

Op-Ed: Council Approves Budget Increase for Child and Family Services Program

Appeared in "[Washington Informer](#)" on May 21, 2009

"It takes a village to raise a child." This African proverb speaks volumes about the important role kinship care plays in the African American community. According to Casey Family Programs in its "Commitment to Kin" report, "The strong role of extended family continued in the United States during the slavery era when relatives and non-relatives on slave-holding plantations cared for children who were separated from their parents."

Since May is National Foster Care Month, what better time to highlight the importance of kinship care and the District's commitment to ensuring that kin-caregivers receive support critical to the wellbeing of the children.

Kinship care allows children of all colors, especially African American children, to stay connected to cultural traditions. The Child Welfare League defines kinship care as the "full-time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child."

On Sun., May 12, the Council took its first vote on the FY2010 budget. In the budget, the Council increased by \$1,465,000 Mayor Adrian Fenty's proposed budget funding for the Child and Family Services Grandparents Subsidy Program that provides low-income District grandparent caregivers with much-needed assistance by making them eligible for the same subsidy payments as foster parents.

The additional money will allow 180 more families to move off the waiting list in order to receive the subsidy.

District grandparents, great grandparents and great aunts and uncles will qualify if they are:

- Caring for the child in their home
- Have a household income that does not exceed: \$36,620 for a household of three; \$44,100 for a household of four; \$51,580 for a household of five; \$59,060 for a household of six; or \$66,540 for a household of seven or more.
- The child's parents are not living in their home (or child's parents live at home but are ill).

In order to apply for the subsidy, they will need to:

- Apply for or receive a TANF Child-Only Grant or a TANF household grant (Kin caregivers receiving Social Security benefits also qualify)
Have formal custody of the child or can prove that they are the primary caregivers.

- Kincalegivers in the District have willingly taken up the call of raising our next generation. The caregiver subsidy goes a long way in providing for kincalegivers so that the children excel and grow into adulthood in a family environment

###

A native Washingtonian and former ANC commissioner, Councilmember Muriel Bowser is chair of the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs and the Office of the People's Council and is also a member of the Committee on Public Committee on Economic Development, Committee on Human Services and Committee on Public Works and Transportation. Click here fore more information on Councilmember Bowser.

For more information or to interview Councilmember Bowser, please contact Communications Director Phallan Davis at 202-741-0915 or pdavis@dccouncil.us

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 406, Washington, DC 20004
202-724-8052 phone 202-741-0908 fax
