

BEFORE THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD. By J. Goldstein, A. Freud, and A.J. Solnit. The Free Press: 1979, 288 pp.

Reviewed by John K. Torrens, MD

What do you do for an encore? This book follows the "instant classic," *Beyond The Best Interests of the Child*, and a worthy supplement it is. It addresses the questions the authors really didn't confront in the first book. After the family has failed in its function, should the child's interest become a matter of state intrusion? They ask and answer what must happen in the life of the child before the state should be empowered to investigate, modify, or terminate an individual child's relationship with his or her parents, and what ought to justify overcoming the presumption in law that the parents are and should be free to determine what is best "for their children in accordance with their own beliefs and life style." This volume recommends minimal state intervention but proposes certain statutory grounds to give full warning to parents and child, and to restrict and guide state authorities. According to the authors the grounds for intervention are: parental request for state placement of the child, a common-law parent's request for custody, gross failure of parental care (such as death of parents), sexual offenses against one's own child, bodily injury, emotional neglect, child abuse, and refusal by the parents to authorize life-saving medical care.

Throughout, the authors stress their feelings that the decision to intervene is a difficult and important one that must be carried out with great caution. They also speculate, however, that this caution must be enforced frequently by people who may or may not have the skill to carry it out. Each of these "grounds for interventions" is carefully delineated, always emphasizing the rights of the child, the rights of the parents (or custodial persons), and the law, with the implications of each request carefully spelled out. In addition to these proposed grounds for intervention, the book includes an Appendix that describes children killed by their parents, including a lengthy case review pointing out the need for intervention when a child is being harmed. A second Appendix contains suggestions for some provisions of a child placement code.

This book is clearly a supplement to the authors' first volume but addresses additional very important issues. It should arouse the concerns of all psychiatrists, lawyers, judges, social workers, and psychologists involved in the "best interests of the child." □

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE CHILD? THE PROBLEMS OF PROXY CONSENT. By Willard Gaylin and Ruth Macklin. New York: Plenum, 1982. 315 pages. ISBN 0-306-40860-0.

Reviewed by Gary B. Melton, PhD

Who Speaks for the Child? is an edited volume arising from discussions of an