

# Brighter Futures

**MYFDA Meeting Summary • April 15, 2008**

C/o Community Advocates, 4906 W. Fond du Lac Ave., Milwaukee WI 53216  
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## New state family agency looks to BF agencies for ideas

**Brighter Futures  
Meeting Report**  
April 15, 2008  
Hillside Family Resource  
Center

The state's new Department of Children and Families is turning to the community for ideas as to how to best serve the needs of the area.

Brenda Bell-White, director of Milwaukee Coordinated Services Program in Milwaukee, said the new department goes into effect on July 1 in a major state reorganization. She appeared at the April 15th Brighter Futures meeting at the Hillside Family Resource Center.



**Brenda Bell-White**

The new department is part of an important initiative of the Governor, Bell-White said. The mission is to strengthen the social and economic welfare of children and families, she said. The new department will include child welfare, W-2, TANF-related programs, child support, child care regulation, subsidized child care, and home visitation.

Reggie Bicha, the administrator of the new department, has a strong background in working with children and families, she said. He has strong interest in prevention program, she said. The department's program seek to work off the success of various state programs, including BadgerCare Plus, the increases in minimum wages, child care tax deductions, expanded 4-year kindergarten, school breakfasts, and use of general tax revenue for child support, and the Wisconsin Covenant to encourage additional education for teens.

She said more and more families of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are struggling to find and maintain good paying jobs. There's an overrepresentation of people of color in risk programs, she said. Many struggle with multiple issues and thus are involved in multiple systems, including family violence, substance abuse, poverty, mental health and child welfare.

"Families look far different from the families of the past," she said.

The challenge is to insure not to transfer the silos of the old programs into the new agency, Bell-White said. The department aims to "restructure, retool and refocus," aiming at prevention and early intervention, with a hope that families will get stronger.

The vision of the department is that children are safe in their own homes or in out-of-home care, and that youth have an opportunity to succeed when the age out of foster care, she said. Furthermore, she said that "all families must have access to and can afford high quality early care."

The challenges facing the new department is to offer:

- Integrated approaches to strengthen families.
- Prevention of maltreatment.
- Streamlined government.
- Identify new and more flexible funding sources.
- Focus on performance and outcomes that demonstrate child and family success (not process).
- New ways to engage consumers and the public in policy and program development. (*"This is not a one-time shot," she said, "We want to come back after the department starts July 1<sup>st</sup> to hear how we're doing."*)
- Ensure children and families have equal access to quality services, regardless of geography or individual differences.

The department is interested in having a strong connection with the southeast corridor of Wisconsin, including Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha counties, Bell-White said.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## New Agency Seeks Ideas . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

She asked the group to provide answers to the following questions: 1) *What is working well in the current/ program/services for children and families?* 2) *What do you see as an opportunity for change as we create a new department with the focus on children and families?* And 3) *What do you see as effective strategies?*

“There is no additional money involved,” she said. “We’re just transferring current programs and bodies into the new department.” Governor Doyle is expected to submit a plan soon, she said. Some of the comments made by the Brighter Futures group were:

- There are some good workers in system, but there’s a need for more training.
- Mary Pat O’Hara (Walkers Point YFC): The development of Brighter Futures and other coalitions like it help to create more services by providing a network for organizations with similar goals. What kind of networking will be done with churches, schools, etc.? *(Bell-White said the staff is making similar presentations as this to such groups.)*
- Often court-ordered parenting classes are not in appropriate for the family’s needs. There needs to be a real plan to address the parent training needs by tailoring classes in parenting. People are asking for more classes.
- How does agency address abuse that affects people? What are the programs that effectively address people’s abuse? *(Tom Spellman said MPS is suspending 10 percent of its first graders and the rate increases as the child ages, with such suspensions being linked to abuse and neglect of the child and/or the whole family.)*
- Norma Madison, Urban League: The online “Access” system is often needed to apply for Food Share, Medicaid, and other benefits, yet the system still has the ‘hoops’, such as the need for passwords.
- What have Community Based Organizations done that has worked??? Or where have CBOs not worked out effectively?



**Patricia Neal (left) of Parenting Network and Marge Kreuser of Perez-Pena**



**Shaunte James(left) of New Concept Self Development Center, Michael Bersch of the Horizon Center, and Norma Madison of the Milwaukee Urban League share ideas. Darryl Davidson of Milwaukee Health Department (background)**

- For children aging out of foster care there is a need to continue programming even after the magical age of 18, according to Lisa Gumm, of The Counseling Center. (Brenda Bell-White said the new budget provides Medicaid and other benefits for children aging out of foster care.)
- There’s a need to encourage youth to be more job ready and to have jobs that motivate them and pay well. Gumm said that not every child is fit to go to college. The other option is sell drugs and it’s “quick cash,” commented Gumm. “If we really want our youth to succeed the community must reflect that in better paying jobs”
- A problem occurs in that day care providers will hire a person only if the worker puts her child in the center. That’s discriminatory, it was noted.
- Transportation makes it difficult to get to 1220 W. Vliet St., thus creating a need to provide for more application sites throughout the community.
- There is a need to identify children’s mental health issues earlier in life.
- Marijuana is a major issue in the schools, which often leads to expulsions and there is no middle way to intervene and treat children early on!
- Are the data systems going to talk to each other? “There are systems out there that let us talk with each other and we need to purchase those,” Brenda BW said. She cited the LaCausa/UMOS pilot which links W-2 and BMCW. The referrals come from W-2 which seek to identify issues early on before the child needs to be removed, Bell-White said. In Coordinated Service Teams meetings we need to get more W-2 worker participation.

**She cited the new fatherhood** program that will include the city of Milwaukee. There is a catastrophic housing initiative that addresses the issue where housing is only issue preventing a reunification. The Bureau is partnering with Milwaukee’s Empowering Children program.

“This doesn’t have to be the end of this,” and she said persons may contact here in coming weeks with other suggestions and ideas. Send messages to [Brenda.Bell-White@dwd.state.wi.us](mailto:Brenda.Bell-White@dwd.state.wi.us)

## MCAPS Public Policy Committee

Jan Buchler, of the Parenting Network, gave an update on the Milwaukee Child Abuse Prevention Services (MCAPS) Coalition. She announced that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and she distributed symbolic blue ribbons to the group.

She said "When you put it on today, think of one thing you can do today that will make a difference in the life of a family."

She announced that the MCAPS Public Policy Committee meets on the second Monday of each month at United Way, 225 W. Vine St. May 12 at United Way ..

## WELCOME ...

Ann Wilson, executive director of the Hillside Family Resource Center, said there are many activities going on at the Center, including Boys and Girls Club activities, and a health clinic. The center is a division of the Milwaukee Housing Authority.



## Brighter Futures Notes

**Concerns and problems** involving the W-2 system can be fielded by the Milwaukee W-2 Office. The contacts are Joyce Simms at 227-4836 (cell ph. 416-0179), Kathy Morrell 416-0216 and Mary Musk (child care) 333 7247.

**Jan Wilberg, the BF Consultant** and evaluator, and Coordinator Racquel Bell are scheduled to lead a discussion on the BF Youth Survey at a Corrections Conference in Madison. They were to discuss violence issues based on the results shown in the Youth Survey, with an emphasis on girls.

**Scholarships for the State Preven-**

tion Conference are available, Racquel Bell announced.

**Mary Pat O'Hara** of Walkers Point Youth and Family Center, praised Aricka Evans for her work as the BF site visitor, noting that she has been understanding and respectful to the groups.

**New MU Center for Peacemaking** is planning a Peace Fair on Friday, Sept 13. For information, contact **G. Simon Harak, S. J. Director**, Marquette University Center for Peacemaking, Academic Support Facility, 201; 735 N. 17th Street, Marquette University, Milwaukee WI 53201-1881

414-288-8444 (Office)  
414-288-8445 (Harak)  
[Peacemaking@marquette.edu](mailto:Peacemaking@marquette.edu)

**BF Website** is soon to be open. In the meantime, you can keep up-to-date on Brighter Futures activities at <http://bfmilw.kagermanson.com>.

This is a temporary site that will carry:

- announcements of coming meetings,
- access to files showing summaries of all 2008 general BF meetings,
- reproductions of all Up-dates for 2008,
- a list of all participating funded agencies,
- plus other links.

**April 2008 MYFDA Attendance**  
(Listed by Agency)

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Racquel	Bell	Community Advocates
Michael	Bersch	Journey House
Janeen	Boone	Agape Community Center
David	Bowen	Urban Underground
Deborah	Bryant	Milwaukee Adolescent Health
Jan	Buchler	Parenting Network
Odell C	Chalmers	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Natalie	Cooper	Boys & Girls Club
JoAnn	Craft	Neighborhood House
Darryl	Davidson	City of Milwaukee Health Department
Sandy	Dotson	Managed Health Services
Erin	Ebert	The Parenting Network
Aricka	Evans	Community Advocates
Harry	Foreman	Volunteer
Kenneth	Germanson	Community Advocates
Lisa	Gumm	The Counseling Center
G. Simon	Harak	Marquette University, Ctr for Peacemaking
Shaunte	James	Urban League
Claude	Kenner	Hillside Family Resource Center
Karen	Kolberg	IMPACT
Marge	Kreuser	Perez-Pena, LTD
Sally	Ladky	WI Abstinence Coalition
Andrea	Libber	Task Force on Family Violence
Emilio	Lopez	Milwaukee Christian Center
Norma	Madison	Milwaukee Urban League
Anthony	Mc Henry	Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
Anthony	Mc Henry	Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
Daryl	McNeil	New Concept Self Dev. Ctr.
Larry	Moore	HACM
Peggy	Neal	Heartlove Place
Kari	Nervig	COA YFC - Riverwest Ctr
David	O'Day	Modjeska Youth Theatre Co.
Mary Pat	O'Hara	Walkers Point Youth and Family Ctr.
Jody	Rhodes	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Duncan	Shrout	IMPACT Inc.
Tom	Spellman	
Kathy	Stresman	Stop It Now
Kasandra	Tarkington	AGAPE Community Center
Joe	Volk	Community Advocates
Paul	Williams	Hillside Family Resource Center

Please send any corrections to [general@communityadvocates.net](mailto:general@communityadvocates.net)

**NOTE: All Brighter Futures funded agencies are expected to attend monthly MYFDA meetings, according to their contract.**