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SeniorLAW Center Receives Grant from William Penn Foundation to Improve and Expand Services for Grandparents who are Raising Grandchildren

PHILADELPHIA (September 7, 2022) – SeniorLAW Center has received a \$500,000.00 grant from the William Penn Foundation to improve and expand services that support Philadelphia “grandfamilies” – families in which grandparents or other older adult kin are the primary caregivers for young children. The three-year grant will support SeniorLAW Center’s work to provide direct legal and outreach services to Philadelphia grandparents/older kinship caregivers.

“I am constantly inspired by our seniors who are raising their grandchildren. They care for their grandchildren with love and dignity, despite many obstacles and difficulties. I am proud to be part of a team here at SeniorLAW Center gets to serve this very special group of seniors.” said Heather Kelly, Esq. Supervising Attorney.

SeniorLAW Center will increase the number of Philadelphia grandparents/older kinship caregivers receiving direct legal services (advice, brief services, and extended representation) and increase its capacity to provide these legal services by recruiting and training 30 new pro bono attorneys and law students. SeniorLAW will also conduct outreach to Philadelphia grandfamilies, enhance access to online intake and in-person legal clinics at senior centers and other community partners, create a fund for childcare and transportation needs for court appearances, and launch both a Grandparents Justice Advisory Council and Storytelling Initiative

In Philadelphia, more than [17,000 grandchildren](#) are estimated to live in homes where grandparents provide their primary care. There are many reasons why young children may be raised by grandparents or family members other than their parents. Grandfamilies can result from biological parents' challenges that include death, divorce, substance use, incarceration, job loss, and illness. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the needs of existing grandfamilies and created new ones.

Research shows that when grandfamilies receive the supports they need, children raised by grandparents or other relatives thrive despite the potential to face multiple challenges. Compared to children in foster care with non-relatives, children living with relatives have more stability, better behavioral and mental health outcomes, and are more likely to stay connected to siblings, other family, and cultural identity, according to [Generations United](#), a policy, research, technical assistance, and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of intergenerational families. In 2020, Generations United, with funding from William Penn Foundation, published the [Grandfamilies of Philadelphia report](#), which noted a number of challenges facing grandfamilies, including insufficient financial resources to address basic needs; difficulty navigating agency and government services; navigating the school curriculum and virtual education; and legal hurdles to achieve child and family stability

“In our mission to support Philadelphia children’s success, we seek to understand the strengths and challenges of families of all types, so that we can ensure they have what they need to help their children thrive,” said Jennifer Stavrakos, Interim Director of the Great Learning Program at the William Penn

Foundation. "We are excited about this opportunity to build up the supports and services available to grandfamilies in Philadelphia. Through this initiative, more grandparents and kinship caregivers who are raising children will gain access to specific resources and tools from an organization they know and trust."

SeniorLAW Center is one of eight organizations who received a total of \$2.8 million from the William Penn Foundation to support grandfamilies. The grantees include small, grassroots organizations as well as large multi-service agencies. The grants will fund a range of supportive services for grandfamilies, including case management, resources and referrals, peer support groups, outreach and education, and emergency funding for basic needs. Collectively, more than 1,500 grandfamilies will receive services through this initiative annually. Read more about the Foundation's grandfamilies initiative [here](#).

As part of the initiative, William Penn Foundation awarded a grant to [Generations United](#) to convene a learning community and provide technical assistance among the grantees and other Philadelphia kinship support organizations. [Child Trends](#) also received a grant to develop an evaluation plan to assess the impact of the initiative.

About SeniorLAW Center

Is an independent non-profit legal services organization that seeks justice for older Pennsylvanians using the power of the law, educating the community, and advocating on local, state and national levels.

About William Penn Foundation

The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that increase educational opportunities for children from low-income families, ensure a sustainable environment, provide inclusive and equitable public spaces and arts and culture experiences, and advance philanthropy in the Philadelphia region. Learn more at www.william penn foundation.org