



**TERRY A. SOLOMON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

*From The Desk of The
Executive Director*

In May, the African-American Family Commission joined many organizations in saluting individuals who provide safe, stable and loving homes for children who are unable to live with their parents. Many of these individuals known as "Foster Parents," are ordinary people who give unselfishly of their time and resources to help children in the child welfare system heal the emotional and psychological wounds of separation, loss, abuse and neglect.

In the summer of 2001, Governor George Ryan signed legislation

expanding the definition of family to include "second cousin and god-parent."

This insightful legislation was introduced by Representative Annazette R. Collins to preserve foster children's ties with their natural families and communities. The Commission believes that this law will help maintain children's ties with their families and increase the pool of relatives as potential foster parents. This legislation is a victory for African-American parents, grandparents, and other relative caregivers who have worked hard to change the child welfare system to protect children and strengthen families.

* * * * *



***Outcome-based Child
Welfare Practice 426
Federal Training Grant***

The Children and Family Research Center and the Office of the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) Research Director received a federal training grant to

implement a training entitled, "Outcome-based Child Welfare Practice." This training is intended to enhance the outcome management skills of child welfare managers, supervisors, and case workers.

The training has three objectives:

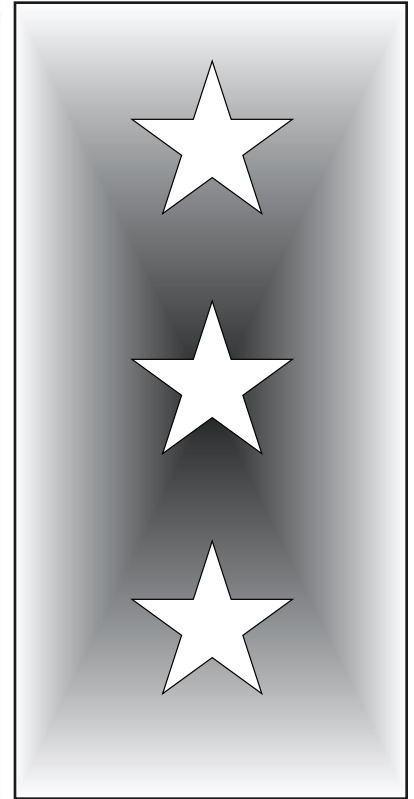
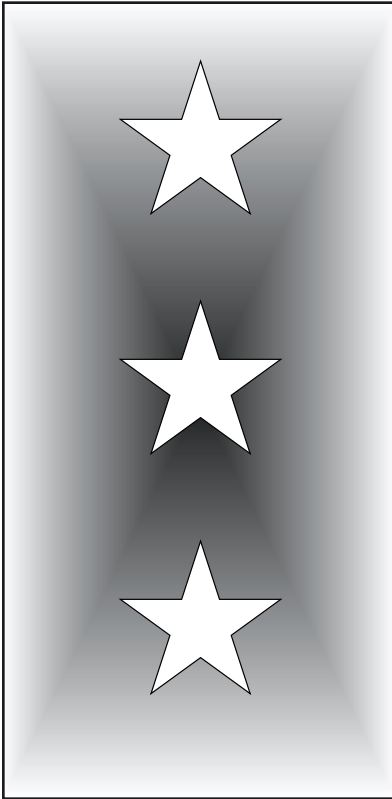
1. Increasing staff focus on outcome objectives
2. Strengthening child welfare practice by integrating outcome objectives into current practice methods
3. Understanding and implementing outcome-based child welfare practice in conjunction with DCFS performance contracting and in anticipation of Federal FY 2003 Child and Family Services Reviews

The training will be provided to four DCFS offices and four private child welfare agencies in Illinois. The final draft of the training will become a part of the DCFS Enhanced Training Core Curriculum.

The computer-based training will occur in four full-day sessions. The first session was launched in November of 2001 and the second in April, 2002. Technical assistance is provided to participants throughout the training program, including the time between each module.

A Tribute To Foster Parents

GWENDOLYN CHARLES



May is National Foster Care Month. Each year during this time, the African-American Family Commission recognizes the contributions of African-American caregivers who provide safe, stable, and supportive homes for children and youth. This year, The Commission is proud to salute Ms. Gwendolyn Charles from Youth Empire Services.

Ms. Charles has been a foster parent for four years. She transferred to Youth Empire Services, Inc. less than a year ago, and subsequently accepted two little girls into her home.

In order to ensure a smooth transition, Ms. Charles served as an active liaison with the children's school and the DCFS worker prior to the children being placed in her home. Ms. Charles transported the children and arranged family visits, which helped to facil-

itate their return to a relative placement. After the girls were reunited with their family, she accepted another sibling group of boys. The children were immediately accepted in the home and Ms. Charles, with the help of clinical staff, identified and met their service and emotional needs.

When the worker identified a relative placement, Ms. Charles encouraged the placement and assisted in returning the boys to their family. She has remained in full compliance with licensing standards and has completed all training requirements to be renewed for the next four years.

Ms. Charles is a mother of two who found time in her life to help parent a group of deserving children. The staff at Youth Empire Services is ecstatic that she has chosen to be a part of their team.

SPOTLIGHT ON AAFC COMMISSIONERS



REVEREND JAMES GORDON

Reverend James Gordon is the Pastor of Southtown Apostolic Church and the founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Southtown Youth Program.

Southtown has become a base for Mt. Vernon residents providing support, assistance and some direct services. It serves 300 - 900 youth and families each month.

Reverend Gordon also initiated such programs as the Male Awareness Project which is designed to mentor males 8 - 14 years old to create positive attitudes, build self-esteem, and assume leadership responsibilities. This program serves 50 - 75 males each school year.

Today, with the efforts of volunteers and community leaders, Southtown has been able to generate over 5 million dollars in programs and community improvements for residents living in Mount Vernon, Illinois and Jefferson County.

Reverend Gordon is also the Mt. Vernon Chapter President of the NAACP and Rainbow PUSH.

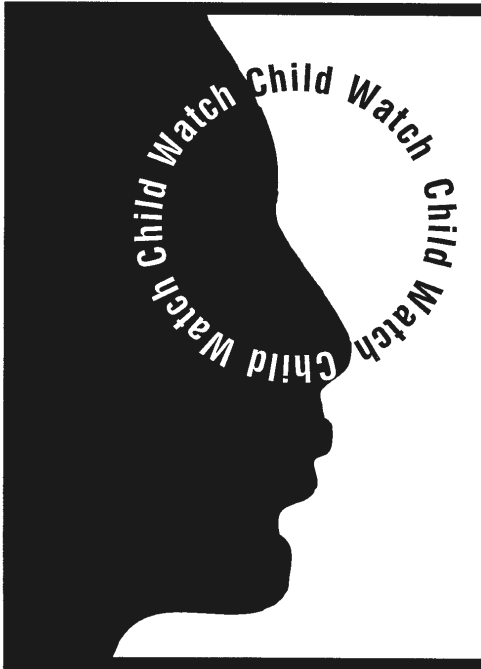


TED CURTIS

Ted (Theodore) Curtis is a Division Manager for the Procurement Services Division at the Department of Central Management Services in Illinois. Some of his responsibilities encompass formulating procedures for the management process of the centralized procurement program including: Automated On-Line Illinois Procurement System, Team Buying Sections, Minority Business Purchase, Joint Purchasing, and Rehabilitation Purchasing Programs and Standards and Specifications. Additional duties include providing interpretation and direction in the application of new or amended laws governing the procurement process.

A licensed Illinois Real Estate Broker and a General Illinois Insurance Broker, Ted is an affiliate of the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of State Procurement Officials.

Ted is a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., the American Legion Post #809 in Springfield, IL, and St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church.



CHILD WATCH

Child Watch is a program designed to protect and promote the welfare of children by strengthening and supporting families. Its goals are:

- ✓ To strengthen African-American communities by providing services that will assess and assist families in providing care for their children;
- ✓ To empower parents and family members by encouraging their nurturing through education and informational resources; and
- ✓ To reduce the incidence of families entering the child welfare system.

For more information, call Ms. Deidra Wilson at (312) FAMILY 3 or (312) 326-4593.

Let's continue to build our community and keep our children safe at home!!

Reduce the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

SIDS (also known as “crib death”) is the sudden and unexplained death of a baby under 1 year of age. The cause of SIDS is unknown, but it is known that:

- ◆ SIDS is the leading cause of death in babies after one month of age.
- ◆ Most SIDS deaths occur in babies who are between two and four months old.
- ◆ More SIDS deaths occur in colder months.
- ◆ Babies placed to sleep on their stomachs are much more likely to die of SIDS than babies placed on their backs to sleep.
- ◆ African-American babies are twice as likely to die of SIDS than white babies.

Steps To Reduce The Risk of SIDS:

- ◆ Place your baby on his or her back to sleep, at nighttime and naptime.
- ◆ Place your baby on a firm mattress, such as a safety-approved crib.
- ◆ Remove all fluffy and loose bedding (pillows, quilts, stuffed toys, etc.) from the sleep area.
- ◆ Make sure your baby's head and face stay uncovered during sleep.
- ◆ Don't smoke before or after the birth of your baby.
- ◆ Don't let your baby overheat (too many layers of blankets or clothing) during sleep.



Legislation & Public Policy

A primary function of the Commission is to determine the impact that public policy and legislation may have on the African-American Community. The Commission's Legislative Committee is responsible for reviewing legislation and recommending action to be taken by the full Commission.

The following is legislation supported by the Commission in FY 2001 and signed by the Governor:

House Bill 638

DCFS-DISCRIMINATORY PLACEMENTS

Amends the Children and Family Services Act. Requires the Department to create an advocacy office to receive and resolve complaints about a child's services. Provides that when a child must be placed outside his or her home and cannot be returned immediately to parents or guardian, an assessment of the child's special needs must be conducted and race, color, or national origin may be considered in the placement only if that has been assessed as advancing the child's best interests. Makes the statewide foster parent phone number available to any person wishing to report problems concerning a child's welfare services.

House Bill 1911

DCFS-CHILD PLACEMENT

Amends the Children and Family Services Act. Provided that a second cousin or godparent of a child under the care or jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Family Services is within the definition of a "relative" who is eligible to be a foster parent of that child so long as a background check does not identify that person as having a prior conviction for any one of a number of specified criminal offenses

House Bill 1096

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Amends the School Code. Creates the Alternative Learning Opportunities Law. Allows school districts to establish alternative learning opportunities programs for students at risk of academic failure in grades 4 through 12. Provides that the consent of the student's parent or guardian must be given to enroll the student in the program and that the student shall remain in the program only with the consent of the parent or guardian and shall be returned to the regular school program upon the request of the parent or guardian. Requires the school district to grant academic credit to a student in the program if certain conditions are met.

* * * * *

Resource Corner

Illinois Child Abuse Hotline: (800) 25-Abuse

Youth Hotline: (800) 232-3798

Help Line for Kids: (800) KID-4345

Advocacy Office: (800) 232-3798

Youth Housing Assistance: (312) 814-5571

Foster Parent Hotline: (800) 624-KIDS

Day Care Information: (877) 746-0829

Kid Care: (800) 226-0768

DCFS Division of Education & Transition Services

100 W. Randolph, Suite 6-100

Chicago, IL 60601

Gloria Fitzgerald, Division Deputy Director

(312) 814-5959

Krista Hinton, Cook Educational Coordinator

(312) 814- 8258

John Kasper, Statewide Youth Employment &

Training Coordinator

(312) 814-5959

Lori Moreno, Cook Pregnant & Parenting

Team Coordinator

(312) 814-5567

Donnella Bishop-Ward, Statewide

Independent Living Coordinator

(312) 814-5959

Freddie Rhone, Youth in College/Transition

Coordinator

(312) 814-5959

Youth Advocacy Office/Ombudsman

(217) 524-2029

* * * * *

* * * * *

Links

Minority Health Association

www.minorityhealthassociation.org

State of Illinois Record Expungement Information

<http://hometown.aol.com/sun1955117a>

State of Illinois

www.state.il.us

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml

Illinois Legislative Black Caucus

http://community-2.webtv.net/pol_gov_speak/

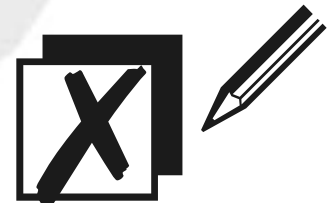
IllinoisLegislative

Illinois Department of Human Services

www.state.il.us/agency/dhs

U.S. Census Bureau

www.census.gov



Cast Your Vote!!!

Every citizen of this nation has the right to register to vote, enter a polling place without impediment, cast his or her vote, and have that vote counted!

It is your right, your privilege and your responsibility to vote!

Every Vote Counts!

General Election Day Tuesday.

November 5, 2002

* * * * *

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Jesse D. Madison
Chair

Felicia Blasingame, Ed.D

Joyce Bowen, Ph.D.

Margaret T. Burroughs, Ph.D.

Betty Clawson

James W. Compton

Ted F. Curtis

Margaret A. Davis, RN, MSN

Valerie Davis

Donald J. Dew

Margarite Faulkner

Reverend James Gordon

Renard I. Jackson, Ph.D.

Myra Nash-Johnson

Vivian R. Jones

Sokoni Karanja, Ph.D.

Avis LaVelle

Dian M. Powell

Reverend Albert Sampson

Robert Starks, Ph.D.

Rosetta Webb

Carol A. Winn

AAFC STAFF

Terry A. Solomon, MSW, MPH

Executive Director

Joe Gray, CPA

Deputy Director of Operations

Audrey Miller

Executive Assistant

Wasi Young, MFA, MS

Research Specialist

Mary E. Smith

Operations Coordinator

Deidra Wilson, MBA

Community Outreach Specialist

Jason Hood, BA, JD

Legislative Liaison

Blanche Brooks

Receptionist

STANDING COMMITTEES

Communications & Public Relations

Finance & Personnel

Health

Legislative & Advocacy

Monitoring & Oversight

Research & Public Policy

Training & Education

Executive Committee



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY ADVOCATE
EDITORIAL BOARD:**

Dr. Felicia Y. Blasingame
Terry A. Solomon
Joe Gray
Deidra Wilson

The African-American Family Advocate
newsletter is published by the
African-American Family Commission
2925 S. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616
(312) 326-0368
Fax: (312) 326-1392
TDD: (312) 326-1348

Email: webmail@aafc.org
Website: www.aafc.org



African-American Family Commission
2925 S. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616