**Goal:** To provide grandparents with information about financial assistance available in Florida for grandfamilies.

It is often difficult to house, feed, and clothe an added individual to the family. This is more difficult when you are on a limited income. You and your grandchildren may be entitled to receive financial assistance. Listed below are several of these programs.

### Cash Assistance

#### Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)

This program, also called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), offers cash assistance for low-income families. There are different rules for receiving cash assistance, but eligibility is determined by residency, income, and assets. You may qualify to receive benefits as a family, or your grandchildren can receive benefits under the child-only grant. With the child-only grant, your grandchildren may be able to receive benefits until they are 18 (or 19 if they are still in high school). Cash assistance is limited to a lifetime total of 48 months.

For more information about TCA/TANF:

**Access Florida**
http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/
1-866-762-2237 (TTY 711)

### TCA-Relative Caregiver Program

This program provides monthly cash assistance and benefits for children living with relative caregivers. The amount of cash assistance depends on the age of your grandchild. Payments are slightly higher than TCA. To qualify for this program:

- You must live in the state of Florida.
- You must have custody of your grandchildren, meaning they were placed with you by a Florida court and the Department of Children and Families (or a contracted provider).
- Your grandchildren must be younger than 18.
• You must agree to a background check and home study completed by the Department of Children and Families (or a contracted provider).

• You must cooperate with child support enforcement.

For more information about the TCA-Relative Caregiver Program:

Access Florida
http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/
1-866-762-2237 (TTY 711)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

This program pays monthly cash benefits to families with mentally or physically disabled children. To qualify, families need to have a limited income.

For more information about SSI:

Social Security Office Locator
https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLo/fo001.jsp
1-800-772-1213 (TTY: 1-800-325-0778)

Food and Nutrition Assistance

Food Assistance Program

The Food Assistance Program helps limited-income families pay for food. When a family applies, this program considers these factors:

• total monthly household income of each adult;
• value of items owned (not including your house); and
• other family expenses.

For more information about food stamps:

Access Florida
http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/
1-866-762-2237 (TTY 711)

Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

WIC provides monthly checks to purchase foods that improve the nutritional quality of a child's diet. The types of foods you can purchase may vary, but can include cereal, milk, eggs, cheese, juice, and beans. Your grandchild must be under the age of 5 to qualify. There are income requirements to receive WIC, but if your family qualifies for Medicaid, food stamps, and TAC, you will very likely qualify for WIC. To apply for WIC, you will need to prove legal custody or guardianship of your grandchildren.

For more information about WIC:

Florida WIC
http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/wic/
1-800-342-3556

Energy Assistance

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

This program provides money to local governments to assist low-income families with home heating and cooling costs. Eligibility is determined by the local agency; however, you may be eligible if you are currently receiving the following assistance:

• Supplemental Security Income (SSI); and
• food stamps.

For more information about energy assistance:

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
http://www.floridajobs.org/job-seekers-community-services/community-services/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program

Child Care Assistance

School Readiness Program

Coping with the demands of caring for children on a daily basis can be very stressful. You may need to work at the same time you are caring for your grandchild. The Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Office of Early Learning provides financial assistance to low-income families for child-care services. Child-care services include extended-day, extended-year, and school-age care. Eligibility requirements vary by county.

For more information about the School Readiness Program:

Agency for Workforce Innovation, School Readiness Program
http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/OEL_CCRR_SRPrograms.html
Head Start/Early Head Start

These are programs for children from birth to age five. They are child-focused programs aimed at increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.

For more information about Head Start/Early Head Start:

Florida Head Start
http://www.floridaheadstart.org/

Tax Credits
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

You may qualify for EITC if you meet all these criteria:

- Your grandchild is under age 19 or under age 24 and is a full-time student.
- Your grandchild has lived in your home for more than 6 months of the tax year.
- You pay more than 50% of your grandchild's support, and the child is not claimed as a dependent by the parent.
- You have worked during the tax year.

For more information about the Earned Income Tax Credit:

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
1-800-829-1040

Other Resources

The National Council on Aging sponsors a website called Benefits Checkup (visit the site at https://www.benefits-checkup.org). It is designed to help you find local resources and benefits for a variety of needs (for example, cash, food, housing, medical, and more). The process usually takes about 20–30 minutes.