



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

More Grandparents Are Raising Their Grandchildren

Second-time around parenting in which older family members assume responsibility for raising younger children is steadily increasing. While some families have always shared parenting responsibilities across generations, a new development is an increase in grandparents who are raising their grandchildren on their own. When families break down due to illness, tragedy or abuse and neglect, it is often grandparents who step forward to care for their children's children. This is often unexpected and may come at times of great stress or grief.

It may also occur at a time in the grandparent's life when they are finally free of family responsibilities and looking forward to their retirement, a chance to travel and relaxing.



"It's Not the Same the Second Time Around"

Although the majority of grandparents assume these responsibilities with strong skills and love, grandparents and their grandchildren can also find it trying to adapt to this change. Even the ordinary problems facing traditional parents of infants and toddlers can become extraordinary for some grandparents. Over 50% of the grandchildren being brought up by grandparents are 6-years-old or younger. When the grandchildren arrive after having experienced abuse or neglect, grandparents must learn new skills to help the children begin healing. And many of the issues facing today's young children are different than the issues their parents faced a generation ago.

Changing Diapers Is The Easy Part.

For grandparents bringing up their very young grandchildren, changing diapers may be the most familiar chore and possibly the only one that has grown simpler since they had infants and toddlers of their own. The charming image of grandparents with plenty of time on their hands rocking on the front porch while their grandchildren play in the sunshine is quite lovely, but certainly very different for most grandparents who are raising their children's children. And the reality for many grandparents is they are overwhelmed.

Support is Available In Many Communities

Grandparents who face parenting again benefit from reaching out for support. Across Alaska, support groups and activities for grandparents are now being offered. Gathering with other grandparents who are in similar situations can be a very positive experience, decreasing the isolation and loneliness that may exist. Support groups focus on practical concerns, offering ideas and resources to address health, financial and legal questions the grandparents have.

For more information, contact: Strengthening of Grandfamilies/ No Empty Nest Program Volunteers of America 441 West 5th Ave, Ste. 202 Anchorage, AK 99501 907/279-9634



Community Resource Kit

Alaska Children's Trust 1-800-643-KIDS

Alaska Child Abuse Prevention Network. akchildabuseprevention.org