

---

# GrOW FACT SHEET

For Grandparents & Other Relatives Raising Children



Number 2, September 2017

---

## Addressing Learning Challenges

### All Children Can Learn

All children can learn. Most children with learning disabilities are just as smart as those without. They can succeed in their own way once you and their teachers know the best learning methods for the way their mind handles information.

Knowing about special education resources and how learning plans are made for each student will help you to support the grandchildren you are raising. Also, don't forget to look for -- and celebrate -- all kinds of achievement! Your praise and encouragement are very important to your student's progress.

### Does your grandchild struggle with schoolwork?

36% of grandparents surveyed believed a grandchild they were raising might have a learning disability (Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup, 2014). It's important to know that many schools have special programs to help children who are facing learning challenges. Public schools are required to do a full assessment of the child's needs, and respond by developing an individualized plan to meet the child's needs. This could include learning style, speech, language, occupational or physical therapy, mental health and counseling needs.

### Start Early

- Many licensed day care centers can evaluate your birth to 5-year-old grandchild's development and check for signs of learning challenges. You can ask for a copy of the results.
- The sooner a learning issue is noticed and addressed, the more likely your child can reach his or her full potential.

### **Special Education Resources**

See the following organizations and websites for detailed information about special education and related issues:

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Parent Guide**  
[www.LD.org](http://www.LD.org)

**Learning Disabilities Association of America** [www.lidaamerica.org](http://www.lidaamerica.org)

**National Center for Learning Disabilities** [www.LD.org](http://www.LD.org)

**Understood** – An online resource to support parents and guardians as they help children with learning and attention issues to unlock their strengths and reach their full potential  
[www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)

**Head Start and Early Head Start** – Head Start is a Federal program that promotes school readiness in children birth to age five from low-income families. Early Head Start serves infants, toddlers, and pregnant women who are low income  
<https://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/616>

## Help With Learning & Attention Issues

Students in grades kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade have two formal ways of getting help at school for learning and attention issues. One is an evaluation process that results in an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The other is an educational plan called the 504 Plan. In both cases, services are provided at no cost to parents or guardians. See the sidebar on page one for more resources.

## Basic Steps

- First, contact the teacher, main office or special education department to get the teacher's input about how your grandchild is learning, to find out how they are doing in school, and if any services are already in place.
- If an evaluation is needed, the school can help set it up at no cost to you, or you can pay for a private evaluation.
- If your student qualifies for services, an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or 504 Plan will be designed to fit the child's needs.
- The plan will be reviewed at least once a year, or more often at your request.
- If you have a gifted student, you can also request these services.

## Know Your Rights

- You have the right to request an evaluation for your grandchild.
- You have the right to be part of meetings with the teacher, other school personnel, and other experts when your grandchild's education plan is being discussed.
- You have the right to ask for an advocate to attend meetings with you to provide support and help navigate the process.
- If you have legal guardianship, you have the same rights that parents have in terms of education decisions.
- You have the right to dispute decisions the school makes.

## Tips for Finding Support

Look for a group of parents raising children who have learning and attention difficulties.

Groups for grandparents and other relatives raising children can also be especially helpful.

The website [Grandfamilies.org](http://Grandfamilies.org) has created state-by-state fact sheets listing community-based resources.

Visit their website:

[www.granfamilies.org/State-Fact-Sheets](http://www.granfamilies.org/State-Fact-Sheets)

According to the Grandfamilies Support Guide, produced by AARP, the following places may have helpful supports or services:

- Your grandchild's school
- Faith-based organizations
- Community Centers
- YMCA and YWCA
- Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts
- Mentoring programs, such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters
- Local colleges and universities (for example, they may have free legal clinics in their law schools, or might have students who can work with your grandchildren)
- Children's Services, Children and Families, or Child Welfare Offices

---

If you don't have computer access, ask for help at your local library or senior center. Your grandchild's school can also be a good resource.