

CASCW News

Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare

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YOUNG WARDS OF THE STATE

A Study of 215 Children, under Six Years of Age, Waiting to Be Adopted

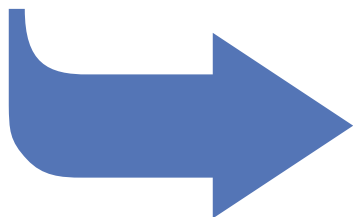
Introduction

What do we know of young children "legally orphaned," i.e., legally severed from their birth families in a court procedure known as termination of parental rights (TPR)? Recent attention to permanency planning for foster children, including an emphasis on adoption, has brought renewed interest in the children who are now wards of the state. A study was undertaken in order to understand the characteristics of young children, their placements, their parents, and the adoption outcomes. The following are selected highlights from this study of children who were under six years of age as of October 14, 1996 and who were wards of the state. At that time, 1,445 children were wards of the state. Of these, 215 young children

TO REQUEST A COPY OF THE FULL REPORT, PREPARED BY PROFESSOR ESTHER WATTENBERG AND DOCTORAL STUDENT HYUNGMO KIM, PLEASE SELECT THE BOX FOR "A STUDY OF YOUNG CHILDREN WHO ARE WARDS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA, AS OF OCTOBER 14, 1996" ON THE ORDER FORM ON PAGE 9.

Continued on page 2

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Also in This Issue

1997-98 IV-E Child Welfare
Scholars

Report on Statewide Symposium
"Rethinking Child Welfare"

Research Spotlight: CASPARS:
Clinical Assessment Package for
Risks and Strengths

Child Protection at the Crossroads

No-Cost Publications Available

CASCW News
Editor in Chief: Esther Wattenberg
Editing and Design: Laura Baugh

Doctoral Support

Two doctoral students have been selected to receive \$2,500 awards to support their studies in areas of child welfare affecting Title IV-E-eligible families and children. • **Lila George** will complete a paper on

"A Qualitative Study of Native American Workers Implementing Families First." • Using county data reported to the MN Department of Human Services, **Marcie Jefferys** will prepare a paper on the

expenditures in the State of Minnesota that primarily affect children eligible for Title IV-E services.

Both papers will be disseminated upon completion.

were waiting to be adopted because parental rights had been terminated.

The study, conducted by Professor **Esther Wattenberg** and doctoral student **Hyungmo Kim**, examined data reported by counties to the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Characteristics of Children

- Almost half of the children were Caucasian (49.3%), followed by African American (41.9%), Native American (8.4%), and Asian American (0.5%).
- Almost 65% of children were under three years of age when parental rights were terminated; 35% were between three and six years of age at TPR.
- Almost 90% of children had “special needs”: a description that denotes a condition that requires special attention for placement and supervision.
- Almost 87% of children had more than one sibling to be placed together. One third had three or more siblings, resulting in a group of four or more children needing to be placed together.

Characteristics of Placement

- Seventy-four percent of the children were eligible for Title IV-E services during the placement, indicating a poverty status.
- The living arrangement for most of the children was foster care (83%), followed by placement with relatives (13%) and others associated with the family (3%).

Characteristics of Parent

- Of these young wards of the state, over 60% of mothers and fathers of the children were Caucasian, compared to about 30% who were African American; 16% of parents were mixed race.
- Sixty-two percent of mothers of the children who were wards of the state were never-married, single mothers.
- Seventy-one percent of mothers were in their 20’s when their parental rights were terminated. Only 2% were in their teens.

Characteristics of Adoptive Placement

- More than 30% of children were adopted by foster parents; 22% were adopted by grandparents, aunts/uncles, and other relatives.
- More than three-quarters of adoptive parents were Caucasian. Almost 21% of primary adoptive parents were African American.
- Eighty-seven percent of the placements were same-race placements.

Time Lag Between TPR and Adoptive Placement

- Seventy-two percent of the children were placed in adoption within one year after TPR.
- Almost 28% of children spent more than one year in foster care after TPR awaiting adoptive placements; 12% of children spent between one-and-one-half and three years awaiting adoption after TPR.

Conclusion

The findings from this study are somewhat reassuring. A significant number of children waiting for adoption are young and have multiple special needs. Nevertheless, more than 70% of the children were placed in adoptive homes within one year after termination of parental rights. This speaks well for Minnesota’s energetic placement efforts. However, 28% of the children remained in care for up to three years. Concentrated attention to these children is in order.

Common knowledge in the field of adoption, confirmed by studies, indicates that young children have the greatest potential for moving into adoptive homes quickly. However, an assumption that young children can be placed effortlessly is not warranted. Almost 90% of Minnesota’s young wards at the time of this report had special needs that would have to be considered in adoption plans. More than half of the children were noted to have disabilities. Moreover, more than three-quarters (83%) of

Continued on page 3

the children belonged to family groups in which three children or more needed to be placed together.

These factors present formidable challenges for the guiding principle in adoption, "the best interests of the child." Both the scope and intensity of the search for adoptive parents that will provide stability and an optimistic environment in which children can thrive will require resources and continued support for a post-adoption period. ■

Child Maltreatment Risk Assessment Symposium

Recently **Chris Baird**, Director of Children's Research, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Madison, WI was the keynote speaker at a child maltreatment risk assessment symposium, coordinated and cosponsored by the Child Abuse Prevention Studies (CAPS) program. This regional symposium, cosponsored by CASCW, was held in Minneapolis and broadcasted to Marshall, Mor-

IV-E CHILD WELFARE

The following 46 MSW students (22 new recipients and 24 continuing recipients) have been offered IV-E Child Welfare Scholarships for 1997-98:

- Joan Blakey • Shalema Blue • Cindy Brinkman
- Born Chea • Thaly Chhour • Mary Cicola • Richard Coleman • Rosemary Cyr • Nancy Erickson
- Shari Fiedler • Bryce Fier • Darius Giles • Cindy Grosklags • Hoeun (formerly Richard) Hach • Martha Haws • Michael Heinen • Marden Holden
- Sherry Holloway • Chantel Houg • Phillip Larkins • Lao Lee • Yee Lee • Kaying Lor
- Kerry McDonald
- Andrea Merims
- Kevin Merritt
- Vicky Meyers
- Jeanne (Miller) Fritz • Faraja Mungai
- Nancy Nelson
- Anne Rieke • Angela (Johnson) Schelske • Chul Schwanke • Marilyn Seifert • Jill Simon
- Christopher Sorensen • Sue Stoterau
- Phyllis Thompson
- Makeba Tredwell
- Ann Turnlund
- Brenda Valadez
- P. Mengpao Vang
- Bryan Vue • La Madrid Wilson • Pat Worden and • Vang Yang. ■

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

- Twenty-seven of the 46 students selected are in the weekend program; 26% are rural/out-state students including eight who are distance education students attending classes at the Rochester (2) and Moorhead (6) sites.
- 34% are male scholars, 75% of the male scholars are males of color.
- Over half those selected for scholarships are students of color.

ris, and Rochester to allow participation at CAPS distance education sites.

Chris Baird is nationally recognized for his development of research-based risk assessment instruments in child protective and juvenile justice domains. The following composed the statewide panel responding to Chris Baird via ITV: **George French**, Executive Director, Stevens County Social Services; **Paul Horn**, Lyon County Social Services; **Rob Sawyer**, Director of Social Services, Olmsted County Human Services; **Steve Vonderharr**, Program Consultant, Minnesota Department of Human Services; and CASCW Director **Esther Wattenberg**. ■

News of Child Welfare Scholars and Alumni

• **Eileen Banks**, Bush/IV-E alumna and a senior social worker at Hennepin County Children and Family Services, has been chosen to serve on the Board of Directors to the Minnesota Social Service Association.

Continued on page 4

• Current IV-E Scholar **Nancy Erickson** was awarded a College of Human Ecology Dora A. Waller International Award for an internship to conduct research in the Child Protection Unit of New Children's Hospital in Sydney, Australia.

• **Candace Kragthorpe**, Bush/IV-E alumna, presented "Risk Situations: Vulnerable Children" (a juried presentation) at the 7th Annual State Conference of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN). Kragthorpe is a child abuse prevention coordinator with PACER Center.

• 1996-97 Bush/IV-E Scholar, **Raven Mason**, was interviewed for a *Star Tribune* article entitled "Community forum seeks remedies to prevent youth violence" which appeared April 11, 1997. Mason also was interviewed for "Their aim, pure and simple: Keep guns away from kids," an article appearing in the *Pioneer Press* June 22, 1997. Mason is a youth violence prevention specialist for the Harriet Tubman Center.

STATEWIDE SYMPOSIUM

The statewide symposium "Rethinking Child Welfare: Can the System Be Transformed through Community Partnerships?" took place on Tuesday, June 3, 1997. Three national speakers presented nationwide findings and Minnesota professionals composed the panel response teams. This day-long CEU-earning symposium targeted selected community agency, county, and state staff members; legislators; school social workers; Child Welfare Scholars; faculty with related interests; and others with a strong interest in a community-based system of care for families and children. Approximately 260 professionals attended the full-capacity symposium. Participant responses on the evaluation instrument demonstrated substantial support for both the content and the presenters.

The keynote speaker was **Patricia Schene**, PhD, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation consultant on community partnerships; consultant to various federal, state, and local public welfare agencies; and member of the Executive Session, New Paradigms for Child Protective Services, Kennedy School of Public Affairs, Harvard University. In addition to giving an overview of the "child welfare crisis" and outlining new approaches on the national scene, Dr. Schene discussed a number of community partnership programs that she has been evaluating. A panel comprised of Minnesota professionals **Tony Wagner**, President, Pillsbury Neighborhood Services; **Steven Oates**, Executive Director, New Unity Incorporated; and **Brian Guidera**, Division Manager, Hennepin County Children and Family Services presented the response: "Crafting a Community Partnership."

PROCEEDINGS FROM "RETHINKING CHILD WELFARE: CAN THE SYSTEM BE TRANSFORMED THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS" ARE IN PREPARATION AND WILL BE DISSEMINATED DURING FALL QUARTER. TO RECEIVE A COPY WHEN THEY BECOME AVAILABLE, PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX ON THE ORDER FORM ON PAGE 9.

Continued on page 5

• "Understanding Tribal-State Relationships and The Indian Child Welfare Act" was the title of a presentation given at the NASW-MN Annual State Conference by

Rose Robinson, Executive Director, MN Indian Women's Resource Center and Bush/IV-E alumna.

• Bush/IV-E alumna **Sue Serbus**, currently

a social service supervisor with Nicollet County, has been elected to serve as a regional board representative of the Minnesota Family Based Services Association.

Charles Lindsey (Lynn) Usher, PhD, Wallace H. Kuralt, Sr., Professor of Public Welfare Policy and Administration, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, provided a second major presentation. Dr. Usher is a consultant to the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation on the evaluation of community-based initiatives and has conducted several studies on community initiatives for these groups. Dr. Usher presented findings from his evaluation of community partnership programs and addressed the topic of building the capacity of neighborhoods to serve at-risk families. The first "Minnesota response" was offered by **Anne Hill**, Ombudsperson for Families, Minnesota Department of Human Services, who presented "A Perspective from Families." The second Minnesota response was provided by **Jesse Bethke**, Executive Director, CLUES (Chicanos Latinos Unidos En Servicio); and **Jenny Gordon**, Management Coordinator of Child Foster Care and Day Care, Ramsey County Social Services Division who presented "A Thriving Partnership: CLUES and Ramsey County Human Services."

The Center also was honored by a major presentation given by **Cecilia Sudia**, Program Officer, Children's Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services. Sudia provided an outline of the federal role and its interest in community-based initiatives, including an examination of Family Support funding (Title IV-B, 2)—an important source of funding for prevention and early intervention which are basic strategies for community-based systems. Sudia's early professional life at the University of Minnesota gave her a unique understanding of Minnesota's county-based system. Sudia's indispensable role in the growth and development of the family preservation concepts embraced by the Department of Health and Human Services was especially appreciated by symposium participants. ■

•**Donna (Demarais) Wacker**, current Rural Child Welfare Scholar and a bilingual child protection specialist with Watonwan County Human Services, presented "Implications

for Social Work Practice: Integrating the Bicultural Continuum with a Strengths Perspective" at the NASW-MN 7th Annual State Conference. ■

State Universities Meeting

The Spring Quarter Meeting of the State Universities Committee was held Friday, June 27, 1997 at the Campus Club, Minneapolis. Representatives from Bemidji State, Southwest State, St. Cloud State, the University of

lowing received concentrated attention at the meeting: the unprecedented upswing of family mobility among those receiving public assistance; issues in wraparound services; and the Indian Child Welfare Act, implications for training and coordination with child protection.

THE FOLLOWING PRESENTED AT THE SPRING JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP, COORDINATED BY GRADUATE ASSISTANT JEFF FISHER:

- Diane Knust**, SSW alumna, currently Case Management Director with the Minnesota AIDS Project;
- Dana Swift**, CASCW alumna, currently Social Worker with Dakota County Children and Family Services;
- Jean Exline**, Director of Career Services, College of Human Ecology, speaking on the services available to job seekers through the Career Center; and
- Colleen Besser-Wiek**, Early Childhood Education Social Worker, Wayzata Public Schools.

Minnesota, and Winona State attended this meeting on strengthening the child welfare curriculum content in undergraduate education, which included reports from State Universities receiving \$4,000 grants for this purpose and a discussion of current issues in the field. The fol-

An Innovative Use of Grant Money: WSU

Field Coordinator **John Collins** and Professor **Caecilia Winubst**, both on staff at Winona State University (WSU), used part of the award to WSU made by the Center through IV-E funds to support a spring series of child welfare cur-

Continued on page 6

CASPARS

a work in progress by Jane Gilgun, PhD

New Tools Give Equal Consideration to Client Strengths and Risks

Social work long has emphasized the importance of assessing for client strengths and risks. With the support of a grant from the Allina Foundation, Associate Professor **Jane Gilgun**, University of Minnesota School of Social Work, is completing the development and testing of five assessment instruments for children and families where the children have a range of childhood adversities and clinical issues such as a history of maltreatment, foster home placements, sexual acting out, and neuropsychological issues.

Called CASPARS (Clinical Assessment Package for Risks and Strengths), the instruments were tested on 146 children and families. About two-thirds of the children had been in foster care, and there was a balance of girls/boys and cultural groups.

The instruments were completed by treatment professionals; preliminary analysis suggests the instruments are sensitive to client change. They may, therefore, be particularly useful evaluation tools. The entire package includes instruments on emotional expressiveness, family relationships, peer relationships, sexuality, and the family's embeddedness in the community. The instruments are based on social work's ecological-strengths perspective, and research and theory on risk and resilience. ■

THIS EXCERPT IS FROM AN UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT, "CASPARS: CLINICAL ASSESSMENT PACKAGE FOR RISKS AND STRENGTHS"; PLEASE USE THE ORDER FORM ON PAGE 9 TO REQUEST A COPY.

riculum workshops designed to strengthen the child welfare component of an undergraduate curriculum. CASCW Distance Field Coordinator **Kevin Burke** represented the Center at the workshops; other contributors included child welfare field instructors, administrators, and professors from both Mankato and Winona State Universities. Workshops to assess the elements necessary for the best academic preparation for students before embarking on child welfare practice were held during Spring Quarter and focused on the following:

- discussion of revision to the content and format of existing child welfare courses;
- a pilot project: development of a child welfare practicum experience in partnership with relevant county agencies and an articulation of the critical elements in a child welfare practicum experience;
- development of a for-credit continuing education workshop in the area of child welfare.

A proposal was drafted from the workshop exchanges. A follow-up meeting to critique the proposal and plan for the implementation of the project components was held in July. ■

Project Updates

Area Training Centers

In June 1997 the School of Social Work (SSW) was awarded \$1,033,680 by the Department of Human Services to support a two-year project to strengthen the State's regional training delivery system. Director of SSW Distance Education **Nan Kalke**, CASCW Faculty Associate, is the principal investigator. The project is to employ and supervise four Area Training Managers and to develop four Area Training Centers in targeted geographic areas in a collaborative effort with the State, county agencies, and tribal reservations. The project is a component of the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System's initiative to develop a statewide, competency-based, culturally sensitive child welfare system.

Continued on page 7

Abuse of Mothers and Their Children

In June 1997 the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Center for the Future of Children awarded \$97,000 to Assistant Professor **Sandra Beeman** and Professor **Jeff Edleson** for the first year of their two-year study, *The Experience of Families Where Both Children and Their Mothers Are Abused*. This project will examine how multiple forms of violence within families evolve over time and how the two forms of violence interact. It will also explore the help-seeking behaviors of families in which there is both battering of mothers and maltreatment of their children, and the responses these families have received from various informal support, social service, and legal systems. Data will be collected through telephone sur-

veys with 200 women contacted via domestic violence programs in Minneapolis, MN; Dallas, TX; Pittsburgh, PA; and Santa Clara, CA. In-person interviews also will be conducted with an additional 25 women, 25 teenage children, and 25 male partners from the Minneapolis area.

Higher Education Center Against Violence and Abuse (HECAVA)

In May 1997 Professor **Jeff Edleson**, CASCW Faculty Associate and Director of HECVA, received a \$75,000 award from the Office of Drug Policy and Crime Prevention (Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning) in support of the Higher Education Center Against Violence and Abuse. In addition, the Legislature has now funded this initiative for

\$300,000 over the next two years (through June 1999).

National Electronic Network on Violence Against Women

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence renewed a subcontract with Professor **Jeff Edleson**, who received the \$47,000 award to design, implement, and pilot test a national electronic network on violence against women. In addition, organizing a national advisory group on applied research and evaluation, supervising the identification and development of research abstracts for the national database, and maintaining an on-line database on applied research evaluation are components of the project. The subcontract is a result of a grant awarded to the Pennsylvania Coali-

tion by the National Center on Injury Prevention and Control (Centers for Disease Control).

Follow-Up on Findings from Kinship Foster Care Project

Over the summer Assistant Professor **Sandra Beeman**, CASCW Research Associate, and Assistant Professor **Laura Boisen**, Augsburg College, gave a presentation on the findings from the Kinship Foster Care Project to Anoka County staff members. Anoka County was one of the three counties that participated in the study (along with Hennepin and Blue Earth Counties). A similar presentation on the attitudes and practices in Hennepin County is planned for staff members of Hennepin County Children and Family Services Division during the fall. ■

WEB SITES OF INTEREST

<http://www.umn.edu/mincava/> -- HECVA's electronic clearinghouse: many links, several on-line papers and reports, and more.

<http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us> -- Office of Revisor of Statutes: on-line access to State of Minnesota statutes and Minnesota Rules as well as other related links.

<http://www.calib.com/nccanch/> -- National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information: on-line publications and fact sheets, links, and more.

Editorial Comments

by Esther Wattenberg

Child Protection at the Crossroads

Chou En-lai, the Chinese premier under Mao Zedong, was once asked by a reporter what he thought of the French revolution; Chou En-lai considered for a moment, then replied, "It's too early to tell."

And so it is with Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, which is widely regarded as the most important child welfare reform enacted in recent times. After almost two decades of policy and practice directed by PL 96-272, critics nationwide are questioning its effectiveness, and proponents are saying, "It's too early to tell."

It is useful to recall the outline of this federal initiative, sometimes referred to as the "permanency planning law." PL 96-272 requires that specific efforts be made to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their parents; that an infusion of services be provided to the family if the child must be placed in order to speed reunification; and if "rea-

sonable efforts" are of no avail in reuniting the child with the family, termination of parental rights may occur, and the child becomes a ward of the state, with adoption as the preferred option for a permanency plan. Under Minnesota law,

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... Is PL 96-272 working? Is it too early to tell?

twelve months is the maximum time a child can remain in "temporary" care.

Despite the mandates under PL 96-272 and a network of prevention programs, Minnesota, like the rest of the nation, has seen a steady rise in maltreatment reports, shelter care/out-of-home placements, failed reunifications, disruptive adoptions, and a doubling of children in correctional facilities.

"Rethinking" the child welfare system has become a national phenomenon.

There is widespread impatience with the philosophy of family preservation. Politicians want hard answers, but they don't exist. Those who pick up the phone and report an abused child are angry with what they perceive as an un-

GAO/HEHS-97-115).

The policy milieu is sharply divided by ideologies. Advocates for shifting child protection responsibilities to the criminal justice system focus on a "save the child" mission. Those who support a social work role for child protection to "assess" as well as "investigate" the allegations of maltreatment rely on social work principles of rehabilitation and, if at all possible, "family preservation."

Much less discussed is the devastation that has ripped through families and neighborhoods due to the lethal combination of drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, and poverty.

The child welfare system is overwhelmed. Its power to curb these corrosive and corrupting forces is limited. The intrusion of crack/cocaine, dating from 1986, has further inflicted incalculable damage on inner-city neighborhoods.

With child protection at the crossroads, there are both short and long-term concerns that should be addressed. For the short term, the legislature should allow some dis-

cretionary judgments beyond the twelve-month limit for permanency. Minnesota allows three options when children cannot be reunited with their families: adoption; legal custody (most often with relatives); and permanent long-term foster care. But severing a child from birth parents is a life-shaping decision. A year's limit for measuring a family's capacity to change is too rigid. We also must press for a well-funded substance-abuse research program. Almost eighty percent of all reports of neglected children are drug driven. The human and fiscal cost of drug addiction is staggering. Treatment plans have high failure rates. We should not flinch from discussing the hard realities of drug

addiction.

If there is any chance to motivate the general public to play an active role in reducing child maltreatment, the focus should be on the scourge of drugs and how to contain its devastation.

For the long term, social problems of poverty, crime, and income disparity once again should emerge as national priorities. ■



Goldberg v. Kelly

Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., died on July 24, 1997.

As all students of welfare history know, his opinion in *Goldberg v. Kelly* (1970) created

the constitutional basis for both justice and compassion for poor people in this nation. That decision held that it was a violation of the F o u r t e e n t h Amendment's guarantee of due process of law for a state to cut off a welfare recipient's benefits without a hearing. The decision became the shield for poor citizens against the arbitrary power of government. It will, no doubt, be invoked in the next few months, when the state, following a federal directive, removes 1,000 children from their (SSI) grants.

Justice Brennan left a powerful legacy when he wrote: "If due process values are to be

preserved in the bureaucratic state of the late 20th century, it may be essential that officials possess passion — the passion that puts them in touch with the dreams and disappointments of those with whom they deal, the passion that understands the pulse of life beneath the official version of events." In his opinion in *Goldberg v. Kelly*, he noted that due process injected passion into "a system whose abstract rationality had led it astray."*

*As quoted in the *New York Times*, Friday, July 25, 1997. ■

A CASCW SYMPOSIUM ON THE DECISION IN *GOLDBERG V. KELLY* AND ITS MEANING FOR THE 90'S AND BEYOND IS UNDER DISCUSSION.

PUBLICATION ORDER FORM/ADDRESS CORRECTION FORM

- "A Study of Young Children Who Are Wards of the State of Minnesota," as of October 14, 1996"
- Proceedings from "Rethinking Child Welfare: Can the System Be Transformed through Community Partnerships" (forthcoming)
- "CASPARS: Clinical Assessment Package for Risks and Strengths"

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Current Center Research

The Center and its director, Professor **Esther Wattenberg**, have been awarded \$150,000 for an 18-month proposal to the McKnight Foundation: "Developing Optimal Permanent Placements for Young Children in Foster Care." This project represents the first phase of a comprehensive proposal to assure optimal outcomes for the increasing number of very young children enmeshed in the child welfare system. The project, which begins Oc-

tober 1st, is focused on a group of children, six years of age and younger, who have been removed from their families and placed in foster homes because of situations of egregious harm and who have the least chance of returning to their families. A risk assessment protocol for "egregious harm" and a community engagement endeavor will be completed in the first phase. The eighteen-month period will lay the groundwork for a two-year experimental project to test concurrent

planning. The North American Council on Adoptable Children is the collaborating community agency selected for the second phase of the project.

Professor Esther Wattenberg is the principal investigator, and Field Coordinator **Gail Walters** is the project director for this undertaking. Dr. **Jane Gilgun** is a consultant to the project; doctoral student **Hyungmo Kim** is the primary research assistant.

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