



# NJ DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*To ensure a better today and even a greater tomorrow for every individual we serve*



*In partnership with New Jersey's communities, DCF will ensure the safety, wellbeing and success of New Jersey's children and families*

## *Annual Agency Performance Report*

*July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012*

Allison Blake, PhD, LSW - DCF Commissioner

Chris Christie - NJ Governor

Kim Guadagno - NJ Lt. Governor

[www.nj.gov/dcf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf)



## Commissioner's Message

Dear Colleagues,

I'm sure many of you are wondering why we are releasing our FY 2012 Performance Report so close to the end of FY 2013. Although we found ourselves delayed by the impact of Superstorm Sandy over the last several months, we continue to believe it is important to provide insight to our stakeholders and staff regarding our performance during FY 2012.

As you know, during 2011 the Department of Children and Families undertook an ambitious planning process that culminated in the development of a Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2014. The Strategic Plan provides DCF with a roadmap to help the Department achieve its mission of ensuring the safety, well-being and success of children, youth, families and communities in New Jersey. I am pleased to provide you with DCF's Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Agency Performance Report which highlights our work and progress organized around the five strategic priorities featured in our Strategic Plan: Seamless System of Care, Performance Management and Accountability, Communication, Partnerships, and Organizational Development.

As this report reflects, we are proud of the significant efforts we made in Fiscal Year 2012. Each and every day our staff works diligently to honor our commitment to help the women, children and families we serve achieve a better today and an even greater tomorrow. Your partnership in this endeavor sustains us.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Blake". The script is fluid and cursive.

Allison Blake, PhD, LSW  
Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Children and Families



## WHO WE ARE

Created in July 2006, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families is the first Cabinet-level department devoted exclusively to serving and safeguarding the most vulnerable children and families in New Jersey. Through the following divisions and offices we strive to provide an integrated array of services that strengthen families and communities in order to keep our children and youth safe:

- Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS)
- Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS)
- Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships (DPCP)
- Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU)
- State Central Registry / Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (SCR)
- Office of Licensing (OOL)
- Office of Education (OOE)
- Office of Adolescent Services (OAS)
- Office of Advocacy (OOA)

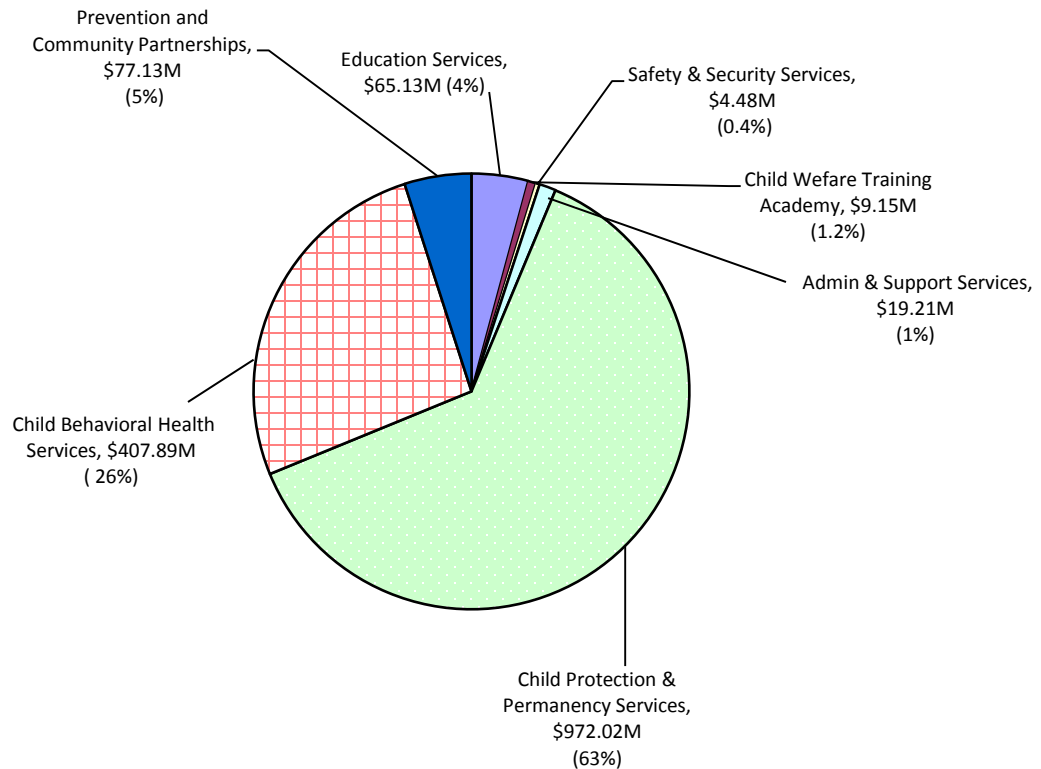
Approximately 6,700 dedicated employees carry out the work of DCF guided by these values:

- We value the unique strengths, needs and abilities of all individuals.
- We achieve positive outcomes through individualized, family-oriented, child and youth centered services.
- We foster healthy relationships that promote safety and well-being for children, youth, adults and families.
- We are ethical, fair and transparent in all that we do.
- We are culturally aware, informed and responsive; we value and respect diverse traditions, heritages and experiences.
- We work in partnership with individuals, families and the community, as well as with other state departments and within DCF, to build connection, strength and success.
- We are professional, highly-trained and committed to the communities we serve.
- We provide excellent customer service so anyone can easily find and access services when needed.
- We provide innovative solutions aligned with community needs.
- We are accountable to our partners, ourselves and the communities we serve.
- We are good stewards of the resources entrusted to us.
- We continually seek to learn and correct ourselves when needed to provide the very best solutions for children, youth, individuals and families.
- We recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with our system.
- We listen to and communicate openly and honestly with the community and with our partners.

## HOW WE WORK

DCF strives to incorporate the best thinking of its partners, providers and staff to achieve positive results for the children and families we serve. As a learning organization we are committed to transparency, to accountability and to providing appropriate services geared towards keeping children in their own homes, communities, and schools. DCF's current priorities focus on improving family engagement, expanding our network of family strengthening programs, managing outcomes by data, developing a trained workforce and developing added services and supports for youth aging out of the system.

### Fiscal Year 2012 Appropriations for DCF: \$1.55 Billion



## WHAT WE DO

In 2011 the Department of Children and Families undertook an ambitious planning process that culminated in the development of a Strategic Plan for 2012-2014. This Strategic Plan provides DCF with a roadmap to help the Department achieve its mission of ensuring the safety, well-being and success of children, youth, families and communities in New Jersey. DCF's Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Agency Performance Report highlights our work and progress organized around the five strategic priorities of our Strategic Plan.





## Seamless System of Care

In 2011 DCF provided services to children, youth, women, and families through a broad range of strengths-based services including school based youth services, behavioral health services, domestic violence programs, and life skills training for youth.

### SEAMLESS SYSTEM OF CARE

Providing ease  
of access to care  
for children,  
youth, and  
families

#### Adolescent Housing Hub (“The Hub”)

“The Hub” is an online reservation system for Adolescent Transitional Housing Programs created in April 2012 by DCFs’ Office of Adolescent Services in collaboration with PerformCare. With the deployment of “The Hub” DCF’s housing programs are now accessible to all DCF involved youth and youth that are homeless and non-DCF involved. This vital effort was undertaken to maximize access and coordination of housing options for youth and young adults in the state of New Jersey, with the ultimate goal of assisting youth to achieve self-sufficiency and transition to adulthood.

#### Task Force on Helping Youth Thrive in Placement

DCF is committed to ensuring that children and youth have the opportunity to maximize connections with the special people in their lives and to fully participate in their schools, neighborhoods and communities. In June 2012 DCF convened the Task Force on Helping Youth Thrive in Placement (HYTIP) charged with studying these opportunities and making recommendations for improvement. As a part of this process HYTIP identified areas where focused

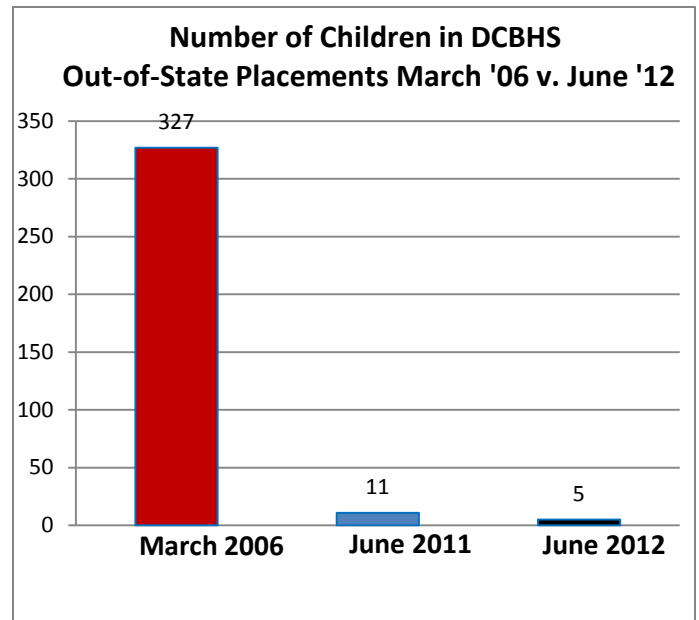
attention is needed -- such as licensing, training, and resource availability -- and work groups were established to begin infusing this critically important work into DCF’s practice.

#### Expansion of DCF’s Home Visiting Program

In 2011 DCF received a \$9.43 million federal grant to strengthen and expand its Home Visitation Program which provides services to families challenged by complex health-related and/or social problems. This program focuses on young families who are at risk for abuse and neglect with primary prevention and early intervention services for pregnant women and children up to age five. Federal funds are being used to expand DCF’s current network of nationally recognized evidence-based home visiting models that strengthen families. These programs promote infant/child health and development, nurture positive parent-child relationships, facilitate parent resilience, build social/community connections, and provide linkages to needed resources and supports that have been shown to improve maternal and child health, family functioning and stability, child/family well-being, and prevent child neglect and abuse.

## State Residential Alternatives for Youth with Behavioral Health Challenges

The Division of Child Behavioral Health (DCBHS) works diligently to provide a full continuum of out-of-home treatment alternatives for youth with behavioral health challenges. Research shows that treatment is more effective when it is provided as close to a youth's home community as possible allowing for more regular family participation in treatment, increasing youth's ability to regularly participate in family therapy and therapeutic home visits, and increasing the likelihood that the youth can remain in school. Recognizing this, the Division has invested resources to develop high quality treatment programs in the state of New Jersey. As a result of these efforts, DCF achieved the incredible accomplishment of reducing the number of children receiving out-of-home behavioral health treatment outside the state to just 5 children as of June 30, 2012.



## 2011-12 OOE Student Graduates

The DCF Office of Education serves approximately 1,150 students from ages 3-21 on any given day in a variety of educational settings including public and private schools as well as in its own Regional Schools throughout the state. Education is a key childhood experience which supports the growth and development of all youth on the path to adulthood and self-sufficiency. Every society needs educated citizens to solve life challenges and become productive members of their community. Many students' life circumstances create significant challenges to educational achievement placing them at risk of school failure. The DCF Office of Education is proud to share that 198 of its students earned a high school diploma for the 2011-12 school year, overcoming the many challenges placed in their path. This achievement opens the door for future educational and career opportunities for these young adults.

## Seamless System of Care Highlight

*In 2011 DCF received a \$9.4 million federal grant to expand home visitation services to help at risk families with an array of health and social services.*



## Performance Management & Accountability

DCF strives for continuous quality improvement and is committed to sustaining measurable reform. Through a data-driven approach, DCF incorporates the best thinking of New Jersey's child welfare stakeholders, child welfare professionals and the families served to identify and quantify strengths and challenges in developing a sustainable self-monitoring system. In 2011-2012 DCF continued its commitment to performance improvement and transparency, and to assuring that DCF's formal accountability systems are part of its ongoing quality improvement work.

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Ensuring the  
integrity and  
quality of DCF's  
system of care

#### Office of Performance Management and Accountability

In 2011, the Office of Continuous Quality Improvement was renamed the Office of Performance Management & Accountability (OPMA). The OPMA functions as a centralized hub for nearly all of the department's quality assurance and continuous quality improvement activities. The Office manages DCF's Qualitative Review and ChildStat processes, houses the Department's Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit, staffs the child and domestic violence fatality/near fatality review boards and handles the licensing functions of child care and youth mental health programs and adoption agencies. The OPMA also coordinates targeted reviews for department-wide practice issues and partners with the federal monitor on qualitative and record reviews as needed. It is the goal of the OPMA to bring transparency and accountability across the system to improve outcomes for all children and families served by DCF.

#### Qualitative Review

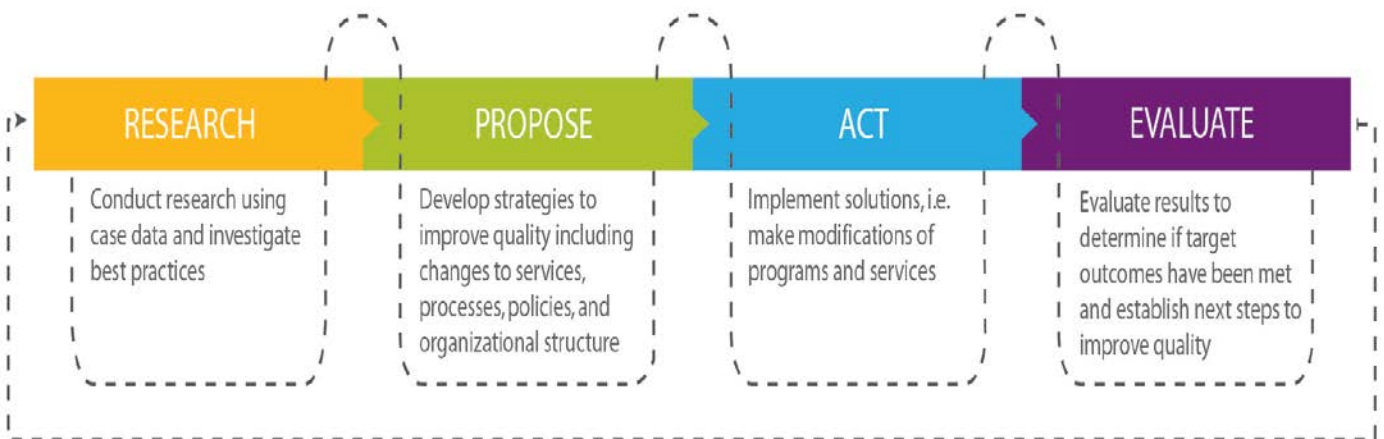
Qualitative Review (QR) is a powerful data tool used by DCF to monitor progress and improve work. This process began with a pilot program in 2010, followed by the first comprehensive QR conducted in 2011. The 2011 QR review took place in 16 of New Jersey's 21 counties and included over 1,600 interviews regarding 190 children / youth. Each county was assessed on 20 indicators in two main areas – Child & Family Status and Practice Performance. QR results help the Department determine areas where progress has been made as well as areas in need of improvement. DCF received an overall rating of 58% in the Practice Performance category. Areas in need of improvement included indicators such as case planning and teamwork formation and functioning. DCF's overall Child and Family Status received a rating of 91% and demonstrated the significant progress DCF has made in the core areas of safety, stability, and well-being.



## ChildStat

The purpose of ChildStat is to encourage a culture of learning at DCF through self-reflective and self-diagnostic processes. ChildStat uses a case conferencing model where cases are used to carefully review practice, policy and procedure from a systems perspective and to identify specific steps that can be taken to enhance practice. Through the ChildStat process gaps in community resources have been identified as have internal resources needed for increased monitoring of compliance such as reports from the data system. In 2012 ChildStat was modified to include additional data points for parent/child visitation or “family time” as well as data on Family Team Meetings and information on the county’s Qualitative Review process. This modification helped provide additional focus on two practice areas needing improvement statewide: visitation and teaming. This change also helped DCF further link quantitative and qualitative data together in an effort to further the understanding that compliance and quality are of equal importance.

### Continuous Quality Improvement Process



### Performance Management & Accountability Highlight

*In 2011, the Office of Continuous Quality Improvement was renamed the Office of Performance Management & Accountability (OPMA). The OPMA functions as a centralized hub for nearly all of the department’s quality assurance and continuous quality improvement activities.*



## Partnerships

DCF strives to build a culture of partnership and shared responsibility among the public and community stakeholders, including the families DCF serves. Key components of this effort are strengthening and broadening DCF's stakeholder base and fostering a mutual understanding of the roles and competencies of DCF and its external stakeholders.

### *PARTNERSHIPS*

Collaborating with stakeholders and community partners to improve outcomes for New Jersey's children, youth, and families.

#### **Family Success Centers**

DCF's statewide network of 42 Family Success Centers (FSC) serve as gathering places for families in their own communities where they can go to make life-long social connections, obtain information, receive support to achieve the goals they set for themselves or volunteer and give back to their communities. Family Success Centers bring together concerned community residents, leaders, and agencies and serve as "one-stop" shots to provide wrap-around resources and supports for families before they find themselves in crisis. Core services provided at every FSC include: access to information on child, maternal and family health services; economic self-sufficiency/employment related services/income security services; life skills training; housing related services; parent education; and parent-child activities. FSC's are a vital part of the community, as evidenced by the 61,755 people who received services at FSC's in Fiscal Year 2012. In 2011-2012 DCF also reached a milestone with the opening of ten new Family Success Centers representing a significant expansion in the reach and impact of this important program.

#### **Help Me Grow NJ**

In 2012 New Jersey was one of three states awarded a Technical Assistance grant by Help Me Grow (HMG) National Replication Center. The grant was used to bolster DCF's capacity to support infant and young children's healthy development. The HMG system is an evidenced-based model that was created to assist states in identifying at-risk children, identifying the gaps in and barriers to services and linking children and families to the services and programs they need.

#### **Joint Task Force on the Co-Occurrence of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence**

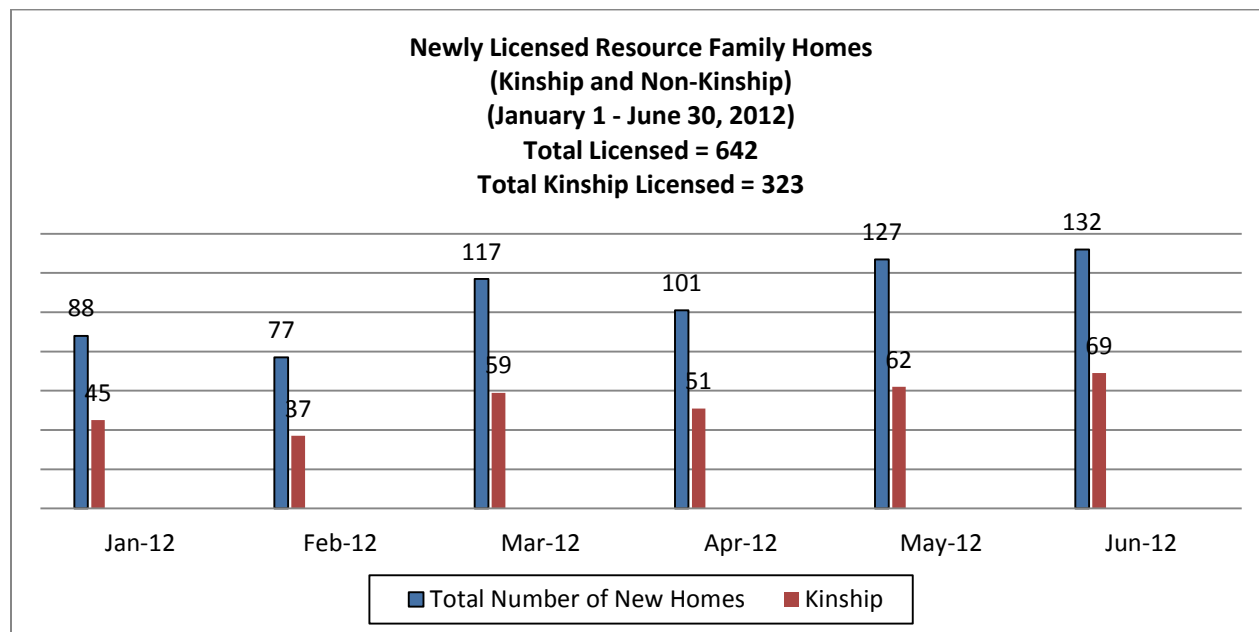
The Joint Task Force on Domestic Violence and Child Abuse was reconvened in order to refocus attention on the co-occurrence of child abuse and domestic violence and redouble the efforts of all state partners, including DCF, the Administrative Office of the Courts, domestic violence providers and other community partners. The reconvened Joint Task Force began meeting in September 2012 to review policies, procedures, training and support, with the ultimate goal of offering recommendations for service delivery, policy and programs to reduce the co-occurrence of child abuse and domestic violence.

## All Children-All Families

All Children-All Families (AC-AF) is a nationwide recruitment initiative launched by the Human Rights Campaign's Family Project. It was created to increase the number of qualified foster and adoptive families for children in care by educating the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community about opportunities to be foster/adoptive parents. The main focus of AC-AF is to promote policies and practices that welcome and support LGBT prospective parents by educating and engaging the LGBT community about opportunities for foster and adoptive parenting. Improving the cultural competence amongst DCF staff that recruit, develop, train and support resource families is also an important component of the AC-AF program. In November 2011 DCF became the first state child welfare agency to earn a Seal of Recognition by the AC-AF Initiative.

## Kinship Caregivers

New Jersey has long recognized that appropriate relative caregivers, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or close friends, are the next best alternative when a child cannot live with a parent because of abuse or neglect. For this reason, New Jersey has been licensing kinship caregivers since 2005, providing them all the supports and services that foster parents receive. During the time period of January 1 – June 30, 2012, 323 (50%) of DCF's 642 newly licensed Resource family homes were kinship homes, outpacing the national average of 26%. This accomplishment reflects DCF's progress and commitment to exploring kinship care as the first placement option for children in foster care.



## Partnerships Highlight

*In 2012 DCF empowered and strengthened more than 61,755 families through the state's network of 42 neighborhood based Family Success Centers.*



## Organizational Development

DCF is dedicated to providing training and other opportunities so that employees can successfully achieve organizational goals and objectives.

### ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continually examining and preparing DCF structurally, in alignment with the mission and strategic plan

#### Case Practice Model

The Department of Children and Families' (DCF) case practice model defines who the agency serves, identifies the expected outcomes of these services, and is the guiding principle and expectation of the organization. The case practice model defines how DCF expects children and families to be treated and how they and their natural support networks will be engaged in the decisions affecting their safety, permanency and well-being. The underlying tenants of the model are quality investigation and assessment; engaging youth and families; working with family teams; individualized planning and relevant services; continuous review and adaptation; and safe and sustained transition from DCF Involvement.

In 2012 DCF successfully completed Case Practice training in each of the DCF's Local offices throughout the state of New Jersey. This practice change reflects the guiding principles of DCF's day to day work with children and families. DCF's partners in the training program included the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group and the NJ Child Welfare Training Partnership.

#### Focus on Supervision Training Program

In January 2012 DCF launched Phase II of the Case Practice Model: Focus on Supervision. Focus on Supervision was created in response to staff identified needs and is designed to build on the progress DCF has already made while creating the opportunity for additional professional development and practice enhancements. As the name implies, Focus on Supervision is aimed at strengthening the supervisory role in case conferencing – through a process that reinforces DCF's commitment to Teaming.

Focus on Supervision begins with the pairing of DCF case work supervisors to a clinical social work supervisor in a community agency. These partners attend a two-day training on a "Grand Rounds Case Conferencing" model that envisions inclusion of all of our clinical team members (i.e., DV Liaison, Clinical Consultant, Substance Abuse Consultant, Child Health Unit) as well as staff responsible for the cases presented during Grand Rounds. Supervisors are included in the second day of the two day training.

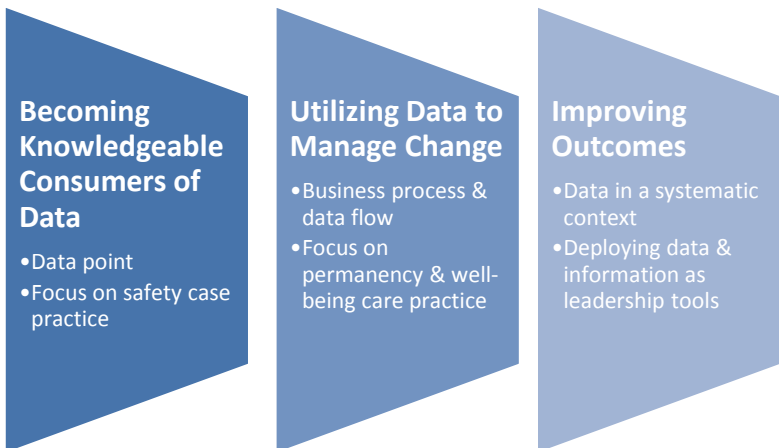
## Violence Against Women Certificate Program

In June of 2012, forty staff from DCF graduated from the Violence Against Women Certificate (VAWC) Program at Rutgers University's School of Social Work, Center on Violence Against Women and Children. The VAWC Program is designed to provide advance practice training for staff who have demonstrated an interest and aptitude for working with families where domestic violence is an issue and further develop the capacity of DCF to employ best practice when dealing with family violence.

## Data Fellows Program

DCF's Data Fellows program was initiated in 2011 with a goal of providing intensive training to DCF staff including new analytical and presentation skills. As a part of the program participants worked in small groups to examine, in depth, areas where data pointed to potential areas for improvement in practice such as cases with multiple referrals or cases with children in placement for longer periods of time. In June 2012, 93 DCF staff graduated from the Data Fellows program. The result has been the development of a data driven group of staff, primarily at the local or area office level, who have added an important new dimension to DCF's vision to imbed quality improvement efforts throughout the Department.

### DCF Fellow Series Overview



## Organizational Development Highlight

*In 2012 DCF successfully completed training on the Case Practice Model in each of the Department's Local offices throughout the state of New Jersey.*



## Communication

Ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of communication is a top priority for DCF. DCF also strives to develop and implement methods that produce effective two-way communication with partners, providers and the community.

### Communication

Enhancing the effectiveness of communication with employees, partners, the media and the general public

#### Website launch

In recognition that DCF's website serves as an extraordinary communication tool to reach its stakeholders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, a decision was made to enhance its effectiveness through a much needed redesign and update. As a result, in June 2012, a newly redesigned website ([www.nj.gov/dcf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf)) was launched to capture the essence of DCF's strategic direction, increase search engine optimization and ensure more user-friendly navigation features such as streamlined links to news, divisions and offices, automated forms and the ability to select any of seventy-one (71) languages. DCF has worked diligently to create a site that is user-friendly and easier to navigate, yet still comprehensive and all-inclusive of the programs and services offered by DCF. While proud of the redesigned website, DCF recognizes that websites are always a work in progress and the Department will therefore continue to refine, upgrade and enhance website content on an ongoing basis.

#### Adolescent Services

Incorporating the youth voice into the work of DCF is a top priority. In 2012 DCF took a major step toward achieving this goal with the launch of a YouTube video entitled: *Keeping Your DYFS Case Open Until 21: The Experiences of Young People Like You*. The video -- produced in conjunction with Rutgers University and Terek Pierce, 23, a Rutgers student who aged out of the DYFS system at age 18 -- explains the benefits of youth keeping their DYFS cases open until age 21 so they can continue to receive voluntary services such as mentoring, housing, educational, and financial assistance.

#### YAB Art Event

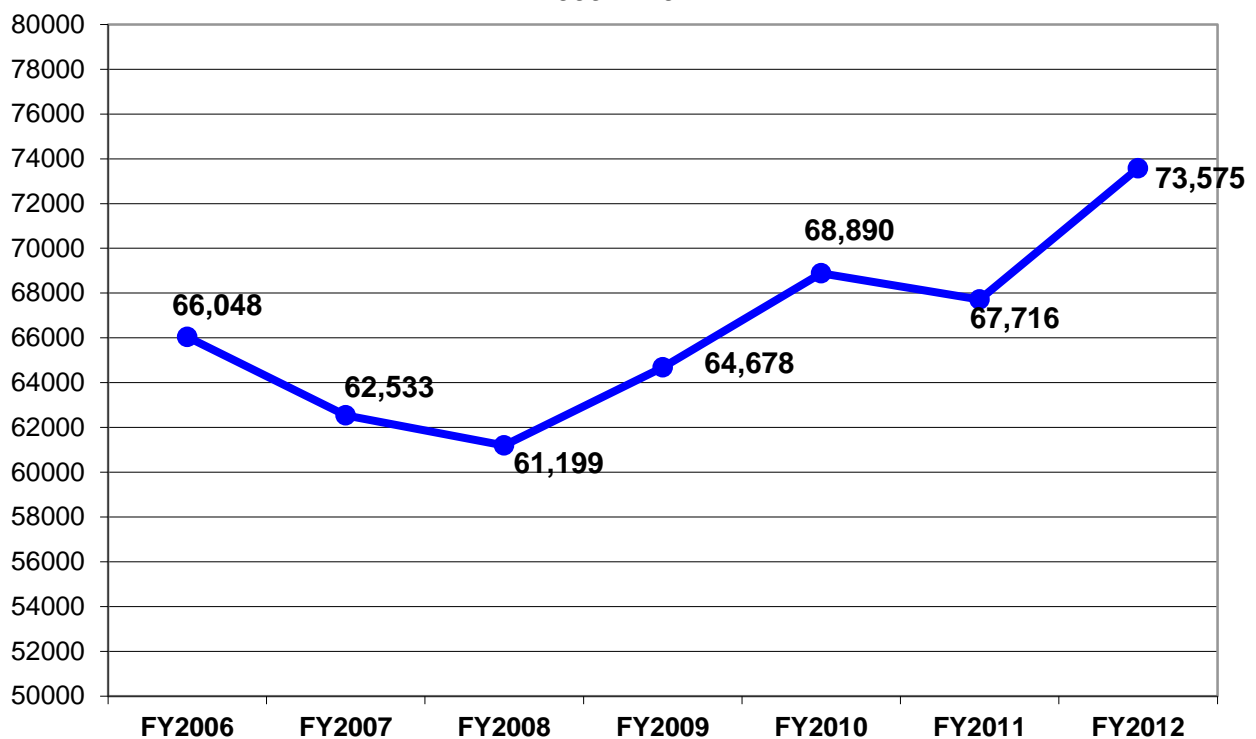
In November 2011 the Middlesex Youth Advisory Board hosted its first art exhibit in New Brunswick. The exhibit featured paintings, drawings, sculptures, poetry and other written works created by over 24 young artists that are or had been involved with DCF's Division of Youth and Family Services. These young artists submitted interpretations of their work, as well as recommendations on changes that they felt should be made to DCF. DCF Executive Leadership attended the event and spoke directly with these youth to hear about their experiences and suggestions for improvements to child welfare policy and practice.

## Hotline Calls to State Central Registry

The State's child abuse and neglect hotline, also known as New Jersey's State Central Registry (SCR) is a 24 hours per day, seven days per week state-of-the-art call center that is the public's single point of entry to DCF. Screeners at SCR determine the nature of each caller's concerns and initiate the appropriate response. This function also includes receiving calls about and investigating allegations of abuse and/or neglect in institutional settings (e.g., resource homes, schools, shelters, detention facilities, etc.). DYFS local offices employ investigative staff to follow-up on the calls as appropriate and a regionally organized Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) is responsible for investigations in institutional settings. In Fiscal Year 2012, more 73,000 calls to the hotline were referred to DYFS local offices for investigation or follow-up. DCF experienced an increase of approximately 6,000 referrals from Fiscal Year 2011.

### Hotline Referrals to all DYFS Local Offices

FY2006-FY2012



### Communication Highlight

*In 2012 DCF successfully launched its first YouTube video entitled: Keeping Your DYFS Case Open Until 21: the Experiences of Young People Like You.*



*Constituents can call the DCF Office of Advocacy at 877-543-7864  
with any questions regarding DCF programs and services*

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