



# Speaking for Children

What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!

## Grandparents Can Help Children Reach Their Full Potential

A grandparent's love and support has a positive impact on children, particularly in the early years of a child's life. According to the Foundation for Grandparenting, when kids develop a strong bond with their grandparents, they feel more secure and even do better in school.

Researchers also have found relationships between older and younger generations have long-term benefits for both grandparents and grandchildren. Anthropologist Margaret Mead once even stated that connections between the generations are "essential for the mental health and stability of a nation."

### Why are grandparents so important?

Grandparents have always been important. Today, they're even more important when children live in busy, two-job or single-parent families. Children who spend time with grandparents have a better sense of who they are and where they've come from. They have roots, a history, and a sense of belonging.

Grandparents can help grandchildren develop higher self-esteem and stronger emotional and social skills by spending unhurried time with them, sharing family stories, passing on hobbies and traditions, and providing wisdom and guidance.

First 5 Sonoma County provides the following tips for spending time with young grandchildren:

- Give children the undivided time and patient attention that their rushed, tired parents may not always be able to give.
- Read to and talk with children to help develop their thinking and speaking skills. Choose books that encourage kids to touch and point to pictures. Ask them tell or "read" the story to you.
- Play games like "peek-a-boo" when they are babies and word games when they are in preschool. Games help kids learn colors, shapes, numbers and letters in a fun way.
- Stack and build with blocks or sort objects (buttons, beads, nuts and bolts, or small rocks) by shape, color and size. These activities help children develop hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills.
- Walk through your neighborhood or to a park. Point out and name trees, flowers, birds, and insects. Express your enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world.
- Enjoy gardening together. Preschoolers can help plant flowers and vegetables, water with a hose or watering can, and pick lettuce, strawberries, beans or tomatoes. Talk about the colors, sounds and smells found in your garden.
- Keep physically fit together - indoors and outdoors - by stretching, playing hide-and-go-seek, rolling a ball back and forth, or dancing. A trip to the nearest playground is always fun.
- Share family stories with grandchildren and pass on your family's culture and traditions. Tell them about your special memories of childhood and growing up.
- Teach cooperation and sharing by taking turns and working together to finish projects, solve puzzles, or put away toys.

- Help your grandchildren develop healthy eating habits by encouraging them to join you in eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Provide kids with wisdom and guidance - grandparents can be great role models.

## Safety Tips for Grandparents Providing Child Care

The U.S. Census Bureau says that grandparents provide child care for almost a quarter (23%) of children under the age of five. That number is even higher for youngsters who live only with their dads. Grandparents watch more than a third (34%) of these children. An even higher percentage (38%) of Hispanic preschoolers receives child care from their grandparents. The following safety tips can help grandparents provide a safe setting when they provide child care for their grandchildren:

- **Make a list of contact information.** Have parents' contact information handy, so you don't have to search for it. Write down office, cell and pager numbers. If parents are traveling, get the phone number of the hotel or home where they're staying. Be sure to include the children's doctor and dentist, local hospital, fire and police departments, the children's schools, and poison control center.
- **Get a "Letter of Permission."** This letter should say that you are responsible for your grandchildren for a specified period of time. It should also give you permission to seek medical and dental care for them, and to deal with all school-related issues. A parent should sign and date the letter. Keep this letter handy in case a doctor or teacher wants to see it.
- **Prepare for medical emergencies.** Be sure to have a copy of the child's health insurance cards, a list of prescription drugs the child may be taking, or a list of allergies the children have. You should also be aware of any illnesses the child has, and know where a well-stocked first aid kit is located.
- **Make sure the house is child proof.** If you're watching your grandchild at your home, it is important to make sure the house is safe for young children. Find great child-proofing tips at [www.babycenter.com](http://www.babycenter.com) or [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).
- **Take a CPR/First Aid class.** The ability to stay

calm in an emergency situation can sometimes be a matter of life and death. Receiving training in lifesaving techniques and CPR certification can provide grandparents with the ability to save their grandchild's life, should the need arise. Contact the American Red Cross at (707) 577-7600 to find CPR classes available in Sonoma County.

## Resources for Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren

More than six million children in the United States - approximately one in 12 - are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. In about one-third of these homes, grandparents and other relatives are taking on the primary responsibility of raising their grandchildren without the children's parents present in the home.

There are many resources available to help grandparents fulfill their role as primary caregivers. The following resources provide information on available local services, health and financial benefits, and legal issues:

- **Grandparents Parenting Again.** Peer support for grandparents who are their grandchildren's primary caregivers. (707) 566-8876. [www.grandparentsparentingagain.org](http://www.grandparentsparentingagain.org)
- **National Center on Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren.** Find local programs, legal resources, and online groups for grandparents raising children the second time around. [www.grandsplace.org/gp4/ca.html](http://www.grandsplace.org/gp4/ca.html)
- **A Grandparents Guide for Family Nurturing & Safety.** The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, along with pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., provides information about establishing healthy relationships and boundaries with grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. [www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/grand/704.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/grand/704.html)
- **The AARP Foundation Grandparenting Program** has a variety of resources to help grandparents in various family roles, including resources that strengthen their health, finances, and family connections. [www.aarp.org/family/grandparenting/articles/grandparent\\_info\\_center.html](http://www.aarp.org/family/grandparenting/articles/grandparent_info_center.html)

Source: AARP.org

### About First 5 Sonoma County

First 5 Sonoma County funds children's health insurance and programs that improve childcare quality, help children succeed in school, and help parents provide safe and nurturing environments for their children. For more information on *First 5 Sonoma County* and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit [www.first5sonomacounty.org](http://www.first5sonomacounty.org)