

JULY 2012

A Message from the Executive Director

Each month I have been providing an update on where the agency is regarding the progress in the Olivia Y. Settlement and implementation of new practices, policies and procedures toward the goal of improved services to the children in our custody. Also the Department of Justice Consent Decree, TANF Work Program, SNAP payment accuracy, Child Support collections and program activities in our other programmatic divisions: Community Services, Aging and Adult Services and Early Childhood Care and Development, have received a lot of print and rightfully so since they deliver the services directly to our customers.

There is another group of people that work very hard behind the scenes to provide the infrastructure and support that the programmatic divisions need to accomplish our mission of serving our customers. The Divisions of Budgets and Accounting, Human Resources/Administrative Services and Management Information Systems provide the equipment, finances, personnel and systems that are required to maintain our organization and they do it in an exemplary manner.

The Division of Program Integrity ensures that our contractors and subgrantees provide services in accordance with the law and the terms and conditions of their contracts. They also recover hundreds of thousands of dollars for the taxpayers by investigating fraud in the SNAP

program and provide the basis for local and federal authorities to prosecute violators and close down stores that are engaged in trafficking.

The Office of Attorney General staff assigned to MDHS handles all of our termination of parental rights, freeing up children for adoption and a better life. They also review all of our contracts to ensure that all legal aspects are properly addressed. They represent us in court in employment issues and other types of litigation.

The Offices of Communications and Consumer Services represent the agency on a daily basis to elected officials, the press, our customers and the public in general.

Social Services Block Grant provides the funding that provides services for both children and vulnerable adults.

I just felt the need this month to recognize these dedicated, hard-working people in our support divisions. We couldn't do it without you!

I hope everyone enjoys the remainder of the summer. When we are back together next month, school will be back in session and everyone will be anxiously anticipating football season.

"See" you next month!

Richard A. Berry
Executive Director

Oakley Youth Development Center Gains Full Accreditation



OYDC Science instructor Vincent Houseworth works with students to ensure they understand how science plays an important role in our lives.

The **Oakley Youth Development Center, Williams School**, was recently awarded full accreditation from the **Mississippi Department of Education**.

This historical institution has its roots in the 1920's and began as a home for delinquent African-American youth. The **Mississippi State Federation of Colored Women's Club** upon seeing the need for a special facility, lobbied the state legislature in the 1930's to enact a law to establish a training school solely for the purpose of rehabilitating young black men who had run afoul of the law. Oakley was later established in 1942 and opened in 1943 to serve this population

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of youth who were adjudicated delinquent. Williams School, the educational arm of the institution, was named for the first superintendent at Oakley, the Reverend G. W. Williams.

OYDC is comprised of approximately 1,200 acres in rural Hinds County and currently houses students of all races, boys and girls, who have been adjudicated delinquent through the Youth Courts. The student population on campus is currently 47 boys and 5 girls, ages 10-17. Their average length of stay at the facility is from 16 to 24 weeks.

The psycho-educational program offered at the institution is designed to build basic concepts of self-discipline, self-worth, personal responsibility, attention to detail, a sense of urgency and respect for constituted authority. Students are placed in academic and vocational classes at Williams School according to their previous school placement and additional scholastic evaluations. This enables students to continue their educational advancement during their commitment at the facility. Along with academic courses, there are five vocational courses offered to further habilitate students and help them achieve successes once released. Vocational classes offered are: welding, small engines, custodial maintenance, building trades and computer technology.

To achieve full accreditation at Williams School, additional teachers were added, staff attended rigorous trainings and workshops, student assignments and assessments were evaluated and advanced technologies were implemented in classrooms.

The progress at Williams School will ensure that education at OYDC is an integral and rewarding part of all students' rehabilitation. The staff is excited about its advancements, improvements and maintaining the full accreditation of its educational program, while offering quality education to the students under their care.

APHSA "Our Do'ers Profile" Spotlights MDHS Executive Director

MDHS Executive Director Rickey Berry was recently featured in the *American Public Human Services Association's* bimonthly publication, Policy & Practice under the "Our Do'ers Profile." APHSA is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization representing appointed state and local health and human service agency commissioners. APHSA is the only association of the nation's top government human service executives, including states, the District of Columbia, and the territories, their key state program managers and hundreds of county-level human service directors nationwide. A copy of the article is available online at: http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/pdfs/pr_other_aphsapolicy.pdf. Congratulations Mr. Berry on this national recognition.

Franklin County Honors Long Time Employees



Franklin County Director Nancy Butler (center) recently presented Certificates of Appreciation to Virginia Priest (left) for 35 years of service and to Catherine Lowe Butler (right) for 20 years of service. These frontline workers are so important to our agency and we thank you ladies for your dedication and devotion to the people of Mississippi.



Jaclyn Buford, OYDC counselor works with students in a variety of settings and helps them transition to life at the institution. Students can take part in art, gardening and a number of other extracurricular activities while on campus.



Energy Assistance Available to Low-Income and Elderly Mississippians

Hot Mississippi summers send electricity bills soaring, but help is available. The Mississippi Department of Human Services, **Division of Community Services** is pushing federal dollars down through local community action agencies to help the elderly, disabled and low-income Mississippians beat the heat.

The **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program** provides financial assistance to eligible households to help pay the costs of home energy bills and other energy-related services.

During extreme weather conditions, low-income elderly residents or people living in poverty should not have to choose between cooling or heating their homes and buying food or prescriptions. Since two-thirds of families receiving LIHEAP assistance have incomes of less than \$8,000 a year, the program clearly assists those who need help the most.

Since January 2012, over 30,000 Mississippians have received assistance with their energy-related bills through LIHEAP. With more hot weather in the forecast, \$13 million in federal LIHEAP funds is available to meet the energy needs of low-income Mississippians.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for assistance, contact your local service agency.

Some money-saving tips include:

- Turn the hot water heater down to below 120 degrees.
- Cook on the lowest burner setting; consider using the oven only in the evenings.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed on hot days.
- Raise the thermostat to 78 degrees or more to decrease your air conditioning bill.
- Replace AC filters once a month.
- Use ceiling fans to maximize your AC's effectiveness.
- Wash your clothes in cold water; don't over-dry your clothes and if possible, hang clothes outside to dry.

Lee County Combats Bullying

Before the school bell rings this fall, northeast Mississippi teachers had the opportunity to sharpen their skills in combating child abuse and bullying at a free conference.

SAFE, Family Resource Center Child Advocacy Center and the Mississippi Department of Human Services partnered to offer "Equipping Educators Today for Student Success" July 27 at the MDHS building in Tupelo.

"Educators are a vital part of helping to fight child abuse," said Shelia Nabors, regional community partnership coordinator with MDHS. "We want to break those cycles."

Educators sat in on workshops covering the signs of child abuse and neglect, bullying and trauma and its impact on student achievement.

The conference also gave teachers a much needed treat with a session on taking care of yourself that included mini massages.

"If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of the children," Nabors said.

The federal government has also launched an initiative to stop bullying. On the website **Stopbullying.gov**, bullying is defined as: unwanted, aggressive behavior among school- aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated over time. Both kids who are bullied and those who bully others may have serious outcomes from this destructive behavior.

Cyberbullying is another form of bullying but is becoming more and more prevalent with kids' increased access to electronic technology such as cell phones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles.

LIHEAP - Energy Assistance for those in Need

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program - LIHEAP is the **Division of Community Service's** most well-known and highly utilized program. LIHEAP provides financial assistance to eligible households to help pay the cost of home energy bills and other energy related services. Benefits vary depending on the intensity level and are based on the rating tool. Households may qualify for regular LIHEAP assistance and/or the Energy Crisis (emergency) Intervention Program (ECIP) for natural gas, wood, electricity, liquid petroleum propane/butane gas and other energy related services. The allocation of funds to subgrantees is based on the percentage of poor households in each county compared with the state's poverty level according to the current census data.

- For more information, go to: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap/brochure/brochure.pdf>
- To access the online pre-application, go to: <https://virtualroma.mdhs.ms.gov/>
- For a list of service agencies in Mississippi, go to: http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/pdfs/pr_LIHEAP2012.pdf

★ *The Oakley News Flash* ★

D. Montie Moore, Jr. is the new Volunteer Services Coordinator for **Oakley Youth Development Center**. Montie comes to Oakley with several years experience in fundraising and volunteering having devoted time on the Board of Directors for the **Mississippi Boys Choir** and the **Mississippi Chorus** where he served in many positions including President-Elect. Welcome aboard!

The Behavioral Incentive Program at OYDC received a boost recently when **Paul Moak Automotive** donated \$250 for the program's store. This very generous donation will help us stock the shelves with items the youth may purchase with "Oakley Bucks," which are earned for good behavior. This program is invaluable in reinforcing good behavior exhibited by youth in our care at Oakley.



The Employee of the Month Program at OYDC has recently received some gifts to be given as part of the programs award package. **Sneaky Beans** in the **Fondren** neighborhood of Jackson has donated two gift cards and a tshirt. Another great

package came from **Delta State University** that donated a wonderful collegiate items which included a tshirt, mug, folio, pen, luggage tag, cap, 2011 Christmas ornament, autographed baseball by Delta State and Boston Red Sox legend, **Dave 'Boo' Ferriss** and a "Fighting Okra" bumper sticker.



Fastest Growing Crime in the U.S. - Identity Theft

Identity theft has been called America's fastest-growing crime problem by the FBI.

If you don't really know what identity theft is all about, it's what happens when a thief "becomes" you by stealing your financial identity and using it to benefit themselves. Less-sophisticated crooks will use your credit cards to go on a buying spree - more sophisticated ones will use your personal info to get a fake driver's license, take out car loans, open bank accounts or even use your identity when they get arrested.

Some tips to protect yourself include:

- Safeguard your Social Security Number. Don't print it on any ID or carry it on you or in your wallet and avoid using it as a personal identifier if at all possible. Remove it from your driver's license.
- Be Careful with Your Mail. Opt out of pre-approved credit card offers and insurance by calling 888-5OPT-OUT or by logging onto optoutprescreen.com. If you write checks for credit card payments, only use the last 4 digits of your account number.
- Protect Your Trash. Things you throw out, such as credit card bills/offers, bank statements, etc., all contain valuable personal information. Buy a shredder and use it.
- Order your credit report at least once a year from each of the three major credit bureaus and review them for inaccurate or suspicious material.
- Place passwords on your credit card, debit card, bank, phone or other accounts you have.
- Clean out your wallets and carry only the ID cards, and credit cards that you absolutely need.
- Update your computer virus software regularly. For more information on protecting your identity, go to: **Consumer Protection, Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood.**

To report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, call:
Mississippi Centralized Intake

1-800-222-8000

www.msabusehotline.mdhs.ms.gov

You can remain anonymous.
Just don't remain quiet.



Retirements

Lori Woodruff



A number of celebrations were held for retiring Deputy Administrator for Family and Children's Services Director Lori Woodruff (From left: Cindy Greer, Tammy Miller, Woodruff and Mike Gallarno). Her sweet smile and gentle spirit will be missed. Lori came to MDHS in September 2008 and worked tirelessly to bring the division forward through many reforms and challenges. Her leadership and vast knowledge of child welfare created many positive advances for the care of vulnerable children taken into state custody. With a career of over 28 years of child welfare experience, Lori's passion and dedication brought many new leaders to the agency and leaves behind a legacy of positive role models for the division and the children we are charged to protect. Lori, we truly appreciate your years of service to the children at risk in Mississippi.

Hazel Funchess



Hazel Funchess retired from state service after 14 1/2 years at MDHS. Hazel was an integral part of the Division of Human Resources team. Hazel always made time to stop and share a kind word, smile or laugh. Her sweet spirit will be missed. Thanks so much for all your help throughout the years and your great attitude that you shared with us all. Best wishes on your next chapter of life.

Mary Jefferson

A celebration was held in honor of retiring Copeiah County Director Mary Jefferson. Mary's celebration was all decked out in her favorite color, purple and even the staff's clothing picked up the color



scheme. Mary served the state faithfully for 32 years and she will be greatly missed at the Copeiah County office.

Linda Broadway



Linda Broadway retired after 33 plus years in state service. Linda was a dedicated worker, took her job very seriously and did it well too. Linda served the Tate and Tunica County offices as the clerk/bookkeeper. She will be missed very much. Congratulations Linda!

Margaret Woodward



Margaret Woodward retired with 35 years of state service. For over 26 years she served as a training coordinator for the Division of Child Support Enforcement. A lady with many interests outside of work, Margaret is sure to be a busy bee now that she's free. Best wishes.



Big Heart? Apply to be a Social Worker

Many changes have been made at the Mississippi Department of Human Services, **Division of Family and Children's Services** to improve the processes and procedures in place that address child safety and placement. But a sign of the tough economic times we live in today brings an increased need for the services provided by the agency.

Increased stress on families brings a rise in reports from the public on the agency 24-hour child abuse and neglect hotline, **Mississippi Centralized Intake** (1-800-222-8000). In State Fiscal Year 2011 Centralized Intake received a record 46,192 calls. That increased need demands an increase in the number of frontline workers.

"We need qualified social workers to help protect vulnerable children," said Mike Gallarno, director of MDHS, DFCS.

The division currently has employment opportunities statewide, especially in the three coastal counties and Hinds County where hiring incentives are being offered to help attract qualified applicants.

Gallarno said, "The bar is set high. The expectations and responsibilities are enormous. And although the need is great, the rewards are high; to make a difference in the life of a child or to help restore a family in crisis can't be measured. Our services are focused on safety, permanency, and well-being for vulnerable children and families."

The agency works in conjunction with Governor's Job Fairs, along with traditional advertising to fill positions throughout the state. While Gallarno acknowledges that DFCS is working to fill the vacancies, he notes that working with abused and neglected children is difficult.

"These jobs are some of the most difficult jobs in public service but might become the most challenging job that you will ever love," said Gallarno.

For more information on how you can join the Mississippi Department of Human Services and make a difference in the life of a child, call 601-359-4999 or go online to the Mississippi State Personnel Board Job site at: <http://www.mspb.ms.gov/>.



Accept the challenge
to make a difference
in the life of a child!

Consider a career in Social Work.

*Join the Mississippi Department of Human Services
Division of Family and Children's Services.*



For more information call
1-601-359-4999

To apply for a job online, go to:
<http://www.mspb.ms.gov/>

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds. • More than five children die every day as a result of child abuse. • Approximately 80% of children that die from abuse are under the age of 4.
(Information from www.childhelp.org)

County Corner - Spotlight on Humphreys, Issaquena and Itawamba Counties



Humphreys County is located in the Mississippi Delta region. Its county seat is Belzoni. The county is named for Benjamin G. Humphreys. **Belzoni** was named for the 19th century Italian archaeologist/explorer **Giovanni Battista Belzoni** by Alvarez Fisk, a plantation owner. Fisk admired "The Great Belzoni" so much that he named his plantation for this Italian showman, engineer, and explorer of Egyptian antiquities.

Humphreys County was named the **Catfish Capital of the World** in 1976 by then **Governor Cliff Finch** because it produces more farm-raised catfish than any other U.S. county. The county has a total area of 431.16 square miles of which 40,000 acres are underwater and used to grow catfish. About 60% of U.S. farm-raised catfish are grown within a 65-mile radius of the county seat, Belzoni. Belzoni is known for the World Catfish Festival held every April.

The **U.S. Census** noted that there were 9,375 people living in Humphreys County in 2010, down 16.3% since the 2000 Census. Humphreys County has the seventh lowest per capita income in Mississippi and the 56th lowest in the United States.

Notable residents of the area include: **Lawrence Gordon**, film producer and former president of 20th Century Fox and American International Pictures; **Don Gorton**, Commissioner, Massachusetts Appellate Tax Board; Madolyn Hardy, first Miss Mississippi in 1934; **Elmore James**, blues guitarist; **Denise LaSalle**, blues singer; **Ethel Wright Mohamed**, 'Grandma Moses of Stitchery'; **Pinetop Perkins**, blues musician; **Monroe Swan**, Wisconsin State Senate; **Jean Terrell**, R&B and jazz singer, replaced **Diana Ross in The Supremes** in 1970; **Herb Washington**, track and field athlete and Major League Baseball player; **Annette Polly Williams**, Wisconsin State Assembly; **Sonny Boy Williamson II** aka Rice Miller, blues Harmonica player; and **Benjamin Swan** State Representative in Massachusetts and Chairman Black Legislative Caucus.

Issaquena County is a river county located in the Mississippi Delta and was formed under the Second Constitution (1832-1869), March 23, 1844, from the southern portion of Washington County. Issaquena County was named for the Choctaw Indian word meaning "deer river." As of 2010, the population was 1,406. In population, it is the smallest county in Mississippi. Its county seat is **Mayersville**. The county is highly based on agriculture and has a total area of 441.36 square miles.

The 2010 U.S. Census counted 1,406 residents in the county, down 38.2% from 2000. Issaquena County has the second lowest per capita income in Mississippi and the 36th lowest in the United States with the median income for a household in the county of \$19,936.

Mayersville had 613 residents in 2010 down from 795 in 2000.

An interesting published fact is that just before the Civil War, Issaquena County had the highest concentration of slaves at 92.5%; 115 owners held 7,244 slaves.

Notable residents from the area include: **Muddy Waters**, blues musician; **Eliza Winston**, a slave who gained her freedom while on vacation with her owners; and **Unita Blackwell**, civil rights leader, mayor of Mayersville 1976-2001 and the first female African-American mayor in Mississippi.

Itawamba County is located in the northeastern part of the state. As of 2010, the population was 23,401. Its county seat is **Fulton**. It was named for the Chickasaw leader **Levi Colbert**, who was also known as Itawamba. Colbert (1759-1834) was a leader and chief of the Chickasaw in the American Southeast. Colbert was called Itte-wamba Mingo, meaning "bench chief." He and his brother George Colbert were prominent interpreters and negotiators with **President Andrew Jackson's** appointed negotiators related to the tribe's ceding its lands and moving west of the **Mississippi River**.

The county has a total area of 540.42 square miles. As of the 2010 U.S. Census, there were 23,401 residents, up 2.8% from the 2000 census. The median income for a household in the county was \$31,156.

Founded in 1836 from the **Mississippi Chickasaw Cession**, the beautiful hills and valleys were primarily settled by hardy pioneers from the hill regions of other southern Appalachian states. This hardy independent pioneering spirit has survived for generations creating a unique place in Mississippi.

Notable residents include: **Tammy Wynette**, American country music legend who was born near Tremont and **Delphia Spencer Hankins**, an American supercentenarian, was born in Itawamba County and 111 years old when she died in October 2007.

Next month, we'll take a look at Jackson and Jasper Counties.



Neshoba County Investigation Ends in Arrest

On June 21, 2012, investigators from the MDHS, Office of Special Investigations and the **Neshoba County** Sheriff's Department made an arrest in Philadelphia of a local store owner who was charged with trafficking Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Justin Dewayne Wilcher was arrested at the Laural Hill Cash and Carry, located at 10101 Road, and charged with the fraudulent exchange of \$5,042.26 in SNAP benefits for cash or ineligible items.

In Neshoba County, 23.3% of the county's residents are SNAP clients, representing over \$9.7 million in benefits that are issued each year. "Greed by a few has cost the honest, low-income families and elderly a local grocery store that can accept their EBT cards. This crime penalizes all who may have used this local shop for eligible EBT food purchases. The trickle down effect of SNAP trafficking is huge, particularly in rural small-town Mississippi. The crime affects the whole area," said MDHS investigator Frank Saddler. "We want store owners to know that we are watching them and if they choose to scam the system, they will be caught."

SNAP trafficking investigations are aimed at preventing the illegal use, transfer or trafficking of SNAP benefits, with the focus of investigations on retailers who are authorized to accept benefits through EBT purchases but instead exchange benefits for cash and/or ineligible goods such as non-food items. Retailers arrested for trafficking are not only charged with the crime but lose eligibility to accept any future EBT benefits at that store location. Further, clients who participate in trafficking are charged and potentially lose their benefits. All can face fines and jail time.

Local residents can help spot possible fraud in their grocery stores. The small "mom and pop" grocers are usually the type of stores targeted by those trying to defraud a system in place to help those who are at risk of food insecurity, such as the elderly and children. If you suspect a store or client is misusing benefits, call the Fraud Hotline at 1-800-299-6905. SNAP fraud is a crime.

DFCS News Flash

The Office of Continuous Quality Improvement would like to welcome Diane Mobley as the new MACWIS Director for DFCS. We are excited to have Diane here to continue MACWIS current work and help move us into the new MACWIS system development project. Diane comes to us with 23 years of Information Technology experience with the **Division of Medicaid** (DOM). She has many years experience with application development and the majority of her years have been managing and building the network at DOM. Diane has already hit the ground running with analysis on our network and ways to improve system performance, specifically connectivity for improving log-in times. Diane, welcome to MDHS!

Go Direct for Safe Access to Federal Payments

Introduced in June 2008, the Direct Express® card has helped more than 3 million Americans – two-thirds of whom did not have traditional bank accounts when they signed up for the card – to safely and easily access their federal benefit payments. The U.S. Treasury Department urges everyone to switch to the Direct Express® card or direct deposit well ahead of the March 1, 2013, deadline for all federal benefits to be paid electronically.

"For four years, millions of senior citizens, people with disabilities and other Americans who lack access to traditional banking services have used their Direct Express® cards to pay bills, withdraw cash and make purchases without worrying about their paper checks being lost or stolen or paying check-cashing fees," said David Lebryk, commissioner of the Treasury Department's Financial Management Service.

Social Security check recipients can sign up for direct deposit or the Direct Express® card by calling toll-free 1-800-333-1795, visiting www.GoDirect.org or talking to their local federal paying agency office. The process is fast, easy and free.

Do You Have a Facebook or Twitter Account?

Social networking is one of the many ways we stay connected with our friends and family. We also use it to find out what's going on in the world. "Like" the Mississippi Department of Human Services Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/msdhs> or follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/MS_DHS to stay up on the latest happenings at MDHS.

Mississippi Department of Human Services monthly newsletter, The BEACON.

For information or to submit articles, contact Julia Bryan, Beacon Editor and MDHS Public Information Officer at: julia.bryan@mdhs.ms.gov or phone 601-359-4517.

*To mail photos or articles, send to: PO Box 352, Jackson, MS 39205-0352
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