



Developments

Serving children and families by promoting

Interdisciplinary education and research • University-community programs • Dissemination

Consumer Health Coalition

Subsidized School Lunch Rosters Yield Uninsured Children For Health Plans

If solving the nagging problem of uninsured children was as easy as offering a free health plan, the Consumer Health Coalition wouldn't be redoubling efforts to find them and sign them to the coverage they are entitled to.

In Allegheny County alone, some 28,000 to 30,000 children remain uninsured, despite being eligible for either Medicaid medical assistance benefits or CHIP, Pennsylvania's free and reduced price insurance plan.

The Consumer Health Coalition, a health care advocacy group, is broadening efforts to tie enrollment in free and reduced school lunch programs to free and reduced price health insurance plans – part of a campaign that shows promise as an effective outreach strategy.

“To find uninsured kids, the places to look are programs that we know are serving the same kinds of families,”

said D. Geoffrey Webster, executive director of the Coalition, whose members include human service agencies and community organizations such as family support centers. “Free and reduced priced lunch is a perfect example. You have almost identical eligibility guidelines.”

Other organizations that routinely serve eligible, but uninsured children are also being asked to help enroll them in the insurance plans.

Both approaches were successful enough in recent trials to justify expanding them, Webster said.

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From Pediatricians' Offices To Book Drives, Diverse Approaches Promote Early Literacy

Using computers to attract young children to read can no longer be considered a new wrinkle. Recruiting college students to mentor developing readers might not be either. But what about a pediatrician promoting early reading development by offering a few tips and a book or two during well-baby visits?

All three represent the diverse approaches to advancing early literacy that have emerged recently in western Pennsylvania.

Last October, an early literacy summit, READY For Life: The Early Literacy Connection, drew 400 education,

civic, and government leaders and rallied them around a goal of having every child, by grade three, achieve grade-level proficiency in reading or better.

Many organizations are taking new and significant steps toward that goal, according to a report, *New and Significant Early Literacy Initiatives In Allegheny County: Spring - Summer 2000*, published by the Policy Initiatives Division of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

Early literacy activities summarized in the report include the following:

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Bullying Is Widespread In U.S. Schools, First Nationwide Study Finds

Hitting, pushing, taunting, threatening, spreading rumors, and intimidating. Bullying comes in many flavors. And, a nationwide study reports, it is widespread in U.S. schools.

Nearly 17% of U.S. school children report being bullied by other students in school, according to a study funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

The study, the first nationwide research on bullying, was based on a survey of 15,686 U.S. public and private school students in grades six through ten.

Bullying has become a hot topic of public debate following reports that it may have been a contributing factor in the high profile shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, in 1999 and at Santana High School in Santee, CA, in 2001.

But such extreme consequences are rare. It is more common for children who are bullied to suffer problems such as low self esteem, depression, poor relationships, and loneliness, even into adulthood. Bullies themselves are more likely to drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol, and engage in criminal behavior later in life.

Bullied Often

In questionnaires, 8.4% of the students reported they were victims of frequent bullying, acts of violence or intimidation that occurred at least once a week. Another 8.5% said they had been targets of bullying "sometimes."

Out of all the students, 13% said they had bullied others. Some students – about 6% of the sample – reported having bullied others and having been bullied themselves.

In all, 29% of the students have been a bully, a target of bullying, or both.

Other dynamics of bullying were also reported. The study found that:

- Bullying happens most often in sixth through eighth grade and the degree to which it does varies little between urban, suburban, and rural schools.

- Boys are more likely to bully others and are more likely to be victims of bullying.
- The most common type of bullying among boys is physical, such as being hit, slapped, or pushed.
- Girls are more often bullied verbally and psychologically, usually through sexual comments or rumors.

One somewhat surprising finding was that bullies, when verbally abusing a classmate, tend not to make derogatory statements about the other child's race or religion. "There seems to be stronger social norms against making these kinds of statements than against belittling someone about their appearance or behavior," said Tonja R. Nansel, Ph.D., one of the authors of the study.

High Profile

Bullying is nothing new. But several factors have thrust the issue into the popular press and public policy arena in recent years.

In the wake of shocking school shootings, investigators, school officials, and parents seek explanations as to why children kill other children so ruthlessly. Bullying often has emerged as a contributing factor.

These shootings – as statistically rare as they are – and greater access to guns tend to cast bullying in a more dangerous light than perhaps was the case decades earlier when it was considered by many as little more than an unpleasant rite of passage.

The fact that bullying is something that studies suggest schools can effectively prevent also contributes to its high profile status.

"A lot of it has to do with wanting to be able to identify these school shooters and the frustration of not being able to," said Edward P. Mulvey, Ph.D., a Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Pittsburgh's Law and Psychiatry Program. "Working with bullying is frequently seen as reasonable. Studies show that dealing with bullying has had some success in reducing aggressive behavior in schools."

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Elementary Extended Year Literacy and Learning Initiative Extended School Year. This initiative offers kindergarten and first-grade students small summer classes designed to improve their reading skills. The intensive program includes four components: read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Writing skills are also emphasized, and independent writing is encouraged. Twenty-one Pittsburgh Public Schools and more than 400 students participate. The program, in its third year, is funded by the Howard and Vira Heinz Endowments, Grable Foundation, and the school district.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Nadine Bachelor, District Coordinator for EEYLLI, c/o Horace Mann Elementary School, Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2819 Shadeland Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15212; (412) 734-6620; Neatchelor1@pghboe.net.

Increasing Public Awareness Billboard and Radio Messages for Parents. Reminding parents and caregivers of the importance of reading to child development is the idea behind the messages on billboards – “Read 10 minutes a day. Build a child’s mind” – placed in six county low-income neighborhoods and radio spots on several popular stations that recall favorite childhood stories. The messages are part of a county-wide early literacy campaign and are based on research done for the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development that found that parents most often identify time limitations as the biggest obstacle for not reading and sharing learning activities with their children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Darryl Ford Williams, Office of Child Development Consultant, 1442 Pennsylvania Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15233; (412) 322-1970; fordwms@aol.com

The Waterford Early Reading Program – Using Computers to Advance Literacy. The Waterford Early Reading Program seeks to nurture an enjoyment of reading with a computer-based curriculum developed by the non-profit Waterford Institute. Young students interact with a comprehensive software curriculum and are given individualized instruction. The program is designed to ensure that students enter first grade prepared to read and able to maintain grade-level skills. Begun in four Pittsburgh schools in 1997, it is being expanded to K-2 students in 13 new city

schools with the support of the district, the Grable Foundation, and The Heinz Endowments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: MaryAnn Bogosta, Area Sales Director, Electronic Education, 3880 Kim Lane, Gibsonia, PA 15044; (724) 449-7230; Maryann.bogosta@electroniceducation.com

JumpStart Pittsburgh – Engaging Committed College Students. The initiative, in its second year, pairs Americorps college students with preschool children who could benefit from a reading readiness program. Some 80 children are enrolled in the program, which includes one-on-one mentor relationships to promote school readiness, and family involvement such as teaching parents how to teach their children at home. The program is sponsored by Pittsburgh-based American Eagle.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Elizabeth Louik, Program Director, JumpStart Pittsburgh, 920 William Pitt Union, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; (412) 648-5867; elouik@pitt.edu.

Ready for Life: the Arts and Literacy Connection – Using Art to Promote Literacy. The program takes to heart recent research suggesting the arts can stimulate learning and development in a child’s early years. Ready for Life, an Arts and Literacy mini-grants program, seeks to strengthen the arts in early childhood education, develop high-quality literacy instruction, and rally parents and communities around early literacy. More than 27 artists and 500 children have participated since June 2000, when the program began.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Diane DeNardo, Education Director, Gateway to the Arts, 2010 B Smallman Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222; (412) 261-9221; gtmpa40@aol.com.

The Starting Points Early Literacy Task Force. Local leaders in early adult literacy gather monthly to address a range of issues, including better preparation of elementary teachers by universities and colleges with an emphasis on improving the instruction of reading, improving the professional development of existing teachers, improving and updating reading courses, and supporting the various

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OCD Offers Courses In Program Evaluation

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development Planning and Evaluation Project is offering human service agencies a series of training courses designed to develop and enhance evaluation skills and information management techniques to improve service delivery.

Designed for directors, program staff, and board members of human services agencies, the upcoming evaluation training series provides the skills to meet a range of evaluation needs. Those interested can choose the topics most important to themselves or agencies.

The series, for example, teaches the skills needed to develop an evaluation program to apply to programs within the participant's own agency, how to design and implement a needs assessment, and how to develop surveys and use focus groups.

Fall-Spring Schedule

The courses are held in the mornings on Tuesdays at the Commissioner Tom Foerster Training and Resource Center located in East Liberty at the corner of Penn and Negley. The following courses are being offered beginning in September.

	Name	CE Hrs.	Time	Date	Prerequisites	Cost per Session
I	What is Evaluation?	2	9 a.m.-11 a.m.	9/18/01	None	No charge
II	Modeling for Evaluation	3	9 a.m.-noon	10/2/01	None	\$45.00
III	Measuring Outcomes & Documenting Services	6	9 a.m.-noon	Two sessions 10/23 & 10/30/01	II	\$90.00
IV	Budgeting for Evaluation	3	9 a.m.-noon	11/13/01	II & III	\$45.00
V	Selecting Evaluation Tools	3	9 a.m.-noon	12/4/01	II & III	\$45.00
VI	Needs Assessment	3	9 a.m.-noon	3/12/02	None	\$45.00
VII	Survey Design	6	9 a.m.-noon	Two sessions 4/16 & 4/30/02	II or VI Required III Recommended	\$90.00
VIII	Focus Groups & Other Qualitative Methods	3	9 a.m.-noon	5/7/02	None	\$45.00
IX	Communicating Findings	3	9 a.m.-noon	5/21/02	II & III or VI	\$45.00

FOR A COPY OF THE PROGRAM BROCHURE, contact Charlene Nelson at 412-624-1188, fax: 412 624-1187, or e-mail: bobcats@pitt.edu.





Home Visiting Revisited

Special Report

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development
Serving Children and Families By Promoting
Interdisciplinary Education and Research • University-Community Programs • Dissemination

Home visiting is an increasingly popular strategy for delivering services, particularly among programs for families with young children. In all, 550,000 American children are estimated to be enrolled in programs that rely on home visits.

Although they share a similar approach to service delivery, the content and goals of programs that use home visiting are diverse. Some, for example, strive to improve the child-rearing skills of parents and the school readiness of children, while others try to prevent child abuse and the development of violent behavior during childhood.

The effectiveness of home visiting is unclear. Home visiting is a service delivery strategy, not a specific service; yet it has never been evaluated as a service delivery strategy and compared with another strategy for delivering the same type of service.

Instead, studies focus on whether the specific services and information provided through home visits improve outcomes of parents and children compared to no service or whatever services families obtain on their own.

Conclusions drawn from such studies of the effectiveness of programs using home visiting are mixed. Several reviews have concluded that home visiting was not especially effective. However, evaluations and other research shed light on certain practices that lend themselves to successful delivery of services in the home.

Approaches To Home Visiting

Several approaches to delivering services through home visits have been used to address issues ranging from child language development to parental depression.

Approaches to home visiting fall into several categories: service-based, information-based, behavior-based, and relationship-based. It is not unusual to find characteristics of several approaches blended into a particular program.

Service-Based

This approach might be taken when a program attempts to reduce stress among family members or support healthy child development by linking parents with services and resources in the community.

Linking parents to community resources is typically done by providing information, referrals, case management, transportation, and other services.

Addressing immediate needs and family crises is a strength of this approach. A crisis distracts parents from issues related to their children, and lending support can help home visitors build relationships with parents. However, there is a risk that focusing on issues of environment might lessen attention paid to children's developmental needs.

A national evaluation of the Comprehensive Child Development Project, which used an "access to services" home visiting approach, found no significant differences in the outcomes of program and non-program control families in all but one of 21 sites. Control families, either by themselves or with the help of other community agencies, accessed as many services as CCDP families. And both groups improved in measures such as parent employment and child's language.¹

Information-Based

Programs that take an information-based approach to home visiting try to improve the skills and knowledge of parents by offering instruction in areas such as caregiving practices, promoting language and cognitive development, and stages of development.

A standard body of information is often used and is delivered in the home through one-on-one sessions with home visitors, handouts, video tapes, and other means.

Studies suggest this approach works best with motivated parents. More intensive intervention is usually required with parents confronted with circumstances that make it difficult for them to focus on the needs of their young children.

Parents As Teachers, a program with 2,000 sites nationwide, takes an information-based approach to try to strengthen parenting skills and a parent's knowledge of child development and to prepare young children for school. A study of two sites reported small and inconsistent gains in parent's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior as whole. But children of teen mothers who received PAT and case management showed gains in cognitive development of up to 1.5 months and had fewer cases of child abuse.²

Behavior-Based

The behavior-based approach promotes the well-being of young children by focusing on improving the way mothers interact with their children.

Skilled, professional home visitors are usually required. They are often called upon to observe infant behavior, interpret what they witness, discuss their observations with parents, and use video tapes and other instructional materials to encourage more positive interactions and to build parents' confidence in their parenting abilities.

Such an approach has been found to be effective with families who typically resist intervention, and with young, inexperienced parents. A Michigan program, Interaction Guidance, targeted just such a population. Positive outcomes reported in studies included mothers improving in relationship measures and weight gains and fewer hospitalizations among failure-to-thrive infants.³

Relationship-Based

Another approach to home visiting emphasizes building trusting relationships among parents and home visitors that become a foundation from which work on improving relationships within families – particularly between parents and children – can begin. Some programs using a relationship-based approach appear well suited for families in which risks to the relationship between the parent and infant are a primary concern or where parental mental illness is a significant factor. Such programs typically require home visitors who are professionally trained in therapeutic interventions.

The UCLA Family Development Project, for example, built relationships among home visitors and parents that were used to help mothers better understand relationships within their families, learn how to effectively respond to their young children, set goals for themselves, and assess and solve problems they confront in life.

A study of the project reported gains that included mothers being more responsive to their infants and having better relationships with their partners. Their levels of depression or anxiety were not affected, however. Children were more compliant, attached, and task involved, but no significant differences in their cognitive development were reported.⁴

Effective Intervention

Evaluations of home visiting programs identify several characteristics that contribute to successful intervention, ranging from the types of issues most often addressed with families to the importance of the staff who are sent to their homes to deliver services.

Program Content

Although their approaches may vary, home visiting programs deal with several common issues important to the early development of children.

How they address those issues is influenced by the program's strategy, objectives, quality of staff, and other factors. Content of home visiting programs fall into several general categories. Key areas include:

- **Address serious needs of the family.** Home visitors counsel, instruct, refer to services, or take other steps to ease a family crisis or fill a critical family need that distracts parents from parenting effectively.
- **Promote self-efficacy.** Improving the competence and well-being of parents is the focus of home visitors whose work might include teaching problem-solving skills, counseling parents on relationships, and helping them set goals and obtain jobs.
- **Promote healthy parent-infant relationships.** Observing and interpreting infant behavior and counseling parents are among ways programs promote healthy parent-infant relationships critical to social-emotional, cognitive, and language development.
- **Promote effective child care.** Most programs take steps to encourage good child care practices, including providing access to health care and immunizations and teaching topics such as feeding and sleeping practices, safety, and substitute caregivers.
- **Instructing parents on child development.** Methods that help parents understand child development and be a positive influence, including teaching about discipline, exploration, and other topics, and using assessments that give parents a better idea of their children's developmental stages.

When To Intervene

Many home visiting programs begin recruiting parents during pregnancy or around the time of birth. They find parents to be the most open to guidance and support during those times. Some programs report the strongest outcomes are realized when enrollment occurs during pregnancy and services are continued throughout infancy.

Other interventions, however, focus on different developmental periods more suited to their objectives. Families of boys ages 18 months to two years old are recruited for

an intervention led by University of Pittsburgh researcher Daniel Shaw, who relies on home visitors to deliver services designed to prevent conduct problems. His research has the premise that the “terrible twos,” a period when even strong parent-child relationships can become frayed, is also a time when family-based interventions work best.

Contact At Home

How often home visitors meet with parents and the period of time over which visits take place are important issues.

Frequency of visits depends upon the approach of the program and many variations have been used, including regular once-a-week visits, declining patterns starting with weekly visits and ending with monthly visits, and visiting patterns determined by the degree of family need.

Unfortunately, program evaluations offer no clear recommendation with respect to frequency of visits, although frequent visits – and services in greater amounts and intensity – are likely to improve most outcomes.

Studies do suggest that, in general, early intervention home visiting programs realize better outcomes the longer services are provided parents and families. Some issues, such as changing attachment status, have been found to require intervention for longer than one year.

However, some brief approaches have also shown promise. The Michigan program, Interaction Guidance, realized improved mother-child relationships and other gains over 10-12 sessions timed to coincide with shifts in developmental stages.⁵

Staff

Recruiting home visitors, training, and other staff-related issues are important to the success of home visiting interventions in which the relationships established with parents are critical to outcomes.

Home visiting programs use professionals as well as paraprofessionals to deliver services to families. Professionals typically have specialized training in human services fields, while life experience and the ability to work with families are often the primary strengths of paraprofessionals. Some studies report that professionals produce better outcomes.

In deciding who to employ, programs need to consider the difference between professionals and paraprofessionals. Among the differences are the following, which were reported in a study of a visiting nurses program in Colorado:⁶

- Nurses spent a greater proportion of time on parenting issues.

- Paraprofessionals spent twice as much time on health and safety issues.
- Nurses completed more visits than paraprofessionals.
- Paraprofessionals had more of their families drop out than did professionals.
- A higher turnover among paraprofessional staff was reported.

Establishing Relationships

Programs that use home visiting approaches often believe that the relationship between home visitors and parents is the central mechanism for inspiring behavioral change.

Establishing a strong relationship with parents requires several skills. For example, home visitors should be able to:

- Listen and respond with empathy.
- Be non-intrusive and respectful.
- Be flexible and responsive to family needs.

Several personal characteristics and attitudes among home visitors help them work effectively with families. These include:

- Warmth, understanding, and the ability to relate to others.
- A commitment to helping empower families.
- Emotional strength.
- Patience and realistic expectations about the pace of change.
- The ability to understand and accept cultural diversity.

Training & Supervision

Training is a key element of home visiting programs that should not be overlooked. Even professionals well-trained in their specialties may lack the breadth of knowledge and skills a comprehensive home visiting approach demands.

Evaluations of home visiting interventions offer several lessons related to training and supervision, including these:

- Professionals often need training relative to the home vis-

iting approach embraced by a program, even though their formal education may have exposed them to a range of strategies and techniques used in home visits.

- Paraprofessionals often require specific skills and close supervision.
- Beyond techniques and strategies, training of home visitors should consider the nature of building and sustaining relationships so critical to their work by providing opportunities to address, for example, their personal background, feelings, and conflicts that may influence their ability to work with families.
- Supervision is more productive when it extends beyond performance review to include helping solve problems presented by individual families and providing opportunities for workers to reflect on their capabilities and vulnerabilities.

Support and opportunities for reflection have enabled staff to work more effectively with families and has helped reduce burn-out and staff turnover rates.

Help With Cognitive Outcomes

Home visiting as a service delivery mechanism is expanding as more programs turn to it to address issues such as violence prevention and school readiness. Studies suggest caution, however, when looking toward home visiting as a means to improve children's cognitive development.

Cognitive development proves to be much less influenced by home visiting programs when compared to health, behavioral, and emotional outcomes. Part of the reason may be that stimulation at home depends a great deal on a parent's motivation, cognitive skills, and the time he or she has to spend with the child.

Center-based approaches to cognitive development show more promise. And studies suggest that – particularly when working with high-risk children – linking home visiting services with quality child care offers a better chance of improving school performance.

References

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Best Practice Briefs, 17; Summaries of home visiting models for very young children – 1. *Best Practice Briefs, 18*; Effective home visiting for very young children – 2. *Best Practice Briefs, 19*; Effective home visiting for very young children – 3. *Best Practice Briefs, 20*. Issues of *Best Practice Briefs* can be obtained by writing to Outreach Partnerships, Michigan State University, Room 6, Kellogg Center, East Lansing MI 48824; or by calling (517) 432-2500.

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This Special Report, written by Jeffery Fraser, is largely based on the above-referenced publications. It is not intended to be an original work but a summary for the convenience of our readers. References noted in the text follow:

¹ St. Pierre, R.G., et al. (1997). *National Impact Evaluation of the Comprehensive Child Development Program: Final Report*, Cambridge: MA: Abt Associates Inc.

² Wagner, M.M., & Clayton, S.L. (1999). The Parents as Teachers program: Results from two demonstrations, *The Future of Children, Home Visiting: Recent Program Evaluations, 9* (1), pp. 91-115. Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

³ McDonough, S.C. (1993). Interaction Guidance: Understanding and treating early infant-caregiver relationship disturbances. In C. Zeanah (Ed.), *Handbook of Infant Mental Health*, chapter 27, pp. 414-426.

⁴ Heinike, C.M., Fineman, N.R., Ruth, G., Recchia, S.L., Guthrie, D., Rodning, C. (1999). Relationship-based Intervention with at-risk mothers: Outcome in the first year of life, *Infant Mental Health Journal, 20* (4), pp. 339-374.

⁵ McDonough, S.C., op. cit.

⁶ Korfmacher, J., O'Brien, R., Hiatt, S., & Olds, D. (1999). Differences in program implementation between nurses and paraprofessionals providing home visits during pregnancy and infancy: A randomized trial. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*(12), 1847-1850.

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, a program of the University Center for Social and Urban Research, 121 University Place, Second Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15260 (412)624-7426.

Internet: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/.

Announcements . . .

CONTACT Pittsburgh Training Crisis Hotline Volunteers

CONTACT Pittsburgh, which operates the Crisis and Suicide Prevention Center serving the Greater Pittsburgh area, is conducting an evening training program for new crisis hotline volunteers in Oakland.

Volunteers are taught how to help troubled adults and teenagers who need immediate emotional support.

CONTACT Pittsburgh offers immediate emotional support by telephone volunteers trained to help people of all ages who may be suicidal, in emotional distress, or in need of reassurance. Last year, the organization offered help to some 25,000 callers.

The Tuesday and Thursday evening training program begins September 18 and continues through October 30.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, call (412)820-0100. ■

Federal Agencies Offer Funds For Child Neglect Research

Several federal agencies have joined together to continue a research funding initiative on child neglect.

The broad initiative offers funds for large-scale research and exploratory and preliminary studies. Areas of interest include antecedents of neglect, consequences of long-term neglect, processes and mediators influencing the effects of neglect, delivery of treatment and prevention services, and other issues.

Deadlines are October 1, 2001 and February 1, 2002. Public and private for-profit and nonprofit organizations are eligible.

The agencies participating in the initiative include the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; the National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Administration for Children,

Youth and Families; Children's Bureau; the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Cheryl Boyce, National Institute of Mental Health, (301) 443-0848; fax, (301) 480-4415; e-mail: cboyce@nih.gov; or visit the NIH website at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-file/PA-01-060.html>. ■

Parenting Guide Series Available From OCD

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development is offering a series of easy-to-use parenting guides offering information and advice on 50 parenting topics. These guides are available free of charge to parents and organizations, agencies and professionals who work with children and families.

The You & Your Child parenting guide series, written and edited by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, covers topics ranging from how to deal with children's fears, finicky eating habits, and aggressive behavior to getting a child ready to read, setting rules, and coping with grief.

Each guide is based on current parenting literature and has been reviewed by a panel of child development experts and practitioners. The series is made possible by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

To receive a printed set of all 50 guides by mail, send a request along with your name, organization, mailing address and telephone number to:

Parenting Guides
Office of Child Development
121 University Place, Suite 201
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

The You & Your Child parenting guides are also available on the Internet for downloading as portable document files at: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/guides.htm. ■

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literacy programs. The 40-member task force is sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Robert Nelkin, Director, Policy Initiatives, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, 2017 Cathedral of Learning, Pittsburgh PA 15260; (412) 624-7986; rnstpnt@pitt.edu.

Early Literacy Leaders. The program seeks to train parents to become advocates for quality early literacy initiatives in their neighborhoods. The advocate parents, with training and support, work on self-designed advocacy efforts to implement early literacy best practices in schools, childcare centers, libraries, pediatricians' offices, family support centers, after-school programs, and other sites with children ages birth to eight years.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Wendy Etheridge, Projects Manager, Policy Initiatives, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, 2017 Cathedral of Learning, Pittsburgh PA 15260; (412) 624-6332; wee@pitt.edu.

Easy As ABC – Engaging and Training Pediatricians. Beginning with Books is partnering with pediatricians to encourage parents to read to their children – and for good reason. Parents, studies report, trust their children's pediatrician and are willing to listen to his or her advice. The program includes giving parents early literacy counseling, books, and other print material at each well-child visit between ages four months and five years. Sponsors include

Verizon, Gateway Health Plan, Ross Pediatrics, Pittsburgh Pediatric Society, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The pilot project is expected to reach some 100,000 children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Betty Segel, Executive Director, Beginning With Books, 7101 Hamilton Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15208; (412) 731-1717; segele@carnegielibrary.org.

READY For Life Book Drive. The book drive is part of a comprehensive set of activities to achieve the goal of every child reading at least at grade level by third grade. Books will be provided to children ages birth to age eight who have few or no books, and to others, including parents of newborns who become involved in literacy training, parents who are improving their own literacy skills, and child care centers. Funds for the drive are being raised through a corporate campaign, media campaign, and community fund drive. Some 12 organizations are involved in the book drive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact: Karen Johnese, Director of Community Affairs, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 34 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222, (412) 263-1340; kjohnese@post-gazette.com.

Fuller summaries of these and many other early literacy activities in western Pennsylvania are found in the OCD report. A copy of *New and Significant Early Literacy Initiatives In Allegheny County: Spring - Summer 2000* can be viewed and downloaded from the Internet at www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/policy21.htm or by calling (412) 624-1186. ■

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Addressing Bullies

Several interventions outside the U.S. have reported success in curbing bullying in schools. The programs, in general, limit opportunities to bully others and reduce the rewards of bullying.

The best known and most thoroughly studied intervention is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program developed in Norway in the mid-1980s and refined over the years. The program recruits school staff, students, and parents to buy into a strategy to increase awareness of bullying, tighten teacher and parent supervision, set clear anti-bullying rules, and protect and support those bullied.

In school, students are more closely supervised during breaks and they discuss bullying in schoolwide assemblies and in classrooms. Rules prohibiting bullying are enforced. Parents are asked to not tolerate bullying. And teachers and schools intervene with bullies, victims, and their parents to ensure that the bullying stops.

Studies suggest the relatively straightforward program is highly effective among students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools, where reported incidents of bullying were reduced by half within two years and the rate of other kinds of antisocial behavior, such as theft and vandalism, also declined. ■

(*Subsidized* continued from Page 1)

Missed Opportunities

In Pennsylvania, two government-funded programs offer health insurance to low-income children. Medicaid provides medical assistance benefits to children and families in poverty. CHIP extends free or reduced price health coverage to children whose families earn up to 200% above poverty-level incomes.

Statewide, about 900,000 children are enrolled in the health plans. But another 200,000 children who are eligible remain uninsured. The reasons include lack of knowledge, lack of trusted connections, confusion about eligibility, a complicated application process, and welfare stigma.

Many low-income parents, for example, do not understand that children may qualify for free or low-cost coverage in a family of four with an annual income as high as \$38,000, Webster said.

Over the years, the application process has been simplified. Parents can apply for both Medical Assistance and CHIP by filling out a single ten-page form, leaving the state to decide which one their children are eligible to receive. But in some cases, parents wait months for the state to sort out eligibility. Requiring hard copy proof of income is another obstacle, particularly for parents with informal work arrangements.

And some parents place a low value on health insurance, making them even less willing to take the extra steps needed to get their children into the programs.

“There are a lot of people who don’t understand the importance of health insurance for their kids,” Webster said. “A significant number of people who don’t have insurance for their children don’t have insurance for themselves. Many have never had insurance.”

Enrolling The Uninsured

The Coalition, whose emphasis is on advocacy for vulnerable populations, has launched initiatives to demonstrate ways to ensure that poor and low-income families receive care.

One is Covering Kids, a program to identify uninsured children from school free and reduced price lunch rosters and help their families enroll them in health plans. Previously limited to a trial in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the program is being expanded with financial support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

On applications for the free and reduced price lunch program last year, Pittsburgh parents found a box they could check if they wanted help getting their children enrolled in government health insurance plans. Some 2,555 families checked the box and more than 400 children have applied for Medical Assistance or the state’s CHIP plan in the first three months of follow up.

“You have hundreds of thousands of kids in the Pennsylvania schools who are receiving free and reduced price lunches and many of them don’t have insurance,” Webster said. “There has never been an attempt until now to look at those lists and work with those families and see if their children are eligible for insurance as well.”

This fall, the Coalition will introduce a common application enabling students to apply for free and reduced price lunches and the government health plans at the same time. The program will return to the Pittsburgh Public Schools and will be introduced to students in the Sto-Rox, Duquesne, and Wilkinsburg school districts.

Meanwhile, the Coalition is continuing to encourage other organizations that serve children and families to develop similar enrollment processes. The 100% Pledge initiative is providing technical assistance to more than 30 agencies to help embed enrollment and retention strategies in community organizations that work with low-income children.

At stake, Webster said, is the stubborn population of insurance-eligible children whose health needs go wanting because they are uninsured. “Immunization, well-baby checks, all the things that keep you healthy are less likely to happen in families who don’t have insurance.” ■

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Announcements . . .

Autism Research Sought In A Range of Categories

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders and its partners are accepting applications for research to clarify the diagnosis, epidemiology, etiology, genetics, treatment, and best means of service delivery for autism and autism spectrum disorders, such as Rett's Disorder.

General research categories include epidemiology, early identification and diagnosis, genetic studies, brain mechanisms, communication skills, psychosocial interventions, and pharmacological/biological interventions.

Deadlines for applications are October 1, 2001 and February 1, 2002.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Judith Cooper, (301) 496-5061; fax (301) 402-6251; e-mail: Judith_Cooper@nih.gov; or on the Internet at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-01-051.html>. ■

Federal Institute Seeks Research On Drug Abuse Treatments

The National Institute on Drug Abuse is seeking applications for interdisciplinary research focused on the structure, processes, and outcomes of drug abuse treatment, prevention, and other services.

Projects should be related to putting evidence-based drug abuse prevention and treatment interventions into practice. NIDA is particularly interested in studies on subgroups, such as minorities, children, and adolescents; studies on matching interventions to individual needs; and research on integrating drug abuse prevention and treatment with other health and social services.

Deadlines for applications are October 1, 2001 and February 1, 2002.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Jerry Flanzer, (301) 443-4060; fax, (301) 443-6815; e-mail: jfl199i@nih.gov; or visit the web site: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-01-097.html>. ■

State Home Improvement Grants Offered To Low-Income Families

State home improvement grants are being offered to low-income families and people of moderate income who are disabled.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development accepts applications all year for its PA Access Grant Program. Redevelopment authorities, local government entities, and nonprofit organizations are eligible for the grants. Nonprofits, however, must apply through a branch of local government or through a redevelopment authority. And contacting DCED regional office before applying is encouraged.

Grants are provided to government entities or qualified nonprofits to help low-income families and the disabled afford home improvements or to make their homes more accessible.

The program's objectives include helping those of limited means afford better housing, encouraging collaboration among housing and disability organizations, promoting consumer control over home improvements, and expanding the living options of the disabled and promoting their safety.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Emily J. White, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, 400 North Street, 4th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17120; (717) 787-7120. ■

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