Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Grandparents Raising Children
(Kinship Care)
Information for Teachers and School Staff

Definition

There has been a major increase in children being raised by grandparents or other relatives in recent years. Examples of some factors that have contributed to this rise are increased reporting of abuse and neglect, drug abuse by parents, HIV/AIDS, and parental incarceration. Grandparents raising children may have issues with their own health, age, finances and legal issues of guardianship.

- Nationally, 4.5 million children are living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children under age 18). This represents a 30% increase from 1990 to 2000.*

- There are another 1.5 million children in the United States who are living in households headed by other relatives (2.1% of all children under 18).

- In Maryland, there are 98,836 children living in grandparent-headed households (7.3% of all children in the state). There are another 30,651 children living in households headed by other elatives (2.3% of all children in the state). Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in Maryland, 54,323 are living there without either parent present.

Cited from AARP/Brookdale Foundation September 2005 newsletter: Maryland, A state fact sheet for grandparents and other relatives raising children.

Why do we care?

- Children who are being raised by grandparents or other relatives are usually not with their own parents due to some unfortunate circumstance
- Children who are not in the care of their parents may show signs of stress
- Grandparents or other kinship caregivers may have mixed emotions about the responsibilities in raising a relative's child
- Grandparents who do not have formal custody of their grandchildren are not eligible for financial aid, and may be under a financial burden
- Grandparents and kinship caregivers may give the child a sense of stability and family support

What can we do about it?

See links and resources below to help caregivers:
- Educate themselves about their rights
- Get in touch with family support groups
- Become an active advocate for the child they are raising

<u>**Key Resources/Links**</u>
- **Child Welfare League of America-Kinship Care:**
  http://www.cwla.org/programs/kinship/
  - *Kinship in Maryland Fact Sheet***:**
    http://www.cwla.org/programs/kinship/2005statefactsheets/maryland.pdf

- **The Kinship Care Resource Center of Maryland** provides information, referrals, and support services for Maryland kinship care families through a central data bank. The Kinship Care Resource Center assists caregivers and the organizations that serve them in developing support groups. It also identifies the most pressing needs and concerns of kinship caregivers by maintaining kinship care information and statistics for legislators and other policy makers. *Contact:* Dr. Earlene Merill at (410) 951-4177, (888) 951-4177 or emerill@coppin.edu

- **Maryland's Kinship Care Program** has a website that provides information on resources and services for formal and informal kinship care families. The website is informational and gives an overview of kinship care in Maryland. The program also offers a quarterly newsletter, *Kinships Care Connections.* The same information can be obtained by phone. http://www.dhr.state.md.us/how/chldprnt/kinship.htm or call (410) 767-7521.

- **Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health** www.mdcoalition.org

- **The National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights** has a Maryland Chapter located in Frederick County. This organization is represented by every state and is involved in legislative changes within their respective states and on the federal level. *Contact:* Pat Owens at (301) 898-8023 or owespat@aol.com

- **DB Legal-Legal Database Locator** http://www.dblegal.com/findlawyer/maryland.asp

- **Welfare Information Network-Resources for Welfare Decisions: Kinship Care** http://www.financeproject.org/Publications/kinshipcareresource.htm