



1992 Consortium Connections: Spring \*S\*

Children, Youth and Family Consortium:

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Consortium Connections

Volume 1 Number 2

"Electronic Rolodex" Update

by Hall Grotevant, Executive Committee

Even though the Consortium is still in its infancy, the activity level of its many workgroups is impressive. In this brief report, I would like to provide an update on the activities of a task force whose goal has been to conceptualize and create an "electronic rolodex" of resources related to children, youth, and families. The resources are located both within the University of Minnesota and within the larger communities of the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota. Because of this state's longstanding commitment to its families and children, many exemplary programs have been developed and many tireless individuals have important expertise. The concept guiding our task force is that information about these resources should be easily accessible to people throughout the state, through a combination of direct computer links and a toll-free number connected to an information specialist who could access the computerized data bases.

We began with a rather modest concept, have fantasized about grandiose ideas (indexing everything relevant in Minnesota!), and are now closing in on a middle-ground project that will be appropriately useful but neither re-invents the wheel nor is so expensive as not to be feasible.

One of the most gratifying aspects of this task force's work has been the truly collaborative efforts of university and community professionals. Our last meeting held in the Centennial Building near the state capitol, brought together members of the community (Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Planning, Action for Children Commission) and the university (Minnesota Extension Service, Research and Technology Administration, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement) to discuss existing data base efforts and the possibility for collaboration. The spirited discussions were exciting! Several data base efforts are already in the planning stages, and the meetings' participants clearly wanted to collaborate in order to develop a comprehensive and useful system. This workgroup epitomizes the Consortium's mission and strength: to marshal collective expertise for the benefit of the state's children, youth, and families. At our next meeting, we will each discuss the expertise and resources we can contribute to this important collaborative effort. If you have interest or expertise in this area and would like to participate in this working group, feel free to call me at 612/624-3756.

Collaboration with the Children's Museum Herbert Pick, Professor, Institute of Child Development

The Minnesota Children's Museum and the University of Minnesota are collaborating in developing a proposal to the National Science Foundation Informal Science Education Program. The Children's Museum is nationally renowned for informal educational programs for young children. Educational staff from the Museum are working together with faculty and students from the University department of Kinesiology (Allen Burton and Robert Rausch) and the Institute of Child Development (Herbert Pick and Marian Heinrichs) with seed money provided by the Consortium.

The focus of the proposal will be on the patterns of exploration demonstrated by children visiting the Children's Museum. Why exploration? Historically, at least since the renaissance, observation and exploration have been the initiation point of the scientific enterprise. A large part of scientific education involves teaching how to systematize one's exploration and observation. Exploration of our world can range from the very casual and often passive observation that we engage in when we first go to a new place to the very systematic and active manipulation and observation usually involved in scientific experiments.

Little is known about patterns of children's exploration when confronted with cognitively rich new experiences. What are the relative gains from different kinds of exploration? One of the major differences between formal and informal educational experiences is the freedom of exploration afforded by informal settings. Children's natural curiosity can be probably best expressed in informal educational settings, and many think it is that natural curiosity which underlies the creativity desired as an outcome of both informal and formal education. There are huge individual differences in curiosity, expressed most readily in the patterns of exploration manifest in informal settings. What are these patterns? How can they be enhanced so as to increase curiosity, exploration, and creativity in formal education?

This project will examine the patterns of exploration manifested by 1 to 8 year old children in two kinds of exhibits: a physical environment for younger children which affords opportunities for crawling, climbing, and walking to provide access to attractive locations; and exhibits for older children, involving a complex manually operated remote control device. On the basis of normative patterns of exploration observed, it will be possible to introduce and evaluate the effects of various kinds of experimental manipulation. The project is designed to lead to recommendations for development of museum exhibits for children and suggestions for teachers who use museum visits as part of their curricular activities will be elaborated.

Herbert Pick

Connection Corner

## Volunteer Opportunities at Parent Warmline

Parent Warmline is embarking on its sixth year of service. Support, information, practical advice and resource referral is provided to parents and community professionals who have concerns related to child development, behavior, and parental stress. The Warmline (612/863-6336) is available year round so please inform your clients or group participants about this program to help them "survive" the summer months.

To date, over 50 individuals from fields such as parent education, child development, social work, nursing and psychology have volunteered their time to this service and many have chosen to remain with the program for 4-5 years! Warmline's annual volunteer orientation is scheduled for June 15-17, 1992. This orientation, offered free of charge, is comprised of a three day workshop which addresses topics of child development, parent education and telephone consultation. The seminars are presented by Minneapolis Children's Medical Center physicians and mental health staff, veteran volunteers and community professionals. Past participants have commented that the orientation was "stimulating, invigorating and highly informative." The orientation provides 12 1/2 hours of contact hours for continuing education and is an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Volunteers are requested to commit to the program for one year, four hours per week; however the current average is 2-3 hours per week. The time commitment includes telephone consultation with parents as well as attendance at a regularly scheduled meeting. Telephone consultation is conducted from the volunteer's home. Preferably, each volunteer will have a bachelor's degree in a child development or a related field and will have had practical experience with parents and young children. Call 612/863-6816 to receive an application. Interviews will be conducted prior to the orientation.

## Minnesota American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (MAPSAC)

These are exciting and difficult times for those who work in the area of child abuse. Recognizing this and the need to share expertise and troubles, a Minnesota chapter of APSAC (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children) was recently formed. MAPSAC is committed to a multidisciplinary approach to common issues for individuals working in the area of child abuse. For information on this new organization, please contact Ann Ahlquist, MAPSAC President Elect, at 612/872-6225.

## Success By 6 Parent Tip Cards

United Way's Success by 6 is a vision of helping all children succeed for life. Success by 6 is working to remove barriers that prevent children from developing the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and imaginative skills needed for fulfilling their potential. One identified barrier is a lack of understanding of quality early child development activities. As part of their public awareness effort, Success By 6 has developed 9 new activity cards describing age appropriate early childhood development activities. The cards were developed for community organizations and companies to use; they may be distributed individually or as a group to parents and may be reprinted in newsletters or flyers. The titles are: Relating to a Child, Helping Prevent Child Abuse, Saying Goodbye, Making Choices, Helping Children Listen, Learning to Relax, Our Multicultural Neighborhood, Fun While Shopping, and Breakfast Boosters. Your organization may order 100 of each of the activity cards free of charge. To order the cards, contact Kelly Ramberg at 612/340-7666.

## MOAPPP

The Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (MOAPPP) is a new non-profit membership service for individuals and organizations involved with adolescent pregnancy prevention, pregnancy care and parenting programs in Minnesota. Affiliated with the National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting (NOAPP), MOAPPP receives support from the Dayton-Hudson Foundation on behalf of Dayton's and Target Stores, Northwest Area Foundation, Bush Foundation and members. The organization supports a variety of diverse and culturally appropriate methods for approaching adolescent pregnancy issues. MOAPPP is holding its first annual Program Sharing Conference on June 22, 1992. The title is Successful Program Strategies: Pregnancy Prevention, Pregnancy Care, and Parenting Support. For more information on the conference or how to join MOAPPP, call 612/296-2571 or write to P.O. Box 40392, St. Paul, MN 55104.

## The Minnesota Infant Mental Health Association

The Minnesota Infant Mental Health Association is seeking members. Membership includes a relationship with the International Association as well as a subscription to their journal, an excellent resource for the latest research and programming in infant development and parent-infant attachment. If you want more information on the Minnesota Association, please contact Joann O'Leary, 612/863-4427.

Children of the State - Children in Minnesota's Child Welfare System  
Excerpted from a report by Esther Wattenberg and Donald W. Cassidy

Children who come to the attention of the child welfare system reflect the enormous difficulty some families face in trying to meet the child's needs for a safe, nurturing environment. Contrary to common perceptions, neglect and abandonment, not physical abuse, are the major problems that bring children to the attention of county social services. Reports of neglect and maltreatment have increased 53% from 1986 to 1990. Following are some statistics about Children in the Minnesota Child Welfare System.

Of more than 9,000 children with substantiated cases of maltreatment in 1990:

45% were victims of neglect and abandonment  
35% were victims of physical abuse  
14% were victims of sexual abuse  
10% were victims of emotional abuse

Over 15,000 children were in out-of-home care for some period of time in 1990, at a cost of 100 million dollars. Eight thousand children are in foster family homes at any one time in a calendar year. Presently, there are 4,555 licensed foster homes throughout the state. The largest portion of children entering care in 1990 were adolescents, ages 13-17. On average, almost 47% of all children entering care were teenagers. State-wide, the share of adolescents in the population has dropped by 26% (1990 Census) and 23% in the metropolitan area.

In 1990, 68% of children after one year or less were either reunited with birth families or placed with a relative. Eighty-three percent were reunited with families or relatives after 2 years or less. (These percentages are well above nation-wide figures, which report 40% of children returned home after one year or less and 76% returned after 2 years.) Ten percent of children, 1,663, have remained in care for three years or more; a portion of these children are in stable and continuous arrangements.

White adolescents were reunified with birth families more often than their counterparts with minority heritage. Reunification rates for American Indian children with birth parents were particularly low. While children of minority heritage are 9.8% of the total child population, 33% of children in out-of-home care are children of color. In 1989, when compared to their proportion in the population, minority children were over-represented in foster care placement by a 7 to 1 ratio. In Minnesota and nation-wide, the upsurge of minority children in the child welfare system is generally attributed to the deepening effects of the recession on poor families and the widespread availability of crack/cocaine.

One of the chief barriers to reunifying children with their parents after separation is the lack of affordable, clean, safe housing. Little information is available on how children thrive once they are returned home. Nation-wide, some studies suggest that children do not do well in either educational achievement or in general well-being. These studies suggest that there is premature discontinuance of services to reunified families. For example, a support system, respite care, and basic income, which are generally available to foster parents, is often lacking to birth parents whose children are returned.

#### Leave No Child Behind

Leave No Child Behind is the theme of a national, nonpartisan campaign to educate voters and candidates about the need to make children's concerns a priority in the 1992 election. In Minnesota the Leave No Child Behind campaign is being led by the Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, Congregations Concerned for Children and the Junior League. Representatives from over 50 state and local organizations concerned with meeting the needs of children are carrying out the work of this campaign. Campaign activities will include: offering precinct caucus training; providing candidates with briefing materials; surveying legislative candidates; encouraging groups to hold candidates' meetings on children's needs; developing an educational curriculum for schools; and initiating voter awareness at county fairs and the State Fair.

The goal of Leave No Child Behind is for every child to have a Healthy Start, Head Start and a Fair Start. The campaign will be specifically concerned with these issues:

#### **A HEALTHY START**

Nutrition-The funding and availability of WIC, the food stamp program, and school breakfast and lunch programs.

Health Care Access-full medicaid for all poor children; health care coverage and access for all children through a national children's health care plan.

Abuse & Neglect Prevention-prevent child abuse and neglect through increases in the Children's Trust Fund; and support of Home Visitor programs.

Affordable Housing-support for transitional housing programs; support for the Housing Trust Fund and efforts to provide housing for homeless children.

#### **A HEAD START**

Head Start-full funding of the Head Start program for all eligible children.

Child Care-availability of subsidies for low income working parents.

#### **A FAIR START**

Tax credits to parents-expansion of Earned Income Tax at national level, support of the Working Family Tax Credit in Minnesota and a children's tax credit.

Child Support Enforcement-support of a child support insurance fund to insure income to families with an absent parent and establish enforceable paternity guidelines.

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