

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Almost 40,000 Colorado Grandchildren Live with "Parenting Grandparents" Half Likely Facing Multiple Risk Factors

According to unpublished Census Bureau tables for March 1998, 5.6 percent of children under age 18 lived in their grandparents' households. For that year, there were over 1,040,580 children under age 18 in the state. Thus, for that year, the number of Colorado grandchildren living in their grandparents' households may be estimated at 37,460. For perspective, that figure is greater than the enrollment of Colorado Springs' District 11 and just smaller than the enrollment of the Cherry Creek school district.

These children are likely to experience several generally recognized risk factors for educational failure, including: poverty, welfare dependence, the absence of parents, one-parent families, and one or more parents who has not graduated from high school.

While the parenting efforts of grandparents are usually heroic—aiding a teen mother, sparing a child foster care or saving children from outright abandonment—such efforts are often undertaken in the face of serious hardships. Of these "parenting grandparents" ...:

- 39.8 percent are divorced, widowed, or never married;
- 38.7 percent did not graduate from high school or earn a GED diploma;
- 33.8 percent are in only fair or poor health; and
- 17.6 percent are poor (i.e., living below poverty level).

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In addition to being raised by grandparents who are often “single parents” with little education and failing health, the grandchildren experience a number of other at-risk conditions:

- 56.2 percent live in households receiving some form of public assistance (e.g., school lunch program, food stamps, AFDC, SSI, housing assistance, energy assistance);
- 38.9 percent live in households with three or more children under age 18;
- 36.3 percent have only public health insurance, and
- 33.4 percent have no health insurance at all; and
- 26.9 percent are poor.

Family literacy projects supported by CARE—Adult/Family Literacy seek to ameliorate these risk factors by offering Adult Basic Education (ABE), children’s developmental education, Parent And Child Time (PACT), and parent time. Positive outcomes these projects can document include increased participation in children’s school activities and increased time spent reading with children. Other units of the Colorado Department of Education support Special Education initiatives, Early Childhood Education initiatives, Even Start programs, and Title I programs in public schools. All of these programs seek to ensure that Colorado children experience educational success despite living with one or more risk factors.

SOURCES

- GP-1. Children Under 18 Living In Their Grandparents’ Household, by State: 1990 Census. Released July 1, 1999. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/grandparents/gp-1.txt>
- P20-514. Unpublished Tables—Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998 (Update). Table A. Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years: March 1998. Released 1999. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/marital.html>
- ST-98-9. Population Estimates for the U.S., Regions, and States by Selected Age Groups, Annual Time series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1998. Released June 15, 1999. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/sage9890.txt>
- For additional statistics on this topic, see the U.S. Census Bureau’s Grandparents and Grandchildren page. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html>

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