It has been six years since Savana Redding, then 13, was strip-searched by Safford, Arizona school officials. Redding, an honor student at the middle school, still remembers the day she was escorted out of class by a male assistant principal after a friend, who was found in possession of pain relievers, told school authorities that Savana had given her 400-milligram ibuprofen pills, a prescription-level dose of the pain reliever—used to treat headaches and menstrual cramps.

Savana, now 19, recalls she was taken to the nurse’s office where she was met by the nurse and an administrative assistant. “I went to the nurse’s office and kept following what they asked me to do. I thought, ‘What could I be in trouble for?’” Both women were in the room alone with Savana when they asked her to remove her shoes and socks and then remove her shirt and pants. The two then asked Savana to pull open her bra and panties so they could see whether she was hiding any pills. None was found. Furious, Savana’s mother sued the school district alleging that her daughter’s Fourth Amendment rights had been violated. In an article published in *USA Today*, Savana is quoted as saying she still feels shaken and humiliated (*USA Today*, 2009, page 1).

**NASW Files: Friend-Of-The-Court Brief in Case**

Last year, NASW joined with the NASW Arizona Chapter, the National Education Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry, and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children and filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. This court issued a ruling that school officials violated the Fourth Amendment’s ban on unreasonable searches. The brief argues that the decision to strip-search Redding was “…wholly unjustifiable under New Jersey v. T.L.O” (*NASW News* 2009, page 2). In this 1985 case, the Supreme Court issued a mandate that a schoolhouse search “…will be permissible in its scope when the measures adopted are reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction.” The brief points to social science research that
I recently had the pleasure of traveling with five students to the 4th International School Social Work Conference in New Zealand. It was a truly multi-cultural experience with all of the many countries represented at the conference. However, it was also an opportunity to experience a common bond between practitioners from around the world who are implementing social work services in schools to help students and their families. There are some messages that I shared in my conference keynote address that apply to all school social workers. In my keynote, I reminded participants that we so often focus on what we have yet to accomplish, or what we did not accomplish, that we forget to identify the strengths of what we have accomplished. As the school year comes to a close, it is important to look back over the year and see how much you, as the school social worker, have accomplished, and how many of your students and families have moved closer to the goals they set out to achieve. Take time to celebrate those small steps.

I also reminded conference participants that we all have an area of expertise in our field, and we need to reach out to each other and offer that expertise. Just as some foreign countries are beginning only now to implement school social work services, there are still school districts in the U.S. that have never employed school social workers. We have the expertise in neighboring school districts to provide technical assistance to other districts. I challenge you next school year to help another school in your district, or in another school district, to implement school social work services that are based on best practices in the field. At the same time, I challenge you to publish your successes in some format. This newsletter is a great example of an opportunity to publish some of the innovative work you are doing and to share it with the field.

I am taking the challenge that I have given to participants who attended the 4th International School Social Work Conference, and that I now extend to members of the NASW School Social Work Section. Four of my five students have published articles about their experience at the conference in three different newsletters, including one published in New Zealand. I am working with a local school social worker to write an article for the next issue of this newsletter and to continue to write grants for rural K-12 school districts interested in school social work services. Let us all help each other strengthen the field of school social work.
demonstrates that “…strip searches can traumatize children and adolescents which may result in serious emotional damage. The effects, both acute and long-term, can be akin to those of psychological maltreatment. Likewise, states, school boards, and courts nationwide have recognized that strip-searching children is severely intrusive.”

The brief makes two arguments:

• A strip-search of a 13-year-old girl by school authorities is an extraordinary intrusive search.

• An excessively intrusive search, such as a strip search, could only be justified by a heightened quantum of suspicion.

Pursuant to T.L.O., “The reasonable suspicion determination must balance risk to health/safety, locational specificity, weight of available evidence, and possible alternatives to the search” (NASW News 2009, page 2).

The Supreme Court Ruling: Will it Transform the Landscape of Drug Searches in Public Schools?

It’s common practice in schools across the nation to conduct drug searches and perform tests on student athletes and students engaged in extracurricular activities, but the search of Savana Redding on October 8, 2003 went all the way to the Supreme Court on April 14, 2009 where justices tackled “…the thorny question of just how much leeway school officials should have in policing zero-tolerance policies for drugs and violence, and the court is likely to provide important guidance to schools around the nation” (The New York Times, 2009, page 1).

In a statement to the court, Redding’s lawyer told the justices that a strip search for any reason was unconstitutional unless school officials had specific evidence showing that something was hidden in Savana’s underwear.

This statement raised concern on the part of the justices who worried that strip searches of school-age children could lead to more intrusive actions, such as body cavity searches.

In rebuttal, lawyers for the school argued that courts should not limit officials’ ability to search for dangerous items brought on school property. They stated that the Safford school district is “on the front lines of a decades-long war against drug abuse among students” and defended the search of Savana as necessary. (USA Today, 2009, page 1).

References


STUDENT ATTENDS THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE IN NEW ZEALAND — APRIL 11-17, 2009

Susan Dunfee

I had the privilege of attending this conference as a senior in college, and it was an extraordinary learning experience. I attempted to meet at least one social worker from each of the many countries represented by the attendees. All seemed eager to learn from each other and to apply their new experiences back home. For me, however, the highlight was meeting with representatives of New Zealand’s native people, the Maori.

I interviewed a Maori school social worker from the southern island of New Zealand. According to my colleague, the Maoris are well integrated into New Zealand society because most Maori tribes quickly became economically independent, and they have considerable social autonomy.

Issues in School Social Work Practice from an International Perspective

Among the social workers and students I interviewed, there was strong agreement that the neuroscience information was both up-to-date and highly relevant to working with children and their families. The presenter explained how the brain works at various ages and how to teach and respond to children during their milestone years. Others agreed that the presentation on resilience was vital to students, families, and social workers alike.

These are the valuable lessons I brought home:

1. **Be attentive to the needs of others.**
   Regardless of nationality or culture, people have the same fundamental human needs, including acceptance, education, and goals.

2. **Listen to their knowledge and experiences.**
   Learning from others is valuable. We can achieve a fuller, richer understanding of people and situations.

3. **Learn and adopt new technology for bringing people and knowledge together.**
   New technology is a resource for helping people worldwide. Among other things, it has given us the ability to document and share our research.

I plan to incorporate these lessons into my social work practice. Continuous learning is essential to being on the cutting edge of any human service profession.

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IMPULSE CONTROL: TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO SLOW DOWN AND THINK
Tonia Caselman, LCSW, PhD

Research tells us that children who have better impulse control do better in almost every area of their lives. They are:

- more successful academically (Nietfeld and Bosma, 2003)
- less likely to have behavioral problems (Wulfert et. al., 2002)
- better at getting along with people and making friends (McMurran, Blair, & Egan, 2002)
- better able to handle stress and other emotions (d’Acremont & Van der Lindon, 2007 Mulsow, 2001), and
- healthier (Grano, 2008).

The primary reason why these children are more successful is because they spend more time analyzing information and restraining primary urges in order to consider healthier courses of action. Children who lack impulse control are at risk for a range of problems. According to Hollander and Evers (2001):

The ability to moderate pathological impulsivity is of great clinical and public health relevance because impulsive disorders incur large costs to society and are associated with substantial morbidity, mortality, social, family, and job dysfunction, accidents, suicide, violence, aggression, criminality and excessive use of health-care, government, and financial resources ...[impulsivity is] a core behavioral symptom domain that cuts across various psychiatric disorders and contributes to substantial societal costs.

Yet research has shown promising results for cognitive/behavioral interventions with impulsive children (Barkley, et. al., 2000; Teeter, Rumsey, Natoli, Naylor, & Smith, 2000). Some of the strategies that have been used in these interventions include:

- **Verbalized Self-Talk.** Because impulsive children have limited self-talk skills, social workers should coach them on how to talk to themselves. Initially this should be out loud. When beginning a task, the child can be coached to say, “O.K., what am I doing here?” or “What is my goal here?” As the task progresses, the child can use phrases like, “I need to pay attention,” or “I’m doing O.K.,” or “Just a little more and I’m finished.” After several sessions, the child should whisper these phrases and then, ultimately, just think them.

- **Problem-Solving.** Problem-solving is lacking in impulsive children. Whenever a child faces a problem or decision, the social worker should stop and ask the child for several suggestions on how to solve the problem. This allows the child to reflect on multiple solutions rather than simply trying the first solution that comes to mind. Giving the child hypothetical problems to brainstorm solutions is also an effective exercise.

- **Looking Ahead.** Being able to anticipate the consequences for an action requires reflectivity. Social workers should ask questions that cause the child to consider what might happen in the future if a particular course of action is taken (i.e., “What might happen if you tried to jump over a mud puddle in your good clothes?” or “What might happen if you called out the answer to the teacher’s question without raising your hand?”). Activities and games which involve looking ahead are also helpful in building impulse control, such as mazes, chess, checkers, and games like Simon Says, Mother May I? and Red Light/Green Light.
• **Role Playing.** Most impulsive children have certain situations or settings in which they are particularly impulsive. For some, it is when they feel angry; for others it is when they are in larger groups of children. Social workers can role play these specific problematic situations so that the child has practice using impulse control.

• **Reinforcement.** Social workers should give the impulsive child positive feedback for times when she or he does use impulse control or reflects on a particular situation. This allows the child to see exceptions to the problem in her or his life and to feel proud of her or his positive behavior. Impulsive children can also be asked to report their impulse control successes each week by using the statement, “I had the impulse to [fill in the blank], but I stopped and thought [fill in the blank] and decided to [fill in the blank] instead.”

There are also therapeutic games available that are designed to teach impulse control, including Look Before You Leap; The Impulse Control Game; Stop, Relax and Think; and Remote Control Impulse Control. Providing interventions for impulse control development promotes efficient learning and pro-social behavior. Also, it gives children the opportunity to control their impulses and lead more rewarding lives, rather than allowing impulses to control them.

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**References**


Its companion bill, H.R. 1361, formerly H.R. 6654, was reintroduced the same day by Representative Towns. During the last legislative session H.R. 6654 had over 50 cosponsors and H.R. 1361 had 20. The “Increased Student Achievement through Increased Student Support Act” seeks to address the aforementioned workforce shortage. It creates a federal grant program designed to increase the number of school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists serving low-income local educational agencies (LEAs) by creating a pipeline between institutions of higher education and low-income school districts. Institutions of higher education with graduate training programs in school social work, school counseling, and school psychology that develop collaborative training and placement partnerships with LEAs will be eligible to apply for federal grant funds to hire and pay participating graduates to work in those schools. Program participants who remain employed in a low-income school setting for a minimum of five years will be eligible for loan forgiveness. By expanding the number of school social workers in low-income, high-need schools, we can improve the school and life success for students throughout the country.

**Action Needed**

We need your help to get these bills passed into law. Please contact your Senators and Representatives and urge them to co-sponsor the “Increased Student Achievement Through Increased Student Support Act.” Let them know that you are a social worker who is committed to improving the lives of our nation’s children and you look forward to passage of this important legislation. For more information please visit: http://capwiz.com/socialworkers/callalert/index.tt?alertid=12910801.

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