

# Montana Services for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRGs)



## Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project Montana State University Extension

MSU Extension provides the leadership for the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Project to help support grandparents across Montana who have taken on the responsibility for raising their grandchildren.

### The Montana GRG Project:

- Develops local support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Provides training for support group leaders and parent educators.
- Offers parent education classes for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Coordinates a statewide task force to address the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Publishes a newsletter three times a year.
- Produces MontGuides (fact sheets) for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Operates a library of reference materials on family and parenting.

For more information on the GRG Project please visit [www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg](http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg) or contact us at (406) 994-3395.



## Contacts

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## Women Infant Children (WIC) Program

The program's complete name is "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children." WIC helps infants and children (up to age 5) and their guardians with nutritional education and counseling, referral to other health care and social programs, and payment vouchers for nutritious food packages. Grandparents raising young grandchildren can qualify by submitting proof of guardianship. For more information on the WIC Program call **1-800-433-4298**.



## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is a cash assistance program for families with children, which promotes the values of work, responsibility, and family. To be eligible for cash assistance benefits, the family's countable income must be at or below 30% of the 2002 federal poverty level. Recipients are subject to work requirements and time limitations. However, extensions to the time limits may be granted to 20% of recipients based on other mitigating circumstances such as chronic disabilities.

### TANF services may include:

- Cash assistance for the purchase of basic needs such as food, clothing, housing and personal care items.
- Work supports such as transportation, vehicle repair, and items that assist individuals with continuing employment, becoming employed, or fulfilling the work requirements.
- Education and training, excluding tuition.

## Child-Only TANF Payments

Child-only TANF is a program that provides benefits solely for the children in the family. Caregivers are not counted as part of the assistance unit, and are not subject to the work requirements. The amount of the child-only cash assistance grant is based solely on the number of children in the home. Child-only grants are not subject to time limits. For more information on TANF or TANF Child-Only Grants visit [www.dphhs.mt.gov](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov) or contact your local Office of Public Assistance.

## Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Groups Across the State

### Billings

Bernie Mason  
P.O. Box 35021  
Billings, MT 59107  
(406) 256-2828

### Bozeman

316 Herrick Hall  
Montana State University  
Bozeman, MT 59717  
(406) 994-3395  
[grg@montana.edu](mailto:grg@montana.edu)

### Browning

Carrie Jackson  
Eagle Shield Center  
PO Box 76  
Browning, MT 59417  
(406) 338-7257

### Colstrip

Jennifer Anderson  
PO Box 65  
Forsyth, MT 59327  
(406) 346-7320

### Glendive

Pete Bruno  
Parents Resource Center  
200 S. Kendrick  
Glendive, MT 59330  
(406) 377-7515

### Great Falls

Jona McNamee  
Cascade County Extension  
454-6980  
Mariellen Ritts  
(406) 453-3554

### Helena

Jeannette B. Mattfeldt  
562 Broadway  
Helena, MT 59601  
(406) 442-8207

### Kalispell

Marylann Pannell  
The Nurturing Center, Inc.  
146 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. West  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 257-5793

### Lewistown

Denise Seilstad  
712 W. Main  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
(406) 535-3919

### Missoula

Lara Mattson Radle  
Families First Parenting Programs  
815 E. Front St. Suite 3  
Missoula, MT 59802  
(406) 721-7690 ext. 202

### Poplar and Wolf Point

Ardis Oelkers  
MSU Extension Agent  
Culbertson, MT 59218  
(406) 787-5312

### Ravalli County

Brenda Fisher  
Family Resource Specialist  
Family Services  
108 Pinckney  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
(406) 363-1961 ext. 107

### Rocky Boy Reservation

Mary St. Pierre  
Stone Child College  
(406) 395-4875

### Townsend

Nancy Marks  
(406) 266-3710  
Jerri Paulk  
(406) 266-4249

## Big Sky Rx

Big Sky Rx (BSRx) is dedicated to helping Medicare clients pay for Medicare approved prescription drug insurance premiums. It is administered by the State of Montana. You may apply at any time—enrollment is ongoing.

### Eligibility Criteria:

- Montana is your primary state of residence.
- You're a Medicare recipient.

- Your income is less than \$20,660 (single person) OR \$27,620 (two person household).
- Assets (Savings, Bonds, IRAs) are NOT considered income.

To apply for Big Sky Rx call **1-866-369-1233** or you can download an application at [www.dphhs.mt.gov/prescriptiondrug/bigsky.shtml](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/prescriptiondrug/bigsky.shtml)

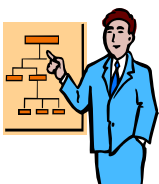
## The Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) also provides the following services for families through local Offices of Public Assistance:



**Food Stamps, Medicaid**, childcare referrals, and other services to help families move out of poverty and toward self-support.



**Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)** provides heating assistance to those in need through the Human Resource Development Council. They also offer a Weatherization Program. You can apply for these programs between Oct. 1st and April 30th by calling **1-800-332-2272** or visiting [www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/energyassistance/index.shtml](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/energyassistance/index.shtml).



**Work Readiness Component (WoRC)** provides employment and training services to participants receiving cash assistance. Services may include: employment case management, job search support, job skills training and work experience.



## Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network

**MCCR&R** is a statewide network of 12 community-based child care resource and referral agencies, and is a member of the Nation's Network of Childcare Resource & Referral. MCCR&R:

- Helps low income families find and pay for childcare.
- Offers referrals to licensed and registered child care facilities for families of all income levels.
- Initiates projects to build quality child care.
- Informs policy makers, businesses, and the public on child care related issues.
- Advocates for child care providers and families with children.

For more information on MCCR&R agencies in your area visit [www.montanachildcare.com](http://www.montanachildcare.com) or call **406-443-4551**.

## The Montana Afterschool Network

A statewide coalition working to increase availability, accessibility, affordability, sustainability, and quality of out-of-school-time programs for Montana children and their families. Visit them at [www.mtafterschool.com](http://www.mtafterschool.com) or call **406-443-4551**.

## Montana Head Start

Head Start is a comprehensive child development program that has served low-income families since 1965. Their child-focused program serves children from birth to 5 years of age and their families, with the goal of increasing school readiness of children from low-income families. Head Start provides a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; nutrition; and parent involvement which is responsive and appropriate to each child's and family's developmental, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage and experience. If you are interested in having your grandchild attend Head Start, you can contact the Montana Head Start State Collaboration Office at **406-444-0589** or visit the website at [www.headstartmt.org](http://www.headstartmt.org).



## Office of Public Instruction

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) oversees all of Montana's K-12 Public Schools. The parent's page on their website offers valuable information and resources related to enrolling and supporting your grandchild through their public school experience. You can call them at **(406) 444-3095** or visit them on the web at [www.opi.mt.gov/parents/index.html](http://www.opi.mt.gov/parents/index.html).

## Guardianship Subsidies

Guardianship subsidies may be available for children exiting foster care and entering guardianship when the children are in the custody of the state, and under some circumstances, a Montana tribe. Subsidies are negotiated between the Child and Family Services Division and the prospective guardian(s) prior to establishment of guardianship. Subsidies may include any or all of the following: a monthly financial payment, Medicaid, and social services. A child must have been determined by the state to meet one or more of the following criteria when eligibility for a subsidy is being determined: the child has a physical, mental, or emotional disability or is recognized to be at high risk for developing such a disability; the child is a member of a minority group; the child is age six or older, or is a member of a sibling group being placed together. Contact Betsy Stimatz, Foster Care Program Officer, DPHHS, Child and Family Services Division, at **(406) 444-1675**.

## Adoption Subsidies

Adoption subsidies may be available for children adopted from state and tribal foster care systems and in some other limited circumstances. Subsidies are negotiated between the Child and Family Services Division and the prospective adoptive parents, prior to finalization. Adoption subsidies can include any or all of the following: a monthly financial payment, Medicaid, social services, and a one-time reimbursement for costs to the family directly related to the finalization of the adoption (examples would be attorney fees or court costs). The state must determine that the child is legally free for adoption, cannot or should not return to the care of the birth parents, and meets one or more of the criteria for adoption subsidies. The State must also determine that an effort has been made to place the child without subsidy, except where contrary to the child's interests. For more information contact Child and Family Services at **(406) 444-5975**.

## Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

This credit is a supplement to the income of *working* individuals with children. Benefits vary depending on several circumstances: types and amounts of payments families receive from agencies, and amount of family earned income and family size. Go to [www.irs.gov/individuals](http://www.irs.gov/individuals) for more information.

## Montana Legal Services Association

The Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) is a federally and privately funded program that provides free legal assistance in civil cases to people living on low incomes.



### What help can I find at MLSA?

- Legal advice and representation for clients.
- Referrals to pro bono attorneys and other providers.
- Self-help clinics.
- Self-help materials.
- Education brochures, classes and workshops for Montana's low-income community.

To qualify for our services, applicants generally must have incomes of 125% or less of the federal poverty level and limited assets. You must also be a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien. MLSA never charges a fee for services. However, you may have to pay court costs and filing fees.

### What kind of information is available?

- Landlord/tenant law.
- Social Security Disability and other public benefits.
- Family law.
- Domestic violence.
- Bankruptcy.
- Indian law.
- Migrant workers' legal issues.
- Consumer matters.
- Housing discrimination and other civil rights.

### What does MLSA not handle?

- MLSA does not handle auto accidents, personal injury, business-related matters or any criminal cases (including traffic citations).
- MLSA usually does not accept ongoing cases for representation, such as changes to parenting plans or existing custody decrees.
- MLSA cannot accept cases where an attorney's fee may be available.



### How can I get help?

Call the MLSA hotline to talk with an intake worker. The intake worker will ask you questions about your financial situation and what possessions you own (cars, houses, land). You must complete an application to determine eligibility before you will be considered for services. Visit their website at [www.mtlsa.org](http://www.mtlsa.org) or call the MLSA Hotline at **1-800 666-6899**.

For common legal information and resources, visit [www.montanalawhelp.org](http://www.montanalawhelp.org).

### Montana Law Library

The Montana Law Library is a great resource you can use to try and answer some of your legal questions yourself, or look up forms, etc. The staff at the state law library are extremely helpful and can often direct the public to helpful information.

The Montana Law Library can be contacted at **1-800-710-9827**, or visit their website at [www.lawlibrary.mt.gov](http://www.lawlibrary.mt.gov).



**Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program**, operated jointly with Montana State University Extension, teaches participants to buy healthy foods and use food stamp benefits wisely.



**Commodity Foods Distribution** provides nutritional foods to Montana's Indian Reservations, food banks, emergency-foods organizations, and senior centers. They also provide monthly food packages to low-income women, children, and seniors.



**Emergency Assistance** provides emergency aid to meet the needs of families with children who have unforeseen and unavoidable emergencies (fires, medical situations, etc). Some examples of emergency assistance are: food, shelter costs, clothing, utilities, and personal expenses.

**Other Services**– OPA staff make referrals for assistance with: child care, child support, housing, heat, utilities, telephone bills, Medicaid travel-related costs, voter registration, supplementary security income (SSI), vocational rehabilitation, employment services, Head Start, Montana Legal Services, Social Services (chemical dependency, mental health, and domestic violence services, etc.).



**1-800-332-2272**

Citizen's Advocate Insurance Assistance Program Office

**1-800-551-3191**

Aging Services Help Line

Contact your local Office of Public Assistance or DPHHS office for more information on these services. For local office info on the web, go to: [www.dphhs.mt.gov/contactus/index.shtml](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/contactus/index.shtml).

## **Native American Elder Family Caregiver Support Program at the Blackfeet Eagle Shield Center**

The Native American Elder Family Caregiver Support Program is one of several programs the Blackfeet Eagle Shield Center offers. The Elder Family Caregiver Support Program provides support for Blackfeet Native American caregivers residing on the Blackfeet reservation, who care for elders, or who are elders caring for disabled, handicapped, or minor children. The program has a network of community resource providers to help caregivers locate appropriate resources and services. The Elder Family Caregiver Support Program offers a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group, a Caregiver Support Group, training sessions, a resource directory, training manuals, health information, and a book and video library. For more information contact Carrie Jackson at the Blackfeet Eagle Shield Center: **406-338-7257** or **406-338-7906**, or send an email to **respite@3rivers.net**.

## **National Indian Child Welfare Association**

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) works to address the issues of child abuse and neglect through training, research, public policy, and grassroots development. NICWA also works to support compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA), which seeks to keep American Indian children with American Indian families. NICWA improves the lives of American Indian children and families by helping tribes and other service providers implement services that are culturally competent, community-based, and focused on the strengths and assets of families. This work includes collaborating with tribal and urban Indian child welfare programs to increase their service capacity, enhance tribal-state relationships, and provide training, technical assistance, information services, and alliance building. Visit their website at **www.nicwa.org** or call **503-222-4044**.

## **Montana State University Extension, Family & Consumer Sciences**

The MSU Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Program website features information and services concerning family finance, family and human development, food and nutrition and housing and environmental health. Visit this website at **www.montanafamilies.info**.



## **Working Caretaker Relative Child Care Program**

Caretaker relatives who are receiving child-only TANF grants may also qualify for assistance with child care costs associated with the minor child (ren) for whom they are receiving TANF. To be eligible for the Working Caretaker Relative Child Care Program, a caretaker relative must be employed a minimum of 60 hours per month (120 hours in a two-parent household) and must make a monthly \$10 co-payment to the child-care provider. Applications for this child care program are available at the local Office of Public Assistance.

## **Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP)**

CHIP is a low-cost or free health insurance plan that provides health insurance coverage to eligible Montana children until age 19. In some cases, caregivers may be eligible for free health coverage under Medicaid. For information on how to apply call **(877) KIDS-Now** or go to **www.chip.mt.gov**.



## **DPHHS Senior and Long Term Care Division (SLTC)**

Long Term Care is a general term describing a variety of medical, social and other services that are designed to meet the ongoing need for support and assistance people often experience as a result of the natural aging process, a severe disability or an injury. Specific SLTC functions include: 1) administering programs for senior citizens funded through the Federal Older Americans Act such as meals on wheels, information referral services, senior centers, health services, congregate meal sites and transportation services; 2) protecting vulnerable senior citizens and persons with disabilities; and 3) educating the public about long-term care issues and services to help Montana address aging-related issues now and in the future. Visit **www.dphhs.mt.gov/sltc** or call the Aging Hotline (toll-free in Montana): **1-800-332-2272**.

## **eXtension Community**

Whether you are raising grandchildren or anticipating raising grandchildren, the eXtension Family Caregiving website has information to help you. The site provides valuable information to assist you with a variety of needs, including child guidance and discipline, nutrition and feeding, child development, legal issues, family finances, and much more. Visit the website at **www.extension.org**.

## No Support Group in Your Area?

If you are interested in starting a support group in your area, please contact us at **406-994-3395** or **406-994-6745**.

### Respite Care

Contact the listed agency closest to you.

#### Missoula Aging Services

Mary Dalton  
337 Stephens Avenue  
Missoula, MT 59801  
**406-728-7682**

#### Western Montana Area VI Agency on Aging, Inc.

Duane Lutke  
110 Main Street, Suite 5  
Polson, MT 59860  
**406-883-7284** (office)  
406-883-7363 (fax)

#### Developmental Educational Assistance Program (DEAP)

Sylvia Danforth  
2200 Box Elder, MT 59330  
**406-234-6034**

#### Belmont Senior Citizens Center

Marie Walsh  
615 East Mercury  
P.O. Box 586  
Butte, MT 59701  
**406-723-7773**



AARP offers information for GRGs through the Grandparent Information Center and grandparent links on their web site at **[www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/)**

#### The GIC offers:

- A web site with articles, fact sheets, and a message board.
- Initiatives around work issues for grandfamilies, benefits outreach, and financial literacy.
- Booklets in English and Spanish.
- *The Grandcare News*, a free newsletter for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.
- Information and referral to grandparent support groups and agencies.
- Networking and assistance to local, state, and national organizations.
- Research about grandparenting.
- Advocacy for grandparents in collaboration with AARP's State Affairs and Legal Advocacy groups.

### Contact the AARP Grandparent Information Center:

Email: [gic@aarp.org](mailto:gic@aarp.org)  
Mail: AARP Grandparent Information Center,  
601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049  
Phone: **1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277)**

### Benefits Check Up

Answer a few confidential questions and this database tells you which federal, state, and local programs you might be eligible for and how to apply. The site is provided by the National Council on Aging; AARP is a national outreach partner for the site. **[www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org)**