

# GRANDFACTS

## STATE FACT SHEETS FOR GRANDFAMILIES



The GrandFacts state fact sheets for grandfamilies include state-specific data and programs as well as information about public benefits, educational assistance, legal relationship options and state laws. Visit [www.grandfamilies.org](http://www.grandfamilies.org) to find this and all GrandFacts state fact sheets.

# Florida

## Grandfamilies Data

**497,700**

Children living in homes where a relative is head of household

**145,000**

Children being raised by kin with no parent present

**7,187**

Children in foster care being raised by kin

**132,601**

Grandparents responsible for their grandchildren in Florida

For every **1** child raised by kin in foster care, there are **19** being raised by kin outside of foster care

The data presented in these graphics is from the [United States Census Bureau](#), the [Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center](#) and the [Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System \(AFCARS\)](#).

For more information on kinship care and caregivers, and for detailed instructions on accessing and interpreting this data, please visit: [gksnetwork.org/kinship-grandfamilies-data/](http://gksnetwork.org/kinship-grandfamilies-data/)

## Programs That May Help

Local programs that provide support, resources and assistance to grandfamilies can often be found by contacting your local school, area agency on aging, community center, faith-based organization or children's services office.

### Key Programs in Florida

#### [Aging True Community Senior Services - Relatives as Parents Program of Jacksonville \(RAPPJAX\)](#)

**Website:** [www.agingtrue.org](http://www.agingtrue.org)

**Phone:** 904-807-1292

**Service area:** Duval County

**Description:** Trainings, support groups, transportation, long term goal planning, bi-monthly newsletter, caregiver respite, stipends for children's summer camps and more. Open to grandparents and relative caregivers age 55+.

#### [Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast](#)

**Website:** [www.bbbssun.org](http://www.bbbssun.org)

**Phone:** 941-488-4009

**Service area:** Sarasota, Manatee, Desoto, Highland, Hardee and Charlotte Counties

**Description:** Provides children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported, one to one relationships.

#### [Children's Bereavement Center, Inc. \(CBC\)](#)

**Website:** [www.childbereavement.org](http://www.childbereavement.org)

**Phone:** 1-888-988-5438 (toll-free)

**Email:** [program@childbereavement.org](mailto:program@childbereavement.org)

**Service Area:** Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties

**Description:** No-cost bereavement support groups for children, teens, and adults who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Grief group support in Spanish for adults, group support for those who have experienced perinatal or infant loss, groups are being held virtually.

#### [Children's Home Network Inc.](#)

**Website:** [www.childrenshomenetwork.org](http://www.childrenshomenetwork.org)

**Phone:** 888-920-8761

**Service area:** Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Orange, Osceola, Seminole Counties, Miami-Dade and Broward

**Description:** Information and referral, case management, kinship navigation, benefit enrollment, support groups, and educational workshops to grandparents and relatives raising children. Children's Home Network also provides training and consultation on the Kinship Navigation Model, learn more at [mykinship.org](http://mykinship.org)

#### **Families First of Palm Beach County- Kin Support Project**

**Website:** <https://familiesfirstpbc.org/kin-support/>

**Phone:** 561-721-2887

**Email:** [info@familiesfirstpbc.org](mailto:info@familiesfirstpbc.org)

**Service Area:** Palm Beach County

**Description:** Main goal is to keep families together and children out of the foster care system. Services include: Counseling and education, Support groups, Financial guidance, and Educational services through the school system. Also provide advocacy and linkage to legal services, economic benefits, healthcare and health insurance and Individual/family therapy and social work/case management services for kinship families. Program partners with kinship families to address their financial, legal, emotional/mental health, educational, medical and social concerns.

#### **Florida Legal Services, Inc. (FLS)**

**Website:** [www.floridalegal.org](http://www.floridalegal.org)

**Phone:** 407-801-4350

**Service area:** Statewide

**Description:** Legal support center that provides technical consultation.

#### **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County, FL Inc.**

**Website:** [GrandparentsRaisingGrandchildren.org](http://GrandparentsRaisingGrandchildren.org)

**Phone:** 321-631-7776

**Email:** [grg.brevard@gmail.com](mailto:grg.brevard@gmail.com)

**Service Area:** Brevard County

**Description:** Information and referral, navigation, benefit enrollment, support groups, and educational workshops to relative caregivers; assistance with summer camp, tutoring, school supplies, and birthdays for children in relative care.

#### **Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS)- Kinship Support Program**

**Website:** <https://gulfcoastjewishfamilyandcommunityservices.org/children-family-service/>

**Phone:** 813-459-1601

**Service Area:** Hillsborough County

**Description:** Designed to complement case management services by providing direct support to non-licensed caregivers of children in the Hillsborough County child welfare system. Services provided in the caregivers' homes and local communities. The program utilizes direct family involvement to develop an individualized support plan to address necessary services such as

case management, caregiver benefit assistance, crisis intervention, and peer support. Support services are designed to strengthen and stabilize kinship placements to maintain children, requiring out-of-home placement, with their “family” versus licensed foster care.

#### Heartland for Children- Caregiver Support Program

**Website:** <https://www.heartlandforchildren.org/caregiversupport>

**Phone:** 863-519-8900

**Service Area:** Highlands, Hardee and Polk Counties

**Description:** Provides temporary supports and financial resources, with services including caregiver training, Medicaid access and a monthly stipend.

#### Kids Central, Inc.- Kinship Care Program

**Website:** [www.kidscentralinc.org](http://www.kidscentralinc.org)

**Phone:** 352-873-6332

**Email:** [info@kidscentralinc.org](mailto:info@kidscentralinc.org)

**Service area:** Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion and Sumter Counties

**Description:** Monthly support groups, case management, mentoring, free legal services to those who meet criteria, home visits, events, and advocacy.

#### Manatee Children’s Services- Grandparents as Parents Program

**Website:** [www.manateechildrenergicervices.com/prevention-services](http://www.manateechildrenergicervices.com/prevention-services)

**Phone:** 941-345-1200

**Email:** [info@mcsfl.com](mailto:info@mcsfl.com)

**Service Area:** Manatee County

**Description:** Advocacy services, support groups and crisis intervention for relative caregivers.

#### Meals on Wheels South Florida

**Website:** [www.mowsoflo.org](http://www.mowsoflo.org)

**Phone:** 954-731-8770

**Email:** [info@mowsoflo.org](mailto:info@mowsoflo.org)

**Service area:** Broward

**Description:** Provides home-delivered food & nutrition services to South Florida seniors.

#### Parc Center for Disabilities- Caregiver Relief Program

**Website:** <https://www.parc-fl.org/programs/childrens-services/caregiver-relief-2/>

**Phone:** (727) 345-9111

**Email:** [info@parc-fl.org](mailto:info@parc-fl.org)

**Service area:** Statewide

**Description:** The Caregiver Relief Program pairs nationally trained respite care workers with families raising a child with a diagnosed disability, developmental delay, and/or documented trauma.

**Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)**

**Website:** <https://palgroup.org/>; find a local meeting at <https://meetings.palgroup.org/meetings>

**Phone:** 480-300-4712 (8:00 a.m. to 8 p.m. MST)

**Email:** [info@palgroup.org](mailto:info@palgroup.org)

**Service Area:** Fleming Island, Fort Walton Beach, Hilliard, Shalimar, Tampa, Titusville and Yulee

**Description:** PAL is a national faith-based nonprofit that helps families learn healthy ways to deal with an adult child struggling with addiction. Meetings are facilitated by parents who complete the training program and receive ongoing education. Weekly meetings include an evidence-based educational component using a curriculum written by a licensed Substance Abuse Counselor, and peer-to-peer support. Meetings are offered free of charge to both the facilitator and the attendees.

**Tallahassee Senior Center & Foundation – Grandparents as Parents Program (GaP)**

**Website:** [www.talgov.com/seniors/neighborhoodsites.aspx](http://www.talgov.com/seniors/neighborhoodsites.aspx)

**Phone:** 850-891-4027

**Service Area:** Leon County

**Description:** Support groups, educational programs, legal services, health screenings, access to community resources, information & referral, and family outings and social events.

**Public Benefits**

Federal and state public benefits programs can help with income, food, healthcare, home energy, telephone and other needs for those who are eligible. Eligibility requirements vary with each public benefit and sometimes are different from state to state. Some benefits are for the family and others are for children or older adults individually. Children are often eligible for public benefits even if their caregivers do not have guardianship or legal custody. Relative caregivers may become eligible for benefits programs when their household size increases.

**Help with Public Benefits****BenefitsCheckUp**

Powered by the National Council on Aging, BenefitsCheckUp offers a free and private way to complete a questionnaire to find out if older adults and people with disabilities qualify for certain programs that pay for food, increase income, and cover home and health care costs. The specific programs covered by the questionnaire on the website are listed below. Once the questionnaire is completed, the website generates a list of eligible programs and contact information. BenefitsCheckUp does not currently connect individuals to programs for grandparents raising their grandchildren, but their [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) includes links to websites for the [Children's Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#), the [State Children's Health Insurance Program \(SCHIP\)](#), [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF, Child Only Grant\)](#), and [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\) for Children](#).

<https://benefitscheckup.org/>

| <b>BenefitsCheckUp</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>State, Territory, and Federal Public Benefits</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medicare Savings Programs</li><li>• Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage</li><li>• Medicare Rx Extra Help</li><li>• State Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs (SPAP)</li><li>• Medicaid for Aged, Blind, and Disabled</li><li>• Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</li><li>• Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)</li><li>• Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)</li><li>• State Property Tax Relief/Rebates</li><li>• Supplemental Security Income (SSI)</li><li>• Employment Programs</li><li>• Telephone and Cellphone Assistance</li><li>• Transportation Assistance</li></ul> |

### **Benefits.gov**

An official website of the federal government, this resource has state specific information on benefits, in addition to a screening tool to find out which programs you may be eligible to receive.

[www.benefits.gov](http://www.benefits.gov)

### **Eldercare Locator**

The National Eldercare Locator service helps you find your local area agency on aging and other state and local resources that can help with public benefits, local programs and other services for older adults.

1-800-677-1116 (toll-free)

<https://eldercare.acl.gov/home>

### **Key Public Benefits: Income**

Each state administers federal funds that provide cash assistance to families in need. Some states also offer other forms of financial assistance.

### **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**

Cash assistance may be available to eligible children and their relative caregivers. There are two types of TANF grants: child-only and family grants. Under virtually all states' policies, caregiver income is not considered in determining eligibility for TANF child-only grants. TANF child-only grants are based solely on the income of the child, and are designed to help meet the needs of just the child. Child-only grants are not subject to time limits and work requirements like TANF family grants.

#### **Florida Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)**

1-866-762-2237 (toll-free)

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/temporary-cash-assistance> To apply online – Go to <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>

**Generations United's Grand Resources:**

A Fact Sheet for Grandparent and Relative Caregivers to Help Access Support through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program

[www.gu.org/resources/](http://www.gu.org/resources/)

**Social Security**

A multigenerational program, Social Security provides income benefits to adults, older adults and children. In addition to [Retirement](#) and [Disability](#) benefits, [Survivor's Benefits](#) are based on a child's parent's earnings and may help if a child's parents die. Your grandchild may also qualify for benefits based on your work record. The [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI) program pays benefits to disabled [adults](#) and [children](#) who have limited income and resources. SSI benefits are also payable to people 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial limits.

**Online Directory** - To find your local Social Security Administration office.

1-800-772-1213 (toll-free)

<https://secure.ssa.gov/>

**Key Public Benefits: Nutrition**

Relative caregivers and their families may be eligible for assistance with groceries, meals, infant formula and nutrition education. These are some of the key nutrition benefits programs and resources.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

SNAP is the new name for the federal Food Stamp Program. It helps low-income individuals and families buy the food they need for good health. Although SNAP is the national name, your state may use a different name.

**Florida Food Assistance Program**

and **SUNCAP** (for individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income – SSI)

850-300-4323

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

To apply online – Go to <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>

**Food and Nutrition Services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

**School Meal Programs** - The schools, early childhood education programs, child care centers, afterschool programs or other programs that children attend may offer free or reduced meals through the federal school meal programs, which provide breakfast, lunch, snacks, summer meals and milk. Contact the school, center or program to ask if they participate in any of the school meal programs and how to apply. Relative caregivers should inform the program that they are raising the child and whether or not they are doing so through a court order.

**Online State Directory** - To find your state office that manages school meal programs.

[www.fns.usda.gov/contacts](http://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts)

**Women, Infants and Children (WIC)** - States administer federal funds for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

To find your state office that manages the WIC program- <https://www.fna.usda.gov/wic>

### **Foodbanks**

Organizations that provide free food and sometimes other items, such as diapers, to families in need.

**Online State Directory** - To find local food banks.

[www.feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx](http://www.feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx)

### **Key Public Benefits: Health Care**

Relative caregivers and the children they are raising may be eligible for health insurance through Medicare and/or Medicaid and help with prescription drugs. **BenefitsCheckUp** can help you find these benefits.

<https://benefitscheckup.org/>

### **Health Insurance for Children**

Relative caregivers may apply for free or low-cost health and dental insurance for the children they are raising through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides health coverage to eligible children through both Medicaid and separate CHIP programs. CHIP and Medicaid are the national names, and your state may use different names.

#### **Florida's KidCare program**

1-888-540-KIDS (5437) (toll-free)

[www.floridakidcare.org](http://www.floridakidcare.org)

#### **Florida's Medicaid**

Department of Children and Families

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/medicaid.shtml>

To apply online – Go to <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>

### **Consent to Obtain Health Care**

Even with insurance, consenting to health care for a child can be a challenge for relative caregivers who do not have legal custody. Some states have laws that allow these caregivers to “consent” to such treatment.

**Grandfamilies.org Online Database** - To see if your state has such a law.

[www.grandfamilies.org/Search-Laws](http://www.grandfamilies.org/Search-Laws)

## Key Public Benefits: Tax Credits

The following information is about tax credits from the federal government available throughout the United States. Similar tax credits may exist in your state for state taxes. For example, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), 29 states and the District of Columbia offer a state tax credit based on the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and four states offer a Child Tax Credit. See CBPP's "[Get it Back Campaign](#)" for more information on state tax credits.

**Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** is an income tax credit for workers who do not have high incomes. It is a refundable tax credit, which means you could get a refund check from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) even if you don't earn enough to pay taxes.

**Child Tax Credit** is a tax credit per dependent child. But, it is not refundable.

**Additional Child Tax Credit** may help if you don't owe enough taxes to benefit from the child tax credit. Unlike the child tax credit, this tax credit is refundable.

**Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit** may help you if you've hired someone to help care for the child so you could work or look for work.

**Adoption Tax Credit** can help if you have adopted your grandchild or other relative. It can give you a credit for the money you spent to adopt. If you adopted a child from the foster care system with special needs, you may be eligible for the maximum amount of credit for the year you adopted regardless of whether you had any qualifying expenses. If you did not adopt from the foster care system, you must have qualifying expenses like legal fees.

Please note that tax credits themselves are not counted as income. They will not be counted when you apply for financial help.

**Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)** – To find out about tax credits in your state.  
[www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)

**The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** – To find out more information about each of these tax credits  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

## Education

The **U.S. Department of Education** offers [resources for parents and families](#) with a wide range of helpful information for parents **and** caregivers regarding children's education from early childhood through college, special needs, disabilities, language challenges and gifted students.

1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (toll-free)  
[www.ed.gov/parents](http://www.ed.gov/parents)

**Florida Department of Education**

850-245-0505

[www.fldoe.org](http://www.fldoe.org)**Educational Enrollment**

Relative caregivers can contact their local school district's administrative office or their local school to find out how to register the child and what paperwork is needed. Caregivers may need birth records, health records or previous school records. Some states have laws that allow relative caregivers without legal custody or guardianship to enroll the children they are raising in school. These laws are often called education "consent" laws, but they may be called something else in your state.

**Grandfamilies.org Online Database** - To find out if your state has an education consent law.

[www.grandfamilies.org/Search-Laws](http://www.grandfamilies.org/Search-Laws)

**Early Intervention, Special Education and Related Services**

**The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** - From birth to age 21, children who have learning disabilities, physical disabilities or other special needs may be able to get early intervention, preschool and special education services in school through the federal IDEA. Services may include speech, physical and occupational therapies.

The IDEA requires that states identify, locate and evaluate all children ages 3 to 21 with disabilities who may need special education and related services. Once the evaluation team, which includes a child's caregivers, has decided if a child is eligible for early intervention, preschool or special education services, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP; birth to three years of age) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP; three to 21 years of age) is developed and services should begin shortly.

**Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education**

850-245-0475

[www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/index.shtml](http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/index.shtml)

**FDLRS Child Find**

Florida Diagnostic &amp; Learning Resources System

Contact: Mary Ann Ahearn

386-312-2265

Email: [ahearnm@nefec.org](mailto:ahearnm@nefec.org)

[www.fdlrs.org/child-find](http://www.fdlrs.org/child-find)

**Parent Centers** across the country provide information to help parents *and* caregivers with children who have special education needs and disabilities.

**Online State Directory** - To find Parent Centers in your state.

[www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/)

**Generations United's Grand Resources:**

A Grandparent's and Other Relative's Guide to Raising Children with Disabilities

[www.gu.org/resources/](http://www.gu.org/resources/)

**Early Childhood Education**

**Head Start** and **Early Head Start** are early education programs for eligible children.

**Online Directory** - To find Head Start or Early Head Start centers in your state.

1-866-763-6481 (toll-free)

[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator)

**Child Care Aware** provides information, resources and connection to local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R) that help you find local child care.

**Online Directory** - To find your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency.

1- 800-424-2246 (toll-free)

[www.childcareaware.org/families/](http://www.childcareaware.org/families/)

**Legal**

The following legal relationships may be options for both those children exiting the foster care system and those outside the system. For those families who do not want to establish a legal relationship, consent and power of attorney laws are available in several states.

All of the following options are presented in general terms. This area of the law is created at the state level, so how these options are defined and which ones are available can vary significantly by state.

**Adoption**

With adoption, the relative caregiver becomes the parent in the eyes of the law. This fact makes access to services on behalf of the child the same as for any parent. Adoption ends all of the birth parents' rights and responsibilities, which means that birth parents cannot go to court later and reclaim those rights and responsibilities.

**Adoption assistance** payments may be available to relative caregivers who choose to adopt children in their care from the child welfare system.

**Families Rising** - To get information about your state's subsidy, in addition to other adoption information.

<https://wearefamiliesrising.org/>

**Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption** - To find adoption resources that may be helpful to you.

[www.davethomasfoundation.org](http://www.davethomasfoundation.org)

**Guardianship**

The biggest difference between adoption and guardianship is that guardianship does not take away all the birth parents' rights and responsibilities. Parents typically keep certain rights and the obligation to financially support the child. Unlike adoption, the parents can go back to court and ask for the guardianship to be ended.

For caregivers, a guardianship allows them to access services on behalf of the child that otherwise might prove impossible while not changing family relationships, like making grandma legally mom.

**Guardianship assistance** payments may be available to relative caregivers who choose to get guardianship of the children in their care who are exiting the child welfare system.

**Subsidized Guardianship-** Florida has an approved Title IV-E Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)  
<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/child-and-family-well-being/gap>

## Comparing Adoption and Guardianship

This chart, created by Generations United with support from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, is designed to help kinship foster parents compare adoption and guardianship as two options that you and the children in your care can pursue to exit foster care and create permanent families.

<https://www.gu.org/resources/adoption-and-guardianship-for-children-in-kinship-foster-care/>

## Legal Custody

Legal custody is similar to guardianship, but it is usually granted by a different court that has different procedures.

## Other Options

In some states, relative caregivers who do not want or have a legal relationship to the children in their care have laws that make it possible to access health care treatment and educational services on behalf of the children without going to court.

For more information on all these options, and to see what exists in your state, see [www.grandfamilies.org](http://www.grandfamilies.org).

## State Laws

**Grandfamilies.org** is a collaboration between [Generations United](#), the [American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law](#) and [Casey Family Programs](#). It contains an easy-to-use, searchable [database](#) of state laws and legislation directly impacting kinship families. You will also find explanations of legal topic areas, practical implementation ideas, personal stories and many other resources.

Topics Covered:

- Adoption
- Care and Custody
- Education
- Federal Laws
- Foster Care Licensing
- Financial Assistance
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Kinship Navigator Programs
- National Family Caregiver Support Program
- Notification of Relatives
- Subsidized Guardianship

The online database of laws and legislation is at [www.grandfamilies.org/Search-Laws](http://www.grandfamilies.org/Search-Laws).

## Updates

If you have an update or a resource to be included in this or any of the other GrandFacts State Fact Sheets, please email [grandfamilies@gu.org](mailto:grandfamilies@gu.org).

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**Disclaimers:** None of the sponsoring organizations or foundations of this fact sheet assessed or evaluated listed programs for their responsiveness or effectiveness. Consequently, none of the sponsoring organizations or foundations assume any liability for any program's usefulness or accuracy of their listed information. The programs are included solely based on their own claim that they provide services or supports to grandfamilies. Omission of any relevant program is not intentional. We welcome feedback and updates via email to [grandfamilies@gu.org](mailto:grandfamilies@gu.org).

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