

COMMISSION ON GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN



CITY OF HARTFORD
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
COMMISSION ON GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN
2 HOLCOMB STREET
C/O GRANDPARENTS PROGRAM
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06112

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July 16, 2004

Hon. Eddie Perez
Mayor
City of Hartford
550 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06103

RE: Background material for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) , prior to meeting

Dear Mayor Perez:

As you requested, enclosed is some information on Hartford and Connecticut programs for grandparents raising grandchildren, as well as some material on the issue itself. I apologize for the delay in getting this to you.

The Commission is still establishing goals and a legislative agenda. However, one of the main problems we see is that GRGs have trouble accessing information about the resources that exist. The other problem, of course, is that there aren't enough programs and resources. We started to address the "accessing information" part of the problem with research on something called a "kinship navigator", which would help GRGs navigate the various systems they encounter. There are many parts to this program, and it is indeed a multi-faceted, ambitious project (proposal enclosed). We hoped to address at least part of it with InfoLine, but have not agreed as a Commission to make this a priority yet; it is my hope that we will, and be able to work with DCF to get some funding for it.

We have many ideas, and we are clear that the following is needed in Hartford: extra staff for the City of Hartford Grandparents Program; more support groups in the City for GRGs (in both English and Spanish), including educational programs on the issues they face as a "parent" again; support groups or services to address the needs of the children they are raising (especially of loss and adjustment to being raised by a GRG); respite for the caregivers; and equal treatment financially for GRGs—in terms of getting a monthly subsidy equivalent to foster parents.

The financial issue for guardians is a major concern for the Commission, and "subsidized guardianship" will probably be on our legislative agenda, although it has been fought for in the legislature by various groups for the past 5 years. Some progress has been made in terms of getting legislative support and awareness, but it is a big money bill, and aside from that, the problem I see is getting either DCF or DSS to agree to administer the program. I have enclosed testimony from one of the groups that supported it because it succinctly states the issues.

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Another issue I see has no money attached to a legislative change, but would require DCF workers to inform all proposed guardians of their options before they file for guardianship in probate court, or before they accept an “unsubsidized” guardian appointment in juvenile court. Specifically, they should be told about the option of becoming a subsidized guardian or a relative foster care provider, both of which have significantly more financial help from the state than a “regular” guardian. And if they qualified for it, they should be helped to access that option.

We are linking with various groups throughout the City, including the Salvation Army Parents Second Time Around Program; the Caring Families Coalition (for legislative issues and lobbying); and the statewide GAPS (Grandparents as Parents Support) coalition of kinship caregiver support groups. We work closely with the City of Hartford Grandparents Program and will be assisting with their various projects this fall.

It is our hope that we can get the official support of the City of Hartford for some of our proposed projects, especially for our legislative agenda. I look forward to speaking with you and hope this information is helpful, and not too dis-jointed. Thank you for your interest in reading it!

Sincerely yours,



Christina LaMorte
Chair

cc: Elizabeth Horton-Sheff, Councilwoman

Encls: 2/18/04 Community Briefing prepared by the City of Hartford Grandparents Program
Kinship Navigator Proposal for Connecticut—prepared by GRG Commission members
Flyers on the 2 support groups in Hartford I know of, and for the City of Hartford Grandparents Program
Flyers for educational seminars put on with some assistance from GRG Commission members
Fact sheet on the different types of legal guardianship in Conn.
Legislative testimony on Subsidized Guardianship—for an overview of facts
Fact Sheet on Conn. GRGs from the Brookdale Foundation website.
List of Upcoming Events in Hartford
Latest Information on the GAPS Network and the Sept. 8th Rally
Conn. Resource Guide for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (English and Spanish) –funded by AARP
(mostly about the different legal ways to get guardianship)