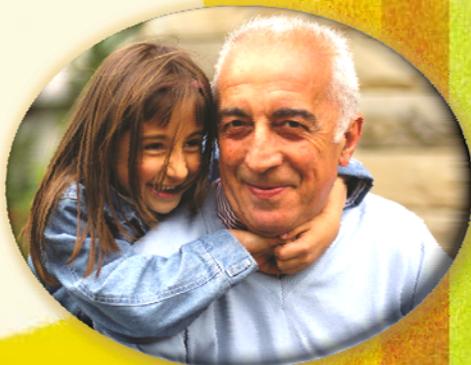


Montgomery County, Maryland



Child Welfare Services

2013 Annual Report



Children, Youth and Family Services • Child Welfare Services

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2013 CHILD WELFARE SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

PAGE 3

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES GOALS
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

PAGE 4

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM
SERVICES WE PROVIDE
SERVICES TO FAMILIES
IN-HOME SERVICES
SAFE & STABLE FAMILIES

PAGE 5

KINSHIP CARE
KINSHIP NAVIGATOR SERVICES PROGRAM

PAGE 6

FOSTER CARE
TREATMENT FOSTER CARE
PLACEMENT SOLUTIONS

PAGE 7

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES
ADOPTIONS

PAGE 8

TRANSITIONING YOUTH
THE TREE HOUSE CHILD ASSESSMENT CENTER (CAC)

PAGE 9

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST YEAR
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT MEETINGS
FAMILY FINDING
LIVE SCAN FINGERPRINTING

PAGE 10

RESPONSIBLE FATHERS PROGRAM
THE VISITATION HOUSE
FOSTERING CONNECTIONS
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

PAGE 11

MD CHESSIE
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
SOCIAL WORK STUDENT TRAINING

PAGE 12

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
CITIZENS REVIEW BOARDS AND PANEL
BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

PAGE 13

STAFFING
LEGAL ACTIVITIES
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
DIRECTIONS PROGRAM
MARYLAND CHOICES INTERAGENCY FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES (IFPS)

PAGE 14

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH
EMPLOYEE AWARDS
COMMUNITY GIVING

PAGE 15

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS
MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHILD WELFARE SERVICES EXECUTIVE STAFF
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OFFICE LOCATIONS

MISSION STATEMENT

To protect children,
preserve families,
strengthen communities,
ensure permanency and
well-being for every
abused and neglected child
in Montgomery County.

APPROACH

Child Welfare Services
advocates an integrated
service strategy to
assure the safety and
well-being of children,
youth and families.

OUR VISION

A future where
children are safe,
families are stable
and communities are
strong.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES GOALS

Provide family-focused, community-oriented services that adhere to national standards of best practice and result in positive outcomes for children and families.

Advocate for essential services to children & families.

Create a work environment that attracts and retains competent and diverse staff, and promotes professional development and leadership

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



This has been another very successful year in our efforts to do a better and better job of protecting children, supporting families and providing other necessary services. We reduced the number of children in out of home placement, reduced the number of youth in group homes and finalized many adoptions. CWS continues to be a key member of the Montgomery County Health and Human Services team and a strong partner of the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

As a result of our focus on Family Centered Practice (FCP), more children were able to remain with their parents and many other children were placed with relatives; in both situations, we provided supportive services to bolster the family's efforts. Family Involvement Meetings (FIM), during which the family gathers with others who are a part of their support system, continued to increase in number this year again were highly successful. We also introduced a new state initiative, Alternative Response, which seeks to engage parents in identifying the services they need to provide safe parenting. As a result of family meetings, more intensive family finding efforts, and alternative response strategies, more relatives and community members were available to provide parents with needed supports.

Our highly dedicated staff and our strong community partners are the keys to our successful work with vulnerable children and youth and their families. Our staff continues to provide outstanding care and services to a large number of children and families, many from diverse backgrounds. Our efforts are greatly enhanced because of the work of our wonderful, supportive partners both in government and in the community.

In the coming year, we will focus on providing caring, effective services to protect children and support families. We will continue our emphasis on family-centered practice strategies and outreach to communities, intensify our attempts to find relatives, and expand our efforts to identify new foster and adoptive parents. We are committed to maintaining children in their homes to the extent possible and to providing high quality services to families, all in an effort to keep Montgomery County's children safe from abuse and neglect and achieve their full potential.

Agnes Farleas Leshner

Director
Child Welfare Services

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Child Welfare Services (CWS) is a complex system offering a wide range of services to assess and ensure child safety and well-being. Social workers conduct assessments to determine first, whether an intervention is needed and then, the most appropriate intervention. In some situations there is no need for services and the case can be closed. In other situations services are provided by a community agency. If problems are considered serious but the child can remain in the home, social workers provide services to parents and regularly visit the family. If children cannot remain safely in their home, they are temporarily placed with relatives or with a foster family. If, over time, it becomes clear that reunification with the parents is not possible, permanent placement with a relative or an adoptive family is an alternative. Having a safe, permanent living arrangement is our ultimate goal for all children.

SERVICES WE PROVIDE

The Screening Unit is the single point of entry for all Child Welfare Services cases. During the past fiscal year, Screening received a total of 9,069 telephone calls. Social workers in this unit receive calls from citizens and professionals in our community, as well as calls from other state agencies seeking assistance with child maltreatment and family problems. Following state policy, social workers use the Structured Decision Making, an evidenced-based tool to determine if a child protective services intervention is warranted. Social workers evaluate each referral carefully to determine if there is a need for an investigation/assessment of the maltreatment allegation and/or to refer the callers to other community services to assist the family.

Assessment Units investigate allegations of physical and sexual child abuse and neglect, and then evaluate the need for services to ensure child safety and promote family preservation. This past year, social workers investigated 2,665 families. Of that number, neglect investigations/allegations accounted for 58% of the total, while 30% were physical abuse, 11% were sexual abuse, and less than 1% were due to mental injury. The social workers also conducted 280 assessments for other jurisdictions and the Courts.



SERVICES TO FAMILIES

In-Home Services

In-Home services were provided to 372 families when abuse or neglect had occurred, but the children were able to safely remain in the home. These were all instances in which children were not in imminent danger and the family agreed to receive a variety of services from Child Welfare social workers and community providers. Services were home based and time limited in an effort to help support and educate parents. An average of 133 families were provided services each month.

Safe & Stable Families

Through a grant from the Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR), CWS established an evidence-based model of intervention for adolescents who are “hard to manage” by their parents and are at risk for out-of-home placement. The Safe & Stable Families program offers intensive In-Home interventions beginning with an assessment of the child’s environment and the family’s functioning to establish a service plan incorporating the values of safety and well-being into the service delivery. The targets of these interventions were adolescents



referred to CWS with serious “out of control” behaviors and parents lacking the skills and knowledge to advocate for mental health, educational, and social services necessary to stabilize the crisis. The focus was improved family functioning, maintaining youth in their communities, and reinforcing the family system so that youth can safely remain with their families. The program worked with 47 children in 26 families during the past year and all the children remained in their home. Only one family re-entered the system after services had been provided.

During the year, the program saw several trends: many of the target children were female; there were increasing financial stressors among the families; there was an increase in drug/alcohol use; and many families were foreign-born. In addition, increased problem behaviors occurred when teens were not engaged in summer job/positive activities, and when there were insufficient after-school activities for them.

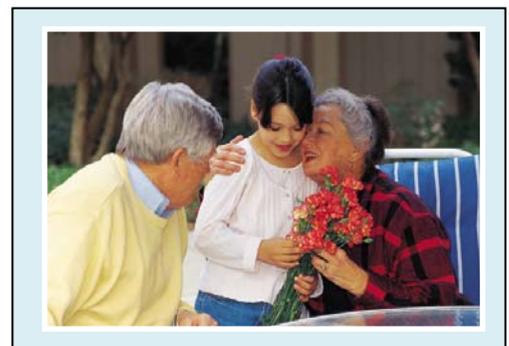
Kinship Care

Kinship Care is considered the placement option of choice if a child cannot be safely maintained in his/her own home, and if the kinship placement can meet the needs of the child in a healthy, stable, safe, and nurturing home. Kinship Care Services maintain the family system as the primary source of care for children, and preserve the continuity of care, culture, relationships, and environment essential for the child’s well-being. In Fiscal year 2013 (FY13), an average of 86 children each month lived with relatives in formal kinship care placements. Over that twelve month period, 48 children’s cases were closed with permanent Custody and Guardianship being awarded to their relatives. This number was double the goal set for Montgomery County by Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR).

Kinship Navigator Services Program

The Kinship Navigator Program is an In-Home, voluntary program that provides supportive services to informal kinship caregivers caring for a minor child(ren) as a result of arrangements with the child’s parent(s) without the involvement of Child Welfare Services.

The Kinship Navigator Program provides services to support families in maintaining relative child(ren) in the caregiver’s home, works to support and promote safety, assist and improve the well-being and permanency of children, provide referrals for services, and access to information along with help in finding community resources to meet the needs of these children. Informal kinship caregivers are offered a monthly support group to address the needs of caregivers and children. The support group provides the informal kinship caregivers a place where connections can be made with others in the same situation, networking can occur, support is received, suggestions may be found to address specific issues, and where caregivers tend to gain a sense of empowerment and control.



This fiscal year the Kinship Navigator Program was able to divert 68 families, including 108 children, from becoming court-involved Child Welfare Service cases. The Kinship Navigator Program assisted 16 families in gaining legal custody and guardianship for the relative children in their homes.

Foster Care

Abused or neglected children, unable to remain safely in their homes, are provided temporary “Out-of-Home Care” services. Along with case management and reunification services provided by an assigned social worker, the focus is improving the conditions which led to the initial safety concerns. The goal is to reduce the time children remain out of their homes. If reunification is not possible, the social worker explores other permanent living arrangements for the children. The social worker’s ultimate plan, in conjunction with the family, is to have each child in a stable, permanent placement (home and family) that allows the child to grow and become a healthy, productive citizen who can contribute positively to society.



In Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13), CWS reduced the number of children in out-of-home care by 15% (402 at the end of FY13 vs. 474 at the end of FY12). Early involvement and intervention with the family’s natural supports, such as extended family, friends, and community members, encouraged prevention and reduction in the number of children entering foster care.

Treatment Foster Care

Our agency Treatment Foster families provided a home environment for children with special needs. Twenty families received intensive training to serve children with serious health and/or mental health problems including behaviors that are difficult to manage. The treatment foster care staff continued to provide specialized training to assist foster parents in managing children’s needs.

The Treatment Foster Care Program of Montgomery County continued to be one of the only successful public Treatment Foster Care programs in the State of Maryland. The program, which has 20 licensed families, has proven to be a significant cost-saving measure in comparison to private Treatment Foster Care programs. Our program provides the same level of care, treatment and oversight to serious emotionally fragile, medically and behavioral disordered children. The Treatment Foster Care program collaborated with the Foster Parent Association and several other CWS units to organize a Holiday Ice Skating Party which was attended by over 250 participants. Training opportunities continued to be provided to families focusing on crisis management, attachment and communication skills.

In addition, many children were placed with private agencies specialized in licensing therapeutic foster home providers. Social workers monitored an average of 98 children each month in treatment foster homes.

Placement Solutions

The Placement Solutions Unit is charged with providing case management services to children in congregate care and their families. The primary focus of this unit is to resolve the issues that brought these children into foster care so that they can be reunified with their family. Other efforts include searching for extended family to possibly become a permanent placement resource, and helping these youth develop the necessary skills to live independently and be self-sufficient when they leave the foster care system.



One of the tools that social workers use to help these families is participation in Family Involvement Meetings (FIMs). FIMs bring together all the relevant people in the child’s life to make a plan for how to best help the child. In FY13, The Placement Solutions Unit served 92 youth and was able to close 5% of those cases. There was a 26% increase in Voluntary Placement cases served by the Placement Solutions unit in FY13.

Foster and Adoptive Families

During the past year CWS maintained a monthly average of 240 approved resource homes. Resource family recruitment and information meetings were held each month in Rockville and were attended by a total of 176 prospective resource families. There were 104 home studies initiated and 46 new resource families were licensed/approved, including guardianship homes in FY13.

The team organized several successful retention events including the Foster Parent Appreciation dinner (100+ attendees), the Foster Family picnic (300+ attendees), the Holiday Skating Party (250+ attendees), and the Wellness Fair (70+ attendees). In addition, there were a variety of trainings held throughout the County (up-County, mid-County, lower County, etc.) offered to the resource families on a variety of topics such as Behavior Support Management and Tax Tips for Resource families, The Importance of Birth Parents, Managing the Helper's Mind, Attachment Disorder and the Family, The Legal Process of Adoption, The Impact of Childhood Trauma, Creating Sexual Safety - Promoting Awareness and Healing in Foster Families, Changing Behaviors of Complicated Children, and Child Abuse and the Brain; plus ongoing resource parent support groups.



Adoption

Montgomery County Child Welfare Services achieved their adoption goal of 31 this past fiscal year. The ages of the children ranged from one to 20 years; and 15 of the children were part of a sibling group (three sibling groups of two and three sibling groups of three). The children were adopted by diverse families, including several families who previously adopted through the County. The agency celebrated National Adoption Day in November 2012 and adoptive families were honored and appreciated for forming Forever Families.



Child Welfare Services held an additional Adoption Day on June 26, 2013. The day began with adoption finalizations at the Montgomery County Circuit Court, followed by a celebration at Dave & Buster's in Rockville. A total of 13 children were adopted by nine families. Over 150 people were in attendance for the celebration.

The Adoption unit managed over 500 adoption subsidy cases, and provided Post-Adoption supportive services to approximately 40 families to prevent adoption dissolution. Approximately 15 adopted children were given financial assistance through the College Tuition Waiver and Education Training Voucher programs. Over 50 children exited the Adoption Subsidy program at the age of 21.

The Adoption Unit also coordinated Child Specific Recruitment for children in need of adoptive resources. These efforts included participation in the NBC4 *Wednesday's Child* program, Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruitment program, the Heart Gallery, North American Council on Adoptable Children recruitment events, and the Council of Governments recruitment events. In addition, the Birth Search program reunified approximately 15 adoptive children with their biological families.

Transitioning Youth

With a mandate to ensure that all youth are equipped with the skills and supports to transition out of foster care successfully, the Transitioning Youth Services program continues to promote youth engagement and collaboration to facilitate a smooth exit from foster care. Approximately 217 youth received transitioning youth services throughout Child Welfare Services.

Transitioning Youth Services continues to work with teens placed in a variety of settings including foster homes,



supervised apartment programs, private rental arrangements and college dormitories. Our Supportive Youth Housing Program provided funding for rent for 10 young adults this year. The ten-week Life Skills course was offered three times over the course of the year. Youth met as a group and had the opportunity to learn new, and strengthen existing skills in a variety of life domains. The annual Teen Conference and Older Youth Summit was held again in FY13 to give our young adults the chance to reinforce their learning in a number of key areas. Our priority continues to be that all of our youth are provided with the supports and services they need to move to an independent

and productive adulthood.

We look forward to our partnership with the 3L Academy: *Live, Learn Lead*, an interdisciplinary and individualized program that will serve transitioning youth ages 18-24. Several community partners have come together to forge this model of youth engagement designed to support our young adults in planning and goal-setting for their futures. A generous grant from the Trawick Foundation will enable this program to serve up to 25 youth for 12 months. Our department's Foster Youth Employment Program received funding for another year and continues to serve approximately 20 young adults at any one time.

The Tree House Child Assessment Center (CAC)

The Tree House Child Assessment Center (CAC) of Montgomery County, Maryland, serves child and adolescent victims of sexual and physical abuse, and neglect, along with their non-offending family members. The program provides a child-friendly environment and is a public-private partnership between the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County (PCC). The Tree House provides integrated services to child victims including forensic interviewing, pediatric medical evaluations, nurse case management, mental health assessments and ongoing therapy, and victim advocacy. Primary funding is obtained through DHHS, and supplemented by federal and local grants, foundations, and donations. Governance and oversight is provided by The Tree House Operations Board and a Community Council.



The Tree House works collaboratively with The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Police/Family Crimes Division, Office of the County Attorney, and the State's Attorney's Office. This multidisciplinary team, (MDT) approach eliminates the trauma that children experience when they are required to talk about their abuse multiple times. Coordinating investigations and treatment plans enables the victims and their families to begin healing as soon as possible.

During FY13, The Tree House provided 2559 services to 758 victims of abuse or neglect, including 699 new and 59 ongoing clients. Sexual abuse victims comprised 43% of new clients, while 22% were seen for physical abuse, 34% for neglect, and 1% for foster care exams. The majority of clients seen were female (65%), and age ranges for all clients were 0-6 (29%), 7-12 (25%), 13-17 (17%), and 18 and older (29%). Adults served are non-offending parents and a few adult siblings.

Family Involvement Meetings

Family Involvement Meetings (FIMs) are a collaborative effort to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Participants include family members, agency staff, service providers, community members, foster parents, members of the family's support network and (if age appropriate), the child is also included in placement decisions. FIM meetings are convened at key decision points over the course of a child's case such as:

- ▣ When out-of-home placement has been recommended
- ▣ When there is an emergency or planned placement change
- ▣ When changes in the child's permanency plan occurs
- ▣ When a youth is recommended for Independent Living
- ▣ Annual FIMs are held for all youth 14 years of age and older

In FY13, 364 FIMs were held relating to 523 children. 196 children were diverted from out-of-home placements; 167 remained with parents, and 29 were diverted to relatives. 80 of the 364 FIMs were the annual Transitioning Youth meetings which focused on the following service areas: education, employment, health/mental health, housing, financial literacy/resources and family/friends support. Satisfaction surveys from biological family members, community partners, social workers, and supervisors indicated continuing support for these meetings.

Family Finding



The Family Finding Program is an evidence-based model used in locating relatives of children and youth who are in out-of-home placement with CWS. The goal of Family Finding is to search and locate relatives and non-relatives who become lifelong connections for these children thereby increasing stability and permanency. The model includes *Family Search and Engagement (FSE)*; a set of six steps designed to locate, engage, connect, and support family resources for youth. Through this process we strive to provide increased permanency for children in foster care. Montgomery County is one of nine counties in Maryland to successfully implement the Family Finding Program. In FY13, the Family Finding Program worked with 44 youth and their families in an effort to make permanent connections.

LiveScan Fingerprinting

This fiscal year, the Department purchased an electronic fingerprinting system called LiveScan. Several CWS staff members were trained on this device and became licensed as Certified Fingerprint Technicians. Electronic fingerprinting is now available to the Department's prospective foster/adopt families, kinship caregivers, students, and volunteers.

One of the major benefits of having a LiveScan system at the CWS office is that it provides our families and volunteers with a convenient place to have their fingerprint taken. In addition, electronic fingerprinting provides increased accuracy, security, and reduced turn-around time. Prior to LiveScan, CWS could wait weeks for FBI and State of Maryland background check results to arrive. This held up placements, adoptions and foster home licensing. Now, the average turnaround time is less than 24 hours. Having on-site fingerprinting has made a big difference to CWS and the families it serves.

Responsible Fathers Program

The Responsible Fathers program continued to provide services to fathers and their children involved in Child Welfare Services. The program's goal was to enhance the relationship between fathers and their children while working to provide individualized services to help fathers identify and overcome obstacles in their parental involvement and responsibilities. Support was offered to fathers navigating barriers to successful involvement with their children and includes services such as: parenting classes, relationship classes, economic stability classes and individual counseling. The program continued to develop successful working relationships with various County departments including the Pre-Release Center, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and Workforce Solutions Group (WSG) to provide services to fathers and their families. During the past year, the Responsible Fathers program partnered with the Montgomery County Child Support office in an effort to assist in collecting child support. It also provided counseling and ongoing workforce solutions to remove barriers thereby increasing a parent's ability to pay child support. This initiative was successful as it increased by 31% the child support collections of those involved in the program. Throughout the year, the Responsible Fathers program provided services to 143 fathers and their families.



The Visitation House

The Visitation House moved to a new, permanent location and provided a home-like atmosphere for supervised visitation for parents, children and siblings in the CWS system. The Visitation House is a collaborative effort between various departments of Montgomery County government (Health and Human Services, Housing and Community Affairs, and the County Attorneys), the Courts, the legal community, and various community agencies. The Children's Action Team (CAT) provided additional support for the The Visitation House and its operations. In FY13, 128 families with 176 children had 1,236 visits at The Visitation House. There were 2,486 hours of visits scheduled at The Visitation House this past year. The Visitation House is also used by parenting coaches, therapists and Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers program representatives. Several groups held meetings at this location, and the Kinship Support Group also meets there on a monthly basis.

Fostering Connections

Based on federal legislation, and with the goal of improving academic performance of children in the Child Welfare system, a new initiative this fiscal year has been the implementation of fostering communication and connections between Child Welfare Services and the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). With leadership by the Casey Foundation, CWS staff and MCPS have been meeting regularly to improve communication, keep children in their home schools (even if they are placed away from their home schools), learn how each entity functions, and to share information. There have also been significant efforts made by both CWS and MCPS to identify key contacts in both groups. This initiative will be expanded in the coming year.

Continuous Quality Improvement Activities

Child Welfare's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Council continues to serve as a vital part of the Child Welfare system by advocating service improvements, enhancing communication between frontline staff and various levels of management, and strengthening employee morale.

This year, the CQI Council gained fresh leadership under two new co-chairs along with several new members. The Council continues to oversee the activities of an Ombudsperson, Standing Committees (Training, Cultural Competence, Stakeholders, and CHESSIE), as well as addressing employee-submitted "requests for action" (RFA). In an effort to improve morale, the Council has begun regularly recognizing outstanding employees by presenting a quarterly CQI Service Award.

This fiscal year, the Council directly addressed nine (9) RFAs submitted by Child Welfare Staff. Topics included continued work on communication within CWS as well as with providers in the community, and ethics and safety for staff. The Council plans to survey staff to see how morale may be affecting our service delivery.

The CWS Ombudsperson provides community consultation, education and training. In FY13, presentations were conducted for community programs, non-public schools, MCPS staff, child care providers, nursery schools, volunteers, and professional committees. A Child Welfare Services Speaker's Bureau has been formed to assist with community education. Alternative Response information has been included in the Recognizing and Reporting Child Maltreatment presentation.

Maryland Children Electronic Social Services Information Exchange (MD CHESSIE)

MD CHESSIE, the statewide automated child welfare records system that enables the tracking of children and facilitates information sharing, is a tightly integrated electronic case-management system which allows roles-based case viewing, automated federal reporting, and comprehensive funds management, along with a payments system that accommodates centralized payments to vendors for children and families involved in Child Welfare Services programs.



A number of changes were made in CHESSIE regarding how case information is reported federally, with improvements in AFCARS reports and the National Youth in Transition Database, where youth graduating from our foster care system are monitored in a longitudinal study. Changes were made to the IV-E determination system, improving system logic as well as making eligibility determinations for certain In-Home clients' "candidacy" for Title IV-E funds for paid services, thereby increasing the federal reimbursement our clients are eligible for.

Mental Health Services

Montgomery County continued to fund six therapists to provide specialized In-Home services for children and families in the Child Welfare system. Three of the current Home-Based Team (HBT) therapists are Spanish-speaking, all are highly skilled in Child and Family therapy, and have also received training in Motivational Interviewing and Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. These therapists, co-located with Child Welfare staff in the Piccard and Germantown offices, provided direct services, consultation and progress reports. The HBT worked with 90 children and families, providing intensive individual and family therapy, and clinical case management. Treatment focused on assisting children and adults to strengthen family functioning and stability, and resolve trauma related to child abuse and neglect.

Social Work Student Training

The Department continues a partnership with the University of Maryland and Catholic University to offer Social Work graduate students an opportunity to gain valuable experience through a Child Welfare internship. The program had 12 graduate students, including the IV-E (Title IV-E of the Social Security Act) Multicultural Unit, an expansion of our Social Work Field Instruction Program. Through collaboration with the University of Maryland School of Social Work, along with MDDHR, this program developed child welfare competencies in a multicultural group of student social workers and prepares them for work in a public agency. The mission of this unit is to develop the knowledge and skills of graduate social work students in working with clients of diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Department successfully recruited several graduating MSW students, with various language capabilities, as full-time employees.



Early Childhood Programs

Partnerships with Infants & Toddlers, Head-Start and other programs have been successful in facilitating early evaluation and intervention for children with developmental disabilities. These trans-disciplinary approaches start with rapid assessment and services often taking place in the home. Children and parents benefit from the skills gained, increased socialization, and knowledge of available community resources. Collaboration with the Head-Start program assures that eligible children are enrolled in these preschool programs to better prepare them for elementary education.



Citizens Review Boards and Panel

Community members serve on two review boards: one appointed by the Governor's Office, Citizens Review Board (CRB), and the second by the Montgomery County Executive, Citizens Review Panel (CRP). Four Citizens Review Boards, all appointed by the Governor, review a random selection of cases each month. This fiscal year, the CRB reviewed 132 cases of youth in an out-of-home placement and continued to support the efforts of providing permanency for children in foster care. Case review results are presented to Child Welfare managers and to the Court.

The CRP examined the training and services provided to foster parents. A number of recommendations were made by the panel and implemented by the agency. Some of the recommendations and changes included:

- ▣ *Foster Parent Training* - Additional topics have been added to the pre-service training sessions as well as to the ongoing training throughout the year. Also, a foster parent co-trainer has been added to all pre-service training sessions.
- ▣ *Training manuals* - Materials have been updated, reorganized, and expanded. Additionally, information is now being provided on the developmental needs of children.
- ▣ *Communication/Support* - A new procedure was introduced to assure that foster parents know how to contact the child's social worker, their supervisor, the child's attorney, and other significant people in the child's case.

In addition to making recommendations for improvement to training, a tracking form, developed by the Panel, was piloted with relatives and foster parents to track health and mental services that children in foster care receive.

The year was also spent gathering information on the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care and the implementation of the alternative response initiative. These two issues will be the panel's focus next year.

Budget and Administration

The FY13 budget for Child Welfare Services was \$21,826,000. The Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR) provided approximately 70% and Montgomery County funds contributed approximately 30% of the total budget. In addition to funds designated for personnel and operating expenses, MDDHR provided flexible and/or special purpose funds for a variety of services, such as intensive In-Home services, psychological evaluations, preparing youth for independent living, child care for foster parents and relative caretakers, court-ordered services, foster/adoptive parent recruitment and retention efforts, and adoption promotion. In addition, MDDHR also provided funds for weekend and holiday coverage, for after-hours screening and investigation of child/adult protective services reports.

CWS utilized County funds for community education, specialized services such as service coordination, parenting skills training, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), youth mentoring services, and post-adoption services to prevent adoption disruption. In FY13, Child Welfare Services managed fifteen (15) contracts that totaled over \$1,000,000.

Staffing

Recruitment and retention of staff continued to be a major challenge during the past year. Sixteen individuals resigned (15 social workers) and new staff was hired to replace those who left. Exit interviews identified that the highly stressful nature of the work was the leading reason people left, and personal reasons (children and re-location) was the second reason. Many young social workers were recruited over the past few years and they have remained energetic and committed to fulfilling Child Welfare Service's mission. New CWS social workers are required to attend extensive pre-service training through the University of Maryland and the CWS Training Academy. This training takes more than three months to complete and is held in Baltimore, Maryland.



Legal Activities

The Office of the County Attorney, Division of Health and Human Services, provided the legal representation for CWS staff. This team consists of staff and contract attorneys, paralegals, and legal secretaries. CWS was represented in Juvenile Court, during mediations and in administrative appeals. In addition, the attorneys served as general counsel to the CWS administrators, participated in weekly case reviews with child welfare staff and prepared social workers to testify in court. The attorneys provided regular legal training programs for CWS staff, foster parents, and kinship providers. Each year one of these trainings involves a review of recent legislative changes and the impact on CWS practices. The attorneys also represented the Director of The Tree House, Montgomery County's Child Assessment Center, and they participated in weekly multi-disciplinary team (MDT) case reviews. In addition, the attorneys participated in the Children's Action Team (CAT) headed by Judge Katherine Savage, and bi-monthly Children In Need of Assistance (CINA) Bench Bar meetings. FY13 saw a small decrease in new CINA petitions filed in the Juvenile Court as well as a slight decline in the number of Juvenile Court hearings that were held.

In FY13 there were 31 finalized adoptions. The County Attorneys represented CWS in 2279 CINA and Guardianship hearings in Juvenile Court and filed 198 new CINA petitions.

Community Education

Community Education continued to be a valuable project during the past year. There were 28 presentations attended by approximately 887 people. This included eight new organizations who requested informational workshops and the development of two new booklets: one focusing on the problems of sexual abuse, and the other on parenting difficult teens. From these presentations, one potential foster parent and three potential mentors for the *Directions Program* were recruited.

Directions Program

The *Directions Program* was created to recruit, train and provide mentors to youth ages 18-21 who are in the care of Child Welfare Services. In the first nine months, 10 matches were made. Although the program has been in existence for only a short time, there are already several "success" stories that demonstrate the value of the program.

Maryland Choices Interagency Family Preservation Services (IFPS)

Maryland Choices developed a program with the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families in which children/youth with intensive needs receive services to help stabilize the family and develop skills toward preventing out-of-home placement. 72 youth and their families received services in FY13, and of those served, 46 families successfully completed the program. Interagency Family Preservation Services (IFPS) includes a program to help children who have been in group or residential care make the transition back into the community. Other programs include home-based therapy, mentoring, specialized services and professional team coordination, along with IFPS to children in danger of being removed from their home.



An Integrated Approach

The Department of Health and Human Services and Child Welfare Services have an integrated approach to help assure the safety and well-being of children, youth and their families. To that end, CWS maintains a large array of professional partnerships and collaborations. Easy access to services was made possible by a variety of specialists from other County programs and agencies.

- ▣ An Income Support program specialist is assigned and co-located with CWS. This individual provided medical assistance enrollment for children coming into out-of-home care.
- ▣ The Metropolitan YMCA implemented a Court-supported, mentoring program which matched more than 25 young people in effective supportive relationships. This was the program's fifth year and it has been highly successful in keeping adolescents in school and encouraging social development.
- ▣ Children's Action Team (CAT) - a group comprised of juvenile court judges, attorneys, CWS staff and Court administrators developed and implemented an agenda to help speed permanent plans for children. One of their major projects was supporting a new Visitation House and improving communication among key participants.

Employee Recognition

Child Welfare Services is able to achieve its mission through the dedicated efforts of its employees. Several awards were given during the fiscal year to recognize those staff members who brought a positive attitude to the workplace and displayed consistent and exceptional efforts towards the advancement of CWS' goals.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Award

Wendy Hall-Page - September 2012
Kumba Baryoh - December 2012
Jackie Albanes - June 2013

Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG) Award

Ramona Zeender - August 2012
Erin Stillwell - December 2012
Brad Wofford - April 2013

Child Welfare Services Administrators' Award

Phyllis Reed - January 2013
Patty Carson - March 2013
Barbara Cromartie - June 2013

DHR Excellence in Social Work Award

Wendy Grier

Community Giving

We are very fortunate that the Montgomery County community continued to be supportive in many of our efforts to assist children and families. Two of the larger programs included:



The Generous Juror Program - A joint project between the Montgomery County Circuit Court, and Child Welfare Services which gives prospective jurors the opportunity to donate their jury fee towards activities to benefit children served by CWS and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). It continued to be a highly successful program. More than \$68,000 was collected and used to provide opportunities for children that otherwise would not be covered by state or local funds, e.g. camp scholarships, tutoring, holiday arts, sports activities, and birthday and graduation gifts.

The Adopt-A-Social-Worker Program - The Adopt-A-Social Worker Program received voluntary donations from the community for children and families. Donations were used to provide children and youth with school supplies, and graduation presents for high school seniors. Items donated included: 180+ cases of shoes, 383 backpacks filled with school supplies, and 800 gift certificates for haircuts donated by The Hair Cuttery. \$8,000 in gift certificates were also donated for the children's use at the local Unique Thrift Store. In addition, a private citizen collected food for 185 Thanksgiving dinners. Holiday gifts for 487 children were also donated by the community.

Partnerships and Collaborations

These are some of the community groups and partners with which Montgomery County Child Welfare Services collaborates:

- *Addiction Services Coordination*
- *Arbor Employment Services*
- *Aunt Hattie's Place*
- *Behavioral Health Partners*
- *Board of Social Services*
- *The Casey Foundation*
- *Center for Adoption Support & Education (C.A.S.E.)*
- *Child Fatality Review Committee*
- *Childrens' Action Team (CAT)*
- *Citizens Review Boards*
- *Citizens Review Panel*
- *Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children*
- *Commission on Children and Youth*
- *Contemporary Therapeutic Services*
- *Council of Governments (COG)*
- *Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)*
- *Domestic Violence Alert Team*
- *Early Childhood Workgroup*
- *Family Service Agency*
- *Friends in Action (FIA)*
- *Futurelink*
- *Hearts & Homes for Youth*
- *The Home Based Team (HBT)*
- *Homeless Shelter Providers Team*
- *Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC)*
- *Infants & Toddlers Program*
- *Institute for Family Centered Services*
- *Interagency Committee on Adolescent Pregnancy*
- *Interfaith Works*
- *Juvenile Justice Commission*
- *Linkages to Learning*
- *Local Coordinating Team (LCT)*
- *Maryland Choices*
- *Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR)*
- *Maryland Department of Juvenile Services*
- *Maryland Multicultural Youth Center*
- *Mental Health Assoc. of Montgomery County (MHA)*
- *Montgomery County Collaboration Council*
- *Montgomery County Government (DHHS, Housing, Police, Human Resources and County Attorneys)*
- *Montgomery County Public School*
- *Montgomery County Child Care*
- *National Center for Children & Families (NCCF)*
- *Operation Runaway*
- *Primary Care Coalition (PCC)*
- *Reginald Lourie Center*
- *Trawick Foundation*
- *The Tree House, Child Assessment Center (CAC)*
- *University of Maryland School of Social Work*
- *Workforce Solutions*
- *YMCA – Metropolitan YMCA*

Montgomery County Child Welfare Services Executive Staff

Agnes F. Leshner, MA

Child Welfare Services Director

Kim Watkins, Office Services Coordinator

Sheila Dennis, LCSW-C

Assessment Section Administrator

Marisa Lim, Office Services Coordinator

Angela English, LCSW-C

Out of Home Services Administrator

Patty Carson, Office Services Coordinator

Lisa Merkin, LCSW-C

Continuing Section Administrator

Jessica Santos, Office Services Coordinator

Pat Davis Spann, LGSW

Resource Section Administrator

Phyllis Reed, Office Services Coordinator

Thomas Grazio, LCSW-C

The Tree House Director

Sandra Marino, Administrative Assistant

Montgomery County Child Welfare Services has four offices. The main office is in Rockville and there are two regional offices. These offices are co-located with other Montgomery County Government programs.

Headquarters (Main Office)

*1301 Piccard Drive,
Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: 240-777-3500
TTY: 240-777-3556*

Juvenile Assessment Center

*7300 Calhoun Place, Suite 400
Rockville, MD 20855
Phone: 240-777-4435 / 3391
TTY: 240-777-3560*

Germantown Regional Services Center

*12900 Middlebrook Road, 2nd Floor
Germantown, MD 20874
Phone: 240-777-1742
TTY: 240-777-8002*

The Tree House Child Assessment Center (CAC)

*7300 Calhoun Place, Suite 600
Rockville, MD 20855
Phone: 240-777-4699
TTY: 240-777-3560*