

# THE WAY FORWARD

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

May 2016

*Protecting Children and Nurturing Mississippi Families.*

## LEADING THE WAY

Even though we lost a beloved colleague, we must carry on. May's issue is about carrying forward to protect children.

## FORWARD THINKING

*Olivia Y.* Interim Remedial Order - Progress and Perspective - Where are we, and where are we going?

## VISIONARY MOVEMENT

New name and logo announcement, celebrating new achievements and National Foster Care Month!

## New Name, New Logo... It's a New Day

As specified in Senate Bill #2179, the Division of Family & Children's Services is transitioning into the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. Our staff has been working diligently to make this conversion a smooth one. One of the changes we have seen has been the development of a new, stylized logo which depicts children and families joining together with its multiple colors signifying the diversity of families and children in our state.

You can monitor the bill's progression through the Senate here:  
<http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2016/pdf/history/SB/SB2179.xml>



## Carry On Warrior: Remembering Joyce Cook

On Tuesday May 3, 2016, a longtime employee and dear friend of our division, lost her battle with cancer. We recognize Joyce's 16 years of state service, including the five and a half years of time she spent dedicated to our agency in Region 15. Joyce received her Master's in Social Work from MS Valley State University in 2012. She was known for her compassion and guidance to other social workers as well as to her clients. She will be missed, but her legacy lives on.

## THE WAY FORWARD:

### MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES' NEWSLETTER

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# CELEBRATING OUR 2016 GRADUATES!



Higher education, excellence in professionalism and continuing competence will ensure that we achieve the goals for the agency and accomplish the standards set forth in *Olivia Y.*

MDCPS recognizes the importance of continuing education and would like to applaud and congratulate the following employees on completing their Master's Degree in Social Work.

## REGIONS 1N & 1S GRADUATES:

Tracy Dilworth  
Carla Holeman

## REGIONS 3N & 3S GRADUATES:

Ciera Carson  
Rhonda Moffett  
Tiffany Robinson

## REGIONS 4N & 4S GRADUATES:

Ryakko Hickman  
Iris Spencer-Joiner  
Shonda Kirksey  
Kaneisha Mays

## REGIONS 5E & 5W GRADUATES:

Quianti Merchant  
LaCanvas Walker  
Angela Short



Iris Spencer-Joiner, 4N Regional Director, exemplifies professionalism, not only in continuing her education but also in the way in which she leads. Iris, to you and all the May graduates, we salute you.

## Carry On With Education

As we embark on May, we want to celebrate our staff that has made the commitment to continuing education, focusing on bettering themselves as professionals, and embracing the personal motto of never stop learning. We are highlighting those who will receive their Master's in Social Work this month. We also want to honor Dr. Whitt, who will be walking in the inaugural class at the University of Mississippi Medical Center for her Doctorate in Health Administration on May 27, 2016. Dr. Whitt completed her degree on July 31, 2015, but is now able to walk in the annual graduation ceremonies. Dr. Whitt completed her degree while serving as the Field Operations Director. She now will be able to serve the agency in new administrative capacities, specifically in Human Resources for MDCPS.



# Proud Achievements of Our 7W Staff



Join us in congratulating Mona Holloway, Kimberly Weary, Harmony Dedeaux, Stacie Gilner, Wendalyn Davis Bostic and Odia Shields (not pictured). These ladies were recently inducted into the Phi Alpha Honor Society, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Work, MSW Program.



Vicki Blaize was awarded “Field Instructor of the Year-Gulf Coast” from the USM School of Social Work. Congratulations on your outstanding award, Vicki!



Kimberly Weary received the “Outstanding Student of the Year” award, also from the USM School of Social Work. What an honor! Congrats, Kimberly!



MDCPS is proud to call all of the women highlighted this month a part of our organization! We appreciate your hard work and can't wait to see what else you accomplish!

## PROGRESS IN THE OLIVIA Y. REMEDIAL COURT ORDER

- “In but not of” Agency Structure
  - Memorandum of understanding drafted and will be submitted for approval to the consultants by June 1, 2016
  - Court date rescheduled from May to October 17, 2016
- A better resourced field operations
  - State Office staff responsible for foster care and adoption program functions moved to Field Operations
  - All Field Operations Plans and Workforce Plans are submitted for approval
  - Salary realignments for frontline workers submitted for approval
- Technology
  - All dedicated investigators are equipped with smartphones or tablets
  - Dell and Verizon Wireless contracts are in process to equip all caseworkers with tablets and wireless smart technology
- Legislative Agenda
  - Agency and appropriations bills approved by the Legislature

Pleadings, reports and the Public Catalyst assessment are available to the public at:  
<http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/olivia-y-lawsuit/>

SAFETY AND WELL-BEING: OUR TOP PRIORITY  
 Promoting safe and stable families is the top priority of the Department of Child Protection Services

# MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH!

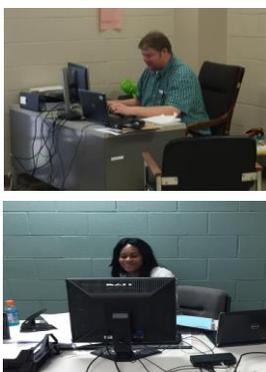


In 1988, President Ronald Reagan issued the first presidential proclamation that established May as National Foster Care Month. This is the time to acknowledge the foster parents, family members, volunteers, mentors, policymakers, child welfare professionals, and other members of the community who help children and youth in foster care find permanent homes and connections. It is also a time to focus on ways to create a bright future for the more than 400,000 children and youth in foster care nationwide.

This year's National Foster Care Month theme is: **"Honoring, Uniting, and Celebrating Families."**

## IT UPDATE: The New Tablets Are Here!

The IT Team has been busy as bees with the rollout of tablets for workers across the state. The dedicated investigators in Harrison and Hancock counties received their new tablets the last week of April and first week of May. Last week the team visited counties in Regions 3N, 4N, 4S, and 5E distributing tablets to field staff. **The excitement is spreading as you can tell from the pictures below!** Lauderdale County is on the list for this week and the week of May 23rd (next week) the team makes its way down to Regions 6, 7E and 7W. Stay tuned for a visit from the IT Team in your county. They are coming your way soon! **This is a monumental and exciting time for our agency!**



### Spreading the Good Word

The newly formed Department of Child Protection Services is working to change the image, and the actuality, of the state's broken foster care system.

As part of that job, we rolled out a new ad campaign against child abuse. The TV and radio spots feature Governor Phil Bryant and First Lady Deborah Bryant, as well as former Ole Miss running back and New Orleans Saint, Deuce McAllister. Dr. David Chandler, the former state Supreme Court Justice who now leads the division recently spoke to MPB. Dr. Chandler is quoted as saying he wants Mississippians to know the state is taking seriously the care of its most vulnerable citizens. Hear the PSA and story about Dr. Chandler's leadership here:



To report child abuse and neglect:  
(800) 222-8000 | [mdcps.ms.gov](http://mdcps.ms.gov)

<http://www.mpbonline.org/blogs/mississippi-edition/mississippi-edition-thursday-may-5th/>