



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Strong Support Staff Help Us to Succeed

In every office in this Department, there are staff who do the day-to-day support work needed to keep this agency going. They can be found working with social workers to complete necessary paperwork, answering phones, setting up meetings, helping the public and preparing important documents and reports. They are the clerical support staff – the unsung heroes of this Department that fill an important role in keeping us moving forward efficiently and successfully.

It is one of my goals as Director to make sure our clerical support staff is supported by management, social workers and administrative staff.

One way we are achieving this is through the inclusion of clerical support staff in the discussion of the future of DCFS. There is now clerical support staff representation in the newly formed Staff Advisory Forum. The Staff Advisory Forum members began meeting in March to provide their input, thoughts, concerns and solutions on a broad range of issues affecting the Department's pursuit of achieving its goals of safety and permanence.

In addition, we are currently organizing an employee recognition program that will routinely honor staff from every segment of the organization. Outstanding employees, including clerical support staff, will be honored on a regular basis for their contributions toward promoting the goals of the Department.

As we begin to reduce caseloads, social workers will be spending more time with families. Working on solutions to help families and keep them together requires a strong clerical support staff who can quickly access quality resources and provide the seamless assistance needed for the highest quality of customer service.

I realize that a wealth of talent already exists in our clerical support staff team. Through re-deployment, we will be looking at utilizing this pool of talent where it is most needed. As this adjustment is made, I urge you to foster the teamwork spirit and strive for excellence. ■

**David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director**



Innovative Practices to Help Lower Detentions Emerge from SPA Offices

Now that the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has developed its Department goals to reduce timelines to permanency, decrease reliance on out of home care and improve safety for children in care, Service Planning Area (SPA) offices are developing innovative ways to meet these goals. Recently, the Department looked at the number of children detained per office and found that some offices produced a lower amount of detentions.

"We have to examine a few issues," said DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders. "We have to look at if this is due to different populations or a product of the decision-making practices. We also have to ask ourselves, what are we doing as managers to guide the decision of detaining? We need to take the best practices based on the best numbers, in this case, the lowest number of detentions, and apply them across the board."

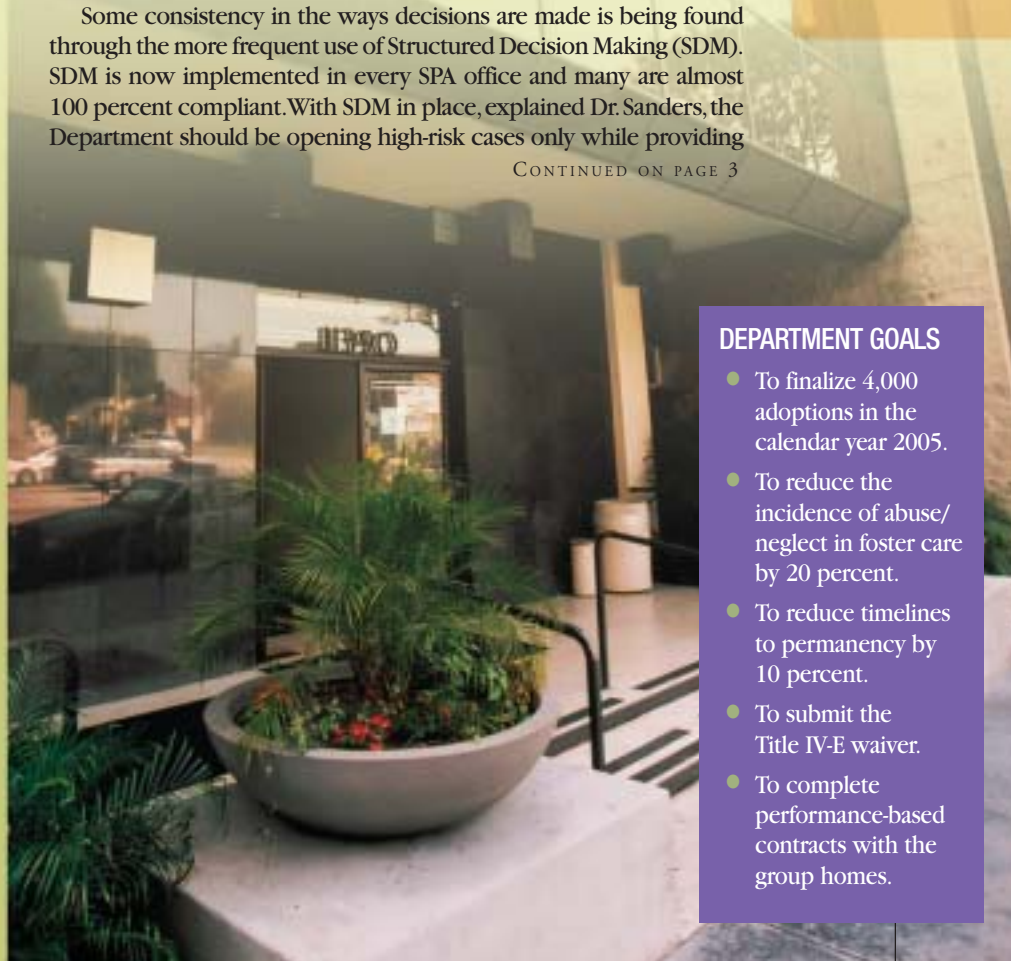
Some consistency in the ways decisions are made is being found through the more frequent use of Structured Decision Making (SDM). SDM is now implemented in every SPA office and many are almost 100 percent compliant. With SDM in place, explained Dr. Sanders, the Department should be opening high-risk cases only while providing

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SPRING/SUMMER 2004

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DEPARTMENT GOALS

- To finalize 4,000 adoptions in the calendar year 2005.
- To reduce the incidence of abuse/neglect in foster care by 20 percent.
- To reduce timelines to permanency by 10 percent.
- To submit the Title IV-E waiver.
- To complete performance-based contracts with the group homes.

'Heroes' Highlight Successes

As part of a month-long Los Angeles County Foster Care Awareness Campaign, eight "Foster Care Heroes" were recently nominated and honored for overcoming adversity and for devoting their lives to helping children in need.

The honorees included two Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers, two emancipated youth, a 90-year-old Court Appointed Special Advocate, a foster mother, a child advocate and a community group. The following are profiles of just four of the incredible honorees. Information about all of the honorees can be found on the L.A. Kids web site under the Thursday, April 29th archive.



JESSICA AMBROZ

Former Foster Youth Becomes Social Worker

JESSICA AMBROZ

Twenty years ago, Jessica Ambroz was bouncing from homeless shelter to homeless shelter, living on the streets with a mentally ill mother. She was eventually placed in a series of foster homes. But despite this chaos, Ambroz always managed to do well in school. She earned a B.A. in Child Psychology and a minor in Spanish, which she speaks fluently. She completed her

master's degree from USC in May and is now pursuing her LCSW.

Ambroz specializes in Voluntary Family Maintenance. She has a caseload of 26, but takes the time to nurture every child and family. She takes an extra interest in all her families, accompanying a child to school, providing beds, or even getting bus passes, if necessary.

In March, Ambroz ran the Los Angeles Marathon and raised money for the DCFS Children's Trust Fund. She dedicated each mile to the families she works with. Ambroz continues to be an inspiration and mentor by speaking to former foster youth and telling them they *can* succeed. "Foster kids need to see foster kids being successful," she said.



RASHAD MCALLISTER

Tough Beginnings to Extraordinary Success

RASHAD MCALLISTER

Rashad McAllister, who has overcome tough beginnings in an environment where violence and abuse were the norm, didn't let those odds deter him from a dogged pursuit of his goals. Rashad graduated from high school and joined the Job Corps, a federal program that not only teaches youth a trade but also provides them with

a place to live. After developing his employment skills, Rashad continued to work hard as a security guard to support himself while pursuing his dream of a career in nursing. He often worked long shifts; 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Through the DCFS Independent Living Program, Rashad obtained government grants to attend nursing school and spent hours in the public library studying and using the library's computers. He even took his materials along to work, so he could study during his breaks. This past February, Rashad's determination and perseverance paid off, and he graduated from Casa Loma College as a Nurse's Aide. Rashad has earned his success through hard work and focus. The next step for Rashad? He hopes to find a way to return to school and become a Registered Nurse.

From Social Worker to Valued Friend

ROB HIRSCHHORN

Social Worker Rob Hirschhorn brings a special passion for families. He specializes in Family Group Decision-Making emancipation conferences, which support youth in achieving their goals as they get ready to leave the foster care system. He created an emancipation protocol to establish short-term goals for youth and then expanded the concept to include future life plans. For the past 10 years, Rob has been successful in reunifying many children with their parents, providing "safety plans" for children so they are not hurt in care, and coming up with creative visitation plans. Rob's success is measured by the youth he served, such as a young girl Rob began to work with when she was 15 years old. Although she had been severely abused, the youth believes Rob's nurturing character helped her regain her trust in men and flourish as a successful young adult. Now reunited with her mother and a volunteer in her own right, the young woman said, "Somebody took the time to listen and help me. Now it's my turn." Many of the youth Rob helped over the years continue to stay in contact with him and depend on this devoted social worker as a mentor and friend.

Role Model for Foster Teens

ELVIRA RODRIGUEZ

For 30 years, Elvira Rodriguez has provided foster care for six adolescent girls at a time. Many of these teens are mothers themselves, and Rodriguez is determined not to perpetuate the cycle of abuse and neglect.

With a positive parenting example that foster youth too often lack, Rodriguez has become a role model for teens and their babies, giving foster youth who are also moms faith in their ability to parent and encouragement to participate in school, therapy, visits with siblings, and school activities. Rodriguez emphasizes the importance of getting an education. While fewer than half of foster youth overall complete high school, Rodriguez makes sure that almost all her girls graduate.

A former foster child said, "I have never been able to pay her back for all the wonderful things she did for me, but I hope you can make her feel like a star at least for one day." ■

services for moderate cases and using services to keep families together.

Regional Administrators (RAs) from SPA offices with lower detention rates recently shared their best practices for lessening the amount of children they remove from homes.

METRO NORTH

Child Safety Conferences Help Families

Child Safety Conferences are the cornerstone of the success at the Metro North SPA office. The conferences tap into the expertise of Emergency Response (ER) Workers, ER Supervisors, generic social workers, supervisors and the Assistant Regional Administrator who meet to provide the family in crisis with the resources necessary to keep the child safe. Two facilitators on staff coordinate the meetings. The Metro North office conducts two to three Child Safety Conferences per week.

The Metro North office also uses Family-to-Family at the front-end to keep families together. The staff at Metro North routinely research a variety of community resources and explain these resources to the families they serve to make sure the families have what they need to succeed. After that, staff follow-up with the families through monthly counseling sessions. Staff are also referring many families to Family Preservation and Alternative Response Services so that cases are not opened in the first place, explained Metro North RA Tedji Dessalegn.

The use of SDM has also been effective. “Previously, we found that SDM wasn’t being used effectively,” said Dessalegn. “Now, everyone in Metro North is using it. It has brought more consistency and all of our supervisors must do a report to show they’re using it.”

“Our management philosophy is that we believe we should do everything to keep kids safely in the home,” said Dessalegn. “Metro North has experienced managers and supervisors, so that helps a lot.”

WEST LOS ANGELES

SDM as a Management Philosophy

For the West Los Angeles office, SDM plays a big part in the front-end response system. “It has to be a management philosophy,” said Helen Maxwell, West Los Angeles RA. The West Los Angeles office is 80 percent compliant with SDM, said Maxwell, and is working toward 100 percent compliance.

Staff at the West Los Angeles office also conducts “High-Risk Committee Meetings” weekly to discuss between four and seven of the most serious cases they are dealing with. Department of Mental Health professionals and County Counsel are all brought in for their input. “We are committed to the idea of Team Decision-Making,” said Maxwell.

The West Los Angeles office is also committed to Family Group Decision-Making and sees maintaining good relationships with family preservation agencies as a key to their success.

Maxwell explained that staff receive a lot of support from the Department of Mental Health staff who accompany DCFS staff on home visits to assist with crisis intervention and mental health issues with families. ■



Foster Care Awareness Month Campaign Explores Needs of Foster Children

For the second year in a row, child advocates, County judicial and community leaders and child welfare officials teamed up to bring attention to the need for community support of foster youth and to honor foster care “heroes” as part of a Los Angeles County Foster Care Awareness Month Campaign.

During the month of May, a variety of educational activities and special awards were highlighted including a “Dependent Minor Mothers Conference” at the Westside Children’s Center. The featured speaker was Barry Zuckerman, MD, Chief of Pediatrics at Boston Medical School, and a nationally renowned expert on developing relationships between mothers and infants. Teen mothers also shared their experiences.

In recognition of Foster Care Awareness Month, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors honored seven individuals and one community group on Tuesday, May 11th as “Foster Care Heroes” whose compelling personal stories illustrate outstanding foster care success stories within the foster care system. The heroes include a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), a foster parent, two Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers, two emancipated foster youth and a community organization. These heroes, were chosen by a roundtable of child advocacy agencies, and showcase the ability to overcome adversity and make a significant difference in the lives of foster children.

The 2nd Annual “Los Angeles Education Summit on the Needs and Challenges Facing Foster Youth: Identifying Obstacles and Forging Solutions” was held at St. Anne’s Maternity Home. More than 100 Los Angeles leaders and decision-makers from the education, judicial, child welfare and advocacy community built on last year’s summit to focus on the educational needs of children age 3 and under. Featured speaker at this event was Congressman Adam Schiff.

Cedars-Sinai Hospital and other local hospitals hosted presentations highlighting the health needs and challenges facing foster youth during “Grand Rounds.” Presenters included doctors, parents, social workers, attorneys and foster youth who have faced medical obstacles. In addition, lobby displays related to the health issues of foster youth were placed in several area hospitals to bring more awareness to the public.

A meeting of spiritual leaders throughout Los Angeles brought together the faith-based community as part of a dialogue on effective ways to outreach to congregations at churches and synagogues on the need for more foster parents and mentors. Congregations held dialogues to understand how the faith-based community can better support the foster care system and more actively “parent” the children in our care. Sermons, bulletins, and newsletters focused on issues related to foster care.

The Foster Care Awareness Week Campaign was coordinated by a roundtable including representatives from the Alliance for Children’s Rights, the Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles, DCFS, the Los Angeles Affiliate of the National Association of Counsel for Children, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council and Public Counsel Law Center. ■

New Project Gains Support of Foster Parent Association

A new Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) project designed to streamline assessments of foster care and adoptive homes, improve safety of foster children and shorten the timelines for a child to have a permanent home has gained the support of the California State Foster Parent Association, Inc. The Consolidated Home Study Project combines the foster care and adoption assessment process to provide training, support and approvals of home studies simultaneously for both foster and adoptive parents.

Previously, separate orientations, trainings and approvals were conducted for foster parents and adoptive parents. Under the new plan, all foster parents and adoptive parents will be assessed at the highest level, or adop-

tion level. The first joint orientations and trainings took place in March.

DCFS initiated the project to streamline the process for a child to be adopted, noting that many foster parents end up adopting the foster children in their homes. Now, when the foster family is ready to adopt, most of the paperwork and approvals have already been done and will just need to be updated.

Under the new project, the foster family will no longer have to begin a new assessment process in order to adopt. By making these homes compliant at the adoption level from the beginning, the process for assessing a home for adoption will be sped up to approximately 120 days as opposed to the current average of nine to 12 months.

Part of the inducement to initiate the project came from the Department's recently developed Adoption Initiative that created the Department's new Permanency Resource Division. All recruitment, orientation and training for foster care and adoption is now conducted through one central section within the Department.

To become foster or adoptive parents, families attend an orientation session, meet with a social worker and complete 33 hours of training called "Permanency and Safety: Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting." In this training, the need for permanency for children is stressed. Foster parents are urged to create permanent homes for children and are told that this is the goal of the Department when children cannot return home.

"We need families who are fully committed to the children," said Karen Sims, DCFS Assistant Regional Administrator over the Recruitment and Home Study Section. After the family is approved, a home study is conducted on either the foster parent or adoptive home.

The Department's goal, said Trish Ploehn, Deputy Director of Adoptions, is to eventually include relative caregivers in this streamlined training and approval process. "Our goal is to ensure that every child who cannot safely remain in or return to their own family is placed in a home where they can grow up safe, secure, healthy and happy." ■

Staff Advisory Forum Begins to Tackle Issues



DR. SANDERS ADDRESSES THE STAFF ADVISORY FORUM.

The new Staff Advisory Forum had its first series of meetings in April to begin working on ways to meet the three Department goals of reducing timelines to permanency, reducing reliance on detention and enhancing the safety of foster children.

The Staff Advisory Forum was created earlier this year to increase effective communication throughout the Department by presenting a broad range of issues that impact the daily work lives of staff.

Director Dr. David Sanders, who attends the meetings, also expressed his desire to use these forums as a source of information for him to gain insight and understanding into the concerns, ideas and opinions that exist among staff.

In an effort to allow the most number of participants, yet maintain a workable group size for communicating thoughts and ideas,

the Staff Advisory Forum has been split into two separate groups. Representatives and alternates from each office, division, and section were randomly chosen to reflect the make-up of the entire department from clerical through administrative. They will each serve a one-year term.

So far, each group has organized future meetings, chosen a Facilitator and a Secretary and set by-laws. Each group will also set agenda items and identify meeting locations. Staff Advisory Forum co-chairs provide regular updates to the Executive Team.

The feedback following the first meetings was quite positive. Overall, the redeployment of social workers to case-carrying positions was seen as a positive move. The implementation of Structured Decision Making was also seen as a positive tool.

A number of participants described the meetings as "excellent." Supervising Children's Social Worker Ken Prescott said that the forum was an example of "best practices" while another liked that the members "have a lot of latitude to make the forum into whatever the members want."

"The best part about the meeting is that it was not a bunch of people complaining, but it was people looking for solutions and providing opinions," observed Children's Social Worker Mary Lau.

Some of the issues that the groups plan



STAFF ADVISORY FORUM MEMBERS AIR THEIR CONCERNS.

to tackle next include how to gain more support of staff by supervisors, areas of need for redeployment, a better definition of clerical duties and the need for more clerical staff. One issue already being worked on is a way to build stronger, team-oriented relationships between line staff and support staff.

It is expected that the participants and their alternates will stay in close communication with each other and disseminate the information from the meetings to the other staff members in their offices as well as bring back ideas to the Staff Advisory Forum meetings.

A Staff Advisory Forum page has been posted on L.A. Kids. The site includes meeting notes and a way for staff to communicate ideas. A list of Staff Advisory Group members and agendas for future meetings agendas is also posted. ■

Issue of Repeat Referrals Examined

The Children's Services Advisory Group (CSAG), which began meeting last fall, has presented management with an Improvement Plan for reducing the amount of multiple referrals and ensuring the safety of the children under the care of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

CSAG was formed in 2003 to bring together Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSWs) to meet on a regular basis and discuss recommendations for improving current systems in the Department. CSAG reports their recommendations to management through an Improvement Plan.

The group began meeting monthly in October 2003 to discuss its first issue — examining what could be done about the issue of “four or more referrals.”

By examining data, CSAG found that the percentage of children with Substantiated Physical and/or Sexual Abuse with four or more referrals represented 2.25 percent of children under DCFS care. In addition, CSAG found that 73 percent of the cases that come into the Department with Substantiated Physical and/or Sexual Abuse allegations have had no prior history with DCFS.

The group looked at the duplication of reporting incidents by schools, counselors and other mandated reporters. CSAG found that although a large number of referrals might initially be thought of as indicative of a higher level of risk, there were no statistically significant findings to support this fact.

Some of the CSAG methods recommended to reduce the amount of multiple referrals and increase the safety of all children under DCFS care included:

- Lessening the isolation felt by social workers in the decision-making process by having Assistant Regional Administrators review cases with multiple referrals and set up team decision-making meetings;
- Using Structured Decision Making on a consistent basis;
- Redefining the role previously held by Resource Coordinators in order to make sure accurate service resources are provided for families;
- Operationally defining a “referral”; and
- Centralizing a database to establish “red flags” and patterns of risk factors.

There was also broad support among CSAG members for the reallocation of staff in order to bring down caseloads. DCFS management is currently examining these recommendations to see which can be implemented.

“The number of repeat reports on open cases

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ON THE LINE

“ON THE LINE” IS A “DCFS NEWS” COLUMN FEATURING LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES’ CHILDREN’S SOCIAL WORKERS (CSWs) WHOSE ACHIEVEMENTS AND PRACTICES EPITOMIZE THE BEST IN SOCIAL WORK.

Social Worker’s Dedication to Keeping the Family Together Lowers Recidivism Rate

To Supervising Children’s Social Worker Jorge Ortiz of the Latino Family Preservation Program (LFPP), social work is a commitment, not just a job. He became a social worker as a way to give back to others.

Ortiz has been with LFPP since its inception 12 years ago, starting as a line worker with the program and becoming a supervisor seven years ago. Over the years, he has helped to develop the program, which has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the Department. LFPP has a detention rate of 2 to 3 percent. Out of a caseload of about 300, only four or five children have been detained.

“In the beginning, there were no guidelines,” said Ortiz.

“We used previous experience and utilized the basic social work concept of starting where the family is at and not where the Department feels they should be.”

When thinking about detaining, there are certain things to look at such as the family history, the sequence of events that led up to intervention as well as the pattern of the incidents, said Ortiz. “If you sit and listen in a non-judgmental way, you would be surprised at what they say.

Ortiz explained that by asking the family what they felt they needed and wanted was a way to begin building a relationship and trust with them. This concept of building strong relationships with the family has been a key piece in the success of LFPP.

“We keep one worker throughout the life of a case, which demonstrates a commitment to the families,” he said.

Ortiz also feels that a worker needs to have good people and social skills to help draw out a family. He feels that in LFPP the staff has been selected to create a well-rounded program. The staff draws on each other, he said.

Resources and program coordination is also instrumental to keeping a family together. Ortiz has become involved in other programs such as The Parent Project, the Student Attendance Review Board (SAR), and the Family Assessment and Services Team (FAST) unit as a way to enhance the family preservation work that he loves.

“Coordination with other programs is essential to help empower families,” explained Ortiz. “It is important to know who is who in the community as a means to address basic issues such as food, housing and some basic family issues.” He added that the community must have access to the Department, too. “They have to be able to ask questions of us.”

In addition to his basic duties, Ortiz volunteers as a leader in the Department’s social worker internship training program. He is very dedicated to the training of interns in the ways of family preservation and community-based services.

Christine Balderas-Vasquez, LFPP Manager, describes Ortiz as a critical member of her team.

“He has helped usher us through the many changes the Department has undergone in the past year all the while overseeing and ensuring his unit remains faithful to the basis tenants of child safety and family preservation. He also embraces innovation and has remained fluid and flexible and willing to institute new policy and program designs,” she said.

For more information on techniques to enhance family preservation, call Ortiz at (323) 881-1442. ■



JORGE ORTIZ



SPA SPOTS

In every issue, "DCFS News" provides information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

Congratulations Team DCFS!

On Sunday, March 7th, more than 55 DCFS staff members from all offices braved 90-degree temperatures to tackle the Los Angeles Marathon. Dubbed "Team DCFS," they biked, walked and ran the 26.2-mile course, which most of them had trained for more than six months, all as a fundraiser for the Department's Children and Family Trust Fund.

When the day was done, Team DCFS had raised \$11,749 through generous donations given by marathoners themselves, co-workers, family and friends. Early donations were matched and the overall effort was deemed one of the largest employee fund-raising efforts in DCFS history.

But, the day's intense heat came as a huge surprise to everyone. Even orange slices, water and wet sponges supplied by more than 50 volunteers at the 17-mile mark couldn't lessen the heat's intensity. At the rest stop, or what seemed more like a fly-by, Team DCFS was met with hugs and encouragement from co-workers, loved ones and friends. The volunteer group's enthusiasm provided the extra push that was needed to complete the remaining nine miles.

Later, at a celebratory luncheon, certificates were handed out to all the participants. Various marathon stories were shared including two co-workers who lost a combined total of 85 pounds while they trained for their first marathon.

DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders and a Team DCFS biker, declared the effort so successful that he wants to see it grow. The Department is now looking into sponsoring a 10K race. For more information, check out the Team DCFS page on the L.A. Kids web site under the "Quick Links" section.

Get Ready to Tee Off

The Fourth Annual Youth Opportunities United, Inc. (YOU) Celebrity Golf Tournament will tee off at 9 a.m. on Friday, September 10th at the Lost Canyons Golf Course in Simi Valley.

This annual, star-studded fundraiser is expected to be the most exciting to date. Not only will golfers play on a world-renowned golf course, but the day will also feature goodie bags, team awards and participation in putting contests. All proceeds go to scholarships for foster youth.

Sponsored by DCFS and YOU, last year's golf tournament enabled the YOU Board to award six \$1,000 scholarships. Last year's host was three-time NBA champion L.A. Laker and New Jersey Nets Coach Byron Scott. Other participants were football great Kermit Alexander and Jerry "The Beaver" Mathers.

YOU provides educational opportunities to foster children. Donations are used to enrich children's lives through educational art tours, and art camps and scholarships for college. The YOU Board also works closely with the DCFS Trust Fund.

For more information about the YOU Celebrity Golf Tournament, call Michael Wrice in the Bureau of Finance at (213) 639-4821.

West L.A. Office Honors a Generous Community Partner

On March 25th, the West Los Angeles Office held a reception to recognize the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) Lake Shrine for their generous contribution of 550 bicycles and toys to DCFS children this past holiday season. The gifts are valued at about \$45,400.

Co-organizers of the event were SCSW Kane Phelps and CSW Laura Kim who have worked with SRF over the last six years to gather the donations. Jan Brice, a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate at Edelman Children's Court is also an integral part of this holiday gift giving program.

Certificates of appreciation were presented at the reception, which included 15 of the 70-person SRF volunteer staff. "This is not a particularly affluent church," said Phelps. "Rather, the generosity is spread out and comes in even in very modest amounts."

The money donations go to purchasing gift certificates, ranging from \$50 to \$100, for teen foster youth. The church takes particular delight in finding specific request gifts that correspond to a foster child's particular interest, such as a study desk and chair, a telescope, an electric piano and all kinds of games.



Social Worker Dedicates Flag to Foster Kids

When Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Social Worker Napoleon Sadsad signed up for the Naval Reserves in 1985, he had no idea he would one day be sitting in a military convoy in Iraq being shot at. Sadsad served in Kuwait and Iraq from February 2003 through last August as part of the Naval Reserve Seabees in charge of heavy equipment operation assigned to the Marines.

On a daily basis, Sadsad and his fellow Reserves traveled with Marine convoys moving personnel and equipment throughout Iraq. Under the motto of "We Build – We Fight," the Seabees also helped remove physical barriers for the Marines, helped to reconstruct bridges that had been destroyed and built the infrastructures for camps. Occasionally, there was gunfire and manual labor in 120-degree heat, and through it all Sadsad said he always kept the people back home in his mind.

So when the opportunity came to show dedication and honor toward the children in Los Angeles County foster care, Sadsad didn't hesitate. As part of a military flag dedication program, Sadsad raised an American flag last April in honor of Los Angeles County foster children and had it formally dedicated.

The flag flew over Camp 93 in Kuwait where Sadsad was stationed with the Marines during Operation Iraqi Freedom. "I thought it would be a neat thing to do," he said. "I wanted to show support for the Department and support for the children and families we serve."

Shortly after its dedication, the flag and an official certificate marking the event was shipped back to the DCFS Pasadena office where Sadsad works. Staff plans to mount the flag in the office.

'DCFS News' Wins State Award

The Office of Public Affairs is pleased to announce that "DCFS News" has won the Award of Distinction (2nd place award) from the California Association of Public Information Officials (CAPIO). Judges cited the newsletter's "strong messaging" and "excellent graphic design." The award was accepted on behalf of the Department at the CAPIO awards ceremony on April 29th. Finalists included cities and counties from throughout the state.

Redeployment Update

Phase II Set To Begin in July

Prior to the beginning of the Department's redeployment of non-case carrying social workers, approximately 40 percent of Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) staff held case carrying positions. In order to make further progress on the Department's three primary goals of increased safety, increased permanency, and a reduced reliance on detention it was decided that this percentage needed to be increased.

Beginning in May 2003, DCFS Director Dr. Sanders convened a Labor/Management Workgroup that included management, SEIU's Local 535 and 660 and represented staff. Since that time, the mission of the group has been to review non-case carrying positions and make recommendations for a redistribution of staff to directly support case-carrying assignments.

The Labor/Management Workgroup met regularly over a period of a few months to review non-case carrying positions, establish a goal for staffing the case-carrying assignments, and make decisions and recommendations for moving staff from non-case carrying positions to case-carrying positions.

The recommendations and attachments were posted on L.A. Kids in September 2003. Dr. Sanders, along with the Executive Team, supported the recommendations put forth by the Labor/Management Workgroup.

The recommendations included making very difficult decisions to move non-case carrying staff from valued assignments to critical case-carrying functions. The goal was to achieve 120 percent of the Department's direct service staffing needs. This reallocation plan also included joint labor/management decisions about the identification of staff to be moved, the locations staff should be moved to, the dates the moves would occur, the space and equipment resources and the training needs. The process was very comprehensive and challenging, particularly given the commitment to maintain fairness and consistency with Labor/Management oversight.

There were many issues raised and challenges to be met, but the initial recommendations have nearly been fully achieved since the redeployment was started. As of March 31st, 59 Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSWs) and 124 Children's Social Workers (CSWs) had been moved from non-case carrying assignments to case case-carrying assignments.

Some of the workers were moved to the unit responsible for doing the initial and subsequent placement reviews and approvals of relative homes. As a result of the redeployment almost every office has surpassed 100 percent staffing levels and is approaching or has surpassed the goal of 120 percent staffing level.

NEXT STEPS: PHASE II

Phase I of the redeployment will be complete by June 30th and Phase II will begin. The original Labor/Management Workgroup will reconvene to discuss and review additional assignments. These include a review of clerical allocations that would meet the needs of each office. Other programs that were not identified in December are also being evaluated regarding possible redeployment.

For any questions regarding the redeployment process, please contact Priscilla Cruz, Employee Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5758. ■

WARMLINE NUMBERS AND INFORMATIONAL WEB SITES

Los Angeles County currently provides the following "Warmlines" to provide support, information and resources to the community. Please use these phone numbers to find resources such as medical, counseling, food, and shelter for DCFS clients. DCFS clients may directly contact these numbers for services closest to where they live.

INFO LINE

(800) 339-6993
www.infoline-la.org

NEXCARE AND FIRST FIVE

(888) 347-7855
(818) 205-2500
(213) 482-5902
(888) FIRST5-LA
www.first5laconnect.org

ISSUE OF REPEAT REFERRALS EXAMINED

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has been a problem," DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders said.

Dr. Sanders recently attended a special luncheon to congratulate CSAG on its progress so far. "I'm very proud of the work CSAG has done to address this critical issue. We must continue to look at the issue of how we make decisions to keep children safe and use the tools we have and how to provide more support to CSWs when making decisions."

SCSW Stephanie Harges, a member of CSAG, noted that the process was useful, but challenging. "I found the biggest challenge was attempting to resolve the issue at hand and at the same time trying to make realistic recommendations that can be implemented. We also faced the challenge of trying to not tremendously impact the existing workload of CSWs," she said. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS



BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS CONFERENCE: SPA 8

Wednesday, June 30, 2004 • 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
3 Civic Plaza, Carson
Information: (310) 972-3186

The Torrance and Lakewood offices will host this conference designed to establish collaborative relationships and strengthen services for DCFS clients. Service providers will be informed on how the Department operates and how to work together to achieve more effective outcomes.

ADOPTION SATURDAY

Saturday, July 31, 2004 • 8:30 a.m.
Edmund Edelman Children's Court,
Monterey Park
Information: (310) 972-3120

A special Saturday when DCFS and court staff donate their time to finalize hundreds of adoptions for Los Angeles County children in an effort to expedite the adoption process.

"RISING STARS" FUNDRAISER

Saturday, October 9, 2004 • 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
L.A. County South Coast Botanic Gardens
Information: (213) 351-5886

For the second year, The Teague Family Foundation teams with DCFS and the Norris Center to sponsor the "Rising Stars" fundraiser. This elegant evening event helps raise funds for the Celebration I graduation ceremony for emancipating youth and a youth performing arts program. The night will include dinner, live entertainment, live and silent auctions and a few surprises! Look for more information on L.A. Kids coming soon.

STRUCTURED DECISION MAKING CONFERENCE

Wednesday/Thursday, October 13 & 14, 2004
Queen Mary, Long Beach
Information: (608) 831-1180
www.nccd-crc.org/crcindex.htm

The sixth annual, national conference to discuss strengthening SDM implementation for improving outcomes. Workshops will be offered. Sponsored by The Children's Research Center and co-hosted by DCFS.

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