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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Overcoming Obstacles, Building a New Culture

Your commitment to servicing families in order to keep them safely together is evident in the steady increase in the number of Family Reunification cases over the past year. The department has seen Family Reunification cases rise from 8,048 in April 2004 to 8,427 in March 2005. We have also seen our Permanent Placement caseload drop, from 17,731 in April 2004 to 16,104 in March 2005, as we close more of these cases by finding permanent homes for children in foster care. These numbers are a great start as we continue to challenge some of the internal and external roadblocks to permanency.

As we move toward increased permanency for children in foster care, we must continue to change our organizational culture. An assessment of the Achieving Permanency Workgroup suggested that we need to continue to emphasize the importance of legal permanency for all children in foster care. While we have made significant changes, it still takes too long for a child to be returned home. It still takes too long for a child to be adopted. We still emancipate too many youth from foster care every month. Long-held internal and external biases against adoption and legal guardianship, as well as the belief that long-term foster care is a suitable permanent plan, are challenges that need to be addressed before we can move forward.

We plan on strengthening training to staff in the areas of legal permanency and have developed new technology tools to ease the burden of paperwork and make the Concurrent Planning process easier for all levels of staff.

The assessment also indicated that a "PP (Permanent Placement) mentality," or the thought that children can be stable without a legally permanent family or connection, still exists. I am aware that staff feels there are disincentives for closing "easy" cases and that there is a pervasive fear that you will be "rewarded" with more, often harder cases.

I also know that the amount of time staff needed to focus on permanency plans can be daunting. Even in these tight budget times, the department is committed to providing additional staff for Team Decision-Making and will hire additional employees to fill behind staff who are on extended medical leaves.

In the coming months, I will look to the offices to come up with the innovative permanency ideas that work best for you. The freedom to focus on these office-specific permanency objectives should result in more children reunifying with their families and less youth emancipating from foster care with no legally permanent plan or significant adult in their lives. ■

David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director

Offices Create Customized Permanency Plans

Workgroup Identifies Barriers, Solutions

During the past year, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) managers and staff recognized there is no singular answer to the issue of finding permanent homes for children and that multiple solutions are needed to increase legal permanency of older foster youth, especially those over 12 years old.

"We started looking at the best ways to achieve legal permanency for the nearly 14,000 kids who have been in care for two years or longer – with over half of them being age 12 years or older," said Deputy Director Trish Ploehn.

Ploehn was charged with setting up an "Achieving Permanency Workgroup" to develop long and short-term plans and strategies for increasing the percentage of foster youth who exit the system with a legally permanent plan and strong ties to one or more nurturing adults. One goal of the workgroup, said Ploehn, was to be realistic about the barriers and challenges staff would face, and find solutions to those barriers. Some of the barriers discussed included the reluctance from relatives to adopt, the loss of financial assistance for establishing guardianship for special needs youth, the need for more Independent Living Services and the need to consolidate permanency resources.

After a series of meetings with department staff and managers, a draft plan was developed in May. With the assistance of the Bureau of Information Services, regional offices were given the names of youth on their caseloads who have been in care for two years or longer so each office could target specific children with a plan. The offices are now assigned with creating their own customized permanency plans.

"We asked each office to pick a focus," said Ploehn. "Some might choose to start their work with younger children, some might want to focus on older youth or youth in group homes. Others might want to concentrate on legal permanency for children in relative care."

The workgroup found that some DCFS offices have already developed numerous strategies. In the Torrance office, through an idea initiated by staff, Regional Administrator Harvey Kawasaki has created a new permanency unit called LEAPS (Life-skills, Emancipation Aimed at Permanency and Self-Sufficiency). The unit's goal is to provide comprehensive permanency services and resources to a specific population (children 16 years and older), with a focus on exploring and initiating alternate legal permanency options including adoption, legal guardianship and mentors.

Recently, DCFS applied for and was selected to receive a state Youth Permanency Task Force grant. As part of this grant, the Metro North office will receive technical assistance to improve permanency for youth living in group homes. The office has already begun working with Five Acres, Sycamores and Vista del Mar group homes.

To further assist with office permanency plans, the department is expanding the Permanency Partners Program (P3) and has hired retired social workers for each of the offices. As part of the expansion of P3, the department is publishing a "Youth Permanency Handbook" for all staff.

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DCFS Success Stories

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.

In this edition of "DCFS News" Success Stories we highlight the youth honored during the 2005 Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Campaign held in May. These youth exemplify some of the best of our foster care system – whether through working for systemic reform, achieving artistic goals, advocating on behalf of foster children, providing direct assistance to youth in need, or preserving and attaining success even in the face of difficult odds.

Pedro Martinez, 18 Winner of the Foster Care Awareness Campaign Art Project



Pedro created this winning self-portrait with the guidance of renowned artist Judy Baca. As part of his award, he received a series of art classes from the Barnsdall Art Park in Hollywood. ■

Chelsea Clemons, 16 Winner of the Foster Care Awareness Campaign Writing Project

"Questions for My Mother"

*What's it like to wake up in an ice-cream truck?
What's it like to wake up alone?
How do you feel when your children don't call you?
How does it feel to know you'll never be the same?
What keeps you coming to court when you know you'll never
get us back?
How was your childhood?
Did you have any friends? Did you ever smile?
How much do you cry?
Do you ever laugh?
How hard is it to say good-bye to everything?
Do you have any hope?
Do you have any pride?
Why did you give us up?
Do you regret it?
Do you ever think you'll be normal again?
Why do you act so immature?
When will you take responsibility for your actions and take charge
of your life?
When will you stop making people feel sorry for you?
What's it like to wake up in an ice-cream truck?*

As part of her award, Chelsea received a laptop computer and printer and had her work published in a Campaign booklet. She worked on the poem above with the guidance of children's book author Kerry Madden. ■

Tramisha Poindexter-2005 Foster Care Hero Youth Honoree



It's a long journey from a group home in Compton to the halls of the United Nations in

Geneva, Switzerland, but former foster youth Tramisha Poindexter is determined to make the most of every opportunity to speak out for the needs of children in our foster care system.

When Tramisha entered foster care as a young child after her mother died, she lacked a good support system and dealt with loneliness, fear, and sadness while trying to find stability and build a foundation for her adult life.

This year, Tramisha was named as one of eight Los Angeles County "Foster Care Heroes" during the annual celebration of Foster Care Awareness Month in May. Tramisha was honored because she exemplifies the great personal resilience of foster youth and, after stabilizing her own life and establishing her own adult path, dedicated herself to improving the

lives of others.

A leader of California Youth Connection, a grass roots organization advocating for foster youth, Tramisha has traveled widely to help develop skills of transitioning foster youth and advocate for legislation to improve the foster care system. Tramisha is also a poet; her work reflects her own beauty, strength, and unique personality and makes a powerful impact on everyone she meets. In Tramisha's own words, "Situations sometimes come with no invitation and leave with no explanation. It's up to us to reach our final destination!" ■

Customized Permanency Plans

Continued from Page 1

The handbook will include success stories, an explanation of permanency funding streams and practical tips and information on how to move children into permanency. Later this year, a department-wide training will focus on the permanency of older youth.

In addition, DCFS will soon be embarking on a joint workgroup with the Children's Court on how DCFS and our legal partners can better work together to effect timely legal permanency for all children served by our respective systems.

DCFS is also looking at legislative changes to address and eliminate the financial disincentives for youth leaving foster care and entering into a legally permanent plan.

Each office is now working on written permanency plans to submit to the DCFS Executive Team. The plans will include the target population, specific strategies to be used by the office, specific timeframes and measurable goals for permanency.

"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." ■

Achieving Permanency

Department Responsibilities

- **Training** including in-service training on adoptions for social workers and seminars on the importance for permanency.
- **Public messages** to create support among community partners and agencies that serve clients.
- **Permanency partnerships** will be enhanced and expanded to support the new directions of legal permanency for all children.
- **Support legislative change** to address disincentives at the state and federal levels.
- **Provide office support** including additional staff to help with Team Decision-Making, expanding P3 staff and maintaining office staff levels as caseloads decrease.

Office Responsibilities

- **Choose a target population** of youth.
- **Identify current programs** and resources available to assist offices.
- **Select strategies.**
- **Provide a written plan.**

Lisa Parrish Named New Deputy Director of Resources Bureau

New Bureau Committed to Supporting Families in Crisis

In March, Elisa (Lisa) Parrish joined the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as the Deputy Director for the department's newly created Bureau of Resources. The new bureau will contain several divisions including Emancipation Services, Out-of-Home Care/Quality Assurance, Community-Based Support, Multi-Agency Services and Kinship/ASEA. The Bureau of Resources was created to bring together programs DCFS contracts with private providers.

Lisa Parrish

"The goal of the bureau is to reinvest money for community-centered, family-based services which in turn will support families in crisis, therefore helping them to become the best families they can be," said Parrish. Parrish is most excited about "creating a kinship support unit to do a more dynamic job of supporting relatives." Another exciting aspect of the new bureau will be the planned expansion of Wrap-around Services.

For six years prior to joining DCFS, Parrish was the Deputy Commissioner for Foster Care and Preventive Services for the City of New York's Administration for Children's Services. As Deputy Commissioner, Parrish reduced the number of children in out-of-home care by 46 percent and increased the amount of children remaining in their homes by 18 percent through the provision for community-based services.

Prevention and front-end, home-based services is at the forefront of Parrish's mandate for the new Bureau of Resources as part of the department's commitment to the Katie A. panel. ■

New BIS Tools

It's 8 a.m. You've just arrived at your office and switched on your computer. You try to open Outlook to check. After banging your mouse and grumbling a few choice words at the computer screen, you pick up the phone hoping your problem is addressed within a couple of hours. Sound familiar?

New Technology Tools Streamline Paperwork and Provide Faster, Easier Help

What if you could save some of the aggravation by shortening the time it takes to get help? Several new tools recently initiated by the Bureau of Information Services (BIS) are designed to provide faster, easier service and create a more mobile, paperless workforce.

"A lot of people get frustrated when they have computer problems and just want them corrected quickly," said BIS Deputy Director Leo Yu. "We understand the frustration and we're here to help you. Through these new tools we hope to help staff work more efficiently and make it easier to provide safety and permanency for youth and families. It's also important that we move in this direction because we are increasingly becoming a more mobile and paperless workforce."

All of the following new DCFS technology tools are centered around social work and designed to assist social workers and staff. These tools will also work to streamline some of the endless paperwork involved in social work. By using these tools, staff will have more time to spend helping children and families. ■

One of the pluses of the new IT Service Request System is the automatic tracking tool. The new system is great and much easier because it automatically tracks your requests so you can view the progress at any point along the way.

**-Mary Elshehawy, Staff Assistant
Santa Fe Springs Office**

Concurrent Planning Redesign Pilot Site

This new internal web site has been developed as a joint Labor-Management initiative to address the goal of returning a child that has entered foster care into a safe, stable, and lifelong home. In working towards this goal, the Concurrent Planning Re-Design Pilot is being implemented in five DCFS offices that serve approximately one third of the children in out-of-home care. The Concurrent Planning Redesign Pilot web site provides you with answers to frequently asked questions, documents designed to assist with implementation of pilot protocols, status updates and people you can contact for assistance. The web site can be accessed through L.A. Kids. ■

CWS/CMS on the Web

Web access to CWS/CMS will allow staff to access this vital system from anywhere, 24 hours a day, by using the web. Staff will be able to connect to CWS/CMS anywhere they can connect to the internet. BIS is also looking at providing outstation access to e-mail and L.A. Kids. ■

The 'ticklers' included in the new IT Service Request System reminds me to follow through so requests will never be lost.

**-Kathleen Kurkjian, Senior Secretary
Emancipation Services Division**

MyCSW

MyCSW, developed with and for social workers, is an online workspace and information portal for social workers that organizes and streamlines the activities central to case management. The goal of MyCSW is to reduce the burden of office tasks so that social workers can focus more on personal interaction with children and families.

MyCSW provides each social worker a personalized home page containing critical information needed by the worker to meet case goals. The information includes tracking case milestones and monitoring CWS/CMS alerts. MyCSW also allows workers to organize their day-to-day case activities, which includes viewing their caseload geographically, accessing caseload-related reports and viewing child history abstracts. The abstracts include past referrals, associated cases, foster care placements and payments. There are also alerts for important upcoming and overdue activities such as participating in forum discussions and locating resource information geographically.

The first phase of implementation, dedicated to case-carrying social workers, began in March. The MyCSW for Emergency Response social workers was implemented in June. This time-management automation program frees up more time for social workers to focus on protecting children and supporting their families. A MyCSW personalized home page is also in development. ■

IT Service Request System

Want to move your computer? Need a new printer or monitor? This new system automates the IT Service Request process so that users can initiate and track the progress of any request made. Approvals of the requests can be made on the computer, eliminating the hard copy signature and speeding up the process. ■

your e-mail, but can't get in. the phone and call the Help Desk and

IT Service Desk

Next time you have a computer problem, there's no need to pick up the phone. Launched in July, the new IT Service Desk provides an easily accessible, faster system to provide tech help via the web. Now, the easiest and fastest way to get IT support and help is by logging onto the new IT Service Desk web site at <http://infrasrv/itservicedesk>. Through the site, the user can enter a computer problem and the new IT Service Desk software will send an e-mail to a CAT's Blackberry. The CAT will be notified of your need for assistance and the response time for help will be decreased. If going online is not possible, you can call IT Service Desk at (562) 345-6789, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. You no longer have to call outside of DCFS to the Internal Services Division. The IT Service Desk is now in-house and located in the BIS' Norwalk office. A dedicated team of highly skilled DCFS CATs and customer support professionals will take calls. ■

On-line Requests for Shelter Care Transportation

As part of the newly developed Shelter Care web system, a new module was developed to provide regional social workers and clerical staff the ability to enter on-line requests for Shelter Care Transportation to and from the Children's Court when children are required to appear in court. Use of this new system for requesting transportation eliminates the need to complete and fax hard copy transportation requests to the Shelter Care Unit. This module can be accessed through L.A. Kids - no user id or password is required to access this module. The new system will minimize data entry by populating the Transportation Request screen with CWS/CMS child and provider information. Acknowledgement of on-line requests will be displayed on the search result grid on the search screen. ■

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.

ILP Coordinator Helps Youth Take Charge of Their Lives

Maurissa Sanders

Independent Living Program (ILP) Coordinator Maurissa Sanders believes that Emancipation Division Chief Rhelda Shabazz recommended her for an "On The Line" profile because, "I tend to be outspoken and a go-getter. I try really hard to make sure that the services we provide benefit the kids."

"She is committed, capable and confident," noted Shabazz. "Her tireless efforts and resource development are a great benefit to transition age youth, especially those in South Los Angeles."

Sanders began her career with the department more than 12 years ago as a Children's Social Worker trainee in a Family Maintenance/Reunification unit where she served for five years. She then moved on to the Training Section as an Emancipation Services Trainer. Sanders trained social workers and foster care providers on how to help youth who are over 14 years old and then joined the ILP program where she said, "I get to work with teens and encourage them to be the best they can be. My rewards are when the kids achieve and are stable."

Sanders dynamically describes an ILP Coordinator's job as teaching and assisting youth to take charge of their lives by being a guidance counselor for foster youth on day-to-day issues.

These social workers assist youth who are in out-of-home care or with non-related legal guardians to successfully exit the foster care system. The youth they deal with usually range in age from 16 years old to almost 21 years old. Initially, ILP Coordinators help make referrals for the youth to appropriate Life Skills Classes such as G.L.A.S.S.'s Stonewall program for Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgender youth, or the L.A. Conservation Corporation for youth who are not on a college-bound track.

There are multiple issues that ILP Coordinators address with their youth, explained Sanders. Among them are education issues such as researching and applying for scholarships, paying tuition and purchasing books. Housing is another important issue for the youth with issues ranging from moving into Transitional Housing, to applying for financial assistance, to find their first apartment.

Employment situations are also addressed such as dealing with work-related conflicts, transportation, purchasing work-required tools, attaining and purchasing uniforms and paying union dues. Sanders said there is financial assistance available for all of these needs. Assistance with driver's training and car insurance are also available and funds do not have to be paid back to the department unless they are not used.

Sanders is passionate about the work she does. Some of it comes from her personal experience.

"Given my history of a chaotic family, I was lucky not to end up in the system," she said. As a result of her early life, she can relate to her clients, especially teens. Stability is something that is very important to Sanders and she translates this message to her clients. She said she does see some youth thrive in spite of their tumultuous history.

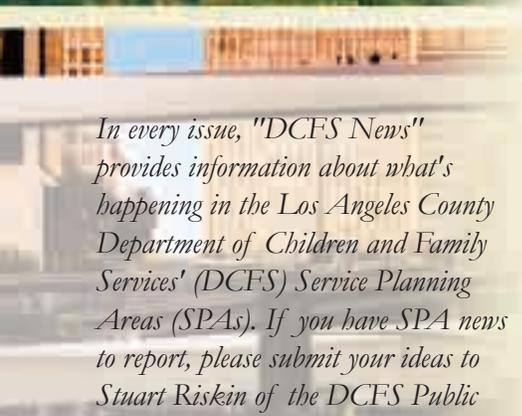
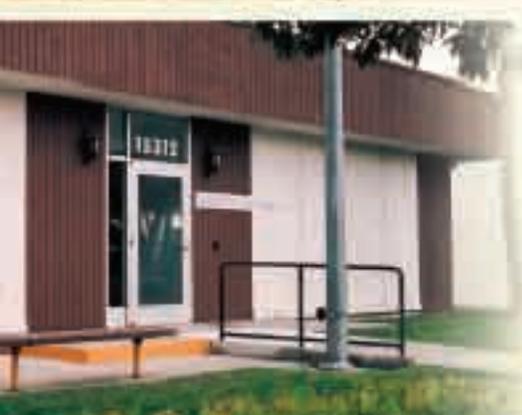
In recent years, Sanders helped a youth named "Brandy" who was raised by her maternal grandmother. Brandy traveled to Japan twice supported by ILP. She then went on to attend Spelman College where she studied international business with a focus on Japan. Today, she works for the city of Pasadena and is planning to attend law school.

"She would have succeeded regardless," Sanders humbly admitted. "She had it in her."

For more information on the Independent Living Program and the services it provides, call (213) 351-0111. ■



Sharette Garcia



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.

Concurrent Planning Redesign Update

To improve permanency outcomes for children, DCFS has embarked on a comprehensive redesign of its service delivery system and Concurrent Planning process.

Through the redesign, the Concurrent Planning system is being transformed into a "seamless delivery system," said project head Nancy Chess. The key is getting parents on-board from their initial point-of-engagement with the department and keeping them involved throughout their cases including repeated full disclosure regarding the status of their case. Also, standardizing information collection and realigning job duties are being implemented to avoid redundancy and duplication of social worker's efforts. "Teaming" between the divisions and workers involved on a case are key to making the redesign work, said Chess.

Presently, Concurrent Planning is being piloted in five DCFS offices including Lakewood, Belvedere, Covina, Compton and North Hollywood. The redesign is under the auspices of a joint labor/management group, which includes DCFS Labor Relations head Priscilla Cruz and Locals 550 and 660 are full partners in the redesign.

Under the direction of the Bureau of Information Systems, a new Automated Tracking System launched in July works off of CWS/CMS and replaces the old stand-alone system. ■

Pregnant Teen Survey Underway

A Teen Pregnancy Survey was implemented at the request of the DCFS Pregnant and Parenting Teen Workgroup, a collaboration between the department and the Los Angeles Children's Law Center, The Alliance for Children's Rights and other external stakeholders. The project has been gathering data on the DCFS pregnant and parenting teen population including the number of minor mothers and the number of pregnant DCFS-supervised youth. A data analysis is planned to determine what other information the department can cull from the survey. An analysis of the survey is expected later this fall. ■

Team DCFS and the XX L.A. Marathon

Team DCFS does it again! Through participation in the XX Los Angeles Marathon, the department raised \$3,700 for the Families and Children's Services Trust Fund. A huge congratulations to all the participating Team DCFS runners, walkers and bikers along with the committed volunteers who worked the team's support station throughout the day.

The weather gods were looking over the runners this year. The temperature that day was in the high 60s accompanied by a refreshing breeze instead of last year's oppressive 92 degrees. The volunteers were busy handing out water, orange slices and candy, while serving up a good dose of cheers and words of encouragement as runners passed the station.

Veteran marathoner Shirley Logan was a lady on a mission. Although she was focusing on the finish line, Shirley took a slight detour to the water station while never breaking stride. Otto Astorga swung in for a pit stop. Volunteers jumped into action refueling Otto and getting him back on the track in record time. Armand Montiel shot by the station trying to beat his 2004 time. Our volunteers glimpsed other Team DCFS runners as they pushed on to cover the last 6 miles of the course. ■

Lakewood Social Worker Returns from Iraq

Lakewood Emergency Response Worker Sharette Garcia came to the United States 14 years ago from Belize. She started working for the department and became a Family Maintenance and Reunification worker eight years ago. In 2001, Garcia received her Green Card and at that point she made a drastic decision.

"I wanted to give back to this country all it had given to me," said Garcia. So, with a supportive husband and two children at home, Garcia took a leave of absence from the department and joined the United States Armed Forces for a three-year hitch.

Initially, Garcia explained that she wanted to experience being in the army and see if she could make it through basic training. Garcia never dreamed that she would be going off to war where she ended up as a Chemical Operations Specialist (COS) in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Garcia believes that her experiences as an Emergency Response Worker prepared her. As a COS, Garcia and her unit refueled transports, recycled fuel and drove it to the front. Her job also included setting up traffic checkpoints, driving tanks, and serving as a Tank

Spa Spots

Continued from Page 6

Commander, operating the tank's guns. As a Fuel Specialist, Garcia and her unit frequently came under fire. Luckily, there were no casualties in her battalion.

She completed her tour of duty and returned to the states in February 2004. A year later, she completed her obligation to the service. She then returned to her previous position at DCFS after having a baby. Garcia will now be a sergeant in the inactive reserves for the next eight years. She knows that she can still be called up for duty and shipped back to Iraq at any time.

Garcia feels that her experience was all worth it. "You never know how much you appreciate something until you experience something different like dodging mortars." ■

Correction

In the spring edition of "DCFS News" article on Specialized Programs' Indian Child Welfare Unit, the court proceedings department was misidentified as Department 402. The correct Department is 413. In addition, if children and families are any part Native American, the court must make active efforts not reasonable efforts to notify the family's tribe-of-origin. ■

Programs Available to Aid Victims of Crime

The Victims of Crime (VOC) Program is one of the many resources available to Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) minors who are dependents of the court through the Community Support Division.

VOC provides crime victims with reimbursement for specified expenses directly related to a crime that are not reimbursed by other resources, explained Otho Day, manager of the program. Funds for the program come directly from fines imposed by both the state and federal courts on individuals who have committed crimes. Because the program works in conjunction with the District Attorney's Office, it is essential that victims and their families cooperate with law enforcement throughout the investigation and prosecution of the crime, said Day.

Who qualifies?

DCFS youth eligible for VOC services must be 18 years old or under when the crime occurred. Siblings or relatives of victims under 18 years of age who were living in the same household at the time of the crime are also eligible for services. Clients who use VOC are mostly victims of child endangerment through domestic violence, victims of domestic violence itself, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Approximately 1,700 DCFS clients per year are referred to the program for help, Day said.

What is reimbursable?

Reimbursable expenses from the program include medical care, mental health counseling, special schooling, physical/occupational therapy, glasses and dental expenses.

Day said the majority of the claims are for mental health reimbursement. VOC also covers expenses for adult victims including lost income if the victim is disabled as a result of the crime and job retraining due to a crime-related injury. Other expenses covered include home and vehicle modifications for the victim and home security if law enforcement feels that the family is in danger do to terrorist acts by the perpetrator(s). Insurance co-payments will also be requested on the VOC application if parents or caretaker cannot pay the co-payment or need to be reimbursed. The families of victims are also entitled to funeral expenses for the victim up to \$5,000. However, if the victim was a DCFS dependent, the family needs to apply through

the SCIAP program.

A family is also entitled to lost support if a loved one is killed or disabled by the crime. They can also be reimbursed for the crime scene cleanup when the crime occurs in someone's home. Many of these benefits are available on an emergency basis to both the victim and their families.

What is not funded?

VOC does not compensate victims and their families for expenses covered by insurance or stolen items. However, items such as eyeglasses, wheelchairs and hearing aids can be covered when insurance does not cover their replacement. Those involved or affected by a crime cannot be compensated for pain and suffering through VOC.

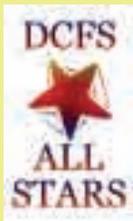
How do I refer a client?

Social workers and service providers can make referrals by sending referral forms directly to the DCFS VOC unit. The case is researched for the necessary documents. All these documents must accompany the application to the District Attorney's Office for processing.

Currently, the department gets more referrals from providers than from staff. To keep staff up on VOC's availability, DCFS Victims of Crime Unit Coordinator Alba Diaz visits every regional office each spring to do an in-service training for line staff. Diaz said she has received a very positive turnout for the training, with more staff turning out than are scheduled to attend. There is always an increase in referrals following the trainings, she said.

Added Day, "The Victims of Crime Program is a resource that social workers should utilize. When our families are dealing with violent issues, they need to know that we are here to offer them resources. They do not have to be hindered by concerns of how to pay or where to go to receive therapy."

For more information on the Victims of Crime Program, contact either Alba Diaz in the VOC office at (213) 351-3223 if minor is a DCFS dependent or call Victims of Crime directly at (800) 777-9229 for non-dependent children and non-perpetrator adults. The VOC web site is located at www.victimcompensation.ca.gov. ■



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

January: None

February: None

March: Team Award: Norma Dreger, Bill Garcia, Olivia James, Ylia De Luna, Sharon Langley - Child Protection Hotline

April: Laura Shotzbarger, ARA - ASFA

Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award

January: Deborah Ramirez, SCSW, ERCP

February: Tami Pearl-Hill, CSW III
- Adoptions / Covina Office

March: Angel Rodriguez, SCSW
- Wateridge Office

April: Mary Chandler, CSW III
- Rites of Passage Unit

Outstanding Support Service Staff Award

January: Kevin Brown - Senior Typist Clerk, START Unit/ Metro North

February: James Cooper, Eligibility Supervisor
- Revenue Enhancement / Pasadena

March: Loreta Sirakain, ITC
- Pasadena Office

April: Torrie Lockridge, ITC - ERCP

UPCOMING EVENTS

COUNTY DAY AT THE FAIR

Sunday, September 11, 2005

Fairplex in Pomona

Gates open at 10 a.m.

Information: (213) 974-1363,

www.lacountyfair.com

"L.A. County Day" will kick off at 12 noon with a parade. A County exhibit will highlight the day and County employees receive special admission prices on this day.

SPA 8 COMMUNITY

PARTNERSHIP LUNCHEON

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Carson Community Center, Carson

Information: (310) 972-3114

A support and appreciation event for caregivers in SPA 8.

'RISING STARS' BENEFIT

Saturday, October 29, 2005

6 p.m.

Norris Center for the Performing Arts, Palos Verdes

Information: (310) 373-0888

This fundraiser provides a brighter future for hundreds of L.A. County foster youth by raising thousands of dollars in college scholarships. The evening will feature dinner, entertainment and a live auction.

'HEART GALLERY' OPENING

Saturday, November 5, 2005

The Highlander, Hollywood

Information: (626) 229-3237

Part of a national program. Artistic portraits of children awaiting adoption, taken by top photographers will be unveiled.

NATIONAL ADOPTION SATURDAY

Saturday, November 19, 2003

8:30 a.m.

Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court, Monterey Park

Information: (310) 972-3120

Courts around the country along with Edelman Children's Court will open their doors to finalize hundreds of adoptions and celebrate the adoptive families.

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Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-540-4000

Adoptions and Foster Care

Information

1-888-811-1121

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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.

All submissions are subject to review and editing.

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Enter your computer problem and create a service ticket that goes to a CAT who will respond to your help request. It is that easy.

If going online is not possible, call (562) 345-6789 from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., or after hours emergencies at (562) 940-3305.