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PROJECT HEALTHY GRANDPARENTS Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

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Grandparents raising grandchildren is an enduring family arrangement. Despite worries about insufficient finances, housing limitations, and inadequate material resources, most custodial grandparents are committed to serving as surrogate parents for their grandchildren; few would consider alternative arrangements.¹ However, helping grandparents establish and sustain a supportive and nurturing family environment requires

¹ Landry-Meyer, L., Gerard, J.M. & Guzell, J. R. (2005). Caregiver stress among grandparents raising grandchildren: The functional role of social support. *Marriage & Family Review*, 37(1/2), 171-190. Waldrop, D. & Weber, J. (2001). From grandparent to caregiver: The stress and satisfaction of raising grandchildren. *Families in Society*, 82, 461-472.

giving them access to multidisciplinary support services, including legal assistance, health/mental health

public and private sectors are forming partnerships to develop creative and innovative programs to enhance family strengths, while managing family needs.

In 1995, Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia initiated a strengths-based program designed to benefit grandparents raising grandchildren in parent-absent households. The program, Project Healthy Grandparents (PHG), provides a range of support services for custodial grandparents, while helping them gain a sense of stability and control over their lives. The primary goal of PHG is to *empower* participants. The concept of

empowerment means grandparents begin to recognize their personal and family assets, while learning how to self-advocate for needed resources to manage difficult family circumstances and, perhaps,

resources and social welfare services. Nationwide, communities are trying to find ways to provide accessible, cost effective service systems to support grandparent-headed families. Agencies in both the

IN THIS ISSUE

- Project Healthy Grandparents: Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- The Fourth National GrandRally: Momentum Continues for Support to Assist Grandparents and Other Relative Caregivers
- Connecting Cooperative Extension and the Department of Defense to Relatives As Parents Programming Efforts to serve Military Families
- Lessons Learned From The Penn State Extension Relatives As Parents Program

ALSO INSIDE

- Tips for Developing RAPP Programs on Indian Reservations
- Recommendations for Kinship Caregivers of Incarcerated Children
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation Workshops
- Cornell Cooperative Extension's CyberBullying Resources
- Child Welfare League of America's Kinship Training Curriculum; and
- RAPP State Highlights

motivate others for positive change. Families are eligible to receive PHG services if grandparents are raising one or more grandchildren, aged birth to 16 years. Social work and nursing case management services, monthly support group and parent education meetings, child development evaluations, and assistance with legal requirements are the primary service components. Families enrolled in the program receive client-centered case management services for 12 months, but may attend monthly group meetings indefinitely. Serving approximately 50 families per year, including over 100 grandchildren, PHG provides a level of service delivery that is individualized and comprehensive. To date, PHG has served over 900 families and 1300+ grandchildren. Each participating family receives monthly home visits from staff to assess strengths and address a variety of family needs. Below is a brief description of each service component:

Social Work Services

Working collaboratively with grandparents, PHG social workers assist with accessing public benefits, such as SNAP (formerly food stamps), TANF, Medicaid, and energy assistance. Grandparents also receive assistance in obtaining material aid from private agencies, e.g., baby furniture, clothing, toys, and other items. Serving as family “coaches,” social workers help grandparents identify and utilize their personal, familial and

community strengths to establish and sustain positive change. To enhance self-advocacy skills, grandparents learn to regard other service providers as partners, rather than adversaries, in the caregiving process.

Nursing Services

Continuing the home based model, nurses provide an array of health education/health promotion services. During home visits, nurses conduct health assessments that include measurement of weight, height, visual acuity, glucose and cholesterol blood levels, and blood pressure. Assessing preventive health behaviors such as obtaining annual physicals and mammograms, and monitoring the type and frequency of prescribed and over-the-counter medications are additional case management tasks. When necessary, staff nurses work with grandparents to help them become informed health consumers. Families receive referrals to outpatient clinics, health centers or private physicians for primary care services. While home visitations occur monthly at a minimum, more frequent visits and telephone follow-ups occur to monitor acute onset or chronic health problems.

Monthly Support Group/ Parent Education Meetings

Grandparents in PHG have the opportunity to socialize, share information, learn new skills, and receive peer support. Parent education meetings incorporate topic-oriented presentations about various child-parenting

issues, e.g., exercising positive forms of discipline, grief and loss, parenting children with special needs, and communicating with teens. Support group meetings allow participants to share their personal stories – the joys, as well as the challenges. Each meeting is a vehicle to teach strategies to overcome certain challenges/barriers, and form a collective identity. The monthly group meetings are open to any grandparent currently enrolled in the program, as well as “alumni” members – former participants who have transitioned from the program after one year. On average, 15-20 grandparents attend the monthly meeting. Current PHG participants have access to program sponsored transportation services to attend monthly meetings.

Legal Assistance

A majority of grandparents entering PHG are raising their grandchildren informally, some with limited or no legal relationship with their grandchildren. Keeping families informed about the different types of legal options is an essential program component. Working collaboratively, PHG staff and representatives from the local Legal Aid Society and private law firms help grandparents gain access to essential legal information and facilitate any legal decisions.

Early Intervention Services

Many grandparents face the challenge of raising grandchildren affected by severe trauma and prenatal exposure to

various substances (e.g., alcohol, illicit drugs, etc.). Working with a local child development center, every grandchild age 2-5 years receives a developmental screening and evaluation. Grandparents' conference with child development staff when receiving evaluation results and treatment/service options in response to documented needs. Learning how to navigate the network of child development services is a featured activity of the service component. PHG staff work with grandparents, teachers and education specialists to implement prescribed treatment plans either in the home or in a school setting.

Other Activities

Families in PHG have experienced the broad generosity of the university and greater Atlanta community. Every fall PHG celebrates Grandparent Month with a special luncheon. Over 100 grandparents and guests attend the luncheon, including program advisory board members, program funding representatives, and university personnel. It is truly a celebration for grandparents and the Atlanta community. The generosity of the Atlanta community is also evident during the Christmas holiday season when many agencies and businesses provide holiday gifts to families.

The PHG model is an evidence-based service as determined by scheduled assessments of various dimensions of support and participant characteristics.

Research results suggest the service model promotes an enhanced sense of empowerment, social support, and community resources, as well as reduced psychological distress.² Efforts through the National Center on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, also housed at Georgia State University, continue to promote the service model to other communities. Presently, other localities (i.e., North Carolina, Maryland, and other locations in Georgia) are implementing variations of the PHG model with much success.

Lessons Learned

Five Key Points

Project Healthy Grandparents has served the Atlanta metropolitan area for 16 years. In that period there are lessons learned to share with others:

1. **Start Small:** The development of the PHG model evolved over time. Nursing home visits were the first

² Kelley, S.J., Whitley, D.M., & Campos, P. E. (2010). Grandmothers raising grandchildren: Results of an intervention to improve health outcomes. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 42, 379-386.

Kelley, S.J., Whitley, D.M., Sipe, T.A., & Yorker, B.C. (2000). Psychological distress in grandmother kinship care providers: The role of resources, social support and physical health. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24, 311-321. Whitley, D. M., Kelley, S.J., & Campos, P. E. (2011). Perceptions of Family Empowerment among African American Custodial Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren: Thoughts for Research and Practice. *Families in Society* (in press).

service offered to 25 families in 1995, followed by social services. Slowly, other support services and community partners were engaged to extend the PHG model. Communities may find it beneficial to initiate programming by establishing a support group for grandparents, or a respite program. Churches or schools are community resources that may provide space or other resources to begin these services.

2. **Develop Partnerships:** A factor related to the success of PHG is its list of strong community partners. Developing relationships with multiple service providers (e.g., legal professionals, educational/child development specialists, and health/mental health personnel) allows the program to expand its service structure to meet family needs. Nurturing and sustaining partnerships with service providers is an ongoing programmatic priority. Considering current economic conditions, few agencies can develop a multi-tier service structure without external support; collaboration is a key strategy for any planned service model.

3. **Seek Funding Sources:**

Acquiring adequate financial support to provide services to families is an ongoing task, especially in these difficult economic times. However, partner with other agencies to co-sponsor a service, establish “friendships” with funded agencies to learn their successful strategies, and make contact with program officers at local and national funding sources, like the Brookdale Foundation Group, to learn their funding priorities. Grandparents raising grandchildren allows one to seek potential funding opportunities under the categories of aging, families, and child welfare. Help funding agencies to extend their vision of program support for custodial grandparents by offering to provide them with information on current needs and challenges of intergenerational families in local communities.

4. **Evaluate Your**

Program: It is important to know how a program is making a difference. An objective evaluation determines your program’s effectiveness and efficiency. Making evaluation a central component of the

program structure is important for quality assurance and funding purposes. When seeking external funding, a well-designed evaluation component with experienced evaluators is a general requirement. An experienced program evaluator may be a private consultant, university faculty, or part of an organization specializing in program evaluation. Seek assistance or advice from agencies with a successful funding track record, as well as individual foundations, United Way, or other funding sources.

5. **Tell Your Story:** Let others know what is occurring in your community. Many local, statewide, or national conferences (aging and child welfare) welcome presentations on programs about relative caregiving. It is important for others to know new services, program successes, and any lessons learned. Sharing what you are doing helps other service providers trying to establish a service program, or refine an existing program. Do not keep your program a secret; tell your story!

For more information on Project Healthy Grandparents or the National Center on

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, contact Debbie Whitley at dwhitley@gsu.edu. Visit the PHG website at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwalhl/>.

**FOURTH NATIONAL GRANDRALLY:
MOMENTUM CONTINUES FOR SUPPORTS TO ASSIST GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVE CAREGIVERS**

Stefanie Sprow, Children’s Defense Fund and
Jaia Lent, Generations United

They came by bus, by car, and by train; from Arizona, Texas, the Midwest, and the Northeast. “They” were the more than 600 grandparents raising grandchildren and other relative caregivers who journeyed to Washington D.C. on Thursday, September 15th, to take part in the Fourth National GrandRally for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children. Hundreds of additional caregivers who couldn’t make the trip to Washington D.C. called their Members of Congress that day urging them to support caregiver families. The rally participants gathered at the U.S. Capitol to celebrate their important role in caring for children and to focus lawmakers’ attention on the profound contributions relative caregivers make to society, and the difficulties they endure for the children. The first GrandRally in 2003 helped bring awareness to grandparent and relative caregivers, often referred to as “grandfamilies,” and the subsequent GrandRallies have continued the momentum to push forward

important reforms for these special families.

This year’s GrandRally highlighted the important role Social Security plays for children being raised by grandparents. Many grandfamilies struggle to provide financial security for the children in their care and in these times of extraordinary economic challenges they need extra support. Social Security is a critical lifeline for the caregivers and the children they are raising. Caregivers raised their voices and asked that Congress

protect and strengthen Social Security and the role it plays through its retirement, disability and survivors benefits for children and relative caregivers. With the growing trend of children living with grandparents – 7.8 million children live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives according to the latest Census figures – caregivers also asked to extend Social Security support to more children being

raised in grandfamilies. At the GrandRally, caregivers from across the country shared how

survivors benefits when their father died. The survivors benefits for the children and her own Social Security and

SOCIAL SECURITY AND GRANDFAMILIES

One of the policy priorities highlighted at the GrandRally is the importance of protecting and improving Social Security. Here are some of the ways Social Security helps grandfamilies:

- Social Security provides critical retirement, disability, and survivors benefit income to grandfamilies. Even with Social Security benefits, 22 percent of grandparent headed families are poor. Without Social Security benefits, 59 percent or more of these families would be living in poverty.
- Social Security is more than a retirement program. More than 6.5 million children in the United States receive part of their family income from Social Security¹. Social Security pays more benefits to children than any other federal program.
- Social Security covers 98 percent of all children in the event of the death or disability of a caregiver.²

To learn more about the different types of benefits available to grandfamilies through Social Security, visit Generations United’s website at www.gu.org and click on Public Policy/Social Security or contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Detailed Table B09006, Relationship to Householder For Children Under 18 Years In Households.

² U.S. Social Security Administration. Survivors Benefits. SSA Publication No. 05-10084, August 2009.

this intergenerational lifeline has helped them care for children.

Morrisella Middleton, a grandparent caregiver from Baltimore, Maryland, shared her story of how crucial Social Security has been in keeping her family together. Middleton began raising her two grandchildren since they were ages three and eleven and they began receiving Social Security

disability insurance from her employment were a lifeline for the family when she faced serious health problem and economic challenges. “It’s been critical for me in raising the children and to their future,” Middleton said. “Thank goodness for the survivor benefits for the kids and what I contributed to Social Security in the 44 years I have worked. It’s been my only token to get by.”

Other caregiver speakers included Natividad

Flores, a grandparent caregiver from Hartford, Connecticut who started raising her two grandsons after their mother died suddenly in a tragic accident, and Steven Harris, a relative caregiver from Suitland, Maryland, who is raising his four nieces and nephews because their mother was not able to care for them due to drug use. Gerald Wallace, Executive Director of the

National Committee of Grandparents for Children’s Right (NCGCR), and Sharon Olson, Vice President of GrandFamilies of America, also took to the stage and gave a call to action to the participants to meet with their members of Congress and ask them to protect and strengthen many of the federal programs that are critical to grandfamilies. This GrandRally also brought renewed interest and commitment to help to raise the voices of children and youth being raised by relatives.

Sixteen-year-old aspiring singer Yolanda Howard, who is being raised by her aunt, struck a special chord with the participants. Yolanda treated the crowd to a song she’d written to her “daddy” asking where he’d had been all her life. Crystal O’Grady, a 21-year-old from Palo Alto, California, was raised by her grandmother but also spent many years in foster care and spoke to the importance of grandparents and other relatives as a resource for children both in and out of

foster care. Jordan Westwood, an 18-year-old from Ocean City, New Jersey, has been raised by

overcome challenges with her learning disability and helped her go to college. Jesslyn, Isaiah, Kayleana and McCoy, ages 11, 10, 8, and 7, of Texas read a poem together about the importance of grandparents.

Once again Reverend Clifford Barnett’s inspiring words opened and closed the GrandRally. Reverend Barnett, a nationally recognized advocate for grandfamilies and founder of the Grandparents as Parents Group, has helped establish support groups for grandparents in all the city’s elementary schools in Portsmouth, Virginia. He traveled with

Steps to Take Now

The 2011 GrandRally is over. Now what? You can do a lot in your own state or community to keep the GrandRally momentum going:

- Brookdale Foundation’s Relatives as Parents Programs (RAPPs) are great places to start to explore family-friendly programs, practices and policies in your states and communities. (Check their website, www.brookdalefoundation.org, for a list of RAP Programs).
- Work with a service provider in your state to help start a support group for caregivers or children and youths being raised by caregivers.
- Connect with your state’s Respite Coalition to see what respite care programs may be available to reach more relative caregivers and their children in the state. Visit www.archrespite.org
- Encourage an interfaith network in your community to engage churches and other faith based organizations in celebrating the role grandparents and other relatives are playing for children in your community, or to create a mentoring program for children being raised by grandparents and other relatives.
- Start a GrandFamilies Coalition if you don’t have one in your state or community.
- Host a State GrandRally.
- Encourage a friendly legislator or city council member to host a briefing on concerns facing grandparents and other relatives raising children in your state.
- Stay in contact with your Congressional delegation through e-mail, fax, or contact their District offices in your state. Let them know what you are doing to help children and caregivers and how they can help as well. You can call the Congressional Switchboard is 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected with the offices of your Senators or Representatives. The local District offices of your Senators or Representatives should be listed in your local phone book or visit www.congress.org and enter your address to get information on your members of Congress.
- Please let Generations United know about your activities so that we can share them with other GrandRally partners.

her grandmother since birth and spoke about how her grandmother helped her

two buses of caregivers from the Wilmington, North Carolina, where he is now

Pastor of the Warner Temple
A.M.E. Zion Church.

The Love, Hope and Spirit choir has been a very special part of the past three GrandRallies, and the choir once again opened and closed the program with moving musical selections. The choir members are staff from A Second Chance, Inc., a private, not-for-profit, community-based agency in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania committed to providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for children who are being cared for by relatives or close family friends in kinship care. The choir is no longer formally a part of A Second Chance, Inc., but several of their staff came back together to perform again at the GrandRally. The Love, Hope and Spirit choir ended up bringing more than 25 grandparents, relatives and children to the GrandRally!

Members of Congress also attended the rally and gave their encouragement to the GrandRally participants. Senator Chuck Grassley from Iowa, Representative Karen Bass from California and Representative Mike McIntyre from North Carolina spoke at the event and applauded the caregivers for all that they are doing for the children in their care.

The Steering Committee for the Fourth National GrandRally included representation from AARP, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, Generations United, Grandfamilies of America, and

the National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights. Major support for the GrandRally and related activities was provided by the Atlantic Philanthropies. Additional support was provided by Casey Family Programs.

For many of the caregivers, the GrandRally excitement began with the GrandRally Celebration Dinner the night before the GrandRally. Very special thanks to the Brookdale Foundation Group for their support of the dinner. Nothing at the GrandRally could have happened without the hard work and support of many dedicated organizations and individuals. GrandRally State contacts in more than 30 states worked very hard to bring grandparents and other relative caregivers together from across the country and arrange for Congressional appointments. It was a true celebration!

And Beyond...

The GrandRally was not just an event, but another stop for relative caregivers in their advocacy journey. It gave caregivers hope that help was at hand and that they were not alone in their struggle. They returned home with new friends, from their own states and across the country, and a renewed commitment to the children they are raising. The effects of the GrandRally are significant and are continuing to grow across the country. State and local coalitions of caregivers are coming together to make the case for expanded services and

supports for their children. Over the next year some will join together to hold State Grand Rallies at their state capitols to seek additional funds for new support. Some may testify at legislative hearings or find other ways to educate state policymakers about the help needed by children in their care. Some will sponsor kinship care conferences to offer new strategies to relative caregivers. Several participants have already started support groups within their local communities that serve not only as a resource for kinship families but that are also encouraging families to educate Members of Congress about legislation that would help strengthen their families.

CONNECTING THE USDA/DoD MILITARY PARTNERSHIP TO RELATIVES AS PARENTS PROGRAMMING EFFORTS

Brent Elrod and Ahlishia Shipley
USDA Cooperative Extension

Today's military families face a lifestyle that includes frequent deployments and increased family separations. These unique challenges can affect military readiness and family resilience. For more than 25 years, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Land-Grant University System, and the Department of Defense (DoD) agencies have partnered to enhance military family and youth quality of life through extension educational programs and research.

Because of the nature of military service, families face

separation which often leads to relatives stepping in to care for the children. These relatives can encounter a host of challenges related to child care, schooling, finances, health, employment, and family dynamics. There are several projects under the USDA/DoD partnership intended to assist all families successfully meet these challenges and improve community capacity to serve military families. Through this partnership between the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Military Community & Family Policy (MC&FP) at DoD, programs and training support military youth, families, and communities as well as non-military audiences. NIFA engages with land-grant University and Cooperative Extension faculty and staff to:

- Increase and strengthen community capacity in support of military families
- Increase professional development and workforce development opportunities
- Expand and strengthen family, child care and youth development programs

Under this partnership, there are several programs that serve the needs of relatives who have taken on a parental caregiving role due to deployment of parents, and the children to whom they provide care. Here are some of these resources:

- **Project YES!**

Provides youth development programming for military families affected by deployments or other service related programs. Interns who have been trained to work with military youth deliver stimulating one- and two-day events for children impacted by military deployment, while caregivers participate in Yellow Ribbon Program events or other military support programs. Project YES! Interns lead activities and programs centered around leadership, life skills, and STeM (Science, Technology, and Mathematics). Learn more about Project YES! at <http://militaryfamilies.extension.org/yes-intern-program/>

- **Military Teen Adventure Camps**

The Military Teen Adventure camps are designed specifically for teens in military families to experience a wide range of exciting outdoor activities with other teens like themselves. Military teens, 14-18 years old, can sign up to participate in these high energy adventure camps at locations across the country and abroad April 2011 through April 2012. Camps have funding available to assist with transportation costs. There are also camps designed for youth who have special needs. For more information visit: <https://www.extension.purd>

[ue.edu/Adventure_camps/camps/home.html](http://www.extension.purd.edu/Adventure_camps/camps/home.html)

Additionally, there are other resources that can educate, support, and assist relatives serving as parents due to military deployments and the practitioners who work with them:

- **Fisher House Foundation Military Youth Scholarships**

The purpose of this scholarship fund is to recognize the contributions of military families to the readiness of the fighting force and to celebrate the role of the commissary in the military family community. Website: <http://www.militaryscholar.org/index.html>

- **Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)**

The MCEC's work is focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition. The MCEC performs research, develops resources, conducts professional institutes and conferences and publishes resources for all constituencies. Website: <http://www.militarychild.org/>

- **Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA)**

MISA is a national organization of school superintendents. Their

mission is to serve school districts with a high concentration of military children. Website: <http://www.militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org/>

- **National Military Family Association (NMFA)**

The NMFA is a grassroots advocacy organization that speaks on behalf of military families and empowers husbands, wives, and children to understand and access their benefits.

Website: <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>

- **Penn State Military Personnel & Family Research Initiative**

The mission of the Penn State Military Personnel and Family Research Initiative is to catalyze basic and translational research to improve the health and well-being of military personnel and families. Website:

<http://www.ssri.psu.edu/military-families>

- **Touching Base**

Touching Base is a quarterly newsletter from the Department of Education for the military community. It covers current governmental and non-governmental news on education that is relevant to military service members and their families. Website: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/newsletters/touchingbase/index.html>

To learn more about the USDA/NIFA-DoD Military Partnership, please visit: <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/military>

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PENN STATE EXTENSION RELATIVES AS PARENTS PROGRAM

Matthew Kaplan, Ph.D., Professor
Penn State University

In Pennsylvania, 164,000 children (5.6 percent of the children in the state) are living in grandparent-headed households and another 37,500 (1.3 percent of the state's children) live in households headed by other relatives. There are over 80,000 grandparents in Pennsylvania responsible for meeting the needs of children in their care.³ This article describes some of the intervention strategies, and lessons learned, from the Penn State Extension – Relatives as Parents Program and its efforts to address the needs of kinship families.

In the early days of our programming in the kinship care arena, our focus was primarily on establishing and supporting kinship support groups and organizing weekend retreats consisting of family-based recreational and relationship-enhancing activities

³ AARP Foundation, Brookdale Foundation Group, Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and Generations United (2007). *Grand Fact Sheets* Downloaded July 2010 from <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friend-family/grandfacts-sheets/>

for participating families.⁴ We learned about the power of family-to-family social and emotional support. Family members realize they are not alone, and, as they meet and develop a sense of camaraderie with the other families, they feel less "different" or "judged." As one grandparent who took part in a kinship family retreat put it, "It's been a weekend where we're all the same – We're all normal."

We also learned that the families find value in the educational workshops that we conduct at support group meetings and as part of the weekend retreats. We cover topics ranging from: youth resiliency, conflict management, anger management, family communication dynamics, health and nutrition, physical fitness, self esteem (for children and teens) and the use of humor in dealing with the day-to-day challenges adults and children face. In addition to providing kinship families with reliable information on these and other topics, our educators facilitate discussion and practice with regard to how families might apply this information. Invariably, conversations touch on issues related to communication, including how family caregivers might improve their communication skills. This was reflected in the comment made by a grandmother raising her

⁴ To access a manual outlining steps for planning and conducting such retreats, go to: http://www.extension.org/pages/Conducting_a_Kinship_Family_Retreat.

grandson when asked what changes she would make based on her retreat experience, "I will first ask myself how a nine year old would solve problems." Another retreat participant added, "Don't yell. Try to settle things calmly."

Over time, we realized that many of the difficulties faced by kinship families have as much to do with the social service system, and how the professionals within it operate and relate to kinship families, as with the communication skills and behaviors of kinship family members. We therefore set out to expand our program, beyond direct service with kinship families, with the goal of engaging the professionals who work with kinship families and raising their awareness of the challenges faced by these families and the resources available to them.

After trying several approaches

for conducting educational seminars for human service

professionals, we learned about the *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KINSHIP CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

By Dee Ann Newell, MA Executive Director and Founder
Arkansas Voices for the Children Left Behind, Inc.

1. Recognize that the children have probably endured multiple traumas and may have behaviors that are reactive to these, including withdrawal, anxiety, isolation, or aggressive and unpredictable behaviors.
2. Keep the communication door open with the children. Proactively let them know you are accepting of their feelings and to feel safe expressing them to you in words. You have to tell them this, even when you think that they should know this.
3. Recognize your own ambivalence toward the incarcerated parent can bewilder the child who in turn feels conflicted in loyalties and may shut down their sharing with you.
4. Realize that there is often grieving and mourning in the worlds of these children, and rituals and symbols help to comfort the children.
5. Tell them stories about yourself as a child, allowing you to share some of the times when you were conflicted and were successful in working out your conflicts, both inner and with others.
6. When seeking counseling for the child in your care, and many need the professional help of mental health providers, be sure that the therapist has experience and compassion for children of incarcerated parents. Some of the typical prejudice in our society regarding incarcerated parents also exists with professionals who have not been trained in the research and understanding of these children.
7. If there has been a relationship with the parent in prison, and there has been no violence perpetrated against the child by their parent, permit the children to visit and receive letters and an occasional phone call. This is so important if the parent will be returning during the childhood of the child, as sustaining the relationship is critical to the well-being of the children.
8. Never force a child to visit their parent, but if they wish to, be sure to prepare them for the visit, the security protocols, the dress code, long waits, the presence of guards, and the change in appearance of their parent.
9. Know the visiting rules and teach them to the children.
10. Always tell the child the truth about the incarceration of the parent. Deception will only create more fear.

Workshops developed by University of Arizona, Coconino Extension faculty and staff and grandparent mentors at the Kinship Kare of Northern Arizona program (see the article on Page 11 of this newsletter). We decided to adapt the program for use in Pennsylvania (with modified scenarios and shorter workshops) and now conduct *Kinship Family Simulation Workshops* for human service professionals in various counties across the state.

Another aspect of our overall program strategy is a continual emphasis on collaboration and partnership. With limited resources and a relatively small team (there are eight of us

engaged in kinship family-related programming on a part-time basis, most with less than one day/week allotted to this work), we recognized early on the importance of partnering with other organizations if we were to meet our goals of planning and delivering programs and services on a statewide level. Over time we have deepened our relationships with the Kinship Institute (part of Turning Points for Children, based in Philadelphia) and members of the Pennsylvania RAPP Task Force (which is managed by the PA Department of Aging). We rely on both groups for help in updating and adding new resource listings to the *Pennsylvania Kinship Navigator* website, a tool we developed to help PA kinship families find needed programs, resources and services in the state. [Visit: <http://extension.psu.edu/kinship>.] As another element of our relationship with the Kinship Institute, the program's Coordinator (at first Karen Fisk and now Brenda Rich) writes the *Relative Caregivers Rock!* column for Penn State Extension's quarterly newsletter, *Ideas for Intergenerational Living*.

We have a wonderful relationship with the Raising Grandchildren Content Group of the eXtension Family Caregiving Community of Practice. We worked with CoP members to modify our "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Doubly Stressed, Triply Blessed" public forum curriculum so it can be delivered via the eXtension website (see:

<http://www.extension.org/pages/32573/grandparents-raising-grandchildren-doubly-stressed-triply-blessed>. And, of course, we have also benefited from the expertise and resources from other RAPP groups such as the team behind Cornell Cooperative Extension's Parenting a Second Time Around (PASTA) curriculum.

We also draw upon resources across the university, such at Penn State Public Broadcasting, with which we partnered in 2002 to conduct an hour-long community call-in program with Donna Butts, Executive Director of Generations United, and Amy Goyer, past Coordinator of the AARP Grandparent Information Center (GIC) as guests. Penn State Cooperative Extension has also partnered with Extension initiatives launched from other land grant universities, such as the series of national satellite programs on kinship care issues organized some years ago by the University of Wisconsin-Extension and Purdue.

Certainly, in today's tough fiscal climate, we anticipate challenges ahead. However, when considering the growing public awareness of the issues faced by kinship families, and the expanding number of professionals who are committed to doing what they can to support kinship families, we feel energized and in good company.

For more information about the Penn State Extension Relatives

as Parents Program, contact Matt Kaplan, Professor, Intergenerational Programs and Aging, (814-863-7871; msk15@psu.edu) or Janice Hassen, County Extension Director, Family Living Educator, Lawrence County (724) 654-8370 or jma2@psu.edu).

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN SIMULATION WORKSHOPS

Beth Tucker
Kinship Kare of Northern Arizona
University of Arizona

Grandfamily caregivers are proud people who may be reluctant to ask for help, even when they desperately need it, for themselves and the children they are raising. So why are caregivers sometimes reluctant to ask and pursue help from agencies? It could be that they have never asked for help before. Family caregivers who are raising a child, whose parent is incarcerated, share the fear that agency contact might trigger interference or removal of the child from their home. Caregivers might also be reluctant to seek agency resources because of an unpleasant and/or discouraging contact with agencies that are not sensitive to caregivers, (especially older caregivers) who might be unfamiliar with agency procedures. We at the University of Arizona's KKONA (Kinship Kare of Northern Arizona) program heard stories from *our* discussion group members who felt discouraged by some agencies attitudes and practices

that were cumbersome, confusing and added to the embarrassment of having to ask for help. One grandmother's story about having to attend a co-parenting workshop for divorcing parents illustrated that some agencies are unaware of how to better serve the growing population of relative caregivers. As a result of that and other caregiver's stories, KKONA set a goal to change attitudes and practices about "grandfamilies." We started by educating grandfamilies about strategies to work more effectively with agencies and then we tackled the next step - changing agency attitudes about the strengths and challenges grandfamilies face.

We developed the "**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation Workshop**" with the overall goal to promote "attitudes and systems" among agencies that provide services on the key resource issues that our grandparents face such as physical and mental health, financial, legal, education, respite and childcare. The "**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation**" helps agencies see the world through other eyes; forces them to perform problem solving family tasks under pressure; and finally guides them to think about systemic changes to improve interactions with caregivers. While we could have chosen "a community forum to discuss grandparent barriers and needs, we felt that a simulation design would better produce the empathy,

understanding and motivation agencies needed to act on the outcomes we targeted.

The simulation workshop assigns agency participants into 1 of 8 different "families" where they then read family scenarios (that represented our community cultural profile and critical caretaking issues) and then act as a "family unit" to problem solve a challenge-a hindering and then a helping situation. The final step of the workshop is a reflection activity entitled, "family resource mapping." In this activity, participants report on their experience by sharing the family profiles and their "Aha" moments. They then examine what systems barriers and actions could be taken to improve services to grandparents. One participant expressed, "*How fun and informative the simulation was, role playing and how useful it is to be in the actual situation.*"

If you are interested in conducting a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation, KKONA has compiled a complete "toolkit" on DVD to plan, conduct and evaluate a "simulation workshop."

What you will find in the simulation toolkit: Section one, "**Organizers Materials**," include all the materials and handouts to plan for the simulation workshop. Section two; "**Orientation Materials**" contains materials and suggestions for conducting an optional training session for

volunteers who will help with the actual workshop. Section three, "**Workshop Materials**" contains all the handouts (including "family profiles" challenges and "helping situations" for the workshop. Section four, "**Bibliography and other resources**" lists reference materials used in the development of the grandparents raising grandchildren simulation, as well as on site and follow-up evaluation instruments.

For more information on the workshop please contact Beth Tucker at the Coconino Extension office at (928) 774-1868, Extension 120 or tucker@ag.arizona.edu.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING RAPP PROGRAMS ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS

Sandra J. Bailey, Ph.D., CFLE
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Montana State University

Although I have lived in Montana most of my life, it wasn't until I began my job with Extension that I started working with our seven Native American reservations. I was fortunate in that my tenure coincided with an Extension Agent at Stone Child College on the Rocky Boy Reservation. We learned about Extension together and how to work effectively in each other's culture. On my first trip to Rocky Boy, my colleague asked me if I wanted a tour of the reservation. Driving the dusty dirt roads in her pickup proved to be the best way for me to be introduced to the culture and community. Every

time I have a project on one of our reservations I continue to learn and I am humbled by the struggles and resiliency of our Native American neighbors.

Our newest RAPP project on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations has just begun. We were fortunate to find an individual who lives on the Crow reservation to take leadership for the project. Recently, at the week-long Crow Fair Days, we began advertising the project. Our next step is to meet with groups of key individuals on each reservation to see how they would like to proceed in supporting relative caregivers in their communities.

Here are some tips that I have learned that may assist you in expanding your RAPP programs to Native Peoples.

- Travel to the reservation to learn about the communities. In Montana, this means a six-hour drive one way in some cases; however, it was essential to develop trust. And more than one trip is needed! Take part in reservation activities such as powwows, feast days, and rodeos.
- Developing trust with groups who have had treaties and promises broken and experienced racism for generations takes time. Additionally, some well-intending groups have started

projects, only to leave. It may take years to develop a solid trusting relationship. Getting involved helps build relationships faster. For example, help someone fix a screen door or give someone a ride. These small acts of caring go a long way.

- Find key stakeholders on the reservation to work with. If the reservation has a land grant college, find out who the Extension Agent is and work with that individual. Head Start programs, aging programs, schools, and health services are also places to find partners on the reservations. However, be aware of the communities' view of these organizations on the reservation. They may be accepted on one reservation or not all – so do your homework and find out what organizations and agencies are respected.
- Choose your partners carefully and listen to what they say. They know what will and what will not work on the reservations or with native people.
- Remember that many of the grandparents will have experienced life in boarding schools. Although experiences vary, many have anger

and sorrow that influence how they view the non-native culture and parenting.

- Serve a meal or refreshments at gatherings. While meals are important in any culture, gathering around a meal is helpful in getting people to attend events.
- Understand that time is more fluid in Native cultures. Expect that some people will not arrive at the stated start time and some will leave before an event is over.
- Offer travel assistance for participants to get to your event. We have done this in the form of gas vouchers. Sometimes Tribal College or Head Start vans are available to help with transportation. You may need to take events to remote locations on the reservation due to the lack of transportation, poor road conditions, and unwillingness of people to travel far from home.
- Open meetings and events with an elder giving a blessing or prayer. In my experience we have had non-native grandparents be upset that we do this, especially if the prayer is in a Native language, but

this is important and respectful. Many Natives follow multiple religions and one usually is of a Christian denomination. For mixed groups one solution could be to have a prayer or blessing said in English too.

- Avoid going into the Native community as the “expert” who is trying to “rescue” the relative caregivers. People want to be supported rather than “rescued.”
- Understand the importance of family in Native cultures. Family includes extended family members and often “fictive kin” – those who are not related by blood or marriage. Cousins may be considered “brothers” or “sisters.” Family is of utmost importance and if there is a family emergency or death, that supersedes any work deadline or event.
- Learn about family rules and customs within the culture. For example, in one tribe a married woman is not to speak directly to her father-in-law or her husband’s brothers.
- Consider tribal politics. Just as with any community, there are politics – formal and informal. On

reservations you may need to work with the Tribal Council and/or the Tribal College. Additionally, there may be differences among the communities, clans, or families on the reservation that need to be considered.

- Admit mistakes. If you make a cultural *faux pas*, admit the error and apologize if needed. However, don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Most unintentional faux pas act as a learning experience for both sides.

Let’s Talk About... Cyberbullying

Suzan L. Sussmann, Denyse Variano
and Brenda Reynolds
Cornell Cooperative Extension of
Orange County, NY

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."

[-Bill Belsey](#)

We all recognize that traditional bullying behavior is harmful in social settings that include negative verbal, physical and social emotional behaviors. When “cyber tools” like texting and social networking sites are added into the mix, the effects of bullying are SUPER SIZED! The bullies appear meaner because it is hard to truly identify who is behind the bullying; it can be anonymous

and also spread like “wild-fire.” In the past, when someone was bullied on the playground, they could go home to a bully-free zone. Now, they continue to be bullied through the variety of technological advances of the smart phone and computer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The bystanders of the incidents are not just limited to a few any more, they can include all “friends” on a social networking site, which can be thousands. Comments made are often impulsive and not thought out and once they are out there, they are not easily removed. Our youth need tools to help them be more prepared to be a helpful bystander and to develop skills to navigate our technological world.

Cornell Cooperative Extension-Orange County has developed a web based site called ***Let’s Talk About...*** designed to help start conversations between youth and the adults about sensitive topics. One set of these products addresses Cyber Bullying, and includes a short eye opening video and PowerPoint presentation. The information is designed to help support youth who might be bullied and to teach skills to prevent bullying behavior, especially helpful bystander skills. This research based information and the educational tools are available by free download for use in the home or community setting.

Other topics available are Social Networking, Life After High School, Contributing to the Greater Good and Media

Literacy. You can access this information at:
www.cce.cornell.edu/orange/letstalkabout.

The New York State Senate has recently passed anti-bullying legislation to create safer learning environments for children. The goal is to prevent cyber bullying as well as conventional bullying on school grounds. Senator Stephen Saland has sponsored the LEAD (Law to Encourage the Acceptance of All Differences) to help protect students who feel intimidated, threatened, harassed or taunted by others. This law requires that school districts create policies and guidelines to encourage awareness of and to prohibit acts of bullying and would increase education about bullying prevention for teachers and students.

Other valuable websites:
www.Stopcyberbullying.org
www.cyberbullying.us
<http://netsmartz.org/>

**COLLABORATING WITH
KINSHIP CAREGIVERS: A
COMPETENCY-BASED
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR
CHILD WELFARE WORKERS
AND THEIR SUPERVISORS**
Eileen Mayers Pasztor, DSW*
Donna D. Petras, PhD, MSW**
Cassandra Rainey, JD***

The frontline of the child welfare workforce, charged with achieving the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) outcomes of safety, well-being, and permanency, is typically considered to be the line staff

that makes daily decisions for the children and families in their caseloads. But there is another population making many more life-impacting decisions on a daily basis: relatives or kinship caregivers who have round-the-clock responsibility for the children in their care. While they are not the salaried workforce, they are essential to the delivery of child welfare services. Kinship caregivers also have an impact outside of and beyond formal child welfare services. For every child and family that is known to a public child welfare agency, there are a half dozen other families in our communities who are not active. And while child protection services may not be needed for these families, many of them still need a range of services to help ensure the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) outcomes of child safety, well-being, and permanency.

Twenty years ago Child Welfare League of America's (CWLA) National Commission on Family Foster Care (NCFCC, 1991) authored "A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youth in the 1990s." That publication offered concepts and terminology that have had a far-reaching and lasting impact. First, it coined the term "kinship care" for the field, based on the 1974 classic work of Carol Stack in *All Our Kin – Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*.

Second, it reconceptualized "permanency" as "having safe, nurturing relationships intended

to last a lifetime," meaning that when children's "independent living alarm clocks" ring at the age of 18 years, they are not put out on the streets but, instead, maintain positive relationships with at least one adult who provides a caring relationship. Third, the *Blueprint* specifically differentiated kinship care and family foster care, offering definitions for each and policy and practice mandates to ensure that both services were essential programs in the array of child welfare services.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a proliferation of research focusing on all aspects of kinship care, especially its impact on children and families. About ten years ago, gerontology and child welfare faculty from the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) Department (now School) of Social Work recognized challenges in how child welfare social workers and kinship caregivers worked together to help achieve ASFA outcomes. The project's researchers considered that collaboration might be a useful framework to look at that relationship. They applied to and received funding from the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), which supports the development of empirically-based teaching materials that can reinforce and supplement competency-based child welfare practice.

The original curriculum was titled, "*Kinship Caregivers and Social Workers: The Challenge of Collaboration*." While there

has been considerable literature on organizational and interdisciplinary collaboration, less has been available regarding how collaboration might be applied in a child welfare setting when diverse

populations of staff and kinship caregivers must work together to achieve goals that each group may view differently. An overview of the original curriculum was presented to CWLA's National Kinship Care Advisory Committee in February 2009. It was recommended that CWLA partner with faculty at the CSULB Department (now School) of

Social Work to: obtain permission from CalSWEC to update and publish a revised curriculum; field-test the curriculum in three diverse sites to inform the updates; and produce this new training program, based on those results.

In November 2009, the original training program was field-tested with kinship caregivers and public and private agency and organization staff in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Providence, Rhode Island and Bronx, New

York. Field-test participants and their respective agencies and organizations are listed in the Acknowledgments section. This updated curriculum shifts from the original 2002 title of "*The Challenge of*

It challenges participants to use more child and family-friendly language, such as referring to families instead of homes, and not using deficit expressions, such as "hard to place child" and "aging out."

AoA Awards Expansion Supplement Grants under the 2011 Lifespan Respite Care Program

Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee recently announced Lifespan Respite Care Program Expansion Supplement Grant awards totaling more than \$1.1 million to eight states. All of the states initially received grant awards in 2009 or 2010 to provide respite services and expand program development activities.

Grant awards were made to the following states: Delaware, District of Columbia, Nevada, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

The primary focus of these one-year Expansion Grants will be the provision of respite services to eligible populations. Additionally, grantees may use some of the funds to further enhance volunteer recruitment, training and retention activities and to further enhance outreach and dissemination activities, in order to facilitate the provision of respite services across the state.

For more information about the implementation of the Lifespan Respite Care Program and to learn more about the key activities of each of the grantees, please visit the AoA web site at:

http://aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HCLTC/LRCP/index.aspx

Collaboration" to a more strengths-based "*Collaborating with Kinship Caregivers*." Most important, to model collaboration, this program is designed to be co-trained or co-facilitated by child welfare practitioners and experienced kinship caregivers.

Curriculum Description
Module I, Part I includes the welcome, introductions, and overview of the curriculum, along with definitions for kinship care and collaboration.

for kinship care, which is typically conflicted between being viewed as family preservation or "kinship foster care." This part identifies two compelling dynamics inherent in kinship care collaboration: the "Double-D" (demographic diversity) and the "Double-A" (attachment versus authority). Most important, Part II provides an opportunity to learn from the kinship caregiver/co-trainer's own story to: (a) have an experiential framework for the collaboration practice model;

Part II provides historical, national, and state perspectives to describe the legal, social, and economic factors that have made kinship care both a child welfare policy choice and a practice challenge. It describes key demographic, legislative, and other change-drivers impacting kinship care. Part II provides the opportunity to discuss a program identity

(b) model the collaboration competencies; and (c) provide participants with the opportunity to listen to a kinship caregiver's life experience without having casework responsibility to address the issues raised.

Part III describes the collaboration practice model beginning with *nine major issues* that, according to research, are of concern to kinship caregivers and child welfare workers and supervisors. These issues are: legal; financial; health and mental health for the child and caregivers; child behavior; school/education; family relationships; support services for the kinship family; fair and equal treatment for the kinship family; satisfaction with services and recommendations from the kinship caregivers.

Module II is titled "*Implementing the Collaborating with Kinship Caregivers Practice Model.*" It is divided into four parts. Part I provides an opportunity to welcome participants back to Module II and review the objectives and agenda. There is a "bridge" from Module I that enables participants to transition to Module II by remembering key points from Module I. It also enables the trainers to assess what seemed to be most significant to the group, and what issues may be more challenging.

Part II is an especially critical component of the curriculum. Working in small groups,

participants have the opportunity to apply all the work tools learned in Module I to specific child- and family situations. Part III enables participants to apply the nine issues and to discuss implementation of the five competencies. Also included is a tool to assess their strengths and needs in implementation.

Part IV closes the training by including an opportunity for any final remarks, suggestions for any next steps in training or implementation, and training evaluation.

Curriculum Access: The "*Collaborating with Kinship Caregivers*" will be available through CWLA Publications in early 2012. Meanwhile, CWLA staff is available for training implementation now at your agency. Registration is open for training scheduled for November 2 – 4, 2011 at the Catholic Guardian Society and Home Bureau, 1011 First Avenue, New York, NY. Please contact Cassaundra Rainey at CRainey@cwla.org for registration information.

** Eileen Mayers Pasztor, DSW, is principal developer of this curriculum. She is a professor, School of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach, and a trainer/consultant for CWLA.*

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**** Cassaundra Rainey, JD, a co-author of this curriculum, is a mission-driven visionary with 20 years of experience bringing about outstanding results for children and families, and the*

social service organizations that support and serve their needs.

RAPP State Highlights

KENTUCKY STATE RAPP NETWORK: A YEAR IN REVIEW
A major focus for this past year was maintaining and increasing support groups across the state. One way we did that was to strengthen our partnership with the Family Resource and Youth Service Centers which are in every school district in Kentucky. They are the primary facilitators of support groups with assistance from the 15 Area Agencies on Aging and Independent Living Centers (AAAILs) in the state as well. Curriculum, fact sheets and hand outs are made available for the support group facilitators with assistance from Kentucky Cooperative Extension Services. Mini-grants are offered by the many of the AAAILs to develop new support groups in the state. An effort has started to identify other ways to offer support groups online via a website for grandparents and relatives raising children; there is much work to be done on this yet. We have maintained a network of entities that all work with or have a vested interest in the issue of grandparents and relatives raising children. That network shares resources, updates, services and programs for the families as well as other professionals.

An annual GAP (Grandparents As Parents) Conference is held each year in March and in 2011, the 7th Annual GAP Conference was held with a record breaking

attendance. Regional conferences, forums and workshops were held as well combining topics for caregivers and professionals.

The Kentucky Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) at each of the Area Agencies on Aging are populated with resources, services, benefit programs and information about support groups to just name some of the information that is available to assist family and relative caregivers of both frail elderly and children.

THE HAWAII EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING is pleased to highlight the good work of Honolulu and Maui counties in their efforts to support grandparents and other relatives who are raising grandchildren.

Honolulu County

In the Spring 2011, Na Tutu – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren met with officials from the City and County of Honolulu’s Department of Community Services (DCS) and the Elderly Affairs Division (EAD) to make them aware of their work and to ask for their support.

Government officials committed their support to Na Tutu’s advocacy efforts, including supporting their legislative and administrative initiatives. EAD pledged to advocate for grandparents raising grandchildren within city government like when their colleagues in DCS, who administer Section 8 or senior buildings, have regulations that

prohibit grandchildren in senior dwellings, even for one night. EAD will educate their colleagues about the need for contingencies/variances to allow the grandparent time to make other arrangements for either the keiki or her/himself. EAD contracted with Hawaii Family Service to provide counseling, training/education, and caregiver support groups to grandparents raising grandchildren living in Waianae, Oahu. This area of the island is very rural and has a relative high number of relative caregivers of Native Hawaiian ethnicity.

Maui County

Hi'i Na Kupuna Coalition (Coalition) is a group of grandparents and professionals who serve grandparents in Maui. The Coalition works to provide resources for grandparents and other relative caregivers, and consists of close to 20 organizations that vary in their level of activity with about a half of those being very active. Their work is focused on the island of Maui, and they hope to expand to Lanai, Molokai, and Hana.

In the last year the Coalition has:

1. Conducted a needs assessment and focus groups to identify the grandparent needs. The most common theme in the needs assessment was that grandparents need to be appropriately matched up with resources - most of the

needed resources are already in the community but they just don't know how to access them. The Coalition is using this information to adjust the grandparent newsletter to highlight those resources that were identified as top needs.

2. Developed factsheets to help professionals better understand and work with the incredible cultural diversity of the grandparents.
3. Developed a newsletter with educational information and resource/event listings and information on the three local grandparent support groups. In Maui, there are three grandparent support groups - two through Maui Family Support Services (called ROKK - Raising Our Keiki's Keiki) and one through the Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center.
4. Planned a public awareness/public service announcement campaign leading up to Grandparents Day.

One of the ongoing challenges in Maui is keeping the support groups going; Maui Family Support Services' ROKK group is always vulnerable to budget swings and at least once or twice it's been within a couple weeks of closing down the

support groups because of funding issues.

**OKLAHOMA AGING SERVICES,
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
SERVICES**

Oklahoma will have three educational conferences for relative caregiver families in October in Oklahoma City, Ponca City and Ardmore. The Aging Services Division of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services in sponsoring two of the events (Oklahoma City and Ponca City). Our GRANDfamilies Initiative committee assisted a volunteer group in Ardmore last year to hold an event and they are hosting their second conference. The event's main sponsors are the First United Methodist church and the Ardmore Higher Education Center.

One of the goals of the GRANDfamilies Initiative committee is to help communities bring together resource coalitions of service providers, relatives and others to strengthen the community services and supports for relative caregivers and help improve community connections.

Catheryn Koss of The Senior Law Resource Center in Oklahoma City, a fellow RAPP and a great resource for Oklahoma, will present at one of the events. The topics include self-care, mental health issues, bullying and internet safety, legal issues, services available through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, family communication, and

education topics including information for children with special needs and general education issues including graduation requirements.

**UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
CENTER ON AGING**

During the past year, the University of Maine Center on Aging and its partners have been hard at work educating the public and service providers about the issues facing relative and kinship caregivers, providing opportunities for RAPPs across the country to connect, and providing direct support for caregivers through activities such as the 11 support groups for grandfamilies across the state conducted by RAPP partners.

During the Fall of 2010 and Spring of 2011, the UMaine Center on Aging and Brookdale Relatives as Parents Program hosted a series of three online discussions for RAPP professionals from across the country on topics such as strategies for advocating for relative caregivers; funding, research, and university resources available to RAPPs; and we even hosted a networking opportunity for RAPPs to discuss new initiatives and share successes and challenges they are facing. Helping to co-facilitate these discussions were RAPP members from different programs around the country.

RAPP Network and Task Force members continue to engage in key RAPP activities through the Maine Kinship Connections

Project, an effort made possible through a grant from the Children's Bureau within the Department of Health and Human Services. Key elements of this project include providing supports for children and kinship caregivers such as enhanced kinship navigator services, facilitated family team meetings, and family-finding services. Another component of the project is the creation of an advisory board made up of kinship caregivers and professionals from throughout the state. The project is serving to increase awareness of the issues kinship caregivers face among both the public and those who serve these families, as well as to expand services for these families and better understand the most effective ways to support them.

RAPP partners in Maine also supported a Legislative Task Force which convened multiple times in the fall of 2010 to examine the needs and challenges faced by kinship families and recommended solutions. Two bills emerged from the Task Force including one allowing for extended Power of Attorney arrangements that passed the Maine legislature, and another bill that makes registering children for public schools easier for caregivers that have a Power of Attorney arrangement but do not yet have guardianship. Both bills set the stage for continued policy efforts in the state that seek to support kinship families by facilitating access to supports

and benefits needed to raise the children in their care.

MISSION WEST VIRGINIA RAPP of West Virginia held legal workshops in two locations of the state. The topics were Guardianship and the Multidisciplinary Team process. Presenters were a Judge and a Child Protective Services Supervisor.

A 4-H RAPP Retreat was held August 13-14 in Berkeley County. Activities included swimming, a cook out, camp fire, crafts, singing and dancing. 25 caregivers and 30 children attended.

A group for teens in kinship care meets monthly in Morgan County. In addition to support group meetings, the teens participate in service projects and have social activities.

THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING (IDOA)

In 1996, Janet Sainer, consultant with the Brookdale Foundation Group, shared her vision for kinship services with Maralee Lindley, the Director of the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) at the time. These two resourceful and determined women carved a memorable path which brought resources to kinship families nationally and in Illinois. The 1996 Brookdale Foundation Group grant leveraged state funding within the budget of the Illinois Department on Aging to provide assistance to relatives regardless of their age and complimenting the funding of the National Family Caregiver Support Program. With state

funds, IDoA has been able to fund and maintain support groups for relatives; guardianship advocacy and assistance programs; grief counseling for children and caregivers; respite through crisis nurseries, camps, etc.; mentoring and respite programs for children and youth of the Juvenile Court; legal assistance for creating permanency plans and advocating with the Department of Children and Family Services; supportive services for kinship families affected by HIV and develop a guide to legal options and resources for families caring for children whose parents are incarcerated.

Training and presentations at Illinois AIRS (Alliance of Information and Referral Specialists); the Illinois State Board of Education Special Education Directors Statewide Conference; Illinois Adoption Advisory Council; Illinois Foster Parent Advisory Council; Illinois Post Adoption and Guardianship Council; the Child Abuse Hotline and Advocacy Office of Children and Families with the Department of Children and Family Services; Head Start and Early Intervention programs have created a seamless referral system.

Collaborations developed through the Illinois Task Force on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children have resulted in helpful contacts/navigators at the Department of Health and Family Services/Bureau of

Child Support and Paternity Establishment; the Department of Human Services/TANF cash, medical and Food Stamp program, Bureau of Child Care and Development, Policy and Training divisions; Illinois State Board of Education/Legal Department, Homeless Education and Special Education programs and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

A partnership with the Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has blossomed into a mandated training for DCFS employees (investigators, foster care licensing, Intact Family workers; caseworkers; post adoption and guardianship staff) in resources for kinship families and issues concerning older caregivers. Child welfare personnel utilize the resources and expertise of Area Agencies on Aging in addressing concerns about older caregivers.

The IDoA kinship navigator has recorded a lecture on issues faced by kinship families for an on-line kinship course developed by Dr. James Gleeson of the University of Illinois-Chicago Jane Addams School of Social Work. Two regional task force groups have been implemented in Chicago and Southern Illinois with a goal of expanding to other areas of the state. The IDoA statewide kinship navigator continues to attend support group meetings throughout the state; advocate on behalf of relatives raising

children who are having difficulty in accessing services; referring to programs; and providing networking opportunities for organizations throughout the state.

In FY12, the Department is awarding 44 agencies, including 9 Area Agencies on Aging, a total of \$241,877 in state funding to provide services and resources to kinship families. The six funding categories include \$100,235 for emergency needs; \$50,652 for support groups; \$43,500 for legal services; \$11,500 for respite; \$22,500 for counseling and \$13,500 for outreach.

RESOURCES

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation

To order a DVD of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Simulation for \$25, contact Beth Tucker, University of Arizona at: tucker@ag.arizona.edu

Grandmother to Grandmother: From New York to Tanzania captures the stories of grandmothers who are responsible for raising

grandchildren in two very different cultures.

The film highlights two programs that support grandfamilies and brings together grandmothers from the far corners of the globe for a memorable gathering in Tanzania. As their unique stories unfold, the deep common bond that these grandmothers possess unfolds. The inspirational journey of these unsung heroes shows the love that bridges the gap between generations and across cultures. “At risk” children can thrive and their grandmothers hope again.

To view a trailer of the film, learn more about the programs highlighted and order the DVD, visit www.olddogdocumentaries.com

To host a screening of the film, or for more information about outreach, contact Amy Goyer algoyer@comcast.net.

Free GIFT (Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training) E-Newsletter

Get free fundraising tips delivered to your inbox each month! Be the first to know

about training opportunities, job announcements, and exclusive discounts on fundraising resources. Visit:

<http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/staticpages/index.php/esignup>.

The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

This book was written in honor of the work and sacrifices parenting grandparents make in order to raise their grandkids. The physical, social, psychological, emotional, and generational challenges they face are addressed in the book. Through story telling, the author tries to address the needs and emotions of the grandparents, their grandchildren and the adult parent who is absent. For more information on the book or to order a copy, visit:

www.Elainekwilliams.com.

Notes

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