

Foster Parent Ombudsman Report

July 11, 2011

- I look forward to speaking with many of you tonight on the scheduled conference call meeting at 7:00 PM. Certainly with summer activities coupled with everything else you do, I know it is difficult. However, it is very important to participate in and support MFPA activities. There are a lot of new and exciting things on the horizon, but you are the ones needed to make them happen.
- Secretary Dallas sends his greetings. He wanted me to thank the outgoing Board for all that you did in the last two years. He also wants the new Board to know of his continued support of foster parents and MFPA.
- Hopefully you have had a chance to read the Foster Parent News sent the other day. I am always looking for stories from local jurisdictions or any comments. I plan on the next edition going out in October. The deadline for submissions is September 16th.
- Secretary Dallas has asked me to create a tool to assess how Maryland is doing in supporting our foster parents, especially based on the twelve stipulations of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights. The current draft is the second attachment and currently I am soliciting feedback from foster parents and local department staff. You can share your thoughts with me this evening, or send them via e-mail. Secretary Dallas has been personally involved in the creation of this tool and is looking to see where things are going well and where we can improve our policy and practice.
- The Social Service Administration has vowed to make their policies available to foster parents. Secretary Dallas has asked that a website be established so that foster parents can easily go to a place on the web and find this and other important information. A temporary site has been established, the policies are there, and currently I am placing them in categories. Appropriate COMAR will be added, and upon completion, the new Foster Parent Manual will be there as well. Currently, the specific domain or site is being determined. The plan is to have this up and running before September.

- The Regional Conferences have continued to go well. The most recent was in Prince George's County on June 25th. Congratulations to Mildred Stewart and also the folks from Prince George's County DSS for hosting a wonderful and informative event. Continued thanks to the Conference Committee for your work. I am looking forward to the upcoming ones...September 24 for Carroll, Howard, Frederick, and Washington Counties; and, October 1 for Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties.
- The Foster Parent Panel continues to do well. We just had a session last Friday. Thirteen foster parents participate, many are MFPA Board Members.
- The contract for foster parent Satisfaction Surveys has been renewed by DHR with the University of Maryland. The continued focus will be homes that close. However, there will be a small continuing (currently open and approved homes) sample to be contacted by telephone as well.
- On behalf of MFPA, I have been distributing medication boxes around the state. Any requests can be submitted to Sam and I am happy to assist in the distribution.
- Pat Molineaux, Teri Benson, and I have met to revamp the Behavior Support Management Training (Discipline). As you may recall, such a training is required for all public foster parents every two years.
- My monthly challenge is for the Board to set up and maintain a calendar for meetings. Besides the Board Meetings, I recommend regular Executive Board Meetings as well. Also, you might want to review your supply of bags, clips, etc. for the upcoming conferences with the eye on the November 30 deadline to use the funds attributed to the current Plan of Work, as you have not even begun the Plan of Work that Sam wrote for next year.
- Have a safe and enjoyable rest of the summer... John