

New Jersey Office of the Child Advocate To Meet with Resource Parent

CONTINUING
EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITY

The New Jersey Office of the Child Advocate, an independent state agency dedicated to promoting positive change for children, will meet with northern New Jersey resource parents on **May 28, 2009 at 7 p.m. at 337 First St. Hackensack, NJ 07601. (Note: This meeting is approved for two continuing education credits towards your licensing requirements.)**

The Child Advocate works closely with Legislators, government officials, community stakeholders and other advocates to craft innovative solutions to identified problems. The Child Advocate then monitors implementation of these reforms to make a real difference in the lives of New Jersey's children and their families.

The Child Advocate has broad statutory authority to protect children's rights and to ensure they receive the care, supervision and safety to which they are entitled. This authority is used to monitor systems that serve children and families, including the child welfare, juvenile justice and child behavioral health systems.

In addition to the Office's policy work, the Child Advocate offers a Helpline, which responds to hundreds of inquiries each year from people who are concerned about the safety, education, health or welfare of a child they know. Many involve issues with government agencies responsible for safeguarding, educating and tending to the needs of our children.

Child Advocate representatives will give a brief presentation of the Office's 2009 policy agenda, including two key child welfare projects: promoting school stability for children in care and improving parent/child visitation.

The Child Advocate wants to solicit feedback from resource parents on these two issues specifically and is interested in hearing about your personal experiences in these areas. Key questions will center on the effects that changing schools has had on the children in your care and your observations about family visitation practices, including parent/child and sibling.

You will also have an opportunity to share your input on the Office's overall policy agenda and discuss any issues that you see as requiring statewide attention.

Please RSVP to Jennifer Faasse, FAFS Resource Family Advocate, at 201.342.4397 ext.2053 or jfaasse@fafsonline.org.

The Child Advocate's Primary Goals

- Improve child safety by advocating for relevant reforms of the child protection system and by monitoring other systems that serve children.
- Ensure that all children have safe, permanent homes.
- Enhance healthcare for children and youth.
- Improve the care of children with mental health needs.
- Help juveniles involved with the legal system to forge productive lives.
- Strengthen children's legal rights.

The Office concentrates its efforts in six key issue areas:

Child Protection. A primary focus of the Office of the Child Advocate is to ensure that children who have been abused or neglected – or are at risk of abuse or neglect – receive the needed protections and services from relevant state agencies. The Office assists the court-appointed monitor in measuring progress of child welfare reforms and is working to strengthen the review of children who died from abuse or neglect.

Permanency. It is critical that the state do everything possible to ensure that children in out-of-home placement receive permanent homes in a timely manner, whether through reunification with their families or, when that is not possible, through adoption or permanent placement with relatives. The Child Advocate is engaged in specific projects to promote stability and permanency for children in foster care, including improving parent-child visitation practices and ensuring that foster children are allowed to remain in their "schools of origin" when they enter care.

Child Health. A healthy start leads to a healthier, more productive life. Child health continues to be a primary policy area for the Child Advocate, as the Office works to ensure that all children have health insurance and to measure the quality of healthcare provided to children in out-of-home placement.

Mental Health. Children who have mental and behavioral health needs require appropriate services and interventions to grow into stable, productive adults. The Child Advocate works to improve the systems that serve these vulnerable children and their families and will launch a public education campaign about youth group homes.

Juvenile Justice. When youth become involved with the legal system, it adversely affects their chances of building productive lives. The Child Advocate is launching several initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system, including a project designed to improve youth's chances for success when they leave secure care and re-enter their communities.

Children's Rights. Ensuring that children's legal rights are protected and strengthened is another key focus of the Office of the Child Advocate.

Contacts

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