

child and youth care

A Journal for those who work
with children and youth at risk

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**Conference 2003
EDITION**



Conferring with South African Child and Youth Care Practitioners on Creating Safe Spaces for our Children

**"A conference is more than a collectively shared training experience; it is also the celebration and expression of the vitality of the profession itself."
(Goodwin: 2003)**

Anyone who has been intensively involved in putting together a conference – and I mean really planning and working down to putting the last map in the last file, to checking that the dancers are appropriately clad, and to running around when the power goes off, rather than simply negotiating with professionals whose real job it is to worry about all the minutiae of bringing such an event to fruition – anyone who has planned a conference knows that at least once in those last pre-conference moments of exhaustion and tension one asks oneself, "Is this all worth it?" Such an undertaking is in the best of circumstances daunting. When the infrastructure is thin it requires creativity and tremendous commitment to host a record number of South African Child and Youth Care Workers at a national event – 706 of us in all! We came from all provinces, we were child and youth care workers, social workers, probation workers, educators and students. Some of us came from abroad and from other African countries. The places where we work are child and youth care facilities, shelters, community based programs, diversion programs, family preservation programs, detention centres and the regional and head offices of departments of social development. From diverse origins we melded into a professional body, celebrating the spirit of service and debating issues of program and policy. Some of us demonstrated innovative practice to others. We listened to wise words from Dr Brokenleg and our home-grown gurus. We were moved to go back to our work places having touched our inner well-springs that made us work with children and their families.

Together we acknowledged the role of the elders – those who have laid the foundations for today's success – and started a ritual which likely to be held for many years in the form of resolutions honoring those contributors. And together we articulated important concerns determining the Association's agenda over the upcoming two years.

Holistic is a word we use a great deal in Child and Youth Care, and is certainly appropriate to use in relation to this experience. We laughed, cried, sang, danced, debated, presented, articulated, decided, considered, assisted. If a conference is indeed an expression of the vitality of the profession, I am left, after the Conference 2003, with the sense that our profession is very, very much alive and growing! We also were thrilled by the full participation of youth in the Conference. A parallel Youth Conference fed into the main event with youth articulating powerfully on creating safe spaces. We were enthralled, we were touched, and we were inspired by the young people present. I know I speak for 700 others when I say a big thank you to the Northern Cape Conference Planning Committee for their determination to host this Conference. It was our great privilege to come to Kimberley and we hope that each one of you knows that the hard work was indeed well worthwhile! We know too that you will be happy to hand the responsibility and the lessons learned to colleagues in the Western Cape as they prepare for Conference 2005 in Cape Town.

Merle Allsopp

The Resolutions of the 14th Biennial Conference will be printed in the August issue of Child and Youth Care.

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NACCW

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Cover photo: © NACCW – Chairperson's Past and Present: Ashley Theron, Barrie Lodge and Francisco Cornelius
Back page photo © NACCW – A scene from the 14th Biennial Conference

Dates to Remember

September 2003

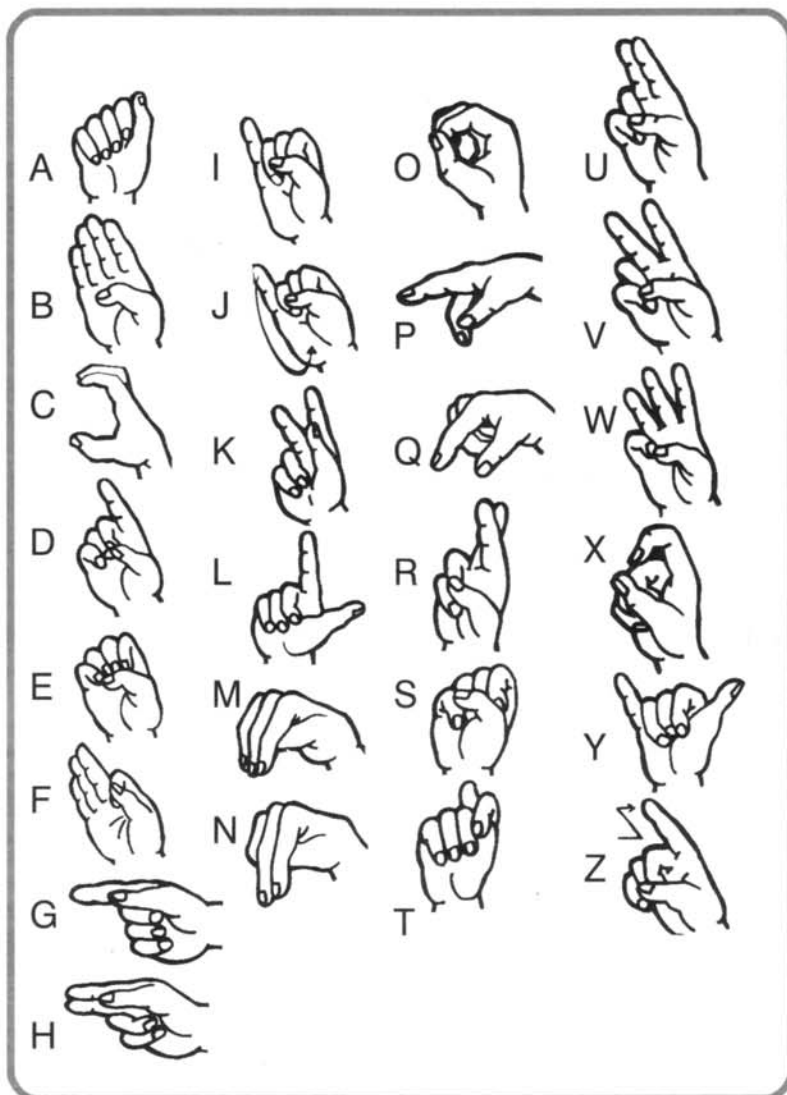
National Albinism Awareness Month
National Epilepsy Awareness Month
Skin Cancer Awareness Month

- 2** United Nations Convention on
the Rights of the Child - 1990
- 3-7** School Aids Week
- 7** Bisho Massacre, South Africa
-1992
- 8** International Literacy day
- 21** World Gratitude Day
- 21** International Day of Peace
- 22-28** Older Persons Awareness
Week (South Africa - DoH)
- 23** International Landmines Day
- 24** Heritage Day - South Africa

GOODBYE TO RUTH

Child and Youth Care says goodbye to **RUTH BRUINTJIES** this month. Ruth has been responsible for the area of "Publications" in head office of the past three years. In this position she has connected with many colleagues in the field prompting practitioners to submit their writing to the journal thus contributing to the development of a South African child and youth care discourse. Ruth is a child and youth care practitioner and trainer and in both of these roles has made her commitment to good practice well known to many in the Western Cape. A strong advocate for children, Ruth will continue to contribute to the field as she plans to move her family to the small town of Bredasdorp as her husband Melvin develops his career with the SA Defence Force. ■

HELPING CHILDREN WHO DO NOT HEAR WELL



Some children cannot hear well as well as others. If this is discovered early, we can do a lot to overcome the problem. Therefore it is very important to find out if children can hear well while they are still young. There are different ways of doing this. Children who **do not hear properly** will not learn as quickly as other children. Sometimes, we do not realize what is wrong with such children. We do not know that they are having difficulties because they do not tell others. They usually do not even know themselves what the problem is. Babies who **do not hear** will not learn to talk or understand as early as others, so their development may be slower than that of other children. However, if we can communicate with the child in other ways, he will be able to develop more normally. Children with hearing problems may appear shy and quiet and prefer to be alone. Sometimes children who do not hear well seem to be naughty because they do not understand what to do. They do not always respond to sounds or voices. They may fail to answer questions, or to come when their name is called.

Understanding what it feels like to have problems hearing

One way of getting children to think about problems of seeing and hearing is to ask questions like:

- Do you know anyone who does not see or hear well? How do they behave? Are their other senses more developed?
- Do you act differently with these people? What do you do?
- How do you think you would feel if you did not see well? Or hear well?
- How many people in your community do not see well? Or hear well?

We use all our senses to help us understand the world around us. If, however, one of our senses is

not working properly, we have to rely on our other senses.

Recognize the signs

Here are some signs which can tell us if a young child is having difficulty hearing:

- He makes normal noises as a baby, but does not learn to speak as he gets older.
- He does not notice voices or noises if he does not see where they are coming from.
- He seems to be disobedient, or is the last person to obey an order or a request.
- His ears are infected, or liquid or pus is coming out.
- He watches people's lips when they are talking.
- He turns his head in one direction in order to hear.
- He speaks rather loudly and not very clearly.
- Sometimes he may appear to be quiet and perhaps rude and prefers to be alone.
- He may not do as well at school as he should.

A child who behaves in this way may need help. Young children can be severely deaf without it being recognized, and older children can be slightly deaf without it being recognized. What can we do to help them? We need to find ways to meet their needs. Like any other child, the deaf one learns by watching others and copying what they do. When they are included in family activities, they learn as quickly as other children. If deaf children are left alone, they will not learn. Children who are born deaf, or who become severely deaf when they are very young, have great difficulty in learning to speak. They cannot hear speech sounds, and so they are not able to copy the sounds. However, some children learn to understand people's speech by watching their lips (lip reading). All can learn to communicate with hand and body signs, and can develop a proper language if exposed to sign

language early enough. Some people make the mistake of thinking that these children who cannot speak are dumb. This is not necessarily so. Many deaf children are as intelligent as any other children and can learn to speak very well if given the right help. Many deaf children can hear some sounds. These children can learn to speak more easily if they are helped.

Noticing Deafness

Use this test for young children who do not speak. Sit the child on the ground. Have another child sit in front of him and catch his attention, then stand about one metre behind him so that he cannot see you. Use a rattle (like seed in a tin) and gently shake it, first to one side of his head and then the other. The child sitting in front can then check his reaction. If the baby's eyes or head do not follow the sound, he may have difficulty hearing. It is also possible to test in the same way by:

- tapping or stirring a spoon or bowl,
- making a snake hissing sound,
- calling the baby's name softly.

These different sounds have different pitches and the child may only reply to some of them. This means he can only hear certain sounds. Can the baby hear the sound at all? How close do we have to be before he can hear the sound? Can he hear it when it is a gentle noise, or does the sound have to be very loud before he can hear it?

There is another test we can use for children who can understand some words. Gather together a number of things around the house – like a bowl, cup, spoon, some fruit, a toy. Check to make sure the child knows the names of these things. Then sit about one metre away from the child, with your back to him so that he cannot see your lips moving as you talk. Ask him to give you the

objects, one after another. This is one way of finding out if children are hearing, or if they are lip reading in order to understand what is being said to them.

Remember: Never rely on just one test. Try again on another day in order to make sure. Maybe the child was tired. If a child is not hearing well, he should be taken to a health worker for a thorough check-up.

Children can Help

Older children can be very helpful to younger ones who are having difficulty hearing. They can help them **to hear**; they can help them **to speak**, and **to communicate** in other ways with family and friends. Very few people are completely deaf. There is almost always some hearing left, and it should be used. It is often difficult to know how much a deaf child, especially a baby, is able to hear. So it is important to give him plenty of practice in listening to different sounds, and to people speaking to him.

Hearing Games for Children to Play

Children may think of games to play with babies such as:

- singing songs to babies and teaching them to young children,
- telling stories and changing the voice to sound like different people in the story; some may be soft, others loud, others angry.

Other children can help a young baby start to listen for sounds. Sit the baby on your knees and sing into the ear, play music, speak loudly and clearly. Do this several times each day. Don't give up if at first the baby does not seem to notice the sound. Keep on trying. Repeat the sounds which the child reacts to.

Older children can play games with the young child, encourage him to try and speak. Take some familiar objects – only two to

Practice

begin with. Hold up one and say its name. Put it in the child's hands and then say the name twice gently inside his ear. Encourage the deaf child to say the word if he is able. Praise any attempt he makes to speak, even if it is not clear. Let him try again. Do not force him to speak. If he can, he will do it in his own time.

Communicating with Others

Sometimes the deaf child is angry and seems naughty (he may cry and scream) because he does not understand others. Always be patient. This is particularly important for children with almost no hearing. Brothers and sisters often understand the deaf child better than his parents, and can help him communicate with those around him, by talking, signing and lip reading.

Talking

Older children can help others to remember the rules for talking with children who have difficulty hearing:

- put the child at the front of the class,
- talk to the deaf child as much as possible,
- use a good clear voice,
- when talking to a deaf child, stand or sit so that he can see your face and lips so that he can lip read,
- always show pleasure when a deaf child uses his voice, and praise any attempt at speech, even if it is not correct,
- use signs when necessary, but do not stop talking to the child at the same time,
- use short, simple sentences,
- change the word, if he does not understand. ■

From: *Child-to-Child: A Resource Book: Part 2*
The Child-to-Child Trust, 1992.



PERSONALITY PROFILE

Sabitha Samjee

I entered the Child and Youth Care field due to curiosity! My childhood friend grew up in a children's home, a place that was kept as a "dark secret" in the days gone by. For me, the children's home represented mystery and intrigue. My spirit beckoned me to find out more.

Ironically my first employment was at the very facility my friend grew up in, Lakehaven Children's Home. My bumpy journey full of hurdles and turbulences took off in 1977, as a "home-parent" - Lakehaven had moved us one level above being "housemothers." Within one week in the field I realized that I needed to be much more than a "step-mom" to 18 boisterous and challenging young people ranging from 1-18 years!

I completed my first training, a correspondence course through Wits University in 1979. As a professional I embarked on all relevant training in the field. I have been very fortunate to have worked under the guidance of strong transformational leaders who have influenced my professional growth and development: I completed the original BQCC in Natal under the legendary leadership of Lesley du Toit.

As a principal Child and Youth Care Worker at Lakehaven, some of my professional tasks and responsibilities were direct work with young people and families in respect of re-unification services and formulation and co-ordination of developmental programmes for young people. I played an advocacy role at management meetings and planned the annual calendar, celebrating significant dates in respect of diversity and the struggle of our country. Staff development programmes was also one of my enjoyed responsibilities.

I took on the challenge of working with the professional team of the NACCW in 1995 and was pleased to be actively involved in the transformation process through training under Project Upgrade.

In 1977 I relocated to Kimberley to initiate an innovative indigenous programme "Professional Foster Care". I worked directly with the community integrating young people with their families or community through re-unification services and restorative conferencing. My work in Kimberley has enriched my spirit. The diversity and culture is both inspiring and humbling. I was privileged to retrace my footprints to Kimberley during the 14th NACCW Biennial Conference. I was embraced in the circle of kinship at this unique conference. I was in awe of the leadership displayed at the conference in creating a balance of cultural activities, and youth involvement. The conference unified Child and Youth Care practitioners and the Department of Social Development: Congratulations Kimberley!

My professional journey took me to the National Department of Social Development in Pretoria. My role as a child and youth care consultant and trainer with the Department took me to many parts of the country. I pay tribute to hundreds of practitioners in the field who have influenced my professional development. Learning is a two-way process... "a teacher is a learner and a learner is also a teacher". I say a very special thank you to community based Child and Youth Care workers. They are very special people working under challenging circumstances and are least recognised. They are our modern day Florence Nightingales and have greatly humbled me.

It is time for me to return home. Once again I am retracing my footprints and feel very privileged and honoured to be a member of the professional team of the NACCW. I hope to continue evolving in the field of Child and Youth Care as a registered Professional, to continue my advocacy role, to promote professionalism and to uphold the ethics of the profession in the best interests of young people and their families in this beautiful universe. ■

Presentation made at 14th Biennial Conference in Kimberley

Creating Safe Professional Spaces: Regulation of Child and Youth Care

Dr J Lombard, Registrar SACSSP

1. Introduction

When the *Social Work Amendment Act of 1998*, was passed to change the then SA Interim Council for Social Work into the South African Council for Social Service Professions, it paved the way for the child and youth care field to realize its long-held vision of establishing an autonomous statutory regulatory body for child and youth care.

Child and youth care now stands on the cusp of establishing a professional board for child and youth care. To make this a reality, the assistance and active participation of all child and youth care workers in the process of electing and appointing the Professional board for Child and Youth Care is required.

I wish to explain the process establishing a professional board for child and youth care followed thus far, to indicate what lies ahead and to indicate what role you can play to ensure its success. To achieve this objective, I would also endeavour to answer some common questions.

... no longer could the work that a person does simply be a "job"...

2. Route of the Professions

Following this route means that child and youth care in South

Africa would be developed to fully meet the requirements of a profession. Within the framework of a profession, it means that no longer could the work that a person does simply be a "job" sometimes performed by people with cursory knowledge, interest or background of the field. Standards and criteria would be prescribed for the education and training of practitioners, specific criteria would be set for practising in the field, the specific field would be defined and demarcated, registration with a statutory professional body and adherence to an ethical code would be compulsory. For an occupation to be regarded as a profession and specifically for child and youth care to be regarded as a profession, it should meet certain criteria some of which are the following:

■ A profession is service-rendering oriented.

A profession exists to meet particular needs of individuals, groups and communities. The rendering of a specific service is intrinsic to the profession and is not rendered to serve the interests of the profession or its members. The profession exists to serve the needs of others. Due to its caring function towards children and youth, there can be no doubt that child and youth care as an occupation, meets this requirement.

■ A profession has a specific knowledge base and practice.

A profession is characterised by the fact that its practitioners should master a specific and extensive body of technical knowledge and skills in the form of concepts, theories and methods which are utilised in practice to render the specific service unique to the profession.

A profession is characterised by the fact that its practitioners should master a specific and extensive body of technical knowledge and skills...

To be a professional person is to learn to think in a particular way, in particular to exercise reason in making judgements about specific courses of action. Continuing professional education is an important requirement. The existing literature on child and youth care as well as the availability of courses to qualify as a child and youth care worker indicates that child and youth care as an occupation, meets this requirement. The specific knowledge base and practice of child and youth care as practised in South Africa, are

aptly recorded and presented in the educational programmes developed and presented by the NACCW and in the Association's journal *Child & Youth Care*.

■ **A profession is regulated.**

For each profession certain specific registration or certification procedures exist. Minimum standards for education and training are prescribed. Acceptable professional conduct is prescribed and regulated by a statutory body specifically established for that purpose.

It is fortunate that under the guiding hand of the NACCW over the years child and youth care in South Africa has already attended to and meets many of these requirements.

3. The Process so far

The rendering of social services in South Africa takes place in terms of the Government's policy, the guidelines, principles and requirements found in documents such as the White Paper for Social Welfare. The White Paper indicated that:

- the human resource capacity needed to be significantly expanded through the utilisation of different categories of social welfare personnel;
- an accreditation system had to be developed for all categories of welfare personnel, **including child and youth care workers;** and
- the then South African Interim Council for Social Work was identified as the regulatory body concerned, with its terms of reference to be negotiated and amended if necessary (White Paper, 1997:33 and 35).

After consultations with a wide variety of role players and stakeholders, the *Social Work Amendment Act, 1998*, came

into operation on 1 April 1999. This Act provided for the establishment of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (replacing the Interim Council) and the institution, under the auspices of the Council, of professional boards for the various social service professions. The first SA Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) was launched on 8 June 1999, after the election and appointment of members. The new Council then started to deal with was the establishment of the professional boards for the various social service professions in terms of section 14A of the *Social Service Professions Act, 1978*. Two sets of draft regulations providing for the procedure in which members of a professional board should be elected and appointed, and for the functioning of a professional board, applying to all boards, were compiled. They were submitted to the Minister of Social Development. The regulations were subsequently published in the Government Gazette for comment, after which certain changes were made and it was re-submitted for publication in the Gazette.

In a letter to the Council, dated 9 October 1996, the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) expressed its desire to establish a statutory body for child and youth care workers and subsequently officially entered into discussions with the Council about this matter. This led to the NACCW applying to the Council to establish a professional board for child and youth care in November 2000 and the Council approving the application on 21 February 2001.

The acceptance by the Council of the NACCW's application to establish a professional board for child and youth care, meant that the criteria to establish such a board, were met in that the application was made by

practitioners from the profession under the auspices of a professional group or association which:

- is organised on a national level;
- is representative of the practitioners;
- indicated the number of its subscribed members;
- demonstrated a willingness to function in collaboration with other social service professions and to be combined with another profession in one professional board if necessary;
- furnished particulars of the current minimum standards of education and training for the members of the profession;
- demonstrated a willingness to comply with the Council's general code of conduct; and
- demonstrated the profession's value and that it meets the needs of individuals and communities.

... the next step is to announce the election and request nominations of candidates...

The Council and the NACCW immediately started to deal with the necessary technical matters pertaining to the constitution of the board and the financial implications, before the necessary regulations could be drawn up and submitted to the Department and Minister of Social Development, with the request to establish the board. The regulations were subsequently published in the *Government Gazette* for comments, after which certain changes were made and it was re-submitted for final publication in the *Gazette*.

I am very pleased to announce

that we received confirmation early this morning that the regulations were published in the latest issue of the Government Gazette. This means that the next step is to announce the election and request nominations of candidates for the election. This is indeed a very happy day. It is planned that by the end of this year the Professional Board for Child and youth Care should be established simultaneously with the Professional Board for Social Work

Putting the mechanisms in place to establish a professional board is a bureaucratic process requiring statutory measures. Thorough consultation had to take place before the necessary statutory action could be finalised. These factors caused delays in the completion of the process, which the Council could not control.

4. Constitution of the Professional Board for Child And Youth Care (PBYC)

During a process of consultation, it was agreed by the NACCW, SACSSP and role players that the PBYC shall consist of the following members:

- Five child and youth care workers nominated and elected by child and youth care workers.
- Two persons appointed by the Minister from nominations by the community.
- One child and youth care worker or a person involved in the education and training of child and youth care workers, elected by child and youth care workers from nominations by the child and youth care education and training institutions.
- One child and youth care worker in the employ of a social development department in the provincial sphere of government, appointed by the Minister.
- One person versed in law,

appointed by the Minister.

- One member of the Council, designated by the Council.

The term of office of the board would be five years.

The following important matters should be noted in relation to the constitution of the board —

- Child and youth care workers wishing to participate in the election by nominating candidates, voting in the election and/or standing in this first election, will have to be registered as professionals with NACCW. The voters list will be furnished to the Council before the closing date for nominations and before the election. Prospective participants are therefore requested to ensure that they are registered.

Child and youth care workers wishing to participate in the election ... will have to be registered as professionals with NACCW

- A circular with details about the election, and the necessary ballot papers, would be sent by post to all child and youth care workers whose names are on this voting list.
- In addition to the members serving on the board, 3 child and youth care workers would also have to be nominated and elected by child and youth care workers as members of the Council.
- The active participation of all child and youth care workers in the election, is a prerequisite for a successful board to be constituted.

After completion of the election and appointment of members, the board will be instituted, the first meeting will take place and the Minister will be requested to appoint the board's chairperson and vice-chairperson from nominations by the members of the board. The Professional Board for Child and Youth Care would then be able to commence with its responsibility of regulating the profession of child and youth care.

5. The Way Ahead

A specific act, the *Social Service Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978)* provides for the establishment of the SACSSP and sets the guidelines within which the Council and its professional boards can and must function. These guidelines are determined by Parliament.

With reference to its functions and objects, the Council as umbrella body, has in terms of section 3 of the Act an overhead and coordinating regulating responsibility pertaining to all the professions and professional boards. The Council's functions and objects would be linked up with that of all professional boards, which would be more focussed on the regulation of the profession concerned. The Act sets the requirements of what should happen, whilst regulations and rules made under the Act indicate how and when it should happen.

Whereas the Act itself, makes provision for the regulation of all social service professions, the existing regulations and rules mainly apply to social work and not to other professions. However, in order to regulate the other professions, regulations and rules addressing the same issues as they apply to a specific social service profession will have to be drafted and officially accepted. Therefore the immediate and main responsibility of the professional board for child and youth care will be to see to the

drafting of the required regulations and rules applying to child and youth care and this profession's practitioners. Regulations and rules pertaining inter alia to the following matters will have to be drafted in order for the board to be able to function properly:

- Rules relating to the qualifications for registration as a child and youth care worker.
- Regulations regarding the registration of child and youth care workers.
- Regulations relating to the acts which especially pertain to the profession of child and youth care workers (scope of practice).
- Code of ethics for child and youth care workers.
- Rules relating to the acts or omissions of a child and youth care worker which shall constitute unprofessional or improper behaviour.
- Regulations regarding disciplinary inquiries for child and youth care workers.
- Regulations regarding the fees payable by child and youth care workers.

It will also attend to other important matters pertaining to the profession of child and youth care, such as the definition and demarcation of the profession, involvement with the SGB for Child and Youth Care and formulating policy for the practising of the profession. In more practical terms, attention will be given to the following matters:

Qualifications required

The board in conjunction with the SGB will determine the minimum qualifications required for a person to register as a child and youth care worker. Provision could be made for a limited time for a "Granny" clause to accommodate persons currently practising in the field who do not have the required qualification.

Registration of student practitioners

The board should attend to the question of whether to register student practitioners and if so prescribe the conditions.

Categories of registration

The board should determine who must be registered and whether there should be different levels of practitioners registering as such.

Youth work

Whether (and if so how) youth work as a separate profession could be accommodated on the board.

Deregistration

The board should determine under which conditions the name of a child and youth care worker should be removed from the Register. For instance, for the non-payment of annual fees and as part of a disciplinary action.

Non practising child and youth care workers

The board should decide whether non-practising child and youth care workers should be allowed to remain on the Register at the payment of a reduced annual fee.

Annual fees

A principle underlying the establishment of professional boards is the fact that each social service profession would be responsible for the financial upkeep and running of its board. Therefore, an important matter that the board would have to attend to would be the tariff payable for registration.

In other words, the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care will have to attend to the running of the business of the profession and prescribing the conditions applying to practitioners of the profession. This will not be done in isolation but with the input from and communication with the constituency. The necessary means of communication in the form, the Council's or a separate

Newsletter, circulars and the electronic media will have to be utilised.

6. Conclusion

The professionalisation of an occupation entails that the profession and its practitioners should be statutorily regulated. Regulation is required to ensure that the consumers of the services rendered by the profession's practitioners at all times receive a professional service of the highest standards. Regulation of child and youth care will be the responsibility of a professional board comprising members of the profession itself, as well as members of the community.

...the board will also prescribe policy as guidelines for the practising of the profession...

The role of the professional board for child and youth care could be summed up as 'to act as protector of the interests of the clients or consumers of the services rendered by child and youth care workers'. Apart from being responsible for setting standards for the education and training of child and youth care workers, the board will also prescribe policy as guidelines for the practising of the profession. The benefit for the practitioners will be that they will be able to obtain guidance from the board on matters relating to their practice and ethical code, and that the acts which especially pertain to the profession of child and youth care would be statutory defined - thereby creating a "safe professional space" for child and youth care and its practitioners to function within. ■

Creating Safe Spaces for Our Children

- Youth Participation and the 14th Biennial Conference

Biennial Conference

Youth participation is a very fashionable term right now. Youth (and others) often point out that instead of true participation we often involve youth only as "decorations" or in a token manner. The latter cannot be said of the involvement of youth at this event. As members of the planning and organizing committee graduates from the Adolescent Development Program and others were fully involved in the hard work leading up to Conference. As delegates wearily arrived on the evening before Conference after their long bus trips, they were ushered to their rooms by friendly helpful and youthful people! These young people remained willing and facilitating throughout the proceedings, prompting many to comment not only on their energy and enthusiasm, but on their level of responsibility.

Apart from being involved at his level youth participated in a full 3-day Youth Conference which intersected with the Conference at plenary sessions. One of the sessions was deviated to youth input. A panel of youth presented their views to an extremely appreciative adult audience. Leading the youth presentation, Thabo Lebeka shared his experiences of the presentation as follows:

- "My job is to tell you guys about the past two days, but before I do that I would like to say that we as youth are very happy to see that there are so many people who are crazy for us. On the first day, Tuesday 8th, we had to make and combine banners to tell the conference about our expectations. We also had an opportunity to go and listen to

what Dr Martin Brokenleg had to say about us as children or youth. It was a great speech Dr Martin Brokenleg. And the last thing we did was the drum therapy which was great fun, we really enjoyed it. On the second day, Wednesday 9th we as the youth had to put some ideas in to say how should the NACCW and government create safe spaces for children. We had different themes to discuss and later the youth had to present the ideas to the main conference - which was a brilliant presentation. That was the wonderful learning experience we had one these two days. And finally I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity."



Other comments from the youth panel on the theme of creating safe spaces centred around ensuring food security and keeping children out of prison. Some specific suggestions were made:

- "We should be able to talk to our teachers and they are the ones that should be encouraging and motivating us. They should know how to handle us. But we don't see that in our school. We as young people we expect or suggest that there should be teachers that are qualified in child care, we mean they should study child care (BQCC)." - Sebolelo
- "We will motivate young children to participate in recreational activities as part of our Moral Regeneration Program." - Anthony Molefe
- "The Police Forums should initiate a strategy in order to practically implement the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of a Child." - Freddy Moncho

The Youth Conference also involved sports activities, creative story telling, a formal evaluation and the preparation of a set of Conference Resolution which will help to shape the association's agenda for action over the next two years.

Youth Conference Resolutions

- Disabled children should be included in conferences.
- NACCW should give more information to youth across the country about national conferences.
- All stake holders, business people and international guests who are part of the conferences should communicate and interact with youth.

- NACCW should form a youth desk to be included in organizing conferences.
- Resolutions made at this conference should be taken forward by a youth panel to be discussed with the leaders of SA.
- The youth panel should put the conference resolutions into action.
- Youth should be given the opportunity to market their programs at the conference.
- Youth conference was an opportunity to speak out. Also allowed to make friends and to connect with each other

Youth List

Conrad Dirks, Raymond Long, Terence Mashilo, Terence Japhta, Angela Coetzee, Elsie Louw, Tsholofelo Makaudi, Lebogang Selabe, Sammuel Mabula, Daphney Kock, Clive Moreothata, Billy Swartz, Anthony Molefe and Natasha.





14th Biennial Conference Kimberly





The second in a three-part series in which Jacqui Gallinetti provides an overview of legislation that defines the

Minimum Standards for Children deprived of their Liberty

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

South Africa has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995 and, in addition to the best interests principle contained in article 3, there are numerous provisions therein that relate to the present topic.

Article 37 provides, inter alia, that States Parties shall ensure that:

- No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without the possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age;
- Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to remain in contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances;

Article 40 of the CRC, deals primarily with the judicial aspects of managing a child accused of a crime, but nonetheless still has provisions applicable to children deprived of their liberty. These include article 40(1), which states:

"States Parties recognise the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child assuming a constructive role in society."

Articles 37 and 40 are the primary sections dealing with children detained for being accused of a crime. However the inquiry into minimum standards for children deprived of their liberty must also have regard of other relevant articles in the Convention. These include the following:

- Article 9(3), which states: "States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests"
- Article 19, which states: " (1) States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child." 2) Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and as appropriate, for judicial involvement."
- Article 24(1), which states: "States Parties recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services."

The United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty

In December 1990 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Rules

for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.¹ Section 3 of the Fundamental Perspectives set out in the Rules sets out the purpose thereof, namely:

" The Rules are intended to establish minimum standards accepted by the United Nations for the protection of juveniles deprived of their liberty in all forms, consistent with human rights and fundamental freedoms, and with a view to counteracting the detrimental effects of all types of detention and to fostering integration in society."

This is elaborated on further by section 5, which states:

" The Rules are designed to serve as convenient standards of reference and to provide encouragement and guidance to professionals involved in the management of the juvenile justice system."

Thus the Rules do not have the same force of law as the provisions of the South African Constitution or the international obligations that South Africa has

on account of the ratification of the CRC, which is an international agreement, but should guide the application of the rights contained in both documents. In addition, the Rules encourage States to incorporate the provisions contained therein into domestic laws.²

Deprivation of liberty is defined as:

" The deprivation of liberty means any form of detention or imprisonment or the placement of a person in a public or private custodial setting, from which that person is not permitted to leave at will, by order of any judicial, administrative or other public authority."

Therefore, these Rules are not limited in their application to children detained for being in trouble with the law, but extend to all children placed in institutional care. Some of the important minimum standards contained in the document include:

- Detention to have regard to particular needs, status and requirements of juveniles according to their age, personality, sex and type of offence as well as mental and physical health to provide type of care best suited to individual

needs of the juvenile for the protection of his or her physical, mental and moral integrity and well-being

- Juveniles should be provided with clean drinking water and with food that is suitably prepared and presented at normal meal times and of a quality and quantity to satisfy the standards of dietetics, hygiene and health and as far as possible religious and cultural requirements.
- Every juvenile shall receive adequate medical care, both preventative and remedial, including dental, ophthalmological and mental health care, as well as pharmaceutical products and special diets as medically indicated
- The family or guardian of the juvenile or other person designated by the juvenile has the right to be immediately informed of the health of the juvenile on request and of important changes to the juvenile's state of health, including his or her death
- Disciplinary methods that constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment shall be strictly prohibited, including corporal punishment, placement in a dark cell, closed or solitary confinement, reduction of diet, denial of



Obituary

Paddy (Angeline) Manuel, a child care worker at Annie Starck Village in the Western Cape, passed away suddenly on 12 July 2003. For 17 years Paddy served the field

by caring for vulnerable children and youth in a residential program in Cape Town. Her colleagues will remember her as someone who "was as concerned when a child was in pain as

she was when a colleague was going through difficulties." She contributed generously to the lives of the children and youth she cared for by using her many special gifts such as her ability to build and maintain relationships, her patience and empathy with children and colleagues. As senior child care worker and later social auxiliary worker she was always willing to go the extra mile. The field and especially the young people at risk in the Western Cape lost a very committed child and youth care worker. The NACCW expresses deepest sympathy to the children and youth at Annie Starck Village, her colleagues and family. We mourn the passing of a veteran child and youth care practitioner. ■

contact with family members, use of labour, collective sanctioning and more than one sanction for the same offence.

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules)⁴

These Rules were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1985. The commentary on the Fundamental Perspectives of the Rules states that they refer to a comprehensive social policy and aim at promoting juvenile welfare to the greatest possible extent.

Rule 3 makes the Rules applicable not only to proceedings involving juvenile offenders but also juvenile welfare and care proceedings, and so they are applicable to the child justice and child welfare systems in South Africa. Certain of the Rules have specific application in the present inquiry into minimum standards for juveniles deprived of their liberty and these are as follows:

- Rule 9, which ensures that nothing in the Beijing Rules shall detract from the application of the United Nations Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and other human rights instruments and standards.
- Rule 10, which provides that as soon as a juvenile has been apprehended his or her parents or guardian must be informed immediately or as soon as possible, release from custody must be considered by a judge or other competent body without delay and contacts between law enforcement agencies and the juvenile must be managed in order to respect the legal status of the juvenile, promote his or her well-being and avoid harm. Avoidance of harm should be interpreted in the broadest possible way as the juvenile justice process itself can be harmful.⁵ ■

Endnotes

1. General Assembly Resolution 45/113 of 14 December 1990
2. Section 7
3. Section 11(b)
4. U.N. Doc. A/40/53
5. Commentary to Rule 10

Resiliency at its best

In his address on the last day of the conference, Dr Martin Brokenleg spoke about resiliency. He said we should look at the total environment of the child and gave an example of a young man who arrived twenty minutes late at school due to some problems at home. His teacher reacted negatively to him instead of appreciating the fact that he was able to come to school despite his family problems. This was the result of his ignorance regarding the background of this young man.

This reminded me of a young man who was living on the street of Polokwane. He is now doing second year B.Com at Venda University. He had been living on the street for 3 years before I found him.

Among other reasons that led him to the street was the fight his parents had one night. Their father chased him and his mother away at 12 o'clock midnight. They had to walk for about 15km from Mankweng Township (popularly known as Turfloop) where the University of the North is situated to his maternal grandmother's home. I compared the 2km distance I walk from my home to where I catch the taxi with the distance the young man and his mother walked to his granny's home that night. I found that they must have walked for about 3 hours and 35 minutes. They probably arrived at his granny's home at about 03h35 in the morning.

He was supposed to go to school that morning, so he walked another 3 hours and 45 minutes back to Mankweng Township despite the fact that he did not sleep. During school break he went behind the school to take a nap. He was so fast asleep that he did not hear the sound of the bell calling them back to classes. His class teacher learned that he was sleeping behind the school and sent someone for him. Upon the young man's entrance the teacher severely punished him without enquiring why he was sleeping during the school hours.

I agree with the resolution of the young people at the conference that teachers should also receive BQCC training. They will know that every behaviour is meaningful and that it is important to look at the total environment of the child. Had he known the young man's background, I strongly believe that he could have reacted differently. The teacher could have appreciated the fact that the young man was able to come to school under such circumstances.

One will not be wrong to conclude that one sees resiliency at its best when one takes into consideration the background of this young man as described above and the fact that he was able to go to university after staying on the street for 3 years.

PETER MABOTJA

Faranani Family Preservation Project, Polekwane, Limpopo

BEATING THE EXAM BLUES...

End-of-year examinations are just around the corner and for many of you, this means increased stress and anxiety. Even those of you who are not writing exams yourselves are likely to be affected as your colleagues take study leave and the young people with whom you work require extra support from you as they learn. Such stress is normal and in fact, can be beneficial if it motivates you to plan and study hard. However, many learners allow themselves to become overwhelmed by too much unmanaged stress or lack the knowledge and skills necessary to cope effectively in difficult situations. Here are a few hints which might help you ...

1. The sooner you start preparing for the exams, the better

One thing you can't recycle is wasted time! By giving yourself plenty of time to study before the exam period starts, you provide yourself with the opportunity to revise your knowledge several times. It is through repetition that knowledge enters the long-term memory and becomes real learning. Cramming facts into your brain the night before an exam might help you pass but probably won't have much influence on your ability to function as a competent professional in the future.

2. Make a plan

An effective and realistic plan will assist you to cope with your workload. Identify different subjects and/or sections of work to be studied and estimate the time you have available to study. Ensure that the time is divided sensibly between sections so that you have more time to spend on the complex aspects or topics

with which you struggle. However, don't spend so much time planning that you leave too little time for actual study. Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned!

3. Develop a brain-friendly approach

Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern (1992:91-102) identify brain-friendly learning as one of the four strategies of the reclaiming approach. They say that the human brain is able to learn best when information follows patterns, the person feels safe, the learning is based on experience and other people are involved. In studying for exams, try to create these conditions to optimise learning. Get to know yourself by identifying which of the multiple intelligences (Rubado, 2003:14-17) are your strengths and then, utilise these in your study programme.

4. Care for and refresh yourself

Always remember the importance of maintaining balance in your life. Take time to rest and relax between study periods. Schedule regular short breaks rather than one long break every few hours. Eat healthily, drink water, do light exercise and get sufficient sleep. Reward yourself for your efforts by phoning a friend, going to a movie, walking the dog or doing any other activity you enjoy which revitalises you. Spend time with people who are supportive and encouraging of your studies. Make time for peace and silence in your day.

5. Focus on the present

Wilson (1998) states, "Worry always relates to the future. So if you devote your full attention to what is going on now, not only will

you feel calmer, but the future will take care of itself." While you are studying a particular subject, avoid thinking about all the other work you still have to do. If you have planned your time effectively, you will complete everything in time. So, maintain focus on what you are doing in the present and you will progress at a steady pace.

6. Welcome the challenge

No matter how well prepared you are for your exams, you may still feel anxious. The exam might still be tough. Some might argue that exams for child and youth development students should be tough because you have to be tough to work with young people at risk. The process of studying to be a professional child and youth care worker is not an easy one but as people who care about children, we should welcome the challenges for "Smooth seas do not make skilful sailors" (African proverb).

EVERYTHING OF THE BEST IN THE FORTHCOMING EXAMS!

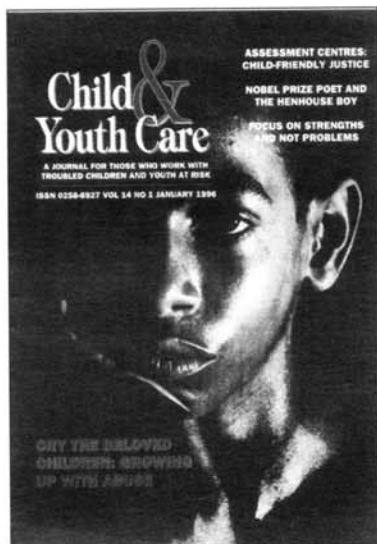
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Readership Survey



What would the Readers like to see more of?

Readers had a wide range of suggestions on what they would like to see more of, most of them from categories mentioned above. A theme emerging from these responses is that we are "proudly South African", wishing to have even greater local content in the journal and hear from local practitioners on their work, their programs and their contexts! The following are representative comments:

- "issues/articles by Child and Youth Care Workers"
- "progress of child care in communities"
- "community work within the Child and Youth Care field"



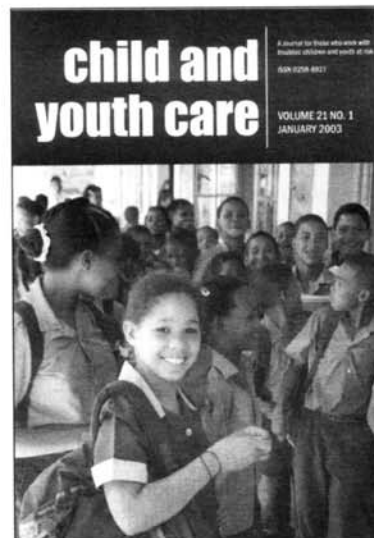
- "local articles"
- "more stories of children and Child and Youth Care workers on the ground, their experiences, challenges and ways of solving the problems"
- "report back from the government on child care related issues"
- "good news from all provinces"
- "what works and research into those methodologies".

What would Readers like to see less of?

Readers responded clearly - fewer overseas articles!

General comments from Readers

Here readers indicated concern about having little news from smaller regions and again the



need to have more articles written by Child and Youth Care workers. They expressed dissatisfaction with the journal arriving late (a temporary problem to be remedied soon) and many were encouraging:

- "Bravo! This is a great journal and it is empowering."
- "The journal is a helping handbook - always user friendly and always a refresher."
- "Good journal. Thank you!"

The Editorial Board thanks all colleagues who responded to the survey and reminds that comments, encouraging or otherwise are always welcomed. ■

Dear Editor

I never had the courage to write to a newspaper or magazine, so please bear with me! First I would like to say thanks on behalf of Rosendal House for organising a wonderful Conference, although wonderful does not sum up what I experienced, the last 3 days. I enjoyed every moment of it and will surely share this with my co-workers. Every session was so powerful I could not make a decision on which session to attend!

May everything that you challenge go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Ceasar

Rosendal House, Place of Safety, Faure, Western Cape

Randy Cima, wrote this piece when Administrator of St. Katherine's Home, Riverside, California

MICHAEL

He was your typical snot-nosed, defiant, twelve-year-old kid. I was a new counselor. I had goodness and warmth in my heart. I was going to help him. I was easy pickin's.

After serving my time at the facility for three months as a "night man," I was given a unit. In those days we had 10-12 boys in a unit. I had Unit II.

These kids were 11-14 years old. Like all pre-adolescents, they were a pain. I couldn't get them to do anything.

Back in 1974, quite frankly, the state-of-the-art in residential care resembled more the techniques of Neanderthal Man than "professional services." Some of it still remains. Not that we pulled kids by the hair. More that we were limited to

restriction-restriction-restriction-terminate. As I said, this tried and true "technique" can still be found in many agencies.

I knew this after watching as a nightman for the three months of my "internship." The veterans, my teachers, showed me how it was done. A child behaves poorly, he is restricted from a privilege (often followed with some threat about termination or Juvenile Hall) until "he learns his lesson." Invariably this leads to more restrictions as the child did not complete the first restriction, or learn his lesson.

Michael was one of the boys in the unit at the time. He and his roommate Cameron defied every rule, broke every restriction, ignored all directives, and frowned at all adults. Both were gifted at verbalizing just the right creative, multi-letter invectives so as to ward off anyone's attempt to engage in a regular conversation. Whether in the on-grounds school or in the "milieu", they were on the outs.

Never fear. I was going to change all that.

As a novice, I watched the veterans work with the kids. The agency did have a system. It was something like this: anyone in the facility, for any reason, could restrict any child, from any activity, at any time. That was the system. A teacher, day counselor, afternoon counselor, night counselor, social worker, or administrator could, and would, come up with a restriction of some sort in order to "make sure he didn't get away with it." I was never sure what "it" was other than "we are in control here!"

By the way, this is by no means an indictment of the staff or the agency. Hell, I was one of them. There was no lack of love, care, empathy, or compassion.

These were the only attributes that saved us. No, this was more a reflection of the "Zeitgeist" (spirit of the times) if you'll excuse the word. Everyone was doing the best possible at the time.

Every agency did it like that despite what they may say. Ask any counselor from any facility in those days. Yes, we all had point or level systems of some sort. But even these were tied to what a child could or couldn't do. Management was the rule of the day, as was "treat them all the same." It still occurs. We should all remember our profession is just now evolving from latency to the early stages of adolescence.

I'll give you an example. I came to work one day and every one of the kids in my unit was on room restriction. (Room restriction was a biggie.) All ten. I got to work at 2:30, the kids got out of school at 3:00 and my job was to enforce the restrictions.

What did I do? I got a chair, positioned it strategically in front of the five bedrooms where the kids were, and I kept them in their rooms. All day and night. I felt like a lion tamer. "Michael! Get your butt back in there! Cameron! Quit stepping out of the room! All right Greg, you got another day!" Of course I still had to get them to clean their rooms, get them to dinner, get them back in their rooms, get them showered, get them snacks, get them to bed on time, and get them quiet and manageable. No easy trick from a lion tamer.

I suppose it was that day I decided this was so much B.S. I can remember sitting in front of those rooms with my imaginary whip and chair thinking to myself there must be more to the business than this. Either that or I should go back to coaching, my original pursuit. At least in coaching the kids know the whip and chair is part of the game. Hell, coaches are supposed to be tough. More importantly, when coaching, there is a sense of teamwork, with a desired end and it's supposed to be fun for kids. This was no fun. For me or the kids. There was no desired end either. And, to be sure, somebody had already been "tough" with them long before they got to the agency. There were some kids I was sure I could beat over the head all day and still they wouldn't make their bed, because I beat them over the head all day. These weren't restrictions we were using. This was punishment, pure and simple. And it didn't work. Pure and simple. Punishment is perhaps

man's second original sin.

I was to find out, years later, that many scholars of the human condition, much more adept than I, had studied the results of punishment on people. They all say that it is ineffectual. Conclusively. Well documented. Real honest-to-God scientific studies. Try to convince anyone of that. No matter how educated, empathetic, or experienced, most still think that if poor behavior is linked somehow, to an undesirable consequence, then the poor behavior will go away. Not true. Really.

The best that can happen, according to these same men and women, is that poor behavior will "disburse." It will occur somewhere else at some other time. Maybe he would clean his room for me if I beat him over the head enough. Maybe. But he certainly wouldn't do it for someone else, and this new "good" behavior certainly wasn't internalized. Anyway, back to Michael (Cameron is another story). As I said, he was a jerk. All counselors like jerks. I don't know why. No, for me it wasn't the "challenge." I never liked the term. I would just as soon not have them be jerks and be less challenged. At the risk of sounding Pollyannaish, "there was something about him I liked." I know, that's as bad as "challenge." We all have to make up some reason to keep showing up for work.

He was the first child I got close to. I was on him all the time. Do this, that, and the other. I discovered, after about a year of "counseling," I said "no" to about 90% of what the kids asked me.

I knew Michael for about three months. Not much had changed. Oh, he would talk with me now, especially at night when lights were out. His voice changed, he was less angry, and he even cried a few times while I was alone with him. He liked me. He even trusted me a little. Though his behavior hadn't changed much during the day, as professed by the many adults that interacted with him, there was something there. I mean, after all, he was a kid. Then one day when I came to work, I got the word from the social worker that Michael was being "terminated." I had been avoiding this for a while. I

had made excuses for Michael, feigned "progress", all in an attempt to buy time. It was too late. Keep in mind the type of counselor I was. No wimp here. No "cry on my shoulder and all would be well" bleeding heart. It was much more serious than that. I didn't care if the kids liked me or not. I really didn't. And the more I seemed to not care if they liked me, the more they seemed to like me. More important issues were at hand than being friendly. They were to get better—whatever the hell that meant—somehow. A throwback to my coaching days I suppose. Shove good behavior down their throats. Mandate it. This style was to get me through the first two years in the business.

I also was naive enough to think termination wasn't an option. This was a boy's home. We all knew the kind of kids we were taking in. Where were they to go from here? Why did we expect them to behave well and follow the rules now? I was to learn more of my "naivete" from the veterans as time went by.

This wasn't unusual. This was the norm. "Failure to adjust" and "inability to follow the program" were phrases that would ring in my ears for a long time. It seemed to me we said them to take us off the hook. I never use those terms anymore.

So how do I tell a child he is to be "terminated"? (I never use that term anymore either.) This was my first. I mean, the social worker didn't want to do it. Nor did I want her to do it anyway. It was up to me. I wasn't sure how the "old pros" did it. I asked around. Some said to just come right out and say it. Others said to wait until the Probation Officer showed up so the child wouldn't "go off" and break something. Still others said the best way to handle this was to pack his clothes while he was in school, have his allowance ready, meet him after school, put him in the car, and tell him on the way to the airport. This didn't sound right to me for some reason.

I took him to a restaurant for lunch.

He thought he had done something good. He had a big grin on his face, like he was eager to get back to the facility and tell Cameron where I had taken him. He said no one had ever taken him — just him — to a restaurant before. He ordered the biggest hamburger on the menu. We ate. He talked more than he ever had, especially about his plans. I'd never seen him like that. And then I told him.

I was quiet and matter-of-fact. I'm not sure what I said, but I explained it like a divorce. I said we both could have done better. I said he could look forward to his next placement. I said I was glad I got to know him and that he was a good kid. There was no need to "make sure he understands he's responsible for his actions." He always knew that. I always knew we were responsible too. Nor was there any reason to boot him in the ass out the door.

His eyes welled up, just like a twelve-year-old little boy. He wasn't angry. He didn't break anything. He thanked me.

This is to acknowledge the wonderful privilege and opportunity granted to me to attend the most powerful, dynamic and unforgettable 14th Biennial Conference 2003.

I learnt a lot and felt encouraged to proceed with my calling of serving the community especially children in my area.

MDU ZULU

Mtubatuba –Thembalesizwe Drop-in Centre

I took him back to the facility. He got his clothes and belongings, and he even shook hands with a few of the staff. I took him to the car and he said he would write. He was still smiling. I never saw or heard from him again.

Of course I took a lot of crap from the vets. Rookie jokes. "Took the little shit to lunch? Are you kidding? The kid was an asshole!" So he was, so he was.

About five years later I was the vet. I was training the rookies. Precious little had changed, but enough to make a difference. I no longer restricted them — I hadn't for three years. It was frustrating for the staff then working for me, for all the same reasons. "The kids will get away with murder," is an old wives' tale still in the business. "The kid can never win" is another that long ago should have died a not-so-peaceful death.

I was directing an adjacent 12-bed facility for 15-18 year olds. It had a fireplace. I was asked by the agency to burn some old files. One night while having an informal group with the boys, I began to throw these files into the fireplace. As we were talking I looked down and there was a picture of Michael on his file. The irony.

You see, I had learned just two days earlier what had happened to him. He was placed in another facility in Northern California. He didn't do very well. He was placed in another. At his third facility after leaving the one I worked at, when he was 14 years old, they found him one night hanging from the shower head in the bathroom. He was dead.

I learned later they did some sort of investigation. Nothing conclusive. Some said suicide, others said foul play. No one took a real interest is what I heard. After all, he was a jerk. I didn't tell the boys at group that night. I didn't burn the file. I kept it.

I tell you this: that snot-nosed, smart-assed, defiant twelve-year-old kid was just a little boy in that restaurant. So please, don't "terminate" kids anymore. Take them to lunch.

Reference

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Letter to the Editor

What do I bring back from the Conference?

Well, quite a wealth of information...
But what I bring are more challenges.

Firstly Dr Martin Brokenleg broke the circle of courage down for me in a simple understandable language. For instance, he said of Generosity: *we need to recognise the goodness inside all our young people; then we need to let them see their own goodness; then we need to develop that very goodness.*

How do we treat the Child?

- This question depends on how well connected we are with the Child.
- The connectedness depends on how many hours we spend with the Child.
- Spending time with the child means building a relationship with the Child.
- The more connected we are to that child as an individual, the better we treat that child.

In other words the child becomes the focus. Is the child "just another child" or is the child "an adult in the making" (a being that needs to develop into a responsible adult). If the Child is "an adult in the making", then what are our responsibilities as adults?

"See young people for who they are meant to be, not who they are now" — Dr Martin Brokenleg

The second challenge for me came from Prof. Jim Anglin. His main point was that "we are in service of the child's best interest". There are 5 different levels of group home operation:

- Extra agency (funder)
- Management (mancom)
- Supervisor (programme director)
- Worker (staff team)
- Youth (young person and their families)

All levels are inter-linked. We all rely on each other, but the one thing we should not forget is the fact that the youth are our focal point. Our work and decisions should centre on their needs. We need to treat these young people with the same respect as we treat our own children, or nieces, or nephews, or our neighbours' children, or any other child. They need to be treated in the same way that we would like to be treated.

Thirdly, where is most of our work being done at the moment? Most of the work is on the "continuum of care" (residential care) area. By doing this we are increasing the number of children coming into the "system". The way in which we are doing this, is by taking young people away from their families and putting them in institutions, therefore not building up the families to cope. The department of social services identified this problem and is now encouraging institutions to transform their thinking. This means that we are now hoping to go into the families and do the preventative work. The challenge is for Child and Youth Care Workers to become Community Child and Youth Care Workers and Children's Homes to become Child and Youth Care Centres. This means that we start running programmes for communities, rather than "isolated" children. This is a challenge that I feel passionate about, because we will then be making a difference, not only in the life of the child, but also the life of communities.

Ted Fisher

Family Reunification Worker, St. Michaels Home

**"Often we must see children for who they are
meant to be — not for who they are right now."**

— Dr. Martin Brokenleg

