

### Support for North Dakota Grandparent Caregivers

- In North Dakota, relatives are the first option for out-of-the-home placement of children.
- Each county social services office offers counseling, referrals and other support to grandparents or relatives caring for children.
- Relatives must meet the same licensing standards established for non-relative foster parents in order to receive any payment for care.
- In addition, North Dakota offers a subsidized guardianship program to relatives caring for children between the ages of 12 and 18, after they have obtained guardianship from the court. This subsidy is also available to children under 12 if they are part of a sibling group, or children over 18 still in school.<sup>5</sup>
- Research shows that as many as half (52%) of North Dakota grandparent caregivers are not legal guardians of their grandchildren and thus would not qualify for subsidized guardianship.<sup>6</sup>

### Services Available to Grandparent Caregivers in North Dakota

County social services offices are the first point of contact for families who need economic assistance, child welfare services, supportive services for elderly or disabled individuals, children's special health services, or need help locating other local resources. For more information about services in North Dakota, visit: [www.ndkidscount.org/family/grandparentcaregivers.htm](http://www.ndkidscount.org/family/grandparentcaregivers.htm).

## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

They are being called the “unsung heroes and heroines of the 21st century.”<sup>1</sup> They are the grandparents parenting the next generation, a responsibility that often proves to be long term.<sup>2</sup> Grandparents raising grandchildren is not a new phenomenon, but Census 2000 data indicate there has been a dramatic increase in the role of grandparents raising grandchildren in the past decade. Other data show that:



*It's about grandchildren.*

- More than 2.4 million grandparents are responsible for grandchildren nationally. There are 2,547 grandparent caregivers in North Dakota.<sup>3</sup>
- Across the country, more than 6 million or approximately one in 12 children younger than 18 are living in households headed by a relative other than the parent; 4.5 million of these children are living with grandparents.<sup>3</sup>
- Throughout North Dakota, nearly 5,000 or approximately one in 33 children are living in households headed by a relative other than a parent. The majority are living with grandparents (3,901 or 2.4 percent of all children in North Dakota). Statewide, the number of children living with grandparents rose 62 percent between 1990 and 2000.<sup>3</sup>
- Cultural considerations also come into play. Children living on Native American reservations in North Dakota are five to eight times more likely to live in grandparent-headed households than the state average.<sup>3</sup>
- Children who live in grandparent-headed households are at the greatest risk of not being covered by health insurance and are at a higher risk of being in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

### Changes and Challenges

#### Factors contributing to changes in family composition:

- Parental substance abuse
- Divorce or death of parent
- Mental or physical illness or disability
- Arrest and incarceration
- Child abuse, neglect, or family violence
- Abandonment of grandchild
- Unexpected pregnancy of teen or adult child
- Unemployment and poverty
- Military deployment

#### Challenges for grandparent caregivers:

- Lack of legal custody or guardianship
- Limited time and money
- Declining health and stamina
- Unaware of or unfamiliar with accessing community resources
- Intimidated or frustrated by the eligibility requirements for financial support
- Role and relationship changes
- Financial strain
- Lack of housing/space

## Grandparent Caregivers and Grandchild Characteristics: 2002 North Dakota Study<sup>6</sup>

- Two-thirds (67%) of grandparent caregivers were younger than 65.
- Half (48%) of grandparent caregivers were employed; one-fourth (26%) were working full-time.
- 71% of grandparent caregivers were married or living with a partner.
- 55% of grandparent caregivers were living in rural areas.
- Two-thirds (63%) of grandparent caregivers had an annual household income of \$35,000 or less.
- More than half (57%) of grandparent caregivers cared for just one grandchild.
- Half (47%) of the grandchildren were younger than 10.
- Nearly half (45%) of grandparent caregivers provided around the clock care; 61% had been providing care for their grandchildren for four or more years. It is understandable why one-fourth (25%) of grandparents reported feeling “tied down.”
- Of grandparent caregivers who said their grandchild had *special needs* (44%), the top three needs were emotional issues, learning disabilities, and hyperactivity disorders.
- One-fourth (27%) of grandparent caregivers estimated spending more than \$5,000 per year caring for their grandchild; one-fourth (25%) did not know how much they had spent.
- Three-fourths (76%) of grandparent caregivers received no monetary compensation for care (see Figure 1). Half (46%) indicated that financial support would be valuable to them.
- 59% of grandparent caregivers reported that their grandchildren received no financial assistance.
- One-third of grandparent caregivers received non-monetary compensation through a school lunch program (38%) or through medical assistance (34%).
- 41% of grandparent caregivers reported having no financial difficulties, such as conflicts between work and caregiving, due to caring for their grandchildren.

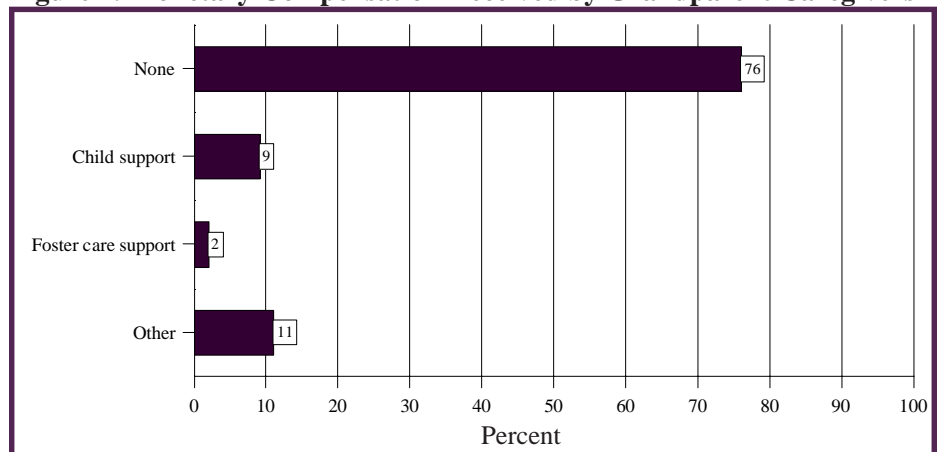
## North Dakota Study of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

In 2002, the North Dakota State Data Center conducted a study of informal caregiving in North Dakota, including grandparents raising grandchildren. A special focus on caregivers living on Native American reservations was conducted separately. Researchers completed a series of phone and face-to-face interviews with grandparents across the state to identify barriers and difficulties grandparents experience in providing care to grandchildren in North Dakota. To learn more about the study and view the complete report, visit: [www.ndkidscount.org/family/grandparentcaregivers.htm](http://www.ndkidscount.org/family/grandparentcaregivers.htm). Key findings from the study include:<sup>6</sup>

*Definition used in the study:*<sup>6</sup>  
A grandparent caregiver is a relative who lives with their grandchild (18 years of age or younger), is the primary caregiver, and has either a legal or informal relationship with the child.

- Overall, grandparents accepted the responsibility of their caregiving role without identifying serious difficulties or concerns. However, their three biggest concerns were emotional aspects (25%), the financial burden (25%), and feeling tied down (25%).
- At least three-fourths of grandparents indicated that school lunch programs (88%), extracurricular activities (82%), and special education (76%) were services available to their grandchildren. For at least one-fourth of grandparents, mentoring programs (27%), tutoring (28%), and scholarships (30%) were not available.
- Half of grandparents said they had access to information on services (55%). However, half said shopping assistance (49%) and parish nurses (56%) were not available to them.

**Figure 1. Monetary Compensation Received by Grandparent Caregivers**



Source: Grandparents as Caregivers in North Dakota, 2002, North Dakota State Data Center.

### References

1. Birckmayer, J., et al. 2005. "Supporting Grandparents Who Raise Grandchildren." *Young Children* 60 (3): 100-104. [www.journal.naeyc.org](http://www.journal.naeyc.org).
2. Simmons, T. and J. Dye. October 2003. "Grandparents Living With Grandchildren: 2000." *Census 2000 Brief*. U.S. Census Bureau. [www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-31.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-31.pdf).
3. U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 SF3 Table DP-2, SF1 Table P28; 1990 Census STF4 Table PB18. [factfinder.census.gov/](http://factfinder.census.gov/).
4. Fields, J. June 2003. "Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2002." *Current Population Reports*. U.S. Census Bureau. [www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p20-547.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p20-547.pdf).
5. Generations United. October 2003. "North Dakota: A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children." [www.gu.org/images/2004StateFactSheets/northdakota.pdf](http://www.gu.org/images/2004StateFactSheets/northdakota.pdf).
6. Rathge, R., et al. June 2003. *Grandparents as Caregivers in North Dakota, 2002*. North Dakota State Data Center. [www.ndsu.edu/sdc/publications/caregiving/Grandparents.pdf](http://www.ndsu.edu/sdc/publications/caregiving/Grandparents.pdf).