

Shaping Child Welfare Practices in America & Abroad

Bill Baccaglino

APSAC recently announced an important new partnership—a joint venture with the organization I lead, The New York Foundling. This partnership is an important milestone in The Foundling’s nearly century and a half of working with children and families, but more important, it could become a milestone in the ongoing development of child welfare practices nationwide.

Pioneering the Science and the Study of Child Welfare

Founded in 1869 by the Sisters of Charity to care for Civil War orphans, The Foundling has grown and evolved into one of the largest child welfare agencies in the country, providing a wide range of services to more than 27,000 children and families each year. For nearly 50 years until his death in 2005, our medical director, Dr. Vincent Fontana, stood as a national leader in the recognition and understanding of issues affecting children. The publication of his *New England Journal of Medicine* article, “The Maltreated Syndrome in Children,” in 1963 opened the nation’s eyes to a long-ignored problem. He was one of the first physicians to define this issue and his work, along with that of other pioneers in the field, led to the development of the first child welfare guidelines and programs across the country.

Dr. Fontana’s spirit lives on today in The Foundling’s Vincent J. Fontana Center for Child Protection, led by Dr. Mel Schneiderman, who serves on the board of APSAC. Like its namesake’s, the Fontana Center’s mission includes not only research but also the sharing of best practices, conferences, partnerships, publications, and its exhibit, “A Story of Hope, Healing, and Resiliency:

Honoring the Lives of Survivors of Child Maltreatment.”

Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Evidence-Based Practices

Our efforts to continue leadership in the advancement of child welfare practices have placed us in the forefront of movement to develop and utilize evidence-based practices, and, with the support and partnership of the City of New York, we have achieved exciting results in a number of areas, ranging from juvenile justice to mental health to foster care and education. We are the first agency to subject our work in this field to clinical trials, and more details about these programs will undoubtedly be the subject of future articles. A few preliminary highlights include the following:

- 2016 research showing that clients undergoing Functional Family Therapy® Child Welfare (FFTCW) were 72% more likely to meet treatment goals and 82% less likely to experience repeat maltreatment after 24 months, compared with services as usual.
- FFTCW families requiring 42% fewer days to complete treatment and 74% fewer contacts with treatment staff.
- A juvenile justice program that removes older adolescents incarcerated at Riker’s Island Jail while they await sentencing and places them with specially trained foster parents using Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO).
- Over the summer, the Foundling’s Camp Felix provides youth in the child welfare system with the opportunity to attend an overnight camp, staffed by counselors equipped to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma or neglect.

- The launch of a mental health program, modeled on our evidence-based programs for child welfare and juvenile justice populations, that is now the first ever to be made available through a commercial insurer to youth in the general population who are desperately in need of help.

A Special Focus on Education

Education is one of the keys to success at The Foundling, and we've been addressing this need for a number of years. We are committed to making a difference, have made significant headway, and are seeing some very promising results.

- Our Road to Success Tutoring program has resulted in an increase from 34% to 55% in the number of youngsters in our care graduating high school—we now have one of the highest rates of college admissions among all New York foster care organizations.
- Students at Haven Academy, a charter school we founded in 2008—two thirds of whom are connected to the child welfare system—are now outperforming not only other schools in the community but also many schools citywide.
- With foundation support, we were chosen to launch and operate a summer immersion program at Queens College (part of the City University of New York) for 40 college-bound and college-ready foster youth. Because of its initial success, the program was extended to span the 2016–2017 school year.

Sharing Knowledge, Experience, and Best Practices

Like APSAC, The Foundling is committed to sharing knowledge and facilitating the advancement of national—and indeed global—best practices in the field. The great value of the type of evidence-based practices we have advocated for many years is that they are adaptable and transferable across geographic and cultural boundaries, as long as the practitioners are committed to the type of rigorous protocols and scientific methodology these programs require.

That philosophy led us to the creation of our Implementation Support Center (ISC), which since 2012, has been training administrators and clinicians from other agencies in the methodology and practical im-

plementation of evidence-based practices and how to sustain them effectively over time. To date, the ISC has collaborated with 16 agencies in New York, as well as with child welfare systems in California, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Having worked with professionals in New South Wales and Victoria in Australia, Glasgow, Scotland, and London, England, The Foundling is guiding the development and implementation of Family Functional Therapy-Child Welfare programs serving children in a number of regions throughout these countries.

The services and resources of the ISC are available to any governmental agency or service provider that wishes to employ EBPs as they seek to advance and improve their child welfare and juvenile justice outcomes.

The Future of Child Welfare

For years, the child welfare system in America has focused on the immediate and urgent needs of the children it served, making sure they live in a safe environment with enough food to eat and clean clothes to wear, while striving to achieve permanent placement with parents, family members, or an adoptive family.

Although those are crucial first steps, they are not enough and never have been. Nationally, only half will graduate from high school and 10% will attend college—but only 3% will graduate. One in four will be incarcerated within two years. One in five will become homeless. And too many of them will move from the child welfare system to the criminal justice system.

We need to think about the well-being of these children more broadly, educate them, and give them the tools they'll need to succeed in life.

The New York Foundling is proud to be one of the organizations, along with many other ASPAC members, that is working to improve the outcomes for those we serve through our educational programs and expanded use of evidence-based practices. We hope to share our experiences through the ASPAC network and engage our colleagues and policy makers across the country in a vitally important discussion about the future of our children.

Guided by the compassion of the Sisters who first put a bassinette on a Greenwich Village street in 1869, and by the conviction of Dr. Fontana that child welfare was

Shaping Child Welfare Practices in America and Abroad

an issue worthy of study and a data-driven, scientific approach, The Foundling is committed to advancing the identification, development, and replication of evidence-based best practices and the application of those practices to programs that serve children everywhere. We look forward to our joint effort with ASPAC to accomplish that.

About the Author

Bill Baccaglini is President and CEO of the New York Foundling. He

has led the push toward [evidenced-based practices](#) in The Foundling's programs, increasing the effectiveness of service delivery for the people they serve, and enhancing The Foundling's role as an industry leader. Prior to coming to The Foundling, Bill spent more than twenty years in New York State government, developing programs and policies directly impacting children, youth, and families. He was instrumental in the creation of the N.Y.S. Office of Children and Family Services (OFCS) in Albany, where later he served as Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development. In this role, he oversaw the agency development of a new model for funding the state's foster care services and led the agency's initiative to expand mental health services in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

APSAC Officers and Board of Directors

President

Tricia Gardner, JD
Center on Child Abuse & Neglect
Oklahoma City, OK

General Counsel and Treasurer

Bill S. Forcade, JD
Attorney at Law
Chicago, IL

Vice President

David L. Corwin, MD
Psychiatrist
Sandy, UT

Member at Large

Kathleen C. Faller, PhD
Professor Emerita
University of Michigan School of Social Work
Ann Arbor, MI

Executive Director

Janet F. Rosenzweig, PhD, MPA
Yardley, PA

Director

Mel Schneiderman, PhD
Senior Vice President, Mental Health Services
The Foundling
New York, NY

Director

Carmen Jirau-Rivera, LISW
Chief Program Officer
The Foundling
New York, NY

Director

Roslyn Murov, MD
Senior Vice President, Mental Health Services
The Foundling
New York, NY

Director

Debra Esnerio-Jenssen, MD

Lehigh Valley Health Network
Allentown, PA

Director

Bart Klika, MSW, PhD
Assistant Professor
University of Montana-School of Social Work
Missoula, MT

Director

Ryan Brown, MD, FAAP
Clinical Associate Professor
University of Oklahoma College of Medicine
Oklahoma City, OK

Secretary

Stacie LeBlanc, JD, MEd
Executive Director
Children's Hospital-CARE Center
New Orleans, LA

Immediate Past President

Frank E. Vandervort, JD
Clinical Professor of Law
Univ. of Michigan Law School
Ann Arbor, MI

President Emeritus

Ronald C. Hughes, PhD
Director
Institute for Human Services and
North American Resource Center for Child Welfare
Columbus, OH

President Emeritus

Jon R. Conte, PhD
Professor
University of Washington
Mercer Island, WA

President Emeritus

Viola Vaughan-Eden, PhD, MJ, LCSW
Associate Professor
Norfolk State University
Norfolk, VA