

Kinship caregivers need supports to be successful, including:

a. Financial support

- Sandra Bailey, et al., “How can you retire when you still got a kid in school?”: *Economics of raising children in rural areas*, 49(8) MARRIAGE & FAM. REV. 671-69 (Dec. 2013), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01494929.2013.803009>

Grandparents raising their grandchildren, especially single grandmothers, face significant financial difficulties, especially in rural areas. In a study of grandfamilies in Montana, researchers find that grandparents raising grandchildren are more likely to work, and more likely to work longer hours than their peers. Additionally, grandparents who are not legally recognized as foster-parents struggle to obtain financial assistance because of work requirements that elderly caregivers cannot meet. Grandparents who are legally recognized as foster parents and qualify for foster-parent benefits still struggle with making ends meet. Financial assistance and resources, such as food stamps, health care, and housing, can help caregiver grandparents.

- Ching-Hsuan Lin, *Evaluating Services for Kinship Care Families: A Systematic Review*, 36 CHILD. & YOUTH SERVS. REV. 32 (2014), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740913003393?via%3Dihub>

This literature review relies on 13 carefully selected peer-reviewed articles evaluating services/interventions for kinship care families or caregivers. Studies generally show positive outcomes for children, caregivers, and families. The review concludes that kinship care families do not receive the same amount of financial support as their non-kin peers, often because of obstacles to foster care licensure and payments. The review also notes that kinship caregivers receive lower levels of support from child welfare agencies. Lin concludes that child welfare agencies can support kinship families by ensuring access to resources and support. More research should be conducted to determine which practices are most beneficial to kinship care families.

b. Support groups and parenting skills support

- Katherine D. Castillo, et al., *The Relation Between Caregiving Style, Coping, Benefit Finding, Grandchild Symptoms, and Caregiver Adjustment Among Custodial Grandparents*, in RESILIENT GRANDPARENT CAREGIVERS: A STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVE, 25-37 (Bert Hayslip Jr. & Gregory Smith eds., 2013), <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-32833-002>

In this study, grandparents’ caregiving and coping styles, “perceptions of their grandchild’s behavior problems,” and resources/benefits are examined to determine how they impact the custodial grandparent’s adjustment to a parenting role. Psychological adjustments and grandparenting behaviors may impact custodial grandchildren’s adjustments. Consequently, custodial grandparents should be provided some sort of training or intervention to foster authoritative caregiving styles which can better support their grandchildren’s development.

- Wanda Lott Collins, *A Strengths-Based Support Group to Empower African American Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren*, 38(4) SOC. WORK & CHRISTIANITY 453-466 (2011), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/906851420?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>.

Support groups that provide tailored caregiver support can be helpful for African American grandmothers raising children. This report follows a support group comprised of African American grandmothers raising grandchildren in either formal or informal arrangements. The group uses five interventions centered on certain main concerns: health; social services; financial and legal matters; religious and spiritual connections; socio-economic support; and the need for respite care. The support group met with nurses, legal aid speakers, and a private lawyer to discuss the first two themes. The church tied to the support group also provides reduced charges for recordings of Sunday sermons for grandparents who could not attend either due to work, caregiving, or sheer exhaustion, so they can stay connected to their spirituality. They also meet with a counselor to “discuss strategies to reduce day-to-day anxiety and emotional frustrations.” Finally, the church offers youth lock-in programs with safe and fun activities so grandmothers can rest and socialize with their friends. These forms of support result in positive improvements for the grandmothers.

- Jean M. Gerard, et al., *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: The Role of Social Support in Coping with Caregiving Challenges*, 62(4) INT’L J. OF AGING & HUMAN DEV. 359-383 (2006), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16739469/>.

Researchers examine 133 grandparents with primary responsibility for their grandchildren and the potential moderating role of social support on stressors and well-being. Results show that formal support improved the relationship between grandchild health problems and both grandparent caregiving stress and life satisfaction. Also, satisfaction with the availability and adequacy of informal (i.e., aid from family or friends) and formal (i.e., assistance from professional helpers) support systems is beneficial to grandparents regardless of children’s health and daily stressors. Professional assistance and community services are important in minimizing the negative impact of child-related challenges on grandparents’ well-being and life satisfaction.

- Bert Hayslip, Jr., et al., *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: What Have we Learned Over the Past Decade?*, 59(3) THE GERONTOLOGIST 152-163 (May 2019), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28666363/>.

Support groups can be beneficial for grandparents taking on caregiving roles. This article provides an overview of key research on grandparents raising children and provides suggestions for future research. Most notably, the authors discuss the importance of grandparent resilience in order to “counteract the negative effects of stressors on [their] physical and mental health.” Resilience can be taught through interventions and “enhancing protective factors” such as social support and health care resources. Additionally, family trauma can increase the intensity of grandparents’ stress. Social support and healthcare resources are especially beneficial for grandparents in situations involving family trauma.

- Bert Hayslip, Jr. & Patricia Kaminski, *Grandparents Raising Their grandchildren: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Practice*, 45(2) THE GERONTOLOGIST 262-269 (2005), <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/45/2/262/815984?login=true>.

This article reviews the literature regarding grandparent caregivers as of 2005 regarding financial resources, social support, and parenting practices. The authors note that the majority of grandparents raising grandchildren are younger than 65, and the reasons they assume this role vary by ethnicity. Caregivers report loneliness and a lack of support but nevertheless state that raising their grandchildren is inherently rewarding. They also discuss having little in common with the younger parents of their grandchild's friends and struggling to maintain their own social networks. The authors suggest providing greater social support which can aid them in tolerating challenging behavior in their grandchildren.

- James N. Kirby, *The Potential Benefits of Parenting Programs for Grandparents: Recommendations and Clinical Implications*, 24(11) J. OF CHILD & FAM. STUDIES 3200-3212 (Jan. 20, 2015), <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-02742-001>

This research examines the effectiveness of parenting programs for grandparents. When grandparents participate in parenting programs, it leads to positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for the children in their lives, even if the children do not directly live with them. These programs positively impact both children and grandparents. The grandparents who participate in parenting programs (specifically support groups, parenting education, and psychoeducation) have better outcomes in terms of reduced distress levels and improved grandparent-parent relationship satisfaction.

- Youjung Lee & Lisa V. Blitz, *We're GRAND: A Qualitative Design and Development Pilot Project Addressing the Needs and Strengths of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, 21(4) CHILD & FAM. SOCIAL WORK 381-390 (May 5, 2014), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cfs.12153>

The authors interviewed caregiving grandparents to determine their key needs, finding that family conflicts, financial instability, and a lack of community resources are a concern of grandparents. When schools communicate openly with grandfamilies, they are able to assist these families in finding helpful, relevant resources and educational programs to ameliorate the negative experiences of custodial grandparenting and emphasize the positives. With this assistance, custodial grandparents are more supportive to their grandchildren, are more comfortable discussing diversity as it relates to their specific family unit, and feel more fulfillment from caring for their kin.

- Anne L. Strozier, *The Effectiveness of Support Groups in Increasing Social Support for Kinship Caregivers*, 34(5) CHILD. & YOUTH SERVS. REV. 876-881 (May 2012), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740912000229>.

Strozier argues that kinship support groups should be more readily available because of their ability to “increase formal social supports” for grandparents and combat their reported feelings of isolation. Given the unique and stressful position grandparent caregivers are in,

social support groups are an important tool. The study finds that caregivers who attend support groups experience a significant increase in social support when compared to caregivers who do not attend kinship support groups. Additionally, caregivers who attend kinship support groups are more likely to seek out formal social supports from sources such as parent groups, social clubs, church members, physicians, early childhood programs, and schools.

c. Knowledge of, access to, and availability of individually tailored resources

- Gloria F. Carr, et al., *Needs for Information about Supportive Resources: A Predictor of Needs for Service and Service use in African American Grandmother Caregivers*, 10(1) J. OF INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS 48-63 (March 7, 2012), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15350770.2012.647566>.

In this study of 93 African American grandmothers, researchers find a link between what services are needed and the grandmother's age and number of grandchildren in her care. The findings suggest that older grandmothers and grandmothers with more children in their care are more likely to need information and access to social, medical, and legal services. Though needs vary for each person, this study helps predict what resources and information may be most helpful for African American custodial grandmothers depending on their particular situation.

- Bert Hayslip, Jr., et al., *Thematic Dimensions of Grandparent Caregiving: A Focus Group Approach*, 6(1) GRANDFAMILIES: THE CONTEMPORARY J. OF RES., PRAC. & POL. 1 (2020), <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1092&context=grandfamilies>.

This study, relying on qualitative information provided by 75 Texas grandparent caregivers during focus groups, finds that grandparents experience isolation, disenfranchisement, and marginalization from others due to financial costs of raising grandchildren and stigmatization. Providing knowledge of available resources through a needs-based approach can empower caregiving grandparents. Major concerns for grandparent caregivers include affordable and trustworthy day care, difficulty dealing with the adult child (parent of the child they are raising), dealing with their own emotions and life situations, and the emotional, interpersonal, and behavioral problems of the grandchild. The article recommends "Empowerment Training" and "Grandchildren Fact Sheets" along with grandparent specific interventions.