

**Council on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**  
**January 11, 2012 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.**  
**Office of Juvenile Justice 7919 Independence Blvd Baton Rouge LA**

**Minutes**

**Members Present:**

John Wyble, LA CASA  
Merieta (Rita) Hathorne, Grandparent citizen committed to raising grandchildren  
Toni Buxton, Department of Children and Family Services  
Mary Norris, Department of Health and Hospitals  
Donna Bowie, Office of Juvenile Justice  
Judy Harrison, Children's Trust Fund  
Tiffany Simpson, Children's Cabinet and Children's Cabinet Advisory Board  
David Hevelston, Louisiana Workforce Commission

**Others Present:**

D'Juannia Judge, Department of Children and Family Service  
Amanda Ramussen, VISTA

The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Wyble. Following introductions, minutes were approved. Ms. Harrison suggested the January report be sent to new members of the legislature. Dr. Simpson believes the names of new committee chairs for the Senate and House of Representatives may be available tomorrow. The CCN Medicaid for physical health starts February 1, 2012.

Delores Dyer's name has been submitted by Sectary Johnson for approval as the CSGRG representative for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Ms. Hathorne motioned to accept Ms. Dyer to the Council. Ms. Simpson made a second motion for Ms. Dyer's acceptance.

Ms. Buxton discussed Behavioral Health organizations and forums. There will be local support organizations in the community for families who are taking care of children.

Judy Harrison suggested the Council participate in A Day at the Capital on April 3. Plans are to immediately get a committee together, including Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, to start planning for this event. Ms. Harrison hopes the Partnership for Children will collectively participate and that there will be more of Children's Services points to increase the awareness of legislators. Ms. Buxton feels more legislators will come out and listen if they realize many organizations are participating.

Grant applications are due February 10, 2012. The application has been revamped for ease of completion. Conference applications will be due in March because the board has to approve the application.

Donna Bowie advised OJJ is seeking mentors to serve on a team to offer support to individuals in Bridge City, Swanson, and Jetson. Mentors will build relationships 3 to 6 months in advance of a youth's release. The mentoring team will serve as a group in the community to embrace/support the youth and his/her family upon the youth's release and help them to integrate back in community.

Dr. Wyble will be working on the strategic plan objectives 1, 3 and 5 of Goal 4, Public Policy/Advocacy-making people aware. Dr. Wyble will talk with Ms. Buxton about meeting with Secretary Johnson. Ms.

Harrison will continue working on the Day at the Capital. Dr. Wyble and Ms. Harrison may coordinate efforts on the Day at the Capitol.

Suggestions were made for increasing public awareness of issues related to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Ms. Buxton suggested targeting a particular community and utilizing organizations such as the Kiwanis's club & Junior League to assist with things such as making flyers. It was suggested this could start in Baton Rouge, then move to another area and eventually move statewide. Ms. Harrison suggested starting in areas that already have a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren support group.

Ms. LeJeune advised churches would be interested in assisting, but many are not aware of Grandparent's Raising Grandchildren. Ms. Buxton suggested the Council write a letter generally advising of the issues of grandparents who are raising grandchildren and attach the *State of Grandparents* booklet instead of writing a letter to explain all issues. Dr. Wyble suggested a pamphlet to ensure a consistent message. Some organizations, such as Blue Cross, may be willing to print the brochures.

Ms. Bowie suggested asking churches to take an offering (on one Sunday during the month of September) to submit to the general fund for grandparents. This should start now with sending a letter to churches and maybe larger church associations could forward the letter to all churches in their association.

Ms. Harrison advised Children's Sabbath is in October and the letter could suggest it mentioned in a sermon/service. Dr Simpson stated Beth Courtney of PBS is always looking for people/organizations to spotlight on PBS. Ms. Harrison stated that Charlie Whinham at PBS may be able to do in depth story on Grandparent's Raising Grandchildren. Ms. Norris suggested Grandparent's Raising Grandchildren could be spotlighted on an LPB public forum

#### **Next Steps**

Dr. Wyble, Ms. Buxton and Ms. Robinson will meet with Secretary Johnson. Ms. Buxton will try to get the meeting date scheduled before April. Follow-up will be made with Blue Cross to determine if they would print pamphlets. Church groups need to be identified to contact for support.

Contact should be made with each workgroup regarding these next steps determine a timeline within those steps/groups. Workgroups may be able to meet via email and conference calls.

Ms. Buxton noted that on page 7 of the Fiscal report Senator Broom suggested DCFS apply for one of the grants; DCFS did apply and was denied.

The next meeting dates are April 4; July 11; and October 10, 2012 at OJJ.

The meeting was adjourned.