



DCFS

Connections

Spring 2015

Care * Commit * Connect



DCFS Connections
Spring 2015

Danielle House-Barlow- Editor

Director's Note...from Cecile Blucker

Spring is in the air! It's that time of year when things come alive, things began to bloom and those things we didn't notice during the winter suddenly have color! It is one of my favorite times of the year!

April is Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness month and the theme this year is Making Meaningful Connections with children and families. That is exactly what we are trying to do with I.M.P.A.C.T. It's through improving our practice, having more meaningful practice through our waiver interventions that we IMPACT the lives of Arkansas children together. We are implementing several new evidence based interventions that are aimed at prevention, strengthening families and identifying and providing families and children with the needed supports and services so they can have the best outcome as a family - being able to stay together and becoming a healthier family.



We need to realize the important role we have daily in a child and family's life! Many families come to us broken and in need of support and services. We know the problems children develop due to child abuse and neglect have negative impacts that ripple across their lifespan and impacts their chances to succeed in many walks in life. Our job is to minimize those negative impacts and ensure children and families are successful.

We do have an IMPACT every day in someone's life. Thanks for all you do each day.

Happy Spring! 

FIVE WAYS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

This May, National Foster Care Month recognizes those who help children and youth in foster care find permanent homes and connections. The Children's Bureau's National Foster Care Month website provides free information and tools to support those who enhance the lives of children and youth in foster care, including foster parents, kinship caregivers, child welfare professionals, and the community.

Here are five ways you can improve permanency:



- Inspire others by sharing real-life stories from foster families, youth, and caseworkers.
- Promote National Foster Care Month through outreach materials, including social media and email messages.
- Access State-specific foster care information, including State agency websites.
- Connect youth, foster parents, and caregivers with resources and information developed to help answer their questions and find support.
- Learn and share additional ways you and the entire community can play a part in enhancing the lives of children and youth in foster care

To access additional information and resources on improving permanency, visit Child Welfare Information Gateway's newly updated Achieving & Maintaining Permanency web section at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/>.

NEW SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR FOSTER PARENTS

BY CHRISTIN HARPER



DCFS is announcing that foster parents posting pictures of children placed in their foster home as well as any information about the circumstances of the child in foster care is prohibited. Foster parents will maintain absolute confidentiality of private information about children in their care and their birth/legal family. It is understood that the foster family interacts with others. Nevertheless, information about the child's history, or information which the child wishes to keep private must not be discussed with others. Policies, activities, and programs of the Department of Human Services are discussed publicly in generalizations only.

In regards to older youth who have a Facebook page or other social media account and choose to post "selfies" or other information, foster parents must monitor to some extent that use of social media. Just as you would with your own children, nieces, nephews, godchildren, etc., please assess how appropriate and safe a particular posting may be -- not only for the youth but your family as well. DCFS appreciates your assistance in ensuring the safety of children in an environment that has many risk factors to be considered. If you would like to provide any suggestions in regards to the development of the policy or other guidance, please email Mona.Davis@dhs.arkansas.gov or Christin.Harper@dhs.arkansas.gov.

FROM RESIDENT TO PRESIDENT

BY ABCHOMES.ORG

During a recent visit to the Baptist Children's Home in Monticello, Stephanie Rodgers, president of ABCHomes Board of Trustees, introduced herself to a young resident. While very polite, the lad initially did not make eye contact with Rodgers and seemed to be very intimidated. Rodgers didn't mind. She understands such behavior all too well. "When I looked again at the boy and asked, 'Did you know that I grew up at the Children's Home, right here where you live?'" said Rodgers. "In less than a second, his big, brown beautiful eyes looked me straight in the eye and he said, 'Really, you lived here?' When I told him I did, the rest of our visit was so personal. He wanted me to sit right beside him and talk." It's moments like these, Rodgers says, that warms her heart. "It means so much to me that I am the board president and an 'ABCHomie,'" shared Rodgers.



Rodgers is the first-ever ABCHomes alumni to serve as ABCHomes Board of Trustees president. What's even more ironic, Rodgers' former housemother, Karen Reynolds, and ABCHomes foster mother, Vicki Wickliff, are also current trustees. "I'm very honored to serve with these wonderful women who impacted my life," Rodgers recently said. David Perry, ABCHomes executive director, said Rodgers is an asset to ABCHomes Board of Trustees. "The fact that we have an alumna as president of the Board of Trustees is of great historical significance, but having Stephanie Rodgers as that person is extraordinary," he said. "Stephanie's energy, love for this ministry, and especially her focus on seeking God's direction for all we do at ABCHomes is the perfect formula for leading our outstanding Board of Trustees."

Rodgers, 38, suffered abuse and neglect in her home from a very early age. She was placed in a foster home at age 5, and by age 10 was in the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes. She says the Children's Homes provided her opportunities in education and recreation common to children raised with their birth parents, but that she never would have known if she had remained with a mother who was unable to care for her. When Rodgers was 11 her mother thought she was ready to take her back. Rodgers returned with reservations that proved accurate. After six months the abuse started again and she was "very, very happy" to return to the Children's Home.

While her clothes were "dirty and provocative" because she wasn't well cared for at home, Children's Home staff "let me know just because I came in with dirty clothes did not mean I was a dirty person," she said. ABCHomes was "a positive, supportive environment, with workers who are called to what they do" Rodgers declared. "They (staff) were always there to help me." Recalling her time at ABCHomes, Rodgers said, "There are things we go through in life that seem so impossible at the time. It is so easier said than done to endure but, we must trust God. He is working in our favor for His glory." Today, Rodgers is a mom of three daughters and one son, a full-time banker, PTA president, Godly wife and leader in her church.

As Trustee president, Rodgers hopes to leave a legacy of change. "When God saved me, He changed the course of my life and the life of my family and what a way to leave a legacy! I want to do the same." Rodgers prays that ABCHomes will remain "a fortress for the weary." Noting text from Isaiah 40, Rodgers said, "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."

<http://www.abchomes.org/from-resident-to-president.html>

Building Community Partnerships- Arkansas's Creating Connections for Children

By: LeCole White

Arkansas's Creating Connection for Children (ARCCC) is one of DCFS service interventions. ARCCC currently has a Community Engagement Specialist (CES) in almost every service area statewide. The Community Engagement Specialists are working to Build Community Partnerships in their service areas, which means building relationships with a wide range of community organizations and leaders in the neighborhoods and communities in efforts to collaborate and create an environment that supports families involved with the child welfare system. In the upcoming months you will receive information about ARCCC's recruitment events, and also receive toolkits in the form of area specific data fact cards, recruitment at its best tip card, brochures, and post cards that the CES will be sharing with community members. The CES will be connecting with all DCFS staff to inform them of community events and ways that staff may also participate in sharing the word that Recruitment Is Everyone's Business. The CES are working to identify sources to support our current pool of foster family homes, and also creating new connections of supports that will aid in building a pool of quality resource providers.

The Community Engagement Specialists are excited about being a part of the DCFS team to recruit and retain resource providers. The Community Engagement Specialists care about their work and are committed in connecting with all DCFS staff and resource parents to recruit for the needs of Arkansas's children.

ARCCC's target goals of recruitment:

- Increase placements of youth in own communities to 80% of all youth
- Reduce the use of congregate care for youth to fewer than 35%
- Increase number of licensed beds to two beds for every child in care
- Reduce the percent of youth in care over 24 months from 40% to 20%
- Increase foster parent retention by 40%

The ARCCC team cannot do this without the involvement of everyone. The CES need to hear from all DCFS staff to understand their area needs, current recruitment events, and resource providers concerns. Please contact the Community Engagement Specialist in your area to let them know how recruitment may be your business.

Area 1- Vacant

Area 2= Jessica Schooley- Fort Smith (Sebastian Co.) 479-782-4555 Ext. 3110

Area 3= Vacant

Area 4= Maegan Gentry- Texarkana (Miller Co.) 870-733-0563 Ext. 10389

Area 5= Lorrie Ellis- Russellville (Pope Co.) 479-968-5596 Ext. 123

Area 6= Michelle Hood- Little Rock (Pulaski Co. SW) 501-371-1198

Area 7= Vacant

Area 8= Hannah Roach- Jonesboro (Craighead Co.) 870-972-1732 Ext 1356

Area 9= Lisa Turner- Augusta (Woodruff Co.) 870-347-2537 Ext 121

Area 10= Doris Clark- Forrest City (St. Francis Co.) 870-261-6644

IMPROVING MEANINGFUL PRACTICE WITH ARKANSAS CHILDREN TOGETHER (I.M.P.A.C.T.) UPDATES

BY MONA DAVIS

Time flies when you are having FUN!!! It seems impossible that we have been practicing many of our initiatives for almost two years! We are well on our way to improving our outcomes for children and families.

- Permanency Round Tables implemented statewide as of 2013
- Differential Response implemented statewide since August 2013
- Team Decision Making implemented in seven counties as of January 2015 with ten additional counties to be implemented in spring 2015
- CANS/FAST implemented for Pulaski and Miller in October 2014 and remaining counties statewide implemented February 12, 2015
- Nurturing Parenting IDIR Implemented March 1, 2015
- Targeted Recruitment -To be implemented statewide May 1, 2015 (there are some activities taking place across the state, but the TA and Overview to implement will be conducted in April and May)

On March 20, 2015, AR submitted the final Comprehensive Initial Design and Implementation Report, Semi-Annual Report, and the final Evaluation Plan. Once these are approved, we will post them to the website for access.

We need to hear from you!

Sometimes, in our daily practice, we do things just because it is what we do and we do not consider it anything out of the ordinary. In child welfare, everything is out of the ordinary—each family has their own dynamic, each situation is different, there are not enough resources to meet every single need, skill sets are varied from worker to worker, supervisor to supervisor, and yet you make a difference every day. Based on the number of children and families that we serve, it is incredible the successes that AR has and the progress that we continue to make year to year is incredible. We all know that this is only because of the care, commitment, and connections that each of us make every day. It takes all of us working as a team to achieve the successes despite the challenges that we face each day.

Part of making a difference is making sure your voice is heard as we assess what works and does not work in our system. Below are a few considerations that are being assessed and/or we need your feedback:

Social Media: What should the guidance be as it relates to children in foster care?

As you know, an e-mail was sent to DCFSall that prohibited the posting of any pictures and/or information around the circumstances of children placed in foster care. As we research this issue and determine what our policy and guidance should be to providers and staff, we would like to have feedback from providers and staff. If you have any comments, suggestions, or feedback, please e-mail mona.davis@dhs.arkansas.gov.

Please also encourage providers to send their feedback. We want to be sure and have as much information as needed to make the best decision to assure safety and best interest of the children in foster care as well as other children and families that we serve.



Age: What should the age of applicants be so that they may be considered for fostering and adoption? This is another policy issue that we are researching. If you have any thoughts or feedback that you would like to be considered, please contact mona.davis@dhs.arkansas.gov

Arkansas Annual Progress and Services Report:

Last year, AR submitted the 5 Year Plan for Children and Family Services as required by the federal government. Each year, AR must report to the federal government the progress toward the strategic plan, how we are working with and strengthening partnerships, how we assess whether we are improving outcomes for children and families, and how we address areas needing improvement when indicated as a result of our QSPR. Over the next few months, we will be requesting information from program managers, area directors, supervisors, and workers in the field. We also plan to conduct focus groups and surveys with various internal and external stakeholders over the next year as we prepare for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) which will be conducted in 2016. I hope that you take the time to participate when your schedule allows.

MILLER COUNTY CASEWORKER HONORED AT BANQUET

BY CINDY WALLER



On April 2 Lonoke Open Arms hosted a Child Abuse Awareness Banquet. It was a gala affair with the Governor's wife Susan Hutchinson as the guest lecturer. Dorothy Jackson, Miller County, was honored, and given a beautiful award as being a "GREAT" caseworker who genuinely cares for her foster children. Lonoke gave her a hotel room for the night, a wonderful basket of goodies, & lots of hugs from all. Her accolades were: always on time, always called, always did what she told the shelter staff she would do, always explained thoroughly the children's issues & their needs when doing a placement, always & continued to check on her children while placed there, AND for "ALWAYS" being such a nice person!

CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS PROCLAMATIONS SIGNED IN SEVIER CO.



On April 1st the Mayor of Sevier county, Billy Ray McKelvy, signed a Proclamation declaring the month of April as Child Abuse Awareness Month. To remind Sevier county residents to be the eyes and ears for our children. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) and DCFS (The Division of Children and Family Services) have collaborated to send out the message that " It Shouldn't Hurt to be a Child"- Be Their Voice!

Both agencies believe that protecting children from abuse and neglect is a vitally important responsibility. To report suspected child abuse please call 1-800-482-5964. To find out more information about CASA and how you can volunteer on behalf of an abused or neglected child abuse please call Cynthia Martin or Renee Hendrix at 479-243-9277

Fatherhood

Statewide Training

With **Sidney Moncrief**

FREE



THE ARKASAS FATHERHOOD and FAMILY INITITATIVE:

Fathers Engaged and Empowered to Learn (FEEL) is to strengthen family foundations and reverse the absentee fatherhood trend by helping fathers to understand the challenges of parenting as well as increase skills in building and maintaining healthy relationships.



Coach Sidney Moncrief will give fathers the skills to increase self-awareness as a man in order to develop as a father, make an earnest effort toward responsible fatherhood, build confidence as a man and as a parent, and more.



***APRIL 25, 2015**

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Little Rock, AR

***MAY 2, 2015**

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
El Dorado, AR

***MAY 16, 2015**

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Texarkana, AR

***MAY 30, 2015**

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Blytheville, AR

***JUNE 6, 2015**

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Northwest, AR (TBD)

For more Information, please contact
The Head Start State Collaboration Office
1400 W. Markham, Suite. 406
Little Rock, AR 72201
501-371-0740

Please go online at www.arheadstart.org to register or complete the registration form on the reverse side of this flyer and mail to the address above.



Arkansas Fatherhood and Family Initiative:

Fathers **E**ngaged and **E**mpowered to **L**earn

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____

Contact Info: _____

Organization: _____

Age of Children: _____

Registration Deadline: April 10, 2015

Please fax or email registration forms to: 501-370-9109

Please Select a workshop in your area:

- Saturday April 25, 2015-Little Rock, AR
- Saturday May 2, 2015-El Dorado, AR
- Saturday May 16, 2015-Terarkana, AR
- Saturday May 30, 2015- Blytheville, AR
- Saturday June 6, 2015-Northwest AR (TBA)

HEADSTART COLLABORATION OFFICE
 1400 W. MARKHAM, STE. 406
 LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201
 501-371-0740

*The Arkansas Fatherhood & Family Initiative: **F**athers **E**ngaged and **E**mpowered to **L**earn (FEEL) is to strengthen family foundations and reverse the absentee fatherhood trend by helping fathers to understand the challenges of parenting as well as increase skills in building and maintaining healthy relationships.*

All trainings are free!



HELPFUL LINKS

www.fosterparentcollege.com/info/connections
www.midsouth.ualr.edu
www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children
www.arkansas.gov/reportARchildabuse
www.fosterarkansas.org
www.dhsshare.arkansas.gov/pages/default.aspx
www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly
www.nctsnet.org
www.fema.gov/kids
www.childrendefense.org
www.fosterclub.com
www.ppcwg.org/communications-overview.html
www.fosteringconnections.org
http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/index.html
www.childwelfare.gov



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Recipe

Fruit Salad

Prep Time: 20 Minutes

Cook Time: 20 Minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Servings: 12

Ingredients

- 1 cup Sugar
- 1 cup Water
- Juice Of 1 Orange
- Zest Of 1 Orange
- 2 whole Vanilla Beans, Caviar Scraped Out (or 2 Teaspoons Vanilla Extract)
- 4 pints Strawberries, Hulled And Halved
- 2 pints Blueberries
- 2 cups Red Grapes, Halved
- 2 cups Green Grapes, Havled
- Mint Leaves



Preparation Instructions

Place the sugar, water, Vanilla, orange juice and orange zest into a small saucepan and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then turn the heat to low and simmer for 15-20 to thicken slightly. Set aside to cool, then store in the fridge until cold.

Mix together all the fruit in a large bowl and pour the syrup over the top, tossing gently. Garnish with mint leaves and serve.

<http://thepioneerwoman.com/cooking/2013/03/pretty-fruit-salad/>