

# The BULLETIN of the National Clearinghouse Project for Home-Based Services to Children

Fall 1979

# Preventing Placements—First Step in Planning for Permanence

Media attention and volumes of startling facts are bringing the problem of foster care drift into sharp focus. The child welfare systems are currently focusing on the initial steps in permanency planning: (1) providing for periodic review and screening of children in foster care and (2) arranging for permanent placements or plans.

There have been strong legislative and/or agency moves toward permanency planning in Virginia, Alabama, Arizona, North Carolina, Texas, and other states. The pace was set by the Oregon project which began in 1973 and produced impressive results. Even of the children initially judged likely never to go home, the dramatic results were that 27 percent did return home!

An inevitable question arises, "How many placements have been made due to the simple lack of alternative service models with real potential to maintain the child with her/his biological family?"

During the last 12 years, such models of home-based family-centered services have evolved throughout the United States. Programs are comprehensive and as intense as needed, based on the philosophy that we must be willing to invest at least as heavily in a child's own family system as we are willing to invest in substitute care. The outcome of such home-based programs strongly suggests that placement can be averted for many of the families currently experiencing placement of one or more children. The Comprehensive Emergency Services System in Nashville, Tennessee, reduced the number of children going into placement by 51 percent at an estimated overall cost savings of \$68,000. Research on the results of more intensive home-based family-centered projects indicates that from 70 percent (when referrals were only children already dispositioned for placement) to 96 percent of children referred

were successfully maintained with their biological families. A conservative estimate is that 50 percent of foster and institutional placements could have been averted by appropriate alternative service efforts.

Overall, home-based family-centered services represent costs about twice those for foster home care. However, average length of service is only seven months and costs are for service to an entire family and community system. Home-based family-centered service can be delivered at less than one-half the average cost of institutional care.

Regarding alternatives to placement, it seems clear that far more knowledge and expertise exist than are being practiced. Glen Downs, attorney and associate director of the Permanency Planning Project at Portland State University (the Oregon project) recently noted the constitutional precepts underlying case review and preventive services. He referred to the doctrine of the least restrictive alternative (United States Supreme Court case of Shelton v. Tucker, 364 U.S. 479 [1960]) and observed, "We need to look first at the reason for a prospective foster care placement and ask: Can we deal with this problem or need without this child going into out-of-home care? Could other services prevent the placement? If that problem could be dealt with without placing the child in out-ofhome care, and that child is placed in out-of-home care, that placement is contrary to the constitutional requirement of using the least intrusive alternative." (Case Record, August 1979)

As more states and agencies give high priority to services for children already in placement, it is hoped that preventive options will be developed simultaneously. Preventing unnecessary placements now is an exciting prospect for the future of the permanency planning movement.



# Doing the Thing We Do Best-Serving People

The Second National Symposium on Home-Based Services to Children and Families was held on the campus of The University of Iowa, Iowa City, April 23–24. Nearly three hundred participants from 27 states and two provinces of Canada chose from 24 sessions offered during the two-day conference. The central theme was the methodology and techniques by which home-based health, education, and social services are best delivered.

Sarah Walton, social services program analyst and in-home specialist, Children's Bureau, opened the conference with "A Federal Perspective on Child Welfare." She underscored the Children's Bureau's support for the development of basic casework skills of effective family intervention and predicted that services to children in their own homes will become the major child welfare program of services for the future.

Tom Higgins, principal regional official, Region VII, DHEW, reiterated confidence in home-based alternatives but emphasized that "right ideas" and multiple studies of needs will not produce responsive legislators and policy planners. Pointing out that there simply is no constituency for much information, such as the Children's Defense Fund's study, Children without Homes, he urged local and state activism as the most effective

method of building a well-organized, cohesive lobby for children and families.

The powerful and often unrecognized therapeutic potential of home and family systems emerged as the unifying theme of the conference. Presentations covered a broad spectrum of treatment techniques and adjunct concerns

A strong dimension was the sense of purpose shared by those engaged in delivering in-home health care, whether to ambulatory children, at-risk infants, children with terminal cancer, or the many who now choose hospice supports. Their presentations showed the immeasurable human enrichment facilitated by the in-home option. Diminished costs of in-home health care seemed a much less impressive, yet real consideration.

While participants being newly introduced to in-home options evidenced much excitement and enthusiasm, there was a carefully considered search for solid theory and innovative techniques by experienced in-home practitioners and participants of Symposium I.

Concern for funding, legislative support, and the intensifying demand for definitive research will doubtlessly characterize gatherings of professionals in the home-based service field for some time to come.

# **Proceedings**

The edited proceedings of the 1979 symposium and other significant contributions on the topic of treatment techniques will be published by Charles C. Thomas. Titled, *Treating Children in the Home: An Alternative to Placement*, the book will be available early next year.

Other publications on HOME BASED FAMILY CENTERED services may be ordered from the clearinghouse (see return address page 6).

Selected Bibliography \$ .50
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# Fiscal Incentives To Change (The Pennsylvania Story)

Child welfare practitioners most readily recognize the potential of home-based familycentered services to reduce out-of-home placements.

By contrast the potential of long-term cost effectiveness readily loses its feasibility when planners and administrators face the inevitability of maintaining current institutional and foster care systems and services while searching for "start-up" and operating funds for home-based or other alternative services.

Pennsylvania has initiated a statewide program which provides fiscal incentives to counties to provide home- and community-based services to children and families. Counties are reimbursed by the state for 75 to 90 percent of the cost of programs and services that serve children and families in their own homes and communities, Included

are programs such as home-based familycentered services, subsidized adoptions, professional foster parents, special day services, and small group homes with adequate staff. Consequently, there is in effect a strong fiscal disincentive to place children in institutions beyond their own communities.

Each county is required by amendments to Public Law 1464 to file plans for the establish ment of the necessary new services to effectively treat families in their own homes and communities. Additional grants were made available "to assist in establishing new services in accordance with a plan approved by the department for up to the first three years of operation of those services."

The plan seems to provide both incentive to consider alternative services and the funds to implement planned alternatives.

# Region VII Develops Recommendations To Minimize Foster Care

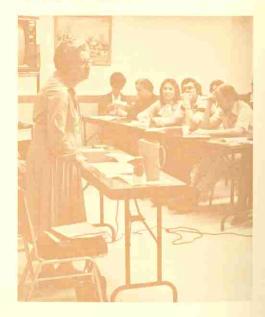
Concern that federal funding and policies of state departments of social services now encourage child placement was voiced at a recent Region VII DHEW conference in Kansas City, Missouri, September 26 and 27. Expressing concern that unanalyzed state and federal practices may contribute to family separation, Manuel Carbello, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Development Services, DHEW, noted that resources have gone primarily to protect children by removing them from their own homes.

State agency personnel, state legislators, participants from the states' juvenile justice systems, and representatives of a variety of professional and public interest groups spent two days ferreting out the crucial roadblocks to the reduction of foster care.

Martha Keyes, special adviser to the secretary of DHEW, challenged the group to establish requirements for preventive services and criteria by which to judge preventive efforts. Focusing on the imperative of long-term cost effectiveness, she urged assessing the true social, monetary, and human costs of present services followed by public education as to the true costs of preventive and alternative efforts.

In their final recommendations, participants agreed that there has been an emphasis on placement and getting placement funded. There is a subsequent need for funding preventive programs and services and for training and education of both lay child advocates and professionals in alternatives to placement. The funding process, which now encourages placement, needs to be restructured to provide fiscal support and incentive for in-home services designed to strengthen and maintain families.

Each state designated a liaison person to work with the regional office in implementing the recommendations.



# Optimism for the Survival of the American Family

Here to Stay. (American Families in the Twenlieth Century) Bane, Mary Jo. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976.

While not new, observations and opinions suggesting the demise of the traditional American family are more widespread than ever before. Isolated statistics are endlessly cited to support the tenet that the family is in serious trouble. Despite her personal optimism for families and family life, Mary Jo Bane admits that she expected her exhaustive study of existing research to confirm such popular notions.

Leaving readers largely to their own explanations for why things are happening as they are, Bane focuses primarily on existing quantitative data as the most acurate description of American families historically and in the present. The resulting book is an emphatic statement that the time is *not* right for writing obituaries and that the family is indeed "here to stay."

The introductory chapters compare prevailing views about the family with test data derived chiefly from census surveys and polls. For example, Bane concludes that the supportive extended family was largely a mythological institution from the early colonial period. North American families have been nuclear in structure, private, and relatively child centered.

She challenges the assumption that rising divorce rates mean that fewer children now ive with their parents. The rise in one-parent amilies reflects instead a trend toward mainenance of families in situations in which children historically would have gone into substitute care in foster homes, institutions, adoption, or with other relatives. The proportion of children who continue to live with one parent after a death or divorce has gone steadily up.

Many studies are cited which contradict a decline in the family's role as primary carepiver for children. Bane specifically concludes that, even though working mothers pend less time on child care than nonworking mothers, the differences in the amount of me mothers spend in direct interaction with neir children is surprisingly small.

is a major participant in recent interdiscilinary attempts to evaluate the effects of jublic policy on families, Bane's credentials ecome evident in the major portions of the look which deal with the conflicting values and complicating principles faced in any attempt to evaluate policy. Four major princiles are cited to which various segments of merican society are strongly committed: a) family privacy, (2) family responsibility for hildren, (3) sexual equality, and (4) equality for poportunity. The most difficult choices for jublic policymakers arise when these major principles conflict with one another. In this context Bane highlights the omnipresent tension between the values of family privacy and the protection of children or the family as protector of children versus the state as their protector.

Bane notes that judges and lawyers seem to be advocating less reliance on removing children and more efforts to improve conditions in children's own homes. She sees a major factor in that trend to be the extremely limited alternatives open to courts, once a child is adjudicated dependent or neglected. Her research indicated no studies that systematically compare institutional with noninstitutional treatment, but adds that research has shown that state training schools do "a rather poor job." Similarly, the type of studies which adequately would compare foster care with care in children's own families has simply never been done. Bane questions the political and ethical possibility of such comparative studies with traditional family care. Although she was seemingly accurate in predicting that "adequate" information about the effects of foster care is not likely to become available, comparative research was indeed being done as she wrote. Wolock and colleagues at Rutgers University were doing the very studies she describes comparing the relative effectiveness of foster, residential, and own-home programs. (Isabel Wolock et al., 1977) Although reports of intensive inhome care as an alternative to placements existed earlier (Goldstein, 1973) the majority of such research has been published only within the last three years. Contrary to Bane's predictions, however, political and ethical considerations have not counter indicated own-home programs of sufficient intensity to provide juvenile courts with exactly the viable alternatives Bane indicates are needed

Written in 1976 Bane's work seems to have foreshadowed current critiques of the use of power of the state to place children in substitute care. It is certain that the emphasis on planning for permanency which has emerged since Bane's analysis will ultimately affect the family/state power balances. If the push for permanency produces significant increases in terminations of parental rights, the trend she suggests will be interrupted, if not reversed.

By noting the steadfast manner in which individuals continue to seek stability, continuity, and nonconditional affection in families, Bane sets the tone for her final advice to human service planners: "Until programs are designed to incorporate the very real and strong values that underlie family life in America and until they are perceived as doing so, they are doomed to failure." She concludes with the challenge to "accept the persisting tension between family and public values and to design creative ways of living with both."

# Instruments Assess Home as Learning Environment

The conclusion that home and family backgrounds are the primary determinants of children's academic achievements has been reaffirmed by recent research indicating the school's apparent ineffectiveness at freeing achievement from the impact of the home. Cross-cultural and multinational studies, including the Coleman studies of students in six countries, point to home background as having a greater effect on students' achievement than school variables.

For more than ten years, groups of child development experts, led by Dr. Bettye Caldwell, University of Arkansas Center for Early Development, have conducted research on the effects of the home environments on the learning processes of infants and young children. One of the results of this research is the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment, an instrument which is designed to assess those somewhat intangible qualities of person-person and person-object interaction which collectively comprise a young child's learning environment. The inventory is administered in the home by a home visitor at any time when the child is awake and can be observed in interaction with the mother or another primary caregiver. Individual items require simple yes or no responses. The inventory for infants consists of a 45-item home checklist. A separate inventory for 3 to 6 year olds includes an 80item checklist. Items to be observed and questioned are grouped under six major categories:

- Emotional and verbal responsiveness of mother.
- Avoidance of restriction and punishment.
  - 3. Organization of physical environment.
  - Provision of appropriate play materials.
  - 5. Maternal involvement with child.
- Opportunities for variety in daily stimulation.

Those involved in the development and testing of these instruments (Bradley, Caldwell, and Elardo, 1977) assert that the scale can be used as a tool both by in-home workers concerned with primary prevention and with remediation of delayed child development. The information collected is valuable in the subsequent design of intervention strategies. In addition to assessing the strengths and weaknesses present in a child's home learning environment, the home inventory has proven useful as a guide to intervention by home visitors and as a tool for on-going evaluation of progress.

The inventory has been successfully used to assess the home environment of children with a variety of disabilities (mental retardation, learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, and autism). Dr. Richard Elardo, child psychologist who directs the Early Childhood Education Center at The University of lowa, believes that not only parents of handicapped children or children at risk, but virtually all parents

# A Better Way

or the past three decades investigators ave raised serious issues about foster care s it has been utilized, institutional care, and e attempt to resolve family problems by isoting one of the family members. But placeent outside the home continues to be an asy "solution" for the difficult problems of inrpersonal relationships, handicaps, poverty, nd discrimination. Included among the more cent studies: All Our Children (1978) by eniston and the Carnegie Council on Chilren, Children in Foster Care (1977) by ruber, Children without Homes done by the hildren's Defense Fund (1979), and the Fial Report of the Commission on Children in eed of Parents. In response to the strongest pecial interest voices along the way, fundg bodies have favored programs designed r isolated problems. Some have developed parate programs for every family member, at is, the handicapped, the elderly memer, the abused child, the mentally ill, and so rth. Too often the program has involved acement. This pattern ignores the interlated causative factors which impact on mily members. Family systems theory helps understand why this partialized, disconcted approach has been inadequate. The

power of the relationships in the family of origin is often ignored, creating even more problems. Harold Simmons, a decade ago, pointed to what many have already observed:

The attachment of children to parents who, by all ordinary standards, are very bad is a never ceasing source of wonder to those who seek to help them. Efforts made to save the child from his bad surroundings and give him new standards are commonly to no avail, since it is his own parents who, for good or ill, he values and with whom he is identified. These sentiments are not surprising when it is remembered that, despite much neglect, one or the other parent has almost always and in countless ways been kind to him from the day of his birth onward; and, however much the outsider sees to criticize, the child sees much to be grateful for.

The home-based family-centered service delivery model, now some 13 years young, makes the first and greatest resource investment in the care and treatment of children in their own homes before more radical measures are taken. As Alfred Kahn at Columbia University has told us, it is widely believed and has now been shown that in-home service can be provided with less cost, in both money and human stress, than out-ofhome care.

Those involved in the provision of home-based family-centered services know that children's rights, rights for the elderly, the handicapped, the abused, and so forth, as they have been promoted are not enough. Children can really only adequately be served by giving them their family who, in turn, give them the identity, sense of permanency, and enabling rights to develop fully and in such a way as to take their own place in society. It is a better way. It is, much more often than now practiced, a possible way.

Copies of Children without Homes are available for \$5, plus 10 percent for postage and handling, from the Publications Department of the Children's Defense Fund, 1520 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

The Final Report of the Commission on Children in Need of Parents is available for \$3 from the Child Welfare League of America, 67 Irving Place, New York, N.Y. 10003

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ould benefit from an increased awareness their homes' "curricula" and their personal aching styles.

ppies may be obtained by writing:

Bettye Caldwell, Director
enter for Child Development and Education

niversity of Arkansas at Little Rock ttle Rock, Arkansas 72204

imple Set: Inventory and

Instruction Manual (ages 0-3) \$5 imple Set: Inventory and

Instruction Manual (ages 3-6) \$5 pnograph: Sample of both forms, plus lengthy review of the research

literature available regarding assessment of the home environ-

ment and its relation to developmental variables.

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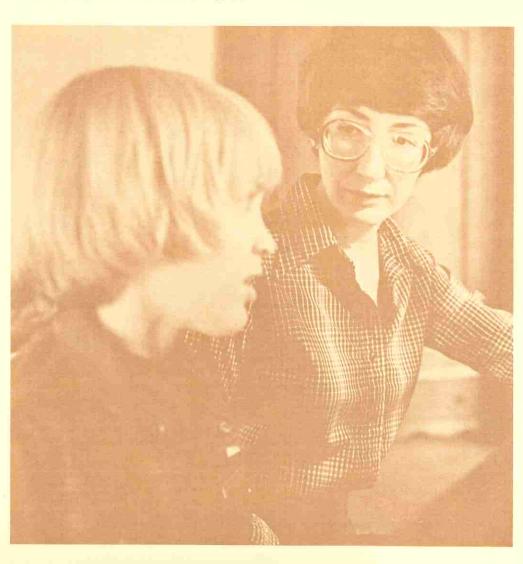
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# White House Conference **Goes Regional**

The 40-member National Advisory Committee for the first White House conference on families is in the process of conducting hearings in six locations around the nation. State and national organizations concerned with families will also be considering issues in preparation for several White House conferences to be held across the country in June and July of 1980. Coordinators have been named in every state, and delegates to the culmination conferences will be appointed by the governor. Additional delegates will be selected by peers, and the remainder will be at-large representatives.

A six-month implementation strategy with a report to the president, meetings with key federal and congressional leaders, and the distribution and promotion of conference recommendations will follow.

It is important that advocates for home-based funding and services be heard. Coordinators for each state are included below. Contact your coordinator and request representation.

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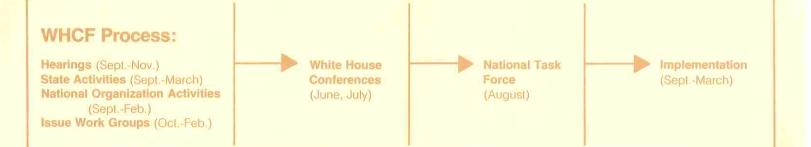
The Bulletin is published quarterly by the National Clearinghouse Project for Home-Based Services to Children and their Families, a national Child Welfare Services Training Project. The project is affiliated with the School of Social Work and the Institute of Child Behavior and Development at The University of Iowa, Oakdale Campus, Oakdale, Iowa 52319. Clearinghouse activities are made possible by a grant from the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Office of Human Development Services, DHEW. (Grant no. 90-CT-1966(01)) The contents of this Bulletin should not be construed as official policy of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

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