

## Craighead County Cakes

First United Methodist Church in Jonesboro has been making birthdays extra special for foster children in Craighead County. Approximately 3-4 church volunteers in February 2010 came up with the idea to make birthday cakes for foster kids on their birthday. Now a year and a half later and they are up to 50 volunteers and have made 150 cakes to date. Way to go Craighead County!



*November is National Adoption Month!*

WWW.ARKANSAS.GOV/  
DHS/CHILNFAM  
FOR THE  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN  
YOUR AREA.

ISSUE 3 ■ SUMMER ■ 2011

# DCFS Connections

## Director's Note...from Cecile Blucker

### Keeping the Momentum!

Often times it is hard to keep the momentum going and to stay the course! That is where many of us are in the Arkansas Child Welfare System. However we MUST keep it going.

We have accomplished so much over the last two years and you should be very proud of yourselves for this. Our success is a journey not a destination – so we must keep moving ahead, continuing to improve our casework practice, continuing to improve our engagement with families, continuing to improve our decision making, continuing our important work with community groups and our stakeholders along with many other aspects of our work.

As we stated at the beginning of our transformation – our Program Improvement Plan (PIP) represented the first two years of our 5 year Division Strategic Plan. Even when we have met our targeted goals we will not stop there but keep striving to move those marks higher each year.

When we started our transformation process based on the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR), of the 7 outcomes and the 7 systemic factors, we did not have substantial compliance in any of the 7 outcome areas and we only were found to be in substantial compliance in two of the 7 systemic factors.

As a result of our hard work prior to the federal partners approving our PIP there were 9 items relating to Safety, Permanency and Well-Being related to the 7 outcomes that we needed to negotiate with the federal partners. With the work on our PIP over the last two years we have been able to meet 6 of those items and have successfully passed the PIP on those items. We still have much work to do on the remaining three - Items 17, 18 and 20 to successfully pass the PIP. These items deal with ensuring the needs and services of the child, parents and foster parents are met, the child and the family members are involved in the case planning and we are doing quality visits with the biological parents.

(Continued)



FOR FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS

SCOTTY ADAMS AT 501.683.7250

OR E-MAIL AT

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Care-Commit-Connect

Welcome to DCFS!  
New Employees

Ashley Smith/FSW/Sebastian  
Tanita Jones/FSW/Sebastian  
Terry Gardner/FSW/Crawford

Dena Perry/Permanency Specialist Coordinator/Central Office  
Jerica Hampton/FSW/Crittenden  
Leon Woodall/FSW/Franklin  
Jerry Awbrey/FSW/Sebastian  
Bobbie Newsom/FSW County Supervisor/Sebastian  
Jacklyn D. Smith-House/Administrative Assistant/Adoptions  
Patrena Tabron/DHS Program Specialist/Policy  
Jessica Thompson/FSW/Benton  
John Vang/Family Service Worker/Sebastian  
Makesha Hamby/DHS Program Assistant/Sebastian  
Julie Howard/DHS Program Assistant/Sebastian  
Merinda Barrett/FSW Supervisor/Searcy  
Jennifer Matney/FSW Supervisor/Marion  
Rachel Nichols/FSW/Sebastian  
Tracy Denny/FSW Supervisor/Sebastian  
Patricia Burks/FSW/Sebastian

### What's Inside:

3RD ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL  
RECOGNITION  
LUNCHEON

FASD AWARENESS DAY

UPDATED SACWIS REPORT

TIPS FOR CHILD WELFARE  
STAFF

PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE  
OVERVIEW



  
**ARKANSAS  
DEPARTMENT OF  
HUMAN  
SERVICES**

## IT'S A FACT:

Motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of death among children in the United States. Many of these deaths can be prevented by placing children in age and size appropriate car seats and booster seats. Proper use of child restraints reduces serious and fatal injuries by more than half.

### 3rd Annual Educational Recognition Luncheon

112 youth in the foster care system who graduated from high school were recently honored May 25 at Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock at during the third annual Educational Recognition Luncheon.

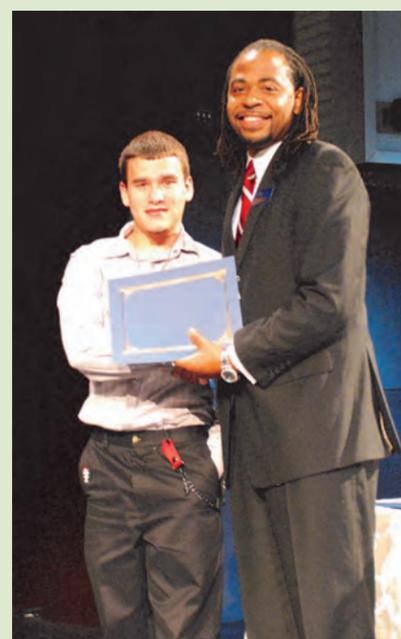
“We are proud of our graduates,” said DCFS Director Cecile Blucker. “They have overcome a great deal in life. I am excited we have so many graduates who have plans to go for higher education, and some are looking at the military as an option. These graduates have future plans and a lot of life experiences that will help them become successful in their endeavors.”

Doug Cantrell, the CEO and part owner of the New Golf of Castle Valley Golf Course and Country Club in South West Little Rock, gave the keynote address. Cantrell spent much of his youth in Tennessee’s foster care system.

He encouraged the graduates to continue their education, follow their dreams and not allow any circumstance to hold them back.

About 200 people attended the luncheon, including youth in foster care, foster parents, teachers, clergy and DCFS staff. They lauded the accomplishments of these young Arkansans.

Youth Advisory Board President Sedella White also spoke. White urged audience members to learn about the obstacles people have overcome before making a judgment about them based on their age or background.



### Letter from the Director (continued)

Even though we have these three items yet to successfully complete, we will need to continue our work on all items as we cannot let our scores fall statewide. Evidence shows that making the right assessments on the front end at the time of the investigation and having quality visits with the children and families have the greatest impact on all of the CFSR items which translates to quality care for our clients.

There are a lot of great quotes regarding success:

- ◇ “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”
- ◇ “Personal success is simply the fulfillment of what makes you happiest.”
- ◇ “The toughest thing about success is that you have got to keep on being a success.”
- ◇ “The secret of success is to do the common things uncommonly well.”
- ◇ “The secret of success is to be like a duck – smooth and unruffled on top, but paddling furiously underneath.”
- ◇ “Success is knowing what your values are and living in a way consistent with your values.”
- ◇ “Some men succeed because they are destined to, but most men because they are determined to.”

#### The Ten Commandments of Success

By Charles Schwab

WORK HARD: Hard work is the best investment a man can make.

STUDY HARD: Knowledge enables a man to work more intelligently and efficiently.

HAVE INITIATIVE: Ruts often deepen into graves.

LOVE YOUR WORK: Then you will find pleasure in mastering it.

BE EXACT: Slipshod methods bring slipshod results.

HAVE THE SPIRIT OF CONQUEST: Thus you can successfully battle and overcome difficulties

CULTIVATE PERSONALITY: Personality is to a man what perfume is to the flower.

HELP AND SHARE WITH OTHERS: The real test of business greatness lies in giving opportunity to others.

BE DEMOCRATIC: Unless you feel right toward your fellow men, you can never be a successful leader of men.

IN ALL THINGS DO YOUR BEST: The man who has done his best has done everything. The man who has done less than his best has done nothing.

As previously stated our success is a journey and not a destination. We must keep moving ahead and continuing to make the differences we are making together as a team across the state. I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish and I look forward to all of the changes yet to come because of our continued team work and our willingness to make a difference in a child and family’s life.

**Let’s Keep the Momentum!**

*Cecile*



# Well I'll Be...Darcy Dinning Retires!

For almost 40 years Darcy Dinning has given blood, sweat, and toys to DHS. As of June 30th she has taken her amazing personality and interesting sense of humor with her into retirement. CHRIS Project Manager for the past 11 years, most DHS employees know Darcy for her positivity and for bringing fun toys into long meetings. During retirement she plans to continue her volunteer work and spend more time with her 97 year old father. Darcy will certainly be missed.

Here's what others had to say about Darcy.

*"I remember the first time I met Darcy and that was when I worked on the initiation of the CHRIS project with her. She has always been so positive and perky and always had a willingness to help. I have always admired her great spirit and kindness and she will truly be missed by myself and I know by many others who have had the pleasure to know her."*

*Libby Cox*

*"As the Monroe Co. DCFS Supervisor, I have worked with Darcy many a time with a Chris placement snafu and it was always a pleasant experience. Darcy has always been pleasant, smile on her face, and sometimes a joke or pun to tell, I've always enjoyed working with Darcy, and she with her easy disposition will be missed by DCFS, statewide."*

*Gail Graves*

*"We served together as DCFS foster care workers at Pulaski South in the late 1970's. The Arkansas Democrat started to offer free wanted, stuff for sale, give away ads. What possessed me I don't know, but I sent in one in Darcy's name and phone number that said,"*

*"Free to good home, Spider Monkey, house broken and good with Children". Her phone started to ring before daylight the day the ad ran, after I guess the 20th "this is a mistake, I don't have any monkeys" she started to say, "I already gave it away".*

*Darcy is a treasure!*

*Ray Hanley*



# DCFS

## Keep the Momentum!

### Becky's Kids

Becky's Kids, a new nonprofit with the mission of bringing love and encouragement to foster children is launching in IZARD County. Honoring the legacy of Rebecca Moser Hickerson, Becky's Kids hopes to eventually grow into other counties changing the lives of foster children across the entire state of Arkansas.

Becky's Kids took 37 kids Shopping in late July; one group to Conway and the other to Jonesboro. It was possibly one of the most blessed weeks of my life. The kids had an amazing time, and so did our volunteers. Counting all of our volunteers, foster parents, DHS workers and kids, we had about 125 people working together; it was a beautiful thing.

"What an amazing day my kids and I have had with Becky's Kids and all the amazing volunteers! When this group of people tell you they are going to do something they mean it. Watching all the kids shopping with their volunteer for clothes, shoes and school supplies blessed me more than I have words to say. For people to reach out to hurting children in such a special way is an act of love from the God. If you have given a donation to Becky's Kids or want to give one, just do it, the blessings are tremendous on both ends." said Teresa Sharp, Health Service Worker in IZARD County

As a quick recap, I know we accomplished the following:

- ◇ We gave these kids love & encouragement in addition to school clothes, backpacks, haircuts and school supplies. They were so excited!
- ◇ We gave 45 volunteers the opportunity to see that foster children are not children to be afraid of, but little kids who simply need someone to love them! Many of our volunteers want to become mentors and ALL of them want to continue being involved in our events.
- ◇ IZARD County raise almost \$10,000 to support this event. Such a blessing!
- ◇ We have planted the seed and are beginning to follow-up on our long-term goal of supporting these kids monthly.
- ◇ We began raising awareness of the need for foster parents and the different ways people can get involved.

Thank you again, DCFS for meeting with us and supporting us! We could not have done this without your support and the work of Teresa Sharp in the IZARD County DHS office. She was a huge help and certainly has a heart for the children she serves. We also appreciate the support of her supervisor Donna, who opened the door for us to work with the IZARD County foster children.

We are moving on to our next project and plan and will keep you up-to-date as we move forward. If you ever have any suggestions, opportunities for us to share our vision or purpose or can encourage anyone to join our Facebook Page, which is simply Becky's Kids, we would love it!

Thank you again,  
Jessica Eldred



## IT'S A FACT:

More than 1 million parents were incarcerated in prisons or local jails in 2010, affecting 2.3 million children.

## FASD Day is September 9th.



**On September 9, 2011 Arkansas will join with several states and countries in bringing awareness Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.**

We would like to invite everyone to participate in a bell concordance. We have come up with the bell idea as there is a purity about bells that reminds us of the innocence of children. As well, bells are historically associated with warnings, alarms, marking important moments, and simply peeling for the joy of connecting with the community. FAS Day is all of these things.

Everyone participating in FAS Day is invited to share in the "Minute of Reflection" -- 9:09 a.m. on September 9, as it goes around the world. In this magical moment - the ninth minute of the ninth hour of the ninth day of the ninth month - we want to get out the message that in the nine months of pregnancy, while breastfeeding or planning to conceive, women should not drink alcohol. In this minute, we also want the world to remember those millions of people around the world who are living with fetal alcohol disorders.

**THANKS FOR YOUR HELP! CAROL RANGEL 501-682-1573**

**CAROL.RANGEL@ARKANSAS.GOV**

## PIP Report Update

The Federal Regional Office Liaison for Arkansas accepted all Evidence of Completion documentations for the 7th quarter PIP submission. We are in the process of developing the 8th quarter Evidence of Completions which are due to the Federal office August 15, 2011. We have had a lot of success with our documentation of the PIP only through the efforts and team work of central office program managers including policy and professional development, and the Area Directors and the work that the field completes every day with children and families.

We will continue to assess our progress quarterly although we will not routinely submit progress reports each quarter to the Federal Regional Office. The quarterly PIP submissions that we will continue to gather will transition to annually reporting to the Federal Office in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) which is also a federal requirements for states that receive federal dollars (IV-E and IV-B).

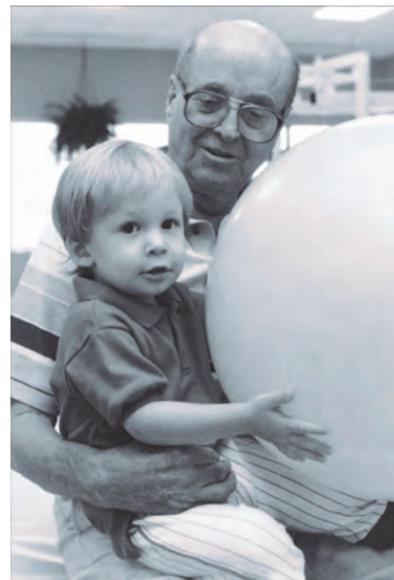
As you know, we will continue our work that we began two years ago to implement our practice model, improve our communication, provide opportunities for organizational and professional development growth, increase our service array not only in accessibility but quality which includes foster homes, mental health services, and informal services and supports to prevent removal of children, and improve our quality assurance processes by monitoring outcomes, analyzing results, and making changes as recommended to become more efficient and effective in serving families with the resources that we have.

It continues to be a challenge, but as a team, we can do it!

Over the next year, the Division priorities will be related to the following:  
-engaging children and families (which includes mothers, fathers, and relatives) in assessing their individualized needs and accessing the services to address these needs  
-involving children and families in case planning  
-facilitating and impacting the quality and frequency of visits with mothers, fathers, and relatives to maintain connections

Keep up the good work and know that the work you do every day with families makes a difference for a life time!

Mona K Davis  
DCFS Planning Manager



## Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System

In May, CHRIS (Child Welfare computer application) was extensively reviewed by Washington Feds and they were impressed with the application and with the Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services – Central and Field Staff! In three packed-full days, the Feds viewed all CHRIS functions and met with DCFS Central and Field Staff (Pulaski and Faulkner Counties)! They even visited with the Arkansas State Police Staff (Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Operators and Crimes Against Children's Division Investigators)! They were very thorough and complimentary of the system, as well as the people who use CHRIS! Here are some of their comments:

- Nice User Tools such as Zoom boxes, Grammar checks, Spelling checks, and word counts
- Liked Web-Inquiry for Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents
- Access State's Policies/Procedures which promotes transparency
- Contacts easily accessed
- Investigation Summary ("Quick View") that pulls together the most important information for the reviewing Supervisor
- Workload Screen pulls up most recently edited cases
- Standard Court Report accepted Statewide
- Provider Search Screen is very flexible and CHRIS Quick Check shows what isn't yet complete for approval
- Moving the CHRIS application toward service oriented architecture
- CHRIS Net Reports are very helpful
- PC Tablets with web access that allows CHRIS use
- 5 Dedicated Midsouth Academy CHRIS Trainers located around State

Of course, they also challenged us to enhance CHRIS to be more reflective of the PIP goals and new Practice Model! We hope to receive their official report in July and look forward to accepting their challenge to make CHRIS even better for You!



### Differential Response Program

DCFS is in the process of developing and implementing a Differential Response Program for the state of Arkansas. Different from the "one response fits all" approach, Differential Response is a method that allows child welfare systems to respond to reports of child maltreatment with either a child protection investigation or a family assessment based on factors such as the type and severity of the maltreatment. Family Assessments are non-adversarial, non-accusatory, with no finding of true or unsubstantiated, and there is no identified offender. Both responses focus on the safety and well-being of the child and promote permanency. Family assessment responses will be handled by specific community partners, whose role is to assess for safety, identify service needs, and arrange for the services to be put into place. On August 15, 2011, DCFS will request proposals from community providers across the state to become a part of this new program. While Differential Response is still in the planning stages, it is anticipated to be implemented before the end of the year.

**Permanency Roundtables**

**PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE OVERVIEW**

The Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services partnered with the Casey Family Foundation to provide the division with the opportunity to conduct professional case consultations that are designed to strategically plan permanency for children and youth in our foster care system. The Permanency Roundtables “PRT” as it’s commonly referred to in the field were initiated in our state in February 2010. The target cases for the roundtables were children and youth who have been identified to have been in care for 24 months or longer regardless of age, race, ethnicity etc. At the time, 4,000 children and youth were in our system. About one-third of those children have been in care for over 24 months. The Casey Family Foundation brought in certified individuals to provide the training and technical assistance needed to conduct the Permanency Roundtable professional consultations.

Since February 2010, three-hundred and fifty three roundtables have been conducted across the state. Ninety-three of those cases were identified as potential guardianship or pre-adoptive placements. So far, seventeen of those cases have achieved permanency whether through guardianship, adoption, or relative placement. In addition, there are six children in pre-adoptive homes and twenty-one children who are in the marginal permanency statuses. These cases have developing plans in the works to achieve permanency. Also, there are five children who are receiving transitional living services and seven children have established or reestablished some family connections. In order to enhance our efforts to ensure the goal of permanency for children in foster care through the PRT process the division has hired a new Permanency Specialist to coordinate permanency strategies and activities that could potentially expedite the permanency process. With this in mind, the division has partnered with one of the assistant professors of the School of Social Work from the University of Arkansas to assist with the Permanency Roundtable evaluation process. Currently, the PRT Coordinators are providing quarterly reports to the DCFS Planning Manager. This data will be used in the program evaluation process.

**PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE NEXT STEPS**

The last roundtables were completed in May 2011. Currently, the 353 cases are being reviewed and follow up consultations are being conducted with the case managers and supervisors who participated in the roundtables. Once the consults are completed, we will evaluate the outcomes of the PRT process by collecting aggregated data from each Area across the state using the outcomes instrument required by the Casey Family Foundation. We will use this quantitative data as well as conduct surveys and focus groups in the evaluation process. The quantitative and qualitative data will help us to analyze the successes and improvements of the roundtable. Once the program evaluation is completed then we will explore more innovative ways to reduce or remove any systemic barriers or issues that may be need to be reassessed in order to achieve permanency for the children and youth in foster care. Every child in foster care needs and deserves a safe home environment and it is our priority to explore every opportunity to achieve permanency for our children.

**Websites and Resources**



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

**DCFS earns the Mountains and Plains Child Welfare Technical Assistance Grant**

The Mountains and Plains Child Welfare Implementation Center (MPCWIC) has granted this prestigious award to DCFS. This program will focus on “Arkansas Learning Circles” which will help DCFS supervisors learn how to become better leaders to their staff and untimely break better long term outcomes for the children in Arkansas.

MPCWIC focuses on these areas of training:

- facilitate sustainable systems change through Implementation projects that will take 2 to 4 years to complete
- provide implementation expertise through intensive long term technical assistance
- execute projects intended to achieve sustainable, systemic practice change
- implement strategies that result in greater safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and families
- facilitate peer to peer learning and networking across State and Tribal child welfare agencies

### Tips for Child Welfare Staff Trauma-Informed Care for Children Exposed to Violence

#### What happens when children who are involved in the child welfare system are exposed to violence?

Children who are in the child welfare system have been affected by abuse, neglect, and/or domestic violence. Many of these children have experienced physical attacks, violations, and injuries. Once in the system, they face other stressors caused by the very system that was designed to protect them and remedy the situations that brought them into the system in the first place. For example, when children are separated from their families, their relationships with caregivers are ruptured, they are uprooted from familiar surroundings, and their daily routines are destroyed. In the child welfare system, families often face uncertainty and instability that can continue for years.

Violent events can cause ongoing and overwhelming feelings of hopelessness and fear. They may be compounded by other stressors, among them school and community violence, poverty, and homelessness. These issues have a cascading effect and leave children vulnerable to further victimization and increase the likelihood of school failure, substance abuse, and involvement in criminal activities. Later in their lives, these children may drop out of school or end up in programs for runaways, delinquents, or substance abusers.

Early and effective intervention can help children involved in the child welfare system begin a healing process and ultimately thrive. Child welfare workers can be more responsive to the needs of children exposed to violence and their families once they understand the impact of that exposure and become more knowledgeable about the symptoms to watch for. An effective response gives children the opportunity to regain a sense of safety and ultimately recover from the effects of exposure to violence.

#### What are some of the warning signs of exposure to violence?

Children's reactions to exposure to violence can be immediate or appear much later. Reactions differ in severity and cover a range of behaviors depending on the frequency, intensity, and closeness of the traumatic events. Many reactions vary according to a child's age.

#### What can child welfare staff do?

Child welfare staff can play a critical role in reducing the impact of exposure to violence on children. The first step is to recognize that a lifetime of exposure to violence is pervasive in families entering the system. Rates of exposure to different types of violence—including family, school, and community violence—vary across different groups. Families from different ethnic and linguistic groups may express the impact in different ways. However, it is critical to be sensitive to the ways in which exposure affects current behavior, treatment, and outcomes for each family. Child welfare staff may:

#### Screen for exposure to violence symptoms and mental health needs of children and their families on an ongoing basis.

Routine screening for safety and risk in cases of exposure—especially to domestic violence—and the possible impact on children is recommended at every phase of the child protection process. In addition, it is critical for child welfare staff to screen for the ongoing mental health service needs of children and their families.

(CONTINUED)

### Trauma-Informed Care for Children Exposed to Violence (continued)



#### Refer for individualized comprehensive mental health assessment.

Many children in the child welfare system exhibit behavior problems that warrant mental health care. An assessment of a family's history of exposure to violence and its impacts provides a solid basis for the development of a service plan. This plan should assist the family in resolving the issues that led to their involvement in the child welfare system and, at the same time, support each child's development and well-being.

#### Plan for individualized interventions that take into consideration traumatic experiences for both caregivers and children, which may be affecting the current family situation.

Children's responses to violence differ based on age, gender, and life history. Treatment plans must be adjusted to ensure individualization, age appropriateness, and family history. In every case, however, it is critical that the treatment plan help the child and caregivers reestablish a normal routine, safety, and predictability. In addition, it is important to realize that families and other caregivers may have been exposed to violence themselves and may display signs of reaction to trauma. In such cases, it is critical to develop specific plans and structures that help caregivers address their own needs so that they can become a powerful anchor to the child's treatment.

#### Facilitate access to evidence-based interventions.

Child welfare workers understand the needs that families have, and they advocate for specialized services for those children with severe and persistent trauma-related symptoms. However, these specialized interventions are not a substitute for other needed services. The report Evidence-Based Practices for Children Exposed to Violence: A Selection from Federal Databases describes several interventions that have shown success in decreasing negative symptoms in children who have been exposed to violence. In addition, this report provides information on several common characteristics of effective treatments for children.

#### Help for child welfare staff exposed to violence.

Child welfare workers may have been exposed to violence directly or indirectly. Exposure to violence may come from their own families and communities or from the families they serve. To be able to effectively respond to children's and families' needs, child welfare workers should develop their own plan for resolving personal issues and addressing job stressors.

For more information and resources on this topic visit <http://www.safestartcenter.org>

### Update on Subsidized Guardianship Program

The Policy and Procedures for the Subsidized Guardianship Program will be submitted for promulgation August 15, 2011. Central Office will coordinate training on the policy in September and October. The Policy and a State Plan Amendment must be approved by the Federal Government prior to implementation. The target goal for implementation is November 1, 2011.

Dena Perry, Permanency Specialist, will take the lead on coordinating the training for each area and provide guidance, technical assistance, and oversight of the program once implemented.

