

Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare

NEWS

Fall 1995

School of Social Work - 431 Ford Hall - 224 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, Minnesota - (612) 626-8202

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Grant Funded

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Department of Health and Human Services; has awarded the Center a two-year grant - \$75,000 per year - to establish a scholarship program for staff members of rural counties and tribal reservations who serve vulnerable children. The grant will be administered through the Distance Learning Program of the School of Social Work. Eight traineeships will be awarded. A model of distance learning in advanced studies in child welfare for staff members of rural counties will be developed. Using the technology of distance learning, graduate social work classes will be offered at Moorhead and Rochester sites and connected with the Minneapolis site through interactive television. Esther Wattenberg, the Principal Investigator for the project, will be assisted by Nan Kalke and Kevin Burke.

FACULTY NEWS

- ◆ **Ann Ahlquist**, Director of the Child Abuse Prevention Studies Program, produced "State of the Children: Victims of Violence Symposium," held on November 30, 1995 in Cowles Auditorium, Hubert Humphrey Institute. The Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare cosponsored the event; **Esther Wattenberg** participated in the panel discussion.
- ◆ **Sonia Davila-Williams**, Field Coordinator, participated on the Hispanic Team at a working conference, "From Vision to Action," sponsored by the State of Minnesota's Action for Children; the Children's Cabinet; and the Legislative Commission on Children, Youth and Their Families. The purpose of the conference, held November 2-3, was to produce information to be used to enhance statewide services on behalf of Chicano/Latino children and their families.
- ◆ Professor **Jeff Edleson's** book *Work-*

ing with Children and Adolescents in Groups (coauthored with Sheldon Rose) has been published in Chinese by a publishing house in Taiwan. Also, Jeff gave two presentations, entitled "The Connection Between Child Abuse and Women Battering: The Impact of Multiple Victimization" and "Family and Intimate Violence Issues in Rural Areas" at the National Violence Prevention Conference. Associate Professor **Oliver Williams** presented "A Multi-Cultural Dialogue on Family & Intimate Violence Prevention" at the conference. The conference, "Bridging Science and Program," was hosted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and the University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center.

- ◆ Associate Professor **Jane Gilgun's** paper "Recognizing Signs of Sexual Abuse in Children, Adolescents, and Adults" was presented to the Minnesota Association of Chiropractic Medicine, Richfield, MN on No-

vember 9, 1995. Gilgun was also a moderator of a panel, "Out of Harm's Way: Children in the 90's," October 13, 1995, Symposium for Homecoming 1995, College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. A two-part series on Human Development and Adversity in Ecology Perspective has been accepted for publication in *Families in Society*.

- ◆ On Friday, December 8, **Nan Kalke**, Director of the Office of Distance Learning, presented "Shared Responsibility for Safety...What's Your Part?" with Denise Morcomb, Gerard Treatment Programs, at the 9th Annual National Association for Family Based Services Empowering Families Conference in Chicago, December 6-9, 1995. This presentation explored safety in family-based services, along a continuum of responsibility, including larger systems, agencies, worker and family.

♦ Among the presentations made by the Center's Director, Professor **Esther Wattenberg**: "The Role of Foster Care in the Child Welfare System," a presentation for foster families honored by Family Alternatives for their excellent care of foster children with special needs, on November 11, 1995, in Minneapolis; and "Kinship Care Research Findings in Minnesota" at a forum sponsored by the National Resource Center for Permanency Planning (funded by the US Children's Bureau) on September 22, 1995 in Region V, Chicago, Illinois.

CHILD WELFARE GRADUATES IN THE NEWS

❖ Congratulations to **Neal Cheng Thao**, a 1988 graduate of the School of Social Work and a 1986-87 Child Welfare Traineeship recipient, who has become St. Paul's second Hmong elected official. Neal received the most votes in the Tuesday, November 7th St. Paul School Board election.

NOTICE OF A RESEARCH AWARD TO FACULTY ASSOCIATES

❖ Professor **Jeff Edleson** and Assistant Professor **Sandra Beeman** received a grant of \$40,356 from the Allina Foundation for their study, "Understanding the Link between Child Maltreatment and Woman Battering." The project is a collaborative undertaking between the Center (CASCW) and the Higher Education Center Against Violence and Abuse (HECAVA) with additional funding from Title IV-E, the Bush Foundation, and the Agricultural Experiment Station (AES). The study focuses on the identification of risk factors associated with the dual occurrence of woman battering and child maltreatment, and on the response of service providers to families where both forms of victimization occur.

A VISITOR FROM THE FAMILY WELFARE RESEARCH GROUP

❖ **Richard Barth**, Ph.D., Director of the Family Welfare Research Group, University of California at Berkeley, visited the Center in September. Barth presented a paper, "Insights from Research on the Welfare of Children," to the symposium "Preserving Families and Protecting Children: The Search for Common Ground," sponsored by the State Department of Human Services. Following this, Barth met with doctoral students in the School of Social Work to discuss interests in child welfare dissertations. Later, Barth presented findings from his research on "Children in Foster Care: Factors in Length of Stay" to Hennepin County Staff in Children and Family Services.

NOTES

♦ A resource library on child welfare issues, located in the Center's office (Room 431, Ford Hall), is available for students, field instructors, and faculty.

♦ The Center sponsored a forum: "Reforming Child Protective Services: A Demonstration Project," on Monday, December 4, 1995 in the Stassen Conference Room, Hubert H. Humphrey Center, Minneapolis. Principal Investigator of the project "Intensive In-Home Family Preservation Services to Enhance Child Protective Investigative and Assessment Decisions," Professor **Elaine Walton**, Ph.D., Brigham Young University, presented her findings from an evaluation study. **Carole Smith**, Program Planner at Lucas County Children's Services, Ohio, and Co-Investigator of the project, presented issues in implementation. A lively discussion on models for improving child protective services followed. A task force to be developed on models in "Investigation/Assessment: Striking a Balance in Responding to Child Maltreatment Reports" is under consideration.

FALL QUARTER SEMINARS FOR FIRST-YEAR BUSH/IV-E CHILD WELFARE SCHOLARS

❖ In October, first-year Bush/IV-E Scholars attended a three-part seminar series on the context of child welfare programs and policies. The following made observations on current issues in the field:

October 11, 1995:

♦ **Maureen Green**, Principal Social Worker, Hennepin County Child Protection Services;

♦ **Ron Bell**, Supervisor, Advocate Program, Hennepin County Children and Family Services;

October 18, 1995:

♦ **Joan Riebel**, Executive Director, Family Alternatives, Inc.;

♦ **Clyde Turner**, Director of Program Services, Family Alternatives, Inc.;

October 25, 1995:

♦ **Penny Scheffler**, Supervisor, Hennepin County Child Protection Services;

♦ **Neal Cheng Thao**, Social Worker for Children with Developmental Delays, Ramsey County Human Services; and

♦ **Rolando Martinez**, Principal Social Worker, Hennepin County Child Protection Services.

SEMINARS FOR SECOND-YEAR BUSH/IV-E SCHOLARS

❖ During October and November, **Denise Revels Robinson**, Director, Family and Children's Services Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services; and **Esther Wattenberg** co-facilitated a series of five integrative field seminars on "Emerging Issues in Child Welfare." The Center's Field Instructional Staff also participated in these seminars for second-year Bush/IV-E Child Welfare Scholars and other interested parties.

The seminars focused on field placement issues and Minnesota's policy initiatives, and provided a review of emerging legislation. Among the topics reviewed and opened up for discussion, the following received primary attention:

- ♦ The Minnesota Child Welfare Services Plan (Title IV-B, Subpart 1) and the Five-Year State Plan for Family Preservation and Support Services (Title IV-B, Subpart 2).
- ♦ The Crossover from Welfare Reform to Child Protection: Unintended Consequences.
- ♦ The Implications of a Block Grant for Child Welfare Services.
- ♦ The Impact of Family Preservation and Family Support Act, 1993; Principles in Developing New Partnerships for the Protection of Children.
- ♦ Minnesota's Heritage Act and the Federal Multi-Ethnic Act: The State's Role in Reconciliation.
- ♦ Initiatives in Reforming the Child Welfare System: The Role of Collaboratives.

THE CENTER SPONSORS A FORUM ON THE CHILD PROTECTION PROTOCOL BILL

❖ With 27,000 child maltreatment reports flooding the child protection system, the forum held on November 7 to discuss recently-enacted legislation (Laws of Minnesota 1995, Chapter 187, S.F. No. 342 and H.F. No. 432) relating to standardized procedures for assessing investigative reports drew a sharply engaged audience of social workers, county attorneys, and legal services advocates.

Chief author of the Senate bill, **Allan Spear**, joined by the House author, **Barbara Sykora**, presented the background and rationale for the legislative requirement of a formal, standardized investigation process.

The following panel members responded:

- ♦ **Ann Ahlstrom**, Assistant Hennepin County Attorney;
- ♦ **Erin Sullivan Sutton**, Children's Initiative, Minnesota Department of Human Services;

- ♦ **Terry Stark**, Social Work Unit Supervisor in Child Protection; and
- ♦ **John Korman**, Hennepin County Child Protection Worker.

The chief issue in this latest legislative modification of child abuse report investigations centered on the requirement of audio recordings in collecting relevant information. Sources of information may include the reporter, the child, the alleged offender, and information from collateral sources. In cases alleging abuse, agencies must videotape interviews with all alleged child victims and child witnesses.

The exchanges exposed conflicting perspectives: in an "investigation," due process is an emphasis; in an "assessment," the need to reach a judgment on the risks to the safety of a child is uppermost.

There were no conclusive answers to the substantive question: are we suffering from the inflexibility of standardized rules or from the broad discretionary powers of frontline child protection workers?

The controversy over mandated performance standards in determining maltreatment of children has not subsided.

A report of the Forum exchanges will be available during Winter Quarter. The bulletin issued by the State Department of Human Services directing county social services on "improving child abuse investigations" (Bulletin #95-68-1) is available in the Center's office. Please call Laura Baugh, 626-8202, if you wish to receive a copy.

NASW NATIONAL VIDEO CONFERENCE

❖ The University of Minnesota's School of Social Work has been actively involved in planning for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) National Video Conference, "Social Workers and the Challenge of Violence Worldwide," hosted by Charles Kuralt. The video conference will take place on February 6 at the St. Paul Student Center Theatre, St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota; and on Friday, February 9 on the Minneapolis Campus.

The MN NASW Chapter is one of six NASW Project Centers working on The Violence and Development Project which is a collaboration between NASW and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to educate social work professionals about the parallel conditions of violence in the United States and less economically developed countries. The focus of the MN Chapter has been Family Structure with an emphasis on women and children. If you would like additional information on how you can participate, contact **Maura Sullivan**, School of Social Work, (612) 624-0563.

NOTICE OF SINGLE QUARTER LEAVE

❖ **Nancy Johnston**, Director of Graduate Studies and Assistant Director of the Center, has been awarded a single quarter leave over Winter Quarter to analyze child welfare legislation and to work with the Children's Defense Fund on their legislative agenda.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

by Esther Wattenberg

❖ The proposal for a massive scaling back of government expenditures at the federal level, and a shift of responsibility from a safety net to the unit of government least able to muster resources (counties dependent on the property tax), has profoundly shaken a 60-year assumption: that there exists among all levels of government a partnership to assure minimum protections for children and families at risk.

As of this date, the negotiations on bills for welfare and child welfare have not been finalized. Yet it is important to grasp the enormity of the assault on children in the proposal to balance the budget in seven years: AFDC (the primary income for the basic human needs of poor children)—eliminated as presently constituted; legal services—decimated; programs for handicapped children—slashed; housing subsidies and energy assistance programs—depleted; health care under Medicaid—endangered; food stamps, school lunches, and

foster care—cut by about 25%, and now the final blow—an attack on children in low-income working families. The Earned Income Tax Credit is slated for a \$32 billion cut. Families earning \$15,000 a year will pay higher taxes, while those making \$115,000 will receive substantial tax breaks.

In sum, the proposal to balance the budget in seven years is not only extremely harsh; it is also unfair. Poor families are hit twice as hard as every other income group. Of all the changes, the elimination of AFDC as it is presently administered has caused the most intense concern among child welfare advocates.

There has been a long-standing law in this country, enshrined in federal legislation and

in state statutes, that poverty alone cannot be used as the sole reason for removing children from their families. "Reasonable efforts" must be made to assist families in providing for the basic human needs of their children for food, shelter, and clothing.

With the impending changes in welfare (AFDC), entitlement to income assistance is ended. The crossover from welfare reform to child welfare is inevitable. If states decide not to provide assistance to a child born to unmarried parents while the mother is receiving AFDC, or if states choose not to provide assistance to parents after a two-year stay on AFDC, there will be thousands of children huddling on the doorsteps of child protection.

We have now entered the murky arena of policy: unintended consequences. The absence of a safety net for poor families is not only morally bankrupt, but also fiscally imprudent. The foster care costs for rearing children are, on average, eight times what it costs to maintain a child at home with AFDC.

The serious debate on how states and counties are going to respond to the federal cutbacks is just beginning in Minnesota. It will be important to remember that Minnesota's historic social welfare responses have rightfully been a model for the nation for fairness and decency. If we abandon that legacy, we abandon our children.

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This publication is available in alternative formats, upon request. Please contact the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, 431 Ford Hall, 224 Church Street SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 (612) 626-8202.

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