

O C D



# Developments

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*Office of Child Development***Family Support**

## Focus On Quality Assurance Helps Family Support Fulfill Its Promise

Family support in Allegheny County can boast many examples of success: one family center creates a mix of programs that help parents navigate the child welfare system, become better parents, and regain custody of their children; another center starts a driver's permit course and 90% of the parents who take it pass the test on their first try; a young mother turns to a family center for help, earns a college degree and returns to family support as the director of a center.

Credit for such accomplishments is shared by the centers, their staff, and the families themselves. Less visible, however, are the efforts of the Family Support Policy Board to elevate the role of quality assurance across a diverse 32-

center family support network in Allegheny County, one of the largest and most successful family support movements in the nation.

A long-standing emphasis on quality has led to more thorough and sophisticated methods of evaluating programs and progress, ongoing program improvement, and the ability to assure funders and other stakeholders that family centers are following core standards based on the principles that launched the family support movement more

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**First Comprehensive Meta-Analysis**

## Gains, Although Small, Are Reported In Study Of Home Visiting Programs

Home visiting programs, in general, help families with young children across a range of outcomes, including better parenting behaviors and higher cognitive and social functioning among children, according to a recently published study involving 60 of these programs.

The reported gains, however, were small. And the study was unable to draw conclusions about which types of programs work best for which outcomes.

A summary of the study – the first comprehensive meta-analysis of home visiting programs – was published in the

September/October 2004 issue of *Child Development*, the journal of The Society for Research in Child Development.

Home visiting is a service delivery strategy, not a specific service. Among the suggestions in the *Child Development* report is the need to evaluate the effectiveness of home visiting as a strategy by comparing outcomes with those produced using other methods of service delivery.

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than a decade ago.

“We really can’t afford to take quality for granted,” said Brenda J. Gregg, the Director of Community Outreach and Community Health Services for Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, who co-chairs the Policy Board’s Quality Assurance Committee with another Board member and family support parent, Aurelia Carter.

“We do good work, but we need to evaluate so we are able to say exactly what happened – how many kids and families are better off because we are in their lives. We always have to look at what we do and challenge what we do.”

### Principles And Standards

What distinguishes family support from many traditional human service systems are the principles on which it is built and a set of core standards that helps family centers adhere to those principles.

Centers, for example, are based in the neighborhoods they serve. They are governed by parents and emphasize relationships, respect, and building upon family strengths. Services are designed by parents to address their needs and are subject to evaluation to promote improvement. Participation is voluntary. Collaboration among agencies assures easy access and use.

All centers in the county share a set of standards based on these principles. How true the family centers are to the core standards is one of the key measures of quality. Family support core standards call on each center to include the following:

- A system of governance that encourages parent participation and includes them in the making of decisions about the center, its programs and other operations.
- A welcoming drop-in center that supports activities of interest to families, including self-help and mutual aid groups, programs, and classes.
- Individual family support work and advocacy that supports families in setting goals and may include home visiting as a way to deliver services and support.

Referrals and advocacy on behalf of the families to other programs and services, including schools, income-maintenance services, and health services.

- Developmental activities that are parent, parent/child and child focused.
- Outreach and community education efforts, specifically around very young children and their families, including a focus on families with prenatal to school aged-children.
- A focus on managing quality, including training and staff development, to make sure centers are inclusive, accountable, and that staff possess the necessary job skills.

Such standards have created an environment for centers to develop innovative programs to meet specific needs of the children and family in their communities.

At the Duquesne Family Support Center, a program of the Urban League of Pittsburgh, where about 20% of families are involved in the child welfare system, a set of programs was developed to help parents understand and address child custody issues and take the steps necessary to mend their families.

These programs offer services such as Children Youth and Families (CYF)-approved parenting classes, help with court-ordered family service plans, transportation, mental health counseling, help with housing, and a monthly law clinic to explain child welfare legal issues. And parents are often able to arrange supervised visits with their children at the family center, a familiar setting to both.

“Many parents come in with a chip on their shoulder. They feel that CYF just took their kids,” said Debra Squires, Director of the Duquesne Family Support Center. “One thing we do is stop the attitude and start looking at what they need to do, improve the relationship between the parent and CYF worker and explain to them how to work with the system, instead of pushing against it.”

“Most of the time,” she said, “if they come into our program and they stick with the program, within six months their children will be coming home.”

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## New University Course Examines Child And Family Systems Issues

The University of Pittsburgh is drawing on the expertise of its faculty and the experience of professionals in the field to offer students an overview of the important issues that children and families face in America today, the systems that address those issues, and the methods used to study them.

The interdisciplinary, graduate-level Proseminar on Applied Issues on Children and Families in Society is designed to expose students to public systems (i.e., the child welfare system, maternal and child health, education system, and government and policy); to skills needed by applied professionals (i.e., program evaluation, applied research methods); and to important child and family issues (e.g., literacy and youth violence).

"We tend to train students in a single discipline," said Robert B. McCall, Ph.D., Co-Director of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. "But the issues that children and families face out there are not pigeon-holed by discipline. Child abuse, for example, is a medical problem, a social work problem, a public health problem, and a psychological problem. Families with young children frequently access more than one system. This course is intended to provide breadth."

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development (OCD) designed the course, which is being offered this spring through the Applied Developmental Psychology Program in the School of Education's Department of Psychology in Education. The proseminar is led by OCD Co-Director Christina J. Groark, Ph.D., with help from Dr. McCall, but

lectures will be presented by a range of faculty and professionals with extensive experience in the issues covered.

Course objectives include the following:

- Students will become familiar with public health, education, welfare, and political systems for children and families.
- They will be able to define components of quality early care and education programs.
- Students will be able to describe critical issues in literacy, early intervention, and early behavior problems.
- Students will learn basic issues in applied research methodology.
- Students will learn to apply evidence-based research to policy initiatives.

The proseminar is being developed as a core course for graduate students in Applied Developmental Psychology, a field in which several traditional disciplines often intersect. It addresses the need to provide students with a broad overview of the field, reported Carl Johnson, Associate Professor and Director of the Applied Developmental Psychology Program. "We think it is important to give students interested in working in this field a sense of what it is – the different disciplines that are involved and how we are applying what we know across those disciplines to actual programs for children."

### Announcements...

#### 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 due 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/oed/family/backgrounders.asp>.

*Home Visiting continued from Page 1)*

Conclusions drawn in previous studies of home visiting programs have been mixed. Some found home visiting programs poorly address certain outcomes. Others shed light on practices that lend themselves to successful delivery of services in the home.

What is clear is that home visiting is an increasingly popular way of delivering services to children and families in the U.S., where an estimated 550,000 families are enrolled in programs brought to them through home visits.

Unlike the two previously published meta-analyses of home visiting programs which focused only on child abuse outcomes, the recent study is much broader in scope, examining a number of parent and child outcomes, including children's cognitive and social functioning, prevention of child abuse, and parent stress, behavior, attitudes, education, and employment.

### **Diverse Range Of Programs**

Several similarities and differences were noted among the 60 home visiting programs examined.

All delivered services to families in their homes, offering parents such advantages as not having to arrange for transportation or take time off from their jobs, while providing greater opportunities to involve the entire family in the intervention and offer more personalized service. Other similarities include a focus on prevention and the belief that parents influence change in children.

Differences among the programs include the types of families involved (e.g., single mothers, different ethnic groups, teenage mothers); socioeconomic backgrounds of families; outcomes addressed by the program; ages of the children served; type of staff; the length and intensity of the services delivered; and the types of services offered.

About 75% of the programs involved families who were exposed to some environmental risk: 55% of the programs enrolled low-income families, for example, and 15% helped families with a low-birth-weight child.

Parenting education was a popular parent-directed service, with more than 98% of the programs offering it. More than half offered parents social support and about 42% offered them counseling services. About 92% of the programs provided child development information. Other common services included child health or developmental screening and referrals to social and health services for children and parents.

Almost all of the programs targeted children of a certain age range. Nearly 75% focused on children between birth and three years old. Most employed professionals, paraprofessionals, and nonprofessionals. Professionals were on the payrolls of 75% of the programs.

### **Families Fared Better**

Families who received services from home visiting programs generally did better across the range of outcomes than did families who did not participate in the programs.

Parents in home visiting programs had better parenting attitudes and behaviors than other parents and they were more likely to return to school or pursue further education. Children in home visiting programs had higher cognitive and social functioning and were at lower risk of being physically abused than children who were not in the programs.

The differences, while considered statistically significant (i.e., non-chance), were considered small. The average statistical effect on child cognitive outcomes, for example, translated into only a few points on a standardized intelligence scale.

Many questions about the programs themselves remain unclear. Although the study looked at program design, goals, and other program-related issues, no conclusions could be drawn from the often inconsistent data to allow the authors to report with confidence which types of home visiting programs work the best or which program characteristics are the most successful.

The type of staff employed, for example, was inconsistently related to program effectiveness across the range of outcomes. Among child cognitive outcomes, for instance, professionals were associated with better results than non-professional home visitors. Among child abuse outcomes, paraprofessionals were associated with better results than professional home visitors.

### **Further Research Needed**

The study represents another important step in understanding home visiting programs. However, a definitive assessment of the usefulness of home visiting programs remains elusive.

Some characteristics of home visiting programs tend to complicate efforts to define their effectiveness. Home visiting programs vary greatly in design, goals, populations served, and other dimensions. They are multi-faceted and complex. Home visiting is a service delivery approach that can be used for many specific programs or interventions. And what happens in the home depends on a number of intangibles not often measured, such as the personality and attitude of the home visitor.

Several steps could be taken to help clarify the usefulness of these programs, noted the authors of the study, Drs. Monica A. Sweet and Mark I. Appelbaum of the University of California, San Diego. Suggestions include more precise conceptualization and measurement of program implementation and service delivery, perhaps designing programs with

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# OCD | Special Report

## Business Opportunities For Nonprofits: A Primer On Social Enterprise Ventures

Starting a business to help support their mission is no longer an idea nonprofits can dismiss out of hand as an unacceptable departure from convention. Although the marriage of a nonprofit and an income-generating business is not new, the practice is receiving broader consideration as more nonprofits seek ways to cope with the tightening of traditional revenue streams and greater competition for funds.

Social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, and community wealth are a few of the more common terms used to describe the concept of nonprofits advancing their missions through business ventures, such as selling products and services and entering into corporate partnerships.

Successful social enterprise ventures deliver benefits ranging from unrestricted funds to heightened public awareness of the nonprofit's core mission. These ventures are not free of risk, however. Some ventures fail and nonprofits lose money, for example, and some may consume more time and money than is justified by the amount of income they bring in.

Experts agree that social enterprise is not for every organization. Knowing whether such a venture is a good fit with the organization is one of the most important determinations nonprofit officials will make. Before investing time and money, they are urged to thoroughly assess potential business opportunities, as well as the organization's capacity for launching and sustaining an entrepreneurial venture.

This report, based on local and national studies and the work of experts in the emerging field, is intended as a primer on social enterprise for nonprofits exploring the idea of starting a business to help support of their missions.

### Social Enterprise

A social enterprise is a business started by a nonprofit that

generates unrestricted revenue and enhances the organization's mission.

Unlike a for-profit venture in the business sector, the return on the financial investment is not the sole measure of success. A social enterprise is often measured by a "double bottom line" – by the revenues it generates for the nonprofit and by other outcomes that advance a nonprofit's mission, such as raising awareness of the organization's work in the community or providing a new service to traditional clients.

### Assets And Markets

Nonprofits must be able to identify their assets, the value of those assets, and whether a viable market exists for the assets.

Marketable assets are identified by carefully examining what a nonprofit does and what it has. Assets most often tapped by nonprofits for building a business around include:

- Services that the nonprofit specializes in providing.
- The expertise, skills, and people within the organization.
- Products related to the nonprofit organization or to its mission.
- Facilities, real estate, equipment, and other tangible assets owned by the nonprofit.
- Name recognition, logos, or standing in the community that might be valuable in promoting a product or service for the nonprofit or for a business partner.

In western Pennsylvania, services are the assets most often marketed by nonprofits. A survey of 25 regional social

enterprise ventures reports that 72% are engaged in providing services, such as literacy training, curriculum development, and renting office or meeting space. About 22% of the nonprofits operate retail ventures.<sup>1</sup>

Similar trends are reported in a study of social enterprises nationwide: 74% of nonprofits running businesses operate service-related ventures and 47% operate product-related enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

High-profile examples of social enterprises include the Children's Television Workshop, which licenses its "Sesame Street" characters for books, toys, and other products. The Girl Scouts, in partnership with a bakery, uses its name recognition, reputation, and wide volunteer network to sell more than \$200 million in cookies each year to support the organization.

In Pittsburgh, the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and Bidwell Training Center have started a number of successful ventures related to its missions, including one that grows and sells orchids while introducing inner-city youth and under-employed adults to careers in horticulture and the principles of running a business.

### Benefits

Social enterprises, when successful, provide nonprofits with significant benefits, which include:

- **New revenue.** A successful social enterprise venture earns new revenue that nonprofits can spend on achieving their central mission.
- **More unrestricted funds.** These ventures typically earn money that nonprofits can spend to advance their mission as they see fit. Unrestricted funds provide greater flexibility and help nonprofits weather possible shortfalls in funding from traditional sources.
- **Greater diversity of funding sources.** A nonprofit dependent on a few funding sources is in a precarious position. Money earned from a social enterprise gives a nonprofit an independent source of revenue that helps the organization become more self-sufficient.
- **Better business-like practices.** A successful business venture may strengthen financial discipline, decision-making, and other critical practices within a nonprofit organization.
- **Increased public visibility.** In some cases, a social enterprise venture may raise public awareness of a nonprofit's core mission.

Such benefits are among the top indicators of social enterprise success as reported by nonprofits engaged in social enterprise ventures, grantmakers, and investors in western Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> The survey found, for example:

- More diverse sources of income, less dependence on funders, and a positive change in the new fund balances/net financial position are considered the most important financial indicators of success.
- Efficient, business-like practices within the organization and more clients/customers being served are the most important non-financial indicators of success.

Financial return is the chief reason most nonprofits across the U.S. say they started a social enterprise venture – but it is not the only motivation.<sup>4</sup> Some 39% of nonprofits say their businesses also provide jobs, training, and therapeutic opportunities for their constituents; 34% say the ventures improve community relations; and 23% say the businesses help revitalize their neighborhoods and communities.

### Risks

As attractive as the benefits are, social enterprise is not without risks. These risks include:<sup>5</sup>

A social enterprise venture could fail.

- The venture could lose money.
- A revenue-generating social enterprise venture may lead to a decrease in funding from more traditional revenue streams.
- The venture could divert attention away from the central mission of the organization.
- The venture could consume more management and staff time than is justified by the return it earns.
- The venture may overly tax a nonprofit by demanding new skills among management and staff and by increasing the complexity of the organization.
- The nonprofit's staff and board may feel "sold out" if they view the venture as a distraction to the organization's central mission.

### Characteristics of Successful Ventures

Every entrepreneurial venture carries a degree of risk. However, several steps can be taken to reduce the risk to non-



profit organizations starting a business.

Among the most important is thorough assessment and planning. This critical step involves carefully thinking through the business venture from concept to implementation and beyond.

“The majority of failures for new venture start-ups occur because the leaders of those start-up don’t plan it all out,” says Timothy Zak, President of the nonprofit Pittsburgh Social Enterprise Accelerator, which was founded in 2002 to assist southwestern Pennsylvania nonprofit organizations develop social enterprise ventures.

Another key consideration is whether the nonprofit has the organizational capacity to run a business: Does the nonprofit have a strong, capable leadership team? Is the board proactive and committed to the organization’s mission? Are the nonprofit’s core processes – from operating programs to paying the bills – robust, consistent, and effectively measured? Is the organization able to identify new processes that are required and improve the ones already in place?

Nonprofits, however, do not need to have all of the resources necessary to run a business in-house. For example, it is not necessary to have an in-house attorney or even one on the board. What is necessary is the ability to recognize that an attorney is needed, identify a firm or an individual attorney with the skills to help, and to manage that relationship effectively.

“Every nonprofit would benefit by going through an assessment of whether they have social enterprise opportunities,” Zak says. “You will be much clearer about what the assets of the organization are, about what the capacity of the organization is, and what the market is for any of the services the organization provides.

“You are forced, by going through that process of evaluation, to adopt more business-like principles—approaches that the corporate sector does in finance and marketing. Going through the process of discovery is going to make the organization fundamentally stronger whether it actually launches a formal social enterprise or not.”

Olszak Management Consulting Services, Inc., in a report commissioned by The Forbes Funds, identified several promising social enterprise practices:

### Pre-planning

Thorough pre-planning includes a systematic assessment of management practices, resources, and the commitment to address the risks and demands that come with a business venture. Specific activities include:

- Secure staff/board support for starting a business venture.

- Review the mission of the organization to provide clear direction.
- Thoroughly assess and develop organizational capacity to undertake a business venture.
- Make sure the CEO or a key staff member is able to devote a significant amount of time to the start-up.
- Anticipate changes and challenges, including possible changes in organization, management, resources, culture, funding, and community response.
- Draft a well-defined strategic plan and financial plan.

### Venture Planning

During this stage, the planning effort is organized, a “venture audit” is done, ideas are generated, opportunities are assessed, and a venture is eventually selected. Specific activities include:

- Seek technical and business expertise, legal and tax advice, and mentors from the business community with general and specific management expertise.
- Involve the entire management team and all appropriate staff in planning and development.
- Identify a social enterprise leadership team.
- Generate enterprise ideas that match resources with market demand.
- Establish and apply a set of criteria to identify promising social enterprise ideas.

### Feasibility Study & Market Analysis

Success is more likely when the nonprofit thoroughly investigates and quantifies the market opportunity for the planned business venture’s products and services. Specific actions include:

- Research other ventures providing a similar product or service.
- Determine your organization’s competitive advantages and disadvantages.
- Focus research on potential customers who would likely represent the majority of sales.
- Research customer needs/wants through direct interaction and focus groups.

- Carefully evaluate the findings against the stated goals of the venture.
- Conduct a preliminary feasibility study and rely only on factual information to form decisions.

### Venture Design

A comprehensive plan should be drafted for meeting the financial, human resource, development, marketing, and operational requirements of the business venture. Steps include:

- Determine the resources necessary to start the business – financial, management, consultants, research and development, and equipment – when and for how long these resources will be needed, and how to acquire them.
- Determine what is required to operate the venture, including start-up and on-going marketing, operations, production/service delivery, and pricing.
- Define the capabilities required for success, including administrative capabilities.
- Design an operating structure that takes advantage of organizational strengths.
- Identify shortcomings in resources and set targets for resolving them.
- Identify milestones for testing crucial assumptions.
- Develop a contingency plan for unexpected outcomes.

### Financial Analysis

Reasonable assumptions should be developed about the projected financial position of the proposed business and its impact on the organization. Steps include:

- Identify and quantify sources of financial support for the business venture that will be available during a certain period of time, usually three to five years.
- Develop a pro forma budget and determine cash flow needs.
- Conduct a break-even analysis.

- Develop pricing strategies.
- Use common financial ratios and gauge the viability of the venture.
- Set a minimum profit margin or return on investment.

### Business Plan

A business plan documents critical issues such as the design of the venture, management, market potential, resource demands, and potential for success. Nonprofits serious about starting a business should:

- Complete a comprehensive business plan.

### Assessment

Once a social enterprise venture is up and running, regular reviews help to gauge progress and assess the validity of earlier assumptions about the business. Steps include:

- Regularly review the venture's planned versus actual performance, including financial, management, marketing, and operational plans and adjust assumptions based on new conditions.

### Resources

Several organizations offer resources nonprofits may find helpful in understanding, planning for, and launching a social enterprise venture. These resources include:

- **Pittsburgh Social Enterprise Accelerator** ([www.pghaccelerator.org](http://www.pghaccelerator.org)): The Pittsburgh Social Enterprise Accelerator was created to help nonprofits in the region develop social enterprise ventures. The staff works with a limited number of ventures, offering one-on-one coaching and other services. Activities also include a business plan competition.
- **The Forbes Funds** ([www.forbesfunds.org](http://www.forbesfunds.org)): The Forbes Funds seek to advance capacity-building among nonprofit organizations in the region through three interrelated funds: The Copeland Fund for Nonprofit Management, The Tropman Fund for Nonprofit Research, and The Wishart Fund for Nonprofit Leadership.
- **Community Wealth Ventures, Inc.** ([www.communitywealth.com](http://www.communitywealth.com)): This for-profit subsidiary of Share Our Strength, an anti-hunger and anti-poverty

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organization, was founded as a consulting firm to help nonprofits increase revenue through business ventures and corporate sponsorships and become less dependant on outside support.

- **University of Pittsburgh Small Business Development Center** ([www.sbdc.pitt.edu](http://www.sbdc.pitt.edu)): The center's experienced consultants, supported by undergraduate and graduate students, offer consulting services, education, and training programs to regional entrepreneurs. It is a member of the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers and the Association of Small Business Development Centers.
- **Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers** ([www.pasbdc.org](http://www.pasbdc.org)): This public-private program is a network of 16 college and university centers that works with entrepreneurs and small businesses to help them to compete and grow.

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The Forbes Funds. (2004). Assessing social return on investment for social enterprises in the Pittsburgh region. *Tropman Reports*, 3 (1), [www.forbesfund.org](http://www.forbesfund.org).

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Community Wealth Ventures, Inc. *Children's Trust Fund Conference, Social Entrepreneurship and Creating Dynamic Communities Workshop, April 23, 2002*, [www.communitywealth.com](http://www.communitywealth.com).

This Special Report, written by Jeffery Fraser, is largely based on the above-referenced sources. 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> The Forbes Funds. (2002). Profit making in nonprofits: An assessment of entrepreneurial ventures in nonprofit organizations. *Tropman Reports*, 1 (5), [www.forbesfund.org](http://www.forbesfund.org).

<sup>2</sup> Massarsky, C.W., & Beinhacker, S.L. (2003). *Enterprising Nonprofits: Revenue Generation in the Nonprofit Sector*. Yale School of Management – The Goldman Sachs Foundation Partnership on Nonprofit Ventures, [www.ventures.yale.edu](http://www.ventures.yale.edu).

<sup>3</sup> The Forbes Funds. (2004). Assessing social return on investment for social enterprises in the Pittsburgh region. *Tropman Reports*, 3 (1), [www.forbesfund.org](http://www.forbesfund.org).

<sup>4</sup> Massarsky, & Beinhacker, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Community Wealth Ventures, Inc. *Children's Trust Fund Conference: Social Entrepreneurship and Creating Dynamic Communities Workshop*. April 23, 2002, [www.communitywealth.com](http://www.communitywealth.com).

<sup>6</sup> The Forbes Funds (2002), op. cit. ■

## Mark Your Calendar

### Family Support: Today & Tomorrow's Children 12th Annual Conference Tuesday, May 3, 2005

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

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### Quality Assurance

Looking at how well family centers meet the core standards is one of the ways the Policy Board sustains and advances quality throughout the system. Taking the lead in this effort is the Board's Quality Assurance Committee, a diverse group that includes family support parents, family support staff, lead agencies, and others including and representatives of the county and the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.

One of the most important resources at their disposal is a management information system that includes data from every family center on a number of indicators ranging from home visits and center-based activities to each parent's goals and child immunizations. Family center self-assessments, satisfaction surveys, and other sources of information are also available.

Recent quality assurance efforts include an in-depth, system-wide examination of family center governance, support for family goal setting, and welcoming drop-in centers. The Quality Assurance Committee looks at indicators to assess compliance with these standards.

For example, indicators examined when assessing governance include whether parent councils meet regularly, have direct contact with agency boards, are included in strategic planning, and are offered training. Indicators for welcoming drop-in centers include their accessibility, availability of age-appropriate toys and other materials, and whether activities are guided by family support principles. Indicators of support for family goal setting include whether all families are given a chance to set goals, are assigned a primary staff within six weeks of enrollment, and are offered home visiting by trained staff at centers that provide the service.

The parent council and individual goal-setting among parents at the Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center led to the creation of a program that enables parents who

had never driven a car before to take the first step toward getting a license. "The majority of them had a goal of improving transportation," said Regina Jones, Director of the family support center, whose lead agency is the Homewood-Brushton YMCA.

Two staff members developed a course to help families study for and pass the permit test. The result: 90% of the parents pass the test the first time and the rest pass on their second attempt. To help them learn to drive, the center typically refers them to a Goodwill driver's training program.

### Documenting Success

The emphasis on quality has proven beneficial in other ways as well. It helps to assure lead agencies, funders, and other stakeholders that centers are true to the family support principles. A strong focus on quality also helps to make the case that family support is worthy investment of human services dollars by providing evidence of outcomes and by promoting ongoing improvement.

Children's Hospital is the lead agency at six family support centers. "Just like we evaluate every service in the hospital, we evaluate how we are doing in the community," said Gregg, who reports to the hospital chief operating officer. "It is important that I am able to show what we do. I'm always challenged. How many families have we seen? What are the outcomes of their child developmental assessments? That is the type of information I need to report."

Individual family successes, however, can vividly illustrate the promise of family support. "We had a parent with two children in one of our centers. She was bright. She just needed some support at that time," said Gregg. "She went back to school and finished her undergraduate degree, came back and became the director of a center, returned to school and got her masters, and ended up in a public school as a social worker. That is the kind of success I have seen."

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

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evaluation in mind; cost-benefit analyses; and comparisons between home visiting outcomes and outcomes from other service delivery methods to better define the effectiveness of home visiting as a strategy.

*FOR MORE INFORMATION, see:*

Sweet, M. A., & Appelbaum, M. I. (2004). Is home

visiting an effective strategy? A meta-analytic review of home visiting programs for families with young children. *Child Development*, 75, (5), 1435-1456. The Society for Research in Child Development, Inc. ■

## 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. ■

### 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). ■

## Announcements...

### 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>. ■

### 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. ■

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