Early Childhood Education & Development

From birth to age 5, children develop the foundations for thinking, behaving, and emotional well-being. Child development experts indicate that it is during these years that children develop linguistic, cognitive, social, emotional, and regulatory skills that predict their later functioning in other areas. (Trawick-Smith, 2014 Trawick-Smith, J. Early childhood development [6th ed.], Boston, MA: Pearson.)

This is no surprise to Child Saving Institute’s (CSI) own early childhood experts, and it is for these very reasons that the agency offers both early childhood education and early childhood mental health services. Addressing social and emotional development in early childhood prepares children for success in school and with making and keeping relationships.

This edition of the CSI newsletter focuses on the KidSquad program (in partnership with six other agencies). CSI has an incredible team of consultants who work with children at Educare in North Omaha and in childcare facilities across Douglas and Sarpy counties. You will read about Sarah, who came into the program at age 3 1/2, learn more details about the program, and meet Jana Habrock, director of early childhood mental health at CSI.

You will also learn about some of the volunteers who make CSI’s work possible by giving freely of their time and talent.

As always, THANK YOU for caring about CSI’s kids.

Peg Harriott,
President & CEO
Young children have limited language to describe their experiences, so their emotional struggles often come out in their behavior.

Sarah was 3 ½ years old when she was referred to KidSquad. She lived with her mom Anji who worked full-time and attended school full-time. Anji had a rocky relationship with Sarah’s dad Mick.

Sarah experienced domestic violence prior to her parents’ divorce and, as a toddler, couldn’t understand what had happened in her family. She was confused by the multiple caregivers who took care of her while Anji attended work and school.

Several childcare centers expelled Sarah because when she felt scared or angry, she would throw toys, push over shelving, hit peers and teachers, spit, and pull pictures off the wall. Anji also tended to avoid spending time with family or taking Sarah to the grocery store or other places because Sarah exhibited challenging behaviors at home and in public.

Then Sarah received a referral to KidSquad.

KidSquad consultant Glenda McKenna worked with Sarah, her classroom teacher, and Anji. Glenda taught Sarah how to take deep breaths or take a break in the cozy corner when her emotions were overwhelming, and to problem-solve with peers when she was angry. Glenda met with Anji to help develop rules for home, set clear expectations, and coach Sarah through her big feelings.

Glenda also worked with Sarah’s teacher to implement a social skills curriculum in the classroom to teach children about problem solving, being kind, and bubble space boundaries. After a few months, Sarah’s behavior began to improve. Sadly, the family moved and had to find another childcare – two more big changes for Sarah. The new childcare center did not have as many preventive practices in place and all Sarah’s challenging behaviors resumed.

From emotional outbursts to self-regulated control

*Sarah Succeeds with KidSquad*

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Habrock Committed To Early Childhood Mental Health

“Do the best that you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

This Maya Angelou quote illustrates what Jana Habrock, director of early childhood mental health services, loves best about her role at Child Saving Institute.

“It really speaks to what I enjoy most,” she said, “and that is facilitating learning. I get to do that in multiple ways. Sometimes it is coaching a teacher or parent to see the real meaning of a child’s behavior and what to do about it; other times it might be discovering with my team better ways to support a child or family. I love how knowledge and new skills help children, parents — all of us really — to feel competent and strong. I truly believe when we know better, we provide better experiences for the children we all work with, live with, and love.”

CSI’s Early Childhood Mental Health programs include KidSquad and Pediatric Social Work.

KidSquad’s services support quality early learning experiences with an emphasis on social/emotional development within the childcare environment.

Jana developed the agency’s Pediatric Social Work program which operates in five low-income medical clinics in Omaha as an early intervention for the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

The pediatric social worker in the clinics screens women with children between the ages of newborn and 5 for depression and the children for appropriate attachment and social/emotional growth. When a potential for problems exists, staff helps connect mothers with the professionals and resources they need — parenting assistance, counseling, an exercise program, a food bank, or other identified need.

Jana earned her bachelor’s degree in family studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a master’s certificate in infant-toddler mental health from Portland State University.

Sarah (from page 3)

Glenda followed Sarah to the new center to work with those teachers to implement the same preventive practices. She helped the teachers to identify the cues that Sarah needed a break or connection with an adult caregiver.

Glenda made cue cards to remind Sarah what to do when she had big emotions and wrote a story to teach Sarah how to use words when she felt angry. With the preventive practices in place, Glenda introduced the social skills curriculum and helped Sarah and her classmates learn the skills of problem solving and appropriately entering play with peers.

In time, Sarah’s behavior improved. As the start of kindergarten approached, Anji allowed Glenda to connect with the kindergarten teacher to share the strategies that worked to help Sarah feel safe and secure.

Glenda wrote another story for Sarah: Going to Kindergarten. This story had pictures of Sarah’s new school, her new teacher, her desk, and the rules for kindergarten. Glenda checked in with the teacher several times during Sarah’s first semester. At winter break, Sarah’s teacher told Glenda and Anji that Sarah was a delight to have in her classroom!
Early childhood is a critical time of development. The KidSquad program is designed to help ensure that children are kindergarten ready by addressing areas of concern in children from birth to kindergarten, including social emotional behavior and developmental milestones.

KidSquad is a cross-agency program serving children who attend licensed childcare facilities or early childhood education centers in Douglas and Sarpy county that accept Title XX. Consistent, quality childcare is critical to a child’s success.

In addition to consultants who travel to the child care providers, Child Saving Institute has two employees who work on location at Educare of Omaha, a low-income childcare facility attached to Kellom Elementary in North Omaha.

KidSquad provides support as well as the tools for families and childcare teachers who are working with little kids ages 5 and younger with challenging behaviors. Consultants provide teachers and parents with strategies and tools they can use to decrease and prevent unwanted behaviors in the referred child. They also share classroom management techniques with teachers and activities that will help the entire class develop appropriate socio-emotional skills.

Partnering agencies include: Center for Holistic Development; Early Childhood Training Center; Heartland Family Service; Lutheran Family Services; The Munroe-Meyer Institute; and Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare.
Volunteers Provide Leadership, Fundraising Support — Connections

Child Saving Institute (CSI) has engaged community leaders and volunteers to aid in serving the mission — “Responding to the cry of a child,” since its beginning in 1892, according to agency President and Chief Executive Officer Peg Harriott. Volunteers assist with fundraising, completing administrative tasks, and spreading the word about the agency’s mission.

The Board of Directors, members of the Child Saving Institute Guild Board, our AUNTYS group, corporate and organizational groups, and individuals all play important roles in helping CSI's kids and families find hope and healing.

Forty-one volunteer board members help guide the agency, reviewing and approving a strategic vision and plan with goals for the agency’s future, and monitoring outcomes. They bring a diversity of skills, knowledge and experience, and play an invaluable role in helping to raise funds in support of the children the agency serves.

The Guild Board, with 54 volunteers, plan, coordinate and execute a number of special fundraising events each year to support CSI's kids and families. Members actively represent CSI in the community as they put together fun, informative, and entertaining events, introducing the agency to new audiences as they reach out for underwriting, in-kind gifts, or other support.

“The Guild Board works hand-in-hand with the Development Department to ensure successful fundraisers,” Harriott said.

Karen Campbell Burmood served six years on the Guild Board and is a current member of the Board of Directors.

“I support CSI because I feel it’s important to focus on kids who don’t have a way to stand up for themselves,” Burmood said. “Whether I’m serving on the board or writing personal notes on a fundraising mailer, I love knowing that kids will receive the services they need, in part, because of my efforts. I’m passionate about working on behalf of at-risk children!”

The AUNTYS group comprises women who pool their resources to serve unmet and/or unexpected needs. In 2017, Aunty’s funds provided books for the Pediatric Social Work program to share with clients. According to Chief Development Officer Andrea Richardson, the AUNTYS group enjoys providing “extras” to help CSI’s kids.

Corporate and organizational volunteers help CSI’s kids in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing in-kind donations to ensure every child receives gifts during the holiday season;
- Cooking meals for the kids staying in CSI’s Emergency Shelter; and
- Reading to the children enrolled in our Early Childhood Education Center or Spellman Child Development Center, among other things.

Many individual volunteers support our mission by helping with administrative duties, during fundraising events, and doing yard clean-up!

“All of these volunteers contribute of their personal time, talent, and treasure to ensure that children in Omaha will continue to have access to services that help them find hope and healing,” Harriott said. They truly are the backbone of the agency. Without them, CSI couldn’t meet the needs of the children and families it serves.”

CSI board member Amie Schellpeper, left, reads to toddlers in the Grampy Tom Multi Age 1 classroom for National Read Across America Day. She and eight co-workers took time off from Mutual of Omaha to read to kids in CSI’s Early Childhood Education Center.
Please join Child Saving Institute on social media May 23, 2018, during OmahaGives!

to celebrate kids and families who have found hope and healing through our programs and services.

These program “G.R.A.D.s” set goals, strengthened their resilience, enjoyed achievement, and followed their dreams.

Honor their successes and help more children and families find hope and healing!

Make your gift at OmahaGives.org on May 23, or schedule it in advance!
Watch your email for additional information, or call Megan at 402.04.3634
How You Can Help

Don’t miss out on a moment of the fun and philanthropic opportunities we have planned for you in the coming months! Visit our website, childsaving.org, or contact Megan at 402-504-3634 or mwebb@childsaving.org for more information about these events and how you can get involved.

Cabaret | Saturday, June 2, 2018
Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District | 6 - 9:30 p.m.

You’re invited to our biggest fundraiser of 2018 — Cabaret! The fun evening will include cocktails, dinner, and comedy from the very entertaining Jeff Dye — one of the stars in NBC’s new eclectic comedy adventure series “Better Late Than Never.” Cost is $175 per person and reservations may be made online at childsaving.org/cabaret, or by contacting Cali at 402.506.3661 or cpage@childsaving.org.

Omaha Gives! | Wednesday, May 23, 2018
omahagives24.org | Midnight to Midnight

On Wednesday, May 23, for 24 hours, you can help raise money in celebration of CSI’s kids who have “G.R.A.D.”uated from our programs by setting Goals, strengthening their Resilience, enjoying Achievement, and following their Dreams. Go online to omahagives24.org and designate your donation to Child Saving Institute!

Touch-a-Truck | Saturday, September 22, 2018
First Data/UNO Campus just south of 69th & Pacific | 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Don’t miss Child Saving Institute’s annual Touch-A-Truck event. Our “friend-raiser” is a FREE event for the entire family where children can see and climb on “real life” vehicles, like emergency vehicles, semi-trucks, bobcats, race cars and other commercial vehicles. Other activities include face-painting, prizes, bouncy tents, food, and more.

Leave a legacy for kids! For information about including Child Saving Institute’s kids in your estate plans, please contact Cali Page, Legacy Giving Coordinator, at Child Saving Institute: 402.504.3661 or cpage@childsaving.org.