

## **Timely Topics: Child Protection Week 2010 5 September – 11 September 2010**

- FPQ is helping parents and carers talk with their children about being safe and developing self protection skills.
- We all recognise that children live in a world where they receive messages daily from television, advertising, computer games and the internet and parents want to reinforce positive messages to combat the negative ones that are encountered.
- Parents and carers can reduce the risk of abuse. Learning about self protection includes talking about feelings, bodies and privacy, assertiveness, understanding relationships, identifying the rules about touch and knowing what to do if the rules are broken.
- FPQ can help parents feel more confident and skilled when talking with their own families about child protection.
- Children are never too young to learn about being safe and whom they can talk to if they need help. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities can also learn from an early age.
- Do not worry about giving too much information; children will only take in as much information as they are able to understand. Remember to be brief, positive and factual.

### **Traffic Lights Framework: Understanding and responding to sexual behaviours in children and adolescents**

Traffic Lights is a framework for understanding and responding to sexual behaviours in children and adolescents. Most sexual behaviours in children are natural and healthy explorations.

Child sexual behaviours should be viewed in the context of childhood. Adults need to take off their adult glasses to understand childhood sexual behaviour in the child's context rather than from a sexually mature adult perspective. Having a holistic view of sexuality that isn't centred simply on sex can help remove some of the controversy and discomfort.

Normal and healthy sexual behaviour can be identified as:

- amongst equals in terms of age, size and ability levels
- reflecting information gathering
- spontaneous, curious, light hearted, mutual and easily distracted in nature

Behaviour becomes concerning when it is

- increasingly frequent, persistent or unusual for that child
- involving significant age, developmental and/or power differences
- compulsive, excessive, secretive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- not matched to the child's developmental stage

## Key journal articles

### **Child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs. How effective are they in preventing child abuse?**

Sanderson, Jennifer

Crime and Misconduct Commission, Research and issues paper series, no. 5, June, 2004

[www.littleangels.org.au/documents/Childsexualabusepreventionprograms.pdf](http://www.littleangels.org.au/documents/Childsexualabusepreventionprograms.pdf)

A well-designed prevention program can be effective in teaching children how to protect themselves from sexual abuse. To be effective, programs need to:

- involve children, with explicit training in preventive behaviours and disclosure
- involve group training using standardized materials, content and administration, with programs taught by trained instructors
- be of longer duration, involving repeated presentations
- be incorporated into the school curriculum
- involve a multisystemic approach, which targets children, parents and teachers.

Further efforts depend on a commitment, from both government and non-government sectors, to providing children with evidence-based programs that are comprehensively evaluated to ensure they are effective in teaching self-protection skills.

### **Human Rights Abuse in Aspects of Child Protection Practice?**

Hansen, Patricia; Ainsworth, Frank

Australian Journal of Social Issues, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 183-193, Winter 2009

This article examines some aspects of child protection practice in various Australian states and territories. It does so from a parent's perspective through the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). Australia was a signatory to both the Declaration and Convention at their point of inception. Of particular interest are articles 5 and 12 of the Universal Declaration and articles 5 and 9(3) of the Convention. The tentative conclusion is that the states and territories cited in this article are from time to time in breach of these articles. The potential Australian Charter of Rights offers a way forward as a guide to development of legislation and service systems.

### **Case, teacher and school characteristics influencing teachers' detection and reporting of child physical abuse and neglect: Results from an Australian survey**

Walsh, Kerryann; Bridgstock, Ruth; Farrell, Ann; Rassafiani, Mehdi; Schweitzer, Robert

Child Abuse & Neglect, vol. 32, no. 10, pp. 983-993, Oct. 2008

A sample of 254 teachers completed a self-report questionnaire. They responded to a series of 32 hypothetical physical abuse and neglect scenarios by rating each of the vignettes on a 5-point scale for likelihood of abuse/neglect (detection) and likelihood to report (reporting). The most important determinants of teacher decision making are case characteristics. These characteristics impact upon both detection and reporting. Findings highlight the need for ongoing evaluation and enhancement of teacher education in CAN. The study underlines the importance of educating teachers about: (a) the warning signs and indicators of different types of CAN; (b) the differential effects of CAN; (c) responding to child victims including responses to direct disclosures; and (d) accurate and timely reporting.

## **'Keep Telling Until Someone Listens': Understanding Prevention Concepts in Children's Picture Books Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse**

Lampert, Jo; Walsh, Kerryann

Children's Literature in Education, Vol 41, No 2, 146-167, June 2010

Children's picture books dealing with the topic of child sexual abuse appeared in the 1980s with the aim of addressing the need for age-appropriate texts to teach sexual abuse prevention concepts and to provide support for young children who may be at risk of or have already experienced sexual abuse. Despite the apparent potential of children's picture books to convey child sexual abuse prevention concepts, very few studies have addressed the topic of child sexual abuse in children's literature. This article critically examines a selection of 15 picture books (published in the US, Canada and Australia) for children aged 3–8 years dealing with this theme. It makes use of an established set of evaluative criteria to conduct an audit of the books' content and applies techniques of literary discourse analysis to explain how these picture books satisfy criteria for child sexual abuse prevention. The analysis is used as a way to understand the discourses available to readers, both adults and children, on the topic of child sexual abuse. Key themes in the books include children's empowerment and agency, and the need for persistence and hope.

## **Newly published books and resources available on this topic**

### **Community development approaches to safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children**

Higgins, Daryl J.

[Canberra, ACT: Closing the Gap Clearinghouse], 2010.

[www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/resource\\_sheets/ctgc-rs01.pdf](http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/resource_sheets/ctgc-rs01.pdf)

### **Protecting children from violence: evidence based interventions**

Lampinen, James M.

New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2010.

Providing an evidence-based understanding of the causes and consequences of violence against children, experts in the field examine the best practices used to help protect children from violence. Various types of violence are reviewed including physical and sexual abuse, cyber-bullying, human trafficking, online predators, abductions, and war. In addition, it reviews the various perpetrators of such violence including parents and relatives, strangers, other children, and societal institutions.

### **The wellbeing of children in care: a new approach for improving developmental outcomes**

Owusu-Bempah, Kwame

Milton Park [England]: Routledge, 2010.

Because of their previous damaging experiences, many children and young people enter the care system having already developed emotional problems or at a greater risk of developing them. This important book looks at how children in care can best be helped to attain desirable developmental outcomes. A notion of socio-genealogical connectedness helps to explain why children in kinship care fare better than children in non-relative foster care.

**See also FPQ publication from February 2008, Settings and Solutions: Supporting access to sexuality and relationships information for children in care**

[www.fpq.com.au/pdf/SettingsAndSolutions.pdf](http://www.fpq.com.au/pdf/SettingsAndSolutions.pdf)

Children and young people in care have poorer sexual health outcomes than peers not in care. They have:

- higher rates of earlier onset of sexual activity
- higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- higher rates of earlier pregnancy and parenting
- higher rates of sexual abuse including participation in sexual exploitation through sex work
- higher rates of problem sexual behaviours and sexual behaviours that cause concern
- less access to sexual health services
- less access to sexuality education and information.

## **Useful resource links**

### **Queensland Government child protection week website**

[www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/events/cpweek/index.html](http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/events/cpweek/index.html)

Child Protection Week promotes the belief that it is everyone's responsibility to make their community child friendly.

### **Statistics from Queensland for 2008-2009**

[www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/performance/child-protection/statistics/index.html](http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/performance/child-protection/statistics/index.html)

The Department of Child Safety is the Queensland Government's lead agency for child protection and adoption services. For statistical data, analysis and supporting information regarding child deaths in Queensland, follow the link above.

### **Statistics from the AIHW**

[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10859](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10859)

During 2008-09 across Australia, over 200,000 children were the subject of one or more child protection notifications; almost 33,000 children were the subject of one or more substantiations; over 35,000 children were on care and protection orders; and around 34,000 children were living in out-of-home care. This report contains comprehensive information relating to state and territory child protection and support services, and the characteristics of Australian children within the child protection system.

### **Snapshot 2009: Children and young people in Queensland**

[www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/resources/publications/snapShot/snapShot09.html](http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/resources/publications/snapShot/snapShot09.html)

Snapshot 2009, the seventh in the Commission's Snapshot series, draws together data from a wide range of sources to compile an up-to-date picture of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland.

### **Cyber Smart Kids (Australian Broadcasting Authority)**

[www.cybersmartkids.com.au/](http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au/)

Young person's guide to safe surfing the Internet. Includes tips for parents and online resources for teachers.

### **Internet Safety (Australian Child Protection Clearinghouse)**

[www.aifs.gov.au/nch/resources/internetsafety.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/resources/internetsafety.html)

Information on a selection of sites covering Internet safety issues and guidelines for parents of children and young people.