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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Wolf Administration Highlights Resources for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren During Family Caregivers Month**

*Discusses growing need for resources for those impacted by the addiction crisis*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Today, the Pennsylvania departments of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), Human Services (DHS), and Aging (PDA) highlighted available resources for grandparents who are raising grandchildren and discussed the need for additional supports for these grandparents because of the overdose crisis.

“We know that the overdose epidemic and substance use disorder has impacted Pennsylvanians of all ages, races, and demographics, touching nearly every family. For some, it has resulted in grandparents assuming the role of parents once again due to their child participating in a substance use treatment program, incarceration, or worst-case scenario, loss of life to an overdose,” said DDAP Secretary Jen Smith. “Having the right resources available to help both grandparents and grandchildren alike who are in this situation is vitally important.”

According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), in 2016, there were more than seven million grandparents living with their grandchildren, and over two million were responsible for their grandchildren’s basic needs. In Pennsylvania, it is estimated that nearly [260,000 children](#) live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives.

Wolf Administration officials were also joined by York County resident, Denise Shanahan, who is a grandmother raising her grandchildren after losing her daughter to a fentanyl overdose in 2015.

“My life was turned upside down the day I lost my daughter, and not only did I lose a child, but I also now had two innocent children that I was responsible for,” said Shanahan. “To say the least, I was in no way prepared, financially or emotionally. I am encouraged by the programs offered by the Wolf Administration and urge the creation and support of additional ways to help families like mine.”

November is National Family Caregiver Month. Around the country, it is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers. The month offers an opportunity to raise

awareness of caregiving issues, educate communities, and increase support for caregivers.

"While older relative caregivers often find the care that they provide to be a meaningful and rewarding experience, the demands of being a primary caregiver can be stressful physically, emotionally, and financially. If an older adult becomes a caregiver for their grandchildren due to either the loss or incarceration of their own child due to substance use disorder, those stressors may be magnified," said PDA Secretary Robert Torres. "We want older caregivers to know that the Department of Aging has resources and supports that focus on their well-being by helping to alleviate those stresses."

[PDA's Caregiver Support Program \(CSP\)](#) provides resources and assistance to individuals who assume primary responsibility as a caregiver of their loved ones. The program, administered by the 52 Area Agencies on Aging, provides access to respite care, addresses the need for formal and informal supports, and offers financial reimbursement of eligible out-of-pocket costs associated with caregiving-related services and supplies.

DHS coordinates work across Pennsylvania to support the nearly 83,000 grandparents in the commonwealth who are caring for their grandchildren. [PA KinConnector](#) is a resource that provides information, referrals, and education programs for kinship caregivers in Pennsylvania. Kinship caregivers – such as grandparents, aunts or uncles, adult siblings, or a close family friend – are blood and non-blood relatives who care for children when their biological parents are not able to for various reasons. Kinship care arrangements help maintain family bonds and reduce trauma experienced when children cannot be cared for by their own parents.

"Caring for a child, especially in a kinship care situation, is both rewarding and challenging," said Deputy Secretary for the Office of Children, Youth, and Families Jonathan Rubin. "DHS strives to provide grandparents and other kinship families with the information and resources they need to take care of themselves and children in their care, including links to physical and mental health care, financial assistance, legal referrals, and much more. Kinship caregivers can be an invaluable line of support and stability for children, and we are committed to helping people who step up to fill this role for children in their lives."

KinConnector also runs a helpline that can be reached by calling 1-866-KIN-2111 (1-866-546-2111). The KinConnector helpline is staffed by knowledgeable, compassionate social service professionals prepared to help kinship care families understand and access resources that may be able to help them and children in their care. The helpline is available from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The KinConnector helpline can support callers needing assistance in English and Spanish.

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