



# The Attachment Network

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## Newsletter

April 2007

### The Attachment Network

The Attachment Network meets three times a year and is comprised of representatives from health and social service agencies interested in promoting and enhancing secure attachment across the life span.

### Attachment Network

- Aulneau Renewal Centre
- Winnipeg Foster Care
- Healthy Start for Mom and Me
- Aurora Centre
- Child Development Clinic
- New Directions
- Pluri-elles
- Family Centre of Winnipeg
- Healthy Child Manitoba
- Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre
- FASD Outreach Program (Children's Special Services)
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
- ...among many others

### Vision Statement

A child's secure attachment to a primary caregiver is the foundation of healthy human development. For this reason, the importance of attachment should be understood and seen as an integral part of being human.

### Mission

This multi-organizational network actively develops and supports best practices for enhancing secure attachment across the life span.

Its activities include:

- education,
- dissemination of information,
- networking, and
- advocacy.

### Ongoing Network Activities

- Promoting awareness of attachment theory, assessment and treatment.
- Promoting awareness of the Network to the larger community and stakeholders.
- Supporting the development of new attachment services; coordinating and improving current services.
- Promoting involvement in research projects.
- Hosting annual conferences.
- Development of a strategic plan that reflects our mission statement.
- Further development of our newsletter.

### Steering Committee

- Yvette Preston, Chairperson (Aulneau Renewal Centre)
- Joanne Brown, Secretary (New Directions)
- Marge Chomoway, Treasurer (Foster Care – Winnipeg C.F.S.)
- Julia Wellwood (FASD Outreach)
- Karen Johnston (FASD Outreach)
- Irmie Nickel (Aulneau Renewal Centre)
- Laurie Marcella (Healthy Start)
- Pam Freeth (Marymount)

### Putting It Into Practice

This section will be used to feature the work of various agencies as they put attachment theory into practice. The following article was submitted by the FASD Outreach team.

At the FASD Outreach Program we are specifically interested in the dynamics of attachment theory and practice as it applies to the child with FASD and their parents. Children with FASD seem to be more vulnerable and therefore more at risk for developing insecure attachment patterns. This

vulnerability is related to neurological factors as well as to environmental factors and quite often it is a combination of both.

Neurological issues such as symptoms of withdrawal after birth, immature nervous systems, sensory processing difficulties, and in the older child, impulsive and hyperactive tendencies and cognitive differences place great demands on a parent. Perhaps you've experienced the helplessness of trying to comfort an infant who is inconsolable, of holding a child who arches away from you or avoids your eye contact. Maybe you are weary from the constant supervision of your child's activity level and constant repeating, or maybe you worry because it seems like your child would go with anyone. The stress of daily care, in addition to possible grief issues, beliefs about the disability, and the individual strengths and vulnerabilities of the parent all influence the parent-child relationship.

Interestingly, many characteristics of FASD such as sleep issues, avoidance of physical contact or clinginess, picky eating, frenetic activity and indiscriminate friendliness can also describe attachment issues and reflect instead social factors in the child's life. All too often these children with FASD have experienced relationship disruption due to multiple placements, or other types of trauma, which makes attachment a very prevalent issue and a difficult one to sort out.

Of all the scenarios, it is the child who has no coherent strategy for coping with distress that is the most concerning. This is the child who, when upset, wants up and then down, approaches but then turns away, accepts a hug but then holds their body stiff, or who approaches but in a slow

apprehensive way. In the research literature, this child is classified as disorganized. It is an extremely problematic classification given its high correlation with later mental health issues and significant behavior problems. Based on the findings of Anne Streissguth, a leading researcher in the field of FASD, who noted in her Secondary Disabilities Study the high rate of mental health issues in the FASD population as well as the protective qualities associated with stability and longevity of placement, this is an important issue for these children.

Most of us have heard at one time or another that "children with FASD don't attach". Our work with families is showing us that attachment theory seems to be equally applicable to children with FASD and that in fact it provides a critically important framework for understanding their needs and provides a context for guiding intervention.

There is exciting work happening in the field of attachment, both in research and intervention. Modified Interaction Guidance is an example of an intervention that has particular relevance here in Manitoba. Our team has had the good fortune to participate along with a group of people from the community and from the Child Development Clinic who have received training in this intervention for the past year. Dr. Diane Benoit, an Infant Psychiatrist with the Toronto Sick Children's Hospital, developed Modified Interaction Guidance as a short-term, play-based therapy for parents who want to improve the way they and their children interact together. They learn to watch more closely for their child's signals and to respond in more accurate and targeted ways. In addition, they can learn to recognize in themselves signals that they might be unintentionally sending to their child that they may wish to change.

Modified Interaction Guidance sessions include goal-setting by the parent, specific information provided to the family that is tailored to their needs, weekly review of progress and the

weekly video-taping of a 10 minute play time for feedback by the parent and by the therapist. Videotaping allows the parent to observe their interactions and to evaluate their progress. Weekly homework is based on the feedback session. During feedback, the parent learns to recognize which of their responses worked really well and which new responses they can try. These are then practiced at home. Success is measured by how the child responds when in distress and by the reduction of problematic behaviors.

The research on this and other interventions is showing that it provides a very important process for change. We feel that we finally have an intervention that helps to address the attachment issues that we have been concerned about for so many years. Above all, we want to say how appreciative we are of the work that families do and what a privilege it is to be part of that!

If anyone has further questions about any of the information in this article please feel free to contact a member of the FASD Outreach Team at 945-8137.

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### Resources

If you want to learn more about the Circle of Security, check out the website at:

[www.circleofsecurity.org](http://www.circleofsecurity.org)

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### Join us at the next Network Meeting!

Date: May 9, 2007

Location: Aulneau Renewal Centre  
601 Aulneau St.

Time: 1:30 – 3:30

### Upcoming Events

The following events are presented in partnership with the Attachment Network.

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*"Understanding Maternal Depression, Attachment and Socio-cultural Influences"*

October 4 & 5, 2007

Day one will highlight socio-cultural influences on maternal depression as well as the effects of depression on mother/child attachment.

Day two will feature advanced skill building.

For more information please contact  
The Conference Coordinator: Dana Hay, Planners Plus Inc.  
Phone 204-224-1831  
Email: [dana@plannersplus.ca](mailto:dana@plannersplus.ca)

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*"Attachment, Psychopathology and Adaptation across the Lifespan"*

March 2008

Featuring Dr. Pat Crittenden

This 5-day course introduces Dr. Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model (DMM) of attachment and will focus on development from infancy to adulthood. It emphasizes the process of adaptation and those developmental pathways that carry risk for psychopathology. At each age, the approaches to prevention and treatment are considered using a strength based approach to working with parents and children

For more information please contact  
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Conference Coordinator  
Aulneau Renewal Centre  
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