



**STATUS ON THE COUNCIL OF GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN
MINUTES**

November 15, 2019
East Baton Rouge Library

Members in Attendance:

Leslie Hill
Nicole Hall
Kathy Coleman
Rita Hathorne
Heidi Bourgeois
Ayn W. Stehr
Brenda J. Swanigan
Mary Norris
Joanna Tonguis
James Vidacovich
Rose Dolittle
Jarwanda Harris
Tewabetch Negatu
Talya Bergeron

Guests in Attendance

Jarwanda Harris

Call to Order:

Tewabetch Negatu called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and provided a welcome

Approval of the Minutes:

Tewabetch Negatu moved to approve the minutes from the August meeting. Kathy Coleman and Talya Bergeron seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Welcome and Introductions:

New members and current members were asked to introduction themselves, the organizations they represents and the connection they have with the council.

Priorities for 2020

Priorities that were turned in via email were compiled into a list and provided to all members during the meeting. Members were asked to react to the priorities and provide feedback and edits. Members discussed that a Grandparent Training should be included into the priorities in order to help older generations deal with and respond to challenging behaviors of children.

Talya Bergeron expressed that the biggest obstacle she witnessed with grandparents seeking custody of their grandchildren were the costs of trying to locate the parents of the grandchildren they were raising. Talya, expressed that there is a curator fee in the amount of \$550 that grandparents would have to pay in order for the parents to be located. Solutions were expressed on what could be done to help alleviate that cost burden to grandparents.

Members agreed that additional time should be given to add to the list of priorities before the top five priorities were identified. It was also decided that Tewabetch would give the commission until close of business November 22nd to add to the priorities sheet for the 2020 year.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center AdHoc group:

Ms. Kathy Coleman informed the group that the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center reached out to several attorneys and individuals across the state to help aid grandparents in navigating the legal system. Additionally, the group was to be used as a soundboard to identify if proposed priorities from the Council could be pushed/changed through legislation.

Georgia Kinship Affidavit

Jarwanda Harris educated the council on The Georgia Kinship care affidavit that became law. The affidavit stated that if a grandparent/kin of a child worked with their Kinship navigator program they were afforded with a documentation that made them the custodian of that child. That document therefore was upheld in the courts was used to allow children to receive benefits, enroll in school and for that child to get his/her driver's permit/license.

Kinship Care Navigator

Heidi Bourgeois provided the Louisiana Kinship Navigator booklet to every individual at the meeting. Prior to the booklet's release they asked several organizations and individuals that they served what type of information they wished to see in the packet. The overwhelming response was that individuals wanted an immense amount of legal information, in addition to information on how to maneuver through the kinship care system. Although the packet can not serve as legal advice it does provide quality information that individuals can utilize to make informed decisions. The booklet was also provided to resource centers that DCFS works with and will be passed out to other organizations as well as the community.

Census

Jarwanda Harris expressed to the council how important the census was for Louisiana. She mentioned, that if a grandparent or next of kin is taking care of a child and that child will reside with them on April 1st 2020, then they should fill out information for that child. She expressed that a grandparent or next of kin can do this regardless if they have custody of that child. Additionally, she expressed that she would be able to provide trainings or talks with anyone at their respective organizations.

Prior to the close of the council meeting Tewabetch stated that she would send out calendar requests for the quarterly meetings for the 2020 year in order to ensure everyone has enough time to make proper accommodations. Additionally, it was expressed that the annual report for the council is due in January 2020 and that Tewabetch would reach out to members to capture information from the beginning of the year.