Fostering grandparents can get grants
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Johannesburg - Social Development Minister Bathabile Dlamini has welcomed a court ruling making grandparents who care for their grandchildren eligible for foster care grants.

"[This ruling is] fundamental to creating uniformity in the orders issued by judicial officers in the children's courts," she said in a statement on Sunday.

The ruling was made in an appeal to the South Gauteng High Court in Johannesburg against a finding by the Children's Court in Krugersdorp in 2011.

The Krugersdorp court found that a grandmother caring for three grandchildren did not have to be formally defined as a foster carer if she had some means of supporting the children.

By not becoming their legal foster carer, she was no longer eligible for foster care grants.

"If left unchallenged, the order issued by the commissioner of the children's court would have jeopardised the lives and future of many children who are presently in the care of their grandparents and receiving a foster care grant," said Dlamini, who was a second respondent in the appeal.

She believed that if grandparents who looked after their grandchildren did not receive foster grants, this would be an incorrect interpretation of the legislation around children's rights.

Dlamini said grants were provided not on the basis of what means the foster parents had at their disposal, but on what was in the best interest of the children.

"The Social Assistance Act categorically states that a foster parent qualifies for a foster care grant regardless of his/her income," she said.

The SA Social Security Agency makes foster care grants to more than 520 000 people. 73 000 of whom are foster parents aged 60 to 70, about 41 000 to people aged 70 to 80, about 1 000 to those aged 80 to 90, and about 900 to those over 90-years-old.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our senior citizens for continuing to provide the much-needed care and support to orphaned and vulnerable children in our communities," said Dlamini.

The government would continue to ensure they were supported, she said.

- SAPA

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