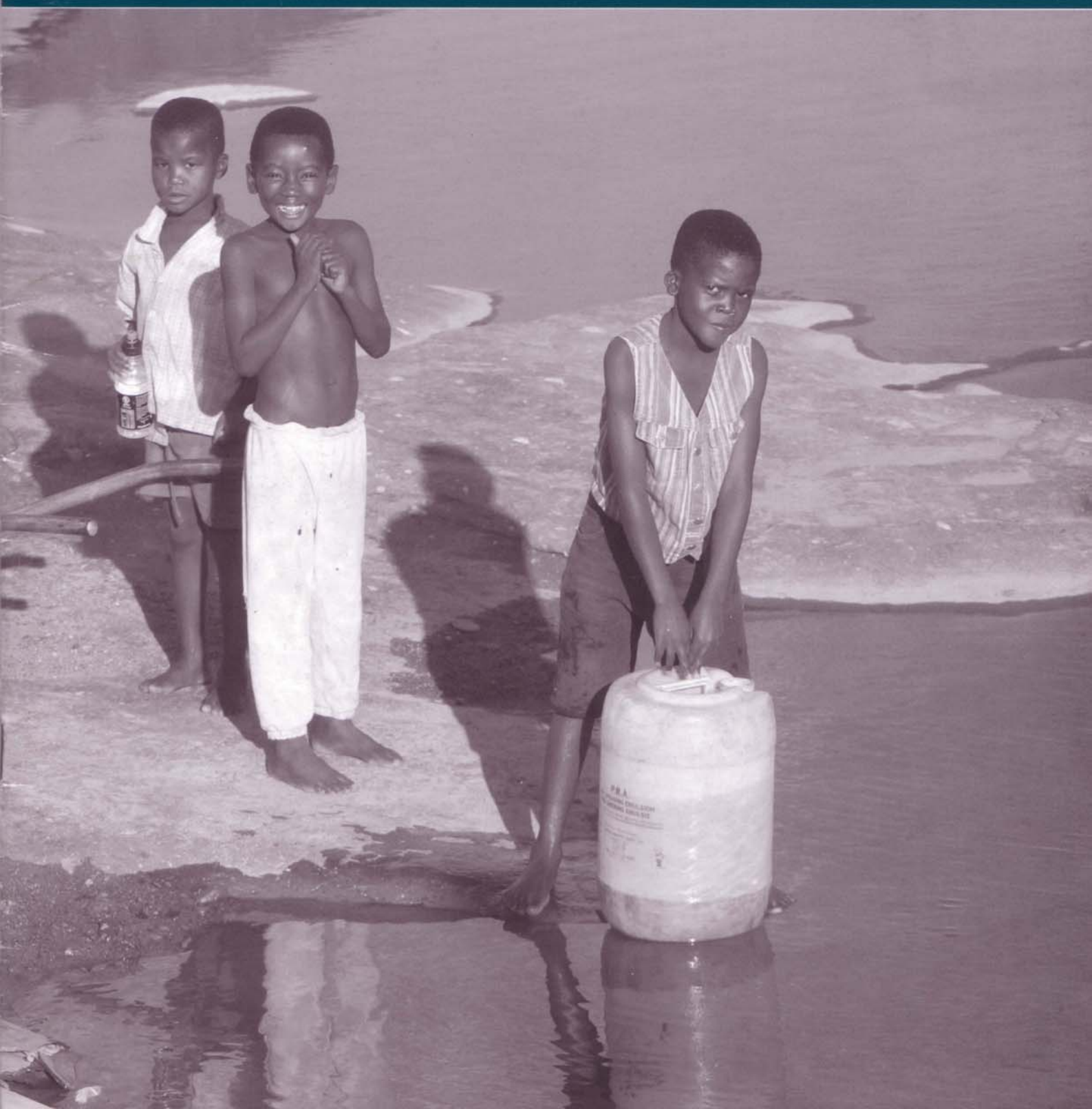


child and youth care

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with children and youth at risk

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The Children's Bill – what is all the fuss about?

At the time of going to press the situation as regards the Children's Bill (as reported on in the editorial of the August issue) remains alarming. A working group made up of NGOs operating in the children's sector has continued to motivate for consideration to be given to two issues, namely the inappropriate speed with which it appears that the Bill is being taken through the parliamentary process, and secondly the exclusion from the Bill of significant provisions that held potential for the realization of children's rights. A press statement made by the working group (of which NACCW is a member) notes:

"Representatives of civil society and children's organizations are aghast to learn that the Children's Bill may be rushed through Parliament. The Bill, in its original draft, developed after years of consultation and extensive research, was a document that was both visionary and practical. Its potential impact has been so diminished that it undermines the rights and the best interests of children. The huge investment that government and civil society have made in this process, is now in danger of being squandered. In a recent open letter to minister Zola Skweyiya, the sector expressed its grave concern about the drastic reduction of the capacity of the Bill to address the plight of children in South Africa. The original draft legislation provided for many innovative measures to improve and protect the quality of life of all South African children. Most of these provisions have been removed, including an inter-sectoral framework for the comprehensive approach to children's needs. This omission is contrary to the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child made to the South African government. This is a serious setback."

Representatives from the various sectors fear that if tabled in parliament in a rush to pass legislation before the elections, the Bill will not be given sufficient consideration. It is after all a statute of almost 300 pages, all sections of which must be read in conjunction with one another to understand the dispensation for children it embodies. Is it possible that so comprehensive and complex a document could be respectfully appraised in a hurry?

Consequently the Working Group has called on the Minister of Social Development and the speaker to delay the tabling of the Bill so

that it receives the attention it deserves in its passage towards enactment. This will allow for the public to be informed about the excisions which will seriously limit the capacity of the system to support vulnerable children. After all the resources that have been absorbed in developing this legal framework for children, surely it is responsible to thoughtfully decide on what will be enacted? Surely it would be important to be cautious about a bill significantly watered down from that considered by a range of experts to be essential in protecting our country's most valuable resource? Not all the sub-sectors which are dealt with in this "cut" version of the Bill have been negatively affected. The section dealing with child and youth care centers for instance represents a leap forward from current legislation dealing with the matter. Certainly too there is an urgent need to improve on the current legislative framework for children. But it is unlikely that major revamping of legislation protecting children will take place for another 10 – 20 years after this legislation is passed. We all know how inter-dependent the different aspects of the system are on one another. The provisioning on the court system directly affects the way children enter care for instance. The success or failure of the social security system likewise affects children being cared for within communities as opposed to being brought into residential care for reasons of poverty.

It is thus incumbent on us as the child and youth care sector to stand together with our colleagues in opposing this legislation being hastily dispatched and in its current form. We must stand up for a comprehensive statute that deals effectively with all aspects of protecting children from harm. To add your personal voice to the call being made by the Working Group please write to:

Ms M Ncgobo-Mbere,
Director: Children
Department of Social Development,
Private Bag X901
Pretoria
0001

or fax her at 012-3127830 and

Dr Zola Skweyiya
Minister of Social Development
Private Bag X9153
Cape Town

or fax him at 021-4654469.

Merle Allsopp

NACCW

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Cover photo: © Benny Gool

Dates to Remember

November 2003

- 1** **National Children's Day
(1st Saturday of
November)**
- 6** **International Day for
Preventing the
exploitation of the
Environment in War
and Armed Conflict**
- 9** **Malaria Day**
- 10** **World Science Day for
Peace and Development**
- 11-30** **Skin Cancer**
- 14** **World Diabetes Day**
- 16** **International Day of
Tolerance**
- 17-24** **International Restorative
Week**
- 19** **World Day for the
Prevention of Child
Abuse and Neglect**
- 20** **Universal Children's Day**
- 25** **International Day of
No Violence Against
Women**



What can we do about Gangs?

MARY LYNN CANTRELL

It's easy to recognize that gangs are a present day phenomenon associated with real problems. It's less easy to determine what we can and should do to help youth faced with these realities. This article will summarize some well informed suggestions from a variety of sources.

What can facilities do?

Become informed! Talk to local police or others who know about:

- names of gangs and territories,
- identifiers - signs and colors,
- members - numbers, names, characteristics, operational styles.

Declare and Make the facility a "Neutral Zone" for Gangs

- Make policies public and repeat them when needed.
- Search for and destroy graffiti.

Take a stand against violence, and work to establish among youth a norm that supports that stand. One school secured anti-violent pledges from students, giving them group support for individually taking nonviolent stances in troublesome situations.

Anti-Gang Program

More such materials are becoming available. A curriculum which includes:

- showing the reality of the gang lifestyle,
- demonstrating alternatives to the gang lifestyle,
- developing self esteem,
- providing models for dealing with peer pressure,
- giving drug abuse information,
- informing about the consequences of criminal behaviour,
- exploring career opportunities.

Include Other Important Curriculum Components

For example:

- training in problem solving and good decision making,
- pro-social skills training, values education,
- non-violent conflict resolution methods and practice,
- education in AIDS/STD prevention and personal safety,
- incentives and support for achievement

What Should we remember in Relating to a Gang Member?

Keep Cool

- Emotionality conveys lack of self control; take it easy.
- Use humor if appropriate, but never humiliate.

Show Personal Respect without Attempting to Intimidate

Gangs place great emphasis on respect. When walking through another gang's territory, members may tilt their hat or drape their sweater over the arm to indicate respect for the gang in that area. Members are likely to return the respect given them by adults.

Remember Not to Threaten

Threats do not work. Gang members feel powerful and everlasting. Most members are likely to say what one gang member said when he was likely to end up getting shot: "Not me; I won't get hurt." And if threatened with disciplinary action, they may well demonstrate that our threats are empty ones.

Be Someone Who Cares, But Don't Come on as a Therapist.

Relationships are important, but degrees are a 'laugh' to gang members. If asked "What's happening?" they may tell about their concerns. If asked to talk about their feelings, they are likely to stop talking. Make your



caring sincere; students have excellent "phonies detectors." Listen well.

Point Out What Youth Pay for What They Get from a Gang Membership.

The economic protective benefits of gangs are difficult to dispute, but the loss of personal independence may not be clear to them. As Nick Long said "Once you're in a gang, they own you. You've gone back to slaving. Nothing is free, and no one in a gang is independent. Join a gang and they've won: you got beat!"

Don't Be Afraid to be Appropriately Assertive.

In the gang arena, fear invites intimidation. "Contrary to much 'common wisdom' teachers who demonstrate that they care about a youth and then are firm and fair in their experiences are rarely, if ever, the victims of assaults by gang member. Rather, it is those teachers who 'back down' and are easily intimidated who are more likely to be the victims of assault. During two years of interviews, not one gang member ever said that a teacher who insisted on academic performance (within the context of a caring relationship) was assaulted. Such teachers are respected far more than those perceived as 'weak' and 'weakness' generally represents a quality to be exploited by gang members in an almost Darwinian

fashion, much as they select targets on the street." (Huff:1980, p531) Many individuals lack assertive responses in situations where they are needed; rather, they progress from passive to aggressive behaviour, both of which are nonproductive. If appropriate assertiveness is a problem for you, obtain some assertiveness training. But remember that being

assertive does not mean acting tough. Acting tough presents a challenge for counter-aggressive action from students, and only makes thing worse. Use the Conflict Cycle (Long, 1979) to analyze behaviour in a situation and to choose how we should respond so as not to escalate a problem. The Conflict cycle suggests we try to understand the youth's view of himself and how the world operates. Then we can better predict his feelings and interpret his observable behaviour following a stressful incident. This information can help us to react in ways which do not confirm his expectations and thus avoid reinforcing his inappropriate behaviour in that situation.

Don't Ask Them to Do Things They Cannot Do

Asking a student to pursue an unrealistic goal is likely to blow an adult's credibility. We cannot ask a member to leave a gang where following our advice will probably get him killed. We may help him find ways to minimize his involvement and to seek other support.

Allow Students Choices Which Enable Them to Save Face

Maintaining the respect of their peers and, therefore, their self respect are constant primary objectives of gang members. Any other person who humiliates them is violating their integrity and therefore creating enemies. ■

Gangs

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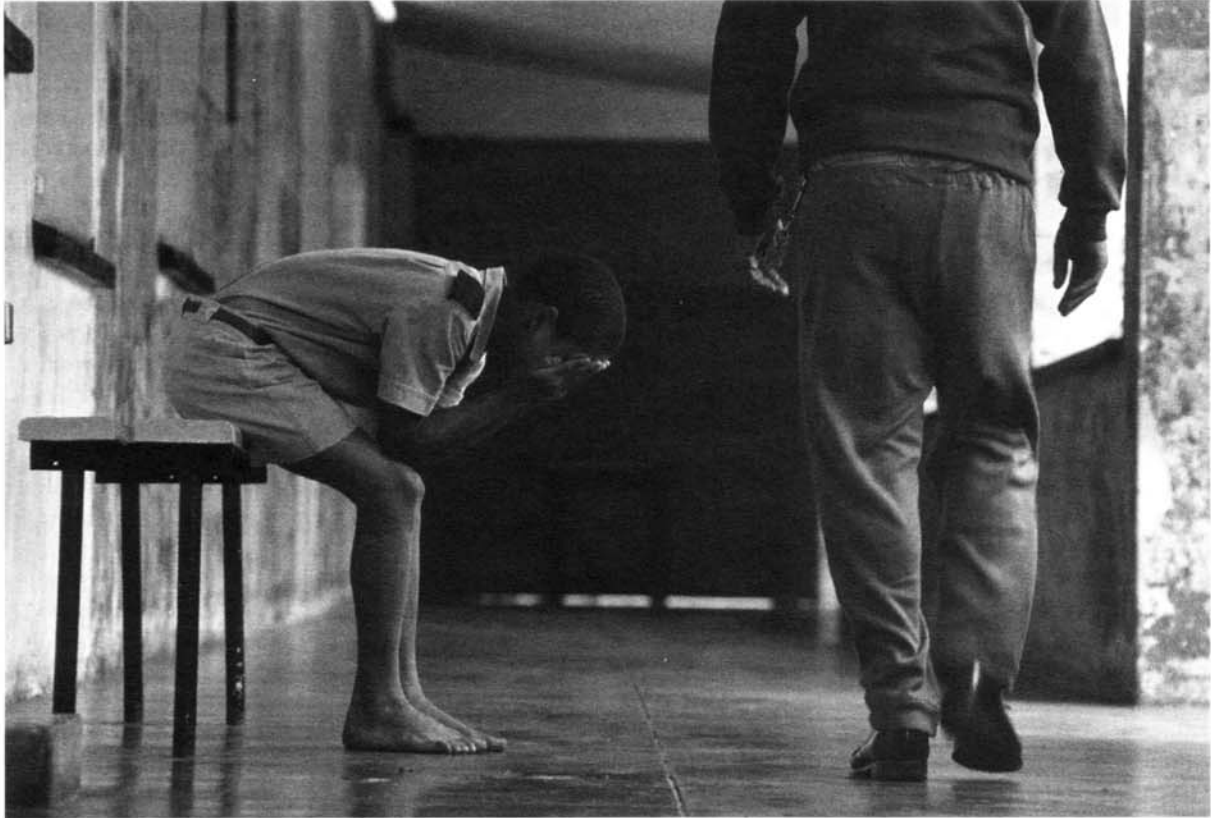
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Benny Gool

Creating a safe legislative framework: New laws for Children and the People who work with them

Extracts from Presentation by ANN SKELTON at the 14th Biennial Conference of the NACCW

1. Introduction

The current legislation relating to children and youth at risk is made up primarily of the Child Care Act no. 74 of 1983 and certain sections of the Criminal Procedure Act no. 51 of 1977. In late 1996 the Minister of Justice requested the South African Law Commission to enter two investigations into their program; one was on "juvenile justice" and the other on "the review of the Child Care Act". The two comprehensive investigations

have given rise to two Bills. The Child Justice Bill no. 49 of 2002, which is currently being deliberated upon in Parliament, and the Children's Bill.

2. The Child Justice Bill, no 49 or 2002

2.3 Keeping children out of prison

In order to keep children out of police cells and prisons, the Legislative Justice Bill encourages the release of children into the

care of their parents. A probation officer will assess every child before the child appears at a preliminary inquiry. A preliminary inquiry is held in respect of every child within 48 hours of arrest and is presided over by a magistrate, referred to as the "inquiry magistrate". Decisions to divert the child away from the formal court procedure to a suitable programme may be taken at the preliminary inquiry stage, if the prosecutor indicates that the matter may be diverted.

The Bill is not soft on crime, however. If a child is not considered suitable for diversion, the matter will proceed to plea and trial. The Bill provides a wide range of sentencing options for children as alternatives to prison sentences. Children who are 14 years or older may nevertheless be sentenced to imprisonment in certain circumstances. The Child Justice Bill provides that children may be sentenced to a "residential facility" and this is defined in the Bill as "a residential facility established by the Minister of Education or the Minister of Social Development which is designated to receive sentenced children.". This of course encompasses what the current law calls "Reform Schools", but could also allow for the use of any facility falling under the Department of Education or the Department of Social Development.

3.2 Scope of the Bill

Although the committee at the South African Law Commission was originally tasked with a review of the Child Care Act, the investigation resulted in a more comprehensive statute. The Children's Bill deals with parental rights and responsibilities (including what we currently call access, custody and guardianship), children in especially difficult circumstances, children in need of care and protection, the age of majority, prevention and early intervention, early childhood development, and social security for children, to name but a few areas.

3.3 Child and Youth Care Centres

For the purposes of my presentation today the chapter on Child and Youth Care Centres is of

particular importance. The provisions of this chapter in the Bill define a residential facility as "a facility for the provision of residential care to more than six children outside the child's family environment in accordance with a residential care programme or programmes suited for children in the facility." The idea of the description is that it heralds a move away from the division and labelling of institutions that South Africa has had. The use of terms



such as children's homes, schools of industry and reform schools will come to an end with the passing of the Children's Bill, and all such facilities will then be referred to as Child and Youth Care Centres. Each child and youth care centre must offer a therapeutic programme designed for the residential care of children outside the family environment. It will be possible within the new legal framework to establish and operate multi purpose centres, such as child and youth care facilities that offer both temporary care and longer term care. For example, a child and youth care centre can be established for:

- the reception and care of, and the provision of tuition to, children ordered by a court to receive tuition or training

- the reception and secure care of children awaiting trial or sentence
- the reception and secure care of children with behavioural and emotional difficulties, for the purpose of providing counselling, tuition and training to them and
- the reception, secure care and training of children in terms of an order under the criminal procedure or the children's court.

The Children's Bill also contains a section on what will happen to existing children's homes, places of safety, secure care facilities, schools of industries and reform schools. All of these will be deemed to have been established by the Children's Bill (Act). With regard to schools of industry and reform schools the Bill provides

that these facilities will continue to reside under the department of Education until the President, by proclamation, assigns the administration of these facilities to the Minister for Social Development.

The details regarding the content of the programs to be offered at the Child and Youth Care Centres will be provided for in regulations to the Act.

Are children safe in the current system?

Let me turn now to the theme of the conference – the safety of children in the system. The theme could not be more timely. In working to get the Child Justice Bill through Parliament, a rash of problems have come to the fore, many revealing that children are in danger in the system as follows:

- 2649 children are in prison awaiting trial – in severely over-crowded conditions
- 155 of these have been in prison for more than one year
- 257 children in pre-trial custody in prison for whom bail has been set, but they have failed to pay.
- At the end of March 2003 there were 1800 children serving sentences, 3 of whom were under the age of 14 years.

The laws will provide an enabling environment in which to do the work, but in the end the success still depends on the quality of that work: making every child matter, making every moment count.

The Child Justice Bill will immediately reduce the number of children being held in prison, but this means that those children will have to be accommodated elsewhere. Some can go home and await trial there, but in many instances this will not be possible. And so there will be increased pressure on the provision of alternatives to imprisonment. The Department of Social Development has indicated that they are planning to roll out their home based supervision model. This will be of great assistance, but will have to be put in place quite rapidly if we are to gain the support of the magistrates and ensure that they use this option well. But even with additional home based options, we cannot escape the reality that there will be calls for more secure care accommodation.

I am aware of the importance of keeping the integrity of the concept of secure care. Those who were part of the conceptualisation and birth of secure care in this country fought hard to ensure that that these facilities would not just be prisons with another name, laying down stringent minimum standards dealing with matters such as staff to child ratios, the physical features and programmes of secure care. Although I am a lawyer, and not a child and youth care worker, my exposure to the process of the transformation of the child and youth care system has ensured that I understand that secure care is a programme, not a building. That children locked behind high walls make wall climbing a sport. That the other 23 hours are of vital importance. But we are still left with having to answer some very difficult questions put by Parliamentarians who have doubts about whether our systems can deliver. It is essential that this matter is tackled by the experts in the field and that a proper plan is

activated immediately, based on minimum standards, but also cognisant of the realities that we are facing. If not, the situation will reach a crisis of such proportions, that other people, who are not experts in the field, will begin to make these decisions for us. Politicians, senior public officials, private-for-profit secure care service providers.

Will children be safer under the new law?

That depends. The laws, on paper at least, are clearly there to ensure that children are safer. But in the end you can legislate as much as you want. The answer depends on whether the people working in the system care enough to make it safer.

What do the new laws mean for people working in the system?

The law that will most affect child and youth care workers is the Children's Bill. What is very notable about the Children's Bill is that despite the fact that it is a long Bill, it is in many ways a framework. The real detail will be in the regulations. This means that there is still an opportunity for the needs of child and youth care workers to be written into those regulations, and it will be important to inform the Department of Social Development about issues that are of importance to the sector. It will be very important for Child and Youth Care workers to collectively present at the Parliamentary hearings on the Bill, giving specific examples of things that should be changed or inserted in the Bill.

To conclude on the issue of what this wave of new legislation means for people working in the system – it means a challenge, but a very positive one. The laws will provide an enabling environment in which to do the work, but in the end the success still depends on the quality of that work: making every child matter, making every moment count. ■

Here is something to ponder . . .

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness ... you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation ... you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep ... you are richer than 75% of this world!

If your parents are still alive and still married ... you are very rare.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.



Henry Maier Says

Words of Wisdom from veteran child and youth care guru shared at the 7th International Child and Youth Care Conference in August 2003 by HENRY W MAIER

☞ "Introduce yourself, if necessary by your first name, tell what connects you with care work or the reason you have for this alignment. We are here for our commitment to care services, as individuals; less important is the bureaucratic organization we represent. No professional lawyer, physician or businessman introduces him or herself for the program organization with which they are connected."

☞ "I am envious of you, in the field of care practice, because you are engaged in a field of human practice where you expand your skills in your daily work experience. Real care work has the promise to develop basic practice skills needed for most professions. As a care worker one learns to make immediate human contacts."

☞ "Looking back on your mastery of these capabilities in the field you can make use of your earlier childhood experiences, tapping into the many fun activities you learned which nurtured relationships. For instance, we can all recall a storehouse of games, stories, and activities from your youth which bring people together."

☞ "I stated earlier that I am envious, I no longer have long evenings where I try to fall asleep while stretching my brain, trying to think what might be done the next day. On-line workers are challenged to constantly come up with new ideas. Regardless of the age of the care receivers, experiences we learned in childhood apply."

☞ "I miss the occasion to be challenged to think of stories I read as a child, stories extracted from books or TV which I could then use for my night story telling."

☞ "You are in a profession, which trains you in skills, in combining childhood experience with future competence. Each of you I am sure could come up with activities that are creative and non-competitive, with no winners or losers."

☞ "Presently we face a situation where unfortunately effective care staff has to accept our limited or meager pay scale because organizations suffer from a lack of public funding. By adjusting to this dilemma and in a strange way applying into their personal advantage, more and more the work schedule is arranged so that the care worker can follow up personal needs like continuing their education, meeting family demands or personal comfort. This money pinch leads to the point where the program manipulation serves to justify staffs' personal requirements rather than care work, which should itself justify the program. I think that this concern deserves the attention of care workers, administrators, board members and consultants."

Our challenge at the present time is to prevent care work from becoming an economic solution rather than a challenge for legitimate public supported services." ■

... continued from last month's issue of *Child and Youth Care*

Presentation for Stockholm University Conference

THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT AND DISASTERS

This is the second part of the research study presented by David Tolfree at the Stockholm University Conference. It is based on a research study commissioned by the Save the Children Alliance and entitled "Care and Protection of Separated Children in Emergencies". The book will be published by Save the Children Sweden in November and is titled "Whose Children? Separated Children's Protection and Participation" by David Tolfree

4. Spontaneous Fostering

In most large-scale emergencies, if communities remain intact, the majority of separated children are absorbed within the extended family, but in conflict and forced migration situations, many children who are separated from their families are taken in spontaneously by other families. In the past, these children have been defined out of sight by the term "unaccompanied children" — because they are not strictly unaccompanied, and it has often been assumed that they do not have protection needs: spontaneous fostering has been assumed to be an appropriate community coping mechanism. But evidence emerging from the study suggests that in some contexts, spontaneously fostered children are being abused and discriminated against on a huge scale.

Talking to foster carers in the refugee camps in Sinje, Liberia, a kind of "double discourse" emerged in their motivation to foster. On one level, many carers were eager to convey their religious and humanitarian reasons for taking in a foster child. But on another level, it also clearly emerged that many — probably the large majority — of foster carers were also reflecting the cultural tradition that children were often placed with either related or unrelated families for reasons which have nothing to do with the best interests of the child.

Fostering, as it is referred to in the anthropological literature, is extremely common in West Africa: children are placed with other carers for a wide variety of reasons. A family may place a baby with an older woman (a "granny") so that the mother can return to productive work in the high-dependency years of the child's infancy, and this may facilitate the mother's resumption

of post-natal fertility by the cessation of breast-feeding. Older children may be placed with higher-status families so that the child can be educated and that he/she (and possibly the family) can benefit from a form of patronage. There are even examples of children being used as "pawns" — as security against a loan. In all these situations there is an element of exchange: the "granny" will expect that the child, when older, will have obligations towards her in her old age. The child placed primarily for the benefit of receiving an education will be expected to contribute to the household economy. Usually there is no expectation that the child will be treated the same as others in terms of access to food, health-care, burden of work, educational opportunities etc... The main consideration is not the best interests of the child but the interests of the family as a whole. However, the presence of parents, albeit at a distance, is probably protective, in that they will keep a

wary eye on how the child is being treated.

In Sinje beneath the humanitarian and religious reasons for taking in the child which many carers were keen to express, were clear reflections of these cultural traditions in which there was an expectation of "something in return". This was most clearly evidenced by one foster carer who, in a focus group discussion about foster carer motivation talked about taking in the child "out of sympathy", but later let slip that he needed a child to work in the home and help with the younger children. It was also quite striking that when foster carers talked about the motivation of other foster carers, they often emphasised the more selfish reasons for taking in a child, but when they talked about their own motivation, there was a strong emphasis on sympathy or pity for the child, or religious or humanitarian reasons for wanting to provide care.

What emerges overall from the case studies is the very diverse

nature of spontaneous fostering. Some carers clearly provide excellent care -some eager to reunite the child with his or her own family, others wanting to "claim" the child, even by changing the name — a form of quasi-adoption, which is generally associated with a good quality of care. In El Salvador it was common for families to take in a child and then register him or her as their own child and changing the name to their own. At the other end of the spectrum, spontaneous fostering can involve overt exploitation and abuse, with discrimination very widespread, and this was borne out by what children themselves told us. Some cases of serious abuse and exploitation emerged. In a small assessment of 20 foster families who remained in Cote d'Ivoire after most of the refugees had been repatriated, all 20 children were being sexually abused in some way. Elsewhere the incidence of abuse and exploitation is difficult to quantify, but cases emerged in all contexts. It seems highly likely that there will be a general under-reporting of abuse and exploitation. The following are two examples of more extreme abuse:

- After these men killed my mother, one of them (members of a government sponsored paramilitary group) took my sister and me to his house. But he didn't treat us like the rest of his children. Oh no. It was only work and work. Then he sold my sister to another family in a nearby village. She was to do the household chores for this family. And the man kept me to work the fields, with the animals, everything. I was forced to work from dawn to dusk, and was hardly given any food. This went on for years. When I was twelve years old I managed to

escape and I joined the guerrillas. This was a huge improvement.

I was living with a foster carer, the man he gave me L\$85 (equivalent to a little more than US\$2) to sleep with him but I refused the sin: at the time he was encouraging me to get married to another man. I refused both so he decided to put me out.

In all the case study countries it was found that discrimination is extremely widespread:

- When I am working I do the work alone while my foster mother's daughter is sitting doing nothing
- Whenever things go wrong in the house I am blamed for it, while the biological children go free
- I do the work but I don't go to school. I want to go to school so that I can be happy

Some of the strongest evidence for discrimination came from a workshop group with the biological children of foster carers. We convened a group of children who were the birth children of foster carers: after explaining that we were interested to know what it is like

to live in a family" in which there is a foster child, we invited them to prepare a drama depicting this. What emerged was an extraordinary level of quite unashamed discrimination and marginalisation of the foster child, in which they took an active part. In the discussion which followed, we asked them whether they would prefer the foster child to be older or younger than they are. Here are two of their replies:

I would like my foster brother or sister to be older because the person will help to buy me clothes I would like the foster child to be small because when they are small I can have control and beat them.

What many spontaneously fostered children resented was not having to work hard, but being treated differently from other children. This led them to feel that they lacked a sense of belonging in the family on equal terms with other children. Gender issues emerge as significant: girls are probably more exploited than boys. It was notable that in the Sinje refugee camps, spontaneously fostered boys and girls aged up to 12 were almost exactly in proportion, but



Benny Cook

among those aged over 13, girls were outnumbered by boys by 2:1. This might suggest that a large percentage of older girls were in unidentified foster families, for reasons which can be guessed at.

It is a firm conclusion of the study that spontaneously fostered children should be regarded as a category of children with potential protection needs, which currently often go unrecognised by governments and the international community.

5. Agency Fostering

So far I have talked mainly about spontaneously fostered children. What are the challenges and opportunities faced by agencies wanting to develop alternatives to residential care? We came across two different scenarios: on the one hand, as we have seen, in areas like West Africa, the idea of fostering is well established but often it is not protective of children. In other areas, it is not at all common- indeed there is a deep suspicion in many parts of the globe towards the idea of being cared for by someone outside of the extended family and community networks, and widespread beliefs that such children would be badly treated. Introducing fostering into either context is obviously difficult, yet in some contexts there is urgency about placing children in a family situation if early attempts to trace the child's own family are not successful. The only alternative may be large scale and potentially long term residential care. Experience in Rwanda, where the idea of fostering was not very familiar and aroused deep suspicions, shows that fostering could be introduced successfully under very difficult circumstances. A number of key factors seem to be associated with the successful introduction of fostering programmes:

- A clear understanding of and respect for cultural norms

- Government support -publicity through radio etc.
- Embedding fostering in the local community
- Careful selection and preparation of carers — including the children and the extended family
- Effective monitoring and support.

The big question is how these can be achieved. Some agencies started work in Rwanda with a western model of fostering in mind -with the agency accepting the principal responsibility for selecting and preparing foster carers, matching them with children, making the placement and providing long-term monitoring and support. However, it was quickly realised that this was neither realistic nor sustainable in the long term in this particular context. The need to work with and through community structures was recognised - not just in the selection and preparation of foster carers, and in the placement event (often involving a public ceremony in the community) but also in monitoring and supporting the placement. It is suggested that the most effective strategy for providing protection not only for fostered children (both spontaneous and agency) but also for those placed within the extended family, is by embedding fostering within the local community, for example by identifying local leaders/committees to oversee fostering, by linking the foster family with organisations of foster carers and by mobilising and supporting young people's organisations may be the most effective protective strategy. But in situations of armed conflict and refugee movements there is sometimes a danger of basing the work on an idealised picture of "community": ethnic tensions and violence, community fragmentation, disruption, upheaval and reconstitution may limit the

extent to which a community is able, or willing, to exercise collective responsibility for people in a potentially vulnerable situation. In each situation, there is a balance to be found, between, on the one hand, recognising and respecting the protective endeavours of the community, and on the other hand identifying the need for external monitoring and support: hence the need to devise and develop new models based on the specific context.

In the refugee camps in Sinje, children were supported by a range of community structures which, in turn, were supported by Save the Children UK. The refugees themselves formed a Child Welfare Committee which was mandated by the Camp Management Committee to visit children in a variety of care situations to provide monitoring and support. Foster carers formed themselves into an Association of Concerned Carers, and Save the Children UK mobilised young people to be actively involved in a range of issues, including promoting children's rights. SC UK played a key role in providing training and capacity-building work with all of these community structures, and the result was a range of networks with a concern for child protection.

Long-term Issues

Agencies working in an "emergency mode" — tend not to think about long-term issues. The study revealed that foster care is often labelled as "interim care" even though, in a significant percentage of cases, the child's family is unlikely to be traced and that the child will need permanent substitute care. It was rare to find any system of planning or reviewing which potentially could help to define the threshold at a point where it might not be in the child's best interests to return to his or her own family if it is traced. This left children and their

carers in an insecure position which militates against giving the child a real sense of belonging. Moreover, fostered children and their carers were often left in an uncertain situation in the event of things going wrong: it is well known that tensions can be experienced in adolescence but when the agency had withdrawn, and if the Government ministry was not playing an active role, who would intervene? In El Salvador, many children were "adopted" by means of registering in the name of the family. This, however, unlike legal adoption, did not always provide a real sense of security, but imposed a certain ambiguity on young people.

6. Adoption

The circumstances of conflict and forced migration usually make it extremely difficult to ascertain whether a separated child is legally available for adoption: establishing that the child has really been orphaned or abandoned, or obtaining informed consent of parents is usually extremely difficult. In any case, many countries disrupted by war lack the infrastructure necessary for adoption to be carried out in a competent and professional manner.

The case study undertaken in El Salvador documents evidence of widespread abuses of children's rights in inter-country adoption. Children were literally being bought and sold by unscrupulous middle-men (usually lawyers) who were also forging and falsifying documentation. In this context, it was driven by the interests of adopters in the west, not of children in a vulnerable situation. Perhaps the only place for legal adoption in emergency situations is for it to be available for foster carers after a period of, say, 5 years of successful foster care, to legally establish the child's position in the family and give both child and family the security of permanence. Unfortunately,



legal adoption is either unavailable, or very difficult to access, in many of the research contexts.

7. Alternative Placements for Adolescents

What about the situation of older children who become separated? Some may be young enough to require a measure of care or protection, but, for various reasons, do not want to be integrated into a new family? The study has attempted to access a range of program examples which will be documented in the book. These include:

- Family attachment program for Sudanese refugees
- Apprenticeship schemes in Sierra Leone

- Group living – staffed and unstaffed in various contexts
- House-building project in Angola
- Supporting "self-care" (Sinje) and supporting children living in child headedhouseholds in various different contexts.

Gender-based vulnerability needs to be especially acknowledged.

8. Conclusions

There is nothing entirely straightforward in providing care and protection for separated children in large-scale emergencies. A key principle, however, is the need to facilitate and support families to care for separated and orphaned children. Some conclusions do emerge clearly from the study:

- There is a broad consensus that residential centres should be avoided as far as possible, and should be used only as a strictly short-term measure
- The extended family is the most important front-line resource for separated and orphaned children, but children living within the extended family can and do sometimes experience high levels of discrimination which they resent and find hurtful. Children who have had painful and difficult experiences may benefit from external help to deal in a culturally appropriate manner with their pain, loss and grief. Psycho-social intervention to help children to grieve and support to carers may help integrate the child into the family and enhance the child's sense of belonging
- Fostering programs can be successfully established in challenging circumstances, but
 - Cultural familiarity with the idea of fostering is no guarantee that it will be protective of children, and
 - Lack of cultural familiarity with the idea of fostering is not necessarily a barrier to its successful implementation
- The importance of cultural understandings needs to be emphasised – respect and build on what is already there and avoid imposing alien structures.
- New models of agency fostering are needed to suit local circumstances: in particular, it may be necessary to emphasise the role of community structures in selecting foster carers and in monitoring and supporting foster placements. However, this needs to be based on a realistic and contextualised assessment of what “community” actually means. Faith-based organisations may have an important role to play
- It should not be assumed that spontaneously fostered children are being adequately cared for and protected. There is a balance to be found between recognising the protective endeavours of the community, and the need for external monitoring and support. The protection needs of this group of children often go unrecognised.
- Both agency and spontaneously fostered children will benefit from continuing monitoring and support. Embedding fostering within the local community, for example by linking the foster family with organisations of foster carers and young people's organisations may be the most effective protective strategy
- The issue of what happens when “interim” care becomes permanent seems to be largely ignored by agencies, leaving fostered children and their carers in a state of limbo. Care planning and reviewing may facilitate the recognition and formalisation of such arrangements, possibly through legal means such as adoption or guardianship
- Except as a means of formalising long-term fostering, adoption should be approached with caution, especially when the situation of the birth parents is unknown and where there is a lack of professional adoption agencies.
- Separated adolescents may need special provision and/or support, for example in the form of peer-group living, supported child headed households, apprenticeship schemes etc.. Gender-based vulnerability needs to be especially acknowledged.
- We do separated children a great dis-service by labelling them as a category of vulnerable children. The research suggests that separated children's resilience and capacity to cope is often more striking than their vulnerability. There is huge scope for work to mobilise and empower young people to take an active part in a range of issues, including child protection
- Separated children frequently reveal clear and well-considered views about their needs, problems and capacities, and about their preferred options for care. Child participation should be embedded in all programmes concerned with their protection and care.

This is a challenging and difficult area to work in. The results of the study are both heartening and discouraging. Some of the lessons learned in these most difficult of circumstances can be applied to other, possibly more straightforward, contexts.

In this presentation I have only been able to share a selection of the issues to emerge from the study. In choosing as the title of the book “Whose Children”, we are drawing attention to two key themes. First, who are the duty bearers whose role it is to uphold the rights of this group of children? In situations where governments are in a weak position to take on this responsibility, who else might do so – their care-givers, community leaders, local volunteers, child protection agencies and even children themselves? Second, from the viewpoint of children themselves, whose children are we? To whom do we belong. The study challenges us to develop ways of supporting communities and families to enhance the well-being and sense of belonging of children who are unable to live with their own families. ■

We omitted to indicate in the August issue that this article will be published in two parts. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Ethics of Child and Youth Care Professionals

As South African Child and Youth Care “comes of age” with a statutory regulatory body being established, requiring the adoption of a set of ethics to guide the profession, *Child and Youth Care* publishes the Code of Ethics adapted by the United States National Organization of Child Care Workers Association.

Introduction

Child and Youth Care – The Profession

North American Child and Youth Care has been developing as a profession. “Characteristic of professions are; a systematic body of theory, professional authority, sanction of the community, a regulative code of ethics and a professional culture” (Greenwood, 1957). North American Child and Youth Care has progressed in these areas. Ethics is the focus of this presentation.

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(Greenwood, 1957)

The International Child and Youth Care Consortium developed a “Description of the Field” which has become widely adopted (NOCCWA, 1992, p. 83). The profession aims to address, as much as possible, the psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and biological needs of young people and their families. This may occur at different life stages or in a variety of circumstances. In multi-disciplinary settings, as in

mandated agencies, the profession is central in the care, custody and treatment of youth. Child and Youth Care centers on the client and utilizes skills and techniques which actualize the processes of development and change. It includes the necessary advocacy for youngsters and their families in powerless and often hopeless situations. It captures the root value of “caring” as an underlying factor and force vital in emotional growth, rehabilitation, social competence and treatment.

The ethics, norms and knowledge base of Child and Youth Care constitute the professional culture which is a source of identity for all who participate in the profession. The shared symbols and values bring together educators, direct care workers and administrators. Practice and research are articulated and validated in the journals and literature of the profession. The profession’s values underlie the mission and management of Child and Youth caring organizations, employers and the professional associations.

The development of a North American Code of Ethics for Child and Youth Care is a benchmark for the profession. The Code of Ethics unites the range of professional roles and functions and relates them to common commitments and shared responsibilities. The Code of Ethics establishes a framework to guide thinking and practice for all Child and Youth Care Professionals.

Current Description of the Field

Professional Child and Youth Care Practice focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, both normal and with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings.

Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centers, day and residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs.

Child and youth care practice includes assessing client and program needs, designing and implementing programs and planned environments, integrating developmental, preventive, and therapeutic requirements into the life space, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice, and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation, and advocacy.

CODE OF ETHICS

Standards for Practice of North American Child and Youth Care Professionals

International Leadership Coalition of Professional Child and Youth Care — June 1995

Preamble

Professional Child and Youth Care is committed to promoting the well being of children, youth, and families in a context of respect and collaboration. This commitment is carried out in a variety of settings and with a broad range of roles including direct practice, supervision, administration, teaching and training, research, consultation, and advocacy. In the course of practice Child and Youth Care Professionals encounter many situations which have ethical dimensions and implications. As Child and Youth Care Professionals we are aware of, and sensitive to, the responsibilities involved in our practice. Each professional has the responsibility to strive for high standards of professional conduct. This includes a commitment to the centrality of ethical concerns for Child and Youth Care practice, concern with one's own professional conduct, encouraging ethical behavior by others, and consulting with others on ethical issues. This ethical statement is a living document, always a work in progress, which will mature and clarify as our understanding and knowledge grow. The principles represent values deeply rooted in our history, to which there is a common commitment. They are intended to serve as guidelines for conduct and to assist in resolving ethical questions. For some dilemmas, the principles provide specific or significant guidance. In other instances, the Child and Youth Care Professional is required to combine the guidance of the principles with

sound professional judgment and consultation. In any situation, the course of action chosen is expected to be consistent with the spirit and intent of the principles.

Principles and Standards

I. Responsibility for Self

- A. *Maintains competency.*
 - Takes responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge and abilities for professional practice.
 - Obtains training, education, supervision, experience and/or counsel to assure competent service.
- B. *Maintains high standards of professional conduct.*
- C. *Maintains physical and emotional well-being.*
 - Aware of own values and their implication for practice.
 - Aware of self as a growing and strengthening professional.

II. Responsibility to the Client

- A. *Above all, shall not harm the child, youth or family.*
 - Does not participate in practices that are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitive, intimidating, psychologically damaging, or physically harmful to clients.
- B. *Provides expertise and protection.*
 - Recognizes, respects, and advocates for the rights of the child, youth and family.
- C. *Recognizes that professional responsibility is to the client and advocates for the client's best interest.*
- D. *Ensures that services are sensitive to and non-discriminatory of clients regardless of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, national ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, abilities, mental or physical handicap, medical*

condition, political belief, political affiliation, socioeconomic status.

- Obtains training, education, supervision, experience, and/or counsel to assure competent service.
- E. *Recognizes and respects the expectations and life patterns of clients.*
 - Designs individualized programs of child, youth and family care to determine and help meet the psychological, physical, social, cultural and spiritual needs of the clients.
 - Designs programs of child, youth, and family care which address the child's developmental status, understanding, capacity, and age.
- F. *Recognizes that there are differences in the needs of children, youth and families.*
 - Meets each client's needs on an individual basis.
 - Considers the implications of acceptance for the child, other children, and the family when gratuities or benefits are offered from a child, youth or family.
- G. *Recognizes that competent service often requires collaboration. Such service is a cooperative effort drawing upon the expertise of many.*
 - Administers medication prescribed by the lawful prescribing practitioner in accordance with the prescribed directions and only for medical purposes. Seeks consultation when necessary.
 - Refers the client to other professionals and/or seeks assistance to ensure appropriate services.
 - Observes, assesses, and evaluates services/treatments prescribed or designed by other professionals.
- H. *Recognizes the client's membership within a family and community, and facilitates the participation of significant others in service to the client.*

Professionalisation

I. Fosters client self determination.

J. Respects the privacy of clients and holds in confidence information obtained in the course of professional service.

K. Ensures that the boundaries between professional and personal relationships with clients are explicitly understood and respected, and that the practitioner's behavior is appropriate to this difference.

- Sexual intimacy with a client, or the family member of a client, is unethical.

III. Responsibility to the Employer/Employing Organization

A. Treats colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.

B. Relates to the clients of colleagues with professional consideration.

C. Respects the commitments made to the employer/employing organization.

IV. Responsibility to the Profession

A. Recognizes that in situations of professional practice the standards in this code shall guide the resolution of ethical conflicts.

B. Promotes ethical conduct by members of the profession.

- Seeks arbitration or mediation when conflicts with colleagues require consultation and if an informal resolution seems appropriate.
- Reports ethical violations to appropriate persons and/or bodies when an informal resolution is not appropriate.

C. Encourages collaborative participation by professionals, client, family and community to share responsibility for client outcomes.

D. Ensures that research is designed, conducted, and reported in accordance with high quality Child and Youth Care practice, and recognized

standards of scholarship, and research ethics.

E. Ensures that education and training programs are competently designed and delivered.

- Programs meet the requirements/claims set forth by the program.
- Experiences provided are properly supervised.

F. Ensures that administrators and supervisors lead programs in high quality and ethical practice in relation to clients, staff, governing bodies, and the community.

- Provides support for professional growth.
- Evaluates staff on the basis of performance on established requirements.

V. Responsibility to Society

A. Contributes to the profession in

making services available to the public.

B. Promotes understanding and facilitates acceptance of diversity in society.

C. Demonstrates the standards of this Code with students and volunteers.

D. Encourages informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.

References

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Helping Children whose Friends or Relatives Die

The Idea

At some time, we all have a close friend or relative who dies. Losing someone dear to us is a sad thing and we feel very unhappy. The loss of a loved one is just as painful to children as it is to adults. Children may also be distressed by the grief of their parents or guardians. Other adults, including teachers, should try to listen to children's thoughts and fears. This may be difficult because adults have to face their own feelings about death. Children can be helped by a home and school environment that gives them affection and security, and where adults and other children listen to them and take account of their feelings.

Talking About Death

If a child loses someone they love, the youngster may want to talk about death to the other children, so that they can try to understand how their friend is feeling. Death means different things in different cultures and religions. It may be frightening. We may believe it is God's will, or destiny. We will explain death to children in different ways, depending on our own beliefs and culture.

What Happens in our Community When Someone Dies?

Adults can help children share what they already know about local customs when someone dies, and understand better why these take place.

Start Off with Children's Own Experience

What do our families do when someone dies? Does it depend on the age of the person, or whether they are a woman or man? Is there a feast or a ceremony? Who takes part in it? Are children included? Do people wear special clothing? For how long? How do these customs help people to express and share their feelings?

Encourage the Children to Find Out More

Children may be able to ask older members of their family and community customs following death. Old people have many

memories of death and children can find out what the different ceremonies that accompany death mean.

Tell Others

Children can tell what they have found out. They can create plays, songs and stories based on what they have discovered, and perform them in school. In this way, children share what they have learnt about death within their own culture.

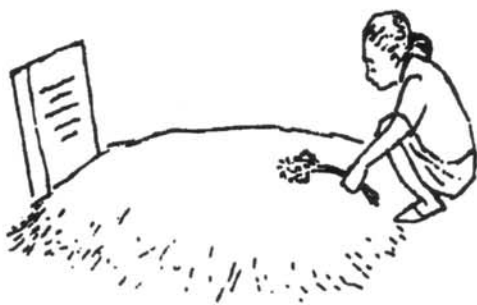
Learning from Stories about Death

Children can find out if there are stories about death in their culture. In small groups, children can tell these stories to each other, and their friends can draw a picture about the story.



Here is a story from the Winnebago people of North America which tells of helplessness in the face of death:

Hare for the first time hears of death. He starts to cry and runs toward his home. As he runs, he is attacked by the thought that everything will die. He casts his thoughts everywhere, upon the rocks, the mountains, under the earth, toward the skies. Wherever he casts his thoughts, all becomes shattered and stiffened up in death. When he reaches home, he wraps a blanket around him and lies down crying. There he lies in his corner, silent.



Activity

In this story Hare is overcome by his sadness and helplessness. Recognising and sharing feelings like these can help children (and adults) feel stronger in the face of death.

Stories from newspapers, or from children's and adult's own lives, can be a starting point for discussion and for children to think about ways of helping others. Here is a story about a child one teacher knew: Matthew was six years old. His grandmother had always played with him, but now she was dying. When his grandmother was taken into hospital, Matthew's mother said that she had gone on holiday. Each day he waited outside her door for her to come back. One day he saw her things being taken out of her house. He did not know why. No one explained properly. After a while, the teacher at school noticed that Matthew was not working well. He kept looking out of the window and did not know when the teacher asked him a question. He did not go out at playtime any more, and seemed to be tired and withdrawn. After the story, the adult asked the children, "If Matthew was with us, how could we help him?"

Children Helping Each Other

A friend is someone who stands by us in good times and bad. Can the children tell about a time when they:

- Needed a friend and had one?
- Were a good friend?
- Needed a good friend and did not have one?

When a child is unhappy after a death, their friends need to be very gentle, good listeners, and patient. The child must be allowed to show sadness by tears and other ways. Children should not be surprised if their friend takes a long time to get over this sadness. Other children can help by just being with them, hugging or holding hands, or doing something simple to show they care for them such as giving them a small gift like a sweet or a favourite toy.



Giving a gift



Playing together



Sharing everyday activities

Children have different feelings after a death, not only sadness. Children often feel angry, frightened, confused, and unable to accept that someone they love has died. They may find it difficult to do their schoolwork. They may have these feelings for a long time after the death. The feelings will be strong and difficult to cope with. When children show these feelings, people may think that they are behaving badly.



Adults and other children can help by being patient and understanding these feelings. There may be one person that the child likes and trusts more than others. It can help the child to talk to that person, as long as they really listen and accept what the child says. Later

Activity

on, children are likely to experience other losses, for instance if a good friend moves away to another place. At that time, all the feelings connected with the death of their loved one can return.

Children Helping Families

Children can help other families when someone has died. For example, they can help with housework, shopping, or looking after younger children. When a family member of one of the children dies, the whole group can write a letter to say how sorry they are, and all can sign it. It helps older people to know that children have remembered their loss.

Showing Feelings through Creative Activities

It may be difficult for children to talk about their feelings when someone they love has died. Adults can encourage children to express feelings in other ways, such as drawings and poems.

When Children Have Lost Someone They Love

- Talk to children and be friendly. When we ignore them or the death, this adds to their sadness and painful feelings.
- Listen to them. It does not help to say we know how they feel – it is very difficult to know how someone else feels.
- Be patient - we should not make them think they should get over their feelings quickly.
- Encourage children to join in play and other activities, but do not force them to do so.

Follow-up

When other children have been helpful to their friends in the ways suggested in this sheet, it is important for older family members, teachers and youth leaders to show that they have noticed. Quietly thank the children for what they have done, e.g. "I saw you went specially to play with Mary. It was very thoughtful of you. I am sure you have helped her."



Aids! Aids!

Who created you?

You are finishing us all

You kill the young and the old

You are finishing our lives

What is your mission?

Aids! You are a threat to the population

Why do you rob a man of his good life?

Last week you killed our father

The other month you killed our mother

Now you are killing our brother

Leaving us orphans.

We wish we knew where you live

Where are you Aids?

Who of you wouldn't want to see God?

To sit with the Creator?

But who of us wants to die?

The young and the old have died

The poor and the rich have vanished

The handsome, the beautiful, the ugly

Have disappeared

Because of Aids, the killer!

Extracts from poems by primary school children in Uganda who live in a community where there have been many deaths of friends and family members

Using This Sheet

This sheet may be useful for teachers, religious training groups, and out-of-school children's groups. It could be used when a child has had to stay away from class because of a death, but even when there has not been a recent death in a child's family, teachers can use this Sheet to help discuss with children how they could help.

Child-to-Child and Children in Camps

Often children who stay in camps, as a result of political changes, wars or disasters, will have lost friends or relatives. The publication *Child-to-Child and Children in Camps* helps give special suggestions on how the *Child-to-Child* materials can be used, and *Child-to-Child* activities carried out.

- Don't say things like, "You'll soon get over it", "Just think of all the good things you have", or "Everything will be all right." This suggests that the child should deny their feelings.
- Don't avoid talking about the person who is dead. The child will want to remember them. ■

Reprinted from: *Child-to-Child: A Resource Book; Part 2; Child-to-Child Activity Sheets; Child-to-Child Trust, 1992*



PERSONALITY PROFILE

ALFRED HARRIS

My introduction into child care

A career in child and youth care was not something I planned as a young boy. Although, in the area where I grew up I was often involved in programs with my peers during school holidays. At a young age I was elected as secretary of a junior soccer club. This meant that I had to make sure all the players were at the field on time, supervised and ready to play. A great responsibility but yet a training ground for something I did not foresee. My real introduction was when someone asked me whether I wanted to work for the government and being a newly married man I said "yes" not knowing where this job will be. All that this person said was that it was a job where you work with boys – the money was not good!

I went for an interview; was accepted and told where to report, so off I went. Arriving for morning shift I felt quite intimidated. There was no formal orientation program. I simply had to work. I clearly remember that first day. My colleague introduced himself to me. He then took me to the dormitory and simply told me he will be back soon and left. Here I was standing amongst a group of boys – both parties not knowing what to say or do!

My development in Child and Youth Care

When I entered into the gates of the facility I knew nothing about caring for troubled youth. I received on-the-job training by the so-called experienced workers. This training was not always in the best interest of the youth. After a few months in my new government job a new boss was appointed. He came with lots of new ideas. The more we rebelled as staff, the more persistent he became. One new idea was to enforce training. Being new and influenced by the older

hands, we informed him that we did not need training. The new boss insisted. I decided to go and see what this training was all about. The first lecture I attended was at St. Michael's Home. The session was so interesting that I went home and experimented with this new knowledge, testing it on my 2 year old daughter. To my surprise it worked. I was in training the next week again. I completed my BQCC training and felt more confident. As an individual I also attended the meeting of the NACCW in the region. This was mainly due to the fact that the principal of the facility was the National Chairperson at the time! Through attending these meetings, networks were established. Talking to fellow child care workers made me understand that we all have the same battles. The support I received at these meetings helped me to grow and develop in the field. The principal of the organization where I was employed left and I sadly distanced myself from the NACCW as a form of protest. I allowed myself to be influenced and believed then that I did not need the NACCW. This led to many other problems in my own development. This all changed after I attended the 1997 conference in Durban. There I realized how much I had lost out on and how my own development had stagnated. During this conference I decided to become involved in the regional activities of NACCW. Since that conference I have not looked back. I also made a decision not to miss another NACCW conference for any reason. Attending that conference had a profound impact on my relationship with my colleagues as well as the youth I was working with. I started to enjoy being a child care worker. When I faced challenges I had a wealth of experience to draw on outside the gates of the facility.

Child care became more than just a day to day job. My relationships with the boys improved and the work became more interesting. I also had the opportunity to train other child care workers which in itself was a challenge to me.

My current situation

I left the facility I was working at and am part of a departmental Assessment team in the Western Cape. The experience I gained being an on line child care worker is standing me in good stead. My new job takes me all over the Western Cape. I am exposed to services for young people as well as for older persons. Although I am not as involved in child care as I want to be, I still feel that I am making a contribution. I am vice chairperson of the Western Cape NACCW Regional Executive Committee and serve on the Editorial Board of Child and Youth Care.

My personal accomplishments

I completed various training courses amongst which are BQCC, Training of Trainers and the National Diploma in Child Care. I also had the opportunity to visit child care programs in America. For me the biggest accomplishment was when I was registered as a professional child care worker with the NACCW.

To conclude I would like to thank people who influenced my development in this field. First in the line is Ashley Theron. He was the person that came and changed everything around for me as an on-line worker. As staff at Bonnytoun I also met the dynamic Brain Gannon. All the staff working for the NACCW contributed greatly to my development. It is good to know that I am always welcome at the office, even if it is just to talk to someone! ■

A number of years ago, Norman Powell ran a workshop in Durban where he told a story about a meeting he had attended with a group of people from diverse professions. Each person introduced themselves by saying their name and their profession. One said, "I'm a lawyer", one said, "I'm a doctor", one said, "I'm an architect". Others said, "I'm a nurse", "I'm a teacher", "I'm an engineer", "I'm an accountant". The introductions went on. When it came to Norman's turn he said, "My name's Norman, and I grow young people into doctors, lawyers, architects, nurses, teachers, engineers and accountants".

Each one of us could have chosen any number of professional paths to follow but we all chose child and youth care work. At the same time, in our daily work with children, very often we find parallels between what we do and what the members of other professions do.

You could have chosen to be a doctor treating the physical wounds and illnesses of patients, performing emergency operations, administering life-saving medication, preventing further spread of disease.

You chose to be a child and youth care worker treating the emotional wounds of young people, providing support in crises so young people might learn new ways of being and doing. You chose to administer daily doses of unconditional care and acceptance so that children and youth might experience themselves and others differently. You chose to help in unblocking the development of young people at risk and walk with them a little way along the road to recovery and holistic health.

You could have chosen to be an architect, designing complex structures of beauty and purpose, drawing plans to be transformed into buildings of brick and concrete and steel and glass.

You chose to be a child and youth care worker, working with the most complex thing on earth, the human being. With your knowledge of human development, you contribute to the drawing up of plans and programmes so that each young person can be transformed into the actualisation of her/his potential, a human being capable of living by positive values, making effective decisions, building caring relationships and expressing joy and sadness.

You could have chosen to be a lawyer, standing in a court room, presenting your cases, fighting for the rights of your clients.

You chose to be a child and youth care worker, often working in "the goldfish bowl", in full view of children, families and colleagues. You chose to represent children and families, to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met. You chose to fight for the rights of those with little power, young people, the poor, the abused, the neglected, the marginalised.

You could have chosen to be an accountant, tallying rows of figures, carrying out calculations according to set formulas, trying to balance the books and hoping that income exceeds expenditure.

You chose to be a child and youth care worker, tallying the human toll of HIV/AIDS, calculating how best to intervene knowing that there are no set formulas



What is a Child and Youth Care Worker?

JACKIE WINFIELD

when it comes to human beings. You chose to work with people to help them to achieve balance in their lives and harmony in their relationships. You continue to choose this because you believe it makes a difference and you know that effective therapeutic work can undo some of the damage in children's lives. You could have chosen to be a teacher, an engineer, a chef, an artist, a musician, a computer programmer ... Each of these occupations has something to offer in our understanding of child and youth care work.

However, as an emerging profession, and on the eve of statutory registration of child and youth care workers, we need to be absolutely certain about what child and youth care work **is** and what it is **not**. Such understanding will help us to be confident about ourselves and our work, and will contribute to improving the understanding of people from other professions and from society at large. Others will recognise us once we are able to truly recognise ourselves, not as social auxiliary workers or auxiliary social workers or child minders or pre-school teachers or nannies or some other group, but as professional child and youth care workers, distinct from any other professional group.

You chose to be a child and youth care worker. You grow young people into lawyers and doctors and teachers and architects and anything else they have the potential to be. More importantly, you chose to work with children in the present, not because of who they might be in the future, but because of who they are right now. ■



**There can be no greater spiritual
accomplishment than to come
through brutal trials and then look
back and see that mean times did
not render us mean spirits**

"Small Wonder" – Barbara Kingsolver
