

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Child and Family Services Agency



Grandparent Caregivers Program

## Information Guide

The Grandparent Caregiver Program (GCP) helps low-income District residents who are raising their grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-nieces, or great-nephews. Those who qualify may get money every month to help care for children living with them. Please read the following Fact Sheet thoroughly along with the attached “Frequently Asked Questions.”

### Who runs the program?

The DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) accepts applications and runs the program. You may obtain a complete application packet directly from the program staff, located at CFSA, which will also include the materials you need for the background checks. Other community organizations have the application form, but you will still need to contact the GCP staff for clearances. There are also several community organizations available to assist you in completing the application process. Those organizations are listed at the end of the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of this Guide.

### Is this program for me?

You must meet **ALL** these conditions.

- Your grandchild, great grandchild, great niece, and/or great nephew under age 18 lives with you.
- The child has lived with you for the past six months or more.
- You have been the child’s primary caretaker for the past six months.
- The child’s parent has not lived with you in the past six months. (This doesn’t count if the parent gave you standby guardianship of the child, or is a minor enrolled in school or a minor with a medically verifiable disability which prevents them from caring for the child)
- You live in the District.
- The total of all money coming into your household is below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level (see box to the right).
- You have applied for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for the child.
- All adults living in your home must submit the results for national and local criminal background checks and a Child Protection Registry check (to rule out child abuse).

Total number of people in your home is:	Total yearly household income is less than:
2	\$31,860
3	\$40,180
4	\$48,500
5	\$56,820
6	\$65,140
7 or more	\$73,460

### **Does this program have limits?**

Yes. The D.C. Council has provided us with a specific budget for subsidies and acceptance into the program is **first-come/first-served**. In the event that we reach program capacity, we will establish a waiting list and, as families leave our program, new families will be accepted from the waiting list. You can use money from this program only to care for the children you list in the application.

### **How do I apply?**

Call 202-442-6009 to ask for an application by mail. You can also visit our office at the address below to pick up an application. If you plan on coming to the office it is strongly recommended that you make an appointment first.

### **Should I do anything now to get ready?**

Yes. Take these steps before you apply.

1. Gather the necessary documents to **show you are the child's primary caretaker**. You can qualify in two ways. The first way is to provide one of the following documents:

- A court order, signed by a judge, granting you custody of the child; or
- A court order, signed by a judge, granting you standby guardianship of the child, pursuant to D.C. Code § 16-4801–4810; or
- A decree, signed by a judge, stating that you have adopted the child.

Or, if none of the above exist, then provide one of the below plus complete the checklist contained on the application form which indicates why the parents are unable to care for the child(ren):

- Records showing that the applicant enrolled the child in school during the most recent school year or that the applicant is the primary educational contact for the child; or
- Immunizations or medical records, no more than two years old, indicating that the applicant is tending to the child's medical needs; or
- Proof that the applicant has been receiving SSI or TANF for the child for at least the last six months; or
- A letter from any legal, medical, military, law enforcement, social service or other similar professional, or the applicant's landlord describing the applicant's status in caring for the child.

2. **Apply for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)** for the child. Call the DC Department of Human Services, 202-724-5506.

### **How do the Background Checks work?**

All adults (persons 18 years old and older) residing in the home must complete our clearance process which includes three checks: an FBI check, a local police clearance and a Child Protection Registry Check.

We conduct the entire clearance process at our offices. The adults in your home must each schedule an appointment to come to our offices for fingerprinting. You can make this appointment by calling us at (202) 442-6009. There is no cost to you for fingerprinting.

Included with your application packet is a "Child Protection Registry" form. This form must also be completed by each adult living in the home and is used to help rule out child abuse. This form must either be notarized or witnessed by a member of CFSA's staff. We will be happy to witness your signature when you come for fingerprinting.

If you need more forms than are in your application packet, please just contact our office.

### **How much money can I get?**

The amount you receive depends on several factors including the age of the children and the amount you currently receive from TANF or SSI. The amount is based on a daily rate so your check each month will fluctuate. Please speak with program staff for an estimate of what your subsidy might be.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Call 202-442-6009 during regular business hours or visit <http://www.cfsa.dc.gov> . If you would like to speak with someone in person, please call ahead to schedule an appointment. **IF YOU ARRIVE WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT YOUR WAIT TIME COULD BE SIGNIFICANT.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Do I need legal custody to qualify for the program?**

Not anymore. The Safe and Stable Homes Act, passed by the D.C. Council in 2007, changed the Grandparent Caregivers Program to no longer require legal custody. Now, you must prove that you are the child's primary caregiver. There are two ways you can do this:

The first way is to provide one of the following documents:

- A court order, signed by a judge, granting you custody of the child; or
- A court order, signed by a judge, granting you standby guardianship of the child, pursuant to D.C. Code § 16-4801–4810; or
- A decree, signed by a judge, stating that you have adopted the child.

Or, if none of the above exist, then provide one of the below plus complete the checklist contained on the application form which indicates why the parents are unable to care for the child(ren):

- Records showing that the applicant enrolled the child in school during the most recent school year or that the applicant is the primary educational contact for the child; or
- Immunizations or medical records, no more than two years old, indicating that the applicant is tending to the child's medical needs; or
- Proof that the applicant has been receiving SSI or TANF for the child for at least the last six months; or
- A letter from any legal, medical, military, law enforcement, social service or other similar professional, or the applicant's landlord describing the applicant's status in caring for the child.

### **I've adopted my grandchildren. Am I still eligible?**

Yes, as long as you are not receiving an adoption subsidy. Please provide us with a copy of your adoption decree.

### **The child's parent lives in my home. Am I still eligible?**

You remain eligible under certain circumstances. The parent may continue to reside in your home if you have a court order granting you standby guardianship of the children, or if the parent is a minor (under 21 years old) who is enrolled in school or has a medically verifiable disability that prevents him or her from caring for the child. Please provide us with documentation to establish these.

### **I'm the child's aunt, not the grandparent. Am I still qualified?**

No. You must be the child's grandparent, great-grandparent, great-aunt, or great-uncle. No other relationships are eligible. Informal relationships such as "godmother" are not eligible. You will be required to prove this in your application

though legal documents, birth certificates, or a legal custody order (signed by a judge).

**How do I prove that I am the child's grandparent?**

You prove this in your application though legal documents, birth certificates, paternity acknowledgements or court reports. For example, if you are the child's paternal grandparent (a parent of the child's father) you can provide a letter from the child's father acknowledging he is the father and his birth certificate showing you are his parent.

**What is the Child Protection Register Check and why do I need it?**

The child protection register is our database of those persons responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child. The law requires that all adults in the house (everyone 18 and older) fill one out so we can ensure the safety of the children in households receiving the subsidy. You are not automatically disqualified if you are listed in the registry. All cases are reviewed on an individual basis. Please fill out the register check completely, have it notarized or witnessed and provide us with the **original**. Failure to include this form or provide the original will delay your application, as we must have an original signature to process the check.

**Why do I need a criminal background check?**

ALL adults (anyone 18 or over) in the house must comply with a local criminal history check and a federal background check. This is a requirement of the program and helps to ensure a suitable environment for the children in the household being considered for a subsidy. You are not automatically disqualified because you or someone in your home has a criminal record. CFSA reviews every case individually and takes into account the entire situation. This includes how long ago the conviction occurred, the type of conviction, and the circumstances surrounding it. Your application is not considered complete until we receive the fingerprinting results

**I've been told I cannot get TANF for the children because I get SSI. Am I still eligible?**

Yes. It is important to note that you only must APPLY for TANF. If TANF denies you because you currently receive SSI, you may still be eligible. Combine your entire household income and see the income chart on the fact sheet to see if you are eligible.

**Can you make copies of my original documents?**

No. It is your responsibility to make copies before you arrive. We also are not responsible for returning any original documents you mail to us.

**I'd like to go over my application with someone before I submit it. Can someone review it for me?**

Yes. We would be happy to sit down with you and go over your application to make sure it is complete. In order to facilitate this, please call (202)442-6009 to schedule an appointment. If you drop in without an appointment and wish speak to someone your wait time could be significant.

**Will I continue to get TANF or SSI if I am awarded this subsidy?**

Yes, this money comes in addition to the benefits you already receive. In fact, you must receive either TANF or SSI in order to qualify for this program and the amount you receive from the GCP is based on how much TANF or SSI you already receive from the government. The amount you receive in food stamps may be affected.

**How long does the application process take?**

We have forty-five (45) days to process your application from day we receive all of the required documents. Please note the 45 days does not begin to run until we receive all documents, including the results of the FBI. Average processing times are significantly less though if you initially submit a complete application. Submitting an incomplete application could delay your application significantly.

**What happens after I am approved?**

After you are approved an appointment will be scheduled for you to visit our office so you can sign a subsidy agreement. Once you sign the subsidy agreement your case will become active and you will get a check in the mail the following month. The subsidy is NOT retroactive to the date you first submitted your application.

**Is there a Waiting List for the program?**

Yes, there is currently a waiting list. The GCP is funded to subsidize a certain number of children at any time and, when that number of children is enrolled, the program establishes a Waiting List. As families leave our program, we move new families up from our waiting list. Because we are not in control of the movement of the waiting list, and cannot anticipate how quickly it will move, we are unable to give an accurate estimate as to how long an applicant may be waiting. Please contact our office to determine whether there is currently a waiting list in existence.

**Can I have the subsidy directly deposited into my bank account?**

No. We can only send you a check in the mail each month. Your check will arrive by the 14<sup>th</sup> of each month.

**Will you inform the child's parents I am receiving this subsidy?**

No. Your application and involvement in this program is confidential. Your personal information may only be released at your request.

**What kind of things can I pay for with this subsidy?**

You can use the money you receive from this program ONLY on things that benefit the child listed in the subsidy agreement. This includes but is not limited to: groceries, school clothes, summer camp, a portion of your rent or utilities, etc. The money cannot be used to the benefit of either of the child's birth parents.

**Other Organizations Available to Assist You:**

**For those 60 and older**

**Legal Counsel for the Elderly – (202)434-2120**

**Emmaus Senior Services – (202)745-1200**

**For all District residents**

**Children's Law Center – (202)467-4900 ext. 4**

**Bread for the City (NW) – (202)265-2400**

**Bread for the City (SE) – (202)561-8587**

**For those families dealing the effects of HIV/AIDS**

**Family Ties Project – (202)547-3349**