



## 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.  
Order from Child Welfare League of America Publications  
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Atlanta, GA 31193-2831  
1-800-407-6273  
E-mail: [order@cwla.org](mailto:order@cwla.org)  
Website: <http://www.cwla.org/pubs/>
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

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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  
E-mail: [valerie.polakow@emich.edu](mailto:valerie.polakow@emich.edu)  
Website: <http://www.iscfc.emich.edu/>
  
4. Berrick, J.D., Needell, B., Shlonsky, A., Simmel, C., & Pedrucci, C. (1998). *Assessment, Support, and Training for Kinship Care and Foster Care*. Center for Social Services Research at the University of California Berkeley.  
This curriculum focuses on assessment, support, and training for relative and non-related foster parents in the State of California. It is meant to be a teaching tool for social work students but may also be a useful training manual for child welfare agencies. Chapters cover characteristics of caregivers, a quality of care assessment framework, sample caregiver training courses, minimum standards of care, practice tips, caregiver focus group feedback, and child welfare policies affecting caregivers. The curriculum is available for purchase from:  
Center for Social Services Research  
School of Social Welfare  
University of California, Berkeley  
120 Haviland Hall, #7400  
Berkeley, CA 94720-7400  
Website: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/pubs/> (publication list)  
<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/pubs/order.asp> (order form)

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.

To purchase a copy, contact:

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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/info\\_services/kinship-relative-care.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/kinship-relative-care.html)

2. *Kinship Caregiver Burden*

This document highlights the implications of a research study that examined the degree of caregiver burden and social support perceived by kinship caregivers (Cimmarusti 1998). It includes implications and possible interventions for caseworkers, including suggestions for assessment techniques. Material is presented in a concise format, with implications divided into the following categories:

- "tears" in family relationships;
- the impact of the agency's involvement;
- caseworker behaviors;

- caregiver social supports;
- impact of caregiver's religion/faith; and
- caregiver-caseworker relationships.

<http://cfrcwww.social.uiuc.edu/pubs/ListResults2.asp>

3. A Caregiver Assessment Form from the Pennsylvania Department of Aging provides a model for some of the types of questions that might be asked in the assessment of a kinship caregiver's situation. While this instrument is specifically designed for use with caregivers of adults, many of the concerns addressed also apply to kinship caregivers of children. Available on the website of the Administration on Aging at <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaproq/caregiver/careprof/progguidance/resources/PA-CGAssessmentFormsandInstructions.pdf>

### **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. *Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guides*

Children's Defense Fund has written four guides specifically for kinship caregivers, about health care and insurance, raising children with disabilities, child care and early education programs, and food and nutrition programs. These guides are 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. All are available online at

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/childwelfare/kinshipcare/guides.asp>

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](mailto:mayday@bethisraelny.org)

Website: <http://www.stoppain.org/caregivers>

3. Illinois Department on Aging. (1999). *Starting points for grandparents raising grandchildren: A resource guide with information and services for grandparent caregivers*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.state.il.us/aging/1intergen/grg.htm>  
This handbook was written for caregivers in Illinois, but it also contains general information and national resources. It may be useful as a model for agencies seeking to produce local handbooks
4. Lilliedahl, C., Nicholson, B. & Spencer, C. (2000) *Colorado Kinship Care Resource Guide*. Denver, CO: Nicholson, Spencer & Associates Training Institute.  
This guide for kinship caregivers in Colorado is available for download from the Colorado Department of Human Services. This Resource Guide provides local and statewide information about organizations and programs that can serve the needs of kinship caregivers. Available:  
<http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/cyf/cwelfare/Kinship%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>
5. *Help for Grandparent Caregivers* is a series of guides on legal status and legal issues for grandparents and advocates in New York State. Available in both English and Spanish from the Brookdale Foundation:  
Help For Grandparent Caregivers  
Samuel Sadin Institute on Law  
Brookdale Center on Aging  
1114 Avenue of the Americas, 40th Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10036  
Website: [http://www.brookdale.org/gpc/help\\_gpc.html](http://www.brookdale.org/gpc/help_gpc.html)

## Websites

- AARP Grandparent Information Center  
<http://www.aarp.org/life/grandparents/>
- Grandparent Again  
<http://www.grandparentagain.com/>
- Edgewood Center for Children and Families  
Kinship Support Network Factsheets  
<http://www.edgewoodcenter.org/results/stuartfactsheets.htm>
- The Foundation for Grandparenting  
<http://www.grandparenting.org/>

## Additional Reading

- *Generations United Fact Sheets*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.gu.org/factsheets.htm>
- Berrick, J.D. (1996). Assessing quality of care in kinship and foster family care: Executive summary. [Online]. <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/pubs/> Full report available for purchase.
- Cimmarusti, Rocco. Caregiver burden in kinship foster care. In J.P. Gleeson & C. Finney Hairston (Eds.), *Kinship care: Improving practice through research* (pp. 257-278). Washington, D.C.: CWLA Press.
- De Toledo, S., & Brown, D.E. (1995). *Grandparents as parents: A survival guide for raising a second family*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Hochman, G. (1996). *Keeping the family tree intact through kinship care*. National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. [Online]. [http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f\\_kinshi/index.cfm](http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f_kinshi/index.cfm)
- Urban Institute. (2003). *Kinship care: Making the most of a valuable resource*. R. Geen (Ed.). Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press