Support for Grandfamilies and Relative Caregivers: A Mosaic of Intervention Strategies

Webinar
Center for Schools and Communities

May 3, 2017 (10:00 a.m.)
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Intervention strategies for meeting the needs of grandfamilies

• Support groups
• Retreats and other activities for strengthening families
• Web-based resources
  – Including the PA Kinship Navigator: an online database of programs, services, and resources available for kinship care families in Pennsylvania
• Creating intergenerational spaces and places for building meaningful relationships

(Re-)Building Families

• Helping family members:
  • become more aware of each other’s needs
  • find ways to provide and receive support from one another
  • learn together
  • re-negotiate relationships
  • Learn how to function as part of an integrated family
Support Groups

- What’s in a name? Some alternatives to “support group”
  - “Chat and Chews”
  - “Coffee and Conversation” group
  - “Family fun night”

- Self help and networking:
  - “experienced” families help those who are new to facing kinship care-related circumstances...

- Short presentations (mostly from partnering agencies) – on topics such as:
  - Legal issues
  - Educational issues/teaching strategies
  - Family communication dynamics
  - Access to mental health services

- Incentives – e.g., potluck meals, gift cards, snacks, refreshments, prizes, school supplies, etc.

- Family activities

“I thought I had the baddest kids in the world. When I got [to the support group] and heard other grandparents speak, it was comforting for me to know that there are some other bad ones. It helped me to deal with them.”

Kinship Family Retreats

• Kinship Family Retreats conducted in Pennsylvania
• Retreat is for at least 8 families, with grandparents and other caregivers and their school age children (ages 3-18).
• Provides structured, shared educational and recreational activities in a stress-free setting.

Kinship Family Retreats (cont’d)

• Some adult time
• Some children/youth time
• Some intergenerational (family) time
  ▪ Single family time
    • reinforcing family identity
    • creating new memories
    • establishing new family traditions
  ▪ Multi-family time

Family bonding time

Retreat participants make FAMILY BANNERS and display them at the family brunch.
Hangout time.
Catching fish together

THE FRIDGE FARM RETREAT – Result of an “unlikely partnership”
Funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) through PA Nutrition Education Tracks, part of USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

My Plate Roll-Up – with fresh vegetables from the farm.

“Out with the Unhealthy and In with the Healthy” mobile-making activity.

Learning about the farm-table connection

Imagine the possibilities if exploring farm-food-family connections.
What participants learn from the retreats

• Communication skills
  – “It is better to use positive questions and reinforcement statements, without critical remarks.”
  – “Don’t yell. Try to settle things calmly.”
  – “Don’t make decisions when angry.
  – “It is okay to share sad feelings.”
  – “I will first ask myself how a 9 year old would solve problems.”
• Glad to not to feel “different” or “judged.”

Depressurizing the idea of “family time”

• [The most valuable thing I learned from the weekend retreat:]
  – “I found out that my grandpa used to like catching butterflies.”
• [The grandfather responded:]
  – “And he is going to make sure we do this together when we get home.”

Another example of a creative partnership that can generate new opportunities for family time
### Intergenerational Activity Ideas

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<th>Activity Ideas</th>
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<td>Bad Show/Flash Show</td>
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<td>What People Say</td>
<td>Make a &quot;Story Chart&quot;</td>
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<td>What People Like To Do</td>
<td>Sing Along (Old and New Songs)</td>
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<td>Social &amp; Family Values</td>
<td>Photos Storybook Composition</td>
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<td>The Need for Self Expression</td>
<td>Share Your Favorite Hobby Exercise</td>
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<td>Connection with Community</td>
<td>A Comparison of Old vs. New Games</td>
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<td>Develop a Chart Listing &quot;The Commitments of Good Living&quot;</td>
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<td>Intergenerational Poetry Writing</td>
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<td>Neighborhood Identification Program (e.g., gardening)</td>
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**Sharing “our moves” with others**

![Image of people dancing]

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**Vegetable Gardening**

Join us on June 8th for an informative and fun workshop on planting and cultivating your own vegetable garden.

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**Every Day a Little Play**

“Sensory Activities for Early MISSORIES COMMUNITY YWCA

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**Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP)**

**Family Holiday Party!**

Sat., Dec 5, 2015, 1-4 pm

Great Companions Network/Orange County

**Join us for our Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Family Holiday Party!**

**Thank you for your participation!**
Exercising together

-- Not thinking about exercise as exercise. (Stealth Exercise)
-- Making exercise part of the family experience.
Some intergenerational “ice breaker” activities

• Slang Chart
• Spelling Game
• Dancing in the Mirror
• Two Truths and a Could Be
• “Confronting the Stereotypes”
• Age-line or Concentric Circles
• Role plays

From the Intergenerational Activities Sourcebook (Kaplan & Hanhardt, 2003. Penn State University, University Park, PA.)

Playing games with family members

The Stump Your Relative Game

Steps:
(1) Pair up with one or more family members or friends who are from other generations.
(2) Have each participant gather a few items that people in their generation tend to know a lot about (e.g., finger bikes, fountain pens, etc.)
(3) For each item, let relatives/friends guess what it is.
(4) Once relatives/friends guess what the item is (or give up guessing), provide additional information about how the item is used.

Examples of Young People’s Items
Examples of Older People’s Items
Web-based resource for supporting kinship care families in PA

- **The PA Kinship Navigator**
  - The PA Kinship Navigator is an online database of programs, services, and resources available for kinship care families in Pennsylvania.
  - Information is presented by county.
  - It’s an interactive database: Relevant information and resources could be posted to this website by filling out an online “submit a program” form.
  - [http://aesop.psu.edu/extension/intergenerational/program-areas/kinship/submit](http://aesop.psu.edu/extension/intergenerational/program-areas/kinship/submit)
  - A Penn State Extension service for all residents of Pennsylvania.

Creating Intergenerational Spaces and Places for building meaningful relationships

Objects that generate intergenerational curiosity and engagement

- **The Memory Chest**
  - A “Neighborhood Reminiscence” approach (The Netherlands)

- **4-H community service project**
  - Handmade top from Turkey (Project in The Netherlands)

- **Playing dress-up at the childcare center**
Some objects with the potential to “transform” settings

Objects that help prepare for family travel

Road-tripping with kids

Road Trip Bingo
Toys as Intergenerational tools
Toy museums, toy hospitals, toy libraries

Examples of items that go into: “Remember Me – Inheritance Kits” (Candice Ng, Nanyang Technological University)

By embedding a memory chip that contains personal recordings, stories, histories and messages into these items, they provide a living, personalized record of that person's existence. [RFID (embedded data) chip reader will display audio and visual information stored in the RFID chips that are swiped over the surface.]

Smelling the Coneflowers
Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder Intergenerational Contest (mixed media division) winner. 2015. Team members: Barbara, Anika, Alara, Porter, Noa, Ann and Laura. Photo Credit: Barbara Achendorf.
Considerations of the “intergenerational bonding” potential of objects

- It’s not just about the actual object:
  - The meaning(s) people have about the object
  - Opportunities for multiple generations to engage the object
  - “Positioning” of the object in relationship-enhancing ways
  - The potential of the object to stimulate intergenerational curiosity and discovery
  - The context: social context, societal values, and institutional policies, etc.

What about the *intergenerational bonding* potential of this object?

The Dutch have a saying:

*Unknown is unloved.*
GrandRally-2017
May 10, 2017 in Washington, DC

“5th National GrandRally will elevate the critical role
grandparents and other relatives play in providing safe,
loving, permanent families for children and the policy
changes needed to effectively support them while
building and strengthening a community of hope.

The previous four GrandRallies effectively educated
policy makers about the unique needs of the families
and created momentum to pass key policies such as
Fostering Connections for Success and LEGACY
intergenerational housing.”

Some Resources

• Building and Maintaining a Support Group (Melinda Perez-Porter, Director, Relatives
As Parents Program (RAPP), Brookdale Foundation)
  http://articles.extension.org/pages/20325/building-and-maintaining-a-support-group
• Conducting a Kinship Family Retreat (Penn State Extension)
  http://articles.extension.org/pages/31281/conducting-a-kinship-family-retreat
• Doubly Stressed, Triple Blessed’ (Penn State Extension): An online curriculum for
  holding a public forum on issues faced by grandfamilies (Penn State Extension)
• Generations United’s website on supports for grandfamilies:
  http://www.gu.org/OURWORK/Grandfamilies.aspx
• Brookdale Foundation – Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) website:
  http://www.brookdalefoundation.net/RAPP/rapp.html
• Penn State Intergenerational Program website: http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu
• The PA Kinship Navigator website: http://aesop.psu.edu/extension/intergenerational/program-areas/kinship/programs

The Penn State Intergenerational Program

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