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Child Protective  
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Virginia Depart-  
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# VCPN

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Winter 1982

Virginia Child Protection Newsletter

Number 2

## Sexual Abuse: Treatment in Virginia

We react strongly to thoughts of our children being sexually abused. Unfortunately, we know it happens to children everyday. Sexual abuse has been happening for generations and yet, until recently, it has been cloaked in a veil of secrecy. Now, television is featuring documentaries in prime time, dramatizations deal with the topic, while popular magazines, such as *Teen*, *Ms.* and *Parent* are publishing articles about it. Increasingly, professionals are talking about child sexual abuse at conferences all over the nation. We are finally beginning to deal with the sexual victimization of our children.

Over the last ten years major treatment programs have been springing up all over the country. The first started in Santa Clara County, California, due to the concern of a probation officer and a local psychologist, Dr. Henry Giarretto. Since then, the federal government has funded five major incest treatment training programs: Sexual Assault Center, Seattle, Washington; CAUSES, Chicago, Illinois; Child and Family Services of Knox County, Knoxville, Tennessee; the Joseph J. Peters Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Training Institute, San Jose, California. In addition to treating cases, these centers have been training professionals from all over the country in the management of sexual abuse cases.

### Virginia's Approach

Virginia's Bureau of Child Protective Services has been concerned about the need for specialized child sexual abuse treatment programs in our state. According to Ann Childress, program specialist in the bureau, the Philadelphia and the Knoxville programs offered an opportunity for training with an emphasis on the need for a strong, well-organized, multidiscipline approach to treating sexual abuse cases.

Therefore, in the summer of 1981, the bureau sponsored scholarships to 18 professionals from different disciplines to attend ten-day training programs at one of the two centers. The scholarships were distributed among the seven welfare regions in the state. Those attending did so with a commitment to provide at least one training presentation in their region and to serve as resource persons. This was part of an effort to establish a coordinated, multidiscipline approach to treatment of sexual abuse in the state.

### Multidiscipline Conference

Multidiscipline teams are being formed throughout the country to help agencies work with child abuse cases

and coordinate prevention services. Sixty-six multidiscipline teams are currently active in the state of Virginia.

Two one-day conferences, sponsored by the Governor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, with the support of the Bureau of Child Protective Services, were held this fall in Blacksburg and Richmond. The goal was to bring together existing teams and interested persons to strengthen the network of teams in the state and to stimulate the development of new teams.

One session of this conference dealt with the use of multidiscipline teams in the management of sexual abuse cases. According to Childress, the feedback from those attending this particular

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## Sexploiting and Sexualizing Children

Child pornography is on the increase. A 1979 report by Judianne Densen-Gerber and Stephen Hutchinson noted that at least 264 different magazines depicting sex acts among children or between children and adults were being sold in adult bookstores across the country. While there still is no proven link between child pornography and child sexual abuse, several researchers feel that the problems are intertwined. There are few arguments about the effects of pornography on the child victims, as there is mounting evidence confirming psychological trauma and long-term damage in the majority of cases.

Sexualization of children, however, does not stop with pornography. In more subtle ways, the media is shattering the taboo previously held against children as sexual objects. The underlying motivation for the media exploitation is simple financial gain.

Sex has long been used to sell many things—from clothes to cars, television

to alcohol. Now children are frequently being used in advertisements in sexually suggestive poses such as an ad for jeans featuring a prepubescent girl straddling the back of a young boy. Movie makers, too, have used the idea of prepubescent and adolescent sexuality to help sell their products. Movies like *Blue Lagoon* and *Endless Love* intimate a young teenager engaging in intercourse.

The sexual portrayal of children is not only overt, but also covert. In his book, *Media Sexploitation* (1976), Wilson Key says, "Those taboos held most strongly by any culture intensify that culture's vulnerability to subliminal manipulation. Pedophilia...is unquestionably the most feared taboo in America culture. Therefore it makes a superb subliminal advertising theme."

Why the increase in sexual portrayal of children? One hypothesis states that the increasing amount of child

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## Virginia Chapter of the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse - Update and News

**Editor's Note:** This column is a regular feature written by Janice Beeman. Any correspondence concerning this article should be sent to her at Rockbridge Area Social Services, P.O. Box 1065, 1 E. Preston St., Lexington, VA 24150.

### Legislation

Final legislation is being drafted to be introduced into the 1982 General Assembly. The bill previously identified as the Children's Trust Fund has formally been named the Family Trust Fund Bill. This bill will make available monies to be used toward the establishment of primary prevention programs in Virginia through a surcharge on the marriage license fee.

### Resource Directory

Work continues on compiling the resource directory that will list all the child abuse prevention programs throughout the state. The target date is June 1982. It is hoped that this directory will facilitate much more knowledge of and communication about existing programs. It should also be helpful in the development of additional prevention programs.

### Conference News

The Virginia NCPCA Chapter continues to work toward its goal to prevent child abuse and neglect. One of the objectives of the chapter was to use the Multidiscipline Team Conferences sponsored this fall by the governor's advisory committee for resource sharing. These conferences were viewed as most successful and provided an opportunity for much exchange and sharing regarding primary prevention of child abuse.

### Prevention

Plans are underway that will enable the Virginia NCPCA Board to assist communities that wish to set up prevention programs with technical assistance. The board believes it may not always be necessary to "re-create the wheel" when there are some good models of working programs existent.

### Join....Help Support Our Efforts!

To function effectively in bringing about the prevention of child abuse, the Virginia NCPCA needs your financial support and assistance to strengthen its state-wide membership. It should be noted that as of 1982 all of the monies for Virginia NCPCA memberships will remain in Virginia for work in Virginia. Previously a portion of membership fees went toward the NCPCA nationally.

### Free Publication Now Available

The Virginia NCPCA highly recommends the publication, "Dennis the Menace...Coping with Family Stress" and the Spanish version "Daniel el Travieso...Como Manepar Le Tension Familiar" prepared by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. This publication in comic book form clearly and simply illustrates how stress relates to child abuse and neglect in any family. It also gets across the message of the demanding task of parenting and the need for communication to support prevention programs to help families in stress. Contact your Regional Child Abuse and Neglect Resource Center for copies.

## Book Review

### No More Secrets, Protecting Your Child From Sexual Assault

No More Secrets, Protecting Your Child from Sexual Assault (Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay, Impact Publishers, Ca. \$3.95 + \$1.00 postage) is a book written for parents with suggestions on how to deal with child sexual abuse. The book explains ways of telling your children about sexual abuse, suggests games to teach prevention, lists several behavioral signs which might indicate sexual assault, tells what to do if an assault has occurred, and suggests ways to deal with the crisis and its aftermath.

No More Secrets is an informative book that stresses prevention in dealing with sexual assault. A major premise is that if a child knows what sexual assault is, he or she will be better able to avoid it. According to these authors, parental reassurance and rational thinking about placing the child's feelings first is of primary importance in dealing with a sexually assaulted child.

Anyone with children will find this book a source of helpful tips both on how to help your child protect herself from sexual assault and how to communicate with your child when you suspect sexual assault.

## Sexual Abuse Training Planned

The Virginia Bureau of Child Protective Services is in the process of awarding a grant for curriculum development and training in the management of child sexual abuse cases. The training will take place in each of the seven Welfare Regional Districts. The curriculum will cover the following four topics: 1) An Overview of Child Sexual Abuse designed to increase community awareness; 2) Investigation Techniques for Child Protective Service workers and Police Officers; 3) Treatment Techniques for Child Protective Service Workers and Mental Health Professionals; and 4) Community Networking for Child Protective Service Workers. Look for more specific information about this grant in our next issue.

## NCPCA Membership



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.

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Enclosed is my membership fee of \$\_\_\_\_\_ I will receive the National Committee's newsletter *Caring*.

Please return this form with your check or money order to the Virginia Chapter for Prevention of Child Abuse, Phyllis Breidenbaugh, 3135 Ashking Drive, Mechanicsville, Virginia 23111.

# Sexploiting and Sexualizing Children

sexualization is merely a symptom of our changing social values regarding children. Our society's mores are shifting; the distinction between what is normal and what is deviant is fading. Others feel apathy is a central factor. "America's indifferent attitude towards its children manifests itself in many ways, including a tolerance of exploitation of children in the production of sexually explicit films and magazines," says Judianne Densen-Gerber, JD, MD, Director of Odyssey Institute (1980).

Robin Lloyd, author of *Playland: A Study of Boy Prostitution*, concurs. "If we equate the amount of money spent on other projects to the amount of money allocated by the government for the care of children...and if we take this as an indicator of concern for children...we will quickly see just where children in America stand in order of priorities."

In the past, indifference towards children in our society has been seen in the absence of strict child pornography laws. In 1978, however, Congress passed and the President signed a significant federal statute. Since then, many states have introduced or passed child pornography legislation.

In 1979, Virginia passed such a law (Code of Va. § 18.2-374.1 [1981 Supp.]). This law states that persons under 18 years of age cannot be used in "sexually explicit visual materials." The act of employing children for such material is a felony. In addition, this law holds financiers, producers and distributors accountable for making available such sexually explicit visual materials; this, too, constitutes a felony.

Virginia also has laws which clearly outline the consequences for sexual acts with children by persons forbidden to marry (Incest - Code of Va. § 18.2-366 [1981 Supp.]), by persons taking indecent liberties with children (Code of Va. § 18.2-370 [1981 Supp.]), and by persons having carnal knowledge of children (Code of Va. § 18.2-61, 18.2-63 [1981 Supp.]). All of these acts constitute felonies.

It is clear that at the legislative level, Virginians are exhibiting a great deal of concern about the overt sexual exploitation of children. At this point, there appears to be no documented information detailing how successfully this concern is being dealt with at the local level. However, efforts are being made to gather this information.

As Peter Williams of the Virginia

Division for Children explained in a recent interview, "The United States Senate Select Committee on Education remanded the General Accounting Office to survey the fifty states to determine the extent of child pornography and prostitution." The General Accounting Office (GAO) is that division of the legislative branch of government which, among other things, is responsible for conducting national surveys. According to Williams, the GAO sent a survey form to a designated office in each state, to each of the three territories, and to police jurisdictions in 22 of the largest cities in the United States.

"The General Accounting Office assumed that each state would have a central store of data pertaining to child pornography and prostitution," says Williams. Since Virginia does not, Williams became responsible for doing a statewide survey in order to compile the data needed to respond to the national survey. Williams hoped to have the information compiled by January 1982.

Simple changes in law and harsh penalties, though important, will not be enough to deal with the problem of sexploitation and sexualization of children. Subtle, sexually suggestive portrayal of children by advertisers and media, in particular, fall outside the child pornography laws. However there

However there are other things which can be done. *Newspage* (December, 1981), a newsletter published by Women Against Violence and Pornography in media (WAVPM), reports what consumers have done about one instance of inappropriate advertising. According to WAVPM, clothing manufacturer Espirit De Corps recently published an advertisement in *Vogue* and *Glamour* magazines depicting a violent, sexual exploitation of a female. The sole purpose was to sell their product. WAVPM asked consumers to "Write Back! Fight Back!", and they did. Espirit De Corps received over 100 letters and calls. People noted that they liked the product but were offended by this method of advertising. As a result, Espirit De Corps offered a letter of apology, and stated a desire to be more responsible to their consumers. It works! Consumers have this option available and can let advertising companies know their feelings about publication of sexually exploitive images for financial gain.

Densen-Gerber (1980) suggests what

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professionals need to do about more overt victimization of children, such as their use in pornographic materials. There must be "development of intervention and treatment models for children victimized by this process." As reported in this newsletter, treatment models for incest are being developed in all parts of the country, including Virginia. One can hope that as successes in dealing with that particular area of sexual exploitation of children continue, and as public awareness of the other areas—pornography and the inappropriate sexualization of children in advertising—increases, these problems also will be addressed in specific treatment models.

Laws, consumer reaction, treatment programs for child victims—all these are reactive measures. In contrast there are only fledging efforts to address prevention. A start has been made in constructing models to educate children to themselves prevent their victimization. (see Book Review in this issue). While this effort is commendable, children, no matter how well educated, will always be somewhat vulnerable.

It seems that more knowledge is needed. Very little is written about, and perhaps little is known about, the consumer of child pornography. The consumer is in many ways the key, for without him there would be no gain in sexualizing children. Time and money need to be allocated for investigation of this facet of the problem.

Knowledge, strong laws, public awareness and action, the development of treatment programs, preventive education of children, and a firm conviction that children have the right to mature free of sexual victimization—these forces can combine to explore viable options to the current multi-million dollar sexploitation industry.

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# Sexual Abuse: Treatment in Virginia continued from page 1

session was very positive. "The sessions generated a lot of interest. In fact, as a follow up to these sessions, at least two localities have held workshops on their own, and one locality has decided to establish a Parents United chapter," she explains.

## Investigation

A canvas of several Virginia social service departments revealed interesting information as to how they are investigating and treating child sexual abuse cases.

As with any child abuse report, sexual abuse is investigated by the protective service workers in the social service department. All workers to whom we spoke mentioned that sexual abuse cases are handled as emergencies, with every effort being made to interview all parties as soon as possible. However, it appears that several alternatives exist as to who actually joins in the investigation. In most cases, two-person teams are used, with the team make-up varying from community to community.

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"If there is no alternative to incarceration, there is really little chance for rehabilitation of the abuser," says Cowlbeck.

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## Social Worker Team

The Virginia Beach Department sends a social worker dyad to conduct initial interviews.

"The two social workers conducting the investigation have distinctly different responsibilities," says Charlotte Maull, supervisor of the Ongoing Unit in Child Protective Services (CPS). "One worker is from the Investigation Unit of CPS. She deals with courts and maintains records. The second member is from the Ongoing Unit and has a more therapeutic role. This worker aligns with the family and encourages them through the therapeutic process." In fact, these workers have been trained in structural family therapy and will enter into a therapeutic relationship with those families who cannot afford fees required for private therapists.



Randi Buerlein, clinician, Henrico Mental Health Center.

## Social Worker - Police Teams

In contrast, Lynchburg's social service department uses a social worker-police deputy team in their investigations. Candace Cowlbeck, a local protective service worker, and Inspector Jack Lewis from the local police department, recently received training in Philadelphia. Since then they have teamed for investigations whenever possible.

"We bring different skills to the investigation interviews," says Cowlbeck. "Though Jack is sensitive, he works towards gaining a confession from the abuser. I, on the other hand, lend the counseling oriented interview skills. It's a good combination."

Because of varying work schedules, they cannot always team up to investigate reports. Cowlbeck is trying to interest other plain clothes police officers in receiving training. She would like to have a policeman available for all investigations. She is committed to this multidiscipline approach.

Sharon Fitch, supervisor of Sexual Abuse Unit in Fairfax County agrees with the importance of the social worker - police team.

"Separate investigations by our department and the police led to unnecessary turf problems," says Fitch. "We met and decided to establish workers with expertise within each department. These two workers team up whenever possible."

## Social Worker - Mental Health Worker Team

An alternative method uses a social worker and a community mental health worker in the primary investigation.

Randi Buerlein, clinician at the Henrico Mental Health Center, describes this approach.

"Whenever possible, the initial interviews should be performed by a pair of specially trained professionals from protective services and mental health. The social worker maintains the legal authority while the mental health worker initiates assessment to aid in disposition of the case. In this way, treatment begins at our first meeting," she says.

## Single Social Worker

In other areas of the state a team approach is not used during investigations. Responsibility for investigation is seen as a function of the social service department. Often one worker will conduct interviews, though another worker or a police officer might go along if the contact is at night.

Many departments reporting this method of investigation are in rural areas, receive very few sexual abuse reports and have a small staff. Only a few have workers who have been formally trained in sexual abuse case management.

## Treatment

As Buerlein stated, treatment begins with the initial investigative interviews. One function of a worker is to assess a family's disposition to receiving treatment. Though referral to formal treatment facilities varies from area to area, all workers interviewed think treatment is vital to ending continued sexual victimization of a child.

In many areas, treatment is a court ordered alternative to incarceration. There is a formal arrangement between the social work departments and legal authorities, with both working together to decide what course of action to follow.

Buerlein mentioned three criteria which have determined criminal prosecution in the Henrico area.

"We had cases where one of three things occurred: the mother of the child wanted to prosecute, there was a use of violence, or more than one child in the family was abused," she explains.

Fitch brought out another point in determining criminal action versus



Sharon Fitch, supervisor of Sexual Abuse Unit, Fairfax County.

court ordered treatment in the Fairfax area. A local mental health worker does an immediate evaluation to assess if the abuse is due to a family dysfunction or due to pedophilia (a disorder characterized by a preference for young children as sexual partners). For the dysfunctioning family, court ordered treatment is the preferred course of action.

"If there is no alternative to incarceration, there is really little chance for rehabilitation of the abuser," says Cowlbeck.

If at some point the abuser decides not to take advantage of the opportunity to alter their behavior, legal authority still prevails.

Though everyone acknowledges the importance of therapy, not all have a treatment program in place. Nancy Rowlette, of Lee County, for instance, is working with others to get their local Mental Health Center operating again. Training at the Knoxville training facility confirmed her feeling that treatment is an integral aspect of sexual abuse case management. She is working toward establishing a treatment model.

Those communities which do have treatment programs in place have

different philosophies about the treatment process.

### Structural Family Therapy

Both Henrico County and Virginia Beach workers state that a structural family therapy model works best for them.

"We are a family stabilization unit," says Charlotte Maull of Virginia Beach. "If the child can be protected, we think it is necessary to keep the family together. This includes therapy."

This does not mean that seeing the family as a unit precludes other therapeutic combinations. At some point in the process, members can be seen individually and in dyads. However, the main focus is the family.

Buerlein explained that Henrico has been using this model for over a year. Their goal is to restructure the family, clarifying roles and role limits within the family. During the initial crisis, the family may be seen as many as three times a week, settling into one visit a week.

"Once we get past the sexual issues the problems are usually no different than those in other families," says Buerlein. "There are usually marital problems, poor impulse control and poor parenting."

She has informally evaluated their program according to rate of recidivism. "We've had no recurrences of abuse in families who have gone through the program," she says.

Though Virginia Beach has just recently begun using this model, they feel optimistic about it.

"We were approaching treatment primarily by focusing on individuals," Maull explains. "We found too many children being separated from their families for too long. Now unless we think the child cannot be protected, the family unit remains intact, and we focus on the family."

### Individuals

Other programs focus on beginning treatment with individuals, working toward a time when the family can meet as a unit.

Those using a more individual approach to therapy discuss the advantages primarily in terms of personal growth. Giaretto states, "People who sexually abuse their children or allow their children to be abused do so because they are incapable of developing mutually beneficial



Candace Cowlbeck, protective service worker, Lynchburg.

relationships. They do not live self-fulfilling lives. Instead, they engage in hostile acts, such as sexual abuse of their children."

In therapy, efforts are made to change participant's attitudes about themselves in hopes of raising their self-esteem so that they can later benefit from marriage counseling and eventually family restructuring.

"The feeling in Philadelphia when I attended the conference was that families may need to be seen individually for as long as nine months to a year before they are ready to be seen as a family," says Candace Cowlbeck.

### Self Help Groups

To many of these professionals, self-help groups are an important complement to the therapy model they espouse. Of those we interviewed, Virginia Beach has the only active Parents United chapter, though several others plan to start chapters in the future.

Generally, self help groups offer support, understanding, and positive socialization for families experiencing

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## Parents United: A Concept of Support

Parents United is a valuable asset to any treatment process for child sexual abuse. It is an independent group not belonging to any one agency or individual. The Parents United program allows the offender a forum where he can relate to others with problems similar to his own. He is able to gather support, criticism, empathy, and guidance from others who have been in his shoes. Primary to the program is the concept of getting help for the entire family. While the parents benefit from the Parents United (P.U.) group, the children have a like program called Daughters and Sons United. In Daughters and Sons United, the children are able to deal with the problems that the abusive relationship had posed for them.

In 1972, Parents United evolved from the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program (CSATP) in Santa Clara County, California. CSATP was under the directorship of Henry Giarretto, PhD., who early on suggested that a few mothers of his first families talk with the new mothers who were in crises at that time. Eventually, those women began regular meetings with Dr. Giarretto, a juvenile probation officer, and a public health nurse in their homes. After a while, the group

considered and rejected the idea of forming a Parents Anonymous chapter. The special needs of these women could not be met in such a group, so they continued meeting as before. After expansion, the group chartered what was to be known as Parents United.

An important step was taken late in 1972 when the first father was admitted to the group. He was serving a sentence at a rehabilitation center when permission was gained for him to join the women's group. This step paved the way for other fathers. The chapter has since grown to better than 200 members.

A chapter meeting opens with a group centering exercise, followed by a discussion of the group's effectiveness and growth. Next, the members divide into smaller groups. Each group has a staff member (generally a professional) and a trained member of P.U. The topics of the small groups reflect the needs of the membership. Each group runs for eight sessions at the end of which the group members are encouraged to change. Typically, a chapter will have orientation, couples, mens, womens, women victimized as children, and mixed groups.

In these groups, stress is placed on self accountability rather than finding a "cure." The individuals seek the

confidence and positive attitudes needed to deal with a society with such highly negative attitudes and misconceptions about families in which incest occurs. Parents United works through its members to rid society of these misconceptions, the most frequent of which is that families with incest problems can handle it themselves.

Although the main purpose of Parents United meetings is group therapy, it also plays an important social support role. Needs such as transportation, jobs, and using community resources are met with the help of other members. Some groups maintain lists of jobs available to a parent with a felony record.

The legal system is gradually becoming aware of the potential that Parents United has to offer. Many courts today are now using Parents United groups as an alternative to incarceration. The results of using this alternative appear promising!

The following are excerpts from an article by Fae Deaton and staff of the Virginia Beach chapter of Parents United. This article was originally published in PUN (Parents United Newsletter, Santa Clara County Chapter, San Jose, Calif., Dec., 1981.)

### What's Happening in Virginia Beach, Virginia

As we look back, it hardly seems possible that we now have over 200 members listed, and back in the summer of 1979 we began with four couples. Next July we will be three years old and already the groups have grown so in size, in understanding and also in being able to have impact on the various segments of the communities and the state(s).

We now have Orientation I and II, Men's and Women's groups, Advanced Couples, and Mixed groups. As the needs of the members have changed, we have tried to provide groups to meet those changing needs.

We are especially proud of the intensive training program for leaders, speakers and sponsors. Various presentations and training have been carried out for the groups from North Carolina, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania as well as our own state of Virginia. We see a continuing need to emphasize the model set up in San Jose, and though it may seem fit to make some temporary modifications, the progression through

the basic groups fits with the group process and avoids protecting the perpetrators and the spouses. The sooner the members can start to confront incest and stop protecting or avoiding the issues, the sooner healing can start.

It is especially important to us to have identified therapists who have joined us in supporting the concept that Parents United is a life-long process. To declare an abuser to be "cured" after a year or two of therapy and state that he and his family no longer need Parents United, only feeds into the denial pattern that the perpetrator and the spouse have used to maintain the incest system in their family. Those of us committed to seeing a unique approach in the therapy modalities have also come to see that traditional family therapy cannot be carried out - but that the whole family needs treatment in various individual and dyadic and triadic modules in order to get to the point that the family can work together in a more traditional family therapy approach.

The Virginia Beach Department of Social Services has provided the nurturance and support in staff, space and encouragement that has allowed Parents United to grow in recognition in Virginia and the nearby states on the East Coast. There are now chapters in Norfolk (the second in Virginia), Fredericksburg, Manassas, Hampton/Newport News. Shortly, the three city chapter for Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Suffolk, as well as a three county/city chapter in Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico will be organized.

We have been infected by the Parents United concept and seen it in process and are addicted with the gains so many make...some slowly, some rapidly. But always, if they come, there's hope for the children of today and tomorrow to not have to experience this terrible trauma. Families can be safe places for their members. Thank you for letting us play our part.

Fae and Dan, Staff, Virginia Beach Chapter.

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## President's Message

My involvement in Parents United started in February 1980. I had sexually abused my daughter from the age of five or six until age 14. During that time I made most of my decisions on the emotions I was feeling and not thinking what the results would be, or how it would affect others. Our Virginia Beach chapter only had about 40 members then, but had a tremendous affect on me and my family.

First, I found I was not the only person with the problem of being incestuous. Knowing this was the start of my growth towards an awareness of where my head was, which I'd never had, and being a productive person, ready and willing to face reality, to deal with problems and not run into "fantasyland," to get away, which meant not dealing with issues.

Second, was the friendly attitude shown to me. I had done a monstrous thing, but I wasn't a monster. Those members, making me feel comfortable, helped in the freedom I felt in talking. That friendly approach has helped some members feel free enough to socialize together in good times, to lean on each other during the times that are hard. A feeling of being united.

Third, an important part Parents United played in my growth was that I could hear from the dads and mates the different roles they were playing: The dad, or perpetrator, playing the victim and being angry about being "turned in," which has caused turmoil in the marriage and blaming the Department of Social Service and/or the legal system for the family being torn apart; Wives of mates playing the protective role to the perpetrator. The victim, social services,

judicial system caused all the turmoil they were going through.

To see and hear the confrontation of others, including the facilitators, helped me to see I was totally responsible for my action and the repercussions of the incest being brought out of the closet. I realized in the first several meetings that I was responsible, that I was immature, and that I did run from reality. I did fantasize, but I could get better; I could survive; I did have feelings and could be aware of them and had to be in control and responsible for those feelings. I did love my wife and children, wanted to help our family stay together. In order for me to be able to help, I had to deal with some things in my past, get them out of the closet, and acknowledge to myself what part I played and where I'm going now. I learned enough about me in our meetings to know I had to build into my head some alarm systems along with the self-awareness. To be aware when I start fantasizing, feeling anger, feeling sexual, under stress, feeling depressed, etc., I asked myself, "Is this productive for me or my marriage?" If it isn't, I'll "flush" it, just like a toilet. I don't need anything in my life that will be detrimental to my personal growth or the growth of our marriage...

Because of our size we have two orientation groups running for eight weeks each. In the first eight weeks the perpetrator has to see his responsibility and start working on getting his head together, so that by the time his mate is starting to deal with the anger of being used, having trust betrayed, being lied to, being jealous, etc., it won't totally wipe out the abuser.

Besides the quantity of persons attending, the quality of personal growth is increasing. From visiting other chapters I have to say that the difference I see in the personal growth of our members has to be given to confrontation. Keep hammering away to find out where the anger is really coming from and where it should really be placed, and where are the tears really coming from. Even depression and self pity is confronted. Is the person carrying guilt they shouldn't carry? Have they dealt with being molested as a child? Who was the victim? Who should carry the responsibility? Are the members going to sit on a pity pot and blame their past for all the crap their future has in it? Each of us is responsible for the decision we make.

I would like to say thanks for all involved in the growth of Parents United, from the West Coast to the East Coast, and making my growth possible. Also a special thanks goes to those persons electing me as president eight months ago. It's been a real challenge and growing experience for me and my family.

Lou, president, Virginia Beach

## HELP!

We must update our mailing list. In order to do so, we need your help. Please take a minute and fill out our form. If we did not hear from you after our last issue, fill out the form telling us to keep you on the mailing list ("add") or take you off, and return it to us by May 1, 1982. Otherwise, you automatically will be removed and will not receive our next issue. Thanks!

Charlotte McNulty  
Center for Child Abuse Education  
Psychology Department  
James Madison University  
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22807

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please remove from list: \_\_\_\_\_

Please add to list: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parents United Chapters in Virginia

**Norfolk**  
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# Sexual Abuse: Treatment in Virginia

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sexual abuse problems. This model is viewed as an essential adjunct to long term therapy. In Virginia Beach it is a part of the court ordered therapy model. (See our article about Parents' United for further information.)

## Community Mental Health Professionals

Of those interviewed, except for Virginia Beach, all therapy is referred to community agencies or private therapists. As with the legal system, there is a positive working relationship between the social service agencies and mental health community, assuring the best services for these clients. In all cases, the clients are seen on a priority basis. In most cases, there is a sliding scale of fees for those who cannot afford full fees.

In Virginia Beach, private therapists help facilitate Parents United groups. In Lynchburg and Fairfax, where there are no Parents United chapters, the mental health agencies (Woodburn in Fairfax and Central Virginia Mental Health Clinic in Lynchburg) have groups for sexually abused adolescent females.

## Training

Many who have received formal training feel a responsibility to train others.

"We see our role as educators," says Fitch. "We've already started training many of our agency personnel and members of the local legal community. Its essential to sensitize them to the issues."

One is impressed with the organization of training planned by the Lynchburg group. Cowlbeck, Lewis, and Diane Walker, mental health clinicians at Central Virginia Mental Health Center, returned from training in Philadelphia with tremendous enthusiasm. They have developed a three-tiered approach: 1) training all professionals dealing with sexual abuse investigation and treatment, 2) training all school personnel, starting with day care and including private institutions if possible, and 3) a major community awareness approach.

"It's necessary to start with professionals and get a good treatment program in place. The second and third tiers are designed to increase reports. When one raises community awareness

about reporting, it's important to have treatment services to offer to the identified families," says Cowlbeck.

The group recently did their first training in Appomattox County. "Fifty people from many disciplines attended," says Virginia Babcock, Protective Service coordinator of the Appomattox office. "The success is due, in part, to the efforts of Jenny Fratrack, coordinator of our very active volunteer group. The workshop was designed to facilitate better communications between disciplines. It was excellent."

Henrico Mental Health, too, is busy developing a training model. They are putting together a training package to be presented to teachers and other school personnel. In fact, they will be ready for their first workshop this month.

"Sexual abuse is a real problem," says Sharon Fitch. "It crosses all socioeconomic classes. We see that clearly in Fairfax County."

"It's a rural problem and it's an urban problem," says coworker Beth Iddings. "It needs to be attended to."

Virginians, it looks like we're trying.



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Funds for This publication are provided by:  
National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Children's Bureau  
Administration for Children, Youth and Families  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Grant no. 3c/22/06

and

Virginia Department of Welfare  
Bureau of Child Protective Services