

Summer 2005



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICE
AND PERMANENCY PLANNING**

at the Hunter College
School of Social Work



A service of the
Children's Bureau/ACF/DHHS

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Permanency Planning Today



from the desk of
**THE
DIRECTOR**

On October 1, 2004 the Hunter College School of Social Work, in partnership with the Child Welfare League of America and the National Indian Child Welfare Association, entered into a new cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau to establish the National Resource Center (NRC) for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning. I am delighted to be able to continue the work we have been doing for the past ten years, first as the NRC for Permanency Planning (fiscal years 1993-1998), and most recently as the NRC for Foster Care and Permanency Planning (1999-2004).

Establishing a National Resource Center for "family-centered practice" and "permanency planning" acknowledges the complex reality that, while families are the best places for children and youth to grow up, for some their families of origin may not be a safe place for them to live. Providing as much support as possible to birth families to assist them in being safe and permanent caregivers for their children, while at the same time planning for another option if our efforts are not successful, must be accomplished through a family-centered orientation. Further, when planning for another option, we reflect the family-centeredness of our practice by seeking the optimal connection a child can have to family, culture and community. An NRC that integrates family-centered practice with the goal of permanence makes a statement that strengthening and supporting all families - birth, adoptive, kinship, guardian, and foster - is the best way to ensure children's timely permanence, stability, safety and continuity in family relationships.

In this issue of Permanency Planning Today, a biannual publication of the NRC, we highlight some of the ways in which family-centered practice has already been incorporated into much of the training and technical assistance we have been providing to the states.

✦ *What is Family-Centered Practice?*

An article adapted from one prepared by the previous National Child Welfare Resource Center on Family Centered Practice, gives a brief overview and four essential components of family-centered practice in child welfare.

✦ *Subsidized Guardianship: What Does it Have to do with Family-Centered Practice?*

Describes ways in which family-centered practice has been integrated into the work of the National Collaboration to Promote Permanency through Subsidized Guardianship.

✦ *Strengthening the Indian Child Welfare Act By Providing Resources for Families, Tribes, and States* describes resources available from the National Indian Child Welfare Association to help parents and families as well as caseworkers understand the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act, which has become an important link to the survival of both tribes and tribal culture.

✦ *Family-Centered Practice with Siblings*

Discusses our recognition of the importance of siblings in the lives of children and highlights the work of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services as it focuses attention on siblings in out-of-home care.

Gerald P. Mallon, DSW

WHAT IS FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICE?



The idea of involving the family as a part of valid intervention in child welfare is still relatively new when compared to other, well-established modes of practice. Traditionally, child welfare efforts were child focused. They were intended to protect, provide care for, and plan for children who were separated from their parents because of abandonment or abuse and who were living in some form of out-of-home care. Children were seen as victims of incompetent parents and the solution to the maltreatment problem was to separate the children from their parents, placing them in the hands of foster care providers.

The intent was to encourage parents to learn to become better parents. Parents were given conditions that had to be met to be reunited with their children. These conditions might include getting a job, cleaning up their apartments, learning better parenting skills, or engaging in counseling to solve the underlying problems that were thought to cause them to be abusive and neglectful. Many of the parents became labeled as "unmotivated," "resistant," and "in denial" or refusing to "assume responsibility" of their problems.

As a result of this approach an increasing number of children were found to be drifting in foster care, often subjected to repeated re-placement, ultimately losing the affectional ties, but not the legal bonds, that linked them to their families. These children had no hope of either going home again or gaining permanency through adoption. Still others, largely because of race or ethnicity - mainly African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans - became overrepresented because of child welfare's historic misunderstanding of their needs.



As a result of the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (PL 96-272), the Family Preservation and Support Act of 1993 (PL 103-66), the Safe and Stable Family Program in 1997, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), recently reauthorized as part of the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments (PSSF) of 2001, the scope and purposes of child welfare programs require a comprehensive plan of family-centered services:

- ▣ to help families manage the tasks of daily living, adequately nurture children, and remedy problem situations
- ▣ to make "reasonable efforts" to keep children and youth in their own homes whenever possible rather than placing them in foster care
- ▣ to safeguard children from dangerous living situations, and protect the right of every child to grow up with a sense of well-being, belonging, and permanence

Shifting the focus from the child to the family has often been viewed in child welfare as creating a dichotomy between the goals of protecting children and preserving and supporting families. But effective family-centered practice depends on a clear understanding of the relationship between these two goals. The belief that the best approach to protect children is to strengthen families acknowledges that there are times in the lives of families when they may be weak from exposure to stressors such as poverty, poor housing, substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental illness. Furthermore, since help and timely intervention may not be available, some families may respond minimally or not at all to efforts to help them, and still others may require long-term help and support, it sometimes becomes necessary to determine if out-of-home care is needed. When it is the plan of choice, the task is to manage placements in ways that minimize, as far as possible, the pain and bewilderment of separation and assure that children who go into care will be protected and well nurtured pending completion of a permanent plan.

Adapted from the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Family Centered Practice. (2000, Summer).

Can we put clothes on this emperor? Best Practice/Next Practice
You can find this publication on our website at

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/newsletters.html#BPNP>

The Essential Components of Family-Centered Practice in Child Welfare

1 THE FAMILY UNIT IS THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Family-centered practice works with the family as a collective unit, insuring the safety and well-being of family members.

2 STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF FAMILIES TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IS EMPHASIZED

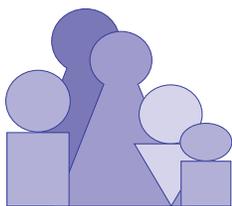
The primary purpose of family-centered practice is to strengthen the family's potential for carrying out their responsibilities.

3 FAMILIES ARE ENGAGED IN DESIGNING ALL ASPECTS OF THE POLICIES, SERVICES & PROGRAM EVALUATION

Family-centered practitioners partner with families to use their expert knowledge throughout the decision and goal-making processes and provide individualized, culturally-responsive, and relevant services for each family.

4 FAMILIES ARE LINKED WITH MORE COMPREHENSIVE, DIVERSE & COMMUNITY-BASED NETWORKS OF SUPPORTS & SERVICES

Family-centered interventions assist in mobilizing resources to maximize communication, shared planning, and collaboration among the several community and/or neighborhood systems that are directly involved in the family.



Toolbox #3: Facilitating Permanency for Youth

By Gerald P. Mallon, DSW

Facilitating permanency for youth in foster care can be challenging. Although the child welfare system has maintained in its policies and practices a clear focus for younger children in need of permanency, it has been less explicit on the logistics of facilitating that goal. This publication focuses on promising practices and approaches shown to promote permanency for youth. Contents include a current literature and research review; highlights of promising strategies, partnerships, and innovative public policies; case review prototypes; strategies for including the adolescent in the service planning process; definitions of outcomes for adolescent permanency; and many other areas. This book will provide practitioners with the vision and the practical guidance needed to facilitate and support permanency for youth and thus improve youth chances for safety, permanency, and well-being.

Please see the others in the series:

Toolbox #1: Using Visitation to Support Permanency

Toolbox #2: Expanding the Role of Foster Parents in Achieving Permanency for Children

Order online: <http://www.cwla.org/pubs>

COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Comprehensive family assessment guidelines were issued by the Children's Bureau in June, 2005. Comprehensive family assessment guidelines are recommended when it is determined that the child welfare agency is responsible for serving the family.

This document which is located on-line at:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/family_assessment/index.htm

- Defines and describes the comprehensive family assessment (CFA) process in child welfare
- Articulates the assumptions of quality practice that support the comprehensive family assessment;
- Identifies the key points in the casework process when comprehensive family assessment and re-assessment are needed
- Suggests how the comprehensive family assessment can be used to develop service plans and inform recommendations to the Dependency Court regarding the need for care, custody, and control of the child
- Provides a case example that illustrates the process of comprehensive family assessment
- Identifies organizational and administrative supports necessary for effective comprehensive family assessment

These guidelines address the components of comprehensive family assessment, show the linkages to service planning and service provision, and illustrate how child welfare agencies can support their use. As states and agencies use these guidelines, they will be updated using the knowledge and experience gained from the implementation of comprehensive assessment. These guidelines are provided as an initial framework to facilitate efforts to move the child welfare community towards comprehensive assessment as a best practice. Additional technical assistance is being developed to support the implementation of these guidelines.

Family-Centered Practice with SIBLINGS

by Susan Dougherty & Roland St. John



There are over 500,000 children in the foster care system and, by definition, the majority are separated from parents - AFCARS, 2004. Estimates are that perhaps 70% of them have brothers and sisters who are also in care - and that perhaps half are separated from one or more of their siblings. In addition, around 50,000 children are being adopted from the foster care system each year, and we do not know how many brothers and sisters are separated, perhaps with no ability to stay connected.

No-one would argue that siblings are not an important part of families, yet child welfare has been slow to develop consistent policies and practices aimed at ensuring that brothers and sisters stay together whenever possible and remain connected when separation is necessary.

The Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) process identifies placement with siblings as one of six performance indicators to be used in determining whether states are in substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. The indicator looks at the extent to which the state places brothers and sisters together in foster care and, if siblings are not placed together, whether evidence establishes a need for the separation.

In the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning's (NRCFCPPP) work with States, we have long recognized the importance of the sibling relationship as a vital component of family-centered practice:

- ✦ We devote a page of resources about sibling issues in the Information Services of our website.
- ✦ Our Sibling Practice Curriculum is designed to enhance understanding of issues concerning siblings in out-of-home care, expand knowledge and skills in making appropriate placement decisions for sibling groups, enhance knowledge and skills in the recruitment and retention of resource families willing and able to parent sibling groups, enhance ability to present appropriate information to the court to support sibling groups, and increase knowledge of policy and legislation affecting sibling placements in participants' jurisdictions.
- ✦ Our Permanence for Young People Framework recognizes the importance of maintaining sibling connections as well as ties to birth parents, siblings, both paternal and maternal kin, and other significant caring adults (such as past caregivers),

including those that may have occurred earlier in life ✦ Past issues of Permanency Planning Today have highlighted sibling issues, including:

Sibling Ties are Worth Preserving

(Adapted from Spring 1999 Adoptalk, the quarterly newsletter of the North American Council on Adoptable Children) in the Winter 2003 issue

Learning Through the Experiences of a Former Foster Youth: How Family Foster Care Affects Foster Children

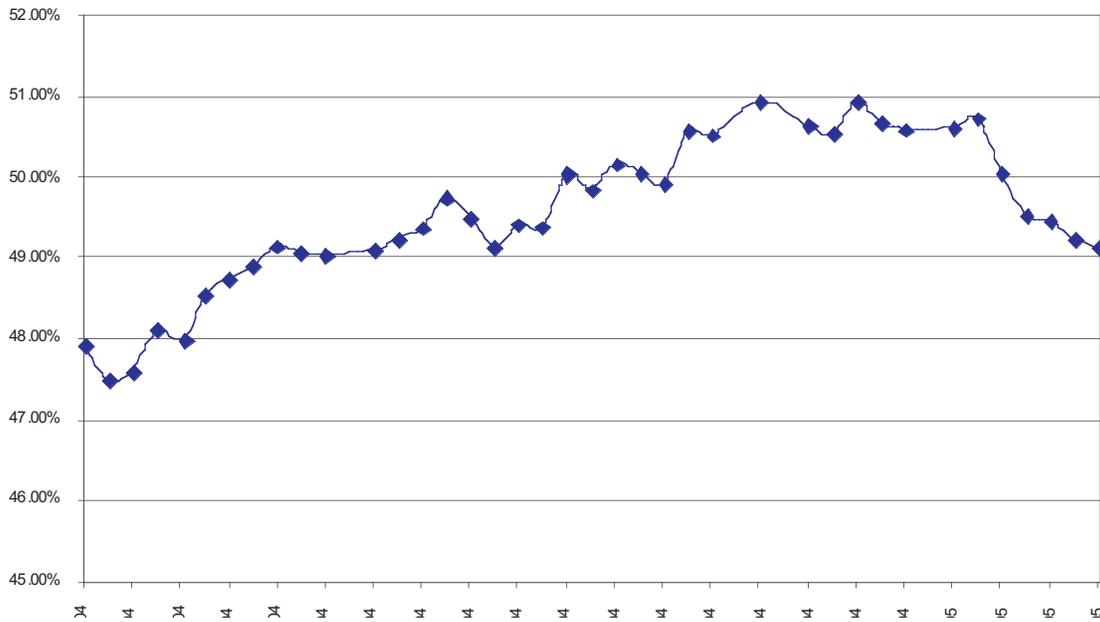
in the Fall/Winter 2000 issue.

In April, 2004 we had an opportunity to provide technical assistance to the State of Oklahoma. Oklahoma was already a leader in its efforts to place siblings together and maintain connections between brothers and sisters. State law has reflected a clear legislative intent to place siblings together in both foster care and permanent placement, or to maintain contact or visits if that is not in their best interests, since the initiation of the Oklahoma Foster Care and Out-of-Home Placement Act in 1996 (Oklahoma Statutes, Title 10, Chapter 72, Section 7202 (12)). Department of Human Services policy expands on this intent with statements about foster care and adoption placement responsibilities, visiting, and foster parent responsibilities, and are enhanced with specific instructions to staff. Information about siblings is collected by Oklahoma Children's Information and Data System (KIDS), over and above that required by the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). A Sibling Separation Committee meets regularly to address sibling issues and oversee placement decisions. In 2002 the State achieved a rating of "strength" in its CFSR final report on the two items related to siblings, item 12 (placement with siblings) and item 13 (visiting with parents and siblings in foster care). Nevertheless, the NRC was invited to assist in the further improvement of the state's practice with siblings by using our Sibling Practice Curriculum as a starting point for the development of strategic plan on sibling placement.

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) has had a Child Welfare Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) for nearly ten years. Over the years, steps

¹ Unfortunately, there are no statistics that provide this information. For source of estimates, see: Casey Family Programs. (2001). Siblings in Out-of-Home Care: An Overview. [Online] http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/siblings.html

Percent of Siblings Who Are All Placed Together



have been taken to make the data available for internal reporting, so that performance measures could be tracked. This database is updated weekly, and gives the current "snapshot" of children in custody. * clarify hx data issue Within the past year, OKDHS staff have begun tracking the following sibling data, including keeping historical data:

- ✦ The number of children in OKDHS custody
- ✦ The number of children in custody who are part of a sibling group
- ✦ The number of siblings who are placed with all of their siblings (not separated from any)
- ✦ The percentage of siblings who are all placed together.

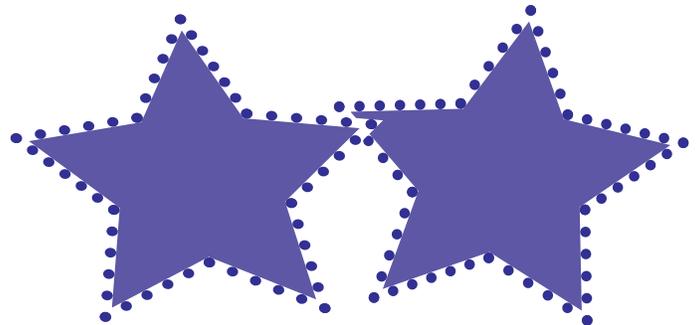
The data have been maintained since May, 2004, and distributed to field staff on a monthly basis, along with the names of separated siblings. Field staff are encouraged to place siblings together whenever possible, with emphasis on placing them together as soon as possible, so that they will not end up separated from each other for many months, and then face the possibility of permanent separation through adoption, due to foster parents, children's attorneys, etc., advocating for keeping them in their separate placements. Between May and December, 2004, all of the sibling measures were increasing, including the percentage of siblings placed all together. These measures peaked at the end of 2004. Beginning in January 2005 there has been a decline in the percentage of siblings placed together. The specific reasons have not been identified, but some possible factors may be:

- ✦ The number of children in care increased steadily for several months, and may have exceeded the capacity of foster homes.
- ✦ Shelters operated above capacity, due to increased numbers of children in custody.

✦ Siblings who are placed into OKDHS custody by law enforcement at shelters are frequently separated from each other when the youngest ones are placed in emergency foster care (EFC). There are conflicting policies (e.g., get the children out of the shelter ASAP vs. keep siblings together) that will need to be addressed.

OKDHS is in the process of developing diligent search protocol, including training child welfare staff on how they can locate parents and relatives. A desired outcome of such efforts would be that more siblings would be placed together with relatives, another important feature of family-centered practice.

Oklahoma has taken several important steps toward improving its family-centered practice with siblings in out-of-home care, beginning with the will and the effort to maintain accurate statistical data and then use that information to guide policy.



Susan Dougherty is the Information Specialist for the NRCFCPPP and has worked on sibling issues at both the NRC and at Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support, where she guided the 2002 National Leadership Symposium on Siblings in Out-of-Home Care along with Kathy Barbell, now Acting Vice President for Program Operations at the Child Welfare League of America. Roland St. John is a Programs Field Representative at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and is known informally as the "sibling czar." He maintains sibling data for the Department and participates on the sibling separation committee.

Strengthening the Indian Child Welfare Act

by Providing Resources for Families, Tribes & States

by **Chey Clifford-Stoltenberg** (Gitksan Nation), MSW

Rachel Kupcho (White Earth Ojibwe), BSW

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (P.L. 95-608) serves as one of the strongest federal child welfare policies for American Indian/Alaska Native children and families. Passed in 1978 to address the large number of Indian children being removed from their families and placed in non-Indian homes, ICWA has become an important link to the survival of both tribes and tribal culture. In fact, Congress stated that “there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children” (25 U.S.C. § 1901).

Overall, ICWA:

1 establishes minimum federal requirements for both the removal and placement of Indian children involved in state child custody proceedings who are enrolled or eligible for enrollment in a federally recognized tribe

2 provides assistance to tribes in the operation of child and family service programs. The main provisions of the law include the following:

- The state must identify Indian children and then notify both the child’s parents and the child’s tribe of their rights to intervene in state child custody proceedings.
- Tribes can request that a state child custody proceeding involving an Indian child be transferred to their tribal court (petition for transfer of jurisdiction).
- States must follow specific procedural requirements for Indian child custody proceedings that remain in state courts, including tribal intervention, standards of proof, and placement preferences.

While the above-listed items are the main provisions of ICWA, there are many more requirements and standards the state must follow in a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child, particularly with regard to the rights of the tribe and the family. Oftentimes, parents and families who come into contact with the child wel-

fare system do not fully understand their rights. These families may be afraid to ask questions of their caseworkers and can feel overwhelmed by the process. Additionally, American Indian/Alaska Native families do not always understand their rights under ICWA. Without a full understanding of these rights, the case can move forward quickly leaving the parent(s) feeling confused and hopeless. Caseworkers should be able to provide an explanation of parental rights under ICWA to their clients; however, they do not always receive adequate training with regard to the federal law.

In order to address some of these issues, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) has developed several informational documents—an ICWA brochure, a general child protective services flowchart, and a glossary of terms frequently used in Indian child welfare. These items are meant to provide parents and families with a starting point for asking questions of their caseworkers and also provide some basic ICWA information for them to reference throughout the span of their case. Although geared specifically toward parents and families, these brochures can also serve as resources for caseworkers and state administrators who may have questions about the law.

The ICWA brochure answers such frequently asked questions as:

- 1** What is ICWA and why was it passed?
- 2** How does ICWA protect American Indian/Alaska Native children and their families?
- 3** Who is covered by ICWA?
- 4** How do I know if my child is eligible for membership in a tribe?
- 5** What if my child is Indian but is not a member of a federally recognized tribe?
- 6** What considerations should be

made in an ICWA case?

- 7** Who should you contact if you feel that your rights under ICWA are being ignored?

The Child Protective Services flowchart walks a parent or family member through a general child welfare case. It provides more detail for parents and families on what to expect, including what types of child welfare hearings they may encounter. The glossary of terms, which serves as a companion document to the flowchart, provides basic definitions of words and acronyms that parents/families may come across during their interactions with their caseworker and/or the courts. Overall, these documents serve as a resource that will help the parent or family member feel more skilled at navigating the child welfare system. All three pieces of information can be accessed by visiting the NICWA website (www.nicwa.org) and looking under the “Resources” tab.

In addition to the informational documents, NICWA has developed an online ICWA training course, which was designed to provide an explanation of the key ICWA provisions in non-legal language. The course presents these provisions in the order in which a child welfare worker might encounter them in an ICWA case. In addition, general information about American Indian/Alaska Native cultures is provided.



Along with an explanation of the law in non-legal language, the course gives the recommended performance steps associated with effective social work practice. Information is provided both to support practice and to ensure appropriate case records. After completing this course, learners should be able to do the following:

- 1 Explain the circumstances that have shaped Indian child welfare policies
- 2 Explain the purpose of ICWA
- 3 Explain principles of good social work under ICWA and the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)
- 4 Use the ICWA performance path to handle a simulated case situation

More specifically, learners should be able to execute the following skills by taking the on-line ICWA course:

- 1 Explain how a child welfare worker should handle a case involving an Indian child in order to comply with ICWA
- 2 Explain how to handle the out-of-home placement of an Indian child in compliance with both ICWA and ASFA
- 3 Identify a resource for additional information about integrating ICWA and ASFA
- 4 Explain the optimum tribal response at various stages of an out-of-home placement of an Indian child
- 5 Explain cultural factors to consider when handling cases involving Indian children and families
- 6 Identify the rights of all parties when an Indian child is placed outside the home

This course can be used for both learning about the act and as a reference while handling an ICWA case. The course is free to NICWA members and employees of member tribes. The cost for non-members is \$50.00. The on-line ICWA course can be accessed by visiting the NICWA website, clicking on the "Resources" tab, and selecting "Online ICWA Course." NICWA is a partner with the NRCFCPPP, providing training and technical assistance on behalf of the NRCFCPPP to tribes and states.

For more information on this topic, please contact Chey Clifford-Stoltenberg, NICWA senior government affairs associate, at (503) 222-4044 or chey@nicwa.org or Rachel Kupcho, NICWA ICWA specialist, at (503) 222-4044 or rachel@nicwa.org.

CHILD WELFARE for the Twenty-First Century

A Handbook of Practices, Policies, and Programs

Edited by Gerald P. Mallon and Peg McCartt Hess

Published by: Columbia University Press

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/catalog/data/023113/0231130724.htm>



CHILD WELFARE
for the 21st Century

A Handbook of Practices, Policies, and Programs

Gerald P. Mallon - Peg McCartt Hess, Editors

This up-to-date and comprehensive resource by leaders in child welfare is the first book to reflect the impact of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997. The text serves as a single-source reference for a wide array of professionals who work in children, youth, and family services in the United States—policymakers, social workers, psychologists, educators, attorneys, guardians ad litem, and family court judges—and as a text for students of child welfare practice and policy.

FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Organized around ASFA's guiding principles of well-being, safety and permanency
- Focus on evidence-based "best practices"
- Case examples integrated throughout
- First book to include data from the first round of National CFRSR

Topics discussed include the latest on family preservation services; family support services, the integration of family-centered practices in child welfare, prevention of child abuse and neglect and child protective services; risk and resilience in child development; engaging families; connecting families with public and community resources; health and mental health care needs of children and adolescents; domestic violence; substance abuse in the family; children with disabilities; and runaway and homeless youth. The contributors also explore issues pertaining to foster care and adoption, including a focus on permanency planning for children and youth and the need to provide services that are individualized and culturally and spiritually responsive to clients. A review of salient systemic issues in the field of children, youth, and family services completes out this collection.

What colleagues are saying:

"Mallon and Hess have gathered the best minds and most current thinking shaping contemporary child welfare to produce a comprehensive and outstanding collection that should be in the hands of every practitioner, educator, policymaker, and researcher in the field."

—Joan Laird, *Smith College School for Social Work*

"The editors have done a remarkable job bringing together scholars and practitioners from all over the country to share their child welfare knowledge and expertise in a well-organized and easy-to-read volume. There is no doubt that this book makes an enormous contribution to the existing literature."

—Hilda Rivera, *Hunter College School of Social Work*

Gerald P. Mallon is a professor and executive director of the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work. He is the author or editor of numerous books and professional articles.

Peg McCartt Hess is a consultant on child welfare practice and formerly professor at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work and the Columbia University School of Social Work. She is the author or editor of many works, including *Nurturing the One, Supporting the Many: The Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn* (with Brenda McGowan and Michael Botsko)

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Subsidized Guardianship: *What Does It Have to do with Family-Centered Practice?*

by **Jennifer Miller**



Many factors

have come together to make subsidized guardianship a more valued part of the permanency continuum for families. Until recently, most states had only two options for securing permanency for children: reunification and adoption. Yet the increasing reliance on relatives as caregivers has led to a reexamination of how legal guardianship - with adequate supports - can provide the permanency and stability needed for children who can not return home.

Increasingly, subsidized guardianship - like reunification and adoption -- is recognized as a way to allow children to achieve the permanent family connections they deserve while preserving existing family ties. This option has particular importance to relatives, but is equally as compelling for many children living with unrelated caregivers. This is particularly true when a parent's disability plays a role in the child being placed out of the home, when termination of parental rights runs counter to a family's cultural norms, or when a young person does not want to be adopted by a caregiver who wants to make a permanent commitment to them.

So, what does this have to do with family-centered practice?

Isn't subsidized guardianship just a program, and aren't the only things we need to worry about financial and legal in nature?

Naturally, our answer is no. In fact, we believe that when agencies make subsidized guardianship available to children who can not return home or be adopted, it provides a unique opportunity to promote values and principles that are at the heart of family-centered practice. In fact, the questions state and local agencies confront as they integrate subsidized guardianship into their permanency framework are the very same questions that crop up in efforts to promote family-centered reunification and adoption.

They are:

- How are families involved in decision making about which permanency options are the most appropriate for them?
 - oHow can agencies and the courts help families understand all the permanency options available and the implications of each?
- Have agencies and the courts sought out and assessed possible permanency resources throughout the extended family network?
- How are the cultural norms of a family taken into account when discussing the most appropriate permanency options?
- Are young people involved to the fullest extent possible in determining the most appropriate route to permanency?
- Have we sought out all available permanency options for older youth, particularly those who may not want to be adopted?
- How can children maintain healthy ties with their birth parents, when appropriate



We began the work of the National Collaboration to Promote Permanency through Subsidized Guardianship four years ago as a way to facilitate resources and information about how subsidized guardianship can improve permanency outcomes for children. Through this work, we not only help the child welfare community learn about subsidized guardianship, but also how to promote more family-centered practice to ensure that subsidized guardianship is used wisely and in ways that support each family's unique circumstances. Many of the resources that have been developed build explicitly on family-centered practices that we believe make a positive difference in a family's child welfare experience.

Here is a sampling of how family centered practice has been integrated into our work on subsidized guardianship:

1... Comparison Charts of Permanency Options - when jurisdictions build new guardianship initiatives or expand existing ones, we strongly advocate the use of charts or other materials that provide concrete infor-

mation about the similarities and differences between permanency options. These charts are an invaluable resource for families who are considering various permanency options and may be confronted with myths or misinformation about what these options mean. For instance, we often talk to families who do not want to adopt or youth who do not want to be adopted because they think they'll have to change the child's last name to their own. Resources should dispel these types of myths so that families, together with their caseworkers and other partners, can weigh the pros and cons of various options to decide which is best for the children in their care. We also encourage those developing the resources to ask families to review them before they become final so that jargon, acronyms, overly legalistic and culturally insensitive material can be reframed. We also encourage that they be translated into languages that are understood by families in their local jurisdictions.

2... Family Team Decision Making - families are most likely to make wise and well informed permanency decisions if all the players involved in the child welfare process are working together toward a common goal. Family group conferencing and/or family team decision making allows these partners to come together to articulate these goals and to ensure family partnership in the decision making process. Many families with whom we've spoken say their attorney told them one thing about guardianship, their caseworker told them another, and the neighbor down the street had a completely different take. Among other things, team meetings provide an opportunity for the major players to get together and provide a consistent and coherent message to families about permanency options.

3... Concurrent Planning - concurrent planning is a family-centered practice that recognizes that families can work toward one permanency goal while also preparing for the possibility that another permanency goal may need to come into play later in the process. Concurrent planning helps birth parents understand the alternatives if they don't follow through with the expectations of the case plan, while also preparing caregivers for the possibility that they can become a permanent resource for the child. Together with the practice of full disclosure, concurrent planning can help all parties deal with the complex and fluid nature of the permanency process so they can be prepared when faced with the ultimate decision of what is in the best interests of the child.

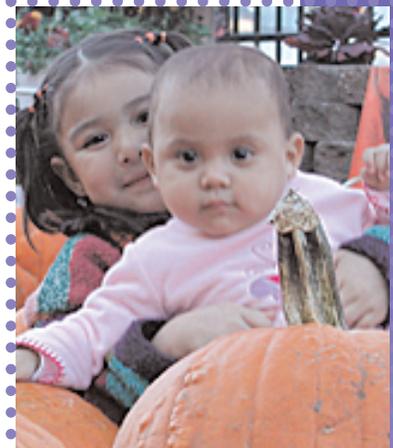
4... Youth Partnerships - subsidized guardianship is a particularly important option for older youth who do not want to be adopted because of their continued attachment to birth parents or their desire to keep familial relationships the way the naturally are (i.e.

not wanting grandma to become mom). Family-centered practice not only means integral involvement of adult members of the family, but also young people who need both permanent connections and independent living skills. Permanency outcomes will be stronger for these young people when professionals take the time and make the commitment to listening to young people and ensuring their hopes and desires about permanency are the major factor in permanency decisions.

Other family-centered practices are important to consider when integrating subsidized guardianship into the permanency continuum. For instance, visitation agreements can help children stay connected to their families of origin even after a guardianship order has been signed. Agencies can also support kinship caregivers - either directly or through community partnerships -- to allow healthy family connections while also maintaining boundaries between children and parents when safety is an issue. Courts can also hold agencies accountable for permanency decisions that are made with full family involvement.

Many of the ideas and resources discussed above can be found in more detail in a recent publication, *Using Subsidized Guardianship to Improve Permanency Outcomes for Children*, published jointly by Cornerstone Consulting Group and the Children's Defense Fund. For a copy of this publication or to find out more about the National Collaboration to Promote Permanency through Subsidized Guardianship, send me an e-mail at jmiller@cornerstone.to or call me at (401)884-1546.

JENNIFER MILLER has fifteen years of experience analyzing and advocating for improved policies and programs for children, youth and families. At Cornerstone Consulting Group, Jennifer is primarily responsible for a growing focus on innovations in child welfare policy and practice. She coordinates the "National Collaboration for Permanency through Subsidized Guardianship," a multi-year project aimed at promoting subsidized guardianship as a valued part of the continuum of permanency options for children. Examples of other work in the child welfare arena includes leading the child welfare workforce agenda, which is part of Cornerstone's overall management of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Human Services Workforce Initiative, development of training materials on permanency decision making, and analyses of the federal child welfare waivers.



Resources for Permanency Planning Today

Curriculum

Promoting Placement Stability and Permanency through Caseworker/Child Visits

Through the Child and Family Service Review process, it was found that there is a significant positive relationship between caseworker visits with children and a number of other indicators for safety, permanency and well-being. This curriculum was developed by the NRCFCPPP in response to that clear indication that the importance of caseworker visits to children in foster care is positively correlated to outcomes for children and families. This one day curriculum is intended to be part of either pre-service or ongoing training within a child welfare organization. It builds on the concepts of attachment, strengths-based assessment and planning, child and youth development, effective interviewing and organizing contacts. It allows caseworkers to practice some of the skills through role plays and preparatory activities. The seven developmental checklists are tools for caseworkers to use as they begin to more intentionally structure their visits to focus on safety, permanence, and well being.

http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/family-child-visiting.html

Guidelines

Training System Assessment Guide for Child Welfare Agencies

The purpose of this Guide from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement is to provide performance principles, related indicators and tools that a child welfare agency can use to assess the extent to which its training system contains integrated components necessary to positively impact children's safety, well-being, and permanency. The aim is for a strengths-based, participatory assessment process, with broad involvement of internal and external stakeholders.

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/pubstext/Trainingassess.htm>

Improving Outcomes for Older Youth: What Judges and Attorneys Need to Know

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development in conjunction with American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law have released this comprehensive guide to federal legislation for youth in out-of-home care for use by judges, attorneys, and youth advocates around the country. The guide covers issues in housing, health, education, employment, undocumented youth, parenting youth, and tribal youth, among others.

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/publications.htm>

Visitation/Family Access Guidelines

Olmstead County, Minnesota has created this guide to family visiting as part of its Child and Family Service Review Program Improvement Plan. The Guidelines are an opportunity for social workers to enhance their practice with children and families and include a job aid to help in the documentation of visits, family access, and parenting time.

<http://egov3.olmstedcounty.com/olmsted/index.php?loc=196>

Manuals

New and Revised Child Abuse and Neglect User Manuals

The Children's Bureau has released three new manuals that offer a foundation for understanding child maltreatment and the roles and responsibilities of various practitioners in its prevention, identification, investigation, and treatment. They are: A Coordinated Response to Child Abuse and Neglect: The Foundation for Practice; The Role of Educators in Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect; Child Protection in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence; and Supervising Child Protective Services Caseworkers.

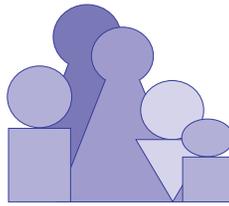
<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/profess/tools/usermanual.cfm>

Videos

Foster Parents Speak: Crossing Bridges and Fostering Change,

This 20-minute video from NYS Citizens' Coalition for Children, Inc., explores foster parenting today through the experiences and insights of foster families. It has received rave reviews from child welfare professionals and foster parents. It meets an important need and will be a valuable training tool for foster parents, birth parents, caseworkers, administrators, legal professionals, community members, and advocates.

<http://www.nysccc.org/Video/FParentsspeak.html>



Best of Weekly Update

THE TRANSITION YEARS: Serving Current & Former Foster Youth , Ages 18 to 21

The National Resource Center for Youth Development (NRCYD) conducted a survey of states and agencies to learn how services are currently being delivered to older youth. This monograph describes some available services, and some current barriers to serving this population. The monograph is structured around the four core principles that NRCYD maintains are critical for the successful delivery of services to youth; youth development, collaboration, permanent connections, and cultural competence. In addition, the literature addressing the needs of older youth aging out of care has been reviewed. Information on current trends among the general adolescent population today is presented to help us understand this age group in light of their cultural context and age-group norms.
<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/publications.htm>

ISSUE BRIEFS from the National Data Analysis System

The National Data and Analysis System (NDAS) at the Child Welfare League of America is generating a series of Issue Briefs to highlight a wide range of child welfare topics. The most recent Issue Brief focuses on the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA). MEPA was enacted in 1994 to prevent children of color from remaining in foster care because adoptive parents of their own race are not available. The data show that African American/black children stay in foster care longer compared to their white peers. In addition, it takes longer from termination of parental rights to the finalization of adoption. Research shows that if adoptive parents maintain an open dialog about the differences between their race and their child's race, their children have better outcomes. After logging onto the site as a guest, select "Publications" to go to the Issue Briefs.
http://ndas.cwla.org/research_info/publications/

The NRCFCPP publishes an electronic newsletter each week that keeps subscribers informed about new Internet-based publications, conferences & other events of interest to child welfare professionals. This section lists some of the valuable resources we have highlighted over the past few months.

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE Annotated Bibliographies

The Child Welfare League of America's Research to Practice initiative compiles, on an ongoing basis, annotated bibliographies on various child welfare topics and related fields. The bibliographies are as inclusive and detailed as possible. Most entries include a description of the project or program, location, number served, and purpose of the program; how the study was conducted, who was involved, what instruments were used, and the rates of and reasons for attrition; and outcomes of the study and possible implications for the field. They also include evaluations to help the reader evaluate the usefulness of the full publication. This section highlights, for instance, readability, the significance for practice, and the applicability of the results.
<http://www.cwla.org/programs/r2p/biblio.htm>

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS of the 2001-2004 Child & Family Services Reviews

The Department of Health and Human Services has released a report on the Child and Family Service Reviews that includes information for all 50 States, D.C., and Puerto Rico. This latest report on the CFRs includes information on State-level analyses and case-level analyses. State-level data show how many States were in substantial conformity with the outcomes and indicators,

common challenges faced by the States, and relationships between systemic factors and outcomes for safety, permanency, and well-being. Case-level analyses provide information on cases involving children in foster care and in-home cases reviewed across all States. Analyses also examined key characteristics of these cases (e.g., age of child, race, caseworker visits), as well as the relationships between these characteristics and outcomes and indicators.
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/results.htm>

FOSTER CARE ADOPTION IN THE UNITED STATES: A State-by-State Analysis of Barriers & Promising Approaches

This Urban Institute analysis is the first to identify common barriers to finding adoptive families for children in foster care, as well as promising practices to overcome them. More than 90% of states report difficulty identifying adoptive families for children in foster care, especially families for older children, those with special needs, and Hispanic and African-American children. 88% of states are working to improve their child welfare case management systems, including reorganizing staff, creating specialized adoption divisions and positions, and providing additional training on adoption.
<http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=411108>

REPORTS REVEAL Promising Strategies to Strengthen Tribal Families

The Administration for Children and Families has released four reports on the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program. The reports reveal ways that greater state flexibility in federal funding could strengthen the abilities of tribal families to care for their children. The reports also highlight promising practices tribes have adopted to meet unique challenges they face in managing services to strengthen tribal families, children, and youth.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/strengthen/imple_prom/index.html