



Message from the DCF Commissioner

Dear Colleagues,

Since the creation of the Department of Children and Families in Fiscal Year 2007, we have been - and appropriately so - focused almost entirely on child welfare issues. The Department's core mission of ensuring the safety and permanency of children and families continues to be key in every aspect of our work.

And the progress we have made has been evident in many areas - particularly in regards to our work around the Title IV-E Program. In fact, I am pleased to share that in the recent period under review (which ran from October 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011) of the Title IV-E Foster Care eligibility, New Jersey was found to be in substantial compliance with federal regulations.

In other words, New Jersey had absolutely "zero" errors for programmatic determinations demonstrating our commitment to doing right by the children and youth in our foster care system.

This is a great accomplishment and demonstrates the team effort in DCF among case practice, licensing, financial reporting, program review, information technology and our partnership with the courts.

This achievement is validation that with diligence and focus on our mission we can achieve positive outcomes to improve the lives of children and families. I am proud that New Jersey is now recognized as a national model for its administration of the Title IV-E Program.

And we are committed to doing even more!

As you know, this week Governor Christie outlined in his proposed SFY 2013 Budget some very exciting changes to take effect at the Department of Children and Families that will further enhance the services that we currently provide children and families.

In the Governor's own words, "We can improve the organization of state government, its transparency its understandability to the families who need it, who actually interact with it."

The proposed budget is really a "good news" budget for DCF - primarily for the children and families we serve. The proposed plan represents smart government, one that is committed to improving effectiveness, efficiency, eliminating duplication and creating positive outcomes.

Most importantly, the plan allows us to create an effective integrated system of care that will be accessible, flexible and responsive to those we serve.

With the proposed restructuring and realignment of services the Department will be able to offer children and families a wider and comprehensive array of services while providing an easier way to access them than in the past - through a single point of entry.

I hope that you are as excited as I am about the opportunities the proposed plan represents for children and families. To learn more about how New Jersey plans to create a comprehensive child and family-centered Department, I invite you to read more details on what is being proposed, as well as the opinions expressed by some of our community partners, in this special edition Newsletter.

Thank you again for your commitment and dedication on behalf of the children and families we serve.

Warmest regards,



Allison Blake, PhD, LSW
Commissioner

CHRIS CHRISTIE
NJ Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
NJ Lt. Governor

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

"We can improve the organization of state government, its transparency, its understandability to the families who need it, who actually interact with it."

— Chris Christie,
New Jersey Governor

Creating a Division of Child Integrated System of Care Services

Efficiency and Family Centered Care

Using its existing infrastructure, DCF will develop one integrated service delivery system which will incorporate services for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance abuse and behavioral health challenges, and services for youth transitioning into adulthood. An integrated system will provide the opportunity to coordinate services resulting in decreased duplication and increased efficiency and effectiveness, including the opportunity for increased Medicaid funding. The family support network that DCF provides will be an essential part of the service delivery system for all families, decreasing fragmentation and improving outcomes for children and adolescents.

Ending Fragmentation of Services

This new division, an expansion of DCF's current system for children's behavioral health, will improve opportunities for wellness and recovery through the integration of services. Families in need of services currently must reach out to numerous New Jersey departments and agencies. Integration will end the fragmentation of services and supports that have historically been an obstacle to access and quality.

Supporting Children with Developmental Disabilities

The creation of this new integrated system will also provide children with intellectual and developmental disabilities a single point of entry and enhanced access to needed services. Underlying this change is the view that children with developmental disabilities and their families should not be "carved out" of generic supports and/or the systems of care that serve other children and families in New Jersey. Services should be integrated, provided as part

of a continuum, and responsive to the whole child and the whole family.

Beginning July 1, 2012 for residential and in-home behavioral services and on January 1, 2013 for family support services, children with developmental disabilities who enter the system, will be referred to DCF. At age 16, the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), will assess a child for eligibility and provide transitional planning services. All direct services (residential, in-home, behavioral, family support, etc.) will continue to be provided by DCF until age 21. Thus, a child will be dually served by both systems between the ages of 16 and 21, ensuring the opportunity for meaningful and coordinated transition planning so that children and their families can make a seamless transition into adult services. All services after age 21 will be provided by DDD.

Adolescent Treatment Services

The current children's system of care will be broadened to provide an integrated approach to services for adolescents with substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. Addiction services for adolescents up to age 18 and those 18 to 21 already known to DCF will be transitioned to DCF. DHS and DCF will examine existing statute and regulation as related to services for 18 to 21 year olds not in the child protection system or not receiving behavioral health services from DCF. Until such time, 18 to 21 year olds not previously served by DCF prior to age 18 will continue to be served by the DHS Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. As the State has aligned mental health services for adults under DHS and children under DCF, this budget supports the alignment of addiction treatment services for adults and children.

"Children with developmental disabilities are children first, and they and their families belong with the Department of Children and Families. Thus, SPAN strongly supports this move, which will consolidate services for children with mental and developmental disabilities and children with addictions under a new Division of Child Integrated System of Care Services. This move will be particularly beneficial to those children who have both mental health and developmental disabilities."

*– Diana MTK Autin,
Executive Co-Director
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network*

"I believe that with the thoughtful planning that is underway, and with opportunities for stakeholder input, children with developmental disabilities and their families will be better supported by the expanded array of services that will now be provided through the Department of Children and Families"

*– Deborah Spitalnick, Ph.D.,
Executive Director
Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities*

Uniting Women’s Services in the Division of Family and Community Partnerships

The functions of the Division on Women in the Department of Community Affairs will be transferred and integrated into the Division of Family and Community Partnerships, formally known as the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships, within DCF. Bringing the Division on Women together with DCF’s Office of Domestic Violence will better position the department to strengthen families and sharpen its focus on the co-occurrences of child abuse and domestic violence.

Additional services that will be transferred over to DCF include the Sexual Violence Primary Prevention and the Displaced Homemaker Programs. The goal of the Sexual Violence Primary Prevention program is to prevent the perpetration of sexual violence. While the Displaced Homemaker Program focuses on helping women, who have previously been financially dependent on another household member, become self-sufficient. Both programs, which serve women in all twenty-one counties, will continue without interruption through the transition.

In transferring these services to our department, DCF will become the primary state agency responsible for domestic violence and women’s services.

Forming a New Division of Child Protection

Formally known as the Division of Youth and Family Services, the new Division of Child Protection and Permanency will continue to support the core mission of providing safety, permanency and well-being to New Jersey’s most vulnerable children and families. In addition to thoroughly investigating allegations of abuse and neglect, the Division, in partnership with our sister Divisions, will continue to provide support and services to families to enable them to remain together or work towards reunification. When it is not in the child’s best interest to remain in their own home, the Division prioritizes finding life-long permanency with relatives and with forever families near their own communities, schools and supports.

SFY 2013 Proposed Budget Realigning, Streamlining and Restructuring Services for DCF

