

Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership

A Newsletter from the School of Social Work

December 2023

Editor: Rendi Nutt

A Message from the Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership Team

Dear Title IV-E CWP alumni, students, and friends,

We hope this newsletter finds everyone in good health! Our Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership Team is currently working on several projects, but one initiative that we are very excited about is preparing to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our program in 2024.

To help us reflect on the history of the Title IV-E partnership between Texas State University and the Department of Family and Protective Services, we would love to be able to learn more about our amazing Title IV-E alumni. If you are an alumnus of the Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership program at Texas State and are interested in helping us with this initiative, please send your answers for the below questions to cwpartnership@txstate.edu and share your story.

- When did you graduate with your BSW/MSW degree from Texas State University and what is your current position?
- Looking back, how has the Title IV-E CWP program enhanced your social work career and professional development?
- What are some professional accomplishments are you proud of?
- With all of the challenges in public child welfare today, what inspires you to keep doing this work?

Thanks in advance for helping us prepare to celebrate this milestone, and we hope everyone has a safe and restful holiday season.

- The CWP Team

Upcoming Training Opportunities

The Title IV-E CWP program is offering the following free online trainings in Spring 2024:

Title IV-E Ethics Workshop for Foster/Adoption Workers: When Ethics, Policy, and Legislation Collide

Friday, 1/26/24, 9 am—12 pm

Friday, 2/9/24, 9 am—12 pm

Understanding Professional Dangerousness: How to Assess for Child Safety and Support Safe Practice with Children and Families

Friday, 2/23/24, 9 am—12 pm

Wed 2/28/24, 9 am—12 pm

If you would like to attend one of the trainings, please register here:

https://txstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_40Wn2M3VfNaaaIm

The mission of the Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership is to enhance the values, knowledge, and skills of the child welfare workforce in Texas through social work education, financial assistance, ongoing training, and career support.

[Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership Program Website](#)

Title IV-E CWP Highlights

Welcome to Our New Employee Participants

In August 2023, the Title IV-E CWP program welcomed nine new employee participants to the program. These employees will continue to work full-time in their position working with children and families while completing the MSW program at Texas State University. These nine employees hail from five different regions in Texas, and four different agencies (Department of Family and Protective Services, St. Francis Ministries, Belong, and 2INGage). Two of the new employee participants, Ginger Jackson and Teresa Gonzales, are highlighted below. Welcome to the program!



Ginger Jackson

"The Title IV-E CWP program is a great way for me to further my education while working in the field. I am excited to learn the various ways social workers impact our community and continue to make social changes. I am excited to see where this degree will take me."

"Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to be a part of the Title-IV E CWP program! I am looking forward to gaining so much knowledge in the Master of Social Work program. This will be a wonderful opportunity to rediscover strengths and become empowered. Thank you!"



Teresa Gonzales

Congratulations to Two Recent Graduates

"The Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership program and the MSW program impacted my career in a positive matter. It gave me the skills to be a better leader and Social Worker. The best part was being able to accomplish something no one in my family has in the past. I would recommend this program to anyone trying to broaden their skillset because the program allows you to gain skills you otherwise could not."

- Jennifer Lopez, MSW Graduate, August 2023



"The Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership has provided me with the experience and expertise necessary to achieve my long-term objective of a career in child welfare. This collaboration has enabled me to establish valuable connections and a deep appreciation for the field. I am thrilled to transition from my student role, and this opportunity has paved the way for me to embrace the role of a professional in the field of social work."

- Amanda Gonzalez, BSW Graduate, December 2023



Faculty Featured Study

Sinking or Swimming: Perspectives of the Children Without Placement Crisis

Study Purpose:

Recently, there have been reports of children without placement (CWOP) in foster care, often resulting in youth sleeping in hotels or child protective service offices. This study explores the perspectives of child welfare practitioners who manage CWOP cases during the current crisis.

Methods:

This study conducted interviews with 11 child welfare practitioners who graduated from two universities in a Southern state. The qualitative thematic analysis approach was utilized for coding and analyzing the de-identified transcripts. Each transcript was independently coded by at least three researchers.

Findings:

The themes align with the trauma-informed framework and highlight challenges related to 1) Organizational and environmental climate; 2) Workforce development, and 3) Trauma-informed services.

Under the first dimension, "organizational and environmental climate," challenges emerged regarding the lack of effective communication, concerns for safety, the need for leadership and management support, limited authority that supervisors and caseworkers had, disconnected policies, and the importance of expanding networks.

Next, under the dimension of "workforce development," decreasing morale, lack of adequate preparation and training, and distractions from primary job responsibilities were discussed as challenges related to CWOP cases.

Lastly, under the dimension of "trauma-informed services," the lack of standardized assessments to identify the needs of youth and the need for specialized trauma-informed models to meet youth needs were discussed.

Implications include strategies for cross-sector collaboration, specific training, and continued research to support a healthy, trauma-informed workforce that can better meet the needs of youth.

For further information:

LaBrenz, C., Jenkins, L., Choi, M., Kim, J., Ryan, S., & Wildberger, M. S. (2023) Sinking or swimming: perspectives of the children without placement crisis, *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, DOI: 10.1080/15548732.2023.2237421

About the Authors

This research was conducted through an inter-university collaboration involving child welfare experts from the Texas State University Title IV-E Child Welfare Partnership Program (Director: Martha Wildberger, LCSW; PI: Mi Jin Choi, Ph.D., Assistant Professor), the University of Texas at Arlington Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program (Director: Scott Ryan, Ph.D., Professor), the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work (Catherine Labrenz, Ph.D., Assistant Professor; Lacey Jenkins, MSW, doctoral student), and the University at Buffalo School of Social Work (Jangmin Kim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor).

Strategies for Change:

Evidence-Based Child Welfare Practices - Casework Practice

The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse introduced two practice models that reported promising research evidence for casework practice: Team Decision Making and Family Connections.

Team Decision Making

Aim: Public child welfare workers use Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings to make the best choices about taking care of children when they can't stay at home. They also involve partners like community members and extended family in the planning. The goal is to agree on what's best for the child's care, ensuring safety while keeping the family together. The early TDM meetings try to prevent removing the child from the family or place them with relatives if needed. When out-of-home care is needed, TDM helps the whole team, including parents, caregivers, and others, work together for a safe reunification.

Dosage and Delivery: These meetings aim to keep children safe, even without involving the court. The initial TDM meetings occur before a child leaves home, during emergencies, or before the mandatory initial court hearing. TDM directly helps children and adolescents in unsafe or unstable home situations and those at risk of being placed in foster care or residential settings. Additionally, TDM provides direct support to parents and caregivers when their children are at risk of removal, lack adequate extended family support, or face a shortage of in-home support services. Each initial meeting typically takes 1-2 hours. It can be a one-time meeting or repeated as needed.

Manual for TDM: A comprehensive set of TDM (Team Decision-Making) program materials, including educational and training resources, is available through The Child Welfare Strategy Group at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the program contacts listed below.

Heather Meitner; National Council on Crime & Delinquency (NCCD)/Children's Research Center (CRC) Email: hmeitner@nccdglobal.org

Family Connections

Aim: FC is a home-based program designed to assist families within the comfort of their homes, ensuring that their children's needs are met while preventing child maltreatment. It operates based on nine fundamental principles, including understanding the family's environment, community collaboration, tailored assistance, building strong partnerships, empowering families, emphasizing strengths, cultural sensitivity, clear goal setting, and enhancing practitioner skills. This approach aims to bolster protective factors, mitigate risks, and guarantee the safety, well-being, and stability of children's living conditions.

Dosage and Delivery: FC directly provides services to children/adolescents to address externalizing and internalizing behaviors, inconsistent school attendance, and antisocial behaviors. Additionally, FC provides services to parents/caregivers to address issues such as poor household conditions, financial stress, inadequate social support, parenting stress, unfavorable parenting attitudes, unsafe caregiver/child interactions, and poor adult and family functioning. A minimum of one hour of face-to-face contact between the social worker and clients is recommended on a weekly basis for a duration of 3-4 months.

Research on Program Implementation: Filene, J. H., Brodowski, M. L., & Bell, J. (2014). Using cost analysis to examine variability in replications of an effective child neglect prevention program. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 8(4), 375-396.

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