

SEEN & HEARD

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & THEIR FAMILIES • THE DELAWARE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

FROM THE SECRETARY



My first six months with the Children's Department have been exhilarating, enlightening, and educational. I've had the opportunity to meet with many DSCYF staff, community partners, legislators, judges, and youth in our care; Each of them have shared with me a perspective on child welfare that has helped me to learn about the organization, how far it has progressed over time, and how much more work we need to do for the vulnerable children and those who take care of them.

During the next few years, the goal of this agency will be to "Think of the Child First" in everything we do. What must we do to keep them safe? Give them a stable home environment? Enhance their self esteem? And give them a sense of hope for their future?

While every child welfare agency is struggling with some of the most sensitive and challenging issues facing youth and families today, there is also much good news to be shared. The new format and contents of this newsletter are just the beginning of how the Children's Department plans to share its message and its success stories with our partners. We hope you enjoy the newsletter and will look forward to reading it on a quarterly basis. Thank you for the work you do to help children. Let's make 2001 a year that will exemplify what it means to "Think of the Child First."

Carol DeSantis

NEARLY 300 FOSTER PARENTS HONORED FOR THEIR DEDICATION TO CHILDREN

Foster parents throughout Delaware were recognized for their outstanding work during the annual "Foster Care Parent Recognition Luncheon" in Dover recently. Brenda Tonge of Frederica, was honored as Delaware's nominee for Foster Parent of the Year. She has fostered more than 24 teenage girls in eight years, and noted that "these girls are my life. I wish I had done this sooner. I can't imagine not being a foster parent." Dave Pelzer, a former child abuse victim, and now a four-time *New York Times* best-selling author for his books on the experience, was the keynote speaker for the event. He thanked the foster parents for the work they do. "You people saved my life. If you think you don't make a difference in a child's life, you're wrong. It's because of you that there's hope for them."



Dave Pelzer (left) was the keynote speaker at DFS' annual recognition luncheon for foster care parents. He is joined by foster parents Sylvia and John Dorsey, who were among the 300 foster parents honored for their work with foster children. Sylvia Dorsey also chaired the Governor's Task Force on Foster Care.

The foster care system in Delaware is receiving much attention in 2001.

Governor Minner made child safety and foster care reform two of her top priorities for her Administration. The challenges faced by foster parents and families, and those who work to support them are being addressed by the Governor's Foster Care Task Force. The committee met on a regular basis since January and made recommenda-

tions to Governor Minner in May. Themes of safety and stability, training and supports for foster parents, and appropriate placements for children are the underlying goals of what the task force hopes to accomplish for foster children.

SUCCESS STORIES

Programs and services that are working to make a difference in the lives of children in our care and their families.

The Division of Family Services **Independent Living Program**, which helps youth transition out of the foster care system, hit the ground running in March when Governor Minner welcomed one of the 14 youth into her new home.

The transitional program called "Life Lines," which is sponsored by the Children's Department, and operated by the West End Neighborhood House, offers affordable housing and transitional living skills to foster care youth, ages 18-21. It is the first of its kind in the State, and the third program of its kind in the region.

"It is important that we provide youth leaving our foster care system with transitional services that will help them to lead responsible, productive lives," said Governor Minner, who toured one of the Life Lines Homes in March.

In May, four youth will move into two homes on the 1600 block of West 8th Street in Wilmington. At the end of June, a statewide system of seven homes will be able to accommodate 14 youths leaving the foster care program.

Youth who participate in the program will be expected to attain several goals including:

- Earning a high school diploma or GED, or a college degree;
- Maintaining a part-time or full-time job;
- Developing and improving their study and/or work habits, and financial management skills (budgeting, banking, savings, credit use, and tax preparation).



Samantha Murphy, a former foster care youth, sits on her bed in her new home, thanks to the LifeLines program, an independent transitional living program sponsored by DFS and the West End Neighborhood House.

A brainstorming session to discuss which of the Children's Department programs and services were most effective was held recently in Middletown. The "Best Practices Forum" was attended by more than 30 client parents, school representatives, and staff members from each county and each division. Community-based resources, family strengths, family involvement, and partnership/teamwork were the four areas discussed by participants. Suggestions and recommendations for what themes, behaviors and attitudes work best for children and families in our care were shared. During the next few months, a follow-up group will meet to summarize the recommendations and distribute the information.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Employee Satisfaction Survey — Thank you to the 841 employees who completed the first Department-wide survey. Overall, at least 80% of employees indicated they are either satisfied or very satisfied working for the Children's Department. However, several common themes presented themselves as issues we need to address to improve our programs, services, and work environment. Work groups are currently being formed to address how our agency can build on its strengths and work on its challenges.

Rockin' for Kids — Family Services staff members hosted "Keep Kids Safe" night at the Wilmington Blue Rocks baseball game at Frawley Stadium during "Prevent Child Abuse Month" in April. A big "thank you" goes to the Criminal Justice Council and the Office of the Child Advocate for their financial support of the event, and to the Children's Trust Fund for providing free tickets to foster care families.

We are also grateful to the following organizations for their help and support that night: Children and Families First, Office of the Attorney General, Grassroots Citizens for Children, and Prevent Child Abuse Delaware. A special thanks goes to the Newark High School Key Club, who had the fun, colorful, but messy task of face painting many of the kids at the game!

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

This past quarter, three new Division Directors were named to the Children's Department: Carlyse Giddins was named Director of Family Services; Henry Smith III was named Director of Management Support Services; and Gwen Angalet, was appointed as Acting Director of Child Mental Health Services.

Giddins, who previously served as deputy director for Family Services, and as administrator for the Office of Prevention and Early Intervention said she will focus on child safety, the significance of prevention and early intervention for youth and families, and a child-centered approach for all services. Prior to DFS, Giddins worked for more than 20 years as a customer service manager for a large managed-care organization, where she focused on quality service, human resources, and strategic planning.



Carlyse Giddins The Division of Family Services manages the State's foster care and adoption services, abuse and neglect investigations and treatment plans, child care licensing, and prevention and early intervention programs.

Smith served as the Deputy Director of Management Support Services since 1993. During that time, he managed the Department's fiscal spending plans, including operating and capital budget development; coordinated contract services, plant operations and maintenance; and worked with Division Directors on issues related to human resources, management information systems, and educational services.

Prior to 1993, Smith was the senior fiscal and policy analyst for the State's Budget Office. He currently serves as an adjunct professor for Springfield College's School of Human Services in Wilmington, where he teaches fiscal management and mathematics.



Henry Smith III

The Division of Management Support Services oversees fiscal services, budgeting, physical facilities, federal cost recoveries, human resources, education, and management information systems.

Dr. Angalet served as the former special assistant to the Cabinet Secretary for the past seven years. During her tenure, she developed and implemented curriculum to train 1,000 staff on quality improvement and leadership; and managed the development of the Department's strategic plan. Dr. Angalet will work with CMH staff to develop new strategies to serve children in the most appropriate and the least-restrictive setting; review fiscal and program needs; and foster communication and teamwork throughout the Division.



Dr. Gwendoline Angalet

The Division of Child Mental Health Services provides voluntary mental health and substance abuse treatment services to children up to age 18 who have mental health or substance abuse problems and their families.



Several children at the Terry Children's Psychiatric Center made this artwork in celebration of Secretary DeSantis' swearing-in ceremony in February. The artwork, which is a reminder to "Think of the Child First," now hangs in the Secretary's office.

"ONE CHILD AT A TIME"

The Children's Department, made up of 1,200 employees, cares for nearly 8,000 children on any given day. "One Child At A Time" will share with our readers a few examples of how DSCYF staff, programs, or services are helping children and families in our care:

A female resident at the Stevenson House Detention Center was isolating herself from her peers and having trouble following a specific policy of the facility. Sonya Odwin, a youth rehabilitative counselor, worked with the youth, helping her to realize why she needed to comply with policies. Later on, the youth expressed her appreciation for the concern shown by Ms. Odwin. Small steps such as this can be a starting point to more positive behavior for youth.

A young boy at Darley Road Elementary School was helped by the actions of Heather Pombo-Pietuszka, a family crisis therapist. The boy's grandmother expressed her thanks in writing. It read as follows: "I would like to thank you for assisting our family to get the kind of eyeglasses for my grandson he needs to be a successful student. Thank you for seeing him on a consistent basis, to reinforce his learning through concentration, being focused and reinforcing positive behavior. Thought I'd drop you this line to let you know how much you have helped in the development of my grandson. Please continue and call me on good days and bad days. Thanks."

Several foster care youth are now participating in the state's first Independent Living Youth Advisory Council, a committee composed of youth in Delaware's foster care system to make recommendations for improvements in the State's independent living programs.

A youth receiving mental health services was able to receive the medication he needed when he moved to Delaware, thanks to Janie Johnson, clinical services coordinator and Dr. Ben Lungen, a psychologist in the Intake and Assessment unit. These two staff members secured funding and payment for the youth who had his Medicaid benefits interrupted when he relocated.



NEWS TO KNOW

Accreditations — The Division of Child Mental Health Services and the Stevenson House Detention Center both received re-accreditations in the past few months.

DCMHS received its re-accreditation from the Joint Commission on Healthcare Organizations, making it the first child- and first public system in the nation to be re-accredited under the JCAHO standards.

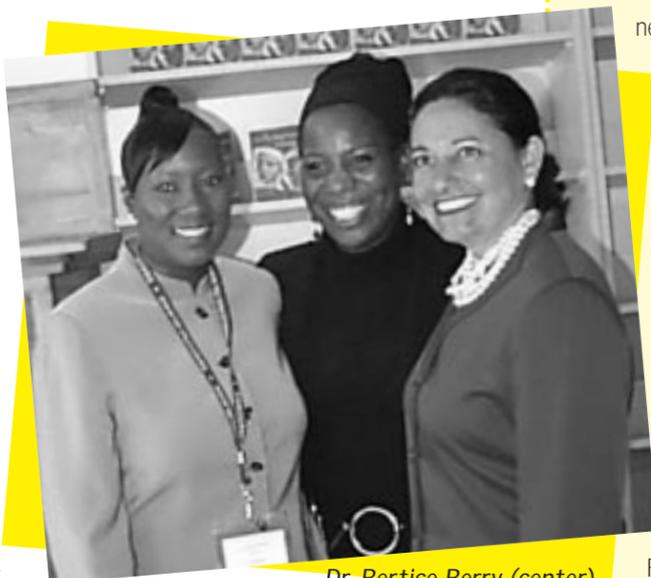
The **Stevenson House** earned a three-year re-accreditation by the American Correctional Association. It is the facility's fourth re-accreditation since 1988. The ACA reviewed several "quality of life" factors at the detention center including security, environmental conditions, academic and vocational education, social services, fire safety, medical care, food service, conditions of confinement, among others.

The **Ferris School** and the **New Castle County Detention Center** are slated to have their accreditation review in November of 2001.

Nearly 400 community leaders involved in child advocacy work attended the 11th annual **Prevention and Early Intervention Forum** held at the Ruddertowne in Dewey Beach in late April. Keynote speakers for the two-day conference were Bertice Berry and Rev. Michael Pflieger.

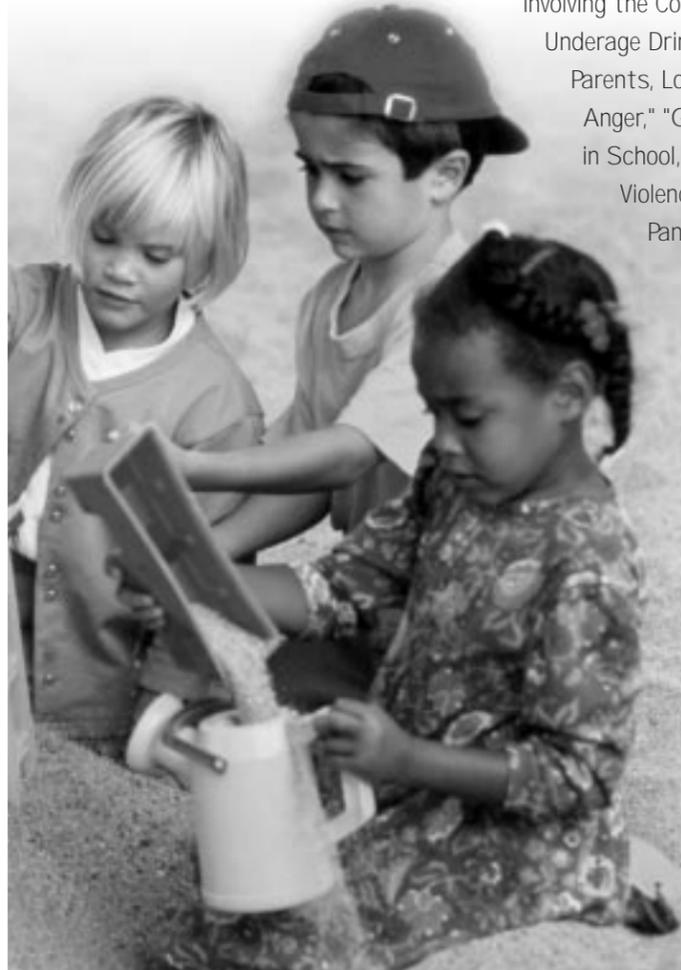
Berry, an award-winning lecturer, stand-up comedian, and doctor of sociology, used the proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," as the premise for her talk, but with a twist: "The problem is, our village is sick." She told the participants that "You are the healers — the best way to heal is to prevent." Instead of living in "crisis mode," Berry suggests that we, as a nation, and in the child welfare environment, must consider every child as our own if we are going to be able to help prevent child abuse and intervene in the early stages of neglect.

Rev. Pflieger, known for his unorthodox campaigns against crime and drug use, lives in Chicago, where he ministers to the African-American community. "We must restore adult leadership and adult accountability," he said. "What's happening in our communities? Gangs have become the new family. They have become what WE USED to be to one another. No child is too far gone — every child CAN be saved."



Dr. Bertice Berry (center) was one of the keynote speakers at the 11th annual Prevention and Early Intervention Forum. She is flanked by Yvonne Bunch (left), Supervisor in OPEI, and Cari DeSantis, Cabinet Secretary of DSCYF.

Forum topics during the conference included "Involving the Community to Reduce Underage Drinking," "Incarcerated Parents, Lost Children," "Handling Anger," "Getting Parents Involved in School," "Preventing Domestic Violence," and "A Faith-Based Panel Discussion."

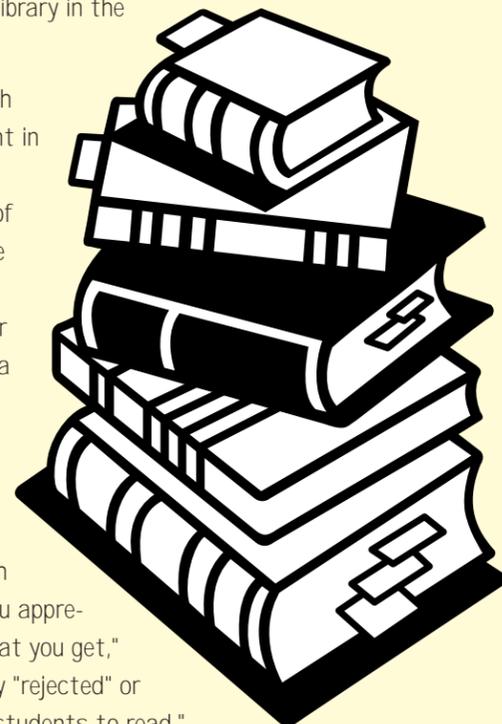


STEVENSON HOUSE TEACHER HONORED FOR IMPROVING THE DETENTION CENTER'S LIBRARY

Faye Faraone, an educational diagnostician at the Stevenson House Detention Center, was recognized in April by MBNA for improvements she made to the facility's library in the past two years.

The Stevenson House serves youth awaiting court action or placement in Kent and Sussex counties, and is operated by the State's Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services. The Stevenson House provides a safe, secure, residential environment for detained youth while they receive a program of education and professional counseling.

Faraone said when she first came to the center, the library was in need of new shelves, a fresh coat of paint, and new books. "You appreciate the hand-me-down books that you get," said Faraone, "but when books say "rejected" or "discarded," that doesn't inspire students to read."



Through MBNA's grant, Faraone was able to set up some new shelves in the library, put a fresh coat of paint on the walls, and more importantly, order new books. "The kids helped to pick out some of the books," said Faraone. "They also helped to process them, stamp them — they got involved in the whole process of the grant."

The books selected also targeted the students' reading levels and interest levels, Faraone said. "We chose books that captured their interest, and that also had some instructional themes. Those types of books help you take a non-reader, and get them to at least enjoy turning the pages of a book.

Edward Rigsby, administrator of the Stevenson House, commended Faraone for her initiative and enthusiasm for the project. "The grant gave us more resources for kids, and it has helped them to improve their academic skills."

The detention center received a \$25,743 grant from the MBNA Foundation in 1999 to make improvements to the detention center's library. Faraone was one of nine finalists out of 500 in MBNA's "Best Practices in Education" award, which honors past grant recipients whose projects exemplify outstanding models for education.

Ann Coleman, grants program director for the MBNA Foundation, congratulated Faraone during a ceremony at the detention center's library. "Faye is an educator who took the time to recognize a need for these youth," Coleman said. "She has helped the students connect with reading, and helped them to grow during a turning point in their lives."

Said Faraone, "There's been a tremendous increase in the amount of reading taking place here. Students, who before would not consider opening a book, are beginning to appreciate books and enjoy reading."

Jerry Henry, a youth care worker at our Silver Lake Day Treatment Center in Middletown, received the "Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment In State Service." He was one of three state employees to receive this honor.

Jerry has worked for the Division of Child Mental Health Services for 18 years. During his tenure, he has been able to link the treatment center with public and private industries, making it possible to improve the quality of life for youth in our care. He took the initiative to raise funds for educational and humanitarian purposes to benefit youth in the care of DSCYF. Through his efforts, local companies have contributed more than \$5,000 to assist youth served by CMH. The funds have been used for educational trips, classroom materials, and for educational programs.



RECOGNIZING MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Child Mental Health Services recognized May as National Mental Health Month. If a young person you know seems depressed, reach out to the child and talk to a health professional.

David Lindemer, Ph.D., a Child Psychologist Supervisor for the Children's Department, offers the following tips for teens and parents of teenagers:

When youths become adolescents, they begin to "move away" from their families and establish close ties with friends. When teens are feeling depressed or unhappy, they tend to turn to these friends first, and many times find the support they need to weather the ups and downs of growing up.

The best advice for teens seeking help is to involve their parents or caregivers early and often. It can be very difficult for a teen to admit to their parents they're having problems; They feel like they're risking a lot, and sometimes afraid about the response they'll get. Even fortunate teens and parents who have very open, honest, and trusting relationships find these can be strained and tense when a teen needs to ask for help. No matter how scary it seems, it's the smart thing to do.

Almost all secondary schools in Delaware provide teens with Wellness Centers, guidance counselors, school nurses, and school psychologists. These helpers usually have open door policies and can easily and expertly steer a troubled teen in the right direction, including to professional help.

In Delaware, 24-hour crisis services (1-800-722-7710 and 1-800-969-HELP) are in place that teenagers frequently call when they feel overwhelmed.

What can parents do when they recognize their children are depressed?

Parents need to know that when a teen is depressed, both psychical and emotional changes may occur. Teens may eat less and lose weight, or eat more and gain weight. Many times, aside from sadness and crying, the feeling of depression may be expressed by irritable moods or anger outbursts.

Parents and caregivers can interpret this as willfulness or defiance, and can respond in ways that don't help. Sometimes teens repeatedly complain of boredom, or lose interest in activities they enjoyed before. They may stop seeing friends, drop out of clubs or sports, miss more school, and get lower grades. Otherwise healthy teens can begin to complain about headaches, back or leg pain, or just feeling generally sick.

Parents with insurance through their employers, Medicaid, or State assistance often need to obtain approval from their insurer's benefit manager or a referral from their family doctor to use these benefits, and will often be referred to specific professionals who have contracts with the insurer. Parents without insurance can directly contact many community counseling agencies and receive services on a sliding scale. They could also contact the DCMHS Intake and Referral unit at 1-800-722-7710, from 8 AM to 4:30 PM for referral assistance.

What should mental health counselors do when they are feeling overwhelmed by caseloads or clients?

Helping professionals can need help, too. Caseloads, crises, third party payors, paperwork, and the emotional drain of salving the pain of others all contribute to problems with burnout, "compassion fatigue," and the migration of good clinicians into other roles.

The best approach is preventative. Professional helpers need to recognize their susceptibility to stresses from a variety of sources in the work they do. Clinicians need to honestly look at their support network of peers and ask if it could be more helpful (and not having such a network is a danger sign...).

For clinicians who find themselves in trying circumstances, turning to a trusted peer or superior for support can be a good step. Sometimes agencies can rearrange workloads or new cases to maintain the effectiveness of their staff. Seeking out ongoing supervision or consultation, even for licensed providers who don't require it, can be quite helpful in modifying personal or professional routines or techniques that reduce work-related stress.

TEAM SPIRIT AWARD

Teamwork is essential in order to accomplish the many goals of this agency. 1,200 people throughout the state are responsible for numerous tasks throughout the day, month and year. The "Team Spirit Award" strives to recognize a group of team members who have gone beyond the call of duty, with enthusiasm and zest for their work.

This issue's award goes to the staff members, foster parents, and community partners who prepared for and participated in the nation's first "Child and Family Services Review," conducted by the Administration for Children and Families, Region III. The review, which included months of preparation by team members, critiqued 14 standards of child welfare including systemic factors of our case review system, staff and provider training, array of services, and responsiveness to the community. It also reviewed "Outcomes for Children" including protection from abuse and neglect; timeliness of initiating investigations; permanency goals, length of stay in foster care, and physical and mental health needs of children and youth.

"We're confident that we did well," said Candace Charkow, child protective services administrator. "We have significant strengths in key areas such as timely investigations, services to protect children in their homes, stability of foster care placements, and worker visits with parents and children. We're also aware of our weaknesses and are looking at ways to improve our system so we can keep kids safe and support the foster parents and families who help us take care of children."

The 14 member team included Charkow, team leader, Trine Bech, Keith Zirkle, Mary Polk, Bob Lindecamp, Susan Taylor-Walls, Gail Womble, Frank Perfinski, all of DFS; Lisa Distefano of YRS; Denise Surdukowski, a foster mother; Louise Clark, Siena Hall; Lynn Shreve, Family Court; Anne Pedrick, Office of the Child Advocate; Maria Matos, Latin American Community Center; and Dorothy Lamb of Vision Quest.



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Editor: Karen M. Murtha, Community Relations Coordinator

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They've never won the Superbowl. Or the World Series. Or the U.S. Open.

But this team has done something that bests the accomplishments of all these events combined — They help children.

And their sense of interdivisional teamwork, respect, and caring, is what makes them the recipients of this issue's "Team Spirit Award."



Interdivisional teams work together to plan for a child's appearance in court (depending on their age), and their treatment or service plan, including education, behavioral needs, support services, such as parent aide, and if the child will need residential or community-based services.

The "team," primarily based in Sussex County, includes staff from across the Department: Child Mental Health Services (CMHS), Family Services (FS), Office of Case Management (OCM), and Youth Rehabilitative Services (YRS): Van Warrington, Dave Lindemer, Susan Taylor-Walls, Catrina Hinds, Mary McGee, Charlita Shamburger, Mary Jo Begley, Janice Gerard, Trenee Parker, Margaret Anderson, and Pat Ewing, are just a few of the workers who have been able to cut across Divisional boundaries to present a unified approach to helping kids in the state's care.

What's their secret?

"The interdivisional process works well in Sussex because we're used to working together as teams on day-to-day things — our (FS, CMH, OCM and YRS) offices are located near each other," said McGee, an OCM reviewer.

Lindemer agrees, and added that the "down home" feel of Sussex County may also have something to do with the cooperation level. "Everybody in rural areas is used to helping each other all along, so it just makes sense that it works for an office unit too."

"They have a real desire to improve the lives of children and parents," said Judge Kenneth M. Millman of the Sussex County

Family Court. "Each of them pulls their fair share. They're prepared when they come into court, and they know their cases."

Judge Millman also offered some kudos to Van Warrington, regional administrator for Sussex County family services. "He's extremely dedicated and he

instills that enthusiasm down the line of command." Warrington passed the praise right back to the Sussex County Family Court system, under Judge Millman's leadership. "The Department has received strong cooperation and support by the courts for kids who are served by Family Court and our agency." Susan Taylor-Walls, assistant regional administrator for family services, said the group tends to develop its own culture as well. "You find your own way of working together effectively. And with limited resources, it almost forces you to get creative with the resources you do have," she said. McGee added that "no one works in isolation."

Catrina Hinds, a youth rehabilitative services supervisor, said teamwork all boils down to keeping one thing in mind: the children. "When you think of those kids first, you have to defer to what's best for them."

Judge Millman agreed that staff are definitely considering the needs of children. "You've got a lot of dedicated people wanting to help kids," said Judge Millman. "They want to make things better — and it shows."

Our thanks to the Sussex County team for all they do for our kids.



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FOCUSED & FORGING AHEAD

The Delaware Children's Department is entering an era of transition, with a renewed commitment to child safety and well-being that brings focus to the mission of the Department and is shaping a vision for performance in the 21st century.

Significant progress has been made since the Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (aka Delaware Children's Department) was created by pulling children's services out of the Departments of Health & Social Services and Corrections. The consolidation of services for children into one place was a major step toward emphasizing the state's responsibility toward its most vulnerable citizens. Improvements in child protective services, juvenile justice and mental health services for children have been developed over the more than 15 years the Department has been in business.

As with any organization, the Delaware Children's Department has evolved to the point that critical review of mission, vision and goals is critical to the future for the Department and for the children of Delaware. "It is of utmost importance that we consider the needs of kids today and tomorrow as we forge ahead," said Cari DeSantis, Cabinet Secretary for the Department. "We can no longer serve 21st century children with a 1970's child welfare system. We must acknowledge the challenges our children face today and work with our communities around the state to develop the services that will ensure our children can reach their fullest potential."

To that end, the Children's Department staff embarked on an extensive strategic planning process that drew on the input of various stakeholders throughout the state, the results of a comprehensive employee survey, performance indicators from the past few years, and internal discussions and debates. A Department-wide strategic planning group consisting of 30 people from throughout the Department - all divisions, all levels of staff, all geographic areas - met several times over the spring and summer, to develop planning principles and bring focus to the Department.

"Throughout the entire planning process, one message came through loud and clear: Think of the Child First! Stakeholders, employees, leadership, everyone involved with kids in this state agree that focusing on the individual child and his or her needs should be the driving force in all that we do," said Secretary DeSantis. "If we can achieve this common vision, everything else will fall into place. Think of the Child First provides focus for every decision we make, whether it is in working with an individual child, or making funding decisions, or creating policy within the department."



Children's Department Milestones

Reports Due	Milestone Achieved	September 2001	Q4, 2001 October - December 2001	Q1, 2002 January - March 2002
Mission/vision revisited				
Strategic plan draft				
Target budget				
Balanced Scorecard				
Governor's recommended budget for year 2003				
DSCYF Manager's meeting				
State-of-the-State's Children's Address				

With that idea in mind, the strategic planning group developed five strategic initiatives (or long-range goals) that will help move the Delaware Children's Department into the 21st century and will provide focus and priority to management over the coming years. They are:

- Develop and implement a statewide system of care that meets the needs of 21st century children.
- Improve the organizational health and communication of the Department, fostering an environment of teamwork and cooperation.
- Develop and implement an uniform intake and assessment process across the department, so that the no matter through what door the children enter our care, his or her needs and strengths will be addressed and an individualized plan of service will be created.
- Enhance partnerships with the community to provide a network of private and public services to rally around the children and work collaboratively to fill gaps in service and resources.
- Develop excellence in fiscal management to maximize financial resources and assure that the Department's and contracted services are being used most efficiently.

These long-range, strategic initiatives will require significant commitment on the part of every individual working in the Delaware Children's Department. Planning groups of various sizes have already begun. Each initiative has a senior management "champion," who volunteered to assure that progress continues and barriers to success are eliminated as the project moves forward.

Each initiative also has a "Project Leader," whose job it is to assemble a good, multidisciplinary, cross-divisional team to do research, identify challenges and opportunities, propose the 'vision' for that initiative, and develop recommendations for implementation. The teams have already begun their work and are regularly reporting back to the strategic planning group and the Secretary.

"We are forging ahead into new territory for the Delaware Children's Department," said Secretary DeSantis. "There is no doubt we will face some tough challenges, but our commitment will remain steadfast as long as we Think of the Child First. That will take us where we need to be for our kids."

FALL 2001

FROM THE SECRETARY



The fall season is upon us. A time of transition... warm summer breezes give way to the cooler, crisp days of autumn. At Delaware's Children's Department, we are entering a time of transition as well. For the past few months, staff from every facet of service have been discussing how we work and what changes may be necessary to best serve our children well into the 21st century.

Many people on a number of teams have begun to tackle some pretty challenging "strategic initiatives" including: Full service of care; community partnerships; a coordinated and unified intake and assessment system; excellence in contract management; and a strong organizational health and teamwork culture throughout the agency.

Although these initiatives and other planning processes will take time, we can begin to see what services and programs we will need to expand, enrich, or eliminate so that children and youth are receiving the care that is most helpful to them. Results from the employee survey and other informal feedback sessions pointed towards changes that needed to be made — changes needed to overcome the challenges many of you face every day in trying to do the best for our children. As we move forward, it will take all of us working together to affect positive and lasting change that will strengthen the Children's Department and better serve our kids. Like the brisk breeze of autumn, the winds of change can be exhilarating and invigorating.

Thank you for your ideas and your feedback as we work together to strengthen the Children's Department. Keep up the great work!

Cari DeSantis

EMPLOYEE SURVEY UPDATE

The primary concern of employees — being able to serve children appropriately — is being addressed through various work groups and initiatives. The results of the 2001 employee survey also reminded us of the significance of strengthening the workplace in order for employees to do the best work possible: A good physical working environment is important for worker morale and productivity.

To date, the Department has taken several steps to improve the sites at which we work, in response to specific items noted in the survey:

- Ferris School phones are being upgraded;
- The air quality at both the New Castle County Detention Center and the Terry Children's Psychiatric Center has been upgraded;
- Plans to install new tile (to replace the carpet) and a new phone system are underway at the NCCDC;
- Geese control (not elimination) efforts have been made to minimize geese attacking staff or visitors;
- A central parking lot at the main campus has been established for state-owned cars.
- Discussions with the landlord at our Milford YRS/CMHS offices have taken place to address air conditioning and other concerns;
- During the last school break, additional efforts were made to thoroughly clean all classrooms at NCCDC;
- Two work groups have been created to address communication and employee safety issues: the Organizational Health Work Group and the Safety Work Group;
- Friendly work place enhancements have begun including painting the lobby at the administration building, hanging art work by children, and installing the large photographs of children on the main stairway.
- Secretary DeSantis acknowledges and shares across the department every "kudo" the directors write in their weekly reports about the great work of DSCYF employees.
- Beginning this month, quarterly department-wide Managers meetings will be held to share policy and operational information across divisions, and provide a forum to foster teamwork.

Keep your eyes open for more improvements to come. Remember - the 2002 Employee Survey will be out in January. We'll need your feedback!

"ONE CHILD AT A TIME"

The Children's Department, made up of 1,200 employees, cares for nearly 8,000 children on any given day. "One Child At A Time" will share with our readers a few examples of how DSCYF staff, programs, or services are helping children and families in our care:

Helping Youth Move Earth: Mowlds Cottage youth learn landscaping skills and win first prize in Wilmington's City Garden Contest

It might have looked like they were just playing in the dirt, but this was serious business. Eight youth residing at Mowlds Cottage, a stepdown facility from Ferris School, participated in a landscaping career program this summer.

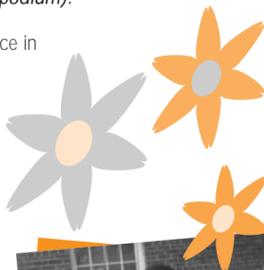


Two youths who participated in the landscaping program spoke at a news conference hosted by Lt. Gov. John Carney (seated directly to the right of the podium).

Their efforts earned them first place in Wilmington's City Garden Contest, which recognizes contestants whose gardens make Wilmington a beautiful city. The Mowlds youth tied with Ursuline Academy for first prize in the "community youth garden" category.

"We're so proud of their accomplishments and their hard work," said Nancy Pearsall, acting director of youth rehabilitative services.

Phil Bright, program manager of Mowlds Cottage, supervised the youth throughout the program. "Winning this contest was just the icing on the cake for these young men," he said. "They learned a great deal about job skills, but they also learned about responsibility. Now, they can take even more pride in what they've achieved."



A youth is interviewed by news reporters about his experience in the Mowlds Cottage landscaping career program.

The young men, ages 16-18, were accepted in the landscaping program about six weeks prior to returning home. The students received 90 hours of training throughout the program, including 30 hours of classroom work (job search skills, interviewing techniques, self-esteem, interpersonal skills/work ethic, and conflict resolution) and 60 hours of hands-on landscaping experience, supervised by a licensed landscaping contractor, Turf's Up!, and accompanied by Mowlds Cottage staff. The landscaping work was conducted on-site at Mowlds Cottage.

"This program enhances the transitional living skills at our stepdown facilities," said Cari DeSantis, Secretary of the State's Children's Department. "It will help youth develop a base understanding of work principals, while teaching them a skill that they can use immediately on their return home."

The landscaping project was sponsored through the State Departments of Labor and Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, and funded by the Workforce Investment Board.

Foster care youth takes big step towards independence

John Diggs became the first downstate participant in the State's "LifeLines" program, which enables youth leaving foster care to learn independent living skills. He is shown here with his "mentors," Tonya Poole, his caseworker from First State Community Action Agency, Glenda Houston, his foster mother, and Pat Ewing, his caseworker from the Department. John said he is looking forward to "being responsible, paying the bills, gaining a savings account and being independent." Congratulations on moving into your own apartment John! Best wishes to you.



FLEET CAR RESERVATIONS "DOS' & DON'TS"

Every dollar spent for Fleet Services is a dollar not available to meet other needs of this agency. "Think of the Child First." Be wise when it comes to Fleet Services!

Did you know it costs:

- \$6.11 per hour for an hourly car rental?
- \$20.36 each day you rent a car?
- \$25.47 each day if you phone in your reservation? (a \$5.11 phone call!)
- \$25.47 extra if you keep the keys beyond the reservation? (even if you don't use the car!)
- \$15.00 if the car is brought back with less than half a tank of gas?
- \$12.50 for a late cancellation (less than 2.5 hours business hours before scheduled pick up)?
- \$75.00 if you run out of gas & a dispatcher is sent out?
- \$4,934.16 a year for each blocked or well equipped worker car? (even if it is not used each day!)

DO: Reserve a Fleet car through email or fax:

By E-mail: Go to "Vehicle Request" icon at DSCYF INFO or Fleet Reservation @resv@Fleet

By FAX: 302-739-5450

DON'T: call (except for "emergency" reservations) calling to place your reservation costs the Children's Department \$7.64 per hour (that's \$1.53 MORE than if you email or fax your reservation)



DSCYF "GOES HOLLYWOOD!"

The red carpet was rolled out — literally — for the Department's new employee orientation video in August. The "premier" of the video was complete with cartoons and popcorn, while the "celebrities" of the Department (staff members featured in the video) were asked for their autographs as they entered the room.

The 12-minute video is now being viewed by employees joining the Children's Department. It features the sights and sounds of several staff members, the Terry Children's Psychiatric Center, and Ferris School.



Tiffany Gibbs, (left) senior family services specialist, and Cassandra Seals, family services specialist, were 2 of 10 staff members who shared testimonials for the Department's new employee video. They are shown here after the "premiere" of the video, which debuted on July 11. Thanks to all of the staff members who participated in the making of the video.

Thanks to our "stars" for their testimonials: Mary Jo Begley Pat Ewing, Jennifer Falkowski, Tiffany Gibbs, Melanie Harmon, Jerry Henry, Erick Lawler, Dave Rabian, Cassandra Seals, and Adrienne Smith.

These staff members shared their thoughts about the Children's Department and the type of work they do to help children and youth. The video, funded by the State Personnel Office and produced by TNT Video, was the project of the Human Resources Working Group — who appeared in their most chic and dapper "Hollywood" outfits for the premier.

To view the new employee orientation video, please email Robert Challenger, chair of the Human Resources Working Group, on Banyan, or: rchallenger@state.de.us.

