



Jamar working to improve providers' care for foster children

By Anya Armes Weber

Jeff Jamar has a particular advantage in his position bringing together private child care providers and the state government staff that work with abused and neglected children: He has recently held both jobs.



"Having worked in both areas, I have an appreciation for how the groups try to do things right," he said. "It doesn't always look that way from the other side."

Jamar is executive officer for Children and Family Services and works for Undersecretary Eugene Foster.

Before arriving at CHFS, Jamar spent two years as regional director of The Villages, a residential and foster care agency that operates in Indiana and Kentucky. The previous year, he was a consultant on contract with the Cabinet for Families and Children.

Jamar has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Prescott College in Prescott, Ariz. He holds a master's in corrections/education from Sam Houston University in Huntsville, Texas, and an MBA from Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio, Texas.

A licensed master social worker in Texas, Jamar is also a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor in Kentucky, and a certified trauma resolution therapist.

At CHFS, one of Jamar's main focuses is working with community partners to improve service to children in state care. He has formed a steering committee of cabinet staff and private child care representatives. The group meets monthly to share information and develop a strategy to address CHFS' high priority needs for the care and treatment of abused and neglected children.

Jamar said improving the way the cabinet purchases services from its providers can help promote the goals of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which ensures that children's safety, permanency and well-being are the overriding concern in child welfare decisions.

For instance, "We can better utilize the private child-care providers to further adoptions" he said. "Most adoptions

are within foster families, and yet we've not maximized this permanency resource for our children. Permanency goes to the heart of our mission for these kids."

Jamar said he's "a big advocate of quality reviews and accountability." In a time of budget restrictions, the cabinet's contracts deserve a closer look to make sure that each dollar we spend benefits the children and families that we serve, he said.

"Taking care of children and families is a great use of our of time and money," he said. "When we are squeezed financially, outcomes become more important. We focus on them to make sure our kids and families get the right services in a timely manner."

Jamar lives in Oldham County with his wife of 22 years, Karla. Their daughter, Hanna, and son, Walker, are students at the University of Kentucky.

An avid runner, Jamar hits the country roads in his neighborhood every morning. He also enjoys wood working and in particular woodturning decorative bowls and vessels.

Looking for Ways to Improve CHFS: OIG's Division of Audits and Detection

A tip from the Public Health Commissioner about a possible embezzlement of funds at the Shelby County Health Department was all it took to open an investigation by the Office of Inspector General's Division of Audits and Detection. Along with the Kentucky State Police, division staff determined that an employee had diverted agency funds in excess of \$30,000 for personal gain during a 12-month month period.

The employee convicted of embezzling had control of the payroll system and had altered her own withholdings to create a fraudulent deposit into her personal credit union account. The end results of the investigation were six months in jail, five years probation and court-ordered restitution of the stolen \$30,000 for the convicted employee. In addition, Audits and Detections' final recommendation was to strengthen internal controls to avoid any similar problem in the future.

That is just a sample of the good work that director George Currie and the Audits and Detection staff do every day for CHFS. Currie, a former special agent with Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation for 27 years, leads the Division of Audits and Detection. Currently, the division has 16 employees and a strategic goal is to hire another 27 to completely staff the division as authorized under the reorganization. Almost all staff members are



auditors with at least a bachelor's degree that includes at least 20 hours of accounting.

Division auditors conduct various types of audits and jointly work with various law enforcement agencies such as the Kentucky State Police and FBI as the case dictates. The Division of Audits and Detection has three branches: Strategic and Internal Audit, Provider Audit and Contract Audit.

During internal audits they function as an independent and objective consulting activity giving assurance to the secretary that cabinet policies and procedures are working as intended and are free from fraud, waste, abuse and inefficiencies. They make recommendations for improvements, if necessary. "What makes having a strong Audits Division so critical to the cabinet is the fact that they not only detect fraud, waste and abuse, but also provide valuable advice which helps to reduce similar issues from occurring in the future," said Inspector General Robert J. Benvenuti, III. "Simply put -- a tremendous amount of money flows through this cabinet and these folks are a key factor in seeing that those monies are not erroneously and fraudulently diverted."

In the course of provider audits, they examine cost reports and financial statements of providers receiving Medicaid funds. OMB Circular A-133 requires agencies to be audited if they receive \$500,000 or more in federal money. The federal government requires these audits, and the contract branch staff reviews audits conducted by the institution's certified public accountants to determine if auditing and reporting requirements are correct.

Audits and Detection is a totally independent function within CHFS and reports directly to the secretary through the inspector general. They have full authority to access any and all cabinet records, properties and personnel relevant to the subject under review. "Our goal is to make sure the governance as set by the secretary and his management team are working as intended. That assurance gives confidence that the risk of fraud, waste and abuse is minimal," said Currie.

Cases come from various sources, some are proactive or routine reviews of cabinet programs, others are requested, and still more come through the Medicaid Fraud Hotline. "We are here to ensure that CHFS controls are in place in order to minimize the risk of any type of waste, fraud and Pro Card abuse," says Currie. "We make sure that CHFS functions efficiently. For example, we might look at pro-cards to ensure they are used properly to eliminate the potential for misuse and loss of cabinet funds."

"There are some really good people in the division. We currently have five CPAs on staff, and certifications are strongly encouraged because it not only enhances an individual's skills, but the division as a whole. In addition, right now there are five division employees who are in the certification process," says Currie. "We are in the process of providing those who pass the CPA exam with the experience to become certified if they so choose." This, in turn, leads to movement along the career ladder which offers advancement and on-the-job training through rotations in different subject areas.

Currie reminds CHFS employees that "Audits and Detection is here to help you. We are part of a team. One of our functions is to assist all members of the cabinet in the effective discharge of their responsibilities by furnishing them with analyses, appraisals, recommendations and pertinent comments concerning the activities reviewed. No employee has to fear an auditor unless they have intentionally done something wrong. We are there to help you do your job more efficiently and effectively."

He also encourages any employee who has knowledge of fraud, waste or abuse anywhere within this cabinet to contact his office. Currie further explained "that any such information will be held in the strictest confidence and any employee should understand they have that assurance from the inspector general."

Brodts appointed Special Investigations director

CHFS has announced the appointment of Steve L. Brodt as director of the Special Investigations Division in the Office of Inspector General. The Division of Special Investigations is the primary investigative unit within OIG.

Brodts, a Virginia native, grew up in Central Kentucky and retired from the Kentucky State Police after nearly 26 years of service. During his tenure with KSP, he had many assignments -- from trooper to lieutenant colonel. As lieutenant colonel, he was assigned as director of the Services Division and was responsible for oversight of more than 300 employees and a budget exceeding \$10 million.

He has a wide array of investigative experience including narcotics, public corruption, forensics, special operations and intelligence gathering. In addition to the lieutenant colonel designation, Brodts held the rank of lieutenant, captain and major, and also was assigned as a commander within KSP.



As Special Investigations director, Brodt will concentrate on investigating and eliminating waste, fraud and abuse in Medicaid and other welfare and assistance programs, as well as special investigations under the authority of the inspector general.

"I am extremely pleased that Steve has joined OIG," said Inspector General Robert J. Benvenuti, III. "I am certain that his experience and leadership will be invaluable to the very critical mission of OIG and the dedicated men and women of the Division of Special Investigations."

DPH Broadens Flu Shot Guidelines to Include Ages 50-64

The Department for Public Health has notified health departments of the local option to expand the recommended groups to receive flu vaccine in Kentucky to include healthy people aged 50-64 years old.



The Centers for Disease Control issued guidance on priority groups at high risk for the complication from the flu in October when the nation's flu supply was cut in half due to a manufacturing problem. DPH's decision to expand the guidelines for Kentucky was based on reports from local health departments in most areas of the state that high-risk populations seeking to be vaccinated have been covered.

"Since the national flu vaccine shortage began, our number one priority in Kentucky has been to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens had access to our limited vaccine supply. We believe that our public health and private provider partners have or will soon be able to vaccinate most high-risk people that seek vaccination," said Dr. William Hacker, Commissioner of Public Health. "With our flu season now under way, we hope expanding these guidelines on who can receive the flu vaccine this year in Kentucky will allow us to prevent more cases of the flu and to use all flu vaccine available."

The group of people CDC has specified at the highest risk for flu complications includes: all children ages 6 - 23 months, adults 65 and older; persons age 2 - 64 with chronic medical conditions, women who will be pregnant during flu season, residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities, children 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy, health care workers involved in direct patient care, and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months old. Health departments and private providers in Kentucky now

have the option of vaccinating those in the 50-64 age group as well.

Dr. Hacker also urged those in the high risk and expanded groups seeking vaccine to check with local health departments or other providers. "Additional shipments of flu vaccine are still scheduled to arrive at some local health departments and health providers' offices throughout December and possibly into January-depending on demand-so people in these recommended groups should continue to try to get their flu shot as soon as vaccine becomes available."

Kentucky reported local flu activity to the CDC in its weekly surveillance report this week.

Dr. Hacker said, "Speaking as a physician, I'd also like to remind people that there are simple steps that can be taken to prevent flu and other illnesses that normally circulate at this time of year. You should follow the advice your mother gave you - wash your hands frequently, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and staying home when you're sick - in order to protect others."

The nasal-spray flu vaccine is an acceptable alternative to the flu shot for healthy persons ages 5-49.

For more information about the flu, see the CDC's website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>, which will also be keeping a weekly map of flu activity reported across the nation at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm>.

Kentucky Scores 7 Out of 10 in Bioterrorism Preparedness Study

A report released on Dec. 14 by Trust for America's Health (TFAH) highlighted Kentucky's progress in preparing to respond to acts of bioterrorism or public health emergencies. Kentucky achieved seven out of 10 criteria used to measure states' preparedness.



"This report showcases the true spirit of collaboration that has been part of Kentucky's preparedness efforts since day one," said Dr. William Hacker, Commissioner of Public Health. "The Department for Public Health and its partners - Kentucky's local health departments, state homeland security and emergency management officials, the Kentucky Hospital Association and other local and state response agencies -- have worked tirelessly to increase



Kentucky's ability to respond to any public health threat or emergency."

"Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health in the Age of Bioterrorism - 2004" examined 10 key indicators to gauge state preparedness and determine America's overall readiness to respond to bioterrorist attacks and other health emergencies. This is the second year in a row that TFAH conducted a review of bioterrorism and public health preparedness.

Kentucky is one of eight states to achieve seven out of 10 indicators; over two-thirds of states and the District of Columbia scored six or less out of the 10 possible indicators. Florida and North Carolina scored the highest, at nine out of 10, and Alaska and Massachusetts scored the lowest, at three out of 10.

"Although we still have a great deal of work to do, this report further demonstrates the Fletcher Administration's commitment to ensuring Kentucky is ready and prepared," said Keith Hall, Director of the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security. "I am pleased that the tremendous efforts of Kentucky's preparedness partners have been recognized by this national survey."

The seven indicators Kentucky received were: Kentucky has a response plan for pandemic flu; Kentucky has enough lab scientists available to run tests in the event of such a bioterrorism-related outbreak; Kentucky increased flu vaccination rates in adults 65 and up in '02-'03; Kentucky has the legal authority to quarantine; Kentucky has less than 25 percent of its public health workforce eligible to retire within five years; Kentucky's public health budget was not cut between Fiscal Year 2003 and 2004; and that there is local concurrence with the state's bioterrorism preparedness plan.

For the full text of the report visit the Trust for America's Health site at:

<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/bioterror04/>

CMS Web Site Deadline Postponed

Secretary James Holsinger announced today the postponement of the Dec. 16 deadline for having the new CHFS Web Site up and running. The new site is being designed to meet the Ky.gov Content Management System requirements and is expected to be operational by the end of January 2005.

The postponement comes as the result of:

- ◆ site editors' workload in preparing Web content while continuing to perform their program responsibilities;
- ◆ the huge quantity of information (more than 10,000 pages) to be transferred; and
- ◆ a lack of response from some site editors.

"I'd like to emphasize that the third point means only 'some' site editors," Secretary Holsinger said. "Most site editors have gone well beyond the call of duty to get their information transferred."

Early payroll distribution – Dec. 23

Earlier this month the Personnel Cabinet released a memo detailing this year's holiday payroll distribution.



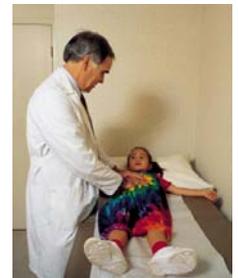
In the memo, Governor Ernie Fletcher and First Lady Glenna Fletcher extended sincere best wishes for all state employees and their families to enjoy a wonderful holiday season.

The memo also stated that the Governor and Mrs. Fletcher recognize the long-standing tradition of paying state employees prior to the Christmas holiday and have authorized personnel departments throughout the state to issue final December paychecks prior to the Christmas holiday.

State employees will receive paychecks or direct deposit for the pay period ending Dec. 15 on Dec. 23.

Health insurance deductions

On Wed. Dec. 15, your paycheck should have reflected the new premium amount deduction for 2005 health insurance. If you will recall, your monthly premium is to be deducted twice monthly from your paycheck. Therefore, the paycheck you received should reflect one half of your new monthly premium amount.



Payroll staff within OHRM reviewed all health insurance applications in a timely manner and forwarded for further processing to the Personnel Cabinet. The Personnel Cabinet has assured us that all employees who completed an application will have their 2005 health insurance cards before the first of the year. There were some applications, however, that were not processed in the Personnel Cabinet in time to make the cutoff for the Dec. 15 payday.





If you are to have out-of-pocket premium expenses for 2005 and the paycheck you received on Dec. 15 does not reflect a health insurance premium deduction, the paycheck you receive on Dec. 23 (normally, the 30th paycheck) will reflect a full month's premium deduction. Please contact your appropriate Payroll Administrator if you are due to have a premium deducted and your health insurance premiums were not deducted from your Dec. 15 paycheck. Payroll staff will then make contact with the Personnel Cabinet to resolve any issues.

Holiday Schedule for 2005

As stated in KRS 18A.190, KRS 2.190, and KRS 2.110, "State offices shall be closed and state employees shall be given a holiday on the following days."

- ◆ Third Monday in January (Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday): Mon., Jan. 17
- ◆ Good Friday, one-half day (Good Friday): Fri., March 25
- ◆ Last Monday in May (Memorial Day): Mon., May 30
- ◆ Fourth day of July (Independence Day): Mon., July 4
- ◆ First Monday in September (Labor Day): Mon., Sept. 5
- ◆ Eleventh day of November (Veterans Day): Fri., Nov. 11
- ◆ Fourth Thursday in November plus one extra day (Thanksgiving): Thurs., Nov. 24 and Fri., Nov. 25
- ◆ Christmas day plus one extra day: Friday, Dec. 23 and Mon., Dec. 26
- ◆ New Year's Day plus one extra day: Friday, Dec. 30 and Mon., Jan. 2, 2006

Please ensure that this information is brought to the attention of all state employees under your supervision.

Please be certain that delivery of essential services to the public will not be impaired.

Governor Ernie Fletcher Thanks State Employees for Generosity

*State Employees
Donated Money,
Food during Holiday
Open House*



Governor Ernie Fletcher announced the Governor's Mansion collected \$220 and several pounds of canned

goods during the annual State Employee Open House on Dec. 3.

"I want to thank all state employees who took the time to stop by the mansion and make a donation during this busy holiday season," said Governor Fletcher. "Many needy families will benefit from their generosity."

All donated items and money were graciously received by the Coalition of Committed Christians. The Coalition operates the Frankfort Soup Kitchen.

Health Tips of the week: Allergy and Asthma Tips for the Holidays

By Anne Parr, R.N.



We are right in the middle of the holiday season, and millions of Americans are decorating their homes and gathering for holiday feasts. But for allergy and asthma sufferers, the holiday season holds several potential triggers, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI).

Whether it's setting up your Christmas tree, visiting your pet-owning relatives, or feasting on holiday treats, allergy triggers may be lurking around every corner.

"With hectic schedules and constant traveling around the holidays, it's easy to forget to take proper care when dealing with allergies and asthma," said Wanda Phipatanakul, MD, MS, FAAAAI, vice-chair of the AAAAI's Indoor Allergen Committee. "Remembering to take medication and avoid potential triggers is necessary to keep symptoms under control."

AAAAI offers the following tips to help you have a reaction-free holiday season:

- Before decorating a live Christmas tree, allow it to dry on an enclosed porch or garage. You also may want to explore whether the tree retailer has a shaking machine, which will physically remove some allergens from the tree.
- Clean artificial Christmas trees outside before decorating. They can gather mold and dust in storage.
- Wash fabric decorations in hot, soapy water before displaying.
- Use plastic, metal or glass decorations that cannot trap dust mites.
- When spraying artificial snow on windows or other surfaces, be sure to follow directions. These sprays can irritate your lungs if you inhale them.



- When attending holiday parties, inform the host about any food allergies you might have and ask about the ingredients used to prepare the meal.
- Carry self-injectable epinephrine in case you accidentally eat a food to which you are allergic. Homemade items do not have ingredient lists and can be contaminated with trace amounts of allergenic foods through contact with storage containers, baking sheets and utensils.
- Remind family members and friends that strict avoidance is the only way to manage food allergies and even one little bite can hurt.
- If visiting relatives who have pets, take medication before arriving to minimize a possible reaction.
- The holidays can be a very stressful time of year. Pay attention to your stress level, which can sometimes lead to an asthma attack.
- Ask your relatives and friends to avoid burning wood in the fireplace. The smoke can trigger an asthma attack.
- Dust mites can be especially troubling when traveling away from home, take your own pillow with an allergen-proof cover and request down-free pillows if staying in a hotel.

If your allergy and asthma symptoms persist and do not appear under control, consult with an allergist/immunologist to discuss treatment and environmental control options. Allergist/immunologists are the best-qualified medical professionals trained to manage the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of allergies and asthma.

Holiday Cooking Tips

The holiday season presents a number of unique food safety challenges for those preparing, storing, handling, transporting and serving foods.

Fortunately, the United States has the best and safest foods, processors and suppliers found in the world. However, each year some Kentucky families may experience illness from their holiday meal, especially persons at the highest risk of being affected by foodborne illness - the elderly, children, and individuals with weakened immune systems, including pregnant women.

Food is a common feature for most American holiday celebrations. So, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services' Food Safety Branch is offering some food safety



precautions to ensure the holiday foods are not only delicious, but also safe. They are as follows:

- Clean - Wash hands and food-contact surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges and countertops.
- Separate - Don't cross-contaminate-don't let bacteria spread from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Cook - Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness.
- Chill - Refrigerate promptly. Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees F and the freezer at 0 degrees F, and the accuracy of the settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer. Potluck dishes are common during the holiday season and care should be taken to ensure that foods are transported and held to assure cold foods remain cold and cooked foods remain hot.

In addition, here are some tips for specific food items often prepared during the holidays:

- Baked goods - The cabinet advises consumers not to eat uncooked cookie dough, homemade or commercial, or batters made with raw fresh eggs because raw fresh eggs may contain bacteria that can cause an intestinal infection called salmonellosis. Thorough cooking kills the bacteria that cause the infection.
- Eggnog - Traditional eggnog made with raw eggs also presents the same risk to consumers -- salmonellosis. While cooking can destroy the disease-causing bacteria, consumers can still become ill when the eggnog is left at room temperature for several hours before being consumed. Safe alternatives are pasteurized eggnog beverages sold in grocery dairy cases; these products should also be kept refrigerated.
- Apple cider and other juices - Apple cider is often served during the holiday season. Most apple cider and juices are pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. Treated juice is shelf-stable. Unpasteurized cider or juice must have this warning on the label: "WARNING: This product has not been pasteurized and therefore, may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems."
- Turkey - Thawing the turkey completely before cooking is important and necessary to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. If a turkey is not properly thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not be hot enough to destroy disease-



causing bacteria. Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw and cook a whole turkey. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs two to three days to thaw completely when thawed in the refrigerator at a temperature of no more than 40 degrees F.

A stuffed turkey needs 4 ¾ to 5 ¼ hours to cook completely. To check a stuffed turkey for doneness, insert a food thermometer into the inner thigh area near the breast of the turkey but not touching bone. The turkey is done when the internal temperature reaches 180 degrees F. and the stuffing reaches 180 degrees F. The turkey should be held at 140 degrees F. until served.

Leftover turkey and stuffing should be stored separately in shallow dishes or platters. To reheat turkey or serve in a hot dish, rapidly heat to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F., assuring it is heated thoroughly.

- Raw fruits and vegetables - All raw fruits and vegetables must be thoroughly washed prior to preparation and serving. Unclean hands are often the sources of food contamination - wash hands often and thoroughly.
- Oysters and Seafood - Be sure to cook oysters thoroughly at home or have them cooked thoroughly when eating out. Buy only fresh seafood that is refrigerated or properly iced. Always cook fish thoroughly. Cooking fish until it is opaque and flaky helps destroy any bacteria that may be present. People with liver disorders or weakened immune systems are especially at risk for becoming ill and should avoid eating raw oysters or shellfish.
- Mail-order food gifts - Care should be taken with mail-order food gifts which can include meat, poultry, fish and other perishables like cheese, fruit and cheesecake. The gift giver should alert the recipient to the pending arrival of the food gift; the recipient should open the package immediately to make sure that, foods requiring refrigeration arrives in a chilled state.

Additional food safety information for consumers is available through the Foods Safety Branch at (502) 564-7181 or your local health department. Also, visit the Cabinet for Health Services, Food Safety Branch Web page at <http://chs.ky.gov/publichealth/Food-Program.htm>.

Frankfort reminder: Heating system outage Dec. 18

The heating system will be turned off in the CHR building only at 8 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 18, for 10 hours so the Energy Savings contractor can make piping connections to the system.

During this period the office temperatures may be lower than normal. Computer server areas will not be affected.

The outage will be cancelled if outside temperatures are below freezing.

If there is a reason that the outage should not occur as scheduled, please contact Andrew Bland, andrew.bland@ky.gov, (502) 564-7530 ext. 4021.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber



Employee Enrichment is a weekly feature for CHFS staff. These tips for making work better will focus on team building, customer service and personal development.

It can be difficult telling a coworker – especially a superior – when you don't agree with them. The key to this is how you package and deliver your opinions. You must have something substantial to say, but more important is how you deliver it.

In "Big Change at Best Buy," coauthor Elizabeth Gibson offers tips for making a challenge at work:

- Use your heart: Channel your feelings so you're honestly constructive. Speak calmly and carefully. Don't go into a meeting angry or interrupt when others are challenging your view.
- Use your head: Figure out the reasons why the policy isn't working. Bring facts, figures and supporting viewpoints.
- Play your hand: Talk about how to do it differently. Be armed with alternative methods.

Above all, be sensitive. If your point of view doesn't prevail, don't sulk. Speaking out to improve team performance is never wrong.

Visit us online!

To view the online version of CHFS Focus, visit our Web site at <http://chfs.ky.gov/newsletter>.

Note to readers: CHFS will not publish CHFS Focus on the week of Dec. 27 – 31 due to the holiday.