

EDITORIAL POLICY

In 1984 the Editorial Review Board shaped the editorial policy for Child and Youth Care Work (The Journal of Child and Youth Care Work, Vol. 2, 1985). It is reprinted here as an attempt to keep our readers informed and to encourage them to help us in our effort to keep our policy relevant.

Content is the foremost consideration in reviewing submissions. We believe that, in order to draw forth firsthand accounts and descriptions of issues, practices, and concepts directly related to child and youth care, initial editorial attention has to be focused on subject matter.

Content is defined by several criteria. The most pertinent are relevancy, clarity, and conviction. In general, a manuscript article is considered relevant if it falls into one of two categories. The first includes techniques, practices, approaches, thoughts, and feelings emanating from or related to a direct work experience. The second includes broader issues such as the professionalization movement, educational curricula, philosophical reflections, and generalized treatment and learning approaches. If the first direction is chosen, the author is encouraged to stick to his or her experience, allowing it to stand on its own merits. This is an area where there is a tremendous need for information and it is an excellent place for new authors to start. If the second direction is being pursued, a thorough literature review is essential. In all cases where documentation or verification of facts is indicated, we urge caution, restraint, thoroughness, and selectivity.

Clarity is judged by the author's ability to communicate with the readers in an organized straightforward manner. The Journal's audience consists of practitioners from a broad range of residential and community based settings. Articles using articulate, everyday language and examples that show how the material can be related to a practice experience are most effective.

Conviction is the author's ability to convey a message with forcefulness and sensitivity. Authors are encouraged to write on topics about which they feel most strongly. In our opinion, conviction is conveyed best with a tone that indicates the authors were able to question their views in the process of reaching a conclusion and that they value different opinions.

A second priority is to continue to solicit articles primarily from those authors who identify themselves as child or youth care workers

in direct practice. Others are invited to submit articles, but with an understanding that we have a major commitment to provide a forum for practitioners to publish. Inherent in this commitment is a willingness to work with first-time authors.

A Review Board consisting of practitioners and former practitioners helps develop and select articles. The objective is to implement our editorial policy by having child and youth care workers working with and critiquing each other's writing. The short article in this issue entitled, *The Review PROCESS*, exemplifies our commitment to practitioners and to peer review. Finally, we see a need to remain flexible. While we are confident that our experiences and opinions are as good a place as any to start, we are fully aware that our work must be tested and altered by the submissions, criticisms and support we receive. Like our work with children, our growth is dependent upon a process of mutual adaptation and acceptance.

This represents our current policy. Readers are encouraged to join us in a continuous effort to mold a worthy contribution for the knowledge base. If you have any suggestions that you feel will help, please forward them to the editor. We promise to consider every written suggestion at our next annual meeting.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Waiting for a letter from the editor is one of the more difficult aspects of writing for publication. Authors work for days, sometimes months, on an article, carefully select the journal that seems "just right" for their masterpiece, and then they wait, wait, wait, and wait, until a letter of acceptance or rejection arrives.

For some authors it's the "not knowing what's going on" that worries them the most. Like sending a youth off to camp, they know their work will return sooner or later. It may come back with minor or major changes, accepted or rejected, and rumpled or neat, but it will probably be back. However, similar to the youth who never writes home and says nothing once he returns, editors often keep their writers in the dark about how their articles have been handled during what is often a very busy absence.

In keeping with our child and youth care traditions, the editorial staff of *The Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* wants authors to know how their "child" is being treated while it is in our "care." The following description of our review process is designed to shed some light on how important we feel the word "process" is in reviewing the work of fellow professionals.

When a manuscript is first received by the editorial office, a careful check is made to see if the author has followed the submission requirements (printed in each issue of the *Journal*) and if the general content is appropriate. If a manuscript is inappropriately submitted (e.g., insufficient copies or improper format), it is sent back to the author with a request for necessary changes or additions. If the content doesn't appear to be appropriate for our purposes, the manuscript is sent back with a written explanation and, whenever possible, a recommendation for an alternate journal.

Articles that pass the initial screening are sent on by the editor for review by two members of the Editorial Review Board. All members of the Board are child and youth care workers with writing experience. In selecting reviewers, the editor attempts to choose individuals who have some expertise in the area being covered by the authors. If no one on the Board is familiar with a specific area, consulting reviewers are selected.

Attached to the copies of the article are review sheets which the reviewer fills out after a careful reading of the article. Reviewers are asked to comment on a number of areas including content, clarity,

relevance, conviction, writing style, organization and technical level (see *Shaping An Editorial Policy*). They are also asked to make comments on the manuscript wherever it is appropriate. All comments are made with the knowledge that they may be sent to the author to help him or her with revisions. Once a thorough review has been completed (reviewers are usually given two or three weeks), the reviewer makes one of the following recommendations: "Publish; no revisions necessary," "Publish with minor revisions as noted," "Publish with major revisions as noted," "Major revisions required – manuscript to be reviewed if submitted," or "Reject – alternative publication would be _____."

After receiving both reviews, the editor makes a decision about whether or not to proceed. If both reviewers make the first recommendation above, the article is usually accepted outright. If the article receives recommendations for revisions (recommendations 2, 3, and/or 4), the editor will, in most cases, send the article back to the author with the reviewers' suggestions and encouragement to make either minor or major changes. In our experience, most of the articles require at least some changes. However, we are aware that many authors interpret requests for revisions as "polite rejection slips." They don't know that most articles are revised before being published. For example, all the articles in this issue were revised by the authors. Therefore, we try to explain that we are sincere about our requests for changes.

If the authors who fall into one of the revision categories are willing to consider changes, the editorial staff will do whatever it can to help. All of our Review Board members are sensitive to the feelings that experienced, and especially, inexperienced, writers have. Their goal is to be supportive and to give authors as much assistance as possible. For example, one of our Board members worked for several months with an author to get her article in shape for this issue. The result was a very fine article and a first publication.

In general, revised articles are eventually accepted for publication. We have had to reject only a couple of articles which had been changed and, in each of these cases we have been able to make solid recommendations for an alternative outlet.

Finally, if an article receives two "rejections," the editor will return it with a letter of explanation. Rejections are part of writing. Every author has had his work rejected at some point. Those who look at this as a learning process usually go on to eventually publish their work, while those who take rejections personally usually do not. In this context, we try to make comments that will encourage and teach.

Hence, "process" is equally as important to our Journal as "pub-

lish." We believe that if we can make the review PROCESS a positive learning experience, the field will be one major step closer to developing a professional knowledge base. So, if you are one of the many practitioners with a good idea that has been tabled because of uncertainties about how it will be received, why not give us a try? We'll do everything we can to make the experience a rewarding one.

M.K.

