MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Remarks to the

Governor's Protect Montana Kids Commission

Helena, Montana

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Deborah Albin M.S., Program Manager

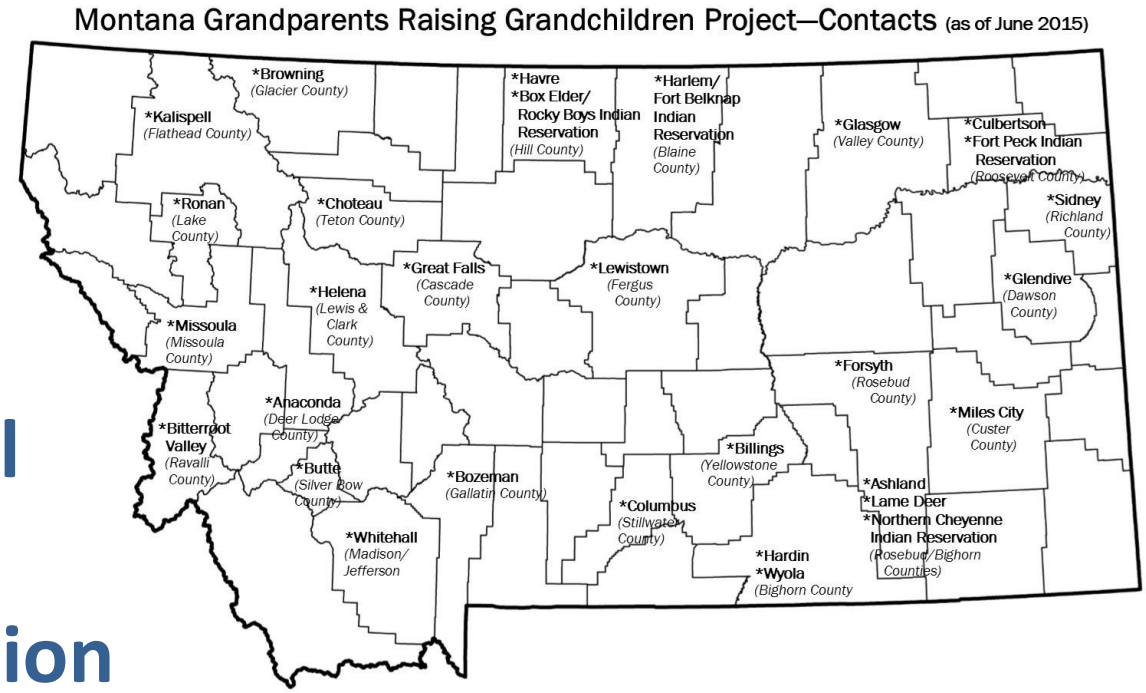
Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

Extension, Family & Human Development Program

Montana State University

Montana GRG Project

- Started in 2002
- Developed a state task force
- Started support groups and local contacts for support, education & networking– currently 30 throughout state



Montana GRG Project

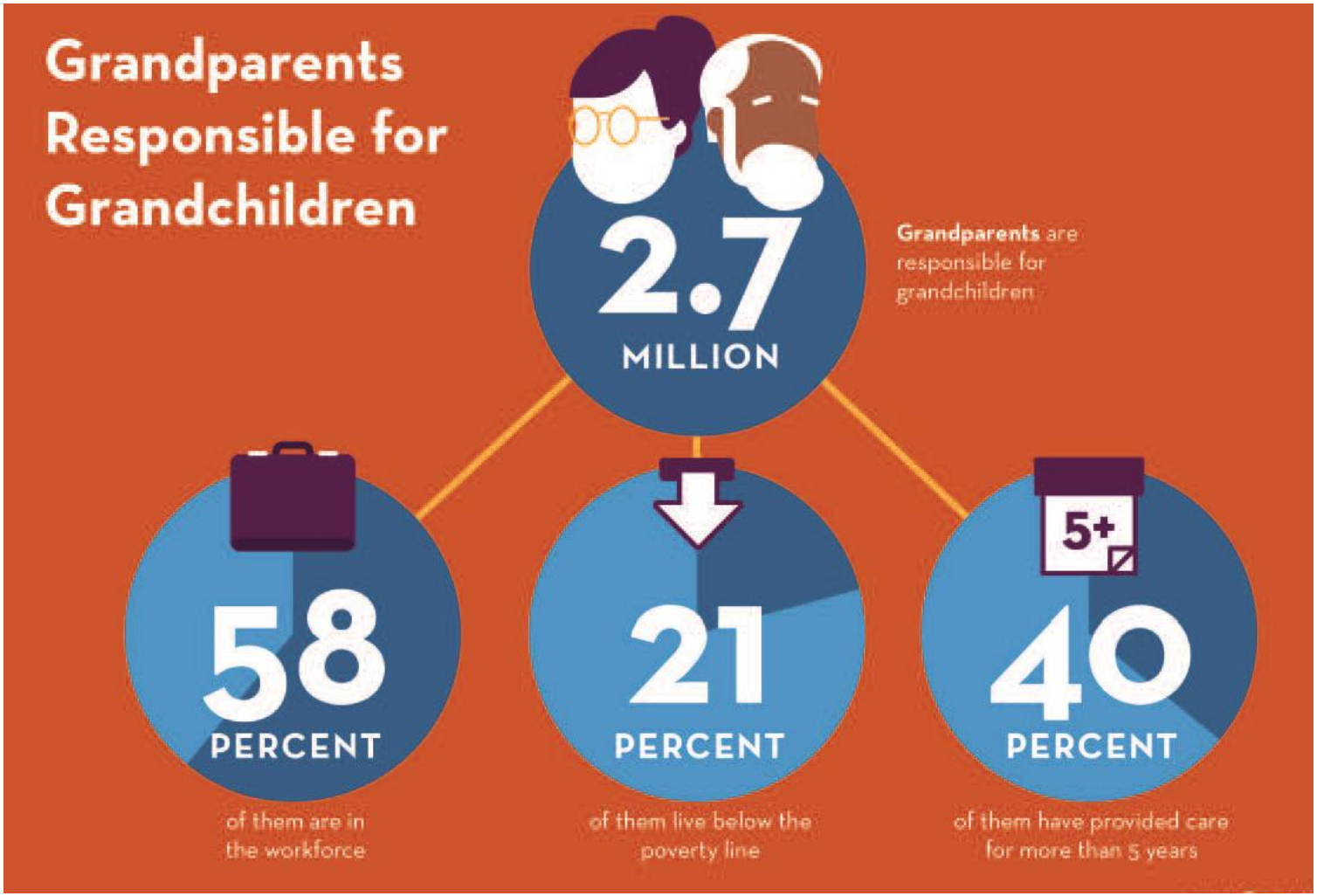
- **MSU Faculty Research on Montana GRGs**
  - Links to these papers found on the GRG website
- **MSU MontGuides (fact sheets)**
- **Conferences/seminars/listening sessions**
- **Newsletter, listserv, website, social media**
  - www.montanagrandparents.org
  - Facebook, Pinterest

Why do Grandparents Take on this Responsibility?

Parental issues including:

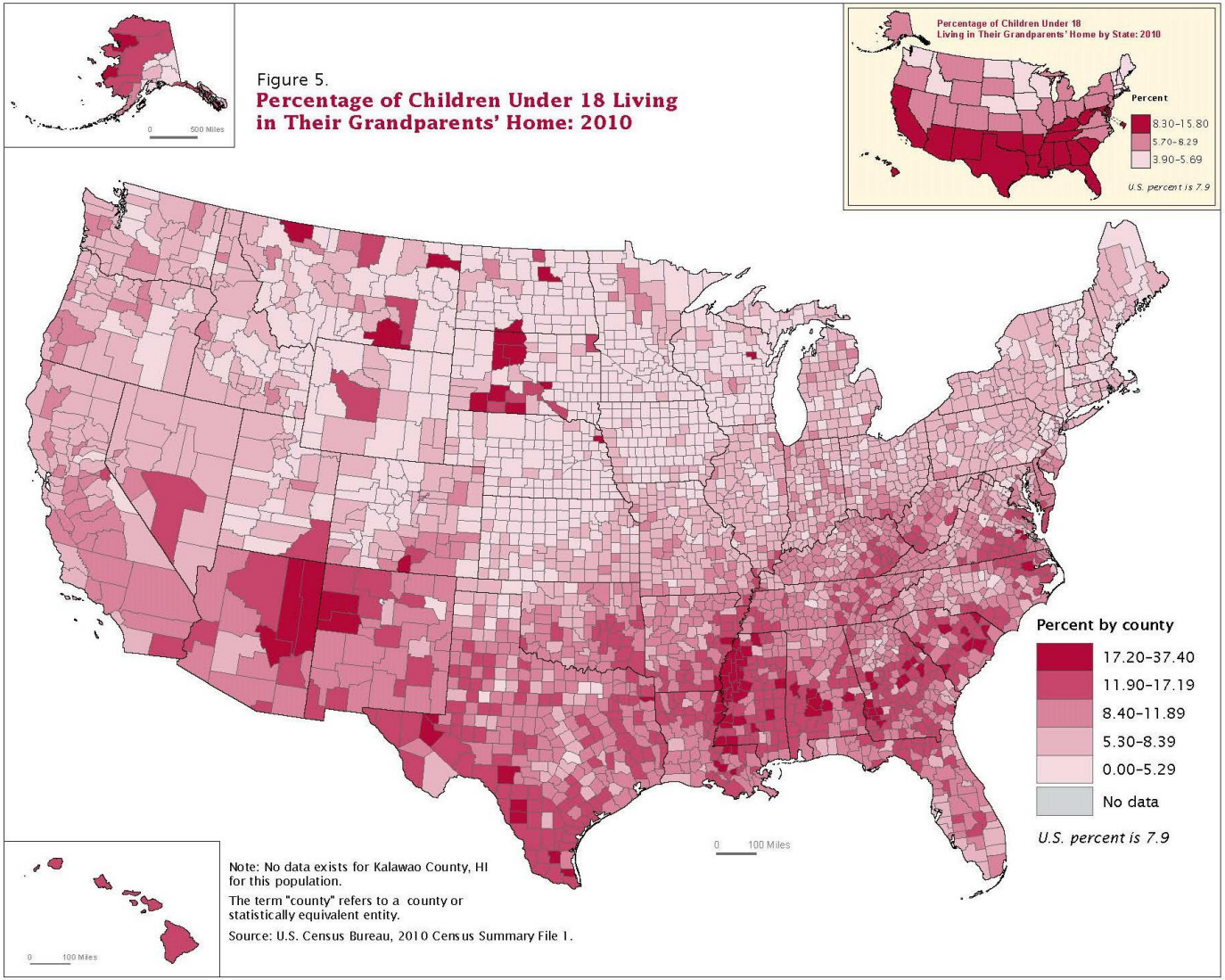
- Substance abuse
- Mental health issues
- Physical health problems
- Death
- Financial
- Teen pregnancy
- Incarceration
- Military deployment

GRGs Nationally



Information courtesy of Generations United; www.gu.org; "The State of Grandfamilies in America: 2014"

GRGs Nationally



Information courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau; "Coresident Grandparents and Their Grandchildren: 2012"

The Issue in Montana

- More than 6,600 GRGs in the state
- More than 11,880 children (average of 1.8 children per home)
- Average age: 60 years
- ~23% of families headed by kin receive TANF Child-Only funds

The Issue in Montana

- 94% of grandparents are raising their grandchildren outside of the State system ("informally")
- These "informal" families save the state of Montana $213,000 per day in foster care payments.

The "Formal" and "Informal" Systems

Formal System

- Child usually a ward of the state
- Grandparents may receive foster care payments for child – Title IV-E or GAP Funds
- Many other services may be available
- Can lead to guardianship or adoption

Informal System

- Grandparents have no legal ties to grandchild
- Might receive TANF & Medicaid for grandchild
- Few other services
- Parents can come back and take child
- Some seek private attorneys for guardianship or adoption

The Good News: Montana Has Many Supportive Services in Place

- **43% of children in foster care are being raised by grandparents or other kin**
- **This is the THIRD HIGHEST rate in the United States and District of Columbia; only Hawaii (48%) and Florida (44%) have better rates.**

Information courtesy of Generations United; www.gu.org; "2015: The State of Grandfamilies in America"

The Good News: Montana Has Many Supportive Services in Place

- **Montana is the TOP TEN in the United States and District of Columbia in supportive services for both "formal" and "informal" grandparent and kin-headed families.**

Information courtesy of Generations United; www.gu.org; "2015: The State of Grandfamilies in America"

The Good News: Montana Has Many Supportive Services in Place

- **Education Consent Law**
  - MT Code Ann. §20-5-501 through 503
- **Medical Consent Law**
  - MT Code Ann. §40-6-501 & 502
- **De Facto Custody**
  - MT Code Ann. §40-6-601 & 602
  - MT Code Ann. §40-4-212 (best interest of the child)

Information courtesy of Generations United; www.gu.org; "2015: The State of Grandfamilies in America"

The Good News: Montana Has Many Supportive Services in Place

- At least one time-limit exemption or extension for TANF funds
- Federal GAP funds
- Lifespan Respite Care Program

Information courtesy of Generations United; www.gu.org; "2015: The State of Grandfamilies in America"

Moving Forward: How Can Montana Better Support these Families?

- Access to low- or no-cost legal services
- Waive income eligibility for SNAP
- Emergency funds available for simple needs
- Waive child-support enforcement notification for TANF Child-Only funds

Moving Forward: How Can Montana Better Support these Families?

- **For children in the State system:**
  - Relax foster care training and other requirements for grandparents who:
    - Live in rural/remote locations; don't have access to transportation
    - Already have a relationship with the child (i.e. have "informally" raised)

Moving Forward: How Can Montana Better Support these Families?

- **For children in the State system:**
  - Make the Montana GRG Project part of your new case worker training
    - Grandparents and other kin can be stressed and emotional during this process – we can help you understand their needs and how to successfully communicate with and work with these families.

Questions?

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project
Extension, Family & Human Development Program
Montana State University
316 Herrick Hall
PO Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717
www.montanagrandparents.org
grg@montana.edu
(406) 994-3395