

in individual foster placements than in group settings. The authors state that close and consistent supervision by adults, effective discipline, adult mentorship, and separation from delinquent peers have been more effective treatments for severe antisocial behavior than has care in traditional group homes.

The authors cite data regarding school practices. Retained students are often viewed as failures and are 11 times more likely to drop out of school than are nonretained students. Also, retained students are 25 percent more likely to drop out of high school than are low-achieving but socially promoted students. In addition, youths who dropped out of high school are at much higher risk of committing crimes. The problems of emotionally disturbed (ED) students in special education programs are noted also. They are more likely to drop out of school: only 42 percent graduate. ED students are at higher risk of expulsion and most ED students have been arrested one or more times.

Part III introduces promising solutions and recommendations. There is a helpful table that describes which interventions work or do not work and in which setting(s). The authors advocate school-based prevention and prosocial programs. The well-documented impact of peer contagion compelled the authors to recommend against placing delinquent youth in group settings unless there is no other option. The authors stress that when public safety dictates that a youth must be placed away from home, it is critical to have a degree of structure in daily activities and an adequate staffing ratio. They further recommend that youths be placed in small family-type units with a high level of staff supervision. A conscious effort should be made to minimize contact between these youths and their deviant peers.

This book should be essential reading for anyone evaluating and/or treating minors, especially child forensic psychiatrists who are often in a position of recommending evidence-based dispositions, interventions, and treatment(s) to the court. It also makes compelling reading for forensic psychiatrists, as it provides insight into how criminal defendants got to their present circumstances. The results of research into current incarceration practices reported in the book raised my concern about the impact of deviant peers on inmates and to what extent it contributes to high recidivism rates. Policy makers and administrators of institutions who care for children should read the book, as policies often lag years behind research

data. While the recommendations are certainly more costly than the status quo, they are probably less costly than the current revolving-door experiences of youths and young adults in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

## **Children of Divorce: A Practical Guide for Parents, Therapists, Attorneys, and Judges**

By William Bernet, MD, and Don R. Ash, JD, MJ. 2nd edition. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2007. 189 pp. \$31.50.

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William Bernet is a child and adolescent psychiatrist who has authored several publications about the clinical and legal particularities of divorce and custody cases, including "The Therapist's Role in Child Custody Disputes" (*J Am Acad Child Psychiatry* 22:180–3, 1983) and "Child Custody Evaluations" (*Child Adolesc Psychiatr Clin N Am* 11:781–804, 2002). The Honorable Don Ash has earned recognition for his expertise in divorce and child custody. His judicial research led the Tennessee legislature to ratify a Parenting Plan statute in 2001 (Tenn. Code Ann. §36-6-401 *et seq.*) The collected experiences of both experts are reflected in *Children of Divorce: A Practical Guide for Parents, Therapists, Attorneys, and Judges*.

The authors proffer practical advice and suggested parameters for people directly or indirectly involved in divorce and custody cases. The book contains descriptions of cases in which the best outcomes came from creative solutions that departed slightly from the usual guidelines. Case examples were collected from the authors' personal experiences, the news media, and case law, among other sources. Cases cited include those that have helped define custody guidelines as well as children's and parental rights.

The book consists of 21 chapters. In several of the chapters, the authors elaborate on problems that develop in the course of divorce and custody and on solutions to these problems. For example, the second chapter, "Fighting and the Children," reviews how divorcing couples fight over, through, and in front of

their children. The authors opine that parental fighting hurts children more than any other difficulty the children usually encounter during and after marital dissolution. Chapter 12, "Moving Near and Far," addresses several problems that arise when a parent, usually the primary residential parent (custodial parent), wants to move to another community or state. The authors summarize relevant case law regarding this issue [*In re Marriage of Burgess*, 913 P.2d 473 (Cal. 1996); *Aaby v. Strange*, 924 S.W.2d 623 (Tenn. 1996)]. Other chapters address challenging topics, including dividing holidays, allegations of child abuse, and parental alienation.

The authors do not limit their discussions to the concerns of parents and children of divorce. Chapter 15, "Grandparents," suggests that grandparents can find themselves assuming positive or negative roles due to divorce and custody proceedings. The chapter reviews legal cases that address grandparents' rights and limitations to such rights [*Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000)]. Chapter 17, "Mental Health Professionals," concerns matters relevant to evaluating and/or treating children of divorce. Each mental health professional is encouraged to define his or her role (e.g., the child's therapist, the family's therapist, an expert witness) and to explain the functions and limitations of that role to the parents and children. The authors also describe common challenges encountered by mental health professionals, including managing a parent who pressures the therapist to become actively involved in the custody battle. The potential importance of other parties, such as teachers and step-parents, is described elsewhere in the book.

There are chapters that describe the rights and responsibilities of, and the resources available to parties involved in divorce and custody proceedings and settlements. Chapter 6, "Parenting Education and

Parenting Plans," explains how a mediator can help divorcing parents create a plan that allows both parents to contribute significantly to raising the child. Parenting plans are successful when parents work together, doing what is best for the child, instead of fighting a custody battle with winners and losers. Effective parenting plans also encourage parents to avoid buying into the myth that the court will solve all problems.

Divorcing parents must address several matters related to child rearing, including, but not limited to, education, religion, medical care, and therapy. The authors use Chapter 13, "Parental Rights and Responsibilities," to itemize these tasks. They encourage parents to work out an agreement and they review cases involving uncooperative parents. For example, in *Zummo v. Zummo*, 574 A.2d 1130 (Pa. Super. Ct. 1990), the divorced parents engaged in unsuccessful negotiations concerning which religious services their child would attend.

Throughout the book, the authors support moving away from the concept of a noncustodial parent with little involvement in the child's life to the new terminology of nonprimary residential parent—that is, a parent who actively participates in raising the child.

The authors have produced an excellent book that shows that common sense and focusing on the child's needs are the most important goals of successful child custody negotiations. The book is enjoyable, and the cases make the material easy to understand and remember. The book's greatest strength is the range of case examples discussed. It is an invaluable resource for forensic psychiatrists working with divorced parents and their children. It is also quite helpful for the parents and would certainly be useful for matrimonial lawyers and judges to read and use as a reference.