While it is not part of their plans, many grandparents are taking on the role of primary caregiver for their grandchildren. The reasons that they take on this new role vary from family to family: death of one or both parents, unstable family situation (due to divorce, drugs, or finances), incarceration, military deployment or abandonment. Whatever the circumstances, many grandparents need assistance adjusting to their new role. The following guide and resources are provided to make this transition as successful as possible.

**Defining The Relationship**

The following terms describe some of the typical caregiving relationships grandparents have with their grandchildren. These terms are used by service providers to distinguish between the different types of caregiving relationships.

- **Informal Day Care Provider** - Provides unpaid caregiving for minors. Grandparents providing this level of care for their grandchildren may do so occasionally or regularly (weekly or daily).

- **Primary Caregiver** - The person who is responsible for providing or coordinating the care for a minor. If the biological parent is actively involved, they are generally considered the primary caregiver. In situations where the parent is absent, the following describes other options for fulfilling this role. Most of the information in this guide is directed towards primary caregivers.

- **Kinship Caregiver** is a primary caregiver who provides full-time care, nurturing, and protection of children and is either a blood relative, member of their tribe or clan, or other adult who have a family relationship to a child.

- **Grandparent Caregiver** is a primary caregiver who is over the age of 55 and
  - lives with the child; AND
  - is the primary caregiver of the child because the biological or adoptive parents are unable or unwilling to serve as the primary caregiver of the child; AND
  - has a legal relationship to the child, such as legal custody or guardianship, or is raising the child informally.

- **Foster Care** is the placement of a child, by a legal authority, in the temporary, primary care of a family other than its own as the result of problems or challenges that are taking place within the birth family, or while critical elements of an adoption are being completed.

- **Guardianship** - Is the legal relationship created when a person is named in a will or assigned by the court as the primary caregiver of minor children. This means that a guardian has the “care, custody and control of” the child and responsibility for the minor’s education. This includes providing meals, clothing, education and living facilities for the child. A legal guardian has an ongoing responsibility to update the court on the child’s wellbeing and residence until the child is 18.

- **Adoption** - Is the termination of parental rights of the parents and the creation of a new parent-child relationship between the child and another

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individual(s). After an adoption the adoptive parents and the adopted child sustain towards each other the legal relationship of parent and child and have all the rights and are subject to all the duties of that relationship.

Financial Supports

Becoming the caregiver for a grandchild may mean unexpected and/or unmet expenses. Especially for retired persons who are on a fixed income, increased expenses for food, clothing, and school supplies can be overwhelming. There are public benefits that can provide assistance for households who find themselves in financial need.

**Cash Assistance**

CalWORKS - Kinship caregivers can apply for CalWORKS benefits in one of two ways: for a "child-only grant" or by adding the child as part of grant covering the entire household. Most kinship caregivers apply for CalWORKS "child-only grants." With a child-only grant, only the child’s income is counted for the purposes of determining his or her eligibility for cash benefits. Since the benefit is intended only for the child, a relative kinship caregiver does not have to share her income information or comply with welfare program work requirements. More importantly, there is no time limit on the receipt of a child-only grant. Eligible children can continue to receive monthly assistance until they reach the age of 18—or 19, if they are full-time students.

For more information on CalWORKS or to apply contact:

**SLO County Department of Social Services**

Atascadero  Paso Robles
461-6000  237-3110

San Luis Obispo
781-1600

Survivor Benefits or Social Security

Disability (Social Security) - Benefit paid through social security to surviving children under the age of 18. Eligibility and payment is based on the parents Social Security Contributions.

For more information on Social Security Benefits or to apply you can contact:

For more information contact Senor Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552
Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP)
The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) program may be available to those children exiting the juvenile court dependency system or to probation youth exiting the delinquency system to live with a related guardian.

The intent of the program is to provide an option for dependent and delinquent children to leave the juvenile court system to live with a relative legal guardian. Kin-GAP provides a subsidy to the family that is equal to 100% of the basic foster care rate, based upon age.

To find out if you may qualify for this you need to speak with the social worker assigned to the child by the courts.

For information on eligibility contact:
Funding Eligibility Unit Foster Care Audits and Rates Branch
744 P Street, MS 20-38
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 324-4873
http://www.dss.ca.gov/cfsweb/pg1354.htm

Food Assistance
It may seem at times that a grandchild’s stomach is a bottomless pit. It may be difficult to meet the nutritional needs for a child without some financial assistance. The following programs may help to extend a family’s food budget.

Cal Fresh (Formerly SNAP)- Also known as Food stamps. Food stamps are used like cash or electronic “debit” cards at most grocery stores. Generally, they can be used to buy food items that are prepared and eaten at home as well as seeds and plants to grow food. Kinship caregivers do not need legal custody or guardianship to apply for food stamps on behalf of the children they are raising.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)- This program can help eligible kinship caregivers meet the special nutritional needs of their young grandchildren. WIC provides free food and formula to eligible low income children up to age five. The grandchildren must have certain types of health conditions, like anemia or growth problems, or another condition that requires the child to eat more nutritious food. Children must get a health screening when they apply to see if their condition qualifies.

For more information on SNAP or WIC or to apply you can contact:

SLO County Department of Social Services
Atascadero Arroyo Grande
461-6000 474-2000
Paso Robles San Luis Obispo
237-3110 781-1600

Brown Bag Supplemental Food- This program is free and distributes groceries to low income seniors 60 and over twice monthly at sites in the community.

For more information on the Brown Bag food program or to apply you can contact:

Food Bank of SLO
Paso Robles
238-4664
Oceano
481-4652

Health Insurance
For more information contact Senior Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552
**Medi-Cal**

Medi-Cal is a state and federally funded health coverage program that includes coverage for infants less than one year of age with family incomes up to 200% of the federal income guidelines, children between the ages of one and six with family incomes up to 133%, and children between 6 and 19 with family incomes below 100%. For example, a child between the ages of 1 and 6, in a family of four, with net family income at or below 133% of the federal poverty level ($27,467) would be eligible for no-cost Medi-Cal. In some situations it is possible to apply for Medi-Cal based on the child’s income independent of the primary caregiver.

For more information on the Medi-Cal program or to apply you can contact:

**SLO County Department of Social Services**

Atascadero       Arroyo Grande  
461-6000          474-2000

Paso Robles       San Luis Obispo 
237-3110          781-1600

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**Healthy Families**

Healthy Families is low cost insurance for children and teens. It provides health, dental and vision coverage to children who do not have insurance and do not qualify for free Medi-Cal. Children in Healthy Families must live in California and:

- Be age 18 or younger
- Not be eligible for no-cost Medi-Cal
- Children in families with incomes within the Healthy Families Guidelines
- Live in families without health insurance from an employer for the past three months
- Meet citizenship or immigration requirements

Members pay a small monthly premium each month and a co-payment when they go to the doctor or get other services. Some services are free. Enrollment can be done through any local Healthy Families Enrollment Entity.

To find a Healthy Families Enrollment Entity call 1-888-747-1222.

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**Legal Resources**

**Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)**

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children. They stay with child case until the case is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

Volunteers get to know the child and meet with the people who are important in that child's life: family members, teachers, medical professionals and others. Their research informs the decisions of the judge and ultimately helps the child to find a safe, permanent home.

**CASA of San Luis Obispo County**

75 Higuera, Suite 180  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
(805) 541-6542

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**Child Care Assistance**

Raising a child is a 24 hour a day job. There are times when grandparents cannot be available to provide that care. Finding affordable and appropriate child care can be difficult. The following resources are available to help.

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**Pepper Tree Counseling Services**

San Luis Obispo  
545-9449

**Self Help Legal Resources**

**Family Law Self Help** offers individual appointments in Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo for family law issues to discuss individual cases. All scheduled appointments will take place at the Courthouse in Paso Robles located at 901 Park Street, Room 111 or the Court Support Services Building at 1120 Mill Street in San Luis Obispo.

For Appointments call:

**Family Self Help Appointments**

(805) 788-2491

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**Family Law Walk In Center** assists with all family law issues including custody, visitation, child support, domestic violence and Department of Child Support Services cases. They also assist in civil harassment, name change and guardianship cases.

**San Luis Obispo Courthouse Hours and Location:**

Wednesday and Thursdays, 8:30 am - 11:30 am at the San Luis Obispo Courthouse on the 2nd Floor in Department 11. For child support issues only staff are available Wednesdays, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm at the SLO Courthouse Annex located at 1035 Palm St., Department 11, San Luis Obispo

**Paso Robles Courthouse Hours and Location:**

Tuesdays, 8:30 am - 11:30 am and 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm at 901 Park Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446. Please sign-in and complete registration forms located in Room 117 then wait for the next available staff person.

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For more information contact Senor Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552
Emotional Supports
Support Groups and Caregiver Education

Raising children later in life can be a major shift in plans for many people and can result in challenging emotions. Many caregivers report high levels of stress, depression and frustration. The following services are available to help them adjust and get on going emotional support.

Kinship Care Programs
These programs provide a forum for families providing kinship care to secure training and practical support. They are also a place for families acting as foster parents to receive training in order to meet the requirements of the foster placement as well.

The following are Kinship Care programs available in the San Luis Obispo County area.

Cuesta College
Foster & Kinship Care Program
Mimi Feliciano-Hix
546-3156

Kinship Center
Templeton
434-2126

Support Groups
Support groups consist of people with similar needs or goals who have come together to share information, coping skills and offer each other emotional support. They can be a valuable emotional support network. Support groups help people to feel less isolated and alone. In addition it can be a resource for developing coping skills and communication skills.

The following are support group resources in the San Luis Obispo County area:

Kinship Center
Templeton
Marta Nielsen
434-2126 ext 30

Counseling
Many people experiencing difficulty adjusting to their new role or need a more private setting to share difficult feelings choose to get counseling. Counseling can provide a safe place to discuss difficult issues, find direction or get more comprehensive therapy.

The following is a list of resources available for counseling.

Wilshire Community Services
Senior Peer Counseling
Free counseling services provided by a trained, non professional counselor.
547-7025 ext. 15

Cal Poly Community Counseling Service
756-1532
Services provided by Graduate Students.

Calm, Clear and Connected
San Luis Obispo and Atascadero
544-2273 or 466-4681

Community Counseling Center
A non profit community organization providing short term counseling and counseling information.
San Luis Obispo
543-7969

Kinship Center
Provides mental health services to minors and their family caregivers.
Templeton
434-2126

For more information contact Senor Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552

Child Care Referrals
These organizations maintain an up-to-date listing of licensed child care providers. Referrals are free and available to all parents. Referral Counselors can help people decide what type of care is best for their child and give information about what to look for and what questions to ask when visiting a potential child care provider. Referrals are not to be confused with recommendations.

For resources on licensed child care providers, contact the following referral providers:

Community Action Partnership Child Care Resource Center
Atascadero
Paso Robles & Cambria
461-6032
226-3234
San Luis Obispo
South County
781-1719
474-2092
Coastal communities
(805) 474-2092

TrustLine:
The TrustLine Registry is a database of nannies and babysitters that have cleared criminal background checks. TrustLine can be used to find a registered caregiver, see if a caregiver is already registered with TrustLine or have a caregiver screened.

1.800.822.8490
www.trustline.org

Subsidized Child Care
Alternative Payment Program
The Alternative Payment Program is a subsidized child care program that serves:

- low-income families who are employed, seeking employment, or participating in a job training or education program.
- children who are “subjected to” or “at risk of” abuse, neglect, or exploitation and have a referral from a legally qualified professional from a medical or social services agency, or an emergency shelter may also be eligible.
- parents who are incapacitated and families that are homeless. Child Protective Services and “At Risk” families shall be served first.

The Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) Program is designed to be a central application point for all publicly subsided child care programs.

Community Action Partnership Child Care Resource Center
Deborah Smith, CEL Supervisor
782-4722
Toll free: (888) 727-2272

Child Development/ Education
For more information contact Senor Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552
Child development and education resources are critical to giving children the opportunity to succeed. Once children enter primary school, many of the services are directed through their school, and information about programs can be found by contacting the school counselor. The following information is focused on early child development resources available in your community:

Low Income Pre School Programs
Head Start - Created in 1965, Head Start is the most successful, longest-running, national school readiness program in the United States. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families.

The following is a contact list for Head Start sites in San Luis Obispo County:

Atascadero
San Gabriel West
466-8181 Ext. 120

Grover Beach
Grover Beach Elementary
489-4799

Los Osos
Sunnyside Elementary
528-4808

Morro Bay
Del Mar Elementary
772-2932

Nipomo
Nipomo High School
929-1114

Oceano
Oceano Elementary
481-5842

For more information contact Senior Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552

State Pre-Schools- Are open to preschool children three to five years of age. They provide a three-hour per day, parent/child education program (expanded day programs offered in some locations). They are free to families whose gross monthly income does not exceed the income ceilings established by the California Department of Education. Proof of income and birth certificate are required to determine eligibility.

The following is a contact list for sites in San Luis Obispo County:

Paso Robles
Marie Bauer Elementary
237-3481

Winfred Pfier Elementary
237-3435

Georgia Brown
237-3480

San Luis Obispo
Chris Jespersen Elementary
466-8181 Ext. 206

San Miguel
Lillian Larsen Elementary
467-3626

Shandon
Shandon Elementary
238-6814

For more information contact Senior Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552

Disability Resources
Raising a child with a developmental disability or delay can be challenging. There are resources to help caregivers with training and additional programs for child development and care. The following resources may be helpful for families with a child with a disability.

Case Management – Is assistance in coordinating state and federal services for persons with developmental disabilities. Children who have been diagnosed with a developmental disability or need assessment to determine if they have a developmental disability can receive case management services from Tri Counties Regional Center.

Tri-Counties Regional Center
San Luis Obispo
(805) 543-2833 or (805) 456-4153

Atascadero
(805) 461-7402

In Home Care - Children with profound care needs may require paid care services. In Home Supportive Services may be available to assist with the in home care of a child with a disability. The child must qualify for Medi-Cal. The In Home Supportive Services Program is operated by the county's Department of Social Services.

For more information or to apply for IHSS contact:

In Home Supportive Services
781-1790

For more information contact Senior Connection at (800) 510-2020 or (805) 928-2552