

# Grandparents Parenting Again

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## Statistics in the US

The Kids Count National Indicators: Family Structure

You can find information Nationally, by state, by some cities, by congressional districts

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/2/23/2488,24,2592,26,2721>

- Florida Congressional District 1 = 10,000 children live with grandparents
- Keep in mind these are only the reported numbers. Many families keep this information within the confines of the family. Some people estimate the numbers are not almost six million children but closer to eight million children being raised by grandparents.
- Many grandparents are employed full time.
- Half of the grandchildren being parented by grandparents are under six years of age.

## What are the reasons for grandparents rescuing grandchildren?

Divorce; illness; death of a parent(s); substance abuse; mental health issues; abandonment; neglect and or abuse; economic hardship; incarceration; domestic violence; natural disasters; war/military duty; failure to have the ability or take responsibility to parent

## What are some issues of parenting again?

Many grandparents thought they were through parenting only to find themselves rescuing their grandchildren and beginning the parenting journey again. This means making a life-changing decision to raise another generation or in the least provide a temporary home for a young child when one may have been looking forward to retirement.

### Emotional issues

1. Grieving the loss of own child / divorce of adult child
2. Parental failure and guilt
3. Having to put own wants, such as retirement on hold, aside
4. Resentment - not wanting to parent full time again
5. How to cope with caring for a child at my age
6. How to deal with being a grandparent, but parenting at the same time

### Legal issues

1. Obtaining legal guardianship (a MUST) / adoption / temporary custody
2. What if parents refuse or revoke legal guardianship – child is bounced around
3. Obtaining a notarized, signed power of attorney
4. Registering for school (immunizations)
5. Auto insurance for teenage child
6. With full custody you can access: Subsidized health insurance  
Social services for housing subsidies  
School enrollment /decision making

Prevent incompetent parent from taking child

Financial issues

1. Usually there is no child support and this can put a strain on the budget
2. Cost of child care for working grandparent
3. Payment for education (Ex. Grants/loans for college)

Medical Issues

1. Medical insurance may not be offered through grandparent's policy
2. Most hospitals will not treat a child without parental consent
3. Special needs assistance (mental health diagnosis; physical; speech therapy, etc.)

### **Adjustments in the home and how to parent as a grandparent**

Increased household responsibilities

1. More planning and better organization
2. More meals and cooking
3. Additional laundry, ironing, mending, sewing
4. Chauffeuring and car pooling
5. Change in schedule
6. Learning about "new" things such as diapers; the "back to sleep" rule

The second generation usually has different and more issues than the first

1. Child may be grieving the death of parent
2. If abuse has occurred then there are trust issues
3. Children may have been exposed to anti social behaviors
4. Children may not feel safe
5. Children are more stressed out than the first generation as they are facing many more issues

Grandparents can't parent the second generation like they did the first.

Grandchildren have more exposure to the world now than ever before. How are they going to handle violent games; Internet; violent music, TV and movies?

The American Psychology Association in a report on "Violence in the Media – Psychologist Help Protect Children from Harmful Effects" says (I'm paraphrasing the report)

- Children may become less sensitive to the pain of those around them.
- Children may become more fearful of their world.
- Children may act more aggressive or harmful to those around them.

Many grandchildren have emotional and behavioral challenges.

1. Emotionally overwrought
2. Behavior problems (ADD/ADHD, Autism Spectrum)
3. Attachment issues
4. Constant power struggles
5. Toilet training

What about wanting to just be a grandparent?

1. There may be issues with grandma wanting to do and be the fun grandma.
2. Other grandchildren may be jealous – how do you divide your energy?

### **Single grandparents / second/blended family marriage issues**

Many grandparents are single and have no support system in place.

1. What if they are career driven? Changes in career will have to take place.
2. What if they are dating?
3. What about their social life and church responsibilities?

In second marriages where the step grandparent has to assume the role of parent even more issues will arise. They do not have access to the up bringing of the child's parent. There is not an understanding of family heritage or history.

Conflict between grandparent and spouse are common

1. "I didn't marry you to have to take responsibility for your grandchildren"
2. "I raised my kids to be healthy adults. I don't think it's fair to raise your kid and their kids."
3. Birth parent may be dealing with issues of parental failure. This may create discord in the marriage.
4. Discipline is relationship specific and step grandparents do not have a relationship.

### **What can you, your preschool and your church do?<sup>1</sup>**

1. Provide respite care for grandparent especially if they are single grandparents.
2. Check out your state's service agencies and help families get assistance.
3. If your church has access to legal aid or legal representatives, enlist their help.
4. Provide parenting classes on parenting children with challenging behavior and emotional issues.
5. Intercede in prayer for the entire family, grandparent, parents and child
6. Provide lay leadership to teach, mentor and love these children.
7. Teach anyone in ministries about the legacy these children are going to have and how your church family can help avert or change the outcomes for the children in your church.
8. Pray with the children. Pray for their comfort and the comfort and safety of the missing parent.
9. If possible enroll the children in a DivorceCare for Kids group in your church or in a neighboring church. <http://www.dc4k.org> Click on "Find a group"
10. Provide clothes and school supplies and or assist with furniture for bedrooms, etc.

### **Resources**

<http://www.aarp.org> AARP website for senior adults. Has grandparent helps.

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<sup>1</sup> **Attract Families to Your Church and keep Them Coming Back**, Linda Ranson Jacobs, (Abingdon Press) "Ten Things Grandparents Parenting Again Need from the Church" page 72-73

<http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/> Has articles on special needs grandchildren as well as other helpful resources

[http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/caring\\_grandchild/](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/caring_grandchild/) Has articles on child development so you can understand various developmental levels of children.

<http://www.grandparentagain.com/> Has articles; recipes to encourage grandchildren living with you to eat healthy; offers community support groups; shares stories from different states about legal issues and grandparents raising grandchildren; offers medical information about special needs and health issues; grandparent's rights

<http://www.gu.org/> Generations United, has fact sheets for every state (legal issues, government help, etc.)

<http://www.grandparentsparentingagain.org/> Has articles on legal issues; offers workshops and seminars on how to parent grandchildren

<http://www.applesaucekids.com/> Great website for Grandparents to have to sue with grandchildren living with them. Has games, crafts, resources, etc.

<http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/allowance.html> Encourages giving children allowances.

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/grandparents/index.cfm> University of Illinois, Grandparenting Again