



*The Department of Services
For Children, Youth and
Their Families*

NEWS

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NEWS

January 8, 1999

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ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Secretary of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, Thomas P. Eichler appointed an Independent Review Panel on November 13, 1998 to review the circumstances surrounding the October 27, 1998 death of Dejah Foraker. The six-member panel was chaired by Malcolm Cobin, Esquire, Assistant State Solicitor, Office of the Attorney General, State of Delaware (see attachment for complete list).

The Independent Review Panel met seven times to review the case, interview workers and supervisors, police, review court records and transcripts and hear from child advocates who wished to address the Panel. On Friday, January 8, 1999, the Secretary accepted the Panel's final report and recommendations.

"I thank the Panel members for their commitment and their recommendations for continuing improvements to the child protection system in Delaware. The safety of children is always the overriding priority of this Department in all the work we do. The work of the Division of Family Services is central to meeting this priority. Much of what the Panel reports points to inconsistent practice of sound policy. While individual performances in the Foraker case have been addressed through personnel actions, we seek to close the gaps between policy and practice in the field on a broader level," emphasized Secretary Eichler. A summary of the DSCYF Action Plan (attached) includes:

Child Safety

- Secretary Eichler has top DFS leadership focusing exclusively on child safety.
- A consortium of the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and Action for Children will conduct a child safety audit of DFS policies, practices and assessment tools.
- A method of monitoring progress in this area has been put in place.
- Personnel actions have been taken where appropriate.

Substance Abuse

- A philosophical commitment is being taken to ruling substance abuse out, rather than ruling it in, as a factor in a case.
- Improvements for tracking substance abuse requirements and heightened accountability for the client will be implemented.

- Contractual capacity to accommodate increased urine screens.
- The safety audit by the consortium will include the assessment tool, how substance abuse and other risk factors are weighted and how it should be completed.

Attachment

DSCYF Division of Family Services Action Plan January 8, 1999

Child Safety

completion date: April 1, 1999

During this Administration, the Division has seen significantly increased resources to support services that ensure child safety: equipment, staffing, technology, policy, training, practice review, partnering with other members of the child protection system, and most recently recruitment and retention support. Child safety is the overriding priority of the Department, not only of this particular division.

- Effective 12/14/98, top DFS leadership is focusing exclusively on child safety to close gaps between policies and consistent practice:
 - consistent application of best practices for safety of children will be met at all field locations;
 - timely case decisions and appropriate caseloads;
 - definition of the Office of Children's Services: expectations, resources, accountabilities;
 - recruitment of an Office of Children's Services Administrator.
- DSCYF has asked a consortium of National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and Action for Children to conduct a child safety audit of DFS policies, practices and risk assessment tools and make recommendations to enhance our focus on child safety.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between DFS and law enforcement agencies outlining working relationships on joint cases has been in place. On November 17, 1998, Secretary Eichler, Attorney General Jane Brady and the Chiefs of Police Departments in Delaware signed an updated MOU. Weekly meetings with at least one law enforcement agency have been taking place. Other law enforcement agencies will join these weekly meetings beginning in January 1999.
- Concerns related to substance abuse are addressed later in this document under Substance Abuse.

Caseworker continuity

completion date: see below

The Panel report cites the Foraker case as passing through the hands of three different supervisors and four different workers. The handling of the Foraker case was not in compliance with DFS policy. DFS practice expectations mirror the recommendations for improved transfer of information. This was reemphasized in a directive on 12/24/ 98 and is monitored through “hands on” reviews by supervisors and management personnel.

- DSCYF is committed to best practice in the area of child protection and is engaging a consortium of the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and Action for Children to conduct a child safety audit which will include case “hand off” and communication practices.

completion date: April 1, 1999

- DFS staff have been directed to document the appropriate transfer of information in the case record, and that documentation will be a focus of supervisor and management review.

completion date: underway

- All within DSCYF concur that having experienced staff in investigation and treatment is critical to quality in child protection services. The most recent efforts to recruit and retain staff included in last year’s budget act are being implemented.

completion date: underway

Supervision

completion date: underway

- The Panel report calls attention to the importance of supervision in child protection services. Where performance of staff did not meet practice expectations, appropriate personnel actions have been taken.
- DFS practice requires that supervisors have conferences with each worker and review all cases on a weekly basis, and that they have conversations on urgent case issues as they arise. This was reiterated in a 12/24/98 memo and will be a focus of case reviews.

Assessment

completion date: April 1, 1999

- The child safety audit to be conducted by the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and Action for Children will include the risk assessment tool (nationally accepted and produced by Action for Child Protection): the tool, how it weights substance abuse and other risk factors, and how it should be completed.

Substance abuse**completion date: April 1, 1999**

Delaware's child welfare waiver is focused on substance abuse and its impact on families. The waiver has been used to partner certified substance abuse counselors in DFS treatment units since 1996. Early evaluation of that project shows up to 80% of families receiving protective treatment services from DFS have substance abuse as a factor. DFS workers also have been receiving training on substance abuse through a three day course provided by a certified substance abuse counselor.

- As part of the child safety audit, the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and Action for Children will review the training provided and current practice regarding substance abuse as it is considered by investigation and treatment workers.
- DFS is committed to a philosophy of "ruling out" rather than "ruling in" substance abuse as a factor in a case. DFS is working with DADAMH and Medicaid representatives to improve the timeliness and access to evaluations of DFS clients, as well as working with a laboratory to assure capacity is in place for the resulting increase in the number of urine screens.

Court orders**completion date: April 1, 1999**

- DFS will work with the court to ensure timely and correct information is entered into the electronic FACTS record used by DFS workers.
- DFS is not in the practice of using the term "protective supervision" and is in full agreement that it be eliminated from the language used by all parties involved in the legal determination of custody hearings.



*The Department of Services
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For release: February 5, 1999

contact: Trish Hearn

302-633-2504

SECRETARY EICHLER PROVIDES UPDATE ON CHILD SAFETY

Wilmington, DE - The Secretary of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, Thomas P. Eichler today updated key partners on the Child Safety focus in the Division of Family Services (DFS). The briefing was sponsored by the DFS Advisory Committee Co-Chairs Joseph Dell'Olio and Shirley Cupery.

In December 1998, Secretary Eichler issued a directive that DFS management focus exclusively on child safety to close the gap between Division policies and practice in the field. The objectives include consistent application of best practice at all field locations, and manageable caseloads. Secretary Eichler expects the objectives to be met by April 1, 1999.

Additional steps to assuring child safety through DFS practices include a more aggressive substance abuse policy; and a child safety audit of DFS policies, practices, assessment tools, training and communication issues by a national consortium. (see attachment)

"We have clearly defined performance expectations with staff. Each week we review performance on timely casework, quality casework and manageable caseloads. That progress will be posted in the field locations. I will continue to meet with staff in the field to be sure they understand the expectations and that I understand their challenges," said Secretary Eichler. "It comes down to the people on the front line doing challenging work with a deep sense of commitment, who are sometimes criticized and often underappreciated. They deserve our support."

Child Safety Update

Performance

To monitor performance, the Division is tracking key indicators such as

- initial contacts completed,
- assessments and plans in place, and
- overall case disposition.

That data is reviewed weekly by Secretary Eichler and Division management, and posted in field offices. In addition:

- Weekly supervisor-worker case reviews are underway.
- Another 150 cases a month are pulled at random and reviewed by management.
- The Office of Case Management looks at more than 600 cases each quarter.

The resulting information is fed back to supervisors and workers for corrective or disciplinary action.

Caseloads

Immediate steps to alleviate high caseloads include:

- reassigning positions and staff,
- deploying central office staff to help field operations
- employing former workers on a part-time basis
- expansion of contracts for services to low risk clients

Longer term DFS is starting to benefit from retention efforts and overhiring authority provided through the General Assembly last year.

Child Safety Audit

The National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and Action for Children will conduct a child safety audit of DFS to include:

- policies,
- practices,
- assessment tools,
- substance abuse,
- training and
- communication issues.

Substance Abuse

- The Division expects workers to assume that substance abuse is present until they rule it out.
- If a child has been removed from the home and substance abuse is a safety factor, the child not will not be returned until a substance abuse evaluation is complete and recommendations are in hand.
- In addition, Delaware Health and Social Services is assisting in making substance evaluations and information more accessible.
 - Parents will sign a waiver allowing DFS access to information.
 - Substance abuse evaluations will be scheduled within 48 hours.
 - Written recommendations to DFS within two weeks.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, February 5, 1999

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ART ON THE LOOP TO DISPLAY WORK OF FERRIS SCHOOL STUDENTS

*Ferris School Students' Artwork to be on display
at Family Court Building through month of February*

Today, an exhibition of artwork created by Ferris School students opened with an evening reception at the Family Court Building in Wilmington. The exhibit was made possible by a program partnership between Ferris School/Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, the Ferris Ad Hoc Art Committee and Family Court. Parents of the students were also invited to the reception. This is the first time Art on the Loop has included art by students from Ferris School. Thirty-five youth from the level five secure program devoted hundreds of hours preparing their work for the exhibit.

"This program has proven itself a good fit for our focus on preparing Ferris School students to be productive in the community." stated Thomas P. Eichler, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. "Our goal for the youth at Ferris School is a total learning environment where youth learn positive alternatives to negative behavior and receive needed education and therapeutic services. The art program moves us closer to that goal."

Chief Judge Vincent Poppiti of Family Court said that, "Family Court has been pleased to host the creative work of artists for the Wilmington Art Loop for the past two years. I am particularly pleased that we will host the work of these young people. I sincerely hope that this inaugural exhibit teaches these young artists that their creative energy represents the best hope for our community always in search of a better quality of life.

"I am convinced that the nurturing of the arts in our young people represents the strongest way to teach self-respect and respect for others. I hope this is the first of many opportunities to highlight the bright side of these young people."

Carl Schnee, Esq., Chairman of the Ferris Ad Hoc Art Committee, and member Janet LeBan of the Delaware Center for Justice, have championed the art program since the opening of the new Ferris School in 1997.

The mission of the Therapeutic Fine Arts Program is to expose the youth of Ferris School to the performing and visual arts in an effort to increase creative development and build self-esteem, while providing an opportunity for emotional management and improvement of problem solving and communication skills.

Ferris School is a maximum secure care facility for juveniles adjudicated delinquent and committed by Family Court or Superior Court. It provides a state-of-the-art rehabilitative environment for 72 youth in two residential units. A youth's day, from wake-up to bed-time is structured to provide learning opportunities. This total learning environment integrates all elements of the rehabilitative environment, including the normative behavioral programs, the school program and the therapeutic clinical programs, to provide an individualized, comprehensive positive learning experience for each youth.

All youth residing at Ferris School will participate in the program. The 5-week visual and theater arts program accommodates 24 youth at a time. Instructors include Marietta Dantonio, Joel Keener, and Charles Conaway of the Delaware Theater Company education program. The Committee received funding from Laffey-McHugh Foundation, the Delaware Community Foundation and Very Special Arts.

The artwork will be on display at Family Court for public viewing through the month of February.



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For Immediate release
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Contact: Trish Hearn
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1999 Delaware Prevention Forum

Village Awards - Accepting Nominations

The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families is holding its 9th Annual Prevention Forum, a three day development sessions on April 19 - 21st in Dewey Beach. The Forum is also an opportunity to recognize individuals who have rendered outstanding service in the field of prevention. The Department is currently accepting nominations for its Village Award. To be eligible a person or group must have made a significant contribution to the field of prevention.

There are two categories of awards:

- Build the Village: for persons making their impact through planning, administering or leading prevention program efforts and
- Live the Village: for those who actually implement successful and effective prevention programming

These awards offer a chance to give some public recognition and appreciation to special persons who do vital prevention work in the community - work too seldom recognized and appreciated. Awards will be presented at the Prevention Forum.

Nomination forms are available by calling the Department's Office of Prevention at 892-4500. Nominations are due by March 26, 1999.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 19, 1999

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Governor Introduces New Child Abuse and Neglect Education Program

(Wilmington) Governor Thomas R. Carper and Thomas P. Eichler, Secretary of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families, joined school personnel at Warner Elementary School for the introduction of a new child abuse and neglect education program. The Governor's also proclaimed April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, encouraging Delawareans to *Protect Our Future - Report Child Abuse and Neglect ... "The Hurt Lasts a Life Time."*

"The abuse and neglect of children impacts all of us by contributing to the violence in our families and communities. Protecting children is the responsibility of all Delaware citizens: neighbors, relatives and family members as well as the professionals who interact with children," said Governor Carper. "I ask Delaware citizens to take their responsibility to protect children from abuse and neglect seriously by reporting their suspicions to the Children's Department report line - 1-800-292-9582."

This was the first of many training sessions targeting school personnel, law enforcement, medical professionals, day care providers and other professionals throughout the state. This professional training program includes a 20 minute video and a guide book that highlights child abuse laws, signs of abuse and neglect, how to report abuse as well as what happens once it is reported. The video was developed and produced by the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families and features a collaborative investigation with the New Castle County Police and Alfred I. DuPont Institute. Professionals, organizations, and citizens may obtain free brochures and borrow a video by calling 892-4505, or schedule a formal training session by calling 633-2695.

"Last year, the Department's Division of Family Services investigated 6,384 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. In 32% of the cases there was enough evidence to substantiate the report. Schools, more than any other institution, have direct care and interaction with children on a daily basis," noted Secretary Eichler.

"The Department is committed to improving our response to child abuse and neglect. We are inviting schools, the medical community, and others to schedule training through our agency to strengthen our ability to protect children.



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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, April 12, 1999

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FERRIS SCHOOL RECEIVES ACCREDITATION

Today, the American Correctional Association (ACA) presented Governor Thomas R. Carper and Secretary Thomas P. Eichler with an award of accreditation for Ferris School. The ACA is an organization which establishes national standards for the operation of adult and juvenile correctional facilities. Ferris School met compliance with 431 standards established by the ACA. These standards cover five categories: Administration (agency organization, fiscal and personnel training); Physical Plant (building and safety codes and environmental conditions); Institutional Operation (safety and emergency procedures); Facility Services (meals and health care); and Juvenile Services (orientation, education, visitation).

There are three institutions within the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services: the New Castle County Detention Center, Stevenson House, and Ferris School. All three are now accredited by the ACA. In addition, the education programs at Ferris School and the New Castle County Detention Center are now accredited by the Mid-Atlantic States Association.

Governor Carper stated that, " We owe it to our youth--and our communities --to rehabilitate juvenile offenders. Restructuring Ferris School was a priority when I took office. This was an upgrade not only of bricks and mortar, but of the work force, the education and treatment program, the school culture and outcomes for the youth at Ferris School. Ferris is

now a high-quality institution providing youth with a solid second chance."

According to Thomas P. Eichler, Cabinet Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, "The ACA accreditation process is an extremely rigorous undertaking that assures we are achieving our goal of providing the best rehabilitative environment possible for seriously delinquent youth."

Ferris School is a maximum secure care facility for juveniles adjudicated delinquent and committed by Family Court or Superior Court. It provides a state-of-the art rehabilitative environment for 72 youth in two residential units. A youth's day, from wake-up to bedtime is structured to provide learning opportunities. This total learning environment includes the normative behavioral programs, the school program, and the therapeutic clinical programs.

Accreditation is one of several most recent successes for Ferris School. The HOSTS program, a school mentoring program partnered by Ferris School and DuPont Company employees, was recognized for excellence at the International HOSTS Conference this winter. According to an impact study by the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, young people with mentors compared with young people in a research group--were:

- 53 percent less likely to skip school;
- 48 percent less likely to use violence;
- 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs; and
- 37 percent less likely to skip a class.

Artwork produced by youth in the Ferris School Art Program was exhibited in the Family Court Building as part of Wilmington's monthly "Art on the Loop" in February. Interscholastic sports including football, basketball and wrestling are now a regular part of the Ferris School program with youth competing against local area high schools.



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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TERRY CENTER AND SILVER LAKE CONSORTIUM AWARDED ACCREDITATION FROM JOINT COMMISSION

(New Castle, DE) Governor Carper commended the accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations of two Division of Child Mental Health Services (DCMHS) treatment programs, the Terry Children's Psychiatric Center and the Silver Lake Treatment Consortium. The Governor also joined Thomas P. Eichler, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, in presenting the DCMHS Employee of the Year award to Nicholas Dello Buono, a Youth Activity Worker at the Terry Center.

"In becoming accredited, these two programs were evaluated against a set of national standards by a Joint Commission surveyor experienced in the delivery of behavioral health care services," said Mary Cesare-Murphy, Ph.D., executive director, Behavioral Health Care Program, Joint Commission. "Achieving accreditation demonstrates their commitment to providing high quality care to their clients."

Thomas P. Eichler, DSCYF Secretary, said that accreditation shows that "we make a significant investment in quality on a day-by-day basis from the top down. We seek accreditation for our programs, because we want them to be the best, and we view obtaining Joint Commission accreditation as another step toward excellence."

Governor Carper noted that such an accomplishment is attainable only through cooperation and commitment among staff members. "Staff members at Silver Lake and Terry Center played a vital role in working to meet the standards. They should be proud of their individual contributions, proud of their teamwork, and proud that they work in an accredited organization. We expect the best from our state employees, and the staff of these programs are great examples of the dedication found in state workers throughout Delaware."

Dello Buono, who has worked at Terry Center for 5 years, received DCMHS' Employee of the Year Award for implementing a new approach to youth activity planning.

"Mr. Dello Buono has led Terry Center's efforts to keep their residential clients involved in community activities. He is truly dedicated to helping these children reach their fullest potential," stated Julian R. Taplin, Ph.D., DCMHS Director.



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 16, 1999

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Ferris School tapped as nation’s model facility **in national juvenile justice report**

--Coalition for Juvenile Justice heralds Ferris for accountability and rehabilitation initiatives--

WILMINGTON - A new report released today examines the programming and philosophy of Wilmington's Ferris School for Boys and heralds the facility as a national model for rehabilitating even the most serious juvenile offenders. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) 1999 Annual Report found that juvenile justice programs that hold offenders accountable and provide rehabilitative, educational and health care services are highly successful in reducing recidivism.

At a press conference this morning in the Ferris library, CJJ Executive Director David Doi, Governor Thomas R. Carper, and Ferris Superintendent Diane Gadow discussed how the school literally has remade itself. A 1990 lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) charged that Ferris was overcrowded, unsanitary and life-threatening. Under Governor Carper's Administration, the state dropped the fight with the ACLU and collaborated to secure funds for a new facility. The state razed the old building, built a new facility and hired better trained staff. Ferris now runs a behavior modification program emphasizing peer support and confrontation. Its school is nationally accredited, and enlists volunteers from the DuPont Company to serve as mentors, some of whom attended the press conference.

"Ferris has done what others should do: create a tough program that makes kids take responsibility for their mistakes while preparing them to function as safe and responsible citizens after their eventual release," said Doi.

Governor Carper stressed his Administration's commitment to providing secure facilities where juveniles will be held accountable and rehabilitated.

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"My Administration has made improving our youth rehabilitation system a top priority," Carper said. "We are providing juvenile offenders the educational and counseling services they need to become straight, successful and productive adults, while also ensuring better and more secure facilities."

Ain't No Place Anybody Would Want to Be, CJJ's Annual Report to Congress and the President, examines conditions of juvenile confinement nationwide. It presents strong evidence of the benefits of preserving the rehabilitative focus of America's juvenile court system, which reaches its centennial this year. Its release comes while juvenile crime is decreasing nationwide, but policy makers' response to it is increasingly punitive, with little emphasis on rehabilitation.

CJJ, a national nonprofit organization comprising juvenile justice advisory groups in the states and territories, is forging an effective response to juvenile crime and delinquency by focusing on prevention and balancing the needs of communities with those of young offenders. In addition to Ferris, the report profiles: the District of Columbia Jail, an adult facility with inadequate services for youth; the Giddings State Home and School, an exemplary Texas institution; and one of the nation's oldest juvenile institutions, the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) in Chicago.

"When centers that confine juveniles are safe, humane and rehabilitative it's a win-win — both the public and children benefit," said David Doi, CJJ Executive Director. "Youthful offenders are not super-predators to be locked away and forgotten. Policy makers and the public should, therefore, function as super-protectors — of both society and children."

The CJJ report presents data on specific programs that are effective. For example, at Giddings, of 90 youth who, as part of their rehabilitation, recently completed the Capital Offenders' Group, an intense 100-day specialized treatment program emphasizing group therapy, only six have been rearrested for violent offenses, none for murder. None of the 262 juveniles who participated in the Sex Offenders Program has been arrested for a violent sex offense. Giddings, operated by the Texas Youth Authority, uses a philosophy that forcing offenders to be emotionally accountable, to hear from victims, and to confront their actions is harder than rotting away in a cell. The Giddings program instills behavioral change and discipline through rigorous education, counseling, athletic, life and vocational training programs.

The magnitude of the decisions about how to treat young people is reflected in the numbers of juveniles in the court system. Every day in the United States, approximately 120,000¹ juveniles are being held in custody. Of those, nearly 10 percent are held in adult facilities.

The trend to emphasize punishment over rehabilitation is especially disturbing because less than one-third of juveniles are "in the system" for violent offenses; most are confined for property crimes, drugs and technical violations. The punitive trend coupled with the failure to incorporate community-based alternatives to detention is leading to severe overcrowding. In fact, almost three-fourths of incarcerated youth are in overcrowded facilities. This leads to myriad problems: lack of professionally trained staff; tension and

(more)

hostility among detainees; substandard health care; and inadequate security are among the most basic.

Juveniles detained in adult facilities or substandard youth centers generally lack education and counseling services, which are vital to functioning effectively upon release. In addition, they are five times more likely to be sexually assaulted and eight times more likely to commit suicide.

CJJ says the trend to lock up juveniles at earlier ages for an increasing variety of offenses takes an especially high toll on minority youth. According to one federal government study, minorities comprise nearly two-thirds of the juveniles held in public detention centers and long-term facilities. And African American youth are nearly twice as likely to be transferred to adult court than are white youths.

CJJ presents recommendations for improving conditions of juvenile confinement to the President, Congress, Attorney General, state legislators, the American public and the media. Among them the CJJ asks:

- ◆ Congress to encourage states and localities to conduct effective early intervention and prevention programs, and to experiment with innovative and humane detention and incarceration models;
- ◆ Congress to establish and the Attorney General to enforce minimum federal standards for juvenile detention facilities;
- ◆ Congress to alleviate overcrowding by not only funding *more* facilities, but supporting *alternatives to incarceration*; and
- ◆ State policy makers to cease using juvenile justice as a political issue and instead promote safe, secure, humane and rehabilitative facilities for youths in detention.

“Despite increasingly severe punishment touted by policy makers, a recent poll shows that the public believes that no child or teen is beyond redemption,” said Doi. “The American public needs to know that the juvenile justice system is turning kids' lives around.”

The CJJ acknowledges John Hubner and Jill Wolfson, the team that researched and authored *Ain't No Place Anybody Would Want To Be*. Hubner is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, currently on the staff of the *San Jose Mercury News*. Wolfson is a freelance writer who specializes in child welfare and juvenile justice issues. They co-authored the 1997 book on juvenile justice, *Somebody Else's Children — The Courts, the Kids, the Struggle to Save America's Troubled Families*.

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¹ This number has been updated from the 87,000 referenced in the report due to the release of new Bureau of Justice Statistics data.

FACTS ABOUT THE NEW FERRIS SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Established May 15, 1997

General Description of the Facility

The new Ferris School for Boys is a juvenile care facility which provides maximum security in a cost-effective state -of-the-art rehabilitative environment. This new secure care facility provides living and learning space for 72 youth in two residential clusters. The residential clusters are designed to facilitate a Total Learning Environment. In addition to the residential clusters, the new Ferris School has seven classrooms, a vocational education laboratory, a gymnasium, a library, and a life skills laboratory. Programming began in the facility May 15, 1997.

Population of youth committed to the new Ferris School

- Family Court adjudicated youth up to their 18th birthday.
- Superior Court sentenced youth below 16 years of age. Superior Court sentenced youth over the age of 16 are served by the Department of Corrections in the separate Young Criminal Offender program.
- The male population at the Ferris School range in age from 12 to 18 years (less than 10% are 14 or younger).
- Youth sent to Ferris School are serious offenders who have failed at other placements or program options offered to them through the Division. They require intense rehabilitative programming and specialized treatment for substance abuse, mental illness, sexual deviancy, violence and aggression.
- Many of the Ferris youth have educational deficiencies:
 - Approximately 50% of the students have been identified as disabled in accordance with the State and federal regulations for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
 - Approximately 60% of the population is special education identified.
 - 40% of the Ferris regular education students scored between a 4th and 7th grade reading and math level.
 - More than 50% of the special education students scored below a 4th grade reading and math level.

The Vision for the new Ferris School

The vision for the new Ferris School is a safe and secure facility established and maintained to allow for a total learning environment. Norms have been established that reflect appropriate behavior, respect for one another, and a focus on academic growth and self improvement. This is the foundation for the culture within the Ferris community. Every contact with a youth is seen as a teachable moment. The goal is to provide opportunities for youth that they have missed in the community.

The program is highly structured with strict youth behavior accountability. The expectation is that youth will be sanctioned for behaviors and lock-down/room confinement is not used as discipline. This allows for a hundred percent participation of youth in all programming.

Steps taken to date to begin the realization of the vision for the new Ferris School

- In 1995, through a workforce transition, a requirement of a Bachelors Degree in Behavioral Science was established for all direct care staff to enhance the delivery of programs and services.
- In 1997, this school achieved Middle States Accreditation. Ferris is the first maximum secure care facility in the mid Atlantic states to receive this certification.
- In 1998, Ferris School received American Correctional Association certification.
- In November of 1999, Ferris was licensed as an Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) program through the State licensing agency (Division of Alcoholism, Drug Abuse and Mental Health, Delaware Health and Social Services).
- DYRS was awarded a federal Residential Substance Abuse Treatment grant totaling \$87,000 to further develop AOD programming.

Putting the School Back in Ferris School

- The environment within the facility is very structured and seen as safe and secure which allows students to participate fully in the program.
- Academically significant increases have been measured:
 - Youth are averaging 2.5 grade level increase in Language Arts and Math,
 - Youth are able to return to public school with six academic credits, and
 - Of 31 students taking a GED test in the last year, 24 have passed.
- A successful partnership with the DuPont Company, neighbors across the road, has been through the HOSTS Mentoring Program. Fifty-five DuPont employees have volunteered as mentors working with Ferris students on an individual basis in Language Arts and Math. The mentoring contributes greatly to the academic growth of youth at Ferris School. This program has received the Governor's award for Volunteer Program of the Year and the DuPont Company's volunteer award.
- The Fine Arts program supported by the Community Arts Council has provided visual arts and theater program to the students. Through this program, youth produced art that was displayed or won awards at:
 - The Art Summit Conference in Dover, Delaware
 - The Delaware Junior Duck Stamp contest (ten winners).
 - The HIV poster contest sponsored by the Peoples Settlement (placed),
 - The Art on the Loop night in Wilmington in February 1999, and
 - The United Nations Millennium Exhibit in New York.
- The Ferris School youth participate in inter-scholastics in football, wrestling, and basketball.
- All youth participate in a 60-day transition program to allow successful re-entry into the community in the areas of school, family, work, and community.

- A victims' empathy program has been established through a partnership with Delaware Center for Justice that gives youth face-to-face contact with victims of crime so they may realize the impact of criminal activity on individuals.

Ferris School is a dynamic program that has seen success with this youth population and it is through the commitment and hard work of all staff and faculty at the agency. They share a common goal of providing resources and programming needed to youth for successful entry into the community.



Seen and Heard

A Newsletter of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

February 1999

Letter From The Secretary

The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) is deeply committed to saving the lives of children in the State of Delaware and ensuring that we do everything possible under our mandate to protect them from abuse and neglect. Simply put, staff in this department want to do all that they can so that children can live their lives being children and not have to worry about emotional or physical pain.

The tragedies of three children that struck this department in the past two years has driven us to examine again how we do business. The learning curve on dealing with abuse and neglect is never over. The stress on families change, conditions in society change and how we respond to those issues will continue to change. We must be constantly vigilant to a better way of doing business.

On February 5, 1999, I briefed members of the DFS Advisory Committee, the Child Protection Accountability Commission, Legislature and advocacy and media organizations to share with them our findings following an examination of our practices. The following are my remarks (Editor's Note: an * denotes updated information since 2/5/99):

Child Safety

The safety of children is the top priority in all that we do within the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. Nowhere is this more the case than within the Division of Family Services and within its Office of Children's Services where the work of protecting children from abuse and neglect is a 24 hour a day job.

I want to take this opportunity to review with you what we are doing to assure that this work is being as effective as we can make it in serving our children. I will not recite all the many steps that have taken place to enable the Division to perform this challenging work. Most people are familiar with what has been done to equip and train staff; to add positions; to address personnel needs; and to sharpen our laws to allow us to be more aggressive on behalf of protecting children.

In spite of all of these steps, there still are serious gaps between DFS policies which have been set for



Shirley Cupery, Chair of the Foster Care Review Board, DFS Deputy Director Peggy Timko and Joseph Dell'Olio, Executive Director of Child, Inc. (not shown) joined Secretary Eichler to announce revamping of DFS service delivery system

child safety and their consistent practice in the field with regard to both investigation of abuse reports and subsequent delivery of treatment services. I have no doubt that over time these deficiencies will be addressed as training, practice reviews, and experience are gained.

However, the urgency of our achieving the highest possible level of performance will not allow for incremental improvement where the safety of children is the objective.

In December, with the findings of our internal review of the Dejah Foraker case in hand, as well as other information I receive which monitors our performance, I issued a directive requiring that top DFS management focus exclusively on child safety practices until performance reaches appropriate standards. It is my expectation that this can be accomplished by April 1.

To facilitate this exclusive safety focus, I further directed that the Division's offices of prevention and case management report directly to me for the duration of this period. In short, it is not business as usual - we are focused, and we are making progress.

Let me briefly review with you the objectives on which we are focused:

Consistent application of best practices for safety of children to be met in all field locations

Four key safety elements for investigating cases have been identified and are being monitored on a weekly basis: initial contacts completed timely, dispositions completed timely, safety assessments, and safety plans completed.

*For the week of February 8-12:

- 100% of the safety plans were completed on schedule;
- 73% of the initial contacts were completed within schedule;
- 68% of the cases were completed on time, up 20% over the previous week.

Three key safety elements for treatment cases have been identified: completed diagnostic profiles, completed case plans, completed plans for child in care.

*For the week of February 8-12:

- 92% of the profiles were completed on time;
- 85% of the case plans; and
- 87% of the plans for child in care.

In addition, we are expecting supervisors to review with each worker, each case, on a regular basis, usually weekly.

*For the week of February 8-12:

- supervisor reviews were held with 98% of the workers, up 10%;
- and they covered 76% of the cases, up 12%.

We are mindful of quality throughout this effort. Managing these challenging cases is more than going through the process. DFS management is reviewing some 150 active cases per month to assure that sound judgment is being reflected in cases. That is in addition to the several hundred cases which the Office of Case Management looks at each quarter in their quality reviews.

We have definite progress, with more still needed. What gets measured, gets done. These reports will be posted in all our DFS field offices.

Another objective in my December safety directive is the distribution of caseloads per worker in keeping with reasonable practice expectations.

At this time, caseloads are within standards in Kent and Sussex county units, but they are too high in our two New Castle units. It is not that the number of new cases has gone up but that those units have been hit with staff turnover. The resulting redistribution of cases has driven up caseloads. The staff turnover included normal vacancies, coupled with several medical leaves, and some turnover which often occurs after we experience high profile cases.

Several steps have been taken to alleviate this caseload situation including the reassigning of positions and staff, deploying some central office staff to help field operations, and tapping some former staff members to give us some part time help.

These measures are having their effect of bringing down caseloads. Meantime, 19 new staff entered new worker training in December and have completed their core training. They are now beginning to lend a hand

and more important, veteran staff can see a longer term solution to the present problem.

We had hoped that we had seen the end of these periodic caseload crises. Last year the General Assembly implemented a recommendation of the Child Protection Accountability Commission in creating a new, high level step on our career ladder to help retain veteran staff, and offer an incentive to which newer staff might aspire. Today there are 26 Family Crisis Therapists in these positions, with more applying. But it has just begun.

Likewise, the Legislature has given us a unique authority to anticipate turnover by over-hiring up to 15 positions more than we actually have vacancies. This too, has gone through its necessary start up and we are presently recruiting. In the future this should give us a necessary cushion.

Safety Audit

Our safety focus also includes an outside expert look at our policies, practices, and tools for how they address safety. We are bringing in the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment to conduct a "safety audit." Under the scope of services, they will look at policies, practices, assessment tools, substance abuse and training. We expect to have the benefit of their work by April. We look forward to sharing their findings with you.

Substance Abuse

Finally, let me address substance abuse and child abuse. Nationally, and in Delaware, 50 to 80% of families served in child protective services are negatively affected by drugs or alcohol. Parenting responsibilities can be severely affected by abuse and addiction.

We are deliberately shifting our expectation to one of assuming that substance abuse is a factor in families unless and until further investigation tells us otherwise.

· Memorandum of Understanding

To make that work, we are working closely with our colleagues at the Department of Health and Social

Services to overcome the barriers that have

complicated this issue. *With their help we have:

- developed an iron clad release to be signed by parents to allow our staff to engage in the process;
- gained 72 hour access to substance abuse assessments by the Medicaid managed care network, instead of the weeks that it some times has taken;
- we will expect the substance abuse agency to notify us of no shows;
- we will transport clients to the clinic if necessary;
- we will expect an assessment of drug and alcohol problems within two weeks which will be shared with the client and the case worker;
- from there we will be in a position to determine a course of action which provides for the safety of children.

· Policy

I look forward to completing a memorandum of agreement on these steps with our sister agency shortly. Meantime, if a child is removed from the home and parental substance abuse is a safety factor, the child will not be returned to the home until the substance abuse evaluation is completed and recommendations are available.

These are the steps that are underway now to close the gap between our policies for child safety and our performance. We will continue to monitor and report our performance. I am meeting daily with Deputy Director Peggy Timko. I am in contact with staff to be sure they fully understand the expectations, and so that I can appreciate the challenges they face.

Ultimately, the job gets accomplished by 127 case workers and their direct supervisors doing this challenging work with a deep sense of commitment, staff who are sometimes criticized and often under-appreciated. They deserve our support.

In conclusion - we are focused on safety. We are tracking our progress and are committed to meeting our standards. It is not business as usual. We are committed to assuring the performance that the safety of children requires.

*For further information on DSCYF services,
please see our web site at www.state.de.us/kids.*

DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES

FAMILY CRISIS THERAPISTS

Last year the General Assembly implemented a recommendation of the Child Protection Accountability Commission to help retain veteran staff and provide an incentive for new workers to aspire to continue working in investigation and treatment of child abuse and neglect. This allows for enhanced compensation for workers achieving the status of Family Crisis Therapist. Today there are 26 DFS members who have achieved that status:

University Plaza Investigation	Nicole Haeckel	<i>hired 8/14/95</i>	BAS - Criminal Justice
	Nancy Rybinski	<i>hired 4/16/90</i>	BSED - Education/Sociology
University Plaza Treatment	Cathy Sebok	<i>hired 11/16/93</i>	BA - Sociology/Psychology
	Elizabeth Malgieri	<i>hired 9/1/92</i>	BSHR - Individual & Family Studies
	Susan Zielinski	<i>hired 8/14/95</i>	BS - Sociology (BAAS)
	Jacquelyn Saunders	<i>hired 2/12/96</i>	BS - Psychology/HR Management
University Plaza Multi-Function	Elizabeth Jennings	<i>hired 2/16/88</i>	BA - Social Scicence
	Steven Jennings	<i>hired 7/16/93</i>	BS - Sociology
Elwyn Institute Treatment	Laurie Laliberte	<i>hired 10/1/92</i>	BA - Sociology/Social Welfare
Elwyn Institute Multi-Function	Joanne Rule	<i>hired 4/16/92</i>	BS - Psychology
	Joyce Pierce	<i>hired 3/1/93</i>	BSW
Powder Mill	Anne Pedrick	<i>hired 11/16/92</i>	BS - Behavioral Science; Master's - Community Counseling
Kent Treatment	Linda Schimp	<i>hired 11/18/91</i>	BS - Psychology
	Sondra Satterfield	<i>hired 2/1/89</i>	BS - Criminal Justice/MSW
Sussex Investigation	Stacy Northam-Smith	<i>hired 6/17/91</i>	BS - Criminal Justice
	Cynthia Stevenson	<i>hired 3/16/93</i>	BA - Sociology/Psyc, Crim. Jus.;
	Robert Svoboda	<i>hired 8/14/95</i>	Master's Psychology
	Showell, Carolyn	<i>hired 5/2/95</i>	MS - Education/Administration
Sussex Treatment	Lisa Barrall	<i>hired 3/1/95</i>	BSW
	Rosalyn Stancell	<i>hired 4/16/85</i>	BA - Social Worker
	Jennifer Sammons	<i>hired 2/27/96</i>	BS - Behavioral Science
Afterhours - New Castle County	Bridgette Saulsbury	<i>hired 4/3/95</i>	BA - Psychology/History
	Joellen Kimmey	<i>hired 11/16/93</i>	BA - Psychology
	Stewart Benn	<i>hired 8/14/95</i>	BA - Psychology
	Edna Cale	<i>hired 5/16/88</i>	BSW/Psychology minor
Kent County	Thomas Stanton	<i>hired 7/16/86</i>	BS - Criminal Justice