

## Children's Institute Gains Local, State, and National Attention with Stage of Change Approach

The Stage of Change Approach was first used by Children's Institute in response to a need for professional development training for child care providers participating in the Early Education Professional Development grant by the U.S. Department of Education and the Partners in Family Child Care program. During the early years of the latter program, we observed that while some child care providers were open to accepting suggestions for changing the way they operated their program, others were not so eager to do so. Change is difficult and resistance to it can hinder progress and success, so over a period of years, Children's Institute, using the research literature on readiness to change, developed a scale to assess the readiness to change of the early childhood educators. Based on the measure, caregivers were identified as being in one of the following stages:

- 1. Pre-contemplation:** Not ready to make a change
- 2. Contemplation:** Thinking about change but overwhelmed by obstacles
- 3. Preparation:** Ready to change
- 4. Action:** Actively engaged in change
- 5. Maintenance:** Maintaining change with vigilance

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## Stage of Change Approach

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Understanding a caregiver's stage of readiness-to-change allowed us to offer training that was individualized and tailored to best meet the needs of the trainees. This approach is based on the Trans-Theoretical Model of Change (TTM). Most recently, we have offered this training to two groups of family child care providers and, both times, the caregivers moved up one or two stages on the scale by the time training had been completed.

One of the reasons the approach is attractive to mentors, consultants, and center directors is that the scale provides a tool for recording attitudinal change in those learners who do not yet show change in their behavior. According to TTM research, only one in five learners is ready to change.

The Stage of Change Approach has received local, state, and national attention from a variety of partners and funders. Support from the Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation and Rochester's Child have allowed us to expand our work and Children's Institute staff has already provided training on the approach to early educators and child care administrators both locally and in other areas including South Carolina; Binghamton, NY; Westchester County, NY; and Washington, DC. We have also received inquiries for training from Ohio and North Carolina. In addition, funding from the Rochester Area Community Foundation has allowed Children's Institute staff to "train the trainers" to replicate the approach for family child care providers.

We continue to look for funding to test the effectiveness of the Stage of Change Approach combined with reflective supervision; five child care resource and referral agencies from across New York State have expressed interest in taking part in this training. These agencies, which are funded by New York State and located in nearly every county, lobby for improved child care and provide professional development for workers in the field.

These research initiatives will give us a better understanding of how to provide more effective professional development to early childhood educators so that their work will result in better outcomes and higher success rates for children in their care.

## Your contributions to Children's Institute

help support our work with the Stage of Change Approach and the other programs mentioned in this newsletter.

To learn more about how you can make a gift, please visit [www.childrensinstitute.net/donate](http://www.childrensinstitute.net/donate).

## Staff Updates



**Terry E. Hartmann, MBA, CMA**, was hired as Director of Finance and Operations. He brings over 40 years of experience including senior leadership and finance positions with Ambrell and Xerox Corporation. In addition, he has volunteered with a number of not-for-profits including Geva Theatre Center, Financial Executives International, and Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester.



**Mary Anne Peabody, Ed.D.**, Director of Primary Project, has accepted a faculty position in Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Southern Maine effective September, 2013. Mary Anne looks forward to this new professional growth opportunity to shape the lives of individuals who aspire to work in counseling and/or early childhood and to support a service learning model of Primary Project at her new position.



**Allison Skillman**, who has been serving as Receptionist, was promoted to Grants Support Assistant. In her new position, Allison will support the grants process by researching, identifying, and recommending potential funding sources and assisting in the grant writing/submission process. She will also provide administrative support to the National Services and Community Partnerships areas.

## Community Update Scheduled for October

On October 24, 2013, Children's Institute will host a Community Update breakfast at The Strathallan Hotel. This event, which is held biennially, includes a report to the community about the agency's work to address the current challenges facing children and families in our community and across the nation. New members will be inducted into the Coterie of Children's Institute at that time. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us. For details, contact us at (585) 295-1000 or [askillman@childrensinstitute.net](mailto:askillman@childrensinstitute.net).

## Primary Project Expands to New Schools

Newly funded New York State schools implementing Primary Project in 2013-14 include:

- Bronx Charter School for Better Learning - Bronx, NY
- Union East Elementary School (Cheektowaga Central School District) - Cheektowaga, NY
- East Syracuse Elementary School and Woodland Elementary School (Contact Community Services, Inc. in partnership with East Syracuse Minoa Central School District) - East Syracuse, NY
- Hadley-Luzerne Elementary School (Hadley-Luzerne Central School District) - Lake Luzerne, NY
- John Paulding School and W.L. Morse School (Public Schools of the Tarrytowns) - Sleepy Hollow, NY

## United Way of Greater Rochester Supports Children's Institute Programs

### BASIC Plans Program Expansion

Over the past four years, six Rochester, NY urban child care centers (St. Paul Child Care, Friendship Children's Center, Rochester Childfirst Network, Lewis Street YMCA, Baden Street Child Development Center, and Richard M. Guon Child Care Center at MCC) have partnered in BASIC (Behavioral and Social Interventions for Children), a program designed to strengthen the social and emotional development of young children. With new funding from the United Way of Greater Rochester, plans are underway to build capacity and provide sustainability in current centers while including new centers as well.

Delays in cognitive, social-emotional, and speech/language development, as well as low-quality care and poverty all contribute to the prevalence of challenging behavior in young children. Poverty is an especially relevant risk factor for Rochester, as the city ranks 7th in the nation for child poverty. Children living in poverty experience greater exposure to violence, and are more likely to be removed from child care centers and preschools. In addition, studies show that prekindergarten children are expelled or suspended at three times the rate of older students due to behavioral concerns. BASIC offers a wide range of early services and supports in an effort to prevent difficulties that might develop later on in a child's life.

BASIC follows a Teaching Pyramid Model (TPM) designed to understand and support children's social and emotional development and to address challenging behaviors. The first three levels of the pyramid focus on prevention, utilizing a targeted staff development plan uniquely developed for each center along with PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) Preschool Program, which promotes social and emotional development in self-control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem, relationship building, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The fourth and fifth pyramid levels provide interventions for children needing additional support. These may consist of a referral to Primary Project, Behavioral Health Consultation, or Child Parent Psychotherapy and/or Trauma Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. Ongoing screening is performed to ensure that children receive the most appropriate support when indicated.

BASIC also places a high priority on teaming with parents/primary caretakers. Center staff and consultants seek opportunities for parental input and strive to inform, support, and partner with parents to enable them to support their children's healthy social and emotional development. As a result, parents and teachers are reporting positive student outcomes.

In one case, a grandmother sent a note regarding her 2-year-old granddaughter whose mother passed away. Through BASIC, the family was immediately connected to Mt. Hope Family Center. The child's grandmother and aunt expressed appreciation that Mt. Hope staff members delved into areas the family did not know how to approach. Because of the timely intervention and the assistance provided, the young girl is bright and vivacious.



Left to right: Dave Fiedler, Board Chair, United Way of Greater Rochester and CEO, ESL Federal Credit Union, presents a check in support of BASIC and Primary Project programs to Lynn Smith and Lauri Brugger, Children's Institute.

In another instance, a teacher reported the following experience: "One morning when we were getting ready to do the PATHS Preschool Lesson, 'Sharing and Caring,' a child brought in a new sticker book with big, beautiful stickers. He was excited showing his friends about his new gift. Soon after, several children showed us the stickers that were now all over their shirts! The owner of the sticker book displayed a big smile, too. We began to tell him that he would need his stickers and should not give them away, but then we remembered our lesson about sharing – the one we were planning for this very same day. We encouraged each child to talk about his or her stickers and how (s)he felt about the owner sharing them, and we asked the owner of the sticker book to tell us how he felt when he shared all of his stickers with his friends. As teachers, it was great to witness this happening and to be able to connect it to our PATHS lesson."

Approximately 400 children have received targeted services through BASIC over the past four years, and 1000 children have been served overall. In the next three years, participating centers will build program sustainability so that they can continue using the TPM model on their own. As they phase out of BASIC, new centers will phase in. In this way, BASIC will continue to grow, and centers that have embraced a TPM model will continue to impact new groups of children year after year.

### Primary Project Continues to Focus on Early Intervention and Prevention

Thanks to an investment from the United Way, seven Rochester City School District elementary schools will continue to offer their Primary Project program in the 2013-14 school year in order to provide services to 90 kindergarten students. These children will be identified and served earlier in terms of both age and onset of emerging difficulties. Program focus will be on kindergarten children who are at risk for behavioral and emotional problems and who are generally at a mild-to-moderate risk for later school adjustment problems, including mild aggression, acting out, shyness, anxiety, withdrawal from others, and similar behaviors that interfere with their educational progress in school. All seven schools are nationally-certified Primary Project sites that currently offer the program to elementary students.

## A Note from the Director



Since its inception, Children's Institute has been committed to strengthening the social and emotional health of children. Through our research, program development and evaluation, training, and consultation, we have sought to give those who work with children the tools they need to improve children's success and to educate parents and policy makers about the importance of healthy social and emotional development.

Over the past twenty years, studies have demonstrated that children's social and emotional skills are linked to academic performance and attitudes about school. Research has shown that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) not only improves positive behavior and reduces negative behavior so that children can focus on learning, but also helps to prevent potential problems such as alcohol and drug use, violence, truancy, and bullying.

In recent years, many professionals, elected officials, and policy makers have been paying more attention to efforts that encourage the healthy social and emotional development of our children, and we are beginning to see a rise in demand for programs and interventions that address the topic of SEL. The Governor has identified student achievement as a priority, and the New York State Board of Regents has adopted guidelines for incorporating social and emotional development and learning into elementary and secondary school programs.

In this issue of *News and Views*, you will read about how Children's Institute is building sustainability in current programs and increasing the number of children who benefit from our work through a "train-the-trainer" effort. With funding from the United Way of Greater Rochester, we are working to replicate the work we have done in our BASIC (Behavioral and Social Interventions for Children) program, and we are seeking funding to do the same with the Stage of Change Approach in order to achieve better outcomes and higher success rates for more children in our community.

As always, we are grateful for the support of those who help make our work possible.

—A. Dirk Hightower, Ph.D., Executive Director

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