



# Family Engagement Newsletter—

Family Engagement

Volume 2 Issue 1

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## 2011 Family Engagement Facilitator Project

In 2010, Virginia began a structured and deliberate approach to partnering with families to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth. In an effort to continue providing support for this initiative, the 2011 Family Engagement Facilitator Project is providing a unique opportunity for 42 family partnership facilitators and state staff. Participants will receive additional training, networking with other facilitators within the state, and skill building techniques to enhance their facilitation.

The Family Engagement Facilitator Project began with a Summit held in March 2011 in Henrico. A portion of training was provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and sessions covered Results Based Facilitation (RBF), cultural sensitivity in Family Partnership Meetings, and the impact of communication styles on interactions with others.



2011 Family Engagement Facilitator Project participants, trainers, and the Family Engagement Unit

To support other facilitators within the state that are not a part of the Project, participants from each region have been given the responsibility of co-ordinating training and events. By facilitating learning activities for facilitators, it is anticipated that the capacity of others to successfully implement

and practice family engagement will also be enhanced.

For additional information about activities scheduled within your region, contact Tracey G. Jackson at [tracey.jackson@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:tracey.jackson@dss.virginia.gov).



Jack Ledden, Division of Family Services (DFS)  
Director  
VDSS

## Family Support

Interview with Jack Ledden, DFS  
Division Director

**Question:** What is your vision for the Division of Family Services (DFS) in supporting family engagement?

**Answer:** My vision for DFS is

to: 1) align programs, 2) support looking at the client beyond the individual to a family unit and 3) support strengthening the family at every point of contact.

**Question:** How do you see the role of DFS in supporting local

agencies with family engagement efforts?

**Answer:** DFS has a unit dedicated to family engagement. The Division has created guiding principles to support practice, provides technical (Continued on page 3)

## Cindy McFeature Shares What is Working in the Western Region and Washington County



Cindy McFeature, Ph.D.  
FPM Facilitator & 2011  
Family Engagement  
Facilitator Project Member  
Washington County DSS

Washington County Department of Social Services (WC DSS) began Family Partnership Meetings (FPM) in January 2010 and today they are utilizing FPM at all decision points. Since implementation, they have worked consistently to identify strategies that will help to improve the process for families. Through a pilot project called "Safe at Home" WCDSS has partnered with a legal aid attorney, Elizabeth Bruzzo to provide counsel and advice to the biological parent(s) during FPM. Ms. Bruzzo utilizes a collaborative law model that assists the family in feeling supported from a legal perspective. This partnership has resulted in the family appearing to be more open to discuss custody issues with the agency.

After 25 years in the field of social work and counseling, Cindy has found FPM to be therapeutic for everyone. She embraces the fact that social workers feel validated through this process. Previously, as a CPS worker, Cindy felt like she had the burden of the world on her shoulders. Social workers have expressed that now because of FPM, they have the support around the table that they need in cases where removal may be necessary. The foster care workers have expressed how much it has helped them when making the painful decision to terminate parental rights. Cindy sees the meetings as being a "win-win" for children and families giving them a voice and allowing social workers

to have the support they need.

Cindy is also proud to be a member of the 2011 Family Engagement Facilitator Project. As a participant she has been working to build the capacity of other facilitators within the Western region. She helped to conduct the first advanced facilitators training in May of this year and the turn out from both agency and contracted facilitators was great. The most important aspect was seeing the support between the facilitators. Facilitators commented about how much it encouraged them to be a part of a group that is forging on with a paradigm shift to better support children and families. The next training, scheduled for August, will include cross training for social workers and attorneys about Family Engagement.

*"Things are going well. Our largest issue is with CPS because of additional involvement. We have brought in someone to assist in CPS cases because of the additional workload."*

—LDSS Director

*"We are using family engagement to prevent child abuse and it is the right thing to do. Family engagement is going well and we are looking to expand to Adult Services."*

— LDSS Director

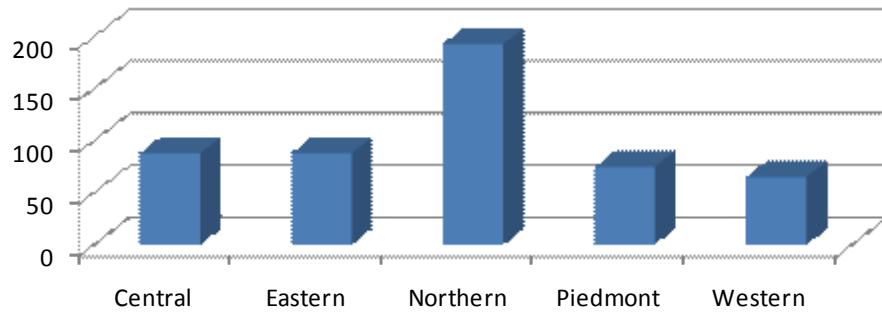


## Accurint is Here!

Through a contract with LexisNexis, the Virginia Department of Social Services is providing Accurint to each local department of Social Services. Accurint is a search tool designed to help find family members and other interested adults as a resource to children and youth involved in the child welfare system. This web-based search program analyzes billions of partial and complete records and provides a report within seconds. The tools provide people searches, address and phone number searches, and will provide workers with a real-time, comprehensive view of public records not previously available. Accurint allows an instant view of an individuals' associations and relatives to the sixth degree which will assist in meeting the requirements of the Fostering Connections to Success Act. Story continued on page 3

## Regional Notes

### Valid FPM for December 2010 to February 2011



**Virginia  
Department of  
Social Services  
Mission:**

**People helping  
people triumph  
over poverty,  
abuse, and  
neglect to shape  
strong futures  
for themselves,  
their families  
and  
communities.**

**"We are sharing a facilitator with our neighboring county. We started with one decision point and by the end of the year we are looking to expand."**

— LDSS Director"



## Fredericksburg Holds Training for Community Partners

The Court Best Practices Team hosted a training on family engagement. The following is an interview with Beth Girone, Assistant Director for Fredericksburg DSS about the event.

**How did your agency determine this training was needed?**

It was decided by the Court Best Practices Team that this type of training would be beneficial to the attorneys and parties involved in the case so they would have a better understanding of the FPM process and family engagement in general.

**Who attended the training?**

Training participants were mostly attorneys, GALs, court personnel and neighboring DSS workers, private providers and community partners (CSB, Schools, CSU)

**Who participated in planning the training?**

The Fredericksburg Court Best Practices Team planned the event and used funding from the Supreme Court Best Practices Program to fund expenses.

**Your agency facilitated a mock FPM during this training, how was that helpful?**

Participants felt that the mock FPM allowed them to

see the process fully and stated that they understood their roles much better having had the opportunity to witness an FPM in person.

**Do you think the session helped to clarify any issues for the participants?**

It explained the philosophy in a manner that helped them understand what "family engagement" is and what it means and how family engagement relates to the child welfare system and what impact this Transformation may have on them in their related field.

## Accurint continued

The use of Accurint will help LDSS improve workflow efficiency and reduce the time necessary to resolve cases, freeing up critical resources.

Accurint has had positive outcomes when used in other states including, significantly improving perma-

nency rates, up to as much as 20%, decreasing the time children spend in the foster care system by locating family members and relatives, and providing documentation of reasonable efforts to locate relatives and establish permanent connections for youth.

For additional information about the use of Accurint, contact the regional Resource Family Consultants.

## Family Support Continued

Continued from 1st page

**Answer:** assistance, training and financial assistance for localities. Every locality is different. We must know what their needs are by asking them. For example, I was approached by Frederick, Winchester and Clark to support a system of care workshop using a model that works across agencies bringing the CSB, courts, schools and DSS together. DFS is supporting this workshop and sup-

porting our goals of engaging and strengthening families.

**Question:** How does family strengthening and involving fathers fit into your vision for the DFS?

**Answer:** It is important to have fathers connected to their families. DFS seeks to support a holistic approach to strengthen families at every point of contact.

**Question:** When fathers are involved with their children, what are some of the outcomes that can be achieved?

**Answer:** Having fathers connected with their families creates safe, stable, intact families which statistically speaking, produces positive outcomes like reducing child abuse and neglect, and decreasing the likelihood of the child to experience deprivation.

## *Best Practice In Action Highlights*

**The number of valid FPM across the state increased from 340 to 514 from Quarter 1 (September–November 2010) to Quarter 2 ( December 2010–February 2011)**

**Portsmouth DSS sponsored training for LDSS in the Eastern region on Kinship Care facilitated by Dr. Joseph Crumbley**

**Family engagement facilitator project participants from the Central region hosted a Brown Bag lunch for facilitators within the Central region to discuss family engagement.**



*Do you have good news or a story idea to share? We would love to hear from you. Contact*

**Family Engagement Unit**

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## **VIRGINIA SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEMS— BEST PRACTICE IN ACTION**

Local agency directors were asked:

### **“How did your agency utilize FPM Incentive funds allocated for September–December 2010?**

“We used the funds to purchase supplies for Family Partnership Meetings such as markers, easel-pads, and administrative expenses.” – King William County

“We purchased furnishings for the FPM rooms, speaker phones for conferencing, and professionally printed “Comfort Rules” for the rooms.” – Newport News

“We purchased a monitor to enable parents during the meeting to view in a nearby room any children they had to bring with them to the meeting. We purchased a laptop computer and printer to use in the meeting room to fill out forms and other documents with everyone present and be able to print them off to give the family a copy without having to leave the meeting, thus preventing disruptions to the meeting. We also purchased a projector to be able to project things like the Principles of the FP Process, Rules of the Meeting, etc., on the wall of the meeting room while a meeting is in session.”

– Northumberland

“We used the funds to stabilize families in any way we can such as provided lodging for a homeless transient pregnant mom to sustain her during the FPM.” – James City County

“We purchased supplies to make families more comfortable during the FPM and to produce brochures to educate the community.” – Staunton-Augusta

## **Contest**

Vote on the newsletter name.

We need your help to select the name of the newsletter! Please place your vote for one of the following:

**Engaging Virginia's Future**

**Engaging Families Futures**

Send your vote to:  
tracey.jackson@dss.virginia.gov

Submit your vote by August 15, 2011.



### **Help for Older Youth for Family Partnership Meetings**

Need help with Family Partnership Meetings for older youth? If so, call Project LIFE with UMFS for assistance and additional information.

Telephone: 1-800-292-0305

[www.vaprojectlife.org](http://www.vaprojectlife.org)

Additional information about Family Engagement is available at [vafamilyconnections.com](http://vafamilyconnections.com)