



CASA News and Views Cochise County Newsletter

Winter Edition 2014

Features

CASA Coordinator
Abby Dodge

CASA Coordinator
(Part-Time)
Joan Hansen

CASA Support
Lisette Borbon

Phone: 432-7521
Fax: 432-7247



Photo courtesy of CASA of Arizona

Co-Editors: Joan Hansen, LuRue Troyer
Published by LuRue Troyer
troyer1234@gmail.com

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Coordinator's Comments



This is my last Comments column as Coordinator or “Head Honcho”. First I want to welcome Abby as the new Coordinator/Program Manager/Head Honcho (you will hear at least the first two titles used interchangeably). She is already diving into work and getting things done, as I knew she

would. As I have said before, Abby was and is the best choice for the position.

Abby, I wish you the best as Coordinator for one of the best programs in Arizona. Of course I’m biased. I know your vision will continue to improve the program and make it stronger.

To all of you CASA volunteers, I thank you for your patience, enduring the length of time it took to get a new Coordinator on board. There were a lot of details that were overlooked due to the shortened number of hours I worked. But you all had the resilience to keep on doing what you needed to do for your cases in spite of the length of time it took to get back to you on your questions/concerns.

I want to thank Lissete for being a “rock” during the extended time I was working part time. She took on a lot of responsibility and did it brilliantly! She was the glue that held the program together. My undying thanks for sticking it out and making it work.

I have enjoyed the past 12 years being involved in the program. But the reason for my enjoying the job was all of you. You are amazing and do some extraordinary work in advocating for your cases, *albeit some of you need to improve on your paperwork requirements such as getting in reports, submitting contact logs on time, and getting your training!*

It has been my pleasure to lead the CASA of Cochise County as the “Head Honcho” for the past 7 years and working with such dedicated volunteers. You are the best and I know you will give Abby your support and respect as you have me. Thank you all for making a difference not only in the life of a child, but in my life. I’m a much better person having known you. You have my undying gratitude and admiration for all you do for the children and for the community.

Joan Hansen
Cochise County CASA Program Coordinator

December 2014						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Bud D. 	2	3	4	5	6
7 Ilene A. 	8	9	10 Human Rights Day	11	12	13 Ice Cream Day
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 National Flashlight Day	22	23	24 National Chocolate Day 	25 Christmas Day Offices are closed 	26 Boxing Day	27
28 Card Playing Day	29	30	31	→ 12/24/14 Ned: Court Report due for SF → 12/25/14 Ned: Court Report due for DM/JM		
<i>***Happy Christmas Everyone! And A Happy New Year!***</i>						

Created by Lissete Borbon, CASA Support

January 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Year's Day Offices closed	2	3
4 Trivia Day	5	6 Mary Kay H. Mary B: Court report due for S/P	7	8	9 Angela M. 	10 Houseplant Appreciation Day
11	12	13	14 Joshua V. 	15	16	17
18	19 Martin Luther King Day Offices closed	20	21	22 Juanita M. Court report due for BB	23	24
25 Brittany E. 	26	27	28	29	30	

Created by Lissete Borbon, CASA Support

Michelle's Story

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

Michelle Tullier was my first CASA kid. She was a 15-year-old single mother. She was smart, loving, prickly and volatile. She had an off/on relationship with her mother at this time, and her dad was in Oklahoma, so he was not part of her life. She burned through several placements and ended up in a group home in Phoenix. I managed to get her a courtesy CASA volunteer in Phoenix, which lasted only a short time before the volunteer informed us that she couldn't handle the case any longer. I had **not** stepped down as the CASA, so I commuted to Phoenix till Michelle decided to run away to Ohio. She had enough money saved from her job, so she bought the tickets and left. Eventually, she came back to Arizona, and I was asked to bring her back, which I did.

When Michelle returned to Sierra Vista, she was placed in a foster home and reenrolled in Buena HS. Within days she decided that she was done with high school, so I took her to Cochise College, and she passed the GED without a minute's preparation.

CPS (DCSF in Arizona) decided she would do best if she and her son were on their own.

She was barely 17½ when she got an apartment. She enrolled in Cochise College and did well. She welcomed a baby girl and eventually decided to join the army. That didn't work out. She came back to Sierra Vista, and our local Outside Inn helped her when she arrived. Eventually, she ended up going to Oklahoma and lived with her sister.

I didn't hear from her for a while, but she eventually called and let me know she was in Camp Pendleton, California with the Marines. Her husband got out of the military, and the family moved to Texas. They had a baby boy Daniel, and Michelle was finishing college. The couple finally divorced in 2012.

After college she took a job with CPS as an investigative case manager. She has been doing this for two years, and she is going to transfer and become an ongoing case manager. Her career goal is to become a CPS supervisor.

Michelle and her mother have become very close. She and her mother live together in the house Michelle owns. Mom works for the Sheriff's Department. Michelle is happy,

successful and very proud of her family.

As a teenager, Michelle had a quick temper, but she never did anything to cause her to run afoul of the law. She wasn't afraid to try new adventures. She had the self-confidence to "go for the gusto," and if things didn't work out, she would pick herself up and try again.

I knew Michelle's oldest son, Cameron, quite well. He had amazing stamina and energy. He was also fearless. Yet he was sweet and loving and could learn amazingly quickly. As long as he could be outdoors, he was happy. The first time, he was with me in my car, he opened the car door while we were driving I pulled over and we had a talk about safety, and he never tried it again.

Marisa, the second born, left Arizona when she was still quite small, so I only remember her as being a happy, sweet baby.

Now that Cameron is a freshman in high school, Michelle is having to deal with the dating scene. It's not a problem for her. She goes along on dates. She explained she felt this was necessary because "you know how girls are."

~Continued on next page

Michelle's Story (Continued)

Life is good for Michelle and her family. She has left the ups and downs of the past behind her, but she still stays in touch with her case worker and Lynna Mros, the supervisor of Open Inn. She is thankful for having people to help when she needed it, but the truth of the matter is this:

Michelle had some hard times, some of which she brought upon herself, but through it all she had the resilience to bounce back and try again. Sometimes it took awhile, but she learned from her mistakes and she grew up to be become a successful, happy, compassionate, healthy adult. She says she uses the experiences she had and the mistakes that she made to help young people find a better way.

I can't think of a better person to join the helping profession. Michelle can relate to what a young person is going through because she has been there, and she is able to share the wisdom she gained from her experiences.

Michelle & Daniel



Cameron & Marisa



The Box

by **Abby Dodge, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

I recently said goodbye to one of my CASA kids, an 8-year-old boy who I have represented since October 2011... He was adopted in June 2014, so I haven't been his CASA for several months, but I was still seeing him on a regular basis because his adoptive parents asked if I would continue to be active with him through the summer. This past week I took him to Peter Piper to play some games and talk to him about not being his CASA anymore. I told him that he has his Nana and Tata (what he calls his adoptive parents) who love him very much, and they will continue to love him and take care of him in the future. I then explained to him how there are other children that need my help and attention because they don't know for sure where they will live and who will take care of them. I told him that I still would like to see him on occasion, but I need to dedicate more time to helping other children. He seemed to understand and accept that explanation.

When I brought him back to his home, I told his parents what we talked about. They

thanked me for everything and we said goodbye. Before I left, this sweet boy came out of his bedroom with a jewelry box that had belonged to his mother. His mother passed away 2 years ago. He thanked me for everything I've done for him and told me that he wanted me to have his mom's jewelry box. Normally I try to avoid accepting gifts like this from any of my CASA children... But if you had seen the struggle that this child went through when his mother passed away from cancer, and the events leading up to her death, you would know that this wasn't a normal situation. When he handed me this jewelry box and told me he wanted me to have it, it was all I could do not to cry... and I'm not usually a crier :) There were so many times throughout this case that I felt like I wasn't doing enough to help this child, or that my actions just weren't achieving enough results... There were so many times that this child screamed at me or called me names, didn't want to see me, acted out, etc... He had a lot of behavioral issues, but who could blame him... At times I got very discouraged and felt like there was nothing I could do to

help this child. However, this beat-up, partially broken jewelry box that originally came from Walmart was a great reminder that even though it didn't seem like I was making a difference, I was...

Just remember, even if your CASA child doesn't seem to be benefiting from your time and efforts, he/she is... They might not know how to explain/show their appreciation for your efforts, but that doesn't mean they don't appreciate everything that you do for them. Every now and again we might be fortunate enough to get some indication that we have made a difference; however, this isn't necessarily the norm. If you're ever feeling discouraged or thinking that you aren't achieving results, just remember that what you're doing is very important. Not everyone has what it takes to be a CASA volunteer. It may not seem that important coming from me, a fellow volunteer, but I appreciate each and every one of you and I consider myself very fortunate to have so many amazing fellow volunteers to work alongside :) Thanks everyone for all that you do!

Parenting

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

Joy, my oldest CASA kid, called me the other day. She is now a college graduate, has an excellent job in the U.S. government, and is the mother of two children.

She called to ask me about her daughter, who is the fourth grade. School is just starting back in Maryland, and the school has already sent two notes home complaining about the child's behavior. The offenses were not paying attention when the teacher was reading aloud to the class (she was busy reading another book) and falling asleep in the afternoon.

We first talked about the falling asleep in class. Joy was especially worried because the young lady gets at least 10 hours sleep every night. Joy felt something must be seriously wrong. I asked if she had checked with the pediatrician. She hadn't yet but promised to make an appointment.

Then she felt like she should have done this already. I pointed out that the problem had just surfaced, probably was not serious, and all that needed to be done was to schedule a quick visit to the doctor and get it checked out. I also told her that her child was lucky to have a mother who was so concerned about

her welfare. I confessed that I was much more lax as a parent.

We next talked about the child's reading her own book instead of listening to the teacher read. We agreed immediately that the teacher needed to be supported. Indeed, she and her husband had already had a **serious** talk with the child. I probed a bit and found out the teacher was maybe not as interesting as he could be. But he deserved respect. Joy came up with the idea to ask the teacher to move her child closer to his desk, so he could keep an eye on her and help her to pay attention.

Then Joy told me that she was looking forward to another year of being very involved in the school activities. I told her I thought she was doing a wonderful job as a parent and I have told her this over and over through the years. And I validated what a wonderful stepmother she is to her son.

I reminded Joy that she had not had an easy childhood and that she had never lived in a loving, nurturing home, but now that it was her turn to parent her child, she was truly dedicated to giving both her children a normal childhood. I told her that she had

eliminated the cycle of abuse and that her children would never know anything but two parents who loved them and who were firm, fair, and consistent. I told her how lucky her children are and how lucky she is that she was able to write a new script for her life and end the cycle of abuse.

Joy has worked hard to become the person she is today. She went through counseling, as a teenager she worked 50 hours a week as a waitress to earn extra money, and she learned to love and be loved. It is wonderful to see how much Joy has accomplished. She set her goals high, she accepted help when she needed it, and by her efforts she has earned success and happiness.

An update from Joy: I have spoken to her teacher and we both agreed on a plan to move her seat closer to him during reading. Since my meeting with the teacher, my daughter has not fallen asleep in class and is more attentive. She has been coming home with good grades in math as well and I believe it is because of the Kumon program I have her on.

PTA involvement: so I'm the chairperson responsible for putting together the end of school picnic. More to come and wish me good luck :~)!

Volunteers of the Year

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

Two of my favorite CASA volunteers received another well-deserved honor recently. They were selected by the Cochise Community Foundation as the organization's first recipients of the Volunteer of the Year Award for service in Cochise County.

Jim and Carol Huddleston have been CASA volunteers for 13 years. They have had a number of different cases throughout the years, but they have been connected with one family ever since they started. They were the advocates for one of the boys for more than 7 years until he aged out. They are still in contact with him. They now are working with the two youngest children in the family. These children are about to be adopted. So, thirteen years later, they are still advocating for children in this family.

In 2005, Jim and Carol were selected as co-CASAs of the Year for the State of Arizona. They were also honored as the CASAs of the Year for Cochise County previously.

Jim told me that they work closely with Manny Valenzuela (also a CASA volunteer).

It is obvious that the Huddlestons work with many people and many organizations. I told Jim that I measure the worth of a person by his/her ability to work with others and by how committed he/she is to the service to others.

The Huddlestons excel in these areas. I have always considered Carol and Jim to be my special role models. There have been times when I was frustrated and didn't know what to do, and I would calm down (very hard for my type A personality to do) and ask myself, "What would the Huddleston's do?"



Happiness Cake

- 1 Cup Good Thoughts
- 1 Cup Consideration for Others
- 2 Cups Well-Beaten Faults
- 1 Cup Kind Deeds
- 3 Cups Forgiveness

Mix thoroughly.

Add Tears of Joy, Sorrow and Sympathy. Flavor with Love and Kindly Service. Fold in 4 Cups of Prayer and Faith. Blend well. Fold into daily life.

Bake well with warmth and Human Kindness and serve with a Smile, anytime.

--St. Peter Lutheran Church newsletter

Ultimate Mac & Cheese

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

Hayley and I have been planning for her to cook the very "best of the very best" macaroni and cheese recipes. She carefully selected her favorite recipe, and recently she showcased her cooking talents.

Hayley has been interested in cooking...serious cooking...for awhile now. She has already visited the Art Institute and scoped out their cooking program.

I was amazed at what a savvy shopper this young lady is. She didn't just buy breadcrumbs. She bought seasoned bread crumbs. She knew all about cheeses (sharp cheddar is the way to go) and block cheese was the best value. She compared prices on every item and knew exactly where to find every item except the bread crumbs, and she asked an employee to help her with this.

Hayley told her foster mother and me all about roux and béchamel sauce, much to the amazement of both of us. Her macaroni was perfectly cooked. Her sauce was velvety. She toasted her bread crumbs and added parmesan cheese to the sauce and sprinkled it on top over the bread crumbs. A dusting of

paprika completed the picture, and thirty minutes later we sampled "**Ultimate Macaroni and Cheese**".

I told Hayley she is the first CASA kid I have ever known who created a culinary masterpiece. I told her I was sure my request to the CASA Council to fund the ingredients would be approved.

It was a great day, and I told her I would be happy to write her a recommendation for the ART Institute when she is ready to apply.



Expect problems and eat them for breakfast.

Alfred A. Montapert



A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.

Colin Powell



Positive anything is better than negative nothing.

Elbert Hubbard

Seeking Assistance

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

Yesterday I was attempting to learn how to find and to fill out on-line job applications. Much to my dismay, when I googled “job applications for Sears,” I wasn’t able to find the Sears site. All Google came up with was the generic job application sites. I tried the store website with no success.

I finally contacted my go-to computer/cell phone man, Bud Dragoo, and asked for help. He asked if I wanted a thorough search or a quick check. I told him, “Quick check.” He called back in a few moments and said all he could find were the generic job application sites. I thanked him and sat down to stew and fret.

Aha! One of my CASA young ladies had just gotten a job and had applied on-line. I called Anna up and asked for her help. I asked her to help me look up Safeway. Both of us pulled up the website. She gave me a moment to check, and when I couldn’t find anything, she said to look for key words such as “employment,” “careers.” or “learn more.” I looked and looked and when I got down to

the fine print at the bottom of the page, I found the word “careers,” and bingo, I was good to go.

I thanked Anna profusely for her help. I know tutoring me in anything technical is tough stuff, but Anna easily helped me find what I needed. It is a pleasure to be an advocate for Anna. I admire her ability to take charge of her life and her willingness to help others. Thank you, Anna. I would still be staring at my computer if it weren’t for your kind assistance.



Open Inn & Crisis Center

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

In my article, Michelle's Story, I told you that Michelle received services from Open Inn in Huachuca City. She left the CPS independent living program and had enlisted in the army. That didn’t work out, so she came back to Sierra Vista and found herself with no job, no money, no services, and two

children.

Open Inn provided her with short term services to get back on her feet. They gave her temporary lodging and support till she got a job. She bounced back quickly, but she was in dire need of a temporary helping hand.

Funding for Open Inn dried up, and their attempts to merge with another agency did not work out. Open Inn was forced to close. This meant that the teens and young adults in our area are now without Open Inn. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of services for this group, so many of them have nowhere to turn.

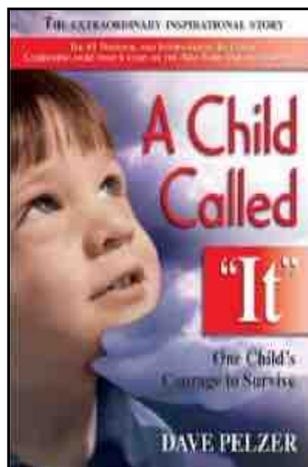
The Crisis Center in Huachuca City, which has been a temporary shelter for children in our area for many years, has also been forced to close. Families now have to go to Tucson to see their children. Some of these families do not have the resources to do this.

We have lost both Open Inn and the Crisis Center. We need to take some kind of action to have them restored. Any ideas?

Book Reviews

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

I just finished two books by Dave Pelzer. Both books are about the experiences of a foster child named Dave Pelzer. The first book is about his experiences from ages 4-12. The second book is about his experiences from ages 12 -18.



A Child Called "It"

By Dave Pelzer
Published in 1995

Dave Pelzer was a victim of child abuse from the age of 4-12. His early years were very happy. His father was a fireman, his mother was a

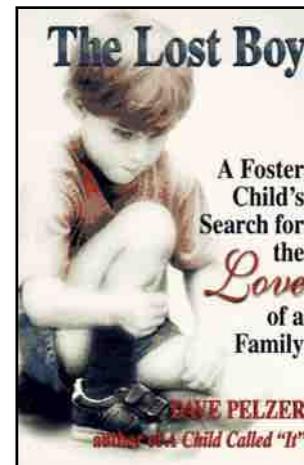
housewife, and he had three brothers. When Dave was four, his mother's behavior became increasingly erratic. She began to single out Dave as the target of her abuse. She did unspeakable things to him and did them over and over on a daily basis. Finally the dad moved out, and Dave was left to face her wrath alone and unprotected. His brothers were afraid to intervene because

they feared becoming targets, and she told everyone over and over that Dave was a **bad boy** who had to be punished.

The book describes in great detail these daily tortures. Dave's very life was in jeopardy from time to time. Dave is listed as the third worst case of child abuse ever recorded in the state of California. Credit is given to his courage to survive. He never gave up trying to find a way to make it.

The experiences are vivid and horrifying. The cumulative effect was overwhelming. When David's school and his teachers finally intervened and called the police and the police responded and David was removed from his home, it was not a moment too soon.

This story began in the 70s, and things were very different in those days. Today, a teacher is required to file an immediate report of suspected abuse. Today the spotlight is beginning to focus on kids who fall through the cracks and are not rescued. Today we are facing this problem and making changes to correct it.



The Lost Boy
By Dave Pelzer
published in 1997

The second book tells about of Dave's experiences in the foster care system. He had a paper bag where he kept his possessions, and when he was moved, always without notice, the bag was the only thing that went with him.

It was interesting to notice the changes in the system. There were faults then, and there are faults now, but there are more safeguards now. It was normal for a foster family to have half a dozen foster children plus their own children. That doesn't happen today. Foster parents and foster children were looked down on, and there was a big shortage of foster parents. Hopefully, today foster parents are given the praise they deserve (and most do deserve it), and hopefully foster children are supported, not put down. But yesterday and today the same problem exists, there is a critical shortage of foster parents.

~Continued on next page

Book Reviews (Continued)

by **Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer**

It was fascinating to read Dave tell, with unflinching honesty, about his own lashing out at those around him and to admit he was acting out because he couldn't accept that his mother didn't love him. Being bad was his way of coping. It took years for Dave to heal from the trauma his mother had inflicted.

Dave tells the reader on page 313:

"As much as this book takes the reader behind the scenes, its main theme is always that of the child who seemingly comes from another planet. Some people may believe that once a child is removed from a threatening environment, the minor's problems instantly disappear. The actuality is, that is when the troubles begin. Like so many other children who enter "The System," I was brought up in a violent, controlled environment. My problem was twofold: first, the need to deprogram my hideous past: and second, the need to be guided into mainstream society."

He finally found a therapist who helped him. He was lucky to have key foster parents who loved him. In the end, he was able to heal and become a fully functioning adult.

I enjoyed both of these books, and I am donating them to the CASA library for you to check out and read for training hours if you are interested.



Kudos

Abby Dodge

FCRB 5/14/14

The Board appreciated the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for obtaining funding from the CASA Council to pay for MT's tutoring, which has reportedly benefitted MT.

Tracy Diaz

FCRB 7/9/14

The Board thanks the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for her continued efforts toward ensuring FR's best interest.

Ned Letto

FCRB 7/15/14

The Board acknowledges the case manager and the CASA for their hard work and dedication to RR.

Jan and Bud Dragoo

Mary Blanchard, Co-CASA

FCRB 8/6/14

The Board acknowledges the Court Appointed Special Advocates, who work with S for their commitment to S.

Mary Blanchard

In an email on 9/16/14 from a former CASA youth; this was Mary's second case which was dismissed in 2001.

You are such a wonderful person and you are definitely one of the reasons why I'm successful today. I truly appreciate all the guidance you've given me all these years.

Ned Letto

FCRB 10/8/14

The Board commends the CASA for his perseverance toward engaging S, consistently being available to her and supporting her best interest.

Lynn Vanderdasson

FCRB 11/5/14

The Board acknowledges the Court Appointed Special Advocate for her involvement in C's life and ensuring his wellbeing.

Ned Letto

FCRB 11/5/14

The Board acknowledges the CASA for his time and commitment to ensuring D and J have a more present advocate.

Ned Letto

FCRB 11/5/14

The Board acknowledges the Court Appointed Special Advocate for being present and a supportive advocate ensuring N's needs are met.

Attention CASA Volunteers!



**Come one
Come all...**

...to our Support Group meeting!

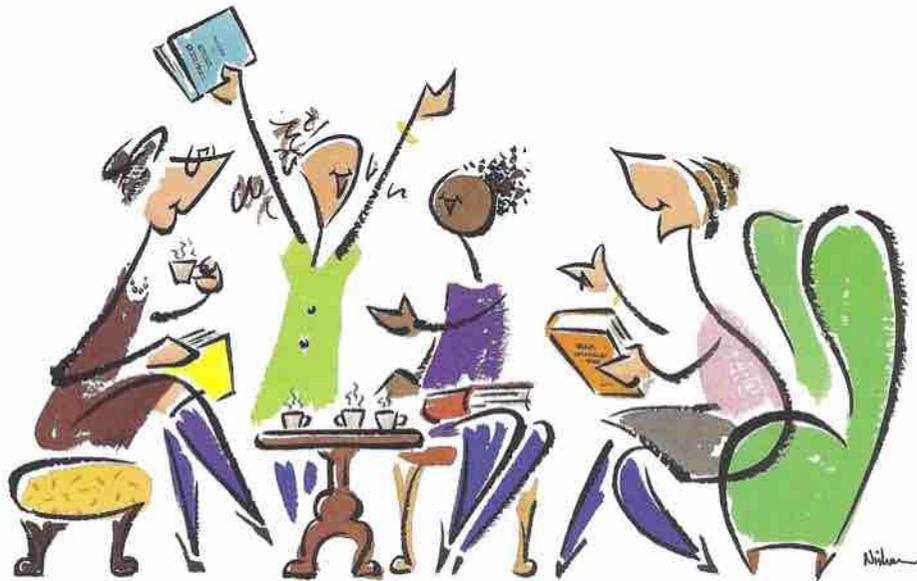
When: Tuesday, December 16th from 6:30 - 8:30pm

Where: Home of Jennifer Rein
2011 Tiffany Place, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

Directions: Off Coronado east (only choice) onto Tiffany Place

It is the brown house with the pompom bushes in front

Just come...not necessary to bring food or drink!



Come join us...you'll be glad you did!

Effects of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on Child Development

by Joseph L. Jacobson, Ph.D., and Sandra W. Jacobson, Ph.D.

Part III

Learning and Memory

Recent studies have found that FAS/FAE patients show greater impairment of certain aspects of learning and memory than others. Kerns and colleagues (1997) reported that, although nonretarded adults with FAS found it difficult to memorize word lists on the California Verbal Learning Test (CVLT), they had little apparent difficulty in retaining what they learned. Similarly, Mattson and colleagues (1996, 1998) found that FAS/FAE children tested on the CVLT have more difficulty in memorizing new information than in retaining and retrieving what they have previously learned.

In a study comparing FAS/FAE children with Down syndrome children, Mattson and Riley (1999) administered a priming task, in which the child initially reads a list of words and is then shown a list in which only the first two letters of the word are displayed. Some of the words on the second list come from the first list; others do not. Although both the alcohol-exposed and Down syndrome children performed more poorly than control subjects when asked to recall a list of words they had seen without any prompting or priming, the alcohol-exposed children

performed as well as the control children in recognizing those words when presented in a multiple-choice format and when given the clues provided in the priming task. Thus, the learning and memory impairment associated with prenatal alcohol exposure is apparently more circumscribed than that associated with Down syndrome. Retention and recognition memory are relatively intact, as is the capacity to benefit from priming.

In another study, FAS/FAE children with normal range IQ scores were given 8 trials to learn to press 5 computer keys in a particular 10-item sequence (Carmichael Olson et al. 1998). The alcohol-exposed children were as capable of learning to perform the sequence manually (demonstrating procedural memory) as the controls but, when asked to verbally recall the sequence (demonstrating declarative memory), they were not able to do so. Thus, their procedural memory was apparently not affected.

Memory deficits have also been reported in children exposed at levels associated with ARND. Among 7-year-olds, greater prenatal alcohol exposure was associated with poorer memory for designs (Streissguth et al. 1989), poorer recall of number sequences (Streissguth et al. 1989; Jacobson et al. 1998a), and poorer recall of rhythmical patterns on the Seashore Rhythm

Test (Streissguth et al. 1989).

In the only study to examine memory processing during infancy, Jacobson and colleagues (1993) found that, as in the studies of FAS/FAE children, recognition memory appeared to be unaffected by prenatal alcohol exposure. However, greater prenatal alcohol exposure was associated with slower, less efficient information processing at 6.5 and 12 months of age on two tasks involving the encoding of information into short-term memory (Jacobson et al. 1993). Greater prenatal alcohol exposure was also associated with the poorer performance on Visual Expectancy Paradigm (Haith et al. 1988), which assesses the degree to which the infant visually anticipates the next appearance of a stimulus during a regular left-right alternating display (Jacobson et al. 1994).

Socioemotional Function

Prenatal alcohol exposure is associated with increased levels of irritability during infancy (Coles et al. 1991), a temperamental variable known to contribute to poorer maternal attachment and behavioral problems in childhood (Kelly et al. 2000). Two studies have found that children exposed prenatally to alcohol were rated by their teachers as less socially competent and more aggressive in the classroom (Brown et al. 1991; Jacobson et al. 1998b). Because these effects remained significant

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Effects of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on Child Development (Continued)

by Joseph L. Jacobson, Ph.D., and Sandra W. Jacobson, Ph.D.

after controlling for current maternal drinking and measures of quality of parenting, these studies suggest that prenatal alcohol exposure may have effects on socioemotional development that are independent of the social environment in which the child is raised.

Carmichael Olson and colleagues (1992) administered the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale, a measure of social skills and emotional maturity, to the parents of FAS/FAE adolescents. The adolescents' most substantial deficits, based on the parents' responses, were in the socialization domain, which assesses interpersonal skills and the ability to conform to social conventions. The most salient problems were failure to consider the consequences of one's actions, lack of responsiveness to social cues, and poor interpersonal relationships (Streissguth et al. 1991). Whereas the Vineland scores in two other domains—communication and daily living skills—were roughly commensurate with the children's IQ scores, their interpersonal skills averaged 20 points lower than expected based on IQ (Carmichael Olson et al. 1992).

Thomas and colleagues (1998) compared 15 FAS/FAE children with 15 normal control subjects and 15 control children matched for verbal IQ. The Vineland scores of the

alcohol-exposed children were significantly lower than those of the IQ-matched control subjects, especially in the interpersonal skills domain, providing additional evidence that the social judgment and relationship problems exhibited by these children are not simply consequences of their intellectual limitations. Thomas and colleagues (1998) also found that the discrepancy between the FAS/FAE children's chronological age and age-equivalent Vineland score increased as the children grew older. This finding is consistent with both the report by Coles and colleagues (1991) of normal Vineland scores at age 6, when FAS children are frequently characterized as talkative, affectionate, and outgoing, and with the findings by Steinhausen and colleagues (1993) that behavior problems which become evident during childhood do not improve as the FAS patient reaches adulthood.

On the Personality Inventory for Children (PIC), the two domains identified by parents of school-age FAS/FAE children as most problematic were cognitive function and delinquency; the latter is not a prominent domain in most forms of mental retardation (Roebuck et al. 1999). These children were more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors, lack consideration for the rights and feelings of others, and resist limits and requests by

authority figures. This finding is consistent with the reports, cited above, of high levels of aggression in the classroom as well as a report by Streissguth and colleagues (1996) that adults with FAS are more likely to get into trouble with the law and to exhibit sexually inappropriate behavior.

Part IV

Caveats and Challenges

A detailed review of the current research on the developmental effects of prenatal alcohol exposure reveals some inconsistencies. For example, although arithmetic skill is frequently more impaired than verbal skills, some of the most severely affected patients perform poorly in both domains. Some of the inconsistencies could be caused by differences in the timing of exposure. Different brain regions and processes are most vulnerable at different points during gestation, but it is difficult to obtain accurate data regarding exactly when during the pregnancy the heaviest drinking occurred. Other factors that lead to inconsistencies include limitations in the accuracy of reported quantities of alcohol ingested per occasion and individual differences in genetic vulnerability. Another limitation of the studies to date is that the domains assessed have been relatively global. Few studies have followed the example of Kopera-Frye and

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Effects of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on Child Development (Continued)

by Joseph L. Jacobson, Ph.D., and Sandra W. Jacobson, Ph.D.

colleagues (1996), who evaluated specific aspects of arithmetic and found that cognitive estimation was more affected than computation per se.

The evidence linking prenatal alcohol exposure to deficits in socioemotional function is based on data from multiple sources, including ratings by parents and teachers and self-reports obtained from adolescents. However, there have been few direct observational studies to identify which specific aspects of socioemotional function are impaired (e.g., empathy, recognition of emotional expression, moral reasoning).

Conclusion

In summary, these data indicate that prenatal alcohol exposure is associated with a distinctive pattern of intellectual deficits, particularly in arithmetic and certain aspects of attention, including planning, cognitive flexibility, and the utilization of feedback to modify a previously learned response. With respect to learning, the acquisition of new information is more likely to be impaired than retention and retrieval of previously learned information. As alcohol-exposed children grow older, deficits in socioemotional function become increasingly salient, particularly with regard to social judgment, interpersonal

skills, and antisocial behavior. Although these deficits are most severe and have been documented most extensively in children with FAS, children prenatally exposed to lower levels of alcohol frequently exhibit similar problems.

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is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure that educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

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For additional information, please contact
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CBI Program Manager in Benson
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