



THE OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE



Tania M. Culley, Esquire
Child Advocate

ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2004 (July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004)



OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE

900 King Street • Suite 210 • Wilmington, Delaware 19801-3341 • Voice 302.255.1730 • Fax 302.577.6831
9 E. Loockerman Street • Suite 302 • Dover, DE 19901 • Voice 302.739-7150 • Fax 302-739-7153

<http://courts.state.de.us/childadvocate>

Mission

The Office of the Child Advocate shall safeguard the welfare of Delaware's children through educational advocacy, system reform, public awareness, training, and legal representation of children as set forth in 29 Del. C., Ch. 90A.

Goals

- * Ensure that every child's voice is heard in every court proceeding, which affects his or her life.
- * Ensure that every player in the child protection system has the necessary education and training to put a child's safety and well-being above all else: children are not personal property ... they are human beings.
- * Ensure that Delaware's child welfare laws reflect the needs of our children and are a model for the nation.

Duties

- * Take all possible actions, including programs of public education and legislative advocacy, to ensure the legal, civil and special rights of children;
- * Revise, periodically, all relevant policies and procedures with a view toward the rights of children;
- * Refer any person making a complaint or report required by Chapter 9 of Title 16 to the Division of Family Services, and, if warranted, to an appropriate police agency. If a complaint or report includes an allegation of misconduct against a Department employee, the complaint or report must also be referred to the Secretary of the Department;
- * Recommend changes in the procedures for investigating and overseeing the welfare of children;
- * Make the public aware of the services of the Office of the Child Advocate and the Child Protection Accountability Commission, their purposes, and how they can be contacted;
- * Apply for and accept grants, gifts and bequests of funds from other state, federal and interstate agencies, as well as from private firms, individuals and foundations for the purpose of carrying out the Commission's lawful responsibilities. The funds must be deposited with the State Treasurer in a restricted receipt account established to permit funds to be expended in accordance with the provision of the grant, gift or bequest;
- * Examine policies and procedures and evaluate the effectiveness of the child protection system, specifically the respective roles of the Division of Family Services, the Attorney General's Office, the courts, the medical community and law enforcement agencies;
- * Review and make recommendations concerning investigative procedures and emergency responses of the child welfare system;

Duties (cont.)

- * Develop and provide quality training to Division of Family Services' staff, Deputy Attorneys General, law enforcement officers, the medical community, Family Court personnel, educators, day care providers, and others on the various standards, criteria and investigative technology used in child welfare cases;
- * Submit an annual report analyzing the work of the Office of the Child Advocate that shall be included in the Child Protection Accountability Commission's annual report; and
- * Take whatever other actions are necessary to help the Commission accomplish its goals.

Locations

New Castle County

900 King Street
Suite 210
Wilmington, DE 19801-3341
Ph: (302) 255-1730
Fax: (302) 577-6831

Kent/Sussex Counties

9 E. Loockerman Street
Treadway Towers, Suite 302
Dover, DE 19901
Ph: (302) 739-7150
Fax: (302) 739-7153

Staff

Child Advocate

Deputy Child Advocates

Program Administrator

Office Manager

Family Crisis Therapists

Tania M. Culley, Esq.

Angela M. Fowler, Esq.

Mary Catherine (M.C.) Landis, Esq.

Anne Pedrick, MSCC

Wendy Gerlach

Celeste Bishop

Jennifer Falkowski

Volunteers, Interns & Law Clerks

Stacey Callaway
Amy Smith
Mattie Picard
Amy Quinlan, Esq.

Elizabeth Treisner
Kim Albert
Laura Westfall

Sharon Opila
Candy Nesbeth
Islanda Finamore

Website: <http://courts.state.de.us/childadvocate>

FY 2004

Pro Bono Honor Roll

Derrick Abbott
Jon Abramczyk
Roger Akin
Debra Aldrich
Becky Allen
Kimberly Allen
Michael Allen
Thomas Allingham
Susan Ament
Eileen Andersen
Melony Anderson
John Andrade
David Arndt
Michael Arrington
Daniel Astin
Greg Babowal
James Bailey
John Balaguer
Samantha Balick
Joseph Barry
Sean Beach
Robert Beste
Antonia Bevis
Elizabeth Beyer
Shakuntla Bhaya
Michael Bonkowski
Mary Boudart
Curtis Bounds
John Brady
Jennifer Brierley
Steven Brinker
Paul Brown
H. Cabbage Brown
Gary Bryde
Warren Burt
Timothy Cairns
Peter Calder
Deborah Carey
Linda Carmichael
Denis Casey
Eileen Caulfield
Teresa Cheek
William Chipman
Joseph Cicero
Martha Claverie
C. Malcolm Cochran, IV
Cynthia Collins
P. Clarkson Collins
Christopher Componovo
Bernard Conaway
John James Conly
Carolyn Connors
Art Connolly, Jr.
Alan Cooper
Margaret Cooper
Jason Cornell
Noriss Cosgrove

Victoria Counihan
Scott Cousins
Lydia Cox
Curtis Crowther
David Culley
Donna Culver
Edward Curley
Brock Czeschin
James Dalle Pазze
Bart Dalton
John Daniello
George Danneman
Jessica Davis
Carrie Dayton
Kim DeBonte
Christine Demsey
Sarah DiLuzio
Jill DiSciullo
Melissa DiVincenzo
William Doerler
John Dorsey
Shawn Dougherty
James Drnec
Stephen Dryden
Kelly Dunn-Gelof
Edward (Mike) Eaton
Craig Eliassen
Margaret England
Elisa Erlenbach
Elwood Eveland
Sherry Fallon
Cynthia Faraone
Dennis Ferri
Thomas Ferry
Yvette Fitzgerald
James Flynn
Tiffany Fonseca
Edward Fornias, III
James Freebery
Barbara Gadbois
David Gagne
Patricia Gallagher
Patricia Garthwaite
Frances Gauthier
Thomas Gay
Kathleen Geiger
Glynis Gibson
Paul Golian
William Gonser, Jr.
Lisa Goodman
Todd Goodman
Susan Gordon
Brian Gottesman
Charles Gray
Gerry Gray
James Green
Joseph Green

Thomas Grimm
Kevin Gross
Jerome Grossman
Mark Gundersen
Kathleen Hadley
Raymond Hancock
Patricia Hannigan
Jeanne Hanson
Thomas Hanson
Jason Harbour
Jennifer Hartnett
Theresa Hayes
Julia Heaney
Catherine Hickey
Timothy Hitchings
Lorin Hochman
Thomas Hodukavich
Steven Holfeld
Vera Holmes
Kathleen Hostetter
Vivian Houghton
Timothy Houseal
Eric Howard
Janine Howard
Kevin Howard
Amy Hudson
David Hurst
David Hutt
Frederick Iobst
Alfred Isaacs
Michael Isaacs
Cathy Jenkins
David Jenkins
Clay Jester
Ann Marie Johnson
Dawn Jones
Judy Jones
Richard I.G. Jones, Jr.
Elizabeth Julian
Brian Kasprzak
Alicia B. Kelly
Michael Kelly
Lucy Kendikian-Smith
Felice Kerr
Shelley Kinsella
Gretchen Knight
Laurie Krepto
Marie LaBruyere
Peter Ladig
Gregory Ladner
William Lafferty
Kathryn Laffey
Kimberly Lawson
Lewis Lazarus
Jane Leamy
Timothy Lengkeek
Norman Levine

FY 2004

Pro Bono Honor Roll (cont.)

Neal Levitsky
Roger Levy
Elizabeth Lewis
Andrew Lippstone
Susan List
Stanley Macel
Titania Mack
Lauren Maguire
Elizabeth Marchioni
Thomas Marconi
Erin Mariani
Adria Martinelli
Hon. Jennifer Mayo
David McBride
Christine McCormick
Bernard McFadden
James McGiffin
Thomas McGonigle
Matthew McGuire
Heather McIntyre
Mary Anne McLane
John McLaughlin, Jr.
James McMillan
Carolyn McNeice
Bruce McNew
Sherry McReynolds
Vivian Medinilla
Luke Mette
Ellen Meyer
Dawn Miello
Stephen Milewski
Maribeth Minella
Paulette Moore
Francis Murphy
Patricia Murphy
Frank Nardo
Jennifer Naylor
Michael Newell
Mary Ellen Noreika
Jennifer Gioia Nowak
Kevin O'Brien
Lynn O'Donnell
Elizabeth Olsen
Deirdre O'Shea
Susan Over

James Parrett, Jr.
Darryl Parson
Hon. Don Parsons
Eliza Patten
Susan Pauley
Dennis Phifer
Lorraine Phillips
Francis Pileggi
Ronald Poliquin
Tiffany Poole
Vincent Poppiti
Thomas Preston
Amy Quinlan
Vincent Ramunno, Jr.
Jennifer Barber Ranji
Mark Rankin
B. Wilson Redfearn
Anne Reigle
Michael Reilly
Richard Renck
Sheldon Rennie
Joseph Rhoades
Courtney Riordan
Michael Ripple
David Ripsom
Elizabeth Rodriguez
Bruce Rogers
Susan Rowley
Helena Rychlicki
Anthony Saccullo
Tamara Sampson
Yvonne Saville
Michael Scali
Christine Schiltz
Todd Charles Schiltz
Jack Schreppler
Pamela Scott
Suzanne Seubert
Thomas Shellenberger
Christopher Simon
Laura K. Simon
Cheryl Siskin
David Snyder
Francine Solomon
Leslie Spoltore

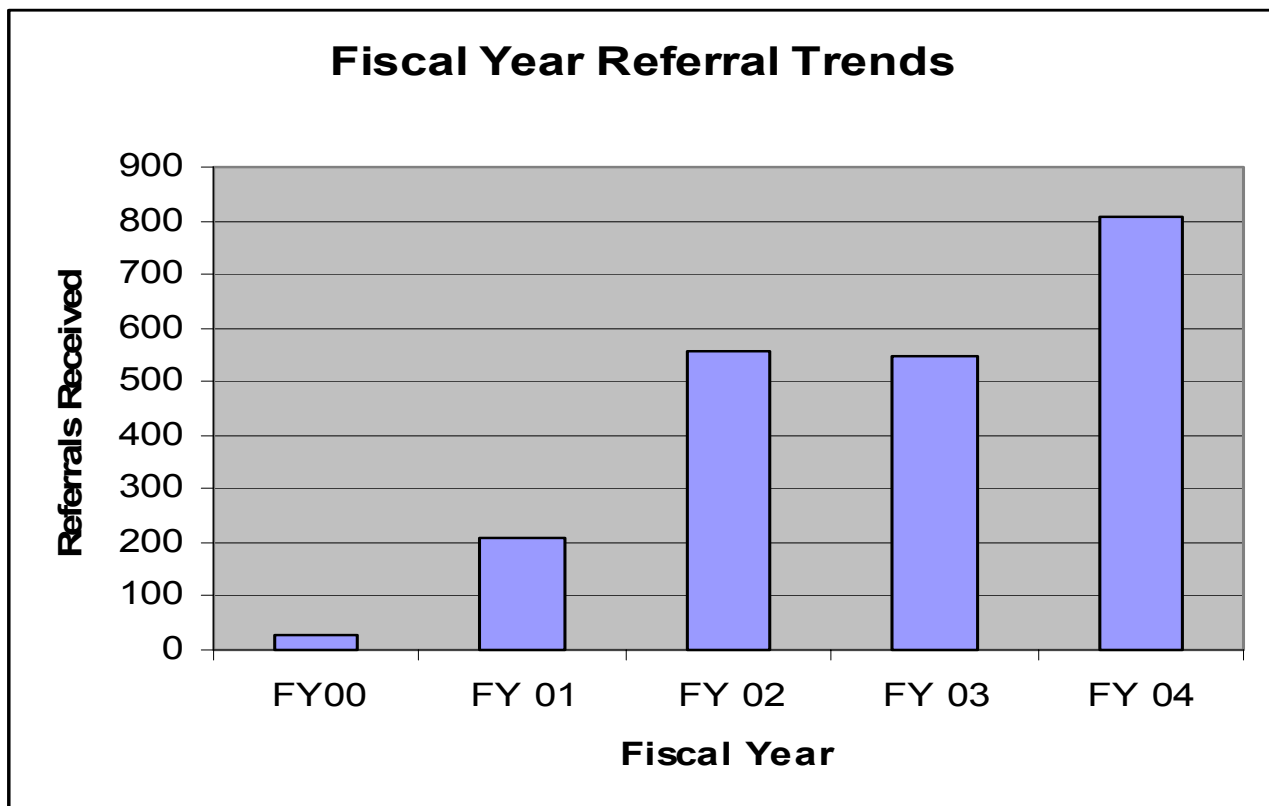
Joanne Springer-Messick
Lisa Stark
Curtis Staropoli
Tasha Stevens
Patrick Straub
William Sudell, Jr.
John Sullivan, Jr.
Karen Sullivan
Paul Sunshine
Carol Evon Taylor
James Taylor, Jr.
Michael Teichman
David Teklits
Harlan Tenenbaum
Allen Terrell
Anthony Testa, Jr.
John Thompson
Melanie Thompson
Erika Tross
Patricia Uhlenbrock
Andrea Unterberger
Jan van Amerongen
Kathryn van Amerongen
Patrick Vanderslice
Karen Vicks
Michael Vild
Nicole Walker
Megan Ward
Natalie Watson
Michael Weidinger
David Weidman
Patricia Widdoss
William Wilgus
Charles Williams
Evan Olin Williford
Julie Windhorn
Natalie Wolf
Etta Wolfe
James Woods
Christian Wright
Davis Wright
Danielle Yearick
Laura Yiengst
Virginia Zrake
Lisa Zwally

Where we are making a difference for Delaware's Children

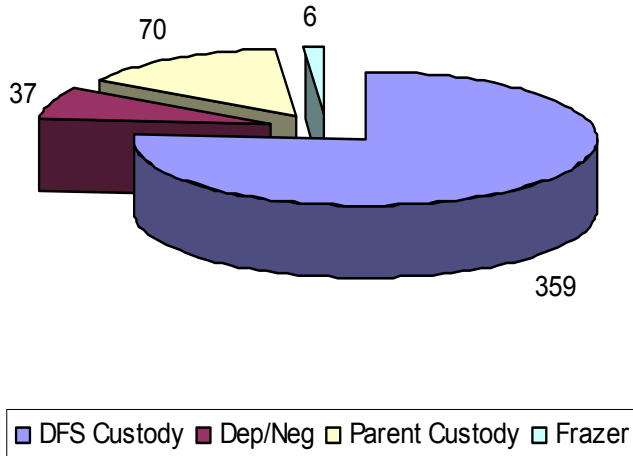
Legal Representation of Children

Referral Trends

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) takes its responsibility to represent children seriously. Internal policies and procedures are continually reviewed and adjusted to meet new challenges. Since beginning operation in February of 2000, OCA has experienced tremendous growth. Each year, as the legal and local communities become more aware of OCA's existence, the number of referrals to the office increases. During fiscal year 2004, OCA received 808 referrals. Of those 808 referrals received and reviewed, OCA appointed an attorney to 349 new children. The majority of these new appointments went to children within the foster care system – 262 children under the care and custody of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. This number does not include open cases carried through from previous years. At the end of Fiscal Year 2004, OCA was actively representing 472 children, and during the course of the year represented a total of 702 children.



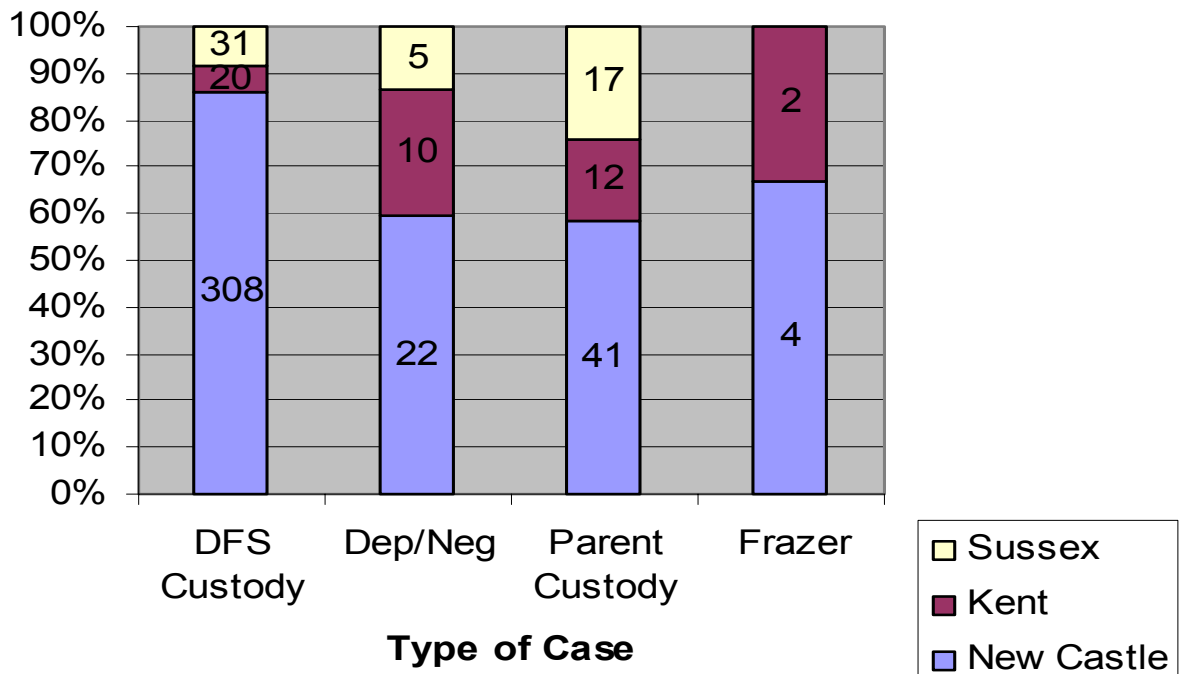
Children Actively Represented



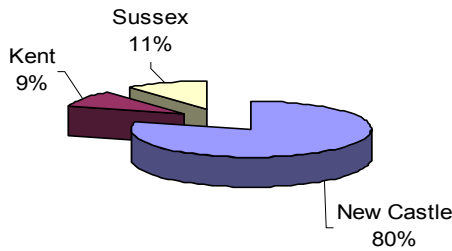
Of the 472 children whose files were still open on June 30, 2004, 359 of those children were in the custody of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. 37 children were the subject of dependency/neglect cases within the Court that did not directly involve DSCYF. 70 children who were the subject of parent custody disputes were also represented through OCA. Finally, OCA assisted the Court in appointing Frazer counsel for 6 children.

Looking at these numbers by county, it is clear that the largest concentration of OCA cases continue to be in New Castle County. 375 children in New Castle County were represented, compared to 44 in Kent County and 53 in Sussex County. Of those 375 New Castle County children, 308 were in DSCYF custody, 22 were dependency/neglect matters, 41 were parent custody disputes and 4 were Frazer appointments. In Kent County, 20 children in DSCYF custody were represented, 10 in dependency/neglect matters, 12 in parent custody matters and 2 Frazer appointments. In Sussex County, 31 children were in DSCYF custody, 5 were the subject of dependency/neglect petition, and 17 were involved in a parent custody dispute.

County Breakdown of Cases



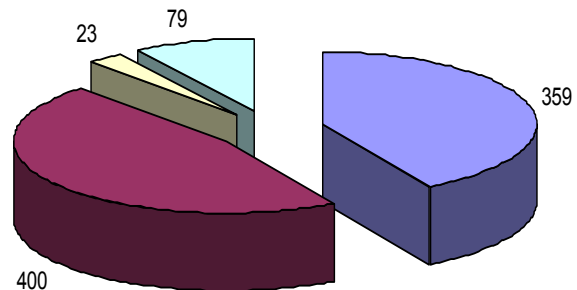
Overall Representation by County



Therefore, in considering OCA's FY04 caseload, 80% of its cases were in New Castle County, 11% in Sussex County and 9% in Kent County. Of those 97 downstate cases, OCA was handling 38 of them (or 39%) in-house. Compare this percentage with New Castle County where only 9% of the cases are handled in-house. These numbers in and of themselves indicate there are simply not enough volunteer resources to serve the downstate children. OCA staff devoted 3,545 hours in representing children in-house, and another 718 hours supporting volunteer attorneys.

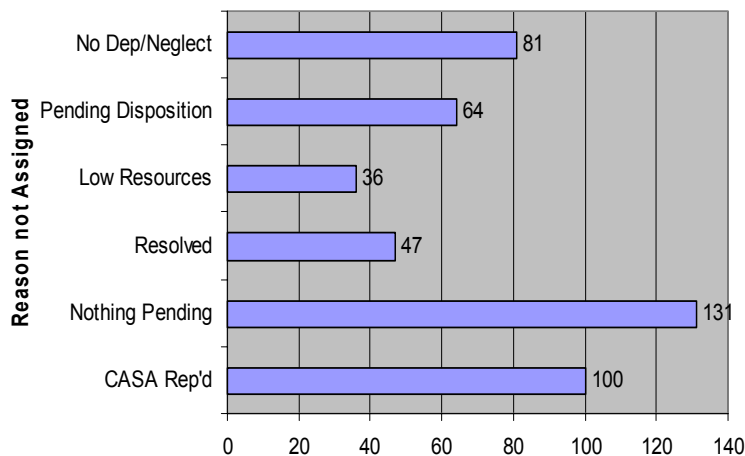
In March of 2004, DSCYF completed an audit of GAL representation. This audit revealed that 123 children statewide in DSCYF custody were still without legal representation (in violation of federal law). Of those 123 children, 79 of them were children in Kent and Sussex Counties. OCA intends to request funding for another downstate Deputy in fiscal year 2005 to address this issue since the volunteer pool has been largely exhausted.

Representation of Children in Foster Care System



■ OCA Rep'd ■ CASA Rep'd ■ Not Rep'd NCC ■ Not Rep'd Downstate

Closed - No GAL Assignment



In FY04, there were 459 cases that OCA did not assign representation and subsequently closed out during the disposition phase. These break down to include 100 cases being picked up by the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, 131 referrals that proved to have no pending petitions in court, 19 cases that were resolved during the disposition phase, 81 that had no apparent dependency/neglect issues, 36 were closed due to inability to assign due to low resources and 64 were still in the disposition phase as of June 30, 2004.

Legislative Advocacy

In compliance with its statutory duties, OCA both drafts legislation and advocates for its passage. Legislative initiatives come from the Child Protection Accountability Commission, various child welfare committees or from discussions with child welfare partners. Oftentimes, OCA is the legislative designee. In Fiscal Year 2004, OCA spent 317 hours drafting and advocating for various legislative bills that benefit Delaware's children. OCA took the lead as Staff for the Child Protection Accountability Commission in seeking the passage of SB265 and SB279. Senate Bill 265 further delineated caseload standards for the Division of Family Services. Senate Bill 279 expanded the duties of the Child Death Near Death and Stillbirth Commission and provided it with staff. OCA also drafted and advocated for the passage of HB401. This bill provides protections for child witnesses in civil Family Court proceedings. These protections are similar in nature to those provided to children in criminal matters.

Training and Education

Pro Bono Recruitment, Training and Recognition:

During Fiscal Year 2004, OCA mailed a letter of interest to each member of the Delaware Bar soliciting their service in representing abused and neglected children. In conjunction with that mailing, OCA scheduled and conducted 12 Nuts and Bolts Trainings throughout the State. The trainings are two hours long and cover such topics as the child welfare system, the judicial process, OCA processes and referrals, and ethical issues in representing children. Each training attracted 10-15 new attorneys, most of whom subsequently accepted legal representation of a child. The trainings were held at various sites throughout the State. Several law firms agreed to serve as hosts providing a comfortable setting with refreshments. As of June 30, 2004, OCA had 295 volunteer attorneys on its roster. The "Nuts and Bolts" trainings conducted during FY 04 were:

11/13/03 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by Morris James Hitchens & Williams
11/21/03 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by Fox Rothschild
12/12/03 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by OCA Wilmington
01/09/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by Richards Layton & Finger
01/16/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by Morris Nichols Arsht & Tunnell
02/06/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by Parkowski Guerke & Swayze
03/19/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by OCA Wilmington
04/12/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by OCA Wilmington
05/05/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by OCA Wilmington
05/13/04 - Pro Bono Nuts and Bolts Training – hosted by Admin. Services at Silver Lake – Dover

As part of OCA's on-going commitment to support and educate the Pro Bono attorneys, the staff implemented semi-annual Brown Bag Trainings. Through interactions with volunteers, areas of specific interest or concern were identified, and OCA obtained experts to educate the attorneys on these issues. 1 CLE credit was received for each training attended. The trainings were provided in the OCA Wilmington Office with video conferencing to Stockley State Service Center. Below is a list of the trainings:

03/25/04 - Brown Bag Advanced GAL Training - Understanding the DFS System

04/14/04 - Brown Bag Advanced GAL Training - Accessing Mental Health Services for your Client
04/26/04 - Brown Bag Advanced GAL Training - A Place to Call Home: Permanency Options for Kids
- Adoption and Permanent Guardianship
05/21/04 - Brown Bag Advanced GAL Training - Talking to Your Child Client
06/01/04 - Brown Bag Advanced GAL Training - Family Court Litigation for Non-Litigators
06/16/04 - Brown Bag Advanced GAL Training - Representing Your Teenaged Client in Foster Care:
Accessing Services and Independent Living

OCA was also proud to participate in the Delaware State Bar Association's Pro Bono Breakfast Awards held on November 4, 2003. Attorney volunteers were recognized for their contributions to legal services for Delaware's indigent population. This population necessarily includes Delaware's abused and neglected children. OCA was proud to see two of its volunteers, Tiffany Poole and Vice Chancellor Parsons, recognized for their service. OCA continues to serve on the DSBA LIP Committee and has joined that committee in lobbying for inclusion of these awards in a higher profile arena in the future to ensure as much recognition as possible for the 14,000 volunteer hours and \$2,500,000 in free legal services contributed by Delaware attorneys on behalf of children.

Training Events:

Pursuant to 29 Del. C. §9005A(9), OCA is mandated to provide and participate in training of the child welfare community. In furtherance of its mandate, OCA spent 220 hours in FY04 participating in and/or conducting training and/or educational forums. In addition to the volunteer attorney trainings discussed earlier, OCA also participated in the following educational matters:

The American Bar Association & American Psychological Association Joint Conference

From June 3rd through the 5th, 2004, Angela Fowler, Esquire, Deputy Child Advocate, attended the 11th National Conference on Children and the Law, jointly sponsored by the American Bar Association and American Psychological Association. The conference focused on joint issues affecting child welfare, family law and juvenile justice concerns by looking closely at the roles played by both attorneys and psychologists in the field. The daily seminars included such discussion topics as adolescents and runaways in foster care, violence in families, permanency planning options, mental health services for children in care and educational advocacy skills.

26th National Children's Law Conference of the National Association of Counsel for Children

The Office of the Child Advocate, in furtherance of its statutory mandates attended the 26TH National Children's Law Conference of the National Association of Counsel for Children in New Orleans, Louisiana in August of 2003. Participants from the Office included, M.C. Landis, the Deputy Child Advocate for New Castle County and Angela Fowler, Deputy Child Advocate for Kent and Sussex Counties. The goal was to obtain information regarding the legal representation of children in the court room, national trends in child protection and to learn about initiatives around the country that are positively impacting children and youth in foster care. Following the conference, Angela and M.C. drafted a 14 page summary of the topics covered in the conference, including topics such as early intervention, federal policy, corporal punishment, custody and visitation, permanency and parental alienation. This summary was provided to all pro bono attorneys as well as other community partners.

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

Anne Pedrick, Program Administrator, was a co-facilitator along with Barbara Chasnoff, J.D. ABA Child Custody Pro Bono Project, and Andrea Kurtz, J.D. Legal Aid society of Northwest North Carolina for "Using Volunteers in Private Custody Cases". This conference, held November 13 through November 15, 2003 in St. Louis, Missouri, examined the use of volunteers to help reduce the cost of advocating for children in private custody cases. OCA was presented as a successful program providing legal representation to children in family law cases.

The 21st Annual Conference of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work - Social Work and the Law: New Trends in Forensics

This conference was held May 16-19, 2004 in Tampa, Florida. The Keynote Address was "Youth Violence Today" by Kathleen M. Heide, Ph.D. It was interesting to learn that all children that are currently on death row in this country have suffered some type of extreme physical and/or sexual abuse. Anne Pedrick found this conference engaging and covering a wide variety of interests for the forensic social worker, attorneys, and Judges. There were two mock trials as part of the conference which provided a great deal of legal information for social workers. A particular workshop of interest was "Testifying in Child Welfare cases". Anne has brought the information learned at this conference back to Delaware to provide knowledge of new trends and additional supports to OCA's pro bono attorneys.

National Citizens Review Panel Conference

In April of 2004, the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC) was designated to be Delaware's Citizen Review Panel as stated under the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) guidelines. A representative from OCA went to the 3rd Annual National Citizens Review Panel Conference held in Lexington, Kentucky from May 27th through the 28th. Anne Pedrick was accompanied by Linda Shannon from DFS for this conference. The focus of the Conference was on the effectiveness of citizen review panels on child protection, using citizen review panels to assist in the Child and Family Services review, and also coordination between Child Death review teams and citizen review panels. It was a small conference that was ideal for networking and learning about other states and how they utilize their citizen review panels.

2nd Annual Abuse Intervention Committee's Training Consortium Conference. "Working Together for Delaware's Families: The Effects of Violence on Children: Abuse, Bullying and Domestic Violence"

OCA was a partner in developing this training with other Delaware agencies in the Training Consortium held June 1, 2004. OCA contributed a small financial amount along with approximately 15 hours of time to attend planning meetings. There were various workshops along with a general session from the YMCA presenting on their school bullying program. Keynote speaker was Dr. James Garbarino, nationally known author/lecturer who wrote "The Lost Boys".

DFS Core Training

Anne Pedrick continues to train “Understanding OCA” to new DFS workers as they go through their Core Training. Anne is sometimes assisted by OCA’s family crisis therapists. This experience is invaluable because it helps put a face to OCA along with some “seeds of partnership” on behalf of children.

Committee and Taskforce Participation:

Abuse Intervention Committee

- *Training Consortium*
- *Subcommittee for Children’s Justice Act Grant*

American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law

Child Death Near Death and Stillbirth Commission

- *Process Subcommittee*
- *Annual Report Subcommittee*
- *New Castle County Review Panel*
- *Kent/Sussex Review Panel*

Child Protection Accountability Commission

- *CPAC SB 142 Subcommittee*
- *CPAC Bylaws Subcommittee*
- *CPAC Near Death Subcommittee*
- *Best Interests Subcommittee*

Children's Advocacy Center (non-voting Board member)

Court Improvement Project Meetings (New Castle, Kent, Sussex)

Delaware State Bar Association Family Law Section

Delaware State Bar Association LIP Committee

Delaware State Bar Association Women and the Law Section

Department of Services for Children Youth and Their Families Runaway Youth Workgroup

Division of Family Services’ Advisory and Advocacy Council

Domestic Violence Task Force (subcommittees listed below only)

- *FIRT Reviews*
- *Children and DV Workgroup*
- *DV Taskforce*

Foster Care Reform Forum

Grassroots Citizens for Children (non-voting Board member)

Independent Living Advisory Board

- *Housing Subcommittee*

Interagency Committee on Adoption

Melson Arsht Inn of Court

National Association of Counsel for Children

National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges

Office of Childcare Licensing Rule Revision Taskforce for Child Placing Agencies

Terry Carey Inn of Court

Community Involvement, Outreach and Publicity

Website

The website covers information on how to make a referral to OCA and how those referrals are processed, who the OCA staff are, significant court cases or legislation affecting children, information on the Child Protection Accountability Commission, and spotlights on pro bono attorneys, foster parents and child welfare workers. We now also provide monthly statistical updates on our representation of children, the Pro Bono Training Manual is available to download via our website and other training opportunities and reference materials are available online as well.

Publicity and Media

Tania Culley, Child Advocate and Mary Catherine (M.C.) Landis, Deputy Child Advocate assisted the Women and the Law Section of the Delaware State Bar Association to organize the annual retreat that focused on Pro Bono Opportunities for attorneys in Delaware.

The Office of the Child Advocate staffed a table at the Delaware State Bar Association's Annual Bench and Bar Conference. This proved to be an excellent opportunity to heighten awareness among members of the Bar to the needs of Delaware's abused and neglected children. Several attorneys expressed interest in OCA's program and subsequently signed up for training to become an attorney guardian *ad litem*.

On October, 24, 2003, the Office of the Child Advocate was invited to speak at the annual meeting of the Child Placement Review Board. Tania Culley and M.C. Landis spoke to the Board members about OCA's statutory duties and how it fits into the child welfare system as a whole.

Grants and Bequests

The Office of the Child Advocate has a legal mandate to "apply for and accept grants, gifts, and bequests of funds from other states, federal, and inter-state agencies, as well as from private firms, individuals, and foundations, for the purpose of carrying out the Commission's lawful responsibilities". 29 Del. C. § 9005A(6). In 2002, OCA was awarded the Children's Justice Act grant to fund a part-time Family Crisis Therapist for Kent/Sussex counties. Celeste Bishop continues in that position. She spends most of her time doing casework, supporting the Deputy Child Advocate in her cases, and providing pro bono support to our volunteer attorneys in Kent/Sussex counties. Her position is crucial to the Deputy Child Advocate since there is no support staff in Kent or Sussex counties. This grant will expire during FY05.

The Office of the Child Advocate continues to research and seek out grants related to pro bono services for children.

DFS Policy and Procedure/Multi-Disciplinary Collaboration

OCA is mandated, pursuant to 29 Del. C. § 9005A(2), to periodically review and revise all relevant child welfare policies and procedures with a view toward expanding the rights of children. The Office of the Child Advocate is also to recommend changes in procedures for investigating and overseeing the welfare of our children. 29 Del. C. § 9005A(4). In fiscal year 2004, OCA spent 467 hours in meetings and working on policy issues with various child welfare partners. OCA spent an additional 367 hours staffing the Child Protection Accountability Commission.

Partnership Meetings: Quarterly, DFS and OCA meet to improve multi-disciplinary collaboration. Topics have included caseloads, improved coordination between OCA and DFS, case concerns, training and system successes and challenges. OCA's Program Administrator has also had several meetings with DFS' Quality Assurance team to effectuate maximum efficiency and cooperation between the agencies.

Representatives of OCA met in July 2003 with CASA coordinator Lynn Shreve to discuss further collaboration to ensure that all children in foster care have guardian *ad litem* representation. Communication continues between CASA and OCA regarding children entering foster care. Development of a database or other means of ensuring children are represented continues to be worked on.

The OCA Program Administrator met with Roberta Ray from CMH to discuss an OCA training for Child Mental Health (CMH) staff in understanding the OCA process. This training has been delayed until a Memorandum of Understanding can be developed between OCA and DSCYF.

During January 2004 and March 2004, OCA joined the Division of Family Services (DFS) for an "internal review" of two serious injuries/near death cases. The dedication of time between these reviews was approximately 80 hours which included an extensive timeline produced by OCA. Policy concerns and child welfare issues were closely examined and have been instrumental in guiding OCA's advocacy of children.

