

## **A University Family Science Department Manages a Private Family and Child Service Agency**

William H. Meredith \*  
Larry D. Kallemeyn  
Pauline Davey Zeece

In a cooperative arrangement between a private foundation and a university academic department, the Human Development and the Family Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has had a contract with the Cedars Foundation of Lincoln for the past one and a half years to provide managerial and professional services for the Cedars Home for Children in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Cedars Home has served as an excellent training facility for undergraduate and graduate students in the department. To our knowledge this arrangement is the only one of its kind in the United States where a university academic department runs a licensed private family and child service agency.

The initial contract period is for four years, renewable annually after that point. The Human Development and the Family Department received \$580,000 to provide managerial and professional services for the Cedars Project for the 87/88 fiscal year. The 28 staff and four graduate assistants at the Home are all university employees and part of the Department's staff.

The creator of this unique concept was Edward Schwartzkopf, a former University of Nebraska Board of Regents Chairman and presently Executive Director of the Cedars Foundation. The details of this arrangement were worked out in cooperation with Helen Sulek, retired Director of the Child Development Laboratories at the University of Nebraska.

The Cedars Foundation and the Department of Human Development and the Family mutually agreed on a common mission to serve as an exemplary service program addressing the multiple needs of children and families and to provide students with a quality supervised learning experience in their chosen field. The Department of Human Development and the Family has three major programs at Cedars: Day Care, Emergency Shelter Care, and Family Services. The Day Care Program has recently been expanded following the completion of a \$750,000 addition to the existing Cedars facility. The new state-of-the-art day care center planned through consultation with the department's early childhood faculty provides services for 47 children from families in need of assistance. Thirty-five of the children are in the preschool program with the remaining 12 in the infant nursery.

Referrals for admission to the Day Care Program are primarily through the Department of Social Services, family members, or other social service agencies.

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\* William H. Meredith is Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Human Development and the Family, Ruth Leverton Hall 109, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0809.

Emphasis is placed on serving families with special needs. Hours of operation are from 6:30 a.m. through 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Transportation to and from Cedars is provided for families with special needs.

The purpose of the Day Care Program at the Cedars Home for Children is to facilitate children's growth directly through child caring programs and indirectly through the strengthening of the role of the family. Another purpose of the program is early intervention, to reduce the risk of future out of home placement in the residential program. The program is designed to provide an educational and developmentally appropriate setting in which children and adults learn and grow together.

The philosophy is based on meeting the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive needs of the children. The program's responsibility is to provide a stimulating, caring environment which will assist the children in growing to their fullest potential by recognizing each developmental stage and fashioning a curriculum that will nurture and facilitate growth during that stage.

The Emergency Shelter Care Program is available for children primarily 4-14 years of age who are in need of short term (1-60 days) residential care. An average of 18 children are served daily through this program. Admission into the program is based on the child's need for an immediate, safe, caring environment until the crisis situation within the child's family can be resolved or until a more permanent placement can be arranged. Referrals for placement are primarily made by the local Police Department, Department of Social Services, family members, and other service agencies.

The Emergency Shelter Care Program operates within a family style living arrangement using live-in teaching/parent couples to provide residential care. Youth are encouraged to continue their current activities within local educational programs, recreational programs, mental health or counseling programs, church or other appropriate community or family activities with Cedar's staff providing needed support and transportation. A family services and individual plan is developed for each youth and their family (or substitute family) to identify specific needs which must be addressed to ensure that the youth's return home or placement in a permanent setting will be successful. Follow-up in-home support services are available in conjunction with the Family Services Program. Sibling groups are welcomed in an effort to keep the children together as an entire unit.

The Family Services Program is an integral part of both the Day Care and Emergency Shelter Care Programs. The Family Services Program is responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing a family services plan which will identify specific needs to be addressed to ensure a child's successful return home or permanent placement. This program currently carries a caseload of 29 families.

The family services plan is developed by the service team and written by Cedars Family Service staff along with the family members. The written family plan identifies areas of specific family or individual needs which can be addressed either through the direct provision of services through Cedars Day Care, Emergency Shelter Care, and Family Services programs (i.e., family counseling, family support

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groups, educational groups of in-home support services), or through other appropriate community service providers.

Faculty of the department have been involved as consultants to the project and as providers of in-service training. The Chair of the Human Development and the Family Department manages the project contract with assistance from the Director of the Child Development Laboratories.

In addition to the full-time staff at the Home, graduate students in Human Development and the Family do practicums in marriage and family therapy through the Cedars Project as well as having fieldwork placements there. Undergraduate department majors also have fieldwork and laboratory experiences at the Cedars Home for Children.

Certainly an advantage to having experiences for students at Cedars, as well as in on-campus laboratories, is that students have a chance to apply information learned in the classroom in a setting that mirrors the department's general philosophical orientation. The Cedars program allows the department to greatly expand its laboratory programs beyond the Child Development Laboratory located on campus which serves 90 preschool children. The Cedars program provides for a wider range of children's ages with which students may work as well as varying types of family situations.

As the program evolves, faculty and graduates will begin research projects at Cedars. In addition, educational interventions also are planned with families in the wider community using Cedars as its base. The development and implementation of the services and programs which have been described are fully dependent on the commitment of Cedars and the University of Nebraska Department of Human Development and the Family to work together as a team. The Cedars Home for children has a long history of providing care for children and families in need and the University Department of Human Development and the Family brings added knowledge, skill, and expertise to further the worthwhile mission and goals which have been jointly established. The programs meet the needs of over eighty children and their families at any given time. Additionally, a wide variety of students are able to learn from "hands on" experience within their chosen field. The challenges and opportunities for the Cedars Program and its service to children and families are limitless. The programs and services which are currently being developed are a foundation upon which to build. The Cedars Foundation and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln can take great pride in its accomplishments to provide quality services for children and families within an educational learning framework for undergraduate and graduate services.