

KINSHIP CARE RESOURCE GUIDE

For Grandparents and other Relatives Raising Children



Fairfax County
Department of Family Services
Fairfax County Public Schools

Acknowledgements

This resource guide is a joint project of the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and the Fairfax County Public Schools Department of Communications and Community Outreach. The project was supported by the Fairfax County Kinship Care Committee – a collaboration of agencies and organizations who have met since 2004 to focus on the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren (and other relatives raising children) in Fairfax County.

These agencies and organizations include:

Fairfax County Departments and Agencies

ElderLink, Options for Caregiving - a Fairfax County partnership with Inova Health System

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board

Fairfax County Department of Family Services:

- Adult and Aging Division - Adult Services and the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging
- Children, Youth and Families Division - Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services; Child Protective Services; Family Preservation Services; and Foster Care and Adoption Services
- Office for Children - Child Care Assistance and Referral, and School Age Child Care programs
- Self-Sufficiency Division - Public Assistance, and Employment and Training Services

Fairfax County Department of Systems Management for Human Services

Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Fairfax County Public Schools - Department of Communications and Community Outreach

Community Nonprofit Organizations

Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources (OAR) of Fairfax County

Thank you to all the agencies, organizations and individuals who contributed information to this guide. Please note that programs included in the guide do not imply endorsement by Fairfax County.

Staying Current...

Between the time this guide is produced and when you read it in print or on the Internet, it is possible that programs, services, eligibility guidelines and fees will have changed. Other programs may have started up, as well. This version of the guide was updated in August 2008.

Please contact us with corrections or additions by e-mail at fairfax_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov, or by calling 703-324-5411; TTY: 703-449-1186. Thank you.

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Introduction

The Fairfax County Kinship Care Committee has developed this resource guide for you – grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the full responsibility of providing care for a child (or children) with whom you share a family bond. We offer this guide to help you find and use the many resources available to you and your family.

Raising a child is both a rewarding and challenging experience. This is especially true for kinship care families, in which grandparents or other relatives take on the responsibility of raising a child when the birth parents cannot.

This responsibility often comes on unexpectedly, causing great change and special opportunities, but also presenting great challenges for the caretaker, the child and the family as a whole. Kinship care households often must adjust to and cope with major changes in school needs, child care demands, finances, employment, housing arrangements, time and energy commitments, mental health concerns and retirement plans.

Kinship care can result from family challenges such as serious mental and physical illness, financial difficulties, military responsibilities, substance abuse, incarceration, child abuse and neglect, AIDS, domestic violence and the death of the child's parent. Kinship care families come from all geographic, economic, educational, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Nationwide, the number of kinship care families is growing, with more than six million children in the U.S. currently being raised by grandparents and other relatives. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2007 approximately 3,500 households identified themselves as having a grandparent responsible for the care of a grandchild or other relative child.

We hope that this guide will help grandparents and custodial relatives take good care of themselves and the precious children they are raising: the next generation.

NOTE: Throughout this guide, the term parent/kinship care relative has been used to refer to parents, grandparents and other relatives raising children. In some cases, however, the term “parent/guardian” or “parent/caretaker” has remained because it appears in that form in the documents of that particular agency or department.