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Summer 2008

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Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project Launches

Numerous studies have shown that root causes which weaken families include poverty, isolation, poor education, housing, homelessness, joblessness, crime and insufficient medical and dental care. When families are weakened, there is a higher risk for child abuse and neglect.

In early April, 12 contracted lead community agencies in the eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs), regional administrators, DCFS staff, representatives from Casey Family Programs and additional stakeholders gathered together for the first planning meeting centered on the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) which was approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 26th. The gathering represented the beginning and, hopefully, the strengthening of a true collaboration, expected to grow during the project's year-long life and alleviate some of the root causes associated with child abuse and neglect.

Attendees used the meeting as a chance to spiritedly discuss plans and ideas for collaborating together, specifically, programs that could be enriched by the PIDP and sustained for years to come. A significant part of the day was also spent gathering input for the PIDP's evaluation process. Formal work plans followed two weeks later, and the year-long process will include a series of regular meetings to track progress.

Over the next several months, community-based agencies, with the support of DCFS and other County

agencies, will put these plans into action to help enhance existing community networks of support for children and families in need or at risk and provide needed services, resources and supports to the community in a quicker and more efficient way. It's a departure from the days when DCFS, County agencies and community providers all worked separately to serve families.

According to DCFS Deputy Director Angela Carter, the PIDP is about working together. "It's not just about the County being invested. It's about all of us being invested," said Carter. "We will explore shared accountability and what that looks like. At the end, it's the hope to inform DCFS and the County on how to better use resources and the community. We will also assist the community with empowerment and help build networks of support.

"We will highlight the notion of collective responsibility," added Carter, "and create networks of people to provide each other with support. This will definitely affect how we do business in the future and interact with children and families, especially relative caregivers."

Next year, at the end of the PIDP, it is expected that DCFS relationships with community providers will be strengthened and the seeds of prevention work will be planted in order for the work to grow in years to come.

"The all-day Prevention Initiative workshop that was

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Collaboration is Key to Achieving Outcomes

Four years ago, DCFS established three department outcomes we want for the children we serve: the safety of children in their own homes as well as in out-of-home care, a reduced reliance on out-of-home care; and a decrease in the time it takes for each child to achieve permanency with a safe, loving and permanent family.

To successfully achieve these outcomes, DCFS embraced collaboration as a core value in all aspects of our work.

Because of your hardworking efforts, we are now doing a better job of collaborating with other County departments and working with the community. The Prevention

Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) is dedicated to strengthening this work, as well as our values and outcomes by taking our collaborative spirit to a new level.

The PIDP will establish prevention networks and community-based safety nets in each Service Planning Area (SPA) to create effective partnerships, improve communications, enhance resource sharing, bridge service gaps and eliminate duplication of services. The goal is to help families and children by providing them with supportive services before their issues rise to a level needing the department's direct intervention. In the end,

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ON THE LINE

“*On the Line*” is a “DCFS News” column featuring Los Angeles County and Family Services’ social workers whose achievements and practice epitomize the best in social work.

Social Worker Advocates the Need for Permanency

For Maya Hivale, a Children’s Social Worker (CSW) III in the Santa Fe Springs office, permanency is a priority in both her professional and personal life.

Hivale has been a CSW at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for nearly 10 years. During that time, she has touched many lives by encouraging permanent outcomes and successfully advocating for families who work to reunify with their children.

Hivale received her Bachelors of Science degree in social work in 1989 from Roberts Wesleyan College in New York and a diploma in art therapy in 1992 from the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada. Hivale also obtained her Master’s degree in intercultural studies from Biola University in 1993.

Beginning her career at DCFS in April 1998 in the Santa Fe Springs office, Hivale worked for nearly two years as a Family Maintenance and Reunification social worker. She was then assigned to a specialized program, the Indian Child Welfare Unit. It was there that she proved to herself that permanency could be achieved after working a case that involved two young brothers with no family connections at the time.

Prior to being assigned to Hivale, the boys had been in the foster care system for approximately five years. When the case arrived in her hands, Hivale immediately established contact with the young boys’ Indian tribe in Alaska. The tribe located the boys’ family in a small village in Alaska where they are residing today.

“It was this case that made me realize how many children are in need of a permanent home,” explained Hivale. “This is why I work hard to achieve permanency for my clients.”

Hivale advocates for permanency with integrity and walks the walk in a very personal way when it comes to permanency. When she and her husband were matched with two siblings from the Orange County foster care system, Hivale put her own needs and wants aside and advocated for reunification with their family.

“The children’s biological mother was in compliance with her case plan,” explained Hivale. “She was doing well and everyone was ignoring her strengths.” Hivale spoke out

for the mother and although it was painful to lose the children, it was a greater satisfaction for her to see them reunified with their biological mother.

In 2007, Hivale’s dream of becoming a mother finally came true when she and her husband were matched with siblings, then 4 and 5 years old.

“Birth is a miracle, but how we came together--through our adoption journey-- it’s a miracle as well,” said Hivale.

In her personal time, Hivale continues to advocate for permanency by encouraging others to adopt. She regularly speaks about the benefits of adoption to members of her church and at the Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency, where she talks to prospective parents about adoption and her own adoption experience.

She also enjoys creating art. “I love to make art. My work grows out of my circumstances and concerns that I live through each day. Art is an innovative approach to foster openness and understanding. It is gratifying to find in the art world values to help enlighten, refresh and educate children, families and the community as a whole.”

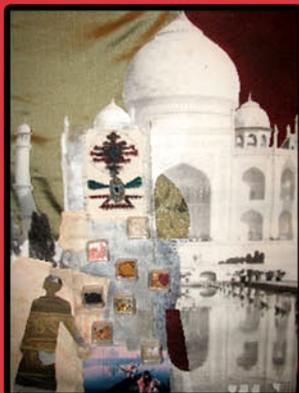
Hivale also enjoys reaching out to the faith-based community. Last fall, she spoke to the congregation at Whittier Area Community Church about the importance of permanency in children’s lives.

In her years as a CSW, Hivale has assisted aging-out youth to achieve their educational dreams. She recalls assisting two sisters who were inspired to pursue an education.

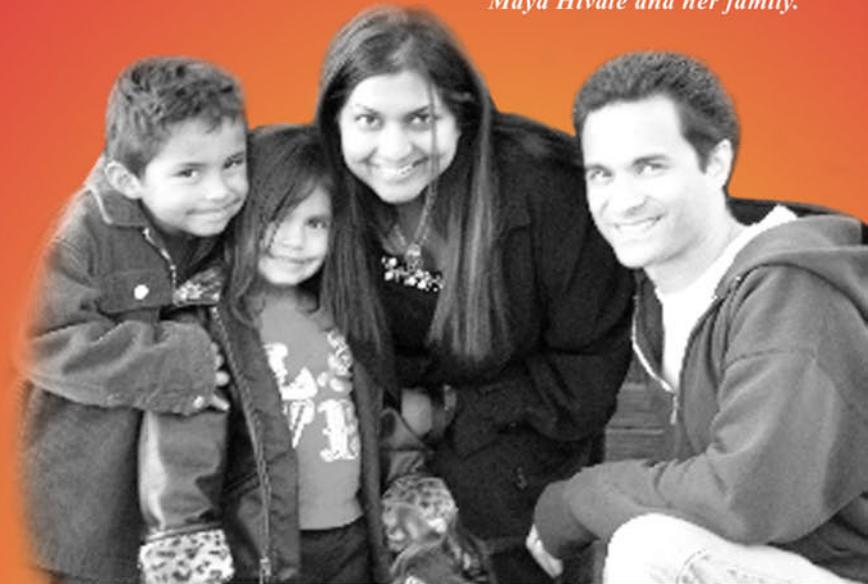
“By providing them with the appropriate resources and assistance, these girls’ educational dreams became a reality,” explained Hivale. The girl that dreamed of becoming a social worker obtained her Bachelor’s degree in social work from Cal State Dominguez Hills. The other youth was inspired to become a chef and graduated from the Culinary Institute of America.

“This is a stressful job, but it is a bigger honor to be able to help people,” said Hivale. It is this value that drives Hivale to do her best, but most importantly, it is this value that has provided many children with stability, permanency and educational success. ❧

Maya Hivale and her family.



Original artwork by Maya Hivale.



it is our belief that families will be able to receive the support and assistance they need without entering the child welfare system.

Over the course of the next year, eight SPAs will collectively use \$5 million to create a comprehensive, strength-based, child abuse prevention system. These networks will bring together talented and qualified agencies to work in direct partnership across systems with families and communities, the public and private sector, the faith-based community and all County departments. Along the way, our partnership with Casey Family Programs will

provide important tools to support the PIDP in capacity building, strategic communications and evaluation.

The PIDP will inform and initiate the vision of a sustained long-term child abuse and neglect prevention strategy for Los Angeles County. It also marks an on-going effort in the evolution of how we do our work – away from isolation and toward collaboration. Ongoing community support is the only way to keep moving forward on this path toward success and continue to improve on our outcomes; and by joining together as a unified force we can all realize the value of the prevention. ❄️

Dental Initiative Provides ‘Call to Action’

This past February, a motion passed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors proclaimed the month as Children’s Dental Health Month. Dental Health is something that most of us take for granted, but studies show that dental disease is the most chronic childhood disease in the country. It is five times more prevalent than asthma, and is the number one reason why children miss school.

Cavities and other dental problems are not only cosmetic, but they can lead to more dangerous conditions including the pain and infection caused by tooth decay which can lead to eating and speech problems. Oral diseases can also cause dangerous bacteria to enter a child’s bloodstream, which in most extreme cases, can cause death. Immune-compromised children are at a greater risk of developing serious complications.

Because of all these potential dangers children face, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) began looking at the issue of dental health seriously to try to find ways to provide better dental health care to children in the child welfare system.

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich and DCFS Medical Director Dr. Charles Sophy joined together to reach out to the local dental community for help and support in meeting the dental health needs of foster youth. A Child Welfare Dental Summit was held in February at the Arboretum of Los Angeles County to coincide with National Children’s Dental Health Month.

At the summit, DCFS and Supervisor Antonovich announced a “call to action” on behalf of children involved in the Los Angeles County child welfare system. The “call to action” united and mobilized dentists, DCFS, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, child advocate groups, the Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles, and faith-based organizations, in a concerted effort to strengthen dental services for children under the supervision of DCFS. As a result, a Dental Initiative is underway and aims to increase awareness about the lack of current dental resources for low-income youth.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to educate the commu-

nity about the critical needs of foster youth,” said DCFS Director Trish Ploehn. “We are asking the dental community to take up the banner and help promote awareness as well as to step forward and provide much needed oral care for foster youth.”

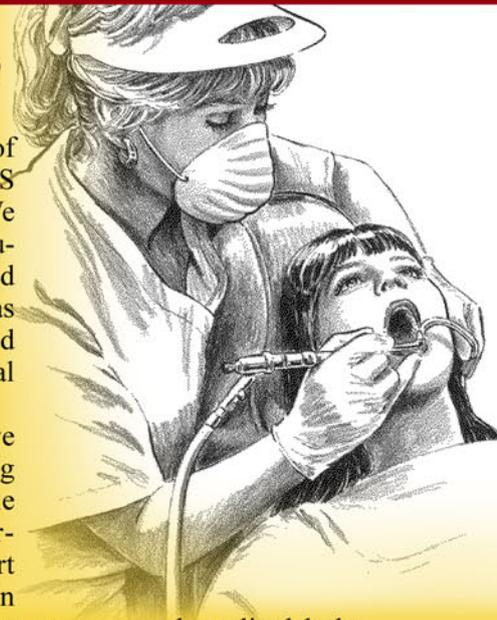
Part of the Dental Initiative includes using the existing collaboration with the Department of Health Services to provide expert medical care to children in foster care through five County-operated medical hubs and one private hub. The hubs are located at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, High Desert Health Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center (MACC), MLK, Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center (MACC), LAC+USC Medical Center, Olive View-UCLA Medical Center and Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

The hubs provide physical exams, forensic evaluations, age-appropriate mental health screenings, and developmental screenings. They also do oral health screenings during the course of the physical exams.

In addition, as part of the Dental Initiative, Public Health Nurses (PHN), who collaborate with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, have identified the major obstacles in obtaining dental care for DCFS-supervised children.

The most common obstacle is a lack of dental insurance. Other issues include the need for more centers that provide in-patient dental care for children with special health needs; a need for more pediatric dentists who accept Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal; and a shortage of pro bono orthodontists in the County.

For more information about the Dental Initiative, please call the DCFS Office of the Medical Director at (213) 351-5614. ❄️





New Chief Deputy Director Ted Myers.

SPA SPOTS

Director Receives Distinguished Alumna Award from Cal State Long Beach

Patricia S. Ploehn, DCFS director, was named the 2008 Distinguished Alumna by the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) College of Health and Human Services. Ploehn graduated from the university in 1989 with a Master's degree in social work.

Each year, the CSULB Alumni Association presents the award to an alumnus from each college who is an outstanding example of accomplishment and distinction. The director was honored at the CSULB alumni awards banquet and commencement ceremony in May.

"I am truly honored by this award. As the director of DCFS, I am proud to be a part of the important work of Los Angeles County, serving our most vulnerable citizens – child victims of abuse and neglect. I thank CSULB for providing me with a strong foundation and for the excellent job they do in preparing students for careers in social work," Ploehn said.

"As director of one of the nation's largest and most diverse child welfare departments, Ms. Ploehn has established herself as a critical player, not only in local children's services agencies, but in national forums. We appreciate her work with our graduate students in the department of social work and is a source of pride for our alma mater," said Marnos Lelesi, president of the CSULB Alumni Association.

Ploehn is the first director to be selected from within the department since its inception in 1984. She began her career with the department prior to its current structure in 1979 as a treatment counselor working with children and youth at the MacLaren Children's Center. She then went on to work as a social worker and supervisor until 1989 when she was promoted to management. After serving in various administrative positions including Training and Education, Emancipation Services, Strategic Planning and Adoptions and Permanency Services, Ms. Ploehn served as Deputy Director from 2003 to 2006. 📄

In every issue, "DCFS News" provides information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at riskis@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

New Chief Deputy Director Appointed

In April, Edward (Ted) E. Myers joined DCFS as the new Chief Deputy Director. Myers has a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Loyola Marymount University, as well as a Master's degree in Public Administration from California State University, Northridge.

He brings with him more than 20 years of progressive experience and responsibility in child welfare and social services which includes extensive knowledge and experience with Title IV-E funding and federal, state and local statutes; an excellent background in social services programs, policies, and operations; and strong budget and fiscal experience.

Myers began his career in social services as a Children's Social Worker in Los Angeles County at DCFS in the mid-1980s. Moving on to Ventura County in 1986, Myers worked his way up through the human services system and has held a number of key positions in child welfare and social services at the local level, including the Department of Children and Family Services and the Human Services Agency for the County of Ventura.

As Director of Children and Family Services with a budget of \$37 million and approximately 180 employees, Myers was responsible for programs, budget development, expenditure control, resource development, human resource selection and management, strategic planning, legislative proposals and interagency relations.

Most recently, Myers was director of the Human Services Agency for the County of Ventura, which is the County's third largest agency consisting of five departments: Children and Family Services, Adult and Family Services, Business and Employment Services, Transitional Assistance and Administrative Services. As director, Myers provided leadership to a staff of more than 1,000 employees and was responsible for an annual budget of more than \$180 million. 📄



DCFS Director Trish Ploehn, left, greets guests at the Vermont Corridor opening.

SCSW Ginger Lassy, right, has run 39 marathons.



Vermont Corridor Office Opens

The DCFS Vermont Corridor office, located at 8300 S. Vermont Ave., was officially dedicated this past winter. It is the only department office which also houses the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Division (CSSD) and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health in order to form a closer partnership and provide a one-stop shop for clients.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, ICO Development, LLS, and Los Angeles Councilmember Bernard C. Parks hosted the grand opening event. Among the attendees were DCFS Director Trish Ploehn, U.S. Representative Maxine Waters, CSSD Director Steven J. Golightly, DPSS Department Head Phillip Browning, and many other County officials who gathered to celebrate the opening. The event included catered food service, a ribbon cutting ceremony and tours of the office.

The new Vermont Corridor office replaces the former Hawthorne and Century offices. The four-story building accommodates 400 DCFS staff, including 150 social workers. The office handles about 2,350 cases and investigates about 600 referrals on allegations of abuse and neglect per month.

“This DCFS office is unique because we are the only office that is housed with three other service providers. The three departments are exploring a number of strategies to operate as an integrated service provider network,” explained Tonye Lightfoot, Children’s Service Administrator. 🍷

DCFS Receives Board Scroll for Reuniting Missing Children

Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich presented DCFS with scroll in February in recognition for the hard work and dedication of staff in helping to reunite missing children with their families. Deputy Directors Joi Russell and Angela Carter accepted the scroll on behalf of the department.

The department reduced the number of missing children from over 900 in 2005 to just over 285 in November 2007. As of January 2008, there were about 150 youth who had been missing over 200 days. It is believed that many of these youth are gang affiliated or have fled to Mexico to friends

and family.

Since the Runaway Task Force was convened three years ago at the behest of the Board of Supervisors, the department has continued to actively address the issue of missing youth and runaways. Recently, the DCFS Runaway Outreach Unit was expanded from three to six social workers and the scope of their work has been expanded beyond working only on youth who have been missing over 200 days.

The unit will also have a new clerical position to keep records and data updated. Changes to the Abducted and Runaway Kids System (ARKS) are underway which will enable the system to more easily update, access and code youth to maintain their accurate status. Deputy Director Joi Russell will be working on training managers so they can better support social workers. 🍷

SCSW Goes the Extra Mile

On March 2, 2008, DCFS Adoption SCSW Ginger Lassy ran the Los Angeles Marathon. At 65, Lassy placed fourth in her age division and finished the 26.2 mile run in five hours and six minutes. Her goal was to break 5 hours, but she says with the heat this year, she did not have the extra kick to make it happen. This was Lassy’s 39th marathon.

“The most exciting things are happening as I continue running, I am jazzed!” said Lassy. At a time when many people are looking to retire and just cruise around the world, Lassy is setting personal records that have placed her first in her age category in two recent marathons.

Lassy did not take up running until she was in her late 40s. A friend talked her into joining a running club, the L.A. Leggers. She says it took her years to learn how to run efficiently. Today, running is her passion and serves her on so many levels of her life. Four days a week, she is up at 6 a.m. to run. On weekends, she still runs her long runs with the L.A. Leggers. Lassy describes herself as a competitive runner, not a recreational one. “I began to win when I focused on running well as opposed to merely finishing. For me, giving up was not an option.”

She has set life goals around running. In 2009, Lassy wants to qualify and run the Boston Marathon. By the time she is 70, she wants to have run 50 marathons. In 2007, Lassy was inducted into the runners’ “Rock N’ Roll”



The Century office celebrates survey completion.



The ASFA team accepts toys from the Kaiser Permanente Latino Association.

SPA SPOTS Continued ...

Marathon Hall of Fame in San Diego.

Although she has not intentionally converted her family to running, Lassy's husband began running at age 62 and had run his ninth marathon by age 66. Her daughter is in training to run a second marathon at 38. She hopes that someday three generations will run together with her husband, daughter and granddaughter at her side. Her motto is: "Don't let your mind tell your body what to do." Extraordinary things happen, says Lassy, when you let your mind soar. **M**

Recognition Lunch for Century Office

The DCFS Education and Mentoring Division recognized the Century office for a 100 percent completion rate of the Preschool Opportunities Survey in January. The entire Century office was rewarded with a Papa John's pizza luncheon at the new Vermont Corridor office. The luncheon was spearheaded by Steve Sturm of the Education and Mentoring Division. The Lakewood and Lancaster offices were also among those offices with high completion rates.

In October 2007, the Education and Mentoring Division created and released a survey that would aid in obtaining information on exactly how many DCFS children are enrolled in preschool and quality child care. The information gathered from the survey is being used to develop strategies on how to engage more children, families, and communities in early care and education.

Sturm said that Century's participation in the survey was exceptional, and they were able to complete 100 percent of the surveys within a matter of weeks. Special recognition is also given to Regional Administrator Charles Tadlock and Assistant Regional Administrator Stephanie Harges, for encouraging their staff to participate in the survey. As a direct result of the information gleaned from the survey, more and better opportunities for DCFS children to attend low-cost or free preschool will be realized in 2008. **M**

Kaiser Permanente Donates Toys

The Kaiser Permanente Latino Association and employees of Kaiser Permanente have donated over 300 stuffed animals to the ASFA Division, formerly known as the Kinship Division. Division Chief Jennifer Lopez accepted the donation from Marlen Garcia of the association's Baldwin Park chapter. The Kinship Resource Center South distributed the gifts throughout the 2007 holiday season. Remaining stuffed animals continue to be given out as gifts to children and needy families who come into the center.

The Kaiser Permanente Latino Association began in 1993 and exists to support and promote the Kaiser Permanente business strategy, mission and vision. The association has a strong emphasis on serving the Latino community and the Kaiser Permanente Latino workforce. Their purpose is to help their members, community and employees to have equality in access to an education, positive work environment and community programs. They promote an environment that values cultural diversity, innovation and personal growth.

All members of the Kaiser Permanente staff including physicians, administrators, ancillary staff and many more participated in the toy drive which helped make it so successful. **M**

Foster Care Awareness Month

Every May, national attention is focused on issues surrounding foster care. In Los Angeles County, the annual Foster Care Awareness Campaign is also a time to focus on the positive aspects of the child welfare system and those special individuals who support it.

This year in Los Angeles County, the multi-departmental and agency partnership which organizes the Foster Care Awareness Campaign focused on permanency, older foster youth and what these young people can give back to their communities. The goal of the month's events was to show the public that foster youth need support and encouragement.

YO SALVO VIDAS CADA DÍA.
MI TRABAJO ES SER UN TRABAJADOR SOCIAL.
MI VIDA ES SER UN HEROÉ.

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para más información:
PROJECT NIGHTLIGHT.ORG



Social workers Ada Escobar, left, and Maria Lepe, right, are featured in a recent billboard campaign.

The month's activities included honoring several "Foster Care Heroes" who stand out and have demonstrated individual strength in helping youth. Recipients included youth, social workers, community organizers and foster parents who were profiled and presented with scrolls from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

During "Big Sunday" foster youth gathered at Griffith Park to join other community groups and help to replant burned out areas from last year's disastrous fires and afterwards, everyone enjoyed a picnic.

Other events during the month included a Job Shadowing Day in which numerous employers throughout the County invited these youth to spend the day trailing employees at various job levels to get a glance into a possible career that may interest them. Employers ranged from television stations and studios to banks to DCFS and other County departments.

DCFS also participated in State Foster Care Month activities and, along with Casey Family Programs, honored a Los Angeles Point of Engagement (POE) team as part of the recognition event at the State Capitol. The team consisted of social workers and a family who was helped by POE.

Billboards Highlight Importance of Social Workers, Adoptions and Reporting Child Abuse

Partnering with the department, the non-profit organization Project Nightlight (www.projectnightlight.org) and Vista Media, once again generously donated hundreds of billboards in L.A. County to help promote the image of social workers and raise awareness about child abuse and adoptions by advertising the Child Protection Hotline and Adoptions/Foster Care Hotline. The billboards were rolled out earlier this year.

The models used in these billboards are DCFS social workers. Project Nightlight focuses on child abuse prevention. Vista Media agreed to donate the billboard space, printing and installation and Project Nightlight donated all of the photography and art design. In addition, Adoptions also received a donated billboard promoting County adoptions.

Prevention Initiative

Continued from page 1

held in April brought all of the right players together," said Regional Administrator Chuck Tadlock of the Vermont Corridor office. "The tone and atmosphere created by those who arranged this activity resulted in community-based organizations, DCFS operational office representatives and Casey consultants being able to work cooperatively together and produce specific plans for preventive services in their respective SPAs.

"The hoped for result of this initiative is the further development, as well as the strengthening, of existing supportive resources and services for children and families in their communities."

Susan Kaplan, executive director of Friends of the Family, attended the April meeting, and looks forward to working on the PIDP.

"We were so pleased to see the coming together in a summit format of lead and major players responsible for making the child abuse and neglect Prevention Initiative happen. In the room, there was a sense of cooperation, excitement and looking in the same direction," said Kaplan.

"The meeting revealed the long and challenging road ahead. We are looking forward to implementing a cutting-edge approach, using front-end investment to prevent child abuse and neglect. It was apparent to us all that we will work harder and in a different manner than we ever have before."

Kaplan gave special kudos to Carter and DCFS Division Chief Harvey Kawasaki for their stellar job of conveying the history and initial conception of the PIDP.

Executive Director of the South Bay Center for Counseling Colleen Mooney also attended the April meeting. "The conversation about evaluation was interesting and I was happy to hear people challenging the original evaluation plan and advocating that the evaluation be embedded in the experience of residents as opposed to institutional experience," she said.

The PIDP unites DCFS, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS), the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families and many other agencies and stakeholders in a proactive plan to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

The guiding principles of the PIDP are family support and community- building principles established by the Board of Supervisors to affect children and families. Strategies are based on lessons learned through years of hard work on collaboration and service integration, building on a aligning with existing infrastructure, leveraging resources, enhancing partnerships, measuring and tracking results and sustaining excellence.

The three theories of change governing prevention planning include decreasing social isolation for families; increasing a family's economic stability within the communities where they reside; and creating an integrated

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Older Youth Adoption Project Aims to Increase Permanent Connections

A major focus of current and on-going permanency efforts at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is on older youth, specifically preventing them from aging out of the child welfare system without a connection to a supportive adult.

In support of this effort, Assembly Bill 1808, known as the Older Youth Adoption Project (OYAP), authorized the California Department of Social Services to grant \$3.75 million to Los Angeles County to be used by December 2009 to ensure the successful adoption of older foster youth ages 9 and up. These youngsters must also have been in care for a minimum of 18 months and have no permanent plan in their case. Los Angeles County began work on the OYAP in January.

The OYAP is to intensively target a minimum of 300 of the most at-risk youth and to have at least 33 percent of the children in this project reach permanency by being placed with a relative, birth parent, legal guardian or adoptive parent.

The majority of the grant will fund 14 Children's Social Worker (CSWs) positions and three Supervising CSW positions. All workers have extensive experience in adoption. In partnership with the Los Angeles Training Consortium, these workers will be specially trained to meet the many needs of the youth and the many aspects of these intensive cases. The OYAP CSWs carry caseloads of only children who meet the project's criteria.

Similar to the Permanency Partners Program (P3), the OYAP CSW will mainly work on family finding and engagement. With the help of the youth, the worker will mine their case for the possibility of any missed family or close connections that may have been overlooked during the history of the case. Simultaneously, the workers will develop a solid working relationship with their young client. The hope is that the youth will join in and actively participate in the project activities and that the growing

relationship will enhance the work.

After mining the case file, if no connection is found, an intensive recruitment will begin to ensure that the youth can develop an important relationship with an adult in their life. While this function may be ordinarily done by the Placement and Recruitment Unit, the OYAP worker will take on this role.

The OYAP workers will take on the combined tasks of the adoption CSW, social worker and a Placement and Recruitment Unit (PRU) worker. They are working with combined permanency models that have been found to be successful in reaching permanency throughout the country. The purpose is for one worker to get to really know the youth and build trust which is a key element in this process.

The CSW will also work with the youth to create and develop a "Life Book," which will visually help them to define themselves. Since many of the youth have been in the system for a number of years, they may feel helpless or possibly hopeless. They may be accepting of their current circumstances and not care to make changes. The worker will also need to help the youth to understand what permanency is about and the importance of having it in their lives.

The social workers will also be able to call together Team Decision-Making groups to help emphasize the idea of permanency and to educate family members, caregivers, mentors or any possible emotional connections for the youth. These meetings are also spent gathering more information about the youth including interests and personal connections.

The remainder of the grant will be used to support smaller permanency projects such as activities of the Los Angeles County Heart Gallery and creating a theater workshop and performance group for children waiting to be adopted.

For more information on the OYAP, please call Sari Grant, at (626) 229-3732. 🌸

Prevention Initiative *Continued from page 7*

community-based spectrum of prevention services, resources and activities to meet a family's needs. All three are expected to lessen the rate of child maltreatment.

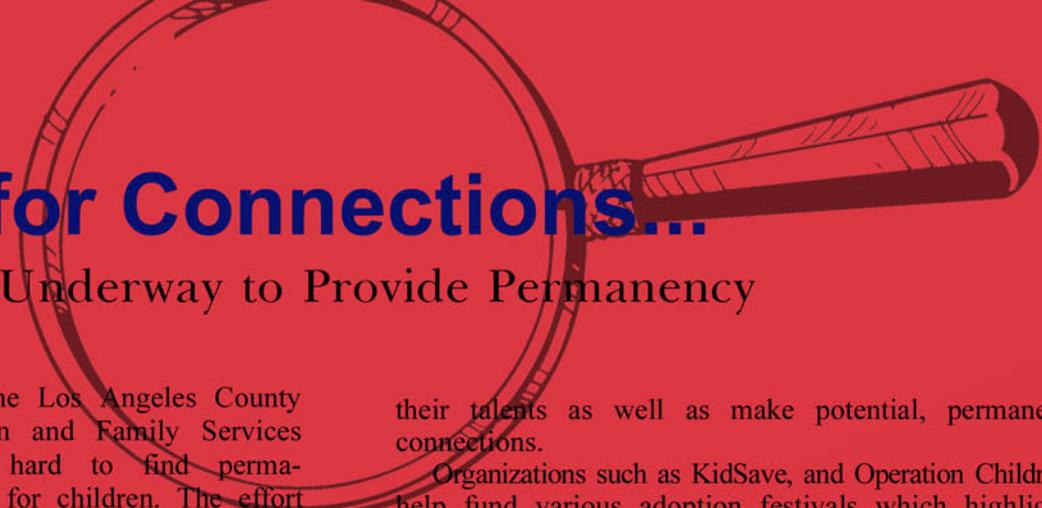
DCFS identified 12 contracted lead agencies in each of the eight SPAs who will be charged with implementing child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in partnership with regional offices and other County departments. This partnership requires collaboration with regional offices, families and communities, the public and private sector, faith-based communities and other County departments.

The seeds for a County-wide Prevention Initiative were planted years ago but formally started to take shape in 2002 when the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, through a motion by Supervisors Don Knabe and Zev Yaroslavsky, directed the Children's Planning Council to

develop strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect.

The CPC joined with DCFS in a Prevention Workgroup, also co-chaired by the Commission for Children and Families. The workgroup produced a plan that defined three "levels" of prevention to focus on.

- First level – Efforts to target the general population, supporting families.
- Second level – Efforts to target families who may have special needs or who are at high risk as a result of one or more inconclusive reports to DCFS.
- Third level -- Efforts that target families when maltreatment has been substantiated and provide services to prevent further maltreatment. 🌸



Looking for Connections...

Multiple Efforts Underway to Provide Permanency

Every day, throughout the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), staff works hard to find permanent, safe and loving homes for children. The effort includes the Resource Family Recruitment Unit, the Adoption Placement and Recruitment Unit, and work done by regional offices.

Recruitment Administrator Sari Grant spearheads much of the efforts along with a host of energetic, dedicated staff members who put their all into reaching out to the community. Every type of idea, event, media, funding source and community are used in order to find permanency for DCFS youth.

But DCFS staff can't do it alone. A variety of community-based programs and organizations have also helped in the recruitment of resource families and adoptive parents.

One of the newer and most successful programs is the Los Angeles Heart Gallery. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words and the Los Angeles version of this national traveling photo gallery proves this to be true. Professional photographers, who volunteer their time, take beautiful, artistic photos of older youth and large sibling groups who are available for adoption. The photos are part of a display that travels around the County to shopping centers, hospitals and other public places. Many families have shown interest in adopting after viewing the gallery in person or on the website (www.heartgalleryla.org).

With the help of government programs, resource family recruitment has made inroads into specific communities. The All Children, All Families Initiative has focused on the gay and lesbian community by recruiting families of different sexual orientations. The gay and lesbian community has a history of adopting children with special needs, so DCFS has outreached to this community through events such as the annual Gay Pride Festival. In addition, the Heart Gallery will be displayed at the opening of the Gay, Lesbian Adolescent Social Services Agencies new Long Beach office.

Media are also being used successfully in recruiting resource families. Today, the internet is used for recruitment efforts in addition to television, print and radio. Youth who are available for adoption are presented through "webi-sodes" and DCFS is hoping to work with the Los Angeles Police Department to display available children on their website in an effort to recruit law enforcement families to adopt.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich supports a billboard campaign in his district for the Los Angeles County Foster Care Awareness Campaign. South Bay Pastor Sonny Kang is developing a theater group where youth can express themselves and showcase

their talents as well as make potential, permanent connections.

Organizations such as KidSave, and Operation Children help fund various adoption festivals which highlight available children in fun, party-like settings with no cost to the department.

Children with special medical needs have their own recruitment days as well. "Adopt Me, Too" is an event that focuses on children with medical needs and invites families and agencies from all over the country to learn about the children. Recently, an adoption day was held at Los Angeles Children's Hospital to recruit medical professionals to become resource families for medically fragile children. There are other hospitals now following suit and hosting their own adoption days.

Some resource family recruitment happens in Service Planning Areas (SPAs). In 2007 the Santa Clarita Office began a partnership with the recruitment agency ChildShare, and was recently joined by Olive Crest Homes and Services for Abused Children, to increase the number of resource families in their service areas. So far, ChildShare has recruited five new resource families in the Santa Clarita area.

SPA 6 has also begun the task of identifying and reaching out to all faith-based organizations in their area. They have identified over 410 faith-based organizations in the West San Fernando Valley and Santa Clarita Valley. Other supportive organizations being brought into the fold include Grandparents as Parents and the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Child Abuse Council. The goal is to develop ongoing partnerships with these groups and share any resources they may have to offer families and youth.

The Glendora and Torrance offices have also been very successful in reaching out to the local faith-based communities. The Torrance office hosted an event for about 2,500 community members. The DCFS recruitment team gathered information from everyone interested in foster care.

The Torrance Office has also developed a Recruitment, Development and Support Workgroup. Members include community partners, DCFS staff and caregivers. Again, the workgroup is focused on recruiting homes in areas with the highest need.

For information on any of these recruitment activities, please call the Resource Family and Adoption Info Line at (888) 811-1121. 

Kin-GAP Strategic Plan Looks at Solutions to Help Support Caregivers as They Seek Independence from DCFS

Several years ago, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (Kin-GAP) was established by the federal and state government to allow children of relative caregivers with legal guardianship to receive a subsidy equivalent to the basic placement rate and have their cases terminated from the child welfare system. These families may also receive supportive aftercare services once their case is terminated.

Since the inception of Kin-GAP, more than 7,000 children and their families have taken advantage of this legislation.

During the earlier days of the Kin-GAP program, many relative caregivers decided they could not leave the system because of their children's special needs and the financial support and services needed to support them. To address the special needs issues, enhancements were made to Kin-GAP to allow the caregivers to continue to receive higher rates even after exiting the system.

Recently, a Kin-GAP Strategic Plan was created to further increase the number of children who move into Kin-GAP. Hopefully, this will result in substantial decreases in caseloads and more permanency for children and families.

The objectives of the plan are to sustain the stability of placements, minimize the potential for placement disruptions and reduce the possibility of re-entry into the system while strengthening the caregiver's ability to meet the needs of their children through continuing supportive services.

Throughout Los Angeles County, there are approximately 10,000 children in the system residing with relative and non-relative extended family caregivers. However, only relative caregivers are eligible to have their cases terminated through entering into Kin-GAP.

The Kin-GAP Strategic Plan will first target Service Planning Area (SPA) 6, where there are approximately 1,269 children eligible for Kin-GAP, and the highest concentration of relative caregivers in the County. What the department has found is that many of these caregivers have not yet taken advantage of the benefits of the program although their home situations are stable and their children are safe and well cared for.

Staff also found that there is a lack of awareness among staff and caregivers about Kin-GAP that has resulted in a decreased use of the program. One focus of the plan is to increase staff education through refresher trainings on Kin-GAP and to ensure that caregivers are provided the details needed in order to mutually agree on what is best for the child.

The collaboration with the community colleges to improve the curriculum and coordination of Kin-GAP orientations across the County is essential as a means of maintaining a consistent of information being shared with relative caregivers and is also part of the plan.

This past February, Kin-GAP seminars were held in

SPA 6. Seminars will also be held in the northern and eastern part of the County in the near future. One of the discussion topics centers on Kin-GAP as a means of reducing the disproportionate number of children of color placed in out-of-home care with relatives. The seminars will also focus on solutions for the concerns of caregivers that services and supports will be significantly reduced or lost if they enter into Kin-GAP.

The department will also be looking at reinforcing the infrastructure of community-based services that exist within each community and their role in aftercare as a means of encouraging the independence of each caregiver and decreasing their reliance on DCFS.

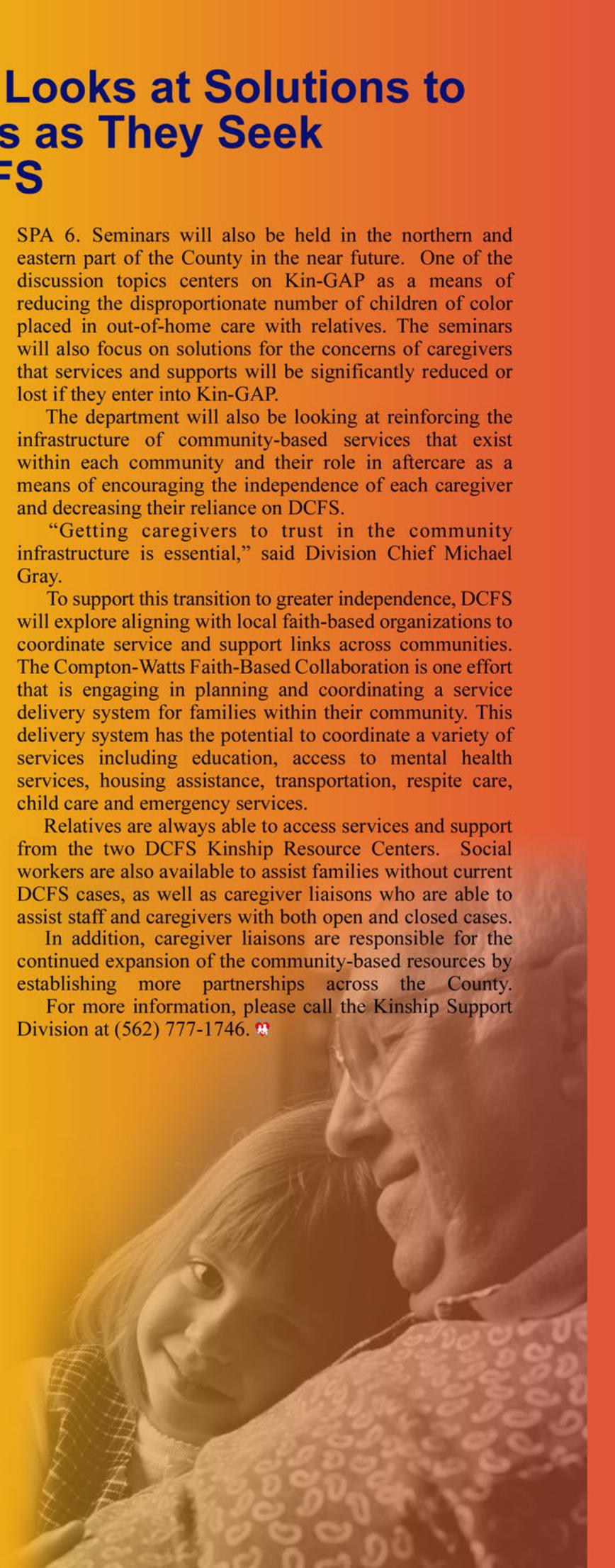
"Getting caregivers to trust in the community infrastructure is essential," said Division Chief Michael Gray.

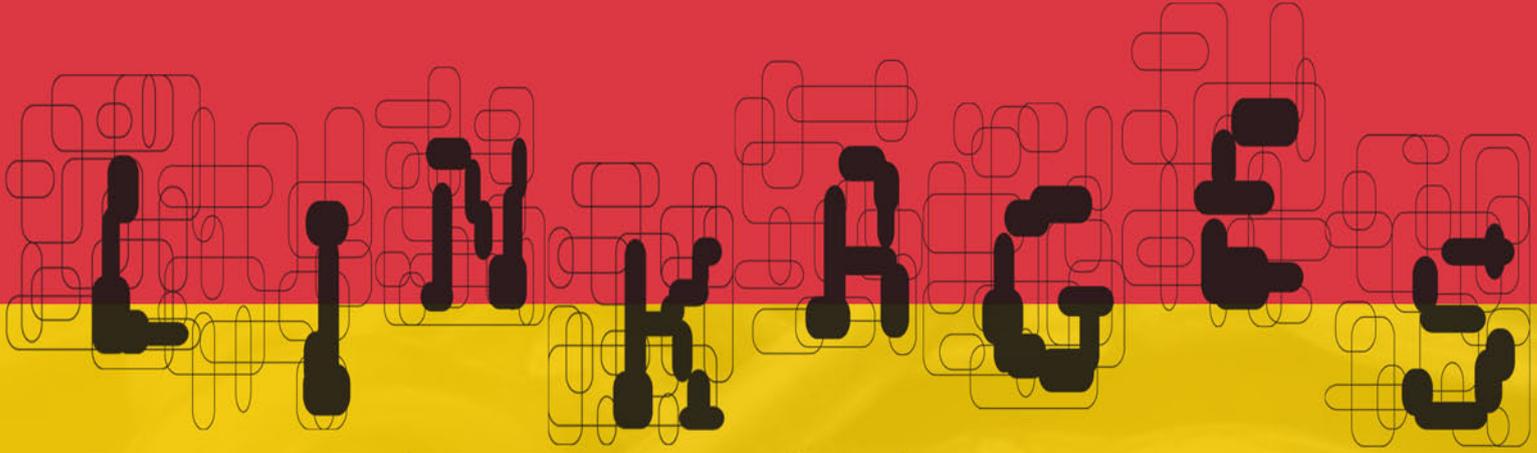
To support this transition to greater independence, DCFS will explore aligning with local faith-based organizations to coordinate service and support links across communities. The Compton-Watts Faith-Based Collaboration is one effort that is engaging in planning and coordinating a service delivery system for families within their community. This delivery system has the potential to coordinate a variety of services including education, access to mental health services, housing assistance, transportation, respite care, child care and emergency services.

Relatives are always able to access services and support from the two DCFS Kinship Resource Centers. Social workers are also available to assist families without current DCFS cases, as well as caregiver liaisons who are able to assist staff and caregivers with both open and closed cases.

In addition, caregiver liaisons are responsible for the continued expansion of the community-based resources by establishing more partnerships across the County.

For more information, please call the Kinship Support Division at (562) 777-1746. 📞





Program Builds Bridge to Services

Linkages, a program designed to enhance service to families who are involved in both child welfare and public assistance, is a partnership between the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). It aims to create a more streamlined way to provide services to families, who in the past may have received duplicate services from the two agencies.

The mission of the Linkages program is to have DCFS and DPSS work together to strengthen families, ensure child safety, promote well-being and sustain self-sufficiency. One goal of Linkages is to provide intervention services to make sure families who are dually involved in both CalWORKs and child welfare services have the opportunity to maximize resources and coordinate case planning in order to provide a safe and stable home for their children while working toward economic self-sufficiency.

Another important goal of Linkages is to provide preventive services to ensure that families who are not currently connected to the DPSS resources, but are eligible to receive their services, are provided a faster way to access these programs.

One example of an expedited service is the "Fast Pass" referral to CalWORKs for DCFS families who are eligible. The "Fast Pass," or the 5122 form, is a referral form provided to eligible families during Team Decision-Making by a Linkages Gain Services Worker, who will be part of the decision-making process. The 5122 referral form must be provided to the customer service representative at the DPSS office to show they have been pre-screened and referred by DCFS.

One of the benefits of the "Fast Pass" is that eligible participants will not have to wait in line at a DPSS office to get processed and the process will take approximately 15 days, rather than the normal 30 to 45 days.

The Gain Social Workers will be Eligibility Workers out-stationed in DCFS offices that will use a strength-based approach in dealing with families.

They will work closely with Emergency Response

Social Workers and Intensive Services Workers to participate in Team Decision-Making meetings; facilitate connections between social workers and CalWORKs/Gain workers for service coordination; refer families to workers who can help them with Welfare-to-Work; initiate Family Reunification notification referrals to DPSS; and screen families for potential eligibility to CalWORKs, General Relief, Food Stamps and/or Medi-Cal, if there is no existing DPSS case.

Linkages is a result of California Assembly Bill 429 enacted in 2002, which enables families who were receiving CalWORKs at the time the children were removed from the home to continue receiving services such as help with substance abuse and domestic violence.

Los Angeles County serves as a Linkages model for both California and the United States. Managers, Supervising Children's Social Workers, Children's Social Workers and clerical staff from DCFS as well as staff from DPSS will receive training prior to the implementation of the Linkages program in each DCFS office. There will also be a link to the Linkages program on L.A. Kids shortly.

For more information on Linkages, please call Debbie Guiloff at (213) 351-5612. 



DIRECTOR'S EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

Every month, DCFS employees are honored as part of the "DCFS All Stars" employee recognition program. All of these employees are honored for enriching the lives of the children and families and contributing to our goals of permanence, safety and reduced reliance on out-of-home care. Recipients are chosen by a rotating panel of all levels of DCFS staff and given special certificates. Photos of all recipients are also mounted on the wall outside of the Director's office at DCFS Headquarters and posted on L.A. Kids. We're still looking for "DCFS All Stars" to honor and all staff are encouraged to send in nominations using the form on the L.A. Kids website.

For more information, call Lois Shirk in the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at (213) 351-5886. To learn more about these outstanding recipients, check out L.A Kids. Congratulations to all of the honorees!

Outstanding Administrative Service Staff Award
September: Sally Wang, Accounting Office II, Headquarters
October: Adela Estrada, CSA I, Family to Family, Torrance Office
November: Diana Flaggs, ASM I, Contracts Division
February: Caroline Han, ARA, Lakewood Office

Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award
September: Earnest McFarland, SCSW, Hawthorne Office
October: Maria Barrios-Duenas, CSW, RUM Liaison
November: Sylvia Serrano, CSW II, Belvedere Office
December: Lovette Panthier, SCSW, San Fernando Valley East
February: Michael Darajon, CSW III, Compton Office

Outstanding Support Service Staff Award
September: Precious Anderson, ITC, Family to Family
October: Linda Escarcega, ITC, Pomona Office
November: Simone Tryon-Williams, ITC, Emancipation Ombudsman office
December: Dora Orozco, ITC, West LA office
February: Ryan Regland, HAS, Wateridge South Office

Outstanding Team Award
October: Title IV-E Work Group Committee, Glendora Office
February: For teamwork in finding permanency for a previously hard-to-place youth, Pasadena Office

Special Recognition Award for January 2008
Sam Labib, CSW III, Wateridge Office
For his dedication and commitment to foster youth and his outstanding volunteerism which contributed to the success of the 2007 Animagination program.



UPCOMING EVENTS

3rd Annual DCFS 'Family Fun Day' Employee Picnic
Saturday, July 12, 2008
11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Griffith Park,
Crystal Springs Picnic Area
Information: L.A. Kids or
(626) 938-1763

Bring your family and join fellow DCFS staff for a day of fun including games for the entire family, special activities for children, music, DCFS talent and raffles. Employees can purchase a barbecue lunch in advance, potluck with their office or bring their own picnic. Plenty of free parking will be available. All DCFS staff and their families are welcome!

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