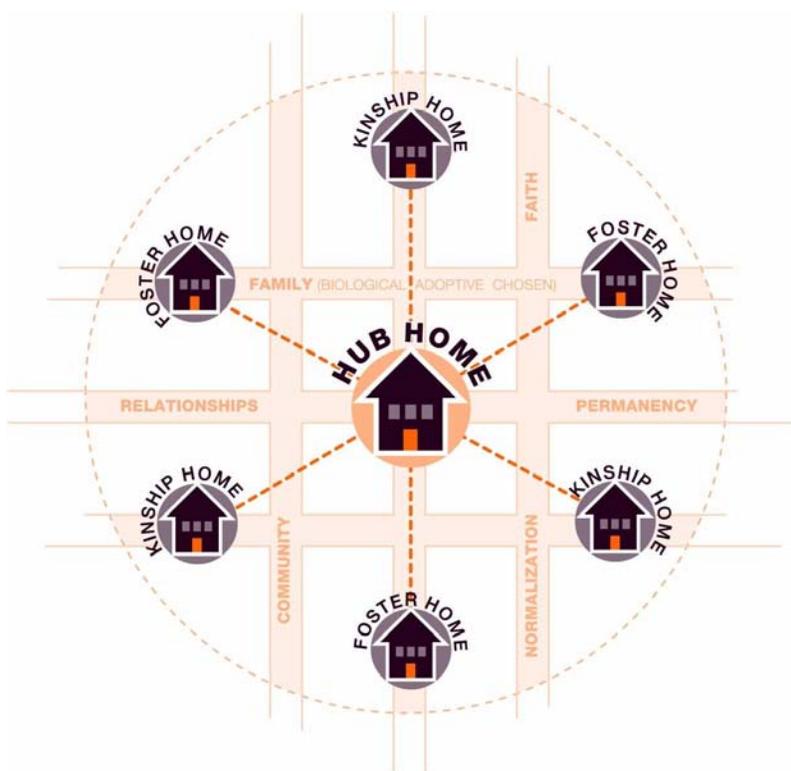




# Mockingbird Family Model

## 2009 MANAGEMENT REPORT ON PROGRAM OUTCOMES

JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009



October 1, 2010

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# Mockingbird Family Model

## 2009 MANAGEMENT REPORT ON PROGRAM OUTCOMES

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009

#### Background and Introduction

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), which was signed into law in 1997, defined the national goals for children in the child welfare system to be safety, permanency and well-being and called for “innovative approaches” in order to achieve these results.<sup>1</sup>

Jim Theofelis, executive director of The Mockingbird Society, and licensed therapist, listened when children, youth and families who had come to the attention of the foster care system expressed the need for strong positive relationships and a sense of family connectedness; and he responded by envisioning an innovative approach to foster care service delivery, the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM). The MFM is a way for child welfare agencies (Host Agencies both public and private) to structure foster care service delivery that uses an extended family concept. Doing so has mitigated the less than holistic decision making that results in multiple placement changes, the separation of siblings in care, less than optimal culturally relevant practice, and the sense of isolation and lack of support too often experienced by children, youth and caregivers.

The Mockingbird Society is a 501 c3 agency, established in 2001 and based in Seattle, Washington. The mission of The Mockingbird Society is to *create a world-class foster care system through collaboration, innovation and advocacy*. The Mockingbird Society shares the ASFA goals and supports their attainment with both legislative and practice change advocacy. This executive summary delineates the primary outcomes of one key program of The Mockingbird Society, the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM), which is an emerging new practice with the potential to restructure the way foster care is delivered nationally.

The MFM structure is comprised of a cohort of six to ten licensed foster and/or kinship families (Satellite Families) and the six to 18 children ages birth to 21 years for whom they are caring (a Constellation). This Constellation structure is implemented by a public or private child welfare agency (Host Agency) that provides case management services to children in care and licensing supervision to participating foster parents. Each Constellation is supported by an experienced licensed support caregiver (Hub Home Parent). The Hub Home Parent’s role is to provide support to children and families including relationship-based respite care as needed, peer mentoring and coaching, and to convene monthly support group meetings and host social activities to facilitate the development of a sense of community amongst children and caregivers.

The first MFM Constellation was launched in 2004 with funding from Washington State Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) as a proof of concept pilot. The number of Constellations and children, youth and caregivers participating has increased annually. The MFM was formally

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<sup>1</sup> Log No. ACYF-CB-PI-98-02. US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. 1/8/1998. Accessed on July 8, 2009: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/pi/1998/pi9802.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/1998/pi9802.htm)

evaluated by the University Of Washington School Of Social Work's Northwest Institute for Children and Families for program years 2004, 2005, 2006 and January to June 2007. These evaluation reports are available on The Mockingbird Society's website:

[www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)

In 2009, five Host Agencies (some public and others private) were replicating the Mockingbird Family Model in 15 sites: seven Constellations in the State of Washington, six in the District of Columbia and two in Louisville, Kentucky. In 2009 (January 1 through December 31) 200 diverse children from ages birth to 22 years and 110 caregivers participated in the MFM. The following presents the MFM growth between 2006 and 2009 and the racial and ethnic diversity of children participating in the MFM in 2009.

All Constellations	2006*	2007*	2008	2009
Constellations	4	5	11	15
Total Families Served	22	27	69	110
Total Children Served	44	72	115	200
Ages (years)	2-18	9 mo. – 19	Birth-21	Birth to 22

\*Data from 2006 and 2007 does not include data for District of Columbia sites. There were two D.C. sites operating in 2006 and four operating in 2007. The 2007 data covers only six months of the year (January to June).

2009 All Constellations		
Race	Children/Youth	Percent
African American/Black	95	48%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6	3%
Caucasian	39	20%
Biracial	18	9%
Multiracial	14	7%
Don't Know	7	4%
Ethnicity	Children/Youth	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	35	18%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	158	79%
Other	21	11%
Don't Know	3	2%

## Data Collection Methodology

The Mockingbird Society began in 2008 to collect management data about the supports Hub Home Parents provide to Constellation children and caregivers, and the resulting outcomes. The Table below outlines the key goals and outcomes areas, the findings of which are the subject of this executive summary. The full Mockingbird Family Model 2009 Management Report on Program Outcomes is available at The Mockingbird Society website: [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

Goal	MFM Outcome
Safety	<b>Outcome 1:</b> Child Safety
Permanency	<b>Outcome 2:</b> Permanency Support
Well-Being	<b>Outcome 3:</b> Placement Stability <b>Outcome 4:</b> Sibling Connections <b>Outcome 5:</b> Culturally Relevant Care <b>Outcome 6:</b> Strong Community Connections
Caregiver Support	<b>Outcome 7:</b> Caregiver Satisfaction and Retention
Child Welfare Systems Change	<b>Outcome 8:</b> Systems Change

In 2009 outcomes data was available for nine of the 15 active Constellations (referred to in this report as Data Constellations). The other six Constellations were not included because the Host Agency does not use The Mockingbird Society's web-based data management system, Efforts to Outcomes (ETO). The outcomes reported are for 146 children/youths (73% of all children and youths) and 77 families (70% of all caregivers).

MFM Data Constellations	2009	% of Total
Number of Constellations	9	60%
Total Families Served	77	70%
Total Children Served	146	73%

**This table shows the number of children and families served in the nine Data Constellations as well as the percentage of the total Constellations that these Data Constellations represent.**

Race	Children and Youth	Data Constellations
African American/Black	45	31%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6	4%
Caucasian	39	27%
Biracial	18	12%
Multiracial	14	10%
Other	21	14%

This chart summarizes the race of the children and youth in the nine 2009 MFM Data Constellations.

This chart summarizes the ethnicity of the children and youth in the nine 2009 MFM Data Constellations.

Ethnicity	Children/Youth	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	32	22%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	107	73%
Don't Know	7	5%

Age	Children/Youth	Percent
0-5 years	34	23%
6-10 years	33	23%
11-15 years	41	28%
16-20 years	34	23%
21-25 years	3	2%
Don't Know	1	1%
Total	146	100%

The nine MFM Data Constellations serve children and youth from birth through 22 years of age.

## 2009 MFM Outcomes Results

The following summarizes the key outcomes reported about MFM data from the 2009 calendar year. The MFM outcomes results are reported for nine Constellations in five areas: under the three ASFA national goals (safety, permanency and well-being) as well as two additional goals “caregiver support” and “child welfare systems change.”

### GOAL: CHILD SAFETY

#### MFM Outcome 1: Child Safety

Safety for children and youth in care is of course the top priority nationally for the child welfare system, as it is for The Mockingbird Society. Improving safety for children in care is also a critical improvement goal identified by the Washington State Braam Oversight Panel which was created in 2004 to oversee a settlement agreement stemming from *Braam v. State of Washington* (1998).<sup>2</sup>

There were zero founded CPS referrals for caregivers in MFM Constellations in 2009.

That 100% of MFM children and youth were free from abuse and neglect exceeds the federal and Braam Panel standards of 99.68%<sup>34</sup> and the Washington State Children’s Administration results from 2008 of 99.62%.<sup>5</sup>

A total of 13,733 hours of respite were provided by Hub Home Parents to children and caregivers during 2009.

The MFM supports the goal of child safety by providing caregivers with planned respite nearly 24/7 and crisis respite as the need emerges. Research has shown that “respite services directly contribute to a reduction in the likelihood of child abuse and neglect...and contribute directly to the safety of children receiving care.”<sup>6</sup>

Child Safety  
**100% of Children and Youth are free from abuse & neglect while in the Mockingbird Family Model**



***One BRS Satellite family was experiencing a high level of stress and the threat of a placement disruption. The Hub Home Parent was able to provide crisis respite for seven days during which time she worked with both the foster child and the caregiver to resolve the situation. After the child went back to live with the family, the Hub Home Parent stayed involved and connected the family to relevant training opportunities.***

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring Report #5 – Guide to Appendices. October 1, 2008. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf> Accessed on June 2, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families “Table A: Data Indicators for Child and Family Services Review [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data\\_indicators.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data_indicators.htm). Accessed February 25, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Benefits of Planned and Crisis respite Care, National Resource Center for CBFPS Programs, fact sheet no. 9: [http://www.friendsnrc.org/download/benefits\\_repsite.pdf](http://www.friendsnrc.org/download/benefits_repsite.pdf) Accessed May 28, 2009.

## **GOAL: PERMANENCY**

Permanency for children and youth in the child welfare system is the second overarching national goal established through ASFA. Studies have shown that youth who age out of foster care without a permanent family experience a number of negative outcomes, including decreased educational attainment, increased physical and mental health problems, unemployment or underemployment and homelessness.<sup>7</sup>

### **MFM Outcome 2: Permanency Support**

The MFM supports permanency by creating more opportunities for birth family connections, supporting permanency planning meetings and creating stable placements from which permanency plans can be achieved.

Overall, 30 children/youths (21%) participating in the MFM achieved their permanency plans or made moves that were consistent with achieving permanency.

Out of these 30 children/youth who exited from foster care, 27 of them (90%) were discharged to a permanent home, comparable to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for state-level performance on this indicator (90.8%).<sup>8</sup> The biggest MFM change between 2008 and 2009 was in the rate of birth family reunifications (2% to 10%). 17 children/youths (12%) had visits with birth parents or other adults from their birth family that were organized by the Hub Home Parent; and most of those children/youth benefitted from multiple visits.

## **GOAL: CHILD WELL-BEING**

The MFM supports child well-being by creating strong support communities. Through the assistance of Hub Home Parents Constellation children have improved and normalized opportunities to build positive relationships, remain in stable placements, interact with siblings, and connect to their cultural identifications.

### **MFM Outcome 3: Placement Stability<sup>9</sup>**

Many of the negative outcomes for children and youth in foster care can be mitigated by keeping children in stable placements. In fact, research has shown that each time a child or youth in foster care changes schools up to four to six months of academic achievement are lost.<sup>10</sup>

In 2009, 83% of MFM children/youths experienced zero placement changes unrelated to their permanency goals—a stricter standard than state and federal standards.

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<sup>7</sup> Time for Reform: Aging Out and On Their Own. The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2007. P. 4.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families “Child Welfare Outcomes 2002-2005: Report to Congress – Chapter II: Finding Permanent Homes.” <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo05/chapters/chapter2.htm>. Accessed on May 12, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> The Mockingbird Society utilizes the Washington State DSHS Children’s Administration definition of placement stability which excludes runaway incidents and any placement change that is related to the permanency plan or in the “child’s best interest.”

<sup>10</sup> Blackledge, Annie. *Improving Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care*. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. <http://www.k12.wa.us/cisl/improvingoutcomes/index.htm> Accessed May 22, 2009.

The Mockingbird Society uses the Washington State DSHS definition of placement stability which does not include runaway episodes. However, data is reported on runaway episodes in this section because running can be an indicator of placement challenges. Data from 2009 indicates that the MFM helps to reduce the incidence of runaways.

In 2009, only 2 (1%) Constellation youths ran away from placement.

#### **MFM Outcome 4: Sibling Connections**

Ensuring adequate sibling contact has been challenging for foster care agencies. In a Washington State survey of foster parents in 2009, just over half (52.8%) indicated they felt there was sufficient sibling contact for their foster youth, well short of the state's 80% goal<sup>11</sup> Connecting siblings is also costly for child welfare agencies. In its 2007-2009 Biennium Budget, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services requested over \$10 million (\$5 million per year) to facilitate visits for siblings not placed in the same home.<sup>12</sup>

94% of the children and youth with siblings in the Constellation had siblings placed in the same home with them.

In 2009 54 children/youths (37%) had a sibling placed in the same Constellation. Of those: 51 children/youths (94% of those with siblings in the Constellation) had siblings placed in the same home with them. 3 children/youths (6% of those with siblings in the Constellation) had siblings placed in another home in the same Constellation resulting in increased sibling contact

#### **MFM Outcome 5: Fostering Cultural Identity**

The fact that children of color are over-represented in the Child Welfare System has been well documented.<sup>13</sup> Once in the system, they can face the additional challenge of being separated from their cultural communities. Research has shown that racial identity is important to healthy development.

106 children/youths in MFM Constellations (73%) shared a cultural identity with at least one of their caregivers.

The Constellation supports the identity development of children/youth in several ways. 85 children/youths (58% of total) benefitted from Constellation activities that helped them learn about their own or another cultural identity. Cultural activities in 2009 organized by Hub Home Parents included celebrating a Native American Thanksgiving, completing art projects for a children's exhibit at the Northwest African American Museum, "Fiestas Patrias" a local Latino cultural festival, and training on supporting LGBTQ youth.

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<sup>11</sup> FY09 Performance Report. Washington State DSHS Children's Administration. Appendix II, Braam Oversight Panel Monitoring Report #8 (March 2010). <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10appii.pdf>. Accessed on March 11, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> PL-AR Increase Visits – Program Level – 010 Children's Administration. State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services. [www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/FSA/Budget0709\\_010\\_S7PLAR.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/FSA/Budget0709_010_S7PLAR.pdf). Accessed July 14, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Hill, R.B. *An Analysis of the Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparity at the National, State, and County Levels*. Casey-CSPP Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare. Casey Family Programs. 2007.

## **MFM Outcome 6: Building Strong Community Connections**

The importance of long-term and consistent relationships is essential for the healthy social and emotional development of children and youth.<sup>1415</sup>

113 children/youths (91%) participated in Hub Home organized social activities.

There were a total of 67 social activities organized during the year across the nine Data Constellations. This means that social activities were occurring during three out of every four months for which data is available. Hub and Satellite Families participated in social activities including holiday parties, BBQ's, pool parties, pizza parties, roller skating, picnics, trips to family entertainment centers, trips to museums, aquariums, ball games, the zoo, etc.

### **GOAL: CAREGIVER SUPPORT**

The MFM helps caregivers by providing a pro-active system of peer mentoring and community support.

## **MFM Outcome 7: Caregiver Satisfaction and Retention**

Nationally the child welfare system has been experiencing a decrease in the number of licensed foster homes, even as the number of children in foster care increases.<sup>16</sup>

In 2009 the MFM caregiver loss rate was only 12% (a retention rate of 88%)

Washington State Children's Administration reports that over the last three years, the average rate of loss of foster homes has been 31%.<sup>17</sup> Nationally it is estimated that between 30% and 50% of all foster homes are lost each year.<sup>18</sup> The MFM is demonstrating substantially better retention rates than the state and national trends.

### **GOAL: CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS CHANGE**

The MFM is creating a world-class foster care system by providing a replicable holistic structure that is changing the standard for foster care service delivery.

## **MFM Outcome 8: Systems Change**

The eighth outcome of the Mockingbird Family Model is, in some ways, a compilation of the other seven. Through Host Agencies' implementation of the Mockingbird Family Model, a new model of integrated foster care service delivery is occurring. As MFM Host Agencies change

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<sup>14</sup> Albrecht, K.M & Miller, L.G. (2001), *Infant and Toddler Development*. Gryphon House, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Siegler, R.S., Deloache, J.S. and Eisenberg, N. *How Children Develop*. Worth Publishers, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> "The number of children entering foster care increased about 74 percent from 1983 to 1992. During this ten year period, the number of foster homes declined by nearly 11 percent." From: Brown, June Gibbs. *Respite Care Services for Foster Parents*. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, 1994. P. 1.

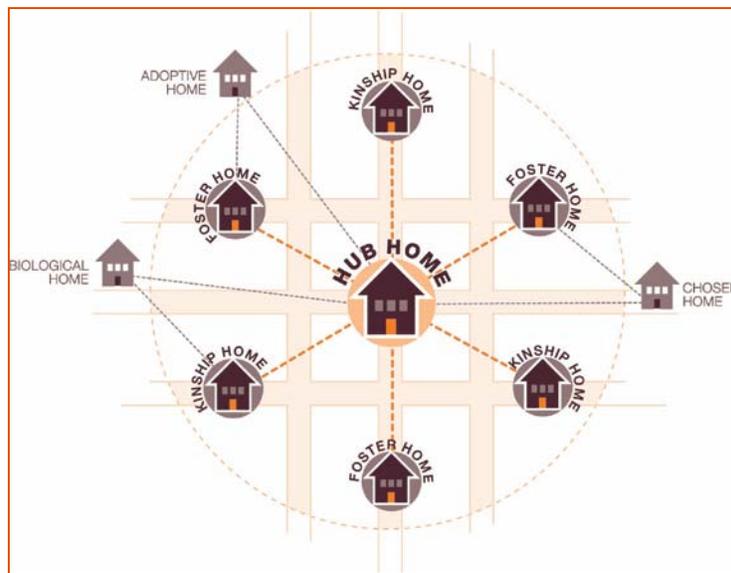
<sup>17</sup> *Annual report to the Legislature: Foster and Adoptive Home Placement RCW 74.13.031 (2)*. December 1, 2008. Department of Social & Health Services Children's Administration Division of Program & Practice Improvement. Accessed February 25, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Groves, Lora and James Kenny, PhD., "Uncovering Why Foster Parents Leave." *Fostering Families Today* (November/December 2009), p.20.

their individual practices (to become more collaborative both within agencies and within the community) and outcomes for children, youth and caregivers improve (in the direction of those documented in this executive summary), the standards for foster care are elevated.

The number of children and caregivers participating in the MFM increased by more than 50% in 2009 and the number of Constellations increased by almost 40%.

In 2009 all five participating Host Agencies added additional Constellations (comprised of the traditional format, see graphic below) and had plans to expand in 2010. One participating Host Agency has completely restructured its therapeutic foster care service delivery utilizing the MFM. Interest in the MFM continues to grow. The Mockingbird Society held discussions with a number of private child welfare agencies both nationally and internationally (in Florida, Maryland, Nebraska, Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, and Melbourne Australia).



## Summary and Conclusions

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) was conceived to help improve safety, permanency and well-being and to mitigate the effects of trauma by pro-actively meeting the needs of children, youth and caregivers in ways that restructure and normalize the way foster care services are delivered. The MFM structure allows for an integrated and holistic approach to foster care service delivery and acts as a vehicle for systems change. Beginning with the model's structure, cohorts of families (caregivers, children and youth) who live in geographic proximity to one another commit to come together and participate in MFM activities. Over time individual families evolve into a micro-community with strong positive relationships not unlike those experienced in an extended family. Working together with the assistance and support of a resource family each MFM Constellation contributes to practice improvements in the areas of child safety, permanency and child well-being.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an award-winning<sup>19</sup>, nationally recognized<sup>20</sup> innovative structure for foster care service delivery that offers practical, cost-effective solutions to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children and youth. After five years of implementation, the MFM continues to demonstrate its effectiveness as a strengths-based approach that improves safety, and well-being outcomes for children and youth, and supports permanency while optimizing caregiver retention. Each of these factors is a critical component of creating a world-class foster care system, which is the vision of The Mockingbird Society.

Summary of key child/youth and caregiver outcomes with associated comparison data:

Outcome	Metric	Comparison Data	MFM Data
Child Safety*	Percent of children/youth in care who are free from abuse or neglect by a caregiver	Federal standard: 99.68% <sup>21</sup> Washington State DSHS Children's Administration: 99.62% <sup>22</sup>	100%
Placement Stability	Percent of children/youth in care who experienced <u>zero</u> unqualified placement changes during the year	The Braam standard states that 89% of children and youth should experience <u>two or fewer</u> qualifying placements in a year. In Washington State, the Children's Administration results from 2009 for children and youth with <u>two or fewer</u> placement settings were 80.9%. <sup>23</sup>	83% w/ zero placement change
	Percent of children/youth with at least one runaway episode in 2009	Braam: fewer than 2.5% Washington State DSHS Children's Administration 2009 Performance: 3.4% <sup>24</sup>	1%
Caregiver Retention	Percentage of caregivers lost to fostering from one year to the next	National average: 30-50% <sup>25</sup> care giver loss rate	12%

<sup>19</sup> Congressional Angels in Adoption Award, Presented by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. 2005.

<sup>20</sup> *Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Respite in your Community*. The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids. October 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Groves, Lora and James Kenny, PhD., "Uncovering Why Foster Parents Leave." *Fostering Families Today* (November/December 2009), p.20.

MFM strengths are emerging in all three ASFA goal areas. The highest standard of **Child Safety**—100% of children and youth in MFM Constellations have been free from abuse and neglect by caregivers each year for which data is available, (six months of 2007<sup>26</sup>, all of 2008 and 2009).

The achievement of permanency plans and moves to support **Permanency** have doubled between 2008 and 2009 with birth family reunification accounting for the largest area of improvement.

Stable placements, using a stricter standard (zero placement changes in a year unrelated to permanency plans) than Washington state standards has been a consistent MFM outcome in both the 2008 and 2009 findings, positively contributing to **Child Well-Being**. A second indicator of youth well-being was only two episodes of runaway behavior occurred in 2009, which exceeds the Braam benchmark and Washington state 2009 performance.

**Caregiver Satisfaction and Retention** continues to surpass expectations. Caregiver retention far exceeds both the state and federal averages. The amounts of caregiver peer mentoring and coaching provided by Hub Home Parents in 2009 was double that reported in 2008.

As the MFM becomes the standard for foster care service delivery, and the model gets increasingly better known, other child and family service agencies (from Texas to Melbourne Australia) increasingly contact The Mockingbird Society to explore whether the fundamental MFM concepts of normalized, relationship-based service delivery utilizing the extended family concept might work for them. This interest and the promising findings reported in this executive summary are the first important steps towards creating a world-class foster care system, the vision of The Mockingbird Society.

**To see the full Mockingbird Family Model 2009 Management Report on Program Outcomes, visit our website: [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)**

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<sup>26</sup> Please note that only six months of data is available from 2007. Each time 2007 data is cited in this report, it is from January to June only.

# Mockingbird Family Model

## 2009 FULL MANAGEMENT REPORT ON PROGRAM OUTCOMES

JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009

### Background

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), which was signed into law in 1997, clearly defined the national goals for children in the child welfare system to be safety, permanency and well-being. It was determined that “innovative approaches” would be necessary in order to achieve these results.<sup>27</sup>

Armed with nearly 30 years of experience working with children and families, Jim Theofelis, Founder and Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society, took a careful look at what works for healthy families, how they get support, develop strong relationships and overcome obstacles. Then he asked, how do we apply these solutions to support our foster families and help us achieve safety, permanency and well-being for our children and youth in the foster care system?

As an answer to this question, Mr. Theofelis conceived of the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM), an integrated and holistic service-delivery structure utilized by child placement and licensing agencies (Host Agencies) to address the ASFA national goals by creating a repository of child welfare best practice to facilitate improved outcomes for children and increased caregiver satisfaction and retention. The MFM creates communities of six to 10 homes (Constellations) which function as extended families. Each Constellation is led by an experienced, licensed foster parent (Hub Home Parent) who coordinates Constellation events and provides a number of additional supports including mentoring, coaching, respite care and community resource connections to Constellation children, youth and caregivers (Satellite Families). Hub Home Parents receive compensation from their Host Agencies for providing these services. See Appendix A for a glossary of these and other terms used in this report.

The MFM helps improve safety, permanency and well-being and mitigates the effects of trauma by pro-actively meeting the needs of children, youth and caregivers. **Child safety** is improved because caregivers are supported and there is a larger community looking out for the needs of the child. **Permanency** is facilitated through birth family connections, and support for birth and future families before and after permanency is achieved. **Child well-being** is enhanced through placement stability, sibling connections, culturally sensitive care and relationship building within the Constellation

In late 2003, The Mockingbird Society was awarded a federal grant through support from Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) to implement the Mockingbird Family Model with a proof of concept pilot. The first Constellation began in 2004 in partnership with UJIMA Community Services/One Church One Child of Washington, the first African-American Child Placing

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<sup>27</sup> Log No. ACYF-CB-PI-98-02. US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. 1/8/1998. Accessed on July 8, 2009: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/pi/1998/pi9802.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/1998/pi9802.htm)

Agency in Washington State. At the conclusion of 2009, a total of 15 Constellations had launched across the country in partnership with five Host Agencies:

- Casey Family Programs (1 Constellation in Seattle, Washington and 1 Constellation in Yakima, Washington)
- District of Columbia Child and Family Services Administration (6 Constellations in Washington, D.C.)
- Maryhurst (2 Constellations in Louisville, Kentucky)
- Ryther Child Center (2 Constellations in Seattle, Washington)
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration (with 4 Constellations one each in four cities: Seattle, Washington; Everett, Washington; Kirkland, Washington and Lacey, Washington)

## Introduction

The following document, covering January 1 through December 31, 2009 represents the sixth report on the activities and outcomes of the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM). The first four evaluation reports were compiled by the Northwest Institute for Children and Families (NICF), University of Washington, School of Social Work pursuant to a contract, and cover the time periods from January of 2004 through June of 2007. Beginning July 1, 2007, The Mockingbird Society began its own data management reporting process. The Mockingbird Society published its first management report covering the 2008 calendar year. This 2009 report is the second management report completed by The Mockingbird Society. All reports (2004-2009) are available on The Mockingbird Society web-site: [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)

## Data Collection Methods

Data for this report was gathered through a web-based data collection and management system, *Efforts to Outcomes* (ETO), developed by **Social Solutions** and customized by The Mockingbird Society to meet its own reporting needs.

Hub Home Parents received two-hours of training on the use of ETO as well as consistent and ongoing technical support from The Mockingbird Society. On a monthly basis during the reporting period, Hub Home Parents utilized web-based reporting forms developed by The Mockingbird Society to enter data about the Constellation's activities. A demographic form was completed when a child/youth first entered the Constellation. Each month, each Hub Home logged one *Foster Child Monthly Participation Form* for each child or youth enrolled in the Constellation, and one *Monthly Summary* for the Constellation as a whole. Samples of these forms can be found in Appendix B of this report.

Prior to publishing this report, The Mockingbird Society submitted Constellation-specific reports to each Host Agency in order to verify the accuracy of data, and incorporated all feedback received into this report.

## Report Limitations

The data used in this report comes from monthly reports filed by each Constellation's Hub Home Parent and reflects the best efforts of the Hub Home Parent to track Constellation activities, the supports they provide, and the placement changes of children and youth. The

Mockingbird Society provides Hub Home Parents with training and ongoing support to assist with accurate data reporting. However, The Mockingbird Society has no agreement to share information with Host Agencies, and cannot verify the data independently on children and youth. To address this challenge, The Mockingbird Society submitted Constellation-specific reports to each Host Agency and asked for data verification. All feedback submitted by Host Agencies was incorporated into the report.

Due to not having an agreement to share information with Host Agencies, The Mockingbird Society was also not able to obtain some of the data that was available in the 2004-2007 evaluation reports completed by the Northwest Institute for Children and Families (NICF). Specifically, the Mockingbird Society did not administer a foster parent survey, interview children in care, or use a random sampling of children and families in care as comparison data.

For comparison data The Mockingbird Society used federal standards, and Washington State-level progress reports. In some cases, comparable data was not available. The Mockingbird Society is continuing to explore ways to improve the accuracy of the data gathering and reporting process.

## FINDINGS FOR ALL 2009 MFM CONSTELLATIONS

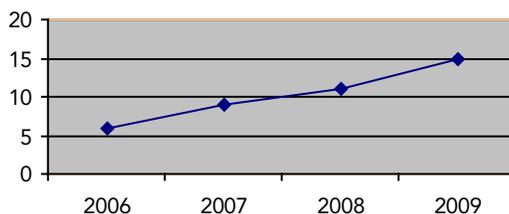
### Demographics

A total of 15 Constellations were active during 2009. These 15 Constellations were operated by five different public or private child welfare agencies known as Host Agencies. The following table contains information about all of the Mockingbird Family Model Constellations that were active in 2009 with 2006, 2007 and 2008 comparisons:

All Constellations	2006*	2007*	2008	2009
Constellations	4	5	11	15
Total Families Served	22	27	69	110
Total Children Served	44	72	115	200
Ages (years)	2-18	9 mo. - 19	Birth-21	Birth to 22

\* Data from 2006 and 2007 does not include data for District of Columbia sites. There were two D.C. sites operating in 2006 and four operating in 2007. The 2007 data covers only six months of the year (January to June).

**All Constellations' Growth Over Time**



## Ethnicity and Race of Children and Youth

For both ethnic and racial data, The Mockingbird Society utilized the federal system used in the 2000 Census which makes a distinction between race and ethnicity.

Race	Children/Youth	Percent
African American/Black	95	48%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6	3%
Caucasian	39	20%
Biracial	18	9%
Multiracial	14	7%
Other	21	11%
Don't Know	3	2%

**Race of Children/Youth served by all 2009 MFM Constellation**

Ethnicity	Children/Youth	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	35	18%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	158	79%
Don't Know	7	4%

**This chart summarizes the ethnicity of the children and youth in all 2009 MFM Constellations.**

## FINDINGS FOR 2009 MFM DATA CONSTELLATIONS

The following findings contain detailed data on **nine of the 15 MFM Constellations** that were active in 2009. The six Constellations in the District of Columbia are not included in the data analysis because in 2009 the Host Agency did not elect to have their Hub Home Parents complete monthly reports through ETO.

MFM Data Constellations	2009	% of Total
Number of Constellations	9	60%
Total Families Served	77	70%
Total Children Served	146	73%

**The table shows the number of children and families served in the nine Data Constellations as well as the percentage of the total Constellations that these Data Constellations represent.**

The nine MFM Data Constellations are located in the states of Washington and Kentucky. Four of the Constellations had an active Hub Home for all 12 months of 2009. Two Constellations launched early in 2009, one in February and one in March, and they were active for 11 and ten months respectively. The other three Constellations experienced turnover in the Hub Home which had the following implications for data collection:

- One Constellation did not have a Hub Home Parent for two months during a transition between Hub Homes. This Constellation remained active, because the Host Agency continued to provide services and families were invited to participate in activities of another Constellation operated by the same Host Agency. However, data is only available for ten months.
- One Constellation had no Hub Home Parent for the first four months of the reporting period and the Constellation was considered inactive for that period of time. The new Hub Home Parent began in April 2009. However, data entry did not begin until August 2009 and so this report reflects five months of data.
- In one Constellation the Hub Home Parent resigned in September of 2009. The Host Agency continued to provide services and the Constellation remained active, although it did not have a Hub Home Parent for the rest of the reporting period. Due to inconsistencies in data entry during the Hub Home Parent's transition period, only five months of data is available on monthly Constellation activities and seven months of data is available on the activities of individual children and youth.

Three of the Constellations serve exclusively children who are identified as requiring a Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) level of care. These children have emotional or behavioral health needs that require higher levels of supervision and additional services. The three BRS Constellations served a total of 39 children (27% of total) and 30 families (39% of total) in 2009.

### **Race of Children and Youth in the 9 MFM Data Constellations**

The race data in the following table reports first children in all 15 Constellations and then those children and youth in the nine Data Constellations for which ETO data is available. The race of the children/youth in the nine Data Constellations differs only slightly from those in all 15 of the MFM Constellations with the exception of African American children who participate in greater numbers when all sites are examined (48%) than in the Data Constellations alone (31%).

Race	All 15 Constellations (N= 200)	9 Data Constellations (N= 146)
African American/Black	95 (48%)	45 (31%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	4 (2%)	3 (2%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	6 (3%)	6 (4%)
Caucasian	39 (20%)	39 (27%)
Biracial	18 (9%)	18 (12%)
Multiracial	14 (7%)	14 (10%)
Other	21 (11%)	21 (14%)
Don't Know	3 (2%)	

**Race of children/youth in all 15 Constellations versus the 9 data Constellations**

The ethnicity of children and youth in the Data Constellations is similar to the children and youth in all MFM Constellations with a slightly higher percentage identified as Hispanic/Latino (22% versus 18%) and a slightly lower percentage identified as Non Hispanic/Latino (73% versus 79%). For seven children in the MFM Data Constellations the ethnicity is unknown.

Ethnicity	Children/Youth	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	32	22%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	107	73%
Don't Know	7	5%

**This chart summarizes the ethnicity of the children and youth in the nine 2009 MFM Data Constellations**

The MFM Data Constellations serve children and youth from birth through 22 years of age.

Age	Children/Youth	Percent
0-5 years	34	23%
6-10 years	33	23%
11-15 years	41	28%
16-20 years	34	23%
21-25 years	3	2%
Don't Know	1	1%
Total	146	100%

**Ages of Children and Youth in the nine MFM Data Constellations**

## OUTCOMES FOR MFM DATA CONSTELLATIONS

The MFM outcomes results are reported under the three ASFA national goals (safety, permanency and well-being) as well as two additional goals of “caregiver support” and “child welfare systems change.”

This report describes each goal and how it is supported by the MFM outcomes. For each MFM outcome, it then describes (a) the importance of the outcome for children and/or caregivers, (b) the services provided by the MFM to support achievement of the outcome, and (c) data findings from 2009 with relevant comparison data when available.<sup>28</sup>

Goal	MFM Outcome	Constellation Supports*
Safety	<b>Outcome 1:</b> Child Safety	Respite
Permanency	<b>Outcome 2:</b> Permanency Support	Permanency Planning Meetings Birth Family Visits
Well-Being	<b>Outcome 3:</b> Placement Stability <b>Outcome 4:</b> Sibling Connections <b>Outcome 5:</b> Culturally Relevant Care <b>Outcome 6:</b> Strong Community Connections	Peer Mentoring Sibling Visits Cultural Activities Social Activities
Caregiver Support	<b>Outcome 7:</b> Caregiver Satisfaction and Retention	Monthly Meetings Training
Child Welfare Systems Change	<b>Outcome 8:</b> Systems Change	MFM Replication Site Growth MFM Partner Relationships

### GOAL: CHILD SAFETY

Safety for children and youth in care is of course the top national priority for the child welfare system and for The Mockingbird Society. Improving safety for children in care was an improvement goal identified by the Washington State Braam Oversight Panel, which was created in 2004 to oversee a settlement agreement stemming from *Braam v. State of Washington* (1998).<sup>29</sup>

The MFM supports child safety in two key ways. First by making relationship-based respite care available as needed to caregivers, as well as providing a strong community network of caring adults, which creates more eyes and ears focused on the child’s safety. With more people looking out for and caring for the child, we hypothesize it is less likely for abuse and neglect to occur.

<sup>28</sup> Please note that many of the supports provided by the MFM act interdependently and as such contribute to more than one outcome. However, they are reported here under a single outcome for which they have been shown by research or experience to have primary importance.

<sup>29</sup> *Monitoring Report #5 – Guide to Appendices*. October 1, 2008. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf> Accessed on June 2, 2009.

## MFM Outcome 1: Child Safety

There were zero founded CPS referrals for caregivers in MFM Constellations in 2009. That 100% of MFM children and youths were free from abuse and neglect exceeds the federal and Washington state Braam Panel standards of 99.68%<sup>30,31</sup> and the Washington State Children's Administration results from 2008 of 99.62%.<sup>32</sup>

Past data available for the MFM shows consistency with this safety record. For every year for which data is available, (six months of 2007<sup>33</sup>, all of 2008 and 2009) 100% of children and youth in an MFM Constellation have been free from abuse and neglect by caregivers.

## Child Safety

**100% of Children and Youth are free from abuse & neglect while in the Mockingbird Family Model**



*"We eat good food at [the Hub Home] and I feel good there and safe."*

**Constellation Child in Foster Care, Age 10**

### Hub Home Supports: Respite Services

The MFM supports the goal of child safety by providing caregivers with planned respite nearly 24/7 and crisis respite as the need emerges. Research has shown that "respite services directly contribute to a reduction in the likelihood of child abuse and neglect...and contribute directly to the safety of children receiving care."<sup>34</sup>

*A Hub Home Parent, recalling previous experiences as a foster parent, stated that she felt "horrible" sending her children off and would lie to them, saying "these are my friends" when in reality they were state licensed respite providers and strangers. She now describes respite through the MFM as "respite without the guilt."*

Planned respite allows small predictable issues to remain manageable. Respite in an MFM Constellation is provided by a member of the "extended family" who is known to both parent and child. Respite within the Mockingbird Family Model is normalized, de-stigmatized and relationship-based.

<sup>30</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families "Table A: Data Indicators for Child and Family Services Review [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data\\_indicators.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data_indicators.htm). Accessed February 25, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Please note that only six months of data is available from 2007. Each time 2007 data is cited in this report, it is from January to June only.

<sup>34</sup> Benefits of Planned and Crisis respite Care, National Resource Center for CBFPS Programs, fact sheet no. 9: [http://www.friendsnrc.org/download/benefits\\_repsite.pdf](http://www.friendsnrc.org/download/benefits_repsite.pdf) Accessed May 28, 2009.

Other supports that the MFM provides to increase child safety include peer mentoring, systems navigation, social support and training coordination. Details of these supports are provided later in this report.

A total of 13,733 hours of respite were provided to children and caregivers during 2009.

In an MFM Constellation, Hub Home Parents provide both planned and crisis respite. Planned respite is respite that is placed on the Constellation calendar in advance, for example doctor's appointments or planned vacation. Crisis respite arises suddenly or was not planned. The crisis could be related to the caregiver (a sudden illness) or the child/youth (acting out behavior or need for relationship pacing). As part of the process of community development, other Constellation families also provide respite for one another when the Hub Home is unable to meet the need or as a consequence of the development of special friendships between families and children.

#### Planned Respite

- 88 children/youths (60%) benefitted from the availability of planned respite
- A total of 11,293 hours of planned respite were provided to children/youth and caregivers during the reporting period

#### Crisis Respite

- 34 children/youths (23%) benefitted from the availability of crisis respite
- 2,440 hours of crisis respite were provided to children and caregivers during the reporting period

In 2008, it was noted that as the use of planned respite goes up in the traditional Constellations, the need for crisis respite often decreases. In 2008, it was noted that children and youth served by the Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) Constellations had used a very high percentage of the total crisis respite (54%) and a very small percentage of the planned respite hours provided (15%). The recommendation in 2008 was to encourage the greater use of planned respite in BRS Constellations to reduce the stress on children and families often evidenced when there is a high need for crisis respite. It was hypothesized that increasing the use of planned respite might decrease the need for crisis respite.

2009 data suggests that this recommendation was acted upon: the proportion of respite care utilized by BRS Constellations which was planned increased. In 2009, a total of 39 children and youths participated in the BRS Constellations, making up 27% of the overall MFM population. In terms of the type of respite care utilized by children and youth served by the BRS Constellations, planned respite was used more than crisis respite in 2009 in comparison to their traditional foster care peers.

- 2009 BRS planned respite care usage was 64% versus traditional foster care usage of 59%
- 2009 BRS crisis respite usage was 15% versus traditional foster care usage of 26%

Children and youth participating in the BRS Constellations accounted for 28% of all Data Constellation children/youths that used planned respite care, having utilized 37% of the planned respite hours provided. They represented only 18% of the children/youths using crisis respite care and 19% of the crisis respite hours provided by the Data Constellations as a whole.

However, in 2009, we observed a trend going in the opposite direction for non-BRS Constellations. While the percentage of children and youth utilizing planned respite stayed about the same (61% in 2008 to 59% in 2009) the number of planned respite hours went down from 258 hours per child in 2008 to 114 hours per child in 2009. While the number of planned respite hours went down, during this same period of time there was an increase in the use of crisis respite. From 2008 to 2009 the number of children/youths in non-BRS Constellations using crisis respite went from 15% to 26% and the number of hours per child increased from 28 hours to 70 hours.

One reason for the change in the reporting of crisis respite services in the traditional foster care Constellations could be a result of the work done to standardize the definition of crisis respite for all Hub Homes which occurred in early 2009. The revised definition includes any respite that responded to a situation that arose suddenly or unexpectedly. This means that respite provided because a foster parent needed assistance working with the behavior of a child would be counted as crisis respite, as would a sudden illness or a childcare challenge that arose unexpectedly. Some Hub Home Parents reported that they had under-counted crisis respite in earlier years because they had not included the more every day challenges like a childcare challenge. Another possible explanation might be non-BRS level Constellations served more children with higher needs in 2009 than in 2008.

## **GOAL: PERMANENCY**

Permanency for children and youth in the child welfare system is the second overarching national goal established through ASFA. Each child and youth in foster care should become connected with a safe, permanent home through reunification, permanent placement with relatives, adoption, or guardianship. Studies have shown that youth who age out of foster care without a permanent family experience a number of negative outcomes, including decreased educational attainment, increased physical and mental health problems, unemployment or underemployment and homelessness.<sup>35</sup>

The MFM supports permanency by creating more opportunities for birth family connections, supporting permanency planning meetings and creating stable placements from which permanency plans can be achieved.

*Birth parents have stayed the night [in the Hub Home] to provide an opportunity for parents to better integrate themselves into their child's daily routine in preparation for reunification.*

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<sup>35</sup> Time for Reform: Aging Out and On Their Own. The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2007. P. 4.

## MFM Outcome 2: Permanency Support

Overall, 30 children/youths (21%) achieved their permanency plans or made moves that were consistent with achieving permanency in 2009.<sup>36</sup>

Permanency plan achievement by children and youth in the MFM:

- 15 children/youths were reunified with their birth families
- 12 children/youths were adopted
- 3 children/youths moved into a relative home as part of their permanency plan
- 3 children/youths transitioned to adulthood
- 0 child/youth moved to guardianship

Out of these 30 children/youths who exited from foster care, 27 of them (90%) were discharged to a permanent home, comparable to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for state-level performance on this indicator (90.8%).<sup>37</sup>

### Hub Home Supports: Permanency Planning Meetings and Birth Family Visits

While the attainment of the permanency plan is the primary responsibility of the Host Agency, the MFM supports positive permanency outcomes in multiple ways. Hub Home Parents attend permanency planning meetings to share insights about children's' needs. They also facilitate interactions between children/youth and their birth families by providing transportation to visits, providing a neutral location for visits and/or supervising visits when required. Research indicates that birth family connections are valuable for improving permanency outcomes and mitigating trauma for children and youth in care.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, families (birth, kinship, adoptive or guardians) are invited, whenever appropriate, to join the Constellation for one to two months prior to permanency being achieved and for one to two months following to support the development of strong relationships, ease the transition and support the continuation of community connections.

During 2009:

- 67 children/youths (46%) benefitted from permanency planning meetings, such as family group conferences, that were coordinated or attended by the Hub Home
- 17 children/youths (12%) had visits with birth parents or other adults from their birth family that were organized by the Hub Home Parent; most of those children/youth benefitted from multiple visits

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<sup>36</sup> Data from the 2008 MFM Management Report included children/youth that made moves consistent with achieving permanency such as moving to a relative or pre-adoptive home. These were excluded from the 2009 analysis in order to more closely match federal definitions.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families "Child Welfare Outcomes 2002-2005: Report to Congress – Chapter II: Finding Permanent Homes." <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo05/chapters/chapter2.htm>. Accessed on May 12, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> See several related studies summarized in: *Connections Count: Understanding Birth Family Ties*. <http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org/index.php/connectionscount/statespotlight/205>. Accessed September 7, 2009.

The Hub Home facilitates interactions with birth families in a natural and relaxed setting, which normalizes the experience.

The percentage of children and youth moving towards permanency almost doubled from 14% in 2008 to 21% in 2009. The biggest change between 2008 and 2009 was in the rate of birth family reunifications (2% to 10%). While a positive change, it is interesting to note that the children and youth benefitting from Hub Home provided services stayed relatively consistent or even went down slightly. In 2008, 14% benefitted from birth family visits and in 2009 it was slightly less, 12%. Children and youth benefitting from permanency planning meetings attended by the Hub Home also dropped from 70% to 46%. An increase in the number of reunifications, as well as, the number of foster-to-adoption families participating in Constellations in 2009 may partially explain the decrease in both birth family visits and Hub Home attendance at permanency planning meetings. However, continued attention to these indicators will be important in continuing to improve the use of the Constellation as a service delivery structure to support permanency.

### **GOAL: CHILD WELL-BEING**

The MFM supports the third ASFA goal, child well-being by creating strong support communities that enhance placement stability and caregiver peer mentoring, by providing improved and normalized opportunities for siblings to interact, and by supporting caregivers in providing culturally relevant care.

### **MFM Outcome 3: Placement Stability<sup>39</sup>**

Many of the negative outcomes for children and youth in foster care can be mitigated by keeping children in stable placements, attending the same school and involved in the same extra curricular activities (e.g., same soccer team, same friends, etc.). In fact, research has shown that each time a child or youth in foster care changes schools up to four to six months of academic achievement are lost.<sup>40</sup>

Improving placement stability is a primary improvement goal identified by the Washington State Braam Oversight Panel.<sup>41</sup> Having stable and consistent caregivers mitigates the trauma associated with multiple moves and provides a base from which permanency goals can be successfully achieved.

In 2009, 83% of MFM children/youths did not experience any placement change unrelated to their permanency goals—a stricter standard than state and federal standards.

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<sup>39</sup>The Mockingbird Society utilizes the Washington State DSHS Children’s Administration definition of placement stability which excludes runaway incidents and any placement change that is related to the permanency plan or in the “child’s best interest.”

<sup>40</sup>Blackledge, Annie. *Improving Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care*. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. <http://www.k12.wa.us/cisl/improvingoutcomes/index.htm> Accessed May 22, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> *Monitoring Report #5 – Guide to Appendices*. October 1, 2008. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf> Accessed on June 2, 2009.

The MFM helps maintain stable placements through the provision of supports for children, youth and caregivers. The first priority is to prevent placement disruption through the use of respite care provided by the Hub Home Parent. Hub Home Parents also support the resolution of issues by providing facilitated problem solving and conflict resolution. When, despite all efforts, a placement disrupts, the child/youth can often move to another home within the same Constellation, mitigating the trauma associated with such moves by meeting the child's/youth's need for consistency and sense of security by maintaining the relationships that have developed.

The Braam standard states that 89% of children and youth should experience *two or fewer* qualifying placements in a year. In Washington State, the Children's Administration results from 2009 for children and youth with two or fewer placement settings were 80.9%.<sup>42</sup> The MFM placement stability figure looks at a stricter standard of children/youth with no qualifying placement changes during the year.

Data from past reports shows that this high placement stability figure is a promising trend. In 2006, 89% of children and youth had no qualifying placement changes. In 2007 it was 76% and in 2008, placement stability was 84%. The MFM Constellation consistently helps children and youth maintain stable placements.

In 2009, the breakdown of the 25 children/youths that did experience a placement change is:

- 13 children/youths experienced placement moves that required them to leave the Constellation
- 6 children/youths changed families but were able to move to another home within the Constellation
- 5 children/youths moved to residential treatment
- 1 child made two moves within the Constellation before eventually moving to a home in another town near by. This youth continued to be involved with Constellation activities after moving away from the Constellation, spending many weekends with her previous Constellation family and attending many Constellation activities.

For the six children/youths that moved to another home in the Constellation, and the child/youth who maintained contacts even after moving away, the Constellation provided them with the opportunity to sustain important relationships and community connections during and after the move.

*"[The Hub Home Parents] always help me work on my anger because this is hard for me when I have a hard time at home. We practice what I will do when I go back home because I love my family and I want to get better."*

**Constellation youth, Age 12**

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<sup>42</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

The Mockingbird Society uses the Washington State DSHS definition of placement stability which does not include runaway episodes. However, data is reported on runaway episodes in this section because running away can be an indicator of placement challenges.

In 2009, only 2 youths (1%) ran away from placement.

Data from 2009 indicates that the MFM helps to reduce the incidence of runaways. While the number of youth ages 11-22 years participating in a Data Constellation decreased by 11% between 2008 and 2009, the trend observed in 2008 of fewer youth running away (2%) was again reported. In 2009, only two youths, or about 1%, ran from their foster home, showing an improvement over the Braam benchmark of fewer than 2.5%, the Washington State Children's Administration results from 2009 of 3.4%.<sup>43</sup>

### Hub Home Supports: Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is a very important part of the support provided by Hub Home Parents to Satellite Families and has been shown to be an important component of ongoing foster parent support strategies.<sup>44</sup> Peer mentoring can occur in formal settings, or informally during monthly meetings or phone calls. Every month, each Hub Home Parent indicated on the monthly data collection forms whether or not peer mentoring occurred and what topics were discussed. In 2009, peer mentoring occurred during 89% of the months for which data was available, a big increase over 2008 when peer mentoring only occurred in 43% of active months. This increase in peer mentoring might be due in part to the training provided by The Mockingbird Society to MFM caregivers in late 2008, which included educational advocacy, addressing behavioral health issues, fostering birth family connections, understanding biracial identity development and facilitating problem solving and conflict resolution.

Peer mentoring was provided on a wide variety of topics in 2009 including educational advocacy, mental health advocacy, managing challenging behavior, licensing and referral questions, working with teenagers, daycare challenges, managing birth family visits/relationships, potty training, placement disruptions, grief and loss issues, stress management, conflict resolution, parenting skills, managing a CPS referral, coping with financial challenges and managing the holiday season.

*"It was great and awesome and a lot of support. Just having the support of another person, a parent [Hub Home Parent], I learned parent techniques from her. We talked a lot about not taking everything personally and taking it one day at a time. I felt welcome in the home (Hub Home), knowing that I didn't have to feel uncomfortable, like it felt like my home too."*

**Satellite Parent**

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Jorgenson, K and Schooler, J. "What Makes Foster Parents Come and Stay: Understanding the Keys to Successful Retention." *Permanency Planning Today*. Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York. Fall/Winter 2000, V.1 No.2 <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/downloads/newsletter/ppt-fall-winter-2000.pdf>. Accessed on August 9, 2009).

*“What I love about the system is that what Mockingbird has accomplished is that we are a family, and so we are able to meet everyone’s needs because we have all of those homes and all of those children meeting constantly. So the child is not just with one parent or a two family parent. They have all the families available to them. So, of course, they have even a greater base of resources... Not only does that support work for children, it also works for parents.”*

**Hub Home Parent**

#### **MFM Outcome 4: Sibling Connections**

Ensuring adequate sibling contact has been challenging for foster care agencies. In a Washington State survey of foster parents in 2009, just over half (52.8%) indicated they felt there was sufficient sibling contact for their foster youth, well short of the state’s 80% goal<sup>45</sup> Connecting siblings is also costly for child welfare agencies. In its 2007-2009 Biennium Budget, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services requested \$10 million (\$5 million per year) to facilitate visits for siblings not placed in the same home.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the challenges, connecting siblings is essential for the emotional well-being and stability of children in foster care. For many children and youth, siblings may be the only connection that child or youth has to his or her birth family, culture and community. Research has shown that children and youth in foster care who are placed with their siblings experience fewer emotional and behavior problems and perform better at school.<sup>47</sup> Enhancing opportunities for sibling connections is also an improvement goal identified by the Washington State Braam Oversight Panel.<sup>48</sup>

While connecting siblings is the direct responsibility of the Host Agency, the Constellation can assist with this goal by supporting sibling connections in several ways. The Constellation provides a larger community support structure. When siblings cannot be placed together in the same foster home, they can be placed with families who are within a 15 mile geographic radius of one another in the same Constellation. The Constellation provides the siblings with a central location – the Hub Home – where visits can occur, and also provides additional, normalized opportunities for the siblings to interact during monthly meetings, Constellation social events, and scheduled overnight visits or play dates. The Hub Home Parent can also provide sibling visits for sibling groups who are not all placed within the Constellation. All of these support activities defray costs and support child well-being.

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<sup>45</sup> FY09 Performance Report. Washington State DSHS Children’s Administration. Appendix II, Braam Oversight Panel Monitoring Report #8 (March 2010).” <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10appii.pdf>. Accessed on March 11, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> PL-AR Increase Visits – Program Level – 010 Children’s Administration. State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services. [www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/FSA/Budget0709\\_010\\_S7PLAR.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/FSA/Budget0709_010_S7PLAR.pdf). Accessed July 14, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> “In 1995, Smith found that children placed with their siblings had more positive behavior towards their peers (Smith, 1995). In a later study, Smith (1998) also found that siblings placed together had fewer emotional and behavioral problems.... research has demonstrated that siblings placed together performed better at school (Thorpe & Swart, 1992) and had fewer overall placement disruptions than siblings placed separately (Staff & Fein, 1992).” From : Herrick, Mary Anne and Wendy Piccus. Sibling connections: The importance of nurturing sibling bonds in the foster care system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27 (2005) 845-861. P. 846.

<sup>48</sup> Monitoring Report #5 – Guide to Appendices. October 1, 2008. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf> Accessed on June 2, 2009.

94% of the children and youth with siblings in the Constellation had siblings placed in the same home with them.

In 2009 54 children/youths (37%) had a sibling placed in the same Constellation. Of those:

- 51 children/youths (94% of those with siblings in the Constellation) had siblings placed in the same home with them
- 3 children/youths (6% of those with siblings in the Constellation) had siblings placed in another home in the same Constellation

The above sibling placement data is not comparable to the benchmarks established by the Braam Oversight Panel<sup>49</sup> because the Braam benchmark looks at sibling groups who were removed together, and due to having no agreement to share information with Host Agencies, The Mockingbird Society has no way to know whether siblings were removed together.

The Constellation provides an important opportunity for siblings to interact when they are placed in different homes within the same Constellation. In 2009, for the three children/youths with siblings in another home in the Constellation, the MFM provided them with opportunities for interaction at the monthly meeting and social events.

The Hub Home Parent also works to arrange sibling visits for siblings in different homes in the Constellation or for children and youth with siblings outside of the Constellation. In 2009, 24 children/youth (16%) experienced sibling visits organized by the Hub Home, providing an important addition to Host Agency efforts to foster family connections.

*5 children from the Constellation went sailing with the Hub Home Parents. A birth sibling of two of the children, who was not placed in the Constellation, went with them. Everyone learned how to hoist sails, work in the galley and to appreciate marine life. After the experience, the siblings were heard to say how great it was to be together on such an awesome adventure!*

## **MFM Outcome 5: Fostering Cultural Identity**

The fact that children of color are over-represented in the Child Welfare System has been well documented.<sup>50</sup> Once in the system, they can face the additional challenge of being separated from their cultural communities. Research has shown that racial identity is important to healthy development, and that “when parents facilitate their children’s understanding of and comfort with their own ethnicities, the children show more positive adjustment in terms of higher levels of self-esteem, lower feelings of marginality, greater ethnic pride, less distress, and better psychological adjustment.”<sup>51</sup> In addition, the Braam Oversight Panel has indicated that foster

<sup>49</sup> FY09 Performance Report. Washington State DSHS Children’s Administration. Appendix 1, Braam Oversight Panel Monitoring Report #8 (March 2010). <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 4, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Hill, R.B. *An Analysis of the Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparity at the National, State, and County Levels*. Casey-CSPP Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare. Casey Family Programs. 2007.

<sup>51</sup> *Finding Families for African American Children*. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008. P. 5.

parent support in the form of “cultural competency skills” is an important improvement goal for foster care in Washington State.<sup>52</sup>

106 children/youths in MFM Constellations (73%) shared a cultural identity with at least one of their caregivers

The percentage of children and youths in an MFM Constellation sharing a cultural identity with their caregivers has remained relatively consistent (77% in 2008 and 73% in 2009).

#### Hub Home Supports: Culturally focused Constellation activities

The Constellation supports the identity development of children/youth in several ways. If a child/youth is not placed with a Satellite Family from their cultural group, there may be greater access to and connections with that cultural group through other families within a Constellation who do share his/her cultural identifications. In addition, Hub Home Parents organize Constellation activities that encourage the understanding of cultural identities, such as field trips to cultural museums or presentations at monthly meetings on culturally relevant topics. During 2009

- 85 children/youth (58% of total) benefitted from Constellation activities that helped them learn about their own or another cultural identity.
- Constellation cultural activities in 2009 included celebrating a Native American traditional Thanksgiving, completing artwork for an initiative sponsored by the Northwest African American Museum, attending “Fiestas Patrias,” a local Latino celebration and training focused on supporting LGBTQ youth.

*“When I get to go to the [Hub Home] for the weekend they always make sure I get to do fun things. They find things like at the Seattle Center where we get to go to cultural events . . . . I have good friends in the Constellation because we all know each other and [the Hub Home Parents] bring us all together to get to know us better.”*

#### **Constellation Youth**

While significant that over half (58%) of Constellation children/youth learned about cultural identity, either their own or others, from involvement in the MFM, this number shows a drop from previous years. In 2007, 84% benefitted and in 2008, it was 85%. In 2009, over half of the Constellations were newly launched. Some of the Constellations with the lowest percentages in this area were those that had first year Hub Home Parents, so this reduction could, at least in part, be due to the large number of newer Hub Home Parents in 2009. It could be that these newer Hub Home Parents were focused on the start-up required in a new Constellation, which may have diverted attention from this objective in the first year. Additionally, for Constellations in more rural areas one must travel a considerable distance to communities of color which may mitigate opportunities to visit museums and attend diverse cultural events.

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<sup>52</sup> Monitoring Report #5 – Guide to Appendices. October 1, 2008. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf> Accessed on June 2, 2009.

The Mockingbird Society, through conversations and training, will focus on improving the number of culturally focused activities and attendance at these activities in 2010; as a consequence, we would expect to see an improvement in this area.

### **MFM Outcome 6: Building Strong Community Connections**

The importance of long-term and consistent relationships is essential for the healthy social and emotional development of children and youth.<sup>53/54</sup> This is particularly important for children and youth in the foster care system because they have moved from the home of their birth parents, and have often moved to a different community, or even a different state. Children, youth and caregivers frequently tell us how important these connections are to their well-being.

*"I enjoyed being part of the Mockingbird family in 2009. When attending the monthly meeting at the Hub Home, it was a time to collect, and refresh, interact and come together as a family. I made sure I attended every meeting and encouraged others as well. This was also a time the Hub Parent made sure we received resources from the community and always had a variety of activities planned for the kids and parents. Mockingbird connects families together!"*

**Satellite Parent**

#### Hub Home Supports: Social Activities

The MFM supports the development of strong caring relationships through all Constellation activities. The social activities organized by the Hub Home are one example of relationship building efforts.

133 children/youths (91% of total) participated in Hub Home organized social activities.

- There were a total of 67 social activities organized during the year across the nine Data Constellations. This means that social activities were occurring during three out of every four months for which data is available.
- Hub and Satellite Families participated in social activities including holiday parties, BBQ's, pool parties, pizza parties, roller skating, picnics, trips to family entertainment centers (e.g., Wild Waves, Gattiland and Bouncy Place, etc.), trips to museums, aquariums, ball games, the zoo and a sailing trip.

This high attendance at social activities is part of a promising trend. In 2007, 84% of children and youth benefitted from Constellation social activities. In 2008 the number was 86%.

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<sup>53</sup> Albrecht, K.M & Miller, L.G. (2001), *Infant and Toddler Development*. Gryphon House, 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Siegler, R.S., Deloache, J.S. and Eisenberg, N. *How Children Develop*. Worth Publishers, 2003.

*“The Hub Home has been awesome. She has invited us over for basketball games, matching a kid in her home with our kid and the families got to spend fun time together, while our kid received social skills building. The activities the Hub Parent has organized have been fun, whether it’s bowling nearby or family time at her home, we enjoy that and our kid is connected there because of it. She tries to make dates that everyone can attend for activities.”*

**Satellite Parent**

## **GOAL: CAREGIVER SUPPORT**

The MFM helps caregivers by providing a pro-active system of caregiver support.

### **MFM Outcome 7: Caregiver Satisfaction and Retention**

Nationally the child welfare system has been experiencing a decrease in the number of licensed foster homes, even as the number of children in foster care increases.<sup>55</sup> Washington State Children’s Administration reports that over the last three years, the average rate of loss of foster homes has been 31%.<sup>56</sup> Nationally it is estimated that between 30% and 50% of all foster homes are lost each year.<sup>57</sup>

In 2009 the MFM caregiver loss rate was 12% (an 88% retention rate), demonstrating better retention than the state and national data. The MFM loss rate of 19% in 2008 (81% retention) begins to show a promising trend.

Experts agree that some of the key factors in recruiting and retaining foster parents include more training opportunities, and improved connections to other foster parents.<sup>58 59</sup> The Braam Oversight Panel has also designated caregiver support to be a focus of improvement for Washington State.<sup>60</sup> In the Braam Oversight Panel’s 2010 report, they cited a benchmark of 85% of licensed caregivers reporting “adequate support for their roles and responsibilities” but noted that for 2009, only 71.9% of caregivers reported this type of support.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “The number of children entering foster care increased about 74 percent from 1983 to 1992. During this ten year period, the number of foster homes declined by nearly 11 percent.” From: Brown, June Gibbs. Respite Care Services for Foster Parents. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, 1994. P. 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Annual report to the Legislature: Foster and Adoptive Home Placement RCW 74.13.031 (2)*. December 1, 2008. Department of Social & Health Services Children’s Administration Division of Program & Practice Improvement. Accessed February 25, 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Groves, Lora and James Kenny, PhD., “Uncovering Why Foster Parents Leave.” *Fostering Families Today* (November/December 2009), p.20.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, June Gibbs. Respite Care Services for Foster Parents. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, 1994. P. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Jorgenson, K and Schooler, J. “What Makes Foster Parents Come and Stay: Understanding the Keys to Successful Retention.” *Permanency Planning Today*. Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York. Fall/Winter 2000, V.1 No.2 <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/downloads/newsletter/ppt-fall-winter-2000.pdf>. Accessed on August 9, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> *Monitoring Report #5 – Guide to Appendices*. October 1, 2008. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf> Accessed June 2, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> *Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8*. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

*"When I first became a foster parent, I felt isolated and uneducated about the details of the process. I didn't know anyone else in the system except the caseworker and guardian ad litem. I struggled to find respite care for my daughter and was unaware of the resources provided to foster care parents . . . I've now been a member of this wonderful group [MFM Constellation] for over a year. I have met a whole group of caring and lively foster care parents . . . The parents have bonded, the children have all become special friends . . . and the Hub parents are kind, supportive and upbeat. The Mockingbird program ensures foster parent success."*

**Satellite Parent**

### Hub Home Supports: Monthly Meetings and Training Opportunities

The MFM Constellation provides an integrated approach to providing services to foster parents in a way that supports State priorities around foster parent retention. In addition to respite services and peer mentoring which were discussed earlier in this report, the Hub Home Parents provide monthly meetings and host/coordinate training opportunities.

Constellation monthly meetings increase peer support opportunities and help to decrease the isolation experienced by many caregivers, and children and youth. Constellation monthly meetings often consist of a meal, informal support time/discussion, respite planning, and sometimes, training or a social activity. The MFM also provides the structure to systematically integrate training into the Constellation routine. Training helps to increase the confidence and competence of caregivers, helping them to develop the skills to effectively parent and to address challenges when they emerge.

In 2009:

- 80 monthly meetings were organized by Hub Home Parents, meaning that one meeting was organized for 90% of the months for which data is available. This shows an improvement over 2008 when a monthly meeting was organized for 76% of active months.
- 70 trainings were organized by Hub Home Parents. This represents an average of one training event for 79% of the months for which data is available and shows an improvement over 2008 when training was organized for 53% of active months.
- Training topics included talking to your teens about sex, mandated reporting guidelines, educational advocacy, conflict resolution, WIC services, adoption support services, taxes for foster parents, cultural diversity, caring for self and others, effective interactions with police, how trauma affects the brain, learning disabilities and discipline, grief and loss, mental health services and complying with host agency protocols.

*"The Hub Home also coordinated a 4 month series training on Grief and Loss, which focused on children in care. There were about ten other families from both Ryther Constellations and my husband and I enjoyed getting to know everyone over the four gatherings. It was also helpful that the Host Agency staff provided childcare at the Hub Home while we attended training. My kids had a good time playing with other children from our Constellation."*

**Satellite Parent**

## GOAL: CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS CHANGE

The MFM is *creating a world-class foster care system* by providing a replicable holistic structure that is changing the standard for foster care service delivery.

### MFM Outcome 8: Systems Change

The eighth outcome of the Mockingbird Family Model is, in some ways, a compilation of the other seven. Through Host Agencies' implementation of the Mockingbird Family Model, a new model of integrated foster care service delivery is occurring. As Host Agencies implementing the MFM change their individual practices (to become more collaborative both within agencies and within the community) and outcomes for children, youth and caregivers improve (in the direction of those documented in this report), the standards for foster care are elevated. As a consequence, new opportunities arise for the achievement of a world class foster care system.

Successes for child welfare systems change can be seen at the micro-level as individual Host Agencies change their practices and at the macro-level as interest grows in the MFM both nationally and internationally. Child welfare agencies implementing the MFM are starting to move away from viewing the Mockingbird Family Model as a "pilot project" to beginning to discuss and plan how to restructure foster care so it is "the way we do business."

#### Micro-level Changes

At the individual Host Agency level, agencies are improving their integrated planning, teamwork and shared decision-making, and soon the types of outcomes reported here will become the standards for foster care service delivery.

The Mockingbird Family Model provides important opportunities for child welfare agencies to break through communication silos and improve decision-making processes. During the creation of an MFM Constellation, orientation and planning meetings bring together multiple stakeholders including different departments within a Host Agency (licensors, social workers, placement coordinators, Family to Family coordinators and administrators) as well as community members and foster parents. Through the planning process, these groups learn to work together to establish a new structure for delivering foster care and to make decisions together. Once a Constellation is launched these new and more collaborative ways of communicating and working together continue to inform the shared decision making necessary to successfully implement the MFM—people have learned that it isn't desirable to go back to the old ways of doing business given the opportunity with the MFM to advance the ASFA goals for children and youth.

What our Host Agencies are saying about what makes the MFM successful:

***"Getting everyone on board and connected to one another and reaching out to one another."***

***"The supportive feeling of family and community is great!"***

***"The coordination between the project coordinator [Host Agency staff member], social workers and supervisors in the context of positive relationships with Hub and Satellite Home Parents creates success."***

## Macro-level Changes

The Mockingbird Society's vision of creating a world-class foster care system is becoming a reality as the number of agencies, children and families that are touched by the MFM grows. This is done by: 1) working with current Host Agencies to increase the number of Constellations within their systems; 2) responding to interest from potential new Host Agencies across the nation and around the world; and 3) by facilitating discussions with community partners about expanding the types of applications of the model to include those focused on prevention of out-of-home placements, transition to adulthood, community re-entry for dependent youth in juvenile corrections and support to adult family care providers.

The number of families and children participating in the MFM increased more than 50% in 2009 and the number of Constellations increased by 40%.

In 2008, five Host Agencies were serving 69 families and 115 children/youths within 11 Constellations in Washington State, Kentucky and Washington D.C. By the end of 2009, those five Host Agencies were operating 15 Constellations and serving 110 families and 200 children/youths, with discussions underway to implement an additional five Constellations (four traditional/foster care Constellations and one BRS Constellation) in 2010. One of our Host Agencies has adopted the MFM as the structure for all the therapeutic foster homes in its system. One other Host Agency is working its way to a full adoption with plans to add Constellations each year.

Host Agencies continue to show their commitment and belief in the MFM as a successful service delivery structure for foster care.

Interest has also been growing with previously uninvolved Host Agencies, both nationally and internationally. In addition to previously received information requests and /or visits from 18 potential new Host Agencies from places as diverse as Tokyo Japan, Canada, Alaska, and Rhode Island, 2009 brought visitors from Melbourne, Australia, interested in bringing the MFM to their country to improve their foster care service delivery.

Besides the growth of traditional MFM Constellations, by the end of 2009 The Mockingbird Society was working with a Host Agency to plan a pilot to expand the use of the MFM to birth families who had come to the attention of the child welfare system and have voluntary service contracts in place. This Constellation would improve the supports provided to birth families thereby reducing the number of children/youth entering foster care. Discussions were also well underway for other pilots' one to smooth transitions to adulthood for Native American youth by actively supporting their connections to cultural ceremonies and rituals. A second application under discussion would provide support to caregivers and dependent youth in juvenile corrections prior to and up to 36 weeks following release to support community re-entry and to mitigate recidivism.

As the MFM becomes the standard for foster care service delivery, and the model gets increasingly better known, other child and family service systems begin to explore whether the fundamental MFM concepts of normalized, relationship-based service delivery utilizing the extended family concept might work for them. Most recently discussions have begun to examine an application of the MFM out side of the child welfare system to support adult family caregivers in the aging and disability services arena.

## SUMMARY

The Mockingbird Family Model is an award-winning<sup>62</sup>, nationally recognized<sup>63</sup> innovative structure for foster care service delivery that offers practical, cost-effective solutions to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children and youth. After five years of implementation, the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) continues to demonstrate its effectiveness as a strengths-based approach that improves safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and youth, and supports caregivers all of which are key factors of a world-class foster care system. Through the restructuring of foster care service delivery utilizing the extended family concept, the too often sense of isolation experienced by caregivers and children is mitigated and tangible outcomes are achieved including increased child safety, placement stability and caregiver retention. As outlined in this 2009 report, benefits can be seen for children, youth, and caregivers as well as the child welfare system.

### **Children and youth who are placed in MFM Constellations continue to experience**

- Increased safety above the national standard
- Greater placement stability above Washington State goals
- Increased permanency support
- Enhanced birth family and sibling connections
- Support in connecting with cultural identities and
- More opportunities for the development of strong and lasting relationships with adults and within communities

### **Caregivers participating in MFM Constellations continue to experience:**

- Less burnout as seen in a greatly improved retention rate above the state and national standards
- Access to more training opportunities
- Increased individualized peer mentoring and coaching
- Increased availability of guilt-free and relationship-based (normalized) respite opportunities and
- Increased sense of community

### **Host Agencies who are implementing MFM Constellations continue to benefit from**

- Improved outcomes for children and youth
- Improved caregiver retention rates
- Use of the MFM structure and supports as a foster parent recruitment tool
- Enhanced cross-departmental and community shared decision-making
- The efficient utilization of resources including offsetting costs associated with caregiver loss and child/youth placement disruptions

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<sup>62</sup> Congressional Angels in Adoption Award, Presented by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. 2005.

<sup>63</sup> *Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Respite in your Community*. The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids. October 2008.

The following table presents a summary of outcomes where comparison data is available.

Outcome	Metric	Comparison Data	MFM Data
Child Safety*	Percent of children/youth in care who are free from abuse or neglect by a caregiver	Federal standard: 99.68% <sup>64</sup> Washington State DSHS Children's Administration: 99.62% <sup>65</sup>	100%
Placement Stability	Percent of children/youth in care who experienced no qualifying placement changes during the year	The Braam standard states that 89% of children and youth should experience <i>two or fewer</i> qualifying placements in a year. In Washington State, the Children's Administration results from 2009 for children and youth with two or fewer placement settings were 80.9%. <sup>66</sup>	83% w/zero placement change
	Percent of children/youth with at least one runaway episode in 2009	Braam: fewer than 2.5% Washington State DSHS Children's Administration 2009 Performance: 3.4% <sup>67</sup>	1%
Caregiver Retention	Percentage of caregivers who are retained from one year to the next	National average: 30-50% <sup>68</sup>	88%

<sup>64</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Braam Settlement Monitoring Report #8. March 4, 2010. Braam Oversight Panel. <http://www.braampanel.org/monrptmar10.pdf> Accessed March 11, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Groves, Lora and James Kenny, PhD., "Uncovering Why Foster Parents Leave." *Fostering Families Today* (November/December 2009), p.20.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) was conceived to help improve safety, permanency and well-being and to mitigate the effects of trauma by pro-actively meeting the needs of children, youth and caregivers. By restructuring and normalizing the way foster care services are delivered, the MFM facilitates an integrated and holistic approach to foster care service delivery and acts as a vehicle for systems change. Beginning with the model's structure, cohorts of families (caregivers, children and youth) who live in geographic proximity to one another commit to come together and participate in MFM activities. Over time families evolve into a micro-community (Constellation) with strong positive relationships not unlike those experienced in an extended family. Working together with the assistance and support of a skilled resource family (Hub Home) and Host Agency support each MFM Constellation contributes to practice improvements in the areas of child safety, permanency and child well-being.

MFM strengths are emerging in all three ASFA goal areas. The highest standard of **Child safety**—100% of children and youth in an MFM Constellation have been free from abuse and neglect by caregivers each year for which data is available, (six months of 2007<sup>69</sup>, all of 2008 and 2009). This performance is above federal and state standards.

The achievement of permanency plans and moves to support **Permanency** have doubled between 2008 and 2009 with birth family reunification accounting for the largest area of improvement. Hub Home Parents continue to provide birth family visitation support, and frequently attend permanency planning meetings. Increasingly the transition to a permanent home is facilitated by the opportunity for birth and future families to participate in Constellation activities before and after permanency is achieved.

Stable placements, using a stricter standard (zero placement changes in a year unrelated to permanency plans) than state and federal standards has been a consistent MFM outcome in both the 2008 and 2009 findings positively contributing to **Child well-being**. Other positive indicators of child well-being included the mitigation of a sense of isolation evidenced by the consistent upward trend (beginning in 2007) of the vast majority of MFM children participating in Hub Home Parent organized social activities, which in 2009 occurred in three out of every four months. Only two episodes of runaway behavior occurred in 2009 exceeding the Braam benchmark and Washington state 2009 performance, another positive indicator of youth well-being.

**MFM caregiver satisfaction and retention** continues to surpass expectations. Caregiver retention far exceeds both the state and federal averages. While the percentage of caregivers in Washington state who report receiving "adequate support for their roles" declined between 2009 and 2010, the amount of peer mentoring and coaching provided by Hub Home Parents to caregivers in 2009 was double that reported in 2008 and similar findings are expected in 2010. Hub Home Parents anecdotally reported that the training they received from The Mockingbird Society in 2008 and 2009 facilitated this increase in peer support.

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<sup>69</sup> Please note that only six months of data is available from 2007. Each time 2007 data is cited in this report, it is from January to June only.

## NEXT STEPS

This report represents the second MFM Management Report to be completed by The Mockingbird Society utilizing *Efforts to Outcomes* (ETO) data. The process has provided the opportunity for learning in many areas. First, the continued positive trends with respect to placement stability, decline in runaways, permanency attainment and caregiver retention are the result of the hard work, dedication and active involvement of our many Host Agency partners, and Hub and Satellite Home Families whose efforts created these outcomes. Second, the teamwork between Host Agency departments, the Hub and Satellite Home families and The Mockingbird Society continues to be a key success factor of the MFM.

Last, with this second MFM Management Report, The Mockingbird Society was able to compare *ETO* data across two years of implementation (2008 and 2009) and identify important trends, and strengths. Initial quantitative and qualitative analyses continue to suggest that the MFM creates real and positive outcomes for the child welfare system, and for the children, youth and caregivers it serves.



# APPENDIX A

## Glossary of Terms

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA):** A national law passed in 1997 that clarifies the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. ASFA focuses on supporting families and emphasizes safety, permanency and well-being as key goals for states in implementing child welfare policy.

**Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS):** An intensive support and treatment program for children and youth with serious emotional and behavioral health issues.

**Braam Oversight Panel:** An independent five-member panel of child welfare researchers, experts and advocates. The Panel was established in 2004 to oversee a settlement agreement that came out of a 1998 lawsuit *Braam v. State of Washington*.

**Constellation:** A community of 6-10 families established through implementation of the Mockingbird Family Model.

**Crisis Respite:** Respite that is arranged because of something that came up urgently and unexpectedly. Crisis respite could be arranged because of emerging caregiver needs (injury, accident, unexpected delay, etc.) or child/youth needs (behavioral challenges, school suspensions, the need for relationship pacing, etc.).

**Host Agency:** The public or private child welfare licensing and/or placement agency that replicates the Mockingbird Family Model with technical assistance and training from The Mockingbird Society.

**Hub Home:** The support family and central organizer of the Constellation. The Hub Home parent is an experienced, licensed foster parent who coordinates monthly meetings, and social activities, provides peer mentoring, coaching, advocacy, systems navigation and support in accessing community resources, as well as respite care for caregivers, children and youth in their Constellation.

**Kinship Care:** Children and youth who are living with a family member other than their mother or father. Kinship care can be formal (licensed family), if the case has come to the attention of the child welfare system and the child has been officially placed with the relative, or informal (unlicensed) living arrangements without the intervention of the child welfare system.

**Mockingbird Family Model (MFM):** An innovative and integrated approach to foster care service delivery that creates micro-communities (Constellations) and provides pro-active systems of support for caregivers and children that have come to the attention of the child welfare system.

**The Mockingbird Society:** A 501(c3) and 401(h) non-profit organization based in Seattle, Washington that serves children, youth and families involved in the child welfare system. Through its nationally-recognized programs (The Mockingbird Family Model and the Mockingbird Network), The Mockingbird Society is committed to working collaboratively with youth, families, and community partners for system reform and improvement.

**Permanency:** The goal of safe, stable and permanent homes provided to children in the foster care system through reunification, adoption or guardianship.

**Planned Respite:** Respite arranged with the Hub Home in advance and documented on the Constellation's monthly respite calendar. Respite is often planned for caregiver doctor's appointments, work meetings, social activities and brief vacations.

**Satellite Home:** One of the 6-10 families that make up the Constellation and participate in Constellation activities and events.

**Therapeutic Foster Care:** Specialized foster care homes and services for children who have serious emotional and behavioral health issues.



# **APPENDIX B**

## **Data Collection Forms**

## APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION FORMS

### DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

First Name:

Last Name:

Today's Date:

Child Age:

DOB:

MBS Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Male to Female
- Female to Male
- Questioning
- Don't Know

MBS Race:

- African American/Black
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Caucasian
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Bi-Racial
- Multi-Racial
- Other
- Don't Know

MBS Ethnicity:

- Hispanic/Latino
- Non-Hispanic/Latino
- Don't Know

Does this child have birth siblings?

Does child have birth siblings in his/her home?

Does child have siblings in other SATELLITE HOME?

Does child share cultural identity with CAREGIVER?

Shares cultural identity with SECOND CAREGIVER?

Do you expect the MFM to foster cultural identity?

Age when first placed in current home?

Attends school/classes regularly?

Works at his/her grade level?

Is in Special Education classes?

Does child receive any services?

- Counseling
- Tutoring
- Medication Management
- Behavioral Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Don't Know
- Other

Has attended 1+ schools due to placement changes?

## FOSTER CHILD MONTHLY PARTICIPATION FORM

A-1. Today's Date

A-2. Child Code

A-3. Did the child have a change in placement status this month?

A-4. Please select the response that best describes the placement change.

- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Runaway
- Aged out
- Birth family reunification (live with birth family)
- Moved to other home in Constellation
- Moved to placement not in Constellation
- Moved to relative home
- Residential Treatment
- Re-entry to Constellation
- Other

A-5. Other status change:

A-6. Is this child/youth still in the Constellation (Note: the child/youth is still in the Constellation if they: 1) live in a Constellation home or are transitioning out of a Constellation home; 2) have an open case and a social worker and receive Host Agency services other than just payment.)

A-7. Is the Hub Home still providing services to this child/youth?

A-8. Was the permanency plan achieved through this placement change?

A-9. Does your child regularly attend school/classes?

A-10. Did your child continue to attend the same school this month?

### **Section B. In the past month, my foster child...**

B-1. Went to the Hub Home for a social activity WITH HIS OR HER FOSTER PARENT

B-2. Went to the Hub Home for a social activity WITHOUT HIS OR HER FOSTER PARENT

B-3. Went to the HUB HOME for CRISIS or EMERGENCY respite (e.g. family situation, challenging behavior)

B-4. a. How many times did this child come to the HUB HOME for crisis respite this month?

B-5. b. How many HOURS did the child spend at the HUB HOME this month for CRISIS RESPITE?

B-6. Went to ANOTHER HOME IN THE CONSTELLATION for CRISIS or EMERGENCY respite (e.g. family situation, challenging behavior)

B-7. a. How many times did this child go to ANOTHER HOME IN THE CONSTELLATION for CRISIS or EMERGENCY respite this month?

- B-8. b. How many HOURS did the child spend AT ANOTHER HOME IN THE CONSTELLATION for CRISIS respite?
- B-9. Went to the HUB HOME for PLANNED respite (e.g. caregiver appointment)
- B-10. a. How many times did this child come to HUB HOME for PLANNED respite (e.g. caregiver appointment)?
- B-11. b. How many HOURS did the child spend at the HUB HOME during PLANNED respite?
- B-12. Went to ANOTHER HOME IN THE CONSTELLATION for PLANNED Respite
- B-13. a. How many times did this child go to ANOTHER HOME IN THE CONSTELLATION for PLANNED respite this month?
- B-14. b. How many HOURS did the child spend at ANOTHER HOME IN THE CONSTELLATION for PLANNED respite?
- B-15. Participated in a Constellation activity that supported understanding of racial/cultural/ethnic/religious identity
- B-16. Had a visit with his/her birth parent (or adult family member) at the HUB HOME
- B-17. a. How many times?
- B-18. Had an interaction/meeting (e.g. Family Group Conference) related to permanency that included the Hub Home Parent and a caring adult, social worker, or adoptive parent
- B-19. a. How many times?
- B-20. Had a visit with birth siblings that was arranged, aided or facilitated by Hub Home Parent
- B-21. a. How many times?
- B-22. Spent time in EXTENDED RESPITE
- B-23. a. How many days?

## MONTHLY SUMMARY NARRATIVE

Date:

Please enter child codes for children/youth who are currently in your Constellation:

How many Satellite Homes are in your Constellation?

How many new Satellite Families entered your Constellation this month?

How many Satellite families have withdrawn from your Constellation this month (have left and will no longer be participating in activities)?

### **Support: Trainings, Meetings and Peer Coaching**

Did you hold a monthly meeting this month?

a. How many Satellite Homes participated?

Did you coordinate a TRAINING this month?

How many training sessions did you coordinate this month?

How many Satellite families benefitted from the trainings?

Briefly describe the training topic(s) covered

Did you provide PEER MENTORING (phone calls, chats, etc.) this month?

How many Satellite homes benefitted from the peer mentoring?

Briefly list major peer mentoring topics covered

Did you organize a social activity this month?

How many Satellite families participated in the social activity?

Briefly describe the social activity

Did a change in FOSTER PARENT status occur in your Constellation this month?

If Yes, please select the TYPE of disruption(s) that occurred:

- License Revoked
- License Under Investigation
- Moved out of Geographical Area
- Withdrawn from Foster Care
- Withdrawn from Constellation
- Moved license to other agency
- Other

Did a Change in Placement Status occur in your Constellation this month?

If Yes, please select the TYPE of change in placement status(s) that occurred:

- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Runaway
- Aged Out

- Birth Family Reunification
- Placement Disruption
- Re-entry to Constellation
- Other

Monthly Narrative: