

**Council on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**  
**October 31, 2012**

**Minutes**

**Members Present:**

John Wyble, LA CASA  
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  
Rita Hathorne, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren  
Winona LeJeune, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren  
Mary Norris, Department of Health and Hospitals  
Sharon Adams, LA Maternal and Child Health Coalition  
Rose Noel, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren

**Others Present:**

Elizabeth Anthon, Department of Children and Family Services

Meeting was called to order by John Wyble. Introductions were made by all members. Sandra Adams with LA Maternal and Child Health Coalition explained that the coalition is in the process of being dissolved and they will no longer be able to participate on the council. Meeting does not have a quorum so official business will be postponed.

Copies of the minutes from the June 28, 2012 meeting were distributed and discussed. Adjustments were made and corrected copies will be sent to all members.

It was suggested that Delores Dyer become a representative of the CSGRG. Dot Thibodeaux stated that she would prefer to be the representative, allowing Ms. Dyer to be the grandparent representative. A motion must be made to add Ms. Dyer. She needs to be contacted to determine her continued commitment to the council.

Discussion centered on stressing the importance of meeting attendance to all parties. The following are the known members of the council:

- Dept of Health and Hospitals: Mary Norris
- Office of Juvenile Justice: Donna Bowie
- Office of Elderly Affairs: Stacy Mills
- Agenda for Children: Anthony Recasner
- Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana: Amanda Brunson
- LA Maternal and Child Health Coalition: disbanded
- LA CASA: John Wyble
- LA Bar Association: never sent anyone, will contact to see if they want to participate
- Dept of Education: Linda Ruffin
- President of the Senate: Sharon Broome (also appointed April Hathorne to represent her)

House of Representatives: Regina Barrow  
Family Court Judges: Judge Dupont or his officer, Paula Clayton  
(Judge Murray in Vidalia City Court might also be interested)  
LA Workforce Commission: David Helveston  
Children's Cabinet Advisory Board: Tiffany Simpson  
Children's Cabinet: Tiffany Simpson  
Children's Defense Fund: Mary Joseph  
Children's Trust Fund: Judy Harrison  
DCFS: Toni Buxton  
5 grandparents: Dot Thibodeaux, Rosemary Davis (waiting on her appointment),  
Rita Hathorne, Winona LeJeune, Rose Neal  
Representative of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Council: Delores Dyer  
(waiting on her appointment)

Patricia Robinson agreed to contact Mary Joseph and Delores Dyer to stress the importance meeting attendance. Dot Thibodeaux proposed that Danna Spayde also be considered as a member of the council. Patricia Robinson also agreed to contact Rep. Barrow and Senator Broome to advise that council is having difficulty obtaining a quorum and ask for their help in stressing the importance of meeting attendance. It was suggested that the council meetings be held in a committee room at the Capital when the Legislature is not in session. Consistency in meeting days and times might also improve attendance.

An official letter will be sent to all representatives on the council highlighting the council's plan in moving forward. A copy of the Strategic Plan will also be enclosed.

Winona LeJeune expressed her frustration with service agencies not being sensitive to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Government agencies need to be more sensitive to what families are going through and to understand that the definition of family has changed.

The discussion continued with how the council can support grandparents raising grandchildren. The following suggestions were made:

1. recruit grandparent volunteers to work with other grandparents
2. work with churches in the area to assess the needs of grandparents
3. gather a list of resources in the community for grandparents

The Council is also available to assist with information sharing and to act as a liaison between grandparents and government agencies.

Additional discussion centered on the possibility of meeting the same day as the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Board Meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at Catholic Charities on Acadian. The support group meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month. A phone line could also be attached to the meeting notice so that if someone was not able to attend in person, they could call in to the meeting. There are concerns that a quorum would not be met if members were not present in person. Items on the agenda

needing to have a quorum could be moved to the beginning of the meeting in case members could only stay for a short time.

DCFS will submit a report to the Legislature in January 2013 to advise of achievements, meeting dates, and plans for continuing forward. It will be documented that the Council has had difficulty in having a quorum present for meetings. The Strategic Plan will be attached to the report. Louisiana has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of grandparents raising grandchildren in the nation.

2013 Meeting Dates: (last Wednesday of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of each quarter)

February 27, 2012

May 29, 2012

August 28, 2012

November 20, 2012

The meeting was adjourned.