

New York State Office of Children and Family Services

FOR RELEASE: APRIL 19, 2007

Press Contact:

New York State Office of Children & Family Services
Public Information Office
(518) 473-7793

2007 Child Abuse Prevention Awards Announced***Recognize Excellence in Educating Communities About Child Abuse, Neglect***

The New York State Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) and Prevent Child Abuse New York announced the 2007 Excellence in Child Abuse Prevention Awards at the 12th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference held April 16-18 in Albany.

The conference, which coincided with the state and national Child Abuse Prevention Month, drew nearly 600 human services professionals, advocates, volunteers and parents from across New York.

OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrión, Esq., said: "It takes all of us working together to keep every child safe and secure. I congratulate and applaud these award recipients for all they have done, through leadership and example, to help protect vulnerable lives and build brighter futures for the children of New York State."

Prevent Child Abuse New York Executive Director Christine Deys said: "The theme of this year's conference is 'Investing in Children, Investing in our Future.' Congratulations to our award winners and to all the other heroes who play a role in supporting families and assuring that children are nurtured and protected."

New York State is committed to reducing, and ultimately eliminating, child abuse and maltreatment in all its forms. The OCFS website, www.ocfs.state.ny.us, provides valuable information about programs such as the Healthy Families Home Visiting Program, which gives a helping hand to new parents who are at risk of child abuse. The online "Concerned Citizen Guide" provides information on child abuse, and is a resource for enhancing community awareness. The website has child abuse prevention materials in Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic, including a 30-minute video in English and Spanish, "New York Loves Safe Babies," which is a visual presentation for caretakers of infants and young children.

The Excellence in Child Abuse Prevention Awards were created by Prevent Child Abuse New York in 1996 to recognize organizations and individuals whose efforts toward preventing child abuse and neglect deserve special commendation. The recipients selected each year have played a significant role in New York State in helping to realize the vision that all children live in families that love, nurture and protect them. This year's recipients are:

Foster Parents Award

This award was presented to Elizabeth Rodriguez and Juan Abreu, foster parents in the Good Shepherd Services' Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home Program, New York City. They care for William, 5, and James, 3, as well as their own 2-year-old son. William and James are very challenging children with multiple special needs. They were in five different foster homes prior to their placement with Rodriguez and Abreu. From the outset, these two foster parents were enormously accepting, loving and patient with the boys. They are extraordinary role models for all with whom they come into contact.

Children's Advocate Award

Recipient of the Children's Advocate Award is Christine Schoonmaker, who has served as senior director of the NYS Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center in Brooklyn for 10 years. She has committed herself to making sure that children who have been physically and sexually abused will not be further traumatized by the intervening systems designed to help these children.

She was instrumental in implementing the Child Abuse Medical Provider Program, the NYS Forensic

Interviewing Best Practice Guidelines and training course, the Child Abuse and Children with Disabilities CD-Rom, and other important initiatives. Her approach to helping individuals and agencies working with child victims can best be summed up as: “Whatever they need to provide better outcomes for kids is what we will do.”

Program Leader

Joy Griffith of OCFS, who has led the Healthy Families New York Home Visiting Program (HFNY) since it began in 1995, received the Program Leader Award. More than 550 staff at community-based HFNY sites and the three-agency central administration team, and the thousands of families they serve, benefit from her supportive, strength-based leadership. She has seen that the sites’ program managers and state partners play an active role in decision-making; helped to initiate and continue the HFNY Home Visiting Council; led HFNY’s credentialing as a Healthy Families America state system; and serves on the national Healthy Families America (HFA) State Leaders Advisory Committee.

Offering voluntary home visiting during pregnancy and immediately after a child is born, HFNY is a program that works. Findings from a stringent, randomized trial evaluation show positive outcomes for high-risk families of young children, both in children’s health and development and in parents’ positive, non-abusive parenting.

Program Leader

Also honored with the Program Leader Award was OCFS Executive Deputy Commissioner Larry Brown, who previously served as deputy commissioner for the OCFS Division of Development a& Prevention Services. He has worked tirelessly for more than 25 years in New York State government to better the lives of the thousands of vulnerable children and families who receive child welfare services each year.

Brown demonstrates daily his ability to manage, and at the same time provides leadership that inspires others. He leads by example and is able to communicate a vision for child welfare, in a way that makes others want to rise to the occasion. He clearly articulates that the work of child welfare is about what happens between the caseworker and the family, and the rest of the system is here to support and empower that relationship. Brown has promoted the child-centered, family-focused model of practice that emphasizes family engagement, with youth and parents – birth, foster and adoptive parents – as true partners in the planning process.

[Back to news main page](#)

###

[OCFS Home](#) | [About OCFS](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Use Disclaimer](#) | [Site Map](#) | [OCFS on Facebook](#)

New York State Office of Children and Family Services · 52 Washington Street · Rensselaer, New York
12144-2834

