



PROMISE OF THE FUTURE



Children's Behavioral Services give hope

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Their eyes tell their stories. These eyes belong to the children who search for a reunion of divorced parents and to those who wish they understood the reason for being abused at home. Some eyes may try to hide the hurt and pain of neglect. Still others try to mask their feelings with rage or indifference.

Yet in each child's eyes is a sliver of hope that increases daily as they spend time in the loving and supportive environment of the Day Treatment Program through the Nevada Child and Adolescent Health Services.

Located in the Carlson Education Building on the University of Nevada at Las Vegas campus, Children's Behavioral Services Day Treatment Program is designed for those children, two to six years old, who have behavioral and emotional problems or associated learning or developmental deficits.

Through a two-way window, the children were seen engaging in normal play, and the sounds were that of a group of excited youngsters. Upon entering the room we, as visitors, seemed to go unnoticed at first. Then the boys wanted to make themselves known to the photographer. The young inquisitive minds with all their questions (including one directed to me, "Are you a kid?") became quickly ad-

justed to this reporter and photographer.

The children were called to play in groups at stations where "kitchen", "teddy bear bingo", or arts and crafts were practiced. The craft the children were making was a telescope (until one of the boys decided to make his telescope into a "Ninja Turtle" weapon).

Discipline is a very delicate process, dealt with carefully. The children are never physically punished with a spanking or a strike. If warnings by the teachers do not remedy the problem, the child is sent to "time out". This consists of a two minute period in which the child is separated from the rest of the group by sitting in a chair in the corner of the room.

During a game called "Little Mouse", one of the teachers spied a child who was fidgeting and causing a scene. Instead of focusing on the misbehavior of the troublemaker, the teacher gave attention to the child next to the commotion by commenting, "I like the way 'Julie' is sitting quietly, folding her hands and paying attention."

Another way to discipline and teach self-control involved reinforcement of good behavior and following instructions.

"In correcting a child, there must be the factor that no choice is given," Teacher Jennifer Wallace said. "If

you say to him/her 'you need to sit down' instead of 'will you please sit down?', it doesn't give them the opportunity to say no. There must also be times," Wallace explained, "when you can offer the child a choice such as the blue or yellow chair, or the green, or orange sticker."

Many children who enter the Day Treatment Program react to situations by kicking, cussing, biting, or screaming. If a child cusses, he/she is usually ignored and another youngster may be praised for not reacting to the harsh words.

There are four main goals of the program. Teaching the child appropriate behavior when interacting with adults and other children is one important goal. Skill development, along with building an enhanced self-esteem for the child is also a priority. An understanding of family conflicts and emotions is strived for as well. The desire for the outcome of the program is to mainstream these children in a normal school setting where they can adapt and adjust to new surroundings.

One third of the children who enter the program are physically abused according to Laurel Swetnam, director of Early Childhood Intervention.

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