



Jayne Bernsten

Jayne Bernsten has an impressive record of service in the Philadelphia community. She served for four years as a member of the Philadelphia chapter of City Year, during which time she developed the City Heroes Alumni Board and planned and implemented many projects, ranging from lot clean-ups to after-school programming. Jayne was also a three-year member of Penn Charter's Community Service Council and worked as a paid intern for the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. Jayne logged over 250 hours of community service in her senior year of high school alone. During her time at Penn, she has tutored eighth graders at Sulzberger Middle School as part of the West Philadelphia Tutoring Project and served on the executive board of Kite and Key as the Ronald McDonald House coordinator. In the summer after her junior year, Jayne interned with the Support Center for Child Advocates in Philadelphia, where she conducted research on "Child Fatality Reports" for the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Human Services. Jayne majored in Philosophy, Politics and Economics and minored in French in the College.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Reducing the Likelihood of Child Abuse and Neglect: A Policy Approach

Faculty Advisor: Dean Richard Gelles, School of Social Policy & Practice

Pennsylvania law (Act 33) mandates that cases of child fatalities and near fatalities undergo review at the state and local levels. Act 33 also requires that the reports include recommendations for investigating and reporting potential future incidences of child abuse and neglect. This thesis closely examines forty cases that were the consequence of Act 33 review by the Departments of Public Welfare and Human Services in Philadelphia with the aim of providing recommendations to reduce the likelihood of recurrent cases of child abuse and neglect.

The thesis highlights the problem of accountability in the child protective services system, an issue that has received publicity with recent high-profile cases that shed harsh light on agency workers. Research in case files revealed that while Act 33 provides procedural reform for reporting, it does not provide a pathway to implement recommendations to reduce the likelihood of child fatalities or near fatalities in the future. The thesis demonstrates that the lack of accountability for implementing the recommendations rests on institutional problems, namely that the agencies conducting the Act 33 reviews fail to follow their own procedures. The thesis calls for the creation of external oversight mechanisms to hold agencies accountable for implementing systematic recommendations in the Act 33 review process.