



# People of Color Leadership Institute

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR: We Are Also in Transition

—by Joyce N. Thomas, RN, MPH

Racial conflict and ethnic injustice is this nation's most serious disease. Unfortunately it impacts the lives of millions of people from all ethnic groups. We know this problem has affected the child protection system, and perhaps accounts for much of the over-representation of children of color in our system. The POCLI project has provided all of us with a wonderful opportunity to gain greater knowledge, share our concerns, and identify useful strategies for working with ethnic populations. As the project has expanded, we have observed, first hand, the changes in attitudes and behavior. As the country has demonstrated the desire to change political administrations, so has the field of child abuse demonstrated the desire to change in the right direction. In fact there is a very strong message from our colleagues in this field about the documented need for all services and interventions for abused children and their families to be "culturally appropriate."

The problems in delivering services to ethnic-minority populations have been cited by several writers (Billingsley, 1978; Williams, 1986; Walker, 1990). While the source of the problems does not follow strict racial lines, it is quite clear that there are disproportionately fewer professionals of color in leadership and decision making roles. We hear this

point stated over and over again in workshops, speeches, seminars, conferences and similar forums. Such language as "cultural diversity," "culturally sensitive," and "cultural distinctions," even appears in the 1992 Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Treatment Act. Naturally, it will take a long time to see any radical changes, but the issues of diversity are more openly addressed. This is an extremely positive sign.

Recently the issue of cultural competence was highlighted on a grand scale at the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect Symposium. This forum, which was held in Bethesda, Maryland in the Fall of 1992, focused on "Creating and Maintaining Caring and Inclusive Communities." We heard about the critical elements necessary to maintaining well-functioning ethnic-minority neighborhoods. We heard about the numerous problems and barriers in our ethnic communities. Many promising approaches and strategies for improved client outcome were also discussed. Complex elements of the issue were raised by Dr. John Holton, Amy Okamura, Carmen Fernandez, Delores Bigfoot and others, including myself. Hard-hitting questions from members of the U.S. Advisory Board demonstrated an intense desire to gain greater insight, and thus improve the quality of care for all

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## A College-Wide Prevention Program on Child Abuse and Neglect

—by Jacqueline Booth

In response to the growing problem of child abuse and neglect, Spelman College, a historically Black institution, launched an innovative child abuse prevention program which targets its student population. Implemented in 1990, the College-Wide Prevention Program on Child Abuse and Neglect is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of child abuse and neglect issues among Spelman's all-female student body and to enhance students' understanding of how this information can contribute to their family living, volunteer experiences, and professional growth and development. Program activities are specifically aimed at providing information about (1) the nature of child abuse and neglect as a social issue; (2) characteristics and antecedents of abusive and neglectful situations; (3) social, moral and legal obligations to report suspected cases of child maltreatment; and (4) local and national agencies that provide services in cases of abuse and neglect.

Dr. Sandra Sims Patterson, Project Director and faculty member in Spelman's Department of Education, oversees the program. Recognizing that

prevention efforts have primarily focused on children, parents and professional groups, Dr. Patterson perceives the need to reach a college-aged audience of young adults who have received little attention in the fight against child maltreatment. With this focus in mind, the project was conceived as a vehicle through which undergraduate students as well as other members of the campus community could become immersed in issues and concerns pertinent to this escalating social problem. As future parents, professionals, and public service providers, program participants will hopefully be able to use this experience in rearing their families, selecting career options, and strengthening their communities.

As a College-Wide Program, the project is a multi-faceted endeavor that pursues a vast Spelman audience and utilizes several approaches to achieving its goals. Students are targeted at the freshmen through senior levels; their areas of study represent virtually every discipline within the institution. In addition to their involvement as recipients of program efforts, the young women of Spelman College also take an active

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# Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the African American Community Without Reinventing the Wheel

—by John K. Holton

Meharry Medical College, the oldest historically black medical college in the United States, held its 3rd Annual Lloyd C. Elam Mental Health Symposium in Fall, 1992. The symposium provides a forum for state-of-the-art discussions on current issues of mental health among leading child sexual abuse authorities, researchers, medical students and faculty representing the diverse African American community. Specifically, the objectives of this year's symposium were:

- To offer professionals working in the field of child sexual abuse the opportunity to share approaches for intervention and treatment of sexual abuse.
- To explore the impact of alcohol and other drug addiction on child sexual abuse and make implications for successful prevention and treatment strategies
- To highlight the status and magnitude of the problem of sexual abuse and incest in the African-American community and determine strategies for health recovery.
- To promote creative audio-visual productions on prevention to be sponsored by community youth groups

I was given the honor of being this year's invited symposium speaker. Selecting as my theme, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the African American Community Without Reinventing the Wheel," I outlined the issues and future directions needed to be taken by blacks desiring to prevent child sexual abuse. In summary, I stated that we need to begin with what we know about this insidious form of child maltreatment and determine if the methods

we're using are preventing the problem. I happen to think that the field's approach isn't working well when it comes to the African American community; further, I happen to believe that our collective inventiveness is needed and not a reliance on what has been used.

New avenues of approach must be developed, and it is the responsibility of African American professionals to develop a descriptive and conceptual knowledge base for understanding the problem. This knowledge base should:

1. Recognize the failure of current research findings in clarifying the problem of child sexual abuse in black communities;
2. Address the need for a holistic and comprehensive analytical framework that attends to the cultural body of black people and incorporates the diverse socioeconomic realities of that community;
3. Examine underlying issues such as race, gender, and age discrimination which tend to be overlooked in prevention and treatment efforts for African Americans families; and
4. Elucidate our understanding of black culture.

These efforts will help illuminate many critical issues surrounding child sexual abuse in the black community and hopefully will lead to more effective prevention activities in the future.

*Editor's Note: The full text of Dr. Holton's inspiring and insightful message is scheduled to be printed in the Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved.*

*John K. Holton, PhD, is Executive Director of the Greater Chicago Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, and a member of POCLI's Expert Task Force*

## College-Wide

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role in sponsoring program activities. Student-centered organizations such as honor societies, sororities, and social clubs co-sponsor many events related to the child abuse program. (Faculty and staff members also lend their support.) Involvement at this level serves to reinforce students' understanding of the issues and helps to nurture their commitment to preventing child abuse. To facilitate this "developmental" process, the program engages several methods of information dissemination which include a series of convocations and forums, a speaker's bureau, and a newsletter. These varied activities will help ensure that a broad base of students receives child abuse and neglect information.

During convocations and forums, students are introduced to an array of topical issues in the field of child maltreatment and are exposed to guest speakers from diverse professional backgrounds such as mental health, child advocacy, law enforcement, and medicine. Convocational events consist of large assemblies of the Spelman community at which senior level professionals in child welfare or related areas speak on their area of expertise. Some speeches and presentations have included, for example, a social worker's account of her experiences in deal-

ing with abused children and their families; a Juvenile Court judge's discussion of legal issues in abuse and neglect; and a pediatrician's overview of situations encountered in identifying and reporting suspected abuse and neglect cases. In comparison to the more sizeable gatherings, forums comprise smaller informational sessions in which students are able to dialogue with experts around issues such as psychological consequences of child maltreatment, treatment strategies in child abuse and neglect, and identification of leading agencies and organizations in the field. Representatives of national organizations such as the Child Welfare League of America and the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Child Protection and Family Support have been invited to appear before the audience of program participants. Throughout the duration of the College-Wide Program, the forums and convocations have provided an enriching experience for students and other individuals who attend.

In another knowledge-building venue, the College-Wide Program on Child Abuse and Neglect instituted a speaker's bureau to disseminate information about child abuse and neglect prevention. Spear-headed during the second year of the program, the bureau

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incorporates a two-tier approach in educating the student body. Students across the campus are trained as speakers on the subject in an attempt to increase their knowledge of the issue and provide spokespersons to other audiences. A resource center housing books and other materials in the area of abuse and neglect has been established to aid these avid learners. After the training process is completed, student speakers are then dispatched to "spread the word" among their fellow Spelman peers, their families and friends, and the community at-large. It is hoped that by becoming "experts" on the issue, students will mature into life-long advocates for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

To further stimulate interest and garner campus-wide support, the program publishes an insightful newsletter which provides numerous updates, summaries, announcements, letters and poems, all addressing child abuse and neglect. The publication offers the opportunity to share important information on this problem and provides an outlet for highlighting program activities and events. One such venture was an essay contest entitled "Child Abuse Prevention: Ways to Promote Community Awareness and Education Among College Students." The winning composition suggested several creative approaches to achieving this worthwhile goal. The newsletter is circulated throughout the Spelman community and has received overwhelming acclaim for its enlightening contents.

Generally, the response to Spelman's College-Wide Program has been very positive. Believed to be one of the rare programs of its type in the country, the project has been successful in several respects. In a pre-posttest survey, students rated the program very favorably. Most young women felt that, as a result of project activities, they had acquired a better understanding of abuse and neglect and were able to recognize symptoms of maltreatment. Moreover, they were relatively confident about their ability to help someone who may be confronted with an abusive or neglectful situation. As future parents and professionals, students also believed that information contained in the forums, convocations and newsletter would help them become better mothers and would assist them in choosing a career. These findings suggest that program participants become more knowledgeable of maltreatment and experience an increased awareness and sensitivity to the problem. Additionally, it would appear that professional options in the child welfare arena may be a consideration for a substantial proportion of the Spelman student-body. Amidst calls for increased ethnic sensitivity and cultural proficiency in the child welfare system, their entry into the field would be timely.

The College-Wide Prevention Program on Child Abuse and Neglect is located in Atlanta, Georgia and is sponsored, in part, by a grant from the Children's Trust Fund Commission of Georgia and Spelman College. For further information, contact Dr. Sandra Sims Patterson at (404) 223-1493.

## DON'T MISS THE POCLI MINI-CONFERENCE June 24, 1993

POCLI will hold a one-day mini-conference on June 24, 1993, immediately preceding APSAC's First National Colloquium. To be held at Malcolm X College in Chicago, the POCLI mini-conference will focus on critical issues in child maltreatment affecting minority children. A schedule for the conference is below. For further information, contact Joyce Thomas, RN, MPH, POCLI, c/o Center for Child Protection and Family Support, 714 G St. SE, Washington DC 20003. 202-544-3144.

### Morning Plenary: An Overview of the Issues (9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

**Moderator:** John Holton, PhD

**Panelists:** Eliana Gil, PhD  
Margaret Iwanaga-Penrose, MA  
Anthony Urquiza, PhD

Gail Wyatt, PhD  
Cecilia Fire-Thunder

### Afternoon Concurrent Workshops (1:30-3:30 p.m.)

- I. CULTURALLY COMPETENT TRAINING CURRICULUM  
Terry Cross, MSW, and Margaret Iwanaga-Penrose, MA
- II. AGENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT  
Fe'lecia Holly, MSW, JD, and John Holton, PhD
- III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  
Gail Wyatt, PhD, and Anthony Urquiza, PhD
- IV. THERAPY ISSUES WITH CLIENTS OF COLOR  
Eliana Gil, PhD, and Cecilia Fire-Thunder

### Closing Plenary: Keynote Address (4:00-5:00 p.m.)

Joyce Thomas, RN, MPH, Director, POCLI