

# child and youth care

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with children and youth at risk

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# When silence is not golden... You, Ethics, Organisations and the Statutory Board

## International Ethical Standards

Among the most respected international documents that sets out a **Code of Ethics** for the Child and Youth Care Profession is that of the International Leadership Coalition of Professional Child and Youth Care (1995). This Code of Ethics is now incorporated into the Internationally acknowledged document that sets out Competencies for Child and Youth Care personnel. Before that Code of Ethics was compiled, twenty-six world-wide codes were reviewed both directly from our field and profession, and from related professional organisations.

## Mutual Accountability

One of the five main sections of that Code of Ethics refers to the expectations of Child and Youth Care Professionals in terms of their ethical **Responsibility to the Profession**. The Code of Ethics makes the point that the whole code of ethical behaviour is to be used as the Standard of professional practice in any resolution of ethical conflict, and goes on to set out that a Professional Child and Youth Care Worker:

- promotes ethical conduct by members of the profession.
- reports ethical violations to appropriate persons and/or bodies when an informal resolution is not appropriate.

## South African Standards

The Declaration and commitment into a Code of Ethics for Child and Youth Care Workers in this country also contains an ethical commitment to what is called *mutual accountability*.

Our code reads: "I accept responsibility for working towards the creation and maintenance of conditions within organisations which enable my colleagues to maintain themselves in keeping with this Code of Ethics."

## Institutional Ethical Practices

It means in practice that in the spirit of a self regulating profession, Child and Youth Care Workers world-wide are required to confront unethical standards in their organization – firstly through informal procedural processes and if these are not effective, to report unethical actions by colleagues as well as structural or organizational unethical practices to the relevant Body for action. Up until now that would have been the NACCW. Very soon it will be the statutory Professional Board for Child and Youth Care.

## Individual vs Organisation – An Ethical Tension

The American discussion document recognises this aspect of ethical conflict as an area of tension. It asks: "What action is necessary if conflicts arise between these ethics and employer/employing agency policies and/or practice?" (Mattingly et al, 2001:28)

Any attempt to hold a Child and Youth Care

Worker to a professional code of ethics will have to wrestle with the issues of the individual and different expectations of practice: in the organisations they work for; in the policies of middle management; in the policies of Boards of Management; practice in privatised facilities; practice in State facilities.

## Other Areas of Ethical Tension

Ethical conflict in this country will take the profession into complex areas of ethical debate. The simplest of these may be the ethics of standards of practice based on, for example, staff/child ratios and child-friendly environments. The more complex will undoubtedly come out of issues such as spirituality, sexuality, cultural practices, profit-taking, child-rearing ideas embedded in religion; proselytism; correctional systems. The list seems endless and they are all often institutionalised into powerful organisational structures. What action for example should be taken if a professional is known to have knowledge of unethical practice and chooses to remain silent?

Consideration will have to be given to the action necessary and the employee protection to be in place, if a professional has to report an organisation like say the **church**, or the **State**, to the relevant body for institutionalised unethical standards of practice.

## The Proposed Statutory Board

Amongst all the other issues that the proposed Statutory Board for the Child and Youth Care Profession will have to engage with, will be proceduralising self regulation in the midst of complex ethical issues, and the actions that will have to follow unethical practice. What is encouraging is that these matters will now have to be brought into focus, deliberated and set out, for the sake of the profession and in the best interests of the children and youth at risk in this country.

The proposed Statutory Board will clearly have a lot to do in the next few years.

## The NACCW and YOU

The NACCW as an Association of members, will contribute to the thinking on these matters. As NACCW members we should position ourselves **now** to make a contribution to the next step in our professionalisation through our own present standards of ethical integrity and practice. As a Professional Association the NACCW will have to initiate processes that allow it to identify with emergent ethical issues and standards and the implications of these in self regulation and mutual accountability amongst its membership.

What to do when silence is not golden...

Barrie Lodge

# NACCW

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-profit organisation in South Africa which provides the professional training and infrastructure to promote healthy child and youth development and to improve standards of care and treatment for troubled children and youth at risk in family, community and residential group care settings.

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## Dates to Remember

### December 2003

- 1 World AIDS Day
- 3 International Day for the Disabled — UN
- 8 International Day of Broadcasting for Children — UN
- 10 Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — 1948
- 10 International Human Rights Day — UN
- 15 Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Ratified by South Africa — 1995
- 15 SA Ratified the OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa — 1995
- 16 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees — 1966
- 16 Day of Reconciliation — South Africa
- 18 International Migrants Day
- 26 Day of Goodwill — South Africa
- 29 International Day for Biological Diversity

# A Framework for Understanding and Practice in Residential Group Care

DR JAMES P. ANGLIN

Director of the Child and Youth Care School at the University of Victoria in Canada

This Paper was presented at NACCW Conference in Kimberley, South Africa in July 2003



[Note: This paper is adapted from Chapter 3 in the book *"Pain, Normality and the Struggle for Congruence: Reinterpreting Residential Care for Children and Youth"* published by Haworth Press, Binghampton, New York, 2002.]

It has been the case in at least one country, up until less than a decade ago, that child and youth care workers were classified in the same occupational category as zookeepers for animals. (I would prefer not to name the particular country as this might unfairly imply that such a classification represents an attitude and understanding that is solely a phenomenon of this one nation.) Perhaps the assumption of such classification is that caretaking is essentially the same, whatever the setting and whatever the "occupants". The findings of a recent research study on residential child and youth care (CYC) work undertaken by the author (Anglin, in press) demonstrate how far from zookeeping and caretaking effective child and youth care work can be, even though we must admit that some residences still appear to indeed function more at the level of a zoo. The purpose of this study was to

construct a theoretical framework that would offer an understanding of staffed group homes for young people that, in turn, could serve as a basis for improved practice, policy development, education and training, research, and evaluation. The method selected as most appropriate to the task of developing a theoretical understanding of group home life and work was the grounded theory method as articulated in a variety of texts by the co-founders of the method, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The development of grounded theory was influenced by the emerging tradition of "symbolic interactionism" (Blumer, 1969; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24). The emphasis on personal meanings, social interactions and interpretative process characteristic of a symbolic interactionist perspective is evident in the formulation of

grounded theory (Glaser, 1992, p.16), and perhaps these aspects of human developmental life alone set the CYC residential care task apart from zookeeping. The basic aim of grounded theory is to generate theory from social data derived inductively from research in social settings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Critical to the accomplishment of this purpose is a systematic gathering of data through the active participation of the researcher in the phenomenon of interest. The process of immersion in the data is sometimes referred to by sociologists as "indwelling", and most aptly so in relation to a study of group homes. Such data gathering techniques as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and document analysis are typical of a grounded theory inquiry (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Central to the grounded theory method is the search for a main

theme, often referred to in the research literature as a "core category" or "core variable", in relation to which most other aspects of the phenomenon of interest can be understood and explained. As Glaser states, "the goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved" (1978, p. 93). Thus the researcher is searching the data on a continual and comparative basis in order to discover a core theme that will serve to connect and place in perspective virtually all of the elements of the phenomenon being studied.

### The Core Theme

The theme that was found to permeate the data across all of the homes and which encompassed the other major categories was *congruence in service of the children's best interests*. A group home may demonstrate congruence or incongruence to varying degrees across its elements, processes and overall operation, and it may do so with a variety of *congruence orientations*. For example, there may be an orientation toward operational efficiency, to the preferences of the staff, or to reducing the budget. In actuality, there are always competing interests and intentions within an organisation as complex as a group home, and *full congruence* throughout an organisation can best be understood as an ideal state never actually achieved in reality. In this study, each home was found to be engaged in what could be termed a *struggle for congruence*, and what was discovered to be at the centre of most of the struggles was the intention to serve "the children's best interests." Related and virtually synonymous terms such as "child-centred" and "child-oriented" were also used by research participants to express

this notion, but the *children's best interests* wording seemed most precise and evocative of the ideal being sought in practice. At the same time, while most of the homes in this study gave at least some evidence of holding this goal as an ideal, some of the homes clearly were not being guided in their work by such a focus. Further, no home was fully consistent in making all decisions on this basis (nor could one expect them to be), given both the competing interests that form the reality of group home operation and the natural variability of staff in their understandings and abilities to achieve congruence in their actions.

The concept of *children's best interests* has become a widely accepted notion in international instruments such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) as well as in the child welfare and child protection literatures in North America and the United Kingdom (Alston, 1994; Goldstein, Freud and Solnit, 1973, 1979). It is interesting to note that even the first book on residential child and youth care published in North America by August Aichhorn (1935) includes the notion of acting "in the child's interest" (p.194) as a touchstone for child and youth care practice.

Therefore, it should not be too surprising that this longstanding and currently dominant concept was echoed in the words of some of the supervisors and managers of homes and agencies within the research sample.

Other major competing interests observed within the homes, and present in all homes to varying degrees and in various manifestations, included cost containment, worker preferences, and maintaining control. However, in this sample of largely well-functioning homes, it was evident that the core challenge was to achieve congruence in service of the *children's best*

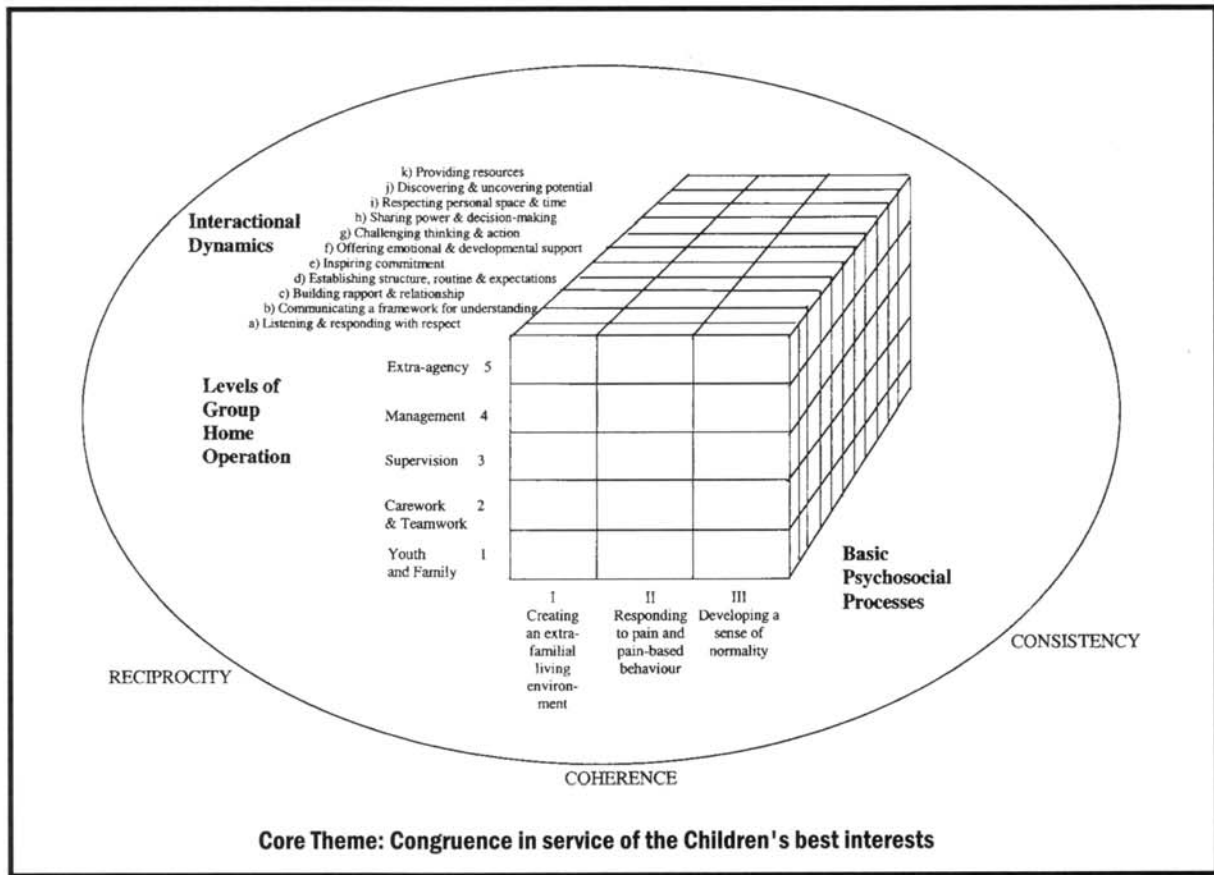
*interests*. The specific processes and interactions found to be most significant in creating such congruence will now be outlined.

### Basic Psychosocial Processes

The ongoing comparative analysis of the data generated in this study revealed three dominant and pervasive psychosocial processes related to the central problematic of the *struggle for congruence in service of the children's best interests*. While each process is subsidiary to the main theme, each could also be viewed as a core category in its own right in relation to a sub-problem within group home life and work.

- I. The most general, or pervasive, psychosocial process identified pertains to the overall development and ongoing operation of a group home, namely *creating an extrafamilial living environment*. The notion of an extrafamilial living environment, or "extrafamilial home," captures a fundamental tension inherent in this form of setting and helps to clarify the group home's unique nature in juxtaposition to foster care and institutional care on the continuum of residential services. As its name implies, a group home strives to offer a home-like environment not attainable within an institutional setting while removing the intimacy and intensity of a family environment. Much of the ongoing confusion and disagreement concerning the need for group homes can be attributed to a lack of appreciation of the importance of the "extrafamilial home" dimension. In this study, and as will be explored in some depth in a later chapter, group home managers and staff themselves frequently did not grasp the significance of this defining aspect of group home life.
- II. At the level of the carework staff, the primary challenge was found to be *responding to pain and pain-based behaviour*. While the residential child and youth care literature frequently

Figure 1  
 Framework Matrix for Understanding Group Home Life and Work



mentions the “troubled and troubling” nature of the youth in care (for example Hobbs, 1982), and acknowledges their traumatic backgrounds, there is a tendency to “gloss over” the deep-seated and often long-standing pain carried by these youth. The term “pain-based behaviour” has been coined to remind us that so-called “acting-out” behaviour and internalising processes such as “depression” are very frequently the result of a triggering of this internalised pain. Perhaps more than any other dimension of the carework task, the ongoing challenge of dealing with such primary pain without unnecessarily inflicting secondary pain experiences on the residents through punitive or controlling reactions can be seen to be the central problematic for the carework staff. One of the observed characteristics of a well-functioning home is a sensitivity to the need to respond effectively and sensitively to both the youth residents’ behaviour, and their own personal anxieties. At the same time, few managers, supervisors and staff demonstrate an understanding of the underlying pain in the residents and within themselves. When it is brought to their attention, there is often a remembrance of the experience of pain, both the resident’s and their own, and a realisation that they have let this experience slide beneath their ongoing awareness. This

intensive psychosocial process, and its frequent repression, makes acting in the best interests of the residents very difficult, and represents perhaps the greatest potential barrier to achieving a high level of congruence within the home in service of the children’s best interests.

III. At the level of the residents, a third basic psychosocial process was identified, namely *developing a sense of normality*. As will be discussed in a later chapter, this psychosocial process not only captures the central task, or goal, to be accomplished by the residents, it also serves to define a key element of what constitutes the resident *children’s best interests*. There is an apparent paradox at the heart of this process that can be confusing and worrisome to critics of group home care. How can an “abnormal” (or “artificial”) living environment such as a staffed group home foster the development of normality? Won’t the residents simply become institutionalised in such an extrafamilial context? As will be discussed later in Chapter 7, what a well-functioning group home can offer residents is a sense of normality, thus providing a bridging experience in terms of the residents’ readiness to engage successfully in more normative environments.

Each of these three psychosocial processes is closely interrelated with the others, and in reality they exist co-terminously as three interwoven threads or interrelated facets of the overall struggle for congruence within a home. To illustrate this point, a significant factor in a resident's experience of developing a sense of normality will be the manner in which staff respond to his pain and pain-based behaviour in the course of creating and shaping the extrafamilial living environment. Further, these pervasive psychosocial processes are made up of many moment-by-moment interactions between individuals, and some of the most pervasive and pivotal of these interactional dynamics will be outlined next. These interactional dynamics provide an important means for understanding and assessing the degree of congruence throughout a group home organisation and its functioning.

**Interactional Dynamics**

On the basis of a comparative analysis of the interpersonal interactions occurring within the homes as noted during the on-site visits and discussed in interviews, eleven dynamics emerged as most pervasive and influential. This category of *interactional dynamics* identifies the most significant modes of relation between persons within and connected to the group home. These interactional dynamics can be understood as the key relational ingredients of group home life and work and as elements of the larger psychosocial processes already identified. Briefly stated, the dynamics include the following:

- (a) listening and responding with respect;
- (b) communicating a framework for understanding;
- (c) building rapport and relationship;
- (d) establishing structure, routine and expectations;
- (e) inspiring commitment;
- (f) offering emotional and developmental support;
- (g) challenging thinking and action;
- (h) sharing power and decision-making;
- (i) respecting personal space and time;
- (j) discovering and uncovering potential; and
- (k) providing resources.

Each of these interactional dynamics can come together with various others in a single moment or episode, much in the same way as various ingredients combine in the preparation of different culinary preparations. The creation of a residents' best interests environment can be seen to be largely a matter of combining these interactional ingredients in a highly congruent manner, while sensitively addressing the three major and intertwined

psychosocial processes of *creating the extrafamilial living environment*, responding to pain and pain-based behaviour, and developing a sense of normality . Finally, one additional category was also found to be important in completing the framework for understanding group home functioning; namely the *levels of group home operation*.

**Levels of Group Home Operation**

Organisations such as group homes are not simply assemblages of people, paper, procedures and premises. As the term "organisation" suggests, these elements must be brought together in an organised fashion. As with most such settings, group homes consist of a hierarchy of operating levels, or domains, each with its defined set of roles and responsibilities. In this study, five such levels were clearly evident as reflected in participants' ongoing thinking and action within the homes.

- 1. Extra-agency level (contracting, funding, liaison etc.)
- 2. Management level (administration, budgeting, resource allocation, personnel management, etc.)
- 3. Supervision level (overseeing careworkers, team development, programming, resident care, etc.)
- 4. Carework and Teamwork level (working individually and collectively with youth and family members, completing reports, linking with community agencies, etc.) and
- 5. Youth Resident and Family level (daily living, visiting, etc.)

The word "levels" rather than "domains" will be used to reflect more explicitly the hierarchical nature of these operational dimensions. In the next chapter, the notion of a *flow of congruence* from the higher levels to the lower levels will be identified and explored as an important aspect of the core category of *congruence in service of the children's best interests*, and how it comes to be realised (or not) in actual practice.

**Conclusion**

It is proposed that this theoretical framework can assist not only in determining the degree to which a group home is well-functioning or poorly functioning but also in identifying areas of specific strength and weakness. Thus, it offers a theoretical tool grounded in the realities of group home life and work to assist in enhancing practice, drafting sensitive policies, targeting standards, ensuring the relevance of education and training, focusing research, and guiding evaluation. ■

Figure 1 — Framework Matrix for Understanding Group Home Life and Work, graphically illustrates the theoretical elements of the framework and suggests, with its rectangular cube and sub-cubes, encompassed within an oval design, the degree of their key linkages and inter-relations.

# Children's Litigation Project aims to take Children's Rights further through the Courts

ADV. ANN SKELTON

"This is going to be the century for children". These are words of Ellen Key, a sociologist. She said these words just over 100 years ago, and she was making her prediction with regard to the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the last century – not this one. Her words were prophetic, but I think she imagined that the changes would happen sooner than they did. It was only in 1989 that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed into international law by the UN General Assembly. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of enormous development in the area of children's rights. In South Africa the children's rights movement flourished during the 1990s. The new Constitution provided a legal framework for children's rights and there has been much advocacy and law reform work in the area.

One area which has not fully developed yet is that of litigation (taking cases to court) in the children's rights arena. The non-governmental sector has engaged in a partnership with government to enhance the protection of children's rights, and this has caused them, perhaps, to be less critical than non-governmental organizations usually are. Those cases dealing

with children that have come before the courts have got there on an ad-hoc basis, promoted by the adults around those children. What has been lacking in the past is a strategic approach to bringing matters before the courts which can change the content and direction of the law in a manner that benefits a broader group of children.

In recent years parallel sectors such as the women's rights sector and the HIV/Aids sector have recognized the need to take their work forward through litigation, and thus we have seen the successes of litigation taken up of the Women's Legal Centre and the Treatment Action Campaign.

## *The central aim of the project is to use impact litigation to push forward boundaries of the law relating to children*

The Centre for Child Law at the University of Pretoria has thus seen the need to follow on these successes by establishing a Children's Litigation Project. Funding for the project has been

received from the Open Society Foundation, and the Project started its work in August 2003. The central aim of the project is to use impact litigation to push forward boundaries of the law relating to children. Our aim is not to provide access to justice for all children, although this is very important work – it is better done by community-based advice offices and legal aid clinics. The project will be looking for cases that can effect change in the lives of all children. Essentially we are talking about litigating in the public interest.

## *... taking cases to court on behalf of children, and arguing the case on the basis of children's rights*

This means taking cases to court on behalf of children, and arguing the case on the basis of children's rights – using the UN Convention, the African Charter and the Constitution as the guiding framework. Although each case may center around a particular child or group of children, the aim will be to achieve justice for a wider group of children, and for this reason a great deal of care has to go in to selecting the "right" cases. As befits a project based at a University Centre, education will be a vital component, as the litigation undertaken will be written about, both in academic journals but also in materials that are more widely disseminated such as newsletters, child rights publications and the media. We are excited about the new venture, but we know that we cannot undertake this task alone. Thus we are keen to develop partnerships with legal aid clinics, non governmental organizations and community based advice clinics.



Let me end by quoting the words of Justice Albie Sachs in the judgment of the Christian Education versus the Minister of Education, a matter in which a group of Christian Schools sought to have section 10 of the Schools Act declared unconstitutional and invalid to the extent that it prohibits corporal punishment in independent schools where parents have consented to its application:

**"Postscript:  
The Voice of the Child**

We have not had the assistance of a *curator ad litem* to represent the interests of the children. It was accepted in the High Court that it was not necessary to appoint such a curator because the state would represent the interests of the child. This was unfortunate. The children concerned were from a highly conscientised community and many would have been in their late teens and capable of articulate expression. Although both the state and the parents were in a position to speak on their behalf, neither was able to speak in their name. A curator could have made sensitive enquiries so as to enable their voice or voices to be heard. Their actual experiences and opinions would not necessarily have been decisive, but they would have enriched the dialogue, and the factual and experiential foundations for the balancing exercise in this difficult matter would have been more secure."

Advocate Ann Skelton is the national co-ordinator of the Children's Litigation Project, which is based at the Centre for Child Law, University of Pretoria.

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PERSONALITY PROFILE

# Pat Heyman

**W**hen I entered the child care field I did not realize how all-consuming the new career choice would be! At that stage it was not recognized as a career, and now 10 years later we are at the peak of what the NACCW has fought long and hard for. The choice I made to exit the fashion business and enter the lives of at-risk children and youth has dramatically changed my life. I want to thank all the



young people whose paths I have crossed, for what they have given to my life. I embarked on this journey to give and I feel I often have received more than I have given. I started at King William's Town Children's Home as an on-line child care worker with 11 young people. 30 years after I had left school, I with much fear and anxiety I embarked on the Unisa Certificate in child care, successfully completing the two years. where I am still in the process of studying through Technikon SA. Another two important milestones in my development took place in 1997 and 1998. In 1997 I became part of the team who were piloting the Life Centre concept and in 1998 undertook the Training of Trainers course with the NACCW. Our greatest strengths can be our biggest challenges as well! I had often been told I talk too much and at last I found a positive way of using it as a strength. I am passionate about training and enjoyed training the BQCC but soon that was not enough, I needed a new challenge. While remaining as community and family preservation worker within my organization, I also train a range of other courses for NACCW. Another one of my passions has been NACCW regional activities which I promoted and advocated. I am thrilled that the region has grown in membership and involvement, and enjoy the challenge of leading our region. In the last year and half training needs in the border region increased dramatically, requiring full time input. This resulted in my withdrawing from the community work, while being exposed to training in rural areas. The training of Foundations of Child and Youth Practice (core literacy) again took me out of my comfort zone and developed my cultural competence further. Thank you to those communities who embraced me so warmly, giving me a clan name - Mamngwevu, as a sign of belonging. After that detour, I have now returned to the life centre to build capacity and evaluate the needs of the project, while still focusing on training. I look forward to this challenge with enthusiasm.

This article written and first published in 1972 (source unknown) offers a useful outline of the

# Expectations of experienced Child Care Staff

MICHAEL E. HOLTBY

There is a lack of clear-cut expectations regarding the skills child and youth care workers should possess. This is equally problematic for supervisors who are charged with the responsibility of setting standards for their staff and having some criteria of accountability for those they supervise. With many of these expectations not explicitly stated or sufficiently specified conflicts often arise out of the confusion.

Out of this need grew the list that follows. It is designed to be an itemization of expectations for staff who have a year's experience or more. It may be best characterized as a goal for staff to work towards, and not a listing of minimum skills. Its usefulness should be three-fold; first, as a guideline for the staff themselves; second, as a training tool to raise the quality of child caring relationships with children; and thirdly, as a supervisory tool to evaluate staff effectiveness and assess deficient areas in work performance.

The list specifically addresses itself to relationships with children, recognizing its place of primary importance in the work of child care. It does not attempt to deal with other aspects of the work which is better delineated by the separate residential settings themselves.

## Expectations of experienced staff in their relationships with children

### A. Control

1. *The utilization of relationship for control:* Experienced child and youth care workers can utilize relationships with individual children to maintain control of the group. They do not rely on structural controls.



2. *Use of counseling for control:* The child and youth care worker utilizes frequent conversations with a child. The child is often times talked with about how he is doing, both negative and positive, and about long and short term goals. In the event that the child acts out, child and youth care workers can often correct the child sufficiently by simply saying, "Now Tom, you remember what we talked about."
3. *Preventative awareness:* Experienced child and youth care workers know where the group is and what they are doing at all times. Rarely does the question arise, "Where was the child and youth care worker?"
4. *Control without support:* Experienced child and youth care workers can control a group without the support of another child and youth care worker.
5. *Setting expectations:* Experienced child and youth care workers can set expectations and know the significance of doing so. For example, before the start of any and every activity the staff briefly outline the expectations or boundaries for that event.

6. *Ability to individualize:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers can individualize. They do not necessarily rely upon "The Rule". They can make judgements about handling individual youngsters and stand firm against the protestations of the other children saying it's not fair.
7. *Individual consistency:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers are individually consistent, not only by policy but by their personal style. The children know where they stand and how far they can be pushed, and they have little need to test.
8. *Giving the "I care" message:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers have compassion. Their handling of the control situation shows concern for the child, and does not feed into the child's anger or provoke it. The message "I care" comes across.
9. *Tone control and verbal delivery:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers are good at using voice and approach to their best advantage. Inherent in giving the "I care" message is the projection of their voice. If a child and youth care worker is sounding harsh and impersonal the message doesn't get across, even if the words are there. Generally, the tone of a child and youth care worker would project warmth and support even in rough times (and by doing so calm down the children). Experienced child and youth care workers do not come across in an abrupt or curt manner with children and rarely escalate a situation by shouting or nagging.
10. *Maintaining Objectivity:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers can maintain objectivity in most situations, they do not become upset and lose their cool. They do not over-react to the child's behaviour. Child and youth care workers are not phony by hiding feelings, but good child and youth care workers are not over-burdened with strong emotions when handling children.
11. *Allowing expression and recognizing feelings:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers stop to ask a child, "What is the problem?" They do not use structure entirely, like an automatic "Go to your room!" response to every problem. They allow the children to express their anger with a reasonable amount of tolerance. They can also acknowledge the child's feelings without compromising their own control. They can verbally recognize with a child that they have a reason to be angry and still help the child to appropriately handle his/her anger.
12. *A balance between over and under control:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers can maintain a good balance between over and under control. They are neither rigid nor marshmallow. The majority of their interactions with the children are of a positive nature. They don't have talks with children just when they've done something wrong. On the other hand, they do not try to be "the nice guy" who is everybody's friend.
13. *Guilt inducement:*  
Good child and youth care workers do not maintain control by producing guilt reactions in a child, with the message of "Look at all I have done for you, and you let me down by doing this".
14. *Perspective:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers do not view a control situation as an isolated incident. Instead they take into account the on-going process with a child and the projected developmental rate and treatment goals.
15. *Depth:*  
Much like perspective, experienced child and youth care workers view a control situation in terms of the underlying dynamics involved. They often view the incident as symptomatic of a deeper problem. They do not take the child's behaviour at its face value.
16. *Focus:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers do not become pre-occupied with daily events and routine. Their goals are not directed toward clean cottage as much as a





well-adjusted group of children. For this reason, they do not place undue focus on how a child makes his bed, or whether his shirt is tucked in. They are aware that much of this is simply just surface behaviour, and do not make it their paramount objective to correct the child.

17. *Physical handling of children:*

Rarely do experienced child and youth care workers have to resort to physical control. Experienced child and youth care workers do not find the need to physically threaten children, or provoke a fear response from them to gain control. In instances where force is unavoidable, they use only that amount which is necessary to regain control. In these situations, the child and youth care workers can remain calm, do not hesitate to take action and are not intimidated.

18. *Ability to assess the group atmosphere:*

Experienced child and youth care workers can tell what the mood of the group is and respond to it appropriately. They are aware of the noise

level and the quality of the noise in the living unit. They can sense when the interaction among the children is tense or potentially problematic.

### **B. Counselling**

1. *Staff vs. caseworker role:*

Experienced child and youth care workers are not caseworkers. They do not use their time with in-depth talks in the office with one child while leaving a group unsupervised. Rather they talk for short, effective periods with the children.

2. *Creating a comfortable atmosphere:*

Experienced child and youth care workers can effectively create an atmosphere in which the children feel comfortable in approaching them with their concerns. They are good listeners and respect the feelings of the children. The children feel they can come to the child and youth care workers for protection, support, and ego enhancement. They enjoy talking with the child and youth care workers. The child and youth care worker do not lecture children or burden their talks with

advice. They are aware of when they are being tuned out by the child.

3. *Sensitivity to the child's needs:*

Experienced child and youth care workers are sensitive to the needs of the children. They pick up on a youngster's feelings and discuss them. They try to encourage the child to discuss feelings but do not cross examine the child, neither do they pass judgement by saying conclusive remarks like, "You've got a bad attitude."

4. *Counseling technique:*

Experienced child and youth care workers are fairly adept at individual counseling with children. They are always asking themselves, "What is this child really saying?" They are aware of gaps and inconsistencies in what they are being told by the child, of indirect and nonverbal signals, of themes which show up in the conversation and so on. The child and youth care workers have a good memory for these type of things and use this to constantly evaluate the child and their relationship and interaction.

5. *Positive interaction:*

Experienced child and youth care workers utilize every opportunity to seek out children and interact with them in positive ways. They do not wait for a child to act out before they have a talk with him/her.

6. *Regulating relationships:*

Experienced child and youth care workers are able to place limitation on their relationship with children and their role is clear. The child does not become confused about the nature of

- the relationship. For example, an experienced child and youth care worker working in a girl's cottage rarely has to deal with overt seductiveness from the girls. What the child can expect from the child and youth care worker is not vague to the child. Another example would be that a child does not ask an experienced staff to hold unrealistic confidences (like the child's plan to run away).
7. *Group counseling*  
Experienced child and youth care workers have enough confidence and ease to adequately handle group meetings, participating freely and directing when necessary. Experienced staff would not hesitate to call an impromptu meeting to settle group problems.
  8. *Awareness and use of diverse counseling opportunities:*  
Experienced staff know that formally structured counseling opportunities are not the only counseling which is effective. They can utilize certain group and individual activities for counseling purposes. They can effectively use this time to create an atmosphere in which the children can talk about things that have meaning to them, and do so without doing all the talking.

**C. General Interaction**

1. *Status management:*  
Experienced staff are aware of the relative status of each child within their group, and are aware of how this can lead to friction and conflicts over power. They do not feed into the power structure by favouring high status youngsters, nor do they allow provocative children to be scapegoated.

2. *Reaching out:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers do not wait for children to come to them but seek out children who may need their attentions the most, but cannot ask for it. They are not put off by rejections or outward statements that children do not want help.
3. *Active involvement:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers are actively involved with children. They participate in their sports, games, etc, and also in their assigned work around the living unit and do not simply oversee their tasks. They do not resist scrubbing a floor alongside a child if the situation indicates the need.
4. *Use of projects and activities:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers know how to best use the free time of the

children. They can effectively organize the group and involve them in some type of game, craft, project or physical activity. Although they do not keep the children going all the time, the children get bored or knock around with nothing to do for long periods of time.

5. *Responsibility:*  
Experienced child and youth care workers are aware of the dangers of institutionalization and do not make the children overly dependent upon them by usurping responsibility from them. They allow children to make as many decisions for themselves as is possible. They actively avoid passive manoevers which make them responsible for what is rightfully the child's problem. ■

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# DANGER PAY?

## Then why are you here?

I'm not sure where I was at the time of the "discussions" around the payment of a danger allowance for people working in Places of Safety, but this has been happening in state-run institutions in different provinces this since 1999. In some instances it is paid to those who are employed in Secure Care Centers only, while in others it is for those working in Places of Safety. Should we as professional child care workers associate with this practice or not? What are we saying when we tell people that we are getting "danger pay" for working in the life-space of young people? What are our thoughts as we prepare ourselves for yet another day at the "coal-face"? Has greed consumed us (people are quite adamant about getting this money!) to the extent that we have forgotten what real child care is about?

I wish to explore this issue with the intention of finding solutions to bring about a positive outcome for both the young people in our care and child care workers. Perhaps I should start with a firm stand best described in the saying "if you can't stand the heat then you had better get out of the kitchen!". There are too many people in the field who do not have what it takes. They are often surprised when attempted interventions actually fuel the behavior of a child, and often with unpleasant results! The notion that this is a cushy job needs to be dispelled. As I see it a child care worker's job is the best in the world but it is also the hardest. The ability to "hang in there" is particularly needed in the field. Years of hurt will not be changed in a few weeks or

months. In addition to this, we may find ourselves in situations where we have our egos dented but as Pat Skerry stated "— we as professionals need to accept the fact that we have chosen to work in a field where violence may occur and we need to be responsible for this choice." I remember one day after work mentioning to my wife that the children were swearing a lot. She rather nonchalantly reminded me, "but it's your job!"

We are bound to find ourselves in situations that may be a bit threatening, such as having to deal with a young person in the middle of a temper tantrum. Or, as occurs all too often, situations arise where the child care worker has ignited a volatile situation and suddenly becomes the target of a violent counter reaction. I once heard of a child care worker who was stabbed in the eye for the simple reason that she refused to exchange a pair of jeans which were too small for a larger size. The resulting conflict cycle was predictable. Had there been sufficient training and support this could have been prevented. At other times we may find that past experiences have not taught children that it is not always possible to have things entirely their own way and this results in the child acting out in ways which may be dangerous. Or what about the young person or child who has experienced years of abuse and rejection and does what they do best - keep us from getting too close by saying or doing things which make us feel less than safe. We are in a position to accept this and respond in ways that are developmentally appropriate for

the child.

How then can we equip ourselves to work with children in our care who will be challenging and difficult to deal with on a day-to-day basis? The answer has a number of facets which include training, supervision and the role and involvement of management.

### Training

When I was asked about the danger pay issue, I responded by asking why it was necessary when you have the B.Q.C.C., B.Q.S.C. qualifications and have done activity programming training? Surely all you need to do is to go out there and apply this training in your work with the children? But perhaps the issue cannot be dealt with in such a simplistic fashion! Although training increased my range of skills, I had to face a lot of resistance from people who did not feel the same way about working with children as I did. This is still a constant issue which many child care face. If there is little or no support for the application of the training then it will serve little purpose. Also, because the techniques are unfamiliar to us, it feels initially strange to apply them and then they are not put to use. There is therefore a falling back onto doing things the old way with the inevitable result that relationships are not established. As is known this is the crux of our work. In such situations finding ways of establishing rapport cannot occur because of the "danger" element. We may even deal with situations of, "I'm doing the training because I have to." There is often a sense of impunity when wrong is done to the child unless there is a trail of paperwork which

proves the allegation of abuse. Child care terminology such as "crisis is opportunity" and "every person has potential" are but clichés unless workers adopt the attitude that says, "I believe this to be so." This would need to be seen in action by all who are working with children who are hurting and in need of care. But better still, as Jim Anglin stated at the 2003 NACCW Biennial Conference, there needs to be a climate of "co-vision" in which individual team members are supporting each other in times of crisis.

### **Supervision**

The role of supervision in our field cannot be over emphasized. It is unfortunately often looked at as a form of "looking over one's shoulder" to make sure that the right things are being done. So when there is a crisis people are left to feel inadequate and unsupported. As Jack Phelan so aptly put it, "The supervisor must see himself as a teacher of professional expertise; using crisis and impossible behaviors as teaching moments"(1990:136). Is this happening and are supervisors able to apply the skills learned through own experience and provide support to those child care workers who are not coping? Even worse, are they supervisors who are left floundering in a mire of bureaucracy needing to be a buffer between management and the people doing the real work? The latter may be a real issue which is made worse when one hears statements such as "they won't listen to me". Guess who are crying loudest for "danger pay" - those who do not want to listen.

### **Management**

I am a fan of the participative management style and am fortunate enough to be working within such an environment. Managers must lead as it is they who have to deal with the difficult

questions when things go wrong. Workers need the understanding and knowledge that there is full support and encouragement from the "Boss". Support when things go awry, or when there are personal issues which impact on our daily work is critical. Encouragement to tackle new tasks and programs is also important, especially when we are wanting to try new ways of dealing with the children in our care. The way in which management treats staff, and the manner in which supervision occurs will be reflected in the manner in which the child care workers deal with the children. Building rapport and relationships and inspiring commitment is something that needs to be seen on all levels of the organization. Respect must be felt by the children. Having knowledgeable, understanding and supportive management which looks after the best interests of the staff will create an environment which will take care of the best interests of the children and protect their dignity and rights. All staff members and students need to be supported and empowered to address challenging behaviour (Allsopp,2001:15). The latter statement clinches the argument against "danger pay", in that it is the total organizational climate which will contribute to the safety of the children and young people in care – not a set amount of money as it is reflected on our bank statements. Ultimately I guess, we are all looking for some form of recognition for the work we are

doing with young people who have been rejected by our societies. The work is complex and multi-faceted and will not be getting any less challenging. To look to "danger pay" for recognition trivializes the work and the contributions of people who have chosen to dedicate themselves to making a difference. It also gives the young people and children a label which places the focus of our interventions in all the wrong places. As Barry Lodge so aptly said, "Our interventions and the therapeutic life space work have moral and ethical considerations" (2003:4). We need to have the right attitude.

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**Work like you don't need the money.**

**Love like you've never been hurt.**

**Dance like nobody's watching.**

**Sing like nobody's listening.**

# Caring for multi-age Groups – pre-school

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**F**amily child care providers generally care for a small group of children of different ages. A typical home might include a 9-month-old, 18-month old, 2-year-old, two 3-year-olds, and a 5-year-old. Caring for children with such a wide range of ages can be delightful, but it also can present some tough challenges.

Many family providers grew up and attended a public school system where children were segregated by age. In addition, many providers receive formal or informal training in child care or preschool settings that segregate children by age. Informal training through workshops, newsletters, or books often discusses child care information from this perspective as well.

The lack of information on how to manage, teach, and care for children of varying ages presents a real problem to many family child care providers. This lack of focus on serving children of different ages is particularly unfortunate because 60 to 80 percent of all children in child care are cared for in a family child care setting.

The first step in understanding how to make different age groups work is to understand the pros and cons of such an arrangement.

## Advantages

### **Multi-age groups promote family-like relationships.**

These groups are very much like a family, and children learn to play together much like sisters and brothers. In fact, family child care often includes siblings, and in times when families seem to be going different directions, the opportunity to keep brothers and sisters together can be an advantage.

### **Children can teach and learn from each other.**

They usually have someone just a little older to learn from and someone just a little younger to teach. Studies show that children often learn best from other children rather than adults, and family child care sets the stage for that kind of learning.

### **Children in such groups have greater freedom to develop at their own rate without being labelled slow or extremely bright.**

A room of 3-year-olds is likely to have children who seem well ahead of the norm as well as those who seem a bit behind. In a multi-age setting, those differences seem less obvious. A 4-year-old who is a little slow in learning how to gallop or skip is

still miles ahead of the game when compared to a 2-year-old.

### **Observers in small multi-age groups often note less competitive behaviour and more cooperative or helpful behaviours.**

This is particularly true when the children have been together for several years. It is common for family child care providers to take care of the same group of children for several years.

### **Providers also benefit from watching children grow and develop over time and from being able to develop closer, more long-term relationships with children.**

As one provider remarked, "I used be in a program where I cared only for 4-year-olds. Each year we would get a new group of kids. It took almost a year to get to know each child individually. Just when we learned how to work with a child and had developed a strong, nurturing relationship, off that child would go to the 5-year-old group! I became a family provider because I think that relationships are so important for young children, and really good relationships take time."

### **Family care providers remark that they enjoy working with children of different ages and like the variety of activities that they can do with them.**

Providers who care for only one age group often get tired of repeating activities. A provider shared this story: "The other day we were playing pizza parlour. Four-year-old Mark ordered the pizza by phone. The 3-year-olds stuffed the "play dough pizza" in the box. Five-year-old Seth made the deliveries on the tricycle to Laura, who is 2. Laura toddled over to the table, plopped the pizza down on a plate and said "EAT!" Seth arrived on the scene and rescued the pizza by asking Laura to help him make deliveries in the wagon. The children played pizza delivery all afternoon, and each time, it was with a new twist."





**Multi-age groups offer children opportunities to develop and practice social skills.**

A second story: "I had been working with David (age 5) for a long time to control his anger. He could really fly off the handle at other children. I also care for Amber, who is 2 and has Down's Syndrome. Like most toddlers, Amber is very much into push and pull, fill and dump, and she inevitably manages to push David's block building over almost every day. David has watched me handle the problem in different ways. Usually we barricade his area off so that she can't get in, but other times this is not practical, so I try to notice when she is headed his way and redirect her (usually under protest) to another activity. The other day, I was very busy with the baby, and Amber made it through the barricade. David intercepted her, put his arm around her in a brotherly way, and said, 'No Amber, don't knock over my blocks. Let's go to the piano. You can play there instead.' As he walked away, he looked over his shoulder and said, 'And I'll listen to your beautiful music!' Amber obediently plunked away at the piano and every so often stopped and looked over at David, who would burst into applause. I was so proud of him for handling the situation like that!"

Providers sometimes limit the span of ages they care for. Some providers prefer to work only with preschoolers, and others prefer to care for infants

and toddlers only. Still others may like to focus on school-age children.

Providers who choose to care only for school-agers like the arrangement as they have time during normal school hours to run errands and take care of personal business. Their program cares for school-agers before and after school and during summer vacations and school holidays.

**Disadvantages**

**Many providers feel that caring for children of different ages makes it difficult to plan activities.**

Infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-agers have different abilities and skill levels. A great activity for school-agers can be disastrous, if not dangerous, to do around infants and toddlers. For instance, school-agers may find it difficult to decorate a T-shirt using permanent markers or paints with a curious toddler hovering around them.

**Meal planning is a common concern.**

Carrot sticks, apple slices, and grapes are fine for 4-year-olds and school-agers, but could cause choking in infants or toddlers. Meal planning with children of different ages may mean separate menus. Feeding a bottle to an infant, assisting a toddler with a spoon, and providing second servings to hungry preschoolers can become a juggling act.

**Same-age playmates are hard to come by.**

Toddlers and younger pre-schoolers seem to be happy to play with children of different ages and a different sex, but older preschoolers tend to want to play with children of their own age and gender.

**Eight Rules for Working with Multi-age Groups**

**Rule 1: Arrange your play areas to provide a wide range of choices.**

Young children need a variety of things to do, and they learn from each activity. One child may like to curl up in a corner and look at a book, an infant may enjoy lying on a colourful quilt and watching the other children play, two other children may be playing house, and a toddler may roll a ball around the room. In early childhood settings, the caregiver's role is to provide an environment that has interesting things to do and to help children learn by talking with them, asking questions, and helping them solve problems.

**Rule 2: Provide some play areas that are used specifically for an age group.**

For instance, you may want to have a room or special corner that is used only by school-agers for craft projects, to do homework, or play board games. A special corner for toddlers with low climbing equipment and a washtub filled with colourful

## Practice

scarves and low riding toys is appropriate. Safety gates, low shelves, or even the back of a sofa serve as good barriers without obstructing your view of the children.

### **Rule 3: Consider ages of children when you store materials.**

Store materials where children can reach them. Work from the bottom up. Store infant and toddler toys and materials on the floor or on a very low shelf. Store preschool toys and materials on a shelf that is a bit higher or in a drawer that can be pulled out safely. School-age toys and materials can be stored even higher. Storing toys at a child's eye level or within easy reach fosters independence and helps children get them and return them easily during cleanup.

### **Rule 4: Provide materials that can be used in different ways.**

Blocks, play dough, or scarves are "open ended" play materials because there is no right or wrong way to play with them. Children of different ages use them in different ways to explore, build, create, and learn. An infant may enjoy mouthing and gazing at different coloured blocks while toddlers fill and dump blocks into a container. Four-year-olds may gather a bunch of blocks together to build a pretend fire, fives may build a fence to house barnyard animals, and a school-ager may use the blocks as ramps for race cars.

An infant enjoys looking at and grasping a colourful scarf. It could be used to play peek-a-boo by a toddler, as a tablecloth or doll blanket by a pre-schooler, and as a turban-like hat by a school-ager.

### **Rule 5: Become comfortable with the fact that very young children, like infants and toddlers, do not always have to "do" an activity.**

Many providers worry about what to do with an infant or young toddler when they are helping preschoolers with a special project. Infants and toddlers learn by observing, touching, smelling, hearing, and tasting. Providers have several options:

1. They can choose to do some activities with preschoolers when the younger children are taking their morning nap.
2. They can place a low barrier around the activity area so that younger children can watch and learn but not disrupt the activity.
3. They can find a way for the younger children to join the activity.
4. They can let young observers touch, hear, or taste the end result after the older children are finished.

### **Rule 6: Avoid large group activities.**

Large group activities are rarely necessary for young children. Infants and toddlers are generally disruptive to group time because they are easily distracted and can't sit still for very long. Reading books or singing

songs to 2 or 3 children at a time is much more effective than trying to read to the whole group. If your play area is set up effectively, children who are not reading or singing with you will be enjoying some other activity they can do on their own.

### **Rule 7: Focus on experience-related activities rather than product-related activities.**

Avoid craft activities that children complete by following a set of steps, however simple they may be. Young children cannot cut straight or glue a picture on the right spot.

### **Rule 8: Teach children self-help skills and encourage children to help each other.**

Allows children to have involvement in day-to-day home life. Children love to help. Washing dishes is real-life water play. Setting the table is valuable sorting experience. Dusting furniture, vacuuming, going to the store, and washing cars are activities that children can do for real, as well as pretend. Children can also help out by helping a little one wash his hands, clean up a spill, or "pretend" to read to someone else. Preschoolers often love to help feed the baby and with guidance may become quite accomplished at this task.

Young children are not very steady or coordinated in their movements, but training and patience can help. It is common for young children to become quite skilful at helping out.

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## The following 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.

**C**hildren need healthy bodies. But they have other different needs. Their other needs are to do with their feelings. Often these feelings are difficult to understand because we cannot see or hear them, and children sometimes do not talk about them, if children can begin to understand some of these feelings, they can grow up well and help others to do the same.

# Understanding Children's Feelings

### A story about feelings

John woke up one morning crying. Mary heard him, woke up and ran to him. She picked him up and found he had wet himself. She changed his clothes and hugged him. He laughed and began to sing and make happy noises.



As the children were walking home, they saw a dirty boy with uncut hair. The children called him names and laughed at him. An older boy came along and saw that the little boy was hurt and crying. He took the little boy's hand, and asked him where he came from. The poor boy said that he had no parents. The people he lived with were cruel to him. The older boy said he would try to help him. The other children were ashamed because they had been cruel.



After helping her mother, Mary went to school. After her lessons, Mary went out to play. One girl had a ball and they all played with it except Anne. She refused to play and stood in a corner. Then Anne caught the ball and would not give it back. Some children started to punch and kick her so she began to cry. The teacher came out. She sent the other children away and explained to Anne that she must give the ball back to the other children. Mary took Anne's hand to show she was her friend. Then Anne felt happier and played with the others.

Mary wanted to tell her mother about the dirty child when she got home. Her mother was tired and told her to go away. Mary began to cry. Her baby brother John came to her and put his arms around her. He began to cry too, so Mary picked him up and went outside. She forgot about herself and made him play.



## Activity

Then Mary's mother called to her. She left John and he ran after a butterfly. Suddenly, John saw that he was alone. He began to cry and call for his sister. Mary came back. She picked him up and showed him some chickens. John forgot his tears and chased the chickens away from the food pot.

This shows the feelings of children in everyday natural situations. A story like this helps to show:

- *feelings themselves*, like love, fear, happiness.
- *signs of feelings*, like laughing (happiness), crying (fear), shouting (anger).
- *causes of feelings*, like cruelty, love.
- how children can *understand and help*, and make other children forget their fear or unhappiness.

### Our feelings

#### Many different feelings

Children experience feelings. Even when they are very young, children have many different feelings. Of course these feelings grow as the child grows. At first, a child feels content and secure close to his mother. She feeds him, keeps him warm and protects him. Sometimes he is happy, content and trusting. At other times he is unhappy, afraid or angry. As he grows older, his feelings are shared with other people. He can learn to recognise and understand feelings that he and other children experience.

#### Different situations, different feelings

Sometimes children experience feelings when they are alone. For example, when a child is alone in a strange place, he could be afraid, or he might just be curious. At other times, children experience feelings when they are with other people. For example, when a mother is annoyed with her children for breaking something she has told them not to touch, they can be afraid or unhappy, guilty or resentful.

#### Different children, different feelings

Different children can have different feelings. The same happening or the same thing can make each child show different feelings or emotions.



For example, when they see animals some children want to play with them, because they feel love and affection. Other children may run away and scream, because they are afraid, or don't like the animals. Other children will simply take no notice of the animals, because they feel indifferent.

### Signs of feelings

Often young children cannot tell us what they feel. But we must try to understand their feelings from the signs they show. The way a child behaves can show us what he is feeling. For example, a child who seems selfish, angry and unfriendly may be unhappy because he does not get enough attention or because he needs affection.

Sometimes one sign can mean many things. For example, a child who laughs may be happy. Or he may be embarrassed or nervous or surprised. A child who cries may be angry, he may be afraid, or even frustrated. Children can be helped to notice signs of feelings in themselves and other children and begin to understand feelings so that they can help and comfort their brothers and sisters, or their friends.

### What causes these feelings?

Everything in everyday life causes some feeling.



Sometimes children can tell what causes their feelings. For example, a child can say he is happy because he has been given something nice to eat. But very often, children do not know what makes them have their feelings. The *causes* of feelings can be *many and not very clear*. For example, if you ask children why they are crying, sometimes they will tell you that it is because their toy has been taken by another child, or because their mother has scolded them. But often children are not sure why they feel the way they do. Children can be destructive, for example breaking plants, throwing stones, killing small animals. If you ask them why, they will not be able to tell you. Perhaps it is because they are unhappy because their mother has sent them out of the house. Perhaps they are hurting something because someone has hurt them. Perhaps they are afraid.

**Understanding and helping**

If children begin to notice feelings and take an interest in them, they may learn about them in themselves and in other people. This will help them to develop as individuals and as members of their community. Children learn to understand themselves and others through living in their *own homes* with their *own families*. They imitate and copy people around them before they even know what they are doing. For example, a girl is more likely to shout at her brother if her parents often shout at her or each other.

**Giving comfort**

In some situations, children can help one another even better than grown-ups. If a child understands that another child who seems 'naughty' or 'bad' may have feelings like fear and pain, or may need affection or company, he can sympathise or understand his feelings. He can give the child comfort and friendship. Children often pick up their brother or sister, or come close to them, and put their arms around them to carry and talk to them. These are different ways of comforting, of showing understanding and of helping. Comfort can also be given with words of kindness, praise and affection. Another way to comfort is to make younger children forget their anxiety (unhappiness, worry) by showing them something different. In this way the younger child will think of something else. If a child is crying, the older child can say, 'Look at that bird over there' or 'Come with me and I'll show you a new game.' Even older children find it difficult to understand and explain their feelings. It can be helpful if a grown up tries to explain to older children what some of the possible causes of different feelings are. In this way

children may begin to understand feelings in themselves and in other people, and help by giving attention and comfort.

**Understanding differences**

Children can also try to understand differences in people's feelings. People are not all the same and do not all have the same feelings. Each person, each child, is different. If a child has a different feeling, it does not mean that he or she is wrong or bad, but only that they are different. Children should be encouraged to understand and accept differences. For example, if a little girl is afraid of the dark, an older child who is not must not laugh at her, or tease her, or make her more frightened. *He must try to understand, and help her to understand why she does not need to be afraid.*

**Activities**

**Make up stories**

Make up a story like the one at the beginning of this sheet, to explain feelings, possible causes and the signs of different feelings. What help can be given in each case? Ask the children to find other feelings within their own experience at home and at school.

**Talk about feelings**

Discuss an event which has taken place in the class or in the playground when people have shown different feelings? How did different children react? Did any of them try to help? Ask questions like, 'What makes you laugh?' 'Why do you cry?' 'What makes you most angry?' Compare the responses of the children: they have different feelings about different situations. Ask the children to describe what they would do if they saw another child who was?

- angry and destructive
  - crying and afraid
  - quiet and alone, apparently unhappy
- Can the children think of ways of helping others feel better?

**Guessing the feelings**

Children could use a sentence like, 'What are you doing?' Each child could say the sentence in different ways. The others have to guess what different feelings (anger, fear or surprise, for example) are shown in the way the sentence is said. Some children can make pictures of situations where different feelings are shown, and others can try to guess which feeling is shown in the picture. Can the children talk about the difference between the feelings themselves, and the causes of those feelings? ■

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# Zambia

A partnership between NACCW and people working with children and youth in Zambia has been formed with representatives from Zambia, Louis Mwewa and Beatrice Mbuze attending the NACCW 14th Biennial conference. Zambian colleagues are interested in forming an association and it was felt that this could be a mutually beneficial relationship.

After Conference it was decided that NACCW would train a group of Zambian practitioners in BQCC, and trainers Sbongile Manyathi and Jeanny Karth have presented the Belonging and Mastery modules. Twenty-one participants representing various sectors like the police and including workers in the life space, have participated in the training.

Both trainers were worldly welcomed by our neighbours, and indicated that they felt privileged to have been a part of this exciting development.



Says Louis Mwewa – “the training has opened a new chapter in child care work and helped us to change from the old way of doing things to a new way.” The inter-sectoral nature of the group as well as the mixture of representatives from both the government and non-governmental sector appeared to hold great potential for rapid transformation and establishment of a child and youth care profession.

We hope that this is a beginning of a relationship that will grow over time. Wouldn't it be wonderful to aim towards a Southern African Association of Child Care Associations?! ■



# Taking Care of Our Professional Code of Ethics

Jackie Winfield

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## Introduction

A rusty car filled with holes spews dark smoke from its exhaust as it splutters slowly down the road. Perhaps the car is very old, but even so, it is likely that regular maintenance would have kept it in better condition. Gardens too need maintenance - the weeds need to be pulled up, soil needs to be fertilized and the grass needs to be cut.

Without maintenance, our cars, bikes, homes, gardens, tools, roads, clothes and even our own bodies, deteriorate and fall into the states of disrepair. When we fail to take care of things properly, they become less effective in doing what they are supposed to be doing. On the other hand, when we value something, we invest in it. We give our effort, time and sometimes, money, to maintain it in optimal condition. There is a cost involved.

The child and youth care code of ethics contains the clause, "I have the right and obligation to share in the maintenance of the ethics of my profession." As child and youth care workers, how can we keep our code of ethics functional and effective? What are the signs that maintenance is needed? What costs are involved? Are we prepared to pay the price?

## Our Right and Obligation

As professionals, each one of us has the authority and is entitled to be part of ensuring the continuation of ethical practice and contributing to its implementation. Effective maintenance of the code of ethics raises standards of child and youth care work, increases the quality of our profession and contributes to the positive development and healing of children and youth at risk. We are required to support ethical practice, to contribute to discussions about professional ethics, to challenge others who violate the code, to ensure that this tool remains sharp and relevant and effective, so that our practice does not endanger young people, and the way in which we work does not become something ugly, leaking, full of weeds and sluggish.

## "Been there. Done that. Got the 'I'm ethical T-shirt.'?"

In her paper about developing professional ethics for child and youth care work, Mattingly (1992) mentions some sessions on ethics which she conducted at professional meetings. Participants expressed some strong views including the following, "Since we are already concerned practitioners and largely benevolent persons perhaps ethics discussions are a very useful concern. Those who are serious practitioners are already ethical. Those who 'don't care' won't be influenced very much."

The implication of this is that once we've got something right, there's no need to give it any further attention. An attitude of "been there, done that", results in a type of complacency whereby people stop questioning and challenging themselves. And what about those who don't care? What should we be doing about them? Do they have a part to play in the field of child and youth care? If so, what is that role and how can we help them to care, for what is child and youth care without care? Effective maintenance of our code of ethics means that we need to give conscious attention to ethical issues and not take things for granted. Societies change, laws and policies change, child and youth care workers change, young people change... perhaps, sometimes, code of ethics need to change too!

When was the last time you read and thought about the code of ethics? Do you ever analyse incidents in relation to ethics? Does the team at your organization engage in debates about ethical issues? Our commitment to ethical practice should be an ongoing and dynamic process. Codes of ethics do not provide simple answers to the complex questions we face in dealing with human beings. Often, there is a myriad of possibilities, and one of the advantages of strong teams is that they provide opportunities for people to give input from diverse viewpoints, to discuss and to disagree!

## Back to Gardening...

Maintaining your garden can be a very messy business. Often, once you start working on it, it looks a whole lot worse for a while until it starts looking better. Effective maintenance of our professional code might be a little messy too. Perhaps, some of us need to be shifted out of our comfort zones and start thinking more critically about what we do as individuals and organizations. Perhaps, we need to debate some of the thorny issues we face in South African child and youth care work and be prepared to disagree. Let us take proper care of our code of ethics. Professional ethics are more important than "nice manners". They are one of the most important keys in effective work with troubled young people and families. ■

# *Defining Child and Youth Care*

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Professional Child and Youth Care practice focuses on the infant, child, and adolescent, 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 the 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 centres, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care and juvenile programs.

Child and Youth Care practice includes skills in 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.