

## PRACTICE AND POLICY FOCUS

Issue 2, 2006

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## Family Foster Care: Voices From Around the World

(Excerpts from guest editor, Rosemarie Carbino)

The current issue of *Families in Society* (Vol. 87, No. 4) honors foster parent associations and foster care associations highlighting the development of family foster care in new places in the world.

An international perspective on child welfare makes us more aware, humane and effective on a larger scale. We discover that human beings have similar needs and face similar or more serious challenges around the world and that, through mutual sharing, good solutions can be arrived at sooner.

The well-being of children within their families is of significance for all societies. Yet, a sound family life is far from accessible for children around the globe, owing to familial, community, national, and/or international conditions. Many children continue to live in terrible circumstances—under attack in war or forced into military combat; as refugees from armed conflict or from ecological disas-

ter; preyed upon for sex or manual labor; maltreated in some communities and institutions—much of which we cannot prevent nor help. And we are continuously reminded of the powerful connections of poverty and racial and cultural oppression to the reasons that these children need care. So, solutions to attain well-being must go far beyond providing services. For children in care everywhere, these central child welfare concepts should be honored:

**1. Child well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the child's family.** The child has a need to know his/her family, to understand that they are OK, and to be validated as to his/her identity and origins. It is important to go beyond the specified caretaker of the child to understand *who is experienced as family* by the child and to support those connections.

**2. Children are capable of maintaining meaningful relationships with multiple families,** and they experience unnecessary losses when cut off from previous families

when they are moved to specified legal placements.

**3. Sibling connection is of immense importance to children, including those siblings not legally recognized as siblings by the society.**

Unless irrevocably damaging, these connections ought not to be severed by legal mandates nor by parental dictates in foster, adoptive, kinship, and/or biological family placements, but, rather, actively supported.

**4. Biological parents are important to their children and to the success of foster care.** To maintain these connections successfully will often entail reaching out to parents across social class, culture and/or language differences to provide respectful and inclusive service.

The articles in this special issue reinforce our awareness of the issues and needs of families; of the need for solid knowledge of what works well; of the usefulness of sharing widely what we know; and of the importance of a voice for children and families in planning.



For more information on this special issue and to read the full editorial, visit [www.familiesinsociety.org](http://www.familiesinsociety.org).

# Featured Topic: Child Welfare

## Policy Focus

### Securing the Welfare of Children: Policies Past, Present, and Future

(CE course #100810) (2000)

For the past century in the U.S., the welfare of children has been considered a legitimate concern of government, but analyses have been critical of the efforts of the public child welfare system. This paper places the contemporary child welfare system, and its failures, in a sociocultural context, from an international perspective. The social construction of childhood is analyzed, and the ways that this construction marks children as a class in need of protection are discussed. Policies to secure the welfare of children are placed in historical context, and analyzed as they currently exist in societies with multiple sites of authority.

### Impact of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (1997) on Families of Color: Workers Share Their Thoughts

(CE course #100713) (2004)

Workers and child advocates may find their concerns confirmed in this descriptive research project. The authors surveyed administrators, supervisors, direct service workers and therapists on their views on the ASFA legislation and concluded workers feel the act may hold negative consequences such as overburdening kinship caregivers, overuse of group homes, and creating adoption disruptions.

### Chronic Child Neglect: Needed Developments in Theory and Practice

(2005)

The response to child neglect by child welfare systems is usually unsubstantial compared to the response to child abuse, and the effort does not match its prevalence or impact on children and society. A better response to chronic child neglect is needed, as is a better understanding of it. The authors discuss potential causes of the breakdown of parental responsibility and its effect on child development, several issues that affect potential interventions, the need for more structure in neglect interventions, and a common skepticism of whether interventions can succeed.

## Practice Focus

### Siblings and Out-of-Home Placement: Best Practices

(CE course #100659) (2003)

This article is based on research and practice experience from projects and cases in both public child welfare agencies and private adoption agencies. The authors summarize the research on sibling relationships, including a description of sibling relationships in families where children have been abused and neglected. The authors also discuss the barriers in child welfare that can result in the separation of siblings. The article offers best practice solutions that support maintaining sibling relationships throughout temporary and permanent placement.

### Moving Best Practice to Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare

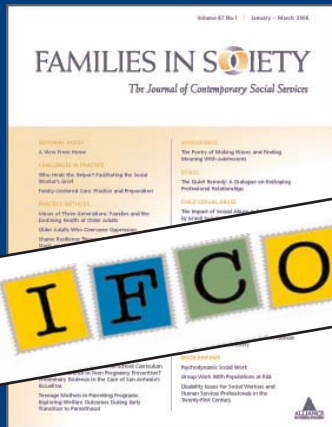
(2005)

Increased emphasis is being placed on improving outcomes for abused and neglected children served by the child welfare system. To achieve this goal, the notion of "best practice" is widely embraced. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on its definition. While all of various interpretations have a role to play in improving results of child welfare interventions, the authors argue that best practice is optimally defined as evidence-based practice. At the same time, there are many difficulties in employing this form of best practice, including a lack of evidence, the transfer of information, and the organizational culture in which the worker operates. Suggested solutions to these difficulties are discussed.

### The Looking After Children Assessment Process: Promoting Resilient Children and Resilient Workers

(2006)

Resiliency in social work with foster children and youth can be low as positive outcomes are difficult to achieve. The article examines a case study of a Canadian *Looking After Children* (LAC) project which promoted positive outcomes for children and worker practice. LAC, a shared parenting approach to family foster care services, is indicated to be used in at least 14 nations and is a shining example of international transfer of a successful approach to child welfare service.



Family foster care is increasingly utilized globally as a service for children and their biological families. Recognizing the importance of these developing models, *Families in Society* has collected contributions from around the world for a special issue in Winter 2006 (Volume 87, Number 4).

In cooperation with the International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO), this special issue highlights family foster care programs from various countries and includes new articles by child welfare administrators and practitioners, foster parent associations, educators, and researchers.

To browse this special issue, visit [www.familiesinsociety.org](http://www.familiesinsociety.org).



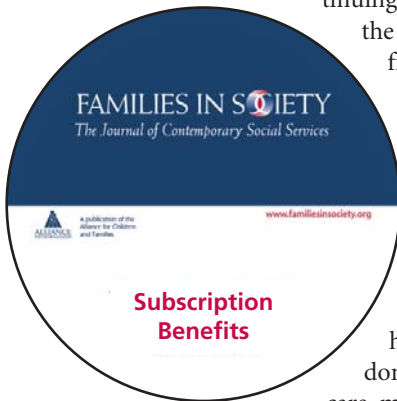
These articles are available at [www.familiesinsociety.org](http://www.familiesinsociety.org). CE Courses available through [CE4Alliance.com](http://CE4Alliance.com).

## Agency Resources

### Did You Know?

#### Free CD-ROM Details Subscriber Benefits

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The **National Leadership Conference on Child Welfare Issues** is an annual event for private sector child welfare leaders that is known for its quality content and premier networking opportunities with both experts and experienced peers from across the country. The 2007 conference will focus on family centered practice in out-of-home care settings, outcomes and benchmarking for sibling groups, supervisory development, the key to performance-based contracting, relative location and the California and Florida federal IVE block grant waivers.

Visit <http://www.alliance1.org/Conferences/NLCCWI2007/index.html> for more information and to register online.

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# 2006 Course Catalog

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**\*Ask about our free course offer available through December 31, 2006.**

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\* *Eligible for free course offer.*

## 2006 Course Catalog

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#10037—**Overview of Cultural Diversity and Mental Health Services** (Credit Hours: 1)

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 Casework Practice  
 Child Welfare  
 Cultural and Racial Diversity  
 Domestic Violence  
 Ethics  
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 Gender and Sexuality Issues  
 Interdisciplinary Teamwork  
 Mental Health / Psychiatric Social Work  
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 Older Adults / Aging Issues  
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 Spirituality  
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# FAMILIES IN SOCIETY

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Families in Society is published by the Alliance for Children and Families, a national member association of child- and family-serving organizations. [www.alliance1.org](http://www.alliance1.org)

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Rhode Island Child Welfare Institute*

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*Melissa Cole, Administrator,  
Foster Family-Based Treatment Association, Hackensack, NJ*

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*Jaime Apolonio, Curriculum Resource Support, First Nations Partnership Programs, Victoria, Canada*

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