



THE CRB REVIEW

A Newsletter from the Statewide Advisory Committee Of
The New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board

WHAT'S INSIDE



From The SAC
Chairman

The Role of a
CRB Volunteer

Happy New
Near Everyone

Silent Scream
by Maria
Herrera-Sobek

Recruitment
Committee

Finance
Committee
Report

Whats
Available on
the NMCRB
Website

From the
NMCRB
Project Director

A Poverty
Solution that
Starts With A
Hug



From the SAC Chairman

Submitted by Bonnie Geer #29 - Albuquerque

Since being elected Chairman of SAC, lots has happened and lots more will be happening as we move through the next few months. I have been encouraged by the excitement that many CRB members have expressed over the new challenges and new directions that both SAC and the entire CRB membership are taking. None of this could happen if it were not for the hard work of individuals from all areas of the state who have stepped up and taken responsibility for promoting this new vision. I want the membership to know who these people are and I want to invite each of you to get involved, either by serving on one of the committees or by sharing ideas or thoughts that you might have. All of these folks will appreciate your support and, also, would love hearing from you!



Chairman – Bonnie Geer, Board 29 – Albuquerque

Vice-Chairman – Shaddon Ross, Board 19 – Taos

Secretary – Tura Hayes, Board 9 - Farmington

Finance Committee – Bernie Gordon, Board 11 – Deming

Friends of Foster Children – Mary Ann Copas, Board 5 – Albuquerque

Legislative Committee – currently unfilled

Local Boards – Shaddon Ross, Board 19 – Taos

Publications – Rita Aronson, Board 8 – Albuquerque

Recruitment – Terri Hammer, Board 29 - Albuquerque

Research and Investigations – Karen Foote, Board 1 – Clovis

Technology – unfilled

Training and Education – Pat Dunn, Boards 15 and 35 – Hobbs

SAC representatives have also added their voices to the challenges that lay ahead. Most certainly, our budget concerns sit at the top of our current efforts. Without a workable level of funding, CRB cannot continue to function or to be a viable player in the child welfare community. When asked to step up and contact your legislators, you did so mightily and we have been rewarded by having favorable budgetary requests put forward for us. However, we are still waiting to hear and, therefore, we are still engaged in the struggle. Please, if your board is not represented on SAC, elect a representative so that your board will be informed and up-to-date and involved.

Whether you serve as a local board chair, SAC committee chair, SAC representative or local board member, you are important to this organization. Your dedication and hard work are what makes us great and without you we are nothing. I want to share an interesting tidbit with you:

With the help of Ezra Spitzer in the NMCAN/CRB Office, we calculated the worth of CRB volunteers. The Corporation for National and Community Service, in 2009, calculated that the rate for volunteer work in New Mexico was \$17.10 per hour. Using that number, Ezra calculated that 120 CRB volunteers spend roughly 12,200 hours preparing cases, meeting boards, traveling, training and representing their boards at statewide meetings. Therefore, CRB volunteers are worth \$208,620.00 to the state of New Mexico - and we all know that this estimate is very conservative! I'll add just one more impressive statistic : last year CRB volunteers conducted 2,573 reviews for 1,784 children.

Thank you for all you currently do and will continue to do for the good of CRB. I look forward to talking with you and working with you. Please do not ever hesitate to call me.

The Role of a CRB Volunteer

Submitted by Bonnie Geer, SAC Chairman/Board #29 - Albuquerque

Since I have become Chairman of SAC, I have had the opportunity to be involved in many activities and have met many people outside of CRB. I have also worked closely with CRB volunteers from around the state and have come to know many of them very well - to the extent that I now call them my friends. The role that CRB plays in my life has broadened, both publicly and personally, and I enjoy being part of this organization.

I'm sure that most of you enjoy working with your board members - I know that I do. My board meets the first Friday of each month and I know that at that time I will do valuable work for the children in custody, but I will also do something for myself. I will personally experience the passion and dedication of others who feel just like me and I will enjoy the friendship and good feelings that my board members bring to my life. We're a group and we work together to make this world a little bit better place. What could be better!

As I work with many of you, I find that what you do in your local communities is not just limited to CRB. Many of you are involved in other activities and play key roles in the betterment of your locality. I applaud you! Some of you are content to serve only as a member of your local CRB Board and I applaud you! However, there are opportunities that exist that can broaden your involvement with CRB and that will not take too much time. Getting involved with CRB committees and doing small things to emphasize the importance of our work will help us to achieve our goals more quickly. What can you do?



- Stay in touch with your legislator and write monthly notes to let him/her know that CRB is still working for New Mexico kids.
- Choose a CRB committee and offer your services to the chairman.
- Surf the net and find articles to share with other CRB members and boards.
- Share with other CRB boards what your board does to identify learning opportunities.
- Take your turn as a representative to SAC so that you can see the broader scope of what CRB does.
- Invite other members of the Child Welfare Community to lunch with your board and tell them about the good things we do.

Now is the time to give back for all the wonderful feelings you get by serving on a CRB board! Currently, our committees consist mostly of just the chairman. If you can add your name to one of them, it would be much appreciated. Additionally, the chairmanship of the Legislative Committee as well as the Technology Committee are still open. I would be more than happy to add your name to the list!

As I always tell you and will continue to tell you - you are a great group! I love working with you and representing you in varied groups around the state and, no matter what your role, you are appreciated. Steve Alford, UNM basketball coach, says, "We are New Mexico!" Well, I am saying to you, "We are CRB!" Get involved - you'll love it!



Submitted by Theresa Cano de Ochoa, SW Regional Specialist

SILENT SCREAM

by Maria Herrera-Sobek

There is so much pain inside our throats we are afraid that if we speak

We'll yell ... We'll shriek ... We'll moan ... We'll scream ... We'll cry

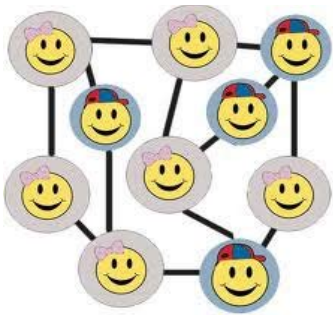
And so ... We stay ... Quiiiiiiiiet.

This happens so much to many children and even us as adults!



Recruitment Committee

Submitted by Terri Hammer, Board #29 - Albuquerque



There is a new committee in the CRB organization and it is Recruitment. I hope that all of you have seen the brochure that has been created to attract new members and to tell them the CRB story. The brochures were given to the Regional Specialists to distribute

to our various boards throughout the state (the brochure is also on the CRB website which you can print or you can contact the CRB office for additional brochures). In actuality, all of us serve on the recruitment committee with the brochure being the tool we can use to let people know about CRB and the children we serve.

Our next task will be to discover the brochure's effectiveness. By getting the brochures into the hands of dedicated and committed advocates, we should start seeing more interest in serving on our boards by the first of the year. Additionally, it is incumbent on each of us to talk about CRB, share its mission and invite persons who might be interested to learn more. If we could all be prepared to keep some brochures handy in our bag or the car, that would be great! Also, we should continue running ads about CRB in the local newspapers. I know that most members I've talked with learned about us from our ad in the paper. That means seems to prove very effective. However, we all know that word of mouth and conversation also go a long way in getting people interested.

It is a pleasure to serve as chairman of this committee and I look forward to more of you wishing to serve. Telling our story, meeting new people and working for the good of the organization - what could be better!

Happy New Year Everyone!

Submitted by Rita Aronson, Executive SAC / Board #8 - Albuquerque



Happy New Year Everyone!

I don't know about you but I needed an energy boost after the hectic days of the Holiday Season. Attending the Children's Law Institute really provided that boost for me. Just interacting with the people in the Child Welfare system: Social Workers, CASAs, Attorneys and Judges seeing their dedication and enthusiasm was contagious.

The workshops were enlightening and informative. I learned a great deal about Reactive Attachment Disorder and its treatment. I was educated about the legal ramifications of immigration and its affects on some of the children whose cases we see in our reviews. In addition, this year there was a workshop especially for CASAs and CRB members focusing on the Multi Ethnic Placement Act or MEPA. This presentation helped explain this very complex act and some of CYFDs placement decisions which may have seemed puzzling in the past.

In short, I find the Children's Law Institute an opportunity to educate myself in what is happening in the Child Welfare system. Also it is a convenient way to receive training hours!

The CRB Review will now be published four times a year. I want to thank all the members, Committee Chairs and Regional Specialists who have contributed articles. Keep those articles coming. I know how busy you are and I appreciate it.



Available on the New Mexico Citizen Review Board Website

www.nmcrb.org

✓ **Information regarding CRB**

- State mandates and vision
- Frequently asked questions
- Volunteer application and information

✓ **CRB Publications**

- Annual Reports and Recommendations
- Preview Reports and Interim Reports
- New Mexico Children in Foster Care Facts Sheets
- Meeting the Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care

✓ **Training Materials**

- CRB Training Modules, plus tests
- NM Court Improvement Best Practices Bulletins
- NM Court Improvement Booklets

✓ **Public Awareness materials**

- Series of articles about a young boy in foster care
- Children's Mental Health
- "1 out of 5" campaign

✓ **Forms**

- Comment Sheets for Interested Parties
- Forms for CYFD workers
- Forms for CRB members

Finance Report

Submitted by Bernie Gordon, Chairman of Finance Committee/Board #11 - Deming



At the September 17th CRB Statewide Advisory Committee meeting, a finance committee was appointed. This committee consists of Bernie Gordon, chairman, Mike Norwood and Michael Hodge committee members. As with any newly appointed committee, there is always a period of getting to know your committee members and setting priorities for the coming year. However, early in the month of October we realized we were facing a crisis situation with our finances. The time for a relaxed getting to know each other and setting priorities was over.

The finance committee was faced with overwhelming news that our budget was facing a possible reduction in funds for the current year of between \$40,000 to \$60,000. Funding reductions over the past four years had already threatened the CRB's ability to meet its statutory and contractual mandates. Since fiscal year 2009, CRB has seen its actual revenue drop \$106,000.00 or 17.8 percent. The drop in dollars to support our mandates have resulted in the loss of three staff

positions, reduction in training for CRB board members and fewer meetings of the statewide committee. This reduction also required our specialists to travel more miles and meet with more review boards.

The possibility of any further reduction in our funding meant we no longer had the financial ability to meet our statutory mandate. Members of the finance committee along with our Contractor, DFA, our Executive SAC, members of our general SAC organization and local boards came together to respond to the crisis with a plan of action to approach the legislature to secure supplemental funds for this current year. Without financial support from our legislators to maintain our fiscal year 2012 budget, quality services to the children of New Mexico cannot continue.

The finance committee remains hopeful that the current situation will be resolved and we can look forward to working with the many volunteers from across our State "to provide a permanent system for independent and objective monitoring of children placed in the custody of the Children, Youth and Families department."

Your finance committee stands ready to support your ideas and suggestions regarding the budget process. We are working to develop a budget that reflects our current needs and supports our future vision. Only by working together can we move beyond providing only the bare minimum for our youth to providing for permanency and youth who are connected, involved, and successful members of society.

From the NMCRB Project Director

Submitted by Patricia Briggs, NMCRB Project Director - Albuquerque



SAC Training Plan

Coming soon to the CRB membership will be the second draft of the CRB SAC Training Plan. Unfortunately, the plan has had to take into account the budget cuts that have happened over the last several years but it provides opportunities for our members. Some of the opportunities are new and some years old. The plan also lists training resources that are already available to CRB on the CRB website. And excitingly, the plan also includes a "wish list" of training opportunities when CRB can obtain budget increases!

All of the projects of the CRB contractor, New Mexico Child Advocacy Networks, has benefited from the work of Bonnie Schermerhorn, Project Director of the Access and Visitation Network of NMCAN and, in her new additional role as NMCAN Training Director. Bonnie has attended CRB New Member Training and has given the SAC Training Committee some new ideas regarding expanding the training and some refinements. Bonnie and the other three NMCAN Project Directors (CRB, NM CASA Network, and Building Futures and Foundations) are working collaboratively to provide Volunteer Supervision Training for CRB Board Chairs, CRB Regional Specialists, CASA staff, and AV staff. More details to follow on this first time ever training to be held in April.

The CRB Volunteer Manual will start to undergo a much-needed major revision this spring with completion slated for FY 2013.

Children's Law Institute

Rita Aronson, Board #8 and SAC Publication Chair, in her newsletter article spoke eloquently about how CLI can re-energize as well as train! Over 30 CRB board members and staff attended the January CLI from various areas of the state – T or C, Santa Fe, Farmington, Hobbs, Roswell, Tucumcari, Carlsbad, Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Las Cruces, Las Vegas, and more areas that I am now forgetting! Please consider attending CLI next January!

THE 19TH ANNUAL
Children's
Law Institute | 2012



January 7, 2012

A Poverty Solution That Starts With a Hug
By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

PERHAPS the most widespread peril children face isn't guns, swimming pools or speeding cars. Rather, scientists are suggesting that it may be "toxic stress" early in life, or even before birth.

This month, the American Academy of Pediatrics is issuing a landmark warning that this toxic stress can harm children for life. I'm as skeptical as anyone of headlines from new medical studies (Coffee is good for you! Coffee is bad for you!), but that's not what this is.

Rather, this is a "policy statement" from the premier association of pediatricians, based on two decades of scientific research. This has revolutionary implications for medicine and for how we can more effectively chip away at poverty and crime.

Toxic stress might arise from parental abuse of alcohol or drugs. It could occur in a home where children are threatened and beaten. It might derive from chronic neglect — a child cries without being cuddled

Affection seems to defuse toxic stress — keep those hugs and lullabies coming! — suggesting that the stress emerges when a child senses persistent threats but no protector.

Cues of a hostile or indifferent environment flood an infant, or even a fetus, with stress hormones like cortisol in ways that can disrupt the body's metabolism or the architecture of the brain.

The upshot is that children are sometimes permanently undermined. Even many years later, as adults, they are more likely to suffer heart disease, obesity, diabetes and other physical ailments. They are also more likely to struggle in school, have short tempers and tangle with the law.

The crucial period seems to be from conception through early childhood. After that, the brain is less pliable and has trouble being remolded.

"You can modify behavior later, but you can't rewire disrupted brain circuits," notes Jack P. Shonkoff, a Harvard pediatrician who has been a leader in this field. "We're beginning to get a pretty compelling biological model of why kids who have experienced adversity have trouble learning."

This new research addresses an uncomfortable truth: Poverty is difficult to overcome partly because of self-destructive behaviors. Children from poor homes often shine, but others may skip school, abuse narcotics, break the law, and have trouble settling down in a marriage and a job. Then their children may replicate this pattern.

Liberals sometimes ignore these self-destructive pathologies. Conservatives sometimes rely on them to blame poverty on the poor.

The research suggests that the roots of impairment and underachievement are biologically embedded, but preventable. "This is the biology of social class disparities," Dr. Shonkoff said. "Early experiences are literally built into our bodies."

The implication is that the most cost-effective window to bring about change isn't high school or even kindergarten — although much greater efforts are needed in schools as well — but in the early years of life, or even before birth.

"Protecting young children from adversity is a promising, science-based strategy to address many of the most persistent and costly problems facing contemporary society, including limited educational achievement, diminished economic productivity, criminality, and disparities in health," the pediatrics academy said in its policy statement.

One successful example of early intervention is home visitation by childcare experts, like those from the Nurse-Family Partnership. This organization sends nurses to visit poor, vulnerable women who are pregnant for the first time. The nurse warns against smoking and alcohol and drug abuse, and later encourages breast-feeding and good nutrition, while coaxing mothers to cuddle their children and read to them. This program continues until the child is 2.

At age 6, studies have found, these children are only one-third as likely to have behavioral or intellectual problems as others who weren't enrolled. At age 15, the children are less than half as likely to have been arrested.

Evidence of the importance of early experiences has been mounting like snowflakes in a blizzard. For example, several studies examined Dutch men and women who had been in utero during a brief famine at the end of World War II. Decades later, those "famine babies" had more trouble concentrating and more heart disease than those born before or after.

Other scholars examined children who had been badly neglected in Romanian orphanages. Those who spent more time in the orphanages had shorter telomeres, a change in chromosomes that's a marker of accelerated aging. Their brain scans also looked different.

The science is still accumulating. But a compelling message from biology is that if we want to chip away at poverty and improve educational and health outcomes, we have to start earlier. For many children, damage has been suffered before the first day of school.

As Frederick Douglass noted, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

I invite you to comment on this column on my blog, On the Ground. Please also join me on Facebook and Google+, watch my YouTube videos and follow me on Twitter.

