

Take Control of the Situation

Even if your grandchildren DON'T live with you, there are many things you can do to look after them...

Sign up with the Montana DPHHS Child and Family Services Division Close Relative Registry.

If the children are removed from the home, CFS will have your contact information and you will be notified that the children have entered the State Foster Care system. You can call **(866) 820-5437** to be placed on the registry.

If possible, **maintain a good relationship with your grandchildren's parents.** Encourage parents to allow you to see your grandchildren as often as possible. This will allow you to monitor the situation and act quickly if conditions change. If the parents are expecting to be absent or feel they are unable to provide a safe home, talk with the parents about the possibility of filling out a Power of Attorney or filing temporary guardianship papers.

If you feel abuse and/or neglect are taking place, call Montana DPHHS Child and Family Services Division Central Intake at **(866) 820-5437** and make a confidential report. You can also call your local law enforcement and ask for a welfare check.

Keep Detailed Records. If possible, gather your grandchildren's personal papers—birth certificate, immunization records, school and medical records, and any law enforcement or Child and Family Services records. Write in a journal daily—include all physical and emotional difficulties your grandchildren may be having and all meetings and interactions you have regarding your grandchildren's care. Save all correspondence, including texts and voice mails.

Power of Attorney for Care, Custody or Property of a Minor

A power of attorney is a short-term document that allows parents to appoint someone to make legal, financial, and educational decisions for their children. Different levels of control can be written into the document. Unless the POA is set to be durable, it is valid until the expiration date, if one is set by the parent; until it is cancelled by the parent; or until the parent dies or becomes incompetent or incapacitated. This document become valid when both parties sign and it is notarized.

You can download the Power of Attorney MSU MontGuide at msuextension.org/publications

Guardianship of a Minor

A judge must grant guardianship of a minor. If guardianship is sought by grandparents over the objections of the parents, it is the responsibility of the grandparents to show the parents are unfit to have decision-making authority for the children.

Seeking guardianship is a complicated, multi-step process.

While it is possible to represent yourself in court, a private attorney or other legal advice may be useful.

You can find both forms at courts.mt.gov/library/topic/guardian



Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

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