

American Humane Association Wins Grant for National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services

Last update: 11:32 a.m. EDT Oct. 22, 2008

DENVER, Oct 22, 2008 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Group Includes Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Institute of Applied Research, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, and the National Conference of State Legislatures

The American Humane Association, in partnership with Walter R. McDonald & Associates and the Institute of Applied Research, has been selected to receive a federal cooperative agreement totaling nearly \$10 million over five years to develop the National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services. The grant was awarded by the Children's Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Differential response, also referred to as dual track, multiple track or alternative response, is an approach that allows child protective services to respond differently to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect, based on factors such as the type and severity of the alleged maltreatment, the number and sources of previous reports, and the willingness of the family to participate in services.

"How our public systems respond to reports of child abuse and neglect is a critical issue," said Marie Belew Wheatley, president and CEO of American Humane. "This is especially true as families struggle with child-rearing issues that are elevated during lean economic times, and while systems redouble efforts to keep children safe and protected."

"All three of these primary organizations have been pioneers in advancing differential response systems nationally and within states, and are uniquely positioned to collaborate and complement each other's strengths, knowledge and networks," said Pat Devin, chair of the American Humane Children's Advisory Committee and vice chair of the organization's Board of Directors. "We are delighted, too, with the participation of the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, and the National Conference of State Legislatures, which will contribute specialized expertise to this visionary effort."

Activities will be conducted in partnership with the Children's Bureau. As the lead agency in the project, American Humane has begun to establish the infrastructure to support the new center, including creation of a national advisory committee, an academic scholars' panel and a family

consumers' council. The participation of these groups will ensure the relevance and usefulness of the project, its findings and recommendations.

"The purpose of the new quality improvement center is to generate knowledge about effective practice models of differential response in child protective services, and to incorporate community and prevention approaches to serve families who are involved with the child protective services system," said Sonia C. Velazquez, vice president of American Humane's Children's Division.

After an initial phase of assessing existing models, gaps and needs, the center will select a research focus and together with nationally selected research and demonstration project sites, will conduct multi-year experimental design, in addition to supporting doctoral dissertation activities, explained Caren Kaplan, ACSW, who is project director as well as director of child protection reform at American Humane. Evaluation will be conducted to build knowledge and provide empirical information to the field. Throughout its various phases of analysis, implementation and dissemination, the project will cooperate with several other institutions dedicated to the advancement of child welfare systems. Previous research in Minnesota and Missouri demonstrated very promising outcomes of differential response systems: 1) that children whose families are engaged differently by child protective services through differential response are safer sooner; 2) that child protection workers and families are more satisfied with this approach; and 3) that, while modest upfront dollars are required, over time there is a significant cost savings for child protection systems. Through this quality improvement center, these are just some of the critical issues that the rigorous evaluation methods will address. In turn, the lessons learned through this project will arm states with information to improve child protection systems.

About American Humane

Founded in 1877, the American Humane Association is the only national organization dedicated to protecting both children and animals. Through a network of child and animal protection agencies and individuals, American Humane develops research, policies, legislation, advocacy, partnerships, training programs, curricula and publications to protect children and animals from abuse, neglect and exploitation. American Humane meets the strong, comprehensive standards of the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, has been awarded the Independent Charities of America's "Best in America" Seal of Approval, and has met the stringent standards for financial efficiency and accountability required by the American Institute of Philanthropy to qualify as a Top-Rated Charity. Visit www.americanhumane.org to learn more.

Contact: Randy Blauvelt

(303) 925-9442

randyb@americanhumane.org

SOURCE American Humane Association

<http://www.americanhumane.org>