

September 28, 2017

To Whom it May Concern,

Community Action of Laramie County Kinship Services program assists grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and other relative caregivers tasked with caring for nieces, nephews, cousins, siblings etc. who are under eighteen (18) years old to properly fill out paperwork to petition the court for guardianship.

Most of these caregivers apply for temporary guardianship that must be renewed every year and only grants them the legal right to obtain medical, dental and educational services for the child. It does not sever the parental rights in any way and the parent is legally able to retrieve the child at any time. On occasion the caregiver will need to apply for permanent guardianship where the judge will decide how long the guardianship is in effect, usually until the child is eighteen (18). It doesn't sever the parental rights but they must petition the court to end the guardianship.

In our office, 90+ percent of these caregivers are in this situation due to heavy and debilitating drug use on the part of the parents, or parental incarceration, child neglect, abuse and abandonment. These children have often lived with their caregivers for many years and don't actually know their parents. Additionally, the majority of the older caregivers live on a fixed income and receive no financial assistance except occasionally SNAP benefits. These caregivers hover around the poverty level; barely above, at or below. They struggle to obtain and pay for child care, feed and clothe the children, and pay for other childhood necessities such as school supplies.

These children are completely dependent on their caregivers to provide a stable and loving home for them. Every year we are seeing an increase in the need for guardianship assistance for caregivers and as the drug use and abuse rises in our communities, so does the need for this help.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Debbie Walter, Case Manager

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c: Tim Ernst, Director, Kinship Support Services