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Family Strengths: A Long Tradition

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The *Journal of Family Strengths* (JFS) is honored to be part of the celebration of the 100 year anniversary of the founding of the Children's Bureau since this agency has done much to advance the cause of child and family well-being over the past century of its operation. JFS, along with its predecessor, the *Journal of Family Preservation*, share a common set of principles with the Children's Bureau, built around home and family being the ideal place for children to grow and develop and the idea that prevention of problems is far more optimal than treatment efforts after the child is exposed to, experiences, and suffers the consequence of the problem. These are the principles on which this Journal was founded over 15 years ago.

And surprisingly, growing out of the White House Conference of 1909, they are the principles on which the Children's Bureau was founded 100 years ago. Remarkably, we see the ongoing disconnect between the fact that most professionals, opinion leaders and community members readily state that families and thus, children in our society are among our greatest treasures and the obvious fact that policies, programs and services for vulnerable children and families across a wide set of developmental domains are inadequate and dramatically miss the mark in terms of helping children and families deal with challenges that they confront in our modern society today.

The articles presented in this issue, under the inspired leadership of guest editors Dean Katherine Briar-Lawson and Dr. Nancy Claiborne, reflect the outstanding evidence-based research which may be used by policymakers to achieve the goals of the White House Conference through the implementation of the Children's Bureau programs.

Acknowledging the celebration of an important organization's century mark, historical reflection is appropriate to see where we've been and where we might go together over the next 100 years. With the 200 attendees of the 1909 Conference, President Theodore Roosevelt went on to state:

"As to the children who for sufficient reasons must be removed from their own homes, or who have no homes, it is desirable that, if normal in mind and body and not requiring special training, they should be cared for in families whenever practicable.... Such homes should be selected by a most careful process of investigation, carried on by skilled agents through personal investigation and with due regard to the religious faith of the child. After children are placed in homes, adequate visitation, with careful consideration of the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual training and development

of each child on the part of the responsible home-finding agency is essential.”

“The sending of children of any age or class to almshouses is an unqualified evil, and should be forbidden everywhere by law, with suitable penalty for its violation.”

“It is a sound public policy that the State, through its duly authorized representative, should inspect the work of all agencies which care for dependent children...”

“A bill is pending in Congress for the establishment of a federal children's bureau to collect and disseminate information affecting the welfare of children. In our judgment the establishment of such a bureau is desirable, and we earnestly recommend the enactment of the pending measure...” (Children’s Welfare League of America, 2012)

The foresight of Theodore Roosevelt's words, the compassion for public policy impacting children and families, and the ability to pass what was a groundbreaking piece of legislation might be difficult to imagine today. However we should never give up on Roosevelt's vision, nor on an updated vision. We still must speak up for enlightened public policy for our children, we must continue to discuss the many avenues to creating opportunity for all of our children, but most importantly we must believe and understand that often it is up to us to empower agencies like the Children's Bureau to serve as a compass and a significant helping hand for children in America.

The articles contained in this commemorative issue document the impact that the Children’s Bureau has and continues to exert in this area of child and family strengthening. It remains our hope at JFS that through the circulation of these articles celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Children’s Bureau that our collective resolve to promote child and family well-being will remain strong, undaunted in the face of recurring challenges and that change can still take place for families and children for the next 100 years by building on the strengths of our families and what hopefully will be an obvious national commitment to achieve this attainable goal.

The next century will undoubtedly bring a very new set of real challenges for family and child well-being. Are we up to the task? Do we have the leadership equivalent of a Teddy Roosevelt? It is our belief that more, much more, needs to be accomplished. Those new ideas needed to act upon often begin in the online pages of journals like ours. Our hope is to continue to attract riveting ideas and interested academic and policy-

focused readers. Here is to the next one hundred years. They will not be easy.

References

Child Welfare League of America (2012). The History of White House Conferences on Children and Youth. Retrieved from <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/whitehouseconfhistory.pdf>