A FOSTER HOME
FOR
ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN
OF THE PASSAMAQUODDY TRIBE

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William E. George

NEW HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE

George, William E.
FINAL PROJECT REPORT,

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A. DEFINITION OF PROBLEM.

The National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect reported 2.6 million incidents of maltreatment in 1990 in the United States. Of these, 20 percent were physically abused; 15 percent were sexually abused; and the remainder were neglected children cases. It is estimated that 10 percent of pediatric patients examined in hospital emergency rooms for treatment are child abuse victims. Approximately 4,000 of the incidents resulted in death, it is one of the leading causes of death among young children; only sudden infant death syndrome and accidents out-rank child abuse.¹

Child abuse, a disease, is "a pattern of abnormal parent-child interactions" that results in non-accidental injuries

"to a child physically, emotionally, sexually, or from neglect." Non-accidental physical injuries includes bruises or fractures from severe beatings, poisonings from overmedications and alcohol, burns from water immersions or cigarettes. Brain damage and subdural hematoma may be produced from the trauma. Sexual molestation and exploitation of a child for adult sexual gratification, includes exhibitionism, rape, incest, "and fondling. "Emotional abuse includes unreasonable parental behavior to a child; unreasonable demands being placed on a child to perform beyond its capacities; verbal attacks; constant belittling; or withholding or withdrawing love, support, or guidance. Neglect includes failure to provide a child with basic necessities of life (food, housing, clothing, hygiene, or medical care)." The lack of concern by the parents is obvious in most instances. In all forms of abuse, a child frequently acts fearful of parents or adults in general.

The child abuser comes from any "ethnic, geographic, religious, occupational, educational, or socio-economic group." There are certain indices common to parents who abuse children. First, the abuser when a child was probably abused; corporal punishment was undoubtingly part of parenting during rearing. Second, the abuser is normally known to the abused.


3 Ibid.

Third, a type of crisis is present in most cases that can cause stress in the family.  

A report by Helfer and Kempe states that 90 percent of the abusive parents can be treated if given considerable support over a period of time. However, 10 percent of abusive parents "are mentally disturbed to the extent that they can not be easily treated, and their children should be removed from the family home."  

The residents of Maine are as violent as anywhere else in the nation; however, they are not any more violent than the rest of the country. There were 8,625 reported child and neglect cases in 1989 in Maine. 1,441 of the 8,625 incidents were sexual. Annually, the State of Maine has 2 or 3 child abuse deaths.

There were 56 cases of child abuse and neglect in 1990 at Pleasant Point Reservation, the project area of this paper. Each case was investigated and cause was found to place the child under Tribal custody.

Outstanding socio-economic problems that impact the Indian family and Tribe which influence the rate of child abuse include:

1.) Alcoholism haunts almost all Reserve families; its misuse by past and present Tribal members of those children under Tribal custody has been devastating. A majority of the child victims cite alcohol use as a leading factor in maltreatment. Over 100 Passamaquoddy children were placed for adoption or for foster care in the last 40 years because of the adverse effects of alcohol. Neglect of children resulted in placement; adequate care for basic living was not being provided. 98 percent of the placements were to non-Indian families.

2.) Marijuana and cocaine addiction is present. Besides causing chemical dependency, scarce money is used that could go towards support of children. As many are alcoholics in addition, a compound problem is evident. Short-term impacts on child rearing are adverse; long-term effects are unknown.

3.) Housing supply is insufficient for the population of Pleasant Point. Though 26 additional single-family housing units are under construction, a need for a 126 additional units has been identified. Two families are sharing housing space in many instances.

4.) Untreated family members who have been previously abused themselves as children unknowingly practice the same abuse tactics on their young. The generation to generation pattern of transmission can be identified. 8

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8 Pleasant Point Child Welfare Department, Pleasant Point Reservation, Perry, Maine, Interview, September 24, 1990.
B. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

The project goal is to stop and prevent child abuse and neglect where possible at Pleasant Point Reservation by providing a safe home that assures safety for the abused and neglected children under Tribal custody and providing treatment programs for those involved.

First objective is to provide a safe home for 14 children that are in the high-risk category by using an existing Tribal house or a leased residence that is nearby in the present year.

Second objective is to launch programs for treatment that can help the concerned abused and abusive persons in the present year.

Third objective is to meet the remaining need with trained staff in new construction or substantial rehabilitated residence with treatment programs in Year 3.

It is proposed that the foster care facility be owned and operated by the Passamaquoddy Tribe. Because a percentage of the existing abuse cases are sexual, all have expressed urgency in addressing the identified problems.
C. PUBLIC EDUCATION STEPS TAKEN TO ACCOMPLISH THE OBJECTIVES.

The following steps were taken to mobilize public awareness to the child abuse problem:

1.) Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. A conference in 1990 was conducted on the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Appendix A) for Tribal officials, Department heads, and interested Tribal members. 38 members attended the all-day session. Stressed was the placement order of preference for adoption and foster care. The order of preference given: First, to a member of the child's extended family. Second, to a foster home specified by the child's tribe. Third, to an Indian foster home. Fourth, to an institution for children operated by an Indian organization.

In addition, the setting for foster care placement must:
- be the least restrictive and most approximate a family.
- meet the child's special needs within reasonable proximity to child's own home.

2. Tribal Court Powers. In 1990, a series of hearings were held on the pending Constitution for the Reserve that was later adopted. Included was a session for interested Tribal members on the powers of the Tribal Judiciary (Tribal Court). The role of the Court on the placement of a Passamaquoddy child in a foster home was explained by the Tribal lawyer.
3. Child Welfare Department. The protocols used by the Child Welfare Department relative to placement of Passamaquoddy children in abuse or neglect cases were presented to the Governor and Council in 1990.

4. Ms Victoria Iron-Graves, Red Lake Indian Reservation, Redby, Minnesota, presented a two-day conference that cited the need to provide solutions to the child abuse problem, October, 1990. (Appendix B).

5. An ad hoc committee of concerned Tribal members was formed to establish a foster home facility for Passamaquoddy children in late 1990. A foster home project was sanctioned in which ways of providing a foster home could be met.

6. Recommendations for a foster home were given to the Tribal Governor and Council. One site, Route 190 Tribal owned residence was designated for foster home purposes.

7. Work program for foster home project was amended (Appendix C).

8. Budget was prepared and adopted (Appendix D).

D. RESULTS.

In mid-1991, the Tribal Governor and Council designated a Tribal-owned residence on Route 190 for foster home purposes. However, operating funds were not committed - the Tribal Governing Body also placed all new programs on hold concurrently until return on Tribal investments could be ascertained. It became clear to all concerned that funding for operating had to be from federal sources when low return on Tribal investments occurred. Immediately, preparation of grant applications for a foster home under Title II, Indian Child Welfare Act and PL 93-68, Indian Self-Determination Act were commenced at that time.

The package of the foster home was remade to include three options:

Option 1 - a Tribal-owned residence on Route 190.
Option 2 - an acquisition of an existing off-Reservation residence.
Option 3 - a lease of an existing off-Reservation residence.

Application of grant funding sought. Action is anticipated in the next 90 days including reconsideration of Option 1 because a Tribal family resides and refuses to move from the Route 190 residence.
E. ANALYSIS.

A review of the standing of the foster home project shows that solid support exists. Funding approval by BIA is expected. The endeavor will be implemented on a revised schedule. To insure success, the following steps by those involved are recommended:

1. That land acquisition funding be authorized to purchase an existing residence nearby if resistance continues on the Route 190 occupants.
2. That leasing an existing residence if warranted in lieu of 1. above.
3. That PL 93-68, Indian Self-Determination Act, funding be used for operating budget.
4. That a monitoring and evaluation report be made after Year 1.
5. That the foster home facility serve as a model for other unmet needs; ie, an after-care facility for adolescents recovering from substance abuse.
6. That placements from other Maine Tribes be permitted as space is available in the foster home facility.

One undertaking a similar project in the future should have funds obligated at inception. Such obligation of funding would be available upon acceptance of project report.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


GENERAL REFERENCES


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