

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Unplanned Consequences of the Opioid Epidemic

PI: Margot Davis (margotd@brandeis.edu); **Co-PI:** Margi Erickson Warfield (mew@brandeis.edu)

Research team: Janet Boguslaw, Sharon Reif, Joanne Nicholson, Connie Horgan

Collaborators: Bay State Community Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mass Bay, Boys and

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Project Description:

Parenting is increasingly shifting to grandparents as a consequence of the opioid epidemic. Social services are available for children who are removed from their home, but grandparents who become custodial caregivers often have no supports. Their new responsibilities can impact their health, economic, and social wellbeing as they may have to move and assume costs associated with parenting. It is not new for grandparents to assume the role of caregivers but the opioid epidemic complicates this role because OUD typically cycles through periods of intense use and abstinence.

Despite their growing numbers, custodial grandparents are hidden from government and service statistics. The proposed project seeks to remedy this knowledge gap and add the needs of these caregivers into the national conversation about family caregiving under the newly enacted RAISE Family Caregivers Act of 2017.

Brandeis University researchers will conduct in-depth interviews and survey custodial grandparents in the greater Boston area. We are partnering with Bay State Community Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mass Bay, and Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston to identify a sample population. The proposed project will (1) build understanding of the challenges faced by those who are custodians of children whose parents have opioid use disorders (OUDs), and (2) assess the financial, health, and psychological well-being of grandparent care-givers.