



# ADVOCACY NEWS

## Spring/Summer 2007

Advocacy News is a publication of the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center. FAPAC's mission is to improve the quality of life of the children in the DC child welfare system by empowering their foster, kinship, and adoptive families to advocate for their children's needs and by assuring the inclusion of these perspectives at every relevant table.

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### Kudos and Thumbs Up!!!!!!!!!!

We acknowledge: **Double applause** to CFSA's Fiscal Office for developing a new process for dealing with overpayments as well as the identification of a single point of contact for foster parents with fiscal questions

We applaud: Justin Kopca and Gloria Yates

We acknowledge: Medicaid card distribution centralized into CFSA Placement Services Administration

We applaud: Audrey Sutton, Jill Forbes, and Linda Ripley

We acknowledge: Implementation by CFSA of an appeal process for placement decisions

We applaud: Paul Kratchman, Andrea Guy, Donald Terrell

We acknowledge: Board of Child Care, for concrete indicators of partnership with their foster parent community

We applaud: Sue Pascale, Tonya Logan

*(For more detailed information about these issues see FAPAC Advocacy Update, page2)*



### Call to Private Agency Foster Parents



FAPAC is calling upon our families in private agencies to help us to better inform prospective foster parents about the strengths of different agencies. Although we by design do not recruit, we often get phone calls from people who want to foster asking us to refer them to an agency. In the past we have given them the whole list of agencies without any specific feedback or information. However, if we could determine the agencies that best partner with their foster parent communities, we could highlight those agencies when giving out referrals. If you are a private agency parent and you feel that your agency shows you partnership and makes you feel like a true member of their team, please let us know so we can pass on that information when people call us. You can email us at [margiec@dcfapac.org](mailto:margiec@dcfapac.org) or call us at 202 269-9441. Thanks!

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Melissa Barringer  
*Editor*

### Advocacy Update

**Fiscal processes:** FAPAC staff had a very productive meeting with CFSA's fiscal office to discuss ways to make the fiscal process easier for foster parents to navigate. We were very pleased with the response of Justin Kopca and fiscal staff. Everyone learned from bringing together the perspectives of the fiscal staff with feedback we have received from the foster parent community. If you are a **CFSA** foster or kinship parent, the following information will be helpful to you in order to facilitate better communication and problem resolution. The stipends for **private agency parents** come from their own agency.

- **Gloria Yates** will be the central person to request information about late checks, missed stipends, etc. She can be reached at **202-727-7383**.
- Checks are sent no later than the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month. We learned that if you are not receiving a stipend for a child placed in your home, it could be that the child has not been linked to you in FACES (the computer data system). Foster parents are advised that if they are not receiving a stipend, they should ask their worker if the placement has been linked in FACES.
- **Private agency kudos:** Board of Child Care is a private agency which has exhibited a commitment to partnership with FAPAC as well as with its own foster parent community. Some examples of their efforts include: Foster parent annual speak-out; sending out a letter to all newly licensed foster parents telling them about FAPAC; buddy system for new foster parents; licensed respite parents to provide support to ongoing foster parents; directory of resources and recommendations which are supplied by foster parents themselves as well as by social workers and provided to foster parents; and very significantly, the opportunity for foster parents to evaluate the licensing process. We want to **applaud them** for their efforts and encourage other private agencies to inform us about their own efforts to include foster parents as a vital part of the professional team.

- If you have to change your address, let fiscal know by the 20th of the month by calling Gloria Yates. This request **must** be followed up with a written request which you can mail or fax to Gloria at 202 727-6033. Please include the effective date of your move and your provider number if you know it. You do not need to include any information on the child. Please note that post offices will not forward checks.
- If your check is lost or has not arrived to you in a timely manner, fiscal will need 10 business days before CFSA can cancel that check and two weeks before they can reissue another one.
- Remittance advice (stubs) should go out within 5 business days after you receive your check. They will be redesigned to be more informative. Please call Gloria Yates if you do not receive them.
- Overpayments are a real headache for foster families. FAPAC will be working with the fiscal office to create a more family-

friendly process. A letter of notification will be sent to a parent when an over-payment has occurred. The letter will include options the parent can choose from to pay back the overpayment and the process by which you can disagree if you do not think it is accurate. Most overpayments are the fault of system breakdowns, so when you get the letter please do not feel like anyone is blaming you for the overpayment. We learned from Fiscal staff that they do not know who has had an overpayment until they get the monthly report from Program Operations, so if you call with a problem they may need time to research your situation. Contact for overpayment issues is **Michael Payne** at **202-727-7404**. Please let FAPAC know if you have an overpayment issue that does not get resolved in a satisfactory manner.



## FAPAC Update

FAPAC is an organization whose purpose is to advocate for systemic reform that will significantly improve the lives of our children and families. We are committed to working collaboratively with other organizations and believe that as a small organization this is the best way to institutionalize the most change. We are proud to report on these FAPAC projects which are being implemented in close partnership with colleague organizations.

- **Cross-training:** We are working with Michele Rosenberg and Philena DeVaughn in the **CFSA Office of Training Services** to develop cross-trainings and dialogue groups between foster parents and social workers. This is one way we are working to build partnership between foster parents and social workers so we can better work together for the needs of our children. We have hosted three very successful trainings and one dialogue group so far; be looking in your mail and on our website for announcements of more to come!
- **Family Team Meeting Evaluation:** FAPAC is working with the **American Humane Association** to conduct an assessment of CFSA's Family Team Meeting process. We are delighted to have been chosen to help with this project and look forward to gathering important feedback which will be of important use to CFSA.
- FAPAC Director is part of the DC leadership team working with the **North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)** towards the goal of developing a coalition for Post-Permanency support and services. Towards this goal we have hosted two meetings and plan for our third in the near future. Please let us know if you are interested in working with this coalition.

*Advocacy update from p.2*

- **Medicaid:** As reported in our last newsletter, we are finally seeing progress on the distribution of Medicaid cards. As an update to our last edition, the Medicaid function has found its place inside the Placement Services Administration and is being coordinated by Lin Ripley and Anitra Chastine. Foster parents will be getting a phone call to confirm that a child is still in their care before a card is mailed to them. Much of the backlog has been distributed and they are now working on a business process for cards to be delivered with the Placement Packet as a child is placed in your home. **Please ask for your packet and card at placement.** If the child is newly entering foster care, there may not be an available card because he/she will be covered under his/her mother's managed care number and may not be switched to the fee-for-service Medicaid that covers foster children until the beginning of the next month. In that situation, CFSA has committed to give foster parents a letter with the information about the current coverage until it switches over and you can get the card. If you need help getting your Medicaid card please call **Anitra Chastine at 202-727-7847.**

*The foster parent community has been advocating for many years for Medicaid cards. When this one is resolved we may have to host a celebration!*

- **Appeal process:** Foster parents can now access an appeal process when they disagree with certain placement decisions. For more information or if you have any questions feel free to call us.

### Hot and Unresolved Issues:

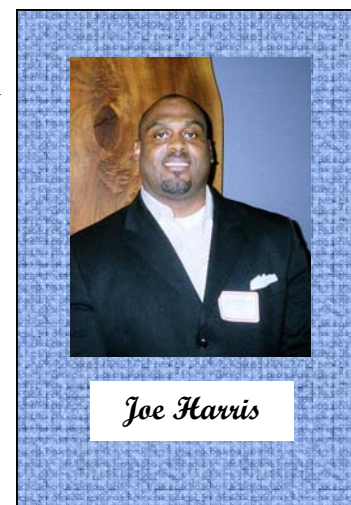


- Mental Health crisis services
- Quality mental health therapeutic services
- Development of support and services for foster parents fostering older teens
- Placement disruptions initiated by CFSA and private agencies which are out of compliance with DC law and CFSA policy.
- Support for CFSA's Maryland Foster Parents

## Foster Parent Advocates in Action

As a single pre-adoptive CFSA foster parent of a 13yr. boy and having worked in the social service field for over 20 years, Joe Harris is keenly aware and concerned of the dire issues facing children and teens today in our nation's capitol. Recently appointed Executive Director of Good Shepherd Ministries, Inc., Harris is poised to make a difference both professionally and personally. The organization, located in the Adams Morgan/Columbia Heights neighborhood serves children in low-income housing. The site's motto is "Empowering Children, Transforming Community".

"Good Shepherd provides a wide range of services for pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade", says Harris who became executive director 6 months ago. "The largest population and program is for teens, 7<sup>th</sup> graders to 12<sup>th</sup> graders" Many of the risk factors in this range include gang violence, drug use, teen pregnancy, dropping out of school and others. Our organization helps fill a gap", states Harris, "we provide educational support, safe haven, after school programs and other positive opportunities" More information can be found at [www.goodshepherddc.org](http://www.goodshepherddc.org) or call 202-483-5816.



Professionally, as the director of Good Shepherd Ministries, Inc., Harris hopes to maintain and expand services for children and teens. Personally, as the single foster parent of a 13 year old boy, for 2 1/2yrs. now, he feels optimistic about making a positive difference. "For me," says Harris, "walking the walk is important". Harris a DC resident for 22 years is originally from Florida. His mother currently resides there and is a licensed therapeutic foster parent. Harris feels strongly more people need to consider fostering and adoption. "Every child wants a family. As a male, our community is relying on men [like myself] who have been fortunate, to now be able to help out, guide children, and teach them how to become young men."

*"Empowering Children,  
Transforming Community"*

## News from CFSA

At the end of February, Uma Ahluwalia, Interim Director of CFSA, left CFSA to take the job as Director of the Department of Social Services of Montgomery County MD. Dr. Sharlynn Bobo has assumed the role of Interim Director of CFSA. We wish Dr. Bobo much success in this important role.

CFSA is seeking foster parents for their "STAR" emergency program. If you are interested in learning more about this program, call **Linda Ripley** at **202 727-7847**.

Please do not throw out your Placement Packet! Packets are designed to follow the child into each new placement. If you do not get a packet of information at placement, please ask your social worker. If you do not have results, you can call your worker's supervisor or **Linda Ripley** in the Placement Office at **202-727-7847**.

DC CFSA foster parents: There are two new processes in the DC licensing unit that should help facilitate a smoother licensing process. First is that you should be receiving a **checklist** of all the documents you need to submit for your relicensing process. Second is you should be receiving a **receipt** every time you give in documents for your relicensing process. Please request your checklist and your receipts and let FAPAC know if you do not receive them. Please also let FAPAC know if you do not receive your license within two weeks after handing in all of your documents.

Foster Parents,

For over two years now, many children in the DC foster care system have benefited from our **Respite Enrichment Program**. Through our collaboration with several childcare sites in DC and Maryland we have fulfilled the request of many foster parents for day respite and have helped provide fun, educational and safe programs for many children.

Since early May 2007 the coordination/reservation of Saturday enrichment services has moved to the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (also known as COG) and no longer done out of the Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center office. Currently, COG manages the overnight respite component and in addition offers extensive training to new foster parents and activities twice a month for the Super Saturday Respite. It was the mutual decision of both organizations to save resources by joining the program together.

**Starting May 1**, Foster parents requesting all-day Saturday enrichment programs for their child will be directed to contact LaToya Bates Manager of Respite Coordination at COG. Her number is (202) 962-3277. Mrs. Bates also is the coordinator of the overnight respite program and the Super Saturday activities, held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month.

If you have been using services, nothing will change as far as the availability of the program. For foster parents who have never had their child (ren) participate, we invite you to register them and participate in these free services.

My role as Enrichment Program Coordinator will be adjusted here at FAPAC but I look forward to continuing contacts with foster parents and the enrichment sites as it regards to quality assurance. Part of my responsibility will be in developing a questionnaire and collecting data from foster parents about the child's enrichment experiences. In addition I look forward to identifying areas that serve as "roadblocks" for foster parents that have never used this free program. Thanks for your cooperation and support of the program.

Sincerely,



Rod Sherrill  
Foster & Adoptive Parent  
Advocacy Center  
(202) 269-9441

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## Free Respite & Enrichment Programs Available!

To Support foster families of DC's children, the following programs are available:

- All-day Saturday Enrichment Activities (4 sites!)
- Overnight Weekend Respite
- Respite Super Saturdays (Bowling plus special activities for children & teens.)

For more information, contact the

Work of Heart Program at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government, 1-800 669-HOPE (4673)

### Wanted

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A project in partnership with DC Child and Family Services Agency  
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