



## DCF Newsletter - April 2012

### Increasing Public Awareness

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, the month of April is proclaimed/declared National Child Abuse Prevention Month. And every year during this time, state child welfare agencies and child advocates across the nation encourage individuals and organizations alike to help prevent child maltreatment and promote the well-being of children and families in their respective communities.

While ensuring the safety, well-being and permanency of children and strengthening families is our focus in New Jersey, it's important to recognize that this critical work could never be accomplished by one single agency, but rather through the partnering of many individuals, child advocates, organizations, and of so many others who are committed to this effort all year round.

By working with our community partners, we are transforming the state's child welfare system, from one that was once primarily focused on protective services, to one that is now able to provide early intervention services to better support children and families before they require more critical services. Empowering families with the knowledge, skills and resources they need are key in building stronger families and stronger communities.

So as we enjoy the arrival of spring this month, I ask that you kindly consider reaching out to your family members, friends, colleagues and neighbors and let them know about National Child Abuse Prevention Month, engage them in a conversation about the protective factors that should be present in a parent/family environment and that help diminish the likelihood of child abuse and neglect to occur and that ensure a family's optimal well-being, and finally encourage them in any way possible to join in our effort in preventing child abuse and neglect in communities across New Jersey.

Certainly, everyone's participation in this effort is vital.

Warm regards,

Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W.  
Commissioner



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**CHRIS CHRISTIE**  
*NJ Governor*

**KIM GUADAGNO**  
*NJ Lt. Governor*

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**ALLISON BLAKE, PH.D., L.S.W.**  
*DCF Commissioner*

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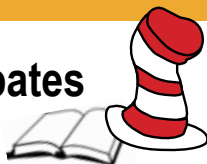
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# Community Outreach

## Commissioner Blake Participates in "Read Across America"



Promoting the importance of early literacy for all schoolchildren in New Jersey, Department of Children and Families Commissioner Allison Blake shared the joy of reading to kindergarten students at Trenton's PJ Hill Elementary School on Friday, March 2, as part of the national "Read Across America" initiative. The annual event marks the birthday of noted children's author Theodor Seuss Geisel, known as Dr. Seuss.

Commissioner Blake said, "Reading to a child is a simple but enjoyable way for caregivers to take time out of their busy day to focus on family. Aside from the lifelong educational benefits that reading can produce for children, reading aloud is also a wonderfully nurturing activity that brings a caregiver and child closer together. This bonding experience not only fosters better communication and possibility for kids of all ages, but builds a stronger relationship that can last a lifetime. By reading together, we can help create some of the most wonderful and priceless memories for children."



Theodor Seuss Geisel was born on March 2, 1904, in Springfield Mass. He wrote over 60 books. Most books were published under his well-known pseudonym, Dr. Seuss. This year marked the fifteenth annual celebration of reading on Dr. Seuss's birthday.

## 180 Cribs To Keep Babies Safe

On Tuesday, February 21, 2012, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Joyce Davis, President of Keeping Babies Safe conducted training for local New Jersey community-based agencies that would receive 180 cribs from Keeping Babies Safe. These community agencies agreed to have their staff members receive training in order to receive the new cribs to distribute to families in need. In turn, the staff members would educate the families that they serve regarding the new crib standards regulations, information on safe sleep environments for infants, registration of infant and toddler products and informing parents/caregivers regarding infant and toddler product recalls. After the agencies complete the training they will receive new cribs that meet the new crib standards requirements as endorsed by the American Academy

of Pediatrics (AAP) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

As of June 28, 2011, new federal regulations states that all crib manufacturers, retailers, importers and distributors are to cease from making, selling and distributing the traditional drop-side rail cribs due to the deadly hazards they have caused to many infant and toddlers in the past. However, all child care centers, family child care homes and places of public accommodations must prepare to replace their current cribs with new cribs that meet the new crib standards before December 28, 2012. In addition to the training, each agency was given a DVD, *Safe Sleep Environments for Babies*, presented by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Keeping Babies Safe, and the American Academy of Pediatrics so

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that they can play this in the waiting rooms of their offices. Keeping Babies Safe is able to provide these cribs from a grant that they received from the Toy "R" Us Children's Fund.

For more information on crib safety and safe sleep environments for baby, please visit Keeping Babies Safe at [www.keepingbabiesafe.org](http://www.keepingbabiesafe.org).



## Safe Haven

New Jersey's Safe Haven Infant Protection Act allows an individual to surrender an infant safely, legally and anonymously. The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) urges parents to consider this option to protect babies from being hurt or killed from unsafe abandonment.

Commissioner Blake explained that abandoning a baby puts the infant in extreme danger. "Too often, unsafe abandonment results in a baby's death," Blake said. "It is also illegal, with severe consequences. But with Safe Haven, this tragedy doesn't ever have to happen in New Jersey."

Under the Safe Haven Infant Protection Act, enacted into law in 2000, a distressed parent who is unable to care for an infant can give up custody of a baby less than 30 days old safely, legally and anonymously. All that is required is that the baby be brought to a hospital emergency room or police station in New Jersey. As long as the child shows no signs of intentional abuse, no name or other information is required. Since the law's inception, 51 babies have been surrendered under Safe Haven. Commissioner Blake added, "It is important to understand that

there must be a 'safe handoff' of the baby, meaning that the infant has to be brought to and left with an officer at a police station or an employee of a hospital emergency room. Simply leaving a child outside or in close proximity to one of these facilities does not qualify under the Safe Haven Act."

If a baby is abandoned, DCF's Division of Youth and Family Services will take the child into custody and place the infant in a foster or pre-adoptive home. "We find loving and safe homes for these children so that they have the opportunity to grow and thrive successfully," Blake said.

"Certainly we would prefer that women call us while they are pregnant, not after giving birth, so we can provide proper medical care and counseling," Blake said. "However, we want to assure parents who choose not to keep their infant, that they will not go to jail and can remain anonymous if they surrender their babies to safe hands in any hospital emergency room or police station throughout New Jersey."

For more information on Safe Haven, visit: [www.njsafehaven.org](http://www.njsafehaven.org).

# A Helping Hand

## Project International Outreach

Ten seniors at Highland Park High School have stepped up to a new challenge that has taken them far beyond their school walls and into the world of international humanitarianism. After a class trip to the United Nations last year students were inspired to help after viewing exhibits showing thousands of children living in abject poverty around the world.

The teens, who are members of Project Outreach – a program under Teen Center – a DPCP-funded School-Based Youth Services Program – raised \$100 and decided their money would have the most impact in South Africa. It was there that they found Queen, a 16-year old high school junior who resided

in a small village orphanage. Queen, an aspiring accountant, was facing the possibility of dropping out of her high school. The funds raised by the Project Outreach students was sent directly to Queen's school and it paid in full for her tuition, uniform and books.

Queen has since reached out to Project Outreach for further assistance. This time, she hopes that they could help her complete her homework at home and not at the local computer café located many miles away from her village. Project Outreach's students have mobilized once again and their next goal is to organize a fund-raiser to get Queen a laptop by December.

## “Paying” It Forward for DCF Involved Youth

Money. How to get it, manage it, save it, use it, enjoy it, and think about it. These are the critical questions that are being answered during the transition into adulthood. Therefore it is important that youth are surrounded by and exposed to supports and circumstances to help them answer these questions thoughtfully and wisely.

A youth who seeks services with DCF might lack these necessary supports and circumstances to help develop knowledge about money and finances to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency. One of the supports offered to youth involved with DCF assists them in gaining this knowledge through life skills programming which covers various topics such as career planning and work life, community resources, daily living, employment readiness and financial literacy.

At the suggestion of Heather O'Neil, an advocate for youth in the child welfare system, the Office of Adolescent Services was contacted by Kearny Federal Savings Bank, who presented an opportunity for NJ-DCF to pilot a new and computerized financial literacy program through a company named EverFi. “EverFi is the leading education technology platform to teach, assess, and certify Financial Literacy, Student Loan Management, Digital Literacy, Substance Abuse” and other life skill areas.



EverFi will pilot their financial literacy program at The Center for Family Services (CFS), which is one of the leading youth serving non-profits in New Jersey. This new program will help to enhance life skills programming at CFS through using EverFi's computerized program that offers “rich media, high-definition video, diagrams, and avatars” to deliver this important financial literacy knowledge.

This pilot program is an incredible example of how public-private partnerships can help to improve critical services for the community and improve the lives of our youth. Especially since it will be these same youth who will be our future leaders, making decisions about and managing the financial and economic state of the country and the world. So this wonderful opportunity through Kearny Federal Savings Bank and partnership with EverFi and CFS really is paying it forward!!



# Achieving Dreams



"I never had a lot growing up," says Tyisha, a 23-year-old graduate of Center for Family Services Camden DREAMS program. "I craved independence and success, but knew I had to

work hard to achieve them." Tyisha's life, like many of the children DCF serves in our residential programs, began in foster care. She lived in several foster homes as a baby and eventually was adopted. "A sweet older woman adopted me when I was just an infant," says Tyisha. "Unfortunately, she became ill and unable to care for me. I ended up back in foster care until I aged out of the system." She eventually found her way to Center for Family Services.

The Division of Youth and Family Services referred Tyisha to CFS' Camden City-based GrandSlam program, which provides structured transitional living assistance to homeless female youth with the primary goal of developing an independent living plan. "I wanted to learn how to clean and cook for myself. GrandSlam taught me that and more. It really prepared me for my next step which was moving into Camden DREAMS."

Camden DREAMS, located just down the block from GrandSlam, is a permanent supportive housing program for young adults. CFS was provided the critical funding to create this program in 2008 as part

of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' commitment to prioritizing resources for children aging out of the foster care system. Because of Camden DREAMS, these young adults now have a place to call home. The program offers wrap-around services to residents while they learn how to set up a savings account, pay bills, and balance school and work all with the help of counselors and resident advisors.

Tyisha set goals and with the help of CFS staff, she started to achieve them. After graduating high school, Tyisha entered Prism Medical School where after one year she became a licensed medical assistant. The DREAMS Job Readiness Training (JRT) program helped prepare Tyisha for interviews by teaching her effective greeting techniques, cover letter and resume writing, and professional interview skills. Tyisha is now a Clinical Medical Assistant in the Surgery Department at Cooper University Hospital.

Tyisha longed for a place to call her own. "Once I secured my job at Cooper, DREAMS staff started to encourage me to look at buying my own home. I never in my whole life thought I'd be buying a house." In January, 2012, Tyisha made settlement and moved into a brand new condominium located in Camden City, just around the block from Cooper. "I can't wait to decorate and have friends over to my own place. If it wasn't for Camden DREAMS I wouldn't be buying my own home. I'd be sleeping on a friend's couch somewhere with no education and no future."

# What's Happening at DCF

## Building Capacity in “Managing by Data” to Improve Leadership, Frontline Practice & Case Outcomes



On Wednesday, May 2, 2012, from 3 to 4:15 p.m., the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) invites you and your colleagues to join us for our fourth session in What Works for the Workforce: Leadership Competencies in Action, A National Webinar Series on Leading Change to Strengthen the Child Welfare Workforce. This webinar is free, and open to all.

This webinar will showcase a capacity-building effort at the New Jersey Department of Children and Families to build capacity in the area of “managing by data” in order to support the Department’s emerging quality improvement efforts, using both quantitative and qualitative data, on the ground, at the front line level, and throughout the organization. The New Jersey Fellows Program provides an opportunity for 100 DCF staff (supervisors, managers, quality coordinators, etc.) to learn how to better utilize data to support improved case practice and outcomes for children and families. The session will highlight the development, implementation, components and outcomes of the program, as well as the lessons learned, tips for agencies, and the leadership skills and competencies necessary to sustain it over time.

REGISTER NOW at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/437642138>

Please also save the date for this webinar’s follow-up learning lab, scheduled for May 10, 2012 at 3 p.m. Registration will open after the webinar.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Munson, National Dissemination Coordinator, at [smunson@albany.edu](mailto:smunson@albany.edu).

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## 2012 Best Places to Work in New Jersey

Congratulations to Coordinated Family Care for making the list of the 2012 Best Places to Work in New Jersey. The Best Places to Work in New Jersey awards program identifies, recognizes and honors the top places of employment in New Jersey that benefit the state’s economy, its workforce and businesses. Recipients will be celebrated at an awards ceremony on Wednesday, April 25 at the Hilton East Brunswick. For more information or to purchase tickets contact Sarah Spangler at [sspangler@njbiz.com](mailto:sspangler@njbiz.com) or 732-246-5713.

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## Your Invitation to the 2012 NJ Governor’s Conference On Women

The 2012 NJ Governor’s Conference on Women will be held in Atlantic City on May 7 – 8. The theme of this year’s event is “It’s All About You.”

Attendees can choose from numerous educational and motivational sessions in areas such as career development, personal finance, healthy living, business startups and leadership. Dr. Lois Frankel, noted author and lecturer, will deliver the keynote address. In addition, several other noted speakers include Wall Street Journal columnist Peggy Noonan; Morgan Stanley Investment Management manager Carla Harris; Celebrity Fit Club medical/diet expert Dr. Ian Smith and author, and TV personality and former Olympic skier Bonnie St. John.

For more information or to pre-register for the event, visit us at [www.njwomensconference.com](http://www.njwomensconference.com).

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## April Recognized as National Autism Awareness Month

This month, the Christie Administration is recognizing National Autism Awareness Month to highlight and increase participation in the many programs, services and support offered by the State to individuals with autism and their families. New Jersey has one of the best systems in the nation for identifying, diagnosing and caring for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

To ensure there is an integrated continuum of services responsive to the whole child and the whole family, Gov. Christie announced a common-sense restructuring during his Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Address that moves all services for children with developmental disabilities from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), beginning in July.

This restructuring ends the historic fragmentation that now exists – particularly for families whose children need services and supports from both departments. With its wide-ranging network of community services, DCF is positioned to provide a holistic approach to serving children with autism and other developmental disabilities. DCF and DHS will ensure a seamless transition to provide needed services and supports as part of a transition plan for older youth moving into the adult system.

Continue to look to this e-newsletter for updates of this transition. More information will also be available on our web site at [www.nj.gov/dcf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf).

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## National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

On Wednesday, May 9, 2012, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, people can help raise awareness about the importance of children's mental health by sharing information about trauma and resilience in children. To learn more about supporting National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website at [www.samhsa.gov/children](http://www.samhsa.gov/children).



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## DCBHS Presents at the Black Administrators in Child Welfare Conference

Jeffrey Guenzel, Director, and Alan Vietze, Deputy Director of New Jersey Division of Child Behavioral Health Services, NJ Department of Children and Families, were presenters at the Black Administrators in Child Welfare Conference, March 25 to 27 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Their presentation "Reducing Inappropriate Out-of-Home Institutional Placements Through a System of Care" discussed how New Jersey has implemented a statewide System of Care model for serving youth with behavioral health challenges that has led to a dramatic decrease in institutional care including juvenile detention.

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## New Case Plan Training

DCF will be offering a new Case Plan training and will begin pilot trainings in late April. The first phase will be an on-line pretraining course that will be available to DCF staff on the Training Academy web site. It will take the user through the automated case management system (NJSPIRIT) process of navigating through the form. The second phase will focus on the process of working with a family to design a case plan and it will rely heavily on and review certain skills acquired during Case Practice Model (CPM) training.