

Children and the Family - 1983

Issue

1. The Breakdown of the Family
 1. Domestic Violence
 2. Child Abuse and Pornography, Missing Children
 3. Spouse Abuse
 4. Child Support
2. Day Care
3. Public Education

Background

Our Jewish family, once the model of stability, respect and devotion, is falling victim to the forces in modern life which brought about the breakdown of the family generally. Changing social patterns of increased divorce, domestic violence, child abuse, drugs, alcoholism, pressures and tensions fragment and severely challenge family life. Single parent families or the decision not to marry and have children especially affect the Jewish family (excerpted from NFTS 70th Anniversary press release).

Domestic violence is not new. It has always happened. Battered children and battered wives have suffered in silence while doctors and authorities often looked the other way. Society is beginning to attempt to come to the assistance of these helpless victims with shelters and counseling services.

The abused child is not only a physically battered child; the child may be the victim of sexual abuse by a member of the family. Those who photograph children nude or engaged in sexually explicit activities are not always strangers. The victims of child abuse bear the scars for the rest of their lives, but the perpetrators often go free.

With more frequent divorce many homes are single parent homes. Too frequently, the father not only physically and emotionally absents himself from the home but also forfeits his obligations to his children through non-payment of child support.

The increasing number of working mothers as well as the increasing number of single parent homes make it imperative that responsible child care centers be available. Ten years ago as the number of mothers with full time jobs began to increase, it was assumed that industry would move to provide on-site day care for its workers. This has not been the case, although in 1982 more than 7 million women with children under six years of age were employed in full-time positions ("Corporate Ambivalence on Day Care," Ardee Brooks). Women now comprise nearly 43% of the work force and are the sole support of nine million families.

Resolution

1. We urge Sisterhoods to work in concert with other organizations to provide a variety of services such as shelters, counseling, food, clothing and jobs for the victims of spouse, child or family abuse. We especially urge Sisterhoods to undertake programs and projects in specific relationship to the Jewish community and where appropriate establish or support programs that will deal especially with Jewish victims.
2. We abhor child pornography and deplore it as a form of entertainment. We urge recognition that the production and distribution of pornographic material featuring children is not a right guaranteed by either

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the U.S. or Canadian Constitution, but a violation of the child's freedom and dignity. We urge legislation which will guarantee that convicted pornographers, producers and sellers of such pornography and child abusers will be prevented from repeating their crimes.

3. In affirmation of the efforts already enacted on behalf of missing children, we urge Sisterhoods to participate in or initiate local and statewide programs that will secure the safety of our children, including such appropriate security measures as voluntary fingerprinting, educational programs for children and adequate supervision of playgrounds, nursery schools and public schools.
4. We urge that spouse, child and family abuse not be viewed as merely social ills by the police, the courts and others but as criminal acts.
5. We urge Sisterhoods to support passage and enforcement of legislation that ensures payment of child support.
6. We encourage Sisterhoods to continue their support of the establishment and maintenance of community day care centers which would provide appropriate environments for young children of working mothers. In addition we urge Sisterhoods to establish day care centers within their congregations to handle preschool children of their own members, recognizing that these particular day care centers should provide an atmosphere of Jewish learning in addition to that which would normally be expected in the home.
7. We reaffirm our commitment to the public school system and to the doctrine of separation of church and state in the education of our children. We believe that while the public school system must exemplify moral and ethical standards, the primary responsibility for teaching these values is within the family and home.