

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor ~ Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner



January 2011

Pages 2-3

NYC PSA Ready to
Launch Financial Forms

Pages 4-5

Praise for Adult Services,
Foster care

Page 6

Collaboration Works

Pages 7- 9

2010 Elder Abuse Creates
Updated Statewide Action
Agenda on Elder Abuse

Page 10

Outstanding Programs and
Practices Celebrated at
AATI and LDSS Offices

Page 11

Certificates of Recognition
for Outstanding Programs
and Practices Promoting
Protection of Vulnerable
Adults

Pages 12-13

Photos from the 17th An-
nual Adult Abuse Training
Institute



FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Office of Children and Family Services

Giving to PSA Clients: From the Heart

I want to share with you a wonderful practice which was created by employees of a local Department of Social Services and which di-

rectly benefits Protective Services for Adults (PSA) clients – without costing any government funds at all.

The employees of the Orange County Department of Social Services have raised funds to establish an Adult Services Petty Cash Fund, in memory of a co-worker. The fund is used to give PSA staff the flexibility to respond to food and medicine emergency needs of clients, as well as some of the day-to-day needs of PSA clients. Orange County DSS Child Support Unit organizes and runs an annual Penny Social Fundraiser on behalf of PSA clients. The proceeds are donated to the Adult Services Petty Cash Fund.

We learned about this practice as part of Orange County's response to my request for submission of nominations for Certificates of Recognition for Outstanding Programs and Practices that Promote the Protection of Vulnerable Adults. Bureau of Adult Services staff attended the most recent Penny Social this past October. They were very impressed by the employees' sense of community in pitching in and working together to raise funds to help our clients, as well as by the many baked goods and homemade crafts available for sale that had been prepared by Orange County DSS staff. This was the 22nd Annual Penny Social, and this year over \$1,800 was raised to benefit PSA clients, thanks to overwhelming support of Orange County DSS employees from across all the units of the agency, giving from the heart to support our clients.

What a great example for all of us!

Gladys Carrión, Esq.

New York City PSA Ready to Launch Financial Focus

New Automated System for Representative Payee Management

By Deborah Ramos, Director of Systems Development for Health and Mental Health Projects, NYC HRA, and Lin Saberski, Deputy Commissioner, NYC HRA Adult Protective Services

The New York City Human Resources Administration's (HRA) PSA program serves as the representative payee for over 2,200 PSA-eligible clients. The system in place for managing these benefits up until now has been a challenge, to say the least. It involves nine separate systems applications, backed up by manual ledger books. The process is not only extremely cumbersome and complex, but also risky; a malfunction of any of the applications could disable the entire operation.

Because of this complexity and vulnerability, PSA Operations and Financial Management staff, working with HRA Management Information Systems (MIS) staff, worked together over the last two years to develop and test a new automated system – called Financial Focus – that will soon be handling all of the NYC PSA financial management functions through one seamless integrated automated system. Parallel testing has been ongoing since August 2010, and many functions are already being handled only by Financial Focus. The goal is to achieve full implementation in the first quarter of 2011. Deborah Ramos, MIS Director of Systems Development for Health and Mental Health Projects, stated, "It was well worth the time and effort to develop a custom solution that really addresses the actual scenarios encountered by the staff."

Financial Focus is a web-based application that allows PSA as the Representative Payee to manage more clients with fewer resources, and with better control and accountability. It can be utilized by any government agency or private entity providing representative payee services to individuals who are unable to manage their finances. Financial Focus supports Social Security (SSA) auditing requirements and enforces SSA's best practices and guidelines. It is designed to minimize the effort required to manage large numbers of clients and offers more features, functions and flexibility than any system currently on the market.

The key features of the system will enable NYC PSA to:

- ◆ automate the bank file upload and processing of benefits received, interest earned, exceptions, and fund transfers and payments.
- ◆ ensure the integrity of the data by enforcing application record-locking so that a user cannot change data while another user is editing the client record.
- ◆ identify reduced or missing benefit checks, as well as whether a client has sufficient funds to pay budgeted monthly expenses.
- ◆ manage multiple bank accounts, including interest-bearing savings and positive payee checking accounts.
- ◆ obtain real-time account balances across bank accounts.
- ◆ ensure segregation of duties by a separate Access Control application and by using customizable security roles.
- ◆ query accounting entries that the system generates, automatically, as a result of actions taken.
- ◆ integrate with case management software to ensure best practices.
- ◆ perform monthly bank reconciliation.
- ◆ generate monthly statements and associated cancelled checks.
- ◆ minimize risk to client by identifying exceptions that can be researched immediately.

As a result of using Financial Focus, NYC PSA will achieve benefits in terms of cost savings, staff efficiencies, the strengthening of best practices, more effective risk management and improved client service. To more specifically highlight the key benefits, Financial Focus will:

- ◆ safely support the growing representative payee caseload.
- ◆ reduce mistakes due to human error.
- ◆ enable Financial Management Unit to pay clients bills more quickly.
- ◆ track and account for overpayments by Social Security, which occur when SSA issues a debit advice against the bank account, using an overdraft account.
- ◆ identify errors in bank files.
- ◆ support reporting requirements for Social Security audits.
- ◆ separate case management and accounting functions.
- ◆ provide a log of who changes data in the system and when the change was made and what the previous value was.
- ◆ allow for centralized printing of checks at a secure location and local printing for emergency disbursement of funds.
- ◆ process Representative Payee applications more quickly.
- ◆ enable staff to research and resolve problems more quickly.
- ◆ free staff to focus more on the clients and less on the calculations.
- ◆ provide commitment control to avoid payments against accounts with insufficient funds.
- ◆ track every transaction in the detailed end-to-end audit trail.
- ◆ reduce time spent to prepare for audits because the auditor-friendly screens will simplify the auditing process.

And what are the financial management staff saying about their new system? “Easy to use and understandable.” “Work gets done faster.” “More flexible.” “Captures and centralizes more data, making it much easier to get answers to questions.” “Finally gets rid of our antiquated technology running on obsolete equipment.” “Integrates previously disconnected systems, enabling faster work and decisions.”

The learning curve was steep, and having staff work on two systems simultaneously for five months of parallel testing has been extremely demanding. But the end result is in sight and will surely be well worth the effort. NYC PSA will have a system that provides security, accuracy and efficiency to its almost 2,300 Representative Payee clients and the 21 members of the Financial Management Unit staff who support them. PSA Financial Management Director Mike Mossad is excited about the new system: “I’ve put 25 years of financial management work experience into Financial Focus and this system has it all. You have to see it to believe it!” With the need for Representative Payee services growing, along with the number of elderly facing financial exploitation, Financial Focus has arrived just in time.



Holding the certificate are:

Deborah Ramos, Director of Systems Development for Health and Mental Health Projects

Mike Mossad, Director, APS Financial Management Unit

In the third row – striped tie – between Deborah and Mike – Suresh Chinnakotla – Project Manager and Technical Lead for Financial Focus

And the rest: The Financial Focus Team!



David Lee/Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

Sitting left to right are Adult Services Specialist for New York State Paula Vielkind, Director of the Bureau of Adult Services of the New York State OCFS Alan Lavitz, DSS Commissioner Paul Mossman. Standing left to right are Supervisor of Adult and Family Services Sue Karlcher, Director of Family Services Deborah Amerling, Foster Care Caseworker Georgla Lanier, Foster Care Senior Caseworker Karen McSweeney, Foster Care Supervisor Cindy Jennings, Senior Caseworker Millie Sweatt, Foster Care Caseworker Dana Shutts and Foster Care and Independent Living Caseworker Elaine Scull. Missing from the picture is Community Care Specialist Cindy Pilch.

Praise for adult services, foster care

By Francesca Olsen

Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

COLUMBIA COUNTY — Representatives from the state Office of Children and Family Services traveled to Hudson on Friday to recognize the county Department of Social Services for developing a program that helps fill in the gap between childhood and adulthood.

A unique approach from DSS' Foster Care and Adult and Children Services divisions gives foster children who age out of care another resource to use when working toward independence. The units are "teamed" together to make the transition out of foster care more manageable for children who age out of the system.

The "team" combines staff from the two units who identify children in foster care age 17 to 21 with a goal of independent living or, in the case of those with developmental disabilities, adult residential care.

Children "age out" at 21, but many who have been in foster care for much of their lives need additional help, especially those with developmental disabilities or who wouldn't be able to live independently.

Caseworkers work with children, and their families, to develop a plan for the future instead of an individual being discharged directly into the community with no prior knowledge of how to find medical care or

Praise

other programs and services.

An advisory board of psychologists, law guardians, DSS supervisors, mental health agencies and other community agencies was assembled to assist the team with the troubleshooting related to the new program.

This year, the state OCFS honored programs that "successfully promote the protection of vulnerable adults," said Alan Lawitz, director of the Bureau of Adult Services for OCFS, who came to Hudson with Paula Vielkind, OCFS Adult Services Specialist.

"Because the transitional team members have broad knowledge of the youth involved, Columbia County expects that the improved discharge plans will prevent homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse and involvement with law

enforcement," Vielkind said. "The transitional team makes sure that each youth has the life skills necessary for self-sufficiency as an adult."

Vielkind said the new program "has changed the way Columbia County DSS deals with youth aging out of foster care ... integration between the foster care and adult and family services units is a step in the right direction."

Lawitz called the team "innovative."

"Amidst all the gloomy budget news we hear, we need to try to remember there's a lot of good news to share and a lot to be proud of," he said.

Mossman gave the credit to his staff, who "put together such a wonderful program and implemented it."

The "teaming" model for social service agencies is part of a pilot program from OCFS; teaming is being used in several New York counties but the foster care teaming initiative is unique to Columbia County.

Reprinted with the kind permission of the Register-Star

Collaboration Works!

By Bonnie Fewtrell, Supervisor,
Schenectady County DSS PSA Unit

Schenectady County Protective Services for Adults (PSA) Unit has established multiple successful collaborative efforts with other agencies in the community. One especially important collaborative effort was the development of the Adult Difficult to Serve Workgroup that meets monthly. This work group is comprised of representatives from Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Ellis Mental Health, Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver Program, Nursing Home Transition Waiver Program, Department of Social Services (DSS), Center for the Disabled, and Bethesda House. Through the diligent, combined efforts of the participants in this group, we have been successful with a number of very difficult-to-serve clients. Here are two of our success stories:

In one instance PSA, Bethesda House and DSS were able to house and stabilize a homeless, 50-year-old man who is extremely paranoid and has mental illness, who had been living on the streets of Schenectady since 1978. He is now living in his own studio apartment, has Medicaid and food stamps, is showering on a regular basis, has a primary care physician and is in the process of obtaining Social Security benefits through PSA's continued involvement.

Another instance of collaborative efforts proving successful was that of PSA working hand-in-hand with NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to assist a 54-year-old man who is deaf, mute, and mentally challenged to receive services through OPWDD. He had never been connected or assessed for those services previously, had never attended school and was born in Puerto Rico. This man was the victim of domestic violence perpetrated by a close relative who had not only become the man's rep payee, but also his Guardian. Our DSS Commissioner is now this man's Guardian. He is happily living in a group home, learning sign language, and is gainfully employed working in a workshop setting.



Schenectady County DSS PSA staff. In back row, left to right, Bonnie Fewtrell, supervisor; Chris Capobianco, caseworker; Adrienne Silva, senior caseworker. In front row, left to right: Reggie Glidden, caseworker; Marion Goodrich, caseworker; Yvonne McClelland, clerical assistant.

2010 Elder Abuse Summit Creates Updated Statewide Action Agenda

By Art Mason, Director, Lifespan's Elder Abuse Prevention Program and Denise Shukoff, Coordinator, NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse

Background

In 2004, Lifespan of Greater Rochester convened a three-day, first-of-its-kind statewide Elder Abuse Summit, bringing together experts from across the state to develop recommendations to address the growing problem of elder mistreatment. A number of significant achievements are directly related to the 2004 recommendations, including (1) creating the NYS Coalition on Elder Abuse, (2) reforming state and federal legislation, (3) conducting a statewide prevalence study, (4) strengthening of local elder abuse coalitions, and (5) expanding public awareness, education and professional training throughout the state.

Although we have made great progress since 2004 and many people across the country look to New York State as a leader in identifying and addressing elder abuse, finding ways to improve recognition, intervention, prevention, and prosecution to better protect the growing aging population continues to be a challenge.

Next Steps

In 2010, it was time to bring the major stakeholders together again to review and reprioritize the NYS Elder Abuse Action Agenda. The 2004 recommendations, our collective experience over the past six years, and the findings of the recent statewide Elder Abuse Prevalence Study formed the starting point for the *next steps* discussion during the 2010 Summit, held in Albany on November 16-18.

The summit kicked off with a presentation on the NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study. Using information learned from the statewide study, the task for the summit participants was to create a new prioritized Action Agenda to address and reduce the prevalence of elder abuse in community settings – seeking a more effective, coordinated approach to prevention and intervention, which will ultimately result in a reduction in the incidence of elder mistreatment and financial exploitation throughout the state.

Summit Participants

As in 2004, participation was by invitation only. Attendees included over 100 people who have expertise or are major stakeholders in elder abuse related issues. Participants were chosen to ensure balanced representation from various professions, geographic locations (including urban and rural), and ethnicities within the state-representing government, non-profits, and the private sector, including advocacy organizations, domestic violence programs, the legal system, health and medical services, academia and research, criminal justice and law enforcement, aging services, protective/intervention services, financial institutions, and victims' assistance programs. State and local PSA and OFA staff constituted one third of the summit attendees.

(continued)

To enable full participation by experts in the field and to better guarantee representation from a cross section of professional disciplines and geographic regions, funding from the U.S. Administration on Aging, the NYS OCFS Children and Family Trust Fund, and The New York Bar Foundation was used to cover participant expenses during the summit. The summit would not have been possible without this support.

Nationally recognized speakers provided additional information at the plenary sessions during each meal, enhancing the main focus of the summit – discussion and recommendations that emerged from the all-day work group sessions. Each participant was assigned to one of six work groups (Financial Exploitation; Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse; Laws, Law Enforcement and Prosecution; Multidisciplinary Teams and Cross-System Collaboration; Public/Professional Awareness, Education and Training; Assessment, Data Collection and Evaluation).

A small committee made the assignment decisions based on the concept that it was very important to have a good mix of different perspectives in each group to keep the discussion lively and to make sure a variety of issues were raised. All work groups were equally important in achieving the desired outcome – developing an updated Action Agenda for New York. As the day progressed, participants realized the value of having such diverse experience in each group.

Summit Work Group Process

Morning session – each group generated a long list of ideas relevant to the specific topic, agreed on a short list of idea clusters, and then agreed on the top three ideas that could “make a difference.”

Afternoon session – small groups within each work group drafted recommendation statements for each of the top three clusters, with whole group agreement on the statements. Small groups then developed implementation plans (strategic issues and action steps) for each recommendation. There was consensus on final wording for the recommendations and implementation plans. Each work group chose a presenter to give a report during the plenary session the next day.

Although there were changes in focus, strategic issues, and action steps, it was not surprising that the 2010 priority recommendations followed themes similar to those in 2004–(1) reforming and updating NYS laws; (2) creating a statewide public awareness campaign to explain the full spectrum of elder abuse; (3) developing discipline-specific training curricula, tools, and best practices to help professionals recognize, respond to, and prevent abuse; (4) the need for more uniform elder abuse data collection, (5) statewide network and clearinghouse for elder abuse resources to increase the quality of services provided to older adults at risk, and (6) recognizing the value of cross-system collaboration at the state and local level. As was also expected, a number of similar issues were raised in multiple groups, independently producing recommendations with common themes.

Final reports outlining the summit proceedings and Prevalence Study findings will be widely distributed statewide and nationally. In addition, regional meetings are planned to share information and continue the discussion of items on the Elder Abuse Action Agenda.

For more information, please contact Denise Shukoff, dshukoff@lifespan-roch.org, (585) 244-8400 x186. <http://www.lifespan-roch.org/NYS-elder-abuse-coalition.htm>



OUTSTANDING PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES CELEBRATED AT AATI AND LDSS OFFICES

OCFS has issued a third round of Certificates of Recognition to local social services districts, with a new focus on exemplary programs and practices that promote protection of vulnerable adults.

At the Adult Abuse Training Institute (AATI) held this past September, OCFS hosted a special awards presentation honoring eight districts. Associate Commissioner Kirk Maurer joined Bureau of Adult Services Director Alan Lawitz and bureau staff in presenting certificates to representatives of the honorees.

OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrión said: *“With these Certificates of Recognition, we are identifying and publicizing a number of innovative ideas and best practices for protecting vulnerable adults that we hope will be adapted and replicated across the state. As with our previous rounds of recognition, we also celebrate the critical role played by all Protective Services for Adults workers in serving some of our most vulnerable clients.”*

OCFS has also participated in presentations in the offices of Columbia, Dutchess and Rockland DSS.

In this issue, you will find pictures and articles about our honorees.

We congratulate all the honorees!



From left:

Liz Norton, Tompkins County DSS; Kate LaBuda, Orange County DSS; Molly Light, Tompkins County DSS; Tim Murphy, Orange County DSS; Patricia Jennings, NYC HRA; John Fella, Rockland County DSS; Marge Windheim, Rockland County DSS; Bonnie Fewtrell, Schenectady County DSS; John Imhof, Commissioner, Nassau County DSS.

**CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION
FOR OUTSTANDING PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES
PROMOTING PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS**

LIST OF HONOREES:

1. **Columbia County Department of Social Services:** Adult Services / Foster Care Teaming Initiative, creating a team providing services to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood.
2. **Dutchess County Department of Social Services:** Use of Case Manager Aides to provide valuable services (transportation, shopping, teaching homemaking skills) to PSA clients, working in conjunction with PSA case managers and supervisors.
3. **Nassau County Department of Social Services:** Homeless Intervention Team comprised of representatives of several county agencies, whose mission is to provide outreach and immediate shelter and services to the homeless.
4. **New York City Human Resources Administration:** Financial Focus (Automated System for Management of Representative Payee Accounts), serving over 2,500 clients, replacing the previous system which involved nine separate systems applications, backed up by manual ledger books.
5. **Orange County Department of Social Services:** Mental Health Supportive Case Management – DSS/PSA Collaboration, in which DSS provides adult preventive financial management, and other case management needs are met by the mental health system; Orange County Adult Abuse and Neglect Task Force, a coalition of community agencies, businesses and individuals who meet to resolve complex cases, partner with other providers to serve the needs of vulnerable adults, and increase public awareness of the abuse and neglect of elderly and disabled adults; and Adult Services Petty Cash Fund, a fund established voluntarily by agency employees in memory of a co-worker, which provides additional funds to respond to food and medicine emergencies as well as some of the day-to-day needs of clients.
6. **Rockland County Department of Social Services:** DSS (Determined to make our Seniors – and all adults – Safe), an annual campaign to raise public awareness of the issues of adult abuse and neglect.
7. **Schenectady County Department of Social Services:** Collaboration Works!, a program of extensive outreach, training and collaboration with other agencies in the community, the results of which have improved outcomes for PSA clients.
8. **Tompkins County Department of Social Services:** Tompkins County Task Force on Hoarding, a multidisciplinary team that organized a conference on hoarding, and developed a field guide and an assessment tool in response to increased demand for more local hoarding resources, and which accepts referrals on hoarding cases.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE HONOREES!



**PHOTOS
FROM THE 17TH ANNUAL
ADULT ABUSE TRAINING
INSTITUTE**

September 2010, Albany



John Imhof, Commissioner, Nassau County DSS and Kirk Maurer, OCFS Associate Commissioner.



From left : Debra Bonnersmith (Dutchess County DSS Deputy Commissioner); Maryanne Maruschak (DCDSS Director of Adult Services); Paula Vielkind (Adult Services Specialist, OCFS); Alan Lawitz (Director, Bureau of Adult Services, OCFS); Barbara VanNordstrand (DCDSS Case Manager Aide); Robert Allers (DCDSS Commissioner); and Amber Collins (DCDSS Case Manager Aide).



John Fella, Director, Adult and Special Services, Rockland County DSS (holding certificate); Susan Sherwood, Commissioner, RCDSS (seated to left of John Fella) and staff of RCDSS Adult Services unit; together with Alan Lawitz and Paula Vielkind of OCFS .



Speakers providing welcoming remarks to AATI attendees include: Alan Lawitz, OCFS Director, Bureau of Adult Services, at podium; Bill Gettman, OCFS Executive Deputy Commissioner; and Michael Burgess, Office for the Aging Director .



Keynote presenter Bob Blancato, National Coordinator of the Elder Justice Coalition, speaks on “Elder Justice In America: the Next Steps.”

