



PRESS RELEASE

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(in advance of the September 7 observance)

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In observance of Grandparents Day State Praises Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren

***Dept on Aging funds support services for grandparents who need assistance
to provide a stable environment for their grandchildren***

SPRINGFIELD - September 5, 2014. In observance of Grandparents Day this Sunday, September 7, Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., praises grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and reminded about support services. A grandparent who lives with and is responsible for most of the basic needs of their grandchildren, ages 18 and younger, is a primary caregiver. It's estimated more than 100,000 grandparents in Illinois serve as the primary caregivers for their grandchildren because the parents are unable to.

The occurrence of grandparents raising grandchildren (or other child relatives) is not new but nationally the number of children being raised by people other than a parent has dramatically increased. Factors that contribute to grandparents raising their grandchildren include drugs and alcohol abuse, health issues, death, divorce and incarceration. In Illinois, more than 220,000 children under age 18, live in homes with grandparents serving as the primary caregivers.

"We mark this Grandparents Day observance by thanking grandparents who have stepped up to do another round of raising children. And for those with limited resources there is help with the physical, emotional and financial stresses that accompany raising grandchildren," said Director Holton.

IDoA has a program called *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (GRG) to help with efforts to locate, assist and promote awareness of grandparents (of any age) as well as other relatives, who are currently raising their family's children. Created in 1996, *GRG* offers numerous services that may help during difficult times. The program is a referral service to local resources, such as support groups and legal assistance. And in some cases *GRG* provides emergency financial assistance for such needs as utility bills, medications, food and clothing.

IDoA awards grants to non-profit organizations to fund initiatives addressing the needs of *GRG*. The grants fund local resources for services, such as: legal assistance to secure guardianship, establish custody and/or back up plans when the grandparents are no longer able to provide care; therapeutic help for children who have lost a parent or significant caregiver through death, divorce or abandonment; advocacy and mentoring; counseling; and respite care. The IDoA budget for FY15 includes \$300,000 for *GRG* grants to support groups.

For more information about *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, call the Senior HelpLine at 800-252-8966 (or TTY for the hearing impaired at 888-206-1327) or visit the IDoA website at <http://www.illinois.gov/aging/CommunityServices/caregiver/Pages/grg.aspx> .