

Robert Cohen, Ph.D.

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**Other Current Positions:**

Principal Investigator and Co-Director of VCU Center for the Study and Prevention of Youth Violence

Director, Commonwealth Institute for Child and Family Studies

Director, VCU Autism Center of Virginia

**Research and Program Development Interests:**

Prevention of youth violence; community based systems of care for children with mental health problems; community Psychology; development of family focused approaches to working with children; organizational development for human service agencies; community mobilization in response to youth violence and other critical issues; development and promotion of policies responsive to the strengths and needs of children; application of evidence-based practices to the prevention and treatment of child and adolescent mental health disorders.

**Biography:**

For the past 40 years Dr. Cohen has been engaged in research, teaching, program development and administration related to improving the quality of life of children and families. He began his career at Syracuse University, serving as the founding director of the Institute for Community Psychology, a university based research and technical assistance organization created to apply behavioral and social science knowledge and methodology to community issues. He has served in a variety of academic, local community and state positions including serving as the Associate Commissioner for Planning, Program Development and Policy Analysis for the New York State Office of Mental Health. For the past 20 years he has been a faculty member at the Virginia

Commonwealth University, where he directed the Virginia Treatment Center for Children, a comprehensive child/adolescent psychiatric hospital located at the VCU Medical Center and played a significant role in the development, implementation and evaluation of Virginia's Comprehensive Service Act for At-Risk Youth and Families. In 1989, he became the founding director of the Commonwealth Institute for Child and Family Studies, the child psychiatry research and community education division of the Department of Psychiatry at VCU. He serves as the Director of VCU's Autism Center of Virginia whose mission is to provide evidence-based service to children with autism and their families, conduct research on the etiology and treatment of autism, and educate students, parents and professionals on state of the art knowledge related to autism. Since 2002 he has been principal investigator and co-director of the VCU Center for the Study and Prevention of Youth Violence (CSPYV), one of 10 academic centers with excellence for youth violence prevention funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CSPYV has worked with elected officials, agency representatives and citizen groups to mobilize a comprehensive strategy for preventing youth violence in the City of Richmond and has supported and implemented a number of action research projects involving collaboration between VCU and Community partners in order to address issues related to violence prevention. Dr. Cohen has served on a number of state and national tasks forces including convening on behalf of the National Institute of Mental Health a workgroup to develop an action plan for implementing services research within the National Plan for Research on Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders. He has conducted research on the practice of requiring parents to relinquish custody in order to obtain services for children with mental health disorders and has conducted needs assessments and program evaluations for a wide range of community agencies. His teaching interests include community psychology, public policy creating and coping with change in human services and organizational development. He has had faculty positions in the Departments of Pediatrics, Psychology, Health Administration and Public Policy, as well as his primary appointment in Psychiatry. In addition to his scientific and professional writing interests which include writing/editing five books, he also writes mystery novels. In 2002 he received the VCU Distinguished Service Award.

**Publications:**

Cohen, R & Cohen, J. (2000) *Chiseled in Sand: Perspectives on Change and Human Services Organizations*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth ITP Publishing.

Cohen, R., Wiley, S., Oswald, D., Eakin, K., and Best, A. (1999) Applying Utilization Management Principles to a Comprehensive Service System with Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and Their Families: a feasibility study, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 8, 4, 463-476

Oswald, D., Cohen, R., Best, A., Jensen, C., Lyons, J. (2000), Child Constraints and Level of Care for Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 9, 3, 192-199.

Vitanza, S., Cohen, R., and Hall, L., (1999), *Families on the Brink: The Impact of Ignoring Children with serious Mental Illness: Results of a National Survey of Parents and Other Care Givers*. Arlington, Virginia, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

Kuperminc, G., Cohen, R. (1995) Building a Research Base for Community Services for Children and Families: What We Know and What We Need to Learn, Journal of Child and Family Studies, 4, 2, 147-175.

Cohen, R. and Lavach, C., (1995) Strengthening Partnerships Between Families and Service Providers in P. Adams and K. Nelson (editors). *Reinventing Human Services :Community and Family-centered Practice*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine deGruyter.

Cohen, R., Preiser, L., Gottlieb, S., Harris, R., Baker, J., Sonenklar, N. (1993) Relinquishing Custody as a Requisite for Receiving Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disorders: a review, in *Law and Human Behavior*, 17, 121-134.

Cohen, R. (1995), *Majorski's Ghost*, Utica, New York, North Country Books.