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Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Training Manual for Group Leaders

Kristine Bjelde

North Dakota State University, kristine.bjelde@ndsu.edu



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Abstract

With a growing trend in the number of grandparents raising grandchildren nationally, a demand has been created for professionals to provide some assistance so that grandparents can navigate their way through a variety of family issues, including legal and custody, financial, and parenting skills. *Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Training Manual for Group Leaders*, by Carole B. Cox, provides a 14-session training workshop program for use with grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Extension, family life, and parent educators will find this manual extremely helpful for use in train-the-trainer programs, support groups for grandparents, and other community education programs.

Kristine Bjelde

Doctoral Student, Gerontology Program
Department of Human Development and Education
North Dakota State University
Fargo, North Dakota
Kristine.Bjelde@ndsu.nodak.edu

Grandparent Training Needed

There is a growing trend in the number of grandparents currently raising their grandchildren in the United States. This trend relates to a variety of social issues of the parent generation, including drugs, divorce, teen pregnancy, incarceration, death, and AIDS. In the United States, 2.4 million grandparents are responsible for most of the basic needs of over 3.7 million grandchildren in their own households (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003).

Thus, a demand has been created for professionals to provide some assistance so that grandparents can navigate their way through a variety of family issues, including legal and custody, financial, and parenting skills. Many of these grandparents have not been child caregivers for years, so an opportunity exists for Extension educators to provide some greatly needed education and training to those grandparents faced with the task of raising their grandchildren.

Helpful Resource

Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Training Manual for Group Leaders, by Carole B. Cox, provides a 14-session training workshop program for use with grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Extension, family life, and parent educators will find this manual extremely helpful in train-the-trainer programs, support groups for grandparents, and other community education programs. The group leader is able to adapt or expand upon the topics covered in this manual to fit the needs of the particular audience he or she is working with or the time frame available, whether for one workshop or many.

Key Areas Included

Some of the topics in this manual include:

- Helping grandchildren build self-esteem
- Helping grandchildren learn how to deal with loss, abandonment and grief issues
- Communicating with your grandchildren about drugs, sex, and HIV

- Dealing with behavior problems
- Grandparents navigating the service system, legal and entitlement issues

Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandchildren covers key areas that most grandparents raising a grandchild would want to know. Each chapter is divided into sections with headings, some of which are in question form, followed by the information or a "how to" section.

For the group leader who might use this manual, each unit ends with an Activities Section. For example, the chapter on "Talking with Your Grandchildren About Drugs" offers three activity ideas to try with the group:

1. Role-play talking to a young child, a pre-teen, and a teenager about drugs
2. Discuss the importance of rules and how to establish them
3. Describe what to look for if you think your grandchild is using drugs or alcohol

In the chapter "Dealing with Behavior Problems," grandparents will appreciate the author's common-sense approach to dealing with a variety of issues that might arise in caring for their grandchildren. One section in this chapter, "A Few More Hints," deals with behavior problems and includes excellent advice for any parents, such as:

- Don't sweat the small stuff
- Pick your battles
- Try to cool down before you respond to anger
- Never belittle your grandchild or call him names
- Focus on specific behaviors that need to be changed

Near the end of the book, Cox includes a reference and resource list, as well as a contact list of national organizations that focus on the needs of grandparent caregivers and their grandchildren. The book even includes a segment on how grandparents can develop their own advocacy skills through effective letter-writing campaigns in their community or state.

Why Select This Resource?

It's a very comprehensive book that contains a virtual gold mine of information on a variety of topics for grandparent caregivers. All Extension educators or other professionals who are currently working with grandparent caregivers or considering developing an educational program or support group for them will want to add this valuable resource tool to their collections. This book also serves as an excellent resource for a lending library for individual grandparents to access. It is an "easy read" for most any reading level, and it is not filled with technical jargon to discourage a grandparent from reading it.

References

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