

Grandparents As Parents

Filling the Gap

Large Step Forward As House Passes Health Reform Bill

This article appeared in the Child Welfare League of America's Children's Monitor online newsletter Vol. 22, Issue 42: 11/16/2009 and was reprinted in its entirety.

The House on Saturday, November 7 passed its comprehensive health reform bill, the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) by a vote of 220-215. A total of 39 Democrats voted against the bill's passage and one Republican--Representative Anh "Joseph" Cao from Louisiana's 2nd Congressional district--voted in favor of it.

CWLA has prepared a summary of many of the bill's provisions that would impact vulnerable children, youth, and families. Among these is an expansion of the Medicaid program to cover all individuals below 150 percent of the federal poverty level (150 percent of FPL for 2009 is \$16,245 for an individual and \$27,465 for a family of three).

The federal government would wholly pay for newly eligible individuals under this expansion for the first two years. Starting in 2015, the federal government would pick up 91 percent of the cost to cover the expansion populations, with

the states contributing the remaining 9 percent.

H.R. 3962 would also extend the Medicaid and IV-E FMAP increase included in the recovery package for two quarters--through June 30, 2011. This would provide support for states in the continuing economic downturn so that they do not have to resort to cutting back health and foster care services.

CWLA is also very pleased that the House has maintained two of our top priorities: protecting Medicaid reimbursement for the treatment in therapeutic foster care programs and new funding for home visitation programs.

With the House health reform bill passed attention now turns to the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) has stated he could start the Senate's health reform debate as early as this week, but Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL) has stated they may need more time to secure enough votes.

Read the summary of provisions at http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/CWLA_Health_Reform_Bill_Summary.pdf

Partnership Awarded Family Connection Grant

South San Francisco, CA - (November 2, 2009) Aspiranet in partnership with Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare Initiative, Child Welfare League of America, California State University, Long Beach, Family Service of Long Beach, Grandparents as Parents, Jewish Family Services, and Life Changing Mentoring was recently awarded a Family Connection Discretionary Grant Award from The Children's Bureau Division of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

This award will create a kinship navigation system entitled "Encore Parenting: Navigating Generations." The navigation system will match skilled navigators with formal and informal kinship caregivers to empower them to access and utilize needed resources. Beginning January 1, 2010, the kinship navigation system will be implemented in Service Planning Areas 3 and 8 of Los Angeles County.

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Message from Chairman Bill Fox

Most families consider holidays to be a first rate reason to be together, celebrate traditions, and share wonderful family time.

I have vivid memories of being in my grandmother's Massachusetts kitchen along with uncles, aunts and cousins. When my grandmother and Aunt Elizabeth baked apple pies, they made small pies for the kids and large ones for the family. More than six decades later, I can still smell the pies coming out of the oven.

The holiday season offers quintessential opportunities to create and share lifelong

intergenerational memories. Some families use and re-use the old-time decorations, while others prepare special recipes. Some travel long distances just to be together.

Having the children take part in the preparation for these festivities makes those shared days more memorable. This is a wonderful opportunity to create and pass on to your children and grandchildren the best of your world and tradition.

On behalf of my family, the Board of Directors and staff... A wonderful and magical holiday season to all.



Who's On Board?



GAP Board member Suzanne Tracy was a single grandparent raising her two grandbabies and said, "Having my grandkids completely turned my life upside down.

Between dealing with problems of her daughter's mental illness and the boys getting sick, life was chaotic. Fortunately, she had resources to get the help she needed. She began to worry about others who were less fortunate, financially, and it was then that she decided to help. After contacting GAP's founder Sylvie de Toledo, Tracy set up GRANDRELIEF, a grant program that offers financial assistance to one or two families per month.

Impressed by all that GAP provides for families in need, Tracy wanted to help. She attended the support groups and participated in the fun activities that promoted family togetherness.

Tracy joined the GAP Board, bringing her unique experiences and skills to the table. Having served on two other boards, having been founder-President-Executive Director for a nonprofit high school and having had firsthand knowledge and a clear understanding of the amounts and types of support needed by relative caregivers, Tracy helps raise funds, organize events and functions, and takes part in brainstorming to improve and increase GAP's offerings.

"We have an incredibly hard working executive director – Madelyn Gordon," said Tracy, "and founder Sylvie de Toledo works tirelessly and selflessly for our families."

Tracy hopes to see GAP expand nationwide, offering online and website support where families in need can find and utilize effective resources. She states that the nonprofit is growing day by day, offering more support groups, services and resources than ever.

GAP Board Members

William Fox, Chairperson
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Sylvie de Toledo, Founder

Advisory Board:
Catherine Goodman, PhD

Dr. Jeff Hananel
Joseph McKenzie, Esq

TEE-OFF FOR TYKES

Grandparents As Parents hosted its third annual Grandparents Day Tee-Off for Tykes Miniature Golf Event on Grandparent's Day – Sept. 13, 2009. The event included not only a raffle but also a silent auction and a pre-raffle. What a collection of treasures were available! Contributions came in from our groups, individuals, and the community at large.

More than 200 people arrived at Castle Park in Sherman Oaks and spent time eating, visiting and having a pleasantly chaotic time. Most families went home with an array of prizes, treats and the knowledge that they had contributed to Grandparents As Parents and the many services we offer.

Players ranged in age from two to 80-plus. No one seemed to worry about the scores and, judging from all the smiles, everyone enjoyed themselves.

Our volunteers worked tirelessly to make the day a great success and, as always, we thank them. This year our team consisted of several dedicated, creative, enthusiastic women who each went above and beyond serving on a committee.

Special thanks to Helen Cohen, Joyce Fox, Kristina Repreza, Linda Sims, Marilyn Popiel, Sona Rosenberg, Suzanne Tracy, Sylvie de Toledo, Madelyn Gordon, Vanessa Henderson and Willa Meller.

Thanks also to Joe Hanrahan, who uploaded photos to our website, www.grandparentsasparents.org. Many candid shots have been printed and distributed to attendees.

BILL FOX JOINS ALCHEMY TEAM

For 20 years, the Annenberg Foundation has invested in the visionary leadership of nonprofit executives and board members through grants, capacity-building initiatives, and other resources. This longstanding commitment stems from Annenberg's belief that when staff and board leaders are aligned in common purpose they are able to transform nonprofit organizations to a higher level of effectiveness.

Dedicated leaders guide our nation's nonprofits as they provide essential health care, human services, education, environmental stewardship, and broad

access to the arts and humanities. By investing in both the staff and board leadership of nonprofits, we believe that we can contribute to the strength and vitality of the sector, and achieve deep impact in the communities we serve.

Our Board of Directors Chairman, Bill Fox, has been selected to be one of twelve community leaders to assist with this training process.

RESPIRE CAMPING

Camping Women (CW) came into being in 1977 as a nonprofit, educational and service organization for women 18 and over.

The two founders, who had many years of experience in Girl Scout camping, knew how scouting had helped girls and adults learn about and enjoy the out-of-doors and wished for a similar organization for adult women.

This wish has evolved into a volunteer organization with a national board of directors, local chapters, national and chapter camping events, service projects and the participation of over 2000 interested members in the last 24 years.

CW chapters reach out to the community and are involved in everything from regular clean-up days along the Sacramento River to adopt-a-family programs.

The LA/Beach Cities chapter approached GAP recently with an idea to offer a weekend of camping to a limited number of relative caregivers (men and women) at a time. Because GAP already offers many opportunities for family activities, this event would be adults only.

Camping Women would provide camping accommodations, food and a few activities. The relative caregivers would show up and be able to relax in the outdoors for a weekend.

The project is still in the developmental stages but CW hopes to have the program up and running by fall 2010.

Save the Date...December 13

GAP families will have a great time at the 2009 holiday party to be held at Northridge Skateland. Enjoy the facility's 12,000 square foot hardwood floor Live DJ, a live DJ, cool effects and much more.

Skateland is located at 18140 Parthenia Street. Check the GAP Web site or call the office at (818) 264-0880 for details. Find out more about Skateland at <http://www.skateland.net/>.

GAP Wish List

- Computers (new or gently used, please)
- Color laser printer (not ink jet, please)
- Color scanner/printer
- Raffle items for picnics and other social events
- Art and craft supplies, school supplies, backpacks
- Vans or cars
- Your creative genius...

Please call the office (818) 264-0880 if you have something in good condition that may be useful to one of the GAP families. Twin beds are particularly useful. A storage unit in Van Nuys is currently available and items can be picked up and dropped off by appointment.

Sharing Family Strengths

Meet the Smith Family

One of the common threads that connects all GAP families is their struggle to protect their grandchildren. This month, we've interviewed John and Mary Smith and learn the story of Jimmy and Billy.



Note to the reader: Names have been changed to protect the family's privacy. The photo is a generic image provided by Photobucket.

GAP: How many grandkids do you have? What are their ages?

We have six grandkids altogether, but are only raising the two youngest, Jimmy and Billy, who are now five and six.

GAP: What were the circumstances that brought you to GAP? Was DCFS involved?

Billy was removed from his birth home at 4 ½ months due to abuse and was placed in a temporary foster home until Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) could evaluate our home.

[Children's Services attempted to reunite Billy with his parents] but three weeks after the attempt, both he and Jimmy suffered abuse and were moved back to the [temporary] foster family. We were trying to get them back before protective services transferred them to yet another temporary foster home - Billy's ninth. On the day we hired a lawyer, we were [finally] given custody of the boys.

Starting over, we found we didn't fit with our friends anymore. We were lonely and in desperate need of other resources.

Joe had been laid off work about the time we started the adoption process and we were living off the equity in our home. Then, the real estate market crashed and we were forced to use our credit cards to survive. We amassed a lot of high-interest debt.

We enrolled both kids in Headstart, and then we got accepted into the Child and Family Center's program. A CFS case manager recommended that we connect with Grandparents As Parents. What a relief to attend weekly meetings and talk about feelings with others who truly understand. We got pointed in the right direction for additional resources we needed, too.

GAP: How do you cope with the emotional issues?

CFC gave us tools to cope with many emotional pitfalls. We've learned to identify and understand the feelings behind the boys' actions, and how to help them work through difficult issues. We have also learned that it's important to tell the boys how we feel.

GAP: What has GAP helped you with?

We have [many] recreational opportunities for the kids; GAP gives gifts at holiday seasons and provides access to various events like miniature golfing and roller skating. They provided tickets for a Clippers game and a children's play. We've had great times at monthly picnics at the park. They've given us lots of emotional support. GAP has helped us find resources that enabled us to maintain a stable home for our boys.

GAP: What is your situation now?

Since Joe was unable to get another job, he took early retirement and we are trying to stay afloat on Social Security. We love to stay in touch with the other Grandparents as Parents in our community and to participate in GAP events. We

don't have much respite, but there is one couple from our church who recently had a baby and they take the boys for a couple of hours every couple of weeks.

GAP: How has your life changed?

Since getting the boys, almost all of our relationships have changed. We find it difficult to be grandparents to our other four grandchildren. Billy and Jimmy don't have grandparents to spend time with them and spoil them. That creates a certain amount of sadness for us.

As parenting grandparents, we don't seem to fit in with any group other than GAP. I joined the young moms' group at church - I love it. But when my daughter-in-law and daughter take the other grandkids to do something, I never get invited with our two kids. GAP helped us find new friends

When we first got the boys our health declined a little because life was so stressful. Now that we have settled into a routine (if you can call it that) we have to stay more physically fit in order to keep up with them.

We've found many resources to help meet the boys' needs and our own. Having others in similar situations to talk to has greatly encouraged us and given us new hope that we can accomplish this difficult task.

GAP: What do you see for the future?

Frankly, when we first got the boys and began to feel the burden of losing friends and having to provide for tiny ones the future seemed bleak. We were lonely; we felt overwhelmed. We got little help from family or friends. We quickly found these boys didn't respond like the children we had raised before.

Now we look forward to a bright future for all of us, a future where we can manage the daily struggles and stresses of life, knowing we are not alone.

Family Camping Trips by Kathy Arellano

Some of my fondest childhood memories are of my family's camping trips to the Colorado River where my little brother and I, 7 and 9 years old respectively, learned to water ski.

My dad, a Los Angeles Police Dept. motorcycle officer, usually took his vacation during Easter week and our family of four would meet other police families for a week of rest and relaxation.

We'd load up the boat with our tent, sleeping bags, the old kerosene camp stove and plenty of food. We'd settle ourselves into the old pickup truck and drive the 250 miles to Lake Mohave's Katherine Landing, where we would launch the boat and glide across the lake to a private sandy beach – yes, there was such a thing in 1957 – to make camp.

There were plenty of tumbleweed bushes set back from the water to screen the portable potty, and we swore to never talk about the time when the plastic bag suddenly dropped off the underside of the toilet seat while my mom was using the toilet; we also don't mention the long stream of profanity that echoed across the placid waters as she pulled her sandalled feet out of the muck.

The day of arrival, grown-ups would delegate tasks, based on ages and abilities. My brother and I usually got stuck policing the area for trash, but the job we both coveted was that of inflating the four air mattresses – we loved feeling dizzy from oxygen deprivation. We set up the smelly Army cots and helped Mom get the kitchen stuff arranged. Older kids helped their folks set up tents and get the life jackets and skis ready for the next day's fun. Everyone helped.

The dads would get a big bonfire going while the moms fixed those delicious camp dinners – hobo stew, boxed macaroni and cheese, or sizzling hot dogs – the backbone of any camping trip.

Someone would invariably get a penny-ante poker game going at the wobbly aluminum camp table. When the parents napped during the day, the kids would pull out the nearly loved-to-death Monopoly board. Even though some of the money was missing and the deeds for Tennessee and Baltic were badly torn, the game commenced.

Thank goodness my folks are still alive. They're elderly now but when we spend time together they can share memories of those camping trips with our grown kids and



grandkids, giving them little glimpses of a good childhood peopled with old, young and in between ages.

Recently, our family had a camping trip to Pismo Dunes. There were 14 of us ranging in age from mid-60s (my husband and me) to our 8-year-old granddaughter. Our 17-year-old grandson, who's been back with his mom for five years brought a friend, as did our middle granddaughter. My brother and his grown sons came along, too.

We had a campfire; we played games; we talked; we napped. The adventurous ones rented all-terrain vehicles, and tore around the sand dunes, creating great memories.

As the shadows lengthened around the campfire we talked about everything under the sun and got to know each other more deeply than before. The casual intimacy of a campsite, especially after dark, encourages conversations.

I observed the future generations at play and at work, interacting with each other and enjoying the company of the extended family. I remember how much I learned from other generations on my camping trips. I'm glad my descendants have an opportunity to do the same.

Kathy Arellano, editor of "Filling the Gap" since 2002, is a freelance writer who reports on local news for two hometown papers and creates how-to articles for online "answer" sites and has several books in the works. She welcomes comments and suggestions and can be reached at grannywords@yahoo.com.

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JEWISH BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF LOS ANGELES IS HERE!

Mario, Hanna and Samantha are being raised by their grandmother, Barbara. Their father isn't present and the mother is often unavailable. Barbara contacted Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Los Angeles (JBBBSLA) for help.

Mario, age 10 was the first to be matched – with David – in the program that individually assesses the needs of a child applicant and finds an appropriately screened and compatible mentor. David and Mario have enjoyed outings at the observatory, science museum and the park.

Samantha was matched with Big Sister Sarah and is learning to feel comfortable trusting another adult with her feelings and stories.

Hanna, age 8 was the last child to be matched. She was excited about having a Big Sister but fearful of being with a stranger. Big Sister Hila took Hanna to the park close to Hanna's home with her dog for their first outing. Now she can't wait for the next adventure.

Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters enriches the lives of thousands of children annually, regardless of race, religion or ability to pay, by providing "Excellence in Mentoring" through a myriad of programs and services that facilitate lasting mentoring relationships, improving a child's self-esteem and learning.

For many of our children, we are the consistent and guiding role in their lives, holding their hands, giving them opportunities they never thought possible, and helping ensure they reach their true potential.

JBBBSLA Programs:

One-to-one and school-based mentor programs

Camp Max Straus residential summer camp

Scholarships

Sports Buddies and Arts Buddies

For more information regarding the programs offered by JBBBSLA, please contact Susan Berk at 323-456-1149 or sberk@jbbbsla.org.

New Caregiver Center at Edelman Children's Court

Relatives finding themselves at the Edmund D. Edelman court may have a new source of information available to them and GAP has been invited to fill another gap.

Many of you may already be familiar with the children's court. For those of you who aren't, here's how it works: In Los Angeles Superior Court, dependency court proceedings are centralized at the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court in Monterey Park. This unique state-of-the-art facility boasts twenty child-sensitive courtrooms. With the exception of one satellite court at the Alfred J. McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center in Lancaster, all dependency proceedings in Los Angeles County are handled at Edelman Children's Court.

Each year, thousands of children cycle through Edelman Children's Court. They are taken before a judge who will decide whether they are returned to a

parent, placed with a foster family, sent to a group home, or entrusted to a family member other than a parent.

For the judges, lawyers and Dept. of Children/Family Services (DCFS) personnel involved in these cases, dependency proceedings are commonplace. For the extended family members who arrive at the courthouse desperate to provide a home for their grandchild, nephew, niece or other kin, the dependency proceeding can be confusing, frightening and can seem to raise as many questions as it answers.

GAP will operate the on-site New Caregiver Center during business hours, five days per week, acting as liaison between kinship families and all facets of the child welfare system. In addition, the center provides new caregivers with referrals, information, support and links to GAP's core services and many other resources.

(Partnership, cont. from Page 1)

"Aspiranet has assembled an exceptional group of partners to implement this essential and important project," said Damian Zavala, Chief Executive Officer of Family Service of Long Beach. "Family Service is not only grateful to be a partner of such an innovative and significant project but also grateful to partner with kinship families as we strive to support as much as we can."

The newly funded project includes the following innovative components: 1) the recruitment and training of Encore Navigators, based on the Encore model of recruiting retired professionals for community-based service with a social purpose; 2) a multi-leveled project evaluation and dissemination plan to foster replication and/or adaptation; 3) the creation of a social work intern unit dedicated to the project; and 4) collaboration and consultation with the Los Angeles County Kinship Advisory and Advocacy Network to create localized kinship councils to promote collaboration, awareness of resources, advocacy, and empowerment.

As one of thirty projects chosen nationally, Encore Parenting: Navigating Generations will receive approximately 1.5 million dollars over the next three years to serve kinship families in Los Angeles County.

"We and our partners are honored to have been selected by the Children's Bureau to bring this new and exciting program design to Los Angeles", said Vernon Brown, CEO of Aspiranet. "Our greatest hope is that grandparents, aunts and uncles providing care for children in their extended families receive the support and guidance that they deserve."

Clean Out Your Garage and Help A Family in Need

It's amazing how much stuff accumulates in a garage throughout the year. Things change, family members move in or out and sports equipment seems to multiply in the corners of the garage.

Why not give those things a new home? GAP is always looking for gently used beds

and linens, tables, chairs and other items that could help a family in need. Or, if you need something, give us a call ... we may have it.

To find out more about the storage unit and to make arrangements to get your items there, call the GAP office at (818) 264-0880.

Caregiver Conference

After months of planning and preparation, the eighth annual conference - Empowering Relatives: Strengthening Intergenerational Bonds hosted by Grandparents as Parents and co-hosted with California State University Northridge (CSUN) Department of Social Work was a great success.

Two immensely supportive backers of these conferences have been Dr. John Oliver (California State University, Long Beach) and Dr. James Decker (CSUN). Both men have made it possible for GAP to continue this tradition.

The conference was held on CSUN's beautiful campus. Councilman Richard Alarcon led the Pledge of Allegiance and so began an information-packed day. Inspiring keynote speaker Andrew Bridge shared his journey as a child in the foster care system. There is no doubt that his success story was a reminder to all that the reasons they do what they do as relative caregivers and professionals who work in the field of child welfare are important.

This year's conference offered a variety of workshops including navigating

government benefits, addressing mental health issues, creating wills and living trusts, and understanding trauma in children.

Lunch was provided for all of those who attended and it gave everyone a good excuse to socialize with other caregivers and professionals while they ate.

More than twenty vendors at the Resource Fair gave people the chance to see what services are available for the relative caregivers and their families. Contributions from these folks also provided some wonderful raffle items. Information from the conference served to educate and to get the word about the importance of relative caregivers' commitment to children, and the need of support services for those caregivers.

A big thank you is in order for committee members Naomi Campos, Ray Cruz, Sylvie de Toledo, Catherine Goodman, Madelyn Gordon, Rosalie Hilger, Heather Lang, Harriet Minke, Katie Mortimer, Lilian Payan, Suzanne Tracy, and Barbara Wasson, who worked tirelessly to make it an outstanding day. Thanks also to roving photographer Joe Hanrahan – check the Web site for photos of this great event.

Thank You Partner Agencies...

*Alliance for Children's Rights
Aspiranet
California State University, Long Beach
California State University, Northridge
Casey Family Programs
Cerritos College
Child Welfare Initiative
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Law Center
Citrus College
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Legal Aid Foundation
Long Beach Non Profit Partnership
Los Angeles City Dept. of Aging
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Los Angeles Mission College
Los Angeles Pierce College
New Directions
Pacoima Community Center
Pasadena City College
Public Council
Salvation Army of Long Beach
San Fernando Valley Mental Health Ctr.
Trinity Center
YWCA*

You KAAN Get Involved

Los Angeles Advocacy and Advisory Network (LA KAAN) is made up of grandparents and relatives raising children, related county and private agencies. The group hopes to provide the mouthpiece for relative families.

The mission of LA KAAN, established in Dec. 2008 is to 'address the urgent and ongoing needs of diverse kinship families, expanding resources, community partnerships and empowering kinship voices to influence and advocate for local, state, and national policies and practices'; its vision states 'Kinship families in Los Angeles County will receive respectful and sustained support, education and access to needed resources within their communities so that children in their care have safe, healthy, thriving and committed relationships intended to last a lifetime.'

Here's a chance for you to become involved and make a difference. The group hopes to have a creative voice in speaking to the needs of kinship families. Meetings are on second Wednesdays. If you have questions and wish to become more involved, please contact the GAP office at (818) 264-0880.

Thank You Volunteers - With your help GAP is getting the job done!

Thanks to Adrienne Lerma, Alan Popiel, Alison Katz, Amy Otsu, Andre de Toledo, Andrea Freidenthal, Anita Boschman, Ann Shimer, Anson Sims, Anton Gonzalez, Babs Wilson, Barbara Clark, Beth Thomas, Bill Fox, Bobbie Dean, Brad Shechtman, Brandon Berry, Carol Bohn, Carol Herskowitz, Carolyn La Brunda, Catherine Goodman, Cherissa Boyd, Deborah Shechtman, Dolores De Nardis, DiDi DeWitt, Ellen Smith, Genoveva Galvez, Gilbert Bautista, Gus Bracamonte, Harriet Minke, Heather Lang, Helen Cohen, Janis Lyons, Jeff Hananel and Jennifer McKinney.

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Sorry if we missed anyone!

Grandparents As Parents



Visit www.grandparentsasparents.org for the electronic version of this publication.

As part of its cost-free services, GAP offers ...

- Caregiver Center at Edelman Court
- Weekly therapy support groups
- Navigation through the process family counseling
- GAP Warmline
- Quarterly newsletter
- Resource information and referrals
- Crisis intervention
- Tangible needs
- Family-friendly social events

GAP relies on your generous contributions of time, skills, funds and ideas to carry out its vital work.

Group Locations

Carson

Fran Zamarripa
(310) 513-8070

Inglewood, Pomona, Pasadena
Sarah Doakes (909) 989-8777

Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs

Barbara Wasso
(562) 921-7554

Pacoima

(RAPP-conducted in Spanish)

Marisela Magana
(818) 249-2755

Panorama City, Woodland Hills,

Van Nuys

Sylvie de Toledo
(818) 789-1177 or (310) 839-2548

Santa Clarita

Ellen Smith
(818) 789-1177

Palmdale/Lancaster

(ROCK)

Cheral Hyman
(661) 478-1881

Important Numbers

**24 Hour Crisis Center
Dial 211**

**AARP Grandparent Info Center
(888) 687-2277**

**Alliance for Children's Rights
(213) 368-6010**

**Bet Tzedek
(213) 384-3243**

**California Dept. on Aging
(800) 510-2020**

**InfoLine, Los Angeles County
Dial 211**

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(213) 640-3883**

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