

**A CHILD RIGHTS APPROACH
TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

**Creating a Critical Mass of Support
for Child Rights Respecting
Professional & Social
Practices**

Stuart N. Hart, Ph.D.

Deputy Director

International Institute for Child Rights and
Development (IICRD)

University of Victoria, BC, Canada

Co-Director of IICRD's program

Child Rights Education for Professionals
(CRED-PRO)

Chair of ISPA Child Rights Committee

shiicrd@uvic.ca

250.472.4762 (office) 317.908.5088(cell)

Convention on the Rights of the Child

A Universal Vision of the Positive Ideology of the Child

- Children are not only of value for what they can do for others – they are not property
- Children are persons in and of themselves – they bring added value to life – by their unique personalities and potentials
- Their human dignity & rights should be respected

Positive Ideology of the Child Interpretations

The Goal of the Child Rights and Child Protection's New Orientation:

**The Well-Being and Development of the Child
--- or "Health" broadly defined**

WHO:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The Six United Nations Human Rights Treaties

- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)**
- **International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (1966)**
- **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966)**
- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)**
- **Convention against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (1984)**
- **Convention on The Rights of the Child (1989)**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted without dissent by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989. The CRC is an international human rights treaty about and for children under the age of 18. It spells out basic human rights for all children, everywhere, all the time. It recognizes that children should be active participants in their own development. It recognizes that children's capacity to exercise their rights responsibly evolves as they grow and develop. It also recognizes the important role parents play in the development of children.
(<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>)

The Convention – Its Nature

- A framework of values
- Specific principles and standards applicable to all aspects of child health
- A common language and rallying base for communication, cooperation and accountability within the professions working for and with children
- A tool for change at clinical-direct practice, school-community, and public policy levels

What it Contains

- **Social rights.** The right to life and **optimal survival and development, to the best possible health and access to health care, to education, to play**, to family life unless not in the child's best interests
- **Economic rights.** The right to an adequate standard of living for proper development, to benefit from social security, the right to protection from economic exploitation
- **Cultural rights.** The right to respect for language, culture and religion, to abolition of any traditional practices likely to be prejudicial to the child's health
- **Protective rights.** The right to promotion of the child's best interests, to protection from sexual exploitation, from armed conflict, from harmful drugs, from abuse and neglect, to rehabilitative care following neglect, exploitation or abuse
- **Civil and political rights.** The right to be heard and taken seriously, to freedom from discrimination in the exercise of rights on any grounds, to freedom of expression, to privacy, to information, to respect for physical and personal integrity and freedom from all forms of violence, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

Implications of Children's Rights for School Psychology Professionals

- Reorients the individual relationship between the professional and the child
- Establishes new policies and approaches to the delivery of psychological services
- Defines the role of psychological professionals, school-community institutions, and governing bodies as advocates for children by advocating for and advancing children's rights
- *Encourages professionals to fully invest in partnerships with parents, teachers and other adults responsible for the care and development of children*

General Principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

- *Article 2.* All the rights in the Convention ***apply to all children without discrimination*** on any grounds.
- *Article 3.* In all actions affecting children their ***best interests*** must be a primary consideration.
- *Article 6.* All children have the ***right to life and optimal survival and development.***
- *Article 12.* All children capable of expressing a view have the ***right to express that view freely and to have it taken seriously*** in accordance with their age and maturity.

BEYOND Law, Regulation, and Rhetoric

Child rights must be respected in declarations, law and regulation – **BUT this will never be enough**

- Great discrepancies exist between the intentions of the Convention and its supporters and the status of the conditions of and for children
- The States Parties reports to the CRC and the analyses and concluding observations of the CRC in their regard delineate and prescribe for these discrepancies

Education of Professionals A Critical Change Agent

- A key building block in transforming commitments and intentions into constructive practices is to assure that relevant professionals and policy makers act to respect and advance the human rights of children.
- The Convention's principles and standards have direct relevance to the legal frameworks, policy and day-to-day practice of all professionals working with and for children (e.g., physicians, nurses, lawyers, educators, psychologists, social workers, ...)

NEED RECOGNIZED

- Child rights education for professionals has been strongly and consistently recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its dialogue with States Parties.
- NGO's have frequently recommended child rights education for professionals
- The Report to the UN on the Study on Violence Against Children recommends: Initial and In-service training to impart knowledge and respect for children's rights.

(Overarching recommendation 5)

Fulfilling the Need

CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

[CRED-PRO]

- An international initiative to develop and provide pre-service and continuing service educational programs on the human rights of children for professionals who work with and for children .
- Intended to foster an epidemic of respect for children, their needs, their rights and their best interests among and through professionals who influence the lives of children, their families, and communities.

CRED- PRO



**International Institute for
Child Rights and Development**



CRED-PRO Vision Support

- **An initiative of** the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada)
- **Endorsed by** the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Partners include:** The Committee on the Rights of the Child, WHO, UNICEF, PAHO, ALAPE, UNESCO, FLACSO, European Society for Social Pediatrics, American Academy of Pediatrics, Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health, Education International, International School Psychology Association, and ...

Rationale

- All children have **needs**. All children by virtue of their humanity, have **rights**. The Convention establishes international recognition that children have a right to have their needs met.
- The Convention provides a comprehensive framework of rights that will facilitate a **holistic approach** to promoting the well being of children
- Children's **well-being, health and full development is best promoted by the fulfillment of all their needs**. Respect for all the rights embodied in the Convention will help achieve this goal.
- The convention is legally binding and imposes **obligations on governments to respect children's rights**.

Recognized Human Needs

- Physical, Psychological, Social, Spiritual
- Connectedness, Competency, Autonomy, Self-Esteem

**Composite supported
by knowledge/expertise base**

Physiological, Safety, Affiliation/love and belonging, competency/self-efficacy/esteem, and self-actualization needs

School Psychological Services assume responsibility for which of these?

The Beginning

***Children's Rights and Child Health
The Interface***

A Course for Health Professionals

[Including -- A Train-the-Trainer Workbook]

**Produced by the
American Academy of Pediatrics**

In collaboration with the

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Authors:

G. Lansdown, J. Goldhagen, T. Waterston

Most Recent Curriculum Edition

Based on experiences of with child health professionals
and incorporating IICRD principles

CRED-PRO's

Child Rights Education Curriculum

For

Child Health Professionals

(For All Health Professionals)

Children's Rights and Child Health

- **Module 1.** The Child: Development, Needs & Rights
- **Module 2.** The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Foundation for a Child Rights Approach
- **Module 3.** Respecting Child Rights in Practice: The Individual Professional
- **Module 4.** Respecting Child Rights in Practice: Community Health Systems
- **Module 5.** The Health Professional as a Child Rights Advocate: Influencing Systems to Respect Child Rights

Module 5

The Professional as A Child Rights Advocate

Survival and Development

Toward What? CRC Article 29!

1. Education of the child shall be directed to:
 - (a) The **development of the child's** personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their **fullest potential**;
 - (b) The development of **respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms**, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
 - (c) The development of **respect for the child's parents**, his or her **own cultural identity, language and values**, for the **national values** of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for **civilizations different from his or her own**;
 - *(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;*
 - (e) The development of respect for the **natural environment**.

Advocating for Changes in Public Policy and Practice

- What rights for children are being breached and what are the implications of those breaches?
- What changes would be necessary in order to protect children's rights to health more effectively?
- To what extent are the changes needed in health policies and practices?
- To what extent are changes needed in broader public policy areas?

Advocating for Changes in Public Policy and Practice

CHOOSE AN ISSUE (e.g., fast food nutritional implications; reduction/elimination of physical education, music and art in schools; resistance to immunization due to fear of autism; domestic violence; time spent viewing television & using Internet; and/or ...)

- Do you consider that school psychology professionals have a role to play in seeking change on this issue? What unique contribution can you make as a result of your direct experience?
- How might you develop a strategy to highlight your concerns and seek to achieve the changes necessary to protect and promote children's well-being?
- How might you involve children themselves in such a strategy?

FIRST PRINCIPLES

DEVELOP AND OFFER PROGRAMS OF VALUED/RECOGNIZED EDUCATION THROUGH PRE-SERVICE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

BRING A CHILD RIGHTS APPROACH TO INDIVIDUAL DIRECT SERVICE, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, AND PUBLIC POLICY THROUGH:

- ***THE PROFESSION***
- ***THE PROFESSIONAL***
- ***THE CITIZEN-PROFESSIONAL***

DEVELOPING A CHILD RIGHTS APPROACH TO

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES – A MODEL

- Establishment of a working group in the host nation/region
- A planning meeting by the working group to prepare for or carry out a review and advice
- Generation/construction of recommendations for modification and for case vignettes/studies for the curriculum
- Modification of the curriculum
- Planning for a Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop
- Preparation for the TOT workshop and for meetings/consultations between/among host nation/region leadership networks and CRED-PRO
- Conducting of the TOT workshop and program supportive meetings/consultations in the host nation/region.
- Follow-up and follow-through programs, including evaluation and revision

A Children's Rights Charter *An Example*

If I am seeking, needing or receiving services, I have the right to the following:

- **To the best possible treatment and care**
- **To be listened to and have my views taken seriously**
- **To be given information that will help me understand my treatment**
- **To ask for advice, information and support**
- **To be asked before anyone touches me**
- **To respect for my privacy**
- **To treatment and care, regardless of my sex, abilities or disabilities, color, race, religion or sexual orientation**
- **To not be hurt or humiliated**

MY PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

(A sample developed for the American Psychological Association)

- 1. I WILL REGULARLY EVALUATE AND ADJUST MY PRACTICES TO RESPECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN I SERVE.**
- 2. I WILL MAKE THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD A PRIMARY GUIDE TO HELP ME PROMOTE THE CHILD'S PRESENT WELFARE AND SUCCESSFUL FUTURE.**
- 3. I WILL RESPECT EACH CHILD'S PRESENT AND DEVELOPING CHARACTERISTICS AND CAPACITIES.**
- 4. I WILL SUPPORT THE UNIQUE AND FULL DEVELOPMENT OF EACH CHILD'S PERSONALITY, TALENTS, AND ABILITY TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.**
- 5. I WILL WORK TO STRENGTHEN EACH CHILD'S FAMILY IN ITS ABILITY TO RESPECT THE CHILD AND SUPPORT HIS/HER DEVELOPMENT.**
- 6. I WILL PROMOTE WORK, PLAY AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES FITTING THE CHILD'S INTERESTS AND NEEDS.**

MY PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

(continued)

7. I WILL ASK FOR AND CONSIDER THE OPINIONS OF EACH CHILD REGARDING CONDITIONS INFLUENCING THE CHILD, INCLUDING MY SERVICES.
 8. EACH CHILD I SERVE WILL BE OFFERED INFORMATION ABOUT MY PRACTICES, HIS/HER CONDITION AND NEEDS, AND ABOUT THE SERVICES I PROVIDE.
 9. I WILL PROTECT THE CHILD'S PRIVACY, SAFETY AND WELL BEING.
 10. I WILL PROMOTE THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN MY PROFESSION AND COMMUNITY.
 11. I WILL PURSUE EDUCATION TO STRENGTHEN MY ABILITY TO RESPECT AND SUPPORT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN.
- *Psychologist's signature, Psychologist's printed name, Psychologist's degree and license*

RESOURCES

- Lansdown, G., Goldhagen, J, Waterston, & T. (2004). *Children's Rights and Child Health – The Interface: A course for health professionals*. Chicago, IL.: American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Goldhagen, J., & Lansdown, G. (in press). Child and adolescent health: Child rights. In *Encyclopedia of Public Health*.
- International Institute for Child Rights and Development (in press). *CRED-PRO Child Rights Curriculum for Health Professionals*. Victoria: Author.
- CRED-PRO overview and updates will be found at www.iicrd.org
- www.search-institute.org – Model, research and interventions in respect of children's assets and needs
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
(<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>)