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CHRIS CHRISTIE
NJ Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
NJ Lt. Governor

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

A Time to Reflect

Dear Colleagues,

I am not sure about you, but I find that the Holidays – more than any other time of year - make me deeply reflect on so many things.

With the closing of one year, and the possibilities of an entirely new one, I am compelled to reflect on the moments that have not only made an impact on me during the past season, but also how I can, in turn, make an even greater impact on the world around me in the coming new year.

As Commissioner, I know that our daily work gives us all the opportunity - and great satisfaction - to help New Jersey’s most vulnerable children and families every day. But for some reason this time of year tends to remind me of the fact that there exists so many more opportunities to give of ourselves.

For example, this past December I had the opportunity to participate in several events throughout the State in honor of the Governor’s “Season of Service” initiative. These events allowed me to volunteer and share a bit of my time with children and families throughout New Jersey. Some of these memorable moments included reading to children at a local Family Success Center, helping youth paint ceramic holiday trinkets, and even something as simple as working the “check out line” at a holiday toy shop for parents.

This past year I also was invited to Chair the 2011-2012 New Jersey State Employees Charitable Campaign (NJSECC). This is truly a privilege for me as this annual successful campaign is one of the wonderful ways that New Jersey’s State employees and committee volunteers admirably continue to give back to those in need, both here at home in New Jersey and across the globe.

Of course, “giving” doesn’t have to come in a red box with a pretty bow and certainly not only during the holidays. The beauty of giving of ourselves is that it can come in many forms. In fact, one of the most valuable and significant gifts anyone can give to others is something that doesn’t cost a thing - our time.

Today, I remain in awe of the many giving individuals that not only make up DCF but also all those individuals that give of themselves every day to others throughout this great State.

As we embark on the brand new year 2012, I invite you to join me in taking a moment to reflect, look around and give thanks to the wonderful world we live in, the moments we shared in 2011 together with our family, friends and loved ones and let us ponder the many magnificent ways we can give of ourselves in the new year.

Thank you for giving of yourselves every day on behalf of the children and families we serve. I am excited and confident that together - you and I - will make New Jersey an even better place for those children and families in 2012.

Warm regards,

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

National Adoption Day



Each November, New Jersey joins with many other states in celebrating National Adoption Day. Adoption Day is a national initiative to celebrate adoptive families as well as a time to raise awareness about the children that remain in foster care waiting to be adopted. For the first time this year, all 21 New Jersey counties held events to commemorate the creation of "Forever Families" for over 200 of New Jersey's children who had been residing in foster care. Along with these various celebrations, efforts were made to continue to highlight the need for foster and adoptive parents for New Jersey's vulnerable children.

This year's celebrations were a huge success with 248 children having their adoptions finalized. Of those children, 17 were teenagers 13 years and older including a 20 year old who, after years in foster care, consented to her own adoption; 41 sibling groups; and 47 relative adoptions. This year's events were truly a success!

Adoption Day is just one example of how we can help make a difference for the children in our care. For a child, an adoption is often the culmination of a long and sometimes difficult process, but one with the greatest reward - a family.

Market Segmentation

We have requested and received approval from the Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau to receive technical assistance (TA) from the National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUSKids (NRCRRFAP) in the area of Market Segmentation.

Market Segmentation is a market research tool used for targeted recruitment of resource families. It utilizes marketing techniques that assist in identifying households that can be targeted that are most "like" our current successful resource families.

Market Segmentation is community based, data driven, culturally competent, creates the right message, and is retention obsessive.

This tool will give us the opportunity to understand who our successful resource families are, how to best reach the families that we are targeting, and gives us the ability to know where to concentrate our message. We have been working to build our capacity to move into this form of targeted recruitment through previous TA requests with AdoptUSKids that have been completed through several training opportunities and follow up consultations, such as sibling recruitment and developing local targeted

recruitment plans that are data driven and action based. This next step will assist us with developing more sophisticated recruitment strategies to target the geographical and subpopulations identified in our recruitment plans.

The AdoptUSKids TA Team came to New Jersey in June for an on-site overview for DCF to include DCF, DYFS, IT and Leadership as each of these areas need to be at the table to ensure success. We are now in the process of working to define New Jersey's successful resource families and we will continue to receive technical assistance from the AdoptUSKids team as we move forward with this work.

Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships

Residents in four counties previously without Family Success Centers (FSCs) will now have one of their own.

The centers, which will be in all 21 counties, are neighborhood-based gathering places where any community resident can find various information and services that include everything from employment to housing and parent education to family activities.

In November the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships approved the development of new FSCs in Cape May, Hunterdon, Morris and Somerset Counties, adding them to a network of centers collaboratively working with their communities to strengthen families and keep children safe. There now will be, 41 publically-supported centers with the new centers opening by March 2012.

"This really rounds out the FSC statewide network," said Lisa von Pier, the division's director, "We are so fortunate to be able to expand this approach of partnering with families that builds on their strengths and supports the family in meeting the goals they identify for themselves."

The Importance of Youth Voice We Can Hear Ya Now!



This past year the Office of Adolescent Services (OAS) had the opportunity to meet with several Youth Advisory Boards across the state. These meetings were truly invaluable as they informed OAS and DCF of useful ideas, provided greater insight and feedback regarding supports, services, and our overall practice in terms of the adolescents and young adults we serve everyday throughout the state.

In fact, the youth voice helped shape DYFS practice and policy in many ways in 2011. For instance, it assisted with the development of a new Post-BA Adolescent Advocacy Certificate Program, promoted

health and wellness, and most recently helped to review and analyze data regarding youth in care. Through the use of creative strategies such as petitions, art exhibits, talent shows, and video production, the youth voice was effective in recommending and implementing important policy and practice change.

With the recent release of the Office of Adolescent Services Strategic Plan (www.nj.gov/dcf), it will be critical to continue to engage, involve, and ensure that youth participate in the implementation of these initiatives. These initiatives will assist youth to successfully transition into adulthood.

Letter of Appreciation

Dear Director Guenzel and Department of Children and Families Leadership,

We want to thank you for helping us attend the 22nd Annual National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Conference. This year was focused on trauma and resilience. All of us have experienced trauma from: bullying, sexual abuse, domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse, and incarceration. We have depended on services from your division and others from the Department of Children and Families. We presented 5 workshops and attended many more. We learned so much about family leadership in child welfare, IDEA, psychotropic medication, prevention and fatherhood. We will use this new information along with our personal and professional experience to continue our work in NJ. You may never understand the impact, but you all have helped us heal. Not only did we find hope and help from DCF services but being able to share our stories with other youth, families and providers empowered us. We proudly stood together to battle the shame of our experiences and combat the stigma associated with our needs.

Sincerely,



Carlos, Bruce, John, Nadia, Eva, Julia and Tessa

On the Horizon

DCF-Verizon Hope Line Project Partnership

So have you donated your old cell phone?

Truth is we all have one lying around somewhere. You know that old cellphone that was thrown in the junk drawer last year when you decided to upgrade to the newest smartphone. Well, now we have the 'cause' to get rid of it.

As you may know, DCF recently partnered with Verizon in its HopeLine project. The purpose of the HopeLine Project is to help victims of domestic violence by providing donated-recycled wireless phones to domestic violence programs across the state. Once a cell phone is donated, Verizon recycles and activates them free of charge to be used for emergency calling and text messaging.

HopeLine project boxes are located at DCF offices throughout the State.

So come on... join us in sharing a little hope!



Requests for Proposals at DCF are Going Green

As of November 2011, DCF has tested and started a new procedure for submitting Requests for Proposals online. In the past, multiple copies were delivered through snow, rain and traffic, risking that the provider would not deliver the proposal on time. The new method is secure, efficient and greener because no paper is required as well as no travel time. Only a registered Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) or a designated alternate is eligible to send in an electronic submission. AOR forms are available on our Web site and must be received five business days prior to the date the bid is due. Once authorization is provided, the applicant/user is granted permission to gain access to with a user ID and password. Providers will receive their access password and instructions through Web Access-ASKRFP email at least three business days prior to the bid due date so they can upload their files.

The new online process was in place for three Requests for Proposals with great success. Over 16 providers chose to submit electronically. Overall, providers reported that the instructions were easy to understand and they were successful with the process. We continue to encourage all providers to use our online system. Technical Assistance is provided through online training which is available on our Web site at www.nj.gov/dcf. Training also will continue at future Bidder Conferences.

Mobility with Technology

Using federal funding, DCF will be rolling out 430 iPads and 376 smartphones on a pilot basis to SPRU workers, case aides involved in parent-child visits, adolescent workers, and permanency staff to assist them in their work in 2012. This is the first step for DCF in exploring "mobile options" for our front line staff to assist them in their work. Presently, DCF is working with OIT on the security issues around these devices, and hopes to deploy them in the weeks ahead.

2012 Upcoming Training and an Enhanced Course offered by DCF's Child Welfare Training Academy

- **Enhanced Course 2012**
The Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning
- **January - June, 2012**
Interviewing Children
- **January - June, 2012**
Impact Incarcerated Parents
- **January - June, 2012**
Reunification: Importance of Resource Parents
- **January - June, 2012**
What Caseworkers Need to Know About Children with Developmental Disabilities and Working with their Families
- **March - June, 2012**
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- **January - March, 2012**
Accessing Older Caregivers