



# Engaging Virginia's Families

Family Engagement

Volume 1 Issue 6

October 2012

## FPM Reviewed During Local Government Task Force Meeting

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On July 30, the Governor's Task Force for Local Government Mandate Review met to discuss 18 "unfunded mandates" which local government officials brought to the attention of this group and which were designated as needing "further study." Family Partnership Meetings was one of the items on the list. The Family Engagement Program manager was invited to make a presentation regarding this mandate and public input was solicited. Because their email addresses were readily available and turn-around time was limited, attendees of the July 2012 FPM Roundtable were invited to provide comment through emails to the Family Engagement Program, which were then compiled and provided to the Task Force.

On July 30, the Governor's Task Force moved the issue of FPMs from their list of unfunded mandates that should

perhaps be eliminated to their list of mandates to consider funding in the future.

It was clear that they weren't convinced by VDSS' 5 minute presentation; the task force members referenced the testimonials which had been provided to them by LDSS staff during their discussion.

The Task Force met again on September 17 and October 18, 2012. If you are interested in following their progress, you can access information at <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/commission-on-local-government/mandates-on-local-governments/force-for-local-government-mandates-review.html>

Thanks especially to everyone who contributed- and for what you all do for the children and families of

Virginia!!

Two testimonials which were submitted to the Task Force are reprinted here with permission.

Amanda Noell Stanley wrote: "From my perspective, the greatest strength and accomplishment of the implementation of family partnership meetings in Virginia is the increased capacity developed in the child welfare system and in families. For many of the families around the FPM table, this is their first experience sitting down with their support systems, family members, and helpers to talk honestly about what's wrong, what's right, and how to move forward better, more safely.

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### Beyond FPM

Now we're thinking about how to build on that work to strengthen our day to day efforts to engage families and to work constructively and collaboratively with all the members of the family's team. We are on the agenda in Piedmont for October 3 and in Eastern for October 22.

Additional presentations are still being scheduled. If you would like additional information, or are interested in having us come directly to you, please contact Dorothy Hollahan at [Dorothy.hollahan@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Dorothy.hollahan@dss.virginia.gov) or Em Parente at [Em.parente@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Em.parente@dss.virginia.gov)



The Family Engagement Program is teaming up with the Continuous Quality Improvement Unit to provide some resources and tools to supervisors about building a local practice which routinely incorporates family engagement and teaming. We're doing great work families through FPMs.

## 2012 Community Days in the Commonwealth



Rev. Dr. Clifford Barnett (Left) and Stephen Blythe, Eastern Regional Director (Right)

A Community Day is an opportunity for staff representing public/private collaborations to network and increase the awareness of resources and services in the community. The Eastern Region held its second annual Community Day at the Marriott City Center in Newport News, Virginia on September 20, 2012. The theme was “Reaching Out: Strengthening Families while Building Broad Community Collaborations.” Approximately 165 people from both public and private agencies attended.

The Northern Region is



FPM incentives for March to May 2012 were distributed on September 26, 2012. Each qualified FPM received \$112. It is important to enter FPM information

planning to host its first Community Partner Day on November 1, 2012 at Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Potomac Conference Center 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. This event will be an exciting opportunity for staff from community partners in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Manassas City, Manassas Park, and Prince William Counties to come together to learn, share, and network. Our VDSS Practice Model states, “We

believe in partnering with others to support child and family success in a system that is family focused, child centered, and community based.” Participants will learn about our VDSS Practice Model and how it relates to family engagement efforts that help strengthen families and communities. The cost is free and lunch will be provided to attendees for the Northern Region Community Day. Registration is required. For additional information—email Sandy Bell at [sandra.bell@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:sandra.bell@dss.virginia.gov)

### FPM Incentives

into OASIS correctly and in a timely manner. Some additional information regarding FPMs may sometimes be necessary because information reviewed

for FPMs is viewed on a paper PDF format and not in OASIS. If you have questions please forward them to:

[tracey.jackson@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:tracey.jackson@dss.virginia.gov).

### VA Strong Family Foundation



[www.facebook.com/VaStrongFamilyFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/VaStrongFamilyFoundation)

A movement in Virginia is afoot. Connecting fathers and reconnecting fathers with families is one of the tenets of the Strengthening Families Initiative in Virginia. To assist with this effort a public/private partnership was formed. The VA Strong Family Foundation is made up of individuals who have received training focused on understanding the

needs of fathers and includes developing services for fathers, working with fathers, and having fathers see the importance of accepting responsibility for their children. The training also teaches methods to promote a positive identity for participants, having participants increase their parenting skills and their ability to become sufficient while taking control of their lives. One way to

create a strong family is to help the individuals in the family. Another way is to create a partnership to provide support groups and training in your area. VA Strong Family Foundation can help you to promote fatherhood efforts in your area. For additional information on the VA Strong Family Foundation please visit the Facebook page.

**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.***



Cindy McFeature, Ph.D.

## Kinship Matters

Welcome to the newest regular column of the Engaging Families Newsletter. In Virginia, kinship care is defined in Code as the “full time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives.” Kinship care can be formal or informal. In informal kinship care giving arrangements, children are not in state custody and the Department of Social Services may not be involved. Sometimes care giving relatives take custody of the children they are caring for, sometimes the arrangement is not formalized in any way through court. In Virginia, the practice of diversion refers to families making a plan for chil-

dren to be safely cared for by alternative caretakers- often relatives- in order to avoid having the child enter foster care. In these instances, the informal kinship care arrangement is generally considered temporary, and the DSS may stay involved to monitor the situation and/or provide services. In a formal kinship care arrangement, or kinship foster care arrangement as it is often referred to in VA, the child is in the Department’s custody and the relative caretaker is an approved foster parent.

In order to make the best decisions for children, we must always

consider kinship care options when a child cannot safely remain in their own home. We know that children who remain with family experience significantly less trauma than do children who are removed from their own homes and placed with strangers. Additionally, code and policy require that family members be informed when removal is being considered and that relatives be considered first when placing the child out of the home. However, Virginia’s kinship foster care numbers remain very low.

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### 2012 Facilitators’ Round Table– Featured Facilitator

Cindy McFeature, Ph.D. was a presenter at the 2012 Facilitators’ Round Table held in July. Her workshop was entitled, “The Telling of the Story – Advanced Skills for FPM Facilitators and Social Workers in Family Partnership Meetings.” Key components of her presentation discussed developing trusting relationships through compassion, respect, demonstrated respect, genuineness, neutrality

and leadership. Dr. McFeature discussed how one might move through the FPM process or an interview process with the client asking questions that invite the client to tell their story. As the client opens up and begins to share their story, it is possible to note core themes and patterns. She recommends considering the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual life domains. One out-

come of using this or a similar process is that allowing a person to tell their life story is cathartic in itself. A second is that the themes and patterns can be built upon to create a nuanced, individualized family action plan. Cindy McFeature has participated in several advanced training for FPM Facilitators and is a trainer for CWS4030. Her presentation slides can be obtained by contacting Tracey Jackson.



**Kinship  
Care**

*Kinship  
Care*  
FAMILY RESOURCES



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In this column, we hope to provide useful information and resources regarding both informal and formal kinship care. We will highlight promising practices and share success stories. VDSS is committed to supporting the work done by the LDSS to engage extended family members and support kinship care giving families.

The National Resource Center on Permanency provides many useful resources regarding kinship care. Dr. Joe Crumbley is a national expert on kinship care who has worked extensively in Virginia.

## Kinship Matters

The following link will connect you to a webcast of an interview with Dr. Crumbley about kinship care. Although the interview is lengthy, the material covered is best practice. <http://www.nrcpfc.org/webcasts/17.html>

Additionally, on the NRC website you can find a Kinship foster care tool kit: <http://www.nrcpfc.org/toolkit/kinship/introduction.htm>

We hope you will find this offering and future columns helpful.



Dr. Joe Crumbley



## FPM Reviewed During Local Government Task Force Meeting

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It is the best kind of training that we can do with professionals and with family—it is training through practice. Family Partnership Meetings allow families to engage in assessment, brainstorming, evaluation, problem-solving, and conflict resolution—all very high-level skills that are needed in safely parenting a child. FPMs create a safe place for families to begin to learn these skills through practice and to take seriously their rights and responsibilities as a parent—all while in a supported, non-blaming environment.” Statement was provided by Amanda Noell Stanley, Owner of TwoChair Solutions and

FPM Facilitator.

Christian Volz wrote, “Family Partnership Meetings and the philosophy inherent in their implementation have reduced the number of children coming into Foster Care significantly. This is the result of bringing the family and their supports to the table and finding solutions to issues, which prevent children coming into care. For those children already in care the Family Partnership Meetings have resulted in a more cooperative union of families and DSS staff to address issues with children/youth and their families and bring about timelier reunification of families. I would submit that both preventing children from coming into care

and returning children home from care faster serves to eliminate far more red tape than going back to having twice as many children in the care and custody of the state. Statistics across the state in both large jurisdictions and small show a drop in the number of children coming into care since the implementation of this model. It would be simplistic to state there are no other causes but Family Partnership meetings are a major reason for the change and provide the positive philosophical framework for this to continue.” Statement provided by Christian Volz, Family Group Conference Coordinator, Loudoun County Department of Family Services.

## BEST PRACTICE IN ACTION

### *Best Practice In Action Highlights*

Family engagement is a prerequisite for helping the family achieve its goals and it doesn't only happen during FPMs. The following list is taken from the Child Welfare Information Gateway . Key elements of family engagement include:

#### *Family Engagement Program*

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- Listening to each family member
- Demonstrating respect and empathy for family members
- Developing an understanding of the family's past experiences, current situation, concerns, and strengths
- Responding to concrete needs quickly
- Establishing the purpose of involvement with the family
- Being aware of one's own biases and prejudices
- Validating the participatory role of the family
- Being consistent, reliable, and honest
- Engaging & involving father and paternal family members
- Engaging kinship families

Find more about family engagement at:

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/famcentered/casework/engagement.cfm>

The Family Engagement Toolkit from the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections is an online tool through which promising practices, programs and resources are made available. Additional information can be viewed by using the link below.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections  
Family Engagement Toolkit

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/fewpt/index.htm>