

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

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6-25-02

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 20, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *S*

SUBJECT: THIRD STATUS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF  
AMERICA

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of the third status report on implementation of the recommendations of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA).

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the City Council receive this report.

**BACKGROUND:** On June 12, 2001, City Council received the CWLA report that reviewed the death of Katelynn Frazier who had been in the custody of the Department of Human Services. The CWLA had been asked to review the tragic death of Katelynn in order to assist the City in examining the policies and practices of its child welfare system, and to recommend improvements that would help the City protect its vulnerable children. The League's report contained a number of recommended improvements in the areas of policy, practice and procedure. Council asked that staff return in the fall with a status report on the implementation of these improvements. On September 15, 2001 and January 22, 2002, status reports were reviewed and Council requested continued progress reports.

**DISCUSSION:** The Department of Human Services has continued to make progress in its implementation of the recommendations made by the CWLA. The major areas of change are discussed below. A statement of all the League's recommendations and the implementation status of each is attached (Attachment I).

Structured Risk Assessments. The department has implemented structured risk and safety assessment protocols for continuous use from the time a child enters the child welfare system until permanency is achieved. These extensive assessment tools were developed with the assistance of the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment and the Child Welfare Institute.

Use of the new tools began January 22, 2002. In all new cases risk and safety assessments begin with the entrance of the family into the child welfare system. For existing cases, the risk and safety assessment process begins in conjunction with service plan reviews which are required at a minimum of every six months. Continued training of child welfare staff is in process. Currently

the consultant from the Child Welfare Institute is reviewing completed risk and safety assessments to assure the consistency and quality of implementation. He also is providing training for the supervisors on effective supervision of the risk and safety protocols, and will consult with staff as they build internal training for new staff.

On February 26, 2002 training on the new protocols was conducted for interested stakeholders. Approximately 60 people attended the sessions. Participants included personnel from Mental Health Services, Police, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, Juvenile Court Services, and guardians ad litem, and the Juvenile Judges. Further training was conducted at the City and School Staff Group on Youth Annual Conference. Approximately 30 staff from the schools, Recreation Department and Department of Mental Health attended. At the Statewide Virginia League of Social Service Conference, 75 social work professionals also received training.

Continued training, review, refinement and evaluation of the risk and safety protocols is planned for FY 2003. This is an extensive and major change in how child welfare staff assess and document cases which not only will aid in increasing child safety, but also will positively impact service planning and case outcomes. It has been well received by our stakeholders.

“New Eyes” Policy. The Community Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services is now known as the Child Welfare Partnership. The Policy Subcommittee thoroughly reviewed the implementation of the “New Eyes” policy, whereby, any injury, suspicious or not, (including any bruise or mark) to a child in foster care must be reviewed by a social worker who is not associated with the foster care case. “New Eyes” is a separate and distinct policy from the CPS requirement that all suspicious injuries to a child be the subject of a full CPS investigation and it is in addition to the policy which requires that any complaint of abuse or neglect of a child in an active foster care case be investigated by a social worker not associated with the case. The “New Eyes” policy is designed to increase the objectivity of the assessment of injuries to foster children and provides for multiple perspectives in a case.

Currently, foster parents are the primary reporters of injuries that occur to foster children while they are in the foster home. Under the “New Eyes” policy, foster parents are required to report all injuries, whether they are suspicious or not. Injuries that have been reported, and prompted a “New Eyes” assessment since the inception of the policy, have included bee stings, scraped knees from playground falls and other injuries that are encountered in normal child development.

The Policy Subcommittee and the full Partnership recommended that two changes to this policy be made. While any injuries to a foster child in the care of a natural parent will continue to be assessed under the “New Eyes” policy, the natural parents will now be required to report injuries under their court ordered service plan. This change emphasizes a “New Eyes” assessment of injuries sustained by foster children while in the home of a natural parent, where risk of abuse and neglect is greatest by requiring parental reporting of injuries to be included in the parent’s foster care service plan. The second change is to complete a “New Eyes” assessment on foster

children in a foster home only in the case of serious injuries or when a parent, social worker or foster parent requests a review. A "serious" injury is one which requires medical attention.

These changes, while they narrow the scope of the "New Eyes" policy, acknowledge and address the fact that the risk of abuse or neglect is greatest while the child is in the care of the natural parent, not the foster parent. It also recognizes that many checks and balances already exist as to foster parents, such as: (1) foster parents are screened, licensed, and have no prior abuse or neglect history; (2) foster parents are required to complete a monthly observation form on children in their care; (3) multiple social workers interact with foster parents which provides many "new eyes" opportunities; and (4) with this change, foster parents will also be required to log all injuries to children in their care and request a "new eyes" assessment only for a serious injury to a child. The Child Welfare Partnership believes that these revisions meet the intent of the "New Eyes" policy. The revisions will be effective July 1, 2002.

Review of High-Risk Cases. Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria Social Services have joined to provide outside risk assessments of high-risk cases in all three jurisdictions. Inter-jurisdictional reviews are conducted quarterly, and are set to occur in February, May, August and November of each year. This quarterly review provides an objective review of high-risk child welfare cases to assure that best practices are provided. In addition, the review teams identify barriers to service and brainstorm alternate service approaches. All agencies have benefitted from the increased sharing of information and expertise and this collaborative model is engendering interest for possible use in other parts of the State.

Criminal Record & State Registry Checks. The Child Welfare Partnership initiated and the City sponsored successful legislation in the 2002 General Assembly for increased authority to conduct criminal background checks in child welfare cases and to strengthen the law that determines when reunification is inadvisable, shortening the time frame for permanency decisions for effected children.

Senator Ticer and Delegate Moran sponsored legislation (SB219 and HB 1043) which was approved by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor, which requires local social service departments to perform criminal history and child abuse records checks in any case in which the department is considering placing a child with an adult (including returning a child to a birth parent) on an emergency, temporary, or permanent basis. Background checks may also be required for all adults residing in the household where the child is to be placed. Senator Ticer and Delegate Moran also sponsored legislation (SB 130 and HB 1061) which was approved and signed by the Governor, which allows local departments of social services to proceed more quickly in placing a child for adoption or in permanent foster care if a court finds that reunification is inadvisable because seriously harmful behavior toward the child or other children (e.g., abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, severe abuse, or sexual abuse) has occurred.

The Child Welfare Partnership is beginning now to assess needed legislation for the 2003 General Assembly. Two items are currently under discussion, increasing payments for foster

homes and increasing the rate of payment for guardians ad litem. Both foster parents and guardians are critical partners in protecting children and helping them to reach permanency. It is necessary to compensate them fairly for the help they provide in caring for the City's most vulnerable children.

Case Collaboration. Case collaboration prior to the reunification of any foster child involves all key parties to the case, including foster parents, attorneys for the parties, guardians ad litem, service providers and CASA. With the implementation of the structured risk and safety assessments, the case collaboration process now includes a review by all parties of the risk assessment protocol that was specifically developed to be used with reunification plans, and requires signatures by all participants in the collaboration meeting. Formalizing the process has helped assure that all partners have been fully apprised of the plan, and the "risk assessment" basis for it, and that any reservations are discussed and addressed. Review of the risk assessment shows clearly that multiple issues were considered and evaluated.

Monthly case collaboration meetings with Mental Health and Substance Abuse are continuing and are very effective in improving service planning.

Staffing. The new Chief of Services joined the staff in February and has become an integral part of the change process. Pamela Hyde brings many years of experience in child welfare and the commitment and energy to help Alexandria continue its progress. Ms. Hyde also has specific experience in the Differential Response process that was just implemented statewide in child protective services (Attachment II).

Differential Response provides for reports of abuse and neglect to be responded to as investigations or family assessments. Reports that can be handled as assessments, include allegations of minor physical abuse, minor neglect, minor mental abuse, or reports of substance exposed infants. An investigation would be completed when reports allege serious abuse, serious neglect, serious mental abuse, or sexual abuse, as well as all child fatality reports. Assessments are family focused and draw in community resources that are needed to assist the family in remedying their problems. Responses to investigations are incident focused and often require a joint investigation with law enforcement. Both responses evaluate child safety as the first consideration, and both have the goal of child protection and prevention of harm. Information on the new system was presented to the Child Welfare Partnership. The Partnership will continue to review implementation through its Policy Subcommittee. This process has been implemented in the State in pilot form with positive results.

Ms. Hyde has also worked on accreditation for children and family services and has brought that knowledge to Alexandria. The Department is beginning this process by receiving the needed training in the Fall of 2002. Accreditation allows an organization to focus on best practices, provides strategies for quality improvement, and demonstrates program accountability. The process could take several years, but the investment in time will improve services and public confidence.

Child Welfare Partnership. The Community Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services has re-named itself the Child Welfare Partnership. Linda App, chair of the Education Subcommittee, was elected Chair of the Partnership and has brought her energy and vision to the full group. The Partnership has sponsored four special events as part of its campaign, "Our Kids - Our Business." These events are aimed at educating the public on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect and on recruitment of foster and adoptive homes.

The April forum, *Honoring Our Heroes*, recognized and honored the everyday heroes who make a difference in the lives of children in the Alexandria community. *Finding Families For Now and Forever: a Foster Care Community Information Forum* was held in May to recruit foster parents. The First Lady of Virginia, Ms. Lisa Collis, was the guest speaker. Also in May, *A Breakfast Meeting with Representatives from the Faith Community* was attended by 13 members of the City's faith community who pledged support of the work of the partnership. Finally, *Adoption Saturday* was held in May. This event celebrated the finalization of Alexandria's most recent adoptions. All the events were well attended and brought the community into our work. Attached are all materials used for these events (Attachment III).

In April, new brochures, information items, an e-newsletter and the website, *ourkids-ourbusiness.org*, were launched by the Education Subcommittee of the Partnership. To date, using the new OK Campaign material, presentations have been made to the City and Schools Staff Groups on Youth Conference, the Virginia League of Social Services Executives Statewide Conference, and the Business Philanthropy Summit. The OK Campaign's future plans include development of a video-based multi-media presentation. All OK Campaign materials were distributed to Council on April 9, 2002.

The Partnership's Policy Subcommittee has been expanded to include Legislation and future plans include review of the Differential Response system in CPS, continued review of all policy recommendations made by CWLA and development of a legislative agenda for the 2003 General Assembly. The Partnership is also planning to expand its membership and has developed recruitment packages. The goal is to increase community involvement and create a state of the art child welfare system in Alexandria.

The department has committed itself to improving the City's child welfare system. Important improvements in policy and practice are in place and, with the help of the Child Welfare Partnership, continued improvements will be made. As described in our memorandum to you of May 20, 2002, the State has closed its review of the Frazier case. Also, the State has asked Pamela Hyde to be a part of the group that will look at CPS reform statewide.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no new fiscal impact to the City. These expenditures were originally approved by City Council on December 11, 2001, in Docket Item number 15. The annual cost of the new staff positions is \$291,143 and is funded with monies from federal reimbursement for local social services. The cost to date, for outside consultants for training and technical advice for risk assessment is \$43,123, and is \$20,438 for the community education

campaign. These funds are also derived from federal reimbursements for social services.

**STAFF:**

Meg O'Regan, Director, Department of Human Services

Suzanne T. Chis, Director, Division of Social Services

Pamela Hyde, Chief of Services, Division of Social Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment I. League's Recommendations and the Implementation Status

Attachment II. A Guide for Community Service Providers and Mandated Reporters

Attachment III. Community Events Programs and Brochures

**June 25, 2002**

**Implementation of CWLA Recommendations**

**POLICY**

**1. Recommendation**

The agency should establish policy and practice guidelines for decision-making related to family reunification which should include the use of structured risk, safety, and family assessment tools. Time frames for the use of such tools should be established to ensure safety at every contact and to facilitate structured decision-making, highlighting key risk and safety indicators. Additionally, assessment tools would provide documentation of the basis for specific decisions. Reunification should not occur without a risk and safety assessment that incorporates the review of informal supports, formal services available, mental health condition of caregiver, special needs of children, caregiver parenting ability, and household composition. Safety must be assessed and documented at each contact.

**Status**

DHS began implementation of Alexandria's risk and safety assessment protocols in January 2002. All staff have been trained as well as outside stakeholders. Alexandria's risk and safety assessment process incorporates Virginia risk and safety tools utilized during child protection investigations and also incorporates a specific protocol to be used prior to reunification. The reunification protocol is reviewed by all key players in the case collaboration meetings prior to a child's return home. Alexandria was assisted in development of this comprehensive risk and assessment process by Barry Salovitz, Director of the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment. Mr. Salovitz is continuing his consultation with the Department of Human Services, reviewing completed protocols for consistency and thoroughness, providing training for supervisors, and assistance in establishing internal training capacity for all new staff. Mr. Salovitz will continue to assist the Department of Human Services through FY 2003 with needed refinements and quality control.

**2. Recommendation**

The agency should implement policies and procedures that require the review of all active cases in which the child is injured on more than one occasion. Agency policy should require that the Child Protective Service Unit assess all injuries occurring in active cases. Investigation and assessments of injuries by the ongoing caseworker risks over-identification of the worker with the family, application of differential standards, and lack of objectivity.

Multidisciplinary teams, composed of agency and non-agency professionals, should be convened routinely to review high-risk cases.

**Status**

The "New Eyes" policy went into effect on June 25, 2001. Under the original policy, any injury to a child in any active child welfare case is to be assessed by the Child Protective Services unit. All complaints of child abuse and neglect in active cases are continuing to be investigated by the Child Protective Services unit.

The Policy subcommittee of the Child Welfare Partnership has recommended modifications to the "New Eyes" policy to focus on the biological home, rather than the foster placement. The full Partnership recommended that two changes be made to the policy. The first is to emphasize "new eyes" assessment of injuries sustained by foster children while in the home of a parent, where risk of abuse and neglect is greatest by requiring parental reporting of injuries to be included in the parent's foster care service plan. The second change is to do an assessment on children in the home of a foster parent only in the case of suspicious or serious injuries or when a parent, social worker, or foster parent requests a review. This recommendation was adopted by the full Partnership on March 21, 2002.

The City began the inter-jurisdictional review of high risk cases in February 2002. This joint venture with Fairfax and Arlington is scheduled quarterly and conducted in February, May, August, and November of each year.

**3. Recommendation**

In addition to direct supervisory review of cases the agency should establish written policy that requires random reviews of cases by staff other than the direct supervisor and caseworker. The results of the reviews should be shared with the supervisor and caseworker.

The agency should provide resources that will institutionalize quality improvement, quality assurance, and quality control processes within the organizational structure.

The agency should develop a mechanism for producing management reports based on the results of quality assurance activities. These reports should be used to improve practice and/or change policies.

**Status**

Written policy has been developed that requires a random review of cases. Random reviews are completed monthly by the Director of Social Services, Chief of Services, as well as supervisors not associated with the case. Review results are shared with the social workers and supervisors. Quality assurance is in process for the risk and safety assessment protocols. In addition, the City is beginning to embark on an accreditation process that includes quality assurance.

**4. Recommendation**

The agency should continue individualized education plans for staff, based on assessed needs and skill levels. Additionally the agency should track the transfer of learning



through case documentation and supervisory conferences.

**Status**

Individualized staff training plans will continue to be prepared based on the particular training need of the staff member. New written policy on supervision includes monitoring the transfer of learning and assessment of social workers' training needs. Transfer of learning will be monitored by the supervisor as part of the weekly supervision process.

**5. Recommendation**

The agency should establish written policy that requires routine collateral contacts with service providers and other parties to the case.

The agency should develop related protocols with social service providers; legal counsel for the agency, parents, and children, and medical and behavioral health systems.

**Status**

The Department has developed written policy that requires social workers to maintain routine collateral contacts with service providers and other parties to the case. Full collaboration meetings occur prior to reunification of any child in the agency's custody. Various key participants include CASA volunteers, parents, guardians ad litem, service providers and all involved attorneys.

The Department has contracts with all service vendors and began requiring monthly written reports from all providers and foster parents as of October 1, 2001. These monthly reports are discussed with service providers to determine therapeutic progress or the need for change. Also, the Departments of Human Services and Mental Health/Mental Retardation/Substance Abuse have established monthly case collaboration meetings. These collaborations are in addition to those which now occur in the Family Assessment and Planning Teams (FAPT) meetings and other similar meetings.

**6. Recommendation**

Clearances should be obtained for every adult member in a household as a routine matter of policy and procedure. The agency should review and revise existing policy and related procedure to require that child abuse and criminal history clearances be obtained on all adults in the household, and that findings be documented and incorporated as key factors in decision making.

The policy should be specific that when an adult has resided in the current state for less than three to five years, clearances from the former state of residence should be obtained and included as a key factor in decision making.

**Status**

City sponsored legislation was passed that will be effective July 1, 2002 that requires local social service departments to perform criminal history and child abuse records checks in any case in which the department is considering placing a child with an adult

(including returning a child to a birth parent) on an emergency, temporary, or permanent basis. Background checks may also be required for all adults residing in the household where the child is to be placed.

## **PRACTICE**

### **1. Recommendation**

The agency should establish written policy that requires weekly formal supervisory conferences between caseworkers and supervisors. Supervisory conferences provide support for caseworkers and an opportunity for supervisors to monitor casework activities. Supervisor-manager conferences facilitate identification of key service program issues, agency management issues, and opportunity to develop strategies for enhanced services to children and families.

#### **Status**

Written policy has been established requiring documentation of weekly formal supervisory conferences between social workers and supervisors.

### **2. Recommendation**

The agency should require that the case dictation document the use of and participation in services, and the evaluation of service effectiveness.

#### **Status**

Written policy has been established requiring increased case record documentation regarding use of services by the client family and evaluation of these services. The case record format has been redesigned to ensure that the record reflects and addresses social workers' assessment of all services. Monthly written progress reports from service providers and foster parents are required to address service utilization and effectiveness. These reports will be utilized by the social workers as part of the assessment of the family's progress and the assessment of risk factors.

### **3. Recommendation**

The agency should develop written instructions to staff that outline the need for documentation in the case notes that includes concrete and therapeutic services provided, and related information from service and treatment providers. Both types of services should match the assessed level of safety and risk.

#### **Status**

Written policy has been established to increase documentation of all services provided. The use of a structured risk assessment shows the relationship between service provision and safety and risk factors, and helps workers define the type and level of services needed to address assessed risk factors.

### **4. Recommendation**

The agency should have standards of practice that require the verification of information related to a parent or caregiver's participation in services. Verification should include the

frequency of participation and the quality of participation. This information should be documented in the case record dictation.

**Status**

Written policy has been established requiring verification of a parent or care giver's participation in services. Monthly reports are required from service providers.

**5. Recommendation**

The monitoring of caseworker contacts with foster children and foster parents should be an element in the quality assurance system and monitored by the supervisor through case record reviews.

**Status**

Current State policy requires social workers to visit with foster children and foster parents at least once per quarter in the foster home. Foster parents are required to complete a written monthly foster parent observation form. Supervisors are required to monitor compliance with this policy through a routine review of the OASIS computer documentation of contacts and regular review of the case record.

**6. Recommendation**

Agency managers stated that all workers receive training on how to identify indicators of abuse and neglect. The State of Virginia mandates this training. The agency should ensure that all caseworkers, after receiving the training, are applying the learning to their documented risk and safety assessments.

In addition, the agency should develop a plan for educating all service providers and the public on the characteristics of child abuse and neglect and how to report it.

**Status**

The Department will continue to monitor social workers' application of their learning to their risk assessments. This will occur by case conferences, supervisory conferences and follow up on training. Training on the new structured risk assessment has been completed and will be continued throughout the year to assure consistency and appropriate use of the tool. The consultant is monitoring completed risk and safety assessments.

Training of mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect is continuing and occurs annually. This fiscal year, the Child Protective Services unit has completed training for 150 new ACPS teachers, Mount Vernon Recreation Center staff, Health Department nurses, the Domestic Violence Committee, Carpenters Shelter staff, school social workers and psychologists, CASA volunteers, police detectives, youth services staff, Mental Health professionals, as well as interested child-serving agencies through the Community Services Act (CSA) Brown Bag lunch series. In addition, 60 stakeholders attended the Risk Assessment Training, and another 50 attended this training through the City Schools Staff Group on Youth.

The Public Education subcommittee of the Community Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services continues working on a public education campaign. A new logo has been designed, "Our Kids, Our Business," that focuses on involving the community in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. A website and newsletter have been launched, and four special events have occurred, as well as more routine public appearances such as at the Youth Policy Commission and the Early Childhood Commission.

**7. Recommendation**

The agency should provide caseworkers with clear practice guidelines on how to make clinical connections between key observations related to the casework process, and case and service goals and objectives.

Practice guidelines should include direction as to when and how to use technical assistance from clinical consultants such as psychologist and psychiatrists.

**Status**

The new psychologist has been hired and will assist in establishing practice guidelines on making clinical connections.

**PROCEDURES**

**1. Recommendation**

The agency, with the City Attorney, should develop written guidelines for determining when appeals of court decisions are needed and when other court actions should be used to assure the safety, permanency, and well being of the child.

**Status**

Written guidelines will be implemented which require that a review of all relevant information, the evidence and the law will be made by the social workers, supervisors and managers and the City Attorney in determining whether an appeal is warranted.

**2. Recommendation**

The Virginia Deputy Administrator for the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) provides training on all aspects of ICPC and is available for technical assistance. DHS supervisors and managers, and the Alexandria city attorneys, who provide counsel to the agency, should participate in training and request technical assistance when appropriate.

**Status**

This training occurred and was attended by Assistant City Attorneys, Judges, social workers, attorneys and various service providers. Technical assistance is utilized when needed by seeking case conferencing with the ICPC Administrator. A second training was attended by social workers.

**BENEFITS OF****CPS REFORM**

Localities utilizing a community based child protection approach report the following benefits for families, services providers, and communities:

**Families**

- Active involvement in identifying and addressing family strengths and needs
- Family empowerment to ensure child safety and well-being
- Less intrusive services
- Improved access to community services and supports that are responsive to family needs
- Avoid stigma associated with labeling and name retention in the Child Abuse Central Registry
- Increased service satisfaction

**Community**

- More efficient and effective use of limited community resources through interagency collaboration
- Capitalizes on each discipline's expertise
- Cost effective service through early intervention services
- Stronger families that are better integrated into the community

**CPS**

- Timely response to child safety concerns
- Shared community responsibility for ensuring child safety, maximizing the ability to protect
- Emphasis on services designed to strengthen families and foster self-reliance

**REPORTING****CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The Code of Virginia requires that mandated reporters immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local department of social services or to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

You need not prove that abuse or neglect has taken place or determine the type of needed CPS response. Local departments of social services are responsible for making these determinations.

To report child abuse or neglect, call the local social services department or the State's toll-free Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-552-7096. The Hotline is answered by social workers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Child Abuse Hotline  
1-800-552-7096  
(Voice/TDD accessible)

**Child****Protective****Services:**

**A COMMUNITY  
RESPONSE TO  
SUPPORTING  
FAMILIES AND  
PROTECTING  
CHILDREN**



A Guide for Community Service Providers

Abuse and neglect of children is a serious problem in Virginia. Each year in this state over 48,000 children

are reported for suspected abuse or neglect. The Code of Virginia requires local social services departments to respond to all valid reports and to assist families in protecting their children from harm.

The purpose of the child protective services program is to protect children; support and preserve families, when possible; arrange protective and other needed services; and prevent maltreatment.

### Better Ways to Protect Children

In recent years, as the volume and severity of reports has risen, states and localities have sought alternative ways to better protect children and help their families. One such strategy is known as community child protection. This approach is being utilized in a number of other states and

- Allows a flexible response by child protective services to allegations of child abuse based upon the severity of the report, immediacy of child safety concerns, and family needs; and
- Partners child protective services agencies with parents, community-based organizations, and informal networks in keeping children safe from maltreatment.



## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS) REFORM

In 2000, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation to establish a Child Protective Services Differential Response System allowing localities options when responding to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. The Differential Response System was successfully piloted, for three years, in five areas of the state: Albemarle, Loudoun, Montgomery, Portsmouth, and York-Poquoson.

The following principles form the foundation of the Differential Response System:

- The safety and well-being of the child are the first goals of intervention;
- Parents have primary responsibility and are primary resources for their children;
- Families and communities are responsible for ensuring that children grow up in safe and healthy environments;
- Interventions must be needs driven as opposed to service driven;
- Service planning must be collaborative and based on the strengths and competencies of the family; and
- Services need to be culturally competent and community based.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT DEFINITIONS

Section 63.1-248.2 of the Code of Virginia defines an abused or neglected child as any child under 18 whose parent, or other person responsible for the care of the child:

- Causes or threatens to cause a nonaccidental physical or mental injury;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care;
- Abandons the child;
- Fails to provide adequate supervision in relation to the child's age and level of development; and
- Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

Infants who have been medically diagnosed for exposure to non-prescription drugs or alcohol during pregnancy are also considered to be at risk of abuse or neglect. Attending physicians are required to report these cases to CPS.



## REQUIRED

## REPORTING

Anyone may report suspected child abuse and neglect; however, pursuant to the Code of Virginia, certain professionals are required to report. These professionals include:

- persons licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts
- hospital residents or interns
- nurses
- social workers
- probation officers
- teachers
- child care providers
- mental health practitioners
- accredited Christian Science practitioners
- law enforcement officers
- volunteer, court appointed special advocates
- court certified mediators
- professional staff employed by a hospital, institution, or facility in which children are placed
- persons associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody, and control of children.

## THE DIFFERENTIAL

## RESPONSE SYSTEM

Since the enactment of Virginia's child abuse and neglect statutes in 1975, all valid reports of suspected child abuse and neglect have been investigated by CPS. This singular response focused resources on investigating the reported incident, i.e., gathering the facts to determine if abuse or neglect occurred, identifying persons responsible, and determining the risk of future maltreatment.

The Differential Response System allows localities flexibility in responding to reports of abuse and neglect taking into consideration the severity of the report, immediacy of child safety concerns, and family needs. The alternative response to an investigation is a family assessment that focuses resources on conducting a child safety and family needs assessment, building upon family strengths, and providing needed services. Valid reports are thus assigned to receive an Investigation or a Family Assessment Response.

### Investigation Response

Valid CPS reports will be considered for an Investigation Response when there are immediate child safety concerns and/or the type of report is required by the Code of Virginia to be investigated including, but not limited to:

- Sexual abuse
- Fatalities
- Serious injuries
- Hospitalization due to suspected abuse/neglect
- Physical abuse requiring medical evaluation and/or treatment
- Abandonment
- Injury due to use of weapons such as guns or knives

The purpose of the investigation is to protect the child; determine if abuse/neglect occurred; identify the abuser/neglector; and provide services to prevent recurrence. Joint investigations with law enforcement and/or regulatory authorities, in accordance with local protocols, may occur.

Each CPS investigation results in a finding of Founded or Unfounded within 45-60 days of report. Founded reports are kept by local social services departments and the Virginia Department of Social Services, Central Registry of Founded Child Abuse and Neglect for 3 to 18 years depending upon the severity of the incident.

### Family Assessment Response

Reports may be considered for a Family Assessment Response when there are no immediate child safety concerns and/or the report is not required by law to be investigated such as:

- Minor physical injury
- Injuries suggesting inattention to child's safety
- Lack of supervision
- Minimal needs for food, clothing, shelter, hygiene are inconsistently met
- Untreated physical injuries, illnesses, or impairments
- Emotional neglect/abuse
- Substance exposed newborns

The goals of a Family Assessment Response are the same as for the CPS program: the protection of children; preservation of families, when possible; and prevention of maltreatment.

The Family Assessment Response shifts CPS intervention from an incident focus to a service delivery focus that supports parents in meeting their children's safety and developmental needs. The CPS worker collaborates with the family in identifying family strengths, stressors, and other factors likely to precipitate abuse or neglect. Family assessment provides the basis for a child safety plan and for an individualized family service plan.

The family assessment is completed within 45-60 days from the date the report of suspected abuse or neglect was received. No finding of abuse or neglect is made and no information is placed in the Virginia Department of Social Services, Central Registry of Founded Child Abuse and Neglect.

#### **Reclassification of CPS Response**

The local department of social services may investigate any valid CPS report. During the course of an assessment if child safety concerns become apparent or there is evidence of severe abuse/neglect, the CPS worker may determine that the report should be investigated. The report will then be reclassified to receive an Investigation Response.

#### **Feedback from CPS**

Section 63.1-209 of the Code of Virginia permits the CPS worker to provide feedback to persons having a legitimate interest such as school personnel, child care providers, service providers, and law enforcement when it is in the best interests of the child. Minimally, reporters will be informed, in writing, that a report has been investigated or assessed and determined to be unfounded or necessary action was taken.

## **AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Code of Virginia empowers CPS with designated authorities and responsibilities in responding to reports of suspected abuse and neglect and ensuring child safety. These authorities and responsibilities apply to both investigations and family assessments and include:

- Immediate response
- Interviews with:
  - the alleged victim
  - siblings
  - parent, alleged abuser/neglector
  - other persons having information
- Observation of the family home
- Authority to take a child into protective custody when there is immediate danger
- Authority to petition the Court
- Authority to take photographs and arrange for x-rays
- Responsibility to report designated incidents to law enforcement and the Commonwealth's Attorney
- Responsibility to arrange protective and rehabilitative services
- Responsibility to create and coordinate community partnerships to ensure effective services delivery to families affected by child abuse/neglect.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

The safety and well-being of children is a community responsibility shared by families, neighborhoods, service providers, schools, community leaders, the faith community, and others. CPS has the legal authority to protect children but is one component of a community of people and services providers in a position to identify and assist troubled families in keeping their children safe.

The success of the CPS Differential Response System is dependent upon the extent to which communities are proactively committed to improving the health, safety, and well-being of those families and children affected by abuse or neglect.

Successful community child protection networks are characterized by:

- Community consensus on the need for integrated services designed to keep children and family members safe at all times
- Clearly articulated partnerships able to maintain commitments
- Collaborative use of informal resources to support families such as the faith community, extended family, and other community groups
- Prevention strategies for at-risk families
- Crisis response to suspected abuse or neglect
- Therapeutic services for families and children affected by abuse or neglect
- Services and supports that are:
  - coordinated
  - culturally responsive
  - accessible
  - family needs driven
  - family empowerment focused





***Thank You***  
**to many generous people and organizations who**  
**made today's Forum possible.**

Community Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services:

The Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership

Linda App, Chair, *Social Services Advisory Board*

Sally Campbell, *Healthy Families of Alexandria*

Anna Marie Caulkins, *Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)*

& *Virginia Emergency Families for Children (VEFC)*

Diane Charles, *Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of Northern Virginia*

Rolando Diaz, Ph.D., *Psychologist*

Debby Dimon, *Foster Parent, Public Health Nurse*

Carter Flemming, *Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)*

Linda Hester, *Liaison to the Committee for Outreach to the Faith Community*

Carrie Jones, *Social Services Advisory Board*

Leigh Loaiza, *Former Foster Child*

Doratheia Peters, *Attorney*

Chris Scheuerman, *Alexandria Hospital Emergency Services Nurse*

April Stafford, *Parent*

Keven Wiggs, *Attorney*

Alexandria Division of Social Services/Department of Human Services

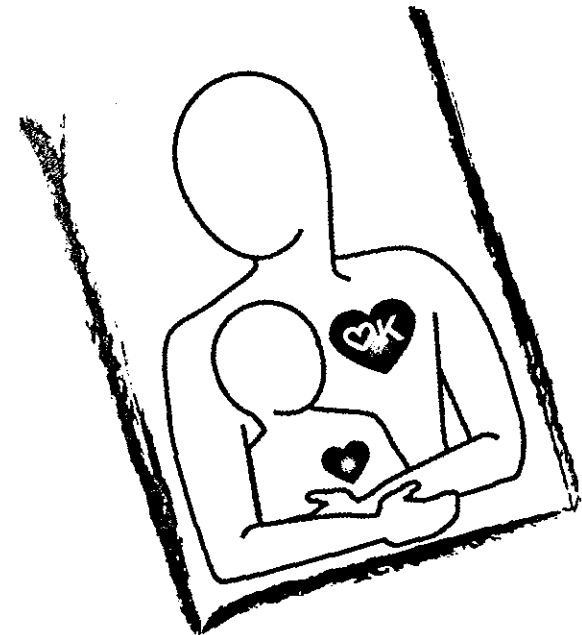
City Attorney's Office

Alexandria Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court

Chinquapin Park Recreation Center

A special thanks to Robyn Fountain for providing childcare during the Forum.

## FINDING FAMILIES FOR NOW AND FOREVER: A FOSTER CARE COMMUNITY INFORMATION FORUM



Saturday, May 4, 2002  
Minnie Howard School  
3801 West Braddock Road, Alexandria, Virginia

Sponsored by The Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership

## Finding Families For Now and Forever: A Foster Care Community Information Forum

May 4, 2002

The Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership was established in August, 2001 to educate the community about preventing and reporting child abuse and neglect, and to recruit foster and adoptive families. The Partnership is composed of members of the community and representatives of organizations dedicated to keeping children safe. They have come together to launch an educational initiative called *OK: Our Kids-Our Business*. "Finding Families for Now and Forever: a Foster Care Community Information Forum" is one of the first events sponsored by the *OK* campaign.

### Welcome and Introductions

Kerry J. Donley  
*Mayor, City of Alexandria*

### Keynote Address

Ms. Lisa Collis  
*First Lady of Virginia*

### Video Presentation

*Take This Heart: Searching for Families*  
The Casey Foundation

### Panel Discussion and Questions & Answers

Judge Nolan Dawkins, *Alexandria Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court*  
Karen Abrams, *Foster Parent*  
Nancy Van Gulick, *Foster Parent*  
Melissa Finney, *Social Worker*

### Workshops

The Facts of Fostering: The Basics      Nancy Hudson, *Foster Parent*  
Peggy Stypula, *Social Worker*

Short Term Fostering      Beth Cook, *VEFC*  
Noreen Hill, *Social Worker*

Fostering Teens      Cathy Bartholomew, *Social Worker*

Foster-to-Adopt Program      Carmen Sarraga, *Parent*  
Julia Swanson, *Social Worker*

Opportunities to Reach Out      Anita Wyatt, *Social Worker*  
Suzanne Kratzok, *Community Resources*

*Social workers will be available for consultation following the workshops.*

*For more information about the Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership,  
please visit: [www.OurKids-OurBusiness.org](http://www.OurKids-OurBusiness.org).*

**A special *ThankYou***  
**to many generous people who**  
**made today's ceremony possible:**

Alexandria Division of Social Services/Department of Human Services

Suzanne Chis, Director of Social Services

Meg O'Regan, Director of Human Services

Pam Hyde, Chief of Services, DSS

Lynne Fountain, Adoption Supervisor

Tawnya Holmes, Adoption and Permanency Specialist II, DSS

Becky Tavenner, Foster Care Home Recruiter, DSS

Dara Schumaier, DHS ITS Staff

Mildred Worthy, DHS Operations Staff

Alexandria Model Court Core Group

Alexandria Circuit Court

The Honorable Judge Stephen W. Rideout

The Honorable Judge Nolan B. Dawkins

The Honorable Judge Donald M. Haddock

Tamara Wright, Esq., Law Clerk, Circuit Court

Office of the Clerk of Court, J&DR Court

Office of the Sheriff, City of Alexandria

Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of NVA

Diana Lowery, SCAN

Shawna Dillner, SCAN

Barbara Jones, Attorney at Law

Reunion Graphics/Happy Photo

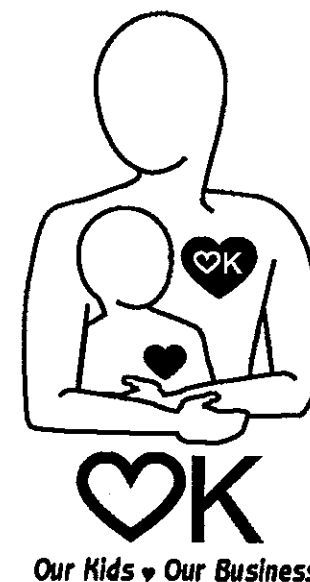
Tasteful Affairs

Affordable Signs & Banners



## Attachment III

# ALEXANDRIA Celebrates ADOPTION



Saturday, May 11, 2002  
City of Alexandria Circuit Court  
520 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia

## A Child Needs Love... A Family Gives Love

The love of a child is a special type of love:  
It is the love that goes on forever.

The love that a child needs is another type of love:  
It is love that will never change through all their endeavors.

A family that taps into this love has created a vision:  
That vision is a life some children never get to feel a part of.

When that family opens up and extends its arms,  
That vision becomes a reality when they choose to give their love.

The world is made up of many ups and downs  
And unfortunately many things we cannot explain.

But when a family opens their hearts and lives,  
The world seems to make sense and the balance of love is sustained.

We welcome you into our family, our lives,  
To celebrate this ending and our family's new start.

We thank you all for the chance to see  
That when a child needs love,  
And a family gives love,

Adoption is the final part.

by Tawnya Holmes

## Welcome

Meg O'Regan

*Director*

*Alexandria Department of Human Services*

## Response to the Welcome

Patrick Purtill

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

*National Council of Adoption*

## Presentation of the Families

Pamela G. Hyde

*Chief of Services*

*Alexandria Division of Social Services*

*The Carpten Family*

*The Lawrence Family*

*The Smith Family*

*The Watson Family*

## Signing Ceremony and Photographs

The Honorable Donald M. Haddock

*Chief Judge*

*Circuit Court of the City of Alexandria*

## Closing Remarks

Tawnya Holmes, MSW

*Adoption and Permanency Specialist II*

*Alexandria Division of Social Services*

The Honorable Stephen W. Rideout

*Chief Judge*

*Alexandria Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court*

*Reception to be held in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor lobby immediately following the ceremony.*



Alexandria Celebrates Adoption

A child needs love: a family gives love.  
Alexandria Adopts!

Come one, come all  
to the

# First Annual Celebration of Adoptions in Alexandria

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Saturday, May 11, 2002

Alexandria Circuit Court  
520 King Street, 4th Floor Alexandria, Virginia 22314

We are celebrating the gift of children, a gift that keeps on giving,  
with a luncheon and gifts for the children.

RSVP by May 5, 2002, to Ms. Tawnya Holme (703) 838-0766



Sponsored by the Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership  
in collaboration with Alexandria Model Court

**BREAKFAST MEETING ON ALEXANDRIA'S CHILD WELFARE INITIATIVES WITH  
REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FAITH COMMUNITY**

Wednesday, April 24, 2002  
8:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.  
Holiday Inn Select, - Old Town  
480 King Street, Alexandria VA

AGENDA

Registration

Welcome and Introductions  
Honorable Kerry Donley, *Mayor*  
Philip G. Sunderland, *City Manager*

Statement of Purpose  
Meg O'Regan, *Director, Department of Human Services*

BREAKFAST

Introduction of Guest Speaker  
Ronald H. Frazier, *Director of Youth Services*

SPEAKER

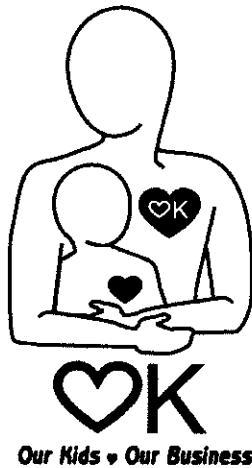
The Faith Community and Social Services: Partners Together  
in Addressing Issues In Child Welfare  
Dr. Derrick Harkins, *President, DC One Church, One Child  
& Pastor, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, Washington, DC*

Overview of the Implementation of Changes in  
the Alexandria Child Welfare System  
Suzanne Chis, *Director of Social Services*

Appeal for Support and Assistance  
Mayor Donley  
Diane Charles, *Member, Child Welfare Advisory Partnership*  
Meg O' Regan

Announcement of Upcoming Events  
Linda Hester, *Chair, Foster Care Forum Planning Committee*

Closing Remarks  
Mayor Donley



## **Opportunities for Alexandria's Faith Community to Help Prevent Child Abuse and Recruit Foster and Adoptive Parents**

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Some of a community's most influential organizations are its religious institutions. Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based groups play an important role in reaching out to and helping families and children at risk. Spiritual leaders can use their religious messages as a positive force in preventing child abuse and neglect and in recruiting foster and adoptive parents. Faith organizations are in a unique position to fill in the gaps to help meet the needs of our community.

Some activities faith communities can do include the following:

### **Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention**

- ☐ Acknowledge child abuse and neglect as a major concern for the faith community, and affirm that religious and lay leaders are dedicated to the concern.
- ☐ Raise awareness of child abuse and neglect by setting aside a day in April to observe Child Abuse Prevention Month and celebrate children and families.
- ☐ Train religious and lay leaders to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, to work with victims and their families, and to make appropriate referrals.
- ☐ Participate in interfaith and/or interagency groups working on community prevention programs and services.
- ☐ Host self-help or parent education and support groups at faith community facilities and stay informed about local resource and referral services.
- ☐ Share information on how to report suspected child abuse or neglect, including toll-free "hot lines" and other prevention resources, in bulletins and newsletters.
- ☐ Sponsor on-site after-school programs and safety training for latchkey children.

- ☐ Provide information on child development, parental stress, and community resources and supports for parents during counseling sessions.
- ☐ Establish a mentoring or a companion program to work one-on-one with children in families under stress.
- ☐ Offer respite care to congregation and community members in need of short-term relief from caregiving responsibilities.
- ☐ Organize a "Baby Supplies" drive to collect diapers, formula, car seats, and other supplies for young pregnant women in need.
- ☐ Establish a program that pairs pregnant teens with older women in the congregation willing to serve as partners through the pregnancy and childbirth.

## **Foster Care and Adoption**

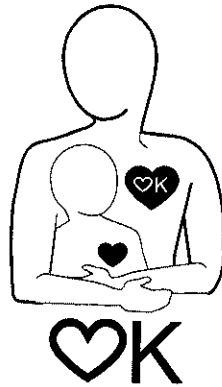
- ☐ Help us recruit foster care and adoptive parents from members of your assembly of faith.
- ☐ Put a display board up in your place of worship or assembly with information on our foster care and adoption programs.
- ☐ Join our speakers bureau, or recruit members of your assembly of faith to join our speakers, bureau. *(We will train you in what you need to know.)*
- ☐ Advocate for the professionalism of foster parenting.
- ☐ Prepare "first night" necessities for children taken into foster care as a result of a crisis.
  - ☐ Baby Basics Baskets (age 0 – 1)
  - ☐ Toddler Treasures (age 2 – 5)
  - ☐ School Age Supplies (age 6 – 12)
  - ☐ Teen Totes (age 13 – 18)
- ☐ Organize/sponsor year-end picnic for children and foster parents.
- ☐ Organize/sponsor appreciation brunch for foster parents and volunteers.
- ☐ Purchase Life Books and scrapbooking supplies for foster children.
- ☐ Be a Santa Claus for a foster child or needy family.



## Other Unique Opportunities to Help

- ☐ Arrange outings for children (zoo, museum, etc.)
- ☐ Supply tickets for sports or theatrical events.
- ☐ Be a "pen pal" to an older child in a group home or facility.
- ☐ Help raise money for *The Fund for Alexandria's Child*, providing enrichment for at-risk children.
- ☐ Contribute to Send a Kid to Camp Fund.
- ☐ Your suggestion here \_\_\_\_\_.

**Alexandria Department of Human Services  
Division of Social Services  
2525 Mount Vernon Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22301  
703/838-0800**



Our Kids • Our Business

*Everyday heroes are people who make personal sacrifices and take significant risks  
to keep children safe and enhance their lives.*

*In recognition of*  
**Child Abuse Prevention Month,**  
**the Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership**

*cordially invites you  
to a reception with City and community officials  
and an awards ceremony  
to honor our everyday heroes.*

**Tuesday, April 9, 2002\***  
**6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.**

**Vola Lawson Lobby  
City Hall  
301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia**

*\*R.S.V.P. , Alexandria Office of Youth Services, (703) 838-0990 , by April 5, 2002*

**Members, Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership:** Alexandria Department of Human Services, Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Healthy Families of America, Social Services Advisory Board (SSAB), Foster Parents, Public Health Nurse, Volunteer Emergency Foster Care. The Alexandria Child Welfare Partnership was established in August 2001 to help the community learn more about preventing and reporting child abuse and to recruit foster and adoptive families.

**Child Abuse Prevention Month  
Awards Ceremony  
April 9, 2002**

Opening

Linda App, Chair, Child Welfare  
Partnership

Greeting and Recognition of Guests  
(Acknowledgment of City Council, City Officials and  
School Board Members, ACWP Members)

The Honorable Kerry J. Donley  
Mayor

Greetings

David Cleary, Vice-President and Founder  
Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of  
Northern Virginia

Meg O'Regan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Jackie Lusk, Social Services Supervisor,  
Department of Human Services

Unveiling of Child Welfare  
Partnership Community Education  
Campaign

Linda App

Presentation of the 2002 Child  
Welfare "Hero" Awards

Mayor Kerry J. Donley

Closing Remarks

Linda App  
Mayor Donley

**Child Abuse Prevention Month  
Awards Ceremony  
2002 Child Welfare Heroes**

**Doris Gazin**

This April, SCAN will distribute over 20,000 blue ribbons throughout Northern Virginia to social service agencies, businesses, libraries, schools, metro stops and numerous other public entities to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect. Designed to both raise awareness and show care and concern for children, these blue ribbons must be cut and pinned to bookmarks that have parenting tips on them. Thanks to SCAN volunteer Doris Gazin, who personally put together the majority of SCAN's 20,000 blue ribbons this year and many of them last year, SCAN is able to carry out this important project. Doris, a long-time Alexandrian, made her volunteer work a family affair through the help of her husband, Max, who transported supplies and ribbons between SCAN's Del Ray office and their home in the West End. A mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Doris sometimes got neighbors to help her cut and pin -- and she assures us that the blue ribbons brought good luck to the Maryland Terrapins, as she worked on them prior to and throughout Maryland's victories in the NCAA Tournament. Doris Gazin has been a very valuable "behind the scenes" volunteer for SCAN. Yet, Doris's impact is very far reaching. Doris is a hero to SCAN, she is a hero to this community and she's a hero for our children. We thank her for all her hard work to help improve the welfare of our children.

**Madalyn Pollitt** is responsible for the rejuvenation of the Advisory Council for *The Fund for Alexandria's Child*. Her vision produced a creative, collegial group to support the work of social workers in protecting and enriching our children. Last year, *The Fund* raised \$17,000 through events like KONES 4 KIDS and An Evening at the Little Theatre. The money bought karate lessons, art lessons, birthday presents, rewards for straight A's, summer camp and all kinds of other things that help to normalize the lives of kids in crisis.

Madalyn is a 30-year resident of Alexandria. She is a legal secretary for Wendi Weinstein, a partner in the Alexandria patent law firm of Burns Doane Swicker and Matthis. The Advisory Council is her very direct experience in organized volunteering -- and she has hit the ball out of the park on her first try

**Carter Flemming** is a professional volunteer and advocate for child abuse prevention. She serves on the Healthy Alexandria Advisory Committee and where she is active raising awareness about the importance of prevention and starting early and helping raise private funds to do it. She serves on the Campagna Center board, is a CASA volunteer with SCAN and serves on the DHS Community Advisory Committee. Carter takes a

hands on approach every where she decides to share her talents. She rolls up her sleeves and dives in. She is organized, enthusiastic, energetic, funny, warm and realistic. She looks at the big picture and keeps the rest of the room honest. Healthy Families Alexandria is VERY pleased to have her. She may be one of Alexandria's best secret weapons.

**Phil Cohen and Ann Donohue** are Alexandria residents who have volunteered their technological talents with the city's child welfare partnership since its inception. They are the creators of the logo for the Our Kids: Our Business Campaign - an image of a small child in the protective embrace of a caring adult. This logo appears on all of the promotional material for the campaign, and will soon be instantly recognized as a symbol of Alexandria's concern for our children - "Our Kids". Their expertise has been invaluable to the campaign as they continue to advise us and help shape the direction and the delivery of the campaign's message. The City of Alexandria would like to recognize you, and thank you- Phil and Ann, for your valuable contribution.

**David Mankin** is being honored for his volunteer work in designing the OK campaign website. Phase I of the website was officially launched today, several months ahead of schedule - thanks to David. His creativity and expertise have resulted in a user-friendly, inviting, and informative web site to help us spread the word about child protection, foster care, adoption, and services available to families in need. David already has ideas for Phase II, which will provide even more information for our residents on how to keep "Our Kids" safe. On behalf of the City of Alexandria, thank you, David, for your hard work.

**Linda App** single-handedly brought the Partnership the needed energy and vision to create the OK Campaign. She practices her commitment to the children in our City everyday, as she brings volunteers to our cause, provides creative ideas and rolls up her sleeves to implement them. Linda is now serving as the Chair for the Child Welfare Partnership, is the chair of the public education subcommittee and is also chairing the Social Services Advisory Board. She is dedicated and talented and we are very lucky that she so willingly shared her talents and expertise with us.