



mdcps

Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services

THE WAY FORWARD

Protecting Children and Nurturing Mississippi Families

October 2016

Heart Gallery Reveal Adoption Event at the Mississippi Children’s Museum on October 25th

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS) has collaborated with Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth to construct a large portable gallery containing photographs of 42 children currently anticipating finding their forever families through adoption.

The Mississippi Heart Gallery Reveal Adoption Event is scheduled for 3 p.m. at the Mississippi Children’s Museum in Jackson on October 25th. You can expect to hear from First Lady Deborah Bryant, while MS NEWS NOW’s Maggie Wade and MDCPS Commissioner, Dr. David Chandler will be in attendance, as well as a host of others with a heart for adoption.

Presley Smith, age 11, will be reciting “We Pray for Children” by Ina Hughes. Presley is the daughter of Sabrea and Michael Farris Smith; Mrs. Smith has years of child welfare experience and was instrumental in the development of resources for foster families across the state and Mr. Smith is the award winning author of *Rivers* and *The Hands of Strangers*. This isn’t the first time Presley has aided in the recruitment of foster and adoptive homes; she appeared in a brochure at the age of seven with that goal in mind.

Photographers across the state have volunteered their time and talent to contribute the 16 by 20 photographs that will be exhibited during the event alongside each featured child’s biography.



MDCPS recently launched the online Heart Gallery which displays a complete listing of all the Mississippi children who need adoptive homes, including photographs and profiles. Visit mdcps.ms.gov/mississippi-heart-gallery/ (or click the heart icon below) to view the precious children presently awaiting adoption and to learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent.



P.O. Box 346 (39205)
660 North Street, Suite 200
Jackson, Mississippi 39202
contactus@mdcps.ms.gov
www.mdcps.ms.gov
601.359.4368

Report Child Abuse & Neglect
by calling 1.800.222.8000
or 601.432.4570

THE WAY FORWARD

is authored by
Communications Manager,
Chris Alexander



Report Child Abuse - MS Centralized Intake

Mississippi Centralized Intake (MCI) is the hotline responsible for receiving reports of child abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation for the state of Mississippi.

The call center is staffed and operated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and is located in Jackson. MCI receives reports for all 82 counties via telephone or electronic reporting. Information is then documented in the MDCPS data management system and disseminated to the appropriate staff for handling, as outlined in MDCPS policy. During SFY 2016, MCI received a total of 33,200 calls of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation against a child.

If you have any questions, compliments, or concerns regarding MCI, we want to hear from you at MCIstateoffice.DFCS@mdhs.ms.gov.

To Report Child Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation Call

1-800-222-8000

or Report Online at

www.mdcps.ms.gov

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Unit

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) provides out-of-state placement and supervision of dependent children in state custody. One of the major purposes of the ICPC is to protect children from going into a dangerous or inadequate situation across state lines. ICPC is essential to minimizing the risk of children being situated in unsuitable or deteriorating placements through home evaluations, supervision, and progress reports.

The ICPC Unit also handles a tremendous amount of mail, telephone calls, ICPC Adoptions (both public and private), and the daily intake of cases from the Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System. The ICPC Unit is currently working with the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children ([AAICPC](#)) to implement a new national electronic system for faster processing of ICPC cases as well as approving a new proposed ICPC. The new ICPC must be accepted by 35 states before it can be enacted and used in all states.

AAICPC is currently moving forward with the process of introducing the new ICPC to all state legislators across the country and MDCPS looks forward to playing a part in that progress.

Goodbye Complaints, Hello Consumer Solutions!

MDCPS has rebranded the unit once known simply as "the complaints line," to the Consumer Solutions Unit (CSU), a vital part of Continuous Quality Improvement. While the players have basically remained the same, the mission has changed. No longer does the unit exist simply to receive, report, and track consumer complaints, but will now assist the community in finding solutions for their concerns.

In addition to the historical complaints that they will still oversee, CSU will also manage general inquiries about the agency, as well as any other requests that are made through them.

Please feel free to contact Consumer Solutions by way of their new e-mail address consumersolutions@mdcps.ms.gov or via the new toll free line at **1.844.494.8375**.

This is an exciting time for Consumer Solutions, for Continuous Quality Improvement (which applies to all divisions of MDCPS), and for the agency as a whole.

Our New Eligibility Bureau Director



Please welcome MDCPS' new Bureau Director of Eligibility, **Sandra Bracey-Mack**. Sandra comes to us from the Division of Medicaid and has 24 years of related experience working in state government. She has been charged with transforming the Eligibility Unit into a new MDCPS Eligibility Department. Sandra is most looking forward to improving and streamlining processes within the Eligibility Department to better serve Mississippi's children.

SPOTLIGHT ON CQI



Truly exceptional work is being done across the state as so many talented team members work diligently to ensure MDCPS maintains Continuous Quality Improvement. Tom Farley, Director of CQI, has glimpsed such dedication and chosen three areas to highlight this month.

Jackson County Staff, Supervisors, and Administrators were recently found to be at 0% error rate for AFCARS Data Element 57 Reporting for two consecutive weeks. This means that all children who either entered or exited custody in the reporting period were entered into or taken out of custody in MACWIS in a timely manner. Historically, this has been a challenge for Jackson County, and they have made tremendous strides to make this phenomenal progress. Congratulations to Regional Director Sherba Hinton, Regional ASWS Daisy Lee, and their staff in Jackson County for this accomplishment. MDCPS commends your hard work!

Foster Care Reviewer Laurel Myles recently reported that staff in Hinds County were 100% on task in completing the previous round of County Conference Documentation, such that she did not have to ask for any conferences to be locked prior to rescheduling the next conferences for those children. This county has experienced past difficulties in this area which makes this achievement even more noteworthy!

Ms. Myles has also noticed great improvement in case work and accountability in Hinds county. Workers, ASWS, and the regional staff have been very professional, prompt in response, and sincere in their interaction with her. As she was reviewing heat tickets for updates, Ms. Myles observed movement on most of the cases, as well as overall progress made from one review to the next. Workers she recognized by name are Chandra Gathings, Latasha Levy, Angela Johnson, Darneshia Martin, Leslie Tucker, Dexter Robinson, Tahana Williams, Maranda Taylor, Tameka Hart, Romona Goodson, Bernita Williams, Berlisa Bracey, Jessica Bland, Stephanie Latiker, Latoya Cole, Chloe Curtis, Ciera Carson, Latoya Harris, Lathan Whirl, Stephanie Green, Patricia Bailey, Kendrick Burnice, and Jeresia Coleman. In addition, their supervisors, Allison Ballard, Jeanette Lewis-Smith, Kamilah Grady, Stephanie Combs, and Candace Carter, as well as Regional Director, Regina Lacking, should also be recognized.

Evaluation and Monitoring held their annual Review in Region 4-North in August, and a few of the workers who had cases reviewed had cases that were very well managed, documented, and presented for review. Furthermore, their interactions with their families were reported to be professional with a clear, diligent effort to move these cases toward permanency. The workers who were identified as performing outstanding work were Bonnie Witcher from Neshoba County, Tyiesha Moore from Lowndes County, Latisha Jackson from Oktibbeha County, and Lisa Woods from Choctaw County.

Units have been instructed to be on the lookout for remarkable performances, like the examples outlined above. Keep up the incredible work and maybe you'll see your name highlighted in a future edition!

Children's Trust Fund of Mississippi

The primary purpose for the Children's Trust Fund (CTF), created in 1989, is to encourage and provide financial assistance in the provision of direct services to prevent child abuse and neglect. A thirteen member Advisory Council provides direction and recommendations on behalf of the CTF. The Advisory Council must include directors of these four state agencies: Mississippi Department of Health, Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Department of Mental Health, and the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. The Mississippi Legislature allows a one dollar (\$1.00) surcharge from every birth certificate and a one thousand (\$1,000.00) fine imposed by the court on each person for committing certain crimes against a minor, to fund the CTF.

The CTF of Mississippi currently funds one subgrantee with the money collected, Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District. This program conducts Parent Cafés in five counties, Oktibbeha, Clay, Lowndes, Winston, and Noxubee. Parent Cafés are parent-led community groups in which parents share, learn, and find support. These parent group discussions provide opportunities for families to discuss matters important to them. The goal is to help families strengthen the five Protective Factors: Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Concrete Support in Times of Need, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, and Social and Emotional Competence of Children. If interested in knowing more about Parent Cafés visit our program's website at www.fcp-parentcafe.org.

In addition, the CTF of Mississippi funds awareness activities including the Safe Sleep and Safe Car Campaigns. Be on the lookout for future crusades as MDCPS continues to contribute to the prevention of child maltreatment.

In order to provide Child Abuse Prevention Awareness and Family Strengthening Programs, the CTF of Mississippi accepts and appreciates donations. If you wish to donate kindly send a check made payable to **State Of MS, Treasurer** to the address below. Please put in the memo section of your check "Children's Trust Fund."

MDCPS / Children's Trust Fund
Financial Services Bureau
P.O. Box 346
Jackson, MS 39205-0346



OCTOBER IS
NATIONAL
DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
AWARENESS
MONTH



[The Women's Resource and Rape Assistance Program](#) defines domestic violence as: "A pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone. Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Domestic violence occurs in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships and can happen to intimate partners who are married, living together, or dating. Domestic violence not only affects those who are abused but also has a substantial effect on family members, friends, coworkers, other witnesses, and the community at large. Children who grow up witnessing domestic violence are among those seriously affected by this crime. Frequent exposure to violence in the home not only predisposes children to numerous social and physical problems, but also teaches them that violence is a normal way of life—therefore, increasing their risk of becoming society's next generation of victims and abusers."

Scope of the Problem: Estimates of the number of children who have been exposed to domestic violence each year vary. Research suggests that nearly 30 million children in the United States will be exposed to some type of family violence before the age of 17, and there is a 30 to 60 percent overlap of child maltreatment and domestic violence (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011; Taggart, 2011).

Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to experience a wide range of difficulties, and the potential effects vary by age and developmental stage. The challenges faced by children and youth exposed to domestic violence generally fall into three categories: behavioral, social, and emotional problems. Children in families experiencing domestic violence are more likely than other children to exhibit signs of depression and anxiety, higher levels of anger and/or disobedience, fear and withdrawal, poor peer, sibling, and social relationships, and low self-esteem (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to experience cognitive and attitudinal problems manifested as difficulties in school and with concentration and task completion, score lower on assessments of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills, lack conflict resolution skills, and possess limited problem-solving skills.

Exposure to both domestic violence and child maltreatment can have immediate and, often, long-term impact on children and youth.

Despite these findings, not all children exposed to domestic violence will experience negative effects. Children's risk levels and reactions to domestic violence exist on a continuum; some children demonstrate enormous resiliency, while others show signs of significant maladaptive adjustment.

Impact of Domestic Violence on Children: Children exposed to domestic violence also are more likely to exhibit pro-violence attitudes and long term issues (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). In addition to higher rates of delinquency and substance use, exposure to domestic violence is also one of several adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that have been shown be risk factors for many of the most common causes of death in the United States, including alcohol abuse, drug abuse, smoking, obesity, and more. (For more information, visit the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study website at www.acestudy.org.)

Protective factors such as social competence, intelligence, high self-esteem, and a supportive relationship with an adult (especially a nonabusive parent) can help protect children from the adverse effects of exposure to domestic violence (Martinez-Torteya, Bogat, von Eye, & Levendosky, 2009). It's important for domestic violence, child welfare, and other child-serving professionals to understand the impact of trauma on child development and how to minimize its effects without causing additional trauma.

*Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway. Available online at www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/domestic_violence/