



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
Child and Family Services Agency



**Grandparent Caregivers Program**

**Grandparent Caregivers Program:  
Annual Status Report, CY12**

**January 2013**



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

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This is the seventh 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 2010</i>	<i>CY 2011</i>	<i>CY 2012</i>
Program funding (subsidy portion)	\$5.365M – \$3.857M	\$3.857M – \$3.888M	\$3.888M
New applications received (from families)	75	58	78
New subsidies awarded (to children)	92	168	111
Children receiving both GCP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at End Of Year	458	472	468
Total number of children who received subsidy in calendar year	727	774	754
Denials due to ineligibility	5	14	5
Denials due to funding - (applications on the waiting list as of End of Year)	60	0	0
Estimated eligible caretakers who have not yet applied	See discussion, page 5		
Subsidies terminated by program or caregiver	89	139	121
Substantiated instances of fraud	0	0	0
Children removed from household while receiving subsidy	4	3	2

## 2. Program Achievements

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### **Increased Rates of Payment – Twice**

At the end of 2010, the Grandparent Caregivers Program subsidy budget was cut by 33% resulting in a sweeping reduction in payments to grandparent caregivers. The GCP budget in FY12 included an additional \$300,000 earmarked toward alleviating the waiting list. This increase of subsidy budget combined with higher-than-normal attrition created a potential budget surplus which allowed for two rate increases during 2012. At the end of 2011, our average daily rate of pay was \$14.96 (or \$448.80 for a 30-day month). By the end of 2012, GCP clients were receiving an average daily rate of pay of \$19.83 – or \$594.90 for a 30-day month per child.

### **Eliminated the Waiting List**

At times during the life of the GCP, the wait time for services has reached as long as 18 months. With the budgetary boost in FY12, the GCP eliminated that waiting list entirely and the program continues functioning without extended wait times. Presently, applicants experience a process time of approximately 6-8 weeks from the point at which the completed application is received to the receipt of their first subsidy check.

### **Continued Expanding Supportive Services to Clients**

The clients of the GCP routinely request support in addition to their monthly subsidy checks. To better serve them, the GCP maintains strong relationships with many community partners who have supported this program since its inception. As part of this partnership, the GCP hosted a series of forums during 2012 to engage clients and empower them as self-advocates:

- The DC Office of the Tenant Advocate and AARP's Legal Counsel for the Elderly presented a multi-part program on housing and tenants' rights in Washington, DC.
- The Childrens Law Center explored the various possibilities of custody arrangements, how caregivers can control visitation with birth parents and other matters of family law.
- AARP-DC presented their very relevant program entitled, "Prepare to Care," which encourages participants to have a plan for aging in place.
- The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program once again hosted a private information and application session for clients of the GCP.
- The DC Office on Aging introduced their services and offerings to the grandparent-caregivers in expansion of our partnership.
- The GCP also continued our holiday assistance program where we linked as many participants as possible with Thanksgiving and Christmas support.

### **City Council Passage of Amendment to Better Narrow the Front Door**

CFSA, under the leadership of the director, has embarked on a focused agenda, termed as the "Four Pillars" targeted at enhancing services to children and families. The first pillar is to "Narrow the Front Door" and divert as many children from foster care as possible. The GCP is in a position to help. This year, CFSA developed legislation entitled the Grandparents Caregivers

Program Amendment Act 2012 that would allow the GCP to instantly start services for families where children are at risk of removal. Previously, applicants for subsidy services must have been the child's primary caretaker for the previous six consecutive months. The amended legislation gives CFSA the discretion to waive the six-month requirement in cases where Child Protective Services has determined that the child must be removed from the household and there is a willing relative who would otherwise qualify for GCP services. Strongly supported by Councilmember Graham and passed by the DC Council and signed by the Mayor on January 14<sup>th</sup> 2013, this amendment allows the GCP to concretely contribute to CFSA's mission.

### 3. Statistical Overview

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#### Applications

In 2012, the GCP received 78 applications from families new to the program who applied on behalf of 120 children. Additionally, ten existing GCP participants applied to add fourteen new children to their subsidies. The latter children came 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](http://www.cfsa.dc.gov)) for download and has been disseminated among the program's many community partners.

#### Subsidies

The GCP subsidy budget remained steady throughout 2012, which allowed for consistently paced new agreements. Much of the calendar year held a projected budget surplus that allowed

**Table 2:  
New Children Enrolled by Month, 2012**

Jan.	18	Apr.	10	July	16	Oct.	13
Feb.	11	May	12	Aug.	4	Nov.	7
Mar.	8	June	5	Sept.	5	Dec.	2

the GCP to almost immediately sign new subsidy agreements upon approval. Therefore, the wait for program services remains minimal. Up to 60 days are statutorily permitted for the processing of applications and receipt of background checks. Most approved applicants received their first check well within this range. Table 2 shows the number of subsidies approved each month.

A projected budgetary surplus during the majority of 2012 resulted in two payment increases during 2012. These increases brought the overall base payment rates to approximately two-thirds of what they were before our major cut at the end of 2010. To maintain this budget, the GCP must operate at a capacity of 600 children. There were 607 children in the program as of December 31, 2012. Overall, 754 children residing in 472 households received subsidies for all or part of 2012.

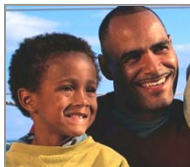
The current average number of children per family participating in the program is two and the average age of the children currently in the program is 10 years old. During 2012, a participant in the GCP could expect to receive an average daily rate of \$19.83 – or \$594.90 for a 30-day month per child. This is up from 2011's daily rate of \$14.96 – or \$448.80 for a 30-day month per child.

#### Waiting List (No Denials Due to Funding)

In August, 2007, the program reached its then-capacity of 497 children. This number was based on the subsidy budget and payment rates available at that time. Rather than deny applications due to funding, the GCP created a waiting list instead. When funds became available, these applicants signed their subsidy agreements and started the program the day a vacancy was created by another participant. Although there have been times during the life of the GCP that the wait time for services has been over one year in length, there was no such delay for assistance in 2012. There remains a process time of approximately 6-8 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**



The latest data available on grandparent-led households comes from the US Census in their 2011 American Community Survey. Nationwide, the survey found that over 2.7 million grandparents in the United States are raising their grandchildren. Of those, over 594,000 are living in poverty. Locally, it is estimated that 4,184 grandparents in the District of Columbia are raising their grandchildren (with a margin of error of +/- 1,037) and that over 1,348 of them (with a margin of error of +/- 700) are living in poverty. To qualify for GCP services, an applicant's household income must be within 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Therefore, it can be estimated that the potential eligible caretakers in the District is higher than the 1,348 living under the poverty line. The same study states that these grandparents are equally divided between those 30-59 years in age and those over 60 years in age.<sup>1</sup>

In 2010, two major studies reinforced the notion that grandparent-led households remain a prevalent and growing trend among American families. The Pew Research Center<sup>2</sup> 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.

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.<sup>3</sup>

### **GCP Participants Receiving TANF**

Of the 754 children who received a GCP subsidy during 2012, a total of 582 (77%) also received TANF. This percentage has been relatively consistent across multiple calendar years of GCP data. An additional 59 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

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder data from 2011 American Community Survey. Retrieved January 2, 2013, from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t>.

<sup>2</sup> 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>.

<sup>3</sup> 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>.

subsidy. A full subsidy payment (without offsets) is \$24.79 for children under age twelve and \$27.92 for children twelve and over per day.

### **Denials Due to Ineligibility**

Five applications were deemed ineligible in 2012. One applicant was over program income requirements and another was denied because the grandchild receives an SSI/disability payment at such a high rate that it completely offsets the GCP payment. A third application was denied because the child left the home while the application was pending.

The remaining two applications were denied because the applicants were already receiving guardianship subsidies on behalf of the children for whom they were applying. Grandparent caregivers are only eligible for one subsidy at a time, per child, from CFSA.

No applications were denied as incomplete. 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.

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 household.

Of the 121 children who left the program during 2012, 56 reached age 18. This number is significantly higher than in years past and was the primary reason for terminating participants. Other reasons included:

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- Death of caregiver (one child in one family).
- Another person assumed care of the children (eighteen children in thirteen families).
- Caregivers failed to recertify (seventeen children in thirteen families).
- Child removed by CPS (two children in two families).
- Child came under the jurisdiction of DYRS (four children in four families)
- The caregiver's household income increased, exceeding eligibility requirements (twelve children in nine families).
- Family left jurisdiction (three children in two families)



- Child receives another subsidy (i.e. adoption/guardianship) that supersedes child's eligibility in the GCP (three children in two families)
- Birth parent moved back into the home and the family did not qualify for an exception as outline in the DC Code (five children in four families)

It is worth noting that the reasons for families leaving the program remain consistent in both type and proportion from year to year.

In 2012, no participant elected to challenge a termination decision via a Fair Hearing. In fact, no participant has ever elected to challenge a termination decision made by the GCP via the Fair Hearing Process.

### **Children Removed from Household While Receiving the Subsidy**

In 2012, two children were removed by Child Protective Services from two 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. Even with these unfortunate situations, the removal rate for GCP participants is only approximately one-quarter of one percent.

## 4. Recommendations for Program Improvement

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

### **Electronic Payment System Development**

From the inception of the Grandparent Caregivers Program, subsidy payments have been sent to clients via paper checks mailed by the DC Department of Treasury to clients' home addresses. Inconsistent mailing dates and unreliable mail service has resulted in the hardship of late or missing payments for many clients. Therefore, CFSA has partnered with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the DC Treasury Department to find a solution. Presently, a team of representatives from each agency is working toward a system that will load subsidy payments onto a debit card issued to each GCP client. These payments will be loaded on the same day each month and this reliability will allow clients to effectively budget their subsidy funds. It is expected that this plan will roll out in the spring; the team is working diligently to move the project forward.

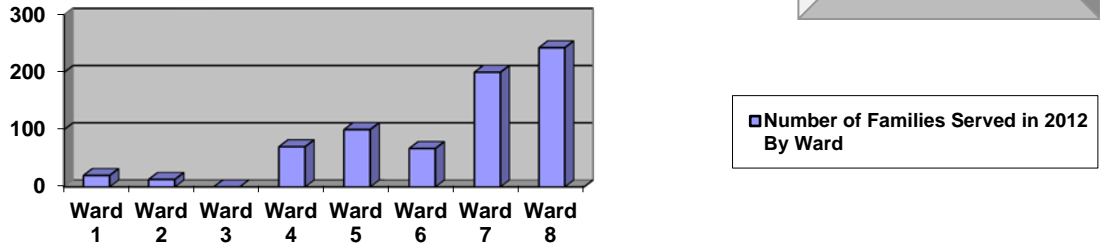
### **Explore Additional Opportunities for Client Support**

Consistently, GCP clients express a need for support in addition to their subsidy payments. As reflected in the surveys contained in past annual reports, and anecdotally by program staff, the needs of clients range broader than financial. Moving forward, CFSA will explore social, emotional and other needs of these families to ensure proper supports are offered and in place. This holistic effort will ensure stability and better outcomes for families.



# Grandparent Caregivers Program

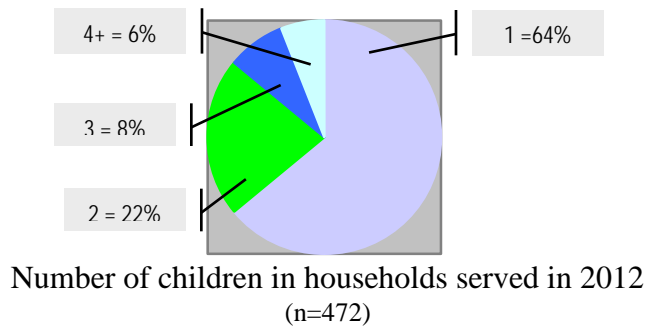
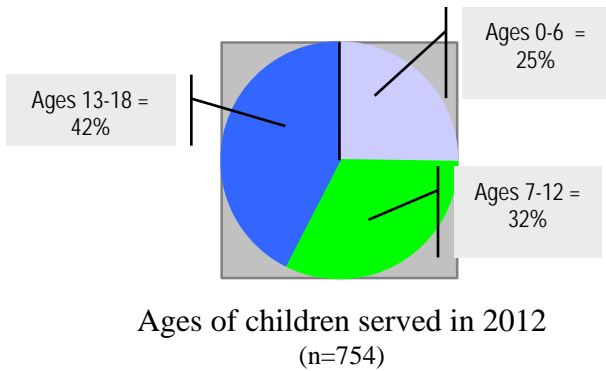
2012  
SNAPSHOT



Average subsidy at end of 2012 - **\$594.90** per month per child.



- We have effectively ended a waiting list that, at one time, was over one year in length.



During 2012, 754 children received a GCP subsidy. At the close of 2012, the GCP was serving 607 children living in 399 households.