

Celebrating Grandparents and Kinship Caregivers



The Department for the Aging's Grandparent Resource Center provides resources and support to help grandparents who are kinship caregivers.

During challenging times, we all need someone to turn to for love and support. And more often than not, the people we seek most are family. Our families are the first to step in when we need help and guidance.

This month, we are celebrating two special groups of family members – grandparents and kinship caregivers, who show us that love is without limits or boundaries. September is Kinship Care Month and National Grandparents' Day is celebrated the Sunday after Labor Day. And there are many reasons to celebrate these family members beyond September.

In many households, grandparents and kinship caregivers keep families together by caring for young children during times of hardship. These caregivers are older adults who are grandparents, aunts, and uncles. And although many of them are retired, they step up to fill the full-time job of parenting children and youth.

[The New York City Department for the Aging's Grandparent Resource Center](#) recognizes the challenges and demands grandparents and older kinship caregivers face and helps them by providing a variety of support services and resources. The pandemic has proved to be a

challenge for many, especially for grandparent caregivers and older kinship caregivers who were new to this role and found themselves with limited information to guide them. At the start of the pandemic, the Grandparent Resource Center transitioned its in-person services to virtual services to keep providing case assistance, support groups, and other resources to older kinship caregivers during the City's shutdown.

During the early months of the pandemic, the Grandparent Resource Center also distributed free computer tablets equipped with Wi-Fi to caregivers so they could access virtual programing, navigate remote learning for children, and stay in touch with others. The initiative has been successful in bridging the digital divide and connecting generations through technology. To keep that momentum going, I am happy to announce that the City will continue to offer another year of free internet service for caregivers who were provided free tablets.

This fall, the Grandparent Resource Center has been helping kinship caregivers and children prepare for the new school year. Starting September 28th, the Center is offering a seven-week Virtual Empowerment Program series to help grandparent caregivers strengthen their parenting and communications skills with their grandchildren and learn how to stay connected to their community and support network during COVID-19. Grandparents or kinship caregivers can sign up for the course by calling (212) 442-1094 or emailing GRC@aging.nyc.gov.

The Grandparent Resource Center also partnered with the Butler Hodson Senior Center in the Bronx and other organizations for "Vax to School" events where youth ages 12 years and older could get the COVID-19 vaccine, receive school supplies, and learn health tips and safety measures in protecting themselves from COVID-19.

For caregivers, getting children ready for school is only a small part of their work. Raising a child in a healthy and safe environment takes a lot of time, dedication, and commitment. Our grandparent caregivers, John Medina and Doris Lewis, are great examples of that. They both recently received the "2021 Outstanding Kinship Care Award" from the NYS KinCare Coalition for their exceptional caregiving role.

John, a veteran from Brooklyn, is the primary caregiver of his two grandchildren, whom he started taking care of a few years ago and they are now at the age of three and six. As a devoted grandfather, John works hard to make sure both children, who have medical conditions, have the proper health check-ups. While John is relatively new to his role, Doris has been the grandparent caregiver to her 16-year-old grandson since birth. Her commitment as a grandmother and primary caregiver has helped her grandson excel academically in school. She is also very proud to say that she has passed on the respect and manners needed for him to be a young gentleman.

During this month and throughout the year, we are honored to celebrate all grandparents and kinship caregivers who are preparing the next generation for success by showing them the love and care of family.

For information about the services and support offered by the Grandparent Resource Center, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/aging.



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