

# Maryland Resource Parents Association

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

## PLAN OF WORK FOR 2013-2014

### Mission

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

The MRPA is specifically chartered to:

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

### Specific Goals for 2013-2014

1. More effectively advocate for the needs of Maryland Resource parents by providing technical assistance to appropriate government committees and effective communication of broad social issues that impact resource parents.
2. Support the development of robust, effective local associations in all jurisdictions.
3. Develop an effective communication strategy for MRPA to increase awareness of MRPA activities at all levels including local associations, local departments, and the general membership.
4. More effectively engage local jurisdictions in MRPA committees and activities.

5. Conduct regional conferences in partnership with SSA, the University of Maryland, Child Welfare Academy and other team members to educate and raise awareness on issues pertaining to the needs of Maryland's at-risk children.
6. Promote awareness of the unique educational issues and challenges that face Maryland's at-risk children of school age.

### **Teaming Relationships**

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

### **Basic Operations**

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

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

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

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

### **2013-2014 Initiatives and Activities**

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

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

Initiatives:

- The MRPA will participate with the Department of Human Resources in the development of policies that support recent (2012) changes to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 07.02.25.22). MRPA will seek to advocate that policies ensure that resource parents are informed and treated with respect when a decision to close a resource home due to lack of placements or lack of need are being considered.

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

Initiatives:

- The MRPA will seek to include all local associations under a 501©(3) Group Exemption, unless those associations have already undertaken a 501 ©(3) determination.
- The MRPA will provide basic services to facilitate operations to those local associations whose goals and activities are closely aligned to those of MRPA. That support is to include: development and hosting of websites for local affiliated, providing accounting packages to include consults with the MRPA accountant for local associates, provide telecommunication and /or web conferencing services to promote more effective meetings for local associations, and provide targeted training for local association officers and board members.
- The MRPA will consult with local association and target grant funding to address specific local association issues. Grant funding will be prioritized to ensure that those associations that are actively participating in MRPA activities are prioritized.

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

Initiatives:

- The MRPA will develop a long-term (5-year) strategic plan.
- The MRPA will develop a comprehensive communications strategy that supports the strategic plan and is aligned with current year goals and objectives.
- Aligned with the communications strategy, MRPA will continue to improve its web-presence to include tools to manage and communicate more effectively with its members and local affiliates.
- The MRPA will collaborate with the SSA to organize and plan an annual Statewide Resource Parent recognition even in May of 2014. MRPA will establish a committee and receive SSA guidance as it manages the detailed coordination of the event.

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

Initiatives:

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

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

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

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

Initiatives:

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

### **Special Projects**

The MRPA will conduct two special projects during the year specifically aimed at promoting awareness among the membership of MRPA and foster/adoptive issues. The Board, in close collaboration with SSA and the SSA grant monitor, will identify one of the projects. The other projects will be to purchase and distribute medicine lock boxes for resource parents.

### **Monthly Monitor Reports**

The MRPA financial officer and Executive board member shall submit to the SSA monitor a quarterly income and expense report to review the spending activities and to review the progress of the implementation of the 2013-2014 Plan of Work. The monitor shall receive the reports subsequent to the most recent Board of Directors meeting no later than 7 days. The

MRPA will provide the monitor with copies of Quarterly Income and Expense financial reports (and other financial documents that may have been distributed) as provided to the MRPA Board of Directors for their review. All documents pertaining to insurance, 501( c) (3) status and the filing of IRS required forms will be made available to the monitor.

### **Annual Meeting**

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

### **Outcomes**

- Increased awareness of MRPA and MRPA's mission amongst foster parents and local Departments.
- Increased participation of local associations in MRPA activities and committees.
- Strengthened partnerships between education entities and foster parents.
- The MRPA will have a more robust web presence.
- More effective communication with SSA monitor and more effective execution and report of funding to the monitor.
- More informed resource parents in regards to supporting foster children in the educational process.
- Increased financial and programmatic accountability reporting to the SSA monitor.