

Humble Heroes.

How Four DFS Co-workers Came Together to Make Sure a Child in Care Received a Life-saving Transplant.

Emergencies don't wait for normal business hours. Emergencies don't care if you're on the clock, sitting down for dinner or unwinding with the latest Netflix offerings. How would you react if you were thrust into a life-or-death situation? A group of DFS co-workers recently experienced one such emergency: get a child in care



DFS coworkers Eieshia Smith, Cris Graham and Julie Mondroski share their story of arranging transportation for a child in care to receive life-saving care.



Patrick Barkley, right, chats with Cindy Fischer (left) and Sandra Blackburn on the Child Haven campus.

to a northern California hospital in less than 12 hours for a life-saving surgery.

"It was truly a team effort," said Julie Mondroski, assistant manager of the DFS Fiscal and Transition Teams. "Each of us knew we had to make this happen. We weren't going to let a child miss his surgery."

And the heroes who successfully got that child to California in time share their story.

Getting the Call

It was a Wednesday night in September when Senior Family Services Specialist Eieshia Smith was advised a child in protective custody had to be transported to northern California for a life-saving kidney transplant, scheduled for 8 a.m. the following morning. With no time to spare, Eieshia jumped into action.



Senior Family Services Specialist Eieshia Smith

"We were faced with obstacles," said Eieshia. "It was after normal business hours, the biological mother had limited resources and we couldn't receive assistance from the hospital in California."

Eieshia reached out to Assistant Manager Cris Graham for assistance. While waiting for direction from



Assistant Manager Cris Graham

management, Cris reached out to Julie Mondroski and began exploring travel arrangements. Eieshia and Assistant Manager Cris Graham kept in contact with the biological mother to iron out the logistics of the trip. While Julie worked on securing travel arrangements, Child Haven Assistant Manager Patrick Barkley stayed in touch with the medical team in California throughout the evening, providing updates on the situation in Las Vegas.

One Hour Late

Once travel arrangements were confirmed for mother and child, another snag befell the team: he would be too late for the scheduled surgery. The medical team in California called off the surgery. But Eieshia, Cris, Julie and Patrick refused to give up.

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“We had to convince them to give us a chance to keep working on travel plans,” said Eieshia. “We were not going to let this child miss the surgery.”

“That’s where Patrick was so important,” said Cris Graham. “He was in constant contact with the medical team throughout the night and convinced them to push the surgery back an hour.”

In an evening of unconventional solutions, Julie came up with one more to ensure the child arrived in time for the surgery. In addition to securing a flight, Julie arranged for a limousine to transport mother and child to the hospital.

“There was no way we were going to let one hour prevent this child from receiving a life-saving transplant,” said Julie.



*Assistant Manager
Julie Mondroski*

Anxious Moments

Once informed mother and child arrived in California—safely and on schedule—and the child was prepped for surgery, the DFS team could breathe a sigh of relief... and maybe get some sleep. They relied on training, creativity, power of persuasion and perseverance to successfully get the child to the hospital.

“It was a bumpy ride, but we got him to the hospital,” Julie said. “But that was just one half of the fight. Now, the medical team had the real job to do.”

Divine Intervention

The transplant surgery was deemed a success by the medical team. Recent updates indicate the child is responding well to the new organ and his health is improving daily. As one of the medical team members said to Patrick, “it felt like divine intervention that the child was in protective custody.” Without DFS’s assistance in the situation, the child would’ve likely never been able to make it to California in time. Patrick said it wasn’t divine intervention, but simply what DFS workers do on a daily basis.

“Around here, there are ‘miracles’ every single day. We do whatever we can to help these kids,” said Patrick.



*Assistant Manager
Patrick Barkley*

“It isn’t just the four of us,” he continued. “Everybody here at DFS works hard every day to make things better for the children in our care. That’s what we did in with this particular child. We were just doing our jobs.”

We can leave the debate over divine intervention to the scholars and theologians, but we certainly know Eieshia Smith, Cris Graham, Julie Mondroski and Patrick Barkley poured their hearts and souls into this case. And, for just one night, they were the divine intervention one child in care needed the most.