

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Continuing to Build on Our Success

It's the end of the year, and I'd like to again congratulate all DCFS staff on working to achieve the department's three goals. The work that's been done this year has been exceptional. We've seen improvements in most areas of performance including safety and permanence.

Due to the incredible work being done in offices, we are doing better than the State averages in some key areas such as recurrence of maltreatment and the rate of recurrence of abuse and/or neglect in homes where children were not removed. Most notably, in the last year we have decreased the abuse and/or neglect rate for children in foster care by approximately 31 percent and we have decreased the median length-of-stay for children in out-of-home care by 20 percent.

Two years ago the department had 800 more cases open and 100 less social workers. Because of your hard work keeping families together and closing cases when appropriate, we have been able to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care and gained support for the hiring of more workers. Over the last year, we have decreased the number of children in foster care by approximately 10 percent and new entries into care by approximately 17 percent.

Today we also have 398 Supervising Children's Social Workers, up from 296 two years ago. Caseload averages have dropped slightly from the 30s to the upper 20s and we will continue to work on this.

The one area where we need further concentration is permanency. Although our Permanency Plan cases are down from 18,000 to 16,000, we still need to focus on improving timelines to permanency and work hard on closing the thousands of Permanency Plan cases that are currently open by finding permanent homes for these children. Focusing on the importance of allocating resources where they are needed most continues to be a priority in providing the safety and stability to the families we serve.

You should be proud of all of these accomplishments and take time out in each of your offices to celebrate your success. The department is well on its way toward being a national model for how social work should be done. In the new year, we will continue to celebrate our achievements and continue to focus on what it takes to be exceptional. ■

**David Sanders, Ph.D.**  
Director

## Five Strategies to Support Three Key Outcomes

Earlier this fall, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) announced five strategies to support the department's key three outcomes of improved permanence, improved safety and a reduction in the reliance of out-of-home-care. (See box on this page.)

Some of the strategies, such as the Permanency Partners Program (P3) are new concepts, but other methods like Team Decision-Making have been used by staff for years. But they all have one thing in common -- all of the strategies were found to be those that best support the department's three goals. Many of these same strategies are now being implemented throughout the country by other child welfare agencies.

"These five strategies are proving to be successful in improving safety and permanency for children and families," said DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders. "By focusing our efforts, we will be better able to achieve the three goals we have set."

In this issue of "DCFS News" we give you a brief overview of each of the strategies. More information and in-depth fact sheets outlining each strategy are located on the L.A. Kids web site, along with a video message from Dr. Sanders explaining how the five strategies support the three outcomes.

### Point of Engagement (POE)

The department began developing POE in 1999 in response to an audit recommendation that the department revise its case flow process and provide a faster response for services. A POE pilot began last year in the Compton office and full implementation is expected to be in all offices by next year.

POE is characterized by a seamless and timely transfer of responsibility from front-end investigations to actual service delivery. This seamless delivery will provide more thorough evaluations and provide more comprehensive services to families, often preventing low-risk cases from entering the court system altogether. When possible, community services are provided to help the family while it is kept safely intact.

POE will not be appropriate for every family. The department uses Structured Decision-Making to identify families who could benefit from POE. POE also uses a team decision-making approach and includes input from the

#### THE KEY THREE:

- Improved Permanence
- Improved Safety
- Reduced Reliance on Out-of-Home Care

#### FIVE STRATEGIES:

1. Point of Engagement (POE)
2. Permanency Partners Program (P3)
3. Concurrent Planning (CP)
4. Structured Decision-Making (SDM)
5. Family to Family/ Team Decision-Making (F2F/TDM)

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# DCFS Success Stories

**A**s a regular part of "DCFS News," we recognize the successes of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its community partners. These success stories are diverse and offer an opportunity for staff and community partners to celebrate accomplishments and share the good work they are doing. To submit story ideas for this section, please e-mail Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at [riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us). In this edition of "DCFS News" Success Stories we highlight the importance of mentoring.

## Volunteer of the Year Sees Value in Mentoring



Dorothy Simpson

"Years ago, I learned that kids get kicked out of foster care at 18 and I remember feeling that this was terrible for someone so young to be left adrift on their own," explained DCFS 2005 Volunteer of the Year Dorothy Simpson. But, it wasn't until years later when she

learned about the need for mentors from an article in the "County Digest" that she was inspired to volunteer. "My reward for mentoring is the knowledge that I am supporting someone who really needs it."

Simpson now mentors a young woman who is in the process of emancipating from the foster care system. She offers encouragement, advice and friendship to the youth, who has been supervised by the department since she was 13 years old and suffers from self-esteem issues. They see each other every other week and talk weekly or as often as the youth needs. Simpson takes her mentee to the beach, movies, museums, shopping and to various musical events. "I want to expose her to a range of cultural and artistic activities."

The pair has been together for almost two years. There have been ups and downs for this young person, but over time Simpson has seen positive changes. The young woman really wants to come out of her shell and take a more proactive stance in her life. She has sought out professional help and has re-enrolled in school and is looking for a new job. Most of all, she needs a friend – and that's the most important part of mentoring, explained Simpson. Simpson has this advice for present and future mentors: "A mentor should not run the mentee's life or try to be a parent. Be a good listener and spend time together doing activities."

The department is currently in the process of creating a formal Mentoring Section to provide all foster youth with a mentor. ■

*For more information on how to become a mentor for DCFS foster youth, call the Emancipation Division Info Line at (213) 351-0100.*

## Former Foster Youth Uses His Struggle to Inspire Others



Irie Reyes and his foster parents

Alan "Irie" Reyes, a 28-year-old mentoring coach at the All Peoples Christian Church, knows a lot about what it's like to be in the system and struggle through a difficult childhood. Reyes is part of the Exodus Urban Academy gang intervention program. He now uses his struggles

and success in life to inspire and teach middle school and high school continuation school students.

Reyes speaks to youth on probation and parole and goes to Homeboy Industries and Destiny Girls Academy, a continuation school for girls on a weekly basis to meet with at-risk youth. Reyes is familiar with pain and loss and he said that helps him relate to the youth. He has lost several family members to gang violence including three cousins in just the past five years alone.

Reyes ended up in foster care when he was six years old. His mother and father had split up years earlier and his father moved to New York City. During his early years, Reyes was raised by his homeless mother who was addicted to drugs. He entered the foster care system after he and his older brother were caught stealing food because they were hungry.

"I remember it like it was yesterday," he said of the day police showed up at a convenience store where he had just stolen candy bars. "They told us we would be taken to a nice home."

His foster parents treated the two boys like family. Reyes remembers those years as happy times. The couple wanted to adopt the brothers, but custody was eventually returned to their father who wanted to raise the boys in New York. Reyes' teen years with his father were tumultuous. He got kicked out of school, was in and out of jail, selling weed and just "hanging out." After returning to Los Angeles, Reyes got involved working with youth first through "Dream Yard" a program that goes into juvenile camps and facilitates poetry sessions. He turned his life around and found purpose. Since then, Reyes has developed a passion for poetry and music. He has also started his own business selling shirts and provided commentary for Youth Radio.

"One of my ultimate dreams is to have a non-profit and work with foster youth who are emancipated," he said.

To view Reyes' poem "Memory Lane" and hear his story in his own words, log on to Youth Radio at [http://www.youthradio.org/poetry/kpfa050129\\_lane.shtml](http://www.youthradio.org/poetry/kpfa050129_lane.shtml). ■

# Five Strategies to Support Three Key Outcomes

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## Permanency Partners Program (P3)

No child should leave foster care without a lifelong connection to a committed adult. That's the philosophy behind P3, a new effort to assist social workers in finding legally permanent homes and adult connections for the more than 7,000 youth ages 12 to 18 who are currently in long-term foster care placements in Los Angeles County.

Piloted a year ago, P3 pairs a specially trained "permanency specialist" with a youth to identify one or more adult connections with the goal of reunifying the youth or moving the youth into adoption or legal guardianship. At the minimum, P3 hopes to connect each child with an adult mentor.

Retired social workers have been rehired to help offices with this effort. In addition, volunteer private investigators will be used to find adults who youth have identified as significant, but have lost contact with over the years. More than 250 youth are now being served by P3 in 16 offices.

"We are beginning a cultural shift," said Director Dr. David Sanders. "We need staff to start embracing the concept that legal permanency for foster children is achievable and that it is urgent."

## Concurrent Planning (CP)

Concurrent Planning aims to support timely permanence for children. Safe reunification is DCFS' first priority, but in the event that this is not possible, Concurrent Planning ensures that the identification of an alternative placement plan for children who cannot safely return home is in place from the beginning.

Working with a labor/management group, the department implemented changes to Concurrent Planning which support the safety and permanence for children and families from the first day they enter out-of-home care. These system changes include focusing on identifying relatives and siblings and developing "resource families" who are committed to working toward reunification and providing legal permanence if safe reunification is not successful. Concurrent Planning also engages families and draws on their strengths and uses ongoing assessments and case planning.

## Structured Decision-Making (SDM)

The goals of SDM are to reduce subsequent harm to children and expedite permanency. Through proper use of SDM, staff are able to identify key decision points, increase the consistency of their decisions, increase the validity of decisions and better target resources for families. SDM provides social workers with simple, objective and reliable tools to make the best possible decisions for individual cases and provide managers with information for improved planning and resource allocation.

Components of SDM include several tools: a Response-Priority which helps determine if and when to safely investigate

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*Improved Permanence*



*Improved Safety*



*Reduced Reliance on Out-of-Home Care*

## Five Strategies to Support Three Key Outcomes

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a referral; a Safety Assessment for identifying immediate threatened harm to a child; a Risk Assessment based on research, which estimates the risk of future abuse or neglect; a Family Needs and Strengths Assessment for identifying problems and establishing a service plan; and a Case Reassessment to ensure that ongoing treatment is appropriate.

In 1998, DCFS was one of the original seven California pilot counties to implement SDM in cooperation with the California Department of Social Services. The SDM model and tools have been in use in other states for more than 10 years.

### Family to Family Team Decision-Making (F2F/TDM)

The philosophy behind F2F/TDM is that all families have strengths and that families are the experts on themselves. Those strengths are used to make an immediate decision regarding a child's placement and create a plan that protects the child and preserves or reunifies the family.

When families are involved in decision making, outcomes can improve. This method offers an opportunity for birth and foster/resource parents to interact in a safe environment. Through the F2F/TDM process, social workers are fully supported in making difficult decisions regarding placement and safety. Families are present and involved and work with DCFS staff to come up with a plan. F2F/TDM is a powerful intervention early in a case. The process encourages a more thorough examination of all of the risks involved in placement and can help to prevent a child's removal and ensure timely placement with relatives. ■

## Group Homes Work With DCFS to Establish Res-Wrap Program

As group homes look for new ways to improve permanency for foster youth, the department has been working with several group home/Wraparound providers on a pilot project to weave the Wraparound values and principles into group home residential programs and find ways to transition youth safely home more quickly and with lasting results.

The pilot, funded through SB163 Wraparound funds at each group home, began two years ago when three provider agencies, San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, Sycamores and Vista del Mar approached the department about creating an innovative residential program that would be more reflective of the Wraparound values and principles. Later, Starview became the fourth agency to join the pilot. Each agency was already a Wraparound provider, but they all wanted to take Wrap into their residential program to create a "Res-Wrap" model.

They all share a basic philosophy - engage the family earlier in the youth's stay at a residential treatment program and work to transition youth out with an agreed upon plan. Over the past two years they tried different models and then reconvened to talk about the challenges, successes and lessons they learned.

"We are now partnering with families in the decision making," said Mary Martone, director of Wraparound/Systems of Care at Vista del Mar. "Before, kids would go home and then get Wraparound services. By providing these much needed services immediately and working with families while the youth are still in residential care, it will ultimately decrease their length of stay in care. Residential programs alone are not equipped to stabilize the family and to meet all of their needs."

"Another difference is that a consistent team of people stay with the child throughout the process. That kind of continuity is not possible in a straight residential program. Wrap can address the needs in multiple domains of a family's life," added Mary Lou Gottlieb, director of Child and Adolescent Services for the San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center. "Wraparound is the best thing I've seen in a long time. Family focus allows parents to have a voice and a choice in what happens to their children. It's made a significant change in my own thinking. It also results in permanency where we could never have dreamed before of such outcomes."

At San Fernando Valley, the Erikson Center is a major focus of the work done by the agency. The unique teamwork at the center has made for strong continuity and better outcomes, said Gottlieb.

Though many staff are supportive, the group did encounter some initial resistance from staff. The challenge came because there are different goals between residential and Wrap programs often complicated by fear of the youth going home and fear of losing control.

"We're changing culture to shift the thinking that residential treatment is no longer a placement, it's part of a larger intervention. Group homes should be seen as a short-term intervention and not a placement," said Division Chief Dr. Michael Rauso.

Despite some skepticism, staff is encountering a lot of success. "Most of the kids are at home and doing well. We have seen the critical importance of parent partners - introducing them to the residential models. They are employees of the Wrap program who have had kids in residential care and they're able to act as mentors for parents with kids in care and advocates," said Martone.

"It's showing promise," added Rauso. "We are seeing a dramatic increase in the timelines to reunification and permanency."

The next step is to use the provider model information to come up with one model for Res-Wrap that can be implemented County-wide. ■

# Amaryllis Watkins Named Newest Member of Executive Team

## Long-time Social Worker Brings Unique Perspective to Management

**A**fter 37 years as a social worker, I am more enthusiastic about child welfare than ever before," said Amaryllis Watkins, the newest DCFS Deputy Director for Service Bureau 2. From her perspective, Watkins sees social welfare coming full circle. "We are back to focusing on families and providing service to children in their homes," she said. "When children can't be kept in or be returned to their homes then they should have safe and loving homes of their own."

Social welfare is evolving, but Watkins' core belief remains that people can grow and change. As long as we look for their strengths and don't give up on them, they have a chance and the community is better off, she said. Team Decision-Making is a critical, key component to empowering families. This is the essence and focus of what she will bring to DCFS Service Bureau 2, which includes the Compton Project and Point of Engagement/Multidisciplinary Assessment Team, Child Protection Hotline, Emergency Response Command Post/Out-of-County Services, Service Planning Areas 4, 5 and 6 and the Katie A. Program.

Watkins believes the goal of leadership is to demonstrate the

tools that can help to accomplish these beliefs. Teamwork is also a key to success and is the result of leadership who demonstrate it. Recent changes at the Command Post are a good example of successful departmental teamwork. "By focusing on the issues at hand, working with regional Children's Social Workers and managers, our Bureau of Resources staff and community resources, Command Post has been better able to quickly place the children who come through their office."

*Amaryllis Watkins*

A year from now, Watkins hopes that as a department we will be focusing on highest-risk cases, maintaining kids in their homes and having the fewest children in congregate care and then only those with the highest needs. Children who need to be placed will remain in their communities and workers will feel an even greater sense of accomplishment. "Another way to move towards this goal," said Watkins, "is to all demonstrate empathy and understanding for each other and take this outside to the community." ■

## ON THE LINE

**"O**n the Line" is a "DCFS News" column featuring Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services social workers whose achievements and practices epitomize the best in social work.

## Personal Life Experiences Help Asian Pacific Unit Social Worker Connect with the Community

**A**fter 13 years of being on the line as a Children's Social Worker, Hai Luu says with great humility, "The more I work, the more I like this job." Luu has been with the Asian Pacific Unit for 12 years. Supervisor S.Y. Woo explains that Luu has gone above and beyond the call of duty by taking the initiative to staff foster parent recruitment booths at community events, obtain tickets for shows for social workers to give to children and collect toys for DCFS families at the holidays.

The first year Luu was with the department, he was a Command Post worker. Working at night when the most critical calls came in was very exciting for Luu and served as a great training ground.

Within the Asian-Pacific community, there are many similarities among Asian cultures, but there are more differences, explains Luu. Therefore, the Asian Pacific Unit serves a very important purpose including helping reduce unnecessary detentions within the Asian-Pacific

community due to cultural misunderstandings.

He also believes that the unit builds cross-cultural bridges by providing information and making families aware of U.S. laws and customs. By actively getting involved in the community, the unit helps children have better lives with less abuse and neglect from their caretakers.

Physical abuse is the biggest issue within the Asian-Pacific community, said Luu. Within the Asian-Pacific culture there are no specific words assigned for feelings, so working through Western-focused therapy does not work. What does work, he said, is presenting an issue in the context of how it may impact the family's political or financial status. That method, Luu said, gets faster results.

Luu brings a great deal of life experience and cultural background to his job. He has straddled two Asian cultures from birth. Luu was born to a Vietnamese mother and a Chinese father who ran to Vietnam to escape the Japanese during World War II. He served in the South Vietnamese army during the Vietnam War. After the war in 1979, he his wife and two babies fled Vietnam as boat people and made their perilous way to Hong Kong and then to Louisville, Ky. He hopes to retire in five years to teach social work and write his life story. ■



*Hai Luu*





# SPA SPOTS



*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.co.la.ca.us](mailto:riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us).*

## **Rotary Club Trust Fund Money Still Available**

This year, the Los Angeles Rotary Club created a special Trust Fund and set aside \$500,000 to help meet the needs of Los Angeles County foster youth. These one-time only gifts of up to \$1,000 can be used for anything that government funds do not cover. These items may be a musical instrument, a computer, a class trip or for a variety of other special needs.

The maximum gift amount is not a hard and fast rule. The Rotarians do not expect that each gift will amount to the full \$1,000 limit so remaining funds may be applied to other requests. The only request that the Rotary Club has is that the funds be spent as fast as possible, so that there will be more funds for next year.

As of October, six out of eight requests have been granted amounting to approximately only \$2,000. There is still a great deal of money to be spent and the Rotary Club has been quick to respond to applications. Some of the requests have been for entry fees, air fares for out-of-state trips, relative visits and a college orientation. Application forms are on L.A. Kids and should be submitted to the DCFS Families and Children's Trust Fund Section to the attention of Michael Wrice. This is a wonderful opportunity for the department to help out kids at a time when money is scarce. Be creative! ■

## **Hundreds Come Out to Support 'Rising Stars'**

Everyone was swinging with Rosie the Riveter and the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy to help make the Third Annual Rising Stars fundraiser a rousing success on October 29th at the Norris Center in Rolling Hills. Sponsored by The Teague Family Foundation, the Rising Stars event supports the annual Celebration I foster youth graduation event and the scholarship program at the Norris Center for the Performing Arts Negri Learning Center. Over 200 supporters attended this year's gala event "In the Mood and On the Town" which was a musical tribute to the 1940s.

This year's honoree was ABC 7 for their support of foster youth as well as spearheading the annual Spark of Love holiday campaign. In support of ABC 7, reporter Phillip Palmer was the evening's auctioneer and the master of ceremonies, and sportscaster Rob Fukazaki sang. DCFS staff member Aris Banico supplied musical accompaniment during the dinner hour. Dinner was followed by a musical review by the young performers of the Negri Learning Center at the Norris. This

year, a 2006 BMW Mini Cooper was among the items raffled and helped to raise more than \$30,000 to support Celebration I. ■

## **SPA 8 Holds Luncheon to Honor Foster Caregivers**

On September 13th, more than 500 foster and relative caregivers packed the Carson Community Center for a wonderful luncheon thanking them for their tireless work and for "Making a Difference" which was the event's theme. This community-based event was designed to build more positive relationships with community members who help care for the children we supervise. The event's focus was to bring together DCFS staff, caregivers and community agencies with the goal of enhancing child safety through better cooperation by those involved in caring for these children. Resource tables for community agencies were very busy.

Although Supervisors Yvonne B. Burke and Don Knabe, DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders and Bureau Chief Trish Ploehn could not be on hand, they sent heartfelt videotaped welcome messages to the guests. The speakers included Chief of Staff for Second District Supervisor Burke and John Hill, who was himself a foster child for nine years. He shared his great love and appreciation for his foster parents who taught him the values and goals by which to live.

Keynote speaker, best-selling author Regina Louise, shared the strong need for a child to have that special person in their life who believes in them. ■

## **Palmdale, Glendora and El Monte Offices Open**

The DCFS Palmdale office was officially dedicated in June by DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders and Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich along with other county officials who gathered to celebrate.

"This DCFS office is here today for one primary reason: It's here because of the children and families we serve who actually reside in Palmdale and are provided services and supervision from our agency," said Rick L. Bryant, the office's regional administrator.

The agency will use about 50,000 square feet of a 72,000-square-foot building at 39959 Sierra Highway which was originally occupied by Lockheed Martin Aerospace. Besides providing plenty of room for about 165 staff members, including 70 social workers, the office will give more space to the Lancaster office.

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The former office space on East Avenue will be used by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services.

The Palmdale office handles about 1,550 cases and investigates 300 to 400 referrals a month on allegations of abuse or neglect. "Our new facility's presence in the community has already begun to bear the fruits of change," Bryant said. "Two conference rooms are now being used regularly for team decision-making conferences to determine if a child can remain safely in their home without detention or removal; furthermore, they hold family group decision-making conferences to determine appropriate case plans with families, extended family or caregivers; and emancipation conferences with teens to establish plans for the minor."

The El Monte and Glendora offices, which replaced the Covina office, celebrated grand openings in October and November. The events included a ribbon cutting, tours of the buildings and refreshments. The El Monte office is located at 4024 Durfee Avenue. The Glendora office is located at 725 South Grand Avenue. ■

## 'All For The Love of Kids' Raises Money for Trust Fund

On the beautiful evening of August 18th in Alhambra, 300 guests gathered for the 10th Annual All for the Love of Kids awards dinner, which raised almost \$19,000 to benefit the DCFS Families and Children's Trust Fund. The evening's honorees were Los Angeles County District attorney Steve Cooley for the "Protecting Our Kids" program and Youth Opportunities United, Inc. for the Animagation program. Fifth District Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich and DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders did the honors. KTLA Morning News Anchor Michaela Pereira was very entertaining as the Master of Ceremonies and auctioneer.

"Protecting Our Kids" is an Internet program that can be installed to help parents keep their children safe on the Internet. Free CD's were available during the event as well as being available to all foster parents. Since 1992, the Y.O.U. Board's Animagation program has provided an annual day of learning and exploration focusing on animation and graphic arts. Entertainment industry professionals are on hand to teach and share career information with foster youth.

The evening's talent included DCFS staff member Aris Banico on the piano and the delightful singing of Andrea Palm, also a DCFS staff member. ■

## New Technology Enhances Services at Hotline

Being on the cutting edge of technology helps the DCFS Child Protection Hotline meet the needs of children and families in a faster, safer and more professional way. Current enhancements include the launch of the Mandated Reporter Web Site, the RightFax Server, Differential Response and the 211 system.

The Mandated Reporter Web Site went into service recently. Now, after calling the Hotline, mandated reporters can submit their Suspected Child Abuse Reports (SCARs) on-line in lieu of mailing them. A link to the web site is located at <http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us>. Regional staff will have almost instantaneous access to the reports, which will be located in the site under "SCAR Reports."

By generating and sending inter-agency cross reports through the new Right Fax Server, the Hotline staff will be able to file cross reports with designated law enforcement agencies, including the Los Angeles County and City District Attorney's offices, without needing clerical staff to fax hundreds of reports. Additionally, the cross report will also appear in CWS/CMS as a permanent document along with the Emergency Response and Screener Narrative. This will enable the regional social worker to access the same cross report sent to the law enforcement agencies.

To alleviate calls to the Hotline that take time away from the work of evaluating reports involving child abuse, neglect, and exploitation, the 211 system began service on July 1st. All information inquiries received by the Hotline are automatically forwarded to County 211, which will be the number for community resources.

As a move towards prevention, Differential Response was inaugurated at the Hotline in May. The Hotline staff now forwards all evaluated out referrals falling within the Compton service area to the Compton Office. As part of Point of Engagement, families that are assessed through Structured Decision Making as having some risk factors, but not meeting criteria for initiating an investigation by the department, will be contacted by the Compton office and offered referrals to community agencies for assistance that may benefit them. ■

## Achieving Our Outcomes!

CWS/CMS Version 5.5: the Outcome Measures release debuted on November 21, 2005. Modifications in Version 5.5 relate directly to AB 636 and Federal mandates to track child welfare outcomes. One colorful change you will notice is the addition of periwinkle fields in most of the notebooks. The data in these periwinkle fields is accessed by State and Federal reporting systems to analyze our performance in relation to outcome measures. Additional major changes in this release include:

- Documenting our efforts to engage the family in case-planning
- A redesign to make it easier to determine where a client is currently located
- A reorganization of the Education Notebook which allows a more efficient way to record grade-level information
- A redesign of the documentation process for the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Check out the changes posted at the following link:  
<http://lakids/dcfs/computersupport/resources.htm> ■



## 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 web site.

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 the Director's Page on L.A. Kids. Congratulations to all of the honorees!

**Outstanding Administrative Service Staff Award**  
May Jennifer Lopez,  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Covina Office  
June: NA

July: Joe Prusak,  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Torrance Office  
August: Robert La Farge,  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Belvedere Office

**Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award**  
May: Dr. Alberto Mejia,  
Children's Social Worker III  
Child Sexual Abuse Program/ Covina  
Annex Office

June: Stephen K. Reid,  
Children's Social Worker III  
Child Protection Hotline  
July: Mark Wing Cheung,  
Children's Social Worker III  
Santa Fe Springs Office  
August: Barbara Barabino,  
Children's Social Worker III  
Kinship Resource Center

**Outstanding Support Service Staff Award**  
May: Betty Malloy,  
Intermediate Typist Clerk  
Emergency Response/Metro North Office  
June: Gihan Guindi,  
Administrative Assistant III  
Budget Service Division  
July: Donald Boatner,  
Intermediate Typist Clerk  
Child Protection Hotline  
August: Andrew Sevrin  
Senior Typist Clerk  
Bureau of Resource Administration

L.A. County Board  
of Supervisors  
**MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH**  
Mayor  
**GLORIA MOLINA**  
First District  
**YVONNE B. BURKE**  
Second District  
**ZEV YAROSLAVSKY**  
Third District  
**DON KNABE**  
Fourth District

L.A. County Commission for  
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Patricia Curry  
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L.A. County Department of  
Children and Family Services  
425 Shatto Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90020  
www.dcfcs.co.la.ca.us  
www.lacounty.info

Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-540-4000  
Adoptions and Foster Care  
Information  
1-888-811-1121

Director  
**David Sanders, Ph.D.**

### DCFS News Staff

Editor  
**Louise Grasmehr**  
Writer  
**Stu Riskin**  
Editorial Assistant  
**Gino Hernandez**  
Photography  
**Richard Cervantes**

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For article ideas and submissions,  
e-mail [grasml@dcfs.co.la.ca.us](mailto:grasml@dcfs.co.la.ca.us),  
or fax to (213) 738-9257. All submissions  
are subject to review and editing.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### DCFS "FAMILY FUN DAY" IS COMING SOON!

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the first annual DCFS "Family Fun Day" on Saturday, April 29, 2006! This staff appreciation event for all DCFS staff will coincide with the annual March of Dimes Walk America event at Griffith Park and include awards, raffle prizes, giveaways and entertainment for the whole family. All DCFS employees and their families are invited to share in the fun. More information will be posted on L.A. Kids in the following months. Stay tuned!

### HELP CELEBRATE SUCCESSES OF FOSTER YOUTH

Celebration I, which has honored foster and probation youth for their outstanding scholastic achievement for over 15 years, is approaching quickly. Each year through Celebration I, more than 150 high school graduates are awarded scholarships to further their pursuits in college, vocational school or the military.

This year's event will again be held at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in June.

All Children's Social Workers and Independent Living Coordinators are urged to have youth on their caseloads apply for the many scholarships available. Applicants must have a minimum grade point average of 2.8. They also must be eligible to graduate in 2006 and be starting school in fall of the same year.

Celebration I is a collaborative effort between the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services; the County of Los Angeles Probation Department; United Friends of the Children (UFC), a non-profit organization that provides the direct and in-depth services that make it possible for foster youth to become self-sustaining adults; Community College Foundation; The Teague Family Foundation; and Casey Family Programs.

Information about Celebration I will be soon posted on the L.A. Kids web site. In 2006, the department encourages more DCFS staff to attend, cheer on these remarkable youth and celebrate their success.