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Q: I live in a part of the state with no contact person or support group— can I still get some assistance?

A: Yes, call (406) 994-3395 and we can talk with you about your situation and point you in the right direction.

Some Frequently Asked Questions About the Montana GRG Project

Q: Do I have to be a grandparent to use your services and resources?

A: No, any Montana family led by someone other than birth parents can benefit from what we have to offer: aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, great-grandparents, friends, etc.

Q: Where can I find GRG information other than this newsletter?

A: You can find resources and information on our website: www.montanagrandparents.org and on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Montana-Grandparents-Raising-Grandchildren-Project/930862973615169>

Q: I know other people who would like this newsletter—how can they get a copy?

A: They can sign-up for the mailing list on our website and they can also see all the back issues since 2004: www.montanagrandparents.org/newsletters.html

Q: I want to help with a donation—how can I do that?

A: You can make a tax-deductible gift by using the “Make a Gift” button on our website: www.montanagrandparents.org or you can make an in-kind donation by contacting us at (406) 994-335 or grg@montana.edu.

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Education

Fun Activities that Build Skills for School Success

Spring is here, which means plenty of rainy weekends! Why not spend that time stuck indoors with the grandkids doing fun activities that will also build important skills to help them in school? Below are some ideas for various age groups.

Author! Author!

(for children ages 5 to 7)

Reading and writing support each other. The more your child does of each, the better he will be at both.

What You Need

Pencils, crayons or markers, Writing paper, Cardboard or heavy paper, Construction paper, Safety scissors, Yarn or ribbon

What to Do

- Write with your child. Talk with him about your writing so that he begins to understand that writing means something and has many uses.
- Hang a family message board in the kitchen. Offer to write notes there for your child. Be sure that he finds notes left there for him.
- Help your child write notes or e-mails to relatives and friends to thank them for gifts or to share his thoughts. Encourage the relatives and friends to answer your child.
- As your child gets older, he can begin to write you longer stories. Ask questions that will help him organize the stories. Answer questions about spelling.
- Help your child to turn his writing into books. Paste his drawings and writings on pieces of construction paper. For each book, have him make a cover out of heavier paper or cardboard, then add special art, a title and his name as author. Punch holes in the pages and cover and bind the book together with yarn or ribbon.

How This Helps With School Success

Writing helps children to organize their thoughts and gives them an important way to communicate with others.

My Place

(for children ages 7 to 9)

Children tend to argue over the same space (even in a big room). By having an area of the floor marked off, each child has a place that feels like his own.

What You Need

Space—even a tiny area will do, Small table, Chair, Lamp, Small floor covering

What to Do

- Find a quiet study area away from the TV and radio for *each child* (even those not old enough to have homework yet).
- Put a rug or a section cut from an old blanket or sheet on a small area of the floor. Use this to mark off each child's private study space. Put the table and chair on the floor covering. This space does not *have* to be in the same place all the time. If the table is lightweight, the floor covering can be put down any place it is out of the way (such as near the kitchen if a child needs help as you are fixing dinner). It can also be put away when it is not being used.
- If the study space will always be in the same place, let the child try out different arrangements of the furniture to see what works best. Make sure she arranges the lamp so that the study area is well lit.
- Have her label items with her name.

How This Helps With School Success

Having a special place at home helps children to focus on what they are studying.



Education

Divide and Conquer

(for children ages 9 to 11)

Just about anything is easier to do if it's divided into smaller pieces. As your child's assignments get longer and more complicated, she needs to acquire more organizing and planning skills.

What You Need

Homework assignments, Chores, Paper, Pencil

What to Do

- Have your child choose a big homework assignment to talk about, such as a geography project. Sit with her and help her to make a list of what she needs to complete the job. For example:

Reference materials (books, maps)

Ask: Can you complete the assignment by just using your textbook? If not, do you need to go to the library? If so, can you check out books or will you have to allow time to stay there and use reference books? Can you use computer Web sites? Do you have the addresses for approved sites? Does your teacher have them?

Taking notes

Ask: Do you have a notebook? Pencils?

Finished project

Ask: Can you do this assignment on a computer? Will you need to staple the pages together? Do you need a report folder or cover? Do you need to draw pictures or make charts? Can you use computer graphics?

- Help your child to decide the order in which the parts of the job need to be done. Have her number them. To help her estimate how long each part of the assignment will take, tell her to work backward from the date the assignment is due. Have her figure out how much time she'll need to complete each part. Have her write down start and finish dates next to each part.
- Have her put the assignment dates on a calendar or her homework chart.
- Together, think about a household job, such as cleaning out a closet or mowing the yard. Help your child to divide it up into smaller parts.
- Talk with your child about how you divide work at your job or at home.

How This Helps With School Success

Learning to see assignments or big jobs in small pieces can make them less overwhelming for a child.

-Information courtesy of U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, "Helping Your Child Succeed in School", Washington, DC, 2005.

Download your free copy at <http://publications.usa.gov/USAPubs.php?PubID=3206>.

Education is a Life-Long Experience!

Check Out These Upcoming Opportunities for GRGs and Service Providers

2015 Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect Conference

April 14-16 ♦ **Red Lion Colonial Hotel, Helena**

Topics Include: Loss and Grief; Understanding the Role of CASA; Ending Bullying; Providing Trauma Informed Care to Children and Youth; and many more.

For More Information & To Register: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/CFSD/CANConference>

47th Annual Governor's Conference on Aging

May 12-14 ♦ **Red Lion Colonial Hotel, Helena**

Topics Include: Estate Planning, Wills and Trusts; Powerful Tools for Caregivers; Living With Chronic Conditions; Caregiver Stress and the Brain; and many more.

For More Information & To Register:

<http://dphhs.mt.gov/SLTC/aging/GovernorsConferenceonAging>



Useful News

Help Your Child Learn to Use the Internet Properly and Effectively

The Internet, or World Wide Web, has become an important part of how we learn and of how we interact with others. For children to succeed today, they must be able to use the Internet. **Here are some suggestions for helping your child learn to do so properly and effectively:**

- **Spend time online with your child.** If you don't have a computer at home, ask your librarian if the library has computers that you and your child may use. Learn along with your child. If you're not familiar with computers or with the Internet, ask the librarian if and when someone is available at the library to help you and your child learn together to use them. If your child knows about computers, let her teach you. Ask her to explain what she is doing and why. Ask her to show you her favorite Web sites and to tell you what she likes about them. This will help her build self confidence and pride in her abilities.
- **Help your child to locate appropriate Internet Web sites.** At the same time, make sure that she understands what you think are appropriate Web sites for her to visit. Point her in the direction of sites that can help her with homework or that relate to her interests. Pay attention to any games she might download or copy from the Internet. Some games are violent or contain sexual or other content that is inappropriate for children. Resources such as *GetNetWise* (<http://www.getnetwise.org/>), a public service provided by Internet corporations and public interest groups, can help you to make good Web site choices and give you more information about Internet use. You might consider using "filters" to block your child from accessing sites that may be inappropriate. These filters include software programs that you can install on your computer. In addition, many Internet service providers offer filters (often for free) that restrict the sites that children can visit. Of course, these filters are not always completely effective—and children can find ways around them. The best safeguard is your supervision and involvement.
- **Monitor the amount of time that your child spends online.** Internet surfing can be just as time consuming as watching TV. Don't let it take over your child's life. Have her place a clock near the computer and keep track of how much time she is spending online.
- **Teach your child rules for using the Internet safely.** Let him know that he should never do the following:
 - tell anyone, including his friends, his computer password
 - use bad language or send cruel, threatening or untrue e-mail messages
 - give out any personal information, including his name or the names of family members, home address, phone number, age, and school name
 - arrange to meet a stranger that he has "talked" with in an online "chat room"



-Information courtesy of U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, "Helping Your Child Succeed in School", Washington, DC, 2005.

Download your own free copy of **"Helping Your Child Succeed in School"** at <http://publications.usa.gov/USAPubs.php?PubID=3206>. Additional topics include monitoring homework, encouraging your child to use the library, encouraging active learning, and many more.



**GRG State-Wide Partner Spotlight:
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS**



*-Special thanks to Valerie Erwin
of BBBS of Gallatin County
for compiling this information.*

Resources

The **Big Brothers Big Sisters** mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported 1-to-1 relationships that change their lives for the better, forever. What exactly, does adversity mean? First of all, adversity doesn't discriminate and, at some point, all children face adversity whether it's in school, with friends or with family. BBBS matches children with positive, long-term adult mentors who become a friend, confidant, and additional support in their life.

As a grandparent raising your grandchildren, BBBS wants to be a resource to you and your grandkids. They accept children ages 5-15, the services are offered free of charge and they work diligently to match your grandchild with a mentor who matches their interests, needs and personality. Contact your local Big Brothers Big Sisters agency today!

BBBS of Gallatin County

www.bbbs-gc.org

406-587-1216

Area: Gallatin County and Ennis (Madison County)

BBBS of Flathead County

www.bbbsfc.org

406-752-0092

Area: Flathead County

BBBS of Great Falls

www.bbbs-gf.org

406-453-5521

Area: Cascade County

BBBS of Butte

www.bbbsbutte.org

406-782-9644

Area: Silver Bow, Jefferson and Deer Lodge Counties

BBBS of Helena

www.bbbs-helena.org

406-442-7479

Area: Lewis & Clark, Powell, Granite, Broadwater and Meagher Counties

BBBS of Missoula

www.bbbsmissoula.org

406-721-2380

Area: Missoula and Ravalli Counties

BBBS of Yellowstone County

www.bbbsyc.org

406-248-2229

Area: Wheatland, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Treasure, Yellowstone, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Carbon and Big Horn Counties

BBBS of Park County

www.bbbsparkcounty.org

406-222-1930

Area: Park County

Engage in New Sports Activities the SAFE and INFORMED Way

With Spring comes the urge to get outside and get moving! Chances are your grandchildren will want to participate in an activity that is new to them. The **CDC** has a great website called **BAM! Body and Mind** that features activity cards on everything from bicycling and Frisbee to inline skating and white water rafting! Each card lists the gear needed, how to be safe, how to play or engage in the sport, the parts of the body worked, and fun facts about the activity.

Find these great resources at: <http://www.cdc.gov/bam/activity/cards.html>



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™





Health & Nutrition

What Exactly is an EMPTY CALORIE?

Currently, many of the foods and beverages Americans eat and drink contain **empty calories** – calories from solid fats and/or added sugars. Solid fats and added sugars add calories to the food but few or no nutrients. For this reason, the calories from solid fats and added sugars in a food are often called empty calories. Learning more about solid fats and added sugars can help you make better food and drink choices.

Solid fats are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter, beef fat, and shortening. Some solid fats are found naturally in foods. They can also be added when foods are processed by food companies or when they are prepared. **Added sugars** are sugars and syrups that are added when foods or beverages are processed or prepared. Solid fats and added sugars can make a food or beverage more appealing, but they also can add a lot of calories. The foods and beverages that provide the most empty calories for Americans are:

- Cakes, cookies, pastries, and donuts (contain both solid fat and added sugars)
- Sodas, energy drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks (contain added sugars)
- Cheese (contains solid fat)
- Pizza (contains solid fat)
- Ice cream (contains both solid fat and added sugars)
- Sausages, hot dogs, bacon, and ribs (contain solid fat)

These foods and beverages are the major sources of empty calories, but many can be found in forms with less or no solid fat or added sugars. For example, low-fat cheese and low-fat hot dogs can be purchased. You can choose water, milk, or sugar-free soda instead of drinks with sugar. Check that the calories in these products are less than in the regular product. In some foods, like most candies and sodas, **all** the calories are empty calories. These foods are often called "empty calorie foods." However, empty calories from solid fats and added sugars can also be found in some other foods that contain important nutrients. Some examples of foods that provide nutrients, shown in forms with and without empty calories are:

Foods with some empty calories:

- Sweetened applesauce
- Regular ground beef (75% lean)
- Fried chicken
- Sugar-sweetened cereals
- Whole milk

Similar Foods with few or no empty calories:

- Unsweetened applesauce
- Extra lean ground beef (95% or more lean)
- Baked chicken breast without skin
- Unsweetened cereals
- Fat-free milk

Making better choices, like unsweetened applesauce or extra lean ground beef, can help keep your intake of added sugars and solid fats low. **A small amount of empty calories is okay, but most people eat far more than is healthy.** It is important to limit empty calories to the amount that fits your calorie and nutrient needs. You can lower your intake by eating and drinking foods and beverages containing empty calories *less often* or by decreasing the *amount* you eat or drink.

-Information adapted from: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/weight-management-calories/calories/empty-calories.html>

A Fantastic Resource is in Two New Places!



The Buy-Eat-Live-Better program that offers ideas for healthy eating and physical activity can now be found on **Facebook** and **Pinterest**. Check it out at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Buy-Eat-Live-Better
www.pinterest.com/buyeatlive/

Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana—By County

Blaine County—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
Liz Werk
MSU Extension
(406) 353-2656

Big Horn County—Wyola
Kristy Old Coyote
LBHC Extension
(406) 638-3114
Jacinta Stewart
(406) 679-2259

Big Horn County—Hardin
Janice Eckman
Hardin Parent Center
(406) 665-4151

Big Horn & Rosebud Counties—Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Ryhal Rowland
MSU Extension
(406) 477-6498

Cascade County—Great Falls
Jona McNamee
MSU Extension
(406) 454-6980

Custer County—Miles City
Don & Vivian Westall
(406) 234-6727

Dawson County—Glendive
Pete Bruno
Family Life Institute
(406) 939-5591

Deer Lodge County—Anaconda
Abbie Phillip
MSU Extension
(406) 563-4036

Fergus County—Lewistown
Denise Seilstad
MSU Extension
(406) 535-3919

Flathead County—Kalispell
Nikki Roth
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
(406) 756-1414

Gallatin County—Bozeman
MSU Extension Family & Human Development
(406) 994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Glacier County—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Carrie Bear Chief-Evans/
Connie Bremner
Eagle Shield Center
(406) 338-7257

Hill County—Havre
Lea Ann Larson
MSU Extension
(406) 265-5481

Hill County—Rocky Boy Indian Reservation
Mary St. Pierre
Stone Child College & MSU Extension
(406) 395-4875

Lake County—Ronan
Nori Pearce
MSU Extension
(406) 676-4271

Lewis & Clark County—Helena
Candi Standall
(406) 202-1668
Jackie Stoeckel
DPHHS, Child & Family Services - Program Bureau
(406) 841-2402

Madison/Jefferson Counties—Whitehall
MSU Extension
(406) 287-3282

Missoula County—Missoula
Kelly Moore
MSU Extension
(406) 258-4206

Ravalli County—Bitterroot Valley
AnnaMarie White
La Paloma Agency
(406) 396-1937

Richland County—Sidney
MSU Extension
(406) 433-1206

Roosevelt County—Culbertson
Ardis Oelkers
MSU Extension
(406) 787-5312

Roosevelt County—Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Carol Bemer
(406) 768-2430

Rosebud County—Forsyth
Jennifer Anderson
MSU Extension
(406) 346-7320

Rosebud County—Lame Deer & Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Kay Medicine Bull
Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation
(406) 477-6654

Silver Bow County—Butte
Brenda Hergott
Butte 4-C's
(406) 723-4019
1-800-794-4061

Stillwater County—Columbus
Lisa Terry
MSU Extension
(406) 322-8035

Teton County—Choteau
Jane Wolery
MSU Extension
(406) 466-2491

Valley County—Glasgow
Roubie Younkin
MSU Extension
(406) 228-6239

Yellowstone County—Billings
Jackie Rumph
MSU Extension
(406) 256-2828



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Montana State University Extension is an ADA/
EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and
provider of educational outreach.

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

*Call it a clan, call it a network,
call it a tribe, call it a family.
Whatever you are, whoever you are,
you need one.*
~Jane Howard