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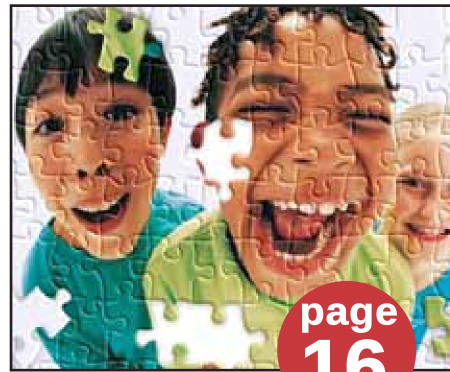

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LeadershipLens

Christine James-Brown

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This famous first line from Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is one of the most quoted lines in literature, and I think it most correctly describes the situation in which we in the child welfare world find ourselves today. On one hand, we are facing an economic crisis that will challenge our ability to continue to serve thousands of children and families whose needs will increase as they struggle to make ends meet. On the other hand, the Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 was recently signed into law—one of the most significant bills to address the needs of the 500,000 children in foster care in two decades—and President-elect Barack Obama and his administration offer great hope for the future. The fact that these things are happening at the same time provides one of the greatest challenges and opportunities for those of us who want to truly change how we deliver services to children, youth, and families.

As a news junkie, most nights you can find me sitting at my desk working with CNN or MSNBC on in the background. Recently, in response to the question of who would want to be president during such turbulent times, noted author and presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin talked about the opportunity that these times provide for real leadership and positive transformation. My take-away from this exchange is that it is the less-quoted last line from *A Tale of Two Cities*—"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done"—that should be our rallying call during these challenging times. Our leadership challenge is to come out of this having significantly improved outcomes for our children, youth, and families.

We have an opportunity to build on the foundation of the Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. This new legislation is only the initial building block for true transformation of how services are organized and delivered. CWLA has already begun preparing for implementation of this law by involving members in the process. As members, you have a significant role to play in crafting concrete steps in your area to maximize the opportunities the legislation offers, such as collaboration between public and private agencies.

In response to the turnover in the federal leadership of this country, CWLA is making sure that President-elect Obama is fully informed of the significance of this act and of all of the key issues pertaining to our mission. Immediately after his victory, we sent a transition document* with recommendations to his team. We will also enlist his leadership, and that of the new Congress, in the call for the White House Conference.

> **"President-elect Barack Obama and his administration offer great hope for the future."**

We will be facing tremendous challenges and great opportunities in the months ahead. Like many of you, I have been around long enough to have seen a number of economic downturns and other challenges. What I have taken from these difficult periods is the need to keep a positive attitude and look for opportunities to take advantage of the situation. It is critical to be focused and strategic about the decisions we make to respond to the challenges.

In this edition of *Children's Voice*, you will read about collaboration, responding to challenges, and leveraging your board. In difficult times too many organizations revert to "watch making" rather than "clock building," cutting things like marketing, resource development, and membership dues. To serve children and families best, we all need to make sure that we are not penny-wise and pound-foolish.

CWLA will continue to do what we do best by pulling together the tremendous knowledge and experience within our member network with a special focus on helping members and the people you serve survive and thrive in the new economy. We will provide opportunities for members to learn from each other, network, and commiserate. We will do even more to ensure that the interests of the children and families you serve are represented at the national level as one voice and to demonstrate that it is not just about the need for organizations to make it through an economic crisis, it is about improving life circumstances for children, youth, and families. It is this vision that has brought together close to 700 public and private organizations in 50 states.

CWLA is the trustee of this vision but it is your membership, your active engagement, and your leadership that will allow the child welfare system, children, and families to thrive during this very difficult time. At the end of the day this is a leadership challenge, and real leadership comes from all of us. I am convinced that together we will realize the opportunity to make sure children, youth, and families do better than they have ever done before. ■

Christine James Brown

**To read the transition document, and to learn about the President-elect's position on child welfare issues, visit www.cwla.org/advocacy/preselect08cw.htm.*

From Campus to Community: Walker School Expands to In-Home Care

In 2005, staff at the Walker School saw that Massachusetts was leaning towards requirements for community-based care for children. Walker's campus in Needham was already a hub for 5- to 13-year-old children with severe emotional distress and related behavioral issues, who are served at an on-site residence, school, and hospital. But staff wanted to get ahead of the state's push for greater community response to troubled children and began brainstorming what became the Family and Community Integration Services (FCIS) program.

Lisa Danovitch, director of marketing and contract management, and Christine Sullivan, clinical team leader for Walker's Family and Community Integration Services program.

Lisa Danovitch, director of marketing and contract management at Walker, said the CWLA member agency hoped to transfer its knowledge of residential care to the new home-based program, but jumped into the first case without adequate preparation. "We underestimated how difficult it was going to be," she says. "It just got very out of control very quickly." There was no model to follow. "There are other home-based services that are less intensive, and historically haven't worked very well with our kids," Danovitch explains.

Walker has made it a point to do better since then by gathering research, establishing protocols, and continually reevaluating their methods. At the same time, the team knows that protocols will get them only so far; the care they provide is unique for each child. "It has to be case-by-case, very individualized, you have to listen to the families," says Christine Sullivan, the Walker clinician who is the clinical team leader for FCIS.

The key component of the program is the assessment phase at the beginning of a case. It is a "thorough-in-home assessment to really get concrete goals and figure out what's going on," Danovitch explains. Seeing where a child starts out makes it easier to see improvement in behavior over time.

Sullivan says assessment is a Walker signature: "It really makes us stand out." These in-home visits allow staff to identify and prioritize concerns. "The assessment period is a really helpful time," Sullivan says. "Because we're working with families that are dealing with so many problems, [cases] can be really complex."

It also provides the opportunity to ensure parents are allies. "We look not just at the problems but when things are working, what have they been doing well," Sullivan says. Because FCIS work takes place at home, it's even more critical for families to direct their own treatment. Sullivan emphasizes "getting the family's voice in there." She and Danovitch ask parents to explain what they need: "What's it going to take for your child to be home more often?"

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LISA DANOVITCH

Lisa Danovitch and Christine Sullivan play with a young boy at Walker's Needham, Massachusetts, campus.

To get the assessments right, outreach workers have to see an accurate picture of a family's daily life. "We're not having a meeting—if you're going to the store, we're going to the store with you," Sullivan explains. Making FCIS a truly community-oriented solution is the point of the program; outreach workers explore the services a family can find within their own neighborhood, like programs at the YMCA or other local organizations. But this tailoring is also a problem, since their families live all over Massachusetts: "That's been a huge challenge—we can't possibly know every community," Danovitch says. Staff must familiarize themselves with each new area when they take on a new case. Another aspect of a distant client is that travel time must be factored in when planning a child's treatment. To address some of these issues, Walker tries to create connections with local agencies, some of which may be able to take over cases that begin in FCIS.

Sullivan currently works with one other case manager and five outreach workers; they cover 16-20 cases total, but are planning to add more staff and grow the program. Sullivan tries to accommodate staff's schedules and give them two days in a row off work, because FCIS work is done "when the families need us," as Danovitch described it—not 9-to-5, Monday through Friday. "Being flexible and being able to give [families] the service when they're home is key, it really is key," Sullivan says. "If wake-ups are an issue, we'll be there at 5 in the morning; if bedtimes are an issue, we'll be there at bedtime." Additionally, Walker has a clinical on-call service 24 hours a day available for families they serve.

"We've had a lot of success, which is why there's so much passion behind it here," Sullivan says. "I feel like they're really behind this program and developing it and growing it." ■

Aging into College

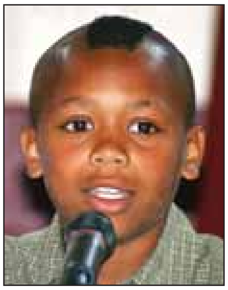
Western Michigan University launched a program this year for foster care youth who age out of the system, reaching 18 without being adopted. An article in the *Detroit Free Press* explained that the Seita Scholars initiative offers mentoring and peer support in addition to tuition. WMU expected 12 students this inaugural year; they have 51.

Donations allow all the scholars to start out with the basic necessities for dorm life: a laundry bag, comforter, towels, soap, and a shower caddy. And like other freshmen, they have something else as soon as they step onto the Kalamazoo campus: an instant community of peers. For more, visit www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080922/NEWS06/809220391. ■

Showing the System

After all eyes were on Texas Child Protective Services last spring, the *Austin American-Statesman* decided to follow the local CPS docket, "one of the least-known, if busiest, segments of Travis County's civil court system." The cases of children who have been removed from their parents are closed to the public under state law, but by not printing the names of children or parents, the newspaper was able to highlight the work done by CPS personnel, CASA volunteers, attorneys, and judges. To view an interactive presentation and the four-part series of articles, visit www.statesman.com/news/content/news/interactive/09/090708_taken.html. ■

All About the Children



Robert, 10, was emcee for the Simba mentoring program brunch.

In June, the Simba mentoring program at Ohio's Franklin County Children Services, a CWLA member, celebrated its 21st annual brunch with the theme *It's All About the Children.* They took the theme literally, as several young boys who benefit from the program and other local children served as the master of ceremonies, the keynote speaker, and the morning's musical performers. The Simba program pairs young African American boys involved with Children Services with African American men in the community. Franklin County also has a program for girls called Malaika. ■

National Newswire

Children's Issues in the News

TENNESSEE
Tracking Medications for Children in State Custody

Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), a CWLA member agency, is a step closer to having a one-stop information shop to help them serve the children in their care: their TNKIDS database now has an area for health records. The development comes after nearly a decade of work to improve accountability after a 2001 settlement agreement in a civil rights lawsuit filed by Children's Rights the year before.

Parts of the lawsuit focused specifically on concerns about the use of psychotropic medications, and accordingly, so does the addition to the TNKIDS database. "As part of the settlement agreement, we track the medications that our children are on," explained Tricia Lea, who from April 2002 until earlier this year was the director of medical and behavioral services for the DCS, a job created in the settlement. Lea knew that getting a health component into TNKIDS—Lea calls it "the end-all, be-all database for our department"—was the overarching goal, but that it couldn't happen overnight. In fact, DCS had a few incarnations of the medications database before its final move to TNKIDS about a year ago.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LYNN POLLARD

Dr. Deborah Gatlin, standing, chief medical officer, and Lynn Pollard, a nurse consultant, of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

The first step to take was to, under the settlement terms, review DCS policies and procedures for the use of psychotropic medications. Lea, a psychologist, worked with Deborah Gatlin, chief medical officer for DCS, and CWLA consultant psychiatrist Christopher Bellonci. Gatlin's Pharmacy and Therapeutics committee tweaked standards used in Texas and created guidelines for the use and dosage of psychotropic medications for children in Tennessee custody. "They were fairly minor changes that we made from the Texas parameters," Gatlin says. Based on the Tennessee guidelines, any prescription falling outside the norm acts as a "trigger" for review by Gatlin and the committee.

Rather than being dependent on a person's careful observation, these triggers are set off through the system itself. As information about children's prescriptions are added into the database, any of several criteria can figuratively throw a red flag (literally, send an e-mail alert to Gatlin): prescribing more than one psychotropic medication from the same class; prescribing more than three psychotropic medications in general; using any of 30 "concerning" medications; giving a dosage above the recommended maximum; or prescribing to a child under the recommended minimum age.

In investigating the alerts, she's found that most of the prescriptions that set off triggers actually fall within the bounds of reasonable care. She gave an example of two similar medications overlapping for a short period of time, as a doctor transitioned a child from one to the other. The critical thing, Gatlin says, is having an explanatory note in the database. "What I want to see in that electronic record is something regarding the doctor's thought process."

Lynn Pollard is a nurse consultant with DCS. She explained that there are 14 nurses working in Tennessee's 13 regions who add information to the health section of TNKIDS. "We're fortunate here in Tennessee that we have a lot of clinical people on staff," she says. "Each region has one or two nurses depending on the number of children in custody." While many statewide programs would have more people involved, the small group made education and training easier, Pollard adds. "We had a small, focused audience who would be putting [data] in, who would be monitoring it. Our case management staff can view the information—can pull or print it—but our nurses are really the ones who are getting it in," she says. The notes that nurses input are paid claims data from TennCare Select, the managed care company that covers children in custody, and pharmacy data from Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Reports from TNKIDS are not technically a medical record, but there's a feature that compiles a customizable health summary. "If you just wanted immunization, you can print out immunizations; if you just wanted psychotropic medications, you can print that out," Pollard explains. "You can pick and choose and customize and create whatever health summary you want." The summaries, similar to the health passport model from Texas, are helpful materials for care meetings, health appointments, and even court hearings. "It's not going to replace the child's medical records, but it's a nice little concise summary," Pollard says.

Gatlin encourages those with questions about the database who might be interested in starting a similar project in their states to contact her at 615/741-9723 or deborah.gatlin@state.tn.us. ■

ALASKA

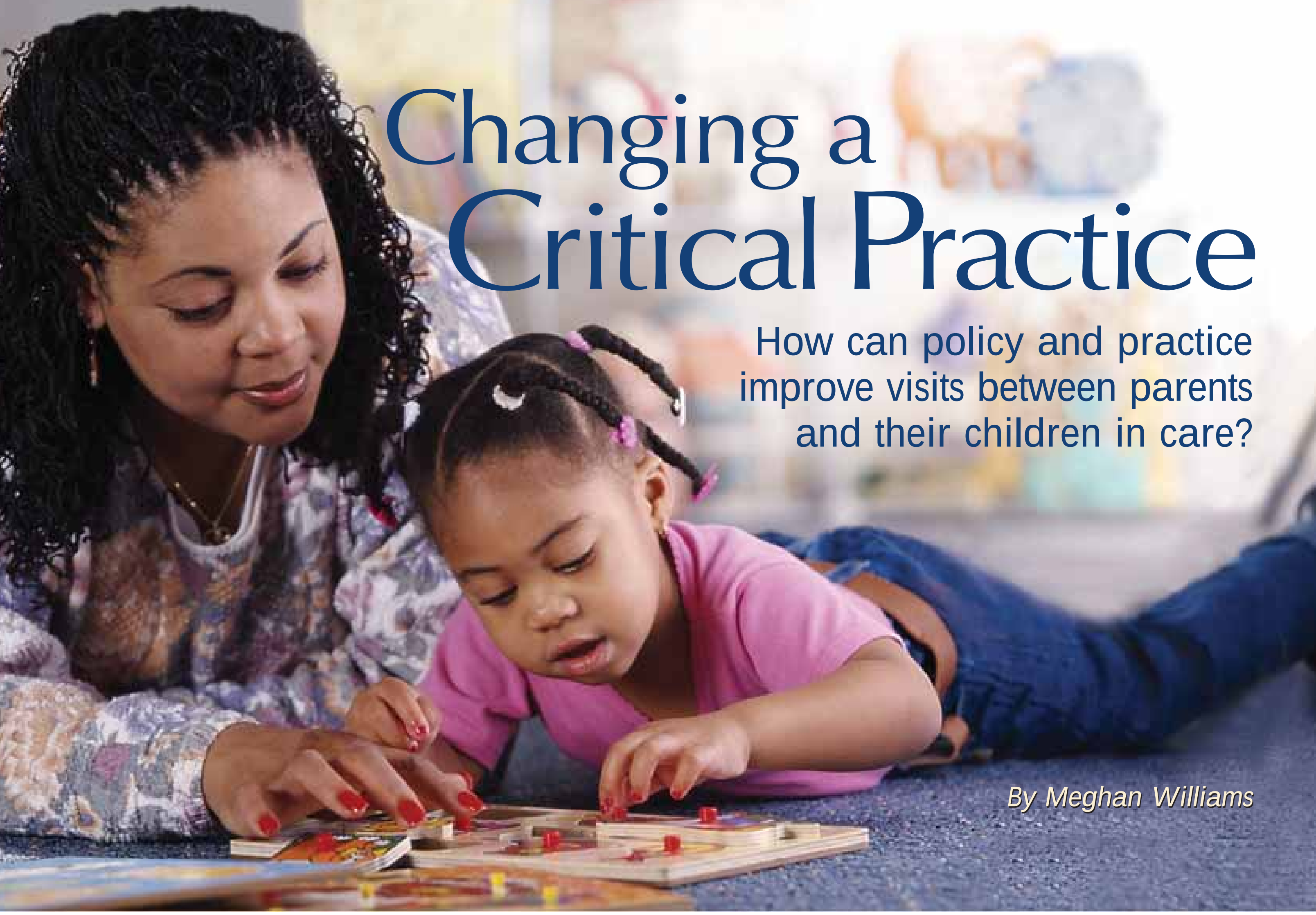
In June, the search for a missing 12-year-old girl led Vermont to issue its first AMBER Alert, the public announcement of a child's abduction. Alaska is now the only state that has not used the emergency response system, which was started in Texas in 1997 and supported with federal money in 2002. Alaska's program started in 2003 and state troopers almost proceeded with an alert in June when an 8-year-old boy was abducted, but he was quickly recovered. Nationwide, AMBER Alerts are declining. For more on the AMBER Alert system, see the Stateline.org article at www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=327184. ■

IOWA

A Polk County woman lost custody of her 12-year-old son in August after a judge decided that sharing his home with foster children caused Chandler Bosch too much stress, the *Des Moines Register* reported. The boy now lives with his father and stepmother. District Judge Richard Blane II, in an order to modify a divorce custody decision, noted that over three years, Desiree Bosch has hosted a series of foster children, many of whom had psychological problems, and their actions could cause Chandler undue anxiety. "Although altruistic and admirable on one hand, this is not in the best interest of Chandler," the judge wrote. Read the story at www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080909/NEWS10/809090367. ■

OHIO

Ten Ohio counties are participating in an alternative response pilot program. Alternative response gives caseworkers flexibility in their approach to families with suspected abuse and neglect. Variation in the reports is mirrored by a variation in the response to them: traditional investigation or a family assessment, which discovers the needs of the child without requiring a disposition of abuse or neglect. Families should also be linked to community services sooner in this system. The pilot project was approved last year by the Ohio General Assembly and is a joint effort by the Supreme Court and the Department of Job and Family Services. Visit www.law.capital.edu/adoption/AR/ for more information. ■



Changing a Critical Practice

How can policy and practice improve visits between parents and their children in care?

By Meghan Williams

This is the first of two articles about changes to parent-child visits.

"In the name of safety, sometimes a child's well-being can get lost in the mix," says Tanya Krupat. She's seen it happen—Krupat is currently the director of the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents at the Osborne Association, and the author of *Taking 'the Village' Seriously: The Importance of Attachment, Continuity, and Expanded Family Networks for Children and Families in the Child Welfare System*. Her experience working in New York City's child welfare system showed her that no matter the reason for removal, a child is apt to panic after being taken from a parent's care. "Often the child is being removed from the person they know the best, and who is their whole life … the parent-child relationship is critical."

Maintaining that relationship is necessary, regardless of the final permanency plan. "I don't know of any case where reunification happened and visits didn't happen," Krupat says. Even when reunification will not happen, visits help children and parents adjust. "We talk a lot about parent engagement, and visiting is a great way to bring them into the process."

The process is what interests Peg Hess. She's an independent child welfare consultant; recently, she has worked primarily with the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFCPPP) and Children's Rights. Her early research was a primary source for many of the programs that have evolved to address concerns about visiting practice. "I've been working on this area of visitation practice really since the late 1970s, and I have seen some changes, but I'm troubled by the areas in which we are not seeing change," she says.

'A Look at Current Policy'

In 2003, Hess completed a study that evaluated states' policies on parent visits, *Visiting Between Children in Care and Their Families: A Look at Current Policy.* She compared legal guidelines from the 37 responding states. She found general consensus in the requirement for a written visit plan, and for that plan to be included in the case record, as well as a common understanding that visits may include not only parents and siblings, but also the child's relatives, friends, and former caregivers. A majority of states addressed the frequency of visits and specified a minimum number of visits, which varied but on average was one per week. Around half recommended that visits occur in the most homelike atmosphere possible.

Of the 30 content areas Hess identified, only seven were addressed by a majority of states, and for some areas the policies were vague. There was variation in all areas, particularly in documentation and supervision of visits. Consequently, Hess's conclusion highlighted the need for more policy, more specificity and more uniformity. "When you don't address something, then you do condone variation and staff discretion," she explains. "You give your staff great latitude when you're not specific. You can say that there must be regular visits, as often as possible, [but] people want to know those specifics." Without details, people implementing the policy use personal feelings to help them make decisions. "Education and training do not fully prepare them—they rely on their own values and their own views of parenting children," she says.

Krupat says caseworkers need more support; they have "a very difficult to impossible job." With large caseloads and other pressure, visiting requires extra investment: "Visiting does take a lot of time and expertise and can be very, very difficult," she says. "It can require a real deep knowledge of family dynamics." She agrees with Hess that sometimes even advanced training doesn't make the job easier. "It's really hard and I have an MSW, and there are caseworkers who don't," she explains. "I feel for them, because it can be very challenging to interact with a family, particularly if they're resistant or if there's a mental health issue."

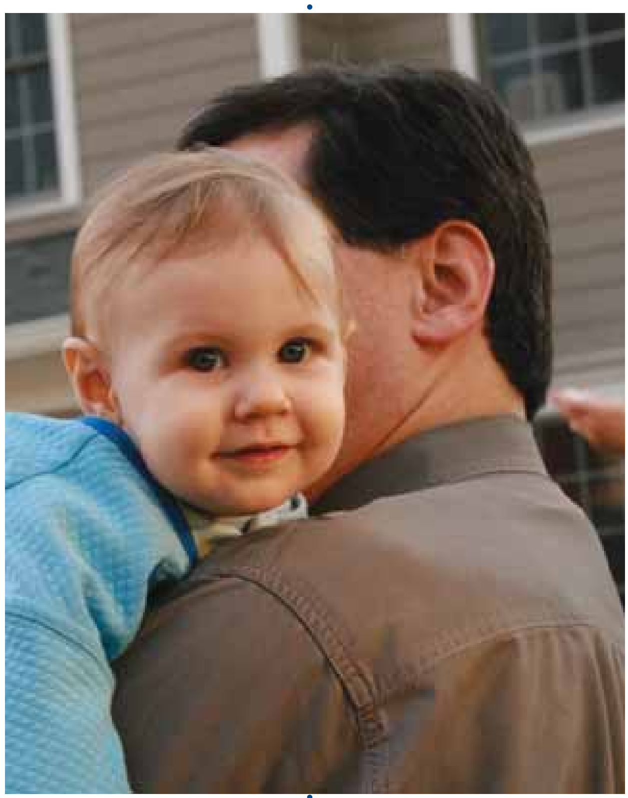


PHOTO TAKEN BY LEE MORALES

Hess maintains that good policy can lead to better practice. She knows there's a "vulnerability a state has when it's working on a policy," but encourages jurisdictions to codify future goals rather than at-the-moment capabilities. "Where possible, policy should reflect the standards you want to be reaching for," she says. The fear of lawsuits over being unable to deliver on better practice policy tends to stagnate policy. But Hess's report includes a method to move forward: her appendix is a checklist of 30 content areas, which jurisdictions can use to ensure they have specific guidelines for visits. "Whatever jurisdiction is developing policy that regulates staff practice, at that level, that policy should be reviewed to see whether it is specific enough that it's actually providing guidance," Hess says.

In particular, she sees room for improvement in statements about visit frequency. Seven states require visits "regularly" or "as often as possible," and 11 of the responding states (30%) did not address frequency at all. This lack of attention "didn't shock me, but it really troubled me," Hess says.

Krupat's proposal to improve the way parents interact with their children is to add more people and more interactions to that relationship. She advocates the idea that "it takes a village to raise a child"; she wants to see the child welfare system become less like a system and more like the village of that African adage. "Building a support network around a parent and child is really important," she says. "Even in the best of families, everyone can benefit from more support."

The primary person giving support to the child, and by extension the family, is the foster parent, and Krupat has seen bonds form between foster parents and birth parents. "I've been on visits where the parent, actually with the foster parent, gave the child permission to love the foster parent," she says.

Three ongoing projects are among those looking for different ways to create that support—by working directly with families, creating tools for caseworkers, and redefining what a visit is.

'How Do We Improve Family Visiting?'

Wendy Negaard works with Family Alternatives, a small foster care agency that serves the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Family Alternatives works mostly with adolescents who will return to their families, and Negaard wanted to make those reunifications more successful. For two years, she ran the Family Connect pilot project, which drew on the experiences of social workers, birth parents, foster parents, and children in care to help create user-friendly workbooks on visiting for the latter three groups.

The project started with a small group and a basic question, Negaard explained. "We just said: How do we improve family visiting?" They soon realized they needed to expand to a real research study. "We really felt like we needed more information," she says. "We came up with more questions than answers."

The broader study included those involved with two child welfare systems, in urban Hennepin County and the more rural Olmstead County. Negaard said they wanted ideas from diverse families in different systems to help ensure their because the kids would come home upset." She described a foster parent who said she was scared to meet the birth parents of a child she was caring for, because visiting with them caused the child such tension. Listening to the responses from the parents and having the information in the workbook changed her point of view. "She was one of the few people who said 'it pushed me to look at how I interact [with the birth parents] and pushed me out of my comfort zone,'" Negaard says. She was glad to see participants beginning to realize what she knows to be true: that agencies cannot support children in care "apart from their relationships with their families."

Visitation Planning Decision Matrix - Sample of a neglected preschool case

	CHILD DEVELOPMENT/ PARENTING SKILLS PRESCHOOL	TYPE OF ABUSE NEGLECT	TIME IN CARE REASONABLE EFFORTS 1 TO 12 MONTHS	OTHER FACTORS DRUG ADDICTION	OTHER FACTORS FAMILY CULTURE
PURPOSE	Meet child's developmental needs and maintain connections	Assess, observe, and teach safe parenting skills	Teach parenting skills and observe improved parenting	Protect child from inappropriate or unsafe parenting	Strengthen child's connection with culture, tradition, and religion
FREQUENCY LENGTH	2 to 4 times per week 60 to 90 minutes Meets Child's schedule	Long enough to practice parenting skills About an hour	At least once a week for at least an hour Amounts can increase	As soon as possible Time when parent is least likely to be intoxicated	Added only if child does not have contact with cultural community
LOCATION	Homelike environment Community setting	In parent's home (If safe) Homelike environment	Family's home Community locations Agency office	Neutral location No drugs available Homelike as possible	Family or relative's home Community locations In family language
ACTIVITIES	Child chooses what to do during visit Provide discipline	Learn to understand child's needs/feelings Practice skills	Modeling/teaching of parenting skills	Bonding and attachment activities	Sharing family history, traditions, stories Religious events
SUPER-VISION LEVEL	Communication and self-care skill determine supervision level	Depends on neglect level Usually monitored	Decreasing level of supervision as parenting skills increase	Therapeutic or supervision until treatment counselor indicates otherwise	Family and friends supervise and teach parenting skills
WHO ATTENDS	Child decides attendees	Birth parent(s), caregiver, siblings Later - Entire family	People child lives with Sibling, extended family Non-custodial parents	Non-addicted parent Have a safety plan	Parents, siblings, extended family, friends of family
WHAT TO HAVE AT VISIT	Bring toys, diapers, food, and comfort items Safe adult	Cooking supplies, homework, toys, bathing, napping	Visit observation every two months Clear case plan	No drugs or alcohol Relapse plan	Information, pictures, reading materials, family culture items
DOCUMEN-TATION	Normal documentation Focus on the Child	Normal documentation	Parents progress Teach how to document	Normal documentation	Normal documentation

Rose Marie Wentz has developed an interactive online guide for planning visits, which was a matrix in an earlier form.

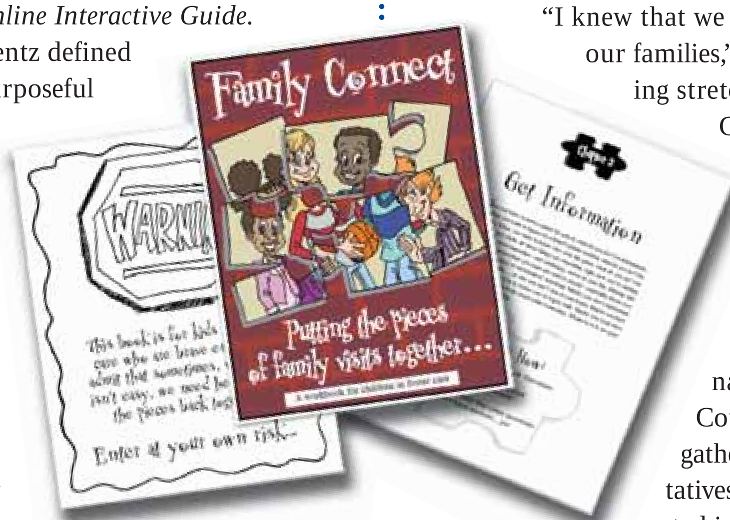
final recommendations would be widely applicable. She said the workbooks are a compilation "of the best practices that we heard." For two months, families in Hennepin County have used the books, testing their information and offering suggestions.

One particular area Negaard hopes to improve is children's transitions to and from visits, as they go from foster parents to birth parents and back. "We didn't hear a lot of foster parents who felt prepared to transition kids in an empathetic way," she says. Foster parents "resented the visits

'Designing Visits from Best Practice'

Independent consultant and trainer Rose Marie Wentz knew that there was information about best practice for visiting, but she thought it was too scattered. "The information was too overwhelming, there were too many pieces of data," she says. Wentz set to work creating an organized format that could be used as both training guide and reference, and started with a paper matrix that added at least one column for each of four aspects of visits that she had outlined. In its beginning, it was "truly an old-fashioned cut-and-paste format," she said, but working with the NRCFCPPP and the University of California-Davis, she has been turning it into a web-based program. No longer a matrix, it is titled *Child and Parent Visit Plans: An Online Interactive Guide.*

To create the program, Wentz defined four steps to developing a "purposeful and progressive" visit plan. Step One factors in the level of child development and parenting skills, Step Two recognizes the type of abuse, Step Three notes the time in care, and Step Four includes other relevant factors. Each step is broken down into detailed recommendations for the visit's purpose, frequency and length, location, activities, supervision level, attendees, responsibilities and materials, and documentation. With the matrix, this translated into at least 32 cells, more if the case included multiple forms of abuse or several of the "other factors" Wentz listed. The online guide simplifies the process; a caseworker inputs the characteristics of a particular case, and gets only one final, comprehensive suggestion for the visiting plan.



Minnesota's Family Connect program created workbooks for birth parents, foster parents, and children.

One of Wentz's goals is to focus attention on what children need from visits. "The first step is always about meeting the child's needs," she says. "When in doubt, you always go back to, what is the child's needs? … If we truly are child-centered, what would the visit look like?" Wentz seeks to define best practice standards. She doesn't ignore the constraints of reality, but instead starts at "what should be" in hopes that "what is" will catch up. "The matrix comes from that approach—if we were designing visits from best practice, what would that look like?"

Wentz is also developing a curriculum for training to complement the online guide. The program will highlight the range of options for all aspects of visits. Even visits themselves are part of a continuum, one type of contact between a parent and child, which also includes letters and phone calls.

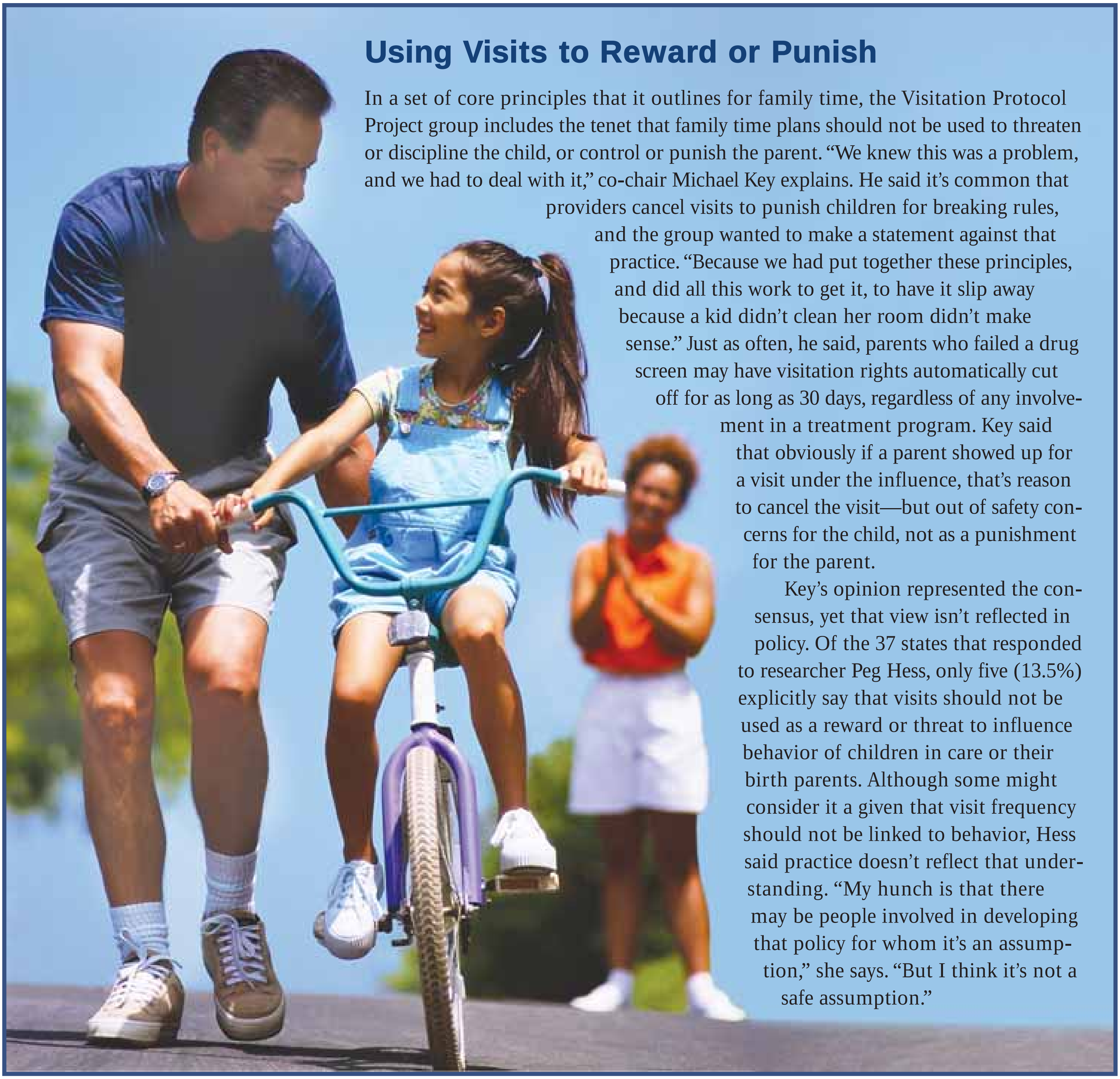
Caseworkers are good at finding what's gone wrong in a visit, but Wentz wants her training to include a "more difficult skill." "What we haven't taught them to do is recognize what it looks like when they're doing it right," she explains.

'We're Not Giving Children Enough Time'

Michael Key, a juvenile court judge in Troup County, Georgia, was co-chair of the Visitation Protocol Project (VPP). The group was formed after a discussion at a National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges conference sharpened Key's focus on visits for the families he sees in the court system.

"I knew that we were not doing enough for our families," Key says. He also knew the feeling stretched much farther than Troup County, and that problems in visitation practice were everywhere. "I seldom find anyone that thinks that their community does a good job," Key says.

In collaboration with the national council and the Georgia Court Improvement Initiative, Key gathered approximately 40 representatives from a range of parties interested in improving visits. Along with other juvenile court judges, there were attorneys for children and parents, state- and national-level court appointed special advocates, psychologists, and legislators. With two two-day strategic planning meetings in 2004, the workgroup formulated a rubric for the



Using Visits to Reward or Punish

In a set of core principles that it outlines for family time, the Visitation Protocol Project group includes the tenet that family time plans should not be used to threaten or discipline the child, or control or punish the parent. "We knew this was a problem, and we had to deal with it," co-chair Michael Key explains. He said it's common that providers cancel visits to punish children for breaking rules, and the group wanted to make a statement against that practice. "Because we had put together these principles, and did all this work to get it, to have it slip away because a kid didn't clean her room didn't make sense." Just as often, he said, parents who failed a drug screen may have visitation rights automatically cut off for as long as 30 days, regardless of any involvement in a treatment program. Key said that obviously if a parent showed up for a visit under the influence, that's reason to cancel the visit—but out of safety concerns for the child, not as a punishment for the parent.

Key's opinion represented the consensus, yet that view isn't reflected in policy. Of the 37 states that responded to researcher Peg Hess, only five (13.5%) explicitly say that visits should not be used as a reward or threat to influence behavior of children in care or their birth parents. Although some might consider it a given that visit frequency should not be linked to behavior, Hess said practice doesn't reflect that understanding. "My hunch is that there may be people involved in developing that policy for whom it's an assumption," she says. "But I think it's not a safe assumption."

frequency and duration of visits, determined by the child's age. The resulting quantitative recommendations are minimums—according to Key, "the least frequent visitation we could have and still meet the needs of these families."

Length is one of the big problems Key sees in current practice. "In the overwhelming majority of visitations, we're not giving children enough time with their families," he says. "It's just resource-driven rather than needs-driven, and that's really unacceptable."

While the 2006 VPP report is still considered a draft, the plan calls for 30-60 minute visits three times per week for children birth-6 months; 1 hour three times per week for children 6-18 months; 90 minutes twice per week for children 18 months-3 years; and 2 or more hours once per week for children 3-5 and 5-12 years. For teens, the group found no generally applicable recommendation, but emphasized the need for frequent, meaningful family time in teens and all age groups. A list of special circumstances that may require modification to the plan is also included. "This is a beginning point for discussions and you can vary from that, that's when we created the special circumstances," Key says.

Listening to a presentation on child development led the workgroup to conclude age—attractive primarily because it is an objective factor—truly was an acceptable divider. Key found another practical reason: "That's probably the only common denominator for all our kids: they all have an age."

'It's Family Time, It's a Time to Heal'

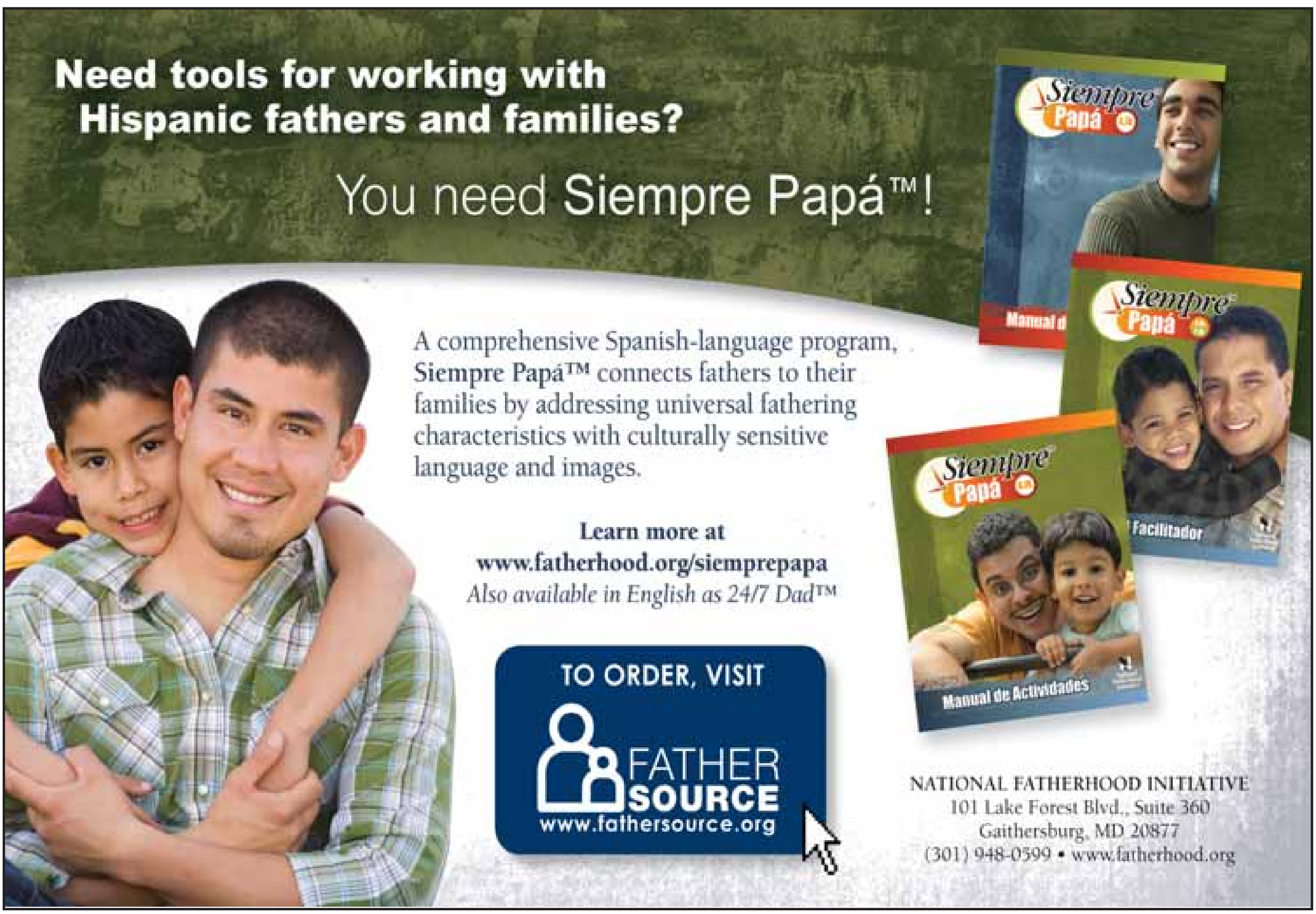
Key knows that the VPP workgroup left many questions unanswered. "Our work is nowhere near done," he says. They ran out of time before they could get very far, but took one strong step in the direction of qualitative recommendations for visitation—by giving up the term visitation. They opted for a more basic label: *family time.*

"The use of the phrase *family time* instead of visitation, I think it was worth the time we spent on it," Key says. The report outlines the main arguments for the switch: "The term 'visitation' does not adequately describe the time families need to spend together when children are placed out of their home, either from a quantitative or qualitative standpoint, before reunification is attempted. … Families need time together that is frequent, consistent, and as 'family-like' as possible."

There was a consensus to move away from *visitation.* Krupat's agency also avoids it: "We try not to use the word *visitation,*" she says. "It's a legal term, and it doesn't convey what we're trying to do." Hess related a story about a caseworker who told her the term conjured up religious images of Mary's visitation from the angels. "It's such an odd word, and a big word, and an official-sounding word," Hess says. "I've just resorted to using *visits* and *visiting.*" She says that *family time* works well: "I think that is a much more family-friendly term." Negaard says *visiting* doesn't describe parent-child interactions. "Is that honoring language?" she asks. "You *visit* your grandma—it's family time, it's a time to heal and figure out family relationships." ■

In the next issue of Children's Voice, *a second article will explore innovative visiting programs already serving as examples for changing practice.*

Meghan Williams is a Contributing Editor to Children's Voice.



Collaboration
The Road to Success

By Susan Soonkeum Cox,
Dixie van de Flier Davis, and Ada White

Experience shows that by working together, organizations and individuals achieve more than they could alone.

Many people are working to improve the number of children placed in successful adoptions, many people representing many different pieces of the puzzle: child welfare caseworkers, administrators, researchers, adoptive and birth parents, even adoptees themselves. Collaborations can open the door to a synergistic success when people bring their separate skills and organizations together to focus on a single concern fueled by the power of their combined passion. Real collaboration always results in change: it spreads responsibility, engaging and empowering a wide range of people.

Knowing the power of collaboration, and recognizing that a joint effort would produce better results than each one alone could achieve, in 2002 five agencies started a collaboration to match children and parents. The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids was funded from 2002 to 2007 as part of the Federal Adoption Opportunities Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration for Children and Families, and the Children's Bureau. A final report from the end of 2007 describes the collaboration's efforts: a media campaign, a website, publications, training and technical assistance programs, research studies, and an evaluation.

The success is a testament to the power of collaboration, which we experienced firsthand. After years as colleagues, in 2002 we had the opportunity to work together as collaborators, representatives of founding partners of the Collaboration to AdoptUsKids: the Child Welfare League of America and two of its members at the time, The Adoption Exchange and Holt International Children's Services.

Collaboration among those who know each other well—those who have similar goals and objectives, are on the same team, or in the same organization—makes the process come together more naturally and easily than does a mix that brings dissimilar interests together. However, when there is a thoughtful, deliberate collaboration among groups that traditionally do not share similar views, but coalesce around a mutual interest, then collaboration truly can take us where we cannot go alone.

The AdoptUsKids workgroup was a mosaic of services, one complete entity from many smaller ones. It was made up of representatives from national organizations and resource centers; federal, central, and regional offices; state foster care and adoption agencies; adoptive parent groups; faith-based organizations; private adoption agencies; adoption exchanges; active and retired adoption workers; and associations focusing specifically on American Indian children. The collaboration's goal was not to create a new agency, but to pull

together the strength of many participating agencies, doing together what none could do alone. The work was undertaken with the understanding that the collaborators would support each other's successes, and no one person or organization would get the credit for achievements reached collectively.

This initiative was immediately successful, as it drew on the resources and connections of members that represented the private and public agency perspectives. Including the right people in a core group and getting them invested in the work means they will reach out to other valuable contacts in the community. In this way, more and more layers of expertise become available.

With a solid commitment to the ideals of collaboration and the purpose of the initiative, the group devoted time to coming together in face-to-face meetings. Meeting in person not only makes it easier for frank discussions, but it also brings the group closer together, fostering a collegial or even familial atmosphere. By chance or design—as it was for the AdoptUsKids workgroup—members frequently end up sharing meals.

Experience has also shown that a "no substitutions" policy for the group leads to faster progress. It can be difficult, especially when participants are the leaders of their organization. But when new members join, time has to be spent on old material—explaining decisions and revisiting discussions—instead of moving forward onto new ideas. Plus, a steady lineup strengthens camaraderie built in face-to-face meetings.

All of these strategies led to success for AdoptUsKids. Bridges between individuals and organizations were built, resources were shared, acquaintances became friends, and trust led to truth, which led to openness and innovation. We agreed and disagreed, and we agreed to solve the disagreements. This work laid the foundation for actual systems change.

Though the collaboration itself was impermanent, its members were able to imbed changes into their separate organizations by revising operating procedures, shifting service priorities, and reworking job descriptions. Remarkably, the system changed. The effort engaged 205 organizations throughout the country to reach over 30,000 prospective families, on behalf of 16,000 children in foster care. Don Snyder, a foster care administrator in North Dakota, called his agency's work with AdoptUsKids "a tremendous success." "I have not seen such positive movement in the previous 20 years as has occurred [recently] due to AdoptUsKids," he says. A second phase of AdoptUsKids is ongoing.

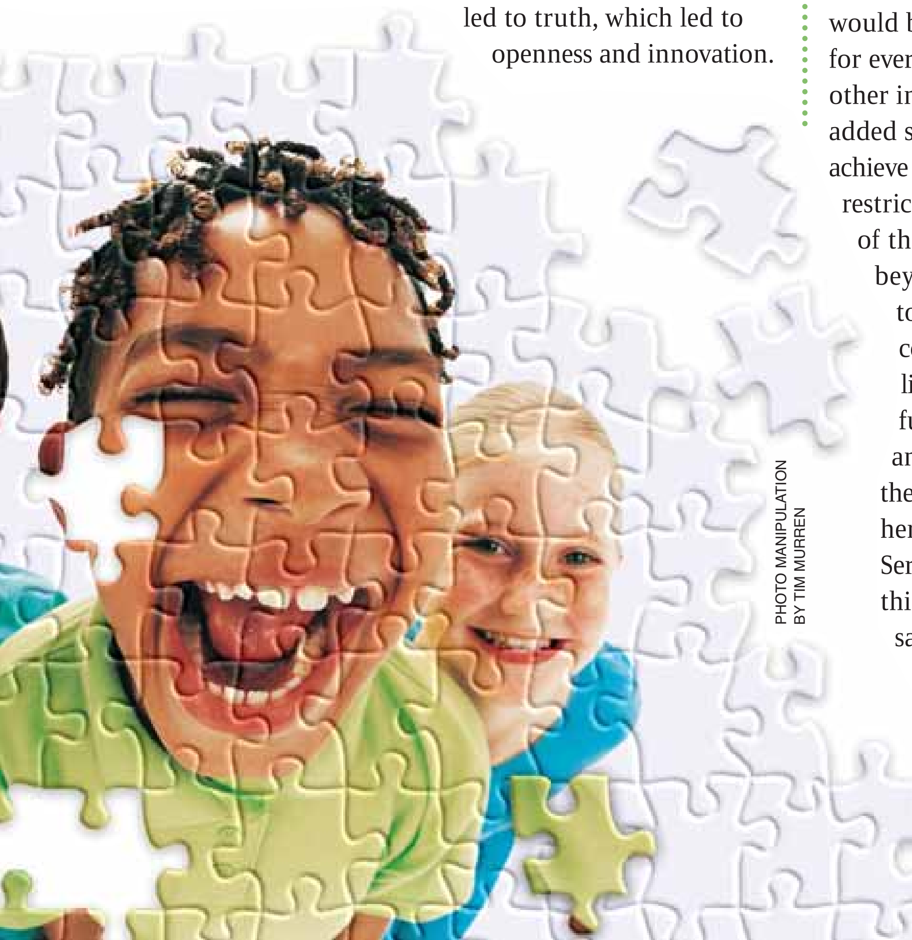


PHOTO MANIPULATION BY TIM MURREN

Reaching Out

Another situation demonstrates how critical it is to reach out and collaborate with unlikely partners in order to promote the common good. Although it is changing, historically, domestic and international adoption issues and policies have developed separately from each other in both theory and practice. In the 1980s, advocacy groups tried to change legislation that would allow domestic adoptees to have access to their birth records. While welcomed by many of those who were adopted in America, this legislation had no direct impact on agencies placing children internationally, since the original birth records of international adoptees are not in the United States.

A collaboration of intercountry adoption agencies was formed to support legislation for more access—not because it would benefit each agency, but because it improved policies for everyone. A small original group recruited the support of other international children's organizations whose stature added strength to the initiative. This collaboration did not achieve the goal it was aiming for; international records remain restricted. But although the formal group split, a number of the relationships born from this collaboration endured beyond the initiative. Agencies have continued to work together when there are issues or concerns they have in common. Because trust and respect were established earlier, they can resume, and continue more naturally in the future. Linda Woodward, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Services for the Cherokee Nation, describes the epitome of this idea when talking about work between her office and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services: "Collaboration is so common anymore we don't think about it as being something special." Instead, she says, close cooperation is "a matter of practice."

Also still going strong is Global Connections, a collaborative effort among The Adoption Exchange, headquartered in Colorado; VIDA, a placement agency in New York; and the National

Military Family Association in Virginia. Agency work styles, funding, objectives, and priorities vary. But where the vision is to recruit and support military families who adopt, the collaboration has created a patchwork of components that serve and protect children and families, while training state and private agency workers to help this population. Linda Foster, a program manager with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Adoption Program, reports that three years after state workers participated in Global Connections training, Oklahoma has placed 26 children with military families, who now live in seven countries. Now several placement agencies and some state agencies, inspired by Global Connections, regularly seek out and work with military families, who are adopting children through international, foster care, and domestic infant adoption processes.

Challenges

It is unrealistic to expect that collaborating will be always be a smooth, easy process, but sometimes successes grow out of early failures. Nancy Ng, board member of Families Adopting in Response (FAIR) in Palo Alto, California, recalled a collaboration outside the realm of adoption from her experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in Trabzon, Turkey. She wanted to clean the pediatric ward of an old hospital, and worked with the hospital administrator, the medical staff, the pediatric staff, and a group of her nursing students. The project "was important from an objective point of view," Ng explains, but it was not that important to her would-be collaborators. They did clean the ward initially, but it didn't become a habit. "I learned that it doesn't matter how great an idea is, it will only work if the folks involved have real ownership," Ng says. "The experience made me rethink how I can best be a collaborator … I am more effective as a listener and gatherer of opinions and ideas."

A similar sharing of opinions took place on a larger scale with the Louisiana Adoption Advisory Board (LAAB), a group started in 1992 through a 1989 Adoption Opportunities grant. The Board was carefully crafted to include a balance of adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoption professionals. But about one year into the project, a tension that had been heating up under the surface boiled over. Several people stormed out of the building and continued a shouting match in the street. It became obvious that each person saw adoption differently, and saw their own approach as the best approach.

Stomping and shouting often come with the territory; crises are almost necessary in a good collaboration. Although in the heat of the moment many of the LAAB members vowed they would never attend another meeting, an organizer's phone call asking for another chance convinced many to return. At the next meeting, the members made a commitment to listen to each other, and in doing so, they learned from one another. Each member had the chance to speak his mind, sharing his unique perspective. Adoptive parents talked about the sadness they felt not being able to have a child, and adoptees who had spent a lifetime disliking their birth mothers were moved to tears by the stories they heard from the birth parents in the room. They saw the issue from a different point of view. Today, the Board remains a strong collaboration across disciplines.

Ernesto Loperena, executive director of the New York Council of Adoptable Children, has learned from experience how to work through rough patches in collaborations: "Challenges are overcome through trust of the good intentions of each member of the collaboration and frequent interaction," he says. A strong basis of communication allows discussions about solutions to develop in place of acrimony. "Communication is the key," he explains.

Success Factors

Communication isn't the only necessary ingredient in the recipe for good cooperative work. Mary Gambon is the assistant commissioner for Adoption, Foster Care, and Adolescent Services at the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. She is no stranger to collaboration, and outlined factors she believes lead to success based on her experience: (1) a willingness to have difficult conversations and hear critical feedback; (2) making room in the conversations for all parties; (3) a willingness to acknowledge and understand the power differential in those conversations; (4) a willingness and ability to make changes; (5) an ability to demonstrate those changes and sustain them over time; (6) a continuous inclusion of new members and broadening of the mission; (7) leading by example; (8) continuous self-reflection and interactive goal-setting; and (9) continuous commitment to the goal.

Gambon knows that for a collaboration to succeed, setting things up perfectly is important. She recalled a collaboration to connect families with Massachusetts children waiting to be adopted."The membership of the group met monthly for almost a year to identify barriers, develop strategies, and 'test' efforts," Gambon explains. They had a written memorandum

Successful Collaboration

The impact of collaboration goes both ways—collaborations don't just change organizations, but the process of working so closely with others changes the individual collaborators as well. Not only can a successful collaboration achieve a tangible result, but it also affects the way people work with each other in the future. An African proverb summarizes this exchange: "We build the road, and the road builds us."

Nancy Ng, who led a collaboration while serving in the Peace Corps, is one of many who say the proverb describes her experience well; she learned valuable lessons about teamwork. "The road certainly built me," she says.

CWLA has published 19 titles on adoption, including *Standards of Excellence.* To purchase them, visit www.cwla.org/pubs.

of understanding to clarify the extent and goals of the cooperation, and established an advisory board "to formalize planning and operations and hold members accountable," she continues. "For 10 years the board has organized numerous activities that have led to the recruitment and approval of hundreds of adoptive families for our children."

Loperena agrees that making sure everyone involved stays on the same page is critical; he says, "Key factors to success include agreement on the overall goals, clearly defined roles for the collaborators, and frequency of interaction among the collaborators."

Similar to these suggestions are the six characteristics that Marilyn Friend and Lynn Cook used to define collaboration in their 1992 book *Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals:* (1) it is voluntary, and means going beyond the job, attending frequent meetings, using other forms of communications, and working more hours; (2) it requires parity between individuals, acknowledges disparate power, and refuses to see one kind of power as better than another; (3) it is based on an unwavering commitment to mutual goals; (4) it depends on shared responsibility for participation in decision making; (5) participants share their resources and take pride in one another's successes; and 6) participants share accountability for the outcomes.

Collaborating means doing things differently, and that brings change—not just for organizations, but for the people who participate as well. In many areas of child service work, change is a good thing. The change brought about by collaboration allows an alliance of agencies to go where none of them could go alone, and to reach amazing results.

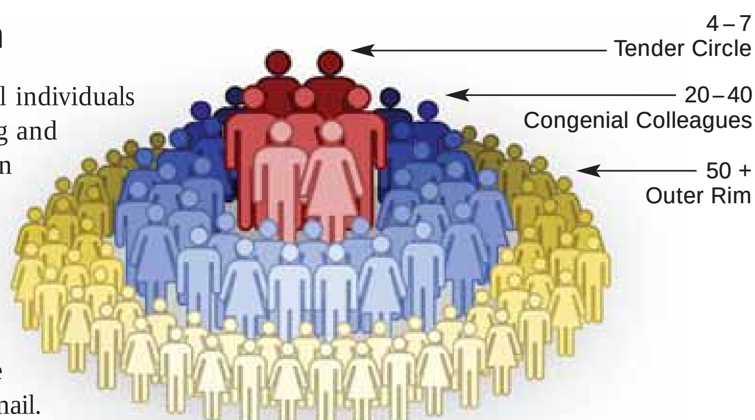
For more individual testimony about the power of collaboration, as well as a discussion of how partnerships, collaborations, and cooperative alliances differ from one another, visit www.adoptex.org. ■

Susan Soonkeum Cox is Vice President of Public Policy & External Affairs at Holt International Children's Services. Cox is grateful for the limitless possibilities that are the promise and joy of successful collaboration.

Dixie van de Flier Davis EdD is President/Executive Director of The Adoption Exchange, Inc., a CWLA member. Among her greatest pleasures are her experiences sharing the hard work, frustrations, fears, and successes of collaborative work with likely and unlikely colleagues.

Ada White MSW, LCSW brings her experiences as a caseworker, Louisiana State Adoption Program Manager, and Director of Adoption Services at CWLA to her current practice as a national consultant.

Three Circles of Collaboration



In *Skills for Success,* Adele Scheele writes that successful individuals have three circles of people around them. In observing and participating in successful collaborations, these circles can be slightly adapted to help understand collaboration.

The smallest is the tender circle, made up of four to seven people with strong ties. They are dependable without question and carry the greatest responsibility to form the collaboration and keep it moving. They make early decisions that set the course, and see one another frequently and communicate by phone and e-mail. Their commitment—often in writing—means they are readily available with time, energy, and resources. Phone calls are returned within hours, if not minutes. They provide emotional support for one another when the project faces challenges. If a change of people or organizations takes place within this circle, there is a resounding impact upon the entire collaboration.

While Scheele's second circle is called *congenial comrades,* we believe it's better to think of this circle as *congenial colleagues.* This group is made up of 20 to 40 people who enrich the collaboration and infuse variety and wisdom. Their opinions inform decisions and directions. They make verbal commitments to meet regularly, share knowledge, and help carry out the goals of the collaboration in their own spheres of influence. Relationships develop within this circle among people who would not have had interface in other circumstances. With time the congenial colleagues begin to identify ways of involving others.

The outer rim is comprised of 50 or more individuals who come and go; their involvement serves a specific purpose. Their alliances with the collaboration may be informal, and contact is usually infrequent or irregular. They share resources and provide stimulation for the collaboration. Some are called upon to conduct training, and they are asked for feedback, criticisms, or suggestions that help ground the collaborative work in reality. Their own work may not be directly related to the collaboration's mission, but they have something to offer to its success.

Ellen Notbohm

ART-ful Teaching for Different Learners

Art can be a wonderful, expressive medium for all children, but for those who have language, emotional, or neurological challenges, art activities can be especially meaningful. Art can open the lines of communication for children with limited verbal skills and provide opportunities for tactile development, visual organization, fine motor control, and hand-eye coordination. Producing a vibrant, tangible product fosters their self-esteem. And, many children who experience cognitive, emotional, or other learning challenges are highly gifted artistically and even go on to make a living doing so.

Teachers and parents can encourage children to explore their art potential in many ways. These creative ideas come from art therapists and paraeducators:

Don't assume that a child has any prior experience with art. Some children may relate only to realistic, photographic images and need instruction in working with illustration and abstract images. Begin introducing your child or student to drawing by taping a clear laminate piece over a photograph and having her trace it, using a felt pen that wipes off easily. This helps her learn about edges, shapes, and concrete objects, and she can be successful with the finished tracing.

Joint drawings can encourage a child to add detail they might not think of on their own. The adult can start the drawing—say, a house—then the child and adult can take turns adding details like windows, doors, grass, flowers, a weathervane, chimney, birds, mailbox, clouds, or a bike in the driveway. Let it go on as long as the child maintains interest. Then come back to it another day and add yet more details. Pair verbal language with each detail as it's drawn; practice spelling, pronouns, or imagination. The educational options are endless.

Provide a model to help the child draw something specific. "When a fabric mural was being created with an artist-in-residence, my student was to choose an animal to depict," says art therapist/paraeducator Lucy Courtney. "He had a picture of the real animal he chose but still his drawing was not a recognizable ant. Then I drew the ant as he watched. I left him alone and he drew an ant that looked very much like mine—a believable ant."

Step-by-step drawing is also helpful. This can be a whole class activity with a teacher leading.

Offer different mediums. One child may like the control and pressure needed to use colored pencils. Another child may prefer the ease of felt pens—instant color without needing to use pressure. Some may enjoy chalk drawing, particularly if you paint an untextured wall with chalkboard/blackboard paint and provide chalk sticks of varying widths and colors. Crayons may be more difficult; it is harder to control the edges, and pressure is needed to get good color. Paint is even harder to control, and can be messy. Art projects have to be achievable and make sense to the child. Otherwise, the task may get done but with an obvious disconnection, ergo no benefit.

Art can segue into writing. Daily journal writing was painstaking for one little second-grade boy. Each day he would draw a train car with the single sentence, "My train is good." When pressed to write a second sentence, he would add something generic like, "It is cool." Courtney noticed that while the writing was static, the drawings were taking on ever more detail: cars became either boxcars or flat cars with added features on the wheels, more cars were added to the train, and people began appearing in them. The drawings continued to progress, even as the writing stayed stagnant—until the following year, when the floodgates opened and the child began writing a screenplay!

Art can open the door to communication for children who are nonverbal or otherwise cannot express their feelings. In one heartbreaking example, a paraeducator worked on a clay project for weeks with a nonverbal child. The school suspected the father of child abuse, but couldn't prove anything. Week after week the child worked soundlessly away on a sculpture of a dark, gaunt figure. One day, the silence broke. He noticed another child watching him and said, "My mom is mean to me."

Art can provide a visual medium for story creation. Children can be encouraged to create characters and several drawings depicting their characters in various situations. Concepts like sequencing and predicting can be taught using these visual representations. ■

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Three-time ForeWord Book of the Year finalist Ellen Notbohm is author of four award-winning books on autism, including 1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders *(with co-author Veronica Zysk), from which this article was adapted. She is a columnist for* Autism Asperger's Digest *and* Children's Voice *and a contributor to numerous publications and websites around the world. For more articles, book excerpts, or to explore Ellen's work, visit www.ellennotbohm.com.*

Patrick Mitchell

A Father's Role in His Daughter's Body Image

The world is full of loving fathers who want the best for their children. Some dads have a knack for frankness, some are huggers, and others are encouragers. Some dads have a keen sense of humor, and some are teasers—this is no problem, unless the teasing is about their daughters' size or shape.

Fathers who offer commentary on their daughter's appearance are treading on thin ice, says clinical psychologist and researcher Helene Keery PhD. She counsels girls and women at Methodist Hospital's Eating Disorders Institute in Minneapolis. One in five girls is teased by her father about her appearance including body size, body shape, and body parts, Keery told me, pointing to results from a study she conducted with colleagues—*The Impact of Appearance-Related Teasing by Family Members.*

"Our research found that about 20% of girls are being teased [about their body] by their dad. Direct comments about body parts and weight, like, 'It looks like you're gaining weight,' or 'You could lose some weight,' or 'You're sitting around and being lazy and being fat, so you need to go outside and do something,' can trigger unintended negative outcomes in some girls, such as thinking they should never relax, or trying to lose weight quickly to please their dad," says Keery. "The child may start thinking, 'I better not relax' or 'I'm a fat and lazy person.' This doesn't happen to all girls, but there's a certain personality trait [a girl may have] that can cause her to take that comment and run with it.

"Referring to his daughter as having 'thunder thighs,' or making comments on the size of her hips, or breast development, is not a good idea, generally speaking, because girls are so aware of the [puberty-related] changes in their body, and having someone point that out in a negative way is not productive," Keery continues. "Commenting on body size or aspects of the body is something that some girls can perceive as damaging or confusing. The girl may think, 'Maybe I should eat less, or maybe I should try diet pills or laxatives. If I really want to achieve that small body, what are the means that I need to go and get?' It may not translate into extreme eating disorder behaviors, but it may translate into some of the more psychological things like being dissatisfied with her body or having low self-esteem."

According to Keery, girls who are teased about their body by their fathers are less satisfied with their bodies and more likely to start engaging in unhealthy behaviors, such as restricting their food intake, exercising excessively, or taking laxatives. Not all girls react to teasing this way, and dads don't *cause* eating disorders; rather, it's a combination of things that make eating disorders occur, and media images of girls and women are the major culprit. "Dads who tease their daughters about their bodies are just one piece of the puzzle," says Keery. She recommends fathers to encourage their daughters to focus on things other than their bodies. "Don't engage in 'body talk' with her, even when she's talking about other people's bodies," she says. "Encourage your daughter to think about her strengths, and to focus on her skills and abilities and the positive things about her.

"A dad is a girl's model of interaction with men in the world, and having an involved dad is an opportunity for a girl to have a really positive relationship with a man who values her as a person, and not for her body alone," she says. "Dads need to ask themselves, 'What impact are my words going to have on my daughter's body image and self-esteem?'" The world is full of loving fathers, and dedicated dads come in all shapes and sizes. Daughters do too, and dads need to remember that. ■

A regular contributor to Children's Voice, *Patrick Mitchell publishes a monthly newsletter,* The Down to Earth Dad, *and facilitates the National Dads Matter!™ Project for child- and family-serving organizations. He provides keynote addresses and trainings, and conducts Family Storytelling Night™ events for programs and schools. To reserve Patrick Mitchell for speaking engagements, or to implement the National Dads Matter!™ Project for your families and community partners, call him toll-free at 877/282-DADS, or e-mail him at patrick@downtoearth dad.org. Website: www.DownToEarthDad.org.*

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Improving Response to Critical Situations

Lessons Learned from CWLA Members

By Cindy Ryman Yost

According to the *New York Times*, federally declared natural disasters have increased 11% in the past seven and a half years. Recent newspaper headlines show immigration raids bringing large numbers of children into the child welfare system at one time, secure websites being hacked and encrypted donor information accessed, clients attacking staff in residential programs, and employees violating ethical practice standards. The Institute for Crisis Management estimates that the number of newsworthy crises in the United States has grown from over 6,300 per year in 1996 to more than 10,500 per year in 2005. The list of potential crises facing today's child welfare executive is large and growing. A new child welfare commissioner recently joked that, on some days, he feels as if he's just waiting for locusts.

There is no hotline for CEOs to call when hurricanes hit an emergency shelter or when a caseworker is attacked on a home visit. Because of concerns about publicity, donor relations, and competition for grants and contracts, some leaders have been hesitant to talk about challenges they have faced with clients and staff. If a client commits suicide in a residential program, executives are unsure who to ask for advice because they don't know who else has faced the same crisis.

Sharing Experience Can Benefit Others

When staff at all levels share their experiences, ask questions, and open up about the challenges faced and the lessons learned, the entire field can benefit. "The richest resources [CWLA] has are its members and its executives," says Jim Fitzgerald, Executive Director of Intermountain Children's Home and Services in Montana. "Anything we can do to impact someone who is serving children and families is important." Fitzgerald was part of a group of members who started an informal discussion about the need for members to connect with each other about their experiences.

Howard Shiffman, CEO of Griffith Centers for Children in Colorado, was also involved in that early conversation. "As leaders we need to be able to be willing to talk openly about what happens in our programs. We can learn each time an organization has to cope with a challenging situation," he says. "In my time as a leader we have had to deal with a whole range of issues from fires to client deaths. I'm happy to talk with others about what we've learned and I also want to know what I can learn from them."

That early conversation, combined with the insight of CWLA's CEO, Christine James-Brown, sparked the idea to provide members with real support in planning for crises and responding to them. Working together with member organizations, CWLA is now developing a network of experienced leaders to assist organizations facing critical situations to provide care for their clients, staff, and agency operations; to develop enhanced organizational policies and procedures; and to collect and disseminate information on legislation and regulations that could be replicated in other states.

Making the Connection

As plans for this project were being developed last summer, record floods hit the Midwest. One of the most heavily impacted areas was the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Jim Ernst is CEO of the large, multi-service organization Four Oaks, and he was confronted with challenges he could never have imagined. He lost communication with his staff and needed to relocate hundreds of families in their low-income housing program, all while his own home was being affected.

Keith Leiderman, CEO of Kingsley House in New Orleans, developed a presentation for the 2008 CWLA National Conference called "Leadership When There's No One to Ask," based on the incredible lessons he and his organization learned from their experience with Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath in 2005. Leiderman knew what Ernst was facing, not only in the days immediately following the flood, but also in the weeks and years of recovery to follow. CWLA brought Leiderman and Ernst together on a conference call to begin to discuss the immediate recovery needs of an organization and also the long-term rebuilding process. Leiderman offered not only to share information over the phone and through e-mail, including sending lists of relief organizations, but he also offered to fly to Iowa with several Kingsley House staff to assist Four Oaks.

"With a natural disaster you are impacted in so many ways. You lose your program buildings, your staff lose their homes, your clients lose their homes. Where do you do your work? How do you help your staff? How do you help your clients?" reflects Ernst. "Usually you assume a crisis will impact only one area, even something as tragic as a fire or a child death. But in a natural disaster you have to constantly circle around to how do you help everyone and when and how do you prioritize the help that needs to be given?"

Four Oaks, a CWLA member organization based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, prepared for flooding last summer. CWLA is developing a network to connect agencies dealing with unexpected crises with those who have been through similar experiences.

Ernst and Leiderman have continued to have conversations and share resource information. "It was invaluable to talk to someone who had been there before," says Ernst. "He predicted that it would come at us all at once and he was right." Leiderman suggested identifying needs and separating staff into groups. For example, one group figures out where to centralize program operations and return business functions, one group focuses on the needs of staff, such as housing and aid, and one group identifies how to find the clients that had lost their homes and their communications systems.

"Talking with Keith helped to normalize our situation," says Ernst. "Three years later they are back, so it helps to know that it can be done, to see an example of a successful organization." Four Oaks is now working to secure replacement housing for 5,400 households with approximately 20,000 people. Ernst is part of a 10-person city recovery team, which initially met daily for several weeks and now meets twice a week for two hours to coordinate the community's response and plan for the future. Ernst admits that the work has been overwhelming, but he continues to see opportunities. "We will end up with a better community," says Ernst. "This gives us a chance to improve affordable housing, to create a human services campus, and to serve people better."

The Impact of Experience

As Iowa continued to recover, the staff at Kingsley House in New Orleans faced the reality of hurricane season again when news of Hurricane Gustav's approach was reported late last August. As the largest provider of adult day health services in the city, Kingsley House became a city-assisted evacuation site for senior citizens and people with medical needs. The process was very difficult for the community and the staff, and Leiderman reported that the impact of post-traumatic stress was evident. "There were 17 city-assisted evacuation sites and we all served as a place for planning and managing the traffic flow for buses and trains," says Leiderman.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUR OAKS

In what became the largest evacuation ever in the United States, the staff at Kingsley House helped coordinate the successful movement of almost 2 million people. Citizens could not return for five to eight days, and many returned to wind- and rain-damaged homes and businesses and a lack of power. "On our first day back though, we had 94 of our 120 staff at the staff meeting," reports Leiderman. "They all came back and all of our programs [began] serving clients immediately."

In comparison to the chaos of Hurricane Katrina, Leiderman said this was very structured and organized. "We're still learning. The re-entry has been a little disorganized and we need full power restored so that those waiting can return, but we know now that we can do this," he says. "We were also impressed by the goodwill and humanity of so many organizations that reached out to welcome people and to provide temporary shelter." Leiderman's own family stayed for the week at the summer camp his daughter attends with 125 other evacuated families in Mississippi.

These experiences, Leiderman says, have changed how he watches situations unfold in other places and how he wants to help. "You need to connect with people who have been through the same thing before. We certainly needed that after Katrina. There were people we talked to from Japan, people involved with 9/11, places where there had been massive devastation and a need for real long-term recovery," says Leiderman. "Would I have felt any compelling need to reach out to Cedar Rapids without Katrina? No. But after what I've been through, I know that I can be helpful."

> "We have learned that having strong relationships with the local media becomes even more important during a crisis. They can assist you in accurately telling your story to the community and helping people understand the real work that we do. Don't hide; even when something bad happens in a program, there is an opportunity to build support through openness. Unless there has been malfeasance on the part of an employee, people want to understand the reality of the challenges in our work."
>
> *Jim Blue, President & CEO,*
> *CEDARS Youth Services, Lincoln, Nebraska*

Learning Which Questions to Ask

Pat Wilson, Commissioner for the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, has also seen the opportunities that have come from tragedy. Boni Frederick, a social service aide, was beaten and killed while supervising the home visit of an infant with his mother in October 2006. After coping with the immediate needs of those involved, there remained an overwhelming number of questions about worker safety in the media, the general public, and most importantly, among those working directly with clients in protective services.

"Where do you go?" questioned Wilson. "There wasn't much available in the literature. We knew we didn't have the answers but we wanted to give other states an opportunity to put their questions on the table." In October 2007, Kentucky hosted the first National Human Services Worker Safety Conference. More than 130 participants from 20 states attended, and topics included the use of technology and telecommunications, personal safety, self-defense, laws passed increasing penalties for crimes against human services workers, and experiences in other states. The response was positive and raised more questions: Where is the line between monitoring employees via GPS for safety and invading their privacy? What do you do in rural areas where cell phone reception may be unreliable or back-up a long distance away?

The Department of Community Based Services developed several responses, including an overriding training theme for staff to constantly be aware of the threats around them as one of the most important things they could do to keep themselves safe. Teams inspected all of the offices and assessed the physical plants for safety features. Changes were made to receptionist areas as well as other areas to improve overall safety. "This was very significant," says Wilson. "We are always looking at our space in terms of utilization, figuring out how to squeeze more people in or reconfigure for another meeting room.... We started to look at everything with a new lens."

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUR OAKS

A web-based critical threat reporting system was implemented allowing for expedited review and response to situations where worker safety had been compromised. Additionally, the new position of regional safety officers was created and Kentucky now has seven full-time safety officers who review critical incidents, examine operating procedures and physical space, evaluate training needs with supervisors, and serve as a sounding board for staff with safety concerns. Some of the positions have been filled with retired state police officers and others have backgrounds that qualify them for their new role.

"After several hours of settling down the program and making all necessary calls and preparations, I had gone to my car to go home when I got another call," says Richmond. "Another one of our group homes was on fire and all nine clients were okay but had to be evacuated and placed in other homes." Locating emergency placement for so many children required temporary license adjustments and other regulatory issues. "You can't just move clients without caseworker approval and parental notification," says Richmond. "And the clients had no personal items, so we had to locate everything from toothbrushes to pajamas." Richmond's day started at 6:30 a.m. and ended at about 10 p.m., with all kids settled and placed in other agency facilities. Her granddaughter arrived safely the following Wednesday.

Now serving as CWLA's New England Regional Director, Richmond reports that the lessons she learned from that day and many others are important in her work with CWLA members now. "It has been my experience that agency personnel rise to the occasion and are willing to pitch in and do whatever is asked of them, so don't hesitate to ask," says Richmond. "There are short-term interventions that need to happen and longer-term interventions that can wait for a day or two. A disaster plan that provides some guidance is a very useful tool and can serve as a starting point; from there, you have to rely on your team to put the plan into action."

"What we most want to achieve is to train and teach our staff how to be as tuned in to their own safety as they possibly can," says Wilson. "If you are in someone's house and something goes wrong, you have to rely on yourself. So I want everyone to constantly pay attention, to have that so ingrained in their everyday behavior that they do it without thinking about it."

Kentucky is continuing their work with the legislature and department officials as well as communicating with other states to share information. When caseworker Brenda Lee Yeager was brutally murdered in West Virginia last July, the commissioners of Kentucky and West Virginia were able to connect and talk about how to cope and how to respond moving forward. At CWLA's annual Commissioner's Roundtable, Wilson and West Virginia Commissioner Jason Najumlski were also able to talk with participants about coping with such tragedies.

Taking Time

Louise Richmond was the Assistant Executive Director at Saint Vincent's Home in Fall River, Massachusetts, when her phone rang at 6:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning. With a granddaughter soon to arrive, she expected to hear her daughter on the phone. Instead, it was the morning staff person from the Independent Living Program. The overnight staff person was unresponsive and had died during the shift. Richmond immediately drove to the program site and called the CEO on her way.

"We determined that our best approach would be for the CEO to drive to agency headquarters to address the legal, licensing, and human resource issues and for me to focus on the needs of clients and staff in the program," says Richmond. Working as a team, the program and administrative staff addressed the immediate needs.

Moving Forward, Together

Every day, member organizations are faced with new challenges that require leaders to enact the plans they have developed and to seek new solutions. The opportunity to talk with others and to share resources is vital to moving through these challenges successfully. Leaders can learn from the experience of others and use that information to make the decisions that result in better services for children and families.

CWLA wants to work with members to share information throughout our network. As we develop formal systems we want to hear from you about the expertise you can share. Contact your regional director (see the list on page 37) to be included in our growing database of executives willing to serve as resources to other members.

Cindy Ryman Yost is the Director of Membership Development at CWLA. To learn more about getting involved with other CWLA members, contact her at 402/730-9275 or CRymanYost@CWLA.org.

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GUEST SPEAKERS

Gregory Michie, renowned educator, author, and professor, will provide insight into the challenges of, and opportunities for, creating change in urban schools. Author of *Holler If You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students* and his most recent book, *See You When We Get There: Teaching for Change in Urban Schools.*

Michael Geisen, 2008 Teacher of the Year, United States, will discuss how America's current system of educational accountability needs a much broader view and approach—one that reflects how true accountability comes from within and recognizes students as creative beings, not as future products, statistics, or "just kids."

Beyond Conventional Wisdom

Working with Your Board

By Howard Shiffman

Being candid, how many nonprofit CEOs would say they enjoy having a board of directors? Have a great relationship with their board members? Look forward to board meetings or spending a full day with them in strategic planning? I venture that most CEOs would answer these questions negatively, and in fact could fill a small book of disaster stories about time with their boards. On the other hand, as CEO of Griffith Centers for Children, Inc., in Lakewood, Colorado, I answer these questions with resounding positivity. I enjoy working with my board because I am not willing to be boxed in by the conventional wisdom outlined by so many authorities on this subject.

Conventional Wisdom for Nonprofit Boards

The criteria put forth by many professional organizations outlines how nonprofit boards should operate to meet industry standards. This wisdom surrounds topics such as board structure, the role of the board members versus the CEO, committee structures, terms of membership, responsibilities of the members, mission attainment, strategic planning, community outreach, board composition, conflicts of interest, and fundraising. Perhaps this wisdom has been proven and is all that is needed to have a successful board operation. On the other hand, I believe most successful nonprofit CEOs will agree that in today's competitive, high-paced, heavily regulated, and often under-funded environment, the CEO must use conventional wisdom only as a foundation. In my experience, this conventional wisdom should be built upon but not necessarily unequivocally followed. Conventional wisdom tells us that some of the major roles of the board are to:

- Define the mission.
- Hire, supervise, and evaluate the CEO to carry out the mission.
- Strategically plan.
- Assure fiscal responsibility.
- Fundraise.
- Promote the organization in the community.

Stepping outside the box, another major role of the board in today's environment, often overlooked, is to act as professional consultants and coaches to the CEO. In fact, this is the most important role on my board. Significant areas of consultation and coaching can include finance, marketing, public relations, legal areas, risk management, business models, and human relations.

Fred Chaffee, President and CEO of Arizona's Children Association, uses this model in his organization. "The arrangement that I have with the board has developed into one where they consult with me on certain things, but it is not around operations unless I solicit their expertise," he says. "For example, we need to get into the 21st Century in our IT area, and I have a sub-committee that has board members with a great deal of expertise in that arena and we rely on that expertise."

At your board room table sits your community's most savvy and well-respected citizens and professionals. They know enough about your organization to apply their years of expertise and knowledge. They are fully vested in reaching your mission because they are part of it. Furthermore, they have come to know you personally and want you to be successful, as their success is tied into yours. As an added benefit, their dedication, skills, and consultation do not cost the organization any money. This type of consultation in today's environment is crucial to giving your organization the competitive edge it needs. For those of you now saying that you need a fundraising board, keep in mind that if these consultations are highly successful you may need less fundraised money.

A Different Philosophy: CEO as Leader of the Board

"In the for-profit world, the CEO is usually also the chairman of the board and the acknowledged leader of that body," says Laurence Demuth, my former board chair. "In the nonprofit world, the CEO is rarely the chairman of the board; but in reality the CEO is the individual that knows the operational details of the entity. He is thus the de facto leader of the board."

Though the board hires the CEO, a successful, confident CEO can naturally become the leader of the board. This is contrary to the idea that the CEO leads the staff and the Board Chair leads the board. Together they make a team, but the CEO should take the reins because the CEO is the consistent factor—the center point that all activities flow around—not the board chair. The chair must be a respected leader among board members and plays an important role in areas such as CEO hiring, supervision, and evaluation; fundraising; and succession and strategic planning. A good chair who serves with an excellent CEO is typically not interested in being the leader but rather the coordinator of the other board members by facilitating meetings and serving as the CEO's point person.

To help facilitate the CEO's leadership role and get the consultation and coaching sought, the CEO must regularly coordinate with the chair outside of the boardroom. "The CEO must organize the work of the board, keep them on task and on time, and ensure that the board leader makes informed decisions," says Bill Holicky, CEO of The House of the Good Shephard in Utica, New York. "This requires that the CEO and the board chair regularly meet, exchange information,

and plan for the future. At a board meeting, I may appear to be the chair's assistant, but the reality is that I have developed the agenda and briefed the chair in advance." At meetings the chair can orchestrate the implementation of the CEO's crafted meeting agenda, and encourage the sharing and participation needed from the members. But the CEO, even if he chooses to keep himself in the background during meetings and showcase the chair as the leader, is still really the actual leader of the group and really keeps the board on task, working, committed, responsible, and happy.

Ted Blevins, Executive Director of the Lena Pope Home in Fort Worth, Texas, echoes these sentiments: "I lead the board by providing them information from our field that is pertinent to their decision that they will be asked to make. I believe the board looks to this leadership and expects it to prepare them for an appropriate decision-making process," he says. "My relationship with my board chair starts immediately after they have been nominated… I sit down with them and ask them what their expectations are from our relationship."

> A successful, confident CEO can naturally become the leader of the board.

In order for the CEO to operate in this model, I recommend that the CEO and board annually agree upon a business plan or goals and objectives to guide the CEO at board meetings and serve as guidelines for the information discussed. This document should be crafted by the CEO and then negotiated with the board. Agenda items that need board approval, input, and acknowledgement must be prepared by the CEO and presented clearly to the board. In addition I suggest that the CEO must make it clear to the board, at strategic times and in the mist of important CEO recommended decisions, especially those that may be controversial, that the CEO recognizes they are hired to get a job done and with the board's trust, consultation, and coaching the mission will be accomplished. If your decisions are poor, you acknowledge that they will have a chance to evaluate (I am also a proponent of the CEO doing his own annual self-evaluation and offering it to the board for their comments) and, if indicated, terminate employment.

To work within this framework the CEO must be willing to take the reins, follow the business plan and its changes throughout the year, and produce outcomes. They must demonstrate leadership characteristics, be sensitive to the dynamics of the members, facilitate open discussion, and find regular opportunities to make the board feel highly appreciated. Although some may say this model is risky, I believe it allows the board to focus their expertise in helping the CEO accomplish what they hired him to do. It is a given that the board engages in governance activities, like the audit committee, but going beyond conventional wisdom where the members are guided by the CEO's desire to get the consultation he needs, this model will produce wonderful results for the organization. Board composition is an important discussion when trying to build a board of consultants.

Howard Shiffman presents a plaque to Griffith's outgoing foundation president, Barbara McKellar, who has been involved with Griffith as a board member and trustee on its Foundation since 1980. Barbara Ritchie (right), Director of Fund Development for Griffith Centers and Director of its Foundation, also attended Griffith's annual holiday party.

Board Composition

Conventional wisdom tells us that our boards should be representative of the population we serve, with a mix of ethnicities, genders, and ages. It also recommends having limited terms to allow others the opportunity to serve and keeping the board at a manageable size. For years, this area of conventional wisdom has made me scratch my head in bewilderment. In fact, I have never met these standards because my board and I had more important things to accomplish.

In my experience, if you are going to meet these criteria it should not be at the expense of the accomplishment of your stated mission and fulfillment of your present business plan. And since I have presented another role for the board member, it also should not be at the expense of getting the best consultation and coaching. Why would I, as an example, ask my most important board members to rotate off if I am getting exactly what I need from them to help me be successful? Would a private for-profit business follow such practice?

Although I have board terms outlined in my bylaws, I have members that have rotated off, attended meetings while technically off the board, and are waiting to sign up again for another major multiyear term. If I rotate my members off, who will be the important culture carriers who remember why we, the board and CEO, signed a 10-year lease? Who will speak up to the other board members when they are pointing their finger at the CEO for the poor decision he made at a meeting a decade ago? I saw this happen at another agency where there were no culture carriers, and this contributed to the ending of the CEO's 17-year tenure. And why would I have my personal supports leave me to a room full of new members that don't know what I have accomplished for the past many years?

Conventional wisdom says you can deal with the problem by staggering board member terms. This is a good solution, but be sure to keep your best board members. "We make every effort to ensure that our board is as diverse as is possible, but the primary issue is ensuring that the board has the proper mix of expertise," says Holicky. "Our board has term limits but we also allow for non-board members to serve on our various committees. In this way, we retain our base of expertise while having the capacity to grow our base on consultants."

It would be interesting to have a mix of males and females, Democrats and Republicans, older and younger people, and different ethnic and religious backgrounds on any board. But it can be difficult to find the commitment, donor support, board member compatibility, community influence, and the desired diversity in a person with the specific expertise needed. Heavy competition for the best people in communities that have a multitude of nonprofits contributes to this problem.

I suggest that the CEO take an active role in selecting board members. I opt for the expertise I am looking for and the desire to serve our industry. I want a board member that sees past skin color, personal political views, and has wisdom regardless of ethnic background, age, or gender. Once you find a core group of these wonderful souls, they seem to multiply themselves by attracting others of a similar mind and disposition. Of course this practice does not make me popular with national accreditation standards, but it is for a good cause: the success of the mission. This does not translate across the organization, however. My organization's personnel profile does parallel the national standards for diversity, which we feel is extremely important to the delivery of culturally sensitive and appropriate treatment.

"I am concerned about diversity, but I'm concerned about the diversity of expertise more than that of culture," says Blevins. "Currently, we have 36 board members, but once again, the most important diversity on our board is diversity of skill level, professional role in the community, and their depth of relationships in the community."

Conventional wisdom is often unclear on board size, although in practice many organizations favor a smaller board. Analyze your needs and if 40 members are what it takes for your success, so be it. I personally like a smaller board of about 15 members. I feel this is manageable for me but this should not be the rule. If you can manage a separate supporting foundation board or volunteer fundraising board, I recommend you follow the path that produces the most success for your organization. "If you focus upon client outcomes, you will drive innovation. If you focus upon process, you get bureaucracy," says Jim Fitzgerald, CEO of Intermountain in Helena, Montana. "I focus upon a board structure that works for kids and families and I find little of that in the conventional wisdom model for the mature organization."

The CEO-Board Relationship

An area of great joy and satisfaction for me as a CEO has been the personal relationships I have developed with board members. Very little is written about this area. I am a huge advocate of personally knowing the members of your board; since I believe the CEO is the leader of the board, developing personal relationships is necessary and important to develop trust and retain great board members. Getting to know your board members means finding out about their lives, jobs, families, hobbies, and their views on the world and life in general. Besides the fun of getting to know the great people on your board, there are added benefits: when the going gets tough in your organization, you can feel comfortable that you are supported and will get a fair shake. Of course, you must be open with your life to the same extent you want to know about the lives of your board members.

My approach goes beyond conventional wisdom, which places board members as your bosses and recommends keeping more professional boundaries. Holicky follows more along the lines of a conventional relationship with his board. "I try to know my board members well, although we are seldom personal friends because I believe a personal friendship creates a potential conflict for them," he says. But some CEOs do feel a less traditional approach works for them. "Our board meetings are on a Friday evening—which is social—and on Saturdays. The board bonds with each other and with senior staff at those meetings," says Chaffee. "I think the personal relationships strengthen the board-CEO work."

Howard Shiffman, CEO of Griffith Centers for Children, joined his board members, Jack Barker, Pete Willis, and Al Bergold for a charity golf tournament. Shiffman believes cultivating personal relationships with board members, and also turning to them as consultants, contributes to a CEO's success.

Future Discussions

There are several other important areas where a break from conventional wisdom could be considered, including CEO contracts, communication, risk management, meeting structure, documentation of minutes, annual audit procedures, and ways to adhere to emerging Sarbanes-Oxley issues. I strongly believe that the role of the CEO and board should be examined in light of today's economic and competitive environment and that conventional wisdom needs to be expanded to help organizations meet current business and program challenges. It is my hope that this discussion will provoke a conversation among CEOs and between CEOs and their board members. Using board members as volunteer consultants, acknowledging the leadership role of the CEO with the board, structuring board membership to meet an agency's identified needs, and developing a more meaningful relationship with members of the board can make a significant difference in reaching success. Going beyond conventional wisdom can make working with your board the highlight of your job. Fitzgerald's words perhaps say it best: "After all, pursuing our potential will take us down a very different road than following a strategic plan." ■

Howard Shiffman is CEO of Griffith Centers for Children, Inc., in Lakewood, Colorado, and can be contacted at howard.shiffman@griffithcenters.org.

CWLA provides valuable consultation and training for boards of directors. Contact Jeff Bormaster, CWLA Senior Director, Consulting & Special Projects, at jbormaster@cwla.org for more information.

Order the CWLA publication, Nonprofit Boards: What to Do and How to Do It *at www.cwla.org/pubs.*

CWLA ShortTakes

Speaking Out


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"America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves—if our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see? What progress will we have made? This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment."

— President-elect Barack Obama, during his victory speech at Grant Park in Chicago on November 4.

2008 Fact Sheets Available

With updated indicators including child protection, health, child care, education, and income support, CWLA's 2008 Fact Sheets are available. The sheets present data that give an overview of the conditions faced by vulnerable children in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. State Fact Sheets from 2000 to 2007 are available for comparison. Visit www.cwla.org/advocacy/state factsheets/statefactsheets08.htm.

Upcoming Conferences

FEBRUARY 23–25, 2009

CWLA National Conference

Children Today… America's Future!

Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC

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.

Support a White House Conference

The next few months offer a perfect opportunity to build momentum for a White House Conference on Children and Youth in 2010. Visit www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconf10.htm to learn about the goals for the conference and the backing it has so far. There is a sample resolution for boards to encourage the conference, a link to join the cause on Facebook, a survey to help determine the agenda, a form for individuals and organizations to sign on in support, and much more. After the 111th Congress is sworn in, keep track of those cosponsoring bills in the House and Senate, and encourage more representatives to join by connecting to Congress at 202/224-3121.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERYL GULLY

Cheryl Gully (right) stands with the Western Region Outstanding Service Award winners, foster parents David and Janine Barber and their daughter. The Barbers were nominated by member agency Casa de los Ninos in Tucson, Arizona.

Western Region Conference

CWLA's Western Region hosted a training conference in mid-September with the theme "It Takes Courage and Compassion to Service Children and Families: Tools for Confidence and Competence." Attendance suffered due to budget cutbacks at public agencies that created new restrictions on travel; about 250 people came, compared to more than 500 at the last conference in 2005.

"The workshops reflected the conference theme: working with children and families," Cheryl Gully, Western Region director, explained. "The field of child welfare has over the past 10 years moved from being child-focused to being family-focused—in order to assist in helping at-risk and vulnerable children, you must also help their families of origin."

Gully added that the attendees enjoyed the conference, appreciating the topical workshops and the chance to network with their peers. She said she heard many people looking for a larger selection of CWLA books and giftables, which they'll find at the national conference in Washington, DC, February 23–25.

At the end of the 110th Congress, the "most significant child welfare legislation in a decade" was passed by both houses and signed into law by the president. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, H.R. 6893, passed the House of Representatives by voice vote September 17, passed the Senate by unanimous consent September 22, and was signed by President George W. Bush on October 7 as Public Law No. 110–351.

"It is amazing that we were able to get this through," said John Sciamanna, codirector of Government Affairs at CWLA. "Everybody joined hands on this—in both parties and in both houses."

"This is an historic moment for foster children and families. Not since the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 has this country had a bill that speaks directly to the needs of the more than 513,000 children in foster care," Christine James-Brown, CWLA President and CEO, said after the bill was signed. "This bill further advances the mission of the CWLA to promote the well-being of children, youth, and their families."

Two early versions shared many points, which were incorporated into the final bill. Primary is the reauthorization of the adoptions incentives program, with increased incentives for the adoption of special-needs children and children age 9 and older, which was set to expire this fiscal year. This reauthorization was the impetus for the entire legislative package.

With the bill, Title IV-E funds are more accessible. States are given the option to use Title IV-E funds for relative kinship placements, an expansion from the current situation, where only relatives who are licensed as foster parents can receive support from Title IV-E funds. Additionally, changes in the bill will allow tribal governments to apply directly for Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance funding, eliminating the current extra step that requires tribal communities to go through a state system for those funds.

States will also have the option to extend federal foster care funding to youth up to age 21 under the new legislation. States will decide to what age support can be given, and will also have the chance to require independent-living settings in care institutions with youth 18 or older. Another provision in the bill for younger, school-aged children compels states to ensure they are still attending school—remaining in their same schools as long as it is in their best interest, and being enrolled immediately in a new school if not. The cost of transportation can be included in the foster care maintenance payments.


Jim McDermott


Charles Grassley

Movement started in late June when Representatives Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Jerry Weller (R-IL), the chair and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Income Support and Family Security, introduced H.R. 6307, the Fostering Connections to Success Act. The House of Representatives passed the bill by a voice vote a few days later. After the summer recess, the Senate Finance Committee approved the chairman's substitute version of S. 3038, the Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act. The Finance Committee bill represents a bipartisan agreement between Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Member Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA). That chairman's mark or substitute bill evolved out of discussions on S. 3038, which Grassley introduced in May. ■

Sign up to receive CWLA's legislative alerts via e-mail at www.cwla.org/advocacy.

Online Learning from CWLA

Taking advantage of the technology that makes learning an any time, any place endeavor, CWLA has partnered with Essential Learning (EL) to offer individual courses and series trainings online. They are continuing education and professional development courses for child welfare and human service workers, clinicians, supervisors, managers, and others. Member agencies can find targeted classes based on CWLA training programs, books, journals, and newsletters, as well as a group of EL courses recommended by CWLA. The curriculum can be searched by accreditation agency, so participants can be sure they'll earn continuing education credits where they need to.

Each month brings updates and new classes to the site, and CWLA member agencies and their staff receive a 10% discount on all EL courses. Visit www.cwla.org/consultation/elearning.htm to learn more, or view the course site at www.cequick.com/myeln/cwla/default.asp. ■

Data Crunching

Of 42 responding states in CWLA's 2004-2005 state survey, four said they did not maintain youth over the age of 18 in foster care: Alaska, Florida, Nebraska, and New Mexico. Florida's response clarified that, like many states, they continue to offer services on a voluntary basis—in its case, until age 23. Three other states—Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Tennessee—maintain youth until they are 23, which is the oldest age at which youth are assisted by foster care, according to the survey. ■

Source: National Data Analysis System (NDAS). Find more information at http://ndas.cwla.org.

EndNotes

ReadyResources

Child Welfare Information Gateway has expanded the **Mental Health Services** section of its website. This web section focuses on mental health as it relates to children and youth involved in the child welfare system, who may be at greater risk for mental health issues than children in the general population. The section, available at www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/service_array/mentalhealth, is designed to provide information of interest to administrators involved with developing and funding mental health programs and to supervisors, caseworkers, and other related professionals who secure, provide, or monitor mental health treatment for children and families.

Adoption placements that move a child from one state to another must follow the guidelines of the **Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC),** which is applicable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The hitch is that the ICPC dates from the 1950s, and its age shows—many states are concerned with the compact's outdated administrative process and lack of accountability. In 2004, the American Public Human Services Association adopted a resolution calling for a rewrite of the ICPC, and has since created a website to track the progress of the new ICPC. Visit www.aphsa.org/Policy/icpc2006rewrite.htm for updates, frequently asked questions, interstate placement data, state-by-state statutes, and other resources.

The Maternal and Child Health Library recently launched the **Community Services Locator,** an online clearinghouse for ways to find local services for a number of health concerns. The locator, at www.mchlibrary. info/KnowledgePaths/kp_ community.html, provides information about search tools that may be helpful to those seeking child care/early childhood education, education/special needs, family support, financial support, health and wellness, and parenting services. ■

Dispatch From Abroad

Dr. Haider Maliki is a psychiatrist at the Central Pediatric Teaching Hospital in Baghdad. The government-run hospital is, according to an NPR report, the premiere pediatric care center in Iraq, but in the midst of a war-torn country, that is not the ringing endorsement it could be. Conditions at the hospital leave much to be desired.

Despite the fact that he has no specialized training to work with children, Maliki is the only federally employed child psychiatrist in Iraq. He taught himself, NPR reported, because he didn't see anyone else stepping up to focus on children's mental health. "I have no training," Maliki told NPR. "I didn't see any child psychiatry center outside Iraq. We told the ministry, we told the government. They say they have no money for the training."

WWW.BBC.CO.UK

Dr. Haider Maliki spoke with the BBC about the implications of so many children suffering from PTSD in Iraq.

He says he's already treated hundreds of children at Central Pediatric, according to the report, and expects there are hundreds more who need psychiatric care. Just like other Iraqi citizens, children have been exposed to the violence of war—many have been kidnapped, tortured, raped, or killed. Even those who are not the victims of physical violence are susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Maliki explained that children with PTSD may abuse drugs or alcohol, stop studying, or become violent themselves. In an interview with the BBC, Maliki said the problems of today will only compound with time. "Many of the children who have experienced trauma become very violent," he told the BBC. "They are violent towards their parents and they have no respect for their teachers. It will be a very violent generation."

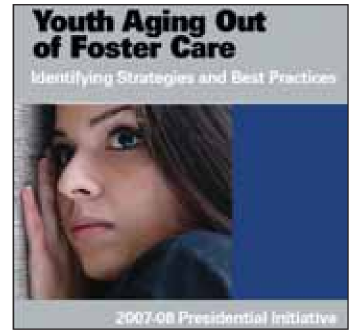
He estimates more than 15% of Iraqi children show some signs of PTSD, NPR reported, and the problem continues to grow. In response, the government of Iraq recently agreed to fund a new clinic at the hospital. Maliki will lead the ward to treat children with psychological problems, including PTSD. The clinic opened in early September.

For the full NPR report, visit www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93937972&sc=emaf. To watch Maliki's BBC interview, visit http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7624473.stm. ■

Research Report

A timely report from policy center Zero to Three focuses on investments in **early childhood development,** and how they can become a different sort of economic stimulus. More and more, when economists discuss taking advantage of "human capital" through education and skills training, they highlight high-quality early childhood programs and the benefits they bring to society. *Investing in Infants and Toddlers: The Economics of Early Childhood* outlines current economic research, its application to the childhood development field, and ways that professionals from both areas can work together to better advocate for more investment in children and families. Visit www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_pub_BM_09_05_06 to read the article.

In 2007, the National Association of Counties (NACo) began a partnership with the Pew Charitable Trusts for an initiative to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by **young adults who age out of foster care.** NACo noted that counties operate the child welfare system in 13 states, and everywhere they provide the bulk of services that former foster youth need: housing, education, health care, training, and job placement. In *Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Identifying Strategies and Best Practices*, an issue brief published earlier this year, NACo's County Services Research Division highlighted model programs in counties across the country. The brief is available at www.naco.org/Content/ContentGroups/Issue_ Briefs/IB-YouthAgingoutof Foster-2008.pdf.



The latest offering from the National Center for Children in Poverty's Research Connections project is a brief examining *Demographics of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care.* The report asserts that **family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care** is the most common form of nonparental care in the country; some statistics suggest that between one-third and one-half of children whose parents are employed experience FFN care. Despite that, its prevalence, role, and impact are not clearly understood, and this report examines the definitions, demographics, and methods behind FFN care. Visit www.nccp.org/ publications/pub_835.html to read or download the report. For more about Research Connections, the National Center's free, web-based compendium of child care and early education information, visit www.nccp.org/projects/rc.html. ■

Save the Date

Each November, one Saturday is designated as National Adoption Day. Courts and communities across America celebrate the occasion by finalizing adoptions for thousands of children and honoring all families who make the choice to adopt. Additionally, National Adoption Day seeks to raise awareness about the more than 100,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted, encourage more families to adopt, highlight the availability and need for post-adoption services, and promote collaboration between adoption agencies, courts, and advocacy organizations.

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY
Celebrating a Family for Every Child

National Adoption Day began in 2000 with nine events, and has only grown since: In 2007, 4,300 adoptions were finalized in more than 300 events in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. National sponsors are the Alliance for Children's Rights, Casey Family Services, Children's Action Network, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, and the Freddie Mac Foundation.

Generally, National Adoption Day is recognized on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, but this year, the event has been rescheduled in respect for the nation's remembrance of the 45th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination on November 22. For 2009, the regular schedule will resume.

Visit www.nationaladoptionday.org for more information. Links are also available from CWLA at www.cwla.org/programs/adoption/2008adoptionday.htm. ■

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OneOnOne

Frequently Asked Questions from CWLA Members

As a CWLA member, you may wonder how to take advantage of member benefits and connect with others in the field. We've put together a list of frequently asked questions, so you know where to turn the next time you're looking for information. In every instance, your first point of contact should be your regional director. If, however, you're unable to reach your regional director, use the information below to reach other staff members at CWLA. To reach our main office by phone, call 703/412-2400.

Regional Directors, *Your first point of contact:*

WESTERN REGION
Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia (CA)
Your Regional Director:
Cheryl Gully, cgully@cwla.org
703/412-3174

MOUNTAIN PLAINS REGION
Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming
Your Regional Director:
Brian Brant, bbrant@cwla.org
703/412-3172

MID-WEST REGION
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin
Your Regional Director:
Jennifer Sharma, jsharma@cwla.org
703/412-3177

SOUTHERN REGION
Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Bermuda
Your Regional Director:
Adrianne Lewis, alewis@cwla.org
703/412-3175

MID-ATLANTIC REGION
Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Ontario (CA)
Your Regional Director:
Cassaundra Rainey, crainey@cwla.org
703/412-3169

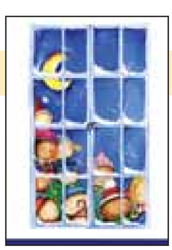
NEW ENGLAND REGION
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont
Your Regional Director:
Louise Richmond
lrichmond@cwla.org
703/412-3176

Frequently Asked Questions, *How do I:*

Access the members-only website? Where can I find my member number and password?

As a member you have access to exclusive information on our members-only website, including downloadable versions of CWLA Standards of Excellence. Go to www.cwla.org/membersonly and enter your information. If you need help with your member number or password, contact Pat Donnelly (pdonnelly@cwla.org).

Purchase gift items and greeting cards?



Order online through our website at www.cwla.org/pubs/ giftables.htm. You can also order customized greeting cards by phone by calling 703/412-2416.

Connect with other CWLA members doing similar work?

Your regional directors are your best resource for finding out about what other CWLA members are doing. Contact your regional director from the list above, and he or she will be able to lead you in the right direction.

Use member benefit hours?

Your regional director can let you know how many benefit hours you have available to use, as well as help you determine how you may want to use these hours.

Find a consultant?

In addition to CWLA staff, we have a pool of qualified contract consultants available to work with both CWLA member agencies and other organizations seeking our assistance. Our contract consultants bring a wide array of competencies and expertise and are a welcome addition to the CWLA consultation team. To find a consultant, contact Andrea Bartolo (abartolo@cwla.org).

Locate and print conference materials on your website?

Go to www.cwla.org/conferences to see upcoming events and find links to conference programs and registration. For questions regarding program content for the National Conference, February 23–25, 2009, in Washington, DC, contact Dana Wilson (dwilson@cwla.org). For questions regarding conference registration, contact Nicky Dixon (ndixon@cwla.org).

Purchase CWLA publications or obtain articles?

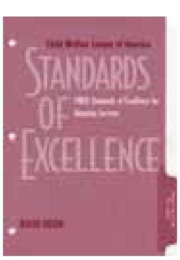
To order books or training materials, visit our webstore online at www.cwla.org/pubs or call 800/407-6273. If you have trouble with either of these, contact Steve Boehm (sboehm@cwla.org). Abstracts for articles published in *Child Welfare* journal, as well as entire issues of *Children's Voice*, are online at www.cwla.org/pubs/welcome.htm. For specific questions about articles from the journal or magazine, contact Emily Shenk (eshenk@cwla.org).

Find a speaker for an event I'm planning?

To find people able to speak about child welfare or related issues, contact Joyce Johnson (jjohnson@cwla.org).

Where can I find information about…

Standards of practice?



Go online to www.cwla.org/programs/standards for general information, as well as the links to purchase specific CWLA *Standards of Excellence* publications. CWLA member agencies can find most volumes available in PDF format on our members-only site at www.cwla.org/membersonly. Contact Julie Collins (jcollins@cwla.org) with questions.

Child welfare data for my state?

Check the National Data Analysis System website, http://ndas.cwla.org. From there you can access state summary data sheets that allow for an 'at a glance' view of the states' data as well as outside resources on specific data topics. If you aren't able to find what you are looking for on the website, contact Connie Hayek (chayek@cwla.org).

A program or practice area?

The Practice Areas page of our website (www.cwla.org/programs) will direct you to information on a variety topics, such as adoption, domestic violence, child mental health, housing and homelessness, and residential group care. For help finding an expert in a particular practice area, contact Paula Neese (pneese@cwla.org).

A policy issue?

To get information on legislation, visit www.cwla.org/advocacy and the website for the Library of Congress, Thomas, at http://thomas.loc.gov. For information about the White House Conference on Children and Youth, visit www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconf10.htm. For all remaining questions, contact Tim Briceland-Betts (bricebet@ cwla.org) or John Sciamanna (jsciamanna@cwla.org).

CWLA's next salary survey?

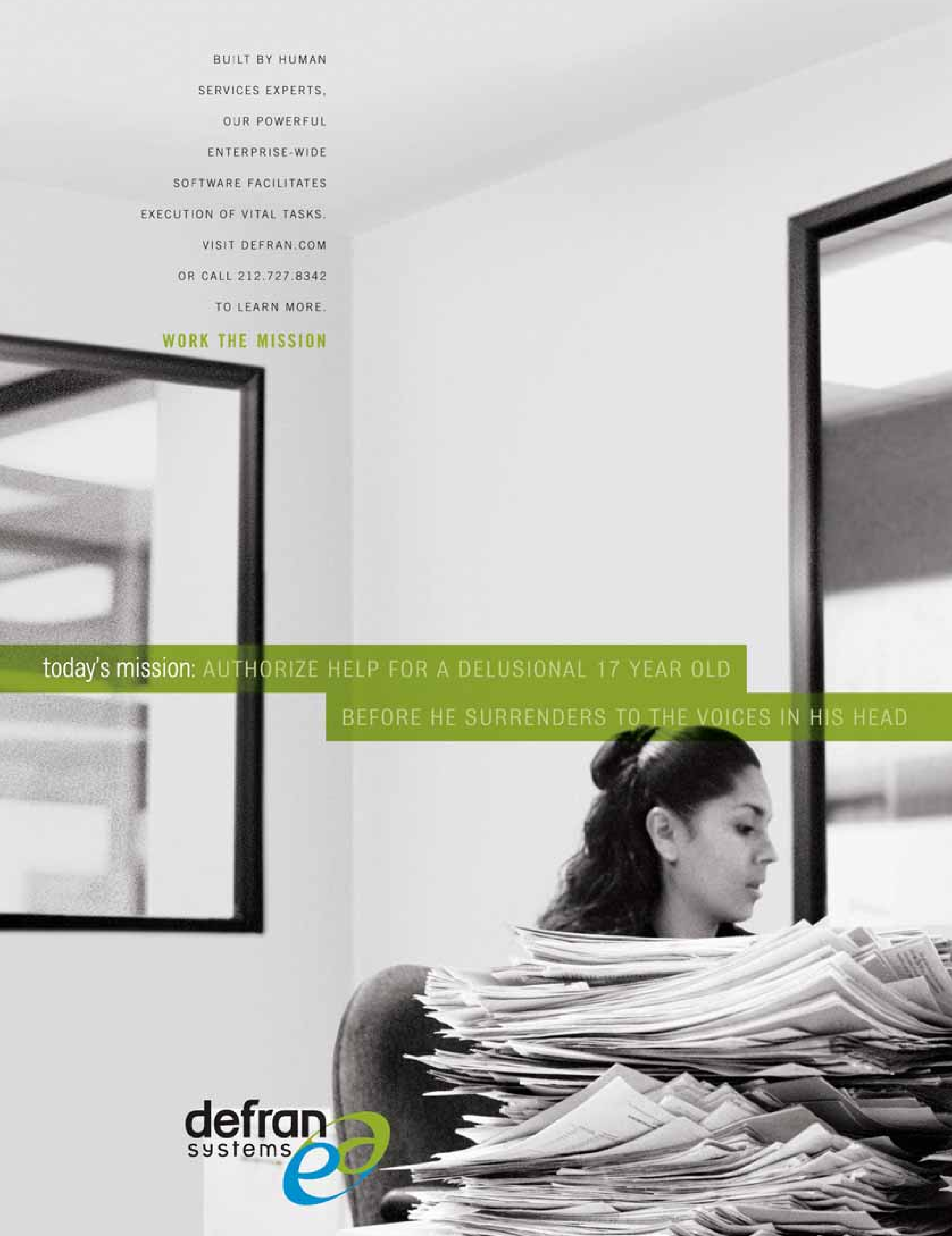
CWLA is working on a new salary survey, which will be published in late 2009. For specific questions about the survey, contact Aiyana Pucci (apucci@cwla.org).

Finance inquiries?

For questions regarding collection/accounts receivable, contact Sharon Morris (smorris@cwla.org). For questions regarding accounts payable, contact Maya Barbee (mbarbee@cwla.org).

Can CWLA offer families help with a problem with their children? I need legal advice about adoption, kinship care, or children taken out of the state.

CWLA isn't able to give legal advice. Families can, however, contact their local United Way by dialing 211 on any phone. That will connect them directly to the United Way in the area, and they should be able to find information about their problem. ■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