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## Governor Patrick celebrates National Adoption Day

**S**even courthouses across the state joined Governor Patrick and the Middlesex Probate and Family Court in finalizing more than 200 adoptions of children from foster care as part of a statewide celebration of National Adoption Day on November 20th. The Middlesex Probate and Family Court, finalized 30 adoptions, and was the featured celebration site for the state.



This year marks the seventh celebration of the annual event in the Commonwealth, and brought the total number of children adopted on this day to more than 1,200. Every November, dozens of judges, attorneys, adoption agencies, adoption

professionals and child advocates volunteer their time to finalize adoptions and celebrate with families who adopt. This year 177



families adopted 211 children; some with disabilities and serious medical needs; sibling groups ranging in age from toddler to adolescents; and children from a different country of origin from their adoptive families. National Adoption Day began in Massachusetts in 2003 when 60 children were adopted.

Since then, the number of children has gradually increased to 177 children adopted in 2004; 186 children in 2005; 204 children in 2006; 228 children in 2007; 211 in 2008; and 211 children this year. [ [top](#) ]

## Jordan's Furniture hosts Special Event for Special Families



**In honor of National Adoption Month**, Jordan's Furniture in Avon hosted a special event for special families. This private, exclusive viewing of the 'Enchanted Village' was held as part of the Village's inaugural year at the store. This event was for foster and adoptive families to say 'thank you' for all that they do. The morning also included the Polar Express 4D 'The Ride' and the Holiday Laser Light Show Spectacular. [ top ]

## DCF testifies on Beacon Hill

The Legislative Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities announced in September that they would be scheduling oversight hearings on several EOHHS agencies that fall within their oversight. The hearing on DCF was scheduled for November 17th. The purpose of the hearing was for the Department to provide an overview of our work, including our progress in implementing the Act to Protect Children in the Care of the Commonwealth, Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2008; an overview of the Department's budget and resources; and to speak about current initiatives within the Department.

Commissioner McClain spoke to the work the agency, including the Integrated Casework Practice Model. Others who testified included members of SEIU, including Chapter President Zevorah Bagni, two youth; four family members; several community advocates; as well as hospital and legal representatives.

The Committee members expressed their support for DCF, and acknowledged the difficult challenges our workforce faces every day. The members of the Committee are committed to continuing their work with the Department, to learning more about the agency, and to advocating on our behalf with their colleagues in the Legislature. [ top ]

## DCF hosts Statewide Regional Forums

The first week of November began DCF's 3rd annual Statewide Regional Forums in the Central Region. Members from senior staff joined Commissioner McClain to discuss the FY'10 9c budget reductions and the Integrated Casework Practice Model (ICPM). The Regional Forums provide a valuable opportunity for dialogue and feedback from DCF staff, providers and other stakeholders. This year the schedule allows separate forums for staff, managers, providers and stakeholders and family members. This is the first time the Department has held a forum specifically for parents. At all three forums held to date, we found the parents to be engaged, responsive and full of a number of wonderful suggestions on how we can improve upon our work. The parents have praised DCF for its many strengths and positive approaches to working with families; they also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their views. We are hopeful that we will learn much more from our staff, stakeholders and family members as we travel across the state over the next three weeks.

If you're interested in learning about the FY'10 budget and the ICPM, please join us at one of the upcoming forums.

### Southeastern Regional Forum

When Friday, December 4, 2009

Where U-Mass Advanced Technology and Marketing Center  
151 Marine Street, Fall River, MA

Time Providers and Stakeholders 3:00 – 5:30 pm  
Families 5:30 – 7:30 pm

### Metro Regional Forum

When Friday, December 11, 2009

Where Arlington Public Safety Building  
Public Safety Community Room, 2nd floor  
112 Mystic Street, Arlington, MA 02476

Time Providers and Stakeholders 2:30 – 4:30 pm  
Families 6:00 – 7:30 pm

### Northeast Regional Forum

When Thursday, December 16, 2009

Where Northern Essex Community College  
College's Technology Center, Room 103B  
100 Elliott Street, Haverhill, MA

Time Providers and Stakeholders 3:00 – 4:30 pm  
Families 5:00 – 6:30 pm

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# 2009 Performance Recognition

## *The Commonwealth Citation Award for Outstanding Performance*

- **Area Administrative Managers, Northeast Region**  
David Foley  
Martha Gilford  
John Kasle  
Chris Marshall  
Teresa Proctor  
Marina Schell  
Kathy Vieira
- **The Claudina Team Brockton Area Office**  
Carminda Jiminez  
Patricia Phillips  
Antero Teixeira
- **Krista's Integrated Clinical/Legal Casework Team**  
Pittsfield Area Office,  
Pittsfield Regional Legal Office, and Central Office  
Alyson Baumgartner  
Carol Carlson-Shaw  
Barbara Cece  
Candice Lafleur  
Russ Livingston  
Lee-Anne Jacobs
- **Virginia Peel**  
General Counsel
- **Patricia Dal Ponte**  
Central Office
- **Tanjirene Smith**  
Central Office

## *The Commissioner's Award for Outstanding Performance*

### CENTRAL OFFICE

- **William Keegan**  
CORI Analyst

### BOSTON REGION

- **Gert Condon**  
Dimock Street  
Area Office
- **The Boston Region Area Resource Coordinators**  
Edward Callender  
Paul Lewis  
Anne Steiner  
Jim Sullivan

- **Backpacks for New Beginnings Co-Founders**  
Tristan and Jackson Kelley  
Hyde Park Area Office

### METRO REGION

- **Andrea Cosgrove**  
Cambridge Area Office
- **Karen Eldridge**  
Cambridge Area Office
- **The Coastal Office Assessment Unit**  
Melissa Coughlin  
Kristin Lindstrom  
Jean Macchi  
Colleen Pritoni  
Osvaldo Dos Reis  
Nancy Reynolds

### SOUTHEAST REGION

- **Joseph Rucker, Jr.**  
Brockton Area Office

### CENTRAL REGION

- **Franco Tarquinio**  
North Central Area Office

### NORTHEAST REGION

- **Denise Adams**  
Legal Office  
Northeast Regional  
Legal Office
- **The Lynn Teaming Unit/Adoption Unit: Triplet Case**  
Anilza Arias  
Lori Cassier  
Helen Chwalsiszewski  
Sue Diamantopoulos  
Tracy Gilmore  
Kim Wadsworth  
Caryn Willa

### WESTERN REGION

- **Susan Staskin**  
Pittsfield Area Office
- **Carol Root**  
Geenfield Area Office

## *Special Awards*

### THE LINDA SILVA AWARD

- **Coastal Hotline Staff**  
Ana Aguiar  
Carlos Amado  
Bree Antonelli  
Amanda Baker  
Robert Bullock  
Darline Cadet  
Judith Edwards  
Susan Etscovitz  
Susan Fearnley  
Tina Fowler  
Kristin Gerritsen  
Leslie Goines  
Lauren Kelton  
Damon Kelton  
William Kennedy  
Lisa Leite  
Frantzes Lys  
Jan Macchi  
Shannon Pierson  
Odvaldo Dos Reis  
James Torpey  
Marianne Walles  
Elise Woiszwillio  
Amy Wojdag

### THE CARING FOR KIDS AWARD

- **Kathleen Eccleston**  
Cape & Islands Area Office

### THE JERRY AWARD

- **Taunton/Attleboro Area Office Family Resource Unit**  
Pat Conley-Bert  
Loretta Shea  
Patricia Walker

### THE COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD

- **The Westwood Young Women's Club SEPAC**  
Westwood Chapter
- **Debra Hession of the LeClair/Ryan Law Firm**  
Hyde Park Area Office

Congratulations to the winners of this year's Performance Recognition Awards [ top ]



## Highlight on the use of “Structured Decision Making” Tools

One of the key elements of DCF's new Integrated Casework Practice Model (ICPM) is the use of the Safety and Danger, and Risk Assessment or Structured Decision Making Tools.

Empirical research and evaluation of other state efforts have demonstrated that the use of structured tools can help guide and support clinical decision-making to improve outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system. The Tools being implemented as part of the ICPM are intended to support but never replace clinical discretion.

The Safety and Danger, and Risk Assessment Tools are part of the STRUCTURED DECISION MAKING SYSTEM (SDM), which was developed by the Children’s Research Center (CRC) in 1998. CRC was established to help federal, state, and local child welfare agencies reduce child abuse and neglect by developing case management systems and conducting research that improves service delivery to children and families. Massachusetts first contracted with CRC in 2006 and "field tested" the tools in 2008, prior to implementation.

The goals of the SDM model are to:

- Reduce subsequent referrals.
- Reduce subsequent substantiations.
- Reduce subsequent injuries; and
- Reduce subsequent foster placement.

DCF decided to include the Tools in the ICPM in order to increase consistency and reliability in decision-making, and to help target resources to families at highest risk. The tools help to control for bias in work with families by using research based indicators of danger, safety and risk. Because they are automated through DCF’s iFamilyNet, they will also allow DCF to use case-level (but not family specific) data to inform decisions throughout the agency.

SDM is an evidence-based model and is being used in more than 16 states including, New York, Michigan, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and California. In Michigan, a 12 month – follow up study was done after their SDM implementation. The study revealed that Counties that used SDM had:

- 27% fewer new referrals;
- 54% fewer substantiated allegations;
- 40% fewer children removed to foster care; and
- 42% fewer child injuries that require medical attention.

Along with the other innovations currently being implemented under ICPM, DCF expects the Tools to help us more accurately understand level of risk, effectively focus resources and ultimately improve our efforts to strengthen families and keep children safe. [ [top](#) ]

## Park Street FELT Team Excels

The goal of the Park Street Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team is to increase engagement with all fathers and father figures. When fathers are involved with their children in a healthy, safe and consistent way, children benefit in strong and lasting ways. We are committed to engaging fathers on a consistent basis.

In the first year, FELT increased the number of fathers involved with the families they work with from 32% to 87%. This accomplishment highlights the work done to improve case practice around working with families.

The FELT Team is currently collaborating with South Bay Correctional Facility. They have recently

completed a series of trainings for the social work staff at the facility, and are now in the process of providing a quarterly training to the 360+ inmates on the importance of father’s involvement in the lives of their children. Their training curriculum includes a PowerPoint presentation, DCF 101, and the importance of father’s involvement and father’s engagement. To date, this training has been well received.

Team Members include: [Betty Nazaire](#), [Robert Bullock](#), [Laurie Roy](#), [Warren Ivy](#), [John O’Neil](#), [Kevin Barboza](#), [John Laing](#), [Damen Kelton](#), [Simiione Chandler](#), and [Elizabeth Terrill](#). [ [top](#) ]

# Letter to Editor

## Experience can shed light on myths

As a young social worker for the Department of Children and Families, I had no children of my own. At that time, I never really thought that my lack of parenting experience was a barrier to understanding parental issues. I was a compassionate person, I wanted to help and in my mind that was enough. I can remember telling parents the importance of being consistent 100% of the time. I remember one parent asked if I had children and my response was, "I don't have to be punched in the face to know that it hurts."

A few years later, my husband and I adopted our daughter. A beautiful 10 year-old with Down Syndrome and many, many behavioral challenges. It was a cold reality to face when I could not be 100% consistent.

I learned very quickly that walking away from her challenging behavior and not doling out a consequence every time saved my sanity. I remember shortly after she moved in with us looking at my husband and saying, "I need to go apologize to every parent that I have worked with."

The moral of this story is that simply being compassionate and wanting to help does not mean that you understand a person's situation. It takes being sensitive to differences and respecting the experiences of others.

- Cory, DCF Southeast Regional Social Worker and Adoptive Parent  
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## Announcements

### Congressional Coalition release Internship Application

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's (CCAI) Foster Youth Internship (FYI) Program is a competitive, highly esteemed congressional Internship for young adults who were in U.S. foster care at the time of their eighteenth birthday or who were adopted after their fourteenth birthday from the US foster care system. All applicants must be enrolled in college and have completed 4 semesters by May 29, 2010. The 2010 program will place 16 academically successful college students in the Washington, D.C. offices of Members of Congress. The dates for the 2010 Congressional Foster Youth Internship are set for May 29 – July 31, 2010. Applications must be completed by January 4, 2010. For an application, please visit: <http://www.ccaainstitute.org/how-we-do-it/apply-on-line-foster-youth-internship/>

### DCF issues updated Mandated Reporter and Parent's Guides

DCF has issued updated mandated reporter and parent guides. The mandated reporter guide incorporates changes made effective in the July 2008 Child Welfare Act Legislation. Additionally, the new guide reflects the Department's change in case practice and Child Protective Services (CPS) process. For a copy, please visit: [www.mass.gov/dcf](http://www.mass.gov/dcf) and click on 'Child Abuse and Neglect: An Overview.' Thank you to the Parent's Advisory Committee for providing valuable feedback on the development of the Parent's Guide. [ top ]

### DCF Budget Team acknowledged for TANF work

Congratulations to the Budget Team of:

- Ellen Finnegan
- Dave O'Callaghan
- Jack Curran
- Rob Scherer
- Virginia Peel

The group was nominated by Terry Dougherty, Assistant Secretary of Administration and Finance at EOHHS for their work as part of a statewide group who assisted EOHHS/DTA with meeting the goals of the Massachusetts State Plan for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Contingency Fund. [ top ]

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