

# CONGRATULATIONS

## DCFS ALL STARS

DIRECTOR'S EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD WINNERS

### March 2011

#### Outstanding Direct Service Staff

*LaQuitta Cole, SCSW*

**Santa Fe Springs Office**

SCSW LaQuitta Cole was assigned to the ER Over 60-Day Project last September in the Santa Fe Springs office to assist the Emergency Response CSWs with tasks necessary to complete their investigations.

LaQuitta employs excellent social work skills to conduct quality and productive interviews. Her assessments skills are 'safety and risk focused'. After identifying the issues with the family caretakers, she provides the necessary services the families need in order to resolve their issues. LaQuitta fully supports the Department's mission to keep children at home provided that maltreatment threats no longer exist at home. When necessary, she provides brief crisis intervention skills to stabilize families dealing with domestic violence and substance abuse.

LaQuitta is a highly ethical person who truly cares for the well being of others and maintains an awareness of the cultural and ethnic differences of the clients she serves. She maintains positive working relationships with the community as well as with her colleagues and management. She consistently meets deadlines producing a high quantity of work. LaQuitta was the first team member who completed all 13 referrals in 6 weeks. She spent the rest of her time assisting other team members in completing their Investigation Narratives. She scheduled her work schedule to meet the families in the evenings and on weekends.

LaQuitta demonstrates excellent analytical and decision making skills to make well-informed decisions in a short period of time with limited information. On one of her follow up visits on an ER over 60 referral, the caretaker requested services for substance abuse. LaQuitta immediately consulted with the team leader and recommended a new case be opened to help the family. This allowed the children to safely remain at home with mother with Family Preservation services initiated. Her quick actions ensured the children's safety.

While working on the ER over 60-day project for three months, LaQuitta maintained a positive attitude, acclimating well to changing demands. She prides herself on being a team player and is quick to assume a leadership role with peers. LaQuitta spent a great deal of time assisting 2 SCSWs with no ER experience assigned to the project in learning ER assessment skills. She accompanied the SCSWs on home visits demonstrating the procedures and

skills of safety assessment. Within two weeks, the SCSWs were able to assess the children independently. LaQuitta also worked with another 2 SCSWs, who suddenly returned to their original duties after three weeks working at the special project, to complete their assignments. After determining that safety assessments were incomplete, LaQuitta voluntarily went back to the family's home and interviewed the children until all necessary information and issues had been addressed. For her many contributions to the safety and well-being of our children and families, LaQuitta Cole is awarded the March 2011 DERA Award for Outstanding Direct Service Staff.

## **Outstanding Team Staff**

### ***Regional Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) Coordinators*** **Bureau of the Medical Director**

The goal of the MAT Program is to ensure that each child that newly enters foster care is provided a comprehensive assessment of child and family needs that is strengths-based and child-focused. The findings of this assessment are incorporated into a realistic plan to ensure quick follow-up and linkage to services. The MAT assessment findings are also incorporated into a child's case plan and are submitted to court.

The MAT Coordinators support safety outcomes for children by ensuring that children's mental health needs and other needs are identified and addressed in the MAT Summary of Findings meeting. They also ensure that the right team to support the child's and family's needs are at the table to hear the finding of the MAT assessment and to form a realistic and achievable plan. Numerous children's lives have been saved by having the multidisciplinary team sharing critical child information during the MAT Assessment process and at the MAT Summary of Findings (SOF) meeting.

The MAT Coordinators reduce timelines to permanency through early identification of the child's needs and the formation of a realistic and viable plan to meet these needs. MAT outcome data shows that children that receive MAT assessments are more likely to achieve permanency quicker through reunification, adoption or guardianship than children who do not receive a MAT Assessment. In addition, these findings also show that children that receive the MAT Assessment are more likely to stay in stable placements.

The MAT Coordinators are also the leads to the Bureau of the Medical Director's Coordinated Action Plan. They make sure that children on open cases are screened, assessed and linked to mental health services. They work closely with co-located DMH staff to ensure quick and appropriate linkage. They also respond to specific critical incident cases regarding mental health issues and help ensure that there is a specific team working on the child's needs. They provide information, research issues, and find appropriate mental health resources for children and families whether or not they have health insurance.

Recently, the MAT Coordinators also supported ER staff by agreeing to investigate and close five ER referrals each while maintaining their regular work.

Most of the MAT Coordinators are MSWs and LCSWs and can quickly determine the best course of action in regard to a child's mental health needs. Regional Managers, DMH staff, CSWs and Families have all been positively impacted by the important role these staff play.

The MAT Coordinators are critical to achieving two of the deficiencies found by the Qualitative Services Reviews: The need for better assessments of children and families' strengths and needs and the need for better teaming across the board.

The MAT Program won three awards from the Productivity and Quality Awards in 2008. The awards included the Top 10 award, the teaming award, and the Million Dollar Club Award for avoiding millions of dollars in placement costs by improving permanency rates for children that receive a MAT Assessment. This award would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the MAT Coordinators. Congratulations to the MAT Coordinators, winners of the March 2011 DERA Outstanding Team Staff Award.

**An Outstanding Colleague  
Of Yours Could Be the Next Winner.**

**NOMINATE Someone NOW!**