



FAQs

The Grandparent Caregiver Program: What You Need to Know

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. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) outline some key practice requirements of the program.



Do I need legal custody to qualify for the program?

You are not required to have legal custody of the child, but 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 you can use one of the alternative methods listed 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 your relationship to the child.

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

You prove this in your application through legal documents, birth certificates, paternity acknowledgements, child support agreements, certified DNA test results, 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.

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.

We conduct the criminal background checks at our offices. The adults in your home must schedule an appointment to come to our offices for fingerprinting. There is no cost to you for fingerprinting.

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) complete a child protection register check 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.

Included with your application packet is a Child Protection Register form. Each adult living in the house must complete and sign his or her own form and have it notarized or witnessed by a member of CFSA's staff. We will be happy to witness your signature when you come for fingerprinting.

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 for the GCP. In the event you are denied for TANF, proof of that denial will need to be submitted with your application to the GCP.

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 to speak with 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. The amount of a subsidy you receive from the GCP is based on how much TANF or SSI you already receive from the government for the child.

How long does the application process take?

It takes us up to 45 days to process your application from the day we receive all of the required documents. Please note the 45 days does not begin until we receive all documents, including the results of the child protection register and criminal background checks. Average processing times are significantly less, however, if you initially submit a complete application. Submitting an incomplete application will delay the processing of your application.

What happens after I am approved?

After you are approved an appointment will be scheduled for you to visit our office to review and sign a subsidy agreement. Once you sign the subsidy agreement your case will become active and you will get a debit card. The subsidy is NOT retroactive to the date you first submitted your application.

Is there a waiting list for the program?

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. You will be issued a debit card where funds are automatically deposited each month.

Will you inform the child's parents that 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 items and activities that benefit the child. They are listed in the subsidy agreement, and include things like: 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.

If you have questions about **grandparent subsidies**, send an email to cfsa.kinfirst@dc.gov or call (202) 442-6009