



January 2013

CHRIS CHRISTIE
NJ Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
NJ Lt. Governor

ALLISON BLAKE
DCF Commissioner

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Dear Colleagues,

I am so excited, as many of you are, at the prospect of a brand new year. While setting new goals and implementing strategies to create even more positive outcomes for those we serve is an effective exercise we undertake every New Year at DCF, so is taking a moment to look back and reflect on the challenges we have faced and to celebrate how we as a department and community, were able to successfully meet those challenges together.

For me, I think there was no greater challenge in 2012 than that of Hurricane Sandy. The storm's deep impact was so far reaching that we continue to address its aftermath even today - and foresee doing so for some time to come. But I am a big believer in that even though we may not be able to undo the past, we can "right" it by the good intentions and efforts we continue to put forth in the present. That is why I am ever so adamant that our efforts in supporting the children and families impacted by the storm steadfastly continues well into 2013.

What have we been able to accomplish along with our committed and compassionate partners?

Well, through the collaborative efforts of the Disaster Response State Led Child Task Force, we have been able to continue to support those impacted by Sandy. One of the Task Force's subcommittees, focused on disaster response in primary health care settings, has collaborated with the NJ Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to Coordinate trainings in Monmouth and Ocean counties provided by Dr. David Schoenfeld, a national expert in disaster response. One of these trainings was specifically held for DCF resource parents.

The second subcommittee, led by Gerald Costa, PhD, from the Montclair State University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Development, is focused on the response efforts for young children and their caregivers. Over the past month, MSU has conducted several trainings on meeting the needs of young children post-disasters and has expanded upon a list of professionals that are willing to volunteer their time in response efforts. To further increase awareness, all of the state's licensed child care centers have also been made aware of supports that can be provided by these professionals.

DCF continues to work with Save the Children and the American Red Cross in the coordination and distribution of donations to children and families served by DCF programs that were impacted by the storm. To date, this collaborative effort has yielded donations to approximately 30 organizations statewide, that have included hundreds of brand new children's coats, and a varied assortment of clothing items and shoes, as well as, diapers, nutritional toddler drinks, blankets and backpacks.

Certainly, I am only mentioning a few of the projects DCF has had the pleasure to collaborate on thanks to the many dedicated staff, individuals and supportive system partners that have and continue to give of themselves selflessly in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. I am so immensely grateful to each of you and look forward to achieving even more in the coming year.

Warm regards,



Allison Blake, PhD, LSW
Commissioner

Children's System of Care

New CSOC Director

DCF's Children's System of Care is pleased to welcome Elizabeth Manley, LSW, as its new Director. Elizabeth is a leader in her field bringing over 25 years of experience supporting children, youth and families with mental and behavioral health



challenges. Since 2005, Elizabeth has served as the Chief Executive Officer at Caring Partners of Morris/Sussex, Inc., a Care Management Organization. In this capacity, she was responsible for the implementation of a strategic plan, policy and procedures, as well as fiscal and operational oversight for the organization.

Her previous experience also includes positions at Capital County Children's Collaborative as Director of Operations and many years at SERV Behavioral Health System, Inc., in a variety of roles. In addition, Elizabeth has been a partner to DCF in implementing our Qualitative Review process and advancing our cross-systems collaboration efforts. Elizabeth holds a Masters degree in Social Work from Rutgers University and a Bachelor's degree in Health Science from William Paterson University, as well as numerous professional certifications. She has also served on many committees and councils, often as the chair. Most recently this has included serving as the president of the NJ System of Care Association.

DCF Commissioner Allison Blake said "Liz's extensive knowledge and experience working in our system of care, as well as her talent for innovative thinking and action, will help strengthen our work and our ability to better support the children, youth and families we serve every day."

4th Annual Statewide Conference on Children's Mental Health

The theme of the fourth annual Statewide Conference on Children's Mental Health was *Integrating Systems of Care for Children and Youth*. Over 200 individuals attended the conference, representing system partners including families, case management agencies, direct service providers, mental health professionals and DCF staff.

The goal of the conference was to enhance professional knowledge and collaborative partnerships in order to improve the effectiveness of the Children's System of Care. The conference also sought to nurture working relationships among families and professionals, and support youth with behavioral and emotional challenges as well as youth with developmental disabilities by providing a forum to learn about and discuss current trends in serving children and adolescents and their families. The conference also offered a unique opportunity for youth, families, and practitioners to network and to gain a better understanding of the various components of the New Jersey Children's System of Care.

There were fourteen workshops offered covering a wide range of topics important to youth with developmental disabilities and their families. Workshop topics included strategies for youth on the autism spectrum to employ to help deal with stress and anxiety; the utility of pediatric neuropsychological evaluations; evidence-based therapies; peer support for mothers of special needs children; as well as issues facing youth with developmental disabilities as they transition into adulthood.

The keynote address, entitled, "Beyond Parallel Play: Building a youth and family-driven system of care that meets the needs of children and youth with cognitive and/or behavioral challenges," was delivered by Dr. David Osher, PhD. Dr. Osher is a widely published author and managing research scientist at the American Institutes of Research where he directs the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, which facilitates federal, state, and local collaboration and undertakes research, synthesis, and communications activities to improve practices for children with emotional and behavioral changes.

CSOC - Free Training and Technical Assistance

DCF's Children's System of Care offers free training and technical assistance to system partners. Over a dozen trainings are offered each month in locations throughout New Jersey. To view online training announcements and to register for specific trainings, please visit the Children's System of Care Training and Technical Assistance web site at:

www.state.nj.us/dcf/providers/csc/training

New Web Site Launched to Promote Youth Suicide Prevention

The Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth Program (TLC), in partnership with DCF, recently launched a peer-to-peer web site, Jersey Voice (www.jerseyvoice.net), to promote suicide prevention and encourage youth and young adults to communicate creatively about the challenges they are experiencing so that they may help support their peers who are encountering similar problems.

The web site - developed by TLC - is open to all teens and young adults in New Jersey. According to TLC, the web site is about using our own unique Jersey voices to help each other out, recognize our strengths, and inspire hope. It's about getting involved, making a difference, and keeping Jersey strong.

TLC Director Donna Amundson pointed out that Jersey Voice's mission is to help strengthen and advance TLC's upstream suicide prevention efforts, to try to reach youth before they begin to feel hopeless and helpless.

"We have created a platform where individuals can share their stories of hope, help and strength and getting through the difficult times in life with messages that can be told through stories, poems, music, photography, posters, videos and other creative outlets. The intent is that these stories will remain front and center on the web site as a source of support and inspiration for other New Jersey teens and young adults," Amundson explained.

DCF Commissioner Allison Blake said, "The mission of this web site is to provide a space where the resounding voices of peers echo throughout as they show each other how to tap into strength, resiliency and connection when facing difficult times at home, at school or at play. We want to help our youth population find solutions to whatever types of stressful behavioral problems they encounter before they become crises."

TLC partnered with Emotion Technology to develop this site that combines a focus on suicide prevention, intervention and postvention with social media outlets to reach youth and young adults where they live and communicate. The site includes a series of tools and contacts, including 2NDFLOOR, NJ's Youth Helpline (1-888-222-2228), a confidential and anonymous helpline for New Jersey's youth and young adults. The site will also add a blog.



For more information visit the Jersey Voice web site (www.jerseyvoice.net)

Family and Community Partnerships

Working with Families to Achieve Success

Partnering is the key to success. That's the message Family Success Center (FSC) workers throughout the state are hearing as they participate in the Family Development Credential Program (FDC) - a professional development course designed to help staff sharpen the skills needed to offer strength-based support to families in their communities.

The FDC Program course, which was made possible through a partnership between DCF's Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), Rutgers' Institute for Families, and the Partnership for Family Success Training and Technical

Assistance Center, began in September 2012, and will run through April 2013. The 90-hour program is a tool to assist front-line staff in finding that balance between telling and asking families where their strengths lie and determining their needs.

"Many social services focus on "fixing" families rather than working with families to develop their capacity to solve problems and achieve long-lasting self-reliance," said Diana Kelley, a regional coordinator in the FCP's Office of Family Support Services which manages the funding for the FDC program. "This training emphasizes the Family Success model on how supports and services are made available to families with a focus on family support."

Kelley added, "By the end of the training staff will become more effective in helping families set and reach their goals; use well-researched, strengths-based approaches when working with families; develop professional and life skills for everyday use; earn a FDC credential from Rutgers; and be eligible to earn up to nine college credits for the course. FSC directors have already completed a similar course."

"Clearly, when staff is better trained," FCP Director Lisa von Pier said, "our children, youth and families are better served."



Child Health Units

Increased Access To and Improved Health Care For Children and Young Adults

Through an ongoing partnership with the UMDNJ School of Nursing, DCF's Child Protection and Permanency's Child Health Units provide health care case management, education, and a range of nursing interventions with resource families and families involved with the child welfare system. Nurses collaborate with caseworkers, resource parents, families of origin, and healthcare providers to ensure our children receive on-going preventative health care and timely specialty care for children with special needs. In coordination with our Adolescent Units, nurses also work with our young adults, ages 18-21, to ensure they understand their individual health care needs, as well as their health history, and can engage effectively with health care providers around their care.

Division on Women Hosts “WE Series”

Aspiring and Established Women Business Leaders Learn How to Boost Their New Jersey Business at Final Installment of Women’s Entrepreneurship Series

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families’ Division on Women hosted the final segment of its three-part, year-long Women’s Entrepreneurship Series. Attended by more than 200 of the state’s aspiring and established women business leaders, the forum allowed participants to advance their business knowledge through small group classes, question and answer sessions, speaker presentations and networking opportunities.

The morning’s keynote address was provided by Alfa Demmellash, a native of Ethiopia and graduate of Harvard University, who, since 2004 has been the Chief Executive Officer of Rising Tide Capital. Headquartered in Jersey City, the organization runs the Community Business Academy – an intensive business training session coupled with year-round coaching and mentorship aimed at equipping entrepreneurs with the skills to better operate their small business.

“Alfa Demmellash is a true inspirational model for all women business leaders throughout the Garden State,” said DCF Commissioner Allison Blake. “Alfa has set an example for others to follow by empowering hundreds of New Jersey business owners to achieve self-sufficiency not only for themselves and their families, but for the benefit and progress of their surrounding communities.”

Participants also heard from Carla Fallone, a lifelong New Jersey resident who designed, started, developed, owned and maintained a successful



entrepreneurial bakery, cafe, retail and wholesale food services corporation in the state. Today, as owner of Fallone Business Resources, she provides consulting services to fledgling entrepreneurs while also teaching business courses at several colleges throughout the state.

Commissioner Blake said, “Carla’s real-world experience of building and running her own successful business made her uniquely qualified to share her knowledge and expertise with us. We were proud to be able to bring such



motivational visionaries to the participants of our Women’s Entrepreneurship Series.”

New Jersey’s estimated 225,200 women-owned businesses generate \$43 billion annually for the Garden State economy, according to the State of Women-Owned Businesses Report recently released by American Express.

To honor the contributions of working women and employers who support working women and their families, Business and Professional Women’s Foundation celebrates National Business Women’s Week during the third week of October. The recognition provides an opportunity to call attention to women entrepreneurs, facilitate the discussions on the needs of working women, share information about successful workplace policies, and raise awareness of the resources available for working women in their communities.

For more information on the New Jersey Department of Children and Families’ Division on Women, visit www.nj.gov/dcf.

Office of Educational Support and Programs

Foster Care Scholars Make Us Proud

DCF is pleased to announce the graduation of 31 students from the New Jersey Foster Care Scholars (NJFC) program during the 2011-2012 academic year. The NJFC Scholars program provides financial assistance to current and former foster youth, as well as youth living in transitional living programs or who are homeless. In addition to receiving financial assistance, students who participate in the NJFC Scholars Program are assigned a coach/mentor through a program called Project MYSELF. Coaches assist students in adapting to college life and support them through the transition to young adulthood.

These students graduated from a variety of vocational programs, two and four year colleges and universities that included Drew University, Empire Beauty School, Georgian Court University, Gettysburg College, Harris School of Business, Kean University, Lincoln Technical Institute, Montclair State University, Pennco Tech, Ramapo College, Raritan Valley Community College, Rider University, Rowan University and Rutgers University.

Now with their Certificates, Associate or Bachelor degrees in majors such as Behavioral Science, Business, Sociology, Political Science, Criminal Justice, Information Technology and Informatics, Public Relations and Certification as an Electrician and Medical Assistant, many of the graduates have ambitious future plans. Some are pursuing graduate school including one student studying abroad in China. Others have attained employment in both for-profit companies and non-profit organizations.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, 316 students participated in the NJFC Scholars program. Approximately 83% of students chose to attend New Jersey institutions and over 100 unique institutions were attended throughout the continental United States and Puerto Rico.



Some words of wisdom from our scholars to you:

“Never stop dreaming and never give up. If you never give up, you alone can make all of your dreams come true.”

“You are the leader in your own life and nothing is impossible.”

“You may have setbacks in life but you must have academic resiliency to persevere through challenging times to reach your goals.”

“Your effort does not go unnoticed whether you do it or not, people will remember. It’s great to take initiatives and challenge yourself to learn and be exposed to the ‘unknown’ which may help you master a skill or even find your passion. Surrounding yourself with people that will motivate you and push you is key.”

“Your network is your net worth.”

“Never give up on your dreams.”

For more information about the NJFC Scholars Program, please call Foster and Adoptive Family Services at 1.800.222.0047 Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. and ask for the Scholarship Department or email scholarships@fafsonline.org or visit www.fafsonline.org.

Family Success Center

Grand Opening of the Winslow Township Family Success Center



Robins' Nest was proud to announce the grand opening of the Winslow Township Family Success Center. The center is designed to be the community's connection to information and support and will offer a variety of free activities for all ages through the generosity of DCF's Family and Community Partnerships. Residents can participate in workshops, learn new skills and connect to others in the community.

Mayor Barry Wright of Winslow Township praised the addition of the center to his community saying, "This is such a wonderful and valuable resource for our residents and we are very excited to welcome the Family Success Center here in Winslow Township. The programs and workshops they offer are so beneficial for those of all ages."

Freeholder Scot McCray added, "We all know that at times access to services can be difficult and these are services that are critically needed. This is a great day and we welcome the Family Success Center to Winslow."

Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera presented a Joint Legislative Resolution to Anthony DiFabio, President and Chief Executive Officer of Robins' Nest. She was thrilled to be a part of the event and said, "It was a great honor to attend the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of Robins' Nest Family Success Center in Winslow Township. Robins' Nest is an outstanding organization whose mission has always been to put families and children first through the top-notch programs and services they provide. I wish the Winslow Township

Family Success Center all the best going forward and am happy to welcome them into our community."

DCF Commissioner Allison Blake said "I am pleased that a new Family Success Center (FSC) has opened at Robins' Nest in Winslow Township, expanding our network of FSCs even further across the state of New Jersey. The FSC model is important not only because it reinforces the State's commitment to strengthening families before they become involved in the formal child protection system, but it also ensures that Winslow's children and families have access to the programs, supports and resources that meet their unique needs and empower their respective community."

The Winslow Township Family Success Center is located at 416 Sicklerville Road, Unit A-2, Sicklerville, NJ. For more information about the center, please call 856-899-5571.



To learn more about all of the Family Success Centers located throughout New Jersey visit www.nj.gov/dcf