your grandchildren may be entitled to:

AFDC Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, foster care payments, adoption assistance, public housing, supplemental security income (SSI), and AC (Women, Infants, and Children). Look for help at:

State social services office. Ask for information about kinship foster care assistance, how to apply for food stamps, AFDC, and AC.

Social Security Administration

Religious or Charitable groups. Many provide food, clothing, transportation and general aid.

Support groups/coalitions. Contact the AARP Grandparent Information Center to find out if there is a group in your area.

Child care

Day care is now widely available in most communities and may offer everything from a few hours each day to full-time care or nursery school programs. Some day care is priced on a sliding fee scale according to your ability to pay. Look for help:

Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
YMCA/YWCA, Jewish Centers, Day Care Assn.
Churches and synagogues (may sponsor program)
State or Local Social Services/Child Welfare
 (For financial assistance, subsidized care)

Local School System (Head start, before and after school care)

Religious or civic volunteer groups or baby sitting co-ops.

Medical Care/Insurance

Except for certain conditions (such as adoption), most medical insurance policies do not cover your grandchildren. Call your insurance carrier to find out.

You may be able to get coverage from a program such as Medicaid or state medical assistance. Early Periodic Diagnosis, Screening, and Treatment (EPDST) is a program for children covered under Medicaid for well baby visits. Look for help:

State or Local Social Services Dept. (Medicaid benefits)

Community Health Clinic (EPDST)

State or Local Public Health Office (free or low cost health programs)

Schooling

With informal authority from parent, or legal authority, you should be able to enroll the child in school and make any requests or decisions about the child's education.

Sometimes, the adjustment to a new setting and the emotional adjustment required shows up in problems at school. Be aware of this and don't hesitate to seek help through the school or on your own. Keep in touch with the school

regularly to see how the child is doing. Look for help:

School counselor or principal (academic, emotional or psychological problems).

Local school (special education services for special needs such as developmental delays and learning disabilities)

Local mental health department (counseling or peer support groups for your grandchild).

Psychological/Emotional

There may be many emotional and psychological issues that the children will face. Talk with your grandchildren about his/her feelings and listen carefully. Seek outside help from any resources to help your grandchild make a successful adjustment. Parenting your grandchild will likely be a challenging responsibility. Look for help:

Local Mental Health Dept. Or Association

Local Family Service Agency

Private Therapist or Social Worker

School Counselor

Local Clergy or Religious Group

Information contained in this tip sheet taken from "Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren" by the AARP Grandparent Information Center (1993).



The Center for Parent Involvement (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi. The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPIY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

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