

David Paterson, Governor ~ Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner

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OCFS ISSUES CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION TO OUTSTANDING PSA WORKERS

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has issued Certificates of Recognition for Excellence in Providing PSA to caseworkers, supervisors and teams of PSA staff.

OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrion has stated that " Protective Services for Adults workers are on the frontlines in responding to referrals of adult abuse, neglect and exploitation. They are the ones who act to protect vulnerable adults with impairments who have no one else willing and able to assist them. With these Certificates of Recognition we proudly acknowledge and celebrate superlative work by PSA staff."

At the Adult Abuse Training Institute (AATI) held this past September, OCFS hosted a special Awards presentation recognizing honorees in the following categories: Innovative Programs and Practices; Collaboration with Other Providers/Systems to Benefit Vulnerable Adults; Success In Dealing With Difficult Situations; Outstanding PSA Casework/Supervision; Going the Extra Mile ; and Outstanding Support of PSA.

OCFS also made presentations in some districts (Montgomery, Greene, Albany and Saratoga) whose staff were unable to attend the AATI Awards presentation. Several of these local presentations included participation of county executives and legislators. The Montgomery County presentation was actually during a session of its Board of Supervisors.

You will find pictures and profiles of many of the honorees in this and upcoming issues of the newsletter. Please also see a [complete listing of all honorees](#). Providing PSA is a difficult job of critical importance to our communities. We're pleased to do what we can to increase public awareness of the great work being done by PSA units throughout the State.

Congratulations to the honorees!



From left to right: Deb Scott (Orange Co.), Peggy Locicero (Cattaraugus Co.), Charles Cerillo, Tim Murphy (Orange Co.), OCFS Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez, Irene Kurlander and Kate LaBuda (Orange Co.)



Ike Mbila, Senior Supervisor HRA, Manhattan South Office Recognized for outstanding supervisory and administrative ability.



From left to right: OCFS Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez, Jessica Flynn and Kelly Amidon (Lewis Co.)



(left) Deb Schwencke assists Kirk Maurer in handing out certificates. (right) Mike Deane of Dutchess C. DSS, accepts certificate on behalf of Dutchess Co. DSS APS unit.



Albany County PSA Staff, together with OCFS Associate Commissioner Kirk Maurer, far left, Albany Co. Exec. Michael Breslin and to the far right of picture, Albany Co DSS Commissioner Vincent Colonno.



Staff of Greene County DSS PSA unit with Mike Cahill of OCFS Bureau of Adult Services.



Staff of Saratoga County DSS PSA unit with Paula Vielkind of OCFS Bureau of Adult Services and Saratoga County DSS Commissioner Robert Christopher.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Alan Lawitz



What Is PSA ?

Is it:

1. A prostate screening test (prostate specific antigen)?
2. A public service announcement?
3. Protective Services for Adults ?
4. Persian Students Association?
5. Professional Software of Amarillo?

A recent Google search reveals that the correct answer is, of course, all of the above, plus much more.

We in Adult Services, and particularly those who are in the profession of providing Protective Services for Adults, know that a lot of people (ok, *most* people) have absolutely no idea what it is that PSA does, or even that there is such a service. Unfortunately we see this reflected in the Google search.

Early entries in the Google search include : Photographic Society of America; Professional Sports Authenticator; Professional Skating Association; Plano Sports Authority; Poultry Science Association; Professional Scuba Association; Pacific Southwest Airlines; Pi Sigma Alpha; Poe Studies Association...

It is not until page 15 that we find the following heart-warming entry : "Welcome - Protective Services for Adults – New York State Office..." etc. from the OCFS PSA homepage. Well, it's not as great as being on page one, three or even page 13 of the Google Search. But on the other hand we **do** come before : Peninsula Stroke Association; Poetry Society of America; Puget Sound Associates; Potapskut Sailing Association; Protein Surveillance Assignment; and Pet Sitters Associates, LLC, among many, many others. In fact the entire search goes on for 76 pages. So while we are not at the very top of the heap, Google-search wise , being 15 out of 76 is not too shabby, either.

I note that on page 31 there is something called "Your dictionary.com " that includes "Psa definition". Not surprisingly *our* definition is not included. Ditto for a later listing of "The Free Dictionary." I also have to add that , except for the page 15 entry for the OCFS webpage, I found no other reference to PSA as Protective Services for Adults.

We should not be discouraged. I believe a time is coming in which there will be increasing recognition of the critical importance of the work of Protective Services for Adults. As our society ages, and as society increasingly values the availability of community-based services and housing for seniors and persons with disabilities, the essential role of PSA workers as safety net and as protector of last resort to vulnerable adults, will also come to be increasingly recognized and valued. We all have a part to play and an obligation to do what we can to increase public awareness of this service. Our regulations state that social service districts must educate the general public, service providers, advocacy groups and other appropriate agencies about the scope of PSA and how to obtain services. OCFS has provided materials for use in such education of the public, as well as for more specific training of our partners in the fields of law enforcement, health, banks, and so on. Do we need to do a lot more? Yes, definitely. Let's work on this together. I'd like to hear from you what you think would be the best ways to inform the community about PSA.

In the meantime, here's hoping that when you answer the phone in your office with "PSA," , you don't get from the caller: "Hi. Is this the Piedmont Soccer Alliance?"

~Alan~

FOCUS ON FAMILY TYPE HOMES FOR ADULTS

Family Type Homes for Adults: An Overview

*Rich Piche, Family Type Homes for Adults Coordinator,
Bureau of Adult Services*



A Family Type Home for Adults is a type of adult residential care facility. Family Type Homes, which are certified by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), are an important way to provide care for disabled or dependent adults who can no longer live alone in the community. The Family Type Home is established and operated for the purpose of providing long term residential care, room, board, housekeeping, personal care and/or supervision to four or fewer adults who are unrelated to the operator. Operators are people who enjoy sharing their home and abilities with adults who are unable to live on their own. The home can be a private house, part of a two family house or part of an apartment building.

What makes a Family Type Home a home rather than an "institution" is the fact the operator, who holds the certificate, lives with the residents and provides twenty-four hour per day supervision/services. A family atmosphere is promoted by a limitation in capacity. Residents are adults over the age of 18 who are unable to live safely alone, due to physical or other limitations associated with age, physical or mental disabilities or other factors. The home helps residents maintain their independence as long as possible and serves to protect New York's most vulnerable adults in a comfortable, safe living environment with the added protection of 24-hour supervision, companionship and friendship of others. Residents of these homes do not need the skilled medical or nursing services provided in nursing homes. Residents are not confined to the home; many attend sheltered workshops or senior citizen centers.

The operator is mandated by regulation (18 NYCRR 489) to maintain a clean, safe environment, prepare nutritious meals, and assist with personal care/supervision, medications and medical appointments. Payment can be arranged on either a private basis or, for those residents in receipt of SSI/Safety Net benefits, the Social Services Law and State regulations establishes a congregate care rate (Level 1) for the room, board and services provided by the operator. The resident receives a portion of the rate as a Personal Needs Allowance, and the balance of the rate is paid over to the operator. All services and fees must be clearly set out in a written admission agreement, signed by the operator and the resident which describes the services to be provided, resident rights and responsibilities, all financial arrangements, including the Personal Needs Allowance, refunds, security deposits, if any, and discharge or transfer procedures. Operators are required to provide a copy of the admission agreement to the prospective resident prior to the date of admission.

The OCFS administers a system of supervision, inspection, technical assistance and enforcement for Family Type Homes to assure compliance with regulations and maintain standards of care. The main goal of OCFS is to provide a safe, healthy and secure environment for the residents. Applications to operate a Family Type Home must be made on OCFS forms along with supporting information and filed with the local department of social services. The local DSS is responsible for verifying information in the application, providing OCFS with a recommendation of approval or denial, conducting annual unannounced inspections at least once a year, and supervising the Home under the direction of OCFS. Currently, OCFS certifies over 500 homes statewide with a capacity for 1500 residents.

In regards to Family Type Homes and zoning ordinances, courts have defined "family" to extend beyond the nuclear family and to include small groups of individuals living together as a family unit. Accordingly, municipalities cannot restrict the establishment of a Family Type Home for Adults in areas that are zoned for single family dwellings. In addition, certain zoning restrictions have been found to violate the Federal Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If you have questions about the Family Type Homes for Adults Programs, please contact your local department of social services or call New York State OCFS at (518) 473-6446.

SSI BENEFIT LEVELS *(Effective January 1, 2009)*

Fed L/A Code	State Supp Code	New York State Living Arrangement
A	A	Living Alone
A, C	B	Living With Others
(B)	(F)	(Living in the Household of Another) ²
A	C	Congregate Care Level 1 - <i>Family Care</i> OCFS certified Family Type Homes OMH or OMRDD certified Family Care Homes
		<i>NYC, Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester Counties</i>
		<i>Rest of State</i>
A	D	Congregate Care Level 2 - <i>Residential Care</i> DOH certified Residences for Adults OMH or OMRDD certified Community Residences, Individualized Residential Alternatives and OASAS certified Chemical Dependence Residential Services
		<i>NYC, Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester Counties</i>
		<i>Rest of State</i>
A	E	Congregate Care Level 3 – <i>Enhanced Residential Care</i> DOH certified Adult Homes and Enriched Housing programs OMRDD certified Schools for the Mentally Retarded
D	Z	Title XIX (Medicaid certified) Institutions ³
A	Z	(see below) ⁵

Minimum Personal Needs Allowances			Limits on Countable Resources	
Congregate Care Level 1	-	\$130		Individuals
Congregate Care Level 2	-	\$150		Couples
Congregate Care Level 3	-	\$178		

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | The combined federal and State SSI benefit provided to eligible individuals and eligible couples with no countable resources. |
| 2 | The <i>Living With Others</i> category includes recipients whose federal benefit has been reduced by the "value of the recipient's share of the household's income, <i>a</i>) living in someone else's household, <i>and b</i>) receiving some amount of free or subsidized food and shelter (room and board)." |
| 3 | Applies when an SSI recipient is residing in a medical facility, is not expected to return home within 90 days, and is not receiving SSI benefits. |
| 4 | Recipients in nursing homes licensed by DOH receive an additional monthly grant of \$25 issued by OTDA called a "Nursing Home Supplement" of \$5. |
| 5 | This zero federally-administered State supplement applies: <i>a</i>) when an SSI recipient is residing in a private medical facility, <i>b</i>) when an SSI recipient is residing in a publicly operated residential facilities serving 16 or fewer residents, <i>or c</i>) while a recipient resides in a public emergency shelter. |

Individual			Couple		
Federal	State	TOTAL ¹	Federal	State	TOTAL ¹
\$674	\$87	\$761	\$1,011	\$104	\$1,115
674	23	697	1,011	46	1,057
(449.34)		(472.34)	(674.00)		(720.00)
674	266.48	940.48	1,011	869.96	1,880.96
674	228.48	902.48	1,011	793.96	1,804.96
674	435	1,109	1,011	1,207	2,218
674	405	1,079	1,011	1,147	2,158
674	694	1,368	1,011	1,725	2,736
30	0 ⁴	30 ⁴	60	0 ⁴	60 ⁴
674	0	674	1,011	0	1,011

Revised 16 Oct 2008

\$2,000 Statutory References: Chap. 57 of L. 2006 and Chap. 57

\$3,000 of L. 2008

income.

"1/3 reduction" (VTR) due to the federal determination that they are both:
(m and board).

Medicaid is paying for at least 50% of the cost of care.

a State Supplemental Personal Needs Allowance (SSPNA). Residents of other medical facilities receive an SSPNA

cal facility and Medicaid is paying for less than 50% of the cost of care, *or b*) when a recipient resides in certain
emergency shelter for 6 calendar months during a 9 month period.

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH NAPSA? ARE YOU A MEMBER?

*If not, please read the following, written by NAPSA President Art Mason, C.S.W. .
As many of you know, Art also serves as Program Director of Elder Abuse Prevention for Life-span, a non-profit organization based in Rochester, New York.*

The National Adult Protective Association (NAPSA) is the only national organization representing the interests of Protective Services for Adults (PSA) workers, programs and the clients they serve. Founded in 1989, NAPSA has more than 600 members in all 50 states. It advocates and supports PSA workers on the national, state and local levels in a variety of ways.

Membership in NAPSA is open to current and former PSA agencies, organizations, directors, supervisors, trainers, caseworkers and case aides. Supportive membership is available to any person with an interest in PSA programs or issues, or who works with the elderly and vulnerable adult victims of abuse, exploitation or neglect.

Membership benefits include:

Information and Technical Assistance – PSA professionals from all around the country provide on-going information, technical assistance and support for members on a wide variety of subjects which are useful in casework everyday.

Training - The annual NAPSA training conference is full of opportunities for professionals who work with vulnerable adults and older persons. Members receive reduced registration fees for NAPSA training events and are also eligible to receive scholarships for the annual conference. For those whose departments are under travel restrictions due to financial cutbacks, NAPSA has also developed a number of training materials that are available in the "training" section of the NAPSA members website.

Support of Elder Justice Act - The current version of the Elder Justice Act (EJA) in Congress would provide *substantial increases* in funding and resources for Adult Protective Services in every State, and would in particular benefit, New York, with its large elderly population. For EJA to be enacted it is critical that legislators know that our PSA members support this bill and that the bill will greatly benefit the clients that we serve. Membership in NAPSA provides the membership numbers that can make a difference and help us get the funding PSA needs. As many of us have seen with Child Protective advocacy, grassroots support can often make a big difference!

Membership Fees: Here is a list of current, annual NAPSA membership fees:

- \$20 for Caseworkers, Case Aides and Retirees
- \$40 for Supervisors, Program Specialists and Trainers
- \$60 for Administrators, Directors and Supporters
- \$225 (up to 6 people for Agencies and Institutions)

If you are interested in joining NAPSA, please either call (720) 565-0906 or access our website at www.apsnetwork.org



CONTACTING CLIENT'S FAMILY, FRIENDS AND OTHERS AS PART OF PSA INVESTIGATION

Q. If a referral source provides PSA with the names and contact information for relatives or friends of the subject of the referral (the client) and asks PSA to contact these relatives and friends because it is believed they have information about alleged abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of the client, is it a violation of client confidentiality for PSA to make such contact without the prior approval of the client?

A. No, there is no violation of client confidentiality. The law mandates that PSA investigate all referrals alleging abuse, neglect or exploitation of individuals who are or may be eligible for PSA. As part of the mandated investigation, caseworkers need to speak with friends, family and others who may have information pertinent to the issues under investigation. Certainly, workers must respect the legal rights of clients, including the right of self-determination. PSA, when making inquiries, should not reveal more than is necessary to obtain such information as will assist in addressing the issues raised. In a PSA investigation, the primary focus must be on determining eligibility for PSA, determining the risk factors to the client, and developing and carrying out a plan to address the client's needs. Client consent is not a prerequisite to carrying out the investigation. Some clients may not have capacity to provide a valid consent in any case. This focus on client protection is integral to the statutory scheme establishing PSA and must outweigh any residual concern about revealing that PSA is investigating a referral.

PLEASE IDENTIFY THE GENDER OF ALLEGED PERPETRATORS IN ASAP AND OTHER CASE RECORDS

This is a request that, to the extent possible, caseworkers include in their case records the identification of the gender of alleged perpetrators of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.

In reviewing aggregate ASAP records for 2007 with respect to perpetrators , we find the following:

At the Open Assessment Stage:

Males were identified as perpetrators in 50% of the cases
Females were identified as perpetrators in 42.62 % of the cases.
However, caseworkers reported UNKNOWN in 7.38% of the cases.

In reviewing aggregate ASAP records for 2008, we find the following:

Males were identified as perpetrators in 46.44% of the cases.
Females were identified as perpetrators in 45.32% of the cases.
However, caseworkers reported UNKNOWN in 8.24% of the cases!

With such a high rate of UNKNOWNs trending up in 2008, it is difficult to make helpful generalizations.

Please make sure that gender is always filled in , except in those rare cases in which it is not known. In such cases, the progress notes should specify why it is not possible to identify the gender.

Thanks!

UPCOMING VIDEOCONFERENCE: DV IN LATER LIFE

For PSA, Office for Aging, Law Enforcement, Domestic Violence and other professionals.

Tentative date is Thursday, March 5 from 9-11 AM. The sites (at 5 Community Colleges across the state) will be announced.

For details, call Art Mason at Elder Abuse Prevention Program, Lifespan, 585-244-8400, ext 119. OCFS BAS will also distribute more detailed information when available to LDSS Adult Services Supervisors.

ASAP LearnLinc Pilot Takes Off

By Michael Cahill

On 11/26/08, the Professional Development Program of SUNY Albany (PDP) held a pilot training course on how to use the Adult Services Automation Project (ASAP) computer application to better manage Protective Services for Adults (PSA) cases and stay in compliance with OCFS regulations. The 2-hour class was conducted via LearnLinc, OCFS's computer- based distance learning technology. With a trainer based in OCFS Home Office facilities in Rensselaer, the PSA supervisors and administrators who participated were able to take the course remotely through their desk-top computer at work. Erie, Monroe, Steuben, Schoharie and Nassau County PSA staff were involved, as were members of the OCFS bureaus of Training and Adult Services.

The course showed participants: the basics of how to sort and filter cases by due date, caseworker, and case status; how to generate standard reports on things like client contacts and referral statistics; and how to create a report on closed cases.

Reactions were generally positive. Following some enhancements identified in the pilot, the course should be ready for production statewide in 2009.

NAME THE NEWSLETTER (continued)

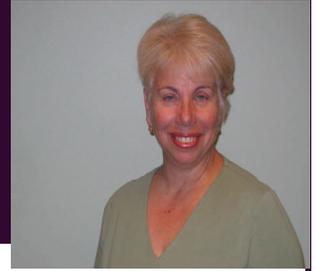
We are still inviting you to submit names for the Newsletter. Remember, the focus is on Adult Services, primarily PSA but not exclusively. We received a number of suggestions geared to services for the elderly, but again, Adult Services are provided to eligible adults age 18 and above. Thanks to those who have submitted ideas. Here is what has been submitted so far;

- PSA Today
- The Aging New Yorker
- Aging Out
- Adult Protective Perspective
- PSA Perspective
- SPA – Services for the protection of Adults
- The WATCH: We Adults Together Can Help
- The Adult Services Newsletter
- Adult Services News and Views
- The Adult Services Advocate
- The Advocate: News and Views Relating to Adult Services

See a name you like? Want to suggest another? Send any ideas to Deb Schwencke at: Deborah.Schwencke@ocfs.state.ny.us

LAURA MINICOZZI: DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

***Howard Sutherland, Director of Adult Services, Suffolk County DSS,
sent us the following as part of the nomination of Laura Minicozzi,
PSA Senior Caseworker, for a Certificate of Recognition.
We wanted to share this with you.***



Laura Minicozzi has worked as a caseworker in Protective Services for Adults for eight years. In 2007 she was promoted to Senior Caseworker. As a Senior Caseworker she is often assigned difficult cases that have many complex issues. One such case recently involved an 83 year-old woman with a gangrenous foot who Laura found lying on her kitchen floor, because she could not get up and into her bed. This woman was refusing medical care and refused on at least four different occasions to be transported to a hospital. Each time she refused she appeared capable of making this decision. Living with her was her also elderly husband who deferred to her completely, while attempting unsuccessfully to meet her care needs. Initially, this woman refused to work with Laura, even refusing to give out the names of her children or their contact information. Laura, however, persevered in trying to get her help.

She found a doctor willing to make a home visit who then sent a nurse practitioner to see the client. Laura worked with this nurse practitioner and eventually they were able to convince her to accept hospice services, allow a hospital bed to be delivered and then agree to be moved into this bed. Additional services were then provided that enabled her to safely remain in her home until shortly before her death when she needed to be hospitalized. Laura's interventions were instrumental in securing needed care for this woman which ultimately allowed her to die with dignity as she wished in her home with her husband. In addition, Laura was also able to locate the client's son, based on the little information the client did provide her. This son was eventually able to intervene and helped develop a plan of care for his father who was also in need of assistance. Laura's interventions effectively addressed a very difficult unsafe situation and helped resolve the problems she found while also respecting her client's wishes.

This example is just one of the many difficult situations Laura has effectively dealt with as a PSA caseworker. She has consistently shown good interviewing and investigative skills in her case involvements. Laura has been very effective in establishing a good working relationship with her clients and their families and also has worked well with outside agencies that have been involved with her clients. She has been able to do this while also completing assessments, reviews and progress notes in a timely fashion.

For all these reasons Ms. Minicozzi exemplifies the best qualities of a Protective Services for Adults caseworker. Accordingly we are nominating her to receive a Certificate of Recognition for Excellence in Providing Protective Services for Adults.

Howard, thank you for submitting this. Laura, we applaud your excellent work. OCFS was very pleased to award you with your richly deserved Certificate of Recognition in the category of Success in Dealing with Difficult Situations.

MARGARET (PEGGY) LOCICERO: Honoree As Outstanding PSA Supervisor

The following nomination for a Certificate of Recognition was submitted by Wendy H. Bourgeois, Commissioner of Cattaraugus DSS, on behalf of Margaret (Peggy) Locicero, Supervisor, Adult Services.

(That's Peggy on the right of this picture, as she receives her certificate from OCFs Deputy Commissioner, Laura Velez).



Peggy supervises four adult protective service workers, who are also payees for more than 200 adults. She also supervises two unit supervisors in PINS (Person in Need of Supervision)/JD (Juvenile Delinquent) and PINS Prevention, and oversees many preventive contracts. Peggy is also in charge of the Block Grant Day Care Unit.

Peggy's years of experience in this department, in child protection service, child welfare, and adult services, including work with JDs and PINS, gives her a treasury of knowledge with which to work. Peggy is a master at sharing her knowledge, departmental, community, and regulatory, with her workers, and also with the workers in every other unit of the Cattaraugus County Department of Social Services.

Most importantly, she understands peoples' hardships, and her care for humanity infects all around her, especially those that work closely with her day to day. Peggy is not easily fooled – (you don't work for 31 years in social services and stay easily fooled), so she is no "pushover," as the adolescents and adults who come in contact with her know. But she cares about them, and youth and adults with whom she has worked keep in touch.

Peggy models persistence. She shares her knowledge of the community and the services available, and that knowledge arms her workers with the tools necessary to craft solutions to the complex and difficult life situations in which many adults find themselves. She expects the Cattaraugus County Adult Services staff to use these tools, and to "find a way." Often the way is not conventional. In fact, PSA often finds itself trying to "fit square pegs into round holes."

Peggy appreciates how hard her workers work, and she always lets them know that. They will tell you that there are times that she rolls up her sleeves and "works" an PSA investigation when she knows they are "maxed out." Her workers appreciate her hands-on approach to supervision, and they understand that her pitching in to help shows her great respect for them. For example, she just recently worked with the discharge planner from our local hospital who had been irritated by another provider agency. The hospital wanted to send the patient home to an unsafe living situation. After letting the hospital discharge planner vent about the treatment she had received from the other agency, Peggy was able to assist the discharge planner in arranging for the patient's son to bring his father home while arrangements are made to improve the conditions of his home.

Under Peggy's leadership, PSA started a mentoring program to help some of our more capable payee clients learn to manage their own finances. She was instrumental in the development of the Cattaraugus County Long-term Care Plan, and she currently sits on the Long-term Care Committee. Her honesty and down-to-earth communication style have brought county agencies a long way in cutting through their own silos and helped us all to develop collaborative processes for working with adolescents and adults.

And selfishly, all of us here can say that she makes us laugh. Despite hardships, despite a hard job, she keeps us going with her straightforward outlook and her humor.

An honor well-deserved. Congratulations, Peggy!

DEALING WITH REPRESENTATIVE PAYEE CASES

*Rich Holcomb, Adult Services Supervisor,
Clinton County DSS*

As much as any issue facing Adult Protective Services today, how to effectively deal with Representative Payee cases has to be one of the most daunting issues. The number of individuals being referred to PSA for Payee services is continuing to climb at an alarming rate. They are requiring more and more caseworker time to sort out some very complex financial dilemmas, as well as fielding an almost continual stream of phone calls from irate clients demanding money that they do not have. Clinton County is no different than any other county in New York State when it comes to this issue; however, we have developed some systems that have proven to be helpful in dealing with some of these issues.

One of the first things we were able to eliminate was the need for caseworkers to sort through and review each and every bill that comes in for their respective clients. Our old system was that when the bill came in it was sorted by a member of the clerical staff who then gave the bills to the PSA Supervisor for distribution to each worker. The workers then reviewed the bill and authorized them to be paid by the clerical person who had originally sorted the bills in the first place. This process proved to be time consuming and resulted in workers having to spend a significant part of each day just going through the bills. After reviewing the process we determined that if the clerical worker was provided with a budget for each individual client, she could then pay the bill as long as it fell within the budgeted amount, without having to tie up either supervisory or caseworker time on routine bills such as rent and utilities. Caseworkers still receive and approve such things as court fines, medical bills and other out-of-budget expenses. We estimate that this change alone has saved workers at least 5 to 7 hours per week. For most individuals we are also able to build in personal spending money to purchase items that are important to them. This is also money that allows us to assist them in learning budgeting skills in an effort to help them become their own payee in the future.

Our next biggest challenge was dealing with the small percentage of individuals who repeatedly call workers with demands for money. Some of the individuals have proven to be very creative in coming up with reasons why they need money: they're out of personal hygiene products that are not covered under food stamps, the judge ordered them to get a hair cut and their mother died (for the third time). One of the means we use to address this issue is to set up voucher agreements with various local merchants to see that funds are being used to purchase what the client states is their unmet need. In addition to vouchers, occasionally we will have an agency homemaker do the shopping for the client to insure needed items are purchased. Additionally, for some of the more persistent individuals who have become excessive in their calling of workers, we have begun assigning them a specific day of the week and time that we accept their calls. Outside of these times workers do not take calls from those individuals. This has proven to be very effective, and most of the clients who have this limitation have adapted very well. Many of these individuals have even expressed that they like the arrangement since they know that they have the workers undivided attention during "their time". However, this has not eliminated that minute percentage that continues to call multiple times a day. If any county has an effective means of dealing with that group please share the answer.

Finally, we have stepped up efforts to assist as many individuals as possible in becoming their own payee. For some it is a matter of helping them to learn to stick to a budget, and for others it is helping them to work through a financial crisis. What we have found is that for some individuals it remains a matter of trial and error, having us as a payee multiple times until they finally are able to maintain complete independence. Building a savings account into each of our client's budgets has been a key to helping people become their own payee. Each month we set aside a few dollars until each individual has a savings equal to one month's Social Security Check. Then we can start turning bills over to them for payment until they are paying all their bills independently. The savings act as the safety net to cover their immediate needs bills should they not successfully handle them on their own. This savings has also been helpful in other areas. It is used to pay court fines, help individuals with security deposits and moving expenses. When people have learned that their savings gives them an opportunity for more options, many have almost become fanatical about increasing their savings for other things they might want in the future.

In writing this piece for the newsletter I am hoping that by creating dialog on what has worked for us in Clinton County other PSA units across the state will share what has worked well for them. While we have come up with some solutions for the ever increasing number of Representative Payee cases we are by no means able to keep ahead of the growing tide. We look forward to hearing about other ways to be more efficient and effective in doing our job.

Ask Asha about ASAP



Where we WERE

In 2003, OCFS began requirements and initiated system development for ASAP in response to NYPWA's report stating that adult protective services was in need of case management automation support. ASAP was deployed statewide (except NYC) in the first quarter of 2005. It has received regular updates and enhancements over the past three years.

Where are we NOW?

Aside from the occasional hiccup, our users are usually pretty happy with the system...But the hardware is OLD and the software is OLD. That said, it is time to MODERNIZE to a WEB BASED SYSTEM! A business case was presented to OCFS management earlier in 2008 and the modernization effort was APPROVED.

And NOW?

Well you all know that we hit hard times...no money...even less than before! So we can not hire additional developers *yet*, but we are still moving forward with what we have!

What we WILL get!

ASAP.NET will be our new web-based system. It will start out replacing the current ASAP system, but with a new look and feel especially regarding navigation as we change to web pages. The first phase will provide the same functionality that you have now, except it will no longer be on CITRIX - it will be on the INTRANET.

Requested Functionality

1. Upgrade to web-based application (in progress now)
2. Standard Letters Automation
3. OMRDD data collection enhancements
4. Additional data fields to collect more information on
 - A. Incidents of Harm
 - B. Date of Report
 - C. Type of Harm
 - D. Representative Payee
 - E. Multiple Referrals per Case
 - F. And more!
5. To Do List for Supervisors and Caseworkers
6. WMS Interface
7. Adult Preventive Services
8. Family Type Home for Adults
9. More Reports Available
10. Audit Report to replace manual audit process
11. Bureau Alerts for OCFS/BAS to send notes to LDSS users

Just like with ASAP - we'd love a group of you to volunteer to review and test our new system as we move forward with it. If you are interested, please contact ASHA.

Look for more information on the way in the next newsletter due out in April of 2009.

Interview of Paula Vielkind, OCFS Bureau of Adult Services



Paula Vielkind is a Children and Family Services Specialist II within the Bureau of Adult Services. She currently serves as State Representative for Adult Services for the following counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Columbia, Erie, Essex, Genesee, Hamilton, Orleans, Niagara, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Ulster, Warren, Washington and Wyoming. Alan Lawitz, Rich Piche and Deb Schwencke sat down recently with Paula for the following discussion.

Q. Paula, where did you grow up?

A. I grew up in Rensselaer County. I was born in Troy, lived in that city very briefly, then we moved to Wynantskill. I lived there until I went to college in Buffalo. After I married, my first home was in Defreestville, but now I live in Clifton Park (Saratoga County).

Q. What college did you go to?

A. I attended Rosary Hill College in Buffalo (but they changed the name to protect the innocent, so now it's called Daemen College).

Q. What was your major?

A. English and Secondary Education.

Deb S: That comes in very handy!

A. There is a place in the world for old English majors. There is a place in the world for people who have the ability to construct a proper English sentence and make a noun and a verb agree.

Alan: I'm a former English major myself.

Q. Can you tell us a little about your parents and your family growing up?

A. My parents were both public servants. My mom was a nurse and worked for the Health Department when I was very young, but went into private duty nursing and retired as Director of Nursing for the Daughters of Sarah Nursing Home, so I was touched by the world of Adult Services even though I did not realize it at the time. Most people in the neighborhood in those days did not call their doctor first when ill; they called my mother. So, if anyone was bleeding or hurt, they asked my mother to check them out before they went to their physician or the hospital. As a result, we all (I have three siblings) learned a lot of lessons based on who was being examined on or at the kitchen table at any given time.

My father was a businessman and a politician. He was asked to run for office by both the Republicans and the Democrats but the Republicans asked first, so he proceeded to run for Town Councilman, then Town Supervisor and after that, he became Rensselaer County Clerk. He never lost an election. It was very important for everyone in the family to know how to deal with the public, how to reply to someone who had a question or how to note something they wanted to complain or get information about.

I learned from my father to be very conscious at a very early age. When someone called, we should expect them to identify themselves so Dad could call them back later, and if someone just wanted to yell and scream, he made it very clear that we did not have to listen to that, and that we should tell them we would not continue the conversation.

Alan: You had early training in dealing with the public and the importance of clear communication.

Rich: Her mother made great sandwiches on snowy days after we went sledding!

Q. So, Paula, you've known Rich a long time?

A. I've known Rich a very long time, since we were in elementary school. And, in spite of that, or because of that, we are still friends, we sit side by side in the office and we can still maintain a reasonable relationship.

Rich: From Wynantskill to...

Paula: From Wynantskill to Rensselaer Co DSS, to the Register and beyond, moving on to other parts of OCFS, now serving in the Bureau of Adult Services.

Interview Continued~

Q. Now, spies have told me that you have been on local radio as a DJ, under the name of Lawanna Trout. Is it true?

A. It is true. Years ago, I had the great good fortune to be affiliated with a show called "Kaleidoscope" hosted by Jim Barrett, back then on WRPI at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) . He needed a female partner for some stupid skits he wanted to do on the air. He was tired of doing a falsetto for the female parts and decided to get a true female. I had engaged in some theatrical performances in high school. He eventually realized that I was also interested in music, and he asked if I wanted to prepare and do a set myself.

Q. What type of music did you play?

A. As the name Kaleidoscope suggests, it was always a mix of everything. My first set was a mix of Bonnie Raitt, Joni Mitchell , and other women singers. I was a DJ during my CPS caseworker days, so there were times when I was on call and I would go to the station with my albums and say, if my beeper goes off, I gotta go. Everything was live in those days.

Q. So tell us about your family now, your husband and kids.

A. My husband John is a mechanical engineer. We have two sons: John, who is a mechanical engineer like his Dad, and James, who is a journalist. We are blessed and lucky to have two young adults in their 20s who are gainfully employed with health insurance and pretty successful, so we are really happy about that.

Rich: tell them why John's my hero!

A. My son John, among other things, has quite a reputation nationally (and even internationally) because of robotics. He designs and builds robots, and the thing that Rich loves best....

Rich: we'll cut this out (Editor: Ha! Guess again!)

A. ...is his Beer-bot, aka the BottleBot. There have been 3 iterations of the Beer-bot so far, which is a robot which can pick up, open a bottle of beer, pour it into a glass and deliver it to you (without spilling!), so it is all in the cup with a head. It is not the easiest thing to design, calculate and execute successfully, but he's done it and it works. Rich has suggested, "Oh, Paula, if you could only have it go to the refrigerator and get the bottle too, every guy in the world would want this."

Alan: Maybe he could work out the ASAP-atron , a robot to enter all those cases!

A. John wrote an article about the Beer-bot which was recently published in a national robot magazine.

Q. Oh, a family of writers. I know you are a very good writer yourself.

A. I don't know about that. It is nice that both of our sons have the aptitude. I can't claim they inherited that from me. What they have from me is nice blond hair. My husband has brown hair. Mine is blond, now streaked with gray.

Alan: I admire anyone with hair of any color. It could be plaid, you know, I don't care...

Q. So tell us about when you started to work for Rensselaer County. Did you go right to CPS?

A. No, my first job was during college, during the summer. I worked in the County Treasurer's office. The Treasurer was Ned Pattison, who later became Congressman Pattison. I had to manually reconcile all the payroll checks, the AFDC checks, Aid to the Blind, and Home Relief checks to make sure persons got and cashed the checks. It was during that time I met my friend Susan Steele, even though she worked in another county office.

Alan: Whatever became of her?

A. She is working in our OCFS Public Information Office now and has been a great help to our unit, but that's when we met.

My first job for Rensselaer County , apart from summer jobs, was at the Department of Motor Vehicles. I was one of the youngest employees in that unit then. There was some interaction with some of the older, more established employees because they felt I was being too nice to the public! DMV didn't have the best reputation at the time. I had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, have some fun and add some pizzazz and bring out the pizzazz in others.

Interview Continued~

Q. When was it that you went to Social Services?

A. Early on I hoped to be an English teacher, but I was unable to find a job doing that. I had taken a lot of Civil Service tests, and when the opportunity came to interview for a Social Services job, I said yes, because it was a good increase in pay. (Believe it or not, and I know I'm dating myself, I think my first job in DMV paid about \$5K annually!) I worked in Income Maintenance as a Welfare Examiner, so I had a whole new assortment of folks to learn about and learn from. I was also on the list for Caseworker, and became a caseworker for a program called the Work Incentive Program. Then I had an opportunity to move to Child Protective Services. I accepted the position, and never looked back. CPS was very interesting, and I am sure it is harder now than it was in my day. I spent a couple of years there as a CPS caseworker. Eventually I thought, maybe I shouldn't be in the field anymore. There were some very long days and very long nights, several removals, and a lot of stress from the Family Court preparation and hearings.

Q. When was it that you moved to the State Central Register [for Child Abuse]?

A. In 1980. I moved to the Register, which was expanding at the time.

Q. What did you start off with: intake?

A. Absolutely. Everybody started on the line. I later became a supervisor and I always worked "after hours." I worked many crazy shifts, and supervised a lot of people. I got a chance to do some training, both in-house Orientation Training for new employees and on the road for Mandated Reporters. When I had my children, the Register was a wonderful place to work because at the time they allowed people to work part-time. I did two very long days, on Saturday and Sunday, and I was able to spend the rest of the week with my children.

Q. So when did you move to Adult Services?

A. From the Register, I had a variety of jobs with the Bureau of Early Childhood Services, in Day Care Subsidies, Enforcement and Policy, and I supervised the Contract unit. I transferred to the Bureau of Adult Services in August 2002. I have to say the best teacher here was Kathy Crowe. I also learned from Carole Fox and Rich, and it was not long after that both Kathy and Carole retired, and Rich and I were the whole Bureau for a while.

Deb: now she's paying it forward; now she takes me under her wing.

A. Going on the road with Kathy was the best exposure to Protective Services for Adults I could ever have, in terms of how to deal with people in the county face to face, and just observing her demeanor, her attitude and how she looked at a case. I learned from her what details to look for in reviewing a case. This was all pre-ASAP, so when I first started, we asked to see the referral log, we would choose cases to review and we went on from there.

Of course we all went through the development of ASAP together, and that was one of the biggest changes for this unit. The development of ASAP and having an automated case record is a very big plus. We all traveled all over the state to observe and assist with basic ASAP training. That also allowed us to meet and observe many of the PSA workers who'd be using ASAP daily. Now it takes very little time to be able to quickly understand what is going on with a case.

Q. Did you find it an advantage to come from a children services background?

A. Yes, there was a lot of thinking on your feet, handling emergencies and keeping people safe. And in terms of automation, when I left the SCR, Connections was just kicking in. There was a way to track cases and check the history.

Rich: It used to be a 3 by 5 card in the day.

Deb: And microfiche.

A. Every job I've had required that I speak with strangers, ask questions, determine eligibility, provide services. Coming to Adult Services, it was interesting to come to the realization that usually the client isn't the one who's asking for help, that you can't force the issue with adults, as opposed to children, where you COULD say, I am coming in to check these kids, and I have the authority to do so. An adult can say no. That was an adjustment. As a CPS worker, I had never gone out with an APS worker.

Interview Continued~

Q. What do you see as some of the challenges facing PSA workers these days? Has it changed since you have been in the Bureau?

A. Number one, I think the biggest challenge is there are more referrals than there used to be. Number two is we are getting more referrals about younger adults as well as the frail elderly. Also, slowly but surely, there are more and more people who are living longer, who may not have a family nearby that can assist, although there may be a distant relative who may try to dictate what workers do or don't do. Number three is that individuals are referred to PSA who have multiple, complex issues. So PSA workers have a lot on their plate including standard issues of assistance for varied vulnerable adults and dealing with reduced resources (how can I address these needs? how can I hold everything together? is there another agency which can help? what do the changes in the long term care system statewide do to APS on a district by district basis?). Philosophically, we are looking to keep people in the community, as opposed to congregate care, and if they are going to be in the community they are going to need services in order to successfully stay there. That is always the biggest issue for PSA, keeping people safe in their communities, and addressing their needs with whatever services are available. Are there ever enough? Never, never, never.

As I have said, ASAP has been a big plus. You generally don't have to ask for records now. If the electronic records are up to date, you'll get a good snapshot in terms of what's going on and what services are being provided. You see it in the case notes. Workers don't necessarily know we are reviewing these, but we are expected to keep track of what's going on.

Q. You coordinate the review and the preparation of the annual report of the efforts to implement the recent legislation that requires DDSOs to be primarily responsible for investigation and the addressing of allegations of abuse and neglect of persons with mental retardation or developmental disabilities. I know you have been going through the updates you get from local districts for 2008. What can you tell us about how things are going in this area?

A. The primary issue is whether these adults will have support in the community. In some cases there have been adults living at home with their parents, perhaps without a formal diagnosis, but now these parents are aging or dying, and there is a need for someone to care for these adults, and maybe they are not known to the OMRDD system, or maybe they are.

Unfortunately a lot of training wasn't done, so a lot of people (OMRDD service providers from voluntary agencies) are not as familiar with the new legislation and the MOUs as we had hoped they would be by this time. This is an issue which has been repeated statewide.

This legislation has relieved us from some of the responsibility and has redirected responsibility to the DDSOs. I don't know that the DDSOs are as comfortable with that as they could be. Part of that is training. Part of that is feeling comfortable going into someone's home. Practice makes perfect in being able to deal with individuals in the community.

Another issue has been the conveying of information as to who is really responsible. We have heard from every district: "Why are they calling to make a referral to us when they are the ones responsible for conducting the investigation?"

Alan: You have been among those in our bureau who have been active in setting up regional meetings with PSA and with the DDSOs to improve mutual understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities under the MOUs and the legislation.

A. I have been fortunate to be at several different meetings with several different DDSO representatives. It has been advantageous to both PSA Supervisors and the DDSO representatives to have faces to go with names, to be sitting around a table talking about the process for determining eligibility, to share phone numbers and say, if there is a problem, call me. The face to face contact has been very helpful.

Q. What brings a smile to your face as you work with the folks in the local districts and you do your job?

A. I've actually enjoyed every PSA Supervisor that I've dealt with, and many workers as well. They have interesting perspectives and great experience. I have seen several supervisors retire and have gotten to know their successors. I've also been the Bureau person designated to send certain messages and questions out to all the local PSA Supervisors. The responses are ALWAYS wonderful and helpful and usually make me smile again and again. I've been able to convey that, although I am from "the State," I am not the be-all and end-all of all information, and I'm not ever afraid to say I don't know, I'll have to check and I'll get back to you.

Interview Continued~

One of the other things that brings a smile to my face is just picking a random case to read. It's almost like reading chapters in a book, from the referral, to the notes, to the decision whether ongoing services are needed. It's just like having a person unfold before your very eyes, in terms of what the presenting problem was, what the assessment revealed, how the situation is being addressed, and what services are available. It often brings a smile to my face to see how creative people are in terms of how they address issues and bring services to bear.

Alan: And a lot of the job is helping to problem- solve the cases.

A. Yes. Adult Services is coming into its own. Any time I run into a former coworker who hasn't seen me in a while and am asked, "Are you still in Children's Services?" and I say Adult Services, they say: "Why? Why are you doing this?" I ALWAYS say: look in a mirror. None of us are getting any younger. The future is right here. We're waiting for the light to go on for everyone so they realize that resources need to go to Adult Services because no one is getting any younger and people want to stay in their communities as long as they can.

Alan: Demographics don't lie.

Q. Last question. Anything else you want to add?

A. I'm very happy in the unit. I like the work that we're doing and I certainly like my colleagues very, very much. They're dedicated and talented; we have all learned to support one another when dealing with our aging relatives, and I took advantage of that support. Another BIG plus is that everyone in the unit likes to laugh (a legacy from Kathy Crowe, perhaps?! It's been an eye-opener, absolutely. And it is only going to get better. I think this is the place to be, no doubt about it.

Alan: This is where we start to sing, "The Best Is Yet To Come."

Rich: (sings) The best is yet to come , and babe, won't it be fine...

Alan: Thank you, Paula!



myBenefits is New On-line Application Process for Many Work Support Benefits

A new website - mybenefits.ny.gov - allows any New Yorker to go online and find out if he or she may qualify for work support benefits and other programs designed to help low-income working families and individuals make ends meet.

Through myBenefits.ny.gov which went live in June, New Yorkers can do a simple, 10-minute prescreening from any computer with internet access at any time, to determine whether they are likely to qualify for Food Stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, child dependent care credits, and school lunch programs.

"Millions of New Yorkers are doing their part, going to work every day, juggling one or two jobs, and yet they are seeing economic security slip further and further from their grasp," said Governor Paterson. "myBenefits is in keeping with our commitment to provide low-income working families with increased access to benefits and services so that no New Yorker falls through the cracks."

OTDA Commissioner David A. Hansell said it is expected that additional program screenings will be made available through myBenefits over time and that the ultimate goal is to allow for online applications.

"The vision of myBenefits is to provide a single site for New York State's families and community partners to connect with benefits, services and work supports – an e-government hub for human services," Commissioner Hansell said. "Ultimately, myBenefits will allow individuals and families to learn about and apply for an array of work supports, customized to fit their unique circumstances, by answering one set of simple questions online."

This is effort is in keeping with the work of Governor Paterson's Economic Security Cabinet, comprised of more than 20 state agencies, which has been focusing on the very real needs of working families in this difficult economic climate, with the goal of growing and strengthening the middle class.

Food Stamps and other vital benefits are too often not accessed by those eligible. The myBenefits site is just one step being taken to maximize the access to work supports by low-income working individuals and families. The site will offer expanded hours for people to apply and allow them to do so without having to take time off from work to visit a local department of social services.

By mid-2009, myBenefits will be further expanded to allow people to apply for Food Stamp benefits on their own from any computer with an Internet connection, and in seven other languages besides English. Electronic applications for other programs and services will be added over time to myBenefits.

Nassau County Homeless Intervention Team: Open Door To Those In Need

Phillip White, Assistant Director of Services, Nassau County DSS

The Nassau County Homeless Intervention Team (HIT) is a team of collaborative agency members whose mission is to provide outreach and immediate shelter and services to those in the community who are or appear to be homeless, wherever they are in Nassau County. The team is comprised of a trained caseworker of Nassau County DSS Adult Protective Services (APS), a psychiatric social worker from the Nassau County Department of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency and Developmental Disabilities Services, a community services worker from the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency, police officers from the Nassau County Police Department, local city/village police departments, New York State Troopers, and staff of other county departments and not-for-profit agencies.

This team of professionals makes assessments of the person's individual needs and assists the person in immediately accessing appropriate services and care. The APS caseworker has been deputized to take applications in the field and help the homeless adult negotiate the Temporary Assistance, Medicaid and Food Stamp systems. The psychiatric social worker assists the person to receive, and often re-engage in receiving, mental health and substance abuse services.

Those who are veterans are evaluated for shelter and the many services and benefits provided by the U.S. Veterans Administration. The police accompaniment is primarily for the safety of the team, as the team will go anywhere in Nassau County to offer assistance: on the streets, in the parks, in the back of buildings, in and along forested areas and parkways where homeless people may live. The police also assist in obtaining emergency medical attention/ambulance services for those who may be in serious medical risk and for those whose life is immediately endangered.

While services are offered, they cannot be forced. The person with mental capacity has the *right of self-determination* and may refuse the services offered. The team, always gentle in its approach, makes frequent return visits to those who may not wish to accept services, early mornings, two or three days a week, and occasionally at night, and much more frequently with winter's extreme weather. The Nassau County HIT is ready to provide services immediately should the person reconsider the offer. Referrals to this proactive outreach team are received by the Health and Human Services Customer Service Unit (Adult Protective Services Intake) from concerned people, residents, businesses, community agencies and local law enforcement.

The Nassau County Homeless Intervention Team provides one wide open door to those who may be in need.

Scenes from the 15th Annual Adult Abuse Training Institute September 23-24, 2008



Pamela Edstrom, presenting at a workshop on "Facets of Family Violence: Linking Services for families Experiencing Violence".



Alan Lawitz, Director of OCFS Bureau of Adult Services, provides welcoming remarks and introduces OCFS Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez, right.



Marcus Harazin, Deputy Director of the State Office for the Aging, provides welcoming remarks to attendees.



Dr Evan Stark provides keynote address on connections and distinctions between elder abuse and domestic violence.



Dr. Patricia Bomba gives plenary presentation on a Rochester-based "End of Life Palliative Care Initiative" whose goal is to improve planning through advance directives.

Scenes from the 15th Annual Adult Abuse Training Institute September 23-24, 2008



Investigator Eugene Bell, State Police Computer Crimes Unit, presents on "ID Theft and Internet Fraud Against the Elderly."



Maria Andriano, OCFS Bureau of Training, in front of the PSA Booth at AATI.