

Empowering Grandparents

Grandparents

A Guide for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



AgeWell
MIDDLE TENNESSEE



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According to the Kids Count Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the US Census Bureau, in Tennessee 9.1% of children under the age of 18 live in homes where householders are grandparents. AgeWell Middle Tennessee has dedicated many hours in discerning some of the needs and challenges faced by grandparents as they confront the responsibilities of raising grandchildren in today's society.



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COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
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Many grandparents give full-time care for their grandchildren; others have daily or weekly responsibility for after-school care. Some carry out their responsibilities in multigenerational situations where grandparents live with parents and children. Often, they must quickly step-up when a parent dies, is incarcerated, is diagnosed with physical or emotional illness or is found to be struggling with addiction. Immediately after assuming responsibility they are confronted with legal issues, the child's medical issues, a child dealing with emotional and/or learning problems, drug abuse in the family, etc. Such situations can be overwhelming, leaving grandparents feeling isolated and not knowing where to find information. Help is here!

The goal of this booklet is to empower grandparents by providing them the knowledge and resources to meet the challenges and responsibilities in 'parenting grandchildren.' You are giving your grandchild the gift of stability and a loving family that is already familiar to them.

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This book is not intended to replace professional counsel. Please seek professional guidance as needed.

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Getting Started

As you begin the journey of raising your grandchildren, you may wonder where to start. There are several documents and pieces of information that you need immediately.

Find the following items:

- Grandchild's social security card and birth certificate
- Insurance cards
- Any legal documents or court records related to the parent and/or child
- Consent forms signed by parents for medical care and school issues
- Citizenship papers for you or your grandchildren (if applicable)
- Marriage or divorce decrees for the parents
- Death Certificate (if parent has died)
- Name of pediatrician
- Any medications the child may be taking
- Immunization records
- Name of school—including name of teacher and guidance counselor
- Any baptismal or religious documents (if applicable)

Seek a Power of Attorney for a Minor Child.

You will need a Durable Power of Attorney for a minor child in order to seek medical care or make any legal decisions. See the Legal & Financial Matters Section for more information.

Notify the school of changes in living arrangements for the child.

Arrange a meeting with the teacher, principal and/or guidance counselor

Contact local relative caregiver program.

Ask for information regarding programs available to you.

- Middle Tennessee – Family and Children's Service at **(615) 340-9725** or **rcpreferral@fcsnashville.org**
- South Central—The Center for Family Development at **(931) 684-4676**

Contact the child's pediatrician about any health concerns.

The office will also be able to inform you of immunizations, medications and allergies.

If working, ask Human Resources if you qualify for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

It is also important to discuss this situation with your spouse before making a commitment.

Raising a grandchild will affect his/her lifestyle and finances. You both need to be "on the same page."

What should you tell the grandchild as well as others about why you are the caregiver?

Being up front and honest is generally best even for small children. The most important thing is to reassure the child that he or she is loved and will be taken care of.

Legal and Financial Matters

Legal Issues

Caring for grandchildren on a permanent basis can mean significant financial and lifestyle changes for the grandparents. As you begin this journey, things to consider include:

- Do I need to return to work? How will this impact my Social Security benefits?
- Do I have enough money to care for myself and my grandchild(ren) long term?
- Are children allowed where I live?
- Will my employer allow me to make adjustments to my work schedule?
- Is my grandchild insured? If not, where can I get help?
- Should I seek custody? Are the child(ren)'s parents taking any caregiving or financial role?
- If the child has been in an abusive situation, am I able to get the counseling he/she needs?
- Do I have the documentation needed to make legal, financial, school and medical decisions for my grandchild?

Seeking a Power of Attorney for the child should be the first step grandparents take. There is a law in Tennessee called the Power of Attorney for Care of a Minor Child Act. This is important because the requirements for this special type of power of attorney are different, and an ordinary power of attorney will not work in this situation. Having this special type of power of attorney will allow you to make decisions regarding the welfare of the child and will allow you to receive information from agencies that interact with the grandchild and gives the grandparent the right to seek medical treatment. A power of attorney will allow you to make decisions regarding the welfare of the child.

After this step, you can work on temporary or permanent custody, if desired. Rules vary from state to state. You will need to verify both your state of residence as well as the state a child previously resided in, if different.

Legal counsel will be needed to obtain a power of attorney.

Types of custody agreements available to grandparents vary but can include the following:

- **Informal Kinship Care**

An informal agreement that does not involve the courts. Under this agreement, grandparents have no legal rights and the birth parents can remove the child at any time. It is advantageous to put in writing what the grandparents and the parents agree to do or not do regarding physical care, financial support and length of time grandchild will be in your care.

- **Formal Kinship Care**

A formal legal arrangement that involves working with the courts and possibly government agencies. It spells out all rights and responsibilities. Formal kinship care arrangements make it easier to get support and medical services or enroll the child in special programs and school. In a kinship care arrangement, the grandparent may be eligible to receive funds to assist with the care of the child through a grant administered by a local agency. In Tennessee, this is a Families First Child Only grant from the Department of Human Services.

Kinship Foster Care – you provide daily care of your grandchild but the state is legally in charge of the child. You may receive financial compensation to assist with the care of the child.

Legal guardianship and custody – You get the legal rights and responsibilities for your grandchild but the birth parents retain certain rights such as visitation. Visitation schedules with parents can be set by the courts. In addition, the parents may be responsible to pay child support to you.

Adoption – The legal rights of the parents are terminated permanently. You become the child's legal parent. This usually involves the birth parents agreeing to give up their rights or to be declared unfit by the court.

Legal assistance is needed for some of the above listed arrangements. Seeking your own legal counsel with a lawyer specializing in family law will provide you with the most complete information. Most local Bar Associations can provide a list of attorneys specializing in this type of situation. Your local Legal Aid Society or non-profit law firm may also be able to assist you if your financial resources are limited. Reviewing all your options prior to any decisions will benefit the child and the grandparents.

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services has several resources available including information about the relative caregiver program and a guide of permanency options.

- Relative Caregiver: <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/prevention/relative-caregiver.html>
- Guide to Full Disclosure of Permanency Options: <https://files.dcs.tn.gov/policies/chap16/GuideFullDisPermOp.pdf>

Financial Issues

Raising grandchildren can be a very expensive endeavor. Financial assistance for the child and financial assistance for the grandparent may be different in nature and come from different sources. Your financial status may change with additional dependents on the same income, so grandparents raising a grandchild may now qualify for financial programs that they formerly were ineligible for.

Insurance

Check to see if you can add the child to your employer-sponsored plan if you are still working. If not, Medicaid/TennCare is also an option. States have a program called Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), called CoverKids, to help families who do not qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford private insurance. For health insurance assistance (TennCare, CoverKids and Marketplace) call **1-844-644-5443** or visit getcoveredtenn.org.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Formerly referred to as "food stamps," the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a USDA nutritional assistance program operated at the state level. SNAP can be viewed as a bridge program to help families with limited income purchase staple food items. Apply through your local Department of Human Services. A list of local office numbers are listed at the end of this chapter.

Social Security Benefits

The minor child is entitled to survivor benefits if the parents are deceased or disabled. If the child is disabled, benefits may be available under the Supplemental Security Income Benefit. If the grandparent chooses to return to work, Social Security benefits could be impacted. Contact the Social Security Administration office for guidance. The local office numbers for Social Security are listed at the end of this section.

Tax Credits

A grandparent raising a grandchild may be eligible for tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child and Dependent Care Credit. Contact the IRS at **1-800-829-1040** or www.irs.gov or an accountant for additional information. The EITC is a benefit for working people who have low to moderate income based on the number of dependents. It reduces the amount of tax owed. The Child and Dependent Care Credit may also reduce taxes owed if you paid someone to care for your grandchild while you worked.

Families First (TANF, formerly AFDC)

Families First, the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, is a workforce development and employment program. The Families First program emphasizes work, training, and personal responsibility. It is temporary and has a primary focus on gaining self-sufficiency through employment. The Families First program helps participants reach this goal by providing temporary cash assistance, transportation, child care assistance, educational supports, job training, employment activities, and other support services. Local office numbers are listed at the end of this section. Families First Child Only is a special exemption for when a child lives with a relative who is not their parent, the adult may choose to be excluded from the case. For more information, visit tn.gov/humanservices/families/families-first-tanf.html. Local office numbers are listed at the end of this chapter.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

WIC is a federally-funded program designed to provide supplemental food assistance and nutrition education to low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children until age five. In addition to providing healthy supplemental foods, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support, the program also provides referrals to other health, welfare, and community-based services. For more information, contact your local health department or call **1-800-Dial-WIC (1-800-342-5942)**.

Returning to Work

Raising your grandchild may require you to go back to work. Before returning to work you should consider how this could affect any retirement benefits you receive. Additionally, returning to work may require daycare placement for your grandchild. The cost of this care should also be considered. Please see the Newborn to Age 5 section for information on daycare options. If you are considering returning to work, the resources at the end of this chapter may be helpful.

Financial Empowerment Center

Provides free, professional financial counseling to Middle Tennessee residents by reducing debt and building assets through free on-on-one appointments. Call **(615) 748-3620** or visit fec.nashville.gov. If you are already working outside the home, talk with your employer about your new responsibilities and what benefits you may now be entitled to.

RESET (Raising Economic Security to Ensure Thriving)

RESET is a new collaborative network connecting Nashville residents aged 50 and older to free, personalized assistance to improve financial security.

- Benefit eligibility screening, application & renewal assistance
- Emergency rent & utility assistance
- Confidential, one-on-one financial counseling
- Referral to supplemental income opportunities

For more information, please email us at RESET@agewelltn.org or call our office at **615-353-4235**.

Planning for the Future

An important part of raising children is planning for their future without your presence. This is especially true for older grandparents who may not be physically able to care for the grandchild in the future. Provisions for housing, medical decisions and education must be considered. Who will take over primary care for the children if you become disabled or die? Where will they live? What financial resources will be available to them? An attorney can help you explore options while protecting your ability to provide for your own care and housing.

Resources

- **Legal Aid Society** (615) 244-6610 or 1-800-238-1443
- **Nashville Bar Association** (615) 242-9272
Dial-a-lawyer provides free legal advice by telephone with volunteer lawyers on the first Tuesday of the month.
- **Nashville Bar Association** (615) 242-6546
Lawyer Referral Service
- **Tennessee Justice Center** (615) 255-0331
- **Social Security Administration** 1-800-772-1213
 - Clarksville office 1-877-531-4695
 - Gallatin office 1-866-964-7392
 - Madison office 1-866-964-6302
 - Murfreesboro office 1-866-593-3112
 - Nashville office 1-877-808-5461

- **TN Department of Human Services** **1-888-863-6178**
 - Cheatham County (615) 746-3164
 - Davidson County (615) 532-4000
 - Dickson County (615) 740-2251
 - Houston County (931) 289-4105
 - Humphreys County (931) 296-4227
 - Montgomery County (931) 648-5500
 - Robertson County (615) 382-2402
 - Rutherford County (615) 848-5153
 - Stewart County (931) 232-5304
 - Sumner County (615) 451-5814
 - Trousdale County (615) 374-3513
 - Williamson County (615) 790-5500
 - Wilson County (615) 443-2746
- **Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS)** **1-888-395-9297**

Resource for general legal information and referrals to lawyers.
- **Online TN Justice** www.onlinetnjustice.org

A free website to ask a lawyer for help with a legal issue.

Returning to Work Resources

- **Workforce Essentials** **(615) 664-8564**

Provides training opportunities & job readiness skills to older Americans to prepare them for employment. To participate in this federal job training & employment program (SCSEP), you must be 55+, unemployed and meet financial guidelines.
- **TN Community Services Agency** **(731) 884-2640**

Provides training opportunities & job readiness skills to older Americans to prepare them for employment. To participate in this federal job training & employment program (SCSEP), you must be 55+, unemployed and meet financial guidelines.
- **TN Department of Labor** **(615) 741-1031**

Offer labor market information, internet access, workshops and job placement. Services are free. Visit www.tn.gov/workforce to find the location in your county.
- **Online Job Forums**
 - LinkedIn
 - Career Builder
 - GlassDoor
 - Monster
 - Indeed
 - Zip Recruiter

As Your Grandchild Grows: Newborn to Age 5

Assuming the care of a newborn can be overwhelming and wonderful at the same time. Care for a newborn has evolved in many ways over the last few years. Practices from the past are now changed. This section will list the most current critical information in caring for an infant. This can be important for grandparents who regularly “babysit” as well as those with full-time responsibilities.

Feeding

Nutrition for a newborn is critical for continued development.

- Many varieties of formula are available for feeding. Formula is available in powder, liquid, and liquid concentrations. Refer to the instructions on the can for mixing directions. For example, liquid concentrate will need water added. However, there is also true “ready to feed” liquid formula that can be very convenient. A pediatrician will give insight into which formula to use and how much your grandbaby needs.
- Before 6 months of age, your grandchild will not need to consume any supplemental water or juice. All of the liquid they need to be healthy and to quench thirst is delivered through regular consumption of formula.
- Solid foods should be started when the baby has complete head control and is able to sit up with limited assistance, around 4 to 6 months old.
- Some babies enjoy using a sippy cup as early as 6 months, and others aren't interested until after their first birthday. To prevent tooth decay, the American Dental Association recommends transitioning from a bottle to a training cup by the child's first birthday.
- Consult your grandchild's pediatrician for up-to-date guidance regarding proper nutrition and foods to avoid in the first few years of eating.

Sleeping ABC (Alone, Back, Crib)

- Newborns and babies should sleep in their own crib—not on a sofa or in bed with you. The mattress should be firm without added padding.
- Use only a fitted sheet on the crib. The sheet should not cover the baby's head.

- Newborns and infants are no longer encouraged to sleep on their stomachs. Babies should be placed flat on their backs.
- Bumper pads and pillows are deemed dangerous due to the smothering risk and should not be used.
- A small light blanket swaddled around baby is one option for covering. A one-piece sleeper is also good. There are now zippered sleep sacks which are a great alternative as there is no risk of the baby pulling the blanket over his/her face.
- Keep small, soft items, such as stuffed animals, out of the crib. These are choking hazards. Nothing should be in the crib but the baby sleeping on his/her back.
- Be cautious to avoid overheating the baby, especially while the child is sleeping. The ideal room temperature is between 68-72 degrees. Having a small fan to circulate air in the room has been known to decrease the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), otherwise known as crib death.
- Another risk factor for SIDS (crib death) is exposure to second or third-hand smoke. Third hand smoke exposure occurs when the child is exposed to chemicals in a caregiver's hair or on their skin or clothing. Many people believe they can smoke in the same home but in a different room from the baby. The chemicals circulate through the home's air ducts and reside on furniture and carpet. It is best for caregivers to smoke outside the home, wash hands and remove tops/jackets to minimize exposure to the child.

Health & Wellness

The first years of a child's life are critical to future development. A healthy start will aid a lifetime of good health. Your first task may be to learn about the previous medical care that the child has received or should have received but did not.

Pediatrician

A strong relationship with your grandbaby's pediatrician is helpful for the successful upbringing of a healthy baby. When selecting a pediatrician, one may ask the following questions:

- What is his/her availability on nights and weekends? Many doctors now have night and weekend appointments for sick babies.
- Does the doctor understand and empathize with my situation?
- Do any of my friends recommend this pediatrician based on their children/grandchildren's care?

The Nashville Academy of Medicine can provide referrals to local doctors. They can be reached at **(615) 712-6236**.

Immunizations

Immunizations are critical for a healthy baby. In addition, day care facilities will not accept children who have not been immunized. Pediatrician offices as well as your local health department provide immunizations. A schedule of immunizations can be found in the Changes in Children's Health section.

Car Seats

Tennessee law has strict guidelines about securing children in the car, based on age, and individual weight and height measurements. Your pediatrician is capable of offering advice on car seat selection and proper installation.

- Children younger than 1 year old or weighing 20 lbs. or less must be properly secured in an approved rear-facing child passenger restraint system.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children remain in rear-facing car seats until 2 years of age or until they have reached the highest weight and/or height for their car set.
- Children between 1 to 3 years old weighing more than 20 lbs. must be properly secured in an approved forward-facing or rear facing child passenger restraint system.
- Children 4 to 8 years old and less than 4 ft. 9 in. tall must be properly secured in an approved belt-positioning booster seat system.

Keeping Your Home Safe

Toddlers can reach so many things. Things that were safe for an adult living alone may not be safe in a household that now includes a young child. Medicine and cleaning supplies are just two examples. Listed below are a few tips for safety in the home.

- Put child safety locks on all cabinets. These can be bought at any toy or discount store.
- Electrical outlets should be covered up with safety plugs.
- Cords, especially long cords from window blinds, are hazardous. Make sure they are out of reach.
- Balloons should not be used around children under 5.
- Helmets should be worn when riding bicycles, motorized toys, or any other toys with movement.
- The US Government will at times issue a recall on children's toys. Check this site often for up-to-date information: www.recalls.gov.
- Firearms must be locked in a secure place and unloaded. Ammunition should be

stored separately from the firearms in another location.

- Make sure the temperature of your water heater is set to 120° Fahrenheit or less. Never leave the child alone with any source of water. It only takes a second and few inches of water for a drowning to occur.
- Keep laundry detergent and other chemicals and cleaners behind locked cabinets or out of reach.
- If you suspect the child has ingested anything from soap to medications to cleaners, call the Poison Control Center immediately. Trained personnel will guide you through how to handle potential poisoning. It is now rare for them to recommend causing the child to vomit. Poison Control Center **(800) 222-1222**.

Personal Dangers

There are many dangers today that may not have existed in years past. Make sure to:

- Teach your preschooler his/her name, address and phone number.
- Teach 'stranger danger' at any age. Make sure your grandchild(ren) know what to do if they feel uncomfortable or if they are approached by a stranger.
- Teach them how to call 911 and when to call 911.
- Swim lessons can begin as early as 1-year old and provide safety around water. Lessons are available at local parks and YMCA locations.
- Make sure to have a family safety plan in case of fire and natural disasters.
- Never leave a child unattended in a car.

Discipline

Spanking is generally frowned upon in this day and age. Timeouts and consequences (such as no TV or limited use of toys) are constructive ways to handle discipline. Your pediatrician can be a resource for additional discipline ideas based on age.

An important consideration is to be consistent in providing limits and discipline. Positive reinforcement is a better approach to behavior modification.

One method would be praising your grandchild when you observe a desired behavior. For example, you witness your grandchild putting toys back in the toy box. Simply comment on how helpful the child is being. Focusing more time and energy on desired behaviors versus unwanted actions encourages the child to behave well to get the attention they seek. You can also use a rewards system where the child earns anything from money to computer time to play time. The rewards do not need to be anything of great value. Try to avoid using food as a reward.

Day Care and Mother's Day Out Programs

Daycare and Mother's Day Out programs offer opportunities for socialization for the child(ren) and a break for the grandparent. Programs are regulated by the State of Tennessee. A rating system is used and gives standards that a program must reach to be licensed. If you are working, day care expenses may be tax deductible. Mother's Day Out programs are frequently operated by local faith communities. Mother's Day Out programs are typically more flexible than traditional daycare and can be used just one or two days per week.

In selecting a program, consider:

- Identify your priorities
 - Location: near work or home?
 - Daycare or Mother's Day Out?
- Ask the Experts.
 - Call the Child Care Aware Hotline at **(800) 424-2246** or visit childcareaware.org. They can direct you to the local childcare resource and referral agency.
 - The Nashville Area Association for the Education of Young Children maintains information on accredited daycare centers. You can call them at **(615) 383-6292** or visit their website at www.naaeyc.org for more information.
 - Ask family, friends and parents of your grandchildren's friends for referrals.
 - Visit and Interview
 - Ask about hours, fees and vacation schedules
 - Ask about discipline, feeding and sleeping guidelines
 - Get a typical day or week schedule of activities
 - Check child caregiver ratios and how many children in each classroom
 - Meet the director and teacher, if possible

Employer Benefits

Many employers offer child care benefits. Speak to human resources for information about benefits that you may now be eligible for.

Head Start

The Head Start program (for children ages 3-5) and Early Head Start Program (infants and toddlers) promote readiness for children in low-income families by providing comprehensive educational, health, nutritional and social services. In order to qualify for this benefit program, you must be a resident of the state of Tennessee and you must be a primary caregiver responsible for a child who is too young for public schools. Additional qualifications may also apply. If you would like to speak to the state representative regarding the program, you can call the TN Head Start Collaboration Office at **(615) 741-4849** or visit www.tn.gov/education/

[early-learning/head-start](#). For Davidson County, you can call the Metro Action Commission at **(615) 862-8860**.

Imagination Library/Books from Birth

Imagination Library/Books from Birth is a service that allows your grandchild to receive a free book by mail each month from birth to age 5. Children can be signed up at any point from birth to age 5. The books are age appropriate and change over time to prevent siblings from always getting the same book. To sign up your grandchild visit www.governorsfoundation.org.

Support Groups

Grandparents need to take care of themselves in order to continue raising grandchildren. Local non-profit agencies and faith communities may offer support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. This can provide a chance for you to share your concerns with other grandparents in similar circumstances. Support groups are also a great way to receive helpful tips and information.

Contact:

- Family and Children's Service at **(615) 340-9725**.

Another way to receive support is to work with a school to host a support group for grandparents. If you are unable to leave home to attend meetings, online support groups can also be a source. Remember we are all human and we can lose our patience even with the sweetest children. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or on edge, it is okay to place the infant or small child in a safe place and walk away for up to 15 minutes. It's okay to let them cry while you calm yourself. Call Prevent Child Abuse at **(800) 244-3736** if you need someone to talk with immediately.

Resources for Children Newborn - Age 5

- **KidCentral TN** www.kidcentraltn.com
This website provides information on health, education, development and support to Tennessee families, as well as a searchable State Services Directory. Advice for keeping children safe and healthy has changed over the last several decades. At www.kidcentraltn.com, grandparents can find the most current information on child safety, developmental milestones and support resources.
- **Nurses for Newborns** www.nursesfornewborns.com
Nurses for Newborns serves the Middle Tennessee area by providing prevention-based home visits to families at risk. This includes teenage mothers, mothers with intellectual or physical disabilities or diagnosed with

mental illness and medically fragile babies. Visits include health assessments, education and links to resources. There are no direct charges for the family.

- **TN Voices for Children** **1-800-670-9882**
Educational programs and support groups for families. Additional information available at tnvoices.org.
- **TN Early Intervention System** **(615) 340-5616**
Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) is a voluntary program that offers therapy and other services to families of infants and young children with developmental delays or disabilities. Services are provided at no cost to families. TEIS is critically important to supporting the development of Tennessee children with disabilities and developmental delays as they prepare for school. For more information, please visit, tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/tennessee-early-intervention-system-teis.html
- **Metro Health Department** **(615) 340-5616**
Offers numerous programs on health/parenting issues as well as providing healthcare for children and adults. Additional information available at nashville.gov/health.

As Your Grandchild Grows: Age 5 to 11

Children at this age will begin to seek a world outside of their immediate family. Friends and school will be an integral part of their growth and development. Please see the Working with Schools section for information regarding enrolling your grandchild in school and services available there.

School age children are transitioning to new things and changing physically and emotionally. This is a time of great learning in your grandchild's life. Participation in scouting and sports often start during these years. You may want to explore different activities for your grandchild. Because of the growing number of working mothers, there are many new options available that offer exercise, socialization and mentors for children. Schools and local media as well as other parents may offer suggestions for activities for your grandchild.

Interaction with friends and activity groups help in child development, self-reliance, responsibility, respect for others, sharing and leadership.

Nutrition

Growing children need good nutrition choices. Your grandchildren may qualify for reduced or free lunches at their schools. Contact the child's school for more information and options. See the Changes in Children's Health Care section for more information on nutrition.

After School Care

In the state of Tennessee, there is no legal age for when children are allowed to stay home alone. Guardians are instructed to use their best judgment. Inquire at your grandchild's school and some local YMCA locations offer "Fun Company," which is a year-round before and after school program. Organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club also offer organized after school activities. Transportation from the school is often provided. Local parks systems also offer a variety of after school activities.

Adult Role Models

Your grandchild might benefit from an unrelated adult to serve as a mentor or role model. This can be especially important if a grandmother is raising a grandson. Big Brothers/Big Sisters offers one-on-one adult relationships for your grandchild. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are other organizations that offer experiences in a supportive environment with adult role models.

Sleepovers

Most children begin sleeping over at a nonrelative friend's home around age 8 or 9 or in some cases 10-12. Before your grandchildren begin this you may want to make sure they are mature enough to be away from home. Having the friend over to your home first might make it easier for both of you.

Sitters

For occasional care needs, you may want to hire a sitter. This is good for you and the child. Ideally you would want to choose a sitter who has training in child care and first aid from a qualified source. Ask friends and neighbors for recommendations and you can always inquire at a local college, faith based organization and community centers. Always check references.

Community Centers and Parks

Many local community centers and parks offer classes and activities in art and dance as well as physical activities. They may offer family activities as well. This would be a great chance to meet new people while both of you are enjoying the opportunity to exercise and have fun.

Sports

Children today begin sports participation earlier than in years past. Many local youth leagues are available for soccer, football, basketball, baseball and many other sports. Opportunities exist for more intense sports involvement at the "travel" or "club" level. These generally require a bigger time commitment and a larger financial commitment. To learn more about sports leagues in your community, consult local media (particularly neighborhood papers), the local Chamber of Commerce, ask other parents and inquire at your grandchild's school or local faith community.

Summer Camp

Summer camp provides opportunities to experience new activities and make new friends. In late winter or early spring several groups sponsor summer camp fairs where you can learn about all types of camps. Camps can be half-day or full day. To learn more about summer camps ask other parents for ideas, research in newspaper and local media or ask at your grandchild's school. Summer camp also provides a break for grandparents who are raising grandchildren and may be needed for those grandparents still working.

Resources for Children 5-11

- **KidCentral TN** www.kidcentraltn.com
This website provides information on health, education, development and support to Tennessee families, as well as a searchable State Services Directory. Advice for keeping children safe and healthy has changed over the last several decades. At www.kidcentraltn.com, grandparents can find the most current information on child safety, developmental milestones and support resources.
- **Big Brothers/Big Sisters** **(615) 329-9191**
Provides caring adult mentors and role models.
- **Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee** **(615) 983-6836**
Provides a safe place with programs and activities. Additionally, provides opportunities to develop relationships with positive adult role models.
- **YMCA** **(615) 259-9622**
Centers throughout Middle Tennessee that provide physical and social activities for the entire family.
- **Boy Scouts** **(615) 383-9724**
- **Girl Scouts** **(615) 383-0490**
- **Family Resource Centers**
Please see General Resources at the end of the book

As Your Grandchild Grows: Tweens and Teenagers

Is There a Generation Gap?

You may have heard the phrase “generation gap” to describe the differences in thinking between grandparents and teenagers. Every generation creates its own styles of music, clothing, and slang, so your teen's language, music, and interests may not make much sense to you.

But keep in mind that the family still has an enormous influence on children during the adolescent years. Most teenagers agree with their parents and grandparents on basic value topics such as what to do with one's life, the value of education, and religion. Your teenager will carry many of your family values and beliefs through adolescence and into adulthood.

Your parenting style might need to be adapted as your grandchild enters the Tween (10-12 years) and the Teenage Years. Open communication will be key. Be approachable. Let your grandchild know that he/she can come to you no matter what.

Going Through Puberty

Puberty starts much younger now, as early as 9 or 10. Consult with the pediatrician about changes and be positive. Many books are available that will guide you as you talk to your grandchild about the body changes and emotions the child will experience. As your grandchild begins puberty, this is a great time to begin the discussion about sex. Teens need accurate information about sexual intercourse, how pregnancy happens, and sexually transmitted diseases. You can also use discussions about sex as a chance to share your own values and beliefs. Most teens still pay attention to adults' values when they are making tough decisions. But be careful to keep discussions of sex from turning into arguments. Adults sometimes lose the chance to help children make decisions about sex because they begin to nag, preach, or moralize. It is important to be “askable.” Let teens know that they can ask you questions any time and help them develop the skills and judgment to make good decisions about their sexuality.

Drugs and Alcohol

Talking to your grandchildren is one of the most important ways to influence their drinking and drug use. Remember that it's never too early to start talking about these "tough" topics. Begin sharing your values about drinking and drug use when children are young. Let your grandchildren know your beliefs and explain the reasons behind your views. If you have teenagers in your home and haven't already discussed these topics, it's never too late to start. If you don't talk to your grandchildren, they will learn from someone else — movies, television, their friends — and you may not approve of what they hear. Since drug or alcohol addiction by a parent is the most frequent reason that grandparents gain custody of grandchildren, this addiction can be used as a learning tool. Be a good role model regarding using drug and alcohol use.

Thinking More Like An Adult

Believe it or not, the parts of the brain that handles reasoning and decision-making still are not completely developed in teens. Many don't understand that they are vulnerable to risks. They might take dangerous risks, such as driving too fast or not wearing seat belts, because they think that nothing bad will happen to them. Even if they know others have been hurt in car wrecks, they believe they are different and don't always recognize that it could happen to them too. You can handle teen risk-taking by helping your teens evaluate risks and find safer outlets for risktaking urges. Give them responsibilities at home such as helping with dinner or cleaning their room to encourage them to accept and learn responsibility.

Becoming Independent

Has your teen become more critical of you or less willing to be seen in public with you?

The teen years are a time when young people are becoming more independent of their families. This is especially true if their caregiver is an older grandparent. Teens are figuring out who they are, and they spend a lot of time thinking about how others see them.

What their friends think becomes very important — which is one reason why they worry about looking and dressing like their friends. Friends provide a supportive environment for teenagers because they are struggling with the same kinds of issues.

Teens' need to become independent sometimes leads to family conflict. Although it's a myth that the adolescent years are constantly filled with conflict, you may see an increase in disagreements with your teenagers. Remember that they're trying out new ways of thinking and figuring out who they are. One way to do this is by

challenging your beliefs and ideas. Some common areas of conflict are haircuts, clothes, allowance, curfew, music, and dating.

So how do you manage this need for independence? Teens need the chance to express themselves and find their own identity. At the same time, they still need adults to set and enforce limits on their behavior. Allow teenagers to express their feelings, but remember that they still need your guidance. Let them make some choices on things like clothes and hairstyles, even if you don't like what they choose. Set clear limits and explain the reasons behind them. It's okay to disagree, but teens need to understand that you expect them to follow the rules.

Try involving your teens in making the rules. They are more likely to follow them if they helped create them. Be calm and flexible, and keep the communication lines open. Remember that most teenagers still agree with their families on important values. Let your grandchildren know that they can bring their feelings and problems to you.

What About Serious Problems?

Despite your best efforts, some teens still get into serious trouble. If your grandchildren are showing signs of school failure, drug or alcohol use, gang involvement, law-breaking or other serious problems, get help as soon as you suspect a problem. Talk with other adults who have influence with your teen, such as coaches, teachers, counselors, or youth workers. Explain your concerns, and get their advice. Enlist their help in keeping your teen on track. Don't hesitate to find a counselor or therapist if your teen is having serious problems. Stay involved in your grandchildren's lives. Your support and concern may help them handle the problems in their world.

Jobs

Many teenagers would like extra spending money or the independence that having a job would bring. While many teenagers do hold jobs during school, time for studies must be weighed against any other benefits. Work with the teen to establish schedules that allow reasonable time for school, homework, work and time with family and friends. Be aware of safety issues on the job site and during transportation to and from work. Children may be allowed to start working at 14 but restrictions are set by the state. Information on jobs can be found at www.tn.gov/workforce or by calling **1-844-224-5818**.

Driving

Tennessee allows residents 15 years of age to receive a driver's permit. This allows

them to drive with a licensed adult in the car. At 16 they may receive a license that allows them to drive alone. Under new regulations, a licensed 16-year old may only have 1 other non-family member in the car while driving. At 17, a new type of license is received that allows more privileges. For complete details on driving regulations, contact the Department of Public Safety and Homeland Security at **(615) 251-5166** or visit www.tn.gov/safety.

Friends

During this time, friends have a big influence on a teenager's life. Make it a point to get to know their friends. Welcome them into your home. It is important to know the parents of their friends. They can be a valuable resource to you as you raise your grandchildren.

Dating

Set the rules that you are comfortable with, but you may need to consider what the norms are concerning dating today. Teenagers may often go out in groups versus individual dates. The new driving rules can also make it difficult for "double dating." Even though the parents may be younger than you, make an effort to get to know the date's parents.

Curfew

By law Tennessee has set curfews for children under 18. Curfew times may vary from county to county. Be sure to check with your local county office for details. However, you may want to set your own curfew times. You need to be consistent and observe penalties if the curfew is not met.

Educational Tips

Parental involvement in a child's education is crucial to continued success. As children approach middle school and high school, they often do not want parents or grandparents involved at school. However, this is still a time when grandparents need to be aware of what is happening at the school. Listed below are tips for helping with educational success.

- Talk to your grandchild about current events. Ask questions and gather their opinion.
- Subscribe to magazines or online sites that relate to the child's interest such as sports, fashion, etc.

- Make sure your teen/pre-teen gets enough sleep and healthy foods. Junk food and late nights are very common at this stage of development.
- Be alert to any drastic changes in mood, behavior, friends and/or grades. Such changes could indicate drug or alcohol use. Seek help, including from the child's school or pediatrician.
- Praise your grandchild as often as possible. A positive home environment creates better students.
- Lay out your expectations for success in education.

High School and Beyond

Information about school requirements and college admissions can be found in the *Working with Schools* section.

References: The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating. Developed and released by Dr. Diane Bales, Human Development Specialist, Cooperative Extension, The University of Georgia. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren series was adapted, with permission, from the Grandparents as Parents series originally developed by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension and released by Sam Quick.

Resources for Tweens and Teenagers

- **Nashville After Zone Alliance** nashvillez.org
A coordinated network of afterschool programming in select Metro Schools middle schools.
- **Oasis Center** (615) 327-4455
Provides a connection to a caring adult in a safe environment.
- **Boy Scouts** (615) 383-9724
- **Girl Scouts** (615) 383-0490
- **Family Resource Centers**
Please see General Resources at the end of the book
- **Local Parks and Recreation**
- **Local Faith-based Groups**
- **Metro Nashville Public Schools** mnps.org
Offers community activities and educational opportunities throughout the year
- **Nashville Public Library** library.nashville.org
Free education resources, music, books, apps, events and classes for children and adults

- **Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Middle TN** (615) 329-9191
Provides children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.
- **College for TN** (615) 741-1318
Provides resources for families and children seeking information about higher learning options visit collegefortn.org for additional information.
- **Power Youth**
Provides career exploration and work experience activities for youth 14 to 24. For more information visit nashville.gov/departments/metro-action/power-youth.

As Your Grandchild Grows: Children with Special Needs

Raising a grandchild with special needs may require a hands-on approach. Children with special needs often have therapies to be conducted along with dietary guidelines/restrictions. Special needs can often be defined as children with either physical or intellectual disabilities or both.

Some common intellectual terms used today include:

ADHD

ADHD or Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyper-activity Disorder is a developmental disorder that is marked by especially persistent symptoms of inattention (such as distractibility, forgetfulness, or disorganisation) or by symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity (such as fidgeting, speaking out of turn, or restlessness) or by symptoms of all three. Consult your grandchild's pediatrician and/or school teacher and school guidance counselor should you have concerns.

Autism

Autism is a developmental disorder that normally appears in the first 3 years of life, and affects the brain's normal development of social and communication skills.

Testing and Getting Help

The pediatrician can help to test for these and other disorders and offer treatment options. As you begin to care for your grandchild with special needs you will need to consider the following:

- Gather information regarding any guidelines for medications, therapies, foods, etc.
- Schedule meetings with teachers, counselors and any others at your grandchild's school to learn of any plans regarding the child.
- Schedule an additional appointment with any therapists or doctors that provide

specialized care for the child. You will need to learn about therapies or medications that you will need to administer.

- Seek out support groups that may assist you as you begin to care for this child.
- Associations may provide informational materials on your grandchild's particular condition as well as support groups and financial assistance.
- You will need to learn about therapies or medications that you will need to administer.

Resources for Children with Special Needs

- **Disability Pathfinder** **(800) 640-4636**
Helps Tennessee families find disability resources and services.
For additional information visit tnpathfinder.org.
- **Tennessee Caregiver Coalition** **(615) 269-8687**
Provides respite for families caring for children with special needs. For additional information visit tncaregiver.org.
- **Autism Tennessee** **(615) 270-2077**
Provides support, resources and programs for autistic individuals. For more information visit autismtennessee.wildapricot.org.

Relationships and Emotions

Families in which grandparents or other relatives are raising children (often called “kincare” families) can be very complex. One major issue is the role of the parents in such families. Although usually not living in the household, parents can affect all members of kincare families. For relative caregivers and children alike, the triangular dynamic in which the caregivers, biological parents and the children interact can be a source of great stress, anxiety and various other emotions. While there are a number of reasons the children are being raised by relatives, research shows that the parents often are still involved in their children's lives on some level and may have total control in the future.

Grandparents who are raising grandchildren may often deal with feelings of guilt and/ or resentment toward their own adult child. If the grandchildren experience trauma and pain, grandparents may feel bad for their grandchildren as well as their own children.

Sometimes the grandchildren will act out because they don't understand the reason for not being able to live with their parents. This often leads to behavioral problems that grandparents have to deal with, while dealing with their own emotional reactions to the situation.

Helpful Tip: Join support groups if you feel anger, shame, guilt or disappointment towards your grandchildren's parents, so that you don't take it out on your grandchildren. If you cannot find a support group, consider starting one at your faith community or school.

Below are some everyday situations that will arise and how to address them:

- First of all, keep all court documents in a safe place so that you can refer to them if any questions or misunderstandings arise between you and your child.
- Then, set very clear boundaries for you, the parent(s) and your grandchild and be consistent.
- If the parent tries to threaten, manipulate or intimidate you with threats to take the grandchild back if you don't comply with his or her wishes, stand your ground; after all you have the court on your side.

- If your style of parenting differs from that of the parent, explain calmly to the parent that there are certain activities and behaviors that are not acceptable for the child whether in your care or theirs and that you would greatly appreciate their cooperation in this matter.
- If the child seems to act out after an extended visit with the parent, you must remind the child that there are rules in your house that must be followed. Be warm and loving yet firm.
- Remember: NEVER SPEAK NEGATIVELY ABOUT THE PARENT WHILE THE CHILD IS PRESENT. It doesn't matter how much pain, suffering or trauma the child has endured at the hands of the parents, the child may still seek their parents' love and acceptance.
- If the parent constantly disappoints the child with broken promises and missed visits, do your best to comfort and to reassure the child that the parent still loves and cares for him/her.
- **Children should always be reassured that the reason that they are not living with their biological parents is not their fault.**
- **If you are a caregiver, remember that you can control your own behavior and actions but not those of the grandchild's parents. Focus on what you can do to make the world a better place for the children in your care.**
- While many caregivers feel that any relationship with a parent is better than no relationship at all, poor parental relationships may negatively impact the entire family. Therapy and counseling may be needed in order to set the stage for successful interactions.
- Know when to get help! In some cases support, counseling and therapy groups may be necessary for the caregiver, the child and the biological parent. The Nashville area has excellent practitioners. If you are not able to find one, call the anonymous United Way Helpline by dialing 2-1-1 for a list of practitioners.

Grandchild's Emotions

Be ready for what your grandchild may feel. These emotions are important to the child and your understanding of this could impact their relationship with you.

- **Confused:** They may not understand where the parent is or why they are not with them.
- **Angry:** They may be angry at the situation, their parents or you.
- **Guilty:** They may blame themselves for the problems that led them to you or they could feel guilty for feeling relief at being in a stable, safe place.
- **Embarrassed:** A child may feel embarrassed because they are living with a grandparent rather than a parent.

- **Suspicious:** A child who has been neglected or abused may have a hard time trusting anyone even someone who loves them.
- **Scared:** It may take time for them to feel your home is a safe place.

If you feel you cannot handle these emotions, it is okay to seek help. Guidance counselors at the school may be able to help or provide you with options in the community for help.

Sources:

Colorado State University Extension-Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
Cornell University, College Of Human Ecology, Department of Policy Analysis and Management
Public Folders – Family & Children's Service
A Grandparent's Handbook, Raising Your Grandchild, Channing Bete Company 2011 Edition

Resources

- **Centerstone** (615) 463-6610
Provides information and support.
- **Family & Children's Service** (615) 340-9725
Provides support and assistance to families.
- **Mental Health America** (615) 269-5355
Provides counseling and other services for families with mental illnesses
- **Mental Health Cooperative** (615) 743-1555
- **Youth Villages** (615) 250-7200
Provides help for children and young people who face a wide range of emotional, mental and behavioral problems.
- **Alive Hospice** (615) 327-1085
Provides information and support related to grief.

Children & Today's Technology

Technology is an area that is constantly changing and understanding it can be quite a challenge. It is common today for all ages of school children to use technology in the classroom. So, what is a grandparent to do? It may seem daunting, but it is necessary to understand in order to better communicate, and also to protect your grandchildren from the dangers inherent to the internet. This is true of the occasional sitter as well as grandparent with full custody. Technology can help grandparents connect with their grandchildren. A study released in 2012 by Microsoft and AARP titled, "Connecting Generations", found that teens are actually communicating more with their parents and grandparents, and vice-versa, due to the use of social media tools and other online tools that enable cross-generational interactions and richly rewarding connections.

The Microsoft and AARP study found that:

- 83% of parents, grandparents and teens consider going online to be helpful forms of communication
- 30% of grandparents, and 29% of teens say connecting online helps them better understand each other
- 40% of teens help their grandparents go online
- 25% of teens communicate with their grandparents several times each week through social media
- 68% of those older than 39 have a page on a social networking site
- 70% of teen say the computer increases the quantity of their communication with family members living far away, and (67%) say it increases the quality of those communications

Technology has brought so many new possibilities and opportunities to our society, but it also has introduced new ways for children and youth to be exposed to troubling behaviors. Cyberbullying, online predators and texting while driving are just a few of the dangers that have risen to alarming levels in recent times.

To monitor and effectively understand how your grandchild communicates, understanding the basic concepts of the internet and how that has changed communication patterns is essential. Children and youth now communicate more often via texting and mobile devices. It is not uncommon to see children and youth texting even with they are in eyesight of each other. With a little knowledge,

grandparents can use technology to their advantage in raising grandchildren and also protect the child.

The Basics

Raising grandchildren is a challenge in itself, but now the growing number of technological advancements that our children use daily creates even more difficulty to stay one step ahead. Where internet and safe browsing was once the biggest concern, now mobile devices, smart phones, and social networking apps have introduced a whole new dimension to potential tech misuse that caretakers need and want to stay on top of. See the Common Applications chart in this chapter for popular social networking apps that you should know about and discuss with your grandchild.

Some grandparents are tech savvy and use the latest technology at their work or for fun. Outlined below are a few of the basics of communication technology and what grandparents should consider in regards to their grandchild's use of the ever-evolving technology.

Computer/Tablet

The computer is comprised of a central processing unit (CPU), monitor, keyboard, and mouse (the mouse is a small accessory that allows you to complete tasks on the computer by pointing and clicking on screen buttons or icons). Many computers are small and portable which are called laptop computers. Even smaller are tablets which have some limited computer programs and access to the Internet. Some laptops, tablets and computers have video recording capability.

Mobile Phones/Smart Phones

Mobile phones used to be just for calling people. Smartphones offer additional features such as video, photography, and music storage. While they still are used for phone calls, tweens and teens communicate via text messages, instant message (IM) or the Internet using various applications and functions (detailed below). Text messages are sent from one mobile phone directly to another mobile phone. Tweens and teens often use abbreviations, acronyms and slang terms when communicating via text message or IM. Children will want their own mobile phone. Consider what age is appropriate for a mobile phone. Limitations need to be set, including when they can and cannot be used, how they can and cannot be used, and cost of purchasing a mobile phone and cost of usage.

Internet

The internet is a virtual world that connects all users to information and the ability to communicate with anyone in the world. Once you have your computer, you are not automatically connected. An internet provider is a company that you will pay on a monthly basis for the service to connect you to this virtual world. Examples of internet providers are your Cable Company or Phone Company. Once connected, you use a program on your computer called an internet browser. The internet is comprised of pages of information that are organized by what are called websites. These websites are identified by addresses which are set up by www.<websitename>. com, .org, .edu, .net (.com or .org are the most widely used identifiers.) WiFi or wireless internet is available in many public places. Cell phones and tablets are able to connect to WiFi networks. Some connections are "private" meaning it requires a password to connect, and some connections are "public" meaning it does not require a password to connect.

Tell your grandchild any pictures they post can be seen by everyone. Let them know, once it's online, it's forever. Do not post pictures you will regret later. Do not share personal information with anyone you do not know. People may also create fake accounts to lure in children.

Email

Email is short for electronic mail. Just like printed mail you receive at your home or post office box, an email is a communication you receive. But you receive it in your virtual mailbox on your computer. Everyone has a specific address they create where they can send and/or receive messages. It used to be the basic way people used the internet to communicate.

Texting/Instant Messaging (IM) Language

Tweens and teens sometimes prefer text messages to phone calls because they don't have to answer right away and are more discreet. Texting or Instant Messaging is immediate and can take on its own language or form of communication. Don't feel that you have to learn or use the lingo. The kids may say "CUL8R," but "See you later" is perfectly acceptable. It's important to know what some of the lingo is, especially when monitoring use. If you aren't sure what something means, use a search engine such as Google or Bing to determine the meaning. Group chats should also be used carefully, because if inappropriate content is shared, everyone in the chat can be exposed or vulnerable. In many states, texting or using a mobile phone while driving is illegal.

Social Media

Social media are apps or websites where teens connect, share pictures, and chat. Popular platforms include Facebook, X, Snapchat, and Instagram, with new apps appearing regularly. It's important to monitor your grandchild's activity, know how each app works, and review who they communicate with. In Tennessee, users under 18 must have parent or guardian consent to create accounts, highlighting the need for adult supervision..

Dangers of Technology

Many of the same dangers that exist in today's society also exist online, and they can be harder to detect. Talk openly with your grandchild about what is appropriate to share in texts or on social media and explain the risks. Because social media is so common, children and teens may be targets of predatory individuals, making clear limits and consistent supervision important.

Supervising online communications may feel intrusive, but digital messages can be easily shared beyond the intended audience. Monitoring may also help identify cyberbullying, which often begins in middle school but can happen at any age and may follow a child home, leaving them feeling unsafe.

To add safeguards, use parental controls on computers, smartphones, or tablets. These tools can limit screen time, restrict apps or content by age, and help you stay informed about your grandchild's online activity.

A.I. (Artificial Intelligence)

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is technology that can learn, make decisions and respond like a human. It's used in many apps, websites and devices your grandchildren might use every day. While AI can be helpful for learning or entertainment, it can also be risky. Some AI can collect personal information, show content that isn't age-appropriate, or give misleading answers. Grandparents who understand these risks can guide their grandchildren, set safe boundaries, and encourage open conversations about what they see and do online.

Gaming & Communication Apps

Teens often use gaming platforms like Roblox or communication apps like Discord to play, chat, and connect with friends. While these platforms can be fun, they carry serious safety risks, including exposure to strangers, inappropriate content, and online predators. Many sites offer little help if a minor is targeted—especially if the teen didn't tell an adult they had an account. Grandparents should know which platforms their grandchild uses and set clear boundaries to help keep them safe.

Dating Apps

Teens may use dating apps like Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Yubo, Hoop, or Grindr, even though these platforms are intended for adults, often by lying about their age. These apps can put minors at serious risk by connecting them with strangers or adults, exposing them to explicit content, predatory behavior, or unsafe interactions. Many apps have limited age verification and offer little help if a minor is targeted.

Grandparents should know which apps their grandchild is using and set clear boundaries for safe use. Conversations about consent, privacy, and online safety are essential. Using parental controls, monitoring tools, and shared accounts can help keep teens safe, but ongoing communication and awareness of online risks are just as important. Even apps marketed as “teen-friendly” can carry risks.

Rideshare Apps



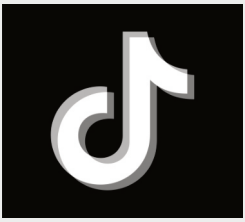
Rideshare services can be a convenient way for your grandchild to get around, but safety is important. Make sure they check the driver's identity and vehicle details, share trip information with a trusted adult, and avoid rides alone late at night. Some areas now offer fully autonomous “robotaxi” services. While these vehicles use advanced technology, they operate differently than human-driven cars, so grandparents should review how they work and set clear guidelines for safe use.




Family Location and Safety Apps

Family location and safety apps, like Life360, can help grandparents stay connected with their grandchildren and ensure they are safe when traveling independently. These apps allow caregivers to see real-time locations, receive check-in alerts, and monitor driving habits or emergencies. While they provide peace of mind, it's important to balance safety with respect for privacy. Grandparents should talk with their grandchildren about why the app is being used, set clear expectations for its use, and encourage open communication so the technology supports both safety and trust.

Social News and Discussion Platforms

Social news and discussion platforms, like Reddit, allow users to share content, comment, and join communities on a wide range of topics. While these forums can be educational and entertaining, they can also expose teens to adult content, inappropriate language, or unsafe interactions, since age verification is minimal. Grandparents raising grandchildren should know which forums their grandchild visits and talk with them about safe, responsible participation online.

APPLICATION	DESCRIPTION
<p data-bbox="284 352 441 388">Instagram</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instagram is a photo and video sharing app where users post to their feed or Stories. ● Users follow accounts to see posts and can like, comment, or send messages. ● It is commonly used to share family updates, hobbies, and community information. ● Privacy settings let you control who can view your posts and profile. ● Direct messaging allows private conversations and sharing photos or videos. ● Requires users to be at least 13 years old.
<p data-bbox="284 850 441 886">Snapchat</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Snapchat is a messaging app where users send photos and videos that disappear after being viewed. ● Users add friends to share "Snaps," chat, or post to their Stories for others to see. ● It is commonly used for quick communication, filters, and fun photo effects. ● Privacy settings allow you to control who can contact you or view your Stories. ● Location-sharing and friend requests should be monitored for safety. ● Requires users to be at least 13 years old.
<p data-bbox="321 1312 404 1348">TikTok</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TikTok is a social media app where users watch and create short videos. ● Users follow accounts to see videos and can like, comment, or share content. ● It is commonly used for entertainment, trends, music, and learning. ● Privacy settings allow users to control who can view or comment on their videos. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Pairing lets a parent or caregiver link their account to a child's account to manage screen time, messaging, and content. • TikTok requires users to be at least 13 years old.

APPLICATION	DESCRIPTION
<p data-bbox="282 352 444 386">Facebook</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facebook is a social networking site where people share photos, messages and updates with friends and family. ● Users create a personal profile, add “friends,” and join groups or pages that match their interests. ● You can post pictures, write messages and comment on others' posts. ● Privacy settings help control who can see your information, photos, and posts. ● It's commonly used for community news, school updates, local events, and connecting with others. ● Messenger, Facebook's built-in messaging tool, allows private chats, phone calls and video calls. ● Requires users to be at least 13 years old.
<p data-bbox="350 947 375 980">X</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● X is a social networking site for sharing short messages, photos, and videos. ● Users follow accounts to see posts and can reply, like, or repost content. ● You can share updates, comment, and follow news, schools, and community organizations. ● Privacy settings let you make your account public or private. ● Direct messaging allows private conversations. ● X offers paid levels with extra features like account verification and ad-free browsing. ● Users must be at least 13 years old.
<p data-bbox="282 1472 444 1505">WhatsApp</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WhatsApp is a messaging app for sending texts, photos, videos, and voice messages. ● Users chat one-on-one or in group chats with family, friends, and organizations. ● You can make voice and video calls through the app. ● Privacy settings control who sees your profile and activity. ● Messages and calls are encrypted for security. ● Users must be at least 13 years old.

APPLICATION	DESCRIPTION
<p data-bbox="293 342 428 373">YouTube</p> 	<ul data-bbox="521 296 1373 793" style="list-style-type: none"> ● YouTube is a video-sharing site where people watch, like, comment on, and upload videos. ● Users can subscribe to channels to see new videos from creators they follow. ● Videos cover entertainment, education, news, tutorials, and hobbies. ● Privacy settings control who can see your activity and uploads. ● YouTube offers paid options (YouTube Premium) for ad-free viewing and extra features. ● Users must be at least 13 years old; younger children should use YouTube Kids.
<p data-bbox="293 932 428 963">Pinterest</p> 	<ul data-bbox="521 886 1360 1276" style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pinterest is a social media site for discovering and saving ideas using "pins" on virtual boards. ● Users follow boards or accounts to see posts about hobbies, recipes, home projects, and more. ● You can save, organize, and share ideas for crafts, cooking, decorating, and lifestyle. ● Privacy settings let you make boards public or secret. ● Pinterest offers paid options with extra tools for creators. ● Users must be at least 13 years old.
<p data-bbox="342 1337 386 1369">Kik</p> 	<ul data-bbox="521 1291 1393 1793" style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kik is a messaging app where users can send texts, photos, and videos. ● Users can chat one-on-one or in group chats and can sign up with just an email (no phone number needed). ● Accounts can be anonymous, and users can join public groups. ● Privacy settings let users block or report others, but controls are limited. ● Kik is mainly used by teens and young adults. ● Users must be at least 13 years old. ● Safety concerns exist because of anonymous accounts and limited parental controls.

Resources

Free Classes

- **Senior Centers and Community Education Programs**
May offer computer classes especially geared to older adults.
- **Nashville Public Library**
 - Free courses, Getting Started Series
 - Computers: Getting Started
 - Internet for Seniors: Getting Started
 - Internet and Computers
 - Mouse, Keyboard, and Windows: Getting Started
 - Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint: Getting Started
- **Nashville Opportunities Industrialization Center**
Free Computer Class **(615) 248-2906**

Online Resources

- Texting Shorthand and Acronyms www.netlingo.com
- Training / Learning www.seniornet.org
- Microsoft Accessibility Techniques www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility
- Online Training. www.meganga.com
- Media and Technology Safety www.commonsemmedia.org
- Online Classes www.seniorplanet.org

Working with Schools

Adult involvement in a child's education is critical and it has been shown that high student achievement and self-esteem are closely related to positive adult participation in education.

You can be involved in a child's education in many ways such as joining the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), volunteering in classrooms, insisting on regular school attendance, helping with homework and talking to the teacher about programs or areas of concern. Most importantly, spend time with the child especially through reading.

When a grandparent becomes the primary caregiver, it is important that this be discussed with the child's teacher, school counselor and/ or principal. Ask about any particular learning issues that have already been identified so that you can begin to address these. Open lines of communication allow all involved in your grandchild's education to be alert and communicate any changes in behavior, mood, etc.

Outlined below are several services and/or programs that may be available to your grandchild before they start school, how to register for public school, and programs available while enrolled in public school.

Head Start Program

The Head Start program (for children ages 3-5) and Early Head Start Program (infants and toddlers) promote readiness for children in low-income families by providing comprehensive educational, health, nutritional and social services. In order to qualify for this benefit program, you must be a resident of the state of Tennessee and you must be a primary caregiver responsible for a child who is too young for public schools. Additional qualifications may also apply. If you would like to speak to the state representative regarding the program, you can call the TN Head Start Collaboration Office at **(615) 741-4849** or visit www.tn.gov/education/early-learning/head-start.html. For Davidson County, you can call the Metro Action Commission at **(615) 862-8860**.

School Registration

If your grandchild is entering the first year of public school, or if they are transferring from another school, you will be required to officially register the child for school. To register or transfer a student, you will visit the Enrollment Center located in the high school in your school's cluster. You will need to bring several pieces of information with you to school registration, such as: custody papers, proof of residency, immunizations, social security card, birth certificate, etc. Proof of immunizations will be available through your grandchild's pediatrician or at the local health department. If the child is transferring from another school, you will need to authorize the release of school records from the previous school. The school should have the authorization form needed. In some school districts, you may be required to register your child for school at the beginning of each school year.

If you are unsure which public school your grandchild is zoned for, contact your local Board of Education or use zonefinder.mnps.org for Metro Nashville Schools.

Be sure to ask if your grandchild qualifies for free or reduced lunch and breakfast meals. Some school districts with Title I federal funding provide free breakfast and free lunch to all enrolled students.

Special Education Services

Some students may require additional services and supports to assist them in being successful in school. Special education is specially designed instruction, support, and services provided to students with an identified disability (physical or mental) or need for or a specialized education plan to meet their unique learning needs.

Special education and related services are available to eligible students, ages 3 through 21 years of age. To be eligible for special education:

- The child must have an identified disability (detailed below, as per State of TN, Department of Education);
- The disability must adversely (negatively) affect the child's educational performance;
- The child must require a specially designed instructional program.

Special Education Evaluation & Eligibility, based on need and above criteria:

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disturbance

-
- Functional Delay
 - Hearing Impairment
 - Intellectual Disability
 - Intellectually Gifted
 - Multiple Disabilities
 - Orthopedic Impairment
 - Other Health Impairment
 - Specific Learning Disabilities
 - Speech or Language Impairment
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
 - Visual Impairment

If your child exhibits difficulties in school and you suspect there may be an underlying learning challenge, you can ask the school to evaluate your grandchild. Discuss concerns with the teacher, or you may call or write the director of special education or the principal of your grandchild's school. Describe your concerns with your grandchild's educational performance and request an evaluation. However, the school does not have to evaluate your grandchild just because you have asked. The school may not think your grandchild has a disability or needs special education. If the school refuses to evaluate your grandchild, there are two things you can do immediately:

- Ask the school system for information about its special education policies, as well as parent rights to disagree with decisions made by the school system. These materials should describe the steps to appeal a school system's decision.
- Get in touch with your state's Parent Training and Information (PTI) center. The PTI is an excellent resource for parents to learn more about special education, their rights and responsibilities, and the law. The PTI can tell you what steps to take next to find help for your child.

If the school thinks that your grandchild may have a disability (physical or mental) or if they need a specialized education plan, evaluation will be provided at no cost to you. However, the school must ask your permission and receive your written consent before it may perform the evaluation.

Once a need has been defined, an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) will be created. The IEP is put in place to assist the student in achieving educational success. This plan may be reviewed or revised based on progress and changing needs, but the school must notify you and obtain your permission prior to making any changes. Depending on the type of IEP needed, your grandchild may have another teacher providing learning sessions in small-group settings outside of the traditional classroom one to two times per week, or throughout each school day.

Showing Support

It is extremely important to show support for your grandchildren by attending their events and performances at school, faith community or community center.

During the school year, you will have the opportunity to attend a parent-teacher conference. At parent-teacher conferences, your grandchild's teacher will discuss areas for improvement and/or areas where your scholar is succeeding. Your participation in parent-teacher conferences assures your grandchild and the teacher that you are committed to your grandchild's educational success, which will make for a bright future.

Learning Styles

The three learning styles are: auditory, visual and tactile.

- An auditory learner learns best from hearing information and therefore does well listening to lectures and books on tape. For example, an auditory learner can read his notes aloud.
- Visual learners benefit from seeing what they are learning. A visual learner does well taking notes, drawing pictures, and making outlines.
- Tactile learners are "hands-on" and learn from doing things. A tactile learner can move about while studying and study in shorter increments.

By discovering the child's learning style, study habits and methods can be modified to fit that style. You can work with the child's teacher for more ideas on how to incorporate learning methods at home and in the classroom.

Homework Hotline

The Homework Hotline is free one-on-one tutoring by phone for parents, grandparents and students in grades K-12 in Middle Tennessee. The service is available Monday- Thursday 4:00-8:00 CST. The number to access services is **(615) 298-6636** or visit their website at www.homeworkhotline.info.

Tutoring

If the child is coming from a different school system, he/she may need extra help to catch up to where the new class is academically. Many private companies provide one-on-one educational help for a fee. These can be found in the yellow pages under tutoring. Area universities may also have a list of students who are willing to tutor in certain areas.

Before and After School Care

Children ages 5-12 whose caregivers work outside the home may need some type of supervision after school and during school breaks. Solutions may be found in local community centers, YMCAs, churches and other community organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Also, check with the child's school as many offer before and after care programs.

Bullying

This can be a big problem in today's schools. Technology has allowed bullying to take a new turn called cyberbullying. See the section Children and Today's Technology for additional information. Hurtful comments and/or inappropriate pictures can be posted in social media allowing others to make fun of other children. If you notice your grandchild withdrawing from friends, making comments about bullying or not wanting to attend school, you may want to discuss with teachers and guidance counselors the possibility of bullying. Additionally, you may want to review your grandchild's social media accounts if you suspect they are bullying others. Suspected bullying should be taken seriously. There have been numerous cases of children trying to commit suicide after prolonged bullying.

High School and Beyond

Many high schools offer a variety of educational options. College preparatory classes as well as career-oriented courses are offered. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are rigorous and academically challenging. AP classes can provide college credit while in high school. Several middle Tennessee school systems are offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) program which follows a more global educational track and allows students to apply for colleges in other countries.

In recent years, much more time and emphasis has been placed on the "college process." Colleges use the ACT and SAT testing systems for consideration in admission. These are generally taken in the 11th and 12th grade years. Guidance counselors at your grandchild's school will be able to provide additional information.

Resources

Educational Resources

- www.pbskids.org
Play educational games, watch PBS KIDS shows and find activities like coloring and music.
- www.education.com
Provides activities, worksheets, videos, expert advice and a school directory to give information and ideas to help children reach their full potential.
- www.khanacademy.org
Learn for free about math, art, computer programming, economics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, finance, history, and more.
- <https://tntel.info/>
The TN Electric Library (TEL) is a virtual library you can access from anywhere with an Internet connection
- www.edutopia.org
Dedicated to transforming K-12 education so that all students can acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to thrive in their studies, careers, and adult lives.

Homework Hotline

- **(615) 298-6636** or www.homeworkhotline.info
Homework Hotline is free one-on-one tutoring by phone for parents, grandparents and students in grades K-12 in Middle Tennessee. Available Monday-Thursday 4:00-8:00 CST.

Changes in Children's Health Care

As mentioned in the Getting Started section, some of the first tasks a grandparent should do are related to health—getting the authorization for medical treatment and learning the child's medical status.

Nutrition

Healthy eating is associated with reduced risk for many diseases, including several of the leading causes of death such as cancer and diabetes. In addition to reducing risk, healthy eating is important for proper growth and development in children. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention provides the following Dietary Guidelines (servings vary by age of child):

- A diet that includes fruits and vegetables (Examples: apples, bananas, broccoli, green beans, etc.)
- A diet that includes whole grains (Examples: wheat breads, oatmeal, etc)
- For persons aged 2 years and older, fat-free and low-fat dairy products (Examples: 1% or 2% milk, yogurt, cheese, etc)
- Limited intake of solid fats, cholesterol, sodium, added sugars, and refined grains (Examples: chips, fried foods, processed foods, snack cakes, white bread, etc)

Eating a healthy breakfast is associated with improved cognitive function (especially memory), reduced absenteeism, and improved mood. What one eats has a big impact on your ability to concentrate and do well in school. Provide a good example by taking the time to eat breakfast yourself. Don't let your grandchild skip breakfast!

Physical Activity

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that children and adolescents should have 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day.

Staying physically active is an important step in being healthy for children and grandparents. Being active helps to build strong bones and muscles, decreases the likelihood of developing obesity, Type 2 Diabetes and heart disease and may help

reduce anxiety and depression.

There are different types of activity, each very important for healthy growth and development.

- **Aerobic Activity:** Most of the 60 minutes a day should be either moderate- or vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity and should include vigorous-intensity physical activity at least 3 days a week. Examples of aerobic activities include bike riding, walking, running, dancing, and playing active games like tag, soccer and basketball.
- **Muscle-strengthening:** Children and adolescents should include muscle strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days of the week. Examples of muscle strengthening activities include gymnastics, climbing a tree, playing on a jungle gym, push-ups, pull-ups, and weight-lifting.
- **Bone-strengthening:** Children and adolescents should include bone strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days of the week. Examples of bone strengthening activities include hopping, skipping, jumping, and running. Joining a sports team or taking lessons in a particular sport will make getting this exercise fun. Teams can also provide socialization as well as life skills such as teamwork and sharing. A great solution for you and your grandchild is to find an exercise activity you can do together or at least different activities at the same location.

Immunizations

It's true some diseases (like polio and diphtheria) are becoming very rare in the U.S. Of course, they are becoming rare largely because we have been vaccinating against them! On the next few pages are charts that tells about immunizations.

School Health Requirements

The State of Tennessee requires physicals before any athlete can compete at the high school level. Additionally, a complete physical is required for all 7th graders by law. Your pediatrician or local healthcare clinic conducts school or sport physicals.

Resources

Nutrition

- **2-1-1 Help Line** – By calling 2-1-1 you can be referred to a food bank in your area that can assist in securing food. 2-1-1 is a call made by dialing three numbers, **2-1-1**.

- **Community Gardens** – If there isn't a community garden in your area, talk with your neighborhood association, Family Resource Center or local school about starting one.
- **Nashville Farmer's Market** – Many vendors at the Farmer's Market are able to accept SNAP benefits cards. (Rosa L. Parks Blvd., Nashville)
- **SNAP** – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps). Call **(615) 743-2000**.
- **Second Harvest of Middle TN** – Food pantry lists, mobile food truck with produce Call **(615) 329-3491** or visit secondharvestmidtn.org.

Health Insurance

- **Get Covered Tenn** **1-866-475-7879**
Provides free healthcare advice and enrollment. A division of Family & Children's Service. For more information visit www.getcoveredtenn.org.
- **Health Assist** **1-866-475-7879**
Provides under- and uninsured Tennesseans with information on and referral to low and no-cost, community-based health care resources, including medical, dental, vision, prescription, mental health, and other resources.

Physical Activity

- **CDC** www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth
Provides information about physical activity, nutrition, and other topics related to raising healthy children
- **National Institute of Aging Information Center** **1-800-222-2225**
Information on free senior Booklet – Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Daily Guide

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and the Vaccines that Prevent Them

Disease	Vaccine	Disease spread by	Disease symptoms	Disease complications
Chickenpox	Varicella vaccine protects against chickenpox.	Air, direct contact	Rash, tiredness, headache, fever	Infected blisters, bleeding disorders, encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
Diphtheria	DTap* vaccine protects against diphtheria.	Air, direct contact	Sore throat, mild fever, weakness, swollen glands in neck	Swelling of the heart muscle, heart failure, coma, paralysis, death
Hib	Hib vaccine protects against <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b.	Air, direct contact	May be no symptoms unless bacteria enter the blood	Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), intellectual disability, epiglottitis (life-threatening infection that can block the windpipe and lead to serious breathing problems), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
Hepatitis A	HepA vaccine protects against hepatitis A.	Direct contact, contaminated food or water	May be no symptoms, fever, stomach pain, loss of appetite, fatigue, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine	Liver failure, arthralgia (joint pain), kidney, pancreatic and blood disorders
Hepatitis B	HepB vaccine protects against hepatitis B.	Contact with blood or body fluids	May be no symptoms, fever, headache, weakness, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), joint pain	Chronic liver infection, liver failure, liver cancer
Influenza (Flu)	Flu vaccine protects against influenza.	Air, direct contact	Fever, muscle pain, sore throat, cough, extreme fatigue	Pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
Measles	MMR** vaccine protects against measles.	Air, direct contact	Rash, fever, cough, runny nose, pink eye	Encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
Mumps	MMR** vaccine protects against mumps.	Air, direct contact	Swollen salivary glands (under the jaw), fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain	Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), encephalitis (brain swelling), inflammation of testicles or ovaries, deafness
Pertussis	DTap* vaccine protects against pertussis (whooping cough).	Air, direct contact	Severe cough, runny nose, apnea (a pause in breathing in infants)	Pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
Polio	IPV vaccine protects against polio.	Air, direct contact, through the mouth	May be no symptoms, sore throat, fever, nausea, headache	Paralysis, death
Pneumococcal	PCV13 vaccine protects against pneumococcus.	Air, direct contact	May be no symptoms, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)	Bacteremia (blood infection), meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), death
Rotavirus	RV vaccine protects against rotavirus.	Through the mouth	Diarrhea, fever, vomiting	Severe diarrhea, dehydration
Rubella	MMR** vaccine protects against rubella.	Air, direct contact	Sometimes rash, fever, swollen lymph nodes	Very serious in pregnant women—can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, birth defects
Tetanus	DTap* vaccine protects against tetanus.	Exposure through cuts in skin	Stiffness in neck and abdominal muscles, difficulty swallowing, muscle spasms, fever	Broken bones, breathing difficulty, death

* DTap combines protection against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.
 ** MMR combines protection against measles, mumps, and rubella.

Diseases Covered by Tennessee Child Care and School Immunization Requirements

TN Rule Chapter 1200-14-1-.29: <https://publications.tnsofiles.com/rules/1200-14/1200-14-01.20191013.pdf>

Disease	Child Care	Kindergarten	New students, Grades 1-12	All incoming 7 th graders	College
H. flu type B (Hib)	Up to date/complete	-	-	-	-
Pneumococcus (PCV)	Up to date/complete	-	-	-	-
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis	Up to date (no 4y dose)	Complete (incl. 4y dose)	Same as K, Tdap req'd only for 7 th gr.	Tdap booster	-
Measles, Mumps, Rubella	1 dose	2 dose	2 dose	-	2 dose
Polio	Up to date (no 4y dose)	Complete (incl. 4y dose)	Complete (incl. 4y dose)	-	-
Hepatitis B	Up to date/complete	Complete	Complete	-	If training incl. direct pt. care
Hepatitis A	1 dose	2 dose	-	-	-
Meningococcal disease (MenACWY)	-	-	-	-	1 dose for some (see school)
Varicella (or disease history)	1 dose or disease	2 dose or disease	2 dose or disease	-	2 dose or disease

Other important vaccines are recommended by CDC for all children and teens, but not required for school attendance.

For more information, visit the TennIS homepage at <https://tennesseeiis.gov> and click on the blue bar titled School Immunization Requirements. For the Official Certificate, go to the above website and login to TennIS.

Last updated by Tennessee Immunization Program: January 2020

Taking Care of Yourself

Raising your grandchild can be a rewarding but stressful and tiring time. The health and well-being of the children is important, but so is your physical and mental health. You must consider your health if you want to take care of your grandchildren.

- Do not let caring for your grandchild interfere with your medical appointments or filling your prescriptions. Seek out programs that can help with your medical needs or the needs of the children.
- Update your doctor(s) on the change in your responsibilities as you begin caring for your grandchild.
- If you are still working, ask your employer for any programs that may offer assistance to you. The company might offer flexible hours or to work longer days in order to work less days.
- Eating properly will keep you energized and keep you on track for good health as well as providing a good example for your grandchild.
- Ask for help. Make a list of small and large ways family and friends can support you.
- Have a "family conference" of close and extended family members. Share how your life and other family members are changing.
- Let your friends know you would still like to see them, but you might need to plan ahead.
- Utilize after school programs, summer camps or baby sitters to take a break for yourself. A break will help your mood and give you the opportunity to participate in activities you enjoy and maintain friendships.
- Seek out a support group for grandparents. This will allow you time to share experiences with others in the same situation and develop support systems as well as learn practical tips.
- Faith groups may offer support and friendship.
- Bring in other family members to help you. This will foster relationships between the grandchild and other family members.
- Work to maintain current friendships and social activities.
- Utilize programs at local parks and recreation centers where both of you can attend activities.

Letting Go

As you raise your grandchild, they will likely become a focal point of your life. Some grandchildren may be with you for a short time and some will live with you until they are grown and can live on their own. It is important to remember that you are preparing them for life without you. Your grandchild will be a success if you can teach them about independence and hard work. When your grandchild leaves your home, you will have given them a safe place to grow and nurture. It will be difficult to let them go after they have been such an integral part of your life but this is part of the process. Making sure they feel comfortable on their own is critical. Letting go will be easier if you feel they are leaving on good terms.

Older Adult Resources

An important part of raising grandchildren is taking care of yourself. Socialization is an important part of aging well. Area senior centers and parks offer programming and activities for all older adults in Middle TN. Additional information on these options and others can be found in the AgeWell Middle TN *Directory of Services*. The Directory can be found in print at area public libraries and the AgeWell office. It is also available online at www.directory.agewelltn.org.

- **AgeWell Middle Tennessee** **(615) 353-4235**
Free information & referral by phone and online for older adults, caregivers and professionals. Resources on caregiving, grandparents raising grandchildren, end of life planning & scam prevention available in print and online. Visit agewelltn.org for more information.
- **FiftyForward** **(615) 743-3419**
Lifelong learning centers for adults 50+ in Middle TN.

General Resources

- **Family and Children's Service** (615) 340-9725
Coordinates the Relative Caregiver Program in Middle Tennessee. Support group and general assistance available. Visit www.fcsnashville.org for more information.
- **The Center for Family Development** (931) 684-4676
Coordinates the Relative Caregiver Program for Maury and Hickman Counties.
- **The Family Center** (615) 333-2644
A nonprofit dedicated to children and parents to provide a safe space, guidance and support for families coping with trauma.
- **Legal Aid Society** (615) 244-6610
Provides information about legal concerns.
- **Nurture the Next** (615) 383-0994
Works to provide education, resources and support to families in Tennessee. Visit www.nurturethenext.org for more information.
- **Mental Health America** (615) 269-5355
Provides information and support for families with mental health issues. Visit www.ichope.com for more information.

Family Resource Centers (FRC) - funded by United Way

Community-Based

- **Bethlehem FRC** (615) 329-3386 x 119
- **Edgehill FRC** (615) 256-4617
- **Martha O'Bryan FRC** (615) 254-1791 x 213
- **McGruder FRC** (615) 291-4513
- **Salvation Army FRC.** (615) 255-0554
- **South Nashville FRC** (615) 834-1944
- **St. Luke's FRC** (615) 350-7893
- **United Way** (615) 780-2447

Online Resources

The following resources provide information, guidance and support for grandparents raising grandchildren.

- **KidCentral TN** kidcentraltn.com
This website provides information on health, education, development and support to Tennessee families, as well as a searchable State Services Directory. Advice for keeping children safe and healthy has changed over the last several decades. At kidcentraltn.com, grandparents can find the most current information on child safety, developmental milestones and support resources.
- **Generations United** gu.org
Provides online support groups as well as information and practical tips.
- **Grandfamilies.org** grandfamilies.org
Provides information and resources for grandparents raising grandchildren including information on adoption and financial help.. Can search for state fact sheets..



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