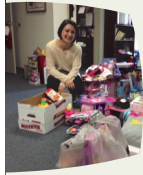




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▶ DONATIONS 13

Office of the Child Advocate

Safeguarding the welfare of Delaware’s children through educational advocacy, system reform, public awareness, training, and legal representation of children as set forth in 29 Del. C., Ch. 90A

Legal Representation of Children

Legal Representation of children is the Office of the Child Advocate’s (OCA) primary focus. The agency is statutorily required to coordinate a program of legal representation on behalf of children. OCA utilizes four full-time Deputy Child Advocates (DCAs) and approximately 300 volunteer attorneys who are supervised by OCA’s Managing Attorney, and also partners with the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA), to represent the best interests of dependent, neglected, and abused children statewide.

OCA’s Volunteer Attorneys

During FY14, volunteer attorneys represented 370 children. Of those volunteer attorneys 23 were new volunteers taking their first case. OCA trained 34 attorneys through five training sessions in FY14, and a number of veteran volunteers also attended these trainings to improve their understanding of the child protection system. By the end of FY14, OCA boasted a roster of 216 attorneys with at least five years of experience representing children through OCA, 89 of them with ten years of experience or more. Collectively, volunteer attorneys donated over 9,000 hours of their time to cases

(Continued on page 3)



Child Welfare Policy

Child Welfare Policy is another area in which OCA acts to strengthen children and families and the system that serves them. OCA is mandated, pursuant to 29 Del. C. § 9005A to periodically review child welfare policies and procedures, to recommend changes in procedures for

(Continued on page 5)



Executive Summary

“Children are great imitators. So give them something great to imitate.” ~Anonymous

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) was created in 1999 in response to numerous child deaths in Delaware resulting from child abuse. These cases pointed to deficiencies in the child protection system that could only be remedied through the collaborative efforts of Delaware’s many child welfare agencies. The General Assembly determined that an office to oversee these efforts, staff the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC), and provide legal representation on behalf of Delaware’s dependent, neglected, and abused children was necessary. Pursuant to 29 Del. C. § 9005A, OCA is mandated to coordinate a program of legal representation for children; to periodically review all relevant child welfare policies and procedures with a view toward improving the lives of children; recommend changes in procedures for investigating and overseeing the welfare of children; to develop and provide training to child welfare system professionals; and to staff CPAC.

OCA accomplishes its charge to represent children through the employment of four Deputy Child Advocates (DCAs), a substantial and dedicated pool of volunteer attorneys supervised by a Managing Attorney, and strong partnerships with the child-serving agencies in Delaware. During Fiscal Year 2014, OCA received 536 referrals, 230 attorney appointments were made, and 53 case reviews were completed to ensure the child welfare system was adequately protecting the children involved, and provided legal representation to a total of 673 abused or neglected children. Three hundred fifty-four volunteer attorneys represented children through OCA during the fiscal year, with 34 new attorneys trained in 5 training sessions throughout the state. By the end of FY14, OCA was proudly partnering with 216 volunteer attorneys with at least 5 years experience representing children through OCA. Eighty-nine of the 214 are attorneys who have 10 years of experience or more.

On the last day of the fiscal year, 613 children were in the legal custody of Delaware’s Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF). Of those, OCA was representing 306 (50%) children, the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program was representing 307 (50%), and no children were unrepresented at that time.

In addition to coordinating the legal representation of children, OCA participated in many initiatives to improve policies, procedures, practices and laws on behalf of children, primarily in the role as staff to CPAC. OCA staff worked diligently to deliver training on mandatory reporting of child abuse to child welfare professionals, as well as to raise awareness within the community, and to make this information widely available online. OCA continued to support efforts to promote permanency and stability for older youth in foster care and those aging out of foster care, and its staff attended several national trainings and conferences on a variety of child welfare issues. OCA also supported its clients’ active participation in the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative (DYOI).

OCA is extremely grateful to all of the individuals and organizations that support the children served by OCA. The assistance and partnership of these entities is critical as OCA strives to fulfill its mission to safeguard the welfare of Delaware’s children through educational advocacy, system reform, public awareness, training, and legal representation of children.



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Legal Representation

“Every child deserves to know the love of a forever family. Every child deserves the chance to thrive.”

(Continued from page 1)

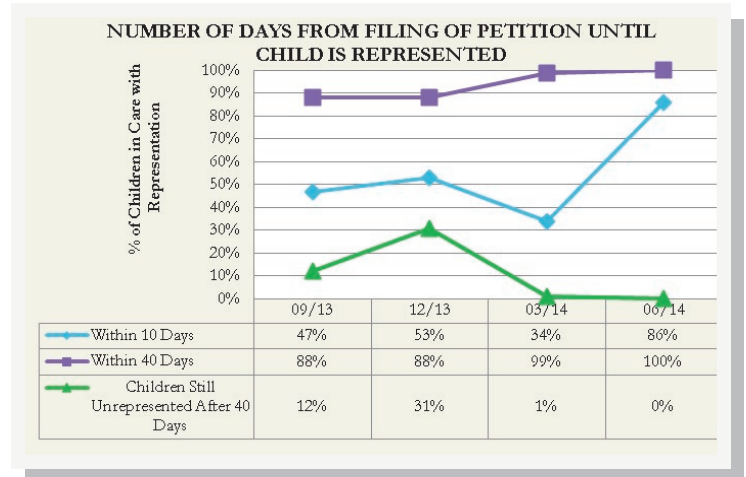
that closed in FY14. OCA staff spent over 1,100 hours training and supporting volunteer attorneys in FY14.

Child Representation Statistics

During the course of FY14, OCA provided legal representation to 673 children statewide, most of whom were in the legal custody of Department of Services to Children, Youth and their Families (DSCYF).

OCA received 536 referrals and made 230 new appointments in FY14. The bulk of new cases to which OCA attorneys were appointed in FY14 were in New Castle County (65%). Seventy – three percent of new cases in New Castle County were handled by volunteer attorneys, with the remaining 27% being handled by DCAs. In contrast, DCAs handled 73% of the new appointments in Sussex County, and 45% of new appointments in Kent County.

DCAs and their support staff spent about 16,000 hours on the representation of children in FY14. Of the new DCA appointments, seven were in serious injury cases. Of the 230 new appointments made in FY14, six were for children who were the subject of parent custody disputes, 48 were for children involved in guardianship proceedings, and 156 were for children in the legal custody of DSCYF. The remaining 20 appointments were for youth who turned 18 and aged out of foster care, but for whom the Family Court extended its jurisdiction and re-appointed the youths’ attorneys.



During FY14, 255 OCA cases were closed. Of those, 28 were guardianship cases and six were parent custody disputes. The Court terminated its oversight in six cases where the Court retained extended jurisdiction. These terminations occurred for various reasons. The remaining cases involved children in the custody of DSCYF, and those cases closed with a variety of permanency outcomes including adoption, aging out of foster care, guardianship, permanent guardianship, and reunification with parents.

At the end of FY14, OCA was actively representing 418 children. The majority, 306, were in the legal custody of



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Legal Representation

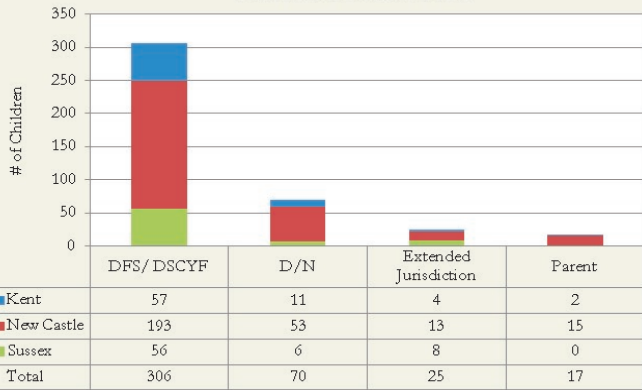
*“I don’t want a family. I need one.”
~child waiting to be adopted*

DSCYF. Another 70 were the subject of guardianship proceedings, while 17 were the subject of parent custody proceedings. Twenty-five youth remained represented by attorneys after their 18th birthday under the extended jurisdiction of the Family Court.

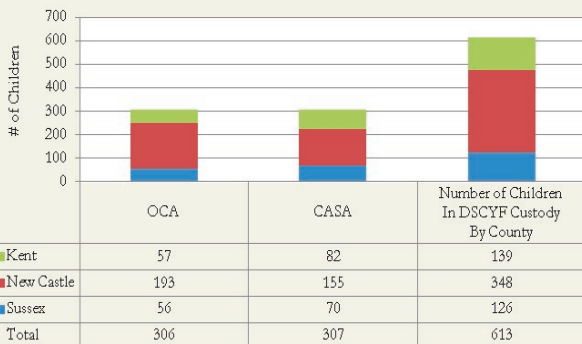
By the end of FY14, 305 referrals were made to OCA to which attorneys were not appointed. Thirty-three of those referrals resulted in case reviews to ensure the child welfare system was adequately protecting the children involved and appropriately responding to the needs of those children and their families. One hundred fifty of those referrals resulted in child representation through the CASA. Fifty-three referrals had no apparent dependency, neglect, or abuse issues and therefore there was no role for OCA. Sixty-nine cases were accepted by OCA and were still under review or pending disposition at the close of the fiscal year. In FY14, OCA staff spent over 430 hours handling referrals and reviewing cases for the need for attorney appointment and system improvement.

OCA worked closely with CASA throughout FY14 to ensure that all children in DSCYF custody received legal representation. On June 30, 2014, 613 children were in DSCYF custody, a 14% decrease from the prior fiscal year. OCA was representing 306 (50%) of those children, CASA was representing 307 (50%), and no children were unrepresented on the last day of the fiscal year.

OCA ACTIVE CASES AT END OF FISCAL YEAR 14
SORTED BY CASE TYPE



LEGAL REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN IN DSCYF
CUSTODY AS OF JUNE 30, 2014



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Child Welfare Policy

“It is hard to be moved around all the time. Permanency is important because then we can feel like we belong and settle, rather than get moved around and feel worthless because we feel that no one wants us.”

~ Kaylee, youth in foster care, quoted from Time to Reform: Too Many Birthdays in Foster Care by Pew Charitable Trusts’ Kids are Waiting

(Continued from page 1)

investigating and overseeing the welfare of children, and to develop and provide training to child welfare system professionals. OCA staff spent over 1,500 hours on efforts involving child protection policy and procedure in FY14, and another 1,300 hours on such efforts while fulfilling their duties as staff to CPAC.

In its role as staff to CPAC, OCA staff support CPAC and its committees by ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), preparing minutes and agendas, scheduling meeting times and locations, facilitating communications, conducting research and chairing committees. Each full-time staff member participates substantively on at least one CPAC committee or initiative including: CPAC’s Abuse Intervention, Data Utilization, Education, Legislative, Permanency for Adolescents and Training Committees. See CPAC Annual Report for more details at <http://courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate/CPACreports.stm>

OCA participated in the passage of several bills during FY14. House Bill 223 clarifies the Court review process for youth whose parental rights are vested in DSCYF but have been placed in a legal guardianship or permanent guardianship. House Bill 251 made several significant

changes to the guardianship and permanent guardianship statute. Senate Bill 181 made substantive changes to the Child Protection Registry. House Bill 253 and Senate Bill 182 provided for “Stop Child Abuse” license plates and a Delaware State tax check box for donations that will benefit the Protecting Delaware’s Children fund. Senate Bill 230 expanded the membership of CPAC from twenty to twenty-four commissioners, adding important members of the child protection community. House Bill 290 provided the Family Court with discretion to waive court fines and costs. All of these bills will have a positive impact on the children served by Delaware’s child welfare system. Senate Bill 233 regarding juvenile expungements did not successfully pass, but OCA hopes for passage next legislative session.

Trainings, Conferences and Retreats

OCA staff attended several local and national multidisciplinary conferences, trainings and meetings throughout FY14. OCA also conducted numerous trainings that focused on improving skills and knowledge in navigating the many facets of child welfare.



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LAW FIRMS WITH THREE OR MORE VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS



Ashby & Geddes P.A.
Bayard P.A.
Berger Harris LLC
Bifferato LLC
Connolly Gallagher LLP
Cousins Chipman and Brown LLP
E.I duPont de Nemours & Company
Fish & Richardson P.C.
Fox Rothchild, LLP
Gonser & Gonser P.A.
Kimmel Carter Roman & Peltz
McCarter & English, LLP
Morris James LLP
Morris Nichols Arshnt & Tunnell LLP
Office of the Public Defender
Parkowski, Guerke & Swayze
Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison, LLP
Pepper Hamilton LLP
Pinckney Harris & Weidinger, LLC
Potter Anderson & Corroon LLP
Richards, Layton & Finger, P.A.
Sergovic Carmean & Weidman P.A.
Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom, LLP
Smith Katzenstein & Jenkins, LLP
The Eaby Firm, LLC
Tybout Redfean & Pell
White & Williams LLP
Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, PLLC
Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor, LLP



Child Welfare Policy

“Sometimes superheroes reside in the hearts of small children fighting big battles.” ~Anonymous

Nationally, OCA staff attended the ABA Conference for Children and the Law, the National Council of Juvenile and Family

Juvenile Expungement, Social Security Benefits and Sex Offender training to OCA and CASA staff.

OCA also held two retreats during FY14, one for all staff and another for attorneys. During the October 2013 retreat, OCA staff worked on teambuilding and discussed a number of issues related to teens in foster care. Staff also discussed youth transitions from the child welfare system. After the retreat staff focused on improved case management as well as policies and procedures within the office. During the May retreat, the OCA Attorneys focused on legal trends, serious injury cases, and needed legal trainings. The Attorneys returned with a plan for serious injury cases and future legal trainings.

Finally, all OCA staff received a five-part training on Managing Vicarious Trauma. This training was conducted by a local psychologist at the OCA office and focused on helping understand the toll child welfare takes on personal and professional lives. The training provided concrete skills for managing vicarious trauma to avoid burn out.

OCA staff continued to provide training on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and the sexual abuse prevention program Stewards of Children.

In FY14, OCA staff facilitated a total of eighteen Mandatory Reporting trainings for professionals and Delaware residents. Ms. Begley and Ms. Morales worked diligently to make



Court Judges (NCJFCJ) 76th Annual Conference, the National Association of Counsel for Children Conference on Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice and Family Law, 30th National Symposium on Child Abuse, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative Convening, National Citizen Review Panel Conference, and Criminal Justice Act Meeting and 19th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. These national conferences and required meetings often incorporated a multidisciplinary Delaware team that not only benefited from learning new legal and investigative strategies for handling child welfare cases, but also built key professional networks that enhanced the child welfare response system upon return to Delaware.

In addition to attending national conferences, Ms. Culley presented a workshop with a Delaware team at the National Resource Center for Youth Development’s Pathways to Adulthood Convening in Baltimore. This conference brought together professionals and youth from across the United States to promote positive transitions to adulthood through a variety of training sessions.

OCA staff also attended countless local trainings such as Child Abuse and Neglect 101 (CAN 101), You’ve Been Appointed, Educational Surrogate Parent, Brain-Based Parenting, Trauma/ACE Study and Ethics, and the Delaware Criminal Justice Council (CJC) Grant Writing Workshop. Ms. Culley facilitated Title IV-E training for OCA staff, and OCA partnered with CASA to provide



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FY14 Annual Report



“Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.” ~Thomas S. Monson

mandatory reporting training widely available in formats tailored to specific audiences such as educational professionals, medical professionals, and the general public. Overall, 12,415 people were trained during in-person and online

trainings. OCA also conducted eleven Stewards of Children sessions in a variety of forums.

OCA staff helped facilitate the Delaware *ChildFirst*[™] training from October 14 – 18, 2013. To ensure a robust program and updated knowledge and skills, staff also attended When Words Matter – Emerging Issues in Forensic Interviewing through the Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center. When Words Matter is training designed to extend the concepts of the *ChildFirst*[™] training program. Ms. Morales also completed the Cornerhouse Forensic Interview Update Training.

During October 2013, OCA helped facilitate Child Abuse and Neglect 101 (CAN 101) training. CAN 101 is a comprehensive day and a half workshop created by the CPAC Training Committee and Prevent Child Abuse Delaware. The training allows participants to understand the basics of child abuse and neglect, how abuse impacts our society, how the child welfare system addresses this issue, how the legal system works, and how to help families nurture children and raise them free from abuse and neglect. Ms. Culley presented on the Legal Aspects of Child Abuse and Ms. Ensslin participated as a panel member on the court process.

In FY14, several OCA staff trained with the Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc. (PIC) to become Educational Surrogate Parents (ESP) for their clients.

An ESP is an individual who has been trained and assigned to represent a child, who receives special education services, in all educational decision-making related to the identification, evaluation, educational placement and provision of special education services of the child. After attending the training, Ms. Hirst partnered with PIC to develop an ESP training geared specifically to attorneys and CASA volunteers. Ms. Hirst led these trainings with PIC to ensure that students’ educational needs are being met.

OCA assisted the Delaware Youth Opportunities Initiative (DYOI) in planning the two day Ready by 21 Summit, held in August 2013, focusing on

improvements to the child welfare system and the experience of adolescents aging out. The Summit had tracks for youth and professionals, as well as a joint track. Over 100 youth and 350 professionals attended the Summit. Youth led the planning

of workshops as well as creating public and private partnerships. Workshops included topics such as: youth involvement in court, case planning, employment, financial literacy, and housing options. Nearly all OCA staff attended the Summit, and Ms. Culley co-led training for professionals about Juvenile Expungement.



During FY14, OCA partnered with Family Court, Delaware Volunteer Legal Services, and private family

(Continued on page 8)



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Child Welfare Policy

“Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be.”

~Rita Pierson, Educator



law attorneys to develop and provide training entitled *The Family Court Called – You’ve Been Appointed*. The

attorneys. (See the Pro Bono Honor Roll on page 15). In November, Ms. Culley presented at the Delaware Supreme Court Pre-Admission Conference encouraging new attorneys to provide pro bono service.

comprehensive program, offered in each county, provided instruction regarding Family Court appointments, procedures, client expectations, trial and ethics. Many OCA staff attended the training.

Committees, Task Forces and Initiatives

In addition to providing training, OCA’s staff was highly committed to child welfare policy through a number of committees, task forces and initiatives throughout the state.

Together with DYOI, OCA, CASA and the Family Court partnered to bring The Missing Piece – Encouraging Youth Involvement in Court to professionals who represent children in Family Court proceedings. The trainings were held in each county and attended by several OCA staff as well as approximately 150 attorneys, CASAs and child welfare providers.



During FY14, Ms. Culley participated as an Executive Committee Member of DYOI. The Executive Committee made decisions about the strategic plan and direction of DYOI as a program. Ms. Culley also participated as the Co-Chair of the DYOI Policy Working Group. The DYOI Policy Working Group is designed to coordinate the policy recommendations of other DYOI

Ms. Ensslin worked diligently to educate the child welfare community about permanency solutions by presenting Best Practices for Finding Permanency for Children Experiencing Foster Care. The training was offered in four separate training sessions and available in all three counties. Additionally, Ms. Culley and Ms. Ensslin co-facilitated an Evidence continuing legal education session to help volunteer attorneys improve their skills in introducing evidence during Family Court proceedings.

working groups and make recommendations to the DYOI Community Partnership Board regarding agendas to prioritize on behalf of youth in foster care. This year the DYOI Policy Working Group welcomed Maggie Boone as the first young adult Co-Chair. An equally important task of the DYOI Policy Working Group is to teach youth how to become self-advocates and advance policy. The Policy Working Group determined that youth involvement in court and client-directed representation were priorities during FY14 and assembled committees to focus first on youth involvement in Court. Additionally, Ms. Culley participated on the Ready by 21 Summit Planning

Throughout FY14, Ms. Culley and Ms. Landis facilitated five Nuts and Bolts: Legal Representation of Children trainings. The introductory training to legal representation of children prepares attorneys to represent children as volunteers through OCA. OCA’s success is in part because of the tremendous support of volunteer



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Child Welfare Policy

*“Please don’t call me a foster child or an orphan. I’m someone’s son, granddaughter, nephew, great-grandson, sister, god-son. I am an athlete, piano player, an artist. I am an honor-roll student. And I happen to be in FOSTER CARE. Words are powerful—choose them wisely.
~WEFOSTERCARE*

Committee. Ms. Ensslin participates in DYOI as a member of the

Physical and Mental Health Working Group. The Physical and Mental Health Working Group has been working to ensure access to comprehensive, coordinated and insured physical and mental health care to youth who are in and transitioning from foster care. During FY14, the Working Group was taking steps to help youth construct a sex education and teen pregnancy prevention program that is accessible and cohesive throughout the state’s agencies.

Ms. Culley participated in a number of other committees and initiatives involving the child welfare system including the Child Death Near Death Stillbirth Commission (CDNDSC) Executive Committee, Court Improvement Project Steering Committee, Delaware Background Check Taskforce (EO42), Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA) Family Law Section, DSBA Women and the Law Section, Family Court Task Force – Open Courts, Governor’s Steering Committee, Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) Juvenile Civil Citation Work Group, Juvenile Justice Collaborative (JJC) Executive Committee, JJC Costs and Fines Work Group, and Youth Camps Group. Ms. Culley also participates on a variety of CPAC Committees including Permanency for Adolescents and Education.

Ms. Ensslin participated in a number of committees and initiatives with a focus on permanency for children experiencing the foster care system including the Interagency Committee on Adoption (IACOA), serving as the Co-Chair of that committee, the IACOA Community Education on Adoption Sub-Committee,

and the CPAC Permanency for Adolescents Committee’s Permanency Options Workgroup. As part of the Permanency Options Workgroup Ms. Ensslin developed a training on permanency options that was first presented to foster parents in May with plans to expand that training to GALs/CASAs, DFS workers, and private agency workers. Ms. Ensslin also participated on Delaware’s Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Task Force.

Ms. Hirst participated in a number of committees and initiatives with a focus on educational needs of children experiencing the foster care system including the Family Court Education Demonstration Project, the School to Prison Pipeline, and the CPAC Education Committee and its workgroups.

Ms. Morales participated in a number of committees and initiatives with a focus on preventing and tracking child death and serious injury cases in the State of Delaware. She participated on the CDNDSC Panels in all three counties, Division of Family Services’ (DFS) Advisory and Advocacy Committee, Child Abuse Committee at Beebe and Bayhealth, Stewards of Children Steering Committee, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council’s Children and Domestic Violence Subcommittee, and Children’s Advocacy Center Board Meetings. Ms. Morales also participates and staffs numerous committees and workgroups



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Child Welfare Policy

“Sometimes you are not born into the family you belong with.” ~ Jillian, youth who experienced foster care

within CPAC including Education, Training and Abuse Intervention.

Ms. Sipple began staffing and participating in the

CPAC Commission, CPAC Permanency for Adolescents Committee, CPAC Legislative Committee, and CPAC Data Utilization Committee.

Ms. Morales was re-certified as a Stewards of Children 1.0 Facilitator and Ms. Begley was certified as a Stewards of Children 2.0 Authorized Facilitator. Ms. Hirst had an article entitled Expanded Medicaid Coverage for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care published by the American Bar Association in the January 2014 issue of its publication, Child Law Practice.

Certifications and Publications

Ms. Ensslin and Ms. Williams completed and passed the Child Welfare Law Specialist Certification through the National Association of Counsel for Children and are now certified child welfare law specialists. Last fiscal year, Ms. Culley and Ms. Hirst also completed this certification. As of June 30, 2014 this is a certification that only a few attorneys hold in Delaware.

“Anyone can slay a dragon, she told me, but try waking up every morning and loving the world all over again. That’s what takes a real hero.”

ANONYMOUS YOUTH



Law Clerks & Interns

OCA benefitted from the assistance of three law clerks throughout FY14. These law clerks helped the DCAs with record reviews, memos, and preparation for court hearings. In addition, OCA benefitted from two paralegal interns and three social work interns. During FY14, law clerks and interns have contributed invaluable assistance to the OCA staff through research, policy work and record reviews.



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*“Real Parent (n.) : Any parent who is not imaginary.”
~ child from Adoption.com*

Additionally, students from Delcastle Technical High School provided videographer

services to OCA in an effort to provide online trainings for professionals. These students were given practical experience and provided an important service to OCA and the community. OCA is continuing to collaborate with Delcastle Technical High School’s program through its digital media department.

Youth Activities

During FY14, OCA continued attendance at the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meetings and supported the youth involved with a variety of activities, including attending the YAC holiday skating party. In the beginning of FY14, OCA staff supported youth from YAC as they planned the Ready by 21 Summit, the first ever two day summit offering youth and professionals specialized sessions focusing primarily on adolescents and the aging out experience. During the summit youth and professionals were able to participate in multiple workshops, many of which featured national and local experts who were able to provide a total of 32 workshops. Workshops and plenary sessions focused on areas such as adolescent brain development, preparing youth for legal hearings, case planning, juvenile expungements, employment services, and youth involvement in Court.

During September 2013, House Bill 163 also known as “Ready by 21” was signed by Governor Markell prior to a YAC meeting. The “Ready by 21” legislation requires the DSCYF to create and maintain a developmentally appropriate, comprehensive program that fully integrates independent living services from ages 14 to 21 and which

will assist youth with their successful transition into adulthood. OCA staff and other professionals worked with the youth from YAC to develop the legislation and advocate for its passage. The signing was a monumental experience for youth who were able to see that hard work and dedication can turn dreams into reality.

OCA attended the Children and Families First J. Thompson Brown Awards Ceremony to support YAC as they received the Muriel E. Gilman Family Advocate Award. YAC received the award as a result of their advocacy efforts on behalf of youth in foster care.

OCA staff also attended the Destined for Greatness Award Ceremony. The Destined for Greatness event was a tribute to National Foster Care Month. During the ceremony Delaware celebrated the many accomplishments of youth throughout the state. Over 80 youth were nominated for their accomplishments including making honor roll, finding a job, graduating high school, performing well in athletics, and other personal accomplishments. At the event youth were granted wishes for their hard work. The organization One Simple Wish partnered with DYOI to facilitate granting wishes to youth who were nominated for this ceremony. Youth were congratulated with gift cards, athletic gear and other items.



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Child Welfare Policy

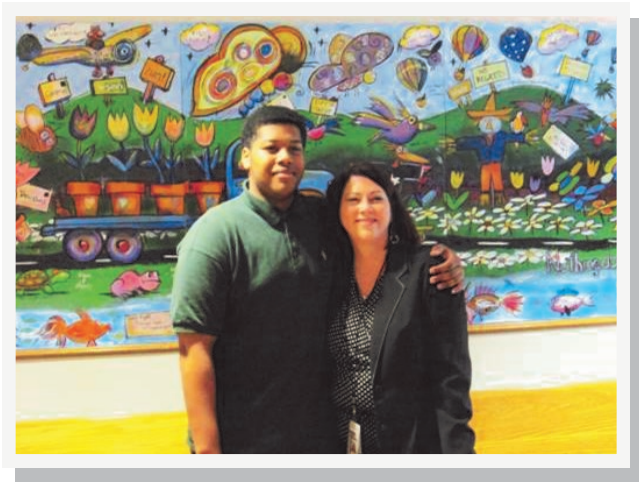


“When we first came together it was easy to do the sky because it’s just one color, but when it comes to your own inner creativity it’s a whole different thing.” G. MCDONALD, ABOUT PAINTING THE KENT COUNTY FAMILY COURT MURAL

Finally, OCA partnered with YAC and others to paint the Kent County Family Court Mural. OCA

requirements and Medicaid and social security policy matters affecting youth in DSCYF custody. In addition, OCA performed case reviews on child abuse and neglect cases referred to OCA to ensure the child welfare system is adequately protecting the children involved and to determine whether there were any breakdowns in the system’s response to the needs of those children and their families. At the conclusion of reviews, OCA completes the following: evaluate whether immediate action by the involved agency is necessary; determine whether to appoint an attorney guardian *ad litem* for the child; document policy compliance and effectiveness noted during the review; issue a letter to the appropriate agency for a response citing any policy compliance issues; and/or close the review.

was especially thankful for the partnership with the Dover Art League, who provided space to complete this mural during the week of spring break, and John Donato, the artist who assisted youth to put their thoughts and words into an inspiring mural. This mural, which hangs in Judge Pyott’s courtroom, depicts the hopes, choices and challenges faced by youth in foster care.



OCA, CASA and the Family Court continued their partnership by not only maintaining a rich database on every youth in DSCYF custody but also by reviewing representation and volunteer statistics on a regular basis and managing volunteer pools based on those reviews. OCA and Family Court have partnered in improving how attorneys are appointed to represent children in all Court proceedings as well as how OCA can serve as a resource. Standardization of Court forms and decision trees for appointments will be available in FY15. OCA and Family Court have worked diligently to improve statistics generated from all of its data and present the statistics in a user-friendly manner. OCA and Family Court regularly analyze the needed trainings for the child welfare system and have collaborated on many policy initiatives, particularly involving education and juvenile justice.

OCA Partnerships

OCA continued to meet with DSCYF to improve policies and procedures in the child welfare system, particularly those focusing on permanency, and to develop future policy and legislative agendas. Quarterly meetings with DFS help to advance issues such as case management decisions, caseloads, placements, advanced training, permanency, and system challenges. Annual meetings with the Division of Management Support Services (DMSS) were held to discuss IV-E funding



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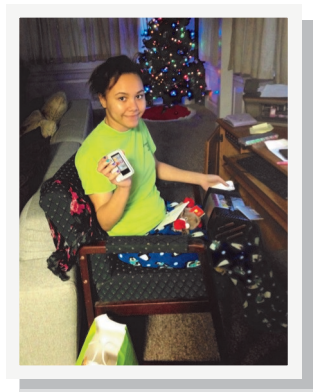
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FY14 Annual Report



Fiscal Year 2014 Grants and Donations

“Thank you for letting us go to Boys and Girls Club and I am having so much fun but the best thing is the pool.”

~ 9 year old child who attended the Boys and Girls Club Camp

Grants

In its role as staff to CPAC, OCA partnered with the Criminal Justice Council (CJC) to administer the federal Children’s Justice Act (CJA) grant funds and to coordinate the activities funded by the grant, including the *ChildFirst™* Conferences that offer training on the forensic interviewing of children. Ms. Morales continued to supervise the CPAC Training Coordinator which is funded through the grant, who took on a greater role in coordinating and implementing training activities as well as leading initiatives through CPAC. Ms. Morales and Ms. Begley worked diligently to make mandatory reporting training widely available online, in formats tailored to specific audiences such as education professionals, medical professionals, and the general public. As a result, the information is easily accessible for everyone. Overall, more than 12,000 people were trained during in person and online trainings.

During FY14, OCA was extremely grateful for the generous grant provided by Delaware Bar Foundation to support the YAC Kent County Family Court Mural Project. Members of YAC and artist John Donato of Lead Your Way Solutions painted an inspirational mural during their spring break and donated the mural to the Kent County Family Court. The mural hangs in Judge Pyott’s courtroom. OCA partnered with

Family Court, DSCYF and DYOI to plan the project and ensure youth were able to participate fully. The generous funding provided the artist, all materials, youth transportation and a modest youth stipend for youth who participated. Most importantly, the project provided youth an outlet to share hopes, choices and challenges faced by youth in foster care.

Donations

OCA received many generous donations from individuals and organizations in the community who seek to help OCA provide necessities, as well as life experiences, to the children OCA serves. These donations help ensure OCA’s clients enjoy the same experiences other children may take for granted, especially during the holidays. In FY14, community members again outdid themselves in their generous donations to OCA.

Many of OCA’s clients were “adopted” and provided with an abundance of gifts during the FY14 holiday season by organizations such as the Christiana Rotary Club through the Rotary’s Transform One Unique Child’s Heart (TOUCH Program), the Crossroads Presbyterian Church, Digital Legal, Siegel Delaware



INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN

Organizations and individuals
who donated funding
during Fiscal Year 2014
for youth experiencing the
child welfare system.



Carpenter—Walsh Inn of Court

Christiana Rotary Club —TOUCH program

Crossroads Presbyterian Church

Delaware Bankruptcy
Inn of Court

Delaware Bar Foundation

Digital Legal

Eastpoint Community Church

Melson—Arsht Inn of Court

Janice Mink

New Castle Insurance Ltd.

Siegel Delaware Jewish Community Center

Terry-Carey Inn of Court



Office of the Child Advocate

900 King Street, Suite 210 Wilmington, DE 19801
6 West Market Street, Suite 1 Georgetown, DE 19947
<http://courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate/>

Fiscal Year 2014 Grants and Donations



Jewish Community Center, New Castle Insurance Ltd. and the Eastpoint Community Church. Members of these organizations rallied to collect thoughtful,

individualized gifts from the wish lists of OCA children. Gifts included toys, games, clothes, shoes, educational items, sports equipment and apparel, electronics, art supplies, jewelry, toiletries, and more. Over 300 OCA clients benefited from the extraordinary kindness of these organizations and families.

Together, the Bankruptcy, Carpenter Walsh, Melson-Arsht, and Terry Carey Inns of Courts continued their tradition of assisting OCA to provide special opportunities and memories for children during the holidays and throughout the year by donating gifts for OCA's clients, as well as making generous monetary contributions of over \$2500. In addition, a community member has donated monies to OCA to support youth who are experiencing foster care.

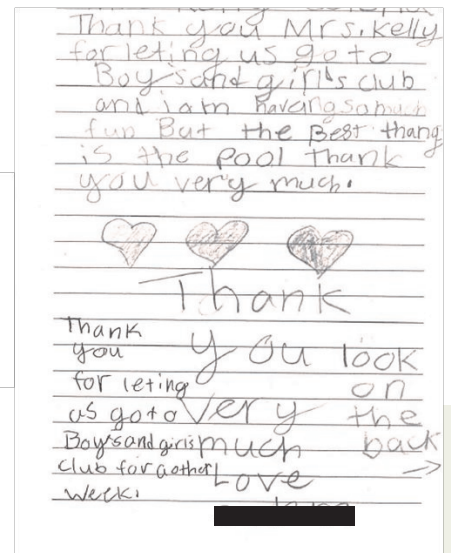
During FY14, OCA used the monetary donations from community members and agencies to help several children experience opportunities they may not otherwise be afforded while in foster care.

This summer, two sisters spent three weeks together at the Delaware Boys and Girls Summer camp. The girls were so grateful for their experience that they sent a thank you letter (see below). Initially the girls were going to spend three weeks at the camp. However, they were having such a wonderful time that they pleaded to spend an additional week. One of the girls had offered to give all of her money so that she and her sister would be able to go to camp for the additional week. To everyone's surprise and heartbreak she followed through with

sending her money – taped to her thank you letter was 34 cents (picture below). OCA could not refuse to pay for the fourth week of Boys and Girls Club camp for these special kids.

A young man desperately wanted to attend a specialized basketball camp. Another set of sisters wanted to attend Camp Arrowhead. Each of these youth were able to achieve their desires because of donated funds. Another teenage girl wanted to participate in an elite Delaware basketball team. Registration for this type of team is expensive and usually not an opportunity that a youth experiencing foster care would be able to participate in without private donations. OCA was able to contribute half of the cost of private tutoring lessons for an adolescent struggling with Algebra and in need of tutoring to ensure successful completion of the course.

Donations in the form of gift cards allowed youth to choose clothing, shoes, sports equipment and school supplies that fit their unique personalities. These are but a few examples of how donated funds were used to help OCA's clients in FY14. OCA is extremely grateful to the organizations that make it possible to continue providing Delaware's most vulnerable youth with experiences such as these.



PRO BONO HONOR ROLL



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Patrick Collins*	Andrew Golian*	Nicholas Kondraschow*	Stephen Milewski**	Leslie Spoltore**	

* represents five years of service and ** represents 10 years of service

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Office of the Child Advocate
900 King Street, Suite 210 Wilmington, DE 19801
6 West Market Street, Suite 1 Georgetown, DE 19947
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