

**Council on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
June 28, 2012**

Minutes

Members Present:

Toni Buxton, Department of Children and Family Services
Judy Harrison, LA Children's Trust Fund
Dot Thibodeaux, Co-Founder, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren
Patricia Robinson, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren

Members Participating Via Telephone:

Delores W. Dyer, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren
John E. Wyble, LA CASA
Linda Ruffin, LA Department of Education
Donna Bowie, Office of Juvenile Justice

Others Present:

Mary Anne Calvaruso, Department of Children and Family Services

Copies of the minutes from the last meeting were not received by all parties. Copies will be emailed to all parties and minutes can be approved at the next meeting in two weeks. Meeting does not have a quorum so official business will be postponed.

Discussion centered on legal obligation related to Council for the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. It was suggested that the group come together at the July 11, 2012 meeting prepared to discuss a strategic goal and plan for the group. This information will be included in the January 2013 report. Secondly, we need to review legislation that addresses reductions in funds, any steps to be taken and identifying any issues.

Copies of the upcoming legislation were shared with the group by Patricia Robinson, CSGRG and CASA board member. John Wyble shared that the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board uses the same documents. Discussion continued regarding specific legislation that would most interest the group.

- 1.) Senator Nevers' proposed bill (Act 763) regarding visitation rights for grandparents. It was an effort to strengthen current grandparents' visitation rights. It also allows grandparents or other relatives to have a contradictory hearing during the custody proceedings to try and attain visitation rights.
- 2.) Senator Hoffman's proposed bill (Act 164) would allow for visitation between grandparents and siblings of minor children if their parents were deceased, interdicted, or incarcerated. It also addresses if grandparents' rights could be denied if a parent makes a decision to surrender their parental rights quickly, without having time to consult with their family. Grandparents could then lose rights to their grandchildren. Members of the council agreed to do some research prior to the next meeting.

Patricia Robinson suggested that educating individuals about the impact that intervening on civil process proceedings could have on the families they work with. There was further discussion regarding the CSGRG publicizing the bill and getting assistance from Tiffany. It is an opportunity for positive PR for the council. There will be a press conference with Representative Barrow at the committee hall meetings. Mentioning the bills in that forum could be a way to obtain publicity. Council could also invite Senator Nevers to a CSGRG event, as he is very active with foster and adoptive parents. Publicity could also include taking pictures with him, as the council was his idea. Council should also speak with Tiffany about something with the governor there, congratulating Senators Nevers and Hunters for their bill to help grandparents. It was agreed that publicity for the group is very important.

The meeting was not called to order, as a quorum was not present. The meeting was held for information purposes only. Copies of Act 763 and House Concurrent Resolution 164 will be available at the next meeting for those who are interested. John Wyble will send a reminder for who is in each group and who is each group's leader.

At the July meeting, the January 2013 report will be discussed and a draft of the report will be available at the October 2012 meeting for everyone to review. The report could then be sent to the Secretary for her review.

The leadership of the committee has made a two year commitment. Delores Dyer is being added to the council as a representative of the CSGRG. Delores was added to the council per October 2011 legislation. Toni Buxton and D'Juannia Judge will follow up with verifying her appointment. Courtney Baker, liaison between DCFS and the Governor's Office, will call if she has heard anything.

As of June 30, 2012, Patricia Robinson will no longer be the project manager for CSGRG. Rosemary Davis will be replacing her on July 1, 2012. Patricia Robinson stated that she preferred to be a public member and for Rosemary Davis to be the official representative.

Patricia Robinson thanked Mary Joseph, who is a member of the committee, for getting grandparents to attend the Child's Defense Fund annual conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. Families Helping Families will pay for registration and the Children's Trust Fund will pay for lodging. Six people will be attending, Patricia being one.

It was requested that everyone check the listing of council participants for correct information. Janie Ward Martin with Louisiana Maternal and Child Health Coalition provided updated contact information. Copies were provided to all council members who were present.

The meeting was adjourned.