

ADOLESCENT HEART & SOUL

Achieving spiritual competence in youth-serving agencies

by Melanie Wilson

Contributors:
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Nancy Jackson

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements4
Introduction: Literature Review and Project Description5
Holy Cross Children’s Services: An Evaluated Chaplaincy Program7
Marimed Foundation: Experiential Learning in a Cultural Context12
Cathedral Home for Children: Spiritual Expression for a Diverse Population17
Roca, Inc.: Peacemaking Circles22
In-Care Network: The Native American Experience26
Covenant House California: Pastoral Care for Disconnected Young People29
Straight Ahead Ministries: Christian Education and Mentoring34
Conclusion: Common Themes36
Appendix39
Bibliography56

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INTRODUCTION

In the last several years the federal government has taken steps to improve the capacity of religious charitable organizations to work effectively with disadvantaged groups. At the same time, responding to a more general societal interest in all forms of spirituality, researchers have begun to seriously study spiritual beliefs and practices and the way they impact well-being in various populations. One group of particular interest has been adolescents who, either voluntarily or involuntarily, come into the care of social service agencies.

Objectively speaking, there are good reasons to be interested in the potential of spiritual interventions to help vulnerable or troubled adolescents. Those reasons are rooted not in dogma, but in empirical evidence about the benefits of spiritual experience with this population. Religious observance is the most clearly defined and understood type of spiritual expression. With very few exceptions, studies conducted in the last several decades have demonstrated positive associations between religion and adolescent well-being. Religious participation has been linked to lower levels of depression, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, delinquent behaviors, and later onset of sexual activity. Research has also shown that the majority of American adolescents consider religion an important part of their lives.

Secular spirituality, often described as involving a sense of the transcendent or of one's relationship to a benevolent universe, has more recently captured the attention of researchers. Unlike religion, secular spiritual expression is not institutionalized and therefore is difficult to study. Nevertheless, in the last several years a small body of research on the relationship between secular spiritual belief and adolescent well-being has emerged, and it too suggests certain benefits for young people. For instance, studies have found that "spiritual interconnectedness" with friends is associated with delayed sexual activity, and that introspective activities such as guided visualization and yoga can reduce depression and improve

attitude and behavior. In a 2004 survey of 149 adolescents in the foster care system, in youth shelters and in other community-based youth programs, the overwhelming majority said they considered themselves "spiritual," and that one could be spiritual without being religious.

Though social scientists have yet to reach consensus on the impact of various forms of spiritual belief or practice on adolescents, it is evident that social service agencies working with troubled young people are increasingly interested in employing spiritual activities as one tool in a varied arsenal of therapeutic interventions. A 2002 study asked social service providers about the number and kinds of spiritually oriented activities they used in their work with adolescents. Of the 191 agencies interviewed, more than half reported using one or more spiritually oriented secular activities with their clients, while over a third offered religious activities. Although few agencies conducted formal evaluations of the spiritual activities they offered to clients, agency staff nonetheless reported that such activities had distinct, discernable benefits for clients, helping them, for instance, to relax, manage anger, and think constructively about the future. This was true regardless of whether the activity being offered was religious or secular in nature. A majority of service providers expressed an interest in developing or expanding their spiritual programming, but cited a need for more training and clarification of legal issues surrounding religious activities. Providers reported that they were uncertain about how to develop or expand spirituality programming for youth, or how to evaluate such programs for effectiveness. In short, while agencies were intrigued and often enthusiastic about spirituality, they wanted to know more – much more – about it.

Of course, many social service agencies are wary of spiritual programs for young people, when that programming is religious in nature. This concern is understandable. Just as there are good reasons to be excited about the potential benefits of spiritual programming for youth, there are also

reasons to worry about the intermingling of clinical and religious agendas. When religion-based spirituality programs are dogmatic or when they carry an underlying or overt proselytizing message, they may conflict with clinical goals and with the ethics of the field, which invariably stress self-determination for clients. That concern is only heightened when the clients in question are vulnerable young people.

This report explores how seven agencies – some of them religious, some secular – have developed spiritual programming in their own work with young people. It attempts to answer some of the questions that youth-serving agencies may have about the various forms that spiritual programming for adolescents can take. Choosing agencies doing promising work in this area was challenging. While many agencies dabble informally in spiritual programming, few consider it a specialty or can demonstrate that it is effective with clients. Agencies highlighted in this report were identified through referrals, previous research by the authors, and a nationally disseminated request for information from agencies with established spirituality programs (see appendix). The agencies selected work with youth ages 14-22, most of them in residential treatment or transitional living programs; have spirituality programs that are at least three years old; and do work that is replicable, at least to a substantial degree. The agencies are geographically and culturally diverse, and vary significantly in size and budget. Though we searched for spirituality programs that have been rigorously evaluated, such work is so difficult, and the desire for it so relatively new, that only a few of the agencies profiled here have attempted to conduct data-based assessments. At least one agency has published an evaluation of its in-house pastoral ministry program, and others have written, or are in the process of writing, their own curricula. Many tools and resources developed by these agencies are reprinted in the appendix of this study.

By choosing and describing the work of these particular agencies, we are not endorsing or promoting any philosophy or approach, either religious or secular. We mean only to present case studies of agencies that have made substantial investments in spiritual work with adolescent clients, that have found the work useful in a therapeutic sense, and that conduct it in conformance with widely accepted standards of clinical care and the principles of youth development. The agencies described in this report have become, for lack of a more broadly accepted term, spiritually competent. They recognize spirituality as an important component of a holistic therapeutic approach, and act assertively and respectfully to offer clients opportunities for spiritual growth. We believe their work merits attention, and that they can serve as reasonable models for other agencies interested in offering spiritual programming to their adolescent clients. ■

HOLY CROSS CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The main campus of Holy Cross Children's Services in Clinton, Michigan, a rural area an hour west of Detroit, looks like a well-tended community college. Instead of straggling between buildings with typical adolescent lightheartedness, though, the young people here move in distinct groups, and with a discernible sense of order. At Holy Cross, control is firmly established and imposed from above, for the sole purpose of healing and rehabilitating the troubled young people who end up here.

At Clinton and more than 20 other sites around Michigan, the agency works with teenagers ages 12-17 who have been placed either by the state child welfare or juvenile justice system. (The agency was known as Boysville until 2002, and its population is still 70 percent male.) Over 80 percent of youth in residential treatment at Holy Cross are classified as delinquent; the remainder have been abused or neglected. The agency also runs specialized programs for sex offenders and for cognitively impaired youth.

The agency's dominant therapeutic tool is the "positive peer culture" model, in which residents live, work, play and undergo therapy in exclusive groups of 15 or fewer. The average client stays in treatment for about a year. Upon leaving Holy Cross, about two-thirds of the agency's clients will go back home, while the remaining third will go into foster care or independent living programs. It is always hard for an agency to predict or control how many adolescents who leave its care will get into trouble again. But Holy Cross' pastoral care program is helping improve the odds that youth will in fact succeed, and it has done the research to prove that pastoral services do indeed matter.

Beginning in the early 1990s, the agency, which was founded in 1947, began aggressively building its pastoral care program, and now employs 11 chaplains, half part-time and half full-time. (Most are Catholic, though a few are evangelical Christian.) All of them are trained in clinical pastoral education, a specialized field of study for chaplains working with clients in institutional settings. Each agency chaplain is assigned to a program site, where he or she works with about five treatment teams, or roughly 50 youth. About half of those youth seek intensive involvement with

- Clinton, Michigan
- Holy Cross provides residential treatment services to delinquent, abused/neglected, low-functioning and sex-offending youth ages 12-17; home and community-based services; and specialized foster care birth-17. It is a faith-based agency with extensive chaplaincy services, including individual spiritual counseling, weekly chapel, weekly religious discussion groups, annual spiritual retreats and community service.
- Annual budget: \$44.7 million (2003), 80% from state, county and local fee-for-service
- Number of youth served: 2,674 youth/families (2003)
- Client demographics: 47% black, 42% white and 11% Hispanic, Asian, mixed race, Native American and unknown (2002)

the chaplains. In fact, some chaplains report doing significant work with almost all the youth on their caseload.

Youth are expected to go to a chapel service partially planned by the residents themselves and held either Saturday or Sunday, depending on the site. (At intake, parents or caseworkers give permission for youth to participate in religious activities. Church is the only activity that has a compulsory feel about it, and even that requirement is a bit soft, since any youth seriously objecting may opt out.) All agency youth take part in community service projects and an annual three-day spiritual retreat. They also have the option of participating in weekly religious discussion groups. The agency is currently planning an aftercare program aimed at connecting discharged clients with spiritual mentors.

Partly because of a red flag raised by an accountant a few years ago, the agency has become careful about how it funds its various spiritual activities. To avoid potential church/state conflicts, it pays for all chapel services out of a separate, privately funded account. The spiritual retreats and community service outings have so much secular content that the agency says it could pay for them with public money; in practice, though, annual fundraising covers most of the \$363,600 the agency spends in non-chapel spiritual costs.

“Some youth come to believe that God was planning for their arrest to save their lives. Religious thoughts and motivations that have been dormant for years come back to life.”

Holy Cross has never received complaints about its spiritual programming, and says state caseworkers have always supported this aspect of its work with young people. A large measure of that support undoubtedly derives from the fact that participation is driven by the clients themselves. Outside of the basic programming, young people themselves decide if they want contact with chaplains, and whether that contact will be deep and substantial or simply cursory. They can explore spirituality as much or as little as they want, and even the type of spirituality is primarily up to them.

FINDING FAITH UNEXPECTEDLY

Most Holy Cross clients had no particular desire to be placed in a faith-based facility; relatively few are deeply religious or seriously interested in growing spiritually. Yet confinement in a medium-security treatment facility does shock many into thinking about their lives in a new way. “A sizable minority of Holy Cross youth turn to religion when they get locked up for the first time,” wrote the agency’s pastoral director, Gene Hausmann, in his 2002 Ph.D. dissertation on the agency’s spiritual program. “They come to believe that God was planning for their arrest to save their lives.... Religious thoughts and motivations that have been dormant for years come back to life.”

Though this new interest in religion may not be profound or permanent, it does give chaplains an opening to discuss feelings that may be deeply buried in youth, and that are intricately bound up in healing and rehabilitation.

Every young person accepted into residential treatment meets with a chaplain within a few weeks of intake to fill out (or in the case of cognitively impaired youth, orally discuss) the agency’s three-page spiritual assessment. (See appendix.) The assessment asks incoming youth for information about their religious histories, current spiritual interests and belief in a higher power, and also seeks to understand how each youth relates to religion in times of stress or depression. The answers become the basis of work the chaplain and youth may do in subsequent meetings, if the young person in fact chooses to continue the one-on-one sessions.

Certain kinds of emotional distress are so common among clients that the agency has developed spiritual treatment protocols to address them. Treatment protocols are used for youth struggling with guilt, self-esteem problems, connection to church, reconciliation with God, and, especially, grief and loss. (Two of the protocols are reprinted in the appendix.) If a youth agrees, and after clearing the plan with the youth’s treatment team, chaplains proceed through the protocols, sometimes starting with the easiest issue first, other times starting with the topic the client is most interested in pursuing.

Because so many of the youth at Holy Cross have lost family or friends to violence, and in some cases have been perpetrators of violence themselves, the grief protocol is the most frequently used of all the spiritual treatment plans. It calls on the youth to complete a workbook on grief and loss; identify beliefs about life after death; distinguish between “realistic and unrealistic guilt”; and, if necessary, make restitution or amends to the deceased. For many clients, the plan ends with a trip to the cemetery, where the young person participates in a service that he or she has planned. Youth choose the music and scripture readings, and often read letters of apology or forgiveness they have written. Sometimes they leave special items at the grave. Like all spiritually therapeutic work at Holy Cross, the process is voluntarily undertaken by the young person and is approved step by step by the clinical team.

RESEARCH: CHAPLAIN CONTACTS

REDUCE YOUTH RECIDIVISM

Very few social service agencies have rigorously evaluated in-house spirituality programs, but since the early 1990s Holy Cross has been mining its own extensive database for just that purpose. The agency's first study on spiritual outcomes looked at recidivism rates and chaplain contact time for 828 delinquent youth in residential treatment between 1995 and 1997. During those years, the average 12-month recidivism rate for all the youth in the agency was 30 percent. For youth who received more than 40 hours of contact with a chaplain, recidivism was 25 percent, and at the Clinton campus, where chaplain caseloads are smaller and chaplains do more small-group and individual work, the rate was only 18 percent. Meanwhile, youth receiving fewer than 20 hours of chaplain contact had a 37 percent recidivism rate. When factors that were also linked to recidivism (such as age of youth, number of prior locked placements, and substance abuse) were taken into account, chaplain contact was still considered most predictive of a client's chance of going back into state custody.

One benefit of reducing recidivism rates is that the state, the principle funder of social services, saves money that it otherwise must pay when treatment fails. How much money? In a follow-up study, the agency compared the costs to the state of maintaining youth who exit residential treatment and, after 12 months, are living at home, in foster care, in an independent living program, in a group home, in jail, in a psychiatric hospital or in

the state training school. The agency found that clients from the Clinton campus who had had no chaplain contact were living in settings that cost an average of \$78.95 per day, while those who received more than 40 hours of chaplain time lived in settings that cost an average \$34.12 per day. Regression analysis showed that, when length of treatment was considered, \$3.14 per day of the savings still could be attributed to chaplain contact, an amount that would mean substantial savings to the state over time.

The agency is considering the implications of the findings for its pastoral care program, and continues to try to pinpoint what kind of chaplain contact, and which of its spiritual treatment protocols, are most effective in reducing recidivism rates.

In 2004 Holy Cross received a grant to develop a spiritual aftercare program for adolescents released to the Detroit area to family or independent living. The aftercare program will, in collaboration with a large Baptist church in Detroit, provide spiritual mentors for such youth. The program will follow approximately 200 young people during treatment, and at 6 months and 12 months after leaving treatment, and will assess the quality of the relationships between mentors and clients and compare outcomes of the mentored group with outcomes of youth who did not have mentors.

The second most-used protocol involves reconnecting youth to former churches and youth groups. For youth who have been angry – sometimes to the point of violence – toward people and institutions in their lives, this sometimes means apologizing to pastors or church communities that have been hurt, and figuring out ways to resume a supportive relationship. One chaplain recalled

supervising a meeting in which a young client apologized to his former pastor for a number of misdeeds, including having sex with a girl backstage during a church service. But the protocol can also simply mean getting a youth hooked up to a church and youth group in the community to which he or she is being released.

'YOU'RE NOT THIS PIECE OF JUNK'

Chaplain Joe Martinus describes his pastoral work with a 16-year-old juvenile offender raised as a Baptist:

"He was at a point where he had dealt with his victimization, he'd looked at offending, he'd done an apology session with his victim. So, I said, what about him forgiving himself, and after forgiving himself, asking God to forgive him? Because he had a spirituality. And the treatment team said 'OK, that sounds good.' So I began to do some sessions with him and I began to ask him to identify all the things that he had done that he felt guilty about and how they impacted people's lives. Then we went from there to talk about shame and guilt, and the difference between those two, and how shame can be toxic, and how guilt necessarily isn't such a bad thing if it tells us that we've done something wrong, and how we're going to take responsibility for it. And then I started talking about ways that you can confront, or deal with, shame, overcome that sense of shame. Since shame is a lie, then let's look at the truth, and what's the truth here? And because of this youth's Christian identity, I said 'Let's look at these scripture readings that talk about who you really are, that you're not this piece of junk, you're not a bad person because of what you've done, and how you have inherent value as a child of God.' I asked him to pick a quote from scripture and then to personalize it, to put his name in the place of the pronoun. And I asked him to carry that in his pocket, or to memorize it, and when he got to a point where he's starting to dump on himself, or beat up on himself, to pull this out and remember the truth. I also asked him to make a list of how he was going to be a friend to himself, respect himself."

EMBRACING THE ALTERNATIVE

Although the agency embraces traditional Catholicism – crucifixes are displayed in some buildings and a grotto featuring the Virgin Mary has a prominent place on campus – it is also surprisingly supportive of young people who want to explore other religious traditions. A chaplain points out three boys from just one sex offender group. One boy is well-versed in Buddhism (when questioned, he easily ticks off the steps of the Eightfold Path); a second one has a serious interest in Wiccanism, and is only awaiting his father's approval before the agency finds material for him on the topic; and a third has nearly encyclopedic knowledge of the Christian Bible but lately has been exploring Shintoism, the Japanese religion. For a time he performed rituals involving rice and salt at a small temple he built in his locker, but he stopped when the other boys teased him. Now he studies arcane books on the topic that his team's chaplain finds for him.

While some Christian agencies may be hostile to meditation and other introspective spiritual disciplines, "the Catholic theology has a whole tradition of mysticism, and contemplation, meditation," Hausmann said. Thus Sister Mary Laurel Smith, a chaplain at the Clinton campus, was successful in soliciting a small gift from her order to construct a meditation labyrinth near the statue of the Virgin Mary. Another chaplain, the Rev. Peter Deane, is vocal about using drawing, collages, meditation, and other secular forms of expression to awaken the spiritual life of clients. "On a day like today, I take them out and lay them on the lawn, just be there. They ask, 'What are we supposed to do?' Nothing. Just experience the wind blowing and so on. It's a whole different way of looking at a higher power." He added, "I'm not here to convert anybody."

WORKING TOGETHER

Chaplains attend all team meetings, and clear their ideas for activities with the clinicians. (Treatment teams include a group therapist, family social worker, special education teacher, and at least four child care workers.) To guard against the potential for boundary violation, chaplains must also get permission from clinicians before disclosing personal information about themselves to youth. One female chaplain told a group of girls about her experience being sexually assaulted; another told a group of boys about her teenage

pregnancy and abortion. A clinician would never share such information, especially at Holy Cross, where therapy is conducted in peer groups, not privately. But while chaplains indeed play a therapeutic function, they are not therapists, and that is why youth can be so willing to talk to them, sometimes even disclosing critical information from their pasts that no one else at the agency knows about.

Thus it is not surprising that there are occasional clashes between chaplains and clinicians, who worry that personal sessions with chaplains will undermine the peer process that is the agency's primary therapeutic tool. Though all workers get a lengthy orientation to the agency, and ostensibly sign on, at least in theory, to its religious mission, chaplains have found that maintaining support for spiritual work is an ongoing and sometimes difficult task. One chaplain said that residential treatment staff sometime sabotage spirituality programming by purposely scheduling conflicting events. And the problem can cut both ways, with overzealous treatment specialists sometimes broaching spiritual issues with clients that the chaplains feel are reserved for them. Conflicts involving chaplains are taken to the team meeting for resolution; in the absence of consensus, the group therapist makes the final decision. Occasional tension between the two camps is inevitable, then the chaplains themselves have no easy solution. In the end, they say, it is a matter of cultivating positive relationships with staff and choosing which issues are important enough to battle out.

WHERE THEY MEET

All youth are invited to participate in weekly hour-long spiritual discussion groups. At some sites, all members of a treatment team go but only some actually participate; the uninterested may read quietly to the side. The groups vary somewhat in form and content depending on the chaplain leading them. Some chaplains show movies reenacting stories from the Bible, or tapes of television shows like "Touched by an Angel" – "I can't believe they would like it, but they do," said one chaplain – that help open up discussions about anger, loss, revenge, grief and faith. Participants of all religious beliefs are invited to share their views, and a group on world religions is currently planned for youth interested in more in-depth discussion of non-Christian faiths.

Every treatment group in the agency goes on a three-day outdoor retreat each year. The retreats provide opportunities for teambuilding, spiritual exploration and sharing, and for simply being out in nature – an adventure in itself for urban kids. Katrina Myers, a chaplain who works with youth in one of the agency's Detroit programs, describes how a retreat affected one of her clients, a 15-year-old girl who was one of 11 siblings split up by the state after their mother's death.

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"She had never known her dad at all, ever, and then he comes into the picture. She has all this hate for him. We go on a retreat last month, and I said I'm going to just let them play outside, do what they want to do, the weather was beautiful, and at the end, we're going to have a bonfire and we're going to share how we experienced God in nature, how we experienced having fun. So they did what they wanted to do, and at the end of the night, we came together, we had a bonfire, we roasted s'mores, and sang some songs, and then we all had a candle. We had the candle lit, and I asked each one of them, how did they experience God today? And each one of them spoke, and when it came to her, she said she experienced God in forgiveness. And she talked about how in nature she felt God, the breeze, she felt God kissing her and how she's never had an opportunity to be a child. She said that somewhere during the day the unforgiveness left her. Everyone was crying, and then she was crying, and then she thanked me for bringing her to the retreat because after that she wrote her dad a long letter. They've met on several occasions, her dad just bought a new home, and not only is he going to take her, but he's going to have the other 10 siblings as well, permanently. And all of this happened in one month's time." ■

For more information: www.boysville.org

MARIMED FOUNDATION

Marimed Foundation, a Hawaii agency that provides therapeutic services to boys with conduct, emotional and behavior disorders, is unusual for many reasons, but most of all for the absolute centrality of experiential learning in its work with young people.

The agency, set on the lush, windward side of Oahu, works with adolescent boys ages 14-18, many of them poor and most referred by the state mental health department, the courts or other state agencies. In most cases, the stakes are high for them; Marimed is a last stop before hospitalization or incarceration. Hawaiian society is, by mainland standards, amazingly diverse, and among the 34 adolescents in residence at any given time are boys of Polynesian, Hawaiian, Micronesian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese and European descent. The program's ultimate goal is to reintegrate them back into their families and home communities or to launch them into independent adult life.

The agency's Kailana program (the name means "Calm Seas") is a small complex of buildings at the end of a short dead-end road, tucked in between close neighbors and the ocean. The yard is scattered with donated sailboats, and just offshore are the program's teaching boats and its 92-foot three-masted schooner, the *Makani Olu*, the centerpiece of its sailing program. Located at sites throughout Kane'ohe are more facilities, including residential homes and a short-term intake house adjoined by agency-owned taro fields, gardens, a banana plantation and an outdoor classroom. The boats and plots of agricultural land are key elements in the agency's attempt to create tasks that connect their clients to their culture and teach them how to work and succeed.

THE EXPERIENTIAL MODEL

Marimed is a young agency with an unusual history. It got its start in the 1980s as a teaching and medical organization making regular rounds through the Marshall Islands on a 156-foot schooner called the *Tole Mour*. By 1992, the program had become a project of the Marshall Islanders themselves, and Marimed began focusing on special-needs adolescents. For a time the

- Kane'ohe, Hawaii
- Marimed provides an array of services to high-risk adolescent boys ages 14-18, including residential treatment, education, aftercare services, therapeutic transitional services, community-based prevention, and substance abuse treatment. At the center of its residential services is a marine and land-based experiential education program promoting personal and spiritual growth and a reconnection to cultural heritage. Spiritual concepts, both universal and specific to Hawaiian culture, are intertwined throughout all aspects of the agency's work.
- Annual budget: \$4 million (FY 2003)
- Number of youth served: 80 (FY 2003)
- Client demographics: Pacific Island/Hawaiian 62%; Caucasian 16%; Asian-American 9%; Hispanic 9%; African American 2%; Native American 2% (2004)

agency partnered with VisionQuest, the better-known experiential learning agency, to provide sailing-based services to court-referred youth from Hawaii and some of the mainland states. Eventually Marimed returned the ship to Hawaii to function as part of its expanding Kailana program there, and in 2001 replaced the *Tole Mour* with a new ship, the *Makani Olu*, which was custom fitted for the sail training the agency was doing with youth.

Although the approach can sound complicated in its particulars, its theme is simple. Young people are given difficult tasks that require them to work together, cooperate, control themselves, exhibit

leadership and solve problems, then, as individuals and as a group, reflect upon their performance and improve. Not coincidentally, Marimed is geographically well-situated to provide such challenging real-life experiences.

The experiential programs at Marimed are intended to take advantage of the importance of the ocean to Hawaiian and other Pacific Island peoples. At the center of those activities are sail training and ocean voyaging on the *Makani Olu* and on small boats and canoes. Using a rites-of-passage model, the boys graduate through the agency's intake program to one of three "voyaging houses," where they take day-long sailing trips and multi-day voyages to neighboring islands, mastering the challenges of big sea sailing, steering, navigation, tying knots, setting and striking sails, bow watch, reading the wind, and safety drills. They also participate in "land voyaging" – hiking and mountain biking – as a way of symbolically connecting the mountains and sea.

The experiential learning activities the agency devises for its youth are particularly geared to their needs. Said Craig Norton, the agency's director of operations: "We work with some pretty high-risk kids and they come in with some pretty severe issues. You could sit in a room all day and do group therapy and it is not real, it is not in the moment. You throw a bunch of kids in a canoe and do paddling, and through the experience, anger comes up, frustration comes up, whatever the situation is. You don't just leave it there, you come back, you get in a circle and you talk about it. It's real anger management, it's 'in the moment' anger management because it is real life. And second, these experiences put the kids in a position of leadership over themselves, first, and secondly, of the group. When they are on that ship they are literally responsible for other people's lives."

CULTURE AND SPIRIT

Marimed does not describe itself as a spiritual program per se, yet spiritual themes are woven throughout all its work. Its central belief – that what a boy actually does is far more important than what he sees or hears – reflects the spiritually based culture in which the agency is rooted, and from which its clients come.

The land and the sea were the central features of Hawaiian heritage and spirituality. The steep cliffs that run to the sea brought water that

irrigated taro, papaya, fruits, and flora. Just off the beach Hawaiians built fish ponds – half-moon-shaped rock walls – to trap fish at low tide. They built sailing canoes for inter-island trade. Each family had its own god (the god of taro, for instance), and ideas about the divine were intricately intertwined with the natural world.

"The youth are healed by the taro patches, they are healed by the sea, they are healed by pulling on the lines of the sails. The experiential approach has the power to reconnect them with being alive in the real world."

"The (early native Hawaiians) saw it all as one thing," said Jim Ford, the agency's director of residential programs. "Marimed has mirrored that. We don't pull out any one thing and say we're about substance abuse or we're about voyaging on the ship, or raising taro. We're about all those things. It's not that they need one thing to solve all their problems, they need a whole comprehensive – I still like the word holistic – intervention without pulling out and pointing at it. The spirituality is caught up in all that we do. It's when we're at sea, or it's the stars in the sky, or the moonlight. All of that is spirit."

Most boys come to the agency relatively uneducated about their native heritage. At Marimed they are immersed in it, and their newfound cultural pride leads many of them to embrace their history for the first time. They learn about the richly spiritual Hawaiian language; they learn that historically, Polynesians were among the most sophisticated navigators in the world. Indeed the theme of navigation is at the forefront of Marimed's image and message, down to the smallest detail. All residents wear T-shirts bearing an image of a ship's wheel, a metaphor symbolizing residents' own personal voyage toward health and wholeness. In the center of the wheel is the *kikoa*, or monkey's fist, the first rope on a boat that a sailor throws to shore when docking. The image signifies an act of self-rescue whereby a boy tosses a line to whomever he trusts to pull him to safe ground.

The agency turns to the local community for help conveying cultural knowledge. For instance, islanders “have *lo’i* (a system for taro cultivation) that has been there for centuries, and they allow us to go there and help out, work in it, we pull weeds, harvest taro,” Ford said. Taro cultivation comes up continually at Marimed because taro is a metaphor for family. “Because of the way it is harvested, while you get a crop, you are also preparing the next generation. Marimed operates in metaphor a lot, which I think is also a way of connecting things to the spirit.”

METAPHORS FOR LIFE

The values that the agency works to inculcate in youth are known to staff and residents alike as “CHART” – community, honesty, aloha, respect and teamwork. They are, metaphorically speaking, the values that underpin the voyage of self-discovery that all teenagers in the Kailana Program commit to undertake. Of the five values, aloha is the only one unlikely to be found anywhere else, and it underscores the spiritual thread running through the agency’s work. The word, which means breath of life or spirit, is defined by the agency as “the essence of what we are and what gives life and humanity.” A staff orientation packet says that when one person honors another, he “shows him his aloha.”

“The real world has environmental spirit and beauty anywhere you go. You just have to find it and create the experiential metaphors and activities to tie all that together.”

Equally important – even vital – to the program is the Hawaiian concept that mistakes can be undone. The idea of “making it right” and earning one’s way back to the “path of Pono” (righteousness) is integrated into the agency’s approach. The cadets, as the boys are called, follow a clearly defined set of rules and face consequences for the violation of rules; through those consequences they can earn their way back into the program or keep the privileges and status they already have.

But the backbone of the program is the agency’s five-stage experiential model. The stages –

called Welcome Aboard/Prepare for Sea; Departure/Commitment to the Voyage; Challenge/Windward Leg; Mastery/Wayfinding; and Reflection/Storytelling – double both as real-life challenges involving the concrete tasks of sea-going, and as metaphorical challenges relating to life as a whole. While the metaphor isn’t necessarily articulated for the youth, it is pervasive.

Cadets enter the program through the agency’s intake facility, Hale Ho’omak’ana. The program is physically isolated; boys who come there find no TV or radio. A new cadet’s primary job is to stabilize and become a working member of the household. (They also begin attending the program’s school, and will later go to the agency’s main campus school.) It is in this phase that the boys are first exposed to the voyaging model. Initially they concentrate on “dry-land voyages” that require them to build terraces, help restore the local watershed system, and plant, weed, and harvest taro. Eventually, they take to the water. “When they first go to intake, they only paddle,” said Connie Sizemore, director of development. “Canoe paddling is a very unifying activity – every seat has to be totally in concert with the seat in front and back of you. It is all about the work together.” In this model, achievement occurs only through cooperation.

After several weeks, most residents move closer to the sea, to one of three voyaging houses (known in Hawaiian as the House of New Growth, the House of Encouragement, and the House of Change). As with all Marimed transitions, this one is marked by ceremony. Said Ford: “When they move to the voyaging house, as a symbolic ritual, the boy gets in a canoe with his housemates, and they will paddle toward Coconut Island. Then there is a canoe with five seats filled with the boys from the voyaging house, and he switches into that canoe with those boys and paddles back to home campus.”

VOYAGING

The boys’ stay in the voyaging house takes them through increasing responsibility and risk. Endurance, courage and teamwork become even more critical to success. Eventually the boys will embark on six-day voyages to neighboring islands, where they participate in community service projects that teach history, heritage, culture and altruism. During the rigors of these trips, change – unpredictable and unquantifiable, but

real nonetheless – simply occurs. Kara Davies, the agency’s director of experiential learning, has seen it countless times. “Every single kid I’ve voyaged with cries on the bow – being out there in the elements, facing their fears,” she said. “I say, ‘If you stand on this watch right now, you can stand up to the people you need to back home.’”

She remembers one particular boy. On his first voyage he was seasick and struggled to stay on watch. On his second voyage, he was terribly sick again, and barely able to fulfill his duties. On the third voyage - he was now an upper level cadet and expected to be a mentor to others – he again was miserable. “He came up on watch, still seasick – and he stopped short and saw all the stars. He said, ‘It’s way bigger than me.’ He had a whole attitude change, he did his mentorship, he had appreciation.” What helped the boy pull himself together? Davies said she has no idea. But his concrete experience on the ship created a shift in his perception and then an improvement in his performance. In a sense, the experiential learning model is that simple.

REFLECTING

Reflection, whether it occurs on the bow of a ship at sunset or in a more structured setting, is central to the youths’ experience at Marimed. “Solos,” which happen every day at dusk, are a rare time of solitude. For up to two hours, every boy sits by himself (though within sight of a staff member) to think and write in his journal. They often work from assignments staff have given them. An assignment might ask them to reflect on how they got into the program, or to write a letter to a person who has helped them in some way. Sometimes boys will gather objects from the natural world to describe their lives and transitions. In a graphic expression of their feelings, a dried leaf may represent “the way it used to be,” and a log an obstacle that they have to climb over to continue on their way.

One of the most powerful of the agency’s rituals occurs when a cadet prepares to graduate from the program. The group of well-wishers – including the boy’s program peers, staff and family members – gather in an “aloha circle” to say goodbye. They pass around a teak paddle and a miniature monkey’s fist – the knotted rope that is thrown to shore when a ship comes into port – pausing one by one to invest the items with their

own positive energy. Group members, drawing on their personal impressions of the youth’s strengths, might say, for instance, “I am going to put in [to these tokens] your ability to ask for help,” or “I am going to put in your honesty.” When the circle members have finished, the departing boy makes his response. He receives certificates, pictures, endorsements and other mementos from his time in the program. The ultimate leave-taking is usually accompanied by hugs, tears and expressions of gratitude.

“Every single kid I’ve voyaged with cries on the bow – being out there in the elements, facing their fears. I say, ‘If you can stand on this watch right now, you can stand up to the people you need to back home.’ ”

Of course, many boys in the program don’t make it this far. Ford guesses that one of every 10 boys washes out and never comes back; two or three leave early and eventually return, some multiple times; and about 6 of 10 succeed the first time around. Those who do stick it out can find progress slow. To move up, boys need to get 16 different signatures from staff across every level of the program. Among other things, they have to achieve acceptable behavioral ratings, conducted hourly, for three weeks in a row. It is a difficult program, and it is meant to be.

EVALUATION & REPLICABILITY

Marimed has recently begun evaluating its program by gathering data on youth who have been discharged. Though a complete statistical picture will not be available until September 2005, the early results are impressive. The agency uses the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs evaluation tool – used with many adult and adolescent populations throughout the United States – to measure truancy, involvement with the law, employment activity, engagement with school, and substance abuse of their clients at increments of 3, 6 and 12 months after discharge. Ninety days out, 87 percent of youth have reached their

“target level,” which varies from client to client but generally means they have made progress toward their goals and kept out of serious trouble. It is important to note that this federally funded evaluation currently combines Marimed’s outcomes with those from another Hawaii program, and the two sets of figures haven’t yet been teased apart yet. Still, to the agency, the positive preliminary numbers seem to confirm what it knows through simple observation.

“Spirituality is caught up in the way of all that we do. It’s when we’re at sea, or it’s the stars in the sky, or the moonlight.”

For instance, Ford said that his aftercare work with court-involved clients indicates that more than 50 percent of them experience a “significant change” in maturity level, anger management, respect for others, perceived importance of work and school, ability to have fun, and desire to use substances. That assessment may not be entirely scientific, but it is backed up by years of professional experience, and, given the overall difficulty of evaluating the experiential model, it seems good enough for the agency. In Ford’s opinion, a holistic approach such as theirs should not be probed too thoroughly, anyway. “The frog doesn’t hop very well after it’s dissected,” he said.

Ford believes that Marimed is highly unusual, if not unique, in the degree to which it employs experiential learning. In his view, the program works because it intentionally puts experiential learning activities at the center, rather than at the margins, of the therapeutic agenda. Agencies that want to replicate Marimed’s approach must fully buy into the model, understand it, and employ staff who are committed to it. The process isn’t easy. Understanding chaos and breakdowns and letting them happen – a key feature of the experiential learning process – is an ongoing institutional challenge for Marimed, and will be for other agencies that fully invest in the model.

Marimed’s program is also expensive. Ford estimates that it costs twice as much as a traditional program, both because it requires heavy staffing and, beyond that, more specialized staff – a chef, for instance, for the program’s vocational cooking component, and an agricultural science

expert to oversee the vegetable cultivation component. The *Makani Olu* alone costs about \$250,000 a year to maintain and staff.

Is the program really replicable, then? Even without the financial issue, most programs working with troubled adolescents are not near the sea and cannot use sea voyaging as a real-life metaphor for personal growth. But Marimed administrators say that any program can connect with its physical environment, and every physical environment – even ones in more prosaic parts of the world – can offer opportunities for experiential learning. Said Jim Ford: “The real world has that environmental spirit and beauty anywhere you go. You just have to find it and create the experiential metaphors and activities to tie all that together. It’s the infusion of spirit and infusion of experience that changes what [youth] see and how they feel about themselves. That’s real change.” ■

For more information: www.marimed.org

CATHEDRAL HOME FOR CHILDREN

Laramie, Wyoming, a small city in the high desert surrounded by sprawling ranches and, beyond that, snow-topped mountains, is home to several distinct cultures: students from the University of Wyoming, Native Americans from two nearby reservations, conservative and moderate Christians. Together they constitute a many-hued spectrum of belief and spiritual practice. Cathedral Home for Children, two miles outside of Laramie on 600 acres of its own, reflects that diversity by offering its young clients a menu of spiritual programming that draws on the many traditions around it.

Founded nearly 100 years ago by an Episcopalian bishop, the agency still receives financial support from the church but is not governed by it. While not technically “faith-based,” the agency nonetheless heavily stresses the importance of spiritual connection for all its clients, and considers building spiritual understanding one of the pillars of its overall mission.

Spirituality informs all of the agency’s work with youth, even its philosophy about controlling behavior, the bugaboo of most programs that work with troubled teenagers. Said Kelly Collini, the agency’s director of development and marketing and herself a former ward of the state child-welfare system, “You can take kids, put them in a facility like this, put a lot of restraints on their behavior, and lock them down when they act out. But when they leave the program and you remove all those restraints, then what happens? Well, many times they’re going to go back to what they knew before because they didn’t have an internal shift.” That shift, she says, happens on a spiritual level, and the approach to achieving it – unconditional love plus freedom of choice plus consequences – is itself spiritual. “How can someone explore their spirituality or look for a power greater than themselves, or pray, when you’re telling them they don’t even have a mind of their own and they just need to adhere to rules? By giving them some freedom and allowing them to do their own thing, you provide a lot more room for spiritual growth, to me, than another program would.”

Brenda Caldwell, an Episcopal minister, constitutes the agency’s one-woman spiritual ministry program. It is a part-time position that

- Laramie, Wyoming
- Cathedral Home offers residential services to boys and girls ages 10-18 with behavioral, educational or emotional problems; crisis shelter; a specialized program for deaf children; outreach; enrichment; and a foster grandparents program. The agency’s spiritual ministry program offers one-on-one spiritual mentoring, religious services, sacred rituals and ceremonies, arts, drama and community service.
- Annual budget: \$5.5 million (103 full-time staff)
- Number of youth served: 100 youth (FY2003)
- Client demographics: white 69%, Hispanic 19%, African American 6%, American Indian 4%, and Asian 3%

she says often – despite volunteer help from staff – seems like more. Indeed, the agency regards the job as so important that in 2005 the position will be made full-time.

Every young person who enters residential treatment at the agency is assessed for religious and spiritual orientation at intake. If clients indicate that the topic is unimportant to them, their case-worker goes no further. If, on the other hand, they say that religion or spirituality has been an important part of their lives – and about half of youth do – they are asked to rate its importance and describe how they have practiced their beliefs in the past, and what the agency can do to accommodate those practices.

The agency “has to meet these kids where they are at,” said Collini. Thus acknowledgment of ethnic and regional traditions is key, even if they

vary from the Christianity of the agency's founders. "If the chaplain just came in and said, 'Here's how we're going to live and this is how it is,' it wouldn't work. It wouldn't teach them how to respect each other; it wouldn't open them up for other possibilities."

The core of the spirituality program involves a loosely structured curriculum that follows the seasons. In the summer and fall, for instance, the program tends to focus on Native American or Celtic spirituality, giving youth the chance to participate in rituals and ceremonies and do art projects in which they identify totem animals and collect other spiritually meaningful items, such as feathers, in the natural world around them. (See appendix.) In winter and spring, the program might offer a drumming group or teach prayer, meditation, yoga or other introspective practices.

The core of the spirituality program involves a loosely structured curriculum that follows the seasons.

And of course there is Christmas and Easter, multi-ethnic holidays that the agency makes the most of. Services are generally elaborate and the youth themselves participate in their design.

Spiritual scheduling is posted in advance so youth know the content and can sign up if they're interested. Though the agency has a chapel service every Sunday evening that most youth attend, Caldwell takes a limited number of youth each week to visit a local church of their choice. (Youth requests for these outside trips go to their treatment team, who approve them based on behavioral and clinical issues.) If youth choose not to attend any service, they are expected to use the time in spiritual exploration.

The agency had not offered Bible study classes for some time, but, due to a recent increase in the number of interested Christian youth, it recently began African Method Bible Studies classes. Introduced by the African delegation of the Anglican (Episcopal) Church, the classes stress reading and re-reading a single passage; having individuals identify words that are particularly meaningful to them; and then asking them to determine what the message of the passage might be for them. There is no give-and-take discussion,

only statements from participants to the group as a whole. (See appendix.) Caldwell says she simplifies the method slightly for the youth at the agency.

Caldwell takes pains to make the chapel warm and inviting. Aside from its regular use for worship, it can be used by the cottages for spiritual direction, meditation and relaxation, or – uniquely – clown classes, in which interested youth choose a personality and a costume to match it, then, after rehearsals, perform during various agency events. Youth also can earn work hour credits – the agency requires residents to work a certain number of hours as recompense for misdeeds, or to earn extra money – by doing chapel-related chores such as organizing craft supplies and cleaning.

THE NATIVE AMERICAN THREAD

At Caldwell's request, Dominic Hvizdak, an Arapaho youthworker at the agency, has helped her integrate Native American practices into the spirituality program by facilitating cedar and cleansing ceremonies, and the better-known sweat lodges. The sweats, which in accordance with Indian custom are run by tribal elders, take place on campus in a traditional circular lodge that symbolizes the cycle of life, birth and death.

The sweat lodges are built by the elders with either red or white willow. Rocks are heated in a fire outside the lodge and then brought inside, where water is sprinkled on them to produce steam and heat. Before entering, youth and staff go through a preparation ceremony, and once inside, pray quietly or out loud. Males and females sit on opposite sides of the lodge, and altogether there are four rounds of song and prayer. The entire sweat lasts for two to three hours, though time is said to be meaningless in the context of the ritual. The details of the sweat and other Native ceremonies are considered sacred and are not often divulged to non-participants.

Twenty-five youth and additional staff members attended the agency's last sweat. The youth were evenly distributed among the agency's five cottages and included roughly 10 girls and 15 boys. Many participants are Native American, but young people from all ethnic backgrounds have participated. "One of my boys, we had a really good relationship but I think he gets tired of me sometimes because I'm always getting on him and everything. And he likes to get back at me. The last sweat we were in, he prayed for me, he asked that

PULLING THE THREAD

Psychologist Brian Sheremeta conducts individual, group and family therapy at Cathedral Home for Children in Laramie, Wyoming. Spiritual themes emerge frequently in his work with young people, and he tends to use stories like the one below to make his points.

"There's this farmer or there's this rancher or there's this guy, just depending on who you're talking to. And he comes across this horse, he captures this horse, he buys this horse, or whatever. It's this beautiful stallion. And, all of the townspeople, villagers, other farmers or whatever, say, 'Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful horse, you are so lucky, that's so fortunate.' The farmer, rancher, whatever, says... 'Hmm, good luck? I don't know.' A couple of days, a week maybe goes by and the horse jumps a fence, goes through a pasture, whatever – he gets away, runs up into the mountain. 'Gosh, that's terrible, what bad luck.' And the rancher, farmer, whatever, says, 'Hmm, bad luck? I don't know.' Well, about two weeks later, the horse comes back leading a herd of mares to the paddocks. Now, by comparative standards, he's rich, he just won the lottery. And everyone says, 'Oh my God, you are so lucky.' And the farmer says, 'Lucky? I don't know.'

"He's got a lot of work to do. He needs to separate the brood mares from the working mares, decide who's going to be sold off, who's going to be kept. One of his sons is helping him. In trying to train one of the mares, he gets thrown off and, bam, he breaks his leg. Everyone says, 'Oh, that's such bad luck.' And he says, 'Bad luck? I don't know.' About a week later, there is a war council, a draft, a civil war, whatever, and they come through and take all of the eligible young men to lead them into battle. But they

don't take the farmer's son. Many young men die. The villagers say, 'What good luck.' The farmer says, 'Good luck? I don't know.'"

Sheremeta comments: "You realize that threaded through the story are a number of principles, one of which is about the whole idea of good luck and bad luck. There's just what happens. I use it also in teaching the principles of physics: there is no solid event. Every event is tied to another event. When we talk about timelines and things like that, if we pull the thread, the thread is attached to everything else and everything has to bend with it. And we also talk about decisions. You decided to do (a certain thing) today, and on the whole, was it good or bad? I don't know. As an isolated event, it has (a certain) effect on you, but it does not have a static effect, it is attached to everything else that occurs. I then pull in how decisions that get made never stop their effect, they continue.

"Then we go to how we are a community. It is something that comes up here a lot. If someone says something rude or does something terrible or awful or mean, everyone will end up having to bear the consequence of that. If I decide to drive my car at 80 miles an hour, spin out and hit a light post, who's in trouble, who suffers for that? [The kids] say, 'You.' No, everyone who needed that light, everyone who's a taxpayer, everyone who goes down that street, everyone who pays car insurance. And they get that, they're like, 'Oh, wow!'"

I be blessed and thanked me and hoped that I wouldn't give up on him." Did the boy's improved attitude last forever? No, said Hvizdak, but since staff members now know the ritual can help the boy think calmly and constructively, it is one more therapeutic tool at the agency's disposal. Veronica Gambler, the agency's registrar and herself a Northern Arapaho, says that the young people who participate in the sweats learn respect for spirituality and religion, grow in confidence and inner peace, and appear to be soothed by the experience.

"We do a lot of things like juggling and unicycle riding because I figure, you see something that looks incredibly impossible, and then you do it and you go, 'Wow.' It's just one more thing to help them have self-esteem and courage and faith."

Caldwell told the story of a 14-year-old Northern Arapaho girl from the nearby Wind River Reservation, who brought Native customs to the most Christian of celebrations – Easter. "She hand-sewed her own native dance dress. And it's called a Fancy Dance. She went out and got materials. Somebody at school helped. She put her whole heart and soul into this. That day, she came in and she said, 'I don't know if I can do this.' I said, 'Well, I bet you can.' She said, 'Okay.' And it came time and it was like this spirit just held her." When her dance was over, "she just drifted down to the floor in a puddle and she just stayed there for the longest time, breathing, shaking – it's just hard to explain. It was a very spiritual moment."

The girl won one of the agency's annual spiritual growth awards, presented to clients who have made notable spiritual progress during their time in residence. Another winner was a street-tough young man who, during the Christmas service, led the agency's deaf choir through a hand-signed rendition of "Silent Night."

Cathedral Home recently began a Native American drumming group. According to Robin Haas, the agency's executive director, experiences like group drumming have a unique ability to reach

troubled youth. She describes one boy who had been a chronic runaway. Before coming to Cathedral Home, "no one could hold on to him," she said. At the agency, the boy began participating in spirituality programming, and was eventually put in charge of the drumming group. He doesn't run away any more. Indeed, Haas said he is making excellent progress, a fact that she attributed specifically to the drumming.

SPIRITUAL DRAMA

Caldwell uses a variety of activities that she says are geared toward engaging youth and creating an atmosphere of safety, fun and acceptance. Drama, for instance, can help them develop concentration. Caldwell generally starts with a meditative breathing exercise (she calls it "spiritual breath work"). Once the youth are relaxed and focused, she introduces an ethical situation or "sacred moment story." The youth then act out the story as a means of gaining understanding and insight. Music and dance – "timeless rituals," in Caldwell's words – create a spiritual aura.

The agency's ongoing clown classes are an example of Caldwell's reliance on offbeat experiential learning. The last clown workshop drew 35 youth and lasted a full weekend. The workshops give participants a chance to develop an "alter ego" and a story they want to tell. "Clowning helps the youths in a transformative way. It makes children smile and makes a place to become new," she said. Caldwell's office is also, oddly for a chaplain, full of unicycles. "We do a lot of things like juggling and unicycle riding because I figure, you see something that looks incredibly impossible, and then you do it and you go, 'Wow.' It's just one more thing to help them have self-esteem and courage and faith."

Caldwell also oversees the type of community-service projects that are standard in spirituality programs. Youth sew lap quilts for residents of a nearby nursing home; they make rag dolls for refugees. The value of the activities is, of course, double-sided: they not only contribute to the lives of needy people, but they challenge the youths' own sense of worthlessness.

SPIRITUALITY IN DAILY LIFE

Ginger Lubbers, director of one of the boys' cottages, describes herself as a Christian who is "disturbed by our kids who come in not believing

in God.” She approaches spirituality through the “back door,” by role-modeling and using statements such as “I feel blessed by...” Cottage residents say grace or have a moment of silence before meals, and staff members are allowed to talk about their own spiritual or religious journeys. But Caldwell says most interactions on the topic are subtle and conducted with an eye toward creating respect for diversity, not imposing particular religious views.

The agency’s cottage system requires youth to live together peacefully in a family-like setting, and the spiritual discussions Caldwell initiates have direct bearing on clients’ understanding of how families function. “One of our things that we did was the story of Moses, and when Moses went up into the mountain and received the Ten Commandments, the covenant, the promise. And how his family came together to do that, to live together under that sort of guideline. And so what they’ve been doing in the cottages is that they have been working on covenant. And how they promise [to work together.] It’s not staff doing it, it’s kids doing it. They’re electing leaders who will come and do some leadership training. We talk about when we come together as a family, what are we going to do? How are we going to live together? Because family is not just biological. I mean, you can feel it when you are with them. It’s a very broken family, but it’s family.”

Caldwell and the agency’s clinical staff have a cooperative relationship. (She can remember only one staff member who seemed “anti-spirituality.”) Clinicians often invite Caldwell to their treatment groups, especially groups focusing on loss and grief, and she may attend any clinical or management team meeting she likes, though she rarely finds the time to do so. In practical, day-to-day terms, the clinical and spiritual programs also work in tandem – both she and the staff team, for instance, must sign off on cottage requests for chapel time. But to some extent, the program exists outside the agency’s normal channels. Youth throughout the agency know when they enter the chapel or take part in activities organized by the chaplain, trouble and punishment can, for a time at least, melt away. Said Caldwell: “We have a saying: Try to leave it outside. Like the fight you just had with a fellow resident, try to let it go, come in here and let’s sort of center ourselves and renew ourselves and be family. It is a respite moment. For example, once a cottage came over and they said, ‘Oh, our level-one kids don’t get pop.’ I said, ‘Yeah, but this is an unconditional

love zone, so they get it here.’ I just go ahead and overrule them.”

Although she does not keep records on contacts with youth, Caldwell says that during their stay, all residents see her at least once, even if just for 10 minutes. She talks to young people about their spiritual journeys, she makes suggestions, she answers questions. To her, these meetings are about “spiritual mentoring,” not “spiritual ministry,” because she considers herself a teacher or a guide. Young people often disclose information to Caldwell during her contacts with them. While she encourages them to share the information with their clinical team, unless there are safety concerns, she will maintain the youth’s confidentiality.

“Once a cottage came over and they said ‘Oh, our level-one kids don’t get pop.’ I said, ‘Yeah, but this is an unconditional love zone, so they get it here. I just overrule them.’ ”

Cathedral Home does not attempt to evaluate the impact of its spiritual ministry program, mostly because it isn’t sure how to go about it. If ways could be found, Caldwell would be interested. In lieu of such an approach, evidence of benefits to youth is anecdotal. Lubbers said that staff see an “increase in friendliness, warmth, goals of not hurting anyone, and an increase in consciousness.” Caldwell said the spiritual program “empowers them, it is a strength, a comforter, it gives them peace. In a way I feel it gives them a sense of family that they don’t often have, a sense of community.” Several girls interviewed confirmed that participation in the spirituality program sometimes leads to changes in mood; one girl said that her anger ebbs away during chapel so that she can return to her cottage “more in control.” ■

For more information: www.cathedralhome.org

Chelsea, Mass., is undeniably poor. Its 35,000 residents are disproportionately likely to be members of an ethnic or racial minority, to be living in single-mother households, to drop out of school. Economic deprivation is exacerbated by intense cultural displacement. The city is a gateway for immigrants, a high percentage of whom are refugees from countries traumatized by war and poverty. Over 70 percent of students in the public school system speak a language other than English at home, and 80 percent are from low-income families. Violence and drug use in the city are endemic. It is hard to imagine a community less equipped to raise healthy, positive young people.

Roca, Inc. (roca means “rock” in Spanish), intends to be the firmament on which the young people of Chelsea can stand and grow. The \$3.8 million dollar agency, founded in 1988, hosts a range of programs focusing on youth leadership, violence prevention, community literacy, after-school educational support, and home visiting for first-time teen parents.

Roca has developed a reputation for being highly intentional about its values of democratic participation and openness. It has also been known, and not always fondly among local officials, for its tenacious advocacy on behalf of young people, particularly those in trouble. But the agency’s very stubbornness in fighting for youth became, paradoxically, a problem of its own.

Roca staff were continually engaged in angry confrontations with the police, courts, child welfare officials and other systems in the community that dealt with young people. Their intention, of course, was to sensitize “the system” to the needs of local youth, but in reality they often created the very resistance they meant to break down. In truth, changing those other systems didn’t seem possible, and in an embattled community where public resources were always in short supply, the various community players seemed destined for continual deadlock.

Then everything changed. At a 1999 restorative justice conference in Boston, a group from Roca heard presenters from Canada and Minnesota describe peacemaking circles, a method of communication and problem-solving derived from native and aboriginal traditions. They were transfixed. Molly Baldwin, founder and executive director of the agency, remembered their reaction. “I don’t really know how to explain it, but we went crazy. It was as if we had a vision, individually and

•Chelsea, Massachusetts

•Roca, Inc., is a non-residential youth, family and community development agency providing street outreach, afterschool, violence prevention, youth leadership, youth employment, and parents and immigrants programs.

The agency uses peace circles, a native method of communication and problem-solving, throughout its programming.

•Annual budget: \$3.8 million, 62% from private foundations (FY05)

•Number of youth served: 620 youth received intensive services; 250 youth received low-level services; 300 parents received services

•Client demographics: Of 620 intensively served youth: 71% Hispanic, 14% Asian/Pacific Islander, 9% black, 5% white

collectively. It was, ‘Oh my God, we have to know about these circles.’”

Within a few months, the agency had been trained in the technique and was using the circles extensively in its work with young people, families, and local officials.

THE CIRCLES

The circle concept is based on the Medicine Wheel, with its four quadrants expressing the four stages of life, the four seasons, the four basic earth elements, and the four elements of human beings: spirit, body, emotion and mind. As such it is a metaphor for wholeness, and a vehicle for what the agency has now adopted as its guiding truth: that, despite the social work credo, no one can improve anyone else. The best you can hope for is

improving yourself and by so doing, extending to others the opportunity for self-knowledge and internal change.

There is a much-heard expression around Roca that derives from its circle work: “You can’t get to a good place in a bad way – ever.” The core phrase may have originated with a Navajo chief, but it has particular resonance for the agency, which for so many years had done just that – tried to create positive outcomes through negative tactics. Baldwin said: “We were very slow and stubborn, so we put the word ‘ever’ on the end. It’s what holds us in place. So we began this journey of what it means to be in a good way. Really. Not for me to say I’m in a good way, but behave in another way.”

Being in a “good way” is ultimately about behavior, she said. “Youthworkers, streetworkers, are a little bit outrageous, a little bit edgy, a little angry and in-your-face. If I’m hell-bent on believing that every child matters, then there’s no ‘us and them.’ No matter how traumatized, how hurt, how angry, how out there they are, everybody belongs. And then if I ... do an us-and-them with the police department, I’m doing the very thing that I don’t want to happen to those kids.”

This revelation led Roca staff to do the unthinkable: apologize to, and work more cooperatively with, the institutions it once fought.

Circles are simple yet can have a profound impact. Participants – the number can vary from just a couple of people to dozens – arrange themselves in a circle to create a shared space and eliminate some of the typical barriers to communication. A talking piece – a feather, a stone, a Bible or some other item – is passed along in one direction. The person holding it speaks while others listen quietly. The piece is slowly passed around, each person speaking in turn. A “keeper” facilitates the group, setting and maintaining the tone (known as the circle’s “energy”) and redirecting it when necessary. Occasionally, if the group is focused on conflict resolution, there might be two keepers, but all participants are responsible for helping the circle go well.

Values – defined as the way members of the group want to “be” with one another – are set by each group at the beginning of the circle, and held throughout it. Values might be respect, non-judgmental behavior, and forgiveness. The keeper facilitates an opening, which can consist of a prayer, song, or quote relevant to the purpose of the circle, or simply a question. For instance, the keeper might say: “Share a time when you really felt listened to.” Everyone has the opportunity to answer with a personal story. “It’s about people having a space to share their story and use their

story to teach each other,” said Anisha Chablani, director of operations and programming at Roca. Chablani has facilitated dozens of circles at Roca and has co-led circle trainings inside and outside of the agency.

“I feel like in this country we want to fix everything with our heads, we want to answer questions with our heads. We’re trained that way. We want to have a curriculum or a program, and we want to do it to you. But I think what ails us and hurts us and keeps us lost is deeper.”

The opening and a check-in around the circle (it might be just a “how are you doing today?”) are meant to build trust to a high enough level so that participants can relate to each other as human beings instead of as roles. When the group identifies problem issues, the issues are “chiseled down” – that is, the surface issues are explored and the deeper issues exposed. When seeking solutions, the group builds consensus and everyone is expected to take responsibility for making improvements.

In the end, Baldwin said, the circles are an opportunity to practice a different way of behaving with others, with the focus always, and only, on yourself. “I feel like in this country we want to fix everything with our heads, we want to answer questions with our heads. We’re trained that way, and we want to respond that way. We want to have a curriculum or a program, and we want to do it to you. We want to fix you. But I think what ails us and hurts us and keeps us lost is deeper. And so I think what happens with circles is more complex. It’s mental and physical and emotional and spiritual, and it invites a process that incrementally lets you get deeper, which is really good and really scary.”

CIRCLE SETTINGS

Roca has used circles in nearly every agency program and at all program and administrative levels. Chablani recalled a few:

- With the encouragement of Roca’s street outreach counselors, members from local gangs participated in a circle in an attempt to resolve the long-standing violence between them.

Initially, the conflict seemed to be about gang colors, but through the circle process, gang members began to see each other as people rather than colors – and further, as people who really had no reason to hate one another. While that single circle did not end all gang violence in the area, “forever they have the knowledge that it could be a different way,” said Chablani. “When they lose [control], they can find their way back to a better way faster.”

- A group of young people requested a circle after the death of a 12-year-old peer who drowned. They used the experience to process their feelings of loss and grief.
- A group of female program participants requested a circle to discuss a problem they were having with adult female staff. The process created an egalitarian structure where participants could talk honestly, unconstrained by the usual sense of hierarchy.
- Roca’s Project Victory program, which serves 12- to 15-year-olds at risk of failing in school, schedules circles weekly. The program works in collaboration with local schools and began using circles a couple of years ago when a principal and some young people formed a circle to discuss school policies. Now the school is talking to Roca about using circles as an alternative to suspensions for disciplinary problems.

Many of the young adult leaders at Roca are themselves circle veterans, including one young man, V., who served time in jail for assault with a dangerous weapon. Before his sentencing, he participated in a series of circles in order to come to terms with the harm he had caused himself and others. In an interview with sociologist Carolyn Boyes-Watson, he described his experience sitting in a circle before leaving. “Circle didn’t lessen my time or help my case. I was meeting with the circle just on my own, and that is the circle I really didn’t want to be in very much ‘cause it was so hard ... you yourself acknowledging the harm ... the ripple effect it had. To be able to be in conversation about that stuff, then to understand and be aware, and then you yourself hold yourself accountable.” For V., the circles were transformative. “I think circle helped me become who I am today.”

It is hard to overestimate how integral the circles are to daily life at Roca, both within the agency’s various programs and at the administrative level. In 2002, just three years after the agency began using peace circles, the agency conducted 557 circles ranging in size from 6 to 70 participants; 121 of them were conducted with staff/management teams.

The agency’s extensive use of circles has garnered attention from a variety of academics and even from well-known organizational learning guru Peter Senge, whose magazine, *Reflections: the SoL Journal of Knowledge, Learning and Change*, in 2004 ran a story on the agency with the laudatory headline “Living the Change You Seek.” The circles are also being evaluated for their ability to impact Roca’s ultimate goal: helping families and young people through the intentional cultivation of a sense of belonging, generosity, competence, and independence. It is unusual for a social service agency to attempt to measure such seemingly amorphous concepts, but through a multi-year evaluation project, Roca has developed three tools – a street log, a structured interview and a “circle of development” survey – meant to collect longitudinal data on youth involved in the agency, and ultimately to measure whether the agency is helping youth develop along those dimensions. (See appendix.)

THE STATE SYSTEM

The circle process has attracted the attention of state bureaucracies that work with children and adolescents. Staff from the Mass. Department of Social Services (DSS) have been trained in circles by Roca and have incorporated circles into its Children In Needs of Services (CHINS) pilot program. Roca is a partner in the project. The objectives of the CHINS program is to increase family communication and build agreement and trust, thereby improving chances that troubled youth can be reconnected to their families and communities. According to Chablani, the circle process tends to expose underlying issues faster than traditional discussion-oriented meetings. Furthermore, the circles give families and adolescents a safe way to communicate without the physical presence of caseworkers. The circles are usually facilitated by community volunteers and ROCA staff.

The workers in the state agency’s Harbor Office have used peace circles for five years in various stages of their work with families – when they place a child in foster care, for instance, or reintegrate a child back into his or her original family. The department has also used circles, albeit less consistently, with its Teen Advisory Council (a group that discusses the needs and issues of adolescents in foster care), its foster parent support group, and its multidisciplinary assessment team, where families present their needs to a group of providers who then work to connect the family to community supports. The office is also investigating circles as a means of assisting youth who are transitioning into independent living after leaving state care.

Ruth McDermott, director of DSS' Harbor Office, said that circles allow the department to meet its dual goals of concentrating on young people's strengths rather than deficits, and working within the context of the family. "Circle reinforces the goals of inclusion of family," said McDermott. She added that the department is moving toward using circles more formally with families, and is exploring the idea of hiring a coordinator who would refer families to the circle process.

About 60 staff members of her office have been trained in using circles and she herself has been trained as a circle keeper. Though the process is not yet integrated in the system as a whole, she said she believes the use of circles will continue, particularly since, once staff members are trained, circles' use as a therapeutic tool costs the agency nothing. To evaluate the impact of the circles, Roca staff have done baseline assessment of families' behavioral and attitudinal patterns, and then compared those with similar data collected at 30, 60, and 90 days afterward. The evaluation, which is not yet complete, will be the first to evaluate the impact of the circles within a state child welfare system.

The circle process is also being used less formally in the state's Department of Youth Services (DYS), which administers programs for youth in the juvenile justice system. According to one anecdote passed along by Roca's Chablani, a DYS staff worker used the circles with 20 young men confined in an open bay rather than individual cells. To his surprise, no physical altercations among detainees were reported in the month following the circles. Since no other changes in programming had taken place, the worker believed the change was due to the circle process.

REPLICABILITY

How replicable is Roca's use of peacemaking circles? It depends. The circles aren't hard to facilitate and run, though they do require more training than many people realize. The process is far more than simply arranging people in a circle and passing a talking piece around. Trainings – at least those that Roca participated in initially, and that it now provides to other groups – take four days, and typically an organization needs to send one or more staff people back for a two-day keepers training. In the last four years, Roca has trained several hundred people in both processes.

In Chablani's view, organizations that are "values-led" and have a strong vision for the future are good candidates for the circle process. While implementing the circle process does not require major structural or organizational changes, such

changes may indeed occur as a result of the process, particularly if the circles are meant to impact the organization's culture. But "circles need a champion," Chablani said, someone to help infuse the philosophy throughout the organization. Baldwin says that circles are flexible and can be adapted to any setting, including highly structured residential settings unlike Roca's own. "These are very universal things. They can happen anywhere."

Carolyn Boyes-Watson, the sociologist at Suffolk University in Boston who has researched Roca's work with circles, agrees that circles can be implemented successfully in a variety of settings. But she also says that institutional resistance is an unavoidable part of the introduction of circles. Typical obstacles are the perception that circles are inefficient and time-consuming, and that the investment of staff time in learning about them will be too great. Another issue, perhaps harder to articulate but very real nonetheless, is that circles insist upon egalitarianism among professionals and the youth and families with whom they work. Professionals accustomed to being authority figures may find the new dynamic very difficult to accept. "People who are used to controlling the pace of discussion lose that control," Boyes-Watson said. Yet in a profound way, she said that circles can manage to reinforce authority structures – say between a principal and students, a parent and child, or a supervisor and staff – by building the mutual respect that makes hierarchies work. All such power relationships, after all, depend on the willing cooperation of the various participants. "The guidelines help people be respectful so that they can say hard things and hear hard things in a way that also maintains the positive nature of the relationship," Boyes-Watson said.

Boyes-Watson said that while a few state child welfare systems have made top-down decisions to employ family conferencing, a similar communication tool, peace circles are slowly percolating up from the bottom as social workers become familiar with them and want to bring them into their own work. "People who find the circles appealing oftentimes can find a place where they can start using it and integrating it into their own practice. It's a good thing because it allows people to do a certain amount of experimentation." But she said it is peacemaking circles' emphasis on families' strengths rather than their deficits that truly bodes well for their ultimate adoption by states. "Circles are how to implement a strengths-based approach that isn't just family-centered, but starts to be community-centered. It's how you use social services to do that. And that's the long-term positive potential." ■

For more information: www.rocainc.org

IN-CARE NETWORK

Billings, Montana, is Big Sky Country. Its stark and majestic geography is studded with sites central to Native American history and the history of the American West. Nearby are the Pictograph Caves with their drawings of woolly mammoth hunts; Custer's battlefield with its white markers pinpointing where white soldiers fell; and Suicide Cliff and Sacrifice Cliff, where Indians fought and eventually lost their battles against the white man and his diseases. This rich and troubled history is a backdrop for the work In-Care Network does with Native American children and youth.

In-Care Network (the name is derived from the phrase "Indians and Individuals Who Care") provides therapeutic foster care services to Native American children from birth to 18 years of age. In-Care was founded in 1986 to meet the special needs of Native American youth diagnosed with severe emotional disturbance and in need of out-of-home placement. Understanding the cultural needs of such a diverse population is a challenge for the agency. There are seven Indian reservations and 11 tribes in Montana, and each has its own culture and spiritual belief system. In-Care makes an effort to work with them all, but for logistical reasons, caseworkers see primarily Crow and North Cheyenne children and families.

The children and adolescents served by In-Care are in some ways typical of traumatized children everywhere. They come from dysfunctional families affected by physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, substance abuse, and other issues. As a consequence, they display a variety of behavioral and emotional problems, and ultimately are referred to In-Care Network by the local Bureau of Indian Affairs, their own tribe, or the state child welfare system.

What makes these children different from the general population is that they are struggling to succeed in two worlds – the Native American world with its own traditions and cultural expectations, and the anglicized American culture within which they and their tribes also exist.

The differences in the white and Native American approach to children are stark. For In-Care, the difference become apparent immediately, during the referral process. Children

- Billings, Montana
- In-Care Network provides therapeutic foster care, intensive case management, experiential and youth leadership groups for Native American children birth through age 18. All have been classified with severe emotional disturbance as a result of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect. Native American spirituality is integrated into every area of In-Care Network's services, including initial and ongoing assessments and Native American rituals and activities.
- Annual budget: \$1 million
- Number of youth served: Between 75 and 90 youth per year, with approximately 30 at any given time.
- Client demographics: Most clients are Crow or Northern Cheyenne. The average client age is 12-13, and the agency serves equal numbers of boys and girls.

who state workers place at In-Care are classified as severely emotionally disturbed. From the viewpoint of mainstream child welfare workers, such diagnostic labels are necessary for both clinical and insurance reasons. But to Native people, who are opposed to labeling children, these troubled youth are "children of a different way," not deficient but instead possessing special skills that need to be nurtured and brought out.

In a culture where words are sacred, diagnoses have tremendous power and are viewed as something to be avoided, said Darren Old Coyote, a historian at the Crow reservation. The aversion to diagnostic classification therefore runs

deep among the Native population. According to Glenda Morrison, a Bureau of Indian Affairs peer advocate from the Crow reservation, the Crow perceive the use of labels as a hindrance to emotional and physical well-being. Indeed, a diagnostic label can trigger a mourning process that can last two years or more. During this period, individuals may be unable to learn about their illness or accept medical advice. Unwillingness to be labeled makes the Crow hesitant about participating in social services.

Another disconnect is apparent in the clinical outcomes that are sought for troubled children. For instance, while a white teenager in foster care may be prepared by an agency for an independent life away from his or her biological family, Native children in foster care ideally are taught the values of cooperation with one's family and community, respect for elders, and interest in the well-being of all members of the tribe. "Independence" in the mainstream American sense is an alien concept. (See "Effective Mental Health Treatment" in the appendix.)

These differences in white and Native ways of dealing with troubled children have profound significance for In-Care and its young clients. According to agency founder Bill Snell and Anthony Herrera, project manager at the agency, many Native American youth coming into the foster care system are truly adrift. Many of these children "don't even want to admit that they are Indian because of abuse by Indians; we need to help them get over that," said Herrera. One of the agency's goals is to provide them with opportunities to reconnect with their heritage and, just as importantly, with the Native spirituality on which that heritage turns.

(Snell, who is executive director of In-Care, also runs Pretty Shield Foundation, a sister organization whose fundraising provides In-Care Network with the resources to provide services. Pretty Shield was the name of Snell's great-grandmother, a medicine woman of the Crow people who foresaw Native cultural deterioration and inspired Snell in his work.)

When a youth is admitted to In-Care Network, he or she is assessed for spiritual connectedness using the Medicine Wheel (see diagrams in the appendix). The diagrams provide caseworkers with a visual aid to lead youth in discussions about their current status and their feelings of cultural and spiritual connection. Part of the assessment focuses on determining the level of traditionalism the child

has experienced. With this information, case managers can identify the types of cultural activities most appropriate for the child.

MAINTAINING CULTURAL TIES

The importance of strengthening the cultural/spiritual connection for Native American youth cannot be overestimated. Gay Munsell, a researcher and trainer on Indian child welfare, writes about Indian youth growing up outside their communities. "A strong value in many Native American communities is the ability to raise children and youth in a traditional setting, passing on the values of the tribe. Many Indian youth coming of age in foster care outside their tribal communities do not have the advantage of growing up in traditional environment. There may be no one to teach them that children are gifts from the Creator and that they are to be treated with dignity and respect. There may be no one to show them how to receive honor without arrogance, to acknowledge and share in the achievement of others. There may be no one to tell them about right relationships and to explain their responsibility to care for those who are smaller and weaker. There may be no one to model the survival skills necessary for success in the non-Indian world or how generosity and selflessness are valued in the Indian world."

The Crow kinship system stresses membership in the nuclear family, the clan, and the tribe. When a Crow child is removed from his or her home, these connections are broken.

Whenever possible, staff at In-Care Network place Indian children with families from their own tribe, enabling the child to maintain his or her cultural connections. When no Indian family is available, foster families do their best to expose children and youth to tribal culture and to Native American culture in general. Youth in the foster homes are exposed to prayer, both Christian and Native American. Foster families thank the Creator each day and seek guidance on plans. If the family goes to church, the foster youth is expected to attend as well. If the youth is connected to a

particular type of church or religion, the foster family makes every effort to maintain that relationship.

Snell uses his own foster children – he has had 38 – as an example of the potency of connection. The Crow kinship system stresses membership in the nuclear family, the clan, and the tribe. When a Crow child is removed from his or her home, these connections are broken. Snell encourages his foster children to define their relationship with him; through that process, they have variously come to call him father, uncle, brother, and friend. Given the sacred power of words, a child who identifies himself as a foster child is a foster child, while a child who identifies himself as a son, nephew, or friend is a member of the family and community. Through naming the relationship, connection is created and maintained.

RITUALS & CEREMONIES

In-Care Network’s foster children participate in ceremonies on their home reservations. Emphasis is on honoring each tribe’s tradition. A Crow child, for instance, would attend Crow sweat ceremonies, which differ considerably from those of, say, the nearby Northern Cheyenne. Foster children attend feather ceremonies, rites of passage ceremonies, pow-wows, and smudgings. Smudging is a purification ceremony that cleanses mind, body, and spirit, and neutralizes anger and pain. Smudging reminds participants of the sanctity of the time and opens the heart to wholesome spiritual connectedness.

In-Care Network offers cultural and spiritual experiences to children outside its foster programs as well. “Vision Seekers” brings young people ages 13 to 21 together to discuss issues such as chemical dependence, low self-esteem, and high drop-out rates. This group is both educational and experiential, and the activities develop youth leadership and extend the Native American idea of kinship. It places special emphasis on Native American culture and history, and brings in cultural representatives from local tribes. Other programs the agency periodically runs, “Camp Little Feather” and “The Grandchild Journey,” emphasize traditional Native activities and ceremonies, “Two Worlds” interventions, and holistic treatment.

The agency uses Native American tradition to address issues such as youth smoking. The Native American Tobacco Prevention Project “Beyond the Pipe” teaches that Native people have long used

tobacco as a spiritual tool, and tobacco is still smoked during traditional ceremonies. The smoking of the peace pipe, for instance, is considered a way of working toward peace; some Crow believe that smoke from tobacco takes prayers to heaven or the Creator. The agency stresses to youth how different the use of cigarettes is from the honorable way tobacco was used by their ancestors. According to Herrera, “smoking Marlboro is diametrically opposed” to the sacred use of tobacco, and youth in the program understand that.

IMMERSION CAMPS

Michelle Sobonya, of the Child and Family Services Division of the Montana Department of Public Health, praised the addition of cultural enrichment and spiritual goals in the treatment plan along with more traditional treatment goals. According to Snell, between 40 to 60 percent of agency youth participate in spiritual activities through the agency’s programs. Snell estimates that the agency spends about \$40,000 on its spirituality programming, though much of the spiritual work is done by staff and through in-kind donations of time from the community.

In addition to its work on behalf of children and youth, In-Care runs cultural immersion camps for professionals in human services. These camps are meant to increase awareness of Native American culture, including Native history, spirituality, and values and belief systems. The agency provides cultural sensitivity trainings on a less intensive level to State of Montana Department of Health and Human Services employees, tribal court employees – including judges, prosecutors, FBI agents – and other community agencies. In-Care Network facilitators open and close all trainings with prayer, offering thanks to the Creator for the work of the day.

The agency has written its own curriculum, “Wounded Eagles,” for child welfare workers, caregivers, and healers involved with traumatized Native American children. It looks at topics such as culture, development, discipline, permanency planning, and therapeutic approaches from a Native American perspective. The “Two Worlds” curriculum, which is soon to be published, is about helping Native American youth live and contribute in anglicized American society while following their Native American culture. ■

For more information: www.incarenetwork.com

COVENANT HOUSE CALIFORNIA

THE LURE OF HOLLYWOOD

The timeless and sometimes destructive pull of southern California is key to Covenant House's identity and the identity of the young people with whom it works. "It's Hollywood," said Sr. Margaret Farrell, a Religious Sister of Charity who heads the agency's spiritual ministry program. "It's where a lot of very vulnerable people hang out. So a lot of people end up on our doorstep. And they're all in search of themselves, to make their future, make their name. Some are trying to get away from a lot of painful stuff in their past. They come with the idea that leaving home is the answer to their problems. But they realize that their problems are part of themselves."

The agency, which offers both short-term crisis shelter and longer-term residency for young people who are either homeless or at serious risk of homelessness, is an island in a chaotic and often dangerous world. Its modern building, which is full of sunlight and bright southwestern colors but set in a rundown neighborhood, suggests as much. "It's the stability that we offer here – they're sure of having a bed for the night, having three meals a day, and they don't have to worry about paying their rent because there's no rent to pay, so I think they begin to relax. One of our residents told me recently that when she came here, it was her first time having a bed in four years."

As pressing as youths' immediate problems may be, the agency believes that the young people who show up at its door suffer from more profound, long-term damage. If the agency works with a client long enough, after all, certain aspects of his or her life – shelter, education, employment – are bound to improve. But the psychic wounds that these youth carry around – wounds that drove them to street life in the first place, and that have grown worse as a result of it – are far more complicated to fix. That is where spirituality comes in.

Jim Bailey, Covenant House's director of crisis services, sees runaway, cast-off, and otherwise alienated young people every day, and says the

- Los Angeles, California
- Covenant House offers advocacy, outreach, crisis shelter, life and employment skills, health services, abuse/addiction services, transitional living, and an apartment program for youth 18-24. The agency's spiritual ministry program offers prayer, meditation, relaxation, Bible study, yoga, individual counseling, outings to local worship services, community service, and jail/prison visits to youth.
- Annual budget: \$10 million, 65% private donation, 15% government grants, 20% corporations and foundations (2004, LA and Oakland sites)
- Number of youth served: 3,180 youth (2003, Los Angeles program only)
- Client demographics: African-American 35%, Latino 30%, white 25%, Asian/Pacific Islander 10%, age range 18-21 (to 24 years if HIV positive)

agency's approach has to be deep and holistic. "I think we have to see people as multi-dimensional and not just flesh and blood. We are eternal beings and we need to foster and develop that, and give a person a sense of purpose. We start that process in Outreach, when we talk to kids who've just finished turning a trick on the corner. We say: 'Here's a sandwich, tell me what that was like for you, and don't you want to get out of that? Here's some referrals if you want to talk to us, and just know that we care and we want to see you change your life around.'"

The words “covenant” and “sanctuary” – though obviously freighted with religious significance – also mean something very specific to the agency about the way it relates to young people. “We really make every attempt to meet the client where they’re at in their life without passing any judgment, without assuming anything of them, and not having any expectations,” said Bailey. “And I think meeting them at that basic level is in and of itself spiritual. We’re committing to them a promise that we’re not going to abandon you, we’re not going to let you fall if we can help it. This is our covenant to you, and that’s kind of why we’re called Covenant House. It’s up to you, though, to make the right choices in this process, in this covenant.”

“Sometimes people come and talk to me about issues, and I ask them, ‘Have you talked to your case manager? Have you talked to your therapist?’ And they say, ‘No, no, I don’t trust those people.’ ”

For young people with no other place to go, sanctuary is a critical part of the promise. “A client can enter, and just through entering you get a sense of peace, and our clients need that so badly because their lives have been turned upside down so often and there’s so much trauma. For them to be able to find a place where they can reach inside of themselves and find the peace that it brings, then some comfort, is really important. Either through looking at a candle burn, or listening to some very soft music, or just sitting and being quiet for a while.”

THE SPIRITUAL PROGRAM

If there is a generalized sense in the agency that spiritual healing is important, the spiritual ministry program is charged with offering the concrete spiritual activities, both religious and secular, that can help young people figure out what they believe and where they belong. The goal is to help interested youth feel more connected, calm and hopeful, and to give them a chance to find their own niche in a crowded place.

One option for clients is daily group prayer. Said Farrell: “It varies during the day, sometimes it’s maybe one or two people who want to do prayer, sometimes people just want time to hang out in the chapel. It’s just a little small room, very informal, just with pillows on the floor where people can just sit, and people do feel very comfortable there. We have some short booklets, little reflection booklets, that really appeal to young people, some poems, sometimes some music.” Favorite musicians are Rock Salt – “they literally love this CD, it goes from resident to resident to resident” – and Kurt Franklin. Prayer sessions are short, just 20 to 30 minutes; Farrell has found that more than that strains the average teenager’s attention span.

The chapel – it has a cross, a Buddha and a Star of David all on display – is also the venue for the agency’s weekly relaxation group, bible study group, and yoga group. According to Farrell, the activities seem to be equally popular among agency residents, bolstering her conviction that the program has to be holistic, touching on all spiritual interests, rather than driven by a viewpoint that might interest some youth but alienate others.

Covenant House youth also participate in numerous activities in the community, from the annual local AIDS Walk to the candlelight vigil the agency holds every December to raise awareness about the needs of homeless young people. Youth make regular visits to two nursing homes, one of which they make gifts and cookies for every Christmas, Easter, and Valentine’s Day. The opportunity to get to know old people is significant for the youth because often the only caretakers in their lives have been grandparents. In such a context, the topics of death and dying come up naturally, said Farrell, and can be discussed in healthy ways.

Once a year, the spiritual ministry program takes youth on a three-day house-building trip to Tijuana, just across the border in Mexico. Young people also make yearly trips to Tijuana to throw parties for neighborhood children. Last year, instead of having their usual Easter weekend egg hunt at Covenant House, the youth had it in Tijuana, at a dumpsite where local children congregate to play. Farrell remembered one Covenant House youth, who, despite his low-wage job back home, brought quarters that he could dole out to the children. To say the least, the trips tend to make a big impact on the youth.

Covenant House residents, who must apply to go on the trip, are asked to write about their expectations before the trip and their experiences afterward. One young man wrote of his experience building a house: "When we first started out on the trip I had hoped to gain the feeling of being able to help someone out that was worse off than I've ever been. But when Farrell handed the keys over to the family and I saw the mother crying and the father fighting back tears, a feeling of happiness swept over me, because it was then that I knew that I did not just help build a house, I helped build a future." Of his one-day trip to Tecate, a village in Mexico, another boy wrote, more simply: "I know now how blessed I am."

Back at the agency, the spiritual ministry program also attends to more everyday trauma. Farrell regularly visits youth in the hospital and in jail, and will accompany young people to court. She takes pregnant teenage girls to visit maternity homes, and continues to see them once they move on. (If they decide on abortions, she says she understands the choice and refers them to support groups.) She conducts services for residents who die in gang fighting or on the street.

TALKING TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

But she spends most of her time counseling youth one-on-one. "People are forever wanting to talk about their issues. And strange, sometimes people come and talk to me, and I ask them, 'Have you talked to your case manager? Have you talked to your therapist?' And they say 'No, no, I don't trust those people.' They have this idea that they can trust a spiritual person. There's a freedom that they can talk to me and they're not being judged, because sometimes they feel they're being judged by their case managers, which they're not, but they're perceiving that they are." Even youth outside the program somehow find their way to her. She points at the sidewalk and bus stop just outside her window. "They come to my window here, banging on the window and saying, can they come in and talk to me."

When young people in the program divulge painful information to her, she is willing to keep it confidential. She nevertheless urges them to speak with their clinician or caseworker. "I say, you know, how about maybe talking to your case manager?"

If you don't feel like doing it yourself, how about maybe I go with you? I'm very much going with the client, where they're at, not putting them under pressure. They might go on for a month before they may feel comfortable enough to kind of, you know, share it with someone else, and I'm very respectful of how they feel."

"Sometimes our residents feel angry with the wider society because people have let them down all their lives. Their families have let them down, their friends have let them down, so to be able to reach out and to help other people is really, really good for them."

Even if their problems are already apparent to staff, they can still find special refuge in what one staff member calls the "comfort zone" of the spiritual ministry unit. Deborah Smith, a resident advisor in the crisis program, remembers one young person in particular. "We had a transgender individual who was having a hard time with his sexuality. And he would change from being a male to a female, and people would ridicule him. And I watched Farrell nurture him and tell him that he was a child of God, and God loves him. When he transferred over from a male to female, she helped him select his clothing, and if he was untidy or his wig needed combing or cleaning, she would work with him. And I just saw her take him under her wing. This person is no longer in the program, but every month he comes here to visit with Farrell. So I know it has left an impact on him... The suicidal ideations went away, the hygiene, the personal appearance and all of that, that definitely improved."

COLLABORATION WITH CHURCHES

The agency's connections with its local religious community are strong, and among youth at Covenant House, church is popular. Though the agency brings a priest in to conduct a Catholic mass on site once a month, most weekends youth sign up to visit one of a dozen or so community

churches. Farrell's van is limited to 10 youth, and there is always a waiting list. Churches are kind to Covenant House youth, and make a special point of welcoming them when they come in. Whenever a particular Lutheran church plans to have a lunch or barbecue after its regular service, it calls to invite Covenant House (like other teenagers, young people at Covenant House always welcome the chance to eat).

“We really make every attempt to meet the client where they're at in their life without passing any judgment, without assuming anything of them, and not having any expectations. And I think meeting them at that basic level is in and of itself spiritual.”

Youth occasionally attend services at Unity Fellowship, the “gay church” of Los Angeles, and – though few agency youth are Catholic – some always sign up for semi-annual mountain retreats with a Catholic youth group from Culver City. The youth organize an annual carwash in connection with “Big Sunday,” a giant community service day run by Temple Israel, a local synagogue. Every year on Catholic Youth Day at Magic Mountain, a theme park, Covenant House youth attend mass then spend a free day in the park. Five or six times a year, the agency even takes youth to a Christian horse ranch in San Diego, where they learn to ride. The agency has contacts in the Muslim, Bahai, and Mormon communities, and accepts that even somewhat fringe religions such as Wicca can be meaningful to their youth. (A resident-led Wiccan “Circle of Light” prayer group was popular for a time with a few young people.) The exposure to a variety of religious traditions is meant to widen the intellectual horizons of youth whose own ideas about spirituality may be limited. “Even though most of our residents are Christian, I like to open them up to all different faiths, because people come from homes where there's been a lot of prejudice about different religions,” said Farrell.

This embrace of alternative spiritual expression has made the agency a rebel within the wider Covenant House network, said executive director George Lozano. Spiritual programs at most other Covenant House sites tend to reflect a narrower set of religious beliefs, probably because the staff and youth themselves are more likely to be local. At Covenant House in Hollywood, clients come from all over the country, expanding the spectrum of belief beyond the usual regional boundaries. In response, the agency has made sure the staff is diverse as well, with Jews, Catholics, Muslims, and non-believers all represented. To Lozano, it is a purposeful and important reflection of the young people with whom the agency works.

But the benefit of nurturing an array of religious connections is more than philosophical. Churches are a significant financial resource as well: they donate clothes that teens can use for job interviews, gifts at Christmas time, even tickets to ball games. Church volunteers help organize the annual trips to Tijuana, lead the weekly Bible study group, and help staff the boards and committees that run the agency.

Being so open to the religious community has occasionally led to problems. For instance, more than once the agency has had to ask evangelical groups not to loiter around in front of the building trying to recruit youth. Speakers from churches are told they can describe their own personal views and experiences to youth, but they may not proselytize. “I don't like imposing religion on anyone,” Farrell said simply.

OVERARCHING SPIRITUAL GOALS

While the agency does not seek to convert young people, or even try very hard to engage them in religious activities, it does nevertheless have a spiritual goal for youth – one that Farrell says is particularly relevant for young people who feel ashamed of their lives on the street and are estranged from organized religion. The message is this: “You don't have to be going to church or saying your prayers to have a relationship with God. God speaks to us in different ways. You find God through the events of your life, through the people that come into your life, through the places that you're going to.” God is not, she tells them, sitting in the sky drawing a line through their names when they make mistakes.

Because Covenant House is so careful not to hard-peddle religion, the influence of Farrell's ministry extends only indirectly into other agency programs. In the 24-bed transitional living program, for instance, a life-skills teacher may partner with Farrell to teach a bit of meditation or discuss spirituality, but beyond that, each young person decides individually whether he or she wants to pursue the topic. One resident advisor, personally enthusiastic about religion, says she knows where to draw the line. "Now it's one thing just to say a prayer with someone, that's fine – if they ask me to pray with them, I'll pray with them. But when they [want to] debate or something like that, I don't get myself caught up in that. I redirect them to Sr. Margaret."

Farrell works closely with agency staff and case managers on individual situations with residents, and finds it helpful to be present at shift changes. She frequently attends case conferences, and is invited to attend management meetings, though she only occasionally does.

COST AND MANAGEMENT

In terms of spirituality programming, Covenant House has some advantages over other agencies serving teenagers. A high percentage of its funding comes from private sources, making church/state conflicts less likely. And unlike many agencies that work with youth, Covenant House accepts only adolescents age 18 and over, and thus has no legal obligation to track down parents or guardians for permission to provide services, including religious services. All this removes one layer of complication from the agency's spirituality program, since parents – one potentially critical constituency – have no say in whether the agency provides spiritual and religious opportunities to youth.

Farrell said that about 80 percent of all Covenant House youth seek involvement in the spiritual ministry program at some point. From program to program, though, estimates vary on how many youth actually participate in spiritual activities or seek personal counseling. Case manager Lon Usher said at least 30 of every 70 youth in the crisis program get referred to the ministry program, and some come back and send their friends. Usher said he sees an immediate improvement in the mood of such youth:

"Self-esteem, confidence, they don't feel like they're just a lost soul in the world anymore." But aside from staff observation and the impressionistic feedback youth give on the Tijuana questionnaires, the agency does nothing to evaluate the impact of its spiritual ministry program on young people. That makes Covenant House typical of youth agencies with spirituality programs; evaluation of spiritual programming is difficult, and in a faith-based agency, it can seem almost beside the point, since, for religious agencies, the importance of spiritual connection goes without saying.

"We're committing to them a promise that we're not going to abandon you, we're not going to let you fall if we can help it."

Covenant House's spiritual program is expensive, despite the community support and in-kind donations it receives. In 2003, the ministry budget of \$47,000 included \$8,500 for activities, \$6,000 for the housebuilding trip to Mexico, \$2,000 for publications and \$2,000 for the annual candlelight vigil. Because of budget constraints, the spiritual ministry program recently lost a nun who had partnered with Farrell, leaving Farrell to run the program by herself. But the philosophy that undergirds the program – respect and support for a variety of faith traditions, reliance on community partnerships, and a multi-pronged approach to getting interested youth plugged into spiritually meaningful activities – entails no particular expense, and could be employed by any agency working with young people. ■

For more information: www.covenanthouseca.org

STRAIGHT AHEAD MINISTRIES, INC.

Straight Ahead Ministries, an evangelical Christian organization founded in Massachusetts in 1987, offers an array of spiritual development opportunities to young people involved with, or just leaving, the juvenile justice system. By providing youth an opportunity to develop what the group calls “faith and character,” the group has emerged as a major player in religious-based services to adolescents in trouble.

The organization, which works in 14 states and Ontario, Canada, utilizes a combination of religious activities, mentoring, residential services, intensive case management and more traditional educational and job readiness services to assist this particularly vulnerable population of young people. The group targets youth between the ages of 14 and 24 in locked detention facilities; core participants are between 16 and 18. The majority of youth who participate in Straight Ahead services are African-American. In addition to their involvement with the juvenile justice system, approximately 75 percent have been in the child welfare system and as many as 60 percent are enrolled in special education programs. Many of the young people have had some previous religious experience, but, according to executive director Robb Zarges, most are “illiterate” about specific faith traditions.

Young people come to the program voluntarily. Their first contact with Straight Ahead volunteers is in Bible classes the organization runs in state detention and residential facilities. Volunteers are trained and use curriculum materials developed by the organization itself. Though the group is unabashedly Christian, it says it is sensitive to the fine line between spiritual mentoring and proselytizing. Indeed, the organization considers itself to be less conservative than most evangelical groups. “The job is not to get the kid saved but to get them stabilized,” Zarges said. “Getting a kid in school has as much spiritual significance

- Westboro, Massachusetts
- Straight Ahead Ministries is an evangelical Christian program providing services to youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The organization operates in 14 states and Ontario, Canada. It provides a variety of religious activities to detained youth, and reintegration services that include intensive case management, mentoring, educational and job readiness support, and residential services.
- Annual budget: \$3 million
- Number of youth served: In the Boston area in 2003, 800 youth participated in Bible studies in locked facilities, 175 participated in aftercare
- Client demographics: 14- to 24-year-old youth

for a kid as Bible study does.” He said that more traditional aftercare services, such as housing, education, job placement and reconnection to the community, often must be provided before young people can focus on religious development.

In Massachusetts, Straight Ahead has forged an unusual collaboration with the state Department of Youth Services (DYS). In addition to allowing Straight Ahead to offer spiritual activities in state detention and residential facilities, DHS will pay tuition for youth in state custody who want to participate in Straight Ahead Academy, a new 24-bed residential group home and school for disadvantaged youth that Straight Ahead is building in central Massachusetts. The academy

will offer a six-month leadership and “character formation and development” program, including GED classes, college prep services, vocational programs, life skills classes, and parenting classes. It will also address substance abuse and sexual issues. The program, which will draw heavily on local church-based volunteers, will also help youth reestablish a connection to the community through apprenticeships, employment, and participation in community events.

“Getting a kid in school has as much spiritual significance for a kid as Bible study does.”

The organization has also developed another group home option – “discipleship homes” – that young people can apply to enter as they approach the end of their incarceration. Discipleship homes are “staffed” by family, rather than by paid workers. The families have a specialized foster care license from the state, meaning they are partially reimbursed for their services. One parent is allowed to work at an outside job, but the other parent is required to stay at home to tend the youth’s ongoing needs. Young people in discipleship homes are required to be in school, have a job, contribute financially to their own housing, and save money toward their exit. A weekly Bible study is held and the residents are encouraged to bring their friends; the “family” goes to church together on Sunday. Each week the residents perform community service.

Currently there is one home each in Nebraska and Alaska, and Illinois and Michigan will each open a home in 2005. Youth entering a discipleship home must be known to Straight Ahead volunteers through participation in other organization activities, and are admitted after a thorough application and assessment process.

For several years the group operated discipleship homes in Massachusetts, but recently closed them due to difficulty finding youth it

deemed appropriate for program. During the homes’ years of operation, though, Straight Ahead staff evaluated their effectiveness in reducing recidivism. The organization followed 41 youth for three years after release and found that within that period only 9 percent were rearrested and charged with a crime. National rates for juvenile offender recidivism are not available, but some state studies show rates three years from release of higher than 50 percent.

Public/Private Ventures, a Philadelphia-based organization interested in faith-based responses to youth violence, has initiated a five-year study of how faith organizations meet the needs of youth re-entering the community after incarceration. “Juvenile Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoner, Community and Faith Initiative” focuses on five components: intensive case management, mentoring, job training and readiness, job placement, and educational reintegration. Eighty Boston-area youth are participating in the study. Preliminary findings documented internally by Straight Ahead staff indicate that the recidivism rate of young people participating in the program was 15 percent. ■

For more information: www.straightahead.org

CONCLUSION

All teenagers, and particularly those who are troubled, angry or traumatized, can benefit from engagement in spiritual activities. Given the trend of the research and what adolescents themselves say about their spiritual interests, benefits can accrue to them regardless of whether those activities are religious or secular in nature.

Participation in organized religion is helpful for adolescents when it is in tune with their experience and interest, and when they participate willingly. Religious involvement can be a source of joy and serenity for young people. It can provide a sense of safety and familiarity and a link to a community that remains stable over time. Church connections can yield concrete opportunities for disconnected young people – assistance in finding jobs or finishing school, for instance. Religion also provides a moral framework for youth, though their ability to apply that framework to their own lives varies dramatically. At the very least organized religion provides a healthy place to be with other young people, and for teenagers with very few social resources, that benefit alone is considerable.

Secular spiritual expression can offer young people chances for introspection that they don't always find elsewhere. Many adolescents are uninterested in religion or hostile to it. Introspective spiritual activities can give them a way to access the deepest part of themselves, to gain control and perspective. Meditation, yoga, even simple communion with nature, can help young people feel calm and in control. Those are real achievements for teenagers who feel abandoned, unwanted, or angry.

The religious agencies in this study have discrete pastoral ministry programs that provide adjunct services to youth as part of an overall treatment plan. The secular agencies, on the other hand, have adopted general approaches that turn on spiritual concepts, making the spiritual aspect of their work both difficult to isolate and describe. Because of the differences in the way spiritual programming is integrated into the work of these agencies, it is not always possible to identify

characteristics common to all. Yet the agencies described in this study nevertheless share certain traits.

SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION AND GROWTH IS A CORE COMPONENT OF TREATMENT.

Agencies in this study believe that opportunity for spiritual development is a critical component of overall treatment for the youth in their care. Although the agencies here struggled to describe the precise mechanism by which spiritual programming helped young people, they are convinced that the sense of comfort and connection afforded by spiritual introspection is vital for their youth, most of whom have been traumatized and feel alienated from their family and communities. The particular form of introspection – religious discussion, meditation, one-on-one counseling, yoga – is considered by most of the agencies to be relatively unimportant. For that reason, the agencies offer a range of spiritual activities, both religious and secular.

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES TEND TO BE EASY, HOME-GROWN, AND INEXPENSIVE.

Although there are exceptions – trips to Tijuana to build houses for instance – most spiritually oriented activities offered by agencies in this report are simple and relatively cheap. They include carwashes for charity and visits to nursing homes; meditating in chapel or listening to music; spiritual or religious discussion groups; time in nature; and journaling. This is not to suggest that spiritual programs themselves are always inexpensive. The salaries of specialized staff can be significant, and heavy emphasis on an approach such as experiential learning can be extremely costly. On the other hand, one-time training of staff and the use of volunteers can ameliorate costs in many programs, and did for the agencies described here.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY.

In agencies with discrete spirituality programs, youth themselves are generally able to choose whether and how to be involved. The exception is church attendance. In three of the agencies described here, attendance at worship services is expected of youth, though only after they and/or their guardians have agreed.

SPIRITUALITY PROGRAMS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY YOUTH-DIRECTED.

Typically, young people themselves are asked to help plan worship services, decide on which outside churches, synagogues or mosques they wish to visit, and choose and even organize community service activities. Agencies stress the importance of self-expression and personal choice, facilitating rather than directing young people's own religious and spiritual interests, however nontraditional they may be.

YOUTH MAKE THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL CHOICES.

Youth in the agencies highlighted in this report are allowed to pursue their own spiritual interests, and are supported in those interests by staff. Staff seem genuinely happy to help young people explore nearly any spiritual experience in which they express interest, no matter how "fringe" it may seem. (Satanism, which has self-destructive themes, is an explicit exception.) In the religious agencies profiled here, young people are actively engaged in a variety of spiritual pursuits, including Shintoism and Wiccanism, and pastoral ministry staff consistently encourage exploration of alternative religious traditions.

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS ARE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE.

The agencies in this report recognize the diverse cultural traditions of young people in their care and create spiritual programs that reflect those traditions. Agencies that work with Native American youth, for instance, understand that Native rituals and teachings are sources of strength and connection for their clients, and develop

programming that invites participation in Native spirituality. Other agencies conduct spiritual assessments with clients at intake and take proactive steps to keep them involved with faith communities they say have been important to them. Not all forms of cultural appreciation are integrated into client services. A non-residential secular agency profiled in this report acknowledges the importance of Islam in its surrounding community by offering local Muslims space for Friday prayers. It also has a prominent partnership with a local Catholic group. Joining with individuals and organizations of different religious backgrounds is one way the agency honors the diversity of the youth with whom it works.

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS ARE A GATEWAY TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

Spiritual programming in these agencies offer youth access to the wider community. Programming invariably includes community service projects that put young people in direct contact with the elderly, the disabled, or the poor. Sometimes enhancing community connections is an explicit goal of spirituality programs. At Roca, Inc., for instance, peacemaking circles bring together young people and outside authorities in an intentional effort to build understanding and resolve conflicts.

AGENCIES CARE ABOUT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION.

All the agencies in this study make some attempt to assess or gather information from youth about their spiritual histories and current interests, and about their reaction to agency-sponsored spiritual activities. All the agencies have designed their own intake questionnaires and evaluation tools for use in-house. Sometimes the agencies developed their own instruments by choice, in order to tailor them to particular agency activities. Other times they developed them out of necessity, because no standard tools were available. The uses to which the resulting data is put varies. In most cases, data serves as an informal indicator of the popularity or impact of a particular activity. At Holy Cross Children's Services, however, chaplain contacts and recidivism

data are collected longitudinally and analyzed in an effort to determine the impact of religious programming. Notably, most of the agencies indicate a strong interest in expanding their program evaluation efforts.

PASTORAL MINISTRY STAFF ARE INCLUDED IN TREATMENT DECISIONS.

Agencies with pastoral ministry programs recognize pastoral staff as part of the therapeutic team. In the agencies described in this report, pastoral ministry staff are invited to (and in one case must attend) clinical team meetings and management meetings. Spiritual and clinical staff are expected to work together cooperatively, though clinical agendas always take precedence and clinical staff have the ultimate say about the appropriateness of particular activities for particular youth. That said, plans made by spiritual ministry staff are rarely vetoed in these agencies, and on the whole, spiritual ministry and clinical staff value one another's contributions.

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS ARE SPECIAL PLACES FOR YOUTH.

Adolescent clients tend to see pastoral ministry programs as "safe" places within the overall agency environment. Young people consider the programs to be protected places where they can be themselves and express their feelings without fear of being judged. Even in agencies where the pastoral programs and clinical programs are highly integrated, youth seem to view chaplains as somehow standing apart from the rest of the agency. In some agencies, rules for youth can indeed be different in pastoral ministry programs. Cathedral Home's chaplain said her program constitutes an "unconditional love zone" where punishments that young people accrue during the day are temporarily suspended. Pastoral staff at two agencies said that young people frequently divulge information to them that they have not shared with anyone else in the agency. (Depending on the therapeutic model an agency uses, such a dynamic may not always be welcome. More study to determine the impact of this "outside-the-loop" counseling on various clinical service models would be useful.) In secular agencies, spiritual activities are often adopted because they facilitate

communication in a similar way. Peacemaking circles, for instance, are specially designed to make participants feel safe enough to talk with one another. Journaling, where thoughts and feelings are expressed privately, is another common tool for self-exploration.



The concept of spiritual competence in youth-serving agencies has yet to be fully developed. But since many youth-serving agencies are in the early stages of planning or implementing spirituality programs, the principles outlined above may serve as a useful guide. There is always an element of the experimental in launching new programs, particularly when those programs constitute an untried addition to the more conventional range of services offered to youth. Spirituality programs can be controversial both within agency and within the wider community. They will be less so if all agencies, regardless of their own religious tradition, ground their spirituality initiatives in a genuine respect for youths' individual beliefs and interests. Slow and careful development of spirituality programs, with an emphasis on assessment and evaluation, will be a first step in the successful integration of spirituality into services for young people. ■

APPENDIX

Spirituality in Youth Services Request for Information

*A Promising Practices and Curriculum Project
New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services
National Resource Center for Youth Development*

Spirituality in Youth Services is a national study designed to identify and describe promising practices in spiritual programming for adolescents receiving services. The study is being conducted by New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services and the National Resource Center for Youth Development. The project is funded by the Children's Bureau of the US Dept. of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children & Families.

Researchers from NEN and NRCYD are requesting information from child- and youth-serving agencies currently involved in providing spiritual programming to adolescents aged 14-22. In the context of this study, "spiritual programming" refers to programming that is explicitly developed to enhance adolescents' sense of awareness, wholeness and well-being, and help them tap into sources of inner strength. Spiritual interventions may be either religious or secular in nature. Religious programming may include prayer or religious discussion groups, chaplaincy programs, or agency-church collaborations that regularly put adolescent clients in touch with a religious community. Secular programming may include meditation, guided visualization, yoga, or a variety of other introspective disciplines and activities.

From an estimated pool of 100 agencies with established spirituality programming, six to eight will be selected for inclusion in a study to be disseminated to public and private child- and youth-service agencies in 2005. Investigation of selected programs will include on-site visits by researchers, review of evaluation data, and interviews with staff and clients.

Agencies responding to this request for information must have offered spiritual programming for at least three years. The agency programs in which the spiritual components are offered may be residential or non-residential, and serve youth in or out of state care. For a complete project description, [click here](#).

To submit information from your agency, please fill out the form below and click "submit." Please answer all questions as completely as possible.

Your name: _____

Title: _____

Organization name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

FAX: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

Continued on next page

Number of employees (full and part-time): _____ Annual agency budget: _____

Is your agency faith-based (formally affiliated with a church or traditionally religious in orientation)? _____

Program Description. Please describe the activities or services that constitute the spiritual component of your overall programming. If more than one program offers significant spiritual components, please distinguish between the programs.

Client Description. Describe the adolescent clients who take part in spiritual program components, including age range, sex, and presenting issues/problems. _____

Program Curriculum. If you use a written spirituality curriculum, either developed in-house or by an outside source, please list the title and author, and describe it briefly. Please include the length of time you have been using it. If you are NOT using a written curriculum, please describe how your agency formulated its current program. _____

Program Outcomes. Describe the three primary desired outcomes, or benefits, of your spiritual programming (i.e., during or after participation in your program, what new knowledge, increased skills or abilities, or improved condition(s) do you expect participants to achieve?). _____

Indicators. How do you measure these outcomes? _____

Program Participants. Estimate the number of adolescent clients who take part in the spiritual component of your programming per year. If more than one program offers significant spiritual components, please distinguish between programs. _____

Cost. Please estimate the overall cost of providing your agency's spiritual program. _____

Agency mission. Describe how the spiritual component of your program(s) helps your organization fulfill its mission and meet its long-term goals. _____

Replicability. In your opinion, is your program easily replicable? Please explain. _____

Holy Cross Children's Services

Policy on Religious Activities

A. POLICY: ALL HOLY CROSS PROGRAMS WILL ASSIST FAMILIES TO UTILIZE SPIRITUAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PROGRESS TOWARD TREATMENT GOALS

B. STANDARDS:

1. Chapel or Church Services that are in harmony with the Holy Cross Christian tradition and with the Holy Cross treatment program will be scheduled for each program every week.
2. Bible Study sessions are offered on a weekly basis for interested youths.
3. An annual Retreat or Camp experience, which includes Bible references and prayer, will be scheduled for each treatment group.
4. Families are encouraged to take their child to religious activities in their own tradition.
5. Upon family request during the intake process, special arrangements may be made with the treatment team and the Holy Cross Chaplain to have an authorized representative of the family's faith visit the youth at mutually agreeable times for special worship and/or religious instruction.
6. The family will be consulted prior to any youth being permitted to be Baptized, Confirmed, or otherwise prepared for a change in church membership or religious affiliation.
7. The Director of Pastoral Care is responsible for monitoring the quality and content of all Holy Cross religious activities in coordination with Regional Directors and Chaplains.
8. Any parent who does not wish their child to participate in the above activities because of personal reasons will be able to have an alternative activity under the supervision of a staff member. The youth may use this time for self-reflection, inspirational reading, or writing.

Holy Cross Children's Services

Spiritual Assessment

NAME: _____ CASE # _____

DATE: _____ NAME OF GROUP/UNIT: _____

What is your religion?

<input type="checkbox"/> 7th Day Adventist	<input type="checkbox"/> African Methodist Episcopal (AME)	<input type="checkbox"/> Christian
<input type="checkbox"/> Apostolic	<input type="checkbox"/> Atheist	<input type="checkbox"/> Church of God in Christ
<input type="checkbox"/> Episcopalian	<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/> Jehovah's Witness
<input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran	<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> Mormon/ Latter Day Saints
<input type="checkbox"/> Muslim/Nation of Islam	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodist	<input type="checkbox"/> Protestant
<input type="checkbox"/> Pentecostal	<input type="checkbox"/> No Preference	<input type="checkbox"/> Unitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> Assembly of God	<input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> NONE	<input type="checkbox"/> United Church of Christ	

2. Do you consider yourself religious?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

3. Do you feel like your life has purpose?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

4. Do you feel guilty about some of the things you have done?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

5. Do you believe in God or a higher power?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

6. Do you feel close to God?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

7. Do you pray or communicate with God?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

8. Does your family talk about God or religious things?

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

Continued on next page

WITHIN THE PAST TWO YEARS, ABOUT HOW OFTEN

9. Have you participated in religious services or spiritual activities?

- Never Once a year or less 2-3 times a year Once a month
 2-3 times a month 1-2 times a week 3-7 times a week

10. If you have one, what is the name of your church or other place of worship:

11. About how many years have you attended classes which teach about God or other religious things (e.g., Sunday School, Catechism, Bible, or Quran study, etc.):

- Less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-6 years 7-9 years 10 or more years Never

12. Do you have a relationship with a pastor or spiritual leader?

- Yes No Not sure/can't answer

13. If yes, what is his/her name and title:

14. Have you ever had an experience that made you convinced that God or a Higher Power exists?

- Yes No Not sure/can't answer

If yes, please explain: _____

15. Describe any loss you have experienced (e.g., death of a close family member, relative, or friend, etc.): _____

WHEN I HAVE A PROBLEM OR FACE DIFFICULTIES, I...

16. Ask forgiveness for my sins:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

17. Wonder whether God has abandoned me:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

18. Wonder what I did for God to punish me:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

19. Question God's love for me:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

20. Decide the devil made this happen:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

Continued on next page

WHEN I HAVE A PROBLEM OR FACE DIFFICULTIES, I ...

21. Question the power of God:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

22. Think about religious advice:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

23. Feel like hurting myself:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

24. Are you ever disappointed with God?

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

25. Are you ever angry with God?

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

DURING THE PAST YEAR...

26. How often have you felt God or a Higher Power was close to you:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

27. How often have you felt God or a Higher Power answered your prayers:

- Never Hardly ever Sometimes Often Most of the time

HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN...

28. Being involved in a church, religion, or spiritual activities:

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

29. Being involved in youth activities at a church, mosque, temple, Kingdom Hall, or other place of worship:

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

30. Getting closer to God:

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

31. Learning more about the Bible, Quran, or other holy book:

- Not at all Somewhat Quite a bit A great deal Not sure

HOW IMPORTANT IS RELIGION TO YOUR MOTHER, FATHER, GUARDIAN?

NAME: _____ Relationship to you: _____

- Not at all religious Somewhat religious Quite religious Very religious Not sure

NAME: _____ Relationship to you: _____

- Not at all religious Somewhat religious Quite religious Very religious Not sure

Holy Cross Children’s Services

Spiritual Pathway: Church/Religion Connection

PROBLEM: Difficulty accessing desired spiritual resources or broken ties with religious organizations as evidenced by:

- No longer involved with spiritual community
- Interested but not currently accessing spiritual resources

GOAL: Parent and/or youth will connect/reconnect with and utilize desired spiritual resources.

Objectives	Interventions
1. The client will state his interest in membership in a church/religion/spiritual support group.	1.1 Chaplain reports spiritual assessment and plan to team.
2. The family will state their support for the client’s interest.	2.1 Family worker reports on parents’ spiritual assessment and support.
3. The client will select the religion/ church/Temple/mosque for membership.	3.1 Chaplain researches and offers choices to the youth/caregiver.
4. The client will select a sponsor from his religion/ church/temple/mosque support group.	4.1 Chaplain, group therapist, and family worker arrange a meeting between family and pastor/youth pastor. 4.2 Pastor/youth pastor reports to recruit sponsor-candidate(s). 4.3 Chaplain/group therapist/family worker will instruct grievors on true vs. false guilt, directed/misdirected anger.
5. The client will establish a relationship with a sponsor/mentor from the religion/support group.	5.1 Chaplain and group therapist arrange a series of visits between sponsor and youth.
6. The client will comply with his religious regimen for special diets, holidays, and prayer.	6.1 Chaplain consults with religious leader for special religious regimen for diets, holidays, and prayer.
7. The client will establish relationship with the peers from the religion/church support group.	7.1 Chaplain, group therapist, and pastor/youth pastor set up a calendar of events on campus.
8. The sponsor or parent will escort the client to church/religion/support group activities.	8.1 Chaplain and team plan home visits around selected events at a place of worship.

Continued on next page

Holy Cross Children's Services

Spiritual Pathway: Church/Religion Connection

PROBLEM: Difficulty accessing desired spiritual resources or broken ties with religious organizations as evidenced by:

- No longer involved with spiritual community
- Interested but not currently accessing spiritual resources

GOAL: Parent and/or youth will connect/reconnect with and utilize desired spiritual resources.

Objectives

9. The client will utilize church/ religious/ spiritual resources for (fill in the blank):
_____.
10. The client will be initiated in the religion/church/temple/mosque.
11. The client will regularly attend their church/support group.

Interventions

- 9.1 Chaplain assesses the resources of the church/religion and recommends connection.
- 10.1 Sponsor prepares the youth for baptism (or other initiation rite), if appropriate and endorsed by family.
- 10.2 Pastor, chaplain, group therapist, and family member arrange a date for baptism or other initiation rite.
- 10.3 Team escorts the treatment group to the baptism or other initiation rite.
- 11.1 Chaplain submits and after care plan including religious participation.
- 11.2 Chaplain monitors completion of after care plan with pastor/sponsor.

Holy Cross Children’s Services

Spiritual Pathway: The Grief Process

PROBLEM: Unresolved grief and loss as evidenced by:

- Death or loss of a significant family member/friend
- Unresolved sadness or anger or guilt

(STRENGTH: the client believes in life after death)

GOAL: Caregiver/Youth will complete the grief process

Objectives

1. The client will identify stages in the grief process.
2. The client will identify guilt/anger/depression as normal aspects of the grief process.
3. The client will complete a journal/workbook on grief and loss.
4. The client will identify the unfinished business related to the loss.
5. The client will identify beliefs about life after death.
6. The client will distinguish realistic/unrealistic guilt.
7. The client will make an apology/ express anger/sadness to the person who was lost.
8. The client will make restitution/ reparation/amends to the person who was lost.
9. The client will explore resources from his spiritual tradition regarding the loss.
10. The client will experience a memorial ritual.

Interventions

- 1.1 Chaplain/group therapist/ family worker will instruct the youth/caregiver on the stages of grief.
- 2.1 Chaplain will show a video to the youth/caregiver and discuss grief issues (“Edge TV No. 8” on grief, “Flat Liners,” “What About Me”).
- 3.1 Chaplain will introduce workbook.
- 4.1 Chaplain/group therapist/family worker will discuss unfinished business regarding the death.
- 5.1 Chaplain will assess beliefs about life after death.
- 6.1 Chaplain/group therapist/family worker will instruct grievers on true vs. false guilt, directed/misdirected anger.
- 7.1 Chaplain/group therapist/family worker will assess appropriateness of guilt/apology/anger.
- 8.1 Chaplain will facilitate the youth/caregiver in making amends.
- 9.1 Chaplain will assist family in the planning of a memorial service.
- 10.1 Chaplain will lead a memorial service.

Cathedral Home for Children

Religious/Spiritual Orientation Admission Assessment

Resident Name: _____ Date of Admission: _____

Name of person doing assessment: _____

Cottage: _____

Is religion and/or spiritual beliefs an important part of your life?

(If no, please have the resident sign the form – do NOT proceed further.)

- Yes
- No

How important are those beliefs?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important

What is your religious affiliation? _____

Do you attend church regularly?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Do you have any food restrictions or special diets that are associated with your religious beliefs?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what are they? _____

(Make sure the dietician receives a copy of this form if indicated.)

Is there anything else we should know about your religious or spiritual beliefs (rituals, holidays, etc.)?

If so, what are they? _____

Is there a need to incorporate any special circumstances into the treatment plan due to religious or spiritual beliefs? If yes, please specify. _____

Resident signature

Date

Staff signature

******PLEASE MAKE SURE A COPY OF THIS FORM IS GIVEN TO THE CHAPLAIN**

Cathedral Home for Children

A Celtic Ritual

YOU WILL NEED:

- ALTAR A (IN THE CENTER)
- TWO MAIN CANDLES
- 4 CANDLES (FOR THE FOUR DIRECTIONS)
- GIFTS FOR AN OFFERING (FOR CHARITY)
- A VOTIVE FOR EACH PERSON
- A BELL OR CHIME
- SYMBOLS OF THE 4 TREASURES OF THE TUATHA DE DANANN
- INCENSE (SYMBOL OF PRAYER RISING TO HEAVEN)

TO BEGIN THE RITUAL

STRIKE A BELL THREE TIMES, OR SIMPLY TAKE THREE, DEEP CENTERING BREATHS.

WE PERFORM THIS RITUAL IN YOUR HONOR, BRIGID SOURCE OF BLESSING.

BRIGID ABOVE US, BRIGID BELOW US, BRIGID IN THE VERY AIR ABOVE US, BRIGID IN OUR TRUEST HEART!

CHRIST ABOVE US, CHRIST BELOW US, CHRIST IN THE VERY AIR ABOVE US, CHRIST IN OUR TRUEST HEART!

(SAY THE FOLLOWING WHILE LIGHTING EACH CANDLE OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS.)

CANDLE IN THE NORTH:

TO THE NORTH I/WE HONOR THE SWORD OF NUADU, SYMBOL OF STRENGTH AND THE LIMITLESS SKY. MAY I / WE RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF COURAGE ON THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE IN THE EAST:

TO THE EAST, I / WE HONOR THE CAULDRON OF THE DAGDA, SYMBOL OF ABUNDANCE AND THE WATERS OF LIFE. MAY I / WE RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF PROSPERITY ON THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE IN THE SOUTH:

TO THE SOUTH, I / WE HONOR THE STONE OF DESTINY, SYMBOL OF HARMONY AND OF THE SOVEREIGN EARTH. MAY I / WE RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF FREEDOM ON THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE IN THE WEST:

TO THE WEST, I / WE HONOR THE SPEAR OF LUGH, SYMBOL OF KNOWLEDGE AND OF THE SACRED FIRE. MAY I / WE RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF WISDOM ON THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ALTAR:

GOOD FATHER GOD, YOU ARE THE WIND THAT BLOWS UPON THE SEA, YOU ARE THE OCEAN WAVE, YOU ARE A STRONG BULL, YOU ARE AN EAGLE ON A ROCK, YOU ARE A RAY OF THE SUN, YOU ARE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF HERBS, YOU ARE A COURAGEOUS WILD BOAR, YOU ARE A SALMON IN THE WATER, YOU ARE A LAKE UPON A PLAIN, YOU ARE A CUNNING ARTIST, YOU ARE A GIGANTIC CHAMPION.

CANDLE ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE ALTAR:

SACRED BRIGID OF THE CALMNESS, BRIGID, FRIEND OF WOMEN, BRIGID, WOMAN MILD, EACH DAY AND EACH NIGHT I CALL THE DESCENT OF BRIGID. I AM UNDER THE KEEPING OF BLESSED BRIGID, MY COMPANION BELOVED IS BRIGID.

MEDITATION AND OFFERING:

NOW THAT THE CANDLES ARE LIT.

MEDITATE ON NATURE...

MAKE AN OFFERING...

SAY THIS IS YOUR GIFT TO THE SPIRIT.

(SHARE SOME COOKIES AND JUICE. EXTINGUISH CANDLES USING A SNUFFER.)

CANDLE IN THE NORTH:

TO THE NORTH, WE KNOW GIFT OF BLESSING OF COURAGE.

THANK YOU FOR BLESSING US THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE IN THE EAST:

TO THE EAST, WE KNOW THE GIFT OF PROSPERITY.

THANK YOU FOR BLESSING US THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE IN THE SOUTH:

TO THE SOUTH, WE KNOW THE GIFT OF FREEDOM.

THANK YOU FOR BLESSING US THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE IN THE WEST:

TO THE WEST, WE KNOW THE GIFT OF WISDOM.

THANK YOU FOR BLESSING US THIS NIGHT.

CANDLE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ALTAR:

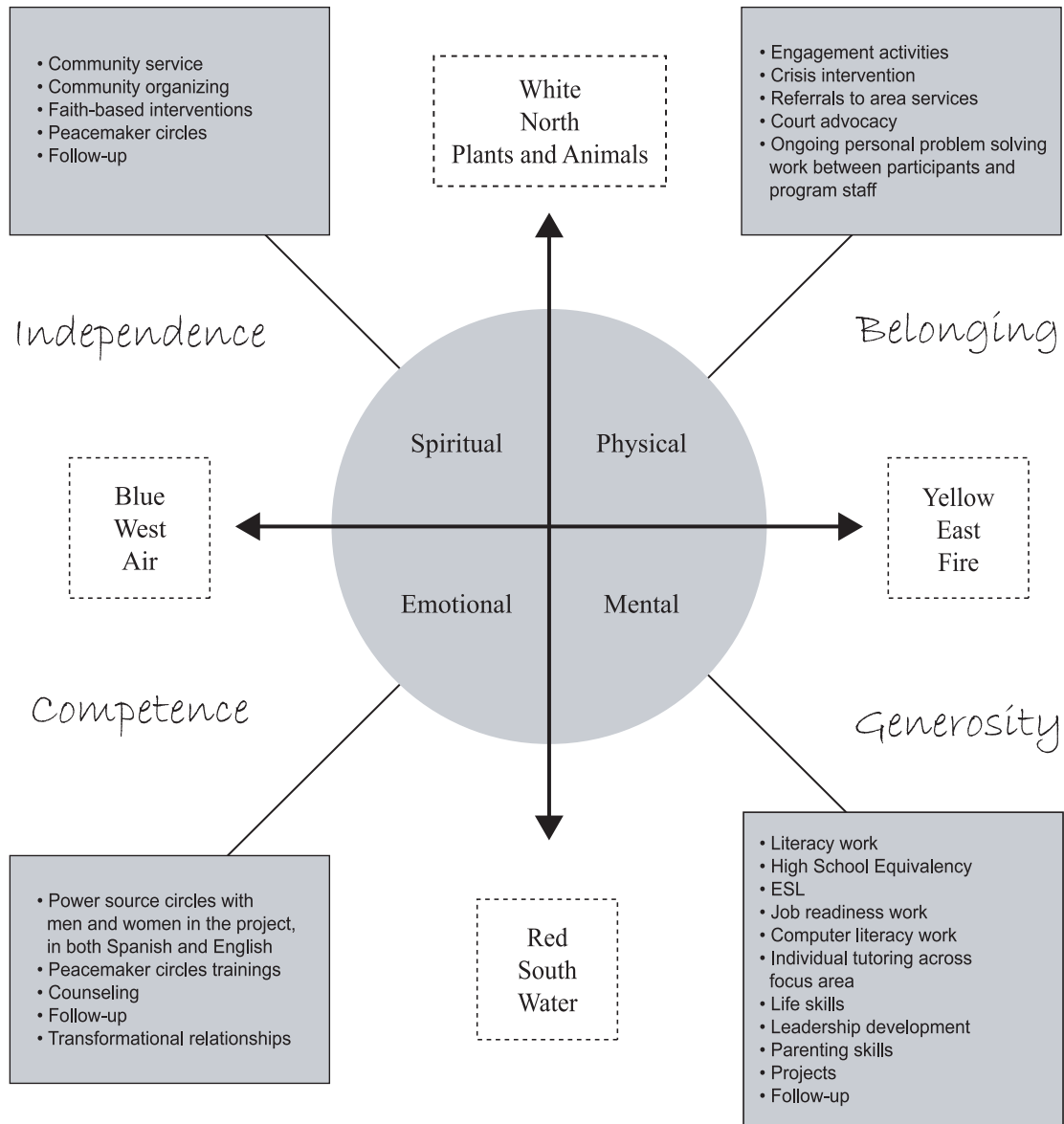
FATHER GOD, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRESENCE AT THIS RITUAL.

CANDLE ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE ALTAR:

SPIRIT MOTHER, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRESENCE AT THIS RITUAL.

Complete Idiot's Guide to Celtic Wisdom. Reprinted with permission.

The Roca Medicine Wheel



In-Care Network

Effective Mental Health Treatment

Effective mental health treatment must be based on cultural values. Therapeutic elements must be culturally integrated. Indian values, practices, and lifestyle norms should be incorporated into the choice of service methods.

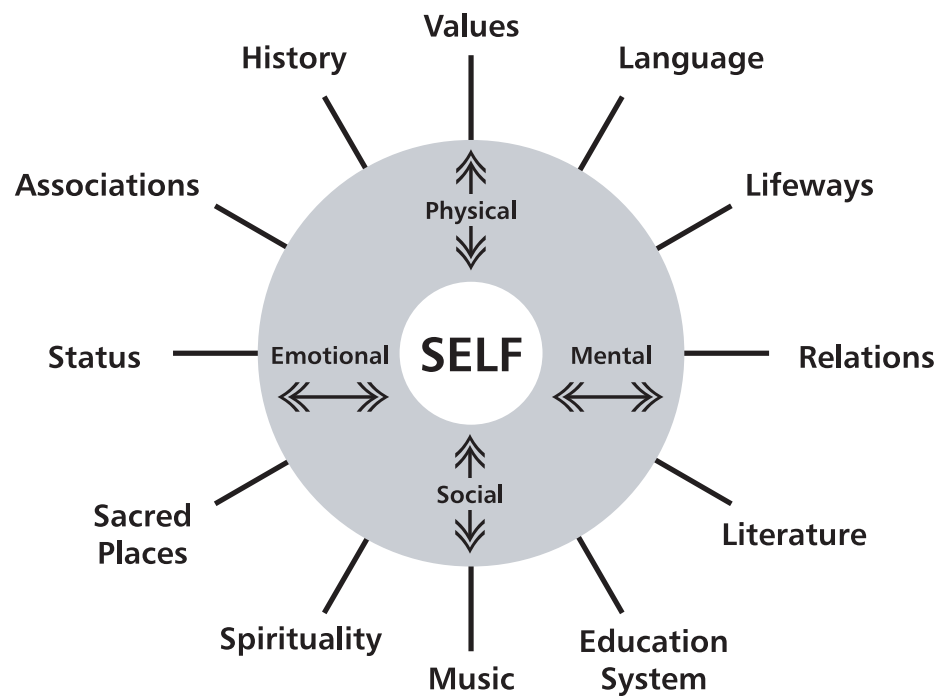
Cultural Mental Health Values:

- Show respect to all; each person has a special gift.
- The highest virtue is to be generous and unselfish.
- You are a reflection of your family.
- Accept what life brings, let go of things you cannot control.
- Practice patience, all things have their own time.
- What you do will come back to you.
- Look out for others.
- Honor your elders.
- Pray for guidance, many things are not known.
- All things are related.

Culturally Appropriate Therapeutic Goals:

- Build a strong cultural identity and personal identity.
- Cooperate in one's family and community.
- Believe in caring for the welfare of all tribal members.
- Respect the insights and experience of elders.
- Learn to respectfully accept responsibility and leadership.
- Develop the ability to give and take in a positive way.
- Recognize that physical, mental, and spiritual health are closely connected.

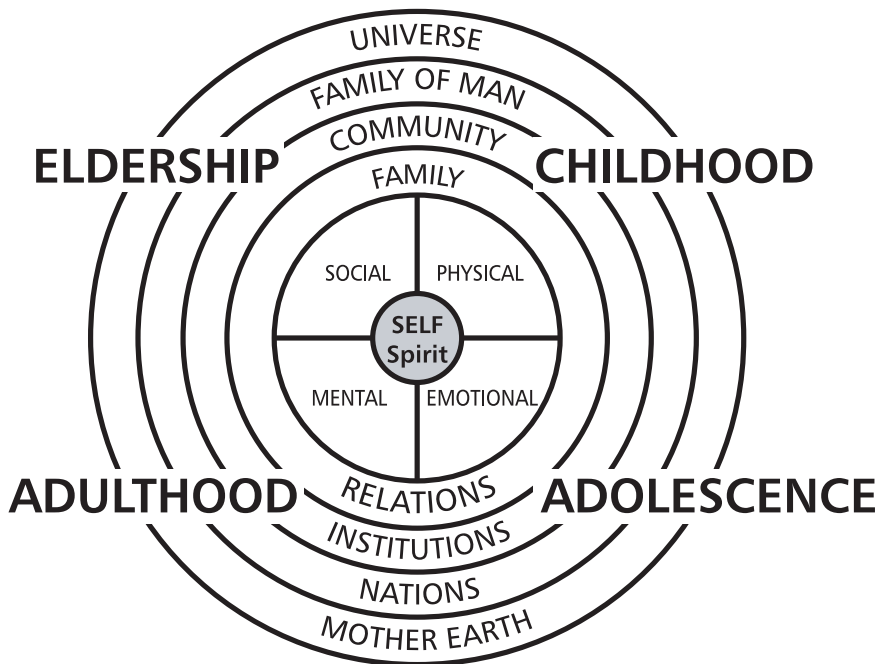
The Roots of Cultural Development



In-Care Network, Inc. (2001), Wounded eagle curricula. Author: Billings, MT.

THE MEDICINE WHEEL

Circles of Life



An American Indian Approach To Holistic Health

In-Care Network, Inc. (2001), Wounded eagle curricula. Author: Billings, MT.

Covenant House Spiritual Survey

Date: _____

Which of the following activities have you attended?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHAMP Spirituality Group or Almira | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-One Counseling/Prayer with Sister Margaret |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Circles of Light |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Evening Inspiration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> Tijuana Building Projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liturgies of Thanksgiving | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday Church Outing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Candlelight Vigil | <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly Volunteer Service Projects |

Which of the events that you checked off did you really like? _____

If so, why? _____

Which of the events that you checked off did you dislike? _____

If so, why? _____

On a scale from 1-5 (1=No way, Jose! & 5=Fabulous), please answer the following:

After attending some of the activities mentioned above, to what degree did you experience...

Comfort	1	2	3	4	5
Relaxation	1	2	3	4	5
Respect for others	1	2	3	4	5
Increased knowledge of God	1	2	3	4	5
Better understanding of myself	1	2	3	4	5

What other activities would you like to see happening to help you with spiritual growth? _____

How can we be more helpful to you? _____

(Covenant House)

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Inspiring innovation and advancing best practices in partnership with child- and youth-serving agencies.



In this first-ever study of spiritual programming in youth-service agencies, New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services describes how seven agencies, some secular and some religious, developed successful spirituality programs. These 'spiritually competent' agencies recognize spirituality as an important component of a holistic therapeutic approach, and deliver their spiritual programs in conformance with widely accepted standards of clinical care and the

principles of youth development. This report is indispensable for social service professionals interested in incorporating spiritual activities into their own practice with young people.

This study follows two other reports on youth and spirituality produced by New England Network:

Practice Unbound: A Study of Secular Spiritual and Religious Activities in Work with Adolescents (2002) and

A Part of You So Deep: What Vulnerable Adolescents Have to Say about Spirituality (2004).



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