Parenting the Second Time Around:
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Home Visiting
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NMAIMH competencies addressed:

Theoretical Foundations:
- Relationship-focused practice

Systems Expertise:
- Service delivery systems
- Community resources

Direct Service Skills:
- Observing & listening
- Advocacy

Reflection:
- Self-awareness
- Curiosity

Many grandparents today are becoming "parents the second time around" and are also referred to as "kinship caregivers". They are stepping in to raise their grandchildren when the children's own parents are not able or willing to do so. In fact, 2.5 million grandparents carried the primary responsibility of caring for their grandchildren and meeting their basic needs (data from 2019 American Community Survey). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey, there are approximately 19,576 children under the age of six are living with a grandparent in New Mexico.

Adjusting to a new role. Grandparents usually anticipate later life as a time to enjoy the privileges of grandchildren without as many responsibilities. Adjusting to the new role of primary caregiver typically takes considerable effort. It may require adjustments in life planning, from finances to career changes to location and lifestyle changes.

Potential reasons a child is cared for by a grandparent.
According to Choi, et.al (2016), there are many reasons that a child may be raised by a grandparent including:
- Parent has an addiction or difficulties with alcohol or drugs
- Parent has mental health challenges or emotional difficulties
- Child neglect, abandonment, or abuse
- Parent is incarcerated
- Youth or inexperience of parents (teen pregnancy, etc.)
- Physical health issues or death of parent
- Unstable home life, homelessness
- Lack of financial resources, lack of general ability
- Domestic violence in the home, divorce, other family challenges
- Military deployment

Home visiting screens and tools for use with grandparents raising grandchildren. There are required screens and tools that New Mexico home visitors administer to grandparents raising grandchildren that help identify and guide the resources and support that grandparents may need.

- **Maternal Child Health** (MCH) provides demographic and health information. This tool is conducted within 45 days of enrollment and every quarter thereafter.
- **Relationship Assessment Tool** (RAT) addresses domestic violence and is conducted within 45 days of enrollment and annually thereafter.
- There are also optional screens, tools, and curriculum that may be used when working with grandparents to provide a more complete picture of what would be most helpful for grandparents.
  - **Social Support Index** (SSI) – this addresses a family's social support system.
  - **Reflections on Parenting** – this supports caregivers in reflecting on how they were parented and what they would like to pass on to their children and grandchildren.
  - **Circle of Security Training** (Curriculum) – home visitors may provide this to grandparents to help them improve relationships with their grandchildren.

Need for support. Regardless of a kinship caregiver's age, race or ethnicity, gender, living situation, or economic status, all kinship caregivers share a common need: the need for education and support. They need to understand the specific issues surrounding their situation, have knowledge of best parenting practices, and support to provide the child with the care he/she needs. Kinship caregivers can benefit from extra support and encouragement from their home visitor and from being connected to available social service agencies and support organizations in their community.

Support options. Throughout NM a variety of support options are available. Some health-care and nonprofit organizations (such as the NM Aging and Long-Term Services and local county or regional extension offices) offer a wide range of services for families, including those for grandparents raising grandchildren. These services may include grandparenting classes to address changing roles. Other options might include caregiver support groups and resources from organizations that focus on serving families and seniors.

Support may come from a variety of resources and may address a variety of needs.
According to Saxena and Brotherson (2021) there are many support resources that can help grandparents in their roles as primary caregivers including:
- Assistance in establishing legal guardianship, if needed
- Financial assistance through welfare (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF]), Medicaid, etc.
- Assistance with housing or energy costs
- Setting up educational funds and assistance with school enrollment
- Respite care and other services for care providers
- Counseling or other assistance for children who have experienced trauma
- Education on caregiver support efforts and programs

Questions to encourage discussion and reflection.
1. What strengths do grandparents possess?
   - How do these strengths facilitate their success?
   - In what ways do you facilitate (or block) grandparents from recognizing and utilizing their strengths?
2. What challenges do grandparents experience?
   - How do these challenges develop?
   - How do these challenges shape what grandparents need in terms of support?
3. What resources (local, state, national) do you utilize to support grandparents raising grandchildren?
4. What are your opinions about grandparents' parenting skills?
   - To what extent do you see them as having valuable experience or wisdom versus needing parent training?
5. Based on your responses to these self-reflection questions, what could you do to improve the quality of services, you deliver to grandparents raising grandchildren?

References

Choi, M., Sprang, G., & Eslinger, J.G. (2016). Grandparents raising grandchildren. *Family and Community
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 North Dakota State University. https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/home-farm/when-grandparents-become-
 parents-to-their-grandchildren

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. (2019). *2015-2019 ACS 5-year narrative profile.* Accessed
 online Jan. 8, 2021, at: www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/narrative-
 profiles/2019/report.php?geotype=nation&usVal=us

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Resources

New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department
https://nmaging.state.nm.us/caregiver-resources/grandparents-raising-grandchildren
The department offers a wide range of services for families including those for grandparents raising
grandchildren. 1-800-432-2080

Las Cumbres Community Services – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
https://www.lascumbres-nm.org/grandparentraisinggrandchildren-sf
Las Cumbres sponsors the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program founded in
Espanola, NM. The program provides support, resources, discussion topics, and an end of year
conference aimed to foster the growth and well-being of grandparents who are the primary
caregivers to their grandchildren in Rio Arriba County and beyond. 505-753-4123

PullTogether.org
https://pulltogether.org/support/kinship-care

This resource offers support for parents, families, and children in New Mexico and includes statewide and
Tribal resources such as family service organizations, health and wellness programs, housing and child care
options, and more. 855-546-1212 (bilingual helpline)

New Mexico ECECD Child Care Assistance
https://www.nmececd.org/information-for-parents/
The Child Care Assistance Program subsidizes the cost of child care for families. In order to receive Child Care
Assistance, you may be required to pay a potion of your child care bill. This is called a copy and is based on
your family income and family size. 1-800-832-1321

ZERO TO THREE
www.zerotothree.org/grandparents
- 5 handouts specifically for grandparents
  - What's New? What's the Same?
  - Limit-Setting for Little Ones
  - Making the Most of Mealtimes
  - Safe Sleep, Sweet Dreams
  - Making the Most of Everyday Moments