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**REPORT OF THE
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OMBUDSMAN**

March 1, 1991

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1991

**John R. McKernan Jr
Governor**



**Jane Sheehan
Ombudsman**

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— Summary of Recommendations —

1990 - 1991

Maine's child welfare service delivery system is an array of services delivered by a variety of agencies and institutions. State agencies are but one component of the system; the federal and State Legislature, the Judiciary, private social service organizations, the health community, the education community, and law enforcement agencies comprise the system as a whole.

The autonomy of the Ombudsman's Office provides flexibility and independence needed to examine the system in its entirety. As a result, the office's recommendations provided to the Governor, State agencies, and the Legislature are designed to improve the service delivery system not only by examining specific problems but also by identifying problems that may be system-wide.

The recommendations listed below emerge from the experience of the second year's operation of the Ombudsman's Office. The recommendations serve as a guide for the activities of the office and for initiatives that may be undertaken by the Executive or Legislative branches of State Government. A report of the actions taken on the recommendations made in the 1989-1990 report follow the 1990-1991 recommendations. Finally, narratives describing the background and rationale for these proposed changes appear throughout the report.

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

1. Pursue a study of Maine's community based programs for children, including early intervention and mental health programs.
2. Encourage the development of more therapeutic foster care placements.
3. Encourage better communication among the departments serving severely disturbed children and youth regarding access and funding for residential treatment.
4. Continue to pursue a cost effective coordinated data system to track the delivery of services to children and their families and to assist in long-range planning for the child welfare services delivery system.
5. Review the reports of the task forces studying the restructuring of Maine's service delivery system for children, youth, and families.
6. Sponsor the second annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in the Fall of 1991.
7. Continue the effort to establish treatment facilities for young sex offenders in order to meet the increasing need. (Also recommended in 1989-1990 report.)
8. Continue to examine the implications and possibilities of developing alternative sentencing for perpetrators of child sexual abuse in order to promote family reunification and enhance treatment alternatives. (Also recommended in 1989-1990 report.)

STATUTORY AMENDMENTS

9. Continue the review of criminal statutes as they pertain to child abuse.
10. Establish an independent statutory death review committee to review all child deaths that result from abuse or neglect.
11. Support the "Confidentiality Task Force" in their efforts to review and make recommendations for any necessary changes in State and federal confidentiality statutes that pertain to children.

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12. Continue the review of statutory changes to special education provisions that apply to the placement process for children and to the appointment of surrogate parents.
 13. Establish funding for a multidisciplinary team approach to improve child abuse investigations.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

14. Continue to monitor the rate of increase in the office's caseload and increase staff levels as State and federal funds become available to ensure a speedy and appropriate response in every case.
15. Augment the resources of the Ombudsman's office with an ombudsman assistant staff person to review complaints, case files, prepare legislative testimony, review legislative documents, conduct research, and to assist the Ombudsman.
16. Augment the resources of the Ombudsman's office with a federally funded staff position to address child support enforcement complaints.



Summary of 1989-1990 Recommendations

Several recommendations emerged from the experience of the first year's operation of the Ombudsman's office. Public policy priorities recommended by the Ombudsman included: examining the implications and possibilities of developing alternative sentencing for perpetrators of child sexual abuse; establishing treatment facilities for children including young sex offenders; reviewing caseworker training, safety, and turnover rates; establishing a multidisciplinary approach to child abuse investigations; reviewing the special education process; establishing a coordinated data system for child welfare services; increasing the number of treatment facilities for children; and reviewing child welfare services policy.

The Ombudsman found that the Joint Select Committee on Corrections has done extensive research on the management of sex offenders. The Committee reported in 1988 that the number of convicted sex offenders increased from 8% in 1980, to 21% in 1987. The Department of Corrections reported in May of 1990, that the number of sex offenders incarcerated as of March 1990, was 31%. In the same period of time, the two remaining institutional sex offender programs for adults were suspended because of loss of funding. (The programs were located at Maine State Prison and Downeast Correctional Facility.) Some sex offenders, as a condition of probation, are treated by providers who are under contract to the six probation and parole districts. The current allocation for community based programs is \$293,000, which is not adequate to provide for the treatment needed. Some sex offenders are part of the Intensive Supervision Program. This program allows for monitoring of offenders in their homes and at work. (Offenders in southern Maine are electronically monitored.) Because the offenders are not housed at the expense of the state and are able to retain employment, the program is more cost effective. The offenders also learn how to live in the community and learn how not to offend. Pending legislation before the 115th Legislature proposes to expand this program by including some mandated sentences in the Intensive Supervision Program. Some young sex offenders are in treatment at the Maine Youth Center. The program, which houses 25 offenders, is always full. (Appendix 1)

In 1989, the Research Task Force of the Committee on Child Sex Abuse surveyed young sex offenders on Department of Human Services, Probation and Parole, and Maine Youth Center caseloads between July 1988 and June 1989. The results of this research identified over 350 young sex offenders. (Appendix 2)

Legislation for a bond issue to build facilities for the rehabilitation of children, including facilities for young sex offenders, failed in 1990. However, the Rumford Group Home did start a new group home program for sex offenders who are released from the Maine Youth Center. The Rumford program can receive up to 10 released young offenders. All other young sex offenders programs in Maine are community based and a continuum of care is nonexistent.

Caseworker training and turnover rates are discussed on page 8. Caseworker safety still remains an issue of concern among many caseworkers. Safety doors were installed in the Region IV Department of Human Services office following the abduction and homicide of a child. The incident occurred during and immediately after a family visit supervised by a case aide. Some safety training is provided by the Department for caseworkers, but many caseworkers still make unscheduled visits alone to isolated homes in rural areas. The caseworkers, unlike law enforcement officers, are not armed nor do they have 2-way radios.

Following several meetings facilitated by the Ombudsman and the Departments of Education and Human Services, the Department of Human Services recommended legislation to the 114th Legislature to establish the authority of the Department of Human Services to make requests for, attend, and participate in Pupil Evaluation Team meetings for exceptional students who are state wards. The Department also proposed that the automatic appointment of the foster parent as the surrogate parent for a state ward, who is an exceptional student, will not occur over the objection of the Department of Human Services. These two provisions were enacted as Public Laws Chapter 857 § 53-56, July 1990. The Joint Standing Committee on Audit and Program Review made an administrative recommendation that the Department of Education, with the assistance of the Department of Human Services, study the implications of establishing a pool of qualified volunteers willing to serve as surrogate parents. In 1990, the Department of Education hired a consultant who reported to the Committee that a surrogate parent pool has been established and that ongoing recruitment and training activities are in process.

Recommendations for treatment facilities for children are discussed on page 9. The recommendation to establish a Coordinated Data System has been carried over by the Ombudsman and also is a recommendation of both task forces studying the restructuring of child and family services. The Ombudsman is working closely with the Child Welfare Advisory Committee and the Department of Human Services Bureau of Child and Family Services in making recommendations for the State Child Welfare Services Plan for FY 91-93.

Introduction

In 1990-1991 the Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman continued to make significant strides in addressing the goals set out for it by the Legislature. The Ombudsman continues to:

- * work closely with the State child welfare agencies;
- * address concerns about the child welfare service delivery system in every region of the State;
- * submit recommendations to improve the child welfare service delivery system to the Governor's office, the child welfare community, the Congressional delegation, and the Legislature;
- * participate in formulating public policy with the Legislative and Executive branches of government;
- * maintain contact with every major child welfare organization in the State; and
- * make presentations before legislative and citizen groups including the establishment of an annual child abuse and neglect conference.

In August, 1990, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect concluded that child abuse and neglect in the United States now represents a national emergency¹. The Advisory Board based their conclusion on three findings: hundreds of thousands of American children are reportedly abused; the present system has failed; and billions of dollars are spent on the results of the failure to prevent and treat child abuse.

¹Child Abuse and Neglect: Critical First Steps in Response to a National Emergency, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, August, 1990. (Appendix 3)

Maine, like the rest of the nation, has similar child abuse and neglect statistics. In 1990, 35,410 Maine children suspected of being abused or neglected were referred to the Department of Human Services. Yet, Department personnel were only able to open and investigate referrals for 8,322 children. The 27,088 children whose referrals were not investigated represent a statewide screen-out rate of 67%; in some individual regions the screen-out rate continues to be as high as 80%. Of the 8,322 children whose cases were opened last year, only 478 children were in situations serious enough to compel the court to transfer custody to the Department of Human Services. Furthermore, in one 12 month period, 55% of the children who left custody of the Department of Human Services were successfully reunited with their biological families.

Although the referrals for abuse increased in 1990, the number of cases that were opened decreased by 1,138 cases. In many instances, the cases opened involved serious levels of jeopardy to the child and intensive case management by the caseworker leaving less caseworker time to manage new cases. In the same period of time, the caseworker turnover rate dropped to zero level in some regions. This lower turnover rate can have a positive effect on the quality of the casework performed. Cases are often not transferred as frequently and the caseworker can spend more time on the most difficult cases. Early assistance or support could help some families function at a higher level and possibly avoid escalation which would require State child protective intervention at a later date and the eventual involvement of the Ombudsman's office. Caseworkers will begin to receive more intensive training starting in May 1991, in a new federally funded training program developed by the Department of Human Services in conjunction with the Human Services Development Institute of the University of Maine pursuant to the mandate set out by the 112th Legislature². The program, which is scheduled to be fully operational by Fall 1991, will provide training to new caseworkers before they start serving clients. (Appendix 4) However, as Maine's current child protection and family support system continues to be overwhelmed by crises and lack of funds, the system has fewer reserves available with which to address situations that do not pose an immediate threat of serious harm to a child's welfare. Moreover, despite the passage by the 114th Legislature of a resolve to establish a model coordinated response system for child abuse referrals, the response system has not been funded adequately to become operational.

Foster care continues to be a part of the child protection system that has not expanded to accommodate the increase in case loads. The increase effects all parts of the system including law enforcement agencies, the courts, mental health services, special education services, the Maine Youth Center, and everyone else involved in investigating and treating abused and neglected children. Services in Maine are often provided in an isolated

²Maine Public Laws, Chapter 269, § 1, 1989.

manner by several different departments, restricted by multiple federal funding streams and entitlements, and not always easily accessed. The problem of inappropriate placements for foster children is particularly difficult to remedy because of the scarcity of treatment and placement alternatives in Maine. The consequences of the lack of facilities continues to include:

- * mounting stress on Maine's foster care system, which, because of the lack of other types of placements, continues to serve as the backbone of Maine's substitute care system;
- * failure to help children who may be deeply traumatized and whose recovery depends on specialized treatment and support; and
- * escalating costs to society when dysfunction in children and families is addressed long after initial detection.

The Ombudsman's office has watched closely the developments of the two concurrent task forces studying the effectiveness of Maine's service delivery system. Both groups will be reporting by June 1991, with suggested models for change. Both task forces have developed mission statements and goals to serve as guides for Maine's children to develop to their fullest potential in a safe and caring environment.

This brief survey of Maine's child welfare system highlights the need for the Ombudsman's Office to continue its work with the Legislature, the Governor, state agencies, and social service organizations to design a child welfare service delivery system for Maine that will:

- * consistently and appropriately protect children from abuse and neglect;
- * provide supportive services to children and their families;
- * promote family unity; and
- * prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect by providing preventative services and effectively intervening with perpetrators.

Together, we can creatively and constructively continue to improve protection of children and preservation of families in Maine.

This report lists each of the Ombudsman's statutory mandates, followed by the Office's goals, 1990-1991 activities in pursuit of those goals, and recommendations for future initiatives and change. Finally, budget information and recommendations are appended.

Enabling Legislation

Title 22

§4087. Child welfare services ombudsman

1. **Office established.** The Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman is established within the Executive Department and is autonomous from any other State agency. Its purpose is to represent the best interests of individuals involved in the State's child welfare system as a class and to investigate and resolve complaints against State agencies that may be infringing on the rights of individuals involved in the State's child welfare system.

2. **Appointment of child welfare services ombudsman.** The child welfare services ombudsman shall be appointed by the Governor, subject to review by the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over human resource matters and to confirmation by the Legislature and shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. Any vacancy shall be filled by similar appointment.

3. **Powers and duties.** The ombudsman may:

- A. Provide ombudsman services to individual citizens in matters relating to those child welfare services provided by and under the jurisdiction of the State;
- B. Advise, consult and assist the executive and legislative branches of State Government, especially the Governor, on activities of State Government related to child welfare. The ombudsman shall be solely advisory in nature, shall not be delegated any administrative authority or responsibility nor supplant existing avenues for recourse or appeals. The ombudsman may make recommendations regarding any function intended to improve the quality of child welfare services in State Government. If findings, comments or recommendations of the ombudsman vary from, or are in addition to, those of the bureau, department or other State agency, the statements of the ombudsman shall be sent to the respective branches of State Government as attachments to those submitted by the bureau, department or other State agency. Recommendations may take the form of proposed budgetary, legislative or policy actions;

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- C. Review and evaluate, on a continuing basis, State and federal policies and programs relating to the provision of child welfare services conducted or assisted by any State Departments or agencies for the purpose of determining the value and impact on individuals involved in the State's welfare system;
 - D. Receive and address inquiries, complaints, problems or requests for information and assistance regarding the State's child welfare services;
 - E. Conduct research, gather facts and evaluate procedures and policies regarding the State's child welfare services;
 - F. Consult with and advise State agencies on operational and management issues or specific or special situations regarding child welfare services and recommend remedial actions when necessary through direct oral communication, memoranda, reports or meetings;
 - G. Serve as a coordinator of communication and cooperation for all components of the State's child welfare services system, especially among State agencies, whenever desirable or necessary;
 - H. Make referrals for service to relevant State agencies when appropriate;
 - I. Set priorities to effectively carry out the purposes of this subchapter; and
 - J. Inform the public to encourage a better public understanding of the current status of the State's child welfare system by collecting and disseminating information, conducting or commissioning studies and publishing the results, and by issuing publications and reports.

4. Confidentiality of records. No information or records maintained by the office relating to a complaint or investigation may be disclosed unless the ombudsman authorizes the disclosure and the disclosure is otherwise permitted pursuant to section 4008. The ombudsman shall not disclose the identity of any complainant unless:

- A. The complainant or a legal representative consents in writing to the disclosure; or
- B. A court orders the disclosure.

A complainant or a legal representative, in providing the consent, may specify to whom the identity may be disclosed and for what purposes, in which event no other disclosure is authorized.

5. Administration. The ombudsman shall administer, in accordance with current fiscal and accounting rules of the State and in accordance with the philosophy, objectives and authority of this subchapter, any funds appropriated for expenditure by the ombudsman or any grants or gifts which may become available, accepted and received by the ombudsman; make an annual report which shall be submitted directly to the commissioner, the Governor and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over human resource matters, not later than March 1st of each year, concerning its work, recommendations and interests of the previous fiscal year and future plans, and make such interim reports as the ombudsman deems advisable. Copies of these reports shall be available to all legislators and other State agencies upon request.

6. Expenses of ombudsman. The ombudsman, within established budgetary limits and as allowed by law, shall authorize and approve travel, subsistence and related necessary expenses of the ombudsman or members of the office, incurred while traveling on official business.

7. Information from State agencies. State agencies shall provide to the ombudsman copies of all reports and other information required for the fulfillment of this chapter pursuant to section 4008, subsection 3, paragraph D.

8. Legal services. The Department of the Attorney General shall provide legal services as necessary to carry out the purposes of this subchapter.

9. Location. Office space shall be made available for the ombudsman within the Capitol Complex.

10. Review. This office shall be reviewed by July 1, 1989, by the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over human resource matters and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over audit and program review matters.



Activities

OFFICE OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OMBUDSMAN MARCH 1990 through FEBRUARY 1991

By statute, the Ombudsman may:

A. Provide ombudsman services to individual citizens in matters relating to those child welfare services provided by and under the jurisdiction of the State.

Goal:

To objectively assist citizens in resolving complaints about the child welfare services system.

Activities:

Between March 1, 1990 and February 28, 1991, the Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman received 158 complaints. Nine of these complaints were screened out as not being relevant to the Ombudsman's duties and 149 complaints were processed for investigation. (See Attachment A.) The nine miscellaneous nonspecific complaints were referred to other sources or resolved immediately without further review. Referrals of complaints are from individuals, Department of Human Services and other State and Local agencies, Congressional offices, the Governor's office, the Citizen's Assistance Hotline, the Child Abuse Hotline, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, and Maine Advocacy Services.

When a complaint is received, a questionnaire is sent to the complaining individual (see Attachment B). If the complainant is a third party, the third party is requested to ask the complainant to contact the Ombudsman directly. If the complaint requires immediate action, such action is taken and the questionnaire is returned at a later date. The Ombudsman reviews the case by contacting all the parties who may have information concerning the nature of the complaint.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

ATTACHMENT A

1990-91 CASE UPDATE FILE SUMMARY REPORT DHS REGIONS I, II, III, IV, V

Types of Cases	Mar.-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Jan.-Feb. '91	Total
Sexual Abuse	17	3	13	4	37
Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	1
Physical Abuse	8	3	5	1	17
Neglect	6	2	3	3	14
Emotional Abuse	1	0	1	0	2
Custodial Disputes	5	4	7	0	16
Foster Homes	8	1	1	1	11
Foster Care Death	0	1	0	0	1
Support Enforcement	2	2	6	0	10
Runaway/Juvenile	6	0	1	0	7
Residential Placement	7	0	1	0	8
Residential Treatment	1	4	4	1	10
AFDC	2	1	1	0	4
School Related Problem	2	1	1	0	4
Personnel Problems	1	1	1	1	4
Medicaid	1	0	0	0	1
Mental Health	0	0	0	1	1
Systems Problem	0	0	0	1	1
	<u>68</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>149</u>

* Screen Outs 9

* Cases that were not opened for investigation.

1990-91 CASE UPDATE FILE SUMMARY REPORT DHS REGION I

Types of Cases	Mar.-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Jan.-Feb. '91	Total
Sexual Abuse	3	0	3	2	8
Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse	2	1	1	0	4
Neglect	1	0	0	0	1
Emotional Abuse	0	0	1	0	1
Custodial Disputes	1	1	2	0	4
Foster Homes	0	0	0	0	0
Foster Care Death	0	0	0	0	0
Support Enforcement	0	1	1	0	2
Runaway/Juvenile	1	0	1	0	2
Residential Placement	1	0	0	0	1
Residential Treatment	0	0	2	0	2
AFDC	0	1	0	0	1
School Related Problem	0	1	0	0	1
Personnel Problems	0	1	0	0	1
Medicaid	1	0	0	0	1
Mental Health	0	0	0	1	1
Systems Problem	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>10</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>30</u>

1990-91 CASE UPDATE FILE SUMMARY REPORT DHS REGION II

Types of Cases	Mar.-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Jan.-Feb. '91	Total
Sexual Abuse	3	0	0	1	4
Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	1
Physical Abuse	2	0	0	0	2
Neglect	0	0	0	1	1
Emotional Abuse	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial Disputes	0	2	0	0	2
Foster Homes	6	0	0	0	6
Foster Care Death	0	0	0	0	0
Support Enforcement	0	0	1	0	1
Runaway/Juvenile	0	0	0	0	0
Residential Placement	1	0	0	0	1
Residential Treatment	0	0	0	0	0
AFDC	1	0	0	0	1
School Related Problem	0	0	0	0	0
Personnel Problems	0	0	1	0	1
Medicaid	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Systems Problem	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>20</u>

1990-91 CASE UPDATE FILE SUMMARY REPORT DHS REGION III

Types of Cases	Mar.-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Jan.-Feb. '91	Total
Sexual Abuse	5	2	2	0	9
Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse	3	1	1	1	6
Neglect	2	2	3	1	8
Emotional Abuse	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial Disputes	3	0	1	0	4
Foster Homes	2	0	0	0	2
Foster Care Death	0	0	0	0	0
Support Enforcement	0	0	2	0	2
Runaway/Juvenile	3	0	0	0	3
Residential Placement	2	0	1	0	3
Residential Treatment	1	2	0	1	4
AFDC	1	0	1	0	2
School Related Problem	1	0	0	0	1
Personnel Problems	1	0	0	1	2
Medicaid	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Systems Problem	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>24</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>46</u>

1990-91 CASE UPDATE FILE SUMMARY REPORT DHS REGION IV

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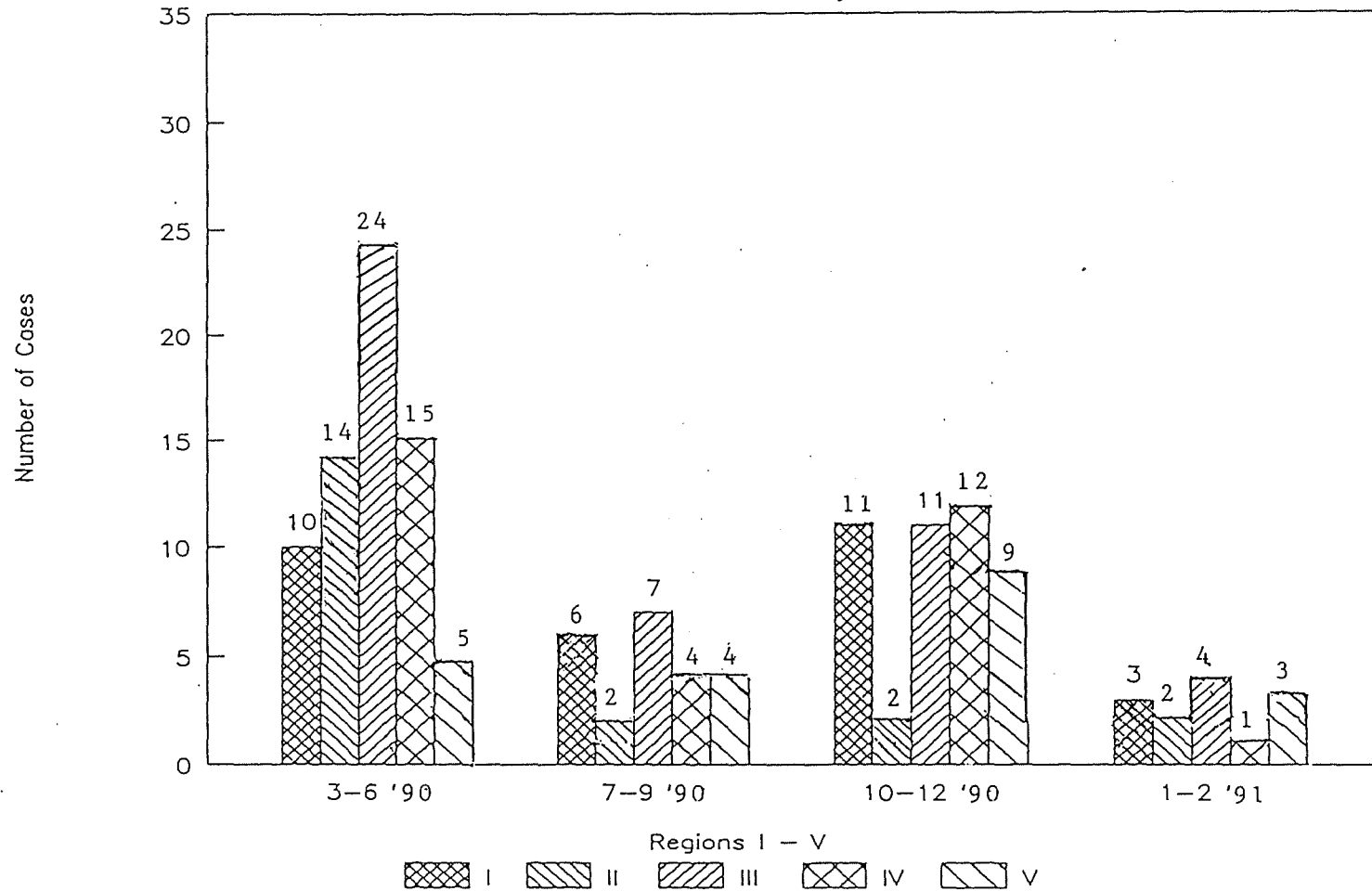
Types of Cases	Mar.-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Jan.-Feb. '91	Total
Sexual Abuse	4	1	4	0	9
Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse	1	0	2	0	3
Neglect	3	0	0	0	3
Emotional Abuse	1	0	0	0	1
Custodial Disputes	1	1	3	0	5
Foster Homes	0	1	1	0	2
Foster Care Death	0	1	0	0	1
Support Enforcement	1	0	1	0	2
Runaway/Juvenile	2	0	0	0	2
Residential Placement	2	0	0	0	2
Residential Treatment	0	0	1	0	1
AFDC	0	0	0	0	0
School Related Problem	0	0	0	0	0
Personnel Problems	0	0	0	0	0
Medicaid	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Systems Problem	0	0	0	1	1
	<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>32</u>

1990-91 CASE UPDATE FILE SUMMARY REPORT DHS REGION V

Types of Cases	Mar.-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Jan.-Feb. '91	Total
Sexual Abuse	2	0	4	1	7
Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0
Physical Abuse	0	1	1	0	2
Neglect	0	0	0	1	1
Emotional Abuse	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial Disputes	0	0	1	0	1
Foster Homes	0	0	0	1	1
Foster Care Death	0	0	0	0	0
Support Enforcement	1	1	1	0	3
Runaway/Juvenile	0	0	0	0	0
Residential Placement	1	0	0	0	1
Residential Treatment	0	2	1	0	3
AFDC	0	0	0	0	0
School Related Problem	1	0	1	0	2
Personnel Problems	0	0	0	0	0
Medicaid	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Health	0	0	0	0	0
Systems Problem	0	0	0	0	0
	5	4	9	3	21

1990 - 1991 Case Summary Report by Region

March 1990 - February 1991





John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor

Jane Sheehan
Child Welfare Services Ombudsman

Executive Department
Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman
Telephone (207) 289-6540

COMPLAINT FORM

Your Name: _____ Name/birthdates of children involved _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Referred by: _____

List all parties involved and relationship to child

Name of DHS office or State agency involved and city or town where located:

Social worker, if any: _____

Supervisor, if any: _____

Please explain your complaint against the Child Welfare Services System by answering the following questions:

1. What is your complaint?
(Please describe as briefly as possible. Use other side or attach additional sheets, if necessary.)

2. How long has this problem existed? _____

a. Date you became involved with the State agency regarding this complaint:

3. What name(s) have you used when filing with the State?

4. If you are not the child's parent/guardian, does this person know you are filing this complaint?

5. Please state name(s) of individuals we may contact concerning this complaint.
(Attorneys, teachers, doctors, other relatives, friends)

Date: _____ Signature: _____

The Ombudsman represents complainants' interests up and until she discovers that the State acted appropriately and prudently within the statutes, rules and practice currently in place. She then represents the State's interest back to the complainant if the State acted appropriately. In many cases, however, the Ombudsman may continue to assist complainants by helping them to better understand how the system works as the system pertains to their complaint. If the Ombudsman finds that the State acted inappropriately, she contacts the individuals involved and seeks a resolve of the situation.

The Ombudsman's case files are confidential under 22 MRSA §4008 and the contents may not be revealed unless the complainant consents in writing to the disclosure or a court orders such disclosure.

The cases average 8-10 telephone calls and 4-6 pieces of correspondence and in some cases may require much more communication. Many cases have remained active since intake, including some that date back to March, 1989. In most cases, the Ombudsman experiences complete cooperation from the Department of Human Services, other State and Local agencies, district attorneys offices, attorneys general, private attorneys, physicians, psychologists and other professionals. A few individuals make appointments to talk directly to the Ombudsman and these requests are honored. Some individuals who do not have complaints, but wish to share some information with the Ombudsman, also contact the office.

Recommendations:

- * Augment the resources of the Ombudsman's office with an ombudsman assistant staff person to review complaints, case files, prepare legislative testimony, review legislative documents, conduct research, and to assist the Ombudsman.

B. Advise, consult and assist the executive and legislative branches of State Government especially the Governor, on activities of State Government related to child welfare.

Goal:

To maintain communication and working relationships with the Executive and Legislative branches of Maine State Government.

Activities:

Governor's office. The Ombudsman consults with the Governor's office through an individual legal counsel for the Governor. The Ombudsman also advises the Governor personally, when necessary. The methods of communication include written memos, discussion meetings, and frequent telephone communication. The Governor's legal counsel is responsive to the comments of the Ombudsman and contacts necessary agencies or individuals when direct contact is helpful to resolving a complaint. In the Spring of 1990, the Ombudsman met personally with the Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners of Human Services, Education, Corrections, and Mental Health/Mental Retardation. She serves as a member of the Child Sex Abuse Committee of the Interdepartmental Council and participated in this committee's 1990 fall workshop in Bethel.

Legislature. The Ombudsman works very closely with the Legislature, including several Joint Standing Committees.

The Ombudsman also processes legislator's complaint referrals and individual legislative requests for information. The Office of Child Welfare Ombudsman sponsored, in conjunction with regional Department of Human Services's offices, an informational workshop for legislators in Augusta, March 14, 1990.

The Ombudsman tracks all legislation related to child welfare services issues and attends legislative work sessions and public hearings when appropriate. The Ombudsman also disseminates legislative information upon request and works directly with sponsors of child welfare legislation.

C. Review and evaluate, on a continuing basis, State and federal policies and programs relating to the provision of child welfare services conducted or assisted by any State departments or agencies for the purpose of determining the value and impact on individuals involved in the State's welfare system.

Goal:

To maintain regular contact with the agencies and individuals who are involved with Maine's child welfare services policy and to collect and review existing and new State and federal policies.

Activities:

In the past year, the Ombudsman met with appropriate Department of Human Services child and family services and legal personnel, the Child Policy Committee of the Interdepartmental Council, and representatives from the Washington and Region I offices of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to discuss issues concerning policies, statutes, programs, and funding. She maintains a library of current legislative changes in State and federal child welfare law and policy. On October 20, 1990, the Ombudsman's office sponsored a workshop for citizens, attorneys, judges, state personnel, and legislators to review the Maine criminal statutes as they pertain to child abuse.

Recommendations:

- * Continue the review of criminal statutes as they pertain to child abuse.
- * Establish an independent statutory death review committee to review all child deaths that result from abuse or neglect.
- * Support the "Confidentiality Task Force" in their efforts to review and make recommendations for any necessary changes in State and federal confidentiality statutes that pertain to children. (Appendix 5)

D. Receive and address inquiries, complaints, or requests for information and assistance regarding the State's child welfare services.

Goal:

To maintain a system to receive and respond to inquiries, complaints, problems, and requests concerning child welfare services and to provide assistance when requested or needed.

Activities:

Complaints and problems received by the Ombudsman are investigated and responded to as described in section A above.

Inquiries, requests for information, and assistance are provided according to the nature of each individual request. Requests for information from legislators is described under section B of this report. Inquiries, requests for information, and assistance to others has been provided by the Ombudsman to the following groups:

- * Augusta Area Rape Crisis Center - board member.
- * Channel 7 - T.V. interview.
- * Child Abuse and Neglect Councils of Maine/Eastern Maine Medical Center and Bath Brunswick - speaker.
- * Child Welfare Advisory Group - statutory member.
- * Court Appointed Special Advocates - board member.
- * Daily Kennebec Journal - statutory information.
- * Department of Education - Home Economics Advisory Board Member
- * Family Violence Project - speaker.
- * Gorham Foster Parents Group - speaker.
- * Home Economics Program UMF - speaker.
- * IDC Child Policy Committee - speaker.
- * Maine Children's Trust Fund - newsletter article.
- * Maine Foster Parents Association - advisory support.
- * Maine Group Home Association - speaker.
- * Maine Medical Association - advisory support.
- * Maine Sunday Telegram - statutory interpretations.
- * Professional and Advisory Committee Maine's Commission for Women - board member.
- * Springfield College - supervised 3 students from the School of Human Services.
- * Victim Witness Advocates - speaker.
- * V.O.C.A.L. - Speaker, several oral and written information responses.

E. Conduct research, gather facts, and evaluate procedures and policies regarding the State's child welfare services.

Goal:

To maintain a method of collecting information concerning child welfare policies and procedure that will provide the Ombudsman with the resources to conduct research and evaluation.

Activities:

The Ombudsman is a member of many related professional associations which provide information on child abuse and neglect and subscribes to several related professional journals. She communicates on a regular basis with selected professionals throughout the State and periodically visits child treatment facilities. She regularly uses the services of the State Law and Legislative Library and collects current State studies and literature related to child abuse and neglect.

The Ombudsman provides research to individual legislators, Department of Human Services's agency personnel, and constituent groups.

F. Consult with and advise State agencies on operational and management issues or specific or special situations regarding child welfare services and recommend remedial actions, when necessary, through direct oral communication, memoranda, reports, or meetings.

Goal:

To be as knowledgeable as possible about the agencies providing child welfare services in Maine and to continue to maintain an ongoing working relationship with all child welfare services personnel in the State.

Activities:

The Ombudsman continues to mediate differences between departments sharing services provided to children and families. She meets regularly with department personnel and facilitates meetings when necessary to discuss remedial actions to resolve individual or departmental problems.

G. Serve as a coordinator of communication and cooperation for all components of the State's child welfare services system, especially among State agencies, whenever desirable or necessary.

Goal:

To continue the encouragement of coordination, understanding, and cooperation among the agencies involved in child welfare services.

Activities:

The Ombudsman often addresses situations involving more than one child welfare services agency. For these cases, the Ombudsman informs each agency of the other agency's involvement. In this way, she assists the agencies in providing the most comprehensive delivery of services possible.

Recommendations:

- * Continue to examine the implications and possibilities of developing alternative sentencing for perpetrators of child sexual abuse in order to promote family reunification and enhance treatment alternatives. (Also recommended in 1989-1990 report, see page 5.)
- * Continue the effort to establish treatment facilities for young sex offenders in order to meet the increasing need. (Also recommended in 1989-1990 report, see pages 5,6.)
- * Encourage better communication among the departments serving severely disturbed children and youth regarding access and funding for residential treatment.
- * Encourage the development of more therapeutic foster care placements.

H. Make referrals for service to relevant State agencies when appropriate.

Goal:

To be as knowledgeable as possible about agencies related to child welfare services so that referrals can be expedient and efficient.

Activities:

The Ombudsman works with the Division of Child and Family Services, the Support Enforcement Unit, the Adoption Unit, Juvenile Corrections, the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, the Interstate Compact, AFDC, Data Processing, and several related regional offices. The Ombudsman also works with several local agencies and private providers of services to Maine's citizens.

Recommendations:

- * Augment the Ombudsman's office with a federally funded staff position to address child support enforcement complaints.

I. Set priorities to effectively carry out the purposes of this subchapter.

Goal:

To meet the needs of Maine's individual citizens and providers as they pertain to child welfare services by responding knowledgeably and efficiently to the current child welfare services' problems and complaints and by addressing the short-term and long-term needs for effective management of child welfare services issues.

Activities:

The priorities for the completed period March 1990 - February 1991 were:

- * Provision of ongoing ombudsman services in a timely and efficient manner to citizen complainants.
- * Continued assessment of the sub-care system in Maine and such related problems as access to the system, the types of facilities currently available, and the resources necessary to create new facilities.
- * Examination of sentencing patterns and treatment programs for perpetrators of child sexual abuse.
- * Establishment of an annual statewide conference on child abuse and neglect. (Appendix 6)
- * Review of the task forces studying Maine's service delivery system for children, youth, and families.
- * Review of the special education regulations that apply to the placement process for children and to the appointment of surrogate parents.

Recommendations and suggested priorities for 1990-91:

- * Pursue a study of Maine's community based programs for children including early intervention and mental health programs.

-
- * Continue to monitor the rate of increase in the office's caseload and increase staff levels as State and federal funds become available to ensure a speedy and appropriate response in every case.
 - * Augment the resources of the Ombudsman's office in order to address complaints regarding child support enforcement. (Appendix 7)
 - * Continue to pursue a cost effective coordinated data system to track the delivery of services to children and their families and to assist in long-range planning for the child welfare services delivery system.
 - * Encourage better communication among the departments serving severely disturbed children and youth regarding access and funding for residential treatment.
 - * Establish an independent statutory death review committee to review all child deaths that result from abuse or neglect.

J. Inform the public to encourage a better public understanding of the current status of the State's child welfare system by collecting and disseminating information, conducting or commissioning studies and publishing the results, and by issuing publications and reports.

Goal:

To create better public awareness of the pervasive problem of child abuse and neglect in Maine.

Activities:

The Ombudsman conducted a legislative workshop on March 14, 1990, in Augusta, for all state legislators to meet with representatives from the five regional offices of the Department of Human Services. (Appendix 8) The Ombudsman also sponsored "Nurturing Maine's Children in Need," a Forum and Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect on October 15, 1990, and November 10, 1990, at University of Maine, Augusta. (Appendix 6) The Forum, a group of leaders of child abuse and neglect programs in the State, met to discuss the issues to be presented at the conference. The conference was done in participation with the UNICEF Town Meetings for Children. The town meetings were part of the World Summit for Children held at the United Nations on September 29-30, 1990. Tapes of the conference are available to the public on loan from the Ombudsman's office.

The Ombudsman's office sponsored three interns from the Human Services Administration program at Springfield College during the Summer of 1990. The interns did a survey and study of selected Maine residential treatment facilities for children. They presented the results of their survey to the Joint Standing Committee on Audit and Program Review on November 28, 1990.

A brochure describing the functions of the Ombudsman's office is available at the Department of Human Services' offices and other child welfare services agencies. (Appendix 9)

Recommendations:

- * Sponsor the Second Annual Child Abuse and Neglect Conference in the Fall of 1991.



Administration

STATE OF MAINE
EXPENDITURE TO BUDGET REPORT
FOR THE MONTH OF February 1991

FUND	010	GENERAL FUND
AGENCY	07A	(OFFICE OF) GOVERNOR
APPROP/ALLOTMENT	0606	CHILD WELFARE OMBUDSMAN
APPROPRIATION UNIT	04	CHILD WELFARE OMBUDSMAN

		BUDGETED	EXPENDED	BALANCE	PERCENT EXPENDED
PERMANENT	3100	51,916.00	37,469.84	14,446.16	72.17%
INTERMITTENT REGULAR	3510	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
OVERTIME	3612	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
RETRO LUMP SUM	3616	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
REC/RET S	3621	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
LOGEVITY	3631	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
UNEMPLOYMENT	3810	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
HEALTH INSURANCE	3901	3,077.00	3,802.72	(725.72)	123.59%
DENTAL INSURANCE	3905	0.00	215.36	(215.36)	NA
EMPLOYEE HEALTH SERVICE	3906	0.00	84.00	(84.00)	NA
EMPLOYER RETIREMENT COSTS	3910	11,940.00	7,508.90	4,431.10	62.89%
EMPLOYER GROUP LIFE	3911	400.00	128.70	271.30	32.18%
EMPLOYER MEDICARE COST	3912	800.00	543.31	256.69	67.91%
CHILD CARE BENEFITS	3973	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
EARLY RETIREMENT PAYMENTS	3982	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
*****TOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES		\$68,133.00	\$49,752.83	\$18,380.17	73.02%
PROF SERVICE, NOT BY STATE	4000	0.00	100.00	(100.00)	NA
PROF SERVICE, BY STATE	4100	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
TRAVEL EXPENSE, IN STATE	4200	1,300.00	377.84	922.16	29.06%
TRAVEL EXPENSE, OUT OF STATE	4300	2,000.00	(107.05)	2,107.05	-5.35%
UTILITY SERVICES	4500	1,000.00	558.90	441.10	55.89%
RENTS	4600	0.00	140.00	(140.00)	NA
REPAIRS	4700	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
INSURANCE	4800	0.00	0.00	0.00	NA
GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSE	4900	1,146.00	1,971.46	(825.46)	172.03%
SUPPLIES, OFFICE	5300	1,300.00	106.88	1,193.12	8.22%
SUPPLIES, DEPT. OPERATIONS	5600	0.00	186.58	(186.58)	NA
PENSIONS	6900	0.00	154.00	(154.00)	NA
*****TOTAL ALL OTHER		\$6,746.00	\$3,488.61	\$3,257.39	51.71%
EQUIPMENT PURCH, LEASE-PURC	7200	250.00	234.71	15.29	93.88%
*****TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$75,129.00	\$53,476.15	\$21,652.85	71.18%

Appendices

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS MASTER PLAN, MAY 1990

SEX-OFFENDER SERVICES

Over the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of offenders committed to the Department of Corrections for sex offenses. According to the "Task Force Report to the Commissioner for the Management and Treatment of the Adult Sex Offender Under Custody to the Department of Corrections," dated May 11, 1988, in 1980, eight percent of the commitments to the Department were for sex offenses, while in 1987, the percentage jumped to 21%. As of March, 1990, 31% of prisoners were committed for sex offenses. These figures do not include prisoners who had previously been incarcerated for sex offenses but are now serving sentences for another charge nor did it include offenses which may have been sexually motivated but for which the charge was not for a sex offense.

A description of the existing services being provided at the adult institutions and by the Division of Probation and Parole follows.

Probation and Parole

The Division of Probation and Parole is supervising over 9,000 individuals, both juveniles and adults. The Division's staff conservatively estimate that about 15% of their clients have been convicted of a sex offense. The majority of sex offenders incarcerated in the state system also receive long sentences of probation on their release from incarceration or beginning simultaneously with their incarceration. For many of these offenders, a condition of probation is sex-offender counseling. The increasing number of convicted sex offenders, coupled with lengthy terms of probation requiring sex-offender counseling, will result in an increased need for community-based, sex-offender counseling services.

At the present time, each of the six Probation and Parole Districts has a minimal number of contractual services, which provide for the treatment of sex offenders. It has been very difficult to persuade the Community Mental Health Centers to provide these services, and, thus, the Department has found it necessary to designate funds to increase the capability of the Division of Probation and Parole to purchase the necessary services for sex offenders.

Maine State Prison/Bolduc Minimum Security Unit

The Maine State Prison began offering special treatment services for sex offenders in 1981. The program began with one psychologist and a Correctional Caseworker, each dedicating approximately 20 hours a week to the program. The treatment program currently consists of two components:

1. The first component requires the offender to complete an educational class, which meets once a week, for about an hour and a half, for four months.
2. The second component consists of group therapy, involving eight to 12 offenders, with cofacilitators, in each group. Each group meets weekly for two to three hours. At the present time, there are an educational program and one group at MSP and one group at the Bolduc Unit. Referrals to appropriate treatment programs in the community are made, when available, for those prisoners being discharged directly from the Prison to the community.

Maine Correctional Center

The Maine Correctional Center had a similar sex-offender treatment program, consisting of an orientation/educational component and a group therapy component. The two-hour orientation classes were held once a week for eight weeks. The therapy groups, with cofacilitators, met approximately for one and one-half hours each week. It was necessary to suspend the sex-offender treatment program at MCC in November 1989, because the 20 hours a week that the psychologist was devoting to this program had to be used for general and emergency psychological services, due to a temporary lack of psychological services at the facility. MCC has recently hired a new, full-time psychologist, and the existing psychologist will again provide at least 20 hours a week to the sex-offender program. MCC has also hired a cofacilitator to work with the psychologist, and the program is expected to begin again by the end of March.

Downeast Correctional Facility

The Downeast Correctional Facility provides a sex-offender treatment program through a contractual psychologist and contractual social worker. This program is structured in a manner similar to the Maine State Prison's, in that there is an ongoing educational group, with open enrollment. At

this time, Downeast has one therapy group. It will soon be necessary to expand the program by starting a second therapy group, since there is currently a waiting list. Presently, the majority of the prisoners (60%) at the Downeast Correctional Facility are sex offenders.

Charleston Correctional Facility

The Charleston Correctional Facility currently provides no specific treatment program for sex offenders. There is a psychologist under contract to CCF for four hours per week. He deals primarily with crisis intervention but, occasionally, will provide services to a few sex offenders. As recommended in the section on Mental Health Services, Bangor Pre-Release Center and Charleston Correctional Facility should share the services of a full-time Psychologist III, who would provide individual sex-offender counseling and possibly group therapy.

Bangor Pre-Release Center

In the past, some prisoners at the Bangor Pre-Release Center have been able to participate in the sex-offender treatment program offered by the Bangor Community Mental Health Agency. However, for the past year, no prisoners have been able to participate in that program, due to the long waiting list. As recommended in the section on Mental Health, the Charleston Correctional Facility and Bangor Pre-Release Center should share the services of a full-time Psychologist III to provide sex-offender counseling.

Central Maine Pre-Release Center

The Central Maine Pre-Release Center is able to offer, on a very limited basis through contractual arrangements, one or two sex offenders the opportunity to participate in a group therapy program offered by a private provider in the Augusta area. CMPRC has not been able to use any of the Regional Mental Health Services or any services from the Augusta Mental Health Institute because of the long waiting lists. Due to limited contractual dollars, it is currently not possible to meet the needs of sex offenders housed at CMPRC

Southern Maine Pre-Release Center

At this time, the Southern Maine Pre-Release Center offers no treatment program for sex offenders. Special exceptions to participate in the MCC program were occasionally made if a prisoner had been involved in the program while at the

Maine Correctional Center. Once the program at MCC is reestablished, it may be possible for a few sex offenders at SMPRC to participate in that program.

All facilities with sex-offender treatment programs have waiting lists. In addition, none of the sex-offender treatment staff has time to try to convince prisoners who are in denial to admit that they have a problem and should enter the treatment program.

The Department's recommended treatment program for sex offenders, which consists of four components, is described below.

1. Support groups would be available for sex offenders wherever they are located within the correctional system. This component would consist of a general education program and ongoing group therapy/individual treatment.
2. An Intensive Treatment Component, located within a correctional facility or in a separate facility, which would have a residential program where all staff, from security officers to caseworkers, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc., would have specialized training in the treatment of sex offenders, would be established. At this time, the Department would like to develop such a residential treatment program at both the Downeast Correctional Facility and at the Maine Correctional Center. An intensive treatment program would include the use of behavioral and psychological measurement techniques. The program would involve sex education individually prescribed to meet a prisoner's needs, victim empathy training, individual behavior therapy for relapse prevention, psychotherapy, family therapy, and behavioral therapy to address deviant sexual-arousal disorders. The length of stay in an intensive treatment program would depend on the needs and progress of each prisoner. The average stay would probably be between nine and 18 months, with some prisoners staying for as long as two and one-half to three years.
3. The Transitional Component would provide sex offenders, who are being released under supervision, with access to halfway houses, which would be established for the continuing treatment of sex offenders. These facilities would be operated by the Department. The programs within these facilities would be a continuation of the intensive residential treatment program. Prisoners would work in the

community and, whenever possible, would participate in community sex-offender treatment programs.

4. The Community-Based Treatment Component would be for sex offenders who are placed directly on probation at the time of sentencing, those who have completed a short period of incarceration, or those who are reentering the community after completing the intensive treatment program. In order to be successful, the community-based treatment program will require trained Probation and Parole Officers and sufficient sex-offender treatment programs throughout the state.

Probation and Parole Officers should be specially trained to supervise sex offenders in the community. Caseloads should be limited in order to provide the intensive supervision necessary. Immediate and long-term community services for sex offenders must be available on a statewide basis. These services must meet basic standards and quality assurance provisions.

According to the Task Force Report, the success of treatment programs depends on the continuum of care that is provided.

The Task Force concluded that a continuum of care is the most efficient and most important condition to create the highest likelihood for success and is the best protection against perpetrator recidivism. The way to expect treatment to have an impact on recidivism is to require the perpetrator to complete an entire course of comprehensive treatment. The perpetrator's participation in any one segment of a treatment plan does not indicate that the risk to the community has been lowered. It is only through participation in a complete treatment process, with a well-established continuum of care, that there is a meaningful rehabilitative process.

The Task Force recognized that the treatment of the sex offender is an ongoing and dynamic process. The various state-of-the-art programs all recognize that treatment, needs, and services continually change. The primary focus of sex offender treatment within the Department of Corrections is to protect the community and decrease the potential for recidivism and subsequent

victims. One important way to impact sexual abuse is to treat the sex offender.

Additional resources are necessary for all facilities in order to provide sex-offender treatment for prisoners who have mandated sex-offender treatment as a condition of probation or who are serving a split sentence, with probation beginning simultaneously with incarceration.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

86. The Department should attempt to persuade the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation to provide additional services to sex offenders through its Community Mental Health Centers by July 1, 1991.
87. The Department should establish new and expand existing community-based services for sex offenders, as soon as resources permit.
88. The Department should increase sex-offender treatment services in all facilities, to include an intensive treatment component at DCF by 1993 and one at MCC by 1995; through contractual community-service treatment funds for the Division of Probation and Parole; and in Central Office, as soon as resources permit.

ADDENDUM - REPORT OF THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS MARCH 1990
PART III. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Increasing the availability of programs for offenders in prisons and in community settings has short- and long-term implications for the correctional system. Programs can effect the system in at least two ways: they can decrease the recidivism rate, resulting in lower future prison populations, and they can increase the operational efficiency of the correctional system, resulting in better allocation of resources. In addition to these practical concerns, certain basic entitlements, such as access to law materials and medical treatment, must be provided regardless of the effect they have on the system.

Programs which can decrease recidivism include substance abuse and sex-offender treatment programs, employment and employment training programs, and transitional services, such as "halfway" houses.

Programs which can increase the efficiency of the system include medical and geriatrics services and mental health services. In particular, the Department's reliance on community hospitals and nursing homes for inmates needing those services has resulted in large expenditures necessary to purchase the services and to pay overtime to correctional officers who must transport and guard the inmates who are receiving the services.

The Committee has offered several recommendations regarding programs in past reports. The following express the Committee's ongoing concern in this area:

Rec. III-A. The Department of Corrections should implement its Master Plan recommendations regarding sex-offender treatment as soon as possible. The need for such services has increased dramatically over the past several years, with the Department estimating that about 30% (over 500) of current inmates are sex offenders. The Committee is particularly concerned that, because of difficulties the Department has had securing the services of a professional therapist, the Maine Correctional Center is currently without any sex-offender treatment services. Additionally, the Committee endorses the Department's plan to institute intensive treatment programs at the Maine Correctional Center and at the Downeast Correctional Center. Furthermore, offenders leaving the institutions must be referred to community treatment services to ensure continuity.

Rec. III-B. The Department of Corrections should begin immediate implementation of its Master Plan recommendations regarding substance abuse treatment programs. Specifically needed are increased substance abuse services for the general inmate population and mechanisms by which treatment can be continued in community settings. Although national experts have not reached consensus on whether segregated "in-patient" treatment units should be established, the Department should continue to give serious consideration to that option. The

Summary of Findings

The study was commissioned to assess the number and characteristics of Maine's young sex offenders and the treatment resources available. The Research Task Force of the Committee on Child Sex Abuse surveyed young sex offenders on Department of Human Service, Probation and Parole, and Maine Youth Center caseloads between July 1988 and June 1989. The results indicate that young sex offenders do present a significant problem in Maine.

- ◆ Over 350 young sex offenders were identified, yet respondents reported that this is an underestimate of the actual number.
- ◆ Almost 90 percent of the offenders were male.
- ◆ The most frequent age of male offending was 14 years old.
- ◆ The most frequent age of victimization was five years old for girls and eight years for boys.
- ◆ Over half of the abusive acts involved oral-genital contact and/or attempted or actual penetration.
- ◆ Ninety-nine percent of the offenders were known to their victims; the majority of them were family members.
- ◆ The majority of the offenders were not involved in specialized sex offender treatment programs.
- ◆ A continuum of care for Maine's young sex offenders does not exist.

Young sex offending must be recognized as a serious problem. The importance of early intervention must not be minimized.

Table 2
Treatment Programs

	Type of Program	Age Range	Female Offenders	Mentally Retarded/ Developmentally Disabled	Exclusion Criteria for Group Therapy	Program Capacity	Number Presently In Program	Number on Waiting List	Assessment Procedures	Formal Program Evaluation
Saco	C	12-17	—	+	D, O	15 (2 groups)	12 (2 Groups)	0	I, T	—
So. Portland (MYC)	SR	12-21	—	+	A	25	25 (Cottage Capacity)	5		—
Portland	C	12-17	+	—	A, D, O	6	5	0	I, T	—
Lewiston	C	12-17	—	—	D, O	10	5	3	I	—
Augusta	C	12-17	—	+	D, O	8	5	0	I, T	—
Waterville	C	12-17	+ (group)	+	D (after 1 month)	23	23	3	I, T	—
Rockland	C	12 and Under	+	—	D, O	5	4	5	I	—
Glen Cove	C	15-17	+	+	D, O	8	5	0	I	—
Bangor	C	12-17	+	+	D	10	6	0	I	—
Ellsworth	C	12-17	—	—	A, D (after 3 months)	6	1	0	I	—

1 Type of program: C = Community based, SR = Secure residential
2 + = Available; — = Absent
3 Exclusion criteria: A = Must be adjudicated, D = Total denial, O = Other
4 Bold = Data for group therapy. If not bold, may include other aspects of treatment program.
5 I = Clinical interview with at least the child and possibly family
T = Psychological and/or sex offender specific testing

Discussion

As noted earlier, this study indicates that Maine does have a substantial number of children who have committed sexually abusive acts. Three hundred and fifty-three cases were identified on Department of Human Services and Department of Corrections caseloads. This figure underestimates the extent of the problem. The data reveal that young sex offending is not limited to consensual, experimental sexual activities. More than half of the youngsters engaged in oral-genital contact, and attempted or actual penetration. Even four and five year olds engage in such intrusive, abusive acts. One quarter of the young sex offenders used physical force.

Treatment programs and options for Maine's young sex offenders are limited. A continuum of care is nonexistent. All but one of the programs, the Maine Youth Center, are community based, are for teenagers, and provide group therapy sessions once a week. Additional treatment approaches sometimes are utilized.

Results indicated that in spite of the large number of young sex offenders in Maine, and the relatively few specialized treatment programs, most of the programs were not filled to capacity and had few, if any, offenders on waiting lists. A primary reason cited for this discrepancy was that offenders, who were not legally mandated to be in treatment, tended to terminate treatment prematurely. As a result, the majority of young sex offenders are not involved in specialized treatment programs.

Responses indicated Maine's treatment programs incorporated many "state of the art" approaches, but none of the identified young sex offenders programs utilized formal program evaluation procedures. In fact, no follow-up studies had been conducted. Staffing and fiscal constraints were cited as factors which preclude quality assurance endeavors that can facilitate cost effective sex offender treatment.

Treatment providers perceived their young sex offender clients as needing a wider range of services, such as day treatment, group homes, therapeutic foster homes, and residential settings. Other client needs were described, such as increased services for intellectually limited as well as older, high-risk offenders. Increased funding was considered necessary for treatment, client transportation, research, and program evaluation. However, there were no available data on the extent to which additional services are required.

It is recommended that the results of this study be distributed to a wide audience, including lawyers, judges, legislators, etc. in order to communicate the severity of the problem of childhood sex offending among Maine's youth. This information can assist professionals, as well as non-professionals, to help young sex offenders through early identification and intervention.

Sexually abusive behavior must be identified for what it is. Those who perpetrate these offenses, regardless of their age, must be held accountable for their abusive behavior. Otherwise intervention strategies will be limited in scope and effectiveness. Information concerning the extent of the problem of Maine's young sex offenders, their needs, and the resources available to meet their needs, is necessary for our state to develop effective strategies that assist not only offenders, but also their victims. This study is an important step.

APPENDIX 3:

The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect was established under provisions of U.S. Public Law 100-294, the 1988 Amendments to the Child Abuse and Prevention and Treatment Act. The following recommendations are reprinted from the advisory committee's first report titled Child Abuse and Neglect: Critical First Steps in Response to a National Emergency, dated August, 1990.

A. RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY

RECOMMENDATION #1:

The Board urges each citizen to recognize that a serious emergency related to the maltreatment of children exists within American society and to join with all other citizens in resolving that its continued existence is intolerable.

RECOMMENDATION #2:

The Board urges each citizen to demand that his or her elected officials at all levels publicly acknowledge that the American child protection emergency exists, and, having so acknowledged this emergency, take whatever steps are necessary—including the identification of new revenue sources—to rehabilitate the nation's child protection system.

RECOMMENDATION #3:

The Board urges the U.S. Congress, State legislatures, and local legislative bodies to view the prevention of child abuse and neglect as a matter of national security and, as such, to increase their support for basic necessities, such as housing, child care, education, and prenatal care for low income families including the working poor, the absence of which has been linked to child abuse and neglect.

B. PROVIDING LEADERSHIP

RECOMMENDATION #4:

The Board urges the President to become the visible and effective leader of a renewed Federal effort to prevent the maltreatment of American children and to help the nation better serve those children who have been abused and neglected.

RECOMMENDATION #5:

The Board urges each Governor to become the visible and effective leader of a renewed State effort to prevent the maltreatment of children and to assure that child victims of abuse and neglect receive appropriate services.

August 1990

RECOMMENDATION #6:

The Board urges each Mayor and County Executive to become personally involved in improving the delivery of services related to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #7:

The Board urges legislative bodies at all levels to join with the President, Governors, and County Executives and Mayors in a renewed national commitment to child protection by providing the funds necessary to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #8:

The Board urges national scientific societies and professional associations to undertake major initiatives to stimulate the development of knowledge about child abuse and neglect and the improvement of the child protection system and to diffuse such knowledge to their members, policymakers, and the general public.

C. COORDINATING EFFORTS

RECOMMENDATION #9:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts within the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Governors of the several States should identify and eliminate barriers which stand in the way of providing coordinated community services related to the protection of children.

RECOMMENDATION #10:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the White House should take steps to assure that all relevant aspects of the national effort to control substance abuse are coordinated with efforts to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. These steps should begin immediately and should be made apparent to the public. All steps taken at the national level should be coordinated with relevant State and local "front-line" programs.

RECOMMENDATION #11:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect) should undertake joint efforts to address the issue of fatal child abuse and neglect caused by family members and other caretakers. These efforts should include the identification and vigorous dissemination to State and local governments of models for: (a) prevention of serious and fatal child abuse and neglect; (b) multidisciplinary child death case review; and (c) identification and response to child abuse and neglect fatalities by the social services, public health, and criminal justice systems.

D. GENERATING KNOWLEDGE

RECOMMENDATION #12:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect) should take whatever steps are necessary to establish a Federal data collection system that provides a comprehensive national picture of child maltreatment and the response to it by the several governments of the United States. This new system should insure: accurate, annual, uninterrupted, consistent, and timely data collection; mandatory participation from the States; and a focus on actual incidence, reported incidence, and the operation and effectiveness of all aspects of the child protection system. This new system should be designed and implemented either by the Bureau of the Census or the Centers for Disease Control, working in collaboration with leading experts on child maltreatment.

RECOMMENDATION #13:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services should launch a major coordinated initiative involving all relevant components of the Department of Health and Human Services to promote the systematic conduct of research related to child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #14:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), should launch a major initiative to use multidisciplinary knowledge about what works as the cornerstone of Federal efforts to rehabilitate the quality of the child protection system. This initiative should include the translation of what is already known about interventions that produce positive results. It should also include the evaluation of possible systemic improvements the value of which has not yet been established.

RECOMMENDATION #15:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), in concert with the nation's private foundations that have an interest in children, should launch a major initiative to increase both the number and the professional qualifications of individuals conducting knowledge-building activities on child abuse and neglect. The initiative should include the active encouragement of noted researchers from other fields in the social, behavioral, and health sciences to do work in this area.

E. DIFFUSING KNOWLEDGE

RECOMMENDATION #16:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), should take whatever steps are necessary to assure that practitioners, policymakers, and the general public (especially parents) have ready and continuous access to comprehensive, consistent state-of-the-art information on child abuse and neglect. Such steps should include establishing a permanent governmental unit from which this information is available.

RECOMMENDATION #17:

Leaders of the media should join in a campaign to promote public understanding of the child protection emergency and the most effective ways of addressing it, including coverage of the complexity and seriousness of the emergency and the alternatives for dealing with it.

F. INCREASING HUMAN RESOURCES

RECOMMENDATION #18:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, their counterparts in State governments, and the Governors of the several States, in concert with professional associations and organizations, should take concrete steps to establish the position of public agency "child protective services caseworker" as a professional specialty with commensurate minimum entry-level educational requirements, salary, status, supervision, administrative support, and continuing education requirements.

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RECOMMENDATION #19:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, and their counterparts in State governments should take the necessary steps to establish minimum educational requirements for the position of public agency CPS caseworker in agencies which receive Federal financial support. Such requirements should provide for the substitution of appropriate experience for education.

RECOMMENDATION #20:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, and their counterparts in State governments should take the necessary steps to assure that all public agency CPS caseworkers systematically receive adequate pre-service and in-service continuing training for the proper performance of their duties. Such training should be offered at different levels in keeping with the differing needs and responsibilities of CPS caseworkers, and should reflect emerging issues in the field.

RECOMMENDATION #21:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Congress, and their counterparts at the State and County levels, in concert with private sector support should take the necessary steps to establish acceptable caseload standards so as to reduce the caseload sizes of public agency CPS caseworkers in agencies which receive Federal financial support. A part of this initiative should be the recruitment and maintenance of a sufficient number of qualified staff so that services can be provided at the acceptable caseload level.

RECOMMENDATION #22:

State and local social services officials should launch an aggressive campaign to recruit new CPS caseworkers representative of the racial, ethnic, and cultural composition of the child maltreatment caseload population.

August 1990

RECOMMENDATION #23:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect) should take concrete steps to assure a steady increase in the total number of the nation's professionals who possess the necessary competence and skill to participate effectively in the protection of children. Such steps should include: the development, introduction and expansion of curricula and clinical programs concerned with child abuse and neglect in all the nation's institutions of higher learning; the replication and institutionalization of models for the interdisciplinary training of graduate students preparing for work in child protection; and the establishment of a new program of Presidential or Secretarial Child Maltreatment Fellowships for graduate students willing to commit themselves to entering the field.

G. PROVIDING AND IMPROVING PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATION #24:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Governors of the several States should ensure that comprehensive, multidisciplinary child abuse and neglect treatment programs are available to all who need them.

RECOMMENDATION #25:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), and the Governors of the several States should ensure that efforts to prevent the maltreatment of children are substantially increased. Such efforts, at a minimum, should involve a significant expansion in the availability of home visitation and follow-up services for all families of newborns.

RECOMMENDATION #26:

The U.S. Congress and State and local legislative bodies should ensure that, in any expansion of programs concerned with child abuse and neglect, resources devoted to prevention and resources devoted to treatment do not come at the expense of each other.

August 1990

RECOMMENDATION #27:

The headquarters or regional units of private sector organizations—voluntary, religious, civic, philanthropic, and entrepreneurial—should take the necessary steps to increase significantly the involvement of their local affiliates and outlets, members, or employees in efforts to support and strengthen families as well as to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. At a minimum the efforts for which increased involvement is encouraged should include: participation in neighborhood home visitation networks; participation in formal volunteer programs; the introduction of workplace measures aimed at reducing familial stress; participation in programs aimed at increasing greater accountability within the child protection system; and the promotion of greater awareness of the child protection emergency, as well as advocacy for more enlightened public policies in response to it. Government at all levels should facilitate the development of public/private partnerships aimed at enhancing the role of the private sector in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

RECOMMENDATION #28:

The Attorney General, the U.S. Congress, the State legislatures, the Chief Justice of each State's highest court, and the leaders of the organized bar should assure that all State and local courts handling the large numbers of civil and criminal child abuse and neglect cases coming before the court system promptly and fairly resolve these cases. Prompt and fair resolution will require sufficient resources including: (a) adequate numbers of well-trained judges, lawyers, and court support staff, as well as manageable caseloads that take into account the complex and demanding nature of child abuse and neglect litigation; (b) specialized judicial procedures that are sensitive to the needs of children and families; (c) improved court-based diagnostic and evaluation services; and (d) greater educational opportunities for all professional personnel involved in such proceedings. Courts hearing child maltreatment cases must also be given the funding and status befitting these most important of judicial tribunals. These officials should also take steps to assure that every child has independent advocacy and legal representation, and every CPS caseworker is effectively represented by counsel throughout the judicial process.

RECOMMENDATION #29:

The Secretary of Education and his counterparts in State and local educational agencies, in concert with the leaders of all relevant national educational organizations and their State and local affiliates, should launch a major initiative to establish and strengthen the role of every public and private school in the nation in the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

August 1990

H. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

RECOMMENDATION #30:

The U.S. Congress should direct an appropriate research agency to determine the cost of developing and implementing a comprehensive national program for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, as well as the projected cost of not developing and implementing such a program.

RECOMMENDATION #31:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with his counterparts in the Federal Government (working through the U.S. Inter-Agency Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect), in concert with the National Governors Association, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National Association of Counties, should develop a model planning process aimed at generating plans for the coordinated, comprehensive, community-based prevention, identification, and treatment of abuse and neglect, and take appropriate steps to assure that the model process is implemented throughout the nation.

MAINE BUREAU OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE TRAINING INSTITUTE

L.D. 335, passed by the Maine State Legislature in June 1989, required the Bureau of Child and Family Services to develop a comprehensive training plan for all caseworkers. As a result of this legislative requirement and of internal initiatives, the Bureau has examined its training system and has concluded that the current system needs radical revision. The training plan proposed here has the following characteristics.

- It is specifically designed for the practice of child welfare.
- It is tailored to the job requirements, training needs and policy of the Bureau of Child and Family Services, Department of Human Services.
- It has agency support including top-level administrative support and commitment of resources and has been developed by a representative state-wide committee.
- It views training as a professional development process which includes monitoring the implementation of what the trainee has learned and relating this to behavior on the job.
- It includes mandatory pre-service training and job-shadowing to ensure that new case workers have the necessary skills and knowledge prior to carrying cases.
- It is designed to not only enhance the capacities of staff to perform their jobs but also to improve the overall functioning of the Division.
- It addresses issues related to selection and retention of caseworkers as well as their training.
- It provides consistent information in a timely fashion so that all employees have the information needed to provide services in accordance with the mandate of the Division.

The following assumptions have guided the development of this training plan.

- The Department is committed to delivering the highest quality of services to those children and families served by the agency. The quality of services provided is directly dependent upon the quality of staff providing those services.
- The Department has the responsibility to ensure that services are provided in accordance with its legal mandate and consistent with established policy, procedures and standards of professional practice. To meet this responsibility, this information must be communicated to all staff in a consistent and timely manner and reinforced on the job.
- The Department expects staff to offer services to clients in a knowledgeable and respectful manner which encourages clients to participate in appropriate rehabilitative services. In order to promote such behavior, the Department needs to provide a work environment which is conducive to learning, which encourages mutual respect and provides opportunities for personal and professional development.
- The Department recognizes the uniquely stressful nature of child welfare work and the need to make difficult decisions which impact on human lives. In order to provide the support needed for employees to function effectively on their jobs, the best resources must be made available, including the expertise of experienced staff, external consultants and other training and educational resources such as academic programs and professional conferences, workshops and new forms of educational technology.

GOAL OF TRAINING INSTITUTE

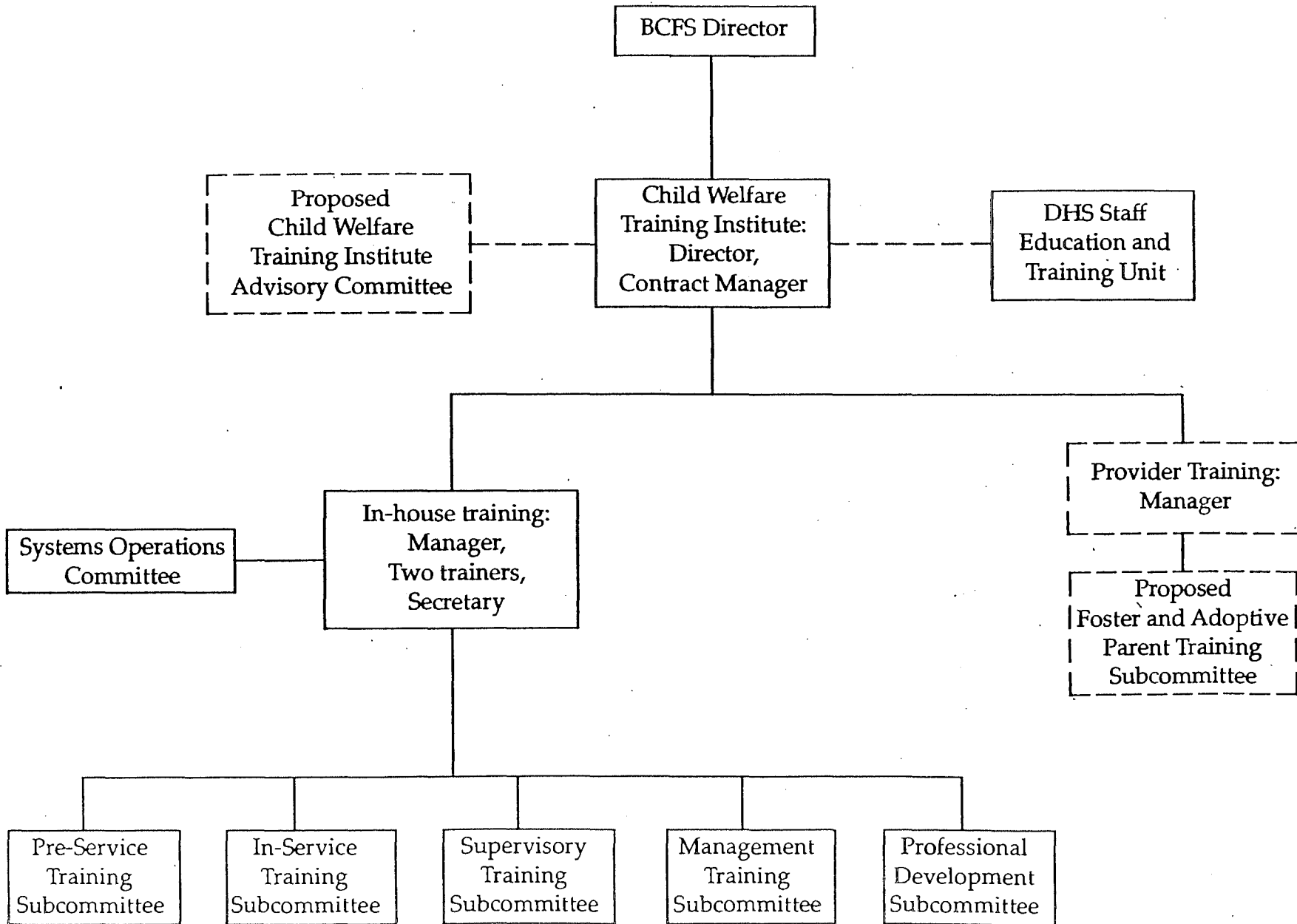
The goal of the training institute is to coordinate the continued professional and personal development of staff at all levels throughout the Bureau of Child and Family Services to enhance the quality of services delivered to clients and advance organizational objectives.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To plan and administer a training institute which integrates and coordinates individual needs for effective job performance with organizational and programmatic outcome measures and priorities.

2. To provide a mandatory pre-service training program which addresses the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to provide the highest quality services to children and families who are clients of the Department in a manner which is consistent with the legal mandate, established policy and procedures and standards of professional practice.
3. To provide an on-going program of in-service training which includes on-the-job training, workshops and other professional development activities to reinforce and enhance skills and knowledge, and to integrate them into practice, to ensure compliance and understanding of changes in policy, procedure and practice in a manner which meets individual training needs and goals, and needs of specialty programs areas.
4. To provide an on-going program of training to casework supervisors which recognizes their pivotal role in reinforcing skills learned in formal training and the need for on-going support and role-modelling.
5. To provide an on-going program of training to managers which recognizes their leadership role in creating and maintaining an organizational climate which supports on-going learning and is responsive to change.
6. To provide an on-going program of continued professional development to promote the acquisition and development of new knowledge and skills and academic credentials.
7. To monitor the effectiveness of the training program in terms of the impact on participants and on organizational effectiveness and maintain a system for recording information about all training activities as well as procedures for utilizing and tracking the use of in-house and external training resources.

CHILD WELFARE TRAINING INSTITUTE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor

Rollin Ives
Commissioner

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

December 31, 1990

Ms. Jane Sheehan
Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman
State House Station 73
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Jane,

Thanks very much for agreeing to serve as a member of this Department's task force to study confidentiality issues relating to the child protection program.

This task force is being formed in recognition of the critical relationship between the public's confidence in state programs and the ability of those programs to carry out their missions effectively. When that public trust is called into question because of existing confidentiality laws, then I believe it's time to re-examine those laws.

This issue is of significant concern to me and is one I'm asking this task force to examine. The basic question for your deliberations is, "Are the existing laws safeguarding the individual rights to privacy out of balance with the public's legitimate right to know?"

The task is a formidable one, and requires an open debate of when the individual's right to privacy ends and the public's right to know begins. I would like to have a final report in September, 1991, so any proposed statutory changes can be submitted to the 2nd Session of the 115th Legislature.

Mr. Fred Nutter of Channel 6 news will chair the task force. Mr. Nutter's years of public service will bring a unique perspective on both the right to privacy and the public's right to know. I am sure under his leadership this task force will be able to accomplish its task.

The first meeting has been scheduled for Friday, February 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. An agenda and meeting place will be sent to you before the meeting.

Once again, Jane, thanks for agreeing to serve. Your participation really will make a difference! I look forward to seeing you on February 1.

Sincerely,

Rollin Ives
Commissioner

sh

John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor



Jane Sheehan
Ombudsman

Executive Department
Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman

September 20, 1990

Dear :

In response to the Ombudsman's mandate to inform the public to encourage a better public understanding of the current status of the state's child welfare system, I am convening a meeting of avant-garde leaders to devote their time and attention to the pressing issues regarding Maine's child welfare services. I am pleased to invite you to serve as one of the twenty-five participants in the Forum portion of the First Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect: "Nurturing Maine's Children In Need." This conference, which is sponsored by the Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman in participation with the UNICEF Town Meetings for Children, consists of a two-part forum and conference, October 10, 1990, and November 15, 1990, in Augusta. The program is for social workers, medical personnel, law enforcement personnel, educators, mental health professionals, members of the legal profession, religious leaders, parents, and citizens. Issues such as the recent tragic murder of a Bangor child in DHS custody, the death of a foster child in Durham, the ever-looming crises in treatment services for children and their families, and the need to prevent child abuse and neglect, combined with state revenue reductions make a meeting of this type, at this time, imperative.

The forum portion of the program will be held on October 10, 1990, at All Souls Unitarian Church on King Street in Augusta, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A facilitator will lead round table discussions with a multidisciplinary group of individuals who are knowledgeable about child welfare issues. Topics of discussion will include:

- To what degree can the State protect children from their abusive parents?
- Are parents obsolete?
- How well are we caring for children in state custody?

Forum-Conference
September 20, 1990
Page 2

- Does the present system respond appropriately and efficiently when a child in state custody suffers a tragic death?

A report of the round table discussions will be published as a white paper to be presented at the conference portion of the program on November 15, 1990, at the University of Maine, Augusta, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Selected forum participants will lead panel discussions at the conference which will be viewed throughout the state on interactive television. All Maine citizens interested in the status of Maine's child welfare system will be invited to participate in the November 15 conference.

I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding your interest in serving as a participant at the forum. If you have any questions concerning the conference, please feel free to contact me at 289-6540.

Sincerely,

Jane Sheehan

JS/vg

Enclosures

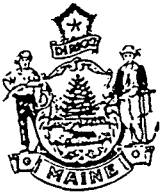


*"NURTURING MAINE'S CHILDREN IN NEED":
A CONFERENCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
Jewett Auditorium, University of Maine, Augusta
November 15, 1990*

John R. McKernan Jr
Governor



Jane Sheehan
Ombudsman



State of Maine

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 1990

CONTACT: BETH RUSSELL
207/289-2531

GOVERNOR HIGHLIGHTS WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN

Governor McKernan has proclaimed the week of September 24 through 30, 1990 World Summit for Children Week throughout the State of Maine, in honor of the first ever World Summit for Children to be held at the United Nations.

The week will be celebrated around the world. President Bush will lead celebrations in the United States by joining 70 heads of state at the United Nations in New York September 29-30.

The United States Congress is participating by promoting Town Meetings throughout the country on children's issues. In Maine, Representative Olympia Snowe held a Town Meeting for Children in Bangor on Saturday, September 15. Advocates, service providers, teachers, children, and young adults participated in discussions on how best to meet children's needs.

Also in Maine, State Child Welfare Services Ombudsman Jane Sheehan is holding a two-part forum and conference titled "Nurturing Maine's Children in Need." The conference portion on November 15 will be a Town Meeting for Children in participation with The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), held in Augusta, but reaching citizens throughout the state through the interactive television network. And, on Sunday evening, September 23, a Children's Vigil will be held in Lewiston's Kennedy Park at 6:00 p.m.

"Heads of state from around the world will participate in this historic gathering, which will provide a highly visible forum for the world's political leaders to commit themselves to action on behalf of children at the global, national, and local levels," the Governor said. "The Summit provides an opportunity for citizens to come together to discuss the rights of children and to make commitments to better meet their needs," he said.

State of Maine



WHEREAS, the World Summit for Children will be held at the United Nations September 29 through September 30, 1990; and

WHEREAS, Heads of State from around the world will participate in this historic gathering which will provide a highly visible forum for the world's political leaders to commit themselves to action on behalf of children at the global, national, and local levels; and

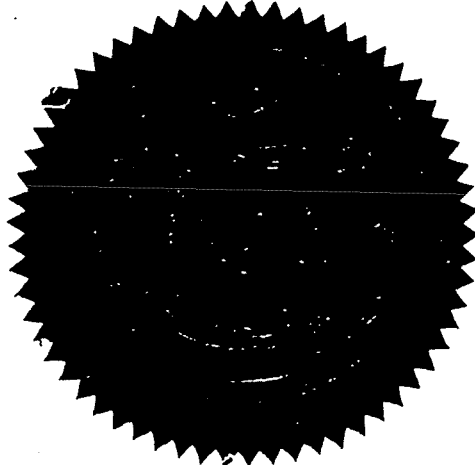
WHEREAS, the World Summit will provide impetus for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a historic legal codification of society's responsibilities to children, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989; and

WHEREAS, nearly 100 countries have signed with intention to ratify, and 20 countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child,


NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOHN R. MCKERNAN, JR., Governor of the State of Maine, do hereby proclaim September 24 through 30, 1990 as

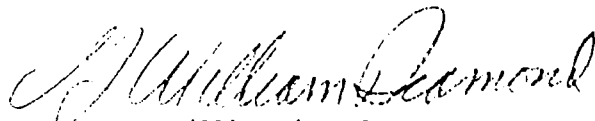
WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN WEEK

throughout the State of Maine.



In testimony whereof, I have caused the Great Seal of the State to be hereunto affixed GIVEN under my hand at Augusta this thirteenth day of September in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety.


JOHN R. MCKERNAN, JR.
Governor


G. William Diamond
Secretary of State

TRUE ATTESTED COPY

State of Maine



Be it known to all that
We, the Members of the Senate and
House of Representatives

join in recognizing

and commending the numerous
organizations, businesses, professionals
and individual citizens for their support and participation
in "Nurturing Maine's Children in Need: A Conference on Child Abuse
and Neglect" to increase awareness and prevention of
child abuse and neglect;

And be it ordered that this official expression
of sentiment be sent forthwith on behalf of the
Legislature and the people of the State of Maine

Given this 10th day of April 19 90

at the State Capitol

Augusta, Maine

President of the Senate

Secretary

Speaker of the House

Clerk

Introduced by : Senator BUSTIN of Kennebec County *Cecily Marie Carter*
Sponsored by : Representative ROLDE of York
Representative DELLERT of Gardiner

* PROGRAM *

"NURTURING MAINE'S CHILDREN IN NEED":
A CONFERENCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

In response to the Ombudsman's mandate to inform the public to encourage a better public understanding of the current status of the State's child welfare system, I am pleased to welcome you to this child abuse and neglect conference. The conference which is sponsored by the Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman in participation with the UNICEF Town Meetings for Children, consists of two parts, a Forum and a Conference. The Forum, a group of avant garde leaders, met on October 10, 1990, in Augusta, to discuss the issues to be presented at today's conference. Issues such as the recent tragic murder of a Bangor child in the Department of Human Services' custody, the death of a foster child in Durham, the ever-looming crises in treatment services for children and their families, and the need to prevent child abuse and neglect, combined with state revenue reductions, made a conference of this type, at this time, imperative. Thank you for coming today to share your concerns.

Moderator, Lucky Hollander - Director Maine Child Abuse and Neglect Councils

- 8:30 - 9:00 Registration, Jewett Hall Auditorium
- 9:00 - 9:30 Welcome and Introductory Remarks - Jane Sheehan, Ombudsman; Norine Jewell, Legal Counsel for Governor John R. McKernan; Peter Walsh, Director Child and Family Services, Maine Department of Human Services; Senator Beverly Bustin, Representative Jean Dellert, Representative Marge Clark
- 9:30 - 10:00 Children in the Courts - A Maine Perspective - Jean Chalmers, Esq., Attorney and former Maine State Legislator
- BREAK
- 10:30 - 11:30 Panel Discussion - To what degree can the State protect children from their abusive parents? Presenter - Sandra Hodge - Director of Regional Child Welfare Operations, Maine Department of Human Services - Panel Members: Margaret Semple, Assistant Attorney General; Brian Welsh, Penobscot County Sheriff's Office; Dr. James Jacobs, Kennebec Valley Mental Health Center
- 11:30 - 12:30 Panel Discussion - How well are we caring for children in state custody? Presenter - Mary Gay Kennedy, Esq., Director Maine Court Appointed Special Advocates - Panel Members: Hon. John Beliveau, Judge, Maine District Court; Rick Schragge, CASA Volunteer and Parent; Karen Edgecomb, DHS Sub-Care Supervisor; Al Monier, Director, Rumford Group Home
- LUNCH BREAK
- 1:30 - 2:00 Children in the Courts - Paulette Tyndall, Clerk - Vermont Family Court System
- 2:30 - 3:00 Panel Discussion - Does the present system respond appropriately when a child suffers a tragic death? - Presenter - Barbara Kates, Liaison Director, Maine Foster Parents Association - Panel Members: Meris Bickford, Assistant Attorney General; Jim Chaplin, Director, DHS Division of Child Care and Licensing; Karen Morrison, Foster Parent
- 3:00 - 3:30 Panel Discussion - Are parents obsolete? Presenter - Sylvia Brewster, Esq. - Attorney and Parent - Panel Members: Ray Cook, Executive Director, Maine Children's Trust Fund; Brion Gallagher, President, Coalition for Maine's Children; Iris Hoffman, CASA Volunteer

*** PARTICIPANTS ***

"NURTURING MAINE'S CHILDREN IN NEED"

FORUM

October 10, 1990

Mary Gay Kennedy, Esq., Executive Director CASA
Sylvia Brewster, Esq., Attorney
Peter E. Walsh, Director, Child and Family Services, DHS
Freda Plumley, Program Manager, Substitute Care Unit, DHS
Barbara Kates, Liaison Director, Maine Foster Parent Association
John Farquhar, Jr., M.D., Pediatrician
Barbara Dunlap Warren, Family Therapist
Mary Dionne, Regional Program Manager, Department of Human Services
Robert A. Frates, Exec. Director, Maine Human Develop. Commission
Marta Wenger, Executive Director, Interdepartmental Council
Larry Ricci, M.D., Mid-Maine Medical Center
Tom Godfrey, Juvenile Justice Planner, Department of Corrections
Frank Antonucci, Consultant, Truancy/Dropout/Alternative Education
Lauren McMullin, Consultant, Department of Special Education
David Stockford, Director of Special Education, Dept. of Education

* HERE'S WHERE WE BEGIN *

Why is this the right time for the Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman to sponsor a Forum and accompanying Conference on "Nurturing Maine's Children in Need?" Because despite the substantial gains Maine has made in supporting its children, the status of children has not improved to the point where we can feel satisfied that children's right to a safe, healthful, and nurturing environment is adequately met. Obviously, we need to do more thinking, talking, feeling, deliberating, policy-making, and legislating. That's what the Forum and Conference is designed to facilitate.

This paper has sprung from the discussion of a group of professionals who are seriously concerned about children and who put their hearts and minds together to address the questions before us today. This paper is obviously, not the definitive treatise on the plight of children in our state today; it serves more as an abstract. It is our job to carry-on from where the Forum left off, using their insight as a jumping off point for our own deliberations.

Your presence here today demonstrates a personal commitment to the Children of Maine. Our cumulative commitment, expertise, dedication, and concern will move us toward the ultimate goal of nurturing, not only Maine's children in need, but, in the long run, all children and families everywhere.

A report of your conclusions will be presented to the Legislature and other policy-making groups for further consideration and implementation.

QUESTION #1

To what degree can the State protect children from their abusive parents?

In reviewing the Forum's responses to this question, four themes are apparent. Following each theme are selective responses to Question #1 made at the Forum.

- **THEME 1:** Parents have the sole responsibility for protecting their children from harm in the first instance but, if the parents fail in their responsibility, then the State's responsibility is to intervene and remove the children from jeopardy.

"The State can't protect children from the fact that they have abusive parents."

"The State cannot protect children from random acts of violence by parents."

"The degree of intrusion in a family to protect children may be unacceptable to society."

- **THEME 2:** The rights of children need to be better recognized and respected.

"We and others should explore which are more important, parents or children's rights."

"The pendulum has swung back to protect parent's rights, the legal system gets in the way of what is right for children."

"What are parental responsibilities and authority?"

- **THEME 3:** Despite existing child protection laws, there is no public consensus on what constitutes abuse and, consequently, no consensus on when the State has the right and duty to intervene on behalf of children.

"We have to sell the idea that what we are doing here, protecting children, is a good idea."

"No assumptions should be made of who is an abuser; abusers have vested interests in protecting themselves."

"There is a need for community education on what is abusive behavior."

- **THEME 4:** The State does have a responsibility to encourage parents to reach out for help and to assist adults in accessing parenting resources.

"The State should be more active in getting involved earlier than it does, but (the State) needs more resources."

"Every community should have access for all parents to learn parenting skills before becoming a parent."

"It needs to be institutionally O.K. to seek help."

QUESTION #2

How well are we caring for children in State custody?

In reviewing the Forum's responses to this question, four themes are apparent. Following each theme there are selective responses to Question #2 made at the Forum.

- **THEME 1:** *The State's training program for foster parents must include a specialized curriculum for parenting the most damaged children.*

"Foster families should get a continuum of training including foster parenting skills for difficult kids."

"Children are abused in foster homes too, are we 'setting up' foster homes because the children, the foster parents receive, are so damaged?"

"We should be looking for therapeutic care for kids now, not just non-abusive care."

- **THEME 2:** *The lack of access and availability of placement resources indicates a disrespect for foster children and treats foster children as second class citizens.*

"State kids get inferior packages of services and some providers show preferential treatment."

"We need to do something about the shelter shuttle."

"Is there a way to give kids some decision making in their treatment?"

"We do not value kids and, therefore, we do not appropriate high enough board rates."

- **THEME 3:** *The child welfare service delivery system fails many foster children because of staff turnover, court delays, and limited access to specialized programs.*

"Judges and attorneys need to be educated concerning the importance of kids."

"We are seeing children with severe behavior problems who are difficult to place, the system has not and cannot, because of resources, catch up to care for these children."

"Is it the kids who have failed, or is it the system that has failed?"

- **THEME 4:** *We need to identify abused children earlier so that these children do not come into the State's custody.*

"We should identify problems early on, so that we don't have to take custody."

"Do we write kids off who are hopeless cases?"

QUESTION #3

Does the present system respond appropriately when a child suffers a tragic death?

In reviewing the Forum's responses to this question, three themes are apparent. Following the themes are selective responses to Question #3 made at the Forum.

- **THEME 1:** *Homicide investigations should be done by multidisciplinary, independent investigators specially trained in child abuse deaths, possibly led by a special prosecutor.*

"There should be a review process for all deaths."

"We let go (of the investigation) too easily. We have to be more accountable."

"Do we need F.A.A. type investigations?"

"Should Maine have an independent, special prosecutor. If so, how would it (the prosecutor) be set up?"

"Sometimes the public perception is that the State did nothing or the response was inappropriate."

"Questionable tragic deaths are a new phenomenon to DHS."

- **THEME 2:** *When a child dies, the State should provide safety and support for involved caseworkers.*

"Should caseworkers be questioned?"

"Sometimes caseworkers are grilled."

"There is a risk to staff in some tragic death situations."

"DHS workers are sometimes treated very badly by the press."

- **THEME 3:** *Clear and uniform procedures for the release of confidential information regarding a child's death should be established.*

"There are confidentiality issues concerning licensing files."

"We get defensive responses from DHS."

"Is enough information conveyed from DHS?"

QUESTION #4

Are parents obsolete?

In reviewing the Forum's responses to this question, three themes are apparent. Following the themes are selective responses to Question #4 made at the Forum.

- **THEME 1:** Parents are being replaced by television, movies, child care providers, schools, peers, homeless shelters, streets, telephones, siblings, libraries, roller rinks, and malls.

"The definition of parent has changed, the functions of parents are performed by substitutes."

"Parents may be extinct, but parenting is not."

"TV and movies are a threat to the traditional parent model."

"Some kids have always seen parents as obsolete; some parents never set goals and boundaries for their kids."

"When a parent becomes obsolete from a kid's perspective, is there a mechanism to intervene?"

- **THEME 2:** The State has an important responsibility in assisting parents with child care costs, parent/child conflicts, and parenting resources.

"We need a process to address parent/child conflicts."

"Natural support systems seem to be diminishing."

"We need to develop parent resource centers in Maine."

"The State should take a leading role in assisting parents when they have problems parenting."

"The State should subsidize the high cost of child care."

- **THEME 3:** Society, particularly the business community, needs to place more emphasis on the values of parenting and family units.

"The business community is a disincentive. There appears to be no respect for parenting and the priority of children."

"There should be more emphasis on the value of parenting and family values."

"Businesses do not support families with such things as sick leave for kid's doctor's appointments, and flexible work schedules for fathers as well as mothers."



World Summit for Children Town Meetings on Children

A Note of Explanation: Town Meetings on Children

The first ever World Summit for Children will be held at the United Nations September 29-30, 1990. Heads of State have been invited to participate in this historic gathering which will make possible a framework for action on children at the global, national, and even local level. Twenty-eight countries, including the United States and the U.S.S.R. have formed the Summit planning committee and President Bush's personal representative, Ambassador Peter Teeley, and our State Department are actively engaged in the Summit preparation.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is encouraging child advocates worldwide to promote Summit-related activities that will spark grassroots initiatives and bring about meaningful improvement in the lives of children. The Summit is not an isolated event, rather, it is the "critical mass" of a broader movement for children that is picking up momentum all over the world and that will serve to carry our priorities defined at the Summit. In the United States, the U.S. Committee for UNICEF is working with a myriad of partners on Summit initiatives.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AUDIT AND PROGRAM REVIEW 1990-1991

FINDING

The Committee finds that the mandate of Maine's Child Welfare Services Ombudsman should be broadened to include child support enforcement cases in order to advise, assist, and represent the best interests of individuals involved in Maine's child support system.

Enforcement Agents in the State's child support enforcement program are charged with four objectives: locating an absent parent, imposing a child support obligation, collecting the support payment, and, when necessary, establishing paternity. After these objectives have been accomplished, Cashiers within the Division of Financial Services receive the support checks from Absent Parents in order to record and distribute the payments to Custodial Parents.

The Committee found that although recounting the goals and objectives of the child support enforcement program is simple, the actual implementation and administration of the program is complex. For example, the State collects child support payments primarily for children whose parents receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children, but, upon request, the Division may also be involved in collecting support payments for families who do not receive AFDC grants. In fiscal year 1989, the number of families served in-state and out-of-state by the Division numbered approximately 46,000, involving a Custodial Parent, an Absent Parent, and their children. The work of locating Absent Parents routinely involves coordination with state and federal agencies such as the Division of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Labor, the Division of Employment Security, the Bureau of Taxation, and others who might know the whereabouts of an Absent Parent such as relatives, friends, or former employers. Establishing paternity involves interaction with courts and attorneys. Distributing the payment involves many complex accounting transactions, including sorting a minimum of 1500 pieces of mail each day, confirming key information about the Absent Parent, calculating the correct amount due the Custodial Parent, and disbursing the check.

Actual case histories reviewed by the Committee demonstrated that collecting money from Absent Parents on behalf of the children is inherently controversial. Case records show that Absent Parents often have a perspective that the Division pursues payment to excess while Custodial Parents charge that the Division is unresponsive and ineffective in collecting payments due through a court or administrative order. In considering the cases, the Committee found that many extenuating circumstances contributed to the frustration and dissatisfaction of people involved in the child support system. For example, the Committee found that checks and other information submitted to the Division may have incomplete or incorrect information; poor communication between the Division and involved parties contributed to significant misunderstanding and misperception; departmental delays occurred in processing payments and other paperwork; delays

in communication among federal, state, and local governments; and inadequate information available to the department prior to taking action.

As a result of the complexity of the daily operation, the potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding, and inherent controversy and dissension among the parties, the Committee finds a need to provide a liaison for people involved in the child support system, similar to the function performed by the Child Welfare Services Ombudsman for people involved in Maine's child protective system.

The statutory mandate of Maine's Child Welfare Services Ombudsman is to "represent the best interests of individuals involved in the State's child welfare system ... and to investigate and resolve complaints against state agencies which may be infringing on the rights of individuals involved in the State's child welfare system" [22 MRSA subch.X-A]. To carry out this mandate, the Ombudsman conducts a broad-based operation which includes:

- providing ombudsman services to individual citizens involved in child welfare matters;
- advising, consulting, and assisting the executive and legislative branches of State Government, especially the Governor, on activities of State Government related to child welfare;
- reviewing and evaluating state and federal policies relating to the provision of child welfare services;
- receiving and addressing inquiries, complaints, problems, or requests for information and assistance regarding the State's child welfare system;
- conducting, researching, gathering facts, and evaluating procedures regarding the State's child welfare services; and
- serving as a coordinator for all components of the State's child welfare services system.

The Ombudsman position is solely advisory in nature and is not endowed with any administrative authority or responsibility; the source of the Ombudsman's authority lies in the position's direct access to State decision-makers at the highest levels to whom suggestions for remedial action can be provided as needed.

The Committee finds that a function similar to that provided now by the Child Welfare Services Ombudsman for child protective services is needed to assist individuals involved in the State's child support enforcement system. By broadening the incumbent Ombudsman's function to embrace not only Maine's child welfare service delivery system but also Maine's child support enforcement system, disgruntled individuals would have access to an impartial agency outside of the Department of Human Services. The Ombudsman's office would then be available to these individuals to assist the individuals in finding resources, gaining access to State employees and programs, and resolving issues of concern and frustration, not only to the individuals but to the Department as well. In issuing this finding, the Committee also notes that federal matching funds would be available to assist in supporting an additional position that would be needed by the Ombudsman's office if its mandate were broadened to incorporate child support cases.



John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor

Jane Sheehan
Child Welfare Services Ombudsman

Executive Department
Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman
Telephone (207) 289-3771

March 13, 1990

TO: All Legislators
FROM: *Jane* Jane Sheehan, Ombudsman

REMINDER

Attached is a copy of the program for the workshop for legislators on Child and Family Services, sponsored by the Office of Child Welfare Services Ombudsman with the assistance of the Department of Human Services Regions I, II, III, IV and V tomorrow, March 14, 1990.

The program is on-going throughout the day from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., in Room 113, State Office Building. I encourage you to attend any or all of the presentations.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES WORKSHOP
March 14, 1990

PROGRAM

9:00 a.m.	Welcome	Jane Sheehan Child Welfare Services Ombudsman
	Introduction	Mary Dionne Augusta Region III Program Manager
		Christopher J. Beerits Augusta Region III Program Supervisor
		Peter Morgan Portland Region I Program Manager
		Ray Duchette Lewiston Region II Program Manager
		Tom Wolverton Bangor Region IV Program Manager
		Fred Putnam Houlton Region V Program Manager
9:30 a.m.	Case Presentation	Sherri Webb Child Protective Services Caseworker Skowhegan
		Lori Michaud Child Protective Services Supervisor Somerset County
10:15 a.m.	Break	
10:30 a.m.	Case Presentation	Linda Jackson Child Protective Services Caseworker Rockland
		Cheryl Barrett Child Protective Services Supervisor Rockland
		Theresa Roth Children's Services Caseworker Rockland
		Jeffrey Carty Children's Services Supervisor Rockland

Agenda
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11:15 a.m.	Case Presentation	Martha Proulx Child Protective Services Caseworker Augusta
		Richard Rogers Children's Services Supervisor Augusta
		Karen Unger Adoption Caseworker Augusta
		Sandra Woodbury Adoption Supervisor Region III, Augusta
12:30 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00 p.m.	Case Presentation	Peter Wigley Child Welfare Supervisor Region II, Lewiston
		Marian Carney Child Protective Services Caseworker Region II, Lewiston
2:30 p.m.	Case Presentation	Shawn Yardley Child Protective Services Supervisor Region IV, Bangor
2:30 p.m.	Case Presentation	Fred Putnam Regional Program Manager Region V, Houlton
4:00 p.m.	Question and Answer Period	
4:45 p.m.	Adjournment	

THE OFFICE

If you wish to make a complaint, you may request a complaint form by contacting the Ombudsman's office. The office is open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you have a question about child welfare services, or any child agency or program, the Ombudsman will try to assist you by answering inquiries or by making referrals to other agencies.

Mailing Address:

OFFICE OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OMBUDSMAN
STATE HOUSE STATION #73
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0073

Telephone:

(207) 289-6540



John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor

Jane Sheehan
Ombudsman

OFFICE OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OMBUDSMAN
State House Station #73
Augusta, Maine 04333-0073



MAINE

OFFICE OF

CHILD WELFARE

SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

STATE HOUSE STATION #73
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0073
(207) 289-6540

WHAT IS THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OMBUDSMAN?

"Child Welfare Services Ombudsman" means a public official appointed to receive and investigate citizens' complaints against state agencies which provide child welfare services.

HOW CAN THE OFFICE OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES HELP YOU?

The Office can assist you by:

- * Processing complaints about the child welfare system.
- * Making referrals to other agencies for help.
- * Explaining how the child welfare system functions.
- * Providing research on children's issues.

THE OMBUDSMAN PROCESS

The Ombudsman represents complainants' interests up and until the Ombudsman discovers that the State acted appropriately and prudently within the statutes, rules, and practice currently in place. The Ombudsman then represents the State's interest back to the complainant if the State acted appropriately. In many cases, however, the Ombudsman may continue to assist complainants by helping them better understand how the system works as the system pertains to their complaint. If the Ombudsman finds that the State acted inappropriately, the Ombudsman contacts the individuals involved and seeks a resolve of the situation.



STATUTORY MANDATE

By statute the ombudsman may:

A. Provide ombudsman services to individual citizens in matters relating to those child welfare services provided by and under the jurisdiction of the State;

B. Advise, consult and assist the executive and legislative branches of State Government, especially the Governor, on activities of State Government related to child welfare. The ombudsman shall be solely advisory in nature, shall not be delegated any administrative authority or responsibility nor supplant existing avenues for recourse or appeals. The ombudsman may make recommendations regarding any function intended to improve the quality of child welfare services in State Government. If findings, comments or recommendations of the ombudsman vary from, or are in addition to, those of the bureau, department or other State agency, the statements of the ombudsman shall be sent to the respective branches of State Government as attachments to those submitted by the bureau, department or other State agency. Recommendations may take the form of proposed budgetary, legislative or policy actions;

C. Review and evaluate, on a continuing basis, State and federal policies and programs relating to the provision of child welfare services conducted or assisted by any State

departments or agencies for the purpose of determining the value and impact on individuals involved in the State's welfare system;

D. Receive and address inquiries, complaints, problems or requests for information and assistance regarding the State's child welfare services;

E. Conduct research, gather facts and evaluate procedures and policies regarding the State's child welfare services;

F. Consult with and advise State agencies on operational and management issues or specific or special situations regarding child welfare services and recommend remedial actions when necessary through direct oral communication, memoranda, reports or meetings;

G. Serve as a coordinator of communication and cooperation for all components of the State's child welfare services system, especially among State agencies, whenever desirable or necessary;

H. Make referrals for service to relevant State agencies when appropriate;

I. Set priorities to effectively carry out the purposes of this subchapter; and

J. Inform the public to encourage a better public understanding of the current status of the State's child welfare system by collecting and disseminating information, conducting or commissioning studies and publishing the results, and by issuing publications and reports. (22 MRSA § 4087)