



MASSB News

The Maryland Association of Boards of Social Services Newsletter

Martin O'Malley, Governor ■ Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor ■ Brenda Donald, Secretary

Gloria A. Drucker, MASSB Chairman • Ronald S. Little, Vice Chairman • Armond Darrin, Secretary • Joyce Woodford, Treasurer

MASSB Newsletter Spring 2007

Brenda Donald Named New Department of Human Resources Secretary

Governor Martin O'Malley announced Brenda Donald as his selection for the position of Secretary for the Department of Human Resources on January 30, 2007.

"I am happy to welcome Brenda Donald to the O'Malley/Brown Administration," Governor O'Malley said. "She is a leader in her field, and will help us protect those who most need the helping hand of a caring government."

Ms. Donald brings 28 years of public service to this position, and most recently served as Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders under D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams. During her tenure, she managed 9 agencies, including child welfare and human services, which provided services to 225,000 residents.



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"I look forward to working under Governor O'Malley to help Maryland citizens in need," noted Donald during today's press conference. "We have a tremendous opportunity to improve upon the programs and services we deliver to families, and I am up to the task."

Donald holds a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Arkansas and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism with honors from the George Washington University. She completed training for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at the John F. Kennedy School of

Government, Harvard University. In 1995, she was selected as a fellow in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Children and Family Fellowship Program.

REVIEW SYSTEMS KEEP MARYLAND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM ON TRACK

The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is the Department of Human Resources' 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, 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, and 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

Child and Family Services 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 the Department of Human Resources through the Social Services Administration is moving in a positive manner toward meeting the State's child welfare goals."**

The establishment of the Child and Family Services Planning Advisory Committee fulfills a requirement of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) to assure broad and active involvement of major stakeholders of the child and family service delivery system in the development of the plan.

Those involved include representatives of Local departments of social services; Community-based agencies and organizations, public and private non-profit; Parents – birth, adoptive, and foster; Local government; Professional and advocacy organizations; State and local agencies administering federal programs, such as Head Start; and Front line workers of child and family services agencies.

CONTRIBUTORS: DELLA WILLIAMS, SHARON HARGROVE, CARNITRA WHITE

LIVE FROM MARYLAND... IT'S CHESSIE! Child Welfare Tracking System Goes Live Statewide

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.

Sheritta Barr-Stanley, SSA's MD CHESSIE Liaison, says she felt 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."

The Frederick County Department of Social Services went "live" on CHESSIE last August. Their In-Home staff had a very smooth transition and is operating at 100% capacity in the CHESSIE system with few frustrations. The Out of Home staff has had more struggles, primarily regarding conversion issues. Most of the foster care caseload had case match issues, which slowed down the process during the first few months. They are currently at 95% capacity and continue to work closely with CHESSIE staff to improve the system. Parallel processing has commenced with the Finance Unit and Services Unit who work very closely together. Debbie Ramelmeier, Assistant Director for Services at Frederick County, says "CHESSIE requires our commitment to make it work. The more we use the system, the better we get at it. I am very proud of my staff's

willingness to embrace the new system and become active partners in our journey to make CHESSIE fully functional.”

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.

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 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Juvenile Services, the Maryland State Department of Education and the Governor's Office for Children, 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.

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.

Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 (HB 799/SB 792)

On February 8, 2006, the Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 was established. This Act provides DHR with an outcome measurement system to determine its efficiency and effectiveness.

The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 requires DHR:

- To develop and implement an outcome-based system of accountability to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of child welfare services. This system should do the following:
 - Address safety, permanence and well being
 - Measure performance at state and local levels
 - Expand on federal outcome measures

- Have a process for assessment of quality casework services
- Enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with an entity that has expertise in child welfare to assist in the development and implementation of the local assessments
- Adopt regulations that establish guidelines for the collection of information at the state and local levels
- Enter into a MOU with an entity to collect and maintain information necessary to conduct local and statewide assessments
- Ensure that sufficient numbers of qualified child welfare staff are hired and retained to achieve caseload ratios consistent with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) caseload standards
- Consult with CWLA to develop a methodology to calculate caseload ratios
- Enter into a contract to have CWLA annually review caseload ratio calculations
- Establish a Child Welfare Training Academy to train staff, administrators, foster parents and kinship caregivers, and authorizes training for CRBC and CASA volunteers
- Pursue national accreditation for each local department of social services
- Conduct a comprehensive study of the recruitment, selection, and retention of child welfare workforce

Actions that have been completed or presently in process are:

- Designed a three-tiered Quality Assurance (QA) system:
 - Local self-assessment
 - On-site local Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)
 - Supervisory/Peer Review
- Conducted reviews in six local departments
- Developing regulations for the local self assessments and information collection
- Entered into an agreement with the University of Maryland at Baltimore School of Social Work to provide guidance on the quality assessment process
- Contracted with CWLA to develop caseload and supervisory ratios for Child Welfare Services
- Negotiating a multi-year contract with CWLA to conduct annual review of calculations
- Established a Child Welfare Retention Research project at UMAB School of Social Work
- Entered into an agreement with UMAB School of Social Work for the Child Welfare Training Academy
- The Department is pursuing potential employment commitments from 80 social work students participating in current training program
- Entered into an agreement with Council on Accreditation (COA) to accredit all 24 LDSS
- Presently 13 LDSS are COA Accredited (Baltimore City, Baltimore, Dorchester, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, Queen Anne's, Worcester, and Washington counties)
- Submitted a report on the assessment of the accounting structure and workload measures used by SSA and local departments which included:
 - Issues, concerns and recommendations of LDSS
- The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children
- Information on the implementation of the Child & Family Review System and Maryland's Quality Assurance System

Contributed by Anita Wilkins

MARYLAND HEART GALLERY OPENS HEARTS OF POTENTIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Patricia, Robert, and Mariah are 12, 13, and 14 year old siblings. Like many young people their age, they enjoy animals, socializing, sports and outdoor activities. What's different about them is that they are featured in an exhibit that is meant to bring attention to the need for adoptive families.

The Maryland Heart Gallery is an open exhibit that features museum-quality photographs of 40 Maryland children who are available for adoption, taken by 20 local photographers who have generously donated their time and talent to create this creative and moving exhibit.

The 2006 Maryland Heart Gallery (the 2nd year for this annual event) originally premiered at the James E. Lewis Museum of Art on the campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland on November 6, 2006. The exhibit took to the road in 2007. Some stops include:

- State House Freedom Wall in Annapolis, Maryland (February, 2007)
- Barker Foundation Annual Conference at the Shady Grove Conference Center in Rockville Maryland (March 10, 2007)
- Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center in Frederick, Maryland (April 27-May 6, 2007)
- Ocean City Convention Center (May 4-13, 2007)
- Maryland State Fair (August 24-September 3, 2007)

For a full schedule of Maryland Heart Gallery events, please be on the lookout for our newly designed Heart Gallery website. Also featured on the website will be the Maryland Heart Gallery photographs as well as information on each of the contributing photographers.

Please visit the Maryland Heart Gallery at one or more of its future homes as we continue our efforts to find all of Maryland's children safe, loving and permanent homes.



Department of Human Resources and University of Maryland Renews Child Welfare Academy Agreement

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the University of Maryland's School of Social Work have expanded their "Maryland Child Welfare Academy" partnership. This renewed endeavor will support those who are on the frontlines of ensuring child safety and well-being

outcomes for Maryland's children and families, effective February 1, 2007.

"Our research has shown that one of the most important aspects to achieving good outcomes for children and families is a well prepared child welfare workforce. We are very excited about this opportunity to continue to work with DHR in this endeavor," says Debra Linsenmeyer, Educational Director for the Child Welfare Academy.

"DHR continues to put children first by recognizing that our workforce needs to have the latest information in order to do their job effectively in an ever-changing society. We first partnered with University of Maryland to bring forth the Child Welfare Academy in April of last year. I'm thrilled that we can continue to build upon its success with the new agreement," states Carnitra White, Deputy Executive Director for DHR's Social Service Administration.

As outlined in the new Child Welfare Academy agreement, specialized training will be offered in subjects such as the effects of parental mental illness, interviewing to strengthen families, and working with families separated by incarceration. Training will extend not only to the child welfare workforce of DHR, but to foster, kinship and adoptive family providers.

Currently the University of Maryland Training Department provides an array of courses for child welfare staff, as well as pre-service training statewide. Beginning in January 2006, DHR began to build upon the existing training agreement with the University of Maryland in order to create the Child Welfare

Training Academy. In the beginning phase, DHR contracted with the University of Maryland to provide standardized training for all new child welfare services employees. Specialized and advanced training for child welfare services employees and other community partners will be phased into the program. DHR has also adopted recommendations to implement a tiered approach to training allowing for the varying educational level of staff.

Maryland Safe Haven Law: Giving Your Newborn a Future

By Kisha Parris-Edusei

It was a cold and windy winter day when a newborn baby boy was found last December, allegedly strangled, at the bottom of a tomato packing company trashcan. Purportedly, earlier that day the mother of the newborn left her job at that company for the day to go home sick. However, twelve hours later she was taken to Peninsula Regional Medical Center, where it was discovered that she had recently given birth and discarded the newborn. Law enforcement personnel were contacted and the mother revealed what had happened to her baby.



A little over a month later, an infant wearing a one piece sleeper wrapped in a bath towel was found in the hallway of an apartment building in Prince George's County. Good Samaritans found the baby girl and immediately contacted the authorities. This newborn was reported to be about 3-4 days old, and was found in time, able to obtain essential life saving medical assistance.

However, the police continue to investigate the circumstances of her abandonment.

Although one infant was tragically found dead and the other found alive, these two infants have one thing in common. Both infants were born to desperate, unprepared, terrified mothers. These mothers were either unwilling or unable to care for them and wished to hide the existence of their newborns from others. In addition, both of these mothers committed crimes when they decided to discard their newborns as a solution to their problems.

This act should never again have to occur in the state of Maryland. Since October of 2002, there has been a law called the **Maryland Safe Haven Law**. This law provides immunity from criminal or civil prosecution for any person or desperate parent who leaves an unharmed newborn - three days old or younger - with a responsible adult, hospital, or state/local police department who are in turn responsible for contacting the local department of social services in that county. Parents may be asked questions regarding medical information about the newborn or themselves, but are not mandated by law to answer such inquiries.

This law is one safe and legal solution to abandoning newborns and leaving them without a suitable plan. Other options to abandonment are voluntary placements in foster care, adoption, or consented custody to a friend or relative. Inform your neighbors, friends and family members that this law exists and let them know it is here to help protect and safeguard newborns from needless death. Inform your clients about the Safe Haven law in Maryland.

Inform adolescents, college aged women, youths at risk of pregnancy, women with limited resources, pregnant women overwhelmed with multiple children and others at risk of abandoning their infants about Safe Haven. Safe Haven is giving your newborn a future. For additional information on Safe Haven call Kisha Parris-Edusei at the Department of Human Resources Social Services Administration (410) 767-7778. Also, an anonymous toll free number (1-800-243-7337) has been established for anyone wishing to learn more about the alternative to infant abandonment that Safe Haven offers.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON: GLORIA A. DUCKER

At the MASSB Annual Fall Conference Meeting, held on September 28 & 29, 2006 hosted by Baltimore City, your representatives elected the following officers for MASSB 2006-2007, they are:

GLORIA A. DUCKER, CHAIRPERSON Prince George's County

RONALD S. LITTLE, VICE CHAIRPERSON Montgomery County

ARMOND DARRIN, SECRETARY Carroll County

JOYCE WOODFORD, TREASURER Queen Anne County

JAMES E. CRAIGEN, IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR Baltimore City

MARK POERIO,ESQ., GENERAL COUNSEL Anne Arundel

We have all accepted the duties and responsibilities of MASSB leadership and look forward to working with you.

Many thanks to the former executive committee members and volunteers for the services rendered during the year, especially as we plan our membership gatherings. Special thanks to the past chair James Craigen and to Baltimore City Department of Social Services Director, Samuel Chambers, and his staff for hosting our meeting last year.

especially our liaison, Elyn Jones, and her staff for their assistance during the entire year.

MASSB is excited about our upcoming 2007 Annual Fall Conference to be held at ROCKY GAP LODGE & GOLF RESORT, in Cumberland Maryland-Thursday, October 11 and Friday, October 12, with an optional day of Saturday, October 13. We are appreciative of Allegany County's willingness to host MASSB. More details regarding this meeting will be sent to you at a later date. I am still recruiting volunteers to assist in the planning of this event. Please be in touch with me or other members of the executive committee if you are interested in volunteering.

MASSB welcomes the new Department of Human Resources Secretary Donald and enthusiastically looks forward to collaborations and community partnering to achieve the mission and goals of the department. Likewise, the executive committee members are willing to visit any local department who would like for us to attend their meetings in order to share with them the specific agenda items we are working on or to provide updates since our last gathering.

Thank you for this opportunity to represent and serve you as we work at achieving our common interests and passions.

MARTIN O'MALLEY, GOVERNOR • ANTHONY BROWN, LT. GOVERNOR • BRENDA DONALD, SECRETARY