



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Grandparent Caregivers Program

**Grandparent Caregivers Program:
Annual Status Report, CY11**

January 2012



D.C. Child and Family Services Agency
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1. Introduction

This is the sixth annual report about the Grandparent Caregivers Program (GCP), which the District established under the Grandparent Caregivers Pilot Program Establishment Act of 2005. The Budget Support Act of 2009 modified the program out of pilot status, creating the Grandparent Caregivers Program and ensuring the perpetuity of the program. The Establishment Act requires an annual report that includes a specific set of statistics (Table 1) and recommendations for program improvement (Section 4). The District launched the program in March 2006, with the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) serving as program administrator.

Table 1: GCP Statistics

|  | <i>CY 2009</i> | <i>CY 2010</i> | <i>CY 2011</i> |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Program funding (subsidy portion) | \$4.5M - \$5.365M | \$5.365M – \$3.857M | \$3.857M – \$3.888M |
| New applications received (from families) | 67 | 75 | 58 |
| New subsidies awarded (to children) | 203 | 92 | 168 |
| Children receiving both GCP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (at EOY) | 449 | 458 | 472 |
| Total number of children who received subsidy in calendar year | 729 | 727 | 774 |
| Denials due to ineligibility | 17 | 5 | 14 |
| Denials due to funding - (applications on the waiting list as of End of Year) | 44 | 60 | 0 |
| Estimated eligible caretakers who have not yet applied | See discussion, page 6 | | |
| Subsidies terminated by program or caregiver | 95 | 89 | 139 |
| Substantiated instances of fraud | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Children removed from household while receiving subsidy | 5 | 4 | 3 |

2. Program Achievements

Eliminated the Waiting List

Shortly after the GCP's launch in 2006, the program reached capacity and a waiting list was established. Wait times for clients have reached as long as 18-months at their height. With the passage of the FY12 budget, the GCP received a subsidy boost of \$300,000 earmarked toward alleviating the waiting list. This amount would support 54 children – approximately the number of children on the waiting list at that time. The entire waiting list signed subsidy agreements in October 2011 and began receiving their subsidies. High attrition at the start of the fiscal year from an unusual number of children reaching age 18 has left the program with remaining capacity that we endeavor to fill. Presently, applicants experience a process time of approximately 4-6 weeks from the point at which the completed application is received to the receipt of their first subsidy check.

Conducted an Updated Survey of Clients

In 2008, the GCP conducted an extensive survey of its clients to assess how the subsidy has impacted their lives. In 2011, the GCP updated this data by mailing surveys to each of the 370 clients receiving the subsidy at that time. 144 completed surveys were returned (39%) and, although this was a slightly lower response rate than in 2008, it did reveal some interesting trends among GCP clients. Please see Appendix A for the survey's results.

Coordinated an In-House Holiday Assistance Program

The holidays can be a difficult time for low-income families and the GCP often receives requests from clients for assistance. In 2011, the GCP coordinated a Christmas wish list program linking the generosity of private donors with 154 children living in 66 families. To preserve required confidentiality, GCP staff gathered wish-lists from the families and passed them along to the donors. Gifts were collected at the GCP offices and distributed to client families who were grateful for the extra hand during the holidays.

Developed New Relationships with Community Partners

The GCP maintains its solid relationship with the many community partners who have supported the program since its inception. During 2011, however, the GCP embarked on two new, strong partnerships. First, the DC Youth Investment Trust's DC Opportunity Scholarship Program recruited clients of the GCP to apply for their services. Representatives of the Opportunity Scholarship Program attended a forum at the GCP offices where they provided information on the scholarships and answered clients' questions. As applications must be filed in person, the DCYIT staff stayed on premises for a portion of the day and provided the opportunity for clients to complete the process right there. Ultimately, scholarship applications were filed on behalf of fifteen GCP children and eleven were awarded new scholarships.

The GCP has also improved its relationship with DC Public Schools. To centralize marketing of the GCP to school communities, program materials were featured on the online Educator Portal. This system is accessed by all faculty and staff at DCPS, particularly those seeking to link their students with additional supports. This partnership has already resulted in multiple inquiries into the program by the DCPS community and we look forward to utilizing this standard method for reaching all city schools.

Participated in the National GrandRally

In September 2011, the GCP participated in the National GrandRally, a gathering of grandparents and other relative caregivers from across the country focused on educating, building connections and celebrating the value of the GrandFamily. GCP staff and clients attended various sessions during the multi-day event, which is co-sponsored by AARP, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund and Generations United. Participants hailed from across the country and the result of discussions with them was undisputed: there is no other program like the GCP in the country. The financial and social supports the GCP provides its clients are aspirational in most jurisdictions.

3. Statistical Overview

Applications

In 2011, the GCP received 58 applications from families new to the program who were applying on behalf of 90 children. Additionally, twelve existing GCP participants applied to add twelve new children to their subsidies. The latter children would have come into the family's care, or otherwise become eligible, after the original subsidy began. Program applications can be obtained by prospective applicants in several ways. Many call the program office for a copy to be mailed, while others appear personally to pick one up. The application is also available on the CFSA website (www.cfsa.dc.gov) for download and has been disseminated among the program's many community partners.

Subsidies

The calendar year began after a decrease in the GCP subsidy budget in December 2010 which required a pause in the signing of new subsidies to reach equilibrium with our new program capacity. In March 2011, however, the program was

**Table 2:
New Children Enrolled by Month, 2011**

| | | | | | | | |
|------|----|------|----|-------|----|------|----|
| Jan. | 0 | Apr. | 19 | July | 11 | Oct. | 49 |
| Feb. | 0 | May | 4 | Aug. | 8 | Nov. | 12 |
| Mar. | 19 | June | 19 | Sept. | 17 | Dec. | 14 |

poised to begin signing new subsidy agreements and moving families from the waiting list for the first time since July 2010. This effort was further bolstered with the implementation of the FY12 budget which included

an additional \$300K earmarked for moving families from the waiting list. At the start of the fiscal year, the GCP worked swiftly to meet with each waiting client to discuss their subsidy agreement and process their paperwork. In October 2011 alone, the GCP signed 49 subsidy agreements for children residing in 33 homes and ended the year with virtually no wait for applicants to begin receiving GCP assistance. This is the first time the program has had a minimal wait since 2007. Table 2 shows the number of subsidies approved each month.

The GCP remained at capacity, approximately 585 children, during the majority of the calendar year. The budgetary boost received at the start of FY12 increased the GCP's capacity to approximately 702 children, a number we are striving to meet. During the budgetary uncertainty of 2010, the GCP limited outreach and marketing of the program but we are increasing efforts at this time. There were 615 children in the program as of December 31, 2011. Overall, 774 children residing in 481 households received subsidies for all or part of 2011. The current average number of children per family participating in the program is two and the average age of the children currently in the program is 10 years old. During 2011, a participant in the GCP could expect to receive an average daily rate of \$14.96 – or \$448.80 for a 30-day month per child.

Waiting List (No Denials Due to Funding)

When the program reached capacity in August 2007, CFSA established a waiting list. Thus, no applications was denied due to funding, rather applicants were added to the program from the waiting list. When funds are available, these applicants sign their subsidy agreements and start the program the day a vacancy is created by another participant. At the beginning of 2011, the waiting list contained 89 children residing in 60 households. By the end of the year, the waiting

list for GCP services was eliminated. There remains a process time of approximately 4-6 weeks from the time a complete application is received until the client receives their first subsidy payment. This interval is used to review and validate the applicant's eligibility and receive background clearances. It also includes a nominal delay in awaiting the date of the standard monthly payment.

Estimated Eligible Caretakers



In 2010, two major studies reinforced the notion that grandparent-led households remain a prevalent and growing trend among American families. The Pew Research Center¹ released a study in September 2010 focusing on the increase of grandparent-led households, particularly since the start of the national economic downturn. According to Pew, about one in ten children in America live with a grandparent. About 43% of those children have no biological parent in the home and are being raised by their grandparent. This figure was last estimated in 2008 as 2.6 million children nationwide. Nearly half of these families are below three times the poverty level.

The US Census has not released its full 2010 data on grandparent-led households but some figures have been cited in recent Census documents. In November, the Census stated that out of the 7.5M children who lived with a grandparent in 2010, 22% of those had no biological parent in the household. These households, nationwide, had a median household income of \$33,147. About half a million grandparents are caring for their grandchildren while living below the poverty line.² The Census also indicated an overall increase in the number of children residing in grandparent-led households.³ Furthermore, there are 1.9 million children in the US living in households led by other relatives. In addition to grandparents, the GCP accepts applications from great-aunts and great-uncles that would be categorized as such.⁴

Locally, the numbers appear higher. In 2007, 14.5% of all children in the District (16,723) lived in grandparent-led households. Another 4.7% of all District children (5,347) resided with other relatives. Of these, 10,702 were residing in the household with no biological parent present.⁵

¹ Pew Social and Demographic Trends, "Since the Start of the Great Recession, More Children Raised by Grandparents." September 9, 2010 from <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2010/09/09/since-the-start-of-the-great-recession-more-children-raised-by-grandparents/#prc-jump>.

² U.S. Census Bureau (Sep 6, 2011), "US Census Bureau Reports Facts for Features: Grandparents Day 2011." Retrieved January 18, 2012 from <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/us-census-bureau-facts-for-features-grandparents-day-2011-sept-11-129296408.html>

³ U.S. Census Bureau (Nov 10, 2010) "US Census Bureau Reports Men and Women Wait Longer to Marry." Retrieved January 3, 2011 from http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/families_households/cb10-174.html

⁴ Amy Goyer, AARP. (December 20, 2010). "More Grandparents Raising Grandkids." Retrieved January 3, 2011 from http://www.aarp.org/relationships/grandparenting/info-12-2010/more_grandparents_raising_grandchildren.html.

⁵ GrandfactSheets.org. (September 2007). "Grandfacts: A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children. District of Columbia." Retrieved January 3, 2011 from <http://www.grandfactsheets.org/doc/DC%20%2007.pdf>.

GCP Participants Receiving TANF

Of the 774 children who received a GCP subsidy during 2011, a total of 588 (76%) also received TANF. An additional 63 children (8%) received Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Per the Grandparent Caregivers Pilot Program Establishment Act of 2005, we offset GCP subsidy amounts for these two groups of children by the amount they receive in TANF or SSI. Children who receive Social Security survivorship benefits from a deceased parent receive a full GCP subsidy. A full subsidy payment (without offsets) is \$20.23 for children under age twelve and \$22.54 for children twelve and over.

Denials Due to Ineligibility

Fourteen applications were deemed ineligible in 2011. Two of these applications were deficient when submitted and the applicant failed to complete the process to begin the subsidy. When an applicant submits an incomplete application, we send a letter listing what is missing and stating that the applicant has 30 days to provide supplemental information or risk denial. GCP staff follows up with courtesy calls as well, to ensure that the applicant understands the process.

Of the remaining denials, three of the applicants were over program income requirements and one applicant requested that her packet be withdrawn for unknown reasons. Three of the applicants were unable to be located. Four other families became ineligible while on the waiting list, either because the grandchildren turned 18 while waiting or because they moved from the applicant's home during that period. One application was denied because the grandchild receives an SSI/disability payment at such a high rate that it completely offsets the GCP payment.

The GCP continues streamlining its application process to ensure both efficiency and effectiveness. Prospective applicants, and other adult members of their household, complete their background check and clearance process while having an initial meeting with GCP staff to submit their applications. These clearances include FBI fingerprint checks, Metropolitan Police Department records and Child Protection Registry screenings. Although we have asked some applicants to provide further information to confirm that a child is not at risk, no application has been denied based on the results of this process. Additionally, no applicant who has been denied by the GCP has ever requested a Fair Hearing to litigate the denial.

Terminations

Termination statistics are based on individual children, as the circumstances of one child may change and result in termination without affecting other children in the family.

Of the 139 children who left the program during 2011, 46 reached age 18. This number is significantly higher than in years past and was the primary reason for terminating participants. Other reasons included:

- Death of caregiver (two children in two families).
- Another person assumed care of the children (twenty-seven children in nineteen families).

- Caregivers failed to recertify (nineteen children in sixteen families).
- Child removed by CPS (three children in three families).
- Child came under the jurisdiction of DYRS (one child in one family)
- The caregiver's household income increased, exceeding eligibility requirements (seven children in five families).
- Family left jurisdiction (five children in four families)
- Child receives another subsidy (i.e. adoption/guardianship) that supersedes child's eligibility in the GCP (three children in two families)
- Program staff was unable to reach provider to confirm continued eligibility and compliance with subsidy agreement (one child in one family)
- Child's SSI/disability payment completely offsets a GCP subsidy (six children in six families)

It is worth noting that the reasons for families leaving the program remain relatively consistent, and in consistent proportions, from year to year. There is, however, one new category of termination encountered this year. When the GCP's subsidy rates were reduced in December, 2010, there was a category of subsidy that was completely canceled. The new full subsidy rate for children under age twelve is \$606.90 per month. At the time of the rate adjustment, five children in five families received the maximum SSI/disability payment of \$674 per month. This amount fully offset the GCP subsidy and their payments were ended, with the hope they will return to the program when the children turn twelve and the full subsidy rate increases. Since the initial terminations, one new application has been denied on this basis and another existing subsidy was terminated when SSI payments began.

In 2011, no participant elected to challenge a termination decision via a Fair Hearing.

Children Removed from Household While Receiving the Subsidy

In 2011, three children were removed by Child Protective Services from three families receiving a grandparent subsidy. All removals resulted in neglect court cases and CFSA has put numerous services into the homes to assist with reunification. One family was reunited, their case closed and subsidy restarted before the end of the calendar year. Even with these unfortunate situations, the removal rate for GCP participants is only approximately one-third of one percent.

4. Recommendations for Program Improvement



The following section includes recommendations intended to enhance the program and an update on previous recommendation.

Increase Marketing and Recruitment of New Clients

An increased budget to eliminate our waiting list, combined with unusual attrition (primarily from children turning eighteen at a high rate), has resulted in a large number of program vacancies. When budget uncertainties prevailed in the past, the GCP scaled back its program marketing and recruitment of new clients. Now, however, the GCP is ramping those efforts back up by engaging DCPS and other city-wide organizations to spread the word of the program. We also utilize the resources of CFSA's adoptive family recruiters who engage the community regularly. The GCP recommends continuing and expanding these efforts into the community.

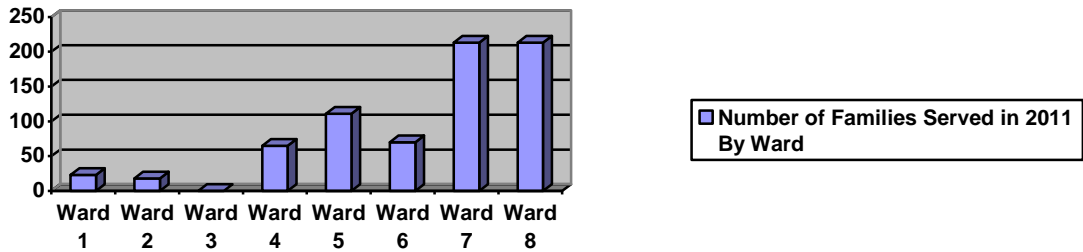
Explore Increased Community Supports for Existing Clients

CFSA has developed and implemented the Mockingbird model program to provide support to foster care families in their own communities. Mockingbird establishes communities within various neighborhoods where families, businesses and other organizations work together to support foster children and the families caring for them. This model is worth investigating on behalf of the clients of the GCP. Many are struggling, particularly after the rate cut of last year, and tightening their webs of support would be beneficial to all. In doing so, the GCP should increase its ties with the DC Family Strengthening Collaboratives to provide additional supports to GCP families, as well.

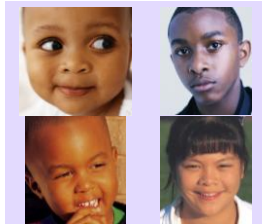


★★★ **Grandparent Caregivers Program**

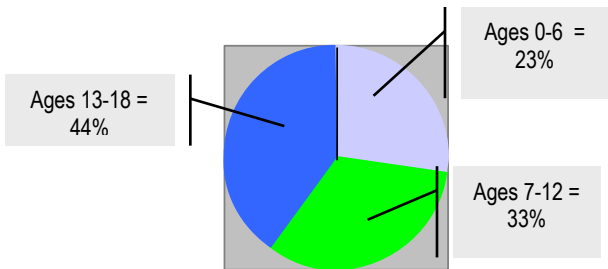
**2011
SNAPSHOT**



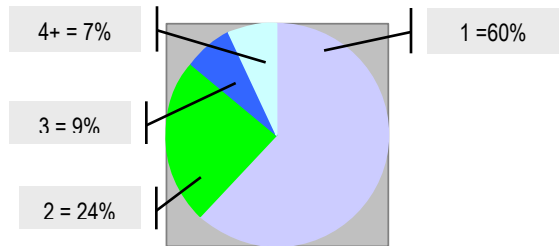
Average subsidy at end of 2011 - **\$453.90** per month per child.



- Began year with waiting list of 60 applicants on behalf of 89 children.
- Ended year with **no waiting list.**



Ages of children served in 2011 (n=774)



Number of children in households served in 2011 (n=480)



During 2011, 774 children received a GCP subsidy. At the close of 2011, the GCP had a program capacity of 729 children and 615 presently participating.



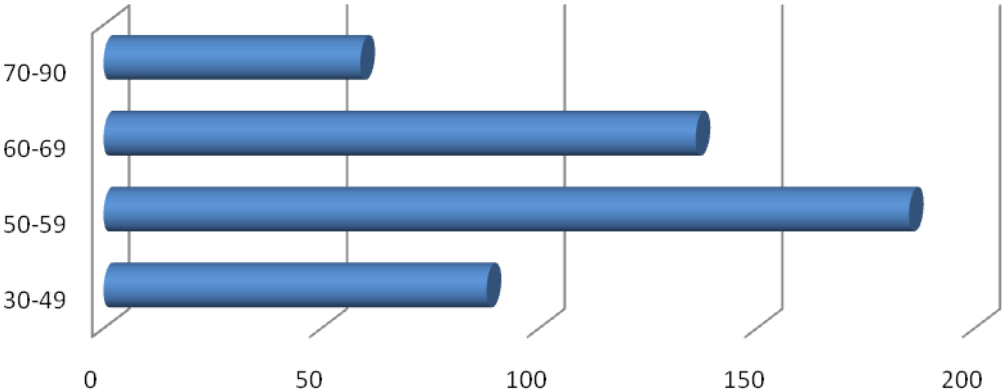
Appendix

Results of the 2011 GCP Client Survey

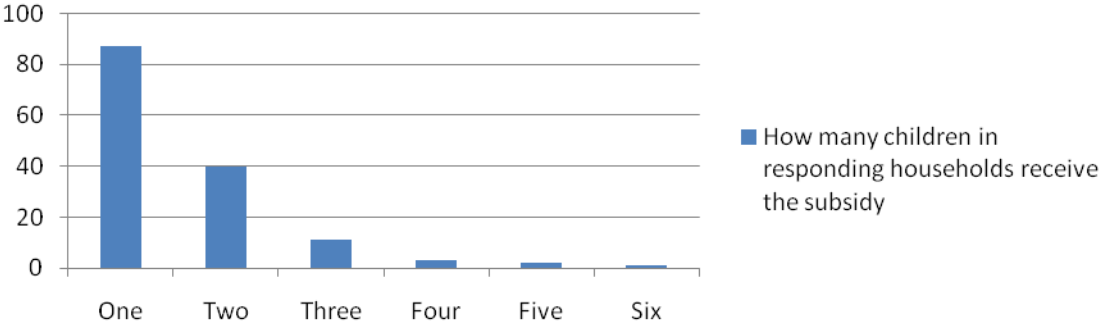
(39% response rate)

Ages of All Providers Participating in the GCP in 2011 (from data).

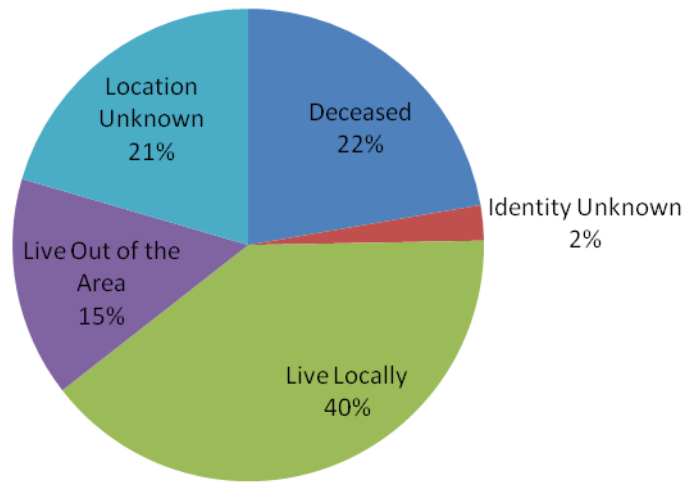
The youngest provider is 31, the oldest is 90. The average age of a GCP provider is 58.



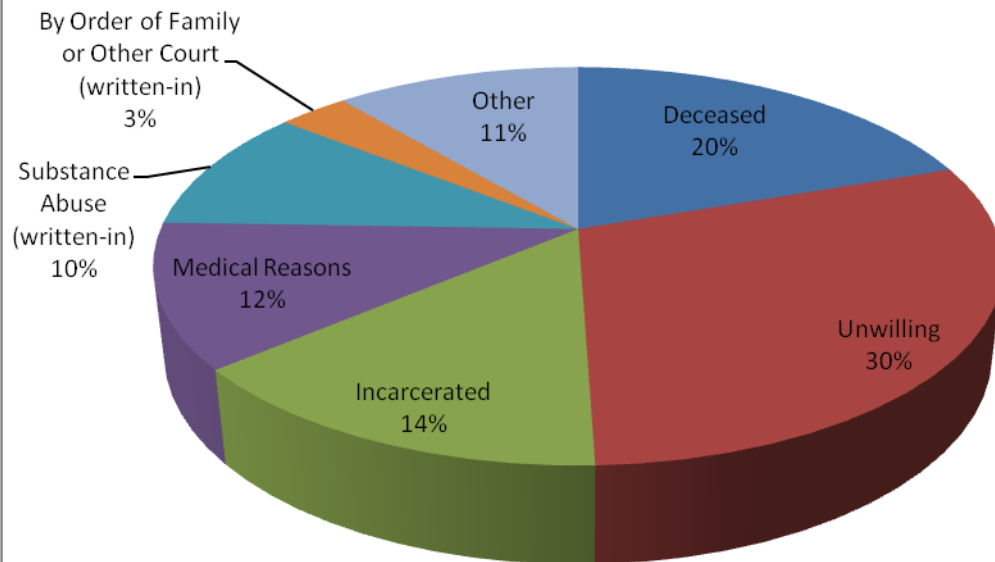
How many children in responding households receive the subsidy



Status of the Birth Parent(s)

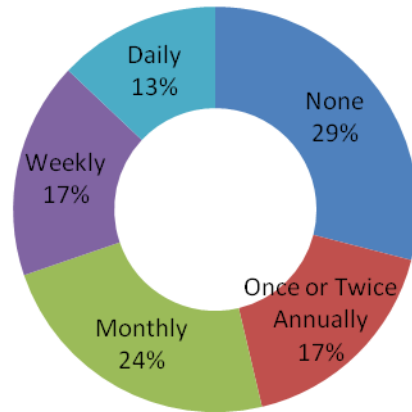


Reasons Birth Parents are Not Caring for their Children

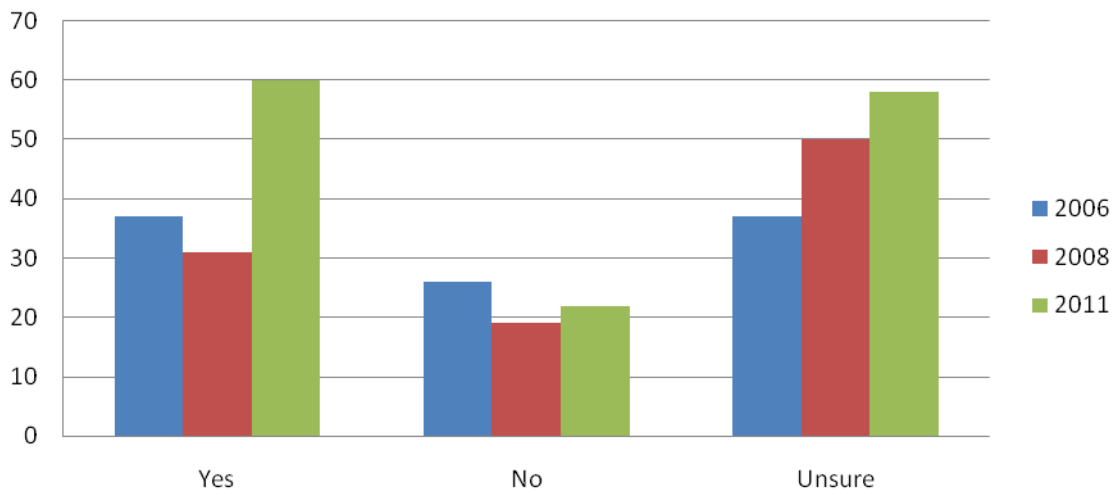


Contact Birth Parents Have with their Children

Thirty percent of GCP children have a significant amount (weekly or more) contact with a birth parent.

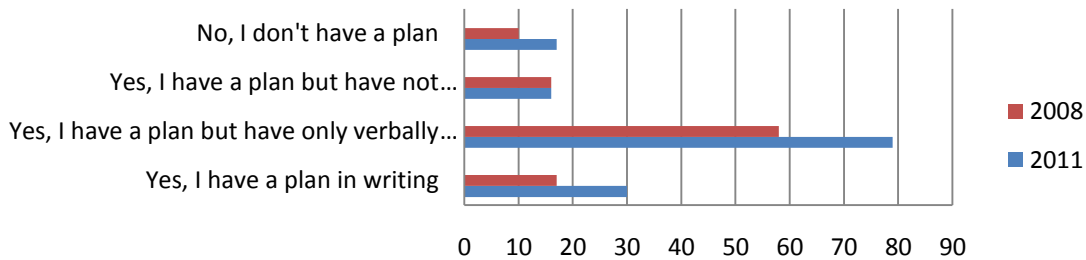


Would you be able to continue caring for the child(ren) without the GCP's assistance?

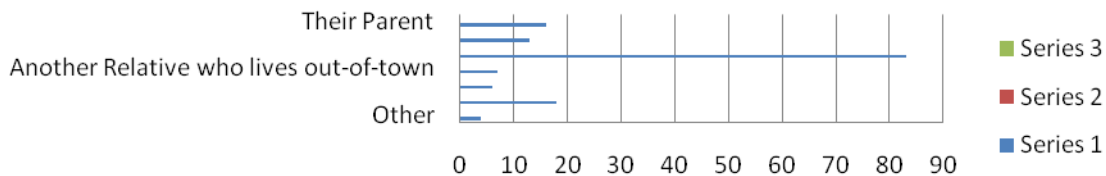


Do you have a plan for the child(ren) should something happen to you?

Between 2008 and 2011, the GCP has actively encouraged clients to engage in end-of-life planning and has connected them with free legal assistance to that end. The below shows that we have made some progress in encouraging grandparents to think about the future but should continue this endeavor.

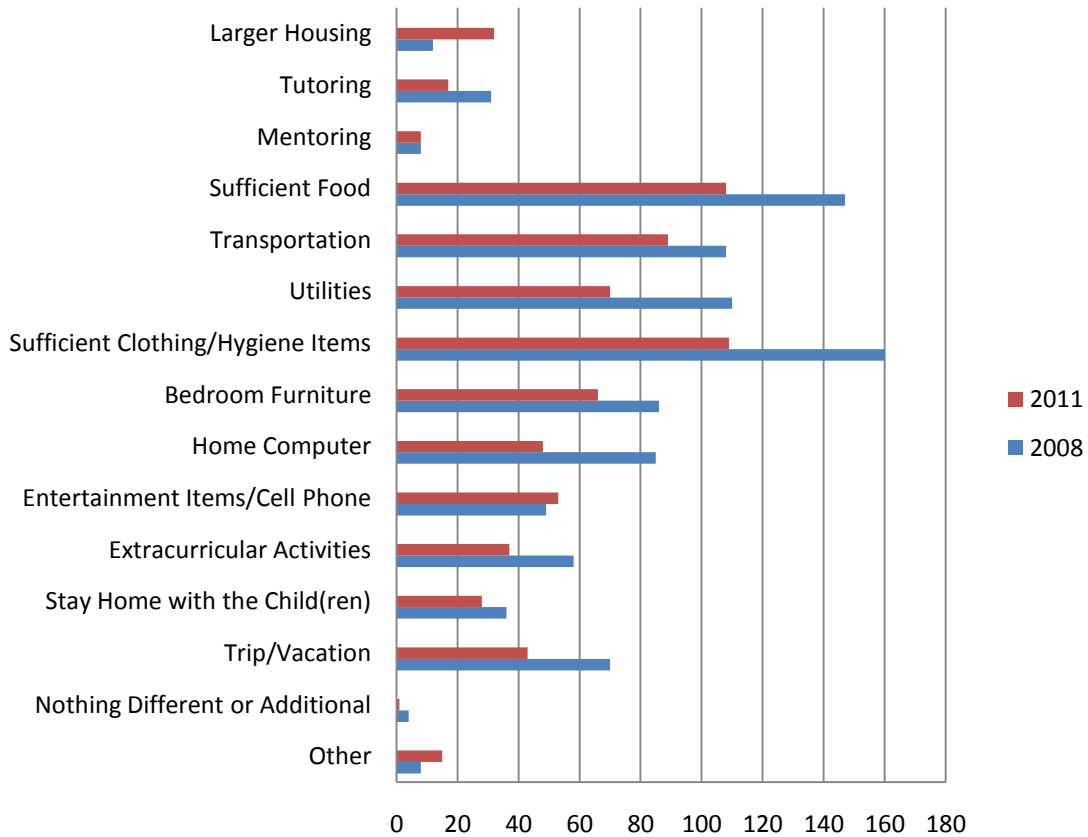


In the event you were unable to continue caring for the children, who would care for them?

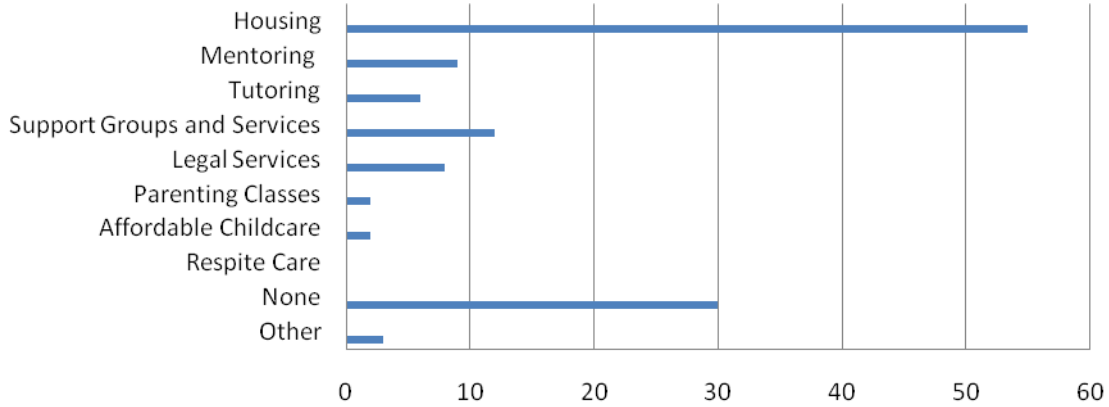


What has the GCP subsidy allowed you to provide for your family?

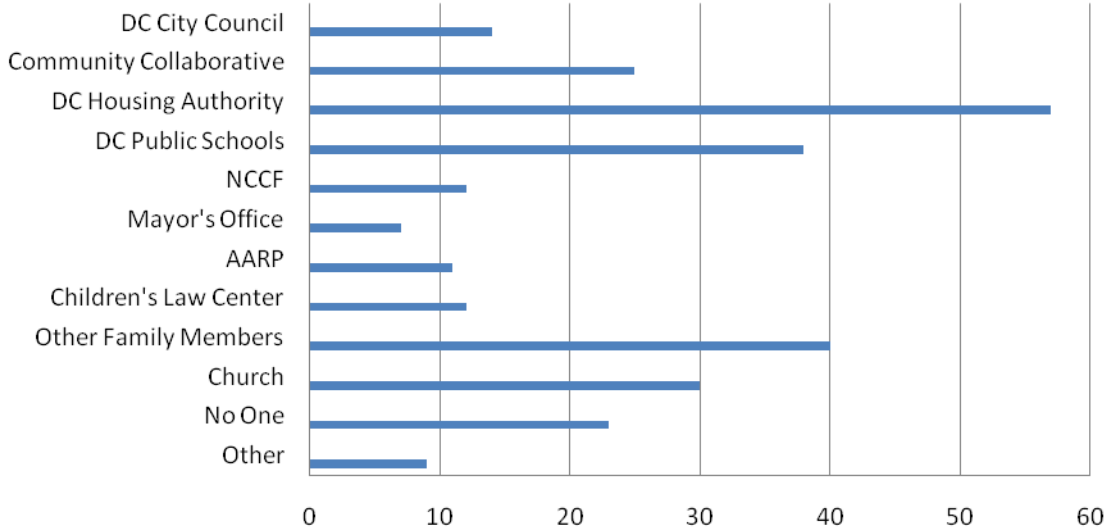
Participants were asked to select all items the GCPP allows them to provide to the child(ren). Basic necessities such as food, clothing, and utilities are still the most common, but we are also seeing an increase in quality of life items like larger housing.



What would you say is the most important unaddressed need for Grandparent Caregivers?



What other resources have you tried to access for assistance?



Additional Sources of Household Income



How Long Caregivers Have Had the Children

