



The Caring Difference

The Newsletter of the Citizen Foster Care Review Board

After all, a home should be forever . . .

What a Year! Major Changes and Successes in the CFCRB

Submitted by Mae Philbeck
Education Specialist

The Citizen Foster Care Review Board has undergone significant changes in the past year. Patrick Yewell, who formerly served as general manager for Dependent Children's Services, has been promoted to general manager of the Department of Juvenile Services. As a result, Kevin Smalley has been named manager of Dependent Children's Services, which now falls under the umbrella of the Department of Juvenile Services.

The 2003 CFCRB Annual Report, just published, details the exciting advancements being made by the CFCRB program. And while the state budget deficit has resulted in the

annual CFCRB conference being changed to a biennial event, the regional training sessions are proving to be a positive alternative to our annual conference.

Patrick Yewell's Farewell

"We still have much work to do, but I am proud to say that the CFCRB is making great gains for Kentucky's children."

It has been my pleasure to serve as manager of the Citizen Foster Care Review Board for the last nine and a half years. During this time we have seen a great deal of growth in our program and improvement in services to children.

I remember my first day when I learned we had one computer and three employees to serve the entire state. Nine years later we have 17 people who work in Dependent Children's Services, many of whom serve the Citizen Foster Care Review Board.

I can also remember when I first proposed that field coordinators visit their boards at least once every six months. I was told that was impossible and now field coordinators attend the majority of the board meetings. At one time our database contained records on a mere 400 children. Today the system contains information on more than 30,000 children.

When I first arrived, no one in the state child welfare system could tell me how many children were in care



Patrick Yewell, left, has been named general manager for the Department of Juvenile Services and Kevin Smalley is now manager of Dependent Children's Services.

or how long they had been in care. We currently have one of the most extensive annual reports in the state on children in out-of-home-care. In the last three years alone we have seen a drop of nearly nine months in the average length of stay for a child in foster care. We still have much work to do, but I am proud to say that the CFCRB is making great gains for Kentucky's children.

Now that Chief Justice Joseph Lambert and AOC Director Cicely Jaracz Lambert have given me the opportunity to serve as the general manager of Juvenile Services, this will require a change for my staff. Juvenile Services is now comprised of the following areas:

- √ Court Designated Worker Program
- √ Court/Community Relations Program
- √ Citizen Foster Care Review Board

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Message From the State Chair

By Anita C. Williams



Recently the McCracken County Family Court Council honored our foster parents with the Fourth Annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner. The guests of honor enjoyed dinner, entertainment, speakers and door prizes donated by local businesses and individuals. Family Court Judge Cynthia Sander-son asked a couple who recently adopted a child from Guatemala to speak. This young couple taught me a real lesson with what they had to say.

John and Laura Roberts eloquently told their story of the adventure they experienced when they went to Guatemala to finalize the adoption of their baby.

They were told their attorney was involved with the Mafia and that, in order to take their baby out of the country, one of the parents had to stay in the country to testify against the attorney. Mr. Roberts chose to stay because Mrs. Roberts had to return to the United States to care for their two daughters. After five months of staying in a hotel and fearing for his life most of the time, he was finally allowed to leave the country with his child.

This couple expressed their appreciation for our government and how children are cared for here in the United States. In that country, most children are put out on the streets to beg for food after age 6 or 7. The orphanages are full and are not able to care for children after a certain age. I was saddened many years ago when I traveled to Mexico and watched children perform on the streets and beg for food and money.

Although some of our children “fall through the cracks” at times, we can hear stories or travel to other countries and know that most of our children are treated humanely. We tend to take for granted our culture and the “system” that we expect to care for our young children. This is not to say that we should stop expecting the best for children. However, I hope we can all be more appreciative of those who do care and advocate to make life a little better for those who can’t speak for themselves.

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Crystal Bohlander, Training Committee
Christy Reaves, Public Relations Committee
Martha Garland, Recognition Committee
Angie Funk, Conference Committee

Editorial Staff

Christy Reaves, Editor
Mae Philbeck, CFCRB Liaison
Jennifer Sharp, Graphic Designer

Much accomplished at annual state board meeting

State Chair Anita Williams conducted the annual state board meeting in Lexington Nov. 8, which was attended by nearly 50 state board chairs, Executive Committee members and staff.

Patrick Yewell announced his promotion to general manager of the newly formed Department of Juvenile Services and the appointment of Kevin Smalley as manager of Dependent Children’s Services.

Bill Goetz and Christy Reaves explained the legislative recommendations, policy and procedure changes, and bylaws changes proposed by the Legislative Committee. All were approved by the state board. Mary Lou Ringo of Kenton County spoke on the importance of sibling visitation.

Dolores Smith reported that the regional trainings have proven to be a huge success, with volunteers appreciative of earning continuing education hours closer to home. Dolores also provided the new initial training agenda proposed by the Training Committee. The new training will focus on the compilation of the DCBS file and how to review the case. The length of the training will be reduced from eight hours to six. The new agenda was approved by the state board and will be used after Jan. 1, 2004.

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2003 brings new initiatives, successes to the CFCRB

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- √ Kentucky Court Interpreter Program
- √ Guardian *ad Litem* program
- √ Kentucky Court Improvement Project

Needless to say, I need help to manage these programs. I have appointed Kevin Smalley, who was previously a staff attorney with the Administrative Office of the Courts, to serve as the new manager of Dependent Children's Services and the CFCRB. Although I will not be involved in the day-to-day activities of the CFCRB, I will be just down the hall and you can rest assured I will continue to be a strong supporter of the CFCRB program. I hope you will give Kevin the same support you have shown me.

I believe this is a great program in which volunteers and government have worked together successfully to improve the lives of thousands of children in our state. I cannot thank you enough for allowing me to be your manager. I have loved every day of my service to this program.

It has been a privilege serving as your manager for nearly 10 years and I hope you know how grateful I am for the time you volunteer. Any improvements to our program have been because of your dedication and I congratulate you on another successful year. Finally, just a simple "thank you."

Introducing Kevin Smalley

Kevin graduated *cum laude* from the Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville in 1996 and was admitted to the Kentucky Bar Association that same year. From 1996 to 1998, he was an associate attorney with Schiller, Osborne and Barnes, where he specialized in insurance defense litigation. From 1999 to 2000, he investigated complaints of unlawful discrimination as a

compliance enforcement officer for the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights. In January 2001, Kevin joined the Administrative Office of the Courts' Legal Department as a staff attorney. He was responsible for personnel issues, government contracts and other matters affecting the courts.

Kevin and his wife, Saundra, have been married for seven years. They live in Florence, Ky., with their pride and joy, a miniature dachshund named Daisy.

Message From Kevin

"These times are full of change and I know we will all work together to positively impact the children in the Commonwealth."

It is an honor and a privilege for me to join the newly merged Juvenile Services Department, and more specifically, the Dependent Children's Services Division. I have been completely impressed by everyone I work with and they all continue to do a wonderful job during this period of transition.

I am also very excited about working with the Citizen Foster Care

Review Board program. As CFCRB volunteers, you perform an invaluable function. Your efforts make a difference, and you deserve recognition, praise and gratitude.

Thank you for the warm welcome I received at meetings of the Legislative Committee, the Executive Committee and the State Board, as well as the regional trainings in Louisville and Lexington. We are going to work hard to improve the status of the children in foster care. As a new administration begins with the Cabinet for Families and Children, we have an excellent opportunity to improve our working relationships. We will seek statutory changes during this legislative session to improve the reporting and tracking of children being released from the Cabinet. We will continue to promote education and accountability among professionals who serve dependent children.

These are times full of change and I know we will all work together to positively impact the lives of children in the Commonwealth. Thanks again for all you do. I look forward to working with you!

Highlights from the 2003 CFCRB Annual Report

* CFCRB conducted 21,056 reviews of 8,072 children, a 48 percent increase since 2001.

* Local boards held more than 1,000 meetings, a 20 percent increase since 2001.

* The average length of time in foster care has decreased from 36 months to 32 months.

* Sixty-seven percent of children have been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. In 2002, that figure was 70 percent.

* In the last two years, the percentage of children who were adopted increased from 14.3 percent to 21.7 percent.

* The length of time from entry into foster care to adoption has decreased from 46 months to 42.8 months.

* In 2002, 22 percent of the foster care population was African American. That figure dropped to 18.7 percent in 2003.

To view this report in its entirety, type in this Web page address (http://www.kycourts.net/AOC/DCS/AOC_DCS_CFCRBPubs.shtm) and click on 2003 Annual Report.



A View From the Bench

By Judge Jeffrey M. Watson
Clark/Madison Family Court



In the wake of the passage of the Family Court Amendment to the Kentucky Constitution, the Supreme Court, upon the recommendation of Chief Justice Lambert, appointed several district judges to serve as Family Court judges. I was honored to be one of them, having served as a circuit judge assigned to Family Court since the beginning of the year, and am pleased to be back.

By "back" I am referring to my return to the realm of child protection. For the first several of my 10 years as a district judge, I presided over dependency, abuse and neglect cases, and was more passionate about those cases than any other aspect of my job. Then, in 1999, our jurisdiction was fortunate to implement a pilot Family Court. While that was great news for our counties, it resulted in a significant hiatus in my involvement with family cases. Now, I'm not only happy to be back, but very pleased to work in a vastly improved system for children.

A decade ago, while I worked with many well-meaning individuals, the

infrastructure itself wasn't so child-friendly. Child victims of maltreatment were often hastily returned to unhealed homes, or were victimized again by years of "foster care drift." By statute and by indoctrination, the goal of reunification was so prevalent that child safety was almost an afterthought.

Fortunately, the pendulum has swung and now child safety is of paramount importance under both federal and state law. The system still prefers that parents raise their children, but *only* when there is a reasonable expectation that they will properly do so. Now, when it appears that parents will not, children can be given a sense of permanency on a much faster track.

A litany of improvements have been enacted, many flowing from passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. While there is still an appropriate focus on reasonable efforts for federal dollars, those findings are no longer required if certain aggravating factors exist, such as abandonment or prior terminations of other children.

Abuse or neglect of siblings and domestic violence are statutorily relevant in adjudication hearings. A parent's inaction for six months matters, permanency reviews are to be held ever year, and a child being in foster care for 15 of 22 months is a ground for termination. An accelerated version of termination of parental rights and adoption is now available for abandoned infants. There are now such terms as kinship care and concurrent planning. The proliferation of Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs across the state continues and is significant. Training is available to guardians *ad litem*. The Citizen Foster Care Review Board seems to be stronger than it was a decade ago.

While these and other improvements have been made to particular aspects of Kentucky's child welfare system, perhaps the most visionary is the permanent advent of Family Courts. Having presided over dependency, abuse and neglect cases as both a district and Family Court Judge, I can attest to the undeniable fact that "one family, one judge" isn't just a slogan but a successful way of doing business that will continue to have a far-reaching, positive impact upon the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens.

Regional training sessions provide education, recognition

Because the annual CFCRB conference was canceled this year due to state budget constraints, the Training Committee planned regional training conferences to be held throughout the state. Ten sites were selected and invitations were sent to all volunteers.

By Nov. 15, 2003, 220 volunteers had attended the training sessions, a greater participation than the usual turnout at the annual conference, which averages around 175. The trainings will continue through February 2004.

Field coordinators and volunteers conducted workshops on the Enhanced Review Process and

Extended Reviewing Skills. The evaluations on the regional training have been positive.

In addition to the workshops, the Dependent Children's Services staff presented five, 10 and 10+ year awards to volunteers who have made an outstanding contribution to the Citizen Foster Care Review Board program. Those who received an award were Judy Booth, Lea Fischbach, Pat Geveden, Alberta Goldsberry, Beverly Hilger, Armina Howard, Kerri Miller, Linda Reeves, Tom Stevenson and Virginia Todd and Curtis Williams.

The regional training sessions will take place during the years the state conference is not held.



Spotlight On: Carter County & Hardin County



Carter County

Submitted by Deb Bennett
CFCRB Field Coordinator

During my first site visit to Carter County as a field coordinator, I walked into the conference room and there were literally so many files on the table I couldn't even see the volunteers. I thought, "Good night, what in the world!" The DCBS office would pull every foster care file for every CFCRB meeting.

The volunteers would spend hours upon hours reviewing these files because they believed they had to. I looked at Dovie Carter, who had just become the new



The Carter County board members are, from left, Robert Tackett, Rodney Helmick, Dovie Carter and Lisa Salmon. Patt Barker is not pictured.

chair for this board, and said, "We've got to get all this straightened out, girl!" Dovie and I began to work diligently to organize

the situation. As this process was taking place, we kept losing member after member. At times, Dovie and I were the only members. We just kept right on being persistent.

Today the Carter County Foster Care Review Board is AWESOME! Every foster child in Carter County can be confident they have volunteers who are making sure they get the care they need.

Dovie Carter, chair of the board, says she does this to get involved with foster children and possibly become a foster parent herself someday.

Robert Tackett, who is a foster parent himself, says

he's another set of eyes and hands, assuring that our foster kids are taken care of.

Lisa Salmon, the youngest member of our board, says her reason for volunteering is the kids. She is a family advocate for the Olive Hill Family Resource Center.

Rodney Helmick, a volunteer for the American Red Cross who also works with children in church youth groups and football programs, says he just loves the kids.

Patt Barker says she volunteers because it's important that children who are forced to start life without a loving, stable family be given every chance to succeed.

Hardin County A

Submitted by Mary Burroughs
Chair of Hardin County A

Hardin County's Foster Care Review Board A is comprised of five members. These volunteers include board chair **Mary Burroughs**, **Laura Cooper**, **Jo Ann Davis**, **Dr. Joseph Dew** and **Vadina Perks**. Our volunteers, who come from varied professional backgrounds, include a physician, budget analyst, college instructor and teacher, and a foster care children's advocate who has also adopted her granddaughter.

We are a small board, but a

faithful group, for we seldom have anyone absent. We can always count on each other and everyone on the board really gets along with one another. We strive to make a difference in a child's life.



Q
&
A

Do I have to answer the question on the review form, "When do you believe it would be reasonable for the child(ren) to be in a permanent placement?"?

– Submitted by Ruth Davis, Livingston County CFCRB

Yes, this question must be answered as federal law requires this finding to be made and your response to this question cannot be found on any other form in the case file. This should be the last question you answer on the review form. After reviewing a particular case, use your best judgment and insert an actual date as to when you believe it would be reasonable for the child(ren) in the case to be in a permanent placement. This is strictly your opinion.

Executive Committee announces three new members

Submitted by Mae Philbeck
Education Specialist

Curtis Williams, Hardin County B

Curtis was elected to serve on the Executive Committee in 2002 as a representative of Region 2. Curtis is chair of the Hardin County B board and is always willing to go the extra mile for children. He and his wife, Diana, have been married for 33 years and have four children. He says one is homemade, two are adopted, and for one they serve as legal guardians.

Curtis and Diana have been foster parents for 10 years and have had 52 children placed in their home. Curtis is a retired police officer/firefighter who served in the armed forces during the Vietnam era. He is currently a pretrial officer in Hardin County. Curtis received the 2002 Citizen Foster Care Review Board Outstanding Volunteer Award and the 2003 Dependent Children's Services Outstanding Contribution Award.

Curtis lists his pets as two dogs, one cat and four horses.

Christy Reaves, Boyd County

Christy was appointed as chair of the Public Relations Committee in the fall of 2003. She is the chair of the Boyd County CFCRB and has been on the board for five years.

Christy considers her most important job to be the mother of six children. She also works in the law office of her husband, William. She is a strong advocate for children and has worked hard in Eastern Kentucky to improve the situation for children in foster care. She started the Court Appointed Special Advocate program in Boyd County.

Since becoming chair of the Public Relations Committee, Christy has already begun several projects to spread the word about our program. She says that when she is not working for CFCRB, she is remodeling her house, doing yard work, or in the car driving one of her kids somewhere.

Mike Hodge, Campbell County

Mike came to the Executive Committee as the Regional Representative of Region 6 in 2002. He has served on the review board in Campbell County for more

than 10 years and has been chair for much of that time. Mike and his wife, Debbie, have two boys, Keegan and Connor. He spends much of his "free" time with homework, karate, basketball, baseball and Cub Scouts.

Mike works with several charities and is a case manager for a mental health agency in Ohio.

"My first exposure to foster care was when I was a child," says Mike. "My parents would invite children from the local children's home to spend their birthdays at our home. We would celebrate with them as if they were a part of our family. I could not imagine what it would be like to not have a family."



The three new Executive Committee members are, from left, Curtis Williams, Christy Reaves and Mike Hodge.

Public Relations Committee seeks interested members

By Christy Reaves
Public Relations Committee Chair

The Public Relations Committee is up and running again after an eight-month break. Sheila Dalton, who had served as the editor of *The Caring Difference* since 2001, relinquished her duties as newsletter editor and chair of the Public Relations Committee when her professional commitments became more demanding.

The Public Relations Committee benefited from her professional experience. Editorial guidelines for *The Caring Difference* were estab-

lished under her auspices. The guidelines define the goals, focus and audience of our newsletter. Because these guidelines exist, we have a strong framework for *The Caring Difference*.

Sheila and her committee members also developed media packets for statewide distribution and created a Speakers Bureau. The efforts of the previous committee have given us a stable public relations foundation.

As the new editor of *The Caring Difference*, I am looking forward to working with my fellow committee members as we follow in the foot-

steps of the previous members. However, we recognize the need for more members with experience in public relations, whether it be professional experience or volunteer experience.

Our next committee meeting will be at the Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort on Jan. 14, 2004, at 10 a.m. (EST). I encourage all volunteers to consider the openings on the Public Relations Committee as an opportunity to work for the children in Kentucky at a new level. For more information, please call me at 800-439-1323 (work) or 606-329-2235 (home).

Bill to explore benefits of sibling care in one facility

By Mary Lou Ringo
Chair of Kenton County Board A

Rep. Jon Draud, R-Crestview Hills, will introduce House Bill 307 during the 2004 Kentucky General Assembly. The bill reads as follows:

"An act relating to children committed to the custody of the state. Create a new section of KRS Chapter 194B to permit the Cabinet for Families and Children to establish a pilot program to provide residential services for sibling groups committed to the cabinet, require the cabinet to solicit proposals from existing agencies; permit the cabinet to promulgate administrative regulations to implement the program."

Many believe that long-term care in one facility with siblings would be better for children than a series of one-year stays in group facilities, multiple foster home placements, loss of contact with siblings and extended family, and many school moves. This pilot program would allow the Cabinet to study these outcomes. Why do we need another bill? These quotes are excerpted from the *Final Report: Kentucky Child and Family Services Review*:

"Kentucky was not in substantial conformity with six of the seven child and family outcomes."

"The Cabinet was not consistently effective in ensuring that children have permanency and stability in their living situations."

"Children in foster care in Kentucky tend to experience placement instability ... either because the appropriate assessments are not being conducted, or because there are an insufficient number of placement resources resulting in placement decisions being made on the basis of what is available rather than what is needed."

"There were inconsistencies in practice with respect to placing siblings together, establishing frequent visitation between children and parents and siblings, maintaining children's connections to extended families and communities, and promoting positive relationships between parents and their children in foster care."

In a statewide teleconference on the Kentucky Foster Care Census in August, it was noted that "Seventy-nine percent (of children in care) were part of a sibling group and 53 percent with siblings were placed with all

siblings." Imagine, just over half of children were placed with their siblings. Regulations call for siblings to be placed together, but in almost half the cases this doesn't happen.

The question of money invariably comes up. This approach would be revenue neutral because it is no more expensive to care for siblings together than separated. There is a possibility of saving money because fewer case workers would be needed to provide transportation and supervision for sibling visits, there would be fewer moves and probably fewer days spent in psychiatric care.

This bill leaves many "what ifs" unanswered. But it does address the most important "what if." What if there is a better way and, through fear or inertia, we fail to find it? Contact your representatives and ask them to support HB 307.

Annual State Board Meeting

Continued from page 2

The Nominations Committee presented the retention vote for Anita Williams, state chair, and Angie Funk, state vice chair. The totals for Anita were 32 yes and 19 no. The totals for Angie were 47 yes and 4 no. Both will retain their offices through 2004.

Angie Funk, Conference Committee chair, announced that the 2004 conference will be Nov. 5-7 at the Executive Inn in Owensboro.

Christy Reaves, Public Relations Committee chair, detailed the many projects the committee has taken on this year. Mae Philbeck will continue to act as liaison for all newsletter articles.

Round table discussions focused on making local boards stronger, support from the AOC, the 2004 conference agenda and improving communications between the Executive Committee and CFCRB volunteers.

Family Court Judge Kimberly Bunnell gave a motivational speech following lunch.



On the Calendar

Meetings • Events • Trainings

Initial Training

December 1, 2003

Initial Training, Barren County

Committee Meetings

January 14, 2004

Public Relations Committee
AOC, Frankfort

January 14, 2004

Legislative Committee, Frankfort

February 20, 2004

Training Committee,
Elizabethtown

February 2004

(Date to be announced)

Nominating Committee
AOC, Frankfort

Regional Trainings

January 24, 2004

Pine Mountain State Resort Park

February 21, 2004

Carter Caves State Resort Park

For more information, call
Amy Smitha at 800-928-2350.

Lending a Helping Hand to Foster Kids

Submitted by Deb Bennett
CFCRB Field Coordinator

The Citizen Foster Care Review Board was privileged in November 2003 to help the Foster Parents Association (FPA) distribute duffel bags to Kentucky's foster children who need something to carry their personal belongings in when they pack for out-of-home placements.

For more than a year, Linda Glover, FPA president, pursued the possibility of getting duffel bags from the Dr. Laura Schlesinger Foundation. The My Stuff bags are filled with items chosen by the foundation along with contributions from listeners of Dr. Laura's radio program.

These bags come personalized for boys and girls, and contain such items as Boyd's Bears, nail polish, homemade quilts or afghans, caps, toys, books, journals and many other items. Each My Stuff bag is lovingly filled by volunteers from Dr. Laura's

own staff, local schools and the community.

Ms. Glover received a shipment of 3,000 bags to be distributed to every Kentucky county. She expects to receive an additional 3,000 bags in six months.

Many foster children in Kentucky are receiving a new duffel bag to carry their belongings in. Helping distribute the bags are, from left, Billy Stover and Bruce Jones, CFCRB field coordinators; Linda Glover, president of the Foster Parents Association; and Judy Gulley, FPA treasurer.



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