Child Welfare and Substance Abuse Committee

In 2001, the Legislature’s Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services established the Child Welfare Substance Abuse (CWSA) committee with a focus on building a seamless system of policies and programs between the state’s child welfare system and substance abuse providers.

A goal of this committee has been to enhance family well-being and decrease the length of time for establishing permanency by:

* Ensuring that all families identified as having substance abuse issues and who are placing their children at risk have access to timely assessments and treatment access; and
* Ensuring that all families whose substance abuse have placed their children at risk are engaged and retained in treatment through inter-system collaboration that includes clear and consistent communication mechanisms.

The CWSA members believed that a uniform screening tool and a consistent process for assessments would result in earlier detection, intervention and treatment of substance abuse issues. Subsequently, the committee developed the Substance Abuse and Child Welfare Screening and Assessment (SA-CW S & A) protocol and the Families Affected by Substance Abuse (FASA) network were developed. The FASA network consists of licensed substance abuse professionals who are trained to administer this assessment and make recommendations for the appropriate level of intervention and treatment for child welfare cases.

Current training initiatives include: a) orientation and certification in the use of the SA-CW S & A, and b) training for DHHS supervisors in how to help caseworkers recognize and respond to family substance abuse and mental health issues.  More detailed information about this work can be obtained from Maryann Ryan, in SAMHS’ Division of Treatment Services, maryann.ryan@maine.gov