

# Talbot County DSS Achieves National Accreditation

The Department of Social Services in Talbot County has achieved national accreditation through the New York-based Council on Accreditation (COA) for their children and family services, including foster care and adoptive services. Organizations pursue accreditation to demonstrate the implementation of best practice standards in the field of human services.

COA accreditation is an objective, independent, and reliable validation of an agency's performance. The COA accreditation process involves a detailed review and analysis of an organization's administration, management, and service delivery functions against international standards of best practice. The standards driving accreditation ensure that services are well-coordinated, culturally competent, evidence-based, outcomes-oriented, and provided by a skilled and supported workforce.

To achieve COA accreditation, these agencies first provided written evidence of compliance with the COA Standards. Thereafter, a group of specially trained volunteer Peer Reviewers confirmed adherence to these standards during a series of on-site interviews with trustees, staff and clients. Based on their findings, COA's volunteer-based Accreditation Commission voted that the Talbot, Caroline, and Kent County Departments of Social Services had successfully met the criteria for accreditation.

April Sharp, director of the Talbot County Department of Social Services, comments about her agency's re-accreditation by COA, "Similar to other accreditations for hospitals and schools, we wanted to be sure, as a human service agency, that we have demonstrated the highest level of national best practice standards for the people we service who are in need."

A board member of the Talbot County Department of Social Services Advisory Board, Walt Cuttler, adds, "They voluntarily submitted themselves for accreditation. They do a great job in all they do. They work as a team and set goals to achieve these positive results. This contributes to the organization's success."

COA provided a Final Accreditation Report to Talbot DSS in June 2014. The Council stated in this report,

"The administrator and senior staff are extremely competent. The administration sets a tone for collaboration, respect, and positive problem solving that all others in the organization emulate. The palpable respect for the customers and work comes from the top."

The community partnerships are robust, dedicated to the well-being the community, and cover gaps in services. The leadership of this agency is very knowledgeable about and committed to the mission and work of the agency. The leadership is fully invested in the PQI process and staff can point to issues that have been resolved through that process. The community stakeholders are very invested in the mission of the agency.

Leadership of this agency makes cooperation with the community, including neighboring county DSS's, a goal and priority of the work. These counties are exemplary in not only the processes they use for collaboration, but the respect they have for each other. Because of this, families and individuals in all three

counties are well-served.

The customers of this DSS are a unique strength of the agency. They clearly feel as if they own the agency and feel that it can be relied upon to help them with difficulties. They are attached to staff at all levels and are wonderful community ambassadors for the DSS."

Two other Eastern Shore counties, Caroline and Kent counties, are among the seven counties in Maryland to achieve COA accreditation which will be in effect until January 2018.

*Founded in 1977, COA is an independent, not-for-profit accreditor of the full continuum of community-based behavioral health care and social service organizations in the United States and Canada. Over 2,000 organizations — voluntary, public, and proprietary; local and statewide; large and small — have either successfully achieved COA accreditation or are currently engaged in the process. Presently, COA has a total of 47 service standards that are applicable to over 125 different types of programs. To learn more about COA, please visit [www.COAnet.org](http://www.COAnet.org).*



*Pictured are members of the Talbot County DSS Advisory Board who recently celebrated the accreditation by COA with a staff picnic in Idlewild Park in Easton, MD. Pictured left to right are Advisory Board member Walt Cuttler, Susan Moore, Assistant Director of TCDSS; Daphan Smith, Advisory Board member; Connie Loffler, Advisory Board member; April Sharp, Director of TCDSS; and Bernice Orelano, Advisory Board member.*

Highlights

# Round Two of The Affordable Care Act: What to Expect in Talbot



## Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise specified, all events take place at TCDSS, 301 Bay Street, Unit 5, Easton, MD

### November

**November is National Adoption Month**

**TCDSS Program Presentation for Elected Leaders**

11/18/14 8:30– 9:30am  
Talbot County DSS

**Maryland Health Exchange Open Enrollment– General Public**

11/19/14

### December

**Foster Care Informational Meeting:**

12/4/14, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.,  
Kent County DSS  
For more information contact  
410-820-7371.

**Foster Care Informational Meeting:**

12/18/14, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.,  
Talbot County DSS  
For more information contact  
410-820-7371.

### January

**Foster Care Informational Meeting:**

1/5/15, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.,  
Talbot County DSS.  
For more information contact  
410-820-7371.

**PRIDE Training**

1/14/15– 2/7/15 Wed. and Sat  
Talbot County DSS  
For more information contact  
410-820-7371

**Foster Care Informational Meeting:**

1/20/15, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.,  
Dorchester County DSS.  
For more information contact  
410-820-7371

This November we start round two of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Open enrollment for the Qualified Health Plans (QHP's) will run from November 15<sup>th</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>. As always, Medical Assistance is available year round to those who qualify. Talbot County saw almost one thousand QHP applications during the last open enrollment period.

QHP's are available to most families and individuals who do not qualify for Medical Assistance. They can be purchased on the Maryland Health Care Exchange (MHC). For families and individuals whose income is less than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level, tax rebates and/or cost sharing may be available. The plans come with several different levels of coverage.

This year, it is anticipated, the open enrollment period will not be fraught with the website issues we encountered last year. Maryland has purchased the Connecticut system. This system has been successfully used in Connecticut since the beginning of the ACA. It is an exciting change for Maryland as it will change how we do business.

The Connecticut system is “without borders”. The system will take all applications into a pool and workers throughout the state will pull cases from the pool for processing. We will no longer consider the county when completing the applications in the system. It is felt this will best utilize the available workers throughout the state in order to get the applications processed in the shortest amount of time.

Consumers will be able to apply online in the new system. Assistance will be available at Social Services and the Health Department for those who are unsure of their computer skills. Navigators and Assisters will also be available to assist at outreach events and other spots throughout Talbot County. Paper applications will be available through the Call Center on a limited basis. Customers applying for a medical plan through the SAIL website will automatically be diverted to the MHC website.

We look forward to this new system. As always TCDSS will continue to strive to provide the best customer service for its citizens. It is our goal to have quality healthcare available to everyone.

*The online application can be found at [www.marylandsail.org](http://www.marylandsail.org).  
The navigator is happy to take questions at 443-510-0069.*

## Would you like to know more about programs available at DSS?

Are you a part of an agency, civic organization, business or local church that would like to learn more about some of our programs?

Talbot County DSS is actively recruiting and educating the community about the need for support of our foster youth. This can come in a variety of different ways from becoming a Resource Parents (foster parents) to providing a donated service or even teaching a workshop in your area of expertise. We can even share with you information about some local partnerships that are also in need of support. Staff at the agency is willing to come to your organizations meetings, services or events and provide information tables, content for newsletters, group presentations and one on one meetings.

In addition to presentations regarding foster care we are also able to present on all of our various programs. Recently local organizations have requested programs from our Child Advocacy Center, Child Protective Services, In-Home Family Services, Child Support, Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program and Family Investment Programs.

**Please contact Paris Quillet, Special Projects Coordinator at 410-770-5870, [paris.quillet@maryland.gov](mailto:paris.quillet@maryland.gov) if you are interested in scheduling a presentation.**

# Talbot County 2014 Adoptive Family of the Year



Talbot County DSS takes an opportunity to select a family each year to be honored during National Adoption Month in November. We submit one family each October to DHR to be included in the state wide recognition. DHR provides this family with a commemorative plaque and a \$150 gift card. At Talbot DSS we also organize a celebration event where we recognize this family and present them with their plaque and gift card. This year's event will be at Clay Baker's in Easton, MD on November 1<sup>st</sup>. The event allows the department to recognize our adoptive family and celebrate all of our TCDSS Resource families. The family selected for FY14 is Greg and Chrissy Taney of Easton, MD.

Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center (TCCAC) has been providing services to citizens of Talbot County as well as the Mid-Shore since 2003. During the eleven years in operation, TCCAC has consistently provided forensic medical exams, forensic interviews, weekly multi-disciplinary team case staffings, mental health services and family advocate services. Public and private agencies have committed personnel to the TCCAC Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT). The MDT includes local law enforcement departments, the Talbot County State's Attorney's Office, medical staff, family advocate, Department of Social Services' CPS workers, mental health therapist and the CAC coordinator.

A large component of the TCCAC is the Mid-Shore Medical Program, which services Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Dorchester and Caroline Counties. The Mid-Shore Medical Program develops and implements best practice strategies to support sexual abuse/assault victims in the State of Maryland. The purpose of the medical examination is to ensure the health and safety of the child; to reassure the child and the non-offending caregiver about what has happened to the patient's body; to diagnose and treat any medical condition; and to identify and document findings.

TCCAC was fully accredited in 2007 and reaccredited in June 2012 by the National Children's Alliance. The number of services to children provided at the TCCAC has remained steady over the last four years; 54 services were provided in 2010, 65 services were provided in 2011, 55 services were provided in 2012, and 70 services were provided in 2013.

TCCAC contracts with an experienced, trauma informed mental health provider. This is essential in delivering services to the Mid-Shore Region for non-offending caregivers as well as individual services to families and children. Groups for female teen survivors, as well as adult survivors of child sexual abuse are also led by the mental health therapist.

TCCAC is a program of the Talbot County Department of Social Services and the above mentioned services are exclusively grant funded. The above services are necessary for victims and their family's to continue with the hope and healing process.

**If you are interested in volunteering with the TCCAC, please contact Kami Morris at 410-820-7141.**



**Pictured above from left: Keirra Taney, Greg Taney, Chrissy Taney and Cassidy Taney (in the front)**

Mr. and Mrs. Taney have a special dedication to those children who are in need of loving and supportive homes. They first became licensed for foster care and adoption following the placement of their two nieces, Keirra and Cassidy, into their home. Mr. and Mrs. Taney legally adopted Keirra and Cassidy in 2014. Also, in the past year, Mr. and Mrs. Taney have taken another child into their home, who they are also working towards adopting. Mr. and Mrs. Taney have been an outstanding resource for their two nieces, providing them with a loving, nurturing, and stable home. Both children are thriving in the adoptive household. Our Department is happy to see such a successful adoption and wishes them well in their future endeavors and adoptions to come.

## Talbot DSS and DHR: Affirming Practice, Policy and Training with LGBTQ Youth

Talbot County Department of Social Services in collaboration with the MD Department of Human Resources (DHR) is committed to continue moving toward LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning) affirming practices, polices and statewide training to ensure competent child welfare practice with our LGBTQ population.

Beginning in April 2013, through DHR’s contract with University of Maryland School of Social Work, LGBTQ training was offered to child welfare staff and our Resource Home providers. As part of our placement provider contracts DHR requires that all LGBTQ youth be linked with an organization and other networks that can support the youth’s identity and culture.

In January 2014, DHR requested technical assistance through the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections on effectively working with the LGBTQ; through this technical assistance DHR has begun to revise policies and trainings to include the sensitive needs for this population.

Talbot DSS is in full support of this effort and has staff assigned to the DHR workgroup to develop and evaluate these changes in policy, practice and training. Talbot’s work with the Thrive @ 25 grant also has a targeted interest in LGBTQ youth’s unique challenges to housing opportunities. A local team from Talbot consisting of DSS leadership, attorney’s and a Thrive @25 researcher recently participated in the LGBTQ Court Summit sponsored by Maryland Court Improvement Project. This summit aimed to educate judges, masters, DHR, local department leaders and attorneys on LGBTQ youth. From this summit an action plan for Talbot County was developed.

Maryland is confident that with increased awareness and knowledge child welfare staff, resource parents and providers will be able to effectively and competently meet the needs of LGBTQ youth and their families.

## Customer Service Excellence Award 2014: Deborah Sampson



Photo captured at 2014 Customer Service Excellence Luncheon

From Left: Jena Spurry, TCDSS FIA Supervisor, Karen Butler, President of MASSD, Ted Dallas, DHR Secretary, Carnitra White, Deputy Secretary for Programs, April Sharp, TCDSS Director and Deborah Sampson, 2014 Award Winner

Talbot County Department of Social Services selected Deborah Sampson as the 2014 Customer Excellence Award recipient. Mrs. Sampson has provided service to Talbot County customers in the FIA unit for over 33 years. Her respect for customers, knowledge on programs and willingness to help is unmatched by her peers. Deborah displays exceptional performance and gives 110% to her customers and peers under all circumstances. Her consistency is admirable, providing the same care and attention to each case and customer equally. Mrs. Sampson is hard working, dedicated, dependable and possess integrity. She also has a smile for her coworkers and is described as our “unsung hero”. She is a daily reminder of who we are, what we do and who we serve.



From the Directors Desk.....

Meeting the service needs for an expanding aging population is a problem facing communities across the nation. Population increases for individuals over the age of 65 combined with increasing disabling conditions as individuals’ age are taxing the service providers in the areas of health, housing, transportation, and financial assistance programs.

Talbot County is one of three counties in Maryland where over 20 per cent of the population is over the age of 65. Talbot’s percentage is 23.7. It is projected to increase to 36 percent by 2020. Programs that support the needs of our aging citizens have not increased to meet these growing demands.

Adult Services Policy and Practice Initiative is a new practice model for the Adult Services Programs at the Department of Social Services. The goal of this model is to position the Adult Services programs to meet the demand for services for a growing adult population in a time of limited public resources, and to support the capacity of staff to deliver these services as efficiently as possible.

Caseload Priority Analysis promotes regular and periodic analysis of clients’ risk, needs, and strengths with service plans that have concrete objectives and clear paths for ending case management involvement upon their achievement. Family Centered and Community Based Practice promotes active engagement of the individual’s natural supports and enhancement of private and public community agencies so that provision of support and assistance is a true partnership between the Department, the Adult, and the community.

Like Thanksgiving dinner with many unique and tasty dishes, the needs of the elderly in our community call for a variety of services from a host of providers. To that end we are engaging a multitude of community partners to build on the strengths of agency partnerships and jointly pursue opportunities to build resource capacity in Talbot County. We will keep you updated as this initiative unfolds.



In the event that we can not meet your emergent needs we can provide you a referral to The Neighborhood Service Center, St. Vincent De Paul or other community resources. It may also be required you seek additional resources and apply for programs of which you may be eligible for to receive Emergency Services.

Dear Missing Link,

I have recently found myself in an unstable financial situation. My household bills have all become months behind and I am facing shut-offs. What types of emergencies can I receive help with?

Sincerely,  
Overwhelmed Resident

Dear Missing Link,

I am a teller at a local bank and an elderly customer of mine was recently escorted to the bank by an unfamiliar man. He appeared to be coercing her to withdraw a large sum of money from her account. They were not violating any of the bank policies but I wonder is there something else I should do?

Sincerely,  
Concerned Teller

Dear Overwhelmed Resident,

You can receive help with a number of emergencies such as utility disconnection, current court order evictions, foreclosures and prescription medications. These services are in place to help individuals experiencing tough times due to unexpected circumstance. Applicants must be able to maintain their household expenses with reliable income under normal circumstances. They are not structured to help ongoing, but can help you in an emergency and you may be eligible to access this program once every 24 months.

In order to qualify for assistance you will need to provide proof of income and expenses for the entire household from the past 30 days. Household members are defined as anyone who is residing within the home.

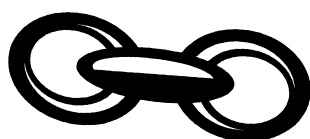
You are also required to provide the emergency, for example a disconnection notice, court order for eviction or foreclosure, prescriptions for medication (non-opioid only) and any additional documentation that provides proof of a valid emergency for the additional services.

Dear Concerned Teller,

Banks are mandated reporters. Effective October 2013, the law, informally known as Project SAFE (Stop Adult Financial Exploitation), requires banking institutions to report when/if they suspect that a customer is a victim of fraud or financial exploitation.

Banking Institutions are required to report the suspicions to the local department of social services if the customer is a vulnerable adult. If the adult is not vulnerable, information should be reported to the state's attorney's office, or the local law enforcement agency.

**Please contact Talbot County Department of Social Services at 410-770-4848 and request to speak to an intake worker to make this report.**



**Highlights from Talbot DSS**  
**Talbot County Department of Social Services**

April Sharp, Director  
Paris Quillet, Editor  
Amy Steward, Contributor

**Board of Directors:**

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CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT



NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

ACCREDITED MEMBER

301 Bay Street Unit #5  
Easton, Maryland 21601  
[www.dhr.state.md.us/talbot.htm](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/talbot.htm)  
Phone: 410-770-4848  
Fax: 410-820-7117  
Email: [talbdss.talbotcountydss1@maryland.gov](mailto:talbdss.talbotcountydss1@maryland.gov)

**Maryland Department of Human Resources**

311 W. Saratoga Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201  
1-800-332-6347  
TTY 1-410-767-7025  
[www.dhr.state.md.us](http://www.dhr.state.md.us)

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