

IASWR Child Welfare Workforce Initiative

Overview

A well-trained, competent child welfare workforce provides an important underpinning to achieving the goals of safety, permanence and well-being. However, we know high caseloads, insufficient training, and high turnover have a negative impact on service delivery. Despite our awareness of these problems, there are few organized efforts to bring together the many different activities and studies that organizations have undertaken to address recruitment and retention problems or to systematically analyze research and outcome studies shedding important findings about the impact of the workforce on service delivery. For these reasons, IASWR has launched a Child Welfare Workforce initiative, with goals connecting current research to practice and policy, and identifying additional research needed to systematically improve the child welfare workforce.

[The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Human Services Workforce Initiative](#), and [Fostering Results](#) help support the IASWR Child Welfare Workforce Initiative.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Workforce Initiative is the first national effort to address workforce issues among agencies providing services in the areas of child welfare, child care, juvenile justice, and youth services. The foundation conducted research on job conditions among workers in these areas and published a report of their findings, titled, "[The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Condition of the Frontline Human Services Workforce](#)." Their research led them to discover structural factors presenting the greatest challenge to this workforce, including lack of quality staff, high turnover, lower salary than in comparable jobs, limited opportunity for growth and advancement, poor supervision and support, lack of autonomy, and mismatched training to roles. Research also led them to identify promising approaches toward solving these problems. The focus of the initiative is on recruitment, retention, and training of social service workers. The Casey Foundation is taking a leadership role toward increasing public awareness of workforce problems; guiding policymakers; evaluating, documenting, and promoting proven practices; providing assistance to states and local agencies; and creating a national commission to focus attention on the issues at hand. IASWR has received funding from the organization to identify effective strategies that will attract and retain a competent workforce. *IASWR will particularly examine research and outcomes related to recruitment and retention in child welfare in order to enhance service delivery and outcomes for children and families, and will convene a panel of agency administrators to identify effective strategies for recruitment/retention, as well as the structural and organizational challenges to this end.* To submit information about your research on these issues, click [here](#).

Fostering Results is a public education and outreach campaign, funded by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to the Children and Family Research Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Fostering Results works to address the two main foci of the Trusts Foster Care Initiative, those being the need to address federal financing incentives that favor foster care over other options for children and families, and the need to improve court oversight of child welfare cases. Fostering Results is working presently within ten states: New York, Connecticut, Ohio, Missouri, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, California, and Iowa. IASWR is partnering with Fostering Results to strengthen research/practice connections in the field of child welfare through promoting evidence-based strategies toward developing and retaining a competent workforce, and thus improved outcomes for children and families.

Convening National Organizations

What Brought People Together

As an initial step in the IASWR Child Welfare Workforce Initiative, IASWR, in collaboration with the National Association of Social Workers, convened in January 2004 representatives of a broad range of national organizations committed to developing and sustaining a high quality child welfare workforce to exchange information about workforce issues, to identify roles they are taking to this end, and to identify areas for further research and policy development. Participants represented professional associations, national advocacy groups, service provider organizations, think tanks, unions, and government agencies.

Who Participated

[Child Welfare League of America](#)
[National Association of Social Workers](#)
[National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information](#)
[Alliance for Children and Families](#)
[Children's Defense Fund](#)
[Council on Accreditation](#)
[Council on Social Work Education](#)
[American Public Human Services Association](#)
[National Conference of State Legislators](#)
[Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)
[Fostering Results](#)
National Child Abuse Coalition
[Maternal and Child Health Bureau](#)
Children's Bureau
[National Training & Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health](#)
[Service Employees International Union](#)
[American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees](#)
[Center for Law and Social Policy](#)
[Urban Institute](#)
[Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research](#)

What Was Shared

These agencies and organizations shared with the group their respective roles in addressing child welfare workforce issues. Some provide training and technical assistance to the field on best practices, as well as training and assistance to child welfare workers. Others are involved in drafting and advocating for legislation that supports permanency for children in foster care or addresses workforce problems. Advocacy groups are involved in bringing greater visibility to child welfare and workforce issues on the political agenda, while unions bargain on behalf of workers for increased pay and benefits, and other organizations represent workers in other capacities. Some agencies are involved in field research or the funding of research into these matters and still others exist to link people to information and resources about child welfare.

Topic areas:

Major Workforce Problems Identified

- Caseload:
 - Too high
 - Organization (Generic vs. Specialized worker models)
- Insufficient training/education

- Insufficient compensation/benefits
 - High turnover

Other Issues Impacting the Workforce

- Insufficient collaborative processes with other service domains
- Privatization of human services
- The current fiscal environment

Consequences of Workforce Problems

- Continued overburdening, burnout, mental health problems, of workers
- Fewer potential positive outcomes for children and families
- More potential cost to society of child abuse/neglect

Questions to help resolve workforce problems

- What are *effective* child welfare services?
- How many workers are needed to provide *effective* child welfare services?
- Should methods for quantifying workers, cases/families/children, etc... be standardized? If so, what method(s) should be used?
- What are effective strategies for assigning and organizing workload?
- How do standards relate to positive outcomes?
- How do we best determine the value of social work degrees?
- What training partnerships can be fostered between universities and child welfare agencies?

Child Welfare Worker Standards for Education and Training

- Document effective strategies for selecting and training workers
- The value of a social work degree
- Use of the title "social worker"

Other Actions

- Advocacy
 - Child welfare workforce as a campaign issue
- Information exchange should be frequent

Child Welfare Workforce Resources

1. The University of Kentucky maintains a site that is a vast resource for child welfare workforce issues and policy information: www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/

Child Welfare/Social Work Education Partnerships

<http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/>

- [Bibliography on Title IV-E Educational Programs prepared by Sandra Murphy, doctoral student at the University of Georgia School of Social Work](#)

Current Research Projects

- [CWLA Research to Practice Workforce Abstracts](#)
- [University of Illinois Website on Assessing Client Satisfaction](#)
- [PowerPoint Presentation for University of North Carolina Retention Study](#) (requires Microsoft PowerPoint)
- [North Carolina Retention Study](#)

- [State University of New York Workforce Research](#)
- [Georgia Retention Study Executive Summary](#)

2. *Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff*
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03357pdf>

This GAO report cites high caseloads and related administrative burdens as well as lack of supervision and training as impacting both the ability to carry-out child welfare tasks and effectively and the decision to stay in child welfare work. The report includes review of child and family services reviews, intensive studies of four states and 585 exit interviews in addition to an extensive review of the literature.

3. *Double Jeopardy: Caseworkers at Risk Helping At-Risk Kids: A Report on the Working Conditions Facing Child Welfare Workers*
<http://www.afscme.org/pol-leg/djtc.htm>

This survey of AFSCME members examined working conditions and caseloads, highlighting workload size and demand, violence toward workers, inadequate training and salaries, and lack of worker input.

4. National Resource Center on Child Welfare Training & Evaluation
 University of Louisville Kent School of Social Work
 - *Training Transfer: Variables that Predict and Maximize Transfer*
 - Becky Antle & Anita Barbee
 - *Training to Outcomes: The Impact of Training on Organizational Outcomes*
 - Becky Antle & Mavin Martin
 - *Child and family service reviews (CFSRs): Preliminary Results and Implications for Training*
 Mavin Martin, Anita Barbee & Becky Antle<http://olav.usi.louisville.edu/nrc.htm>

5. Child Welfare League of America www.cwla.org
 - *Research to Practice (R2P) Research Roundup (September 2002)*
 - *Research to Practice – Child Welfare Workforce Annotated Bibliography (Updated September 2003)*
 - *Children’s Voice*, Vol. 12 (6), November/December 2003 – *Help Wanted*, pp. 26-29.
 - *CWLA Standards* <http://www.cwla.org/programs/standards/default.htm>

6. *Demand for Social Workers in California*, Pasztor, E., Saint-Germain, M, DeCrescenzo, T.,
 California State University, Long Beach, April 2002.
http://www.csus.edu/calst/Government_Affairs/faculty_fellows_program.html

This study was commissioned by the California Assembly to examine the literature on the need for social workers, to review CA statutes that require social workers to provide services, to develop a clear operational definition of “social worker,” to develop a systematic description of statewide need as well as the levels of training and education that would be needed to fill the demand.

7. *SB 2030 Child Welfare Services Workload Study Final Report and Recommendations*
 Completed by Walter R. McDonald & Associates
http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/SB2030Chil_287.htm

To understand the routine activities of child welfare casework staff, the time needed to complete mandated activities, to estimate time required for “best practices,” and to review budget methodology for child welfare services, SB 2030 required the state of California to undertake a

workload measurement and analysis process. The study recommended standards for core workloads, estimating that on average 116.10 hours are available per month for workers to provide direct services to cases.

8. National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators
Proceedings from the Professional Education to Advance Child Welfare Practice: An Invitational Working Conference
[http://ssw.che.umn.edu/cascw/cascw_conference\)proceedings.htm](http://ssw.che.umn.edu/cascw/cascw_conference)proceedings.htm)
September 2002 or it can be accessed through <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/>
9. Center for the Study of Social Policy & Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare
 - Child Welfare Summit: Looking to the Future
 - Summit Background Paper #3: Building a Quality Workforce to Improve Outcomes for Children & Families[http:// www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org)
10. Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families
Workload Assessment Study. Yamantani, H & Engel, Rafael, Community Enhancement Research Network, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh, 11/1/2002.
www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/
11. *A Study of Personal and Organizational Factors Contributing to Employee Retention and Turnover in Child Welfare in Georgia* (June 2003). Prepared by Ellett, A., Ellett, C. E., & Rugutt, J.K., for the Georgia Department of Human Resources/Division of Family & Children Services.
Executive Summary can be accessed at www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe/
12. Landsman, M.J. (2001). Commitment in public child welfare. *Social Service Review*, 75(3), 386-419.
This study of employees found that belief in the importance of social work was the single strongest contribution to job satisfaction and second greatest contribution to organizational commitment. Opportunities for advancement contribute to a satisfied workforce and administrators' creation of a supportive work environment helps staff feel valued.
13. National Association of Social Workers
Child Welfare Workforce Fast Facts
http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/updates/082003_a.asp
Child Welfare: Protecting Children – Promoting the Profession
http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/issues/child_welfare.asp
Child Welfare Specialty Practice Section <http://www.socialworkers.org/sections/default.asp>

Identifying Child Welfare Workforce Research and Outcome Studies

IASWR has received an important grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation as part of their Human Services Workforce Initiative to identify and analyze evidence-based findings related to recruitment and retention of child welfare staff. IASWR in collaboration with the U of Maryland is moving forward on a systematic review of research and outcome studies related to this and we seek your assistance to identify such studies. We are looking for research and outcome studies that address the relationship between:

Demographic variables - marital status, age, education, gender, urban vs. rural, parent or not

Personal perceptions - commitment to organization/clients; goodness of fit; view of self in professional role; stigma of role

Organizational conditions - supervision; resources; dealing with other systems (i.e. court, mental health); physical environment; career ladder; job requirements; trauma; organizational culture

Personal attributes - human caring; authenticity; skills to engage involuntary clients; emotional stability

Qualifications & experience - social work vs. other degree, sw vs. related degree; tenure in the organization, level of sw degree; licensing/certification; competence

Strategies – recruitment, training orientation, education (title iv-e), policies to bring professionalism to the workforce, accreditation, etc.

AND - Intention to work in public child welfare, intention to stay working in public child welfare, intention to leave, turnover, and retention

If you are aware of studies that address the aforementioned, it would be greatly appreciated if you would let us know by completing the form below. Your information can be sent to us via:

Fax: 202.336.8385

Email: iaswr@naswdc.org

Phone: 202.336.8385

SEE FORM NEXT PAGE

Identifying Child Welfare Workforce Research and Outcome Studies

Name:		
Affiliation:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone:		
Fax:		
Email:		
Title of Research (<i>full citation</i>)		
Funder:		
Comments: (<i>pls. Feel free to attached articles electronically</i>)		