



FOURTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON FAIRNESS & EQUITY ISSUES IN CHILD WELFARE TRAINING

Regional Update:
Northern California Training Academy:
Reviewing Our Leadership Practices: Fairness and Equity
Susan Brooks, *Director*

Summary of Presentation
April 28, 2006

Susan Brooks, Director of the Northern California Training Academy, reported on recent training and evaluation activities in the Northern California region and strategies for meeting the diverse training and support needs of the northern counties.

The definition of fairness and equity applies to child welfare practice in the northern region, both in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity as well as the unique challenges involved in rural child welfare practice. This definition is especially important to keep in mind when considering that there are rural counties where access to services is a huge barrier to meeting the needs of families involved in the child welfare system.

Fairness and Equity: The modification of policies, procedures, and practices and the expansion of availability of community resources and supports to ensure that all children and families, including those of diverse backgrounds and those with special needs, will obtain similar benefits from child welfare interventions and equally positive outcomes regardless of the community that they live in.

Ms. Brooks provided copies of the first two issues of Northern Academy's newsletter, *Reaching Out*. The goal of the newsletter is to blend research and evidence-based practice with county and community practice issues. One issue of the newsletter addresses the unique challenges of rural child welfare practice, and the other addresses serving the child welfare needs of Native American communities. The next issue is going to feature drug and alcohol issues in child welfare, particularly the impact of methamphetamine use in the north.

The Northern Academy continues to work with their trainers to improve their competency in addressing fairness and equity issues that arise in the classroom, including hosting a conference on fairness and equity based upon the book *Race Matters* published by the Child Welfare League of America. Northern Academy has also continued to work on fairness and equity curriculum development and guidelines for developing curriculum that incorporates fairness and equity issues.

The Northern Academy has also developed a two-day skill-building training for supervisors entitled “Renewing our Leadership Practices.” The first day of the training focuses on understanding and framing issues of racism and disproportionality in child welfare, and the second day requires supervisors to think about what they will do differently with their staff and in their own practice. The implementation process was begun recently and the training has been offered three times thus far. The training will be evaluated to learn if supervisors’ biases are changed as a result of the training and if the training results in a change in practice.

Distance learning is another training strategy that the Northern Academy has been evaluating to accommodate the needs of trainees, especially in rural areas. For knowledge content, online training has yielded similar results to classroom training. This has enabled a shift to using online training for knowledge content and classroom time to develop and practice skills.