

When grandparents take over as legal guardians

When because of a variety of serious family problems, grandparents feel they must take over, even adopt grandkids, there are a number of issues to address and places to go for help.

First, what all experts agree is grandparents must swing into protective mode. Protect your grandchildren and protect yourself — your physical and mental health, safety, legal status, and financial status. Check with an attorney for a variety of custody arrangements in your state before going any further.

Grandparents taking on the task of raising grandchildren are very courageous. That said, here is what can help with the day-to-day care. Although every family is slightly different, there are protective factors to help the new grandfamily prosper. Grandparents can borrow the knowledge based on many years of study by Drs. David Hawkins and Richard Catalano of risk factors and protective factors for preventing problems.

Grandparents can find out more about the Botvin Life Skills Training, an evidence-based prevention program for schools, families, communities, and places of faith. The information about life training skills is at www.lifeskillstraining.com.

In your own grandfamily, experts suggest finding prosocial involvement in the community like Scouts, organized sports, the Y, 4-H, faith-based clubs, other youth groups, and volunteer to help. Grandkids need recognition for

prosocial involvement and behavior. Prosocial means having a positive helpful view toward other people in general.

Grandparents can develop a strong family unit with reasonable rules, duties, organization, and responsibility. Provide opportunities for prosocial involvement like helping with the work load around the house, playing, volunteering, discussing together. Provide recognition for prosocial involvement like praise and hugs. Control technology use.

In school, grandparents can participate, volunteer, check homework and school notes and communicate with the teachers. Be a part of school organizations. Be alert. Ensure children have opportunities for participation in prosocial learning, volunteering, working hard, studying, helping others, and being involved in many activities that nurture their talents and potential. Find ways for children to receive recognition.

Are grandkids learning and using social skills? Establish a moral order of right and wrong in the family. Teach grandkids your faith. Join faith groups and be active as a grandfamily. Search for a school that teaches self-control, self-discipline, responsibility, respect, and helping others.

Do the grandkids interact with prosocial peers? Some grandparents are taking parenting classes, switching schools, and even moving to a different area. However, the change must come from within or grandkids will seek out the same problem peers.

The problem is such an epidemic that there are many sites and places for help. Search for articles about financial help for grandparents on-line. See grandfactsheets.org; GrandFamilies.org; SavvySenior.org; GenerationsUnitedHelpGuide.org;

[GrandparentsRaisingGrandchildren at usa.gov](http://GrandparentsRaisingGrandchildren.usa.gov). See activities for all age groups at grandparentsteachtoo.blogspot.com and wnmufm.org/LearningThroughtheSeasons.
