



OFFICE OF CHILD ADVOCATE

E-News

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OCA/FATALITY REVIEW PANEL

UPDATE

On October 2, the CT General Assembly's Children's Committee held a public informational forum regarding the OCA's recent report on the preventable deaths of infants and toddlers in 2013. Child Advocate Sarah Eagan and DCF Commissioner Katz discussed key findings related to child fatality review and next steps for prevention strategies. Read the report here: http://www.ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/Final_OCA_Infant_Toddler_Fatality_Report.pdf The Child Advocate's testimony can be found here: http://ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/TestimonyforChildrens_10_1_Re_0-3_Child_Fatalities_2013.pdf

OCA EDUCATES

Along with its partners in the Connecticut Restraint and Seclusions Prevention Initiative, OCA sponsored the second annual Restraint & Seclusion Prevention conference on September 12 at Central CT State University. The conference featured panel discussions with providers throughout Connecticut as well as Key-note Speaker Dr. Kevin Huckshorn, Director of Delaware's Vision of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. Dr. Huckshorn's presentation, which is available here: https://www.ctclearinghouse.org/Files/customer-files/772-Kathryn_Power_Presentation_-_R_S_Prevention_Conference_9-25-13.pdf, described six empirically proven "core strategies" for reducing and even eliminating the use of restrictive and dangerous seclusion and restraint practices for clients in mental health treatment settings.

OCA continues to advocate for reforms in the state's practices with regard to restraint and seclusion of children with disabilities. If you have concerns or questions about a child who is being restrained or secluded, please call OCA.

OCA RESPONDS TO CALLS FOR HELP: SPECIAL EDUCATION, CHILD WELFARE, AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

In September 2014 OCA responded to more than 3 dozen requests from the public for assistance. The most common areas of concern represented among these calls were access to quality special education services, child protection agencies' response to reports of child abuse and neglect, and treatment planning for children with developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs.

OCA opened twelve cases for investigation, including one case in which a family reported experiencing harassment by other tenants in their housing complex due to the behavior of their child, who has autism.

Calls asking for help regarding special education services are much more frequent during the fall months. If you know a parent who needs help with question about school for their child, please feel free to call the OCA at 860 566 2106.

Please also see this link to the State Department of Education's publication: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/Parents_Guide_SE.pdf



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OCA PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH.

On September 22, the Child Advocate participated in a public event with US Senator Richard Blumenthal, who called for examination of professional sports leagues' response to reported domestic violence among their employees and proposed federal legislation that would require disciplinary measures for players and financial penalties for the leagues themselves that fail to substantively address domestic violence.

The Child Advocate serves as co-chair with the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence on a new working group focused on children who have witnessed or been involved in family violence. The working group actively promotes strategies for improving multidisciplinary service delivery, development of provider and advocate work force, and strengthening protocols for first responders who are directly involved with children affected by family violence. Learn more about the work of the CCADV here: <http://www.ctcadv.org/>

Along with its partners in the juvenile justice community, OCA continues to advocate for improved conditions of confinement and treatment for youth with complex behavioral health needs who are detained in juvenile justice facilities. OCA has called for an independent, expert review of CT's locked juvenile facilities, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School for boys, and the Pueblo unit for girls. See: <http://www.courant.com/opinion/editorials/hc-ed-restraints-abuse-prisoners-in-pueblo-unit-20140919-story.html> for further details.

OCA ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In support of the development of CT's Children's Behavioral Health Plan, as required by PA 13-178, OCA submitted to PA 13-178 Advisory Committee a number of recommendations for the creation of a continuum of evidence-based, developmentally appropriate services. OCA recommendations include universal screening by pediatricians, provision of services in natural environments, focus on the family system as well as the identified client, emphasis on prevalence of substance abuse in adolescents, broadly accessible care coordination services, in-home and respite services. Our recommendations stressed the importance of families' access to services regardless of insurance provider, and quality assurance of services programs via measurable outcome goals. See the plan as submitted to the CT General Assembly on October 1 at the following link: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/kid/PA13-178/CT%20Children's%20Behavioral%20Health%20Plan%20October%202014.pdf>