

theLink

the Newsletter for
Healthy Families New York



Summer/Fall 2001

the children of today are tomorrow's parents • los niños del presente son los padres del futuro
les enfants d'aujourd'hui seront les parents de demain

HFNY Goals

To systematically identify overburdened families in need of support

To enhance family functioning by building trusting relationships, problem-solving skills and support systems

To promote positive parent-child interaction

To promote healthy childhood growth and development

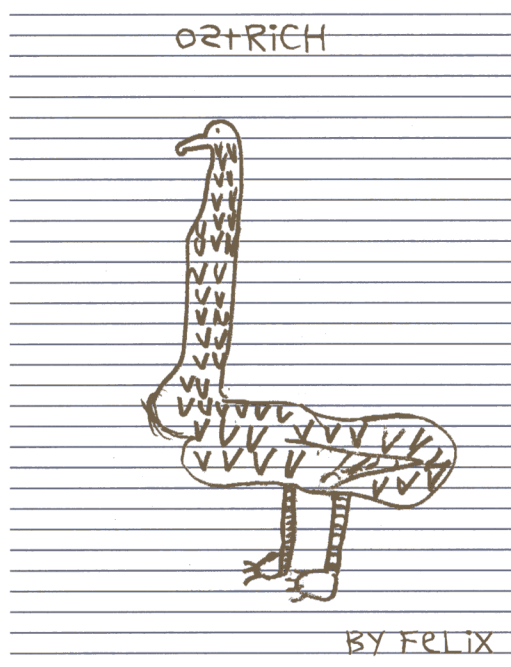
After the tragic events of September 11, we would like to send our good wishes to everyone, especially those who live and work in and around New York City. This a hard time for us all, and, of course, it is also a difficult time for many participants.

HELPING OUR CHILDREN

Dr. Bruce Perry at the Child Trauma Academy sent us an open letter offering support and information. We have included parts of his letter here.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to the victims and their families whose lives have been shattered by these terrorist acts. There are no words that can ever take away such profound pain. Our hope is that we can help those most devastated cope with these terrible experiences...we have worked with hundreds of children and their families shattered by traumatic experiences over the last 15 years. They have taught us a great deal about resilience, courage and the challenges of restoring normal life.

Dr. Perry's materials on coping, designed for children, parents, and teachers are available at www.ChildTrauma.org.



FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS WITH THE MOST!

Family Support Worker	Completed Visits	Program
Faye Sperber	2510	Albany
Wendy Bono	2164	Madison
Onelfa Guillen	2013	Manhattan
Connie Rivera	2010	Erie
Marlene Shiloh	1978	Steuben
Marci Whalen	1900	Chemung
Melissa Wadsworth	1888	Ulster
Veronica Wilson	1867	Erie
Karen Kotch	1861	Chemung
Betty Rodriquez	1826	Erie
Sally Walker	1785	Steuben
Ken Alleyne	1771	Albany
Mara Contreras	1751	Albany

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PICTURES & PROFILES

Thanks to programs for sending in profiles and pictures of "FSWs with the Most!" Unfortunately, pictures of all 13 workers were not available. We have printed all the photos we received that were useable.

Best Beginnings--NYC

Onelfa Guillen has been a part of the Best Beginnings family since July of 1995. She holds an Associate's Degree in Public Administration. Due to her passionate interest in immigrant rights, she has been able to develop a strong informational foundation on immigrant issues and willingly shares this with colleagues and families. In 1998, she was promoted to Senior FSW. Onelfa is a model of commitment and dedication. She is not afraid to share tears and laughter with her families and uses those moments to continue motivating them to pursue their goals. She often expresses that "hugs from the children," being a support person and "celebrating with families" makes her job special. She is the proud mother of four children. Her Program Manager says, "It is a great honor and pleasure to have Onelfa Guillen at Best Beginnings."

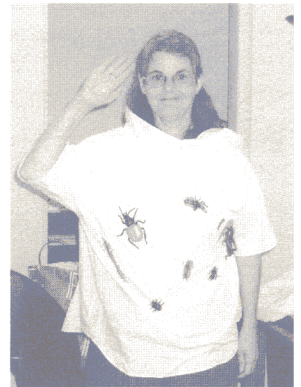
Healthy Families--Steuben

Marlene Shiloh has been with the program since its inception in 1995. She can remember when the staff numbered five in a 10 x 10 room. She has proven to have a great rapport with her families, especially with teen moms. As an experienced member of the team, she is a great resource to her co-workers. She has a ready smile and is always willing to take on new challenges. In Steuben County, some FSWs act as Early Head Start home visitors too. In January, Marlene attended the Annual Early Head Start Conference in Washington, DC and brought back many new ideas. She enjoys living in the country with her husband Chuck and their children, Aleassa and Dayton.

Sally Walker has been an FSW with Healthy Families Steuben since May of 1996. Sally was previously employed for many years in the early childhood field. She has worked in childcare centers, pediatric units, Headstart, a children's home and in summer camps. Her past experiences give her valuable insight into child development issues and the needs of families. She views her greatest accomplishment as seeing families from intake to graduation and seeing the many changes they have made, especially the increase in self-confidence. "...Healthy Families is one of the best programs that I have ever worked for... it is so strength-based and ...supportive to parents... I am privileged and honored to be a part of Healthy Families."

Ulster County Healthy Start


Melissa Wadsworth "I enjoy going out and meeting new families....it's a gift when families want to participate in our program and learn about child development and educational activities they can do with their children. Several of my participants' children are graduating from the program after five years. It's a joy to see these children grow and change and to know I have been part of their lives. I will miss them but I know there will be new families to visit too."



Bright Beginnings--Albany

Faye Sperber is an FSW with the Parsons Child and Family Center site. She has a Bachelor's from Russell Sage College as well as a para-legal degree. She is the proud mother of 2 wonderful young men and a beautiful granddaughter. "I have always felt that being a parent is the most challenging job one can have, but also the most rewarding. I have experienced this in my own life and see it reflected in the families I work with. I feel every child should be given a solid foundation with which to grow. Our program aids parents in attaining this....by promoting positive parent-child interaction, teaching the importance of health care, and fostering self-esteem. I have seen families accomplish so many goals that they never thought they were capable of."

Ken Alleyne writes that his work at Bright Beginnings is fulfilling because it satisfies his personal and moral commitment to help others. He believes the effort Bright Beginnings puts into staff development and training shows a real dedication to achieving program goals. "After more than 12 years of community service and ...exposure to the challenges facing families... I view issues relating to fatherhood as requiring the same intense support needed by mothers." He has seen through his work how barriers facing men as fathers are related to larger social and economic issues, and how these issues affect the whole Bright Beginnings community. "Where FSWs provide equal support for mothers as well as fathers in taking active roles to help children develop...our program will foster needed changes which will impact generations to come."

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Xiomara (Mara) Contreras graduated from Buffalo State College with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. She has been with Bright Beginnings since 1996 at the Parsons Child and Family Center site. Mara is bi-lingual and bi-cultural. She serves as an FSW and also as an Assessment Worker. Most of all, Mara enjoys the families. She feels Bright Beginnings has been very supportive in offering a wide variety of training on how to promote positive interaction between child and parents. Mara takes joy in her work. She writes "I truly look forward to my home experiences and the different dynamics on a daily basis."

Madison County Starting Together

Wendy Bono was the first Family Support Worker hired back in 1995. She has seen many changes in the program. A former dairy farmer and the mother of two grown children, Wendy brings her understanding of the county as well as wisdom and compassion to her work. Her dedication is evident in her persistence in locating families and her flexibility in meeting them when they can be available. She has completed the Family Development Credential (FDC), has recently completed FAW training, and is a member of the Credentialing Focus Group. She is also a mentor for new staff. In August, Starting Together honored Wendy for her achievement of over 2000 home visits and her #2 ranking in the state for home visits.

Buffalo Home Visiting

Veronica Wilson began her work with BHV in June of 1996. Since then she has been a positive influence with her participants. She has always found something to praise in her families. She was nurturing and direct while helping families keep focused on their goals. Veronica left Buffalo Home Visiting in July for another position. Her encouraging words, personality, and smiles are badly missed.



Betty Rodriguez has been an FSW with BHV since August 1996. Her dedication and understanding of the issues confronting program participants have always been assets. She has had a very high retention rate and has seen many participants through to graduation. She is highly respected by both her participants and colleagues and is one of the reasons for the program's success.



Connie Rivera has been an FSW with BHV since December, 1995. She has always gone above and beyond the call of duty with her participants and has earned their respect and loyalty. She has extensive case management experience that has always been beneficial to her participants.



Her helpful approach with her colleagues is well known. Anyone who needs help knows they can come to Connie for assistance. She is a true asset to the program.

Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Developmental Services (CIDS)—Chemung County

Marci Whalen has a B.S. with a concentration in child development, as well as graduate credits toward a Master's. She started her career with CIDS in 1972, administering Denver Developmental screenings to pre-school children for one year. In 1984, she returned as a family advocate. She was in our Family Preservation Program until she joined the Healthy Families Program in 1995. Marci has a wealth of knowledge and experience working with children and families. Her expertise is an asset to CIDS and the families she works with.

Karen Kotch graduated from Elmira College with a B.A. in Psychology. As a senior, she did an internship at CIDS. After graduation, she was hired at CIDS full-time as a developmental screener. A year later, she joined the Healthy Families Program as an FSW, and continues in that role today. Karen and her husband, John, have been married for one year.

Special Thanks ... an open letter to Best Beginnings

The Morris Heights Health Center Special Beginnings Program would like to extend thanks and appreciation to Best Beginnings for their support and assistance. Starting a new program is a major challenge. Best Beginnings made the challenge easier. The guidance and example set allowed us a glimpse into inside operations and the extensive external collaboration involved in making this program work. By example and modeling, Best Beginnings has demonstrated that success can be reached..... Best Beginnings has allowed us to have dreams and has shown us the steps to take as a new program to make those dreams a reality.

We especially want to thank Milagros Batista for allowing our staff members to shadow her workers and for taking the time to provide us with valuable information and advice on starting a new program. The team at Best Beginnings is a unique and special group of people. We will always be indebted to them. Again, thank you, Best Beginnings from all at the Morris Heights Health Center Special Beginnings Program.

Our Ever-Busy Department of Error Correction received the following from Ulster County Healthy Start Program Manager, Ellen Butowsky. Our apologies, Ellen!

Our Child Development Specialist is not a resident rotating through Healthy Start but rather is Monica Meyer, MD, a long-time pediatrician working for Mid Hudson Family Health Institute, our umbrella organization. She is the medical doctor for many of the Healthy Start kids for whom she reviews ASQs, and acts as liaison with other doctors of our children throughout our target area. Having a community pediatrician in this role makes for great Healthy Start-medical community collaboration

FOCUS ON DISCIPLINE

To encourage positive parenting and preserve positive parent-child relationships, Healthy Families staff have a responsibility to teach families about non-violent discipline. This is not the same as telling them what to do or how to raise their children.

TALK HONESTLY ABOUT SPANKING WITH PARENTS.....

Some points to cover, probably not all at once, or you may lose parents' attention.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SPANKING ANYWAY?

- It doesn't teach the desired behavior.
- It may undermine the trust the child has placed in the parent.
- It can teach the child to fear the parent.
- Some believe spanking teaches children to lie in order to get around a feared parent.
- When spanking doesn't correct problem behaviors, parents who rely on spanking often spank harder, possibly causing bruises and other injuries.
- Some may spank or hit as a way to express anger toward the child and then....
- Lose control.
- Physical punishment can damage a child's self-esteem.
- Parents who have relied only on physical punishment can find themselves in two-way domestic violence incidents when the child becomes a teen, as a teen may strike back.
- Spanking and hitting model violence as a way to solve difficulties.

To help parents think and learn about discipline, FSWs can use pamphlets or brochures. For some families it could be best to present one or two ideas from a brochure and ask parents if they would like to test them out. Here are some excerpts from "Quick Tips for Parents".

GETTING CHILDREN TO LISTEN

Some things don't work...like: giving orders, criticizing, putting kids down, begging. These all make children stubborn, defiant, or hurt.

Instead, try these ideas: First, go over to your child. Look her or him in the eye. With young children, touch them to get their attention. Talking from across the room seldom works. When you are close to your child, she (or he) will hear you better.

- **Tell your child what to do, instead of what not to do. Change "don't" into "do".**

"Walk instead of running."

"Keep your paint on these papers."

- **Be clear — be specific.**

Not: "Be a good boy and clean up."

Try: "Put your toys in this basket."

Not: "Get ready to go."

Try: "Put on your jacket and hat and bring your backpack."

- **Give your child information.** Describe the problem. Information helps children figure out what to do.

"I'm making a phone call and need quiet."

"Ants come in the house when jelly is on the floor."

- **Use fewer words.** Children "tune us out" when we talk on and on. Instead of a lecture, use a word or a phrase to remind them.

"Walk."

"Books and jacket."

"Homework before TV."

REMEMBER: The louder you yell, the less effective you are. Screaming and yelling let your child know you are out of control.

INSTEAD OF PUNISHMENT, USE DISCIPLINE—THEY AREN'T THE SAME!

All children misbehave at times. It's a natural part of growing up.

Why isn't punishing a good idea? When children are punished, they become hurt, angry, defiant. They forget the wrong they did and remember the "wrong" done to them.

Children need to learn what to do instead of misbehaving. Discipline teaches them. Our job as parents is to help them learn. Try the following discipline ideas:

- **Clearly, calmly, firmly, tell them what to do.** Tell them what you expect. Show them or tell them how to take care of the problem.

"I can't work when my tools are all over. Hang them on the rack and put the nails in the can."

"Play ball in back of the house instead of here near the window."

- **If they argue, don't argue back.** Simply use the "broken record" method: repeat your calm and firm statement again.



QUICK TIPS FOR PARENTS ON LISTENING, COOPERATION, PUNISHMENT
From the Prevent Child Abuse New York Brochure: Quick Tips for Parents
(Entire brochure available in quantity.
Call 1-800-CHILDREN)

- **Give a choice** . . . but only a choice you can live with.

"You may walk beside me or ride in the cart. You decide."

"We will be watching the video at 7, so if you want to see it, that's when you need to get back."

- **Take action.** Follow through when you have given a choice or told them what to expect.

"Since you are not staying beside me, you must ride in the cart."

"You are still arguing over the toy, so I'll put it away until after supper."

REMEMBER: You are the grown up. Stay cool, firm, calm and clear.

The Resource Center has a new video on instilling positive behaviors in children. See page 8.

KEY POINTS ABOUT PEACEFUL DISCIPLINE™

Bryon Monroe, MD, FAAP, The Peaceful Home Foundation. April 1985

This is a non-violent approach to discipline for parents of young children.

- **A peaceful penalty removes attention from the child for unwanted behavior by:**

1. Ignoring the child's behavior.
2. Distracting the child from the behavior you want him to stop.
3. Isolating the child from the attention of others.

- **A peaceful reward gives attention for desirable behavior:**

1. Praising and encouraging the child's actions.
2. Physical affection: Hugs, Kisses.
3. Playing with the child.

- **Can I use these techniques outside my home?**

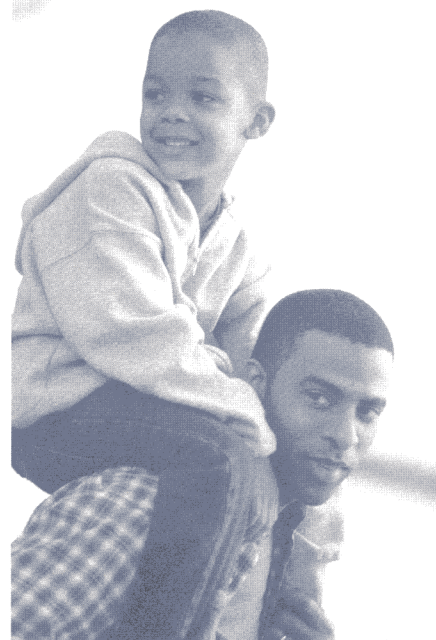
Yes. Isolating the child or ignoring the child's unwanted behavior also works in public. Isolating the child in a corner of the car or ignoring a temper tantrum are valuable ways to let your child know that you are consistent with your discipline. The rewards of loving attention may be used any time outside the home.

The American Academy of Pediatrics position paper on discipline is available on the internet. ("Guidance for Effective Discipline" {RE9740}www.aap.org/policy/re9740.html). This 10-page paper is backed by extensive research and includes many practical suggestions.

A summary of key points follows:

Effective discipline requires these 3 things:

- A positive, supportive, loving relationship with the child.
- Use of positive reinforcements to increase desired behaviors
- Removing reinforcement or providing negative consequences to reduce or eliminate undesired behaviors.



QUESTIONS

- **When should I start using this method of discipline?**

Before ten months of age a baby should never be ignored or penalized, only rewarded with loving attention.

- **Without spanking, won't I spoil my child?**

No, you spoil a child by letting him continue unwanted behavior.

- **How do I express my anger?**

Instead of using violence to express anger, a parent may yell "I'm angry" and call for time out. After taking a break, the parent may discuss the reasons for the angry outburst.

THE BEST EDUCATORS OF CHILDREN ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE GOOD ROLE MODELS AND ABOUT WHOM CHILDREN CARE ENOUGH TO IMITATE

(Guidance for Effective Discipline, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1998)

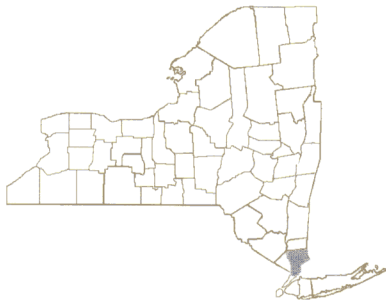
About Fathers....

A study using a sample of 1,600 10-13 year olds found that children who shared important ideas with their fathers and who perceived the amount of time they spent with their fathers as excellent had fewer behavior problems and lived in more cognitively stimulating homes than their peers who did not share important ideas or view the amount of time they spent with their fathers as excellent.

Source: Williams, Malcolm V. *Reconceptualizing Father Involvement*. Masters Thesis, Georgetown University, 1997

JULIA DYCKMAN ANDRUS MEMORIAL

Contributed by staff



ABOUT YONKERS AND MOUNT VERNON

Yonkers is the fourth Largest City in New York State. It began as a European settlement in the 1640's. Early industries included sawmills, small farming, grist mills, and manufacturing. Industry eventually pushed out farming once rail transport was brought in in 1872. Yonkers was the first city incorporated into Westchester County.

Today the population is about 200,000 with a fast-growing Spanish-speaking population.

More than half the housing is renter-occupied, and about 23% of the population has a household income under \$20,000.

Adjoining Yonkers is the smaller city of Mount Vernon with a population of about 70,000. Mount Vernon is home to people of more than 98 different nationalities, and, like Yonkers, has seen a significant increase in Spanish-speaking residents and in residents of African descent during the past decade.

About Our Agency: The Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial (JDAM) is a multi-service center providing child welfare, mental health, special education and family support services from two locations in Yonkers. JDAM operates both campus and community-based programs for vulnerable families and children from birth through age 14.

Home Visiting: Our Community Services Division in downtown South Yonkers currently serves nearly 300 families annually, using home visiting within a family support framework.

Other Programs: We collaborate extensively with local agencies to enrich services to children and families in childcare and elementary school programs. We also provide after school programs to elementary school children both on our campus and in Yonkers Public Schools.

Evolution of the New Home Visiting Program: JDAM's original Westchester Family Friends home visiting program was launched 1994 after over a year of working with our Westchester County Department of Social Services and St. John's Riverside Hospital to develop a model to serve highly stressed mothers and infants, as had been done in Hawaii. We applied for but were not awarded a grant in the first HFNY round of funding. Nevertheless, we were able to continue and expand our home visiting services with county, private and new grant funding. Our goals were to build collaborative relationships with multiple partners (Yonkers Public Schools; homeless housing providers and child care centers); to strengthen our home visiting practices, and to compete successfully in the next round of HFNY funding. We have always shared the HFA commitment to a comprehensive strength-based approach and were delighted to be funded in this current round.

The Curriculum: Parents as Teachers. We wanted to provide the strongest basis for primary prevention, and we wanted a curriculum that provided a solid understanding of child development and parenting education within a

family support model. The result was that we incorporated Parents As Teachers (PAT) into our home visiting in 1998. PAT met our goals, and it also brings current research on brain development into families' homes in very understandable terms. JDAM has been recognized by the developers of PAT for our contributions in adapting the program for use with high-need urban families.

Target Areas: Our HFNY program will be serving families in two ZIP codes in neighboring cities: 10701 (Yonkers) and 10550 (Mount Vernon). The selection of target areas was very challenging for our planning group, due to the staggering level of need in both Yonkers and Mount Vernon. Ultimately, the most distressed ZIP code in each city was chosen. We plan to serve about 50 families in each area in our first year.

Our Successes: It is hard to pinpoint one success story. Every family that opens their home to us, even for a few visits, has accomplished something new and different. For many of our parents, the accomplishment may come from knowing that they are the greatest influence on their developing children. Some families have had such a negative view of outside agencies that we think it is a success if they allow us into their homes and take a chance on learning something new. Many undocumented families have learned there are services open to them that won't increase their risk of deportation and will give their babies extra chances to succeed. We have families who have been able to move from homeless shelters into permanent housing. Many of our families are overwhelmed with securing the basics of food, clothing, and shelter but are still eager to learn new things that can ease the stress for their children. We have families who have gone on to school, found jobs and gained greater confidence. One of our moms is now a respected worker for a community agency where she used to receive services.

COPING WITH INFANT LOSS

Sarah Rubenstein-Gillis, MSW... Thanks to: Carol Swick, Jean Martin, and Reenie Dailey of Starting Together, Madison County; Audrey Lamadieu of Safe Space, Manhattan; and Deb Hoffman of Opportunities for Otsego for information and contributions.

One of the most difficult circumstances for an FSW is the death of an infant or child. Whether it is a miscarriage, stillbirth, death from a chronic illness or sudden death of a child, this kind of loss significantly affects families in both the long and short-term. Many who experience the death of a child describe the pain that follows as the most intense they have ever experienced. Often these parents wonder if they will be able to tolerate the pain, to survive it, and to be able to feel that life has meaning again.

Programs can prepare for a response in the event that such a loss happens.

Providing Staff Training:

Healthy Families America recommends wraparound training for staff on perinatal/infant loss. Such training(s) might address the following topics:

- Prevention of infant mortality
- Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- How loss affects families
- Helping families integrate the loss into their lives
- Kubler-Ross's "stages of loss"
- Resources for parents and families who have experienced an infant death
- Exploring staff feelings and possible actions around the demise of an infant
- Self-care for workers
- Agency protocol related to infant death

Carol Swick, Starting Together, speaking about a training on infant loss, writes that:

As expected, it was difficult for all involved and some found it too emotional and chose to leave the workshop. This is always a choice in our agency as we respect the individual's right to say they have reached their point of saturation.

Caring for Families

Grieving families experience a range of reactions including shock, sadness, denial, anger, guilt, blame, fear, depression, hopelessness, or feeling overwhelmed. While they may exhibit behaviors ranging from hysterical crying to numb silence, the outward response is not necessarily a measure of their pain. Recovery is long and slow, and for some, may take years. As always, it is important that families retain control over decisions made. It's best to follow their lead when offering services. Appropriate responses might include:

- Offer condolences to father, mother, siblings, and other primary family members
- Support families in utilizing their support systems
- Provide advocacy as appropriate
- Allow families to process and feel what they are feeling

- A card, flowers, donation, or other response specified by families
- Consider FSW and/or supervisor attending services
- Consider working with families at their request on level X for up to 3 months
- Help create a memory book, keepsake box, or memorial tee shirt
- Provide support in maintaining healthy family functioning
- Offer brochures, books, or videos if appropriate
- Refer to bereavement counseling, support groups, or other resources

'Sue' said to me, 'I'm not sure you can work with me, I lost the baby.' I'm thinking, 'Oh boy, now what?'... I was honest with 'Sue' and 'Bill' that I did not have very much information on grief but I would get anything I could. Deb Hoffman, Opportunities for Otsego

Because she did not want to recount the circumstances of the death of her child numerous times, this teen [mom] asked the FSW to inform other agencies involved with the family. Jean Martin and Reenie Dailey, Starting Together

With the family [whose] child died at about two years of age we kept the case open for three months... on Level X... We felt that closing the case too soon after the baby had died would compound the mother's sense of loss. This really helped the family and the worker. Audrey Lamadieu, Safe Space

The discussion during supervision about how to end services included the family's wishes and needs, as well as program guidelines. The FSW handled this situation by acting only upon the family's requests. Recognizing that each person deals with grief differently, she gave the family the space and support that they expressed a need for. Jean Martin and Reenie Dailey, Starting Together

Caring for Ourselves

In addition, let's not forget to take care of ourselves! Providing ongoing education for staff on the issue of infant loss and allowing time in supervision and team meetings to process difficult issues will help staff to express grief and keep healthy.

Materials and Resources:

- NY State Center for Sudden Infant Death (at the Center for Living with Loss)
Central New York Satellite Office
990 Seventh North Street
Liverpool, NY 13088-6148
Ph: 315-634-2191
- Local hospice programs, clergy, physicians, counselors, other bereaved parents, friends and relatives

When I asked 'Sue' what has helped her she said "the most important thing for me was for someone to share my grief with and be allowed to cry and heal at my own pace and not have everyone telling me to get over it and move on."
Deb Hoffman,
Opportunities for Otsego

Resource Center Update:

Did you know Healthy Families New York sites may borrow all Resource Center materials? Give us a call at 607-275-3569.

Reducing Risk Factors -- This video discusses environmental factors in pregnancy that contribute to birth defects and low birth weight, with a focus on those factors that have been shown to be preventable through intervention. Discusses the importance of delaying childbirth until after adolescence, obtaining information about personal risks, seeking early prenatal care and avoiding harmful substances.

Family Crisis -- This useful video, though geared toward health care professionals, will help home visitors become more aware of the issues that parents face when they learn that their child has special needs. It addresses various parental reactions and the role of professionals in helping families through these potential crises. Three concurrent and overlapping crises are covered in some depth--diagnostic crisis, values crisis, and reality crisis. The video also reviews Kubler-Ross's "stages of loss".

Peer Relationships -- Discussing the ways in which children influence one another, including modeling and reinforcement, this video describes how children's relationships change depending on their age and stage of development. Characteristics of popular, ignored, and rejected children are described. General guidelines for caregivers are given for helping children get along with others, specifically focusing on children who are shy or overly aggressive.

Compliance, Self-Control, and Prosocial Behavior -- This video focuses on specific techniques for caregivers who wish to instill positive behaviors in children. Factors that influence these behaviors, including temperament, attachment, and cognitive changes are covered. Describes methods shown to help children delay gratification, an important factor in the development of self-control. The video covers inductive and power-assertive discipline, as well as the role of empathy in the development of prosocial behavior. Illustrates and discusses varying parenting styles--permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, and rejecting/neglecting.



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