

# METH AND CHILD WELFARE:



## Promising Solutions for Children, Their Parents and Grandparents



requires interventions within the entire family network. “Now, it is increasingly common for both the parent and the youth to be experimenting with or addicted to meth,” says Kevin Frank, Regional Administrator for the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

One particularly promising treatment model is comprehensive family treatment, which provides treatment for parents and their children. A 2003 evaluation of 24 residential family-based treatment programs showed successful outcomes for mothers and their children, including 60% of mothers who remained clean and sober six months after discharge. The study also showed that 44% of children were returned to their mothers from foster care. In addition to the benefits they provide to women and children, comprehensive family treatment programs are also a cost-saving alternative to foster care. In New York State, for example, effective family treatment costs \$25,000 per family compared to the \$30,000 average cost to support one child in the foster care system and the \$30,000 cost of incarcerating a mother in a state or federal prison.<sup>52</sup>

#### **CALIFORNIA FAMILY SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT MODEL REACHES OUT TO PARENTS AND GRANDFAMILIES IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

Substance abuse treatment programs understand now more than ever that in order to treat an individual, you have to treat the family. Grounded in this philosophy, SHIELDS for Families is a comprehensive substance abuse treatment program serving the Compton and Watts communities of South Central Los Angeles. With 260 employees and an annual budget of \$15 million dollars, SHIELDS provides programs in multiple sites that include substance abuse programs, mental health programs, family and adoption support, family preservation services, a community assessment center, a vocational services center, 16 vans for transportation, and a food bank.

“Grandparents and other relative caregivers are integrated into every aspect of the services we provide,” says Dr. Kathryn Icenhower, the program’s executive director. “From serving grandparent caregivers who are struggling with addiction themselves to teaching relatives how to support a child’s reunification with the parent, paying attention to the family is at the heart of everything we do.”

With one of its most comprehensive services, SHIELDS operates 126-units of low-income housing at three apartment complexes. The Exodus Program is located at Keith Village and provides comprehensive substance abuse treatment to approximately 45 families. Each year, the program serves approximately 60 women and 250 children who stay in the community facility for periods that vary from a year to 18 months. On-site programs include a treatment program, a child development center, a program for youth, a playground, and a community room. Of those parents who enter the program, 83% have an open case with child protective services, although 43% have custody of at least some of their children.

In addition to providing supportive services to other family members and significant others, the Exodus Program helps parents learn better parenting skills, achieve economic and social self-sufficiency and find housing to help keep their families together with the support of extended family members and the broader community. Upon program completion, an average 80% of those women who complete the program remain drug free at 6 and 12 months post-treatment. The completion rate has remained between 65 and 75 percent for the past 12 years.

*In the family treatment program, I knew that my wife and children were safe and healing. That really eased my mind. I could focus on my treatment. But I could also heal with my family.*

**– DARREN NOBLE, OHIO  
FATHER IN RECOVERY  
FROM METH ADDICTION**