



the Link



healthy families
new york

the children of today are tomorrow's parents ◊ los niños del presente son los padres del futuro ◊ les enfants d'aujourd'hui seront les parents de demain

Families & the Law

What is our Role?

Pam Balmer & Wendy Bender
Prevent Child Abuse New York

HFNY families across the state face many of the same barriers, like poverty, isolation, or inadequate housing. When a family needs help, often the legal system may offer the most powerful assistance, yet many families find access to be difficult and intimidating. With complex procedures and language, the work of lawyers and the court system may seem mysterious and frightening.

In this issue of the Link, we look at HFNY families & the legal system.

What happens if a parent has to face the legal system? What does a parent need to know to apply for child support, custody, or visitation? How can people address immigration or tenant issues? How do they find information and get connected to the people or agencies that can help? What forms and documents do they need to fill out or gather? How can you help them navigate the legal system?

Very few (if any) FSWs or HFNY Supervisors are also lawyers, but, good news! You don't have to be a lawyer to help a family use the legal system. Remember we aren't in the advice-giving business—we'll leave that up

to the experts—but we can share information on how to access and use the legal system. So what do you need?

- A good understanding of what the participant needs or is hoping to accomplish. This requires our best listening, observation and inquiry skills!
- Information: Who can participants call? Where will they need to go? What steps will they need to follow?

What does your community offer?

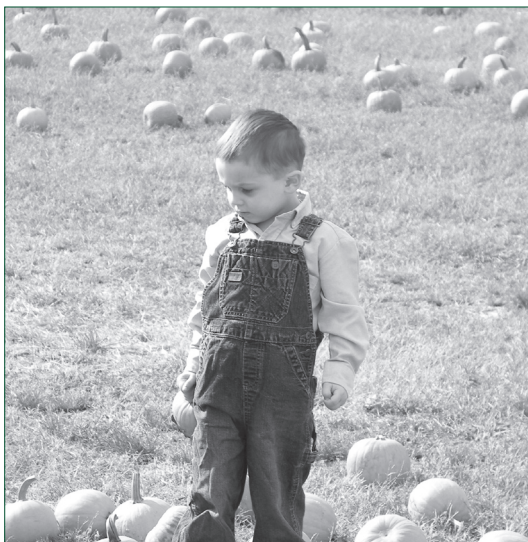
Some of the most common needs arise around paternity and custody, child support, landlord-tenant disputes, incarceration, and immigration. You'll want to find out how families in your community can go about addressing these issues and which agencies or offices handle these issues or can offer support.

Participants may ask:

- Where is the service?
- How do I contact them?
- Do I need an appointment; how long will I have to wait for an appointment; how long will the appointment take?
- What paperwork will I need?
- Will it cost me anything?
- When I get to the front door, then where do I go?
- Can I take my children along, or will I need a babysitter?



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Tyler Gonzales,
2007 Harvest Trip,
Healthy Families
Rensselaer County

Fall 2007

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HFNY Goals

- To systematically identify overburdened families in need of support
- To promote positive parent-child interaction
- To ensure optimal prenatal care and promote healthy childhood growth and development
- To enhance family functioning by building trusting relationships, problem-solving skills and support systems

theLink

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Healthy Families New York Updates from OCFS

Joy Griffith

Program Contract Manager

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Hello Everyone,

2007 has been a very busy year for Healthy Families New York! The 2007-08 State Budget included a total of \$25.2 million for HFNY. This enabled us to add 10 new sites and expand an eleventh, for a total of 39 sites! The HFNY Team welcomes the following new and expanded sites:

- Healthy Families of Cayuga/Seneca, serving several zip codes in both Cayuga and Seneca Counties
- Healthy Families Delaware County, serving several high risk zip codes
- Herkimer County Healthy Families, serving the whole county
- Middletown Healthy Families, serving Middletown, NY
- Healthy Families Suffolk, serving Brentwood, NY
- Healthy Beginnings of Sullivan has expanded to serve the entire county
- Tioga PACT Healthy Families, serving the whole county
- Healthy Families Parkchester, serving the zip code of 10462 in the southeast Bronx
- Healthy Families NY Diaspora, serving zip code 11238 in Brooklyn
- Healthy Families Brookdale, serving zip code 11212 in central Brooklyn
- University Settlement's Healthy Families Program, serving zip codes 10035 and 10009 in East Harlem and the lower East Side of Manhattan.

The new sites have been busy hiring and training staff, setting up their referral systems and offices. HFNY Central Administration Team has provided Orientation Trainings in Albany and New York City for Agency Executives. The Team is also in the process of providing two days of training for new Program Managers. We are looking forward to meeting and working with the new HFNY staff.

Mark your calendars. The next all-staff Training Institute is tentatively scheduled for June

3-5th at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva. If you have been part of HFNY for more than 2 years, you may remember our last training institute in Saratoga. It was a hugely successful event because everyone participated in the planning. If you or any of your team are interested in helping to plan the event, please contact Tina Williams at Tina.Williams@ocfs.state.ny.us or (518)402-6784.

healthyfamiliesnewyork.org & Updated HFNY Policies & Procedures Manual

We hope that you are all taking advantage of our awesome website. Please take time to look at our newly updated and greatly improved Healthy Families New York Multi-Site Policy & Procedures Manual. You will note that each policy includes a rationale, procedures to follow, a reference to specific credentialing standards, the date the policy became effective and any revisions, any related appendices, and a reference to data reports, if applicable. The manual is set up so that sites can add their own policies and procedures after each section. A very special thank you to Ellen Butowsky of PCANY for rewriting this manual and making it so user-friendly. Also a thank you to all of the Program Managers who took time to review each section for completeness and accuracy. This manual will be invaluable to all of us as we follow the HFA and HFNY standards for providing high quality home visiting services.

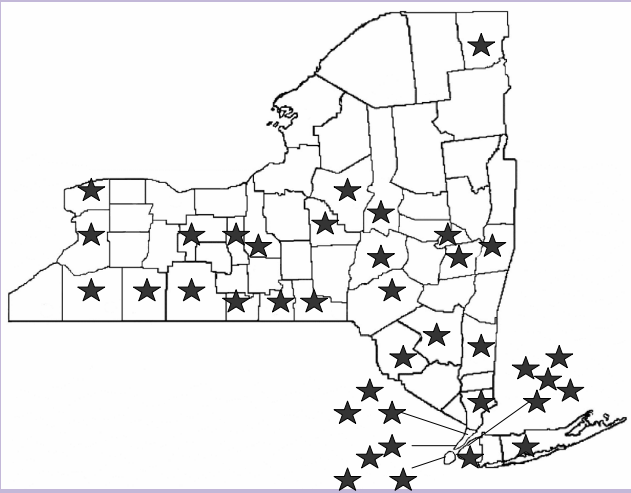
Staff Changes

Many of you have met Myrna Bridges, a Program Contract Manager from OCFS. Myrna is leaving her job at OCFS, but not leaving HFNY. She will join the Prevent Child Abuse New York Training & Staff Development Team. We wish Myrna the best in her new role. We also want to welcome Terri Beers as an OCFS Program Contract Manager. Terri comes to us from Rensselaer County DSS where she was a supervisor for the Hearts and Homes Homefinders, charged with finding and training foster parents.

We hope that you are enjoying this nice fall weather. Thanks for all that you do for the families of New York!

Joy Griffith, Program Coordinator
Bernadette Johnson, Tina Williams,
Maria Rosado & Terri Beers





New! PCANY Training Staff for the New York City Area

Prevent Child Abuse New York is pleased to announce that two new Training and Staff Development Specialists serving the metropolitan NYC area have joined our team.

The first is Myrna Bridges who was most recently working with OCFS as an HFNY Program Contract Manager. Myrna will be re-locating to the NYC area in early November. She comes to us with a wonderful background in teaching and training, as well as a ready knowledge of HFNY.

The second is Ethelena Persons, who joins us from Phoenix House in the City. Prior to that Ethelena served as Vice President for Foster Care and Adoptive Services at The Seamen's Society for Children and Families. Her background in Healthy Families goes back to the earliest days of HFNY, when she had oversight for the first Healthy Families New York training contract. She brings us expertise in many areas, including substance abuse and domestic violence as they affect children and families.



Completion Ceremony
for Morris Heights
Healthy Families,
The Bronx,
June 9, 2007



Farewell from Joy Griffith, HFNY Project Director, OCFS

To My Healthy Families Family:

As you may know, I have accepted a new position as Executive Director of a small foundation called Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation. While I am looking forward to new challenges, I very much will miss Healthy Families New York and all of you. I have seen HFNY grow from a very small program in 9 sites to 39 sites that includes 15 counties and 13 sites in New York City. Since the program began we have provided services to over 19,100 families and provided 568,257 home visits. We have a strong and effective team effort! We are nationally recognized as a "proven program" and as an HFA credentialed multi-site system. We have so many accomplishments to be proud of!

I have been so fortunate to be part of this team and to be able to work with such a talented and committed group of folks. While we have much to be proud of, there are three areas that need our attention.

First, we must continue to reach out to expectant and new parents who can benefit from our services. Our outreach should be able to engage families prenatally especially those who might not seek services on their own.

Second, we need to continually try to make our services better and seek out new ways to support parents where they are.

Finally, we must continue to engage our community and state partners in support of HFNY so that soon we will have home visiting services available in every community in New York State.

I know that you will continue to make HFNY all that it can be, a wonderful support for new and expectant parents. My favorite quote summarizes my feelings about HFNY, "Never doubt that a small committed group of individuals can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has." (Margaret Mead) You, like the girl throwing back the starfish, are making a difference every day!

Joy Griffith, HFNY Program Coordinator

What is our Role? continued from page 1

Where can you gather information?

For starters, there are lots of great websites out there:

- An especially good place to start is the New York State Bar Association, www.nysba.org. The bar association is a professional association for lawyers. The website has numerous downloadable pamphlets and brochures in English and Spanish. Under the “Public Resources” tab you can click on LegalEase for brochures on topics like:
 - √ Rights of Residential Owners and Tenants
 - √ Your Rights if Arrested
 - √ Your Rights as a Crime Victim
 - √ The Courts of New York, A Guide to Court Procedures with a Glossary of Legal Terms.
- See also www.Lawhelp.org/NY, where the goal is “Helping low-income New Yorkers solve legal problems.” Under any of the main headings like Housing, Family & Juvenile, Immigration and Immigrants, Education, and Public Benefits, the site asks for your zip code so that the information can be tailored to your location. Each heading then has four tabs: Find a Lawyer; Know Your Rights; Going to Court; and Finding Other Help, where there are links to agencies and programs in your area providing support. They make information available in English and 33 other languages!
- At www.courts.state.ny.us/courts/8jd/Erie/family/guide.shtml there is a pamphlet, [The Family Court and You](#), provided by the Erie County Bar Association.
- The American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law at www.abanet.org/child/home.html covers topics like Fathers in the Child Welfare System. The ABA site also has a Public Resources section that includes access to information, brochures and referral information for lawyers and other legal services.
- WWW.CASANYS.org is the website for CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates. It has lots of great information and an impressive number of links to other websites (including Prevent Child Abuse NY).
- A resource for information and referral to legal help and support services for women—especially women and girls who are victims of domestic abuse—is www.womenslaw.org. This national site tailors the information it provides to your specific state.
- The Child Welfare League of America at www.cwla.org offers free downloads with detailed information for parents connected to child protective services. See especially “A Family’s Guide to the Child Welfare System” <http://www.cwla.org/childwelfare/fg02.pdf>, and “A Summary of your Rights and Responsibilities as a Parent Involved with the Child Welfare System” <http://www.cwla.org/childwelfare/fg09.pdf>.
- To inform yourself and the families you visit about child support, visit New York State Division of Child Support Enforcement at <https://newyorkchildsupport.com/> for information, brochures and videos.
- Mediation—Did you know that many legal issues can be resolved without going to court? Mediation can often help parents come to agreements that eliminate years of fighting. Mediation is private and voluntary, and it may take 10 hours instead of the 10 months of a court battle—and it’s much cheaper. See <http://www.courts.state.ny.us/ip/adr/cdrc.shtml> for a list of Community Dispute Resolution Centers by county.

Paperwork, paperwork, and more and more documents!

Taking legal action on anything from paternity and child support to housing or orders of protection requires lots of paperwork. Home visitors may be able to assist by: helping to find out what documents are needed, what needs to be copied or notarized, where replacements for missing documents can be found, and who needs to receive the paperwork. Of course families are ultimately responsible, but a home visitor can be a big help in gathering information, organizing lists, and making plans to collect needed documents.

Last but not least, see what is available at your site. Chances are that one or more of your colleagues have guided participants through the legal system. Ask them about their experiences: What worked? Were there certain people in the community who were especially helpful? Maybe your program can develop a brochure for families that contains key information and resources.



Home Visiting in Orange County: Why is that Child So Smart?

**Maggie LaBozzetti, Supervisor
HF Newburgh**

This is a direct quote from a Home Visit Log submitted by a staff member who works with Spanish-speaking participants and translates accounts of her visits into English in her documentation. The grammar is a little "off" but I didn't want to change anything. I just thought it was so great—so "Healthy Families-ish!"

MOB told FSW that other mothers are constantly asking MOB what she does with TC to make her so smart. MOB told FSW that she follows the Healthy Families guidelines, looks for information on-line and doctor's advice for health related issues and she is always talking to TC, hugging her, paying attention to her, dancing, feeding her well and giving her all the love and care she can. MOB kissed TC and asked her with a loving voice who her little doll was. TC pointed to herself and MOB said, "Yes you are my little doll," and kissed TC again saying, "I can't believe you are a year old already." The FSW told MOB that they look really cute together and TC was lucky to have her for her mom.

PCANY 2007 Walk for Children!

Prevent Child Abuse New York's 2007 Walk for Children was a huge success! Over 300 Capital Region individuals, families, businesses and organizations stepped up to prevent child abuse, raising more than \$22,000.

Two Healthy Families programs joined in the walk: Healthy Families of Rensselaer County at Samaritan Hospital in Troy and Bright Beginnings in Albany.

Target, this year's major walk sponsor, also demonstrated their support by having over fifty employees participate.

Hats off to our walkers, sponsors and volunteers for proving that the Capital Region is a community that values children and supports families in the important job of raising children.

The walk was held on October 13 at Washington Park in Albany. Proceeds from the event will benefit Prevent Child Abuse New York's Parent Helpline and legislative advocacy programs.

First Graduation Healthy Families Staten Island

The *Staten Island Advance* published a story about Healthy Families Staten Island in August on the occasion of the first program "graduation," on August 16. This was a special occasion, designed to celebrate the passage into kindergarten of the first wave of children who entered the program.

One mom interviewed for the story, said that "Healthy Families has been a saving grace."

She joined the program while pregnant with her son, Jahari, who is now 4 years old and set to enter kindergarten in September.

"This program teaches you how to be a strong mother; that even if you're a single parent, you can still do it," she said as she helped her son color between the lines. "They encourage you that things will be all right."

Dorothy Gordon, senior family support worker, who has been with the program since the beginning, said, "It's a great experience. It's the most rewarding thing I've done in my lifetime. I've learned so much from these families. They are strong, intelligent, and determined. This program helps them discover that for themselves."

Magali E. of St. George, a mother of two, praised the program, which not only helped her with her children, but with her English as well. "When I was pregnant they gave me the support I needed. It was special, for me, because I couldn't speak English when I was pregnant," Ms.E. said..



above—Healthy Families of Rensselaer County Supervisor & Rural Assessment Coordinator Nancy Gibbs, her husband Tom and granddaughter Zoe, walking for children



Healthy Families of Rensselaer County 2007 PCANY Walk for Children



Completion Ceremony for Morris Heights Healthy Families participants was held on June 9th, 2007

Chemung Families Visit a Farm and See Calf Born!

On Tuesday, October 16th, Healthy Families Chemung County had a farm tour at Busholm Farm. Sixty-nine participants attended, as well as HFCC staff and their children. First, the owner of Busholm Farm, Jim Bush, gave us a tour of the farm. We were able to pet a full-sized cow, and Jim showed us how farmers use machines to milk cows. He even let us put our fingers in the milker to see what it feels like on a cow. The best part of all—there was a calf born during the farm tour! The mother cow was experienced and pretty calm. Everyone was impressed at how nature takes its course, and no intervention or pain medicine was needed. Both the adults and the kids were very excited and had lots of questions. We then went on a hay ride around the farm. Jim's son, Ryan, had to do three hay rides so everyone could have a turn! Melissa Nagy from the local Dairy Princess committee demonstrated how to make butter with an old-fashioned butter churn. Everyone was able to try a sample. The kids really enjoyed the milk punch Melissa made, too. Before leaving, each family was given a pumpkin to take home. Overall, it was a very fun and educational day for everyone involved!



HF Allegany FSW Polly Kilbin, with a small participant at Hallowe'en party



Buffalo Home Visiting Program Manager, AnnMarie Correa, and other staff with area Dads at the Celebration of Fatherhood, March 2007



Healthy Families of Rensselaer County—Program Manager DonnaMarie Martocci's twins, Nathan & Diana, and Asst. Manager Syreeta Garbarini's son, David Junior

Immigration & the Law

Ann Pitkin
Prevent Child Abuse New York

I spoke with attorney Raquel Batista of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights. (NMCIR). This is a non-profit organization, whose mission is to educate, defend and protect the rights of immigrants. Recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals, NMCIR is committed to expanding access to legal immigration services, participating in policy making and community organizing. The agency also provides free citizenship and English classes and assists people in applying for citizenship and fighting deportation.

What is meant by the term, “citizen child”?

A citizen child is a child who is born in this country to an undocumented mother. Citizen children are usually eligible for certain benefits that their (undocumented) parents cannot receive. (A significant amount of HFNY funding comes from Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) funds, and use of these funds requires that each HFNY participant complete a TANF services application/certification review form.)

Applying for benefits for a citizen child: what are the risks for an undocumented parent?

In New York City, Executive Order #41 directs government employees not to ask questions about the immigration status of people who come into a government office for a legitimate purpose, such as, applying for Food Stamps, TANF benefits, or Medicaid for their citizen children.

Getting Legal Status: What’s New?

Ms. Batista said one of the biggest questions for the immigrant population, for those of us who provide services to them and for the country as a whole, is whether or not any comprehensive legislation on immigration is likely to pass in the near future. It is important for service providers to be aware that so far, nothing has passed. There have been no changes.

This point is especially important, because misinformation is sometimes spread by word-of-mouth in the immigrant communities. She cautioned that if someone tells you they have been to see a “notario” (or a notary) to “get papers,” the person often ends up losing the fee and getting nothing in return. People who consider going to such a notario should instead be referred right away to a reputable agency, such as NMCIR, or to the New York Immigration Coalition Hotline, at 1-800-566-7636.

Information and Referral Help

The website for the New York Immigration Coalition is www.thenyc.org. The website has information in Spanish, Creole, Russian, Arabic, Polish, English, Chinese, and Korean. The Coalition collaborates with more than 200 organizations across the state, so they can provide help and important information to people anywhere within New York. They can assist with special issues such as language rights issues, workplace issues, naturalization and legalization questions, and health access.



This is a picture from my daughter Olana’s preschool last year. Each child in the class made a paper plate head resembling themselves, then the teacher asked them what they wanted to be when they grew up, and she attached a sign detailing this. When I got to the school all the ‘heads’ were hanging on a clothesline across the room. They told of how some children wanted to be ballerinas, dentists, firefighters, bakers etc. As you will see from the picture, my daughter’s said, “I want to work at Healthy Families when I grow up.” I thought it was great, and the picture is now framed, hanging in my office.

Gill Hill, Dutchess County Healthy Families Supervisor



Stefanie Sylvestri, Supervisor, & Participants from Baby Steps, Harlem

Spotlight on Starting Together, Madison Co.

Deb Munn, Program Manager **Starting Together**

Early History

In 1995, Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. received funding from OCFS for Starting Together to provide home visiting services for families in eight rural townships. The first staff were a Program Manager, Supervisor, Family Assessment Worker (FAW) and four Family Support Workers (FSW). Soon afterwards we expanded the target area to all of Madison County, and hired two new teams.

Strong collaboration has been our key to success. The 12 members of the advisory board include representatives from health and human services agencies and our former CAP Executive Director, Irene Brown, who wrote the original proposal for the program. During the first few years the board met monthly. It now meets quarterly to review progress and seek feedback.

Screening Challenges

One of the early challenges was how to achieve universal screening, when 45% of pregnant women in the county gave birth in eight hospitals located in four other counties. We were successfully screening most pregnant women who received services or birthed in Madison County, but we were missing the others. The solution took several years and an investment in building relationships with the “right” person in each of the outlying hospitals. This enhanced network now helps us screen between 85% and 95% of our pregnant women, regardless of where they give birth.

Partnership with Early Head Start

Starting Together has been in a partnership with Early Head Start (EHS) since 2002. We received EHS funding to provide home visiting to 50 low-income families with children under three. Our goal was to reach out to families who could not be served through Healthy Families; for example, families in which the target child is over 3 months, or families who had previously been in the program. We have successfully braided these two initiatives into one program with two opportunities to enroll our most vulnerable families. The services are essentially the same. EHS brought some good changes: a Senior FSW position was developed, offering a career ladder for FSWs; all Starting Together families are invited to attend our Parent Child Play Groups (or “socializations”) which are held regularly.

Our staff includes a Division Director (PM for HFNY); EHS Program Manager; 3 Program

Supervisors; 7 FSWs (HFNY only); 6 Sr. FSW’s (4 have 50% HFNY and 50% EHS caseloads; 2 are 100% EHS); 2 FAWs; 1 Father Involvement Specialist; Program Assistant (Data Entry) and a Child Development Specialist.



Fun at the Starting Together picnic

In continuing to change and improve we listen to what our families and staff have to say, and have developed enhancements as a result. Examples are:

Reading Together—Each March we promote parents reading to their children through our “Reading Together” initiative. FSWs share literacy tips that help parents understand the importance of reading with their children, and each family receives 4-6 children’s books.

Nursing Mother’s Group—Our Nursing Mothers group meets once a month, September through May. It’s a place for nursing moms to get together and share success and challenges. Pregnant moms are also invited. We offer healthy snacks and a positive, experienced ear to listen to their concerns.

Building Fatherhood—Our newest enhancement is our Fatherhood Initiative. Our Father Involvement Specialist provides case management services to some of our dads to help with stress reduction. We also offer a variety of group activities for the men involved in raising children. We’ve had Dad/Child activities, Dads-only groups, and a 10-week Dad’s group series.

The group series are open to all dads in our community, space permitting.

Special Events—Over the years we’ve added annual events such as Fall Festival, Holiday Health Open House and a family picnic. We also hold several parent workshops each year and a quarterly Mom’s Night Out.

Over the past 12 years we have grown and worked continuously to improve our services. We’ve enrolled 1,165 families and completed 37,565 home visits. Our staff travels over 70,000 miles a year to meet with families. We’ve faced challenges, found solutions and have many accomplishments to be proud of.

However we have not done this alone. Our success is due to the partnerships we’ve developed and the support we receive from our community partners; from OCFS and PCANY; from the families who give us a chance, commit to the program and offer us ideas and feedback, and from our very dedicated Program Supervisors, FAWs and FSWs.



Boys and bubbles at Starting Together Picnic

Starting Together Family Successes

During staff meetings, Family Support Workers can share successes. It is a wonderful way to revitalize and encourage staff. Here are some examples:

"I have been working with a family for 2 years now. Mom recently achieved two of her goals from her IFSP. One was to graduate from high school. She graduated on June 25th. Another was to get her driver's license. She recently took and passed her road test. Her third goal is to potty-train her two-year-old. She is aware this is a process and feels that progress is being made. When asked how she felt achieving her goals she said, "It's awesome." She will be the first in the family to attend college. She thanked me for the support I have given her along the way. She also said it is her son that keeps her motivated."

"I visited a mom for over three years. She has three children, one with severe disabilities and one with learning disabilities. This mom did not have time for herself. She and her husband separated during this time as well. She was depressed and had health problems due to obesity. She made a doctor's appointment and asked me if I would go with her. She did not have transportation and said she would like some support. That was a little over a year ago. She has since lost 200 pounds, no longer takes medication, and has a whole new outlook on life. She has a great new haircut and look. She is now able to exercise and go for walks with her children. She has a car and a job. Her children are so proud of her."

What families are saying about Starting Together...

"I feel like my worker really listened and tailored the handouts to my needs and wants. She also validated my attachment parenting, whereas a lot of friends and family thought I was just being silly."

"I have been with my FSW for over a year now and have built a respectful relationship with her. I have not had this with many people before."

"My Family Support Worker always listens to everything I say, especially concerns I express about any situation I am having. She makes comments and gives information (facts) relevant to the situation that does not reflect her opinion at all. This is frustrating because I just want an answer of what it is I should do in the situation. I however appreciate that she does this because it allows me to sort my pros and cons in the conversation with her while receiving facts to help justify my concerns. I think it is very important that she gives me the facts and helps me to look at all angles of the situation without her being opinionated. This has helped me through many tough situations. I look at all of the angles with lots of facts to make my own decisions that are the best for my family."



Wind Farm, Madison County

About Madison County

- Madison is a rural county of 661 square miles located in the geographic center of New York, between Syracuse and Utica. Much of the southern townships consist of dairy farms and state forest. A more densely populated region runs along the Route 5 corridor at the northern end of the county. The population is approximately 70,000, with one city, 15 towns and 10 villages. Over 96% of the residents are Caucasian, with the remaining population comprised of various other groups.
- 99.5% of the families speak English.
- About 48% of the land is dedicated to farming, and there are 700 active farms.
- Almost half of the residents commute to the neighboring counties of Onondaga (Syracuse) and Oneida (Rome/Utica). The average commute is 22 minutes.
- Madison County has a rich history and many scenic vistas. Oneida Lake on our northern border, 14 other lakes, the Erie Canal, and many square miles of publicly-owned land provide a wealth of opportunities for outdoor recreation.
- The largest antiques show in New York State, the Madison Bouckville Antique Show, is an annual event bringing many thousands of visitors each August.
- Madison County is also home to two wind power projects; one located in the Town of Fenner and one in the Town of Madison. The 30-megawatt Fenner wind farm, with 20 windmills, is expected to generate enough power to provide 7,000 homes with electricity. The Madison site has seven windmills that drive turbines with generating capacity of 1.65 megawatts each.

Who's Who in the Courts

Assistant County Attorney/Assistant Corporation Counsel: A lawyer who represents a county or the Department of Social Services and files petitions in cases involving juvenile delinquency, child abuse and neglect, foster care, termination of parental rights and PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) petitions. May also represent petitioners in child support and paternity cases, and may represent the Department of Social Services in such cases where the children receive public assistance.

Assistant District Attorney: In New York City, prosecutes juvenile delinquency cases that involve serious crimes. An assistant district attorney may also prosecute some child abuse cases outside New York City.

Caseworker/Child Protective Worker: A staff member of a county or city child protective agency who investigates charges of neglect or abuse. Files neglect/abuse petitions, brings case records to court, testifies during hearings and makes recommendations as to what should happen to the child. Other social service agency workers are assigned to work with children in foster care and with biological parents trying to regain custody of children in foster care.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA): A person appointed by a judge to investigate and observe cases concerning the placement of children in foster care.

Court Attorney: A lawyer who works for the judge. He or she assists the judge in doing legal research, writing decisions and conferring cases to see if the parties can settle without a court hearing.

Court Clerk/Court Assistant: A person who sits near the judge or support magistrate and takes notes about the proceeding. These notes become part of the court file.

Court Officer/Deputy Sheriff: The persons in charge of security throughout the Family Court building. They also call the parties into hearing rooms when the judges or hearing examiners are ready. Uniformed court officers or deputy sheriffs are assigned to every courtroom.

Court Reporter: The person who keeps a record of all testimony and statements made during hearings. Takes notes during the hearing and may then be asked to type a "transcript." However, in a hearing before a support magistrate, and sometimes before a judge, the testimony and statements are recorded on tape-recorders. A written transcript of the tape-recordings can be ordered.

Interpreter: The court provides interpreters for people who have difficulty with English. In New York City, Spanish interpreters are usually available in the courthouse. Interpreters for other languages, including sign language for hearing impaired persons, may be ordered by a judge. It is important to make the court aware of the need to provide an interpreter for anyone involved in a case.

Judge: The judge is in charge of the courtroom and the hearing. The judge listens to witnesses, examines evidence, decides the outcome of the case and issues orders as to how the case should be resolved.

Law Guardian: A lawyer assigned by a judge to represent children involved in a Family Court case. Serves as an advocate for the child, representing the interests and wishes

of the child. Participates in all aspects of a case by presenting and examining witnesses and evidence and arguing and negotiating on behalf of the child.

Petition Clerk: In certain Family Courts, petition clerks explain the proceedings and prepare petitions in custody, visitation, family offense, paternity, guardianship and support cases.

Petitioner: The person or agency who files a petition and initiates a case.

Probation Officer: Under the Department of Probation, investigates and prepares reports for judges about people involved in the cases. In some counties, Probation Officers assist in preparing petitions, file petitions with the court, investigate and obtain reports, and monitor court-ordered attendance in programs.

Respondent: The person or agency against whom a petition is filed and who responds to the petition.

Support Collection Unit (SCU): A unit of the Department of Social Services that collects, accounts for and disburses support payments made pursuant to court orders. SCU will also enforce support orders by filing violation petitions on behalf of the person entitled to receive support payments.

Support Magistrate: In charge of the hearings in support and paternity cases. Listens to witnesses, examines evidence, decides the outcome of the case and issues orders as to what should happen. The decision of the support magistrate can be appealed to a judge.



What about non-resident dads?

At www.ABAnet.org you can look up the Center on Children and the Law to read about a five-year project launched by the American Bar Association, the American Humane Association and the National Fatherhood Initiative.

Funding was provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services to establish a National Quality Improvement Center on Non-resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC-NRF). The study was initiated to look at the effectiveness of efforts to "identify, locate, and involve non-resident fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system." According to the website, the focus of the project is to "offer evidence on how the involvement of non-resident fathers involved in the public child welfare system impacts child safety, permanence, and well-being."

Josh and baby daughter, Forest



The Milky Way

Rayza DeLaCruz-Stitt, RN, BSN, MSN
Bushwick Bright Start



Best Beginnings participant!



*Scrapbooking with Parent Support Group
at Buffalo Home Visiting*

Lactating Women Have Rights!

A code in support of breastfeeding was added to New York State Public Health Law in 1984. Chapter V, Subchapter A, Article 2, Part 405, section 405.8 sets minimum standards for hospitals that provide maternity services for supporting breastfeeding.

What the Law Says:

Hospital staff shall designate at least one person who is thoroughly trained in breastfeeding physiology and management to be responsible for ensuring the implementation of an effective breastfeeding program.

What the FSW Can Do:

The FSW can help the prenatal family learn what breastfeeding support the hospital offers and link the family to the service. If there is no Lactation Support Program, the FSW can encourage the family to request such services.

What the Law Says:

Hospitals should have policies and procedures to assist mothers in breastfeeding efforts. Some of these practices include:

- Avoiding routine use of drugs to “dry up” milk
- Giving supplemental feedings only when medically necessary
- Encouraging mothers to put their infants to breast immediately after delivery, unless it is not possible for medical reasons
- Ensuring that mothers have access to their babies for feeding on demand
- Providing formula samples at discharge only when a family requests them

What the FSW Can Do:

- Inform the mother that she will be lactating (producing milk) when she goes home.
- Let the family know that if the mother decides to breastfeed after discharge, she can still do it because she will be lactating.
- Inform the family that it is against the law for the hospital staff to place bottles in a baby’s crib without a doctor’s order or the parents’ permission.
- Remind the family that offering bottles, especially in the first few days of a baby’s life can interfere with breastfeeding.
- Make sure families know that they have the right to breastfeed in the delivery room within a half hour of a normal birth. This is a good time to begin forming a secure attachment.
- Remind the family that nursing immediately after delivery can help establish a more successful long-term breastfeeding relationship.
- Inform families that in most hospitals the mother can room-in with her baby 24 hours a day, except during brief times in the nursery for routine medical care.
- Remind the mother that mothers and babies who feed on demand tend to have more success with nursing later. Inform the family that parents who take home formula are more likely to buy into subtle messages that encourage bottle-feeding sooner than needed.
- Remind the mother that for the first 6 months, the vast majority of babies get all the food and nourishment they need from their mother’s milk.



Nick Bernstein, son of Penny and Victor, and brother of Alex, passed away on Friday, October 26 in Chicago. He was born on November 19, 1974.

He is mourned by his family and by those of us in Healthy Families New York who know Victor and have learned so much from him because of what he learned from Nick.

If you have a story to share with Victor Bernstein & The Link, email him at vbernste@midway.uchicago.edu or Pam Balmer at pbalmer@preventchildabuseny.org.

To contribute, you don't have to write an article. Victor & Link staff will work with you via phone & e-mail.



Fall 2007



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