

**PROCEEDINGS FROM THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION TO ADVANCE  
CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE  
AN INVITATIONAL WORKING CONFERENCE**

SEPTEMBER 20 & 21, 2002

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

SARAH FERGUSON, MSW, MA, LISW, EDITOR

SPONSORED BY  
NADD/NAPCWA TASK FORCE ON CHILD WELFARE  
CENTER FOR ADVANCE STUDIES IN CHILD WELFARE, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK,  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
GAMBLE SKOGMO PROGRAM IN CHILD WELFARE YOUTH POLICY

November 20, 2002

Dear Colleague:

Enclosed you will find a copy of the proceedings from the Professional Education to Advance Child Welfare Practice conference, the first working conference of the National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD) and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA) task force on the child welfare workforce challenge. The proceedings have also been posted on the University of Minnesota's School of Social Work's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare website, <http://ssw.che.umn.edu/cascw/>. I hope that you find these proceedings helpful and an accurate reflection of the activities that took place in mid-September. Please let me know if there are any changes or additions that need to be made.

Much work went into the planning and coordinating of this conference. I would like to thank those who were essential to its success. Sarah Ferguson ably helped to plan this conference, tended to the myriad of details, and eventually coordinated the entire conference in my unexpected absence. The writing and editing of this report should also be credited to Sarah. Professor Susan Wells and Marcie Jeffreys offered their leadership to the conference activities. Sabrina Denson, Traci LaLiberte, Addie Ternes, Jessica Toft, and Ji-in Yeo all served as efficient and thorough note takers. Not only did they take notes for each session but also they quickly organized their notes so that they could be used as a resource during the next working session. Lisa Moshfeghi assisted with both note taking and the frantic copying of those notes so that they were available as soon as needed. Ros Elstrom sent out all of the mailings and assisted with the collation of the conference folder. Jill Beaudette was the head negotiator in getting rooms at a reasonable price, coordinating the "bus" from the hotel and generally making sure that everything was running smoothly. The conference was a success due to her hard work and organizational skills. Finally I would like to thank Gretchen Test who took notes at every session and was the key contact for the invitation list. Her organizational skills at identifying the appropriate individuals made the conference the rich collection of individuals that it was.

The conference was a success but only a beginning. I hope that these proceedings serve as a useful tool in the group's further investigations and action on the professionalization to advance child welfare practice.

Sincerely,

Jean K. Quam  
Professor and Director  
President, National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work

## **INTRODUCTION**

Last year the National Association of Deans and Directors and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators created a consortium to begin to look at the work force crisis in child welfare and the role that schools of social work, public welfare administrators, Title IV-E funding and professional education could play in both resolving that crisis and creating better outcomes for families and children. After their meeting in spring 2002 in Nashville at the CSWE APM, a working conference was organized to identify what information is known and what information is needed to advance child welfare practice. The working conference, Professional Education to Advance Child Welfare, was held on September 20 and 21 at the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota.

The conference brought together approximately 35 researchers, deans and directors of social work programs, and directors of public child welfare agencies. It began with an overview of the Title IV-E program and collaborative agreements between child welfare agencies and schools of social work. A panel of researchers provided an overview of completed research projects, with a second panel of agency and organization representatives highlighting questions yet to be answered. The remainder of the conference was spent in three work groups that were focused on identifying and prioritizing future research goals.

The following is an overview of the conference, as well as a list of research that has been done or is currently being done in the area of Title IV-E, BSW/MSW education and child welfare. A list of conference participants is also provided.

Sarah Ferguson, MSW, MA, LISW, Editor  
November 20, 2002

## **SETTING THE STAGE – AN OVERVIEW OF TITLE IV-E, JOAN ZLOTNIK**

The federal government has historically supported state and county child welfare workers acquiring social work degrees. With the expansion of the child welfare system in the late 1950s-early 1960s, a succession of federal programs attempted to increase the amount of child welfare workers with social work degrees. The Title IV-B 426 program was created in 1962. BSW and MSW programs were developed and supported with Section 707 of the Social Security Act in 1967. Section 707, which ended in 1974, caused a major expansion of undergraduate education in social work. Title XX training lasted from 1975 to 1981. From this funding, ten Regional Child Welfare Training Centers were developed. Finally in 1980, P.L. 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, was passed. It contained a provision that funded Title IV-E training for AFDC foster care and adoption assistance.

Unfortunately Title IV-E was not immediately accessed for social work education. With the change of federal administration in January of 1981, the focus on a professional child welfare workforce changed. At this time staffing requirements for a BSW or MSW degree were withdrawn and curriculums refocused to save their programs. The professionalization of staff was necessarily set aside. In regard to P.L. 96-272 there was contentious implementation and minimal technical assistance from the federal government. Through the 1980s, there was continued declassification of child welfare positions resulting in the deprofessionalization of the child welfare workforce. There was little attention to the training options available through P.L. 96-272 while Title IV-B was cut and Title XX funding was curtailed.

In 1987-1988, Title IV-E was finally identified by social work programs and state and county child welfare agencies as a funding source to create professional child welfare workers. National Association for Social Workers, Child Welfare League of America, National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, and the Council on Social Work Education began to work together to capture this funding and use it to increase the professional level of child welfare workers. This move also created a renewed collaboration with the Children's Bureau. A few schools of social work began to access this funding and shared with other programs and agencies how this was done. After 1996 there was a great expansion in social work programs that access this funding.

### **WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?**

*Alberta Ellett*  
*School of Social Work*  
*University of Georgia*

There has been a drastic de-professionalization in child welfare since 1953. Research indicates that an MSW is the best predictor of performance in child welfare, yet the results of IV-E research shows that IV-E graduates are better prepared for cases, score higher on competency ratings, and are more sensitive to clients. In addition, with the de-professionalization of child welfare, the problem of retention has emerged. (The greatest correlates for retention are supervision, bureaucratic distractions, and organizational culture.)

*Alice Lieberman*  
*School of Social Work*  
*University of Kansas*

Studies of how child welfare workers assess their competency in their jobs suggest that the more competent a worker rates him/herself, the more likely he/she is to stay in child welfare. A study in Cleveland, Ohio found that MSWs rate themselves better than other degrees (i.e. other liberal arts degrees), while Lieberman found that BSWs rate themselves as better prepared than BAs. While this information is useful, it is important to move beyond self ratings and to assess how others rate worker competency. Dhooper, Royce, and Wolff (1990) included ratings by others and found that state employees are better prepared for their jobs if they have a social work education. While the debate continues in the Rittner and Wodarski study as to the differences between BSWs and MSWs, the vast majority of IV-E funding goes to MSW programs. This denies the reality that BSWs are needed and useful to child welfare; an MSW cannot always be hired. Finally in regard to retention, Okamura and Jones, mentioned later in these proceedings, found that employees with an MSW were the only variable to predict longevity. Lieberman concludes that we need to move beyond retention studies to begin to look at client outcomes.

*Mary McCarthy*  
*Social Work Education Consortium and Assistant Dean for Development*  
*School of Social Welfare, SUNY-Albany*

*Some of the information presented in this section was from unpublished papers with the request not to circulate. This section will reflect that information is available for circulation only.*

New York State completed a Workforce Retention Study that looked at 13 local service agencies that had 20% turnover. The study was participatory in nature with a participation rate of 74%. The information was then shared with each of the agencies studied with action plans for each agency to follow. The primary areas of concern for turnover include salary, high caseloads, technology and record keeping and organizational and administrative issues. The average caseloads size of 30 children per worker was out of sync with the Child Welfare League of America's recommendation of 12 – 15 children per worker. McCarthy recommended that more research is should to be completely understand the complexities of issues affecting worker retention.

*Loring Jones*  
*School of Social Work*  
*San Diego State University*

A study was completed on the first three cohorts of IV-E graduates from the state of California. The general finding was that IV-E graduates who leave child protection positions still stay in the field of child welfare. The initial study of these graduates found that they did better than non-IV-E new hires on an initial knowledge test. At the end of the four-year study, the IV-E graduates were more likely to be employed in a child protection position but there were no differences in worker satisfaction or likelihood of leaving. A follow up study is being completed that has initial findings that the combination of IV-E an MSW is significant in retention. It also found that IV-E was helpful in attracting workers of Southeast Asian descent to the field of child welfare.

*Gary Cyphers*

*Director of Research and Information*

*American Public Human Service Association*

The American Public Human Service Association along with the Child Welfare League of America and the Alliance for Children and Families completed a survey of state social service organizations, county social service organizations, and private agencies. The intent of the survey was to analyze the workforce problems faced by these organizations. There are eight key findings from the survey. The first is that “there is a workforce problem.” While average vacancy rates are low, 9-12%, the average turnover rates are high, 19 – 20%. The study also found that of the turnovers, 57% of them are preventable. The second key finding is that “recruitment problems are complex, widespread, and varied.” The study found that 47% of administrators report a lack of qualified candidates, with 54% commenting on the problem of noncompetitive salaries. The third finding is that “there are no ‘magic bullets’ for addressing recruitment problems.” Any resolution to the workforce crisis will require various strategies including activities from schools of social work. The fourth finding is that “preventable turnover problems are even more complex, widespread, and varied” than recruitment problems. Workloads are high, salaries are low, and there are various time drains such as travel, paperwork, and court that keep workers from doing the jobs for which they feel they were hired. The fifth finding is that “strategies for addressing preventable turnover are multifaceted.” The two categories for strategies are “harder strategies” and “softer strategies.” Harder strategies include those strategies that require larger funding and greater authority to implement. Softer strategies include those strategies that do not require much funding and can be implemented by child welfare administrators or supervisors. The sixth finding is that the softer strategies are important as confirmed by data. The seventh finding is that a “gap exists between severity of problems and implemented effective responses.” Few programs have implemented strategies, soft or hard, to respond to the workforce problems; thus a more active response is needed. Finally, the eighth finding is that “social work accreditation has some positive impact on workforce issues.” Those states that require a social work license of their workers found lower vacancy and turnover rates and paid 8% higher child protection salaries.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES: WHAT QUESTIONS NEED TO BE ANSWERED?**

Representatives from various constituent organizations presented their organization’s perspective and what they felt were the important questions to be answered in regard to professionalizing the child welfare workforce.

*Ann Weick*

*Dean*

*University of Kansas*

*National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD)*

We are now beginning to realize the importance of education for legitimacy in child welfare.

Some key questions are:

- How do people who don’t have training fare in the workforce?
- What is needed to best suit students’ needs in terms of preparation?
- How do we recruit students to child welfare?

*Nancy Rawlings*

*Commissioner of Social Services*

*Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government*

*National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA)*

Collaborative efforts yield better results in child welfare.

- How do we get new workers to care about the client and know the job? (This will help retain workers).
- How can we measure performance and outcomes?

*Tony Bibus*

*Social Work Department*

*Augsburg College*

*Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD)*

Inspiring BSWs and granting them research opportunities helps in worker retention.

The BSW is the backbone and foundation of child welfare. Administrators must facilitate students' preparation for social work.

- Who do BSWs evaluate?
- Are they practicing in a culture that helps them?
- What role do supervisors play?
- How can education help support evaluation of practice?
- What do parents and children say are helpful/least helpful in social work?
- How much say do families have in their case plan?
- Are BSW programs preparing students who are ready to make a change in child welfare?

*Nadja Printup*

*National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)*

Understanding poverty and overcoming stereotypes is crucial to child welfare.

- How do we create a supportive cultural environment for students and workers?
- How do we better understand cultural competence for indigenous peoples?
- What things are necessary to being a supervisor that are not taught? (Question for supervisors).

*Anita Rosen*

*Director of Special Projects*

*Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)*

Basic skills need to be defined for effective delivery of social work.

- How do we get national visibility to inform organizations about what is happening in gerontology and child welfare?
- How do we attract students to areas like working with older people and child welfare?
- How can we infuse basic competencies back into the curriculum?
- How do we create a more intergenerational approach to the curriculum?
- What are the core competencies that social workers need (e.g. grief/loss, supportive services, kinship, workforce issues, et cetera)?

*Joan Zlotnik*

*Executive Director*

*Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR)*

We should examine the links between other disciplines and social work.

- Should we have stronger links between CDC and social work?
- What are the issues around child welfare staffing (violence, et cetera)?
- What makes people stay when accounting for burnout and resiliency?
- What are the issues related to IV-E funding?

## **WORK GROUPS**

Three groups were formed to identify and clarify important research questions. The three groups included the Workforce Management group, the Service Delivery/Program Performance group and the Education group. Each group was asked to prioritize the two most important questions.

### ***Group One: Workforce Management (Licensing, recruitment, retention, burnout, hiring, & training)***

*Education of child welfare workers influences outcomes among families and children.*

*Development of national uniform standards is critical to the social services industry. The educational curriculum should include enhancement of leadership potential and competency.*

#### Discussion:

- What are the outcomes for families and children?
- Need a seamless system:  
education → hire → training → practice → continuing education  
entry and reentry back into the system.
- We need to have different measures for different points along the education continuum.
- We need to have an understanding of what the child welfare worker world should look like, from pre-service to work, to licensing? What do we want the ideal child protection worker to look like? And how to look at it within the context of organizational structure. But don't define it out too much that we exclude worker's other roles and responsibilities within the organizational structure they work within. Rural versus Urban child welfare practice.
- How to bring in MSWs and retain them as mentors?
- Efficacy to do the job, supportive environment, feelings of competency need to be built into the pre service level.
- Quality of supervision and providing empowerment to the social workers. Leadership development.

- Barriers that emerge are caused when states pass laws that lower the standards of workers, i.e., a four-year degree not required.
- What are the key features/variables of high to low turnover in counties/agencies, not particular to IV-E or not IV-E but for all.
- Are we asking the right questions? The system seems scared to look at the outcomes of children and families. Are the federal outcomes going to be or should be our measure of outcomes?
- There are methodological problems re: what is a good study. How reliable are our data from the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System?
- Looking at outcome issues related to work force management, are they related?
- How is our education related to outcomes, does a specific educational experience relate to specific successful outcomes?
- We need uniform standards that are contextually sensitive.

Priority questions:

- How can we develop a seamless system to prepare, attract, support continuing professional education and retain personnel in child welfare? (Licensing, credentials, incentives)
- What does retention mean? What is desirable turnover, what is undesirable turnover?
- How can we identify workforce characteristics that are linked to effective service outcomes?

***Group Two: Service Delivery/Program Performance (Client outcomes, cost, worker performance, quality assurance)***

Retention is a concern among child welfare workers because of stress and the traditionally low pay of these positions. Title IV-E students may have a positive impact on the families with whom they work. Reduction of caseload through privatization seems paramount in increasing positive outcomes among clients.

Discussion:

- The issue of workload is paramount. What is it like to work in child welfare if we don't even have a standard?
- How do we get people interested in coming to child welfare?

- What is the optimum level of contact with families?
- To what extent do we see best practices embedded in our educational systems, promoted by our agencies, et cetera?
- For the therapeutic interventions that are taught in MSW programs, do we have any basic elements that we include? What are the minimal conditions for successful therapeutic interventions?
- It seems like the only way to reduce caseloads is to privatize. What should be effectively privatized?
- What is the impact of AFSA and the intersection between AFSA and AFSA workloads?
- What is the balance between specialization in training on selected issues like substance abuse so social workers can recognize these problems when they see them but be generalist enough to intervene in more than one case?
- How do we divide the job in a way that makes sense? Some people have a clinical background; other people are sitting around in court for hours. Helpful to have some administrative assistance.
- What are the best management and structural models for management in child welfare settings? Can we create standards for management?
- It is crucial to reduce caseloads, but to start with other things and sell reduction of caseload incrementally.
- Do workers that have BSW/MSWs result in more systems change?
- Investigate how people who are performing the best are spending their time.
- We at the universities have a role to advocate for core components of social work programs; we need some flexibility from CSWE but we have a responsibility.
- What are the implications of problems requiring long-term interventions e.g. substance abuse and ASFA requirements?
- What is the benefit to a family when a student is paired up to work with a particular family or a caseload? It seems that students with fewer caseloads resolve cases faster. We could sell the partnership by saying that when a family has a IV-E student the outcomes for the families were better.
- In what ways does a social work education have an impact on practice?

- How many workers are doing case management only versus intervention?
- How can we manage the work of professionals in child welfare settings? How should we structure the work?
- What is the minimum frequency of contact that keeps a child safe?

Priority questions:

- How can you define the context of what's reasonable before you study what's effective? Does workload matter in improving outcomes? What is the minimum frequency of contact, activities, and worker competencies that keep a child safe?
- Does education help ensure positive outcomes for children? Does it matter if a worker has a BSW/MSW in a child welfare job? What is the difference to client outcome?
- How can we institute a dialogue between schools and agencies even amidst turnover, political realities, et cetera?
- When a family has a IV-E student, does this make a difference in outcomes?

***Group Three: Education (De-professionalization, child welfare curriculum, accreditation, preparation for practice, BSW/MSW)***

Social work should be more cross-disciplinary than it has been in the past. Tracking individual workers' performance will guide future policy decisions. Social work should emphasize the difference between training and education.

Discussion:

- What is our job as educators at the BSW or MSW levels in preparing people?
- Are we a vocational school or educational school?
- How has students' education prepared them to enter a position in child welfare?
- How is performance defined?
- How do we track individual workers' performance?
- What is the educational continuum?
- What skill sets do BSW/MSW come with? At what level can they perform?
- To what degree does social work education influence outcomes?
- Determine what would inform agencies and state that social work education is valid.

- We don't have a mechanism for combining and pulling together research that exists. Partnership members should think through resources at an organizational level.
- Social work should be a cross-disciplinary field if it wants to succeed. How much should we do cross-disciplinary work with other fields?
- We should focus on social work education as it relates to IV-E. See what skills sets produce desired outcomes—what other types of content can be picked up from other disciplines without detracting from the requirements of IV-E.
- Do IV-E workers have better client outcomes than those not trained in IV-E? Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System will be measuring outcomes in child protective services. Within the IV-E curriculum, we should be teaching how to work with other disciplines.
- Some social workers don't look at differences that families bring and make premature judgments. How do we make those assessments? How do we teach values/ethics?
- IV-E money is vulnerable unless we have research on three groups: those with no social work education in child welfare system, those with social work education, and those with social work education and IV-E. A related problem is that some are told that unless it's specifically discernible child welfare content, the course won't be paid for. How can we use research question to say this basic social worker education is critical to making a better worker?
- Do we pretest for IV-E? Post-test? Do we do a pretest post-test?
- What competencies are important to families?

Priority questions:

- What is the difference between education and training in child welfare? (Break down to BSW/MSW)
- What competencies do social workers need to make a difference to families, from the families' point of view? For families that have succeeded, what made the difference?
- How do we tie social workers' education to client outcomes?

**SATURDAY MORNING DISCUSSION**

The agenda called for the group to split into two sub-groups, the NADD/NAPCWA consortium on professionalization of child welfare and the researchers interested in the professionalization of child welfare. Before this occurred, concern was raised about splitting into two groups. The concern was that the researchers would create a research agenda without the input of the practitioners. Practitioners want answers and researchers are hesitant to share information that they feel is incomplete. There needs to be a way to disseminate information that is current and

reliable to those in the field. The discussion continued, and then the two groups broke into subgroups keeping the previous discussion in mind as they met.

### **NADD/NAPCWA TASK FORCE MEETING**

The Consortium of the National Association of Deans and Directors and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators held a meeting. The agenda included a review of conference highlights and key themes, plans for facilitating action steps, and other follow up, and identification of other areas for development of Consortium goals.

The professionalization of the child welfare workforce should be on the national agenda and the primary work of this group should be the advocacy for its presence on the national agenda. A national meeting needs to be convened to accomplish two goals, the first to further discussion of the problem and the second to raise the profile of the issue to the media, the public, and the policy makers, particularly governors. Policy statements about such issues as workload and competency should also be issued. Organizations such as NASW and CWLA can play a role by alerting governors to the need for professional child welfare workers. The Stark Bill that the GAO is working on could be the impetus for the national discussion. The Stark Bill could also engage deans of social work programs. The planning for this could begin at CSWE but it must be planned for the day before as to not conflict with other meetings.

The meeting ended with the creation of five action steps:

- The NADD-NAPCWA Consortium purpose will be mailed out to all members (see attached).
- Additional meetings will be investigated, possibly using national organization conferences as venues (CSWE, APHSA/NAPCWA).
- An advocacy agenda will be developed. Both NASW and CWLA will be approached about their willingness to engage governors on this issue.
- Pursue the establishment of a clearinghouse for information.
- Pursue funding.

### **RESEARCHER MEETING**

A meeting on research was held at the same time as the NADD/NAPCWA Task Force. This meeting produced two agendas, an action agenda and a research agenda. The first part of the action agenda is to create white papers that translate the empirical information known into a useable resource for practitioners. Four task forces were created to write papers for four different issues; workload, effective practice with different cases, federal child welfare reviews, and differential effectiveness. The second part of the action agenda is to focus on effective translation of research and of getting research to the right national advocates for policy change. The dual focus of the action agenda is to translate research into useable information and then focus on making sure that information gets used.

The research agenda calls for a focus on three different areas. The first is to investigate competencies and their linkage to outcomes. The second research area is the relative effectiveness of workers with various backgrounds. This would include looking at IV-E vs. non IV-E trained workers both at the BSW and MSW level. The final section of the agenda would be to respond to any research questions that emerge from the action agenda. It is assumed that as more connections are made with practitioners through the action agenda, more research questions will emerge. Some other areas of research mentioned were supervision, retention and turnover issues, and the Federal IV-E reimbursement and the narrowing of what is defined as child welfare.

The following is a list of the issues that the task force on translating research will begin to address. The names of the individuals who volunteered to be the point person on each issue is included. Please contact the writer if there are any errors. Members of the task force include Norma Harris, Evelyn Williams, and Marcie Jeffreys. There are some names missing as some names of volunteers were not recorded.

- Workload – Anita Barbee
- Effective practice with different types of cases? (IV-E vs. non-IV-E) – Mindy Holliday
- What we know about Federal child welfare reviews of states? - Chapin Hall currently investigating
- What do we know about differential effectiveness?

There were two primary resources identified on the web:

<http://olav.usi.louisville.edu/nrc.htm>  
[www.rom.ku.edu](http://www.rom.ku.edu)

## CONCLUSION

The conference ended with a report from each of the sub-groups and an overview of practical next steps. Anyone who is interested may sign up to assist with the task force groups defined by the research sub-group.

### Short-term goals

- Mail conference proceedings
- Conference attendees identify the task force in which he or she is interested in participating

### Mid-term goals

- Task force participants gathering data and forwarding it to the task force leader
- Sharing that information with Joan Zlotnik, who has agreed to serve as a central clearinghouse
- The steering committee completing needed follow up work

### Long-term goals

- Develop support and funding for long-term organizational work

**WORKING CONFERENCE ON PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION TO ADVANCE  
CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Last year the National Association of Deans and Directors and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators created a consortium to begin to look at the work force crisis in child welfare and the role that schools of social work, public welfare administrators, Title IV-E funding and professional education could play in both resolving that crisis and creating better outcomes for families and children. After their meeting in spring 2002 in Nashville at the CSWE APM, a working conference was organized to identify what information is known and what information is needed to advance child welfare practice. The working conference, Professional Education to Advance Child Welfare, was held on September 20 and 21 at the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota.

The conference brought together approximately 35 researchers, deans and directors of social work programs, and directors of public child welfare agencies. It began with an overview of the Title IV-E program and collaborative agreements between child welfare agencies and schools of social work. A panel of researchers provided an overview of completed research projects, with a second panel of agency and organization representatives highlighting questions yet to be answered. The remainder of the conference was spent in three work groups that were focused on identifying and prioritizing future research goals.

The following is an overview of the conference, as well as a list of research that has been done or is currently being done in the area of Title IV-E, BSW/MSW education and child welfare. A list of conference participants is also provided.

Sarah Ferguson, MSW, MA, LISW, Editor  
November 20, 2002

## **SETTING THE STAGE – AN OVERVIEW OF TITLE IV-E, JOAN ZLOTNIK**

The federal government has historically supported state and county child welfare workers acquiring social work degrees. With the expansion of the child welfare system in the late 1950s-early 1960s, a succession of federal programs attempted to increase the amount of child welfare workers with social work degrees. The Title IV-B 426 program was created in 1962. BSW and MSW programs were developed and supported with Section 707 of the Social Security Act in 1967. Section 707, which ended in 1974, caused a major expansion of undergraduate education in social work. Title XX training lasted from 1975 to 1981. In the late 1970s, ten Regional Child Welfare Training Centers were created, with Title IV-B 426 funding. Finally in 1980, P.L. 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, was passed. It contained a provision that funded Title IV-E training for AFDC foster care and adoption assistance.

Unfortunately Title IV-E was not immediately accessed for social work education. With the change of federal administration in January of 1981, the focus on a professional child welfare workforce changed. At this time staffing requirements for a BSW or MSW degree were withdrawn and national organizations refocused to save social programs. Focus moved away from professionalization of staff and promotion of training opportunities were set aside. In regard to P.L. 96-272 there was contentious implementation and minimal technical assistance from the federal government. Through the 1980s, there was continued declassification of child welfare positions resulting in the deprofessionalization of the child welfare workforce. There was little attention to the training options available through P.L. 96-272 while Title IV-B was cut and Title XX funding was curtailed.

In 1987-1988, Title IV-E was finally identified by social work programs and state and county child welfare agencies as a funding source to create professional child welfare workers. National Association for Social Workers, Child Welfare League of America, National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, and the Council on Social Work Education began to work together to promote the capture of this funding and use it to increase the professional level of child welfare workers. This move also created a renewed collaboration with the Children's Bureau. A few schools of social work began to access this funding and shared with other programs and agencies how this was done. After 1996 there was a great expansion in social work programs that access this funding.

### **WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?**

*Alberta Ellett*  
*School of Social Work*  
*University of Georgia*

There has been a drastic de-professionalization in child welfare since 1953. Research indicates that an MSW is the best predictor of performance in child welfare, yet the results of IV-E research shows that IV-E graduates are better prepared for cases, score higher on competency ratings, and are more sensitive to clients. In addition, with the de-professionalization of child welfare, the problem of retention has emerged. (The greatest correlates for retention are supervision, bureaucratic distractions, and organizational culture.)

*Alice Lieberman*  
*School of Social Work*  
*University of Kansas*

Studies of how child welfare workers assess their competency in their jobs suggest that the more competent a worker rates him/herself, the more likely he/she is to stay in child welfare. A study in Cleveland, Ohio found that MSWs rate themselves better than other degrees (i.e. other liberal arts degrees), while Lieberman found that BSWs rate themselves as better prepared than BAs. While this information is useful, it is important to move beyond self ratings and to assess how others rate worker competency. Dhooper, Royce, and Wolff (1990) included ratings by others and found that state employees are better prepared for their jobs if they have a social work education. While the debate continues in the Rittner and Wodarski study as to the differences between BSWs and MSWs, the vast majority of IV-E funding goes to MSW programs. This denies the reality that BSWs are needed and useful to child welfare; an MSW cannot always be hired. Finally in regard to retention, Okamura and Jones, mentioned later in these proceedings, found that employees with an MSW were the only variable to predict longevity. Lieberman concludes that we need to move beyond retention studies to begin to look at client outcomes.

*Mary McCarthy*  
*Social Work Education Consortium and Assistant Dean for Development*  
*School of Social Welfare, SUNY-Albany*

*Some of the information presented in this section was from unpublished papers with the request not to circulate. This section will reflect that information is available for circulation only.*

New York State completed a Workforce Retention Study that looked at 13 local service agencies that had 20% turnover. The study was participatory in nature with a participation rate of 74%. The information was then shared with each of the agencies studied with action plans for each agency to follow. The primary areas of concern for turnover include salary, high caseloads, technology and record keeping and organizational and administrative issues. The average caseloads size of 30 children per worker was out of sync with the Child Welfare League of America's recommendation of 12 – 15 children per worker. McCarthy recommended that more research is should to be completely understand the complexities of issues affecting worker retention.

*Loring Jones*  
*School of Social Work*  
*San Diego State University*

A study was completed on the first three cohorts of IV-E graduates from the state of California. The general finding was that IV-E graduates who leave child protection positions still stay in the field of child welfare. The initial study of these graduates found that they did better than non-IV-E new hires on an initial knowledge test. At the end of the four-year study, the IV-E graduates were more likely to be employed in a child protection position but there were no differences in worker satisfaction or likelihood of leaving. A follow up study is being completed that has initial findings that the combination of IV-E an MSW is significant in retention. It also found that IV-E was helpful in attracting workers of Southeast Asian descent to the field of child welfare.

*Gary Cyphers*

*Director of Research and Information*

*American Public Human Service Association*

The American Public Human Service Association along with the Child Welfare League of America and the Alliance for Children and Families completed a survey of state social service organizations, county social service organizations, and private agencies. The intent of the survey was to analyze the workforce problems faced by these organizations. There are eight key findings from the survey. The first is that “there is a workforce problem.” While average vacancy rates are low, 9-12%, the average turnover rates are high, 19 – 20%. The study also found that of the turnovers, 57% of them are preventable. The second key finding is that “recruitment problems are complex, widespread, and varied.” The study found that 47% of administrators report a lack of qualified candidates, with 54% commenting on the problem of noncompetitive salaries. The third finding is that “there are no ‘magic bullets’ for addressing recruitment problems.” Any resolution to the workforce crisis will require various strategies including activities from schools of social work. The fourth finding is that “preventable turnover problems are even more complex, widespread, and varied” than recruitment problems. Workloads are high, salaries are low, and there are various time drains such as travel, paperwork, and court that keep workers from doing the jobs for which they feel they were hired. The fifth finding is that “strategies for addressing preventable turnover are multifaceted.” The two categories for strategies are “harder strategies” and “softer strategies.” Harder strategies include those strategies that require larger funding and greater authority to implement. Softer strategies include those strategies that do not require much funding and can be implemented by child welfare administrators or supervisors. The sixth finding is that the softer strategies are important as confirmed by data. The seventh finding is that a “gap exists between severity of problems and implemented effective responses.” Few programs have implemented strategies, soft or hard, to respond to the workforce problems; thus a more active response is needed. Finally, the eighth finding is that “social work accreditation has some positive impact on workforce issues.” Those states that require a social work license of their workers found lower vacancy and turnover rates and paid 8% higher child protection salaries.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES: WHAT QUESTIONS NEED TO BE ANSWERED?**

Representatives from various constituent organizations presented their organization’s perspective and what they felt were the important questions to be answered in regard to professionalizing the child welfare workforce.

*Ann Weick*

*Dean*

*University of Kansas*

*National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (NADD)*

We are now beginning to realize the importance of education for legitimacy in child welfare.

Some key questions are:

- How do people who don’t have training fare in the workforce?
- What is needed to best suit students’ needs in terms of preparation?

- How do we recruit students to child welfare?

*Nancy Rawlings*

*Commissioner of Social Services*

*Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government*

*National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA)*

Collaborative efforts yield better results in child welfare.

- How do we get new workers to care about the client and know the job? (This will help retain workers).
- How can we measure performance and outcomes?

*Tony Bibus*

*Social Work Department*

*Augsburg College*

*Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD)*

Inspiring BSWs and granting them research opportunities helps in worker retention.

The BSW is the backbone and foundation of child welfare. Administrators must facilitate students' preparation for social work.

- Who do BSWs evaluate?
- Are they practicing in a culture that helps them?
- What role do supervisors play?
- How can education help support evaluation of practice?
- What do parents and children say are helpful/least helpful in social work?
- How much say do families have in their case plan?
- Are BSW programs preparing students who are ready to make a change in child welfare?

*Nadja Printup*

*National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)*

Understanding poverty and overcoming stereotypes is crucial to child welfare.

- How do we create a supportive cultural environment for students and workers?
- How do we better understand cultural competence for indigenous peoples?
- What things are necessary to being a supervisor that are not taught? (Question for supervisors).

*Anita Rosen*

*Director of Special Projects*

*Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)*

Basic skills need to be defined for effective delivery of social work.

- How do we get national visibility to inform organizations about what is happening in gerontology and child welfare?
- How do we attract students to areas like working with older people and child welfare?
- How can we infuse basic competencies back into the curriculum?
- How do we create a more intergenerational approach to the curriculum?
- What are the core competencies that social workers need (e.g. grief/loss, supportive services, kinship, workforce issues, et cetera)?

*Joan Zlotnik*  
*Executive Director*

*Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR)*

We should examine the links between other disciplines and social work.

- Should we have stronger links between CDC and social work?
- What are the issues around child welfare staffing (violence, et cetera)?
- What makes people stay when accounting for burnout and resiliency?
- What are the issues related to IV-E funding?

## **WORK GROUPS**

Three groups were formed to identify and clarify important research questions. The three groups included the Workforce Management group, the Service Delivery/Program Performance group and the Education group. Each group was asked to prioritize the two most important questions.

***Group One: Workforce Management (Licensing, recruitment, retention, burnout, hiring, & training)***

*Education of child welfare workers influences outcomes among families and children. Development of national uniform standards is critical to the social services industry. The educational curriculum should include enhancement of leadership potential and competency.*

### Discussion:

- What are the outcomes for families and children?
- Need a seamless system:  
education → hire → training → practice → continuing education  
entry and reentry back into the system.
- We need to have different measures for different points along the education continuum.
- We need to have an understanding of what the child welfare worker world should look like, from pre-service to work, to licensing? What do we want the ideal child protection worker to look like? And how to look at it within the context of organizational structure. But don't define it out too much that we exclude worker's other roles and responsibilities within the organizational structure they work within. Rural versus Urban child welfare practice.
- How to bring in MSWs and retain them as mentors?
- Efficacy to do the job, supportive environment, feelings of competency need to be built into the pre service level.

- Quality of supervision and providing empowerment to the social workers. Leadership development.
- Barriers that emerge are caused when states pass laws that lower the standards of workers, i.e., a four-year degree not required.
- What are the key features/variables of high to low turnover in counties/agencies, not particular to IV-E or not IV-E but for all.
- Are we asking the right questions? The system seems scared to look at the outcomes of children and families. Are the federal outcomes going to be or should be our measure of outcomes?
- There are methodological problems re: what is a good study. How reliable are our data from the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System?
- Looking at outcome issues related to work force management, are they related?
- How is our education related to outcomes, does a specific educational experience relate to specific successful outcomes?
- We need uniform standards that are contextually sensitive.

Priority questions:

- How can we develop a seamless system to prepare, attract, support continuing professional education and retain personnel in child welfare? (Licensing, credentials, incentives)
- What does retention mean? What is desirable turnover, what is undesirable turnover?
- How can we identify workforce characteristics that are linked to effective service outcomes?

***Group Two: Service Delivery/Program Performance (Client outcomes, cost, worker performance, quality assurance)***

Retention is a concern among child welfare workers because of stress and the traditionally low pay of these positions. Title IV-E students may have a positive impact on the families with whom they work. Reduction of caseload through privatization seems paramount in increasing positive outcomes among clients.

Discussion:

- The issue of workload is paramount. What is it like to work in child welfare if we don't even have a standard?

- How do we get people interested in coming to child welfare?
- What is the optimum level of contact with families?
- To what extent do we see best practices embedded in our educational systems, promoted by our agencies, et cetera?
- For the therapeutic interventions that are taught in MSW programs, do we have any basic elements that we include? What are the minimal conditions for successful therapeutic interventions?
- It seems like the only way to reduce caseloads is to privatize. What should be effectively privatized?
- What is the impact of AFSA and the intersection between AFSA and AFSA workloads?
- What is the balance between specialization in training on selected issues like substance abuse so social workers can recognize these problems when they see them but be generalist enough to intervene in more than one case?
- How do we divide the job in a way that makes sense? Some people have a clinical background; other people are sitting around in court for hours. Helpful to have some administrative assistance.
- What are the best management and structural models for management in child welfare settings? Can we create standards for management?
- It is crucial to reduce caseloads, but to start with other things and sell reduction of caseload incrementally.
- Do workers that have BSW/MSWs result in more systems change?
- Investigate how people who are performing the best are spending their time.
- We at the universities have a role to advocate for core components of social work programs; we need some flexibility from CSWE but we have a responsibility.
- What are the implications of problems requiring long-term interventions e.g. substance abuse and ASFA requirements?
- What is the benefit to a family when a student is paired up to work with a particular family or a caseload? It seems that students with fewer caseloads resolve cases faster. We could sell the partnership by saying that when a family has a IV-E student the outcomes for the families were better.

- In what ways does a social work education have an impact on practice?
- How many workers are doing case management only versus intervention?
- How can we manage the work of professionals in child welfare settings? How should we structure the work?
- What is the minimum frequency of contact that keeps a child safe?

Priority questions:

- How can you define the context of what's reasonable before you study what's effective? Does workload matter in improving outcomes? What is the minimum frequency of contact, activities, and worker competencies that keep a child safe?
- Does education help ensure positive outcomes for children? Does it matter if a worker has a BSW/MSW in a child welfare job? What is the difference to client outcome?
- How can we institute a dialogue between schools and agencies even amidst turnover, political realities, et cetera?
- When a family has a IV-E student, does this make a difference in outcomes?

***Group Three: Education (De-professionalization, child welfare curriculum, accreditation, preparation for practice, BSW/MSW)***

Social work should be more cross-disciplinary than it has been in the past. Tracking individual workers' performance will guide future policy decisions. Social work should emphasize the difference between training and education.

Discussion:

- What is our job as educators at the BSW or MSW levels in preparing people?
- Are we a vocational school or educational school?
- How has students' education prepared them to enter a position in child welfare?
- How is performance defined?
- How do we track individual workers' performance?
- What is the educational continuum?
- What skill sets do BSW/MSW come with? At what level can they perform?
- To what degree does social work education influence outcomes?

- Determine what would inform agencies and state that social work education is valid.
- We don't have a mechanism for combining and pulling together research that exists. Partnership members should think through resources at an organizational level.
- Social work should be a cross-disciplinary field if it wants to succeed. How much should we do cross-disciplinary work with other fields?
- We should focus on social work education as it relates to IV-E. See what skills sets produce desired outcomes—what other types of content can be picked up from other disciplines without detracting from the requirements of IV-E.
- Do IV-E workers have better client outcomes than those not trained in IV-E? Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System will be measuring outcomes in child protective services. Within the IV-E curriculum, we should be teaching how to work with other disciplines.
- Some social workers don't look at differences that families bring and make premature judgments. How do we make those assessments? How do we teach values/ethics?
- IV-E money is vulnerable unless we have research on three groups: those with no social work education in child welfare system, those with social work education, and those with social work education and IV-E. A related problem is that some are told that unless it's specifically discernible child welfare content, the course won't be paid for. How can we use research question to say this basic social worker education is critical to making a better worker?
- Do we pretest for IV-E? Post-test? Do we do a pretest post-test?
- What competencies are important to families?

Priority questions:

- What is the difference between education and training in child welfare? (Break down to BSW/MSW)
- What competencies do social workers need to make a difference to families, from the families' point of view? For families that have succeeded, what made the difference?
- How do we tie social workers' education to client outcomes?

**SATURDAY MORNING DISCUSSION**

The agenda called for the group to split into two sub-groups, the NADD/NAPCWA consortium on professionalization of child welfare and the researchers interested in the professionalization of child welfare. Before this occurred, concern was raised about splitting into two groups. The concern was that the researchers would create a research agenda without the input of the practitioners. Practitioners want answers and researchers are hesitant to share information that

they feel is incomplete. There needs to be a way to disseminate information that is current and reliable to those in the field. The discussion continued, and then the two groups broke into subgroups keeping the previous discussion in mind as they met.

### **NADD/NAPCWA TASK FORCE MEETING**

The Consortium of the National Association of Deans and Directors and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators held a meeting. The agenda included a review of conference highlights and key themes, plans for facilitating action steps, and other follow up, and identification of other areas for development of Consortium goals.

The professionalization of the child welfare workforce should be on the national agenda and the primary work of this group should be the advocacy for its presence on the national agenda. A national meeting needs to be convened to accomplish two goals, the first to further discussion of the problem and the second to raise the profile of the issue to the media, the public, and the policy makers, particularly governors. Policy statements about such issues as workload and competency should also be issued. Organizations such as NASW and CWLA can play a role by alerting governors to the need for professional child welfare workers. The Stark Bill that the GAO is working on could be the impetus for the national discussion. The Stark Bill could also engage deans of social work programs. The planning for this could begin at CSWE but it must be planned for the day before as to not conflict with other meetings.

The meeting ended with the creation of five action steps:

- The NADD-NAPCWA Consortium purpose will be mailed out to all members (see attached).
- Additional meetings will be investigated, possibly using national organization conferences as venues (CSWE, APHSA/NAPCWA).
- An advocacy agenda will be developed. Both NASW and CWLA will be approached about their willingness to engage governors on this issue.
- Pursue the establishment of a clearinghouse for information.
- Pursue funding.

### **RESEARCHER MEETING**

A meeting on research was held at the same time as the NADD/NAPCWA Task Force. This meeting produced two agendas, an action agenda and a research agenda. The first part of the action agenda is to create white papers that translate the empirical information known into a useable resource for practitioners. Four task forces were created to write papers for four different issues; workload, effective practice with different cases, federal child welfare reviews, and differential effectiveness. The second part of the action agenda is to focus on effective translation of research and of getting research to the right national advocates for policy change. The dual focus of the action agenda is to translate research into useable information and then focus on making sure that information gets used.

The research agenda calls for a focus on three different areas. The first is to investigate competencies and their linkage to outcomes. The second research area is the relative effectiveness of workers with various backgrounds. This would include looking at IV-E vs. non IV-E trained workers both at the BSW and MSW level. The final section of the agenda would be to respond to any research questions that emerge from the action agenda. It is assumed that as more connections are made with practitioners through the action agenda, more research questions will emerge. Some other areas of research mentioned were supervision, retention and turnover issues, and the Federal IV-E reimbursement and the narrowing of what is defined as child welfare.

The following is a list of the issues that the task force on translating research will begin to address. The names of the individuals who volunteered to be the point person on each issue is included. Please contact the writer if there are any errors. Members of the task force include Norma Harris, Evelyn Williams, and Marcie Jeffreys. There are some names missing as some names of volunteers were not recorded.

- Workload – Anita Barbee
- Effective practice with different types of cases? (IV-E vs. non-IV-E) – Mindy Holliday
- What we know about Federal child welfare reviews of states? - Chapin Hall currently investigating
- What do we know about differential effectiveness?

There were two primary resources identified on the web:

<http://olav.usi.louisville.edu/nrc.htm>  
[www.rom.ku.edu](http://www.rom.ku.edu)

## CONCLUSION

The conference ended with a report from each of the sub-groups and an overview of practical next steps. Anyone who is interested may sign up to assist with the task force groups defined by the research sub-group.

### Short-term goals

- Mail conference proceedings
- Conference attendees identify the task force in which he or she is interested in participating

### Mid-term goals

- Task force participants gathering data and forwarding it to the task force leader
- Sharing that information with Joan Zlotnik, who has agreed to serve as a central clearinghouse
- The steering committee completing needed follow up work

### Long-term goals

- Develop support and funding for long-term organizational work

**WORKING CONFERENCE ON PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION TO ADVANCE  
CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE  
ATTENDEES**

THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK - UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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