

## GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN: HOUSING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

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### INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census 2000, about six million children across the country are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives.<sup>1</sup> More than 2.4 million of these grandparents have the primary responsibility for meeting the basic needs of these children.<sup>2</sup> Factors such as parental substance abuse, incarceration, HIV/AIDS, death, poverty, and even military deployments are causing growing numbers of grandparents and other relatives to step forward to keep families together. Grandparent-and other relative-headed families face multiple barriers, which include poor access to physical and mental health care as well as difficulty enrolling children in school and securing legal assistance.

Finding safe and affordable housing is also a significant challenge for these families. Many families live in small units in buildings with occupancy standards that limit the number of occupants allowed in their unit. Others live in housing designated for older adults and those with disabilities and fear that the addition of children will lead to eviction. While government subsidized elderly housing does not legally exclude children, there is a widespread belief among housing professionals that children are not allowed. Private housing landlords may also attempt to evict tenants when a family's composition changes, despite the fact that eviction on this basis is illegal. Furthermore, in many localities, housing officials tell caregivers they are required to have legal custody of the children to qualify for housing assistance even though the law does not require it.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)<sup>3</sup> was created in 2000 as part of the Older Americans Act (OAA). Administered by the Administration on Aging (AoA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the NFCSP allows for all states, working in partnership with Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and local community-service providers, to offer five categories of support services for grandparents and other relatives aged 60 and older who are relative caregivers of children, and family caregivers of individuals aged 60 and older.<sup>4</sup> One of the categories of supportive services provided under the NFCSP is disseminating information to caregivers about available services. This fact sheet provides information about a specific type of housing program for grandparents and other relatives raising children, as limited availability of adequate affordable housing is one of the primary difficulties these caregivers face.

### GRANDFAMILIES HOUSE

GrandFamilies House in Boston, Massachusetts opened October 1998 in response to the need for affordable housing for relative caregiver families. It is the nation's first housing program specially designed for grandparent-headed families. Two local non-profit organizations, Boston Aging Concerns - Young & Old United, Inc. (BAC-YOU) and the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, co-developed the project. Using a mix of public and private financing, BAC-YOU obtained 100 Section 8 vouchers from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and the Boston Housing Authority, in addition to federal HOME housing program funds.

The House is comprised of 26 two, three, and four bedroom apartments that have safety features for both older adults and children, including grab bars in the bathrooms and electrical outlet covers, in addition to extensive communal program

space. For tenants who have Section 8 vouchers, their rent obligation is no more than 30% of their income.

Supportive services are critical to the success of GrandFamilies House, which offers an on-site resident services coordinator, a live-in house manager, educational services, and assistance with accessing outside services. The GrandFamilies van is available to residents, providing them access to transportation for grocery-shopping, educational and recreational field trips, and other events. In addition, the YWCA-Boston offers an on-site program called Generations Learning Together (GLT). GLT features a preschool and school-age program that serves as a summer camp when schools are closed. The after-school program focuses on developing and improving math, computer, and science skills. Through this program, all residents also have access to a computer learning center, tutoring, and homework assistance. In addition, BAC-YOU and the YWCA offer educational workshops, intergenerational community events, holiday celebrations, and respite outings for grandparents.

GrandFamilies House is now operated by Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation. For additional information, contact Stephanie Chacker at (617) 436-0394.

### HOUSING DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Many organizations have contacted Generations United and BAC-YOU for information on housing for grandparents and other relative raising children. There are many groups around the country that have built, or are in the process of developing, similar housing programs including those in *Phoenix, AZ; Sacramento, CA; Santa Clara, CA; New Haven, CT; Chicago, IL; Baltimore, MD; Detroit, MI; Trenton, NJ; Buffalo, NY; New York, NY; Cleveland, OH; Dayton, OH; Oklahoma City, OK; Philadelphia, PA; Nashville, TN; and Tacoma, WA.*

The following is a sample of some of the innovative housing projects underway for grandparents and other relatives raising children:

#### PHOENIX, ARIZONA

- Phoenix GrandFamilies Place will consist of 110 low-cost two, three, and four bedroom apartments for grandparents of any age that qualify for federally subsidized housing with court-ordered rights to their grandchildren up to 18 years of age.
- The project will include a YMCA with day care and a community resource center; to support residents and other grandparents that have questions about guardianship related issues.
- For additional information, contact Representative Leah Landrum Taylor's office at (602) 926-5864, or [llandrum@azleg.state.az.us](mailto:llandrum@azleg.state.az.us)

#### CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

- The Chicago Department on Aging is building a 10-unit facility with a child care and senior center on the property; completion is set for 2006.
- GRANDFamilies Program of Chicago, Inc., a community based Grandparent Resource and Support Center, is assisting the City of Chicago with its grandfamilies housing project.
- The Chicago Department on Aging is purchasing single-family housing and will deed them to social service agencies to rent to kinship families with housing vouchers.

- For additional information, contact Linette Kinchen at (773) 651-8800 or [grandfamilies1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:grandfamilies1@sbcglobal.net)

## 📍 BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

- Urban Restoration Enhancement Corporation recently renovated Urban Villa Apartments (Grandparent's House), which will serve grandparents raising grandchildren.
- The multi-family facility will house 30, two-bedroom, one-bath units, and provide comprehensive supportive services.
- For additional information, contact Ronnie Edwards at (225) 356-8871 or [ronnieedbr@yahoo.com](mailto:ronnieedbr@yahoo.com)

## 📍 BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

- Communities of Care of Maryland is developing a community of adoptive parents at Clare Courts in Northeast Baltimore. The facility will have amenities such as an Intergenerational Center with a reading room, garden, computer lab, and meeting space.
- Communities of Care is developing a pilot program to assist adoptive families of sibling groups who need larger housing to become homeowners in an affordable manner.
- For additional information, contact Duane St. Clair at (410) 381-4788 or [duamestclair@excite.com](mailto:duamestclair@excite.com)

## 📍 DETROIT, MICHIGAN

- Church of the Messiah Housing Corporation (CMHC) is developing Champlain Village; it will consist of a 40 unit apartment building with 11 units designated for grandparents raising developmentally disabled grandchildren.
- The housing will be part of a larger development with additional rental town homes, a community center with daycare, and single-family homes for sale.
- The proposed ground breaking of Champlain Village is scheduled for September, 2005.
- For additional information, contact Frances Howze at (313) 567-7966 ext. 225 or [fhowze@messiahhousing.com](mailto:fhowze@messiahhousing.com)

## 📍 NEW YORK, NEW YORK

- Presbyterian Senior Services (PSS) and West Side Federation for Senior & Supportive Housing (WSFSSH) are constructing GrandParent Apartments in the South Bronx from the ground up and tailored to fit the needs of both older and younger residents.
- The six-story building will provide 40 two-bedroom and 10 three-bedroom apartments and a one-stop resource center serving relative-headed families that live in the building or community.
- Support services that are provided by PSS include case management, parenting workshops, childhood development, support groups, daycare, counseling, legal assistance, respite care, and after school tutoring and recreation.
- For additional information, contact David Taylor, Executive Director at (212) 874-6633 or [dtaylor@pssusa.org](mailto:dtaylor@pssusa.org)

## 📍 CLEVELAND, OHIO

- The Fairhill Center is planning to renovate two large buildings on its campus and convert them to apartments which will form the core of "Kinship Village."
- This project will create 20 to 25 apartment units which will be let at market- and "affordable" rates to grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children, to campus employees and to seniors willing to volunteer some of their time to work with the kinship families.

- Nearby on the campus will be an intergenerational school, where about a quarter of the children are being raised by grandparents. There will also be access to other relevant services and programs offered by Fairhill Center.
- For additional information, contact Michael Gathercole at (216) 421-1350 ext 118, or [mcg@fairhillcenter.org](mailto:mcg@fairhillcenter.org)

## HOUSING LEGISLATION

Grandparents and other relatives raising children provide a tremendous service to their family and community at large. Among the range of difficulties these caregivers often face are inadequate conditions for families living in or requiring public housing. In recognition of the growing need for federal housing legislation to support these families, the LEGACY Intergenerational Housing Bill was created. Several of the LEGACY Bill provisions were added to the American Dream Downpayment Act (P.L. 108-186). The Act passed both the House and the Senate and was signed into law by the president on December 16, 2003.

### The American Dream Downpayment Act requires HUD to implement the following provisions:

- Create national demonstration projects that provide opportunities within HUD's Section 202 program to develop housing specifically for grandparents and other relatives raising children.
- Train and educate front line workers who, through no fault of their own, may be misinterpreting policies that affect the grandparent-and other relative-headed families.
- Conduct a national study of the housing needs of grandparents raising grandchildren.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the endeavors of a few notable initiatives, the housing needs of intergenerational families headed by grandparents and other relatives have not received the attention they deserve. Concurrent with the implementation of federal legislation, additional community based interventions are needed in both the public and private sectors in order to help address the special housing needs of these families.

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For further information, please contact: Generations United (GU), 1333 H Street N.W., Suite 500W, Washington, D.C. 20005-4752, Phone: (202) 289-3979, Fax: (202) 289-3952; e-mail: [gu@gu.org](mailto:gu@gu.org). The GU web site at [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org) contains additional information about grandparents and other relatives raising children.

*Generations United (GU) is the only national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans. GU serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and older adults to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.*



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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. Summary File 1, Table P28, Relationship by Household Type for Population Under 18 Years.  
<sup>2</sup> Simmons, T. & Dye, J.L. (October 2003.) Grandparents Living with Grandchildren: 2000. U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR-31. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.  
<sup>3</sup> Public Law 106-501. Section 316.  
<sup>4</sup> For more information about the NFCSP, please go to [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org) for a fact sheet and user guide about the program or to the AoA website at [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov).