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On the Path to Evidence-Based Programs



Using home visitation programs to help parents with child-rearing and other challenges is an important trend. Trained staff visit parents in their homes several times a month to help with an array of issues ranging from domestic violence to coaching on being a new parent. Some of these programs, such as Nurse Family Partnership, are evidence-based and have years of results that prove their effectiveness. Other programs are earlier in the process of becoming evidence-based, like our Partners in Family Child Care program.

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A Note from Our Director



The onset of the recession has been a wake-up call to the non-profit and education sectors. Donors, taxpayers, and foundations are far more cautious about how they invest their dollars. They are strategic, demanding assessments, outcomes, and accountability. They are asking, “Is this program effective?”

Implementing evidence-based programs and practices provides a competitive edge when it comes to securing funding. But, there is often confusion about what constitutes evidence-based programs and when they are necessary to solve issues facing children and families, and when they are not. In June, I had the privilege of serving on a community panel to discuss this topic.

Evidence-based programs have had their effectiveness demonstrated through rigorous evaluations and have been found to be replicable. A program cannot credibly be self-proclaimed as evidence-based. Such designations are worthy only when a program has gone through an independent, scientific peer review process by a federal or state agency, or credentialed university or private institution, to certify its effectiveness.

The process of becoming evidence-based is long and costly. It can easily take a decade. However, there is tremendous value in the process. Providers, funders, and policy makers have a good idea regarding what to expect relative to outcomes and investments. It has been estimated that it costs close to 100 times more to develop a program than to implement an evidence-based program.

While it is very important for the community of providers, educators, and funders to move towards implementing, and at times developing, evidence-based programs, it is also important to use common sense. Not all efforts need to meet the “gold standard” of a randomized controlled evaluation. For example, when providing basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and safety, the community should apply “value-based funding” and ask if people are being fed and clothed, have a place to sleep, and are safe.

Finally, making mistakes and rectifying them is part of becoming effective. The community should avoid angry criticism of schools and agencies when they share areas that need improvement; instead, we should strongly support organizations that adopt a continuous improvement model and welcome the opportunity to learn. The philosopher Daniel Dennett said science is “making mistakes in public. Making mistakes for all to see, in the hopes of getting the others to help with the corrections.”

While you may be familiar with the Primary Mental Health Project, now called Primary Project, one of our longest running evidence-based programs, this issue of *News and Views* features two other programs on the evidence-based continuum – Partners in Family Child Care and Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP)

–A. Dirk Hightower, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Partnering with the Rochester Area Community Foundation

In our spring newsletter, we announced the establishment of a Legacy Society in order to recognize those individuals who have the vision and foresight to make a planned gift to support our future work on behalf of children in our community. Now, Children’s Institute has entered into an agreement with The Community Foundation to offer donors two new and expanded options for gift planning.

First, by establishing a **charitable gift annuity** with The Community Foundation, donors have the opportunity to receive a fixed dollar return for life, for themselves and/or other beneficiaries, in exchange for a gift of cash or marketable securities. Payment amounts are dependent upon the donor’s age and the size of the gift. Following the death of the donor and his or her beneficiaries, the fund balance may be used to create an endowment fund for the benefit of Children’s Institute.

A second option for planned giving is by investing in a **pooled income fund** at The Community Foundation. A donor may transfer cash or securities to the fund and retain an income interest for up to two beneficiaries. Rates are determined by current interest and bond rates. If the donor so designates, the remainder of the fund may be paid out to Children’s Institute upon termination of the income beneficiary’s interest.

Both of these options offer tax savings to donors along with the opportunity to leave a legacy that helps to ensure that the emerging needs of children in our community will be addressed. Planned gifts may also be made through charitable bequests and gifts of life insurance or retirement plan assets.

We invite you to consider joining other visionaries who have included Children’s Institute in their gift planning and welcome the opportunity to work with you to match your interests with the greatest needs of children. Please call Lori VanAuken (ext. 227) or Jane Passamonte (ext. 245) with your confidential inquiries about planned giving opportunities.

If you have already made a provision for Children’s Institute through a planned gift, please let us know so that we can thank you and honor your commitment to helping children. If you wish to keep your gift anonymous, we can include you in our Legacy Society without publishing your name.

Planned giving is one way to make a sound investment in the future of children and families and in our community.

Evidence-Based Program Gets a New Look

Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP) was first initiated in 1982 by Children's Institute to help children cope more effectively with parental divorce – a highly stressful life event. This evidence-based program has helped thousands of children over the years in the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, and South Korea to constructively deal with the pain of divorce and family disruption.

Thanks to the generosity of Chris and Jodi Reynolds in memory of Carl Reynolds, CODIP was just revised based on input from our customers. The fifth edition features additional supporting materials, updated content, and a bright and appealing game board for elementary school students.

To help ensure effectiveness and quality, Children's Institute submits its programs for review by other experts in the field. CODIP is currently undergoing a rigorous review by the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) to confirm its effectiveness in preventing academic, behavioral, and emotional adjustment problems in children who are experiencing parental divorce.

CODIP can be purchased by visiting www.childrensstitute.net.



Supporting Our Soldiers' Children

This summer, Children's Institute went to camp with children of military families who are experiencing deployment. Campers of the Courageous Kids Summer Camp of Army Strong Community Center explored and shared new feelings about deployment with each other and staff of Children's Institute.

"We are excited to partner with Army Strong Community Center to pilot our Same Sky Sharing groups," said Deborah Johnson, MS, NCSP, director of national services. "Same Sky Sharing is a psycho-educational curriculum designed for children whose parents are in the military and who have been deployed. Our staff uses play-based activities to teach children how to recognize changes in their families that are related to deployment, identify feelings, and cope with these feelings and changes."

Moria Story, staff group facilitator, commented, "Many of the children said that they had experienced new feelings. They also learned that they felt better when they shared those feelings with others." Campers communicated their own methods of coping with deployment and learned new strategies from one another. Children identified the people in their lives on whom they will rely when they need help or feel sad and lonely.

The two-week camp was held at Monroe Community College in July for children between the ages of 7 and 14.

Canine-Assisted Play Therapy

Children's Institute and Nazareth College co-sponsored the 4th Annual Play Therapy Institute in August, which featured the topic of Canine-Assisted Play Therapy. The seminar was underwritten by Kathy Holt in memory of her late husband, Chip Holt.

Workshop participants learned how to incorporate a therapy dog into play therapy sessions. The presenter was Mary J. Rottier, Ed.D., LCP, RPT-S, a certified evaluator for Therapy Dog International, Inc. (TDI) and an approved evaluator with the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen® program. Dr. Rottier is responsible for the Paws for Healing program, in which therapists and canines engage with children and families through non-directive play therapy, with the goal of improving children's emotional and developmental health.



Steve Demanchick, Nazareth College; Mary J. Rottier, presenter and play therapist with her therapy dog, Keegan; Mary Anne Peabody, Children's Institute.

On the Path to Evidence-Based Programs

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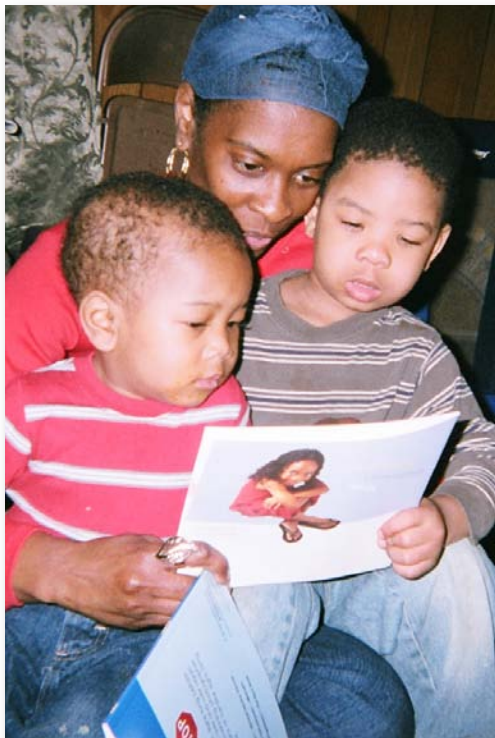
Two years ago, Children's Institute and our partners, Rochester Childfirst Network (RCN) and Family Resource Centers of Crestwood Children's Center, embraced the home visitation model and applied it to those who operate child care programs from their homes. Partners in Family Child Care has worked with 60 group family child care providers and their assistants who serve 450 children under the age of five. Another 30 providers and 200 children will be enrolled this fall. The home visitors work on children's early language development, social, emotional, and cognitive development, and help the providers to raise the quality of child care being offered to children in these homes.

Here is what we are learning:

- There is a statistically significant increase in the literacy environment
- There is a statistically significant increase in the providers' readiness to change their practice
- Children made increases above developmental expectations in their early literacy development

These are exciting and promising results, says Shira Peterson, Ph.D., research associate at Children's Institute. "We will need consecutive years of data to be able to confidently say this program is effective for providers and children. For it to be evidence-based, we need to compare the group to a similar group of providers and children who were not enrolled in the program. We will also need to have the work reviewed by other experts in the field. This is a long but important process and we are in the early stages."

But to a home visitor like Sally Taft, the evidence she needs to know that the program is working is witnessing, week by week, the growth of the children and the family child care providers who work with them...



A Letter from a Partners in Family Child Care Home Visitor...

When I started the Partners in Family Child Care in-home training with Linda, a family child care provider, she was trying very hard to teach the children how to write their letters and numbers. It had become a process that the children did not look forward to and sometimes they refused to do it.

Linda had a variety of toys and activities for the children but she was spending a lot of time being a referee. Each child desired her undivided attention and the children did not know how to communicate and play well together. One child had special needs and several of the parents expected Linda to work through behavior issues without any encouragement or help from them.

Linda was open to learning anything that would help improve her child care program and give her new ideas that would support child development and cognitive growth. After I had made a few visits, Linda would take time to prepare for the next lesson. She would review what we were going to do and had already started talking to the children about my next visit. Linda paid close attention to what I said and did with the children, and she actively took part during the hands-on project that was part of the lesson.

Linda has become more confident and asks questions about how each training lesson relates to literacy. I encouraged Linda to use her skills and to try new ideas. The visits began to go smoother as Linda taught the children to respect each other and to listen when someone was talking to them, and this allowed all the children to participate. Linda started going to the library regularly and she encouraged the children to tell me about a book or experience they had since I had last been there. Linda has started to extend or repeat some of the lessons I have modeled, including Grocery Store, Germs and Hand Washing, Sounds and Music, and Baking with the children.

Linda understands that she can keep the children's attention on an activity for about a half hour, and that learning takes place through play. Linda is now working on teaching the children how to problem solve when differences and anger issues arise. Sometimes the children revert to their old ways, but Linda is determined to help them learn that communication and compromise often eliminate problems and build good relationships.

I believe Linda and her child care children have benefited from the Partners in Family Child Care program because what she needed was someone to work beside her and draw out and develop her strengths while giving her new ideas and positive reinforcement.

—Sally Taft, Home Visitor

Children Institute Staff and Board Updates

Congratulations to **Connie Valk**, M.Ed., CAS, Early Childhood Specialist, who celebrated her partial retirement from Children's Institute in June. Connie has made significant contributions to the organization and to the field of early education and care. She was instrumental in developing, training, and supervising mentors who worked with early childhood educators in child care centers. Connie's expertise and leadership were critical in the successful development and implementation of Pathways National Early Education and Care Accreditation. Before coming to Children's Institute in 2002, Connie served as the Director of Early Childhood at the Rochester City School District, where she directed the prekindergarten program. Connie's devotion to young children, her expertise, and professionalism have served the organization well. She will be greatly missed.

Kim Avery, MS, has rejoined Children's Institute as the coordinator of Pathways National Early Education and Care Accreditation. Kim has worked in the field of early education and care for over 20 years as a child care center owner, classroom teacher, and mentor. Kim is also a Children's Institute Master Observer Trainer and teaches a number of early childhood courses at Empire State College.

Farewell to **Leanne McAndrews**, LMSW, Information Analyst II, who began her doctoral program in Health Practice Research at the University of Rochester School of Nursing in September. Leanne served as study coordinator for the ACCESS evaluation, managing the interviewers, and assisting with measures development.

Save the Date!

*The Board of Directors and staff of
Children's Institute look forward to
saying "thank you" to our donors at a*

Donor Recognition Reception:

Wednesday, October 27, 2010

5:30-7:30 p.m.

Rochester Academy of Medicine

Welcome Aboard...



Kripal Mehta, Ph.D., joined the Board of Directors in July. Kripal practiced clinical psychology for more than 30 years for the New York State Department of Civil Service. She worked with emotionally disturbed and developmentally handicapped children at Rochester Psychiatric Center and Newark Development Center. She conducted teaching rounds, workshops for patients' families, and in-service teaching for the staff in the area of child development, learning and behavior therapies, crisis intervention, parenting and behavior management techniques. She has served on many committees including education and training, credentials, and privileging for JCAHO. She also was the chairperson of the committee on Special Education. Kripal volunteers with Saathi of Rochester and Compeer Rochester, Inc. Her business interests include serving on the board of directors of Indus Companies.

At the Helm...



Carol Gravetter, board member since 1991, began a two-year term as President in July. Carol is recently retired from the American Cancer Society where she was the director of corporate relations. Carol has served on the Development, Executive, and Strategic Planning committees of the board.

Thank You to...

Glenn Gravino, chair of the Finance committee, and Michelle Batiste, for their board service.

David Broadbent, MD, for completing a 2-year term as President of the board. David remains on the Executive committee.

Congratulations to...

Richard Finkelstein, Ph.D., who was appointed Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia. Richard served as the President of the Board in 2004-2005, and chair of the Development committee from 2005-2010. Richard will continue to be an active member of the board.

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COMET

Assessments • Accountability • Outcomes

COMET Helps New Haven Public Schools Launch Improvements

With the opinions of stakeholders weighing more on the minds of policy-makers, New Haven Public Schools asked Children's Institute to help design and conduct a Learning Environment Survey, commonly referred to as a school climate survey.

With input from working groups, a general survey of 62,000 people was launched across the district in March. Students and teachers completed their surveys online using COMET. Parents could complete their surveys by mail or by using COMET.

The results of the Learning Environment Survey presented a snapshot of how the district was performing in five areas including academic expectations, collaboration, communication, engagement, and safety and respect. As New Haven Public School District implements its School Change Initiative, the data from the Learning Environment Survey will help inform plans and practices that will better serve students.

Learn more about how COMET can improve outcomes for children and programs that serve them by contacting Dave Long at (585) 295-1000, ext. 298 or dlong@childrensinstitute.net.



The "school climate" surveys gave public school parents the chance to report back on how they're treated at their school buildings. Kids said whether they feel safe in school. And teachers answered a range of questions, including whether they feel supported by their bosses, and whether they'd recommend their schools.

**-Reggie Mayo, Superintendent
New Haven Public Schools**

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