

*A Course for Health Professionals*

**Children's Rights and Child Health  
The Interface**

**Introduction**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Course Introduction

### Module 1 Children's Needs and Rights

Content of Module 1	
Activity 1.1 Create a List of Children's Needs .....	1-2
Activity 1.2 Discuss the Characteristics of Children's Needs .....	1-4
Additional Reading .....	1-7
Optional Handouts	
Power Point Presentation	

### Module 2 Highlights of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Content of Module 2	
Activity 2.1 Discuss Current Status of Children's Rights .....	2-3
Activity 2.2 Barriers to Best Possible Child Health .....	2-6
Additional Reading .....	2-9
Optional Handouts	
Power Point Presentation	

### Module 3 Respecting Children's Rights in Pediatric Practice

Content of Module 3	
Activity 3.1 Protecting Children's Rights in Pediatric Practice.....	3-3
Activity 3.2 Addressing Potential Conflicts Between Parental Rights and Children's Rights.....	3-5
Additional Reading .....	3-10
Optional Handouts	
Power Point Presentation	

### Module 4 Health Policy and Health Services

Content of Module 4	
Activity 4.1 Protecting Children's Right to Best Possible Health.....	4-3
Activity 4.2 How Child Friendly Are Health Centers, Clinics and Hospitals?.....	4-4
Additional Reading.....	4-7
Optional Handouts	
Power Point Presentation	

## **Module 5 The Health Professional As Advocate**

Content of Module 5	
Activity 5.1 Advocating for Changes in Public Policy and Practice.....	5-3
Additional Reading.....	5-6
Optional Handouts	
Power Point Presentation	

### **Grand Rounds**

**Addendum I: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**Addendum II: References**

**Addendum III: Pre and Post Course Evaluation**

**Addendum IV: Case Studies**

## Introduction

The relevance and importance of children's rights to the health and well being of children and families in the US, UK and other developed and developing countries cannot be overstated. The demography of children and childhood is changing rapidly. The social epidemiology of poverty, the environment and the marginalization of children have replaced the traditional causes of childhood morbidity and mortality. Globalization has forever changed the balance of power and loci of decision making for public policies related to human and community development. These and other societal transitions demand a new context for conceptualizing the health and well-being of children and childhood. They demand a radical shift in the roles and functions of child health professionals if they and their disciplines are to remain viable and relevant to the health and well-being of children and families.

The application of a rights-based approach to health provides such a conceptual framework, as well as tangible strategies and skills that can be applied by child health professionals to the delivery of health services and child advocacy. A rationale for the application of children's rights to child health can be structured from the following 4 principles.

- All children, by virtue of their humanness, have rights. In addition, all children have needs. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Convention) establishes international recognition that children have a right to have these needs met.
- The Convention provides a comprehensive framework of rights that will facilitate a holistic approach to promoting the well being of children.
- Children's health and development is best promoted by the fulfillment of all their needs. Respect for all the rights embodied in the Convention will help achieve this goal.
- The Convention is legally binding and imposes obligations on governments to respect children's rights.

In one comprehensive document, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the prerequisites for the health and well being of children, and the obligations of individuals, parents, communities and governments to meet the needs of children by fulfilling their rights.

Many adults, including some in the health field, are resistant to the idea that human rights are relevant to children. They may argue that children's *needs* are more important than children's *rights*. This course, directed at multidisciplinary children's health professionals in training and in practice, examines the relationship between needs and rights, and explores how knowledge of children's rights can promote children's health and development. In so doing, it introduces participants to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, its principles, status, scope and implications.

A discussion about the definition of "rights" is beyond the scope of this manual. However, readers, teachers and students using this curriculum should be aware that the

definition of “right” is itself a complex philosophical principal and may be used in different contexts. As suggested by Jeffrey Bodkin, M.D., an ethicist in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Utah, multiple questions arise when you enter into discussion and dialog about human rights. “Who grants rights? What are the distinctions between legal and moral rights? Are all rights absolute, or are none or some? How should we decide what actions to take when actions may potentially conflict with rights? Do all of children’s needs create rights, or only a set of fundamental needs that are essential for child welfare?”

These and many other issues and questions may arise in the process of implementing this curriculum. In fact, we hope they do! We welcome your insights, thoughts and perspectives as we advance our understanding of how to improve the health and well being of children through the application of the principles and practice of children’s rights.

## **Course Goals and Objectives**

The Goals of this course are: (1) *To provide insight and understanding of the relevance and importance of the principles of human rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to the health and well being of children and families,* and (2) *To train child health professionals to apply these principles to the practice of Pediatrics and child advocacy.*

Course objectives include the following.

- To raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child among child health professionals and its relevance to the health and well being of children and families
- To increase understanding of the application of children’s rights to health, health care, public policy, child advocacy and Pediatric practice
- To provide insight into how public policy and Pediatric practice can be improved to promote greater respect for the rights defined in the Convention
- To raise awareness of the relationship between public policy and the rights of children
- To encourage a commitment by child health professionals to the development of an advocacy role in respect of children’s rights

The course addresses the implications of children’s rights for the continuum of child health practice. From individual day-to-day relationships between health professionals and children and families, to the development of relevant public policy on the local, national and international levels, this course will seek to introduce the knowledge, perspective and skills required to improve the health and well being of children by respecting their human rights.

## Course Structure

The course is composed of five Modules. Each Module can be presented in as little as an hour, or can be used to generate more indepth discussion and learning. The Modules are interrelated and build upon one another in a logical sequence.

**Module 1. *Children’s Needs and Rights***

**Module 2. *Highlights of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child***

**Module 3. *Respecting Children’s Rights in Pediatric Practice***

**Module 4. *Health Policy and Health Services***

**Module 5. *The Health Professional As Advocate***

Each module follows a similar sequence. *Learning Objectives* are stated first for the content of the Module. The *Content* for the Module is then introduced and summarized. The *Activity and Discussion* section follows, in which at least one learning activity is focused around questions that are intended to stimulate learners’ thinking, whether in group discussion or as self-study. Discussion and commentary related to the activity follows each activity to provide context and breadth to the ideas and discussion stimulated by the Activity. The *Conclusion* section succinctly summarizes the Module’s key elements.

*Additional Readings* are appended to each Module to provide interested learners a more indepth understanding of the principles introduced in the Module. It is highly recommended that this material be read by learners (preferably before the session) and that facilitators of group discussions introduce and use this material. The Readings also include examples and/or elaborations of specific ideas or questions commonly asked about the CRC.

*Optional Handouts* that summarize the important principles in the Module are included at the end of each Module. *Power Point* slide presentations that can be used in their entirety, or segmented to meet the requirements of individual learners or groups of learners follow the Handout Section.

In addition to the above, a presentation structured to provide an overview of all 5 course objectives is included in the course material. This presentation is designed to be given in an hour in a “Grand Rounds” type of format. Written material and a Power Point presentation are included with this presentation.

An Addendum that includes the texts of the Convention and references is provided at the end of the Curriculum. An Evaluation tool is also provided that can be implemented, modified and/or used to develop other Course Evaluation templates.

## Course Delivery Alternatives

The five Modules can be completed in one or multiple sittings via self-study or as groups of learners. The learning process will be greatly enriched by presenting the Modules to groups of professionals (preferably in an interdisciplinary environment) as workshops, wherein discussion activities are led by a skilled facilitator who is familiar with the content of the Convention and the principles, of children's rights. Facilitators can select from among the Power Point slides and Learning Activities to tailor their presentations to the audience and the communities they serve and health issues they and their communities are facing.

It is our hope and intent that this Curriculum will evolve with the expansion and advance in understanding and insight of the relationship between children's rights and children's health. We would like to engage as many learners as possible in the course and evaluation. Although no permission or registration is currently required to use the material, the feedback of those who use the Curriculum would be greatly appreciated. Please send your comments and/or evaluation results to the following email address: [Jeff\\_Goldhagen@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:Jeff_Goldhagen@doh.state.fl.us). All comments will be appreciated and confidentiality maintained. In addition, relevant Case Studies that highlight the issues discussed in the Modules in your communities will also be greatly appreciated. The authors will include these Case Studies in subsequent versions of the Course.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to the health and well being of children and families. We are departing on a journey that will fundamentally change how we perceive, understand and relate to children, childhood and families. Your participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of this course will contribute much to our understanding of children's rights and child health.

Jeff Goldhagen, M.D., MPH  
Tony Waterston, M.D., FRCPCH  
Gerison Lansdown

January, 2004

## **Introduction to the United Nations Convention On Rights of the Child (Convention)**

### **Aims of the Course**

- To raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- To increase understanding of its direct application to health and health care policy and practice
- To promote insight into how policy and practice can be improved to effect greater respect for the rights defined in the Convention
- To raise awareness of the relationship between public policy and the health rights of children
- To encourage a commitment to the development of an advocacy role in respect of children's rights

### **Rationale for the Course**

- All children have needs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child Convention establishes international recognition that children have a right to have these needs met.
- The Convention provides a comprehensive framework of rights that will facilitate a holistic approach to promoting the well being of children.
- Children's health and development is best promoted by the fulfillment of all their needs. Respect for all the rights embodied in the Convention will help achieve this goal.
- The Convention is legally binding and imposes obligations on governments to respect children's rights.

### **Structure of the Course**

Module 1: Children's Needs and Rights

Module 2: Highlights of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Module 3: Respecting Children's Rights in Pediatric Practice

Module 4: Implications of Children's Rights for Health Policy and Health Services

Module 5: The Health Professional As Advocate