



# OSWEGO COUNTY

## Department Of Social Services

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### **INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM**

- Subject:** Annual update from the Oswego County Child Protective Advisory Council.
- Purpose:** To provide the Health & Human Services Committee and the Oswego County Legislature with an update of the activities performed by the Child Protective Advisory Council (CPAC) through June 2011.
- Summary:** The Oswego County Child Protective Advisory Council (CPAC) has been functioning since March 2010. During the past year, CPAC has established its mission, by-laws, and guiding principles. CPAC worked diligently on creating realistic and time focused goals and objectives (*see attached*) that target community outreach and education, evaluation of preventive and early intervention strategies, and the evaluation of existing resources and new programming that can promote and sustain child safety and well being in our community. CPAC has adopted the slogan of: ***“Our County, Our Children, Our Future, It’s Our Responsibility”***.

Goals and objective of CPAC were completed in early 2011. An action plan for community outreach and communication (**Goal 1**) was developed. The plan included the following:

- Creation of a series of community forums across the county
- Develop clear guidelines for forums to maintain focus on positive change; a script of questions was created for use in all forums. Included were:
  - Why should we talk about protecting children?
  - What should be our expectations for the care of children?
  - What factors impact a parents’ ability to care for children?
  - As a community, where do we start?
  - What are we lacking? What tools do we need? What resources?
  - How do we develop a strong community?
- Facilitators and forum hosts were selected
- Selection of information and materials to be distributed to participants
- Locations were determined: Pulaski, Scriba, Fulton, Central Square
- Dates were determined: April 5, April 13, April 28, May 3
- Possible follow up with participants was discussed & plan developed

At the monthly CPAC meeting on May 5, the forums were reviewed and it was determined that the first effort was successful. Community attendance was somewhat light, with provider and school representatives making up more than half of all audiences. The following were common themes and concerns from the forums:

- Increasing “lack of community” in our towns and villages. Residents isolate, are fearful, don’t get involved
- Laws should be improved, greater penalties
- Lack of knowledge about what community can do to help
- Feeling that agencies or police will not respond
- Lack of mentors in our communities
- Poverty, hunger, adequate housing, transportation
- Children have no supervision, no jobs, no meaningful activities
- Alcohol & drugs are increasingly a problem
- Parent education and support system needed

During each forum, CPAC asked participants to sign in and provide the council with an email for future follow up. Part of this stage of Goal 1 is to establish ongoing dialog and information sharing. Seventy-eight (78) participants provided CPAC with emails and a list serve was established. Within one week of the conclusion of the forums an on line survey about the forums was sent to the participants. The following was learned:

- 78 surveys were sent, 22 surveys were returned = 28% return
- 18.2% of those attending described the forum as excellent
- 77.2% described the forum as good or fair
- 4.5% described the forum as poor
- 57.9% of participants desire more information in the future
- Comments included:
  - Give us more details on what child protective can and can't do
  - Bring in lawyers and law enforcement to describe the laws
  - Valid ideas and concerns presented. Who will carry them out?
  - Seems like a lot of talk and little action
  - I would like to see another forum on building communities.
  - How will the weak position of DSS be changed?
  - Bring CPAC to school events
  - Too many DSS workers at the forum

An additional item recently forwarded to forum participants was the Community Resource Directory maintained by the Youth Bureau. This resource was requested at several forums.

Additional areas of focus for CPAC Goal 1 will include:

- Continuing to build a partnership with the community through participation in school district open house and community events
- Developing outreach around the community directory updates
- Identifying and sharing community resources
- Problem solving around access to community services
- Sharing CPAC goals with the community
- Quarterly communications with identified participants

Another topic of interest to CPAC has been the possible implementation of the Family Assessment Response (FAR) model in Child Protective Services. Beginning as a pilot project in Tompkins and Onondaga Counties in 2008, the FAR model was recently signed into law and determined to be optional for the local districts. Training is currently occurring in Madison, Cayuga, and St. Lawrence Counties. FAR is a differential response model to SCR reports and is not intended for cases of serious abuse and neglect. It is intended as an early intervention for less intensive cases focusing on early family engagement in services to increase opportunities for stabilizing outcomes and to prevent recidivism.

In June, 2011, Dr. Marshall Marshall reached the end of his term as Council Chair. Karrie Damm, Executive Director of the Child Advocacy Center was unanimously recommended and elected to fill the position. Jeffrey Grimshaw, Interim Director of Business and Community Relations at SUNY Oswego was elected Vice Chair. Additionally, Superintendent of the Sandy Creek School District, Stewart Amell, resigned his position on CPAC. Dr. Marshall and Mr. Amell were thanked by CPAC and Commissioner Lanigan for their contribution and hard work.

**Next Steps:** Goals 2 & 3.

**Recommended** The Child Protective Advisory Council respectfully recommends approval by the Health & Human Services Committee and the Oswego County Legislature of Ms. Damm and Mr. Grimshaw in their new positions, and would further recommend the assignment of Frances Lanigan to the position held by Mr. Stewart Amell.