



American Indian Grandparents Parenting Their Grandchildren in Michigan

A Qualitative Study Report

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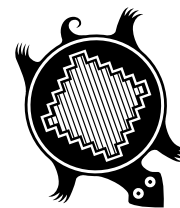
Appreciation is respectfully extended to the many American Indian grandparents who shared their life experiences, awareness and use of services, interactions with the Social Work profession in various fields, and their points of view, which they offered so generously and candidly.

Secondly, we acknowledge the collaboration with the Saginaw Inter-Tribal Center and the late Victoria “Vicki” Miller, director, for her support and assistance in facilitating opportunities to interview American Indian grandparents to gain an understanding of their thoughts on relevant issues involved in parenting grandchildren.

A special thank you is extended to the Indian Outreach Workers, Community Health Representatives and Elder Advocates who were instrumental in facilitating contacts with the grandparents parenting their grandchildren.

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Executive summary



A qualitative study was conducted with American Indian grandparents in Michigan to collect background data, information on issues that impact the grandparents' decision to parent their grandchildren and responses to the question, "What should Social Work students know as they work with American Indian grandparents and their communities?"

Introduction

American Indian grandparents are part of the growing phenomenon of becoming the sole providers of care for their grandchildren. Erera (2002) indicated American Indians represent 1% of the 5.5 million grandparents in the United States providing formal care of grandchildren.

This phenomenon is increasing and spans all racial, ethnic, cultural, educational attainment, and socioeconomic stratum. Grandparents often times find themselves in this role unexpectedly due to crisis situations, resulting in little time for preparation to make the necessary changes in their lifestyles that raising

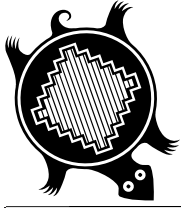
grandchildren demands. The crises that cause grandparents to parent their grandchildren include: parental abandonment, incarceration, alcoholism, drug addition, divorce, dependency, serious illness, death, unemployment, lack of child care, adolescent pregnancy, and mental health disorders (Bell & Garner 1996; Brownell & Berman 2000; Fuller-Thomson, Mills 2001).

While American Indian grandparents are raising their grandchildren in response to similar situations, three additional reasons are specific to the population. First, grandparents are viewed as historians, keepers and transmitters of culture and language to their grandchildren. In the context of extended family, grandparents raising grandchildren is a long-held cultural tradition. Unfortunately for some grandparents, they are not simply one component of a highly-functioning extended family system, but they have become the sole providers of care for their grandchildren.

Secondly, a high rate of unemployment on many reservations results in the adult children traveling long distances for employment and/or seeking

educational opportunities, often leaving their children with grandparents to grow up in a Tribal community with the expectation of maintaining their Tribal identity and extended family ties (Aldous, 1989; Ferraro 2001; Herring 1993; Weibel-Orlando, 1990). The grandparents are often supportive of the adult children's decisions and provide the needed child care on the reservations.

A third reason American Indian grandparents parent their grandchildren is for fear of the grandchildren being removed from home and put into the foster care system. This fear is historically relevant to many of the grandparents because when they were children, often they were removed from their homes and placed in residential boarding schools, foster care and/or adoptive homes of non-American Indians. This resulted in the loss of their Tribal culture, language and community. Such fears provided the rationale for passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978. Until the ICWA, 25% of American Indian children were removed from their homes. The Act was created as a safeguard against the removal of the children from



their homes, families, extended families and Tribal nations. While the ICWA exists, the fear remains and continues to cause grandparents to resist seeking social, educational, and human services for themselves and their grandchildren.

An extensive literature review revealed little research exists related to American

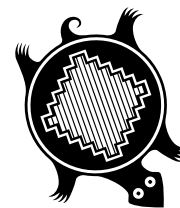
Indian grandparents parenting their grandchildren. Research conducted on this topic is needed and would be valuable and beneficial to the American Indian communities and the social, educational and human service providers working with them. Given the inadequate research, the author conducted a qualitative study, which

included interviews with American Indian grandparents. Data was collected regarding demographics, needs and concerns of American Indian grandparents raising their grandchildren. While not all of the findings can be shared in this venue, the major findings provided in this report will increase knowledge and

Selected statistics regarding American Indians

Source: U.S. Census (2000)

- 558 American Indian tribes, villages and Alaskan nations are recognized by the U.S. Government.
- 13 of the federally-recognized tribes are represented in Michigan.
- 281,421,906 American Indians reside in the U.S., with a median age of 28.0 years.
- 9,938,444 American Indians reside in Michigan, with a median age of 35.4 years.
- Michigan holds the tenth highest population of American Indians within a state.
- 70,044 American Indian grandparents were reported to be living with and responsible for their own grandchildren under the age of 18 years.
- Grandchildren had been living in their grandparents' homes:
 - 9,213 - shorter than 6 months
 - 8,512 - 6 to 11 months
 - 17,031 - 1 or 2 years
 - 10,830 - 3 or 4 years
 - 96,661 - 5 years or more
- Of 41,963 American Indian children residing in Michigan:
 - 19.8% were living in poverty
 - 91.0% attended public schools
 - 13.0% of ages 5-15 years had a disability
 - 15.7% of ages 16-19 were high school drop outs



awareness of the needs and issues of concern for American Indian grandparents parenting their grandchildren in Michigan.

The interviews

Thirty-one individual interviews and 27 focus group sessions (with an average of nine members per group) were conducted over a two-year period, including Tribal nations and bands located in Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas. The maps on pages 6 and 7 identify the locations of the counties where the interviews and focus groups were conducted with the federally-recognized tribes.

The study required a significant amount of travel and time to engage in relationships with those who were interviewed. Frequently, a trip was made to introduce the research project, and a second visit was scheduled to actually

conduct the research. This was done, in part, to establish rapport and develop a comfort level between the researchers and the participants. Once the relationships were established, many times the researchers were invited and encouraged to stay for upcoming activities (e.g., Pow wow, fish fry, art exhibit). Researchers were repeatedly asked, "When are you coming back?" This demonstrated the importance of researchers taking time to foster relationships with the people in their communities.

Legal status and ICWA

The study findings revealed that many of the American Indian grandparents who were caring for their grandchildren did so with no official legal status established, having no knowledge of the ICWA, or if they were aware of the Act, they felt it was not helpful for them in their particular situation.

Fewer than one-third of those interviewed individually found the Act to be helpful.

Reasons for parenting grandchildren

The study found many of the American Indian grandparents were caring for their grandchildren despite their own serious health issues. Their reasons for providing care included the following parental issues: substance abuse, abandonment, unemployment, incarceration, lack of day care, teen pregnancy, separation/divorce, death, child abuse, rights terminated, and serious illnesses. In addition, the cultural tradition of raising grandchildren was part of their rationale as well as the grandparents not wanting their grandchildren to be raised by anyone else (e.g., foster care).



Highlights of the study

Parent and/or relative visitations

A significant benefit for the grandchildren living with their grandparents was the majority of them received visits from at least one parent and/or family member on a regular basis. Only two had no contact with parents or family members. Therefore, most of these children will grow up knowing their parents, extended family members, and the affiliation of their Tribal nation or band as a result of their grandparents' commitment to raise them.

Services accessed by grandparents for their grandchildren

The two services most often accessed by the grandparents for the care of their grandchildren were Medicaid and financial assistance. In addition, Tribal services, the WIC program, school programs, food stamps, Tribal health services, Supplemental Security Income, day care, Social Security, school lunch program, disability settlement, disability services, private insurance, dental services, and child support were utilized. Of the 31 grandparents in-

terviewed, seven received no services—four not wanting to seek services, two did not meet the criteria for any program, and one did not seek services due to fear of the system.

Impact of Indian boarding schools

Even though only four of the grandparents had attended an Indian boarding school as youngsters, during the individual interviews and focus groups the issue of maltreatment by boarding school personnel was discussed at length. Several participants had grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings who had attended these schools. Not all participants felt negatively about the boarding school experience, but the majority shared their own memories or those of relatives who had had difficult experiences in these institutions. These experiences were part of the rationale as to why the grandparents made the decision to parent their grandchildren. Memories and shared experiences provided a foundation for fear of social service systems. As a result, many of the grandparents felt they were best able to

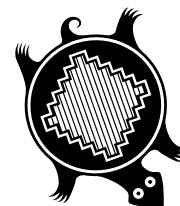
provide the safest care for their grandchildren.

Training and service needs identified

The grandparents were asked if there were any services or training not currently available that they felt would be helpful in raising their grandchildren. Many felt they did not need any services; however, there were some who felt grandparent support groups would be beneficial in their communities. Others indicated they would like to learn how to help their grandchildren with schoolwork, self-esteem and motivation issues, and medical issues.

Social work with American Indian communities

The grandparents shared both positive and negative experiences with the Social Work profession in a variety of fields (Hospital, Hospice, School, Social Services, etc.). The grandparents appeared to have an understanding of the difficulties social workers sometimes have in their positions (e.g., "too much paperwork," "heavy caseload,"



“too much red tape”). They were appreciative of the positive interactions they had had with social workers and indicated their experiences brought them comfort.

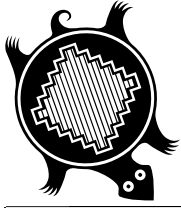
Unfortunately, there were more negative than positive experiences with social workers reported by the participants. Many grandparents felt they were being “judged,” “talked down to” and felt the social workers had “all the power.” They recommended that Social Work students learn the “true

history” of the American Indian people, gain experience in working in American Indian communities, show respect, engage in cultural sensitivity training, receive training on ICWA, and become knowledgeable of both the Tribal and state social service systems.

Informational notebook

The Findings in this report were presented in an **Informational Notebook** that was distributed to key leaders

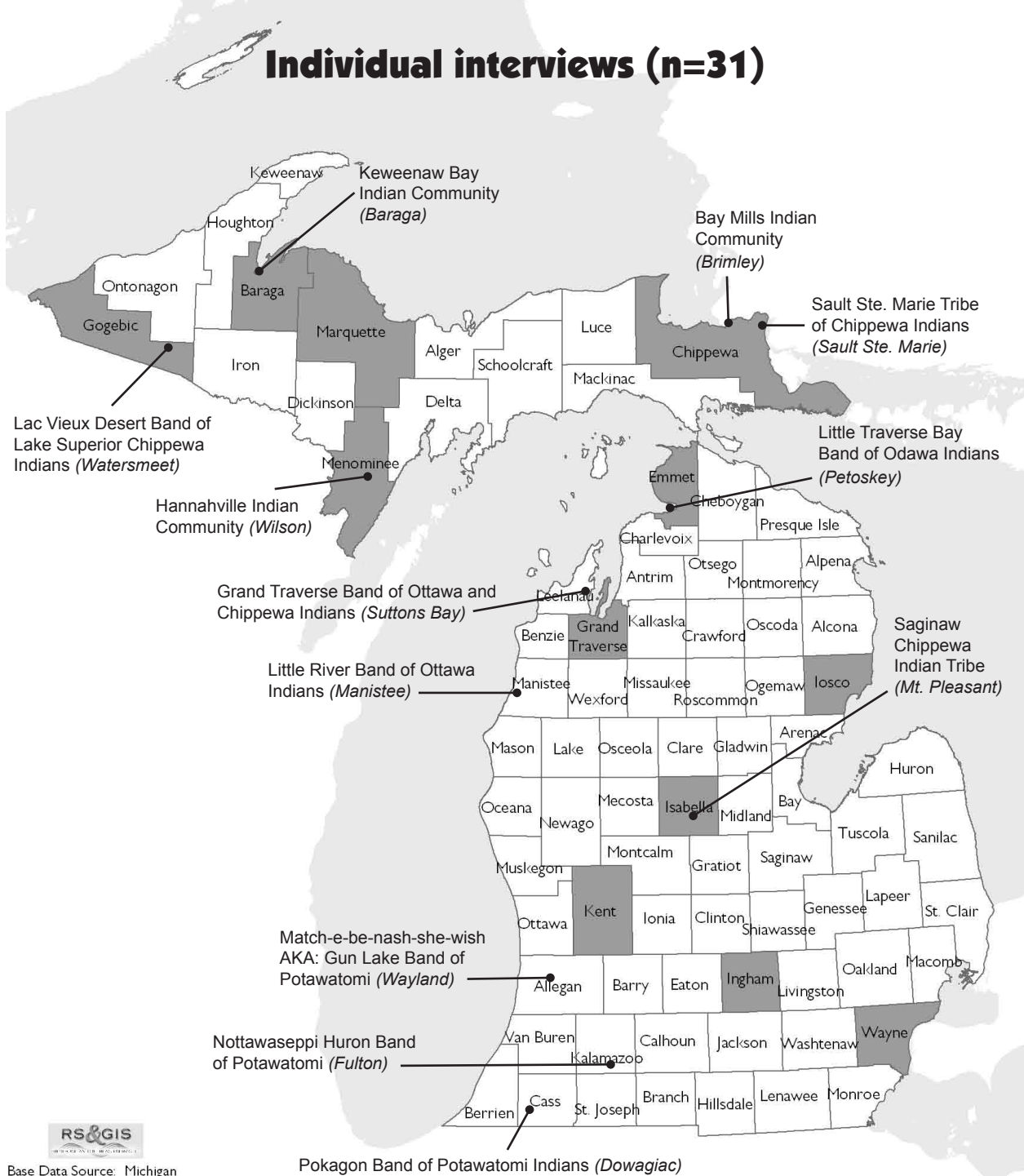
within American Indian communities. The **Informational Notebook** included **Fact Sheets** and **Reference Sheets** developed and/or researched to assist in addressing some of the issues and concerns expressed by the grandparents. The materials were designed to be easily reproduced and disseminated as appropriate to individuals or groups of community members to further discussions on the topic of kinship care relationships in American Indian communities.



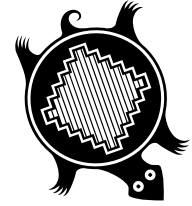
Federally-recognized tribes in Michigan



Individual interviews (n=31)



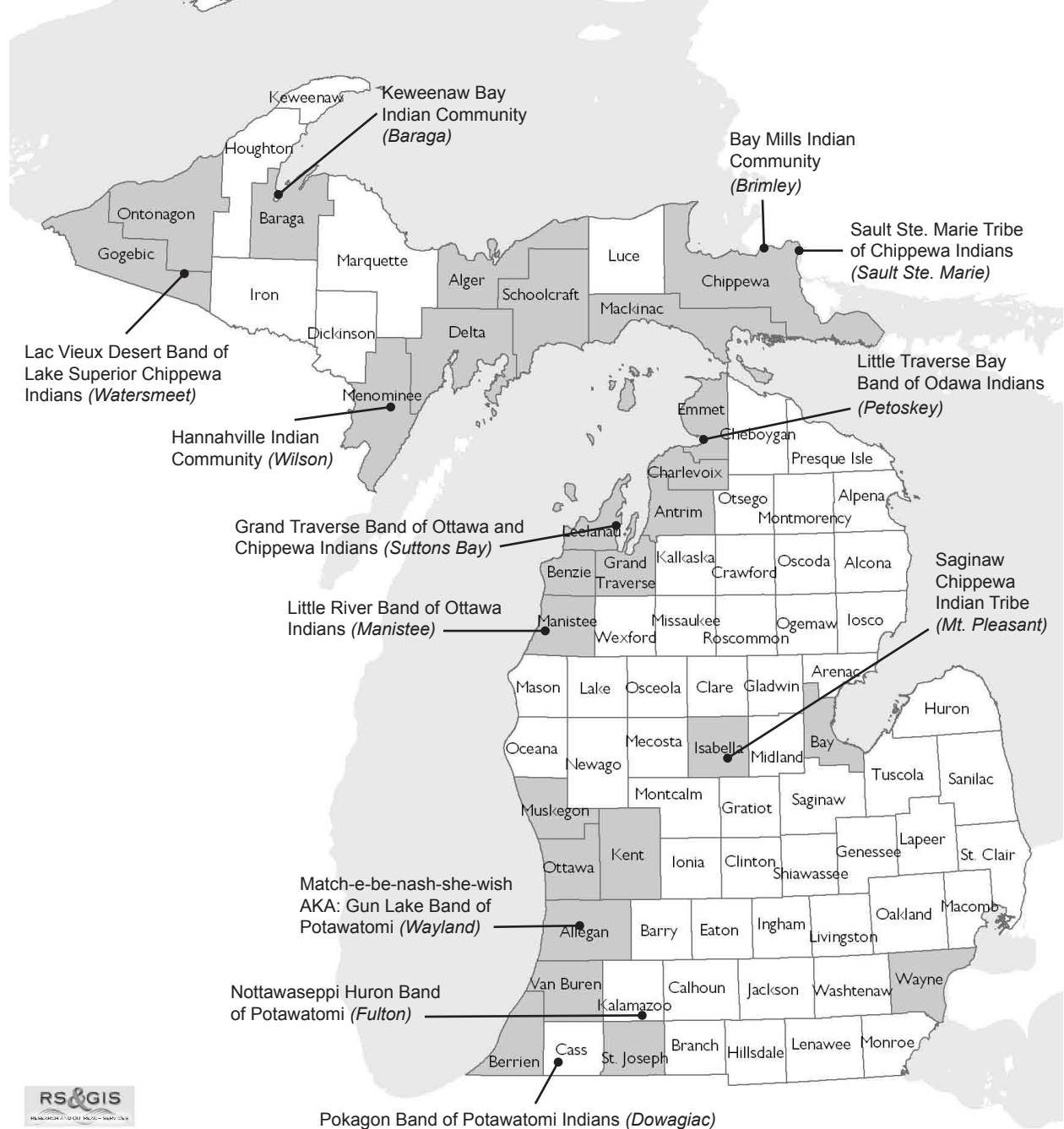
RS&GIS
Base Data Source: Michigan
Center for Geographic Information



Federally-recognized tribes in Michigan



Focus groups (n=27)



RS&GIS
Data Source: Michigan
r for Geographic Information



Major findings

Individual interview findings

Background data of participating grandparents

Age

Ranged in age from 42 to 84
Average age was 56.8

Living arrangement

- 20 Lived off reservation land (cities/rural areas)
- 11 Lived on reservation land
- 4 Attended a boarding school as children

Marital status

- 17 Married
- 7 Widowed
- 3 Single
- 3 Divorced
- 1 Separated

Number of grandchildren living in home of grandparent(s)

Some grandparents had up to three children living in their homes; however, most homes had only one child.

Legal status held by grandparents relative to their grandchildren

- 20 No legal relationship
- 7 Adopted the grandchildren
- 3 Obtained guardianship
- 1 Became a foster care parent of the grandchildren

Background data of the grandchildren of participating grandparents

Gender and age

- 26 Male grandchildren ranged in age from 18 mos. to 23 years
Average was 12.5 years
- 19 Female grandchildren ranged in age from 2 years to 20 years
Average was 10.2 years

Number of years grandchildren lived in home of grandparent(s)

Ranged from 1 mo. to 21 yrs
Averaged 9 years

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) influence on legal status

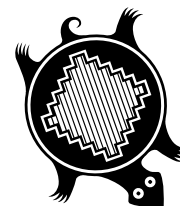
- 15 Not helpful
- 9 Not aware of ICWA
- 7 Was helpful

Major health issues of grandparents

Health issues reported ranged from 0 to 5 per grandparent.

- 11 Diabetes
- 8 Heart disease
- 7 Arthritis
- 5 High blood pressure
- 3 Hypertension
- 2 Depression
- 2 Back/spine
- 2 Stroke
- 2 Hip problems
- 2 Parkinson's disease
- 2 Thyroid disease
- 1 Cirrhosis
- 1 Foot pain
- 1 Paralysis of leg
- 1 Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- 1 Legally blind
- 1 Pancreatic disease
- 1 Renal failure

- 8 No major health issues



Reasons for caring for their grandchildren

The reasons are reported as separate categories; however, as many as five reasons occurred for some of the families.

- 26 Substance abuse
- 8 Abandonment
- 5 Parent(s) unemployed
- 5 Incarceration
- 5 Lack of day care
- 4 Teen pregnancy
- 4 Separation/divorce
- 2 Death
- 2 Child abuse
- 2 Mother in school
- 1 Parental rights terminated
- 1 Parental mental disorder
- 1 Serious illness
- 1 Child had health problems
- 1 Parent has learning disability
- 1 Cultural tradition
- 1 Did not want grandchild to be taken to anyone else (foster care)

Visits to grandchildren by at least one parent and/or family member

- 21 Children had visits from at least one parent and family members
- 5 Children had visits from family members only
- 3 Children had visits from a parent only
- 2 Children had no visits from a parent or family member

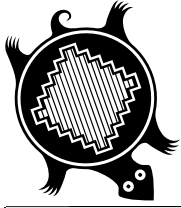
Services used by grandparents to assist in the care of their grandchildren

- 14 Medicaid
- 12 Financial assistance
- 6 Tribal services (food, heat, weatherization)
- 6 WIC program
- 6 School programs
- 4 Food stamps
- 4 Tribal health services
- 3 Supplemental Security Income
- 3 Day care
- 3 Social Security
- 2 School lunch program
- 2 Disability services
- 1 Disability settlement
- 1 Private insurance
- 1 Dental
- 1 Child support
- 8 None; 5 did not want to seek services (one due to fear of the system);

2 did not meet criteria for any program; and 1 father provided for his child

Services and training not available to grandparents but would be helpful in the care of their grandchildren

- 24 Indicated they did not need any services, with one indicating she “would not ask” and another indicated “the Tribe has all the services that I need at this time.”
- 3 Respite care
- 1 Learn how to use a feed tube
- 1 Support group for grandparents
- 1 Help with school work for both children
- 1 Medication for grandchild with ADD and special education services
- 1 Learn how to build grandchild’s self esteem and get her motivated



Grandparents' experience with social workers

The grandparents reported having had both positive and negative experiences with social workers in various fields of the profession, which included: School, Hospice, Hospital, Family Independence Agency (known now as the Department of Human Services), Child Welfare, Mental Health, Family Services, Foster Care and Tribal Social Services.

The positive experiences the grandparents shared included assistance with adoptions, hospital discharge planning, foster care training and home visits, which made the process more personal and reassuring. The grandparents felt they were treated nicely and that most social workers want to be helpful. Also, the grandparents were aware of how their own attitudes may impact their interactions with social workers.

The negative experiences reported by the grandparents are described in the following comments: "There is a need for the workers to understand the culture," "The lack of rapport building resulting in a lack of trust," "Workers do not listen," "I had feelings of

being judged, talked down to and disrespected." They also indicated that some of the workers were "difficult to contact," "had high caseloads, too much paperwork," "lacked time" and were "experiencing burnout."

Six of the grandparents indicated they had "limited" to "no contact" with social workers and, therefore, felt they did not have comments to share in response to this question.

Education and training that Social Work students need to be able to work with American Indian grandparents and their communities

The majority of the American Indian grandparents who had had experiences with social workers shared their recommendations as to what they thought students should learn to become social workers in order to best serve American Indian grandparents and their communities.

- They would require students to engage in culturally-sensitive training to improve services. Many felt they were "judged or disregarded

by social workers because of cultural differences." They would like students to know more about the culture so they do not "stigmatize or prejudge Indian people."

- Enculturation: "Be here for awhile first; learn not to push their own personal values on our people." They would like students to invest in their communities and get to know "Indian people."
- Develop an understanding of "our true history." "They should learn why American Indians don't trust the government or non-Indian society."
- Be aware of body language.
- "If possible, when going into a native home, have an American Indian social worker accompany them."
- Invite American Indian grandparents to come into the classroom to share their culture, stories and beliefs. "Learning



from books is great, but learning from the people is important.”

- Develop internships for students to learn while working within the American Indian communities.
- Enroll in American Indian cultural courses.
- “Be open minded to different beliefs, accept what you see,” “be respectful of the people’s needs,” “more empathic,” “be more responsive and in a timely manner,” “put client first,” “maintain regular contact with clients,” “be more alert and understanding.”

- Understand that American Indians are still targets of racism. “The logo issues are a prime illustration of the ignorance that still exists.” Also, we are perceived as “abusers of the system,” “not taxpayers,” or “rich due to some tribes having casinos.”

- “Don’t get hurt feelings when American Indians don’t want to talk to them.” “Give them time, be patient.” “Don’t be overly friendly.” “Be kind and good to our elders.” “Grandparents need to feel they can trust the person before they can let down their guard.” “Our elders were in the system

(e.g., boarding school, foster care, adoption); they know the system and they fear it.” “There is still some bitterness in how Indian children where treated in the boarding schools.”

- “Tribal nations may have educational, social, health and human services for Tribal members; it is important the students who are going to be social workers know what is offered and how to access these services for the benefit of clients.”
- “Students should be trained how to avoid burnout.”



Major findings

Focus group findings

Reasons for caring for their grandchildren

The participants in the focus groups shared the reasons why American Indian grandparents care for their grandchildren. The major reasons included: substance abuse, divorce and separation, economic needs, teen pregnancy, lack of day care, health issues of parent or grandchild, and death of one or both parents.

Grandparents also shared that they loved their grandchildren and wanted to make sure they were taken care of properly and not abused. The cultural aspects of the reasons grandparents were raising their grandchildren included “to teach them about the Indian culture,” and “We are Indian, and that is our role; it is what we do.”

Are grandparents accessing social, education and health services that are available to them? If yes, what services? If no, why not?

Several of the grandparents indicated they were unaware of the services available to

them. The services accessed most often were medical and dental. American Indian grandparents were more likely to use the services provided by their Tribal nations. One focus group indicated the grandparents only accessed services if they were required to do so by the court.

The reasons given for not accessing services included: “not being aware of the services,” “Indian people are independent and private, and they don’t want to lose their grandchildren to the system, so they make do.”

They were also reluctant to access non-Tribal services for “fear of the system,” “there is too much red tape,” and they felt the workers are “not Indian-friendly, belittle them, and are overworked.” Some of the grandparents felt like they were “begging for services.”

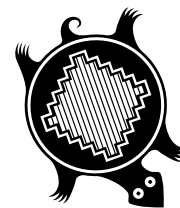
Many, but not all of the grandparents discussed their boarding school experiences, which included maltreatment and being taught their culture was of no value. This is another reason why some of them want to stay away from non-Tribal services. A smaller number of participants indicated their experience in boarding school

was not negative and, therefore, did not impact their seeking services.

How can social, educational and health services currently available be improved to increase their use?

The first recommendation made was to improve awareness of the services available. Such awareness can be attained by including information in Tribal newspapers, newsletters and flyers (not only focused on parents, but include grandparents). Agency representatives should be invited to attend meetings to present the services offered in the local area. Improve the communication between agencies (DHS/Tribal, etc.), and have the agencies’ information available at the Tribal offices. Assign more social workers to make home visits to explain the services available and/or hold a grandparent forum.

Additional suggestions included: “cut the red tape,” “improve communication between worker and client (less judgmental),” “learn the American Indian way,”



“sponsor cultural sensitivity training presented by American Indians,” and “give grandparents the same resources received by foster care parents.”

What type of training is needed to assist grandparents in parenting their grandchildren?

Focus group participants had several recommendations for training they would like to receive. These included: parenting training and discipline, training for the adult children so they can resume their parenting responsibilities, grandparent support groups, awareness of social and financial programs available on and off the reservation land, learn how to attain legal power to make decisions for the grandchildren’s welfare, learn how schools are different now-a-days and how to get involved in school activities, receive information on health issues and behavioral issues (ADHD, ADD), and receive training on computers and the Internet so they can monitor their grandchildren’s Internet activities.

The grandparents also voiced requests for services de-

signed to help the grandchildren such as counseling and drug education, tutors for grandchildren and a place for them to meet, Tribal cultural classes and a place for the grandchildren to learn respect for their elders.

A small number of participants stated they did not need or want any training. They indicated they had had training and/or they would raise their grandchildren in their own way.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) influence on grandparents parenting their grandchildren

The focus group participants were divided on their opinion in response to this question. Approximately half felt that the Act had helped them with adoption and/or resulted in their grandchildren living with them.

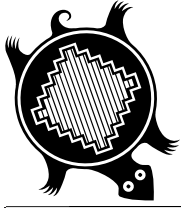
They felt the social workers did a good job, and the children were placed with their families and within their Tribal nations, which provided the children an opportunity to learn about their cultural values and Tribal identity.

One-fourth of the grandparents felt, despite the Act, their grandchildren and

Tribal children were being removed and placed outside of the Tribal nations. Still others did not know of the Act until it was “too late,” and the child was already in the court and/or social service system. The remaining members of the focus groups indicated they were not aware of the Act.

Grandparents’ experience with social workers

Two-thirds of the participants reported having had experiences with social workers that were positive, negative, or both. The fields of Social Work that the grandparents had interactions with included: Hospital, Nursing Home, Social Services (Tribal and state), Child Welfare, and Indian Outreach Workers at DHS. The positive experiences reported were with the Medical, Nursing Home, School Social Workers, Indian Outreach Workers at DHS and Tribal Social Services. One focus group indicated that they felt the quality of the interaction was dependent on each worker’s personality. Again, as in the responses from the individual interviews, the participants of the focus groups were aware



of how overburdened social workers are in their positions.

Several of the grandparents who had interacted with social workers shared numerous negative experiences and strong opinions in regard to the Social Work profession.

The direct quotes are shared to capture the essence of the grandparents' thoughts and feelings about their interactions.

- "I went to get food stamps; it was very intimidating and embarrassing."
- "They think they are perfect, they have all the power." "They all think they know everything, they are just book smart." "Half of them don't have kids."
- "Not a good experience; the child welfare worker removed our grandchildren."
- "In our county, we were treated like beggars."
- "Social workers should not try to force their own ways of doing things upon grandparents."

"They look at our lifestyle negatively."

- "I wouldn't touch a social worker with a 10-foot pole." "They need to stay away; I don't bother with them; they have no mercy."
- "Social workers misdiagnose children."
- "We had our grandchild since birth, the social worker took him away at two years of age."
- "They are very impersonal and brisk." "They put the blame on the client." One worker stated, "Why should the State of Michigan support you?" "Get a job and start supporting yourself."
- "I was always scared even though I was a social worker myself; I had no trust."

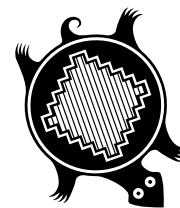
One-third of the participants had no experience with members of the Social Work profession.

Education and training Social Work students need to be able to work with American Indian grandparents and their communities

The personal qualities the grandparents would like social workers to have included: awareness of their own prejudices, knowledge of their own culture and the American Indian culture, respect for older persons; be responsible, kind, and generous; and talk nice. Social workers should be patient, understanding, compassionate, able to communicate, have more empathy, be able to keep matters confidential, and learn to respect traditions.

In addition to the personal qualities, the participants provided several recommendations, which would be best addressed by Social Work academic programs. A partial listing of the recommendations is provided below.

- "Realize that not all American Indians are the same. Learn the history and experiences of the people."

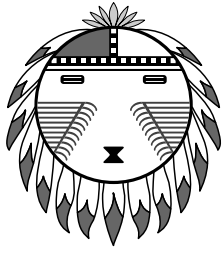


- “Receive special training on the Indian Child Welfare Act.”
- “Understand and accept Indian child-rearing techniques.”
- “Internships, hands-on training with family involvement.”
- “Students should participate in role playing with people who are from

the American Indian culture.”

- “Social workers need to be knowledgeable and up-to-date on resources and eligibility requirements for state and Tribal services.”
- “Receive direct exposure to alcohol/drug abuse as it affects native people.”
- “Learn native traditions/customs.”

- “Work with the grandparents and the grandchildren.”
- “Educate more American Indian social workers. Tribal workers have the cultural awareness and understand that two sets of laws (Tribal and state) exist.”
- “Take away the class that teaches them to be rude.”



Fact sheet #1

Grandparents raising grandchildren

According to the U.S. Census (2000), there are approximately 2.1 million children being raised by a grandparent or other relative without a parent present in the home. Since 1990, the number of grandparents raising grandchildren without a parent present in the home has increased 53%.

Factors that account for the increase in children being raised by grandparents:

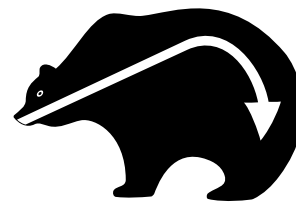
- Substance abuse

- Death of parent
- Child abuse/neglect
- Abandonment
- Teen pregnancy
- HIV/AIDS
- Death
- Unemployment
- Incarceration

- Divorce
- Mental and physical health issues
- Poverty
- Domestic violence
- A parent's unwillingness to parent
- A grandchild with physical, emotional or behavioral issues

Fact sheet #2

Legal options of grandparents raising grandchildren



Power of Attorney (POA)

- Legal custody remains with the child's birth parents.
- Allows a grandparent to make legal, financial and health care decisions on behalf of child.

Foster care

- Court maintains legal custody of the child.
- Grandparent is awarded only physical custody.
- Requires grandparent to obtain a foster care license.
- Higher degree of legal protection than a POA.
- Grandparent is eligible to receive the following governmental benefits:
 - Medical insurance (Medicaid)
 - Day care assistance
 - Financial subsidy
 - Clothing allowance
- Grandparent must comply with all pre-established court visitation agreements.

- Grandparent must comply with all child welfare agency regulations.
- Legal hearings are held every 90 days to review parent and child progress.

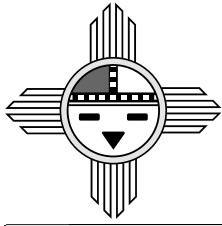
Guardianship

- Grandparent maintains both physical and legal custody of child.
- Suspends a parent's legal rights; parental rights are NOT terminated.
- Grandparent must maintain residency within the state in which the guardianship is established.
- Grandparent is eligible to receive the following governmental benefits:
 - Medical insurance (Medicaid)
 - Day care assistance
 - Financial subsidy
- Guardianship is reviewed by the court annually.
- Guardianship can be terminated upon a petition by the parent if the court rules that the parent is

able to provide a safe and stable environment.

Adoption

- Grandparent has sole physical and legal custody of the child.
- Parental rights are terminated.
- Adoption is the only secure and permanent form of custody.
- Grandparent must complete a favorable adoptive home study.
- Grandparent is eligible to receive the following governmental benefits upon completion of an adoption:
 - Adoption subsidy (usually equal to the foster care payment) if the child has special needs
 - Unlike a foster care payment, an adoption subsidy may extend to the child's college years
 - Grandparents may be eligible for additional assistance if they meet low-income guidelines



Fact sheet #3

Support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren

What do support groups do?

- Provide an opportunity to talk to other grandparents about similar concerns they may have in regard to their grandchildren.
- Allow grandparents to benefit from the experiences of others by talking about specific problems and receiving suggestions from others who have faced similar problems.
- Educate members through guest speakers who talk about various issues of interest to the grandparents. The issues may include health, legal, financial, educational, psychological and developmental concerns.
- Discuss specific issues that a Tribal nation's programs and services may be able to address, in addition to the types of programs and services sponsored by national and local governments.

- Create an awareness of the fact that more and more grandparents are becoming the sole providers of care for their grandchildren.

How would I start a support group?

- Become aware of the grandparents' current situations (working, retired, children in school, children not yet school age, disabilities of grandparents and grandchildren, etc.). This information will help to determine the best time and day to hold meetings.
- Locate a convenient and safe place to meet for two hours such as someone's home, Tribal community center, Tribal or non-Tribal senior center.
- Inform school officials, agencies working with grandparents and grandchildren, and include an announcement in the Tribal and local newspapers to create an awareness of the meeting, location and time.

- Seek volunteers in the community to provide care and supervision of grandchildren, allowing the grandparents to participate in the group and not have to be concerned about the care of their grandchildren while they are in the meeting.

What happens at the first meeting?

- The first meeting can be simple, inviting each grandparent in attendance to share why he/she decided to come to the meeting.
- It should be made clear that all information shared within the group meeting is expected to be kept confidential.
- Each participant can choose to share their stories; however, some may need time to feel comfortable before they will be able to share the details of their situation.

Fact sheet #3 – continued

Support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren



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- Ask for volunteers to help with the planning of future meetings. If the group decides, specific roles can be assigned.
 - Plan a meeting schedule. At that time the group will decide how frequently they want to meet (at least monthly is recommended).
- Determine who is eligible to attend.
 - Plan for a phone network. Exchange phone numbers or set up a phone tree for emergencies or for personal support.
- Remember to celebrate the triumphs and the rewards of raising grandchildren in addition to discussing the challenges.
 - Provide refreshments.

Fact sheet #4



Concern for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and experiencing maltreatment, neglect or exploitation

Unfortunately, some grandparents experience maltreatment, neglect and/or exploitation by the very grandchildren for whom they provide care. The following terms describe what some grandparents may experience.

- **Physical maltreatment:** pushing, shoving, slapping, hitting, pinching, taking away medications.
- **Psychological maltreatment:** yelling, name-calling, harming animals of elder, picking on younger siblings to get what they want.
- **Exploitation:** financial or material abuse such as taking money or possessions without permission, damaging or destroying property.
- **Neglect:** not helping with medical attention when needed or not providing

food if the grandparent is sick or in need of help.

Why would someone abuse or neglect their grandparent?

- The grandchild is angry at the absent parent, lashing out at the grandparent.
- The grandchild may feel overwhelmed and abandoned by the parent(s) and needs to express his/her frustration, sadness, and loss.
- Peer group pressure may encourage a grandchild to take belongings of grandparent such as car, money, TV or checkbook.
- Substance abuse or addiction may cause a grandchild to push or shove a grandparent, yell or scream, or to take belongings to sell to get

money to purchase the substances.

- Coming from an abusive home and trying to adjust to a grandparent's home with new rules and expectations may result in stress that translates into acting out behaviors.
- The grandchild may have disabilities that can cause irrational or abusive behavior regardless of how kindly the grandparent treats the child.
- If the grandparent played a role in the removal of the grandchild from the parents' home, there may be some resentment and anger directed toward the grandparent. The grandparent may be seen as the person who "ruined my (the grandchild's) life."

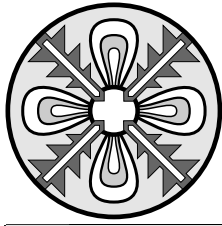
Fact sheet #4 – continued

Concern for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and experiencing maltreatment, neglect or exploitation



What can a grandparent do to be safe from harm?

- Get grandchildren the help they need such as tutoring, counseling, medical and/or dental care.
- Ask a friend or relative who is available to provide respite care to allow for a break from caregiving.
- Maintain and increase friendships.
- Have friends come to visit in their home.
- Keep in contact with neighbors.
- Volunteer or join a group or organization.
- Have regular medical, dental or shopping trips planned.
- Keep belongings neat and orderly; know where their checkbook and credit cards are, have incoming checks directly deposited into an account.
- Pay their own bills if possible.
- Get legal advice before making arrangements for someone to take care of them in exchange for their property, possessions or money.
- Know where to go for help if they think they are being mistreated, neglected, or exploited.
- Ask for help when it's needed.
- Call 911 if in need of immediate help.



Fact sheet #5

Respite care

Respite care provides relief to grandparents who are caring for grandchildren either formally or informally. Regardless of age, most grandparents may need respite from their responsibilities in order to maintain the physical and emotional strength they need to effectively care for their grandchildren.

Benefits of respite

- Supports and preserves the family or grandparent relationship.
- Decreases individual and family stresses associated with kinship care.
- Postpones the need for foster care placement of the grandchild.

Types of respite

- Brief, regularly-scheduled episodes, which allow grandparents to do routine chores and/or take a break.
- Sporadic, longer periods, which allow grandparents to leave town for business or vacation, go into the

hospital or attend to another emergency.

Respite resources

Adult Well-being Services of Detroit

Respite services are offered through the **Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren Program**. Foster grandparents are trained to provide in-home care for children, allowing grandparents to accomplish essential tasks such as going to the doctor or shopping. Educational workshops, support groups, and individual information and assistance are also available. For more information, call (313) 833-3765 or visit <http://www.awbs.org>.

Southwest Michigan Region IV Area Agency on Aging Senior Volunteers Program

Adapted from the national respite model developed by the National Council on Aging (NCOA), the **Family Friends Program** offers respite care for grandparents raising grandchildren in high stress situations. This state-funded program uses National Family Caregiver Support Program dollars in addition to United Way and Strong Families/Safe Children monies to

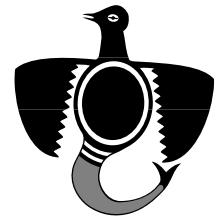
support program operations. Senior volunteers provide between four and 12 hours a week of in-home respite care. Volunteers also take children to planned activities outside the home in order to decrease the amount of stress caregivers may experience in raising their grandchildren. For more information, call AAA Senior Volunteer Programs at (269) 983-7058 or visit www.region-iv.org. You can also visit the Family Friends Program at www.family-friends.org.

ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center

ARCH assists and promotes the development of quality respite and crisis care programs, helps families locate respite and crisis care services in their communities, and serves as a strong voice for respite in all forums. Resources on providing respite services are available and include: *Bringing respite to your community: A start-up manual* and *Evaluating and reporting outcomes: A guide for respite and crisis care managers*. ARCH also provides resource information on state coalitions for respite in each state. For more information, call (919) 490-5577 or visit www.archrespite.org.

Fact sheet #6

The guilt-free way of saying “no” to your grandchildren



Your grandchild is misbehaving. What should you do?

- Make sure that every child in your home knows the rules.
- Make a sign with the *top five* most important rules in your home. List after every rule *what to do* and *what not to do*.
- Family rules should apply to everyone and should be adjusted for age. Putting consequences in writing will help you become more consistent and forewarn your grandchild of the consequences when a rule is broken.
- Doing nothing often stops irritating behavior (whining, arguing, burping, name calling, slurping food, etc.). However, doing nothing only works *if* you are also praising good behavior.
- A small number of children who have been abused or neglected may not respond to

these guidelines. If your grandchild is unresponsive, you may need assistance from your grandchild’s school social worker or an infant mental health specialist (for the non-school-age child) through a Tribal agency or local community mental health agency.

How to say “no” to a nagging grandchild’s behavior

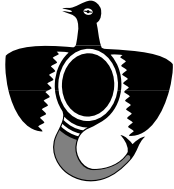
- Once you’ve said “no,” you must stick to your word. Yielding to nagging only reinforces it because your grandchild will get the message that she or he has been able to change your decision.
- A firm “no” followed by some calm words indicating that if your grandchild continues to nag, other privileges or special treats may be withdrawn. For example, “If you continue to nag about the toy, I won’t rent the video you wanted to watch tomorrow.”

- A nagging grandchild requires discipline paired with an understanding that nagging is unacceptable, annoying and undesirable behavior that you will not tolerate.

How to say “no” to prevent arguments

Following a grandchild’s request:

- You do not have to say yes or no immediately. After your grandchild has made a request, ask for his or her reasons. Say, “Let me think about it.” If the grandchild demands an immediate answer, you can tell him or her the answer will be “no” unless you are given time to think about your decision.
- If you have taken the time to consider the request and the grandchild’s reasons, and you decide you need a compromise as a solution, explain your position.



Fact sheet #6 - continued

The guilt-free way of saying “no” to your grandchildren

- If the answer is no, say “no” firmly. You do have the right to say no.
- Include your reason as part of your refusal and do not change your decision (for at least 90% of the time).

Advantages of this approach to saying “no”

- It teaches your grandchild to be patient.
- The child will learn that being “good” increases the likelihood of a “yes” response.

- Grandparents have earned the privilege of saying “no.”
- Grandparents are positive, fair and rational even if their grandchildren don’t always agree with them.

Fact sheet #7

Ways to help children with ADHD control their anger



Children diagnosed as having Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may present special challenges, especially related to episodes of anger.

The following are ways to help children with ADHD control their anger.

- Make lifestyle changes (sleep habits, nutrition, exercise and medications, if doctor recommended).
- Use assertive discipline techniques, such as:
 - Use direct, firm statements
 - Avoid arguments
 - Decide on consequences that you know you can and will reinforce
 - Consistently reinforce limits that have been set
 - Give the child positive feedback when he/she does make behavior changes.
- Recognize the effects of stress.
- Teach your grandchild “self-calming”

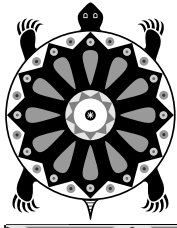
techniques. This skill takes daily practice for at least three months before it becomes a natural reaction to stress.

- Access a mentor or positive role model.
- Teach your grandchild to be aware of their non-verbal behavior and voice tone.
- Encourage your grandchild to talk about their feelings of frustration and disappointment.
- Teach conflict resolution skills.
- Teach your grandchild to recognize his/her own mood states.
- Reinforce your values.

When should a grandparent get involved in a child's education?

- The earlier a grandparent can get actively involved in a child's education, the more powerful the effects will be.

- The most powerful forms of involvement are those with grandparents working directly with children on learning activities at home. Successful students have grandparents who create and maintain family routines.
- Children who are raised by grandparents actively involved in their educational process are more successful both academically and socially.
- The most consistent predictor of school success and social adjustment is having a grandparent who has high expectations of the grandchild in school.
- If you are having concerns about your grandchild's education, you cannot wait for the school to tell you how he/she is doing. Grandparents who stay informed about their grandchild's progress at school have higher-achieving grandchildren.



Fact sheet #8

Bully-proofing your grandchildren

“Bullying is a relationship in which one person seeks to gain power and control over the life of another.”

Signs that your grandchildren may be being bullied

- They say they are being bullied, picked on or teased.
- They complain of not feeling well and don't want to go to school.
- Their grades begin to drop markedly.
- Money or personal possessions go missing.
- They come home with torn or damaged clothing.
- Unexplained bruises on their bodies.
- Nightmares, eating and sleeping problems.

What to do if your grandchildren are targeted by a bully

- Listen to your grandchildren carefully.

- Believe what they are telling you.
- Assure them it is okay to talk about these situations.
- Get the details: who, what, when, where the incident(s) occurred, including the names of any witnesses. Write down all of the details, along with taking pictures if appropriate.
- Ask your grandchildren how they have tried to cope with the bullying.
- Brainstorm with your grandchildren possible alternative strategies.
- Make an appointment to see your grandchildren's teacher / social worker / principal to explain the situation your grandchildren are confronted with and your concern about it.

What to do if your grandchildren are behaving like bullies

- Talk with your grandchildren and find out what is happening and why.
- Keep calm. The use of physical force or anger to punish will make the situation worst.
- Explain how their behavior is hurting people and why it is unacceptable.
- Discourage the use of bullying behaviors from any family member towards another.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help from others if you feel you don't have all the answers. No one does.

Fact sheet #9

Tips for selecting a tutor for your grandchild



Selecting a tutor for your grandchild is an important step in providing a child with assistance to improve his or her learning and academic success in school.

With the rapid increase in technology and changes in the educational curriculum, it is understandable that a grandparent may not be able to provide as much help with the grandchild's homework as needed. Therefore, a tutor may be a helpful alternative to assist a grandchild in learning to improve academic success.

How to select a tutor

- Work with your grandchild to understand the child's learning difficulties.
- If your grandchild is diagnosed as Learning Disabled, be sure to share this information with the prospective tutor.
- Interview the tutor and check his or her references to make sure the tutor is dependable, responsible and has an expertise in the subject the child is having difficulty with in school and homework assignments.
- Ask the tutor how he or she will make learning fun for your grandchild.
- To assist the tutor, provide a schedule of your grandchild's tests, quizzes, themes and weekly homework assignments.
- Attend the teacher conferences to assess your grandchild's progress in all subjects.
- Check with the tutor to find out if he or she has tutored children of the same age.
- Develop a schedule with the tutor and have a cancellation policy in case you need to cancel a session due to illness or vacation.
- To find a tutor, check with the child's teacher, community volunteers and professional volunteers. College students interested in working with children may be an appropriate resource.
- Advocate for your grandchild to make sure he or she gets the services and support he or she needs to be successful.

Tutoring resources

Capital Area Literacy Coalition
1028 E. Saginaw
Lansing, MI 48906
Contact: Lois A. Bader
Phone: 517.485.4949

Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, MI Tribal Youth Program Tutoring Services
Big Bear Arena
Two Ice Circle
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
Phone: 906.635.7010

The WORD Project, Home Assistance Skills Development (after-school tutorial for youth)
671 Davis, NW
P.O. Box 3
Grand Rapids, MI 49504-5147
Contact: Mary Ann Ferguson or Martha Dahl
Phone: 616.458.0871

Reading & Language Arts Centers, Inc.
One-to-one and small group tutoring sessions in Southeastern Michigan for beginning and struggling readers from pre-school age through adults. Programs are designed to meet the unique needs of students with dyslexia, learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders.
Contact: Alison Eldert
Phone: 248.645.9690

Fact sheet #10



Suggested grandparent-grandchild intergenerational activities

This list of activities is provided to encourage grandparents and Elder Programs to develop and share positive intergenerational activities for grandparents and grandchildren.

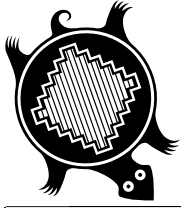
Please note: It is important to provide these activities in a way that is meaningful for your family and/or community.

- **Grandparent's Day.** Elder Programs may want to plan a special luncheon or show for grandparents to attend with their grandchildren. Or a grandparent and grandchild may want to hold this activity as an individual family event.
- **Intergenerational community concert.** Invite musicians of all ages in the local area for a concert to be held at a community or Tribal Center. Grandparents and grandchildren can be involved in the planning and/or the concert.
- **Intergeneration Support Day.** A day for community youth groups and older grandchildren to help grandparents with daily chores such as yard work or grocery shopping. Local college students may be interested to participate in this type of activity.
- **Community forum.** Grandparents and grandchildren can gather to talk about issues they face in their community and share their ideas about how to address those issues.
- **Intergenerational art exchange.** Grandparents and grandchildren can create together or separately artwork that highlights positive aspects of their relationship. Their work may be displayed at a school, Elder Center, Tribal Cultural Center, shopping mall or a restaurant.
- **Elder's Career Day.** Invite Elders from the community to schools or youth group meetings to speak about their work experience and what it meant to them.
- **Writing event.** Sponsor a writing event on the topic of the "Importance of Grandparents" or the "Importance of Grandchildren" and have the articles published in a local or Tribal newspaper. Or create a booklet of these stories to be sold as a fundraiser for a grandparent and/or youth group activity.
- **Lesson plan focused on Elders.** Make a request to teachers to include a lesson plan on "the important roles the Elders play in the community" during National Intergenerational Week (begins the third Sunday in May).

Fact sheet #10 – continued
Suggested grandparent-grandchild
intergenerational activities



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- **Intergenerational talent show.** Grandparents and grandchildren can produce a talent show and/or a play that would include songs and special talents they want to share with their community.
 - **One-day intergenerational trip.** Tribal- or community-sponsored trip to a “fun” location for both grandparents and grandchildren. Additional supervision should be offered by volunteers to assist the grandparents in caring for the grandchildren to ensure all will have an enjoyable time.
 - **Movie night or afternoon.** Select movies that are age appropriate and invite the grandparents and grandchildren to the viewing so they may watch a movie together. Then have the grandparents and grandchildren discuss the movie as two separate groups and then share each group’s point of view with the other.
 - **Grandparent banquet.** Honor the grandparents for their caring contributions to their families and the community. Have their grandchildren present a special “Certificate of Award” to their grandparent. If age appropriate, the grandchildren and community volunteers can do the cooking, decorating and programs.
 - **Brainstorming session.** Invite grandparents and grandchildren to a special meeting to brainstorm their own ideas for a “Calendar of Events.”



Fact sheet references and credits

Fact sheet #1 Grandparents raising grandchildren

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Fact sheet #2 Legal options of grandparents raising grandchildren

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Fact sheet #4 Concern for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and experiencing maltreatment, neglect or exploitation

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Fact sheet #5 Respite care

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Fact sheet #6 The guilt-free way of saying “no” to your grandchildren

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Fact sheet #7 Ways to help children with ADHD control their anger

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Fact sheet #8 Bully-proofing your grandchild

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Fact sheet #9 Tips for selecting a tutor for your grandchild

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Fact sheet #10 Suggested grandparent- grandchild intergenera- tional activities

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