

MIPSAC

ANNUAL MEETING

by Leni Cowling

Our Annual meeting was held on October 11, 1996, at the Comfort Inn in Mt. Pleasant. It was well attended and we accomplished a number of important items. We are officially incorporated and also recognized as a charter member of the national APSAC organization. At this meeting, we held the official voting for the Board of Directors. David Harrison is voted in to serve as President, Vince Palusci is Vice President, Debra Bennett is the Secretary, and Susan Heartwell is the Treasurer. The eight members of the Board of Directors are: Leni Cowling, Bill Ladd, Pat Walsh, Tracey Sirus, Kathleen Faller, Ann Gregory, Barb Kennison, Roger Pickering.

PROGRAM

Interviewing Children who may have been abused. Some of the Controversial issues, by Dr. Kathleen Coulborn Faller.

Dr. Faller spoke about the history of child interviewing and discussed the difficulties in untrained practitioners attempts to "get the truth". Unfortunately,

most CPS workers have only bachelor's level training and are not trained in

important child interviewing techniques. Mental health workers may possess good interview and history-taking skills, but their training usually does not teach them how to decide whether or not an event occurred. Law enforcement people also are not prepared to interview children as they most likely interrogate suspects instead of talk about potential trauma.

Dr. Faller addressed questions about believing children from some cases that have gotten a good deal of publicity, such as the McMartin Preschool case. These cases involved multiple victims and multiple offenders, as well as allegations of ritual and sexual abuse. The current controversies involve the ability of the interviewer to conduct a competent interview, the competence of the child to describe actual events, the interview structure and process and the decision making about the likelihood of sexual abuse. Also much of the controversy often occurs in the context of litigation. She discussed the research on analog studies with children asked to describe actual events and compared those studies to situations of sexual abuse documentation which cannot be fabricated. Children are frequently reluctant to disclose, but research on cases that have some substantial aspects show that disclosure

occurs over a period of time and requires more than one session. Dr. Faller also discussed the use of anatomical dolls in the interviewing process, showing the dolls and aspects of their use. She cautioned that the use of anatomical dolls do not always elicit sexualized behavior from children with a history of abuse, just as demonstration of sexual acts with dolls does not always signal sexual abuse because children can learn about sex from other experiences, such as TV. While we have learned a great deal in the last few years about child interviewing, there is still much to be done as, unfortunately, the needs of children who may have been sexually abused take second place to the "rights" of the alleged adult abusers.

Dr. Faller spoke with great insight and compassion for children and displayed her talent for clarification of difficult issues. It was a delight to hear her and she gave us all a great deal to ponder about. We all have much to do in this area, but working together, we can help our future in our children.

PROGRAM: The Office of the Ombudsman with Rich Bearup.

The office of the Children's Ombudsman was created by Act No. 204, P.A. of 1994, effective January 1, 1995. Part of this Act charges the Ombudsman with the establishment of procedures for receiving and processing complaints, conducting investigations, holding hearings and reporting investigative findings. Rich spoke about the issues he is dealing with in his office. He is directly responsible to the Governor and so is out of the basic

agency politics. He made it clear that his office does not deal with custody disputes, but it is an objective resource in making constructive recommendations where improvement or change is necessary, and in verifying the responsible provision of children's services. The Act also establishes that the records of the Ombudsman are confidential and exempt from court subpoena and from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Rich has been a strong supporter of MiPSAC and we appreciate his input and perspectives. He is helping the field of Child Abuse and Neglect to provide fair procedures and protocol in the protection of children. His job is difficult in view of all the controversy, but he is very capable of doing an excellent job. We thank him for sharing his perspectives with us.



COMING CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

October 28-29, 1996 Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, sponsored by the University of Michigan and the Michigan Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, Ypsilanti, MI

November 19-21 or 20-22. Basic Child abuse, by Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan. Traverse city/ Petoskey/ Shanty Creek./Cheboygan.

NEXT MiPSAC MEETING

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13Th., 1996

in Mount Pleasant.

We will be addressing the committees and looking towards Training and Conference programs for 1997.

REMINDER!

Please renew your annual membership to APSAC. You need National membership for MiPSAC.

Thinking Ahead:

We are looking for articles of interest to our membership for the newsletter. Questions or suggestions to consider are always welcome and should prompt good feedback from everyone.

Membership committee

Legislative committee

Conference/Training committee

Newsletter /brochure committee

President: David L. Harrison 270 Wimberly,
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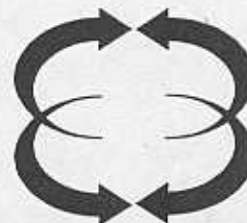
Vice-president: Dr. Vince Palusci, Devos
Children's Hospital, 100 Michigan Ave. Grand
Rapids, MI 49503 phone: (616) 391-8799.

Secretary: Debra Bennett, Gateway Community
Services, 910 Abbott Rd., East Lansing, MI. 48823.
phone: (517) 351-4000.

Treasurer: Susan Heartwell, 901 Michigan NE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Phone: (616) 771-6400.

Goals:

- To bring together Michigan professionals working in the area of abused children
- To foster networking among Michigan professionals
- To be an information resource for Michigan professionals
- To sponsor quality training for Michigan professionals

**JUST FOR ARGUMENTS SAKE**

Case example: A young woman delivers a baby with fetal alcohol syndrome. The mother has a severe alcohol problem. Should the father of the baby be also held accountable for the child's condition, if he is furnishing alcohol and drinking with the mother throughout the pregnancy and delivery, or should the mother bear the sole responsibility?

Would the same hold true for drug addiction?



Please send articles for the newsletter to:

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