

Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD)

“O.U.R. Children” Proposal: Revised

By

Harold Johnson

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Problem:

Child abuse and neglect (CA/N) is a reality that is experienced by children with disabilities at a rate that is three times that experienced by their nondisabled peers (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000). Even at this accelerated level, the incidences of CA/N among children with disabilities is considered to be significantly underreported (Sullivan, Brookhouser & Scanlan, 2000).

All educational professionals are mandatory reporters of child maltreatment (Crosson-Tower, 2003). Unfortunately, many professionals, particularly in the area of deafness, do not have the knowledge or skills needed to observe, understand, or respond to possible incidences of CA/N (MacDougall, 2000). Further analysis concerning professionals knowledge base indicates that:

- Professionals lack of knowledge re. signs and symptoms of abuse & reporting procedures.
- Professionals perceived negative consequences for client, e.g., the reporting of suspected CA/N may put the child in greater danger.
- Professionals negative attitude toward Child Protective Services (CPS), e.g., the system does not work, nothing will occur as a result of the report
- Perceived negative consequences for professionals, e.g., the professional could be taken to court for an incorrect referral

Alvarex, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004; Kenny, 2001 & 2004)

As such, many professionals are insufficiently prepared to observe, understand and respond to possible incidences of CA/N experienced by their children.

Limited research has been conducted concerning the incidence of CA/N as experienced by children with disabilities (Horner-Johnson & Drum, 2006). While Durity and Oxman (2006) presented a summary of the research in relation to children who are deaf/hard of hearing (d/hh), available investigations, with the exception of Sullivan and Knutson (2000), are challenged due

to their primary reliance upon non-representative samples of children who are d/hh. Even given this limitation, the available findings are startling:

- Obinna, Krueger, Osterbaan & Sadusky, 2005
 - Estimated that eighty-three percent of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- Sullivan, Vernon & Scanlon, 1987
 - While the rate of sexual abuse among children who are hearing is one in four girls and one in ten boys, available evidence indicates that 54% of deaf boys and 50% of deaf girls experience sexual abuse.
- Willis & Vernon, 2002
 - The greater prevalence of sexual abuse experienced by children who are d/hh, along with the communication problems that they frequently experience, is considered to lead to significantly higher rates of “serious emotional disturbance” found for deaf vs., hearing children, i.e., 8-22% for deaf, vs. 2-10% for hearing children.

In spite of their increased risk for CA/N, many professionals who work with children with disabilities lack the preparation, data, strategies, and resources needed to protect their students (Kendall-Tackett, Tallaferro, & Little, 2005). While web and hybrid technologies can be used to address this problem (Kenny, 2007), deaf specific information and expertise is needed.

Solution:

CEASD and its members represent a vast knowledge base of both “what works,” and “what is needed” to enhance teaching and learning in the field of Deaf Education and to protect children who are d/hh from experiencing CA/N. This knowledge, as reflected by CEASD’s 2002 position paper entitled “Safe Schools for all Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children” includes an in depth awareness and understanding of the incidence, impact, and prevention of CA/N as experienced by children who are d/hh. While many CEASD member schools have used this knowledge to design curricula, implement training, and establish policy, the resulting “lessons learned,” instructional materials, and administrative protocols are not widely known, or used in the broader field of Deaf Education. Sharing what we know, and learning what we need, represent a critical steps in the effort to reduce the incidence/duration, and impact of CA/N as experienced by children who are d/hh. This proposal represents an opportunity for CEASD and its members to share their knowledge and expertise in a collaborative effort to address the problem of CA/N in the field of Deaf Education.

Proposal:

CEASD leadership:

1. Agree to include the topic of CA/N, as experienced by children who are d/hh, as an agenda item, for one Board meeting a year, for the next three years.

2. Task one individual to work with Harold Johnson for the next three years concerning the topic of CA/N, as experienced by children who are d/hh.
3. Harold Johnson, in collaboration with other organizational representatives, and the designated CEASD individuals will:
 - a. Year 1: document, to the extent possible, how CEASD member organization has/is/plans to address CA/N in relation to informing parents and preparing professionals, plus, resulting “lessons learned,” questions, concerns and suggestions. Synthesis of the resulting information to be presented at a CEASD Board meeting.
 - b. Year 2: design, offer (not require), and evaluate a pilot study to further inform parents of children who are d/hh and prepare the professionals who work with them how to Observe, Understand, Respond and Protect children who are d/hh from experiencing CA/N. Synthesis of the resulting information to be presented at a CEASD Board meeting.
 - c. Year 3: offer, but not require, CEASD member organizations a program to further enhance programs to effectively and efficiently inform parents of children who are d/hh, and prepare the professionals who work with them, how to Observe, Understand, Respond and Protect children who are d/hh from experiencing CA/N. Synthesis of the resulting information to be presented at a CEASD Board meeting.

Budget:

No funds are requested from the CEASD Board to support the activities outlined in this proposal. Harold Johnson, in collaboration with other organizational representatives will seek Federal and foundation funds to support the activities of this proposal.

Outcomes:

The following outcomes are projected to occur if CED and its member organization accept this proposal:

1. CEASD and its members will be further recognized for efforts to prevent and respond to incidences of CA/N as experienced by children who are d/hh.
2. CEASD member organizations will be:
 - a. recognized for the CA/N related work they have already carried out and assisted in disseminating the resulting “lessons learned,” policies, procedures, “best practices” and expertise that have been gained as a result of this work;
 - b. assisted in the design, piloting, and possible implementation of programs to further inform, and when appropriate, prepare their members to **Observe**,

Understand, Respond and Protect children who are d/hh from experiencing CA/N; and

3. CEASD, its member organizations and collaborative partners will be both prepared and positioned to seek additional Federal/foundation funds to support collaboratively efforts to reduce the incidence, duration, and impact of CA/N as experienced by children who are d/hh.

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