



Get support, grandparents!

UNDERSTANDING GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

Today in the United States, more than 2 million grandparents are living with and serving as the primary caregiver for their grandchildren. This trend poses incredible challenges both to the grandparent and the children involved, affecting everything from financial stress to child development to general family cohesion. **The good news is that grandparents can find the support they deserve!**

Why do grandparents become parents again?

Grandparents often assume the role of parent in an effort to keep their family together and keep their grandchildren out of the foster care system. It might happen when a parent is deceased, incarcerated, or struggling with substance abuse, mental illness or other long-term health problem.

The challenges...

Although a grandparent most often chooses to raise a grandchild for the right reasons, they are usually not prepared for the high demands of raising a child today.

Mental Stress: Grandparents are often dealing with their own emotional reaction to the change and helping the child do the same.

Physical Stress: The high physical demands of raising a child can take a serious toll on a senior's health.

Financial Stress: Grandparents are often living on fixed incomes but have more mouths to feed and more people to fit in their home.

For a complete list of state and federal programs that are available to grandparents raising grandchildren, go to www.childrensdefense.org

SPECIAL STEPS FOR GRANDPARENTS:

There *are* steps grandparent caregivers can take to make the transition smoother and the new family unit stronger:

Make daily life as stable and predictable as possible. Establish a daily schedule and stick to it. Set up a routine that is helpful to both you and your grandchild, like preparing meals together.

Involve yourself in your grandchild's school life. Introduce yourself to teachers and coaches at school. They know your grandchild and might be able to provide insight and support.

Decide how to discipline. Start with a short, simple set of rules, and make sure that the children know *why* these rules are important to their safety and well-being. Be consistent!

Communicate! Respect what they have to say about rules, routines, and consequences. They are more likely to be open with you if you are receptive, tolerant, and understanding.

Take care of yourself. Find a trusted babysitter or friend to take over while you exercise, nap, or relax. Your grandchild's school may have before or after-school care.

Join a support group. Even if you have negative feelings towards your grandchild's parents, do not use the child as a sounding board. Instead, try a grandparent support group where you can vent your frustrations, discuss parenting strategies and share successes.

Remember, it is OKAY to feel angry or disappointed with your own child if you feel they are at fault in leaving your grandchildren. And it's NORMAL to feel discouraged that you've had to change your plans at this point in your life.



Parenting can be tough, but asking for help doesn't have to be.

For more information about this and other parenting challenges, visit:

www.scanva.org