



## Be the Change You Wish to See in the World

A new year brings new perspectives and opportunities; it is a time for reflection and looking forward. As I view the coming year, the paperweight on my desk reminds me of what is most important. It says "Be the change you wish to see in the world." I am one of those "save the world" type of people who needs the reminder to look within. As we know, the only control we really have is over our own thoughts and our own behavior. I need to take care of my own business before attempting to persuade others of what they should do. We choose how to respond to all the circumstances and situations that come our way. In The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Steven Covey advises us that we can act with integrity and make decisions with our core values and principles in mind, no matter the array of emotions, challenges, and obstacles we face.

I would like to commit myself to building functional working relationships with all that I am privileged to work with in this coming year. In my new role as President of the Board of PCSAO, I want to work cooperatively and in collaboration with Director Barbara Riley and ODJFS staff, as well as with the other associations and organizations with which we are involved. Cooperation and collaboration implies mutual respect and goodwill, but it does not mean conflict avoidance. All relationships have conflicts. Recognizing the expected and inherent conflicts that naturally result because of the different roles we all have and the different perspectives that come from those roles helps us to not impugn the motives of others. It is like the overused story about the four blind men describing the same elephant that they are all touching. Each of their realities and descriptions are true, yet very different. I will try to understand others' perceptions in the midst of conflicts.

I also have the responsibility to advocate for my own perspective and that of PCSAO. There are important and legitimate positions that are necessary for us to fight for. We need to strive for adequate funding of our services; and we need to strive for proper legislation that benefits our agencies, our customers, and our

communities. We need to continually be involved in the definition of the state-county partnership. The latest issue of whether or not the counties are sub-recipients of the state is a specific issue that seems counterproductive from the counties' point of view. This is something we may need to vigorously oppose. Is this issue a symptom of the frustration of the state supervised county administered system of our state? If mutual respect prevails in these conflicts, the outcomes will always be much better and the conflicts will exist in an atmosphere of goodwill toward everyone involved.



BY TERRY MILLER  
PCSAO  
PRESIDENT

I am hopeful that I can establish and maintain working relationships that are not threatened by disagreements. At the end of the year, I will laugh and be happy to say that I still respect those who have "made my life miserable"! Again, I am in control of whether or not my life is miserable or whether it is satisfying and fulfilling. I look forward to the new experiences and the new relationships and friendships that will be formed in the coming year.

May our organization continue to fulfill the vision and mission of advocating for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities. Every day brings new opportunities for us to accomplish this charge. ♥

*Terry Miller is Executive Director of the Coshocton County Department of Job and Family Services*

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Advocating for  
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# Supporting Permanent Kinship Families

**In child welfare, our first goal is to keep children safe. The second goal is to ensure they have a permanent, stable family to grow up in.** We absolutely work to merge these two very important goals.

Thus, whenever possible, we work with birth families to support them in maintaining or becoming safe, stable families, in which to raise their children. Strategies include everything from parenting classes, to household management, to intense family therapy, to substance abuse treatment.

**If we have to remove children to keep them safe, we do.** In keeping with the public's desires, as well as strong family based philosophy, **we first look for safe relatives or kinship families to serve as temporary caregivers**, while we work with the birth family to restore a safe, stable home. Of course, many extended families handle situations without the intervention of child welfare.

In many cases, the relative family becomes a permanent family. It could happen through adoption (in cases where there has been a termination of parental rights), or more often, through transfer of legal custody to the relative caregiver. In 1999, HB 484, sponsored by Senator Kirk Schuring, established that **legal custody is intended to be a permanent status for children (ORC 2151.42).**

In 1980, the federal government recognized that families who adopt special needs abused, neglected or dependent children often need financial assistance to make the permanent commitment to raise those children. To fulfill those needs, the federal Title IV-E Adoption Assistance program was established, and Ohio established the State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy program. Thousands of children have benefited as they grow up in permanent loving families. The subsidies do not fully cover the costs, but they do ensure some financial stability for the generous families that open their hearts and homes for our children.

**While many relative caregivers temporarily step in to help with the kids, in times of need, agreeing to a permanent commitment to raising a child, or sibling group is a whole other question.**

Serious consideration of raising a

child to the age of 18 deserves a thought to finances. Just as society has agreed that adoptive families of special needs children deserve financial stability, it is time to recognize that permanent kinship caregivers of special needs children experience the same needs.



**By Crystal Ward Allen**  
PCSAO  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

**National studies abound, demonstrating the benefits of Kinship Subsidies** and numerous ways to structure and finance such programs. PCSAO encourages you to

review the following reports:

- The Children and Family Research Center at the University of Illinois conclusively demonstrated that Subsidized Guardianships assist in achieving permanency for children (<http://cfrcwww.social.uiuc.edu/>) go to "News from CFRC."

- *Fostering Results* issued a report in October 2004, "Family Ties: Supporting Permanence for Children in Safe and Stable Foster Care with Relatives and other Caregivers" (<http://www.fosteringresults.org/results/reports.htm>.) The report provides data on children who could have permanent homes if Kinship/Guardianship Subsidies were available, and highlights states that have such programs.

- Children's Defense Fund's 2004 "Using Subsidized Guardianship to Improve Outcomes for Children" outlines the programs that exist in 34 states (go to <http://childrensdefense.org> and type in "Subsidized Guardianship" in the search box).

- Generations United is a national organization focused on promoting intergenerational issues. Their report, "Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children: Subsidized Guardianship Programs", summarizes detailed information about various state guardianship programs ([http://www.gu.org/Files/Subsidized.New12\\_02.pdf](http://www.gu.org/Files/Subsidized.New12_02.pdf)).

**We also have experience and data from right here in Ohio.** Hamilton County DJFS has an Assisted Guardianship program for abused, neglected and dependent children. It combines a monthly subsidy with kinship

child care vouchers. A detailed analysis of foster care cases opened between October 1999 and November 2001 found the following:

- Over 25% of the children placed with relatives who did not receive a kinship subsidy (they did receive a child only TANF grant) disrupted, or changed placements.

- 17% of the children in non-related licensed foster care home disrupted or moved.

- **Only 3% of the children placed in a paid Assisted Guardianship Relative Home disrupted or moved.**

Clearly, Hamilton CDJFS's Assisted Guardianship program is good for children – they are in a stable home with a relative instead of being moved around. In addition, Hamilton's analysis showed the program is also cost efficient, as many of the children who disrupted from the home of the relative caregiver ended up moving into paid foster care at a much higher cost!

**The findings are in – Kinship Subsidies work for kids and budgets!** There are many ways to structure and finance them. PCSAO strongly supports two:

- The federal recommendation to allow Title IV-E funds to support these subsidies, as recommended by the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, and as introduced in Congress by several bills.

- Creation of a program here in Ohio, using our TANF reserves. As we know, because of our great success in welfare reform, **Ohio has built a large reserve of TANF funds that have restricted use. Designation of a small portion of those funds (\$5 million per year) would fund a Kinship Subsidy program for special needs children when the court has awarded Legal Custody or Guardianship to the kinship caregiver. It could easily be modeled after our State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy program.**

We have the funds, the judicial and administrative models, and the need. We have the evidence that this investment

(See **KINSHIP**, page 4)

# The Power of Teamwork: Team Decision Making Can Change Lives... and Outcomes

Perhaps the most difficult decision a child welfare worker ever makes is whether to remove children from their homes. Balancing children's needs for safety against the known risks of separation from their families, the worker is often faced with what feels like a "Solomon-like" decision. Too often, this decision is



By ANGELA SAUSSER SHORT  
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made with much less information than is optimal, or it is based on conflicting facts and confusing allegations. The stress and emotions surrounding these events often create a negative foundation for the family's continuing relationship with the agency and its staff. Time is

then lost as trust must be built step by step with parents who feel bruised by the process of having their children removed. Too often, poor outcomes reflect this process, in long lengths of stay, low reunification rates, high re-entries into care, and frequent placement disruptions.

Team Decision Making (TDM) can assist agencies with improving outcomes for families and children by ensuring higher quality decision making, greater family satisfaction and enhanced community support. The TDM process is one of the four core strategies of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family Initiative. It was born in Ohio (Cuyahoga, Hamilton and Lucas counties) and is now being implemented throughout the United States.

**A TDM meeting must be held each and every time a decision needs to be made about placement**, whether it's the initial placement (to remove or not), change of placement (from residential to foster care, from a foster home to another, from foster care to a relative's home, etc.) or before reunification or other permanency options for a child in care. While some service planning may occur during the course of the meeting, the primary goal of TDM is to make the best possible placement-related decisions for children in an environment

that is strengths-based and solution-focused, inclusive and open.

The TDM meeting is convened prior to making all placement-related decisions, or in the case of an emergency, by the next working day. Because the decision making is "live," family participation is typically very high and family and community satisfaction with the process is great. Positive outcomes typically include reduced entries into care, higher kinship placement rates, reduced placement disruptions, lower rates of congregate and residential care placements and increased reunification or permanency for children. These outcomes can be tracked and updated at every TDM meeting in an already developed database from the AECF.

The TDM meeting is always facilitated by a highly trained and skilled agency staff

person, and includes the family, extended family, family support persons, caregiver family (when applicable), the child (when age appropriate), service providers (if appropriate), and persons who represent the family's community of origin, who serve as natural advocates for the family.

While holding a TDM for all placement-related decisions is challenging to implement, especially under budgetary constraints, it is a very public way to demonstrate a commitment to partnership with families and community in the work of child welfare. In addition, proven outcomes suggest that the process is an investment well worth making for the most pragmatic of reasons.

With the tremendous support and sponsorship from the AECF, a five-day training was provided by consultant Stacey Saunders in January 2005 to 10 additional Ohio counties to train their designated facilitators on the TDM process and acquire the skills to effectively facilitate an often emotional, yet

(See **TEAMWORK**, page 4)

## Marion County

### 10th Ohio Agency Accredited by COA



Marion County Children Services mascot Ted D. Bear hugs a child before the balloon launch at a breakfast celebrating the county's accreditation by the Council on Accreditation. Marion County CSB staff, their children, community supporters, Ohio Auditor of State Betty Montgomery and PCSAO gathered to commemorate the event in January.



Eric Bush, Executive Director of the Marion County CSB, addresses a packed audience at a breakfast celebration of his agency's completion of the COA accreditation process. Marion County Children Services is the 10<sup>th</sup> Ohio agency to achieve accreditation.

## Kinship (continued)

would make a great difference in the lives of children. We want to empower families to care for their own, and we should financially support those relative caregivers who make a permanent commitment to Ohio's children.

Key state legislators such as Senator Kirk Schuring and Representative Linda Reidelbach have pledged their support for this proposal. The Statewide Kinship Advisory Board to ODJFS and the Board of Trustees for the Public Children Services Association of Ohio unanimously endorsed it. Child professionals across the state struggle to support kinship caregivers and are calling for help.

Think safety; think permanency; think families. Kinship Subsidies are a concept whose time is come – are you ready to support Ohio's children? ♥

## Teamwork (continued)

powerful meeting in a strengths-based approach. The AECF will then provide the counties with onsite consultation from two local consultants from Lucas and Cuyahoga Counties to provide additional follow up to the facilitators and administrative staff. PCSAO is grateful for receiving this high level training and consultation from the AECF. Future TDM facilitator trainings and consultation for counties wanting to implement the TDM process will be available through PCSAO.

PCSAO hopes Ohio counties will elect to implement this strategy as it has been proven to achieve best outcomes for children and families. Equally important, this team approach allows caseworkers to obtain additional information about the family at the meeting, identify supports that may be available for the family, review all options that may help to reduce risk to the child, and together as a team make the best placement decision for the child. ♥

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and information are online at**

**[http://www.pcsao.org/2005\\_conference.htm](http://www.pcsao.org/2005_conference.htm)**

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