



Board of Directors Meeting

July 9, 2009

Information Item

Child Welfare Advocacy Update

Item IV.F.

Recommended Action:	Information Only
Issue:	Child Welfare System Update
Program:	Child Welfare Advocacy
Budget Impact:	NA
Strategic Plan Goal:	Child Maltreatment

Psychotropic Medication Update

An investigative panel appointed by Department of Children and Families Secretary George Sheldon continues to investigate the circumstances which led to the death of a young foster child on prescribed psychotropic medication. The panel was instructed to conduct a full inquiry into the events that led up to the boy's death, including case management, judicial decisions, and the contributing effects that psychotropic medications had; reviewing all children currently taking medications.

An article in the Miami Herald on June 18th reported that a recent state review of more than 100 foster care children receiving psychiatric drugs revealed that child welfare administrators had ignored the rules implemented in 2005 to protect the children. Two additional issues identified were the high number of children/youth on prescribed psychotropic medications, and the lack of coordination between caretakers and staff within the foster care system

Eckerd Community Alternatives (ECA) has developed a Circuit 6 Psychotropic Medication Action Plan that includes objectives, action steps, staff responsible and due dates (see attached plan).

Following are the plan objectives:

- 1) Develop a tracking system to ensure that any child prescribed psychotropic medication who is receiving case management supervision within Circuit 6 can be appropriately identified
- 2) Ensure that all children prescribed psychotropic medication have the statutorily required documentation in the case record
- 3) Ensure that all children on prescribed psychotropic medications are appropriately managed by the Lead Agency, to include medication management activities occurring no less than every 90 days.

A discussion of psychotropic medication will be an agenda item for the July 13, 2009, Community Alliance Meeting.

Infant Mental Health

The Pinellas County Early Childhood Mental Health Committee of the Early Learning Coalition is sponsoring an *Infant Mental Health: Foundations of Early Social and Emotional Development Birth to 3* training and community action planning event on July 31, 2009, at All Children's Hospital Education Conference Center. The JWB Child Welfare Advocacy Office and the Training Department are working with the committee to assist with the planning and coordination of the event.

In preparation for the afternoon Community Action Planning session the committee is in the process of identifying infant mental health resources in the community to enable further assessment of the capacity in our community for meeting infant mental health needs. A provider resource list identifying all resource agencies will be developed for distribution. Participants of the Infant Mental Health training will receive a quick reference guide identifying the key agencies, ages served and the contact information.

Prevention Summit

The Manager of Child Welfare Advocacy was invited to participate in the Department of Children and Families Prevention Summit with representatives from local Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Planning Teams from across the state. The summit was designed to equip local planning teams with strategies and tools to implement the local 18-month plan and assist with the development of the 5 year Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan. The focus of the summit was primary and secondary prevention efforts with a concentration on evidence-based strategies that strengthen families and communities.

The local circuit plan and update is intended to serve four major purposes:

- 1) Provide an integrated approach to guide efforts in the circuit to strengthen Florida's families, creating a better environment for children
- 2) Focus on child maltreatment prevention efforts to focus on preventing abuse, abandonment and neglect before they occur.
- 3) The local circuit plan of action along with all the other circuit plans from around the state will form the basis for the statewide plan being developed by the Governor's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council, which is due to the Governor and the Legislature on June 30, 2010.
- 4) The plan will provide structure for monitoring and reporting progress toward meeting the plan and goals.

A sub-group of the local planning team is currently meeting to identify the process for quarterly monitoring of the Prevention and Permanency Plan for January 2009-June 2010 as well as the development of goals and objectives for the 5 year plan.

Domestic Violence Inter-Agency Agreement Update

The Domestic Violence Inter-Agency Working Agreement was originally signed in 2005 to help front-line staff from various parts of the system work together on shared cases within existing confidentiality laws and policies. The Manager of Child Welfare Advocacy has worked with the Chair of the Domestic Violence Task Force to convene and facilitate the review and updating of the Domestic Violence Inter-Agency Agreement. A final draft has been distributed to the parties of the agreement. The group is working with the JWB Child Welfare Advocacy Office and Communications Department to plan a formal signing event in late July 2009, to execute the agreement and recognize the commitment and partnership we have in Pinellas County when child abuse and domestic violence are present.