

For Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

- Are you a grandparent who is concerned about the safety and well-being of your grandchild? Are you unsure about how to help, where to go, or what to do?
- Are you a grandparent raising your grandchild? Are you looking for financial resources or childcare assistance?
- Do you ever feel confused and overwhelmed?

You are not alone! There are thousands of grandparents and other relatives raising children in Massachusetts.

The Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren created this Tip Sheet Series to help answer some of your questions and direct you to the right place for information and support.

TIP SHEET #2 - Choices in Custody provides an overview of the various arrangements, including guardianship and adoption.

TIP SHEET #3 - Legal Resources for Grandparents and Relative Caregivers provides a list of online and in-person resources.

TIP SHEET #4 - When the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is Involved explains custody issues when children are in DCF care.

TIP SHEET #5 - Financial Resources provides information on the available programs for relative caregivers.

TIP SHEET #6 - Support Services provides a list of resources available to grandparents raising grandchildren who need support and access to resources.

TIP SHEET #7 - Talking to Grandchildren about their Parent's Use of Alcohol or Drugs provides guidance on supporting children and self-care.

Court and Legal Services

People obtain responsibility for their grandchildren in many different ways. This process requires families to make complicated and difficult decisions. If you wish to petition for guardianship or custody of your grandchild, you must begin this process at Probate and Family Court. You can obtain all of the necessary paperwork and learn about the requirements in the Court Clerk's Office. You may wish to obtain a private attorney, or, depending on the Court, you may ask the Court to appoint an attorney for you. If the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Children and Families

(DCF) has custody of your grandchild, the legal case is typically heard at Juvenile Court.

For lawyer referral information call the **Senior Legal Helpline** at 1-866-778-0939.

For more information, please review TIP SHEET #2 - Choices in Custody

TIP SHEET #3 - Legal Resources for Grandparents and Relative Caregivers

TIP SHEET #4 - When the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is Involved

Financial Resources

Grandparents raising grandchildren may be eligible for financial resources to help support your parenting role. Financial services may be dependent on the custody status, the age of the caregiver, or the child's specific needs.

- The **Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)** provides **Temporary Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Child-Only Grants** to guardians of grandchildren through Probate and Family Court. DTA also offers the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** for income-eligible families. To learn more, call 1-800-445-6604.
- **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides nutritional supports including healthy foods for families with children under age 5. To learn more, call 1-900-WIC-1007.
- **Child Care Vouchers** are available to eligible families from the Department of Early Education and Care (617-988-6600) or DTA (1-800-445-6604).
- To learn about **MassHealth/Medicaid** and other health insurance benefits, call 1-800-841-2900.
- **Social Security Survivor/Disability Benefits** are available when a biological parent is deceased and/or if a child has a medical or mental health disability. To learn more, visit <https://www.ssa.gov>.

For more information, please review
TIP SHEET #5 - Financial Resources

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: Kinship Navigator is a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that assists all kinship caregivers (grandparents and other relatives) with accessing services for themselves and the children they are raising.

For more information, please contact kinshipnavigator@massmail.state.ma.us or 844-924-4546, or visit www.mass.gov/kinship-navigator

Support Services

You may feel like you are the only grandparent raising your grandchild, but you are not. One of the best things you can do for yourself and your family is to seek out support from those who understand your unique role. You may wish to participate in a support group with others who share your experience, or seek mental health services for your family.

- **Support Groups:** To locate a support group for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in your community, visit www.massgrg.com and go to the "Support Group" tab for a listing of groups by cities and towns.
- **Learn to Cope:** Learn to Cope is a peer-led support network for families dealing with addiction and recovery. There are groups throughout Massachusetts. Visit www.learn2cope.org or call 1-508-738-5148 to find a meeting near you.
- **Family Resource Centers:** Family Resource Centers are located throughout Massachusetts and help families respond to crises, link families to services and opportunities, help children develop social-emotional skills, strengthen parenting skills, and support grandparents and relative caregivers. To learn more and to find a center in your community, please visit www.frma.org
- **Special Education Services:** Your grandchild may qualify for special education services if they are struggling at school. You may request, in writing, that the school complete a TEAM evaluation to determine if he/she is eligible for services. You can reach out to the Federation for Children with Special Needs for more information www.fcsn.org
- **Elder Services:** The Executive Office of Elder Affairs offers numerous services and resources for caregivers over the age of 55 years old, including grandparents raising grandchildren. Visit MassOptions for connections to services for elders and individuals with disabilities at www.massoptions.org or call 1-844-422-6277.

The Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren was established in 2008 to serve as a resource to the Commonwealth on issues affecting grandparents raising grandchildren and other relative grandchildren. The Commission works to provide information, resources, and support to the thousands of Massachusetts grandparents and relative caregivers by hosting community workshops, trainings, an annual conference, and maintaining an up to date website full of resources for caregivers. To receive newsletters from the Commission, or for more information, contact the Commission at www.massgrg.com. You can also contact the Director of the Commission at 617-748-2454 or e-mail colleen.pritoni@state.ma.us.