

## Children's Rights - 1977

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Throughout Jewish history the family has been the basic unit. The relationships of child to parent and parent to child have been carefully defined to achieve a wholesome and harmonious whole. Effective child rearing is a basic Jewish family value. Modern times have created great changes, splintering the stability and strength of the extended family, removing its protection and the value-oriented environment which it created and taught.

Governments have slowly recognized the need to develop policies and programs to protect and aid children. Theories and practices on children's rights are being formulated, but there is both confusion and conflict. We believe that parents and the Jewish community bear a primary responsibility for establishing the standards by which children learn values and express their moral and ethical commitments.

As citizens of our various states and nations, we recognize the obligation of governments to establish and create laws that protect parental responsibility but assume communal responsibility where needed and as appropriate. The preamble to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child states: "The child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care... mankind owes to the child the best it has to give."

Assembled as delegates to the NFTS 31st Biennial Assembly in San Francisco and in loving concern for our own and all children, we do:

1) Express our deep concern about the increasing number of child abuse and neglect cases and recognize that these children frequently become abusing and neglecting parents. To insure that the rights of the child are secured and that the ability of people to be effective parents is created and maintained, we urge legislators to establish laws that will protect the child and programs that will aid both parents and child. We call upon the government at all levels to establish affirmative programs to meet the social welfare needs of every child with adequate funds to provide the necessary services to make such programs effective. While it is usually in the best interest of the child and the family that children and parents remain together, we recognize that there are circumstances under which, because of emotional instability or criminal actions, either one or both parents are incapable of providing an appropriate home for the child. In such circumstances, we urge all public and private welfare agencies to create the kind of programs, service and actions that will provide the child with an environment conducive to developing a secure and whole person.

2) Affirming that the Jewish value of "purity of the family" includes a sane, wholesome appraisal of sexual relationships in human affairs, we deplore as a most heinous form of child abuse, the exploitation of children in pornography. Because most criminal statutes which deal with sex crimes often do not include those activities which are recognized today as child pornography, we urge legislative programs which will protect children who are so exploited by parents or society and which will impose criminal sanction upon those persons guilty of this exploitation, including those who are purveyors of materials containing child pornography.

We specifically call upon United States Sisterhoods to assume responsibility to ascertain in their respective states, the status of legislation safeguarding children and where necessary to press for such legislation.

We reaffirm our request to the President of the United States to form a National Committee to study the whole question of children's rights in order that a coherent program may be developed which will protect and aid

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children. We urge our President and Congress to provide the necessary funds to implement this program and to consider the establishment of a Department or Bureau of Children's Affairs, including the possibility of a Cabinet position so designated. We urge NFTS affiliates in the 15 other countries of our Federation to apply the concept of these resolutions within their own societies.

3) We affirm that the rights of children are secured only when parents and society assume responsibility to set examples of moral and ethical behavior and to teach such values to children. Therefore we urge all Sisterhoods to create study and action programs to help parents develop a system of family observances, disciplines and actions which will bring Jewish values into everyday life, which may defend youth and adults from leaving Judaism, whether for cults or other reasons. This includes advocacy roles, whether individually or in cooperation with appropriate public and private agencies, to de-emphasize violence, crimes and deception in the media, excessive materialism and conspicuous consumption.