

GRG NEWSLETTER



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference Highlights

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The second annual MT Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference took place this year in Great Falls, MT on June 23rd, 2007. Approximately 65 grandparents and social service personnel attended the event. It was great to see many familiar faces and meet new people as well.

The opening speaker for the day was author and nationally renowned speaker, Jane Middleton-Moz, Director of the Middleton-Moz Institute, a division of The Institute of Professional Practice. After speaking about values and the wisdom of our grandmothers, Jane turned to the topic of bullies and shared how the act of bullying and being bullied can extend into every aspect of our lives.

Sandy Bailey, Ph.D. and GRG Project Director, was on hand to make everyone feel welcome and offer valuable insight into children's attachment issues.

During lunch, Dr. Bethany Letiecq provided a brief summary of the legislation that was passed this last session that affects family caregivers. Then a representative from Max Baucus' office let the assembly know that she was there not only to represent Max, but to report back to him about what issues are important for grandparents raising grandchildren.

After lunch, a panel of state professionals gave general information and answered questions about the myriad of state services available for family caregivers. This was followed by a very fun, informative and interactive talk about financial and estate planning given by Extension's very own Marsha Goetting.

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Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

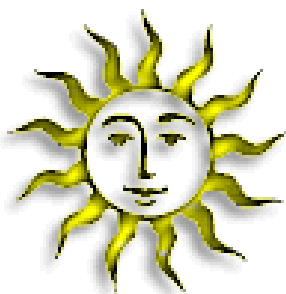
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Legislative Update and Correction

As we reported in the June newsletter, MT legislators passed 4 bills related to grandparents. Unfortunately, we made an error in our description of the first bill, Senate Bill 27.

To clarify, SB 27 addresses the US Supreme Court and Montana Supreme Court decisions regarding the constitutional rights of custodial parents to determine who a child may or may not have contact with by providing that before a District Court may grant grandparent-grandchild contact over the objection of a custodial parent, the District Court must inquire into the **fitness of the parent** and approve the petition for contact **only if the parent is found to be unfit and the contact is in the best interest of the child** or, if the court determines the parent to be a fit parent, the contact petitioned for is in the best interest of the child and the presumption in favor of the parent's wishes has been rebutted. Regrettably, this bill is a setback for grandparent visitation rights in Montana and is going against trends nationwide to give grandparents more visitation rights. We apologize for our error in reporting about this bill. Please check out the following webpage for further clarification: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2007/billhtml/SB0027.htm>. You can also contact the GRG Project for a more detailed discussion of this bill.

The other 3 bills passed by the MT legislature include Senate Bill 31, 48 and 49.

Senate Bill 31 allows for continued custody of a child by the caretaker relative following the voluntary surrender of the child by a parent of the child under circumstances indicating abandonment. Should the parent return seeking to take the child back, this bill allows a caretaker relative to maintain temporary custody of the child for 5 days pending completion of an affidavit and the order of the district court. During that 5-day period, the caretaker relative may not be deprived of the custody of the child by a peace officer or by the order of a court (except in certain circumstances). This bill goes into effect October 1, 2007. Go to <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2007/billhtml/SB0031.htm> to learn more about this important new law.

Senate Bill 48 provides means for caretaker relatives to seek and approve medical care and Senate Bill 49 allows caretaker relatives to enroll children in school, discuss school-related matters, and consent to school-related medical care under certain circumstances. SB 48 goes into effect October 1, 2007 while SB 49 became applicable July 1, 2007. You can find more information about these bills at <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2007/billhtml/SB0048.htm> and <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2007/billhtml/SB0049.htm>.

Childcare for Relative Caregivers

The Office of Public Assistance has a new program available to help relative caregivers offset the cost of childcare. Eligibility for this program will be determined by whether or not the child is eligible for a TANF child-only grant. There is no income test involved at this time, but there is a work requirement. A two-caregiver family would be required to work a minimum of 120 hours per month, while a single caregiver would be required to work a minimum of 60 hours per month. Please check with your local Office of Public Assistance for additional details and requirements.

Something Better Than Punishment

The following is an excerpt from the MSU Extension MontGuide entitled *Something Better Than Punishment*. A complete copy of this publication can be found at the internet site:

<http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt9717.html>



When we think of discipline, we may think of threats and punishment. They may be the most common ways that parents deal with their children's misbehavior. What is wrong with threats and punishment? One thing that is wrong with them is that they teach children bad things. Consider threats. It is common for parents to get frustrated with their children and yell at them. "If you do that one more time I'm going to whip you, young man!" "I've told you a thousand times. If I have to tell you once more. . . "

Threats are bad because they insult children. They are likely to make the child feel dumb and put-down. The child may feel angry with the parent for treating him that way. Threats are also bad because they may tell the children that we yell a lot but never do anything. Consider the following story. **A mother was loading her children in the car to go to the store. Just as she got them all in the car, the neighbor came over to talk to her. As the two ladies talked, the children became restless. One of the boys began to climb out the car window. The mother yelled for him to get back in the car. Then she returned to talking with the neighbor. The boy sat in the window and played. The mother yelled at him to get in the car and threatened to spank him. He sat still while his mother yelled at him, but as soon as she returned to talking, he climbed out the window onto the hood of the car. The mother continued to talk to the neighbor.** This boy did not think his mother was very serious. She yelled a lot. But she never did anything unless she became really angry. It's common for parents to be yelling, "Don't touch that!" "Leave her alone." "Go away." Using threats may teach children that parents are unkind and that they don't mean what they say.

There are also problems with punishment. Sometimes parents punish because they are angry. They may spank their children in anger. What does spanking teach a child? For many children it teaches that the world is a cruel place. It may also teach them that parents are mean. It may teach them that it is all right for big people to hurt little people. Those are not the things we want to teach our children. The most effective parents rarely or never use spanking. When a parent spanks a child for bad behavior, the parent may think that making the child suffer teaches him or her not to do bad things. What it usually teaches the child is to feel angry or unsafe. Or it may teach the child not to do bad things when the parent is around. But it does not teach the child to be helpful or to have self-control or to feel safe.

There is something better than making children suffer. It is teaching. We want to teach our children that rules are important, that people can work together and solve problems without using physical means. Teaching is more than talking. It includes how we act. In this publication are some ideas to help you more effectively teach children respect for rules. You can use these suggestions to find better ways to discipline your children.

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Continued from page 3 Here are some ways to be sure you are helping, never harming your children. You can help your children develop into strong, caring people you will be proud of.

Be careful about the rules you make. Sometimes parents make too many rules. For instance, the lady who yelled at her children to stay in the car while she talked to the neighbor might have been wiser to talk to the neighbor later, or to give the children something to do while she talked, or to let the children play for a few minutes on the lawn until she was really ready to go. This approach would have been better than just asking the children to sit still while she talked. Another place where parents have trouble is the grocery store. Sometimes parents (and children) are tired and frustrated as they enter the store. Mom may ask her one-year-old to sit in the grocery cart, be quiet, and not touch anything while she shops. Is that reasonable? Or would it be more reasonable to give the child a toy to play with, or to talk with the child, or let the child hold purchases that will not get broken as she sits in the cart? If we make rules that are sensitive to the children's needs, it will teach them to respect rules and to see their family's world as a safe place. Sometimes the best rules are a result of a discussion between the parent and the child. A parent might say to the child: "I am very frustrated that you don't take care of the dishes right after dinner. What do you suggest?" The parent and child might work on the rule together until they agree. It might be that the child should be allowed to do some chores other than dishes. It may be that their favorite television show comes on right after dinner and they should be allowed to watch television for 30 minutes before doing the dishes. If you cannot agree on a rule, the parent may have to say, "Let's go by my rule until we can think of a better one."

Enforce rules consistently. I remember seeing a mother tell her boy to stop picking at the cake that was on the table. But he kept picking. She kept shouting. He kept picking. She kept shouting. . . Maybe the mother should give the boy a piece of cake right away. Or, if the rule is important, it should be enforced. When parents make rules they don't enforce, children get the idea that we are not serious about rules. The mother might not be wise to leave the cake on the table in view of a hungry child. But if she asks the child to leave the cake alone and he does not, she might move the cake to the cupboard and distract the child with a different activity: "Son, will you help me get out the plates, please?" If the child insists on trying to climb to the cake, then the parent either needs to get him some dinner or take him to his room.

Being consistent in enforcing rules does not mean that the parent cannot adapt to circumstances. We make allowances for tiredness, illnesses, age, influence of other children, and so on. Consistency means that when we make a rule that we think is reasonable and when a child violates that rule, the child will normally experience the promised result. One mother found that when she went to the grocery store her children would whine and cry for candy. Sometimes she would give them candy. Sometimes she would get mad. She decided to be more consistent. She made the rule that when she took a child to the grocery store she would get the child a small box of animal cookies to eat while they were in the store but she would not buy them candy. She consistently held to the rule. The kids stopped begging for candy.

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Use consequences. Consequences are different from punishment. Punishment hurts children. It makes them angry. Consequences teach children. They show the child that when she does certain things, certain things will happen. Consequences must not be used when a child is in danger. It is not appropriate to teach children the dangers of a hot stove or of busy traffic by allowing them to touch the stove or wander into traffic. But in many things we allow our children choices. Using consequences can take a lot of wisdom. The objective is to allow children to see how their choices affect their lives. "Consequences" should not be used to punish.

Learning to use consequences effectively is very difficult. Think of problems you often have with your children. Can you think of appropriate consequences for them that teach them the importance of following the rule? Are the consequences you have chosen a natural and reasonable result of their choices? Do the consequences allow you to avoid nagging and punishing? Learning how to use natural consequences may be one of the most important skills that parents can learn.

Keep it positive. Sometimes children act up because they want us to notice them. **Tommy was always whining and pulling on his dad's pant leg. The dad would get angry because it seemed that his little boy always wanted his attention. One day he decided to take more time for his son. When his son would pull on his pant leg he would pick him up and talk to him, take a walk with him, or play a game with him. He found that his son whined far less.** They are especially likely to act up for attention if it seems that acting up is the only way they can get attention. Behavior problems with children can be divided into two groups: the once-in-a-while problem and the frequent problem. Once-in-a-while problems can be dealt with by using the five suggestions in this publication. If your child has a frequent behavior problem that you cannot control with these ideas and seems to get worse in spite of all your efforts, you should talk to a counselor. It is wise to get help before a problem becomes a relationship problem.

Grandparent Contributions

If you would like to highlight something special your Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group is doing please send an article or information to grg@montana.edu for possible submission in the newsletter. We would also love to receive photos and poetry. Please remember if you send in photos you need permission from all the people who are in them. You can request a photo release form from the GRG project by e-mailing us at grg@montana.edu or calling 406-994-3395.

Children's Mental Health

One of the state specialists in attendance at the recent MT GRG Conference was Sharon Odden from Children's Mental Health, a division of Health Resources from the Department of Public Health and Human Services. She spoke about a system-of-care network that is available in some Montana communities that uses a wrap-around approach to mental health needs. The network consists of a wide range of mental health support people that work together to provide services near or in the home. Sharon also provided a wealth of written information for each conference attendee to take home with them. We've shared some of this valuable information below (see **Did you know?**).

To find out more about state resources for mental health services in your area, you can contact the DPHHS Children's Mental Health Bureau at 406-444-4540, or ask your local DPHHS office for information.

Did you know?

- * It has been estimated that almost 21% of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder associated with at least minimum impairment.
- * Of these children, less than one in five receive needed treatment.
- * Suicide is the third leading cause of death among U.S. children ages 15 to 24.
- * Eating disorders can be fatal if left untreated.

Did you know?

- * with early detection and appropriate treatment, chances are excellent that most children with mental health needs can recover and lead healthy lives.
- * The treatment success rate for children's mental health disorders is 80%.

Did you know?

- * 74% of students who drop out of school and are categorized as seriously emotionally disabled are arrested within five years of dropping out.
- * A student who drops out of school is more likely to go to prison than a smoker is likely to get cancer.

Sharon's suggested reading for dealing with mental health issues (partial list)

Sunbathing in the Rain: A Cheerful Book on Depression - Gwyneth Lewis

The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family- Paul & Judy Karosik

When Children Grieve: For Adults to Help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss,

Moving and Other Losses - John W. James; Russell Friedman

Helping Your Depressed Teenager: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers - Gerald D. Oster; Oster & Montgomery

Children and Trauma: A Guide for Parents and Professionals - Cynthia Monahon

Survival Strategies for Parenting Children with Bipolar Disorder - George T. Lynn

When Someone You Love Has a Mental Illness: A Handbook for Family, Friends, and Caregivers - Rebecca Woolis

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

Billings

Bernie Mason
P.O. Box 35021
Billings, MT 59107
256-2828

Bozeman

MSU Extension Family &
Human Development
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Bozeman, MT 59715
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Browning

Carrie Jackson
Eagle Shield Center
P.O. Box 76
Browning, MT 59417
338-7257

Butte

Butte 4C's
Terri Bolstad
101 E. Broadway
Butte, MT 59701
723-4019
800-794-4061

Colstrip

Jennifer Anderson
P.O. Box 65
Forsyth, MT 59327
346-7320

Dillon

723-4019
800-794-4061

Glendive

Pete Bruno
Parents Resource Center
200 S. Kendrick
Glendive, MT 59330
377-7515

Great Falls

Jona McNamee
Cascade County Extension
454-6980

Helena

Jeanette B. Mattfeldt
562 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
442-8207

Lewistown

Denise Seilstadt
712 W. Main
Lewistown, MT 59457
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Kalispell

Melody Domphe
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
146 3rd Ave. W.
Kalispell, MT 59901
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721-7690

Kathy Revello, MSU Extension
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Family Resource Specialist
108 Pinckney
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Rocky Boy Reservation/ Box Elder

Peggy Riotar-Aquino
395-4875

Rocky Boy Reservation/ Agency

Evelyn Gopher
395-4875

Townsend

Nancy Marks 226-3710
Jerri Paulk 266-4249

Department of Health & Human Development
316 Herrick Hall, P.O. Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540



To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson