

PRACTICE AND POLICY FOCUS

Issue 2, 2006

Family Foster Care: Voices From Around the World

(Excerpts from guest editor, Rosemarie Carbino)

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The current issue of *Families in Society* (Vol. 87, No. 4) honors foster parent associations and foster care associations highlighting the development of family foster care in new places in the world.

An international perspective on child welfare makes us more aware, humane and effective on a larger scale. We discover that human beings have similar needs and face similar or more serious challenges around the world and that, through mutual sharing, good solutions can be arrived at sooner.

The well-being of children within their families is of significance for all societies. Yet, a sound family life is far from accessible for children around the globe, owing to familial, community, national, and/or international conditions. Many children continue to live in terrible circumstances—under attack in war or forced into military combat; as refugees from armed conflict or from ecological disas-

ter; preyed upon for sex or manual labor; maltreated in some communities and institutions—much of which we cannot prevent nor help. And we are continuously reminded of the powerful connections of poverty and racial and cultural oppression to the reasons that these children need care. So, solutions to attain well-being must go far beyond providing services. For children in care everywhere, these central child welfare concepts should be honored:

1. Child well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the child's family. The child has a need to know his/her family, to understand that they are OK, and to be validated as to his/her identity and origins. It is important to go beyond the specified caretaker of the child to understand *who is experienced as family* by the child and to support those connections.

2. Children are capable of maintaining meaningful relationships with multiple families, and they experience unnecessary losses when cut off from previous families

when they are moved to specified legal placements.

3. Sibling connection is of immense importance to children, including those siblings not legally recognized as siblings by the society.

Unless irrevocably damaging, these connections ought not to be severed by legal mandates nor by parental dictates in foster, adoptive, kinship, and/or biological family placements, but, rather, actively supported.

4. Biological parents are important to their children and to the success of foster care. To maintain these connections successfully will often entail reaching out to parents across social class, culture and/or language differences to provide respectful and inclusive service.

The articles in this special issue reinforce our awareness of the issues and needs of families; of the need for solid knowledge of what works well; of the usefulness of sharing widely what we know; and of the importance of a voice for children and families in planning.



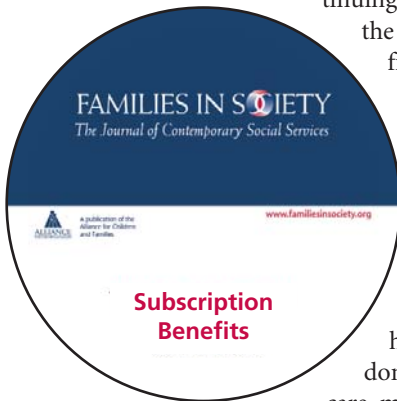
For more information on this special issue and to read the full editorial, visit www.familiesinsociety.org.

Agency Resources

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The **National Leadership Conference on Child Welfare Issues** is an annual event for private sector child welfare leaders that is known for its quality content and premier networking opportunities with both experts and experienced peers from across the country. The 2007 conference will focus on family centered practice in out-of-home care settings, outcomes and benchmarking for sibling groups, supervisory development, the key to performance-based contracting, relative location and the California and Florida federal IVE block grant waivers.

Visit <http://www.alliance1.org/Conferences/NLCCWI2007/index.html> for more information and to register online.

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