

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Focusing on Older Youth

Last November I met with my Director's Youth Council to discuss issues of concern and our department's future direction. During that meeting, one young woman described her experience of being in foster care for several years. She was finally reunited with her family at age 16, and when returned home, was ineligible for any further services.

This young woman's story illustrates the critical need for services for foster youth as they enter their teen years. As I told the Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care last fall, if we expect reunification to be successful, we must have the flexible funding to continue to provide quality services before and after removal and placement of children.

I understand that an area of concern for the department is the current KinGAP program. While it has been an effective means in establishing permanency for children placed with relatives that have no special needs, children who have special medical or mental health needs cannot receive the supplemental funding they need if they exit foster care through KinGAP.

Additionally, the children who receive KinGAP are not eligible for services such as the Independent Living Program, mentoring, tutoring or child care after they exit from foster care. These limitations create barriers to maximizing permanency through this program.

Over the last few years, we have worked hard to significantly reduce the amount of children in long-term foster care and have seen the direct benefit of viewing foster care as a temporary condition. We have made a difference for thousands of older children growing up in the system who now have the benefit of permanent connections and bonds.

As we move forward, we need to continue our progress in this area, first through legal permanency, but when legal permanency cannot be obtained, making every effort to connect them with services they need and a caring adult who can provide guidance and a life-long relationship.

The department is in the process of expanding its mentor program and the Director's Youth Council has been vital in helping us develop strategies for developing this program. The youth have articulated what they think a mentor should look like, how a mentor would help them and what they expect from a mentor. All of the youth agree they are looking for long-term connections to caring adults who have a passion to help them and who they can talk to openly.

We are also working to address the permanency of youth over the age of 12 through the Permanency Partners Program, known as P3. Our initial results are promising as the program has been rolled out to all of your offices. I encourage you to use this innovative program as part of your permanency planning for older youth. ■

David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director

Multiple Services Available for Transitioning Youth

In 2004, the Emancipation Redesign was implemented by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation Department to provide a comprehensive array of services to older foster youth who are transitioning to adulthood.

The redesign was developed by the Emancipation Services Design Team which was convened by the Chief Administrative Office following a 2001 Board of Supervisors' motion. The team included members of County departments, the Commission for Children and Families and community stakeholders such as United Friends of the Children, Casey Family Programs, Public Counsel and the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles. The new design improved upon existing programs and services and created a new service delivery plan that would better meet the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care.

"The Independent Living Program (ILP) services provided to transitioning youth are broad and far-reaching," said DCFS Resource Bureau Deputy Director Lisa Parrish. "The services include job and vocational training, mentoring, help with housing, life skills training and thousands of dollars in scholarship money for college or vocational school."

The following are a few of the services available to youth until they turn 21 and sometimes beyond.

Transitional Independent Living Plan

The Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) is vital to the case planning for foster youth and was implemented in order to help youth access services beginning at age 14. Detailed forms are located on L.A. Kids and in the case-planning notebook in CWS/CMS. The forms allow youth to pinpoint exactly what they need.

"We encourage workers to help youth to complete the form properly," said Resources Bureau Division Chief Rhelda Shabazz. "This will help us best identify their needs such as: Are they college bound? Do they know about scholarships? What are their career tracks? We can identify their needs for college and the Independent Living Program can even help pay for SAT classes to help them prepare for this important test."

ESTEP

DCFS and Community College Foundation staff are helping put teens on track for legal permanency through initiatives such as the Early Start to Emancipation Program (ESTEP), which is available for youth 14 and 15 years old. Run by the Community College Foundation, ESTEP offers assistance to youth in developing their TILP, life skills workshops at local colleges, life coaches, academic tutors and mentors. So far, the program has been successful with a large percentage of the youth enrolled showing significant improvement in school and in the way they view their futures.

Housing Placement Program

The Transitional Housing Placement Program is for foster youth in care

Continued on Page 3

Jennifer Provinse

High school graduations are always exciting, but for foster youth this first step into adulthood holds special meaning. On June 15, graduating foster youth will once again participate in "Celebration 2006," (formerly known as Celebration I) a ceremony honoring their outstanding academic achievements. For the past 17 years, the department has partnered with United Friends of the Children and a host of other community partners to sponsor this event. This year, all of the youth, who have plans to go to college, or vocational school, will receive thousands in donated scholarships.

But, what happens to the graduates after the ceremony? Jennifer Provinse and Bryan Burford are two 2005 graduates who are making the most of their college experience, working hard and having fun.

Jennifer is attending San Jose State and said during a recent holiday break that she can't wait to get back. Bryan is attending Skidmore College near Albany. He said that school is great. "I'm really happy. It's the place for me," he said.

Both youth are positive and have dreams. Jennifer explained that she just knew she had to make the best out of her situation. She talks of her younger sister who has had the same experiences as she has but is not faring as well. Bryan added that youth must consider themselves worthy of success.

Both youth believe foster care offered them resources that they would otherwise not been offered had they not been in care. And both said they couldn't have made the journey without the love, support and consistency of their foster parents. Both have experienced financial difficulties, but regard these as small setbacks for these two determined young people.

Jennifer came into care for the second and final time at age eight. She had been in the same foster home since she was 11 and is now attending college with her foster parents' daughter. They share a dorm suite with eight girls and have become good friends with five of them. Jennifer is on a plan which will take her straight through her doctorate either in social work or in psychology.

After his mother abandoned him at age 12, Bryan went into foster care.

As 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. Looking forward to this year's graduation festivities, we highlight two former foster youth who graduated from high school in 2005.

Bryan explained that in his foster home there was no question about attending college. The big question was where. Today, he is attending one of the country's top colleges and following his dream of studying history. He doesn't know what he wants to do with his life yet, but he knows he wants to help people.

While Bryan said he was prepared for college academically, he expressed some culture shock. Yet, he has been lucky with being matched with a good roommate and finding most of the students very accepting.

His words of advice for 2006 graduates? "Aim high and consider yourselves worthy of great things." ■

Bryan Burford

WORKING TOWARD
THEIR FUTURES

Multiple Services Available for Transitioning Youth

Continued from Page 1

from 16 to 18 years old. Youth involved in this program typically share an apartment with roommates, who are also foster youth. This program is mainly for high-functioning, stable youth. There is an adult caretaker who routinely checks in on the youth.

The DCFS Transitional Housing Program is for former foster youth and is funded by federal Housing and Urban Development grants and department support. Currently, there is funding to provide 244 Transitional Housing Placement Program beds, which makes it the largest county program of its kind in the country. The program has resulted in numerous success stories, including a young man who was able to save enough money during the program to eventually put a down payment on his own condo.

Scholarships

Every June, DCFS joins United Friends of the Children, the Teague Family Foundation, the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, the Community College Foundation, Casey Family Programs and dozens of generous donors and stakeholders to coordinate “Celebration – Honoring the Academic Achievements of Foster Youth” (previously known as Celebration I).

This graduation ceremony for foster and probation youth is devoted to celebrating their successes.

During the evening, thousands of dollars in scholarships are given to more than a hundred foster youth planning to attend college or vocational school in the fall. Any youth with a 2.8 GPA and plans to attend college or vocational school are eligible to take part in the ceremony and qualify to receive a scholarship. All of the youth are also given money to purchase new business suits for interviews.

“Workers can start looking at their case plans now and help us identify youth to honor during next year’s ceremony,” said Shabazz. “I also welcome all DCFS staff celebrate the youth we serve by attending this ceremony and reception.”

More information about Celebration 2006 is available on the L.A. Kids web site.

Ombudsman

Berisha Black and Onitsha Newsome are the department’s full time Emancipation Ombudsmen and are available to assist any youth with issues related to

their transition. They also coordinate the Director’s Youth Council, which meets regularly with DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders to discuss issues pertinent to the care and future of foster youth.

Resource Centers

The department currently staffs nine Transition Resource Centers throughout the County (one in every Service Planning Area) to assist social workers and youth with questions and issues involving how to best access resources.

“I would encourage each unit to go to a Resource Center on a field trip,” said Shabazz. *(See box below for locations.)*

In addition to all of these services, Transition Coordinators (formerly known as Independent Living Program coordinators) are available in each regional office to answer questions and a list of resources for transitioning youth is located on the home page of L.A. Kids under DCFS Services.

For information on any programs for transitioning youth, contact the Transition Coordinator in your office or log on to www.ilponline.org. ■

Transition Resource Centers

Antelope Valley TRC 1420 W. Avenue, Lancaster (661) 726-4128	Metroplex TRC 3530 Wilshire Blvd. 4th Floor, Los Angeles (213) 351-0100
Santa Clarita TRC 24271 San Fernando, Newhall (661) 254-0070	Community Build TRC 8730 S. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles (323) 565-4241
Pasadena TRC/Casey Family Program 1110 E. Green Street, Pasadena (626) 356-5350	Whittier TRC 10750 Laurel Ave Whittier (562) 941-1219
Mt. Sac 1100 N. Grand Trailer # 1, Walnut (909) 594-5273	Long Beach TRC Career Transition Center 3447 Atlantic Avenue, Long Beach (562) 570-3700
Edelman’s Children’s Court 201 Centre Plaza Drive Suite 4, 1st Floor, Monterey Park (323) 526-6034	



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.

Holiday Events Make Season Brighter for Thousands of Kids

Thanks to all of the community partners that help the department make the holiday season brighter for foster youth. The following are just a few of the events and the "holiday heroes" that made the 2005 holiday season a success.

U.S. Postal Workers Play Santa for North Hollywood Office

The San Fernando Valley U.S. postal workers once again supported the North Hollywood social workers and foster kids by providing a caravan of postal trucks from 20 area post offices. Led by Santa Claus, the postal workers delivered about 3,500 Christmas presents. The North Hollywood High School Choir serenaded the postal workers with holiday songs as they unloaded their gifts. Welcoming signs read "Happy Holidays and Thank You."

Postmaster Robert Swanson organized this event with DCFS and postal employees. They purchased gifts specifically requested by foster children. A thank you, continental potluck breakfast organized by Children's Social Worker Lovette Panthier followed. At least 20 thank you cards were issued from each unit to Swanson on behalf of clients and presented during the gift delivery. ■

Spark of Love 2005

Nearly 2,500 foster youth and their caregivers were treated to a screening of the new animated Walt Disney film "Chicken Little," snacks, lunch and gifts donated by the Los Angeles County and City Fire Fighters, ABC 7, MetroLink, and Sav-On Drug stores at the AMC Norwalk Theatre and The Bridge in Culver City.

The planning started early with toy donations gathered and purchased by the campaign sponsors. The DCFS Families and Children's Trust Fund Section set up an annual Spark of Love toy distribution center at the former MacLaren Children's Center. Trust

Fund Section Head Michael Wrice and his staff oversaw the operation of the center. During the brief four weeks of operation, December 1 through 29, more than 34,000 toys passed through the tight quarters of the distribution center. Fire trucks delivered truckloads full of toys daily to be assorted by age and sex. The toys were then repacked for future transportation and distribution to the theatres for the children.

Public Affairs Board Events Liaison Lois Shirk, along with the individual SPA Event Coordinators, headed up the guest list. Invited guests came from the participating areas, which included Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Burke's and Supervisor Don Knabe's districts. Shirk also recruited and organized the many volunteers who make this annual event run so smoothly.

The Spark of Love Toy Drive is also a supporter of Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich's Magic Mountain Holiday Party. Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel supplied gifts for more than 400 foster youth ages six to 18. Youth over the age of 13 were presented with gift cards instead of toys. ■

Teague Family Foundation Parties

For many years, the Teague Family Foundation has sponsored three parties supporting clients enrolled in the Family Preservation Program. The parties focus on the families in the Torrance, Lakewood, Wateridge and Compton areas. More than 350 children and families enjoyed games, arts and crafts projects, face painting, refreshments and gifts.

The foundation purchased hundreds of gifts that were then wrapped by DCFS SPA Event Coordinators and volunteers. The gifts were sorted and delivered to the various sites. ■

Bikers Ride to the Aid of Foster Youth

A new community partner joined the DCFS holiday festivities this year. On December 4 more than 700 motorcycle riders from ToyRide.org came together at Angels Stadium in Anaheim to donate cash and toys for their Fifth Annual ToyRide. Their purpose was to make sure that 250 children got what they asked for this holiday season.

Each child sent in a list of toys and other items that they wanted. The ToyRide organizers took those lists and dispersed it to riders and supporters. ToyRide.org organizers handed these gifts out to each and every child at a special Christmas party on December 22 at the Belvedere Office. ■



**I SAVE LIVES EVERY DAY.
MY JOB IS BEING A SOCIAL WORKER.
MY LIFE IS BEING A HERO.**



Become an LA County Social Worker
for more information, call
1 (213) 351 6417

PROJECT NIGHTLIGHT
project.nightlight.org



‘Team DCFS’ Runs for Foster Youth

“Team DCFS” once again participated in the Los Angeles Marathon, which took place on March 19. This year the group raised funds for the Team DCFS Foster Youth Scholarship Fund. Team DCFS runners and cyclists raised thousands in scholarship funds for foster youth who are going on to college.

DCFS staff volunteered to help at the DCFS water station and cheer on the participants, which again was located at the corner of Mansfield Avenue and Sixth Street. For more information about joining Team DCFS, call Michael Wrice at (213) 739-6202. ■

L.A. County Employee Assistance Program Available

The Los Angeles County Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was created so that every County department is provided counseling services for its employees.

The program provides one to three counseling sessions depending on the employee’s needs. The first session is on County time. Subsequent sessions if needed, must use the employee’s sick or vacation time. The program is a free and voluntary service available to current County employees and their dependants.

Historically, confidentiality or the fear of no confidentiality has been an issue for many employees who have not used the program. All information shared with the EAP workers is kept confidential. To this extent, the EAP records are kept separate from personnel files and are not available to colleagues, supervisors and management. These records can only be released with client’s permission.

The EAP cannot provide crisis services or same-day services. The program does not provide treatment, but can evaluate and provide appropriate referrals. The EAP also does not provide services to employees with open worker’s compensation cases.

Services provided by the EAP include, stress management, anger management, effective communication, grief and loss intervention, coping with changes, job loss and mediation. In addition, the EAP provides consultation to supervisors and managers.

It also provides Drug-Free Workplace training to supervisors. This training teaches supervisors to more accurately observe and detect reasonable suspicions when an employee is working under the influence. All trainings are available upon request by the County department’s upper management team.

For more information, please contact the EAP at (213) 738-4200. ■

New Billboards Go Up

Partnering with the department, the non-profit organization Project Nightlight (www.projectnightlight.org) and Vista Media recently donated hundreds of billboards in L.A. County to help promote the image

of social workers and raise awareness about child abuse by advertising the Child Protection Hotline. The billboards were rolled out at the end of January.

All of the models in these billboards are DCFS social workers from the North Hollywood office, Emancipation Division and Medical Placement Unit.

Project Nightlight focuses on child abuse prevention. Their partner, Vista Media, generously agreed to donate the billboard space, printing and installation. Project Nightlight donated all of the photography and art design. Vista Media was interested in specifically focusing on child abuse prevention.

In addition, Adoptions also received a donated billboard promoting County adoptions. Special thanks to billboard donor Onnik Mehrabian, owner of Glendale KIA, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich for making this happen. ■

Just for Clicks! The Latest in Information Technology

Here are the latest products and cutting-edge business tools available to DCFS staff. All were developed and implemented by the Bureau of Information Services (BIS) to assist your work with children and families, streamline paperwork and support the department’s three key outcomes of improved permanence, improved safety and a reduction in the reliance of out-of-home care.

MySCSW—SCSWs can stay on top of each of their CSW’s caseloads with this detailed module. MySCSW is a team management portal designed by and for supervisors. It was developed in response to supervisors requesting a similar tool after the successful launch of MyCSW. MySCSW helps supervisors perform their duties with greater efficiency, accuracy and ease by delivering true functionality.

Criminal Clearance Tracking System (CCTS) expedites the department’s process for requesting and receiving clearances for caregivers. CCTS is a confidential, comprehensive web-based application that automates the current technician’s manual tracking of Live Scan, California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) and Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) activity. Future enhancements to CCTS will allow online submission by CSWs and SCSWs of CACI and CLETS clearance requests directly to Department of Justice (DOJ). CCTS will provide and expedite clearance result notices to CSWs and SCSWs by automated email alerts.

BIS Computer Support web site offers tech help and focused quick technical training on-demand and on-call 24/7. Just go to L.A. Kids and under Contents, click on “Computer Support.” Here, you can watch a three minute movie or download a how-to guide. Want to make the most of email or discover new printing options? Please log on to <http://lakids/dcfsc/computersupport/index.htm> to find out. ■

Department Creating Job Opportunities for Former Foster Youth

Mentors Needed to Support Youth in Workforce

The department's Human Resources Division is rolling out a revised program designed to provide more career opportunities within Los Angeles County to former foster youth. The new program, called "Career Development Intern," will assist former foster youth with gaining employment and maintaining their employment with the County.

"The department's philosophy is that we try to help as many of our former foster youth as we can," said Sheryl Negash, Human Resources Division director. "Our goal is to make these youth more competitive when they apply for outside employment."

The program consists of pre-employment training, on-the-job training and life-skills training. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors first adopted a motion establishing the program in 1994. But Negash explained that the program's revisions came about as a result of some new directives from the Board including that every County department should set aside 5 percent of its entry level and clerical positions for the County's at-risk youth.

Negash said the department is at the early stages of finding out how we can help former foster youth qualify for various positions in the County and DCFS.

"We are trying to get the other County departments to join in and commit to the program. This program is a continuation service that we provide to our transitioning youths," said Negash.

Negash believes that this program will help provide the life skills and training that foster youth ordinarily would not be able to get anywhere else. She points out that all former foster youths qualify and are eligible for the program. The minimum age is 18 years.

As part of the program, the department is also currently looking for mentors to match up with these youths. The hope is to further support the youth once they are in the workforce.

Negash points out that the department is hoping to identify and hire some youth for the next fiscal year which starts July 1. Social workers who have youth on their caseload who could benefit from this program should contact the Human Resources Division at (213) 351-5850. ■

ON THE LINE

"On the Line" is a "DCFS News" column featuring Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' social workers whose achievements and practice epitomize the best in social work.

Kinship Worker Brings New Excitement to Dealing with Families

Claudia Bustillos

"I love my job. In any other job you'll never have this kind of impact on peoples' lives. You see success stories everyday," says Kinship Supervising Children's Social Worker Claudia Bustillos. Her positive outlook is contagious, making Bustillos an exceptional social worker and a special supervisor.

What she likes about social work, especially Kinship, its unique array of services, the cultural diversity, the family dynamics and the sheer number of clients. In her job as a Kinship Support Center Supervisor, Bustillos and her staff offer support primarily to relative caregivers and their families as well as to KinGap families whose cases are closed but need support so that they do not re-enter the child welfare system. They also see families who walk in off the street needing help.

Following an undergraduate internship at MacLaren Children's Center in 1993, Bustillos entered County service as a Family Maintenance and Reunification (FMR) Children's Social Worker trainee in 1994 stationed in the Belvedere office. In 1997 she moved into the Family Preservation program, but then into Emergency Response in that office. In 1998, she returned to FMR treatment work because she missed working with families on a long-term basis. The next year, Bustillos joined the new Family-To-Family program.

Bustillos joined Kinship in 2001 in the Santa Fe Springs Resource Center and became a supervisor in 2005. She and her staff now also handle ASFA re-assessments for the Santa Fe Springs and Belvedere offices.

One of her most important jobs in Kinship is to run support groups. To be in one of Bustillo's groups is to see how contagious her enthusiasm can be. She is able to motivate the participants as well as provide information and support.

"Claudia is the perfect example of exceptional excellence," explains Kinship Support Division Chief Michael Gray. "Her caring and commitment to the clients is truly genuine and heartfelt. It is an extreme honor to have someone on your team of her caliber and professionalism."

Bustillos' most rewarding experience in Kinship has been working with the Maravilla Kinship Support Group. Primarily Spanish-speaking immigrants, this group has learned to become advocates for the children in their care and themselves and, Bustillos says, they are no longer are fearful of the child welfare system.

"It is amazing to see them get that spark in their eyes when they share experiences, challenges and success stories with each other. It gives hope to the other relative caregivers in the group."

The youngest of five children, Bustillos was raised by a single mother who spoke no English. She cared for her dying mother while trying to attend law school. After her mother passed away from breast cancer, she went back to school to earn her masters degree in psychology. When asked why she became a social worker, Bustillos says it was because of people who touched her life and "where I could make the most change." ■



DCFS Child Care Program

Provides Funding to Help Families

With the average cost of full-time care for a child under 2 years old in a licensed child care center at \$127 a week or \$6,604 annually, child care is out of the reach for many of the families served by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). As a result, the department's Child Care Program was created to provide every eligible child access to quality, affordable, licensed child care that is safe, educationally stimulating and nurturing.

"Child care is one of the most important services we can offer the clients we serve," said Childcare Program Manager Robert Wiltse. "With quality care, research has shown that children perform better throughout the remainder of their academic careers, and become responsible adults who make positive contributions in their communities."

The DCFS Child Care Program teaches parents how to access quality child care in their community. All the daycare providers used are licensed by the California State Department of Community Care Licensing and must meet standards promoting child safety and education in a pleasant, nurturing, culturally sensitive environment.

Four trainings per year are offered to help providers gain expertise in caring for children who are clients of the department. In addition, DCFS can require, for reasons of child safety, that the family choose a licensed provider to care for their children.

Providing child care services also helps social workers meet the

department's goals. It helps reduce the number of children being placed outside the biological caregiver's home by providing a safe caregiver for children to be with while parents engage in court ordered activities such as parenting classes.

Child care also reduces the length of children's time in placement by helping caregivers meet a variety of educational requirements and appointments necessary to achieve the return of their children.

Many parents and relative caregivers with children under the supervision of DCFS may qualify. Only the DCFS Child Care staff can authorize subsidized child care funding enrollment and certification. Authorization is determined after a face-to-face interview with the caregiver and when all of the Child Care Program eligibility requirements are met.

Child care may be utilized for a maximum of 18 months for birth parents and relatives only. Birth parents are always served first and relatives second, if funding is available.

Child care is not subsidized for "D" or "F" rate schedule caregivers, KinGap caregivers, adoptive placements, foster family caregivers certified by Foster Family Agencies and licensed non-relative foster family homes.

For these families, an alternative to the DCFS Child Care Program is provided by CalWORKs. This child care program can be provided for five to seven years as opposed to 18 months. In addition, teens as old as 19 who are on CalWORKs are eligible to receive child care for their infants while they attend school or pursue their GED. For more information on the Cal LEARN program, call (800) 511-2070.

For more information about the DCFS Child Care Program, call (562) 345-6629. ■

All in the Family

KEPS Helps Relative Caregivers Adjust to New Role

When a relative caregiver gets a call that finds a grandchild, niece or nephew on their doorstep with a social worker, they are often not prepared for what will happen next.

The Kinship, Education, Preparation and Support Program (KEPS), while not mandatory, can help relative caregivers through this difficult transition, caring for children who have been in abusive situations within their own families. Created in 1996, KEPS is an off-shoot of the original DCFS Kinship program called "Grandma's House." The department currently contracts with the Community College Foundation to provide the KEPS Program. It currently serves 930 caregivers who attend the workshops.

KEPS workshops help caregivers gain confidence, learn about resources, and develop skills necessary for successfully parenting a child, often for the second time around, explained Kinship Resource Center North Director Natalie Cooper.

Over the course of 36 hours, relative caregivers are presented with strategies and techniques to address the many difficult issues that will confront them as they care for their family member's children and attempt to navigate the child welfare system. Their new circumstances are explored in depth and they understand more clearly what is expected of them by the department, the Juvenile Court and the public school system.

Topics covered include understanding the children in their home and how best to meet their needs. Child development and appropriate discipline are discussed. Relatives caregivers participate in exercises to help them better understand what has happened to the children, to the parent and also to themselves.

"Family sculpture" and "family role modeling" address personality issues in drug-abusing families helping many caregivers address their own feelings about their current situation.

Conflict resolution techniques are also provided, so that the caregiver can deal positively and effectively to address challenges and relationships with the children's parents, adult siblings, the school system and social workers.

Concurrent planning is also discussed, preparing the caregiver for the possibility of deciding on a permanent plan such as adoption or legal guardianship of the children.

KEPS classes are given in both English and Spanish. Caregivers can sign up for KEPS starting with a required orientation at their nearest community college. They can also call KEPS directly at (213) 427-6910 or call the DCFS Kinship Resource Centers at (888) M Y G R A N D (694-7256) for more information or assistance. ■

KEPS Training



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

September: No Nominees
October: No Nominees
November: No Nominees
December: Crystal Cooper-Smith, ASM I,
- Office of the Medical Director

Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award

September: April Conrad, CSW III
Lancaster Office
October: Dr. Elizabeth Koo – Edwards SCSW,
D-Rate Program, SFS Office
November: Sheirella Nance-Gross, CSW III,
Transitional Housing
December: Johanne Larsen, SCSW, ER, EI
Monte/Glendoria Office

Outstanding Support Service Staff Award

September: Beverly Vansen, ITC,
Executive Office
October: Martha Delgado, AA II,
Bureau of Finance
November: Estella Garza, ITC,
Adoptions, Belvedere Office
December: Ted (Te Ying) Lee, ITC,
Out of Home Care Division

UPCOMING EVENTS

8TH ANNUAL COUNTY OF L.A. MULTICULTURAL CONFERENCE

Wednesday, April 26 and
Thursday, April 27, 2006

Wilshire Grand Hotel
Information: (213) 738-9417

More than 30 County departments are expected to participate in this day honoring diversity. All County employees are invited to attend.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FOSTER CARE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Held throughout the month of May

Information: (213) 351-5886 or
(323) 980-1589

For a complete listing of activities, log on to www.dcf.co.la.ca.us. DCFS, the Children's Law Center and dozens of community stakeholders join together to provide a variety of activities honoring the successes of the foster care system. Educational opportunities to learn more about issues affecting foster youth will also be offered.

CELEBRATION 2006

Thursday, June 15, 2006
7 p.m.

Walt Disney Concert Hall
Information: (213) 351-0102

The 17th annual commencement ceremony celebrates the academic achievements of foster youth graduating from high school.

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 Children and Families

Carol O. Biondi
Patricia Curry
Hon. Joyce Fahey
Ann Franzen
Susan F. Friedman
Helen A. Kleinberg, Chair
Daisy Ma
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Rev. Cecil L. Murray
Wendy L. Ramallo, Esq.
Sandra Rudnick, Vice Chair
Adelina Sorkin, Vice Chair
Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Stacey F. Winkler
Dana Blackwell, Executive Director

L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services

425 Shatto Place
Los Angeles, CA 90020
www.dcf.co.la.ca.us
www.lacounty.info

Child Protection 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

DCFS News is published by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Public Affairs. For article ideas and submissions, e-mail grasml@dcfs.co.la.ca.us, or fax to (213) 738-9257.