



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Governor Blagojevich Recognizes Grandparents Raising Grandchildren on National Grandparents Day

Department on Aging program supports Grandparents who are caregivers to their Grandchildren

SPRINGFIELD – In advance of Sunday’s Grandparents Day observance and during a time when more and more grandparents are raising their grandchildren, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich and the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) are reminding families of the state’s program to help grandparents and other relatives, who are raising their family’s children, with the physical, emotional and financial stresses that accompany raising another child. In Illinois, more than 100,000 grandparents are caring for their grandchildren, while more than 200,000 children under the age of 18 are living in a grandparent-headed home.

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program, which was created in 1996, offers numerous services that may help during difficult times. The program provides financial assistance for emergency needs, utility bills, medications, food and clothing. The program also offers referral services to local resources, such as support groups and legal assistance.

“Grandparents Day is a time to honor our grandmothers and grandfathers for the love they provide to their families. But, these days more and more grandparents are becoming the primary caregivers to grandchildren whose parents can not care for them and this takes a toll on people who have already raised their children,” said Governor Blagojevich. “I want to thank these special grandparents for taking on another round of parenthood and assure them that we are doing more to address their needs, while they selflessly try to provide a stable and positive environment for their grandchildren.”

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program helps with efforts to locate, assist and promote awareness of older caregivers who are currently raising their family’s children. IDoA, in cooperation with the Illinois Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, also works to pass legislation to help relatives overcome the challenges they may face.

“Grandparents raising their grandchildren may have only limited support, so the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program is a great resource for those who need assistance,” said IDoA Director Charles D. Johnson. “The most important message to these grandparents is that they’re doing a good job and when they feel like that is still not enough to meet their families’ needs, we can help them.”

In FY08, IDoA dispersed funds through the Grandparent’s program to not-for-profit organizations to establish support groups and fund initiatives addressing the needs of kinship families in Illinois. Thirty seven grants, ranging in amounts from \$1,000 to \$28,000, were awarded which totaled more than \$347,000. Services provided by the grants included legal assistance, child care, emergency needs, case management, workshops, training and the establishment of support groups.

One of the key issues the program addresses is enrolling children in school after they’ve been displaced. A majority of schools in the state of Illinois require that a parent or legal guardian register children for school, but in most cases these kids are left unexpectedly and the cost for a grandparent to gain guardianship can be very expensive. In these cases, program officials and the Illinois State Board of Education work with the local school district to ensure the child’s education is not disrupted.

John and Carla Curtis have been raising their five year old grandson and four year old granddaughter for the past three years. Responsibilities for the children put a financial strain on the couple, who would have faced legal bills to establish guardianship. John and Carla attended a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren support group and found help to hire and lawyer as well as pay for daycare expenses.

“We were encouraged to attend a support group for grandparents responsible for raising their children’s children,” said John Curtis of Shelbyville. “I am so glad we did. We found out there is help available to our specific needs. We were able to hire a lawyer and get assistance with daycare expenses. My wife, Carla, and I did not expect we’d have to raise our grandchildren, but we are thankful for the support we’ve been given. I would urge anyone raising their grandkids to find out about the resources available.”

Grandparents who are raising children may also take advantage of supplemental services provided through the Illinois Family Caregiver Support Program, which include legal assistance, assistance with purchasing prescription drugs, transportation, school supplies and any other gap filling services, which attempt to address a short-term caregiver emergency.

For more information about the services and programs that the Illinois Department on Aging provides to grandparents and other relatives who are raising children, please visit www.state.il.us/aging or call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.