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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 needs and by assuring inclusion of those families' perspectives at every relevant table.

TRAINING WEBSITE GOES LIVE!!!!!!!!!!

FAPAC is proud to announce that on Monday, June 1, 2009, the Resource Parent Training Coalition website (<http://www.dcrptc.org>) went LIVE! Originally developed out of the mutual vision of Philena DeV Vaughn, CFSA's Training Program Manager, and Marilyn and Margie at FAPAC, the website is the product of countless hours of hard work and dedication aimed at providing foster and adoptive parents one centralized location to assist in accessing in-service training opportunities and resources. *A heart-felt "Thank you" goes out to Steve Smith, who along with his wife Nancy has been a long-time DC foster and adoptive parent. Steve has devoted much attention to the website's design. The coalition owes deep gratitude to the Consumer Health Foundation, who made this project possible by generous funding through a grant focused on utilizing technology for advocacy.*



(cont. on p6)

KUDOS and THUMBS UP

We acknowledge: CFSA for creating a new position to respond to complaints, concerns, inquiries and suggestions regarding CFSA services from children, youth, birth parents, foster parents, kinship providers, and adoptive parents.
We applaud (LOUDLY): Dr. Roque Gerald

We acknowledge: Family Matters (formerly known as Family and Child Services, Inc) for foster parent inclusive innovations: Clinical Grand Rounds and Pre-Placement Meetings.
We applaud: Traci Ganoway, Theresa Scott-Harawa, Lisa Emmi and Sabrina Willis

We acknowledge: Progressive Life Center for their regularly scheduled Consumer Input Meetings
We applaud: Peter Fitts, Rosalind Lee, and Linda Crestwell (Foster Parent Advisory Board President)

We acknowledge: Exemption of fee for fire inspections for DC foster parents
We applaud: Rula Swann, CFSA Licensing Program Manager

We acknowledge: CFSA for implementing a single point of contact to improve the process for new foster, kinship and adoptive parent recruits.
We applaud: Ritu Atwal, Kia Jackson-Garnett, Antoinette Harris-Edwards, Tennille Stokes

We acknowledge: Catholic Charities DC for commitment to stronger relations between birth and foster parents through staff-facilitated meetings shortly after placement.
We applaud: Diana Lampe, Adrian Gayle, Deborah Barr, and the entire foster care team

(For more information on these accomplishments please see Advocacy Update, Page3)

T	FAPAC News.....	p.2
H	CFSA Info.....	p.2
I	Hot Issues.....	p.2
S	Advocacy Update.....	p.3
I	Lawyer's Column.....	p.4
S	Resources.....	p.6
S	Dept. of Mental Health Info.....	p.7
U	Focus on our Funders.....	p.7
E	Training Opportunities.....	p.8

FAPAC News:

FAPAC has embarked on a partnership with the Parent Advocate Project (PAP), a project of Adoptions Together. Birth parent mentors from PAP joined with FAPAC foster parents for a wonderful Peer Advocacy Training weekend in April. Additionally, FAPAC held a workgroup of PAP mentors to give birth parent feedback to the draft of the CFSA practice model, to model the path of policy inclusion that we have been able to implement for foster parents. Continued plans for partnership include ongoing foster parent/birth parent dialogue and training, developing a model of co-parenting, and the development of a joint advocacy agenda and policy work. FAPAC is very excited about the potential of this dynamic partnership!

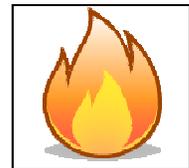
FAPAC, in partnership with the Post Permanency Family Center completed our first “Clinical Rap Group.” Foster, kinship and adoptive parents came together with two clinician group leaders for 6 sessions to talk about their own stresses and issues in a safe and confidential setting. The group was highly successful as evidenced by the positive feedback from participants, who practically ran into the group each week!

FAPAC has completed its research project on Barriers to Permanency, which was funded by Kidsave and conducted in partnership with CFSA. Thank you to all foster parents and social workers who participated in our interview process. Results will be discussed in our next newsletter.

CFSA Information**PLACEMENT FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS**

Foster parents from CFSA or a private agency who feel that a Family Team Meeting (FTM) could be useful to them and perhaps could prevent a placement disruption in their home may request a **Placement FTM** from their social worker or directly from the FTM unit.. A parent may contact the FTM unit by e-mail at cfsa.ftmu@dc.gov or by calling the on-call FTM phone on 202-270-3770. When you call or e-mail please be sure to indicate that you would like to request a **placement FTM**. Also leave your name and phone number as well as any other pertinent information they might need to return your call.

For questions about the FTM process, please feel free to contact FTM supervisors: Ana Burgos: 202-727-7328 or 202-413-1757 (cell); LaTasha Carroll: 202-727-3496 or 202-498-8437 (cell); Tyreis Pierce: 202-727-2912 or 202-270-4388 (cell)

Hot IssuesStill need Resolution!

DC children would be better served if there was/were:

- Accountability for social workers who show disrespect to families
- Meaningful disruption prevention services to prevent multiple placements
- Adoption and guardianship subsidy age 18-21
- Support and specific training for foster parents of older youth and teens
- Emergency day care
- Placement packages consistently being utilized and delivered (in CFSA policy **5 years** and not yet adequately implemented!)

Advocacy Update



1) CFSA has created the job of Ombudsman, in the Office of the CFSA Director. The Ombudsman will be responsible for responding to complaints, concerns, inquiries and suggestions regarding CFSA services to children, youth, birth parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and adoptive parents. The Ombudsman will review CFSA and/or private agency actions and decisions to determine whether they comply with laws, rules, and CFSA policies, make recommendations regarding how to rectify complaints, and identify systemic issues through an annual analysis of complaints and inquiries received by CFSA. FAPAC has been advocating for many years for CFSA to develop an internal trouble shooting process so that issues and concerns can get timely upper level review and hopefully resolution. We are very excited that CFSA has accepted this recommendation and look forward to working together to help ensure its success.

2) Family Matters (formerly Family and Child Services) has initiated two foster parent inclusive innovations. Foster parents are invited to Clinical Grand Rounds, a forum for discussing the diverse and “high risk” needs of clients and families. Additionally, they have initiated a new process of Pre-Placement meetings with foster parents for children who present with multilayered and complex needs. At this meeting, the child’s issues are thoroughly discussed with the foster parent in a face-to-face discussion about the varying needs of the child as well as other issues that may impact the placement. The foster parent then has the opportunity to ask questions, clarify points and be able to make an informed decision regarding his or her ability to meet the needs of the child. They hope that this new process will lead to fewer placement disruptions. FAPAC acknowledges Family Matters for these two great examples of team work between agencies and parents. We look forward to hearing more from them about the positive outcomes of these innovations.

*Hope for new process
to lead to
fewer placements*

3) Progressive Life Center (PLC) holds regularly scheduled Consumer Input Meetings for all of their consumers including Treatment Foster Parents and youth. The focus of the meetings is to give their parents a voice with accountability in telling their staff and program management what works and what does not work within the program and services that parents and families receive. The Director of Performance and Quality Improvement facilitates each meeting in which consumers have a safe and supportive environment in which to share their feelings. After concerns are shared, the Program Director must submit an action plan or a response back to the parents prior to the next quarterly meeting that details how concerns will be addressed and the expected outcomes. Sometimes all concerns cannot be resolved based upon licensing issues or systemic barriers. However, all concerns will receive written feedback. This system of accountability is then used by the Director of Quality Improvement to ensure that accountability occurs for all concerns and responses, with ultimate goal of consumer engagement and satisfaction. FAPAC acknowledges PLC for their commitment to this process of inclusion.

4) In the past months, DC has instituted a \$100 fee for fire inspections. Rula Swann, CFSA Licensing Program Manager, contacted the DC Fire Department and quickly and effectively worked out an exemption for foster parents. Thank you Rula!

**Lawyer's Column
By
Harvey Schweitzer
Attorney at Law**



An Allegation of Child Maltreatment Has Been Made Against You: What Do You Do Next?

Being accused of abusing or neglecting a child, any child, is a frightening experience. What if it happens to you? Although each situation is unique “allegations” do have many common elements. This list is intended as general guidance only and to present suggestions. Not all actions listed will need to be taken. Nor will the actions occur in any particular order. But this list ought to give you a sense of what you should be saying and doing.

- If you have a lawyer, call your lawyer ASAP. If you do not, and need support or referrals, call FAPAC!
- You are not legally required to talk to anyone or cooperate in an investigation of yourself. **Note however, that the investigators will interpret refusing to talk or cooperate as a sign that the allegation is correct or that you are “hiding” something.** As unfair as this is, this assumption is a common element of any allegation investigation.
- Find out if you are being accused of neglect or abuse?
- Do your best to gather as much information as you can as quickly as possible. Who is making the allegation? Who is the victim? What is it alleged that you did?
- In what jurisdiction did the events occur? This will determine who will investigate. In addition to the “child protection” investigation the agency monitoring the placement (and CFSA) may also be undertaking information gathering.
- Your social worker, if you have a good relationship with him/her, may be a good source of information and support. However, some workers do not know how to be supportive in this situation and might erroneously think they are mandated to keep a distance from you during the investigation. Try not to take this personally and always continue to be cordial.
- Tell the truth! And,
- Be careful what you say. It can be taken out of context or misinterpreted. And,
- What you say early on will stay with the case forever.
- If you do not have a lawyer consider having a consultation with a lawyer. This will help you better understand what is happening and the risks you face. You will also be able to decide if you want to

(cont. on p.5)

(Lawyer from p.4)

hire a lawyer. If you are facing criminal charges because the allegation is sex abuse or serious physical abuse then hiring a lawyer at the outset is a very good idea. You may also wish to hire a lawyer if you face a civil case of child abuse/neglect that could affect your custody of your own child(ren).

- All allegations that are not frivolous or clearly fabricated must be investigated. The factual threshold needed to undertake an investigation is very low; if the allegation has any support it will be investigated.
- The investigation must be undertaken and completed with specific time frames and you will be told of the result. If you have appeal rights you will be told of your rights. You will have a right to challenge the allegation in an administrative proceeding.
- Keep Notes. You will be hearing, doing and saying a lot in a short period of time. Get a notebook and keep a diary with enough information so that you will not forget critical dates and events. Write down who you spoke to and how to reach them. This will also help you identify witnesses. Keep in mind that this diary may some day be seen by others
- Allegations seldom disappear quickly. Prepare for the long haul.
- Be very skeptical if anyone tells you things like “Don’t worry” or “I am going to close this out with no finding” or “My supervisor usually drops these”.
- Many people, including social workers, think that whenever an allegation has been made the foster children in your home must be removed. This is not true. Until there is a formal finding, removal is discretionary and each situation ought to be individually assessed by the responsible agency. The most important issue by far is whether remaining in the foster home poses a risk of harm to the child. Once there is a formal finding whether the child must be removed or whether removal remains discretionary will depend upon the finding made and other circumstances. Note that pending an investigation no additional children may be placed into the home.
- Find out what will happen to the victim/child and to the foster children in your care. Will the child (ren) be removed? Why? When? Can this be challenged? If so, how?
- Do not panic or overreact. People are watching you. Always act reasonably and responsibly.

(Website from p.1)

The website allows foster and adoptive parents the ability to view upcoming in-service trainings offered by coalition members. Those members currently include:

- Adoptions Together / Post Permanency Family Center
- Board of Childcare
- Catholic Charities DC
- Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)
- DC Metropolitan Foster & Adoptive Parent Assn.
- Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Family Matters of Greater Washington
- Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center
- Foundations for Home and Community/First Home Care
- Kayla's Village

- Kidsave
- Lutheran Social Services
- Progressive Life Center
- Sasha Bruce Youthworks



As well as hosting a centralized in-service training calendar, the website allows parents to search for specific training by category ranging from Pre-Licensing, Adoption, Behavior, Mental Health and more. The website also allows visitors to connect to each coalition member's website. The website will continue to grow to address the complex and diverse parenting needs of foster and adoptive parents. Other agencies interested in joining our exciting collaboration should call Marilyn Egerton at FAPAC 202 269-9441.

RESOURCES

Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center Launched

<http://www.grandfamilies.org>

Casey Family Programs, the ABA Center on Children and the Law, and Generations United are proud to launch this new website that provides information on state laws and legislation in support of grandfamilies. The easy-to-use database allows for a search of laws and legislation that address common legal questions surrounding relative care giving both within and outside the child welfare system.

The Special Ed Advocate Newsletter Wright's Law

The Special Ed Advocate is a free online newsletter about special education legal and advocacy topics. Subscribers learn about new cases, articles, seminars and training, and other useful information about special education law and advocacy. <http://www.wrightslaw.com>

(Advocacy from p. 3)

5) CFSA has now implemented a single point of contact for their new potential foster, kinship and adoptive parents. Resulting from feedback from the community that the recruitment-licensing-placement process was confusing and thus served as a barrier to applicant families, CFSA has designed a system where every family going through the process will be assigned one "point of contact" who can help them to successfully navigate the process. This will include all families applying to be foster, kinship or adoptive parents including those kinship or adoptive parents residing in Maryland. The supervisors overseeing the "point of contact" assignments in the District of Columbia are Kia Jackson-Garnett and Antoinette Harris-Edwards. The supervisor overseeing the "point of contact" assignments in Maryland is Tennille Stokes. FAPAC acknowledges CFSA for listening, hearing and responding to foster parent concerns. Thank you!

6) Catholic Charities is committed to facilitating stronger relationships between birth and foster parents to talk about the needs of the child, visitation and other critical information. This is a wonderful way to break down the barriers, begin positive communication, and encourage co-parenting between birth and foster parents. FAPAC was delighted to hear about this innovative practice and is pleased to acknowledge Catholic Charities' staff for their creativity and commitment.

Department of Mental Health (DMH) Information

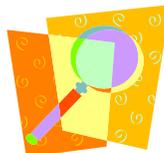


DMH and CFSA have established the Choice Provider network of Core Service Agencies with the ability to provide quality, evidence based, innovative services and interventions dedicated to meet the needs of children and their families in the child welfare system. Choice Providers serve as a clinical home for children and youth served by the child welfare system who are identified with mental health needs and engage families and foster families/kinship caregivers as partners in the assessment service planning and service delivery processes. Services can be accessed for CFSA involved children through their social worker who will complete the referral through the Behavioral Services Unit (BSU) of the Office of Clinical Practice-Clinical and Health Services Administration. (OCP-CHSA). The BSU will ensure that the child is linked to a Choice Provider agency for the needed mental health services and supports. The Choice Provider Agencies are: Family Matters of Greater Washington (formerly Family and Child Services of DC); First Home Care; Community Connections; Progressive Life Center; Universal Healthcare Management Services. The BSU is the behavioral services unit within the Clinical and Health Services Administration within the Office of Clinical Practice.

The DC Department of Mental Health Community Services Agency (DMH CSA) is transitioning to community-based private providers. Consumers will be transitioning to a network of providers with long histories in the District serving individuals recovering from serious mental illness. **Please note, if you hear that the DC Department of Mental Health is closing, that is not accurate**; it is only the DMH Core Service Agency that is closing.



Dedicated to
Making a Difference
in the Health of the Community



FOCUS ON OUR FUNDERS

FAPAC would not exist without the generosity of our foundation funders. To show our deepest gratitude, we want to take the opportunity to thank our funders in this newsletter and future newsletters. This edition, we want to give a loud thank you to Consumer Health Foundation. Many of our exciting projects were funded by Consumer Health, including the website for the Resource Parent Training Coalition, valuable training workshops, and a Health Access Guide for foster parents that is currently in its final stage of design.

The mission of the Consumer Health Foundation is to improve the health status of Washington, DC area communities - particularly the most vulnerable members of these communities - and to support the activities that enable people to be more actively involved in their own health. Within their mission, their work centers on reducing the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic health disparities that exist in accessing health care and health outcomes.

Thank you Consumer Health Foundation, and a very special and heartfelt thank you to Rachel Wick, FAPAC's Consumer Health Program Officer.

ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED
FOR ALL TRAININGS!

PLEASE CALL 202-269-9441, Box 8
CHILD CARE PROVIDED – REGISTER NOW!



When: Sat Jun 27, 2009 9:30am - 4:00pm (Doors open at 9:00 a.m.)

Title: Helping Children Exposed to Violence

Hosted by: FAPAC & KAYLA'S VILLAGE

Attendees: Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Parents and Social Workers

Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents: Certificate - Social Workers: 5 CEU's

A cross-training workshop for CFSA and private agency foster/kinship/adoptive parents and social workers. This training examines the impact of exposure to community, home and family violence on children and youth. Participants will learn to identify the developmental impacts of both direct and indirect exposure to violence on children from infancy to adolescence; will learn to recognize and interpret behaviors and coping strategies of children of different developmental stages who have been exposed to violence; and will learn strategies and appropriate interventions and services for responding to these needs and behaviors..

COST: No Cost for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents of DC's children

Social Workers: 5 CEU Credits: \$10.00 for those who work with families in the DC Child Welfare System, others \$60.00

TRAINER: Elena Cohen, MSW, Safe Start Center

When: July 10th – 12th FRI 6:00-9:00 pm SAT 8:30-4:30 SUN 8:30-4:30 (Doors open at 8:00 a.m. Sat/Sun)

Title: Peer Advocacy Training - A Three Day Workshop (MUST ATTEND ALL THREE DAYS)

Hosted by: FAPAC

Attendees: Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents

An intensive 19-hour training designed to prepare foster, adoptive and kinship parents to deal with issues such as organizational structure of CFSA, advocating in family court, special education, child welfare legislation, health/mental health services, and developing advocacy skills.

COST: No Cost

TRAINER: Various Expert Presenters

When: Sat Sep 12, 2009 9:30 a.m. —12:30 p.m. (Doors open at 9:00 a.m.)

Title: Legal Issues in Child Welfare

Hosted by: FAPAC & KAYLAS VILLAGE

Attendees: Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Parents and Social Workers

Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents: Certificate - Social Workers: 3 CEU's

The training is a detailed introduction to the DC laws and regulations that pertain to the care of children by parents, grandparents, and unrelated caretakers. It will include an explanation of the policies and procedures that affect removal of children from their homes and entry into foster care. The training is intended to enhance the knowledge base of foster parents and make them more effective advocates for foster children and intended to improve the practices of social workers by making them more familiar with the law.

COST: No Cost for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents of DC's children - Social Workers: 3 CEU Credits: \$10.00 for those who work with families in the DC Child Welfare System, others \$60.00

TRAINER: Harvey Schweitzer, Attorney