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# THE PILLARS

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## EDUCATION IN BLACK NEW MEXICO

## THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF GRANDPARENTS DURING COVID- 19

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According to the Center for Disease Control, about 3 percent of children nationwide live apart from their parents, and of those, nearly two-thirds are being raised by grandparents. Some 2.6 million grandparents are raising their grandchildren, either because of a temporary change in circumstances for the parents, such as military deployment or joblessness, or some more lasting and terrible situations such as mental illness, divorce, incarceration, substance abuse, and death. About 61 percent of grandparents raising grandchildren are age 59 or younger.





**I am devoting this article to all grandparents playing such a vital role by providing support and comfort to their children and grandchildren during the coronavirus pandemic. I want to start by sharing the following quotes with the reader pertaining to grandparents:**

GrandFacts state fact sheets for grandfamilies <grandfamilies.org> reports that 26,241 grandparents are householders responsible for their grandchildren who live with them. Of this number, 14,223 (54.2%) are Hispanic or Latino origin, 6,272 (23.9%) are white non-Hispanic, and 604 (2.3%) are Black or African American.

The 2018 National Survey <AARP.org/Research> focusing on Black/African American grandparents conducted by the American Association of Retired People reports that in 2017 the median household income was \$40,258, one-third have an annual household income of less than \$40,000.

New Mexico's numbers have risen significantly, with the number of grandchildren raised by grandparents from 47,382 in 2005 to 55,259 in 2015. The percentage of grandparents-headed households jumped from 6.3 percent in 1970 to 10.9 percent in 2015.

"Nobody can do for little children what grandparents do. Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children." Alex Haley

"If nothing is going well, call your grandmother." Italian proverb

"A grandfather is like someone with silver in his hair and gold in his heart." Unknown

"Every house needs a grandmother in it." Louise May Alcott

## **Common Concerns**

Access to Internet

Physical Education

Chromebook Support



With this background, it is now important to address the role that grandparents can play in their grandchildren's lives while providing much-needed help for their children. Grandparents, you are valuable. Do not underestimate the value of what you can provide to your children and grandchildren during the current pandemic. As the number of Covid-19 cases continues to rise, school districts across the state are already considering online schooling only or a hybrid model consisting of a specific number of days in-person and online. This is putting a tremendous amount of stress on parents and grandparents alike.

Many adult children are juggling their jobs and online schooling. Their daily schedule includes waking their younger children up, getting them dressed, preparing them breakfast and lunch while monitoring their academic progress while at the same time trying to make the time to complete their work. This is when their mothers and fathers put on their superman and superwomen cape and fly to the rescue. The following are two different ways grandparents are involved in the lives and education of their grandchildren.

### **Case Study # 1**

Jack and Janet, retired educators in their 70s, frequently support their work-at-home son and daughter-in-law by babysitting their two youngest grandchildren, ages 4 and 2, while their son and his wife get their two oldest children, ages 12 and 10, started on their online classes before they start their own online work. Jack and Janet picks up their two youngest grandchildren and babysits them until the two oldest children are finished with the online classes. They engage the children in various activities, such as coloring and painting, building blocks, reading, and other educational activities. Outside activities include trips to the zoo and hikes and the mosque and trips to the area playgrounds. Babysitting the two youngest grandchildren provides their son with much-needed relief and reduces their stress by juggling homeschooling and work.



## Case Study # 2

Carl and Ramona, 75 and 72, respectively, have custodial care of their three grandchildren, ages 8, 6, and 3. Their adult son and daughter-in-law gave up the care of their children because of drug addiction and mental illness. Now in their 70s, they find themselves having to teach their grandchildren how to login to their virtual classes, troubleshoot technical problems with the computer, surf the internet for an online resource. And communicate with teachers via email. For a generation taught using books, chalk, and blackboard, they frequently find their situation overwhelming and stressful at times.

In closing, it is important to remember that there are numerous other ways grandparents can help their children and grandchildren. For example, you can

- + read aloud to the children
- + donate school supplies if you have the financial means
- + help the children with their homework
- + if you live close enough, perhaps you can bring them lunch, or you can pick up the kids and provide
  - a couple of hours of after-school care
- + make time to be a listener for your children when they are at their wits end trying to manage with homeschooling and their work

Always remember, especially if the grandchildren are not living with you, to text or call your son or daughter before you drop by to help the grandkids or pick them up, so you don't interfere with or disrupt their school's lessons plans for the day. Whatever the type of help you provide your children and grandchildren, it will prove once again that grandparents, out of their abundance of love, are ready and willing to come to the rescue.

