

1984

## Foster Parent Training Program: Evaluation Report 1983-1984

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THE CENTER FOR APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA



FOSTER PARENT TRAINING PROGRAM  
EVALUATION REPORT 1983-1984

Co-Sponsored by the Nebraska  
Department of Social Services

and

Center for Applied Urban Research  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

June, 1983 - June, 1984

Carole M. Davis  
Program Coordinator



Center for Applied Urban Research  
University of Nebraska at Omaha



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The past two years I have had the good fortune to be associated with the Foster Parent Training Program through the Nebraska Department of Social Services. As project coordinator I have had the opportunity to know and work with many fine people who have a genuine interest in the lives and futures of Nebraska's troubled children.

Foremost among those who deserve credit for the overall success of the program are our facilitators who worked evenings and weekends, often in addition to their regular jobs, to make training available: Teresa Hawk, Amy Franklin, Marilyn Schultz, Diana Kraus, Kaye Long, Darlene Pennington, Nancy Bare, Brenda Coonrod, Karen Singsaas, Judy Riddle, Shirley Calta, Sherry Hall, Judi Pedersen, Kathleen Sorenson, Carole Muetting, Marilyn Fox, Tim Ryberg, Maggie Miranda, Forrest Lien, Marquita Wilcher, and Lou Staroski.

Special thanks to the over 1,000 foster parents who saw value in our training and who on their own initiative took their time to attend. Hopefully, they gained valuable knowledge that will serve them in the difficult job of caring for someone else's children.

Many thanks to Gloria Shattler-Mueller and Bev Piper, NDSS staff members, for their enduring support and cooperation. Their enthusiasm and encouragement made the past two years most enjoyable.

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Those of us at the Center for Applied Urban Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha wish NDSS continued success in their endeavors to train Nebraska foster parents.

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FOSTER PARENT TRAINING PROGRAM  
EVALUATION REPORT 1983-84

Introduction

Over the past two years, the Foster Parent Training project, in close cooperation with the Department of Social Services, has been successful in training over 1,000 foster parents and caseworkers in the Basic and Adolescent curricula. A statewide network capable of providing on-going support to local foster parents has been developed. In addition to the 16 regional trainers, over 55 local people interested in foster care have participated as co-trainers. The involvement of other local resource people such as judges, counselors, caseworkers, and attorneys has increased the number involved in training even more. The following report presents a summary of the delivery plan, the year's activities, and the results of the evaluation of the Basic and Adolescent courses.

Procedures

1. Training Delivery System

A central office was continued in Omaha to manage the project, to develop a newsletter, to provide and supervise consultants, to evaluate the program, to supervise and monitor the regional facilitators, and to provide technical assistance. The state-wide network, established in 1982-83, was continued with some adjustments.

A. The majority of regional trainers recruited in 1982 remained with the project. All trainers in Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4 and one in Region 5 were continued. Two new Region 5 trainers were recruited. In order to provide for a greater utilization of training talent, eliminate duplication of effort, and provide for more systematic recruitment of trainees, a cooperative arrangement for metropolitan Omaha (Region 6) was proposed. A cadre of trainers was utilized from already organized training units in Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, and Dodge Counties and the resource development unit of the Department of Social Services. The trainers for Region 6 who made up the metropolitan Omaha training cadre were employees of either (1) the Nebraska Department of Social Services, (2) the Omaha Field Office of NDSS, or (3) the Papillion Office of NDSS. Because of their commitment to the project goals, these trainers worked with the Foster Parent Project in addition to their regular employment. In all, approximately 16 persons were available to provide training on a city and regional basis. Development of interagency communication and harmony facilitated the common goal of training the majority of foster parents in Region 6. This arrangement also eliminated duplication of efforts since training is mandatory in the Omaha local office of NDSS. More importantly, a local foster care network was developed that has the potential to serve as a resource for other NDSS programs and/or other state



Is it Legal? Rights and Responsibilities of Foster  
 Parents  
 Children's Rights  
 Surviving Separation  
 Helping Everyone Adjust  
 Understanding the Puzzle of Child Abuse  
 Fostering the Abused Child.

#### B. Fostering the Adolescent Curriculum

Each regional trainer made the Fostering the Adolescent course available to all foster parents and caseworkers who had completed the Basic course over the past four years as well as any others interested in the training. Since 75 percent of children in foster care are adolescents, materials needed to be adequate for both foster parents and caseworkers in Nebraska. The previously developed Fostering the Adolescent course was offered with the modifications mentioned under "developmental efforts" below.

The Fostering the Adolescent curriculum covered the following 10 topics:

Introduction and What is a Foster Teen All About?  
 Effective Communication  
 Problem Solving and Rules: Limits and Consequences  
 An Ounce of Prevention  
 Home, School, and Community  
 Sexuality  
 Self-Esteem  
 The Total Teen  
 Drugs and Alcohol  
 Hey! What About Me?

#### 3. Developmental Efforts

In order to strengthen the Fostering the Adolescent curriculum, it was modified with supplemental materials

developed by CAUR as a contractor during the extension of the 1982-83 contract. Under the supervision of the training coordinator, the Adolescent curriculum was modified by Diana Kraus as consultant. She is an experienced trainer and also a foster parent.

Areas in which the curriculum required supplementation or modification were drugs and alcohol and human sexuality. Modifications in some other areas were also necessary. This determination was made in conjunction with the NDSS project monitors, the training coordinator, and the project coordinator after consultation with social scientists experienced in the area of adolescent studies. Several nationally recognized professionals were consulted, e.g., (Foster Cline, Claudia Jewett, Jean Illsley Clarke) One of the concerns of CAUR was to make certain the information on chemical dependency and human sexuality was consistent with the latest research and with a family systems concept. Requests for the Adolescent curriculum have come from several states and as far away as Australia.

#### 4. Preservice Training Institute

The content of the modified Adolescent course was presented to the trainer-facilitators in an intensive three-day workshop held in Omaha June 21-23, 1983. Trainers went through all of the modules and were given instruction on how to replicate the group experience and techniques. Each trainer presented a module of the curriculum which gave everyone valuable input on how they might handle various techniques and group experiences. All of the training was

conducted in a manner consistent with principles of effective adult education. Jean Illsley Clarke presented her workshop, Self-Esteem: A Family Affair, on June 21. Evaluations were very positive, and some of her parenting materials were incorporated into the Adolescent curriculum with her permission.

#### 5. Implementation of Training

Commencing in July, 1983, each regional trainer began making the Basic and Adolescent curricula available to foster parents and/or caseworkers throughout their regions.

Approximately 40 training sites were selected based on the location and distribution of foster parents. The courses were conducted 54 times for 1,000 foster parents and 250 caseworkers in the state (figures provided by the Nebraska Department of Social Services).

CAUR recommended that both courses be taught, if at all possible, over a two-day period rather than in weekly sessions. Not all participants attended every session in a workshop series. However, regional trainers, working as consultants to CAUR, continued to have the flexibility to decide the best format in cooperation with the foster parents and caseworkers in a particular site. In all, 15 Basic workshops were held in 11 locations around the state. Thirty-nine Adolescent workshops were held in 30 different locations. (See Table 1 and Map 1.) A total of 500 foster parents and caseworkers were trained during 1983-84.

# MAP 1

## TRAINING SITES FOR FOSTER CARE EDUCATION DELIVERY

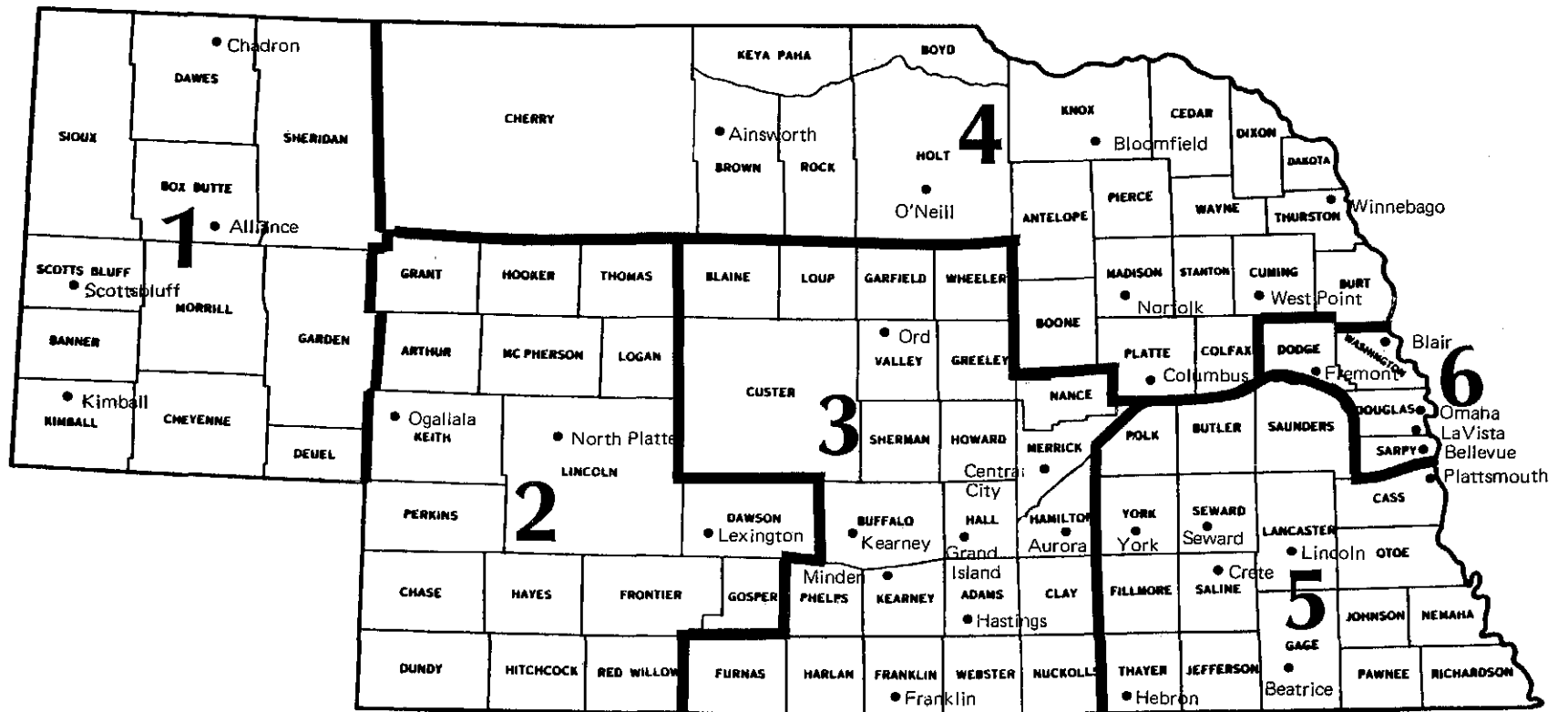


TABLE 1

## WORKSHOPS AND LOCATIONS

Trainer	Region	Date	Type	Number Attending
<u>REGION 1</u>				
Schultz	Scottsbluff	9/6,20,27 – 10/4,11	Adolescent	20
	Kimball	11/12	Adolescent	4
	Scottsbluff	1/23,31 – 2/7,14,21	Basic	8
	Scottsbluff	6/9	Adolescent	7
Hawk	Alliance	9/17	Adolescent	2
	Chadron	3/24	Adolescent	4
	Chadron	6/9	Basic	3
<u>REGION 2</u>				
Kraus	North Platte	10/4,11,18,25	Adolescent	12
	Lexington	10/3	Adolescent	6
	Ogallala	2/1,8,15,22,29	Adolescent	7
	North Platte	4/10,17,24 – 5/1,8	Adolescent	8
<u>REGION 3</u>				
Long	Grand Island	9/10,11	Adolescent	5
	Minden	9/24,25	Basic	2
	Franklin	10/22	Adolescent	6
	Central City	10/29	Adolescent	8
	Grand Island	11/19	Adolescent	5
	Aurora	12/3	Adolescent	7
	Kearney	1/28	Adolescent	12
	Grand Island	2/11	Adolescent	15
	Hastings	3/31	Adolescent	15
	Ord	6/2	Adolescent	7
<u>REGION 4</u>				
Pennington	West Point	9/9,10	Basic	10
	Dakota City	9/23,24	Adolescent	3
	O'Neill	9/30 – 10/6	Adolescent	7
	Ainsworth	10/21,22	Adolescent	4
	Winnebago	11/4,5	Adolescent	6
	Norfolk	11/11,12	Adolescent	6
	Columbus	1/27,28	Basic	3
	Bloomfield	2/24,25	Adolescent	6
	Norfolk	6/8,9	Adolescent	9

TABLE 1 – Continued

Trainer	Region	Date	Type	Number Attending
<u>REGION 5</u>				
Bare	Beatrice	9/13,20,27 – 10/4	Basic	19
	Beatrice	10/3,10,18,24	Adolescent	22
Singsass	Lincoln	10/4,18,25 – 11/1	Basic	17
	Lincoln	11/7,14,21,28	Adolescent	15
Coonrod	Hebron	9/26,27,29 – 10/3,4	Adolescent	11
	Seward	10/10,11,13,18,20	Adolescent	13
	Crete	10/24,25	Basic	11
	York	11/7,8,10	Adolescent	14
<u>REGION 6</u>				
Lien	Omaha	9/24 – 10/1	Adolescent	7
Wilcher	Omaha	9/24 – 10/1	Adolescent	8
Pedersen	Blair	1/18,21	Adolescent	9
Mueting	Omaha	8/23,30 – 9/6,13,20,27	Basic	17
	Omaha	10/5 – 11/19	Adolescent	9
	Omaha	1/18,25 – 4/10,17,24 – 5/1,8,15	Basic	10
	Omaha	5/24,31 – 6/7,14,21	Basic	11
	Lincoln	6/9,12	Adolescent	0
Fox	LaVista	9/24,10	Basic	23
	Bellevue	4/7,14	Adolescent	8
	Plattsmouth	6/2,9	Basic	2
Riddle	Fremont	1/23,30	Basic	15
Ryberg	Bellevue	5/12,19	Adolescent	4
Staroski	Omaha	5/12,19	Adolescent	9
	Omaha	6/7,14	Adolescent	15
Total				500
		<u>Basic</u>	<u>Adolescent</u>	<u>Total</u>
Number of attendees		165	335	500
Number of workshops		15	39	54
Number of workshop sites		11	30	41

## 6. Methodology

The training delivery system for 1983-84 continued to include both interactive study and outreach and the development of an overall training system for Nebraska foster parents, foster parent caseworkers, and resource development persons. Seven training components were carried out for this project.

### A. Modification of the Adolescent Curriculum

The ten supplemented and modified modules were delivered primarily to participants who already were trained in the Basic course. However, anyone wanting to attend these workshops was allowed to do so.

### B. Adaptation of the Basic Curriculum

Nine of the 12 modules as recommended by NDSS continued to be delivered to new foster parents and caseworkers.

### C. Co-trainers

Persons who were either a foster parent, a caseworker, or a resource development person who had been previously trained were recruited to work with regional trainers. Together the regional trainer and co-trainer comprised a training team.

### D. Trainee Recruitment

The recruitment of foster parents and caseworkers continued to be the shared responsibility of the regional trainer, co-trainer, and the project coordinator.

### E. Quarterly Newsletter

Four issues of the Share newsletter were developed and sent to all foster parents and caseworkers to help

sustain and strengthen the foster care network. The mailing lists were supplied by NDSS. (See the Appendix for copies of the newsletters.)

F. Mini-resource Libraries

These were maintained to provide additional resources and information to foster parents interested in supplementing the Adolescent and Basic curricula and were located with each regional trainer. The following resource materials were purchased for the trainers' resource libraries: Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss by Claudia Jewett, Self-Esteem: A Family Affair by Jean Illsley Clarke, Cycles of Power by Pamela Levin Landheer, and Changing Bodies, Changing Minds by Ruth Bell.

G. Resource Consultants

Experts on foster care were available for consultation via telephone and/or site visit as determined by the program coordinator and NDSS monitors.

7. Training Evaluation Plan

Evaluation procedures the second year of the Foster Parent Training program involved the completion of two reaction sheets: 1) Reaction to the Foster Parent Training Workshop and 2) Reaction to the Trainer. (See the Appendix.) These forms were used by participants to evaluate both the Basic and Adolescent courses. Participants were asked to complete the forms at the end of last day or last session of the workshop.



### A. Reaction to the Foster Parent Training Workshops

Participants were asked in part A to indicate whether they agreed with statements regarding the materials and the overall program. Table 2 shows participants' reactions to the Basic workshop. Of the participants responding to question A, 67 percent, compared to 55 percent in 1982-83, strongly agreed that materials presented in the workshop were very helpful to them. Sixty percent of those responding to question 2A, compared to 57 percent in 1982-83, strongly agreed that the material was timely and informative, while 76 percent, compared to 69 percent in 1982-83, strongly agreed they could easily recommend the program to others.

TABLE 2  
PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO MATERIALS AND PROGRAMS  
BASIC WORKSHOPS

	Material Was Very Helpful		Material Was Timely and Informative		I Can Easily Recommend This Program	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	64	67	57	60	72	76
Agree	30	32	36	38	22	23
Disagree	1	1	2	2	1	1
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	95	100	95	100	95	100

TABLE 4

## WORKSHOP TOPICS PARTICIPANTS FOUND MOST VALUABLE

	N=Number of Responses	
	No.	%
Incest	56	12
Discipline	55	11
Problem Solving	43	9
Child Abuse	43	9
Self Esteem	41	9
All the Topics	35	7
Sexuality	28	6
Drugs and Alcohol	26	5
Effective Communication	23	5
Surviving Separation	19	4
Legal Aspects	19	4
Behavior	19	4
Adjusting	15	3
An Ounce of Prevention	10	2
Films	10	2
Working with Agency	9	2
Sharing Feelings	9	2
School and Home and Community	9	2
Listening Skills	6	1
Suicide	5	1
	480	100

In section C, participants were given the opportunity to make suggestions about topics they felt should be added to the Basic and/or Adolescent curricula. Most of the 12 topics mentioned by participants were already incorporated into one or the other of the curricula. At the time of the evaluation some of the participants had not attended both workshops and were unaware the topics were being offered. Examples of mentioned topics included suicide, separation and loss, problem solving, drugs and alcohol, sexuality, and foster parent burnout.

The majority of the topical suggestions made by 1982-83 workshop participants were incorporated into the

Adolescent curriculum developed for the 1983-84 training year. Suggestions included teenagers, teenage suicide, alcohol and drugs, and incest.

In section D participants were asked to give their reactions to the workbooks, visual aids, and meeting room. Tables 5 and 6 present this information.

TABLE 5  
PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO MATERIALS AND MEETING ROOMS  
BASIC WORKSHOPS

	Workbook		Visual Aids		Meeting Room	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	69	75	63	69	50	55
Satisfactory	23	25	27	29	38	42
Unsatisfactory	0	0	2	2	3	3
Totals	92	100	92	100	91	100

The majority of participants attending Basic workshops rated the workbook (75 percent), the visual aids (69 percent), and the meeting rooms (55 percent) as excellent.

TABLE 6  
PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO MATERIALS AND MEETING ROOMS  
ADOLESCENT WORKSHOPS

	Workbook		Visual Aids		Meeting Room	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	86	58	91	60	65	42
Satisfactory	60	41	61	40	88	57
Unsatisfactory	2	1	1	1	1	1
Totals	148	100	153	101	154	100

The majority of participants attending the Adolescent workshops also rated the workbook (58 percent) and visual aids (60 percent) as excellent, although percentage points were lower compared to those received by the Basic course. Meeting rooms were rated as satisfactory by 57 percent of the Adolescent workshops participants.

B. Overall Reactions to the Basic and Adolescent Workshops

Participants were asked to give their overall reactions to the foster parent training workshops. Both the Basic and Adolescent training programs yielded positive results. The response to the Basic workshops indicated a 76 percent excellent rating while another 22 percent rated the program as good. (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7

PARTICIPANTS' OVERALL REACTIONS TO  
THE FOSTER PARENT TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Reaction	Basic		Adolescent	
	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	70	76	121	79
Good	20	22	29	19
Fair	2	2	2	1
Poor	0	0	0	0
Total	92	100	152	99

The responses to the Adolescent workshops indicated a slightly higher excellent response rate of 79 percent. Another 19 percent felt that overall the program was good.

The percentage breakdown for the 1983-84 Basic workshops was identical to that of the 1982-83 Basic workshop overall reaction. The slightly higher positive response rate for the new Adolescent curriculum and the overall high responses to both curricula are encouraging.

C. Should Foster Parent Training Be Mandatory?

Participants' response to whether foster parent training workshops should be mandatory was overwhelmingly positive. (See Table 8.) The Basic workshop respondents were almost exclusively in favor of making the program mandatory with a 98 percent positive response rate. The Adolescent program respondents were almost as agreeable with a 94 percent positive response rate.

TABLE 8

PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO MAKING WORKSHOPS MANDATORY  
FOR ALL FOSTER PARENTS

Reaction	Basic		Adolescent	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	91	98	149	94
No	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>6</u>
Totals	93	100	159	100

Table 9 shows why participants feel foster parents need training.

TABLE 9  
WHY FOSTER PARENTS NEED TRAINING

	Basic		Adolescent	
	N=Number of Responses	%	N=Number of Responses	%
To learn all they can	91	69	132	67
To share ideas and support	12	9	30	15
Differentiate from natural parenting	8	6	10	5
To know what they're getting into	5	4	9	5
To better understand the foster care system	8	6	7	4
To look at all perspectives	6	5	5	2
Other	2	2	5	2
Totals	132	101	198	100

The most frequently mentioned response from participants was "to learn all they can." (Basic, 69 percent; Adolescent, 67 percent). The response was expressed in many different ways. For example, several workshop participants who were foster parents said, "Foster parents always need training because they need help understanding the problems of the foster child and what to look for. Some things are just not realized until they are discussed." Several others said, "Foster parents need help with understanding that every child and family is different and need help learning about the dynamics of

those relationships." Still others stated, "Children deserve the best they can get and learning all you can increases your possibilities for success."

Sharing of ideas and support was the second most frequently mentioned reason given by both Basic (9 percent) and Adolescent (15 percent) for why foster parents need training. For many, sharing also meant working toward a better relationship with their social workers as well as discussing their needs with the trainers and other foster parents.

Foster parents are looking for answers, and the training setting serves as a mechanism for interaction for emotional support and for building a broader knowledge base. One foster parent referred to it as "making friends with people who can help."

#### D. Reaction to the Foster Parent Trainers

Participants were asked to rate their trainers in six areas. This information is presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10

#### PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO TRAINERS IN VARIOUS AREAS BASIC WORKSHOPS

	Class Preparation		Lecture Material		Speaking Ability		Transmit Information		Communication		Answered Willingly	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	59	75	50	63	56	71	62	78	61	77	66	83
Good	20	25	29	38	23	29	17	22	18	23	13	17
Fair	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	79	100	79	101	79	100	79	100	79	100	79	100

The majority of the Basic workshop participants rated their trainers as excellent in each of the six categories. Three-fourths (75 percent) rated the trainers as excellent in terms of class preparation. Participants also rated trainers as excellent in speaking ability (71 percent), transmitting information (79 percent), communication (77 percent), and their willingness to answer questions (83 percent). Only 63 percent of the participants rated the trainers as excellent in terms of lecture materials. Participants rated the trainers from 2 percent to 11 percent higher in 1983-84 than in 1982-83 in each of the various areas with the exception of lecture materials (62 percent in 1982-83). Greater familiarity and added experience with the Basic course may account for the higher rating the second year.

The trainers fared almost as well according to the responses given for the Adolescent workshops in the six areas as shown in Table 11. Nearly three-fourths of the participants responding rated the trainers as excellent in four of the five categories: class preparation (73 percent), speaking ability (75 percent), transmitting information (73 percent), communication (74 percent), answered willingly (81 percent). As with the Basic workshops, participants rated trainers somewhat lower in terms of the lecture materials (63 percent).



TABLE 11  
PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO TRAINERS IN VARIOUS AREAS  
ADOLESCENT WORKSHOPS

	Class Preparation		Lecture Material		Speaking Ability		Transmit Information		Communication		Answered Willingly	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	116	73	100	63	120	75	118	73	119	74	130	81
Good	43	27	56	35	40	25	42	26	41	26	30	19
Fair	1	1	3	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	160	101	159	100	160	100	161	100	161	100	161	101

Note: Percentages do not always add to 100 due to rounding.

In part B of the reaction to the trainer, participants were requested to give their comments on the trainer's outstanding qualities. Table 12 presents the most frequently mentioned qualities compiled from both the Basic and Adolescent workshops.

TABLE 12  
PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS ON TRAINERS' OUTSTANDING QUALITIES

Quality	Basic		Adolescent	
	N=Number of Responses	%	N=Number of Responses	%
Communication skills (rapport)	98	60	148	44
Good personal qualities	33	20	74	22
Knowledgeable	14	9	47	14
Open and honest	10	6	13	3
Practical experience	8	5	47	14
Humor	1	1	13	3
Totals	164	101	342	100

The outstanding quality most frequently mentioned by participants was the trainers' abilities to communicate (Basic, 60 percent; Adolescent, 44 percent). Trainers were reported to be good listeners and to answer questions well, using examples. Trainers were described as having "the ability to bring out the best in the group." Participants commented that the trainers presented the material at a level they could understand and in a respectful manner.

The second most frequently mentioned quality was what was labeled "good personal qualities" of the trainers themselves. (Basic, 20 percent; Adolescent, 22 percent). Participants were impressed with the non-judgmental and accepting attitudes of their trainers. Participants also found trainers to be sincere, empathetic, enthusiastic, and helpful, among other qualities.

The third most frequently mentioned outstanding quality was that trainers were knowledgeable (Basic, 9 percent; Adolescent, 12 percent). Participants reported that the trainers were well-trained, informative, and provided practical ideas and recommendations. Practical experience was also rated in third place by participants in the Adolescent course (14 percent).

Other outstanding qualities mentioned by participants were openness and honesty (Basic, 6 percent; Adolescent, 3 percent) and humor (Basic, 1 percent; Adolescent, 3 percent).

In part B2, participants were asked to make comments about how trainers might improve their workshops. Of the 25 responses received, 10 were concerned with suggestions for changes such as adding more group discussion or eliminating some of the details. Ten responses were aimed at individual trainers, while three dealt with scheduling and smoking, and two were concerned with trainers' lack of technical skills in the use of projectors.

E. Participants' Other Comments

In part B3, participants were given the opportunity to voice any other comments they might have. Table 13 presents this information. Responses for the Basic and Adolescent workshops were combined because of similarities.

TABLE 13

PARTICIPANTS' OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT  
THE BASIC AND ADOLESCENT WORKSHOPS

	N=Number of Responses	%
Praised the workshops	93	65
Expand the workshops	20	14
Time a factor	10	7
Suggestions about format	10	7
Other	9	6
Totals	142	99

The majority of the responses (65 percent) were in praise of the workshops with participants expressing how helpful the training sessions had been to them. Several

said they would encourage others to attend. One foster parent said she had been reluctant to go but had a good experience and was glad she attended.

Another 14 percent suggested that the workshops be expanded to include other professionals such as teachers and judges who might come in contact with foster children but didn't understand the dynamics of their situations. Seven percent commented that time was a factor in that they felt rushed to cover the material and discussion time had to be shortened. Another 7 percent made suggestions concerning the workshop format which included more breaks and having refreshments. Two participants felt the films were outdated.

F. Participants' Reaction to the Trainers

Foster parent trainers received an excellent rating from the majority of participants of both the Basic and Adolescent workshops. Table 14 shows this information. Of the 77 participants responding to the Basic workshop evaluation, 88 percent rated the trainers as excellent and 12 percent rated them as good. A large majority (85 percent) of the participants in the Adolescent workshops rated trainers as excellent, and 15 percent rated them as good.

TABLE 14  
PARTICIPANTS' OVERALL REACTIONS TO TRAINERS

Reaction	Basic		Adolescent	
	No.	%	No.	%
Excellent	68	88	136	85
Good	9	12	24	15
Fair	0	0	0	0
Poor	0	0	0	0
Totals	77	100	160	100

#### 8. Recommendations for the Future

At the close of the 1983-84 project trainers were asked to complete a questionnaire on future planning for foster parent training. The following suggestions were made:

1. Strengthen the program by making it a permanent part of the Department of Social Services with mandatory training for foster parents.
2. Provide a structure within the Department of Social Services to make training of foster parents on-going and not change it every year.
3. Continue using the materials already developed and allow trainers the flexibility to supplement them based on the needs of foster parents in their areas.
4. Build consistency into the program and stop changing it every year and stop spending money on developing new materials every year.
5. Make at least the orientation program mandatory before licensing.
6. Build in once-a-month on-going training for experienced foster parents and monthly classes of basic training for new foster parents.
7. Work more with the biological parents, and emphasize the ultimate goal of reunification to foster parents.

8. Give foster parents an opportunity to be part of the rehabilitation plan.
9. Make training mandatory. The majority of foster parents who attended both the Basic and Adolescent workshops the last two years felt training should be mandatory.
10. Make money available for refreshments and child care during training. "We need foster parents, they don't need us," commented a trainer.
11. Make money available for more facilitators and to pay guest speakers.
12. Train foster parents and staff together instead of separately and require training for both.
13. Examine the way NDSS looks at foster parents. "They are not providers; they are volunteers and need much more support than they receive."
14. Provide on-going training at frequent intervals for the trainers.

Suggestions about curriculum materials were:

1. Overall, use the expertise of the trainers to supplement deficiencies in the curriculum. "No curriculum can ever be perfect, and a fortune could be spent updating and changing it."
2. "The present curriculum is excellent and can be adapted or changed to meet current needs."
3. "Rather than writing new material, reorganize some of the present curriculum and add specific modules from the Creative Learning Child Welfare Curriculum which is a compilation of other materials."
4. "Our Basic materials seem good but perhaps can be cut down to focus in on the more important factors. The green workbook 'looks' threatening."
5. There is a great need to train families to care for children who have been sexually abused.
6. There is a need for materials on fostering the minority child.
7. We could use specialized materials on discipline, fostering the recovering alcoholic, working with the biological parents, suicide, and foster parents "letting go."

As project coordinator over the past two years, I have the general feeling that the coming year should be one of consolidation and building on the previous year's accomplishments.

The following are general suggestions on what this should mean:

1. A statewide training network has been established which should continue to be used.
2. Local resources have been developed which should continue to be used.
3. Training should be mandatory. Foster parents greatly benefit from the training as well as the interaction with others. Those attending ask for more training.
4. Training should be offered on an on-going basis with both Basic and Advanced topics offered.
5. The newsletter should be continued. Although soliciting participation by mail was difficult, feedback from the field was favorable.

## Appendix



# REACTION TO THE FOSTER PARENT TRAINING WORKSHOP

Workshop site \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## A. PLEASE CHECK WHETHER YOU AGREE WITH EACH OF THE STATEMENTS MADE BELOW.

1. The material presented in this program will be very helpful to me.
2. The material presented was timely and informative.
3. I can easily recommend this program to other persons like me.

Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly

## B. WHICH TOPICS DID YOU FIND MOST VALUABLE?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## C. WHICH TOPICS SHOULD BE

ADDED:

WHY:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

DROPPED:

WHY:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## D. CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX TO INDICATE YOUR REACTION TO THE FOLLOWING:

Workbook(s)

Visual aids

Meeting room

Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

## E. INDICATE YOUR OVERALL REACTION TO THE PROGRAM BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER ON THE SCALE BELOW:

12   11   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1  
Excellent                      Good                      Fair                      Poor

## F. DO YOU FEEL THAT TRAINING SIMILAR TO THIS WORKSHOP SHOULD BE REQUIRED OF ALL FOSTER PARENTS?

yes

no

## G. IF YES, WHY DO YOU THINK FOSTER PARENTS NEED TRAINING?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## REACTION TO THE TRAINER

Workshop site \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### A. PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. Class preparation
2. Lecture material
3. Speaking ability
4. Ability to transmit practical information
5. Ability to communicate concepts and emphasize key points
6. Answered questions willingly and understandably

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

### B. PLEASE COMMENT AS REQUESTED BELOW:

1. Instructor's outstanding qualities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Instructor could improve if he/she: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### C. INDICATE YOUR OVERALL REACTION TO THE INSTRUCTOR BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER ON THE SCALE BELOW:

12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Excellent			Good			Fair			Poor		



SEPTEMBER, 1983  
Volume 5, Number 1

# SHARE

## Nebraska Foster Parent Training Program

### Foster Parent Training Continues in 1983-84



Being  
a  
Parent

### It's the Most Difficult Job You Will Ever Have

Speaking for Children has announced that the Parent Assistance Line (PAL) of Omaha has expanded its service to include the entire state of Nebraska.

The Parent Assistance Line is a confidential listening and referral service that deals with all kinds of child related problems. Trained volunteers answer phone calls and offer supportive listening in times of crisis, frustration, loneliness, and day to day stress of family living.

With the addition of a statewide directory of resources prepared by Speaking for Children, a project of the Junior League of Lincoln, the toll free WATS line will enable callers from anywhere in Nebraska to have access to

this support. PAL will also be able to give information on child related services available in or close to the caller's community. Callers are assured of strict anonymity and confidentiality.

Volunteers are available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. Those calling from the Omaha area should continue to call 397-9909.

PAL hopes to become a vital link in Nebraska's effort to deal with child abuse and neglect, its prevention, its causes, and its cure.

If foster parents have any questions or would like further information, please call the PARENT ASSISTANCE LINE, 1-800-642-9909.

Training will again be available throughout 1983-84. Many of you who attended the workshops for the Basic course during the past year expressed an interest in seeing the training continued. The Center for Applied Urban Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and our trainers statewide are pleased that the Nebraska Department of Social Services has again funded such an important project.

Plans for next year will be double duty. The Basic course will continue to be offered to new foster parents or for those of you who missed it last year. A newly updated and supplemented Adolescent course will also be offered. Since 75 percent of the state wards are adolescents, this course should be very helpful to a great many of you.

A statewide network of trainers was established last year. With another year's experience under our belts, we're all looking forward to getting started with this year's Foster Parent Training Program.

Approximately 55 workshops will be held throughout 36 different sites around the state between August, 1983 and April, 1984.

#### How Do I Sign Up For Training?

A flyer containing details along with a registration card will be sent out prior to each workshop. Watch for it in your mail. Workshop dates are subject to change, but we will stay with this training schedule as closely as possible. All training is free, and you will receive a Participants Manual which will be yours to keep.

#### What Topics Will The Training Cover?

The training will cover ten topics which were chosen by experienced foster parents and caseworkers in Nebraska.  
(Continued on page 2)

**REGION 6 (Douglas and Sarpy Counties)**

<b><u>Trainer</u></b>	<b><u>Workshop Site</u></b>	<b><u>Course</u></b>	<b><u>Dates and Times</u></b>
<b>Carole Muetting</b> (402) 444-6265 Nebraska Department of Social Services SONA Building 5211 S. 31 Street Omaha, NE 68107	1215 So. 42nd St. Omaha, NE	Basic	Six Tuesdays 7:15-9:30 p.m. each evening. August 23 and 30 and September 6, 13, 20, and 27
<b>Forrest Lien</b> (402) 554-2189 Nebraska Department of Social Services State Office Building, 3rd Floor 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE 68102	Peter Kiewit Conference Center 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE	Adolescent	Two Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. September 24 and October 1
<b>Marquita Welcher</b> (402) 554-2084 Nebraska Department of Social Services State Office Building, 3rd Floor 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE 68102	Peter Kiewit Conference Center 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE	Adolescent	Two Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. September 24 and October 1
<b>Marilyn Fox</b> (402) 339-4294 Nebraska Department of Social Services 1215 Golden Gate Drive Papillion, NE 68046	8110 Parkview Blvd. Papillion, NE	Basic	Two Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. both days. September 24 and October 1
<b>Carole Muetting</b>	1215 So. 42nd St. Omaha, NE	Adolescent	Seven Wednesdays from 7:15 to 9:30 p.m. each evening. October 5, 12, 19, 26 and November 2, 9, 16.
<b>Maggie Miranda</b> (402) 554-3862 Nebraska Department of Social Services State Office Building, 3rd Floor 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE 68102	Peter Kiewit Conference Center 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE	Basic	November weekend (dates to be announced)
<b>Marilyn Fox</b>	8110 Parkview Blvd. Papillion, NE	Adolescent	January weekend (dates to be announced)
<b>Carole Muetting</b>	1215 So. 42nd St. Omaha, NE	Basic	January—Six weekly sessions (dates to be announced)
<b>Florence Davis</b> (402) 554-2081 Nebraska Department of Social Services State Office Building, 3rd Floor 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE 68102	Peter Kiewit Conference Center 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE	Basic	February (dates to be announced)
<b>Marquita Wilcher</b>	Peter Kiewit Conference Center 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE	Adolescent	March weekend (dates to be announced)
<b>Maggie Miranda</b>	Peter Kiewit Conference Center 1313 Farnam Omaha, NE	Basic	April (dates to be announced)
<b>Carole Muetting</b>	1215 So. 42nd St. Omaha, NE	Basic	April (dates to be announced)
<b>Tim Ryberg</b> (402) 339-4294 Nebraska Department of Social Services 1215 Golden Gate Drive Papillion, NE 68046	8110 Parkview Blvd. Papillion, NE	Adolescent	May (dates to be announced)

# Can you communicate with adolescents?

Foster Parents or parents with teens how would you answer these questions?

What areas are of most concern to you in relation to the adolescent(s) in your home?

How have you handled communication about these problems in the past?

If you have been dissatisfied with communication on these problems, what changes do you feel need to be made?

Communication is the key for accomplishing parental goals. Above anything else it is the central process in family relations. The process is very complex and communication errors often occur. For example, (1) a person cannot not communicate, (2) the message sent is not necessarily the message received, (3) we mix facts and opinion, (4) we send double messages, and (5) no two people see things exactly alike.

Really effective communication skills must be learned. You are not born with them. However, anyone can learn to communicate better. Being aware of the most common communication errors is the first step.

Here are some pointers that should help.

1. Remember, you cannot not communicate. Your facial expression, your tone of voice, gestures, posture, and mood are all actions that give out a message.
2. Check to see whether or not you were making yourself understood. Sometimes we need to ask the other person what message he/she received. Sometimes we even need to paraphrase in order to check out our understanding of a message. This means merely repeating in your own words what you think the other was saying.
3. Keep in mind the difference between fact and opinion. Most things we say are our opinions, our ideas, our feelings, and our preferences. A fact is something that is true for everyone. When we speak as though we have the "facts," we hinder the communication process because A) we tend to reject others' points of view as wrong or bad when they disagree with ours; B) we become close-minded to new information; C) others don't want to discuss issues with a know-it-all. The result is bad in terms of communication.
4. Be careful about sending double messages. People get messages not only from what you say but how you say it. The receivers of the message can become confused, frustrated, or even angry because they don't know which message to respond to when what you say and how you say it do not indicate the same message.

5. Be respectful of other peoples' points of view. We all approach problem situations in our own way. When the people communicating are different in age, culture, or values, it's especially important to take into consideration their experiences and the information they have.

It's very easy to get so involved in solving the problem at hand that the communication process is all but forgotten.

Perhaps family members could begin evaluating their own communication techniques by asking themselves the following questions:

1. Do I do all the talking?
2. Do I not talk at all?
3. Do I say, "That's what happened to me," and begin to talk about myself, forgetting what the other person said?
4. Do I tune out other family members?
5. Do I interrupt someone else's thoughts?
6. Do I encourage others to share their ideas?

The questionnaires on pages and will help you analyze the communication patterns in your family. Each parent and adolescent is to fill out their questionnaire alone, giving the most honest rating possible. Parents should then examine family ratings and summarize areas of agreement and disagreement. the results can later be shared with family members at a family council meeting.

## Communication Summary

The questions below may help you to summarize the questionnaires.

1. What are three areas of agreement concerning communication between you and your adolescent?
2. What are three areas of disagreement?
3. What areas of communication do you feel are most in need of improvement?

Communication will be explored further as a part of the adolescent curriculum the Foster Parent Training Program.

This material, including the questionnaires, is adapted from *Communication Workshop for Parents of Adolescents* by Jane E. Brownstone and Carol J. Dye, published by Research Press.

For further reading, you might find helpful *Conjoint Family Therapy* by Virginia Satir.

## COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE ADOLESCENT

Read each question carefully. Circle the number which best describes your true feelings.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
1. Do your parents seem interested in the things you do and are interested in?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Are you able to say what you really feel around home?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Does your family talk things over with each other?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Do you hesitate to disagree with either of your parents? Which one? _____ Both? _____	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do your parents listen to and value your opinion?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Are you sometimes confused about what your parents really mean by what they say?	1	2	3	4	5
7. When you have personal problems do you discuss them with your parents?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Do your parents ask to hear your side of things?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Are you able to discuss matters of sex with your parents? Which one? _____ Both? _____	1	2	3	4	5
10. Do you feel that your parents trust you?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Do your parents often become upset when they talk to you about some problem?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Do your parents let you know their reasons for objecting to something you want to do?	1	2	3	4	5
13. Do you feel that you and your parents seldom talk except when someone is upset or angry?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Do you wish that you and your parents could communicate better?	1	2	3	4	5



DECEMBER, 1983  
Volume 5, Number 2

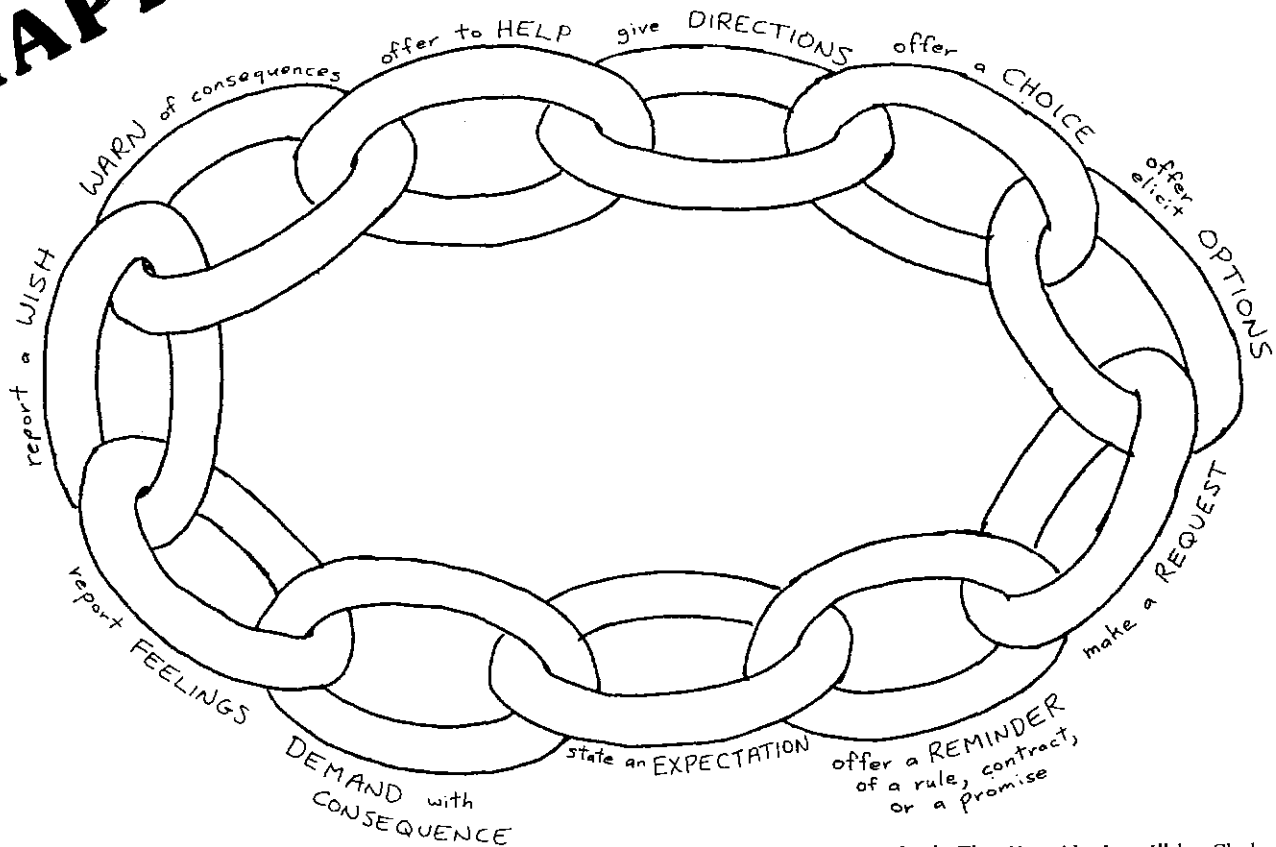
# SHARE

## Nebraska Foster Parent Training Program

# HAPPY

# HOLIDAYS!

### Behavior Change Chain



From *Ouch, That Hurts!* by Jean Illsley Clarke  
Daisy Press  
16535 9th Ave. N.  
Plymouth, MN 55447

## Eleven Ways to Ask People to Change

By Jean Illsley Clarke

**H**AVE YOU EVER wished you could get someone to change but not said anything because you didn't know what to say? Or said something that sounded critical when you didn't mean it to be critical? Or given up, because people don't seem to change when you ask them? I have, many times.

When a person was doing something that was annoying or destructive for me or could be destructive for him, I knew of three things I could do. I could: ignore it, criticize, or ask the person to change.

Ignoring it usually didn't work. Criticizing often made it worse. Asking "Wouldn't you like to do this another way?" frequently brought abrupt rejection.

The change chain, this golden chain of eleven links, provides us with eleven positive ways to tell people that we want them to do something, that we want them to change their behavior, or that we are concerned about one of their attitudes. The use of the chain does not guarantee success (some people will say "no" eleven times), but it does increase our chances of being effective by providing us with lots of options.

Assume that someone has criticized

you and you have decided not to ignore it and not to criticize back. Here is a list of eleven links and an example of how you could use each in this situation.

- **Report feelings:** "I feel angry when you criticize me."
- **Report a wish:** "I wish you would tell me what you want me to do instead of criticizing me."
- **Offer a warning:** "If you continue to criticize me, I may stop listening to you."
- **Offer to help:** "Do you need something from me?"
- **Give directions:** "I have trouble hearing you when you criticize me. Tell me what you want me to do in a gentle tone and don't call me stupid."

• **Offer a choice of two options:** "Do you want to discuss this calmly now, without critical words, or would you rather wait until tomorrow?"

• **Offer or elicit three or more options:** "Here are several ways you might get me to change my behavior."

1. Tell me in a soft voice what you want me to do.

2. Write me a note asking me to do something specific.

3. Call me tomorrow and tell me what you want me to do without using any 'put-down' words.

4. Let me know when I do please you."

• **Make a request:** "Will you stop criticizing me and tell me what you wish I would do?"

• **Offer a reminder:** "Remember the agreement we had about not criticizing each other?"

• **State an expectation:** "You are important to me. I expect you to stop criticizing me and to find a way to talk to me that is easier for me to respond to."

• **Issue a demand with consequences:** "Find a way to tell me what you want without putting me down. If you keep on criticizing me, I will avoid spending time with you."

By now you realize that the links are connected in a chain as a symbol of the support and helpful boundaries that a chain can offer. Think about the chain that holds a ship to a dock to keep it from floating away while cargo is unloaded. Recall the chain across a path that keeps cars from roaring through an area that is reserved as a peaceful retreat for hikers. Feel the golden links that circle a wrist and remind us that someone loves us.

The links are not arranged in a hierarchy of least to best, but in a continuous chain to remind us that each link is important and is most effective in some situations and least in others. It also reminds us that our chances of success are as strong as our weakest link. It is our job to keep each link strong and to increase our knowledge of when to use each one.

Sometimes we try one that doesn't work, so later we try another one. Or we combine two links.

For example, when Tom talks with the adolescents in his charge about truancy, he helps them generate a list of things they can do. (Elicit Options link.) The list includes continuing to skip school. Tom tells the young people that they can choose what to do. They voice their preferences as they discuss the options. He reminds them that if

they continue to skip school, they will be suspended, which will affect their work programs. (Warn of Outcomes link.) The young people say, "Hey, you said we could choose and now you say we will have to suffer the consequences!" Tom says, "Yes, you can choose and you will also have to live with the results of your choice. All people make choices and all of us experience consequences, sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant," Tom used the change link, Elicit Options, to encourage thinking, and the Warn of Outcomes link to encourage responsible consideration of the future.

Here is a description of each link, its uses and misuses. While all links are suitable for use with adults, certain links support the developmental tasks of children at different ages and of teenagers. The examples of ways links can help children are general. Watch your child's responses to tell whether a specific link enhances her growth or seems manipulative or heavy at any given time.



• **Link: Report a feeling.**

**Description:** Report a negative or a positive feeling and relate it to a behavior. Own the feeling. Say, "I feel..." Do not project it onto the other person with a "You make me feel..."

**Examples:** "I feel frustrated when you let things go until the last minute." (Angry looks)

"When you drive this fast I feel scared." (Shudder)

"I'm glad you kept your promise to me." (Hug, kiss, smile)

**Strengths:** This link encourages awareness of, concern for, and responsiveness to the feelings of others. It is important for children in the 3 to 6 age group because they are busy learning who they are in relationship to other people and how to get along with them. Teenagers often recycle these tasks at about ages 15-17, so report feelings to them, but remember they may appear not to care because they are in the process of separating emotionally from their parents.

**Hazards:** Constant reports of feelings without asking directly for behavior changes are manipulative and encourage the child to be overly responsible for the feelings of others. This produces adults who are overly pleasing and who

support dysfunctional family activities such as chemical dependency. A young child may feel burdened by the incessant reminders of the feelings of others and decide to care only about his own feelings.



• **Link: Report a wish.**

**Description:** Tell a specific behavior you wish the person would do. Remember that you are only expressing a wish, not asking for a specific change. Avoid generalities such as, "I wish you would do better," or, "I wish you would be a good girl," or, "I wish you were nicer to me."

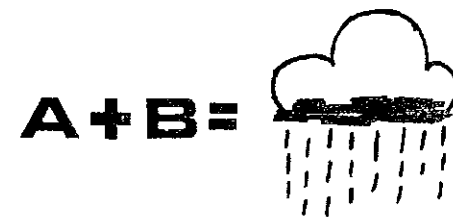
**Examples:** "I wish you would do your homework in the evening and avoid this morning hassle." (Sigh)

"I wish you would drive within the speed limit."

"I wish you would value yourself enough to take your promises seriously." (Hand on shoulder)

**Strengths:** This link helps people learn how to be successful at pleasing other people, plus the skills listed under "Report a feeling."

**Hazards:** Same as "Report a feeling."



• **Link: Warn of outcome.**

**Description:** A warning is a reminder to think about the possible outcomes of a behavior or an attitude. The outcome can be positive or negative. Remember to describe the outcome clearly. Avoid generalities such as, "No good will come of that," or, "You will get hurt!"

**Example:** "This morning homework hassle is a drag. Do you think the family is going to put up with your grumpiness and help you catch the school bus indefinitely?"

"Think about what often happens to people who drive above the speed limit. Is that what you want for yourself?"

"If you continue to break your promise to me, I will not feel like trusting you." (Back away)

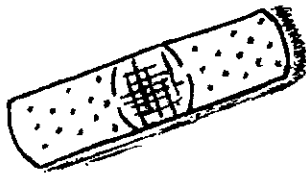
"If you pull the kitty's tail, she may scratch you." (Remove child's hand from cat)



"If you continue to be this thoughtful of other people, you will have lots of friends."

**Strengths:** Encouraging people to think about the outcomes of their behavior fosters clear thinking, responsibility, and independence. It is important to begin using this link when children are about 2 years of age and start the process of independent thinking. It strengthens responsibility in 6 to 12 year olds and is helpful for teens of all ages, but especially around age 14 when they are recycling early separation tasks.

**Hazards:** Overuse of this link, or careless, generalized use or global threats may result in specific fears or general anxiety and worry. Or the child may give up trying to cope with the warnings and decide that she will ignore possible consequences of her behavior.



- **Link:** Offer to help.

**Description:** Offer to help in a general or a specific way. Avoid offering to take responsibility away from the person or preventing the person from learning and growing, as in, "Here, let me do that for you. You don't know how."

**Examples:** Open body posture.

"Do you want me to help you set up a schedule for the preparation of your term paper?"

"I'm scared about your safety when you speed. Do you want me to help you in some way?"

"Do you want ideas from me on how to handle the promise you made?"

"Do you want some help from me?"

**Strengths:** Offers of assistance encourage trust and respect for self and set the stage for the development of cooperative skills. This link is the only one that is appropriate for infants. When the infant cries or fusses, adults figure out what he needs and care for him. Offers of help are appropriate for people of all ages, and especially so when people are starting something new. **Examples:** 6 to 18 month olds who are stuck under furniture, 3 to 6 year olds starting new activities, 6 year olds starting school, 12 or 13 year olds starting adolescence with all of the new sex role skills they will need to learn, and adults who are entering any new activity or group.

**Hazards:** The overuse of offers to help leads to overdependence, lack of responsibility, lack of initiative, the mistrust of

one's own ability and a denial of one's power to be in charge of one's own life. Offers to help that are appropriate at one age level are patronizing if offered at a later age. For example, "Would you like me to cut your meat?" is reassuring at age 3 but demeaning at age 9.



- **Link:** Give directions.

**Description:** Directions should be clear. When asking for a behavior or attitude change, directions are often more effective if they contain a reason and a specific statement of behavior to avoid (do this, because, don't do this). Directions that describe a state of being are not helpful: for example, "Be a good girl." Instead, use statements that describe behavior such as, "Remember to say please and thank you."

**Examples:** "Do your homework in the evening. You are crabby and push on all of us when you try to do it at the last minute. Don't fool yourself into thinking that there will be time enough in the morning."

"Stop speeding. You are risking your safety and the safety of others. Drive within the speed limit."

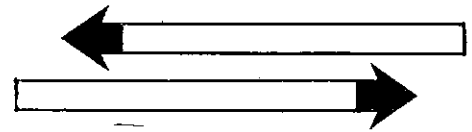
"Keep your promise."

"Don't pull the kitty's tail. He might scratch you. Hold him gently."

"Your 'don't care' attitude about standards will pull down your grades. Pick one or two things to do well today and do them neatly and completely."

**Strengths:** Clear directions offer standards and define time limits. They create an environment in which a child can feel confident that she can become competent and self-sufficient and can get her own needs met. Understanding directions makes it possible for her to please other people because she knows what they want. These are important skills for 3 to 6 year olds who are learning how to relate to other people and how to do things. Directions are important for 6 to 12 year olds who are busy acquiring skills and installing their own personal, internal structures about how to take care of themselves and other people. Clear directions are supportive for anyone who is starting something new.

**Hazards:** Too many directions discourage independent thinking and invite overdependence. If a person feels overburdened with directions, she may give up or find manipulative ways to ignore or sabotage the directions.



- **Link:** Offer a choice of two things.

**Description:** "You may do either this or this" offers a choice with limited options. The technique is often referred to as "the grandma question," as in "Do you want an apple or a peach?" in which case a cookie is not an option, or "Are you going to dress yourself or shall I dress you?" in which case staying in pajamas is not an option. The two items offered should be somewhat parallel and should not involve a threat. "Do you want to get dressed now or do you want a spanking?" is not an offer of two choices—it is a crooked way of using the *Demand with Consequences* link.

**Examples:** "Are you going to do your homework before you go to bed or are you going to set your alarm for six and do it before breakfast?"

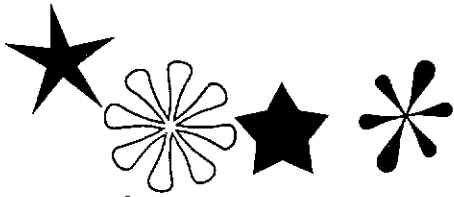
"Are you willing to stay within the speed limit, or shall I drive today?"

"You promised to sweep the garage today. Are you going to do that this morning or this afternoon?"

**Strengths:** Two choices are often used as a convenience or to assure compliance when there is some issue of safety or when the person requesting the behavior is in a hurry. This link can be used to distract a 6 to 18 month old who is exploring something dangerous or breakable.

Choosing between two alternatives strengthens thinking because the person gets to decide which thing to select. It is useful with a 2 year old who is practicing saying "No," because it provides limits for his behavior. "Are you going to climb into bed or shall I put you in?" circumvents an argument over whether he wants to go to bed if the adult is firm about the options. Offering a choice of two actions can help direct a 3 to 6 year old into appropriate social behavior, which is one of his developmental tasks.

**Hazards:** Since the person offering the two options is clearly in charge of the possible activities, the invitation to think is present, but limited. This link does not encourage responsibility, and, if grossly overused, can invite overdependence as in, "You haven't told me what I can do yet." Or, if the child tires of constantly having someone limit his options, he may use deliberate or manipulative ways to defy both options. The choice of two should not be offered unless the choices are appropriate and unless the person offering is willing to carry through on the offer.



- **Link:** Offer or elicit three or more options.

*Description:* This method involves inviting the other person to think of several options, or making several suggestions that would be practical or whimsical solutions to the problem.

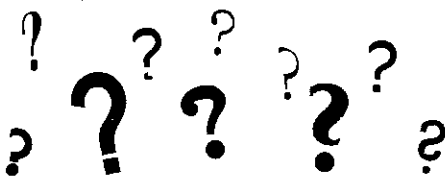
*Examples:* "I hear you say that driving fast is fun. What are six safe things you can do that are fun?"

"David, you are to practice half an hour today. You can do it before school, during lunch hour, after school. Can you think of another way you could do your 30 minutes of practice?"

"You have not been keeping your promises lately. Let's think what you could do. You could continue to break them and deal with the consequences. You could break half of them and keep the rest. You could keep them all. You could stop making promises you don't intend to keep. You could do more things when the need arises so you aren't in a position to make so many promises. You could take three days' vacation from all promises and then start over and make only reasonable promises you intend to keep. What options can you think of?"

*Strengths:* The use of three or more options strengthens thinking, responsibility and competence. It can be used with 6 to 18 month olds to offer safety and variety in their environment and to support their developmental task of exploration. It encourages thinking in 2 year olds and helps 3 to 6 year olds feel powerful. It supports the growth of competency and responsibility in 6 to 12 year olds and affirms independence and separation in teenagers. It helps adults avoid the limitations of either/or thinking.

*Hazards:* Overused, or used exclusively, the three or more options link does not offer enough structure, direction and guidance to other people. Children or adults who are subjected to it incessantly may act combative or whiny and nervous and show evidences of insecurity. A person who feels overwhelmed by too many choices may become passive and long for the comfort and direction of firmer structure.



- **Link:** Make a request.

*Description:* A request is a question that begins with the words "Will you" or "Are you willing to..." or "Is someone willing to..." "Who will..." may sound like a request but often holds a hidden demand or plea, as in, "Who will help me finish this disagreeable job?" A request is a suitable link to use ONLY when both affirmative and negative answers are acceptable. Asking, "Will you set the table now?" Receiving no for an answer and then saying, "Well, set it anyway," is crooked and crooked questions encourage crooked answers.

*Examples:* "David, will you take your shower in the evening and leave more time for yourself in the morning?" "Will you stop speeding?"

"You promised to go to the movie with us tonight. Do you still intend to go?" "We are going to the game at seven. Do you want to go with us?"

*Strengths:* Requests encourage thinking and independence. Since it is the developmental task of a 2 year old to practice saying no, requests can be used to encourage straight no saying.

"Would you like to give me a kiss?"

"Shall I eat your ice cream?"

Direct requests that can be easily met are helpful for 3 to 6 year olds who are practicing being powerful and who also enjoy being pleasing to adults. Requests encourage competence and independence in 6 to 12 year olds and support the separateness of teenagers. *Hazards:* The hazards of overuse are apt to rear their ugly heads when people forget that they really want someone to do something and say, "Will you?" as in, "Will you stop speeding?" When the answer is no, they are stuck with that answer unless they are willing to say, "Sorry, I shouldn't have asked that question. My mistake. There is not an option about doing that. Slow down right now."



- **Link:** Offer a reminder of a rule, a contract, or a promise.

*Description:* When you offer a reminder, you make a statement that is designed to encourage the listener to think, to remember, and to act. It can be given with a supportive sound or with a warning ring. In the latter case the hidden message is, "Remember the consequences part of the contract."

*Examples:* "David, remember our agreement about what we are each responsible to do before breakfast."

"Remember the rules about safe driving." "You made me a promise on Thursday about my birthday."

Sometimes a reminder is given by pointing a finger (at an unmade bed) or by handing the person an object (an unemptied waste basket).

*Strengths:* Reminders encourage thinking and responsibility. They are appropriate for people who are 18 months old or over. Before that time, adults are in charge of providing a safe environment for the child to explore and should not be expecting her to remember rules. Reminders for young children should be explicit. "Remember, it is your turn to feed the dog," or "Do you remember our agreement about the dog?"

*Hazards:* Constant reminders become nagging and encourage irresponsibility and lack of attentiveness. They sound as if the person who reminds is willing to be in charge of the other person's behavior. Overuse of reminders can result in fearfulness in young children (What have I forgotten now?) and temporary deafness or resentment in older children and adults (Get off my back).



- **Link:** State an expectation.

*Description:* This link involves a simple but explicit statement of expected behavior.

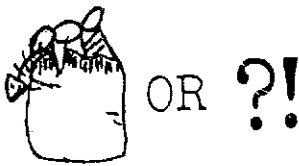
*Examples:* "I expect you to be ready and at the bus stop when the school bus comes."

"You are important to me. I expect you to drive safely."

"I'm depending on you to keep your promise."

*Strengths:* Expectations give signals about who the speaker thinks the other person is. They offer a solid background for children to live up to and to push against. The 2 year old may test defying expectation to see what will happen. The 3 to 6 year old may internalize the expectation as part of the mosaic of who other people think he is. Six to 12 year olds can test their competence against the expectations or defy them to see if they reflect important family or community rules. Teenagers can use them to reflect upon who they are. "Am I really this person you expect me to be? Am I still

OK if I don't live up to your expectations?" Sometimes adolescents defy the expectations to achieve separateness. *Hazards:* Expectations may be inappropriate or too general to be useful, as in "I expect you to be the man of the house now that Daddy is gone." Too many expectations can feel overwhelming and may be met with over-compliance in which the individual gives away his power to think and act for himself and to establish his own identity. He may conclude that he must be perfect, or always be strong, or always please, or constantly try harder or always hurry. Or high expectations may result in the opposite behavior which is a "so what?" attitude.



• **Link: Demand with consequence.**

*Description:* A demand with consequence is usually thought of as being a directive, "Shape up," followed by a negative consequence, "or ship out." It can also have a positive consequence. "Continue to treat me like this and I will love you more and more!" or "Keep up your studies as you have been and you will make the dean's list for sure," or "Continue this type of work and attitude and you will make the team." In either case, the sender is in charge, is doing the thinking, setting the standards, and setting the limits.

*Examples:* "You are not to watch TV until you have finished your practicing."

"If you miss the bus you will have to walk to school today."

"Drive within the speed limit. Anytime that you exceed it you will lose the use of the car for the weekend."

"If you break your promise, I will be mad at you."

"If you keep your promise, I will be very proud of you."

*Strengths:* This link is useful when it is necessary to set limits. It encourages thinking in 2 year olds and helps them with their developmental task of realizing that there are other people beside themselves in the world and that they must adjust to that. The use of appropriate demands with consequences can foster healthy compliance in 3 to 6 year olds and competence in 6 to 12 year olds. It may encourage responsibility in teens and frequently motivates adults to reconsider their behaviors or attitudes.

*Hazards:* Too many or too few demands and consequences invite irresponsibility. Overuse of this link results in squashed or rebellious children, children who are not thinking for themselves but are responding to the thinking of the other person. Overuse discourages thinking and responsibility for self and encourages blind obedience (I was just following orders). The underuse of it encourages people to believe that they are not responsible for thinking through their own behavior (I didn't think it mattered). Consequences are usually most effective if they are specific and short-term. "If you don't keep your promise I will fuss at you this evening," is more useful than "I will hate you forever."

Another aspect of consequences is the need to be sure that they penalize the right person. Usually a mother does not "ground" a young child to the house for a week more than one time because that consequence often causes more distress

for the mother than the child. Remember, keep the discomfort where it belongs. The teenager who is completely grounded from driving can no longer do family errands. Better to ground him from his pleasure driving and increase the amount of family driving he is to do during the consequence period.

## NO LETTERS IN OUR MAILBOX

In the September issue of *Share* we asked for contributions to two new columns that we wanted to make regular features of this newsletter. One was "Problems and Prescriptions" designed to help foster parents with their problems by having readers write in and having an expert respond. The other was "Foster Parents on Foster Parenting," intended as an outlet for sharing experiences through foster parents' own stories about the joys and problems of foster parenting adolescents. We offered \$25 for each letter or article accepted for publication, but no one decided to take advantage of the offer and make a contribution. We'd still like to hear from you.

Carole Davis  
Project Coordinator

## GUIDELINES FOR FOSTER PARENTS



Persuade foster children to try new experiences at least once (new food too); they might like it.

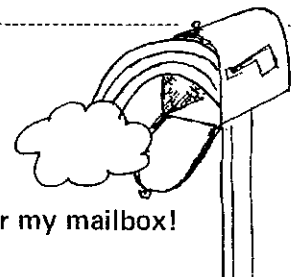
Jean Illsley Clarke, author of "The Change Chain," publishes a newsletter called *WE* for nurturing support groups. She is the author of *Who, Me Lead a Group?*, *Self-esteem: A Family Affair*, and other books. Mrs. Clarke, director of J. I. Consultants, was the trainer of trainers for the Foster Parent curriculum workshop. She works with governmental agencies, community groups, and businesses, helping them put into practice the techniques and methods described in her books.

To order the newsletter *WE*, use the coupon at the right.



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## Personal Activities

### HOW OFTEN DO I USE EACH LINK?

For one day record how many times you use each link in the Change Chain. Put a + by the item if it got the desired change and a - if it did not. Think about which links you use most often and when you would be more effective if you used different links.

<i>Demand / Consequence</i>	<i>111 +</i>	<i>1 -</i>
<i>Expectation</i>	<i>1111 +</i>	
<i>Reminder</i>	<i>1111 -</i>	<i>11 -</i>
<i>Request</i>	<i>11 +</i>	<i>111 -</i>
<i>Option</i>	<i>1 +</i>	<i>1 -</i>
<i>Choice</i>	<i>1111 +</i>	
<i>Directions</i>	<i>11111 +</i>	<i>11 -</i>
<i>Help</i>	<i>1 +</i>	<i>1111 -</i>
<i>Warn</i>	<i>1 +</i>	<i>1 -</i>
<i>Wish</i>	<i>11 +</i>	<i>1 -</i>
<i>Feeling</i>	<i>1111 +</i>	<i>11 -</i>

### HOW STRONG IS MY CHAIN?

Make a bar graph to show how often you use each communication when you want people to change their behavior.

### 1 ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:

1. If someone is asking me to change my behavior, which two options do I respond to most readily? Least readily?
2. Do I use most often the ones I like best?
3. Have I asked people I am close to which links they prefer, or do I just assume that I know?
4. Are some of my links as strong as steel and others as weak as paper?

### 2 MAKE A SELF CONTRACT

Make a self contract about any changes you plan to make to strengthen your links.

### 3 THE POWER OF PRACTICE

Choose a behavior (interrupting, saying put-downs, hitting, etc.). Write the problem in the middle of the chain. Write an example of each communication inside the links.

Practice for a day: Each time you ask someone to do something, think of two or three links that would be appropriate for the situation before you decide which one to use.

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# SHARE

## Nebraska Foster Parent Training Program

### THIS CONTRACT MAY SAVE A LIFE

Each year, drunk driving accidents claim thousands of lives. Many of the guilty, as well as innocent victims, are teenagers. In fact, highway accidents are the leading cause of death among teenagers. Safer cars, better roads, new laws can help, but people are our best weapon in the fight to reduce highway deaths. People cause accidents; people who care can prevent accidents. Remembering our responsibilities to each other when we get behind the wheel can help save many lives. The American family is a powerful social force. This "Contract for Life" offers families a way to make their own personal commitment to help reduce highway accidents.

The Contract for Life was developed by Mr. Robert Anastas, Founder and Executive Director of SADD, Students Against Driving Drunk. Since 1981, tens of thousands of families have signed a contract similar to this model, making their own personal commitment to be responsible drivers and to help family members avoid potentially dangerous situations. In communities where the Contract has been widely used there has been a noticeable reduction in highway accidents and an important number of lives saved.

SADD was organized by Mr. Robert Anastas, an alcohol counselor and educator for over 22 years in Massachusetts, together with a number of interested high school students. The students and Mr. Anastas quickly began appearing on local and national news programs to discuss the drunk driving problem and they developed public service messages and other educational efforts to alert their fellow teenagers and others. The response from all sectors of society was enthusiastic and SADD chapters began appearing everywhere. Beginning in September, 1982, Mr. Anastas devoted full time to the SADD program and has traveled around the country speaking to over 250,000 students from approximately 6,000 different schools in over 22 states and Canada. Many schools in other states have started their own SADD chapters as a result.

The goals of each SADD chapter are to:

- Help eliminate drunk driving and save lives;
- Alert high school students to the dangers of drinking and driving;
- Conduct community alcohol awareness programs;
- Organize peer counseling programs to help students who may have concerns about alcohol.

If you'd like to start a SADD chapter or get more information on the program, a curriculum guide is available for \$2 postage and handling from: SADD, 110 Pleasant Street, Corbin Plaza, Marlboro, Massachusetts 01752.

To make the Contract for Life work in your family, parents and teenagers should sit down together, perhaps after dinner, (Continued on page 4)

# CONTRACT FOR LIFE

## A Contract for Life Between Parent and Teenager The SADD Drinking-Driver Contract

**Teenager** I agree to call you for advice and/or transportation at any hour, from any place, if I am ever in a situation where I have had too much to drink or a friend or date who is driving me has had too much to drink.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Parent** I agree to come and get you at any hour, any place, no questions asked and no argument at that time, or I will pay for a taxi to bring you home safely. I expect we would discuss this issue at a later time.

I agree to seek safe, sober transportation home if I am ever in a situation where I have had too much to drink or a friend who is driving me has had too much to drink.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

