Aging Services
Bringing People and Services Together in Oklahoma

OASIS provides free statewide Information and Referral on resources for people with disabilities, special health care needs and women, infants and children needing low-cost health care, on respite programs and for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Call toll-free from anywhere in Oklahoma at 1-800-42-OASIS or 1-800-426-2747 or in the Oklahoma City area at 271-6302.

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Talk to a person who can help you
Find the resources you need

Visit us on the Web at http://oasis.ouhsc.edu
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For ease and readability, we have used the following symbols throughout the guide:

* A telephone graphic for phone numbers to call for help.

* A light bulb graphic for ideas, tips and information.
Purpose of this Guide

Finding services and resources can be a long, frustrating process that can sometimes seem overwhelming. Determining where to begin can be the most difficult and time-consuming task of all.

This guide has been developed as a joint effort between the OKDHS Aging Services Division and Children and Family Services Division. It gives grandparents raising grandchildren a quick overview of services, programs and general information to get needed assistance. It also provides tips that grandparents, or other relatives providing kinship care, may want to consider when taking on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren.

This guide is by no means an exhaustive listing of all agencies and services available to grandparents raising grandchildren. We have attempted to list resources and services that are statewide and that serve as clearinghouses for further referrals. If you know of valuable services that are statewide and benefit grandparents raising grandchildren, please call the grandparents information clearinghouse located within OASIS, the state’s information and referral network at 1-800-42-OASIS or 1-800-426-2747. If grandparents have issues related to their own needs and are 60 years old or over, they may call the Senior Info-Line, 1-800-211-2116, a statewide number linking older Oklahomans to information and assistance.

Assistance in developing the guide was also provided by the OKDHS Family Support Services Division, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and grandparents who are now raising their grandchildren. We express thanks to all of them for their invaluable contributions.

How to use this Guide

The guide begins with the listing of some of the joys and challenges that often are associated with being a grandparent caregiver. We are sure that you will have some of your own that are unique to your family situation. We have chosen to begin each section with a descriptive scenario of the more common situations occurring in families today.

The guide is divided into the following sections:

- Section 1: Child Development, Health and Safety Needs
- Section 2: Child Care, School and Educational Needs
- Section 3: Challenges Facing Today’s Children
- Section 4: Obtaining Needed Documents and General Assistance
- Section 5: Custody and Legal Issues
- Section 6: Coping Strategies
- Section 7: Resources for Grandparent Caregivers
Emotional Ups and Downs

Joys

Faith that your grandchildren’s lives will be stable and sound.

Satisfaction in knowing you are making a better life for your grandchildren.

Comfort in knowing your grandchildren are safe with you.

Gratification in knowing you are making a difference in your grandchildren’s lives.

Patience to cope with yourself and your grandchildren.

Courage to take on the responsibility of parenting which is a big commitment.

Inspiration that comes from hearing your grandchildren say, “I love you”.

Gain in personal satisfaction knowing you are strong enough for this task.

Sense of order when things go right.

Happiness that you made it through another day.

Pride in yourself and your grandchildren for persevering through tough times.

Compassion in your relationships with your grandchildren, their friends and others.

Hope that the situation will get better.

A Special Note to Grandparents:

Do any of these emotions sound familiar? If so, you are not alone. Grandparents raising their grandchildren, and other relatives acting as surrogate parents, experience all kinds of emotional ups and downs. These emotions and many more represent the feelings of grandparents who are confronted with the challenge of raising their
Challenges

*Denial* of the current situation; unrealistic expectations that the parents will become responsible.

*Fear* of how you will be able to financially and emotionally care for your grandchildren.

*Guilt* thinking you should have or could have done things differently with your own child.

*Anger* at your child for abandoning or not being a responsible parent.

*Sacrifice* in order to keep your family together.

*Loss* of the grandparent-grandchild relationship, as well as peer contacts.

*Frustration* when things don’t go as planned.

*Sadness* at the loss of a child and of the typical grandparent role.

*Disappointment* in not being able to do the things you wanted at this stage in your life.

*Confusion* in understanding the issues facing today’s children.

*Embarrassment* at having to ask for assistance for raising your new family.

*Isolation* from your friends and child-free social networks.

Remember to take a moment now and then to commend yourself for what you are doing – making a difference in a child’s life by giving her or him the chance to be a safe, loved and nurtured child.
CHILD DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY NEEDS
**Child Development, Health and Safety Needs**

Wanda never thought much about when children should begin doing key developmental tasks, such as pulling themselves up, crawling, walking and talking. After all, she had made the decision not to have children of her own. Her husband, Jim, had children from a previous marriage and suffered from medical problems. Now, at 40 years of age, Wanda cares for Jim and raises her stepchild’s 2-year-old child.

Wanda’s situation is not unusual. Many grandparents raising their grandchildren are concerned they lack the knowledge and ability it takes to raise a child. Some grandparents and relative caregivers may be parenting for the first time in their lives. Others may have been away from the role of parenting for so long that they do not remember or simply do not know the latest ins and outs of parenting. And, things change – new technologies, ideas and practices affect the ways we raise and care for our children.

**Child Development**

Children are unique individuals. They think, look, act and grow in different ways. This is part of what makes them so special. The Ages and Expectations chart may help you know what to expect at certain ages. Talk to your medical professional about your grandchild’s development if you have concerns. Children may have been exposed to emotional or physical traumas, or prenatal conditions that may make their development and behavioral patterns different from other children their own age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Plays games like patty cake and peek-a-boo, sits up without support, pulls into a standing position, feeds self finger foods, knows own name and repeats sounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Makes two-word sentences, walks alone, eats with a spoon, names toys and people, recognized self in mirror, can point and name ears, eyes, nose</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Toilet training, plays simple games, counts out loud on fingers, rides a tricycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Begins thinking in an organized manner, knows about 1,000 words</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Plays logically, able to perform activities in sequential order</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Able to learn and recognize differences between right and wrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Able to concentrate well on tasks at hand, often self-absorbed to the point of appearing withdrawn, shows sensitivity to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Curious about all things they are learning – including sexuality, have high energy and often act impulsively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Acts with independence, likes to learn facts, rules and standards, takes on more responsibility and engages in chores around the house</td>
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For more information on child development or health and medical needs for children, call the Oklahoma State Department of Health at 1-800-522-0203. Family Health Services and Child Guidance Services in the Oklahoma City area may be reached at 405-271-4477.
Special Needs and At-Risk Children

Ray’s heart felt heavy as he waited for the assessment report on his grandson. Nathan was only 6 years old and had already lived a tough life. His mother was in jail and his father was nowhere to be found. Ray had hoped the boy would settle down by the time he started school. When this didn’t happen, he knew he needed professional help with Nathan.

Children with special needs include those with physical or mental disabilities, emotional or other behavioral problems, or are considered at-risk for developing disabilities. Children who had prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol are considered at risk. Prenatal, and often environmental, exposure to harmful substances and behavior can result in the child being deprived of certain age-appropriate development steps.

If you are concerned about your grandchild’s development or are raising a child who has a disability, there are programs that can help you. Also, schools are a valuable resource for children with special needs. Children who have disabilities are mainstreamed into most classrooms. Ask about available programs at your grandchild’s school.

Early Intervention

Early intervention is for families with infants or toddlers ages birth through 36 months of age who have concerns about how their child is developing. In Oklahoma, the state’s early intervention program is called SoonerStart. If you are concerned about your grandchild’s walking, talking, crawling, understanding, seeing, or hearing, you will want to find out more about early intervention assessment and services. After age 3, the Special Education Program through your local public schools can help with testing, classes, speech therapists, occupational therapists and physical therapists.
SoonerStart

<table>
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<th>Who is Eligible?</th>
<th>Cost?</th>
<th>Natural Environment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants and toddlers through 36 month of age who have developmental delays or physical /mental condition (like cerebral palsy.)</td>
<td>There is no direct cost to families, regardless of their income. The program mandated by federal and state law and is funded through various state and federal sources.</td>
<td>The services may be provided in the child’s home or daycare. Services may include occupational, physical and speech-language therapy, counseling, nursing services, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Another source for developmental testing, which includes tests for speech and language, physical and developmental screening and ADD/ADHD testing is the Child Study Center in Oklahoma City. To use the center, you must have a referral from a physician, social worker, SoonerStart or other health professional. The Child Study Center is at 1100 NE 13th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73117. The phone number is 405-271-5700.

For more information on Early Intervention Services, contact Oklahoma Areawide Services Information System – OASIS at 1-800-426-2747, Metro Oklahoma City, 405-271-6302.

Helpful Resources for General Information on Raising Children Include:

*Doctors.* Contact your grandchild’s pediatrician or medical clinic to locate other valuable resources and referrals.

*Hospitals.* Many hospitals sponsor programs and activities regarding child development and child rearing. Call your local hospitals to find out if they offer such programs.

*Libraries.* Libraries are a great source for parenting books and materials.

For general parenting tips, support and referrals, call the OASIS Information and Referral Service, 1-800-426-2747.
Immunizations

Your grandchild not only needs immunizations so that she or he is protected from disease, but also because it is required by schools and child care centers for enrollment.

Guide to Immunization Requirements in Oklahoma 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childcare</th>
<th>Pre-School/Pre-Kg</th>
<th>Kdg thru 10th</th>
<th>11th and 12th</th>
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<td>1-4 PCV</td>
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<td>1 Varicella</td>
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For further immunization information and programs in your area that offer free or low-cost immunizations, call the Oklahoma State Department of Health, 1-800-234-6196 or 405-271-4073. Your local Health Department will help, even if you cannot locate the child’s shot records, birth certificates, or legal papers.
Healthy Eating Habits

Children learn from adults. If you practice good, healthy eating habits, chances are your grandchildren will too. The food guide pyramid can be used to ensure that your grandchildren are eating a variety of foods and getting an adequate supply of vitamins and nutrients for growth and health. Quality rather than quantity of food is the important factor for meeting your grandchildren’s nutritional needs.

Tips for Healthy Eating:
Establish a consistent eating routine.
Keep healthy snacks handy for your grandchild.
Avoid eating too much junk food and sweets.
Avoid foods high in fat and cholesterol.
Read food labels carefully.
Visit www.mypyramid.gov for tips and information.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children – WIC with the Oklahoma State Department of Health

This program provides specific supplemental foods for good health and nutrition during critical times of growth and development. Services are available for children birth to 5. Children in OKDHS custody are eligible for this service at no charge. Grandparent caregivers can apply for this service for their grandchildren. Program participation is based on income, child’s age and medical or health risk.

For information on WIC and the nearest agency, contact the Oklahoma State Department of Health WIC Hotline at 1-888-655-2942 or your local Health Department office.
Dental Needs

Eligibility for state purchased health care is determined through OKDHS County Human Services Centers; contact your local county OKDHS office for information or call OASIS Information and Referral Service at 1-800-426-2747, Oklahoma City Metro, 271-6302.

Your grandchildren’s teeth are important. They help children stay healthy by allowing them to chew foods properly. In the past, dental extraction was a common cure for dental problems. Now there are treatments that make pulling teeth almost an obsolete practice. Talk to your dentist to establish a healthy plan for keeping your grandchild’s teeth healthy and strong.

Here Are Some Tips on Keeping Your Grandchildren’s Teeth Healthy:
(Sources: American Association of Pediatric Dentistry, National Institute of Dental Research)

1. Good dental health begins before you see the first tooth in your grandchild’s mouth. Infants need to have their gums wiped with a soft, damp cloth or gauze pad after each feeding. Do not put babies to bed with a bottle at night or at nap time. Milk, formula and other sweet drinks contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay.

2. Children begin to cut their first tooth between the ages of 4-10 months. Teething may cause excess drooling, crying, and fussiness. Be alert to the fact that children who are teething may be tempted to put things in their mouth to soothe themselves. Always pay close attention to what your grandchild puts in her or his mouth. By age 2 to 2-1/2 years, about ten teeth in each jaw will be visible.

3. Ask your dentist when to bring your grandchildren in for their first visit.

4. Make sure you are brushing teeth with a fluoride toothpaste and soft bristle toothbrush.

For information on dental services for children, call the Oklahoma Health Care Authority at 1-800-522-0310. They may be able to direct you to dental services in your area, whether you are using Medicaid or just seeking low-cost services.
Insurance and Medical Coverage

Betty always worried about her own medical bills. After all, Medicare only covers so much. She knew she couldn’t afford private insurance for her two grandchildren living with her. A grandparent in a similar situation told her that Medicaid was often available to children. Betty was embarrassed at the thought of applying for assistance, but there wasn’t anything else she could do since the children needed medical care.

Private insurance

Many grandparents have difficulty obtaining health insurance for their grandchildren. Grandparents who are retired are often on Medicare, an insurance program that covers older people. Grandparents who are still working may find it difficult, if not impossible, to add grandchildren to their employer-based policy. As a result, many grandparents seek Medicaid coverage for their grandchildren. If you have employer-based health insurance, ask about dependent coverage for grandchildren in your custody.

For people who qualify financially, Medicaid pays for hospital, medical care and prescriptions. In many cases, grandchildren being raised by grandparents qualify for Medicaid. You do not need to be receiving assistance for your grandchildren to receive Medicaid. Your grandchildren are automatically eligible for Medicaid if they are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Security Income.

You may apply for Medicaid at your OKDHS County Human Services Center. You will need to prove that you are the primary caregiver for your grandchildren. You will also need to show that your grandchildren are deprived of parental care, proof of your grandchildren’s ages, relationship to you, and current living arrangement. You do not need to have legal custody of your grandchildren for them to receive Medicaid.

Children receiving Medicaid will be enrolled in a managed health care program called SoonerCare. The OKDHS office can help you complete a SoonerCare application and answer questions about available services.

*Remember, your income should not be considered when the OKDHS office is determining benefits for your grandchildren only.

Once the children have been approved for SoonerCare, if you need help locating SoonerCare providers, have general questions the OKDHS County Human Services Center cannot answer for you, or need help choosing a SoonerCare provider, you may call the SoonerCare Helpline at 1-800-987-7767 or for hard or hearing/deaf only, dial 1-800-757-5979 (TDD/TTY). Also, be sure to get a copy of the SoonerCare Enrollment Guide and Provider Directory and the Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis Treatment – EPSDT brochure.
Health

Adolescent Health Program

The mission of the Oklahoma State Department of Health’s adolescent health program is to address the most important health challenges among young people, which include too-early parenthood, intentional and unintentional injury, violence, substance abuse and access to primary health care. The program targets adolescents aged 10 to 21.

Phone 405-271-4471

Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Program – WIC

Women, Infant, and Children Nutritional Program improves the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as infants and children up to 5 years old who are at nutritional risk. WIC helps prevent malnutrition by providing food vouchers for a special package of nutritious food, supplemented with nutrition education and referrals for additional health care. Contact your local county health department for more information or to make application.

The WIC telephone number should be listed in your local telephone directory or call 1-888-655-2942.

Mental Health

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has mental health community centers throughout Oklahoma. The centers provide emergency intervention, assessment and counseling to provide therapeutic services for children who are demonstrating symptoms of emotional difficulties.

You may find out about the mental health center in your area by calling the Reach-Out hotline at 1-800-522-9054. Reach-Out hotline workers are available to answer questions about hours of operation and specific services offered at the various community centers.

Children who have been approved for SoonerCare may also use the medical card for mental health services. Call the SoonerCare Helpline to find out about services available, 1-800-987-7767.
Safety

The social worker told Bill and Janet that the children would be at the police station downtown. Getting ready for the trip, Janet looked around her house. It was by no means childproof. What she had considered comfortable clutter now just looked like safety risks.

Keeping your grandchildren safe may seem like a full-time job, and at times it will be. However, by establishing good safety practices for you and your grandchildren, you are not only setting a good example, but you are protecting your grandchildren from potential dangers and accidents.

Consider the following safety tips:

**Car Safety**
* Use proper safety belt restraints at all times in a moving vehicle.
* Make sure infants and young children are in approved child safety seats in cars. To make sure car seats are appropriate, correctly installed and to get free or discounted child safety seats, call the SAFE KIDS Coalition at 405-271-5695. You may also get a free car seat through the WIC program at your local county health department.
* Never leave your children alone in cars.
* Children under 12 years old should never ride in the front seat.

**Home Safety**
* Keep small objects away from small children. Needles, pins, coins and beads can be deadly if swallowed.
* Never let children play with plastic bags.
* Help prevent poisoning by keeping all cleaning supplies, chemicals, medicines, and cosmetics out of reach or in child-proof cabinets.
* Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors and check batteries twice a year.
* Hold a mock fire drill with your grandchildren. Plan escape routes and arrange for a safe meeting place outside in case of fire.
Infant Safety

To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome:

Place infants to sleep on their backs, even though they may sleep more soundly on their stomachs. Infants who sleep on the stomachs and sides have a higher rate of SIDS than infants who sleep on their backs.

Make sure that cribs have a snug fitting mattress and narrowly spaced slats. There should be nothing in the bed but the baby – no covering, no pillows, no bumper pads and no toys. Soft mattresses and heavy covering are associated with the risk for SIDS.

Never allow babies to fall asleep with bottles in their mouths.

Keep all cords and strings, including blinds and curtain cords, away from the crib.

Avoid exposing the infant to people with respiratory infections. Avoid crowds. Carefully clean anything that comes in contact with the baby. Have people wash their hands before holding or playing with the baby. SIDS often occurs in association with relatively minor respiratory infections, such as a mild cold, and gastrointestinal infections, such as vomiting and diarrhea.

Consider using a baby monitor by the child’s crib if:

1. the child weighed less than 3.5 pounds at birth.
2. had a sibling who died of SIDS.
3. was exposed to cocaine, heroin, or methadone during mother’s pregnancy.
4. was the second or succeeding child born to a teenage mother.
5. an apparent life-threatening event happened to the child.

Tell your doctor if you are concerned about SIDS with your infant. Many communities have special programs to help manage babies at high risk for SIDS.
**Personal Safety**

*Teach your grandchildren the following personal safety tips:*

1. To memorize their full name, address and phone number, including the area code and zip code.
2. To use the telephone and how to make calls to the operator and to dial emergency numbers.
3. To understand what stranger means.
4. To never enter a stranger’s car or home.
5. To keep the doors locked and only admit authorized people into the home.
6. To use a code word; a code word is a special word that only you and your grandchild know.
7. Use the code word if you are having another person pick up your grandchild from school or day care so that he or she can verify that the person is safe.
8. To play and walk with friends.
9. To avoid alleys as well as poorly lighted or deserted areas.
10. To not wander away from you or your yard without permission.
11. To tell you if something strange or uncomfortable has happened to them.
12. To not give information about themselves to anyone except authorized people.

For more information on child safety issues, call your local Fire and Police Departments. Other places to obtain information on child safety issues include: schools, hospitals, and American Red Cross offices.

The Oklahoma SAFE KIDS Coalition is a national non-profit organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury – the number one killer of children ages 14 and under. Besides helping to distribute car seats, OSKA helps families by distributing smoke alarms in local communities, life jackets, fire safety and bicycle safety, providing a resource library of more than 100 videos available for free loan for the cost of return postage.

The Oklahoma SAFE KIDS Coalition can be reached at 405-271-5695.
CHILD CARE, SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
Child Care

Finding child care wasn’t how Bev had planned to spend her weekend. She knew her son, Gary, was having difficulty with the children after their mother died, but she didn’t think the situation was that bad. When she received the call from Protective Services saying the children had been abandoned, she knew she had to act fast. There was so much to do, and she couldn’t take time away from her job. Bev needed to find a place for the children to stay while she worked, and she needed to find that place quickly.

Finding child care is a concern for parents and caregivers. One of the first steps to finding the child care option that is right for your family is knowing the types of child care.

The different types of child care include:
In-home care – child care provider provides care in your home.
Family child care – care provided in a caregiver’s home.
Child care centers – care provided outside of the caregiver’s home.

Finding the Right Type of Care

There are many pros and cons to the different types of child care. You may find it helpful to make a list of your child care needs, such as hours open, individualized attention, trained workers and planned activities, to help you decide which is best for your family. An excellent resource to finding out about child care options is talking to other parents, grandparents and co-workers. Ask them if they are aware of the place you are considering. One grandparent offers the following advice to those seeking child care: ask, ask, ask.

You may also want to consider contacting places such as the ones listed below in your area. While not all the places you contact can assist, they may be able to refer you to places that can. Some places are Schools, Civic Clubs, Social Organizations, Churches, Health Clinics, Parent Training Centers, Hospitals, YMCA and YWCA, and Parks and Recreation Departments.

To help you in the decision-making process, contact your local Oklahoma Child Care Services by calling the local OKDHS Human Services Center, or contact OASIS Information and Referral Service at 1-800-426-2747, Oklahoma City Metro, 271-6302. OKDHS has a list of child care centers and in home child care providers to help you choose the one that fits your needs. You may also call Oklahoma Child Care Services at 405-521-3561 or 1-800-347-2276 for more information or to schedule an appointment to review the history file of a potential provider.
Grandparents are eligible to receive free child care through the TANF program. OKDHS custody children can only be placed in OKDHS approved homes or child care centers. The grandparent must be working at least 20 hours per week to receive child care benefits.

If you think you may qualify for subsidized child care or for current eligibility guidelines, contact the OKDHS office nearest you.

Other Subsidized Child Care Alternatives
There are a variety of Head Start programs in Oklahoma. These programs generally provide free half-day school-year care for eligible, low-income, 3- to 5-year-old children. Some programs also provide full-day, year-round care. Pre-kindergarten programs sponsored by many public school districts in Oklahoma also offer half-day, school-year care at no cost to 3- to 5-year-olds who meet eligibility guidelines set by each local district. This is an income-based program. Call your local school district office for information and availability, or your local Community Action Agency.

Respite Care
Grandparents raising a grandchild who is 18 years old or younger may qualify for the respite care program. An application can be obtained by calling OASIS at 1-800-426-2747. When approved for respite services, you will receive vouchers worth $400 to hire someone of your choice to sit with your child while you do necessary shopping, go to doctor’s appointments, or just get a much needed break. The person you hire to watch the child cannot live in your house. The vouchers are good for three months. You are eligible to reapply for more vouchers every three months. Note: The respite program can also be used if you are caring for family members age 60 or older. The application is the same for all types of respite. The federal funding comes from the Older Americans Act.

Contact OASIS Respite Care at 1-888-771-4550 toll free or Metro Oklahoma City at 405-271-4550 to apply.

Employer Supports
If you are working, your employer may have a program to help you with your child care needs. Contact your employer’s human resources department about participation in child care programs. Remember to ask about insurance coverage for your grandchildren under your insurance plan.
School and Educational Needs

To enroll your grandchildren in school at a minimum you will need:

- Birth Certificate
- Proof of Immunizations
- School Records (if attended another school)

Enrollment Procedures

1. Call the school district office listed in the phone book in your area to obtain the name and address of where your grandchildren will be attending school.

2. When you go to register your grandchildren in school, you will need all the information listed above. If your grandchildren have attended another school, the previous school records, including immunization records, will be needed. Schools have forms for requesting past school records. They can help you fill out the necessary forms and get documents. You may be asked to prove that your grandchildren live with you. Often this can be done by a letter from the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, landlord or community leader. Ask the school what type of documentation is required.
Interactions with Schools, Teachers, Therapists, Counselors and Staff

Sylvia kept postponing the visit with her granddaughter’s fifth grade teacher. How could she tell the teacher that the reason she is not involved in Marty’s homework is because she does not understand it? Sylvia was not only intimidated by the schoolwork, but she also feared embarrassing her granddaughter at school.

Get to know your grandchildren’s teachers. Inform teachers that you are raising your grandchildren. Teachers will want to send things home to grandma instead of mom. Let the teacher know you want to be informed of your grandchild’s progress.

Keep the lines of communication open between you, your grandchildren and the school.

Attend open houses and meetings. Try to attend all parent-teacher conferences. Schedule personal meetings with teachers and counselors to talk about your grandchildren. If you cannot make face-to-face contact, arrange for a telephone conference.

Get help with homework if needed. Teachers may be able to get your grandchildren extra help with homework and tutoring. This may take place at the school or in the community. Let them know if you are having trouble finding time or simply do not understand the homework well enough to help your grandchildren.

Do not be embarrassed if you do not understand your grandchildren’s homework. Many adults have trouble with reading, writing, math, computer work and other subjects. Remember: It is in the best interest of your grandchildren to ask for help.

Talk with the school counselors and nurses. Counselors often have advice and resources for grandparents about social service programs in the community. This includes programs for behavioral and learning problems and other special needs. Contact the school nurse for information and resources on health and nutrition needs. Nurses and counselors can often provide information on talking with your grandchildren about difficult topics such as sexuality, drug and alcohol abuse, gangs and peer pressure.

Sex education and other sensitive issues. Children are growing up very fast these days. As a result, schools are attempting to keep pace. Some schools do this by talking about important and serious issues in the classroom. For example, many classes integrate human sexuality and intimate relationship information into coursework. Your grandchildren may also learn about things such as AIDS and HIV, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, child and juvenile violence, gangs, domestic violence, substance abuse and other social problems. Talk with your grandchildren’s school about these subjects. You may want to plan special discussions with your grandchildren to see how they feel and react to these subjects.
Other School Programs that May Be Available to You:

**Before and after school care.** Many schools have programs that offer before and after school child care. Most of these programs are for working parents and caregivers. Talk to the school about these programs. The program hours tend to change frequently at some schools, so be sure you know the current hours of the program.

**School lunch programs.** Public schools have free and reduced lunch plans for children who qualify. When you enroll your grandchildren in school, ask about eligibility and guidelines for registration in the lunch program.

**Peaceful Resolution for Oklahoma Students – PROS**
PROS is a project of the Early Settlement Programs administered by the Supreme Court of Oklahoma and the Administrative Office of the Oklahoma Bar Association. This school based peer mediation program encourages young people to resolve conflicts in a positive way. Strategies center on building strong student self-esteem and teacher effectiveness in dealing with on-site conflicts such as fighting and harassment.

For more information, contact PROS at 405-521-6677 or 1-877-521-6677 toll free.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides that children with special needs have specific rights in the public school system. Schools are required to assess children with learning disabilities, assist families with placement decisions, structure a large part of the student’s weekly schedule, modify educational programs to the child’s needs, prepare individualized education plans, provide a free and appropriate education, and provide appropriate services by the school nurse or health service.
CHALLENGES FACING TODAY’S CHILDREN
Ana and her friends were good children. They did well in school and never got into trouble. Les and Cathy were proud of their granddaughter, but they didn’t understand why she needed to dress that way – baggy pants, stomach showing and a tattoo. This wasn’t the way things were when they were younger.

Things are different today. Children learn about drugs, alcohol, sex, gangs and violence at very early ages. Your grandchild’s history might include some of these behaviors. As a result, she or he may not know what is right and wrong.

Many grandparents are raising children who are developmentally deprived, but socially advanced. For example, a child may have trouble reading on a third grade level but has the survival instincts or street-smarts of an older teenager. The events that led up to your grandchildren being placed in your home may warrant a special approach in child rearing.

Talk to a counselor or family therapist. Check with your grandchildren’s school for additional information and referrals on getting help with child rearing.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Young people are being exposed to alcohol, tobacco and drugs as early as elementary school. The younger someone starts to use alcohol and drugs, the more likely she or he is to develop problems. Consider the following facts and information from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services:

* Young people who use alcohol and drugs also are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, experience school failure or be seriously injured from driving or engaging in other risky behavior while impaired.

* Easy access and availability of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs make it difficult to keep young people out of harm’s way.

* Young people who use tobacco are more likely than others to drink heavily later or use illicit drugs.

* Over the past two to three years, annual use of marijuana doubled among 8th graders, grew by two-thirds among 10th graders, and increased by two-fifths among 12th graders.

* Fewer young people see harm in using drugs. Yet, understanding the harms associated with drug use is one of the greatest deterrents to drug use by youth.

* Young people report that getting alcohol, tobacco and most illicit drugs is very easy.
Five Reasons Young People Give for Using Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illicit Drugs:

· To feel grownup
· To satisfy curiosity
· To fit in and belong
· To relax and feel good
· To take risks and rebel

For more information about drug/alcohol abuse and prevention, call the Reach-Out Hotline at 1-800-522-9054. Teens with problems can talk to a peer who is trained to assist callers by contacting Teenline at 1-800-522-8336.

Gangs

Criminal gang activity is a growing problem in our society. Steve Nawojczyk, a leading national expert on gangs and gang-related dynamics, offers the following information on gangs:

It is not illegal to be in a gang, and indeed many adults are currently involved in activities that meet Webster’s definition for a gang. However, when gangs engage in activities that break the law, their actions are illegal.

Gangs may be part of a larger city or national gang, or they may remain local. Joining a group that has a reputation, good or bad, gives a child looking for a purpose something in which to be involved.

To get information on gangs in Oklahoma, contact the Oklahoma City Police Department and ask to speak with Tim Holk at 405-297-1000 or 405-316-4694.

To get information on positive groups and activities that your child can get involved with contact OASIS at 1-800-426-2747.

Participants have said the mere interaction of members, listening to one another’s problems and sharing the ups and downs kids face are often what entices them to join a gang.

Once in a gang, children may find quitting the gang difficult and, in some cases, dangerous.

Reasons for Joining a Gang:

Identity    Discipline    Recognition    Love    Belonging    Money

Most police departments have juvenile gang specialists. For more information on gang prevention and intervention, contact your local police department.
Sexuality and Kids

You may have difficulty talking to your grandchildren about sexuality. Most parents do. However, kids learn about sexuality early in their lives. They may get information at school, from their friends or through television or music. It is important that they get information from you.

Some Tips to Help You Talk to Your Grandchildren About Sexuality Include:

Find out what your grandchildren's questions and concerns are.

Make sure you know the facts about sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, birth control, and pregnancy.

Talk about the things you see on TV or in the community that deal with sexuality.

Ask your grandchildren how they feel about certain topics.

For information on talking to your grandchildren about sexuality issues, contact your local Planned Parenthood or other health and family planning clinics or community centers, the local Parent Teacher Organization or people at your grandchildren's school.

Another source of help is Responsible Choices, a private community organization that offers sexuality education and sexuality counseling to children, adults and families. The Responsible Choices for Sexuality program is based on the belief that individuals are sexual beings throughout their entire lifespan, and therefore, children and adults need to be empowered with accurate knowledge and skills to assist them in their natural sexual development. A crucial component of the Responsible Choices’ program focuses on providing caretakers with sexual development knowledge and skill so that they may become better equipped to teach, guide and support their children. Ultimately, Responsible Choices for Sexuality is a tool for promoting responsible and positive sexual development.

Responsible Choices, LLC, 4444 East 31st Street, Tulsa, OK 74135, phone 918-747-7373 or 1-800-354-1574.
Child Abuse

Oklahoma statutes define abuse and neglect as harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or safety by a person responsible for the child’s health or safety. [10 O. S. § 7102] Harm or threatened harm can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, neglect, or failure or omissions to provide protection from harm or threatened harm.

To report child abuse or neglect, call the statewide Child Abuse Hotline at anytime at 1-800-522-3511 or your local county OKDHS office during business hours. You will be asked to give the children’s names, address and specifics about what happened – how they were harmed or neglected.

Communication Tips for Grandparents and Grandchildren

Good communication creates a win-win situation for both grandchildren and grandparents. Learning good communication skills helps children and adults develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others.

* Teach your grandchildren good listening skills.
* Practice listening and talking; talk with your grandchildren about school, friends, and their feelings.
* Respect your grandchildren. If you talk to your grandchildren as you do your peers, they will be more likely to tell you when things are right and wrong in their life.
* Praise your grandchildren for doing things right. Praise builds a child’s confidence and reinforces communication. Unkind words tear children down and teach them that they just aren’t good enough.
* Children are never too old to be told they are loved. Saying and hearing I love you is important at any age.
* Give your undivided attention when your grandchildren want to talk to you. Don’t read, watch TV, fall asleep or make yourself busy with other tasks.
* Set routines for bedtime, meals and chores. Routines will help your grandchildren feel safe, and let them know your expectations.
* Remind them of your rules; just saying no is not enough.
**Tips for Setting Limits:**

Start with only a few rules. The more rules you have, the harder it will be for your grandchildren to remember them.

Be sure you know why you are saying no. Explain your reasons for saying no. Be sure your grandchildren understand your reasons.

Give kids a voice. Kids need a voice in setting limits. They need a chance to tell you what they think and feel. Even a child of 5 or 6 can talk with you and help you set fair limits. When kids help you make rules, they are more likely to obey them.

Say what you mean. Be very clear about your limits.

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**Domestic Violence**

Battering is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Battering happens when one person believes they are entitled to control another. Battery is against the law.

If you know an adult who is the victim of physical battery, sexual abuse battery, or psychological battery, refer the person to the Safeline, 1-800-522-3511.

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**Child Guidance**

Child guidance programs specialize in the treatment of children from infancy to age 12 who have adjustment problems, behavior problems, emotional disturbances, personality disorder or incipient mental illness.

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**Culture and Tradition**

Many grandparents have strong, traditional cultural ties to their heritage. They may find that even though their children were raised in a bicultural household, their grandchildren were not. Grandparents need to be aware that their grandchildren’s background may be different. They may not know about long-standing family cultures and traditions. For instance, grandparents may have a bilingual household, and the grandchildren have been mainstreamed into speaking only English.

The hairstyles, dress and language of today’s children and teenagers might try the patience of traditional adults. It is important for grandparents to be sensitive to their grandchildren’s need to look, dress and act like others their age.
Adolescent and Youth Counseling

Programs specialize in the treatment of adolescents, usually age 12 or 13 through 17, who have adjustment problems, behavior problems, emotional disturbances, personality disorder or incipient mental illness.

Youth Service Agencies

Local youth service agencies are dedicated to providing high-quality services to our state’s greatest assets – children, youth and families. These community-based services can include individual and group counseling, mentoring, parenting classes, first-offender programs, shelters, community intervention centers and services for at-risk youth.

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Publicly supported Community Mental Health Centers provide therapeutic services for children who are demonstrating symptoms of emotional disturbance. To find one, call the Reach-Out hotline, 1-800-522-9054.
OBTAINING DOCUMENTS AND GENERAL ASSISTANCE
Obtaining Documents

Tim didn’t have any records for his granddaughter. The way things were going, he was surprised that Rebecca had shoes and clothes in the bag she had when his son so abruptly dropped her off. Tim knew his son had been living on the streets for the past three months and wouldn’t have the child’s birth certificate.

If you are raising a child that is not your own, you are going to need to have certain papers and documents in order to apply for public assistance or medical services, school registration and identification purposes.

Birth Certificate

For a copy of a birth certificate, contact the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state and county of your grandchild’s birth. In Oklahoma, only parents and guardians of children can obtain birth certificates. Attempt to get the birth parents to obtain the birth certificate for you. If this is not possible, you will need to get an order from a judge giving you permission to obtain a birth certificate for your grandchild. This can be done through the guardianship process in Civil Court. Once you have permission, you will need to furnish the following information:

· Full name at birth of person for whom you are requesting the certificate
· Date of birth
· City or county of birth
· Parents’ full names as they appear on the birth certificate, including mother’s maiden name

There is a fee for obtaining a birth certificate. Check with the Bureau of Vital Statistics or the birth state for all fees and forms of payment accepted.

If your grandchild was born in Oklahoma, contact the Oklahoma Department of Health, Vital Records, P. O. Box 53551, Oklahoma City, OK 73152. The phone number is 405-271-4040.

If the child is in OKDHS custody, OKDHS can get the birth certificate for you, at no charge to you.
Social Security Card

If your grandchildren do not have Social Security cards, or if they are lost, you can apply for either new or replacement cards. You do not have to be the children’s legal guardian to obtain Social Security cards for them. U. S. citizens need a copy of their birth certificate or baptismal record.

For information on obtaining a Social Security Card, phone the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213, or go in person to the Social Security office located nearest to you.

Medical Records

If you have not raised your grandchild from birth, you may not have the child’s medical records. Try to obtain all his medical records. Try to obtain all medical records from your grandchild’s birth parents. If they do not have the records, ask them to sign a medical consent to have the records released. Also your pediatrician’s office or clinic may be able to help you in obtaining the records. If your grandchild has been enrolled in school, you may be able to obtain a copy of the medical records that the school has on file.

If you do not have prior medical records and your grandchild has a medical appointment, you may find it helpful to make a list of all illnesses and conditions you can remember your grandchild experienced, including information regarding the birth parents’ medical history, if you know it, and any medical conditions or behavior during the mother’s pregnancy. This can be helpful if doctors have to attempt to reconstruct your grandchild’s medical history.
General Assistance

Ann Marie made a modest living, but only enough for herself. Anything left over at the end of the month was used to help cover her mother’s care in the nursing home. How could she possibly financially care for the two grandchildren who were now living in her home? Her savings were depleted, yet she knew others were counting on her.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – TANF

TANF provides financial assistance in the form of a monthly benefit to help families care for children who need help. This program also provides help to children who have been deprived of parental support or care.

Grandchildren who are eligible for TANF are also eligible for Medicaid health care assistance. Most grandchildren under their grandparent’s care are eligible to receive child-only cash benefit under the TANF program. This means that the grandparent’s income and assets are not counted in the child’s eligibility.

For further information on TANF, contact your local county OKDHS Human Services Center.

You should be aware that certain factors must be established for eligibility of a TANF child-only cash benefit. For instance, you must:

• prove you are related to the child through birth certificate or other legal documents.
• prove that the child is living with you.
• have proof of grandchild’s citizenship.
• provide Social Security numbers for each child applying for assistance.
• have proof of health insurance, if you have it.
• provide information about the birth parents – you will be required to cooperate in attempting to obtain child support from the parents, as required by law.
• provide proof of any income or assets belonging to your grandchild.

Questions to Ask When Applying for TANF, Food Benefits or Other Financial Assistance

• What documents will you need from me?
• What information do I have to provide to you?
• What forms do I need to complete?
• How will I know when we have been approved for services?
• When will I receive the payment card or medical card?
• How often do I have to update my records, and what is the process? Is it a yearly review or every three months?
• Do I have a right to appeal your decision, if I am unhappy with it?
• If we move, or the child returns home, when do I need to notify you and how?
• If I have additional questions, how do I reach you?
• I know you may be in the field a lot. Can I have the name and phone number of your supervisor, in case I have trouble reaching you?
• Can I have a copy of the policy regarding this program, for my understanding and records?
OKDHS Client Bill of Rights

Applicants and recipients of benefits and services administered by OKDHS have the right to:

- Be treated with courtesy and dignity.
- Receive prompt service.
- Receive clear explanations of the laws and rules that determine eligibility for benefits and services.
- Have benefits and services explained in native language, if not able to understand English.
- Have forms read and explained, if unable to read forms because of limited eyesight, or other inability to read.
- Have the opportunity for an appeal and a fair hearing in case of denial or reduction of benefits or services.
- Discuss with a local OKDHS supervisor any complaint regarding OKDHS benefits or services or treatment by OKDHS staff.
- Contact the OKDHS Office of Client Advocacy (OCA) at 1-800-522-8014, regarding any complaint that has been discussed with, but not resolved by, the local office supervisory staff.
- Receive, upon request, a further explanation of applicant or client rights.

Filing a Grievance

Recipients of benefits and services administered by OKDHS, and people acting on behalf of recipients, have the right to talk with a local OKDHS supervisor if they have a complaint about the way they were treated by OKDHS staff. Supervisory staff promptly need to resolve the matter with the client. Clients have the right to contact Office of Client Advocacy, Attention Grievance Coordinator, P. O. Box 25352, Oklahoma City, OK 73125, 405-525-4850 or 1-800-522-8014, regarding any complaint which has been discussed with, but not resolved by, the local office supervisory staff.

Child Support Payments

Child support is based upon the concept that children are entitled to the support of both parents. This recognizes that there are costs associated with raising children. Child support is designed to partially offset these expenses and even out the burden based upon the parent’s respective incomes.

Even though you may be taking care of your grandchildren in your home, the birth parents may be held financially responsible.

Certain programs, such as TANF, require cooperation in attempting to collect child support payments from birth parents. When a TANF case is opened, even a child only case, OKDHS Oklahoma Child Support Services will automatically initiate a child support case.

To get help with collecting child support, establishing paternity or information on other Child Support Enforcement services, call the Child Support Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-522-2922.
Earned Income Credit
(Source: Internal Revenue Service)

The Earned Income Credit is a special benefit for low and moderate income working people who are raising children.

The EIC program provides working grandparents who qualify with assistance by reducing the amount of taxes owed or by giving you money back.

The EIC is a tax credit program administered by the Internal Revenue Service. You file for the EIC when you file your tax return.

There are also Advance Earned Income Credit payments available that allow those who qualify to get part of their EIC in advance instead of waiting until after the end of the year. Check with the IRS for rules and regulations on the EIC program.

To obtain qualifying information on Earned Income Credit, contact the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040. You may also contact the AARP Grandparent Information Center at 1-888-687-2277 to request a copy of the EIC Tax Package for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

Supplemental Security Income – SSI
(Source: Social Security Administration)

Supplemental Security Income provides financial assistance in the form of monthly payments to low-income elderly, blind or disabled individuals, including children.

If your grandchildren have a disability, they may qualify for assistance. Disabled means one has a physical or mental problem that keeps him or her from working and is expected to last at least a year or to result in death. When deciding if a child is disabled, Social Security looks at how his or her disability affects everyday life.

*Parents or guardians can apply for blind or disabled children under 18 years of age;*

You will need to provide the following information when applying:

your grandchildren’s Social Security cards or records of their Social Security numbers; your grandchildren’s birth certificates or other proofs of age;

the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of doctors, hospitals, and clinics that have seen your grandchildren; and,

your grandchildren’s documents of citizenship or eligible non-citizen status.

For more information or to apply for Supplemental Security Income, go to your local Social Security office, or call 1-800-772-1213.
**Tips on Dealing with Social Service Agencies:**

Be patient and persistent. You may encounter long waits on the phone or in person. Many agencies do not have the staff to take your calls immediately. You may call services that have automated answering systems or answering machines.

Call during low-volume phone times. Agencies differ by the volume and types of calls they receive. However, in doing research on programs for this Guide, we found that it was often easier to get through to agency helplines during the early morning hours on Tuesday through Thursday. The busiest phone times often are during lunch hours, 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., and on Mondays and Fridays.

Keep a log. Always write down the name, title and number of the person to whom you speak. Record important details of your conversation for future reference. Write down the name of the office, telephone number, name of the person with whom you spoke, and date and time of the call. Be sure to ask questions if something is not clear to you.

**Joint Oklahoma Information Network – JOIN**

The Joint Oklahoma Information Network is a Web site that offers two ways to find help:

1. a community resource directory – search for services and programs in your area.
2. an eligibility questionnaire – helps you find specific services for which you may be eligible. Visit JOIN at http://www.join.ok.gov.
CUSTODY AND LEGAL ISSUES
Custody and Legal Issues

Tears ran down Paul’s face as he watched his 3-year-old grandson, Jason, scream and hold out his arms as his mother pulled him away. This is the third time Jason’s mother, an alcoholic and drug addict, has abruptly uprooted Jason from his grandparents’ house within the past year. When Jason was 2 years old, Paul and his wife agreed to raise their grandchild after their daughter was negligent in providing for him. The agreement with their daughter was verbal. Paul knew it would be his word against hers in court.

For many grandparents raising grandchildren, one of the most difficult challenges involves the court system. Legal and court systems are expensive, emotionally draining and can be difficult to navigate, but often necessary. There are many options to consider when deciding what is best for you, your grandchild and the birth parents. Prior to making any decisions regarding custody, seek professional advice and review all your options. Avoid making hasty decisions during a crisis. The following section provides general descriptions of these options:

Physical Custody

An informal agreement in which grandparents are caring for grandchildren in their home without official or legal authority by a court. In these situations, grandparents have no formal rights or authority to make decisions regarding the child. The birth parents retain all the rights and responsibilities for the children.

Power of Attorney

A legal arrangement in which birth parents grant authority to grandparents as agents to perform certain custodial tasks such as enrolling the child in school and providing medical needs such as shots. The advantage of this arrangement is that a court is not involved but the disadvantage is that it may be revoked by the birth parent at any time.

Legal Custody

A formal agreement in which custody of grandchildren is granted to a grandparent by the court. Grandparents have legal authority to make all decisions regarding the children. Birth parents remain financially responsible for the children even though their rights are temporarily suspended by the court. The birth parents continue to have the right to visit with the children. Custody is granted in Oklahoma only when parental unfitness is established in court.
Guardianship

Guardianship is a legal arrangement in which an adult has the court-ordered authority and responsibility to care for a child. In most counties, grandparents file for guardianship of a child in district court. In certain circumstances, the guardianship may be granted in juvenile court if there has been a deprived action filed regarding the grandchild.

Guardianship may be necessary if a child's parents die, if the child has been abandoned, is not receiving adequate care or is being abused in some way. Guardianship is a more permanent relationship than power of attorney and should be considered as a means of avoiding the uprooting of a grandchild described above.

Guardians of related children have authority to:
- consent to medical treatment;
- enroll grandchildren in school;
- obtain documents, such as birth certificates; and
- stop birth parents from taking the child out of their home without consent from the court.

Under guardianship, rights of the birth parents are not severed. Birth parents retain residual parental rights. These are, for example, the right of visitation, to determine the religious faith of the child, to consent to adoption and the duty to support the child and pay for the child's medical care, and similar expenses. Birth parents, if able, must contribute money to support the child.

Once guardianship is ordered by the court, the child must live with the guardian. Guardianship can only be transferred back to the birth parents by the court.

You can obtain the phone number of your nearest Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma office by calling 1-800-211-2116 or Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Inc. at 1-800-658-1497. Legal Aid may be able to assist you with guardianship or adoption issues. In the Tulsa area, you may call the hotline number, 918-428-4357. Or to find your local office on the Internet, go to www.legalaidok.org. To take advantage of low-cost or no-cost assistance, you will need to meet certain income or other qualifications before service can be provided.
Kinship Foster Care

When a child has been abused or neglected by their parent and has been placed in the custody of OKDHS by court order, OKDHS seeks to place the child with someone the child or parents know.

Kinship foster care is temporary or long term care that is provided by a grandparent, other relative or responsible adult with an existing bond with the child.

Legal custody of the child resides with the state agency, OKDHS. The kinship caregivers have only physical custody of the child. Kinship foster parents cannot make any major decisions regarding the care of the child without first obtaining consent of OKDHS.

Kinship foster care services include money or assistance for food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, personal needs of the child, medical and dental care, social services, and supportive services such as counseling. Kinship foster care parents must follow the rules and regulations set out in OKDHS’ policies.

Kinship caregivers who meet the relationship requirement may be eligible for TANF prior to the payment of kinship foster care. Those kinship caregivers who do not meet the relationship requirement of TANF may still be eligible for food benefits or child care services.

For information on Kinship Foster Care, contact your local OKDHS office.

Supported Permanency

Supported Permanency provides financial assistance to help grandparents and eligible children in the custody of OKDHS for whom the permanency plans of reunification and adoption have been ruled out. An eligible child is one who has resided in a paid relative foster home at least four of the last six months, is a current ward of the court in the custody of OKDHS and wants the relative to have legal custody. As a grandparent, you may become the child’s legal guardian through this program, and as long as you live in Oklahoma and the child remains in your home, you:

• receive a monthly payment based on the current foster care rate,
• receive medical services for the child, and
• receive money to help pay for legal fees incurred in obtaining legal custody and assistance with referrals for other services as needed.

Your Kinship care worker will be able to give you information about the program. OKDHS has a printed pamphlet OKDHS Publication Number 01-40, also with information.
Grandparents Glossary of Legal Terms

**Adoption** – process in which a natural parent’s legal rights and duties toward the child are terminated and similar rights and duties toward the adoptive parents are substituted. Adoption creates the legal relationship of parent and child between people who were not so related by nature.

**Custody** – the care, control and maintenance of a child, which may be awarded by a court to grandparents in a custody case. Custody will be awarded to grandparents only if parental unfitness (see below) is established.

**Guardianship** – a legal arrangement under which one person – a guardian or a grandparent – has the legal right and duty to care for another – a ward or grandchild – and the ward’s property. Guardianship is not a proceeding for termination of parental rights; it is a temporary relationship supervised by a court.

**Mediation** – a private, informal dispute resolution process in which a neutral third person, the mediator, helps disputing parties reach an agreement. The mediator has no power to impose a decision on the parties. Mediation can be used for child custody and visitation rights issues, for example.

Public mediation services are available through the 12 Early Settlement Centers across the state. This program utilizes volunteer mediators who are trained and certified to mediate in the Administrative Office of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Mediators are available at minimal or no charge to help you resolve conflicts, often without the assistance of an attorney or the need to go to court. Call 1-877-521-6677 for the phone number and location of the center nearest you. You should feel free to ask for information about the assigned mediator, including the mediator’s experience in disputes like yours.

**Parental Unfitness** – exists when a parent’s character and habits are such that provision for the child’s welfare cannot reasonably be expected from the parent, or that for some other reason the parent is unable to care for the child. The unfitness that is necessary to deprive a parent of custody must be positive and not comparative, for example, the mere fact that a child may be better cared for by a grandparent is not sufficient to justify taking a child from the parent.

**Power of Attorney** – a written agreement whereby one person – a child, as principal, appoints another – a grandparent, as agent, and confers authority to perform certain specified acts, such as care of a grandchild.

**Relative Guardianship** – this is a low-cost way to obtain guardianship. You may fill out the Relative Caregiver Authorization Affidavit with your county court clerk.

**Visitation** – the statutory right of access to a grandchild, granted to grandparents in a court proceeding, if it is in the best interest of a grandchild.
Adoption

Formal legal agreement granted by the court that ends the legal relationship between a child and her or his birth parents. The court has terminated the legal rights of the birth parents.

Adoption legally transfers the ongoing parental responsibilities for a child from the parents or legal guardian to the adoptive parents. Adoption can occur with people related to the child, have a kinship bond with the child or have no relationship with the child by nature.

Adoption permanently transfers all parental rights from the birth parents to the adoptive parents.

Unlike legal custody, adoption is permanent and cannot be modified if the birth parent becomes able to care for the child.

Adoption may be necessary for grandparents to obtain some benefits available for their grandchildren, such as Social Security in the event of the grandparents’ death. Be aware that adoptive grandparents will no longer be eligible for TANF for the grandchild.
Adoption Assistance for Special Needs Children

Children with special needs, as defined by Oklahoma statutes and federal law, are eligible for adoption subsidy. A child with special needs is defined by the Social Security Act as meeting the following conditions:

1) The child cannot or should not be returned to the home of his or her parents;
2) The state has determined that there exists a specific factor or condition with the child, such as ethnic background, age, or membership in a minority or sibling group, or the presence of factors such as medical conditions or physical, mental or emotional handicaps, and because of which the child cannot be placed with adoptive parents without providing adoption assistance; efforts have been made to place the child with appropriate adoptive parents without providing adoption assistance.

Eligible children may receive one or more of the following types of assistance:

* One-time-only payment for non-recurring adoption expenses.
* Payment, through issuance of a Medicaid card, for medical services that are not covered through public or private insurance or other public resources, and the necessary counseling services for the adoptive family and child following the adoption.
* Monthly payment in an amount that is determined for each child, based on the child’s needs and the circumstances of the family.
* Conditional adoption assistance may be available for children who at the time of the adoption do not meet the eligibility criteria but may be at risk for future physical, mental or emotional disability.

For general information on adoptions through OKDHS, call 1-866-612-2565, or check the Web site at www.okdhs.org/adopt.
COPING STRATEGIES

WHEN THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH THE BIRTH PARENTS
Coping Strategies When There are Problems with the Birth Parents

Mary wasn’t the type to have a personal fight in front of her co-workers, but her daughter stormed into her office demanding that the children be returned. Her daughter was a crack-cocaine addict, and this was the third time she had shown up at Mary’s office. Mary knew this behavior had to stop now.

Depending on the particulars of the situation for which you became a grandparent caregiver, you may at some point encounter problems with your grandchildren’s birth parents. If you have legal custody of your grandchildren, you may be able to get either a Protective Order or Supervised Visitation in court.

Protective Order. This is an order issued by a judge that orders the parent to stay away from you, your grandchildren, and your home. Failure to abide by a court order is cause for police arrest. You file for a protective order at the office of the district court in your county.

Supervised Visitation. If you are worried about the safety of your grandchildren during visitation with birth parents, you may ask a judge to order that all visitation by your grandchildren and the birth parents be supervised.

Note: Both protective orders and supervised visitation may be modified as situations change, or as the court determines.

Negative Interactions with Birth Parents

(Source: Grandparent Caregivers: A national guide by Ginchild-Abeje and Perez-Porter)

There may be occasions where the parents are not in a stable living situation or are participating in activities that you think could have negative effects on your grandchild during visitation. If this is the case, you may want to consider the following suggestions:

Ask the parents to schedule visits for a particular time so you have time to prepare the children.

Ask other cooperative relatives to be present for the visit.

Ask the court to limit the parents’ contact with the children at the time that the guardianship order is issued, if there are problems with visits or phone calls.

If there is a previous visitation order, a motion to modify the order may need to be initiated if the problems with uncooperative parents persist. However, the parent can also file a motion to change the original order.

If there is a real risk that the parents may endanger the children, that is, if the parents have, in the past, left them alone or with an irresponsible person, taken them someplace dangerous or physically abused them, then visits should take place under the supervision of the guardian or a mutually agreed upon person. If the parents do not agree to this, you may have to ask the court to resolve this matter.

When you are upset or angry with the child’s birth parents, do not degrade the parents in front of your grandchildren. You can let your grandchildren know that you can be angry and upset with someone’s behavior and still love and care about them.
Factors to Consider in Determining What are Reasonable Expectations for Visitation

The parent should be free from substance abuse for the visit. The visitation schedule should take into account the child’s bedtime, regularly scheduled activities and school. It should also accommodate the parent’s schedule including work, counseling, mandatory programs, and available free time if in work release.

Grandparent Visitation Rights

Remember, visitation of your grandchild is not a right. Oklahoma law provides that grandparents have reasonable rights of visitation only if a court deems visitation to be in the best interest of the child.

For information on legal services, call your local Legal Aid office or Attorney Referral Service.

Coping Strategies

One of the best ways you can help yourself and your grandchildren through tough times is to take care of yourself, both physically and mentally. You know the drill – eat right, get plenty of rest and regular exercise and see your doctor regularly. Talk to your doctor about any physical, mental or emotional problems you are experiencing.

Grandparent Support Groups

Rosemarie was nervous about going to her grandparent support group meeting. Shy at first about speaking up in the group, she just sat and listened. Within the first five minutes she began to hear that others were in similar situations. Finally, she had found a place where people understood what she was going through.

The number of support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren is increasing in Oklahoma. Many of them offer child care so that both grandparents and their grandchildren have a chance to socialize. For many grandparents, support groups such as these offer the only respite from their child care duties.

How Support Groups Can Help:

* Offer emotional support to grandparents who feel alone and isolated.
* Create a network of grandparents who are in caregiving situations.
* Offer guidance, assistance and advice to grandparents in their efforts to care for their grandchildren.
* Give grandparents ideas on formulating positive solutions to difficult and challenging problems.
* Serve as a clearinghouse for resources and information.
* Offer a safe, understanding place for grandparents to discuss the emotional ups and downs of raising their grandchildren and blow off steam.
* Provide tools for advocacy and awareness of the issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren.
Tips for Organizing a Grandparent Support Group

If there is not already an established support group in your area, you may want to consider organizing one. There are many different ways to go about doing this. The following tips may help you get started.

Learn from others. Contact established support groups in other cities and ask for advice in starting a support group. The Senior Info-Line and OASIS can help you locate existing support groups in the state.

Contact professionals in the community. Ask for help from family counselors, therapists, local health associations, hospitals, social service agencies, etc. in getting a support group started. If any of the people you contact has expertise in issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren, ask if they would be willing to facilitate group meetings or serve as special speakers once the group is formed.

Talk to the school superintendent for permission to distribute support group meeting information at schools to the principals and counselors.

Find a location for meetings. Churches, hospitals, non-profit organizations, schools, and libraries may have facilities that the group could use at little or no charge. The facility will need to have a separate room for the child care. Explain the importance of support groups. Do not be bashful about asking for free space.

Use public service announcements to generate interest. Local newspapers, radio broadcasts, television spots and church newsletters are good places to put notices of meetings and articles about grandparents raising grandchildren.

Hold an organization meeting. Enlist the help of other grandparents, service providers, and others interested in grandparents raising grandchildren issues.

Be patient in your attempts to organize a support group. Planning and organizing a group takes time, effort, and lots of perseverance. Remember: the benefits of the group will make all your time and effort worthwhile.

For more information on Grandparent Raising Grandchildren support groups, call the Senior Info-Line at 1-800-211-2116 or OASIS, 1-800-42-OASIS.

For general information, call the AARP Grandparent Information Center at (202) 434-2296.
Taking Care of Yourself

It had been months since Andrea had seen her other grandchildren. She seemed to be spending all her time parenting her son’s children these days, and she felt guilty at not having the time or energy to visit with her other grandchildren. She knew it would be a needed relief to be able to be just a grandparent for a day with the other children.

Stress Reducing Suggestions for Grandparent Caregivers

(Adapted from Illinois Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Tip Sheet)

Your adult child’s circumstances are not your fault.

1. Join a support group. This is an excellent place to get information, ideas, and emotional support.
2. Keep up your own health.
3. Walk or exercise regularly.
4. Insist on regular quiet hour.
5. Take time for yourself.
6. Do something you enjoy.
7. Talk out your problems with friends, other grandparents, or a family counselor.
8. Consider your religious community and personal faith for strength and assistance.
9. Concentrate on the task at hand. Don’t dwell on the past. Looking too far ahead can also be overwhelming. If you can’t take a day at a time, try to accomplish one thing at a time.
10. Learn to say no.
11. Practice patience. Let those you are caring for do as much for themselves as possible.
12. Set limits with grandchildren and stick to them.
13. Focus on the positive and keep a sense of humor.
14. Accept reality. See things as they are and not how you wish them to be.
15. Eliminate hurtful thoughts and self-pity. These negative emotions only drag you down.
16. Reward yourself. Even small rewards will help your emotional well-being.
17. Avoid isolation. Make an effort to maintain friendships, even if it is by telephone for now.
18. Look into parenting classes to learn new methods for helping children develop self-esteem, confidence, accountability, and responsibility.
RESOURCES AND INFORMATION
Resources for Grandparent Caregivers

Oklahoma

Joint Oklahoma Information Network JOIN – Web site of government services
http://www.join.ok.gov

Senior Info-Line
1-800-211-2116

OASIS
1-800-42-OASIS

National

AARP Grandparent Information Center
601 E. Street N. W.
Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2296
http://www.aarp.org/grandparents

Generations United
122 C Street, NW Suite 820
Washington, DC 2001-2085
202-638-0259
http://www.gu.org

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
3851 Centraloma Drive
San Diego, CA 92107

The Brookdale Foundation Group
126 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022
(212) 308-7355
http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
100 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 255-7036
fax (415) 552-3150
http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org at the publication section provides a resource guide titled Manual for Grandparent-Relative Caregivers and Advocates
Sources used in the Creation of the Starting Points Manual


Rothenberg, D. *Grandparents as Parents: A Primer for Schools.* ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Urbana, IL.


Community Services Directories

Grandparent Support Groups

**Sunbeam Family Services**
616 NW 21st Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73103-1899
405-528-7721 or Toll-free -866-344-2391

**Youth and Family Services**
2404 Sunset Drive
El Reno, OK 73026
405-262-6555

**Grandparents As Second Parents**
250 12th Avenue NE
Norman, OK 73071
405-321-4048

**The Center for Children and Families**
Contact: Heather Baker, Program Director
Norman, OK 73071
405-364-1420

**New Covenant Christian Church**
Contact: Debbie Keith
12000 N Rockwell Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73162
405-722-7445

**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**
400 North Bell
Shawnee, OK 74801
405-273-6410

**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren RSVP on Kay County**
408 S Eighth St.
Ponca City, OK 74601
580-762-9412

**Generations – Grandparents Support Group**
1401 East Taft
Sapulpa, OK 74066
918-224-5531 or 918-224-1789

**Tulsa Area Agency on Aging**
111 South Greenwood
Tulsa, OK 74120
918-596-7688 or 918-596-7680
## SoonerStart Local Numbers and Addresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>1630 E. Beverly, P. O. Box 10, Ada, OK 74821-0010</td>
<td>580-332-2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bartlesville</td>
<td>3838 State St., Bartlesville, OK 74006</td>
<td>918-335-3005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingfisher</td>
<td>124 E. Sheridan, Rm. 101, Kingfisher, OK 73750-3200</td>
<td>405-375-3008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawton</td>
<td>1010 S. Sheridan, P. O. Box 87, Lawton, OK 73501-0087</td>
<td>580-585-6610</td>
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<tr>
<td>McAlester</td>
<td>620 S. Third St., McAlester, OK 74501-5898</td>
<td>918-423-1267</td>
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<td>Muskogee</td>
<td>530 S. 34th St., Muskogee, OK 74401-5038</td>
<td>918-683-0321</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norman</td>
<td>185 Triad Village Drive, Norman, OK 73071-2800</td>
<td>405-321-1786</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
<td>4545 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 250, Oklahoma City, OK 73105</td>
<td>405-528-3061</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tahlequah</td>
<td>906 S. College, Tahlequah, OK 74464-4726</td>
<td>918-458-6577</td>
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<td>Tulsa</td>
<td>209 S. Lakewood, Tulsa, OK 74112-1713</td>
<td>918-835-8691</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>3030 Cluster Ave., Clinton, OK 73601</td>
<td>580-323-2100</td>
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Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma and Other Legal Assistance Numbers

Attorneys and paralegals at Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma can help with non-criminal cases involving basic needs. Priority is given to the most urgent cases. These cases include:
Social Security disability and SSI, TANF, food benefits, and other OKDHS issues, Title 19/Medicaid/Medicare, veterans’ benefits, eviction, landlord repairs, foreclosure, bankruptcy and garnishment.

LASO Altus Satellite Office, 3000 N. Main St, Suite 500, Altus, OK 73521
580-482-7431

LASO Ardmore Law Center, 115 W. Broadway #402, Ardmore, OK 73401
580-226-4863

LASO Ada Satellite Office, 410 South Mississippi Avenue, Ada, OK 74820
580-332-7141
Craig, Delaware, Nowata, Osage, Ottawa and Washington counties

LASO Bartlesville Law Center, 3851 East Tuxedo, Suite E, Bartlesville, OK 74006 918-336-5736 or 1-800-421-4066

LASO Chickasha Satellite Office, 301 S. 2nd St, Suite B, Chickasha, OK 73018
405-222-1231
Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Major, Roger Mills, Texas, Washita, Woods and Woodward counties

LASO Weatherford Law Office, 109 S. Broadway St., P. O. Box 309, Weatherford,OK 73096580-774-2235 or 800-256-1978

Stephens County
LASO Duncan Satellite Office, 12 South 8th Street, #17, Duncan, OK 73533
580-252-5872
Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, Coal, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties

LASO Hugo Law Center, 402 E. Duke St., P. O. Box 890, Hugo, OK 74743
580-326-9655 or 1-800-299-9655

Delaware and Owatta counties
LASO Jay Satellite Office, 312 South Fifth St., P. O. Box 390, Jay, OK 74346
918-253-4980 or 1-800-725-8930

Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Stephens and Tillman counties

LASO Lawton Law Office, 323 Southwest C Avenue, Lawton, OK 73501
580-248-4675 or 1-800-850-5950

Adair, Cherokee, McIntosh, Muskogee, Sequoyah and Wagoner counties
LASO Muskogee Law Center, 323 W. Broadway, Ste. 408, Muskogee, OK 74401
918-683-5681 or 1-800-725-5681
Cleveland and McClain counties
LASO Norman Law Center, 210 East Main #216, Norman, OK 73069
405-360-6631 or 1-800-421-4057

LASO Administrative Center, 2915 Classen #500, Oklahoma City, OK 73106
405-557-0020 Oklahoma and Canadian counties

LASO Oklahoma City Law Center, 2901 Classen Blvd. #112, Oklahoma City, OK 73106
Senior Law Project 405-557-0014
405-521-1302 or 1-800-421-1641

Serves Native American issues in all 77 Oklahoma counties

Seminole, Hughes and Pottawatomie counties
LASO Shawnee Satellite Office, 316 N. Broadway #C, Shawnee, OK 74801
405-275-6870 or 1-800-421-8017

Grant, Kay, Kingfisher, Lincoln, Logan, Noble and Payne counties
LASO Stillwater Law Center, 312 South Duck, Stillwater, OK 74074
405-624-1734 or 1-800-256-9601

Adair, Cherokee, and Sequoyah counties
LASO Stilwell Satellite Office, 219 West Division, P. O. Box 924, Stilwell, OK 74960
918-696-2331 or 1-800-574-2331

Haskell, Latimer and LeFlore counties
LASO Poteau Law Office, 224 Dewey, P. O. Box 906, Poteau, OK 74953
918-647-8136 or 1-800-299-8136

LASO Tulsa Administrative Services
Intake Hotline 1-888-534-5243 or 918-428-4357

Creek, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Pawnee, Mayes, Rogers and Tulsa counties
LASO Tulsa Law Office, 423 S. Boulder, Suite 200, Tulsa, OK 74103 918-584-3338 or
1-800-299-3338

LASO Woodward Satellite Office, 1115 E. 18th Street, Woodward, OK 73801
580-256-4903 or 1-800-283-6949

Pittsburg County
LASO McAlester Satellite Office, 1335 East Carl Albert Parkway
McAlester, OK 74502
918-423-2030 or 1-888-423-, 2033

Garfield County
Enid Satellite Office, 2615 East Randolph Avenue, Enid, OK 73701
580-242-6131, ext. 102
Area Agencies on Aging

Craig, Delaware, Mayes, Nowata, Ottawa, Rogers and Washington counties
Grand Gateway Area Agency on Aging
333 S. Oak St.
P. O. Box Drawer B
Big Cabin, OK 74332-0502
918-783-5793; 1-800-482-4594

Beckham, Custer, Greer, Harmon, Kiowa, Jackson, Roger Mills and Washita counties
SWODA Area Agency on Aging
Sherman Industrial Air Park
Bldg. 420, Sooner Dr., P. O. Box 569
Burns Flat, OK 73624-0569
580-562-4882; 1-800-627-4882

Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Grady, Jefferson, McClain, Stephens, and Tillman counties
ASCOG Area Agency on Aging
802 Main St.
P. O. Box 1647
Duncan, OK 73533-1647
580-252-0595; 1-800-658-1466

Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Coal, Garvin, Johnston, Love, Marshall, Murray and Pontotoc counties
SODA Area Agency on Aging
224 W. Evergreen, Ste. 203
Durant, OK 74701
580-920-1388

Alfalfa, Blaine, Garfield, Grant, Kay, Kingfisher, Major and Noble counties
NODA Area Agency on Aging
2901 N. Van Buren
Enid, OK 73703-2505
580-237-4810; 1-800-749-1149

Adair, Cherokee, McIntosh, Muskogee, Okmulgee, Sequoyah and Wagoner counties
EODD Area Agency on Aging
1012 N. 38th St.
P. O. Box 1367
Muskogee, OK 74402-1367
918-682-7891

Canadian, Cleveland, Logan and Oklahoma counties
Areawide Agency on Aging
Mayfair Center
3200 N. W. 48th St., Suite 104
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-5910
405-942-8500

Hughes, Lincoln, Okfuskee, Payne, Pottawatomie, and Seminole counties
COEDD Area Agency on Aging
400 N. Bell
P. O. Box 3398
Shawnee, OK 74802-3398
405-273-6410; 1-800-375-8255

Creek, Osage, and Tulsa counties
Tulsa Area Agency on Aging
111 S. Greenwood, Suite 200
Tulsa, OK 74120-1820
918-596-7688

Choctaw, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Pittsburg and Pushmataha counties
KEDDDO Area Agency on Aging
Vo-Tech Administration Addition
Highway 2
P. O. Box 638
Wilburton, OK 74578-0638
918-465-2367; 1-800-722-8180

Beaver, Cimarron, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Texas, Woods and Woodward counties
OEDA Area Agency on Aging
330 Douglas Ave.
P. O. Box 668
Beaver, OK 73932-0668
580-625-4531; 1-800-658-2844
Community Action Agencies offer programs and services to help people with low-incomes become self-sufficient. Programs include emergency services such as food, utility and rental payment assistance; housing assistance; nutrition and congregate meals; transportation and assistance for people with developmental disabilities.

Through Head Start state appropriated funds, the State Head Start Coordination Project was created and contracted to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to serve as a state point of contact and to coordinate Head Start Activities throughout the state. The Community Action Agencies have Head Start Coordinators in them. If the Head Start coordinator has a different phone number than the main CAA, it will be listed below. You can also find a complete list of Head Start grantees in the 2007 OKACAA Directory and Annual Report online at www.okacaa.org/2007AnnualReportUpdated.pdf.

Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies, 2800 N. W. 36th, Suite 221, Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-949-1495

Greer, Harmon and Jackson Counties
Southwest Oklahoma Community Action Group, 900 South Carver Road, Altus, OK 73521
580-482-5040
www.geocities.com/socag2004

Caddo and Grady Counties
Washita Valley Community Action Council, 205 W. Chickasha Ave., P. O. Box 747, Chickasha, OK 73023
405-224-5831;
www.washitavalleycommunityactioncouncil.com

Nowata, Mayes, Rogers, Washington and Wagoner Counties
Community Action Resource and Development, Inc., P. O. Box 947, Claremore, OK 74018; 918-341-5000;
www.cardcaa.org

Beckham, Cotton, Jefferson, Kiowa, Roger Mills, Tillman and Washita Counties
Community Action Development Corporation, P. O. Box 989, Frederick, OK 73542, 580-335-5588;
www.cadccconnection.com
Head Start 580-762-3343

Choctaw, McCurtain and Pushmataha Counties
Little Dixie Community Action Agency, 209 N. 4th Street, Hugo, OK 74743
580-326-3351
Head Start 580-326-7581
www.littledixie.org

Craig, Delaware and Ottawa Counties
Northeast Oklahoma Community Action Agency, Inc., 856 E. Melton Drive, Suite C, P. O. Box 603, Jay, OK 74346
918-253-4683; Head Start 918-253-4291
www.neocaa.org

Comanche County
Great Plains Improvement Foundation, P. O. Box 926, 2 SE Lee, Lawton, OK 73502
580-353-2364;
www.gpif-caa.org

Bryan, Carter, Coal, Love and Pontotoc Counties
Big Five Community Service, P. O. Box 1577, 1502 N. First, Durant, OK 74702,
580-924-5331;
www.bigfive.org

Muskogee County
Muskogee County Community Action Foundation, P. O. Box 647, 1313 N. Main Street, Muskogee, OK 74402
918-683-7637
Head Start, Green County Community Mental Health Services, Inc., 619 North Main, Muskogee, OK 74401
918-682-8407

Oklahoma and Canadian Counties Community Action Agency of Oklahoma City and OK/Canadian Counties
319 SW 25th, Oklahoma City, OK 73109, 405-232-0199,
www.caaofoklahomaCity.org
Head Start 405-232-0199, ext. 4103

Creek, Kay, Noble, Osage and Pawnee Counties
United Community Action Program, 501 6th Street, Pawnee, OK 74058
918-762-3041; Head Start 918-762-2561;
www.ucapinc.org

Garvin, McClain, Stephens Counties
Delta Community Action Foundation, 308 S. W. 2nd, Lindsay, OK 73052
405-756-1100

Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore and Pittsburg Counties
KI BOIS Community Action Foundation, 200 SE A Street, P. O. Box 727, Stigler, OK 74462
918-967-3325; www.kibois.org;
Head Start 918-967-3325, ext. 126

Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah and McIntosh Counties
Cookson Hills Community Action Foundation, P. O. Box 745, Tahlequah, OK 74465
918-456-0571;
www.cooksonhillscommunityaction.com

Atoka, Johnston, Marshall and Murray Counties
INCA Community Services, 202 S. Capitol Street, Suite 2, P. O. Box 68, Tishomingo, OK 73460
580-371-2352; www.incacaa.org

Tulsa County
Community Action Project of Tulsa County, 4606 S. Garnett Rd., Suite 100, Tulsa, OK 74146
918-382-3270

Alfalfa, Beaver, Blaine, Cimmaron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Kingfisher, Major, Texas, Woods and Woodward Counties
Opportunities, Inc., 117 W. Russworm, P. O. Box 569, Watonga, OK 73772
580-623-7283
www.opportunities-inc.org

Garfield and Grant Counties
Community Development Support Association, 2615 E. Randolph, Enid, OK 73701
580-242-6131 Head Start: 580-623-7283

Hughes, McIntosh, Okfuskee and Okmulgee Counties
Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, 223 W. Sixth St. P. O. Box 670, Okmulgee, OK 74447 918-756-2826; http://www.deepforkcommunityaction.org

Cleveland, Lincoln, Logan, Payne, Pottawatomie and Seminole Counties
Central Oklahoma Community Action Agency, 429 N Union Avenue, P. O. Box 486, Shawnee, OK 74802
405-275-6060, 1-800-256-5960; www.cocaa.org
Oklahoma Health Department
visit their Web site at www.ok.gov/health/ for local office information.

Oklahoma Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
visit their Web site at www.odmhsas.org for local office information.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services
County Human Services Centers

Adair County
Section Line Road
Rt. 1, Box 42
Stilwell, OK 74960
918-696-7736; 1-800-225-0049

Alfalfa County
101 S. Grand
Cherokee, OK 73728
580-596-3335; 1-866-294-3936

Atoka County
P. O. Box 418
401 N. Greathouse Dr.
Atoka, OK 74525
580-889-3394; 1-800-225-0051

Beaver County
P. O. Box 306
111 W. 2nd St.
Beaver, OK 73932
580-625-3441; 1-800-225-0092

Beckham County
312 E. Madden
Sayre, OK 73662
580-928-4000; 1-800-225-0098

Blaine County
410 W. Main St.
Watonga, OK 73772
580-623-2000; 1-800-808-8961

Bryan County
4302 Highway 70 West
P. O. Box 837
Durant, OK 74702
580-931-2500; 1-800-225-0062

Caddo County
201 Hardee’s
P. O. Box 549
Anadarko, OK 73005
405-247-4000; 1-800-225-0053

Canadian County
314 W. Rogers St.
El Reno, OK 73036-2450
405-295-2700; 1-800-572-6845

Carter County
925 W. Broadway
Ardmore, OK 73401
580-490-3600; 1-800-225-9927

Cherokee County
P. O. Box 1067 (74465-1067)
1298 W. Fourth St.
Tahlequah, OK 74464
918-207-4500; 1-800-225-9868

Choctaw County
1602 E. Kirk
Hugo, OK 74743
580-317-2900; 1-800-225-0076

Cimarron County
1 Courthouse Square
P. O. Box 326
Boise City, OK 73933
580-544-2512; 1-800-572-6838

Zips 73051, 73068, 73069, 73070, 73071, 73072

Cleveland County
631 E. Robinson
Norman, OK 73071
405-573-8300; 1-800-572-6823
Zips 73139, 73153, 73159, 73160, 73165, 73170, 73173, 74857

Cleveland A
2507 N. Shields Blvd.
Moore, OK 73160-3305
405-912-2000; 1(877) 207-7317

Coal County
1 N. Main
Coalgate, OK 74538
580-927-2379; 1-800-572-6829

Comanche County
2609 S. W. Lee Blvd.
Lawton, OK 73505
580-250-3600; 1-800-572-6841

Cotton County
1501 South 7th St.
Walters, OK 73572
580-875-4000; 1-800-572-6830

Craig County
310 N. Wilson
Vinita, OK 74301
918-713-5000; 1-800-572-6844

Creek County
17 S. Elm
Sapulpa, OK 74066
918-746-3300; 1-800-572-6834

Custer County
190 S. 31st St.
Clinton, OK 73601
580-331-1900; 1-800-572-6846

Delaware County
P. O. Drawer #750
438 S. Ninth
Jay, OK 74346
918-253-4213; 1-800-433-6772

Dewey County
P. O. Box 128
Taloga, OK 73667
580-328-5546; 1-800-433-6967

Ellis County
103 N. Washington
P. O. Box 215
Arnett, OK 73832
580-885-7546; 1-800-433-6773

Garfield County
2405 Mercer Dr.
P. O. Box 3628
Enid, OK 73702
580-548-2100; 1-800-433-7074

Garvin County
2304 S. Chickasaw
Pauls Valley, OK 73075
405-238-6461; 1-800-433-6846

Grady County
1707 W. Frisco Ave.
P. O. Box 1308 (73023)
Chickasha, OK 73018
405-574-7400; 1-800-433-7075

Grant County
112 E. Guthrie, Rm. 303
Medford, OK 73759
580-395-3312; 1-800-433-6909

Greer County
130 N. Oklahoma
Mangum, OK 73554
580-782-3311; 1-800-433-7076

Harmon County
114 W. Hollis
Court House, 1st Floor, Room 6
Hollis, OK 73550
580-688-3361; 1-800-433-6945

Harper County
1001 N. Hoy
P. O. Box 355
Buffalo, OK 73834
580-735-2541; 1-800-433-7079
Haskell County
# 9 Highway East
P. O. Box 659
Stigler, OK 74462
918-967-4658; 1-800-638-3641

Hughes County
801 Kingsberry Rd.
Holdenville, OK 74848
405-379-7231; 1-800-493-7980

Jackson County
201 S. Main Street
Altus, OK 73521
580-480-3400; 1-800-493-7974

Jefferson County
400 E. Hwy. 70
P. O. Box 180
Waurika, OK 73573
580-228-3581; 1-800-493-7981

Johnston County
1003 E. Main St
P. O. Box 340
Tishomingo, OK 73460
580-371-4000; 1-800-493-7975

Kay County
801 W. Grand, Ste. B
Ponca City, OK 74601
580-765-2656; 1-800-493-7982

Kingfisher County
102 W. Coronado
P. O. Box 118
Kingfisher, OK 73750
405-375-3867; 1-800-493-7976

Kiowa County
403 S. Main
Hobart, OK 73651
580-726-6500; 1-800-493-7983

Latimer County
1809 Highway 270 East
Wilburton, OK 74578
918-465-5800; 1-800-493-7978

LeFlore County
511 S. Harper
P. O. Box 370
Poteau, OK 74953
918-649-2300; 1-800-493-7960

Lincoln County
2020 E. First St.
Chandler, OK 74834
405-258-6800; 1-800-493-7984

Logan County
1414 S. Division
Guthrie, OK 73044
405-264-2700; 1-800-572-6831

Love County
311 S. Highway 77, Suite A
Marietta, OK 73448
580-276-3383; 1-800-815-7558

Major County
1425 N. Main Ste 3,4,5
P. O. Box 98
Fairview, OK 73737
580-227-3759; 1-800-815-7571

Marshall County
111 Highway 70 West
Madill, OK 73446
580-795-8100; 1-800-815-7567

Mayes County
501 S. Elliott
Pryor, OK 74361
918-824-4900; 1-800-815-7572

McClain County
1930 S. Green Ave.
P. O. Box 467
Purcell, OK 73080
405-527-6511; 1-800-815-7570

McCurtain County
1300 S. E. Adams
P. O. Box 329
Idabel, OK 74745
580-208-3400; 1-800-815-7562
McIntosh County
Hospital Road and Highway 69
P. O. Box 231
Eufaula, OK 74432
918-689-1200; 1-800-219-3238

Murray County
1019 W. Wyandotte
Sulphur, OK 73086
580-622-2186; 1-800-815-7568

Muskogee County
727 S. 32nd
P. O. Box 608 (74402)
Muskogee, OK 74401
918-684-5300; 1-800-815-7573

Noble County
205 15th St.
Perry, OK 73077
580-336-5581; 1-800-815-7569

Nowata County
309 E. Delaware
Nowata, OK 74048
918-273-2327; 1-800-815-7574

Okfuskee County
119 S. First
Okemah, OK 74859
918-623-1363; 1-800-884-1528

Zips 73003, 73013, 73034, 73102, 73103, 73104, 73105, 73111, 73114, 73116, 73117, 73120, 73121, 73131, 73134

Oklahoma County 55-C
2409 N. Kelly Ave.
P. O. Box 26768 (73126)
Oklahoma City, OK 73111
405-522-5818; 1-800-884-1534

Services all Oklahoma County zip codes in the area

Oklahoma County 55-D
5905 N. Classen Court
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
405-713-2600; 1-800-884-1581

Services all Oklahoma County zip codes in the area

Oklahoma County 55-E
930 N. E. 13th
P. O. Box 26307 (73126)
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
405-271-3325; 1-800-884-1572

Zips 73106, 73107, 73112, 73118

Oklahoma G (Mayfair)
2821 NW 50
P. O. Box 268979 (73126-9734)
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-602-5700; 1-866-289-8008

Zips 73008, 73122, 73127, 73132, 73142, 73162, 73172

Oklahoma H (Family Support)
7201 N. W. 10th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73127
P. O. Box 26768 (73126)
P. O. Box 268980 (73126-9734)
405-470-6200

Zips 73115, 73129, 73135, 73145, 73149

Oklahoma J (Crossroads)
1115 SE 66th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73149
405-604-8800; 1-866-231-8394
Okmulgee County
5005 N. Wood Dr.
Okmulgee, OK 74447
918-752-2000; 1-800-884-1582

Zips serviced by Tulsa 72B: 74020, 72054, 74060, 74061, 74070, 74073, 74106, 74107, 74126, 74127, 74063, 74066

Osage County
550 Kihekah
Pawhuska, OK 74056
918-287-5800; 1-800-884-1573

Osage County
550 Kihekah
Pawhuska, OK 74056
918-287-5800; 1-800-884-1573

Ottawa County
2114 Denver Hamar Dr.
Miami, OK 74354
918-541-2400; 1-800-884-1715

Pawnee County
501 Fifth St.
Pawnee, OK 74058
918-762-3606; 1-800-270-0786

Payne County
711 E. Krayler
Stillwater, OK 74075
405-707-3700; 1-800-270-0797

Pittsburg County
1900 S. Main St.
McAlester, OK 74501
918-421-6100; 1-800-270-0792

Pontotoc County
1628 E. Beverly, Suite 104
Ada, OK 74820
580-310-7050; 1-800-270-0798

Pottawatomie County
1400 N. Kennedy Street
Shawnee, OK 74801
405-878-4000; 1-800-270-0793

Pushmataha County
104 S. E. B St.
P. O. Box 40
Antlers, OK 74523
580-298-3361; 1-800-270-0803

Roger Mills County
480 E. Broadway
P. O. Box 339
Cheyenne, OK 73628
580-497-3393; 1-800-270-0794

Rogers County
2020 Holly Rd.
P. O. Box 3030 (74018)
Claremore, OK 74017
918-283-8300; 1-800-270-0804

Seminole County
206 E. Second St.
Wewoka, OK 74884-2604
405-257-7400; 1-800-270-0796

Sequoyah County
1611 South Kerr Blvd.
HC61 Box 20
Sallisaw, OK 74955
918-776-8000; 1-800-270-0805

Stephens County
1805 Plato Road
P. O. Box 1367 (73533)
Duncan, OK 73534
580-251-8300; 1-800-734-7506

Texas County
1000 N. E. Fourth St.
Guymon, OK 73942
580-338-8592; 1-800-734-7514

Tillman County
125 N. Ninth St.
Frederick, OK 73542
580-335-6800; 1-800-734-7507

Zips 74021, 74070, 74126, 74106, 74110, 74117, 74130, 74148, 74156

Tulsa County 72-B (McClain HSC)
3666 N. Peoria
Tulsa, OK 74106-1626
918-430-2300; 1-800-734-7509
Zips 74101, 74103, 74119, 74120, 74127, 74104, 74114, 74135

**Tulsa County 72-C (Brady Heights HSC)**
444 S. Houston
Tulsa, OK 74127-4494
918-581-2401; 1-800-734-7516

Zips 74008, 74011, 74012, 74013, 74014, 74043, 74108, 74133, 74134, 74145, 74146, 74147, 74148, 74153, 74155, 74156

**Tulsa G (East Regional HSC)**
5051 S. 129th East Ave.
P. O. Box 690600 (74169)
Tulsa, OK 74134
918-294-2000
1-800-294-2093

Zips 74055, 74112, 74115, 74116, 74128, 74129, 74150, 74152, 74159, 74169

**Tulsa H (Renaissance HSC)**
6128 East 28th Street, Suite 200
Tulsa, OK 74135
918-280-3100; 918-280-3199

Zips 74037, 74050, 74063, 74105, 74107, 74132, 74136, 74137, 74170

**Tulsa W (West Regional HSC)**
444 S. Houston
Tulsa, OK 74127
918-581-2912; 1-800-734-7416

**Wagoner County**
102 N. E. Seventh St.
Wagoner, OK 74467
918-614-5000; 1-800-734-7518

Zips 74003, 74006, 74022, 74029, 74051, 74061, 74082

**Washington County**
5205 Jacquelyn Lane
P. O. Box 1099 (74005)
Bartlesville, OK 74006
(P. O. Box is 74005)
918-338-5700; 1-800-734-7512

**Washita County**
106 Lowber Lane
Cordell, OK 73632
580-832-3391; 1-800-734-7519

**Woods County**
1616 Oklahoma Blvd.
P. O. Box 724
Alva, OK 73717
580-327-2714; 1-800-734-7513

**Woodward County**
4900 Oklahoma Ave.
Woodward, OK 73801
580-256-6091; 1-800-734-7520
Helpful Numbers for Grandparents For Grandparents
60 years of age or over

Legal Services Developer 405-522-3069
Senior Info-Line 1-800-211-2116
Senior Health Insurance Counseling Program (SHICP) 1-800-763-2828
Oklahoma City metro 405-521-6628

Numbers for Grandparents of any age

Child Care Licensing Agency
OKDHS Oklahoma Child Care Services 405-521-3561 or 1-800-347-2276
Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma (LASO) 1-800-211-2116
Legal Aid Services of Tulsa 918-428-4357
OASIS (Info for Grandparents) 1-800-42OASIS
Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Inc. 405-943-6457 or 1-800-658-1497
Oklahoma Disability Law Center 405-525-7755
Oklahoma Parent Center 1 (877) 553-4332 toll free number
Oklahoma Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222 (Voice or TTY/TDD)
PRO Oklahoma (IEPs, basic rights) 405-681-9710 or 1-800-759-4142 (Voice/TDD)
Reach Out Hotline (mental health) 1-800-522-9054
SAFE KIDS Coalition 405-271-5695
State House of Representatives 1-800-522-8502
State Senate 405-524-0126
Teenline (peer hotline for preteens/teens) 1-800-522-8336
Aging Services