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New Name, New Format, New Publisher, Same Principles and Values

Alvin Sallee

Center for Family Strengths, Univeristy of Houston-Downtown, salleea@uhd.edu

Angelo P. Giardino

Texas Children's Health Plan, apgiardi@texaschildrens.org

Robert D. Sanborn

CHILDREN AT RISK, sanborn@childrenatrisk.org

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It is rare when an institution has the opportunity for rebirth or at the very least a major makeover. This issue of the *Journal of Family Strengths* is that opportunity, as the *Family Preservation Journal* is renewed and revived under a new name and a new format. Still keen on being a definitive record on developments in family strengths and parenting, the *Journal* is devoted to presenting theory, practice and evaluation articles on the strengths perspective in family preservation practice, all to assure and improve services and programs that promote and sustain family systems. The *Journal's* goal is to facilitate interchange among researchers, policymakers, family workers, supervisors, agencies and educators, and ultimately, to promote research, evaluation, and information dissemination for the best in family-centered practice. This emphasis has applications to service delivery in the fields of child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice and intellectual disabilities. There is additional relevance to education, health care, elder care, and other social welfare arenas.

The *Family Preservation Journal* was first published in 1995; this current volume marks the *Journal's* evolution from a traditional print to a fully online format. The content continues to feature evidence based, family-centered practice, informed by research. Eddie Bowers Publishing (www.eddiebowerspublishing.com) has graciously allowed the Texas Medical Center Library and CHILDREN AT RISK to publish online all of the back issues of the *Family Preservation Journal*. This venture is a partnership among an academic institution (the University of Houston-Downtown, Center for Family Strengths), a research and advocacy organization (CHILDREN AT RISK), and a medical center (the Texas Medical Center Library).

As an online journal we now have the advantage of reaching a wider audience and more quickly disseminating the *Journal's* contents. The online format also allows for a more interactive reading experience, including links to videos, interactive charts or online resources.

Few would question the important role the family plays in nurturing children and building strong communities, yet as Giardino and Sanborn point out in the *Journal of Applied Research on Children*, "Despite a great deal of explicit affirmation for the value of families in our society, we are struck by the reoccurring failure to implement change" (2010). The *Journal of Family Strengths* is a forum to present evidence and practice based methods utilizing partnerships with families to strengthen family units and communities. The research and evidence circulated by the *Journal of Family Strengths* enhances the opportunities for meaningful change in policy and practice.

Everyone has a family and most have strong opinions about the family's function. The concept and tasks of the family are voiced from widely differing political and religious viewpoints. Discussions are complicated by multiple definitions of family and the role it does or should play in an individual's life and in society. Families face many issues involving mental health, physical health, poverty, violence, substance abuse, crime, developmental/intellectual challenges, and maltreatment in all forms. The *Journal of Family Strengths* will continue to be guided by a set of principles and values which support the family unit as the critical resource for insuring the safety and development of children. Growing out of the definitional issues of the early 1990s regarding family preservation (also known as family-centered, family-based, wraparound, family-focused and family strengths), the results of two Delphi studies with practice and policy experts in the field formed the basis of the *Journal's* underlying principles.

1. Children need their families and with few exceptions are better protected, assessed, and developed within their own biological families.
2. Families are experts on the problems and strengths within their own families and as such are regarded as partners in the helping process. Families define themselves (whether it is an extended family, gay and lesbian, a clan, an elderly person or other). Culture and heritage are viewed as strengths of each unique family and serve as foundations for many intervention strategies.
3. To best keep families together it is critical to work from a strengths perspective, understanding that most parents want to parent and most families have the potential for change and want to change for the better. Workers provide behavioral confirmation of their respect for and sincere belief in the dignity of individual family members and the family unit.
4. Workers use family-focused theory, research, and policies as the structures for helping. Whenever possible, the family is the unit of intervention rather than isolated individuals.
5. Policies and social programs are family-driven, from practical practice such as access to unanticipated policy impacts (Ronnau & Sallee, 1992; Newlin, 1997).

Family Strengths practice must be fully informed by evidence. As the articles in this issue illustrate, the research methodologies may vary, but the efforts and rigor to document effective practice do not. Many forms of

family-centered practice are agreed upon by most family-serving practitioners and researchers, but their areas of difference and the basis for the lack of agreement are complex (Giardino & Sanborn, 2010; Zimmerman, 2001). It is this area of complexity which we hope to address through articles, commentaries and editorials in the *Journal of Family Strengths*.

We wish to thank the authors who evidenced their faith in us and our institutions by submitting their work. We thank the editorial board and the guest editors for their guidance and careful review of each article to assure a strengths perspective. The editorial staff at CHILDREN AT RISK, led by Caroline Holcombe, and the staff of the Texas Medical Center library, led by Kate Krause, have effectively guided the review process.

We are very fortunate to include in this edition editorials from one of the leaders in the field for over two decades, Commissioner David Berns, and from a nationally known leader in higher education and the leader of the University of Houston-Downtown, President William V. Flores.

Finally, we thank you, the reader, whether practitioner, policymaker, program designer or family member, for all you do each day to support children and families. Building on nearly 20 years of publication, we at the *Journal of Family Strengths* are pleased to continue to contribute to the knowledge of improving the lives of children and families. Please let us know how we are doing. We welcome your engagement in this multifaceted arena dedicated to providing what is best for children and families.

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