

**Task Force on Kinship Families, Preliminary List of Ideas for Recommendations  
September 28, 2010**

(RAPP= Relatives as Parents Project report, GP panel=Grandparents who testified 9/ 7/10)

**Increase services for children and families**

- A. Increase availability of mental health, other health services and child welfare services for children in kinship care regardless of legal authority to care for child or lack of it.
- B. Improve DHHS training, practice, procedures and reimbursement rules:
  - (1) Adopt best practices training, standardize policies and procedures, and improve family team meeting casework practice.
  - (2) Ensure that State eligibility staff has adequate training regarding kinship family assets and income.
  - (3) Reimburse under MaineCare family therapy for family meetings and review of family case records.

**Provide increased financial assistance**

- A. Provide financial assistance for low and middle income kinship families, in formal and informal systems, similar to Louisiana, funded from the TANF Block Grant. (GP panel) (RAPP)
- B. Provide TANF for low-income fictive kin families. (RAPP)
- C. Expand subsidized guardianship to kinship kids who were not in State foster care. (RAPP)
- D. Provide additional flexible funding for kinship families to meet children's essential needs. (RAPP)
- E. Increase access to low-cost child care. (RAPP)
- F. Provide free or subsidized legal assistance for kinship families for guardianships. (RAPP)
- G. Provide health coverage for all members of kinship families. (RAPP)

**Provide assistance with educational issues**

- A. Amend law to give authority to kinship family for children placed with kin in order to protect the child's safety and well-being. (Title 20-A, section 5205, subsection 3-A; new law on school enrollment for children placed by DHHS in foster care)
- B. Require school superintendents to recognize power of attorney forms for enrolling children in school or establish new form for educational purposes.

### **Probate Court and District Court procedures**

A. With regard to Probate Court (guardianship matters) and District Court (parental rights and responsibilities and child welfare matters):

(1) Establish a required or advisory timeline for rehabilitation and reunification efforts in informal kinship care situations.

(2) Provide legal representation for kinship families in the informal system.

(3) Change the Probate Court procedure and standard for modification or termination of an order of guardianship and to recognize the value of stability in the kinship family. (GP Panel)

(4) Provide legal definition for “best interest of the child.”

B. Remove the requirement that a child have special needs to qualify for a guardianship subsidy, conforming Maine law to federal law. (Amend Title 22, section 4038-C and section 4038-D)

C. Reduce the threshold for terminating parental rights, making it easier to terminate.

D. Legislation on reinstatement of parental rights. (DHHS)

E. Allow kinship families to limit visitation by a parent. (GP panel)

### **Other**

A. Enlist assistance of Maine Housing to protect kinship families in rental apartments and homes from eviction when a child joins the family.

B. Establish a permanent committee to report to the Legislature and make recommendations on kinship family issues.

C. Review the effect of 2005 changes in law regarding permanency guardianship and guardianship of minors.

D. With regard to information resources for kinship families provide information more broadly and with a single point of entry, perhaps using a navigator program. (RAPP)