



Caregiver of Children News 3/2023



A quarter of children being raised by grandparents face hunger

Advise by: Michelle Singletary

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/11/04/grandparents-report-food-insecurity/>

A new report finds the rate of food insecurity among grandparent-headed households with grandchildren is 60 percent high than that of all households with children.

After Kathy Coleman and her husband became the primary caregivers to their six grandchildren in Baton Rouge, she found a way to temper her hunger pains.

She drank coffee.

Going without food became a necessary trade-off to ensure the children didn't have to.

"I just couldn't fathom eating something that one of my babies needed," said Coleman, director of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana. "You make your coffee a little stronger."

Eugene Vickerson also stepped in to care for grandchildren — one 7 years old, the other 16 months — when they came to live with him just as the housing crisis hit. He had a predatory mortgage with an adjustable rate, and soon his Atlanta home became unaffordable. For a time, until he could get his lender to modify his loan, he stopped paying the mortgage, partly to ensure the children were fed.

In households across the country, many grandparents are struggling to feed the children in their care. And [inflation](#) has only made that harder: The cost of food has jumped 11.2 percent in the past year, according to the [September report](#) on the consumer price index released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Coleman experienced what researchers call "food insecurity." Such households are uncertain how to or unable to get enough food to meet all of their family's needs, because they don't have enough money or other resources.

The number of Americans who fall into this category is staggering: In 2021, about 34 million people lived in food-insecure households, Agriculture Department data shows.

Food insecurity is far worse for Americans who have taken over the raising of their grandchildren than those who haven't, according to a [new report](#) by Generations United, an organization dedicated to helping what it calls "grandfamilies."

I interviewed Coleman and Vickerson for a panel discussion on food insecurity. And they both illustrated one figure in the Generations United report that resonated with me, having been raised by my grandmother from the time I was 4, along with four siblings.

Roughly a quarter of grandparent-headed households experienced food insecurity between 2019 and 2020. That's more than twice the national rate.

The stories the caregivers shared in the report are heartbreaking.



This program is supported by Senior Resources – Agency on Aging with Title III funds made available under the Older American's Act.

"Sometimes people would give us food that had been in their refrigerator for two weeks, but it was better than nothing," said a Wyoming woman who raised two grandchildren. "Someone gave us a bag of oranges and we ate nothing but oranges for four days."

One finding, in particular, stood out: In 2019, only 42 percent of low-income, grandparent-headed households with grandchildren younger than 18 participated in the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

There are a lot of reasons these families don't seek those benefits.

Grandparents who responsibly accumulated assets don't always meet the low-income eligibility in their state to qualify for SNAP. About 46 percent of grandparents responsible for raising their grandchildren are 60 or older.

"Children shouldn't go hungry because their caregivers were careful financially," said Donna Butts, the executive director of Generations United.

One way to improve access to assistance would be to create a "child-only" SNAP benefit based on the needs of the child as opposed to household income, the report recommended.

Grandparents often aren't aware they qualify for federal food assistance, because they mistakenly believe they must have legal custody of the children to qualify.

"I hear from the grandfamily caregivers that they don't want to be a part of 'the system,'" Keith Lowhorne, vice president of kinship with the Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parents Association, said in the report. "They worry that applying for food and nutrition programs would cause someone to come and take the children away if they don't have legal custody, or go after the parents for child support, which would cause problems."

Unlike many other public benefit programs, federal nutrition programs such as SNAP don't require caregivers to obtain legal custody to receive aid.

The Biden administration held a summit on combating hunger and later released a 44-page report that included improving outreach and countering misconceptions about the government's food programs.

"We need to improve outreach for existing federal nutrition programs like SNAP and to better reach more grandfamilies and connect them to benefits that they're eligible for and should be receiving," said Alexandra Ashbrook, director of root causes and specific populations at the Food Research and Action Center, which contributed data to the report.

But there's another reason families don't apply for SNAP benefits: embarrassment.

My grandmother, Big Mama, hated using food stamps, what SNAP was previously called. It wasn't her fault my parents failed at parenting. Nonetheless, she felt shame in asking for help and would try to shop at times when she was less likely to see someone she knew.

She would try to slip the food stamps to the cashier without anyone in line behind her noticing. But even as a child, I could see the judgmental glares she received.

Eventually, she stopped reapplying for food stamps. The stigma was just too much for her. Somehow she made do with the money she had.

Whenever you may be tempted to judge families facing food insecurity and their need for assistance, think about Coleman and her strong cups of coffee.

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April 5th, 12th, 19th, & 26th, May 3rd & 10th, 2023
****Technology Training - March 29, 2023**

RSVP: Lori Rygielski at lrygielski@SeniorResourcesEC.org **OR**
860-887-3561 ext. 127



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April 10, 2023		5:30 pm - 7:30 pm		Waterford Senior Center RSVP at 860-444-5839
April 11, 2023		5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Middletown Senior Center RSVP at 860-638-4540
April 12, 2023		5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Thrive 55+ Active Living Center RSVP at 860-441-6785
April 13, 2023		5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Colchester Senior Center RSVP at 860-537-3911

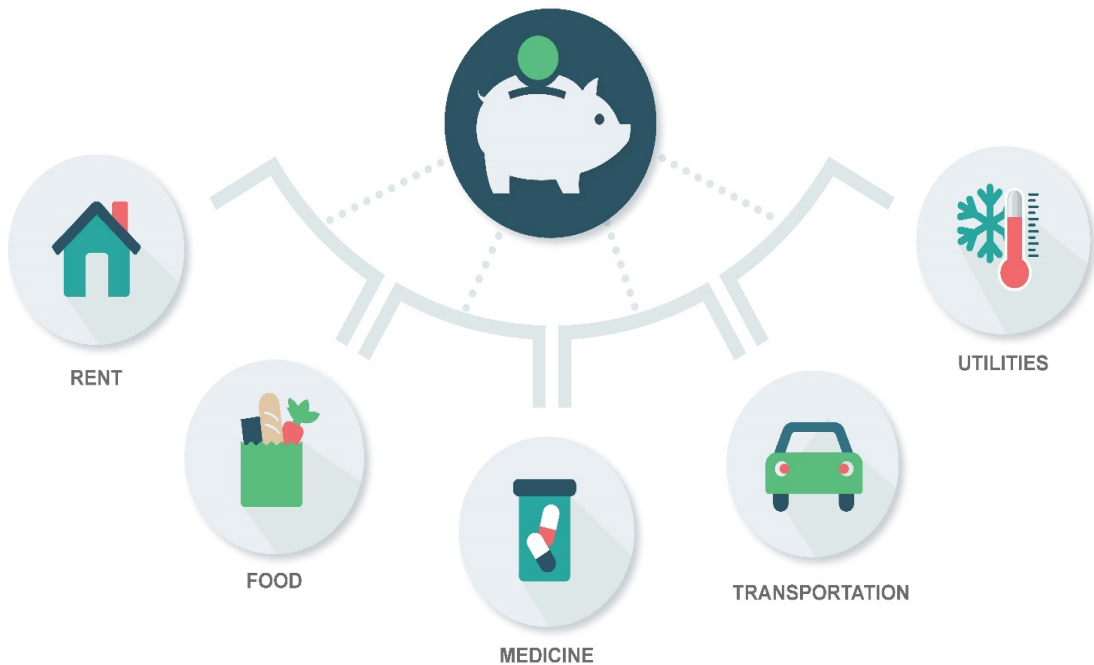


Presented By:
Laura Crews, Director of Benefits Access



Are you living on a fixed income?

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ncoa.org/Boost

When **April 13, 2023 Appointments are required**

Where Colchester Senior Center; 95 Norwich Road, Colchester CT

RSVP Please sign up by calling 860-537-3911

Questions? Email cscprograms@colchesterct.gov

Are you living on a fixed income?

You may qualify for benefits to help pay for food, medicine, utilities, and more. Attend a free event to see if you're eligible.



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When **April 12, 2023 Appointments are required**

Where **Thrive 55+ Active Living Center; 102 Newtown Road, Groton CT**

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Questions? Email Cindy at colsen@groton-ct.gov

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When **April 11, 2023 Appointments are required**

Where **Middletown Senior Center; 61 Durant Terrace, Middletown, CT**

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Questions? Email Laura.Runte@MiddletownCT.Gov

Are you living on a fixed income?

You may qualify for benefits to help pay for food, medicine, utilities, and more. Attend a free event to see if you're eligible.



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When April 14, 2023

Where Waterford Senior Center, 24 Rope Ferry Road, Waterford, CT 06385

RSVP Call 860-444-5839 to schedule today!

Questions? Email Terry Wheeler at twheeler@waterfordct.org

GrandParents Raising Grandchildren Support Group

**Confidential conversation and sharing of financial and educational resources with peer caregivers and professional facilitators
the LAST TUESDAY of the month from
9 AM to 11 AM at
Rose City Senior Center
8 Mahan Drive, Norwich, CT 06360**

2022-2023 Schedule

December 27, 2022 | January 31, 2023 | February 28, 2023

March 28, 2023 | April 25, 2023 | May 30, 2023

June 27, 2023 | July 25, 2023

Inclement Weather Policy:

Meetings will be cancelled if public schools or the senior center are closed or delayed.



19 Ohio Avenue, Suite 2
Norwich, CT 06360
860-887-3561
800-690-6998
www.SeniorResourcesEC.org



Norwich Youth & Family
Services
75 Mohegan Road
Norwich, CT 06360
860-823-3782
www.NorwichCT.org



Rose City
Senior Center
8 Mahan Drive
Norwich, CT 06360
860-889-5960
www.NorwichCT.org

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Groups

Senior Resources Agency on Aging

Sally Huck, Caregiver Program Coordinator
(860)887-3561 x126
Rose City Senior Center
8 Mahan Drive, Norwich
Last Tuesday of each month, 9:00 a.m.

Eastern CT Area – Mansfield

Janit Romayko (860)569-1978, Call to Register
Big Y Mansfield, 141 Storrs Road, Mansfield Center
2nd Wednesday of each month, 9:15 a.m.

United Services - Kinship Support Group

Plainfield Area
Lori Bergstrom, Prevention Services Manager
(860)412-8665 lbergstrom@usmhs.org
United Services, 303 Putnam Road, Wauregan
2nd Tuesday of each month, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

East Lyme Youth Services

Sarah Firmin, MA – Wellness, Prevention, and Mentoring Coordinator
860-739-5828 ext. 301
East Lyme Youth Services
41 Society Road, Niantic, CT 06357
1st Wednesday of each month



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We hope you find this month's edition of our Caregiver of Children newsletter informative.

Senior Resources currently produces a monthly caregiver of children newsletter. We are looking for feedback on any ideas you may have for future editions.

Please contact Ishma Harris with any ideas/suggestions or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list.

Ishma Harris: IHarris@seniorresourcesec.org or 860 887-3561 x 102.

To read previous editions of this newsletter please visit:
www.SeniorResourcesEC.org/stay-informed/grandparent-newsletter