

SUGGESTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THOSE RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

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Raising children is hard work, just ask any parent. And just when you think your child rearing days are behind you, sometimes you're asked to raise your grandchildren or to become a "supportive" grandparent – a grandparent who is living with or close to their grandchildren and the children's parents to provide physical or financial support to the family. Often, grandparents take on this responsibility because the children were removed from their own homes by Child Welfare Services, or because of the parent's mental disorder, substance abuse, job losses or abandonment of the child.

If you find yourself in this situation, you are not alone. According to AARP and the 2010 U. S. Census, the number of grandparents raising their grandchildren has increased significantly over the past decade. In the city of San Diego 7,325 households have grandchildren living with them.

It's important to take care of yourself if you are a "grandfamily." If you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed and underappreciated, your health may suffer and limit

your ability to provide for your grandchildren. Here are some suggestions for taking care of you:

- Talk to someone, either a friend, relative or a professional.
- Take a break from parenting and get some respite care.
- Take a parenting class to update your skills and resources.
- Learn to say "no" – set your priorities and stick to them.

In addition, there are resources available to help grandparents raising their grandchildren. If the children were placed with you by either Child Welfare Services or juvenile delinquency court, you may be eligible for KIN-GAP payments to help care for the children. Your home must be approved as meeting the same standards as for licensed foster family homes with the approval assessment performed by a county social worker. If approved, grandparents are then eligible for the same placement rates as foster parents along with a clothing allowance.

Depending on eligibility criteria, grandparents can receive federal and state benefits to provide health

care and nutrition including Medicaid for children, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), TANF Child Only Grants (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), CalFresh (food stamps), or WIC (Women, Infant and Children) program.

Finally, there are support groups available to grandparents raising their grandchildren. Instead of coping alone, you can reach out to others going through similar situations. For information or for a group in a particular area, call (877) 962-4546 or (877) YMCA-4-KIN. If looking for a support group in the Southeastern area of the city of San Diego, contact www.grandparentsconnection.org. Or attend one of their Thursday morning support group meetings held every Thursday from 10 a.m. until noon at the Tubman-Chavez Center on the corner of Euclid Avenue and Market Street. The group is open to all grandparents, relative caregivers or supportive grandparents in the county.

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