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Happy New Year

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

2009: A Year in Review

Happy New Year! As we begin this new decade, we wanted to briefly reflect on the agency's most notable achievements during 2009.

These accomplishments are a reminder that when we work together, children and families are the ones that benefit the most.

Safety

■ Improved Safety Net for Children and Families



In January, with the assistance and feedback from staff, community

partners and family members, the Department completed its strategic planning process resulting in the development of an Integrated Casework Practice Model (ICPM). The model integrates nationally recognized child welfare practices, incorporates an approach to strengthening families, and includes family voice in service planning.

The Department commissioned the Center for Support of Families (CSF) from Maryland to conduct an independent review of the Department's case practice. CSF presented the final report to the Department in December 2008. In its findings, CSF identified 18 practices that reflected solid case practice and identified 22 opportunities for DCF to strengthen its clinical practice. Greater than 80% of CSF's 22 recommendations were addressed through implementation of the DCF strategic plan.

■ Increased Public Awareness of Domestic Violence



In May 2009, DCF awarded Jane Doe Inc. a grant to bring the Domestic Violence Prevention Public Service Announcement

(PSA) featuring First Lady Diane Patrick to movie theaters throughout Massachusetts. This project brought the important domestic violence awareness message to tens of thousands of people across the Commonwealth.

■ Restraint Reduction

Alongside the Departments of Mental Health, Youth Services, Elementary and Secondary Education and Early Education and Care, DCF spearheaded an initiative to support efforts by congregate care providers to prevent the use of behavioral support procedures that can be re-traumatizing to youth, particularly restraint and seclusion.

The initiative has brought together residential program managers, child advocates, providers and state agencies with the financial and consultative support of Casey Family Programs.

Permanency

■ Enhanced Timeliness to Adoption and Reunification

In FY2009, DCF met the national standard (36.6%) and exceeded the agency target (35.3%) established for the number of children adopted within 24-months of their entry into care. This represents a 48.2% increase in performance since March 2007, when the agency's performance was 24.7%.

The National Standard for reunification of children who have been in out-of-home placement within 12 months is 75.2%. DCF exceeded this standard, reunifying 77.1% of children during this time period.

Well-Being

■ Better Transition Planning for Children in Acute Psychiatric Hospitals

Of considerable significance, we were able to solve what was once considered the intractable psychiatric hospitalization stuck case problem — achieving a 66% reduction in "stuck" kids. Not only have we achieved this reduction, we have also continued our focus and been able to maintain the reduction.

■ Affirmed Rights for Foster Children



The Department's Youth Advisory Board presented Commissioner McClain and the DCF statewide management team with the first Foster Child Bill of Rights. These rights are

intended to guide the Department and its providers in the delivery of care and services to foster youth with the commitment to permanency, safety and well being. Commissioner McClain and the youth members of the Board signed the Bill of Rights at a statewide management meeting as acceptance and commitment by the Department to ensure that the rights are incorporated into daily practice.

■ Unprecedented Academic Success



In June 2009, the Department celebrated the academic achievement of more than 600 youth

who completed their high school education, GED, vocational training or college education. This was the highest number of graduates ever recorded by the agency. Jordan's Furniture held a wonderful event to celebrate the achievement of these youth. [[more](#)]

■ Provided a Happy Holiday to our Children through the Kids Fund' Support



The DCF Kids Fund experienced one of its most successful years yet, thanks to the wonderful donors; some who have given to the Fund for many years, some who have given for the first time.

Just in time for the cold weather, the Kids Fund allocated more than \$38,000 to purchase coats for over 1,500 children who did not have the appropriate winter wear.

In spite of the difficult economy, over 230 companies and the Marines Toys for Tots joined with the Kids Fund to ensure that the 45,000 children we serve were able to enjoy the holiday season. EMC Corporation sponsored 1,000 children, Baystate Financial Services sponsored 500 children, Thomson Reuters sponsored 300 children, Borders at Downtown Crossing donated over \$25,000 worth of books, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company donated 3.5 skids of books! WTAG in the Central Region hosted its Christmas for Children Pledge Day to raise funds to support our children. In addition, the DCF Kids Fund allocated \$45,000 to purchase gift cards for teenagers who were not sponsored and \$30,000 to purchase gifts for younger children. Area Offices attested that every child would receive a gift this holiday season. The kindness and generosity of so many organizations was a gift to the children and us all.

Community Connected

■ Greater Community Engagement

The Department celebrated the involvement of family voice at the senior levels of the organization with family members joining senior staff and the statewide management team. The addition of these individuals has been invaluable to the agency; their advice has provided the Department with a broader perspective and has informed the direction the Department is headed.

The Department implemented a Statewide Advisory Council consisting of community partners, parents and providers, and launched Area Boards with a similar, more local composition, across the state.

The Department also completed its third annual regional forums which allowed DCF Central, Regional and Area leadership to hear directly from staff, providers, stakeholders, youth, and family members about their experiences with the Department. This is the first year that there has been a portion of the day designed to hear from the community and family members. The feedback is important and will be incorporated into the Department's future planning and decision making.

Effective Leadership

■ Approved Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

On October 23rd, the Department was notified by the Children's Bureau that our federal Performance Improvement Plan was approved — given the Children's Bureau historically high standards for approving any state's improvement plan; this was quite an accomplishment for Massachusetts! For the first time, the Department was successful in meeting four of six federally defined outcomes as part of a federal improvement plan to strengthen our child protective practices.

■ Effective Budget Management

Although these have been trying financial times, the Department was able to responsibly manage the FY2010 budget and preserve funding to meet our core mandate to protect children and families. Together we have been able to maintain foster care rates, services to youth as they transition into adulthood, and community based services for and safely maintaining children in their homes.

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Implementation of Agency Diversity Plan

Effective October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011, the Department has designed a Diversity Plan that includes strategies and measures intended to achieve the following goals:

- Fully integrate diversity and cultural competence work into the DCF management structure through Diversity Leadership Teams and the Diversity Leadership Committee.
- Focus attention on ethnic groups that often are not at the forefront of diversity discussions such as: Southeast Asian and Native American/American Indians.

- Increase the agency's capacity to provide culturally competent and accessible services to families and children.
- Continue to reduce disparity in outcomes for children and families of color involved with DCF.
- Increase DCF staff diversity at all levels through recruitment, improved retention, and promotional opportunities.

Many of these goals include efforts that are already underway at the Department. [\[top \]](#)

Grandparent's Commission Issues Resource Guide

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren recently released the Grandparent Resource Guide, now available on the Executive Office of Elder Affairs' website: www.mass.gov/elder. This guide is intended to assist grand-parents and other kinship caregivers in locating and obtaining needed resources. If you have questions regarding the guide or the resources included, or how the guide pertains to DCF, please contact Manuela Dacosta at: Manuela.Dacosta@state.ma.us [\[top \]](#)

Coastal Worker Clues in Santa

In the spirit of the holiday season, we wanted to share the work of Elaine Thurberg, a Family Resource Worker in our Coastal Area Office. In an effort to ensure that Santa Claus and his reindeer knew where children who had recently been displaced from their homes were living, Elaine came up with the idea of having her daughter's Brownie Troop 80937 from Holbrook leave Santa Claus and his reindeer a clue about where these children would be. The Brownie's filled small bags of reindeer food which were then brought to a party organized by the South Shore Children's Fund for DCF foster children and given to them to keep for Christmas.

The children also received wrapped gifts and toys at the party.

To read more about Elaine's work and the South Shore Children's Fund holiday party, please see: <http://www.wickedlocal.com/holbrook/news/x304323423/Brownie-Troop-in-Holbrook-helps-Santa-not-to-forget>

Thank you Elaine, and to all of your colleagues for making this another joyous holiday season for children in our care. [\[top \]](#)



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