The Family Center, Alameda County’s new family visitation center, is scheduled to open in March 2011. The Family Center is a collaborative project between Alameda County Social Services Agency, Alternative Family Services, and Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services.

The Family Center
401 Roland Way
Oakland, CA 94621

Hours: Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Friday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Therapeutic Visitation (TV)

Therapeutic visitation is a mental health intervention-based service for children and families. TV uses a strength-based specialty family therapy model. Mental Health clinicians address the child’s mental health needs within the context of the family. Individual sessions with parents and children may be scheduled as needed to meet the needs of the children and families. The focus is on family functioning, promoting positive parenting skills, and attunement.

Note:
- Therapeutic Visitation at The Family Center cannot be provided for children with the offending parent.
- Services can be provided to the non-offending parent and child.

Supervised Visitation (SV)

Supervised visitation services have a Family Support Counselor supervising the visit at all times for safety and appropriateness. Each family creates a Family Center Visitation Plan and some families may receive parent coaching and support as well. Some of the coaching and support activities utilized may include:
- Direct observation
- Supportive feedback
- Practicing positive parenting skills with skill rehearsal
- Structured activities to assist with positive family interactions
- Individual meetings with parents can be scheduled to review, debrief and practice parenting skills that are utilized within visits.

(continued on page 7)
Dear colleagues and friends:

After 28 years of service to the most vulnerable youth and families in Alameda County, on March 31, 2011, I am retiring from my position as the Assistant Agency Director of The Department of Children and Family Services.

I remember when I began work as a Child Welfare Worker in 1984. My oldest son was just two years old at the time, and he will be 29 years old in March. Both of my children have grown to be successful young men while my public service career has developed over the years from Eligibility Technician to Assistant Agency Director.

I was promoted to DCFS Assistant Agency Director in 2002, and I have had the privilege and support to be able to take some risks and put some creative ideas to the test in an effort to change our Child Welfare System and better serve families. Since I became the director, DCFS launched the Faith Advisory Council, which remains one of my most proud achievements. The Faith Initiative was born of a need to partner with the strong, untapped faith communities in Alameda County to address a crisis of too few county licensed foster homes for our youth. Also in response to the need to provide family settings and permanence for youth, the Family Finding and Engagement work has been instrumental in securing more relative caregivers for youth who are unable to return to their birth parents. Additionally, we are also now one of the only Child Welfare agencies to genuinely engage birth parents and youth in very direct ways as paid advocates.

When asked to name some of the most compelling changes in the DCFS work environment, I am quick to think of how diverse our staff has become and the role I have played in making this a reality. We are now openly discussing racial disparity in foster care with our staff and community partners and addressing the overrepresentation of African American children openly and honestly in a way that was not imaginable twenty or even ten years ago. The formal and informal work to address racial disproportionality will definitely be one of the legacies of this era in Child Welfare.

Another major Department accomplishment that is a great source of personal and professional pride is our participation in the Title IVE Waiver. The IVE Waiver has allowed an enormous amount of flexibility over how we spend our funding. We have invested savings into some of the most innovative and cutting edge programs. During a time of recession and cutting back, DCFS has been able to continue to hire additional Child Welfare Workers and to implement best practice models. For example, our Family Center is opening soon to provide supported visits between youth and their families in an effort to enhance timely and permanent reunification.

Many people ask me what I will be doing in my retirement. My first goal is to travel by my favorite method—cruising with my wonderful husband of 31 years! Many of you have heard me talk about my dream of opening a local day care facility and I am excited that the dream will soon become a reality. I will also be teaching at Berkeley City College and Cal State University East Bay. I plan to stay very involved in community and children’s issues by finally having the time to serve on various local nonprofit boards.

I have been blessed and fortunate to have a long and successful career that has been so much more than a job. It has been my “calling” and my vocation. I am inspired and humbled to have had the opportunity to work with the kindest, most caring, dedicated professionals who I will truly miss.

With Warmest Regards,
Carol Collins

It’s never too late to be what you might have been.
— George Eliot

A Fond Farewell

We all wish Carol Collins the absolute best in her retirement. We are grateful for the many years of service and will continue to build on the strong foundation she created. We all hope that Carol and her family will enjoy every relaxing minute that the future brings!
DCFS STAFF PHOTO CONTEST!
Can you guess who’s in this photo?

The DCFS Newsletter is soliciting photographs for our May 2011 issue. In recognition of Foster Care Month and the Department’s commitment to Youth Permanency for teens, we are requesting that interested staff submit one photo of themselves as a youth between the ages of 9-17. The photos can be individual shots or photographs with their family.

All staff submitting photographs will be asked to sign a photo release prior to publication of the newsletter. A grand prize will go to the first staff to correctly identify all staff featured in the next newsletter.

Photographs must be submitted by email, and be received by April 1, 2011. Please email photographs to: junifx@acgov.org.

Email photographs to: junifx@acgov.org
Dependency Investigations CWW Aaron Leavy could not have imagined that a casual conversation with his neighbor last year could have resulted in Alameda County’s foster children receiving two large donations of new clothing from OLD NAVY.

In early 2010, Aaron’s neighbor, Jennifer, an OLD NAVY corporate staff person, asked Aaron about his work with children. Aaron explained the awesome work of DCFS, including the continuum of services the Department provides to children and their families. It was just a simple conversation and Aaron was happy to be able to share one of his passions. Jennifer mentioned that OLD NAVY traditionally donates “a ton” of new clothing to various companies that actually end up re-selling the goods and use the money for programs that they support. Aaron explained that the Department of Children and Family Services could definitely utilize donated new clothing and the clothing would NOT be sold—it would go directly to the children and families who need it most.

Jennifer was very interested in helping the Department and from that point forward, she diligently worked with the appropriate corporate executive staff at OLD NAVY to get the authorization to move forward with the donation. The Department received the first donation in August 2010. Aaron and Department staff sorted the clothing and delivered it to the Assessment Center. Aaron was hopeful for a second donation for the Holiday Season, and he worked with Jennifer to make that happen. In December 2010, the holiday request worked its way up to the Vice President of Global Production & OLD NAVY Outlets in San Francisco who authorized a second, even larger donation! Aaron worked with Jennifer on the logistics and the Department received 27, enormous, fully packed boxes of new clothing that were organized and sorted by staff and delivered to the Assessment Center on January 7, 2011 for immediate distribution. In total, Alameda County received approximately 3,500 articles of new clothing!

Aaron went the extra mile, and his perseverance in procuring new clothing donations is the ultimate example of professional networking, building partnerships and has undoubtedly brought a little extra joy to Alameda County’s children and their families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>What do I do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need to find out information regarding my Foster Child, what will I need?</td>
<td>Before contacting the department be sure to have the child’s name and date of birth available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Payment Received/Payment Issue</td>
<td>Call your assigned Eligibility Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Medi-Cal Card</td>
<td>Call your assigned Eligibility Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is my Eligibility Technician (ET)?</td>
<td>Central Index 268-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no assigned ET</td>
<td>Call 780-8888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is my Child Welfare Worker (CWW)?</td>
<td>Call Central Index 268-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRU Phone Number</td>
<td>Call 780-8888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRU Letter Not Received</td>
<td>Call 268-2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have left messages and the ET has not called.</td>
<td>Call or E-mail the Assigned Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have left messages and the supervisor has not called.</td>
<td>E-mail or call the Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received a notice requesting information, and I don’t understand.</td>
<td>Call your assigned Eligibility Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have concerns regarding the child in my care.</td>
<td>Call your assigned CWW</td>
</tr>
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</table>
A Look at Our County-Licensed Foster Homes

Did you know that our Licensing Unit supervised by Brittany Walker Pettigrew licensed 59 new homes in 2010? Although we lost 34 homes, we currently have 236 licensed foster homes in our county! Foster Parent Orientations are held twice each month on the first Thursday at the Oakland Main Office and on the third Thursday at the Glad Tidings Church in Hayward.

The process for licensing a foster home takes about ninety days. About 60-70% of families become foster parents for the sole purpose of adopting, but end up becoming concurrent planning homes somewhere along the way.

Brittany became the supervisor of the Licensing Unit in March 2010. She believes that the future of recruiting foster homes lies in the philosophies of retaining the foster homes we currently have. “A nationwide statistic is that 95% of potential foster families became interested in fostering because they knew someone who was already a foster parent,” said Brittany when asked what the best advertising method is for recruiting foster parents. Brittany went on to say, “Foster parents are our neighbors, everyday people, who volunteer to take our foster youth and who happen to receive a stipend to help support those youth.”

The Alameda County Foster Parent Association has been a great support for foster families. Tina Hughes, who had been the Association’s President for twenty years, recently retired, and Gwen Evans-McWilliams is now the Association’s President. Ms. Evans-McWilliams has been an Alameda County Foster Parent since 1991! For more information on the Association, please visit their website at http://fosteryouthalliance.org/?point_of_contact=alameda-county-foster-parent-association.

If you know of anyone who is interested in becoming a foster parent, encourage them to contact the Foster Parent Hotline at (510) 259-3575, or they can visit our website at www.pathwaytohome.org.

Our Licensing Unit, from left: CWS Brittany Walker Pettigrew, Theresa Johnson, Katie Luangrath, Shelley Siegel, Pamela Ng, Manny Velez, and Juan Lemus. Not pictured: Katherine Richard

For more information about becoming a foster parent, please visit www.pathwaytohome.org

Alameda County Office of Education
Foster Youth Services Expands its Mentor Program to serve Transition Age (15-18) Foster Youth

With the support of DCFS, Alameda County Office of Education’s Foster Youth Services is expanding its Mentor Program. Three new Mentors are joining the program and will be working with transition age (15-18) foster youth specifically. This addition is very exciting because it means that 75 or more new foster youth will be served in the program.

To date, the Mentor Program serves a range of school age foster youth that receive one-on-one support from an Education Mentor. Foster youth meet once a week or more with an Education Mentor and discuss their educational goals, set a plan for academic achievement and track their progress throughout the school year. The Education Mentor is also available to talk with school staff, caregivers, Child Welfare Workers and advocate for the youth when needed.

Child Welfare Workers are encouraged to refer transition age (15-18) foster youth to the Mentor Program now. Please contact Foster Youth Services at 670-7750 for referrals and more information.
In 2010, Assembly Bill 12 (AB12) was approved to authorize California to extend foster care services to youth up to age 21. The legislation also authorizes federal funding to be used for this new group of Non Minor Dependents (the individuals, ages 18-21, covered by the bill) according to specific eligibility criteria. The expectation is that Non Minor Dependents will be given the opportunity to receive case management and supervised independent living while taking incremental responsibility for their life as a young adult. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), along with a host of stakeholders, are charged with the task of developing standards, regulations and the rate structure before the January 1, 2012 implementation deadline. This means that only those Non Minor Dependents who are between 18 and 21 on January 1, 2012, and meeting other eligibility requirements, are included in the extension of foster care and the associated federal funding.

A statewide informational meeting was recently held in Sacramento to educate California child welfare stakeholders and others about the proposed implementation structure for AB 12. CDSS shared their proposed three tier implementation structure, outlined below.

**TIER 1: AB 12 STEERING COMMITTEE:**

- **Composition:** This group consists of the nine AB 12 sponsoring organizations, all stakeholders identified in AB 12, legislative staff, CDSS leadership and other stakeholders, such as tribal representatives, youth and caregivers.

- **Purpose:** To (1) articulate the AB 12 vision and core values (2) ensure alignment with vision and values through quarterly meetings with the Coordinating Leadership Team and Focus Area Leads (3) identify subject matter experts for focus area teams (4) provide input on drafts of policies (5) review policy drafts with constituents and (6) advise and assist in public education and dissemination among stakeholders.

**TIER 2: COORDINATING LEADERSHIP TEAM:**

- **Composition:** The Coordinating Leadership Team consists of the public agencies legislatively charged with implementation of AB 12: CDSS, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the County Welfare Director’s Association (CWDA) and the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC).

- **Purpose:** To (1) be responsible and accountable for implementation (2) ensure alignment with vision and values (3) coordinate with other affected public agencies (4) ensure alignment and coordination across five focus areas and (5) review policy drafts with stakeholder organizations and constituents.

**TIER 3: FOCUS AREA TEAMS:**

CDSS and AOC outlined five focus area teams. Each will be led by a different division within CDSS or the AOC, with specific AB 12 sponsor organization as a lead collaborator for each focus area team. The focus teams will consist of the following content areas:

1. **Placement & Program:**
   - Topics to be addressed: ILP, Case Planning, New Placement Options, Licensing

2. **Eligibility, Rates and Placements:**
   - Topics to be addressed: THP-Plus Foster Care, Case Plan Amendment

3. **Training and Informing:**
   - Topics to be addressed: Communication with counties, caregivers, providers, youth, public and the media

4. **Administration and Fiscal:**
   - Topics to be addressed: Aid codes, Claiming, Allocations, Caseload, IV-E Allowability

5. **Rules of Court:**
   - Topics to be addressed: Administration, practices and processes, “Not inconsistent with statute” areas

Alameda County Children and Family Services staff are actively involved in this process and will be participating in many of the outlined focus areas. In addition, our department is in conversation with the local advocate and provider community and will be establishing implementation meetings locally, once State discussions begin to provide details as to how AB12 will be implemented.

Stay tuned for more information about AB12.
Continuity of Child Welfare Services
The Vertical (FR-FM) Case Management Pilot Project

One of the Department of Children and Family Services’ (DCFS) Waiver Reinvestment strategies includes a Vertical Case Management Pilot Project, which began in October 2009. The project consists of a child welfare unit, under Child Welfare Supervisor Naima Hart, housed in the Family Reunification (FR) Section. There are currently 6 Child Welfare Workers in the unit. They each carry a caseload of 15 children. The unit provides Family Reunification services to children and families when they are placed in out-of-home care, with a goal of reunification. In cases where children are successfully returned home, the same worker keeps the case and transitions with the family, providing Family Maintenance services with continuity and ongoing support. The Pilot Project’s overarching goals are to:

- Maintain continuity of child welfare support for families to improve permanency outcomes
- Establish vertical case management and relationship based child welfare services as a best practice model for DCFS by demonstrating improved worker and client satisfaction

The Vertical Case Management Pilot Project is being evaluated by the Agency’s Program Evaluation and Research Department to measure its effectiveness. Some of the research questions include:

- Are there differences in type, quantity and intensity of child welfare contact, visitation, or use of other services, including secondary units and contracted services, to address case plan goals for children and families with workers in the Vertical Case Management unit compared to other FR units?
- What are the permanency outcomes for children served by the FR/FM Vertical Case Management Unit compared to children served by other FR units in regard to:
  - Time to reunification
  - Type of exit from foster care
  - Re-entry following reunification
- What differences, if any, are there in worker satisfaction in the Vertical Case Management unit compared to other FR units?
- What differences are there in client satisfaction for families with a worker in the Vertical Case Management unit compared to other FR units?
- What are the costs associated with the vertical case management model and are there any savings resulting from observed reduction in placement rates?

Data regarding these outcomes will be shared as it comes available.

The Family Center

(continued from front page)

- OBSERVED VISITATION (OV)

Observed visitation services include staffing by a Family Center Support Counselor, who periodically observes families. Families plan and structure their own visit as outlined in their Family Center Visitation Plan. The Support Counselor is available to brainstorm activities, provide feedback and guidance to families, answer questions, and debrief after the session.

The Family Center will offer additional services, including:

- Safe Exchange: When parents or caregivers require a safe place to exchange their child for visits
- Transportation: Limited transportation services will be available under specific circumstances.

Visitation at Alameda County Social Services Agency offices, supervised by child welfare staff will continue to be an option for children and families. This visitation option may be used for families who need supervised visitation and/or for families who prefer to have visitation in an Agency office. Families who require on-site security must use this option.

In January, trainings were provided to staff by Rose Wentz, a national expert on family visitation. Ms. Wentz’s trainings focused on best practices for planned, progressive, purposeful visitation. Ms. Wentz’ visitation model holds that the primary purpose of visits is to meet the child’s developmental and attachment needs. The secondary purposes of visits are to assess a parent’s ability to safely parent their child and to determine the final permanent plan for the child. The type of maltreatment, the time in care, family culture, and other factors are considered on a case by case basis.

Ongoing trainings on visitation will be offered to staff, caregivers, and community partners throughout the year. Policies and Procedures for use of The Family Center, including an overview of the referral process will be provided to staff on the Department’s OPG website. Information on The Family Center opening and rollout will be shared with staff in the upcoming weeks.
Preparing for a Natural Disaster

It is important that we are prepared for a natural disaster, given that our region is earthquake prone. There are many websites that have a wealth of information about preparing for a disaster, what to do after a disaster occurs, and more.

- American Red Cross: disaster preparation, training, etc. - http://www.redcross.org/
- CARD (Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters): provides emergency preparedness and disaster response resources for nonprofits, faith organizations, and community agencies serving vulnerable residents - http://cardcanhelp.org/
- Alameda County: local information and preparedness resources - http://www.acgov.org/emergency.htm
- The Association of Bay Area Governments - http://quake.abag.ca.gov/residents/

The first 72 hours after an earthquake are critical. Electricity, gas, water, and telephones may not be working. In addition, public safety services such as police and fire departments will be busy handling serious crises. You should be prepared to be self-sufficient—able to live without running water, electricity and/or gas, and telephones—for at least three days following a quake. (California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, 2011) - http://www.oes.ca.gov/

Just one of the ways to prepare for a disaster is to have a basic emergency supply kit on hand. The Red Cross recommends that, at a minimum, everyone have these basic supplies in an easy-to-carry emergency preparedness kit that you can use at home or take with you in case you must evacuate.

- Water—one gallon per person, per day (three-day supply for evacuation, two-week supply for home)
- Food—non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items (three-day supply for evacuation, two-week supply for home)
- Flashlight
- Battery powered or hand crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Map(s) of the area

FOR CAREGIVERS OF FOSTER CHILDREN

In the event of a natural disaster, staff from Alameda DCFS will contact you to check on the well-being of the foster child in your care. This is a part of the Department’s Business Recovery Plan. The plan maintains other critical service functions in the event of a disaster, such as receiving and responding to calls made to the County’s Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. We all have the responsibility to prepare as best we can for a disaster.