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owners. Often these sites are experts at telling parents what they want to hear, but make their money on some variation of “cash-for-kids” schemes. One concern is that from an analysis of web visits of various sites, there appears to be more traffic to anonymous sites than there is to sites openly identifying themselves, their credentials and experience.

Then there are some sites who only talk about the bad experiences, and accept only negative comments, accusing all other viewpoints of being on the take, naïve, or dishonest. Not knowing who to believe, parents are obviously going to be confused as to whose advice they should follow, and the whole industry is being smeared with an image of people who are only preying on desperate parents.

After a networking break, the sessions reconvened for a discussion by Woodbury Affiliate Larry Stednitz, Educational Consultant, and Paul Clark, Director of Galena Ridge Wilderness Program and member of the Montana Private Alternative Adolescent Residential or Outdoor Programs Board (PAARP). This discussion of the Montana Legislature regarding regulation for private parent-choice programs, and the process the state has undergone over the last few years generated much interactive discussion from the attendees.

The major issue is whether regulations of private programs should be developed by the state or developed by programs collaborating with the state. Paul explained how Montana and private child care providers in the state are in the middle of a difficult struggle regarding licensing. The process started in 2003 from legislation to explore requiring registering and licensure of all unlicensed alternative adolescent programs in Montana – including boarding and vocational schools, wilderness programs, faith-based and residential treatment programs.

The entire industry watches because out of this struggle could come an approach different than simply following regulator and legislative generated dictates. The state’s point of view is it has the primary responsibility to protect children being cared for within the state. But the providers assert that creativity and uniqueness is vital to be able to adjust to the real needs of the students, which can be done only through regulations that have provider input.

After the session on Montana Legislature, we broke for lunch. Some left the Get-Together to tour area programs, others left for lunch away from the group. (For those who left early, you really missed good one.)

For those who stayed, Jonathan Mack and Joel Smith presented a hands-on demonstration titled “Technology and Neurobiology; Practical Applications in the Treatment of Children with Regulation Difficulties,” representing Linda Zimmerman and the Sandhill Child Development Center in New Mexico, which was founded by Linda. At Sandhill Center, staff interventions treat behavioral and emotional problems using a therapeutic milieu integrated with neuro-feedback and clinicians.

“Before you can do the work with young patients prone to aggressive, emotional outbursts, you have to calm the brain,” explained Jonathan. “That’s the first priority.” Jonathan briefly summarized what Linda had spoken of at the First Annual Get-Together, then described how patterned and repetitive sensory input can produce a calming effect on adolescent’s “functional brain map.” He explained how specialists use computerized neuro-feedback as a tool for helping young patients who have been affected by early trauma or a confluence of painful events.

In neuro-feedback, the goal is optimal brain function by getting the brain to work more effectively and providing a workout for the brain. The neuro-feedback practitioner looks for a quieting of the nervous system. When patients calm down, they gain a sense of mastery over emotion. It’s not a replacement for other therapy. In a neuro-feedback session, it’s a way to get some kids to calm down so the rest of the therapy can take effect.

To demonstrate, Joel wired a volunteer from the audience to equipment that monitors brain waves, which was relayed to a screen. The audience could watch subtle changes in his brain wave patterns at various states of relaxed tension.

“I felt quite relaxed while listening to different rhythms of sounds,” said the volunteer.

To conclude the discussion and demonstration from Sandhill Center’s clinicians, Jonathan and Joel asked volunteers from the audience to help them demonstrate the effects of repetitive sensory input through “Dance Dance Revolution,” (DDR Therapy). DDR Therapy is a music video game, first introduced in Japan, which is played on a dance pad with the eight primary directional arrows, four arrow-panels in a cross-formation and four arrows in a plus formation with a circle in the middle to rest. The panels are pressed by the feet in response to arrows that appear on the screen, which are synchronized to

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