



THE FLASH

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Excitement Builds as CPAC Annual Conference Date Approaches

By Barbara Kutscher, Burlington CPR Board and CPAC Program Committee Co-Chair

The CPAC Program Committee is finalizing the roster of speakers and workshops for the 2010 Annual Conference. This year's theme, "The CPR Compass: Setting a Course for Permanency," reflects our strong commitment to providing a program that will enhance our members' case review skills and help them navigate the complex universe of child welfare practice and regulation.

This year's workshops feature a roster of fine presenters such as our keynote speaker, Bill Stanton, who will discuss foster care from the children's perspective. Other topics include: the Traumatized Child in Care; Placement Prevention Efforts in New Jersey and Navigating the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act.

Stanton is a remarkable individual who has dedicated his career to the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, within which he has worked as an administrator, trainer, and practitioner for over 25 years. He is an alumnus of foster care, a former foster parent, and an adoptive parent.

Stanton received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the State University of New York at Albany in 1981 and began his career as a juvenile probation officer. He worked for the Arizona court system from 1988 to 2006. As division director of Dependent Children's Services for the Arizona Supreme Court, Stanton was responsible for oversight of the following programs: Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA); Foster Care Review Board (FCRB); the Court Improvement Program (CIP) and the Parent Assistance Hotline Program. He provided technical assistance to state legislators and other policy makers to improve the Arizona child welfare system. He also conducted training for probation officers, law enforcement officials, court staff, and child welfare personnel.

Stanton is employed as a consultant and senior technical specialist with ICF/Caliber Consulting. He provides support to the National Review Team (NRT) in conducting Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) to assure compliance with Title IVB and Title IVE of the Social Security Act. He is an expert on the interaction between juvenile courts and public child welfare agencies, and he works to enhance collaboration between the two. He also provides training and technical assistance to states in addressing child welfare and court issues.

Stanton is a member and past chairman of the Board of Foster Care Alumni of America. He has received numerous awards for his work in the field of child welfare, including the Foster Care Alumni of America Vision Award in 2008 and the Casey Family Programs Ruth Massinga Award in 2007.

Stanton travels nationwide, delivering an upbeat and inspiring presentation in which he reflects on his experience in foster care, what it taught him, and what he sees now that he travels as part of the CFSR process. He reminds his audiences, particularly those involved in citizen review, "that even the simple things we do as reviewers, can have a huge impact on a foster child's life."

Stanton's workshop will focus on the perspective of children in care. He asks, "Did you ever stop to consider what youth in care think about our decisions?" This presentation will provide a first-hand look at what youth across the country are saying about their foster care experiences: what they like, what they dislike and what they wish to see changed. Stanton also will discuss ways in which to address issues including, but not limited to, sibling visitation, court hearings and changes in placement.

The CPAC Program Committee is excited that Stanton has agreed to join us on April 17. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to do the same.

It's tax time and New Jersey residents can help prevent child abuse by checking the box on Line 58 of their state income tax return. A check on that line means support for the Children's Trust Fund (CTF), a fund that supports prevention programs throughout our state. Go to nj.gov/dcf/home/sponsor.html to donate throughout the year. For details on this program, go to njchildrenstrustfund.org.

Volunteer View ...

SAVE THE DATE

CPAC Annual Conference

**The CPR Compass:
Setting a Course for Permanency**

Saturday, April 17, 2010

**Middlesex County Fire Academy
1001 Fire Academy Dr., Sayreville**

Keynote Speaker: Bill Stanton

Please see the article on this page for more details.

Registration materials will be distributed soon.

Online registration will begin in March at njcpac.org.

Meet Earl Fleming: Gloucester CPR Volunteer

By Nancy Leibold, Chair, CPAC Publications Committee

It is always a pleasure to learn more about the Child Placement Review (CPR) volunteers who serve throughout New Jersey. Earl Fleming from Gloucester County has been a CPR volunteer for eight years. He serves on the Juvenile Conference Committee and is a municipal court mediator, among other community activities. In 2007, Fleming was honored as Outstanding Volunteer for Gloucester County by Vicinage XV of the New Jersey Judiciary. But in the past few months, he also was recognized for a contribution that was literally a matter of life and death.

During the Vietnam War, Fleming served as a member of the Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. In October, President Barack Obama honored this unit with the Presidential Unit Citation for its actions in March 1970. This is the nation's highest honor for a military unit. As President Obama explained in his speech, this citation is awarded for "gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions." The president also noted, "Since its creation during the Second World War, it has only been bestowed about 100 times."

The March 1970 event involved Charlie Company, which had encountered an underground bunker of North Vietnamese. These 100 American soldiers were outnumbered by approximately four to one. About 200 men of Alpha Troop moved out to rescue their fellow soldiers in what one member of Charlie Company described as "a miracle." As the president stated:

"And so, ultimately, this is a story of what soldiers do – not only for their country, but for each other: the troopers who put themselves in the line of fire, using their tanks and vehicles to shield those trapped Americans; the loaders who kept the ammunition coming, and the gunners who never let up; and when one of those gunners went down, the soldier who jumped up to take his place."

It is difficult to find the right words to thank those who so dedicate themselves, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. On behalf of CPAC, we recognize and thank Earl Fleming for his military service that touched all of us in ways we don't even think about. And we thank him for his current service that touches so many children and families. Take a few minutes to read the president's speech to get a full appreciation of the honor that Fleming and his unit received. It can be found at soldiersperspective.us/2009/10/20/obama-awards-presidential-unit-citation-to-a-trp-1st-squadron-11th-acr/.

Office of the Child Advocate Issues Report on Parent-Child Visitation

By Nancy Leibold, Chair, CPAC Publications Committee

The New Jersey Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) released a report in January that discusses facets of parent-child visitation after children have been removed. The title of the report is *Protecting and Promoting Meaningful Connections: The Importance of Quality Family Time in Parent-Child Visitation*.

The OCA investigated visitation programs and practices throughout New Jersey, and programs in other states. They interviewed national experts and other child welfare professionals to compile the most current information on what is working most effectively in the state and nationally. The report addresses how parents, legal guardians, resource parents, caseworkers and others must ensure that the visits are child-focused.

The research results discussed in the report point to visitation as one of the most meaningful factors when determining whether children will be reunited with their families. The report details various aspects of visitation, including basing the length and frequency of visits on the age of the child; providing visitation in a supportive environment that is conducive to putting parents and child at ease (visits in the local DYFS office were considered the least desirable); ensuring that parents understand the importance of visitation in maintaining the bond with their children and learning and demonstrating improved parenting skills.

The report also points out the importance of the opportunities for child welfare professionals to gain information from parent-child visitations. It describes the time before, during and after the visits as significant opportunities to observe and assess family dynamics. For example, the time transporting children to and from visits is an opportunity to find out how the child feels about the visits. The transporting individual needs to be skilled at talking with children in matters of this nature. The information available from the visitation can guide the worker, the court and others in assessing the needs of the child and whether services are effective.

The OCA recognizes the progress made by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) in the establishment of the case practice model that emphasizes family engagement, as well as the fact that caseloads have decreased. The report notes that the federal monitor's review and the federal Child and Family Services Review indicate that improvement is still needed in areas related to parent-child visitation.

This report provides valuable insights into the dynamics of successful visitation and its far-reaching effects on the family. Child Placement Review volunteers will gain information that will help them ask more appropriate questions of caseworkers, parents and resource families regarding visitation. The report is available at njcpac.org.

The FLASH is edited by the CPAC Publications Committee, Nancy Leibold, chair.

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