Child and Family Services Update

June 2008

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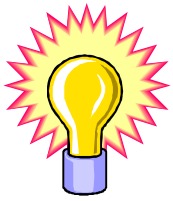


Please share your thoughts and ideas by sending them to Carol Miller at CAROLMILLER@utah.gov

Betournay's Bits

By Duane Betournay, Director

SAFE is not a Search Engine

I struggled with the title of this article. I did not want it to come off as condescending, but I did want to highlight the issue of the appropriate use of SAFE and the incredible amount of information that is contained in that system.

Every week I get a list of people who have accessed confidential cases. Records can be "locked" by Region Directors for a number of reasons, but primarily they are locked due to the need for some heightened level of privacy for individuals involved in that particular case. It can be either a high profile situation or it could be a related-party investigation. Either way, access is limited to those who have a need to know. Now the vast majority of inquiries into confidential cases are for legitimate business purposes. However, some are not.

There are two other types of inquiries that have been seen in the past that are troubling. One involves people who are just curious about current events. For example, when the troubled young man tragically took lives at Trolley Square, there were a staggering number of people in Child and Family Services and other divisions that searched the name of the shooter to learn more about him.

Also troubling is the number of times that I have received complaints that someone has accessed the confidential records of ex-husbands/wives, siblings, fellow employees, business associates, and even members of their church. These are all very inappropriate uses of the system and cause significant damage to our credibility. There may be those cases that a CPS worker comes in contact with where they realize that someone with whom they have had a relationship with in the past or present is a party in the investigation. At that moment, you should be staffing the case with your supervisor to let them know of you conflict.

In this day of the information age, please take time to be careful about what you try and access. We have at our fingertips an incredible amount of information that is used on a minute-by-minute basis for legitimate business purposes. Please realize the importance of this tool, and also the seriousness of our responsibility to use it appropriately.

Here are a couple of links to tools to help you know your responsibilities related to:

- DHS Policy Manual Section 6.4 Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources and Section 6.4b Addendum to Policy on Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources;
- DHS Policy Manual Section 2.3 Code of Ethics; and
- Utah Code Ann. Section 62A-4a-1003 Management Information System -- Requirements -- Contents -- Purpose -- Access.

If you have any further concerns or questions, please let me know.

Development

Motivational Interviewing Comes to Child and Family Services

By MaryCatherine Jones, Curriculum Developer

Child and Family Services is currently offering Motivational Interviewing courses in the Salt Lake Valley and Northern Regions. Motivational Interviewing is a way of helping people find their own motivation to make changes in their lives. For caseworkers and supervisors, this client-centered approach facilitates engaging, teaming, and planning with families. Twenty-two of 24 course participants said that they would recommend the course for caseworkers and supervisors.

Here is what some course participants have said:

- "I enjoyed the hands-on work during class."
- "It was good to gain new skills and improve practice."
- "The trainer was extremely knowledgeable and presented the information clearly…Having time to practice during the week was helpful."

Motivational interviewing is an evidence-based practice for brief intervention counseling. It works well in child welfare work because:

- It provides strategies for engaging with any client.
- It helps us to deal with clients who do not recognize that their behavior is a problem or do not want to change.
- It can be used in time-limited situations and can be done in-person or over the phone.
- It builds upon Practice Model principles and skills.

The course is taught by Brad Lundahl, a professor with the University of Utah School for Social Work. Brad's child welfare-related publications include *Interpretations of child compliance in individuals at high and low risk for child physical abuse* and *Preventing child abuse: a meta-analysis of parent training programs*.

For more information about motivational interviewing, please contact MaryCatherine Jones, Professional Development Team, at (801) 538-3961 or mcjones@utah.gov.

Utah Domestic Violence Council Combined Conference

By Del Bircher, Domestic Violence Program Administrator

The Utah Domestic Violence Council (UDVC) will be holding its Combined Conference on September 16-19, 2008. Individuals may register at http://www.udvc.org/home.htm.

Permanency

Placing Children with Relatives

By Patti VanWagoner, Deputy Director

This past month has been a whirlwind of activity to implement new practice guidelines for kinship care. If you have not already done so, please go to http://www.hspolicy.utah.gov/dcfs/ and review these new guidelines (Section 500). We can now place children more quickly with relatives when we've followed these guidelines. As we presented these guidelines in the regions, many questions arose about the fine line between a parent choosing to have their child stay with relatives versus a decision by Child and Family Services to remove a child from a parent/guardian and to place the child with a relative as a preliminary placement. Below are a few of the scenarios we were asked about in training and the responses for those situations.

Scenarios:

What if dad has custody with an ongoing case and mom is having a visit but gets arrested and dad can't get there for two days. We can't take custody of a child under the jurisdiction of another court, can we?

Any removal of a child from the care of a parent/guardian must be in accordance to practice guidelines Section 205.1 Grounds for Removal. A warrant shall be obtained from a court of competent jurisdiction to facilitate the removal and subsequent placement of a child into protective custody, unless there are exigent circumstances that demonstrate a substantial, immediate threat to the health or safety of a child, unless a court order to remove is already in place, or unless a parent gives consent for removal.

Even though a child/family may be under court jurisdiction for protective supervision, a decision for removal is based on immediate safety. The jurisdiction issue is not one we need to sort out as that is up to the court system if we've had to take action to protect a child.

In this situation, the caseworker would need to determine if the child was dependent, meaning without proper care. The question may be whether the absent father can make arrangements for care of the child even though he is unavailable to provide for that immediate care himself.

The police are at the home and are arresting mom. Mom said she wants to call grandma to come and get the kids. Are the kids in custody or not?
The key here is whether or not law enforcement is contacting Child and Family Services because of a concern that the children are "dependent" (left without care) because the mom is being arrested and there is no one available to care for the children. If they have contacted Intake and indicated that there is a need for immediate response because they are going to take the mom to jail and the children will be left without care, then law enforcement has taken the children into protective custody due to exigent circumstances and we would need to follow practice guidelines Section 501.3, 501.4, etc. to identify potential kinship placements and do all the requirements for a preliminary placement before the children could go with a relative.

If a parent makes arrangements for the children to be cared for by another adult and when you arrive at the home the children are being cared for by that person, you would assess whether the children are dependent. The caseworker would assess any potential threats of harm, the vulnerabilities of the children, and the protective capacities of the caregiver. The safety decision will determine if there is a need to intervene to keep the children safe. You would continue your CPS intervention into any allegations until you were able to conclude whether abuse, neglect, or dependency had occurred and make appropriate recommendations.

As soon as law enforcement or Child and Family Services makes a determination that children cannot safely remain in the care of a parent/guardian, a decision has been made to take that child into protective custody and we need to follow practice guidelines Section 205.1 and Section 501.

***There were some variations on this question*: What if Child and Family Services was there first, if the mom left before grandma arrived, if mom was asked about where the kids could go, etc.? There is confusion over when we might just file a petition for ongoing In-Home Services for a family or when we have actually taken custody of the children.**
If a caseworker is gathering information and still assessing to make a safety decision during the course of an investigation into allegations of abuse and neglect and a parent decides to have the children go to grandma's house during the investigation, the parent

has made that choice and the caseworker should continue to gather information that will lead to a decision regarding safety. If at the conclusion the CPS worker feels that the children are currently safe with the substitute caregiver but would be in a situation that poses an imminent threat of harm with the parent/guardian if they were to return to their care without further intervention, a petition could be filed to seek court intervention to ensure that the offending parents are offered services to reduce the likelihood of repeat maltreatment.

Please take note that if you do have situations in which parents have placed their children in the care of relatives and we determine that there is a need for court intervention to prevent that parent from having the ability to just show up and take the child, we may petition the court for protective supervision and temporary custody and guardianship to the substitute caregiver. However, because we have never taken the child into protective custody, that family does not have an option of becoming a licensed foster parent for the child since the child is not in state's custody, nor will they be eligible for any type of subsidy if for some reason adoption becomes a permanency goal.

Partnership

Five Named Foster/Adoptive Dads of the Year

By Carol Sisco, Public Affairs Coordinator

Art, kids, and dads combined for a huge turnout at the Utah Foster Care Foundation's Sixth Chalk Art Festival on June 14 in Salt Lake City.

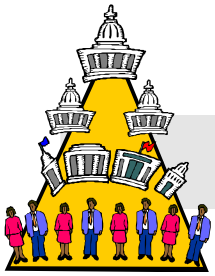
More than 2600 Utah children rely on nearly 1300 foster homes for safety, love, and a home. Five of those foster dads were named Utah's Foster/Adoptive Dads of the Year. Winners include:

- **Blair Hacker, St. George –** Blair has three birth children but is dedicated to all the children in his home, including a sibling pair he and his wife adopted. He's known as the dad who took the summer off to play with the kids. They camped, hiked, went swimming, and headed to the park. He's also a full-time social work student who works full time and is there mornings to get the kids up and ready for school.
- **Dan Heath, Provo –** Dan and his wife have adopted four children from foster care. He runs his own business but attends each child's events. He also keeps the foster kids in touch with their birth families. And he takes all his kids out on daddy-daughter and daddy-son dates. Dan regularly spends individual time

Utah's Foster/Adoptive Dads of the Year include, back row from left: Joel Redd and Paul Jensen; front row: Dan Heath, Doug Young, and Blair Hacker

with the children and participates in all their activities. He also helps bio families fill out job applications, go apartment hunting, or do whatever it takes to get their children back.

- **Doug Young, Kaysville –** Doug's wife, Jennifer, nominated him, calling him "an incredible man who loves kids. Watching him raise our five biological children, I knew he would be an excellent foster dad." So far 11 children, ranging from three days to three years old, have lived with Doug and Jennifer. He holds them, feeds them, plays outside with them, and tucks each one in at night. He also writes each child a letter when they leave to go home.
- **Joel Redd, Blanding –** Joel goes to work at 5:30 a.m. daily so that he's off in time to pick the children up from school and spend afternoons with them doing homework and playing. Joel and his wife have six children and have had one foster child with them continuously for two years. Joel makes sure his foster son gets to visit his family frequently, even taking time to supervise the visits himself.
- **Paul Jensen, Taylorsville –** P.J. has 11 children, including eight adopted through foster care. The adoptees include a sibling group of six and another set of two. P.J. has so much fun being a foster/adoptive dad that many of his friends have inquired about becoming foster parents too. "If there is anyone in the entire world that deserves to be named Foster/Adoptive Dad of the Year, it is my dad," his daughter said. He lets the girls do his hair, plays catch with the boys, coaches Jr. Jazz basketball, and rocks his three-year-old to sleep.



Organizational Competence

What is a Caseload?

By Jack Green, Finance/Information Systems Director

Based on our caseload data, last year the Legislature authorized an additional 24 caseworkers, and this year's Legislature added another 14. While some of you may question what caseload counts and averages mean, they provide important information that helps us receive the workers we need to make your jobs more manageable.

Caseloads aren't the only thing we look at. We know that a caseload of all the cases you have is very different than your actual workload. One person might have 15 cases and not be too busy. A coworker could be swamped. It depends upon the types of case you have. A Child and Family Services workload study showed that new out-of-home cases generate twice as much work during the first six months than at any other time during the case.

As a division, we have had to report caseloads to the court monitor to show that we try to keep the load workable. We also use caseload numbers to justify additional caseworkers to the Governor's Office and to the Legislature

A Legislative Audit several years ago established standard caseloads for Child and Family Services of 12 for out-of-home (foster care and residential) cases and 15 for child protective services and in-home cases. That standard is still used to compare to actual average caseloads in our reports.

When we calculate average caseloads, we pull information as of the month's end three weeks after the month has closed. It allows us time to record the case closure in SAFE. Three month's data are used to compute the quarter averages. These averages are then reported to Administration and the court monitor.

Total open cases are counted for each worker (that includes child protective services cases assigned during the previous 30 days, not the number open). With the exception of family preservation workers, we only count workers with eight or more cases. Most who have less than eight are new workers and to include them would actually reduce the reported average caseload.

As of the end of March the quarter's reported averages were:

Service	Number of Workers	Average Caseload
Child Protective Services	112	12.7
Foster Care	208	14.0
In-home	46	13.8
Family Preservation	38	4.7
Generalist **1/**	15	13.6
1/ *No majority in any service area*		

Number of workers by caseload category (as of 4/30/08):

	Caseload			
Region	**8 – 11**	**12 – 15**	**16 – 19**	**20 or greater**
Northern	14	29	33	7
Salt Lake Valley	95	49	3	2
Western	19	35	15	0
Southwest	12	19	10	2
Eastern	21	18	3	2
Division	**161**	**150**	**65**	**13**

Some of you may not agree with the numbers, especially if you are a child protective services worker who may have up to 35 "open" cases. There may also be other workers who, during the month, at some point-in-time had a higher open caseload. It would be great if instead of the standard being the average, it could be the maximum caseload.

We also have presented a plan to "hire ahead" so new workers would not need to carry a full caseload until fully trained but haven't gotten it approved.

Foster Care Caseworker Alert

By Cosette Mills, Federal Revenue Manager

If you receive a medical bill from a health care provider for a foster child ***and the bill is in your name***, **DO NOT** discard the bill. As soon as possible, make sure the medical provider has the child's Medicaid number or an MI706 number so the provider can bill Department of Health, Medicaid Operations, for the services provided.

Please remind foster parents **NOT** to give health care providers the caseworker name as the responsible party. Foster parents should give the health care provider a copy of a letter stating that Medicaid Operations should be identified as the responsible party. (If you need a copy of this letter to give to foster parents, please contact the nurse assigned to your team.)

Your credit can be seriously affected if these bills are not handled correctly.

If you have questions about how to handle a medical bill or need to get a Medicaid or MI706 number, please contact the nurse or eligibility worker assigned to your team. They will not do the work for you to get the billing information corrected, but may help you know the steps to take.

Professional Competence

Employee Incentive Awards – Policy Summary

By the DCFS Worker Recruitment, Satisfaction and Retention Work Group
(Summary by Brandi Peterson; Workgroup Co-Chairs Navina Forsythe and Cosette Mills)

In 2007, Child and Family Services administration identified Worker Recruitment, Satisfaction, and Retention as a Priority Focus Area. A workgroup has been established and has begun its work. *(More information will be forthcoming from this workgroup in coming months.)*

Goal 3.2 for the Workgroup states: "Clarify policies and identify resources available for employee recognition activities and incentives. Provide information to regions on recognition and incentive policies and resources."

Following is a brief summary of what is allowable and what steps to take for incentive awards for employees of Child and Family Services. Also included are policy references and helpful resources for recognition. (A one-page summary is also attached to the Child and Family Services Update as a Word document that can be printed separately.)

The purpose of this summary is to provide guidance on who may be eligible for incentive awards, what is allowable for incentive awards, and what steps must be followed to nominate and approve someone for incentive awards. Each region determines the amount of funding available for incentive awards on an annual basis, up to an allowed maximum.

INCENTIVE AWARDS SUMMARY

The Department of Human Services establishes an Incentive Awards Program to recognize and award employees for their exceptional work performance that results in measurable efficiency, cost savings, and innovations that contribute directly to the Department meeting its mission and vision.

I. WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

An **Exceptional Employee** whose accomplishments exceed those normally expected and has met one of the following criteria:

1. **Improvement in Department Operation:** Applied creative ideas, initiative, leadership and investment of time beyond standard expectations, for improvement of agency function.
2. **Statewide Benefits and Public Service:** Increased or improved public service / safety / health, or reduced duplication of statewide efforts (such as improved interagency data systems, communication and coordination).
3. **Cost Savings or Revenue Increases within the Department:** Saved significant dollars/time or increased revenues.
4. **Outstanding Work Effort:** Positively exceeded normal job responsibilities and expectations for a unique event or over a sustained period of time.

II. WHAT IS ALLOWABLE?

This following is a list of Allowable Incentives that are available to reward employees who meet the criteria listed above if the Division/Department has available funding:

1. **Certificates** of Commendation or Letters of Appreciation
2. **Administrative Leave** (1-8 hours per occurrence)
3. **Cash Awards** ($50 to $500)
4. **Non-Cash Awards** (not to exceed $50 each)
   a. The following items <u>ARE</u> acceptable as Non-Cash Incentives:
      Caps, shirts, jackets, mugs, key rings, and similar miscellaneous items
   b. Non-Cash Incentive awards may <u>NOT</u> include cash equivalents such as gift certificates or tickets for admission.
5. **A Combination** of the Types of Awards (i.e. certificates, admin. leave, non-cash awards, and cash) may be granted at the discretion of the Executive Director and/or Agency Heads.

III. HOW IS IT DONE?

General Procedures for all Types of Service Recognition Awards:

1. **Nominator(s):** <u>Any</u> Department employee or individual outside of the Department who has direct knowledge of the achievement of the employee(s) being nominated may nominate an individual or group for Service Recognition.

2. **Forms:**
   a. DHS Incentive Award Nomination Form is required for nominations for a group or individual for cash awards.
   b. DHS Certificate of Administrative Leave is required for administrative leave.
   c. Forms can be found online in the DHS Policy and Procedures, Ref 02-08, pgs 6-7 at http://www.hspolicy.utah.gov/pdf/2-8.pdf.
3. **Approval:** The form must be given first to the employee's supervisor for approval, then to the Regional Director to sign, and finally the form is turned into payroll. Some levels of award require Departmental approval.
4. **Time lines:** Nominations shall be made as soon as possible, but no later than (6) months of the date of the occurrence of action for which the employee is being nominated.

For more information regarding Incentive Awards specific policy, guidelines, forms, and ideas:

- DHS, Policy & Procedures, Ref. 02-08 - http://www.hspolicy.utah.gov/pdf/2-8.pdf
- DHS, Limelight Employee Recognition - http://hsemployees.utah.gov/limelight/index.html
- DCFS, Administrative Guidelines 020.3 - http://www.hspolicy.utah.gov/dcfs
- HR Management Rules R477-6-5 - http://www.rules.utah.gov/publicat/code/r477/r477-006.htm#T5

If you are interested in having a voice in the Worker Recruitment, Satisfaction, and Retention Workgroup efforts, please email Cosette Mills or Navina Forsythe at the State Office.