



Counseling



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The resource section at the end of this chapter gives you the locations, phone numbers, and/or Web sites of agencies where you can find help. For access to computers and assistance in reaching the information available on Web sites, contact your local public libraries, senior centers, community centers, or family resource centers.



Children who come to live with their grandparents may be afraid or upset because their lives have suddenly changed. They may feel they are unwanted or that they are the reason for this change in their family's life. They may have seen drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, or the imprisonment or death of a parent. As a caregiver, you are also dealing with your feelings about your adult child, the parent of this child who is now your responsibility.

Sometimes these situations require immediate attention for the safety and well-being of everyone in the family. The **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS** section in the beginning of this book will give you a quick list of phone numbers to call. The information in this section will give you an idea of some places you can call for counseling help or support groups for you and your grandchild.

1. My grandchild is very young. Do young children need counseling?

Although children may not be able to explain a mental health term, they can and do experience problems. Check over the list of signs in the next question that may indicate a problem.

2. What are some of the signs that my younger child may need counseling?

- Sudden changes in mood or behavior
- Depression – feeling unhappy for a long time
- Anxiety – strong feeling of fear or nervousness
- Getting upset over small things
- Physical aches and pains that have no real physical cause
- Dropping grades
- Not being able to sleep
- Fighting against being hugged or cuddled
- Unusual behaviors (e.g., head banging, constant rocking, or hurting themselves physically in other ways)
- Babies crying constantly or having a weak cry

3. What are some signs that I should be concerned about my older grandchild's or teenager's behavior?

Older children may not speak out and tell you what's bothering them. Instead, they may *act* out in ways that may give clues that they need help. Some of the items in the list in Question 2 may also be true for older children and teenagers. Other signs may be:

- Not being able to give affection or not willing to be hugged or touched with affection
- Are difficult to control or can't control their own behaviors (constant talking, lying, stealing, extreme anger)
- May harm themselves or others (e.g., may cut or burn themselves; fighting with or hitting others)
- Don't get along well with others (e.g., bullying other children, being a loner, not trusting others)
- Cruelty to animals
- Eating problems
- Talking about or attempting suicide
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Running away
- Inappropriate sexual behaviors
- Lethargy (no interest in things they previously enjoyed doing)
- Poor concentration
- Low self-esteem
- Sleeping too much

4. I've heard a lot about children and teenagers being depressed. What is depression and how can I know if my child is depressed?

Many of the signs listed in Questions 2 and 3 may point to depression. Depression is being "down" or showing signs of being unhappy for more than a couple of weeks. Children or teenagers may talk about feelings of sadness or about life not being worth living. They may start cutting classes, cry or act moody for long periods of time, or want to spend most of their time alone. If you feel that your child has been acting depressed, ask someone for help.

5. How can I find the right counseling service for my grandchild or my particular situation?

You can begin by checking the counseling/mental health resources at the end of this section. If you know of anyone who has had to get help for a child, ask them about the counselor they used. Did they feel that they were treated with respect? Would they recommend that counselor to other people? You also could ask your family doctor for the name of a counselor, the child's school social worker or guidance counselor. Another good place to check is the Counseling section in the

Yellow Pages of your phone book. An agency that offers assessment and consultation will be able to examine the child, tell you what they think the problem is, and suggest where you can take her to get treatment. They will also recommend individual, family, or group therapy, whichever is best for you and your situation. When selecting a counselor, be sure to check with your insurance provider or HMO to be sure the child's counseling is covered.

6. What are the different types of counselors?

Counselors can be psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors of mental health, certified mental health counselors, psychiatric nurses, marriage and family therapists, or pastoral counselors. You can find the definitions for these different professionals in the Glossary at the back of this book.

7. What are some questions I can ask counselors to help me decide if they can help my troubled grandchild and me?

Finding the right mental health professional may take several tries. Do not be shy about asking questions and making sure that you find the right person. The mental well-being of you and your grandchild is important, so look at the following questions and pick those that you might want to ask to help you with your decision:

- What are your qualifications, experience and training?
- What kind of license do you have?
- What type of therapy do you use?
- What experience do you have in treating my problem?
- What is your fee and can you adjust it based on my income?
- How will my insurance billings and co-payments be handled? When and how do I pay?
- Is there a charge for the first meeting?
- What are your office hours?
- How long does it take to get an appointment?
- How often will appointments be scheduled?
- How long do your sessions last?
- Who will see my records?
- How confidential is therapy?
- What do I do if there is an emergency?
- What do I do if I have questions?
- Will we set goals for treatment?
- If you feel you are unable to treat my problem, will you refer me to someone else?

8. What are support groups?

Self-help or support groups are regularly scheduled meetings (often held weekly or monthly) of people who share similar problems. A counselor may or may not help run the group. They help grandparents and relatives who are parenting again, by giving them a place to share information, learn about resources, and help one another.

Agencies in your area that offer support groups are shown at the end of this section of the Resource Guide.

9. What do school counselors do?

School counselors give students educational guidance and counseling, and work on short-term problem intervention for children while they are in school. They help students with personal and social growth and career/life planning. At times, they work with other school officials, parents or guardians, and the students themselves in helping with their problems.

If a student needs long-term help, the school counselor will refer him or her to the right kind of agency.



The information in this chapter has been adapted for use in the Wisconsin from the state of Delaware's *Grandparents/Relatives Raising And Nurturing Dependent Children (GRAND) Resource Guide* by David A. Riley, Child Development Specialist, UW–Extension Family Living Programs; Beth Swedeen, Parenting Associate Outreach Specialist, Waisman Center; and Nancy Marz, CICSW, Clinical Consultant, Department of Health and Family Services; and Mary Brintnall-Peterson, Program Specialist in Aging, UW-Extension Family Living Programs.

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This chapter is one of eight chapters included in Wisconsin's *GRAND Resource Guide*. Other topics addressed in the resource guide include Child Care, Education, Financial Assistance, Health, Housing, Legal, and Parenting issues. These chapters can be found on the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Web site at:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/grand.pdf>

The University of Wisconsin-Extension presents the information in the *Grandparents/Relative Raising And Nurturing Grandchildren (GRAND) Resource Guide* as a service to those who are raising grandchildren or other kin or to those who

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