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Developments

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Parents Led Quiet Revolution

Advocacy For Russian Children With Disabilities Awakens Memories Of Hard Road Traveled In U.S

Before his visit to Russia in October, Robert Nelkin had heard a 25-year-old Russian graduate student confess that she had never once seen a child with Down syndrome on the streets of her home city of St. Petersburg. Her statement struck a familiar chord. "That was true here in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s," Nelkin said. It also indicated that the recent movement in Russia to improve the conditions of children with disabilities has its work cut out. Nelkin knew from years spent advocating for better treatment of Americans with mental retardation that changing entrenched practices is a long, hard road when abuses are hidden from the public and those who are at risk live veiled lives.

It took decades of persistence, lobbying, and lawsuits to win significant gains for Americans with mental retardation, including improved services, the closing of inadequate facilities, the right to a free public education, and the general shift from confining them in institutions to treating them in community settings.

In Russia, the movement is young. And the struggle to improve the outcomes of children with disabilities in tradition-bound orphanages and

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More Companies See A Need To Make Early Childhood Issues Their Business

In the business world, where trends are closely watched, one trend is becoming increasingly clear: businesses, realizing they cannot ignore issues that influence the outcomes of children, are becoming eager and powerful partners in early childhood initiatives that affect families inside and outside their companies.

A number of factors are motivating business to become involved. Children's early experiences, researchers say, strongly influence their development in areas, such as learning, that determine the quality of tomorrow's workforce. And studies suggest that workplace policies that make it easier for parents to balance work and family duties help companies attract and retain valued employees.

Whatever the motive, business can be a strong partner in the cause of young children. But partnerships with business do not build themselves.

While early childhood advocates and business may share similar concerns around children's' issues, they are not cut from the same cloth. Successful partnerships require, among other things, knowledge of the possibilities as well as a willingness to listen and learn.

"It's a two-way street," said Martha Isler, an early childhood consultant who has been involved in several significant western Pennsylvania initiatives. "You're educating the employers about potential supports and the business is telling you what opportunities are there. It's not a unilateral

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institutions is taking place in the context of a nation still feeling the political and economic aftershocks of the dissolution of the Soviet Union some two decades earlier.

Faced with such circumstances, Nelkin was less than optimistic of the movement's chances of success – until he traveled to Russia as part of a team from the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. OCD is partners with Russian professionals in an initiative to train staff in St. Petersburg orphanages, known as Baby Homes. During their stay, the OCD representatives were introduced to Russian advocates for children with disabilities, including a well-organized parents group that has already shown an ability to influence policymakers.

"I went to Russia not feeling very hopeful" said Nelkin, Director of Policy Initiatives at OCD. "I left feeling there is a real possibility for change."

Parent-Driven Reform

Of all the developments that led to improved conditions for Americans with mental retardation, none was more important than the emergence of a well-organized and active parents movement. U.S. parent movements inspired organizations, such as the National Association of Parents and Friends of Retarded Children, which was registered as a nonprofit in 1953 and has labored under several names including the National Association for Retarded Children, the National Association for Retarded Citizens, and, most recently, ARC.

Parents united for several reasons. They came to realize the serious limitations of the institutions and began to uncover neglectful, even abusive practices. In the late 1960s, the concept of normalization emerged, arguing that people with mental retardation can be helped to live according to everyday patterns that are as close as possible to those typical of mainstream society – a lifestyle dramatically different to that lived in the institutions. Many parents grew tired of hearing that nothing could be done for their sons and daughters and began challenging public schools that systematically and unlawfully excluded their children.

The 1960s brought to the White House a president, John F. Kennedy, whose sister, Rosemary, had mental retardation. In 1962, the Kennedy-appointed Panel on Mental Retardation concluded that services in the state institutions should be upgraded and federal funds were appropriated the following year to build community facilities for people with mental retardation. In 1967, the American public received a shocking dose of the realities of life inside mental institutions when *Look* magazine published a photo-rich expose of the deplorable conditions witnessed by Dr. Burton Blatt during a tour of state-run facilities in the eastern U.S. Twenty years of advocacy had awakened the country to the issues of the mentally retarded. But significant changes in policy, practice, and the institutions were slow to follow in Pennsylvania and across the nation.

There were no preschool programs for children with mental retardation and they still were unlikely to receive an appropriate public education similar to other children. Families were hard-pressed to find respite care. And the idea of small group homes in community settings had not become a reality, leaving families with unacceptable options of caring for their children at home without help or sending them to large, overcrowded institutions.

Advocacy, however, seemed to draw strength in the face of this frustration. In 1977, the National Association for Retarded Citizens reported having 220,936 members. Parents whose children were cared for at home emerged as the most vocal and active advocates of reform. They cared deeply about their children's access to a free public education. And they feared the prospect of some day having to send their children to an institution. Their fears were well-founded. Several years after *Look* magazine's widely-read expose of deplorable conditions inside institutions, Nelkin, working as an advocate with the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens in Allegheny County, found no shortage of inhumane conditions to expose in the Commonwealth.

Opening Doors

Institutions discouraged visitors. Most were located in remote sections of the state, hours from the nearest city. Those families concerned enough to inquire in person about

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situation, where you go in and say, 'Here's what you need to do.' It's a process."

Children's initiatives improve their chances of involving business by doing their homework before approaching companies and following a few guidelines, according to the New York-based Families and Work Institute, which has studied and reported on what makes public-private partnerships work.

Getting Business Involved

A sound idea and an organization's track record of doing good work are important, but making a case for business to get involved in children's initiatives usually requires more. The case for early childhood initiatives becomes more compelling when business believes something important is at stake and understands how their involvement could return dividends.

Early childhood initiatives often address a company's business needs in some way. Future prosperity and continued economic development, for example, demand a pool of available workers who have at least earned a high school diploma. An increasing number of jobs require not only high school graduates, but employees able to read challenging material, perform sophisticated calculations, and solve problems independently. Such skills are enhanced by positive early childhood development that quality child care, health care, parenting supports, and other services nurture.

Recruitment and retention are major business concerns. The Families and Work Institute reports that, in some surveys, business ranks retention of employees as a more pressing concern than productivity. Trends reported by the U.S. Department of Labor show America's workforce growing sluggishly at an annual rate of less than 1%, while the number of workers ages 25-44 is shrinking. Such reports give business incentive to consider family-friendly workplace policies, such as flex-time and parenting leave, which studies suggest help increase employee satisfaction and improve retention rates.

It is also helpful to know what business has to offer and is willing to provide when approaching companies as partners.

Business can support early childhood initiatives in a number of ways. They can bring political influence, money, volunteers, and technical expertise to community-wide initiatives. Business can provide product or lend in-house experts such as accountants, financial managers, communications experts, building managers, and risk managers to the cause. Within the business itself, flexible scheduling, child care assistance, leave polices, and parenting education help ease conflicts that arise between work and family and therefore reduce family stress.

Building Partnerships

The Families and Work Institute identifies several other important aspects of rallying business around early childhood issues and forging partnerships that yield benefits to all involved. The Institute's suggestions include:

- **Define a clear vision, goals and strategies**. When dealing with business, success might hinge on the ability to explain clearly and confidently the purpose of the initiative, how goals will be accomplished, and how success will be measured.
- **Identify a champion for the cause**. Support from people of influence in business can be critical. Those with a passion for the cause do not necessarily have to be from the executive ranks, as long as they areinfluential in the decision-making.
- **Enlist business peers in recruiting others**. Those in business can effectively recruit the support of peers. They know the business culture, are usually well connected, their peers often feel more comfortable joining an effort that colleagues endorse.
- **Measure and report results**. Keeping in touch is critical to sustaining partnerships with business. Measuring and reporting outcomes builds credibility and strengthens the case for ongoing involvement, while helping refine strategies as initiatives progress.
- **Recognize the contributions of business**. In most cases, companies welcome press coverage and other types of recognition that puts a shine on their image. Thanking a company with awards and other types of recognition can strengthen its commitment.

Sometimes, business is ahead of the curve. In western Pennsylvania, business leaders understood the risks posed by inadequate early childhood education when their support was sought for the Early Childhood Initiative, one of the most ambitious attempts in the U.S. to bring quality early learning to children in economically disadvantaged school districts. "Business was concerned, in particular, about how well prepared high school graduates were to enter the workforce," said Isler, who was the ECI director. "That led them back to the early childhood years as the foundation for all that children learn."

Their grasp of the urgency of the issue did not prevent organizers from doing their homework before launching a campaign for support and tens of millions of dollars. "We tried to anticipate questions and we put together a substantial business plan," said Karen Shapira, an Executive

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Announcements . . .

Workshop Series Explores Collaboration Building

The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University is offering a workshop series examining aspects of collaborations that, when successful, can extend the resources of nonprofits.

All workshops are held from 8:30 a.m. until 12 noon at the Robert Morris University Pittsburgh Center, 600 Fifth Avenue in Downtown Pittsburgh. Registration is $50 per session. Registration deadline is two weeks before the session.

The following sessions are scheduled in the coming months:

- **Staying On Track and Finishing Strong** (April 11): A workshop covering issues such as how to identify the warning signs of difficulties in collaboration, diagnosing the problem, and life cycles of collaborations and the challenges of each stage.
- **Resolving Conflict – Getting to Win-Win** (May 9): Addresses key skills of negotiation and creative strategies to deal with conflicts that arise within collaborations.
- **Developing Collaborative Leadership** (May 30): Explores issues of effective leadership essential to successful collaborations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Yvonne Van Haitsma at (412) 227-6874. ■

Full Slate Of Training Sessions Cover Family Support Topics

The Family Support Resource and Thomas Foerster Training Center is offering training sessions on a wide range of issues related to family support.

Located in East Liberty, the Center has meeting space for up 40 people and a circulating library which includes books, audio and video tapes on family support and related topics.

The Center is offering the following training sessions in the coming months.

- **Ways to Address D&A Issues with Families**. March 28, 1-4 p.m. A training focused on the behavior signs of drug and alcohol abuse, including instruction on how to develop healthy boundaries and strategies to use in working with families who have drug and alcohol issues.
- **Empower vs. Enable**. April 3, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Promotes an understanding of the difference between empowering and enabling and addresses issues such as personal boundaries in a field that encourages the building of relationships.
- **"Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Family Support MIS Forms But Were Afraid To Ask!"** April 9, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The training will help familiarize family center staff with the forms used to collect information from families for input into the Family Support Management Information System (MIS).
- **Developmental Play Activities.** April 25, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. A "hands on" workshop providing an overview to creating developmentally-appropriate learning activities for infant/toddler groups and on home visits.
- **Mothers Raising Sons**. May 1, 1- 4 p.m. A workshop designed to provide mothers – particularly single mothers – with effective support tools and information to enhance parenting relationships with their sons.
- **Family Support Pre Service Training - *Learning to Be Partners*.** Week of June 3-7, 9 am-4 p.m. An overview from principles to service delivery for staff in "Learning to Be Partners" in Allegheny County Family Support Programs.

GrandKIN Raising GrandKIDS. June 21, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. An interactive workshop that considers the needs and concerns of grandparents and other relatives who are raising children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, contact Nancy Kuritzky, Director, Partnerships for Family Support, (412) 661-9280; fax: (412) 661-9288; e-mail: kuritzky@pitt.edu. ■

The Youngest Offenders: Understanding and Preventing Child Delinquency

Special Report

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development

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Child delinquents are a troubling lot. These children, ranging in age from 7 to 12 years,[1] are at least twice as likely to become chronic criminal offenders than children whose first brush with the law occurs during their teenage years. Greater numbers of them are turning up in juvenile courts. And their crimes are becoming more violent.

These early starters exhibit antisocial behavior around age 7 years on average. By age 14 ½ years – the average age juvenile offenders have their first court contact on a criminal matter – many are well down the path toward becoming career criminals.

Research suggests the foundation for behavior characteristics is laid during the first five years of life. And addressing behavior development early has shown promise as a way to reduce the likelihood of children becoming criminal offenders later in life.

Yet, most programs addressing juvenile crime tend to focus on adolescent offenders or troubled youth in middle school or high school and are designed to remediate problem behaviors after the behaviors emerge. Few integrated initiatives are designed specifically to prevent young children from growing up and becoming the hardened offenders who commit a disproportionate amount of this nation's serious and violent juvenile crime.

Child delinquency is the subject of the latest work of the leading authorities on juvenile offenders, Rolf Loeber, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh, and David P. Farrington, Ph.D., Professor of Psychological Criminology, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England. This report is based in large part on a summary of their *Child Delinquents: Development, Intervention, and Service Needs*, published in 2001 by Sage Publications. The volume draws on the work of a number of experts who collectively produced the report, the first of its kind on child delinquents. The study group on child delinquency was convened by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The Problem

An estimated 253,000 children ages 12 years or younger were arrested in 1997, representing 9% of all juvenile arrests. At first glance, the numbers do not appear to be reason for despair: from 1988-1997, child arrests rose 6% compared to a 35% increase in juvenile arrests overall. Child arrests for property crimes, in fact, fell 17%.

Other trends are more troubling. Juvenile courts have seen a dramatic change in the characteristics of child delinquents brought before the bench and in the crimes they are charged with. Only 10% of child arrests in 1997 were for status offenses, such as curfew violations, running away from home, or violating liquor laws. Increasingly, child delinquents brought to court are charged with violent crimes, drug offenses, or weapons violations. From 1988-1997, their arrests for violent crimes increased 45%, mirroring a 49% increase in violence among all juvenile offenders. Drug abuse violations among child offenders soared 156%.

The 33% rise in juvenile court cases involving child offenders from 1988-1997, which far exceeded the increase in child arrests, suggests police referred more child offenders to court in 1997, probably due to the seriousness of their crimes. From 1988-1997, cases that resulted in formal court-ordered probation for child delinquents increased 73% and residential placements rose 49%.

Compared to adolescents who first become involved in crime in their teenage years, child delinquents are two to three times more likely of becoming serious, violent, and chronic offenders. The cost of such a career is measured in ruined lives, lost potential, and dollars. A single criminal career spanning childhood to adulthood is estimated to cost society between $1.7 million and $2.3 million.[2]

Risk Factors

What are the signs that a child is heading toward delinquency? The answer varies from child to child. Research, however, offers a range of factors that are associated with the development of disruptive behavior.

Studies suggest that the more risk factors a child has, the greater the likelihood of early offending.[3] For example, poor parenting is a risk factor, but when coupled with a child's poor academic performance in a school where rules of conduct are lax and teachers are dissatisfied, the chances of the child actually committing a crime increases.

Several factors signal a child may be heading toward delinquency. The warning signs of child behavior problems

include:

- Disruptive behavior that is much more frequent and severe than what is seen among other children of the same age group.
- Aggression, temper tantrums, and other disruptive behavior that last beyond the "terrible twos and threes."
- A history of aggressive, inattentive, or sensation-seeking behavior during preschool years.

Early Childhood & Family

During the first five years of life, the most important risk factors of child delinquency are related to a child's individual characteristics and family.

Risk factors at home include antisocial parents, a mother suffering from depression, family poverty, marital strife, large family, history of family violence, and parents who abuse drugs or alcohol, discipline harshly and erratically, and rely on poor parenting practices.

Certain characteristics of a child, such as a difficult temperament as an infant and depressed moods as a child, are risk factors for child delinquency. Having been a victim of violence is a risk factor for early offending, as is being exposed to a steady dose of violence on television, in movies and in video games.

Some factors stand out more than others. Aggression appears to be the best predictor of delinquency up to age 12. One recent study reported the strongest predictors of early onset violence include large family size, poor parenting skills, and antisocial parents.[4]

Juveniles who commit property crimes and violent crimes often have a history of conduct problems in preschool, were hyperactive or impulsive at a young age, and engaged in aggressive and covert problem behaviors such as lying or shoplifting.

Outside The Home

Other risk factors come into play as children get older, attend school, and become integrated into their communities.

Schools and how children relate to them are important influences. Poor academic performance is associated with child behavior problems and delinquency.[5] A weak commitment to school, low educational aspirations, and poor motivation are also factors that put children at risk of becoming juvenile offenders.[6]

Research, although sparse, suggests antisocial behavior in children is associated with several school factors, including low job satisfaction among teachers, poor cooperation among teachers, poor teacher-student relationships, poorly defined rules and expectations for conduct, weak rule enforcement, and norms that tend to support antisocial behavior.

Research also suggests an association between juvenile offending and having friendships with deviant peers. Children who count deviant peers among their friends are more likely to be arrested than those who do not associate with such youths. A delinquent sibling can also encourage a brother or sister to become delinquent, especially when the siblings are of a similar age and have a close relationship.[7]

Peer rejection is another factor. One study reported that being rejected by peers in the fourth grade predicted antisocial behavior two years later,[8] and another study found aggressive behavior and rejection by peers in the first grade predicted later delinquency.[9]

Not only does peer rejection pose the threat of starting a child down the path toward delinquency, it may also encourage a rejected child to associate with deviant peers and gangs later in childhood and into adolescence.

Finally, neighborhood quality also relates to child delinquency. The level of poverty in disadvantaged neighborhoods tends to promote the development of antisocial behavior, especially in young children. In disorganized neighborhoods in particular, the efforts of adults to control the behavior of children are often weak, and children's delinquent acts may go unmonitored or even unnoticed.[10]

Prevention and Intervention

The study group on child delinquency recently concluded that prevention is the more effective approach to intervention – an approach contrary to that embraced by most juvenile crime programs, which tend to target problem behavior after it surfaces.

Nearly 71% of the practitioners the study group surveyed thought effective methods were available to address child delinquents and reduce their risk of offending. But only 3-6% of them felt the juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare programs in place are effective.

Preventing child delinquency is complicated by the numerous risk factors involved and their relations to one another. A comprehensive approach is considered to have the best chance of succeeding. The study group recommends integrating several types of programs, including those that focus on multiple risk factors and address behavior management, social competence, conflict resolution, violence, and bullying, as well as services, such as mentoring and after school recreation.

Well-organized, integrated programs designed to prevent child delinquents are very rare. Those that exist tend to be coordinated efforts among police, prosecutors, courts, schools, and mental health services. These programs have not been evaluated, so their effectiveness is unclear.

Several other interventions, however, have strong records for reducing crime among a more general juvenile population. The Justice Department's Blueprints for Violence

Prevention Initiative, for example, identifies 11 effective prevention programs, some of which address children under the age of 12.

The Incredible Years

One program identified by the Justice Department, The Incredible Years Parent, Teacher, and Child Training Series, seeks to reduce aggressive behavior among young children and prevent the social problems and negative reputations that often come with it.

The program targets children ages 2 to 8 who have conduct problems or are at risk of developing them. Parent, teacher, and child training curriculums promote skills and strategies for preventing or reducing aggressiveness and other problem behavior.

Parents are taught interactive play, nonviolent discipline techniques, problem-solving strategies, and ways to promote academic and social competence. Depression, marital discord, anger, poor coping skills and other family risk factors are also addressed.

Training for teachers is designed to help them manage their classrooms, encourage and motivate students, promote pro-social behavior and cooperation among students, and teach anger management and problem-solving skills. A children's curriculum emphasizes having empathy with others, making and keeping friends, managing anger, following school rules, and succeeding at school.

Several studies suggest that each component has in some ways been successful in improving student behavior. In six randomized trials, for example, the parent training component led to fewer conduct problems among children and improved parenting interactions – gains that were sustained up to 3 years after the intervention.[11]

PATHS

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), a school-based curriculum, seeks to promote social and emotional competence and reduce risk factors associated with maladjustment.

The program is taught three times a week by teachers of students in kindergarten through fifth grade as part of the regular curriculum. Students are given lessons in self-control, emotional understanding, self-esteem, relationships, and interpersonal problem-solving skills, and other topics. Activities such as dialoguing, role-playing, storytelling, and modeling by teachers and peers are included in the lessons.

The curriculum also involves teaching students to identify and label their feelings; express, understand, and regulate their emotions; understand the difference between feelings and behaviors; control impulses; and read and interpret social cues.

PATHS students fared well in studies that compare their classrooms with a range of control populations, including normally adjusted students and behaviorally at-risk students. PATHS students did significantly better in recognizing and understanding emotions, understanding social problems, and finding non-aggressive solutions to problems. Teachers also reported significant improvements in children's self-control, ability to tolerate frustration, and use of conflict resolution strategies.

Multisystemic Therapy

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) addresses a variety of factors that influence antisocial behavior, recognizing that problems that often lead to crime stem from a complex social network that includes a child's family, community, and schools.

The program was developed as a community-based treatment for youth with serious behavior disorders who are at high risk of out-of-home placement. MST is usually provided in the home, schools, and other locations in the community. Collaboration among therapists and family members is stressed.

Steps to empower families and prevent delinquency include addressing barriers to effective parenting, such as parental drug abuse, promoting the capacity of parents to monitor and discipline their children, helping families build social support networks, discouraging children from becoming involved with deviant peers, and helping them develop relationships with pro-social peers. Treatment, on average, lasts four months.

Studies report reductions ranging from 25% to 70% in long-term rates of repeat arrest among children who completed MST. Families report significant improvements in family functioning and fewer mental health problems among their children.

Functional Family Therapy

A short-term program, Functional Family Therapy, is a well-studied multisystemic intervention that seeks to help diverse populations of under-served and at-risk children and families who, often entering the system angry and hopeless, tend to resist treatment. Although not tailored to a specific age, the program has been successful with a wide range of problem youth and their families.

Children usually attend 12 one-hour sessions over 3 months. Various techniques are used to increase hope, expectations of change, respect for individual differences and values, and to address obstacles to change, such as negative attitudes within the family. Plans to change behavior are developed and implemented for each family member. And clinicians help families apply positive changes to specific problems or situations, link them to resources in the community, and work with them to avoid relapse.

Significant and long-term reductions have been reported

in repeat offending and in the likelihood of siblings engaging in high-risk behaviors. The nation's largest FFT site reported 19.8% of children who completed the program committed an offense in the following year, compared with 36% of youth in the control group.

Shift Of Focus

Child delinquents represent a serious problem for the nation. They are at high risk of becoming dangerous and violent juvenile offenders and career criminals. And they are voracious consumers of public services including special school programs, child welfare, mental health, and criminal justice programs.

To address the problem, the Justice Department's study group on child delinquency recommended the focus of efforts to reduce serious delinquency be shifted from adolescence and teenage years to earlier in childhood, when most of conditions that lead to serious juvenile offending begin.

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This Special Report, written by Jeffery Fraser, is based on the publications cited above. 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] Child delinquents are not defined uniformly in the U.S. The state-defined minimum age of criminal responsibility ranges from 6 to 10 years old. In this report, child delinquents are defined as children ages 7 to 12 years old who have committed a delinquent act according to law.

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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/.

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their children were often turned away at the door. Nelkin, parents, and other advocates were just as unwelcome. When they did manage to get inside an institution, it was usually on the strength of a complaint lodged with the right public official or by threat of court order. Considering what they witnessed once inside, the reluctance of institutions to open their doors was not surprising.

Facilities were overcrowded. One institution housed 3,200 children and adults and had 50 residents for every staff member. Many of these residents were unable to perform daily living tasks, such as feeding themselves, and toileting. Medical care was inadequate and the food was barely edible. Activities were rarely organized. Their contact with the world outside the institution was negligible. Education was nonexistent. It was not uncommon to see older children and adults being used as forced, unpaid labor. In some facilities, people with mental retardation were kept in cages. "That was what the core of the movement was about – bringing the conditions to light," Nelkin said.

The most troubling problems they investigated were patient deaths, which too often had been quietly dispatched after only cursory review by officials who considered fatal accidents as unavoidable hazards in institutional settings. Residents drowned in bath tubs and in lakes on the grounds of institutions. They choked to death on food. They died from complications arising from untreated medical conditions. One southwestern Pennsylvania institution had one accidental death a month during a five-month period. An institution in eastern Pennsylvania was closed following an investigation of the bathtub drowning of a 13-year-old Allegheny County boy, whose mother called Nelkin after she had been notified. "She was beside herself, blaming herself." Nelkin said. "She had sent her son there because she thought – and had been told – that this was a place that would help her son." The investigation by Nelkin and the Association found a general disregard for the well-being of residents, lax supervision, and a poorly trained staff. It also exposed other avoidable deaths, including one resident who had been found frozen to death outside and another who had been crushed in the compactor of a garbage truck.

Parent-led investigating teams looked into institutions across the state, exposing conditions, alerting public officials, raising questions, demanding answers. When public officials failed to respond, the parents took their case to the news media or to court. Another aspect of their strategy to promote reform was to offer solutions and alternatives. "That was incredibly important," Nelkin said. "One of the reasons why the deplorable conditions existed for so long was that there was the perception that there were no available alternatives."

Fruits Of Advocacy

Eventually, many of the alternatives to institutionalizing Americans with mental retardation that were suggested by parents and advocates were adopted. Community residences were developed and today small group homes are found in almost every Pittsburgh neighborhood. The Social Security Act was amended to provide people with disabilities with Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI), enabling many to live in their communities. Respite care for families and other supports became more available, as did early intervention, pre-school, adult training, and other services for people with mental retardation.

Courtroom victories included Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, a 1971 federal district court case that affirmed the right of children with disabilities to a free public education. The U.S. Congress built upon the court ruling and passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which not only guaranteed public education for children with disabilities, but transportation and developmental, corrective, and other support services as well. While President, Richard Nixon signed an executive order setting a goal to move about one-third of the 200,000 people in mental institutions to community residential placements. Other laws gave states broad responsibilities to develop services for Americans with disabilities, established protection and advocacy systems to protect their rights, and made it unlawful to discriminate against them.

Nearly every victory turned on the strength of the parents movement, which is why Nelkin, after assessing the potential of the Russian parents group, left St. Petersburg with much more optimism than he had when he arrived. "The changes in society and government now allow parents to organize and raise these issues," he said. "The parents association in St. Petersburg has received significant recognition, they are becoming well respected, and they've already received some funding. The professional community, the people we've worked with, are enlightened. I am hopeful."

As in the U.S., success will be measured in part by whether future generations see children with Down syndrome on the streets of their cities as well as in stores, parks, schools, and churches, and accept them as friends and neighbors.

*(**Early Childhood Issues** continued from Page 3)*

Committee member of the United Way of Allegheny County who was involved with ECI from its earliest days. "We said to people, 'We have as much information as we can possibly have. We need you to be part of this. It's about the economic and social health of the community.' It was the convincing nature of the argument, the collective vision for the community, the thorough business plan, and we created a critical mass of their compatriots who had bought into it, which was not irrelevant."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Portions of this report was based on *Ten Tips for Getting and Keeping Business Involved*, by Nina Sazer O'Donnell and Carter McJunkin, and published by the Families and Work Institute. The publication and other related information can be found at the Institute's website, www.familiesandwork.org. ■

Announcements . . .

Free OCD Parenting Columns Well Suited For Newsletters

Dispensing parenting advice, long the domain of grandmothers and other family relations, is drawing more attention from policymakers and others looking for ways to strengthen families and communities – and for good reason. Studies show effective parenting improves a child's chances of healthy development.

Sound parenting advice on more than 50 topics is now available free of charge in a series of columns written by Robert B. McCall, Ph.D., Co-Director of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development and former columnist for *Parents* magazine.

The columns, well-suited for newsletters and community newspapers, provide clear, concise and accurate information on topics such as dealing with a child's lying, how to toilet train, what to do about nightmares, discipline and finicky eaters, and how to recognize and address grief in children.

OCD offers the columns free of charge as Microsoft Word documents, which can be viewed and downloaded from the Internet at: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/columns.htm

The public service initiative is made possible by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education, whose contributions support production of the columns and other Office of Child Development projects. ■

Summer Fellowships In Child And Family Policy

The Center for Young Children and Families at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York is offering a summer fellowship program for doctoral students in child and family policy.

Putting Children First is a Fellowship Training Program in Child and Family Policy with a developmental perspective. It provides the opportunity to link academic learning across disciplines with interests in social policy. The program is offered in cooperation with the Society for Research on Adolescence and the Society for Research in Child Development.

Full-time summer placements are available for eight weeks in a variety of policy settings in New York City government and non-profit agencies. Fellows also attend weekly seminars at Columbia University at the Center for Young Children and Families, with leading policy scientists and practitioners.

Deadline for applications is April 5.

Fellowships begin June 3 and end July 26. Fellows receive a $4,700 stipend. Information about University housing is available.

To apply, applicants should send a two-page statement describing their interests in policy and research, a completed application, a current curriculum vitae, two letters of recommendation, and a self-addressed stamped postcard.

FOR INFORMATION, contact Pia Rebello Britto, Center for Young Children and Families, Teachers College, Columbia University, Box 39, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027; e-mail: pmrll@columbia.edu; or visit the Internet web site at : www.tc.columbia.edu/academic/cycf/summer.htm.

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Announcements . . .

Enhancing Nonprofit Boards Focus Of Leadership Academy

The Nonprofit Leadership Institute at Duquesne University is offering a Leadership Academy addressing issues important to nonprofit boards.

Topics covered during the Leadership Academy, which is scheduled for June 7 and 8, include: basic responsibilities of nonprofit boards, fundraising, fiscal management, social entrepreneurship, and others.

The sessions will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day in the Institute's conference facility on the Duquesne University campus, Pittsburgh.

Breakfast Series

Also offered is a Leadership Breakfast Series addressing a range of topics of interest to nonprofits, including:

- **Philanthropy in the Wake of Crisis** (April 4). The session discusses the historical course of philanthropy in times of war, and other issues.
- **Power Tools in the Boardroom** (April 11): Session examines practical applications to improve board meetings, and other related topics.
- **Important Trends in the Nonprofit Sector** (April 25): Session discusses topics such as how organizations can remain aware of the changes the economy has on them.
- **Critical Components for Building High-Performance Teams** (May 2): Session examines stages in the development of a successful team, and other topics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Leadership Academy and Leadership Breakfast Series, contact Annamarie Akhand (412) 396-6231; e-mail: nli@duq.edu; or visit the web site: www.leadership.duq.edu/nonprofit. ■

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
UCSUR/121 University Place
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 ■

Notice to *Developments* Subscribers

To subscribe to *Developments*, a free publication, please mail the following information to our Office (if you have not already done so): name, profession, title/position, work address, and phone number. (See this newsletter's back page for the OCD address.)

To submit material, write the Office of Child Development. Notices of programs or services will be published at the editor's discretion. All programs must be educational and nonprofit, and any fees charged must be noted. Publication of services does not imply an endorsement of any kind by OCD, its funding agencies, or the University.

Coming Events . . .

Family Support Conference Set For May, Explores Raising Children In 21st Century

The Allegheny County Family Support Conference, an annual event that has drawn audiences as large as 1,000 people, will this year feature guest speakers and workshops on the theme, *Raising Children in the 21st Century*.

Pittsburgh will once again host the conference, which will be held May 28 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel at Station Square.

The 2002 conference will address key issues related to raising healthy children in today's world, including working parents, child care, intergenerational parenting, education, mental health, abuse and neglect, and others. The conference also explores a holistic approach to raising children as a shared responsibility between parents, family members, and the community; illustrates how research and best practices can be applied to families, partnerships, and other community initiatives in raising healthy children; and provides tools to promote, recognize, engage, and build family partnerships that enhance the outcomes of children.

Keynote speakers include James Roddey, Chief Executive of Allegheny County, and Dr. Ronald B. Mincy, Professor of Social Policy and Social Work Practice at the School of Social Work, Columbia University, and formerly of the Ford Foundation, where he developed the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative.

The Conference will also include:

- 34 workshops on topics ranging from helping children feel safe and ways of supporting working families to kinship care and understanding infant mental health and development milestones.
- A speak-out session that gives parents and others a chance to share ideas, dreams, and stories related to family support. The session will be hosted by Bev Smith, syndicated talk show host, American Urban Radio Networks, Sheridan Broadcasting System.
- Family support awards and recognition.
- Youth entertainment.

Registration deadline is May 11. Registrations after May 11 will be accepted only as space permits.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, or to register, contact Elizabeth Trexler, Conference Coordinator, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, at (412) 624-1338.

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University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development
University Center for Social and Urban Research
121 University Place, Second Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

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