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## *Season's Greetings*



**With the joy of remembering the happiness of children at play, we wish you a wonderful year.**

# National Adoption Day 2010: A great success!

On Friday, November 19, six courthouses across the state joined Governor Deval Patrick, the Department of Children and Families, the Massachusetts Trial Court's Juvenile Court Department and the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange in finalizing 148 adoptions of children from foster care as part of a statewide celebration of National Adoption Day.

This year marked Massachusetts' eighth celebration of annual National Adoption Day and will bring the total number of children adopted on this day to 1,432. Every November, dozens of judges, attorneys, adoption professionals and child advocates volunteer their time to finalize adoptions and celebrate all of the families who adopt. On National Adoption Day, they celebrated 116 families who adopted 149 children, including some with disabilities and serious medical needs and sibling groups ranging in age from infants to adolescents.

Adoptions were finalized today in:

- **Boston** (Edward W. Brooke Courthouse): **38 children** were adopted by 29 families
- **Brockton** (George N. Covett Courthouse): **24 children** were adopted by 21 families
- **Hadley** (Franklin/Hampshire Juvenile Court): **19 children** were adopted by 15 families
- **Salem** (Essex County Juvenile Court): **10 children** were adopted by 7 families
- **Springfield** (Hampden County Juvenile Court): **18 children** were adopted by 13 families
- **Worcester** (Worcester Trial Court): **40 children** were adopted by 31 families. [[top](#)]

## DCF birth parent to be awarded national honor for service, leadership and dedication



DCF birth parent John G.C. Laing Jr., will be awarded the 2010 Casey Excellence for Children Award as part of the Ruth Massinga Awards, sponsored by Casey Family Programs. John will be presented this honor for his distinguished professional work, exceptional

leadership, and relentless dedication to his work as a birth parent. The award for birth parents is presented to those who have been reunited with his or her child after the child was placed in foster care and has given service on behalf of his or her own family and other birth families who need support seeking reunification with their own children. This person must also have demonstrated leadership in working to improve the child welfare system.

Ruth Massinga is the retired president and chief executive officer of Casey Family Programs and retired chair of the Marguerite Casey Foundation

board. Both Seattle-based private foundations are committed to supporting children, youth and families in reaching their full potential. Each foundation focuses on children in, or at risk of entering, the nation's child welfare systems. Ms. Massinga also was co-chair of the initial board of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a St. Louis-based private nonprofit focused on assisting youth to successfully transition from foster care to adulthood.

John serves as an invaluable member of DCF's senior staff, providing insight and advocacy on behalf of the families DCF serves. His tireless efforts have profoundly impacted case practice throughout the agency, ensuring the family voice is included in decision making at all levels of the organization. John is a mentor to all fathers, and has helped the agency to bolster our fatherhood engagement initiatives to ensure fathers remain connected with their children. We are incredibly lucky to have John as part of our team. Congratulations, John! [[top](#)]

## Worcester West area office participates in child traumatic stress breakthrough series

The Worcester West area office has partnered with LUK, Inc.'s Child Trauma Center to participate in a Breakthrough Series Collaboration (BSC) sponsored by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). Massachusetts is one of nine states selected to participate in this national BSC. The focus of the BSC is: "Using Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice to Improve Placement Stability". The five themes of the BSC are: Knowledge Building and Developing Practice; Trauma-Informed Mental Health Assessment; Case Planning and

Management; Externally Delivered Trauma-Informed Services; and Child Welfare Systems, Cross-Systems Partnerships, and System Collaboration". The primary goal for the Worcester West Area Office is to become a more trauma-informed child welfare office through training the staff and foster parents on the impact of trauma on children and how we may mitigate this trauma to improve placement stability. Staff will become familiar with trauma assessment tools and evidence-based trauma treatment. A target population has been

identified and the core team made up of staff from LUK and the Worcester West Area Office has been established and has begun to implement a series of small changes known as PDSAs. Donna Jerszyk-Hollis, Director of the Worcester East and Worcester West Area Offices, is the day to day manager and Olga Roche and Jan Nisenbaum, Deputy Commissioners, are the senior leaders. For more information about trauma informed practices, go to [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org). [[top](#)]

## DCF loses former Assistant Commissioner and Community Advocate

We learned that Pam Whitney, former DCF Assistant Commissioner and Community Advocate passed away from complications related to leukemia in early November. Many across the agency and it's provider community who knew Pam, knew her passionate dedication to DCF. Pam sought connections, throughout the agency and with the larger community by a shared commitment to children and families impacted by domestic violence and poverty. Joan Stiles, a community support manager for DCF said in Pam's Boston Globe obituary, "she believed in the possibility of change and got others to believe in that possibility. Pam had a gift for working inside the

system and yet fostering change. She had an incredible warmth and an incredible sense of humor and an ability to bond with people." Pam was a strong advocate who supported and worked towards strengthening the department's community connected practices. She was instrumental in the design and development of the Community Connections Coalitions, and understood the importance of supporting the voice of family and community representatives in the agency's work. Pam will forever be remembered by the Department.[top]



## ICPM Corner

### Engaging fathers through ICPM

Just like mothers, fathers play a critical role in their child's development and their involvement can bring important immediate and lifelong benefits. For children involved with DCF, fathers may also provide a gateway to a kin network that can be a key resource.

The Department's implementation of the Integrated Casework Practice Model (ICPM) provides us with an opportunity to work with and engage families in a more strength based and empowering manner. Depending on the unique circumstances of each family, there are different ways to work with fathers. The Department is legally required to identify and locate fathers, whether they live with their children or not. Unless there is a concern about safety – for family members, children or DCF staff – regulations and policy require DCF to work with both parents in all phases of case practice, including parents who are out of the home.

#### What Research Tells Us

Research shows that when fathers (including out of home fathers) are involved with their children in a positive, nurturing, safe and consistent way, there are lifelong benefits to children. Fathers' contributions to children's well being are somewhat different from mothers', and are measurable.

When fathers are engaged:

- Younger children display increased exploration of the world around them, greater tolerance to stress and frustration, and more willingness to try new things. (Pruett, 2000)
- Older children have higher educational achievement and better health outcomes, and lower frequency of disruptive behavior, depression, sadness and lying. (Goldstine, 1982; Nord & West, 2001)
- Fathers' healthy play with children and use of reasonable discipline has long-term benefits for children. (Lamb, 2002; Parke, 1996; Parke et al, 2002)

When out of home fathers are consistently involved with children:

- Children in foster care return to kin care more often, foster care stays are shorter, and fewer abuse/neglect allegations ensue. (Malm et al, 2008)
- Delinquent behaviors lessen proportionately to how much time out of home fathers spend with teens. (Coley & Medeiros, 2007)

### Some Tips for Engaging Fathers

**Use positive fatherhood engagement approaches.** Remind fathers that they are important to their children and that there are some things that only they can do for their children. Share information and research about how fathers can have a positive impact on children.

**Take a strength-based approach.** Make it a routine practice to inquire about and identify his strengths, such as a positive vision of how he wants his children to look at him as a father.

**Fathers are all different – and our approach needs to be too.** Identify and assess strengths and risks and work with fathers in different ways depending upon their unique circumstances. For example, with greater strengths and low risks, we can focus on supporting fathering; with higher risks, we can focus on programming to address risks and promote safety. When talking about risks they may pose focus on behaviors that may be of concern instead of assigning labels to them as individuals.

**Father-specific services are best.** Responsible Fatherhood groups can be a great starting point and can serve as a gateway to referrals for other services that are geared specifically for dads including substance abuse treatment, counseling, attention to PTSD & trauma, batterer intervention programs, and vocational assistance. Become familiar with father specific services in your area so referrals can be quick and easy when appropriate and needed. Ten DCF Area Offices currently have onsite or closely affiliated Responsible Fatherhood groups: Holyoke, Hyde Park, Lynn, Malden, New Bedford, Park St., Plymouth, South Central, Salem and Worcester.

### Engaging Out of Home Fathers

Approximately one-half to two-thirds of fathers in DCF involved families are out of the home. A routine practice of identifying and locating these fathers is essential. This step is the initiation of a process that will allow an assessment of the father's situation and strengths, and then a decision can be made about the best way to work with him in the interest of his children. Working with mothers is also critical to effectively, and safely engage out of home fathers. [top]

# A Dad Can



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## FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Supporting Children • Strengthening Families

[www.mass.gov/dcf](http://www.mass.gov/dcf) • 1.800.KIDS.508

Are you interested in learning more about the National Youth in Transition Survey or the DCF Health and Medical Services unit? Visit [www.mass.gov/dcf](http://www.mass.gov/dcf) for more information

## 2010 child/youth related legislation

Over the past several months, the Governor has signed a number of new laws that will affect the agency's case practice.

**Harassment Prevention** – The first of these laws allows for a court to issue a Harassment Prevention Order. This law, effective as of May 10, 2010, allows a court to issue an order to any individual under certain circumstances. Should a child on a DCF caseload be served with one of these orders or if a social worker wants to obtain one for a child on their caseload, they should contact their local legal department.

**Anti-Bullying** – Also in May, anti-bullying legislation went into effect. This law defined bullying to include any type of communication or physical act or gesture or combination that is directed at a person that either causes harm or places the person in reasonable fear of harm or creates a hostile environment at school or substantially and materially disrupts the education process at school. Every school system must, by December 31st have an anti-bullying plan. The statute also requires the reporting of bullying to the principal at the school. The law also requires that if a child is identified as vulnerable to bullying and the child has an IEP, then the IEP must address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to the bullying and/or harassment.

**Persons With Intellectual Disabilities** – Effective November 3rd of this year, the term “mentally retarded person” was removed from the laws of the Commonwealth and replaced with the term “persons with an intellectual disability”. On the same date, the law changed to allow for LICSW to issue applications for emergency hospitalization for an individual who is believed to be a danger to herself or others. DCF social workers should not, in their role as a DCF social worker complete such an application.

**Transition Age Youth** – The Commonwealth enacted legislation which strengthens the Department's existing commitment to young adults by requiring annual permanency hearings for any young adult ages 18 to 22 who remain in DCF placement beginning January 3, 2011. For those young adults that turned 18 prior to January 3, 2011 and are continuing in DCF placement, the legal department will be working with the Juvenile and Probate Courts to obtain dates for Permanency Hearings. Also, the statute requires that a Foster Care Review also occur for these individuals. At both the Permanency Hearing and the Foster Care Review, the young adult should be encouraged to attend and participate. [top]

## DCF Kids Fund works to ensure every child in care has a happy holiday



The DCF Kids Fund has been busy helping to ensure that every child will have a holiday to look forward to and enjoy.

We are working with more than 200 companies who are purchasing gifts of clothing and toys for specific children.

A number of book publishers and groups in Boston and New York have donated over 15,000 books for children and teens which they can

enjoy at the holidays and cherish throughout the year. Other companies and groups are donating gifts cards so teens can experience the joy of choosing something they like on their own.

The DCF Kids Fund has received many generous monetary donations that will make it possible for us to apply about \$100,000 to purchase gifts for children and teens throughout the state that have not been sponsored by a specific company. Additionally, the Department is working with the

Marines' Toys for Tots program in all four regions who are donating gifts for our children across the state. The work will not end. We will keep going full steam until December 24th so that this is the best season yet!

### Are you interested in making a donation?

Please contact Saf Caruso, Executive Director of the DCF Kids Fund at:

[Saf.Lerman-Caruso@state.ma.us](mailto:Saf.Lerman-Caruso@state.ma.us) [top]

## 2010 DCF memories and highlights

### Foster Parent Recognition Awards Brunch, May 2010



Eleanor and Tom Killeen, 2010 Goldie Rogers Award winners.



Diane and Mark Hall celebrated at the Sheraton Tara in Framingham.

### Adoption Option at Jordan's Furniture



Record number of Massachusetts residents attended a fall Adoption Option in Reading to learn about the process to become adoptive parents, and to meet waiting children and talk with social workers.



### 2010 Youth Achievement Celebration at Jordan's Furniture for grads in May



Commissioner McClain greeted Governor Patrick with Eliot Tattleman at a party for DCF 2010 grads.



Teens gathered in the IMAX movie theater for a private showing of "Iron Man 2".

### Plus One recruitment event for new foster parents



The Plus One event drew foster families from across the state.



Commissioner McClain.

### National Adoption Day, November 19, 2010



Governor Patrick greeted adoptee in Boston.



Commissioner McClain helps occupied brothers waiting for their big moment.



National Adoption Day, good reason to get dressed up and twirl! (composite photo)

### Jordan's Furniture celebrated adoption in Enchanted Village



Everyone joined in the fun with pre-adoptive and adoptive families at a private showing of the Enchanted Village in Avon.

### NE Breakthrough Series on Safety and Risk Assessment



Collaborative teams from member agencies from New England states participated in work groups to develop effective services for children and families, April 2010.

### DCF Performance Recognition Awards 2010



Fifty-two exemplary DCF employees were recognized for their outstanding work in February 2010.