

# Social Work Practice with Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren



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MARIAN S. HARRIS, PHD, LICSW, ACSW  
PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WORK  
MH24@UW.EDU  
VERONICA HINOJOSA, MSW  
INSTRUCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK  
VEROD34@GMAIL.COM  
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA

# Grandparent Demographics



- 7 million grandparents reported grandchildren living with them
- 2.7 million grandparents responsible for most of the basic needs of their grandchildren
- 60% of these grandparents in workforce
- 21% live below the poverty line
- 36% have provided care for grandchildren for more than 5 years

# Kinship Care and the Child Welfare System



- Variation in child welfare systems
- Services and resources of child welfare agencies, especially culturally specific services
- Placement with relatives

# Different Types of Kinship Care

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- Informal kinship care
- Voluntary kinship care
- Formal kinship care

# Voluntary Kinship Caregivers and the Child Welfare System



- Ensuring safety
- Visiting
- Offering Services Including Culturally Specific Services
- Changing custody status

# Formal Kinship Caregivers and the Child Welfare System



- Ensuring safety or licensing standards
- Supervision/support
- Arranging parent-child or sibling visits
- Service planning

# Reasons Grandparents Parent Grandchildren



- Parental drug and alcohol abuse
- Incarceration
- Mental Health problems
- HIV/AIDS
- Parental child abuse and neglect
- Military deployment
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Illness, disability or death of the parents

# Advantages of Kinship Care



- Child maintains emotional ties
- Share emotional history with grandparents
- Grandparents or other relatives can help with identity (e.g. racial, ethnic and cultural identity)
- Easier access to parents to promote reunification
- Transitions less traumatic
- Positive perceptions about child by grandparents or other relatives
- Lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behavior problems



# Disadvantages of Kinship Care



- Difficulty of grandparents to establish boundaries with birth parents
- Parent/grandparent/family relationship issues
- Grandparents feel burdened
- Grandparents unable to complain or ask for help
- Question of home safety

# Challenges Facing Grandparents



- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of support system or support group
- Distress relating to trauma and grief
- Lack of knowledge regarding current school system
- Inadequate or no child care
- Lack of health care services and knowledge of requirements
- No access to legal services
- Age, limited physical and/or emotional health
- Lack of knowledge regarding world of technology

# Ways to Obtain Legal Custody



- A custody order
- Legal guardianship
- Adoption

# Services and How to Access Them



- Therapy and counseling (culturally specific for non-white children and families)
- Financial Support
- Health Insurance
- Respite Care
- Support Groups
- Kinship Care Navigator Programs

# QUESTIONS?

