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CHRIS CHRISTIE
NJ Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
NJ Lt. Governor

ALLISON BLAKE
DCF Commissioner

WWW.NJ.GOV/DCF

Dear Colleagues,

The month of September marks National Baby Safety and Child Passenger Awareness Month – calling on all of us, society as a whole – to be ever more diligent toward ensuring the safety of infants and children. Of course, our efforts are vital in this calling every day.

While this is an integral part of DCF's daily work, we continuously look to identify new opportunities in which we can reinforce our efforts not only within the department, but also with our community partners to bring greater awareness as to how we can together, promote and ensure the safety of infants and children.

For instance, every year we are pleased to collaborate with Keeping Babies Safe (KBS), a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide training to families about crib safety and best sleep practices. The organization also donates new cribs, at no cost, to families in need. In fact, this past March, KBS generously donated 202 cribs to the families we serve and in 2011 a total of 760 cribs were provided to families across New Jersey.

In addition, with the help of a Federal Grant awarded to our Division of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP), we were able to coordinate an educational awareness campaign about the Safe Haven Law on New Jersey Transit buses. This educational campaign is invaluable as it reaches people where they live and work.

Just recently, DCF partnered with the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety to build a team of Child Passenger Safety educators responsible for creating and implementing highway safety programs and initiatives to ensure optimal safety of the infants, children and youth we transport every day. Stay tuned to learn more about this new initiative in the near future.

As we approach this call for safety with states across the nation, I encourage each of you to join in partnership to help strengthen our mutual commitment to the safety of infants and children not only in our own families, but also those in our daily lives and our communities.

Warm regards,



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



DCF News



DCF is proud to announce that Jeffrey Guenzel has been appointed Deputy Commissioner for Programs and Services.

In this new role, Jeff will serve as a member of the department's executive management team, providing oversight to the Division on Women, Family and Community Partnerships, Children's System of Care, and the Office of Education.

In 2010 Jeff joined DCF as the director of the Division of Child Behavioral Health Services. In this role he oversaw

our statewide child behavioral health system of care including a wide range of community based services, inpatient units, and residential treatment facilities. Over the past six months Jeff has been instrumental in guiding the transition of services for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the Department of Human Services to DCF.

Prior to joining DCF, Jeff was the Executive Director of the Partnership for Children of Essex, the state's largest wraparound care management agency. He has also worked as a clinical supervisor and program director at UMDNJ's University Behavioral Health Care overseeing crisis services, mobile response, rape care and domestic violence programs, to name a few.

Jeff earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's degree in Counseling from Montclair State University. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and has specialized in child and family services, suicide and violence prevention and intervention, post-traumatic stress, and system of care implementation.

DCF Commissioner Allison Blake said, "As DCF continues to grow and expand its community service array, we have also begun to consider how to better connect programs and services across our divisions and offices in order to better serve our state's most vulnerable citizens. We are fortunate to have a very talented and committed leadership team, willing to think creatively about the changing practice environment and the needs of our consumers. By creating this new executive level position, with responsibility for oversight of the majority of our service providing divisions and offices, I believe DCF and the people we serve will soon realize our goal of providing a connected and coordinated continuum of care for the most vulnerable women, children, and families of our state."

Commissioner Blake added, "We are grateful for the partnership of all of our stakeholders – both internal and external – and look forward to continuing our dialog about improving our service delivery system. Please join me in wishing Jeff a warm welcome into his new role."

National Suicide Prevention Week is September 9 -15, 2012

September 10, 2012 is acknowledged globally as World Suicide Prevention Day. This designation provides opportunities to engage many who might not otherwise be aware of the magnitude of suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in the United States, suicide was the third leading cause of death for 10- to 24-year-olds. Information for raising awareness and activities can be found on the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) website www.suicidology.org.

UMDNJ's University Behavioral Health Care is Awarded Federal Funding in Support of Youth Suicide Prevention

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration has awarded a \$1.4 million youth suicide prevention grant to UMDNJ's University Behavioral HealthCare, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

Through the grant, new suicide prevention programming will be added in the state for individuals who work with youth and young adults from 10 to 24 years of age. The New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Project, which began this August, will target six pilot counties during a three year period: Camden, Monmouth, Passaic, Hudson, Middlesex and Bergen Counties.

DCF Commissioner Visits Dottie's House, A Haven for Survivors of Domestic Violence



DCF Commissioner Allison Blake (second from right) with Carole Wolfe (center), executive director and founder of Dottie's House and other members from the program

Commissioner Allison Blake recently traveled to Dottie's House, a transitional housing facility in Brick, NJ, designed to aid women and children who have survived domestic violence.

Commissioner Blake met with Carole Wolfe, founder and executive director of Dottie's House, and toured the center which has been in existence since 1999.

"Dottie's House is a remarkable example of a program making a real difference in the lives of the families it serves," Commissioner Blake said. "Mrs. Wolfe and her team have created a warm and safe environment for female victims of domestic violence, as well as their children, which offers intensive programs and services aimed at guiding these families to self-sufficiency."

In addition, information on topics such as safety planning and guidance to prevent future incidents of domestic violence, budgeting and financial literacy, job readiness training, stress and time management, life skills and health and nutrition counseling and art therapy sessions for children are offered.

"Upon completion of the Dottie's House program, our families have gained the knowledge and skills they need to live an emotionally healthy life free from violence," Mrs. Wolfe said.

Commissioner Blake acknowledged these efforts by adding, "The work being undertaken at Dottie's House is instrumental not only for the current

safety and security of the women and children it serves, but it is also helping to prevent the effects of abuse on future generations, and that is absolutely imperative as we work together to break the cycle of domestic violence."

DCF's Office of Domestic Violence and Family Support Services is the primary oversight agency for domestic violence programs in the state of New Jersey. The emphasis of the office is to provide culturally-competent, strength-based, family-friendly services in a manner that is universally accessible and non-stigmatizing to women in need of this assistance.

On July 1, 2012, the New Jersey Division on Women was transferred from the Department of Community Affairs to DCF, making DCF the state's primary agency responsible for domestic and sexual violence programs, as well as other women's services.

For more information on DCF, the Division on Women or domestic and sexual violence programs, visit www.nj.gov/dcf.

For more information on Dottie's House visit www.dottieshouse.org.

NJ Transit Delivers Safe Haven Awareness Across the State thru Transit Messages

The NJ Safe Haven Law allows a parent or his/her designee to anonymously surrender an infant 30 days old or younger to any hospital or police station.

For more information visit www.njsafehaven.org



Serving Constituents: DCF's Office of Advocacy

The Department of Children and Families' Office of Advocacy was established in 2010 to enhance service provision to the children and families we serve, as well as our other constituents such as service providers and stakeholders. The goal of the Office of Advocacy is to provide timely resolution to issues and concerns by providing information, referral services and advocacy support when needed.

There are many different constituent groups that contact the Office of Advocacy. They include state and federal legislators, the Governor's Office of Constituent Relations, community partners, law enforcement, judicial members, residents of New Jersey not involved with DCF but seeking help with a problem, and non-residents, to name a few.

The Office of Advocacy's services are available to any family in New Jersey who calls or writes seeking assistance. The staff provides callers with information on the various programs, services and policies of DCF; assists in case related issues; helps link families to appropriate services; and provides advocacy support.

In addition, the Office of Advocacy provides DCF Executive Management with feedback about trends and systemic matters based on performance data with the intent of improving the delivery system.

The Office of Advocacy can be reached Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. toll-free at 1-877-543-7864 or via email at askdcf@dcf.state.nj.us.

The Office of Advocacy and Horizon Health FSC Work Together to Assist a Victim of Domestic Violence

A mother of two children, ages three and five who was also five months pregnant, contacted DCF's Office of Advocacy (OOA) for assistance with housing. She explained that she was residing in a motel, but she was only able to stay in the motel for two more days because the social service provider was unable to pay for a longer period. The mother had not been involved with DCF in the past.

Her housing situation was caused by a domestic violence incident involving the children's father. OOA provided the mother with many housing and domestic violence resources, including Horizon Health Family Success Center (FSC) in Jersey City. Horizon Health FSC contacted the mother and the

FSC was able to have her motel stay extended. The FSC continued to work with and monitor the mother's housing.

A representative from OOA contacted the mother a short time after her housing had been resolved and she said that the FSC was extremely helpful and sensitive to her situation. She was very thankful for their assistance.



Grants Awarded to Six Counties in Support of New Jersey's Most Vulnerable Children and Families

DCF's Family and Community Partnerships has awarded a total of \$1,680,000 to six counties across the state to develop seven new Family Success Centers (FSC). The counties include Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester, Middlesex, Salem and Union.

"I am truly excited about the expansion of our network of Family Success Centers and how that will translate positively to the children and families we serve," said DCF Commissioner Allison Blake. "The Centers are an effective vehicle for parents not only to access needed services, but a way in which parents can become stewards of their respective communities helping to develop services that work for them and their families."

This expansion brings the total number of Family Success Centers across the state to 49.

To learn more about Family Success Centers, visit www.nj.gov/dcf.

My Life Growing Up and Aging-out of the NJ Foster Care System



By Tony A. Conover, 22 Years Old Rutgers University of New Jersey Class of 2012

If I only had a few words to describe the person I am today, I would probably say that I am "A Walking Contradiction."

During a recent conversation with someone, I shared that I had just graduated from Rutgers University and had double majored in Political Science and Philosophy. This individual was surprised to think that I was interested in Philosophy.

I couldn't help wonder, why? Who wouldn't be eager to learn about history's all-time greatest thinkers? My favorite is Plato because his theory put logic before anything else, and emotion second. Plato once said, "To love rightly is to love what is orderly and beautiful in an educated and disciplined way." These words ultimately became the philosophy by which I was determined to live by.

But here's the catch (or contradiction). I am a product of New Jersey's child welfare system.

According to national statistics, youth who grow up and age out of the foster care system are more likely

to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), become homeless or imprisoned. The latter is what happened to my older brother.

From early on, I experienced many trials and tribulations. I went from home to home, had bouts with the criminal justice system. But when my older brother was imprisoned, I promised myself I would not become another statistic.

That was the turning point in my young life. In his honor, I took up the vocation he loved, computers, and afterwards set my sights on college.

If anyone can appreciate the breadth and depth of success, it is someone who has aged out of the foster care system.

I feel fortunate that the NJ Department of Children and Families created a platform for youth to have a voice - their Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The YAB has provided me the opportunity to work with the state's leadership toward improving the quality of life for other youth in foster care.

When I speak to my peers, I remind them that we are no different than anyone else; it's just that we have had a

different upbringing. I urge them not to let anyone strip away their ambition. Material objects like clothes, a car, or even a home can come and go, but no one can take away your ambition.

As a college graduate, I know that I have succeeded in achieving one of my goals and anticipate there will be many more to come.

So what's next for this walking contradiction?

I will continue to be engaged with, advocate for and give a voice to other youth in the foster care system. I will continue my work with DCF's Youth Advisory Board. My long term goals include earning a Master's in Social Work and a Juris Doctor so that I can one day help develop the very policies that will better support youth in the foster care.

Yet I know, all of this must be done in a logically and orderly fashion: one step at a time.

Plato definitely lives on!

Domestic Violence Liaison Program Expands

The Department of Children and Families' Domestic Violence Liaison (DVL) program is extending its reach throughout the state by adding seven new liaisons to the existing 24 that continue the work of collaboration of cases where there is co-occurrence on child abuse and domestic violence.

The Burlington, Ocean, Cumberland and Gloucester regions will each receive one DVL while two will be hired in Essex and one each in Bergen, Middlesex and Union Counties.

Since hiring the first liaisons in April 2008, the program continues to profoundly affect DCF's daily approach to often times very fragile families. The DVL program helps increase staff awareness of asking relevant questions while creating a better understanding of the responsibilities in child protection and permanency and domestic violence services. At the same time, the relationship between the DVL and the caseworker strengthens communication and coordination between the systems, provides more effective response in co-occurrence situations and ultimately increases safety and stability for children and the non-offending parent.

Do You Have a Story Idea for DCF's Newsletter?

Let us know and your idea may just be featured in a future edition.

Email us:

Communications@dcf.state.nj.us

DCF Employees Participate in a Successful Blood Drive



On Tuesday, August 14, the Department of Children and Families in partnership with the Community Blood Council of New Jersey held a blood drive in Trenton. Many generous DCF employees came out to donate.

Currently, the national blood supply is at a nearly all-time low. Summer tends to be a slow time for blood drives, even though the need for blood always exists. Donating blood is a simple, selfless gift of life that helps ensure a sustained and secure blood supply for all people. While most people expect blood to be available if they should ever need it, only a fraction of those who can give blood really do.

We offer our appreciation and thanks to all those who participated in the blood drive to help save lives.