

SOCIAL SERVICE EXPERT NEWS

Committee for Public
Counsel Services

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Your place for SSE news, updates, training notices and more.

Please join us as we welcome **Annabelle Frazier, LMHC, Ph.D.** as the new Director of Social Service Advocacy for the Mental Health Litigation Division. Prior to starting at MHLA, Annabelle provided outpatient and community-based services to children, families, and adults, most recently as a CPCS vendor.

We are thrilled that our team is finally complete and that each division now has a director in place to work with private panel social service vendors. As always the contact information for each person will be listed at the end of this newsletter.



Our Work, Works!

“Thanks for all your help, I used your language about PTSD, risk taking, etc. in my plea and I do think it worked! Plus, the client told you a lot more in your interviews than he ever told me, which became the meaty stuff of the plea argument. The judge was NOT pleased with the idea that he wasn't going to jail right there and then, but he went along with our plea anyway.” *-Feedback from an attorney who hired a social service expert as part of their legal defense team.*

Getting Started on a Case

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What you need when starting a case:

- An APPROVED Motion for Funds.
- The NAC #.
- Letter of Engagement that specifies scope of requested work and services, and your role.
- Client contact information.
- Signed releases-remember do not contact anyone without permission from the attorney.
- The context/theory/criminal charges of the case.
- Timeline for any work product.

[How to Market Yourself as a Vendor](#)

We are often asked what vendors can do to “land” more business. As an independent contractor, you are welcome to promote yourself as a vendor for CPCS. However, because attorneys are expected to do their own vetting of experts, you are *not allowed* to indicate that you are an employee of, or have been certified, accredited, or vetted by CPCS. That being said, here are some helpful hints on how you can promote yourself as a vendor for CPCS:

- Be active on LinkedIn by updating your profile and uploading your resume. Connect with attorneys who take CPCS cases and others who work in this field.
- Follow relevant organizations and groups. Here are a few examples: National Juvenile Defender Center; Health Law Advocates, Citizens for Juvenile Justice, Vera Institute, William James College; Mass Bar Association; National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
- Sign up for newsletters offered by these and other groups, organizations, professional networks.
- Network with defense attorneys you know to inform them you are a CPCS vendor, and ask them to “spread the word”. Encourage attorneys that have hired you to share your contact information with colleagues.
- Reach out to anyone you know who may work with these systems. In other words, *NETWORK*.
- Create a brief overview to share with attorneys that describes your background, experience, types of services you can offer, and whether you’ve been qualified as an expert by the courts.
- Have a redacted version of a biopsychosocial history, sentencing report, parenting assessment, or anything similar that you could send as a writing sample to an attorney.
- Make sure your resume/CV is up to date and details your areas of expertise. You should only include areas of expertise that are relevant to your level of education, training and experience.
- Keep informed about the current research on brain development, trauma both chronic and complex, child and adolescent development, positive youth development and its uses within the juvenile justice, and the work around criminal and juvenile justice reform.
- Educate yourself about the courts, the criminal and juvenile justice systems, probation, family court, mental health civil commitments, the public defender’s role and the mission of CPCS, and the intersection of social work and the law including sentencing advocacy, mitigation, diversion, and restorative justice. It is important you understand what it means to be part of the legal defense team.



We know that people change jobs as they move forward in their professional development. Please be mindful that if you work for a state, city, or municipal agency it is your responsibility to complete the required Conflict of Interest check with the State Ethics Commission. If you are required to complete a [Conflict of Interest form](#), please send a copy of the form signed by your agency's Appointing Authority to us. It will then be reviewed by CPCS for a final determination.

Assessing for conflicts goes beyond completing the required forms. Please be mindful that you may be employed by a non-state agency/school/hospital in which a client is currently (or has in the past) received services. Attorneys can help you assess for conflicts prior to taking cases. Additionally, your social service expert contacts can also help with this.



While social work and social service vendors are part of the legal team, vendors must gain consent to assess/evaluate someone prior to beginning any work on a case. If the client is unable to give consent, please notify the attorney and discuss next steps for the work.

In some instances, a client may be unable/unwilling to give consent and in other cases they may be another party in the case and it is not in their best interest to participate in an assessment/evaluation. This is most apparent in CAFL cases where there is always more than one party on a case. Any person represented by an attorney is considered a party to the case. If your work requires you to interview observe and/or talk with another party and/or their collaterals, you must gain consent from that party prior to starting the work. Consent to participate should be negotiated by the attorneys, but it is your job to verify that consent has been given.

Ex. You have been retained by child's counsel to observe visits with a birth parent. You must have the consent/cooperation from the birth parent in order to complete this work.

Experts vs experts

While all of our vendors come with a wealth of experience, knowledge, training, and expertise, we recognize that we are not all *Experts* in all areas of practice. We also know that there is a learning curve to working as part of the legal team and being a defense-centered vendor. When assessing your expertise in a particular area, consider that a Qualified Expert is determined by the judge based on education and experience. Any Social Services Expert vendor can testify to facts and direct experience, *but only Qualified Experts can testify as to an opinion*. When considering taking a case, know what the expected scope of work entails, and whether you have the needed education and experience to do that particular work. Communication with the attorney can help in determining your qualifications for a case.

BILLING

While we can help with some billing questions, your best resource for answers is the Vbill User Manual or you can email vendorbills@publiccounsel.net with any questions. That being said, here are a few quick reminders.

- Travel time is billable. The rate is lower than the hourly rate for other services and is prepopulated by VBill.
- Remember if you make a billable phone call during your travel time, you cannot bill for both services.
- Reminder FY2020 is from 7/1/19-6/30/20
- Billable hours per FY are capped at 1,650, and you can only bill up to 12 hours/day. Anything over those hours requires a waiver.
- There are timelines for submitting Vbills. Make sure you know what they are.

Don't forget to keep us updated on new licenses, additional certifications or potential conflicts. If you have not done so already, please update the attached vendor information questionnaire.

Running for Innocence!

The New England Innocence Project's (NEIP) mission is to free innocent people who have been wrongfully convicted in New England, and to bring public attention to the prevalence and causes of wrongful convictions. As a non-profit organization, NEIP is responsible for raising the funds to hire the investigators and experts needed to bring innocence cases to court. The Running for Innocence (RFI) team was formed in 2014 to support NEIP's work. On Sunday, Nov. 3, 2019 from 11am-2pm., our team will return to the Lexington Battlegreen where participants can choose from a 5K Walk, 5K Run or a 10K Run. If you want to register to run with us, or learn more about us, click here: <https://runningforinnocence.com/pick-an-event/>. By selecting RFI as your team affiliation, you are not obligated to fundraise but those who do will get a team shirt. You are also welcome to register as an individual or create your own team!

Helpful Resources and Links

National Association of Forensic Counselors: (<http://www.forensiccounselor.org/>)

The National Board of Forensic Evaluators: (<https://www.nbfe.net/>)

William James College Continuing Ed/Life Long Learning:
<https://www.williamjames.edu/academics/lifelong/index.cfm>

Massachusetts General Hospital: Center for Law, Brain & Behavior:
<http://clbb.mgh.harvard.edu/>

"The Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Law, Brain, and Behavior is an academic and professional resource for the education, research, and understanding of neuroscience and the law."

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Massachusetts: <https://namimass.org/>

Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS):

Helpline: <https://helplinema.org/>

Search for Treatment: https://mahelplineonline.custhelp.com/app/account/opa_interview

Sentencing Project: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/>

Family Resource Centers: <https://www.frcma.org/>

Re-Entry Services:

Coming Home Directory Greater Boston:

[http://www.cominghomedirectory.org/assets/2019/02/CHD Print Final With-cover-2019.pdf](http://www.cominghomedirectory.org/assets/2019/02/CHD%20Print%20Final%20With-cover-2019.pdf)

Office of Returning Citizens, Boston: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/returning-citizens>

After Incarceration Support Systems (AISS), Hampden: <http://hcsdma.org/aiss-3/>

Worcester Initiatives for Supported Reentry (WISR):

<https://www.advocates.org/services/worcester-initiative-supported-reentry-wisr>

Your Social Service Expert Contacts

If you have any questions or need guidance, please contact the person who oversees the Social Services Experts for that division.

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Children and Family Law Division

The Committee for Public Counsel Services

- We Defend the Accused
- We Demand Justice
- We fight for the Rights of Parents and Children