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PRESS RELEASE

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In Honor of Grandparents Day State Praises Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Dept on Aging funds support services for grandparents who need assistance to provide a stable environment for their grandchildren

SPRINGFIELD - September 6, 2013. In observance of Grandparents Day on Sunday, September 8, Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., today praised grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and offered support. A grandparent who lives with and is responsible for most of the basic needs of their grandchildren, ages 18 and younger, is a primary caregiver. In Illinois, it's estimated more than 100,000 grandparents are serving as the primary caregivers for their grandchildren when the parents are unable to.

“The decision by a grandparent to raise their grandchild can be a difficult one. And for those with limited resources, another round of parenting can pose further stress on the grandparent, whatever the circumstances. So, as we mark this Grandparents Day observance I want to remind that there is help with the physical, emotional and financial stresses that accompany raising grandchildren,” said Director Holton.

The occurrence of grandparents raising grandchildren (or other child relatives) is not new but nationally the number of children being raised by people other than a parent has dramatically increased. Factors that contribute to more grandparents raising their grandchildren include drugs and alcohol abuse, health issues, death, divorce and incarceration. In Illinois, there are more than 200,000 children who live in homes with grandparents serving as the primary caregivers.

IDoA has a program called *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (GRG) to help with efforts to locate, assist and promote awareness of grandparents (of any age) as well as other relatives, who are currently raising their family's children. Created in 1996, *GRG* offers numerous services that may help during difficult times. The program is a referral service to local resources, such as support groups and legal assistance. And in some cases *GRG* provides emergency financial assistance for such needs as utility bills, medications, food and clothing.

IDoA awards grants to non-profit organizations to fund initiatives addressing the needs of *GRG*. The grants fund local resources for services, such as: legal assistance to secure guardianship, establish custody and/or back up plans when the grandparents are no longer able to provide care; therapeutic help for children who have lost a parent or significant caregiver through death, divorce or abandonment; advocacy and mentoring; counseling; and respite care. For FY14, IDoA has awarded \$300,000 in grants to 46 support groups.

For more information about *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, visit www.state.il.us/aging or weekdays call the Senior HelpLine at 800-252-8966, or 888-206-1327 for the hearing impaired.

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