PATH ND Awarded Contract to Coordinate Chafee Independent Living Program for Foster Youth

The N.D. Department of Human Services Children and Family Services Division has recently awarded a contract to PATH ND to coordinate the Chafee Independent Living Program, which provides services and support to foster care youth who are transitioning out of foster care into independence.

Chafee Independent Living coordinators from PATH ND will assist eligible foster youth and foster care alumni ages 16 to 21 to build personal skills in crisis management, meal preparation, and money management. They will also help youth set goals towards education and employment, while locating housing and other resources. PATH ND has hired seven Chafee Independent Living coordinators to meet the needs of foster youth across the state.

“We are pleased to be working with PATH ND who share the same goals of providing quality services and support to meet the needs of young people in foster care, so they can successfully transition to living independently,” said Tara Muhlhauser, the department’s Children and Family Services Division director.

PATH ND was awarded the contract through a formal request for proposal process. They have provided personalized treatment of foster care and family-based services for children and families throughout the state since 1994.

For more information on program eligibility for the Chafee Independent Living Program, go online to www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/fostercare/chafee.html, or call 701-328-2316, or ND Relay TTY 1-800-366-6888. (Chafee continued on page 7)

FROM CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES TRAINING CENTER

Welcome to the first issue of “electronic” Fostering Communications presented by UND Children and Family Services Training Center. The only thing that should change is the fact that you, the readers, will find the newsletter online rather than in your mailbox. The Training Center does not have access to the email addresses of every foster and/or adoptive parent in the state of North Dakota therefore we need to rely on the licensing agencies to forward the notice when a new issue is to be added to our website.

We are asking our readers to help us improve Fostering Communications by offering ideas for articles, format suggestions and we invite you to write personal interest articles. We welcome and encourage reader feedback.
From the State Office

By Kelsey Bless, LCSW
Chafee Independent Living Administrator

18+ Continued Foster Care

Children and Family Services (CFS) is working to create and implement policy to reflect changes in law (SB 2192) that will go into effect on January 1, 2012. SB 2192 was passed with a Senate majority of 41 to 5 and House majority of 63 to 29. This legislation allows foster care youth the opportunity to remain in care between the ages of 18 to 21. This change to North Dakota law is based on the federal law PL 110-351: Fostering Connections. North Dakota has titled this expansion in foster care services, 18+ Continued Care. The goal of 18+ Continued Care is to broaden the range of foster youth that qualify for continuing support and to be able to pay for this continued care with federal Title IV-E reimbursable dollars. Currently, North Dakota offers foster care youth the opportunity to remain in care if they are going to school, but no option to re-enter if they choose to leave care past age 18.

18+ Continued Care programming will allow a foster care youth the opportunity to remain in care if he/she is in school, in a program leading to employment, working 80 hours per month, or has a medical condition/disability which does not allow him/her to work or go to school. In addition, 18+ Continued Care will allow a youth who is discharged from foster care at age 18 or greater a six month window to re-enter foster care if needed. North Dakota is happy to be able to pursue this option for foster care youth, as transitioning to adulthood can be an intimidating time if one is left with limited resources and supports. If you have questions regarding this expansion in services please contact Children and Family Services Foster Care Administrator, Dean Sturm, at 328-1018. (State Office continued on page 7)

National Adoption Month

Build Capacity to Make Lasting Change

November is National Adoption Month, a time to raise awareness about the adoption of children and youth from foster care. This year's initiative focuses on building capacity of adoption professionals to recruit and retain parents for the 107,000 children and youth waiting for permanent families in the U.S. foster care system. View the 2011 National Adoption Month poster as well as other materials on the following website to learn how you can take action all year to benefit children in foster care waiting for permanent families.

http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/nam/index.cfm
The conference that wasn’t. What else can we say about this year’s North Dakota Foster and Adoptive Parent Association’s annual conference? It is unfortunate that the conference had to be canceled, especially because of the related devastation that was inflicted on the city of Minot and its residents. But also, an enormous amount of work had gone into putting together what promised to be an excellent educational opportunity. I want to personally thank everyone who was involved with lining up speakers for the conference. Many of this year’s ideas will be carried over to next year’s conference in Fargo.

Despite the lack of a state conference, the association’s board of directors has met and took action on a number of items that normally would have been handled at the state meeting. Here is a summary of some key items that were addressed at the board’s Oct. 14th meeting:

**Awards** – this year’s social worker of the year is Jennifer Simoneau of Burleigh County Social Service. She was nominated by Scott and Joell Kautzman of Bismarck. We have two scholarship winners this year. They are Eric Burns from Rugby and Vanna Osterroos from Burlington. Eric is going to college at Dakota College in Bottineau and is majoring in criminal justice. Vanna is entering medical school at Ross University on the island of Dominica. Nominations for either of these awards or for foster parents of the year may be submitted at any time and should be directed to Colette Sorenson at davecolette@yahoo.com or Jon Mielke at jcmielke3@bis.midco.net

**Board of Directors** – the association’s bylaws call for the election of a secretary and treasurer in odd numbered years. Given the lack of a members’ meeting this year, the board of directors acted to fill the vacancies. Jim Hooge from Munich agreed to continue on as the association’s treasurer. The association has a prospective secretary and hopes to fill that position shortly. The association’s president and vice president positions will be up for election at next year’s annual meeting. Anyone interested in serving on the board should contact one of the board’s existing members. Here is a list of current board members and related contact information:

- **President** Jon Mielke (Bismarck - 2012)  
  [jcmielke3@bis.midco.net](mailto:jcmielke3@bis.midco.net)
- **Vice President** Keatha McLeod (Horace - 2012)  
  [cloudynd@Q.com](mailto:cloudynd@Q.com)
- **Treasurer** Jim Hooge (Munich - 2013)  
  [jim43hooge@gmail.com](mailto:jim43hooge@gmail.com)
- **Past President** Jim Schnabel (Venturia)  
  [jpmfarma@drtel.net](mailto:jpmfarma@drtel.net)
- **Human Services Rep.** Tara Muhlhauser  
  ND Dept. of Human Services

**Membership** – A portion of the registration fee for each year’s annual conference goes to cover membership fees. Anyone who does not attend the conference may become a member by paying the membership fee (currently $10). Given the lack of an annual conference this year, we could technically be an association with virtually no members. To address this unintended occurrence, the board of directors has moved to waive the annual membership fee for the current year. Anyone who attended the 2010 conference in Grand Forks or who otherwise paid related dues will be considered a member until the 2012 conference in Fargo. Anyone else who would like to become a member should send the $10 fee to Jim Hooge at 8928 88th St. NE, Munich, ND 58352.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again invite association members to become involved with the work of the association. If you would like to be a member of one of the following committees, please contact me and I will put you in touch with the appropriate committee chairperson:

- **Scholarships & Awards**
- **Financial Review**
- **Website**
- **Education/Convention Planning**
- **Legislation**

(President continued on page 5)
FOSTER CARE FOCUS

The following are brief articles taken from a variety of respected resources on the internet that are meant to enhance the knowledge and skills of foster parents, adoption parents and other child welfare professionals. The articles are presented for informational purposes only; their inclusion does not represent an endorsement by the UND Children and Family Services Training Center.

Runaway Youth in Foster Care

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) conducted a research study in 2010 on runaway foster youth to learn why youth run away, what can be done to prevent youth from running away, and where youth go when they leave. As a part of the study, 50 youth who had run away from foster care in the previous 12 months were interviewed. Half were living in Chicago and half in Los Angeles County, and all were between the ages of 14 and 17 years old. The results of these interviews have been published by the National Runaway Switchboard in a short paper. The interviews with runaway foster youth show some consistent findings:

- The two reasons youth gave for running away were wanting to be with family or friends and being unhappy with their current placement.
- Most youth returned to foster care voluntarily because they wanted to go back to school or home or wanted to stay out of trouble.
- A majority of the youth ran away to a friend's house or spent the night at a relative's home.
- Many of the youth felt they needed someone to talk to and that they could not talk to their foster parents.
- Youths felt that caseworkers did not provide enough support and that the caseworkers should have visited more frequently.

This brief, Running Away From Foster Care: Youths' Knowledge and Access of Services, can be downloaded from the NRS website: www.1800runaway.org/assets/1/7/042111_Part_C_Exec_Summary.pdf

The original 2010 report, Why They Run: An In-Depth Look at America's Runaway Youth, can be found on the website: www.1800runaway.org/learn/research/why_they_run

Characteristics of Infants in Foster Care

Infants in out-of-home care are a vulnerable population with needs and challenges that significantly differentiate them from older foster children. A recent study by Chapin Hall explores the unique set of strengths and vulnerabilities that infants in foster care exhibit as a group. The study looks at foster care data from 14 States for the years spanning 2000 to 2008 as well as data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) and existing research on smaller samples of foster infants and toddlers.

Researchers examined key findings across five main domains: incidence of first-time out-of-home placements, duration in care, experiences in care, characteristics, and vulnerability for delayed development. Results indicate the following:

- Children under the age of 1 enter care at a higher rate than older children.
- The youngest infants spend more time in care than older children.
- Like older children, the most common placement for infants is a foster family setting.
- Infants entering care are most likely to be African-American, while older children are most likely to be White.
- Intellectual impairment, mental health issues, and higher levels of stress are more prevalent in the primary caregivers of young infants.
- Prenatal factors heightened by the effects of postnatal trauma (i.e., neglect, abuse and/or caregiver transitions) may produce a "toxic stress" that negatively impacts most areas of development, including emotions, cognitive abilities, and physical health.

Although infants and toddlers in foster care face a number of challenges, the authors conclude that recent research points to promising new developments in the areas of recovery and brain functioning. Early intervention programs, appropriate therapeutic responses, and caregiver training and support can greatly reduce the harmful effects of toxic stress and improve the odds for better cognitive outcomes.

The complete study, Who Are the Infants in Out-of-Home Care? An Epidemiological and Developmental Snapshot, by Fred Wulczyn, Michelle Ernst, and Philip Fisher, is available on the Chapin Hall website: http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/publications/06_08_11_Issue%20Brief_F_1.pdf
**AFCARS Shows Continued Drop in Foster Care Numbers**

In July, the Children's Bureau posted new statistics on the numbers of children involved with the child welfare system. *Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Report #18* provides preliminary estimates for fiscal year (FY) 2010 and indicates that, as of September 30, 2010:

- **There were 408,425 children in foster care.**
- The average age of children in foster care was 9.4 years.
- The largest percentage of children (48 percent) in foster care were in foster family homes, followed by 26 percent in relative family placements.
- The largest percentage of children (51 percent) had reunification with parents or primary caregivers as their placement goal.
- There were 107,011 children waiting to be adopted.
- Of the children in foster care, 41 percent were White, 29 percent were Black, and 21 percent were Hispanic.
- Of the children adopted from foster care that year, 53 percent were adopted by a foster parent and 32 percent were adopted by another relative.

The updated Trends report, which compiles data from FY 2002 through FY 2010, shows that the number of children in foster care dropped during that period from 523,000 in 2002 to 408,000 in 2010 (numbers are rounded). The number of children served by child welfare also has dropped, from 800,000 in 2002 to 662,000 in 2010.

Find the latest AFCARS reports on the Children's Bureau website, [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/index.htm#afcars](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/index.htm#afcars)

**Toolkit: Kinship Care and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008**

This new NRCPFC web-based toolkit discusses the critical kinship care practices addressed in the Fostering Connections Act: notice to relatives, foster care licensing standards, placement with siblings, and family connections grants. The toolkit provides information and links to resources on each of these topics. The toolkit is accompanied by an organizational self study on kinship care, which can be used to review kinship care policies and practices through the lens of the Fostering Connections Act. [http://www.nrcpfc.org/toolkit/kinship/](http://www.nrcpfc.org/toolkit/kinship/)

(President continued from page 3)

A couple months ago I was invited by our pastor to give a temple talk about our foster parenting experiences. As usual during such presentations, I got teary and blubered my way through it. Afterward, a middle-age man with tears in his eyes came up to me. He told me that he had been a foster child and that we had no idea how important we are. So are you. Thank you for all that you do for the foster kids that come into your care.

Before I close, and on behalf of the association’s board of directors and all its members, I want to extend condolences to all the foster parents and social workers who were impacted by this year's floods across North Dakota. We all hope and pray that your lives will return to normal as soon as possible.
NORTH DAKOTA’S CHILDREN 2011


ADOPTION, KINSHIP CARE, AND PERMANENT FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN
• Of the 877 children exiting out-of-home care in North Dakota in 2009, 503 were reunited with their parents or other family members.
• Of the 1,224 children in out-of-home care in 2009, 315 or 25.7% were waiting to be adopted.
• In 2009, approximately 2,663 North Dakota grandparents had primary responsibility caring for their grandchildren.
• Of the 1,224 children in out-of-home care in 2009, 156 were living with relatives while in care.
• Of all North Dakota children in kinship care in 2009, 95 were white, 1 was black, 10 were Hispanic, 24 were American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 26 were other races.

CHILD POVERTY AND INCOME SUPPORT
• The total number of individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in North Dakota decreased from 5,132 in September 2009 to 4,975 in September 2010, a 6.0% decrease. The number of families receiving TANF in September 2010 was 1,995, a 3% decrease from September 2009.
• In 2006, a family of three receiving only TANF and food stamp benefits in North Dakota was at 55% of the federal poverty guideline.
• In 2009, North Dakota spent $27,250,914 in TANF funds, including 31% on basic assistance, 4% on child care, 5% on transportation, and 51% on non-assistance.
• In 2010, North Dakota spent $7,513,762 on the Special Supplement Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), serving 14,621 participants.

NORTH DAKOTA’s Children At a Glance (statistics are for 2008)
State Population………..646,844
Population, Children Under 18…………….142,429
State Poverty Rate………..10.9%
Poverty Rate, Children Under 18……14.4%
Poverty Rate, Children Ages 5–17….13.4%
Poverty Rate, Children Under 5……16.0%

VULNERABLE YOUTH
• In 2009, 98 children aged out of out-of-home care in North Dakota.
• In 2009, 2,000 North Dakota teens ages 16–19 were high school dropouts.
• In 2009, 7% of North Dakota teens ages 16–19 were not enrolled in school and were not working.
• In 2009, 8,000 people ages 18–24 in North Dakota were not enrolled in school, were not working, and had no degree beyond high school.
• In 2008, approximately 2,000 children ages 12–17 in North Dakota needed but had not received treatment for illicit drug use in the past year.
• In 2008, approximately 4,000 children ages 12–17 in North Dakota needed but had not received treatment for alcohol use in the past year.
• In 2007, 12 North Dakota children younger than 20 committed suicide, a rate of 6.64 per 100,000 children.
Chafee Referral Procedure

Custodian will:

a. Communicate with the youth about his/her willingness to participate in Chafee.
b. Complete the referral paperwork
   i. CFCIP Referral Form (CF-1)
   ii. Multi-Agency Release of Information (SFN 970)

Chafee IL Coordinator will:

a. Review referral paperwork (CF-1+ ROI)
b. Determine program eligibility
c. Contact the case manager to notify of youth eligibility
   i. Custodial Case Manager will invite Chafee IL Coordinator to CFT Meetings and make him/her an online team member in FRAME.
d. If the youth is eligible and interested, Chafee IL Coordinator will schedule an appointment to meet with the youth to complete assessments, review the independent living plan created with custodian, add to it, collaborate, etc.

ND Youth Website: Check out the youth resource website at [http://www.nd.gov/ndyouth](http://www.nd.gov/ndyouth)

Chafee Contact Information:
Chafee Independent Living Coordinators located in PATH ND offices statewide:

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<thead>
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<th>Phone</th>
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NDFAPA Executive Board

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Vice President     Keatha McLeod (Horace - 2012) cloudynd@Q.com
Treasurer          Jim Hooge (Munich -2013) jim43hooge@gmail.com
Past President     Jim Schnabel (Venturia) jimpfarm@drtel.net
Human Services Rep. Tara Muhlhauser ND Dept. of Human Services