GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency

Grandparent Caregivers Program: Annual Status Report, CY2013

January 31, 2014

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1. Introduction & Program Profile

Introduction

This is the eighth annual report for 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 moved the program out of pilot status, creating a permanent Grandparent Caregivers Program. Since program inception in March 2006, the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) has served as program administrator. The Establishment Act requires this annual report, which must include a specific set of statistics (Section 3) and recommendations for program improvement (Section 4).

Program Profile

The Grandparent Caregivers Program provides a monthly subsidy to eligible DC residents with low incomes who are raising their grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great nieces, or great nephews. Caregivers use the financial assistance to help care for the child relatives residing with them in the District. The program currently serves 449 households with 685 children.

Table 1: GCP Statistics

	CY2011	CY2012	CY2013
Program funding (subsidy portion)	$3.857M – $3.888M	$3.888M	$4.448M[1]
New applications received (from families)	58	78	86
New subsidies awarded (to children)	168	111	128
Children receiving both GCP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at End of Year	472	468	543
Total number of children who received subsidy in calendar year	774	754	756[2]
Denials due to ineligibility	14	5	3
Denials due to funding (applications on the waiting list as of End of Year)	0	0	0
Subsidies terminated by program or caregiver	139	121	25
Substantiated instances of fraud	0	0	1
Children removed from household while receiving subsidy	3	2	2

[1] The number of applications increased while the number of children aging out of the program declined, compared to previous years. In response, the District Council approved an increase to the GCP subsidy budget for FY2014. The increase in subsidy is aimed at increasing family stability and child well-being.

[2] The number of children decreasing has to do with the size of the families changing over time. The increase in subsidy amounts also is a result of restoring subsidy levels back from when they were reduced several years ago.

2. Program Achievements

Transitioned the Grandparent Caregivers Program to the Kinship Administration

In an effort to better streamline and centralize operations of the Grandparent Caregivers Program (GCP), CFSA moved oversight of the GCP from the Foster Care Resources Administration to the Kinship Administration in April 2013.

Reduced Application Processing Time

The GCP reduced the average wait time for approval from 60+ days to 14 days. The primary strategy involved separating functions that process re-certifications and initial applications, which streamlined operations. We enhanced our process by building in the time needed to gather the application and supporting documentation (e.g. - TANF/SSI proof, school records, proof of income, etc.) from applicant, having the applicant complete the fingerprinting process at CFSA, and awaiting results of the clearance checks for each individual in the household over age 18. These clearances include FBI fingerprint checks, Metropolitan Police Department records and Child Protection Registry screenings. After receipt of clearances and all needed documentation, GPC staff then follows up with applicant within 24-48 hours to approve or deny the application.

Implemented Electronic Payment System

To increase the security and timeliness of GCP payments, in June 2013, the Government of the District of Columbia replaced paper subsidy checks with a personalized Visa® debit card that loads when the city deposits funds in the cardholder's account. This change has greatly reduced the number of caregiver calls to CFSA regarding the timeliness of subsidy delivery.

With the switch from paper to plastic, GPC participants have advantages such as:

- Immediate access to funds on the same payment date every month. This eliminates watching for the mail or waiting in line to cash or deposit a check.
- Security through a Personal Identification Number (PIN). The card is protected against unauthorized users, if the card is lost or stolen.
- Ability to make purchases anywhere that accepts Visa® cards and to withdraw cash at ATMs or Visa® member banks.
- Capability to manage their account and track spending 24 hours a day by phone or online.

Eliminated the Waiting List

During 2013, staffing changes led to a temporary backlog of 34 applications awaiting approval between January and March. New leadership assumed program oversight in April 2013 and eliminated the backlog in May 2013.

Enhanced Data Collection, Analysis, and Tracking

We continue to improve our process of tracking daily functions in an effort to better serve the families

in need and to carefully monitor the allocated budget for the program. The snapshot of the program is included at the end of the report and provides a more in-depth synopsis of the program activities. We also have a process of looking at the whole year to know how many children will age out each month so that we will know that at minimum we are able to allow that amount of children to be approved for the program. This data tracking system allows us to project the number of cases that will be closed, and potentially the number of cases that can be approved. By expanding our ability to track daily programmatic activity, CFSA is better positioned to manage service linkage and ensure greater financial stewardship.

Achieved Performance Indicator

In 2012, CFSA and the local child-serving community developed and rallied around a strategic agenda known as the Four Pillars. It is a bold strategic agenda to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families at every step of their involvement with the District's child welfare agency. Each pillar highlights a values-based foundation, a set of evidence-based strategies, and a series of specific outcome targets. The Four Pillars are as follows: Narrowing the Front Door, Temporary Safe Haven, Well Being, and Exit to Permanence.

The Grandparent Caregivers Program cuts across all these pillars. The program is especially valuable in giving families the support they need to care for children at home so that they do not need to enter foster care. The following chart shows the outcome and performance indicator achieved for the program.

***Outcome*:** **Families will be assisted to remain together and prevent out-of-home placement**				
Performance Indicator	**Baseline 2012**	**Actual 2013**	**2014 Target**	**2015 Target**
Children receiving GCP services will be diverted from entering out of home placement	90%	99%*	95%	95%

*Out of the 447 families served in CY2013, there was only 1 family who had 5 children removed in July 2013 as a result of a report made to Child Protective Services for substantiation of abuse or neglect.

3. Statistical Overview

Applications Filed

In 2013, the GCP received 86 new applications on behalf of 128 children.[3] In addition, 15 existing

[3] Potential applicants can receive an application by calling the program directly or downloading the application from the CFSA website (www.cfsa.dc.gov). CFSA has also provided application information to community partners so they can inform prospective caregivers about the program.

GCP participants applied to add 20 children to their subsidies.

Subsidies Awarded

Out of the 86 new applications, 83 were approved, and three were denied.

Subsidy Details

A full subsidy payment (without offsets) is $24.79/day for children under age 12 and $27.92/day for children older than 12. During 2013, 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 consistent with the 2012 daily rate and up from the 2011 daily rate of $14.96 or $448.80 for a 30-day month per child.

The current average number of children per family participating in the program is two, and average age of children currently in the program is 10.

Families Receiving the Subsidy, TANF, and SSI

Of the 680 children receiving a GCP subsidy in 2013, 543 (80%) also received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). This percentage has been relatively steady throughout the life of the program. An additional 35 children (5%) received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a decrease in 3% since the previous year. 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. However, children who receive Social Security survivorship benefits from a deceased parent receive a full GCP subsidy.

Denials Due to Ineligibility

CFSA deemed only three applications ineligible in 2013. Reasons included exceeding program income requirements, inability to verify the relationship between the prospective provider and child, and the child's parent residing in the home. None these applicants requested a Fair Hearing.

Denials Due to Lack of Appropriate Funding

CFSA did not have to deny any applications for lack of funding.

Estimated Eligible Caretakers & Estimated Grandparents Acting as Caregivers

This section of the GCP Annual Report provides both national and local statistical data on the number of grandparent headed households, the number of children being raised by grandparents with no parent present and demographic data regarding race and ethnicity.

National Statistics

Research shows the following with respect to grandparent-headed households nationally:

- 7.8 million children live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives.

These households include both those where the children's parents may or may not be present.[1]

- 2.7 million children (4%) of all U.S. children are being raised in "grand families" or kinship care situations.[2]
- Children placed with relatives make up over a quarter (26%) of all children in the foster care.
- 2.7 million grandparents are responsible for most of the basic needs of their grandchildren.[5]

District of Columbia

Grandchildren

- 17,444 children under age 18 live in homes where the householders are grandparents or other relatives (17.5% of all children in the District of Columbia).[4]
- Of these, 12,822 live with grandparents who are the householders (12.9% of the children in the city) and 4,622 live with other relatives who are the householders (4.6% of the children in the city). (U.S. 2010 Census) [1]
- 7,494 children live in homes with a grandparent in their household where the grandparent is responsible for them. Of these children, 5,693 have no parents present in the home.[3]

Grandparents

- Of the grandparents who are householders responsible for their grandchildren living with them, 2% are White and not Hispanic, 93% are Black/African American[3]
- 40% have no parents of the children present in the home [3]
- 56% are under age 60 [3]
- 31% live in poverty [3]

<u>Terminations and Age-outs</u>

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 73 children who exited the program during 2013, a total of 48 youth exited the program due to reaching the age of 18. This number is slightly lower than CY2012 (decrease of eight children who aged-out) and was the primary reason for terminating participants. The remaining 25 children were terminated for one of the following reasons:

- Death of child (one child in one family)

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[4] U.S. Census Bureau. "Households and Families 2010: U.S. (April 2012)."

2 Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center. "Stepping Up for Kids: What Government and Communities Should Do to Support Kinship Families (2012)."

[3] Generations United calculated this figure based on the federal share of the 2000 average monthly foster care maintenance payment for 1 million children. The Green Book of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives estimates the cost at $545 per child. This is approximately half of the children being raised in grand families outside of the formal foster care system. Half the children are used for our calculation, due to a conservative estimate that the other half already receives some type of governmental financial assistance, such as a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) child-only grant. Consequently, the cost of one million children entering the system would represent all new financial outlays for taxpayers

[5] The State of America' s Children Handbook (2012). Children's Defense Fund. Data Source is U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Tables B10050, B10051, B10058, B10059. Additional calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

- Another person assumed care (two children in two families)
- Caregivers failed to recertify (10 children in seven families)
- CFSA removed children as part of an abuse/neglect investigation (five children in one family)
- The caregiver's household income increased, exceeding eligibility requirements (two children in one family)
- Substantiated case of fraud (two children in one family)
- Birth parent moved back into the home and the family did not qualify for an exception as outlined in the DC Code (three children in two families)

In 2013, one participant challenged a termination decision through a Fair Hearing, which resulted in reinstatement of the subsidy.

Substantiated Instances of Fraud

One instance of fraud emerged during a Child Protective Services investigation. The family did not notify the GCP that the two children had been residing with the birth mother for five or six months in violation of the subsidy agreement. This was the first incident of substantiated fraud in the program's history.

Children Removed from Households while Receiving Subsidy

In 2013, CFSA removed five children from one family receiving a GCP subsidy. The family stopped receiving the GCP subsidy and started receiving services as a client of CFSA.

4. Recommendations for Program Improvement

Establish Quarterly Support Groups

The GCP helps low-income grandparents and other specific relatives offset the expense of taking related children into their home. At times, the subsidy is enough. However, at other times, the subsidy is not the only support a family needs. To do more to stabilize families, we will create support groups around what caregivers feel they need. The support groups will occur quarterly with a projected date of implementation in the spring of 2014. We will partner with AARP, Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center, and Children's Law Center to help inform the families of their rights.

GCP will use results from surveys completed in June 2013 to identify needs for additional supportive services that support groups may be able to address (Section 5).

Linking Families to the Department of Human Services for TANF

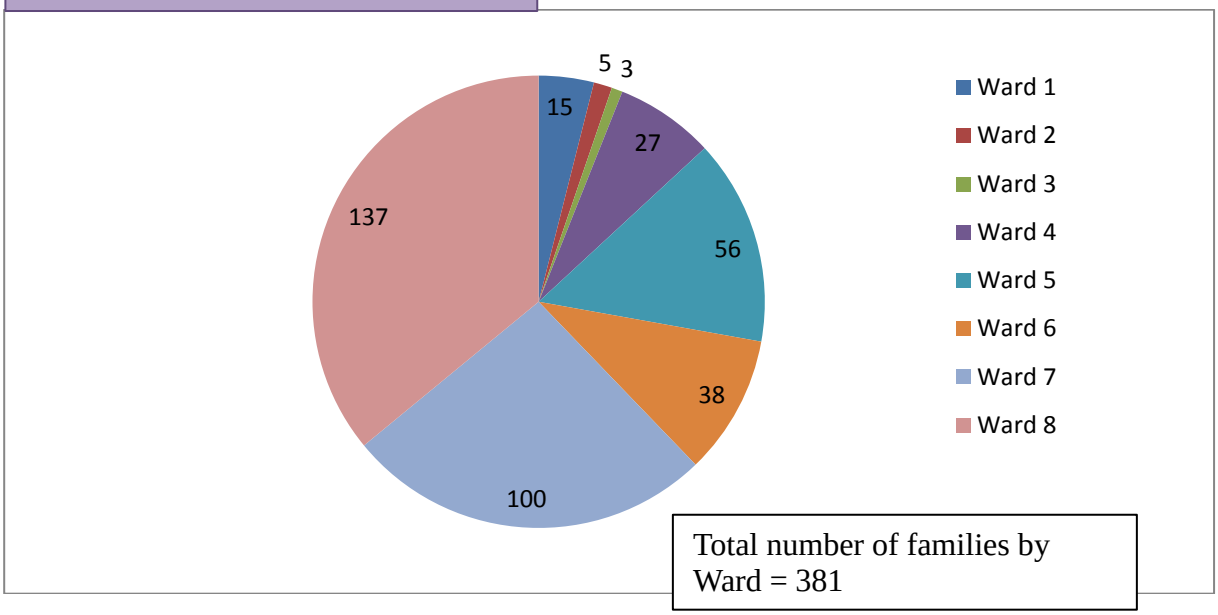
When individuals apply for the GCP subsidy, they must also apply for TANF. GCP staff will advocate for caregivers who do not understand the process of requesting TANF benefits or have barriers to receiving the benefits. Staff will refer caregivers to the Department of Human Services for assistance and provide information needed to complete the application process.

5. CY2013 Survey

In June 2013, CFSA solicited feedback from caregivers on how they felt about the program overall, support services needed, and whether they felt comfortable being advocates for the program. Response to the survey was extremely high: 381 caregivers or 85% of program participants. Highlights of findings are detailed below. Survey respondents were caring for 601 children in 381 households.

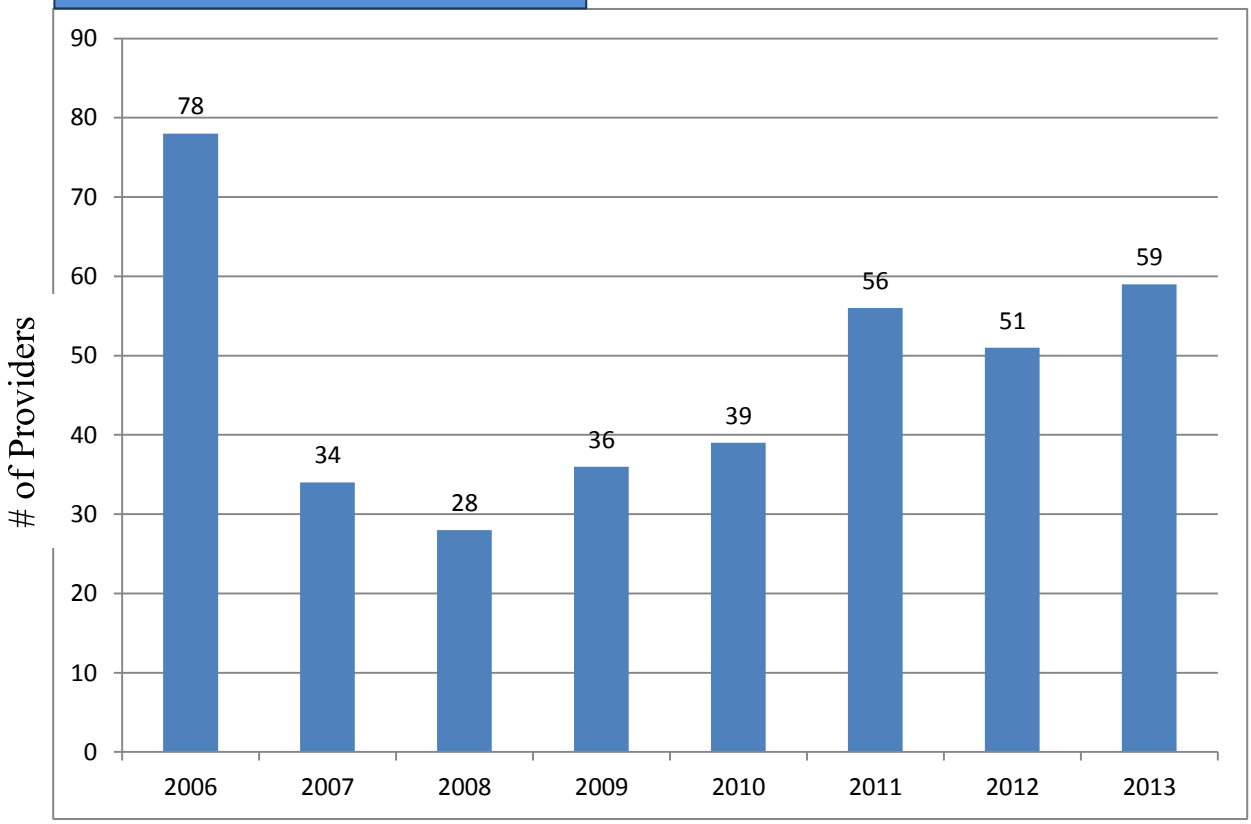
The largest number of survey respondents came from Wards 7 and 8 (Figure A), reflecting the top home wards of program participants overall.

Figure A



The chart below (Figure B) illustrates the number of providers by when they began receiving the GCP subsidy.

Figure B



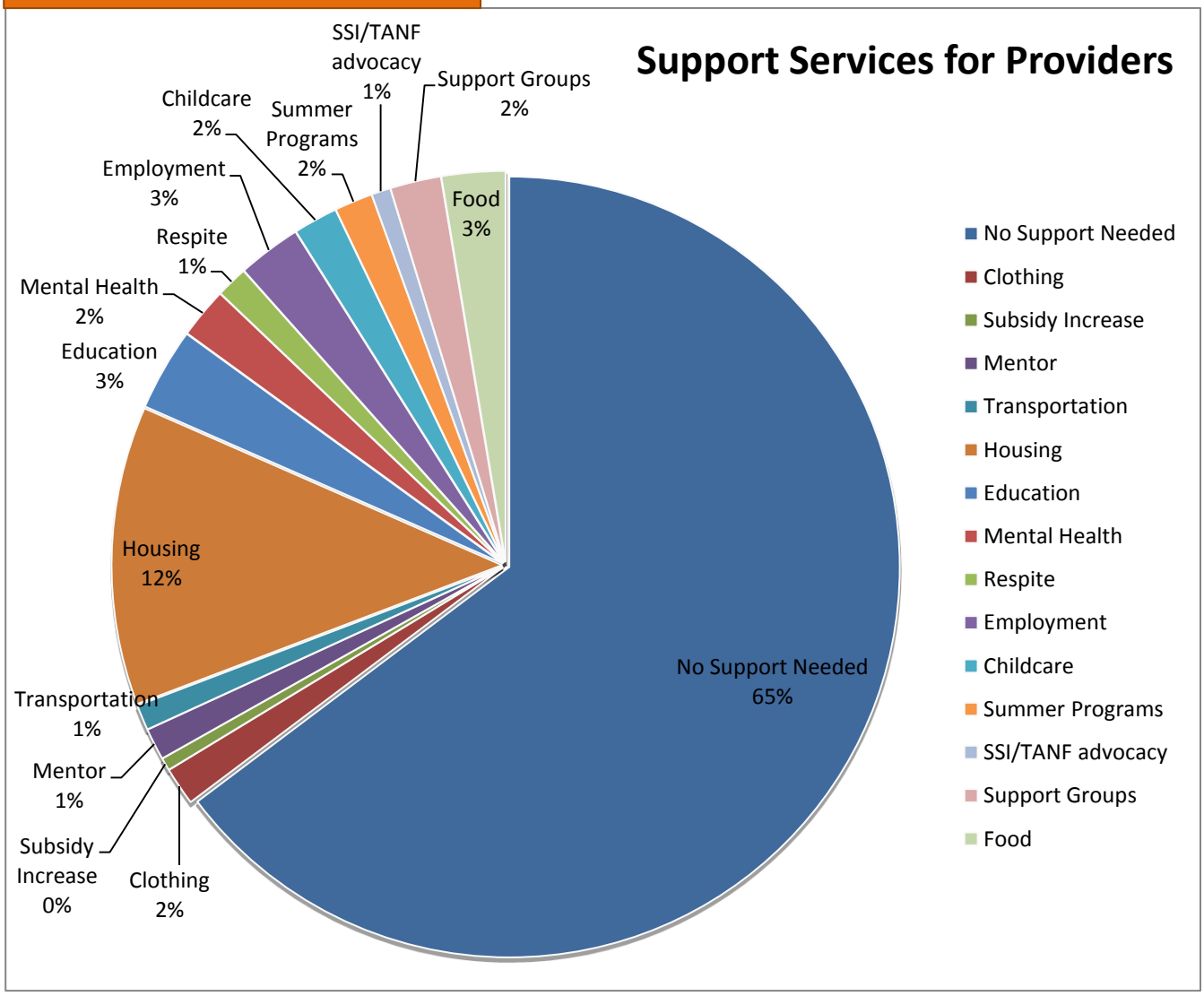
Other Findings

A survey question asked whether caregivers would be willing to speak on panels, represent the program in public forums, speak out about the need for the program, and testify before the DC City Council to discuss the program. A total of 277 (73%) caregivers out of the 381 were willing to be advocates for this program.

Survey respondents (99.5%) approved of the switch from paper checks to electronic payment via a debit card.

Figure C below illustrates the types of supportive services identified as needed by caregivers. Sixty-five percent of caregivers reported that they feel this program is providing adequate support for their family. The greatest area of need is for Housing resources (12%) followed by Employment and Education resources (both at 3%). CFSA plans to develop a resource directory that will focus on kinship caregivers where these types of supportive services can be accessed within the community.

Figure C



CY13 Snapshot

Statistics	Month											
	Jan '13	Feb '13	Mar '13	Apr '13	May '13	Jun '13	Jul '13	Aug'13	Sep'13	Oct '13	Nov '13	Dec '13
New Applications	12	11	10	1	6	7	12	3	6	0	13	5
# of Approved Applications	0	0	0	33	6	6	12	2	6	0	13	5
# of Denied Applications	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
# of Terminations	0	0	0	0	3	4	5	2	7	2	0	2
# of Age-outs	3	4	3	5	4	4	3	6	3	4	4	5
# of Appeals	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
# Waitlisted	34	34	34	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avg. time for decision	90 days+	90 days+	60 days+	60 days+	45 days	14 days	14 days	14 days	14 days	14 days	14 days	14 days
# Service Referrals	0	0	0	22	28	41	36	25	26	31	30	27
# of Providers Receiving Subsidy	400	411	414	429	432	424	439	437	437	434	447	449
# of Children Receiving Subsidy	608	623	631	658	660	653	666	665	663	657	680	685
Total Subsidy Amount Paid	$373,037.10	$344,353.10	$387,623.87	$386,459.90	$402,696.25	$389,056.20	$403,128.31	$405,930.13	$390,280.14	$401,990.41	$400,312.25	$416,921.76