

The Mentor Connection

FALL 2001

Contents

Families First Housing Services
- 2 -

SFC Sites around
the Country
- 2 -

Interesting Facts
about SFC Mentors
- 3 -

New Legislation
Pending in California
- 3 -

The Mentor Forum
- 4 -

Quick & Easy
(and Cheap!) Recipes
- 4 -

Upcoming Events
- 4 -



Produced by the
AIA Resource Center



Funded through a grant from
the Zellerbach Family Fund

Editor: Lauren Wichterman

WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of *The Mentor Connection!*

The purpose of this newsletter is to connect Shared Family Care (SFC) mentors with each other. It will give both mentors and service providers a forum in which they can post news about upcoming events and share insights and information about SFC. It will also highlight SFC successes and provide information about new legislation that could have an impact on SFC, as well as resources that are available to mentor and mentee families.

This first issue identifies and describes various SFC sites around the country. Kim MacDonald from Families First talks about the Housing Services available to mentees in Contra Costa County. Another article provides information about current mentors. One fact is irrefutable: individuals who choose to become mentors come to SFC with a wide array of experiences and skills. We hope that some of these talented people will share their expertise in future newsletters.

We plan on publishing this newsletter twice a year. However, you can contact the editor, Lauren Wichterman, at any time if you have an idea or would like to submit an article. This is a newsletter for you to exchange information, make announcements, share a story, or get feedback from other mentors. We hope to see many of you in these pages in the next edition of *The Mentor Connection!*

Lauren Wichterman can be reached at (510) 643-8833, or by writing to: AIA Resource Center, 1950 Addison Street, Suite 104, Berkeley, CA 94704. Her e-mail is: wichter@hotmail.com.

Thank you
for the
wonderful
work you
are doing!

**Mentors are the
backbone of
Shared Family Care.
We appreciate your
commitment to families
in your community.
Not only are you
making a difference
in the lives of those
families, you are
helping to shape the
future of child
welfare in this country.**

Families First

Housing Services



By Kim MacDonald, *Housing Services Specialist • Shared Family Care, Contra Costa County*

In June of 2000, Contra Costa County and Families First implemented a Housing Services Specialist position in the Shared Family Care program. This component was added to assist the mentee in placement, as well as upon graduation from the program.

Assistance in credit repair, help with increasing their income, saving for a place to move to and assessing housing options within the county are just a few of the services the housing specialist facilitates with the mentee. Mentees are often matched with a landlord in their desired place of residence in the county. Services are offered 30 days after mentees are placed

in a mentor home. These services continue through placement, and include six months of aftercare. This assistance is provided to help the mentee maintain self-sufficiency and to find housing upon graduation.

Shared Family Care is not a housing program by any means, but a program where families can learn from the example of their mentors. It will help these families develop the life skills they need to be self-sufficient and to continue on their own journey with their family intact.

All of the graduates of the Contra Costa Shared Family Care Program have succeeded in making and achieving their housing plan.

From June 2000-2001, six families have graduated and moved out on their own. Since June 2001, two of those families who were in transitional housing have moved on to permanent housing. This program continues to see many successes.

Housing isn't always the ultimate solution for all families, even though it is one of their goals. I believe that these families need more than just being placed in a home of their own. They need to learn not only how to maintain a home, but how to maintain all aspects of their lives. Shared Family Care provides a place where a family's needs can be addressed, and their lives rebuilt. ■



SFC Sites Around the Country

Although Shared Family Care is a relatively new concept in the U.S., it is available in numerous sites around the country. What all of these programs have in common is: the mentoring relationship between mentor and mentee families, and the additional support provided to families in the process of reunifying or staying together. Despite sharing these fundamental components of SFC, there is considerable variation among the different programs. Here is a snapshot of SFC programs around the country:

California • SFC is currently provided in 2 Bay Area communities: San Francisco and Contra Costa County. Clients are typically single women with young children, although single fathers have also been involved in the program. In Contra Costa County, the program is run by Families First out of two offices — Hercules and Concord. In San Francisco, the program is currently run through a collaboration between the SFDHS and the Epiphany Center at Mount St. Joseph/St. Elizabeth. However, the county is in the process of restructuring the program. Placements generally last at least 1 year.

Colorado • CHINS UP, a private agency in Colorado Springs, offers SFC to families in El Paso County. Families are referred from the Child Welfare system or the courts, or they can refer themselves, and they stay an average of 3.5 months. Several families in the program have relinquished their parental rights allowing their children to be put up for adoption.

Illinois • Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois, in Chicago, provides SFC to a wide variety of families through their Adolescent Mothers Resource Homes program for teen parents who are in the foster care system. The program places pregnant and parenting teens, who are dependents of the child welfare system, in the homes of "resource parents" who are typically (but not always) single women who have raised their own families.

Minnesota • Since 1990, Growing Home's Whole Family Placement Program in St. Paul has worked with over 100 families, including single fathers, single mothers, and two-parent families. Although these families may face a variety of challenges (e.g. substance abuse; homelessness), they are all involved in the child welfare system. Placements typically last about five months but can range from one month to two years. The program was recently restruc-

tured to specifically target adolescent mothers with extreme emotional disturbances.

New Jersey • The Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Extended Family Care Program uses the SFC model to place teens with their children.

Pennsylvania • Since 1991, A New Life Program, at Crime Prevention Associates in Philadelphia has used SFC as part of an intensive outpatient drug treatment program for women with infants. The women clients and their infants are placed in mentors' homes, for an average of 5.5 months. In addition to receiving assistance with parenting and life skills, the clients receive intensive in-home services and on-site childcare.

Wisconsin • SFC is provided through a collaborative effort between the state and several private agencies in Milwaukee. They have a two-pronged approach: half of the mentor homes will be for whole families; the other half will be for children only, although the parents will spend at least 15 hours per week working with the foster parents. Families in both components will receive a comprehensive array of services through several community-based organizations. ■

Interesting Facts

about SFC Mentors



Every year, the National AIA Resource Center at the University of California at Berkeley evaluates the Shared Family Care programs in California and Colorado. The evaluation team produces an annual report with all of the data that is collected from SFC staff, mentors and mentees over the year. The primary purposes of this evaluation are to: 1) determine if SFC is effective at helping families stay together and move toward self-sufficiency; 2) understand what makes a good mentor; and 3) identify qualities of families not likely to benefit from SFC. Each year, the report includes up-to-date information about the mentors that have participated in SFC. Here are some highlights from this year's report:

Mentor Activity: In the past year, the number of active mentors doubled, from 18-37, while only four mentors resigned from SFC. The increase in mentor activity in the past year is particularly evident in Contra Costa County, where the number of applicants and active mentors tripled. To date, there are 37 active mentors, 22 former mentors, and 87 non-active mentors (those who left the program without ever having a placement or who are in the middle of the application/training process) in Contra Costa, Colorado Springs, San Francisco and Oakland (although this program was discontinued as of July 1, 2001).

Eight of the mentors have had more than one family consecutively placed with them, and six have had three or more placements. Former mentors left the program primarily of their own choosing, citing personal reasons such as conflicts with time, family members moving back into their home and thus having no more room to host a family, and beginning a new family of their own.

How people heard about SFC: The vast majority of mentors who have had a placement reported that they heard about the program through friends or, less frequently, through staff at county social service agencies or private agencies. A large proportion

of the mentors were drawn to SFC because of their desire to improve their community, or because they enjoy working with people. Many mentors expressed a commitment to reuniting families and/or concern for the children. Others were drawn to mentoring due to similar life experiences.

Mentor Demographics: The majority of mentors have been African American women, with over half identifying themselves as single. A greater percentage of

active mentors are married (some with children, some without) compared to former and non-active mentors. The mean age of all of the mentors is 46 years, and the majority work full-time. Over half (57%) of active mentors have at least a bachelor's degree, with 14% having an advanced degree. Approximately one-quarter of mentors have been foster parents, and more than half have experience working or volunteering in the human services. ■



New Legislation

Pending in California

Healthy Families to Cover Uninsured Parents

Last December, Governor Davis announced his plan to provide Healthy Families coverage to nearly 300,000 uninsured parents, using federal matching funds already reserved for California. The expansion will cover uninsured parents with incomes up to \$2,400 a month for a family of three (200% of the federal poverty level). In the past, Healthy Families has been limited to children. Expanded coverage is expected to begin in October.

Continuous Eligibility:

All parents and children, whether covered by Medi-Cal or Healthy Families, will receive "Twelve months continuous eligibility." Once a family is approved for coverage, everyone in the family remains eligible and does not need to complete new paperwork for 12 months. Toward the end of that time, the family qualifies for another 12 months of coverage by filling out forms to show they are still eligible.

Premiums:

Families will pay partial health insurance premiums, with lower-income families paying less. For example, a family of four with income up to 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) will pay up to \$34 a month. A family of four with income between 150% and 200% FPL will pay up to \$58 a month.

Co-payments:

Parents will be asked to pay limited amounts when they seek care. Such co-payments will be capped at \$250 a year for all Healthy Families parents.

Excerpted from Health Consumer News, volume 2, issue 1, Summer 2001. For more information, contact the Community Health Advocacy Project, Bay Area Legal Aid, 50 Fell Street, 1st Floor, San Francisco, CA 94102, 1-800-551-5554, website: www.healthconsumer.org. Staff language capacities include: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese. ■

Upcoming Events

ALL CALIFORNIA MENTORS:

Regional Training

Topic: Understanding and Working with Differences
Date: Wednesday, October 17, 2001
Time: 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Location: TBA
Contact: Amy Price
(510) 643-8383

CONTRA COSTA MENTORS:

Mentor Support Meeting

Topic: Child Safety
Description: The “Child Safety” presentation will cover: child-proofing your home for small children; recognizing safety hazards in the home; and best ideas, tips, products and guidelines for a child-proof home. The guest speaker will be Lore Carr Johnson, Contra Costa Adoption Recruiter, Families First, Inc.
Dates: East/Central County (Concord): Thursday, September 13, 2001, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
West County (Hercules): Wednesday, September 19, 2001, 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Contact: Sandra Marshall
(510) 741-3100

Mentor Training

Topic: “True Colors” Personality Testing
Description: “True Colors” will cover: understanding the self (communication styles, interpersonal skills, etc.), and relationship building. The guest speaker will be Margaret Jacobs, Private consultant, Contra Costa County Interfaith Coalition.
Date: Wednesday, November 28, 2001
Time: 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Location: Hercules Offices
Contact: Sandra Marshall
(510) 741-3100

Holiday Party

Date: Wednesday, December 19, 2001
Time: 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Location: Concord Office
Contact: Sandra Marshall
(510) 741-3100

Quick & Easy (and Cheap!) Recipes



Ever wish that you could share some quick, easy and cheap recipes with your mentee family? Here are two recipes which might just fit the bill!

Speedy Chili

1 lb. ground beef
1 can diced tomato with chilis
1 8 oz. can regular tomato sauce
1 c. water
1/2-1 onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
2-3 cloves garlic, chopped or minced
3-5 tsp chili powder
salt, pepper, onion & garlic powder, and cumin to taste.

In a dutch oven, brown ground beef with onion, green pepper & garlic. Drain. Add tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, water & seasonings. Bring to a boil & then simmer approximately 20 minutes. While simmering, shred cheese to go on top. If in a hurry, you can warm flour tortillas; if you have more time you can bake a quick cornbread. Add a salad & you've got a quick meal. Leftovers are great as “Frito” pie or chili dogs!

And the vegetarian equivalent—

Mama's Meatless Chili

1 can chili beans in gravy
1 can kidney beans
1 can stewed tomatoes
1/2 cup sliced celery
1/4 cup diced onion
1 Tbsp chili powder
1 cup cooked rice
salt to taste
(optional) sour cream, grated cheese, hot sauce

In sauce pan, cook celery, onion and tomato for 5 minutes. Add everything else but rice, sour cream and cheese. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Add rice, put into bowls and top with any or all of the “optionals”.

From the website:
www.miserlymoms.com/MOMfrecipes2.htm

If you have a recipe to share, please send it to Lauren at wichter@hotmail.com, or AIA Resource Center, 1950 Addison Street, Suite 104, Berkeley, CA 94704.

The Mentor

Forum



The “Mentor Forum” is a place where mentors can bring up questions or concerns and get feedback from other SFC mentors and staff. Comments will be printed in subsequent newsletters, along with a new question/issue to be addressed.

Kristie O., a mentor from Colorado, asked this question:

What is the best way to get started with a new mentee family in your home?
How do you make them feel welcome while still setting appropriate limits?

Please send your response to:

Lauren Wichterman, AIA Resource Center, 1950 Addison Street, Suite 104, Berkeley, CA 94704; or e-mail wichter@hotmail.com or fax to (510) 643-7019.

Responses received by December 1, 2001 will be printed in the next issue of *The Mentor Connection*. Please indicate whether or not you would like your name and/or contact information to be printed.

If you have a question/concern that you would like addressed in this forum, please send it to Lauren at the above address, or call her at (510) 643-8833.