Children's Voice

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CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

DECEMBER 2005

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- Fostering Progress
- Navigating Special Education

CHILDREN 2006

Securing Brighter Futures

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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- Monday, February 27, 7:30 A.M.–7:00 P.M., Exhibits Open
- Tuesday, February 28, 7:30 A.M.–7:00 P.M., Exhibits Open
- Wednesday, March 1, 7:30 A.M.–10:30 A.M., Exhibits Open
- Wednesday, March 1, 11:00 A.M., Dismantle

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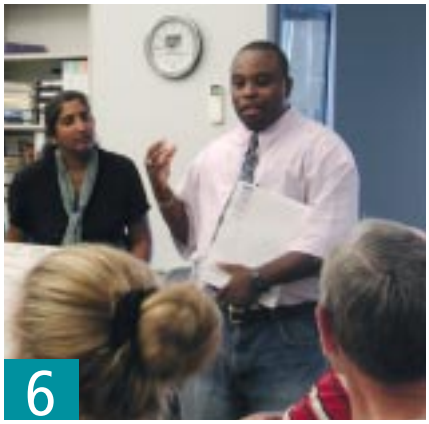


DEPARTMENTS

Executive DIRECTIONS

My holiday season began the same way every year growing up in Cleveland. At the sound of the first holiday song on the radio or the mere mention of shopping for gifts, I diligently set to work on a wish list. If I came across these scraps from childhood now, I would no doubt find detailed requests for train sets, footballs, and toy soldiers—a hodgepodge of material things.

Today, I look forward to the holidays for a lot of different reasons, including rest and relaxation and spending time with family, not to mention the incredible food. As an adult, however, my wish list has become very simple. Nothing can be bought at a shopping mall, over the Internet, or through a catalog. It contains just three gifts that I ask to receive, that I plan to give to my own children, and that I hope other adults will share with the children in their lives.

First on the list is love. There is an abundance of this gift in my family. But for the nearly one million children who are abused and neglected every year, love can be much more elusive. Their life circumstances make it much harder for them to find someone to love who will love them back in a healthy way—someone whom they can count on to be there for them each and every day.

For too many children, the holidays are a sad time, either because they've spent too many holidays in the absence of a family's love, or from having had love and trust stripped away due to violence. This is what happened to a 7-year-old named Darline—the horrifying experience she lived through is described in "Survivors, Not Victims: Children of Murdered Parents" in this issue of *Children's Voice*. On Christmas Eve, Darline witnessed her mother murder her abusive father, plunging Darline and her siblings into further chaos.

Darline managed to survive her tumultuous childhood. Today she knows more than any of us about the power of love and is working to spread it through her job at a nonprofit agency, as a coach for young female boxers, and as a mother. We can all learn from Darline's example.

Second on my wish list for children is the opportunity for a full, productive life. For most people, a large portion of that involves finding fulfilling, meaningful work when they become adults. If the children in our agencies don't receive the treatment and stability they need to be healthy, both emotionally and physically, they cannot maximize their natural skills and properly prepare for careers that are important to them.

The value of such a gift has become more evident as we learn about the bumpy road so many youth from the foster care and juvenile justice systems face as they transition to the real world. The article "From Custody to Career" describes how meaningful work is difficult for young people to find without ongoing support and guidance, well beyond age 18. Making career paths smoother for young people is a gift that will keep on giving for years to come.

The road to adulthood and opportunity is also cumbersome for so many children in the child welfare system diagnosed with learning disabilities. We address the topic this month, and will continue to do so in future issues, in a new column "Exceptional Children: Navigating Learning Disabilities and Special Education." Written by experts in the field, the column will help demystify the process of getting these children help for disabilities that too often serve as roadblocks to their success.

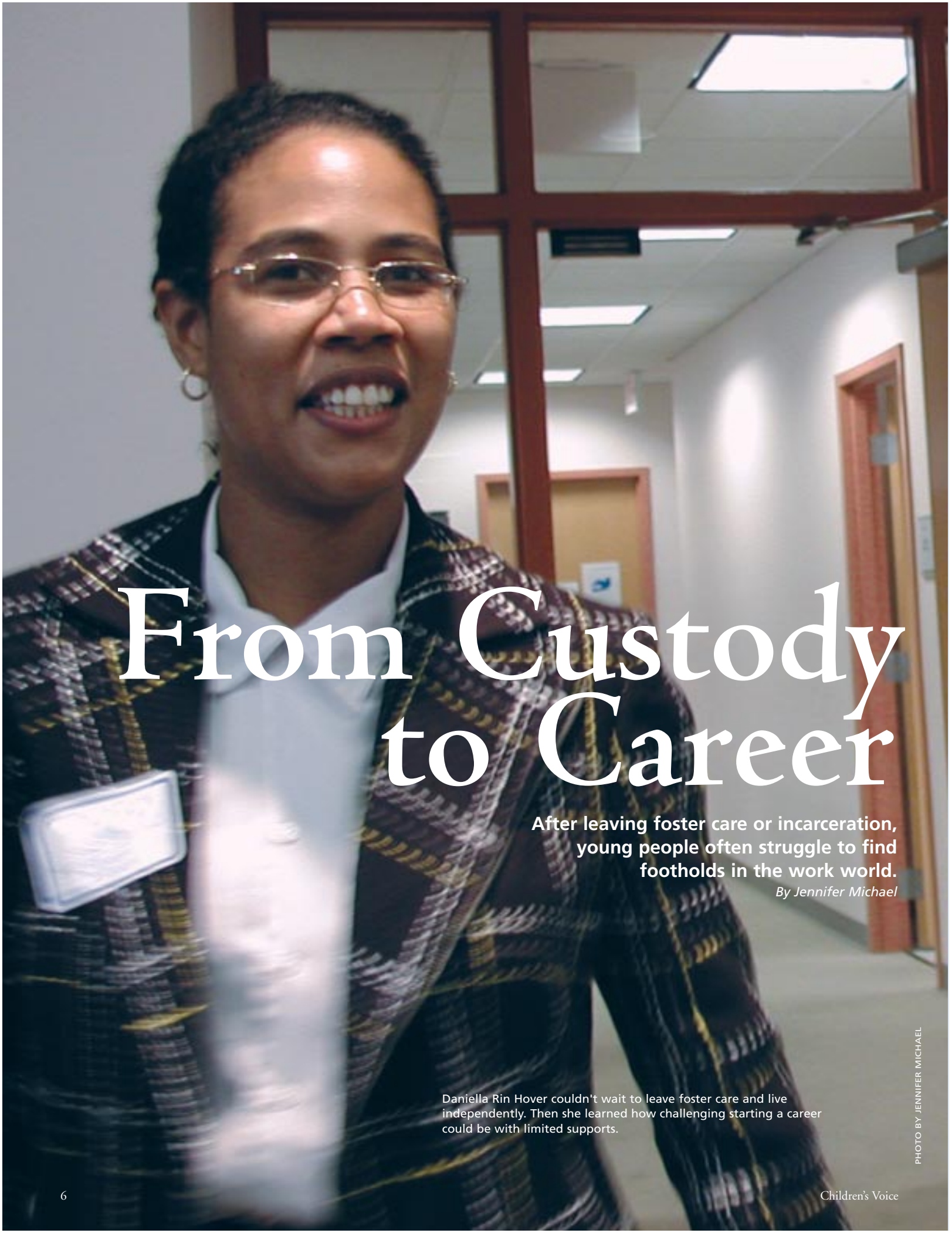
If we bestow love and opportunities for productive lives to children and youth, then the third gift—hope—will materialize naturally. Instilling hope in future generations most at risk is the very essence of what we do in child welfare. We want all our kids to have hope that something better will come into their lives, whether it's the next day, or the day after that.

With this wish list in hand, I urge you to spend time this holiday season thinking about how you can give the most special gift of all—your love and attention—to your own children, and then, as a family, reach out to other children and share the gifts you have to give to those who need them. Simply reassuring and encouraging a child may be something she or he will hold special for a very long time.

Taking the even more dramatic and life-altering step of adopting a child can fulfill all of the wishes on my list—a new family providing hope, love, and opportunity in their future. We were reminded of this during National Adoption Awareness Month in November, but we need not limit ourselves to considering adoption only one month out of the year. Adoption may be the most special gift of all for one of the 125,000 children waiting for a permanent, loving home.

With that, I wish all of you, our readers, a happy holiday season, and I encourage you to take my wish list, make it your own, and distribute it far and wide.

Shay Bilchik



From Custody to Career

After leaving foster care or incarceration, young people often struggle to find footholds in the work world.

By Jennifer Michael

Daniella Rin Hover couldn't wait to leave foster care and live independently. Then she learned how challenging starting a career could be with limited supports.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER MICHAEL

If only getting a job were as easy as writing a résumé, buying a suit, and pounding the pavement. For seasoned professionals, this can work fine. But for young adults with only a high school diploma or GED and part-time, minimum wage job experience to their credit, launching a career can be a far greater challenge. Add a background spent in the foster care or criminal justice systems, and the job outlook can become even more complicated.

Each year, about 20,000 young adults leave foster care; and, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), some 100,000 youth are released from secure and residential facilities. Many of these young people lack family support and have little to no job experience, but they're forced to quickly find the means to support themselves in an already grim job market for young people.

According to the American Youth Policy Forum, the national teen employment rate declined to a new historical low in 2004. For youth leaving foster care or the criminal justice system, the outlook is bleaker. Foster care alumni who participated in a recent study by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago were far less likely to be employed than were their same-age peers, and they were far more likely to be earning less than $10,000 a year.

And the outlook for young ex-offenders? Unemployment rates for youth ages 16–24 leaving incarceration is about 60%, compared with about 10% for other youth, according to YouthBuild USA.

Enrolling in a weekend job readiness workshop doesn't always cut it for these young people struggling to battle the odds. Fortunately, over the last decade, state agencies and private organizations have begun partnering to enhance transitional supports and services to youth leaving foster care or the juvenile justice system.

New or enhanced programs for youth are focusing on more holistic approaches to job readiness that spend weeks, if not months, on career development, building résumé-writing and interviewing skills, and getting youth involved in community service projects to acquire hands-on work experience, build self-esteem, and learn leadership and teamwork skills—all before hitting the classified ads. Many programs also provide mentors, counselors, and job placement follow-up.

Maria Garin Jones, Director of Youth Services for CWLA, says youth need to be encouraged to take the reins themselves in career exploration and job hunting. "Young people need to be active, not passive, participants," she says. "Many times, young people leaving these systems aren't aware they have options and choices and the ability to make decisions about their futures."

Young people also need to think about more than just minimum wage jobs, Garin Jones adds, and consider careers leading to gainful employment and a secure future.

Leaving Care: Daniella's Story

On a hot, muggy June morning in Washington, DC, Daniella Rin Hover arrives bright and early at Covenant House, a shelter and child care agency for at-risk youth. Looking astute in small, rectangular eyeglasses with her dark hair pulled back from her face, and wearing a plaid dress jacket, Rin Hover is there to meet with the program's Washington director for advice on starting her own nonprofit organization to help youth leaving the foster care system.

At 23, Rin Hover is herself only a few years removed from the foster care system. At 20, she voluntarily left the New York City foster care system, despite being eligible to continue receiving services until age 21. "To me, it was about empowering myself," she says. "I wanted to be in the driver's seat."

Now Rin Hover wants to help improve the system she was so eager to leave, but it's been a struggle. Since leaving foster care—where she lived for five years after reporting her abusive father to the New York City authorities at age 15—she has married and has two small children. Her husband Veasna also lived in foster care since infancy.

During their transition from foster care, neither Veasna nor Daniella have had parents to fall back on while trying to take college courses, land careers, and pay bills. "It's not like we've been able to say, 'Hey mom and dad, can you pay our rent this month?' or 'Hey, can we come over for dinner?'" Daniella explains.

On their own for the first time, the young couple moved to Washington, enticed by job offers for both to work at a national organization assisting foster care youth. Neither stayed with the organization long, however, realizing they disagreed with the organization's mission and goals.

Daniella then spent several months helping to promote *Aging Out,* a documentary about youth transitioning from foster care that aired on PBS last May. The film featured Daniella and other youth. Now she is job-hunting full-time while Veasna watches their children, Elijah, 3, and Skye, 1. Both unemployed, they rely on public assistance.

"It's difficult to market myself," Rin Hover admits, noting she was unable to gain work experience while living in the foster care system. "The experience I did get was moving from high school to high school. I didn't have the stability. I didn't even have friends. I didn't get job training or do afterschool events. There was no encouragement to do that."

In high school, Rin Hover fell behind in her classes after attending four high schools in four years. She came close to giving up on school altogether until a guidance counselor encouraged her to take night classes to help her graduate on time.

She enrolled at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, on loans and worked in the college's community technology center. She also worked briefly as an assistant manager at McDonald's. After her second child was born, Rin Hover stopped classes at Trinity.

Even though her initial job prospects in Washington didn't work out, Daniella is determined to continue pursuing youth advocacy work, she explains to Judith Dobbins, Executive Director of Covenant House Washington. Dobbins encourages her to start a journal to clarify her ideas about how she wants to help youth, then explains how Covenant House operates.

"Everybody deserves an opportunity to reach their fullest potential," Dobbins says. "Our role in [the lives of at risk youth] is to help them overcome their challenges. The biggest

Advice for Practitioners

(An excerpt from It's My Life: Employment, A Guide for Transition Services from Casey Family Programs, *available online at www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ItsMyLifeEmployment.htm).* Youth attending the National Youth Employment Coalition's 2004 Policy Forum participated in a youth-only session. They presented the recommendations below to adults who work with young people.

Demonstrate integrity. Do what you say you are going to do. Practice what you preach. Promote individual accountability. Develop trusting relationships with youth.

Advertise programs and opportunities. Use billboards to tell stories of how getting involved has helped young people.

Seek to motivate youth. Use rewards and incentives such as recreation, dance, music, and food. Focus on positive things about young people. Push them to achieve goals. Take them on educational and career-related trips. Practice tough love.

Educate young people. Provide quality educational opportunities: quality staff, necessary supplies, hands-on learning opportunities. Youth need teachers who show them how to do things and engage them, not instructors who tell them what to do. Provide financial aid for advanced education. Educate youth about American history, government, voting, and issues.

Involve youth with the community. Have a community youth day. Take youth to meetings in Washington, DC (or state/local levels) to have their voices heard. Hold meetings in the community.

Focus on the personal, and be sensitive to youth needs. To participate, youth need things such as transportation, respect, and rights.

barrier for young people is a sense of hopelessness—that there is no light at the end of the tunnel."

At the end of their meeting, Dobbins says she needs a temporary administrative assistant; before Rin Hover leaves, she sits down with a member of Dobbins' staff to interview for the position.

During the interview, Rin Hover talks about her computer skills and her work at Trinity College's technology center. She says she would also like to work as a youth counselor at Covenant House. The staff member explains that due to licensing requirements, the agency can only hire counselors with a bachelor's degree and at least one year's experience working with at-risk youth, or someone without a college degree but at least three years' experience working with at-risk youth. Rin Hover points out her many years in the foster care system, an asset she would bring to the job. The staff member moves on to the next question.

Later, Rin Hover confides to an observer that she doesn't feel she'll get the administrative assistant job and expresses frustration that most vacancies she is interested in require a bachelor's degree. But she says she won't give up, and goes on to interview at another youth advocacy organization that afternoon.

Stronger Bridges

Most states provide some transitional services to young people over 18 who age out of the foster care system, but the ser-vices vary widely. Even with the continuation of some services, many youth still face challenges transitioning to life outside the system. It's been 14 years since a national evaluation of youth transitioning from foster care, but individual state studies have revealed growing evidence of young people's struggles. Just this year, two substantial regional studies of foster care alumni were released, shedding even greater light on the conditions of youth formerly in care.

The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, released last April by Casey Family Programs, Harvard Medical School, the Washington State Office of Children's Administration Research, and the Oregon Department of Human Services, found that more than 20% of foster care alumni were doing well. But most still faced major challenges in mental health, education, and employment. One-third of youth formerly in foster care had incomes at or below the poverty level, one-third had no health insurance, and nearly a quarter had experienced homelessness after leaving foster care. Rates of post-traumatic stress disorder were twice as high for foster care alumni than for U.S. war veterans.

"We are not establishing a strong enough bridge from foster care to young adulthood," says Peter Pecora, the study's lead researcher. "We need to be…helping youth who are going to be in care a year or more become better prepared emotionally and educationally to get and keep jobs that pay a living wage with health care benefits."

Similarly, the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth, Chapin Hall's longitudinal study of youth leaving foster care and transitioning to adulthood in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, found that young people leaving foster care face "formidable challenges," often struggling to stay in school, find stable housing, support themselves financially, and secure medical services.

The Midwest study also found that remaining in care beyond age 18 increased the likelihood young adults would continue their education or be employed. Those who left foster care at 18 were nearly three times more likely than a national sample of their peers to be disconnected from work or school.

In recent years, states have given more funding and greater flexibility to support young people transitioning to independent living, thanks to the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999, which created the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. FCIA increased funding for federal independent-living services to $140 million anually and enabled states to help young adults 18–21 years old who have left foster care.

Easing Transitions for Future Generations

The Achieving Independence Center (AIC) is one program that has used Chafee funds and other funding to open a one-stop center to help Philadelphia youth, ages 16–24, successfully transition out of foster care. Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) partnered with the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation and the Philadelphia Youth Network to open AIC in December 2002. Approximately 1,250 youth have participated.

Director Evelyn Busby explains AIC is an expansion of a 90-day transitional program that had provided a few hours of

lifeskills training for youth, four days a week after school. The Commissioner of Human Services decided that wasn't enough.

"[DHS] charged itself with expanding opportunities for youth transitioning out of care with the [rationale] that—for our own children or adopted children—we don't just give them some training and kick them out," Busby says. "In essence, the state has said to these youth, 'We are going to be your parents because, for whatever reason, your parents are unable to do it.'"

DHS social workers are required to inform youth transitioning out of care about AIC and make referrals. AIC's services are free to eligible youth, and the center operates flexible hours and is located near bus and subway lines. Youth enrolling at AIC to boost their job prospects find instruction on how to conduct a job search, prepare a résumé, complete an employment application, and prepare for a job interview. Workshops and individual counseling on balancing work, family life, and education also are available.

AIC's euro-style café offers hands-on work experience serving the public. Youth work alongside food service employees and managers for eight weeks for $6.50 an hour to learn the ins and outs of the hospitality trade. AIC also collaborates with outside partners such as Goodwill to help place young people in jobs.

But employment services are just one aspect of AIC, Busby explains. Other services include instruction on conducting a housing search, planning and preparing meals, and handling finances, as well as computer classes, academic tutoring, and assistance with college preparation—many of the basics necessary to get a foothold in adulthood.

AIC's services aren't only free, young people can earn points redeemable for cash rewards up to $2,100. For example, they can earn points for perfect attendance, for landing a job, and for every month they remain at that job. "We want them to have funds and resources when they leave here," Busby explains.

Further north, the New Jersey Youth Corps is also making strides to prepare foster care alumni for work and life in the real world. The program opened in 1984 to provide academic instruction and community service to high school dropouts. Last year, the program began specifically targeting youth ages 16–25 who were leaving or had left foster care. Chafee funding helps provide education, community service, and personal and career development.

Across 12 sites, New Jersey Youth Corps provides individual and career counseling; preparation for the GED; employability skills instruction, such as résumé writing and interviewing techniques; and lifeskills instruction, including becoming an educated consumer and preventing unwanted pregnancies. Youth placed in jobs receive periodic follow-up counseling for their first 120 days on the job.

"There aren't a lot of programs that operate full-time, year-round that provide this comprehensive experience," says New Jersey Youth Corps State Director Lynn Logo-Keepers. "There are a lot of places where you can go and get GED instruction, for example, or basic skills instruction, or some vocational training, but they don't string them all together and keep the young person under their wing until they're ready to move on to a job or to college."

By participating in jobs programs aimed at young people with criminal records, Antoine Bennett turned his life around. Today, he directs such a program in Baltimore.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER MICHAEL

In the New Jersey Youth Corps, youth also receive at least 150 hours of community service experience, such as environmental restoration, human service projects, and housing rehabilitation—a critically important aspect to the program, Logo-Keepers explains. "It might take doing one or two projects, but usually once they start to see how much they can accomplish and the impact they can have on communities, it's so positive that their academics improve along with their increased interest in community service."

What has challenged New Jersey Youth Corps, Logo-Keepers says, is making the right connections among thousands of state agency personnel working with youth so that referrals are made on a local level to Youth Corps sites. "Even though we've been around over 21 years, you have to constantly tell people about what you do and who you are and make sure that information is out there."

Leaving Incarceration: Antoine's Story

With a criminal record and only six months work experience at Burger King under his belt, it took Antoine Bennett a long time to find steady work after being released from the Maryland Penitentiary in 1993. Bennett was incarcerated for three years, beginning at age 18, and on the snowy February day of his release, he headed straight for the Baltimore neighborhood where he grew up, visiting and reuniting with family members.

The honeymoon didn't last long. Bennett realized he couldn't live forever off the generosity of his aunt, who took him in after his release. "I remember coming out with no ID and no money in my pocket, and for a lot of us that's what led us into the penitentiary in the first place."

Bennett wasn't sure where to begin looking for work, but he was certain of one thing: "One promise I made to myself was that I was not going to be as stupid going out as I was going in."

Raised by his grandmother, Bennett grew up in one of Baltimore's most economically depressed neighborhoods. As a teenager, he admits he got into trouble and had a bad temper. He stole from the local convenience store, stayed out late, and was suspended from school. Shortly after he turned 18, he shot a man; the victim survived, but Bennett was convicted of attempted first-degree murder. Today, Bennett says he fully regrets his actions and is thankful the man survived.

For the first year after his release, Bennett's employment was sporadic. At times, he was unemployed for months on end. He worked an assortment of janitorial, construction, and restaurant jobs but would end up being laid off or, once employers learned of his criminal record, let go. "I felt it was important to be honest about my background, but it did me in."

The turning point came when he found a flyer for the Economic Development Employment Network (EDEN), a free, nonprofit jobs placement program for the residents of Bennett's neighborhood. From the beginning, Bennett was impressed. "They didn't treat me like an ex-offender coming through the door. They always referred to me as a 'job seeker.'"

For the first time, Bennett learned how to write a résumé and cover letter, and EDEN staff drilled him in mock interviews, asking him straightforward questions about his background and prior work experience and suggesting appropriate responses. Through EDEN, he landed a spot with YouthBuild USA, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor in which unemployed, low-income young people 16–24, including ex-offenders, can learn job skills building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people.

In the program for 18 months, Bennett discovered YouthBuild wasn't just about building houses. Participants spend half their day working and the other half in the classroom earning high school diplomas or GEDs and taking workshops on career and leadership development. They receive stipends and personal counseling. Program graduates receive help finding jobs or applying for school and are encouraged to participate in alumni groups.

The community service piece has been key to YouthBuild's success, says founder and President Dorothy Stoneman. "Building housing for people in the neighborhood is an enormous sense of pride for young people who've been disrespected and marginalized, and now the community looks at them as heroes because they see them in their hard hats building housing."

YouthBuild has helped 47,000 teenagers and young adults build some 13,000 units of affordable housing in 44 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. About 15% of participants have felony convictions.

The criteria for participation, according to Stoneman, are only "that you show seriousness of purpose and motivation, and that you are not addicted to hard drugs. That's what we tell them, and they line up at the doors. We tell them a criminal record is irrelevant. What matters is your future."

Bennett's success in YouthBuild launched him on a career path right back to where he started, at EDEN Jobs. Since 1996, he has played many roles at the organization, including receptionist, security guard, financial counselor, and jobs counselor. Today, at 34, he's the Director of EDEN Jobs and serves on YouthBuild USA's Board of Directors.

"Antoine has always been a stunningly committed man, and I'm not surprised at his success," Stoneman says, "but no one should think it was easy for him. Young people need a long period of support if they don't happen to have the resources in their own family to get that kind of support. The programs they are connected with need to pay attention and provide care and interest in doors opening for them for a long time."

Aiding Reentry

Many young, motivated ex-offenders line up at YouthBuild's doors looking for work, but some programs don't wait for the young people to come calling. Youth Opportunity Boston, or

Resources

- *Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment*
  Casey Family Programs
  www.caseylifeskills.org
- *The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program—Frequently Asked Questions*
  www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ChafeeFAQ.htm
- *Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Vulnerable 14–24 Year Olds*
  Youth Transition Funders Group
  www.ytfg.org/documents/connectedby25_OOS.pdf
- *CWLA Standards for Transition, Independent Living, and Self Sufficiency Services*
  Child Welfare League of America ($16.50)
  www.cwla.org/programs/standards/cwsstandardsindependentliving.htm
- *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth*
  Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
  www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1355&L2=61&L3=130
- *Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*
  Casey Family Programs
  www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/NorthwestAlumniStudy.htm
- *State Fact Sheets on Serving Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*
  National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development
  National Resource Center for Youth Development, University of Oklahoma
  www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/state_pages.shtml

YO Boston, visits young people while they're still incarcerated to help them prepare for and think about employment once they're released.

"We like to get in and start at least three to four months before they get out so we can create that continuum, so they aren't stepping into our agency cold," says Kim Pelletreau, YO Boston's Law Enforcement Manager. "If you can sit down with a kid and punch out a résumé for someone who doesn't have any experience, and they can walk out with that in hand…that is immediate gratification and boosts their self-esteem."

Started in 2001, YO Boston serves youth 14–21 who have been arrested, incarcerated, or on juvenile probation within the past two years. The program also serves the siblings of court-involved youth, young people whose parents are incarcerated, and those who have GEDs or high school diplomas but no plans for the future. The program offers transitional employment services, workshops on topics such as workplace etiquette and decision-making, education classes, technology training, and community service activities. All services are free.

YO Boston's employment program is aligned on four levels, beginning with community service learning and work readiness, and ending with intensive career planning. "It's a clear picture for young people," says YO Boston Career Development Manager Maddrey Goode. "There are four different levels to this thing they call work. The youth have to master one before they can go on to the next."

To help youth land jobs, YO Boston has partnered with various businesses, including Citizen's Bank, UPS, and Wendy's. The staff is continually working on building more partnerships with the private sector and community-based organizations, and periodically invites them to participate in activities at YO Boston, including career fairs.

The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and operated by the Boston Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Service, in partnership with the Boston Police Department, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, and the Suffolk County House of Corrections.

Speaking from Experience

On the four corners of the block where EDEN Jobs is located in West Baltimore sits a liquor store; the gutted shell of an abandoned row home; a crumbling, vacant car wash parking lot; and the brightly painted gate and signs for EDEN Jobs and a Habitat for Humanity housing program. If Antoine Bennett hadn't ended up on the corner where EDEN Jobs is located, he says he'd be "dead or in jail."

After living through the difficult transition from jail to work, and now working day to day with young people in the same predicament, he says one of the best things public and private agencies can do is come to the table together to coordinate services and make such transitions easier. "It takes a village to raise an ex-offender," he says. For example, many young ex-offenders leave incarceration with no identification and limited knowledge about how to obtain it—a problem the Motor Vehicle Administration could help solve together with the jail systems, Bennett says.

Removing Roadblocks to Reentry

After leaving incarceration, young ex-offenders find numerous barriers to reintegrating into society. For example, most states restrict voting rights and allow employers to deny jobs to people who may have been arrested or convicted. Many public housing authorities deny eligibility for federally assisted housing based on arrest records, according to the Legal Action Center (LAC).

Laurie Parise, an Equal Justice Works Fellow at the National HIRE Network, a project of LAC, recommends youth leaving incarceration learn about the laws and restrictions in their states before searching for employment. Parise also suggests:

- Know the difference between a crime and an offense. This can change how you respond on a job application.
- Know what's on your arrest record. These records sometimes contain incorrect information.
- Know about your state's sealing laws for court records. These vary from state to state.
- Maintain thorough documentation about rehabilitation services you may have received.
- Don't lie about your background. Background checks will uncover the truth.

Visit the Legal Action Center online at www.lac.org for more information and to access LAC's recent study, *After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry, A Report on State Legal Barriers Facing People With Criminal Records.*

As for Rin Hover's advice for those helping youth transition from foster care, she says, "Once a young person leaves foster care, we really have no connections to anyone. Because that connection is not there, it's important that the skills you need in the workforce are taught to you."

Reflecting on her own search, she says she has learned many things along the way, including the need to research companies before applying and interviewing, regularly updating a résumé, and sending thank-you letters after interviews. Here and there, she picked up other skills, such as learning how to write a résumé from a parks and recreation program and learning about proper attire through a Dress for Success program.

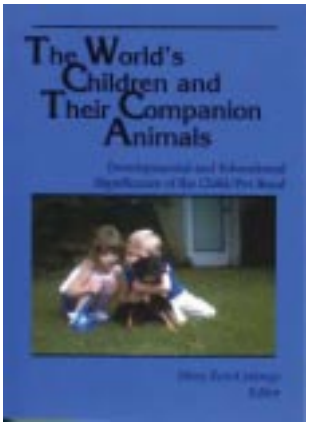
Although Covenant House did not hire her as an administrative assistant, she continued to work temporary positions while looking for a full-time job. A window finally opened when CWLA hired her as Youth Leadership Coordinator, working with the National Foster Youth Advisory Council and providing training and technical assistance around youth engagement and positive youth development.

Daniella offers advice to other young job seekers like her who may feel discouraged with the obstacles they encounter looking for work: "Try to remain encouraged, remember why you're trying to do this, and understand this is temporary."

Jennifer Michael is Managing Editor of Children's Voice.

The World's Children and Their Companion Animals: Developmental and Educational Significance of the Child/Pet Bond

Mary Renck Jalongo, Editor



Internationally renowned physician Albert Schweitzer once said, "We need a boundless ethic which will include the animals also." It is just such an ethic, an ethic of compassion and generosity, that holds the greatest promise for more responsive parenting, more compassionate teaching, and a more tolerant and just society.

Foreword: Stars in a Child's Universe by Michael J. Rosen
Introduction: The Special Significance of Companion Animals in Children's Lives by Mary Renck Jalongo with Marsha R. Robbins and Reade Paterno
Part One: Children, Families, and Companion Animals
* Bonding With and Caring for Pets: Companion Animals and Child Development
* Companion Animals in the Lives of Boys and Girls: Gendered Attitudes, Practices, and Preferences
* Companion Animals at Home: What Children Learn From Families

Part Two: Companion Animals in Schools and Communities
* A Friend at School: Classroom Pets and Companion Animals in the Curriculum
* Animals That Heal: Animal-Assisted Therapy With Children
* Global Companion Animals: Bonding With and Caring for Animals Across Cultures and Countries
* Portraying Pets: The Significance of Children's Writings and Drawings About Companion Animals

Part Three: Companion Animals in Print and in the Media
* Companion Animals in Books: Themes in Children's Literature
* Companion Animals and Technology: Using the Internet, Software, and Electronic Toys To Learn About Pets

Afterword by Mary Renck Jalongo

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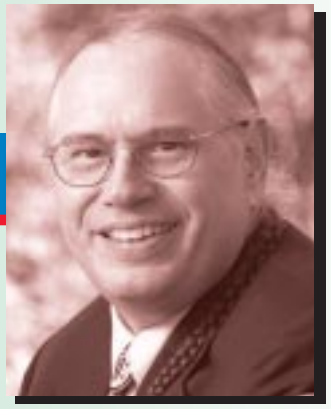
Other Voices



The Responsibility of the Reconciled

By Terry Cross

In October, five national organizations from the United States and Canada (the Child Welfare League of America, the Child Welfare League of Canada, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and the Center for Excellence in Child Welfare at the University of Toronto) hosted a North American forum on reconciliation in child welfare. Indigenous and nonindigenous leaders from communities, professions, and governments, who are committed to changing the way we think and act as social workers to benefit indigenous children and their families, convened in the spirit of reconciliation.

Reconciliation takes two willing partners, the injured and the perpetrator. Over the past centuries, indigenous peoples of North America have experienced oppression, loss, and exclusion. Yet, indigenous and nonindigenous peoples understand that the way forward for our children depends on our ability to hear the lessons of the past, learn from them, and carve out, in a vigilant way, a new relationship together based on respectful coexistence.

Mainstream helping professionals, policymakers, researchers, and child welfare leaders comprise people of good intent who care about human rights and justice. Why, then, do they usually conduct their affairs as if indigenous people do not exist? Emilios Christodoulidis of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, writing about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, cited the following quote from French philosopher Simone Weil:

> *"You do not interest me." No man can say these words without committing a cruelty and offending against justice.**

The phrase is manifest in many forms, such as when Native peoples are ignored in research findings and lumped among the amorphous category "other" or reported as "insignificant." Most often, the essence of this phrase appears as acts of omission. It is why policy does not change, even when report after report affirms that change is necessary. It is why practice does not change, even when helpers are of good will, open mind, and rational thought. It is at least part of the reason the same government that enacts policy to preserve the family can be the agent of destruction of indigenous families through perpetuation of boarding schools.

The reasons many interventions in child welfare are unhelpful or destructive for indigenous communities stem from two closely related, larger societal problems:

- systemic colonialism, a situation that allows the more powerful to take what they want from the less powerful—in this case, American Indian/Alaska Native peoples, and
- racism, the treating of indigenous peoples differently just because of their racial heritage.

We must have the courage to recognize the mistakes of the past but, more importantly, the presence of mind to recognize new forms of colonialism today. Nowhere is this more exemplified and critical to our understanding than in the momentum moving the child welfare field toward evidence-based practice. No one should argue against accountability or the value of research informing practice, but the child welfare field is at risk of having evidence-based practice become the latest wave of colonial oppression.

Community-based, culturally specific services will never achieve the status now bestowed upon interventions proven in randomized control trials. A traditional culture-helping approach will likely never be, nor should it be, distilled down to an instructional manual. Funders and policymakers are beginning to limit program funding to evidence-based interventions. But if the field ignores the implications of imposing services on native people just because they work in someone's randomized control sample, we are condemned to remain oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized. We must have the courage to ask questions like, "Who gets to determine what evidence is considered?" "Who defines success?" and "Who controls the approved lists?"

To redress these problems, a necessary beginning point is to build relationships by engaging in dialogue that will initiate a process of reconciliation between mainstream child welfare and the indigenous peoples of the United States and Canada. This dialogue must be founded on principles of respect, understanding, inclusion, and truth. It involves a confirmation of, and learning from, our historical experiences and moving toward a new sustainable relationship that supports children who thrive.

This new relationship will foster recognition and support for the right and ability of indigenous peoples to make the best decisions for indigenous children. The ultimate goal of this process in both the United States and Canada—for both

See *Other Voices*, p. 19

* Christodoulidis, E.A. (2000). "Truth and Reconciliation as Risks." *Social and Legal Studies, 9*:(2) 179–204.

Agency Briefs

Empowering Parents Through Conversation

As a child protective services (CPS) supervisor in Louisville, Kentucky, Deborah Turner recalls working with a mother who was addicted to drugs and in danger of having her children placed in foster care. The woman had attended multiple substance abuse programs, but nothing helped. Then the mother discovered a discussion group in her neighborhood that helped turn her life around.

Despite their apparent benefits, Turner was troubled by the lack of enthusiasm in the CPS community for community-led discussion groups. She believed they could be helpful—especially in African American neighborhoods, where conventional therapy is sometimes met with suspicion. So, in 1998, Turner established Talkshops at the Neighborhood Place Ujima, a service center for low-income families in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Talkshop participants meet for 90 minutes, once a week, for eight weeks to discuss parenting, family, and community issues, including communicating with their children, understanding the CPS system, and developing healthy partnerships.

Promoting a sense of community and empowering participants are at the heart of Talkshops. While the program is open to everyone, many participants have lost their children to the child welfare system and have been referred to the discussion group through CPS or a parole and probation program. Referred parents often bring relatives and other people involved in their children's lives to participate in discussions.

Parents who maintain custody of their children bring their children along and eat a meal with them at the center before the children go to child care elsewhere in the building during the Talkshop session. Foster parents also attend Talkshops to fulfill training requirements, and therapists and community leaders are invited to participate as well. This diversity of participants allows people involved in different aspects of the child welfare system, including birth and foster parents, to understand various viewpoints within the system.

Volunteer facilitators begin sessions with short presentations, allowing participants to comment and ask questions. Discussion topics come from participants primarily and help shape the program. For example, if a participant wants to know more about buying a house, Turner will invite a housing services representative to speak to the group. She says she wants participants to feel "they own the program." Many participants return to lead other Talkshop discussions.

Turner hopes the Talkshops will change the image of CPS from a "policing force" to a "provider of tools to help [parents] develop skills to make change."

Corrections Program Encourages Mother-Infant Bonding

In Baltimore, women in the penal system who are pregnant or have children under 3 months old may be eligible for a residential program that allows them to remain with their infants. Since 2001, TAMAR's Children (Trauma, Addiction, Mental Health, and Recovery) has helped incarcerated mothers develop secure attachments with their infants.

Women participating in TAMAR's Children have been diagnosed with substance abuse addictions due to trauma, such as losing a baby or witnessing domestic violence, and are serving sentences from 14 months to three years for nonviolent crimes. After being accepted into TAMAR's Children, the women are placed on parole or probation and must remain in the program for six months. Up to 16 women can participate at one time.

Without TAMAR's Children, participants would give birth in prison and lose their children to foster care. On the other hand, children who become attached to their mothers during infancy are "more resilient and perform better in school," according to TAMAR's Children therapist Kate Oliver.

Babies remain with their mothers throughout the program, and the women interact as a community. The mother of a 3-month-old infant, for example, might help the mother of a newborn learn how to change diapers. The mothers receive individual therapy with a trauma therapist and an addictions counselor. Group discussions focus on topics that include relationships and communication. The women follow the mantra, "Always be bigger, stronger, wise, and kind. Whenever possible, follow my lead; whenever necessary, take the lead."

A video component called *Circle of Security* depicts real-life secure and insecure attachment cases. Used in some Head Start programs, the intervention is based on more than 50 years of research about mother and infant attachment.

The mothers also record their own videos as part of what Oliver describes as an "experimental intervention" called Strange Situations. Two cameras record the mother and child, respectively, for about 20 minutes as the mother interacts with the child. The mother follows the child's lead, turns away from the child, and turns toward the child. Then a stranger enters the room, and the mother leaves. The child's reactions to these situations illustrates whether a secure or insecure attachment is forming. The mothers later analyze the tapes during group sessions and receive tips on forming more secure attachments.

Occasionally, the exercise reveals the mothers' own childhood trauma. One mother, Oliver recalls, reentered the room during a Strange Situation and said her baby was mad at her for leaving. The child wasn't mad, but the mother's statement revealed her own trauma from childhood abandonment.

To date, 25 women have graduated from the program, with a rate of 67% forming secure attachments—a rate equal to that of middle-class white parents outside the penal system, Oliver says. After they have completed the program, the women may enter Shelter Plus Care, a program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that provides housing assistance and job training for eligible cliental for up to five years.

The mothers also continue with outpatient therapy while their infants are between 6 months and 1 year old.

TAMAR's Children is operated by multiple public agencies, including Maryland's correctional services, and is funded by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Abell Foundation, and other social service agencies.

Internship Places Foster Care Alumni on Capitol Hill

In Washington, DC, last summer, a select group of young people brought foster care issues to the forefront with help from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI).

Through its Congressional Foster Youth Internship (FYI), CCAI provides summer internships to college students who grew up in foster care. CCAI piloted the program in 2002 with two interns serving the offices of Senators Larry Craig (R-ID) and Mary Landrieu (D-LA). This year, 13 House and Senate members opened their offices to FYI students. While interns aid legislative assistants with research, attend committee meetings, and sort mail, their presence is a constant reminder to members of Congress and their staff about the need to support the child welfare system, says CCAI Executive Director Deanna Carlson Stacy.

CCAI supports the interns by giving them an orientation about Capitol Hill terminology, the dress code, the importance of punctuality, and how to communicate with congressional leaders. CCAI also holds bimonthly education sessions to discuss problems or questions that surface during the internships. These sessions are important, says Program Manager and Policy Associate Tricia Tyskowski, because "sometimes [students] come without knowing how legislation works."

The internship program has graduated 37 students since its inception, and many have moved on to promising futures. Jelani Freeman, for example, interned with Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) in 2003 and now works as the Youth Engaged in Service Ambassador in the office of Washington, DC, Mayor Anthony Williams.

Students from the foster care system who have completed at least two years of college as part of a four-year degree program are eligible to participate in the internship program. CCAI selects 14–16 students for six-week internships in Washington every summer and provides them with a stipend and money for traveling and housing expenses, thanks to funding from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Beyond the internship opportunities they offer, Stacy says CCAI staff have also committed their resources to helping some of the interns reunite with family members. They helped intern Nyanga Nzabamwita, for example, reunite with her Rwandan family, whom she believed dead; Adier Mach Deng, a Sudanese refugee, was reunited with his father.

The Power of Dance

On August 11, participants in the CAS/AileyCamp took the stage at New York City's United Palace Theatre on Broadway and wowed the audience with a special performance that ranged from tap and ballet to hip-hop and modern dance. The show capped six weeks of intense work at this summer dance camp, where dance is used as a vehicle for self-esteem and critical thinking. This year, the camp served 100 young people ages 11–14 from New York's Washington Heights and Central and East Harlem communities. The final performance celebrated 15 years of the partnership between the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and The Children's Aid Society (CAS). AileyCamps also operate in Boston, Chicago, and Kansas City, as well as Bridgeport, Connecticut and Berkley/Oakland, California.

CALIFORNIA

High school graduation rates have been rising slowly but steadily in California's public education system, but African American, Native American, and Latino students continue to lag behind their European and Asian American counterparts.

For the class of 2002, the largest disparity existed between American Indians, who had a 52.2% graduation rate, and Asians, with an 83.5% graduation rate, according to the report *Who Graduates in California?* from the Urban Institute Education Policy Center.

The 2002 graduation rate breakdown for other racial groups in California includes blacks, 56.6%; Hispanics, 60.3%; and whites, 77.8%. The graduation rate for all students was 71.3%, up from 64% in 1992. California's overall results have followed nationwide patterns in high school completion, the report notes.

Addressing the minority lag, the report says, "Fewer than two-thirds of all students graduate from high school in central city districts and in communities that suffer from high levels of racial and socioeconomic segregation."

The report also states, "All major racial-ethnic groups have shown improvements in the past few years. Since gains have generally been stronger for the lowest-performing students, the graduation gap has closed slightly since 1998 (the first year for which disaggregated rates can be calculated). Nevertheless, very large disparities still remain among students from different racial-ethnic groups."

The report is accessible on the Urban Institute's website, www.urban.org.

FLORIDA

Florida's statewide, multiagency child death review system has released an analysis of 35 child deaths in the state in 2003 due to abuse or neglect. Florida's Child Abuse Death Review Report also analyzed 161 child deaths over five years. All of the abuse and neglect cases had been reported at least once to the Florida Abuse Hotline, operated by the state's Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Of the deaths in 2003, 13 were due to abuse, and 22 due to neglect. The review team, established by Florida's Department of Health in 1999, issued a number of recommendations with its analysis, including recommending enhanced training about the signs of child abuse and neglect for law enforcement, DCF staff, members of the judiciary, and school personnel.

Nine of the 35 cases reviewed were related to drowning—seven children drowned in swimming pools, one in a canal, and one in a pond—prompting the team to recommend that DCF emphasize drowning risk factors in its training curriculum. The team also suggested continued public awareness and education about drowning prevention, specifically focusing on the risks to children under age 5. Over five years, drowning was the leading cause of neglect deaths in Florida, accounting for 37 child deaths.

The team also identified a significant risk of infant death due to unsafe sleeping environments in which the children were placed in unsafe positions or beds, or were co-sleeping with adults or children, causing the child to suffocate. Four of the 35 deaths in 2003 were due to infants sleeping with their parents. The team recommended that hospitals, pediatricians, and home visiting programs continue to educate parents and the community about safe sleeping and the dangers of co-sleeping.

Of the 161 child deaths due to abuse and neglect over five years, 52% were caused by neglect, and 48% by abuse. Fifty-eight percent of the children who died were male, 42% were female; 58% were white, 39% black, and 25% Hispanic.

Fathers or boyfriends were responsible for 44% of the deaths; mothers were responsible for 36%. Neglect was the primary cause of death in most cases in which the mother was the sole caregiver, but abuse was the cause of death in most cases where the father or male boyfriend was the primary caregiver. Fifty-four percent of the caregivers responsible for a child's death were under 30 years old.

The full text of the Florida Child Abuse Death Review is available online at www.doh.state.fl.us/cms/CADR/2004CADRrpt.pdf.

GEORGIA

The Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) is making improvements in its child welfare offices in Fulton and DeKalb Counties as part of the settlement of a lawsuit filed in 2002 by Children's Rights Inc., a New York-based advocacy group.

The suit claimed the two county DFCS offices were overburdened and failed to deliver basic services to children, alleging that high caseloads for caseworkers, poor monitoring of child safety, and a drastic shortage of foster homes were harming children.

DFCS agreed to make a number of systemwide management and infrastructure reforms, including reducing caseloads, increasing payments to foster parents, and reducing children's time in foster care. DCFS will have to improve outcomes for children in 31 areas of service and sustain

this performance for at least 18 months before the U.S. District Court in Atlanta will consider ending its oversight.

The court has appointed independent child welfare experts to measure and report on Georgia's performance under the terms of the settlement. The state expects to spend at least $15 million to address the settlement's terms during the first year of court supervision, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution.*

NORTH DAKOTA

What barriers and difficulties do grandparents face while caring for grandchildren in North Dakota? The North Dakota State Data Center took this question to grandparents statewide through telephone and in-person interviews, and North Dakota KIDS COUNT reported the findings last summer.

According to 2000 Census data, 2,547 grandparent caregivers live in North Dakota, and approximately 1 in 33 children live in households headed by a relative other than a parent. Most of these children live with a grandparent, representing 2.4% of all children in the state.

The North Dakota State Data Center survey found that, in 2002, half of grandparent caregivers lived in rural areas, and two-thirds had an annual income of $35,000 or less. Three-fourths of grandparents received no monetary compensation to care for their grandchildren, and approximately 59% of grandparents reported their grandchildren received no monetary assistance.

Overall, grandparents accepted their responsibility as caregivers without identifying serious difficulties. Their biggest concerns, however, centered on the emotional aspects of caregiving (25%), the financial burden (25%), and feeling tied down (25%).

At least three-fourths of grandparents indicated that school lunch programs (88%), extracurricular activities (82%), and special education (76%) were available to their grandchildren. For at least one-fourth of grandparents, mentoring programs (27%), tutoring (28%), and scholarships (30%) were not available.

The study offered a number of recommendations for future policy initiatives, including creating an online tracking and referral system for caregivers, establishing a caregivers website, and providing distance education programs, long-term health insurance, and tax breaks for caregivers.

The complete report is available at www.ndkidscount.org/family/grandparentcaregivers.htm.

Other Voices, from p. 15

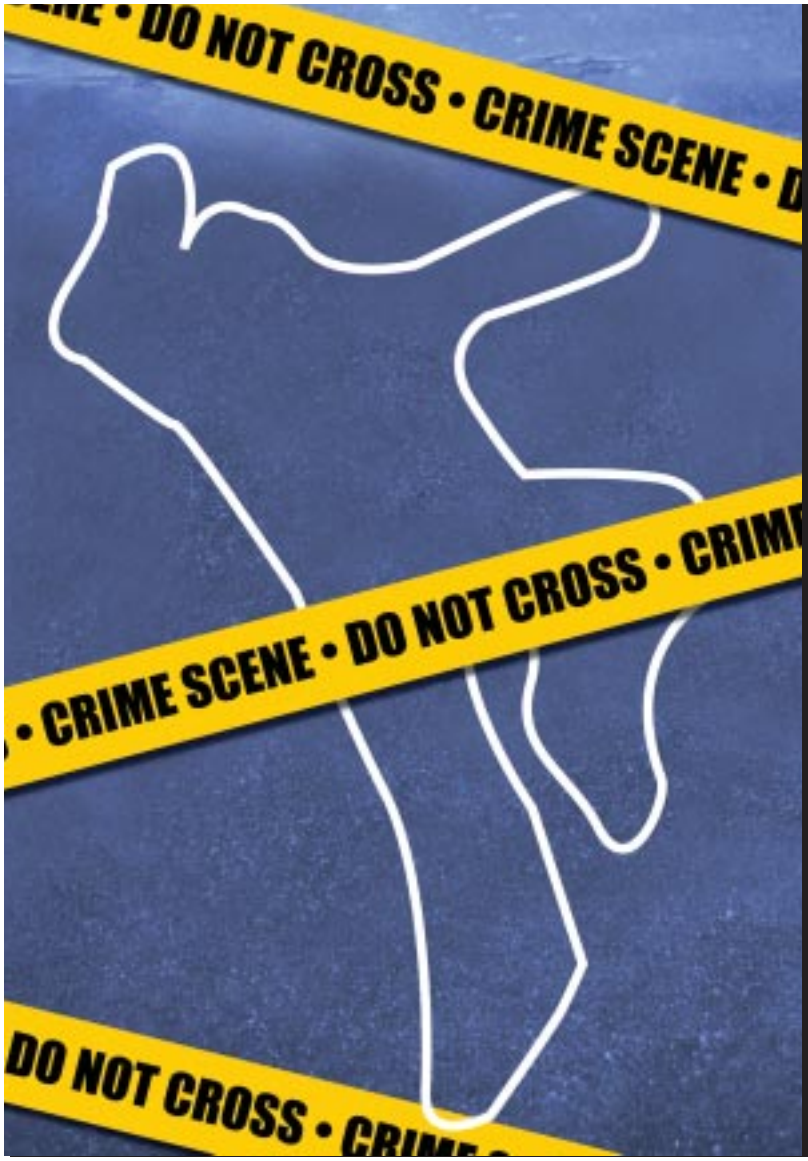
aboriginal and nonaboriginal peoples—is unity in child welfare in support of the well-being of children.

The goal of October's international meeting was, and remains, to build relationships and engage in dialogue that will initiate a process of truth and reconciliation between mainstream child welfare and the indigenous peoples of the United States and Canada. This will necessarily mean acknowledging and affirming the sovereign and moral authority of indigenous peoples' governments to make decisions about their children.

This event puts in focus current relationships between indigenous peoples and the child welfare system, calling for a confirmation of, and learning from, our historical experiences, and moving toward a new, sustainable relationship that supports successful children and is founded on principles of respect, understanding, inclusion, and truth. Together, we will strive for excellence in child welfare.

Terry Cross is Executive Director, National Indian Child Welfare Association, Portland, Oregon.

"Other Voices" provides leaders and experts from national organizations that share CWLA's commitment to the well-being of children, youth, and families a forum to share their views and ideas on cross-cutting issues.



Survivors, Not Victims: Children of Murdered Parents

By Mary Liepold

Illustration by James Melvin

Of the many remarkable things about Darline, the most striking is that she is at the same time both phenomenally calm and phenomenally energetic. What she brings to her job as Director of Finance and Operations for a national nonprofit, beyond her solid business and accounting background, is the rare ability to chart a clear path through a maze of tangled systems.

In her spare time, she is a volunteer firefighter with up-to-date training in disaster preparedness, and she coaches a young women's boxing team preparing for the 2008 Olympics. Besides the Olympics, her dreams for the future include adopting lots of older children and managing a bed and breakfast for international visitors in the nation's capital. Her daughter, who wants to be a chef, would operate the restaurant on the first floor. It's easy to see Darline presiding over an orderly hubbub of challenging young people and cosmopolitan guests, because everything she does comes from a core of inner certainty.

But this serene adult grew up in a violent and chaotic household. Her father was an abusive alcoholic, and her parents battled constantly. Her mother lost a leg in a car accident as a result of his drunken driving. On Christmas Eve of the year Darline was 7, her mother shot and killed her father. The ruling was justifiable homicide.

When Children Witness

Since 2002, Barbara Parker and Richard Steeves at the University of Virginia (UVA) School of Nursing have been studying survivors of uxoricide—children with a parent who murdered the other parent.[1] By a conservative estimate, parental homicide affects more than 3,000 U.S. children annually. Exact numbers are hard to come by—police records don't always mention children, and they may not mention the adults' relationship unless they are married—but Parker and Steeves calculate that children in the United States are more likely to see a parent murdered in any given year than to contract leukemia.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) estimates that during the 1990s, more than 20,000 people died at the hands of a spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend. According to DOJ's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), between 1993 and 2003, 49% of all violent incidents in the United States were crimes against a spouse, and spouse murders comprised 9% of all homicides.

Nonetheless, OJP also reports that the rate of family violence nationwide has fallen sharply, from an estimated 5.4 inci-

1. Although the Latin term denotes the killing of a wife, *uxoricide* is commonly used for partners of either gender.

dents per 1,000 individuals older than 12 in 1993, down to 2.1 per 1,000 in 2003. This is in keeping with a decline over the last decade in violent crimes of all types for which we have national statistics. Domestic violence programs, shelters for battered spouses, and services that strengthen families can share the credit with economics and other factors for preventing some lethal incidents.

Still, even a single such incident is a catastrophe. Searching for a statistical handhold, Parker and Steeves have found research showing that children were in the home in 63% of uxoricides, and they either witnessed the murder or found the body in 43%. In Parker and Steeves' home state of Virginia, that would involve roughly 108 children in one year alone.

A book-length British study, *When Father Kills Mother* (2000), described what happened to a group of 95 such children in the short term: 52% went to relatives, 30% to foster homes, and 10% to institutions. Almost 75% of them moved from one placement to another in the first year, and 13 moved three or more times.

The UVA researchers wanted to find out what becomes of these children over the long term. Once they secured funding from the National Institutes of Health for a study, they began looking for adult survivors who could tell them how they coped and what was helpful and unhelpful in their own experiences. The youngest of the first seven volunteers were in their late 20s, and most were considerably older. The team conducted unstructured interviews, inviting participants to tell their stories, then used content analysis to organize what they heard.

Three findings emerged from these first seven interviews, and all three held constant in a larger study as well. First, and most surprising to the researchers, was that most of the children had wanted to reconnect with the assailant. They forgave abusive fathers who had killed their mothers, as well as abused mothers who had finally taken enough and struck back. Three beliefs seemed to shape their thinking, though not all were present in each case:

- Their religion called for forgiveness.
- The parents' alcoholism or mental illness reduced their culpability.
- Families should stay together no matter what.

The Virginia authors cite earlier studies, which posit that bereaved children have to negotiate three tasks:

- Accept the reality of what happened.
- Find ways to tolerate the pain.
- Loosen the affective bonds with the deceased and make the energy available for other relationships.

All three tasks are particularly difficult when a parent is murdered. Maintaining a bond with the assailant parent was how these children had chosen to accomplish the second, a way to soften the pain of separation.

Parker and Steeves' second finding was closely related. They observed that children's efforts to suppress anger, to rationalize the violence and normalize it so they could go on with their lives, created a double-edged sword. It allowed the young people to hold on to precious family connections, but it also seemed to predispose them to a tolerance for violence. Domestic violence researchers Murray Straus, Richard Gelles, and Suzanne Steinmetz concluded in 1980 that sons who observe violent fathers have a 1,000% greater chance of becoming violent with their own partners than do boys from nonviolent homes.

Six of the original seven in the UVA study either became abusive themselves or entered abusive relationships, although all later freed themselves to some extent.

One man came from a large family in rural Virginia. His mother had taken the children and returned to her parents' home to get away from an abusive partner. One Sunday morning, returning from church, they saw a strange car in front of the house. The mother went to investigate, and the father opened fire from the car, killing her. The grandparents raised the children.

The son who participated in the study later shot his own wife—but he did not kill her. He served his time, he found his faith, and he is now a strong member of his church, as well as a valued employee. He looks out for the young people in the workplace, and he was very proud when a young woman introduced him to her father as "my dad at work." Like others who participated in the study, he is aware of his own propensity for violence. He manages it by enjoying social relationships, but keeping people at a safe distance.

Parker and Steeves' third research finding: "Some of the children of uxoricide prosper," Parker says. "The well-adjusted are telling us how they are well-adjusted."

Darline is extraordinary, but she is not unique. Academy Award–winning actress Charlize Theron is still close to her mother, but when she was 15 in her native South Africa, her mother killed her father in self-defense. The director who cast Theron in *Monster* sensed the survivor's grit that made this former model more than just another pretty face.

One of the male participants in the UVA study, whose mother was murdered by an ex-boyfriend 25 years ago, now works as an advocate for abused women and their children. Another survivor, Jeff, spent years feeling angry, isolated, and even suicidal. As he tells his story, a flash of insight came to him one day when he was able to walk away from a fight with his girlfriend and sit down to reflect.

> *I could see my life from the outside, and I could see the ways in which I was blinded by being inside who I was... And within 10 minutes I asked Mary to marry me...Now all the things that weren't working before started to work, and I have three great kids and I [have] had a great time being a father...*

Jeff's insight may have been possible because he had one dependable adult in his life as he was growing up. An aunt came back from missionary work in rural South America when she learned of the homicide and stayed with the children while their mother was in jail, then in a mental hospital. Although she returned to South America after a year, the aunt continued to be an important presence in their lives.

Child Advocacy Centers: Where Kids Come First

No child should ever have to witness a murder. But when the worst happens, a Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) may provide the best chance for a supportive, coordinated community response. Though the centers focus on severe child abuse, many have also been called on to assist survivors of parental homicide.

When a child enters a CAC setting, her comfort and security is the first concern. She can tell her story once and without delay to a highly trained interviewer, with all the right people present. The telling may be videotaped to prevent unnecessary repetition. Centers provide therapy for the children, as well as training for team members. CAC coordinators report numerous cases in which their child-first, teamwork approach not only reduced trauma for children, but also led to successful prosecution.

John Humphrey, Executive Director of the Children's Advocacy Center of Delaware, remembers a time when a father was convicted on the basis of the testimony of a 3-year-old the morning after the murder—but only after the team of police detectives, prosecutors, social workers, mental health, and medical staff cooled their heels while staff members and two aunts took the child out for chicken nuggets and a visit to the playground.

National Children's Alliance, the CAC network, has grown to 356 accredited members, 204 associate members, 44 chapters, four regional partners, and one tribal partner since its founding in 1992 by Representative Bud Cramer (D-AL), then District Attorney of Madison County, Alabama, in response to the needs of a growing number of facility-based child abuse intervention programs and the demand for guidance from grassroots organizations working with child victims. The Alliance provides national standards for the centers, training, technical assistance, networking, advocacy, and subgrants from its own U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funding.

Parker and Steeves' current full-scale study aims to interview 90 adults, and with a year to go, it's well past the halfway mark. It's among the first to draw domestic violence and bereavement together, and it should yield useful information for people who serve children and families. The team is preparing a second study focusing directly on young children—but because of the difficulties involved in interviewing children, they will base their research on interviews with caregivers.

What Adults Can Do

Although little solid information is available currently, suggestions for adults who want to promote healing come from Parker and Steeves, from published research, and from survivors themselves.

Agencies, Social Workers, and Family Members

- **Help family members who are caring for the children to let go of their own anger. This can be anger at the victim as well as the killer.** Parker describes an interview with one young man who visited his father in prison until his father died there. The father insisted until the end the mother had deserved to die. The aunt who was raising the boy defended the mother and strongly blamed the father, but the boy would not join her in assigning blame. He told Parker, "Whenever she starts, I think, 'That's half of my gene pool you're talking about.'"
- **Reassure children that what happened is not their fault.** Boys, in particular, may have fallen into a pattern of protecting the mother, and they may blame themselves for not preventing the crime. Younger children, who frequently engage in magical thinking, may also be likely to blame themselves for the tragic outcome.
- **Give them opportunities to talk.** This is what survivors overwhelmingly report they needed. Yet many family systems deal with trauma by papering it over and making the subject taboo. A 1988 British study of 28 child witnesses from 14 families found delays in providing therapy, or any emotional support at all, ranging from two weeks to 11 years.[2]
- **Try to find (or be) at least one person who can serve as a constant for the child.** Families are often bitterly divided. Adults may be too focused on their own pain to offer much help to the children. A helper may need to locate extended family members and notify them. Every child needs a rock.
- **Be alert to the possibility of suicidal thoughts in the child, both short- and long-term.** A child in pain has not had the life experience to know that bad times get better. This risk is especially high in the not-uncommon scenario of a parental murder-suicide. Children of suicides are at higher risk than the general population at every age.
- **Encourage survivors and family members to participate in the UVA studies so more knowledge can be gained for the benefit of all.** Call toll-free, 866/834-9564; e-mail homicide-study@virginia.edu; or visit the website at www.nursing.virginia.edu/centers/cnr/Parental%20Homicide%20Study/parental_homicide_study.htm.

Judges and Court Personnel

- **Try not to call children as witnesses.** When children or family members have to testify, they are usually instructed not to talk about the case before the trial. This runs counter to both children's and adults' needs to process the experience in words. It also prevents adults from understanding children's misperceptions and correcting them. Judges seldom bend down after the trial to tell families it is now okay to talk about the crime. Even if one does, by that time the family may have settled into a pattern of not talking.
- **When children must tell their story in court, respect their rights and work to minimize the number of repetitions.**

2. Black, D. & Kaplan, T. (1988). Father Kills Mother: Issues and Problems Encountered by a Child Psychiatric Team. *British Journal of Psychiatry,* 153: 624–630.

Although telling is therapeutic, wounds can be deepened when a child is forced to retell the story in a hostile setting. The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) model, which protects abused children nationwide, has been effective in many family murder cases. *[See "Child Advocacy Centers: Where Kids Come First," opposite.]* CAC staff members tell of cases where a videotape of the initial interview was used in court, and others in which the record of a child's first interview led to a confession.

- **If at all possible, protect young children from hearing graphic details about the murder or previous family violence.** When children must be present in court during painful testimony, provide an opportunity for them to talk about what they have heard with a trusted adult soon afterward.

- **Include information about child survivors of uxoricide in training for judges and guardians ad litem.** The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges said in a recent statement that "the number one barrier to effective representation [for children] is inadequate training."

Educators

- **In the immediate aftermath, focus on the children instead of procedures.** One brother and sister, in two separate schools, were both called out of class, brought to the principal's office, told there was a family emergency, and then made to sit for what seemed like forever before family members arrived. The school was probably following guidelines, but the procedure was hugely insensitive.

For More Information

Further Reading

- Burman, S., & Allen-Meares, P. (1994). Neglected Victims of Murder: Children's Witness to Parental Homicide. *Social Work, 39*(1), 28–33.
- Harris-Hendriks, J.; Kaplan, T; & Black, D. (2000). *When Father Kills Mother: Guiding Children Through Trauma and Grief.* Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Matthews, M.K. (2005, February 18). Deadly Consequences. *Baltimore Sun,* pp. 1E, 4E.
- Parker, B.; Steeves, R.; Anderson, S.; & Moran, B. (2004). Uxoricide: A Phenomenological Study of Adult Survivors. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 25,* 133–145.

Resources

- **Child Trauma Academy**
  How Caregivers Can Help Children Exposed to Traumatic Death
  www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/loss2.asp

- ***Homicide: Survivors/Covictims***
  U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime
  www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/help/hv.htm

- **National Center for Children Exposed to Violence**
  877/49NCCEV
  Fax 203/785-4608
  Email nccev@info.med.yale.edu
  www.nccev.org

- **National Center for Victims of Crime**
  800/FYI-CALL (394-2255)
  TTY 800/211-7996
  E-mail gethelp@ncvc
  www.ncvc.org

- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network**
  (a national coalition led by UCLA's National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress and the National Resource Center for Child Traumatic Stress at Duke University, and the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
  www.nctsnet.org

- **National Children's Alliance**
  (the national coalition of Children's Advocacy Centers)
  516 C Street NE
  Washington DC 20002
  202/548-0090
  Fax 202/548-0099
  www.nca-online.org

- **Parental Homicide Study**
  University of Virginia, School of Nursing
  PO Box 800782
  Charlottesville VA 22908
  434/924-2744
  E-mail homicide-study@virginia.edu
  www.nursing.virginia.edu/centers/cnr/Parental%20Homicide%20Study/parental_homicide_study.htm

- **Make sure children receive age-appropriate therapy.** Immediate treatment is best, but even if too much time has gone by without treatment, play therapy, art therapy, family and peer therapy groups, and one-on-one counseling can help children confront the loss and move beyond it.
- **Furnish the children's classmates with skills to help, and monitor interactions carefully.** A positive peer culture can promote healing. Conversely, allowing the traumatized child to become either a scapegoat or a bully will exacerbate the existing injury.

Healing takes time. Sometimes it takes decades. If child survivors can come to terms with what has happened, at whatever age, and if they can forgive the perpetrator without excusing the violence, survivors can thrive.

One man in the Virginia study admired a brother who visited their father in prison, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. Finally he made up his mind to visit—as it turned out, just a year before the father's death. He told his brother, "Tie me up, throw me off the porch if you need to, but don't let me hit him. I may try to, but I don't want to do that." Later he told the researchers:

> *I think had I not seen him all this time he might still have had a hold on me. But when I went back, and physically and every other way it was like I was larger than him…that released me a lot…You say, 'Well, I don't have to forgive him.' Because what he did was of course unforgivable. However, you don't have to always carry all this hatred and fear, and so I was working on myself as well.*

As for Darline, her mother's boyfriend moved in after her father's death, but the boyfriend turned out to be a convicted child molester, much more interested in Darline and her sisters than in their mother, who was in a wheelchair and suffering from a brain tumor that eventually paralyzed her remaining limbs. The abuse lasted six years, until the mother's death. The children went to live in the country with their father's mother, whom they had not seen since his funeral. There was no running water, and the girls had to chop wood for heat. The farm chores were endless, and relationships were strained.

Darline rebelled and ran away several times, but she never stopped going to school. Her chemistry teacher's family offered encouragement and a refuge in the toughest times. She went to live with them permanently when she was 17. When it looked like high school might be the end of the road, they and her caring social worker found a program that sent her on a European tour, while they worked at finding the right college.

Theirs was the home she returned to during college breaks. Mom and Dad, as she came to call them, cheered her academic and personal accomplishments and encouraged her to reconcile with her grandmother. When they formally adopted her in 1998, at the age of 37, the announcement cards showed a stork delivering a cheerful young woman in hat and heels, carrying a briefcase. Her gifts included a silver spoon engraved with her initials, which incorporate the name of her adoptive family as a new middle name.

Formerly Director of Individual Giving for CWLA and Editor of Children's Voice, *Mary Liepold is Director of Development for Peace x Peace, Vienna, Virginia.*

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Preventing Burnout in Your Staff and Yourself: A Survival Guide for Human Services Supervisors
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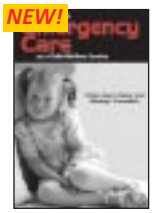

The Role of Emergency Care as a Child Welfare Service
Madelyn Freundlich
Sets forth guiding principles and recommendations for quality emergency placements for children and youth.
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Caren Caplan
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Madelyn Freundlich and Leslee Morris
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Foster Parent Retention and Recruitment: The State of the Art in Practice and Policy
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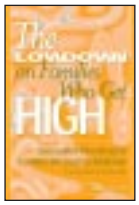

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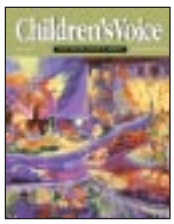

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Fostering Progress

Facts to move children and families forward.

By Mary Bissell and Rob Geen

What prevents the U.S. child welfare system from doing all it can to protect children and support families? Complex social problems? Insufficient funding? Staff turnover? The truth is, the inability to address these barriers is rooted in a much larger problem—a chronic lack of public will. Despite its best efforts, child welfare faces daunting challenges in making policymakers and the public understand and commit to fixing the system.

Child welfare agencies and service providers rarely have the time, expertise, or capital to invest in strategic communications that promote their successes. And media coverage rarely moves beyond crisis-driven headlines to a more meaningful discussion of the programs and policies necessary to stop a crisis before it occurs. The unfortunate result is that the public understands little about foster care—and the information it does have is often based on anecdotes or stereotypes.

To build support for child welfare innovations, the public first needs accurate information. The following test is designed to help you educate the opinion leaders in your community to distinguish foster care fact from fiction.

Most abused or neglected children end up in foster care. ***False.*** In 2002, more than 3 million children were reported to child welfare agencies for abuse and neglect. About 900,000 of these children were confirmed as victims of abuse and neglect, but only one-fifth were actually placed in foster care, the last resort when they can no longer remain safely with their parents.

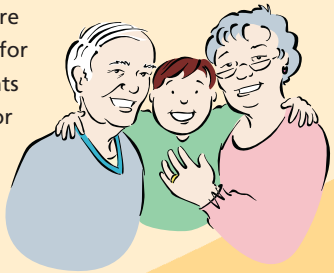
In fact, most cases of abuse or neglect aren't serious enough for children to be taken from their families. Instead, child welfare agencies should provide supportive services to stabilize the family. Although child welfare agencies provided these preventive services to more than 1.7 million children in 2002, about 40% of child victims of abuse and neglect received no services at all.

Most children are in foster care because of physical abuse. ***False.*** Nearly 58% of children in foster care have been removed from their families for neglect (for example, their parents have left them unsupervised at home or failed to take care of their basic needs). About 19% of all children who are maltreated are physically abused, 10% are sexually abused, and 7% psychologically abused. The remaining 6% of maltreated children experience educational or medical neglect, cases in which a parent fails to ensure that a child goes to school or receives proper medical care.

Foster parents rarely end up adopting the children in their care. ***False.*** Of the children adopted in 2002, 61% were adopted by their foster parents. Family members adopted another 24%. "Like all parents, foster parents form strong emotional attachments to the children in their care," says Courteney Holden of Voices for Adoption. "Foster parents and children often become forever families by choosing adoption."

There is a national shortage of foster parents. ***True.*** With the onset of the crack cocaine epidemic, the number of children in foster care doubled between 1986 and 1996, while the number of available foster care homes declined. "This trend is expected to continue as an increasing number of foster parents adopt children in their care," says Karen Jorgenson of the National Foster Parent Association. "We now need 130,000 more foster homes to meet the demand."

Grandparents and other relatives can't become foster parents. ***False.*** Increasingly, child welfare agencies are relying on placements with caring relatives for abused and neglected children. Grandparents and other relatives currently provide care for nearly one-third of all children in foster care. "Sometimes, children move through the child welfare system without anyone realizing that the solutions to their care lie



right there with the children's families' networks," says CWLA President and CEO Shay Bilchik. "Grandparents and other relatives should be the first line of defense."

Most children stay in foster care for a long time. ***False.*** Even a week is an endless amount of time to a child, but most abused and neglected children do not spend their entire childhoods in foster care. Of the children who left foster care in 2002, 19% spent less than a month in foster care, and 51% spent less than a year in care.

Unfortunately, however, more than one-fourth of children in foster care have been there for at least two years, and 17% of children have been in foster care for five years or more. Equally distressing, an estimated 10% of maltreated children who go home to their parents return to foster care within the year.

Most children in foster care move around a lot. ***False***. Although media accounts often focus on the experiences of children with multiple foster care placements, 84% of children who have been in foster care for a year or less have had two or fewer placements (and the first placement often is an emergency shelter). Child welfare agencies have far to go, however, to minimize placement disruptions. "Each additional move after the trauma of children's separation from their families only adds to their sense of loss, confusion, and uncertainty," says consultant Madelyn Freundlich, formerly of Children's Rights Inc.

All children in foster care get federal support. ***False.*** A child's eligibility for federal foster care funds is based on whether the child enters care from a low-income family rather than on the child's individual needs. More than 40% of children in foster care are not eligible for federal foster care support. According to Rutledge Hutson of the Children's Defense Fund, "The federal government should have a role in responding to the needs of all children who have been abused or neglected, not just those from very poor families."

In most cases, siblings in foster care are placed together. ***True.*** About 60% of children in foster care are placed together with some or all of their siblings, but it still doesn't happen often enough, according to April Curtis, an Illinois advocate for foster youth. "Agencies also need to do more to help siblings maintain close relationships when they can't be placed together," Curtis notes. "Many states only allow siblings two one-hour visits per month. That adds up to only one day per year."

Foster parents are in it for the money. ***False.*** "There's a difference between doing it for the money and needing money to do it," says Margie Chalofsky of Washington, DC's Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center. "The real question is whether that foster parent is a good parent and the child is well-placed in their home." Foster parents point out that foster care stipends rarely cover even children's basic expenses. Nationally, the average monthly foster care payment for a 9-year-old child is $420. The average middle-class family spends about $780 on a child of the same age, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Child maltreatment is higher in African American families. ***False.*** There is no difference in the incidence of child maltreatment based on race. African American children, however, are significantly overrepresented in foster care, comprising 15% of the U.S. child population, but 41% of the foster care population. "The child welfare system needs to better understand exactly why children of color are disproportionately represented in foster care before we can improve these children's lives," says Ralph Bayard of Casey Family Programs in Seattle.

Abuse by foster parents is rare. ***True.*** Whether perpetuated by birthparents, foster parents, or any other adults, child abuse is wrong. Well-publicized tragedies of children abused in foster care, however, often distort public perceptions of the benefits that foster families provide to children who have experienced abuse and neglect before entering foster care. Of children who experienced abuse or neglect in 2002, 81% were abused by their parents, but less than 1% reported abuse by their foster families.

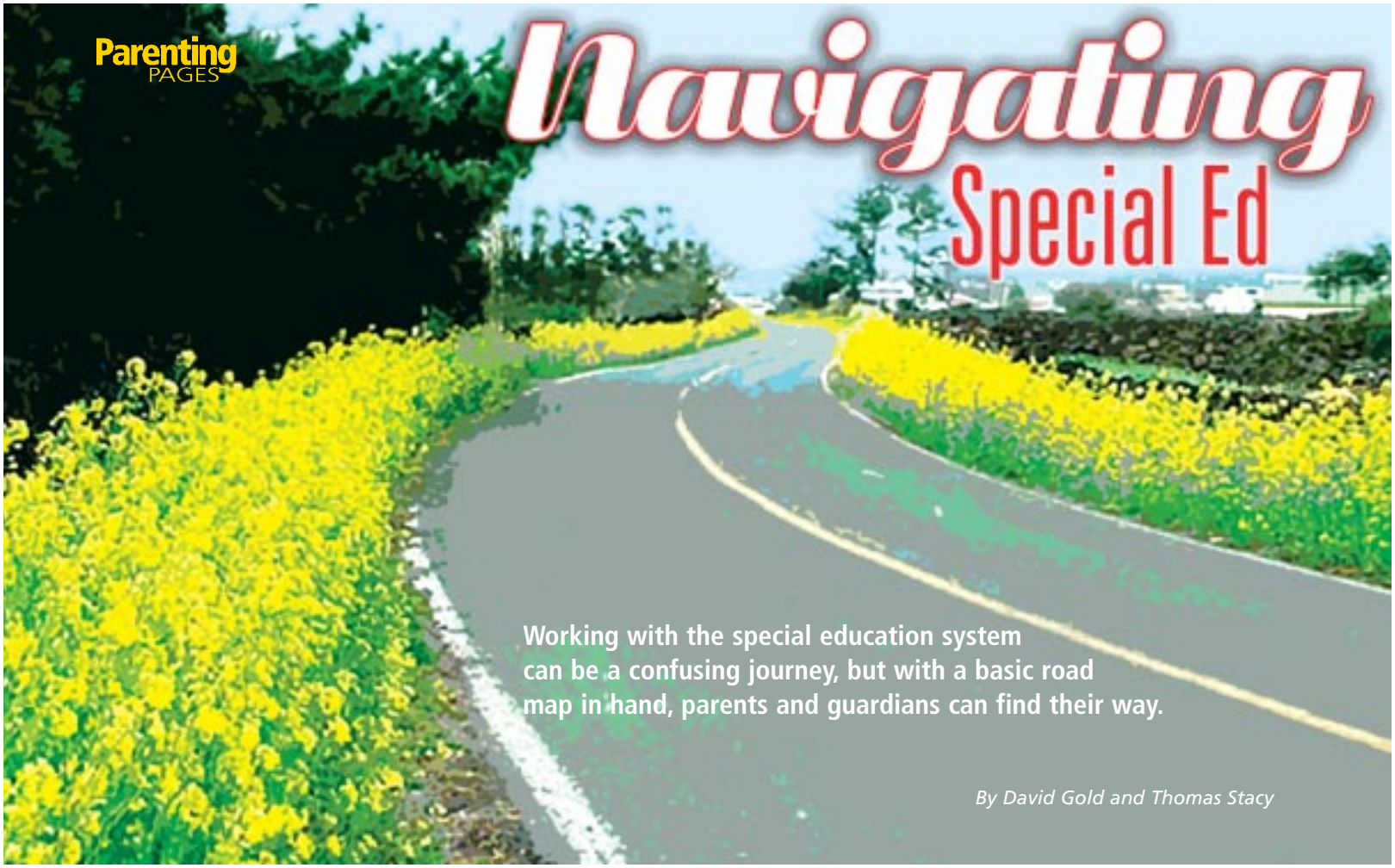
Foster parents are not permitted to contact a child's birthparents. ***False.*** In addition to caring for a child, foster parents can play an important role in helping birthparents enhance their parenting skills and improve their relationships with their children. "Foster parents are often needed as mentors to birthfamilies," explains Chiemi Davis of Casey Family Programs. "More and more frequently, they are becoming key members of a team that can include social workers, relatives, and, of course, the youth."

Child welfare workers earn about the same as public school teachers. ***False.*** The average starting salary of a child welfare worker is $22,000, one-third less than the average beginning salary of public school teachers. Given the difficult working conditions and poor compensation, it's no surprise that 22% of child welfare workers leave their jobs every year. The average tenure of a child welfare worker is less than two years.

Child welfare workers have higher caseloads than they should. ***True.*** Nationally, average caseloads for child welfare workers are double the accepted standards for good social work practice. In some jurisdictions, caseloads are three to four times the accepted standard.

Most children have bad experiences in foster care. ***False.*** "The most negative part of foster care is usually not where you're placed,

See *Fostering Progress,* page 34.



Navigating Special Ed

Working with the special education system can be a confusing journey, but with a basic road map in hand, parents and guardians can find their way.

By David Gold and Thomas Stacy

Special education conjures different meanings, fears, anxieties, and hopes for children and their parents or guardians. But what does special education really mean, and what are the pros and cons for children enrolled in it? How exactly can special education help?

Used appropriately by parents armed with an understanding of the system and a good working relationship with the school, special education can be an invaluable resource for many children, including those diagnosed with learning disabilities, mental retardation, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism.* But when children experience significant difficulties in school, and their families look to special education for help, many discover the process can be confusing and intimidating.

Sometimes, special education seems to have a vocabulary of its own. Many parents and guardians have attended meetings with their child's education team where they don't even understand the title of the meeting; they are asked to make decisions and sign agreements when they can't understand the questions, let alone any potential solutions.

The Role of Special Education

Two points about special education are widely misunderstood by the public. First, the purpose of special education is to help students already experiencing significant difficulties in the education system, not to prevent students from experiencing difficulty in the first place. The second misconception is that the special education system is supposed to provide whatever services are necessary to ensure the best education for its students.

This is not the case. Rather, the role of special education is to provide the necessary services to ensure a good or adequate education for the student. Special education isn't supposed to provide a Mercedes-Benz education. It is mandated, however, to provide the educational equivalent of a Honda Accord.

The terms *IEP* and *504 plan* can be confusing for families considering special education. A 504 plan defines a set of instructional services for students with some form of disability that interferes significantly with at least one major life activity. It is designed for students whose needs are not severe enough to warrant special education services. A 504 plan gives students access to educational services, just as a ramp gives wheelchair-bound individuals access to a public building, but it is a somewhat less intensive plan of intervention than what is usually included under special education.

An IEP, or Individual Education Plan, is the set of educational modifications, accommodations, and interventions special education provides students. Strict laws govern how IEPs are created, their content, how often they are reviewed, who is

* Although children diagnosed with mental retardation, ADHD, and autism do often experience learning disabilities as well, strictly speaking these conditions themselves are not learning disabilities.

responsible for implementation, and how these individuals will be held accountable for providing services.

The IEP Meeting

Administering special education services begins with an initial IEP meeting, and everyone present comprises the IEP team. Typically, the team includes one or more regular education teachers who teach the student, one special education teacher, a school administrator, and, ideally, one or more related service professionals, including school psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, and others. The most important members are the student and her parents. Parents are full members of the IEP team and have equal say in all team decisions.

During the initial meeting, the team will answer two questions: Is there enough evidence the student has at least one condition qualifying her for special education services, and should she be formally assessed? If there is enough evidence, including grades, disciplinary referrals, and teacher reports, the team will order specific assessments and evaluations. Legally, the school must administer these assessments, at no cost to the student or family, under a predetermined time frame. Everything in the special education process operates according to a specific timetable mandated by federal law.

Before the end of this time frame, the team must reconvene and review the assessment results that evaluate whether the student can be classified as having a disability, thus qualifying her for special education services. If the student is eligible, the team then addresses what services the student needs. In rare instances, such as when assessment data have already been collected, it's possible to forego additional assessments and decide during the initial meeting if the student qualifies for special education.

Classifying the Disability

Thirteen labels or classifications qualify a student for special education and often are referred to in meetings by their numeric labels rather than by the qualifying condition. (See the box, right.) These classifications or disabilities include mental retardation, autism, blindness or visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, speech or language impairment, and learning disabilities.

A learning disability means the student's achievement in one or more academic areas is significantly below his overall cognitive or intellectual potential, as measured on a standard IQ test. This discrepancy must significantly interfere with the student's ability to receive an adequate education.

For example, if a student's IQ places him in the superior range, but his spelling ability places him in the average to below-average range, this may constitute a significant discrepancy between potential and achievement. But if the student works hard and is earning Bs in English, despite his spelling ability, the discrepancy is not interfering significantly with his education and school performance, and he most likely would not—and probably should not—be classified with a learning disability. A learning disability would be labeled as 09 qualifying condition for special education.

Another common qualifying condition is severely emotionally disturbed (SED). These students have difficulties in school because of social and emotional issues that often manifest through behaviorally acting out in school. Technically, an SED student has significant difficulties forming and maintaining relationships with others, including peers or authority figures, and these difficulties interfere with her ability to receive an adequate education.

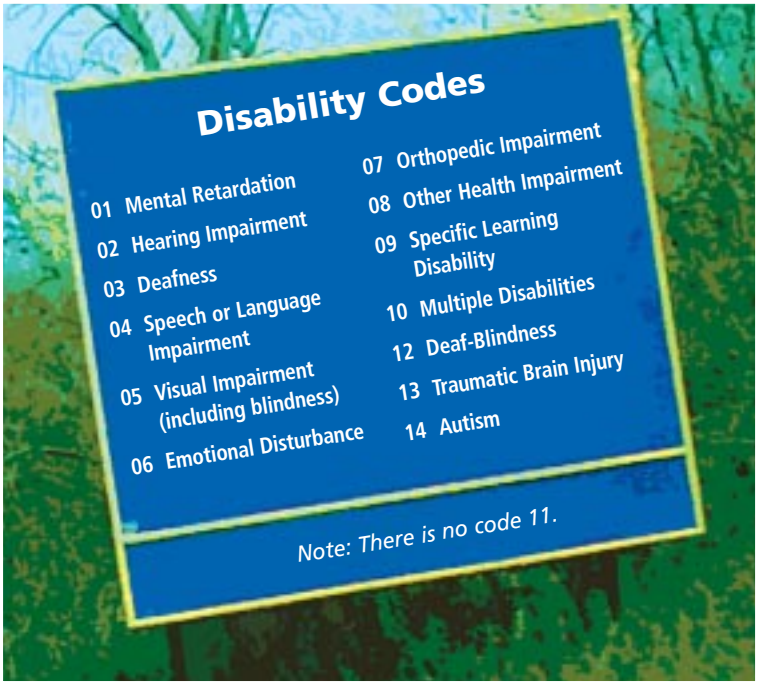
SED is not a medical, psychological, or psychiatric term. It is specific to the special education system and can potentially refer to students with a host of psychological or psychiatric difficulties, including forms of depression, bipolar disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and other social or emotional difficulties. In terms of qualifying conditions for special education, SED is classified as 06.

ADHD is a medical diagnosis, not a specific classification or qualification for special education, nor listed as a qualifying disorder on an IEP. Rather, ADHD typically is lumped into category 08 and labeled *other health impairment.* ADHD is characterized by impulsivity, difficulty sitting still, and an inability to focus and control attention. It's not unusual for school systems to have very specific guidelines about who may assess and diagnose ADHD. In some school systems, ADHD may only be diagnosed by a medical doctor and not by the school psychologist or even a private clinical psychologist.

Determining Appropriate Services

Once the IEP team decides a student qualifies for special education, the discussion turns to what services to provide him. These services may include implementing changes within his classroom, such as preferential seating, extra time on tests and quizzes, and providing lists of homework assignments ahead of time. It may also mean removing the child from his classroom for all or part of the school day to receive extra help, or to be placed in a classroom with a more favorable teacher-student ratio or in which the teacher is trained to work with students with certain disabilities.

Teachers may use different teaching methods for students with learning disabilities, such as increased visual cues, whereas teachers working with SED children may use token economies and behavior modification. Special education students may also receive specialized therapy from one or more school-based



professionals—often called *related service providers*—including school psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists.

Obviously, most services are related to the student's qualifying condition. But, once the student is accepted into the special education program, she is eligible for all services the IEP team decides are beneficial for that student, even if the interventions are not specifically related to her qualifying condition.

For example, if a student has a learning disability in mathematics, the team may decide she would benefit from seeing a social worker or school psychologist for counseling, even if the counseling has nothing to do with the learning disability but will focus on other aspects of her life. The IEP team must be convinced a legitimate need for these services exists, but the need doesn't necessarily have to be related to the student's qualifying condition.

The services the team agrees on are recorded in the student's IEP, which lists the services, modifications, and accommodations the student will receive, their frequency, who will provide them, and the goals the team sets for the student. The IEP is a legal document—by law, the school system must abide by what is recorded in the IEP.

The team must meet at least once a year to review the IEP, discuss the student's progress, and revise the goals and services as needed. If specific concerns arise about the student's progress or any part of the IEP, any member of the team can request a review meeting at any time, however, without waiting for the regular annual review.

There are some limits on the services the IEP team can recommend. For instance, the school system must provide services that will meet the student's academic needs in the least restrictive setting possible—if a student's needs can be met by removing him from his regular classroom for only one period each day, then he should not be removed for three periods each day or placed in a full time, self-contained classroom.

This rule is designed to prevent over-using resources or abuses such as segregating special ed students. This also means, however, that services often are only increased incrementally, which can prove frustrating for both parents and teachers.

Special education is by no means a panacea. Despite what many parents want, it isn't designed to prevent students from developing academic difficulties and falling behind in the first place. Rather, for those students who already are having difficulties and find themselves in a hole academically, it can be an invaluable resource. Special education is not a one-size-fits-all service but must be constantly tailored to fit each student's specific needs at any particular time. The more parents understand the system and their personal goals, options, and resources, the better prepared they will be to actively participate in helping design a program to help their child or teenager.

David Gold PhD and Thomas Stacy PhD are practicing psychologists in Maryland. For more information on learning disabilities, see the new Children's Voice *column, "Exceptional Children," on the next page.*

Ensuring School Success for Children with Learning Disabilities

By Sheldon H. Horowitz

Learning Disabilities: What They Are, and What They Are Not

Even though some 3 million school-age children are classified as having specific learning disabilities (LD), this category of special need is often widely misunderstood. Surveys of both parents and educators confirm that many people mistakenly link LD with mental retardation and disorders of mental health and believe that, left alone, children are likely to outgrow LD over time.

Let's set the record straight:

- The term *specific learning disability* refers to one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, and affects a person's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
- LD does not include problems primarily due to visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, although students with such diagnoses can also have learning disabilities.
- LD does not include problems that result primarily from mental retardation or emotional disturbance, although, again, children who experience such difficulties can also have learning disabilities.
- LD does not include problems that result primarily from cultural, environmental, or economic disadvantage.
- Learning disabilities are real! Although they often aren't observed until a child is doing school-related tasks, a proven biological basis for LD exists, including emerging data that document genetic links for LD within families.
- LD is common, affecting an estimated 4%–6% of the public school population. And if you include individuals who, for a number of reasons, struggle with reading, the numbers are considerably higher.
- Learning disabilities are lifelong. That said, individuals with LD can learn to compensate for areas of weakness and, with early, effective support, can be highly successful and productive members of society.

Serving Students with LD: It's the law!

The quality of services and supports children receive in school are key to their learning success. Working together, general and special educators are charged with ensuring that all children receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive setting.

Although states and school districts have considerable latitude in how they meet this challenge, a few important federal laws underlie their efforts:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides for special education services for children and youth, ages 3–21, with disabilities. It ensures each child receives a free, appropriate public education based on his or her individual needs, and it specifies 13 possible educational disabling conditions, including specific learning disabilities. It also guarantees a number of important rights—timely evaluation, access to all meetings and paperwork, transition planning, and related services—for children with disabilities and their parents or guardians. *[For more on special education, see, "Navigating Special Ed," page 28.]* Most children with LD are served under IDEA.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities that receive federal funding. It does not provide funding for these programs, but it does permit the government to withdraw funds from programs that do not comply with the law. To qualify for services under Section 504, a person must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Some schools use this law to support students with LD who need only simple accommodations or modifications. It is also frequently used for children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and who do not need more-comprehensive special education support.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is also a civil rights law that protects individuals with LD from discrimination in schools, the workplace, and other settings. ADA does not provide funding for services and accommodations, and, as with Section 504, persons must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Learning is considered a major life activity under ADA, so if a student qualifies for services under IDEA, he or she is also protected under ADA.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, first passed in 1965, which affects all public education, from kindergarten through grade 12. The power of NCLB is that it holds schools accountable for student progress by demanding clearly defined content standards (what students should be learning) and achievement standards (how well they should be learning). It also requires schools to measure student progress to see whether all students are making adequate yearly progress. NCLB ensures that schools report overall student progress data as well as progress for various student subgroups, including students with disabilities.

Look for more specific information about learning disabilities in future installments of this column. For more detail about how you can use these specific federal laws to help children and their communities of care, and to access free online parent guides and links to additional resources, visit the National Center for Learning Disabilities online at www.LD.org.

Sheldon Horowitz EdD is Director of Professional Services at the National Center for Learning Disabilities, New York, New York. NCLD provides essential information to parents, professionals, and individuals with LD; promotes research and programs to foster effective learning; and advocates for policies that protect and strengthen education rights and opportunities. E-mail Dr. Horowitz at help@ncld.org.

Adults Earn Mediocre Grade from Teens

With the tables turned and grade books in their hands, a sampling of teens across the United States gave adults an overall C grade for their progress on issues affecting teens.

For the seventh year, the Uhlich Children's Advantage Network (UCAN) in Chicago asked more than 1,000 teens ages 12–19 to grade adults in 22 subjects. Teens received the questions in the form of a mail survey, with the results weighted to reflect regional, ethnic, and gender distribution nationwide. CWLA helped conduct a focus group for the UCAN Teen Report Card in Washington, DC, and CWLA's Research Division provided long-term trending analysis of survey results.

Although the grades were fairly consistent geographically, adults in suburban areas earned somewhat higher grades than did their urban counterparts. Issues such as gang violence, drugs, neighborhood safety, and a host of other subjects led to lower scores for adults from urban teens. Latino and African American teens gave adults an average grade of C+, whereas white teens graded adults at an even C.

Adults received Bs in providing quality education for young people, providing young people with safe places to live, creating job opportunities for the future, keeping schools safe from violence and crime, fighting AIDS, protecting teens and kids from gun violence, being honest, preventing child abuse, leading by example, making neighborhoods safer, and protecting young people from terrorism.

Adults received Cs for fighting the war on terrorism (dropping from a B last year); disciplinary tactics; combating prejudice and racism; preventing teens from running away; understanding the realities of teen sex; protecting the environment; protecting teens and kids from gun violence; stopping young people from drinking, smoking, and using drugs; getting rid of gangs; listening and understanding young people; helping young people cope with depression; and reducing bullying.

The only D grade was for a limited understanding of why teens run away from home.

"In a DC-based focus group, one young person gave adults in her life an F and complained that the opinions and ideas of young people such as herself don't matter to adults," says Shay Bilchik, CWLA's President and CEO. "With seven years of data and mediocre grades now under our belts, it has become increasingly clear that we have a long way to go in terms of respecting, valuing, and listening to the unique opinions and ideas of our nation's youth."

A full copy of the UCAN Teen Report Card is available at www.ucanchicago.org/advocacy/report_card.html.

Organizations Foster One Cool Summer

For 1,300 children in foster care in Washington, DC's Child and Family Services Agency, last summer was more than just sleeping in and watching television. Capital One, in a partnership with CWLA, Casey Family Programs, the National Foster Care Coalition, and the National Foster Parent Association, sponsored the children's attendance at summer camps run by DC's parks and recreation program.

Highlighting the importance of people and programs that "change a lifetime for children in foster care," CWLA generated advertisements on National Public Radio and a full-page color ad in the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call* to promote Capital One's Fostering One Cool Summer program. A panel discussion at a downtown Washington restaurant formally announced the summer program and featured five foster care alumni, who spoke about how enrichment activities such as summer camp had improved their lives. CWLA President and CEO Shay Bilchik hosted the event.

CWLA is in the second year of its partnership with Capital One to promote foster care. In 2004, with CWLA's help, Capital One focused on recruiting foster parents by featuring information about foster parenting in some of its mailings, and by holding a nationally televised holiday ice skating program that highlighted the needs of kids in foster care. This year, Capital One's focus has been on Washington youth in foster care.

CWLA Program Trains Child Welfare Administrators

When the University of California, Davis, found itself in need of a training module on evidence-based practice for child welfare supervisors last spring, it turned to CWLA for assistance.

CWLA's Research to Practice (R2P) division pulled together a three-hour training module that includes a definition of evidence-based practice, a skills primer for the research consumer, and application of evidence using examples of practice in family engagement, assessment, and case planning.

This training module is now available for presentation by CWLA staff to other agencies. The training is appropriate not only for public agency supervisors, but can also be used in the private sector, for policymakers, and with administrators. "There is some latitude for tailoring it to the needs of a specific audience," says R2P Director Sue Steib.

For more information about the training module, contact Steib at 225/654-9347 or ssteib@cwla.org.

Getting the Word Out About Meth Abuse

CWLA has been front and center in publicizing how methamphetamine abuse is increasingly putting children in harm's way. In July, President and CEO Shay Bilchik publicly commented on the release of two studies by the National Association of Counties (NACO) showing the effect of increased abuse of meth on law enforcement and child welfare.

"The last time we faced this kind of crisis around drug use was back in the 1980s with crack cocaine," Bilchik told Belo Broadcasting's Washington bureau. Belo owns the *Dallas Morning News,* the *Providence Journal* in Rhode Island, and the *Press-Enterprise* in Riverside, California, as well as 19 television stations nationwide, including WFAA in Dallas/Fort Worth, KING-TV in Seattle/Tacoma, and KTVK in Phoenix.

In the interview, Bilchik also noted that local governments need help with law enforcement, health care, drug abuse treatment, and child welfare services to combat the problem. "They need the resources staff-wise, training-wise, and treatment-wise," he said.

NACO's study included a survey of child welfare agencies. Of those responding, 40% reported an increase in out-of-home placements in the last year due to methamphetamine.

Also in response to the growing meth problem, CWLA has established an internal meth task force to develop policy recommendations and identify evidence-based best practices addressing meth abuse. One of the task force's first efforts was to assemble a wealth of data and information about how the drug is adversely affecting children, families, communities, and the child welfare system nationwide. CWLA presented this information during a Congressional hearing in July.

CWLA continued its focus on meth abuse during the fall by commencing a five-part teleconference series that runs through January 2006 about the effects that meth manufacture and use are having on the child welfare system and the creative responses of states and communities nationwide.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Recently published by CWLA members.

Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens

By Debbie Riley MS, with John Meeks MD

Case studies and treatment considerations for therapists and parents, by the Executive Director of the Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE), Silver Spring, Maryland, with the cofounder and President of The Foundation Schools, Rockville, Maryland. Available from CASE Publications (2005), $19.95. Online at www.adoptionsupport.org.

Management by Essay, Leading with Hope

By Dave Bradley, photographs by Tom Spitz

A series of short inspirational essays on a number of topics by the Executive Director of La Paloma Family Services, Tucson, Arizona. Published by Kino Publishing (2003), $12.95. Online at www.byessay.com.

Of Such Is the Kingdom: God's Legacy of Love

By Kay K. Ekstrom

The history of Christian Family Care Agency, Phoenix, Arizona, by its founder and CEO. (2004). Available online at www.christianfamilycare.org.

SECURE A BRIGHTER FUTURE

JANUARY 23-25

Women In Leadership Retreat
Leading Through Chaos: A Woman's Perspective
Doubletree Ocean Point Hotel, Miami, Florida

FEBRUARY 27–MARCH 1

CWLA National Conference
Children 2006: Securing Brighter Futures
Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC

MARCH 5–7

Black Administrators in Child Welfare Annual Conference
Building Partnerships to Serve African American Children and Families
Sheraton National, Arlington, Virginia

MAY 31–JUNE 2

2006 Juvenile Justice Symposium
Building Sucessful Alliances to Improve Outcomes
Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport, Burlingame, California

Dates and locations subject to change. For more information on the CWLA calendar, including conference registration, hotels, programs, and contacts, visit CWLA's website at www.cwla.org/conferences, or contact CWLA's conference registrar at register@cwla.org or 202/942-0286.

Assessment Tool Now Available on CD

In an effort to make its resources more readily accessible, CWLA has published CD versions of the Family Assessment Form (FAF). Developed by Children's Bureau of Southern California, and marketed and distributed by CWLA, the CDs are software versions of the printed assessment tool first published by CWLA in 1997.

CWLA is selling three CD versions—a Trial CD, available for the cost of shipping and handling, as a free download from the Internet; a full Pro version; and an abbreviated Express version. The software allows agency staff to complete family assessments via computer. Each CD contains a limited number of assessments.

Additional assessments and upgrades for multiple sites are available directly from Children's Bureau—CWLA is selling the initial software CDs only. For more information, visit www.cwla.org/programs/familypractice/faf.htm or www.familyassesmentform.com, or call toll free 888/357-9135.

Fostering Progress, from page 27

it's how other people judge you," says Letitia Silva, a senior at the University of Pennsylvania who spent time in foster care. "Too often, people treat children in foster care like they did something wrong."

Although every child's foster care experience is different, it's not always bad. According to the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being, the first comprehensive study of children in the child welfare system, more than 85% of children in foster care reported they like the people they are living with, feel like part of their foster family, and believe their foster parents care about them.

The U.S. foster care system faces persistent challenges, but real improvements are impossible unless new policies are grounded in a better public understanding of the realities facing child welfare workers, foster families, and children. Until the public can understand the daily challenges of the child welfare system, we will not have policies that allow children and families at risk to reach their full potential.

Mary Bissell is a Fellow at the New America Foundation. Rob Geen is Director of the Child Welfare Research Program at the Urban Institute. Both organizations are in Washington, DC.

Mississippi Children's Home Services

CONTRIBUTE TO THE CWLA KATRINA KIDS FUND

Your donation will be used to help America's most vulnerable children and families – those who had so little even before Hurricane Katrina struck. The Katrina Kids Fund will support CWLA member agencies that serve children and families from the hurricane-affected regions. The fund is extremely efficient: Ninety-four cents of every dollar received goes toward helping kids and families get their lives back on track. Please give to the CWLA Katrina Kids Fund today. Our children are our most precious resource and we mustn't lose track of a single one.

To donate, go to https://www.cwla.org/sec/donate/donateKATRINA.htm or call 202/638-2952.

All donations are tax deductible as provided by law.

CHILD WELFARE FACES A CATEGORY 5

"Systems of care are already stretched and struggling to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families. The aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita could easily overwhelm these already challenged safety nets."

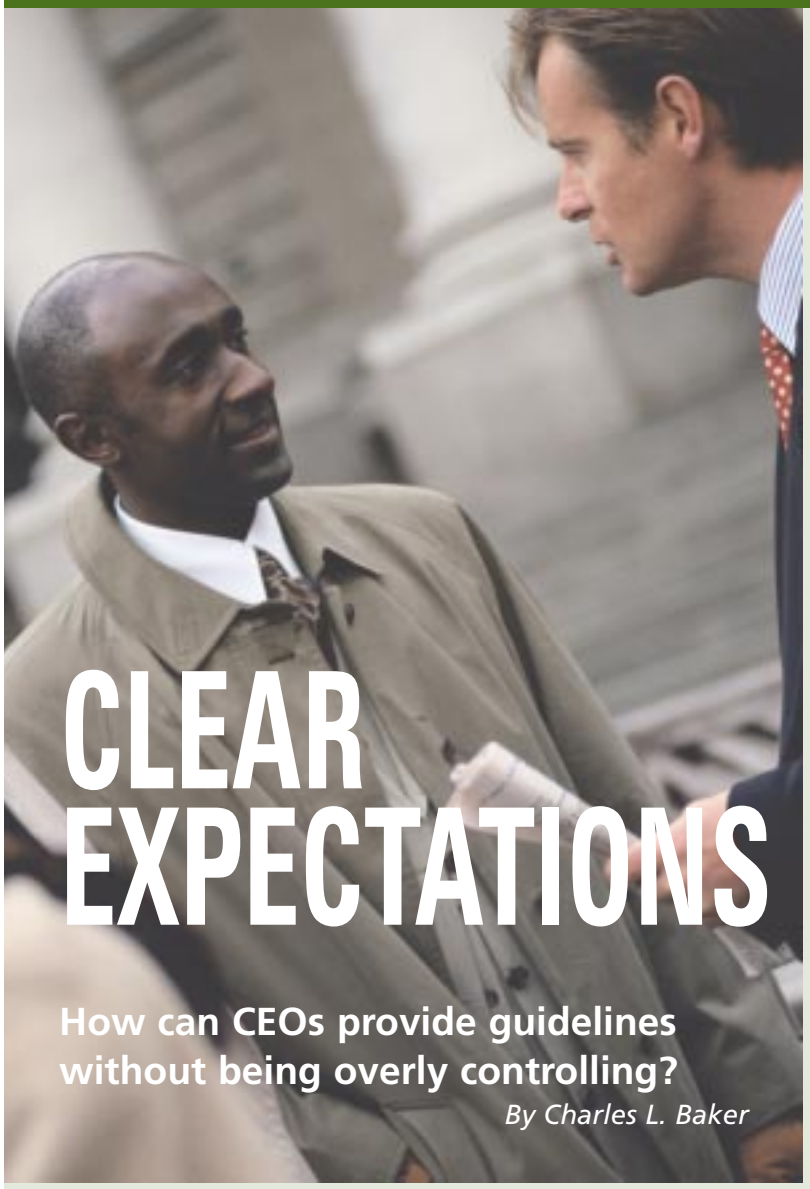
—Keith Liederman, CEO
Kingsley House, New Orleans

"All of the children are understandably frightened and upset because they have not been able to contact family members. The staff is working around the clock to deal with their anxiety and stress. Most of the staff have sustained damage to their homes and apartments, have been without power, and are having difficulty finding gas to be able to drive to work."

—Chris Cherney, CEO
Mississippi Children's Home Services

"Most of the boys evacuated from St. Francis Academy homes have never been outside of Mississippi, so they have been scared by the change in scenery after their trek across the states…The local women's prison sent over afghans for the youth, and those prisoners who are from the south have worked to put together a southern cookbook for the St. Francis Academy."

—Sharon Ringler, Vice President
St. Francis Academy



CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

How can CEOs provide guidelines without being overly controlling?

By Charles L. Baker

Ask any employee to describe the top 10 characteristics of a great job, and you're likely to hear three items near the top of the list:

- I know what's expected of me.
- I have the freedom to do what I think is necessary to get the job done.
- I have a terrific supervisor.

Obviously, these items are related and partially overlap, since a terrific supervisor will let employees know, very specifically, what's expected of them and then give them plenty of room to be successful.

Great Organizations Need Independent Thinkers

A great organization must have a terrific supervisor at the helm. The CEO supervises a variety of individuals with high levels of expertise in specific areas, and their knowledge often exceeds the CEO's. The CEO may be knowledgeable in fiscal matters but not as conversant with fund development. She may know a good deal about the services the agency provides but may not be an expert in human resources. No one individual can be an expert in every area, and the CEO will be very aware of his or her own limitations.

Managing individuals whose knowledge is greater than your own requires a great deal of trust, and to lead a good organization toward becoming a great one, the CEO must be able to build a highly effective team from diverse individuals with multiple talents and abilities. Each manager must feel free to function quite independently and creatively within her department while understanding there are definite limits to her authority.

Herein lies the dilemma. Given today's difficult economic times and the public's ever-increasing scrutiny, it's tempting to be overly cautious. The thoughtful CEO, however, knows a vibrant organization must foster diversity of opinion, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a willingness to take risks. In stressful times, the controlling, second-guessing, autocratic CEO only serves to drive away the best and brightest managers. Talented individuals are most productive in an environment that encourages a good deal of freedom.

Written Expectations Provide Freedom

To strike this critical balance, many CEOs have developed what might best be called "The CEO's Parameters." Managers retain a great deal of freedom, but there are clear boundaries that require consultation with the CEO or other team members before crossing.

Every CEO will want to develop his own parameters to fit the individual organization, and these should be discussed thoroughly with the chair of the board. A genuine secondary benefit of this discussion is the ongoing clarification of the CEO's authority and the continuing development of the relationship between these two critical leaders of the organization.

The CEO should then provide these parameters, in writing, for a full discussion by the management team. The CEO may be surprised at the team members' relief. One vice president said, "These are great. Now I know exactly when I need to check with you."

Here are some suggestions for what the CEO's Parameter's might include:

Board Relations

- All written, telephone, and electronic communication has prior clearance through the CEO.
- All relationships and ongoing discussions with board members must be cleared through the CEO.

Finance

- No contract or proposals will be submitted or considered without approval from the CEO. (A research and development fee of 10% should be included.)
- All fiscal issues require the approval of the chief financial officer (CFO).

- Revenue/expenses ratio cannot be exceeded without CEO/CFO approval. (Monthly expenses cannot exceed income or budgeted expense, whichever is less.)
- All programs and departments must operate with an approved budget.
- New obligations of $10,000 or more require the CEO's approval.
- All loans, including extensions to the cash flow note, must have CEO approval in advance.
- All delays in the normal accounts payable routine require notification of affected departments and prior approval of the CEO.

External Affairs

- The CEO approves all contract initiatives.
- External affairs initiatives are communicated to other agency components and departments.
- All staff contacts with state, regional, or county governments require involvement and approval by some member of the management team and notification of the CEO.

Human Resources

- All personnel activities, such as grievances, recruitment, hiring, discipline, and terminations, must receive HR consultation.
- Any change of job status for any staff at the manager's level or above requires consultation with the CEO—before any discussion with employees involved.
- All benefit program changes must have CEO approval.
- Any revision to HR policy must have CEO approval.

Services

- New program development requires CEO approval.
- All facility acquisition and development requires consultation with the CEO.

Fundraising/PR

- All aspects of fundraising/PR must receive the chief development officer's approval.
- No written/formal donor requests over $25,000 can be submitted without CEO approval.
- All representation (written, media, etc.) of the agency must receive CEO approval.
- All fund development letters must receive CEO approval.

Risk Management

- The CEO must approve the risk management plan and activities.

Legal

- All communication with counsel must be cleared through the CEO.

Other

- Have a written agenda for your regular meeting with the CEO.
- Ensure that you do not exceed the allotted meeting time. Aim for finishing early.
- Before a pop-in meeting, check with the CEO's executive assistant for an appointment. Very brief meetings are encouraged.
- Occasionally, schedule a brief meeting just to share some good news.
- Create a list of parameters and expectations for staff who report to you.

In the discussion with the management team, the CEO should focus not only on the limits, but also on the wide areas of freedom that are available. For example, although it's important to the CEO that she know about relationships between managers and board members, she isn't interested in prohibiting them, just in exercising some understandable guidance.

In fund development, the CEO may not need to write fund development letters, but he may want to know what goes out over his signature. Any CEO who has ever met a donor who thanked him for his nice letter when he knows he didn't write one can certainly understand this situation.

The last point on the list encourages every manager to develop her own parameters for her team—and, practically speaking, the CEO's list will also be shared up and down within the organization. The CEO is acting as a role model to build an organization whose members have freedom within reasonable bounds.

This is a relatively simple list, and many of the items may seem to be what everyone already knows. This, of course, is the goal! The CEO wants each member of the team to know where potential trouble can arise. Real responsibility and genuine accountability grow from clear communication.

Charles L. Baker is President of Baker & Company, Louisville, Kentucky, providing support for nonprofit executives, executive coaching, and executive talent matching. Interested in sharing your own CEO parameters? Contact him at charlie.baker@insightbb.com or 502/290-4316. *The author wishes to express his warm appreciation to Miki Jordan, CEO of Para Los Niños, Los Angeles, for stimulating his initial thinking regarding the use of parameters.*

BULLETIN BOARD

Family Violence Falling

Reflecting a general decline in crime during the 1990s, the rate of family violence fell by more than half between 1993 and 2002, from an estimated 5.4 victims to 2.1 victims per 1,000 U.S. residents 12 years and older, according to a recently released Bureau of Justice Statistics report, *Family Violence Statistics.*

Family violence accounted for 11% of all reported and unreported violence between 1998 and 2002. Of these offenses, 49% were crimes against a spouse, 11% involved a parent attacking a child, and 41% were offenses against another family member.

Additional highlights from the report include:

- Seventy-three percent of family violence victims were female, and 76% of persons committing family violence were male. Simple assault was the most frequent type of family violence.
- About one in five people murdered in 2002 were killed by a family member. Of all homicides that year, almost 9% involved killing of a spouse; 6%, the murder of a son or daughter; and 7%, the killing of another family member.
- Among family murder victims, 58% of were female, and 26% were under age 18; 66% of murdered children under age 13 were killed by a family member.
- Eighty percent of offspring killed by a parent were younger than 13; the average age was 7.
- About 4 in 10 family violence incidents did not come to police attention between 1998 and 2002. Thirty-four percent of victims of unreported family violence said they did not tell police because it was private or personal. Another 12% said they did not report it to protect the offender.

The entire report is online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/fvs.htm.

Head Start Study Examines Progress of 5,000 Children

According to a recent report from the U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF), 3- and 4-year-old children in Head Start performed better in prereading, prewriting, and vocal skills during the 2002–2003 school year than did non–Head Start children. The congressionally mandated report, *Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings,* also indicates that parents who became involved in Head Start were more likely to read to their children and to access dental care.

The study examined 84 Head Start agencies nationwide and involved some 5,000 3- and 4-year-old children entering Head Start. Although Head Start children had some cognitive gains, the study also found that Head Start had no significant effect on the children's oral comprehension, phonological awareness, or early math skills.

In the area of social and emotional improvement, children who entered the program at age 3 showed improvement in problem behaviors but demonstrated no statistically significant impact in social skills, approaches to learning, or social competencies. Both age groups in Head Start had greater access to health care. Among children who entered Head Start at age 3, parents reported higher uses of educational activities and lower uses of physical discipline.

The study is available on the ACF website at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/impact_study.

Judicial Groups Work to Speed Things Up for Kids in Foster Care

Several leading judicial organizations have collaborated to create an innovative plan aimed at decreasing the amount of time children spend in foster care while their cases are pending in court.

The *National Curriculum for Caseflow Management in Juvenile Dependency Cases Involving Foster Care* found court delays to be a leading reason many children are forced to remain in foster care for extended periods. To move children into safe, permanent homes more efficiently, the *National Curriculum* calls for cooperation between state courts and welfare agencies to pool resources and share responsibility for children's well-being.

Those behind the *National Curriculum* see it as a method to facilitate increased communication among involved parties and help judges make more informed decisions, while reducing the number of hearing postponements and other common delays in child welfare cases. The curriculum engages judges, attorneys, and child welfare representatives in a series of discussions, workshops, and team-building exercises.

Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the curriculum was successfully piloted in Arizona in 2004, and California and Ohio have agreed to implement it. The *National Curriculum* is available from the Judicial Education Reference, Information, and Technical Transfer Projects at http://jeritt.msu.edu.

Teen Rx Abuse Triples

The number of Americans who abuse controlled prescription drugs nearly doubled from 7.8 million to 15.1 million from 1992 to 2003, and abuse among teens more than tripled during that time, according to a new report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

The report details the findings of a three-year study of the use of prescription opioids, such as OxyContin and Vicodin, and central nervous system depressants and stimulants, such as Valium, Xanax, and Ritalin. While the U.S. population increased 14% between 1992 and 2003, the number of 12- to 17-years olds who abused controlled prescription drugs jumped 212%, and the number of adults 18 and older abusing such drugs climbed 81%. In 2003, 2.3 million 12- to 17-year olds, nearly 1 in 10, abused at least one controlled prescription drug—for 83%, the drug was opioids.

The report calls for an effort on all fronts to reduce abuse of prescription drugs, including a major education and prevention campaign; better training of physicians, pharmacists, and other health professionals; and new laws and better law enforcement to close rogue Internet sites peddling controlled prescription drugs. The 214-page report, *Under the Counter: The Diversion and Abuse of Controlled Prescription Drugs in the U.S.,* is available online at www.casacolumbia.org.

2005 KIDS COUNT Data Book Available at the Stroke of a Key

The 2005 *KIDS COUNT Data Book,* a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is now online, featuring state-level statistical data on the well-being of children, and easy-to-use tools that allow users to generate and download custom reports, including rankings, graphs, and maps. Raw data files are also available.

Since 1990, the *Data Book* has used 10 key measures to track child well-being and create and rank state profiles of child well-being. The 2005 edition includes several background measures related to unemployed parents in each state, as well as an essay by Casey President Douglas W. Nelson, "Helping Our Most Vulnerable Families Overcome Barriers to Work and Achieve Financial Success." Hard copies of the 2005 *Data Book* can be ordered online at www.aecf.org/kidscount or by calling 410/223-2890.

States Receive Millions in Adoption Incentives

In September, the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced it would release $14.5 million in Adoption Incentive funds to 24 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico for increasing the number of children adopted from state-supervised foster care in fiscal year 2004. The fund was created by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 and reauthorized by the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003.

The incentive payment plan is based on a state's ability to increase its number of adoptions. Nationwide, 51,000 foster children are adopted from the child welfare system annually. ACF awards a state $4,000 for every foster child placed above its previous annual best rate of foster child placements. States also receive additional bonuses for the adoption of foster children age 9 and older and for the adoption of children with special needs.

Florida received $3.5 million, the largest award. New York, Kentucky, and the District of Columbia were the only other jurisdictions to receive more than $1 million. For a complete list of states and their funding awards, go to www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2005/adoption_incentives.htm.

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Children's Voice

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