

Grandparents As Parents

Filling the Gap

PUTTING AB 12 INTO PRACTICE

Groundbreaking legislation requires careful planning and hard work

by Angie Schwartz, Policy Director
The Alliance for Children's Rights

California Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12) is a new law that extends foster care until age 21 and makes significant changes to California's old Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) program.

Kin-GAP allows children in long-term, stable placements with relatives to exit foster care and remain under guardianship with that relative while continuing to receive the equivalent level of financial assistance as before.

AB 12 is groundbreaking both in its promise to improve outcomes for youth who leave foster care, as well as the manner in which it is being implemented.

The goal of AB 12 is to help young people achieve self-sufficiency by providing them with additional time in foster care in order to pursue their education, gain work experience, and live in a supported environment. However, it will take more than three additional years in foster care to realize AB12's goal of improving outcomes and helping these young people achieve self-sufficiency.

The challenge before those working to implement AB 12 is to develop a program that shifts the practice of child welfare so that these young adults see foster care as a positive support system in which they want to remain.

Recognizing this challenge, the co-sponsors of AB 12 have been involved in a massive effort to implement this historic legislation, with a focus—like never before—

on ensuring that the voices of the youth and caregivers are included throughout the implementation process.

To this end, the AB 12 co-sponsors have hosted three stakeholder meetings that included housing providers, county officials, legal advocates, independent living coordinators, educators, and others, with the final meeting scheduled for November in Los Angeles. Each stakeholder meeting has averaged more than 200 people in attendance. These meetings ensure that all of those interested in AB 12 implementation have an opportunity to review draft policies and provide feedback.

In addition, the Alliance for Children's Rights has focused on collecting input from youth and caregivers specifically by developing surveys, conducting focus groups, and holding numerous webinars and other trainings designed to elicit the critically needed insight from those who will be most impacted by the new law.

The Alliance for Children's Rights surveyed 145 relative caregivers and conducted 10 focus groups in nine Northern and Southern California counties during the month of March 2011 in order to get input from relative caregivers about critical aspects of implementation. During the same period, The Alliance surveyed 136 current and former foster youth and held numerous focus groups to ensure the youth perspective was also part of implementation.

AB 12 continued on Page 7

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11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Message from Chairman Bill Fox

*Summertime
And the livin' is easy
Fish are jumpin'
And the cotton is high...*

For many, summertime is a period of slower living, vacations, less work, kicking back, trips, travels and kids underfoot. For some it is the doldrums.

For me and GAP, summer is a period of high activity, no doldrums. July 1 begins our new fiscal year and we will continue to grow in dollars, families served and high aspirations.

Summertime is the big push for our Annual House of Blues Fundraiser on September 11, 2011. So dig deep, pull out your

checkbook, ask all your friends to buy tickets, buy ads, be a sponsor, donate silent auction items and buy raffle tickets! Make this year bigger and better! Summertime is GAP picnics, special events, lots of meetings and planning and yes, lots of fun!

I trust that for you, this is a wonderful, productive time and fun season—not one of doldrums.

This year, make summertime something special for you, your family, your friends and GAP.

Be sure to take a moment or two and go fishin', because, the fish are jumpin' and, in some parts of California, the cotton is high!



Summertime lyrics by DuBose Heyward, author of *Porgy*, upon which George

Who's On Board? Raymond Cruz

The GAP Board has attracted yet another talented member of the community – Raymond Cruz. A well-educated and gifted people-person, Cruz excels in fields of project management, business operations/development, consulting, mediation/conflict resolution, fundraising, family counseling and small-group growth.



With his flair for the artistic, he has facilitated theater and art therapy approaches to problem-solving and provided on-air talent for cable television. He hopes to see GAP produce a television documentary on its success and its impact on today's society.

"Ray is a wealth of information, advice and tremendous support of our organization," said GAP Executive Director Madelyn Gordon. "His oversight in our strategic planning must be recognized as having played a part in where we are today."

A New York City Boy Scout alumnus, Ray Cruz loves baseball and says, "I was born five blocks away from where they play real baseball—Yankee Stadium!"

Cruz continues his commitment to his community and nation by serving on many recognized boards and volunteering his time and talents to a variety of worthy events. Ray enjoys traveling abroad and serving others. His most recent trips have taken him to serve on humanitarian projects in Mumbai and Puna, India and Mexico.

"We are fortunate to have someone with such a diverse background who knows so many people in so many areas and is willing to share it all with us," said GAP Chairman Bill Fox

His responsibilities at GAP include donor development and cultivation; production of special events; grant-writing; board building and governance, but Ray's gregarious nature is probably the most winning of his skills.

"I [like to] hug people less fortunate than I," adds Ray.

GAP Board Members and Advisory Board

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GAP News

NOTE: Call the GAP office at (818) 264-0880 for information about calendar events, fundraisers, donations, scheduling and group activities. You can also visit www.grandparentsasparents.org for a complete list of support chapters, information and volunteer opportunities.



Oatman's wild burros are the descendants of those brought, and later released, by the miners coming to the area.

SPECIAL TRIPS

Nine adults and 20 kids spent a week in the Arizona desert and lived to tell about it. For the kids, it was all about having fun getting drenched in the desert rainstorm and then the pool, when the air temperature was 112 degrees. For the grandmothers, it was shopping at the outlet mall and winning—and losing—at the gaming tables in Laughlin, Nevada.

There's a lot to see in northwestern Arizona and its environs. The group visited the Oatman, Arizona wild burro ranch and enjoyed feeding the donkeys and watching the town's regular wild-west show.

The whole group shopped, went bowling and to the movies. Once the kids were safely tucked in and guarded, the grown-ups played at the casinos until the wee hours of the morning.

The group traveled approximately 150 miles to Grand Canyon Village, where they had a picnic in the woods and a walk around the lake. They took a bus tour to ten recommended vistas. On the way back, they saw elk and deer along the roadway. Everyone had a great time.

Save the Date

2nd Annual Sunday Brunch at the House of Blues
Sunday, Sept. 11, 2011 - 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
\$85 per person (includes parking)
DEANA MARTIN Performing a tribute to her father, the king of cool, Dean Martin.

HOUSE OF BLUES • 8430 Sunset Blvd • Los Angeles
Call (818) 264-0880 and make your reservations
TODAY

INTERNS

GAP says a sad goodbye to last year's interns. Thank you for all the time you've donated. We wish you good luck in the continuation of your studies. We welcome the new interns from CSUN, Phillips Graduate Institute and CSULB and look forward to working with you.

KAISER PARTNERS WITH GAP

GAP has benefitted greatly from its ongoing relationship with Kaiser Permanente Hospital. Recently, Kaiser invited GAP to be its community partner at the recent Dodger baseball game, with more than 170 tickets to the event going to GAP families. Many thanks to Susan Ng, Jennifer Lopez and many more people who made it happen.

ENCORE PARENTING

A few years ago GAP joined partners Aspiranet, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Child Welfare Initiative (CWI) Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and California State University Long Beach (CSULB) to begin work on a three year discretionary grant from the Children's Bureau of the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The project, known as Encore Parenting, is in its final year and relative caregivers are a part of the research effort which has been designed to examine the effectiveness of navigation services in supporting kinship caregivers.

Many caregivers who become involved with the program will have the chance to participate in this worthwhile study to identify the needs of kinship families, and support future funding and programs to benefit others in similar situations.

If you are a kinship caregiver in the San Gabriel Valley or South Bay area of Los Angeles County, and are interested in being a part of this project, please call (888) 4KINSHP or (888) 454-6747 to find out how you can connect with Encore Parenting.

GAP Wish List

Washers, dryers
Beds
Office Supplies
School Supplies
Raffle items for picnics and other social events
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 - Funding Important Programs

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." ~ Winston Churchill



I am Madelyn's husband (also known as Larry Gordon). As the newly appointed Chair of the Fund Development Subcommittee, it's my job to tell you what GAP does, why you

should give to GAP and how you can do it. This new series of articles will serve to enlighten you about the finer points of fund development.

Since its inception, GAP has offered a variety of programs providing kinship families access to emergency funds, food and clothing, emotional empowerment, mentoring and skill-building.

NOTE: The terms 'grandparents', 'relative caregivers' and 'kinship caregivers' will be used interchangeably, but, more than 90 percent of the caregivers served by GAP are grandparents.

GAP PROVIDES:

Individual and Family Crisis Intervention and Counseling

designed to help the family overcome specific problems, situations, or issues. These are short-term programs with finite treatment schedules.

GAP Support Groups

provide peer support and education. Support Chapters are offered weekly in fifteen Los Angeles County sites.

Family Recreational Activities

organized recreational activities offered at no cost to participant families provide peer interaction for grandparents and grandchildren and create a natural but monitored 'visitation' setting.

Respite Care

provides alternatives for relief caregiving that alleviate the psychological burden and emotional stressors.

Emergency "Safety-Net" Referrals

links families in need to emergency resources for food, clothing, transportation vouchers, low or no-cost medical and dental care.

Emergency Grants (when available)

provides stipends to grandparents in cases of extreme need (assistance with utility bills, car repairs, emergency-room visits, medication).

Warm line

immediate access to a skilled professional and/or volunteer who can impart helpful information and referral resources.

Classes, Trainings, and Workshops

court-ordered parenting classes, workshops and educational conferences, referrals for counseling and more.

Child-focused Advocacy

provides licensed social workers to advocate on behalf of grandparents with DPSS, DCFS, schools, doctors, and courts on an as-needed basis.

Filling the GAP newsletter

distributed to over 9,000 individuals and families throughout Los Angeles County and highlights recent research, legislative issues, information, events and articles written about-grandparent-headed households.

Government and Public Awareness

provides awareness-raising information to policymakers and the media. GAP leaders offer expert testimony at legislative hearings on issues pertaining to kinship care.

Caregiver Center

in conjunction with the Child Welfare Initiative, Children's Law Center and Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court in Monterey Park, makes assistance, support, and referrals available to all kinship families involved with the court system through DCFS.

WHY DONATE?

In California, more than 625,000 children reside in grandparent-headed households and another 327,000 live with relative caregivers.

For 389,631 of them, no parent is present in the home at all. Kinship families form the backbone of support for children not living with parents.

Seventy-one percent of GAP's clients are 55 years of age and older, and are caring for one or more chil-

dren ranging in age from infants to teenagers. The majority of GAP's clients are low-income.

All kinship families are united in a single need: a safe, stable environment in which to rebuild the lives of children.

While determined to provide the best possible life for the children, kinship caregivers are often unprepared emotionally and financially for the responsibilities that their new role imposes upon them.

Support services and programs are essential in helping grandparents forge healthy family structures capable of meeting the needs of at-risk children and youth. Accessing affordable resources is a frustrating task for many families—particularly those lacking any legal standing with regard to custody.

Children and caregivers alike require counseling to deal with the emotional, physical, social, and educational problems arising from the crisis at hand; they need assistance in navigating the complex educational and legal systems; they need help locating and applying for community services. These families need the programs and support provided by GAP.

We live in challenging economic times and GAP is not immune. Today our families are in even greater need. GAP is challenged on a daily basis to help meet those needs. Government funds are being cut and foundation money is even more difficult to obtain. Individuals are caught between their own needs and charitable giving.

Last year, GAP served more than 2,500 caregivers and their children. Whether or not you were one of those served, you are sure to understand how the work GAP does in our community enriches the lives of so many people.

That work is made possible by the generous support of community citizens like you.

Over the next several months I will outline the various methods by which you can give. But, we need your help today. Please give generously by submitting your gift in the enclosed envelope or visiting our website or calling our Executive Director, Madelyn Gordon at (818) 264-0880.

Sharing Family Strengths will return with a family interview in the next issue.

Summer Doldrums *by Kathy Arellano*

I can hardly summon the energy to write about this particular time (or is it a mindset?) of the year. My journalist's voice is nearly mute. Everything feels stagnant and devoid of color. Those sweet creatures that used to lighten my spirit – hope, creativity and adventure – have retreated to a far corner, while my hulking sense of duty takes center stage, flanked by its companions apathy and inertia.

Perpetually irritable, I snap at those closest to me. I plop down in front of the TV and tune out, rationalizing that it's good for my bad knee.

Bad news sounds ten times worse than it would've seemed during the spring. Money woes suck the marrow right out of my bones. Familial responsibilities weigh heavily on my shoulders with no end in sight. Needless to say, those thrilling times of jumping into life with both feet are gone. I'm wearing cement shoes now.

Jeez, Louise! Can life get any grayer?

Imagine my surprise when, because my husband, Bob, and I reluctantly agreed to clean the garage and plan a yard sale, the gloom and doom came to a screeching halt.

Understand this – in the 34 years we've lived in this house, neither of our cars has ever been inside the garage. There are boxes of stuff belonging to family members who needed a place to store them 'for a little while'. The quarter-inch-thick layer of dust on the crates is proof that it's been much longer than that. The trail we blazed to the laundry area is getting narrower with each passing year.

It's very bad.

I've gotten a lot of recent practice at purging, since I've had to do the task at each of my parents' homes. Seeing what other folks' closets and garages are filled with has given me a super-strong will when it comes to tossing bric-a-brac, laying to rest those 1960s Harvest Gold appliances and jettisoning the piles of I-might-need-this-someday items.



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.

Bob and I gave ourselves a month to do it. I called my brother and asked him to find a new home for his camping gear. I told our relocated daughter to send money to pay the shipping costs for the four packing boxes she left or they'll end up at the second-hand store.

We've made several serious trips to the thrift shop, to drop off things we didn't even remember we had. We've unearthed many items that have decomposed while in the depths of the garage. We've filled the trash bins to heaping every weekend.

A side effect of all this dusty, sweaty work has been the resurfacing of my hope and enthusiasm. The physical act of sort-and-release has resulted in the feeling of a great weight having been lifted off my shoulders. The empty space where once there was junk now offers some breathing room, space for new possibilities. The summer doldrums have been banished for another year.

Clearing out the garage hasn't hastened the seasons, improved our money situation or lessened the responsibilities I have undertaken for my parents. It has, however, released me from the passive obligation of ownership. With fewer things to own and manage, I can more deeply enjoy the things that are important to me, like sitting outside with Bob early on a summer morning, drinking my coffee and planning the day.

Thanks to some of our donors ... and sponsors

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Important Phone Numbers

- 24-hour Crisis Center/InfoLine - 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
- Legal Aid Foundation (213) 640-3883
- Public Council (800) 870-8090
- Los Angeles Caregivers (800) 540-4442
- L...A. Dept. of Rec. and Parks (888) 527-2757

Conference Recap *Life Stories, Workshops, Inspiration*

Gap and CSUN put on another spectacular conference in early May. Keynote speaker Sheriff Lee Baca shared the story of his childhood, revealing that he was raised by his grandparents who gave him the strength to be who he is today and taught him to turn adversity into opportunity.

Speaker Andrew Bridge, who also shared with us the story of his life as a child in foster care, said his experience has led him to be a strong advocate for children's rights. He has devoted his life to changing laws to help children and to change the child welfare system. Andrew is the author of *Hope's Boy*.

Once we had heard both speakers, there was not a dry eye in the room. We were all moved by both of these speakers' stories and inspired to continue our work as relative caregivers and advocates.

We held a number of workshops with wonderful speakers. Some of our topics included suicide prevention, bullying, government benefits, fetal alcohol syndrome, grief and loss.

The resource fair was also very helpful for all the attendees to get useful information.

This year we had social-work students from CSUN attend the conference and volunteer their services.

We want to thank all who helped make this conference a huge success. Thanks to the speakers who volunteered their Saturday to present workshops and special thanks to all the attendees who came and can now go out and use the knowledge they have gained. We hope to see you all again next year.

Grandparents As Parents provides programs and services to meet the urgent and ongoing needs of grandparents and other relative caregivers raising at-risk children.

Help GAP when you Shop - Time to Renew at

The Ralphs Markets Community Contributions Term begins September 1, 2011. All participants need to register or re-register starting 9/1/11 for the new term at www.Ralphs.com or at any Ralphs Market, using your scanbar letter (last year's scanbar letter can be used this year). GAP's contribution code is #81519.

This does not apply to participants of the Food 4 Less/Foods Co. Community Rewards program.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR SCHOOLS

In conjunction with the California mandate regarding the pertussis

(Whooping Cough) vaccine (also known as Tdap) Ralphs Pharmacies will donate \$5 to the school of your choice for each 7th through 12th grade student (minimum age is 11) that receives the Tdap shot at one of the 90 Ralphs pharmacies throughout Southern California. The vaccine is covered by many insurance companies.

Take your student(s) to the local Ralphs Pharmacy and tell the pharmacist they're there for the Tdap shot and which school you'd like the donation to go to. For more information or pharmacy locations, call (800) 443-4438 or visit www.ralphs.com.

GAP in the News

Latino Grandparent Caregivers Relieve the Foster Care System

New America Media July 29, 2011

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2008 there were 6.4 million grandparents living in households with grandchildren under age 18, and 2.6 million of them

had primary responsibility for parenting their grandchildren.

Read the complete article online:

<http://newamericamedia.org/2011/07/grandparent-caregivers-relieve-the-foster-care-system.php>

A Happy Ending

by Wanda Cooper, Group Facilitator and Navigator with Encore Parenting

When my phone rang, I looked at the caller ID, picked up my pencil and pad and took the call. I could barely understand the words of this panic-stricken grandmother through her tears.

She was fearful that her three grandchildren would be detained by the Department of Children and Family Services. I understood her story and the position she had taken, based upon what she felt was in the best interest of her grandchildren and herself.

Things had become unbearable for her at her current residence so she made the decision to move into a hotel. After moving, she immediately contacted her social worker only to be told that this violated her foster parent/kingap agreement. An emergency Team Decision Meeting (TDM) would be held in less than a week. She faced the risk of losing her grandchildren.

"I am so scared, I don't know what to do," she said. "I can't/won't go back there; the children cry every time. I thought I was doing what was best...please help me!"

The strong sense of commitment that my caregiver had heightened my desire to

assist this woman without question. The reason she went against previous advice I had given her became secondary. After discussing the safety for her and the children I assured her that I would advocate for her and attend the upcoming TDM.

The DCFS Pomona office staff was committed to helping this grandmother, her grandchildren, and her daughter. Immediate decisions were made to put 'stop funds' in place; she was given addresses of places to seek residence and was told to let them know that she was sent by DCFS.

Once the supervisor heard that unmonitored overnight visits with the children's biological mother had not been in place, she immediately set up visitation. Family Preservation workers made a commitment to assisting this grandmother and her children by providing monies to help her with the move-in.

There was a true dedication to assist this woman and to move the case forward as quickly as possible. All agency representatives pitched in to help. Having someone to advocate for her and being connected with Grandparents As Parents made a difference for this grandmother.

In less than a week, this family moved into their new apartment. Positive things DO happen.

AB 12 continued from Page 1

Stakeholders have been critical to the development of the policies and regulations that will govern the extension of foster care to youth ages 18–21. However, the most important part of implementation is still before us when these new policies are translated into practice in local communities all across California.

If you would like more information about implementation or would like to be involved in these efforts, contact a.schwartz@kids-alliance.org or call (415) 568-9803. You can also read about AB 12 on the Alliance's website at www.kids-alliance.org.

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

Thanks to Alan Popiel, Anat Louise, Andre de Toledo, Andrea Freidenthal, Andrew Arreola, Andrew Bridge, Angela Pennacchio, Angelica Leyva, Anita Boschman, Anson Sims, Bill Fox, Brad Shechtman, Bria Verdugo-Uy, Carol Bohn, Carol Surtees, Carolyn La Brunda, Catherine Goodman, Char Bland, Cherissa Boyd, Colleen Friend, David Jarkoff, Deborah Shechtman, Dolores De Nardis, Ellen Smith, Etienne Thach, Genoveva Galvez, Gianna Provenzano, Gilbert Bautista, Gina Taylor-Pickens, Gloria Pollack, Georgia Durante, Gus Bracamonte, Harriet Minke, Heather Lang, Helen Cohen, James Pickens, Jan Lyons, Jeff Hananel and Jennifer McKinney.

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Thank You Partner Agencies...

Alliance for Children's Rights
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California State University, Long Beach
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Casey Family Programs
Cerritos College
Child Welfare Initiative
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Law Center
Citrus College
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Sorry if we missed anyone!

Grandparents As Parents

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

Monday Chapters

Santa Clarita – Ellen Smith
Kaiser Permanente Hospital
27107 Toumey Road – Conf. Room #1
Day - (818) 789-1177

South Los Angeles – Giselle Raines Brown
Watts / Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club
1339 E. 120th Street
Day - (909) 549-6265 or (424) 750-9127

Van Nuys / Sherman Oaks – Joyce Fox
The Help Group
15339 Saticoy Street
Evening - (818) 789-1177

Tuesday Chapters

Hollywood – (Spanish) Marisela Magana
Christ Presbyterian Church of Hollywood
4011 Clinton Street
Evening - (323) 828-4158

Inglewood – Ewanda Jackson
Parent Center
401 So. Inglewood Avenue
Day - (909) 549-6265 or (424) 750-9127

Tuesday Chapters (cont'd)

Long Beach – Barbara Wasson
Salvation Army Building
455 E. Spring Street
Day - (562) 921-7554

Pacoima (Spanish) – Mirza Arroyo
Maclay Middle School Community Center
12513 Gain Street
Day - (323) 828-4158

Panorama City – Pam Meeker-Stolz
Kaiser Permanente Hospital
13652 Cantara Street
Day - (818) 789-1177

Wednesday Chapters

Chatsworth – Dee Meichelbock
Grandparents of Teenagers
St. Stephen Presbyterian Church
20121 Devonshire Street
2nd & 4th Evening - (818) 789-1177

Wednesday Chapters (cont'd)

Culver City – Marilyn Brison
6666 Green Valley Circle
Day - (424) 750-9127

Pasadena – Janet White
Hathaway-Sycamore
(First Lutheran Church Annex)
851 No. Oakland Avenue
Day - (909) 549-6265 or (424) 750-9127

Santa Fe Springs – Barbara Wasson
Kinship Resource Center
9834 Norwalk Boulevard
Day - (562) 921-7554

Woodland Hills –
Tom Bellows / Joyce Fox
Kaiser Permanente Hospital
5601 De Soto Avenue
Day - (818) 789-1177

Thursday Chapters

Carson – Pamela Servos
Boys & Girls Clubs of Carson
21502 Main Street
Day - (424) 750-9127

Long Beach – (Spanish)
Angelica Leyva
Long Beach Family Service Center
1043 Pine Street
Day (818) 789-1177

Palmdale/Lancaster (ROCK) –
Cheral Hymen
1038 W. Ave. J-5
Day - (661) 478-1881

Pomona – Wanda Cooper
New Directions Community Church
1100 E. Holt Avenue
Day - (909) 549-6265 or (424) 750-9127



22048 Sherman Way
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Canoga Park, CA 91303
www.grandparentsasparents.org

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

- Caregiver Center at Edelman Court
- Weekly therapy support groups
- Navigation through the court 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.