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Social Services Staff Speaks out during Social Work Month

By Anya Armes Weber

We've observed Social Work Month in the Focus each week in March with a staff testimonial, and we publish our final entry this week.

The Focus sends its appreciation to the social services staff who shared their stories of personal challenges and rewards. Thank you for your openness and dedication to the clients you serve.

Stacy Hait, Adoptions Specialist DCBS Central Office

Helping others always came naturally to me from the many tragedies I suffered through with my own family. In college, I majored in psychology until I discovered this wasn't exactly what I had in mind. That's when I discovered the college of social work. This fit perfectly with my desire to work with families and children living in poverty.

Once I entered the college of social work, my college career flourished. I did my first practicum at the Center for Women, Families and Children. At this point, my life suddenly opened up to a world of caring and devoted people. My second practicum on an investigative team in Fayette County further enriched my desire to be part of something that truly seemed to help those in need.

After graduation, I was hired as an investigative worker in a small county. During those years, I experienced some of the most wonderful and most tragic experiences of my life.

As a social worker now for going on 10 years, I have had the opportunity to work with some of the most caring and loving people I have ever known. Through my experiences with these special people, I have been taught the true

meaning of self sacrifice. As a social worker, you sacrifice everything you know and love to help others. There are times you must sacrifice everything that is important to you -- including your safety, your beliefs and values, your time and your own family -- to protect someone else from harm.

My experiences as a social worker and working with social workers have taught me how to give of myself to help others. To me, there is no one like a social worker, and I am very proud to say that I am one.

End of Year Purchase Request Deadline

The Finance and Administration Cabinet (FAC) has just issued the closing schedule for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008. CHFS must have non-contract purchase requests with a cost greater than \$20,000 to FAC by close of business April 11. These purchases are typically for items or non-professional services that are not currently on an existing price contract and will require formal competitive bidding by the FAC.

Therefore, if your agency wants to use FY 2008 money to purchase items or non-professional services not on an existing price contract, the Office of Contract Oversight (OCO) must have that request completed, approved and transmitted to the Finance Cabinet by April 11. OCO staff will work with you to complete all needed requests within the timelines. If your agency discovers it needs additional items (utilizing 2008 money) after the deadline date, OCO will work with FAC to complete the requests individually but there will be no guarantees the Finance Cabinet will accept the requests or complete the processing in time to utilize FY 2008 funds.

Submit an approved CHFS 96 Purchase Requisition Form, along with detailed specifications, to the Procurement Process and Administration Branch (275 East Main Street,

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4E-B; Frankfort 40621) no later than close of business Friday, April 4, for any item or non-professional service meeting the criteria specified above. It is imperative for the specifications to be as comprehensive as possible so that OCO buyers can expedite processing your request.

Submission deadlines for other purchase requirements are identified below:

It is essential that CHFS Departments plan ahead and submit requirements before the deadlines indicated above. Please understand that last minute requests may not get processed due to the volume of requests. Ensure that each request is completed accurately and the proper documentation is attached (e.g., proper signature on request form, funding allocation specified, adequate justification, etc.). Every effort will be made to process requests using FY08 funding.

If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Smith, CHFS Procurement Process and Administration Branch Manager, at (502) 564-7736. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

April is Autism Awareness Month

As many as 1.5 million Americans today are believed to have some form of autism. And this number is on the rise. Understanding and bringing awareness to this developmental disability is the aim of Autism Awareness Month, observed during April.

Autism usually appears during the first three years of life. It is the result of a neurological disorder that affects normal functioning of the brain and affects roughly every one in 150 children born each year.

Autism impacts development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal

communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

Based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Education and other governmental agencies, autism is growing at a startling rate of 10 to 17 percent per year. At this rate, the Autism Society of America estimates that the prevalence of autism could reach four million Americans in the next decade.

Autism recognizes no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries; family income levels; lifestyle choices; or educational levels. Any family and any child can be affected by autism.

And although the overall incidence of autism is consistent around the globe, it occurs four times more often in boys than girls.

With appropriate supports and services, people with autism can succeed in school, thrive in the workplace and contribute to their communities. Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that lasts throughout a person's lifetime. While it's a widespread disorder, the general public gets little information about it.

Learn more about autism at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/>.

April 4 has been designated as Autism Awareness Day in Louisville.

An event will be at noon at the Belvedere on the Louisville Waterfront that day. The event will celebrate work being done at University of Louisville on behalf of children with autism that includes:

- Systematic Treatment of Autism and Related Diseases (STAR) provides individualized intervention to children with autism spectrum disorders, helping them reach their full potential.
- Kentucky Autism Training Center (KATC) offers families and schools

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assistance and training to enhance support for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

- Bingham Clinic provides psychiatric diagnostic services, medication treatment, family consultation, supportive therapy and individual psychotherapy.

For more information, call Lori Wilson at (502) 852-8814.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

By Anya Armes Weber

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and staff wearing blue lapel ribbons is supporting the promotion of child abuse prevention and awareness.

The Cabinet's Department for Community Based Services is reminding Kentuckians this month that reporting suspected child abuse or neglect is the law.

"Just picking up the phone could save a child from harm," said Jim Grace, assistant director of the Division of Protection and Permanency in the CHFS Department for Community Based Services. "If you see obvious abuse or even suspect it, you are obligated to report it.

The toll-free reporting hot line is 1-800-752-6200.

Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky (PCKA), one of the cabinet's community partners, is a statewide nonprofit agency whose mission is to prevent the abuse and neglect of Kentucky's children through its outreach.

PCKA offers a toll-free hot line -- (800) CHILDREN -- that provides information and referrals to help prevent child abuse. Visit them online at www.pckay.org.

Learn more about the Cabinet's efforts to prevent child abuse online at

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/childsafety.htm>.

PCKA suggests several tips to help prevent child abuse.

Child Abuse Prevention Strategies

- Never discipline a child when your anger is out of control.
- Never leave a child unattended, especially in a car.
- Learn the signs of physical abuse. Take note of bruises, cuts, burns or other injuries a child cannot explain.
- Teach children the difference between "good touches," "bad touches" and "confusing touches."
- When a child tells you he or she doesn't want to be with someone, this could be a red flag. Listen to them and believe what they say.
- Be aware of changes in a child's behavior or attitude, and inquire about it.
- Teach children what to do if you become separated while away from home.
- Teach children the correct names of his or her private body parts.
- Be alert for any talk that reveals premature sexual understanding.
- Pay attention when someone shows greater than normal interest in a child.
- Make certain that your child's school or day care center will release him or her only to you or someone you designate.

Free Teleconference Focuses on Helping Grieving Teens

By Anya Armes Weber

Staff is invited to participate in a free teleconference about dealing with grief next month.

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The Hospice Foundation of America's 2008 national bereavement teleconference, "Living with Grief: Children and Adolescents," will be from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, April 16.

The teleconference will focus on the experiences of grieving children and adolescents and the ways that hospice professionals, teachers, parents and social workers can best support them as they cope with loss and grief.

Three continuing education units are available to social workers and nurses, and pre-registration is required.

Here are the state meeting locations and contact details for the teleconference.

Frankfort Area

Contact: Glenna Hughes

Phone: (502)223-1744 or (800)926-1302

E-mail: ghughes@hospicebg.org

Teleconference Locations

Frankfort: Frankfort Regional Medical Center, 299 Kings Daughters Drive

Lawrenceburg: Anderson County Board of Education, Training Room, 1160 Bypass North

Owenton: Monterey Baptist Church, 44 High St.

Versailles: Woodford County Library, 115 N. Main St.

Cynthiana Area

Contact person: Mary McKenzie

Phone: (859) 234-6462 or (800) 756-6005

E-mail: mmckenzie@hospicebg.org

Teleconference Location

Cynthiana: Hospice of the Bluegrass, 1317 US Highway 62E

Harlan Area

Contact person: Janet Nantz

Phone: (606) 573-6111 or (800) 371-6112

E-mail: jnantz@hospicebg.org

Teleconference Locations

Harlan: Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College - Harlan Campus, 164 Ball Park Road

Middlesboro: Holiday Inn Express, 1252 North 12th St.

Hazard Area

Contact: Roger Smith

Phone: (606)439-2111 or (800)560-1101

E-mail: rsmith2@hospicebg.org

Teleconference Location

Hazard: UK Center for Rural Health, 750 Morton Blvd., Room 218

Nicholasville Area

Contact: Michele Heim

Phone: (859) 887-2696 or (800)279-0750

E-mail: mheim@hospicebg.org

Teleconference Locations

Wilmore: Asbury College, Kinlaw Library Board Room, One Macklem Drive,

Nicholasville: Jessamine County Schools, Career and Technology Center, 881 Wilmore Road

Northern Kentucky Area

Contact: Traci Mattera

Phone: (859) 441-6332 or (800) 200-5408

E-mail: tmattera@hospicebg.org

Teleconference Locations

Florence: Hospice of the Bluegrass – Northern Kentucky, 7388 Turfway Road,

Edgewood: St. Elizabeth Medical Center, 1 Medical Village Drive

Staff Reminded of Smoking Policy

Employees who smoke are being reminded to use designated outdoor smoking areas at the CHR Complex. Smoking areas are located away from entrances to the building so visitors and employees will not be exposed to secondhand smoke, a public health hazard. The location of CHR Complex smoking stations are:

- Facing the main entrance of the CHR Building, there is a smoking station to the

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left, between the porch and Door A. Staff should not stand in front of or around doors.

- Facing the entrance on the front side of the CHR Building near the breezeway/snack bar.
- On the front side of the CHR Building at the far east end near Martin Luther King Boulevard.
- Facing the Health Services Building (HSB) front porch (East Main Street side of the building), on the sidewalk to the right of the main entrance.
- On the patio off of the cafeteria.

All of these areas are covered with the exception of the Health Services Building and patio locations. Staff should not move benches or smoking urns used for disposal of cigarettes, as they are placed to allow for easy access during breaks but are a good distance away from the doors. Also, staff should make sure and use the smoking urns for the disposal of cigarette butts to keep the outside of the building clean and to prevent fires.

Staff and clients should refrain from blocking or smoking in front of public/employee entrances and use proper containers for disposal of cigarette butts.

Ensuring Quality Child Care is a Team Effort

**By Sadiqa N. Reynolds, Inspector General
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

We all want the best for our children, at home or in a child care facility. As Inspector General of the agency responsible for regulating Kentucky child care facilities and, more importantly, as a mother, I know that the morning drop off at daycare can be an emotional time filled with worry and uncertainty for parents. Providing parents with reassurance that their children are in a safe and nurturing environment is a top priority

of my office, under the direction of Governor Steve Beshear and Health and Family Services Secretary Janie Miller.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) helps keep Kentucky's children safe by performing inspections and investigations of child care facilities. The OIG is responsible for certifying 799 homes and licensing 2,419 day care facilities, 126 child-placing agencies and 72 group homes throughout Kentucky. Last year alone we conducted nearly 3,000 annual licensure and certification surveys, and investigated more than 1,500 complaints.

During routine surveys we evaluate aspects of operation such as staff to child ratios, supervision and environmental issues, daily programming schedules, safe play areas, proper transportation accommodations such as car seats and seat belts, and timely employee background checks. Whenever possible we work with child care facilities to improve services, but we will not hesitate to act if our findings indicate that children may be in harm's way because a facility does not meet licensure standards.

Obviously, OIG staff are not present at child care facilities all of the time. Parents also have a key role to play by choosing the child care facility best suited to serve the needs of their child.

Before making this important decision, I encourage parents to:

- Visit the facility, and ask questions of the director and the staff who work directly with the children.
- Use your senses – sight, smell, hearing, etc. – to observe the surroundings.
- Inquire about staff turnover and job satisfaction.
- Ask to allow your child to spend some time in the center before signing a contract.
- Check for cleanliness and wear and tear of furnishings, toys, carpeting and paint.

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- Examine staffing to children ratios – for instance, there should be one staff member for every five children ages birth to 1 year.
- Assess staff and child behaviors - Do staff members interact well with the children? Do they address the children by name, respond to their needs, get on the floor with the children, or sit or stand away from the children? Are the children participating in interactive activities?
- Don't hesitate to ask for references from other parents and follow up with those parents about their experience with the facility.
- Most importantly – trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel quite right to you, do not leave your child.

Parents have the right to know they are leaving their children with people they can trust. That's why all child care facility employees must undergo two background checks; a criminal background check from the Kentucky State Police or the Administrative Office of the courts and an abuse registry check through the Department for Community Based Services. Kentucky law requires a person to pass both types of background checks in order to work at a child care facility. The background checks must be requested immediately upon hiring a new employee, received within 180 days, and placed in the personnel file for review by our surveyors. All new employees must be directly supervised until these requirements are met. There are no exceptions.

Parents may also ask facility staff for the latest OIG report and license, which contains information about any problems as well as the maximum occupancy and services provided. You should feel empowered to speak up on behalf of your child and let facility directors or staff know if you see problems.

If you do not see improvements after voicing your concerns or believe we need to address a problem directly, please report complaints or concerns to the OIG at (502) 564-7962 or online at <http://chfs.ky.gov/oig/complaintinfo.htm>. All complaints are kept confidential. Parents can find more resources on the OIG Web site at <http://chfs.ky.gov/oig/drcc.htm>.

There are many wonderful child care providers in this state that should be applauded for the job they do. By working together, we as parents, care providers and state regulators can better ensure that quality child care is available for Kentucky's children.

Living Well: Know Your Numbers

Did you know there is an online program that will give your health a score? Humana is launching the Humana Health Assessment that will actually rate your health and give you a numeric score. The Humana Health Assessment (HHA) is a quick health survey that will give participants an individualized score, an action plan for your health, and will also identify potential health risk factors. The assessment takes about 10-15 minutes and is available online or over the phone. All state employees are eligible for this new assessment. Follow the guidelines below to learn your health score:

- Go to kyhealthplan.humana.com and register with your member ID and set up your Username and Password.
- Click on the MyHumana/Health Assessment link
- Click on Health and Wellness, then Health Assessment.
- Click on Launch Humana Health Assessment (HHA) at the bottom of the screen.
- Review the Humana's agreement, click "I accept" and then "Next" at the bottom of the screen and begin the HHA.

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- To access the HHA by phone, have your member ID ready and date of birth ready. Dial 1-866-444-6096 and answer the questions. The result will be mailed directly to you.

*In order to access the HHA you must disable the pop-up blockers. Those using Internet Explorer should connect to the internet and then click "Tools", then "Pop-up blockers," then "Turn off pop-up blockers" (if "Turn on pop-up blockers" is showing do not click that button.)

Successfully completing the HHA will not only educate you about your current health, it will also make you eligible for the Humana Health Coaching program for state employees. The Health Coaching is provided by trained behavior health specialists in the areas of tobacco cessation, stress management, weight management, back care, physical activity and nutrition. If you enroll in the program, a total of five calls will be made to you with an unlimited number of inbound calls to the coach. This allows participants to receive personalized information specific to their needs as well as maintaining their privacy.

The state's Humana Wellness Consultant will be in the CHR Building from noon to 1 p.m. in the cafeteria conference room on Wednesday, April 16. The consultant will present a lunch-n-learn session to educate state employees on Humana's new programs. Please sign up for this session by contacting Kris Hayslett at kris.hayslett@ky.gov. The first 25 people to register will receive prizes that will be handed out at the lunch-n-learn. Participants are encouraged to bring their lunch.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Working in cubicles offers scant privacy for office workers. The Professionalassistant.net offers

several tips for staff to be more mindful of each other and practice good cubicle etiquette.

- Use a relatively low voice for phone conversations, especially the personal ones.
- Keep personal calls short since your neighbors might hear you.
- If you hear a coworker's personal conversation, keep the details to yourself.
- If the coworker you want to talk to is on the phone, don't hover in their office until their conversation is over. Visit them again later when they are free.
- Use headphones if you choose to listen to music.
- If you must borrow an item from a coworker's desk, ask first. If it's urgent, leave a note and plan to return the item.
- Keep hallway conversations to a minimum.
- Don't use offensive language or put others down in conversations. Keep this either to yourself or reserve these conversations for outside the office.
- Knock before entering a cubicle. Think of it as going into an office with a door.
- Don't speak across several cubicles to a person. Walk down the hall or pick up the phone so you won't disrupt others.