

The Grandparent Caregiver Program

The Grandparent Caregivers Program has provided essential financial assistance to grandparents raising their grandchildren. This assistance has kept children living with family and out of the foster care system.

The Grandparent Caregivers Program, administered by the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), was created in 2006 to help District residents with low incomes raise their grandchildren, great grandchildren, great nieces and nephews.

District residents who have been the primary caretaker of a child under 18, who has lived with them for at least 6 months, are eligible. Their household income must be below 200% of the federal poverty level (currently, \$29,140 for a family of two; \$44,100 for a family of four).

Caregivers enrolled in the program receive a monthly cash benefit to help them care for the children. The amount of money a caregiver receives varies based on the age of the children and the amount of money the caregiver receives from other programs. The average annual subsidy in FY10 is projected to be \$9,137 per child.¹

The need for the program is great:

- **12,000 District children live in the care of their grandparents.**²
- **Child poverty is at epidemic proportions in the District.** 52,000 children – nearly half of all children in the District – live at or below 200% of the poverty line.³

The program is successful and cost effective:

- **Keeps children with their families.** The government surveyed subsidy recipients in 2008 regarding the effect of the subsidy on their families. Asked what would happen if they lost their subsidy, 19% of respondents said that they would not be able to continue to take care of the child without the subsidy, and an additional 50% said they were unsure if they could continue to take care of the child without the subsidy.
- **Prevents abuse and neglect.** By helping low income grandparents meet the needs of children in their care, the program prevents the need for many of those children to enter foster care.

¹ The average annual subsidy in calendar year 2008 was \$8828. Grandparent Caregivers Pilot Program: Annual Status Report CY'08, at 1 (2009). Applying a 3.5 percent cost of living adjustment yields an average annual subsidy of \$9137 in calendar year 2009, which will be in effect at the start of FY 2010.

² Annie E. Casey Foundation KidsCount Data Center, http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/profile_results.jsp?r=10&d=1&c=9&p=1&x=142&y=11.

³ *Id.*, http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/profile_results.jsp?r=10&d=1&c=1&p=1&x=150&y=3.

- **Saves Tax Payer Dollars.** It is significantly less expensive to provide a subsidy to a grandparent caregiver than to place the child in the child welfare system. The average annual grandparent caregiver subsidy in FY2010 will be \$9,137. The average annual cost (in local dollars) to keep a child in foster care is \$48,000.⁴

⁴ The proposed budget for the ‘Out of Home Care and Support’ program includes \$104,317,000 in local funds. Proposed CFSA Budget, Schedule 30-PBB, E-16. With about 2300 children in foster care, this budget means that CFSA will spend an average of \$45,355 for each child in foster care. That estimate is conservative because we have not included other costs associated with children in foster care, such as “Adoptions and Guardianship Subsidy,” “Guardianship Subsidy,” “Foster Care Services,” “Adoption Activity,” and “Teen Services Activity.” *See* Proposed CFSA Budget, Program Description, E-21 – E-22. We do not include the costs of those services in our estimate due to the difficulty in projecting their average cost.