

SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN SURROGATE PARENTING

A growing number of families across the country, regardless of income, background or race are assuming the challenging responsibility of raising their grandchildren. They did not expect to be parents again and often need help with legal, financial, medical, educational and emotional issues that come with this new role. It is not unusual for grandparents to feel overwhelmed, lonely, tired, and at a loss in dealing with their role as a full-time caregiver to their grandchildren. It is not unusual for the grandchildren to feel frightened, abandoned, ashamed or angry. Together they can help each other.

As a “full time” grandparent think through what you want to do, what you can do and what you must do. Remember to take care of yourself. Your health and well being are critical to the health and well being of your grandchild/ren. Help is available. To get help, you must work with the schools, the child welfare system and the legal system. Be aware that most agencies are not set up to recognize grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. When seeking help, you should insist that people in authority listen to you about your needs and those of your grandchildren. Get help from family members, friends and support groups.

The following pages are only a starting point for gathering information and getting help in Collier County, Florida. Inclusion of agencies does not constitute endorsement nor does omission imply disapproval.

Once you have informal authority from the parent or legal authority, you should be able to enroll the child in school and make any requests or decisions about the child’s education. Sometimes, the adjustment to a new setting and the emotional adjustment required shows up in problems at school. Be aware of this and don’t hesitate to seek help through the school or on your own with a private counselor or mental health center. Visit the child’s teacher and explain the situation. Keep in touch with the school regularly to see how the child is doing.

Reference Resources for Surrogate Parents:

- NAFC Resource Directory
- The Phone Book
- The Self-Help Section of Tuesday’s Naples Daily News
- The Public Library
- The Internet

PHONE & WEBSITES FOR KINSHIP CARE SUPPORT

- See Hot Lines Page 3
- Naples Alliance for Children 239-649-5260 www.napleschild.org
- Kinship Care Warm-line 1-800-640-6444 www.flkin.usf.edu University of South Florida School of Social Work Support Center
- AARP Grandparent Information Center www.aarp.org/grandparents

CHECKLIST OF KEY ACTIVITIES

The responsibility of being a fulltime caregiver can be stressful. Sometimes the best way to cope with stress is to make a list of things that need to be done and a reference list of sources. A checklist of key activities kept in one central location will be help. Keep important papers, names, and phone numbers, with this list. The following will serve as a guide for you until you make one your own.

| To Do List | Yes | No | Date | Details |
|--|-----|----|------|---------|
| Legal custody has been established for child(ren) | | | | |
| All important papers are in your custody and are in a Safe place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Certificate • Social Security Card • School Records | | | | |
| Child(ren) have a doctor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have been seen • Shots are up to date • Special Medical Condition • Require special supervision /medication | | | | |
| Child(ren) are being seen by a counselor | | | | |
| All economic resources have been identified and are in place to help support the care of the child(ren): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Stamps • Social Security • Parental Child Support • Child care/after school program • Medicaid • Transportation | | | | |
| Family members/neighbors/friends who can assist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names, Addresses, Phone Numbers | | | | |
| Plans for the child(ren) if something happens to you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things that need to be done | | | | |

Suggestion: Make copies of all forms, paperwork and especially **identification** documents. Keep originals in safe place. If you are required to give documentation to receive service, let them make a copy. **Be sure to get the original back.**

School records and **court records** can be used for identification. If you do not have the correct paperwork, always explain the circumstances and ask for help.

Note: The following information can be used in case of an emergency or when you need to fill out any forms or paperwork. Duplicate for each child and use the back of this page for any additional information

CHILD'S INFORMATION SHEET

CHILD'S FULL NAME: _____

SEX: _____ DATE OF

BIRTH: _____ S.S.#: _____

HEIGHT: _____ WEIGHT: _____ HAIR COLOR: _____ EYE
COLOR: _____

PLACE OF BIRTH: _____
(Hospital, County, State)

MOTHER'S NAME: _____ (include maiden name)

MEDICAL INFORMATION:

- DOCTOR: _____ PHONE: _____
- DENTIST: _____ PHONE: _____
- OTHER: _____ PHONE: _____
- BLOOD TYPE: _____
- ALLERGIES: _____
- DATE OF LAST TETANUS IMMUNIZATION: _____
- SPECIAL MEDICATIONS: _____
- OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS: _____

SCHOOL INFORMATION:

- SCHOOL: _____
PHONE: _____
ADDRESS: _____
- CONTACT PERSON AT
SCHOOL: _____

SOCIAL WORKER'S NAME: _____

- AGENCY: _____ PHONE: _____

SOCIAL WORKER'S
NAME: _____

- AGENCY: _____ PHONE: _____

PLAYMATE: _____ PHONE: _____

- ADDRESS: _____

PLAYMATE: _____ PHONE: _____

- ADDRESS: _____

DOCUMENTS OF IDENTIFICATION

PAPERS

It is necessary to provide a copy of the child's' birth certificate, a certificate of a physical examination or an appointment notice. If the child needs a physical examination it must be done within thirty days of enrollment.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

A social security number is appreciated but not necessary for enrollment in school. If you are a grandparent, or other caregiver, you can apply for a social security card for a child. When you apply you must show the child's original or certified birth certificate and one other document showing the child's identity.

To request an application, you can call toll free Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. Or, you can write or visit the local Social Security Administration office at:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Naples | Immokalee (Guadalupe Center) |
| 6214 Trail Blvd. North | 211 S. 9 th Street |
| Naples, Florida 34108 | Immokalee, FL 34142 |
| Monday – Friday | Every other Tuesday |
| 8:30a – 3:30p | 9:00a – 12:00p |

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

The following agencies are able to help with obtaining birth certificates. There are certain facts about the child that you must know to obtain a birth certificate. If you do not know all the information, ask for help. Try your child's social worker, school counselor or doctor's office. They may be able to call the Office of vital Statistics on your behalf to do a "Search."

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Collier County Health Department | |
| (239)252-8205 | www.doh.state.fl.us/chdcollier |
| 3301 Tamiami Trail E., bldg. H | 419 N. 1 st Street |
| Naples, FL 33932 | Immokalee, FL 34142 |
| Monday – Friday | M & Th Tu, Wed, & Fri |
| 8:30s – 5:00p | 8:30a-noon 8:00a-noon |
| | 1:00p-6:00p 1:00p-6:00p |

There is a \$10 fee.

BAPTISM CERTIFICATES

A copy of the Baptism Certificate can usually be obtained, free of charge, from the church where the baptism took place. A written request, including as much information as you have, is required. To make the search simple for the church include the following information:

- Parents Names
- Child's Name
- Child's Date of Birth
- Anything Else You Deem Important

If the church charges a fee and you cannot afford it, explain you situation and ask for help.

GETTING THE HELP YOU NEED

There are many different services you may be using in taking care of your child(ren). The questions you ask at the beginning can save you from frustration later on. There are differing requirements for getting services from these agencies and organizations. Some may have an application process and require an interview. Some may have income requirements and require documentation. It is very important that you be prepared. The following suggestions are helpful hints for dealing with the “system.”

FIRST, IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A CAREGIVER:

“Hello, I am taking care of my (grandchildren, niece, nephew, etc.) and need help with _____ . Could you direct me to the person who can answer my questions about your service?”

1. Have a pen and paper ready.

Keep a notebook just for information you need for your child(ren). Or, write in this book; it is yours to use in any way that is helpful. List the name of each person you talk with next to his or her phone number and the name of the agency. Keep notes on what they told you.

2. Get the information you need from each agency.

Ask about hours of operation, fees, if there is a waiting list, and the application process. Find out if there is someone in the agency that can help you with the process. Write down the name. If you have transportation or medical problems, some agencies may be able to do a home visit. Ask if you need to make an appointment or can you walk in.

4. If you have to go in for an interview, make sure you have what you need.

- Make a list of papers you need to take to the interview. If some of these papers are unavailable to you, ask if there is something else you can use. If the answer is no, ask if someone can help you get the papers you need.
- Write down the name of the person your interview is with, the time and location of the interview.
- Find out how long the interview will take. Let them know if you need to bring your child(ren) with you or if you have a baby-sitter for only a short time.
- Take notes during the interview.
- After the interview, ask what will happen next. How soon can you start getting the service or financial assistance? Ask if there is anything you can do while you are waiting for an answer. Ask if there will be any fees or other money needed when you start the program.

Make sure you have picked up all of the documents you took with you. Allow the agency to make copies --- **Do not leave your originals.**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Grandparents and other relatives are concerned about the following issues involving the health and safety of their grandchildren:

LOW COST MEDICAL INSURANCE.

See Financial Issues section of this guide.

IMMUNIZATIONS (SHOTS)

Children get “shots” (immunizations) against illnesses that are potentially fatal like diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, polio, rubella and others. If you do not have a primary care physician and cannot afford the cost of immunizations, contact the Collier County Health Department, 732-2684. They can provide information on getting a shot for your child. The shots are free. Keep a vaccination health record to keep your child on schedule. This information will help you if you move to a new area or change health care providers, or when your child is enrolled in daycare or starts school. Remember to bring this record with you every time your child has a health care visit.

SEE THE CHART ENCLOSED.

NUTRITION AND FEEDING YOUR BABY.

The Collier County Health Department’s **WIC Program** has information on infant and child nutrition, parenting, budgeting, food safety, handling information, general nutrition and guidance for infants through 5 year olds. You may be eligible to get assistance through this program. The telephone number for this program is (239)252-8208

IF YOUR GRANDCHILD IS SICK AND YOU DON’T KNOW WHERE HIS PARENTS ARE.

It is not a good idea to give a child aspirin or any other medicine without knowing what is wrong. The best thing to do is to call the child’s doctor (if you know who this is) and follow his/her instructions. If you can’t do that call your doctor. As a last resort you can also call an emergency room but it is not the best choice, because it will take a long time to get help and it is very expensive.

IF YOUR OWN CHILD HAS BEEN TESTED POSITIVE FOR AIDS (HIV+). HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR GRANDCHILD HAS THE VIRUS?

This is a very scary situation but not always disastrous. Not all children of HIV+ mothers will have the virus. For information about testing or other questions, you can contact the A.I.D.S. Hotline, 1-800-FLA-AIDS (1-800-352-2437) or Collier County Health Department, (239)252-8200.

LEAD POISONING

Lead poisoning is one of the most preventive health hazards in young children. Lead poisoning is a disease caused by swallowing or inhaling lead. Even a small amount of lead can be dangerous to small children. The biggest source of lead in the home is lead-based paint used on walls, floors and radiators in some older homes. Your child(ren) can get lead poisoning when they eat paint chips or flakes and eat or breathe paint dust, by eating soil or dirt that has lead in it, by putting hands or toys that have lead dust on them in their mouths, by drinking water that has lead in it or any other way your child(ren) may swallow or inhale lead.

Signs of Lead poisoning:

Some of the signs include: tiredness, headaches, weakness, weight loss, loss of appetite, vomiting, irritability, sleeplessness. Some children do not show signs of lead poisoning. If you live in an older home or if the child had been living in an older home, you may want to get them tested.

Poison Precautions

Be sure that all medicines, even such things as aspirin and cough syrup, are out of sight and out of reach.

CHOKING PREVENTION AND FOOD SAFETY

You should not give a child under three anything small and round such as grapes, popcorn or peanuts. Toys with small, removable parts are also tempting to a child to put in their mouth and can cause choking. Choose toys that are meant for small children. The child(ren) should never be allowed to eat uncooked hot dogs or undercooked hamburgers as they can have a bacteria that can make the child very ill. Leftover foods should always be refrigerated within two hours. Do not let your child(ren) lay down or walk when they are eating or drinking.

SLEEPING SAFETY

Do not sleep with an infant or baby. It is very easy for an adult to roll while sleeping and suffocate the baby accidentally.

More Safety Tips & Resources

The #1 health risk for children ages 14 and under isn't violence, drugs, or disease. It's unintentional injury. You can protect your family from needless tragedies by following these basic safety steps offered by the National Safe Kids Campaign (<http://www.safekids.org>).

- Use a safety seat until your child outgrows it (through age 4 and 40 pounds). When your child is 40 to 60 pounds, use a booster seat. Follow manufacturer's instructions carefully. When your child has outgrown the booster seat, always use a safety belt.
- Always wear a bike helmet properly when bicycling. A helmet should sit on top of your head in a level position and should not rock back and forth or slide to side. Always fasten the safety strap.
- Kids under 10 should never cross streets alone. Teach children to stop at the curb or edge of the road and to look left, right, and left again for traffic before and while crossing the street.
- Install four-sided, five-foot high fencing with a self-closing and self-latching gate around your pool or spa. Use personal flotation devices in open bodies of water. Drowning can happen in bathtubs, buckets, and toilet bowls in a matter of seconds.
- Install smoke detectors in all sleeping areas and on every level of your home. Replace batteries yearly. Plan and practice two different escape routes.
- Keep hot foods and liquids away from children. Water heaters should be set no higher than 120 degrees F. Test the water temperature before placing children in the bathtub. Consider installing anti-scald devices.
- Keep guns unloaded and locked out of children's reach. Lock and store bullets in a separate location.
- Install stairway safety gates and window guards on windows that are not fire emergency exits. Ensure that playgrounds have safe equipment and cushioned surfaces.
- Buy child-resistant packaging, but remember this does not mean "child-proof." Keep potentially poisonous substances and plants out of sight and reach of children.
- Post police and fire (911), poison control center (1-800-282-3171), and medical services telephone numbers near phones. Store Syrup of Ipecac with first aid supplies. Call Florida Poison Control Information Center Hotline (1-800-282-3171) if you think your child has eaten swallowed or inhaled any poison.