



Arizona - Pima County, Kansas, Northeast Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan - Kent County,
Mississippi, Montana, New York City, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington

July/August 1997

On June 25 and 26, nearly 250 key national, state, and local leaders gathered in Washington, DC, for a foster care and adoption policy conference, ***Policy Perspectives on Permanency***, hosted by the W.K Kellogg Foundation as part of the Families for Kids Initiative (FFK). The goal of the conference was to focus national attention upon the critical issue of waiting children and create a sense of urgency about their plight that would compel action and systemic change at all levels. The conference provided opportunities for FFK to leverage sustainability efforts; communicate with broader audiences about FFK and children in foster care waiting for permanent homes; sustain the adoption reform momentum generated over the last two years; and engage federal, state, and local policymakers in exchanging solutions and perspectives.

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*To help people
help themselves
through the practical
application of knowledge
and resources to improve
their quality of life and
that of future generations*

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Kansas Governor Bill Graves and First Lady Linda Graves, and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani were among the keynote speakers who presented their perspectives on solutions and systems changes. Other national, state, and local advocates from across the United States, as well as adoptive families, brought their first-hand experiences to the discussion. The audience included leaders from religious groups, child advocates, community activists, top child welfare administrators, the judiciary, state and local elected officials, and Congress.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton noted that the conference could not have been more timely given that federal policymakers are forging a bipartisan coalition on some crucial child welfare issues that put the country "within reach of bringing common sense to the overburdened and outdated foster care system." She emphasized the need to recognize and work harder to reduce the disproportionate representation of children of color within the foster care system and to redefine reasonable efforts and offer financial incentives to those interested in adopting children, especially special needs children, from the public system. Underscoring the President's commitment that no child should be deprived of a safe and permanent home for longer than necessary, she summarized current efforts to highlight successful strategies; breakdown financial and other resource barriers to permanency; and make tax credits available for adoptive parents. Mrs. Clinton offered support and gratitude to FFK for its commitment and leadership in reform efforts.

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FROM: COMMUNICATION CONSORTIUM TO: 23382391 0432 571 AUG 22, 1997 4:10PM #818 P.01

Members of Congress speak up. . . The conference's plenary and breakout sessions on June 26 were preceded by a reception and dinner on the evening of June 25 featuring federal policymakers who shared their perspectives on child welfare reform. Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH), Congressman Dave Camp (R-MI), Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly (D-CT), Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), and Olivia Golden from the Department of Health and Human Services emphasized the importance of both Republicans and Democrats working together to reform the system and were hopeful that Congress would act this year on legislative reforms. In the opening prayer, Judge Julian Pinkham, Yakima Nation Tribal Court judge and spiritual leader, urged participants to protect the health and well-being of children in foster care.

Envisioning change. . . On June 26, Dr. Valora Washington of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation opened the conference, calling it a clarion on behalf of waiting kids as well as an opportunity for conferees to share what they know about what works. "Increasing the chances of permanency for children drifting in the system requires new potential allies to elevate the dream of change above the intimidating presence of things as they are," said Dr. Washington. "This is what FFK reformers have succeeded in doing and what all reformers must do if we are to enact what 25 years of research has already taught us about children's needs and proven systems solutions."

Through the eyes of children and youth. . . To underscore the urgency of the issue, the opening speakers were veterans of child welfare systems that failed to find permanent homes for them. Shane Salter, who is currently the deputy director of For Love of Children in Washington, DC, spoke about his experiences in nine foster homes, two group homes, and an orphanage before he "aged out" of the system. Mr. Salter was followed by Kevin Green, a member of the Mississippi SUN (Speak Up Now) Team, who told his story of his foster care placements. He indicated that his FFK advocacy work as part of the SUN team was helping fill a hole in his heart as a result of being without a family. "Why we turn our backs on kids, I don't know," Mr. Green said.

Community visioning, community leadership. . . Judge William Byars, Jr., Fifth Circuit Family Court Judge in Kershaw County, S.C., spoke to the participants about the paradigm shift needed, including in the court system, to "see the system through the eyes of a child." He has been an acknowledged leader in South Carolina's legal reform movement, which has embraced family preservation, emphasized permanency, supported kinship care, increased terminations of parental rights by a factor of 10, and increased adoptions by a factor of six.

State perspectives on permanency. . . Kansas Governor Bill Graves and Mrs. Linda Graves, adoptive parents themselves, shared with the audience Kansas' approach to reform. The change process had three immediate goals: above all, to protect kids; to focus on outcomes, not social service process; and to deliver services more effectively. Kansas pursued these goals by privatizing the bulk of their child welfare services, the first state in the nation to do so. He stated that the initial results of this approach are encouraging, with fewer children entering foster care each year, more children returning home, children staying in foster care for shorter periods of time, and reunified families remaining together longer.

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FROM: COMMUNICATION CONSORTIUM TO: 23382391 0432 571 AUG 22, 1997 4:11PM #818 P.02

Achieving permanency: What we must do. . . A panel of child welfare commissioners shared their philosophies and strategies for improving the foster care and child welfare systems. Nicholas Scopetta, commissioner of New York City's Administration for Children's Services, talked about several of their strategies that have steadily increased the number of adoptions since 1994. A new focus on permanency and adoption and the support of key members of the judiciary are among the factors of their success. Donna Starr, president of the Native American Commission on Children and Families in Washington state and a member of the Muckleshoot Tribe, emphasized that tribal people do not believe in severing their blood ties (as is often the case in the mainstream formal adoption process); instead, they favor using guardianships, relying upon open adoptions as a last resort. Jim Clarke, state director of the South Carolina Department of Social Services, stressed improving the management of systems serving children. Kevin Fitzgerald, director of the North Carolina Division of Social Services, cited the success of North Carolina's eight "FFK counties" in outperforming all other counties in terms of increasing adoption rates and stabilizing expenditures. JoAnn Lawer, deputy secretary for the Office of Children, Youth and Families in Pennsylvania, discussed her agency's collaborative efforts with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family initiative to develop reliable data on children in the foster care system. Marva Hammonds, director of the Michigan Family Independence Agency noted several positive developments throughout the state, including legislative initiatives that would require legal personnel to recognize a child's sense of time.

The FFK Mandate: Reduce the backlog and change the system. . . Thursday's luncheon featured Mayor Rudolph Giuliani speaking about New York City's approach to reducing the backlog of kids waiting to be adopted and reforming the child welfare system so that it serves children and families better. He spoke about the need for the agency to shift from a culture of unaccountability to one of accountability in order for it to effectively protect children. He also emphasized that local governments, particularly city governments, are in the best position to help kids and families because they are the closest to their problems and their needs.

Implementing change: Conversations about permanency. . . In the afternoon, the conference divided into five breakout sessions to allow participants to engage in concrete discussion about various aspects of reform.

Taking action to achieve permanency for kids. . . This session explored putting state policy and legislative frameworks in place by addressing issues such as reasonable efforts, court management, and enforcement of timeframes and permanency options in statute and policy. The panel featured Mark Hardin, director of Child Welfare at the American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C.; Cassie Bevan, staff professional assistant to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources in Washington, D.C.; Barbara Pryor, legislative assistant to Senator John D. Rockefeller (D-WV) in Washington, D.C.; and Judy McKenzie, executive director of the Spaulding Center for Children in Detroit, Michigan.

Building blocks for permanence addressed the question of whether the movement to restructure or privatize child welfare services will ensure permanency for children. The session included discussions of public and private sector roles, the need for integrated children's services and the implications of managed care. Teresa Markowitz, commissioner of Children and Families in Kansas, Karabelle Pizzigati, the director of public policy at the

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FROM: COMMUNICATION CONSORTIUM TO: 23382391 0432 571 AUG 22, 1997 4:12PM #818 P.03

Child Welfare League of America, Gary Crow, executive director of Lorraine County Children's Services in Ohio, and Michael Weekes, deputy commissioner of quality management and program development in Massachusetts lead the discussion.

Funding mechanisms for outcome-based systems looked at innovative alternatives that address the reduction of mainstream funding and how states are developing new resources. The panel included Isaac Palmer, deputy commissioner for the Ohio Department of Human Services; Fred Wulzcy, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago; Chuck Harris, chief of the Children's Services Section in North Carolina; and MaryLee Allen, senior public policy director at the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, DC. The panelists and participants discussed managed care, outcome-based contracts, and new approaches to IV-E & IV-B federal funding waivers, among other issues.

Promising practice solutions: Early Interventions highlighted innovative solutions that include intervention before removing children from their families; reducing foster care drift; and identifying critical cultural issues. Some of the programs designed to achieve this include kinship care models, concurrent planning, family decision-making conferences, and family advocacy. This session was led by Linda Katz, program director at the Lutheran Social Services of Washington and Idaho; Veneese Chandler, executive director of the Family Outreach Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Ernesto Loperena, executive director of the New York Council on Adoptable Children in New York City.

Promising practice solutions: "The Backlog Blitz". . . "How best can we achieve the outcome of moving children into permanent families?" was the central question in this session. A panel including Ruth Amerson, executive director of Another Choice for Black Children in Sanford, N.C., Polly Pfeuffer, a permanency planning specialist for Arizona Families for Kids in Tucson, and Kim Stevens, family advocacy coordinator for Massachusetts FFK in Boston shared their successful approaches to increasing the number of children who find permanent homes.

For more information. . . Complete summary highlights of Families for Kids national policy conference, *Policy Perspectives on Permanency*, will be available in early September from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation at 800/819-9997. Visit the W.K. Kellogg Foundation web site at www.wkkf.org for a press release on the conference and press kit including several downloadable publications and fact sheets on FFK. Go to the "Newsroom" in the "Resources" section of the web site, and click on "Adoption Reform Conferences."

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Successes and Challenges is a monthly fax providing information about the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Families for Kids Initiative. We have recently added the participants in the African American Leadership Summit and national adoption policy conference, *Policy Perspectives on Permanency*, to the distribution list. If you have moved, changed your fax number or do not want to be on our distribution list, please contact us by phone: 202/326-8713, fax: 202/682-2154, or e-mail: nora@ccmc.org. Thank you.

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Prepared by the Communications Consortium Media Center, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005. We welcome your comments, questions or suggestions.

FROM: COMMUNICATION CONSORTIUM TO: 23382391 0432 571 AUG 22, 1997 4:13PM #818 P.04

Families for Kids SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES

AN INITIATIVE OF THE W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

Arizona - Pima County, Kansas, Northeast Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan - Kent County,
Mississippi, Montana, New York City, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington

October 1997

In honor of National Adoption Awareness Month, Families for Kids (FFK) is making a special push in November to raise awareness about the children in the child welfare system who are waiting for permanent homes. Each of the eleven FFK sites is working in partnership with other adoption organizations, government agencies, policymakers, corporations, and media outlets toward their shared goal: to highlight individuals and programs that make a difference in the lives of waiting children and to reduce the backlog of waiting kids.

Ohio Families for Kids (OH-FFK) is collaborating with several organizations to provide accurate information about adoption by sponsoring events such as "Ages and Stages of Adoption"; "The Truth about Pre-natal Drug and Alcohol Exposure"; and "Open Adoption". . . On November 7, Dr. Valora Washington from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will host a round-table discussion for child welfare professionals on the issue of families for kids of color. That evening, she will address this same issue at a reception for community leaders . . . OH-FFK will be recognized as a community partner by the Cuyahoga County Commissioners on November 12. . . The family advocacy group, Advocates for Children Today, is making a presentation at a state-wide conference sponsored by the Ohio Department on Human Services; OH-FFK is also presenting a workshop on systems reform. . . Wendy's of Northeast Ohio is again generously tailoring tray liners to feature the regional toll-free adoption resource line, and WUAB-TV 43 will sponsor a family movie with adoption public service announcements and the toll-free number. Contact Mary Brooks at 330/434-4713.

Treasure Book receives award from Montana's governor. . . On November 19, Montana Governor Marc Racicot will preside over an Adoption Awards Ceremony to acknowledge individuals and organizations that have shown great commitment to finding permanent homes for children waiting in foster care. A special award will be given to Montana's Treasure Book, which was initiated by Montana Families for Kids. The album features engaging photos and descriptions of Montana children who are legally available for adoption; sixty percent of children featured in the book have

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FFK Successes and Challenges, Page 2

been placed in permanent homes. The social worker responsible for the greatest number of placements of children from the Treasure Book will also receive an award. Other honorees will include an adoptive family, Wendy's of Montana, and the reporter from KTVQ-2 in Billings who did all the interviews for the "Waiting Child Program." Contact Bette Hall at 406/444-5903.

Arizona honors families. . . On November 19, **Pima County (Arizona) Families for Kids** will participate in an interfaith evening of Thanksgiving, sponsored by the Catholic Social Services' St. Nicholas of Myras Center, in honor of adoptive families in the community. Pima County FFK will also participate in the Arizona Children Association's celebration for adoptive families on November 23. The new president of the University of Arizona, who is an adoptive father, will be a featured speaker at this event. For more information, please contact Karen Abman at 520/622-7611, ext. 1335.

Massachusetts "Gets on Board for Permanency". . . **Massachusetts Families for Kids** is coordinating November activities with public and private agencies, parents, and advocates throughout the state. Beginning with six regional kick-off events on Saturday, November 1, a series of events and displays will celebrate adoptive families and remember the more than 4,000 children waiting for permanent homes in Massachusetts. Kick-off events will be held in each region of the state with a campaign-style, "Get On Board for Permanency" bus stopping at regional events in Springfield, Worcester, and Boston. The Western Region will hold a breakfast event with the mayor of Springfield. Plans are underway for a parade and gospel concert featuring children's choirs in the Central Region. The Northeast Region will host an afternoon oldies dance party at a local college. Fall River Heritage State Park will host the Southeast Region event with discounts for attractions. Children and families will play games, receive information and create art at the Reggie Lewis Track and Field Center near Boston. Contact Gretchen Grozier at 617/542-2366.

"Leave No Child Behind". . . **Mississippi Families for Kids** will hold its Third Annual State of the Children Conference, "Leave No Child Behind," on November 13-15 in Tunica, Mississippi. The conference will bring together foster and adoptive children and parents, ministers, child welfare professionals, advocates, judges, policymakers, and others to bring unity to their work serving children and families. Featured speakers include Jann Heffner of the Dave Thomas Foundation on Adoption and Reverend Wayne Thompson, president of National One Church, One Child. The three-day conference will also include more than 40 workshops for judges, ministers, parents, and child welfare professionals. Families will have the opportunity to exchange ideas with members of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures from throughout the South about solutions for children and families. WMC-TV, Channel 5, in Memphis is planning to televise parts of the conference. For more information, contact Pam McCaffrey at 601/360-0591.

North Carolina Families for Kids. . . Governor Jim Hunt will issue a North Carolina Observance of National Adoption Awareness Proclamation for November. **North Carolina Families for Kids (NC-FFK)** is working with the State Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate 10 regional celebrations throughout the month that incorporate all 100 counties. The statewide Adoption Exchange will distribute white ribbons for people to wear to call attention to the issue, continuing their National Adoption Month tradition. . . The Fourteenth Annual Friends of Black Children State Conference will bring together families, social workers, and advocates on November 7-8 in Research Triangle Park. NC-FFK has taken the lead in an intensive media campaign targeting radio, television, and state and local newspapers. For more information, contact Sharon Reuss at 919/834-6623.

FFK Successes and Challenges, Page 3

Partnering for publicity for waiting children. . . In partnership with other South Carolina adoption and foster care advocacy groups – South Carolina One Church, One Child, the South Carolina Council on Adoptable Children, Children Unlimited and Foster Parents Association -- **South Carolina Families for Kids (SC-FFK)** is launching a November media blitz with television, radio, and print interviews throughout the state. The campaign will highlight the reduction in the backlog of children waiting for permanent homes; the number of children who are still waiting; and what people can do to foster or adopt. . . The Midlands Restaurant Association will place SC-FFK brochures in approximately 50 restaurants in the midlands area of the state. The association will designate a day in November for all food servers to wear National Adoption Month ribbons and publicize the event with regional media. . . SC-FFK is also developing a poster featuring children from each of the 46 counties in the state with the theme, "46 Reasons why you should foster or adopt." The posters will be distributed to churches, Department of Social Services and United Way offices, and other appropriate locations. Contact Jeffrey Black at 803/435-4665.

New York City celebrates record adoptions. . . **New York City Families for Kids (NYC-FFK)** will hold an Adoption Celebration on November 17 at the American Museum of Natural History to recognize the foster care agencies, adoptive families, and adoption professionals who contributed to a record 4,009 adoptions in FY1997. Mayor Giuliani and Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner Scoppetta will host the event. . . Wendy's restaurants will include the NYC Adoption Hotline number in posters placed in their restaurants throughout the city. . . NYC-FFK is supporting ACS in launching the One Church, One Child Initiative in Brooklyn on November 19. The program will be expanded to other boroughs in 1998. Contact Kathleen Fallon at 212/266-2908.

Kansas profiles adoptive families. . . **Kansas Families for Kids (KS-FFK)** is creating a color family album with professional photos and profiles of adoptive families that will be given to the local media in their communities. The albums will also be used in the future as a tool for recruiting foster and adoptive parents. . . Bookstores and libraries across the state will feature National Adoption Awareness Month displays to draw attention to the urgency of children waiting for permanency. For more information, contact Kelley Carpenter at 913/834-6623.

Families for African American kids who wait. . . **Washington's Families for Kids' African American Initiative** is holding a region-wide leadership summit during National Adoption Month. The Summit is modeled after the national FFK African American Leadership Summit on child welfare in Washington, D.C., in May 1997. About 150 community and business leaders will gather for the two-day conference to look at their roles in helping the children in the system. In addition, recruitment is taking an interesting twist in the form of a Souper Party hosted by adoptive-parent recruiters. The event will feature soup and an opportunity for families who are licensed to adopt to talk freely with social workers and see videos of children who are legally free for adoption. Contact Barb Fenster at 206/524-6020 for more information.

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Prepared by the Communications Consortium Media Center, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005. We welcome your comments, questions, or suggestions.

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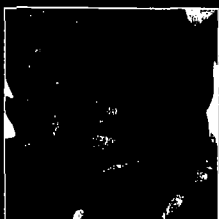
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Families for Kids of Color:

**Ways Your
Organization
Can Help**



October 1, 1997

Ms. Nicole Rabner
Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff
OEOB - Room 100
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Our Vision: "A permanent, loving family for every child"

Dear Ms. Rabner:

During the June, 1997 "Perspectives on Permanency" meeting, many of you requested a written summary of events and activities of the meeting. In response to that request, please find "*Families for Kids National Conference on Policy Perspectives: A Summary of Proceedings*" enclosed.

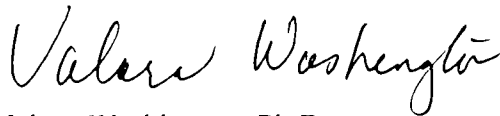
Also enclosed is a copy of the newly published brochure titled, "*Families for Kids of Color: Ways Your Organization Can Help.*"

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It is our sincere desire that these materials will be helpful to you as you strive to find permanency for children. We applaud you and your commitment to children and families.

Sincerely,



Valora Washington, Ph.D.
Project Director
Families for Kids

VW/cas

Enclosures

*To help people
help themselves
through the practical
application of knowledge
and resources to improve
their quality of life and
that of future generations*

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**FAMILIES FOR KIDS NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POLICY PERSPECTIVES:
A SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

Renaissance Washington DC Hotel
June 25-26, 1997

Event Sponsor:
W. K. Kellogg Foundation

Conference Purpose and Scope:

The Conference brought some 350 current Families For Kids (FFK) grantee representatives and families from all FFK sites together with potential new allies from federal, state, and local government; the judiciary; philanthropy and the nonprofit sector; education; business; grassroots family advocacy groups; and organized religion.

The conference sought to focus national attention on the critical issue of children languishing in foster care ("waiting children"), and to create a sense of urgency about their plight which compelled action and systemic change at the highest levels. Conference presentations and activities also aimed to widen the circle of FFK supporters by clarifying the magnitude of the problems faced by waiting children -- as illustrated through the stories of waiting kids themselves; to articulate the FFK vision and principles of reform; and to disseminate up-to-the-minute information about pending legislation, as well as model policies and practices. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton brought the conference to a close by offering support and gratitude to FFK reformers for their commitment and work in the vineyards of reform.

The conference was timed to provide information useful to the current congressional debate on legislation affecting waiting children and their families, as well as executive branch initiatives on adoption. Sessions were designed to offer information at many different levels of detail: testimonials from affected children and families, conceptual information about intended initiative outcomes, as well as highly technical information needed to implement reform.

The conference's plenary and breakout sessions on June 26 were preceded on the evening of June 25 by a reception and dinner at which the following policy makers spoke about federal legislative and cabinet-level agency activities on behalf of children and families: **Congressman Dave Camp** (R-MI); **Senator Mike DeWine** (R-OH); **Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly** (D-CT); **Olivia Golden** (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services). **Judge Julian Pinkham** (Yakima Nation Tribal Court System) offered a Native American prayer urging FFK participants and other leading policy makers to act wisely to protect the health and well being of children in care.

The morning session on July 26 included four brief video presentations on child welfare system problems and the FFK vision and outcomes which are not summarized in these proceedings.

**Morning Session
9:30 a.m.-12:00N
Families For Kids: A Vision for Children**

Opening Remarks By Valora Washington, Program Director, Families For Kids

(W. K. Kellogg Foundation). Dr. Washington began her remarks by noting that the conference was a call to action and an opportunity for all conferees to share what they knew about policies affecting permanence for children within the foster care system. She said that five questions would give shape to the proceedings:

- How can we better promote healthy development of children in foster care?
- Who are the children in foster care?
- Who should care for them when parents can't?
- What is the plan for these children?
- What can be done by systems and what can individuals do?

She underscored the special problems of children of color within the foster care system -- particularly their disproportionate representation within the foster care system of every state. She also deplored the lack of good data and adequate recognition of race/ethnicity in the policy debates on the issue.

Increasing the chances of permanency for children drifting in the system would, she said, require of new potential allies an act of imagination to elevate a dream of change above the intimidating presence of things as they are. This is what FFK reformers had succeeded in doing and what all reformers must do if we are to enact what 25 years of research has already taught us about children's needs and proven system solutions, she said.

Finally Dr. Washington emphasized the importance of expanding the circle of people who know and care about waiting children -- moving beyond relatively small professional communities to gain broader support.

She closed her remarks by introducing the next two speakers -- Shane Salter and Kevin Green-- two adult African-Americans who had spent virtually their entire childhoods in foster care, never experiencing permanent loving families. "Let there be no more Shane's and Kevin's; let them be our teachers," stated Dr. Washington.

Families For Kids: The Challenge "Through The Eyes of Youth"

Shane Salter, Deputy Director, For Love of Children *(Washington DC)*: Mr. Salter began by telling the story of his own childhood: abandonment at the age of four in a New York City basement apartment where he attempted to care for his six month old brother; later, nine foster homes, two group homes and an orphanage; a long period of school failure followed by a dramatic turnaround featuring graduation from high school as the valedictorian of his class, successful college years and professional development, marriage and children of his own (both biological and adopted).

Salter reminded the audience that the system expected "these [foster children like himself] our most fragile members of society . . . to succeed without help." He asked that society "make a place for each little gentle face," and suggested that he was himself everything the system was throwing away in children, a reminder of all that is "good in children."

Kevin Green, Member, Mississippi Sun Team/Speak Up Now *(Jackson, MS)*: Mr. Green, the son of a woman addicted to drugs, said that his story began in a hospital room where he struggled as an infant to survive and later experienced multiple foster care placements.

He indicated that his Families For Kids advocacy work as part of the Mississippi Sun Team was helping to fill a hole in his heart left by being a person without a family. "Why we turn our backs on kids, I don't know, he said."

Valora Washington noted that 16,000 youth leave the system each year merely because of age without ever achieving a permanent family. She said that an assumption that "we can do better for kids" had led the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to pull together a group of experts in 1990 to consider ways to have an impact. On the advice of these experts, the Foundation had undertaken Families for Kids, initiating reform with a "community visioning process" which ultimately involved 14,000 people in 15 states. The planning process in effect gave participants, she said, a "blank piece of paper" and asked them to imagine what reforms would best address the systemic problems causing so many kids to languish in foster care.

She also summarized the goals and outcomes that had given shape to all reform efforts:

FFK Goals:

- (1) eliminating the backlog of kids languishing in foster care
- (2) achieving system change

FFK Outcomes:

- one year at most before permanent placement
- one stable foster care family
- one assessment to determine need
- one case worker or case work team
- comprehensive support for caregivers

Community Visioning/Community Leadership

The Honorable William Byars, Jr., Judge of the Fifth Circuit Family Court, Kershaw County, SC. An acknowledged leader of South Carolina's Families For Kids court and legal reform movement, Judge Byars reminded the audience that 100,000 kids nationally were stuck in foster care drift, and that only a "paradigm shift" -- a radical change in the way people began to see the issue -- could initiate successful reform. Byars recalled that his own paradigm shift came when he began to "see the system through the eyes of a child."

Judge Byars noted that the child welfare system stood on two legs: social services *and* the legal system. He also noted just a few of the results of recent child welfare legal reform in SC:

- an embrace of family preservation, if possible
- a stronger focus on permanency
- support for kinship care
- increase in the termination of parental rights by a factor of ten
- increase in adoption by a factor of 6

He emphasized the importance of getting children who cannot return home freed for adoption faster, by expediting termination of parental rights (TPR), so that kids will have a better chance of achieving permanency.

Pat and Ricky Landrum and their two children David and Britanny (adopted through South Carolina Families For Kids) joined Judge Byars on the dais as he concluded his remarks.

State Perspectives On Permanency

Bill Graves, Governor of the State of Kansas and First Lady Linda Graves. Mrs. Graves noted that the most important crop in the State of Kansas was kids and that her husband's most important role was that of father to their newly adopted daughter Katie.

Governor Graves noted that when he took office, the child welfare system was broken, the State's leading child welfare agency was operating under the terms of a legal agreement, and adoption was taking much too long. Change was therefore a requirement, and safety and permanence for children were to be the hall marks of that change. The change process had three immediate goals, he said:

- protect kids -- the first job
- focus on outcomes, not social service process
- deliver services more effectively

The Governor also stated that Kansas had privatized the bulk of its child welfare services, and that the initial results of this privatization were encouraging:

- fewer children entering foster care
- more returning home each quarter
- the average stay in care was less than three months
- reunified families were remaining together longer
- more than 70% of those kids placed out of home were being placed *together with one sibling*
- the State was achieving a net gain of five placements a month

Joan Wagon, Former Kansas FFK Project Director and Newly Elected Mayor of Topeka, Kansas concluded the state perspectives presentation by noting that collaboration among many partners had been a successful, primary strategy in Kansas. She also thanked Linda Katz for her pioneering efforts to establish the concurrent planning process that had been such an important innovation in the Kansas FFK initiative and elsewhere.

Achieving Permanency: What We Must Do

Pat Babcock, Program Director (W. K. Kellogg Foundation). Mr. Babcock introduced a panel which included **Nicholas Scoppetta** (Commissioner, Administration for Children's Services, City of New York); **Donna Starr** (President, Native American Commission on Children and Families, State of Washington); **Jim Clark**, State Director, South Carolina Department of Social Services); **Kevin Fitzgerald** (Director of the North Carolina Division of Social Services); **JoAnn Lawer** (Deputy Secretary, Office of Children, Youth & Families, Pennsylvania); and **Marva Hammonds** (Director, Families Independence Agencies, Michigan).

Before recognizing each panelist for separate remarks, Mr. Babcock noted that adoption reform was a partnership of three's:

- all three levels of government
- all three branches of government
- local communities, families, and kids

Brief summaries of the remarks of each commissioner follow.

Nicholas Scoppetta said that New York City had increased adoptions steadily and significantly since 1994, showing a 58 percent increase in 1995, a 58 percent increase in 1996, and a 78 percent increase in 1997 (4,131 adoptions). He credited the following strategies for these promising numbers:

- bringing a new focus on adoption and permanence
- improving system management
- getting the support of two key judges, especially the State's chief judge
- creating a special adoption expediting unit
- creating contract incentives for private agencies doing adoptions (number of completed adoptions a criteria for re-contracting)
- using concurrent planning

- boosting family recruitment with One Church One Child, adoption fairs, and the State's "Family Album"

Donna Starr, a member of the Muckleshoot Tribe, introduced herself by first naming her parents and grandparents, to dramatize how important ancestral and tribal roots are to Native Americans.

Ms. Starr noted that tribal people do not believe in severing their blood ties, as is often the case with mainstream, formal adoption processes. She said that many tribes preferred to place children in guardianships with relatives, using open adoptions as a good last resort. Children, she said, have to know where they are from, so family information must always follow them. She also noted that tribes provide children with something stable to come back to, because tribes will take ownership of kids.

The new State - and FFK-sponsored Native American Commission on Children and Families is, she said, an important vehicle for engaging Washington's 37 tribes in advocacy for Native American children and for bringing together all child-serving agencies to look at a child's whole life. FFK has, she said, "opened eyes."

Jim Clark stressed the importance of improving management of systems serving children. Such management, he said, must begin with good leadership that articulates a clear vision of change and brings together system units so that organizational learning can occur. He also stressed the importance of establishing accountability with county-level managers --making the foremost criterion of job performance by getting kids into families (adoption). Better measurement -- understanding children's points of movement through the system -- was a key to reform. Clark also said that to succeed, county-level managers needed to be granted greater authority, discretion, and flexibility. Ritualistic, hierarchical forms of bureaucracy were counter-productive, he said.

Clark pointed to two issues of great concern to the future of reform:

- 1) the need to raise the quality of foster care homes, always asking, "Is this a home I would want to put my own child in?"
- 2) the need to face more directly the problems of entrenched drug and alcohol addiction and avoid the tendency to automatically grant primacy to the biological mother's wishes (South Carolina has recently more than doubled the number of TPR's, from 800-1500)

Kevin Fitzgerald noted that North Carolina's 8 "FFK counties" were currently outperforming all other counties in terms of increasing adoption rates and stabilizing expenditures. He pointed to the following promising reform trends:

- income maintenance and services are more integrated around values of self-reliance and self-sufficiency
- program identities are now being subordinated to clear program outcomes, with finances beginning to follow outcomes
- a vision of safety and permanency are becoming a movement
- there have been important changes in court and legal reform
- managers and workers have recognized the importance of "being in the community"

JoAnn Lawer summarized developments in the State of Pennsylvania's collaboration with the Casey Foundation's "Family to Family" program, noting that it shared FFK's central values of permanency for children and the need to eliminate the backlog of children in care.

Lawer focused most intensely on the program's steps to develop technological ways of analyzing what is happening to kids in the system, noting that framing outcomes and other indicators of other success, and helping child welfare professionals understand that "data is our friend" were essential to progress.

Other developments of note included:

- adding an additional ground for TPR
- adding a medical history registry
- allowing children to petition for TPR
- creating a statewide adoption network ("SWAN")

In closing, Lawer praised FFK reformers for their theme, "Through the eyes of the child," and urged that child welfare services work more closely with mental health care providers to ensure stable adoptions.

Marva Hammonds noted that Michigan had embraced the value of permanency for kids and had in the Kent County (Grand Rapids, MI) Families For Kids initiative a "stellar" performer that had dramatically increased placement of waiting kids. She also summarized a number of other positive developments within the State of Michigan:

- a new package of legislative initiatives that would force attorneys and other legal personnel to recognize a child's sense of time
- a new community-based process to review child welfare practice
- permanency-focused reimbursement to providers
- trust money to prevent child abuse
- wrap-around services to prevent disrupted adoptions

Luncheon Speakers On the FFK Mandate: Reduce the Backlog and Change the System

Ernesto Loperena (*Executive Director, New York Council on Adoptable Children*) opened luncheon proceedings by noting that the current national policy focus on the health and welfare of children made this an opportune time for the FFK vision.

He also briefed the audience on "Latinos and Child Welfare -- Voces De La Comunidad," a report sponsored by the National Latino Child Welfare Advocacy Group and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to shed light on the lack of information and understanding that now exists about the role child welfare services play in the lives of Latino families and children.

According to the report, Latino children are often undercounted in system census data because they are miscoded as Caucasian or African American, or they are "lost" in the "other" category. Given the status of current data, distinguishing the nature of the Latino experience within the system is not possible. Understanding unique Latino needs is also complicated by the many differences among Latino subgroups now living in America, and by aggregate national data that tends to obscure the status of Latino children where their concentrations are greatest: California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Texas.

By way of introducing the first speaker, Nicholas Scoppetta, Mr. Loperena said that Mayor Giuliani had begun important child welfare reform in New York City by naming Nicholas Scoppetta, a former foster child, Commissioner of a newly-formed agency, Administration for Children's Services, City of New York (the agency is responsible for the welfare of some 40,000 children in 60 agencies). Mr. Loperena expressed confidence in the new changes.

Nicholas Scoppetta commended Mayor Giuliani for his courageous commitment to keeping needless abuse-related child deaths from recurring.

Mr. Scoppetta also summarized the most important recent developments in the New York City reform movement:

- establishing a separate agency for children's services
- protecting the agency from budget cuts
- adding 53 million to the new agency's budget
- regular meetings between the Mayor and Commissioner to report on progress
- a newly-released report of reform progress

He concluded his remarks by stating that recent reforms had done more for child welfare in NYC in the last two years than had been accomplished in the previous twenty years.

Rudolph Giuliani (*Mayor of New York*) reminded conference participants, with a smile, that New York City was the "Capital of the World" -- a city of seven and a half million legal residents, an additional 7 million illegals, and two million "guests."

Protecting children from abuse and neglect is, he said, "an enormously complex and difficult task" which required a special agency and a shift from a culture of unaccountability to one of accountability. He said that he was heartened by several recent interventions by ordinary citizens to help children in distress. These, he believed, were indications that the community at large was beginning to feel responsible for helping kids and confident that their efforts would be heeded by officials and indeed make a difference.

He said that local governments, particularly city governments, had the best chance of helping kids and families, because they were closest to problems and needs. "We must encourage the stability and preservation of families," he said, "almost as a compulsion."

The dramatic reduction in crime in NYC was also helping families and children, he said. New understanding and enforcement in domestic violence cases was particularly significant he said, because 75 percent of all violence perpetrated against wives also involved child victims. He stressed the importance of addressing domestic violence publicly, stating that if "we had dealt directly with domestic violence 20 years ago, we wouldn't have so many violent young adults now."

In conclusion, he noted that the "real beneficiaries of adoption are adults, and people are beginning to recognize this." He also stated that reform efforts were "building a better, more secure country."

Afternoon Breakout Sessions (2:00-4:30)
Implementing Change: Conversations About Permanency

Participants were at liberty to choose from among the following five different breakout sessions:

1. **Taking Action to Achieve Permanency for Kids**
Putting State Policy and Legislative Frameworks in Place
2. **Building Blocks for Permanence**
The movement to restructure or privatize child welfare services. Will these efforts ensure permanency for children?
3. **Funding Mechanisms for Outcome-Based Systems**
Innovative alternatives are addressing reduced mainstream funding. How are states developing new resources?
4. **Promising Practice Solutions: "Early Interventions"**
Innovative solutions that include intervention before children are removed from their family, reducing foster-care drift and identifying critical cultural issues.
5. **Promising Practice Solutions: "The Backlog Blitz"**
The end result: Movement into Permanent Families. How Best Can We Achieve this outcome?

Brief summaries of moderators, presenters, and discussion themes for each of these sessions follow.

Breakout Session #1
Taking Action to Achieve Permanency for Kids
Putting State Policy and Legislative Frameworks in Place

Moderators:

Kathleen Hayes, *Project Director, South Carolina Families for Kids*
Sara Anderson Mims, *Project Director, North Carolina Families for Kids*

Presenters:

Mark Hardin, *Director, Child Welfare, American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law, Washington, DC*
Ron Haskins, *Staff Director, Subcommittee on Human Resources, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, Washington, DC*
Cassie Bevan, *Staff Professional Assistant, Subcommittee on Human Resources, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, Washington, DC*
Barbara Pryor, *Legislative Assistant to Senator John D. Rockefeller (D-WV), Washington, DC*
Judy McKenzie, *Executive Director, Spaulding for Children, Southfield (Detroit), MI*

Major Objectives and Themes

True system reform in child welfare services requires a fundamental paradigm shift away from programs and policy developed to suit specific interest groups, agencies, and funding sources toward services needed to assure that all children find permanent homes. Eleven (11) Families for Kids communities, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, have encouraged policy makers and legislators to make this shift by establishing a clear vision of permanency for all foster children and specific goals that improve the child's stability and reduce the child's time spent in foster care.

Panelists in this session addressed those policy and legislative issues that most clearly support the type of reforms necessary to institutionalize improved outcomes for children. Key themes included: Reasonable Efforts, Enforcing Time Frames, Permanency Options in Statute and Policy, and Court Management.

Panelists compared and contrasted Senate and House versions of current adoption bills before Congress, noting that both made health and safety paramount concerns, shifted away from family preservation at all costs toward a greater emphasis on permanent placement, pushed for more expeditious placement of children into permanent homes, and redefined "reasonable efforts" (to reunify children with families). All agreed that the principle difference between the two bills was money, with the Senate bill being the more generous of the two.

Discussion of permanency options in policy and practice emphasized the need to recognize the importance of adoption as an option offering lifetime commitment and legal security. The value of doing strength-based assessments was also stressed. Yet older children must be prepared to make it with or without permanency, through partnerships with churches, planned rites of passage, internships, etc. Professionals, it was suggested, should ask, "What is the life plan?" not just, "What is the permanency plan?" Presenters noted that when politicians consider subsidies (e.g. for children with severe disabilities), they often engage in a "shell game" that ignores the real costs of caring for kids in the absence of permanent families. Such short-sighted thinking was roundly criticized.

Finally, the presentation on the Court Improvement Program (CIP) offered a definition of the three pillars of permanency: (1) good casework; (2) good service delivery; and (3) good court processing of cases. The principal features of CIP reform were also summarized, as follows:

- speeds up court decision making process
- improves scheduling of court hearings
- embraces “1 judge, 1 case” principle (for consistency)
- increases expertise of judges and attorneys
- creates officially-recognized caseloads (more time per case)
- had the potential to spotlight judicial stars and laggards

Breakout Session #2
Building Blocks for Permanence

The movement to restructure or privatize child welfare services. Will these efforts ensure permanency for children?

Moderators:

Wendy Lewis Jackson, *Project Director, Kent County, Michigan Families for Kids*
Antoinette Nelson, *Project Director, New York City Families for Kids*
Rita Wolf, *Interim Project Director, Kansas Families for Kids*

Presenters:

Teresa Markowitz, *Commissioner of Children and Family Services, State of Kansas, Topeka, KS*
Karabelle Pizzigati, *Director of Public Policy, Child Welfare League of American, Washington, DC*
Gary Crow, *Executive Director, Lorain County Children Services, Elyria OH*
Michael Weckes, *Deputy Commissioner of Quality Management and Program Development, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, Boston, MA*

Major Objectives and Themes:

A number of states are restructuring their child welfare services as a way to support reform and provide better permanency options for children. Major examples include the transferring of child welfare services to the private sector through an outcomes-based contractual agreement, privatization of state agencies, or the partial or full combining of mental health, social services and/or public health departments at the state or local level. A critical factor for consideration is how these new structures will impact permanency, casework decisions, and costs. Thus key themes for discussion were: Public/Private Sector Roles, Managed Care Integration, and Children's Services.

Presentations on managed care and privatization emphasized key principles and strategies in use across the country, and challenges involved in implementation. Essentials for a good managed care approach were also summarized, as follows:

- assessment
- building on what works
- good information management systems
- an emphasis on quality improvement
- realistic pricing systems

Presentations on child welfare service delivery systems stressed the importance of outcomes and the promise of incentive-based approaches.

Breakout Session #3 **Funding Mechanisms for Outcomes-based Systems**

Innovative alternatives are addressing reduced mainstream funding. How are states developing new resources?

Moderators:

Marie Jamieson, *Project Director, Washington Families for Kids*
Renay Sanders, *Project Director, Ohio Families for Kids*

Presenters:

Isaac Palmer, *Deputy Director, Office of Family and Children Services, Ohio Department of Human Services, Columbus, OH*
Fred Wulczyn, *Research Fellow, Chapin Hall Center for Children, the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL*
Chuck Harris, *Chief of Children's Services, Division of Social Services, Raleigh, NC*
MaryLee Allen, *Director of Child Welfare and Mental Health, Children's Defense Fund, Washington, DC*

Major Objectives and Themes

Public agencies are exploring new methods to involve private agencies in the delivery of child welfare services. Panelists described a spectrum of options from small purchase of service contracts to system-wide managed care, including consideration of such questions as:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches?
- What safeguards should decision makers have in place before they move into a privatization of services or contracting out of services?
- How are outcomes measured?

Key concepts addressed included: Managed Care, Outcome-based Contracts, and New Approaches to IV-E and IV-B Federal Funding Waivers.

Definitions of managed care highlighted the tension between fiscal and social policy objectives, and noted that several levels of analysis were necessary to understand critical elements.

One level of analysis -- case management -- is, for example, more than a fiscal mechanism; it relates to staff organization, as well as coordination of service delivery. The fiscal level of analysis typically involves either fee-for service or fixed reimbursement formulas. Fee-for-service arrangements feature per unit costs with variable revenues, whereas fixed reimbursement systems tend to have more predictable revenues -- a characteristic that is appealing to county commissioners. There is a need to tie management reforms to fiscal incentives by linking service outcomes to payment and developing tools to improve case management and utilization.

Managed care is more than privatization if privatized systems merely shift responsibility without linking work to specific outcomes. Managed care is more than a so-called "performance based" system if contractors are not allowed to reinvest or reallocate dollars. Finally managed care systems are more than simple competitive businesses if they use outcomes and allow for reinvestment.

For child welfare systems, risk varies according to service conditions: Volume of Cases is a high risk condition because it is not within the system operators' control; Unit Cost, on the other hand, is a low risk condition because it is fairly easy to control. Planning for volume risk management is critical.

Presentations were made on both the North Carolina and Ohio models of performance-based contracts for the placement of children with special needs. Representatives from both states talked about the use of planned Title IV-E waivers, looking forward to the increase in flexibility offered by the waivers. Both models also feature payments made at intervals throughout the placement process.

For example, in North Carolina, payments for the placement of special needs children into adoptive homes are made according to this formula: 60 percent at time of placement, 20 percent at finalization, and 20 percent if placement is intact one year after placement.

The second example, North Carolina Families For Kids, involves 8 counties in a pure county-administered child welfare system. Data tracking to gauge performance is a hallmark of the system, which looks at:

- restrictiveness of placement
- number of moves and disruptions
- entry into and out of the backlog
- length of stay
- re-entry into care

The five Families For Kids outcomes now form the State of North Carolina's vision for children.

Key elements of the system include:

- the five outcomes
- specific measures of success
- a culture of striving for better performance
- attempting to get the incentives right

The session ended with a presentation on the ways in which the federal government signals its system of care priorities. These general signals were noted:

- higher level of reimbursement for a particular practice
- funding for base entitlement versus caps in the use of discretionary funds
- expediting activities through time-limited funding
- using specific conditions, sanctions, and penalties
- limiting eligibility to specific groups
- granting flexible dollars for innovations

Specific fiscal incentives to promote increased adoptions as written into current House and Senate legislation were also noted. The House bill (*The Adoption Promotion Act*), for example, offers an after-the-fact bonus for each adopted child and includes a significant increase in adoption opportunities grant program dollars. The more generous Senate version (*The Safe Act*) extends the definition of "special needs" to all kids in care, increasing by approximately one-third the number of children covered. It also allows for the use of IV-E dollars for family reunification services for a period of one year, and it includes \$50 million in entitlement dollars to track adoption goal achievement in states receiving federal grants.

The session ended with the expression of some concerns for the future, including:

- increasing numbers of children entering the system
- decreasing SSI benefits for special needs children
- the fate of family services in a child-based rate system
- changing oversight responsibilities vis-à-vis the federal government and the states

The presentations as a group emphasized the critical need for managed care systems to have feedback channels to help determine what is successful and what hard questions need to be asked, as well as to incorporate principles and outcomes to ensure that children have permanent families.

Breakout Session #4
Promising Practice Solutions: "Early Interventions"

*Innovative solutions that include intervention before children are removed from their family,
reducing foster care drift and identifying critical cultural issues*

Moderators:

Jacquelyn Kidd, *Public Policy Analyst, North American Council on Adoptable Children, St. Paul, MN*
Linda West, *Project Director, Mississippi Families for Kids*
Gary Walsh, *Project Director, Montana Families for Kids*

Presenters:

Linda Katz, *Program Director, Lutheran Social Services of Washington and Idaho, Mountlake Terrace (Seattle), WA*
Veneese Chandler, *Executive Director Family Outreach Center, Grand Rapids, MI*
Ernesto Loperena, *Executive Director, New York Council on Adoptable Children, New York, NY*
Donna Starr, *Health and Human Services Director, Muckleshoot Tribe of Indians (Auburn, WA)*

Major Objectives and Themes

Prevention and intervention measures to reduce the length of time children lack permanence are helping to reshape child welfare as we know it. Family involvement and child-centered decision making are critical to reforming child welfare systems. This session discussed innovations in family group conferencing, kinship care, concurrent planning, family advocacy, as well as critical cultural considerations.

The Family Decision Making Conference. The Family and Community Compact Program of Kent County Families For Kids (Grand Rapids, MI) was offered as a promising example of the family group conferencing model, an alternative to foster care. The program serves predominately African American children and families, since 60 percent of children entering foster care in Kent County are African American. Parents of these children often have a history of drug or alcohol abuse and are frequently single parents.

Prospective Compact participants are offered two alternatives: the traditional foster care system, which involves the courts, or the Compact, which utilizes decision making conferences made up of extended family or kinship network members (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). This group assesses the permanency needs of the child and identifies primary and backup caregivers -- typically extended family members -- as well as needed services. The Family Outreach Center reviews the permanency plan developed in family group conferences, provides supportive services and referrals, and does case follow-up work. The Center receives approximately 100 referrals per year.

Kinship Care Models --New York City. A report on kinship care in New York City established that one-half of all children in the City are in kinship care at the same maintenance rate as regular foster care.

These benefits of kinship care were noted:

- the child knows the family
- visits with the birth mother are easier
- the placement is more stable

These disadvantages were noted:

- the length of stay in foster care is typically longer
- visits may need to be supervised
- there are unanswered questions about standards for subsidized guardianships (for kinship care) and about what impact such arrangements may have on adoption as a permanency alternative

A second kind of kinship care placement initiative provided for by the AIDS Orphan Adoption Program (established February 1993) was also summarized, as follows:

- 309 children assisted -- most by kinship placement
- the birth parent is empowered to identify caregivers
- staff ensures that appropriate caregivers are chosen
- funding is provided by AFDC, as well as Veteran's Administration and Social Security entitlements

Permanency and Native American Cultural Issues. Native American children are over-represented in the foster care system. This presentation summarized several values and characteristics of Native American communities that are highly relevant to permanency decision making for Native American children in care:

- reservations are distinct legal and political jurisdictions
- Native Americans regard children as wealth and often have large families
- extended family members are close-knit and often parent relative children as a matter of course
- Native American culture is typically more communal and less materialistic than the dominant culture
- Native American children who practice their traditional cultural ways are less likely to enter foster care

These characteristics need to be recognized and utilized as strengths by child welfare professionals when permanency decisions are being made.

Concurrent Planning In Washington State. This presentation explained that Washington State's pioneering concurrent planning model developed in relationship to a particular history and target population. Paradigm shifts preceding the establishment of the model were the passage of an open adoption law in 1990 and increasing numbers of adoptions both by foster parents and kin.

Children now entering the State's foster care system have increased dramatically primarily because of parental drug and/or alcohol addiction. Those most at risk for foster care drift are under age one and either African American or Native American. While 65 percent of all children entering the system return to their birth families within three months, those with adoption as a goal typically wait up to five years.

Concurrent planning works simultaneously toward two goals: (1) the reunification of the biological family, if possible; and (2) an alternative permanency plan such as adoption, if reunification isn't possible. The model depends on recruiting foster parents and relative families who will both be prepared to work with biological families to attempt reunification, and to adopt, if reunification fails.

Concurrent planning supports two Families For Kids outcomes: one year to permanent placement and one stable foster care placement. The model is child - and family-centered and committed to cultural sensitivity.

Breakout Session #5
Promising Practice Solutions: "The Backlog Blitz"

The end result: Movement into permanent families. How best can we achieve this outcome?

Moderators:

Joe Kroll, *Executive Director, North American Council on Adoptable Children, St. Paul, MN*

Brenda Gadson, *Project Director, Massachusetts Families For Kids*

Karen Abman, *Project Director, Pima County (Arizona) Families For Kids*

Presenters:

Ruth Amerson, *Program Administrator, Another Choice for Black Children, Inc., Sanford (Raleigh), NC*

Kim Stevens, *Family Advocacy Coordinator, Massachusetts Families for Kids, Boston, MA*

Polly Pfeuffer, *Permanency Planning Specialist, Arizona Department of Economic Security, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Tucson, AZ*

Major Objectives and Themes

This breakout session identified system change strategies designed to eliminate the backlog. New cross-functional assessment teams, specialty placement agencies for children of color, and policy-oriented advocacy were chief among the strategies presented.

Cross-functional Assessment Teams (Pima, AZ). To assist in eliminating Pima County's backlog of 395 legally-free children (all in care for two years or more), local Families For Kids organizers created cross-functional assessment teams composed of a permanency planning specialist, a consulting psychologist, a case manager, a support specialist, as well as invited parents and other caregivers. These administratively and culturally diverse teams have helped overcome system fragmentation and in doing so expedited permanency for waiting children. Job duties include:

- collaboratively reviewing cases
- profiling individual children and their needs
- meeting with the case managers and children
- developing permanency and action plans

Several concrete team achievements are already apparent, such as:

- increased community awareness of waiting children
- better agency collaboration
- a greater sense of responsibility for children (ownership)
- improved training and permanency planning procedures
- placement of 239 children as of March, 1997
- more older children asking for families

Another Choice For Black Children, Inc. Specialty agencies focusing on the placement of children of color have become an important element of the child welfare system. The final presentation described the philosophy and practices of one such agency, Another Choice For Black Children, Inc., located in Sanford (Raleigh), NC.

The agency actively seeks to dispel several destructive myths that often impede permanency for Black children:

- that Black children aren't adoptable
- that there are too many children in Black families
- that the Black community isn't interested in adoption
- that the Black family is defeated

Unlike many more traditional child placement agencies, Another Choice does not make extensive use of the church, advertisements, or match meetings. Its distinguishing features include a focus on assessing potential parents in terms of strengths, describing children positively, and emphasizing positive phone contact work. Each worker places 12-15 children per year and provides limited supportive services for approximately three months after placement.

Family Advocacy. Adoptive parents can discover that they are unprepared to deal with the needs of their new children because so many support services are needed but not available to them. The final presentation in this session focused on the strategies family advocates can use to gain necessary support and attention from policy makers. These strategies were advocated:

- recruit families by *retaining* the ones you already have
- engage legislators using legislative breakfasts
- let children and teens speak out
- expand family resources
- get the community, courts, and legislature involved

Concluding Session: Adoption 2002
An Address By First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton

The First Lady began her remarks by noting that the video on adoption made in 1995 (shown immediately prior to her remarks) was the White House's first venture focusing public attention on adoption. Since that time, she said, the President has made an unparalleled commitment to improving the foster care and adoption system through the Adoption 2002 initiative.

She thanked all reformers (including Foundation and government leaders like Valora Washington, Paul Vander Velde, Olivia Golden, and Carol Williams) for their help on the President's initiative, for their work on behalf of children needlessly languishing in foster care, and for the knowledge about effective models of service they were contributing to the change process. She called the assembled reformers "heroes to children" and ground breakers for policy makers, and she expressed pleasure in hearing about the many positive impacts growing out of reform efforts.

She also characterized the conference as timely given that federal legislators were forging a bipartisan coalition on some crucial child welfare issues that put the country "within reach of bringing common sense to the overburdened and outdated foster care system" by redefining "reasonable efforts" and offering financial incentives to those interested in adopting children (especially special needs children) from the public system.

To illustrate the significance of current developments, she recounted a case she had tried some 20 years previous when she was representing a neglected four year old whose biological mother had psychological problems. The child's foster parents wanted to adopt; the child welfare agency had refused their request; the biological mother was suing for custody; Mrs. Clinton was arguing that the child be placed with the foster parents. Although serving "the best interests of the child" was not common court doctrine at the time, the judge ruled in favor of the foster parents. The First Lady noted that "we now have a clearer consensus about which children should/shouldn't be reunited with their biological parents"; yet, she acknowledged that "none of us can predict with certainty the outcomes of our difficult decisions" and it is therefore necessary to act on our best judgment at the time. . . and support our professionals when they do so.

She also emphasized the need to recognize and work harder to overcome the disproportionate representation of children of color within the foster care system.

She underscored the President's commitment that no child should be deprived of a safe and permanent home for longer than necessary, and she summarized current efforts to:

- highlight successful strategies
- breakdown financial and other resource barriers to permanency
- make available tax credits for adoptive parents

Finally she thanked the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for bringing reformers to the table to reduce the number of kids waiting for homes and for launching FFK and achieving positive results (as evidenced by church involvement, changing judicial attitudes and systems, and 7,000 new child placements). She expressed optimism about the prospects of reform to change thousands of lives and urged that all present continue to work together.

Conclusion

The W.K. Kellogg Families For Kids initiative is committed to continuing its efforts to focus national attention on the plight of waiting children and to create a sense of urgency that compels action on their behalf. Efforts to widen the circle of those who support change and to educate policy makers and others based on lessons learned from the experience of participating FFK states and localities also remain top priorities.

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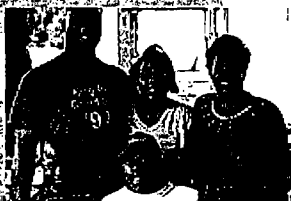
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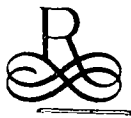
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Families for Kids Who Wait:

**Promising Directions
in Community-Based
Adoption Reform**





RENAISSANCE
WASHINGTON D. C. HOTEL

Kellogg Conference

Graves:

re: privatization of social services.

\$1500 tax credit for expenses
incurred from adoption of SRS child.

NY

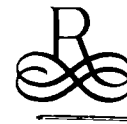
Adoption Expedition Agency created

Kellogg effort began in '94

58% ↑ in adoption in '95

78% ↑ over '94 #s this FY.

Trihal perspective, Wash state (37 tribes)
Trihal form. on children & families



RENAISSANCE
WASHINGTON D. C. HOTEL

South Carolina

Ambiguity of law to both preserve
fam / protect children (we tried to do both,
but true that in too many instances we
preserved the fam at the expense of the child)

- Personnel - incentive

- Need greater auth / flexibility to
make instituting change - personnel &
budgetary discretion.

"accountability partnered flexibility &
discretion"

Raise quality of foster care -
delicate issue: ~~see~~ there are saints
there.



RENAISSANCE
WASHINGTON D. C. HOTEL

SC., cont

Issues of drugs & addiction (Courage
of TPR in the face of addiction)

North Carolina

8 Kellogg countries are outperforming
others in NC by factor of ~~5~~ 6.

floor cracking b/c of files in ct. hall.

focus on outcome $\rightarrow$ 5 goals supplanted binders
of policy.

Pennsylvania

(not a Kellogg state)

foster care reform $\rightarrow$ Casey

Data is overfused

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Families for Kids: Building the Dream

HOW NINETEEN COMMUNITIES PLANNED ADOPTION REFORM
THAT PUT THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN FIRST

