Grandparents
Raising
Grandchildren

Resources & Tips

Mecklenburg County
Department of Social Services
AARP – AARP is a membership organization leading positive social change and delivering value to people age 50 and over through information, advocacy and service. They have participated in research and produced numerous resources that are beneficial to grandparents.

Another Level Counseling - A Charlotte based agency prepared to advance you to another level in your life. Our mission is "Empowering individuals, families and communities to Another Level"

Bethlehem Centers of Charlotte - work with low income children and families to provide educational opportunities, headstart, summer camp, scholarship opportunities for those who qualify (704-375-1417).

Big Brothers, Big Sisters - helping children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with measurable impact. This organization is the oldest, largest and most effective youth mentoring organization in the United States.

Child support Enforcement –Mecklenburg County Child Support Enforcement is dedicated to our mission of enhancing the quality of life of children and families through the efficient and timely provision of child support services. The extended mission of the Child Support Enforcement Program is to enhance the well-being of children by assuring that assistance in obtaining support, including financial and medical, is available to children through locating parents, establishing paternity, establishing support obligations, and monitoring and enforcing those obligations.

Communities in Transition –The Center for Community Transitions strengthens our community by helping people with criminal records find a healthier and more productive way of living. Our work provides employment and transitions services; supports alternatives to incarceration; and restores and strengthens family bonds. The Family Support Services program links incarcerated parents with services to help them transition home and back into the role of parenting as well as support services for the children of incarcerated parents.

The Council for Children’s Rights: - Works primarily in the areas of special education, abuse and neglect, mental health, custody, domestic violence and
GRANDPARENT AND GRANDCHILDREN RESOURCES

juvenile justice; however, we accept any case where we feel that a child is in danger or when their rights to receive government or community services mandated by law are in jeopardy of being violated. Each day the Council for Children’s Rights works to address the issues, injustices, and/or situations that shape a child’s life for better or worse. Our experienced, knowledgeable staff members know exactly who to call, what to do, and where to go when a child’s life is in crisis. We provide hope where others find roadblocks.

**Creative Counseling** – Creative Counseling offers a range of experience-based counseling services for children and adults throughout Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Therapy sessions may be conducted in-home or on-site, as required. The following services are provided: Individual, family and group services: Child & adolescent therapy, Family therapy, Couples counseling, Psychoeducational groups, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy.

**Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center**: ECAC is a private non-profit parent organization committed to improving the lives and education of ALL children through a special emphasis on children with disabilities. ECAC provides parents with the knowledge and skills to become their child's best advocate. ECAC's parent education programs are designed to meet the needs of parents and families, young children and students, educators and other professionals—Mo

**Grandparents of America Inc.** – A nonprofit group that helps grandparents find information and services for themselves and their grandchildren. To learn more or to get involved call 704-605-8228.

**J1C** – Just one Call is the information and referral line for Mecklenburg County staffed by Social Workers (704-432-1111)

**Kinship Care (Family Caregiver Support Program)** This program for grandparents raising grandchildren is sponsored by the Department of Social Services in Mecklenburg County. There are 2 active support groups that meet monthly and there are special events throughout the year. (704-432-1111)

**Melange Health Solutions** - offers empowering child, family, and adult counseling services to help families and individuals achieve their full potential.
Meridian Counseling Group PLLC – is a mental health group practice which focuses on the emotional wellness of children, adolescents, adults, couples & families. We provide Individual, Couples & Family Therapy, Comprehensive Clinical Assessments, Play Therapy, Parent Coaching, Domestic Violence Counseling, Pet Assisted Therapy, and more.

NC Cooperative Extension service – Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program – Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program offers several programs and simple solutions that educate families on how to eat smart and move more. This is a national educational program and the mission is to assist families with limited resources in making simple changes in eating behaviors and daily physical activity so that over time healthy choices become healthy habits.

Parent University – Parent University is a community collaborative which is led by Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools to help parents become full partners in their children’s education. CMS partners with Community agencies to offer free courses to provide parents with additional skills, knowledge resources and confidence to work with the school system.

Parent Voice – is a family-run organization, whose staff consists mainly of trained parents and caregivers of youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health concerns. The Mission is to provide information, support and opportunities that strengthen and inspire youth with mental health challenges, and their families and caregivers, to learn, lead, participate and advocate for quality services and successful outcomes.

Social Security Administration – (1800-772-1213) offers information about benefits for children and adults with disabilities, retirement and survivors benefits, what every woman should know and understanding the extra help with your Medicare prescription drug plan among other valuable information.

Teen Health Connection – We are a non-profit medical practice that provides comprehensive medical and mental health services for adolescents. Our mission is to improve the health of adolescents by providing an array of services, education, advocacy, and research through connections with teens, parents, and the community.

YMCA of Greater Charlotte - Strengthening Families Program/Family Advocate – Serves Latino families and grandparent families caring for children under age 5, on the eastside of town. Contact Victor Rodriguez 704-621-6888 or www.ymcacharlotte.org. Programs include: Parents as Teachers, Star Fish, Y Achievers, Getting Ahead program for adults.

Making Connections Workshop
A January 28, 2011. e-mail communiqué from the Child Welfare League of America emphasizes the importance of grandparent and relative care –

At least ten times larger than foster care, the recent surge in grandparent and relative care and the compelling research- that families in informal kinship arrangements provide children at risk with a great opportunity to succeed – emphasize the urgent need for better engagement of this great natural resource. Given the social and economic benefits of keeping children within their families, it only makes sense that now is the time to strengthen policy and practice in order to effectively engage kin as a resource for children.

Helpful websites:
www.caringgrandparents.com
www.grandparents.com
www.aarp.org
www.grandfamiliesofamerica.com
Medicaid covers most of the cost of medical care and services for several categories of people (children and families, pregnant people, the aged and disabled, and adults interested in family planning services). Eligibility is based on state and federal regulations. Once approved, as with private insurance, direct payments are made to medical providers. Coverage is generally for 6-12 months. Medicaid is our nation’s 6th largest health insurer covering one in six Americans. For more information or to download an application visit www.nchealthcarehelp.org.

Food and Nutrition Services (formerly known as Food Stamps) provides supplemental food assistance to individuals and families who currently have limited income and resources. Eligibility is based on state and federal regulations. Once approved, benefits are issued via an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card which looks and works like a bank debit card. EBT cards can be used to purchase food at most local grocers. Over $11 million dollars in benefits are issued each month in Mecklenburg County. For more information or to apply visit https://epass.nc.gov/epass/cw.playerpage.do?.

Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) provides time limited cash assistance to parents with minor children while they look for work. Eligibility is based on state and federal regulations. If approved for WFFA, Medicaid coverage is included. Cash assistance can also be given to relatives who are caring for children who are not their own. There is a federal time limit of five years, nationwide, for parents to receive cash assistance. In Mecklenburg County, employment social workers are linked to each WFFA family. They provide assistance in breaking down barriers to employment.

All applications may require that certain verifications be provided or activities be completed. The time frame for applications is up to 30 days for Food and Nutrition Services, though all applications are automatically screened for expedite services, and up to 45 days for Medicaid and Work First Family Assistance. Application time frames for Senior Assistance vary by program. There are alternatives to coming in to our offices to apply, please call if you would like more information on this.
Applying for Benefits: All applications may require that certain verifications be provided or activities be completed. The time frame for applications is up to 30 days for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), though all applications are automatically screened for expedite services, and up to 45 days for Medicaid (MED) and Work First Family Assistance (WFFA). Application time frames for Senior Assistance vary by program. There are alternatives to coming in to our offices to apply, please call if you would like more information on this.

None of this information is required to make an application. Anything that is needed that you do not have with you will be requested and you will have time to provide it. If you need assistance getting information, please ask, we can assist you. If you do not provide the information that is requested your application will likely be denied.

As part of the application process you will receive and be required to sign the Notice of Rights and Responsibilities. This explains what you can expect from us, and what we expect from you. This is an official agreement.
What Caregivers are Saying...

**A grandfather writes:**
“Participating in the support group has been very helpful to me. It helps to bring home the reality of the situation and helps me know how to better deal with the circumstances.”

**A grandmother writes:**
“The support group has been a Godsend for me. I am able to relax, share experiences and gain insight from others who have the same or similar issues of being a grandparent caregiver. It helps us to realize that we are not alone.”

**A grandmother writes:**
“The meetings have been helpful both to me and my grandchildren. It’s like church on Sundays. I just look forward to going.”

Just1Call is a one-stop source of information and assistance for seniors and adults with disabilities, as well as their families and caregivers.

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MECKLENBURG COUNTY Department of Social Services
Family Caregiver Support Program

**Here Today for a Better Tomorrow.**

**Mecklenburg Kinship Care**
Family Caregiver Support
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program

MECKLENBURG COUNTY Department of Social Services

704-432-1111
MecklenburgCountyNC.gov
What Is Mecklenburg Kinship Care?
Mecklenburg Kinship Care is a support program for grandparents and kinship family caregivers.

Why Kinship Care?
There are an estimated 6 million children in the US living in families headed by a grandparent or other relative caregiver.

Statistics show that children raised in these family settings have a higher incidence of poor school performance, self-esteem issues, abandonment issues, boundary issues, and behavioral problems, including run-ins with the law.

Who is Eligible?
Caregivers aged 55 years and older and living in Mecklenburg County are eligible for Kinship Care.

Services Offered
- Information and Referral - including encouraging participation in classes offered by CMS Parent University.
- Monthly Support Group Meetings
- Advocacy
- Celebrations
- Supervision for participant children during support group meetings
- Additional services such as respite and trainings are offered to caregivers 55 and older.

Program Highlights
- Grandparents’ Month Celebration
- November Caregiver Celebration
- December Children’s Holiday Gift Shoppe Event

Our goal is to create a family centered system of support responsive to the needs of caregivers.
No matter why or how they came to live with you, your grandchildren will benefit from being in your home. When children cannot be with their parents, living with a grandparent may provide:

- Fewer moves from place to place
- The comfort of a familiar language and culture
- A chance to stay with siblings
- More contact with their parents, depending on the situation

Despite these benefits, the children will face some unique challenges:

- They may feel insecure and unsure that you will take care of them.
- They may act out or challenge you.
- They will miss their parents.
- They may be anxious or depressed.
- They may seem young or act too old for their ages.

It will take time for your grandchildren to feel safe and secure in their new home with you. You can encourage these good feelings in a number of ways:

- Set up a daily routine of mealtimes, bedtime, and other activities.
- Help your grandchildren feel “at home” by creating a space just for them.
- Talk to your grandchildren, and listen when they talk to you.
- Set up a few rules and explain your expectations. Then, enforce the rules consistently.
- Reward positive behavior. When children make mistakes, focus on teaching rather than punishing.
- Be as involved with their school as you can, and encourage your children to participate in school activities.

This is a big job, and you may need help from your community. Here are some suggestions:

- Help with housing or other bills, clothing, or school supplies may be available specifically for grandparents raising grandchildren in your community.
- Join a support group. Often there are local groups for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Ask for help and referrals from a church leader, the counselor at your child’s school, or a social services agency.
- If necessary, get professional help to address your grandchild’s special needs, such as medical care, mental health care, or special education.

Parenting the second time around brings special challenges and special joys. Do not hesitate to ask for help or seek services in your community for yourself and your grandchildren.

This tip sheet was created with input from experts in national organizations that work to protect children and strengthen families. To download this tip sheet or for more parenting tips, go to www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting or call 800.394.3366.
Connecting With Your Teen

What's Happening

Many teens spend less time with their families than they did as younger children. As they become more independent and learn to think for themselves, relationships with friends become very important. Sometimes it may feel like your teen doesn’t need you anymore. But teens still need their parents’ love, support, and guidance.

What You Might Be Seeing

Normal teens …

• Crave independence
• Question rules and authority
• Test limits
• Can be impulsive
• Make mature decisions at times, and childish ones at others

What You Can Do

Simple, everyday activities can reinforce the connection between you and your teen. Make room in your schedule for special times when you can, but also take advantage of routine activities to show that you care.

Tips to keep in mind:

• Have family meals. If it’s impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night that accommodates your child’s schedule.
• Share “ordinary” time. Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teen. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offer chances for your teen to talk about what’s on his or her mind.
• Get involved, be involved, and stay involved. Go to games and practices when you can. Ask about homework and school projects. Look for chances to learn about your teen’s latest hobby.
• Be interested. Make it clear that you care about your teen’s ideas, feelings, and experiences. If you listen to what he or she is saying, you’ll get a better sense of the guidance and support needed. Get to know your teen’s friends and their parents, too, when possible.
• Set clear limits. Teens still need your guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences. Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and be consistent in following through. Choose your battles. Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.

Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Don’t forget to say and show how much you love your teen!

This tip sheet was created with input from experts in national organizations that work to protect children and strengthen families. To download this tip sheet or for more parenting tips, go to www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting or call 800.394.3366.
## KINSHIP CAREGIVER BENEFITS CHECKLIST

*Are relative caregivers and children receiving the support they need?*

### CASH BENEFITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</strong></td>
<td>1. Child-only TANF: Nearly all children in kinship care are eligible for child-only grants. Consider only the needs and income of the child. Since few children have income or assets of their own, almost all relative caregivers can receive a child-only grant on behalf of the children in their care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Work First” in North Carolina</strong></td>
<td>2. TANF family grants: caregivers need to meet the state’s TANF definition of a kin caregiver to apply for benefits. Time limits and work requirements are associated with family grants, thus they may not be appropriate for retired relative caregivers or those who need longer term assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foster Care Board Rate</strong></td>
<td>Relative caregivers who are licensed foster parents taking care of children placed with them by their local child welfare agency or court may be eligible for payments.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adoption Subsidy</strong></td>
<td>May be available to relative caregivers who adopt the children in their care.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Old-Age Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI)</strong></td>
<td>Children being raised by grandparents may be eligible for social security dependent benefits under OASDI if the child’s parent is collecting retirement or disability insurance benefits or if the parent was fully insured at the time of his or her death. Caregivers can apply for benefits on behalf of the child based on the work record of the child’s parent, or if not receiving these benefits, may qualify for dependent benefits based on his or her grandparent’s work record. Generally the grandparent must be raising the child because the child’s parents are deceased or disabled, and the child began living with the grandparent before age 18.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supplemental Security Income (SSI)</strong></td>
<td>May be available to children or caregivers who are disabled. This is also available to anyone over age 65. This is an important source of assistance for grandparents and other relatives raising children who are blind or who have other serious disabilities. This program, administered by the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA), provides a cash benefit to the child. Child must meet age, disability, income, and asset criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Security</strong></td>
<td>If a child’s parent or parents are deceased and were insured through the Social Security system at the time of death, the kin caregiver is eligible to receive a Social Security payment on the child’s behalf.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child Support</strong></td>
<td>Until a court has terminated parental rights, a parent generally remains financially responsible for his or her children. A child support enforcement agency may assist grandparents and other relative caregivers in obtaining child support on behalf of the children in their care. Amount of support is based on child’s needs and resources and ability of the parent to pay. Kinship caregivers who receive federally funded foster care payments or TANF may receive only a small portion of child support collected, as most of the support goes to helping the state recoup the costs of providing assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Veteran’s Benefits</strong></td>
<td>Survivor’s benefits, disability benefits, educational benefits, etc. may be available to relative caregivers who are veterans or caring for child survivors of deceased veterans. <a href="http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/">http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/</a></td>
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### TAX CREDITS

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<tr>
<th>Benefit Type</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Earned Income Tax Credit</strong></td>
<td>May be available for certain low or moderate income relative caregivers who are working. This tax credit is refundable so that even workers who do not earn enough to pay taxes can get cash from the IRS. Credit amount depends on income earned and number of qualifying children in the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Tax Credit</strong></td>
<td>May be available to some grandparents and relatives raising children. Age limits for dependents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit</strong></td>
<td>May be available to kinship caregivers who incur child care expenditures in order to work.</td>
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### SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE

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<th>Infants and pre-school age children</th>
<th>North Carolina’s Division of Child Development uses a combination of state and federal funds to provide subsidized child care services to eligible families through a locally administered, state-supervised voucher system. Local DSS agencies have information about subsidies and eligibility.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before school and after school care for school-aged children</td>
<td>Many school districts offer reduced program rates depending on a family’s income and need.</td>
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Questions: I have been raising my daughter’s two boys for three years because she hasn’t been able to give them the kind of care they need and deserve. She still wants to be a part of their lives, and one day she may be able to care for them, but she keeps “bad company” and sometimes she can get angry and hit them. I am not sure they are safe when they are with her. What can I do to keep them safe and still let them spend time with their mother?

Answer: When a grandparent or other relative suddenly must become the parent, there are often profound feelings of disappointment and even anger toward the irresponsible behavior of the parent. Such feelings can often lead to a strained relationship between the caregiver and the parent. Obviously this is typically not in the best interests of the child, particularly if there is going to be an ongoing relationship with their parent(s). If you have concerns for the child’s safety:

Consider establishing ground rules that will work out for you, the child and the parent. This will allow you to set clear limits, establish expectations, and clarify what you will accept and will not accept.

Don’t be afraid to show feelings of compassion toward the parent for missing out on the joys of parenting their own child. Though they may not show it, he/she is probably not happy or proud of his/her behavior.

When you feel the parent can’t be trusted, keep a written log of their behavior to possibly establish patterns. If the parent does anything to hurt you or the child, do not hesitate to call your local Department of Social Services.

Question: My granddaughter gets so angry over the smallest things. She seems especially upset when her mother leaves our house after a visit, or when she returns from a visit with her parent. How can I help her with this?

Answer: I’m sure you recognize that even though your granddaughter is living with you, her grandmother, she is deeply hurt about not living with her mother and/or father. Many children in this situation are also separated from their brothers and sister, which also adds to their hurt. Her anger is one way of dealing with the emotional impact of being separated from her family.
First, the old advice: Do not take it personally. In fact, if she is striking out at you, you can view this as evidence that she trusts you and knows that you love her unconditionally.

Let her “have her anger.” Allow her (and you!) to be “angry with the world”. Do not punish her for crying screaming. As long as she is not hurting herself or others, or destroying things, let her get it all out. She will calm down after the outburst.

When she does calm down, it is a good time to soothe her. Hold her and let her know that she is loved. Talk honestly to her about her mother and others that she misses. Let her express her thoughts and feelings about the whole situation.

When her angry episode is over, let it be over for the time being. Hopefully, over time, her hurt will lessen and she will adjust to what life has dealt her, even though it’s not what we would want for any child.

**Question:** My four-year-old grandchild was neglected over a period of a year or two before I took over raising him. How might this affect him? And what should I do about it?

**Answer:** When children have been neglected, they may also have been abused. This situation is causing the children and you a variety of emotional and physical upsets.

These can range from sadness and guilt to frustration and outright rage; from sleepless nights and nail biting to serious stress-related illnesses. We hope that you know you are doing the right thing when you:

- Allow the child and yourself to be angry “at the world;”
- Do not get upset if his school/day care reports poor performance and/or bad behavior;
- Do not allow others to make judgment about the children’s behavior;
- Speak honestly about the situations confronting the child and you;
- Advocate for the child with teachers/childcare workers and others;
- Seek and ask for help if you need it.