



Grandparents

You are not alone!

Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

On July 8, 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the Child Advocate bill, which included the establishment of a permanent "Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren."^{*1} The Commission, consisting of 15 individuals with a demonstrated commitment to supporting grandparents was sworn in on May 5, 2009, to serve as a "resource to the Commonwealth on issues affecting grandparents raising grandchildren." As such, the Commission continues to meet at least monthly at the Executive Office of Elder Affairs in Boston.

The Commission quickly undertook an energetic agenda, evaluating needs and developing resources for grandparent caregivers. Its first effort, a Listening Tour was conducted, with Commissioners traveling across the state to hear the concerns and challenges of grandparents, grandchildren, and the people who work with them. By the end of the year, and with the help of the Department of Children and Families, a great deal of feedback was gathered, assimilated and published in the Commission's first report. This helped to prioritize the work, and in year two, develop a work plan based upon these findings^{*2}.

The current plan of work is divided into four categories, each guided by an active working committee:

- (1) Information and Referral/Interagency Collaboration/Navigating the system,
- (2) Strategies to create and sustain state-wide support groups for grandparents and kin,
- (3) Legal Information and access to legal services and,
- (4) Financial support and accessing financial resources.

The work of the committees has included the generous donation of time and resources of community members outside of the Commission, and has resulted in many accomplishments. Following is a list of some of them:

- The establishment of a regularly maintained website for grandparents in Massachusetts (www.massgrg.com) including an update in 2016.
- An updated comprehensive Resource Guide which appears in full on the website (above)

- A quarterly newsletter, introducing new or emerging issues, resources and grandparent-submitted articles and events
- Information or "tip" sheets continue to be added to our website. These serve as helpful guides to grandparents, providers and caregivers who may have questions about various situations they are faced with
- Legislative advocacy resulting in the allocation of funding for staff support for the ever-increasing work of the Commission
- An annual statewide conference (2012-2016) for grandparents and the organizations that support them
- In 2015 the state Legislature allocated an appropriation for The Commission resulting in the hiring of a Program Coordinator in 2016
- The Commission continues to critically monitor and evaluate administrative and legislative policies affecting grandparents raising grandchildren, advocating for change when appropriate and necessary.

Although we are proud of its accomplishments, the work of the Commission is just beginning! It relies upon the ideas, time, and support of Massachusetts citizens of all ages. We invite you to read more extensively at www.massgrg.com or to attend a meeting in the near future.

^{*1} Section 1 of chapter 176, the acts of 2008 M.G.L. chapter 3, section 69.

^{*2} All of the feedback, full report, documentation and charts can be found on our website at www.massgrg.com