

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Telecommunications & Information Administration**

Evaluation of the  
Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program

**Case Study Report**

**Cornell University Family Life Development Center  
94035**

**Ithaca, New York**

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Site Visitors: John Lockwood

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## **PREFACE**

On behalf of the National Telecommunications and Information (NTIA), I am pleased to share the following report that is one of a series of case studies conducted on grants awarded by the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP) in 1994 and 1995. The case studies are part of the program's evaluation effort designed to gain knowledge about the effects and lessons of TIIAP-funded projects. NTIA contracted Westat, a research and consulting firm, to perform an independent evaluation of the program's first two years of grants. The evaluation consisted of a mail survey of 206 grant recipient organizations and in-depth case studies of selected projects. In February, 1999, the Commerce Department released Westat's evaluation report.

The projects selected for the case studies cover a broad range of program types and sizes, planning grants as well as demonstration grants, and they show varying degrees of implementation, sustainability, and replication. Westat selected the projects to represent a cross-section of all projects funded in the program's first two years. Specific selection criteria included geographic region, target population, project application area, project category, and size of award. To conduct each case study, Westat reviewed all project files, including progress reports and the final report, and conducted site visits. The site visits consisted of project demonstrations and interviews with project staff, representatives of partner organizations, and project end users.

NTIA thanks the case study participants for their time and their willingness to share not only their successes but their difficulties, too. Most of all, we applaud their pioneering efforts to bring the benefits of advanced telecommunications and information technologies to communities in need. We are excited about the case studies and lessons they contain. It is through the dissemination of these lessons that we extend the benefits of TIIAP-funded projects nationwide.

We hope you find this case study report valuable and encourage you to read other TIIAP case studies. You may obtain additional case studies and other TIIAP publications, including the final Westat evaluation report, through the NTIA web site ([www.ntia.doc.gov](http://www.ntia.doc.gov)), or by calling the TIIAP office at (202) 482-2048. We also are interested in your feedback. If you have comments on this case study or suggestions on how TIIAP can better provide information on the results and lessons of its grants, please contact Francine E. Jefferson, Ph.D. at (202) 482-2048 or by email at [fjefferson@ntia.doc.gov](mailto:fjefferson@ntia.doc.gov).

Larry Irving  
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information

## TIAP CASE STUDY

### Cornell University Family Life Development Center

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this 1994 TIAP planning grant, Cornell University's Family Life Development Center (FLDC) conducted a needs assessment for telecommunications use by child abuse and neglect professionals. This research led to the establishment of the Child Abuse Prevention Network (The Network), which came on line in November 1995. The Network currently has 9 partner organizations, each with its own website based on The Network's server, and provides to child maltreatment professionals both nationally and internationally. Access to the site has been steadily increasing during its 3 years of operation (based on the number of hits on the web page and the amount of information downloaded by visitors). The current usage trend is toward increasing numbers of visitors who stay longer and find more information worth downloading. Just in the month of November 1998, there were over 400,000 items downloaded from the home page for approximately 1.5 gigabytes of information. The Network use is growing at the rate of over 300 percent per year. Currently, there are 10,000 visits to the site each month.

The three main goals of the project were completed. First, the FLDC conducted a survey of child abuse professionals nationwide. The objectives of the survey were to measure technology readiness, measure psychological readiness, and discover network products and services that would appeal to professionals in the child abuse maltreatment arena. The survey found that the child abuse researchers were both technologically and psychologically ready for an Internet-based system that would provide links and other useful information.

The second goal, to monitor computer networking in child abuse prevention, also yielded important information. The monitoring aspect of the project allowed staff to describe and monitor developments as well as establish a methodology for tracking network activity. Cornell Information Technologies was called upon to advise the project or planning in light of the exploding capabilities of the Internet. They advised the creation of a testbed that eventually developed into a website (<http://child.cornell.edu>) designed to help provide a model Internet service for professionals. The Network, by operating the website and continuing efforts to develop information resources to serve child maltreatment professionals, accomplished and surpassed the third goal of translating research results into practical plans for child abuse networking.

Having successfully completed the initial goals, the project's current areas of special interest are programs to guarantee children's rights, the role of emerging technologies in training, and childhood violence prevention. In addition to The Network, current programs of FLDC include the Child Protective Services Training Institute; National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect; Just for Kids; the Residential Child Care Project; and Strong Families, Strong Soldiers, a program with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Marine Corps. The Network has helped these programs in their development of web and other Internet resources.

The largest issue facing the project is fundraising. Although sustainability was planned for during the early days of the grant award, efforts of project personnel have not always been rewarded with sustaining capital. The attempts at raising money for the project include trying to gain child maltreatment association funding, developing electronic networks, selling products (publications, software, and information services), and sustaining strong partnerships. In addition, the project has disseminated a business plan to banks and investors, but funding agents have yet to come forward. The project leader described the

problem as a “Catch 22” – one must have sufficient funding to obtain funding. Although sustaining the project is probable, expansion seems unlikely without greater sources of outside income.

Despite the issue of funding, the project has made several laudable impacts. Due to the website and its many links, information has been made much more accessible to child maltreatment prevention professionals. In addition, the TIIAP grant has indirectly helped the National Data Archive collect information on child maltreatment by providing it with a new source to collect data about the field. There were also two major impacts for the grant recipient: the TIIAP project improved the visibility of FLDC as well as its relations in the field.

The project staff reported several lessons learned about the World Wide Web during the planning and implementation of the project.

- Be interactive with your audience.
- Constantly bring new things onto the website.
- People are ready, willing, and able to be involved in expanding technology.
- Surveys are a good way to collect needs assessment data.
- Position project with a corporate partner.

The project is poised to maintain the website and continue to investigate partnerships that will secure sustainability. The project leader remains optimistic about the future and is planning for the next phase of the project, turning into an independent, private-sector entity.

## **OVERVIEW**

In this 1-year planning grant, Cornell University’s Family Life Development Center (FLDC) conducted a needs assessment for telecommunications use by child abuse and neglect professionals. This research led to the establishment of the Child Abuse Prevention Network (The Network), which began in July 1995 and opened to the public in December 1995. The Network operates as a collaborative among its members and partners. Major sources of support have come from the TIIAP planning grant, the U.S. Army Family Advocacy Program, and Cornell University's College of Human Ecology -- Family Life Development Center (FLDC). In addition, LifeNET, a corporate partner, has provided technical support.

The network has over 1,000 members and provides access to over 1,500 professionals in child abuse research and related fields through various electronic mailing lists. These lists include the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, Child-Abuse-L for professionals in the field, SIGCA-MD-L for physician and those involved in the clinical issues, HUSITA-L list for human services information technology applications, and SBSpro-L for the particular issue of Shaken Baby Syndrome. A great deal of information is provided through The Network gateway. Access to some mailing lists and the proprietary databases are currently for members only.

Access to the site has been steadily increasing during its 3 years of operation (based on the number of hits on the web page and the amount of information downloaded by visitors). The reported trend is toward increasing numbers of visitors who stay longer and find more information worth downloading. By November 1998 (the latest figures available), over 400,000 items and approximately 1.5 gigabytes of information were downloaded. Current Network use is growing at the rate of over 300 percent per year.

## **Purpose and General Approach**

The 1-year planning grant extended from October 1994 to October 1995. Hoping to combine a needs assessment for a network, an assessment of the existing technology, and a strategy for designing a network for child abuse and neglect prevention, the stated project goals were to:

- Conduct a survey of 1,200 child abuse professionals nationwide;
- Monitor computer networking in child abuse prevention; and
- Translate research results into practical plans for child abuse networking.

The grant recipient achieved all of its goals and further established The Network and kept it running since the termination of the grant. The Network provides a “one-stop shopping” resource for professionals in the field of child abuse and neglect.

## **Description of Grant Recipients and Project Partners**

**Grant Recipient.** The Family Life Development Center (FLDC) was established by New York State in 1974. Its mission is to improve professional and public efforts to understand and deal with risk factors in the lives of children, families, and communities that lead to family violence and neglect. It focuses on strategies and programs to help vulnerable children and youth by strengthening families and communities. As an interdisciplinary unit of the College of Human Ecology, the FLDC accomplishes its mission through research, training, and education. The current areas of special interest are programs to guarantee children's rights, the role of emerging technologies in training, and childhood violence prevention.

In addition to sustaining a national computer network for the field of child abuse and neglect (The Network), FLDC programs include the following.

- **The Child Protective Services Training Institute** is in its 17<sup>th</sup> year of providing training to the professionals who investigate, manage, and treat the more than 100,000 annual cases of child abuse and neglect in New York State. Nearly all child protective workers and supervisors in New York, currently active in the profession, have been provided core training on the skills needed to do protective work. In 1995, over 200 participated in core training and 1,000 professionals engaged in 50 advanced courses.
- **Just For Kids!** is an organization that addresses the issue of psychological maltreatment and disseminates information for protective services, prevention, community awareness, and parent education. It responds to the needs of professionals and the general public for information and consultation.
- **National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN)** acquires, preserves, and disseminates high-quality datasets relevant to the study of child abuse and neglect. The Archive facilitates secondary analysis by distributing data in ready-to-use computer formats, providing technical support to data users, and sponsoring training programs for researchers.
- **Prenatal/Early Infancy Program (PEIP)** is a followup study assessing the long-term effects of a landmark nurse-home visiting program 15 years after the initial intervention. The

study will measure the enduring impact of the intervention on both the mothers and their children.

- **Protecting the Rights of Children** focuses on efforts to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Current efforts include an international project in collaboration with advocacy groups in Costa Rica and Canada, and a two-week training institute dealing with "The Child's Right to be Heard" in legal, child protection, and mental health settings based upon research on memory, perception, and adult-child communication.
- **The Residential Child Care Project** has reached workers in 40 states, Canada, Puerto Rico, and the United Kingdom with its ongoing program of institutional abuse prevention and investigation.
- **Strong Families, Strong Soldiers** is a program with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Marine Corps to identify key family violence prevention strategies, develop operations manuals, and implement initial training efforts for the U.S. military's Family Advocacy Programs at installations and bases around the world.
- **Violence Prevention in Childhood** is a research and program development initiative to redirect violent beliefs and respond to violent trauma in childhood.

### **Project Partners**

The Child Abuse Prevention Network has involved partners on state, national, and international levels in government, military, and corporate sectors. These partners include:

- The U.S. Army Family Advocacy Program,
- The New York State chapter of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPCA-NYS),
- The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN),
- Life Network Engineering Technologies, Inc. (LifeNET),
- The Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), and
- Survivors and Victims Empowered (SAVE).

**The U.S. Army.** Over the past five years, the U.S. Army had an inter-agency agreement with USDA/Cooperative Extension and the FLDC on supporting family violence prevention efforts at over 100 installations worldwide. As a part of FDLC's ongoing relationship with the armed forces, The Network is working with the Army to develop web pages that give the Family Advocacy Programs access to links on child abuse, child safety, and family violence. A collection of professional manuals and ready-to-use resources are published online at the TIAP-initiated Network website.

**New York State.** The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse in New York State (NCPCA-NYS) is part of a network of 60 chapters that exist in every state in the U.S. NCPCA-NYS has worked with The Network to build a statewide effort to prevent child abuse. Their mission is to be the primary source of statewide advocacy, information and referral (I&R), public awareness, and strategic support for effective prevention programs.

The NCPA-NYS operates a Prevention Information Resource Center that is used by thousands of parents, relatives, neighbors, professionals, and concerned citizens across the state. Their strategic focus is on home visitation programs for parents and problem solving at the local level.

**International.** The International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) is one of the newest partners. ISPCAN was founded in 1977 and is the only multidisciplinary international organization that brings together a worldwide cross-section of professionals to work toward the prevention and treatment of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation. ISPCAN has a membership of over 2,000 individuals in over 90 countries.

ISPCAN's mission is to prevent cruelty to children in every nation. It is committed to increasing public awareness of all forms of violence against children, developing activities to prevent such violence, and promoting the rights of children in all regions of the world. To this end, ISPCAN publishes *Child Abuse and Neglect*, a leading international research journal in child abuse and neglect, and *The Link* an international newsletter for members. In addition, ISPCAN convenes biennial international congresses and regional conferences, and supports local training and education programs.

**Corporate.** Life Network Engineering Technologies, Inc. (LifeNET) is the private sector partner of The Network. LifeNET is dedicated to providing resources for all child abuse prevention professionals through its Endangered Child Network (EC-Net). EC-Net is a collaborative initiative of the FLDC and LifeNET.

The EC-Net product line design includes web subscription services, software, and consulting. Under the EC-Net umbrella, The Network has become the first full-service Internet child abuse resource for identification, reporting, intervention, treatment, and prevention. EC-Net is a subscription service on the Internet for human services workers who deal with the problems of child endangerment and family life in today's complex environment. It has e-mail access to over 900 doctors, researchers, and other child protection professionals. EC-Net also features a collection of online resources with descriptive information to guide professionals to needed information, databases with resources and expert contacts, and a feedback system to improve the site.

**National.** Another partner is the National Resource Center on Child Fatality Review (NCFR), operated by Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN). ICAN is dedicated to improving the lives of abused and neglected children by developing policies and providing services, education, and treatment programs. NCFR's mission is to prevent the severe and fatal abuse and neglect of children by the establishment, support, and expansion of a national network of child fatality review teams. NCFR sponsors a website with a searchable directory of the state, national, and international organizations that have responsibilities for child fatality reviews. Child fatality reviews probe cases of child death to see the interplay between medical, criminal, and child protective concerns, and how communities can respond more effectively to prevent child deaths. NCFR also has an online publication entitled *Child Deaths in California: 1992-1995*, which provides an overview of how a statewide commitment to child fatality review works.

**SAVE.** The Network and LifeNET have an alliance with Survivors and Victims Empowered (SAVE). SAVE helps prevent the criminal neglect and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children by raising public awareness and implementing solutions. The organization distributes publications, such as *Treating Abuse Today*, and sustains a searchable database of important contact points for victims and survivors.

## **Project Costs**

The total budget for the planning grant was \$229,352 with \$114,676 (50 percent) provided by TIIAP. Cornell University provided the match through the FLDC's departmental funds. The FLDC receives core funding from New York State and currently operates over \$3 million in programs funded through competitive grants and contracts at the state and federal levels.

## **PROJECT CONTEXT**

### **Community Description**

The communities served by this project are the professionals in the field of child abuse and neglect and, indirectly, the nation's children. Child maltreatment, physical abuse, psychological maltreatment, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse are the main areas of concern. The project provides tools for over 120,000 website visitors and listserv users annually (e.g., social workers and child psychologists) to support the identification, investigation, treatment, adjudication, and prevention of child abuse and neglect. The project was described as serving a nationwide area and as such is descriptive of the widespread impact of child abuse and locations of child welfare professionals.

According to researcher and author George Thomas,

*The child welfare field today can be said to consist of services provided to the 400 thousand-plus children in foster family care; perhaps another 75 to 100 thousand in private residential group care, and equivalent numbers residing in mental health residential treatment facilities and in juvenile delinquency facilities; somewhere between 500 thousand to 1 million runaway and "throwaway" children living in shelters, make-shift arrangements, and the streets; undocumented numbers of children receiving family based services; additional numbers attending therapeutic day service programs or alternative schools under public and private auspices; and some of the millions of younger children in full and part-time day care programs.<sup>1</sup>*

The community is as large as the problem is pervasive—nationwide.

### **Status of Telecommunications/Information Infrastructure Environment Prior to the TIIAP Project**

Given the widespread nature of child abuse and neglect, professionals need a good source of information to nurture their clients. Before the TIIAP grant, no such informational infrastructure was available. The grant provided the impetus to create an accessible telecommunications venue for the dissemination and exchange of child welfare information and resources. The infrastructure developed, tested, and implemented through The Network project is a model that organized a human services infrastructure via telecommunications technology. Thus, the infrastructure developed by this project was not wholly telecommunications oriented, but is an important dimension for the nation's human services infrastructure relating to the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

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<sup>1</sup> George Thomas (1994), *Travels in the Trench Between Child Welfare Theory and Practice*, "Installment I," presented online in collaboration with the author and Haworth Press by the Child Abuse Prevention Network. Embedded references have been removed.



## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

### Activities/Milestones that Occurred Prior to the TIIAP Grant Period

The FLDC has a litany of milestones that reach back to its founding in 1974, and the seeds of The Network project were sown in one of these. In April 1985, the FLDC conducted a Tenth Anniversary Conference that involved experts from all over the country. In a post-mortem analysis, it emerged that the conference was viewed as excellent by its participants, but the impact on practice was minimal. The rhetorical question was: wouldn't it be great if the "conference" could be run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year? This led to the development (by the same personnel who were to become the project leader and the principal investigator of the TIIAP project) of a 1986 grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to launch a national computer network on child abuse and neglect. While the proposal was rejected, FLDC actually received technical support from General Electric Information Services (GEISCO) and a grant from the Apple Computer Corporation, which resulted in development of a prototype network that functioned, but failed for lack of funding. In addition, in October 1988, one of the ideas that had been built into the earlier HHS proposal, the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) was actually funded by HHS and established at FLDC. By making data available to a larger number of researchers, NDACAN seeks to provide a relatively inexpensive and scientifically productive means for researchers to explore important issues in the child maltreatment field. In FLDC's efforts to make data available to scholars across the country, developing a means to do this may have been the beginning of an interest in nationwide dissemination through the use of telecommunications technology. Thus, it seems that the TIIAP grant from the Department of Commerce was a logical outgrowth of the early prototyping that began in 1985.

### Activities/Milestones that Occurred During the TIIAP Grant Period

During the year of the grant, a number of milestones were established by the FLDC. A snapshot of those activities (taken from the reports The Network submitted to TIIAP) is provided below.

- The **first quarter** was spent establishing the human network of partnerships and supporters in the field. In addition, FLDC began monitoring the Internet for "content, utility, and participation related to child abuse and neglect" and planning for the survey. Further implementation of the grant was delayed while contract negotiations between Cornell and TIIAP concluded (in December 1994).
- The **second quarter** saw a great deal of activity on the survey. A questionnaire was developed, 25,000 potential respondents were identified, a sample was drawn, and the survey was piloted. The survey had five sections that covered background information, computer use for professional work, home computer use (one section for professionals who did not work from home and one for those who did), and other demographic information. In addition, Internet monitoring continued and a survey was administered to 60 America On-Line subscribers who "indicated a commitment to child abuse networking."
- In the **third quarter**, the project analyzed pilot survey results, made adjustments to the survey, and began the national survey. A nationally-representative list of 3,000 respondents was generated and a number of questionnaires were completed. The FLDC also began planning business and marketing strategies based on the data retrieved from the ongoing Internet monitoring process and the pilot study.
- With the data gathering coming to a close, the **fourth quarter** involved analysis of the information obtained. The monitoring aspect of the grant had identified more than 1,000

child maltreatment professionals who were participating on listservs, Gophers, and the World Wide Web. The grant set up its own website testbed under the advisement of Cornell Information Technology specialists. In addition, the project began to test Internet-mediated database simulations aimed at serving the needs of child maltreatment professionals.

Since the project was being asked to help professional organizations with outreach and partners were offering to further develop the FLDC's simulations, the project received a 3-month no-cost extension. This extra time allowed the project to confirm their findings that there was a general readiness for networking and the Internet was the way to best capitalize on that interest. Another interesting finding was that two out of five respondents indicated they were already on the Internet. Of these, however, 40 percent not finding useful information on the Internet.

Thus, the goals of the project were completed as planned. The project successfully conducted a survey of over 1,100 child abuse professionals nationwide, monitored computer networking in child abuse prevention, and translated the research results into practical plans for child abuse networking. This last goal materialized as the Child Abuse Prevention Network (The Network), which was publicly launched in November 1995.

### **Steps Taken to Sustain Project Activities Beyond the TIAP Grant Period**

The idea of sustainability was in the minds of the project leaders from the beginning. Throughout the life of The Network, staff members tried to devise ways to keep the project going after grant funds ran out. The efforts of project personnel, however, have not always been rewarded with sustaining capital. The attempts at raising money for the project include the following.

- **Association funding.** The program leader is currently working with child maltreatment associations to gain funding for the website. A partnership with an association would funnel a certain portion of the members' annual dues to sustain the network.
- **Electronic Networks.** The Endangered Child Network (EC-Net) provides information resources for the public, and they have set aside special resources for members. These are protected by password access and other security measures. The subscription charge is \$10 per month. Although a business plan was developed for a 5,000-member proprietary network, for lack of financing, it has not yet taken hold.
- **Products.** The project designed products that could, if financed and marketed, be sold to professionals, such as simulations and other proprietary tools for professionals. For example, The Network and LifeNET partnership is developing software called CAN Do! for child abuse and prevention professionals. CAN Do! is software for child abuse professionals that reduces the time it takes to get answers, increases the power of problem solving, and reduces paperwork. The partnership also provides solutions for large agencies and state bureaucracies by working with improving major data systems. The service, WorkSmart Solutions, allows for information on demand and provides administrators with analysis tools.
- **Corporate partners.** LifeNET is still working with the project to sustain and expand its services.

## **Activities/Milestones that Occurred Following the TIIAP Grant Period**

Activities following the grant are related to refining the website and securing additional funding for the project. This has led to a great deal of human networking to develop those refinements and funding possibilities. As they stated in their final report (p. 42), “Our project continues to bear fruit. Both our research results and our prototyping have brought considerable interest from our main audiences and considerable insight into the planning of a national network for child abuse prevention.” Thus, their efforts have focused on the following.

- *Assist professionals in managing risk*, i.e., with better information resources, the risk of misdiagnosis and treatment is diminished.
- *Coordinate with researcher work styles*, i.e., making adjustments in services to better serve network clients.
- *Provide immediate timesavings*, i.e., by utilizing top-drawer telecommunications, necessary information is available on the desktop.
- *Lengthen decision-making time*, i.e., the faster information is available, the longer one can consider options. In addition, with thorough consideration, risk is potentially reduced.
- *Engender a sense of control over available information*, i.e., by having information readily available in a one-stop shopping environment, researchers have access to the information they will likely need. In the event that they cannot find what they want at The Network website, they can search outside the site while maintaining control via the frame technology employed by the site.
- *Enhance the user’s ability to provide information*, i.e., information that is found can be disseminated.

## **Issues**

There was a delay in implementation due to extended contract negotiations between TIIAP and Cornell University. The grant was not finalized until late December 1994, which prevented the project from spending any funds until then. In particular, it delayed the hiring of key personnel and establishing a subcontract for the survey.

## **Problems**

The only problem that the project may suffer is inadequate funding. Although there was conflicting testimony about the continued viability of the project, the bottom line is that it may face cutbacks from FLDC in the future. The business side of the project that would have made it self-sustaining has not materialized as expected. Although progress has been made since the grant ended, the principal investigator indicated that it was delayed. Without the needed infusion of funds, the project found it difficult to leverage capital. The project has disseminated a business plan to banks and investors, but they have not yet provided funds. The project leader described the problem as a “Catch 22” – one must have sufficient funding to attract investment funds.

The project will likely continue in some form. At present, Cornell’s College of Human Ecology and the FLDC are sustaining the project, and there is still hope that a business partnership with LifeNET will

produce revenue as well. Although sustaining the project is probable, expansion seems unlikely without additional outside funding.

## **PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND IMPACT**

The three main goals of the project were completed. The FLDC conducted a survey of 1,120 child abuse professionals nationwide. Although the goal was 1,200, the project came close (over 93 percent of its goal) with 900 telephone interviews of child abuse professionals and another 220 with technology specialists in child abuse agencies. The objectives of these surveys were to measure technology readiness, measure psychological readiness, and discover network products and services that would appeal to professionals in the child abuse maltreatment arena. Surveys found that child abuse researchers were both technologically and psychologically ready for an Internet-based system that would provide links and other useful information.

The second goal, to monitor computer networking in child abuse prevention, also yielded important information. In the project's final report (p. 11), they stated that,

*We found that the period of this grant marked a watershed. There was an exponential growth in information on child abuse and neglect online. At the beginning of the project, there were 5 to 10 information sources, and around 200 "connected" professionals. By the end of the project, there were more than 200 information sources, and evidence of tens of thousands of agencies connected.*

The monitoring aspect of the project allowed them to describe and monitor developments as well as establish a methodology for tracking network activity. This led to the creation of a website (<http://child.cornell.edu>) to help provide a model Internet service for professionals. They use frame technology to help guide the researcher through the morass of information on line without getting lost. Through The Network, researchers can access numerous resources within the frame of the home page.

The third goal of translating research results into practical plans for child abuse networking was accomplished and surpassed by establishing The Network. The website continues to develop products to serve child abuse and neglect professionals.

### **Technology-Related Accomplishments**

The major technology-related accomplishment was developing a frame technology website. Although this was not an exclusive development of the project, it may have been an ideal choice for helping researchers. Frame technology allows a user to remain at a particular website while surfing other sites. The advantage of this to researchers is that it allows them to experiment with different sites and sources of information without leaving the security of The Network. This is particularly useful to novice users of the web because it helps prevent them from getting lost in a sea of sites and information.

### **Impact of Project on Direct End Users**

Due to the website and its many links, information has been made much more accessible to child maltreatment prevention professionals. As of November 1998, 10,000 visitors (professionals and other inquirers) seeking facts about child abuse and neglect were downloading more than 1.5 gigabytes of information from the website on a monthly basis.

## **Impact of Project on Other Beneficiaries and/or the Overall Community**

The TIIAP grant has indirectly helped the National Data Archive collect information on child maltreatment. Because of the networking possibilities of web technologies and its interactive nature, a great deal more information has been readily available for collection. Indeed, more information is available to the general public via The Network website.

## **Impact of Project on Grant Recipients and Project Partners**

There were two major impacts for the grant recipient: the TIIAP project improved the visibility of FLDC as well as its relations in the field. This has had an impact on FLDC's other projects such as the National Data Archive project. The project has also helped develop strong partnerships with the U.S. Army and LifeNET.

## **Impact of TIIAP Support on the Initiative**

The consensus of the project staff seems to be that the project would have happened without TIIAP support, but not as quickly. The funding allowed FLDC to improve access to quality information much more rapidly than would have otherwise taken place.

## **EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION**

### **Evaluation**

Although the project collected a great deal of information about the field of child maltreatment, no evaluation was performed on the project itself. Since the project ended in October 1995, feedback has been received on an ongoing basis, but it has not been written up in an accessible form. The only data collection that is currently performed by the site (to evaluate itself) is through tracking visitor traffic. The Network routinely tracks the number of visitors and the amount of information downloaded.

### **Dissemination**

Presently, the sole engine of dissemination is the website. During the grant period however, there were a number of dissemination venues.

1. January 1995—A computer slide show was developed and displayed at the San Diego Children's Hospital Annual Research Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect.
2. April 1995—The project leader gave presentations to the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect in Washington, DC, and Childwatch International in Glasgow, Scotland.
3. August 1995—A paper on computer networking for the Interagency Coalition on Child Abuse and Neglect was written to be included in their annual report.
4. September 1995—The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) asked project staff to assist them in developing online publications in the field of child sexual abuse investigation and prosecution. Initial work went online by the end of September.
5. October 1995—Project staff gave three presentations at the Clinical Technologies Conference in Chicago.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project staff reported several lessons learned during the planning and implementation of the project.

- **Be interactive with your audience.** – Projects do not develop in a vacuum. Program staff should actively seek feedback from users in order to improve delivery of services and other project elements in development.
- **Constantly bring new things onto the website.** – To keep a website interesting, useful, and evolving, website coordinators should strive to update frequently.
- **People are ready, willing, and able to be involved.** – The interest in technology is pervasive and many people are willing to get involved with projects that are developing technology.
- **Surveys are a good way to collect needs assessment data.** – During the needs assessment phase of the planning, surveys were used. They provided a great deal of useful data and guided the development of the project.
- **Position the project with a corporate partner.** – During the process of securing sustainability for the project, academic-oriented project leaders learned how to position themselves to be more interesting to corporate partners. By learning how the corporate world works, the project developed needed business acumen and The Network was better able to secure funding for the project.<sup>2</sup>

## FUTURE PLANS

The project plans to maintain the website and continue to investigate partnerships that will secure sustainability. The project leader remains optimistic about the future, but the principal investigator is “less optimistic that a year ago.” As funding continues to become tighter on college campuses, projects such as The Network will remain in danger of fluctuating subsidies. Thus, the next phase of the project may be a move to become an independent, private-sector entity with help from its partner LifeNET. The project leader has since retired from the FLDC and been hired as vice president for strategic planning at LifeNET, so the partnership remains strong and may bear fruit in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> The project personnel remarked that the Department of Commerce, given its special expertise, could have helped in developing aspects of the project’s business objectives through technical assistance, but did not.