

Support & resources for kinship caregivers and grandparents

These are unprecedented times. Things aren't functioning the way they normally would, and grandparents and other kinship providers are under increased amounts of stress. Here are some tips and resources to help mitigate some of that.

- ▶ **Talk to someone.** Find someone you can talk to about what you're going through, be it other family members or a neighbor. This will give you a chance to work through your feelings and reach an acceptance of the situation. If you deny or ignore these feelings, they will come out in other ways and may affect your relationship with your grandkids.
- ▶ **Your health is paramount. Take care of it.** If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of your grandchildren either. Make it a priority to eat nutritious meals, exercise regularly, and get adequate sleep. Don't let doctor's appointments or medication refills slide.
- ▶ **Ask for help.** Make a list of small and large ways family and friends can support you. It's also okay to lean on your grandkids for help. Kids are smarter and capable of more than we often give them credit. Helping will also make your grandkids feel good.
- ▶ Look for support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. Support groups or even phone support can be very helpful in this journey, and it's a good start for making friends in similar situations. Hearing from people who have been there can help both uplift your spirits and give you concrete suggestions for your situation.
- ▶ Connect with other parents that have children. Even if you feel like you are from a different generation, the joys and tribulations of raising children can quickly form common bonds.



It may take time, but forging friendships with parents of similar aged children can offer camaraderie and help on navigating the maze of issues facing children today.

▶ **Acknowledge and accept what you're feeling, both positive and negative.** Don't beat yourself up over your doubts and reservations. It's only natural to feel some uncertainty about childrearing at a time when you expected your responsibilities to be dwindling. These feelings don't mean that you don't love your grandchildren.

Remember that while you may not have the energy you did when you were younger, you do have the wisdom that only comes with experience—an advantage that can make a huge difference in your grandchild's life. Unlike first-time parents, you've done this before and learned from your mistakes. Don't underestimate what you have to offer!

▶ **No matter their behavior, your grandkids need your comfort and support.** If you start to get angry or upset, put yourself in their head. Picture what they've been through, and the confusion, mistrust, and fear they're probably feeling.

▶ **Establish a routine.** Routines and schedules help make a child's world feel safe. Set a schedule for mealtimes and bedtimes. Create special rituals that you and your grandchildren can share on weekends or when getting ready for bed.

▶ **Offer your time and attention.** You can be a consistent, reassuring presence for your grandkids. Try to make time to interact with them at the beginning of the day, when they come home from school, and before bed.

Facts and resources

Helpful information <http://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/State%20Fact%20Sheets/Grandfamilies-Fact-Sheet-Pennsylvania0919.pdf>

AARP Guide to public benefits in PA https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/public-benefits-guides/2016-2017/Pennsylvania_public_benefits_guide_2016.pdf

Washington State University Free Learning Links <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/learning-links-4-h-and-more/>

Electric Service Payment Assistance <https://www.navigateresources.net/penn/MatchList.aspx?k%3b%3b0%3b%3bN%3b0%3b14891%3bElectric%20Service%20Payment%20Assistance%3bTopServices%3bAll>

Gas Service Payment Assistance <https://www.navigateresources.net/penn/MatchList.aspx?k%3b%3b0%3b%3bN%3b0%3b14891%3bGas%20Service%20Payment%20Assistance%3bTopServices%3bAll>

Utility Assistance <https://www.navigateresources.net/penn/MatchList.aspx?k%3b%3b0%3b%3bN%3b0%3b14891%3bUtility%20Assistance%3bTopServices%3bAll>

Water Service Payment Assistance <https://www.navigateresources.net/penn/MatchList.aspx?k%3b%3b0%3b%3bN%3b0%3b14891%3bWater%20Service%20Payment%20Assistance%3bTopServices%3bAll>