

reClaiming Children

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

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Issue 1

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20 Years Celebrated!

Our 20th Anniversary Conference was a huge success. The event was held in December in Washington, DC. With over 900 participants in attendance, we brought in a diverse crowd of advocates, family members, youth, service providers and supporters. Individuals of all ages were able to actively participate in the conference by selecting from over 60 workshops and engaging in one of our largest poster sessions to date.

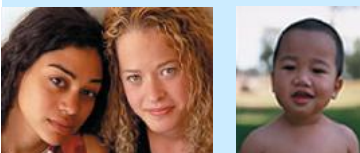
Many of the conference events and activities were a big hit. Participants who attended Policy Day were offered a host of policy related workshops and had the opportunity to head to Capitol Hill and interact with key legislators. The Youth Track was also a big attraction this year, with many youth coordinators, youth groups and youth providing dialogue and effective strategies for youth empowerment, involvement and engagement. The Fathers Roundtable workshop gained a lot of interest and attention, bringing in a large crowd to discuss the emerging fatherhood initiatives that are taking place. To learn more the Fatherhood Initiative, read more about it in this month's issue under our Feature section (pg. 6).

The workshops and events were not the only thing worth celebrating. Holly Robinson-Peete was the keynote speaker at our 20th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon. She offered an engaging and inspirational speech to a packed audience. Sesame Street also participated in the conference in more ways than one. Rocio Galarza from the Sesame Workshop spoke with other panelists on early childhood intervention and prevention and handed out tool kits to everyone in attendance. In addition to this, we also had a surprise visit from Cookie Monster.

We have received a large amount of feedback, and would like to thank you for making our 20th Anniversary Conference one to remember. We're already planning for next year and with your help, we hope to make our conferences bigger and stronger. Together, we will continue our goal to support children, youth, and families and help build the national family voice.



Sandra Spencer, Executive Director, posing with Cookie Monster at the 20th Anniversary National Federation Conference.



Happenings

We've started the [National Family-to-Family Initiative](#) and we're rapidly moving forward! Visit our website to read more about the volunteer advisory committee, certification and credentialing of family-to-family support, and much more!

The new National Federation Policy Interface, a private Facebook group for Federation chapters to discuss various policy topics to share strategies has been launched. For more information, email Andrea Barnes at abarnes@ffcmh.org

The National Federation has begun to add a host of new youth resources. These include the newly introduced [Just 4 Youth](#) section of the website, the Youth Focus section of the newsletter, as well as a wide assortment of tools for youth involvement, advocacy, and engagement.

New Faces at the Federation



Corey Brown

**Youth M.O.V.E.
National Assistant**

Corey is the new Youth MOVE National Assistant. Corey provides support to the YMN board, chapters, and members, as well as the YMN Director.



Emmett Dennis

Fiscal Officer

Emmett is the new National Federation Fiscal Officer. Emmett's main role is to manage and monitor the organization's budget and contracts among other duties.



Eric Lulow

**Youth Involvement
Associate**

Eric is the new Youth Involvement Associate. In his position, he works closely with youth on advocacy issues and generates ways for youth to get more involved.



James Sawyer

**Youth Involvement
Content Specialist**

James supports system of care grantee communities funded by Center for Mental Health Services through the Technical Assistance Partnership. His main duties are to mentor Youth Engagement Specialists, facilitate peer-to-peer networking, and provide technical assistance and training.



Sheryl Schrepf

**Technical Assistance
Coordinator**

Sheryl serves as a technical assistance coordinator for assigned systems of care communities through the Technical Assistance Partnership. Her work connects communities to information and resources. .

The Federation is Going Greener!

In an effort to do our part in sustaining the environment for our children, we're trying something new at the National Federation! In our continued efforts to be a greener organization, we're going to be eliminating our paper newsletter and piloting a new electronic one. We aren't doing away with the traditional newsletter altogether – we're just going to be sending more of the information to you electronically from here on out! If you know of organizations or members who are unable to access this information electronically, please let us know, and we'll continue to send a printed copy of our newsletter.

Executive Address

From the Desk of Sandra Spencer

It is time to better invest in our children. We need to put our resources into the healthy development and well being of our children now, rather than continue to spend huge amounts of resources to repair the impact of the lack of services and support in adulthood. How do we get everyone to finally pay attention to this need, our children, our future? We need a revolution! The word Revolution comes from the Latin word *revolutio* meaning 'a turn around'. According to *dictionary.com*, "a revolution is a sudden, complete or marked change in something". I know revolution is a strong word, but in this case I am talking about an effort to completely mobilize all of us to speak with one voice and change the political will of our nation.



We have entered a new year and a new decade; we are experiencing economic downturn and fierce debates about health care reform. At the same time, our children are continuing to fall through the cracks. What if a MD-88 jet crashed every two weeks, killing everyone on board? The story would make news headlines, and the planes would be grounded, a full investigation would be launched and those at fault would be fired. The families affected by the loss of loved ones would sue the airline and all who were involved. According to the Surgeon General, an estimated 90% of children who commit suicide have a mental disorder. Every day, 16 American youth die by suicide - that is more than the number of people that would die every two weeks on the MD-88 jet. So, where is the outrage?

One in every five children has a diagnosable mental health disorder, yet less than 25% ever get the help and support they need. In recent news, there has been full coverage about the Toyota car recall. There have been 39 deaths related to sticking gas peddles. While 39 deaths are 39 too many, there has been a national alarm sounded off about this issue. The CEO of Toyota had to stand before Congress to offer explanation. There has been national outrage. Where is the national media attention about children with mental health challenges? It is estimated that at least 75% of children and youth in juvenile detention have mental or emotional disorders that should be treated. These children have a much higher school dropout rate, are more likely to be bullied, and of all youth who are diagnosed with a mental illness, 1 in 8 has co-occurring substance abuse problems. These facts don't seem to move our nation to action. We need a revolution!

Let's continue to educate the country about children's mental health. Please join the National Federation of Families as we prepare for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. Again this year, the National Federation declares the first week in May (May 2-8, 2010), Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. This is an opportunity for us to launch a national campaign on the local, state and national level.

We need you to help us - we need a Revolution!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra".

Policy Room



The Impact of Healthcare Reform on Children and Families

By Andrea Barnes

The National Federation has been actively monitoring health care reform since the first version of the legislation was introduced in June of 2009. Since then, more bills have been introduced and the Federation has been attentive and vigilant as the legislation has evolved. All the while we advocated for language that would help children and families.

Despite the controversies surrounding the bills, there are many and varied provisions that support people with mental health conditions and/or substance abuse. Of course, the House of Representatives and the Senate have different versions of health care reform legislation. At this stage in the game, the Senate version is the one most likely to pass, so below you will see what we support in it because of the significant difference it would make in the health care of children, youth and families.

Insurers would be immediately prohibited from excluding coverage of pre-existing conditions for children.

Ending this discriminatory practice would mean that parents and caregivers would not have to worry about an insurance company denying coverage for their child because of the child's mental illness.

Most plans would have to comply with the mental health parity law.

Individual, small, and large group plans would have to comply with the 2008 mental health parity law, which states that insurers cannot make people pay higher co-pays and other financial obligations on mental health services as compared to physical health services.

Young adults would remain under their parent's insurance plan until age 26.

This will be a huge help for transition-age youth, who often face difficulty in obtaining coverage once they "age out" of the child-serving system.

Medicaid's eligibility and scope of services would be expanded.

One of the provisions in the health care reform legislation that would make one of the largest impacts on society is the expansion of Medicaid eligibility to all adults at or below 133% of poverty (\$30,000 a year for a family of 4). This would expand coverage to an estimated 14 million people. To help states pay for this increase in enrollment, the federal government would increase its share of the costs of Medicaid benefits.

The bill would also remove barriers for states to provide home- and community-based services (HCBS) by giving states the option of a state plan amendment, rather than a waiver. Under a state plan amendment, individuals receiving HCBS would have full Medicaid benefits.

Finally, all young adults below age 25 who were formerly in foster care would be eligible for Medicaid and all its benefits, including Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) would continue.

States would maintain current eligibility levels for CHIP through September of 2019. From 2014 to 2019, states would receive a 23 percentage point increase in the CHIP match rate, which is money that the federal government gives to states to help them run this program and enroll more children into it. CHIP has been highly successful in getting children insured and improving their health status, so it is unfortunate that there is no provision to continue CHIP after 2019.

Health care disparities would be addressed.

Grants within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) would be created to meet the goals of: dissemination of research, demonstration projects, and model curricula for cultural competency, prevention, public health proficiency, reducing health disparities, and aptitude for working with individuals with disabilities training.

Data collection would help reduce health care disparities.

Data is important because it lets policymakers know where the needs are, so that resources are given to those most in need. DHHS would require that all federally conducted or supported healthcare programs collect and report data on race, ethnicity, sex, primary language, and disability status. DHHS would also require that collection requirements become standardized for Medicaid and CHIP, which are different in each state because these are state-run insurance programs.

Grants would help increase the child-serving health care workforce.

Because it is becoming harder and harder to find mental health professionals that specialize in children, especially in medically underserved areas, the bill includes a loan repayment program for individuals practicing pediatrics and child and adolescent mental health/substance abuse services. The bill also authorizes grants to higher education institutions for professionals in the following areas: social work, graduate psychology, professionals providing mental health/substance abuse services for children and adolescents.

The bill authorizes, or makes available, \$5 million in grants for training in paraprofessional child and adolescent work at state-licensed not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. Therefore, family-to-family and peer support services could potentially receive these funds.

School-based community health centers would have to provide mental health/substance abuse services.

Children spend most of their day at school, this is a key location for them to conveniently find and receive the help that they need.

Policy at a Glance



What else is the National Federation's Policy Department doing?

- ⇒ We are planning a legislative briefing on May 6th that will highlight the needs of young children with mental health challenges, and the importance of SAMHSA programs in delivering services to these children. The goal is to push Congress to reauthorize SAMHSA.
- ⇒ We are training youth on how they can impact policy with our Youth Advocacy Academy. This is a 4-part webinar series.
- ⇒ We are working on a Community Bill of Rights, which brings together input from diverse communities across the country through our leadership of the Advocacy and Community Engagement group within the National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health.
- ⇒ We have been advocating for Congressional action on bills relating to the dangerous use of restraints and seclusion practices in schools, on the need for mental health services for incarcerated youth, and for school-wide implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports.
- ⇒ We keep our membership informed of federal policy through action alerts, quarterly newsletters, and monthly news clips.
- ⇒ We continue to advocate for the inclusion of children and mental health in health care reform.

Features

Federation Works to Engage the Power of Dads

By Frank Rider and Nadia Cayce



On December 15, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, speaking at Morehouse College in Atlanta, remarked that “being a responsible and engaged father is every bit as demanding, and every bit as important, as being the Attorney General of the United States.”

“I know this,” Mr. Holder said, “not just from the studies and research I’ve read, but from my own experiences parenting two teenage daughters and a 12-year-old son. Believe me, when I’m not up late thinking about how I can help to keep our nation safe, I’m up late thinking about how I can help my kids.”

Two weeks earlier, some 40 persons from across the country had grappled with tough questions -- father to father, parent to parent -- about what communities and their systems of care can do to support fathers who are trying to do the right thing. The occasion was a morning-long roundtable discussion, “Engaging the Power of

Dads,” at the National Federation of Families’ 20th Anniversary Conference in Washington DC.

Roundtable participants expressed appreciation for a deepening of understanding that occurred that morning. Earl Kelly from California, Joseph Turner and Jerry Roach from Missouri, shared personal encounters with maternal biases within mental health, public education, child welfare and civil court systems. Other fathers, too, shared similar experiences. They all seemed to embrace what Holder would later assert - that “a defining characteristic of the word ‘man’ is the care and nurturing of those we bring into this world. You simply cannot be a real man if you don’t do all that you can to care for those who have the greatest right to depend on you.”

In his Atlanta speech Mr. Holder admonished, “We cannot leave this awesome responsibility to the women in our lives and in our communities who too often labor alone, taking care of our sons and

daughters.” Moms had joined dads in the National Federation’s roundtable discussion, and had reflected on service system traditions whose unintended effects, they acknowledged, often seem to suppress fathers’ positive problem-solving instincts, and even sometimes their fundamental openness to engage in planning and delivery of the special services their children need.

A SAMHSA official who is also a dad, commented about the roundtable, “What a change of pace to be in a workshop session where there were more men than women. I can’t remember the last time something like that happened.” The National Federation of Families and the Technical Assistance Partnership have created a space in which that work continues. They support an energetic Fatherhood Initiative to raise awareness of, and begin to break down, some of the barriers that have inhibited more consequential, positive role for dads

in expanding opportunities for their children with significant emotional challenges.

Inspired by support from Dr. Gary Blau, chief of SAMHSA's Child, Adolescent and Family Branch, last spring, dads from systems of care across the nation now regularly convene each month – along with many women - to examine the barriers, and share promising approaches to support a more viable balance of parental roles. [Their “virtual learning community” is developing a body of positive guidance for our nation’s service systems.](#)

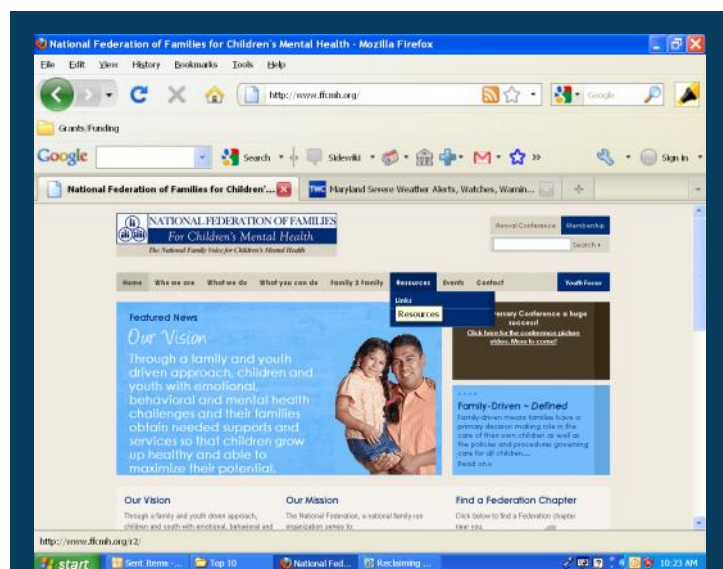
Recently the Fatherhood Initiative has begun to explore some key cultural perspectives that can illuminate systems’ efforts to “engage the power of dads.” Fathers of Latino, African American and American Indian identities have been invited to step forward and educate participants about key cultural considerations that can magnify our effectiveness. The National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health [NNED] has joined the Fatherhood Initiative partnership, and recently reported up to 10,000 “hits” at the [webpage it now dedicates to the effort.](#)

Attorney General Holder pointed out that “Those of us who are fathers have opportunities -- big and small everyday -- to take responsibility in the lives of our children. We can spend time with our sons and daughters, we can help with their homework, we can teach them to play well together, we can get to know their friends and classmates, and we can serve as role models for how to interact with others and how to handle the challenges of life. We can – and we must – assume the responsibility for being involved in our children’s lives.”

The National Federation’s investment in the Fatherhood Initiative seeks to enable and reinforce fathers’ commitment to improve the services and systems to help *all* their children overcome debilitating effects of mental health problems. As

Holder suggested, “by being involved, we each have the opportunity to impact our kids’ lives, as well as the future of our nation, in profound ways.”

For more information, please visit <http://www.azffc.org/index.php>.



Check Out Our Updated Website!

- The newly launched National Family-to-Family Initiative
- The newly introduced “Youth Focus” section has been added to the website and it is packed with information, tools and resources to support young people.
- A Workbook on Data-Informed and Family-Driven Decision Making: Evidence is Co-Pilot
- Ways to get involved in 2010 Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week



Driving the Future: Utilization of Data for Advocacy and Sustainability

By Shannon Cross-Bear and Marie Niarhos

The most successful communities make decisions based on data during their development, governance, assessment and sustainability efforts. Therefore family-run organizations participating in the development, governance, assessment and sustainability need to have the capacity for utilization of data to be effective advocates. Advancing and sustaining structures for programs, practices and services is a must.

In this economic climate, good record keeping is heavily attached to funding. For a long time, there has been a need to “keep track” of what it is that family-run organizations do, but now it is more important than ever. In demonstrating that need for services, data can be utilized to document the areas in which the children, youth and families need the assistance; such as education, out of home placements, medication monitoring, training, or direct peer to peer support services.

There are a number of national reports that have come out in the past decade that support the need for data including: The New Freedom Commission Report, The Federal Action Agenda for

Transforming Mental Health Care in America, Unclaimed Children Re-visited and the National data sets coming from the National Evaluation of Systems of Care. Many of our families and family-run organizations have contributed to the information contained in those reports.

It is also important to continue to utilize data in advocacy and policy efforts that improve services and supports to children, youth and families. As leaders in the family movement, family-run organizations must inform the field as to how and why services are a critical part of meeting the overall need. In order to do that, accurate, credible, and relevant information must be collected to demonstrate that what we do is necessary and valuable; then that information must be delivered in a way that has the most impact and potential for sustained response.

For more information, download the following resources from our website:

[A Workbook on Data Informed and Family-Driven Decision Making: Evidence is Co-Pilot](#)

[Family Peer-to-Peer Support Programs in Children’s Mental Health: A Financing Guide](#)

Coming Soon!

The National Federation is currently developing a workbook on using data for advocacy and sustainability. This workbook will be released later this year.



Community Spotlight

Maryland Coalition

We would like to thank the Maryland Coalition for their support and hospitality during our 20th Anniversary National Federation Conference! They aided us in the registration process, and were a huge help. Thanks to their support, we were able to get everyone successfully registered for the conference! Thank you!

Tessie Schweitzer

Tessie Schweitzer, recently retired Executive Director of Mississippi Families as Allies for Children’s Mental Health, Inc., won the National Federation Lifetime Achievement Award for her continued efforts toward promoting positive children’s mental health. She has been an advocate of the movement for many years! Way to go Tessie!



Tessie Schweitzer, winner of the National Federation Lifetime Achievement award, posing with Cookie Monster and husband Jack at the 20th Anniversary National Federation Conference

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

Once again, the National Federation declares the first full week in May (May 2-8, 2010) *National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week*. Children's Mental Health Awareness Week has evolved into one of our most important awareness and education campaigns. This week long national campaign not only brings attention to the triumphs, challenges and celebrations in children's mental health, but also works to combat the stigma associated with mental illness and promote awareness around mental health issues.

This year's theme for awareness week is **Promoting Positive Mental Health from Birth to Adulthood**. The National Federation invites all our chapters and statewide organizations to use the week to promote positive mental health, well-being and social development for all children and youth. Join the National Federation in sending out the following messages:

- **Mental Health is essential to overall health and well-being**
- **Serious emotional and mental health disorders in children and youth are real and treatable**
- **Children and youth with mental health challenges and their families deserve access to services and supports that are family-driven, youth-guided and culturally appropriate.**
- **Values of acceptance, dignity and social inclusion should be promoted throughout all communities for children, youth and families.**
- **Family and youth voice is a valued asset in determining appropriate services and intervention.**

A major part of our awareness week campaign is centered on advocacy and policy reform. The National Federation is partnering with the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Mental Health America for a legislative briefing on Capitol Hill on May 6th. This briefing will be focused on early childhood intervention and prevention methods. A group of informed panelists will be discussing current issues and challenges that impact families of children with mental health challenges. The legislative briefings of the past have had a wonderful representation of legislators, staffers, mental health providers and advocates. We anticipate the same level of enthusiasm this year.

Another major part of Children's Mental Health Awareness Week is *The Green Ribbon Campaign*. This is a positive public health promotion we use to spread awareness and start dialogue in communities nationally and internationally. The Green Ribbon Campaign is also a major fundraising initiative for us to continue to do the work we do. We are selling green ribbons, lapel pins and t-shirts in order to raise awareness all over the country. Our goal is to sell over 150,000 green ribbons.



WHY GREEN?

In the 1800s, the color green was used to brand people who were labeled "insane." The children's mental health community decided to continue using the color green, but with a completely different focus. Green signifies new life, new growth, and new beginnings. Therefore, we wear green ribbons to raise public awareness, better the lives of children and youth with serious emotional disorders, and show our support of these children and their families.

To order green ribbons and lapel pins, visit our website at www.ffcmh.org

Major events are not only happening in our nation's capitol, but also in our chapters, state and partner organizations. All over the country, events and activities focus on educating communities about children with mental health needs and the impact of mental health challenges on families.

- **The Family Involvement Center** in Phoenix, Arizona will be hosting a Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Celebration and Awards Ceremony. This will feature the awards for their Poster Contest and Creative Writing Contest, and will be co-hosted by FIC and Mental Health Awareness Coalition. Visit their website at www.familyinvolvementcenter.org/
- The **Texas Federation of Families and Alamo Youth MOVE** will be hosting their 8th Annual Guadapalooza! The Guadapalooza is a Texas Music Festival that celebrates families and artists in Texas. If you're interested in more information, visit the event website at www.guadapalooza.com
- **Families Together in New York State** are beginning their celebration early at their Families Together Annual Conference, which will feature a Children's Mental Health Matters Rally, and serve as a kick-off event to the upcoming Children's Mental Health Awareness Week events throughout New York State. For more information on events taking place, visit the website at www.ftnys.org!
- **Parents for Children's Mental Health** in Ontario, Canada is working in partnership with the **F.O.R.C.E Society for Kid's Mental Health** on a roundtable discussion. They have garnered support for the event from labor unions, community organizations, as well as many of the children and youth mental health agencies across the Province and hope to make it a tremendous success and bring about awareness. For more information on this event, visit the website at www.forcesociety.com or www.pcmh.ca!

If you're looking for ideas of what you can do in your community to participate, we've got a host of great ideas that might interest you:

- Order green ribbons and lapel pins! You can distribute the green ribbons to advocates, supporters, potential partners and funders, child-serving agencies and children, youth and families in your community!
- Visit the National Federation website and print tip sheets and other resources to distribute to others in your community.
- Write an editorial and send it your local newspaper or reach out to your local media outlets.
- Partner with local talent in your community and host an art or music event that showcases local talent while promoting the importance of children's mental health awareness out in the community. For more publicity, invite local media to your event!
- Become a social marketer! Use social networking sites to promote the message of positive mental health, and provide ideas about how to get involved!
- Encourage others to join the National Federation. More members allow us to build a stronger voice so that we can advocate for greater change!
- Spread the word and share information with others!

Whatever you decide to do, please share your Children's Mental Health Week promotion ideas by sending them to Kameisha Bennett at kbennett@ffcmh.org. For more information about Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, visit the website at www.ffcmh.org.

In addition to all this excitement, we will be supporting SAMHSA's Children's Mental Health Day events! For more information, visit www.samhsa.gov/children.

**This article was contributed by:
Kameisha Bennett**



Youth Focus

Welcome to the Youth Focus portion of the National Federation of Families Newsletter! This section is designed to help inform youth and the adults they work with on new things that are happening here at the National Federation. It also provides youth with the opportunity to provide their input and have their voices heard. So, I encourage you to take a look at what we are doing with the new and improved Youth Focused section.



By Eric Lulow

What's New!

The National Federation is proud to announce that we have just launched a section on our website that is [Just 4 Youth](#). Here you will have the opportunity to nominate the Youth of the Month, learn about policies happening On the Hill, participate in Youth Leadership Development, and check out some of the different resources that we offer.



Give us feedback! Let us know what you think of the new Youth Focus section. Send your comments to elulow@ffcmh.org.

Youth Voice Matters

Here at the National Federation of Families, it is important to us that youth voice be heard, and that youth have the opportunities to express themselves. That is why we are devoting a portion of every newsletter to you. In the Youth Focus section, we will publish essays, songs or poems that express your opinions. If you have something you would like to get published, please send in your submissions to elulow@ffcmh.org.

Writing Development

One of the best ways to express your opinions and viewpoints is through written communication. The writing development portion of the newsletter will help you hone your written communication skills, and provide you with the opportunity to express your thoughts in a more technical form. This will be useful when writing professional letters, opinion editorials, journal articles and other professional documents. For this newsletter edition, we are going to talk a little about how to write a Letter to the Editor.



A 'Letter to the Editor' is a letter that is sent to the editor of a publication, such as a local newspaper, that expresses a person's opinion or view point on a particular issue. Usually, letters are written in response to an article that was recently published in that newspaper. These letters are written with the intent that they will be published in that paper, allowing the writer's opinion to be heard by the publications readers.

Below are 7 steps/tips to help you write a more effective *Letter to the Editor*.

1 Pick a topic that you feel very passionate about that was recently discussed in the paper. This could be anything from pending legislation to an article written by a reporter. It doesn't matter if you agree or disagree with the other writer's opinions, just make sure that you have new information or a new viewpoint to provide to the readers. Nobody wants to read the same thing over again, and your chances of getting it published are slim.

2 It's important that you write clearly and that you stay on topic. Most Letter to the Editor sections of the newspaper have guidelines that your letter must fit. Often these are word restrictions, such as all letters must be 300 words or less. Getting off topic often increases your word count and takes away from your main objective.

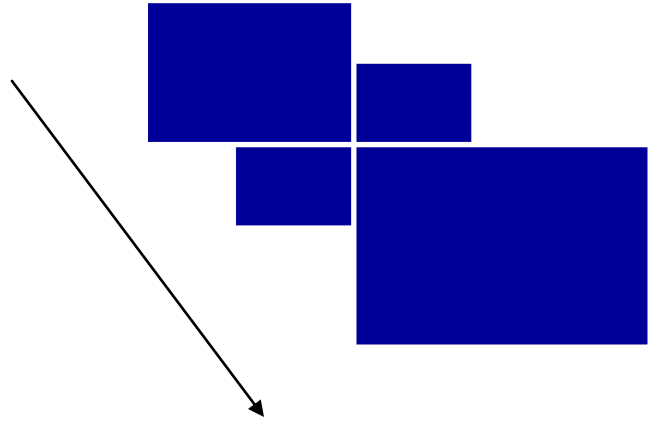
3 When writing your letter, you want to get all of the important information in a quickly as possible. This gets the attention of your reader and helps to ensure that you won't go over your word restrictions. The first thing that you want to do is reference the article to which you are responding. Next, you want to state your qualifications; it is important to establish your credibility. Finally, you want to state your opinion and why you are writing this letter to the editor. This can and should be done in the first 3 to 4 sentences of your letter.

For example: " I'm writing this letter in response to Mr. John Doe's article on *The Need to Take Away the Bike Lane on Main City Streets* that appeared in this publication on February 16, 2010. I am a junior at Blakemore High School and have used these bike lanes to ride my bike to school for the past three years. Taking away the bike lane, as Mr. Doe supports, would have a large negative impact on myself and many other members of our community."



More steps on the next page!

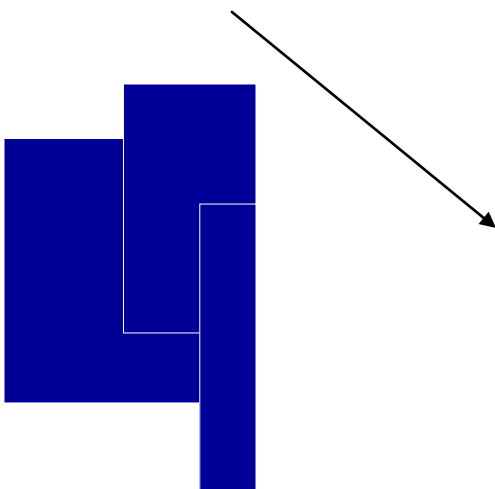
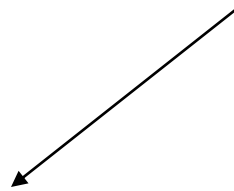
4 Next, you will want to use facts to support your opinion. Facts and statistics go a long way with convincing and influencing people to see your point of view. Some of the things you could talk about in the example above could include how many other members you see in your community use the bike lane to get to school or to work. You could even talk about how it helps to keep you and the other riders safe and healthy and that it's better for the environment. Just make sure that you stay



5 Make sure that you restate your main point at the end of your letter. This tells people one last time what your opinion is and brings a concise conclusion to your letter.

Example: "Because so many individuals utilize our city bike lanes as a healthy and environmentally friendly way to commute, it is important that we work to keep them open, and encourage more people to take advantage of the benefits that they provide."

6 Remember to always be polite regardless of what your feelings on the particular issue might be. This makes you sound more professional and will be better received by others. Read aloud what you have written to make sure that it makes sense. Use spell check and proof read it thoroughly; get a friend, parent, or teacher to proof read it as well.



7 Now you need to send it in! Just mail or email it to the address provided in the newspaper. Make sure you attach your name, address, and phone number along with the letter. Most publications will call you to confirm that the letter was in fact written by you.

You are now on your way to being an advocate in your community!



Your Ad Space Here

Youth MOVE National wants you!

Support the cause as either an Individual Member (youth & adult), Support Organization or Chapter. Applications can be found at www.youthmove.us, or by contacting Corey Brown at 240-403-1901 or cbrown@ffcmh.org.

Contact the National Federation
for rates and deadlines!

240-403-1901

Youth MOVE National is a youth led national organization devoted to improving services and systems that support positive growth and development by uniting the voices of individuals who have lived experience in various systems including mental health, juvenile justice, education, and child welfare.

Dress for success and style everyday - Make sure you get all of your National Federation gear today!

Don't forget your **Children's Mental Health Awareness Shirt!**

www.cafepress.com/nffcmh



Moving Forward

Resources, Reminders, and Resolutions

Executive Director
Sandra Spencer

Staff
Andrea Barnes
Kameisha Bennett
Corey Brown
Nadia Cayce
Brittany Couch
Shannon CrossBear
Emmett Dennis
Ivonn Ellis-Wiggan
Lorrin Gehring
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Upcoming Topics

New Developments in the Family-to-Family Initiative
Children's Mental Health Week Activities
Youth Voice: The Power of Words

Resources Available from the National Federation:

Policy and Advocacy Alerts
Newly Developed Tools and Resources
Evidence is Co-Pilot: Data-Informed and Family-Driven Workbook
Critical Issues Guide on Financing

Check Out the National Federation's Website for:

Fact Sheets, News Briefs and Updates
New Developments, Reports and Findings
Upcoming Activities and Events!

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