

Dialogue

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Summer 2002

A newsletter for and about DCFS employees
George H. Ryan, Governor
Jess McDonald, Director

SACWIS



Goes Live!

■ Life on the Hotline

■ Child Protection
Reorganized

■ Kaleidoscope

Director's Message	3
Cover Story: SACWIS Goes Live	4
Life on the Hotline	8
Child Protection - Reorganized	11
Child Abuse Prevention Month Honorees	14
Tazewell Providing A Safe Environment	16
Spring Foster Parent Conference	18
New College Opportunities for Wards	19
Accentuating the Positive: Kaleidoscope, Inc.	20
Tom Finnegan Moving On	22

Credits

DIALOGUE is a publication of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Dialogue welcomes your comments, articles and contributions. Please send them to the Office of Communications: 406 E. Monroe, Springfield, Illinois 62701 • Phone: 217-785-1700 • Fax: 217-524-0014 • DCFS website: www.state.il.us/dcfs

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Illinois SACWIS a National Benchmark in Child Welfare

Dear Colleague:

In this issue's cover story, investigator Sherrye Hampton talks about "feeling overwhelmed" by the new technologies and terms she encountered as a Statewide Automated Child

While some other states already have Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) in operation, we are the first to build a web-based SACWIS that can be easily adapted to changing needs.

Welfare Information System (SACWIS) tester. I share her frustrations with computers. However, I also share her belief that SACWIS will prove to be "very rewarding" for workers in the field who are seeking more time with clients, greater access to information and a break from hav-

ing to fill out so many forms.

Last month's Phase I rollout of SACWIS for child protection staff is a benchmark in the child welfare profession. While some other states already have SACWIS in operation, we are the first to build a web-based system that can be easily adapted to changing needs. We are also the first to build a SACWIS to support Best Practice standards, instead of having to modify Best Practice standards around the limits of a computer system already in place. Our SACWIS is also special because DCFS workers in the field helped design and test the system they'd later use.

Will DCFS staff find SACWIS easy to use? Not at the beginning. Like Sherrye, Child Protection staff are reporting some delays, glitches and learning curves. However, with time, I also believe that workers will experience the long term "rewards" that Sherrye discovered. In the meantime, I ask for your patience, hard work and willingness to learn a new tool that can help both you and the families you serve.

In addition to acknowledging invaluable input from field service



Director Jess McDonald

workers throughout the Department, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the SACWIS team for its outstanding contribution to this effort. From the onset, Best Practice/SACWIS leader, Don Vacca, along with his top managers, Sam Traylor, Marilyn Arnold, and John House have worked tirelessly to make SACWIS a reality for the Department. Their commitment and dedication have been integral to the project's success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jess McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

SACWIS Goes Live

Child Protection workers get first taste of new information system

by John Hamm

Last month's rollout of the nation's first web-based Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) introduced DCFS Child Protection staff throughout Illinois to a broad range of new child welfare tools.

"It's a great system," beamed Springfield-based Child Protection Investigator Dorothy Rice. "There are so many bells and whistles built in, and there's so much information available. You can track all your work from start to finish." Acknowledging early frustrations with system glitches and a moderate learning curve, Rice credited training and onsite support provided by SACWIS "coaches" for making initial weeks of adjustment easier.

According to SACWIS Implementation Manager John House, the bumps DCFS staff encounter during the early months of Phase I implementation will lessen and become more tolerable as users gain experience with the system and realize the power they now have. "Initially, there's a ton of stuff to see and process," noted the former Investigator and Central Region Child Protection Manager. "But once they get comfortable with the system, they're going to be really amazed at what it can do. Now, for the first time, workers can turn on their computers and see a brand new desktop created just for them. They can see every case assigned to them, along with all the past information about those cases. Field staff are also getting reports they can read clearly, and we've eliminated a substantial number of forms."

Phase I of the Department's SACWIS implementation, which supports intake and investigation services, went live on May 20th. Intake begins with initial phone calls to the State Central Register (SCR) when callers express concerns about potential harm to children. Phase II implementation, which includes support for everything beyond intake and investigation, is expected to begin in mid-FY03.

"There are important reasons why the Hotline and our Child Protection workers were chosen to be the first in line to get this new technology," said Director McDonald. "They are the front door to DCFS services, and the information that workers collect in Phase I will become a foundation that other direct service workers will be able



The Best Practice/SACWIS Management Team headed up by Don Vacca (far right) includes SACWIS Project Manager Sam Traylor, Change Management Manager Marilyn Arnold and Implementation Manager John House.

SACWIS Goes Live

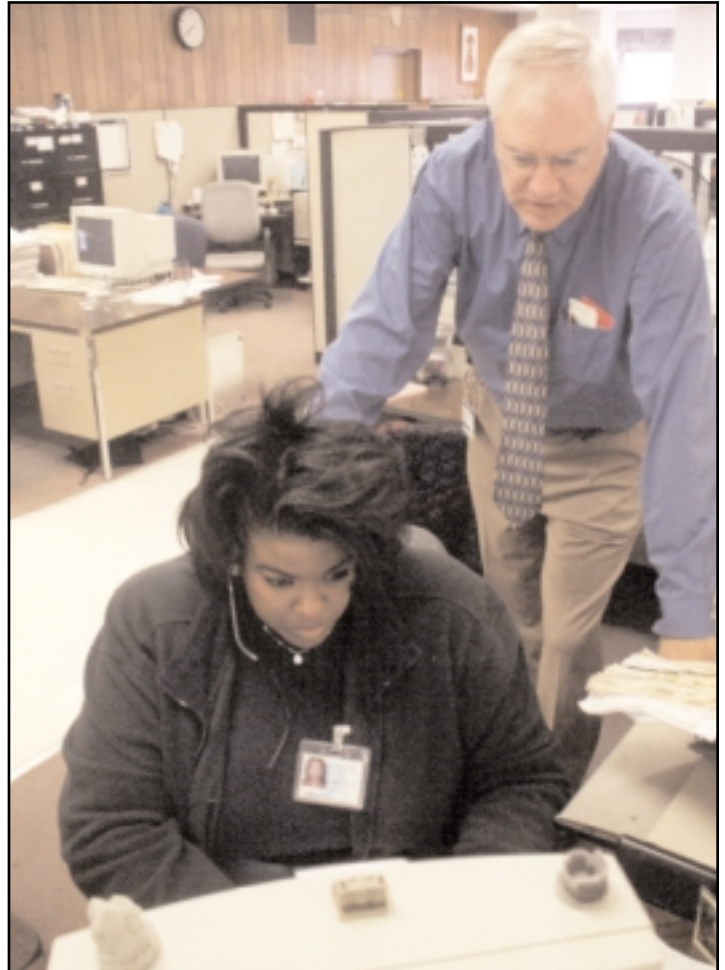
to access in Phase II.”

“More importantly,” added McDonald, “DCFS intentionally reversed the SACWIS-building process that other states have used. Instead of having to modify Best Practice standards around the limits of a SACWIS computer system already in place, we built a SACWIS to support Best Practice standards. This means that, from day one, our staff have a system built around a set of child welfare and protection practices that can guide them in making the right decisions for the children and families they serve.”

The Department’s intensive multi-year SACWIS project accompanies efforts in 45 other states that are either developing or using Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems. In 1993, Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to reimburse states for 50-75 percent of SACWIS development and implementation costs. The intent was to increase knowledge about those served and to provide for more efficient, economical and effective administration of child welfare and foster care programs throughout the nation. As SACWIS projects in individual states develop, researchers at state and national levels will be able to share data to help identify successful strategies in child welfare practice.

The Illinois SACWIS is expected to become a national leader in the collection and delivery of information to child welfare professionals. “Workers will be able to look up information for themselves, and it’s great to have all the information you need in one spot,” said Hotline Call Floor Worker Mary Kennedy-Moore, noting that investigators will no longer need to contact the Hotline or investigators from other offices who are conducting parallel investigations in the same case to retrieve documents they need. Everything will be accessible from a desktop computer.

“The biggest piece of SACWIS,” said House, “is that there’s a ton of information available at a worker’s fingertips that they now won’t have to call five or six places to get. And we’ve done this while at the same time eliminating a substantial number of forms and the duplicate entry of information. They’ll also be able to read the reports they get,” said House, instead of having to deci-



Implementation Manager John House guides Hotline Call Floor Worker Mary Kennedy-Moore through SACWIS checklists during the midnight shift’s initial experience with the “live” SACWIS information system.

pher handwritten “chicken scratches.”

Checklists, pull-down menus, and other SACWIS features will also ease data entry and ensure that no details are missed. “The beauty of the system,” said Kennedy-Moore, “is that it reminds you when there are errors or when something that is needed has been missed. At the Hotline, it catches problems in reports before we send them out to investigators in the field.” According to Sherrye Hampton, a Chicago-based lead child protection investigator, “The checklist tools help us keep on target and complete our work. You can also manipulate the data you enter and not have to worry about losing it, because

Continued on page 6

SACWIS Goes Live

Continued from page 5

the system makes sure that everything is saved. I've been telling people that it's very user-friendly."

However, the veteran DCFS investigator was not always excited about the technological prowess of SACWIS. Hampton was among a dozen field workers and supervisors invited to pretest SACWIS during the months preceding its May launch. "It was a real challenge for me, because I wasn't really into working with computers," remembered Hampton. "I was feeling overwhelmed, being 40 years-old and doing all this. One advantage, though, was that I already knew my job, so it helped me to better learn the Child Protection side of SACWIS. It all gradually started coming to me, then I got excited because I was learning something new. The testing was tedious, but turned out to be very rewarding for me."

"Phase I development has been in the works for nearly two years," added House, who noted that workers like Sherrye Hampton played a major role in adapting SACWIS to the real world work environment encountered by DCFS staff in the field. For example, SACWIS checklists and pull-down menus have been redesigned to better track paramours. Private agency staff will later be linked to SACWIS, as well.

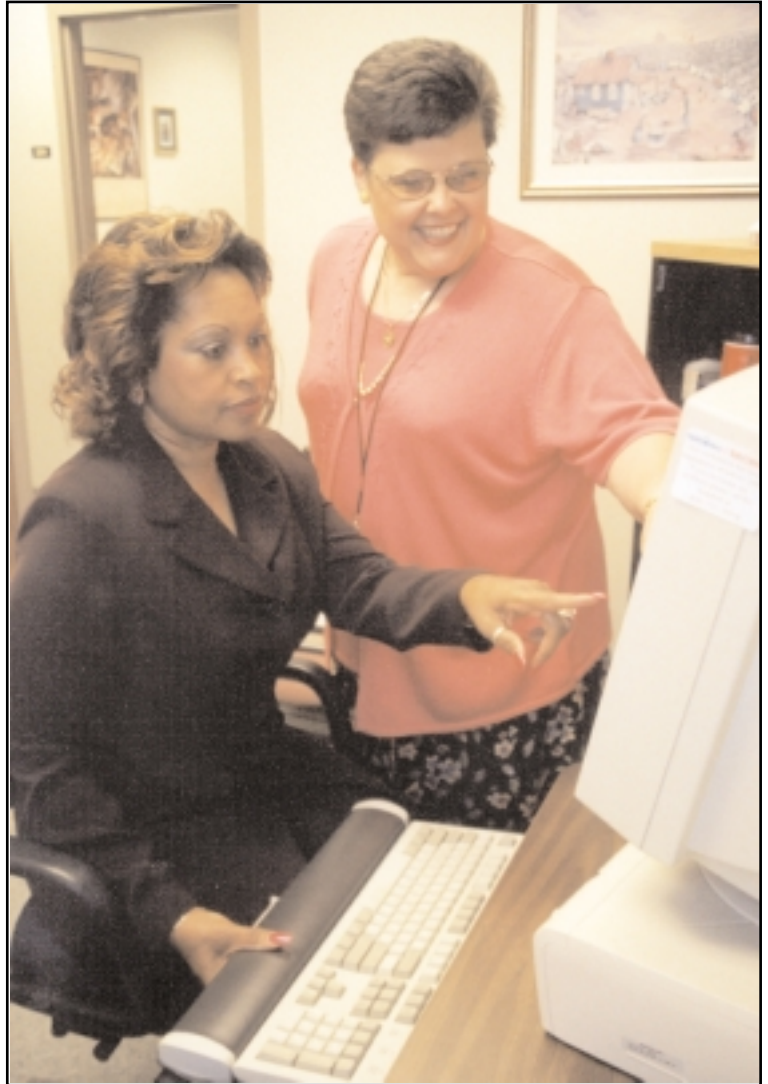
SACWIS will also benefit more people inside and outside of the Department. "Supervisors and managers will be able to see exactly what's going on in a case," said

House. "They can access more information, much faster and in a more readable manner, so they'll be able to concentrate more on the qualitative pieces of investigations, and there's far less of a chance that something will fall through the cracks."

"Clients who request case files will also be able to understand what they're reading, because printouts won't just read 'allegation 11,' but actually say 'cuts, welts and bruises.'

And workers won't have to waste time recreating records for courts, because they can give judges fresh documents with fresh information that also include past histories that may have been collected from three different counties that had been involved with the same family."

House added that SACWIS



Child Protection Investigator Dorothy Rice meets with Change Management Consultant Joanne Dedert, who served as a SACWIS coach at the Springfield Field Office during the early weeks of the May rollout of the web-based information system.

ensures that cases are treated equally. "It's really going to enforce uniformity throughout the State," said House, noting, in part, that SACWIS prompts workers if they fail to interview potential witnesses considered pivotal to a certain type of investigation.

Hampton, who has been an

SACWIS Goes Live

investigator at Cook North Region for nine years, agreed that “SACWIS helps to keep everybody on the same page and will help children be better protected.” Child Protection Investigator Dorothy Rice added that “SACWIS touches on 90 percent of everything I do as an investigator. It makes it easier for me to do assessments and makes information I need more accessible.”

“That’s why the May rollout has been so important,” said SACWIS



Sherrye Hampton, a Chicago-based lead child protection investigator, said of the SACWIS system, “The checklist tools help us keep on target and complete our work.

Change Management Manager Marilyn Arnold, who is responsible for the organization and development of SACWIS-related training and communication in the field. “SACWIS will free worker time, so they can engage more with clients. Their services to families will be enhanced, and their work efficiency will improve. They’ll really see the

How Will SACWIS Help Me Improve My Work?

SACWIS will:

- ✓ Make information more quickly and easily accessible
- ✓ Provide guidance regarding Best Practice expectations
- ✓ Reduce paperwork
- ✓ Aid in tracking information such as required contacts
- ✓ Eliminate the need to decipher handwriting
- ✓ Help supervisors track staff work
- ✓ Search for case notes
- ✓ Locate the most current CERAP and safety plan
- ✓ Allow CPSWs access to parallel files
- ✓ Eliminate duplicative documentation

DCFS
Department of Children and Family Services

impact of SACWIS as time goes on.”

Intake and Child Protection staff are still learning how to assimilate SACWIS - an admittedly complicated technology - into their daily work lives. Volumes of existing documents are still being hand-entered into the system, as well. However, Investigator Sherrye Hampton

believes that workers will quickly adapt. “I think they’re going to adjust well,” said Hampton. “We have many bright people in the field, and many of them are more versed in computers than I was. In the end, it will help us do more accurate, consistent work, and clients will get better service.”

Life On the Hotline

Inside “the nerve center
of child protection”

by John Hamm

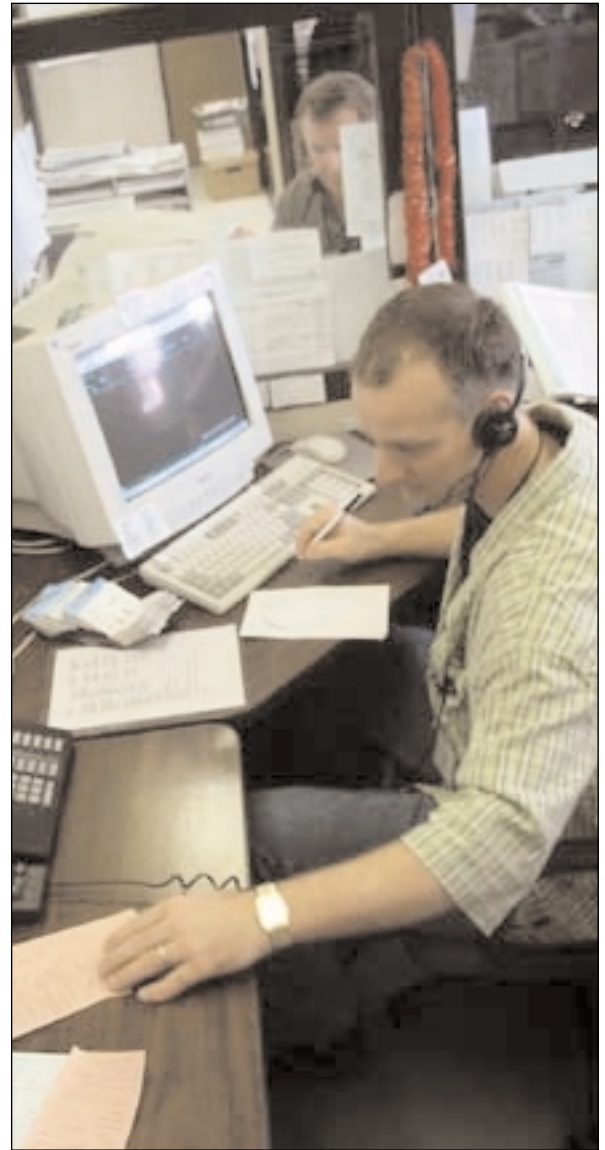
Quiet, omnipresent and largely hidden from the outside world, Illinois’ Child Abuse Hotline reflects the changing world of child protection. Established in 1980, the DCFS State Central Register (SCR) is among the nation’s oldest and busiest hotlines of its kind, sometimes handling in excess of a thousand phone calls a day. Called “the nerve center of child protection” by Director McDonald, who occasionally visits the call floor after late night meetings, the Springfield-based facility is both a hub of investigations and a benchmark of innovations in child welfare.

“As society changes, our roles change, too,” said SCR Administrator Linda Williams, who is preparing

her staff to take an early lead in implementing “Best Practice” measures that will eventually transform the entire Department. “When the Hotline started in 1980, there were only 12 Call Takers on staff. Their main function was simply taking and accessing reports. Now we have 69 Call Takers whose jobs include making referrals to outside resources, identifying sexually aggressive children and youth, handling notifications of runaways, and a number of additional tasks on top of their traditional roles,” said Williams. In April, the Hotline converted to a paperless report-taking system that will improve the quality, accessibility and

delivery times of information going to investigators in the field and management staff charged with oversight responsibilities.

“There’s more complexity in our work,” agreed Hotline Lead Worker Joyce Andresen, who also trains Call Floor Workers on changing procedures and technologies. “When I started at the Hotline in 1980, we worked in a basement without win-



Call Floor Worker Tom Stewart gathers information from a clerk concerning a possible child abuse report.

Child Abuse Hotline

dows. It was awful. The space was very small and there was a terrible odor. The work was much the same as now, though. There were computers and we screened calls, but now a worker has to absorb so much more information. There's also more interaction with other groups, such as referral agencies and the police. We also do parallel reports with agencies in other states because of the transient nature of some of our clients."

Anyone can call the Hotline (800-25-ABUSE), but the vast majority of reports are phoned in by doctors, teachers and other professionals mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

The good news is that trends reveal dramatic declines in child reports of abuse and neglect (from 139,720 child reports in FY95 to 100,421 child reports in FY01). The bad news is that the Hotline continues to receive nearly a third of a million phone calls annually. Fewer than 20 percent of these calls actually result in a report being taken at the Hotline.

Follow-up calls about investigations already underway and calls resulting in a referral for child welfare services were among the extra calls. "Unfortunately," added Andresen, "we're also sometimes used as a directory service for other

agencies because we have a toll-free number." Significant numbers of calls also involve requests for publications, students writing term papers, renters seeking help with payments and other inquires unrelated to child abuse or neglect.



Call Floor Worker Gail Mayer (left) consults with Lead Worker Joyce Andresen (right) at the hotline's supervisor's desk about a complex report recently taken.

Hotline schedules are structured around a predictable cycle of calls. "Calls vary by shifts and days of the week," said Call Floor Worker Tom Stewart, noting that the largest concentration of workers are scheduled to cover the crunch periods of early afternoons and evenings. He added that callers also vary by time.

"Calls are way up when school is in session. More school officials call during the day. There are more calls from hospitals and police in the evening, and we get a lot of calls Sunday evenings when visitations are over."

Williams explained that the Hotline's 69 workers are scattered throughout seven overlapping shifts to balance supply with demand. "A majority of staff are here on Wednesdays between 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.," when the most calls are received, said Williams.

A relatively new feature is the taping of calls for quality assurance. "Some people are afraid we can find out who they are," said Stewart about the year-old practice. "But we don't have caller ID, and I've only had one person say they didn't want to be taped." Stewart added that he has become used to having his calls monitored.

"Everything you do here is monitored from day one," he said, "so I figured as long as you do a good job of assessing a call, it doesn't matter. Overall, I think it's a pretty good feedback mechanism."

Accuracy is critically important. While call floor workers do not use a script, their phone interviews must focus on criteria required by law to be met before an investigation can begin, including the child's age, the alleged perpetrator's relationship to the victim and the surrounding circumstances. Failure to gather sufficient information could further

Continued on page 10

Child Abuse Hotline

Continued from page 9

endanger children at risk. Applicants wishing to become Call Floor Workers must have a college degree in social work or a related discipline, plus two years of field experience prior to arriving at the Hotline. Advanced positions, such as Lead Workers and Supervisors, require a Master's in Social Work. Applicants undergo 40 hours of specialized training, and a supervisor reviews all of their decisions during a six-month probationary period to ensure that children at risk are protected.

Stewart arrived at the Hotline in 1998, after working nearly three years in the field. As with many other veteran staff, he is also pursuing an MSW degree, which opens doors for further advancement.

"The difference between casework and call floor work is like night and day," said Stewart. "Caseworkers are the people on the front line. They have more stress. At the Hotline, I hear the bad cases but don't see them. My job is important for a different reason, though. I have to do a good job of assessing, because if you blow that, nobody will be able to protect the child. From what I've seen, the people at the Hotline usually have an easy, relaxed talking style, so it's easy for people who call to open up."

Once sufficient information is collected to initiate a report, the Call Taker performs needed child abuse and criminal background checks, and faxes the information to a local investigation team in the field. More than 99.6 percent of investigations begin within 24 hours, and often much sooner.

Williams noted that the Hotline introduces workers to a broader, but more indirect view of child protec-



SCR Administrator Linda Williams began her DCFS career as an investigator at the Springfield Field Office.

tion.

"Moving from the field was a good transition for me," said the former investigator and field office supervisor, "because I could still be involved with child protection. However, I found myself moving to a different type of stress. When you're a field supervisor, you're on call and have to make decisions based on what an investigator saw. I had to ask them the right questions. Here, there are established criteria to decide whether to take a report. Also, as a supervisor in the field, we only had a few child death investigations. When

I became Administrator for the Hotline, I was on call for all child deaths in Illinois. As Administrator, you're making decisions that affect the entire state."

Williams acknowledged that some miss the personal involvement found in the field, which is why careers often follow a revolving door between the Hotline and field assignments.

"Handling calls all day can be intense, and people who especially like to have in-person contacts with clients seem to have a little more difficulty transitioning to the Hotline," said the seven-year veteran administrator. "When you're restricted to a telephone, you don't see the end result of what you do. When I came to DCFS, the Hotline was considered the doorway into the Department. Now many workers follow more of a rotation between the Hotline and investigations in the field."

Despite feelings of being removed from the action, the monotony of repeated calls and "stressing" whether intricate assessments came to the right conclusion, Call Floor Workers regard themselves as part of an elite group of professionals asked to perform a difficult mission. Sitting in cubicles within sight of the Capitol dome, the staff maintain an often frenzied pace in an attempt to keep up with call volumes.

How can a person gather enough information in a five-minute phone conversation to make a potential life-or-death decision whether to initiate the report, then repeat the process dozens of times a day? Answers vary, but follow a common theme. "I've stayed because this is my profession," said Andresen. "I like helping people and protecting kids." ●

Child Protection Reorganized

Changes aimed at improving speed of aid to families

by Marjorie Newman

The Department is expected to complete a major reorganization of its Child Protection services by the Fall of 2002. Most changes will focus on speeding delivery of services to families involved in investigations by forming Child Protection investigators and intake workers into teams that work together from the early stages of an investigation. The Southern Region and half of the Central Region are currently working under this “Paired Team” model, while the remaining portion of Central Region and the Northern Region will complete their transition this Summer. Reorganization within the Cook Regions was instituted as far back as 1997.

“Components of Child Protection were disconnected from the field,” said Child Protection Deputy Director John Goad, commenting on why dramatic restructuring at the field level was implemented. “We have a lot of programs across the state that benefit the families we serve, but Child Protection workers couldn’t always make referrals for these programs. The problem was there was no input from the field as to which programs worked best to meet an individual family’s needs.”

The first step in overcoming that hurdle, Goad said, was the creation of specialized teams. In the Department’s Paired Team model, Child Protection



Child Protection Deputy Director
John Goad

investigators and intact child welfare specialists are included in teams working for the same supervisor. After child abuse or neglect reports are taken by the DCFS Hotline, they will be assigned to a Paired Team. However, because of their complexity and serious nature, reports involving serious physical injury or sexual abuse will continue to be investigated by specialized investigators, with the involvement of law enforcement, and with Child Advocacy Centers in locations where the Centers exist.

“Paired Teams avoid problems associated with case handoffs from one unit to another and ensure quicker decisions regarding permanency,” continued Goad. “It also gives staff better access to resources around the state.”

“In the Southern Region, this model has facilitated a quicker service assignment and the safety of children is monitored better,” said Downstate Child Protection Associate Deputy Director Kathy Roman. “We are look-

Continued on page 12

Child Protection Reorganized

Continued from page 11

ing at fewer oral reports, reductions in the number of children coming into care and families who have an increased comprehension of our involvement.”

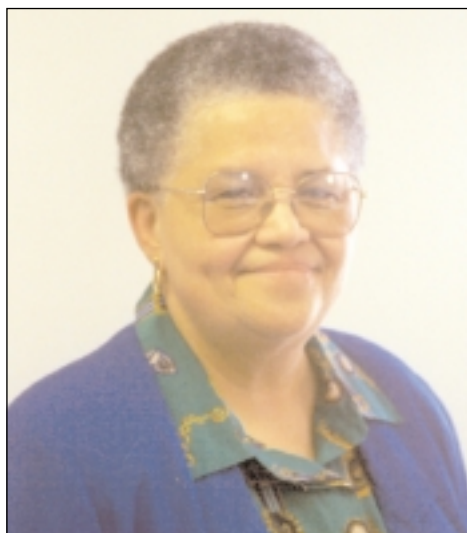
Paired Team assignments didn't require staff to be moved to new locations. It did, however, require

The second step in reorganizing the Division of Child Protection involved reassigning duties for three associate deputies who would focus on specific aspects of Child Protection. Associate Deputy Director of Community Services Carol St. Amant will focus on the external environment that supports

Division's Central Office staff who coordinate and monitor the regional Child Death review teams who, by state law, are charged with reviewing cases of child fatalities and making recommendations to the director of the Department based on those reviews with an aim toward child fatality prevention.



Associate Deputy Director of Cook County Mary Ellen Eads



Associate Deputy Director of Community Services Carol St. Amant



Downstate Child Protection Associate Deputy Director Kathy Roman

supervisors to be retrained and learn about investigations and follow-up services, and some staff within the same office were transferred to different teams. Changes implemented so far have been showing a positive impact. There were 22,999 reports taken in FY97. Of those taken, 9,934 reports were “indicated,” meaning that credible evidence of abuse or neglect was found. By FY01, 18,132 reports were taken and only 6,586 reports were indicated. Also, there were 6,485 protective custodies taken in FY97, but the number had decreased to 5,163 by FY01.

the Division's direct service work. This includes overseeing the Division's Central Office staff who monitor federal government and state grants administered by the Department; Central Office staff who assist in the development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of state funded Child Advocacy Centers and their staff who facilitate the development of Child Advocacy protocols to ensure a victim sensitive and multi-disciplinary approach to the investigation of child sexual abuse (mandatory) and serious physical abuse (discretionary); and the

Associate Deputy Director Mary Ellen Eads will oversee Child Protection activities in the Cook County regions and Kathy Roman will oversee the child protection functions in the three downstate regions. Even though child protection staff are a part of the regional structure, Roman will have line authority in the decision-making of child protective functions and actions as well as employee actions.

“It is through this joint process of administration, the Department will be consistent across the regions versus independent regions,” explained

Child Protection Reorganized

Roman. "Through the close working relationships with Carol and Mary Ellen, we will strengthen the whole child protection organizational structure as one, while allowing for the individual geographical and cultural differences."

"Overall," she continued, "staff feel this is beneficial to the families. Of course there are some people who are afraid of change, but now they are seeing and understanding what each person does and how we can all work together more effectively."

Although the structure for Cook County is a little different, it still has produced favorable outcomes. "In 1997,

"One thing you want to do in a good child protection system is to reduce indicated reports and the number of children coming into care. ...The Department continues to accomplish this goal." - Associate Deputy Director Mary Ellen Eads

we combined the intact service unit with the investigative unit and placed it under Child Protection," explained Eads. "It makes is easier to develop systems and work with private agencies when the workers are functioning under one manager who is in charge of child protection and permanency issues."

"I think the numbers show significant reductions," said Eads, adding "there's been a reduction in oral reports and in the number of children coming into care in Cook County, too."

In FY97, there were 8,591 subsequent oral reports taken in Cook County and 4,217 were indicated. But by FY01, the number of oral reports taken dropped to 5,932, of which 2,242 were indicated. Cook County also witnessed a decline in the number of protective custodies taken as a result of the newly structured Child Protection system. In FY97, when Cook County was changing the way they handle investigations, 3,354 protective custodies were taken. But after implementing the new system, protective custodies decreased to 2,518.

The current structure for the Cook County region is paired at the administrative level rather than at the team level. Intact and investigative teams, although separate, report to the same manager. The manager reports to one of three regional administrators (Cook North, Central, South), who each report to Eads. If, however, the case results in a child being placed, the case is transferred from a protective worker to a permanency worker on another team.

Both systems have allowed the Department to:

- Better engage families in the service process
- Assess family strengths, weaknesses and risk to their children
- Detect any deterioration of the family situation, which may threaten the children's safety

"One thing you want to do in a good child protection system is to reduce indicated reports and the number of children coming into care," said Eads. "The Department continues to accomplish this goal."

Roman agrees that "having Paired Teams and the divisional oversight, we are bringing the state together with consistency through one practice ... and that is 'Best Practice'." ●

SAVE THESE DATES

North American Council on Adoptable Children
Conference
Hyatt O'Hare, Schaumburg
August 1-4, 2002

Illinois State Fair
Springfield
August 9-18, 2002

Prevent Child Abuse Conference
Radisson Hotel O'Hare, Des Plaines
October 8-9, 2002

Child Abuse Prevention Honorees

In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, DCFS and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA-IL) joined forces in March to kick-off their annual awards presentation and educational campaign at the State Capital rotunda. The event, entitled “Teaming Up to Keep Kids...Safe at Home,” not only raised awareness of statewide Child Abuse Prevention Month activities, but also served as a platform to honor six community programs for their outstanding work to prevent child abuse.

PARENTS PLUS PARTNERS, PALOS HILLS

PCA-IL Executive Director Roy Harley, Parents Plus Partners Parent Educators Karen Turner and Patricia Avila, Senior Social Worker Priscilla Rian, Program Director Karen Allen, Deputy Director John Goad



MOMS - VANDALIA

PCA-IL Executive Director Roy Harley, MOMs Coordinator Pat Garbe, Coordinator Joan Henna, Family Counseling Supervisor Mavis Gehant, Deputy Director John Goad



CHILD MALTREATMENT AWARENESS CHICAGO

PCA-IL Executive Director Roy Harley, Dr. Susan Fuchs, Social Worker Lisa Froemel, Social Worker Dana Wiltek, Director of Child Advocacy Jim Harisiades, Deputy Director John Goad

Child Abuse Prevention Month Kickoff

DCFS Deputy Director John Goad and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA-IL) Executive Director Roy Harley gave awards to programs that showed excellence in preventing child abuse, and improving the well-being of children and families.

DCFS Deputy Director John Goad opens the Capitol rotunda ceremony, as Prevention First Executive Director Karel Ares, PCA-IL Programs Director Mary Salisbury and Executive Director Roy Harley await their turns to speak.



YOUTH STRENGTH PEORIA

PCA-IL Executive Director Roy Harley, Youth Strength Educators Katie Ross-Tanavic, Kristine Law, Rich Stroud and Kevin Nowlan, Deputy Director John Goad

KISHWAUKEE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM - DEKALB

PCA-IL Executive Director Roy Harley, Representative David A. Wirsing, PCA-IL Child Abuse Prevention Coordinator Peggy Carey, Kishwaukee Education Consortium Assistant Special Needs Coordinator Donna Larson, Deputy Director John Goad



Tazewell Providing a Safe Environment

Non-for-profit organization providing a variety of services for children

by Elizabeth Calhoun

Since 1987, Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) have been developing throughout the state to assist abused and neglected children. These centers help coordinate agencies involved in investigating reports of child abuse, especially allegations involving child sexual abuse. CACs provide a child-friendly location where teams of DCFS child protection workers, law enforcement officers, state's attorneys and doctors can interview abused children and work with victims and their non-offending family members to find help and treatment. The Tazewell County Children's Advocacy Center is one of 31 CACs



The Tazewell County Children's Advocacy Center is one of 31 CACs in Illinois. To date, the Tazewell County CAC has served more than 300 children and families.

in Illinois.

CACs provide a safe environment in which children can talk about the abuse they may have experienced. Children who have not been abused benefit, too, because they are

interviewed in a neutral and non-threatening way. Since its establishment in 1999, the Tazewell County CAC has successfully served several hundred children who have been involved in abuse situations. Its pro-

Tazewell Providing a Safe Environment

grams include coordinated interviewing, family support, crisis counseling, individual child therapy and prevention education programs for children.

Working with an advisory board that consists of the Tazewell County State's Attorney, the County Sheriff, police detectives, DCFS investigators and mental health counselors, the Tazewell County CAC has been able to deliver a variety of services to children who reach its doors. This is a not-for-profit organization that is funded by several grants, fundraisers, and public and private donations. Much of the grant money supporting the Tazewell County CAC comes from DCFS, the Office of the Attorney General, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and the National Children's Alliance.

"We have received a lot of support for this Center," said Executive Director Mary Zumwalt, noting that "We wouldn't be doing this work without the support of DCFS. We're happy to work with them. They have been doing a great job."

To date, the Tazewell County CAC has served more than 300 children and families, including 152 cases during the last calendar year. The Center has also opened a satellite center in Woodford County, which is a mini-center serving children in that County with coordinated interview-

ing and follow-up advocacy services.

The Center has achieved these accomplishments with only a small staff of three dedicated individuals: Executive Director Mary Zumwalt, Prevention Educator Catherine Guebert and Case Manager Jill Hayes.

"We wouldn't be doing this work without the support of DCFS. We're happy to work with them. They have been doing a great job." - Executive Director Mary Zumwalt

Noting the importance of strong interagency cooperation, Zumwalt gave special recognition to staff at the DCFS Pekin Field Office. "The Pekin Field Office doesn't get the credit they deserve; they've been a big help to us," said Zumwalt.

The staff at the Tazewell County CAC are especially proud of the Center's Prevention Education Program. This Program was established when the Center was given a

special grant by the National Children's Alliance. The Prevention Education Program, which emphasizes body safety for children, has been presented in 42 schools, pre-schools and day care facilities. More than 2,700 children have been given a "Better Safe Than Sorry" presentation, which teaches how to say "no", and informs children of the differences between good and bad touches by using terms such as 'red light' and 'green light touches'. "The program has been very well received in the schools," stated Guebert, adding that "DCFS helps us get the message out to teachers about how they can be better mandated reporters. We give a presentation on mandated reporters to the school's staff when we do the program, and because of that more school personnel have called in reports to the DCFS Hotline."

Although the Tazewell County CAC is a relatively new and small establishment, it has been serving a much-needed purpose, providing Tazewell County child victims and their families support and prevention services for child sexual and physical abuse. It plays an important and positive role in assuring child safety and helping children recover from abuse.

For more information about the Tazewell County CAC, or to schedule a presentation for its services, email the Center at cac@mtco.com. 📧

Spring Conference Attracts 500 Foster and Adoptive Parents

More than 500 foster and adoptive parents met with DCFS and POS staff at the 12th Annual Spring Foster and Adoptive Parent Conference, sponsored by DCFS and the Illinois Foster Parent Association. Held at Springfield's Crowne Plaza Hotel, the March 8-9 event featured a compelling slate of speakers and 27 cutting-edge workshops devoted to attachment

Keynote speaker Dr. Thomas Phelan, a nationally-recognized expert on Attention Deficit Disorder, was among 35 notable speakers who shared recent advances in disciplines ranging from psychotropic drug administration to tax law for foster parents.

Director McDonald met with the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council in a pre-conference gathering to outline issues related to the state's budget crunch, and opened the conference with an informal talk about the importance for attendees to remember the reasons they opened their homes to foster and adoptive children. He went on to address attendee concerns about staffing and funding, assuring that resources will be there to continue the progress that the Department has made. McDonald added that while financial pressures may mean tougher times ahead, the experience can help strengthen bonds among the people who are working to protect children and strengthen families. Other featured speakers included DCFS Deputy Director Jane Elmore, Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council Chairperson Patricia Cooper and Child Care Association Director of Marketing Linda Lenzini.

This year's conference was among the most successful yet, but planning a conference of this caliber is no easy feat. The Division of Foster Care and Permanency Services served as the interface between foster parents and the Department and led in the program development. The Division of Training coordinated logistics for the conference. Special thanks go out to the following for their extra efforts: Director McDonald; Jane Elmore, Deputy Director, Division of Foster Care and Permanency Services; Bernadette McCarthy, Deputy Director, Division of Training; DCFS conference staff; the Conference Planning Committee; the Hospitality Team; and, keynote speaker Dr. Thomas Phelan. ●



More than 500 foster and adoptive parents filled the Crowne Plaza Hotel's main ballroom during opening ceremonies.

disorders, recruiting and retaining families for African American children, meeting the needs of children with disabilities and other topics hand-picked by a steering committee of foster parents. Attendees also had an opportunity to network during meals, at exhibit booths and during the popular IFPA Scholarship auction.

Entitled, "Every Child Is a Success Story," the two-day conference focused on skills, strategies and attitudes that encourage foster and adopted children to succeed.

New College Opportunities for Wards

A new Interagency Agreement between DCFS and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) will enable more youth in DCFS care to obtain a college education. Under the agreement, DCFS will pay up to four semesters of public community college tuition for eligible wards. The Interagency Agreement will be managed by the DCFS Division of Education and Transition Services (DETS), which will make decisions about tuition requests and will monitor wards in community colleges to ensure appropriate services are being provided.

Under the agreement, wards requesting tuition payment are asked to complete a CFS 407-3, Tuition Payment Request Form, and obtain documentation of their ward status from their caseworker. The documents can then be submitted to DETS for a decision and they will notify both the community college the ward wants to attend and the ICCB of its decision. When a request is approved, ICCB will pay tuition costs to the community col-

lege from the pool of DCFS funds.

The ICCB will also encourage community colleges to provide other support services to ensure a successful educational experience for wards who are students.

These services may include career selection, financial aid advising, placement services and tutoring. Each community college will also be asked to designate a person to assist DCFS students to reach their educational and employment goals. Additionally, community colleges will help wards complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms.

It is very important that caseworkers and caregivers are aware of this agreement and the opportunities it provides. When a ward is planning to attend a public community college, the caseworker and caregiver should collaborate to ensure that the ward completes the CFS 407-3 to request tuition payments. Copies of the CFS 407-3 can be obtained from local DCFS and private agency offices. Please contact the DETS Statewide Education Coordinator at (217) 524-2030 with questions related to the Interagency Agreement. ●



Accentuating the Positive: Kaleidoscope, Inc.



Executive Director Karl W. Dennis and a child enjoy fishing during an Agency outing.

by Kim Broome

Kaleidoscope, Inc. has been reaching out to difficult-to-place foster children since its 1973 inception. Licensed through DCFS, the Agency primarily serves children with emotional, mental or physical disabilities, particularly children who have been identified as Severely Emotionally Disturbed. Kaleidoscope refers to their clients as “emotionally unique” or “emotionally challenged,” so the children can be recognized for both their needs and strengths.

Many of Kaleidoscope’s clients have experienced years of rejection and frustration by the time they reach the Agency. Staff members work tirelessly to help clients overcome these issues, taking on the outlook that the only difference between staff and clients is the set of life circumstances each has experienced.

“We realize that the difference between us and the client is not that great,” said Executive Director Karl W.

Dennis. “We choose to approach our work from a humanistic perspective, rather than becoming preoccupied with clinical interpretation.”

The Agency’s mission is to reach out to children who are most in need, particularly those who have been left behind, ignored, missed or intentionally rejected.

For many youth, Kaleidoscope offers the only alternative to institutionalization. Therefore, services are designed to build on the strengths of each child or family to provide the least restrictive placement possible.

In today’s climate, fewer children are being placed in residential facilities. However, Kaleidoscope has advocated for years to serve children and families in their own communities, believing that it is the most normalized environment of care. All of the Agency’s services are community-based with the preferred environments being in-home family care.

Accentuating the Positive

“The fewer number of children going into residential care presents a wonderful opportunity to develop more community-based services in Illinois,” said Dennis.

Although the term “wraparound” has been used by DCFS in recent years to describe Illinois’ goal of integrating children into the community by combining services from various agencies to meet the individual needs of children and families, Kaleidoscope is known as the first wraparound agency in the country to apply this service method.

Kaleidoscope has always believed in wrapping people and supports—instead of walls—around children and families. Kaleidoscope uses wraparound services developed or approved by an interdisciplinary services team. These services are community-based, family focused, cost effective and unconditional. This method ensures that the delivery of services is coordinated and highly customized.

“Kaleidoscope has been a long-standing and productive partner with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for almost 30 years,” said Dr. Renard Jackson, Deputy Director of DCFS’ Purchase of Service Monitoring Division. “Through the leadership and guidance of Executive Director Karl W. Dennis, Kaleidoscope has established credibility, and provided compassion and protective care to the wards of the state of Illinois.”

Services are based on the assets of the people the Agency serves.

Areas of Treatment

Three basic service treatment areas include:

- Therapeutic Foster Family Care Programs (40%) - Includes three Therapeutic Foster Family Homes: 1) The Adolescent Parents Program, which provides professional foster care for state wards who are pregnant or parents, as well as for their babies; 2) The STAR Program, which secures professional foster parents and state-of-the-art health care for HIV-exposed babies; and, 3) Intensive Treatment Program for children who are dually-diagnosed and would otherwise be living in an institutional setting.
- Youth Development Independent Living Program (30%) - Helps youth who are able to learn to live on their own. Kaleidoscope’s Youth Workers focus on enhancing client’s job-seeking and retention skills, developing jobs, enrolling youth in basic education classes, teaching independent living skills such as maintaining an apartment and budgeting, and helping youth overcome behavioral problems.
- Satellite Family Outreach Program (30%) - Historically, Satellite worked to unite children in residential treatment or foster care with their biological or extended families, and strove to prevent the unnecessary separation of children and families. Today, Satellite has an intensive treatment service contract and works with other foster care providers to stabilize placements that are on the verge of disruption. It is one of the oldest and largest intensive, long-term family preservation services in the U.S. and is widely recognized as the model for working families who have serious emotional challenges.

While Kaleidoscope looks after its clients’ needs, planning is based on building upon the strength of the people they serve.

A child’s initial assessment at Kaleidoscope includes a search for any positive character attributes and talents that can act as a springboard to help the child thrive. These interests, such as art and music, can be

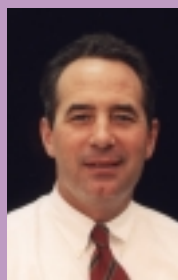
used as communication tools. Another important feature is that the services are culturally-competent, ensuring that each child is comfortable in his/her surroundings.

Each child and family has an individualized service plan tailored to meet their specific needs. Services also allow a certain amount of flexi-

Continued on page 22

Tom Finnegan Moving On

In late May, DCFS Operations Chief of Staff Tom Finnegan accepted the position of Executive Director of Kaleidoscope, Inc., replacing Karl W. Dennis, who retired after 27 years of service.



Finnegan

After joining DCFS in 1989, Finnegan worked in a variety of assignments, including Regional Administrator of Cook County, Administrator of the Office of Litigation Management, Special Assistant to the Deputy Director of Bureau of Services to Children and Families, Special Assistant to the Director, and Children's Program Analyst. Much of his attention during these years focused on managing, implementing and negotiating consent decrees and lawsuits.

In 1993, Finnegan left the Department to pursue outside career opportunities, then returned in 1998 as the Department's Operations Chief of Staff, where he was responsible for the conceptual design, planning and implementation of the DCFS system of care for Seriously Emotionally-Disturbed children and youth. Finnegan's child welfare career also includes the holding of key positions at Mercy Home for Boys and Girls and Uhlich Children's Home. Finnegan has both a M.S.W. degree and a B.A. degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Illinois-Chicago.

During his farewell remarks to Finnegan, Director McDonald noted that "Tom's leadership, commitment and dedication to the children and families of Illinois serve as an example to all of us in the field of child welfare..."

Accentuating the Positive

Continued from page 21

Kaleidoscope's treatment provides an array of care, so that children can easily move from one treatment environment to another as their needs and circumstances change. The Agency seeks to provide each child with as much service support needed at any given time.

The uniqueness of Kaleidoscope's services is its commitment to unconditional care for the most challenging of children and families. That philosophy has meant that during the Agency's history, it has never rejected anyone because of previous behavior, nor have they ejected anyone because of current issues. The Agency has no admission criteria, thus allowing DCFS and other referring agencies to prioritize those children and families who are most in need.

Kaleidoscope believes children need loving care, regardless of their behavior, and that rejecting them from care for misbehavior only worsens their condition and our society's burden. If it is determined that services are not working for a particular

individual, Kaleidoscope staff will switch gears and readjust the services as often as necessary until they find a formula that works for that child. Staff members also believe that it is their obligation as professionals to find the right mix of care, rather than expect a child or family to fit into a set of predetermined services.

In the late 1970s, this strategy was put to the test when a troubled client who had previously been kicked out of 16 placements before coming to Kaleidoscope, set fire to the Agency's office. Dennis concluded that what the boy had done was no more hostile or criminal than what adults had done to him for years by failing to provide him a stable home. True to its philosophy, Kaleidoscope did not dismiss the boy from the Agency's care. Treatment strategies were readjusted, which uncovered feelings of anger and abandonment stemming from the death of a beloved foster mother who had died suddenly in an accident. Today, that same young man runs a group home for troubled youth.

Accentuating the Positive

“So often, adults are quick to point out all the things kids do that are wrong,” said Dennis. “When people assess and document a child’s behavior, they should use as much space to reflect on the positive as they do for the negative.”

The Agency utilizes a two-prong care philosophy:

- Normalization - Children can best learn to become normal, competent adults if they live and learn in the least restrictive, most normal environment possible—a family, neighborhood or community—not an institution.
- Unconditional Care - Children have the right to parental care – even children who are state wards or who do not have parents to care for them. Families are recreated when necessary. Kaleidoscope’s policy is to never give up on children or families.

Individual services are based on specific needs of the child and/or family and not on a particular intervention model. Services provided by Kaleidoscope are both traditional (therapy, foster care, etc.) and non-traditional (hiring a special friend, bringing staff to live in a family

home, special recreational services, etc.).

Traditional services are accessed only when they can be tailored to the specific needs of the child and family.

Kaleidoscope’s ultimate goal is to bring each child back into the family and into the community fold. Each participant presents a unique challenge and as such, the methods for achieving success must be equally creative and individualized.

After nearly 30 years of service, Kaleidoscope continues to pioneer nationally-acclaimed programs in the areas of wraparound services, therapeutic treatment foster care, intensive in-home services and pediatric AIDS treatment.

This commitment has earned Kaleidoscope many honors over the years, including being named one of the country’s top five child serving agencies by the prestigious Chesapeake Institute in Washington, DC.

“The key to our success,” concluded Dennis, “has been treating each child as an individual, utilizing a strategy that incorporates family in the decision-making process.” ●



It’s in the Bag

Andrea Flitz, age five, draws winning names from a March of Dimes raffle bag in the lobby of the Department’s Springfield headquarters. Springfield DCFS staff donated more than \$3,400 to the March of Dimes Walk America campaign during a series of fundraisers held last April. Flitz is the granddaughter of DCFS Data Process Specialist Judy Moss and a former Ambassador Child for the March of Dimes.

Info You Need to Know

DCFS Emergency Action Steps

In DCFS Offices and Facilities

FIRE

1. Protect children and clients
2. Call local authorities, such as police and fire station
3. If disturbance is inside, select one person as leader
4. If disturbance is outside, lock doors and windows if possible

TORNADO

1. Move to the pre-designated safe area. Avoid windows, exterior walls, fire escapes, and large rooms
2. Assure client safety, children in particular
3. Notify authorities
4. Stay tuned to a portable radio station for details

VIOLENCE

1. Protect children and clients
2. Call local authorities, such as police and fire station
3. If disturbance is inside, select one person as leader
4. If disturbance is outside, lock doors and windows if possible

BOMB THREAT

1. Attempt to solicit information from the person making the threat
2. Evacuate the building, children first
3. Call local authorities
4. Do not use radios or touch suspected bombs

GUN THREATS

1. Vacate the building if possible, children first
2. Report immediately to local police and State Police
3. Notify the nearest supervisor
4. Report to the Office of Inspector General

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

1. If you have not been trained in handling medical emergencies, find a person nearby who has been trained
2. Assist injured person. Use the medical first aid kit if appropriate
3. Have someone call 911 and describe the building location and medical situation
4. Stay with injured person until further assistance is received

Call 911!

After contacting the local emergency authorities and taking care of the immediate danger to staff, children or clients, call the Director's Office, 217/ 785-2509 or 217/ 785-4020 after hours, then send an Unusual Incident Report.