



GRANDPARENTS
RAISING
GRANDCHILDREN



A RESOURCE & LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

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DEFINITION, RESOURCES, HELP

PENNSYLVANIA GRANDPARENTS

RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

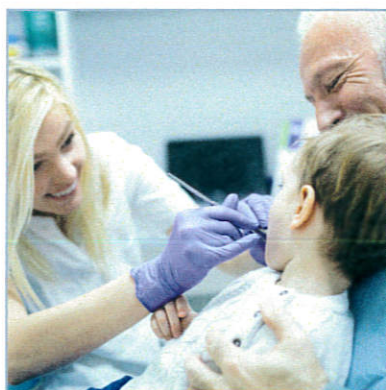
In 2017, there were nearly 90,000 Pennsylvania grandparents who were responsible for the basic needs of one or more grandchildren under the age of 18. These grandparents are caring for approximately 195,000 children, which is about 7.2 percent of all children in our state. Over 20 percent of these grandparents are living below the poverty level.

Kinship caregivers, particularly grandparents, face a variety of emotional, legal and daily living challenges as they unexpectedly find themselves in the position of raising a second family. Many factors contribute to the dramatic increase in the number of kinship care families, including:

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Teenage pregnancy
- HIV/AIDS
- Incarceration
- Divorce
- Loss of a parent

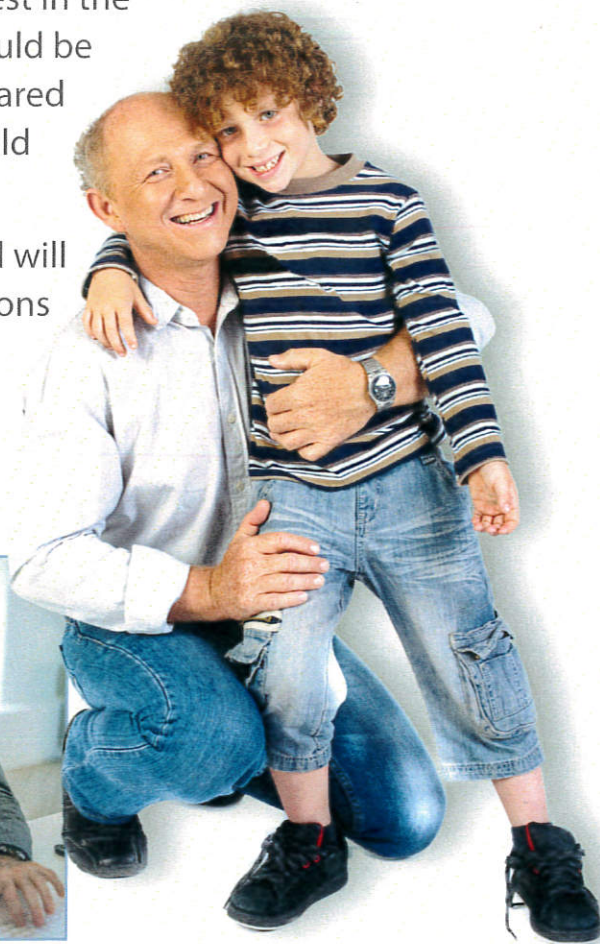
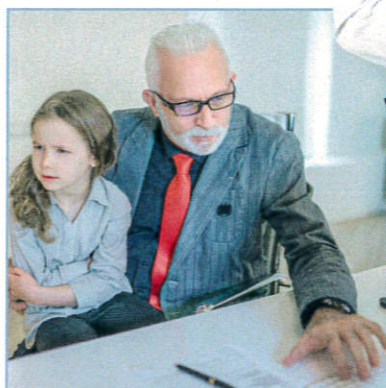
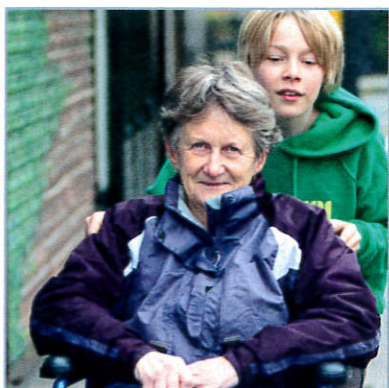
WHAT IS KINSHIP CARE?

Kinship care is defined as the full-time nurturing and protection of children who must be separated from their parent(s) and temporarily placed in the home of a caregiver.



WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE?

- Various community agencies may have an interest in the home life of a child. As a result, these places should be aware of this growing trend so they can be prepared to meet the challenges that may arise for the child and/or caregiver.
- The needs of each grandparent caring for a child will vary from one to the next and program innovations must take this into consideration for the success of the family.





WHAT IS PENNSYLVANIA DOING ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

THE FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM (FCSP)

This program allows the Pennsylvania Department of Aging to provide aid to those who find themselves in a kinship care situation. For more information on how the FCSP may be able to help you, contact your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) at 1-800-753-8827.

ACT 88 OF 2018

This law allows a grandparent or family relative to petition for temporary guardianship of a child when the parent has entered a rehabilitation facility or has received emergency medical intervention for the abuse of drugs or alcohol.

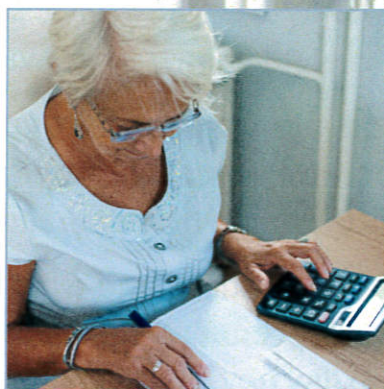
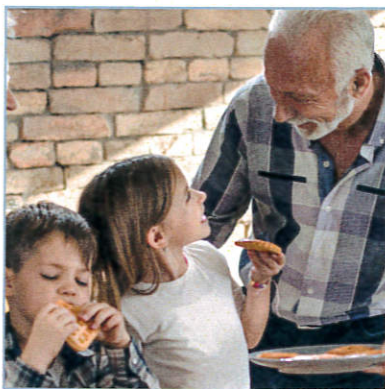
ACT 89 OF 2018

In 2018, the General Assembly passed the Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program (Act 89) and Governor Wolf signed it into law that same year.

This law establishes the Pennsylvania State Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program for the purpose of providing information about services and support available to kinship caregivers. Act 89 requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to hire a contractor to create and maintain a website that fulfills that purpose and the Bair Foundation has been selected. When up and running, this site will contain information on state and federal programs, support groups for both the caregiver and child(ren) in their care, respite services, financial and legal aid, and educational support.

In addition to the website, the Bair Foundation is also required to establish and maintain a statewide toll-free phone number managed and serviced by trained Kinship Caregiver Navigators who can provide one-on-one support and guidance to kinship caregivers.

Please note: At the time of printing the website and the toll-free number were in progress and not yet available. For more information and site status inquiries, contact the Pennsylvania State Representative whose information is on the back of this guide.





TIPS WHEN SEEKING HELP

BE ORGANIZED

Make a separate folder for each child. Write the child's date of birth, Social Security number, health care information and important telephone numbers on the inside of the folder. Be advised this information is considered confidential and needs to be stored appropriately. Use this folder to store all your notes and records about the child. Include, for example, last known addresses of the child's parents.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Find out as much information about an agency as possible. Learn what services the agency provides, how to apply for services, and what information and documents will be needed. Learn who is in charge of the services you need.
- Make a written agenda of your questions and what you want to learn. Review the list just before you talk with the person. Write down all the answers and check off each item as you go.

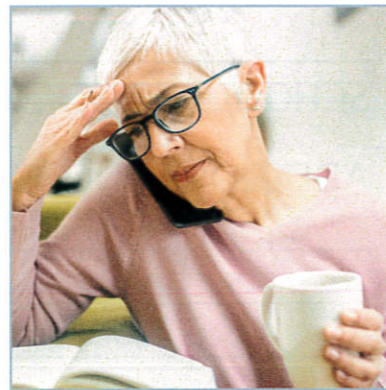
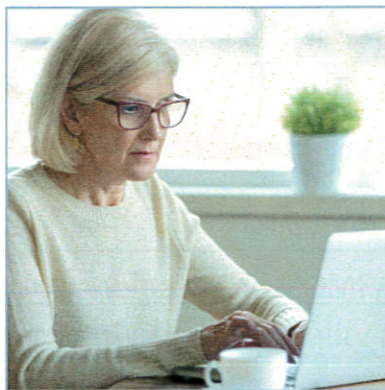
BE PERSISTENT

There are no wrong doors. If you call an agency that doesn't offer what you are looking for or what you need, this is your opportunity to ask for referrals.

- Keep notes and documents of who you talked to and what they told you to do next.
- Request the names and phone numbers of other organizations that may help. If you call a referral and find out it's no longer there, simply ask if there is a replacement. Be persistent; don't give up.
- If you are not satisfied with the progress you are making, ask to speak to a supervisor. Document that your efforts to go through the proper channels have been unsuccessful.

DON'T ISOLATE YOURSELF

Friends, family, neighbors, church members, etc. can be powerful sources of support. If they are not able to help, they may know someone who can. Make contact with others via support groups.



KEEP YOUR OWN RECORDS

Although agencies are required to keep records, you should keep your own copies.

- Keep records of the dates and times you make phone calls. Note if the line is constantly busy, if no one answers, or when you leave a message and no one returns your calls.
- Take notes of phone conversations and appointments. Get names, titles, agency names and phone numbers of everyone. Ask for business cards.
- Write down your own thoughts and questions to ask when it is your turn to talk. After the conversation has ended, immediately review your notes for understanding and confirm with the person what each of you will do.

YOUR LOCAL SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE



www.ssa.gov



Phone: 1-800-772-1213



TTY: 1-800-325-0778

Find your local Social Security Office at this link:



<https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

You can search for your local Social Security Office and contact them to determine if you or your grandchild(ren) are eligible for any additional benefits.

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH COUNTY RESOURCE GUIDES



www.health.pa.gov

The Department of Health has created guides for available health and human services in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Each guide contains resources for children with special needs, health insurance, housing and more.

UNITED WAY OF PENNSYLVANIA



www.uwp.org



Phone: 211 or 717-238-7365

When you call you will be connected with a United Way operator who has access to a database of health and human services resources available in local areas. These services include support groups, counseling centers, relevant non-profit organizations and more.

SPECIAL KIDS NETWORK



www.health.pa.gov



Phone: 1-800-986-4550

The Special Kids Network offers a wealth of resources for children and youth with special needs or physical disabilities. The Network offers referrals to local resources, in-home coordination services and systematic support for families.

PA FAMILIES



www.PaFamiliesInc.org



Phone: 1-800-947-4941



Email: info@pafamiliesinc.org

PA Families is a non-profit that offers a database of resources for families caring for children with emotional, behavioral or special needs. You can find resources by searching for your county and/or the type of services you are seeking.

GRANDFAMILIES FACT SHEET



www.grandfamilies.org

This fact sheet includes information on a number of programs throughout Pennsylvania designed to support grandparents as they raise their grandchildren.

PA FAMILY SUPPORT ALLIANCE



www.pa-fsa.org



Phone: 1-800-448-4906

The PA Family Support Alliance is a non-profit that provides education, support and training to help ensure the safety of children throughout Pennsylvania. The website includes many parenting resources as well as information on events they frequently hold in different communities throughout the state.

PENNSYLVANIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES



www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/childwelfareservices



Phone: 1-800-932-0313

Pennsylvania's Child Welfare services include information and contact info for county Children and Youth offices, local family centers, and resources for preventing child abuse and neglect.

BEREAVEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE



www.elunanetwork.org/assets/guides/BereavementResourceGuide_Pennsylvania.pdf

This resource guide includes information about Pennsylvania organizations available to help children and families affected by grief and addiction.

CONTACTS:

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

AGENCY: _____

NAME OF CONTACT: _____

NOTES: _____

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

AGENCY: _____

NAME OF CONTACT: _____

NOTES: _____

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

AGENCY: _____

NAME OF CONTACT: _____

NOTES: _____

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

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LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

GRANDPARENT AND KINSHIP CARE LEGAL ISSUES

Kinship care providers are often faced with a complicated set of legal issues, particularly when they do not have legal custody of the children. Following is a list of current kinship care laws in Pennsylvania and where families can go for help. It is important to keep in mind, however, that laws and policies change and are subject to different interpretations. These general descriptions are not intended as legal advice in any particular situation.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LAWS AND POLICIES

In addition to the state's child guardianship and custody laws, the following laws may be helpful to kinship caregivers:

Medical Consent (11 P.S. §§ 2511-2513):

This law allows a child's legal guardian/custodian to permit a relative or family friend to consent to medical, surgical, dental, developmental, mental health or other treatment for the child.

Standby Guardianship (23 Pa. C.S. Ch. 56, Subch.B):

This law allows a parent or legal guardian to authorize a co-guardian to assume the care of the person or property for a child upon the parent's incapacity, debilitation or consent. A custodial parent or legal guardian may designate a standby guardian by means of written consent unless the child has another parent or adoptive parent (1) whose parental rights have NOT been terminated or relinquished, (2) whose whereabouts are known, and (3) who is willing and able to carry out the day-to-day childcare decisions concerning the child. Pennsylvania requires kin to be considered first when an out-of-home placement is sought for a child when under the care of the Department of Human Services. In terms of licensing for kinship foster parents, the same approval standards must be met. Also, grandparents and kinship caregivers can receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents in their county as long as they are a part of the foster care system through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Temporary Guardianship (23 Pa. C.S. Ch. 56, Subch.C):

This law allows a grandparent of a child, or other family member related to the child, to petition a court of common pleas for temporary guardianship of that child when a parent of that child has entered a rehabilitation facility for a treatment of drug or alcohol addiction, or has been subject to emergency medical intervention due to the abuse of drugs or alcohol.





FINDING LEGAL HELP

Although each community varies, available resources may include governmental agencies, social service agencies, faith-based organizations and other entities that are designed to provide assistance to people in need. Following is a list of resources that may be able to help you. If you are over 55, you may want to begin with calling your local Area on Aging at 1-800-753-8827.

PENNSYLVANIA BAR ASSOCIATION LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE



www.pabar.org/site/For-the-Public/Find-a-Lawyer



Phone: 1-800-932-0311

The Pennsylvania Bar Association provides lawyer referrals and information on local Bar Associations.

PA LAW HELP



www.palawhelp.org



Email: palawhelp@palegalaid.net

PA LAW HELP provides free information on a variety of civil legal issues including adoption, guardianship and custody. You can find information about legal proceedings and use the website's interactive tool (*LawHelp Interactive*) to fill out necessary forms and documents.

PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK



www.palegalaid.net



Phone: 1-800-322-7572

The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network connects individuals and families who meet income requirements to local Legal Aid programs that can assist them with legal matters.

STATEWIDE ADOPTION NETWORK (SWAN)



www.adoptpakids.org



Phone: 1-800-585-7926



Email: swanhelpline@diakon-swan.org

Administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, SWAN offers a network of resources and/or information for families and children going through the adoption, custody and guardianship processes. With regard to kinship families, they offer a variety of post-permanency services such as support groups and referrals to local family centers.

GRANDFAMILIES.ORG



www.grandfamilies.org

Grandfamilies.org is a national legal resource that provides information to grandparents as they navigate the legal aspect of caregiving.

Their website offers a searchable database of laws and pending legislation of importance to grandfamilies, as well as resource guides to guardianship, custody, foster care, financial assistance and contact information for local bar associations.



CONTACTS:

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

AGENCY: _____

NAME OF CONTACT: _____

NOTES: _____

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

DATE: _____ TIME: _____

AGENCY: _____

NAME OF CONTACT: _____

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RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

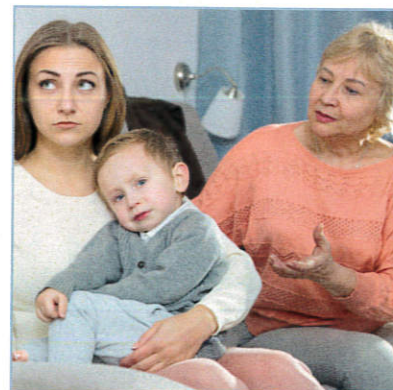
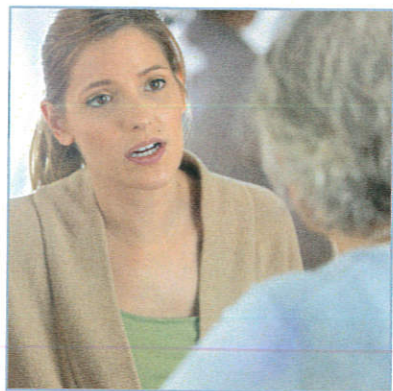
*No one knows your specific case better than you. Following are general suggestions for you to consider and utilize according to your own needs and circumstances:

CHANGES AND THE EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Becoming a caregiver may happen suddenly and it is often very difficult to adjust to the changes that occur. The extra time that is needed often means spending less time and attention on other people in your life. It is common for caregivers and their friends to feel they no longer share common interests with each other. Both may feel some discomfort having children with them in certain social situations. In spite of these changes, there are ways to maintain healthy relationships.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARENT OF THE CHILD IN YOUR CARE

When a grandparent or other relative suddenly must become the parent, there are often profound feelings of disappointment and even anger toward the irresponsible behavior of the parent. Such feelings may often lead to a strained relationship between the caregiver and the parent. Obviously this is typically not in the best interests of the child, particularly if there is going to be an ongoing relationship with the parent.



If you are a kinship care provider where the parent(s) of the children are still somewhere in the picture:

- Consider establishing ground rules that will work best for you, the child and the parent. This will allow you to set clear limits, establish expectations and clarify what you will accept and will not accept.
- Don't be afraid to show feelings of compassion toward the parent for missing out on the joys of raising the child. Though it may not be readily apparent, he/she is probably not happy or proud of the behavior which resulted in the need for kinship care.
- When you feel the parent can't be trusted, keep a written log of their behavior to possibly establish patterns. If the parent does anything to hurt you, do not hesitate to call 911. You may also seek help at the 24-hour elder abuse hotline at 1-800-490-8505. If you suspect a child has been abused or neglected, please call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313.
- Avoid being a messenger between the parent and child.



RELATIONSHIP WITH SPOUSE OR PARTNER

Strong relationships take a lot of work. Taking on the responsibility of a child should be planned together.

- Remember the little things that show you care, such as hugs and kisses, a “Thank You,” and let your spouse or partner know when you’re in need of that extra hug.
- Set aside “couple time.” When the time is right, get a babysitter and indulge in something you did before children. Attend a retreat or other activity designed for kinship care providers and the children in their care.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENDED FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Extended family members, such as adult children or even other grandparents, may feel jealous of the time and attention given to the children in your care.

- As soon as possible, let the family know what your new situation is and be honest about your needs. Let them know you will need to plan your time more strictly and to give you as much notice as possible to attend family events.
- In return, give attention to extended family members by remembering them with cards, email or telephone calls. If they live close, invite them over for a family dinner or another activity that promotes family togetherness.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE

It is normal for children to miss their parents and want to be taken care of by them. Find ways for them to constructively express their feelings of anger or hurt.

- If you're comfortable with the idea, talk with them about how they feel. If they seem uncomfortable talking to you, don't take it personally. Ask if they would like to talk to someone else, someone that you and they trust. All in all, assure them that you are there when they are ready.
- Help the child adjust to the present situation by talking realistically with them about what is happening now. Let the child know it's OK not to like what their parent is doing and still love the parent. It's also OK to be unsure about their feelings for the parent.
- Regardless of how you feel about the child's parent, never talk about the parent disrespectfully in front of the child.



KINSHIP CARE SUPPORT GROUPS

BENEFITS OF BELONGING TO A SUPPORT GROUP

Support groups are beneficial to families because:

- They can help reduce caregiver stress, improving overall health and resulting in greater physical and emotional stability for caregivers and those in their care.
- No matter the situation, just knowing there are others experiencing the same thing is very helpful.

ORGANIZING A SUPPORT GROUP

Here are some helpful pointers on how to start your own kinship care support group if none exist in your area:

- Gather information about other kinds of support groups. If possible, call and ask permission to attend a meeting to observe, ask questions and borrow ideas.
- Assess the need in your community. Talk with the decision-makers at your local schools, preschools and childcare centers.
- Develop ground rules by which you will run your meeting so that everyone will know what to expect without apprehension. Confidentiality of discussions is an example.

- Decide if you want an open meeting or an informational meeting with speakers who can educate about caregiver needs. Often it is a good idea to have an open coffee and/or pizza meeting and let the group participate in developing the organization.
- Be flexible.
- Find a convenient and safe meeting place for a one to two hour meeting, such as a library, community center, church or synagogue, hospital, social service agency or a YMCA/YWCA.
- Contact human service professionals who work with older adults, families or children as well as school officials and make them aware of your support group. Ask them to refer families to your organization.
- Publicize meetings through posters, flyers, announcements or letters-to-the-editor in newspapers. Place them where you go and you are likely to find other caregivers in the same position as you.



AT YOUR FIRST MEETING

- Keep it simple and start small; two or three people make a fine conversation. Allow one to two hours for the meeting. If possible, let the group participate in planning ahead for the time, length and place of future meetings.
- Introduce yourself, share your story and invite others to share theirs. Keep in mind, however, that some participants might not yet be comfortable sharing their story.
- Place a notebook by the entrance to the meeting and invite everyone to write down their name, phone number and email address for emergency cancellations. Ask if you may share the information with the group as a support tree.
- Ask for volunteers to help plan and run future meetings.

TIPS...

- Plan your meeting schedule — at least monthly is recommended.
- Decide how you will handle any group expenses. How will refreshments be provided?
- Create a plan for childcare or teen activities.
- Remember to celebrate the triumphs and the rewards of raising children, as well as to discuss the challenges.

MEETING CONTACTS:

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

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NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

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RELEVANT AGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

AREA AGENCIES ON AGING1-800-753-8827

CHILD CARE WORKS..... 1-877-472-5437

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (CHIP).....(Voice) 1-800-986-5437

COUNTY ASSISTANCE OFFICES1-800-692-7462 or
.....TTY/TDD 1-800-451-5886



EDUCATIONAL LAW CENTER (Philadelphia) 215-238-6970
.....(Pittsburgh) 412-258-2120

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR LIMITED INCOMES
(DHS Helpline)(Voice) 1-800-692-7462
.....(TDD) 1-800-451-5886



PA FAMILY SUPPORT ALLIANCE.....1-800-448-4906

PA LEGAL AID NETWORK, INC.1-800-322-7572

PA STATEWIDE ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY
NETWORK (SWAN)..... 1-800-585-7926

SPECIAL KIDS NETWORK (DEPT. OF HEALTH)(Voice) 1-800-986-4550

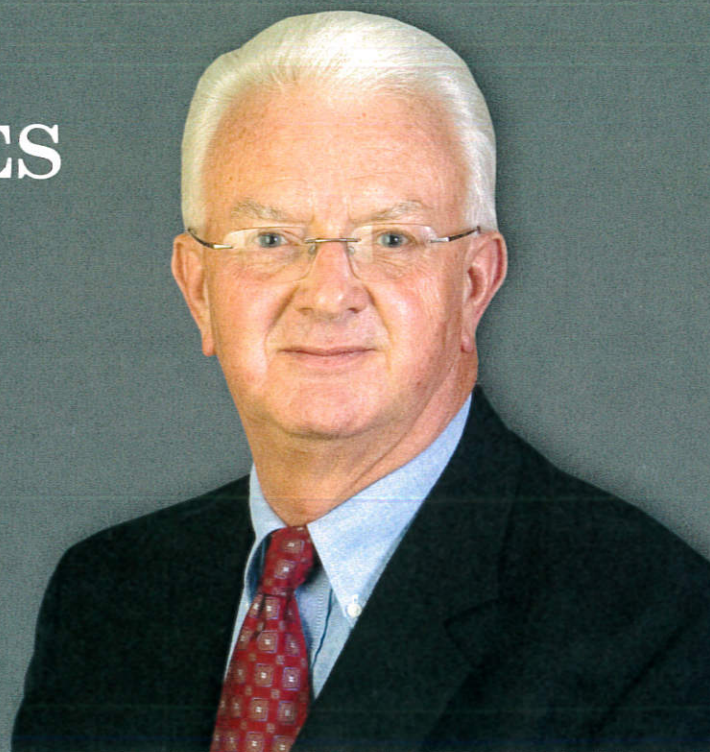
SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)(Voice) 1-800-772-1213
.....(TTY) 1-800-325-0778



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