

Ideas for Relatives As Parents Programs (Grandparents & Relative Caregivers)

**Support Groups for Relative Caregivers**

* Consider time of day and day of week in regard to kids’ activities at school or church
* Plan the meeting during meal time and serve a free meal – this in itself would be respite
* Coordinate childcare during the meeting which would also impact attendance – collaborate with churches, school organizations or community clubs (4-H, Scouts)
* Bring in presenters on topics that matter to parenting – staying safe on social media, cyber-bullying, drug/alcohol abuse, family practice lawyer, setting boundaries, staying on top of new technology (maybe even have some HS students explain some of the popular computer games or phone aps their kids are likely talking about)
* Be creative in naming the group meeting – “support group” may not draw people in

**Activities for Children and Teens**

* Activities for families or teens could be an extension of a regular support group or could be planned instead of a support group.
* Activities could be planned as a one-time event, as a series (i.e. once per month during the summer) or ongoing.
* Family oriented activities allow the grandparent to interact with the child with other older adults in a parenting role. Some older kids may feel embarrassed by the age of their “parent” so this environment makes it the norm. Ideas for activities include:
  + Visit the Zoo, museum, conservatory, etc.
  + Trip to a waterpark, swimming pool or beach
  + Fishing trip
  + Hiking at a State Park (with accessible trails)
  + Picnic at a park with lawn games/group games
  + Family movie viewing
* Events designed just for teens or just for kids could also be provided as a safe activity for kids while grandparents/caregivers get a much-needed break, perhaps before a holiday.
* Consider partnering with your Family Resource Center, schools (high school honors students, technical college or university student groups), church youth groups, Big Brothers - Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, YM/WCA, Parks and Recreation, etc.

**Educational Support**

* Presentations for grandparents/caregivers can provide important and useful information for older adults who are stepping back into a parenting role. One-time

presentations (or a series) might appeal to those who are not interested in a support group. Consider topics such as:

* + Computer/technology training
  + Understanding social media, internet safety, monitoring activity, cyber-bullying
  + Mental health needs of children and teens – grief/trauma/loss, suicide, depression/anxiety
  + Mental health needs of the older adult – loss/grief over the reason *their* child is not actively parenting, depression/anxiety, etc.
  + Have School Counselor explain activities/services offered at school
  + Parks and Rec employee can present programs/activities available for kids
  + Public Health Nurse can offer presentation on raising infants (or toddlers) in the 21st century and provide the latest in vaccinations, safety equipment, etc.
  + Presentation by a current or former relative caregiver sharing their story and how they coped with adding a child back into their family
* Presentations for kids could focus on issues such as:
  + Dealing with loss/grief/anger (Why isn’t my mom taking care of me?)
  + Depression/anxiety
  + Suicide and other risky behaviors
  + “How to survive living at grandma’s house”

**Collaborate with Other Agencies Serving Kids**

* Day care centers, schools, clinics, family resource centers, kinship program, churches, Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, etc. Dedicate 10% of your NFCSP funds for GRC families and get this information to these agencies to find eligible families.
* Meet regularly with your local [Kinship Coordinator](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/map/kinship) to discuss current issues/needs.

**Print Materials**

* Put together a handout with information and resources specific to grandparents and relative caregivers. Partner with your kinship coordinator to create and distribute this. (See Sample GRC Resource List found here: <https://gwaar.org/grandparents-and-relative-caregivers>. Give to school counselors, clinics, day care centers, etc. to distribute.

**Helpful Websites**

* [Brookdale Foundation – Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP)](http://www.brookdalefoundation.net/RAPP/rapp.html)
* [AARP Grandparent](https://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.html)
* [University of Wisconsin-Extension – Grandparenting Today](https://fyi.uwex.edu/grandparenting/2011/03/21/12/)