

## MARYLAND FOSTER CARE SYSTEM



Many of the advocates for abused and neglected children and teenagers in Maryland have argued that one of the largest foster care placement companies in the state has failed many children, by allowing some of the homes fall through the system, so to speak. The director of Maryland's network for Court Appointed Special Advocates, Ed Kilcullen, said that he was immediately disturbed when he found out that the Contemporary Family Services company, based in Hyattsville, did not report any documents with yearly re-certification for some of the foster homes. The state is currently dealing with a sanction made against the company. Kilcullen said, "It's really incumbent on every one of us to be concerned." He also said, "These are children who, through no fault of their own, are involved in a complex legal system. We really want to take whatever steps we can to provide rights that every child is entitled to, specifically to grow up in a safe home." Mary-Dulany James, a representative of both Cecil and Harford counties, says that she has many questions for the Department of Human Resources because of the oversights it has made with the company. James said, "I think there is a lot of explaining to do." In the meantime, an operating officer for the foster care company, Corey L. Pierce, claims that the safety of the children within the company was not in question and claims that the sanction created sent to the company by the Department of Human Resources, and would take place in the middle of February, was actually based on certain troubles the company was having with management. Pierce said, "We have done an excellent job caring for over 700 children over the course of the last 10 years." Pierce also said, "We have never been sanctioned prior to this." As of right now, the inspector general for the Department of Human Resources is investigating the company deeper. The company was not allowed to place children throughout the months of April, all the way through to December. Pierce says that the company has agreed to pay the IRS approximately \$2.8 million back that was owed in taxes and fees, the reason for the company being placed under investigation by the Department of Human Resources. Pierce says that they are working hard to make sure they correct any problems that have been made with yearly documents, along with situating the financial issues that the company was dealing with. Pierce said, "We work year-round to correct any outstanding issues." The company will have to renew its license next month, in March. If the company is able to operate efficiently again, it is important that they have a series of documents on foster parents, which will include background checks, number of people living in the home, type of insurance coverage, and emergency training.