CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Children's VOICE

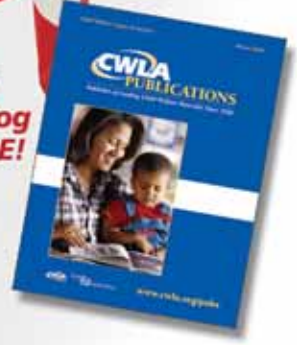
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2008

Reviving the White House Conference on Children & Youth

Collaborating in the Classroom

Steps to Implementing Evidence-Based Practice

Promoting From the Ranks



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As more senior staff approach retirement, agencies are developing internal leadership programs to prepare younger staff for leading them into the future.

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CWLA
CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
Making Children a National Priority

Children's Voice

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ReadersWrite

Keeping Girls off the Streets

Emily Shenk's article "Keeping Girls off the Streets" (September/October 2007) is fantastic—very real, and very informative.

Before moving to New York's Capital Region, I lived in Boston and worked for Pine Street Inn, an agency serving 8,000 homeless adults per year. I am familiar with the Home for Little Wanderers and their excellent work.

I hope your readers decide to learn more about the My Life My Choice Project and consider implementing a similar program in their community.

Laura Alpert
Vice President of Communications
Northeast Parent & Child Society, Schenectady, New York

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LeadershipLens

Christine James-Brown

What better way to begin a new year than to come together as a league of agencies and celebrate our profession during CWLA's National Conference, February 25–27? Many of you will have picked up this issue of *Children's Voice* while attending the conference. If so, we welcome you and thank you for attending. For those of you reading this from your home or office, we hope you will find the following articles both informative and enjoyable.

CWLA staff work hard to produce conferences and publications that best support and acknowledge the hard work of the child welfare workforce in creating better outcomes for our children. Now more than ever, we need these resources. Not only are the needs of today's families and their children increasingly complex, social work is facing the same staffing shortages afflicting nursing, teaching, and other professions.

One need only look to a March 2006 national study of licensed social workers by the National Association of Social Workers for proof. The study found that during the previous two years, more than three-fifths of social workers providing services to children and adolescents reported increases in paperwork (74%), severity of client problems (73%), caseload size (68%), and waiting lists for services (60%). The same report found that 21% of social workers working with children and adolescents reported vacancies in their agencies are common, and 21% reported vacancies are difficult to fill.

These challenges are something we collectively as a league must face head-on so our noble work on behalf of children is not jeopardized. What can we do to retain and recognize good employees with our limited resources? How do we make it clear to child welfare workers their work is critical, despite society's tendency to devalue people in the field?

How do we make it clear to child welfare workers their work is critical, despite society's tendency to devalue people in the field?

Answering and tackling these questions and others around workforce development takes leadership. That's why creating new leadership initiatives, and building existing ones, will be a major focus of CWLA's work in the coming year. It's our response to an issue our members have told us is important to them.

The National Conference will be the catalyst to get things started. Many workshops will focus on strengthening the skills of current and emerging leaders, breaks between workshops will allow for networking among leaders from different regions, and our awards ceremonies will honor those individuals and agencies that have demonstrated exemplary leadership and serve as examples for us all.

After the conference, we want to see the momentum continue throughout the year and branch out across regions. Members will be asked to share best practices they've used to both find and keep good employees. We will also be forming more partnerships with other national organizations with similar concerns to leverage their connections and expertise.

And of course we will continue to share best practice examples here in *Children's Voice.* In this issue alone are several, including the article "Collaborating in the Classroom," which gives us an up-close look at how partnerships between state child welfare agencies and university systems are better preparing social workers for the field and keeping them there longer. "Promoting from the Ranks" shares what Parsons Child and Family Center in New York is doing to foster leadership among its own staff through a newly established leadership academy.

Many more great examples of what member agencies are doing exist; we simply don't have room to highlight them all in the magazine. Great work is coming out of our New England region, for example. CWLA New England Director Louise Richmond is working with her member agency CEO affinity group to explore the feasibility of launching region-wide training for emerging leaders. Ed Kelley, President and CEO of the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps in Boston, and Carlton Pendleton, President and CEO of Sweetser in Maine, are working closely with us on this initiative. Both have established successful internal training programs for their employees.

And we want to see even more examples of best practice emerge. If you are attending our National Conference, grab a member of CWLA's staff and tell us about your great work, or send an email to the editorial staff of this magazine at voice@cwla.org. Just keep in mind that while CWLA can help facilitate the sharing of best practice by providing tools, trainings, conferences, and publications, at the end of the day it is up to individual child welfare agencies and their leaders to acknowledge our workforce challenges and reach out to do something about it. ■

Christine James-Brown

Clearing a Path to Higher Ed for Dependent Youth

The Miami-Dade County Public School System is the fourth largest in the nation, with more than 300,000 students, including 5,000 youth in foster care. To make sure foster youths' dreams for the future don't get lost in the crowd, the nonprofit organization Educate Tomorrow is training school employees to identify dependent and delinquent students and matching those youth with community and in-school mentors to help them pursue higher education.

Virginia Emmons, a former famine relief worker in Niger for the Peace Corps, cofounded the Miami organization with her four sisters, including Melanie Emmons Damian, an attorney and child advocate. They realized many foster youth were unfamiliar with the educational resources legally available to them, such as tuition waivers and stipends for youth aging out of care. Even if the youth were told about these opportunities, they still needed someone to motivate, encourage, and help them research and apply for college and obtain financial aid. Mentors proved to be the critical link.

Educate Tomorrow matches youth aging out of foster care with educational mentors.

"It's really been our mission to do whatever we can to help youth achieve higher education," Emmons says.

Educate Tomorrow follows a holistic community approach to the program, drawing on the commitment and resources of the school system, child welfare agencies and providers, Department of Juvenile Justice, and community volunteers. It points to a Florida statute passed in 2004 that requires the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Florida Department of Education to enter into interagency agreements to best meet children's educational needs.

Using this statute as its guide, Educate Tomorrow worked with Miami-Dade Public Schools to develop the Juvenile Court Contact Assistance Project. During the 2006–2007 academic year, Educate Tomorrow trained about 500 school employees designated as "juvenile court contacts" on why foster youth need extra support and introduced them to using the school system's database to identify youth in foster care.

This school year, school staff are being trained on how to conduct in-school education support groups and what to talk about with dependent and delinquent youth to get them thinking about and preparing for higher education.

Educate Tomorrow is also focusing more on recruiting in-school mentors from among the school system's 49,000 employees, including teachers, counselors, and other staff who can more closely follow the youth during their

school careers. The goal is for community mentors to continue to work with the youth after they graduate.

Javier Brezdivin, a counselor at Miami Killian High, said the training "sensitized me to the enormous needs these children have and helped me realize that without us providing that additional attention, it's hard for them to succeed. These kids generally are invisible, and it makes a huge difference when I know which kids are in foster care."

Educate Tomorrow received full funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service to design and implement the core mentor program, and from the Children's Trust to implement the Juvenile Court Contact Assistance Project. Learn more about Educate Tomorrow and how to replicate it in your community by visiting www.educatetomorrow.org.

Treating Recovering Addicts as Patients *and* Parents

For women substance abusers, becoming a patient in a treatment program is a good first step toward recovery. But if those helping her forget she is also a parent, her recovery may be compromised. The Enhanced Services for Children of Women in Substance Abuse Treatment Project in Philadelphia is working to provide that parental support and attention to children's needs to promote recovery and reduce child welfare involvement.

Started in 2001, the initiative is jointly coordinated and overseen by the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Community-Based Prevention Services and the city's Coordinating Office of Drug and Alcohol Prevention Programs. Fifteen residential or intensive women's treatment programs are participating.

Using funding through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the collaborating departments hired family service coordinators for each treatment center to work one-on-one with recovering mothers and their children. The coordinators attend to the health, educational, and social service needs of the children, and help mothers achieve and maintain their recovery goals. They also ensure the various systems involved with the family, including school, housing, and health systems, are coordinated in ways that prevent relapse and support permanency.

"It's about reconnecting the family to resources," says Michelle Heyward, Program Manager for the project.

The project also organized Aftercare Coordination Teams to provide aftercare services to the women and children recently discharged from the program. The teams help the women develop and implement relapse prevention plans and manage family issues. Additionally, the teams ensure children's health, mental health, and academic needs are being met after mothers have been discharged.

For more information about the Enhanced Services for Children of Women in Substance Abuse Treatment Project, contact Heyward at 215/341-6094, or Michelle.Heyward@ phila.gov.

The Enhanced Services Project is just one program within DHS's seven-year-old Division of Community-Based Prevention Services (CBPS) office, which coordinates initiatives such as afterschool programs, parent education classes, training of "family leaders" and curfew centers.

According to CBPS Program Director Ellen Walker, due to CBPS's efforts in fiscal year 2007, 4,500 parents received parent education in their communities; truant youth improved in school attendance by 40%, compared with no improvement for youth receiving other services; and first-time offending youth showed a 12% rate of reoffending, compared with a 30% recidivism rate of youth not receiving services.

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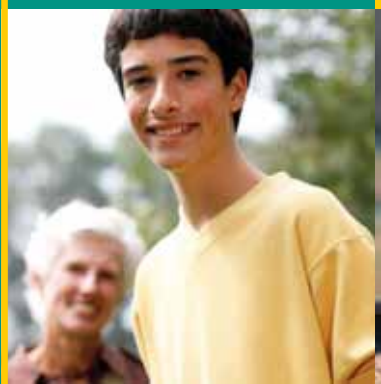

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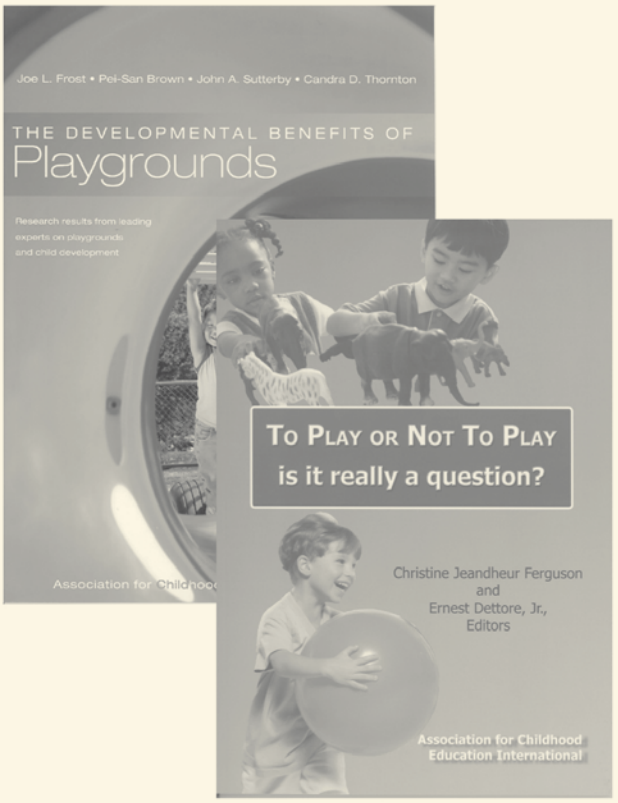
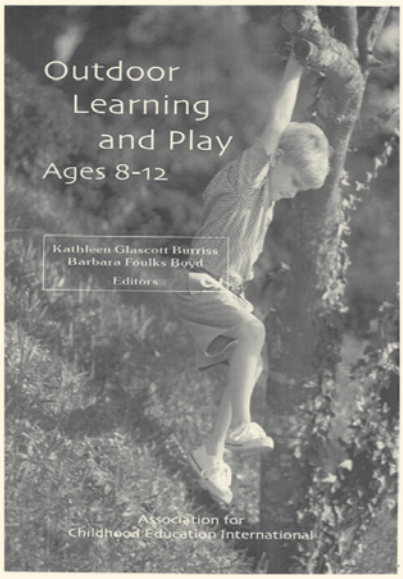
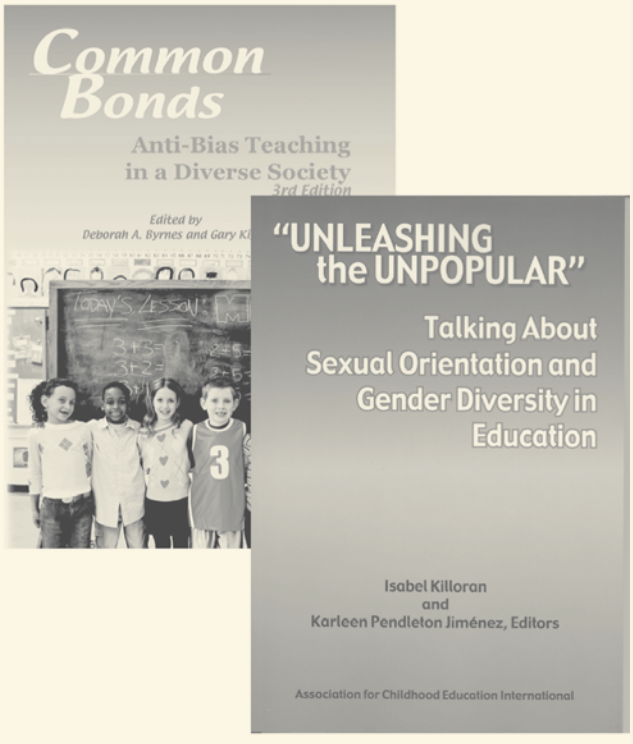




"Play needs to be cherished and encouraged, for in their free play children reveal their future minds."
~ Friedrich Froebel (1887)

"Anti-bias educators play a crucial role in the formation of nonprejudcial attitudes an in supporting respectful behaviors among school children." J. Barta and C. Mount Pleasant-Jetté, 2005.

—Common Bonds: Anti-Bias Teaching in a Diverse Society, 3rd Edition



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Children's Issues in the News

ALABAMA

A new statewide Parenting Assistance Line, or PAL, has launched in Alabama to give parents a chance to get help without feeling ashamed or embarrassed about their parenting skills, according to the *Montgomery Advertiser.*

Wal-Mart, the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama, and state agencies, including the Departments of Mental Health and Human Resources, are funding the toll-free line, which will operate 8:00 AM–8:00 PM, Monday–Friday, so parents can talk about their problems rather than take them out on their children.

"Yes, it's your responsibility to look after the child, but who's looking after you?" the *Montgomery Advertiser* quoted First Lady Patsy Riley after the hotline was launched last spring. "Now you have a confidential phone number. They can't give you a shot and all of a sudden you've got sleep again, but they can give you some great advice."

Housed at the University of Alabama's Child Development Resources, the PAL phone center employs six counselors. Although the line is meant for parents with children ages 1–12, center Director Sally Edwards says telephone operators are child development experts who can address a range of issues for children who are much older. For more information, visit www.pal.ua.edu.

COLORADO

A study by the Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute shows that one in five Colorado families are barely getting by, often going without health care and other necessities, the *Rocky Mountain News* reports.

"The sheer number of families struggling was a surprise to us," the paper quoted Kathy White, who worked on the study. "Since the late 1990s, costs have started to outpace wages. Housing has skyrocketed, and child care costs continue to increase."

Many families are putting grocery and health care expenses on credit cards; as a result, health care costs are one of the leading causes of bankruptcy.

Single mothers and people of color make up a large percentage of the families barely making it in the state, but the study found most struggling households in Colorado consist of white married couples with children, and most have at least one family member who works full-time.

The study's authors said the federal poverty estimate is outmoded and based only on the cost of food, so they used a "self-sufficiency standard," factoring in costs for housing, child care, health care, transportation, and other expenses. The study determined that most struggling Colorado families make too much money to qualify for most government programs.

A group of Colorado-based foundations supported the study, including the Denver Foundation, the Chambers Family Fund, the Women's Foundation of Colorado, and the Mile High United Way.

MAINE

For more than five decades, Maine has followed a law stating that records of all adoptions finalized on or after August 8, 1953 are confidential unless a probate court judge rules otherwise. Many adoptees, as a result, have birth certificates that list their adoptive parents' names only.

This cloak of confidentiality will be raised on January 1, 2009, when a new law takes effect that will allow adoptees 18 or older who were born in Maine to have copies of their original birth certificates. The certificates will bear the names of their birth mothers, and, in some cases, their birth fathers, according to the *Portland Press Herald.*

A grassroots group made up of adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents, who called themselves Original Birth Certificates for Maine, pushed the bipartisan legislation for three years. "The document provides adoptees with the truth needed for optimal personal development and the freedom to marry without concern of committing incest," the group stated in a news release.

Opponents to the new law included the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, which claimed releasing the

birth records to adoptees would violate the privacy of mothers who were promised their identities would not be disclosed, according to the *Press Herald.* The new law, however, allows birth parents to file a confidential form with the State Registrar of Vital Statistics that states whether they want to be contacted by the adoptee if the adoptee chooses to search for them.

MASSACHUSETTS

Governor Deval Patrick recently made permanent the state's Baby Safe Haven Law, allowing a safe alternative for mothers who might otherwise abandon their babies. The law, passed in 2004, was set to expire this year, according to the *Boston Globe.*

"The Baby Safe Haven Law saves lives," Angelo McClain, Commissioner of the Department of Socials Services, said in a statement. "By making this important piece of legislation permanent, Massachusetts offers parents a safe alternative and helps protect babies from abuse and neglect. DSS enthusiastically supports the law, and we are pleased to see it extended."

Under the law, parents can surrender a newborn 7 days old or younger to a predetermined Baby Safe Haven, including hospitals, police stations, and manned fire stations, without the threat of incarceration. DSS officials say six babies have been safely surrendered since the law's inception.

DSS takes immediate custody of a surrendered child and, after medical screening, the child is placed in a preadoptive home, allowing for the newborns to have the best chance of staying with one family, as opposed to placement in a foster home, says DSS spokesperson Denise Monteiro.

In addition to easing the surrender of children, the law provides for information to expectant mothers, including a Baby Safe Haven Hotline. Thirty-five mothers have developed a successful pregnancy plan through the hotline, ensuring their newborns were not abandoned, DSS officials say. "We have the services out there; we just need to connect the expecting mothers to the service," Monteiro told the *Globe.*

MISSOURI

Missouri has passed a new law dropping the maximum age for child support from 22 to 21, as well as setting new academic standards for students whose parents receive child support. The law has stirred debate within the state.

Critics say the original law set the age at 22 because it is the traditional age for college completion. They say dropping the age to 21 could jeopardize college students' senior years, cause more conflict between divorced parents, and flood the courts with litigation, the *Kansas City Star* reports. The new law cuts off child support for 3,200 current college students over age 21 and will affect thousands more in the future, a state official told the *Star.*

State Representative Brian Baker (R) pushed for the change in the law, originally proposing the age limit be set at 18—the age when people can first vote, and the age at which most states draw the line for child support. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 38 states terminate child support at age 18 or at high school graduation. Massachusetts and Hawaii have the highest cut-off age at 23.

The new law also allows a parent to stop paying child support when a full-time college student receives two failing grades in half or more of his or her course load in any one semester.

NEW YORK

A report released last summer by New York City investigators said the city's child welfare agency received warnings that several children—who eventually died in care—were in danger, but never fully acted on them, according to the *New York Times.*

Mayor Michael Bloomberg ordered the review after 7-year-old Nixzmary Brown was beaten to death in a Brooklyn apartment in January 2006. Since this case and the cases of at least 10 other children who died or nearly died were examined in the report, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) has fired or disciplined 14 caseworkers who were involved in those cases; instituted ChildStat, a case review system; and increased the number of child protective caseworkers by 400, reducing the average caseload to 11 per caseworker, compared with an average of 21 in March 2006, the *Times* reports.

Following its review, the city's Department of Investigation and Children's Services released a 141-page report containing 20 recommendations for the agency's improvement, including hiring 100 investigators to consult with caseworkers. ACS Commissioner John Mattingly said many of the recommendations are already under way.

"This report is a big step forward in strengthening our ongoing reforms to improve child protective investigations," Mattingly said in a statement. "The recommendation to hire 100 more experienced law enforcement consultants will mean many more of our caseworkers will get the support, guidance, and training they need to conduct thorough investigations." ■

Reviving the White House Conference on Children

CWLA calls for a White House Conference in 2010 to focus on child welfare, following a tradition that began 100 years ago and improved the lives of millions of children.

By Jennifer Michael and Madeleine Goldstein

During the early 20th Century, those working to improve the lives of children in the United States faced an uphill battle. Brutal child labor was not uncommon, school attendance was loosely enforced, if at all, and the institutionalization of children whose parents had died or were incapable of caring for them was the norm.

Despite the challenges, policymakers and organizations made headway as the decades progressed in passing new laws and initiatives that boosted and supported children's well-being. Seven national White House conferences devoted to children and youth propelled much of this work. President Theodore Roosevelt initiated the first in 1909; President Nixon, the last in 1970. Direct outcomes from these gatherings included a commitment to ending the institutionalization of dependent children, the first significant report on child health and welfare standards, the creation of CWLA and the U.S. Children's Bureau, the development of a national Children's Charter, and legitimacy given to the benefits of creative freedom and healthy personality development on children's well-being.

Today, at the dawn of the 21st Century, CWLA is calling for a new White House Conference on Children and Youth to commence in 2010. Although conditions for children have improved substantially since the first conference in 1909, 3 million cases of abuse and neglect are reported annually. More than 100,000 children wait to be adopted. To make matters worse, less than half of children in care are eligible for federal foster care and adoption support.

"The fundamental purpose of the 2010 White House Conference on Children and Youth is to fulfill the nation's need for an overall vision in child welfare and refocus an inspired understanding of the many facts we have at our disposal," says CWLA President and CEO Christine James-Brown.

Looking ahead to 2010, it's also important to look back at how past conferences approached the issues of their time. What follows are summaries of the accomplishments of previous White House conferences. From these examples, CWLA aims to inspire a new national conversation around a new generation.

1909: Raising Public Awareness

The White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children in 1909 was designed to raise public awareness and address children's issues applicable to the time, including the deleterious effects of institutionalizing dependent and neglected children.

President Roosevelt, together with some 200 conference attendees, offered nine proposals concerning the use of institutional care for dependent and neglected children. Conference members emphasized the importance of family and home life and incorporated this ideology into their proposals, including establishment of a foster care program, formation of the federal Children's Bureau, regular state inspections of foster care homes, and education and medical care for children in foster care.

The conference proved successful when the Children's Bureau was created in 1912. Other outcomes included development of the widows' pension movement, the growth of adoption agencies, the establishment of boarding-out care for children who were not adopted, and the formation of the "cottage plan" that replaced congregate institutions.

The 1909 conference also led to CWLA's birth. During the event, several child welfare agency executives decided to create the Bureau for Exchange of Information Among Child-Helping Agencies to support each other and share knowledge. In 1920, after the second White House Conference, members converted the bureau into the Child Welfare League of America.

1919: Developing Standards

The White House Conference on Standards of Child Welfare convened in 1919—designated by President Woodrow Wilson as the "children's year"—at the suggestion of the Children's Bureau. The conference involved a series of meetings in Washington, DC, and eight cities nationwide. Committees of five to eight members determined minimum standards for child labor, health care for children and mothers, and aid for special-needs children.

The conference's Committee on Children Entering Employment, for example, stimulated improvements in state regulation of child labor, and the Committee on Health Care for Children and Mothers drafted detailed statements on health standards for treating pregnant women, infants and preschool children, schoolchildren, and adolescents. This prompted widespread awareness of the need for better standards for maternity and infancy protection.

1930: Promoting Health and Well-Being

Preparations for the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection began in July 1929 when President Herbert Hoover announced the purpose was "to study the present

status of the health and well-being of the children of the United States and its possessions, to report what is being done, to recommend what ought to be done and how to do it."

Some 1,200 experts in 17 committees compiled research and documents on their respective areas. The White House provided a substantial $500,000 in funding.

When the conference took place in November 1930, all 3,000 attendees received a 643-page volume of information. A public volume was published in 1931, containing conference speeches, abstracts of committee reports, lists of committee members, and a Children's Charter offering 19 proposals on the requirements for children's education, health, welfare, and protection. The final conference reports were published in 32 volumes. Although the conference generated the most comprehensive report on the needs of children ever written, the overwhelming volume of reports and proposals impeded efforts to convert the recommendations into action.

One of the conference's notable outcomes was the creation of the American Pediatric Society.

1939: Assessing Research, Taking Action

The purpose of the 1939 Conference on Children in a Democracy was to accumulate research on children in the 1930s and establish a program of action to treat the needs of children in the 1940s.

In creating the program, the conference's Report Committee considered American family life, family income, family residence, education, child labor, child health care, special needs children, and finances. The committee produced an 85-page volume containing research results and 98 proposals. General recommendations included a proposal for a program of action over 10 years to cover all aspects of a child's life. The program would be shaped from actual experiences of children and would consider the country's financial situation. The committee also pursued balancing the involvement of local, state, and federal governments and voluntary agencies in child welfare reform, while emphasizing the importance of maintaining a strictly nonpartisan, nonpolitical agenda.

The Conference on Children in a Democracy focused on areas such as malnutrition and the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race or faith. An important outcome was the 1943 Emergency, Maternity, and Infant Care Program, the largest medical care program instituted by the United States up to that time. The program provided free medical, nursing, and hospital services for mothers during prenatal and delivery periods, as well as six weeks of postpartum. Complete care was also provided to infants less than 1 year old.

ILLUSTRATION: "THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE CONTROLS THE NATION," © 2001 BY GEORGE E. MILLER II, WWW.GEMART STUDIO. COM, 800/244-4222.

1950: Federal, State, and Local Collaboration

The 1950 Mid-Century White House Conference on Youth and Children was the best-attended and had the strongest leadership of any conference on children and youth to that point. Youth were invited for the first time, and 400 attended. Two hundred foreign delegates representing 30 nations observed the conference proceedings.

Overall, the conference emphasized the importance of healthy personality development and how social, educational, health, recreational, and religious institutions help shape children's personalities. Preparations began well in advance at the state level, with committees assessing children's needs. State committees created 1,000 local committees. Each state submitted a report for incorporation into the White House conference proceedings.

More than 460 national organizations helped plan the conference. They kept their own members up-to-date on the progress of the conference, organized meetings between their members and state White House conference committee members, arranged and led discussions on the effects of community life on a child's personality, and conducted research.

Many of these organizations also submitted reports for integration into the conference proceedings. As a result, a *Chart Book* and 170-page *Fact-Finding Report* were published before the conference. Donations from national organizations and foundations, as well as $150,000 from Congress, funded the event.

The conference theme encompassed all facets of life, from public health, to theater, religion, education, and recreation. According to an account in the January 1951 edition of the *American Journal of Public Health,* the Mid-Century Conference "base[d] its concern for children on the primacy of spiritual values, democratic practice, and the dignity and worth of every individual. Accordingly, the purpose of the Conference [was] to consider how we can develop in children the mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and responsible citizenship and what physical, economic, and social conditions are deemed necessary to this development."

TAKE ACTION

- ★ Visit CWLA online at www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconf10.htm and sign onto CWLA's call for a White House Conference on Children and Youth.
- ★ When authorizing legislation is introduced, support it. (Authorizing legislation would designate funding, create a policy committee, establish a bipartisan appointment and planning process, and define the goals of the next conference.)
- ★ Write and call your members of Congress. Call Capitol Hill at 202/224-3121.
- ★ Urge your board to adopt a resolution of support that calls on Congress to authorize the conference.
- ★ Get your local leaders, mayors, commissions, and state legislators to voice their support for the call.
- ★ Attend Advocacy Day on February 26 during CWLA's National Conference in Washington, DC.

Addressing National Committee members before the conference, President Harry Truman articulated the need for a stronger educational program with more teachers and better-funded schools. Other conference goals included documenting participants' expertise on the physical, mental, emotional, and moral needs of children; providing suggestions to enhance the quality of child services; and parents fostering healthy development for their children.

As the conference began, delegates made a pledge to children that unified the attendees in their promise to help improve children's quality of life. To meet the varied interests of the participants, attendees divided into 35 work groups on such topics as nursing, the role of the arts, and racial discrimination. Minority groups represented the needs of different racial groups.

The groups submitted their recommendations during the conference closing. The work group on healthy personality growth, for example, recommended increasing children's participation and interest in the arts to lead to healthier personal development and creative freedom for children nationwide.

1960: Getting Creative

Seven thousand delegates attended the Golden Anniversary White House Conference on Children and Youth. The theme was "to promote opportunities for children and youth to realize their full potential for a creative life in freedom and dignity."

More than 6 million citizens participated in preparatory activities, including state and local committees that drafted the *States' Report on Children and Youth* and other reports. Young people were invited to attend, and their reports on the conference were published too. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's opening address highlighted the importance of high-quality, long-term education for children.

Committee members determined a series of procedures for the conference. The structure remained the same, with larger general sessions and smaller work groups that drafted recommendations and discussed and voted on them in larger forums.

The growth of the White House Conference necessitated 210 work groups, 175 more than the 1950 conference. Their

recommendations were specific to certain fields. The work group devoted to the arts, for example, proposed improvements in the areas of creative writing, visual arts, music, theater, and dance. The pediatrics work group attested to the profound impact of past White House conferences on reducing the death rate for infants under age 1 by 78% between 1910 and 1956. The death rate of preschool children ages 1 to 4 had decreased by 92%, and the death rate of youth ages 15 to 19 had dropped by almost 75%.

After much debate, attendees presented and published 670 final recommendations.

CWLA'S VISION

How would a White House Conference on Children and Youth work?

The conference would function similar to other White House conferences on issues such as aging—funding would be provided to establish a series of events and small conferences in all states a year before the national conference. Delegates to the White House event would represent all states, tribes, and territories, and the District of Columbia.

What would be the objectives of a 2010 White House conference?

- ★ To focus national leaders' attention on child welfare issues and improving outcomes for children.
- ★ To bring together a cross-section of policymakers, advocates, professionals (including the courts), and families and children directly affected by the child welfare system.
- ★ To provide a two-year process that allows all stakeholders to weigh in at the national, state, tribal, and local levels.

What is Congress's role?

Congress's role will be three-fold:

- ★ provide authorizing legislation that sets the goals and requirements of the conference;
- ★ appropriate the funds; and
- ★ participate in appointments of policy committees overseeing the conference and its preparatory activities.

1970: Cherishing Individuality and Identity

The purpose of the 1970 White House Conference was "to enhance and cherish the individuality and identity of each American child through the recognition and encouragement of his or her own development, regardless of environmental conditions or circumstances of birth," according to a July 1971 article in *The Family Coordinator.* Conference planners included youth, professionals, parents, and community workers.

The conference focused on infants and young children from birth to age 5, children ages 6–13, and youth ages 14–24. Regional conferences focused on children to age 13 also occurred in six cities. Four thousand people attended the national conference in Washington and divided into forums of 15 members each who gathered data, researched the needs of children, and submitted recommendations. Forum 14, for example, looked at changing families in a changing society and society's pluralistic nature. Forum 15 focused on parent-child relationships and articulated the importance of a parent figure in each child's life.

In addition to producing forum reports, delegates ranked 16 statements of conference priorities in order of concern. According to *The Family Coordinator,* these included "comprehensive child development programs that include health services, day care and early childhood education, programs that eliminate 'the racism which cripples all children,' and a reordering of the nation's priorities, beginning with 'a guaranteed basic family income adequate for the needs of children.'"

The conference stressed the importance of direct and immediate implementation. The regional conferences devised strategies for implementing the national conference recommendations. Outcomes included establishing state councils to monitor the status of children in the states, and creation of a Congressional Subcommittee on Children and Youth.

Looking Forward to 2010

Momentum faded after the 1970 event. President Jimmy Carter called for a White House conference on families during his 1976 campaign, which led to a small event in 1979 that was not as formalized or focused as past White House conferences. President Ronald Reagan disbursed money to the states for their own individual events, but no formal White House Conference on Children and Youth took place. Congress authorized a White House Conference on Children, Youth, and Families for 1993, but funding never followed. One-day White House conferences took place during the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush around single issues such as early childhood development, missing and exploited children, and school safety.

CWLA is calling on its members and national partners to take the first step toward reestablishing the tradition of a full-fledged White House Conference on Children and Youth. CWLA envisions the conference focusing on child welfare issues—in particular, prevention, permanence, and safety. The conference would be part of a larger strategy to refocus the nation's attention on ways to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children.

"The League has become the trusted authority for professionals who work with children, and the only national organization with members from both public and private agencies providing unique access and influence to all sectors of the children's services field," James-Brown says. "We can help lead our nation to revise, remove, and start anew our behaviors and actions toward our children." ■

Jennifer Michael is Editor-in-Chief of Children's Voice; *Madeleine Goldstein is a former intern in CWLA's Government Affairs department.*

Ellen Notbohm with Veda Nomura

The Great Indoors: Classrooms that Inspire Learning

Learning blossoms when the outdoors comes in as part of a sensory-friendly classroom.

As parents of children with learning differences, one of the first things we learn is how little we actually know about learning. The typical classroom is too frequently a place of frustration, anxiety, and other unseen obstacles to learning.

Our family was beyond fortunate that, shortly after our son was identified with autism, we fell in with an occupational therapist (OT) who was on an odyssey of her own—discovering a fascinating new set of tricks that refocused the manner in which she approached classroom education, with remarkable results.

Veda Nomura was an OT with 25 years' worth of working with children to her credit. While working toward a master's degree, she enrolled in a class on learning environments and the Reggio Emilia approach to preschool education. *(See the sidebar on page 19.)* Inherent in this approach is the belief that environment deeply affects children's ability to tap their own individual learning resources. In effect, the "learning triangle" has three partners: child, teacher, and environment.

"Environment can be very powerful," Nomura explains. "Think about a grocery store. The environment is manipulated to draw you into the store. The floral department and the bakery are near the entrance, so when you walk in you are greeted with beautiful sights and delicious smells.

"Once in, every item is strategically placed. The items you need most often, such as milk or eggs, are at the back of the store. There is no direct route to get to these items, so as you maneuver through the aisles you are tempted by hundreds more products, catchy end cap displays, maybe even samples. It ends with the ubiquitous candy and gum placed at eye (and kid) level near the checkout counters. It's all carefully designed to encourage spending.

"Lobby spaces also send a message. Next time you walk into a building of any kind, note how you feel and what was done to make you feel welcomed or not. You will notice many things. Try this: When you come in a school's main entrance, forget for a minute that you know you are in a school. Look around. Does this entry area let you know anything about its occupants and their activities? Do you feel welcomed? Is it playful (one of my personal criteria)?"

Nomura's course project was an exercise in manipulating an educational environment: overhauling a classroom from the ground up. The classroom was a self-contained Early Childhood Special Education classroom housed in a former nursing home. Overall, it was a depressing place where rooms, corridors, and entryways were anything but kid-friendly and did nothing to enhance socialization. People working there were always complaining about it: the smells, the lighting, and the ventilation actually made some people physically sick.

The classroom itself had once been two rooms. A wall had been removed, creating a long, narrow 15x50' space with two doors. This layout encouraged the children to zoom up and down the middle of the room with little awareness of the activities and stations that were located along the perimeter of the classroom. The lure of two escape hatches was just too tempting to resist. Kids were constantly running in one door and out the other. Worse, the room had the cold, institutional feel of a building designed not for people, but for ease of maintenance.

The children in the class had many behavioral and sensory challenges. Nomura relates how she "wanted the children, teachers, and assistants to participate in the planning and creation of their new space, since they would all be sharing it. The teacher questioned the children about what a special place might be like for them, from a sensory perspective. What sounds make you happy? What smells do you like? The children drew pictures, and the teacher took notes as they described their favorite places.

"I do this exercise whenever I suggest the redesign of a classroom. I ask the staff and children to draw a favorite

memory from childhood. The results are amazingly consistent: most of the time, favorite memories occur outdoors—parks, playgrounds, the beach, the snow, the farm, the zoo. We talk about the rich experience of the environment, then we brainstorm about what it would mean to bring the outside in. It could be having live plants in the room, having a small fountain with its soothing background noise, using pebbles and pinecones for math manipulatives, making leaf mobiles, fish prints, or wood frames for their artwork, embellished with twigs, seeds, or shells. You'll be able to think of many ways to bring the outdoors in."

Just how much change can be brought to a classroom depends upon both funding and volunteer help. Many changes can be affected relatively inexpensively. Here's how to start:

Take everything out of the room and off the walls. Measure the room, then use graph paper to draw out the room, marking windows, doors, counters, etc. Before placing furniture and materials back in the room, play with different arrangements on paper. Consider each item: Is it purposeful or is it just decorative? Look at the room from the child's perspective. What do they see from their angle?

Reduce clutter! We teachers and therapists are collectors of books, supplies, and thematic materials that we always plan to use "some day." For many special-needs children, clutter can be very disorganizing. Many are very visually oriented and move toward something visually interesting, even if the teacher wants their attention elsewhere at that moment.

Position materials so they are easily accessible to where they are used: Store the paint and pencils where the kids paint and draw. When materials are stored in a logical manner, it doesn't matter whether the cupboards are open or closed. In fact, it seems to help students organize themselves independently if they see where materials are kept and learn they are only used in this space.

Clutter reduction applies to walls too. Start with a neutral color as a background. Then have meaningful information on the walls and only meaningful information. This brings students' attention to what is important, even when their eyes and attention may be wandering. Examples of meaningful information: visual schedules rotated daily, spelling words rotated weekly, framed photos of the children, and displays of their artwork rotated monthly. In this manner, information is kept minimal but pertinent. Everything their eyes fall on is both useful and presented in a manner that decreases distraction by being visually consistent.

Do away with cute decorations and anything that doesn't say something personal about the special kids in the class. Nomura tells teachers, "If you were to walk into this space in the evening, there should be echoes of your students present."

Think about the flow of the classroom. Think of zigzags or diagonals when planning classroom play spaces. Nomura suspected her project classroom, with the two doors and the running corridor down the middle, was not being utilized fully. A simple exercise proved this.

"I drew a map," she says, "then used different colored pens to track the activities of several children as they moved about the room over a 20-minute period. Sure enough, they tended to return to and cluster around several familiar places while large areas of the room went unnoticed and unused. We brought the room into full use by moving activity centers away from the walls and regrouping them so children could share materials and do more than one thing at each station. Try science things next to art materials, or a writing center next to the manipulative play area. This helps activity flow uninterrupted and decreases distraction."

Plan several areas in the classroom where two or three students can play. This will encourage students who may have some difficulty with social interaction to practice social communication skills in a less stressful environment.

Mix natural materials from the environment with other classroom materials. As mentioned earlier, bringing the outdoors inside is powerful. For example, hang a panel of sheer fabric with many pockets containing differently textured

natural materials (seeds, pods, pebbles, moss, leaves) to encourage tactile exploration. Go on a color hunt outside, seeing how many white things children can find, or how many green or brown. Bring them in and create a poster or collage display.

Nomura's pièce de résistance was finding a large curly willow branch that had fallen in a friend's yard. "We suspended it from the ceiling in the classroom with screw eyes and fishing line," she says, "creating not only delightful ambience but also a backdrop for other natural embellishments the kids brought in—an abandoned bird's nest, pressed hanging leaves."

Think vertically. Nomura's most successful adaptation was including a small loft in the classroom. "Looking at the world from a different perspective is a potent experience," she says. The loft became many things—a quiet area where children read books and played board games, a castle, a jungle tree house. The space beneath the loft became a hiding place, dress up place, kitchen, "mouse house." The children could look down at everything happening in the room, or look up from the floor level and see what was happening in the loft. Placing a nonbreakable mirror on the ceiling under the loft also encouraged the children to look at their world from a different angle.

Commercial packages for lofts are available at several thousand dollars each, but a carpenter friend and parent volunteers can bring the cost down into the hundreds. The loft was about eight feet square and accommodated three or four children at a time. This encouraged interaction among smaller groups of students.

Safety is a huge factor with a loft, however. Nomura made sure it was very stable and mounted safely to corner walls. Strict rules for usage were posted by the ladder.

And while you're thinking vertically, have at least one activity center in your room where the children stand to do their work.

Wide, low risers that are about one foot high and two feet deep and built in sections in various lengths, are another wonderful addition to a classroom. Children can lie down on them to read a book, build blocks on them, sit on them to listen to a story, or use them to give a performance. Some students with sensory imbalances are fearful about movement, especially when their feet are off the floor. Risers offer the experience of being up higher and getting a different perspective, while removing the fear factor of climbing a play structure. Because they are basically just carpet-covered plywood, risers are relatively easy to build, perhaps even from leftover or donated materials.

Create softness in the room. Many classrooms have a hard feel—plastic toys, plastic and metal furniture, severe fluorescent lighting. This can also create a harsh auditory environment—clanging cabinets, scraping chairs, echoing spaces. Softening both the visual and auditory elements of the room can be as simple as creating a canopy of fabric to hang over a gathering area or a quiet play space. Inexpensive fabrics such as cheesecloth can be used. Having a comfortable couch in the classroom is a wonderful way to encourage several students to look at books or relax together.

Check with your principal, however. You may need to treat fabric with a fireproofing solution before hanging it in your room.

Overhead fluorescent lighting, so prevalent in many schools, contributes a lot of harshness to a classroom. The buzzing, glaring, pulsating nature of the light is a major problem for many children. Wherever possible, change out typical fluorescent tubes for the newer natural light tubes; arrange so that light reflects up rather than down. Turn off half the lighting in the room, and use as much natural light as possible to compensate, or add incandescent floor or desk lamps.

Add olfactory, proprioceptive, and other sensory experiences to the classroom with common kitchen appliances. Our teacher brought in a bread machine once a month and made bread for the class. He used a Crockpot to heat apple cider and kept it brewing all day. Whole spices ground with a mortar and pestle provided multisensory experiences. An air popper is great visual, auditory, and olfactory fun for a generation of children raised on microwave popcorn.

Outside Nomura's project classroom, many other changes began to happen in that building. The entry was revamped to make it parent- and kid-welcoming. An art gallery featured artwork from each classroom on a monthly rotating basis. The children were very proud to see their work displayed, and parents and staff previously unacquainted got to know each other through the photo displays.

Nomura's project was a resounding success. "It's exciting to see children respond to positive changes in their learning environment. So many of my students loved their new classroom, it wasn't long before I was receiving requests from other special-needs teachers wanting to revamp their space."

One little boy called the loft "my heaven." He used it initially to escape the pressures of the classroom for short periods. Gradually, as he became more comfortable, he used it less frequently as an escape and increasingly as a place to play with other children.

Another child enjoyed the light box—a large box with a light inside and a translucent panel on the top; you place objects on top of it and watch how the light goes through them. This student was willing to explore and touch a variety of objects that previously held no interest, because he was intrigued by the light filtering through them.

Yet another boy, fascinated with the risers in the classroom, would experiment with different building materials and could look at his structures from different angles.

And one student loved looking at the reflection of objects in mirrors that were placed in unusual locations—under the loft and horizontally on the floor next to the block area. He would explore and move various objects to see what happened in the mirror.

"The transformation of my project classroom, and the changes it engendered for students and staff, were truly gratifying," Nomura says. "And although I work with special-needs classrooms, I'd like to see attention to learning environments emphasized for all students. Sensory adaptations have benefit for all children. The beauty of the Reggio Emilia thought process is that it enhances any classroom learning situation."

Two-time ForeWord Book of the Year finalist Ellen Notbohm is author of the award-winning Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew *and the newly released* The Autism Trail Guide: Postcards from the Road Less Traveled. *She is a columnist for* Autism Asperger's Digest *and* Children's Voice, *and a contributor to numerous publications and websites around the world. To contact Ellen or explore her work, visit www.ellennotbohm.com.*

Veda Nomura, MS, OTR/L, an occupational therapist with Portland (Oregon) Public Schools, has 32 years experience working with children, birth to high school. In recent years she has focused on developing training for education teams and schools addressing the sensory needs of students with autistic spectrum disorder and the importance of creating positive, supportive learning environments for them. She can be reached at vnomura2@pps.k12.or.us.

This article was adapted from "The Great Indoors" by Veda Nomura, as told to Ellen Notbohm, Autism Asperger's Digest, *July 2005.*

The Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio Emilia model, named for the town in Italy where the concept originated, is a three-pronged approach to early childhood and primary education that has at its core the mandate that children have not only the need to learn, but the right to do so in a safe, caring environment. Learning unfolds through movement and integration of all the senses, and through their relationships with other people and the environment around them. The three tenets are:

- **Parent as first teacher.** Parents are considered essential partners and collaborators, expected to take an active role in the education and well-being of their children, thereby contributing to the collective education and well-being of all the children in the school.
- Teacher as learner. The curriculum is not set in advance. Teachers observe the children closely, ask questions, learn about the children's ideas and theories, and direct activities accordingly. Teachers are considered partners with the children in learning and discovering.
- Environment as third teacher. Classrooms are organized to fully use space in a manner that enhances learning opportunities and integrates to the larger school, community, and surrounding natural world. Emphasis is on natural light and materials in the classroom, and, schoolwide, creating spaces that promote interaction.

Learn more about Reggio Emilia at www.tinyurl.com/2f75hj.

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Making Children a National Priority

DownToEarthDad

Patrick Mitchell

The Power of Play

"To the field of honor!" proclaims my 8-year-old son, daring me to accept his challenge to wrestle him on the living room floor. After some hemming and hawing, and following a brief inventory of my limbs from the previous night's bout, I agree to participate in five minutes of body slams, pillow whacks, and all other manner of dad-kid power grappling.

The power of touch is real, and our kids are willing to wrestle us for it—on the living room floor, in swimming pools, and in the backyard—wherever dads are willing to play. Be it a power hug from the heart, a pillow fight for fun, or a relentless tickling of the ribs, our kids are hungry for, and actually require for their healthy development, some rough-and-tumble play with their dads.

You heard me right: Children actually need to play with their fathers and to play roughly sometimes—wrestling, rolling, jostling, and chasing around. Dads come by this type of rough-and-tumble play quite naturally, says Stephen J. Suomi, Chief of the Laboratory of Comparative Ethology at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Maryland, with the National Institutes of Health. He's a medical doctor who studies human and animal behavior, and he's one of the world's leading play experts.

Play Teaches Limits

"If a father and son are in a wrestling match, the child learns all the moves that would be involved in an actual fight (but) without causing any injury," Suomi says. "Fathers teach their children when enough is enough—if the play gets too rough, they (children) have to learn how to stop it before it gets out of hand."

Moms play with their kids too, but as Suomi notes, dads, uncles, and other men are rather famous for playing with children, and they are by and large willing to play more roughly, which can have great benefits as long as the play is done safely. Fathers show their kids how rough they ought to be and how careful they should be when playing, he explains.

Play Modulates Aggression

Boys and girls alike are naturally aggressive during the so-called "terrible 2s" when they'll hit, slap, punch, and clobber others to get their way. Parents don't see their toddlers as aggressive because they're so small, but if 2-year-olds weighed 400 pounds, Suomi jokes, we'd send them into battle and be victorious.

The naturally high aggression of 2-year-olds (and 3-year-olds!) tapers off as the child grows to elementary school age, he explains, but this intense early-life aggression resurfaces at puberty and in the early teen years. Suomi says dads can help their kids socialize their aggression by physically playing with them, he noted. Physical play with their dads "helps children learn how to modulate the intensity of their aggressive-like behavior. It helps children socialize aggression."

Learning appropriate play skills from their father ensures that children will know how to interact appropriately with their peers and in society later in life. Play has a behavioral basis in nature and is crucial for children's healthy social development. According to Suomi, kids who don't learn how to play in appropriate ways are at risk for being shunned by other children.

Here's how it works: Nobody wants to play with the kid who plays strangely—hits inappropriately, plays too roughly, or doesn't play by the rules. In nature, Suomi explains, "Animals who can't play nicely get dumped by their friends. In nature, those animals who aren't able to do that are shunned by the other animals." Children must "learn when things start getting out of hand," he says, and dads teach that lesson marvelously by showing their daughters and sons how to roughhouse, play fair, and recognize when they're being too rough.

"Fathers who form patterns of playing with their children when they are young stay involved with their children through puberty and beyond," Suomi says.

I have to agree; at least that's been my experience. Although nowadays I have a backup plan if things go sour when I decide it's time to wrestle my 16-year-old son on the living room floor: Run! ■

A regular contributor to Children's Voice, *Patrick Mitchell publishes a monthly newsletter,* The Down to Earth Dad, *from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and facilitates the Dads Matter!™ Project for early childhood programs, schools, and child- and family-serving organizations. He conducts keynote addresses, workshops, and inservice and preservice trainings. To reserve Patrick Mitchell for speaking engagements, or to implement the Dads Matter!™ Project for your families and community partners, call him toll-free at 877/282-DADS, or e-mail him at patrick@downtoearthdad.org. Website: www.DownToEarthDad.org.*

Collaborating in the Classroom

University–agency partnerships are improving workforce recruitment and development.

By Jennifer Michael

They are not hard to find in schools of social work—idealistic, energetic young people who want to change the world for the better, one child and family at a time. After graduation, many enter the field of public child welfare as newly minted caseworkers and soon find themselves immersed in caseloads and long hours. If they are still working at it two or three years later, they are the exception.

With child welfare being one of the toughest jobs in social work, it's no wonder agencies continually struggle to recruit and retain workers. To address the problem, some state agencies are looking back to the colleges and universities from which many of their personnel came. State and county agencies are tapping into the wealth of knowledge and training resources universities have to offer their staff and, in turn, the universities are expanding their social work programs and better preparing students for the child welfare field.

The heart of this collaboration lies in Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, an entitlement program that allows states to claim a 75% federal match—or three dollars for every state/local dollar—for allowable training of state and local agency staff, as well as current and prospective foster and adoptive parents. The Title IV-B child welfare training program also awards grants to public and private nonprofit institutions of higher learning, but the Title IV-E program is larger. Both programs are administered by the U.S. Children's Bureau.

"Studies show that people who have come through agency–university partnership social work programs tend to stay in child welfare longer. People come into the agency ready to do the job," says Joan Levy Zlotnik, Executive Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research.

The Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 created the Title IV-E child welfare training program, but few states began taking advantage of its benefits and developing university–agency partnerships until the 1990s. In fiscal year 1990, the Government Accountability Office found that Title IV-E provided about $44 million to train state child welfare workers. In FY 2002, 49 states received some $286 million in Title IV-E

training reimbursements, ranging from an estimated low of $10,000 in Alaska, to more than $79 million in California, according to the House Ways and Means Committee's *Green Book.*

Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Human Services has a long history of success with recruiting, preparing, and retaining its child welfare workforce through an integrated learning partnership with the state's higher education system. The University Training Consortium (UTC) began in 1983 as a small contract between Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) and the Cabinet to improve social services training. Today, UTC is a collaboration that includes all eight of the state's public universities, the community college system, and three private universities, with EKU as the lead university.

The program conducted more than 39,000 hours of training for new and tenured staff, foster and adoptive parents, and community partners in FY 2006. Since 2002, it has provided 44,000 undergraduate and graduate credit hours to agency staff. The program is a lot of work, says Steve Fox, UTC's Director of Learning Development, "but it is making a difference, and if it were not for IV-E, [the program] would not be there."

A Win-Win in Kentucky

Levy Zlotnik says the key to successful university–agency partnerships is strong leadership at the state level. Many states, for example, have governor-level memorandums of agreement solidifying collaborations between schools and public child welfare agencies. Also key is viewing a partnership as a win-win situation for the university, the public child welfare agency, and ultimately the student.

In Kentucky, this win-win is clearly understood. "The universities get tuition, have an opportunity to participate in application of human service best practice, and the Cabinet uses the IV-E dollars generated through the universities' ability to match to support an integrated total learning development system," says UTC Executive Director Donna Harmon.

The interface between higher education and public agency is critical, Fox says, to create a true continuum of workforce development across potential, new, and seasoned workers. Kentucky's public child welfare agency employs approximately 1,700 frontline caseworkers and 300 supervisors serving 120 counties.

Two main components of UTC's child welfare training program are the Public Child Welfare Certification Program (PCWCP) and the Credit for Learning Academy for new employees not enrolled in PCWCP. All non-PCWCP graduates are required to attend the academy for 12 weeks. Trainers with the Cabinet, and faculty from Kentucky's three accredited public graduate schools of social work—University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, and Western Kentucky University—coteach academy courses. Employees can earn nine credits toward a master's degree in social work.

The pre-employment PCWCP gives future social workers in-depth training for working within the state child welfare agency even before they leave school. The agency and 11 accredited undergraduate university social work programs jointly select up to 10 undergraduate, junior-level students annually to participate in the two-year program. Students receive tuition and a stipend in exchange for agreeing to work for the public child welfare agency for at least two years after they graduate, at a salary 5% higher than other new hires.

The highly structured PCWCP includes jointly developed courses on child welfare theory and practice specific to Kentucky. In addition, students complete an intensive field practicum within a local department of social services, and receive additional competency-based training through twice-annual retreats also attended by university faculty and public child welfare agency staff and leaders. Fox says the PCWCP has been "extremely successful."

"They have two years to get ready for the hardest job, in my mind, in government, whereas people off the street, even with the best training, have about 12 weeks," he says. "Our tracking and research point out much better casework. They make better decisions about child protection. Their attitudes in the agency are better. And the main thing…is they are not overwhelmed. That's what our students constantly tell us."

Retention of PCWCP participants within the agency is about 95% after two years due to their two-year contract, but even after seven years, retention is about 75%, compared with a 60% rate with a non-PCWCP control group.

Kentucky's university–agency partnership also involves ongoing professional development through an MSW stipend, leadership learning events, and special credit courses requested by the Cabinet and developed by the consortium of universities.

Mark Washington, Kentucky's Commissioner for Community Based Services, says the university– agency partnership is "a wonderful relationship" with a lot of "bang for the buck." His office hired about 170 new staff through UTC in FY 2007, and he anticipates hiring 200–300 staff annually in coming years.

Without the partnership he says, "We'd be like a lot of government agencies that just trip over themselves with paperwork and red tape. The training consortium allows us to move beyond that."

Striving for Consistency in Pennsylvania

When he started in the child welfare field as a social worker in Kentucky in the 1970s, the training landscape was "pretty barren," Larry Breitenstein recalls. "We really weren't looking at a systematic approach to how to orient and train staff to do child protective services."

Breitenstein went on to work in South Carolina and Pennsylvania, but he maintained contacts in Kentucky and watched as the state's training programs improved and expanded under the university–agency partnership. In the mid-1980s, when he became director of the child- and youth-serving agency in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, east of Pittsburgh, Breitenstein knew Pennsylvania could do more in terms of training and that good child welfare training models existed. "Pittsburgh and Philadelphia had some training and resources, but outside of the big metropolitan areas, there wasn't quality training," he says.

Breitenstein and other child welfare leaders in the state formed a steering committee and set to work finding a way the state could take advantage of Title IV-E federal matching dollars for child welfare training.

Although the process took six years, the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program eventually came to fruition in 1992 and, like Kentucky, has experienced success in recruiting and retaining child welfare staff. Through the University of Pittsburgh, the program provides 67 county child- and youth-serving agencies with individualized training and technical assistance services. The state's Department of Public Welfare, state child and youth administrators, private provider agencies, and community members also are part of the collaboration.

"We put the county child welfare worker out there as the person we are all trying to serve effectively so they, in turn, can serve children and families effectively," Executive Director Kathy Jones Kelley explains.

Jones Kelley stresses the Child Welfare Training Program's 70 staff are practitioners who all came from child welfare systems or another human services systems. They conduct a 120-hour core certification program for all new child welfare caseworkers, and 20 hours of training annually thereafter. New supervisors undergo a 60-hour program and 20 hours of annual training.

The Child Welfare Training Program staff stays abreast of the latest research and practice improvements in child welfare—something public agencies typically don't have time to do. The program, for example, runs an Organizational Effectiveness Department that provides onsite technical assistance and support to child welfare agencies implementing evidence-based practices. It comprises three units—practice improvement, independent living, and transfer of learning. A separate Curriculum Development Department develops, for county use, curricula that support transfer of learning to the worksite and prepares trainers to present the curricula.

Although the state does contribute significant funding to the program, the federal match has allowed the program to be "fairly comprehensive," Jones Kelley explains.

For other states considering implementing or improving their own university–agency partnerships, Breitenstein advises they look first at what they want to accomplish with their training policies and determine their training goals. Secondly, they should consider how the public child welfare agency is structured within the state, how much of the state is rural or urban, and where ethnic groups reside, such as Native American tribes, then come up

continued on page 33

CWLA Advocacy in Support of Title IV-E Training Programs

The following is adapted from CWLA's 2007 Legislative Agenda.

Improvements and clarifications to the Title IV-E training program are necessary to improve child welfare practice and outcomes for children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has given inconsistent directions to states about the use of Title IV-E training funds; as a result, states differ considerably on how they expend these funds.

Title IV-E training should be extended to additional staff working with children in the child welfare system, including

- short-term training for permanent guardians and staff of group care settings;
- staff of private state-licensed or -approved child welfare agencies that provide services or care to foster and adopted children and children with guardians;
- court staff, including judges, judicial personnel, and staff of tribal courts;
- law enforcement personnel;
- agency attorneys and attorneys representing parents or children in proceedings conducted by or under the supervision of an abuse or neglect court;
- local or private nonprofit substance abuse prevention and treatment agencies;
- mental health providers;
- domestic violence prevention and treatment providers; and
- health, child care, and school and community service agencies working with state or local agencies to keep children safe and provide permanent families.

The purposes of Title IV-E training need to be clarified. Current law refers to training foster or adoptive parents and group care staff to increase their ability to support children in foster care and adopted children. Change is necessary to allow eligible training to include any training intended to help states meet federal goals of safety, permanence, and well-being for children.

The current Title IV-E requirement that training expenditures be allocated in proportion to the percent of a state's caseload that is eligible for federal Title IV-E Foster Care assistance should be eliminated. This would allow states to use training funds for staff who are working with all children and families in the child welfare system to help them achieve safety, permanence, and well-being.

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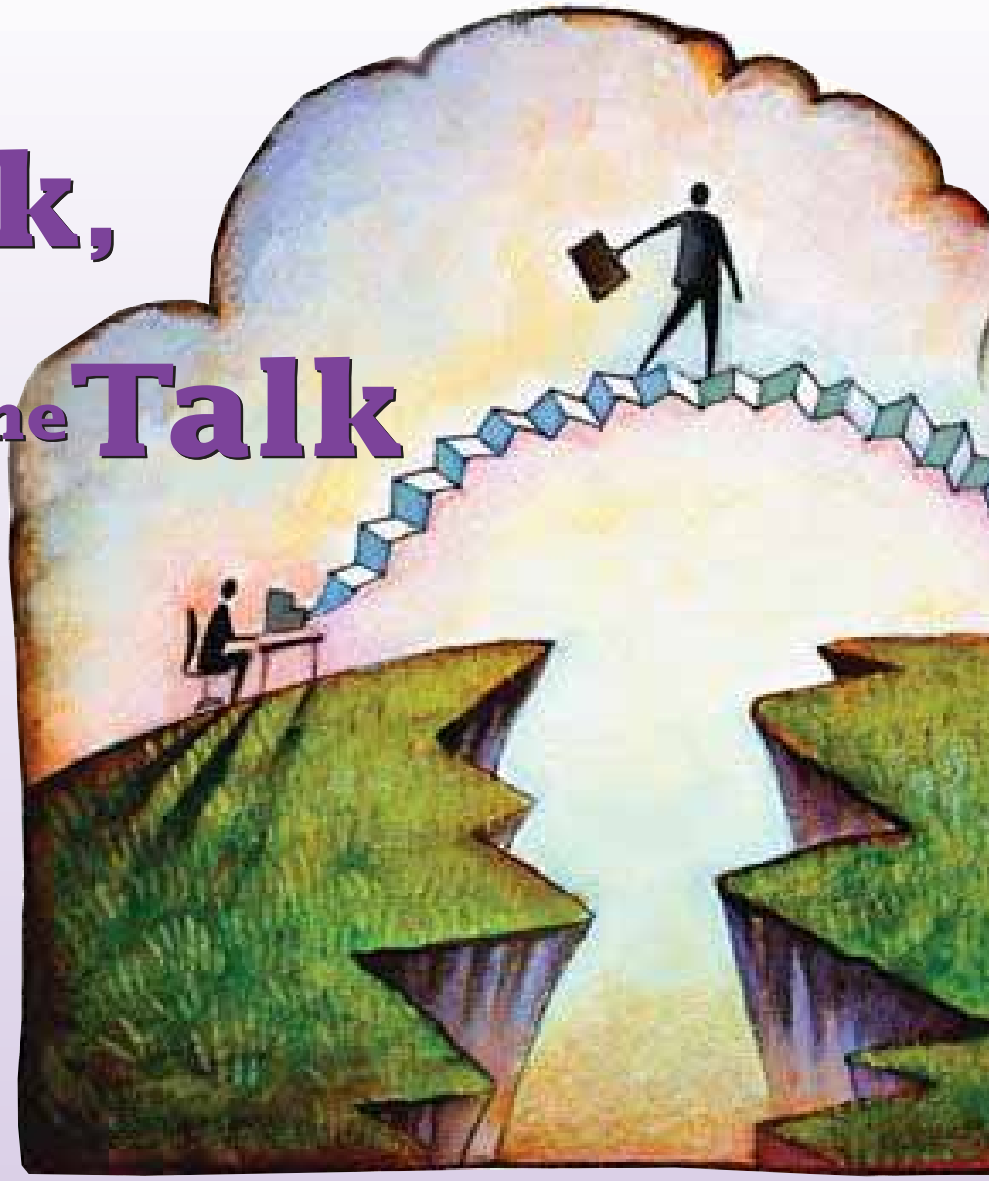
Walking the Walk, Not Just Talking the Talk



Eight Steps Toward Implementing Evidence-Based Practice

By Sue D. Steib and Wendy Whiting Blome

Talk about evidence-based practice has floated among child welfare administrators, practitioners, and academics for years. The conversations include using terms like *empirical support, proximal and distal outcomes, fidelity assessments,* and *generalizability.*

What exactly are evidence-based practices? They are distinct activities an agency can incorporate into different types of service delivery models and that have some level of empirical support indicating they are effective—in other words, they work. In the field of family services, for example, casework practices such as family-engaged service planning, strengths-based assessment, and structured family visitation, have an empirical base. These practices have been researched individually but may not have been tested together as part of a specific model of practice. Every agency does assessments and plans, but most are not using evidence-based practices.

Evidence-based programs are clearly defined activities delivered as a whole. The models specify requirements for staff qualifications and training; type, intensity, and duration of contact with clients; and use of particular tools, techniques, and documentation. Their effectiveness has been demonstrated with a specific population addressing documented needs. Examples include Functional Family Therapy, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, and Multisystemic Therapy.

Evidence-based models often command attention, sometimes causing policymakers and practitioners alike to use them as a one-size-fits-all answer for the many needs of their service population. Tempting as this may be, a more methodical, holistic approach usually is better. If, for example, your agency's mission statement and policies are well targeted and aligned, but the agency lacks sufficient committed, qualified staff, no evidence-based model is going to compensate.

The Evidence-Based Practice Process

Evidence-based practice, as a way of approaching work in child welfare, implies more than just adopting practices or models that have demonstrated effectiveness. It is an inclusive process that poses thoughtful questions about needs, plans for specific outcomes, involves ongoing evaluation, and uses evaluation to revise and improve practice.

Many agencies explore evidence-based practice, but few take the plunge to find the practice that will address problems identified in their organizations, then implement the change and evaluate the results. To move from talking the talk to walking the walk, agencies need to follow eight steps:

1. Identify existing data sources. Assessing organizational needs begins with examining the data. All agencies have some data sources. Public and larger private agencies have sophisticated data tracking systems, while smaller organizations may have simpler computer-based or manual tracking tools. The key is determining what data exist and what the data do and do not tell you.

Agencies also have the capacity to gather additional data to use as a basis for planning. Interviewing a group of supervisors, caseworkers, or clients; having supervisors poll their staff about programmatic issues; or reviewing a sample of case records may provide valuable additional information.

2. Disaggregate the data by appropriate variables. Data provide more information when they are disaggregated based on key variables. If, for example, you are concerned about the time it takes for children in foster care to move to permanency, you will learn much more about the issue by disaggregating the data by children's permanency goals, ages, races, reasons for entry into foster care, courts of jurisdiction, and placement types, than by simply looking at the timeline for the entire population. More precise information gained through this examination allows you to be more targeted in the steps that follow.

3. Look at policy, practice, and system issues based on data. The next step is to determine just what is happening to cause the problems pinpointed by examining the disaggregated data. Why are problems, such as delays or placement changes, occurring where they are? Are policies unclear or inefficient? Are resources inadequate? Are certain court jurisdictions rendering different decisions than others?

4. Meet with the agency team to determine where problems exist. The combined knowledge and perspectives of agency managers and supervisors can help form the most complete and meaningful conclusions from the examination of data, policy, organizational structure, and capacity. Managers and workers are most likely to know the practical factors and details about how things are really working. Identifying discrepancies between policy and practice may reveal part of the problem.

5. Review the evidence-based practice for the program area. The search for evidence-based practices should be directed not simply at the newest, most widely touted model, but to the evidence base that addresses the needs identified in Steps 1 through 4.

6. Assess the current practice against the selected evidence-based practice. This step is also about being strategic. Before you abandon current practices in the program area you have identified, examine them against the key features of successful practices revealed in the research. Chances are you will find some of your current activities are already aligned with the research. Focusing on those that are not supported by the evidence base is more efficient than changing everything.

7. Implement changes in policy or practice. Organizations, like people, can tolerate only so much change at one time. You have to be deliberate about what you decide to implement and how. Change implemented by e-mail won't work; change needs to be planned, measured, and monitored over time. Change must be nurtured until it is institutionalized into the agency's practice and process. Many change management schemes exist, but most incorporate multiple steps that include

- defining the problem,
- establishing a sense of urgency,
- forming a work team,
- creating a vision,
- planning for short- and long-term implementation,
- empowering everyone involved, and
- monitoring, monitoring, monitoring.

Evidence-based practice can be implemented without outside help except when the program is licensed and requires the agency to use established training, tools, or processes. For all agencies, however, enlisting a consultant may be helpful to ensure you are looking at the problem and the implementation design with fresh eyes that will allow you to build on agency strengths to meet agency needs.

8. Evaluate the program. For many social workers and administrators, memories of research classes in a long-ago graduate program are not their favorite recollections. But if you or someone on staff is qualified, evaluation of your implemented evidence-based practice can be performed internally. Otherwise, you will need to enlist the help of an external evaluator. That person should be involved in the process early—back in Step 1 when you were identifying data sources, and Step 2 when you were disaggregating the data. Calling an evaluator late may mean you have not collected the essential data or you have not established control or comparison groups that will be necessary to determine if the experimental group is experiencing a change.

Agency evaluation must follow the rhythms of the organization, not interrupt the services to children and families. An evaluator will explain to staff and managers the research design, the sampling plan, the data collection strategy, the analysis scheme, and the interpretation method. The first thing the evaluator will want to do will likely be a process evaluation, which determines if the program or practice is being implemented as

Eight Steps to Program Change Through Evidence-Based Practice

1. **Identify existing data sources,** such as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS), agency MIS, performance tracking system, quality assurance processes, state reports, and manual tracking tools.
2. **Disaggregate data by appropriate variables.** Worker variables include county, work unit, catchment area, education of workers, time in job, and turnover rate; child and family variables include length of time in placement, age, race, special needs, and so on.
3. **Look at policy, practice, and system issues based on data.** The data will lead to questions: Is our policy clear? Are practices consistent? Can agency systems like IT answer crucial questions?
4. **Meet with the agency team to determine where problems exist.** Look at the data, policy analysis, and systems review to answer the question, "Where is our problem?"
5. **Review the evidence-based practice for the problem area.** Target the search; look for what meets your agency needs, not just what is new and improved.
6. **Assess current agency practice against the selected evidence-based practice.** How close is what you are doing already to what the evidence-based practice requires?
7. **Implement changes in policy or practice.** Pick the programs or practices that have the greatest likelihood of creating positive change, given the strengths and needs of the agency.
8. **Evaluate the program.** You have come full circle. Now you must evaluate the program to ensure you are getting the positive results promised by the evidence-based practice. Maybe you'll get better results, or maybe you will have work yet to do. Either way, you won't know until you evaluate.

planned—or, put another way, determining "Are we doing what we intended to do?" If you evaluate a practice without knowing whether you are doing the evidenced-based practice as designed, the resulting data will not be useful.

Following the process evaluation is an outcome evaluation. This measures the extent to which your implementation of the program or practice is meeting the established goals. The goal of the evidence-based case planning process, for example, is to involve parents in developing the plan so they will feel ownership of it. Using established tools, you measure their level of commitment and success in completing the tasks outlined in the plan. Often in outcome evaluations, measures are taken at several points in time to see if the change is being maintained. Data analysis techniques are necessary to determine if the change observed is significant or if it could have occurred by chance.

Applying the Steps

Let's look at an example. Perhaps your examination of data in Step 1 reveals that moving children in your agency's foster care program to permanency is taking an average of 20 months. By going through Steps 2 through 4, you learn that children who return to their families and those who are discharged to relatives exit within 14 months, on average, but those who exit to adoption remain for up to three years. This discovery prompts you to examine the key decisions in the permanency planning process to determine where the source of the delay lies.

Timely adoption can be linked to all steps in the permanency planning process, so you will need to examine decision points, beginning with children's initial placement. Where, for example, are children who take the longest to be adopted placed when they enter protective custody? Would early placement with potential adoptive families allow these children to avoid multiple moves and attain permanence sooner? How consistent and thorough are efforts to identify and assess absent parents and relatives as placement resources? At what point are case plans being changed from reunification to adoption? Is planning being done sequentially, rather than concurrently, so that many months are spent working toward reunification before an alternative plan is identified?

Are procedural steps, such as moving the case from one unit to another or approving adoption subsidies, consuming more time than they should? Are most children relinquished voluntarily, or are almost all being made available for adoption through an involuntary termination of parental rights? How long does that process take, and where are the greatest delays along the way in caseworkers' preparation of materials for attorneys, or in attorneys' preparation of petitions?

Suppose you went through the above process and learned that caseworkers have manageable workloads but lack the skills to involve families in developing alternative permanency plans that can be implemented quickly if it becomes clear that reunification will not be successful. That finding would suggest you provide supervisors and caseworkers with professional development focusing on evidence-based techniques that engage families in planning and decision-making. If, on the other hand, you found that permanency planning moves along efficiently, but a huge backlog in the approval of adoption subsidies is responsible for the delay, you have identified a procedural problem that cannot be addressed through changes in casework practice.

Every agency makes changes routinely in programs, practices, and procedures. Whether they are well-planned or poorly conceived will take time and money—two commodities in short supply. Picking evidence-based programs and practices improves the likelihood the change will bring positive results for children and families and for the agency. It isn't magic—evidence-based practice changes are like all other planned changes: They require planning, consistent monitoring, and quality evaluation. But, then, what's your option? You don't want to invest in changes that may not work. Better to take the time, follow the steps, and learn to walk the walk. ■

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Inner Qualities of Educators

Patience and a mulberry leaf will make a silk gown. -Chinese Proverb

August 15, 2007

In the article "Teachers of Young Children Need Basic Inner Qualities," Professor Gross comments that most writings on early childhood address "how children learn and what we should teach them." While universities create extensive teacher preparation courses of study, "the heart of the matter – the inner qualities needed for working effectively with young children – has been strangely overlooked."

The five "inner qualities" Professor Gross describes are:

1. There is enjoyment in learning. "... If we wish our children to love learning we must provide them with teachers who love learning."
There is the ability to distinguish between personal and others' needs. "[The teacher] will be less likely to interpret children's and parent's behavior as either personal tribute or personal threat...."

2. There is knowledge about how young children learn. "[The teacher] must be able to constantly adapt and invent curriculum so that it flows with the tide of the children's learning." Gross notes that this is the quality most focused on by educators and trainers.

3. The teacher must have a personality which is comfortable with open-endedness. "... The basic inclination towards the unanswered question – the journey rather than the arrival – is a necessary quality in one who would work with young children."

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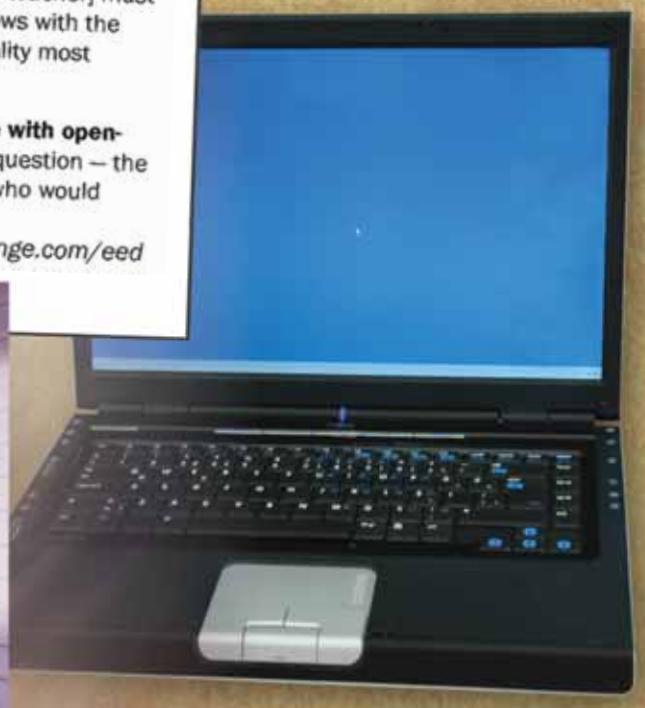

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Promoting from the Ranks

As growing numbers of senior staff approach retirement, agencies are developing internal leadership programs to prepare younger staff for leading them into the future.

By Jennifer Michael

With all the discussion around the imminent wave of retiring baby boomers, Ray Schimmer and his staff at Parsons Child and Family Center in Albany, New York, decided to gauge where their own agency stood amid the trend. They pulled records on members of their management group and were alarmed to learn 21 out of 28 key leaders would be turning 65 within seven years of each other, including Schimmer.

"After clarifying the size of the challenge, we saw we needed to focus specifically on internal leadership development if we hoped to maintain institutional continuity," Schimmer recalls.

To better prepare for the future and the retirement party clean-up, Schimmer and his staff developed and launched an internal training program, or Leadership Academy. The academy is just one aspect of an agencywide program to manage succession and build the leadership abilities of existing staff, with the goal of reducing reliance on outside recruitment to build the workforce, preserving institutional knowledge, and allowing for continued agency growth.

A leadership development task force of 32 staff members from across Parsons's 21 programs, including line staff, managers, and senior administrators, developed the Leadership Academy. They also designed a list of "stretch opportunities"—experiences that go beyond an individual's job description that increase awareness of the agency's range of activities, as well as the individual's portfolio of professional relationships—for program directors to consider offering staff. Additionally, an administrative reorganization expanded the senior management team from four to nine people.

"The reorganization, in effect, institutionalizes last-stage mentoring," Schimmer explains. "It also institutionalizes our group's determination that given both internal and external considerations, growing leadership from inside the agency is likely to be a more effective strategy than recruiting from [the outside]."

The first Leadership Academy, which concluded last fall, received enthusiastic interest and participation from Parsons's approximately 550 staff. Sixteen people participated in the first cycle—after nominating themselves and securing approval

from their supervisors—but twice that many applied initially, requiring the human resources department to pare down the number. Schimmer says the staff's interest taught him two things—a staff member's personal ambitions may be greater than a supervisor's expectations of that person, and offering staff potential future growth opportunities within the child welfare field and the agency generates excitement.

Of course the risk that staff will take their newly acquired leadership knowledge and pursue higher positions with other agencies is always there, but Schimmer contends, "That's a risk we would prefer to be taking as opposed to not doing anything and having to resort to the outside or to the promotion of an individual internally who we haven't prepared."

Getting Acquainted with Parsons

When looking for models of internal leadership academies to follow, Parsons's staff couldn't find any pertaining to child welfare agencies, so they adopted concepts from a business sector model used by their local chamber of commerce.

Parsons's resulting Leadership Academy model does not focus on transmitting skills, but rather with acquainting future agency leaders with the span and complexity of the organization. "We're trying to help them break out of their program and job silos to advance their appreciation of all mission-related activity," Schimmer says of his staff.

The first Leadership Academy met once a month for eight months and included a frontline social worker, a social work supervisor, a group home worker, a trainer, an Early Head Start staff member, a human resources professional, a fundraiser, and a medical clinician. The daylong sessions took place at different locations across Parsons's 11 sites to give participants a 360-degree view of the agency's multifaceted activities and services.

Different program staff led the academy sessions each time, and sessions were treated similar to graduate course study. Typically, session leaders would lecture, put together panels of outside customers and clients, open up question-and-answer sessions, and conduct field trips. Participants were evaluated on their level of participation in the written work and class discussions.

Academy participants worked in teams of three, with no more than six per team, to allow for the maximum level of discussion and synthesis of material presented. They studied the agency on three levels—departmental, agencywide, and future—and were assigned position paper topics and leadership proposals to write.

During the orientation session about the agency's mission and how to build a community around the agency, for example, participants were asked to write a position paper outlining what their new mission statement for the agency would be and how they would share that mission with the community. Then they were asked to create a leadership proposal outlining how the community could provide resources for the agency and how, in turn, the agency could act as a resource for the community.

One of the Leadership Academy participants, Mike Conway, says he had been looking for leadership opportunities within the agency long before the Leadership Academy was developed. After 18 years with Parsons, he felt professionally stagnant.

"My biggest complaint to my direct supervisor is that I don't feel I have a plan for where I'm going in the agency," he says. "I felt [the Leadership Academy] was my chance to get my foot in the door and learn some skills, get to know people, get to know what the agency is doing and what type of plan they have to grow new talent and identify people."

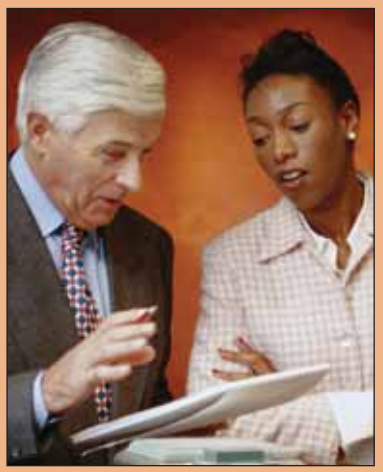
Conway was recently promoted from Manager to Director of Software Development for Parsons, due in part, he believes, to participating in the Leadership Academy, as well as taking a CWLA supervisory training course also given to Parsons staff last year.

"It's definitely given me direction; it's definitely exposed me to areas of the agency I wouldn't have otherwise been exposed to," Conway says of the Leadership Academy. "If I need something from another program that I have no information about, I know who to talk to for more information."

As an offshoot project from the Leadership Academy, the 16 participants are continuing to work with one another on their own time to develop a comprehensive agency directory

Parsons's Blueprint for Leadership Development

- Establish at the executive and senior management levels an awareness of challenges and goals around leadership development and succession. Commit to action.
- Agree to the primacy of the concept of internal development of leadership at senior management and executive levels, with external recruiting a secondary strategy. Understand the internal development strategy imposes obligations for the focused preparation of leadership candidates.



- Consider three phases of leadership development:
  - for line staff moving into supervision,
  - for supervisors moving into senior management, and
  - for senior management moving into executive management.
- Create phase-appropriate content for the standard leadership development components. These components are
  - formal training,
  - designed experiences ("stretch opportunities"),
  - diagnostic appraisal of performance,
  - individualized development plans, and
  - comparative appraisal of performance.

so all staff can better know who their colleagues are, what everyone does, and how everyone's work is interrelated.

Overall, Schimmer believes the Leadership Academy helped build business friendships across the agency. "We are looking for bonding between our young leaders so that when they become program directors, we'll be able to utilize interpersonal synergies and unify the organization."

Parsons's leadership development task force continues to work on identifying components of leadership that are particular to the agency, and then figuring how to transmit and evaluate them. For instance, the agency is considering incorporating a merit-based pay system and job shadowing.

"A lot of the business research we got into indicates that for-profit companies are much more forthright about making qualitative comparisons," Schimmer notes. "They identify individuals on the basis of their performance, then they favor those individuals in developing them as leaders. That's something that we're interested in but we haven't done yet."

Other Leadership-Building Strategies

Other child welfare agencies are similarly beginning to explore internal leadership training, though on a less formal basis than Parsons's Leadership Academy program. Three years ago, Ted Blevins, Executive Director of Lena Pope Home in Fort Worth, Texas, started taking a day each month to conduct sessions explaining the different aspects of an executive's role in leading a child welfare agency, including the executive's role in budgeting, construction projects, public sector advocacy, and legal issues. "You have a much better workforce when you're supportive of their development," he explains.

Blevins invites about a dozen internal staff, and even staff from external business partners, who have the credentials and potential to be in executive leadership. Program directors and outside vendors and contractors are invited to speak to the group. Blevins keeps the sessions informal to maintain a "comfortable and safe learning environment" where individuals can feel free to ask questions and explore ideas. Even though some of the training participants have moved on to become leaders at other agencies, Blevins views such promotions as a way his agency has helped improve the child welfare field beyond its community.

Blevins, like Schimmer, decided it was time to initiate succession efforts when he realized most of his senior staff had decades of tenure under their belts—his chief operating officer has been with the agency 35 years; a finance executive, 20 years; the properties manager, 20 years; and the executive director of programs, 12 years. Blevins himself plans to retire in 2009 after 25 years as executive director. He is only the fourth leader in Lena Pope Home's 77-year history. *[For more on Lena Pope's succession efforts, see "Exiting Executives," the Management Matters entry in the November/December 2007 issue of* Children's Voice.*]*

Norma Stoker-Mtume, on the other hand, has been dealing with staffing a West Coast agency that hasn't been around as long at Parsons and Lena Pope Home, but is rapidly growing. She is the Chief Financial Officer and Associate Director of SHIELDS for Families, Inc., in South Los Angeles. Since Stoker-Mtume cofounded SHIELDS in 1991, the agency has grown from 11 staff and a $500,000 budget, to more than 260 staff and a $20 million budget. Finding field staff during this time of growth has been challenging, "So we decided to grow our own," she says.

SHIELDS directors had always wanted to provide leadership training for the younger, more inexperienced staff but lacked the time and the funding until Stoker-Mtume received a two-year, $50,000 fellowship through the Los Angeles-based Durfee Foundation. She is focusing her fellowship on developing a young executives mentoring and coaching institute, with particular emphasis on building leaders of color.

The first sessions, open to all levels of line staff, were held in September 2007 and provided a general overview of nonprofits and how they operate. Many agency staff, Stoker-Mtume notes, don't have a complete understanding of how nonprofits function, even though they work for one. Supervisory training for young staff was also held late in 2007 and early 2008, conducted in part by CWLA consultants. In addition to the training program, SHIELDS has established a partnership with California State University at Dominguez Hills to conduct master's of social work degree classes onsite at the agency, taught by university faculty.

Stoker-Mtume believes part of her role as a leader is to help grow other leaders. Too many young staff become stuck in administrative roles, she says, and never receive a chance to aspire to higher roles, yet it is these young staff who bring new energy to an agency.

"Young people can figure out how to do this better than we can," Stoker-Mtume says. "One of the challenges is convincing other nonprofit leaders they can do it."

Jennifer Michael is Editor-in-Chief of Children's Voice.

More Advice from Parsons's Executive Director

Following are some of the "dos" Parsons Executive Director Ray Schimmer suggests agency leaders follow when building internal staff leadership:

DO: "Involve as many people as you can. There are more leaders by far than you imagine. If you invite people to participate in personal growth and agency leadership, you find more than if you do not invite."

DO: "Look at the entire span of current leadership, and estimate rate of retirement. Make assumptions and design plans with numbers in mind."

DO: "Consider the specific features of your organization. It is different from all others, and planning for it should be individualized."

DO: "Get going. One thing will lead to another as participants bounce ideas off one another. You don't need the entire plan at once."

DO: "Think leadership development, perhaps above succession planning. If you've done the first, the second is much easier."

Collaborating in the Classroom, *continued from page 24*

with a plan for implementing a training program consistent across the state.

"Answer those questions first about how you approach training," he says, "then look at how a university can work with you to bring down those dollars and how you want to use those dollars."

Expanding Title IV-E Dollars

Breitenstein has since left public child welfare and today leads a private agency, Adelphoi Village, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. In his new role, he has begun advocating once again in support of Title IV-E training programs, but for private agencies. Currently, Title IV-E training does not reimburse private universities or private agency staff, despite many public child welfare agencies increasingly privatizing services.

"Now in 2007, we are right where we were in 1986," Breitenstein says. "If we are going to make a change in how we service kids and get our private providers to really be tuned in with providing quality care for kids, then we need to look at a way of at least offering some of that training through the [federally funded] programs."

The issue has caught legislators' attention. In past congressional sessions, Representative Jerry Weller (R-IL) has introduced a bill to extend Title IV-E training funds to private child welfare agencies. He reintroduced the bill in 2007; at press time, the legislation was still on the table in Washington. Each year, CWLA's legislative agenda has supported the proposal.

While room for improvement in the Title IV-E training program remains, Breitenstein says he and other members of the original steering committee that made the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program possible—most of whom are now working in the private sector—consider the project one of their most significant achievements.

"We wanted quality training, we wanted training that was accessible to everybody in the state, and we wanted the training available when you needed it, when you had new workers coming in," Breitenstein says. "What we are doing is growing the next generation of child welfare leaders."

Jennifer Michael is Editor-in-Chief of Children's Voice.

Learn More Online

Kentucky University Training Consortium
www.utc.eku.edu

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program
www.pacwcbt.pitt.edu

University of Kentucky School of Social Work
www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe. This site provides general information about Title IV-E child welfare agency– university partnerships, including articles, curriculum, and legislative alerts.

CWLA ShortTakes

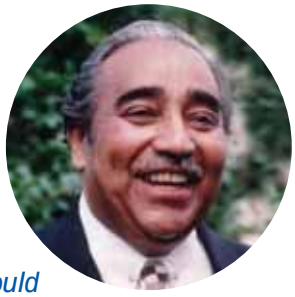
New for the Field

CWLA and American Humane have jointly published the *National Study on Differential Response,* featuring national survey results that show great variation in state and county implementation of the approach.

Differential response is also referred to as dual track, multiple track, or alternative response. The approach allows child protective services to respond differently to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect based on factors that include type and severity of the alleged maltreatment, number and sources of previous reports, and willingness of the family to participate in services.

To obtain the publication from American Humane, go to www. tinyurl.com/32gzj7, and look for the link under "Downloadable PDFs."

Speaking Out



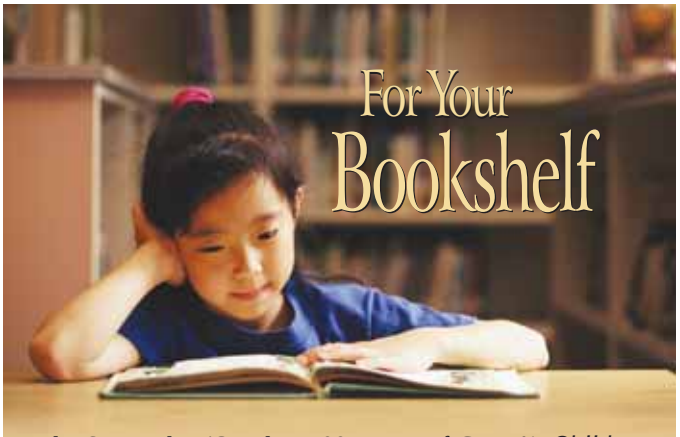
"We commend Congressman Rangel for his leadership on this critical issue in our nation's child welfare system. We hope this report will build momentum toward a solution to this challenge that must include legislation that would extend Title IV-E funding to kinship families."

—CWLA President and CEO Christine James-Brown in a statement praising Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY) for requesting the Government Accountability Office report on the high rate of African American children entering and remaining in foster care. Rangel, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, released the groundbreaking new report last summer on racial disproportionality in foster care in the United States and called for federal assistance to find these children permanent homes.

Data Crunching

In 2005, 17.3% of child victims of abuse and neglect had a reported disability. Of child victims with a reported disability, 18.3% had been diagnosed with a behavior problem.

Find this and other related information at http://ndas.cwla.org, the website for the National Data Analysis System (NDAS), a free online service started in 1999 by CWLA and sponsoring states.



The September/October 2007 issue of CWLA's *Child Welfare* journal is a special issue devoted to children's mental health. Readers are provided with present policy, program, and practice innovations, as well as contemporary research to effectively address mental health issues for children and families in the child welfare system.

If you haven't already received a copy, visit http://www.cwla.org/pubs/welcome.htm and order online, or visit the book exhibit during CWLA's National Conference, February 25-27, in Washington, DC. A workshop based on articles in the special issue will take place on the last day of the conference. Presenters will include Richard Thompson with the Juvenile Protective Association, Judith Silver with the Starting Young Program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Sheryl Dicker, formerly with the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, the Chadwick Center for Children and Families, and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

Upcoming Conferences

FEBRUARY 25–27

CWLA National Conference
Children 2008
A Call for Action — Leading the Nation for Children and Families
Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC

SEPTEMBER 15–17

2008 Western Region Training Conference
It Takes Courage and Compassion to Serve Children and Families: Tools for Competence and Confidence
Hilton Hotel, Portland, Oregon

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 703/412-2439.

Donation Benefits Young Readers

Even though CWLA's Child and Family Press is no longer in operation, thousands more children from Baltimore to Oklahoma have an the opportunity to enjoy two of CWLA's most loved children's book titles.

To clear excess inventory, CWLA donated more than 31,000 copies of *A Pocket Full of Kisses* and *The Whistling Tree,* both by Audrey Penn, to worthy charities. Baltimore Reads, a nonprofit organization, distributed 5,000 copies of *A Pocket Full of Kisses* to city teachers and children from low-income families. First Book, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, distributed more than 27,000 copies of *A Pocket Full of Kisses* and *The Whistling Tree* to tribal children in Kansas, Minnesota, and Oklahoma by networking through the National Indian Child Care Association (NICCA).

"We appreciate them," says Barb Fabre, with White Earth Child Care in Ogema, Minnesota. "Everybody loves books."

Conference Kudos

For more than a decade, CWLA has hosted yearly meetings of the nation's state child welfare directors and commissioners. Convened in relaxed and informal settings, the Commissioner's Roundtables foster open discussion about the critical issues facing children and families in the states.

The 2007 Commissioner's Roundtable, in Tucson, Arizona, and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, featured sessions on evidence-based practice, how the Child and Family Service Reviews and Program Improvement Plans are changing frontline practice, and the impact of federal policy and political changes on the child welfare system. Commissioners tell CWLA there is no other meeting like the annual roundtable; indeed, participants in the 2007 session produced many post-roundtable kudos:

Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend the Commissioners' Roundtable. As [a] child welfare director…I found the meeting invaluable, both in the panel presentations and discussions and in the opportunities for networking with my peers from across the country.

As always, this is my personal favorite meeting that I attend each year…I thought all the topics and sessions flowed well and had good participation.

I appreciate all of CWLA's efforts in planning and organizing this event. It is those efforts that make it such a success.

Supporting Foster Care Finance Reform

CWLA cosponsored and arranged a congressional briefing in Washington last October highlighting a new report, *Hitting the MARC: Establishing Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children.* CWLA served on the advisory board for the report's authors, Children's Rights, the University of Maryland School of Social Work, and the National Foster Parent Association.

The report calculates the real expenses of caring for a child in foster care and recommends foster care rates for the states and the District of Columbia, which each set their own rates. *Hitting the MARC* demonstrates that rates of support for children in foster care are far below what is necessary to provide basic care for children in care in nearly every state. According to the report, foster care rates would have to increase almost 40% nationwide, on average, to provide basic care.

The national average of the foster care MARC is $629 per month for 2-year-olds, $721 per month for 9-year-olds, and $790 per month for 16-year-olds, compared with the current national average rates of $488 per month, $509 per month, and $568 per month respectively.

The foster care MARC is calculated by analyzing typical expenditures by families on their children; identifying and adding additional costs particular to children in foster care, who have needs and behaviors resulting from the trauma they have experienced that generate additional costs; and applying a geographic cost-of-living adjustment.

"CWLA has long contended that the entire child welfare system has been under-funded, from front-end prevention services to support for children in foster care," says John Sciamanna, CWLA's Codirector of Government Affairs. "Two years ago, CWLA published *Ten Years of Leaving Foster Children Behind: A Long Decline in Federal Support for Children in Foster Care,* documenting how as a result of an outdated eligibility requirement, only 45% of children in care were eligible for federal support, resulting in pressure on state child welfare systems, including foster care."

To download *Hitting the MARC* and state fact sheets, visit www.childrensrights.org. For the updated CWLA report, *Eleven Years of Leaving Foster Children Behind,* go to www.cwla.org/advocacy/childreninfostercare.htm.

EndNotes

HealthBeat

A compendium of federal child health statistics released last summer show the death rate from heart disease among children is about half what it was in 1980. Also cut in roughly half are children's death rates from birth defects, cancer, pneumonia, and flu, as well as injury-related deaths from motor vehicle accidents, drowning, fires, falls, firearms, and suffocation.

McClatchy Newspapers report that better medicine and new safety measures, as well as expanded government health insurance for disadvantaged children, giving them better access to medical care, have contributed to the decrease. Parents are also drinking and smoking less, thereby reducing birth defects, fires, and car accidents.

"Parents have gotten away from the idea that accidents happen and can't be prevented," McClatchy quoted Frederick Rivera, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Washington in Seattle who specializes in injury reduction. "They know child safety seats save lives, and bike helmets prevent head injuries. They believe, as parents, that they can protect their kids, and that's a big change."

Homicide is the only other leading killer that has not relented significantly. Also, while death rates showed similar declines among all racial groups between 1980 and 2004, the death rate for black children remained nearly 40% higher when compared with those for Hispanics, Asians, and non-Hispanic whites, according to McClatchy.

More information about the decline in child death rates is in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007,* a report available at www.childstats.gov. ■

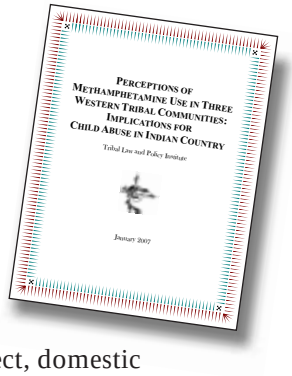
Did You Know?

Rural child poverty rates increased between 2000 and 2006 in 37 of the 47 states where rural data was available. Ohio had the largest increase in rural child poverty (+6.8%), while Maryland had the largest decrease (-4.0%).

Source: Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire analysis of U.S. Census Bureau poverty data.

Research Report

Perceptions of Methamphetamine Use in Three Western Tribal Communities: Implications for Child Abuse in Indian Country. This report from the Tribal Law and Policy Institute includes survey results of professionals in three western tribal communities. The survey assessed community perceptions and awareness of methamphetamine use and its effect on child maltreatment, permanency outcomes, and agency workloads.



Results indicate greater awareness of methamphetamine use and production; increases in the incidence of child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and sexual assault; and increases in the workload of law enforcement and social services. The authors offer recommendations to promote agency collaboration and family reunification, and suggest strategies for funding, programs, and research to reduce the impact of methamphetamine on tribal communities. Download the report at www.tribal-institute.org.

Science Says: Effective and Promising Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs for Latino Youth. This issue brief from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy highlights six programs designed specifically for Latinos that have shown through careful evaluation the programs delay sex, improve contraception use, and reduce teen pregnancy among Latinos. Four other promising programs that have not been rigorously evaluated but have shown encouraging results are also discussed.

The program information is a starting point for those interested in helping Latino teens avoid too-early pregnancy and parenthood. Although teen pregnancy and birth rates among Latinos have declined, still 1 in 2 Latina teens (51%) gets pregnant at least once before age 20—nearly twice the national average. Download the research brief at www.teenpregnancy.org.

Consent to Adoption: Summary of State Laws. This latest publication in the State Statutes Series prepared by the Child Welfare Information Gateway outlines how states differ in how they regulate consent—the agreement by a parent, or a person or agency acting in place of a parent, to relinquish a child for adoption and release all rights and duties with respect to that child. State statutes, not federal law, regulate consent to adoption, and states differ in how they regulate consent.

The state-by-state information is broken down by who must consent to an adoption, age when consent of adoptee is considered or required, when parental consent is not needed, when consent can be executed, how consent must be executed, and revocation of consent. Download the report at www.childwelfare.gov. ■

Ready Resource for Parents

Here's a short quiz: If your teen were to "ROTFL," what would she be doing? Answer: Instant-messaging someone about something really funny (rolling on the floor laughing). If a teen is "leaning," what might he be doing? Answer: Drinking cough syrup and soda. What are the most popular inhalants among teens? Answer: Glue and shoe polish.

WebsiteInfo

Did you pass? Fail? Either way, The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has issued more quiz questions and other useful resource materials about teen-speak and culture as part of its Parent Chronicles Action Kit. The purpose of the Parent Chronicles initiative is to strengthen teen–parent relationships so teens will be less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol and engage in risky behaviors.

The Action Kit, available free online at www.media campaign.org, includes action items on how to learn more about teen culture, a parent-to-parent forum, and plenty more advice on connecting with teens.

LEND YOUR VOICE

Read and contribute to what thousands of refugee resettlement staff, child welfare workers, teachers, and other service providers nationwide are talking about through a new email listserv created and monitored by Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services. All emails are screened and sent out as periodic digests. Sign up at www.brycs.org/brycs_discussion.htm. ■

PolicyWatch

The original intent of the federal adoption tax credit was to promote adoption of U.S. foster children, but research from Child Trends summarizing U.S. Treasury data finds that most adoption tax credit dollars support children adopted privately or from foreign countries. Specifically, the research finds:

- Private adoptions accounted for almost half of the children supported by the adoption tax credit, and 38% of the dollars spent on the credit in 2004, the last year for which data are available.
- Foreign adoptions accounted for just over one-third of the children supported, but 45% of the dollars spent.
- Children in foster care accounted for 18% of the children supported and 17% of the dollars spent.

"We need to educate parents who adopt foster children about this tax credit," says Rob Geen, Child Trends' Vice President for Public Policy and Director of Child Welfare Research. "We should also consider alternative approaches, such as supporting state and local efforts to recruit adoptive parents or supporting postadoption services, since the tax credit may not be the most effective means of increasing the adoption of foster children."

Congress enacted the federal adoption tax credit in 1996 to help families defray adoption costs and to promote the adoption of children in foster care. In 2001, Congress increased the tax credit from $5,000 to $10,000 per adoption, and raised the phaseout range from $75,000–$115,000 of income to $150,000–$190,000. ■

OneOnOne

Questions and Answers with CWLA Staff

John Sciamanna, Codirector, Government Affairs

What are the hot topics this year on Capitol Hill that will affect child welfare?

One of the key focuses is going to be promoting the idea of a White House Conference on Children and Youth. This is something established by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909, and the last conference was held in 1970. The first several actually focused specifically on child welfare issues. CWLA had its birth from that first White House conference, so we want to revive this.

We would hope that any kind of finance or reform effort this Congress looks at includes a kinship care provision. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) announced legislation on this issue in 2004 at our National Conference. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) joined her; now it's a bipartisan bill in both Houses, and we continue to make progress in gaining support. Hopefully we will elevate it beyond just getting it cosponsored to get real movement on the legislation.

And of course there are other issues getting more and more attention—as always the issue of how we finance child welfare and the need to fix how we finance the system, to more adequately address the needs of the kids in out-of-home care, and to address some of the other areas such as prevention and intervention services. There has also been a great deal of attention over the issue of youth aging out and what we can better do to support them.

How does CWLA plan to address these issues?

We're calling on candidates for president to endorse the idea of a White House Conference on Children and Youth and address the issue of child welfare. We will be working on and promoting legislation enabling the conference, including circulating our ideas about what the legislation should look like and what the issues would be and how they would be addressed.

On the issue of kinship care, we are working to extend our reach. We are already working with other key groups, like Generations United and the Children's Defense Fund. We are trying to expand what is a growing coalition of organizations supporting kinship care.

We're calling on candidates for president to endorse the idea of a White House Conference on Children and Youth…

Last year, we joined with a broad coalition of groups called the Partnership to Protect Children and Strengthen Families to sign onto a document that outlines some broad, important principles in terms of child welfare financing, fixing some of the problems with the current eligibility for the Title IV-E system, and opening that up to important intervention and prevention services. In 2008, we'll continue to work together and expand the number of organizations that are joining with us.

How can individuals advocate on behalf of these issues outside Washington?

One of the major things is coming to CWLA's Advocacy Day 2008 in Washington, DC, our single biggest event of the year. It's a chance to really have an impact. Some people feel they can't lobby because they work for foundations or other groups, but they can still meet with their Senators and Representatives, or with congressional staff. Some people get discouraged if they don't meet their particular member of Congress, but it's equally critical to establish strong relationships with the key staff.

The next easiest thing to do is go to CWLA's website and sign up for the *Children's Monitor* e-newsletter we publish every Monday (www.cwla.org/pubs/epublica-tions.htm). It gives you the latest news on what's going on in Washington in child welfare and children's issues.

We also issue legislative email alerts (www.cwla.org/advocacy/alerts.htm)—when there's a key vote or key time of action, you would get an automatic email from us with instructions and tools, such as sending a letter or finding a member of Congress and other key players. And of course, our website under the advocacy page (www.cwla.org/advocacy) has all kinds of information you can use to educate yourself and members of Congress on the issues.

We've been working to build on year-round advocacy. In addition to Advocacy Day, we have more meetings planned with our members back in their districts, as well as conference calls and discussions to continue putting out more information on strategies about ways people can influence their members of Congress.

What are important questions to ask the presidential candidates concerning children and families?

Our proposal for another White House Conference on Children and Youth is certainly a way candidates can embrace the issue and demonstrate their concern about child welfare and child abuse and neglect. Everybody talks about children, and there are critical issues around health care and education, for example, but we want to get a focus on the issue of child abuse and neglect and what we can do for the 500,000 kids in foster care. ■

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