



Tips for Parents: Children Raised by Relatives (Kinship Care)

More than 6 million children in the United States are being raised by relatives—especially grandparents. In many of these homes, the parents are not present and may be only minimally involved in the child's life—if at all.

When parents choose not to care for their own children, or become unable to provide safe, loving care due to drug addiction, abuse, imprisonment or other situations, family members often step in to care for the child and prevent them from living in the foster care system.

Raising a Relative's Child can be a Challenge

This situation allows children to remain among family and retain a sense of belonging and acceptance. However, it presents unique challenges to everyone. Family members with limited incomes, such as grandparents living on social security, often struggle to find a way to pay for additional expenses the child needs. Older guardians may have health issues that make caring for a young one difficult.

Jealousy, resentment, financial hardships, health concerns, poor relations with the child's parents and other issues can make adopting or raising a relative's child a challenging experience.

Listen to the Child's Feelings

Kids need time to adjust to living in a new home and with different family members. Depending on the situation of the parents, they may feel abandoned, angry, or if a parent has died, be in grief. Support the child as they work through these feelings and encourage them to talk to you about them.

Work hard to make sure that the child feels accepted and loved in your home. Allow them time to adjust and to build a relationship with you. Continue to be loving and supportive, even if they refuse your affections and don't immediately return your love.

Try to establish a routine so the child knows what to expect and maintain a safe, consistent environment so the child can begin to build trust—something that may be more difficult for them now. It is highly recommended that you seek counseling for the child and at times, you may need to participate in sessions.

Finding Resources

Having access to the right resources can make all the difference between a difficult and a rewarding experience. Both you and the child will need support as you get used to the new situation. You may need financial assistance and/or legal assistance, and may have many questions about school, medical care, counseling and much more.

There are many organizations and resources available to help you as you take a child into your home. You are the child's advocate. Don't be afraid to ask for help and to be persistent. Below are some links to help you find assistance and support.

Grandfacts:

Grandfactsheets.org offers a comprehensive list of resources for grandparents and other family members raising children. The lists are organized by state and describe the organizations and programs in your state, what they offer, and how to contact them.

Child Welfare League of America:

CWLA.org offers several helpful links and resources for kinship care on topics such as kinship adoption, financial resources, kinship care and substance abuse, stress management, advocacy for kinship care and links to national organizations.

Children's Defense Fund:

Childrensdefense.org offers a Kinship Care Resource Kit for kinship caregivers that provides information on topics such as cash assistance, child care and education programs, health care, and other issues important to relative caregivers.

Help our community grow—share with a friend!

