



The Child Welfare Compass

Volume I Issue III
Fall 2006



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LIVE FROM MARYLAND... IT'S CHESSIE! Child Welfare Tracking System Pushes Forward



Most of us can hardly imagine a life without email, the Internet or other modern computer applications where information is saved, sent and tracked with efficiency and ease. In the same respect, Maryland's CHESSIE (Maryland's Children Electronic Social Services Information Exchange) is hoping to replace antiquated ways of tracking child welfare data statewide. MD CHESSIE has already gone live in 23 jurisdictions, including DHR. Baltimore City, the final and largest jurisdiction, is slated to go live in Maryland this Fall.

Sheritta Barr-Stanley, SSA's MD CHESSIE Liaison, says she feels confident about the final roll out.

"I felt good about the system since its inception. It's a good case management tool, and a great supervisory tool." Ms. Barr-Stanley also feels good about the fact that MD CHESSIE has been developed and implemented as a whole, rather than in portions, which makes the system that much more useful. Erin Claxton, an Investigator for Child Protective Services and Social Worker for the Montgomery County Department of Social Services, a frequent user of the CHESSIE system, says "I definitely think (CHESSIE) will be useful. It's a uniform system of documentation, and it's all connected."

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MD CHESSIE incorporates the requirements for the federally mandated Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). In particular, MD CHESSIE aims to:

- Establish a statewide foster care and adoption payment issuance and reconciliation system that provides fiscal accountability, monitoring, controls, and reporting capabilities;
- Provide social workers with an interactive system which automates the case record, assists in scheduling appointments, generates reminders, prints notices, authorizes payments, and performs other administrative functions;
- Enable DHR to respond to the rapidly growing demands for child welfare data
- Facilitate good practice by including policy and procedural manuals with hypertext links. Additionally, the system will contain good-practice reminders and constraints.

44 states have already implemented a system such as CHESSIE, 28 of which currently have an operational model similar to Maryland's. The CHESSIE model is known to improve the tracking of child welfare outcomes. It offers child welfare workers better data to work from.

However, MD CHESSIE is also known for other reasons. It is one of the largest and most expensive computer projects in recent state history, and has not come without its challenges. Kirk Grothe, Chief Information Officer for DHR's Office of Technology for Human Services, says, "One of the biggest hurdles has been trying to communicate the complexity of the system to 3,000 plus users in the field and to train each of those users in a way that is unique to their job."

Mr. Grothe says that the major CHESSIE players continue to discuss how to improve the system. They have already helped to increase the bandwidth in many of the locations,

which will help the system run faster. In addition, SSA, Budget and Finance and the local departments have already met to prioritize next year's enhancements. Carnitra White, Deputy Executive Director for DHR's Social Service Administration says, "Child welfare practices continuously change, improve, and upgrade. We need to make sure that the CHESSIE system grows in order to meet those needs."

Mr. Grothe states, "For a system that's been around for this short a time, it doesn't always get off gracefully. However, if we remain committed, we are sure to gain the benefits that other states are seeing. We just need to work hard to make sure this happens." Ms. Barr-Stanley agrees, and likens the child welfare tracking system to a child itself, "We have to treat CHESSIE as an infant. Nothing new is perfect... CHESSIE will grow, it might take a while, and we still need to nurture her, but the good thing is that she's born."✦

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



During the past four years, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and its 24 local departments of social services has placed major emphasis on child welfare services. Indeed, **"Putting Children First"** has become our mantra. DHR's Social Services Administration (SSA) has taken the lead on many of the initiatives that support our mantra. MD CHESSIE, the State's Program Improvement Plan, The Child Welfare Training Academy, the new and revitalized MD Foster Parent Association, and higher stipends for our foster and adoptive parents and guardians are a few of those initiatives. Internally, SSA has recently hired new high quality staff, developed a new Resource Unit, and hosted several exciting child welfare conferences including the opening of the 2nd Maryland Heart Gallery.

As the holidays approach, I am thankful for your commitment to protecting children and vulnerable adults, and supporting families in need. As I often say, you are among our greatest unsung heroes. May you and your loved ones enjoy a safe, happy and holy Holiday Season.

Christopher J. McCabe

Department of Human Resources Secretary

Excellence in Child Welfare Supervision Is Goal of DHR/School of Social Work Partnership

By Gisele Ferretto



The nature of public child welfare social work practice requires a knowledgeable, thoughtful consideration of the needs of each child and family. The practitioner needs to simultaneously balance his/her use of authority with engagement of families; child safety with family preservation; and permanency with preservation of familial roots. A competent, experienced supervisor is often the key in resolving the balance.

In fact, most child welfare experts agree that the key to competent provision of public child welfare services is the level of expertise and skill of the line supervisor. Wehrman, Shin, and Poelner (2002) write that “the supervisor is the key to structuring opportunities to practice new skills as well as creating a work climate that promotes peer support for applying new learning.” Supervisors are the primary conduit for establishing and maintaining agency culture, maintaining practice

standards, and ensuring that models of service delivery are implemented. They tend to have longer tenure on the job than line workers, more focus on aggregate outcomes for families and children, and the potential to influence the practice of numerous practitioners.

Investment in the development of supervisory resources is, therefore, an important strategic investment in the public child welfare workforce. DHR is currently working with the University of Maryland School of Social Work to prepare current public child welfare practitioners for future supervisory, leadership, and management roles in the public child welfare system to increase the pool of MSW prepared social workers available for supervisory positions in its Child Protective Services, Family Preservation, Foster Care, and Adoption Programs, and to mentor and support newly appointed child welfare supervisors.

Through grant funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, current child welfare workers participate in a specialized work-study arrangement that provides tuition assistance, release time, course and field work specializing in clinical work with children and families, supervisory, leadership and management skills. The first group of 10 MSW students in the program has just begun their second year of classes and fieldwork through this 4 year federal grant.

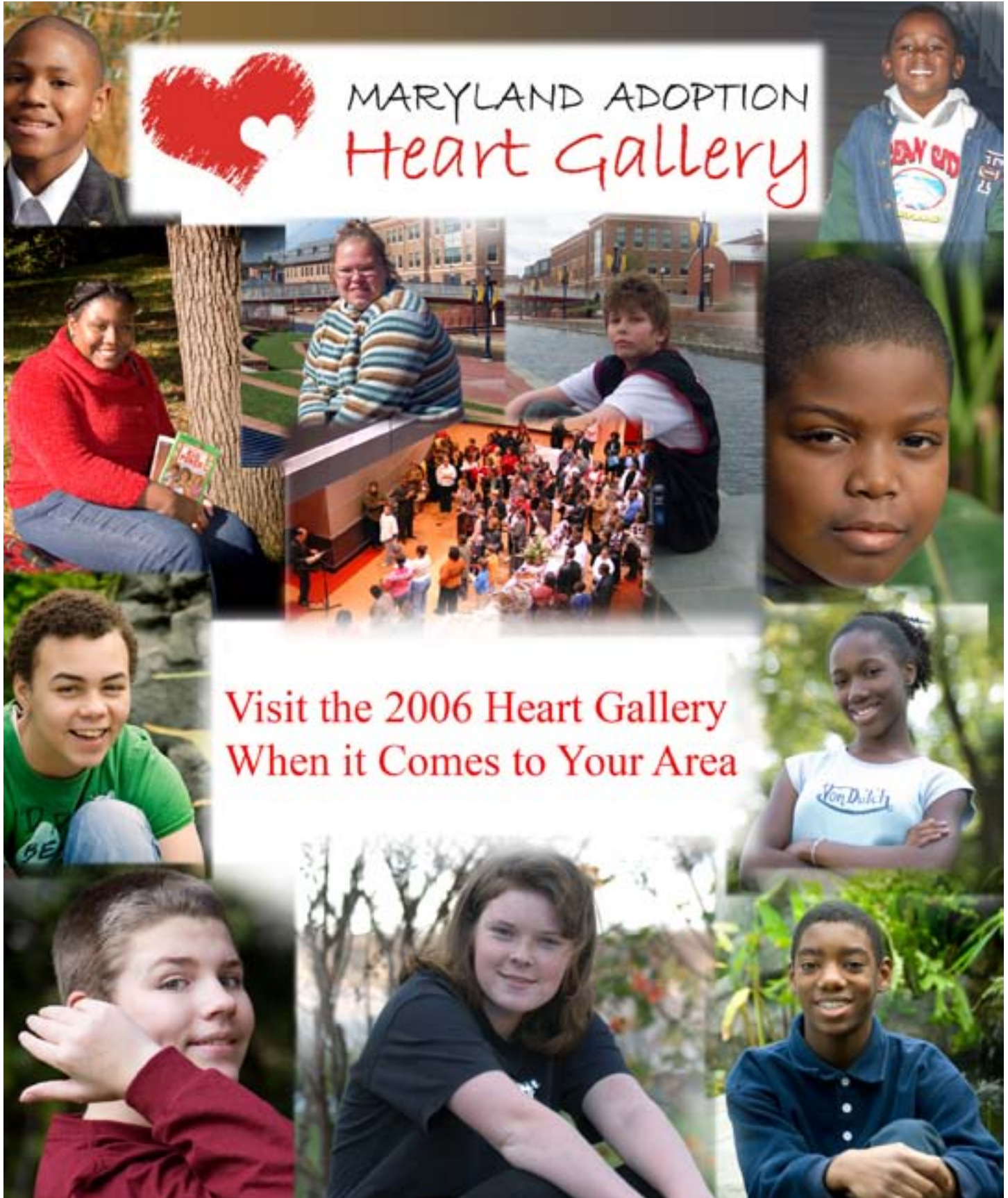
In addition, 18 newly appointed child welfare supervisors throughout the state participated in 10 monthly seminars that provided “hands on” mentoring to assist in the implementation and practice of supervisory skills and knowledge. In October 25 new child welfare supervisors will begin the second “class” of the Child Welfare Supervisor Seminar program.

Now is the time for any current child welfare worker who aspires to supervision and management and a MSW degree to apply for admission to the School of Social Work and to the “Excellence in Public Child Welfare Supervision Program” for fall 2007. ✦

For more information, contact

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Review Systems Keep Maryland Child Welfare System on Track

The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is the DHR's road map for improving outcomes for Maryland's children and families. The PIP outlines priorities, initiatives, and strategies to drive Maryland to meet the standards set in the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) by March 2007.

Family Centered Practice Model

To standardize best practices, Maryland has established a Family Centered Practice model as the cornerstone of PIP.

The Family Centered Practice Model is designed to ensure that the entire system of care works with the entire family throughout the life of the case to help them to safely parent their children. The concept is that working with families will encourage and support their involvement in safety issues and the permanency planning for their children. It will also build on the family's strengths by connecting them to community resources that can help them with essential living needs.

The Family Centered Practice Model will serve as the framework for future practice in the Maryland Local Departments of Social Services. Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Calvert County, Cecil County and Wicomico County are the five-implementation sites that will demonstrate the model for the State.

The Model consists of five strategies: Family Team Decision Making Meetings (TDM,s), Community Partnerships, Recruitment and Support of Families and other Placement Resources, Self Evaluation, Enhanced Policy and Practice Development.

This Model will:

- Make team decisions regarding potential movement of the child in order to reduce trauma
- Include the family in decision-making
- Reduce the number of placements
- Keep children in their schools and neighborhoods
- Reduce child maltreatment
- Reduce the length of stay if a child must come into foster care
- Expedite finding a new family for children when they are unable to return home

“SSA is moving in a positive manner.”

Child and Family Service Plan

The goals and objectives of the five year Maryland's Child and Family Services Plan have been revised to align with the goals and objectives of the PIP, and the federal review system says Maryland is on track for meeting its child welfare goals.

In a letter to Secretary McCabe, dated August 29, 2006, the Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) approved of Maryland's Annual Progress and Services Report and praised SSA for its efforts. ACF Regional Administrator David J. Lett says, “It is evident from the information provided in the Annual Progress and Services Report that (DHR) through (SSA) is moving in a positive manner toward meeting the State's child welfare goals.” ✦

Resource Development Unit Tackles Placement Needs

By Barbara Terry

The Resource Development Unit of the Social Services Administration is a newly created program (created in January 2006) designed to address the placement needs of the 23 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) and Baltimore City.

They:

- *Interpret policy*
- *Write regulations based on Federal and/or State legislation*
- *Evaluate the LDSS' foster parent recruitment and retention activities for outcome effectiveness and compliance with federal and state regulations*
- *Provide support to foster parents, individually, collectively and through an affiliation with the Maryland Foster Parent Association.*

The Resource Development Unit in collaboration with DHMH, DJS, MSDE and GOC, coordinates and facilitates out-of-state-placements when attempts to secure in-state-placements have proved unsuccessful. When hospitalizations occur involving mentally fragile committed children (LISA-L children), the Resource Development Unit expedites the process of acquiring appropriate placements upon discharge.

The next phase of the Resource Development Unit in collaboration with Licensing and Monitoring, and the LDSS's, will include a component that includes the development of a cluster of placement options, available to the LDSS's to address the needs of the difficult to place kids. ✦



CONFERENCE MANIA!

Come one, come all! Conferences Aim to Provide Understanding, Learning, Fun, and Camaraderie among Various Target Groups

PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST CONFERENCE: *Planning for success in child welfare practices*

The “Putting Children First: Planning for success in child welfare practices” conference was held September 11 through 12 at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum, Maryland. It was planned and implemented by SSA, and was funded through Child Welfare Academy funds. Pat Blackwell, Training Coordinator for DHR’s SSA says, “The conference was targeted to social workers and supervisors and offered practical workshops on a variety of child welfare topics provided insight and planning strategies that will enhance worker effectiveness, promote safety, permanence, and the well being of the children we serve.”

Specifically, the Putting Children First conference highlighted sessions on everything from how to strengthen clients’ parenting skills, to how to avoid forensic interview errors. It also featured a unique session on how to effectively reach youth, from a youth’s perspective as well as a number of best practice training sessions, ranging from family group decision to learning more about a new supervisory review tool.

Donna Briggs, a conference attendee and moderator thought the conference was a success, “The Putting Children First conference was well attended with thought-provoking workshops, excellent presenters, and great luncheon speakers.” Quality Assurance Coordinator Dee Loftis also attended the event, “I truly enjoyed attending DHR’s “Putting Children First” Conference. Since social work tends to be a fairly thankless job, hosting social workers at an interesting conference in pleasant surroundings with great food is a real treat!”

The conference included remarks from Secretary Christopher J. McCabe, and welcomed keynote speakers Dr. Richard Barth, Dean of the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland on September 11, and Dr. David Sanders, Executive Vice President of System Improvement for Casey Family Programs on September 12.

Additionally, on September 11 Dr. Barth, along with Secretary McCabe, announced the joint formation of the Child Welfare Training Academy, which will provide training in employing strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect, protect vulnerable children, and preserve and strengthen

families. Secretary McCabe says, “The Training Academy will put all our child welfare training efforts under one umbrella in collaboration with the School of Social Work and other community partners.” The training is two-prong in that it aims to train in-house as well as in the university setting, and will extend pre-service training especially to hone skill development.

Special thanks to conference coordinators Pat Blackwell and Stacey Mitchell-Brown on a successful event.

KINSHIP CARE CONFERENCE: *Celebrating a community of caring for children*



On Friday, September 22, the DHR Social Services resumed their much-awaited annual Kinship Care Conference: "Celebrating a Community of Caring for Children," this time at the New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. For the first time in three years, 300 conference attendees were rewarded with six-hour sessions of workshops that will support their efforts to provide much needed care for relative children. Karen Powell, Kinship Care Policy Analyst and Mistress of Ceremonies for the Kinship Care Conference, says, "A lot of caregivers appreciated having the conference again. It was a good networking opportunity, and helped them recognize some of the resources that are available to them in order to support DHR's goal of strengthening, protecting and preserving families."

"Interesting conference in pleasant surroundings with great food is a real treat"

DHR Secretary Christopher J. McCabe recognized three providers for their commitment and leadership to Kinship Care Children and Families. They include Chileta Grimes, Mildred Smith and Eleanor Simms. Secretary McCabe expressed his gratitude to not only these three outstanding citizens, but to all Kinship Care providers. He said, "Kinship Care providers are among our most treasured unsung heroes. You provide a valuable resource to our children who are unable to remain in the care of their parent." The keynote speaker, Dr. Henrietta Hestick, professor of psychology, clinical psychologist, author and founder of Partners in Parenting,

delivered a heart felt presentation on the importance of supporting our family.

Currently 1,900 children are being served through Kinship Care programs. Attendees of this year's event are eagerly awaiting the next Kinship Care Conference.

TEEN CONFERENCE: *Band together; Believe & Achieve*



The annual Teen Conference for Maryland foster youth (ages 14-21) took place from July 14 through July 15 at Frostburg State University, where teens learned some valuable life lessons while bonding and having tons of fun!

Sharon Hargrove, Program Manager for Out-of-Home Placement Services and Stephanie Pettaway, Acting Office Director for SSA's Children and Family Services opened the conference but handed it over to the Youth Advisory Board officers, including Board President Eleese J. of Baltimore County, Vice President Marshe' G. of Baltimore City, Treasurer Alvin B. of Baltimore City, Secretary Krystal R. of Baltimore County, and Parliamentarian Fjuan W.G. of Baltimore City. The Youth Advisory Board not only offers a voice from the youth, but helped to organize the conference with assistance from the Foster Club of America, a nationwide organization whose mission is to provide encouragement, motivation, information, education, and benefits for foster youth.

This year's conference theme, "Band



Together: Believe & Achieve," was carried throughout the conference as teens bonded and participated in unique workshops, such as the House of Ruth run "Teen Dating" session, and the session on "Job Readiness" run by the Ashlin Management Group. In addition, teens got to take part in other fun activities such as swimming, dancing, a newspaper fashion show in which participants made outfits from newspapers and showcased them on a "runway," and -back by popular demand- "Independent City."

"Independent City" is a practical living activity where "Teen Conference" attendees got to emulate real life by learning how to pay rent, get assistance from local resources, go to the post office, etc. Dianne Timmons-Himes, Maryland Independent Living Coordinator, says that the "Independent City" workshop enables teens to learn problem solving and to become self sufficient.

Deborah Joyce, Independent Living Program Analyst says, "Although the conference was a lot of fun, all of our workshops focused on building life skills in order to encourage self sufficiency. We wanted to give the teens the key components for what they need to live independently." Teens and coordinators alike look forward to next year's conference, which will also be held on a college campus in order for teens to experience a bit of campus life during their stay at the conference. ✨



Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. Appoints Members to the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect



Congratulations to the newly appointed members of the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN)! Secretary Christopher McCabe announced that Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. appointed the 12 members during the Mid-Atlantic Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect held in Ocean City. The Conference, co-sponsored by Maryland Children’s Alliance, the Maryland Department of Human Resources and SCCAN, is held annually to share best practices.

“I served as a SCCAN representative early in my career with the Maryland General Assembly, and I understand the importance of the issues that this council deals with,” Governor Ehrlich stated.

SCCAN is established by Maryland law to “evaluate the extent to which State and local agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with” state and federal law. The Council is required to “report and make recommendations annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on matters relating to the prevention, detection, prosecution and treatment of child abuse and neglect, including policy and training needs...”

Secretary McCabe extended a special thanks

to Jim Witherspoon, Planning Director for the Office of Planning within the Maryland Department of Human Resources, who led the efforts of developing the newly appointed SCCAN.

“I have been impressed with the high caliber of people who will be serving on the Council. Their professional and volunteer experience in protecting vulnerable children in Maryland is outstanding,” says Mr. Witherspoon.

Members of the Council appointed by the Governor represent a variety of professions and interests in child protection issues from across the State of Maryland. Ms. Claudia Remington Conroy, a Montgomery County attorney, professional mediator and long-time child welfare volunteer and advocate will serve as Council Chair. The Council will meet quarterly and will be staffed by the Office of Planning. Here’s wishing all of the new members much luck in their endeavors of making Maryland a safer place for its children:

Members appointed by the governor

Claudia Remington Conroy
Chair Attorney and mediator,
Montgomery County

Mathew J. Dolan
Esquire Attorney, Montgomery County

Kay Gibson-Ayuso
Executive Director, Harford County
Partnership for Families, Harford County

Reverend Alvin C. Hathaway
Sr., Assistant Pastor, Union Baptist
Church of Baltimore, Baltimore City

Sally A. Hellane
Program Supervisor, Villa Maria
Behavioral Health, Washington County

Jessica Marie Hill
Sergeant, Wicomico County Sheriff’s
Office, Wicomico County

Liliana Janssen-Checa
Healthy Families Program Manager,
Prince George’s Child Resource Center,
Montgomery County

Edward T. Kilcullen
State Director, Maryland CASA
Association, Baltimore County

Scott D. Krugman, M.D.
Chairman of Pediatrics, Franklin Square
Hospital, Baltimore County

Jean Tucker Mann
Clinical Management Consultant,
Baltimore County

Laura L. Martin, Esquire
Attorney, Calvert County

Nicholas Ricciuti
Director, Cecil County DSS, Cecil
County

Sue Song, R.N.
Adjunct Professor, University of
Maryland School of Nursing, Howard
County

Members designated by their organizations

Steven K. Berry
Child Protective and Family Services,
Social Services Administration,
Maryland Department of Human
Resources

Sue Hazlett, Esquire
State’s Attorney Association

Delegate Susan K.C. McComas
Maryland House of Delegates

Mary Louise Orth
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services

Alexander Obeahon
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services

Pamela Ortiz
Family Administration, Administrative Office of the Courts

Richard Scott
Maryland Department of Education, Student Services Branch

John McGinnis
Maryland Department of Education, Student Services Branch

Joan Stine
Center for Health Promotion, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene ✦

GOVERNOR TAKES TO THE ROAD TO HONOR FOSTER PARENTS

Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. and Cabinet Secretaries took the show on the road this summer to highlight successful initiatives, businesses and organizations in Harford and Frederick Counties.



Among the honored were top-performing foster parents whose tireless efforts exemplify putting children first. Please join Governor Ehrlich and Secretary Christopher McCabe in recognizing the following outstanding citizens:

- Michael and Doreen Hochlowski of Harford County for providing a home to more than 20 children since becoming foster parents
- Nancy and Paul Metal of Frederick County for providing a home to more than 160 children in the past 14 years
- Cathy and Gene Crone of Frederick County for providing a home to more than 56 children in the past 17 years
- Mary Snyder of Washington County for providing a home to 16 children in the past 3 years
- Christine and Dwight Diller of Washington County for providing a home to children in their first year as foster parents
- Donna and Arnold Eby of Washington County for providing a home to 22 children in the past 4 years. ✦

BARN Kicks Off National Adoption Month by Celebrating 20 Years of Service!

By Rashida E. Brown

The Black Adoption Recruitment Network (BARN) got an early start in celebrating November as National Adoption Month by hosting a luncheon at New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland on October 19, 2006. Attendees included local departments of social services, private adoption agencies, members of BARN, DHR employees, adoptive parents and community members.

BARN, a unique collaboration of public and private Maryland adoption agencies, organized this community event to increase adoption awareness and to raise funds for the Lillian Brooks Lansberry Memorial Scholarship Fund, established in 1998 in honor of adoption advocate and Baltimore City Department of Social Services employee, Lillian B. Lansberry, who served as president of BARN until the day of her passing. Her legacy lives on through the scholarship fund, which provides financial support to an adoptee in his or her second year of

college. This year's Lillian Lansberry Scholarship recipient is 19-year-old, Tavon Mullaney. Tavon was adopted from Baltimore County Department of Social Services in 1987. Adoptive parents, Juanita and Raymond Mullaney, have cherished their son since he first arrived to their home, and are very proud of his accomplishments.

Another highlight of the luncheon was the keynote speaker of the event, Jelani Freeman. Jelani, now a young adult working for the District of Columbia government, gave a powerful speech about the experiences he faced in the child welfare system since he was the age of nine. Jelani lightly touched on his personal experiences, but focused on the importance of adoption and placing children with permanent families. Jelani encouraged the adoption community to "continue to let their light shine" when working with at risk youth in need of permanent homes and nurturing families.

Secretary McCabe honored BARN for serving adoptive communities for 20 years by presenting a special proclamation to BARN President, Michael Marshall.

For more information about BARN or to give to the Lillian Lansberry Scholarship fund, please contact: Helen Murray-Miller, (410) 853-3222

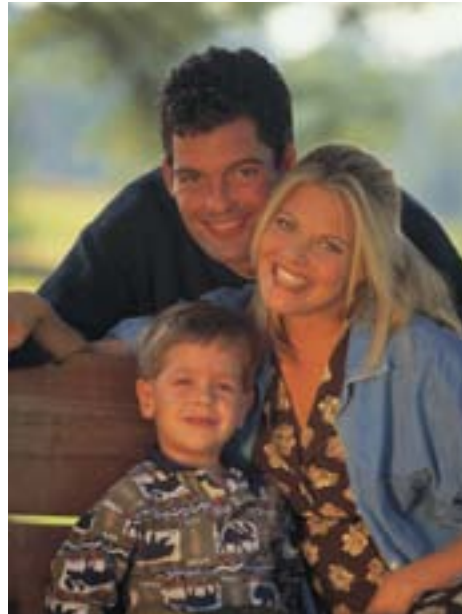


PROMOTING SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES IN MARYLAND

By Helene Hornum

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program strives to protect children, promote family strength and stability, provide permanency and enhance or improve family functioning by providing prevention and early intervention services to communities throughout Maryland. In the past, twelve (12) local management boards in Maryland have received funds to operate PSSF programs. Starting October 1, the PSSF funds are being allocated to sixteen (16) local departments of social services. More children and families are now being served by this program, which will result in a greater impact to Maryland's child welfare system.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed some executive initiatives that they have been promoting. Some of the initiatives include building healthy relationships,



encouraging responsible fatherhood, and promoting youth development. Some of the local departments are using the PSSF

funds to provide distinct fatherhood and youth development services while others have incorporated building healthy relationships into their programs. Examples of other programs funded by the PSSF initiative include intensive in-home family preservation services, parenting workshops, respite services, services at family support centers, and Healthy Families.

Even though the programs all differ, they all fit within the overall goals of safety, permanency and well-being of children. In addition, all of the local departments are being held accountable for the same performance measures: that at least 80% of families would not receive an indicated CPS finding or experience an out-of-home placement 6 and 12 months post-closing. The PSSF program is federally-funded and has a state match. ✦



Too often we hear stories about newborns that are abandoned by mothers who aren't ready to have children. We hear of babies being left in trash cans, on sides of roads, or worse. Maryland's law, "Infant Safe Haven," is looking to make this a problem of the past by allowing new mothers to drop their newborns off at hospitals, fire departments or police stations-no questions asked- simply by stating "This is a Safe Haven Baby."

Infant Safe Haven Law Alive & Well!

During the 2004 legislative session, the General Assembly passed the Infant Safe Haven law. Since then, DHR representatives have worked tirelessly to spread the word to more than 80 family planning program clinics, more than 25 public school systems, more than 60 school health services, and to hospitals across the state.

"I know that Infant Safe Haven has already saved five to six newborns, from what we've heard from our local departments," says Steve Berry, Program Manager for Child Protective Services at DHR. However, Mr. Berry believes more can always be done to access those who need the information the most - young pregnant women. He states,

"It's a difficult population to reach, so we have to work hard to figure out the best way to reach them."

Anyone who wishes to learn more about the alternative to infant abandonment that Safe Haven offers can call an anonymous toll free number at 1-800-243-7337.

DHR is proud to partner with Family Tree to provide the toll free number. Family Tree is dedicated to improving Maryland's communities by providing families with solutions to prevent child abuse and neglect. You can read more about Infant Safe Haven by logging onto <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/safehaven.pdf>.

Department of Human Resources and Wicomico County Council Name Paula M. Erdie as New Social Services Director

By Paula Tolson



Secretary Christopher J. McCabe and Wicomico County Council President Anthony Sarbanes announced the joint appointment of Paula M. Erdie to the post of Director for the Wicomico County Department of Social Services.

“Paula brings years of experience to this position,” McCabe said. “She served as the Director of the Worcester County Department of Social Services for ten years, and prior to that appointment worked at the Wicomico County DSS as the Assistant Director for Services. Her history with both agencies will help to accommodate a smooth transition into her new post.”

“The County Council wanted to be sure that the new director would be able to strengthen existing collaborations,” said Council President Anthony Sarbanes. “We wanted someone with a successful track record of building linkages with community partners, and Ms. Erdie has demonstrated her ability in this area.”

Throughout her career, Ms. Erdie has been instrumental in numerous innovations in the human service arena. She has implemented welfare reform initiatives that have achieved some of the best performance outcomes in the state; led the Worcester County DSS to accreditation through the National Council on Accreditation; been instrumental in the formulation and strengthening of the Tri-County Workforce Development Initiative which serves all lower shore counties; and is a founding member of Worcester G.O.L.D., a 501C-3 non-profit that provides support and funding to vulnerable families. She has membership on multiple boards and associations, and currently serves as Chair of the Local Management Board for Worcester County.

Ms. Erdie began serving in her new capacity on August 2, 2006. The Administration offered its appreciation to Matthew Maize, who served as Acting Director during the search process. Mr. Maize resumed his post as Assistant Director of Administration.

Ms. Erdie, a resident of Berlin, who has relocated to Wicomico County, has a Bachelor of Social Work Degree from Salisbury University, and a Masters of Social Work from the University of Maryland, School of Social Work and Community Planning ✦

QUICK TAKES FROM SSA

CONGRADULATIONS! Cecil County Foster Child Graduates with Unique Award

Congratulations to Keyara Chireese Sewell of Cecil County for not only graduating from Bohemia Manor High School, but for being awarded a special Bohemia Manor High School Award. The unique award is given to students who are in difficult situations, yet strive to do the best they can. Keyara was surprised by the honor as well as the personalized plaque, which reads, “Your smile, perseverance, and uplifting attitude has inspired us all.” The entire high school staff gave Keyara a standing ovation, saying that she was greatly adored and will be dearly missed. Keyara is currently enrolled at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Here’s wishing her much luck in all her future endeavors!

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM

By Deborah Joyce

The John H. Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) is a federal grant program that provides financial assistance to youth in out of home placements, who meet eligibility requirements, and are attending post secondary educational/vocational schools. The program provides eligible youth with tuition, books, transportation and any other related educational costs for up to \$5,000.00 per year. Currently the Orphan

NOTES FROM THE SSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Thelma Savage

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Foundation of America (OFA) is the vendor for this program. To apply for the ETV program, please visit www.statevoucher.org and click on Maryland. Please contact Deborah Joyce at 410 767 7912 for further information and eligibility requirements.

REGIONAL MEETINGS BRING DHR CLOSER TO LOCAL DEPARTMENTS

Since the re-introduction to the regional meetings this fall, DHR Social Services have conducted meetings in all but one region in the State. They will continue to meet with one or two regions each quarter. Carnitra White, Deputy Executive Director for DHR's Social Services Administration, says, "The regional meetings give DHR an opportunity to provide local departments with key information on upcoming activities, initiatives, regulations and legislations that could affect child welfare." The meetings also make for a warm environment that encourages increased cooperation. Agnes Leshner, Assistant Director for Child Welfare Services at Montgomery County Department of Social Services says, "We found the regional meetings to be very, very useful, especially when providing us with important updates... For us, the meeting was at right place, the right time, took the right amount of time, and gave us the right information." Dick Paulman, Director of Social Services at Allegany County agrees, "I think regional meetings are very good. It helps the local departments keep abreast on the latest in the field of child welfare." ✦

SSA is pleased to welcome six new staff members to our agency. The new staff members can be found in the Office of Children and Family Services, of which Stephanie Pettaway is the Acting Director. The new staff members are functioning in SSA divisions for Out-of-Home Services, Foster Care, Resource Home Recruitment and Retention.

Resource Home Recruitment and Retention

Barbara Terry, Sherlema Brown and Patricia Molineaux have joined us from Anne Arundel County DSS and Baltimore City DSS. They will be assisting SSA Manager, Judith Eveland, in connecting with local department and external stakeholders to address Maryland Foster Parent Association needs, regulations updates, local recruitment and retention planning, National Foster Care Month celebrations and requirements of the Child and Family Services Review and Performance Improvement Planning.



Barbara Terry
Regional Recruitment & Retention Analyst,
410-767-7908



Patricia Molineaux,
Regional Recruitment & Retention Analyst,
410-767-7195



Sherlema Brown,
Regional Recruitment and Retention Analyst,
410-767-0566

Out-of-Home Foster Care

Della Williams, Deborah Joyce and Karen Powell have joined us from Baltimore City DSS. They will be assisting SSA Manager, Sharon Hargrove, in attaining positive outcomes for Foster Care, Kinship Care and Independent Living Program participants.



Della Williams,
Out-of-Home Services Analyst
410-767-7630



Deborah Joyce,
Independent Living Analyst,
410-767-7912



Karen Powell,
Kinship Care Analyst,
410-767-7788

SSA has hired seven additional staff that will be featured in upcoming issues. We hope that you will become acquainted with our new staff as they help us in our mission of Putting Children First.



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