



ADVOCACY NEWS



Summer 2006

Advocacy News is a publication of the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center. FAPAC's mission is to improve the quality of life of the children in the DC child welfare system by empowering their foster, kinship, and adoptive families and by assuring the inclusion of the families' perspectives at every relevant table.

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Kudos and Thumbs Up!

We acknowledge: Placement information packages finally rolled out the door!

We applaud: Linda Ripley, Jill Forbes

We acknowledge: Clarification of process for foster parents to request their own Child Protection Registry information.

We applaud: Cynthia Courts Marshall, Sarah Kaplan, Andrea Guy

We acknowledge: Implementation of recommendations from Transportation Dialogue.

We applaud: Jesse Winston and Uma Ahluwalia

For more detailed explanations about issues in this section, please see FAPAC Advocacy Update on page 2.

District of Columbia's Foster Parent of the Year Patricia Dozier congratulated by the Honorable Mayor Anthony Williams at the 2006 Foster Parent Gala in May.

FAPAC Goes Independent!

On July 1, 2006 The Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center officially became its own independent organization. Although we had always operated independently on operational issues, administratively and fiscally we were part of the Consortium for Child Welfare (CCW). We thank Tommy Wells and the CCW Board of Directors and staff for all of their encouragement these last five years and for incubating us until we were ready to spin off on our own. We will continue to "live" in our same offices, side by side with CCW.

Foster Parents Unionizing?

Foster parents in the state of Washington are unionizing. This is a unique and exciting approach to foster parenting for those who are trying to be taken more seriously as advocates for their children and become part of the professional team. FAPAC will host a dialogue between foster and kinship parents about the Washington initiative and if it would work here. We would like to hear your opinion—please call us at (202) 269-9441 if you would like to be invited to this dialogue.

This Issue:	
Advocacy Update.....	p.2
DC Adoption Scholarships.....	p.2
Licensing for Private Agency FPs.....	p.3
Health Advocacy Project.....	p.3
DC Mayoral Candidates.....	p.4

ADVOCACY UPDATE

Please Ask WHERE IS MY GREEN PACKET?

We are pleased to announce that CFSA is finally distributing Placement Information Packages!!

Beginning this summer, **each new child** entering a placement and **child being replaced** will be accompanied by the green Placement Information Package, also known as the Passport Packet. This will include children being placed directly by CFSA and through the private agencies. The easy to identify green packet is now a "living document" by which on-going communication can occur between foster parents and workers. Each packet contains the responsibilities of all parties to participate in the upkeep and maintenance of this information. The packets are designed to be more than a collection of facts about a child—it is an opportunity to provide the child with a history, a narrative to a part of a life that is often lost. When a child exits care, much of this information will go with him or her.

We applaud Linda Rippey and Jill Forbes of the Placement Unit for developing a new procedure and format that was more user-friendly, and thus more likely to be utilized!

We also thank Vivian Ledbetter, foster parent and FAPAC board member, for the suggestion of making the packets a bright and identifiable color.

If you take a new placement and do not receive a placement information package, please ask for it. If you still do not receive it, please call Linda Ripley at (202) 727-7847.

Transportation Improvements

During FAPAC's September 2005 transportation dialogue between foster parents and social workers, logistical barriers were identified that cause CFSA social workers to feel limited in their ability to support foster parents with transportation needs. As a result of this dialogue, CFSA Director Uma Ahluwalia has implemented the following recommendations made by the group.

Thank You, Uma!

1. Automated car schedule through unit administrators;
2. 50 spaces purchased by CFSA in close by parking lot for social workers who agree to use their own cars for transporting and visits;
3. Agency to cover difference in social worker insurance to allow them to use their vehicles to transport children;
4. Flex cars at metro stops for workers when they are not transporting children;
5. Fleet of new cars.

Obtaining Your OWN Child Protection Registry Clearance

Despite information you may have been given to the contrary, foster parents may access their DC Child Protection Registry Clearance directly. To do so, you may contact Rosalie Davis, at (202) 727-7801 and request a clearance form to obtain your information.

DC Adoption Scholarship (DCAS) Mayor's Scholarship Fund

The State Education Office administers the District of Columbia Adoption Scholarship (DCAS) Program. This program was authorized by PL 13-172 (Adoption Voucher Act). The Act appropriated a federal payment to establish a scholarship fund for post high school education and training of District of Columbia children who were adopted through DC's Child and Family Services Agency, and/or children who lost one or both parents in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Beginning with the 2006-2007 academic year, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will be required to complete the application.

Award Amount

The DCAS grants the eligible Adopted Child or the applicant who lost one or both parents in 9/11 attacks up to

\$10,000 per year, with a lifetime maximum of \$50,000 and/or six years.

Eligibility Criteria

- Adopted on/after October 1, 2001 through the District of Columbia's Child & Family Services, DC's foster care system, **or**
- Lost one or more parents in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks
- High school graduation transcript or an earned General Equivalency Diploma (GED)
- Accepted or currently enrolled in an eligible Title IV post secondary institution
- Applicants must be 24 years of age or younger

Parents of adopted children do not have to reside in the District of Columbia.

Required supporting documents

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

For adopted applicants

Copy of the final adoption decree

For 9/11 applicants:

Copy of death certificate

Certified copy of most recent DC Income Tax Return (D-4o)

Copy of two current utility bills

Eligible Institutions

All post secondary institutions certified by the US Department of Education as being eligible to participate in Title IV Aid Programs are eligible schools.

To apply use the DC OneApp application which is available by calling 727-6436 or online at: www.seo.dc.gov.

FAPAC thanks Mayor Anthony Williams for his commitment to this scholarship program.

Private Agency Foster Parents & Licensing

We have been hearing much confusion lately from both foster parents and agencies about the re-licensing authority for foster parents in the private agencies. We hope this information will clear up confusion, and not make you more confused!

- If you are a private agency foster parent who lives in DC, your private agency makes a re-licensing recommendation to CFSA, which has the final decision about whether to re-license you and directly administers your license. Proper written notification must be given to the foster parent of the private agency's decision not to re-license their home. The private agency can recommend revocation of a license to CFSA and it is only CFSA who can actually revoke your license. However, your agency can decide they themselves do not want to handle your re-licensing process. In that case, you may be able to apply to become a foster parent for another agency.
- If, however, you are a private agency foster parent living in Maryland, your private agency itself makes those licensing decisions, as Maryland licenses are given directly by the specific agency. **Your private agency can revoke your license.**
- In all cases, private agencies have the authority to decide whether they themselves will or will not place children in your home.
- If your DC license is revoked, you can appeal the decision through a DC Fair Hearing process. **You must file your request by written form within 30 business days of the date of the timely notice of action or intended action about the revocation of your license. If your agency has not given you the Fair Hearing request form, the office to call in DC to request this form is The Office of Fair Hearing and Appeal at (202) 724-7100.** If your MD license is revoked, you must appeal through a MD Contested Case Hearing process. **Read carefully the notice you received regarding the revocation of your license because it should have a "notice of action" date and should specify how many days you have to appeal the revocation.** Maryland's regulations regarding contested case hearings provide that appeals must be filed within ninety (90) days after notice. The main telephone number to the Office of Administrative Hearings is (410) 229-4100. You may want to consider being represented by legal counsel during a Contested Case Hearing (MD) or Fair Hearing (DC).
- Private agency foster parents who have questions about the licensing process please call Rula Swann at (202) 724-7201 at CFSA's Office of Licensing and Monitoring. For Maryland families, it is suggested they contact their private agency's licensing specialist.

If we can be of any help in understanding this process or with legal referrals call us at (202) 269-9441.

FAPAC Health Advocacy Project

Obtaining appropriate physical, behavioral, and mental health for their foster children is one of the many challenges facing DC's foster parents...and actually, a challenge for foster parents in many other jurisdictions in the country as well. In order to better understand this problem from the foster parent perspective, FAPAC, with funding from the Consumer Health Foundation, conducted a verbal survey of foster parents. In addition, a small group of foster care professionals were also surveyed for comparison. Some of the issues that were identified through the surveys were:

- More than two-thirds of foster parents said they had never received a Medicaid card, **with newer placements over the last two years actually less likely to receive cards than earlier placements!**
- Foster parents have problems filling prescriptions in Maryland with DC Medicaid numbers.
- Foster parents generally reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of health care from DC KIDS but many reported dissatisfaction with the process for making appointments and the time they had to wait for appointments. MD families had higher level of dissatisfaction with the location of DC KIDS providers.
- Many cited difficulties obtaining dental care, especially in MD.

We were pleased to find that most foster parents expressed confidence in their ability to obtain medical services for their foster child. **FAPAC attributes**

this finding to the growth and development of the Office of Clinical Practice at CFSA. However, we did identify that foster parents need training on assessing and accessing quality mental health services and on medication management. In addition, it was identified that social workers also need further training in dealing with health issues.

In response to the survey findings, FAPAC has done several things:

- We hosted a training workshop for our Advanced Peer Advocates in January. The training focused on the issues that came from the survey.
- We developed an advocacy agenda based on survey findings and strategies to meet that agenda.
- In June, we hosted a very successful training on mental health for the foster parent community.

Next steps in this project will include further training workshops, to include cross-training between social workers and foster parents, and a Health Access Guide for DC's foster, kinship and adoptive parents.

FAPAC would like to thank Nancy Smith, Jean Hoyt, Vivian Ledbetter, Carrie Porter and Jeff Menzer as well as CFSA's Office of Clinical Practice (OCP) for their help on this project.

To request a full copy of the report please call us and we will mail it to you. We also hope to have it available on our website soon.

In an effort to inform readers, Advocacy News made a request to all eighteen of the DC Mayoral Candidates (as of 7/06). They were asked to share their concerns and ideas for one of the cities most important services. Five of these candidates seeking DC's highest office met our production deadline date and provided a 250-word or less response to the following question:

If elected mayor, what would you implement in your first 100 days to maintain and enhance the quality of services from the Child & Family Services Administration?

Michael Brown:

I will begin by making our families and children a priority with the implementation of citizen-first legislation. Our current city leadership has put too much focus on projects like the baseball stadium and new condominium development, and not enough focus on the welfare of our children and families. I will implement a top-to-bottom self imposed audit of the Child & Family Services Administration by an independent agency to determine CFSA's exact needs, and follow through on those needs by involving the stakeholders when determining solutions. In addition, I will implement more parenting classes, adult literacy classes,

and more services for our young people. I will also take the Grandparents Caregivers Pilot Program a step further by extending it to aunts, uncles, and other relatives taking responsibility for children under the age of 18 in their families. Our city needs an attitude adjustment, and when I am Mayor, I will bring the courage and compassion required to make it a reality.

Campaign Office: (202) 249-2905

Website: www.brownformayor.com



Linda Cropp:

During the first 100 days, after a national search, I will hire the best of the best to manage this critical agency and transform the culture to one of quality service and results. I will evaluate the performance of each program and hold each person accountable for improvement. A Cropp administration will be transparent. I will publicize my assessments so we can detail to the public what we are doing, where we fall short, and plans for improvement so we can be held accountable.

I will hold the management team accountable for substantial progress on the following goals: improve provision of mental health services for children and youth in the child welfare system; fuller implementation of Family Conferencing for resolution of child maltreatment cases; empower the Family Violence Coordinating Council; better utilization of Case Planning Acknowledgement forms; improve outreach, service and resources for

abused or neglected non-English/immigrant children; improve aftercare support services for adoptive and foster families; and promote an ethos of cultural competence throughout the agency.

Campaign Office: (202) 842-2006

Website: www.lindacroppformayor.com

Adrian Fenty:

As Mayor I will immediately name a permanent director of CFSA. CFSA has been operating under revolving leadership for far too long. Strong leadership will ensure that all parts of the agency are building on recent progress and are accountable for taking care of children who depend on our care and protection.

Secondly, it is imperative that CFSA has the resources it needs to support youth who have been abused or neglected, as well as the people who care for them. This year, I added to the 2007 budget \$3.9 million to increase adoption and guardianship subsidies, plus an additional \$2.9 million to support community-based initiatives to prevent child abuse and neglect. As Mayor I will ensure that the District makes more efficient use of available Federal funds for services to children who have been abused or neglected. Improved use of Federal Title IV-E funds will allow the District to use local money to support post-adoptive services which are critical to long-term family stability.

Regardless of whether the District has satisfied the benchmark standards of the LaShawn order by the end of 2006,

the District must make demonstrable improvements in the child welfare system in 2007. As Mayor I will ensure that the agency standardizes contracts and pays providers promptly, expands strategies to recruit and retain social workers, provides comprehensive mental health services, improves sibling and family visits, and reaches out to support foster parents.

Campaign Office: (202) 667-2006

Website: www.fenty06.com



Marie C. Johns:

To support foster parents and the children and youth they care for, there must be an ongoing, productive dialogue between DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and foster parents in an effort to craft and implement policies that help foster parents meet the needs of children while sustaining their own capacity to be good caregivers.

Foster parents should have:

Thorough and accurate information about children's histories medical and behavioral and as complete information as possible to make a proper match.

Quality mental health services for children in their care; services must be accessible and provided by professionals who are trained and skilled in treating the kinds of trauma that many children in foster care have suffered;

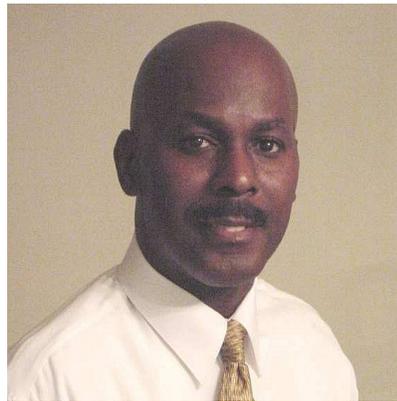
A seat at the table in the team case planning process since foster parents are central in implementing many of the decisions social services professionals make for the child; and,

Adequate support from government for foster parenting; which includes recognizing the unique role of a foster parent and aiding with practical issues such as transportation and healthcare.

Finally, we need to make sure that there is a **meaningful connection between policy and practice** in foster care and child and family services in general. We need to match our high expectations with the necessary support and resources to help raise the odds for successful lives for children in foster care and for foster parents.

Campaign Office: (202) 399-0669

Website: www.johnsformayor.com



Dennis Moore:

No doubt, without delay, I will convene an interim panel of 30 diverse advocates, professionals and activists to review, evaluate and advise me on the current state of child and family services throughout the District.

Within the same first 100 days, 11 members of this panel will be formalized into a Mayor's Family Advisory Council. This cabinet-level council will be charged with ongoing assessments, evaluations, advisories and oversight of effective implementation of initiatives, resources and methods that effectively improve diverse services for DC's children and families. This will not be another layer

of bureaucracy. The Mayor's Family Advisory Council will be a fully operational, mandated and accountable entity within my office that will have immediate and direct access to me regarding any and all matters related to improvements, monitoring, enforcement, developing, funding and empowering all public and private entities that serve DC families.

The Mayor's Family Advisory Council will meet formally twice each month, in addition to informal meetings as warranted. Headed by a Family Advisory Council deputy mayor, the full Council and I will thoroughly review and initiate appropriate action on diverse current and potential needs, including any conceivable problems. The Council will have a standard operating procedure of being proactive rather than reactive on all matters regarding the holistic well being of the District of Columbia's diverse children and families. Dennis Moore – DC's Republican Mayoral Candidate

Campaign Office: (202) 441-8528

Website: www.mooreforpeople.com

Special Note: DC Activist and Mayoral Candidate, Chris Crowder, called our office after our initial request for this newsletter. Via phone, Crowder described briefly his strong concerns about children in foster care and adoption. He stated he would be providing a response to FAPAC soon. Unfortunately due to tragic and fatal circumstances on July 8 in NW, he was unable to provide the response. Our condolences go to the Crowder family.

