

# Grandfamilies Tip Sheet Series

For grandparents & other relatives raising children



## Technology Access & Comfort

Even if you weren't raised with technology,  
if you want to learn it, YOU CAN.

Now is the time to  
Take Tech On!

### Key Findings

From GrOW's National Grandfamilies and COVID 19 Survey Wave 1 (600 caregivers surveyed in 2020) and Wave 2 (225 caregivers surveyed in 2021):

- Nearly 1 in 5 caregivers (17%) reported comfort with technology as one of the issues that impacted them most. Access to technology (13%), and access or connectivity to Wi-Fi (11%) were also noted
- Significant disparities exist across multiple issues surrounding kinship caregivers' use of technology, for instance, 43% of Black caregivers compared with 27% of White caregivers experienced struggles in online remote learning for their kinship child in school
- Caregivers reported "I do not know" when asked if they use kinship navigator programs to determine eligibility for federal benefits (34%), enroll in federal benefits (36%), access a kinship website (29%), learn about programs and services to meet the needs of the children in your care (28%), or learn about programs and services to meet your needs as a caregiver (24%)
- Kinship caregivers need additional outreach and education to connect them to resources provided by kinship navigator programs, including information shared via web-based platforms
- Caregivers found all sources of support less adequate during COVID 19 except online support groups

“ [The value of technology is] to have at-home connections via internet and phone — to strengthen me through calls, videos, and educational opportunities; for stress relief; [and for] video counseling sessions. ”

— Kinship Caregiver

#### Recommended Citation

Fedus, D., Cooper, L., Devine, A., Langosch, D., Littlewood, K., & Rosenthal, M. (2022, September). *Technology Access & Comfort. Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup (GrOW): Grandfamilies tip sheet series for grandparents and other relatives raising children.* <http://grandfamilieswork.org>

### Resources

- Search terms with or without zip code
  - Tech tutoring for older adults
  - Older adults technology
  - Technology training
  - Adult or Senior computer classes
- Goodwill Community Foundation supports free training: [gcflearnfree.org](https://gcflearnfree.org)
- Apple offers free training on Apple products: [apple.com/today](https://apple.com/today)
- AARP offers free technology training for adults age 60+ through their Senior Planet website and Older Adults Technology Service (OATS): [seniorplanet.org/classes](https://seniorplanet.org/classes)
- AARP Fraud Watch Network helps you spot scams and get guidance if you've been targeted: [aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network/](https://aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network/)

# Practice Recommendations

## If technology COMFORT is your group's issue

There are many ways to help your caregivers gain skills and experience to become more technology-savvy:

- **Spark interest.** Your biggest challenge may be convincing your group they can learn tech, and it's worth it
- **Start small.** There's big benefit to learning a *little* about technology – you don't have to know everything
- **Set realistic expectations.** The learning curve may be steep, so be patient
- **Inspire confidence.** Consistently remind your people they can do this!
- **Embrace the trend.** Tech is not a temporary fad. Many services will only be delivered via technology
- **Maintain your independence.** The more you know, the less you'll have to rely on others to access information, communicate with government offices, apply for benefits, communicate with schools and service providers,, make appointments, and even order groceries or toilet paper!
- **Expand your world.** Connect right from home to enriching travel, culture, learning and spiritual experiences, without the need to arrange or pay for transportation or childcare
- **Work your brain.** In addition to practical benefits, improving your tech skills is a brain fitness workout
- **Learn together.** Make your support group into a safe Learning Community by discussing success stories, fears & frustrations, and sharing learning strategies & sources
- **Find a champion.** Ask your members who already have some tech comfort to teach or coach others on what they know or what they have newly learned
- **Tech Time.** Spend a little "tech time" at each meeting to get regular practice and model ways to learn new skills, work through tech questions, seek information, or explore something silly to wow the kids. You or your champions (group members) can take turns leading Tech Time. Create email, send photos to faraway grandchildren, connect to websites such as:
  - Your local area agency on aging
  - Town website – find your local municipal agent or sign up for town announcements
  - Kinship Navigator program in your community
  - Your agency website
  - Something fun, enriching or entertaining
- **Consider collaborations.** Seek tech tutoring from schools, civic organizations, universities or adult learning programs. They may have speakers or tech tutors for your group. Your group members may be able to help them tailor their digital services to match the abilities of typical consumers
- **Educate about scams.** Even as we use technology to learn, communicate, access benefits, and consume entertainment, it's critical to recognize and avoid technology-related scams! See Resources to learn more

## If technology ACCESS is your group's issue

- **Collaborators:** Contact local schools, companies, social service agencies, and funders to help locate, fund or defray costs of hardware (devices including computers, iPads or phones), software, internet service charges and monthly subscription fees
- **Libraries:** Most libraries offer a wonderful place for free computer access. Just beware of sharing passwords or personal info, and be sure to sign out of your accounts and browsers before you leave



The Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup (GrOW) is a national collective comprised of multi-disciplinary stakeholders that work across systems of care in partnership with kinship families.

GrOW intentionally integrates the lived experiences of kinship caregivers in its evaluation methods, tools, and resources to support best practice in the field of kinship care. GrOW: Research to Inform Practice.

To learn more about GrOW, visit [grandfamilieswork.org](https://grandfamilieswork.org)

Tip Sheets are made possible by funding from:

The Brookdale Foundation Group

