

Foster Parent Ombudsman Report

August 5, 2011

- I cannot believe the summer is going by so quickly, heat and all! Before we know it, the children will be back in school. Did I hear a collective sigh?! I look forward to speaking to many of you on the conference call board meeting on Monday evening at 7:00 PM. It is wonderful and exciting that several new members are participating.
- Anita Wilkins, who is the Program Manager for Resource Development, will be the main contact between MFPA and SSA. Also, Shannon McRae, who has always been a wonderful advocate for MFPA and foster parents, will be back participating in many activities and meetings of MFPA as a resource from SSA. Of course, Pat remains the fiscal guru and is a great supporter of what you are doing. These two new established communication links with SSA are in addition to my continued role as your ombudsman, which includes being your advisor and a liaison with Secretary Dallas. SSA/DHR wants to continue to collaborate with and support you in the most efficient and beneficial way possible.
- Attached is the Annual Report of the Maryland Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey. I know it is rather lengthy, so I want to highlight a couple of things. On page 5, it says: "There was an increase in percentages of foster parents who answered the foster parent association question indicating increased awareness of the foster parent associations." On page 17, it is reflected: "The majority of exited (79%) and continuing (86%) respondents rated the support from the Foster Parent Association as adequate or more than adequate." Even though the percentages are up, please realize the sample of those who responded to this question is relatively small. As the report indicates, there are still many foster parents unable to answer this question. In essence, MFPA and local associations need to continue to try to get the word out. I think the revamping of the MFPA website and Sam's idea of an E-Newsletter are great avenues to accomplish this goal. As a post script, if you are looking to see how your jurisdiction fared in some of the questions, please take the results with a grain of salt as the sample for most jurisdictions is very small.
- Secretary Dallas and I are both very appreciative of the comments from resource parents and staff about the Foster Parent Assessment Tool of Local Departments. I am incorporating some suggestions and will present it to the Secretary for approval later this month.

- The final decision about the exact web site for the Foster Parent Policies and Other Important Information has not been determined yet. However, there is other news in this regard. SSA will be posting all policies for anyone to read on the DHR web site in the near future.
- Thanks to Gloria and her summer intern, we are back on track with issuing Foster Parent Photo ID's in a timely manner. I think we have a great system going; kudos to both of them.
- Thanks also to Arnie, Gloria, and Cindy (the accountant), for working out some real concrete ways to address fiscal issues of MFPA and the local chapters/associations. It will provide a great opportunity for capacity building with local associations.
- My challenge for the month is to finalize and get the web site operating in the next 30 days and on Monday night set up a calendar of upcoming meetings.
- Enjoy the rest of the hazy, lazy, and hot days of summer! Hope to talk to you on Monday evening...