

# CONSORTIUM CONNECTIONS

## In this issue

The removal of children from their homes is one of the most difficult issues faced by state and local human service staff and the child welfare system.

Apart from the financial impact on state and local budgets, which is substantial, the social, emotional, psychological and spiritual impact on children and their families is enormous. Based on the

recommendation of CYFC's Policy Work Group, out of home placements has been identified as a priority focus for its policy work. This issue of *Consortium Connections* focuses on challenges and best practices related to out of home placements from academic, administrative, practitioner and policy perspectives.

## It's Time to Address Out of Home Placement Through Prevention

*Meghan Kelley Mohs, director and legislative liaison with the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA), an affiliate of the Association of Minnesota Counties. She holds master's degrees from the U of M's School of Social Work and Humphrey Institute.*

One recent evening, I tuned into a major network's TV news magazine program. The subject was a contentious child welfare issue. Knowing the topic (gay adoption) might stir some controversy among viewers, the host began by asserting something to the effect of: "One thing we can all agree on is that the foster care system in this nation is in crisis and damages kids." She made this statement with such easy conviction that the average viewer might feel ignorant for questioning it. But few things about the child welfare system, nationally, as well as in Minnesota, are that black and white.

In truth, the general public is much more ambivalent about public child protection issues than the program host's statement assumes. Frequently expressed viewpoints regarding the child protection system are widely divergent:

*The "bar" is too high; legitimate cases of child abuse go uninvestigated.* -vs- *Child protection authorities are too intrusive in the private lives of families.*

*The system gives parents too many chances.* -vs- *The system doesn't work long enough and hard enough to save troubled families.*

*The authorities should have known about and investigated this particular case of abuse in my neighborhood, school, or place of worship.* -vs- *I wouldn't want to report anyone to child protection. I don't want to get involved.*

The public system exists in a society that is clearly divided about the role of government in the lives of families – especially troubled families.

Child protection issues are inherently troublesome, uncertain matters. Authorities are faced with trying to measure and meet outcomes that often seem to be in conflict, against the backdrop of public disagreement about expectations. Is the role of public agencies to provide physical safety at the cost of emotional abandonment, or is it to maintain family relationships at all cost?

When tragedy strikes and a child is seriously injured or dies in an abusive home, the child protection agency is held accountable. But society rarely acknowledges the 99% of the cases where public agencies succeed in helping troubled families. In either case, the complexity of situations and decision-making is never made public, nor is there recognition that child protection is a responsibility shared by the community at large.

### Mission Statement

*The Children, Youth & Family Consortium was established in fall 1991 in an effort to bring together the varied competencies of the University of Minnesota and the vital resources of Minnesota's communities to enhance the ability of individuals and organizations to address critical health, education, and social policy concerns in ways that improve the well-being of Minnesota children, youth, and families.*

# What needs to change to turn the tide on OHPs?

There is consensus among authors and sources featured in this newsletter that placing children outside of their families poses significant societal challenges. What would it take for society to change the underlying factors that have resulted in the high number of out of home placements? These ideas were shared by county human service staff who work regularly with children and families involved in the child protection systems. They present an ambitious challenge to society, while at the same time offering opportunities for improved policies.



*Community supports for families to help promote asset development in children may be one way to reduce the need for out of home placements.*

*Photos in this issue were graciously provided by the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota.*

- Adequate housing, jobs with pay that moves people out of poverty.
- Safe communities.
- Culture change within the agencies and systems that are responsible for child welfare.

- Evidence-based practices that keep children safe, strengthen families and promote a positive, growth-oriented holding environment for those children at risk.
- Accountability through outcome data that demonstrates progress.
- Development of community-based systems of care that offer access to individualized services that address the challenges families are facing.
- Earlier intervention/prevention services and education, which reach families before issues become overwhelming and/or endanger children.
- Improved partnerships between families and service providers.
- Improved collaboration among community systems to build community safety and promote effective and efficient service delivery at the child and family level.
- Access to mental health and chemical health services.
- Clear criteria for placement that is established across agencies involved in placement decisions.
- Family supports that promote asset development in children.
- Increased use of family group decision making and other strategies that build the capacity of families to keep their children safe.
- Basic skill building for families (practical information on parenting, child development, nutrition, maintaining safe and healthy homes, health, and other topics).

## CONSORTIUM CONNECTIONS

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# What Makes Foster Care Successful?

*Susan J. Wells, Gamble-Skogmo Professor in Child Welfare and Youth Policy in the School of Social Work, College of Human Ecology, University of Minnesota*

A successful foster care placement is a one in which: (1) a child is safe, (2) the level of care (e.g., foster home, group home, treatment facility) is appropriate for the child's situation, (3) the child's developmental and/or special needs are met, and (4) the child will stay until permanent living arrangements for the child can be assured.

No matter how loving the foster family, or how deserving the child, an inappropriate match can lead to disaster for both. Success rests on three major issues – the nature and quality of services provided by the foster care agency, the quality of the foster home, and the appropriateness of the match between the child's needs and the foster family's capacity to meet those needs.

Social work services begin with accurate assessments of the prospective foster family, the child needing placement, and the child's family of origin. Services proceed along these parallel lines throughout the process: selection and licensing of the home, matching children and placements, setting goals with all concerned, preparing the family of origin, child and foster family for the placement, providing support during placement to all parties and providing appropriate and effective services that will enable the child and the child's family of origin to meet their individual and collective goals. These activities are more complex when there are special needs such as several siblings needing placement; siblings already in placement; the health, educational or behavioral needs of the child; the cooperation and behavior of the family of origin; the need to establish whether reunification is possible; and considerations such as keeping the child within geographic proximity to his or her family. The complexity of these tasks and the potential for problems at any point in the process are abundantly clear.

The child's experience in the placement is critical. Quality is measured first by whether the child is safe from maltreatment and from potential environmental hazards in the home or surrounding neighborhood. The degree to which the child's daily health, educational, social, cultural/ethnic and psychological needs are met are crucial issues. Another major facet of quality is whether the child feels unconditionally accepted, feels like he/she belongs in the family and believes that he/she is being emotionally cared for. Second only to safety and basic physical needs, the availability of a relationship with a caring adult in the home can be one of the most important factors in the child's experience.

The environment in the foster family, within which the child's needs are met, will also help determine the success of the placement. The relationships among foster family members, their own physical, social, psychological and economic well-being, and their manner of relating to the foster care agency and the community are important factors in creating a positive environment.

Ensuring success is no easy matter. No matter how hard any one person works (the social worker, foster parent, child or family of origin), there are so many factors operating, at any point a situation can turn from good to impossible. It is remarkable – and a testament to all those involved – that efforts of enough of the key people come together often enough to make most placements in foster family homes successful; and that many children who have been in placement fare well in adulthood.



Photo By: Adair Solentida

*A warm, nurturing climate in the foster family helps make a placement successful for the child.*

## *Mediation May Offer Promise in Child Welfare*

*"The child protection system is a minefield of disputes. These are inevitable when the state intervenes in the intimate life of a family. Arriving at a solution for the best interest of a child, reportedly maltreated, plunges the family and the child protection worker into a complex set of exchanges. Contending issues are pulled into play. We are thus drawn to mediation, a method which is centered in conflict resolution.*

*To the extent that an honest and trusting relationship can be built under the stressful conditions of child protection procedures, approaching the family with skills developed by mediation enable us to see family problems with a sense of clarity and a perspective that place us in a better position to appreciate the child's needs.*

*Mediation skills outline a method that assures that families will have an opportunity to provide their narrative, define their concerns, and articulate their options for the safety of their children."*

—Esther Wattenberg  
(Excerpted from an article in the January 2002 issue of "Practice Notes," a publication of the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota)

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## Time to Address OHP Prevention —continued from cover

Minnesota is one of few states with a state-supervised, county-administered system of social services, including child protection. This means counties are the direct service providers, the ones who actually take away kids from abusive parents, and try to help fix broken families. Far more than any other single line item, the costs of out-of-home placement for children drive county human service budgets.

Beyond fiscal concerns, out-of-home placement is one of the most difficult issues a county caseworker faces. The ambiguity in working with families in trouble creates difficulty for front-line workers as well as for policymakers. On a daily basis, county workers and courts bravely make difficult decisions based on the best interests of the child, while balancing conflicting evidence regarding the long-term consequences of out-of-home placement, the reaction and involvement of parents, and the goals and outcomes of placement.

It's time for Minnesota to decide if we are willing to adequately fund services that prevent out-of-home placement. Do we support public policy that helps families of diverse types thrive? Will we pay enough attention to the welfare of children to hold agencies, and ourselves appropriately accountable for kids' well-being? And, most of all, can the public agree on and articulate a clear statement of how government should be involved in families? It's an idea whose time has come.

# Blue Earth County Is Making It Work

Kelly Harder and Phil Claussen have passion for their work with out of home placements. Both assistant directors with Human Services in Blue Earth County, they absolutely exude excitement about the way their system has been revamped to better serve the needs of kids and families. What they thought would work four years ago is now working.

In 1998, Blue Earth County was on track to spend \$2.1 million on out of home placements – double what was budgeted. They had, in Kelly's words, a business crisis. In 2001, just three years later, they spent \$1.3 million – a drop of nearly 40%, and an obvious success.

But the bigger success, the two men say, is that their work with out of home placements is now based on best practices rather than budget. And they have seen a significant improvement in the quality of care.

How did they do it? Several key elements seemed to make the difference.

**Culture change is required.** Reworking a huge system like out of home placements required county commissioners, judges, front line workers, and everyone in between, to be engaged. They had to “buy in” to the new philosophy. It required changing the culture of their organization to utilize practices that were different from the past. People had an option to jump on, or to leave it. There

was not an option not to be involved. Staff have now embraced the new way of working.

**Teamwork is critical.** Administrators and front line workers must work as a team. Parents and others close to the situation are also part of the team. No one is an island in this work. They build bridges to keep all parties connected and supported.

**Community based solutions** will always be considered, and will be the preferred option in every case where they fit. If they must place youths in facilities outside the county, a series of preauthorization and quality assurance steps are required to prove that it's necessary. Kids are better off if they can maintain the connections with their communities, in most cases. As an example of the change, 48 youths were placed in Rule 8 (group home) facilities in 1998; at the end of 2001 there were only nine.

**Criteria Criteria Criteria!** Decisions about when and where to place a child outside the home are often fraught with emotional battles and subjectivity. To alleviate that problem, and to provide some guidelines on which staff and families can rely, Blue Earth County has established specific criteria that guide all placement decisions. In addition, all placements, family-based or institution-based, are reviewed every 30 days to re-evaluate and determine whether they are still appropriate.

Blue Earth County's story shows that success is possible when the whole organization is committed to change.

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## What Is Community-Based Care?

Community-based care is the preferred method of practice when human service intervention is required, according to human service staff in Blue Earth and Olmsted counties. But what exactly do people mean when they use this term?

Overall, community-based care involves using local resources to provide care for children. This care is focused on supporting the children, their parents, and foster parents in their community, rather than depending on institutional providers.

A strong base of high quality foster families must be recruited with enough variety that settings can be found for the diverse range of children needing care. This is a challenge for most counties. But with active recruiting and training of foster families, Blue Earth and Olmsted counties are rising to that challenge. Both counties provide on-going training for foster families, and development of new capacities in current foster families so they are able to accept children with special needs or older children. Blue Earth County is even looking at developing specialized foster homes that are able to take juveniles offenders who would normally be placed in institutions within the criminal justice system. Olmsted also provides relief care.

Developing supportive resources within their own agency and community strengthens a county's ability to use community-based options for placement. Olmsted has a treatment center for adolescent boys in the county. Blue Earth County's social workers and supervisors have improved client access to high quality and timely assessments in order to help the decision-

making process. Teamwork is key in both counties. In addition, both counties have developed a network of professionals within the community to provide wrap-around services.

Involvement with the children's families is an important part of community-based care, and occurs in a couple of ways. Before, during and after placements, families are offered skills training and support to provide appropriate care for their children upon their return. Counseling is also provided where needed. Olmsted is looking at ways to target earlier supportive interventions to help prevent the need for placements outside the homes. Additionally, parents are involved as members of teams making decisions about the placement of their children. Parents are much more committed to making a plan work if they have ownership in creating it.

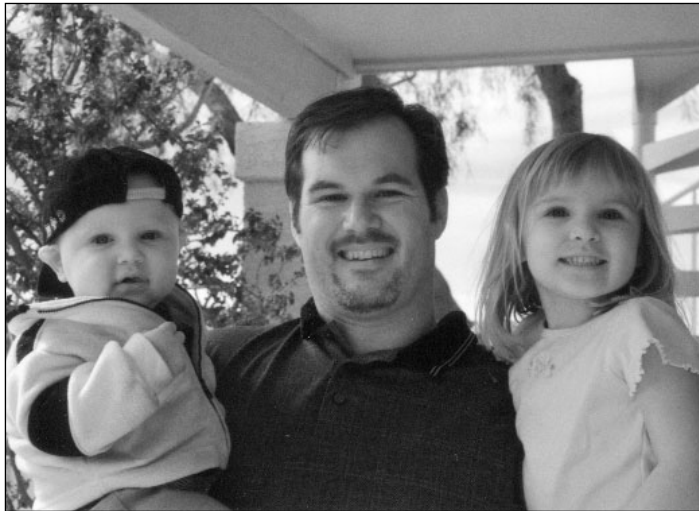
Finally, when kids must be placed outside the community, Blue Earth keeps connected with them through an initiative they call “facility management.” They work with group homes, treatment centers, or others, before they make a placement to be sure the facility understands the individual child being placed, and the desired outcomes. Then they track and manage the placement regularly. “We pay them hundreds of dollars a day,” says Harder. “We have a right to expect a lot from them.”

Community-based care makes it possible for children in placement to remain connected to their communities, and avoids the pitfalls of re-entry that often accompany other kinds of placements.

# Families Play A Key Role In Olmsted County's OHP Decisions

Based on the philosophy that families are a driving force in the partnership and a critical voice in the planning and decision making about services and placements of their children outside the home, Olmsted County began the regular use of Family Group Decision Making three years ago.

According to Rob Sawyer, Child and Family Services Director for the County, FGDM has become a very positive strategy for increasing family participation, and is now the preferred process in concurrent permanency planning for the county. Although participation is voluntary, most families want to be involved, especially when there are real decisions they can impact.



*Families play a key role in OHP decisions.*

In addition, the Olmsted County Court's children's justice initiative is using a family conference process to reduce the adversarial nature of the court process and allow the opportunity for partnership with families to be a preferred way of meeting the needs of children.

While there are situations in which children need to be removed from the home immediately for their safety and well-being, it almost always works best when families are involved in addressing their own needs. Since 75-80% of children in placements ultimately return to their homes, families must develop the skills and supports needed to address the issues that caused the need for placement so it won't happen again.

The use of these practices has resulted in Olmsted's meeting or exceeding national Child and Family Services Review Standards (standards set by the federal Administration for Children and Families), and in being able to contain their county costs for out of home placements.

Even in the face of this success, though, they still face challenges, Sawyer says. Maintaining a pool of family foster homes is one, as it is for most counties. Reducing the barriers to re-unification (such as transportation, lack of staff resources, and dis-engaged families), and improving the infrastructure to support parent/child visits are both critical needs. And with Olmsted's changing demographics, culturally relevant services for families of color is increasingly important.

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## Promoting Family Strengths

No one wants to see children removed from their families and, equally, no one wants to see children left in harmful environments. So, how do we strengthen families so they can fulfill one of their primary jobs—nurturing children from infancy to adulthood?

Here's one answer: if we really want to reduce the likelihood of out-of-home placement, we must improve the assets of children and families. That's one of the top recommendations from current research, and the driving force behind two excellent community-based programs in the Twin Cities, both funded by SAMHSA.

### **Families and Schools Together**

A group of Hmong families at two St. Paul middle schools are learning to improve communication skills within their own families. It's bringing together parents with children of the same age attending the school, in order to create a powerful network of family-to-family support. Knowing whom your kids associate with and how to talk openly about home and school expectations are critical factors in preventing violent behavior and encouraging healthy development. The 10-week sessions include sharing a meal, playing communication games, and meeting in peer groups. After families graduate from the program, they meet monthly and develop their own leadership structure and goals.

Linda Gensheimer of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation Southeast Asian Program is helping evaluate this school-based program that uses the Families and Schools Together (FAST)

best practice model developed by Dr. Lynn McDonald, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "FAST is a process, not a cookie-cutter curriculum," says Gensheimer, "and at a deep level it works to knit together families over time." It is research based, and it is being adapted to the Hmong community in St. Paul. One of the most exciting results of the program is that several Hmong parents have emerged as real leaders and there is increased attendance in parent meetings at the schools.

### **Families that don't give up on kids**

But what about kids who are already involved in the juvenile corrections system and are at risk for being removed from their families? It's a challenge to engage families in yet another program that seeks to address the roots of their children's behaviors. But, Ramsey County Juvenile Corrections is excited about early results from a new program offered for families who have children on probation. Functional Family Therapy is a national best practice model designed to engage youth and their families—and keep them engaged—so they can restore trust, build skills, and change behaviors... permanently.

Carol Gehrety, program contact at Ramsey County, says one of the most important outcomes is that Latino, African American and Southeast Asian family therapists from six agencies have been trained in the method, and are finding the program really values the rich, cultural and racial heritage of the families. Most importantly, the youth and families who have volunteered for the program are sticking with it. Wilder Foundation is conducting an outcome study, and early results will be shared soon.

MAY

May 19-21

*Foods for Health*, 14th annual National Agricultural Biotechnology Council (NABC) conference, hosted by UM College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences and the Academic Health Center. For details, visit [www.coafes.umn.edu/nabc2002](http://www.coafes.umn.edu/nabc2002)

May 28-June 14

*From Farm to Table: Safety & Biosecurity in Food Production Systems*, 2002 Public Health Institute, includes nine courses from many UM departments. Call 612-626-4649 or visit <http://www.ophec.umn.edu/institutefindex.html>

May 30

*A Minnesota Comparative Family Law Symposium*, presented by William Mitchell Law Review and St. Olaf College, at William Mitchell College of Law, St. Paul. Contact Heidi Quiram at (507) 646-3629.

May 30-31

*Black Males and Domestic Violence: What do We Know, Where do We Go?* A national conference sponsored by UM Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, held in Philadelphia, PA. Contact LaTania Williams at (703) 341-1110, ext. 326.

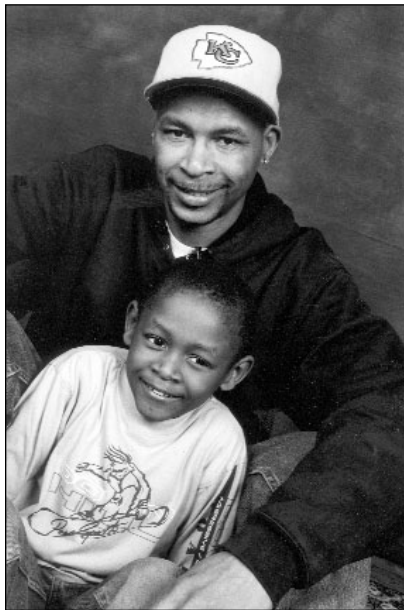


Photo by Adam Soderholm

*The disproportionate placement of African-American children outside their homes is a troubling trend, and one that must be addressed.*

# Raising All of the Village's Children

*William D. Allen, Ph.D., licensed marriage and family therapist and consultant to Hennepin County and the Minnesota Department of Human Services.*

There is a pernicious problem affecting Minnesota that few people are fully aware of. It affects children and families most directly, but the aftershocks reverberate through whole communities and create a drain on the state's economy. The problem could get worse unless the legislature and state government take enlightened action soon. The problem is the disproportionate out-of-home placement of African-American children in Minnesota's child welfare system.

Research has shown the incidence of child maltreatment to be statistically no higher among African-Americans than in other ethnic groups. This is why the disproportionate outplacement of African-American children is so disturbing.

Child welfare policy is guided by several beliefs about children and their relationship to society. Among them is the commonly-held assumption that children need and deserve to grow up in loving and supportive households, free from physical or emotional harm.

Disagreements typically stem from differences in the conceptualization of the family and family relationships. While some see family members as individuals whose rights and welfare must be preserved and promoted, others view the family as the engine that generates the individual well-being of its members. In the latter view, preservation and, if necessary, rehabilitation of the family represent the most effective strategies for safeguarding child welfare and family health.

Some implicit beliefs also shape both policy and public perceptions of child welfare and child abuse. Some are grounded in ethnocentrism and, like other manifestations of institutional racism, infect otherwise rational social processes. Each of the decision points in the outplacement process are vulnerable to bias on the part of decision makers, especially when they have little or no other contact with children and families of ethnicity or social classes different than themselves.

Perhaps more troubling is an underlying belief that families who end up in the child welfare or child protection systems lack the capacity to adequately care for their children, and have demonstrated parental incompetence or even criminal negligence. When these social misconceptions are combined with the ethnic and class biases mentioned earlier, they form a powerful force that if unchecked, literally extracts children from a relatively small minority of problem-filled, African-American families.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that at the core of this problem are deeply held beliefs about the capacity of African-Americans to nurture and raise their children. If as a society we believe that African-Americans are inherently inferior,

it is only a small step to the belief African-Americans would be incompetent parents. We might also see the state-sponsored disintegration of such families as a legitimate and necessary method of "saving" specific family members. These unspoken, implicit beliefs may partly explain our tolerance of the disproportionate outplacement of African-American children in Minnesota.

Some pivotal questions must be answered to effectively address the problems related to disproportionate outplacement: Do we believe some children, because of their history with or risk of abuse, need protection by the state? Is there a single cause of disproportionality? Is race or ethnicity a factor in the maintenance of disproportionality? Do we have enough information to solve the problem?

The answers to these questions and solutions to the challenges posed by disproportionality are varied and complex.

Most important, it is vital those who care about children and families adopt a sense of urgency about this problem. There are wide-ranging and serious financial, emotional and psychological costs for society.

Second, no one individual or system can solve the problem of disproportionality. It will take sustained cooperation and problem-solving of multiple stakeholders across systems to effectively address the immediate disparity. Underlying causes of child neglect and family dysfunction must be addressed concurrently with efforts to help those already in the child welfare system. Only in this way can we avoid the potential of working hard to solve one end of the problem while additional families stream into the other end.

Third, better information is needed about decision-making processes that determine child and family disposition. A recent DHS study suggested that actual cases be examined to learn if systemic biases disproportionately affect African-American families. Alternatives will need to be developed that can prevent disparities in the future.

Finally, there is need for training of service providers in how to effectively cross cultural boundaries, more input from the African-American community must be solicited and incorporated in both assessment and disposition of cases. This will mean better collaboration between existing agencies and development of new community-based initiatives.

Minnesota has a reputation for being a progressive leader in social policy. Now is the time for us to preserve that hard fought reputation by eradicating disparities in the child welfare system and thereby supporting the healthy development of all children and their families.

# CONNECTION CORNER

## Harris Forum Focuses on Foster Care

The annual forum sponsored by the Harris Center for Infant and Toddler Development featured Dr. Mary Dozier, associate professor of psychology at the University of Delaware, who focused on the role attachment plays in

understanding the experience of young children in foster care. Held May 2 at the Minnesota History Center, the event attracted children, youth and family professionals from around the state.

## New Child Welfare Briefing Paper Just Out

"Responding to The Needs of Children Unable to Live at Home," a briefing paper on the Minnesota Child Welfare System written by Esther Wattenberg of the U's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare and the Center for Urban

and Regional Affairs, and Constance Fumea, M.P.P. candidate, was released in late April. View or print it on-line at: <http://www.cura.umn.edu/publications/pubs-online.html>

## Ready 4 K Focuses on School Readiness

Ready 4 K Minnesota is a new organization dedicated to ensuring that every Minnesota child is ready for school. It grew out of the work of the Early Care and Education Finance

Commission, which developed The Action Plan for Early Care and Education. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.organizeforchildren.com>.

## CEED Early Literacy Project

The Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) is beginning a two-year program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, to provide initial training and ongoing professional development for pre-school educators and families to help Minnesota children develop early literacy and language skills. Faculty members Mary McEvoy, Michael Rodriguez and Scott McConnell are

providing leadership for the project, which will include the Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, Minneapolis and Hennepin County libraries, Minneapolis Community and Technical Colleges, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association and White Earth Reservation as partners.

# CONSORTIUM UPDATE

## Promise Fellows fan out across the University

Twelve undergraduate and graduate students are working as *Promise Fellows* in various departments and colleges across the University to provide program and research assistance related to youth development. This cadre of students is collaborating on several interdisciplinary projects, and their individual activities will be collected and reported on at the end of the year. The *Promise Fellows* corps is part of the University of Minnesota's two-year *University of Promise* initiative, which has been funded through the Provost's Office, and co-chaired by CYFC, the Center for 4-H Youth Development, and the Division of Pediatrics and Adolescent Health.

## Covering All Families

A collaborative effort between the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth and Family Consortium is underway attempting to discover common questions about services targeted to low-income families and children. The outcome of this search will be a web-based tool designed to help service providers assist low-income families in Minnesota determine eligibility for a broad range of services they may or may not know are available to them. Such services include: affordable health care coverage, affordable child care, school meal benefits, and federal and state income tax credits. Determining ultimate eligibility for any of these programs is not the intent of this web tool. Rather, it seeks to provide broad guidelines that will assist and encourage families with applying for services. It will clarify the entry/access points to these programs and give tips on how to make the application process more efficient.

## University/Community Work Group on Out of Home Placements

A group of University faculty and community-based staff from U's Extension Service met several times in recent months to discuss out of home placements. Associate Dean of Outreach and Extension in the College of Human Ecology, Catherine Solheim, co-hosted the meetings with CYFC to bring together University faculty and staff who have an interest in, or have done research on, out of home placements. The work and discussions of the group culminated in the identification of the need for a policy briefing paper. Participants were active reviewers and contributed tremendously to the final brief, along with comments and ideas from many community providers, policy makers and educators. See [www.cyfc.umn.edu/policy/issues/placement.html](http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/policy/issues/placement.html).

## JUNE-AUGUST

June - August

*Summer short courses* from U M Family Social Science. Topics include ADHD and Families, Adoptive Families, Ambiguous Loss and more. Call (612) 625-1900 or visit <http://fsos.che.umn.edu/courses/specialtopics.html>

June - July

*Harris Summer Institute 2002*, six short courses covering a variety of topics in infant development, infant mental health, and early intervention. Contact the Harris Center 612-624-4510.

June 27-30

*Work and Labor in the Global Economy*, national conference of the Society for Advancement of Socio-economics will be held at U M, and is sponsored by a wide range of U M departments. See [www.sase.org](http://www.sase.org) for more information.

July 10-11

*National Leadership Summit to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health*, sponsored by the Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More information is available at [www.summit.omhrc.gov](http://www.summit.omhrc.gov).

August 1-4

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) annual conference, Chicago, Illinois. For more information visit <http://www.nacac.org/conference.html>.

August 12-15

*Youth Development + Sexuality Education = Healthy Teens*, 2002 Summer Institute in Adolescent Health and Sexuality Education, sponsored by DCFL, MN Department of Health, and several U M departments. Contact [ljevge@umn.edu](mailto:ljevge@umn.edu) or (612) 626-4772.

Aug. 22-Sept. 2

*Minnesota State Fair!* Minnesota's 4-H will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of 4-H with special events and a traveling exhibit showing the many faces of Minnesota youth, entitled *A Day in the Life of Minnesota Youth-A Photo Story*.

## SEPTEMBER

September 15

*7th Annual Walk for Justice*, a community event for grassroots nonprofits, their supporters and friends. Email [wjinfo@walkforjustice.org](mailto:wjinfo@walkforjustice.org) or call the Walk Hotline at 612-879-5999.

*Michael Brott, Community Partnerships and Communications Coordinator*

## Juvenile Out-of-Home Placement

<http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/1999/juv99.htm>

This 1999 summary from the Legislative Auditor discusses the impact of out of home placement on counties, characteristics of the children served in such settings, as well as performance of the system in Minnesota.

## What Works in Family Foster Care

<http://www.casey.org/research/reports/wwffcshort/whatworks.html>

This report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation on family foster care focuses on specific service objectives include preventing further child maltreatment, maintaining family, school and other connections, minimizing movement from one home to another, stabilization or improvement of the child's emotional, social, and cognitive functioning, and addressing immediate health care needs. Using the key desired objectives of child safety, permanence and child and family well-being, the authors identify major components of effective family foster care.

## Evaluation of Family Preservation and Reunification Programs:

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/fampres94/index.htm>

In January 2001 an interim report was submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services focusing on the efficacy of family preservation and reunification programs. The report is "an evaluation of programs intended to prevent the placement of children in foster care when it can be avoided." It focuses on programs in three states, using a particular approach to family preservation called Homebuilders.

## Assessing the Context of Permanency and Reunification in the Foster Care System • <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/fostercare-reunif01/index.htm>

Following the interim report listed above, DHHS produced this report submitted by Chapin Hall Center for Children in December of 2001. The papers in the report address six main components:

1. Identification and examination of reunification practice and services in 25 states,
2. An analysis of the patterns of reunification and reentry to track experiences of children in foster care,
3. An exploration of the role of race in reunification,
4. An examination of the reunification case decision making process,
5. A framework for thinking about permanency with a focus on the status of reunification within the permanency continuum, and
6. Consideration of the issues involved in evaluating programs for permanency and reunification."

## Who's The Consortium?

**Elaine Cunningham** of the Children's Defense Fund-MN and **Emily Williamson**, formerly of the Children's Defense Fund-MN and now with the MN Department of Health's Office of Multicultural and Minority Health, have been working closely with CYFC staff to develop and market the "Covering All Families" web-based screening tool. Both of these women bring extensive experience and knowledge of health insurance and other programs for low-income Minnesotan families to this collaborative project.

**Scott McConnell**, "U" faculty in the Center for Early Education and Development, brought his interest and scholarly expertise on literacy and language skill development to a several session "think tank" on school readiness convened by CYFC on behalf of Ready 4 K, a new community effort to increase school readiness in children. Scott is also involved with a new CEED research project intended to strengthen the development of literacy and language skills in Minnesota children.

**Rose Allen**, educator with the U's Extension Service in Ramsey County, has been an active participant in CYFC's Policy Work Group. She was one of the developers of Extension's Parents Forever and Positive Parenting programs, and offers programs regularly around the metro area. She also co-chairs the Minnesota Council on Family Relations Policy Committee and serves on its Board of Directors. Rose has been involved with the Consortium since its inception.

**Rob Sawyer** of Olmsted County, and **Kelly Harder** and **Phil Claussen** of Blue Earth County, provide leadership with out of home placement policy and practice in their counties. All three have pushed the edges to make their out of home placement work more successful. They graciously shared their time and wisdom with Consortium staff in lengthy interviews as part of the preparation of this newsletter.

**And the Consortium is YOU!**



*CYFC's new policy brief on out of home placements is available at*

<http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/policy/issues/placement.html>

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