

Review of: Second Time Around: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Curriculum Guide for Group Leaders

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The number of grandchildren living in grandparent-headed households almost doubled from 1960 to 2000 - from 2.4 million to 4.5 million (Hill 2002). That includes 6.3 percent of U.S. children under 18 (Census 2000). Put another way, for one-third of grandparents who care for grandchildren neither parent of the grandchild is present. According to Census 2000 data, of 5.8 million grandparents who lived with their grandchildren under age 18 in 2000, 42 percent (2.4 million) were the grandchildren's primary caregivers and 39 percent had cared for their grandchildren for five or more years (Census 2003). Grandparents raising grandchildren face many challenges (Barber & Kubin 2001; Pinson-Milburn, Fabian, Schlossberg, and Pyle 1996). These grandparents need current, research-based information and effective educational programs.

We searched the literature for written workshop curricula for grandparents raising grandchildren with four components. We sought curricula that

- were research based
- addressed the needs of grandparents as identified in the research literature
- showed empirical evidence of program effectiveness with grandparents and with grandchildren and
- included materials ready for busy Cooperative Extension agents to use.

We searched the World Wide Web and completed computer literature searches for as many years as possible. We asked colleagues on various listservs to recommend curricula. As a result, we found two grandparents-raising-grandchildren curricula. Only one met the inclusion standards, and it is the focus of this review.

Second Time Around: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Curriculum Guide For Group Leaders was developed by Linda Dannison and Ann Nieuwenhuis (1994) at Western Michigan

University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Suggested targeted audiences are grandparents who are raising grandchildren and professionals interested in responding to the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren. Overall program goals are (1) to provide an educational program that offers grandparents valuable information and resources to help them in their grandparenting role and (2) to develop a forum in which grandparent caregivers can build peer support and exchange ideas and information.

Dannison and Nieuwenhuis (1994) provide a 442-page curriculum for group leaders. They first provide practical background information that group leaders can use to select facilitators, develop a budget, and market the program. The authors provide practical information on the roles of the facilitator, techniques for developing and maintaining a cohesive group, tips for managing difficult group members, and tips for creating a learning environment. The authors provide eight chapters. Each chapter includes process objectives, expected outcomes, suggested sequence, presentation plan, content information, experiential activities, one-page worksheets, tip sheets, and a weekly evaluation. A chapter overview follows:

1. Understanding Your "Not-So-New" Role. The goal is to explore the roles and responsibilities of today's grandparent care providers (p. 57).
2. Promoting Personal Well-being (Physical and Emotional). The goal is to provide grandparents with information regarding the promotion of their physical and emotional well-being (p. 101).
3. Refining Parenting Skills. The goals are to reacquaint grandparents with children's development and to provide suggestions for effective age-appropriate grandparent/grandchild interactions (p. 161).
4. Building Relationships. The goal is to assist grandparents in gaining skills that will help them to develop and maintain positive relationships (p. 203).
5. Working with School and Community. The goals are to provide grandparents with information about school policies, to assist grandparents in developing realistic expectations about what schools are like today, to improve grandparents' interactions with school personnel, to help grandparents make choices that will enhance their grandchild(ren)'s achievement in school, and to link to local community resources (p. 263).
6. Managing Finances. The goal is to provide an opportunity for grandparents to discuss their financial situations, review their current money management practices, and learn more about today's financial techniques (p. 309).

7. Exploring Legal Issues. The goal is to provide grandparents with information about the court system (p. 377).
8. Looking to the Future. The goal is to support participants in bringing closure to their experience as a group (p. 417).

Dannison and Nieuwenhuis (1994) provide weekly evaluation sheets and expected outcome achievement logs, which may provide some evidence of low-level knowledge gains. Further work and research is needed to develop clear empirical indications of high-level behavioral change and program impact. Much of the legal information in Chapter 7 is specific to Michigan. Facilitators in other states are encouraged to invite a local attorney to cover state-specific legal issues related to grandparents raising grandchildren.

Key teaching strategies include small group-format, educational presentations with discussion, individual activities, group activities, possible guest presentation, informal talk time, handouts, and transparencies. Materials include a facilitator's guide, educational module, resource list, and support materials (handouts, activities, discussion topics, and evaluation forms). The curriculum includes 16 two-hour modules, and the authors recommend using only 8 of those. The program costs \$75. No formal teacher training is needed because the facilitator guide is self-explanatory. The facilitator guide covers facilitating group discussion, budgeting, planning, implementing, and evaluating the program.

The curriculum was evaluated on four criteria:

- Has an obvious research base: yes.
- Has evidence of program effectiveness: yes. The program offers suggestive outcome data with participant satisfaction from a study with weak design. A preliminary study with two small experimental groups by Vacha-Haase, Ness, and Smith (2001) is available. There was no control group. Grandparents completed the "Session Evaluation Form" after each of the sessions. They assessed their interest in the session, enjoyment of the session, ability to understand the information, usefulness of the information to improve their ability to care for their grandchild, and the overall usefulness of the session from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Grandparents reported that the most useful content was managing finances and exploring legal issues. They reported that the sessions that were most useful to improve their ability to care for their grandchildren were managing finances, working with school and community, and exploring legal issues.

- Addresses the needs of grandparents as identified in the research literature: yes. According to anecdotal reports made to the first author, it appears that Second Time Around does address the informational needs of grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Is ready to use: yes. Almost everything a professional needs is here (and more). He or she may want to seek out more current local statistics and legal information.

This curriculum is available from Ms. Dannison, Program Support, (269) 387-3704, e-mail linda.dannison@wmich.edu.

References

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