



# All Children Considered

VOL. I • 2004/05

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR CHILDREN

## Reaching Out: A Multicultural Approach to Child Care

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## Encouraging and Celebrating the Richness of all Cultural Groups

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### Cultural Differences are Assets to be Valued

The first day of school is here! You double check to see that bulletin boards are

colorfully decorated, the play centers are organized for active learning, and there is enough macaroni (that you will be picking up off the floor later!) for everyone at the sensory table. As the children arrive and you take a closer look, you may notice many differences: children from different cultures and backgrounds who have different skin colors, speak more than one language, have different social norms and traditions, or follow different religious practices. As you notice your observations, you might ask yourself,

*(Continued on page 2)*

### From the editor...

"Reaching Out: A Multicultural approach to child care" is the theme of our first issue of the 2004-05 school year.

Providers of child care have an obligation to provide an environment that helps children be successful in our increasingly diverse and multicultural world. We need to make sure that those in our care gain the attitudes and experiences that will enable them to be comfortable with others who have different skin color, language, or habits. It is important that each of us actively demonstrates an awareness and respect of other cultures, and of the fact that cultures solve similar problems in their own particular ways.

The articles on these pages will help you think about the "Cultural Competence" of your care environments. They will also give you specific examples of how

you can make "cultural literacy" (the knowledge of other cultures), and the celebration of differences, a reality. News and important information from the CT Departments of Social Services and Public Health are found in the Agency Update section. And finally, be sure to check out the "Providers Resource Corner" where members of our Editorial Team share titles of some favorite books and web sites that address the issues of awareness, sensitivity, and respect of other cultures.

Thank you for your continued interest in our publication. To read earlier issues of the newsletter, or to send us your comments and suggestions, please go to our website at <http://www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/acc/>

Harry Mangle, Editor



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“How will I address all these different children?” How CAN we teach young children the richness and value of ALL culture groups?

Differences in our classrooms should always be seen as an asset, a resource, and an opportunity for learning. This may mean looking beyond what appears evident, and gaining a deeper knowledge of what culture means to ourselves and the children and families with whom we work. Finding ways in the classroom to celebrate the richness of different cultural groups can help build positive relationships with families to engage them in their children’s classroom experience. Celebrating culture also helps enhance our children’s sense of self and a new awareness from their peers.

### Ways to Spread Cultural Literacy

Traveling “Cultural Literacy Bags” are a great interactive learning tool for

children and parents. Plain old regular tote bags are turned into a vehicle for spreading information about different cultures. The bags, which children take turns to take home, can include an age-appropriate book about a specific culture or an item that is identified with that culture,



such as a picture and narrative about Scottish bagpipes. On the other hand, they could include an activity the child and parent can do together, such as a recipe, reflecting that culture. Within the classroom, that culture can be celebrated further by incorporating it in the daily routine

during music, language, or art projects.

Another way to celebrate the richness of the cultures represented in your classroom is to create a “Cultural Quilt.” The quilt can be made with colored fabric or construction paper.

Children in the classroom would create a cultural square that represented what things are culturally important to them. The square can include child artwork, words transcribed by the teacher, or a combination of both. Teachers can also participate and contribute a square in the quilt.

However you choose to address culture in your classroom, it is important to remember that the children in our classrooms reflect a variety of cultural identities. By celebrating culture, we celebrate children and support their social emotional development toward the world around them. So, whether you use multilingual labels in the classroom, or plan a party with different cultural foods, celebrating culture can be an integral part of our children’s classroom experience. ✨

## A Grandmother’s Story

*Edie Luciano, Legislative Secretary  
Connecticut Commission on Children*

We have raised three wonderful children. They are bilingual. Our main language and culture is Spanish, so we want them to be just like us. Knowing both the Spanish and the English language is something that we both wanted for our children.

At home, the main language that we speak is Spanish. We raised our children in our culture. Even though our children attended all English language schools, they learned the Spanish language well.

We celebrate Christmas like Americans do, but we also teach our children about Three Kings Day that we celebrate in Puerto Rico. We have traditional food, like Arroz con Gandules (Rice with Peas), Pork, Flan, Arroz con Dulce (Sweet Rice with coconut) and all the Spanish dancing and food that we do on special occasions. Every year, friends

bring us parrandas (Christmas carols with all kinds of musical instruments) and they love playing and singing and dancing. Sometimes we stay until morning listening to the Christmas carols in Spanish.

My children grow up with the Spanish heritage, and I am so glad that we continued with the Spanish culture. Now we have two grandchildren, and they are the same way. We are teaching them to be Hispanic and American. There is a way to teach them to become bilingual. Sometimes my granddaughter, who is four years old, repeats words in Spanish, and we are so happy that she is getting the Spanish language. Our culture, language, and education will never disappear from their sight. My grandchildren will continue with both cultures, education, and English and Spanish languages.

Editor’s note: If your child care center, home, or school is fortunate enough to have a parent or grandparent of a student willing to share their culture, traditions, and language, invite them to do so. Everyone will benefit and enjoy the experience! ✨

# A Guide to Respecting and Appreciating Differences

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America has always been home to culturally rich and diverse populations. This is reflected in our communities, our schools, and in our child care programs. The make up of any group of children in any program, no matter the community, will have many differences among its participants. There will be differences in gender, hair color, eye color, height, weight, ages, as well as skin color, eye shape, ethnicity, country of origin, and language. Incorporating the values of respect and appreciation of differences is an important component in quality programs. Here are some strategies to help you:

## 1. Identify your own attitudes and beliefs

- We all grow up with a set pattern of beliefs, attitudes, and biases. Children are very aware of the subtle reactions of the adults around them and may get unintended messages about our discomfort with differences in others. Exploring personal bias can be uncomfortable but is a necessary part of overcoming prejudice.

## 2. Your program can reflect the children in your care

- Classroom decorations: Display enlarged photographs of the children and their families, or neighborhood activities. If the children are predominantly from one culture, gradually introduce other cultures by adding pictures of children from other cultures to the class "gallery," or making "theme posters" from magazine cut-outs that show how familiar activities, such as making bread, are done in various cultures.
- Books and music: Regularly read stories and play music from the cultures and languages of the children in your care. Ask each child in your group to

bring music from home to share.

- Playthings: Incorporate everyday items from the children's cultures into play areas, such as empty boxes of common foods for the house area. Make sure that dolls reflect a variety of cultures.
- Activities: Build on the children's cultural practices into life at child care.
- Have children complete "about me..." sentences.
- Have the children paint family and self-portraits using a variety of true-to-life skin tones.
- Each month create "different lands" that reflect the children's cultures in your classroom (i.e., Africa, Italy, China, Puerto Rico, etc.). Decorate the room to reflect the land, cook their foods, listen to their music and songs, dress-up or bring in costumes from that land, discuss the holidays celebrated there, etc.

## 3. Build a partnership with parents

- Invite parents to participate in many aspects of the program. Parents, grandparents, or guardians can tell stories in their own languages and share music, food, games, hobbies, or traditions in the classroom.
- Parents or other volunteers can help to translate stories or teach staff and children how to say important words in their language, such as hello, goodbye, and thank you.
- Talk to parents and guardians on an ongoing basis about how they feel about your program practices and how that relates to what is done at home.

Source: Franklin, Melia. Preparing children for a multicultural world. in Children's Advocate newsmagazine, published by Action Alliance for Children, September-October 1999



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## Department of Social Services (DSS)

<http://www.dss.state.ct.us/ccare/>

### Bridging Cultural Barriers with Informal Caregivers

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203.549.0075 x12.*

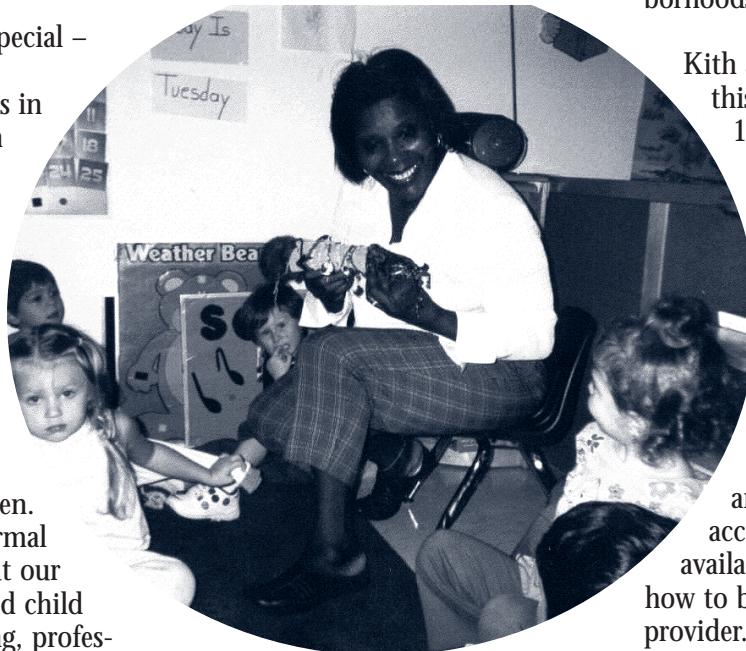
“The opportunity to participate in a group with people of diverse cultures had great importance to my personal growth. I gained a better understanding of human values and different cultures... I felt very comfortable because everyone listened and respected one another’s opinion... This group is so special – friendships were made...”  
--- Reflections of participants in the Bridgeport Kith and Kin Project

#### Kith and Kin Providers

“Kith and Kin” providers are an important component of child care in Connecticut. These providers are relatives, friends, or neighbors who care for other people’s children. The care is provided in informal settings in homes throughout our state. Unlike formal, licensed child care programs, where training, professional development, and resources are readily available, kith and kin providers must make special arrangements for such opportunities. The Department of Social Services’ Quality Enhancement funding (available to priority school communities participating in the School Readiness Program) carries the requirement that 10% of each town’s allocation must support services and activities targeted to kith and kin caregivers. The Bridgeport School Readiness Council uses part of its Quality Enhancement allocation to support The Bridgeport

Child Advocacy Coalition Kith and Kin Project. The project is described below as an example of how cultural barriers are bridged by organizations that serve multi-ethnic populations.

The Bridgeport project reaches ethnically and culturally diverse unlicensed, informal caregivers, friends and neighbors or kith and kin—and works to improve the quality of child care they provide. More than 75 percent of child care in Bridgeport is being provided by this arrangement. In this city, one out of four children



lives in poverty and forty percent of the city’s school children speak a language other than English at home. There are more than 65 different languages spoken in the public schools.

The Bridgeport Kith and Kin Project meets caregivers in their own neighborhoods and is based on an approach developed by Bank Street College of Education. The project seeks to build the capacity of neighborhood-based programs to reach and support kith and kin caregivers; using

a culturally competent group training experience. In addition, the program gives an opportunity for information sharing among providers that will increase and enhance their skills and network kith and kin providers with other resources in the community.

Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition provides coordination, technical assistance and support to the initiative. The Bridgeport Board of Education Parent Center and four school-based Family Resource Centers recruit and train kith and kin caregivers at their sites located in five Bridgeport neighborhoods.

Kith and kin providers who join this program meet over 10 to 12 weeks in a support group environment and receive training in several content areas. These areas include: using developmentally appropriate activities, childproofing their homes, responding to medical emergencies; managing challenging behaviors of young children; child abuse and sexual abuse prevention; accessing resources and services available in the community; and how to become a licensed child care provider.

The Project has been very successful attracting kith and kin caregivers from very diverse backgrounds. Since November 2001, 146 caregivers have been trained so far, 98% of whom are African-American or Latino, and half of the providers speak Spanish only. Bringing together informal caregivers from diverse cultures and backgrounds provides opportunities for shared learning and experiences that improve the quality of child care in the community as a whole. ♣

# Newly Revised Early Childhood Health Form – The “Yellow Form”

Grace Whitney  
CT Head Start State Collaboration and  
Healthy Child Care CT  
888.608.7830

On September 1, 2004, the State Departments of Education, Social Services, and Public Health jointly released the revised Early Childhood Health Assessment Record, or “the yellow form.”

The Early Childhood Health Assessment Record is used in place of the State Department of Education’s blue Health Assessment Record for children who have not yet entered kindergarten. It is designed to specifically address health issues important to assess in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The standard format will make it easier for critical health indicators to be monitored regularly as children grow. Since the format has been standardized and consistent with the blue form, (used for children in kindergarten through grade 12) a more complete health record can be maintained through the transition to the elementary school years.

The yellow health record is used by many school nurses in preschool programs, child care health consultants, and Head Start health managers who find that having a single form for all early childhood programs can be less confusing for health care providers.

Information on the revised The Early Childhood Health Assessment Record can be obtained from Healthy Child Care Connecticut at the number above, and copies can be obtained on the web at <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Student/Health/Index.htm> ↗

## Department of Public Health (DPH)

<http://www.dph.state.ct.us/>

### Celebrating Cultures: A Service of High Quality Child Care

Nancy E. Berger, M.P.H., Director,  
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#### Our Growing Diversity

*“...Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love...”* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As the need for child care has become increasingly evident in Connecticut and nationwide, many advances have been made in the delivery system of that care. However, one area that has lagged behind is that of cultural sensitivity and competence. According to reported data of four years ago, one of every three Americans is a “minority” so it becomes crucial that child care providers learn more about people with different cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, and responses to everyday situations. In addition to differences of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, there are growing numbers of people who are physically challenged, speak different languages, have different sexual orientation, and other differences that need to be understood and respected.

#### What is Cultural Competence and Why is it Important?

Cultural Competence has been defined as: “...the provider’s capacity to accept and respect differences and continually self-assess his or her reactions to different cultures. It involves careful attention to the dynamics of differences, the continual expansion of culture knowledge and resources...” (Torres). The cultural competence of a child care provider will affect the policies for all aspects of operations, interactions with families, and procedures for the daily routine of the center. Ultimately, it affects the quality of care and services provided. Four arenas of competence include:

- 1 Cultural Awareness: Becoming sensitive to another’s culture, values, beliefs, practices, lifestyles, and problem-solving strategies.
- 2 Cultural Knowledge: Understanding how persons of another culture see the world and their framework for operating.
- 3 Cultural Skill: Learning to interpret another’s cultural mode of approaching everyday life situations and building that into child care services.
- 4 Cultural Encounter: Spending time interacting with people from different cultures and gaining informa-

tion to help future interactions be appropriate and effective.

#### Good Practices for Cultural Competencies

How you relate and provide services to specific cultural groups is truly a learning process. Here are some concrete steps that you can take to improve your cultural competency:

- 1 Take time before forming impressions of families. Nothing can substitute for spending time (listening and engaging in conversations and discussions) with members of diverse groups.
- 2 Learn about the family and the community in which the family lives before drawing conclusions.
- 3 Avoid generalizing from one experience that is not typical for a cultural group and applying it to an entire cultural group.
- 4 Recognize that individual variations exist between families, the cultural group, and individuals.
- 5 Involve members of different cultures in projects, group meetings, and advisory councils.

Seeking cultural competence brings opportunities to learn and grow for you as a child care provider, and for the children and families you serve.

## A Culturally Competent Environment

A program environment needs to be positive and value human differences. This not only helps children be comfortable, it helps them learn positive, appropriate responses to differences. Child care providers, along with the family, have a responsibility to help prepare children with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to live a fulfilling and productive life in a complex, diverse, and ever-changing world.

To assure that your program environment is inclusive and reflects the cultural norms of families served, consider assessing the interactions and the beliefs and attitudes of yourself and your staff. Various models exist for conducting such assessments. An example of such assessments may look at:

### Physical Setting

- Do books, pictures/posters, videos/movies include children and adults of various ethnic backgrounds, and do stories about different cultures, depict people of various social/economic classes, etc.?
- Do children get to see and hear a variety of different languages, including songs and music?

- Do toys and play materials represent a balance of major groups? Do you have dolls available representing major groups in the U.S.? Do you have both boy and girl dolls?
- Do snacks and meals include foods and dishes from other cultures?

### Interactions with Children

- Do children receive open, unbiased answers to their questions about disability, gender, and race or ethnicity?
- Is language used by adults free of gender bias?
- Are similar behaviors interpreted or responded to differently with white children than children of color?

### Beliefs and Attitudes of Providers

- Do you and staff members appreciate the similarities and differences that exist among different racial and ethnic groups?
- Are you and staff members comfortable talking about different religious beliefs?
- Do you and staff members believe that each minority culture has something positive to contribute to our society?

These are a few variables that are important to consider in determining the cultural competency of the child

care environment. The extent to which we can help children develop a high level of understanding, appreciation, and respect for individual differences in themselves and others will help them to live well in our changing world. By serving children in this way, we give them a gift that lasts a lifetime!

Make a commitment to do your part. Start and keep taking steps. Remember, the longest journey begins with the first steps, and the beauty lies not just in reaching the destination, but in enjoying it along the way.

Resources (Copies available by accessing the links below or calling the numbers below)

2002 Multicultural Health Resource Directory  
CT Department of Public Health  
Public Health Initiatives  
860.509.7140  
Website:  
<http://www.dph.state.ct.us/omch/mhrd.htm>

Diversity Resource Guide  
Multicultural Leadership Institute, Inc. (MLI)  
203.281.1347  
Website: [www.mli-inc.org](http://www.mli-inc.org) ↗

## Medical Home Training Academy

Kevin J. Sullivan, Project Coordinator  
Department of Public Health  
860.509.8074

### New Health Care Initiative Coming!

The Department of Public Health (DPH) will be developing and implementing a Medical Home Training Academy for pediatricians, families and other allied health professionals. The purpose of this academy is to improve care for the growing population of children and youth.

The "Medical Home" concept focuses on caring for all children and youth, especially those with special health care needs. Such individuals have an increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions that require a greater than usual amount of providers' time and care management. The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that the medical care of infants, children, and adolescents ideally should be accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective.

The Connecticut Medical Home Academy will be introduced at a full-day Medical Home Implementation

Conference in early 2005.

Subsequent trainings will be offered via webcasts, CD's, and videotapes. Topics to be included in the training include: Family-Centered Approach; Family-Professional Partnerships, Developmental Health, Behavioral Health, Comprehensive, Coordinated, Collaborative Care for Children, and youth with special health care needs, etc.

For additional information on the Medical Home Training Academy, contact Kevin Sullivan, DPH Medical Home Academy Project Coordinator, at [kevin.j.sullivan@po.state.ct.us](mailto:kevin.j.sullivan@po.state.ct.us) ↗

# Gifts From Other Cultures: “The Talking Stick”

Susie Collier, Director  
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## From Native Americans

It is thought that Talking Sticks evolved from the culture of Native Americans to improve discussions at council meetings. These important meetings covered topics such as tribal issues, complaints, family and personal arguments, political decisions, group planning and problems with other tribes, so it was important for members to remain calm and listen to one another. Talking Sticks improved listening and speaking skills, taught respect and manners at meetings, and made peace and agreements possible between individuals and tribes, even stopping wars between them. Today, versions of these Talking Sticks are used in schools, work places, and counseling sessions.

Children benefit in many ways when adults introduce Talking Sticks to them. The sticks help children develop listening skills, learn manners, build community, and even lead to understanding of the Native American culture. You can use a Talking Stick in your children's circle in much the same way Native Americans did. The person leading the meeting (chief or leader) holds the talking stick and begins the meeting. The rules are:

- Select a topic
- Only persons holding the talking stick can speak
- No one can make fun or interrupt the speaker
- Everyone remains silent and listens carefully to the speaker
- The speakers talk from their heart with honesty, choosing their words wisely
- The speakers do not talk too long (so the Spirits do not become angry!)
- When speakers finish, they hand the talking stick to someone else to speak

These rules help individuals to wait their turn and think about what is being said in the circle. Talking sticks stop confusion, because only one per-

son speaks at a time. Each speaker feels valued as others wait patiently, listening to what is said.

## Making Talking Sticks

Talking Sticks are about a foot long with decorations and symbols that have special meaning to each person. A person creates his own talking stick and decorates it with objects and symbols special to him. To create a talking stick, find a wood stick (1' long) the thickness of your thumb. Make sure there are no sharp edges. Have the children decorate it with feathers, beads, fur, etc. Part of the activity is to ask the children why they used certain decorations.

Children love creating their own talking stick. Often, children create a talking stick at school and take it home to their family who use it at family meetings. Other children share it with their friends who make one, who in turn share it with day camp counselors, who create them with their campers, and so on....

Have fun and enjoy this project – see where it takes both you and the children! For more information, contact [scollier@teikyopost.edu](mailto:scollier@teikyopost.edu) ✈

## Caregivers Resource Corner

Dear Readers:

With this issue, we begin a new feature in our newsletter called the “Caregivers Resource Corner.” Included each time will be a few tried and true resources related to the overall theme of the issue, which we think will help you in your very important work with children. Our Editorial Team and other child care professionals teamed up to provide the following resources. We welcome your comments on their usefulness to you.

### Recommended Books to Promote Multicultural Understanding

Bulion, Leslie (a CT author), *Fatuma's New Cloth*, ages 5-8  
Castle, Caroline, *For Every Child: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures*, ages 4-10  
Garland, Sherry, *The Lotus Seed*, ages 6-10  
Hamanaka, Sheila, *All the Colors of the Earth*, ages 2-6  
Hoffman, Mary, *Amazing Grace*, ages 5-10  
Kasza, Keiko, *A Mother for Choco*, ages 4-8

Mora, Pat, *A Birthday Basket for Tia*, ages 5-7  
Mochizuki, Ken, *Baseball Saved Us*, ages 4-8  
Park, Francis and Park, Ginger, *The Royal Bee*, ages 4-8  
Polacco, Patricia, *Mrs. Katz and Tush*, ages 4-8  
Polacco, Patricia, *The Keeping Quilt*, ages 4-8

### Websites with Information Related to Multicultural Topics

CT Child Care Infoline <http://www.211infoline.org/>  
Great Kids, CT, <http://www.greatkidsct.org/>  
National Cooperative Extension System Gateway for Spanish Speaking Providers  
<http://extensionenespanol.net/index.cfm>  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
<http://www.naeyc.org/>  
National AfterSchool Association, <http://www.naaweb.org/>  
Reach Out and Read National Center,  
<http://www.reachoutandread.org/index.html>

## Child Care Infoline Mailbag



### **Question:**

*I am the father of a two-year old girl. My wife works days and I work at night, so I care for my daughter during the day. I usually take her to the park and we often read stories and play games. However, I feel like Hannah is missing out on playing with other kids. She is an only child, and my wife and I plan to enroll her in preschool next year. In the meantime, what community resources could you recommend for play activities?*

### **Answer:**

You are not alone in your search for enriching play activities for your child. Many community resources provide both parents and their children opportunities to interact and enhance socialization. Public libraries and local youth organizations are excellent resources and often sponsor open story times, for example, in addition to other planned children's events. Playgroups are another option and provide an environment in which children can play together, while

learning developmentally appropriate behaviors. Other programs such as Early Head Start may offer the opportunities you seek for your child.

2-11 Child Care Infoline can also give specific information regarding professional organizations, child care resources, educational workshops and trainings, business loans, food programs. Our website at [www.211infoline.org](http://www.211infoline.org) provides quality child care tips. For more information, please contact us at 800.505.1000. 🐦

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