

**Promoting Favorable School Experiences
For DSS Involved Children and Their Families:
Promising Practices**

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword/ Acknowledgements	3
The School and Community Support Project:	5
Purpose and Conceptual Model	
What Benefits Are Derived From This Project?	7
Sites by Geographic Location: Project Portraits	10
Athol	10
Attleboro	11
Beverly, Gloucester	12
Cambridge, Milton, Quincy, Randolph, Weymouth	14
Chicopee	15
Clinton	16
Haverhill	17
Lowell	18
New Bedford, Dartmouth	19
Springfield	20
Wareham, Barnstable	22
Worcester	23
Sites by Promising Practices	24
Professional Development and Training	24
Behavioral Consultation	28
Interagency Collaboration	29
Welcoming Foster Children	33
Service/Resources/Program Linkages	33
Accessing Mental Health Services	35
Foster Family Support	37
Social Skills Development	42
Supportive Services	43
Appendix A: Resource Directory by Community	46
Appendix B: Illustrations of Children, Families, and Services Provided	48
Appendix C: School District/DSS Memoranda of Collaboration	55

Foreword/Acknowledgements

Despite the technologic superiority and vast human and natural resources in Massachusetts, there are children whose lives have been dominated by little or no opportunity to develop caring, secure, and gratifying relationships with other children or adults. Furthermore, too many children have known nothing but unexpected change, loss of family members and significant adults, unpredictable living circumstances, and sustained emotional deprivation.

In acknowledgement of the fact that a positive, nurturing school experience can provide a powerful antidote to the above harsh realities, the Departments of Social Services and Education have collaborated to create an initiative entitled the *School and Community Support Project*. Located in 19 school districts throughout the Commonwealth (Appendix A), the principal objective of this project has been to ensure a positive, engaging, and effective school experience for foster/adoptive/kinship children enrolled in elementary and middle schools. Initially funded in 1998, the project has been carefully and thoughtfully evaluated, and its results have been particularly impressive.

In order to prompt and support wide-scale examination and adoption of many of the components and practices of this program, the intent of this **Handbook of Promising Practices** is to provide to all school districts and DSS area offices a compendium of approaches that appear to be particularly effective for children as well as their parents and teachers. Although it is neither feasible nor desirable to replicate the approaches and methods described in the Handbook, this book includes a mosaic of alternative ideas and practices that are intended to promote a variety of creative applications in other school districts statewide.

Numerous individuals have made enormous contributions to the successful implementation of this project. First, Susan Stelk (DSS) and Marcia

Mitnacht (DOE) have provided invaluable guidance and encouragement to communities in order to ensure full and effective implementation of the project's core philosophy and conceptual framework. Second, school district and DSS area office staff has provided tireless leadership and persistence in engaging schools, agencies, and families in the conduct of the project. Third, school district, DSS, and community agency staff should be commended for generating and implementing a wide array of creative ideas intended to strengthen children in foster/adoptive/kinship arrangements.

Overall, multiple sources of evidence suggest that improvements in child and family functioning and DSS/School District collaboration have occurred during the last five years. While it is imperative to continue to identify long-term effects of these services, data imply that this project represents a prudent investment of public tax dollars over the short term.

The imminent challenge to resolving problems of challenging child behaviors, academic failure, inadequate parenting, and violence resides not only with these programs, but also with a comprehensive and sustained effort to prevent their initial occurrence. Ascertaining the most effective investment of finite tax dollars into both preventive and rehabilitative initiatives is a daunting administrative challenge. However, children and families whose lives are dominated by crises, constant mobility, insecurity, and unpredictability, and whose safety and well being are occasionally threatened, plead that this challenge be confronted.

Thomas T. Kochanek

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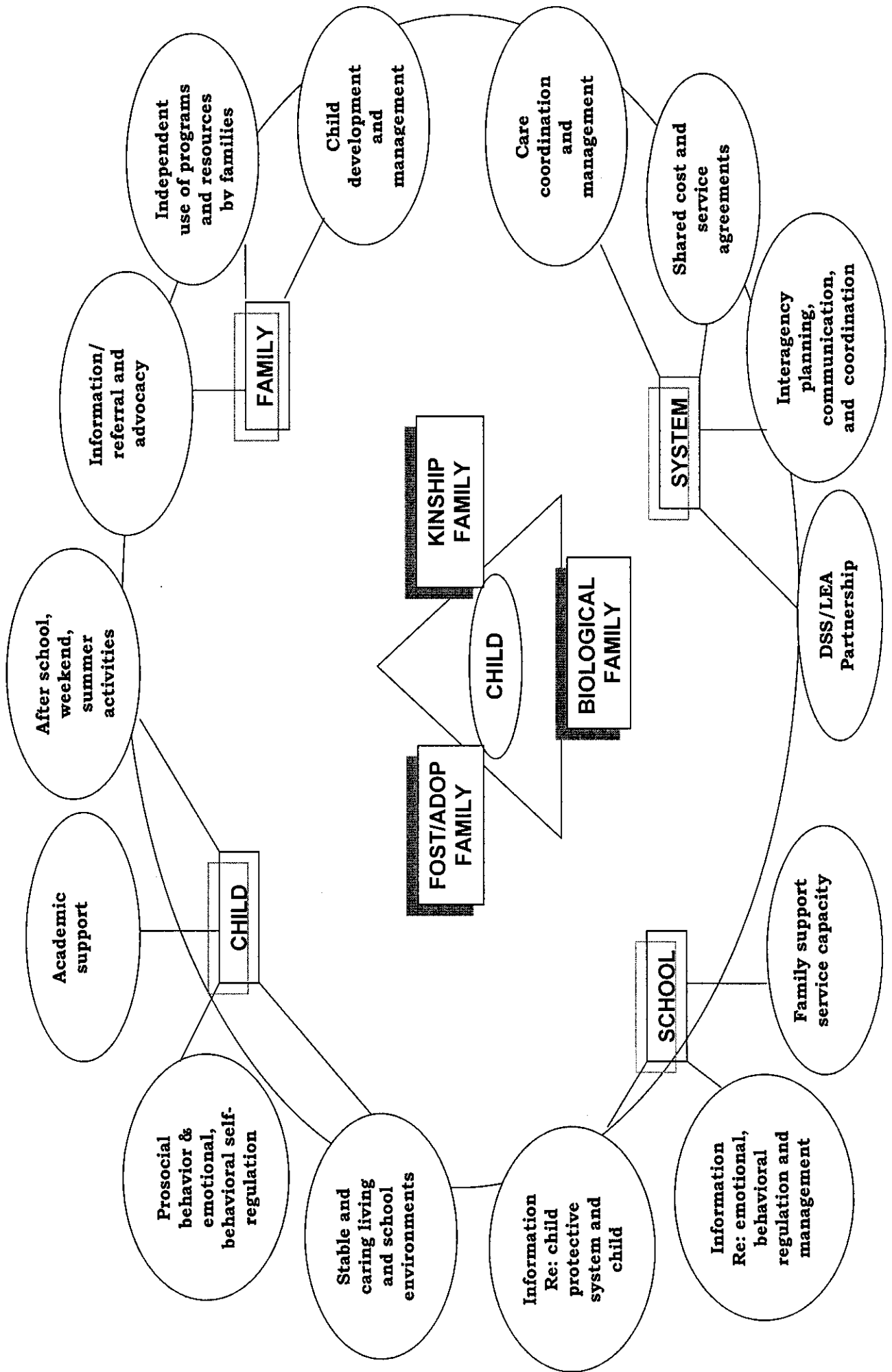
The School and Community Support Project: Purpose and Conceptual Model

It is widely acknowledged that the life experiences of many Department of Social Services (DSS) involved children are marked by disruption, instability, and absence of meaningful human connections. This harsh reality affects not only a child's family circumstances, but also significantly influences school experiences as well. In order to support the implementation of alternative approaches to providing successful school experiences for DSS involved children, the Departments of Social Services and Education have collaborated to create an initiative entitled the *School and Community Support Project*.

Located in 19 school districts throughout the Commonwealth, this project is intended to provide a well-orchestrated system of varied services for DSS involved and other high-risk children and their families. The cornerstones of this project (Figure 1) include emphases on the acquisition of prosocial behaviors in children, training and consultation for school staff, classroom teachers, and foster/adoptive/kinship families, and developing collaborative service agreements between school programs and DSS.

Figure 1.

**SYSTEM of CARE, EDUCATION, and SUPPORT
for DSS INVOLVED and VULNERABLE CHILDREN and FAMILIES**



Throughout the last five years, major project activities have included:

- Ongoing classroom-based consultation for teachers focusing on strategies for resolving problem child behaviors.
- Family support and guidance regarding the management of challenging behaviors by children at home.
- Training for teachers and school staff regarding the unique experiences and emotions of foster children and their families.
- Short-term child and family focused intervention provided in both school and home settings.
- Linkage with after-school and summer recreational/ socialization experiences for children.
- Developing welcoming procedures to ensure full access to all school activities, programs, and resources by foster children.
- Providing information/referral services for foster families as well as strategies for more effective communication with school staff.
- Elevating the consciousness of the overall community regarding the unique needs and challenges of foster/adoptive/kinship children.

What Benefits Are Derived From This Project?

In order to identify the outcomes associated with these project activities, an independent evaluation was recently conducted in three representative communities. Major findings were as follows.

Placement Stability

Of the 40 children in the study sample, findings revealed that: (1) 74% of the sample were able to maintain a consistent educational program placement throughout the school year (i.e., majority of children were able to maintain their full inclusion within regular education classrooms or not require more intensive special education services); (2) 90% of the sample were enrolled in the same school throughout the year; and (3) 86% of the children were maintained in the same residence. Given the instability typically encountered by DSS involved children in both school and home placements, this finding is viewed as particularly noteworthy.

Changes in Behavioral Functioning

In examining changes in behavioral functioning and school performance, findings revealed that: (1) significant decreases were reported by classroom teachers in child verbal aggression, classroom disruption, bullying, overactivity, and restlessness; and (2) substantial growth was evident in the acquisition of prosocial skills (e.g., makes friends easily, initiates conversations, follows directions, compromises in conflicts). In light of the fact that approximately 50% of these children are currently enrolled in special education programs, these data are viewed as positive evidence of productive change in very challenging children.

Linkage with Additional Services

In all three study communities, data revealed that the majority of children became involved in a wide array of after-school, weekend, and summer academic, recreational, and athletic programs for children. Representative activities included academic support programs, MCAS study groups, YMCA memberships, summer camps, community-based adult mentors, violence prevention activities, and strategies to more effectively engage parents in school activities and programs.

DSS/School District Relationships

Within all three study sites, interviews with DSS Area Office Administrators and school district administrators revealed:

- Enormous improvement in information sharing and collaborative planning for individual children.
- Substantial reduction in spontaneous, unplanned placement of children into schools.
- Substantial improvement in communication and trust between foster parents and school staff.
- Significant increases in joint decision making between DSS and school district staff.
- Substantial improvement in the prompt inclusion of foster children within classrooms and school activities.

- Significant increases in attendance by parents and DSS social workers at IEP meetings.
- Substantial increases in the understanding of the child welfare system on the part of school staff, and an enhanced perspective by social workers of school programs and policies.

Changes in Foster Families

As a result of project activities, foster parents have reported:

- Substantial decreases in out-of-control, defiant, and explosive behavior by children at home.
- Improved school performance (report cards) by children.
- Manifestation of “caring” behaviors by children at home toward both other children and adults.
- Foster children describing/introducing themselves as “family members”.
- Improvement in the acquisition of positive values (honesty, respect, trust) by children.
- Productive participation in IEP meetings.
- Having the knowledge and confidence to function as an educational advocate for their children.
- Developing the ability to successfully use alternative forms of communication with school staff (e.g., phone calls, written letters, personal meetings, teacher conferences).

Changes in Classroom Management Skills By Teachers

As a result of project activities, teachers have reported:

- Significant improvements in their ability to resolve conflicts prior to behavioral escalation, to more clearly interpret student words and behaviors, to develop spontaneous, effective solutions to behavioral problems, and to use voice, facial expression, and proximity control in managing student behavior.
- Substantial improvements in their ability to think about and understand the origin and intent of student behaviors, to become more astute observers and analysts of student behaviors, to identify the early onset of anger and depression, to independently create solutions for challenging student behaviors, to seek more in-depth rather than superficial explanations of student behavior (e.g., ADHD, ODD).

Revenue Enhancement

In addition to benefits for children, families, and teachers, the independent evaluation also attempted to identify fiscal benefits from this project. In two study communities in which financial data were analyzed, findings revealed an enormous amplification of project funds. More specifically, while one school district received \$79,000. in project funds, additional in-kind school services totaling \$75,794. were accessed for children and their families. In a second community, significant increases in therapeutic services for children were evident as a result of utilization of third party reimbursement mechanisms.

In summary, multiple sources of evidence suggest that improvements in child and family functioning have occurred as a result of these project activities. Despite the absence of a comparison group, it seems highly improbable that such changes would have occurred spontaneously, particularly with such a vulnerable group of children. While it is imperative to continue to identify the long-term effects of these services, data imply that this project represents a prudent investment of public tax dollars over the short term. Moreover, the project includes a wide array of activities that could readily be adopted by other school districts and DSS Area Offices statewide.

Sites by Geographic Location: Project Portraits

Athol

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The Athol-Royalston Regional School District has entered into a sub-contractual agreement with Clinical and Support Options, Inc, a community based mental health center, for management and implementation of this program. Major emphases of the project have involved the following activities.

- In order to prompt and support interagency collaboration, a formal committee has been created that is co-chaired by the Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Assistant Director of the DSS Area Office. Composition of the committee includes school administrators, DSS Area Office staff, an externally funded project focusing on interagency service access for families (PATCH), and staff from Clinical and Support Options, Inc. Meeting on a monthly basis, the committee has addressed policy and procedural issues (e.g., information transfer between agencies; service needs, duplication and fragmentation), and has also discussed and resolved presenting circumstances of unusually complex children and families within the area.
- To address concerns of social isolation of children, the project has entered into an agreement with the area YMCA to provide after-school, weekend, and summer camp opportunities for children.
- To address challenging behaviors of children manifested in school and at home, clinicians from Clinical and Support Options, Inc. have provided school and home-based consultation that have focused on assisting adults with understanding and managing disruptive childhood behaviors.

Attleboro

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The project in Attleboro, entitled Steps to Success, is a sub-contractual agreement between the Attleboro Public Schools and Community Care Services, a community based mental health agency. The project has focused principally on three areas that capitalize on the expertise of the mental health clinicians at Community Care Services. These emphases include:

- Providing short-term, individual counseling to students in school whose challenging behaviors frequently interfere with learning, school achievement, and appropriate and satisfying peer relationships.
- Providing information/referral services to families in response to identified child and family needs, and also providing access to direct services including specialty evaluations, medication management, family therapy, and social skills training.
- Developing and nurturing a relationship with the Senior Center in the community to support a Grandparent Raising Grandchild Program. The majority of families served in this program is not involved with DSS, and largely, are unknown to the school district as well. Viewed as principally a prevention effort, this component of the project focuses on supporting grandparents who have recently and unexpectedly assumed the role of primary caregiver for their grandchildren.

Beverly

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The project is managed by Emily Rockwell, Coordinator of Child Welfare within the Beverly Public Schools. Principal components of the program are as follows.

- To address interagency collaboration, a formal memorandum of understanding has been crafted and endorsed by the Beverly Public Schools and DSS Cape Ann Area Office. The agreement attempts to ensure prompt and expedient access to and transfer of information, collaborative service planning on behalf of individual children and their families, and development of policies and procedures that promote effective and cooperative interagency relationships.
- To ensure school success of DSS involved and other high-risk children, a sub-contractual agreement has been developed with Health and Education Services, Inc., a community based mental health agency. Mental health clinicians from HES provide classroom-based consultation that assists teachers with understanding and effectively managing problematic behaviors demonstrated by children.
- To welcome children and families into the Beverly Public Schools, a multi-faceted Welcoming Packet is distributed that includes information about project resources, various school based services, and a directory of community social, recreational, and mental health services. All foster/kinship/adoptive families receive the packet annually.
- To promote the acquisition of prosocial skills in children with special needs, an eight-week social skills group is offered that focuses on self-image and esteem, identification and expression of feelings, establishing appropriate boundaries in social relationships, safety and self-protection, and problem-solving strategies.
- North Star Adventure is an adventure-based counseling and therapy program for special needs students. These group meetings involve cooperative games and initiatives in the pursuit of creating a respectful and supportive learning community. Students are provided with the opportunity to participate in hiking, canoeing, rock-climbing, and climbing the NSA challenge course. Recent studies have suggested that

the NSA program is associated with improved social skills, problem solving and conflict resolution abilities, and communication skills.

- The project has offered a wide array of training opportunities for school staff on several topics such as "Limit Setting and Anger Management", "Adoption, Foster Care, Kinship and Guardianship," "Children Who Witness Violence", "Diversity: Issues of Race and Culture", " Helping Children Deal With the Threat of Terrorism and Violence", "The Spectrum of Pervasive Developmental Disorders", "Diversity, Religion, Anti-Bias, and Bullying Training", and "Positive Behavioral Supports".
- The project also has developed a supportive relationship with the Gloucester Public Schools such that HES psychologists can provide classroom-based consultation to DSS-involved children enrolled within Gloucester elementary schools.

Cambridge/South Shore (Milton, Quincy, Randolph, and Weymouth)

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The project in these five school districts has been sub-contracted to the Community and School Based Programs Unit of the Walker Home and School. Coordinated by Paulette Cobin, the project has focused principally on the following activities.

- Provided training to school staff on the unique needs, emotions, and circumstances of foster/kinship/adoptive children including: "The Grieving Child: Understanding and Teaching a Child Who has Experienced Loss", "Assessment and Treatment: A Multi-Systems Approach", and "Behavior Problems in the Classroom".
- Provided training and ongoing support to foster/kinship/adoptive parents on strategies for effective communication with schools, behavior management, homework completion, and identifying and accessing needed community programs and resources.
- Provided school based consultation to teachers, principals, and adjustment counselors regarding understanding and effectively managing problematic childhood behaviors.
- Developed a protocol between the project and DSS Area Office regarding consistent and uniform procedures for information exchange, collaborative service planning, and problem resolution.

Chicopee

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Coordinated by Roy Messenger and Diane Jensen (413 594-3597) of the Chicopee Public Schools, the project has focused on the following activities.

- In order to identify and effectively respond to the individual needs of DSS involved and other high-risk students, the project has created a mentoring model in which teachers and adjustment counselors serve as resource coordinators for individual children. In brief, these mentors provide ongoing, stable, and meaningful human connections for children, identify unmet needs, and access and broker services for children both in school and the community overall.
- Provided an array of training and professional development opportunities for school staff including: "DSS Policies, Regulations, and Procedures", "Children Who Witness Violence", "Strategies for Behavioral De-Escalation", "Juvenile Court: Purposes, Responsibility, Jurisdiction, and Power", "Pharmacologic Management of Behavior", and "Childhood Psychopathology".
- Developed and disseminated an information and resource handbook for foster/adoptive/kinship families, and sponsored training on such topics as "Parent-Teacher Conferences", "The IEP: What Is It?", "Preparing for and Participating in School Meetings", "Labels (ADHS, LD, PDD): What Do They Mean?"

Clinton

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The project is coordinated by Ellen Turini, an adjustment counselor within the Clinton Public Schools. Major initiatives that the project has addressed are as follows.

- In order to support parents with behaviorally challenging children, a variety of educational opportunities have been offered in both English and Spanish. Options have included a 12-week program on ADHD, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, and 1-2-3 Magic.
- To provide support to classroom teachers with behaviorally challenging children, a consulting psychologist has been engaged to collaborate with teachers to develop behavioral plans for individual children.
- To raise the level of consciousness and understanding in the community of families in need, an Adopt-a-Family Program has been created that allows concerned and committed community residents to donate needed items for children.

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Mary Connors has been employed by the Haverhill Public Schools to coordinate and manage the School and Community Support Project on a full-time basis. Additionally, Deborah Eggers shares program implementation

responsibilities on a half-time basis. The project has assumed a wide array of functions and activities within the past two years.

- In order to promote and support opportunities for meaningful connections of children to school and community resources, the project assumes responsibility for linking children and families with after-school, weekend, and summer programs and activities.
- To assist teachers with behaviorally challenging students, a consulting psychologist has been engaged to develop behavioral plans for children within the context of their school classrooms.
- To assist and support foster parents with children enrolled in the Haverhill Public Schools, the project has assembled a myriad of options including a comprehensive compendium of community resources, a monthly newsletter of school and community activities, monthly discussion and problem resolution meetings, advocacy strategies, and home visits to families on a semi-annual basis.
- To ensure full access and integration of DSS-involved children in schools, project staff has attempted to bridge the gap between DSS caseworkers and classroom teachers by ensuring prompt transfer and full disclosure of information, attending IEP meetings, and negotiating access to needed school and community resources.
- Other creative initiatives have included producing a program for parents on the area cable TV network, and also forging a relationship with area colleges and universities to provide clinical internships for social work students.

Lowell

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The Lowell Public Schools has sub-contracted the management and implementation of the project to MSPCC. Coordinated by Cathy Brown, the project has attempted to respond to the enormous diversity of families in Lowell, both culturally and linguistically. Major initiatives recently implemented are as follows.

- In order to respond to the unique needs of Portuguese, Latino, African, and Southeast Asian families, four bilingual, bi-cultural outreach workers have been hired for approximately one day/week each (i.e., existing Healthy Families staff at MSPCC). These individuals have conducted bi-weekly home visits, and have provided information/referral services, linkage with the health care community, and needed tangible items (e.g., clothing, school supplies, camperships, food baskets, and YWCA memberships). In addition, support and guidance have been provided, both individually and in small groups, on issues pertaining to appropriate discipline techniques and parent/child activities at home and in the community.
- To support DSS-involved and other high-risk children, MSPCC affiliated clinicians (LCSWs) have provided intervention and support at school (individual and group), and have also attended case planning and evaluation meetings for these children. A medical record has been created for these services and as such, access to third party reimbursement has been successfully secured.
- To support children who present unusually challenging behaviors, the project employs a consulting psychologist who has provided training sessions for teachers in behavior management strategies, classroom-based consultation on behalf of individual children, and assisted with formulating behavioral plans that can be implemented at home.

New Bedford

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Cheri Riggs is employed on a full-time basis by the New Bedford Public Schools to coordinate the School and Community Support Project. The project has focused on increasing and enhancing the understanding and commitment of the New Bedford community to foster children while also providing direct services to children and their families. Principal activities have been as follows.

- In order to elevate the level of consciousness of the New Bedford community regarding the needs of foster/adoptive/kinship children, a comprehensive public awareness campaign (i.e., newspapers, radio, and television) has been launched. Additionally, by developing a leadership role in the New Bedford Community Connections Coalition, an initiative overseen by the United Way of Southeastern Massachusetts, the visibility of foster children has significantly increased.
- The project has provided supportive services to foster children and their families including advocacy within school meetings, information/referral services, linkage with in-school and after-school services, and monthly publication of *The Advocate*, and information-rich newsletter designed specifically for families.
- The project has also ensured that foster/adoptive kinship children gain access to a myriad of in-school, after-school, weekend, and summer programs that provide enrichment opportunities in academic, recreational, therapeutic, and socialization areas.
- The project also has developed an affiliation with the Dartmouth Public Schools to assist with the development of programs for foster/adoptive/kinship children enrolled within elementary schools.

Springfield

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The Springfield Public Schools has elected to sub-contract this project to the Behavioral Health Network/Center for Human Development. The program is designed to provide support to children living in foster/adoptive/kinship care, as well as to children at high risk for out-of-home placement. The goal of the program is to improve student adjustment in the school and home by providing training, support, and education to school staff and parents and therapeutic services to children and their families. Additionally, the program also strives to build connections and improve communication among the myriad

- To sensitize and educate school staff regarding the foster care experience, group presentations by mental health clinicians are provided that describe the emotional, psychological, and behavioral consequences of out-of-home placement. In addition, teachers may request and receive classroom-based consultation to identify the causes of problem behaviors, and also craft individualized interventions that can be implemented jointly by teachers and clinical staff.
- To support the acquisition of appropriate social behavior in children, a variety of therapeutic modalities are available. These include large, classroom-based groups co-lead by teachers and clinical staff that teach social/emotional skills to all students. Small psycho-educational groups are also offered that focus on skill development in anger management, social interaction and relationships, and overall school adjustment. Finally, small psychotherapy groups are also offered for children that focus on shared life experiences of transition, disruption, and adjustment.
- To support and educate parents, weekly discussion and problem resolution meetings, conducted in both English and Spanish, are co-lead by clinical staff and a parent liaison. Topics include parenting skills, limit-setting strategies, and behavior management techniques, and opportunities are provided for parents to form connections with other families for information, support, and recreation.
- Project staff also serves as active contributors to school-based pre-referral teams that are chaired by building principals. These inter-disciplinary teams assist with the development of classroom-based strategies that can be implemented by teachers.

Wareham

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The Wareham Public Schools has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to foster/adoptive/kinship children by establishing a full-time coordinator of Foster Care services within the district (town founded). Major achievements of the project are as follows.

- To ensure full service access and integration within school and community activities, the program coordinator has forged a unique and productive relationship with the DSS office. In brief, all incoming DSS-involved children are routinely referred to the project coordinator. The coordinator obtains all relevant historical information and records, meets with the child and family at home to identify unmet needs and describe school policies and routines, and convenes a meeting among the child, parents, and classroom teacher to ensure a smooth transition into school.
- To assist classroom teachers with behaviorally challenging students, a consulting psychologist provides classroom-based consultation that leads to an individualized behavioral plan for each student. Additionally, anger management groups have been offered bi-weekly for all elementary level students.
- In order to support foster parents, ongoing informational meetings have been provided that focus on topics such as alternatives to medication, nutrition and diet, CPR, ADHD and PTSD, advocacy skills, and effective communication strategies with DSS and school staff.
- To address issues of social isolation that often accompany foster placement, the project negotiates an array of after-school, weekend and summer recreational opportunities for children that are supported via in-kind contributions from a variety of sources (Boys and Girls Clubs, area camps, municipal summer programs).
- The project also has developed an affiliation with the Barnstable Public Schools to use consulting psychologists to provide classroom-based consultation for children with unmanageable behaviors.

Worcester

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Stacy Amaral serves as the full-time coordinator of the School and Community Support Project in Worcester. The project has focused on providing a stable school placement for foster children throughout an academic year, has promoted more effective communication and collaboration between schools and DSS, and has committed substantial energy to assisting foster parents, particularly within the Latina community. Major achievements have been as follows.

- To ensure stability and consistency within a child's educational program, the project has ensured that children will remain in the same classroom for a full school year irrespective of the number of physical moves and disruptions children may encounter within the community.
- To promote interagency collaboration and coordination, the project has linked with a community coalition of agencies including DSS, DARE Family Services, Worcester Youth Guidance, Community Health Link, Devereux Family Services, MSPCC, and Valley Psychiatric Services. This coalition provides not only coordinated care management for individual children and families, but also provides a forum in which improved resource sharing can occur.

policies, and options, understanding adoption laws, strategies for effective communication with classroom teachers, and strategies for communicating with birth parents of foster children.

Sites by Exemplary Practices

Professional Development and Training

Beverly

Title: "How to Develop an Effective and Realistic Behavioral Intervention"

Content: Understanding the anatomy of misbehavior, using crisis as an opportunity for growth and learning, and discussing alternative intervention approaches (e.g., structuring, listening, re-directing).

Title: "The Spectrum of Pervasive Developmental Disorders".

Content: Identify the essential characteristics of PDD, discuss alternative treatment approaches (e.g., behavioral therapy, psychosocial intervention, psychopharmacology), and identify methods to assist families with children with PDD.

Title: "Limit Setting and Anger Management"

Content: Using limit setting and anger management not to control the child but to teach self-control, examining the emotional and physiological precipitants to anger, and using the adult/child relationship as the primary reinforcer in behavior management.

Title: "Cultural Competency in School: Issues of Race and Culture in Adoption, Foster Care, and Family"

Content: Understanding the various manifestations of cultural identity and belonging, developing skills that recognize the values and traditions of cultural variation, and protecting and preserving the dignity of individuals and their cultural identity.

Title: "Diversity, Religion, Anti-Bias, and Bullying Training"

Content: Understanding and appreciating one's own multiple cultures related to characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, national identity, sexual orientation, religion, class, age, and geographic region.

Title: "Behavioral Medicine and Stress Related Disorders"

Content: Understanding the origins and impact of stress, obstacles to stress coping, and developing skills (e.g., self-control, time management, assertiveness training, recreation) to manage stress.

Title: "Children Who Witness Violence"

Content: Understanding the psychological effects of witnessing violence, acknowledging that teachers can have a significant impact on the cognitive profile of children living with violence, and acquiring skills to be a resiliency mentor.

Cambridge/South Shore

Title: "The Grieving Child: Understanding and Teaching a Child Who Has Experienced Loss"

Content: Understanding the various losses and traumas that children experience (with an emphasis on the child living in foster or kinship arrangements), and discussion of strategies used by teachers that can modulate symptoms and behaviors associated with grief or loss.

Title: "Assessment and Treatment: A Multi-Systems Approach"

Content: Understanding the impact of multiple systems on child behavior (e.g., family, peers, neighborhood, race and culture), and accessing resources in the school and community that have therapeutic value.

Title: "Behavior Problems in the Classroom"

Content: Understanding the origin and meaning of challenging behaviors in the classroom, and identifying alternative strategies for maintaining a positive learning environment.

Chicopee

Title: "De-Escalation Training"

Content: Understanding alternative strategies for de-escalation in the classroom.

Title: "Adoption and Foster Care: DSS Policies and Procedures"

Content: Understanding existing statutes, policies, and procedures that affect decision-making in out-of-home placements.

Title: "Childhood Psychopathologies"

Content: Understanding the various diagnostic categories and behavioral manifestations of children with behavior disorders, and using case studies as a method for formulating alternative intervention approaches.

Title: "The Role of Juvenile Court in Dealing with Complex Children and Families"

Content: Led by a Juvenile Court Judge and an attorney, this presentation allows teachers and school staff to understand the role and limits of Juvenile Court in responding to the needs of challenging children and their families.

Springfield

Title: "The Unique Experience of Children in Foster Care"

Content: Informing teachers about situations of abuse/neglect that may precipitate foster placement, the emotional and behavioral consequences on children of being removed from their home, and the difficulties foster children may have in engaging in appropriate relationships with other children and teachers.

Title: "Being in Foster Care: What It Really Means"

Content: Presented by three students who entered the foster care system as young children, this panel presentation and discussion is intended to assist teachers and adjustment counselors in gaining insight into the feelings of disruption, loss, and insecurity prompted by out-of-home placements.

Behavioral Consultation

Beverly

The behavioral consultation service offered within the elementary schools of Beverly brings together education and community behavioral and mental health services to benefit children, families, and all school staff. The presence of a community-based, behavioral consultant for a minimum of 2-6 hours/week accomplishes the following:

- Establishing and maintaining educational/behavioral interventions that address both the academic and mental health needs of the child, and in some instances, the child's family.
- Establishing and maintaining easier access to mental health, psychopharmacology, and neuropsychological services.
- Observing children within their classroom setting, and as such, increasing the chances of designing an effective behavioral intervention plan.

- Providing classroom teachers with individualized intervention plans that are designed for specific children and also accommodate a teacher's preferences for classroom organization, student learning, and curriculum design.
- Increasing a teacher's awareness of the psychosocial factors that prevent or impede a child's ability to focus/learn in a classroom.

Springfield

An important link for the School and Community Support Project are the school-based service teams that exist in all schools in Springfield. Service Teams, interdisciplinary in composition, meet weekly to discuss individual students who are not performing well, and generate ideas and strategies that can be implemented by classroom teachers. Mental health clinicians supported by the SCSP are active participants on these teams, and as such, provide a competent mental health perspective to these deliberations within a school setting, assist with identifying relevant community based resources, and assist with addressing the needs of families.

Wareham

Project funds support the employment of two part-time consulting psychologists for approximately one day/week each. Teachers who have children in class with unresolved behavioral issues submit a formal referral to these consultants, and the subsequent assessment process typically involves both classroom observations and, if needed, a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). Based on this information, individualized behavioral plans are formulated for implementation by classroom teachers. These plans may also include a family support and consultation component.

Interagency Collaboration

Athol

In order to promote and ensure a more effective collaborative relationship between the Athol/Royalston School District and DSS Area Office, a formal committee has been created that is co-chaired by the Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Assistant Director of the DSS Area Office. Composition of the committee includes school administrators, DSS Area Office staff, a DSS-funded project focusing on interagency service access for families (PATCH), and staff from Clinical and Support Options, Inc. Meeting on a monthly basis, the committee has addressed policy and procedural issues (e.g., information transfer between agencies; service needs, duplication, and fragmentation), and has also discussed and resolved presenting circumstances of unusually complex children and families with the area.

Beverly

In order to enhance and formalize the collaborative relationship between the Beverly Public Schools and DSS Area Office, a formal Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix C.) was crafted and signed by both parties. In brief, the memorandum articulates areas of collaboration between the agencies, and specifies methods, protocols, and procedures through which collaboration will be implemented. Areas addressed include: (a) guidelines for ongoing communication and cooperative planning; (b) a schedule for ongoing meetings between school adjustment counselors, supervisors, and caseworkers from the DSS Area Office to improve communication, correspondence, and trust; (c) opportunities to discuss specific children and families known to both agencies; (d) ensuring that foster children remain in the same school for an entire academic

year; and (e) identifying areas of common need for professional development and training.

Cambridge/South Shore

In both Cambridge and the South Shore communities (Milton, Quincy, Randolph, Weymouth), the frequency of kinship family arrangements is unusually high. As such, a protocol has been created and signed by both the project and DSS Area Office that specifies the SCSP as the major mode of support and intervention for such families.

In addition, agreements have been forged between the project and DSS Area Office (Appendix C.) that specify ongoing collaborative planning meetings between agencies, and ensure the integration of DSS information and services into decision-making at the neighborhood school level.

Haverhill

The Haverhill Public Schools and DSS Area Office have crafted and authorized a formal Memorandum of Collaboration (Appendix C.). In brief, the memorandum: (a) ensures prompt transfer of information between agencies; (b) establishes that the Haverhill Public Schools will be immediately informed of either new foster children within Haverhill or changes in existing placements; (c) provides to the project a current list of all foster parents in Haverhill; (d) ensures that the school will be promptly informed of DSS involved children who have been hospitalized or placed in day or residential programs, and who will be returning to the Haverhill School District in the near future.

New Bedford

The New Bedford project has used the Community Connections Coalition at the United Way Agency as the vehicle for interagency awareness and planning regarding foster/adoptive/kinship children. As an integral part of a comprehensive agenda and work plan, a specific Task Force for Foster Care Support has been formed that includes representatives from the school district, mental health and social service agencies, state legislature, and prominent community activists. The overarching goal of the Task Force is to raise the level of awareness and understanding of the community relating to foster/adoptive kinship children, and solicit commitments from agencies and individuals to make available opportunities for out-of school education, recreation, and socialization for these children and families.

Wareham

The School and Community Support Project assumes a particularly prominent role in the Wareham School District due to the fact a full-time, town funded position was created and dedicated to the support of foster children and their families in all schools. Coincidentally, this individual, Marcine Fernandes, was a previous long-term employee at DSS and as a result, the linkage between school staff and the DSS Area Office has been unusually strong and positive. A written Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix C.) has been signed by both the school district and DSS Area Office that ensures: (1) prompt disclosure of foster placements within the community accompanied by prompt transfer of records and documents; (2) ongoing interagency meetings for both policy and program discussion as well as joint planning for specific children and families; (3) jointly sponsored trainings for foster/adoptive/kinship families in the community; and (4) an introductory meeting among Ms. Fernandes, newly placed foster children and their families, and classroom teachers in order to ensure full integration within all school activities.

Worcester

In order to promote interagency collaboration at the child, agency, and policy levels, weekly meetings are convened at the DSS Area Office for project staff. The working agenda for these meetings includes review of new and/or changed placements of children, and discussion of DSS treatment plans and school-based services that require change and improvement. In addition, organizational policies and procedures are reviewed in order to maximize resources and efforts between both agencies. Finally, since the Worcester Public Schools embraces the notion of neighborhood schools, unfortunately, changes in foster placement also leads to changes in school and classroom placement throughout the school year. In order to minimize this disruption, both agencies have agreed to use project funds to maintain children within their initial school of enrollment.

Welcoming Foster Children

Due to a variety of different factors, it is not uncommon for foster children to endure isolation and distance as they enter school classrooms. In many instances, children experience 2-3 different classrooms per school year. In order to minimize feelings of dislocation and ensure immediate inclusion within a school and assigned classroom, several project sites have created Welcoming Packets for both foster children and their families. While each packet is unique to its community context, common denominators include information and incentives for becoming involved in both school and community activities. Project communities that have developed impressive packets include Athol, Attleboro, Beverly, Chicopee, Haverhill, and Wareham.

Service/Resource/Program Linkages

Athol

Given the scarcity of resources in the community for children and families, a significant problem that Athol confronted was social isolation and disengagement. To address this issue, a partnership has been forged between the project and the Athol Area YMCA to offer reduced-cost annual family memberships. In addition, summer camperships are also provided to foster/adoptive/kinship children.

Chicopee

The Chicopee site has elected to address the challenge of resource linkage through the assignment of project mentors or liaisons for each participating child. In brief, mentors (teachers, adjustment counselors, and other school staff) assume the responsibility of establishing a meaningful and trusting relationship with the child through weekly meetings. Upon identification of child and family needs and desires, the mentor serves as a resource broker to facilitate linkages between children and families and school and community programs. Resources may be in-school and academically based, and also involve after-school, weekend, and summer opportunities as well. This mentorship program allows for the establishment of meaningful social connections, for full utilization of school and community resources, and for ongoing communication among all individuals and agencies involved with specific children.

Haverhill

The project within the Haverhill Public Schools has formed numerous linkages with programs and projects that guarantee access to foster/adoptive/kinship children. Representative resources include after-school academic and recreational programs, school-based clubs, a wide array of enrichment options (e.g., film camp, sign language clubs, art/music program, school vacation and summer camps).

Lowell

Lowell is a culturally and linguistically diverse community with a high prevalence of recently immigrated families, particularly from Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America. In many instances, families are unaware of resources (and how to access these resources), and embody a set of values and cultural traditions that may conflict with practices in the United States (e.g., health care access and utilization; child rearing and discipline practices).

In order to address the acute needs of these families and offer preventive services, the project employs a number of part-time outreach workers. All outreach workers are bi-cultural and bi-lingual, and work with families on information/referral services, accessing basic entitlements, and providing support and skill to successfully navigate through the city of Lowell.

New Bedford

New Bedford fosters resource linkages at two distinct levels. First, for foster children and families, efforts are made to ensure maximum utilization of in-school and after-school programs and activities. Representative linkages include 21st Century Community Learning Centers, After-School and Out-of-School (ASOST) programs, MCAS academic support groups, the Parent Involvement Project, Safe Harbors (Federally funded program to prevent violence and violent behavior and reduce substance use and abuse in children), advocacy and case management programs (Roots and Wings, Nurtured Wings, You Belong), and reduced fees at summer camps sponsored by the New Bedford Recreation Department.

Second, at the organizational level, the project has formed a significant affiliation with a comprehensive community-based effort (i.e., Community Connections Coalition) to improve awareness and services for foster children.

Wareham

A significant asset of Wareham's program is the availability of a full-time coordinator dedicated to foster/adaptive/kinship children and their families. On the basis of an initial information-gathering home visit conducted for all newly placed foster children, connections are made to all pertinent school and community-based programs and resources.

Accessing Mental Health Services

Athol

The project in Athol is sub-contracted to a community-based mental health agency. As such, participating children and their families have immediate access to mental health clinicians who can provide therapeutic services and intervention in both school and home settings. In a recently completed study of this program, it was determined that the assets received via third-party billing for such services were approximately equal to project funds committed to this community.

Attleboro

The project in Attleboro has also been sub-contracted to a community-based mental health center. As a result, home-based parent consultations and family therapy have become a treatment option, even during evening hours. Referrals for more intensive individual and family therapy are made if needed to the mental health center. Services provided to families include formulation of behavioral charts, adult/child communication skills, anger management skills, strategies for initiating open, civil conversation, problem-solving strategies, and alternative methods for effectively communicating with teachers.

Lowell

In Lowell, the project is sub-contracted from the school district to MSPCC. Given the therapeutic capacity of this agency, the project purchases time of LCSWs to provide therapeutic groups at school (cognitive/behavioral, play, and activity), individual child therapy, family therapy, and case consultation to teachers. In addition, the project purchases consulting psychological services for support in developing behavioral plans both in school and at home.

Springfield

Behavioral Health Network/Center for Human Development is the principal sub-contractor for this project in Springfield. Due to its extensive mental health service capacity, identified children may participate in small psychotherapy groups that focus on shared experiences of life transition, disruption, and adjustment. Children in need of more intensive psychotherapy may be included in a psychotherapy group for children in foster care. These children are also registered as clients within the agency, and as such, are assigned a primary therapist who becomes more actively engaged with biological and foster parents, DSS caseworkers, and school staff.

Foster Family Support

Attleboro

In an effort to find and support kinship family arrangements, the project has developed a significant affiliation with the Senior Center in Attleboro. The Center sponsors a "Grandparent Raising Grandchildren" support group. Through this connection, the project has been able to identify families providing kinship care, many of whom are not involved with DSS and would otherwise be unknown to this project. The affiliation has resulted in a sharing of fiscal resources used to offer special events and trainings for families. These events are

extended to a broader audience including DSS involved kinship and foster families, as well as those not DSS involved but in need of supportive services.

Training sessions have also been made available to the above groups. Topics addressed have included: "Bullying and Harassment", "Understanding the Steps of the IEP Process", "How to Manage Children's Anger", and "Mental Health, Medications, and Children: An Introduction".

Cambridge/South Shore

In both the Cambridge and South Shore Communities, there is an unusually high prevalence of kinship arrangements. Many of these families are unknown to DSS, and evidence the need for information and guidance on special education issues, child evaluations, school test data and report cards, homework completion, and adolescent health care access. In response to these needs, the project created a training and discussion series entitled "Partnering with Schools". Project staff also provide information/referral services to these families, partner with families in school-based meetings, and provide strategies for behavior management at home. Finally, the project also sponsors a kinship support group for adults raising children of relatives or close friends.

Chicopee

Chicopee has created an informational handbook to assist foster/adoptive kinship parents with a variety of educational issues and concerns. Additionally, parents are offered information and support groups that provide detailed information on a variety of school-related issues. Sessions recently offered include:

- "The Special Needs Child in Foster/Adoptive/Kinship Care" (content includes explanations of the IEP, 504, modifications, accommodations, and various ancillary services available.)

- “Educational Jargon, Acronyms, Diagnoses, and Terminology” (content includes information on PDD, ADHD, autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, learning disabilities, and other common DSM diagnostic categories).
- “Mental Health Issues and Concerns with Foster/ Adoptive/ Kinship Children” (content includes an overview of various mental health diagnoses, separation issues, sexual abuse, trauma, and depression).
- “Home/School Communication” (content includes information on Parent/Teacher conferences, report cards, progress reports, standardized tests, and MCAS scores).
- “Children Who Witness Violence” (content includes an overview of domestic violence and its effects on children, and community services and resources for children and families).

Clinton

In order to support parents with children who present unusually challenging behaviors at home, several services are provided. First, the project offers STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) in both English and Spanish. Within a seven-week session, topics addressed include discipline strategies that eliminate hitting/yelling, and increase communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, patience, and child self-esteem. As a supplement to this training, videos from The 1-2-3 Magic Program are also available for home use as well.

Second, a 12-session parenting skills group has also been developed that focuses exclusively on ADHD. Representative topics include common manifestations, the diagnostic process, medications and behavior management strategies, and adapting to ADHD into adulthood.

Haverhill

A broad spectrum of services is made available to foster parents in Haverhill. First, home visits are conducted by project staff semi-annually to identify unmet needs and offer information, support, and guidance. Second, a monthly newsletter, a community resource booklet, and monthly foster parent support group meetings are open and available to all foster parents in the community.

A major undertaking this year has involved the creation of a "Family University". In brief, an enormous menu of choices has been made available for both children and parents. Representative topics have included:

For Parents:

- "Talking to Kids About Terrorism"
- "Detecting Depression in Children"
- "Helping Your Child with the MCAS"
- "Nutrition and Learning"

For Children:

- "Street Safety"
- "What's In a Big-Mac?"
- "Bully-Proof Yourself"
- "Getting Ready for the MCAS"
- "Bike Safety"

Lowell

Lowell is a culturally and linguistically diverse community with a recent, dramatic increase in families who have immigrated from Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. In addition to providing comprehensive information/referral services to families in their native language, several workshops and discussion groups have also been designed to assist families to

become assimilated into American culture. Workshops that were sponsored this year include:

“Raising Children in Troubled Times”

“Health and Nutrition”

“Teaching Responsible Behavior”

“Strategies for Handling Arguing, Lying, Bedtime, and Mealtime”

“Africa 101: A Brief Introduction to Health, Education, and Family Life in Africa”

“Trauma, Transition, and Treatment: Working with African Children in the Lowell Community”

New Bedford

In addition to providing foster parents with information, consultation, support, and advocacy to assist in the stabilization of foster children in their home, the Foster Care Advocate, a monthly newsletter focusing on foster care, adoption, and educational, parental, and childhood issues, is distributed to all foster families in the community.

Various fundraising events have been sponsored this year that have generated resources to support children in summer camps and other recreational and socialization opportunities in the community. A “suitcase drive” was particularly successful, and allowed each foster child to experience a dignified transition into various foster homes that occurred throughout the year.

Springfield

Weekly support and information groups for parents, offered in both English and Spanish, are co-lead by a parent liaison and clinician from the community mental health center. Discussion typically focuses on building parenting skills as well as establishing a support network with other parents. The primary objective of these groups is to improve family relationships and access to resources in order to prevent out-of-home placements.

Wareham

A wide array of topics has been addressed within workshops designed exclusively for foster parents. Content of recent offerings are as follows.

"Diversity Awareness"

"Conflict Resolution"

"Stress Management"

"Trauma Issues in Children"

"Drug Use by Children in Grades 5-12"

"How to Conduct Effective Family Meetings"

"How to Advocate for Your Foster Child"

"Depression in Children"

In addition to the above discussion groups, a Resource Library has been developed that includes books, articles, videos and audiotapes, and other information sources intended to provide families with easy, no-cost access to contemporary literature on foster children, childrearing, and community resources and services.

Worcester

All foster parents with children enrolled in the Worcester Schools receive a personal visit from project staff, either at home or in school. In addition to providing information/referral services, linkages are made with in-school, after-school, and community programs.

A novel program in Worcester that has also been initiated with project resources is a support group for Latina Foster Mothers entitled "Madres de Crianza". Meeting on a monthly basis, the group provides a vehicle for training and also provides inter-familial support within a common cultural context.

Social Skills Development

Beverly

The School and Community Support Project in Beverly has launched multiple activities intended to promote social skills acquisition in children. First, at the middle school level, an eight-week social skills group is sponsored by clinical staff from Health and Education Services, Inc. Representative topics covered include self-image and self-esteem, understanding and expressing feelings, relationships and social interactions appropriate to different kinds of relationships, problem resolution strategies, and safety and self-protection.

A second program consistently offered is Project North Star Adventure (NSA). In brief, NSA is an adventure-based counseling and therapy program for special needs students. Through group discussions, cooperative games, and individualized, challenging activities, children gain insights into their own behavior and into their relationships with other children and adults.

Springfield

Social skills acquisition is addressed at two levels. First, large, classroom-based groups are co-lead by a teacher and mental health clinician. The Voices of Love and Freedom curriculum is used as the primary mode of implementation. The VLF program uses popular children's books as a medium for teaching skills of conflict resolution and perspective and relationship building.

Second, small psycho-educational groups are also offered for specific children who are experiencing unusual difficulty in engaging in school activities. Focusing on anger management, social interactions/relationships, and school adjustment, these weekly sessions attempt to teach children concrete skills they can successfully apply in their child and adult relationships.

Supportive Services

Beverly

A wide range of services is also provided to children and families in order to prompt and support student success. For children, homework completion is frequently a significant barrier to a successful and satisfying school experience. Project resources have been used in elementary schools to support classroom teachers to oversee an after-school "Homework Helpers" group for children who chronically fail to complete assigned homework.

Second, in order to respond to expressed concerns of parents relative to recent, tragic events, discussion groups were offered in two areas: "Sexual Abuse and Abduction Prevention" and "Helping Children Deal with the Threat of Terrorism and War".

Clinton

In order to heighten the level of community awareness to the needs and challenges of foster and other at risk families, an Adopt-a-Family and children's Holiday Fund drive have been launched. While the anonymity of recipient children and families is guaranteed and fully respected, area families, businesses, civic groups, and school staff provide needed, tangible resources to both children and families.

Haverhill

Several creative initiatives were launched in Haverhill intended to inform and support families with children enrolled in schools. First, a local area cable-TV "Parenting Today" series was produced with the partial support of project funds. Representative topics included:

- Impact of Lead Paint Poisoning
- Nutrition and Children
- Inhalant Abuse
- Gangs
- New Math Curriculum
- Immunization
- Adolescent Medicine

After-School Programs
The Importance of Reading to Children

Second, two videos were prepared and used at the elementary school level that addressed the unique needs of foster children. For teachers, the video presentation was entitled "Working with Foster Children and Families". For foster children, the video was entitled "Welcome to the Haverhill Schools".

Finally, the project coordinator also assumed responsibility for preparing a grant proposal for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act Program. These resources have been used to connect with area shelters, ensure school enrollment of both DSS-involved and non-involved children, and assist with accessing resources, services, and transportation in the community. In addition, the project has developed relationships with the University of New Hampshire, Salem State College, and Merrimack College to provide clinical internships for students in the social work program.

Resource Directory by Community

	<u>Promising Practices</u>									
	Prof. Develop./Training	Behav. Consult.	Interagency Collab.	Welcoming Foster Children	Resource Linkages	Mental Health Services	Foster Family Support	Social Skills Develop.	Supportive Services	
<u>Community</u>										
Athol			**	**	**	**	**	**		
Attleboro										
Barnstable		**	**	**	**		**	**	**	**
Beverly	**			**					**	**
Cambridge, Milton, Quincy, Randolph, Weymouth	**			**			**	**		**
Chicopee	**			**			**	**	**	**
Clinton							**	**		
Dartmouth							**	**		
Gloucester		**					**	**		**
Haverhill			**	**	**	**	**	**		**
Lowell					**	**	**	**		**
New Bedford	**		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Springfield	**	**		**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Wareham		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Worcester			**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**

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Appendix B.
Illustrations of Children, Families, and Services Provided

Case Study #1

CA is currently 8 years 10 months of age. She was the product of a full-term, uncomplicated pregnancy. Although she has two sisters (six and ten years of age respectively), they currently reside with a different foster family.

With regard to her social history, a 51A was filed against CA's mother when she was two months old. CA was placed in a foster home at age three years due to chronic parental neglect, maternal substance abuse, a history of sexual abuse by the mother's boyfriend, and a domestic violence incident during which the mother was shot in the leg.

Subsequent to her initial foster placement, she has since been placed within **12 different environments** (i.e., within a five year period), one of which included a brief stay at a residential treatment center. In addition, she has been assigned **three different social workers** in the last six months. CA was freed for adoption two years ago, and continues to await a permanent home.

With regard to her school history, she has attended **six different school districts** within the last five years. As a preschooler, she was identified as presenting with mild to moderate developmental delays and placed within an integrated preschool program. She then attended an integrated kindergarten program and continued to receive special education services focusing on reading, spelling, writing, and number concepts. She was placed in regular education settings for Grades 1 and 2, and has continued to receive special education services in a Resource Room for approximately six hours per week.

At present, she is enrolled in Grade 2, participates in a Resource Room program for 7.5 hours/week, and receives assistance in reading, language arts, spelling, and task completion. The classroom teacher reports no significant behavior problems currently, and her report card grades are all within the A to B range. In addition to school-based services, CA also receives weekly individual therapy from a private provider that focuses on the loss of her birth family and her adoption interest and placement.

Staff from The School and Community Support Project have worked with CA and her foster family for nearly two years. They have provided academic tutoring for CA, activities and experiences designed to promote social skills acquisition and development, individualized support on self-care (dressing and grooming), information/referral and advocacy with the foster family, and perhaps most significantly, have ensured a stable school placement and environment.

With regard to the Fall, CA will transition into a Grade 3 setting, and no special education services have been recommended. She will however, receive academic support through Title I. Although CA has done remarkably well within the last year, she will continue to need support from this project.

Case Study #2

FJ is an 8-½ year old boy who currently resides with his maternal grandmother (MGRMO). He has a sister (16 months old) who resides with his biological mother in a different home. FJ's birth and early developmental history are described as normal. A 51A was filed against his mother when FJ was **10 months of age** with allegations of chronic alcohol abuse and child abandonment. The MGRMO was granted custody, and then named legal guardian when FJ was 1 ½ years old. Allegations of sexual abuse by his uncle (MO's brother) were substantiated when FJ and his uncle both resided with the MGRMO.

FJ was then moved to his paternal grandmother (PGRMO) during a custody dispute between grandparents, and ultimately the PGRMO was granted guardianship. Due to verbal and emotional abuse by the PGRMO, FJ was then returned to his MGRMO with whom he currently resides.

With regard to FJ's school history, he was referred in kindergarten for a Special Education TEAM evaluation by his PGRMO due to "developmental concerns". At that time, he was judged as ineligible for services and placed "on

watch". While in the first grade, approximately two-thirds of the items on his report card were rated as "Satisfactory", and one-third as "Needs Improvement".

He was again referred for evaluation due to impulsivity, behavioral organization and control issues, immature fine motor skills, and persistent incomplete homework. Evaluation data revealed findings within the normal range (e.g., FSIQ = 111; on grade level in reading and arithmetic; age appropriate scores on the Bender Gestalt, Conners Behavior Rating Scale, and Behavior Assessment Scale for Children).

Despite his excellent progress, he is currently diagnosed as PTSD and is being treated with Clonidine. For the current academic year, his report card included all "Satisfactory" ratings except for handwriting. Current services include weekly, school-based group counseling, weekly individual therapy from a private provider, and DSS voluntary services (e.g., after-school day care, homework activities, and a summer educational program). The School and Community Support Project has provided information and support of the MGRMO on PTSD, effective discipline, and homework completion. In addition, project staff have assisted with medication management, communicating with and coordinating services through DSS, the Courts, and other providers, developing behavior management charts for use in the home, arranging transportation through the school district such that FJ can remain in the same school, and providing overall care management and coordination.

At present, the MGRMO continues to struggle with the challenges that FJ presents, her own mild depression, and the recent unexpected death of her husband. The DSS service plan includes four objectives: improve parent/child relationship, assist child in recovery from past harmful indicators, strengthen parenting skills and assist MGRMO with depression, and ensure safety/protection from any additional sexual abuse.

Case Study #3

BK is currently 11 years of age. He has two brothers and one sister however, they reside in a different foster home. A 51A was filed against BK's mother when he was only **three days old** due to substance abuse and alleged abuse/neglect of BK's older siblings. He was initially placed within a foster home at four years of age, and has since lived in **eight different homes (six different families)**. BK's unmanageable, challenging and aggressive behavior is reported as the reason for these multiple placements. He was legally freed for adoption, and continues to await an adoptive home.

With respect to historical information on BK, he was placed within numerous child care programs as a toddler and preschooler, and was described as "moody, needy, hungry, and clingy". He has attended **five different schools** within the last five years partly due to his acting out and disruptive behavior, work refusal, and verbally aggressive behaviors. He has been suspended from school on multiple occasions, and is currently diagnosed as ADHD and treated with Ritalin.

Throughout his entire school career, he has been placed within a substantially separate program for children with behavior disorders. This program includes a six week summer component as well. Academically, he is approximately 1 ½ years below grade level in reading and arithmetic. His report cards include primarily B's and C's in academic areas. His cognitive abilities are within the average range (FSIQ = 106), however, his behavior is described as unpredictable and volatile.

In addition to his school-based special education program, he also receives weekly individual therapy from a private provider, an academic tutorial program for 1 ½ hours/week, and an after-school recreational program. The School and Community Support Project has served BK for approximately two years, and has provided transportation in an attempt to stabilize school placement, identified and collaborated with a new private therapist, provided

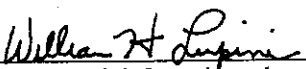
ongoing support and guidance to educational staff, provided ongoing support to foster parents regarding behavioral issues and limit-setting, and has provided ongoing crisis intervention in both the home and school settings. Service plans indicate the BK will remain in a self-contained special education program for the fall, and the search will continue for an appropriate adoptive home.

Appendix C.
School District/DSS Memoranda of Collaboration

*Beverly Public Schools
20 Colon Street
Beverly, MA 01915*

MEMORANDUM OF COLLABORATION
BEVERLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (BPS) & DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES,
CAPE ANN AREA OFFICE (DSS)

1. The BPS and Cape Ann DSS will exchange fax, telephone, and voice mail numbers annually. DSS and BPS will attempt to use voice mail more effectively and efficiently, keeping respective parties apprised of school and home status, as indicated.
2. School adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, and the DSS Beverly Unit will meet, alternating sites, on a monthly basis.
3. When obtaining student records, Cape Ann DSS will provide 24-hour notification to the school prior to a release of records (via school adjustment counselor, guidance counselor or school secretary).
4. At enrollment, student and guardian will be given a welcome packet which includes pertinent information about BPS, after-school & community activities, and community social and mental health services.
5. Upon enrollment of a new student, DSS will notify the school counselor of the type of services the child/family is receiving (as releases allow). On the secondary level, the guidance rather than the adjustment counselor is the contact person.
6. At enrollment, the school counselor or principal at the middle and high schools (principal or school secretary at the elementary level) will check to see if the new student is a child living in a foster, adoptive or kinship home. The school counselor will assist in successfully integrating the child into his/her new school.
7. The school adjustment/guidance counselor will schedule a meeting with DSS, caretakers and other appropriate individuals to coordinate services for the child within one week of enrollment.
8. When DSS becomes involved with a family with children enrolled in the Beverly Public Schools they will seek a Release of Information as soon as they become involved and provide the school with said release as soon as possible. The Department will provide releases for all children in their custody within one week.
9. The school adjustment counselor/guidance counselor or principal will keep DSS apprised of any concerns regarding the child, their "school status" and/or his/her family.
10. In compliance with DSS regulations, DSS will speak with the school adjustment counselor/guidance counselor or principal on a monthly basis concerning school status of any child with whom they are involved, as releases allow. BPS, Sped and Child Welfare personnel will maintain frequent communication around court involved and high-risk students.
11. DSS will work with school staff to request Pre-referral Student Assistance Team review if a child is having behavioral or learning difficulties at school, prior to making a referral for a special education evaluation.
12. DSS will refer children to the principal or adjustment counselor/guidance counselor for screening behavioral consultation and grant services in those schools who benefit from the School and Community Support Program Grant.
13. DSS will provide the School and Community Support Program Coordinator with an accurate list of all foster children and foster parents living in Beverly so they may be screened for and offered grant services.
14. DSS will refer foster and biological parents for parent effectiveness training as provided through the School and Community Support Grant.
15. Prior to relocation, the DSS worker will contact the school for recommendations.
16. If a child attending the BPS is removed from the Beverly community, the Department or new custodial parent will notify the school within 24 hours. The teacher and counselor will assist in transition "hello's & good-bye's", as able.
17. With emergency removal, DSS will inform the adjustment counselor/guidance counselor as to the child's whereabouts so that the teachers can send communications from class members and appropriate staff.


William H. Lupini, Superintendent
Beverly Public Schools


Area Director
Department of Social Services, Cape Ann

MEMORANDUM OF COLLABORATION
HAVERHILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS (HPS) AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
HAVERHILL AREA OFFICE (DSS)

1. In order to provide for efficient collaboration between DSS and HPS Susan Ottaviano the Area Resource Coordinator will be first person contacted to provide information on a child in a foster placement or in custody of the DSS.
2. Susan Ottaviano (DSS) will notify Mary Connors, (HPS) Program Coordinator each Monday morning regarding changes in child's/family's status in order to maintain up to date information for the HPS.
3. DSS will notify HPS of any new foster child entering HPS as soon as possible in order to facilitate a smooth transition. The Program Coordinator will make every effort to contact the family before the child enters their new school and provide information regarding the HPS, after school programs and summer camps.
4. When the DSS becomes aware of a child moving/leaving the area they will notify HPS immediately so that HPS can work with the child during transition and prepare necessary educational papers.
5. In order to ensure positive transitions and develop supports, the Program Coordinator at HPS will be notified immediately of any child in the custody of the DSS who becomes hospitalized. DSS will provide a release of information to the coordinator so that she may be able to receive discharge notes from the hospital. Every effort will be made to establish supports for the child/family upon returning to school.
6. DSS will make every effort to provide HPS with all evaluations and test findings immediately upon receiving results.
7. DSS will provide the Program Coordinator with a list of foster families and children. This list will be updated twice a year. The Program coordinator will be notified of all newly approved foster parents.
8. When a child is removed due to emergency DSS will notify the HPS where teachers can send communications from class members and appropriate staff.
9. DSS will provide information to HPS coordinator on any policy changes. The coordinator will provide information to necessary HPS staff
10. DSS, prior to terminating a case, will contact the HPS for discharge/termination recommendations.
11. When a child is to be placed in a school outside the Haverhill area the Program Coordinator will be notified. The Program Coordinator will provide DSS with the child's school records.

Mary Connors, Program Coordinator
Haverhill Public Schools

Nancy Fagan, Area Director
Department of Social Services, Haverhill

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

SOUTH SHORE

PROTOCOL BETWEEN SCSP AND DSS – COASTAL AREA OFFICE

DSS OBJECTIVE #1: SCSP will service kinship families at the time of kinship placement immediately following removal of child(ren) from biological parents.

DSS OBJECTIVE #2: SCSP will provide services to ongoing DSS kinship cases that are determined by DSS as in need of additional services to stabilize school and/or home placement.

1. STAFF CONTACTS: SCSP

Paulette Cobin is the Program Manager for the SCSP on the South Shore and Cambridge. She provides direct service to children and families in Randolph. Helene Lucien is the social worker providing direct service to children and families in Quincy, Weymouth and Milton. All referrals should be made through Paulette Cobin, Project Manager by fax to (781)383-2938 or by phone (782)789-5395 – followed by fax.

2. DSS CONTACT:

Jay Madigan, Area Director is the interim contact at the DSS Coastal Area office until a new Area Program Manager is assigned.

The Area Program Manager assigned to SCSP will:

- 1) Act as a resource for information and reminder about our program for clients DSS Workers are servicing – keep program on DSS Workers 'radar'.

The Family Resource Worker or Child Worker will:

- 1) Do the referral by completing Referral Form and faxing to SCSP Program Manager.
- 2) Communicate regularly with appropriate SCSP worker.

3. REFERRAL PROCESS

The procedure for DSS Family Resource or Child Worker to make referral to SCSP is as follows:

- 1) DSS Worker will notify Kinship Parent of the referral and will provide them with the name of the SCSP Worker who will be contacting them in the next couple of days.
- 2) DSS Worker will complete SCSP Referral Form and fax to SCSP Program Manager.

The procedure for SCSP once referral is received by DSS Worker is as follows:

- 1) Within 3 business days from receipt of written referral from DSS a SCSP Worker will make contact with family by phone to introduce SCSP and to set up an initial meeting with family and child.
- 2) SCSP will notify DSS Worker who made referral that contact was made or tried and status of SCSP involvement.

4. PROVIDING SERVICES:

- 1) Once family decides to use SCSP services SCSP will request kinship guardian or DSS to sign appropriate Release of Information Forms – depending on guardianship status.
- 2) DSS Worker will provide initial assessment information to SCSP worker when assessment is completed. SCSP Worker will meet with family, child, school and other collaterals and review initial assessment to determine appropriate school and community service links for the child and family.
- 3) SCSP Worker will provide information and referrals to family and child for school and community services.
- 4) SCSP Worker will ensure communication between school staff, administrators, social workers/guidance counselors, home, DSS and other collaterals.
- 5) DSS Worker and SCSP will ensure constant communication about family and child(ren).
 - a. Weekly phone calls.
 - b. Monthly consult at DSS office by SCSP workers.

5. TERMINATION OF SERVICES:

- 1) After three months DSS Worker and SCSP Worker will review case and determine if SCSP services should terminate or continue. If continuation is determined, after 3 additional months another review of the case will occur.

6. ADDRESSING PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS BETWEEN DSS AND SCSP:

- 1) Is a DSS Worker, Area Program Manager or Area Director has a concern or problem with a SCSP Worker, the DSS contact can address the concern/problem with SCSP Worker directly (by phone or meeting). If this does not satisfactorily resolve the concern or problem, DSS Contact can contact Program Manger, Paulette Cobin (781)789-5395 and/or Assistant Director of Community and School Based Programs (CASP), Nora Rushford, at The Walker Home and School (781)292-2155.
- 2) If the SCSP Worker has a concern or problem with the DSS Worker, the SCSP Worker can address the concern or problem with the DSS Worker directly. If this does not resolve the concern or problem, the SCSP Worker can contact the DSS Worker's Supervisor or the Area Program Manager contact at DSS assigned to SCSP.

JOHN W. DECAS SCHOOL
(508) 291-3530
ETHEL E. HAMMOND SCHOOL
(508) 291-3565
MINOT FOREST SCHOOL
(508) 291-3555
EVERETT EDUCATION CENTER
(508) 291-3540



WAREHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
54 MARION ROAD
WAREHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02571
(508) 291-3500

WAREHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL
(508) 291-3550
WAREHAM HIGH SCHOOL
(508) 291-3510
WEST WAREHAM SCHOOL
(508) 291-3534
EAST WAREHAM SCHOOL
(508) 291-3545

September 11, 2002

Protocols for D.S.S. & Wareham School System

DSS Responsibilities

- 1-Call ahead when possible with name of new foster child, the foster parent, school child is coming from.
- 2-Share any educational assessments and psychological reports with Wareham schools with a brief history on the child.
- 3- DSS to call Foster Care Liaison when a team meeting is needed or a meeting is needed with school personal because child may be experience problems in Wareham. A team approach will be used to develop a plan to stabilize the school and foster placement.
- 4 Dss workers to attend foster child's I.E.P. meetings for an update on child's progress, to share any changes in child's situation, help in the development of child's I.E.P. to ensure continuity & consistency for the child whenever possible.

Wareham Schools responsibilities

- 1-To obtain paper work needed to enroll foster child in Wareham.
- 2- Set up meeting if child is on an I.E.P. to help assure child's academic needs are being met.
- 3- Keep DSS updated on how the foster child is doing and set up meetings when necessary to ensure child's success.

4- Attend team meetings at DSS when required to ensure continuity and consistency for foster child.

5- Foster Care Liaison to access services child may need in the school or community to help keep placement stable and help reduce the number of suspensions child may get in school.