

PART II: APSR Report FY 2005

(10) Presidential Initiatives

“And our job, frankly, all our jobs, is to find those who are willing to be a part of the solution and encourage them to help surround somebody who hurts with love.”

-President George W. Bush

**Children’s Administration
Department of Social and Health Services**

Annual Progress and Services Report FY 2005 Presidential Initiatives

Healthy Marriages:

The Healthy Marriage Waiver Project terms and conditions for Section 1115 have been accepted by the State of Washington agency and now confirmation is being awaited from ACF. The waiver grants authority to the State to conduct two projects to test new strategies for improving child support. The projects were approved as part of a series of grants to develop and test new strategies to support healthy marriages and parental relationships, with the goals of improving the well-being of children, promoting paternity establishment and increasing financial and emotional support to children. Washington will receive \$1.99 million in Federal funds for the projects: one in Yakima and one in Lakewood, both of which will be supplemented by private funding.

Each project is of five-year duration. It will include efforts to improve couple relationships and reduce the potential for domestic violence, as well as screen participants for domestic violence and refer appropriate individuals for services.

Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN) is a 14-member, Governor appointed Council legislated to promote prevention of child abuse and neglect. The legislature created WCPCAN in 1982 with the mission to provide leadership and a statewide focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and to encourage and support effective community prevention efforts. The Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration is a member of WCPCAN and this last year supported a variety of training classes and workshops on parenting development, practices, and strengthening families using a variety of teaching approaches. WCPCAN also continues to support a website with current resource information for parents and families and offers mini-grants to communities for planning and implementing a celebration of the annual Washington State Children's Day held the second Sunday in October each year.

The new "Safe Place for Newborns" posters offering help and resources to parents of newborns have been created by a coalition of child health and safety organizations, including DSHS. Coinciding with Gov. Christine Gregoire's proclamation of April 2005 as Child Abuse Prevention Month, the posters have been produced in several languages, giving new parents, and parents-to-be information and resources to help them and their newborns. They are available to schools, colleges, health clinics, hospitals, physicians and teen centers anywhere in Washington to provide a toll-free telephone number for help, a safe and legal alternative to abandoning a newborn child, and information on safe places to leave a newborn infant, confidentially and without fear of punishment, within the first 72 hours of a child's birth.

The Neglect Project in Region 6 was started to reduce repeated findings of neglect within families. Early evidence shows a reduction in re-referrals of the families involved in the project, with feedback from families indicating a positive benefit for them and their children.

Responsible Fatherhood:

Fatherhood Forums were planned and financially supported through collaboration with community partners. The goal of these statewide summits is to raise awareness of the role of fathers in the child welfare system and to increase the consistency of good practice in the identification, search, engagement and support of fathers. Forum participants include social workers, court staff, Tribes, community mental health, and schools. The four day-long

forums were planned to occur throughout the State to explore barriers to working with and supporting fathers, explore attitudes/values, learn about current research on fathering, begin skill-building, and identify actions/skills to take into practice. They were scheduled to occur in March and April, however they have been postponed until fall 2005 due to budget constraints and travel restrictions.

Regional efforts in this area included the following: Region 2 and Region 6 working together to bring Jerry Tello, a nationally recognized expert from the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute, to provide six one-day trainings in July 2004. He addressed the identification, assessment, engagement, involvement and support of fathers whose children are involved with CA. There was great interest and attendance both from CA staff and from our community partners.

Region 6 sent 4 staff to the 7th National Summit on Fatherhood in Atlanta Georgia, began a fatherhood support and education group in Shelton in September, created a local Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) committee to address issues that were raised in the Vancouver area that impact fathers' abilities to engage with their children that has resulted in the creation of classes and support groups, and Olympia has several father's support groups and "Fathering the Future" flyers.

Region 1 and Region 5 have Fatherhood Forum Committees that meets monthly to continue to focus on inclusion of fathers, identify training, and planning for Forums in the fall.

Rural Initiatives:

CA has their offices located throughout key locations within each region to provide maximum accessibility to services. For those Washington citizens living between offices, staff make every effort to go into the field to bring services to them. Toll-free office telephone numbers are available to encourage a communication exchange.

Some regions have special projects to increase accessibility to services, such as the following examples from Region 5:

- Region 5 has a Passport program with the Port Gamble/S'Klallam Tribe on the Kitsap Peninsula. It is the only tribe in the state that has Passport.
- Region 5 is working with the Bethel School District to recruit foster homes in that district.
- Family Team Decision-Making Meetings are being held in the rural areas of Pierce County, for those families residing there.

Faith-Based Initiatives:

Many Faith-Based Child Placing Agencies **contract with CA, such as Catholic Community Services and Lutheran Social Services.**

Lutheran Community Services (Families for Kids) has a new negotiated contract to provide foster parent retention services within Regions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. Retention efforts will be focused on linking foster parents together through buddy systems, mentoring arrangements and support groups.

The YMCA of Greater Seattle also has a new contract to work on the recruitment of foster parents in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, while the Foster Care Resource Network will provide both recruitment and retention services to Region 5.

Community Initiatives:

CA is working with numerous partners in community collaborations to continue the Working Together Action Agenda started in June 2003 by former DSHS Secretary Dennis Braddock. This agenda challenged DSHS managers and staff to (1) seek out individual and family participation in solutions to problems, (2) make use of community resources and connections to strengthen families, neighborhoods and communities, and (3) act as a partner, not as an agency standing alone. This is still in effect.

KCF II: Safe Kids in Healthy Families focuses on building strong and sustainable partnerships with parents, relatives, Tribes, foster parents, service providers, schools, court systems, social workers, advocates, and the community to keep children safe. Many workgroups have been formed (including field staff, HQ staff, Tribes, stakeholders and community partners) to develop updated and/or new policies, procedures and guidelines for KCF II.

The DSHS Children's Mental Health Work Group was established in April, 2005 in an **effort to more effectively deliver mental health services to children**. Three administrations of DSHS (Children's, Health and Rehabilitation Services/ Mental Health, and Juvenile Rehabilitation) began a process of planning a different approach for the delivery of mental health services to children and their families.

The three administrations provide mental health services to thousands of children, many of whom receive services from two or three DSHS administrations at the same time. The goal is a more integrated and coordinated response to children and families.

This integrated system will have common service approaches, use of evidence-based practices, clearly identified outcomes, and similar language and definitions as children and families move among systems and across the state. In addition, taxpayers can anticipate the best possible use of their resources to serve children and have input during the development process.

The Washington State Heart Gallery brought many top Northwest photographers together to volunteer their expertise to create visual images of children, teens, adults, families and seniors supported by DSHS programs. It debuted in King County in April 2004, and has expanded into other counties this last year. DSHS, sponsors, and photographers have joined forces with the original sponsors to create new portraits and bring this nationally recognized, gallery-quality exhibit to four additional counties of Spokane, Snohomish, Pierce and Thurston counties in 2005.

Through its participation, the Children's Administration brings the focus on children needing foster homes or adoptive families and at-risk teens needing mentors. In addition to the exhibits, the Heart Gallery is also online and was featured in several news media accounts. In the past year, **at least 14 new families asked to become foster families for children** whose families cannot or will not care for them, **at least 10 new families asked to become adoptive families** for children, **at least 20 people asked to become mentors** for at-risk teens (new mentors have already received the necessary training), and 8 of the 9 **children** who participated in Heart Gallery portraits (89 percent) have been adopted to date.

Communication with Foster Parents has been improved in an effort to keep foster parents informed and updated on the KCF II plan and other changes occurring within Children's Administration. Several means of communication are being utilized including: improved communication through the foster parent website to include important policy and practice updates for foster parents, a *LISTSERV*® that has been set up for foster parents utilizing e-mail to communicate with as many foster parents as possible, and a Caregiver Crisis Line set up as a resource for foster parents licensed by Children's Administration and unlicensed relative caregivers providing care to dependent children to handle crisis situations and support for their children's medical, emotional or emergency needs after hours. Social workers trained to respond will deal with situations that can not wait to be addressed during business hours and callers may choose to remain anonymous.

Be Safe, Keep Them Safe: A Prevention Awareness Calendar for Washington State has been created by many service delivery programs and partners of DSHS, other state agencies, local governments, communities, neighbors, families and extended families. This team effort focuses on the theme of safe behavior – preventing harm to oneself, and preventing harm to vulnerable children and adults.

State staff and private contractors are working on recruitment and retention of foster parents. Regional teams have been put together to work specifically on regional and local issues.

Families and Communities Together in Region 1 focuses on prevention of involvement with CPS through early community intervention with families.

Culturally Competent Professional Practice in Region 4 is an effort to address possible cultural bias and improve cultural awareness and practices in working more effectively with African American children.

Mandatory On-going Training for Licensed Caregivers (including private agency, Children's Administration and licensed relative homes) will be required to complete 36 hours of ongoing training during each three year licensing period. The mandatory training hours must be completed prior to the caregiver's license being renewed. If a current licensed caregiver is scheduled to be re-licensed in less than three years, the 36 hours of training has been pro-rated during the transition period, based on the remaining months of the current license.

Youth Development:

Youth Advisory Board: The Youth Advisory Board was established and will be composed of youth and young adults (up to age 25) who have been recipients of services provided by CA. This board will serve in an advisory function, providing CA with input and recommendations regarding policy and practices on a quarterly basis. The establishment of the board will provide opportunities for adolescents to have their voices heard and provide input into CA policy and program decisions.

KIRO KIDS: An on-going special project at Children's Administration is support of the annual KIRO Kids Holiday Magic Program. This program provides foster children with toys and gifts at Christmas time. KIRO and CA have been partners since 1988, and both raise money and solicit gifts to support the program. CA provides the wish lists of the children and coordinates the delivery of the gifts.

A variety of fund-raising events take place throughout the year sponsored by staff from CA headquarters and the local offices. These include rummage sales, plant sales, and soup and bread luncheons. CA staff also volunteer to shop and wrap the gifts, and also to "adopt" children to provide them with their wished for gifts themselves. Each child receives an average of 5 gifts, and up to 8000 children are served each year in this partnership.