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Making Strides in Reducing the CARD List

In March 2007, DCF had 132 children ready for discharge from a psychiatric hospital setting. Children who are ready for discharge are listed on the Children Awaiting Resolution of Disposition (CARD) list, also known as Administratively Necessary Days (AND). While some refer to these children as being 'stuck,' they are waiting for an opening in an identified placement or for family work to progress so that their return home will be successful. There are many individuals, systems and providers who have embraced the goal to minimize the number of children who need to reach a resolution to their disposition plan.

The staff at DCF have recognized, addressed and sustained efforts to prioritize the attention towards the resolution of discharge planning for every child who is hospitalized. From day one of a hospital stay, DCF begins to formulate a plan (and an alternative plan) for the hospitalized child. These plans include the family, the hospital staff, and other involved parties.

With the guidance and collaborative work of facilities and the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP), the Department's Regional Mental Health Specialists have helped the Area Office staff when challenges to disposition plans arise. Sister agencies, such as the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Youth Services (DYS), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have collaborated under the guidance of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to address any barriers or challenges to an individual child's plan. This formal and pointed effort has resulted in 39 children awaiting discharge in March of 2009. This is the least number of DCF children awaiting resolution and disposition in the last 10 years – in 1992, it was 12.

Commissioner McClain wishes "Congratulations to everyone who has worked so tirelessly to achieve this amazing reduction!" [top]

Class of 2009: Largest Number of DCF Youth to Graduate

On Sunday, May 3rd, DCF and Jordan's Furniture celebrated youth graduates from the Class of 2009. The event was held at the Jordan's store in Reading and included a fun filled evening of dinner, games and desert culminating in an awards program to acknowledge the great achievements of these youth. Speakers at the event included: Angelo McClain, Commissioner, DCF; Eliot Tatelman, President, Jordan's Furniture; Richard Doria, Suffolk University Graduate; Alonzo Portlock, DCF Social Worker; and Timothy Lynch, Attorney.

To date, we have 601 confirmed youth who will be graduating this year:

- 27 youth with a Bachelors Degree
- 9 youth with Associates Degrees
- 21 youth with post-secondary vocational training certificates
- 440 youth with high school diplomas
- 104 with a GED

["We are proud of our graduating youth and all the people who encouraged and guided them through their journey to success. Faced with a struggling economy and job market, our youth have the benefit of knowing that they have the strength, resilience and determination to overcome challenges to achieve their goals. These recent accomplishments are just the beginning for them – new opportunities are waiting."](#)

– Maureen Messeder, DCF, Director of Adolescent Services

Congratulations to the Class of 2009! [\[top \]](#)

MA Interagency Leadership Forum Embarks on Restraint Prevention Initiative

DCF is very excited to announce that an interagency initiative to support efforts by congregate care providers to prevent the use of behavioral support procedures that can be re-traumatizing to youth, particularly restraint and seclusion, held it's kick off meeting on May 29th at the Hoagland-Pincus conference center in Shrewsbury. The forum brought together residential program senior managers and child advocates from across the state to discuss how state agencies and providers can collaborate in creating violence free environments of care and learning. DCF, DEEC, DESE and DYS co-hosted this event, with the financial and consultative support of Casey Family Programs. This first forum included an overview given by the Commissioners of each of the agencies about the importance of this work; presentations from a panel of providers that have already begun to transform their practices; data that reflects what we currently know about the use of physical restraint in Massachusetts;

and a presentation from DMH on their challenges and successes in supporting new practices in their secure residential settings over the last eight years.

The intent of this initiative is to provide technical assistance and support in a collaborative effort to advance alternative strategies for working with youth that bring a history of traumatic experiences to these treatment settings. Practice change in any institutional setting requires strong leadership behind the effort, and begins with an examination of the organization's culture and its readiness for change. For this reason, the initial phase of the work will engage the Chief Executives, Clinical Directors and Program Directors of the agencies. Training and other forms of assistance will be available to any provider that chooses to join with us in this endeavor over the coming years. [\[top \]](#)

Update on Chapter 257 and POS Reform

Chapter 257 places authority for the determination of Purchase of Service (POS) reimbursement rates with the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy (DHCFP) of the EOHHS. Currently, most of these rates are negotiated directly by DCF with the individual provider.

The Chapter 257 statute requires that, when setting rates, the Secretary of EOHHS take into account:

- Costs of existing or new governmental mandates
 - Changes in costs associated with the delivery of services
 - Geographical differences in costs of service delivery
- Chapter 257 specifies a four-year implementation plan, starting in SFY2010. EOHHS is working to integrate the implementation of Chapter 257 with POS Reform Principles. These principles include: fair wages for direct care workers; the development of Secretariat-wide Service Classes; standardized rate setting; the development of clear outcome and quality standards for contracts; and efforts to streamline and simplify POS contracting.

Many of the POS Reform principles are in accordance with DCF contracting practices, such as: the use of rate agreements; standardized rates; recognition of "fair" wages; and the use of performance requirements in contracts. However, the implementation of Chapter 257 and POS Reform principles will still have a substantial impact on DCF procurement and contracting practices. The Department is working closely with EOHHS and the DHCFP to implement Chapter 257, and will keep providers and stakeholders informed as this law is implemented. The initial impact of Chapter 257 will be experienced by DCF and our Intensive Foster Care (IFC) providers in October 2009 when rates for the DCF IFC program will be published as set and determined by DHCFP. [\[top \]](#)

DCF & EOEA Launch Grandparent's Commission



The Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren met for the first time on May 4th at the State House. The new members were sworn in during a brief ceremony, followed by their first meeting. Commissioner McClain and Interim Secretary Eleanor Shea-Delaney of Elder Affairs convened and facilitated the meeting.

This Commission was established by the Legislature as part of Chapter 176, the Act Protecting Children in the Commonwealth in 2008 and is composed of 11 members who will serve for two years. Its purpose will be to:

- Foster unity among grandparents raising grandchildren communities and organizations by promoting cooperation and sharing of information and encouraging collaboration and joint activities
- Serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups with regard to matters of unique interest and concern to grandparents raising grandchildren in the Commonwealth
- Assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect grandparents raising grandchildren
- Advise executive and legislative bodies of the potential effect of proposed legislation on grandparents raising grandchildren
- Investigate the merits of a state agency dedicated to grandparent's issues and determine how the agency would be set up
- Determine issues that are faced by relatives other than parents raising children

In 2008, the AARP reported that in Massachusetts there were 67,781 children living in grandparent-headed households, 19,721 children were living in households headed by other relatives, and 30,615 children were living with grandparents and other relatives without either parent present.



During 2008, the DCF Family Advisory Committee identified and met with 12 grandparents groups, a total of 122 grandparents, across the state to engage in open dialogue on their experiences as grandparents raising grandchildren. There was a constant unifying theme in all groups; substance abuse and mental illness were the factors that prompted grandparents to step in as parents for their grandchildren. All groups stated that their major concerns were lack of financial resources, not understanding the legal implications of raising grandchildren, and the emotional rollercoaster of protecting the grandchildren from their children, shifting the role from grandparent to parent, and fear of not being around to support their grandchildren into adulthood. The generation gap was also a concern to grandparents; they felt out of place among much younger parents, and the grandchildren felt different and teased for having much older parents.

The lack of information and where to get resources has been a major challenge for grandparents. Elder Affairs is currently compiling a resource guide for grandparents that should be ready soon.

The Commission will be meeting monthly, and the next meeting will be June 10th. Manuela DaCosta, DCF Family Representative is the DCF appointee to the Commission. [\[top \]](#)

Attleboro/Taunton Youth Participate in Poetry and Visual Arts Program

Through a program titled *Between the Lines*, funded by a grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, youth serviced by the Attleboro/Taunton DCF were given the opportunity to participate in an eight-week program to explore personal journeys of self-discovery at the Attleboro Arts Museum. Caroline Harvey, a Boston-based poet and healing arts professional, and Cristina Hajosy, a Boston-based visual artist, guided the participants through poetry and art-making workshops. The results are honest, moving and heart-felt.

The exhibit is currently on display at the Attleboro Museum of Arts. The DCF Attleboro Area office is currently in the process of trying to identify other locations for the exhibit including libraries, city/town halls, YMCA's and anywhere else interested in showcasing the work. The grant sponsor, Bank of America is also interested in displaying the work in their Boston office lobby. [[top](#)]



"If you could only have seen the faces on the participants as their work was exhibited in a museum. This was their time to shine. They were praised by the state representative and all interviewed by a local newspaper reporter. It is at events like this that we are reminded that these aren't foster children or state kids but just kids who are both courageous and resilient in light of their current circumstances."

– Marty Kenney, Area Director,
Taunton/Attleboro Area Office



Kids Can't Fly:

Warm Weather Heightens Need for Child Window Safety

As the weather gets warmer and families begin to open their windows, it is important to remember the following safety tips to prevent window falls:

- Lock all unopened windows and doors
- Keep furniture or anything a child can climb on away from windows
- Open windows from the top, not the bottom

- Install child safety window guards
- Be sure children are always supervised.

Please share these tips with your families. They can be found in the Department of Public Health's, 'Kids Can't Fly: Facts on Window Falls & Child Safety Window Guards' brochure. [[top](#)]

DCF May Celebrations



Top row: Statehouse Celebration in honor of National Foster Care Month (l – r) EOHHS Secretary JudyAnn Bigby; Rear Admiral Richard Gurnon, USMS, President of MA Maritime Academy and foster parent; Commissioner Angelo McClain and Steve Ryan, Area Director, Cape Cod Area Office; Layeforest Donald, Harbor Area Office Foster Parent Liaison.

Second row: Foster Parent Recognition Brunch, Framingham (l – r) Commissioner Angelo McClain with foster parent Mary Brown, 2009 Recipient of the Goldie Rogers Memorial Award; Vocal performers and DCF Youth, Chris Borelli, Breanna Hewson, and Jaci Casey; DCF Kids Fund Board Members and 2009 Commissioner's Community Leadership Award recipients.

Bottom row: City of Boston's Youth Pride Parade, participants included DCF staff and families; 2009 Youth Achievement Celebration at Jordan's Furniture (l – r) DCF youth Rose Hathaway and Kajon Pompey; DCF Outreach Worker, Francesca Rogato and Debbie Spano. [top]

Update on Strategic Plan and Model

The pre-implementation phase of our DCF Integrated Casework Practice model is progressing. This phase was established to ensure significant feedback from staff in the field as the Department finalizes the design of the model, practice guidance, and training that will be needed to support implementation.

The purpose of the pre-implementation phase is to:

- Provide preliminary basic guidance on each component of the model;
- Gather experiences and learning from a sample of ten cases per Area Office for each component of the model;
- Gather input on what additional specific practice guidance should be incorporated into the final policies and training materials;
- Identify IT needs and begin development to support implementation; and
- Incorporate the observations and learning gathered during pre-implementation into the final design, policies and training

As Area Offices have engaged in the pre-implementation activities, substantive input has been provided by Regional

Area Offices. Their observations and questions are helping to shape and to inform the final design. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee, the Statewide Implementation Team and Regional Facilitators have been meeting regularly to review and incorporate feedback from staff. Planning groups charged with the development of a Training and Coaching Plan and Area Office Readiness Assessments have also been working on preparing for the initial implementation.

The Steering Committee will be meeting on June 15th and 16th to finalize the design of the practice model, assess the status of IT development. The next phase of implementation (initial implementation) will begin July 1st, as each Area Office begins to ramp up their implementation of the final design of the model. This initial implementation phase will provide an opportunity for Areas to begin implementation of the DCF Integrated Casework Practice model in a thoughtful and planned approach over a three to four month period. Training and coaching opportunities are scheduled to begin the week of July 6th and will continue throughout the fall. [[top](#)]

A n n o u n c e m e n t s

DCF Office Moves

Our **Greenfield Area Office** is now co-located with the Department of Transitional Assistance's (DTA) office at:

- 143 Munson Street
Unit #4
Greenfield, MA 01301
Phone: 413-775-5000

Just a reminder that our **Taunton/Attleboro Office** is now located at:

- Mill River Place
1 Washington Street
Taunton, MA 02780
Phone: 508-821-7000

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Contact Information

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