

BREAKING INTO PRINT: WRITER'S WORKSHOPS POINT THE WAY

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"Never say never." Albeit trite, this admonition is still applicable to practicing child and youth care workers who tell themselves, "I could never write anything for publication. Don't even think about it." Let's think again by taking a look at some practical insights and information for potential writers.

The Journal of Child and Youth Care Work (JCYCW) has for some years at conferences sponsored 'Writers Workshops.' These are designed to encourage child and youth care workers to engage in writing for publication by 'demystifying' the writing process and offering support for them in undertaking to set their ideas and experiences on paper. This is a summary of the proceedings of the Writers Workshop held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in June, 1994 at the International Conference on Family Centered Child and Youth Care Work co-sponsored by the National Organization of Child Care Workers Associations and FICE, the International Federation of Educative Communities. The workshop was led by Karen Vander Ven, JCYCW Editor and author of over 140 publications, with input by Writer's Workshop pioneer and JCYCW Founding Editor Mark Krueger. Meredith Kiraly, from Kildonan Child and Family services in Australia, recorded the transactions to contribute to this joint article. Subsequent to the workshop, too, Meredith has had several pieces published. So follow her example. This can happen to you!

Why Write? The Good News

There are a number of reasons for undertaking writing:

- As child and youth care work continues to evolve as a profession, there is a great need to record its emerging knowledge base. One of its crucial components is the 'practice knowledge' generated by line or 'direct' child and youth care workers. This must be recorded and preserved.
- The times are right for child and youth care workers with varied backgrounds and experience to find outlets for their work since there is a trend away from classical academic

writing as the primary type of publication towards a great variety of styles and formats.

- Journals and other publications are *always* looking for new perspectives and new authors.

The Writing Process

Understanding the writing process can support the novice writer in seeing his or her efforts through from the germ of an idea to print!

- *Be alert to those times when you are most likely to think creatively, to reflect, to get ideas.* This isn't as hard as you think. Consider: what do you reflect about the most, or what interests and intrigues you, what you seem to talk to others about. This may be a start. Ideas may come to you at any time – while you are jogging, just before bed, or whatever. Be prepared to jot them down by having your pad and pencil with you at all times. Karen's ideas always come to her with her morning coffee. After breakfast, she takes those little napkin and paper towel fragments up to her study room, turns on her word processor, and writes them up.
- *Then settle on an idea to work on right now.* What is it you would like to write about most, now? Save your notes on your other ideas.
- *Apply the seat of your pants to the chair!* This is perennial advice from the most experienced and published writers in the world. If one does not sit down to write – and stay down – then nothing gets written!
- *Give your idea an angle, or focus.* Consider what is there about the idea, experience, data, or whatever, that would 'hook' a reader, that would put a new 'spin' on the topic?
- *Select your mode of expression.* As indicated, already there is a wide array of formats, such as:
 - Conventional academic articles with literature reviews, data presentations and the like.
 - Position papers, taking a stance with or without documentation.
 - Book Reviews. Often a good way to get started. Editors are often looking for reviewers; or if you know a good book, suggest it to an editor and offer to review it.

- Conference write-ups or proceedings.
- Columns. If you have an idea for a column, suggest it.
- "Op-Ed" or editorials—material for editorial pages and commentary suggests.
- Letters to the Editor.
- Poetry.
- Anecdotes or case examples with commentary.
- Metaphorical ways of expressing your own experience.
- Fiction. *JCYCW* Founding Editor Mark Krueger has pioneered this genre for the field through his well known novels, short stories about children, youth and child and youth care workers.

Review these, and then think. Which will be best?

- *Start writing.* Do not labor over a beginning, if it does not 'come easy,' and give up. Start in the middle if you feel more comfortable. Just get something down.
- *If it gets painful, don't give up.* We said "you can do it" – we didn't say it was always easy. Writers who have dozens of publications have times of struggle, times of the 'blank page,' times when they'd rather pet a rattlesnake. What do they do? Take a break perhaps and then simply get back to it and keep at it!
- *Have a reader.* Have someone else read your draft and give you some commentary on its clarity and content. Karen's 'best' articles have only emerged after a review and revision process. Her favorite first reader is her colleague, Martha Mattingly who will tell her when an idea 'doesn't follow' or a sentence is unclear.
- *When you have a draft, send it to the editor of a journal, newsletter or other publication.* The following section will tell you how to select a publication outlet and in general how the review.

Knowing Your Options

- *Select a Journal or Publication Outlet.*

–Identify the numerous journals in the field. Check out the references in the articles in any journal you may have in hand. This gives some ideas regarding related journals. There are also books on writing for professional publication that give lists of journals in different fields. And of course, go to the library and browse the shelves.

–Be alert for possibilities. Journals themselves often issue “Calls for Papers” as do professional newsletters. Introduce yourself to editors and publishers at conferences and tell them about your work. They may issue you and invitation to submit something. Or ask them if they would ‘take a look’ if you submitted a piece.

–Check out what the publications want. Read previous issues to get an idea of the style and content of the particular publication. Read the guidelines for contributors, which are often (but always) inside one of the covers. These guidelines will tell you the *scope* of the publication in terms of desired content and formats.

Submitting Your Piece. There are two aspects to submitting to a publication, which we might call *formative* and *summative* submission.

- *Formative Submission.* This is currently done particularly with the child and youth care journals, particularly the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, and the *Journal of Child and Youth Care*. You may submit something rough, or just the description of an idea, for initial feedback and suggestions as to how to develop it into a publishable piece.
- *Summative Submission.* This is done when you feel your piece is essentially ready to be considered for formal publication (For some publication outlets, this is the first step). It is crucial that your piece follow technical guidelines for submission at this stage; these guidelines are also found in the journals under ‘instructions for authors’ or some similar heading. These guidelines often request multiple copies, adherence to APA (American Psychological Association) format, submission on disk, and the like. When your piece is received, it goes the review process, as stated before. In ‘refereed’ journals, your piece is sent out to one or two other reviewers who make comments and recommendations for revisions and whether or not they feel the piece should be published.
- *Hearing Back.* You will hear back from the Editor as to the status of your piece. It may be accepted ‘as is’ (lucky you!); more likely, with recommended changes; or possibly, rejection.
- *One Submission at a Time.* For regular journal articles, standard procedure is to submit the same piece to only one journal at a time. If you do not hear from the journal after, say, two months, then contact the Editor to make sure your piece was received, and to determine its status. If your piece is rejected ‘flat out,’

without an option for revision, then you are free to send it somewhere else. Of course it is useful to review the reasons you receive for the rejection, so you can correct them.

Being Able to Take 'It'

What is 'it'? Criticism and rejection, with being able to accept and act on it, perhaps the fundamental attribute of published writers. You must be able to take 'editorial suggestions' (read: criticism); and having your piece turned down. These modes of 'feedback' are as characteristic of the writing/publication process as are paper and printing ink.

- *Do not quit when you receive a heavily marked over manuscript with a several page letter of page by page 'suggestions' for change.* Make them! Karen has received back manuscript drafts that looked like the red pen company jamboree! When she acted on these, the articles were indeed strengthened.
- *Do not be deterred by a rejection. Every published writer has had them!* Karen is now on the Editorial Board of, and a columnist for, a journal that rejected flat-out the first article she sent to it. Learn from a rejection and persist!

Continuing Your Writing

- *Use technology!* If you do not have a computer/word processor, perhaps now is the time to think of getting one. Word processing brings a marvelous element of speed and efficiency into the writing process. If you are already used to writing 'directly into a typewriter,' rather than writing by hand, you already have a leg up on the process, since keyboard skill is really the crux of writing on a computer/word processor.
- *Form a support group or relationship with one or two other people whom you can 'talk' about writing, exchange ideas and experiences.* The great literary figures of the 20s had 'writers' salons'— why can't we?
- *Leverage your work.* This is a way in which you have one publication, perhaps in an initial outlet, serve to open you to new opportunity. For example, a newsletter is often a good publication target for an initial effort. Newsletters are usually looking for 'material' and may be less demanding regarding documentation (use of reference citations) and standard for-

mats. When your piece comes out in a newsletter—you're now in print! List this on your resume. Watch for new publication opportunities, and cite your newsletter piece as evidence that you have written and published. Keep it up. Eventually, invitations will come to you as editors realize that you are a writer with a 'track record' who is willing to work, open to opportunities, and can take 'suggestions!'

- *Consider writing a book.* There is a need for practice books in the field, as well as articles and other shorter pieces. For book writing, the essential process is similar: have a concept, and present it to the most appropriate publisher. Contrary to popular belief, you don't always have to have written an entire book before having it considered for publication. Book publishers usually expect a prospectus: a proposal-like document which contains such information as title, general purpose and focus, target audience(s), format and reading level, table of contents, sample chapter, competing titles, suggestions for promoting the book, and author 'biosketch' stating your qualifications for writing the book
- *View yourself as having work in progress.* This means that you have an area, or areas, of special interest and expertise, that you continue to work on, develop, vary, branch out from—as you continue your professional career. This is the stuff and substance of your ongoing writing.

And finally: "Never say never!"

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Please read the following carefully; conforming to these procedures greatly speeds up the review process and increases the likelihood of acceptance.

Since the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* particularly encourages submissions from direct line child and youth care workers, editorial assistance is available to those who have not previously published. To encourage editorial assistance, new authors may submit a single copy of the manuscript, along with the identifying information requested above; and a brief biographical sketch. A self-addressed envelope with adequate postage must also be included. Manuscripts submitted in this format will not initially be considered for publication, but rather will receive constructive comments and suggestions.

Articles submitted to the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* should be completely typewritten, double-spaced on standard letter-sized paper, with ample margins. Whether produced by typewriter or word processor, a dark, fresh ribbon should be used. Two copies should be sent. *FAX and e-mail* articles cannot be accepted.

It is strongly recommended that the article be produced on a word processor since, if accepted for publication, the article will be required to also be submitted on disk, to aid in the final editing and printing process.

Standard academic or research articles must conform to the specifications of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, particularly in-text citations and the format of all sources used in preparing the paper that are cited in the Reference list. Similarly, *APA* guidelines must be followed for headings, tables, figures, and other aspects of style and format.

First person accounts, fiction, poetry and other pieces should conform as much as possible to the *APA Publication Manual*.

To aid the editorial review process, each manuscript must be accompanied by a cover sheet indicating the title of the manuscript, author's name, institutional affiliations, address, telephone (and FAX and e-mail if applicable) numbers, date of article submission. The first page of the article should have the title and date of submission, but with no indication of the author's name, to allow a blind review process.

After the article has been reviewed, the author will receive either a letter of acceptance, rejection, or a form indicating suggested revisions so as to meet criteria for publication.

WHEN AN ARTICLE IS FINALLY ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION, THE AUTHOR MUST BE PREPARED TO SUBMIT IT ON A COMPUTER DISK IN ORDER TO ENABLE FINAL EDITING AND PREPARATION FOR PRINTING. MACINTOSH IS PREFERRED.

THE ALBERT E. TRIESCHMAN CENTER

Helping You to Find Better Ways of Working With High-Risk Youth and Their Families

National Conferences

Clinical Technologies: Information Systems to Measure and Improve Outcomes in Behavioral Health & Social Services

November 7-11, 1995
Chicago Hilton & Towers
Chicago, IL

The fourth annual *Clinical Technologies* is a hands-on conference for executives, clinicians, and information system specialists that explores the use of technology as a solution to many challenges facing behavioral health providers today. This year's special focus is on measuring and reporting outcomes in a managed care environment.

Finding Better Ways: Working With High-Risk Youth and Their Families

March 19-23, 1996
Hyatt Regency
Cambridge, MA

Finding Better Ways features the most skilled presenters and the most innovative programs and practices in child welfare, special education, and behavioral health. This nationally recognized event helps practitioners increase their competence and strengthen their organizations' capabilities. Current and critical issues are always featured.

Training

Effective Supervision

Supervisors set the pace and tone for human service organizations. Their role has grown in importance in these days of continued employee turnover and increased litigation. Well-trained supervisory staff is one way to reduce an agency's liability while improving the quality of its services.

The *Effective Supervision* program consists of two 3-day courses that complement each other but also stand alone. These courses will help you develop more effective ways to "manage from the middle" by taking you to a higher skill level in many vital aspects of supervision.

The Trieschman Center also licenses trainers to teach these courses. A number of larger organizations and state associations have taken advantage of this opportunity to assure greater local access of these quality programs in a cost-effective manner.

These courses are offered by the Albert E. Trieschman Center on an open enrollment basis or can be taught at your location.

Publications

The Gus Chronicles

Offering a sensitive look into the heart and mind of a child in residential treatment, *The Gus Chronicles* is written from the perspective of an abused teenager. This unique book uses typically occurring and often disturbing language and situations to help adults and child and youth care professionals better understand the children in their care. Written by Charlie Appelstein, based on his extensive career in child welfare.



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The Albert E. Trieschman Center, a division of The Walker Home and School, Needham, Massachusetts, is a non-profit, national resource center committed to helping practitioners find better ways of caring for and treating high-risk children, youth, and their families. The Trieschman Center offers training for direct care workers and supervisors, manages training events, and provides consultation and technical assistance to private and public agencies.