



DCFS Connections Summer 2012

Care * Commit * Connect



DCFS Connections
Summer 2012

Danielle House-Barlow- Editor

Director's Note...from Cecile Blucker

I want to thank each of you for the hard work you have been doing. I know we have been extremely busy over the last year and we have had some bumps in the road but we have persevered.

It was unfortunate our Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding was reduced beginning in July 2012. This reduction caused us to eliminate two of our very effective prevention programs – Human Service Workers in the School Program which served around 15,429 students last year and Family Resource Centers which assisted approximately 11,448 families last year. The decision to eliminate these two programs was made so we could ensure the direct care services to the families we serve.



Another program we were not able to get going during last fiscal year was Differential Response (DR). DR is a "different" way to respond to those identified low risk child maltreatment types. We thought we were going to be able to contract this service out – we did do a Request for Proposal (RFP) and only received a few responses. The four responses did not meet the intent of the program. We have created implementation zones for DR in several counties utilizing existing staff – those counties are Saline, Pulaski, Faulkner, Van Buren and Searcy counties. If we are selected as one of the states to receive the IV-E Waiver, we will look at contracting this service once again. Having DR performed by both existing staff and contracted staff will allow us to see which direction allows us to have the greatest results with families and will assist us in decisions going forward. One thing we need to keep in mind is the Division is currently investigating the low risk maltreatment types as a Priority II – so we are not actually adding to we are simply approaching these in a different manner. Below is the difference between an investigation and how differential response will work:

	Investigation	Differential Response Assessment
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did an incident of child abuse or neglect occur? • Who was responsible? • What steps need to be taken to ensure the child's safety? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What underlying conditions and factors may jeopardize the child's safety? • What strengths and resources exist within the family and community? • What areas of family functioning need to be strengthened?

Goal	To determine the "findings" related to allegations in the report and identify perpetrators and victims.	To engage parents, extended family, and community partners in identifying problems and participating in services and supports that address family needs.
Disposition	A decision must be made whether to substantiate the allegation of maltreatment.	Caseworkers are not typically required to make a formal finding regarding whether child maltreatment occurred.
Central Registry	Perpetrators' names are entered into a central registry, in accordance with State statutes and policies.	Alleged perpetrators' names are not entered into a central registry.
Services	If a case is opened for services, a case plan is generally written and services are provided. Families can be ordered by the court to participate in services if CPS involves the court in the case.	Voluntary services are offered. If parents do not participate, the case is either closed or switched to another type of response.

Again, DR cases are not new cases but utilize a different approach with these families. Other states who have already implemented DR programs have seen that over time the number of children entering care decreases and families develop the skills needed to address the issues that previously brought them to the attention of the child welfare system. While it may take some time to get to this point, one of the primary goals is to lessen the number of children and families involved with the child welfare system. This is in line with the direction of the system – building healthier families and keeping children safely in their homes if possible.

We have seen such improvement in our visits with our children and families. We saw our numbers increase in May and again in June. In June our visits with children in protective service cases increased to 65% and visits with children in foster home cases increased to 69%. These are the highest seen in the last 12 months – great job!!!! Visiting our children will bring about the greatest change in our system and will ensure our children are safe!

We have met all but two of our Program Improvement Plan goals – we still have until September to reach our negotiated goals. The two areas we still need to meet are involving family and child in the case planning process and visiting with the parents. In the areas that have been reviewed so far, it appears we will make those goals. We will know for sure in September. Great job on this as well.

I know we all get tired and we wonder if we are making a difference – we are making a difference! As someone said long ago – “Many of the great achievements of the world were accomplished by tired and discouraged men who kept on working.” The child welfare system is continuing to get better because of our efforts. The children and families we serve are continuing to reap the benefits of our changes.

We are exploring alternative funding options as well as legislative changes that we hope will bring about positive changes in staffing, services and ultimately practice.

I encourage you to stay positive, realize we will have obstacles to overcome, realize we can overcome those obstacles, realize that even with obstacles – we have made progress in the right direction, realize we are making a difference in the lives of children and families and realize limitations live only in our minds but if we use our imaginations and thinking outside the box, our possibilities become limitless.

I appreciate each of you and the job you have done, the job you are doing and the differences we have made already and the differences we will make together going forward.

AR C.I.R.C.L.E.S project continues to strengthen supervision in Arkansas

by Tammie Langston



The **AR C.I.R.C.L.E.S** project continues making progress to strengthen supervision in Arkansas. Over the last 6 months, project teams worked on phase 1 of the learning circle roll-out and developed a strategic plan to more broadly address supervision issues.

Learning Circles

Lincoln/Cleveland, Garland, Pulaski North and Lawrence counties have successfully launched the first phase of Learning Circles (LC) in our State! As mentioned in our previous newsletter, Learning Circles

help organizations solve problems and make decisions by providing a structured process (PARA-Plan, Act, Reflect, and Adjust) to guide the LC work.

In Arkansas, learning circles consist of a supervisor and his or her unit. In some larger offices, supervisors may also form a learning circle, role modeling the process for other units. Typically a learning circle meets once a month but can meet more frequently if needed. To prepare for the learning circle launch, supervisors and coaches (from the above counties) attended a special Facilitator training in April.

Pulaski North and Lawrence counties were the first of our above phase in counties to implement a learning circle in their office. Here's what they have to say about Learning Circles.

Marchell Seewood, Pulaski North County Supervisor tells us, *"Learning Circles are an opportunity to take time out of a very busy schedule to explore, address & adapt to problems and issues prior to those same problems and issues becoming explosive. By taking advantage of this available tool, staff will find they are putting out fewer fires and have more time to focus on the business of helping children & families; thereby assisting staff to do their jobs more effectively..."*

Wilma Tatum, also a supervisor in Pulaski North says, *"Learning Circles have taught us that we can be change agents and come up with solutions to some of our own problems."*

Tina Jordan, Lawrence County Supervisor told us, *"I think Marchell said it all. Thanks!"*

Currently, we are gathering feedback from facilitators, coaches and other LC workgroup team members to help us design phase 2 of Learning Circle implementation in Arkansas.

You can read more about this great change management tool in our last newsletter. Click the link, open the newsletter and go to the last page!

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dcf/dcfDocs/DCFSNewsletter-Holidays%202011b.pdf>

Strategic Plan Development: Care, Commit, Connect Workgroups

Compiling feedback from supervisors and field staff, the project team grouped supervisory issues into categories using our division's Practice Model tagline Care, Commit, or Connect. Care, Commit and Connect workgroups, led by DCFS supervisors, were also developed.

Over the last six months these workgroups have met regularly and engaged in a strategic planning process designed to help them understand issues, explore strategies, and then select appropriate interventions they feel will enhance supervision in Arkansas. Highlights of proposed goals include but are not limited to:

- Developing a supervisor practice model and supervisory handbook.
- Identifying ways to improve the hire process.

- Establishing a communication plan for feedback from the field to central office.
- Creating a recognition program for supervisors to reward workers for superb casework.

The workgroup chairs will continue working with the state project team to integrate each workgroup's strategic plan into the State's comprehensive plan. September is the targeted date to begin working the steps of the integrated State plan.

We welcome everyone's participation as we start working on plan goals and will keep you updated. In the meantime, if you have questions, feel free to contact any one of the Central Office Project Team listed below:

- Mona Davis, Project Manager at Mona.Davis@arkansas.gov
- Beki Dunagan, Project Liaison at Beki.Dunagan@arkansas.gov
- Greg Moore, Project Liaison, at Gregory.Moore@arkansas.gov
- Christin Harper, Project Liaison at Christin.Harper@arkansas.gov
- Tammie Langston, Project Liaison at Tammie.Langston@arkansas.gov

Project PLAY: Positive Learning For Arkansas' Youngest

by [Terese Patrick](#)



Project PLAY is an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECHMC) program funded by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE). Project PLAY facilitates collaboration between early childhood programs and Community

Mental Health Centers (CMHC) with the following goals:

- Increasing the capacity of child care providers to support and enhance children's social emotional development.
- Decreasing problem behaviors in young children by building skills of early childhood teachers and family members.

Healthy social-emotional development is a foundation for mental health and later school success. Beginning in July 2011, Project PLAY added a focus on children in foster care.

Project PLAY goals were expanded to include:

- Working with team members to ensure children in foster care have access to quality and stability in their child care placement.
- Increasing the capacity of child care centers to support the needs of children in foster care.

Project PLAY Updates

An article about Project PLAY was in the last DCFS Connections. In that article the importance of quality and stability in child care placement was described and suggestions made to promote both. You can read more about quality child care by visiting our website at <http://familymedicine.uams.edu/ProjectPLAY/Resources> and clicking on Every Child in Foster Care Deserves Our Best. Since then, Project PLAY has been busy with outreach.

You may have seen us at one of your staff meetings. We have also scheduled several presentations to foster parents this spring to share information about quality child care. If you would like us to share information on the importance of quality and stability for foster children enrolled in child care with a group that you work with, feel free to email us at projectplay@uams.edu. Additionally, Project PLAY has been invited to conduct a training session at the Children in The Courts conference to be held at the Double Tree Hotel in Little Rock in May.

Project PLAY has conducted a telephone survey with child care directors serving children in foster care. The survey results, feedback from County Supervisors, and feedback from ECMH consultants working at child care centers all point to the need to increase communication between child care providers and child protective service workers. So, to that purpose, Project PLAY staff members are working with DCFS and DCCECE leadership to create a "Child Care and Child Welfare Partnership Toolkit". The toolkit will include suggestions to 'jump-start' communication with the goal of ensuring that foster children get the best care possible. Workers from both professions will be encouraged and supported in using the toolkit.

Project PLAY is a UAMS Department of Family and Community Medicine program. Funding is provided by DCCECE.

Garland County Hosts Foster Parent Appreciation Picnic

by Theresa Garner

Garland County is fortunate enough to have wonderful foster parents. On May 22nd, Garland County Staff showed their appreciation to their foster families by hosting an Appreciation Picnic for Garland foster parents and their children at the Family Park. We devoured hot dogs, hamburgers, cakes, banana pudding, and more! Even better, foster parents, children in care, and staff enjoyed everyone's fellowship, and the children had fun fishing in the pond and playing on the playground. It was refreshing for staff and foster parents to visit with each other in a relaxed environment where no one was rushed to get to appointments. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you foster parents for all that you do by providing the nurturing, safe families our children need and for being supportive of our workers all year long!



10 Back-to-School Tips for Parents

(source www.parentfurther.com)

1. If you and your child have fallen out of your bedtime routine this summer, get back into a solid routine! A week before the first day of school is a good time frame in which to begin.
2. Plan and shop for healthy breakfasts and lunches a week in advance. This will save you precious time and prevent much stress in the long run!
3. Go shopping for school supplies together. Some elementary school teachers will provide specific supply lists for their classes. Your area's office supply store may also have local school supplies lists on hand. Shopping from a teacher-supplied list will ensure your child has the right supplies, and could save you a ton of money and time.
4. Save time on those busy school mornings by preparing your child's clothes a week ahead of time, already paired. Place a pair of socks, underwear, a shirt, and matching bottoms together in the drawer so that your child can easily grab a stack and go.
5. Support positive study habits early! Create a homework center—a specific area in the house where your child can do homework each evening. Make sure that it's in a quiet place and stocked with enough supplies, such as pencils, erasers, paper, a folder or two, and a calculator.
6. Pack light—a backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of the student's body weight. Always use both shoulder straps. Slinging a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles and may increase curvature of the spine.

7. Prepare your child for social situations in the elementary school classroom. A certain level of social anxiety is normal for elementary school aged kids. Teach her to introduce herself and make friends: "Hi, my name is Sarah; what's yours?" If she's older, role play various social scenarios with her—from sharing classroom supplies to encounters with older kids.
8. Keep encouraging literacy at home. Read frequently with your kids and make frequent trips to your local library.
9. If your child is going to be riding the bus to school for the first time, be sure to talk about bus safety. It's also a good time to reinforce general school safety rules including who he should and shouldn't talk to, and when he should and shouldn't get off the school bus (when you or a guardian is not there waiting to pick him up).
10. Parent involvement in education is important throughout elementary school! Talk to your child's teacher regularly about his educational and social development or, if your schedule permits, volunteer your time in the classroom or become an active participant in your school's PTO/PTA.

September 9th – FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) Awareness Day

by [Carol Rangel](#)

In February 1999, a small group of parents with children who suffer from fetal alcohol spectrum disorders united to promote awareness of the devastating consequences of alcohol consumption during pregnancy by establishing International Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day.

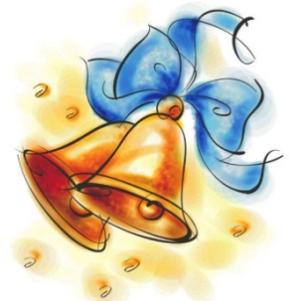
Bonnie Buxton of Toronto, Canada, the co-founder of the first international FAS Fetal Alcohol Syndromes Awareness Day, asked "What if.... A world full of FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorders) parents all got together on the ninth hour of the ninth day of the ninth month of the year and asked the world to remember that, during the 9 months of pregnancy, a woman should not consume alcohol..... would the rest of the world listen?"

Since 1999 communities around the world have observed International Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day.

In September of 2011 Governor Beebe signed the first proclamation in Arkansas declaring September 9th as FAS awareness Day in Arkansas and he plans to again this year.

We ask everyone to participate in a minute of reflection on September 9th at 9:09 a.m. We will be ringing bells across the state to remember those living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and to remind women not to drink during the 9 months of pregnancy, while breastfeeding or when planning to conceive. Ring a hand bell or get your church or other organization to ring bells at the precise time so that the message can be heard across the state and join with others around the world during this international campaign.

For more information about FAS and FASD contact Carol Rangel, at 501-682-1573 or carol.rangel@arkansas.gov





Websites and Resources

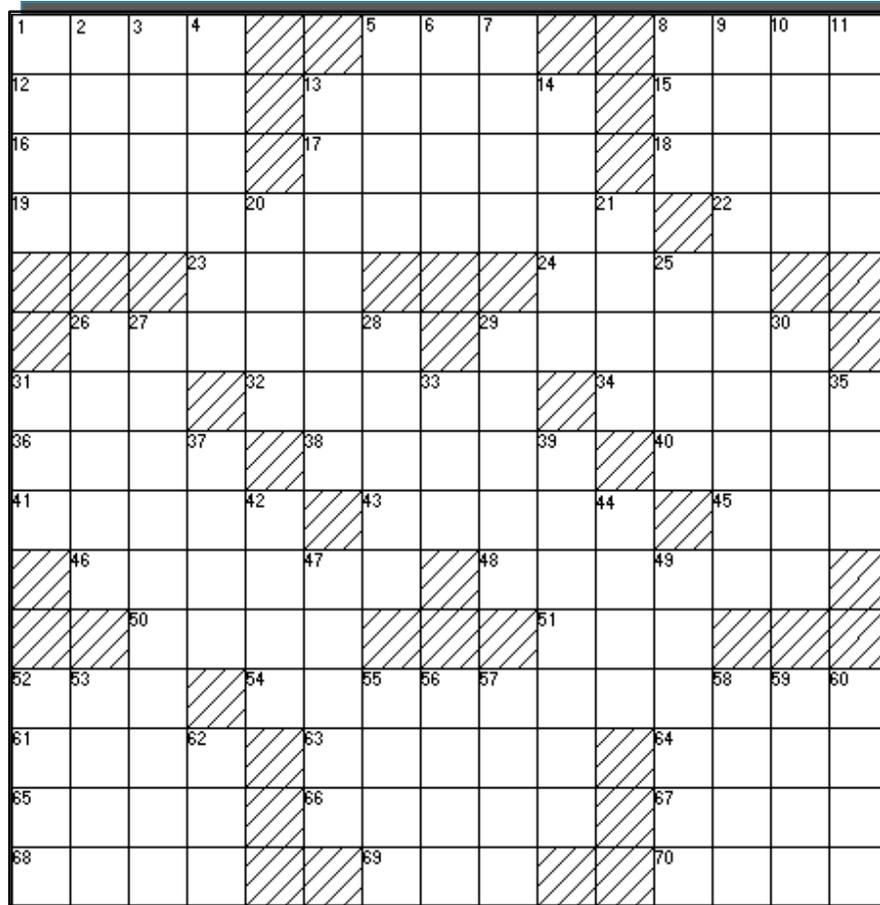
www.childwelfare.gov
www.fosterparentcollege.com/info/connections
www.midsouth.ualr.edu
www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children
www.arkansas.gov/reportARchildabuse
www.fosterarkansas.org
www.dhsshare.arkansas.gov/pages/default.aspx
www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly
www.nctsnet.org
www.fema.gov/kids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

Follow us on....



ACROSS

1. Dry
5. 24 little hours
8. Website addresses
12. In front of
13. Bravery
15. Train track
16. Top of a house
17. Palm cockatoo
18. "Good going!"
19. Ubiquitous
22. Recent
23. Fifty-two in Roman numerals
24. Blunder
26. Shake
29. Emblem
31. 3rd person pronoun female
32. Skirt fold
34. A cap with no brim or bill
36. Annoyance
38. A financial inspection
40. 365 days
41. Came up
43. Undersides of feet
45. When it's clear, it's blue
46. Pass
48. Accord
50. Murres
51. VCR button
52. Picnic insect
54. Secret
61. Be in an agitated state
63. Prepare
64. Inspiration
65. Dwarf buffalo
66. Parisian river



5. Have the nerve
6. "Oh, my!"
7. Bygone time
8. Ashes holder
9. Tropical woodland
10. Killed
11. Cooties
13. Smallpox
14. Slender and long-limbed
20. Panderer
21. Grave
25. Comply with
26. Not here
27. Determination
28. Utilize again
29. Piling
30. Porous
31. Resort
33. Bother
35. Attempt
37. Russian emperor
39. Belonging to this world
42. Majestic
44. Notices
47. Preserves, as pork
49. Dynamic

67. Pledges
68. Transmit
69. Beer
70. Alternatively

DOWN

1. A type of hair style
2. Chamber
3. Press laundry
4. Desecrate

52. Fabrics made from goat hair
53. Not a single one
55. Region
56. Wood fastener
57. Eat
58. Graven image
59. Current event information
60. Lack of difficulty
62. Young boy