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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |  
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Transmittal No: 95 LCM-45

Date: April 24, 1995

Division: Division of Services  
and Community  
Development  
&  
Management Support  
and Quality  
Improvement

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Training Video Series: Working with Alcohol and Substance  
Affected Families

ATTACHMENTS: There are no attachments to this LCM

Under separate cover, you will be receiving a copy of the video series entitled: Working with Alcohol and Substance-Affected Families and a facilitator's discussion guide for each of the videos. We anticipate the distribution to occur some time in early June.

Since the arrival of crack/cocaine in the early 80's, there has been an alarming increase in the presence of substance abuse in the families that are served through the child welfare system. In the Department's 1992 preventive services study entitled Families in the Child Welfare System: Foster Care and Preventive Services in the Nineties, parental substance abuse was reported for over half of the families of children who entered foster care and almost half of the families of children who began receiving preventive services in 1990.

Due to workload and other resource constraints, local social services districts and voluntary agencies are often unable to free up significant numbers of staff for other than core requirement training activities. Districts have requested support from the Department for local training initiatives. In addition to funding a limited number of specialized local trainings, about five years ago the Division of Services and Community Development decided to develop a video training series on substance abuse that could be used by local agencies to provide basic information to their caseworkers.

These videos complete the five-video series produced by the Department on the topic of substance abuse for casework, child care and supervisory staff to help improve their ability to provide comprehensive casework intervention to substance-affected families. The video entitled Crack/Cocaine: Implications for Child Welfare was the first of the series to be developed; it was distributed to local districts and voluntary agencies in the Spring of 1993.

The Working with Alcohol and Substance-Affected Families series was developed for the Department under contract with Mountainview Productions and the Center for Development of Human Services at the State University College at Buffalo. The series includes the following videos:

Identifying Substance Abuse presents information on what substance abuse and chemical dependency are and the current trends of usage in the United States and New York in particular. Causes and risk factors for addiction are discussed, and the special risks for women of child-bearing age and adolescents are highlighted. The video and facilitator's guide give information on the nature of the effects of drug and alcohol usage. The biopsychosocial consequences for dependency are enumerated, as is the rebound effect and its role in the cycle of addiction. Indicators of substance abuse which can be observed by the case worker are given, and the impact of substance abuse on family functioning is explored.

Assessment expands on the information presented in video 1. The impact on family functioning is depicted through family vignettes. Home visits by caseworkers are dramatized, and strategies for beginning to assess the needs of the family and child safety issues are introduced.

Intervention shows caseworkers intervening with substance abusing family members. The video illustrates strategies for approaching the topic of drug and alcohol abuse. Ways to counteract refusal of treatment and positive actions the caseworkers can take to facilitate the chemically dependent person's entry into and continued use of treatment are shown.

Recovery and Relapse Prevention discusses critical issues in recovery and relapse prevention. It explores myths and attitudes that can stall the recovery process, explains triggers or stressors that contribute to relapse, and offers strategies for caseworkers to use to aid in recovery.

As you know, the Division's basic course on substance abuse is the four day comprehensive curriculum developed by the Child Welfare League of America from the recommendations of the North American Commission on Chemical Dependency and Child Welfare. CDHS at SUC Buffalo will deliver the four day Working with Alcohol and Substance Affected Families course this year. This video series is not intended to take the place of the basic course, but rather serve as a means for staff to share knowledge and expertise gained through other coursework or casework experience with one another. For this

reason, staff who have attended the four day course should be encouraged to view these videos with others who have not had the opportunity of "live" training. Their input to discussions and sharing additional resource material from the comprehensive course will certainly increase the value of the video series.

We also strongly recommend that agencies seek the assistance of someone well-versed in substance abuse issues to help present the videos and process the information. Agencies may have established relationships with treatment providers in their district who would be willing to co-facilitate sessions around the videos. If such a resource is not readily available to a district, the district could contact their County Mental Health agency or Local Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs to ascertain their willingness to assist. Not only will such staff be an invaluable resource should questions arise beyond the scope of information contained in the videos but also provide insight and information concerning the local treatment capacity and referral mechanisms.

If you have any questions, please call Jayne Stillwell, Division of Services and Community Development, at 1-800-343-8859, extension 6-3448 or (518) 486-3448. If you wish to borrow additional copies, please contact Karen Gaskell at the Social Services Materials Resource Center at 1-800-343-8859, extension 2-8320 or (518) 472-8320.

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Peter D. Miraglia  
Director  
Office of Human Resource  
Development

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Anona Joseph  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Services and  
Community Development