

## Community Conversation

Grandparents raising their grandchildren

Lakota West High School

January 14, 2020

*What's important for school leaders to know?*

You can get Medicaid and TANF if you're raising grandchildren and need financial help. You get it through the state, and you can do it online.

Kinship Navigator is free of charge and has a variety of supports.

There's a kinship newsletter. It's a way to get information. Make sure you're in that support loop.

With the idea that you're raising your grandchild, you're socially isolated. That's not who they go to for a playgroup.

Children with disabilities, who have IEPs, cognitive difficulties, you have to spend extra time teaching them. It's repetition over and over and over.

It's not pleasant when the kids are teenagers. Mine, he wants nobody to get near him or touch him. The only time he lets his guard down is with friends. But anxiety and depression are overtaking him.

Mine is younger but still acts like a teenager all the time. He's getting bigger, and we're getting older.

My granddaughter doesn't know how to express herself. It creates anxiety for me. What if I die in my sleep? What's going to happen to her? And she's not only dealing with stress, and anxiety, but with PTSD because of what happened before she lived with us

One thing schools could do, if the school psychologists could get extra training and knowledge about these kids.

Mindpeace is just fabulous. It has been a godsend.

So much about kids is different today. It's want, want, want, especially technology.

Kids can't survive without it. They know more than their parents do.

My granddaughter, she's very savvy. I have to sit and watch her. There's a lot of stress from the ongoing vigilance.

With mine, I actually kind of like it. She can help me navigate on the computer or the phone.

I went from being grandma to now, I have to be her mother. I have to stick to things. I'm shifting from spoiling to disciplining.

-We grew up with spare the rod and spoil the child. That doesn't work any more. Kids today, they know their rights. They say, "Let's see what the sheriff will say..."

We come from a background where you really have to work at inserting yourself into their life.

If I ever had talked to my father or mother like that, I wouldn't be sitting here.

You have to find the right way to nudge them, to try to get them to the right path.

There's a lack of respect for teachers and society. And the language – I'm shocked at what I'm hearing. Even the girls.

When I was growing up you respected your elders even if they didn't deserve it. Now you have to earn it.

Our kids are really good. We take them to church so they're around good people all the time.

There are anger issues, and elder abuse. Our grandson was starting to get physical in his anger. The counselor said call the police. She said they'll just talk to him the first time, and that's often enough.

*What are the schools doing that's been helpful?*

The teachers, their assistants – their compassion. They're very good at communicating. That has been the biggest support.

They know the situation, that you're the one with custody.

You get a sense from Lakota that's genuine caring. They give a damn. They care.

The IEP was very helpful. It gave us data and support. The training for how to access school records was very helpful.

The teachers, when they're starting a new semester, there's a lot of emails with a lot of information on what's to be expected for the students.

The counseling. We get help from Children's Hospital.

Ours is from Community First.

For counseling services, each school goes through its own selection process as to what provider there will be. They ask about what insurance they take when they select a provider.

*What would be helpful for the schools to do?*

A way for grandparents to network...maybe a closed Facebook page.

Meetings are difficult. They're hard to get to.

I'm in a couple of grandparent support groups and they're a godsend.

I found everything I found on my own. The district didn't help -- and I work for the district

Emails to grandparents with information specific to them.

Transportation at the freshman building.

Someone you can leave the kids with when you have a meeting, like interviewing the therapist.

Thought we had right paperwork, then more hoops to jump thru to get them in school

When you first get the kids, it's a complete disruption to your life.

I went to court and got them that afternoon. All of a sudden I'm thinking about what to make everyone for dinner.

You have to ask what services are out there. They won't automatically offer it to you. Maybe it could be part of a checklist or a packet.

A support group for the kids themselves – the ones being raised by grandparents.

At school they call us mom and dad. At home we're grandma and grandpa.

Kinship Navigator is not just for grandparents. It's for anyone caring for a child they didn't give birth to.

The PTAs are different in each school.

Things like Muffins with Mom and Donuts with Dad. I never had that before. I don't know if it's an outreach type thing or a PTA thing, but maybe a way to be included.

Those programs are changing. Our school does KISS – Kids Invite Someone Special.

I've always wanted a support group, especially in the very beginning. We are raising these young kids and it's exhausting. We need something like an AA for grandparents.

Narcanon started in West Chester two years ago, at Bethany United Methodist. Anyone affected by substance abuse can come. Some who come have grandparent issues like these. It's Thursday nights at seven.