

Foster Parent Ombudsman Report

MFPA Board Meeting

June 1, 2011

1. As Foster Care Month comes to an end, I want to reiterate thanks from Secretary Dallas and myself for all that you do as resource parents and for your leadership in the foster parent community. There are still some Foster Parent Appreciation Events scheduled for June, but so far I have attended 14 celebrations and put on almost 3,000 miles. It is worth every minute and every mile.
2. The next edition of Foster Parent News will be published this month. Anyone who would like to submit something about what is happening in your jurisdiction; please submit it to me by June 7th.
3. Parts of COMAR are being revised and soon will be available for public review by the House of Delegates. When the exact dates are available, I will provide you with the information of how to contact them if you so chose. The latest draft from the Social Services Administration contains a couple of things I thought you would like to know about:
 - The first gives a local department the ability to close a home if children were not placed there in the previous three years or if the characteristics of the children a resource parent is willing to accept are not consistent with those of the children entering care in that jurisdiction.
 - Visitation should be agreed upon by the resource parent if the visitation is in your home. However, the citation seems to indicate by omission that you do not have the right to agree to other visitation plans, or that those plans would be determined without consulting your availability or schedule.
 - Just as an FYI: the bunk bed rule is unchanged and the requirement for in-service training hours will be 10 hours a year.
4. Under the direction of Secretary Dallas, I am working with the Communications Office to create a Resource Parent Web Site wherein all appropriate SSA policies involving foster parents will be available. We can link this to the MFPA and DHR sites. Also, Secretary Dallas has me working on a way public foster parents can anonymously, but by jurisdiction, evaluate the services you receive from your local department. This will be reported out statistically. I am working with our data people on this.

5. Gloria Parsley, MFPA Executive Director, has graciously accepted the responsibility of printing out the Foster Parent Photo ID's after I take the pictures. There is currently a back log, but we hope to get these out in the next six weeks. Thanks to Dan Hall for helping me with this project the last year and a half.
6. The regional conferences are going well. Thanks to Cathy Goldsborough and her committee, but also to all of you who have been working to make these successful. Bridging the gap between you and workers is so important and these sessions are wonderful first steps to build those bridges.
7. My monthly challenge is now that you have got your web domain back, thanks to Gloria, to get the web site current and up and running. Also, I strongly encourage you to set your meeting schedule so that you can do what is necessary to get things accomplished. And as always, please make every effort to participate, or have someone else represent your jurisdiction if you are not able to do so.

Happy Summer,

John Bertulis

Foster Parent Ombudsman

May 31, 2011