



TO: Colleagues
FROM: Jan McCarthy, Anita Marshall, Barbara Huff, Julie Collins, Steve Hornberger, Chey Clifford Stoltenberg, Terry Cross, Elena Cohen
DATE: March 24, 2004
RE: **Introducing *A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System***

We are pleased to share with you *A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System*, a comprehensive resource that answers many of the questions families face when they become involved with the child welfare system.

Written in a simple, question and answer format and grounded in the experiences of families and child welfare professionals from across the country, *A Family's Guide* is meant to be a tool to help families learn about:

- experiences other families have had with the child welfare system
- child welfare laws and policies that influence the actions and decisions of child welfare workers and courts
- people families will meet, the service systems they work in, and their roles with families
- ways to advocate for their family's rights (their own and their children's)
- responsibilities of parents involved with the child welfare system, and
- practical tips from other parents.

A Family's Guide also can be used by the child welfare agencies to build positive relationships with families and increase family participation in service planning, as a tool in family support groups, and to train new workers and foster parents. *A Family's Guide* provides information that will help other child and family-serving agencies understand how the child welfare system works. It can be a resource for family support organizations such as community centers, faith-based organizations, churches, and family advocacy groups. It also can be used to teach social work students about the child welfare system and family experiences. Readers are encouraged to use *A Family's Guide* creatively and to adapt it to fit the unique characteristics of their own states, communities, and agencies.

A Family's Guide was developed as a collaborative effort among Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, American Institutes for Research, Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Child Welfare League of America, and National Indian Child Welfare Association.

Additional materials that will be available soon include:

- a curriculum to use as a "guide to the guide", including training exercises and audio tapes of the *Guide's* Family Voices
- a Spanish version of *A Family's Guide* funded by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice
- PDF version of *A Family's Guide* that can be downloaded by visiting the websites of any of the sponsoring organizations:
<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu>, www.air.org/tapartnership,
www.ffcmh.org, www.cwla.org, or www.nicwa.org

To order additional copies at \$10/copy, contact:

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