



Tools for Working with Kinship Caregivers

by Susan Dougherty

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Training Materials

1. *A Tradition of Caring* is a comprehensive six-module, nine-session curriculum, providing kinship caregivers with 27 hours of valuable information and support related to kinship care. Sessions are designed to facilitate interaction and the sharing of experiences and support among participants. Meetings utilize a task-based, strengths-oriented approach to learning. During the course of this program, each participant develops a comprehensive individualized action plan for accessing needed resources and meeting identified family needs.

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2. The Kinship Care Practice Project at the Jane Addams College of Social Work has prepared curriculum materials intended to prepare child welfare caseworkers for engaging family members of children in the custody of the child welfare system in development of a permanent plan for the child. The materials may also be useful tools for child welfare practice and policy, generalist practice, family intervention, and human behavior courses. The six learning units are:
 - The Context of Practice in Kinship Foster Care: Formal and Informal System Constraints and Opportunities
 - The Sociocultural Contexts of Kinship Care
 - Substance Abuse and Its Impact on Family Systems
 - Convening the Kinship Network
 - Decision-Making & Family Empowerment
 - Supporting Permanent Plans

¹ This paper was originally prepared by the Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support in 2001. It has been updated by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning.

Both written materials and video segments can be downloaded from the College's website at

http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/kinicare/curriculum_videos/curriculum_videos.html

3. The Center for Child and Family Programs at Eastern Michigan University has developed two curricula dealing with kinship care:
 - The *Kinship Training Program* for child welfare workers is designed to provide factual information, sensitize workers to the strengths and needs of kinship families, and highlight strategies and techniques for developing effective helping relationships and interventions with the extended family system to support intra-familial child placements. It consists of four 3-hour modules.
 - The *Kinship Caregiver Forums* provide the guidelines for presentation to caregivers. Each of the nine forums provides participants an opportunity to discuss issues of concern, exchange ideas, and develop supportive networks. Each forum provides instructions for the presentation of the session as well as participant handouts. Materials are available for purchase from:
Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Communities
203 Boone Hall
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Phone: 734-487-0372
Fax: 734-487-0284

Website:

<http://www.iscfc.emich.edu/Publications/ISCFC%20-%20Publications%20-%20Kinship%20Training%20Materials.htm>

4. *Kinship Care: A Manual for Families* and *Kinship Care: Trainer's Guide* by Charles E. Confer, LSW, ACSW, RTC.

- *Kinship Care: A Manual for Families* is a skills-based text that can be used as the text in group instruction or as an independent study for kinship caregivers. You may order from <http://www.afcr.com/content/9610-11.html>, or from a general text supplier, such as Amazon.
- *Kinship Care: Trainer's Guide* by Charles E. Confer, LSW, ACSW, RTC. This kit is supplied intended to aid the facilitator in presenting curriculum to kinship care group members. It is supplied with step-by step instructions, exercises, and overhead transparencies that can be used as a format and adapted for individual group work. You may order from <http://www.afcr.com/content/9610-11.html>, or from a general text supplier, such as Amazon.

5. Cox, C. B. (2000). *Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Training Manual for Group Leaders*. New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Grandparents who have accepted the task of raising their grandchildren often need assistance navigating the child welfare system, refining parenting skills, and becoming informed of legal and entitlement issues. The author presents training sessions focused on these issues, as well as:

- Communicating with children
- Dealing with problem behaviors
- Teaching their grandchildren about sex, HIV, and drugs
- Helping the child cope with grief and loss
- Developing advocacy skills
- Helping children build self-esteem.

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Assessment Tools

1. *Assessing Adult Relatives as Preferred Caregivers in Permanency Planning: A Competency-Based Curriculum*
This curriculum was developed by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning in March of 2002. It is intended to be used in coordination with your existing state laws, policies and best practices regarding safety and family study assessments, placement, permanency planning efforts, child and family well-being initiatives and foster/adoptive family licensing/approval procedures. Download from the NRCFCPPP website at:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/assessing-adult-relatives-as-preferred-caregivers.pdf>

2. *Assessment Guide: A Tradition of Caring--Information, Resources, and Support for Kinship Families* (Child Welfare League of America)

The *Assessment Guide* is a tool for conducting family assessment in kinship care. The guide is a resource for agencies that wish to develop an effective assessment process that not only meets agency and legal requirements, but also helps and supports kinship families.

Topics addressed include:

- the role of assessment in kinship care, the unique aspects of kinship care assessment;
- the mutual assessment process and content in kinship care;
- challenges in conducting assessments with kinship families; and
- ways to build relationships and provide support to kinship families during assessment.

The guide is designed to be used with the *Tradition of Caring* group preparation process. It identifies the benefits of combining preparation with assessment and provides information on how to use the tools in the *Tradition of Caring* curriculum to facilitate a respectful, strengths-based assessment process.

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Handbooks for Caregivers

Each of the handbooks listed here is addressed to a specific population of caregivers. However, each also offers some general information, and may also serve as a template for other organizations seeking to provide such a resource for their caregivers.

1. Kinship Care Resource Kit (2006)

Children's Defense Fund has prepared a resource kit to assist kinship caregivers with cash assistance, health care and insurance, raising children with disabilities, child care and early education programs, domestic violence issues, food and nutrition programs, and a range of other issues. This clearly written resource kit is designed to answer questions and offer information about federal programs, eligibility requirements, and how to enroll the children they are raising so they receive the supports they need.

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/kinship-care-resource-kit.html>

2. *Caregiver Resource Directory*

This guide was produced for caregivers of patients with medical problems. However, kinship caregivers may find some of the tools it provides to be useful, and particularly if they are caring for children with medical needs. It provides clear, concise advice on topics ranging from how to communicate with medical staff to self-care for caregivers. The guide also provides blank forms to be used for such things as assessing personal resources, emergency information, medication schedules, and other features such as a "fatigue journal" to help the caregiver track a patient's energy levels and a page of heavy paper with slits arranged to hold the business cards of physicians and other professionals. Some portions available online; hard copy available at no cost from:

Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care
Beth Israel Medical Center
First Avenue at 16th Street
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 877-620-9999
Email: mayday@bethisraelny.org
Website: <http://www.stoppain.org/caregivers>

3. Illinois Department on Aging. A range of information is provided at this web site as part of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program and are available for download at: <http://www.state.il.us/aging/1intergen/grg.htm>. While intended for caregivers in Illinois, the site also contains general information and national resources. A resource guide (2003) is available. The site and the resource guide may be useful as a model for agencies seeking to produce local information.

4. American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Benefits QuickLINK

Navigating through the maze of public benefit programs can be difficult and confusing. Many people don't know what assistance is available — or how to gain access to it. AARP offers online tools that take the guesswork out of the process for every state in the U.S. and the District of Columbia. Find resources, information, programs, and policies. This tool is easy to use and is tailored to your local state.

https://www.benefitscheckup.org/index.cfm?partner_id=22

Websites: Additional sources of information

- AARP Grandparent Information Center
<http://www.aarp.org/life/grandparents/>
- Grandparent Again
<http://www.grandparentagain.com/>

- The Foundation for Grandparenting
<http://www.grandparenting.org/>
- Brookdale Foundation (Relatives as Parents Programs, RAPP)
<http://www.brookdalefoundation.org>

Additional Reading

- State Fact Sheets for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children (October 2007)

In a unique national partnership, [AARP Foundation](#), [Brookdale Foundation Group](#), [Casey Family Programs](#), [Child Welfare League of America](#), [Children's Defense Fund](#), and [Generations United](#) have compiled and released state fact sheets and one national fact sheet that include census data, local programs and resources, state foster care policies, public benefit programs, important state laws, and important state laws.

www.grandfactsheets.org

- Help for Children Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives: Questions and Answers about the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2009)

The Fostering Connections Act of 2008 is one of the most significant pieces of child welfare legislation ever passed. This user friendly document was put together by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and fifteen national organizations to provide an overview of the new Fostering Connections Act. The article provides information regarding the impact the legislation will have for children living in kinship care.

www.clasp.org/publications/NewHopeforChildrenRaisedbyGrandparentsandOtherRelatives.pdf

- Urban Institute. (2003). *Kinship care: Making the most of a valuable resource*. R. Geen (Ed.). Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press