

INSIDEOUT

Center for Positive Prevention Alternatives, Inc.
A Non-Profit Corporation

Serving the Stockton/San Joaquin County Community Since 1969

CPPA's New FOCUS Program

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Project Coordinator Mariana Gumm and Director of Youth & Clinical Services Dennis Newlin make plans for CPPA's new Focus Program.

According to the California Institute for Mental Health, the number of California children in out-of-home placements has increased by 60% over the past two decades. This explosion of foster care services places tremendous burdens on county and state governments and, of course, causes much pain and difficulty for the affected families.

Children who have been removed from their families by social services are, in most circumstances, looking forward to the day when they can go home. San Joaquin County has always recognized the value of successful family reunification and in its 2004 Child Welfare Self-Assessment made provision for programs that would support families when a child returns from a foster care placement. CPPA is very happy to have been chosen to work with the county toward this worthy goal.

Getting families the help they need

CPPA's new FOCUS (Families On Course Unite Successfully) Program is gearing up for a March launch. The program is aimed at providing support to families when a child is returned home from a foster care placement. Its long-term objectives are to prevent any recurrence of maltreatment and to prevent re-entry into foster care.

Families who have had a child (or children) removed are frequently struggling with multiple challenges that overburden their ability to cope with the stresses of day-to-day life. These challenges may include unemployment, unmet housing needs or legal and medical problems, to name a few. Their struggle is made more difficult by limited abilities to navigate the various systems that offer services and by practical limitations, like inadequate transportation. Drug and/or alcohol dependency often interfere with the parents' abilities to meet the requirements of their reunification plans, as do long-term unresolved psychological issues stemming from a family history of dysfunction.

CPPA's FOCUS Program draws on well-established best practices supported by extensive research. Specifically, CPPA will use the "wrap-around" services model and the "team decision-making" technique. FOCUS staff members will be there to support families. The FOCUS Case Manager will visit each client family's home and work with the family to assess their needs. The family may include friends, relatives or other community members as part of the decision-making team to insure that everyone's best interests are served. Families will be referred to services at CPPA and throughout the community and will be assisted by FOCUS staff to insure that they are able to keep their appointments to get the help they need.

FOCUS will enhance SJC's efforts to reunite families

"We are excited to see if we can improve the long-term outcomes for these children and families," comments David Erb, LCSW, Deputy Director of Children and Adult Services for SJC's Human Services Agency.

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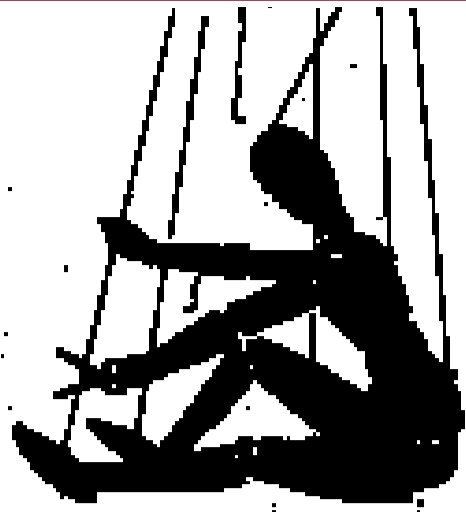
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Director's Perspective



Linda J. Mascarenas

As I sit here at my desk trying to think of something profound and moving to tell you, my thoughts lead me to my two girls at Casa who are preparing to graduate high school. One girl is graduating from a traditional high school and she has worked very hard to maintain her grades and her activities at school. She has a goal to be a teacher and she is making plans to enter college.

As you may know, Casa has been open for nearly two and a half years; the second girl has been with us since we opened. CPPA's philosophy at Casa is a bit controversial and extremely difficult for our staff to implement. It requires them to give up their power and to allow the girls to learn to use their own power to live a successful life. It is a battle for us to get our staff to understand and embrace the program.

When I look at this young woman about to graduate from high school, it gives me faith and the courage to continue our philosophy. The changes we have seen in this young woman are amazing. She entered our program with the intent to get kicked out, to reinforce her perception that "nobody cared about her." I admit she was tough. She was a raging, angry child, who had been through at least ten placements before Casa. Not one of those placements

CPPA Wish List

You can help us meet the needs of our youth and keep their residences in top condition by donating something from the wish list.

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| computer desk | 4 pillows |
| 1 outdoor mat | 2 regular garbage cans |
| 1 mop & 1 new mop head | 1 broom |
| 1 bathroom plunger | 2 kitchen drain boards |
| 4 bathroom waste baskets | 4 bathroom mat sets |
| 2 - 13 gallon trash cans for the kitchen | |

lasted for a year. It took her about two months to realize we were not trying to control her. It took her another few months to trust us. By her own admission, we allowed her to be herself and that is what made all the difference. She was allowed to decorate her room the way she wanted, dress the way she wanted and she was allowed to express her anger. I am so proud of her and the road she has chosen for herself. There are no guarantees where she will end up. She has some pretty substantial goals and if she meets a quarter of those goals she will have achieved more than anyone expected. I hope she lets us know in ten years how she is doing.

When my staff questions our philosophy I use these girls as examples. I know in my heart of hearts this is the best way to work with our girls and I know we can make a difference. It is not easy. It is contrary to what most people have learned, but it is some of the most rewarding work I have done in my thirty two years here at CPPA.

As always, I have an open invitation to you to give me a call, stop by and have a cup of coffee, take a tour and let's discuss the problems of the world. If you know me, you know I love to talk about my kids and CPPA. Have a great spring!

CPPA's Mission:

Strong communities are built by people who make good decisions for their own lives. CPPA helps youths and adults acquire the skills and personal characteristics they need to create positive environments for themselves, their families and their communities. CPPA, dedicated to preventing self-destructive and socially negative behaviors, respects the individuality and honors the strengths of every client.

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"The Focus Program will enhance the efforts of the Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services to increase the number of foster children successfully reunited with their families and to reduce the number of children who re-enter foster care. FOCUS workers will be providing case management services, which are in addition to the services of the Child Welfare Social Worker," Erb explains. "With high caseloads, Child Welfare Social Worker's aren't always able to provide the close monitoring, support and supervision for the families in which reunification has occurred. The FOCUS workers should prove to be able to provide and coordinate a safety net of services to these families."

CPPA is gearing up for the new program

Associate Social Worker Mariana Gumm will head the FOCUS Team as its Program Coordinator and Case Manager. "I'll be the connector, the one in the middle," says Ms. Gumm, "helping families to use the many services available to them here at CPPA and acting as a liaison with services available throughout the

community." Gumm is preparing for service delivery by updating CPPA's list of community resources and developing a curriculum and materials for the FOCUS support groups that will act as a key program component. Under the guidance of Director of Youth & Clinical Services Dennis Newlin, MFT, other CPPA staff members are supporting the effort to get the FOCUS Program off to a good start. Operations Manager Jan Sasser is developing the database that will insure that program results are carefully monitored, while others are creating informational materials and the many forms that will be necessary to accurately track service provision.

"Having operated the Casa group home for the past two and a half years and seeing how much girls want to go home," says CPPA Executive Director Linda J. Mascarenas, "has made us realize how important it is to help families reunite with their children whenever possible." Families that want to participate in the FOCUS Program need to speak with their HSA social workers, who will refer up to ten families for services each month.

Help a youth build for the future

Every year CPPA's friends and supporters generously contribute to the Adopt-a-Youth program, providing a happy holiday for youth clients and their families (see photo below). This past December, the program took on new meaning when generous donors "adopted" two transitional youth who were preparing to move into their own apartments. By providing the furniture and household items that these youth placed on their holiday wish lists, CPPA contributors gave them the support they needed to move forward toward independent living.

The Opportunity House Transitional Living Program gives youth from 16-20 years old safe shelter and supporting services that prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life. Last year 25 youth participated in the program. Casa de la Paz is home to six foster youth from 12 to 18 years old. This year two Casa residents are preparing for high school graduation and a move to independent living.

Each of these youth needs everything from couches and chairs to a toaster for the kitchen. CPPA invites you to become a part of our new, expanded "Adopt-a-Youth" program. When you sign up, your name will be placed on the list of potential adopters. CPPA will notify you (by email, snailmail or phone, as you prefer) when a youth is getting ready to move into an apartment and will send you a list of what's needed. Like the holiday program, you can opt to provide one item or many from the youth's list or to make a cash contribution. Signing up for the program is easy—just fill out the form at the bottom of the page and send it to CPPA in the envelope that accompanies the newsletter.

The Wray family (Gabriel and Jennifer, with children Nick and Daniel) enjoyed their visit with Santa at CPPA's annual Christmas party for youth residents and former clients.



Please sign me up for CPPA's year-round "Adopt-a-Youth" program.

Name _____

I prefer to be contacted by

email: _____

phone: _____

mail: _____

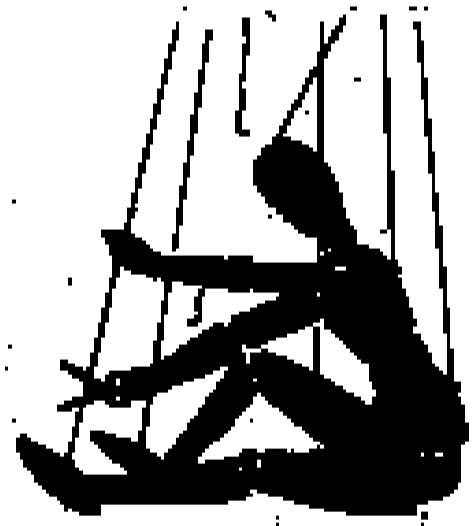
Mail this form to CPPA at 729 N. California St., Stockton, CA 95202 (you may use the envelope enclosed with the newsletter). Or, send your contact information by email to kfogle@cppainc.org (subject: adopt-a-youth).

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