

**Center for
Advanced Studies in
Child Welfare**

NEWS
January 1995

School of Social Work - 400 Ford Hall - 224 Church Street SE - University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota - (612) 626-8202

*Sponsored by the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
with Bush Foundation and IV-E funds, through the Minnesota Department of Human Services.*

Announcement:

It is with great pleasure that the Center announces a three-year extension of the Bush Foundation Award. This vote of confidence provides stability for the Center and also yields the match for state IV-E funds, enabling it to become a vital partner with the State, the counties and the nonprofit sector in the search to improve the well-being of families and children in the child welfare system.

1994-1995 SCHOLARS

The following students are receiving Bush/IV-E Scholarships for the 1994-95 academic year: **Mary Anderson, Eileen Banks, Bernadette Benner, Charissa Bryant, Chandra Carter-Mialor, Ana Dean, Diana Marie Denlinger, Lena Dixit, Christine Enking, Doriscile Everett, Theresa Feldt, Claudia Fercello, Sarah Ferguson, Danya Foley, Arie Ford, Valerie Forsch, Teyent Germa, Gloria Haines, Lori Hamilton, Christina Johnson, Valandra Kamara-Makeba, Candace Kragthorpe, Phillip Larkins, Daniel Lee, Robin Lee, Dawne Loud, Michael Rivard, Rose Robinson, Hunter Roe, Rebecca Santos-Ramos, Nicole Sellin, Suzanne Serbus, William Sparke, Dana Swift-Araya, Dzung Hung Trinh, and Linda Veitch.** The racial composition of recipients is as follows: African-American=36%, Caucasian=31%, Asian/Pacific Islander=14%, American Indian=12%, and Hispanic/Latina=7%.

STUDENT NEWS

Phillip Larkins presented a paper at the Black Social Workers Conference in Seattle, WA entitled "Team Building: The 12-Step Method; A Common Sense Approach" in November and the

National Black Child Institute in October.

Two scholars, **Valandra Makeba-Kamara** and **Phu Phan**, recently had articles published in Colors: Minnesota's Journal of Opinion by Writers of Color.

FACULTY NEWS

Esther Wattenberg presented a paper and presided over a panel on Neglecting Families at the national conference: "Expanding Partnerships for Vulnerable Children, Youth and Families" in September in Washington, D.C..

Sandra Beeman and **Esther Wattenberg** received a grant for \$55,798 from the Minnesota State Department of Human Services to conduct a study comparing characteristics of kinship and nonkinship foster care cases in three Minnesota counties.

Jeffrey Edelson has been appointed by the National Academy of Sciences as a member of the Panel on Research on Violence Against Women. The 14-member panel was mandated by Congress in the recently approved Violence Against Women Act. He will also be presenting an overview of data and research to a family violence meeting to the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C..

The council of representatives of the American Psychological Association has elected **Geraldine Brookins** to serve as a member of the Board for Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest.

CONFERENCES

"Honoring the Integrity of Culture, Family, and Children: The Indian Child Welfare Act Revisited," a workshop held on December 12, 1994 at the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center was developed with the cooperation of Healthy Nations, the School of Social Work, the Center, and continuing education. Funds from Bush/IV-E and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs provided support for this workshop. Presenter were: **Mark Fiddler**, Turtle Mountain Ojibwe, Attorney at Law, Executive Director, Indian Child Welfare Law Center; **Rose Robinson**, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Indian Child Welfare Adviser, Minnesota Department of Human Services; **Lila George**, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, MSW, Assistant Professor, Social Work, Bemidji State University; **Adrienne Adkins**, White Earth Band, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Leech Lake Reservation; **Penny Scheffler**, Lower Sioux, MSW, Social Worker, Hennepin County Children's and Family Services; **Ardith Lessier**, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Social Worker, Hennepin County Children's and Family Services; **Katie Turner**, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, White Earth Reservation, Urban Adoption Worker, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe; **Iris Heavy Runner**, Blackfeet, MSW, Director, Twin Cities Healthy Nations Program joined by **Sarah Gaskell**, Social Worker,

Hennepin County; Social Worker.

Among the important issues underscored in the discussion on implementing the Indian Child Welfare Act was the use of an Indian expert witness. This expert witness may be identified by the tribal organization and is selected to provide knowledge and understanding about tribal culture and the relevance of these factors to the decision about the child's well-being. Indian expert witnesses serve in instances where removal of a child from an Indian home is being sought or in any other deviation from the principles of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Culturally appropriate services and case-workers who are familiar with Indian culture are also acknowledged as playing a vitally important role in a successful implementation of the Act.

A summary of the Indian Child Welfare Act, a bibliography, and a report prepared by the Urban Coalition, "The Well-Being of American Indian Children in Minnesota: Economic Conditions," as well as a statistical portrait of Indian children in out-of-home care are available from the workshop packet. Please call 625-1551, if these materials are of interest.

MESSAGES FROM THE FIELD

David Thompson, Ramsey County; **Barbara McBain**, Dakota County; **Julie Brenner**, Anoka County; **Dennis McCoy**, Blue Earth County; **Jean Quam** and **Esther Wattenberg**, at the advisory committee meeting on October 31, 1994, engaged in a lively discussion on some important and troubling trends. Among their observations, the following was noted: • Corrections is now a very large and increasing component of county budgets; • The linkage between children's mental health and child protection continues to be uncertain.

A new initiative is being developed to create an integrated response to maltreatment reports. In this experimental model, Dakota County's initiative is described as providing a coherent response for both the families and the reporters of maltreatment of children.

PUBLICATIONS

FORTHCOMING PAPERS

Proceedings of the conference, "Children of the Shadows" will be available during the spring quarter.

STAFF/FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

"Child Welfare Issues in Latino/Chicano Communities: A selected annotated bibliography (1894-1993)," prepared by **Mary DeVore**, MSW; under the direction of the Center and supported by CURA.

"Avengers, Conquerors, Playmates and Lovers: Roles Played by Child Sexual Abuse Perpetrators," by **Jane F. Gilgun**, Ph.D., an article appearing in *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, Vol. 75(8), 467-479.

A paper, "The Fate of the Non-Marital Child: A Challenge to the Health System," Co-authored by **Michael Resnick**, **Esther Wattenberg**, and **Rose Brewer** has been published in the *Journal of Community Health*, Vol. 19(4), 1994.

PROJECT UNDER DEVELOPMENT

A project to work with Minnesota State Universities to strengthen their content in child welfare was initiated at a meeting held on December, 16, 1994. Present were representatives from St. Cloud State University, Southwest State University, Augsburg College, Winona State University, and Mankato State University.

DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

An Advanced Standing MSW program will be initiated that enables students in Moorhead and Rochester to complete the MSW in three years. The equipment permits students at each site to see and be seen by the instructor and students at the other site. A group facilitator will be present at each site to assist the primary instructor and facilitate local arrangements. This model builds on the model developed by instructors **Ron Rooney** and **Ann Ahlquist** in delivering three graduate level courses over the past two years.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: A Profile of Two Recent Bush/IV-E Graduates

To the haunting question, can our students, recipients of a Bush/IV-E child welfare scholarship truly make a difference when they begin practice? We believe the answer is "yes." A remarkable contribution to change has been made by our recent graduates. Meet two recent "new age" child protection workers, **Ann Stein** and **Rolando Martinez**. They graduated in our first class, 1992 and went to work in the highly regulated, complex and crisis ridden unit, child protection, in Hennepin County.

Ann Stein: A Brief Profile

Ann came to graduate school with a background that provided evidence of a strong interest in child welfare. While still a graduate student, Ann, under the supervision of the Center, prepared a highly regarded paper, "Prevention: A Perspective for a Child Welfare System" which was included in the final report of Hennepin County's Foster Care Redesign Commission.

Ann had two internships before accepting a full time job as Principal Social Worker in Child Protection: one with "Project Child," a Hennepin County program for pregnant women addicted to cocaine and one as an intake worker in a child protection unit. Within the first month of her job, Ann was carrying a full case load of 12-15 high risk families with 30-50 children. Undaunted, within her first year of professional responsibility, Ann gave birth to daughter Zoë. A half-time job share arrangement was developed. Another Bush/IV-E graduate, **Anne Dare**, who is now the mother of two children, is the partner in this arrangement. Hennepin County's progressive personnel policies created this "family friendly" environment.

Rolando Martinez: A Brief Profile

Rolando came to graduate school with a background that assured his interest in child welfare. He worked at Neighborhood House with Hispanic youth before coming to the University. As a graduate student, his distinguished work both in the classroom and in his internships with child

protection, earned him an early offer from Hennepin County to join their social work staff in child protection. Rolando capped his graduation in 1992 with marriage to another Bush/IV-E scholar, **Anna Griffin** and now they have a child, **Bobby Rolando**. Balancing work, family, and children appears to be an unexpected talent of our Bush/IV-E scholars.

Observations from a joint interview

Ann and Rolando came to lunch, late in December, to talk about their first year and a half as principal social workers in a child protection unit. What follows are comments from that meeting.

Rolando and his supervisor, **Lou Kaluza**, along with a few colleagues, sparked the idea of testing fresh approaches to families reported for maltreatment of their children.

A new unit was developed which Ann joined along with 9-12 other social workers (3 of whom are Bush/IV-E scholars). This unit is characterized by flexibility, a strong commitment to the family preservation philosophy and a team approach. Allowing time for consultative exchanges is central.

"The family that I work with is just not my case, it belongs to the whole unit. I'm in a steady dialogue with other members of the unit. They are all part of my support group." Ann makes these remarks and Rolando adds, "I treasure Ann's judgment. She is fair, dedicated, responsible," and Anne adds, "Rolando's wisdom in checking things out is prized by everybody in the unit." Working with desperately troubled families that enter and re-enter the child protection system is a serious challenge to the child welfare system. Sometimes there is a decision to carry a case jointly. On other occasions, joint staffing takes place at different points in the assessment.

A simple but inspired contribution to change was the availability of cellular phones for each worker in the unit. "The phone in the bag and beepers" has transformed the process of assessment and referral. Families can reach their workers without lengthy delays. Referrals for resources are made during home visits. "The waiting list phenomenon," an obstacle in referral to needed services, has been reduced. Responses to crises are immediate. Increased availability to their families through "the phone in the bag" is valued by Ann and Rolando as the beginning of

building a trust relationship.

This new unit is dedicated to front-end services (child protection has traditionally spent an inordinate amount of time following a report of maltreatment on "risk assessment" and then made referrals for intervention). The new approach reverses that long-standing practice.

Intensive, comprehensive services for a brief time, working directly with smaller caseloads and linking families to community based services for on-going support is a major change in child protection practice in an overburdened urban county. Lou Kaluza is credited by Rolando and Ann for his leadership in creating this new unit. "He is a visionary--always open to new ideas."

What does it take to break through the suspicions, depression, passivity, hopelessness of treatment jaded families mired in a long chain of failures? Rolando observes: "Be humble in your use of power and totally honest with your families on what you can do."

The struggle to survive alcohol and drug addiction, mental illness, domestic violence and the devastating impact of poverty stirs both Rolando and Ann to comment on the importance of understanding the strengths that poor families bring when they want to maintain their children.

"When I see that a family, despite the terrible things that have happened, wants to hold on to their children, it is important to see if you can keep the family together safely. Once the court system is involved, wheels turn and they may never be a family again..." commented Rolando.

If Ann and Rolando could change any part of the child welfare system, what would it be?

Ann says: "There has got to be a less punitive way for families to receive services. Child protection poses the threat to families of the loss of their children." Ann would like to see the referral system within Hennepin County to programs like "Families First," made more flexible, easier to access. The eligibility regulations need to be revised.

Rolando would reform the court system. The adversarial nature of the court system which brings an accusatory environment into play needs to be replaced with mediation if we are serious about strengthening families to maintain their children. "There is a lot of power in the court room and it can be easily misused in an adversarial setting."

An evaluation of the role of the "guardians ad litem" was recommended. While "guardians..." who are volunteers

appointed to represent the interest of the children in the court system often contribute an important perspective, there are many instances of inadequacies. In Hennepin County, the corps of "guardians" lack diversity in background and knowledge of minority heritage. Some have little knowledge of the family preservation law and its philosophy. The understanding of family systems is uneven. Their advocacy for a "save the child" often runs at cross purposes with a family support perspective.

Ann and Rolando acknowledge the heavy responsibility of working in a child protection unit. "Our decisions shape the life of a child and the history of the child's family. It is true that we do have sleepless nights over our decisions."

However, the experimental unit has created a supportive family to counteract the isolation in which traditional protection workers operate.

If it takes a village to raise a child, a frequent observation these days, then it takes a nurturing and cooperative unit such as the one being developed by Lou Kaluza to raise a wise social worker to work with high-risk families.

Did Ann and Rolando provide any advice for those Bush/IV-E scholars presently in the MSW program? The courses most helpful, in retrospect, were Child Welfare and the Law, Psychopathology, Working with Involuntary Clients, Direct work with Children and Ethno-Cultural Concepts in Social Work.

Comments on the interview conducted by Esther Wattenberg

This issue of the newsletter is devoted to the observations of two recent graduates. Their experiences in making lifeshaping decisions that will have long range consequences for children and their families reminds us, once again, that child protection is the most difficult arena in social work. It requires the wisdom of Solomon and humility born in the respect that comes from observing families, with little control over their lives struggling to deal with the terrifying circumstances of separation, abandonment, murder, homelessness, addictions and the corrosive despair of poverty.

One of the most pressing problems in protecting children is the wide gap between the number of cases reported and the level of prompt and appropriate services available. Engaging high risk families to assess their capacity to change

requires time.

That is why we take notice of the experimental unit to which our graduates have made a contribution. Some time has been provided for the important task of engaging the family in a plan.

It is important to note that Hennepin County is in the midst of a sweeping reorganizational change. In this yeasty period of searching for fresh responses and a revision of traditional ways, the opportunity to create a promising experimental unit was seized. An energetic and visionary supervisor, Lou Kaluza, and a creative and forward looking manager, **David Sanders**, are credited with the effort. We are pleased that our graduates also made an important contribution. EW

AN EDITORIAL COMMENT

Have draconian measures intended to change the welfare system considered the effects on children?

Welfare reform and child welfare are inextricably bound together. Among the proposals for reforming welfare, consider the

following: denying AFDC to poor children born to teenage, unmarried mothers; ending entitlements to income and nutritional programs; eliminating AFDC for children whose mothers are unemployed after a two-year stay on AFDC (proposed as a state option); consolidating federal nutrition programs, including food stamps, school lunches and WIC and slashing the block grant at a level that could eliminate 3 million children from these nutritional programs.

The reverberations of the jolting election that produced these proposals will have a profound effect on the child welfare system. As a nation, we seem to be heading down the path to dramatically altering the way in which poor children in poor families are treated. Make no mistake, slashing and eliminating programs will drive the child welfare system into an unprecedented crisis of skyrocketing caseloads.

A reminder is in order. Minnesota has one of the best Family Preservation Acts in the nation (Family Preservation Act, Section 10, M.S. 1990, Section 256F.0.1). The State's explicit policy is to avoid the separation of parent and child unless such

separation is absolutely necessary for the protection of the child. We hope the policy is reaffirmed. Our perverse attraction for institutionalization (building more and more prisons; reinventing orphanages) should be curbed, and our attention to strengthening the capacity of families to take care of their children needs to be reinforced.

Our legislature will spend the next few months grappling with reforms in welfare, health, education, and the criminal justice system. For each and every proposal advanced, we hope there is a persistent question: How will it affect the well-being of children?

Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
School of Social Work
425 Ford Hall
224 Church St SE
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612) 626-8202
<http://ssw.che.umn.edu/cascw/>

Center Staff

Esther Wattenberg, Director
Nancy Johnston, Assistant Director
Maura Sullivan, Field Director
Sandra Beeman, Research Associate
Sonia Davila-Williams, Field Liaison Instructor
Gloria McGee, Field Liaison Instructor
Laura Boisen, Graduate Assistant
Susan Bullerdick, Graduate Assistant
Heather Sinclair, Administrative Assistant
Jin Hedstrom, Principal Secretary
Jean Quam, ex-officio

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Minneapolis, MN Permit No. 155
--