The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS) has collaborated with Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth to construct a large portable gallery containing photographs of 42 children currently anticipating finding their forever families through adoption.

The Mississippi Heart Gallery Reveal Adoption Event is scheduled for 3 p.m. at the Mississippi Children’s Museum in Jackson on October 25th. You can expect to hear from First Lady Deborah Bryant, while MS NEWS NOW’s Maggie Wade and MDCPS Commissioner, Dr. David Chandler will be in attendance, as well as a host of others with a heart for adoption.

Presley Smith, age 11, will be reciting “We Pray for Children” by Ina Hughes. Presley is the daughter of Sabrea and Michael Farris Smith; Mrs. Smith has years of child welfare experience and was instrumental in the development of resources for foster families across the state and Mr. Smith is the award winning author of *Rivers* and *The Hands of Strangers*. This isn’t the first time Presley has aided in the recruitment of foster and adoptive homes; she appeared in a brochure at the age of seven with that goal in mind.

Photographers across the state have volunteered their time and talent to contribute the 16 by 20 photographs that will be exhibited during the event alongside each featured child’s biography.

MDCPS recently launched the online Heart Gallery which displays a complete listing of all the Mississippi children who need adoptive homes, including photographs and profiles. Visit [mdcps.ms.gov/mississippi-heart-gallery/](http://mdcps.ms.gov/mississippi-heart-gallery/) (or click the heart icon below) to view the precious children presently awaiting adoption and to learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent.
Report Child Abuse - MS Centralized Intake

Mississippi Centralized Intake (MCI) is the hotline responsible for receiving reports of child abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation for the state of Mississippi. The call center is staffed and operated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and is located in Jackson. MCI receives reports for all 82 counties via telephone or electronic reporting. Information is then documented in the MDCPS data management system and disseminated to the appropriate staff for handling, as outlined in MDCPS policy. During SFY 2016, MCI received a total of 33,200 calls of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation against a child.

If you have any questions, compliments, or concerns regarding MCI, we want to hear from you at MClstateoffice.DFCS@mdhs.ms.gov.

To Report Child Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation Call 1-800-222-8000 or Report Online at www.mdcps.ms.gov

Goodbye Complaints, Hello Consumer Solutions!

MDCPS has rebranded the unit once known simply as “the complaints line,” to the Consumer Solutions Unit (CSU), a vital part of Continuous Quality Improvement. While the players have basically remained the same, the mission has changed. No longer does the unit exist simply to receive, report, and track consumer complaints, but will now assist the community in finding solutions for their concerns.

In addition to the historical complaints that they will still oversee, CSU will also manage general inquiries about the agency, as well as any other requests that are made through them.

Please feel free to contact Consumer Solutions by way of their new e-mail address consumersolutions@mdcps.ms.gov or via the new toll free line at 1.844.494.8375.

This is an exciting time for Consumer Solutions, for Continuous Quality Improvement (which applies to all divisions of MDCPS), and for the agency as a whole.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Unit

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) provides out-of-state placement and supervision of dependent children in state custody. One of the major purposes of the ICPC is to protect children from going into a dangerous or inadequate situation across state lines. ICPC is essential to minimizing the risk of children being situated in unsuitable or deteriorating placements through home evaluations, supervision, and progress reports.

The ICPC Unit also handles a tremendous amount of mail, telephone calls, ICPC Adoptions (both public and private), and the daily intake of cases from the Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System. The ICPC Unit is currently working with the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) to implement a new national electronic system for faster processing of ICPC cases as well as approving a new proposed ICPC. The new ICPC must be accepted by 35 states before it can be enacted and used in all states.

AAICPC is currently moving forward with the process of introducing the new ICPC to all state legislators across the country and MDCPS looks forward to playing a part in that progress.

Our New Eligibility Bureau Director

Please welcome MDCPS’ new Bureau Director of Eligibility, Sandra Bracey-Mack. Sandra comes to us from the Division of Medicaid and has 24 years of related experience working in state government. She has been charged with transforming the Eligibility Unit into a new MDCPS Eligibility Department. Sandra is most looking forward to improving and streamlining processes within the Eligibility Department to better serve Mississippi’s children.
Truly exceptional work is being done across the state as so many talented team members work diligently to ensure MDCPS maintains Continuous Quality Improvement. Tom Farley, Director of CQI, has glimpsed such dedication and chosen three areas to highlight this month.

Jackson County Staff, Supervisors, and Administrators were recently found to be at 0% error rate for AFCARS Data Element 57 Reporting for two consecutive weeks. This means that all children who either entered or exited custody in the reporting period were entered into or taken out of custody in MACWIS in a timely manner. Historically, this has been a challenge for Jackson County, and they have made tremendous strides to make this phenomenal progress. Congratulations to Regional Director Sherba Hinton, Regional ASWS Daisy Lee, and their staff in Jackson County for this accomplishment. MDCPS commends your hard work!

Foster Care Reviewer Laurel Myles recently reported that staff in Hinds County were 100% on task in completing the previous round of County Conference Documentation, such that she did not have to ask for any conferences to be locked prior to rescheduling the next conferences for those children. This county has experienced past difficulties in this area which makes this achievement even more noteworthy!

Ms. Myles has also noticed great improvement in case work and accountability in Hinds county. Workers, ASWS, and the regional staff have been very professional, prompt in response, and sincere in their interaction with her. As she was reviewing heat tickets for updates, Ms. Myles observed movement on most of the cases, as well as overall progress made from one review to the next. Workers she recognized by name are Chandra Gathings, Latasha Levy, Angela Johnson, Darneshia Martin, Leslie Tucker, Dexter Robinson, Tahana Williams, Maranda Taylor, Tameka Hart, Romona Goodson, Bernita Williams, Berlisa Bracey, Jessica Bland, Stephanie Latiker, Latoya Cole, Chloe Curtis, Ciera Carson, Latoya Harris, Lathan Whirl, Stephanie Green, Patricia Bailey, Kendreek Burnice, and Jeresia Coleman. In addition, their supervisors, Allison Ballard, Jeanette Lewis-Smith, Kamilah Grady, Stephanie Combs, and Candace Carter, as well as Regional Director, Regina Lacking, should also be recognized.

Evaluation and Monitoring held their annual Review in Region 4-North in August, and a few of the workers who had cases reviewed had cases that were very well managed, documented, and presented for review. Furthermore, their interactions with their families were reported to be professional with a clear, diligent effort to move these cases toward permanency. The workers who were identified as performing outstanding work were Bonnie Witcher from Neshoba County, Tyiesha Moore from Lowndes County, Latisha Jackson from Oktibbeha County, Lisa Woods from Choctaw County.

Units have been instructed to be on the lookout for remarkable performances, like the examples outlined above. Keep up the incredible work and maybe you’ll see your name highlighted in a future edition!
Scope of the Problem: Estimates of the number of children who have been exposed to domestic violence each year vary. Research suggests that nearly 30 million children in the United States will be exposed to some type of family violence before the age of 17, and there is a 30 to 60 percent overlap of child maltreatment and domestic violence (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2011; Taggart, 2011).

Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to experience a wide range of difficulties, and the potential effects vary by age and developmental stage. The challenges faced by children and youth exposed to domestic violence generally fall into three categories: behavioral, social, and emotional problems. Children in families experiencing domestic violence are more likely than other children to exhibit signs of depression and anxiety, higher levels of anger and/or disobedience, fear and withdrawal, poor peer, sibling, and social relationships, and low self-esteem (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to experience cognitive and attitudinal problems manifested as difficulties in school and with concentration and task completion, score lower on assessments of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills, lack conflict resolution skills, and possess limited problem-solving skills.

Impact of Domestic Violence on Children: Children exposed to domestic violence also are more likely to exhibit pro-violence attitudes and long term issues (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). In addition to higher rates of delinquency and substance use, exposure to domestic violence is also one of several adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that have been shown to be risk factors for many of the most common causes of death in the United States, including alcohol abuse, drug abuse, smoking, obesity, and more. (For more information, visit the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study website at www.acestudy.org.)

Protective factors such as social competence, intelligence, high self-esteem, and a supportive relationship with an adult (especially a nonabusive parent) can help protect children from the adverse effects of exposure to domestic violence (Martinez-Torteya, Bogat, von Eye, & Levendosky, 2009). It’s important for domestic violence, child welfare, and other child-serving professionals to understand the impact of trauma on child development and how to minimize its effects without causing additional trauma.