Preventing Violence: Early Family Intervention Suggested for American Indian Youth

by Rebekah Raymond

Given higher levels of violence reported among American Indian younger adolescents, interventions should begin at early ages.

The master's research of Jim McLean, recent GSAN graduate, focused on violence among Native American adolescents. The study examined the responses of nearly 14,000 in-school, reservation-based American Indian and Alaskan Native youth from 55 tribes across the country who participated in a school-based survey of health and risk factors. Violent behaviors and family connectedness were among the factors assessed in the survey.

Although their homicide rates are not the highest among all adolescent groups, American Indian youth are involved in homicides to a greater extent than comparable groups of Caucasian youth. Furthermore, American Indian adoles-
cents have the highest rates of victimization for any violent crime in any age group.

In this study, about 12% of the group reported a history of violent behavior, defined as fighting three or more times within the past year. A greater percentage of boys reported involvement in violence than girls did (14.3% vs. 9.4%), and younger adolescents of both genders were more likely to report violent behaviors than older youth.

According to McLean, the family has potential to be a “strong source of resiliency for adolescents.” This is supported by other research. In 1990, a report from the Public Health Service/Indian Health Service at White Earth Clinic in White Earth, Minnesota, found that more time spent with the family is associated with lower levels of delinquent behavior.

A Caring School Climate is Most Important in Achieving Good Academic Outcomes

by Kristin Geenen and Rebekah Raymond

School climate is the single greatest influence on educational outcomes of Native American students according to a recent study of urban youth in the Minneapolis public school system.

Researchers from the University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the Minneapolis Ginew/Golden Eagle Program, have been working to understand strengths and stresses affecting urban American Indian youth. Data have been collected from approximately 300 American Indian students during the 1995-96 academic year and the following summer as part of the University of Minnesota study called the Indian Youth Resiliency Impact Study (IRIS). Students responded to surveys asking about a host of factors affecting their health and well-being, such as getting along with family, friends, and in school; Indian culture and values; youth health; and drug and alcohol use.

State and local educational statistics indicate that American Indian students are at great risk for school failure. The results of the 1996 Minnesota Basic Standard Test found that 60% of American Indian students failed the math test compared to 28% of the general population, and 68% of American students failed the reading test compared to 45% of the general population (Roy Wilkins Center, 1997). District-wide standardized achievement assessments found that American Indian students in Minneapolis performed well below the district average. Furthermore, the drop-out rates for American Indian students are alarming. Data from the 1995-96 school year indicated that roughly 18 of the 206
Welcome!

Welcome to **Linda Halcón, B.S.N., M.P.H., RN** who joins Graduate Studies in Adolescent Nursing this fall as our Associate Education Specialist. Linda received both her B.S.N. and M.P.H. in Public Health Nursing from the University of Minnesota and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in epidemiology focusing on infectious diseases. She has worked with adolescents in sexually transmitted diseases, chemical dependency treatment, college health, and sexual assault service settings. She has also worked in public health administration in Minnesota and internationally in Kenya, Madagascar, Sudan, and Iraq.

Welcome also to **Sarah Stoddard, B.S.N., RN, PHN**, who joins the Graduate Studies in Adolescent Nursing staff as Coordinator of GSAN Outreach and Student Services. Stoddard is a GSAN student who received a B.S. in nursing from Mankato State University, Mankato, MN. She has been employed as a public health nurse for Blue Earth County for the past three years, working with pregnant and parenting teens.

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**Ethosolutions introduces SkillSight as the next generation online service for job-seekers**

In November, EthoSolutions, providers of the industry-standard JobSpan, introduced healthcare professionals and students to the future of online job-searches, SkillSight. SkillSight builds on JobSpan’s sophisticated job-matching technology and provides a solution to the problem of accurate career planning in today’s accelerated healthcare labor market. SkillSight enables professionals and students who use JobSpan to discover how they rate nationwide among peers in each of their specialities, on a skill-to-skill basis. Because JobSpan is based on skills, not keywords, applicants can capture the precise skill sets demanded by today’s leading healthcare employers.

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**Job Announcement**

The Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Schools of Nursing and Medicine, Dept. of Pediatrics are seeking an experienced nurse practitioner in adolescent health either from pediatrics, family or women’s health. This person will have a shared appointment in the School of Nursing and Dept. of Pediatrics with responsibilities to both undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as to patient care in clinical and community-based settings. Minimum requirements are a Master’s degree in nursing, nurse practitioner certification (in North Carolina), and 3 years experience as an adolescent health nurse practitioner, including gynecological care.

Submit vitae and references to Margarete Sandelowski, PhD, RN, FAAN, Professor and Chair, Dept of Health of Women and Children, Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Nursing, CB#7460, Carrington Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7460. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Males and minorities are encouraged to apply.

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**Graduate Studies in Adolescent Nursing: A master’s focus at the University of Minnesota**

Do you enjoy working with adolescents? If so, consider a Master’s of Science (M.S.) with a major in nursing at the University of Minnesota, where you can focus your graduate studies on adolescent health. The coursework is grounded in a public health nursing framework, integrating theory with clinical, research, and leadership skills.

As a full-time student, the master’s program can be completed in six quarters. Students can also earn a Master’s in Public Health (M.P.H.) or certification as a nurse practitioner concurrently with our program. Application deadlines are October 25, December 15, and April 15. For more information, contact the Graduate Studies in Adolescent Nursing office at (612) 624-3938 or e-mail adolnurs@tc.umn.edu. We look forward to hearing from you.
On March 4 through 8, 1998, the 30th annual Society for Adolescent Medicine meeting will be held in Atlanta, Georgia. Continuing the tradition of several years, this year's nursing research forum offers four paper presentations and four poster presentations of nursing research about adolescents. These are:

Carol Bandura Cowley, PNP, RNC, MSN, Boulder, CO: "To contracept or not? A prospective study of contraceptive use among adolescents with different degrees of motivation to avoid pregnancy"

Mary Mach Long, BSN, RN, with K. Friedl, L. Bearinger, M. Ireland, and T. Evans, Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN: "Nursing competence related to adolescent sexual health"

Mary Aruda, RN, MSN, C-PNP, Boston, MA: "Teens at initial pregnancy diagnosis"

Mary Riner, MN, Indianapolis, IN: "Violence risk and violence avoidance behaviors among adolescents"

Kathleen M. Hanna, PhD, RN, Laramie, WY: "An adolescent and young adult condom perception scale"

Rose Mays, PhD, RN, Indianapolis, IN: "How adequately are pediatric nurse practitioners assessing tobacco use risk with adolescents and parents?"

Maurice Melchionio, C-FNP, Boston, MA: "Health services utilized by homeless and HIV-positive adolescents: An innovative model"

Kathleen Sasonoff, RN, CS, MS, Boston, MA: "A model for addressing teen mothers' concerns during the newborn period"

In addition to the Nursing Research Forum, to be held Friday morning March 6, there will be a Nursing Networking Dinner the night before, to provide nurses with further opportunities to connect and share interests in practice and research. Several nurse researchers are presenting in the SAM plenary platform and poster sessions as well.

For further information and registration materials, contact Edie Moore, Administrative Director, Society for Adolescent Medicine, 1916 Copper Oaks Circle, Blue Springs, CO 64015, (816) 224-8010. We hope to see you there! □

Violence

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However, the influence of family connectedness on violence involvement appears to be different for boys and girls. In McLean's work, girls who feel they are surrounded by caring family members were less likely to report involvement in violence than girls who did not feel connected to their families. Only 8% of the "connected" girls reported involvement in violent behaviors, while about 13% of "non-family-connected" girls reported involvement in violence. Among boys, on the other hand, there was only a small difference in the proportion of "connected" and "non-family-connected" youth reporting involvement in violent behavior, 14.1% vs. 14.5% respectively. "Not surprisingly, adolescents experiencing family stress were more likely to be violent than those who were not."

Considering that "boys and girls take different paths toward violence, ...interventions addressing violent outcomes will have to take gender into account," wrote McLean. This study supports the notion that facilitating the relationships between adolescent American Indian girls and their families will lead toward decreased violence. However, further research is needed to find those factors influencing violent outcomes among adolescent American Indian boys.

McLean suggested that educational programs for parents, adolescents or families may provide a means for preventing violent behavior among American Indian youth. And according to McLean, the earlier we start building strong family relationships with young adolescents, the better. □

The primary author, Jim McLean, M.S., RN was supported in part by grant #MCJ-279185 from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, HRSA, DHHS. This research was prepared in fulfillment of requirements for the MS degree with a focus in adolescent nursing.
School climate
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Minneapolis American Indian 7th graders currently enrolled will actually graduate from high school by 12th grade, roughly 9%.

Students' perception of the supportiveness and approachability of their teachers was a major factor contributing to their perception of the school environment, according to IRIS research. The extent to which students are personally connected to their teachers and feel their teachers are approachable and caring, represents a powerful indicator of students' perceptions of the climate of their school. In addition, a strong relationship was found between school climate and students' motivation to achieve.

This is supported by other research as well. In a 1993 article published in Psychology in the Schools, Goodenow states that a student's sense of belonging or psychological membership is associated with academic achievement and motivation to achieve. A sense of belonging, fostered through social interactions with caring, supportive teachers, is thought to promote students' commitment to school norms, a sense of academic self-efficacy, motivation to achieve, and academic success. Students experiencing difficulties in negotiating a school culture that differs significantly from their culture of origin commonly cited caring, approachable teachers as instrumental to school success, as reported by Phelan in a 1994 article in the American Education Research Journal.

The fact that caring, approachable teachers are an asset to any student's success is probably no big surprise. However, the findings of this analysis shed light on their importance and suggest that they may have greater influence than any other factor.

There were additional conditions found to have a moderate effect on American Indian students' educational outcomes. These included parental involvement in education, motivation to achieve, and quality of instruction. In comparison, family income was found to have a negligible effect on educational outcomes. Indian-based educational programs seem to have a positive, although largely indirect effect.

In short, Indian-based programs, to some degree, appear to enhance school climate. Furthermore, the University of Minnesota study clearly demonstrates that schools should continue to emphasize safe and drug-free learning environments with supportive, caring teachers to improve the educational outcomes of American Indian students.

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