



The Caring Difference

The Newsletter of the Citizen Foster Care Review Board

After all, a home should be forever . . .

Assistant General Manager Christopher Cecil celebrates 16 years as a special needs adoptive parent

The new assistant general manager for the Department of Juvenile Services claims strong ties to his new position. As an adoptive parent, Christopher Cecil can relate to the important work of the Citizen Foster Care Review Boards. And as a former field coordinator for the Dependent Children's Services Division, he brings CFCRB experience to his job.

"I'm very excited to have Chris back with our program," said Patrick Yewell, general manager for the Department of Juvenile Services. "He brings experience from many levels, which will be an asset as we continually improve the Dependent Children's Services Division."

Cecil and his wife, Carol, are the parents of four children, two of whom were adopted in 1990 from the Kentucky Special Needs Adoption Program.

"When Carol and I were married in 1985, our first choice in starting a family was to adopt through the Special Needs Adoption Program," said Cecil. "We decided we wanted to raise a nontraditional family and open our home to children who might not otherwise have a family of their own." Ronnie, now 25, and Billy, 24, had been in foster care for five years and were 9 and 8 when the Cecils adopted them.

Ronnie and Billy had a difficult time adjusting and were diagnosed with severe emotional disabilities related to abuse, neglect and attachment disorders. It was necessary for them to be hospitalized on occasion and eventually Billy needed to be

placed in a residential treatment facility. "Even though Billy had to be placed out of our home, we never gave up our legal, emotional or spiritual commitment to him," said Cecil. "There were times when the system would have made it easier for us to recommit Billy to the state, but we were able to advocate for his needs and maintain our commitment to him."

The Cecils also have two birth children, Elaine, 9, and Cooper, 6. Cooper enjoys basketball, baseball and racing BMX bicycles. Elaine enjoys dancing, singing and acting. Elaine and Cooper are very close to their big brothers and enjoy every minute with them. "It's amazing to see the kids playing together. Ronnie and Billy have a blast playing with Elaine and Cooper. Billy is teaching Cooper how to play baseball and Ronnie is teaching Elaine how to fish."

Cecil is a native of Louisville, Ky. He holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Eastern Kentucky University and a master's degree in social work from the University of Kentucky. His career has focused on child and adult protection, mental health and school social work. From 1995 to 1999, he was a field



Christopher Cecil spent some time with his son, Cooper, during a recent visit to his office at the AOC. Cecil was named the new assistant general manager for the Department of Juvenile Services in February.

coordinator for the Citizen Foster Care Review Boards and a supervisor for the former Court-Community Relations Division. From 1999 to 2004, he was director for the State Interagency Council for Services to Children With Severe Emotional Disabilities and he oversaw the Kentucky IMPACT Program.

More recently, he advocated for the rights of adults with mental illnesses as a recovery specialist for the Kentucky Division of Mental Health.

Message From The State Chair



By Angie Funk

I presented the following Citizen Foster Care Review Board Annual State Chair Report to the Kentucky CFCRB State Board at our meeting on Nov. 5, 2005.

“Strong Local Boards”

The Executive Committee was hard at work during 2005 striving to reach our goal of “Strong Local Boards.” Below are the areas we focused on the past 12 months:

1. Ensuring that each local board has at least three volunteers, a chair and a vice chair. A list of counties with three or fewer reviewers was given to Dolores Smith at the Executive Committee meeting on Feb. 26, 2005. Dolores followed up with the field coordinators to get updates on these boards and recruit volunteers. Discussion also took place about the need to keep the Volunteer Directory current.

2. Creating a state board e-mail list to improve communication among the Executive Committee and the local board chairs. Out of 144 chairs, 97 have e-mail. Hanna Harvey helped create and maintain this list. The e-mail list was used several times last year and will be used even more in 2006.

3. Piloting a program that would enable reviewers to attend Family Team Meetings. At our quarterly meeting with the Cabinet for Health and Family

Services on Dec. 10, 2004, local boards were invited to attend the Cabinet’s Family Team Meetings (FTMs). Former Commissioner Robinson suggested this as a way for boards to become better informed about children entering and exiting care. The Review Committee will be looking at how FTMs are currently handled across the state because some boards are already notified of the meetings. We will also examine our role as reviewers when attending these meetings.

4. Improving the review form. The Executive Committee worked with the Legislative Committee and the Dependent Children’s Services staff to revise the CFCRB Review Form to allow volunteers to conduct more thorough reviews.

5. Visiting local boards. In an effort to discover the differences and similarities among local boards, some Executive Committee members have volunteered to visit local boards in 2006.

6. Creating a 2005 State Board Survey and Strategic Planning Committee. The survey addressed how the CFCRB governing structure can improve itself through short-term and long-term strategic planning.

The committees carried out all of these initiatives in addition to their ongoing work during 2005. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated individuals who give their time and talents to the CFCRB! I appreciate the special volunteers and staff who helped make 2005 such a productive year and I look forward to 2006. As always, I invite volunteers who have ideas of how we can improve the CFCRB to contact me at afunk@netzero.net or 859-263-0619.

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PR Committee using many avenues to recruit members, educate public

By Kathy Silberman
Public Relations Committee Chair

As a volunteer for the Citizen Foster Care Review Board, you know what you do and why! Maybe even your family members and close friends know what the CFCRB is all about. But does the average citizen know? The main focus of the Public Relations Committee is to get the word out to the public about the role of the CFCRB.

We want everyone to know that serving on a review board is **not** being a foster parent! Of course there is a great need for more foster parents. But for those who are not ready for such a huge step, volunteering to review cases of children already in foster care may be just what they are looking for to make a difference in the life of a child.

By educating the public, we hope to recruit new CFCRB volunteers to help alleviate the shortages on many of the existing boards.

Our committee members will be appearing on local TV talk shows to

discuss how review boards make recommendations and findings to District Court and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. These findings help to temporarily place



neglected or abused children until permanent homes are found or the children are returned to their families.

We will share that our work provides checks and balances that help keep foster parents, social workers, parents and other parties

focused on doing what is in the best interests of the children.

We will also be reinstating the CFCRB Speakers Bureau so that board members can recruit new volunteers by speaking to civic groups, churches and other organizations. We will train those who are willing to participate in the Speakers Bureau, and provide a script and a video they can use in their presentations.

Committee members are going to contact human interest reporters at newspapers across the state. We hope these reporters will want to write articles about what the CFCRB does for Kentucky's children.

We wonder if CFCRB volunteers and board members would like to participate in community fundraisers as a member of the CFCRB team. Can you see us walking in the American Heart Association Walk wearing our bright red shirts with *The Caring Difference* logo on the front? What a great way to get others to ask us what this is all about!

The Lost Boy: A Foster Child's Search for the Love of a Family



Book Review

By Shelly Meyer
CFCRB Volunteer, Fayette County

The Lost Boy is the sequel to *A Child Named "It,"* author Dave Pelzer's story of abuse, neglect and torture at the hands of his mother when he was a little boy. *The Lost Boy* covers ages 12 to 18

and *A Man Named Dave* finishes the trilogy. His most recent book, *The Privilege of Youth: A Teenager's Story of Longing for Acceptance and Friendship*, tells the story of his missing teenage years.

"On March 5, 1973, I received the long-awaited answer to my prayers. I was rescued. My teacher and other staff members at Thomas Edison Elementary School intervened and notified the police," said Pelzer in the opening lines of *The Lost Boy*.

Pelzer's resilience is challenged as a foster child. He longs to forget the agony he endured as a child. Yet at every turn he is terrified

that his evil mother will jump out and take him away. Relentlessly taunted by bullies, his misery is overwhelming. The love of a family eludes him as he moves in and out of foster homes.

The Lost Boy is an inspirational book of a boy's triumph over insurmountable odds. Pelzer's compelling spirit and courage are essential to his survival. His memoir is evidence that the foster care system is vital and quite literally changes lives.

The Lost Boy, Dave Pelzer, Heath Communications, Inc., © 1997, 340 pages

Child Protection Mediation helps facilitate permanent homes for children



Mediation is an informal process in which a neutral third party – a mediator – facilitates the resolution of a dispute between two or more parties. The process is designed to help disputing parties reach an agreement on all or part of the issues in dispute without going to court or otherwise escalating the dispute.

Decision-making authority remains with the parties, not the mediator. The mediator assists the parties in identifying issues, fostering joint problem solving and exploring settlement alternatives.

What is Child Protection Mediation?

Family Court introduced the new Child Protection Mediation Program in April 2004. Child Protection mediation provides a confidential and creative opportunity for families and social service personnel to make a timely decision about where child victims of dependency, neglect and abuse will permanently live.

Permanent placement for children in crisis requires such painstaking coordination between social services and the legal system that it is not uncommon for a case to linger for years; that is, a child lingers for years. Child Protection Mediation cuts through the process and eliminates some of the delay that prolongs uncertainty and insecurity for children looking for structure and permanence in their lives. Mediation can address many issues including improving prevention/case plans, visitation, grandparent visitation, communication, permanent placement and termination of parental rights.

How Child Protection Mediation Works

When appropriate, all participants are ordered to attend mediation in the local court facility. Participants may include biological parents, foster and/or adoptive parents, social workers and attorneys for the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, guardians ad litem for the children, the Court Appointed Special Authority (CASA) representative,

and attorneys for the parents. Highly skilled mediators keep the large group focused on the best interests of the child and set the stage for creative problem-solving. An essential component is the involvement of the biological parents. In the confidential setting of mediation, these parents are often willing to consider solutions that are difficult for them but best for their children.

The mediation process provides a forum for biological parents to express their concerns, which is usually the fear that they will completely lose contact with their children. Some mediated agreements can address these concerns so that the biological parents surrender their parental rights in exchange for some future contact with their children. This may range from occasional phone calls and annual school pictures to sharing information in the event of death of either parent or child. At the judge's discretion, mediated agreements are usually entered into the court record as an order.

Where Program is Offered

The Mediation and Family Court Services Department provides trained and experienced mediators free of charge to participants. The Child Protection Mediation Program is offered in Barren, Boyle, Campbell, Clark, Fayette, Franklin, Hardin, Harrison, Jefferson, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer, Metcalfe, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pulaski, Robertson and Rockcastle counties.

The program currently enjoys a 80 percent success rate. The Administrative Office of the Courts would like to make this program available to all Family Court sites in Kentucky. For more information, contact Shanea Garretson at 502-573-2350 or shaneagarretson@kycourts.net.

Interested Party Review Board Pilot Project

The Interested Party Review Board Pilot Project continues to expand statewide after being implemented in November 2004.

The program currently operates in 10 of the Department for Community Based Services service regions: Barren River, Big Sandy, Fayette, Green River, Jefferson, Lake Cumberland, Lincoln Trail, Northern Kentucky, Pennyriple and Purchase. Since November 2004, these boards have reviewed 259 children throughout these regions.

Three other regions, the Bluegrass Rural, Cumberland Valley and FIVCO, are scheduled to hold their first Interested Party Review Board meeting sometime in March or April.

Recruitment applications for the Gateway Buffalo Trace, Kentucky River and KIPDA Rural regions were mailed at the end of January.

The program will soon be operating in all 16 regions. Anyone interested in serving on an IPR Board can contact Jill Hall at 866-551-0040.

How to conduct better reviews on children with mental illness

By Mike Hodge
Region 6 Representative

Although astounding advances have been made in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in the last 50 years, the stigma of mental illness still persists.

As Citizen Foster Care Review Board reviewers, we routinely come across issues of mental illness. Often we overlook this aspect of a child's well-being, but a child's emotional health should not be ignored.

Studies have shown that 30 percent to 70 percent of the children in foster care suffer from mental illness. This is not surprising, considering that these children are dealing with traumatic and unstable circumstances. Children depend on their parents for their mental stability. They do not have the knowledge or maturity to establish a firm mental foundation on their own. When their relationship with their parents becomes distressed, their mental situation is often affected as well.

How do we, as CFCRB reviewers, get a handle on the prevalent issue of mental illness? There are no easy answers. I have worked in the field of mental health for many years and I still find every case involving mental illness to be a challenge. There are, however, four basic things to consider when reviewing a child with mental illness.

Read the psychological evaluations in the file. Do not be intimidated by these reports or think they will be too technical. These reports offer a good overview of the child's situation and

are generally easy to read and understand. These evaluations provide information not found in any other area of the case file.



Give more attention to children with severe symptoms. Assess the impact of the illness. Two children can have the same diagnosis but very different presentations. One child may be relatively stable and have the illness under control. Another child may be totally out of control. Examine how disruptive the illness is to the child's current placement and educational situation. Pay special attention to any child who was recently treated at a psychiatric hospital. You should be able to find in-patient hospitalizations in the placement log.

Assess the mental health needs and treatment of the child. Look for the reason the child came into care. Often the parent(s) have mental health problems that led to abuse or neglect. If the goal is for the child to return to the parent, examine the services and treatment progress of the parent. In some cases, the child's illness may have pushed the child beyond the parents'

control. Sometimes the illness develops after a child enters care. In any situation, check to see that appropriate mental health services are provided and that treatment is followed. Make sure the goals in the case plan address the mental health issues.

If you believe that important mental health issues are not being addressed, use the check box for Mental Health on the review form. It is located at the top center of the form in the Child's Needs section. Check the "N" box and specify the issue in the Comments section at the bottom of the form. Also, remember to check the box for "Response Requested from Cabinet."

Consider your own mental health. Don't allow your own frustrations and disappointments with a case or with "the system" to get the best of you. Keep a positive perspective on your work. Recognize that you are part of a large system, that you have an important role and that you have limitations. Do the best you can in spite of your limitations. Be proud of what you do, strive to do it better, and focus on one child at a time.





Spotlight On: Christian & Montgomery Counties



Christian County

By Danielle Meyer

Members of the Christian County C Board wanted to show their concern for the foster children in Hopkinsville in some small way so they collected and donated toys to give to the children for Christmas. Chair Cathy Wallace presented the gifts to Christian County FSOS Debbie Richardson.

Members of the Christian County Board are Sharon Bush, Nora Dunbar, Elizabeth Gray, Mary Keel, Sherry Roger, Sandra Salyer, Sam Salyer, Gloria Wacks and Cathy Wallace.



Cathy Wallace and Debbie Richardson are shown with the toys collected for the children in Christian County.

Montgomery County

By Mae Philbeck, Field Coordinator

Starkey Ray, chair of the Montgomery County Board, was one of the original board members and has been a volunteer for 18 years. Starkey keeps things lively and his board entertained, which may be one of the reasons all of his board members have served at least nine years.



The Montgomery County Board includes, front row, left to right: Dolores Williamson and Pat McGlothlin; back row, left to right: Suzie Cowden, Kate Zolman and Starkey Ray.

Kate Zolman devotes much of her time to volunteering at schools in Montgomery County.

According to Starkey, the board would fall apart without Pat McGlothlin. Dolores Williamson had to take a leave from the board for a while, but is once again a faithful member. Teachers Suzie Cowden and Theresa Fetter bring their educational backgrounds to the board. One board member, Buddy Chappell, passed away in November and is sorely missed by the other members. They still feel his presence at each meeting.

Volunteers invited to attend Executive Committee meetings

By Mae Philbeck, Field Coordinator

State Chair Angie Funk is working hard to promote strong local boards during her tenure as head of the CFCRB. One way to accomplish this is by inviting CFCRB members to attend Executive Committee meetings that are being held throughout the state. You are invited to attend these Executive Committee meetings:

Saturday, Aug. 26, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. EDT
Jenny Wiley State Resort Park Prestonsburg

Thursday, Oct. 2, 5 - 8 p.m. EDT
Executive Inn, Louisville

Please note that these are tentative locations. If you want to attend any of the Executive Committee meetings, call Hanna Harvey at 800-928-2350 at least two weeks prior to the event to RSVP and confirm the location.

Calendar of Events

August 26, 2006
Executive Committee Meeting
Jenny Wiley State Resort Park, Prestonsburg

October 26, 2006
Executive Committee Meeting
Executive Inn, Louisville

October 27-29, 2006
2006 CFCRB Statewide Conference
Executive Inn, Louisville



What does concurrent planning mean? How do reviewers know if a case is a concurrent planning case?

Submitted by Ann Goodwin, Daviess B Chair

Answered by Dolores Smith, Professional Services Supervisor, Administrative Office of the Courts

Concurrent planning is a method of case management that provides reunification services to a family whose child is placed in out-of-home care while simultaneously developing an alternative permanency plan for a child in case it is needed. It redefines success as achieving permanency for a child in out-of-home care, which may or may not be reunification with the birth family.

Concurrent planning applies only to cases with a permanency goal of return to parent. Once a goal other than return to parent is established or termination of parental rights occurs, concurrent planning no longer applies.

Concurrent planning depends on an accurate assessment of the child's and family's strengths and needs, and on a case review of the family's progress toward completing the objectives and tasks developed in case planning.

The process is based on full disclosure to the family regarding their rights and responsibilities as parents, the impact of foster care placement on children, what concurrent planning means and where they stand in the process, the support services that will be provided to them, their progress or lack of progress toward completion of the case plan, the possible consequences for not following the case plan, and the permanency options available for their child. This disclosure begins at the initial case planning conference and is ongoing.

Concurrent planning is to be considered at the initial five-day case planning conference using the Concurrent Planning Review Tool (form). The form should be filed in the case record. If the determination is made to initiate concurrent planning, it should be documented in the Child Youth Development section of the Continuous Quality Assessment (CQA).

Concurrent planning is considered again at the three-month review Family Team Meeting if the case was not designated as concurrent planning at the initial case planning conference. This should be documented in TWIST contacts.

At the six-month case planning conference, all child protection out-of-home care cases must be converted to concurrent planning if they are not already designated as a concurrent planning case. Status out-of-home care cases are exempt.

Documentation that a case is designated as concurrent planning should be made in the Permanency Objective section of the Child Youth Action Plan. An alternate permanency plan objective should be added as a contingency plan. The alternate plan is not required to be adoption and may be any approved permanency goal.

Foster parents are expected to continue to support reunification with parents after a case is designated as concurrent planning. If the alternate plan is adoption, foster parents are asked to consider adopting the child if TPR were to occur. If the foster parent is not interested in adoption, consideration begins of other potential adoptive placements. The possibility of moving the child to an alternate adoptive placement is considered; however, the concurrent planning designation does not require that a child be moved from a foster home that does not wish to adopt.

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The Caring Difference to be sent as an e-newsletter

The Caring Difference will take on an exciting new looking beginning with the next issue. We will launch *The Caring Difference* as an e-newsletter, which will be distributed by e-mail instead of snail mail to save printing and mailing costs. In anticipation of this change, the AOC field coordinators have been updating their volunteers' e-mail addresses. If a

volunteer does not have e-mail, the field coordinator will be happy to provide a black-and-white copy upon request. The e-newsletter will provide the same important CFCRB news while allowing volunteers to take simple surveys online and link to online resources. For more information, contact your local field coordinator.

The 2006 CFCRB Conference is just a few months away!

The 2006 CFCRB State Conference is quickly approaching. The event will take place Oct. 27-29 at the Executive Inn in Louisville. Although the conference is typically held the first week of November, it was scheduled a week earlier due to the Breeder's Cup and the Farm Machinery Show filling up hotels in Louisville in early November.

The Executive Inn offers a great location right across from the Kentucky Fair and Expo Center, Freedom Hall and Six Flags® Kentucky Kingdom. For those of you who are bringing children and who love fun and excitement, the park will be open that weekend.

The hotel is also conveniently located just a short drive from downtown, which offers the eclectic atmosphere of 4th Street Live and the Hard Rock Café. Other great attractions include the Louisville Zoo, the Louisville Slugger Museum, the Kentucky Derby Museum, Churchill Downs and Caesars Indiana Casino Hotel.



The Executive Inn in Louisville will be the site of the 2006 CFCRB Conference on Oct. 27-29.

Not only will the conference allow you to spend time in a great city, it will also provide important opportunities for you as volunteers. It's a great way to obtain your six hours of continuing education and learn what the committees have been up to during the year. You'll also get to meet other volunteers and make new friends. Volunteers are recognized and honored for the love and joy they put into being advocates for the children in Kentucky.

We will kick off this top-notch conference with a recognition and awards banquet on Friday night, followed by educational sessions on Saturday and Sunday.

The Administrative Office of the Courts will provide overnight accommodations and meals free of charge for volunteers and reimburse mileage of more than 200 miles round trip. Mark your calendars now for Oct. 27-29 and look for registration information in the coming months. We hope to see you there!



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