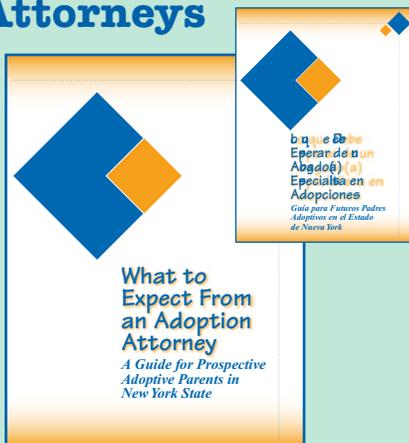


# Challenges & Solutions

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2007

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY, PERMANENCY, AND WELL-BEING IN NYS

## Explaining the Relationship Between Adoptive Parents and Attorneys



The 4-page pamphlet, *What To Expect From an Adoption Attorney*, was written as a guide for prospective adoptive parents. It includes information on the legal relationship of adoption, filing an adoption petition, hiring an adoption attorney, paying for an attorney, signing retainer agreements, and the client's rights.

The pamphlet is a product of the Adoption Now Workgroup. This multidisciplinary collaborative workgroup was formed as a result of the initiative of Chief Judge Judith Kaye of the NYS Court of Appeals to bring together the commissioners of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to identify and resolve systemic barriers to achieving timely permanency for children who have been freed for adoption yet linger in foster care. The workgroup is composed of representatives of the courts, Office of Court Administration, OCFS, ACS, and other local social services district personnel.

*What to Expect from an Adoption Attorney* (Pub. 5054) is available in English and Spanish on the OCFS website at [www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications).

## Sanctuary Model Offers Promise for Residential Care

Identified as one of the most promising of "promising practices," the Sanctuary Model® offers residential care programs a vision that can lead to system-wide change and healing. Based on the creation of a nonviolent community that understands trauma and its effects, the model is designed to shift the organizational culture from one of control to one of collaboration.

In April 2006, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) invited voluntary authorized agencies to apply for participation in the Andrus Sanctuary Leadership Institute (ASLI) of the Andrus Children's Center in Yonkers. In doing so, agencies would have the opportunity to implement the Sanctuary Model in their residential care programs. Dr. Sandra Bloom, who created the model for use in a number of settings, worked with Andrus to develop a training module for agencies offering residential care.

To participate in the three-year institute, OCFS selected five voluntary authorized agencies—Astor Home for Children, Glove House, Jewish Child Care Association, Mercy First, and St. Catherine's Center for Children—and two OCFS residential centers—Annsville (for boys) and Brentwood (for girls). After initial discussions, research, and training, implementation of the Sanctuary Model is under way.

### Benefits of the model

The Sanctuary Model represents a trauma-informed method for changing an organizational culture in order to address the psychological and social trauma experienced by youth entering residential care.

OCFS Executive Deputy Commissioner Larry Brown recently noted, "We believe the model supports our efforts to create safe, secure, and therapeutic environments in our residential facilities."\*

"We are very interested in promoting trauma-based initiatives," said Phil Williams, OCFS Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). Citing statistics on children entering residential care, he said "Many of our adolescents' behaviors are based on past events in life. The model helps programs and staff to be sensitive and change behavior, which will lead to a more positive discharge from care."

Tom Hoeg, also from OCFS DRS, agreed: "This is a wonderful opportunity

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Sandra Bloom, M.D., presents the Sanctuary Model at the training session for OCFS residential centers. From left to right, participants Valerie Fitts and Rebecca Piwinski, Brentwood Residential Center, and Craig Allen, OCFS



\* Testimony, New York State Assembly Standing Committees on Children and Families and Codes, December 18, 2006

# Influencing Others to Create Change

## White Eagle Leadership Forum for Directors of Services

The first statewide Leadership Forum for Directors of Services, sponsored by OCFS, was held on November 1–3, 2006, at the White Eagle Conference Center in Hamilton, NY. Focusing on leadership and change, the forum offered directors of services across the state an opportunity to learn from experts in the field of organizational growth and development in public child welfare. With 51 counties in attendance, participation was high.

Jane Lynch, OCFS Deputy Commissioner, Division of Development and Prevention Services, proposed the forum: “In each county, directors of services manage their own child welfare system guiding their frontline and supervisory staff to address the needs of the families they serve. Directors of services also are required to interface effectively with the companion systems that serve the child welfare population: the judicial system; other state systems, including OMH/OMR/OASAS; schools, and local service providers. Directors of services influence change within their own district and across systems. In recognition of this need, the focus of the Leadership Forum will be on leadership and influencing others to create change.”

Facilitated by Ed Miner, former commissioner, Chautauqua County DSS, the forum led off with remarks by Reverend Alfonso Wyatt from the Fund for the City of New York. He spoke compellingly on why leadership matters in the field of child welfare and how change can—and must—happen.

Keynote speaker and workshop presenter was Dr. Michael O’Brien, who offered sessions on “Leadership Conversations—Managing Yourself and

Influencing Others.” He provided an opportunity to think together about leadership as a relationship, and how to influence others through powerful conversations. Participants practiced skills associated with influencing their own organizations as well as community stakeholders in creating change.

“The forum was very timely and helpful,” said Diane Connelly, Assistant Commissioner, Office of

Quality Improvement, NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). “I found it energizing; it focused on what it means to be a leader, especially during difficult times.” Jerry Moran, Director of Services, Genesee County DSS, appreciated the insights and practical tips offered to help reinforce messages such as “be consistent” and “be approachable.” Both enjoyed sharing stories with others at meals.

OCFS Regional Directors designed the forum, with input



From left to right, Sandra Bunkley, Barbara Clawson-Cole, and Roshelle Lewis, Erie County DSS, with Rev. Alfonso Wyatt



Betsy McKee, Family Engagement Specialist, Syracuse Regional Office, presents Concurrent Planning Curriculum.

from directors of services, via an electronic needs assessment and group analysis of the results. They identified several essential components of the first forum for directors of services: an opportunity to learn from a national speaker, tools to take back home and begin using immediately, and the opportunity to talk openly with each other and build a resource network among themselves. The Regional Directors also developed evaluation instruments that will inform planning for a 2007 Leadership Forum.

Larry Brown, OCFS Executive Deputy Commissioner, gave closing remarks. He charged directors of services with taking responsibility for shaping the agenda for our children’s future. For more information on the forum, contact Linda Kurtz, (585) 238–8200; [linda.kurtz@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:linda.kurtz@ocfs.state.ny.us).



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Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner

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## Local solutions

### Asking Youth What They Think:

## Northeast Parent and Child Society

What does one agency do to get feedback from the youth in its programs? It asks them! And in this agency, youth are the ones asking the questions.

In November 2005, Northeast Parent and Child Society in Schenectady came up with the idea of holding focus groups with youth by youth. The agency sought feedback from the youth about its residential programs. Staff realized that the discussion would be more open and honest—and the responses more complete and helpful—if youth, not adults, were asking the questions.

The focus group activity grew out of Northeast's active participation in Y4P, the regional group of the statewide Youth in Progress (YIP), the OCFS Foster Care Youth Leadership Team.

Through Y4P, youth at Northeast learn leadership skills while examining issues of concern to foster care and engaging other youth. They participate in regular local meetings, statewide YIP retreats and teleconferences, and national presentations to spread the word. Most recently, Northeast gave a workshop at the September 2006 meeting of the National Independent Living Association meeting in St. Louis, Mo.

"They're the constant," says Michelle Ray, coordinator of Y4P through the Adolescent Services Resource Network, Professional Development Program, State University of New York at Albany. "Northeast staff and youth stand out for their involvement and dedication. They have been involved with YIP from the get-go, and they are emerging as the larger agency doing YIP work."

The focus groups included 24 youth in four programs. The goals were to gather information about the success of the agency's residential program and determine the program's effectiveness for youth after discharge. The questions, asked by youth from YIP in Buffalo, NYC, and Schenectady, dealt with six areas: helpfulness of the program, ownership of youth, permanency, personal goals, relationships, and supports. Questions about the permanency plan included: What does it mean to you? Do you know how you got it? Do you agree with it?

Steve Opela, Coordinator of the Group Home Program, noted, "We learned that staff should use the language youth use to find out what youth know and don't know. For example, the term 'permanency' is not well understood by youth, and yet adults use it frequently. Staff should take the time to educate youth on what permanency means."

Another finding, described by John Amos, Independent Living Services Coordinator, was the need to "invite youth into the treatment planning process" so that youth have input into their own treatment plan. Also, planning for discharge should include "making sure all parties are in the loop and working together." Discharge should be seen as an opportunity for youth—a celebration.

Based on the findings, Northeast has improved procedures and approaches in its residential programs. Career development and educational opportunities for youth are priorities for the agency.

## Hunter College Launches Post Graduate Program in Adoption Therapy

Thanks to the efforts of the adoption competency workgroup, a program is now available to child welfare staff seeking to enhance their skills in working with families on adoption. In September 2006, after two years of national research and program development by the workgroup, Hunter College began offering the new post graduate certificate program on adoption therapy.

The adoption competency workgroup is a subcommittee of the Adoption Strategy Workgroup, which is a collaboration of OCFS, ACS, agencies, and other statewide stakeholders (see box below). The workgroup sought to address the need, expressed in surveys by adoptive parents, for mental health professionals who have a greater understanding of the impact of foster care placement, termination of parental rights, and adoption on the mental health, well-being, and functioning of their adopted children.

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### Strategy on Strengthening Adoption and Post-Adoption Services

With this strategy, New York State is undertaking an integrated set of actions to shorten the time to adoption and improve the process of achieving permanency for children, youth, and adopting families. This includes identifying gaps in the system as well as promising programs across the country. The goal is to remove barriers to timely adoption and facilitate an increased understanding of adoption issues by all those in the child welfare field.

For more information on YIP and the strategy on adolescent services and outcomes, contact Shelley Murphy, (518) 402-6546; [shelley.murphy@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:shelley.murphy@ocfs.state.ny.us).

# Sanctuary Model from page 1

to pilot a trauma-sensitive, therapeutic model, using all aspects of the environment and staff. Often we focus on the ‘customer’ and forget the staff. Having a common goal is very important. Everyone has ground-floor investment.”

“Sanctuary works,” he said. “It’s a means of changing the levels of trauma in staff and youth and reducing the need to physically intervene with kids.” He explained that “the spirit of the model is an open and respectful atmosphere.” Recognizing that implementation requires time and effort, OCFS staff from the two DRS centers are working to iron out issues regarding “how we mix and match the model with our existing policies and procedures.”

## Launching the model

The first step was an intensive on-site review of each agency conducted by ASLI staff who asked hard questions about challenges and gaps in agency practice. In fall 2006, two five-day training sessions (one for agency staff and one for OCFS center staff) were held at Andrus. Each agency sent 4–9 staff members, who then formed a steering committee to bring the model back to their agencies.

Sarah Yanosey, ASLI Coordinator and OCFS liaison, noted that the faculty are staff at Andrus Children’s Center who were chosen for their experience, diversity of roles, and potential as good teachers. She said, “It was exciting to

## Commitments of the Sanctuary Model

The Sanctuary Model is committed to a culture of:

- ✓ nonviolence
- ✓ emotional intelligence
- ✓ inquiry & social learning
- ✓ democracy
- ✓ open communication
- ✓ social responsibility
- ✓ growth & change

use our experience with the Sanctuary Model to help other agencies. It was also an opportunity to be open and honest about the things we didn’t do well. In that way, it was refreshing.” Some of the lecture topics by experts in the field such as Dr. Bloom included *The S.E.L.F. Model of Trauma Treatment* and *Community Responses to Traumatized Youth*.

Don Smith, Deputy Executive Director, St. Catherine’s Center for Children, appreciated the ASLI faculty. “They were excellent: very supportive, challenging, and honest. As people who have been ‘living the model,’ they could talk about theories and practice from the perspective of caregivers. We left the training all fired up and anxious to get started.” After a daylong retreat presenting the model

to the agency’s board of directors, “the leadership responded enthusiastically and gave their full support to go ahead.” St. Catherine’s will be implementing the model throughout all programs.

The Jewish Child Care Association (JCCA) also has the full support of its board and administration to implement the Sanctuary Model. According to Mike Spindler, Executive Senior Vice President, “The model provides a lens for looking at young people.” As a long-standing family-centered agency, JCCA has used other models, but this one “resonates with us and lends itself beautifully to our current approaches.” While it represents “a sea change, an all-encompassing way of looking at residential care, it is also contagious.” Even at this early stage, other programs at JCCA are beginning to ask about using the model as well.

There is general agreement that the greatest challenge in implementing the model will be asking people to change. Letting go of old ways of perceiving and communicating will be difficult for some staff. The ASLI faculty provides ongoing support through monthly telephone contact and six on-site visits per year.

For more information on the Sanctuary Model, contact Bill McLaughlin, (518) 474-9465; [william.mclaughlin@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:william.mclaughlin@ocfs.state.ny.us); or Patricia Sheehy (914) 377-2080; [patricia.sheehy@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:patricia.sheehy@ocfs.state.ny.us).

## The Sanctuary Model works toward these outcomes:

- ✓ Create a truly collaborative treatment environment.
- ✓ Work more effectively and therapeutically with your traumatized clients.
- ✓ Improve treatment outcomes.
- ✓ Reduce restraints and other coercive practices.
- ✓ Build high-functioning multidisciplinary teams.
- ✓ Improve staff morale.
- ✓ Increase employee retention.
- ✓ Reclaim the commitment upon which your organization was built.

# Strategy Coordinators . . .

*Who they are and how to contact them*

*The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) contains 16 strategies to improve child safety, permanency, and well-being. The strategies are listed here along with the OCFS coordinator(s) for each strategy.*

For general information about implementation of the strategies, contact Bill McLaughlin at (518) 474-9465; [william.mclaughlin@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:william.mclaughlin@ocfs.state.ny.us).

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Michelle Rafael (518) 474-4352

**Safety and Well-Being of Children in Residential Care**

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Patricia Sheehy (914) 377-2080

**Permanency Mediation**

Michelle Rafael (518) 474-4352

**Adolescent Services and Outcomes**

Linda Brown (716) 847-3145  
Diana Fenton (518) 474-0014

**Workforce Development**

Gail Haulenbeek (518) 474-9879  
Peter Miraglia (518) 474-9645  
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**Achieving Child Welfare Outcomes through Enhanced Supervision**

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**Improving Cross-Systems Collaboration**

William McLaughlin (518) 474-9465

**Strengthening Adoption and Post-Adoption Services**

Cheryl Larrier (212) 383-1805

**Reducing Repeat Maltreatment**

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Catherine Grose (518) 474-9584

**Strengthening Service Plan Reviews**

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**CPS/DV Practice Collaboration**

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Jamie Greenberg (518) 473-1327

**Practice Guidance**

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## Hunter College from page 3

Dr. Gary Mallon, professor, Hunter College School of Social Work, and Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao, CEO, Center for Family Connections in Cambridge, Mass., developed the curriculum and serve as faculty. The 10 sessions include courses on clinical practice, treatment planning, therapeutic strategies, and other core issues in adoption therapy. Required reading and a research project are part of the course of study.

Designed for professional staff working in local districts and voluntary agencies, the program offers the opportunity to learn advanced skills and increase clinical and practice competency in adoption. Students should have an MSW in social work or a mental health field, or a bachelor's

degree plus several years of experience working with families and adoption services. Mental health professionals who do not have this specialized experience but want to enter the field may also apply.

To accommodate professional work schedules, classes take place on Fridays from 4:30–8:30 P.M. and on Saturdays

from 9–4, once a month from September through June.

Eighteen students are participating enthusiastically in the first year of the program. The names of graduates will be available to adoptive families and workers who request therapy resources.

**To learn more about the program, go to the Hunter College website, <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/adoptiontherapy/about.htm>. For more information on the work of the adoption competency workgroup, contact Cheryl Larrier, (212) 383-1805; [cheryl.larrier@ocfs.state.ny.us](mailto:cheryl.larrier@ocfs.state.ny.us).**