



# 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

## *Bonding, Attachment and the Role of Temperament*

### This issue and why it matters

This issue of The Link explores Bonding, Attachment and the Role of Temperament. One of the most important things we do in Healthy Families New York is support parent-child attachment. Every day Healthy Families staff help parents learn about temperament, and the impact it has on the parent-child relationship.

With this issue we hope you will find motivation for your efforts to strengthen families and communities through promoting positive parent child relationships.

## Understanding Bonding, Attachment and the Role of Temperament

*Ellen Butowsky, PCANY-Healthy Families Training and Staff Development*

We've learned that what makes the biggest difference in the lives of at-risk children is a solid relationship with a caring, supportive adult. While important at all stages of development, a strong, secure relationship is especially important in the earliest years.

Without a secure attachment in infancy, children are more likely to have difficulty forming relationships, and they may lack the confidence and focus that is important for doing well in school. While secure attachment doesn't immunize children against all risks and challenges in life, it can certainly lay the foundation for better physical and emotional outcomes. Supporting these crucial relationships includes helping parents learn about temperament, and the interaction between their own temperament and their child's.

Bonding, attachment and temperament are terms we use often in our work.

Bonding refers to the parent's experience with his or her baby. It is what happens between an infant and parent during the first hours and days after birth.

Attachment is the relationship between parents (or other primary care-

giver) and their baby, and develops gradually over the first months and years, based on the parents' sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's needs. A securely attached child knows that her needs will be met. Just as important, the child is confident in her own abilities to make her needs known to those around her.

Temperament, though influenced by both nature (biology) and nurture (the environment around the child), remains basically consistent throughout the child's life. By understanding a child's temperament, parents gain important information about how the child experiences the world and is useful for encouraging positive attachment.

### Understanding Temperament

#### Three Types of Temperament

Thomas, Chess and Birch (1968) identified three common temperament types: flexible, cautious and feisty, based on observable qualities: activity level, intensity of reaction, regularity, distractibility, threshold of responsiveness, approach to new things, adaptability, mood, and attention span and persistence.

Lerner and Dombro (2004) identified five key characteristics that include these qualities. Where someone falls on a continuum of low to high intensity for each of the characteristics helps identify whether they are flexible, cautious, or feisty, or somewhere in between.

1. Activity Level: Is she always moving or do you notice her being still and taking in what's happening?
2. Intensity of reaction: There are "low reactors" and "big reactors." When something happens, for instance, she falls or is startled, how powerfully does she react?

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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

### EDITOR

**Pam Balmer**

Director of Training  
& Staff Development  
Prevent Child Abuse NY

### MANAGING EDITOR

**Ellen Butowsky**

Prevent Child Abuse NY

### DESIGNER & PRODUCTION

**Rob Attardo**

Prevent Child Abuse NY

### PROGRAM COORDINATOR

**Bernadette Johnson**

NYS Office of Children  
& Family Services

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Christine Deyss**

Prevent Child Abuse NY

### SUBMISSIONS

ellenbutowsky@hvc.rr.com

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### PCANY

33 Elk St, 2nd Floor  
Albany, NY 12207  
518.445.1273 1.800.CHILDREN  
cdeyss@preventchildabuseny.org

### NYS OCFS, DDPS

52 Washington St. 3N  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
518.474.3166  
Bernadette.Johnson@ocfs.state.ny.us

# Healthy Families New York Fall News from OCFS

**Bernadette Johnson, Acting HFNY Coordinator  
NYS Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS)**

Well, here it is, November and I feel like I didn't even experience a summer. The days are still warm but the nights have a chill!

I was so happy to see so many familiar faces and meet some new people at the Training Institute in Geneva this past June. There were a few glitches in some of the scheduling and I appreciate all of your patience. It was wonderful to see how we have grown as a program-to the point that we could take over a whole college campus! I hope it provided you with an opportunity to get together, network, and learn new information, so that you could go back to your communities invigorated and ready to use this knowledge with your families. We received many favorable evaluations on individual workshops as well as the overall institute, especially on the food! Thank for taking the time to complete them.

As I am sure you know the state is facing difficult financial times. State economists are now, for the first time since 2003, forecasting that New York has officially entered a recession. As we figure out what this will mean for our families, it is important to keep focused on the goals of our program and to provide our participants with the best possible service we can provide.

The Year 7 Evaluation has made great progress with its data collection efforts. The Research Team has completed 689 interviews with the study's original participants, 608 with their seven year old children, and more than 315 videotaped observations with the mother and child pairs. With a goal of re-interviewing 912 mothers and videotaping 450 observations, we are well on our way! In addition, we are working on estimating program costs, and have completed extracting and coding the child protective services records that were needed for the sample. We hope to begin analyzing these data in early 2009.

September was staff appreciation month here at OCFS. I would like to share how much I value the OCFS staff, their dedication to the families and children of New York State, and especially to the Healthy Families programs that we serve. Tina Williams, Maria Rosado, Terri Beers, and Tom Dwyer are among the finest people with whom I have worked. Susan Mitchell-Herzfeld, Kim Dumont, and Kristen Kirkland, also OCFS employees, provide valuable information to help our program grow and better serve families. Thank you to our Central Administration partners Prevent Child Abuse NY and the Center for Human Services Research. Your knowledge, assistance, and education are unsurpassable. Lastly, my thanks and appreciation goes out to you, the staff of HFNY. You are fantastic. Thank you for all that you do to let parents know that THEY are the light in their children's lives and that THEY make all the difference in the world to their child.

Bernadette Johnson

Acting Program Coordinator

Healthy Families NY

# My Three Sons...parenting the 3 temperaments]

**Pam Balmer, PCANY, Director of Training and Staff Development**

Julie is a former TV news anchor who gave up the glamour and stress a decade ago to move with her husband from the Midwest to New York State and become a full-time mother. Today she is the mother of three boys, ages 10, 9, and 7, and works part time at a paying job. She and her husband Todd earned their stripes well before the birth of their first child after going through fertility challenges and a series of miscarriages.

I talked with Julie about her experiences recently and here are the bullet points from our conversation:

- 3 boys; 3 temperaments
- Looking back, I could see it all coming
- Children are people!

**The Link:** When did you first become aware that your children have different temperaments?

**Julie:** My first child was easy-pregnancy and all. I was super careful, very conscious of every detail and nuance. I had to take hormones and get shots twice a day throughout the pregnancy. I had gestational diabetes and was taking blood thinners and calcium; watching my diet like a hawk. But after a series of miscarriages the pregnancy actually felt smooth and I welcomed it as my fulltime job. Number 1 was an easygoing baby and I thought, 'What's the big deal, this is easy.' With my second child, everything about him was a crisis. During my pregnancy I was on bed rest, went to the emergency room twice with hemorrhages and to the Ob's office often. It turned out that we had lost his twin. He is the child that slept when I was active and was active when I slept, so he turned my nights into days and days into nights. I should have realized before he was even born how stubborn he was going to be-he was breach and they needed two doctors to turn him around in my belly. But then delivery was great and breastfeeding was easy. After the second son was born I saw right away that he was awake a lot more than the first. He liked lots of stimulation; he wanted to take it all in. If he had been the first there wouldn't have been a second!

Number three started out a lot like number one but he got lots of attention from my first two. They each had baby dolls and loved babies, so the new baby was very exciting for them. When my third was a newborn my second was just learning body parts so I had to really pay attention to when he said, 'Eyes...!' Even now both older boys adore their little brother; in fact there is a little rivalry between them for his attention. For my husband and me our pregnancies were real projects. Because we thought we might not be able to have children we had to invest a lot beforehand in thinking about what our relationship would be like if we weren't ever able to become pregnant and these discussions really made us a team. We thought of it as our "common crisis."

**The Link:** In our work we think of temperament as falling into three main types: fearful or cautious, flexible, and feisty. What have you observed about your children?

**Julie:** Our first son is definitely cautious. He won't do something until

he knows he's going to be able to do it well. The second one we call our test pilot. He's the one who would say he'd like to bungee jump if you asked him. So he's feisty. He's actually a good model for the other two-he pushes them out of their comfort zones and gets them to try things they probably wouldn't otherwise. The third one knows himself so well. He watches, thinks about it, and then decides either no, not yet, or sure, I'm ready. And he's the diplomat of the family. I'd say he's definitely a flexible child.

**The Link:** What does all of this mean for you and your husband as parents? What temperaments would you say you are and how has that affected your parenting?

**Julie:** First of all parenting three children you are outnumbered so you have to be organized. There has to be a decent amount of structure and really the thing is predictability. And you have to know the kids. For instance you have to anticipate way ahead of time whether they are headed for the curb and how fast they might get there! I am a feisty and so is my husband. So my second child and I sometimes butt heads, but I've learned to be more flexible. And my husband is an avid skier and thinks everybody should ski. Our first son really wasn't ready until the second one took off and proved that it was OK, and that was a little frustrating for my husband; he saw our son's caution as rejection. Another thing for us was that as a stay-at-home mom I became the expert and I actually got in my husband's way. I could do everything faster and better. It took me a while to see that and relinquish the reins. I was fortunate that at one point I was laid up with a knee injury and had to rely on my husband to care for the kids-and he did a great job. I stopped managing his relationships with them and everybody's relationship grew. And I realized I was making my life harder than it needed to be by taking on the responsibility for everything.

**The Link:** Have you thought about what might be in store for the future as they grow up?

**Julie:** I can't project who they will be. I will grow into them as they grow. My husband and I want to create a home where they can be whoever they can be, and be who they are-and we want them to always be comfortable bringing their friends home. We want them to want to be home. And it's not about Gameboys and a TV in every room! We laugh about everything and we play tons of games. We demand respect for everyone. If someone is speaking you listen; if someone asks a question they get an answer. If they talk about something that is important to them, it's important to them. Children are people! They are mirrors too-you see yourself reflected back in them; you realize they are learning from you every minute. So if I have a tantrum and yell I apologize; we all have tempers and get angry and that's OK, but it's never OK to hurt somebody else. As they've grown up they've started making their own friends and we get to see more of who they are by who they hang out with.

## Ulster County Healthy Start collaborates with farm project for 9th straight year.

**Tina Tison, QA and Training Coordinator, Ulster County Healthy Start**

The Ulster County Healthy Start program has been involved with the “Farm to Families” project for 9 years. Through this project, Phillis Bridge Farm, a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm has provided our program with fresh, organic vegetables every other week throughout the summer and fall. Home visitors take the produce out on home visits and tie health and nutrition education into the home visits. We also take families on a “field trip” to the farm every year. They go on a tour of the fields, pick vegetables & flowers, and, anyone who is able, helps wash and chop. The farm workers cook a delicious lunch for us using the vegetables and the eggs that the kids collect right from the hens. It is a wonderful experience for our families, and an extremely popular event for both families and staff!



## DCHF participates in Annual Father's Day Parade

**Gillian Hill, Healthy Families Coordinator, Dutchess County HF**

On June 14th, Dutchess County Healthy Families (DCHF) participated in the 6th Annual Father's Day Parade. This event was conceived of during brainstorming about father involvement at a DCHF staff meeting six years ago and with the program's initiative and hard work, has turned into an exciting annual event with massive community participation. It was the first of its kind in New York State.

The parade ended at the riverfront with many activities for children, and free music and food. DCHF had decorated its float with posters of participant fathers with their children, and balloons and pinwheels. The program hosted a yo-yo competition with DCHF Yo-Yos, plus bottles of water, slices of pizza and, of course, DCHF outreach materials. Everyone had a great time as we promoted the message of the importance of fathers!



**Healthy Beginnings of Sullivan County highlighted in local paper**

## Sullivan and Dutchess Healthy Families Programs participate in National Breastfeeding Week 8/1-7

**Gillian Hill, Healthy Families Coordinator, Dutchess County Healthy Families**

Dutchess County Healthy Families participated in a local Breastfeeding Walk as part of National Breastfeeding Week. Claudia Aldarondo, FAW/FSW/CLC, DCHF's representative on the Breastfeeding Initiative helped organize the event where participants walked through Poughkeepsie to raise awareness of breastfeeding. Over 75 breastfeeding moms participated and received gift bags; some of them were DCHF participants! Dr. Malak from TLC Pediatrics spoke about breastfeeding benefits and how families can get breastfeeding support from doctors' visits. Nolita Sellers, FAW/FSW, created two beautiful baskets that were raffled off at the end of the walk.

## Diaspora Healthy Families hosts successful family breakfast!

**Eboni Banks**

On July 17, Diaspora Healthy Families (DHF) in Brooklyn hosted a family breakfast for program participants. It was attended by all staff and seventy-five percent of our enrolled families. Our goal was to collectively engage families and to see what some of the barriers were to their attending a bi-monthly support group. We also wanted to give all DHF staff an opportunity to meet the families they didn't know, and for the families to meet each other. Wanda Garcia, FSW, shared: "It was a great opportunity to meet all the mothers and their babies, and I had a great time."

Our guest speaker was a lactation specialist. She held an open discussion with families about the importance of breastfeeding, and addressed individual challenges and questions. Jaime, a program participant said: "I've always been breastfeeding, I was just happy finding out about the support group... I think this program is an asset to the community."

The breastfeeding discussion was so lively that we needed more time and we invited our speaker to return the following week. Families were asked about other topics of interest and activities for future groups. "The family breakfast was a success, I enjoyed the families and their input, and I hope they remain in our program," shared Program Supervisor, Joane Celestin.



## Nature of Nurturing

**Victor Bernstein, PhD**

Thanks to Tioga Healthy Families' Fatherhood Advocate, Matthew Brown, and FSW, Margaret Sullivan who wrote to Dr. Bernstein to share their experiences working with a young family.



Dear Victor:

A year ago, when we started seeing a teenage mom and dad, they had just started on the journey of parenthood armed with a sense of deep love and devotion for their baby boy. While they were not in a committed relationship, they were committed to co-parenting to the best of their abilities while living in separate households.

Tension developed between the parents because of the father's tendency to lash out at others. There were occasions when the father became physical in his outbursts; most of the time he reacted by being verbally abusive and threatening. Even though it seemed the father did not intend to cause physical or verbal harm to others, his actions could not be ignored and steps had to be taken to ensure the safety of the baby. The father needed to find a way to get help for himself before he could parent to the best of his abilities.

The father lost his visitation rights and our program needed to consider different home visiting arrangements. Matthew reached out to the dad by offering to meet with him one-on-one. The father accepted, and during these important visits he showed sincere interest in child development, asking great questions. Through tremendous effort on the part of this young father, counseling, case management and education from services in our community, and support from our program, he learned to deal more effectively with his anger and stress.

The mother was determined that her son's father would remain a part of his life. She went to court and advocated for the father's visitation with his baby and the lawyer and judge saw how important her baby's father was to him and to his development. Visitation was reinstated and even though there was resistance from other family members.

Today we are again visiting the young parents and their baby together. As a Fatherhood Advocate and an FSW, working for a strength-based program like ours, it gives us a great feeling of satisfaction to see this family that was once broken, whole again.

Sincerely,

Matthew Brown, Fatherhood Advocate and Margaret Sullivan, FSW

Tioga PACT Program, Healthy Families

**Answered on Page 9**

## ***Understanding Bonding, Attachment and the Role of Temperament (continued)***

3. Frustration/Tolerance Level: How much time can she spend on an activity even with interruptions? When attempting a challenging task, is she more likely to give up or try again?

4. Reactions to New People: When someone new walks into the room, does he need to warm up slowly or does he seek to pull them into his world immediately?

5. Coping with Change: When something isn't quite the same, does she take it in stride or have a harder time dealing with the change?

### **What can we learn from observing these five characteristics?**

Flexible children and adults tend to fall in the middle of the continuum of the characteristics described above. For example, they are open to meeting new people, even though they may occasionally need some help to feel comfortable. They tend to sleep well and have predictable eating, sleeping and play patterns. About 40% of children fall into this category.

Cautious children and adults tend to be thoughtful and quiet. They are usually not immediately comfortable in new settings and need time to transition. About 15% fall into this category.

Feisty people have more traits on the high end of the continuum. They typically react strongly to change, both negative and positive, and you can usually tell how they are feeling. About 10% of children fall into this category.

The remaining 35% of children are a combination of temperament types.

### **Is it a good fit?**

Goodness of fit is defined as "how well the demands and expectations of an environment and the people in it are compatible with a person's temperament, expectations, and other characteristics." (Kristal, 2005) This includes how well a parent can recognize and respond or adapt to a child's temperament.

FSWs can help parents recognize and better understand their own temperament, and be curious about their child's temperament. Increased self-awareness will help them reflect on the way they respond to their child. The interaction of their temperaments can influence attachment both positively and negatively.

Here is an example: Two fathers have been dropping their sons off at the same child care center for 2 weeks. One of the fathers, John, is extremely confident and gregarious (flexible) and his son, Jack, is similar. The other father, Peter, also has a flexible temperament, but his son, Paul, is more a "slow to warm up" or cautious child. John barely comes in the room when dropping off Jack because he knows Jack has already moved on to playing with his friends. Peter, on the other hand, plans extra time in his morning to feel OK about leaving Paul. Paul typically sits alone watching the other children play. Peter says he "just doesn't get Paul" and worries that he is unhappy.

What is the role of the FSW? Using the concept of goodness of fit is a way to discuss challenges in the parent child relationship without blaming anyone. For example, asking Peter questions that help him to reflect on his own temperament and how it is different from Paul's

may help him to understand his son's temperament and behavior. As a cautious child Paul appreciates having a little more time to settle into his surroundings; he isn't necessarily unhappy at all!

The concept of "goodness of fit" does not only apply to parents and children with similar temperaments, it also refers to parents who have adapted to the child's temperament by observing and learning about the child and tailoring their own reactions and the child's environment. (See "My Three Sons" interview) When there are challenges and parents find it hard to adapt, it results in a less favorable fit. Understanding temperament will help get parents on the same page with their children and lessen the challenges of temperaments that aren't as compatible. When parents understand the meaning behind behaviors that are driven by temperament, like separation anxiety or shyness in groups, then they can have realistic expectations for their child and see the world through the child's eyes. This perspective is crucial for forming a secure attachment.

We can help parents and babies to develop positive relationships when we help parents better understand, observe and positively interpret their child's behavior. Activities and discussions around temperament during home visits are an ideal way to do that.

The following sources were used for this article:

Seibel, N. L., et. al. (2006). Preventing child abuse and neglect: Parent-provider partnerships in child care. Washington, DC: Zero TO THREE.

Erickson, M.F., Ph.D, Director of Children, Youth and Family Consortium, University of Minnesota



# The Milky Way

**Rayza DeLaCruz-Stitt, RN, BSN, MSN**  
**Certified Healthy Families FSW Trainer**  
**Program Director, Bushwick Bright Start Healthy Families**  
**Program, a program of Public Health Solutions (formerly**  
**MHRA) and The Coalition for Hispanic Family Services**

## AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FSWS TO PROMOTE THE DANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

Breastfeeding, by its nature, involves interaction, attunement, and attention to the needs of the nursing infant. Prolactin and Oxytocin are known as the “breastfeeding hormones.” Prolactin is present in all lactating women, and Oxytocin is released in increased amounts when a baby comes to the breast. These maternal hormones are known to enhance mother-infant interactions. For example, the mother experiences a relaxed, calming effect when the surge of Oxytocin is released during the let-down of milk (milk-ejection reflex). It immediately acts on the central nervous system and reduces stress.

When breastfeeding is going well, the mom is more available to meet her baby’s needs, readily shows affection, comforts her baby, and experiences and shows pleasure in her baby. Breastfeeding requires physical closeness and touch, both critical to brain development, and helping babies achieve a balanced state in their bodies (homeostasis).

FSWs can use C.H.E.E.R.S to note the role of breastfeeding in supporting behaviors which enhance the parent-child-relationship.

C	CUES-Starting the breastfeeding relationship early in the post-partum period can help the mother learn to recognize her baby’s cues. This can have long-lasting effects on her ability to “read” her baby throughout the parenting relationship. Dads can be supported to notice their baby’s cues before, during and after nursing.
H	HOLDING-Breastfeeding offers a ready-made opportunity for baby to have skin-to-skin time with mom. Especially during early nursing, this helps baby feel like she is back in her natural habitat.
E	EYE CONTACT-Newborn babies can see best at a distance of approximately 8-10”. Babies at the breast are at the perfect position to access their mother’s face. This is very convenient since they are particularly interested in human faces. Breastfeeding promotes parent-baby eye contact both during early breastfeeding as well as later nursing.
E	EMPATHY-The hormone Oxytocin is released during breastfeeding. Drs. Kennell & Klaus and others have termed Oxytocin the “Love Hormone”. This hormone promotes relaxation, and helps to increase nurturing maternal instincts. FSWs can support families to maximize these physiological benefits resulting in more empathic behaviors towards baby.
E	ENVIRONMENT- The nurturing nursing hormones create an emotional state in the mother that directly helps bonding. Bonding is the process by which the mother connects to her baby. Bonding can enhance the parent’s ability to provide an atmosphere of emotional safety for her baby. This early relationship provides the building blocks for workers and parents to discuss ways in which the home environment and appropriate stimulation enhances child development.
R	RYTHMICITY& RECIPROCITY-The “supply and demand” nature of breastfeeding provides a unique opportunity to practice baby-led nursing. The parent who is knowledgeable of and attentive to her or his baby’s cues is more likely to fall into a rhythmic and reciprocal pattern with their baby (The Parent-Child-Relationship Dance). FSWs can support dads to become attuned to their nursing baby’s cues, and respond quickly to subtle hunger cues by bringing the baby to mom. In the context of a breastfeeding family, the worker has a wonderful opportunity to support and promote partnering and collaboration between parents. The parents learn to be more flexible by allowing the baby to set his own feeding schedule.
S	SMILES-The effects of Oxytocin, the “Love Hormone” are likely to help the mom feel endeared to her baby. Nursing moms more typically have a relaxed affect, and smile often while nursing the baby.

You can email your breastfeeding questions to: [rdelacruz-stitt@healthsolutions.org](mailto:rdelacruz-stitt@healthsolutions.org)  
 or [Raydelasti@aol.com](mailto:Raydelasti@aol.com).

Works referenced: Dr. Marshall Klaus

# Spotlight on NYS Office of Children and Family Services Program Contract Managers

The Link typically “spotlights” one of our home visiting programs so we can all get to know the program’s staff, program culture, and community, and to help us all feel more connected. This issue of the Link spotlights our Program Contract Managers at the Office of Children and Family Services for the same reason.

We asked each of your Program Contract Managers to share their thoughts about their role in OCFS, what in their past prepared them for that role, and also to share something about themselves that maybe none of us knew. Here’s what we found out:



**Bernadette Johnson**

My current role within the Healthy Families New York network is Acting Program Coordinator.

I began in this role in November 2007 when Joy Griffith retired from OCFS. I started working with the Healthy Families program in August of 1999 and with OCFS (formerly DSS) in 1986. Within this role, I act as a State Leader with the national HFA organization, and oversee the entire HFNY program, including helping other state agencies and officials at OCFS understand HFNY and the important work that we do.

I know many people see OCFS’s role primarily as the funder of the HFNY program. Yes, we provide the majority of the funds that support the program, and part of our role is to make sure that this money is spent wisely and within the guidelines. However, I also feel that this program is a collaboration between all the programs and the Central Administration partners of OCFS, PCANY, and CHSR. Part of my role is to support that collaboration and the work that is being done in the community. This is a successful program because of the contributions and dedication of all our staff.

I chuckle when I think of my preparation for this role as I am not sure if I am prepared, but I can tell you thus far it has been quite a learning experience! I began working in the field with children that had emotional and developmental delays. I absolutely loved that work. From there, I went to work with children that were in our foster care system and available for adoption. I later began working at the Child Abuse and Maltreatment Register in many different capacities. These two positions really made me believe that prevention was the way. This program makes such a difference in the path of children’s lives. That coupled with what I was witness to in the field made me a strong

supporter of our program.

The one thing that is the most important to me is my family and the pride that I have in all of them. Both my parents are Deaf and communicate using American Sign Language (ASL). They are elderly but still very active. My parents worked hard for all they have and to raise my brother and me. Because of my upbringing and being the eldest child, much responsibility was given to me at an early age as would be the case of any child who needed to speak for their parents. I am extremely proud of my heritage and as a result have been interpreting and teaching ASL all of my adult life. Some of you may have attended the ASL workshop at the Training Institute. I enjoy sharing this information that was gifted to me. My family also includes my husband of 20 years who is a terrific dad and coach, and 3 great kids (17, 14, and 12) who keep me on my toes!



**Terri Beers**

My role is to strengthen communities by developing and supporting programs which protect and improve the quality

of life for children and families across New York State. I see my role including providing technical assistance to agencies in the planning, development, and evaluation of home visiting services and in being compliant with a HFA program...

My 10 years with a local department of social services has prepared me in many different ways to identify and understand child abuse and neglect from a systems approach. Being a child protective investigator and long-term protective caseworker, as well as a caseworker in foster care and prevention/adoption, has

allowed me to get to know the needs of a system that is not based on strengths. Most importantly my previous experience has given me a good understanding of a child’s needs which only cements my belief that prevention, education, and a strength based approach are crucial in successfully engaging families, and thus reducing child abuse and neglect.

I live with my husband and niece partly in East Greenbush, NY and partly in Cobleskill, NY where we own a Mediterranean Cafe (Fairuz Cafe).

**Tina Williams**



My role in OCFS is to see that government funds are distributed most appropriately and expeditiously to Local Districts and non-profit agencies, so that needed services are provided to families. I also monitor and support the agencies in the provision of those services. In the past, I have worked with children and families who are in dire need of help, so I am proud to be part of the process which offers them more support in their homes and community.

I have worked in state government for 29 years and HFNY is the best program and the best team I have had the pleasure to work with.



# Nature of Nurturing

Continued



Thomas Dwyer

I have several years experience working with people in various programs and settings, including: Adoption, Foster Care, Education and working with people with Traumatic Brain

Injuries & Developmental Disabilities. I believe my past experiences (personal and professional) have prepared me for my role with OCFs/HFNY. I understand the importance of being part of a team with a strength-based approach and supporting the work we do with programs and families. As a husband and father, I also understand the importance of a "healthy family" unit and being involved in every part.

I have worked with HFNY as a Program Contract Manager since January 2008. I am originally from Utica and I am a graduate of SUNY Oneonta. I worked with teenagers in a group home setting and moved to the Albany area 10 years ago. I live with my wife, Karen, and two wonderful children, Alan (11 years old) & Rachel (2 years old).

Maria Rosado



Dear Matt and Margaret,

Thanks so much for sharing this story. It is a reminder of why we do this work: to feel we are contributing to the development of children and families. I'd like to highlight several points that stood out for me, and connect them to the Nature of Nurturing and The Mutual Competence Model Stages of the Helping Relationship.

You write that mom and dad "had just started on the journey of parenthood armed with a sense of deep love and devotion for their baby boy." That they wanted to participate in the program together even when not together, is a powerful statement of their capacity to put their child ahead of themselves and their own needs. Just because parents are teenagers does not mean they are necessarily immature in their parenting.

In terms of our concept of "identifying and building on what is working" through sharing observations and using inquiry, I would like to hear how they decided to participate together in the program even though not in a relationship. I'd also like to know more about how "love and devotion" translate into action. How do they see themselves as parents? This would give me an idea of how they are able to communicate effectively, and set the stage for how we might work together effectively.

You identified the father's behavior as unacceptable. We define this in Stage I - Orientation. You were clear in setting limits. Likely, dad did not like this change, but he agreed to see you, indicating that even during this difficult time he respected you for your honesty, and perhaps trusted you too. For me, what is important is that you, Matt, "held dad in your mind." Your reaching out showed that even though the behavior was unacceptable, you accepted him as the father (Stage II). The sincere interest he showed in the child development information provided by asking great questions that were very specific and detail-oriented, represents Understanding (Stage III). These "tremendous efforts" (his and yours), along with resources provided by community agencies (which he was motivated to utilize), allowed him to stay connected with his love for his child and let go of his anger. In terms of the Nature of Nurturing, you connected with the parenting instinct, and this motivated both mom and dad to move in

positive directions.

Unresolved, the father's anger may have led to his becoming disconnected from his son. What a loss that would have been for both the child and the father! What a loss you and your co-workers helped prevent!

Your program's flexibility allowed for the family to receive the supportive home visiting they needed. You set clear limits, accepted the father, and responded to his desire to be a good parent with information he valued and resources he needed. Your caring for him allowed him to care for his child. This is the parallel process. Stories like this can help all of us cope in difficult times.

All the best to you, and to all of my friends at HFNY,

Victor

If you would like to share your story with Victor and The Link, email him at [vbernste@midway.uchicago.edu](mailto:vbernste@midway.uchicago.edu) or Ellen Butowsky at [ellenbutowsky@hvc.rr.com](mailto:ellenbutowsky@hvc.rr.com). You don't have to write a formal piece. Victor and The Link staff will work with you via phone and email.



**Question: Think of a family you've worked with where the parents and child seemed to have either well suited temperaments, or mismatched temperaments. What was helpful in your work with them, and how did you know?**



"In looking at either temperament (together or not matched) I always ask the parents how they feel and/or how they keep the baby busy (if

baby is a little more active than parent). I look at what the parent is doing, and keep their point of view. I know when it works because the parent adjusts to the baby, and they seem happy together."

- Luisa Salazar, Dutchess County Healthy Families

"I ask the parents many open-ended questions about what they are doing. I point it out to the parents, and I notice the parents and baby responding well to one another. Everyone notices these great responses. There is one



family that I work with whose temperaments match so well. Mom really responds to the baby, and they seem to both have this quiet, laid back type of personality. I spoke about this

to my supervisor, and later when this family attended a group at the program, my supervisor mentioned how she also noticed how well matched their temperaments were. Listening to the parents really works."

- Janice Griffin, Healthy Families of Cayuga-Seneca

I was working with a Mom and her 22 month twins. Both parents and children have similar temperaments, however when the twins get frustrated they tend to bite themselves. I normalized the situation and brainstormed with Mom possible solutions. I also brought

handouts concerning biting and understanding toddler's body language from the San Angelo curriculum."

-Peggy Ayala, Best Beginnings



And some questions for further exploration sparked by Peggy, offered by our Roving Reporter.

Biting is an interesting behavior to look at from the standpoint of temperament. Consideration of the temperamental traits may offer insight into why the child is biting. For example, does the child have a high activity level, a low adaptability level and a high level of intensity? Might this lead a child to biting as an immediate release of frustration?



**Fall  
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**Prevent Child Abuse  
New York, Inc.  
33 Elk Street, 2nd Floor  
Albany, NY 12207**

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