

# OCD | Developments

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Office of Child Development

## **SELS Project Begun in Four Communities**

# Improving Early Learning Opportunities To Brighten Futures Of Needy Children

Forty years of research shows that when low-income children are given high quality early learning opportunities, they gain – in school, at home, and later in life. The challenge is finding ways to promote quality learning opportunities in neighborhoods that are typically short of the resources necessary to create them.

In Allegheny County, the Strengthening Early Learning Supports (SELS) Project is taking up that challenge, putting existing services and the strength of collaboration to work to improve early childhood care and education in four of the region's neediest communities.

The project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and The Heinz Endowments, has set goals of improving literacy, raising overall quality of child care, improving children's development and learning readiness, and helping providers give children with special needs the quality learning experiences they deserve.

To meet the goals, SELS teaches parents and providers strategies that enhance learning and development and supports them as they work with

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## **PA Children**

# Pennsylvania Sharpens Its Focus On Helping Children And Families

Several state initiatives over the past 18 months have left Pennsylvania better positioned to address issues important to the well-being of children and families, including making it easier for troubled families to get the services they need when they need them and improving the quality of early childhood education and child care.

These efforts include a Governor's Cabinet for Children and Families and a state Office for Child Development, which have raised the profile of children and family issues at

the highest levels of state government and promoted greater coordination among government departments and collaboration with stakeholders outside Harrisburg.

In education, reports suggest Accountability Block Grants are helping school districts shore up specific needs, particularly early learning. And recent programs such as Keystone Stars are helping to achieve a goal of making higher quality child care available to more children.

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those strategies. The approach relies on training, technical assistance, and incentives that promote quality.

SELS is also taking steps to ensure high quality early neighborhood child care providers.

### Communities In Need

The four SELS communities – the Allegheny County municipalities of Braddock, McKees Rocks and Wilkinsburg, and Pittsburgh’s Hill District neighborhood – have significant numbers of low-income families and higher than average population of children school age or younger. Of the school aged children, 78% are eligible for free and reduced lunch programs.

Child care quality in these communities is generally low. In school, children’s reading and math skills are poor overall. The number of children in special education programs is high with enrollment across the four school districts at 19% – 61% higher than the county as a whole. Drop-out rates are 280% higher than the county average.

However, each community can build on existing resources. Eight family support centers reside in these neighborhoods and are linked to one another through the Family Support Policy Board, recipient of the SELS grant. The centers receive training and technical assistance from the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development (OCD), fiscal agent for SELS. Each community also has a high-quality child care center to host the SELS project.

### Focus On Early Years

The emphasis on strengthening early learning opportunities to improve child outcomes is supported by the latest brain research and studies of early childhood education programs.

Scientists now know that the brain develops from the earliest moments of life and that experiences, nurturing, and positive relationships with parents, teachers, and other adults are highly influential to that development.

Studies also show that children perform better in school, grade retention is lower, fewer of them need special education services, and rates of antisocial behavior and delinquency rates decline when they are exposed to high quality early learning experiences that include well-trained staff and warm, stimulating relationships.

### Strengthening Community Resources

SELS expects to serve more than 10,000 children through neighborhood family support centers, family and group homes, and non-profit and for-profit child care centers.

The program places a premium on collaboration among local organizations and coordinating existing services and systems. SELS, for example, takes advantage of growing state and federal interest in early childhood care and education, using existing systems such as Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania’s child care quality program; PA Pathways, a statewide system of training; Early Intervention; and Service Pathways, the web-based system of special service coordination.

“One of the things that we all struggle with is that getting some of these quality initiatives to scale can be tough,” said Margaret Petruska, Program Director, Children, Youth & Families, The Heinz Endowments. “The formula is, do you have public dollars to help sustain the effort. In this case, not only are there federal government dollars, but our state is very interested in providing technical assistance to these communities.”

### Early Literacy Crucial

Early literacy, a key to school success, is often underemphasized in curricula and many of those who work in early childhood programs enter the field with little training in how to help young children build a foundation in reading.

Most, however, appear eager to learn. Surveys suggest teachers want to be better trained in ways to promote literacy and low-income parents say they want greater emphasis placed

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on reading and school readiness.

SELS addresses such needs with services to improve the early literacy competencies of parents, caregivers and child care providers.

Beginning With Books, for example, provides Raising Readers clubs designed to help parents establish a foundation for reading and writing at home through workshops and other activities about reading with children, phonetic awareness, using the library, and other topics.

“Parents gain new knowledge, share ideas with each other, and talk about the importance of reading and writing. The focus is on making sure they understand how important this process is,” said Sandi Koebler, Beginning With Books Director of Programming.

Other services include “Lullabies to Literacy,” piloted by Family Communications, Inc. that helps parents and caregivers nurture emergent literacy in infants and toddlers. Allegheny Intermediate Unit consultants offer child care providers training in the AIU “Early Childhood Literacy Matrix” model designed to improve classroom practices in early literacy topics such as phonetic awareness and oral language/vocabulary. And home visitors are trained to work with parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers on promoting literacy.

### Promoting Development And Learning

The school readiness of children is a chief concern expressed by both parents and providers, who say they want and need training and help to promote child development and early learning.

SELS coordinates community resources and existing training systems to help parents and child care providers become better skilled at promoting the development of children in their care. For example, child care coaches provide outreach to the 123 providers in the four communities. SELS surveys family support centers to identify specific needs and provides targeted training and technical assistance in child development and parent education. The program also brokers PA Pathways to give providers easier access to child development and early learning training.

For children entering school, SELS convenes kindergarten teachers, family support workers, child care and Head Start staff, and parents to plan for a smooth transition.

### Special Care For Special Needs

Children with special needs pose a dilemma for providers of child care and early education. Most programs are simply ill-equipped to address the needs of these children, particularly those with severe disabilities.

In fact, 23% of Pittsburgh area providers offer no care at all for children with more limiting special needs, an OCD study reports. In Pennsylvania, 71% of providers said they expelled or threatened to expel a child for aggressiveness in the past two years, according to a statewide survey. At the same time, providers are concerned about their limitations – 68% of providers across the state say they want more training on children with disabilities.

SELS provides help in identifying children with special needs, eliminating barriers to service, connecting children and families to appropriate services, and training parents and providers in strategies to enhance the development and early education of these children.

“The goal is to keep these children in child care. Children with behavioral problems too often go from one child care setting to another because they don’t get help,” said Jacqueline Dempsey, consultant for the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, a nonprofit working with SELS to identify and assess children with special needs.

Providers are given intensive training in how they can better support children with special needs. This training includes two federally-supported workshops Family Communication, Inc. has conducted with success in other states that examine children’s behaviors, encourage positive ways to deal with them, and emphasize relationships with the child, parents, and others.

“The training improves the skills of the provider,” said Annette Santella, Family Communications Training Coordinator. “The reason the federal government continues to fund the initiative is that managing a child’s behavior is on the top of the list of issues child care providers and parents want help with.”

### Making Quality An Issue

The quality of child care is a national, state, and regional issue.

Studies show that high-quality early childhood programs

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## Pennsylvania Child and Family Impact Seminars

# UCPC Initiative Informs State Policymakers On Child, Family Issues

A collaboration of university experts is helping Pennsylvania policymakers gain insight into issues important to children and families, arming them with evidence-based information vital to making informed decisions on early childhood education and other child-related topics on the Commonwealth's policy agenda.

In June, the Pennsylvania Child and Family Impact Seminars initiative is scheduled to begin with a workshop on pre-kindergarten issues. The initiative is expected to offer an ongoing series of seminars, briefing papers, and other activities to inform those involved in making decisions about policies that affect children and families and those who implement the policies.

The initiative is based on a model first tried in Wisconsin that has been adopted in 18 other states.

In Pennsylvania, the seminars are being developed by the Universities Children's Policy Collaborative (UCPC), a collaborative that includes the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, the Center for Public Policy at Temple University, and the Pennsylvania State University College of Health and Human Development.

The seminars are primarily intended to inform state legislators, but other officials are invited to participate and share the information presented, including officials of the executive branch and legislative staff.

UCPC is working with legislative leaders and the Legislative Office for Research Liaison to identify pressing issues of interest to policymakers.

"We strive to be reactive, not proactive," said Michelle Harmon, administrator of the program for UCPC. "We see our role as providing information that relates to specific issues already on the policy agenda that would help them make better informed decisions."

UCPC was created to provide nonpartisan information on issues important to the well-being of children, youth, and families. Previous projects include providing research, surveys, and other evidence-based information to the Governor's Task Force on Early Care and Education, whose landmark report on this critical issue was released in 2002.

The Child and Family Impact Seminars model recognizes the need for assisting policymakers by providing science-based information and a neutral, nonpartisan forum to promote dialogue and seek common ground on a range of policy alternatives. The initiative is expected to:

- Provide research and practice-based information useful in developing state-level policies that strengthen and support children and families.
- Increase knowledge of current policy issues by presenting objective, state-of-the-art research.
- Identify timely issues of interest to state policymakers and present innovative, politically and economically feasible policy options for making complex problems more manageable.
- Foster a child and family perspective in policymaking and encourage those who make and implement policy to consider how policies and programs affect the well-being of children and families.
- Develop innovative delivery methods for disseminating research to state policymakers.
- Facilitate communication and establish working relationships among researchers, policymakers, and policy implementers.

The June pilot workshop, "Universal Pre-K and Other Alternatives for Pennsylvania," includes an overview of services available to children in Pennsylvania and experts who will discuss a universal pre-kindergarten program in Tulsa, Okla., Florida's passage of a universal pre-kindergarten program scheduled to begin in September, and other topics.

The Pennsylvania initiative is part of a network organized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which started the Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars to provide information to the Wisconsin legislature. Success of that initiative led to a grant to extend to the initiative to other states. Each state is responsible for its own seminars with The Policy Institute providing a network and resources to help affiliates organize their activities. ■

# OCD | Special Report

## Parents And Adolescents: Positive Relationships And How They Influence Outcomes

Adolescence is a trying time for both child and parent. As children struggle to understand and deal with the physical, cognitive, psychological, and social changes they are experiencing, parents may feel their relationship has been turned upside down. Their child all of a sudden has become less willing to accept their advice, more independent, argumentative, and unwilling to acknowledge that a parent could have even the slightest clue about what they are going through.

Given such changes, parents may worry that their adolescent children have come to value their relationship less and that they have lost considerable influence over the direction of their children's lives. Research suggests otherwise.

An examination of a national survey of teenagers in the United States provides evidence that the majority of adolescents respect, admire, and like their parents and enjoy the time they spend together. This evidence is encouraging. Studies in the U.S. and other nations report a link between quality parent-child relationships and several positive outcomes among teenagers.

### Changes During Adolescence

Parent-child relationships grow more complex during adolescence. Children undergo profound developmental changes during these years. For instance:<sup>1</sup>

- Their physical development progresses at a rapid rate. Changes in height and weight are common. Puberty leads to development of several secondary sexual characteris-

tics. Brain development continues into late adolescence. It is not unusual for adolescents to feel awkward, compare their appearance to that of others, worry they are not developing at the same rate as others, and ask questions regarding sex.

- Cognitively, adolescents develop advanced reasoning skills and abstract thinking skills. They become able to think about how they feel and how they are perceived by others. They are much more self-conscious and tend to believe everyone is watching them and is concerned about what they do and think.
- They begin to form their identities, seek autonomy, and establish intimacy. They start to become comfortable with their sexuality. Adolescents often spend more time with friends and more time outside the home. They tend to want more privacy and be vague when it comes to explaining what is happening in their lives. They can be argumentative.

Adolescence is far from a trouble-free period. Parent-child relationships, in particular, are more challenging.

There is evidence to suggest many parents feel this difficult developmental period signals a loss of influence over their child. A 2004 Child Trends public opinion poll found that about half of adults believe a child's peers and parents have equal influence. Only 28% think parents have a greater influence over their adolescent child than the child's friends.

## Adolescent Perspective Of Relationships

Survey data suggest that, in general, a majority of adolescents enjoy positive relationships with their parents, although the numbers decline a bit during early adolescence and are lower among children who live with stepparents.

Their perspective on relationships with parents were measured in a study of data from interviews conducted as part of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997 cohort (NLSY97). The adolescents ages 12-18 years were asked questions about their parents from 1997 to 2001.

Overall, they expressed positive feelings about both their mothers and their fathers. This was especially true among children who lived with their biological parents. For example:

- About 84% of adolescents whose parents lived with them agreed or strongly agreed that they think highly of their mother. About 81% felt the same way about their father.
- More than 57% agreed or strongly agreed they wanted to be like their mother and 61% felt the same way about their father.
- Nearly 79% reported they enjoy spending time with the mother and 76% said they enjoy spending time with their father.

## Stepparent Relationships

Adolescents are less positive about how they feel about their stepparents than children are about their biological parents. However, the majority still responded in ways that suggest they respect their stepparents and want to spend time with them.

Among adolescents ages 14-15 years whose parents live with them, 67% agreed or strongly agree that they think highly of their stepfathers, compared to 82% of those who live with their biological fathers. About 59% said they enjoyed spending time with their stepfathers, compared to 78% who enjoyed spending time with their biological father. Only 39% said they wanted to be like their stepfather, compared to 63% for biological fathers.

Similar differences were found when relationships with biological mothers and stepmothers were compared.

## Slight Decline

Survey data show that children's overall positive attitudes toward relationships with their parents decline somewhat as they move through adolescence. For example, the proportion of adolescents who stated positive feelings about their parents dropped from 70% to 64% for mothers and from 70% to 61% for fathers as the adolescents grew from ages 12 to 17.

The modest decline was steepest during early adolescence and leveled out during the later years. Feelings about mothers actually improved when children reached ages 16-17 years.

## Importance Of Relationships

How adolescents feel about their relationships with their parents is important in light of research that suggests child-parent relationships play a key role in a number of critical outcomes.

Numerous nonexperimental studies have consistently found warm and positive child-parent relationships to be associated with positive academic, social and emotional, and behavioral outcomes. These patterns are found in studies of children in the U.S. and studies of children in other countries.

## Academic Outcomes

Better academic outcomes are generally seen among adolescents who have positive relationships with their parents.

NLSY97 data, for example, suggests that children with positive relationships with their parents are more likely to earn good grades in school and less likely to be suspended than adolescents with less positive relationships. Such outcomes were reported even after other social and economic influences were taken into account.<sup>2</sup>

In other industrialized nations, better academic outcomes were also found among students with good relationships with their parents. The findings were part of an examination of data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a survey by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The data suggested a link between frequent parent-adolescent activities were associated with higher levels of reading and literacy in science and mathematics. In most of the countries, eating meals together was the activity that brought children and parents together most frequently. In 16 of the 21 nations studied, students who frequently had meals with their parents had higher levels of reading literacy.

Students who often discuss politics or social issues with their parents were found to have significantly higher levels of reading and literacy in mathematics and science, according to the international data.

### Social & Emotional Well-Being

The psychological, social, and behavioral well-being of adolescents is also associated with the quality of their relationships with their parents.

The NLSY97 data suggests that high-quality parent-child relationships are linked to better mental well-being and fewer instances of delinquency.<sup>3</sup> Other studies report finding positive adolescent-parent relationships to be associated with such positive outcomes, including self-confidence, empathy, and a cooperative personality.

### Long-Lasting Influence

Studies based on national survey data have found that strong relationships among parents and their adolescent children influence outcomes into adulthood. In some cases, these relationships produce benefits to both the child and parent. For example:

- Positive parent-child relationships are associated with lower levels of psychological distress among adult children and their parents.<sup>4</sup>
- Close relationships during childhood and adolescence tend to promote self-esteem, happiness, and satisfaction into adulthood.<sup>5</sup>

Such evidence underscores the importance of promoting close, warm relationships among parents and their adolescent children. The studies and survey data also suggest that parents are mistaken if they believe they no longer have much influence over their adolescent children or that their adolescent no longer values their love, attention, advice, and support.

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

<sup>1</sup> Huebner, A. (2000). Adolescent growth and development. Virginia Cooperative Extension, publication 350-8503. <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/family/350-850/350-850.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Garrett, S. B., Kinukawa, A., Lippman, L., & Michelson, E. (in press). The parent-adolescent relationship scale. In L. Lippman (Ed.), *Conceptualizing And Measuring Indicators Of Positive Development: What Do Children Need To Flourish?* New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Press.

<sup>3</sup> Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., & Garrett, S. (2004). The continued importance of quality parent-adolescent relationships during late adolescence. Manuscript submitted to the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

<sup>4</sup> Umberson, D. (1992). Relationships between adult children and their parents: Psychological consequences for both generations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *54*, 664-674.

<sup>5</sup> Amato, P. (1994). Father-child relations, mother-child relations, and offspring psychological well-being in early adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *56*, 1031-1042.

## Announcements . . .

### Family Support: Today & Tomorrow's Children

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[www.education.pitt.edu/oed](http://www.education.pitt.edu/oed).

### Fatherhood Institute Training Teen Fathers: Facts and Fiction

Wednesday, May 4, 2005  
9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development  
400 N. Lexington Avenue, LL  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

**National Trainer Kirk E. Harris** is the Senior Group Vice President and General Counsel at Family Support America. Dr. Harris initiated his work in fathering as a consultant with the Paternal Involvement Demonstration Program (PIP) in Chicago. PIP was an innovative public/private collaboration that provided direct services to low-income, non-custodial fathers to support their efforts to connect financially and emotionally to their children and families. He went on to cofound the Center on Fathers Families, and Public Policy, which was the policy arm of the Ford Foundations/ National Fragile Family Initiative.

#### Learning Objectives:

- Learn who teen fathers really are...Facts from Fiction
- Learn key principles and program components in providing services to teen fathers
- Explore teen father recruitment and retention strategies
- Learn how to incorporate the key teen father components into program development

Registration Fee: \$75 (Lunch Included)

Approved for CEU's

For detail information, please visit our website:  
[www.education.pitt.edu/oed](http://www.education.pitt.edu/oed).

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clearly promote literacy and school readiness. However, most of these programs are rated only “fair” or poorer. In the Pittsburgh area, a sample of 70 centers and homes found that only 14% offered high-quality care. Across Pennsylvania, the quality of care has fallen in the last five years, according to a statewide survey.

Raising the overall quality of child care is a key goal of the SELS program, which places an emphasis on getting providers involved in the state’s Keystone STARS quality program. Before SELS, only eight of the 123 neighborhood child care providers were enrolled in STARS.

“If we fast-forward to the future and see 123 providers in these communities all involved with Keystone STARS, all targeted toward early literacy, early learning, and high quality care, there will be a very big improvement in the learning

opportunities children have before they reach kindergarten,” said Laurie Mulvey, Director of Service Demonstrations, University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

Every child care provider in the SELS communities is contacted, encouraged, and supported to enroll in STARS, which sets quality standards with measurements and offers financial incentives for ongoing improvement. SELS coaches also provide case management to support providers in using the system effectively now and in the years to come.

As SELS host centers maintain high levels of quality, it is hoped that they will be seen as a model of what can be achieved in low-income communities to give young children much better opportunities to learn, succeed in school, and enjoy brighter futures. ■

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## High-Level Audience

Giving children and family issues a regular audience at the highest levels of state government was a key step.

The 11-member Governor’s Cabinet for Children and Families brings together the directors of welfare, education, budget and other high-ranking state government officials to recommend ways to make services to children and families more responsive, efficient, effective and easier for them to access.

To provide support for the Cabinet and a broader voice on child and family issues, Gov. Edward G. Rendell last year appointed the 40-member Commission for Children and Families made up of stakeholders from across the state.

The work of the Cabinet and Commission includes identifying key issues and service gaps, reviewing and evaluating programs and policies that affect children and families and making recommendations on how services can be improved, streamlined, and coordinated.

“With the Cabinet and the Commission, there is an opportunity for better collaborative work among the departments and for better communication and collaboration among state departments and key leaders in the community,” said Robert Nelkin, Director of Policy Initiatives at the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development and the governor-appointed Executive Director of the Governor’s Cabinet for

Children and Families.

One early area of focus is how the state can better prevent child neglect, abuse, juvenile crime, school failure, and other poor outcomes. Another is how to better direct families to the services they need and make the process of getting those services easier and less confusing.

The idea is to answer those questions by examining issues, program models, evidence of what works and what doesn’t, and how the state government can best apply its fiscal and human resources to improve child and family outcomes.

“Before any attempt is made to create a brand new endeavor, we look at the scientific research and reports of exemplary models,” Nelkin said.

## Early Childhood Issues

Early childhood issues, particularly early learning, have gained considerable attention in Harrisburg. Encouraging developments include a statewide approach to improving child care quality and evidence that school districts across the state are investing more in early education.

Raising the profile of these issues is the recent Office for Child Development, which links the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Education to better coordinate leadership and promote issues of child development,

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early care and education.

Several recent initiatives focus on improving the quality of existing child care. Standards for early learning were established to elevate the quality of the early learning experiences offered by child care providers large and small. And more child care providers are discovering Keystone STARS, an initiative that offers them support and incentives to improve the quality of their programs.

Pennsylvania last year contributed funds to Head Start early education programs in the state for the first time in its

history. Gov. Rendell's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year calls for doubling Head Start supplemental assistance to \$30 million.

Early education is gaining in local communities as well. Reports show that two-thirds of the state's school districts are investing their Accountability Block Grant dollars in early education. Most use the money to support full-day kindergarten. Other uses for the money include investing in quality pre-kindergarten, early literacy and smaller class sizes. "It's an impressive record of getting funds to communities to expand early childhood education," Nelkin said. ■

## Announcements . .

### Parenting Guides 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  
University of Pittsburgh  
Office of Child Development  
400 North Lexington Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208.

The You & Your Child parenting guides are also available on the OCD website as portable document files at: [www.education.pitt.edu/ocd/family/parentingguides.asp](http://www.education.pitt.edu/ocd/family/parentingguides.asp). ■

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## 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. All columns are available on the OCD website at: [www.education.pitt.edu/ocd/family/parentingcolumns.asp](http://www.education.pitt.edu/ocd/family/parentingcolumns.asp)

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. ■

### Conductive Education Summer Camp Scheduled

Conductive Education camp for children ages 2 to 18 with cerebral palsy and other types of motor disorders is scheduled for June 27 through July 29, 2005. Sessions will be held in Squirrel Hill and in the North Hills. The camp, which focuses on building self-reliance and functional skills, is sponsored by Conductive Education of Pittsburgh.

Conductive Education (CE) is a unique and intensive program for children with motor disabilities. The program helps children use their cognitive abilities in order to move their bodies more functionally and gain greater independence.

Teachers in the program — called “conductors” — lead small groups of children through activities that help them improve skills in sitting, standing, walking and many other functional activities. Conductors are graduates of a four-year degree program at the Peto Institute in Budapest, Hungary, or at satellite centers in England, Israel, or Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Conductive Education is currently offered in more than 50 locations in North America, Europe, Israel, New Zealand and Australia. Conductive Education of Pittsburgh, is a grassroots organization of parents and professionals whose mission is to make Conductive Education available to children in Western Pennsylvania. The summer camp is in its eighth year.

To register or to arrange a time to observe the program, call (412) 361-3997. ■

## Announcements...

### The Evaluation Symposium 2005 *Transforming Information into Knowledge and Action*

For the second consecutive year, OCD's Division of Planning and Evaluation will offer an Evaluation Symposium, which will be held on Wednesday, May 18, 2005 at the Radisson Hotel Sharon.

This year's one day Symposium, Transforming Knowledge Into Action, will offer participants from social, human service and community agencies the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of evaluation topics and methodologies.

The Symposium will include three morning and three afternoon sessions. Session topics include Goals and Objectives and the Logic Model, as well as more specific evaluation content and methodologies like Survey Design, Focus Groups and Needs Assessments. The 2005 Evaluation Symposium will include small group exercises so participants may apply new knowledge and skills and benefit from one-on-one assistance from the presenters. The presenters have extensive expertise in program evaluation and have provided training and technical assistance to numerous agencies during the Division's 13 year history.

Please contact Charlene Nelson at 412-244-7553 or [ocdpep@pitt.edu](mailto:ocdpep@pitt.edu) to be placed on our mailing list to obtain the brochure for this event. ■

### Free Background Reports Cover Children's Issues

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development offers background reports on current topics important to children and families free of charge.

The series of reports, *Children, Youth & Family Background*, is updated with new topics throughout the year.

New reports published in June cover issues such as early childhood care and education, the latest research on bullies and the impact of television violence on children, and preventing problem behavior among children.

The reports, originally produced to keep journalists and policymakers up to date on children's issues, are available free of charge to anyone interested in concise overviews of what is known about topics such as early childhood education, resilient children, school transition, and juvenile crime. The reports are written, edited, and reviewed by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

All *Children, Youth & Family Background* reports are posted on the OCD website as portable document files (.pdf) for viewing and downloading at the following address: <http://www.education.pitt.edu/ocd/family/backgrounders.asp>. ■



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