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PARENTS ANONYMOUS: A Family Adventure

Parents Anonymous: it is the "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow following the storm" of child abuse (Herbruck, 1979). A self-help group, Parents Anonymous (PA) has chapters in Virginia which are available to any parents who have abused their children, or are at risk of doing so. Participants make themselves available to one another during a weekly support group as well as by phone for crisis situations 24 hours a day. Each chapter's leadership consists of a sponsor (a community professional who volunteers time to attend weekly meetings and be available by phone other times during the week) and a chairperson (a parent member who has risen to a level of leadership).

Johanna Schuchert, the Virginia state coordinator is a vibrant and dynamic leader. She has been paid for her position in the past; however, Johanna is presently a volunteer coordinator as all funds for her position ended in July. With limited funding, PA has continued to grow based mainly on a volunteer effort. Johanna's energy, enthusiasm and dedication to the project are very clear. This kind of dedication is the real story behind the Parents Anonymous organization. And, the present is one of the most exciting times in the Virginia organization's development.

Focus on Children

"Nationally, Parents Anonymous is developing a focus on services for children," says Schuchert. "Thirty sites have been given seed money by the national organization to

begin developing this focus. Fortunately, two sites in Virginia-- Richmond and Tidewater--are able to begin this work."

There are two models being developed to assist the children of Parents Anonymous parents: Children Helping Children for children 12 and under, and Teens Together, a support group for children 13 and above. The VCPN staff was able to meet with several people involved in the implementation of both the Richmond projects.

Children Helping Children

PA has always provided child care while the parents were meeting. However, the child care is now taking on a more therapeutic dimension. Children's Coordinator JoAnn Comerato, a professional with experience in child abuse as well as in assessing children's needs, is developing structural play activities based on specific strengths and weaknesses displayed by the children. She is using various assessment tools to determine skills in motor development, language, social and cognitive development, as well as emotional and behavioral needs. These activities are developed with the following goals in mind: 1) to help the children identify and express feelings in appropriate ways; 2) to enhance the child's self esteem; 3) to develop feelings of competency; 4) to develop better relationships with parents; and to develop social skills with peers.

One of the most exciting and touching aspects of the new children's play group in the Richmond area is the involvement of a

cottage of boys from the local Methodist Youth Home (See adolescent abuse article). Tony Miller, cottage counselor, explained how it began. "The boys wanted to do some volunteer work in the community. We started doing some calling and we were eventually put in touch with Johanna. She came and talked to the boys, telling them what qualities they had which would allow them to be a valuable asset to this play group. The boys got really excited."

Approximately eight boys from the group home work with 12-15 children of PA members. They play and they share in one-on-one structured activities which have been developed by Comerato. Each boy has developed a particular friend, and he is now spending quality, nurturing time with that child.

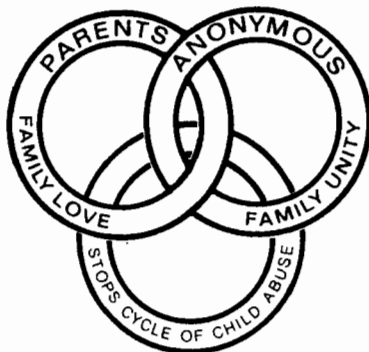
"It does the boys a lot of good," says Tiller. "They are gentle; they understand the hurt. They really get attached. It is a thrill for them to help these other kids."

The PA children get benefits, too. "They look to these boys as big brothers," interjects Schuchert. "Meaningful, sensitive relationships have developed."

Teens Together

Equally as exciting is the teen support group which also meets when the PA parents are together. Leadership for this group comes from Holly Newman, a counselor with the Family and Children Services in Richmond. Her group is an open-ended group and is available to any teen in the community.

continued on page 3



Parents reaching out to parents.



(Ed. Note: This article is written by Sara Bishop, a representative of Va. NCPCA. If you have any questions, write her at 621 New Hampshire Ave., Norfolk, Va. 23508)

Annual Meeting

Get involved! The Virginia Chapter of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse will hold its annual meeting on Dec. 3, 1982, at 10 a.m. in Richmond. All members of the Virginia NCPCA are invited and encouraged to attend. Officers will be elected and brief committee reports will be given. Details will be mailed to all members.

Leadership Conference

The Virginia chapter has submitted a proposal to the national committee to host the next NCPCA Leadership Training Conference at the Xerox Center in Leesburg, Va., in fall 1983 or spring 1984. The NCPCA conference is designed to train and educate state representatives in the latest skills and knowledge of volunteer leadership, preventive programs and strategies, chapter development and fund raising. If Virginia is selected, all chapter members and MD teams will be invited to participate and benefit from the excellent training provided by nationally recognized experts and leaders in abuse prevention.

NCCAN Conference

The sixth annual National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect Conference will be held in Baltimore, in October 1983. The fifth annual NCCAN Conference, held in Milwaukee, Wis., in spring 1981, was attended by at least 20 Virginians. Since the upcoming conference is being held so close to Virginia, we hope a greater number can attend it. Watch for further information so you can reserve conference dates on your calendar.



Virginia Chapter of the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse

Resource Directory

The Virginia chapter is compiling a directory of prevention programs in Virginia. Information has been coming in from agencies and organizations involved in prevention. If you have not yet responded to the questionnaire, please do so quickly so you can be included. The directory will be kept on file at the Bureau of Protective Service. However if copies are desired by individuals or organizations, arrangements can be made. Watch this newsletter for information.

Model Program Guide

The Virginia chapter has selected Charlotte McNulty to undertake the development of a model program guide. This guide, a handbook on prevention program ideas, will be completed by summer 1983. Individuals, agencies, and organizations will be able to refer to this guide in the development of prevention programs in their locality.

Theater IV Project

The Virginia chapter has contracted with Theater IV, for the production of a sexual abuse prevention play for children in grades K through 6. Beginning in fall 1983, this play will be presented throughout the state. If you or anyone you know is interested in serving an advisory committee, please contact Cheryn Durette, as the program committee is presently forming an advisory committee of professionals with expertise in the area of child sexual abuse to review the script. Cheryn can be contacted by calling (703-938-2803).

Board Retreat

Board members of Virginia NCPCA met in Wintergreen, November 12-14 to discuss chapter activities and long range plans.

Christmas Cards

The Virginia chapter is selling Christmas cards with all proceeds going towards chapter activities. The cards cost \$7 for a package of 25 cards. The cards have a tag on the back page that states the purpose of the cards. If you are interested in buying cards for your Christmas mailing, please call Sue Gibson at 804-423-3983 or the board member nearest you (see spring issue 1982). Arrangements will be made for you to receive your cards.

State Conference

It is hoped that a state conference can be planned for 1984. The purpose of the conference will be to gather state child abuse information and facts. The results will be presented to the State Legislature. The conference will be planned by a coalition of groups with interests in the area of child abuse.

NCPCA Publication

The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse has many excellent publications available at low costs. Topics include emotional maltreatment, maltreatment of adolescents, sexual abuse, fund raising, evaluating prevention programs, healthy preschoolers, parenting, disabled children, and child abuse and the law. Several of the publications are available in Spanish. For a free copy of the catalog of publications write: NCPCA, Publishing Department, 332 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1250, Chicago, Illinois 60604 or call (312-663-3520).

NCPCA 

Yes, I want to help stop the hurt!
Please accept my membership in the Virginia Chapter of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse today.

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Contributions and bequests to NCPCA are charitable contributions which are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

\$15 Individual \$100 Donor \$500 Friend of Abused Children
\$25 Organizational \$250 Patron \$1,000 Corporate Friend of Abused Children
\$50 Sustaining

Enclosed is my membership fee of \$_____.

Please return this form with your check or money order to the Virginia Chapter for Prevention of Child Abuse, Connie Gendron, 1302 Lombard Ct. Martinsville, Virginia 24112.

Parents Anonymous

continued from page 1

Presently, the children of PA members make up the majority of the membership, though they often bring their friends.

"We basically provide a place that feels safe," says Holly. "The conversation is open to what ever they have on their mind. I try to model adult behavior with which they can feel comfortable. I do not set myself up as an authority." She goes on to explain that a major problem in abused teens is that they often lack any sense of control at home. "Here they have some control." The control comes in the form of deciding what topics will be discussed from week to week. Newman is expected to bring in the information they request.

"Though we never really discuss their abuse per se, I try to deal with topics directly related to conflict issues. For instance, I try to role model ways of handling conflict without beating. Everyone has anger and there are constructive ways of handling it. Often these children don't know there are other ways [besides using violence] to solve a problem," laments Newman.

Newman hopes the role playing and appropriate modeling will be generalized to their own families. She is already seeing some "really fine interactions" developing between group members, where they are now effectively dealing with group conflicts. She hopes these can begin happening in their own family too.

Though these children's groups are not necessarily dealing directly with child abuse and neglect, the children are apparently being taught skills for better human relations. At the same time, their parents are meeting to discuss their problems hoping to develop more effective coping mechanisms and parenting skills. It seems that this kind of multiple treatment intervention could have profound effects on the interaction within the family unit. This facilitates a break in the cycle of abuse.

MILK

Another exciting program in which the PA has become involved is the innovative and unique MILK program—Moms Inside Loving Kids—at the women's correctional institution in Goochland, Va.

"In March 1981, three women inmates approached the prison chaplain," relates Schuchert. "They were concerned about their relationship with their children, both now and in the future. They wanted to develop a program to help with the problem."

The chaplain, seeing the benefits of such a program, decided she needed a community resource to help with the project. PA was contacted in May, 1981.

The first step was to investigate other prisons to see what they were doing to facilitate relationships between mothers and their children. They found some prisons had Parents Anonymous chapters, some had parent-

ing classes and some had extended child visits. However, no prison facility had all three. From this, the three women, the chaplain, Schuchert, and 12 community professionals developed a seven part program: 1. A series of child development classes; 2. Parenting education classes; 3. A parent support group, with the chaplain as discussion leader; 4. Extended visits (eight-hour visits on Saturdays) with the children at the institution; 5. A guardian program, taking place at the prison while children are visiting their mothers; 6. Ways and means projects within the institution; and 7. Support after leaving the institution (connection with a PA group in or near their community when possible; another support network, where a PA group does not exist).

The first series was implemented in October, 1981. Since then, the response has been so great that each time the series is offered, applicants need to be screened as only 25 can be handled at a time. MILK is now beginning its third series of classes.

Two ways and means projects have been implemented: an in-house fashion show with all the clothes made by the inmates and refreshments provided by the local Junior Women's Clubs (bringing in \$400); and, an in-house disco with a local disc jockey donating time and equipment (bringing in \$250).

Of course, none of this could be happening without the support of the warden, Ann Downes, and the security staff who donate their time on Saturdays to provide security during the extended children visits.

continued on page 8

Virginia PA chapters are located in the following areas:

Appomattox
Eastville
Falls Church
Hampton-Newport News
Manassas-Woodbridge
Martinsville-Henry Clay
Monticello-Charlottesville
Norfolk
Petersburg-Tri-Cities
Portsmouth
Richmond
Richmond (Chesterfield)
Roanoke
Staunton
Virginia Beach
Waynesboro
Williamsburg, James City County,
York County
Winchester

Sponsors and addresses are available on request or through the Virginia Department of Welfare.

Book Review



Dr. James Garbarino

Understanding Abusive Families

by James Garbarino and Gwen Gilliam
(D. C. Health Company, 1981)

"Defining abuse is difficult. That difficulty should not stop us from examining the problem, however."

And examine the problem, they do. In *Understanding Abusive Families*, James Garbarino and Gwen Gilliam give a comprehensive and complex picture of the maltreatment of children in our society.

The problem of child maltreatment is one that the authors feel involves the developmental process: the definition shifts as the developmental agenda of the victim and the family shifts. Therefore, the authors adopted a definition which covers children from infancy to adolescence, pointing to the different factors that contribute to the problem.

Child maltreatment is also examined within the ecological context of the family: "In the case of maltreatment, the intimate relationship between the child and parents cannot be accounted for or understood without understanding how conditions surrounding family effect interaction between child and parent."

Within this context, the authors examine psychological, physical and sexual abuse. They draw upon the vast amount of research in the field to give a complete analysis of the problems as they stand. They do not leave us with that, however, instead they suggest specific social responsibilities for intervention in the problem. They suggest new as well as already developed strategies for intervention, with a clear eye toward prevention.

This book is a must for professional and lay people connected with or involved in the lives of families with children. In other words, it is a must for us all.

Don't Get Stuck There...Adolescent Abuse



(Note: A *adolescent abuse* is a term used throughout this article to signify the abuse of children 12 years old and older).

Child abuse of the adolescent is a problem, and a well hidden one at that. While up to 25% of all nationally reported abuse cases concern adolescents, there is a dearth of resources dealing with the subject. Why? "Society's attitude toward adolescents does not allow its recognition," says Dr. James Garbarino, researcher and one of the nation's leading experts on adolescent abuse. He is also co-author of *Understanding Abusive Families* (see book review.)

"The problem is hidden," says Dr. Garbarino, "because we have a tendency to look at a beaten teenager and think, 'I wonder what that kid did to deserve that' or 'why does that kid stay when he can run away?'" Society seems to look at the nearly adult body and assume that this young person can take care of himself. Because of this attitude, adolescent abuse is less likely to be reported. As a matter of fact, the Westat National Incident Study (as cited by Garbarino) which was conducted by interviewing several categories of professionals, concluded that adolescent abuse is more likely to be known to professionals without their reporting the incident than is abuse of younger children.

There are distinct differences between the abuse of a young child and the abuse of an adolescent. During a presentation at the 80th Annual Conference of the Virginia Council

on Social Welfare (29 March-1 April, 1982) Dr. Garbarino set forth some of these differences:

1. Employment of the father—In infant and child abuse, the father is two times more likely to be unemployed than in adolescent abuse.
2. Marital status of parents—Of the population of abused infants and children, less than 50% of the parents are married while of the population of abused adolescents, over 70% are married.
3. Income status—In adolescent cases, the income tends to be about three times greater than in cases of child and infant abuse.
4. Involvement of fathers—In abuse cases, the role of the father as abuser increases with the age of the child. In fact, when a child is 15 or older, the father is almost always the abuser.

In general, then, the adolescent cases seem more representative of the general population while child cases are more concentrated among single parents and the economically disadvantaged.

Several researchers, including Dr. Garbarino, have noted at least two major patterns of adolescent abuse. One pattern is where abuse begins in childhood and continues into adolescence. The second pattern is where parents have not been abusive prior to adolescence. In Garbarino's small scale study, about 50% of the adolescents fell into the second pattern.

Parents who abuse young children and continue into adolescence are the familiar multi-problem families characterized by unmanageable life stress and inadequate coping resources. However, parents who abuse their children for the first time in adolescence seem much different. These families appear to be more settled and stable. They are more likely than long-term abusers to be married and to be less transient. They are less likely than long-term abusers to be involved in spouse abuse or to have been victims of child abuse themselves.

What, then, precipitates the abuse in families with no history of prior incidents? In a broad context, the cultural climate of adolescence and society's negative stereotype of that state of development are partially responsible.

"Adolescents are often perceived as a drain on the family—emotionally and economically," states Dr. Garbarino. "There is also a general decline in goal-directed activity within families of teenagers." He goes on to remark that this lack can be blamed, in part, on the easy access to television, cars, and on the general weakening of ties with the family as peer influence increases.

Adolescence is a challenging time for families. The adolescent is trying to establish autonomy and independence, and often does so by testing limits, while trying to change rules and gain control over interactions. This

developmental task may begin a major change in family interactions. It is also likely that the testing and changing comes at a difficult time in the life of the adult. While the adolescent is planning life, the adult may be reassessing it; the adolescent is denying mortality, while the adult may be dealing with the aging or dying of parents; the adolescent is perceived as having boundless energy (the "Pepsi Generation"), while the adult may be beginning to slow down; the adolescent symbolizes a new beginning while the adult may be facing a divorce. Most families adjust by altering their behavior in response to these challenges. But, some do not.

It seems that parents who abuse only in adolescence are likely to be at one extreme or another in childrearing practices. That is, they are either parents who try to exert a great deal of authoritarian control, or parents with inadequate controls over their children (and, as a consequence, the children have not been able to develop adequate inner controls for themselves). The parent who maintains standards while being capable of negotiations is better prepared to meet the challenge of adolescence. Amount of parent flexibility, then, seems to be an important indicator for assessing if parents may be at risk of abusing their adolescent.

"The pool of adolescents with a history of abuse continues to fill like a spring-fed lake."

The differences in the two categories of adolescent abuse have some important implications for professionals involved in service delivery. In general, the later the abuse begins, the more intact the victim will be, and the more adequate the family. Thus, those families who begin abuse in adolescence have a better treatment prognosis than long term abuse cases, and are good candidates for family counseling. For chronic, long-term abuse families, some recommend concentrating upon the child rather than family mediation.

The most obvious solution to long-term cases is early identification and treatment. However, "the sad truth is that few services are available to meet the needs. We have not done nearly enough for abused and neglected children, but we have done even less for adolescents. Most services for teens are new, few and overburdened," laments Garbarino. "The pool of adolescents with a history of abuse continues to fill like a spring-fed lake."

The solutions to the dearth of adolescent services will not come easily. Garbarino has some ideas, however. "It is more effective to tinker than to manufacture," he claims. "We need established agencies to direct their attention towards abused youth and to modify programs, policies, and procedure to accommodate them." We also need to broaden and expand services to adolescents.

Programs

Some specific programs are beginning to be developed nationally. Among these is Youth Helping Youth, a self help group for youth developed by Dr. Garbarino. In developing this program, he saw four primary goals: 1) providing a supportive setting in which youthful victims can talk about maltreatment; 2) providing a context in which youths can discuss strategies for coping, including foster care, court appearances and child protective services; 3) providing a support system for youthful victims who need encouragement to seek adult intervention in abusive or neglectful family situations, by defining the kind of treatment and cure they have a right to expect; and 4) teaching skills that will make it less likely that members will become mistreating parents in the future (Garbarino and Jacobson, 1978).

In addition, Parents Anonymous is beginning to focus on children's services. Thirty sites in the United States have been given seed money to begin services for teens. The adolescent focus—Teens Together—is modeled after Youth Helping Youth but has a more general helping theme. (See Parents Anonymous article for more specific information about Teens Together in Virginia). Virginia was fortunate to receive sufficient money to begin pilot programs in two sites: Richmond and the Tidewater area.

It was difficult to find programs for adolescents within Virginia which worked specifically with abuse. We contacted several residential programs recommended to us as excellent. "Many of our children are from abusive or neglectful families. And, alcohol is almost always a problem," reports Bob Fleischman, director of development for Adventure Bound, a boy's residential program located in Boonesville, Va. This theme was echoed by those representing similar institutions: Rick David of Elk Hill Farms in Goochland, Va. (also a boy's residential center) and Lee Peebles, coordinator of community liason for Charterhouse School of the United Methodist Family Services of Richmond, Va.

All these institutions have excellent programs featuring vigorous, structural outdoor activities as well as innovative educational programming. "The emphasis is on the peer group, with activities focused toward building trust and enhancing self esteem," states Peebles. And Fleischman adds, "We emphasize that they are responsible for their lives."

Two of the institutions—Elk Hill Farms of Charterhouse School—also provide services for families, whether biological or guardian. "We rely on a resource being available when a young person finishes here," says David. Peebles agrees, stating that bi-weekly group attendance is required of their youth's family members. "We want someone available who can help to reintegrate the young person into the community."

Adventure Bound, on the other hand, works primarily with kids. "Very few of our families are intact," says Fleischman. "As a matter of fact, most of our kids have bummed out of foster care."

These three institutions appear to have superior staff and programming. They serve a population of adolescents known to be abused or neglected. However, it was striking to us to discover that none of the three offer any treatment specific to abuse/neglect, such as Youth Helping Youth. Much of the programming deals with overt behavior—such as the anger, the striking out, the promiscuity, and the poor communications. The focus is a more general theme of esteem building. There is no question as to the importance of changing those behaviors. But, it seems that focusing on the issue of abuse is important, too.

Prevention.

What about prevention programs? In a recent telephone interview, Dr. Garbarino stated that he placed a great deal of hope on prevention. "There is a growing recognition that treatment approaches are costly," he says. "Prevention is cost effective." And, he has some specific ideas for primary prevention of adolescent abuse:

- 1) Reorient existing adolescent programs to focus on abuse/neglect issues.
- 2) Use of self help groups for parents and teens.

3) Parent training in negotiating skills (non violent conflict resolution) and handling of adolescents prior to their children entering that state.

We found a program similar to that suggested by Dr. Garbarino in Waynesboro. Jack Tucker, director/counselor of Youth Services in Waynesboro, along with the local director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters and a local court services counselor, volunteer their time to provide a modified STEP parent training program free of charge. "We try to support parents in developing realistic problem solving by teaching them some negotiation skills," says Tucker of his program.

The questions are still greater in number and scope than the answers. Garbarino hopes, by approaching the problem of adolescent abuse ecologically and developmentally, we all can get "unstuck."

For more information about the institutional programs mentioned, contact: Rick David, Director, Elk Hill Farms, Box 99, Goochland, Va.; Bob Fleischman, director of development, Adventure Bound, P.O. Box 574, Charlottesville, Va. 22902; and Lee Peebles, Coordinator of Community Liason, 3900 Broad Street, Richmond, Va. 23230.

There are many more residential-communities for youth in Virginia. If you are interested in knowing if one is located near you, contact your local department of social services. If you know of programs or individuals offering treatment specific to adolescent abuse—phone or drop us a line!

Reference

Garbarino, James and Jacobson, Nancy. Youth helping youth in cases of maltreatment of adolescents. *Child Welfare*, 1978, 8, 505-509.



Isolation from peers is one of the side effects.

Summary of Results

	Physical Abuse Severity (of the injury)	Neglect Severity (of the neglect)	Lack of Supervision Severity (amount of time involved)
Almost Always Important	82%	85%	63%
Usually Important	15%	13%	25%
Sometimes Important	3%	1%	11%
Seldom Important	0%	0%	0%
Not at All Important	0%	0%	0%
Parent's Perception of their own behavior			
Almost Always Important	60%	52%	36%
Usually Important	31%	36%	45%
Sometimes Important	5%	9%	16%
Seldom Important	2%	1%	1%
Not at All Important	1%	1%	1%
Adolescent's Behavior (Provocation)			
Almost Always Important	20%	49%	65%
Usually Important	44%	35%	30%
Sometimes Important	25%	10%	5%
Seldom Important	7%	4%	0%
Not at All Important	3%	1%	0%
History of Incidents			
Almost Always Important	75%	67%	54%
Usually Important	18%	29%	36%
Sometimes Important	6%	3%	8%
Seldom Important	0%	0%	1%
Not at All Important	1%	1%	0%

supervision, the most important variable seems to be the effects on the adolescent. In fact, 53% of the respondents commented that they looked closely at the teenager's maturity. Another 24% stated that age, a variable related to maturity, was important. An additional 9% cited the adolescent's general adjustment and/or emotional damage as a factor.

Second in importance was the severity (or amount of time unsupervised), and the time of day. Most workers (81%) felt that these two factors interacted, with the majority stating that night-time lack of supervision was more serious. However, a number of workers felt that teens could watch TV, do homework, or sleep during the evening/nighttime hours and that lack of supervision in the daytime was a more serious problem.

The "quality of supervision" was seen as next in importance with an additional 32% of the sample specifically mentioning assessment of resources (neighbors, friends, ability to call the parent) as desirable.

The least important of the listed factors

was the "parent's perception" of his/her own behavior. An additional 17% of the workers cited "reason for the lack of supervision" and 11% commented that "what the parent was doing while the adolescent was unsupervised" was important. For example, if the parent was working, the lack of supervision would not be seen as neglect.

One in five workers noted that the location or type of neighborhood was a determining factor. Some workers indicated that they were more likely to make a determination of neglect in a less affluent, more "dangerous" area. However, in a sort of "reverse discrimination," other workers said they were less likely to determine lack of supervision in a poor area because the immediate community was more tolerant of unsupervised youth than was the case in more affluent areas.

Abuse of Younger Children vs. Abuse of Adolescents

Most protective service workers (88%) saw differences between abuse/neglect of

younger children and abuse/neglect of adolescents. Nine out of ten saw differences between lack of supervision in younger children and in adolescents. Abuse was seen as less severe and less frequent in teenagers, as well as causing different reactions in the victims. Adolescents were thought to be more likely to defend themselves, to strike back or to run away. It is interesting that even though one-third of the workers noted that injuries were less severe in teens, almost all placed great importance on the severity of the injury as a criteria for determination of abuse.

There was less agreement in the differences in lack of supervision. Thirty per cent of the workers saw this problem as more severe for the older group, while 13% saw it as more severe for the younger children. One in four workers commented that the children's reactions differed, most feeling that older children were more capable of self-supervision. About one-third of the workers felt that the reasons or motivations of the persons differed in the two groups. This later assumption appears to be supported by the bulk of the research (see article on Garbino, this issue).

Summary

The response to our survey indicates that determination of abuse, neglect, and lack of supervision for adolescents depends on interaction between a large number of factors. Protective service workers in Virginia are making determinations using key variables, as well as including assessments of individual family situations.

Our data indicates that the protective service worker is not immune to the prevalent "myths" of adolescent abuse. A considerable portion of workers feel that "adolescents seek help," and that "adolescents 'deserve' the abuse" (or are partially to blame).

On the other hand, Virginia's workers seem sensitive to other equally important issues. Many recognize that family dynamics in abuse of the adolescent differ from those in abuse of younger children and that the reasons for the incidents are not the same. A number noted that the abused adolescent is more likely to have general adjustment problems and perhaps contact with the juvenile court. Perhaps most important was the general recognition of the importance of emotional abuse in adolescent years.

We hope this initial survey concerning how protective service workers make adolescent abuse and neglect determinations will add to the slowly accumulating fund of knowledge about adolescent abuse. If you have ideas, comments, or want more complete information, contact us!

References

A complete list of references available on request.

Parents Anonymous

continued from page 3

"The prison made two very important concessions," explains Schuchert. "MILK is available to any inmate regardless of her offense and security status; and, it cannot be taken away as punishment."

Some of the more impressive aspects of the program relate to the fact that this is a program very much in tune with the self-help approach—the inmates worked it out with the help of prison and community resources, and the inmates developed it. In addition, it functions with very little money. A national network of community volunteers has been mobilized by Schuchert in order that children can be transported for occasional visits with mothers (not all children are in Virginia, and not all guardians can afford the transportation).

All this considered, it's not hard to understand why MILK was voted the most successful treatment program in the penal system in Virginia at the Virginia Conference of Correctional Counselors!

"I believe MILK to be primary prevention for child abuse and neglect," says Schuchert. "LEAA did a study in Wisconsin and Illinois in 1979; 93% of the inmates had been abused or neglected. We believe there is a



Pictured left, Safia, president MILK; right Johanna Schuchert; front Stephanie Schuchert

connection between childhood abuse, or deprivation, and abusive parenting. We know this program can prevent that abusive parenting from happening when these women leave."

Anyone interested in knowing more details about MILK should contact Johanna Schuchert, Parents Anonymous, 7810 Wistar Village Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23228, 1-804-288-7729.

PA Self Help Effectiveness

Of course, Parents Anonymous continues to provide the original concept of self help through the group process and telephone hotline in addition to all their new projects (see list for PA chapters). This is important and effective. "Our recidivism is minimal; and, including our children's programs, we do it for \$475 a year per person. You can't get much more cost effective than that!" Schuchert exclaims.

(For historical information about PA, see the Spring 1979 issue of VCPN. If you can't find a copy, write us and we'll send one.)

Reference

Herbruck, Christine Comstock. *Breaking The Cycle of Child Abuse*. Minneapolis: Winston Press, Inc., 1979.



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