



Informal Kinship Care in Minnesota: A Pilot Study

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by

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Research study

A one-year pilot research project, summer of 2002 to summer of 2003.

- Funded by a grant from the Minnesota Board on Aging to the Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association (MKCA). www.mkca.org/
 - Grandkin Project
 - School of Social Work <http://ssw.che.umn.edu/>



Purpose of study

- To explore the caregiving experiences of relative caregivers, 60 and older, in informal kinship arrangements
- Questionnaire: 63 questions
 - Caregiving arrangement (3)
 - Services utilized (8)
 - Services needed (3)
 - Knowledge about services (6)
 - Concerns (8)
 - Quality of life (9)
 - Demographics (26)



Recruitment

- MCKA's network of service providers
- Newspapers and agencies' newsletters
- Radio interviews were conducted
- Mailing lists



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Criteria
 - Relationship: Relative or close friend
 - Initial arrangement, informal: (agreement between family members without child welfare)
 - Age, 60 (caregiver or spouse)
 - Primary caregiver (biological parents absent from household)
 - Grandchild(ren): under 18 (allowance if in school)
 - Living in Minnesota



SCREENING AND DATA COLLECTION

- Screening
 - 192 calls from volunteers
 - 96 grandparents were interested and interviewed
- Face-to-face interviews
 - Interviews were conducted in homes or local offices
 - \$20.00 Target gift certificate as compensation



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS GRANDPARENTS

- 52 – 82, average age of 64
- 56% Married and 79% White
- Highly educated (35% some college, 26% college degree and above)
- High incomes (23% over 50,000; 10% less than 10,00)
- Evenly divided into retired (45%) and working (44%)
- Grandchildren, 1-19 years, average of 12.6 years



Needs of Respondents

Respondents' services needs	Total	%
Government financial assistance	26	21%
Health insurance / Medical coverage	19	15%
Support groups / mentoring	17	14%
In-home respite services	14	11%
Legal services	12	10%
Counseling / mental health services	12	10%
Education / schooling services	5	4%
Housing services	5	4%
Other services	14	11%
Total	124	100%



Knowledge about services

- 35% do not know what services were available.
- 27% lack information on how to access services.
- 14% did not know what documents were needed when applying for services.
- 67% would apply for services if could get help



Quality of life

- Grandparent's QOL decreased.
- Grandchildren's QOL increased.



Concerns as Caregivers

Concerns	Total	%
Quality of caregiving	55	24%
Caregiver's health	37	16%
Financial	26	11%
Education of grandchildren	21	9%
Emotional well-being of grandchildren	19	8%
Generational gap	12	5%
Grandchildren staying out of trouble	11	5%
Problems with biological parent	11	5%
Safety of grandchildren	10	4%
No life of your own	6	3%
Future of kids	4	2%
Others	22	9%
Total	234	100%



Surprises & Joys

- 13% exhaustion and demands of being parents again
- 12% joy and other positive experience of being parents again
- 7% behavioral and attitude problems of their grandchildren



Social Support

- Over 50% grandparents found that family members were most helpful to them.
- School teachers (12%).
- Friends (9%)



Recommendation to MKCA

- Advocate for increase health/mental health services for grandparents and grandchildren and sensitive policies to caregivers.
- Increase support groups .
- Provide education about services, eligibility guides, and the context of kinship care.
- Collaborate with MN Board on Aging to facilitate education and services to grandparent caregivers