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# Family Preservation and Support: Past, Present and Future

by

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## Abstract

As the family preservation and support movement evolves rapidly, this article overviews the past, present and future of this approach to policy and services. Building upon several decades of practice experience and research, and now federally funded, program designers are searching for ways to implement system wide change with an array of services all from a family focus, and strengths perspective. Critical issues facing the movement are discussed and a set of benchmarks to judge our future success is presented.

Families. Everyone has had one; everyone wants one, and woe to anyone who disagrees. No subject in our society provokes such emotion as the term "family." Policy makers and politicians of all persuasions invoke the term "family" to support their causes. At a personal level, families elicit the most basic feelings possible for each individual member. Families come in all shapes and sizes, all colors, cultures and preferences--each unique and part of the total fabric of our society.

This is the backdrop for those professionals, concerned citizens and consumers who attempt to bring answers to the multiplicity of questions and dilemmas facing families in our society today. When does society intervene in a family? What institutions should be strengthened in order to better support families? How do we develop a consensus on family policy? What models and techniques work with families and under what circumstances? How do we evaluate and substantiate our efforts?

In other words, where have we been, where are we now, and what might the future hold? What successes have we had, and what critical challenges still face family practitioners and consumers?

Of course, volumes of literature and years of research are required to answer all of these questions. What lies before you is the modest attempt of four persons (who are experienced as family preservation practitioners, academic professors and researchers, consumers, and social workers) to provide a glimpse of the past, present and future of this movement called "family preservation and support."

We must consider the following.

- (1) What is family preservation; an approach and philosophy, or a new model program?
- (2) What are the philosophical, theoretical and value bases for family preservation practice?
- (3) What has evaluation and research on family preservation and support taught us to this point?
- (4) What impacts do all the various forms of policy have on families?
- (5) What benchmarks can we use to measure our success in the future?
- (6) What do collaborative services look like, and how do they work?

The trail we follow diverges into many pathways. Some are clear and well traveled, while others are barely visible. Some courses seem contradictory, or circular, perhaps, because where we want to go is still unclear. Hopefully, what we provide here will help clarify where we want to go with family preservation and support and what trail signs we need to recognize to stay on course.

Family preservation and support is an approach to practice and a philosophy guided by values which uphold the uniqueness, dignity, and essential role which families play in the health and well being of their members. In keeping with this philosophy, programs, policies and organizations are family focused. As an approach, family preservation provides services ranging from prevention to intensive in-home services based upon the family's strengths and needs (Ronnau & Sallee, 1993). With the passage of the Family Preservation and Support provisions of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (PL 103-66), approximately \$1 billion became available to states over a five-year period (GAO, 1995). Thus, "each state is faced with the challenge of conceptualizing and implementing system-wide family preservation and family support services" (Lloyd & Sallee, 1994, p. 3). These intensive efforts to build family preservation and support programs and policies signify a challenge to practitioners, families, policy makers and communities to bring about a paradigm change. Numerous initiatives over the past twenty years, including this journal, can provide many lessons to guide this transformation.

The need for systemic application of services was recognized in the permanency planning movement in the 1970's. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, Public Law 96-272, highlighted each child's right to a safe, permanent home. As the law was implemented, a disquieting fact emerged. Many parents were unable to make the changes being required of them, given the traditional types and levels of child welfare services at that time (Lloyd & Sallee, 1994). Therefore the number of family preservation programs has increased dramatically (Biegel & Wells, 1991; Nelson & Landsman, 1992; Nelson, Landsman & Deutelbaum, 1990). Family preservation is being used successfully in a number of arenas, including health care (COFO, Family Policy Report, 1992), juvenile delinquency (Schwartz, AuClaire, & Harris, 1991), substance abuse (Jiordano, 1991), severe emotional disabilities (Yelton & Friedman, 1991), the poor (Ronnau & Marlow, 1993), and the elderly (Marlow, 1991; Raschko, 1991). While it is apparent that the "time is right" for family preservation and support, expansion into new arenas increases the need for this promising approach. By responding to the need and spanning the domains of policy and practice, family preservation and support services heighten the challenge of definition and focus. Consequently, research and theory integral to policy and practice development have lagged.

## The Past

Since the first White House Conference on Children in 1909, our nation has struggled to advance family supports in order to keep children and families together. Consider some of the benchmarks in this one-hundred year agenda. We created mothers' pensions during the progressive era, with the belief that no child should be placed in an institution merely because the sole caregiver was at work. In fact, historically, it was believed that no mother should be expected to be both a full-time parent and employee. Mothers' pensions were succeeded by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), first known as Aid to Dependent Children during

the depression, followed by special needs grants in the 1960's, flex funds, intensive family services, and skill based family capacity building in the 1980's and 1990's. Over the course of this century, we have come to recognize that, despite the best intentions, the state often fails to be the best parent (Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; Horejsi, 1979; Eastman, 1979; Poulin, 1985; Sallee, Eastman & Marlow, 1989). We also now recognize that many families will require services, resources, and support to fulfill their essential responsibility of raising children.

Family preservation services, particularly the intensive programs, evolved out of the child welfare and mental health arenas. Funded through Title IV-A and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act; and Medicaid, these services have increased our optimism for the potential of success of many families, which in the past would have been ignored. Key program characteristics such as services tailored to the family's unique needs, a strengths focus and respect and attention to cultural resources are now being applied system-wide through the new Family Preservation and Support Act.

A major challenge of early intensive family preservation programs was to protect their distinguishing features. These features included caseloads of two to four families, a very limited time frame, clear goals, and extraordinary flexibility. In their efforts to maintain the integrity and their uniqueness, program designers and foundation funding sources required that family preservation be defined and delivered in ways that could be easily described, taught, and replicated (Massinga & Cargar, 1991). As is true in any paradigm shift, control was considered important to assure that basic program components were not lost. Concerns for the integrity of these family preservation models were heightened as they expanded from the private into the public sector.

During the 1980's, growing out of the White House Conference on the Family, concerns for the impact of policy upon families increased in many states. Family impact studies were completed not only in child welfare, but also in mental health, Aid to Dependent Children, in schools and even taxation and revenue policies. Just as focused efforts are made to protect the earth through the Environmental Protection Impact Statements, so impact studies identify how state and federal policies impact families (Johnson, 1979; Lloyd & Sallee, 1990).

Growing out of these efforts, we have worked to develop initiatives which, in broad terms, seek to support and preserve the family as a basic institution in our society. Over the years we have witnessed attempts, now being implemented with renewed vigor, to dismantle initiatives that have been part of an ever growing yet fragile welfare state. With alarm, at the same time we consider what it means to successfully launch family preservation and support programs in our communities and states, we see that not only are families in need under fire, but also the very initiatives designed to help them - - both are in need of our resolve.

These challenges reflect the practice arenas. We may work diligently to unify a family only to discover that the child has been killed by gang-land gun fire outside their front door. Or we

might find that the family is evicted and dispersed into cross-town shelters. Are we destined to be today's policy and program pioneers whose daily advances become tomorrow's antithesis? On a more hopeful note, there is much to be learned from these challenges. As change agents and advocates for families, we must be mindful of who the ultimate beneficiaries of our efforts must be.

Family preservation and support services should be key components of a "long term care, policy agenda" for families and children, and part of a United States family protection agenda that includes a family bill of rights. The Family Preservation and Support Act of 1993 with its increased funding levels offers opportunities to expand the application of family preservation to a full array of services (Lloyd & Sallee, 1994; GAO, 1995).

## The Present

### Definitional Challenges

While family preservation has grown dramatically employing millions of dollars in private and public funding and has helped thousands of families across this country, it is not without its detractors (Davis, 1991; Bernard, 1992; Gelles, 1993; Wells, 1994; Schuerman, Rzepnicki, Littell & Budde, 1992). As with any other innovation, it should not be portrayed as a cure-all for the nation's social problems. To be most effective, it is important that practitioners, program developers and policy makers implement family preservation and support services from a common conceptual and theoretical framework. Conflicting definitions make it difficult for practitioners to collaborate and for administrators to sell this important approach to funding agencies and policy makers.

The absence of a commonly accepted definition of family preservation and support is well documented (Maluccio, 1991; Bernard, 1992; Ronnau & Sallee, 1992; GAO, 1995). Unlike intensive family preservation services, family support programs are less likely to follow a particular service delivery model. Family support programs "are often not clearly delineated as services, maybe multidisciplinary and strategies may overlap" (GAO, 1995, p. 31). Family centered child welfare services are a wide variety of programs with different titles (Nelson, Landsman & Deutelbaum, 1990). Numerous labels have been applied to family preservation: family-based services, home based services, in-home services, family-centered, family-focused; while "family preservation and support services" are identified in the current Family Preservation and Support Act (Leverington & Bryce, 1991; Cole & Duva, 1990; Nelson, Landsman & Deutelbaum, 1990; Nelson & Landsman, 1992).

Sudia (1993) states that the family-based services term was coined in response to Bryce and Lloyd's report, "Family-centered home-based services" and that Peter Forsythe and Betsy Cole originated the term, "Family Preservation." "In many instances, these terms are regarded as

synonymous which leaves a whole range of other programs feeling excluded, consequently presenting a political liability in gaining financial support” (Sudia, 1993, p. 8).

Ronnau and Sallee (1993), utilizing a Delphi methodology, surveyed 115 family preservation and support experts across the country, resulting in the definition presented earlier as well as a set of principles and values. The study respondents were in key positions nationally to influence the family preservation and support movement. While there was approximately a 70% agreement on the definition, unanimity was lacking and critical questions were raised of conceptual clarity for potential funding agencies, legislators, practitioners and consumers. A much higher level of agreement was noted among the respondents on the values and principles which guide family preservation and support. These are:

1. The definition of "family" is varied and each family should be approached as a unique system;
2. People of all ages can best develop, with few exceptions, by remaining with their family or relying on them as important resources;
3. Families have the potential to change, and most troubled families want to do so;
4. The dignity and right to privacy of all family members should be respected;
5. Family members themselves are crucial partners in the helping process;
6. The family's ethnic, cultural, religious background, values and community ties are important resources to be used in the helping process;
7. Policies at the program, community, state, and national levels should be formulated to strengthen, empower and support families.

Arising from this definitional quagmire are four main issues as identified by Ronnau and Sallee (1993). One is the critical need for clear definitions of family and support even though many of the principles and values identified by Ronnau and Sallee are found in the Family Preservation and Support Act definition. Secondly, prevalence of funding from two major foundations has dramatically influenced family preservation through a tightly controlled approach. As an Edna McConnell Clark Foundation report stated, “But endorsing just one intervention alienated some service providers, isolated Homebuilders from the home-based community, and created divisiveness among advocates and practitioners (Notkin, 1994, p. 5).”

Third, political groups have rallied around the major models further hindering progress towards a common definition and unified effort. As Friedman (1992, p. 9) states, “the costs of ideological battles are counted in lost energy, loss of resources, loss of community in our field, and a loss of integrative, creative staff effort.” The reality is that as with most significant developments in the social service arena, family preservation owes its prominence to a convergence of factors (Mannes, 1991; Maluccio, 1991; Sallee, 1991) and has benefitted from the leadership provided by many.

While these concerns are real, there is reason for optimism given the apparent commitment by our national policy makers to the principles and values which underlie family preservation. Agreement on service components is emerging as “family preservation and family support services emphasize safety; a focus on the family; and a service-delivery approach that is flexible, accessible, coordinated and culturally relevant” (GAO, 1995, p. 4).

“Family preservation services are typically designed to help families (including adoptive and extended families) at risk or in crisis. Services may be designed to (1) prevent foster care placement, (2) reunify families, (3) place children in other permanent living arrangements, such as adoption or legal guardianship, (4) provide follow up care to reunified families, (5) provide respite care for parents and other caregivers, and/or (6) improve parenting skills . . .

Family support services are primarily community-based preventive activities designed to promote the well-being of children and families. Services are designed to (1) increase the strength and stability of families (including adoptive, foster, and extended families), (2) increase parents’ confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, (3) afford children a stable and supportive family environment, and (4) otherwise enhance child development . . .” (GAO, 1995).

Carol Williams, Associate Commissioner of the U.S. Children’s Bureau, states that her vision for the Family Preservation and Support Act encourages states and agencies to 1) think big in systems change, 2) create a vision for children and families through values and a shift in spending patterns from crisis intervention to prevention efforts and 3) to focus on principles not models. The regulations allow states wide latitude in developing their plans as long as the following principles are incorporated:

1. children and all family members must be protected,
2. services must be family focused,
3. services must be community-based, and culturally and psychologically available,
4. a strengths perspective,
5. a continuum of services is developed, and
6. planning should be very inclusive of all groups (Williams, 1994).

While the definition of family preservation and support remains somewhat elusive, we have made major strides towards consensus. Perhaps some of the confusion evolves from the fact that family preservation and support originated in child welfare but is now successfully applied in many other settings. There will always be ambiguities inherent in the concept of family preservation and support. This is because family preservation connotes 1) a desired outcome, 2) the direction intervention will take 3) and the types of relationships which will be established, not a recipe imposed upon all families regardless of their needs and resources.



While there is wide-spread agreement on the values and principles behind the movement, we are well advised to look beyond our achievements to our critics, set-backs and current barriers. We might ask, if family preservation is the solution, what is the problem? Is the problem out-of-home placement? Family stress that goes unmitigated? The need for permanency planning? Children at risk of being raised without biological families or other sources? Is it one of these, or a combination? In fact, some of the most provocative feedback comes from critics of family preservation. Issues such as risk assessment, cost effectiveness and evaluation continue to be raised. Critics also observe a lack of carefully controlled research on family preservation service models and their differential outcomes.

### Lessons Learned from Research and Evaluation

We live in an age of accountability (Briar, 1974), therefore, scrutiny of service delivery systems is a reality of life. While critics and supporters agree that the movement is having a profound effect on the delivery of services to children, youth and families criticism, in large part, stems from a lack of identifiable research and program evaluation outcome results. In fact, family preservation has been subjected to more research and evaluation than any other field of children's services. An extensive review of the research literature may be found in a number of places (Schene, 1994; Tracy, 1995), including Marianne Berry's article in this volume.

Four major themes emerge as a consequence of the definitional ambiguity and related challenges in operationalizing and specifying terms and process of family preservation. First, how do you evaluate a movement? We certainly know more about how to evaluate programs and work with individual families, yet how do you evaluate a philosophy or an approach to practice? Gelles (1993) and Wells (1994), among others, have identified the apparent lack of grounded theory underlying family preservation practice. Gelles (1993) has noted that too many studies lack empirical support for their initial assumptions and few existing studies "meet even the most minimum standards of scientific evidence" (Gelles, 1993, p. 539). Clearly, a major strength of family preservation is its appeal as a philosophy, policy, and set of programs. Yet, without concurrent evidence to guide and inform practice and policy the momentum of the past decade may be lost. We need to combine grounded theory and develop research strategies so that practice driven theory and data may help guide program development and provide a cornerstone of the family preservation and support movement.

The second issue regarding research and evaluation of family preservation is the methodology itself. For a number of reasons most of the methodologies used in family preservation research, have failed to provide the rigor necessary to inform practitioners and policy makers. Current tools are unable to account for multiple variables, including the number of different systems which are typically involved in the change process. Program evaluation is difficult in the best of circumstances but is even more complicated because the "subjects" of family preservation research range from an individual family member to the entire community. Furthermore, a

program's history and developmental stage must be considered, just as we assess a family's developmental stage as we work with them.

This leads to the third research and evaluation issue, measuring and examining process rather than outcomes. Overwhelmingly, the evaluations conducted on family preservation programs to date have looked at specific outcomes. This includes avoiding the placement of the child outside of the home and recidivism rates. The lack of a clear definition of family preservation and how to operationalize "success," whether in terms of avoiding out-of-home placement or improving the family's functioning, have been cited as flaws in a number of national studies (Yuan, McDonald, Wheeler, Struckman-Johnson & Rivest, 1990; Gelles, 1993; Wells, 1994). When researchers have difficulty defining an outcome, it is understandable that we see results ranging from unqualified success to high levels of skepticism.

Developing family preservation programs have been evaluated using outcome standards. This clearly violates basic principles of program evaluation which requires the evaluation of process towards goals until a program fully matures and can stand on its own. We believe that this maturing process in most family preservation programs requires at least five years, considering the context in which most of them have begun and the new techniques and strategies required. When you add into this mix of variables community values and political factors, it's only fair that programs be up and running before they are subjected to rigorous evaluation.

To us, successful program evaluation entails identifying and reporting positive results that can be used to improve the manner in which we work with families and communities. A major study that failed in this regard is the often cited Illinois Family First Program (Shuerman et al., 1993). It evaluated approximately thirty private agencies, many in the early stages of development, implementing numerous and varied models, on the basis of only one major outcome, out-of-home placement. The popular press, as well as the critics, picked up on this sole criterion measure as evidence that family preservation did not work. This leads us to the major difficulty with family preservation research and evaluation.

Program evaluation requires both technical and social skills. Fair and accurate evaluation of emerging programs, during a paradigm shift in a highly charged political arena, requires process evaluation. Few children, their parents or family service workers can comfortably engage in a sophisticated political debate with policy makers from the county, state, or national levels. Given that family preservation is such a value-laden field of practice, the media and popular press are easily misled by research which overstates the success of a family preservation program or unfairly evaluates it during the early developmental phase.

We agree that the research and evaluation on family preservation is not definitive in terms of its effectiveness in preventing placements in the long term or permanently improving family functioning (Schene, 1994). However, based upon anecdotal literature and experience, we do believe family preservation has a profound impact on families and communities. The inability

to definitively describe success may be more clearly attributed to the lack of grounded theory, inappropriate research technology and evaluation methodology, than to flaws in the basic principles and philosophy behind this new approach.

## What Family Preservation Mirrors in Us

All too often we hear family preservation practitioners say that at an earlier stage of their career, they did not have the ability to prevent an out-of-home placement or to reunify a particular child and family. These “breakthroughs” say as much about us as practitioners and policy advocates, as it does about family capacities and necessary conditions of change. Perhaps the next stages of practice development will advance our understanding of the ways in which family preservation and support can be facilitated.

For example, if it is our responsibility to motivate families, then practitioners need diverse sets of strategies and interventions upon which to draw. Some will need to be crafted by foster parents who help as reunification aids others, by child protection workers serving as mediators and motivators in the initial stages of the helping process, and still others by families in partnership with each other to provide ongoing support, incentives and mentoring. In some cases, encouragement will come from foster care reviewers who may encourage families to follow through with case plans.

Many unanswered questions remain. For example, how might these motivational skills be used to engage other professions? How many practitioners from other professions today despair over their belief that families cannot change? How many bequeath this negative attitude to families and children who, in turn, give up? Can we ask teachers to be part of a family preservation and support agenda? Can they, in turn, find ways to build helpful, empowering relationships rather than blaming parents for children's learning and school problems? Can teachers be family capacity builders, too? Can we even go one step beyond and link service relocation in or near schools and promote schools in their role of family stabilization, preservation and support (Lawson, 1995)? Furthermore, what good is it if we are forced to do reunification and placement prevention work within an environment of hostility, resentment and blame toward the parent? Unless teachers, nurses, law enforcement and other key service providers are collectively invited to be family support and prevention activists, how can we build a more coherent community agenda for family support and preservation?

Instances in which there are as many as fourteen providers delivering services to various members of the family, unknown to one another, is a telling sign of today's service delivery challenges. These challenges signal the family preservation and support agenda to be cohesive across professions and disciplines; otherwise we will continue to respond to crisis which we could have prevented. The lack of family preservation and support initiatives and collaboration manifest as “a prevention gap.”

## The Future

### Building a Family Investment Model

To close this prevention gap, we must provide holistic approaches to both families and practitioners. Many family preservation programs have been launched with existing child welfare, maternal and child health funds shifted into more strategic uses (Hooper-Briar & Lawson, 1994). Out-of-home care, foster care, and other budget lines are being redeployed to accelerate placement prevention programs. Rather than seeing family preservation and reunification services as "add on" programs and service enhancements, they may need to be reconceptualized as investment initiatives. We must demonstrate that there is a more effective way of expending funds and energy for both workers and families.

As family preservation and support are seen as investments, we will be obliged to invent even better predictive tools and establish data bases inclusive of multiple indicators of relapse and risks for system re-entry. These steps may help ensure that chronically fragile families will not be forced to re-enter the system in order to receive help.

It is estimated that 75 to 90% of our service dollars go to crisis intervention, such as child protection, rather than prevention and early intervention. Moreover, it is estimated that families themselves provide up to 90% of the counseling, teaching, norm enforcement and health care they need despite the absence of supports, resources and skills. Thus, the family investment plan is also a family support and prevention gap strategy. When families are without support they should not have to injure themselves and those they love in order to get attention or help.

There are many promising pilot programs in which families are served by child protection workers before a case is formally opened. For example, in Boise, Idaho, early evaluation data reflect an 87% diversion rate from open child protection caseloads.<sup>1</sup> Child protection workers in school based services are able to respond to referrals from teachers with resources from Title IV-A funds to help families whose neglectful behaviors might have kept them in the system for a long time. In preventing families from entering child protection services, family support centers in Missouri reflect an 80% diversion rate<sup>2</sup>. Such findings show promise for the

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Data presented in panel presentation by Mary Anne Saunders, Theresa Tanowry, and Mark Lusk at the National Conference on Expanding Partnerships for Vulnerable Children, Youth and Families, Alexandria, VA.

2

Personal communication with Lois Pierce, University of Missouri; Statistics from State of Missouri-Division of Social Services, Department of Research and Evaluation, February 1995.

development of more innovations so that child protection involves immediate family support and systems diversion initiatives.

### Resources: An Achilles Heel for Family Preservation

When families have the support they need, the referrals to child protection are often very low. When families enter the system and lack the resources to follow through on court ordered plans, the consequences may be dire for the child, family and system. It is estimated that between 50 and 90% of families lack the resources to follow through on court ordered case plans<sup>3</sup>. How can systems already steeped in family preservation programs continue to operate without the requisite resources for critical action steps? How many families have to scrounge in dumpsters in order to make ends meet? How many will continue to be stripped of AFDC when their children are removed and yet required to attend counseling, parenting classes and drug and alcohol treatment?

### The Role of Universities in Sharing the Family Support and Preservation Agenda

When there is a child death or other high profile case, what role does the university play in mobilizing more research and technological supports to predict behavior? How often do we elicit from the very institutions that are charged to solve the problems of the day the efforts that are required to create more helpful supports for practice? Should not family support and preservation be reflected in university mission statements and supported, especially, in public universities (Lawson & Hooper-Briar, 1994)?

It was the family support and community problem solving agendas which catapulted some of the helping professions from their community bases to universities (Sallee, Lloyd, Ronnau, Sandau-Beckler, Mannes & Chandler, 1993). So, too, did the professions associated with these movements become a focus for the university. Seeking to be more relevant and responsive to the needs of the day, universities began to bring to their campuses the social workers, nurses, teachers, and law enforcement practitioners who otherwise might have remained in settlement houses, lab schools, hospital based nursing training or neighborhood precincts. Despite the recent rise of partnerships between social work education and child welfare agencies, as well as schools of education and public schools, there is little concerted effort to build cross-disciplinary and professional missions to sustain the family preservation and support policy agenda. In fact, our very definitions of family centered practice and support vary. Depending on the school, it may mean family involvement or family therapy or that families are empowered to be their own

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<sup>3</sup> National Foster Care Review Board Meeting, March 1994.

case managers and problem solvers and to build mutual aid models with one another (Sallee & Lloyd, 1991). We must build curriculum from core values and principles allowing for diversity in approaches (Jensen, Maluccio & Sallee, 1993).

## Toward Family Centric Policy Making and a First Call Agenda

Despite the plethora of family related policies and systems, our nation lags behind many others in family health. In the United States we have never created a national family policy. If a comprehensive framework were developed, it might promote a new century of family centric policy making<sup>4</sup>. This would compel all systems that touch the lives of families to promote and protect family functioning by having family needs and resource challenges explicitly addressed as a top national priority.

To further advance the agenda, at least among the professional community, families and children would have first call on resources. The conditions that led to the child and family movement during the progressive era are every bit as challenging now, albeit different. To build upon the movement, we must organize families as well as other stake-holding professions and service sectors. Family preservation and support cannot belong to child welfare practitioners alone but must become the organizing framework for a social movement that is, at its core, an advocacy and a "first call" agenda in every community and state. Universities, too, must play a pivotal role in this shared agenda (Terpstra, 1992; Jensen, Maluccio & Sallee, 1993).

## Conclusion

As we examine the past two decades and look forward into the next millennium, we anticipate a steady progression and expansion for the family preservation and support agenda. We have identified benchmarks (see Appendix A) which reflect the possibilities in the different developmental stages of this agenda.

Family preservation and support clearly has a history of being practice driven with intense family-centered, home-based services and strong research and evaluation components. Family support has a legacy of strong consumer involvement and specific prevention programs. The present finds us with federal legislation and funding tentatively in place. This funding provides a catalyst to this major paradigm shift in the provision of services and care for families and communities. The future challenges us to learn to collaborate and move from a categorical

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The idea of Family Centric Policy is being developed for a forthcoming book on the International Year of the Family; *International Family Policy*, Sage, co-authored by Hal A. Lawson, Katharine Hooper-Briar, Chuck Hennon, and Allen Jones.

problem oriented service system to designing integrated family focused programs which incorporate family preservation and support principles. The opportunity is here to tear down the walls which separate programs from the community, state and federal levels and move to one playing field. Striving to blend funding, provide training in a common set of values and principles, and practicing from a strengths perspective are challenges which will face us for many years.

Thanks to the contributions of family preservation pioneers, the current system has many strengths to build upon. As we design an array of services and move from a deficit model to a strength perspective, the families with whom we work can come to the table as partners to preserve the family as society's most treasured institution.

## Appendix A

As we look back over the past two decades and ahead to the next, we predict a steady progression and expansion for family preservation and support agenda. Here are some benchmarks to look for along the way.

### **BENCHMARKS: FROM FIRST TO SECOND GENERATION FAMILY PRESERVATION POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH**

#### First Generation Benchmarks

- Pilots of intensive social services with demonstrable results in keeping children and families together through placement prevention
- Statewide policies supporting family preservation and program expansion across each state
- Philosophy of Family Preservation introduced in several kinds of state legislation and in at least 50% of the states
- Family preservation practices required of all subcontracting service providers with state and local government child welfare agencies
- Family centered and family preservation principles used throughout child welfare, in child protective services, foster care and reunification support and adoption
- Diverse implementation strategies and divisiveness over models of "best practices"
- Family Preservation philosophy able to withstand child deaths, to become a sustainable agenda at State and local levels
- Program expansion without theoretical bases
- Federal policy developed and philosophy captured in several pieces of federal legislation
- Poor research and research that has contradictory results
- Lack of clarity in definitions

#### Second Generation Benchmarks

- Family Support and Preservation services become entitlements
- Laws are drafted that treat every abuse attack as a sign that service systems got there too late
- Reduction in punishment syndromes toward families from teachers, child welfare workers, police; families are asked what services and supports they need, what the necessary conditions are for their being more successful. Such data drive legislative bodies
- Universities adopt a family preservation and support agenda as one of their missions in surrounding communities and regions
- Family supports and services are delivered by families to one and another through assistance networks



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