

# Doris Duke Fellowships *for the* Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

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*The month of April marks an important time for the field and for the Doris Duke Fellowships, as we honor National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and announce the second cohort of accepted fellows. This edition of the newsletter highlights current fellows and mentors specializing in early intervention as a tool for maltreatment prevention, and features columns on new research and reflections on the future direction of the field.*

## Announcement of New Fellows Congratulations to the second cohort of Doris Duke Fellows!

### **Kristin Abner, MA**

Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago

### **Aaron Banman, MSW, LCSW**

School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago

### **Emily Bosk, MSW**

School of Social Work and Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

### **Jackie Duron, MSW, LCSW**

Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston

### **Megan Finno, MSW**

School of Social Work, University of Southern California

### **Kate Fulwiler, M.Ed.**

School Psychology Program, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle

### **Brooks Keeshin, MD**

Division of Safe and Healthy Children - Child Abuse Pediatrics, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

### **Tia McGill, MPH**

Institute of Public Health, Georgia State University

### **Justin "Jay" Miller, MSW, CSW**

Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville

### **Byron Powell, AM, LCSW**

George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis

**Whitney Rostad, MA**

Developmental Psychology Program, Department of Psychology,  
University of Montana, Missoula

**William Schneider**

School of Social Work, Columbia University

**Kristen Seay, MSW, LMSW**

George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in  
St. Louis

**Amanda Van Scoyoc, MS**

Department of Psychology, University of Oregon, Eugene

**Jessica Schaffner Wilen, MSW, LCSW**

Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, Bryn Mawr College

## Notes from Deb

# National Child Abuse Prevention Month: Reflections on the Field

by **DEBORAH DARO**

Senior Research Fellow

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

For almost 30 years, April has played a special role in promoting child abuse awareness and prevention. Officially proclaimed by Congress as National Child Abuse Prevention Month in 1983, April offers an annual opportunity to educate the public on child abuse and neglect and the importance of sustaining a comprehensive approach to its prevention. While the prominence of the child abuse issue has shifted from year to year, there remains a consistent belief that protecting children and promoting their healthy development is an appropriate social endeavor.



Today, the child abuse field faces a critical juncture in which its viability as a unique field of practice faces notable challenges. In many respects, a greater distance exists between those focusing on clinical and judicial interventions for victims and perpetrators and those promoting abuse prevention. While not a new situation, the problem has been exacerbated by the partnerships and fields of practice to which both sides are now drawn. Those engaged in providing therapeutic services to victims and offenders often seek clinical partnerships and shared learning with those implementing trauma-focused therapies that address a wide array of violent acts and social dilemmas that negatively impact children. On the prevention side, robust alliances are being formed with primary health care providers and early care and education professionals. Indeed, the framing of the child abuse prevention message has moved away from an explicit mention of maltreatment in favor of a more positive, strength-based message that emphasizes child development, positive parent-child interaction, and protective factors.

Embedding child abuse prevention within the broader issues of positive child development or trauma offers important opportunities to increase overall service availability, to better align the efforts of health, education, and social service agencies, and to address normative standards that threaten a child's well-being. On the other hand, it is possible that the absence of a coherent, well-focused child abuse and neglect message will leave some families unserved and some children unprotected. Families unable to effectively access and engage in broadly targeted prevention

services, but considered inappropriate for mandated child welfare interventions or trauma-focused therapies, are at risk of being lost in a sustained bifurcation between prevention and treatment.

Efficiently responding to all at-risk families will require more complex thinking, nuanced response, and intentional outreach to multiple disciplines and fields of practice. Developing and sustaining a robust and diversified set of supports to reduce child maltreatment rates will hinge on a research and practice agenda that maximizes opportunities within these broader domains while retaining the benefits of a continued focus on the unique needs of children whose parents and caretakers are unable or unwilling to nurture their development. Ultimately, the end goal is to take better care of kids. This objective will be achieved through a joint effort to equip parents with the skills and knowledge essential to effective parenting and insistence that parents and all of us be held accountable for creating and maintaining an environment where children can grow and flourish.

## Featured Fellow

### Grace Hubel, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

by TOVA NEUGUT

*Grace & Tova interviewed one another about their career paths, academic and professional work, and current research.*

Grace began working with maltreated children early in her career as a project coordinator for a federally-funded study on Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy at the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center. When she applied to doctoral programs, she discovered Dr. David Hansen's Child Maltreatment Lab at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL) to be a perfect fit. As a student, she was particularly excited to begin working in a clinical placement as a mental health consultant to the local Head Start/Early Head Start program. While with the organization, Grace began to recognize common vulnerabilities among families through her contact with children who had experienced abuse. She also began to see the promise of the program as a tool for primary prevention. Grace's policy mentor, Dr. Brian Wilcox, directs the UNL's Center for Children, Families, and the Law. A faculty member at the Center suggested that juvenile court records could be used to monitor instances of maltreatment. This new data source helped her to examine Early Head Start's role in the prevention of instances of maltreatment.



Grace's dissertation project is funded by a federal grant through the Administration for Children and Families. The grant provides support to train early career researchers who pursue questions that directly inform local, state, or federal policy relevant to early care and education contexts. A recent highlight of Grace's doctoral training was her experience at the national grantees meeting where she received feedback on her dissertation project from a diverse group of researchers interested in promoting the healthy development of young children.

## Featured Fellow Tova Neugut,

by GRACE HUBEL

Tova spent the year after she graduated from college as a Hart Fellow in Jamaica working with the Roving Caregivers Program, a home visiting service for families with children ages 0-3 living in low-income, rural communities. Upon returning to the U.S., she worked with Montague Catholic Social Ministries Family Support Programs, providing home visiting services in Franklin County, Massachusetts to families with children under the age of five, and identified as "at risk for intergenerational transmission of low literacy and poverty." In both positions, many of the children she worked with had been direct victims of parental violence and/or exposed to adult domestic violence, and she witnessed the varied and devastating impact of trauma on young children's development. Her practice experience with *intervention* inspires her research focus on *primary prevention*--while it's vitally important to provide restorative experiences to children who have endured maltreatment, it's optimal to prevent harm and spare children pain.



As a joint Ph.D. student in social work and psychology at the University of Michigan, Tova has developed a program of research that is fundamentally translational. It is informed by her clinical work with high-risk families and aims to identify psychosocial targets of intervention that will strengthen families and prevent and/or effectively treat family violence and early signs of psychopathology in young children. Later this month Tova will travel to South Africa with her academic mentor, Dr. Rich Tolman, and her policy mentor, Dr. Deborah Weatherston, to attend the 13th World Congress of the World Association for Infant Mental Health. She is enormously excited to present a component of her dissertation research, to meet colleagues with shared interest in early intervention to promote nurturing parent-child relationships, to visit a new continent, and to share the experience with her two fellowship mentors.

## Keeping Up with Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Research

by ROSEMARY CHALK

Consultant to the Child Abuse Prevention Program  
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Prevention strategies that address child abuse and neglect now draw upon an evidence base that involves the social, behavioral, health, and biological sciences. Valuable syntheses of relevant research findings are often found in reports published by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC). IOM and NRC are part of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, a nonprofit, non-governmental organization based in Washington, DC that has provided scientific and technical guidance to government agencies and foundations for over 150 years. The IOM-NRC Board on Children, Youth, and Families, which I directed until June 2011, has stimulated the development of these studies.



Several IOM and NRC reports deserve particular attention because of their focus on the theories, measures, and evaluation of prevention programs that all relate, in some way, to child abuse and neglect. Many of these reports include specific policy and research recommendations that guide future initiatives at the national, state, and local levels. Further information about each publication is available online via the [National Academies Press](#).

The most recent publication is the [summary of a January 2012 IOM-NRC workshop](#) that examined emerging research on child abuse and neglect. The 2012 workshop updates a 1993 in-depth NRC study, titled [Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect](#). IOM and NRC are now organizing a new study committee that will conduct an extensive review of the research literature and also formulate new policy and research recommendations for this field.

Other studies of interest include:

- [Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders among Young People](#) (NRC-IOM, 2009). The report highlighted research findings that have shown how selected programs are effective at preventing disorders such as depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, and substance abuse, which are common risk factors for abuse and neglect, and promoting mental health in at-risk populations.
- [Depression in Parents, Parenting, and Children: Opportunities to Improve Identification, Treatment, and Prevention](#) (NRC-IOM, 2009). This study explored how two-generation models might be developed and evaluated to treat those aspects of adult depression that disrupt parenting roles and contribute to adverse outcomes among children of depressed parents.
- [From Neurons to Neighborhoods](#) (NRC, 2000). This landmark study of the science of early child development highlighted dramatic examples of the significant gap between current knowledge and practices, including the absence of sophisticated developmental services for young children who have been maltreated.

Keeping up with emerging research findings can be an overwhelming task. IOM and NRC studies provide valuable reference sources as well as critical reviews of the strengths and gaps in the scientific literature. They are must reading for anyone concerned with new research trends and their implications for child maltreatment prevention strategies.

## Academic Mentor Spotlight

**Kenneth Dodge, Ph.D.,**

[Director of the Center for Child and Family Policy,](#)

[William McDougall Professor of Public Policy,](#)

[Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience,](#)

[Duke University](#)

by SANDRA NAY MCCOURT

*Sandra interviewed her academic mentor about current work and reflections on emerging trends and innovations in early intervention as a tool for child maltreatment prevention.*



In considering innovative approaches to child maltreatment prevention, Dr. Dodge regards the nurse home-visiting model pioneered by David Olds as beneficial to the field in that it encourages intervening with parents early in a child's life to promote healthy development and secure attachment and reduce the likelihood of maltreatment. However, he identifies several barriers to broader implementation of this model, including the expense of a lengthy and intensive program, the fact that not every family at risk is likely to volunteer, and community resource limits. Dr. Dodge emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively with communities in developing effective and sustainable early intervention programs, by building support from community leaders as well as ensuring that adequate community resources are in place to meet the needs of families.

Dr. Dodge's current early intervention work includes Durham Connects, a universal, community-based nurse home-visiting program for Durham County, NC residents. This program aims to lower the population rate of child maltreatment and improve family functioning. Durham Connects nurses provide in-home health assessments of mothers and newborns and discuss social conditions affecting new families, with the goal of connecting new parents with the community resources they need to raise a healthy child. It is designed to be brief and relatively inexpensive so that communities can afford its costs. Initial evaluations found program effects on positive parenting behaviors, father involvement, child care quality, and reduced infant hospitalization.

The State of North Carolina plans to extend the Durham Connects program to six rural counties. Dr. Dodge is looking forward to addressing the special challenges involved in transporting this promising program to other communities.

## **Policy Mentor Spotlight** **Melinda Ohlemiller**, Chief Executive Officer, **Nurses for Newborns**

by PAUL LANIER

*Paul interviewed his policy mentor about current work and reflections on the field.*

Melinda Ohlemiller, Chief Executive Officer of Nurses for Newborns (NFN), is a passionate advocate for early intervention. NFN serves over 4,000 families each year, providing home visitation services with a mission to prevent infant mortality and child maltreatment in Missouri and Tennessee. Caregivers are visited by a registered nurse to promote healthy development of the newborn and support positive parenting skills following evidence-informed clinical guidelines. Melinda has been strongly focused on evolving NFN's 20-year history as a grassroots-grown support for new



mothers to an empirically-driven program delivering effective and high-quality services to the highest risk families.

In addition to her work running a successful multistate non-profit, Melinda has a strong presence in the policy world. Melinda is a recognized national leader on prevention of prenatal alcohol exposure as a member and co-chair of several federal expert panels at the [CDC](#) and [SAMHSA](#). Currently at the state level, Melinda serves as cochair of the [Missouri Governor's Task Force on Prematurity and Infant Mortality](#).

Melinda's work reflects a consistent philosophy of encouraging early intervention to prevent maltreatment. She holds the view that maltreatment emerges from incremental and multifactorial stressors beginning in the infancy of future parents. Seemingly insignificant choices accumulate to create substantial differences in risk. Therefore, simple and inexpensive methods of support and intervention during infancy can pay massive dividends down the line.

Melinda cites three key areas that she sees as critical emerging trends and innovations in successful home visitation. First, she believes that we cannot move the bar on many outcomes for infants without a stronger focus on integrating strategies that meet the mental health needs of caregivers. Second, Melinda's experience in policy-making arenas leads her to believe that our core responsibility as advocates is to better articulate both the human face of child abuse and neglect but also to articulate the cumulative financial burden of failing to prevent maltreatment.

Melinda is emphatic that the respectful care of the families we serve demands a concerted, multidisciplinary approach to addressing child maltreatment. She believes that we are on the cusp of moving away from disciplinary silos and truly focusing as a professional community on the well-being of children from a holistic point of view. Melinda's vision at the local and national level is a strong example of the leadership that is needed to make the potential future for every family a reality.

## Calendar of Fellowship Events

### 18th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

- **April 16 - 20, 2012**
- Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC
- Register and learn more [here](#).
- **Workshop on the Doris Duke Fellowships for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect**
  - **Wednesday, April 18, 2 - 3:30 p.m.**
  - *Chapin Hall Presenters:* Deborah Daro, Lee Ann Huang
  - *Fellow Presenters:* [Bart Klika](#), [Katie Maguire-Jack](#), [Kerri Raissian](#)
- **Doris Duke Fellowships Reception**
  - **Wednesday, April 18, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**
  - Chapin Hall and the Doris Duke Fellowships for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect will be hosting a reception for fellows, mentors, Chapin Hall and Doris Duke staff, and special invited guests. We hope many of you are planning to attend the conference and will join us for refreshments and great networking opportunities.
- **Keynote Town Hall Event with Deborah Daro**
  - **Thursday, April 19, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.**
  - Plenary III, Keynote Townhall Event
  - *Keynote speakers:* Deborah Daro, Lucille Echohawk, Eliana Gil, John Myers
  - *Moderator:* Kojo Nnamdi

### **Society for Prevention Research, Annual Meeting**

- **May 29 - June 1, 2012**
- Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC
- Register and learn more [here](#).

### **Head Start's 11th National Research Conference**

- **June 18-20, 2012**
- Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC
- Learn more [here](#).

### **The APSAC 20th Annual Colloquium**

- **June 27-30, 2012**
- Chicago Sheraton Hotel, Chicago, IL
- Register and learn more [here](#).

### **International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conference**

- **July 8-10, 2012**
- Sheraton Harborside Hotel and Conference Center, Portsmouth, NH
- Register and learn more [here](#).

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