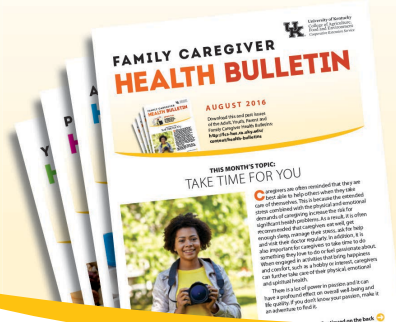




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



OCTOBER 2017

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

KIDS AS CAREGIVERS



With today's caregiving demands combined with the numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren, it is not uncommon for those grandchildren, even those as young as seven years old, to eventually become the primary caregiver to their grandparents. Grandchildren often assume this role due to proximity, family situations or because they feel especially close to their grandparent and want to give back to them.

Regardless of the reason for care, grandchildren — in an effort to help their family — are bogged down with navigating caregiving demands and a complicated healthcare system, instead of concentrating on school or launching a career or family. As a result, grandchildren-caregivers are at greater risk of assuming emotional, physical and even financial strain.

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➔ Continued from page 1

While older caregivers may balance these same caregiving challenges, they are more apt to tackle them based on having a lifetime of experiences behind them and the likelihood of having a more understanding peer support system. Grandchildren, on the other hand, have only a small stash of life experience and friends who likely don't understand why you have to take care of grandma versus going to the movies on a Saturday night.

For late adolescents and young adults, the grandchild-as-caregiver phenomenon can force them to juggle life with caregiving demands. As a result, it is not uncommon for grandchildren in this situation to delay their education and/or career, which can negatively affect career plans and financial stability. Even friendships, socializing, romantic relationships and parenting can be put on hold due to caregiving.

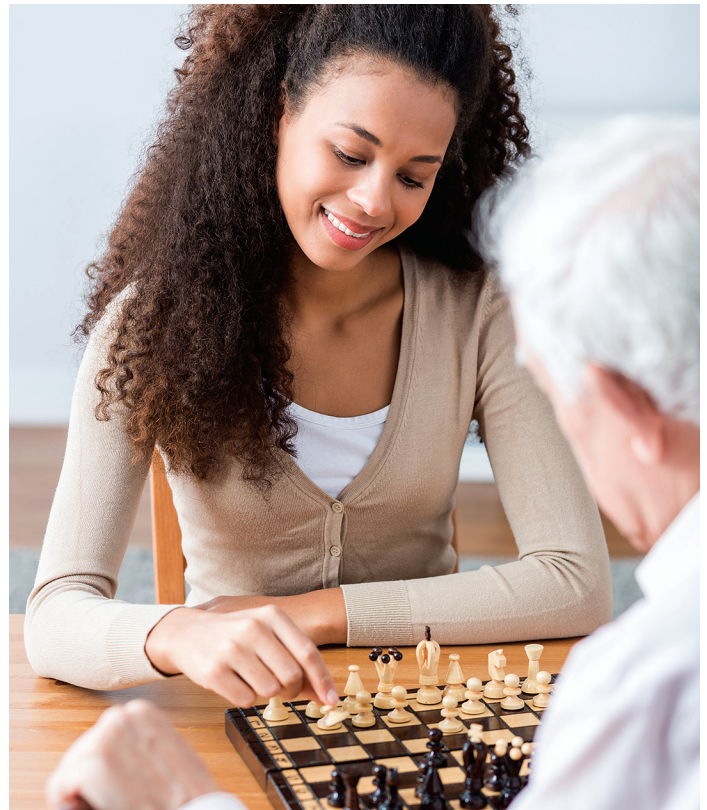
The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services has a variety of support services that can help young caregivers.

Not only can the responsibility of taking primary care of a grandparent be distressing at a young age, some grandparents make it increasingly difficult due to their mistrust in the abilities of their young grandchildren. In such cases, grandparents need to understand that their grandchild is likely helping because no one else in the family is able. Together, it is important to communicate, trust and make a caregiver plan together.

Another challenge for young caregivers is that they may not know where to turn for support. The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services has a variety of caregiver support services.

Services include:

- Information about programs and assistance to access services



- Counseling and support groups
- Caregiver training related to decision-making and problem-solving
- Respite care to help young caregivers get temporary time off from caregiving

For more information, contact your local Area Agency on Aging or County Extension office.

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Written by: Amy F. Kostelic, Ph.D.
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

