

**MINUTES**  
**Division of Family Services**  
**Advisory & Advocacy Council Meeting**  
**January 21, 2010**

**Attendees:** Julia Pearce, Mary Lou Edgar, Mike Kersteter, Rita Paige, Rosalie Morales, Leslie Newman, Sue Dougherty, Laura Miles, Rodney Brittingham, Joseph Smack.

Meeting called to order at 10:05 am.

**Opening Comments** – Julia welcomed the Council members and asked for them to review and approve the minutes from the October meeting.

**Approval of Minutes from prior meeting** – Approved with one revision. Mike reported that Whatcoat Shelter Services and Abriendo Puertas had merged into People’s Place II service array.

**DFS Update** – Laura thanked the Council for their support and provided an update on DFS. As part of the state budget reductions, DFS put forth five vacant positions for reduction from the employee complement in Fiscal Year 09 and ten positions in FY10. The Office of Management and Budget has asked for an additional ten positions in the current fiscal year to be reduced. (see attached budget breakdown for FY 11).

Laura highlighted current vacancies and hiring status. The Department is required to submit any requests to fill vacancies and that they are vetted by the Office of Management and Budget. Laura stated that investigation caseloads are higher than we would like. DFS has reallocated two workers from treatment to investigations. The Adolescent Unit at Beech Street that carried both investigation and treatment cases has been split to better concentrate on the separate areas. A similar change will occur in the University Plaza unit. Kent County’s numbers are driven by retirements and extended medical leave.

On the legislative front, DFS will be sponsoring a bill related to the Office of Child Care Licensing. It would bring child care centers into the restricted zone for convicted sex offenders. External legislation includes SB 113, a Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC) sponsored bill pertaining to extended jurisdiction. The Department has figured out a way to utilize Court Liaisons to complete court filings related to DSCYF. The Dept. of Justice will represent the Dept. in court. Liaisons will work with the DFS Independent Living Program Manager and DFS staff will work with all children before they are 18 to prepare them for extended jurisdiction. DFS is very excited about this approach. The new IL Program Manager, Felicia Kellam, joins DFS on February 1. She comes to DFS from West End Neighborhood House.

DFS continues to complete the requirements for the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR). Four of the eight quarters have been completed. The fifth is due on February 15.

**VISTA** – Laura reported that twelve candidates had applied for the five coordinator positions offered in the Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) grant received by DHSS and DFS. The five positions will be allocated in the following locations; one at DFS, one at the Office of Volunteerism, and one each at West End Neighborhood House, Murphey School, and People’s Place II. The coordinators will be recruiting and bringing on mentors. An Independence Advisory Council has been proposed (see attached charter). The Council is designed to advocate for adult and community level services for youth aging out of foster care. Julia presented an idea that she had discussed with the APPLA workgroup. Her idea is to have curricula developed that would help to enhance relationships that children already have. The first tier would be as a mentor and the second as a respite provider. Rodney stated that this is similar to STEPS and that there is a way to blend the two. Leslie stated that supports and resources are needed to help mentor continuity. There are too many persons in a child’s life at times and that we should reconsider Independent Living and integrate it better with foster care looking at it is a continuum of care. Mike suggested that the Council examine what occurs currently with children going to the IL program. Rita inquired about training for foster parents in dealing with certain challenging behaviors of children. Laura stated that DFS had started incorporating more mental health training into the required training hours. Julia noted that over the past ten years, the training levels have increased greatly. Leslie stated that her agency’s foster parents undergo extensive training even before they accept a child in their home. They provide a lot of supports. Leslie expressed her pride in the work her foster parents accomplish. Laura noted that the CPAC Mental Health Subcommittee has been working with CMH in having two liaisons to help prevent disruptions in DFS homes. There is a crisis response protocol that has been established to attend to our children’s needs quickly. A dedicated unit in Sussex has recently begun that opens a CMH case for children coming into foster care.

**Budget** – The Joint Finance Committee presentation for the Children’s Department is on Tuesday, February 23 in the Senate Chambers, Legislative Hall. DFS is scheduled to present at 1:30pm.

**New Business** – Julia announced that she is stepping down as chair of the Council. Marylou Edgar will assume the reins.

Julia noted that Pat O’Brien is returning to Dover in March to present his program ‘You Gotta Believe’ designed to help find homes for children considered ‘unadoptable’.

**Future Focus** – Mary Lou stated that we need to advocate for post-adoption services and examine what is currently available.

The April 21 meeting will feature a discussion of improving system services for teens.

The July 21 meeting will feature a report on the Kent Youth Pilot Project by Mary Lou Edgar.

Meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.

**Next Meeting – April 21, 2010, 10 am - Noon, in Room 199 of the DSCYF  
Administration Building. 1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph D. Smack  
Division of Family Services

**Fiscal Year 2011 Governor's Recommended Budget**

**Division of Family Services Positions**

<b>FY 2009 ACTUAL</b>	<b>FY 2010 BUDGET</b>	<b>FY 2011 GOV. REC.</b>
GF 302.0	298.0	288.3
ASF 25.5	23.9	23.9
NSF 32.8	32.4	32.1
<b>TOTAL 360.3</b>	<b>354.3</b>	<b>344.3</b>

**FUNDING**

<b>FY 2009 ACTUAL</b>	<b>FY 2010 BUDGET</b>	<b>FY 2011 GOV. REC.</b>
GF 43,901.6	43,761.3	42,230.4
ASF 2,288.0	2,559.2	2,559.2
<b>TOTAL 46,189.6</b>	<b>46,320.5</b>	<b>44,789.6</b>

**DFS Pass Throughs**

<b>FY 2009 ACTUAL RECOMMEND</b>	<b>FY 2010 BUDGET</b>	<b>FY 2011 REQUEST</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>
General Funds 1,456.3	1,237.9	1,237.9	0
Appropriated S/F			
Non-Appropriated S/F 1,456.3	1,237.9	1,237.9	0

**AmeriCorps VISTA Mentor Program Advisory Council**

## Charter

### **Program Mission:**

The VISTA Foster Care Mentoring Program will pair young men and women between the approximate ages of 16-21 either currently in the Foster Care system or receiving Independent Living Services with mentor volunteers to work on goals and directions and independent living skills. The goal is for the volunteer mentors to develop a long-term mentoring relationship with the individuals they serve.

Purpose of the Advisory Council:

**The purpose of the Advisory Council is to direct the VISTA Program volunteers and the partnering/host site agencies on all aspects of program management and advocacy. VISTA staff will be utilized by the Council as staff support.**

The Advisory Council Shall:

1. Assist and advise VISTA staff in securing and allocating resources as identified from the community.
2. Assist and advise VISTA staff on marketing and media relations.
3. Assist and advise VISTA staff regarding training of volunteer mentors and appropriate supports to encourage ongoing participation.
4. Review performance indicators and make recommendations accordingly.
5. Provide informed testimony to the executive and legislative bodies including the State Budget Hearing and the Joint Finance Committee Hearing as needed.

Membership:

The Advisory Council should include representation from the following, as initially identified by the Division of Family Services and as identified by the Council moving forward:

- ❖ Child welfare advocates (5)
- ❖ The Division of Family Services (1)
- ❖ The Delaware State Office of Volunteerism (1)
- ❖ The Kids Caucus of the Delaware General Assembly (1)
- ❖ Citizens interested in advancing the quality of child welfare in Delaware (5)
- ❖ Youth accessing Independent Living Services (4)
- ❖ Related state and local contracted agencies (3)

Chairperson:

**The Chair of the Council shall be elected by the membership of the Council.**

Committees:

**According to the needs of the Advisory Council, members may be asked to participate in work groups addressing specific matters. These committees shall be supported by VISTA staff.**

Meetings:

The Advisory Council shall meet monthly and committees to meet as determined.