

## Response to Questions on the FY 2011 Budget

**Request By:** Supervisor McKay

**Question:** Please provide information on the Fairfax Families4Kids program. Is it being discontinued as part of the FY 2011 budget or is it being continued under the proposed reorganization?

**Response:** The Fairfax Families4Kids (FF4K) program began in 2005 with the goal of helping older youth in foster care find adoptive homes. Since that time, FF4K has evolved into an intensive mentoring program serving older youth in foster care. Fairfax Families4Kids typically serves 12 to 15 older youth at any one time. Current participation is at an all-time high of 20, because nine youth who have left foster care (having either returned home, been adopted or placed with relatives) are still participating in FF4K activities. Since its inception, the program has served a total of 40 youth. As of March 1, DFS has 366 children in foster care. Of those, 207, or nearly 57 percent, are age 14 or older.

In FY 2010, two social workers and \$133,000 are dedicated to identify and support FF4K mentors, as well as to plan and coordinate weekend activities for the youth and their mentors in FF4K. The planning and coordination of these activities consumes more than half of the social workers' time. While the FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan includes the elimination of the Fairfax Families4Kids program, including the two positions and the \$133,000, the Department of Family Services (DFS) intends to expand the mentoring concept more broadly across the entire Foster Care and Adoption Program to achieve better outcomes for all older youth in foster care. It is intended that the relationships between the youth and their mentors currently established in the FF4K program will continue. However, the planning and coordination activities done by the County social workers will continue through the transition.

Current research indicates all youth in foster care benefit from positive mentor relationships. Based on this, and the fiscal constraints facing the County, the Department of Family Services determined resources could be realigned to address the needs of the entire population of youth in foster care, not just a small subset of those needing services. DFS staff will work with the mentors and relevant stakeholders to design a program utilizing remaining staff in the Children, Youth, and Families division.