

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 rumped 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 alternative 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 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 resubmitted"; 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 that 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 minor 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.

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 "publish." 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.