

WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?

Fact Sheet

Campaign Overview / Key Issues

The educational outreach campaign in association with WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? engaged social workers, substance abuse counselors, and child welfare workers. Nine public television stations conducted screenings and facilitated discussions. Station grant recipients included Thirteen/WNET, New York and KUAT/Tucson, AZ as well as seven stations engaged in the Making Connections Media Outreach Initiative: Connecticut Public Television, Detroit Public Television, MI; KLRN/San Antonio, TX; KPBS/San Diego, CA; WFYI/Indianapolis, IN; WHYYP/Philadelphia, PA; and WYES/New Orleans, LA. Key areas of concern included permanency planning and substance abuse. Other issues included grandparents rearing their grandchildren and kinship care.

Series / Broadcast

Nominated for an Academy Award®, this emotionally-wrenching story reveals how two brothers who were devastated by their mother's addiction and neglect found a way to thrive and redefine what it means to be a family. WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? is a cinema vérité portrait of the bond that develops between two brothers who long to be reunited with their mother. Shot over a three-year period, the film chronicles their mother's battle with crack addiction and their grandmother's struggle to keep the family together. The film ends on the day the Family Court is scheduled to decide the fate of Danny and Raymond. Ultimately, the judge decides to respect the boys' wishes and does not terminate their mother's parental rights. The boys remain in the custody of their grandmother.



WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? was produced and directed by Roger Weisberg and Murray Nossel for Public Policy Productions. The film is narrated by Ossie Davis. It aired nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Don Cheadle on January 27, 2004.

Funders

The outreach campaign was funded by a generous grant from The Hite Foundation, with additional support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Campaign Objectives

Projects adhered to the following objectives and anticipated outcomes for the overall campaign.

- Build awareness of the film and outreach campaign among key constituencies such as schools of social work, social work practitioners, family counselors, substance abuse counselors, and others in the child welfare community, as well as the general public.
- Form partnerships with groups such as local schools of social work and child welfare and family service organizations to conduct outreach activities; determine how to use WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? effectively in local communities, including ways to extend its use beyond the project period.
- Draw upon partnership resources to convene screenings, forums, and discussions on the practice of social work related to adoption, kinship care, and permanency. Related issues may include substance abuse and its effect on families.

Campaign Media Tools and Resources

1. Discussion Guide

Stations and local conveners received a *Discussion Guide* to assist them in conducting their local campaigns. Outreach Extensions worked with organizations and social work professionals to develop a set of 33 child welfare and social work discussion questions for the *Guide*.

- The questions on **permanency planning and social work** were developed by Barbara Pine, professor of social work at the University of Connecticut, and Anthony Maluccio, professor of social work at Boston College, drawing from their extensive research, teaching, and agency consultation in the area of child and family services.
- Questions pertaining to **substance abuse** were developed by the **Veritas Therapeutic Community, Inc.**, a family-focused substance abuse treatment program in New York. Veritas' special focus on children and families makes it a one-of-a-kind drug treatment program.
- Murray Nossel, one of the film's producer/directors, developed **social anthropology questions** that are designed to open up an inquiry into the social, cultural, and historical elements underlying the film.
- Generations United**, the only national membership organization focused solely on promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and policies, developed questions about **grandparents rearing grandchildren and kinship care**.

Additional materials in the *Discussion Guide* included a description of the film, featured appearances and epilogue notes, film production notes, and resources.

2. Web sites

Information about WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN? was housed on the production Web site at www.pbs.org/whycantwebeafamilyagain. Around the broadcast date, Independent Lens, the series under which the show was broadcast, offered promotional materials and linked over to the *Discussion Guide*. The *Discussion Guide* is available on: www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc/communications/mcmoi/wcwbafa_tools.htm.

3. Communications / Technical Assistance

Outreach Extensions provided customized technical assistance to all stations conducting local grant-funded campaigns. Stations were informed about campaign activities and resources via e-mail on an ongoing basis.

National Strategic Partners

National strategic partners included Generations United and Veritas Therapeutic Community, Inc. Two professors of social work offered advice and counsel.

Evaluation / Outcomes

A final report summarized project activities and outcomes.



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