

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
1990 PLAN FOR ACTION

122771

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Established in 1920 on the recommendations of the first White House Conference on Children, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is a federation of nearly 600 public and voluntary child welfare agencies, working with children and their families on critical issues such as child abuse, day care, adolescent pregnancy, adoption, foster care, and homelessness. More than 125,000 professionals work at CWLA member agencies, serving two million children and their families each year.

CWLA member agencies serve the most troubled and needy youths in America. Increasingly, these agencies turn to CWLA for guidance and leadership on a range of policy and practice issues affecting services for children, youth, and families nationwide. These include services for children in their homes, foster care and group care.

In 1990, CWLA intends to expand: development and revision of standards for practice; training services; consultation services; publications; research; public policy efforts; information services; and those activities within its Florence Crittenton Division that focus on adolescent pregnancy issues.

In addition, CWLA will expand and develop a number of special initiatives related to family foster care, family preservation, HIV infection, chemical dependency, cultural responsiveness in child welfare practice, intergenerational programming, public policy, and peer support for youth in care.

STANDARDS

CWLA is internationally recognized for establishing standards that guide child welfare practice. CWLA standards represent goals for child welfare practice. They are used by child welfare agencies to complete self studies; to revise and clarify agency policies and practice manuals; to interpret services to the public, clients, legislators, and organizations; to orient staff members and boards of directors; to train staff members; to assist funding efforts; and to educate social work interns.

Over the next year, CWLA will revise its Standards for Day Care Services and Standards for Group Care, and examine its Standards for Foster Care (under the auspices of CWLA's National Commission on Family Foster Care).

TRAINING

The CWLA Training Institute, established in 1985, continues to help child welfare professionals transfer standards into practice by holding regional training conferences, program seminars, and training for individual agencies. As a part of its commitment to advance the field, the Institute now offers a comprehensive, competency-based training system. This system optimizes investments in training by providing a framework for efficient use of existing training resources and the structured management of agency staff development. CWLA's need for training development resources is increasing as service providers struggle to respond to social challenges such as crack-cocaine addictions, HIV infection, and professionally-enhanced child care. Every training product developed by CWLA will reach the public and volunteer sectors of the child welfare field through its membership and interdisciplinary networks.

CONSULTATION

CWLA's Center for Program Excellence was established in 1985 to assist public and private child welfare agencies in North America who want to improve the quality of their services. The Center believes that it is most effective in assisting an agency to identify/clarify problems, developing strategies or options for solving the problems, and implementing appropriate solutions. Utilizing experts from the field as well as CWLA staff members, the Center provides an array of services

including: surveys and needs assessments; community and agency studies; evaluations; general consultation; crisis intervention; long-term and strategic planning; transition planning; technical assistance; executive searches; accreditation consultation; board development; and recruitment for management-level positions.

The Center's activities are provided on-site nationwide. In 1989, the Center provided on-site consultation to over 50 agencies. Services are expected to increase over the next year as additional demands in the child welfare field force agencies to revise policies and programs for services to children and their families.

PUBLICATIONS

CWLA is the largest publisher in North America of child welfare and social work practice materials. The Publications Department produces and distributes books, monographs, and newsletters, in addition to a scholarly professional journal.

CWLA seeks to expand its publications activities to inform and educate a wider audience about child welfare issues. While not all publications are profitable, CWLA will actively solicit manuscripts, support new authors, and develop new materials in an effort to better inform practitioners and interested parties about the best care and practice for children.

RESEARCH

Research plays a vital role in the improvement of child welfare service. CWLA's Research Department provides practitioners with data to identify and resolve problems related to policy and service delivery. All research activities are practice oriented. They help child welfare professionals determine what programs and services best serve children and their families.

In 1990, CWLA will convene leading child welfare researchers and practitioners to develop a "research agenda for the '90s". A new CWLA publication will highlight CWLA's research findings and feature successful programs to support agencies interested in transferring new technologies into practice.

PUBLIC POLICY

Since its inception, CWLA has played a major role in developing the nation's public policy in behalf of children and their families. Historically, CWLA functioned in an advisory role to several White House Conferences on Children. In the mid 1950s, it formed a Public Policy Division, which today is comprised of five full-time policy analysts who assist Members of Congress, their staffs, and appropriate federal agencies in developing sound public policy for children, youth, and families.

Over the last several years, CWLA has taken the lead in passing a number of initiatives affecting children nationwide, including: independent-living programs for youth who have "aged-out" of the foster care system; post-legal adoption services; and assistance for infants and children whose mothers are placed in foster care. In addition, CWLA has helped to ensure adequate funding for other critical programs designed to assist children, youths, and families nationwide.

During the second session of the 101st Congress, CWLA's public policy efforts will focus on strengthening existing services and creating new programs where necessary to support children in their own families and those needing out-of-home care, including those affected by chemical dependency; ensuring appropriate health care for children in foster care; establishing a national

youth policy; seeking enactment of child day care legislation; and ensuring that children in foster care and their families have priority for federal housing programs.

INFORMATION SERVICE

In May 1915, the Bureau for the Exchange of Information (BEI) was established by a handful of child welfare agencies who felt a strong need for the exchange of sound standards of social work practices and programs. Later, when the BEI was incorporated into the Child Welfare League of America in 1920, the information service became a major program of CWLA.

CWLA's Information Service will continue to collect and disseminate up-to-date material impacting on the development of standards, policies, and practices to improve the quality of services provided to children and their families by voluntary and public agencies throughout the North America. The goal in the next year is to automate the bibliographic information of the library collection to provide fast and easy research on child welfare issues.

TASK FORCES

CWLA periodically creates task forces consisting of representatives from member agencies to develop its future agendas for research, standards revisions, public policy initiatives, and training. In the next year, task force activities will focus on: government/voluntary partnerships; integrated service systems; recruitment and retention of competent child welfare staff; chemical dependency; cultural responsiveness in child welfare practice; adoption; child day care; HIV infection; family foster care and group care.

FLORENCE CRITTENTON DIVISION

The Florence Crittenton Division, created in 1976 through the merger of the Florence Crittenton Association with CWLA, is the home of the first nationally developed adolescent pregnancy service. A continuing focus of the Division is the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and the provision of services to pregnant adolescents. One of the major advocacy efforts of the Florence Crittenton Division is to motivate the public and Congress to actively seek resolution to the problems of adolescent pregnancy and parenting.

The National Florence Crittenton Mission is dedicated to assisting CWLA in its effort to address the special needs of pregnant adolescents and young parents. The Mission has annually made available grant funds for capital building projects and new program initiatives by CWLA member agencies that serve at-risk youth.

In 1990, a major program focus of CWLA's Florence Crittenton Division will be supporting efforts that address the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and the development of comprehensive, community-based services to meet the needs of young people and their families in: education, health care, social services, job training and employment, child care, and financial assistance.

Over the next year, the Division will focus on identifying and disseminating for replication program models that address male responsibility in pregnancy prevention and parenting as well as those models that emphasize adolescent sexuality, self-esteem, and youth empowerment.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Family Foster Care: A Model For Change

Throughout the United States, child welfare agencies are struggling to strengthen their family foster care programs. This is occurring at a time when the demand for foster care is increasing and the children being placed in care need foster parents and agency staff with special skills and access to more community resources. The problems facing the family foster care program are severe, complex, and varied in nature. They include the increasingly severe problems presented by children in foster care; widespread shortage of foster parents, especially minority foster homes; the lack of supports for foster parents, i.e., respite care, specialized training, and liability insurance; and the impact of a complicated, cumbersome, and often adversarial juvenile court process.

In response to this crisis, CWLA proposes to create a model design that moves foster care toward a service delivery system that promotes professional parenting and care-giving. To accomplish this, CWLA will initiate a number of activities, including a national review of creative family foster care programs to assist in the development of the model program, and establishment of a National Commission on Family Foster Care. This commission will in turn develop policy, fiscal, and programmatic solutions to the family foster care crisis. CWLA will then assist selected states in implementing a new family foster care system and will conduct research to determine its effectiveness.

As a result of this major initiative, CWLA believes that children and their birth families will be served by a system that is competent and professional, assuring children protection and permanency in placement.

Preserving the Family: Protecting the Child

CWLA has initiated an aggressive agenda to increase supports to families. This agenda is aimed at strengthening family life, increasing family stability, preventing problems that may result in family dissolution, and assisting families whose children are at risk of harm.

This is not a new agenda for CWLA, but rather builds on and expands past efforts and initiatives to develop comprehensive support for all families in every community in this country.

Over the next year, CWLA will publish standards for services to strengthen and preserve families; develop and promote legislation designed to increase federal funding for a continuum of family support services; establish networks of public and private agencies to plan and implement family support services and develop public/private partnerships; provide technical assistance and training to states in developing a continuum of family support services in accordance with CWLA Standards; and promote implementation of the "reasonable efforts" requirements of P.L. 96-272.

Attention to AIDS: Responding to Affected Children and Their Families

CWLA member agencies work with infants and young people who are most vulnerable for HIV infection, including sexually active youths, drug abusers, runaways, homeless youths, child prostitutes, and out-of-school youths. Responding to this need, CWLA established a National Task Force on Children and HIV Infection, comprised of experts in child welfare and pediatric AIDS, to develop initial guidelines for the care of children with HIV infection and their families. These guidelines were distributed to member agencies in March 1988 and made available to other child-serving organizations throughout North America.

As a result of a contract with the National Institute of Mental Health and the Georgetown Child Development Center, CWLA developed and published *Serving HIV-infected Children, Youth, and Their Families: A Guide for Residential Group Care Providers* in 1989. Supported by grants from

the Ford Foundation and the Metropolitan Life Foundation, *Initial Guidelines* and the *HIV Infection Guide* will be used in a series of forums and seminars on children and AIDS that CWLA will continue to conduct early in 1990.

CWLA's Task Force will continue to identify AIDS-related issues pertinent to the field and update the policy and practice guidelines as needed. Currently, subcommittees are addressing HIV infection and day care, and HIV infection and family foster care.

Over the next year, CWLA will produce an AIDS-related video training series for caregivers and service providers in collaboration with Children's Hospital National Medical Center. In addition, and in collaboration with a number of non-profit organizations concerned about the care and well-being of children, CWLA intends to facilitate the development of a documentary for prime time major network television on children and AIDS worldwide.

Chemical Dependency

CWLA has established a North American Chemical Dependency Steering Committee to develop an initiative to address the impact of drugs and alcohol on the children and families served by the child welfare system. In the upcoming months, the Steering Committee will provide guidance to CWLA and the field on a wide range of chemical abuse policy and practice issues.

As a first step, the Committee has planned a two-day symposium, "CRACK and other Addictions: Old Realities and New Challenges", to be held in conjunction with the 1990 CWLA National Conference. Participants will learn current medical information, strategies for community education and prevention, model programs, and policy implications for local, state and federal action. The Committee will draw on experts from the fields of health, education, juvenile justice, mental health, and substance abuse.

Following the symposium, the Committee will call for the formation of a national task force to continue the initiative and to develop practice and policy guidelines for the field; conduct regional training to improve practice and service delivery; and review existing standards and legislation in light of emerging knowledge.

Promoting Culturally Responsive Child Welfare Practice

Statistics indicate that those children receiving child welfare services are an ethnically diverse population and that some child welfare services, particularly out-of-home-care, are disproportionately minority. As a national organization whose charge is to improve services to children, CWLA is strongly committed to taking the lead in ensuring that practice, public policy, and public education activities are conducted in a manner that reflects sensitivity to the cultural and ethnic needs of all children served by the child welfare system.

In response to CWLA's 1989 colloquium, the coming year will highlight specific activities to increase knowledge, raise sensitivity; improve policy and practice through cultural responsiveness; and facilitate involvement of minorities in child welfare decision making activities. Priority areas for action in 1990 are to establish a National Task Force on Cultural Responsiveness; implement an Agency Self-Assessment Model for Cultural Responsiveness; develop a training package for practice and administrative issues; and highlight cultural issues at CWLA conferences.

Generations United

CWLA believes that the vulnerable in society--young and old--deserve our very best efforts. Programs should promote cooperation and understanding between the generations while also providing necessary services that might not otherwise be available in a community's service system. In an effort to promote intergenerational cooperation and programming, CWLA, in partnership with the National Council on Aging, launched Generations United in 1986. With the support of the Skillman Foundation, the intergenerational coalition, which now includes over 100 national organizations, seeks to highlight the interdependence of young people and the elderly to improve the lives of society's most vulnerable members.

Generations United also seeks to shape public policy related to intergenerational issues; fashion collaborations between generations in local communities; disseminate literature describing or encouraging programs for intergenerational cooperation; and increase public awareness of issues faced by Americans of all ages.

Generations United will hold its second annual intergenerational conference in April 1990. A national audience of leaders from the public and private sectors concerned with the relationships of America's generations will gather to focus on building state and local intergenerational coalitions and on developing and encouraging intergenerational programs. A second invitational conference is planned in May 1990, "Healthcare for All Americans," which will focus on needed health care reforms to better serve all ages.

In 1990, CWLA intends to develop model state and local counterparts to Generations United and a technical assistance guide for organizing state or local intergenerational coalitions.

Children's Campaign

The Children's Campaign is a national network of concerned citizens committed to providing a stronger voice for children, and creating greater opportunities and supports for families to help them care for their children. Launched in 1986, the Children's Campaign not only informs and educates individuals about the pressing needs of children and youth, but also provides a way in which people can participate in the decision-making process by enabling them to communicate directly with their national legislators and the President. As a follow up to the Children's Presidential Campaign '88, which brought children's issues to the attention of the public, candidates, press, and political parties, the Children's Campaign launched "The First 100 Days: A Children's Initiative," a comprehensive package of investment proposals delivered to President Bush and the 101st Congress in December 1988. Thousands of "Please Support the Children's Initiative" planks from Campaign members nationwide helped spur a push for a major child welfare package that continues to work its way through Congress. The Children's Campaign is now gearing up for a major enrollment drive and public education effort in anticipation of the 1990 congressional elections.

Youth in Care Network

Children who enter the foster care system frequently feel disconnected from birth families and friends as well as from each other. They often feel powerless and unable to control circumstances that dictate where and with whom they are to live. Many experience multiple placements and have little hope of returning to their birth families or being adopted. Many are in the care of child welfare agencies, affording little opportunity for them to affect decisions about the quality or future of their lives.

Lacking stability, these youths find it difficult to mature emotionally. Unable to focus on activities such as education and vocational training that promote adult satisfaction and productivity many engage instead in delinquent and other inappropriate behaviors. CWLA believes that to a large

degree, youths in foster care can find support from each other. Therefore, in 1990, CWLA will develop a model training program to help agencies and youth in foster care develop peer support programs and will provide on-going technical assistance to sustain these activities.