

Quality 4 Children Standards

FICE, the international, mostly European organization that represents children's services in many countries, has recently published a document titled, "Quality 4 Children Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care in Europe" (Q4C). The goal of this project is to ensure that children and youth in out of home care get the best possible care and treatment, but the more interesting part of this document is the process of creating these standards.

The project team created a process that involved inviting youth who had experienced out of home care to tell their stories about what they felt was useful or not and to take a narrative based approach to develop themes and practice principles from the analysis of these stories. These children and youth, from 26 different countries, accounted for half of the narratives that created the resulting standards. The remaining stories were from biological parents (11.5%), caregivers (32%), and 7.5% from social workers, lawyers and others.

There were a total of 332 stories collected and analyzed. These stories of good practice, by people with direct experience of out of home care, were revised, edited



Quality in the Best Interests of the Child! –
Quality Standards in Out-Of-Home Child Care in Europe

and developed into the resulting standards by a small team, which also included youth representation. The words actually used by youths to describe their experiences have been preserved in the resulting report by the project team.

The result is a set of 18 standards divided into three areas; decision-making and admission process, care-taking process, and leaving care process.

None of the standards will surprise CYC practitioners, but the clarity and straightforward language is impressive. The material emphasizes the right of every child and family to be respected and involved in decision making about life choices. Foster parents and cyc workers have the right to

appropriate training and support, and after care and follow-up support should be available as a matter of policy.

These standards are available for free on CYC-Net and can be downloaded in an Adobe document. (www.cyc-net.org)

The three sponsoring organizations, FICE, IFCO and SOS-Kinderdorf, have presented this set of standards to the European parliament in June and they were well received. This is a model that North American organizations can pay attention to and perhaps

duplicate. The idea of creating a best practice document that would guide out of home care across large jurisdictions isn't new, but the process of developing the standards through the narratives of people who have direct experience and mostly have

been on the receiving end, is a powerful concept. Actually, the process used is a well understood method of creating good information and ground level support.

This document is important reading for all care givers, and a possible source of agenda material for staff, youth, and agency-wide discussions.

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