

SHAPING AN EDITORIAL POLICY

Poolside at the Bahia Resort in San Diego is perhaps the last place one would expect to find a working group of child and youth care workers. This, however, was the setting for a recent meeting of nine Editorial Review Board members who were participating in the Southwest Regional Conference for Child Care Workers. Our task, aside from enjoying some late fall sunshine and warmth, was to begin to shape an editorial policy for Child and Youth Care Work.

As we sat in our lounge chairs "testing the waters," exchanging sometimes opposing viewpoints, and attempting to communicate in a common professional language, we began to appreciate that our search for a workable starting place was representative of the diversified and relatively undefined nature of the field. It also became apparent that, with the proper guidance, the Journal could play a major role in answering or openly exploring many of the issues with which we were struggling, such as: who falls under the child and youth care umbrella?; and, what are the similarities and differences in their various role functions? With this somewhat humbling information at hand, we relied on our own experiences, which ranged from institutional to community based services and which were accumulated in places as far apart as Victoria and Baltimore, to set the following guidelines for the Journal.

A consensus was reached to make "content" the foremost consideration in reviewing submissions. Obviously, the best way to draw forth firsthand accounts and descriptions of issues, practices, and concepts directly related to child and youth care is to focus initial editorial attention on subject matter.

In further defining content, several criteria were noted. Those most pertinent to readers and potential authors are relevancy, clarity, and conviction. An article, in general, will be 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, authors are encouraged to stick to their 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 will be 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 while at the same time valuing differing notions. In our opinion, conviction is conveyed best with a tone that indicates the authors were able to question and laugh at themselves in the process of reaching a conclusion.

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 strong will-

ingness to work with first-time authors.

A Review Board consisting of practitioners and former practitioners will also continue to help 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 will be dependent upon a process of mutual adaptation and acceptance.

This, then, represents the product of several months of preparation and a most delightful afternoon in San Diego. You are encouraged to join us in this continuous effort to mold a worthy contribution for the knowledge base. We can't promise you lush surroundings (unfortunately, we can't even promise that to ourselves), but we can promise that we will consider each and every written comment and suggestion we receive prior to our second annual meeting in Vancouver next fall. Authors with additional questions about policy, style, or format, please contact the Editor. Otherwise, pick up your pen and go to it. We are eager to work with both readers and authors.

M.K.