

# SUPPORT LINES

Kansas Children's Service League

Summer 2007

## New Resources for Families to Assist Children's Learning and School Success

Nancy P. Kraft, Ph.D., Director  
Kansas Parents Information Resource Center, Topeka, KS

Kansas families have a statewide resource to help them understand the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Federal Education Legislation and how the law impacts children from birth through high school. The federal funded Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) is a partnership among ten statewide parent advocacy, parent education and school based organizations and is ready to serve you and address your needs. A major goal of the KPIRC is to support families in providing information and resources they can use to help children meet the Kansas academic and performance standards and to be successful in school. KPIRC staff are available to provide strategies and training to parent and caregiver groups to help them assist their children's learning.

Our website, [www.kpirc.org](http://www.kpirc.org), has over 1000 resources on parent involvement as downloads and links on a variety of topics. If you have questions about the "No Child Left Behind" legislation, how it impacts your family, or want more information about KPIRC, please check out our website or call our toll free number—(800) 711-6711.

## Grandparents as Caregivers Assistance Program

Sharon Dabzadeh, Facilitator/Parent Leader  
Topeka, KS

In October 2003, the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature introduced House Bill 2004. If the bill was approved, it would provide financial assistance to grandparents or other relatives raising their grandchildren. Through the efforts of the Silver-Haired Legislature, Kansas Action for Children, AARP Kansas, Kansas Children's Service League, The Kansas Department on Aging and others, as well as testimony provided by several grandparents and caregivers, the Grandparents As Caregiver Program was approved and became effective on January 1, 2007.

Families applying for the funds must meet certain eligibility criteria; the child must live with a grandparent or relative and there must be documentation of legal custody. There is also an age limit of 50 years for the grandparent/relative, the household income must be less than 130% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and the parent of the child must not live in the same household. Also, the child must not be in state custody.

As with any new program, there may be amendments that need to be made. One concern is with the age requirement. If the age requirement was lowered, more grandparents/kin would be able to apply for the benefits. Another issue is the cost of obtaining legal custody. Many grandparents simply do not have the monies to obtain legal counsel and again, the age requirement for any legal assistance would not be available for the grandparent. Kansas Legal Services does offer services at a reduced rate to grandparents/kin over the age of 65. Once again, we may be asked to prepare and present testimony and to contact our representatives to push for amendments to the program.

On a personal note, I am a grandparent who has raised her grandson since birth. My grandson is now 16 years of age. I have experienced the joys and fun of having him in my life, but I have also lived with sadness in knowing my own child could not assume the responsibility of raising his own son. Quite a few years have passed, and I have come to terms with my own child's shortcomings. I could have made it difficult for him and made him feel guilty, but I love my son too. Family is everything! There are too many reasons why we assume the role of mom, and sometimes dad, in our grandchildren's lives. We all have our own personal stories, but our issues, as I have always said, are the same.

Statistics show that more and more grandchildren are living with a grandparent or other caregiver. The Kansas State Fact Sheet indicates there are 29,026 children living in grandparent-headed households. Another 8,739 live in households headed by other grandparents or other relatives. We as caregivers must continue to support other caregivers, so that the children will grow up in a loving and secure place they call home.

## Kansas "Bullying Bill"

Gina McDonald, Vice President, Education and Awareness  
Kansas Children's Service League

Bullying is like a dark secret that nobody wants to bring up, but when it is addressed, people are grateful to be able to share their experiences.

KCSL, advocates and students from various Kansas school districts worked to get legislation passed in Kansas to require schools to have programs in place for children, teachers, staff and parents to learn how to address bullying. Each time I mention the work we did on the bullying bill, I am stunned at the stories people tell me about personal experiences with bullying in schools.

Each person tells stories of past or current situations where their son, daughter, neighbor or they themselves have experienced being bullied. All the stories ended with kids not wanting to go to

school, loss of self worth or kids put on suspension because they confronted the kids that were bullying them.

The statistics are staggering. Last year in Kansas schools, there were 6,808 acts of violence against students. In addition to that, there were 646 acts of violence against faculty. These represent only those incidences that were reported. Many students, who are bullied, are afraid to report the incidence for fear of reprisal.

And these statistics do not report the incidences of cyber bullying, which has become a national issue. Cyber bullying occurs when students spread rumors and lies about other students on the web, through text messaging and other forms of technology.

The bill, which was signed into law by Governor Kathleen Sebelius last

week, requires the Board of Education in each school district to adopt and implement a strategic plan to address bullying on school property, in school vehicles or at school sponsored activities or events.

During the hearings on the bill, SueEllen Fried, a national expert and author on Bullying, invited students to discuss their personal experiences with bullying. The most compelling testimony was by a young man, Alex, who had to switch schools because of bullying. He described his day as having no time to learn because all he could think about was how he was going to get home and how he could "survive recess".

We hope this legislation will have an impact on attitudes in schools about the potential harm of bullying and offer young people, teachers and parents the tools to help them find ways to combat child abuse in all forms. Please remember to thank the Kansas House and Senate, especially Senators Jean Schodorf, David Wysong, John Vratil, and Janis Lee, and Representatives Terry Huntington, Clay Aurand, Deena Horst and Sue Storm. And thanks to Governor Sebelius who signed the bill into law and will be holding a ceremonial signing for the young people who testified.

Hopefully, this bill will have an impact for all the Alex's who are still trying to figure out how to survive the school day.



## Volunteer Recognition

April 28, 2007

B. J. Gore

Parents Helping Parent and  
Parent Leadership , Supervisor

On April 28, 2007, volunteers from across the state gathered in Wichita for the Kansas Children's Service League's Annual Volunteer Recognition Meeting. Volunteers had the opportunity to spend the day networking and gaining information on topics of interest to them.

The Education and Awareness team introduced the new PHP Program Coordinators. Barbie Klinedinst-Shields will coordinate support groups in the North Central and East Regions and P. J. Saunders will be responsible for the coordination of groups in the Western Region.

Attorney Pam Thompson, Wichita, did an excellent job of providing the volunteers with information regarding "Custody Issues". Ms. Thompson specializes in family law and the information she provided will assist our volunteers in working with those families who are dealing with legal issues. The KCSL staff provided child abuse and neglect scenarios which allowed the volunteers to draw from their expertise in the area of child abuse and neglect. The volunteers were very impressive in analyzing the cases and what they saw as suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

At the end of the day, the Volunteers broke down into groups to discuss the successes and challenges of their respective programs. Volunteers provided insight on the successes of the program they were involved with and what ways the program could be improved to help to provide continuous quality services to the families and children we serve in Kansas.

