

A publication sharing ideas and insights

**CASEY
FAMILY
SERVICES**

THE DIRECT SERVICE AGENCY OF
THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

CELEBRATING
30 YEARS
of building lifelong family connections.

Voice

Spring 2006 Volume Seven Issue Two



Sharing Experiences from the World of Foster Care

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From the Executive Director's Desk

As we approach National Foster Care Month—which the nation observes each May—there are encouraging signs of advances in child welfare practice and policy. At the same time, there still is cause for concern that too many of our older children in foster care are experiencing negative outcomes. Too many of these youth “age out” unprepared for life’s challenges and unsupported by caring adults.

On the plus side, I see signs of more cooperation and collaboration today than ever before among those who care about the well-being of our most fragile children and families. Thanks to dedicated foster parents, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates alike, the past decade has witnessed a revolution in foster care in which the emphasis has dramatically shifted from merely finding temporary safe homes for children unable to live with their birth parents to ensuring that every child achieves a lifetime, supportive family relationship. Foster children need family permanence. They need to be part of a family, to belong.

At the same time, there has been an alarming drop in funding for many services and programs that help foster and adoptive children and their families.

Perhaps more than at any other time in our history, there is both a sense of urgency and a growing consensus that change must occur in the ways we design practice and make policies that affect children in foster care.

This is not easy work, and without foster parents, it would be impossible work. Foster parents provide the bridge to healing and permanence for children and their family members. I am honored to join with the National Foster Care Month Partnership and the nation in saluting the more than 130,000 caring men and women who make a powerful difference in the lives of America’s children in foster care.

It is very clear that we all must join together to shape change. We must accept our collective responsibility to ensure that every child has the security of knowing that someone has committed unconditionally to be there for him or her, every day, every step of the way.

Raymond L. Torres

Izq.: Wendy Winters, miembro del Consejo Consultativo de Casey Family Services, con Aristi y Raymond L. Torres.



Del Escritorio del Director Ejecutivo

Mientras se va acercando el Mes Nacional de Cuidado de Crianza que se celebra cada mes de Mayo, hay avances alentadores en la practica y los principios tocante al bienestar del niño. A la vez, siguen las preocupaciones por los jóvenes en cuidado de crianza cuya experiencia ha sido negativa. Muchos jóvenes llegan a la edad de salir del sistema de crianza sin la preparación necesaria para enfrentar los desafíos que trae la vida y sin el apoyo de adultos.

Por el lado positivo, yo veo hoy más cooperación y colaboración que antes entre los que se preocupan por el bienestar de niños y familias frágiles. Gracias a la dedicación tanto de los padres de crianza como por parte de los profesionales, abogados y otras autoridades, hemos visto en esta década un cambio radical; el enfoque ha cambiado desde el esfuerzo para conseguir alojamiento provisional y temporal a la necesidad de establecer relaciones permanentes con familias cariñosas. Los niños en cuidado de crianza necesitan estabilidad. Necesitan formar parte integral de una familia. Necesitan sentirse en casa.

Al mismo tiempo, se ha reducido en forma alarmante los fondos para los servicios y programas que apoyan a estos niños y familias.

Quizás hoy más que nunca hay tanto un sentido de urgencia como un consenso general sobre las perspectivas, la planificación y las normas que guían los esfuerzos para con estos niños.

Este trabajo no es fácil y sería imposible sin los padres de crianza. Ellos construyen el puente a la salud y la estabilidad. Me siento orgulloso juntarme con la Sociedad del Mes Nacional de Cuidado de Crianza y con todo el país en el reconocimiento de los 130,000 hombres y mujeres dedicados al mejoramiento de los niños en cuidado de crianza.

Hay que unirnos para lograr el cambio. Hay que aceptar nuestra responsabilidad colectiva para asegurar que cada niño sepa que hay personas dedicados a su cuidado cada día, en cada paso del camino.

Raymond L. Torres

CASEY FAMILY SERVICES CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

30



Birthdays are significant, especially when you work with children. This year is Casey Family Services' birthday. Thirty years ago, Jim Casey established Casey Family Services as the direct service agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Also the founder of UPS, Jim Casey was an insightful man. But as any parent will tell you, growth and change are inseparable. As Casey Family Services—and its 350-plus employees—celebrates this important milestone, Executive Director Raymond L. Torres believes that Jim Casey would have been pleased and surprised by what the agency has accomplished during its history.

From its beginnings in 1976 as a relatively local provider of high-quality foster care in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Casey Family Services has grown to include an array of services in eight divisions with 15 locations operating in Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The agency's ability to promote positive change for children and families extends well beyond its direct service work in the Northeast, Torres observes.

According to Sarah Greenblatt, director of the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, the agency is offering technical assistance, consultation, and training to other child welfare providers to enrich the field: "We now are able to share our insight and knowledge—particularly on permanence, post-adoption services, and life skills—with our peers. Jim Casey's commitment to the importance of stable families is having an impact nationally."

For the organization, this anniversary is a proud moment for very practical reasons. Quite literally, three decades of service and growth mean that thousands of children have been supported. Each year brings help to hundreds more vulnerable families. Even more important, because Casey Family Services is committed to self-evaluation, research, innovation, and positive change, the organization has become better at what it does. "Casey has used the past 30 years to learn and evolve," Torres says. "We have taken what we have learned and modified our own practice, shared our findings across the Foundation about what helps children, and developed service models that can be replicated to enrich the entire field."

For most of its first 15 years, the agency exclusively provided long-term foster care for the region's most vulnerable children. However, recognizing needs within the communities it served, the Board of Advisors for Casey Family Services committed the agency in the late 1980s to fill vital gaps in service. Casey began developing family-strengthening efforts that today include family advocacy, preservation, and reunification programs, as well as six family resource centers. In 1997, Casey held a historic national conference on families affected by HIV/AIDS, tackling the issue of helping children whose parents have died from the disease. Responding to the needs of children who were adopted from foster care, Casey launched its own post-adoption services initiative in 1992, sharing its expertise in 2000 when it hosted the country's first national conference on the issue.

In recent years, Casey has placed an even greater priority on helping children develop lasting family relationships. "The goal of

someone raising a child is to produce a successful adult," Torres says. "What a child needs extends well beyond a place to sleep until his or her 18th birthday. Instead, every child needs and deserves a family for life, and this—the concept of permanence for youth—has become Casey's goal for every child in care."

Casey Family Services' emphasis on permanence is helping to lead the Annie E. Casey Foundation's national strategy for helping vulnerable children achieve lifelong family relationships. The Foundation is drawing from Casey Family Services' on-the-ground experience to inform other direct services work, including Family to Family, a model for rethinking child welfare systems with sites across the nation, and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, a joint project with Casey Family Programs to support youth transitioning from foster care. In addition, Casey Family Services is playing an active role in the Foundation's family- and community-strengthening efforts through Making Connections and Family Economic Success initiatives.

As Casey looks forward to helping build lifelong family connections for a new generation, it is optimistic. "We are very mindful of our charge and the public trust involved with helping these often forgotten and vulnerable children to establish a relationship with a family who will always be there for them, ideally a birth parent, relative, or another family when that is not safe," Torres says. "We will apply new lessons and ideas to this work. I know Jim Casey's commitment to excellence and to children will guide us as we continue our work into the next 30 years."

EXTENDING JIM CASEY'S DREAM



by Lorrie Johnston, Foster Parent,
Casey Family Services

Working at UPS for more than 20 years, Lorrie Johnston was immersed in the philosophy of the organization and its founder, Jim Casey, who also established Casey Family Services. Today, she continues to honor his legacy by serving as a foster parent with Casey's Vermont Division. On the occasion of Casey Family Services' 30th anniversary, Johnston, in her own words, shares how one man's vision for a better tomorrow has impacted her life and the lives of those she welcomes into her family.

I started at UPS in October of 1983 as a part-time package handler in Brattleboro, Vermont. I worked at UPS until May of 2005. I count Christmases: I worked 22 Christmas seasons there.

Jim Casey truly became a bigger part of my life once I went from working the floor to serving in management. When we had meetings, we always opened with some type of quote or a story from Jim and had an opportunity to discuss it. I never met him, of course, but his lessons and approach were part of everything we tried to accomplish.

The values that Jim Casey taught all of us, and those I take with me, are to be yourself, work hard, be dependable, and trust the other people who work with you. Don't be afraid to let others help you. Don't try to do it all yourself. Work as a team. And always think of new and different ways to keep going and change with the times.

In the last couple of years, I had a major lifestyle change, becoming a single parent. While my two oldest children were starting families of their own, I had one child still at home who had a challenging time with the change. She went through some very tough times.

Since then, my daughter has improved, and we've gotten her to a successful level. The experience of having a child who needed some help made me want to reach out to others as a way of giving back. I wanted to share what I had learned with another child who needed some direction to become successful in life. That's one of the issues to which Jim Casey was committed: He wanted young people to become successful.

In the tradition of Jim Casey, one of the things constantly emphasized at UPS to

employees was the need to give back to the community. Since I'd had some success with my teenager and I was at home spending this time with her, I looked for a way to give back. Casey Family Services was one of the first organizations I thought of because of my relationship with UPS.

We are doing respite care right now, my daughter and I. It is the perfect situation for us. It introduced our family to the needs of others and what challenges people are going through. The experience is very rewarding. Recently, we provided a young woman with a nice, safe place to live while she could get her thoughts together. During this time, she continued to work with Casey to help her transition successfully into a permanent family situation.

I plan on fostering another child. I am in the process of going through a couple of different workshops. The thing that's impressed me most about the training is the openness and the friendliness. It's still like a classroom type of situation, but there are other foster parents who participate as well, and they share experiences and ideas.

Jim Casey really pushed professionalism. His idea was that once you came in the door, he supported your success. I think that's what Casey is doing with these young people. The agency is providing safe homes. The staff is providing a lot of guidance for the foster families to help these children to become successful and get them into lifelong family relationships.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH:

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF WAYS YOU CAN HELP



Since 1988, each May, communities from Maine to California have joined together to recognize National Foster Care Month. For foster parents, child welfare professionals, current and former foster youth, and countless volunteers from across the country, today's foster care system offers much to celebrate, especially the growing recognition of the right and need of a child for a lifetime connection to a family—a family for life.

Lifelong Family Relationships

This focus on family relationships is at the heart of National Foster Care Month.

Patricia Robinson, a foster parent with Casey from Stratford, Connecticut, knows the importance of a permanent family relationship. Her foster son, Willie, came to her at age 16, a month after his mother died and only two years before he would “age out” of the foster care system. “Willie has done well, but it wasn't easy,” Robinson says. “He wasn't ready for college after high school. He went kicking and screaming to live at a Job Corps Center. Then he came back home while he took classes at a community college. Not all kids are ready to leave the nest, even at age 22 or age 23. He needs me to be there for him, even today—and I am.”

Just as children enter the foster care system for many reasons, there are multiple paths to follow when leaving the system. Ideally, youngsters will return to their birth families or be adopted. If neither of those options is possible, there are other pathways to permanence, including guardianship and kinship care. “No matter what, each child should have a positive, lifelong connection with an adult before leaving foster care,” says

Raymond L. Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services.

Despite the gains made in helping foster youth find lifelong relationships, much work remains. Nearly half of foster children are older than age 10, and an estimated 20,000 children will “age out” of foster care this year, signaling an end to state funding and support, as well as formal connections to foster parents. Studies show that without continuing support, services, and connection, youth exiting care at age 18 are more vulnerable to unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, or incarceration. They also are more likely to drop out of school or end up on public assistance.

National Foster Care Month focuses on what works and the continuing needs of vulnerable children. “Right from the beginning, this national event has accomplished two very important objectives,” Torres says. “First, it raises awareness about the 518,000 children and youth in foster care. Second, it gives us a chance to honor the families, social workers, and others who work to make a difference for these children.” Casey Family Services is a founding partner of National Foster Care Month and the National Foster Care Coalition.

“Change a Lifetime”

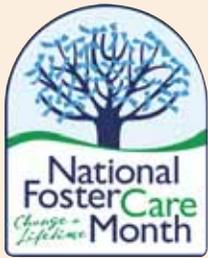
This year's theme, “Change a Lifetime: Share Your Heart, Open Your Home, Offer Your Help,” will focus heavily on how to get involved in the lives of young people in foster care. National Foster Care Month and its series of events are sponsored by a national partnership of 13 public and private organizations, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct service agency, Casey Family Services; Casey Family

Programs; the Child Welfare League of America; and the National Foster Parent Association.

National Foster Care Month 2006 will feature national events along with many local celebrations. The West Coast launch takes place on May 2 at Seattle's Space Needle. Casey Family Programs will host the event featuring Regina Louise, an author and former foster youth who was adopted at age 40 by a shelter worker who cared for her as a child. A huge banner will be unfurled on top of the famed structure, displaying the National Foster Care Month logo and this year's theme.

On May 1, award-winning actress and foster care advocate Victoria Rowell will open the “Passion Tour Art Series,” a traveling exhibit of art created by current and former foster youth (see article on page 8). The Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan will bring these creative works of youth expression, all captured in shadow boxes, to Baltimore; Boston; Los Angeles; Maui, Hawaii; New York City; and Portland, Maine. Rowell will sponsor openings in each city, and she will share her experiences of growing up in foster care and encourage people to become engaged in the lives of vulnerable children.

Many of the state and local organizations observing National Foster Care Month will take part in the blue ribbon campaign. Foster parent associations distribute blue ribbons—each signifying a child or youth in foster care—to call attention to the number of foster children in their respective states. In Arkansas last year, for example, supporters tied a blue ribbon around a tree for every child in state care.



“We have to help children establish a meaningful relationship with an adult who will always be there for them. This spirit of connection is at the heart of National Foster Care Month.”

*—Raymond L. Torres, Executive Director,
Casey Family Services*

The National Foster Care Month website, www.fostercaremonth.org, is a valuable resource for local organizers. It contains information about foster care, links to partner organizations, a toolkit on how you can help, stories from foster parents and foster care alumni, a calendar of events, and official pins, ribbons, and campaign posters for purchase.

Getting Involved

“The website is a wonderful way to engage communities,” says Virginia Pryor, manager of national nonprofit partnerships for Casey Family Programs and chair of the National Foster Care Month Partnership. “It encourages individuals to take an active role in helping foster youth in any manner possible. There are hundreds of ways to become involved.”

The most obvious way to help is to serve as a foster parent. For Robinson, being a foster parent offers her a way of “giving back.” She is keenly aware of the need to be a positive role model for black children. “When I worked at IBM, I used to go out and talk with unwed mothers. I wanted to show them that even if you grow up without much, like I did, you still can be successful.” Now in her 60s, she has two foster children and a foster grandchild at home and remains connected to her former foster child, Willie.

Rowell is another person who is committed to “giving back.” She is one of several national spokespersons for National Foster Care Month. “Victoria has been Casey Family Services’ spokesperson for seven years,” says Torres. “We have been inspired by her tirelessness in increasing awareness



about foster care and in empowering foster kids to succeed.”

Volunteers Make the Difference

There are many other ways to positively influence the life of a foster child. One is to volunteer as a mentor.

Two years ago, Meregilda Matteo, a Dominican woman in Bridgeport, Connecticut, started tutoring 13-year-old Mari through Casey Family Services. They began working together on Spanish homework, but, over time, their relationship grew. Matteo became a role model and supportive adult to Mari. “Every Friday, we had an activity,” she says. Most meaningful to Mari was Matteo’s help planning her quinceañero (Sweet 15). “She helped me

figure out what I wanted and made the invitations. It was a wonderful party,” says Mari. Today, Matteo and Mari share a lasting connection that enriches both of their lives.

While National Foster Care Month spotlights the ways people can help, Torres offers that it’s important to meet the needs of foster children year round. “We are encouraged by the thousands of individuals and families who come forward to enrich the lives of foster children during May,” he says. “It’s heartening to see these relationships develop and grow throughout the years. We are pleased that May can serve as a catalyst for such meaningful connections.”

MARYELLEN'S JOURNEY



Maryellen is a former foster youth who recently was chosen to take part in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's Congressional internship program for foster youth. Despite a challenging childhood that included coping with the mental illness of one parent and the death of another, she currently is studying for a master's degree in social work at Columbia University. Maryellen will share her experiences on Capitol Hill with Voice readers in future issues. Appropriately enough, during this upcoming National Foster Care Month, Maryellen shares her story of childhood in her own words.

One of the most difficult questions you can ask a former foster youth is, "Where are you from?" Do you mean where I was born, where I grew up, or where the seeds of my life experiences began to blossom?

I'm from many places, and I take pride in saying that during the first 12 years of my life, my universal understandings were limited to a block off Walton Avenue and 170th Street in the Bronx in New York City. With four siblings in a two-bedroom apartment, a mother plagued by poverty and mental illness, and a father with a talent for hiding from welfare officials, life in the Bronx was far from luxurious.

Several months before officially moving to Connecticut on December 1, 1995, my father included my siblings and me in the decision to move from our apartment with cable television to a place near my older sisters, Betsy and Sonia. It was a unanimous decision to move out of one ghetto in the Bronx to a more advanced ghetto in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

For the first few months in Connecticut, everything was great, but then my mother's manic depression began to escalate. After an intense argument, my father decided to move in with his cousin in New Jersey. At age 13, I suddenly found myself as head of the household. Somehow I knew it wasn't right, yet there were no options.

IN MY OPINION, ONE OF THE GREATEST BENEFITS OF ADOPTION IS THAT IT OFFERS A CHILD IN CARE A SENSE OF SECURITY AND A CONNECTION TO A POSITIVE ADULT ROLE MODEL.

After dropping my little sister Maritza off at her kindergarten class one morning, I sat down to take a math test at school. All the stress from the move, my mom's manic depression, and new household responsibilities made me realize that I had no idea what the numbers and symbols on the test meant. I was overcome with emotion. All I could do was run out crying. I was sent to meet with the school social worker. In between sobs, I managed to tell her about the Bronx, my father's move to New Jersey, my mom's illness, the bills, and my academic failures. I didn't know what was to come, but I knew I had to seek help.

A phone call from the school social worker led to police and social workers coming to our home. When we lived in the Bronx, many child welfare workers had come to

visit us, but this was the first time we had to put clothes in a black garbage bag and move into kinship care with my sister Betsy, who was 18 years old at the time.

Betsy and her domestic partner Gabriel decided to take temporary custody of my younger brother and sisters. On May 13, 1996 – my brother Tony's 13th birthday – Betsy received a call from our social worker at the Connecticut Department of Children and Families telling us that my father had been diagnosed with full-blown AIDS and that he had only a year to live. Two months later, on July 19, 1996, our father passed away.

During those two months between learning about my father's virus and his dying, I had spent six days in an all-girl group home, had stayed several weeks in a group home with Tony, and had moved into the first of three foster homes. Eventually, I was placed with a foster family through Casey Family Services, providing me stability and a sense of belonging. Even today, as a graduate student in social work at Columbia University, Casey and its staff members continue to offer me support, compassion, and guidance.

Like many other foster youth and alumni, life in the system provided temporary families and some sense of security, but the trauma of losing family and friends and experiencing academic disruptions can be detrimental. Children come in and out of the system for different reasons, such as neglect, physical and sexual abuse, or any other sudden changes in the household. Some children stay in the system for a short time, but there are many who "age out" of the system.

I've had a difficult childhood, but because of my determination to remain resilient and because of my relationships with caring adults who encouraged me, I continue to try to become the best that I can be.

With encouragement from the staff at Casey Family Services, I decided to apply for the internship program with the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute because I want to share some of my wisdom and experiences with members of Congress so that they, in turn, will be motivated to make a commitment to strengthen child welfare legislation, particularly in the areas of adoption and other permanency options for children in care. I want to learn from some of the most influ-

ential individuals in American politics. I also believe I can strengthen my skills in public speaking, administration, and interpersonal interactions through the program.

In my opinion, one of the greatest benefits of adoption is that it offers a child in care a sense of security and a connection to a positive adult role model. Due to parental death, addiction, disabilities, or mental illness, many children are left without permanent positive parental connections. Adoption reduces the likelihood that former foster youth will experience homelessness, criminal activity, inadequate health care, and incomplete education.

I have made a commitment to myself, and to those who grew up in the struggle, to expand my consciousness and to transcend the limits imposed by myself and society at large. I've had a difficult childhood, but because of my determination to remain resilient and because of my relationships with caring adults who encouraged me, I continue to try to become the best that I can be. I hope that one day I can take all my life experiences and the wisdom learned and inspire another foster youth to transcend his or her limits as well.

SUMMER ON CAPITOL HILL



The Foster Youth Internship Program – sponsored by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) – provides talented college students who have spent their formative years in foster care an opportunity to intern in Congressional offices for the summer. These young adults, who have succeeded academically despite challenging childhoods, bring their unique perspectives to the offices of the U.S. Congress.

“The program raises awareness about the 518,000 children and youth in foster care, and specifically the 119,000 currently available for adoption, by bringing members of Congress in direct contact with those who have personal experience in the foster care system,” says Deanna Carlson Stacy, CCAI’s executive director.

Supplementing the interns’ work on Capitol Hill, CCAI enhances the experiences of the interns by organizing an orientation and training program, bimonthly educational

sessions, and a mid-summer retreat. In addition, CCAI provides a stipend, covers all housing and travel expenses, and acts as an ongoing support network for the interns. The Dave Thomas Foundation, as the founding sponsor, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation provide funding to make this program possible.

Several foster youth interns have worked in the office of Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho). The senator has found the young people to be motivated and energetic. “My office has benefited from the help provided by these talented young people, but the opportunities to talk frankly with them about the foster care experience was of special value,” he says.

Since the program’s inception, 20 members of Congress have participated, and 38 former foster youths from 21 different states have completed the program.

ACTRESS VICTORIA ROWELL TOURS NATION WITH FOSTER CARE ART EXHIBIT

QUESTION: *What do a world-renowned artist, an award-winning actress, and 40 foster youths in two cities 3,000 miles apart have in common?*

ANSWER: They all are part of one of the most unusual art exhibits expressing the foster care experience ever to tour the nation.

experiences. Each of the works is presented in shadow boxes provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation through Casey Family Services.

The "Passion Tour Art Series," and the accompanying reception series that features the artists from foster care, will premier at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles on May 1, 2006. On May 7, the exhibition will move to the Children's Museum of Manhattan in New York City and provide the backdrop for the official East Coast launch of National Foster Care Month, for which Rowell serves as a national spokeswoman.

The show re-opens on May 12 at the University of Southern

Maine in Portland, where Rowell is later scheduled to deliver the institution's commencement address. Wheelock College in Boston will be the venue for the fourth tour stop on May 17. Wheelock will present Rowell with an honorary doctorate degree at its commencement ceremonies. The next opening will take place at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore on May 26, and the final show will be held on June 10 in Maui, Hawaii. At each of the exhibition sites, the student artwork will be offered for sale in a silent auction to support RFCPP's work.

"This creative series has been an inspiration to all of us who have worked so hard to see it transform from a dream into a reality," says

Rowell, who also serves as the national spokesperson for Casey Family Services. "Each piece provides a powerful glimpse into the personal and often profound experiences that these young people have had growing up in foster care."

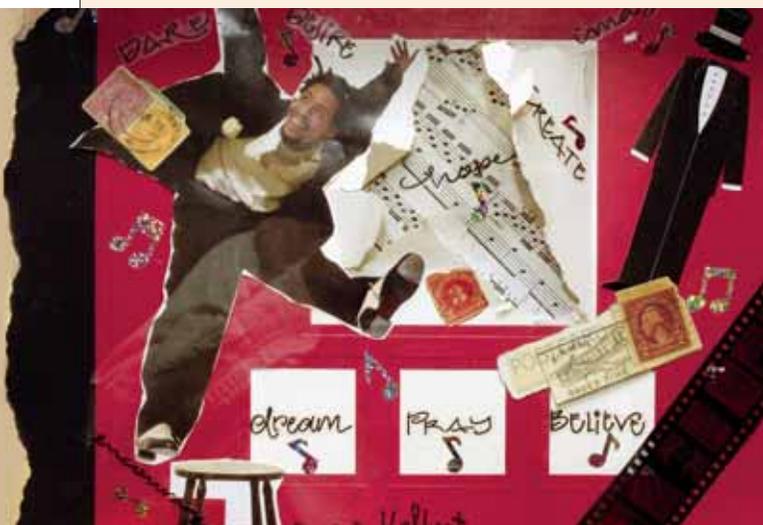
The arts are an important part of RFCPP's work, providing scholarships in ballet, fine arts, and sports, as well as internships for foster youth transitioning to independence. "Studies have shown that children who are exposed to the arts and team sports at an early age acquire life skills that will be instrumental in their personal growth and development," Rowell says. "These disciplines transport children away from their unstable lives to a place where dreams are born."

For the youth who participated in the workshops, the experience also presented the opportunity to work alongside Beasley. Herself a collector of the artist's work, Rowell praises Beasley for her ability to connect with foster youth.

Of Beasley, Maya Angelou once wrote, "As a painter, her eye is sharp and quick. She sees human beings, our foibles, frailties, and strengths, and she cares about what she sees."

Specializing in oils-on-canvas, as well as prints and collage, Beasley is the only artist to twice receive the Presidential Seal on her artwork. She is the first African-American woman to serve as president of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

"I am most proud when people tell me that, through my art, I'm part of their lives," Beasley says. Now, through their own art, 40 foster teens are part of her life as well.



In celebration of May as National Foster Care Month, actress Victoria Rowell and her foundation, the Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan (RFCPP), will host a traveling exhibition of art created by foster youths. The "Passion Tour Art Series"—a collection of found-object pieces—is the creative result of workshops in Los Angeles and Boston that were conducted by acclaimed artist Phoebe Beasley.

Each work of art is as unique as the youthful artist who created it. Some pieces are made from photographs and wisps of cloth, others from bits of broken toys, CDs, diary pages, or other symbols of young lives that are themselves a collage of often-unconnected

AFTER THE HURRICANE:

FOSTER PARENTS HELP EACH OTHER



On the morning of Hurricane Katrina, Myra Magee woke up her six adopted children at 7 a.m., had them get dressed, and got them to another house just as the storm struck. “Something was telling me, ‘Myra, you need to get those kids out of their bedrooms,’” says Magee. Thank goodness she did. Later that day, her husband called and told her that the roof covering the children’s rooms was gone. “If those kids had been in their bedrooms, the whole roof would have fallen down on them,” she says.

Magee is president of the Louisiana Foster Adoptive Parent Association and a board member of the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA). Although Magee and her family were displaced by the storm, she worked with NFPA to quickly set up a distribution center for donations of clothing and other household items for Louisiana’s foster, adoptive, and kinship families. NFPA also contacted the Mississippi Foster Adoptive Parent Association and the South Mississippi Foster Parent Association, which acted as distribution centers in their state.

Based in Gig Harbor, Washington, NFPA is a national volunteer organization that supports foster families and serves as a strong voice on behalf of all children. To help deal

with the immediate needs of foster families in the Gulf Region, NFPA donated \$10,000 to establish a relief fund and sent out a request to its network of state foster parent associations for donations. According to NFPA Executive Director Karen Jorgenson: “We collected everything the families told us they needed at the time: personal care items, clothes, blankets—real basic survival articles.”

With some of the more immediate needs of families being addressed, NFPA turned its attention to gathering information on the longer-term needs of all the foster, adoptive, and kinship care families in Louisiana and Mississippi. NFPA and the Louisiana and Mississippi foster parent associations developed and distributed assessment forms, seeking to determine where families were, how much damage their homes had sustained, whether they had insurance, how many kids were at home at the time of the storm, and what the families’ needs were.

To help foster parents meet their families’ needs, NFPA received funding from the Freddie Mac Foundation, which, in September 2005, established a \$1 million Katrina Fund for Foster Children. These funds have been used to help foster and adoptive parents in their rebuilding efforts.

In Gulfport, Mississippi, foster parent Gary Cuevas continues to work as NFPA’s “on-the-ground eyes,” inspecting the damage to homes that were identified as needing repair on the assessment forms sent back from foster, adoptive, and kinship care families in the Gulfport area.

Volunteer teams have been working to repair homes before the next hurricane season begins. To facilitate this effort, NFPA linked with UMCOR—United Methodist Committee on Relief—which has the infrastructure set up to coordinate and accommodate the volunteer teams. “We’ve repaired close to 25 homes to make them habitable,” says Jorgenson. “And we’ve assisted more than 400 families.”

In addition to helping the families still living in Louisiana and Mississippi, NFPA coordinated with its state foster parent associations in Alabama, Georgia, and Texas to provide assistance to the foster and adoptive families who were displaced to each respective state. Families were invited to support-group meetings, and many received help in getting furniture and appliances for their rebuilt homes or apartments.

More than six months after the hurricanes, NFPA is working with the Louisiana and Mississippi foster parent associations to help



connect them with donors and other resources for the children and families as aid becomes available. However, the struggle continues for many families. Homes remain in disrepair or are uninhabitable, families may still be living out of state or in trailers locally, and there are obstacles with insurance companies and other organizations that hinder funding for the replacement or repair of their homes.

According to Magee, the Louisiana Foster Adoptive Parent Association's conference held in Baton Rouge this past January helped to re-energize families. Nearly 400 foster, adoptive, and kinship parents from throughout the state, and those who have been living in other states, traveled to the conference. "I think [the conference] was one of the best things that could have happened to foster parents. We were able to get together and encourage one another," says Magee.

Throughout the ordeal of the storm and its aftermath, families cared for their foster children. "They should be commended – the foster parents who took care of those children during the storm," says Magee. "I just say to these foster parents, 'That was wonderful!' Most of us didn't have anywhere to stay, but we found a way for our children."

CASEY FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO SUPPORT LOUISIANA'S DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Annie E. Casey Foundation established a \$3 million disaster relief fund to help with recovery efforts in the Gulf Region and worldwide. In New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast, the Foundation is working in a number of ways to ensure a fair and equitable redevelopment. The Casey Strategic Consulting Group (CSCG) is working with Louisiana's child welfare and juvenile justice systems to help officials through the aftermath of the hurricane and to assist with their system reform efforts.

The hurricane affected the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS) in many ways. According to Louisiana state law, DSS staff members are responsible for staffing emergency shelters, which usually only requires the staff being in the shelters for a few days. However, in this instance,

many shelters were open for months, requiring DSS staff members to be taken off their typical assignments. In addition, more than 600 DSS staff members themselves had to evacuate temporarily, and many had to relocate out of state. Even so, DSS had the responsibility of processing 500,000 applications for food stamps to help people affected by the hurricane. In the midst of all this, the remaining staff was charged with tracking down more than 2,000 foster kids who had been evacuated.

"It was just an unbelievably traumatic time for the staff of DSS," says Tracey Feild, director of consulting engagements at the CSCG. "It was a period of time that was unprecedented across the country. No one has ever experienced anything like it before, so there was no rule book on how to do things."

Six months later, DSS has somewhat recovered – the shelters are closed, many staff members returned to their normal assignments, the foster children have been located, and food stamp applications have been processed. However, things will never be the same. Before Katrina, the city of New Orleans represented 40 percent of revenues

to the state. When it basically shut down, the state's fiscal base was devastated. This meant there had to be a number of major budget cuts.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has provided funding that enabled consultants to work with DSS to help prepare justifications for minimizing cuts to its budget. The result was DSS' budget being cut by only about five percent, which, in light of the state's budgetary crisis, was a fairly small reduction. However, the state's entire budget will be impacted for the next four to five years.

Casey consultants also assisted staff of the Office of Community Services (OCS), which is the child welfare division of DSS, in filing FEMA claims and appeals for claims that FEMA denied. For example, FEMA had denied the initial claim to have OCS staff travel to other states to visit foster children who had been evacuated with their foster parents. The consultants facilitated an appeals process for the claims to help OCS maximize its FEMA support.



WILLIAM BELL, PRESIDENT AND CEO, CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS

Close-up

Last December, William Bell, then executive vice president of child and family services for Casey Family Programs and the former commissioner of New York City's Administration for Children's Services, was named as Casey Family Programs' new president and CEO. Bell succeeds Ruth W. Massinga, who had served since 1989.

Bell has received numerous national awards and accolades for his achievements in reforming and improving child welfare practice and policy, including the National Association for Public Child Welfare Administrators' Betsey R. Rosenbaum Award for Excellence in Child Welfare Administration. In addition, he serves on several national child welfare advisory boards and committees.

Casey Family Programs is part of a constellation of associated Casey institutions either formed directly by Jim Casey or as a result of his legacy. These include the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct service agency, Casey Family Services (established in 1948 and 1976, respectively), Casey Family Programs (established in 1966), and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (formed jointly by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs in 2000). All the Casey organizations work regionally and nationally through related but independent programs and initiatives to improve outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable children, especially those involved with the child welfare system or those transitioning from it. Through collaborations such as the Casey Alliance for Racial Equity, the Casey organizations are sharing resources and staff to bring attention to the need for child welfare policy, practice, and systems reform.

VOICE: What do you see as the challenges for vulnerable children and families?

BELL: There are many challenges facing vulnerable children and their families today. Far too many are living in poverty. On any given day in America, more than 500,000 vulnerable children are in foster care. These vulnerable children are more likely to show less progress than their peers around educational achievements. And, just as important, vulnerable children and families are less likely than others to have a strong voice in the political process.

VOICE: What are the barriers to succeeding in helping these children?

BELL: One of the major barriers to success in helping vulnerable children is the level of publicly and politically placed support behind ensuring success. There are very few communities in America that do not make certain that they are the best they can be with their police force and firefighters. We need to put this same level of commitment behind improving child welfare. Another barrier to success is the level of cross-systems collaboration. Child welfare agencies cannot succeed alone. Success in child welfare requires collaboration from other

systems like education, mental health, law enforcement, and criminal justice.

VOICE: What are the potential consequences of continuing to fail?

BELL: If nothing changes in the child welfare system between now and the year 2020 nearly 14 million children will be confirmed as victims of child abuse or neglect. If nothing changes over this same time period, approximately nine million new children will enter the foster care system in America. Approximately 300,000 children will "age out" of the foster care system, with a majority not adequately prepared for adulthood.

But the most shocking factor is that if nothing changes with the child welfare system between now and the year 2020, approximately 22,500 children will die from child abuse or neglect in this country. Most of these children will die before they reach their fifth birthday.

VOICE: How will you position Casey Family Programs to address those challenges?

BELL: For 40 years, Casey Family Programs has been committed to putting vulnerable children first. In our next 15 years, we will work collectively with other national orga-



nizations, local organizations, and government stakeholders to increase the safety and improve the path to self-sufficiency for vulnerable children in America. To do this, we must change the conversation about child welfare. We have spent too many years lamenting about how the system is broken. It's time to focus on those things that we know work and to make sure that every system is improving.

VOICE: *How will you accomplish that goal?*

BELL: We will do this through education, demonstration, and advocacy. Our education agenda will focus on creating awareness of the solutions that have worked in jurisdictions around the country. We will demonstrate that success is possible by highlighting realistic, scalable, cost-effective programs and tools that all systems can implement. Additionally, we will engage people throughout the country to take action and work together for change.

VOICE: *Where do you hope to take Casey Family Programs in the 21st century?*

BELL: There are too many kids in foster care in this country. In the next 15 years, through our investments and current and future partnerships, we must demonstrate that we can bring the numbers down. Also, every child in foster care deserves a permanent family. We must find new ways of creating stability and eliminating placement disruption for our children.

In addition, we must raise a voice for our nation's most vulnerable children. The bottom line is that we can't reduce the numbers of children in care without shining a spotlight on children. That means a relentless focus on leadership, within Casey Family

Programs, our Casey partners, and other partners within the child welfare community. That means driving political will in this country to focus on the needs of our most vulnerable children.

VOICE: *How can this be achieved?*

BELL: The problems associated with child welfare are solvable. New York City, Los Angeles County, and the state of Illinois all have demonstrated that success is possible. Now we must convince the nation that success is possible. Success will not and cannot occur overnight. We must take a long-term, long-range approach.

EVERY CHILD IN FOSTER CARE DESERVES A PERMANENT FAMILY. WE MUST FIND NEW WAYS OF CREATING STABILITY AND ELIMINATING PLACEMENT DISRUPTION FOR OUR CHILDREN.

But there are specific things that can and must be done now. We must invest in the front line Child Protective Services staff and supervisors. We must make the right and best decisions about which children must enter foster care and which children can remain safely at home. When children are in foster care, we must keep them stable and reduce the number of placement changes, the number of social worker changes, and the number of times they change schools.

We must increase dramatically the capacity for foster youth to have access to medical and mental health services. We must work with the education system to improve foster youth access to educational supports. Casey Family Programs' recent Northwest Alumni Study shows that when foster youth are provided with stable families and have access to medical and mental health care, their lives can become as healthy and as successful as their peers in the general population.

VOICE: *Just how serious are the problems facing America's foster children today?*

BELL: According to our alumni study, health issues for children leaving foster care are very serious. More than 50 percent of the youth surveyed were found to have had at least one mental health problem during the prior year, including depression, social phobia, panic syndrome, and anxiety.

Education issues also are very dire for foster children. If nothing changes in the next 15 years, only 9,000 of those 300,000 young people who will "age out" of foster care by the year 2020 can expect to graduate from college. Imagine: 291,000 young adults who formerly were in foster care attempting to carve out a successful, meaningful life without the advantages that a college degree brings.

Of the 300,000 who "age out," we can expect 58,000 to become negatively involved with the criminal justice system. For every young adult who goes to jail, the cost to taxpayers is approximately \$29,000 a year. That means for every former foster youth who goes to prison with a sentence of seven to 10 years, we will spend nearly \$300,000 in an effort to rehabilitate a life we could have changed – for so much less money.

“And most of all, we cannot rest until the ‘standard of one’ is applied to all children in America. The ‘standard of one’ simply says, ‘if it is not good enough for my own children, then it is not good enough for any child in America.’”



(from left): U.S. Representative John Lewis of Georgia talks with William Bell, Casey Family Programs president and CEO.

VOICE: *What other solutions do you see as key?*

BELL: There are several. For example, in terms of prevention, we frequently hear about what needs fixing in the system. But at Casey Family Programs, we believe that in order to solve the problems of foster care, we need to look at the root causes that lead children to enter the system in the first place. We know that poverty and substance abuse are the primary causes of family instability.

In addition, the concept of “kinship care” has emerged as a proven best practice over the past two decades. Relatives always have played a role in raising children when parents could not care for them. In all cultures, extended families have cared for, nurtured, and protected their children. Six million grandparents in this country are taking care of their children’s children and serving an invaluable role for society.

We must support kinship families with the same resources we provide foster parents. By funding and supporting kinship care, we remove a huge burden on a system that

already is overloaded, underfunded, and challenged in finding suitable foster families.

VOICE: *How important are collaborations with partner organizations, especially the other Casey institutions?*

BELL: Partnership, integration, and collaboration are key to fundamental, positive change. This issue has no silver bullet; we need to cooperate and engage.

The need to carry Jim Casey’s vision forward has never been greater. The Casey allies are combining resources and encouraging other people to invest their resources in changing the world for vulnerable children and families in this country. Jim Casey was a man who always walked his talk. He was a man of great talent and strength, but he was tremendously humble, believing that success and achievement are created through partnership and collaboration.

VOICE: *How would you describe the issue of disproportionality?*

BELL: Children of color are overrepresented in the child welfare system. Six out of every 10 children in foster care in America are children of color.

This is true even though research has shown that parents of color are no more likely to abuse or neglect their children than Caucasian parents. What also is true is that even when family circumstances are almost identical, a child of color statistically is more likely to be confirmed as a victim of child abuse or neglect. A child of color statistically is more likely to be placed in foster care rather than left at home with support services.

And once placed in foster care, a child of color is more likely to stay longer and to have worse outcomes than Caucasian children.

VOICE: *What can the Casey organizations do to eliminate these disparities?*

BELL: The Casey organizations already have formed the Casey Collaborative to begin to answer this question. We must continue to insist on equity in opportunities and outcomes for vulnerable children. We must continue to educate other stakeholders at the state and federal levels on ways that they can work to change this picture.



Casey Family Programs staff members at a recent event: (from left) Susan Abagnale, director; James Edmondson, managing director; William C. Bell, president and CEO; and Yakiciwey Washington, supervisor-Clinical Services.

And most of all, we cannot rest until the “standard of one” is applied to all children in America. The “standard of one” simply says, “If it is not good enough for my own children, then it is not good enough for any child in America.”



AL CASAD, MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION DIRECTOR

Massachusetts Division Director Al Casad began his career with Casey Family Services in 1989 at the then-fledgling Maine Division. After heading the Family Reunification Program for 12 years, he went south to serve as division director in Massachusetts. Today, he oversees Casey's state-wide foster care program, as well as two family resource centers that serve large immigrant populations – mostly Hispanic and Cambodian – in Lowell's public housing projects.

VOICE: *The Massachusetts Division has focused on working with older youth in foster care. What are the challenges of this work? What strategies are you employing to support family permanence?*

CASAD: Adolescents in foster care have experienced a life full of trauma. Our Massachusetts youth have had an average of seven placements before coming to Casey. Because nothing in their lives has been stable, the idea of family stability is foreign. They don't trust that placements will last, that families will be there long term.

The clinical work of preparing these youth to be a part of family is critical. In addition to addressing their emotional health, we engage in "family finding." In this permanency strategy, a youth identifies significant adults in his or her life to be part of a permanency team, which our social workers then facilitate. This group – which might include birth family members, mentors, teachers, coaches, and foster parents – becomes a youth's lifelong support network.

VOICE: *In 2003, your division hosted a legislative event to address the needs of youth "aging out" of foster care. What progress has been made?*

CASAD: Since our briefing, Harry Spence, Massachusetts' Department of Social Services commissioner, has supported an Aging Out Task Force focusing on the gamut of youth needs. And, in a policy shift, youth who have "aged out" of the system now are able to return to state care for assistance when and if they need it. Fortunately, Massachusetts is very collaborative in responding to youth issues. Earlier this year, for example, the division hosted a regional conference on "aging out" with other service providers. As a result of this gathering, a new mentoring program is being developed. Since the briefing, this kind of collaboration on behalf of older youth has continued to expand.

VOICE: *Commissioner Spence is an advocate for youth permanence. Are you witnessing a change statewide? What role do you see Casey playing?*

CASAD: The change has been significant. Massachusetts is focused on moving youth from residential programs into family settings, emphasizing permanence. All state child welfare services now address permanence as a service-planning goal. The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice is working with the state to help older adolescents in care achieve family permanence, so the division is very much involved.

VOICE: *Do you consider your partnership with Lowell's Housing Authority a success?*

CASAD: Absolutely. While we have a number of ongoing programs at our family

resource centers, the residents themselves identify the community's needs and advise us on service development. For example, our families wanted homework support for their children because many parents don't have the language skills needed to help with schoolwork. Our Parent Advisory Committee raised the issue, and, today, we facilitate a homework club with more than 30 students attending four times a week.

I'm particularly excited that our boys want to start a young men's group, which I'll facilitate. What do you think they chose as the first topic? How to talk with girls!

Because many of these young people have a limited view of what opportunities are available to them, group discussions are a wonderful way to open doors to a broader world. We also offer financial literacy training as part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family Economic Success initiative.

VOICE: *Where do you see the family resource centers headed?*

CASAD: We're aware that a one-size-fits-all approach is not enough so we're exploring a model in San Francisco that has been very successful with some Asian populations in which groups are organized around a particular need that they have articulated. We also hope to provide more child welfare services, such as family preservation. We're aiming for integrated services above and beyond our current referral and counseling services that will allow us to respond to all of the challenges that vulnerable families face.

THE POSTADOPTION EXPERIENCE PUBLISHED



The Postadoption Experience: Adoptive Families' Service Needs and Service Outcomes was officially released at the Child Welfare League of America's national conference in February. This collection of research on post-adoption services, which was initiated and edited by Casey Family Services, examines fundamental issues such as effective services, accessibility, funding, evaluation, and future research.

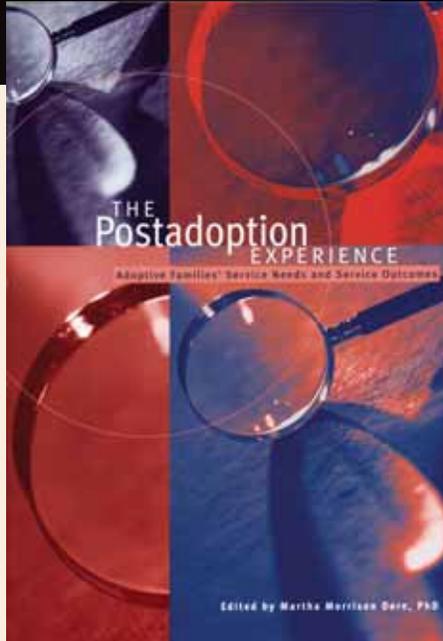
"*The Postadoption Experience* incorporates knowledge and experience from experts in the field and academia," says Raymond L. Torres, Casey Family Services executive director. "We hope it sheds light on successful and achievable approaches to meeting the needs of adoptive families and their children."

Responsible for shepherding the book through its development, Casey's Joy Duva believes that post-adoption services are an essential component of the service continuum to support and sustain adoptive families. "The traumatic histories of foster children, as well as the chaos and instability of multiple foster care placements, can result in significant challenges for the children and the adoptive parents who care for them," says Duva, the agency's deputy executive director for planning and policy. "The need for services and supports does not end with the legalization of the adoption."

The Postadoption Experience

This book provides a thorough introduction to post-adoption services and an analysis of their effectiveness. The first three chapters examine the needs of adoptive families and their children:

- Jeanne Howard compares the service needs and challenges faced by Illinois fami-



lies formed through foster parent adoption, kinship adoption, and matched adoption.

- Trudy Festinger examines the needs of families who adopted children through the New York City Child Welfare Agency and the services they received.
- Michael Grand reviews two studies of adult adoptees to determine necessary services at various developmental stages.

The next six chapters evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of post-adoption services:

- Susan Livingston Smith examines the experiences of families served by the Illinois Adoption Preservation Program.
- A team from Casey Family Services, the Research Triangle Institute, and the University of North Carolina School of Social Work tracks the experiences of more than 400 families in six sites who participated in post-adoption services.

- Michael Lahti describes how the Maine Adoption Guides Project supports families adopting children with special needs.

- A team of social workers and academicians from Salem State College describes the evolution and effectiveness of Massachusetts' Adoption Crossroads.

- Through an analysis of adoptive families from Illinois who received services, Susan Livingston Smith identifies characteristics of effective post-adoption services.

- A team from Seattle investigates Washington's Adoption Support Program to determine the level of financial support families received to encourage the adoption of children with special needs from that state's child welfare system.

The final two chapters focus on frameworks for research in this relatively new area:

- Jeffrey Haugaard analyzes methodological and design issues and identifies research criteria for further study.
- A team from Florida State University describes how concept mapping of qualitative data can identify barriers to post-adoption services and solutions.

Casey Family Services and Post-adoption

Since 1991, Casey Family Services has been providing post-adoption services to families. The Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice has published three white papers on post-adoption.

The Postadoption Experience: Adoptive Families' Service Needs and Service Outcomes is available for \$29.95 from the Child Welfare League of America. For ordering information, go to www.cwla.org.



CONFERENCES PROMOTE PERMANENCE FOR VERMONT YOUTH

Nationally known advocates for children recently headed to Vermont, bringing the message of permanence for youth to the Green Mountain State's provider community. In April and May, 230 of the state's child welfare practitioners and policymakers came together to conduct a statewide convening on permanence for youth. Each event focused on helping child welfare professionals and service providers develop a deeper understanding of the need to find enduring family relationships for foster youth.

"This convening celebrated the collaborative spirit of Vermont's provider community," says Nita Lescher, director of Casey Family Services' Vermont Division. "By sharing our experiences and coming together, we increased everyone's commitment to making sure foster youth leave care with a family relationship for the rest of their lives. I believe service providers are truly inspired to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to do this critical work."

A Call to Action

The convening's first session – A Call to Action – took place on April 12 in

Killington, Vermont. A panel of five youths spoke powerfully about what it means to have permanent family connections. In addition, a panel of professionals who presented successful permanency practice models reminded participants of the importance of identifying, engaging, and supporting lifelong families for children and youth in foster care.

The Honorable Leonard P. Edwards of the Superior Court of Santa Clara County, California, delivered the session's keynote address. Judge Edwards encouraged courts and child welfare agencies to partner in developing permanency plans for youth. He shared his experiences from the Santa Clara County juvenile dependency court, considered a national model for its compassion and effectiveness. In closing remarks, Pat O'Brien, founder of a New York adoption agency that promotes permanence for older youth, talked about "the only love that matters to teens: unconditional commitment."

A Time for Action

The second session – A Time for Action – held on May 3, in Stowe, Vermont, featured

more in-depth information and discussion on promising practice models. "We took what we learned in the general session and divided into district teams," Lescher explains. "Each team spent time identifying strengths, defining future work, setting goals and measures, and developing the action steps necessary to achieve permanence for Vermont's foster youth."

A New Commitment

Both sessions – co-hosted by the Vermont Department for Children and Families and Casey's Vermont Division – were attended by a full range of agencies and individuals who enrich the lives of children and youth in the state's foster care system. They all eagerly participated in animated discussions about what they could do for foster youth and how they could do it better.

"The convening provided an opportunity for us to inspire and inform others about successful permanency practice," says Lescher. "The statewide participation ensures that permanence will be considered at every decision-making point in service planning for youth."

NATIONAL CONVENING ON YOUTH PERMANENCE BUILDS MOMENTUM

The 2006 National Convening on Youth Permanence will be presented by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct service agency, Casey Family Services, for child welfare commissioners, directors, and their state teams on September 14-15, 2006, in Washington, D.C. The convening, Families for Life: Addressing the Needs of Older

Children and Youth in Foster Care, will offer a range of presentations and working sessions designed to strengthen the ability of states, counties, and tribes to achieve permanence for all youth in foster care.

Each year, as many as 20,000 teenagers "age out" of foster care, usually when they turn 18. Exiting the system as an older adolescent by "aging out" without a permanent family relationship has been correlated with a range of deleterious outcomes as a young adult.

The convening will build on the successes of previous gatherings – which were sponsored by the California Permanency for Youth Project – by moving the 2006 event to the nation's capital. In addition, the invitational convening will expand to include participants from all 50 states, tribes, the District of Columbia, and territories, as well as national policymakers, researchers, and consumers.

“TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS ...”

Staff Profile: Lynne Goodwin

by Greg Simpson, Case Information System Administrator, Casey Family Services

When Lynne Goodwin, a team leader in Casey Family Services' Vermont Division, wants to escape the stress of her job as a social worker, she doesn't have far to go. She leaves her White River Junction office, crosses the Connecticut River, and drives the short distance to her farm: five mostly wooded acres nestled on a hillside in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

When Goodwin returns home, she usually is greeted by husband, Brian; daughters Marissa, age 12, and Natasha, age 9; and a barnyard of animals, including horses, geese, chickens, a dog named Carly, and a cat named Bobby McGee (“... his mother was our neighbor's cat, Janis Joplin”). Goodwin smiles and jokingly adds: “We're considering adding a goat to mow the lawn.”

Goodwin's homestead provides her with the quality of life that she says is unique to northern New England living. “I like the simplicity of it—the rural quality,” she says. “It really helps me put work aside when I'm able to go home and be with nature.” Her family's acreage borders an apple orchard, wildlife conservation area, and dirt roads accessible only by horse, bicycle, and foot.

It was a Casey foster parent, Goodwin explains, who encouraged her family to raise poultry. “The relationships with Casey foster parents and kids have taught me what I want to do with my free time,” confides Goodwin. “Now our family's free time is spent with the animals. It's an all-consuming hobby with lots of chores.” All the

animals have names, including the chickens, and are considered family pets.

Before her promotion to team leader in October 2005, Goodwin logged an average of 1,000 miles monthly in her car during her 10 years with Casey, making home visits within a 200-mile region. “I saw a lot of different barns in my social work travels that helped me decide on the kind I wanted to build,” she says. Now her two-stall horse barn, completed in November 2005, houses Cagney and Dostoyeski, nicknamed “Toy.”

Saturdays with Goodwin's household are spent largely at horse riding lessons or shows where her daughters compete in equine events related to walk, trot, canter, dressage, and jumping. Goodwin learned to ride over three summers spent at a “Y” camp from age 9 but didn't resume her interest until her older daughter turned age 7. “If I were younger, I would love to do what my girls are doing,” she says admiringly.

In good weather, Goodwin, a lifelong New Hampshire resident who graduated from Dartmouth College and the University of Vermont Department of Social Work, rides three times weekly. “You have to leave everything behind when you ride. The horse knows what you're feeling. You are ‘one’ with the horse,” Goodwin says almost mystically. She speaks to the trust that develops between the rider and the 1,200-pound animal.

“The relationship that you can establish with these animals is the best therapy ever,” Goodwin says. “When you bring out carrots to the horses at 10 p.m. to say good-night, you would think that you just gave them the world, they are so happy.” Because of this therapeutic environment, Goodwin

explains most vacations are spent at home doing things the family loves to do. Last October, Goodwin went horseback riding on New Hampshire's Hampton Beach. “That was a childhood dream come true,” she beams.

“We made a conscious decision to have this lifestyle,” Goodwin continues. “It keeps our kids busy, and the horse riding bolsters their self-esteem for other endeavors. I wouldn't be able to have horses unless it was a family affair.”



(from left): Marissa, Lynne, and Natasha Goodwin enjoying the family farm. Photo by Brian Goodwin.

CLINICAL CORNER

PERSPECTIVES

FEELING STRONGER EVERY DAY: STRENGTHS AND RESILIENCE IN CLINICAL TREATMENT AND PERMANENCY PLANNING



by Eliot Brenner, Ph.D.,
Director of Clinical Services,
Casey Family Services

Traditionally, clinical assessment and treatment of behavioral concerns in children and adolescents have focused on a youth's deficits and problems. The field of mental health has embraced the psychiatric model of mental illness, which uses diagnostic classifications to identify and label conditions. Making clinical diagnoses serves many important functions, not the least of which is giving youth, families, and treatment providers a common language for talking about and understanding clinical problems.

Yet deficit-focused approaches have their limitations. In the past decade, research in developmental and clinical psychology has provided empirical evidence for the critical role of strengths and resilience in helping youth cope with and adapt to major life stress.

Some clinicians and clinical case managers might wonder why it is important to focus on youths' strengths when there are existing evidence-based treatments for specific psychiatric diagnoses. In fact, many evidence-based treatments, including cognitive-behavioral therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder, focus on enhancing youths' strengths by teaching them how to use existing coping skills such as relaxation or cognitive reframing in a more flexible and consistent manner. In addition, when clinicians focus on strengths, youth are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to participate in clinical treatment and permanency work. A strengths focus also provides

direction in treatment and case planning. People get better and redirect themselves because of their strengths, not their deficits.

A strengths-focused approach to clinical treatment and permanency planning begins with an inventory of the youth's skills and abilities. Two traits that improve a youth's ability to adapt to major life stress are, first, self-efficacy—a belief in one's ability to make positive changes in one's life—and, second, the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

Most youth—even those who have suffered from maltreatment—exhibit both of these traits to some degree. Fortunately, there are

network of friends, family, and supportive relationships with individuals such as coaches, teachers, or mentors.

Youth in the child welfare system do not always have these two protective factors to the same degree as youth who have not entered the system. Nonetheless, youth in the foster care system often can identify at least one caregiver who has provided a nurturing, structured environment for them at some point during their childhood.

Casey Family Services' permanency teaming approach helps youth identify existing caregivers and brings them together with the foster youth's network to form a child-

IN THE PAST DECADE, RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENTAL AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY HAS PROVIDED EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE CRITICAL ROLE OF STRENGTHS AND RESILIENCE IN HELPING YOUTH COPE WITH AND ADAPT TO MAJOR LIFE STRESS.

evidence-based interventions available for youth who need to enhance these abilities. For example, cognitive problem-solving skills training teaches youth how to distinguish between controllable and uncontrollable problems and how to solve problems by generating possible solutions then and selecting one.

A strengths-based approach also includes assessing protective factors in the youth's family and social environment. Protective factors that promote resilience include having at least one loving caregiver who sets limits and boundaries as well as a strong

centered planning team. During the permanency teaming process, caregivers frequently will offer to become legal parents. In other cases, caring adults will work together to support and nurture a youth to deepen important relationships and to achieve self-sufficiency in other areas of his or her life.

Youth in the child welfare system often have challenging mental health and permanency needs. Focusing on strengths and protective factors—not just on deficits—offers us the greatest likelihood of helping these youth achieve safety, permanence, and well-being.

Responding to Federal Budget Cuts to Child Welfare

View from Washington



by Robin Nixon, Executive Director, National Foster Care Coalition

This past February, President George W. Bush submitted his 2007 budget plan to Congress, which then began developing its own budget proposals. As child welfare advocates launch efforts to advance funding for children and families for 2007, we first must evaluate the impact of the 2006 budget reconciliation passed by Congress at the end of 2005. This budget amendment, also known as the Deficit Reduction Act, will directly affect programs and services designed to help vulnerable children and families, including those served by the child welfare system.

The primary cost-saving strategies enacted by Congress and the President include direct cuts and eligibility changes to both Medicaid and Title IV-E—the primary mechanisms for funding foster care—that will result in reduced enrollment in, and eligibility for, these historic entitlement programs. Programs, including financial supports to grandparents and other relative caregivers, child support enforcement, child care, and student loans, also have experienced devastating reductions in funding. The cuts to entitlement programs, particularly, are disturbing.

Historically, the government creates programs with entitlement status because such programs are critical to the health and well-being of Americans. Services and programs funded through an entitlement are protected by law and are not subject to the unstable funding of discretionary programs. Entitlements typically serve our most vul-

nerable citizens: children, the elderly, families living in poverty, and the disabled. Once Congress approves cuts or changes eligibility (which usually results in cuts) to any entitlement, all such programs are at risk. It is hard to contemplate that the federal government would step back from its role in ensuring the safety, permanence, and well-being of children, but that is exactly what these cuts imply.

We now need to think about our individual and collective responses to the emerging debate. Do we have a clear understanding of what the federal government's role is, or should be, in the lives of its citizens? Do our communities understand how much of

IT IS HARD TO CONTEMPLATE THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD STEP BACK FROM ITS ROLE IN ENSURING THE SAFETY, PERMANENCE, AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN, BUT THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THESE CUTS IMPLY.

the support for its vulnerable members comes from the federal government? Some believe that the government should play a minimal role in the lives of its citizens and that states should provide for special needs. Others consider the federal government to have an important role in ensuring that vulnerable citizens' needs are met regardless of where they live within the nation's borders.

The extent of federal funding and federal involvement in local policy and programming is a topic worthy of debate. We all are concerned about the escalating costs of government, not just the cost of entitlements but the costs of the military, disaster response and preparedness, and counterterrorism efforts. It is difficult to weigh priorities and make responsible decisions.

At the same time, our government has a responsibility and commitment to promote the general welfare of its people—to implement laws and to fund programs that meet people's basic needs and the special needs of some citizens (children most of all).

As individuals and communities, we must educate ourselves about the use of our tax dollars to help the poorest and most vulnerable of our neighbors. We will not be able to participate in the debate and decision making about what the government should fund and about how our tax dollars should be spent if we are uninformed.

Below is a list of organizations and resources to help you learn more about federal funding for child welfare programs:

The Brookings Institution:
<http://www.brookings.org>

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:
<http://www.cbpp.org/budget-series.htm>

Center for Law and Social Policy:
<http://www.clasp.org/whatsnew.php>

Child Welfare League of America:
<http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/financing.htm>

The Performance Institute:
<http://www.transparentgovernment.org>

POLICY CORNER

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FAMILIES: PREVENTIVE SERVICES



by *Sania Metzger, Esq.,
Director of Policy, Casey
Family Services*

Nationally, more than 75 percent of child maltreatment cases involve parental neglect rather than abuse. Neglect cases in child welfare usually are intertwined with the impoverished conditions in which low-income families are forced to eke out their existence.

Research has shown that a family receiving public assistance is twice as likely to have a substantiated report of child neglect to the state child abuse registry, and substantiation is four times as likely for a family of color.¹ It also has been demonstrated that the provision of timely and customized family support services can make the difference between a child's removal from the home and placement into foster care and a family's ability to safely provide for the child at home.²

April, commemorated as National Prevent Child Abuse Month, recorded several significant developments. These have enormous potential to enhance family supports aimed at strengthening families through prevention and early intervention services to low-income, at-risk families. In Alabama, for example, the state Legislature voted unanimously to raise the annual tax threshold for a family of four from \$4,600 to \$12,600, eliminating the nation's most regressive income tax for many working poor families. Alabama Governor Riley has promised to sign the historic measure.

In nearby Arkansas, low-income workers and their families received a much-needed boost when a bill to increase the state's minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$6.25 per hour—a rate higher than the federal minimum wage—was drafted and is expected to become law. In April, the Maine Legislature also gave approval to an increase in the state's minimum wage, bringing it to \$7 per hour.

And in Massachusetts, there was still more news on the family supports front. There, the state Legislature statutorily made the Bay State the first in the nation to require all residents to purchase health insurance by July 1, 2007, as a central component of its strategy to implement universal health coverage. A range of health insurance policies from \$250 per month to virtually cost free will be made available.

However, April 1 also marked the official end of the Title IV-E Waiver program. The passage of the Budget Reconciliation Act of 2006 did not include an extension of the Title IV-E Waiver program. Allowed until sunset on March 31, 2006, the federal waiver program—in existence since 1994 (Public Law 103-432)—generated innovation and effective child welfare practices in 17 states through 25 child welfare waiver demonstrations.

The basic idea behind the Title IV-E Waiver program provided a flexible federal grant for states to use for a broad range of child welfare services to fund, for example, subsidies for guardianships and post-adoption services, as well as benefits for children who otherwise are not Title IV-E eligible. Successful states are expected to conduct a

randomized study to demonstrate cost neutrality and to submit a rigorous evaluation of their demonstration, including process and outcome components. So confirmation in mid-April that five states—California, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, and Tennessee—composed the final group of Title IV-E Waiver awardees was bittersweet news.

Bitter, because the elimination of the popular program was accomplished with little warning and virtually no Congressional debate. Sweet, because several states in the final group of states were approved to use Title IV-E “upfront” for family support, family preservation, and family stabilization services.

Recently, several news articles announced that Michigan's Title IV-E Waiver application was approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Michigan's waiver approval is especially newsworthy because it will permit the state's Department of Human Services “to use some of its \$95 million in foster care funds for prevention services.”³

Among the prevention and early intervention services in Michigan, the state will apply its waiver to include: mental health treatment, substance abuse, family counseling, parenting lessons, safe housing, basic household needs, and clothing. A Lansing-based advocate praised the waiver, stating: “It gives the state flexibility to work with families in holistic ways.”

1. Fact Sheet No. 2, “Racial Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System,” The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.

2. Resources at www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org.

3. *The Detroit News*, April 11, 2006.

SUPPORTING FOSTER PARENTS ON THE PATHWAY TO PERMANENCE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CASEY FOSTER PARENTS

Sharing Perspectives on Research, Practice, and Policy



by (above) *Susana Helm, Ph.D., Helm Consulting, and (left) Carol H. Ripple, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, Casey Family Services*

Foster parents play a critical role in moving children and youth toward permanence. They may support myriad permanency pathways such as providing short- or long-term foster care, facilitating reunification with birth parents, committing to adoption or guardianship when children cannot return home, or building lasting emotional connections when legal permanence is not an option.

How do Casey foster parents negotiate these roles, and what kinds of support do they need to do it? Can they be flexible enough to do it all or are some foster parents better suited for certain roles than others? We interviewed 20 Connecticut foster parents to learn more about the process from their point of view. Most were recruited by Casey many years ago with the initial understanding that they would provide long-term foster care. Our goal was to explore the extent to which these parents had supported children's multiple permanency pathways and to learn about the mechanisms that supported and challenged them as they "stretched and flexed" to provide permanence to the children in their care.

By using a computerized qualitative data management system (Richards & Richards, 2002), we applied rigorous methods to explore themes in the interviews. An ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) guid-

ed our inquiry into mechanisms related to the children, foster parents, Casey workers, and the community. Five central themes emerged from the analysis.

1. *Casey foster families "stretch and flex" to meet children's permanency needs.* Foster parents showed a remarkable ability and willingness to support a range of children's permanency pathways. Except in short-term placements (such as respite), they assumed a parenting role regardless of the child's permanency track and independent of their children's particular needs.

One long-term foster and adoptive parent's experience was a good example of this theme: "I'm not any more committed to the child I plan on adopting than the children who never end up being legally adopted. If my 24-year-old called me next week and said, 'I feel I need to be legally adopted now,' then that's what we would do." She expressed willingness to fulfill the different permanency needs of each child and to adapt to the shifting needs of individual children.

2. *Foster parents developed and clearly articulated their parenting role.* Foster parents believed that children's sense of well-being depended on the parents' consistent communication of their conceptualization of parenting, childhood, and "familyhood." This provided a secure basis for parenting that helped to offset foster children's persistent sense of uncertainty. One foster parent described how he and his wife communicated "up front" when children came into their home: "We will tell you what's right and what's wrong, and we will not tolerate nonsense. That is our job as parents. We are your parents. You may call us foster parents,

but if you live in our home, we are the parents in this home, and we expect you to behave like a child." Despite problems with some children over the years, he said, "We've never told them to leave. You have to remember: These children, many of them, do not know what childhood is all about."

Parents who had foster children who reunified with birth families relied on this concept of parenting to support children through what often was an emotional process. One foster mother facilitated a child's desire to connect with his birth family because, "He needed to know where he came from. I really loved him, and I didn't need him to be my child – I needed him to be okay. I told him I would work with him, and we would see what we could do about maintaining the relationship with his birth family."

3. *Foster parents experienced tension between the roles of "parent" and "professional."* Sometimes, providing services to high-needs children interfered with foster parents' ability to forge permanent connections. A foster father with child welfare experience summarized the issue: "The biggest problem was how badly damaged these kids were. They needed help that was beyond just parenting." Similarly, a mother expressed the underlying stress in meeting children's emotional needs: "Most of the kids in our family had had numerous placements before coming to Casey. So how can they attach? When they get sent to a new foster home, they figure in their minds that they're not going to be there long. How can they make an attachment? Why would they?"

Foster parents showed a remarkable ability and willingness to support a range of children's permanency pathways. Except in short-term placements (such as respite), they assumed a parenting role regardless of the child's permanency track and independent of their children's particular needs.

Foster parents feeling overburdened in the dual role of parent and professional expressed fatigue and frustration and wondered to what extent they were expected to professionalize their role. This duality could challenge their conceptualization of parenting (as described in No. 2, above).

4. *Casey workers were essential to promoting permanence.* Foster parents identified elements of practice that were helpful to them. A worker's family-focused team approach – in contrast with a service-oriented model focused solely on the child – nurtured permanence. One parent with child welfare experience said that this was essential: "A worker's number one goal should be to support the parents in building the parent-child relationship."

Effective workers facilitated the parent-child relationship, affirming foster parents as central figures in the child's life as the worker shifted to a more peripheral role. Workers, then, could either establish or undermine the role of the parent, ultimately promoting or deterring permanence. A parent recalled her appreciation when her worker's actions conveyed a clear message: "He trusts that I make good choices for my foster kids, and he acknowledges that I am their parent; I am their mother."

5. *Foster parents did not know whether to pursue ongoing relationships with children after case closure or how to go about doing so.* Many of the foster parents we interviewed conveyed a wistful, dispirited emptiness or ghostlike quality when talking about chil-

dren with whom they had not maintained relationships. Their expressions did not reflect guilt but rather grief and regret about events beyond their control.

Parents had difficulty discussing this, and their recollections were halting and sometimes fraught with emotion. Talking about a child who had been in several placements since leaving her home and Casey Family

PARENTS BELIEVED THAT CHILDREN'S SENSE OF WELL-BEING DEPENDED ON THE PARENTS' CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION OF THEIR CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PARENTING, CHILDHOOD, AND "FAMILYHOOD."

Services, one foster mother voiced her disappointment and loss: "It's an absolute disaster. My former foster daughter has regressed. She's pregnant with her second child; she doesn't go to school; she doesn't work. I don't know what she does." Parents often did not know whether it was appropriate to contact the children or how to go about doing so.

Conclusion. Casey foster parents in this study demonstrated a striking ability to meet multiple permanency needs despite having been recruited expressly to provide long-term foster care. They were flexible in

their relationships as they relied on a strong, enduring concept of their parenting role. Casey workers played a critical role in promoting the foster parent-child relationship, and parents needed more help to balance roles of parent with professional and to negotiate ongoing relationships with children post-closure to maintain enduring connections.

These insightful and often poignant comments offer implications for enhancing permanence for children and youth in foster care. For example, integrating findings related to the worker's role could enhance worker training. Similarly, the need to define and support ongoing relationships after case closure, when appropriate, has practice implications; together, these themes can inform stronger permanency planning.

Foster parents have a wealth of experience that can strengthen Casey's move to greater permanence. This study suggests that many can and do stretch and flex to fulfill myriad roles and that the support by Casey workers is central to being the best resources for children on their pathway to permanence.

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- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Richards, L. and Richards, T. (2002). *QSR N6: The latest version of the NUD*IST software for qualitative data analysis*. QSR International: Doncaster, Australia.

Resource

Corner

“Avoiding the Money Trap”

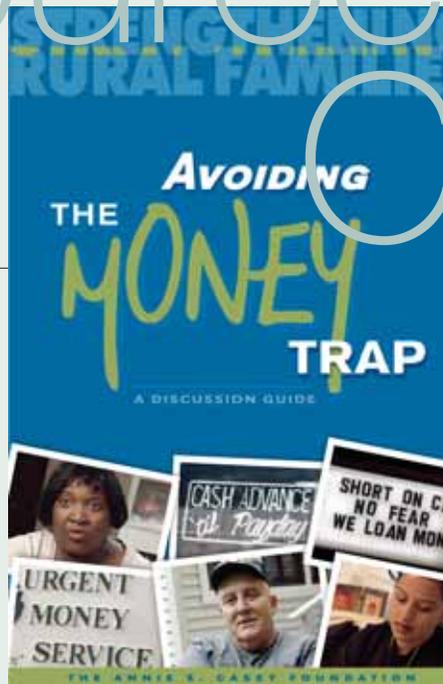
The Annie E. Casey Foundation recently released a new documentary: “Avoiding the Money Trap.” The 25-minute video, on DVD, highlights financial problems that often ensnare rural working families, including payday loans, high interest car loans, high debt, poor credit, and more. The documentary is designed to raise awareness among policymakers, service providers, and advocates, as well as to be a resource for financial education. The DVD contains the full documentary in English and Spanish, a shorter version in English, and materials, including a discussion guide, background papers, resources, and an order form.

To learn more, visit www.aecf.org.

All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated

The American penal system currently incarcerates the parents of more than 2.4 million children. Only a handful of police precincts and social service agencies across the country have policies in place to deal with the children of incarcerated parents at the time of arrest or after, too often leaving children directly in harm’s way. In this 320-page book, journalist Nell Bernstein takes a look at children and parents torn apart by the current penal system. She discovers that a few innovative programs and leaders are finding ways to ensure that the need for justice and public safety is met without punishing children.

To learn more, visit www.thenewpress.com.

***FYI3 Binder***

The FYI3 Binder, produced by FosterClub, is a tool designed for youth transitioning from foster care. It provides a road map for youth to become more involved in their service planning, outlining necessary documents and activities that help youth move toward independence. This guide, contained in an expandable three-ring binder, is a valuable resource that is easily customizable to include information regarding life skills and local assets and supports.

To learn more, visit www.fyi3.com, which is presented by FosterClub with support from the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

“The Right Start for America’s Newborns”

The online report, “The Right Start for America’s Newborns: City and State Trends,” recently has been updated to include 2003 data, adding to the birth information the report has tracked yearly since 1990. Nationally, most birth outcomes tracked in “The Right Start” continued to improve, with five of eight measures showing better trends in 2003 than in 1990.

The conditions under which infants are born can have lifelong effects on a child’s development and readiness for school. The measures tracked in “The Right Start” are intended to provide policymakers, child advocates, and others with data that reflect conditions prior to birth, a newborn’s health status at birth, and maternal characteristics that are associated with a child’s educational and social outcomes.

“The Right Start” is a joint project of KIDS COUNT, an initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Child Trends, a research organization located in Washington, D.C.

The report is available online at www.aecf.org/kidscount.

Knowing Who You Are

Young people who grow up in foster care often lose the connection to their racial and ethnic heritage. They need to be provided with the necessary skills to gain multicultural competence, to develop pride in their heritage, and to face racism and discrimination. Child welfare professionals can be powerful resources and role models for helping youth develop a healthy sense of racial and ethnic identity. To support this work, Casey Family Programs recently released a three-part program called Knowing Who You Are. The initiative consists of a video, an online learning course, and in-person training designed for those who work directly with youth, raising awareness of the issue of racial and ethnic identity formation for youth in care.

For more information, visit www.casey.org/ToolsAndResources.

What the Media Say



Foster Kids Forced Out before They Can Fend for Themselves

Teenagers in California “age out” of the foster care system every day with nowhere to go, and about 40 percent of them don’t have a high school diploma, according to an article by the Juvenile Law Center. They are forced to leave the system on their 18th birthday or when they graduate from high school. Assemblywoman Karen Bass wants to change that. The Baldwin Vista [California] democrat chairs the recently created Select Committee on Foster Care. The committee aims to raise the emancipation age to 25 and works to extend independent living assistance, as well as transitional living programs.

Americans believe young people aren’t self-sufficient until age 23, according to a 2003 poll by Casey Family Programs, a child welfare foundation. That age jumped to 28 in respondents with kids older than 19, said Gary Stangler, executive director of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and member of the Pew Commission on Foster Care. Bass and Stangler noted that the cost of transitional living is less than the cost of incarceration down the road.

“The question would be how much it would cost not to do this,” Stangler said.

Tracy Press
Tracy, California
January 2006

Probate Reform in Connecticut: A Historical Perspective

In 2002, the probate court administrator requested that Casey Family Services examine the manner in which the probate courts



handle children’s matters, including removal of parents as guardians, termination of parental rights, and adoptions. The study noted both strengths and weaknesses of the probate system. Included among a variety of recommendations were improved training for judges and the consolidation of districts. In response to the Casey report, the probate court administrator proposed legislation that resulted in the establishment of the New Haven Regional Children’s Probate Court as a pilot project.

Connecticut Bar Journal
June 2006

Grandparents Helping to Raise Grandchildren

In addition to adjusting to the usual concerns that go along with aging ... grandparents who are rearing their grandchildren often must deal with the problems concerning their own adult children. Some adult children have addictions and become neglectful of their children, which forces a grandparent to become involved. Other sce-

narios that prompt a grandparent to care for a child include adult children who are serving time in prison or teenagers who have kids and lack the resources to take care of their children.

When grandparents do intervene, many do not receive the financial support they need to properly care for their grandchildren. “Primarily, there is no federally mandated fund, other than foster care, for grandparents,” says Sania Metzger, director of policy for Casey Family Services in New Haven, Connecticut, which offers a broad range of programs for children and families.

Ebony Magazine
April 2006

Parental Rights: Women in Prison Fight for Custody

Under a 1997 federal law, the Adoption and Safe Families Act, states must move to end the rights of parents whose children have been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months.

Since then, the population of women in prison has exploded – to nearly 105,000 from 79,624 – and now the law is raising difficult questions about what is best for children whose parents are incarcerated.

About three-fourths of the women in federal and state prisons today have children under age 18. There are nearly 30,000 children in foster care because their parents are in prison. Cases involving parental rights termination of incarcerated parents more than doubled from 1997 to 2002.

The Wall Street Journal
February 2006

For additional important dates, visit www.caseyfamilyservices.org.

2006: Important Dates

Voice is published quarterly by Casey Family Services for child welfare professionals, advocates, and the children and families they serve. The opinions expressed within this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, including Casey Family Services. Casey Family Services is the direct service agency of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization established in 1948 by UPS founder Jim Casey and his siblings in honor of their mother.

The Foundation is dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. Started in 1976, Casey Family Services offers quality foster care, post-adoption services, family reunification, family preservation, family advocacy and support, family resource centers, assistance to young families and families affected by HIV/AIDS, and technical assistance through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice.

The mission of Casey Family Services is to improve the lives of at-risk children and strengthen families and communities by providing high-quality, cost-effective services that advance both positive practice and sound public policy.

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Design: Inergy Group

Extending the Conversation

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May

National Foster Care Month
www.fostercaremonth.org

May 7

“Passion Tour Art Series” Opening
Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan
Children's Museum of Manhattan
New York, New York

May 12

“Passion Tour Art Series” Opening
Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan
University of Southern Maine
Portland, Maine

May 17

“Passion Tour Art Series” Opening
Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan
Wheelock College
Boston, Massachusetts

May 18-20

The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Mobilizing Communities for Ratification
Convention on the Rights of the Child
Washington, D.C.
www.childrightscampaign.org/crcsummit.htm

May 21-24

Prevent Child Abuse America
2006 National Conference
San Diego, California
www.preventchildabuse.org

May 26

“Passion Tour Art Series” Opening
Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan
American Visionary Art Museum
Baltimore, Maryland

May 31-June 2

2006 Juvenile Justice National Symposium
Child Welfare League of America
San Francisco, California
www.cwla.org

June 9-10

Pathways to Permanency Regional Child Welfare Conference
Sierra Association of Foster Families
Reno, Nevada
www.saffnn.org

June 27

2006 “KIDS COUNT Data Book” released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org

June 29

Young Fathers Conference
Casey Family Services and the Maryland Regional Practitioner Network for Fathers & Families
Baltimore, Maryland
www.caseyfamilyservices.org

July 16-19

Annual Conference on Treatment Foster Care
Foster Family-Based Treatment Association
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
www.ffa.org

July 19-21

Making IT Work: Improving Data and Practice in a Time of Change
Ninth National Child Welfare Data and Technology Conference
Washington, D.C.
www.nrcwcdt.org



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Voice

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