

Maryland Resource Parents Association

www.mrpa.org

PLAN OF WORK FOR 2015-2016

Mission

MRPA supports the development of local Resource Parent Associations and coordinates training opportunities and recognition events for our members. We serve as a liaison with the SSA to advocate for the rights and concerns of all Maryland's resource families and assure responsiveness. As a result of our collective efforts, resource families are encouraged, supported, and skilled in providing quality care to children.

The MRPA is specifically chartered to:

- Advocate for Resource/Foster Parents
- Evaluate/Provide and Support Training for Resource/Foster Parents
- Develop a Statewide Support Network for Resource/Foster Parents

Specific Goals for 2015-2016

1. More effectively advocate for the needs of Maryland Resource parents by providing technical assistance to appropriate government committees and effective communication of broad social issues that impact resource parents.
2. Support the development of vibrant, effective local associations in all jurisdictions.
3. Implement the communication strategy for MRPA bringing increased awareness of MRPA activities at all levels including local associations, local departments, and the general membership.
4. More effectively engage local jurisdictions in MRPA committees and activities.
5. Conduct regional conferences in partnership with SSA, the University of Maryland, and other team members to educate and raise awareness on issues pertaining to the needs of

Maryland's at-risk children. The MRPA will provide training upon request to local associations and/or local DSS's

6. Promote awareness of the unique educational issues and challenges that face Maryland's at-risk children of school age.

Teaming Relationships

The MRPA will actively seek to work collaboratively with all local Department of Social Services to strengthen the mutually shared responsibility and partnerships needed to provide for the safety, permanency and wellbeing of Maryland's most at risk children from birth to 21 years old. MRPA key stakeholders include resource parents, foster teens and the community. The MRPA will seek technical support from social workers, medical professions, the business community, DHR/SSA staff, teachers, the Maryland Department of Education, the Maryland Resource Parent PTA, local department administration and staff, National PTA and the National Foster Parent Association. The Maryland Resource Parent Association will encourage all resource parents and providers to consider themselves effective partners with the Social Service Administration as we provide care to achieve the best possible outcome for our children.

Basic Operations

In order to operate more effectively and to provide broad support across all MRPA activities, the Association shall provide the following:

- Accounting and bookkeeping activities conducted by a licensed professional.
- Maintain teleconferencing and web-conferencing capability to reduce travel expenses and provide increased opportunities for geographically dispersed membership to participate in MRPA meetings and committees.
- Maintain a web presence via a website and social networking tools that are effective in 1) representing MRPA to the public; and 2) communicating MRPA activities internally to members and committees.
- Procure and distribute lockboxes for resource parents' use in securing medicines so they are not accessible to children in foster care, and provide training in Medicine precautions.
- Provide insurance as required for MRPA activities.

- Make available a toll-free telephone number to provide general information to resource parents, including public foster parents. This number will be publicized on MRPA’s website and on brochures.
- Purchase of supplies, equipment, and software required for basic operations
- Travel funding for MRPA officers to support basic operations.
- Provide the grant monitor a quarterly report of the progress of the Plan of Work and utilization of the grant funds. Two of these meetings will be conducted by telephone conference and two will be in person at the DHR offices.

In support of Goal #2 “*Support the development of vibrant, effective local associations in all jurisdictions*” For the sake of efficiency, MRPA may structure some of those activities in basic operations to be able to provide that support. For example, MRPA may expand its web presence to include a web presence for local affiliates as opposed to providing funding for local associations to develop their own web sites.

2015-2016 Initiatives and Activities

In addition to basic operating expenses, the MRPA shall fund and support the following activities that are aligned to current-year and long-term organizational goals, as follows:

Goal 1: More effectively advocate for the needs of Maryland resource parents by providing technical assistance to appropriate government committees and effective communication of broad social issues that impact resource parents.

Initiatives:

- MRPA will participate with the Department of Human Resources in the development of policies that support recent (2012) proposed changes to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). MRPA will seek to advocate that policies ensure that resource parents are informed and treated with respect when a decision to close a resource home due to lack of placements or lack of need are being considered.

Goal 2: *Support the development of vibrant, effective local associations in all jurisdictions.*

Initiatives:

- MRPA will seek to assist all local associations to receive individual 501©(3) exemption, unless those associations have already undertaken a 501 ©(3) determination.
- MRPA will provide basic services to facilitate operations to those local associations whose goals and activities are closely aligned to those of MRPA. That support is to include: development and hosting of websites for local affiliated, providing accounting packages to include consults with the MRPA accountant for local associates, provide telecommunication and /or web conferencing services to promote more effective meetings for local associations, and provide targeted training for local association officers and board members.
- MRPA will consult with local association and target need areas as they arise. MRPA will develop a “Jurisdictional Notebook” with all required filings and deadlines. A digital copy will be maintained by MRPA.

Goal 3: *Implement an effective communications strategy for MRPA to increase awareness of MRPA activities at all levels including local associations, local departments, and the general membership.*

Initiatives:

- MRPA will implement a long-term Strategic Thinking Process
- MRPA will continue a comprehensive communications strategy that supports the strategic thinking and budget guidelines and is aligned with current year goals and objectives.
- Aligned with the communications strategy, MRPA will continue to improve its web-presence to include tools to manage and communicate more effectively with its members and local affiliates. An E-Newsletter will be published quarterly
- MRPA will collaborate with the SSA to organize and plan an annual State wide Resource Parent recognition even in May of 2016. MRPA will establish a committee and receive SSA guidance as it manages the detailed coordination of the event.

Goal 4: *More effectively engage local jurisdictions in MRPA committees and activities.*

Initiatives:

- To promote inclusion, share information, communicate and provide training upon request. Members of the MRPA will visit local Resource Parent Associations as well as nonmember resource parents and local DSSs.
- MRPA will plan initiatives to incentivize increased participation in MRPA activities.

Goal 5: *Conduct regional conferences in partnership with SSA, the University of Maryland, and other team members to educate and raise awareness on issues pertaining to the needs of Maryland’s at-risk children.*

- The MRPA will sponsor two regional conferences with the planning assistance from the local DSS, the local Foster Parent Association and DHR/SSA. The MRPA will work with local associations, local departments, and DHR to focus these conferences on issues/areas that are of most concern and benefit for resource families. (Hagerstown Community College in October 2015, Wye Mills 2016)
- The MRPA will develop a working relationship with all of the local DSSs and encourage their support for regional conferences.

Goal 6: *Promote awareness of the unique educational issues and challenges that face Maryland's at-risk children of school age.*

Initiatives:

- The MRPA will seek invitations to attend both the State and the Local Teen Advisory Councils to make presentations and seek their input concerning teen support and provide feedback from foster parents concerning their expectations.
- The MRPA will support DHR/SSA in all of its efforts to address the issues relating to teen care and teen transitioning. The association will use an inclusive team approach that will bring together a diverse array of human resources to support new and creative SSA initiatives. The MRPA will seek to be included in some of the internal planning efforts to support our teens.
- The MRPA will provide training upon request of local resource parents and local Departments of Social Services

Special Projects

The MRPA will conduct two special projects during the year specifically aimed at promoting awareness among the membership of MRPA and foster/adoptive issues. One of the projects will be identified by the Board, in close collaboration with SSA and the SSA grant monitor. The other projects will be to purchase and distribute medicine lock boxes for resource parents. (Adoption Event in November and End of Summer Bash at Cascade Lake in August)

Monthly Monitor Reports

The MRPA financial officer and Executive board member shall submit to the SSA monitor a quarterly income and expense report to review the spending activities and to also review the progress of the implementation of the 2015-2016 Plan of Work. The monitor shall receive the

reports subsequent to the most recent Board of Directors meeting no later than 7 days. The MRPA will provide the monitor with copies of Quarterly Income and Expense financial reports (and other financial documents that may have been distributed) as provided to the MRPA Board of Directors for their review. All documents pertaining to insurance, 501(C) (3) status and the filing of IRS required forms will be made available to the monitor.

Annual Meeting

At least one of the MRPA's monthly Board of Directors meetings will be held at the Department of Human Resources headquarters annually.

Outcomes

- Increased awareness of MRPA and MRPA's mission amongst foster parents and local Departments.
- Increased participation of local associations in MRPA activities and committees.
- Partnerships between education entities and foster parents will be strengthened.
- MRPA will have a more robust web presence.
- More effective communication with SSA monitor and more effective execution and report of funding to the monitor.
- Resource parents will become more informed about supporting foster children in the educational process.
- There will be increased financial accountability reporting to the SSA monitor.
- There will be increased training opportunities for Resource Parents in Maryland