

## INTRODUCTION

As I set out to edit – and in many instance rewrite – this book I hoped I would get the chance to set the record straight on some of the things I had originally expressed. I also wanted to note some of the new and exciting things that are happening in the field. After all, in the five-plus years since the original book was written, I have grown as a professional and have engaged in more research. I have also come to realize that our field is changing rapidly and we have to devise and incorporate new ways of serving children, youth and their families.

While this work is technically a second edition, there are enough edits, changes and additions to the manuscript to make it a new book in its own right. There are new chapters: The Impact of No Physical Contact Policies; Managed Care, Mergers, Networks, and Accreditation; and Suggestions for Future Practice. The Workforce Crisis chapter was eliminated but its more important passages are included in this manuscript in various sections. The Educational Needs of Youth in Care chapter was removed but it will be available on my website for those who are interested.

Aside from the new chapters, the remainder of the book incorporates extensive revisions. There is also a glossary of field terms. It is hoped that all of these changes will make the work an even stronger and better resource, not only for direct-care workers, but also for supervisors, administrators, and clinicians. It should be noted, one of the core goals for writing and publishing the text was to stimulate critical thinking among all the professionals in our field.

In keeping with the ethos of the original offering, I tried to be as honest as I could in this text. At times, this has resulted in preaching to the choir. On other occasions I am strongly challenging that same group. It is my belief that as our field is changing we need to be doing even more to internally critique the system. Only by reviewing what we do well, what we don't do well, and addressing gaps in service needs and delivery can we adjust our programming and move forward.

I am proud to admit that I started out in this field as a direct-care worker, and I will never forget the potential that folks in this position have to connect with youth in care. I am also an administrator, advocate, researcher, lobbyist, trainer, historian, sports enthusiast, husband, and father. All of these voices come out in this book. Instead of trying to silence some and curtail others, I tried to find a way to use all of them, because our jobs in the residential setting require us to wear many hats. We are role models, teachers, parents, administrative assistants (completing

an abundance of paperwork, reports, and charts comes with the job), transporters, and the list goes on.

One belief I maintain passionately is that those who work with children in residential programs, and the families of youth in care, have one of the most important jobs in our society. Sure the work is tough and the pay is not the greatest, but we do have the chance to work with some special kids – and help families become whole again. Not many jobs give us the opportunity to go to bed at night knowing we had a positive impact in the lives of others. We make a difference in the world: one day, and one child and family at a time.

All of us who devote our professional lives to helping youth in residential placement have essential jobs. I only hope that this text helps in some way, both as a resource and as a stimulus for critical thinking within our profession.

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