

**Workforce and Accountability:
*Child and Family Services Reviews—Implications for Child Welfare Practice***

Report from the August 3, 2004 Symposium

*Convened by the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR)
in collaboration with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)*

On August 3, 2004, the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) in collaboration with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) convened a meeting of national stakeholders to address recent research on child welfare service delivery. The goals of the meeting were:

- ❑ To review the outcomes of the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) in regard to the implications for child welfare practice, workforce and training issues—including caseload, competency, supervision, and practice models.
- ❑ To identify practice improvements strategies and research questions that need further study, including potential roles for child welfare agencies, university partners, and technical assistance providers, as well as financing strategies.

This meeting was a second in a series of meetings convened by IASWR and NASW as part of their respective child welfare workforce initiatives. The purpose of the meeting was not to critique the CFSR process, but rather to facilitate a discussion around workforce and accountability issues, to identify how these issues relate to the CFSR findings and to address implications for child welfare practice and the need for further research. The IASWR launched the IASWR Child Welfare Workforce Initiative (ICWFI) in the Fall 2003 with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and in partnership with Fostering Results, a project based at the University of Illinois School of Social Work's Child and Family Research Center and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The NASW Child Welfare Initiative also began in the Fall 2003.

This symposium, initially planned for June 2004 (it was postponed due to the funeral of Ronald Reagan) brought together representatives from national child welfare organizations, resource centers, professional societies, accrediting bodies, public interest groups, unions, universities, Congressional offices and federal agencies (see list of attendees). The presentations included a review of recent relevant GAO reports, analyses of the CFSR findings, a perspective on technical assistance planning from the Children's Bureau and strategies for best practices.

The following provides an overview of the symposium presentations as well as the discussion and recommendations.

Child and Family Service Reviews' GAO Report—Findings on Child Welfare Practice

*Diana Pietrowiak/Joy Gambino, Government Accountability Office (GAO)
(Formerly the General Accounting Office)*

- The GAO released two reports – April 2004 on the CFSRs and March 2003 on child welfare workforce issues. The CFSRs assess states' performance on specific outcomes related to safety, permanency and well-being.

- GAO used a definition of workforce deficiencies that included high caseloads, training gaps, and staff shortages.
- For the purposes of their presentation, the GAO staff looked at these two reports together to identify the extent to which their studies indicated that caseworkers have sufficient time to do critical work and to what extent the CFSRs show workforce deficiencies that hamper agency attainment of national performance measures..
- The GAO studies used multiple methodologies.
- In the workforce study, GAO conducted interviews with federal (HHS) and state and local officials, and obtained and analyzed exit interviews from public and private agencies across the country, which no one ever had done—to corroborate other findings. They reported that high turnover is related to low salaries, high caseloads, limited supervision, insufficient training and risk of violence.
- The GAO also reported that some evidence suggests issues dealing with recruitment and retention—staff shortages and high caseloads-- impair workers' abilities to perform critical case management activities, e.g., less time to establish relationships with children and families.
- University training: GAO visited Kentucky and California during its workforce study and reported that evaluations in those states showed that more than 80% of students utilizing Title IV-E funded-educational stipends remained with their respective child welfare agencies after their contractual employment obligations had expired.
- GAO also visited Illinois during its workforce study, and found that accreditation there and in Kentucky improved staff morale, enhanced the agencies' reputations with the press, and corresponded with improvements on quality assurance measures.
- The study on CFSRs reported that states struggled to meet performance benchmarks in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being, and not one of the 41 states reviewed by HHS prior to the publication of the GAO's report had achieved substantial conformity on all 14 outcomes and systemic factors.
- The CFSRs did not focus on the content of worker training nor did they speak much towards workforce issues.

Discussion:

- While HHS has a federal role that mandates certain requirements, there are no federal recommendations related to caseload size and no specific federal oversight regarding caseloads for states.
- Symposium attendees suggested that for future CFSRs: HHS should assess categories for training, such as supervisory and foster care training, and further clarify who the stakeholders are that participate in the review process (i.e. lawyers, outside agencies).

Review of Child and Family Service Reviews

Assessment and Worker Skills—Elena Cohen, National Child Welfare Research Center on Family-Centered Practice

From a review of the first round of CFSRs the following identified issues related to child welfare practice:

- CFSRs analyzed the quantity not the quality of the visitations with clients.
- Caseworker visits correlated to child welfare outcomes, and caseworker visits with parents are as important as with children.
- Types and frequencies of services received in foster care versus in-home differ substantially and mental health needs are less likely to be met by in-home services.
- CFSRs indicate inadequate efforts to involve fathers.
- CFSRs indicate differences in urban versus rural services.
- CFSRs confirmed disproportional representation of children of color in placement, most true for African American and Native American children.

- Due to the system's infrastructure, focus is on safety and risk assessment rather than comprehensive assessments. Caseworkers do not want to discover needs of the client that they cannot adequately service. Therefore, it creates the cycling of the client in and out of the system. States are concerned about being systems of care rather than just focused on safety.
- The Child Welfare League of America develops and promulgates nationally recognized standards, but they are not mandated—
- Other issues: Lack of caseworker competency to assess and engage with families; the need to have differentiated interventions and specific trainings on issues families face; and, the adversarial relationship CPS has with families, all impact service delivery.
- The Children's Bureau, through the Resource Center, is working on guidelines for a comprehensive family assessment that will be piloted next year. Need to address both administrative and practice issues, as there is confusion about how broad or narrow the CPS role is in enhancing well-being of children.
- Georgetown Children's Mental Health Training/Technical Assistance Center (Jan McCarthy) and American Institutes for Research completed a review of the CFSRs in relation to mental health issues. They are also developing a tool for families to train them to be more engaged in the CFSR process and more aware of their rights.

Training Needs Identified in CFSRs—Anita Barbee, University of Louisville

- Findings: When states have better overall training systems, the strength in meeting the standards of Well Being 1 and 3 (the areas of greatest weakness for states) is higher than when states have weak training systems. Furthermore, when states have more ongoing training for the existing workforce including supervisors, the strength in Safety 2, Permanency 2, and Well Being 1, 2 and 3 is higher than when states do not emphasize ongoing training for the workforce. Strong Foster Care and Adoption Training is particularly important for Child Well Being 1 & 3. Better training is associated with the more critical parts of practice: Involving families in case planning, placing siblings together, emphasizing the child and parent relationship when a child is in out of home care, worker visits with parents, and ensuring services for parents, children and foster parents. In order to improve outcomes, states must recognize and support ongoing training for the existing workforce including supervisors if they intend to improve outcomes.
- State Child Welfare Agencies must view their Training System as CRITICAL to achieving outcomes. That means organizationally elevating training directors to be a part of the highest level of the management/leadership team in the organization and ensuring that training is an integral part of the organization.
- Kentucky has an evidence-based training system: Research has shown that the critical components of an organization with an effective training system include: 1) personal selection capability for hiring employees with social work backgrounds, ready to learn and conscientious, 2) training content that is viewed as relevant by the workforce and that ties to the actual child welfare job, 3) trainers that have child welfare expertise and who effectively use adult learner techniques, 4) training delivery methods that are targeted to entire teams or units, 5) all types of training including initial, supervisory, ongoing and foster care and adoption training, 6) training reinforcement must be in place in the field so that trainees have support, coaching and mentoring from supervisors and co-workers on critical job enhancing behaviors, 7) organizational support for training so that front line workers are given the support they need to execute important aspects of the job such as assessments and case plans and 8) organizational structure that keeps workloads manageable and resources available to carry out best practices.

General Discussion

- There are political, administrative and capacity building issues to address.
- State and federal legislators need education about child welfare, the expected outcomes and the types and levels of service and the qualifications of the workers that go with that.

- Currently, there are no guidelines on the number of times a caseworker should visit or make contact with families. (Note: such guidelines do exist in CWLA foster care standards and some states have such requirements in policy.)
- A question was raised on how the recently introduced Herger Bill would affect the issues?
- Need to address how development of caseload standards actually will play out in practice (e.g. covering vacancies, etc).
- How an agency is structured, e.g., the separation of child welfare and child protection services and lack of funding for in-home services impacts service delivery and outcomes.
- CWLA, through its National Data Analysis System (NDAS), does not have complete information on how states compare in regard to caseload size.
- Issues of accountability arise, especially for in-home services when it might be other agencies that are responsible for meeting the needs, outside of child welfare – need to address inter-governmental cooperation and cross-system training.
- Need to consider worker training strategies that bring them to the job “ready to learn” and on-going review of curricula for relevance.

Technical Assistance Strategies and Priorities toward Practice Improvement

Susan Orr, Associate Commissioner, Children’s Bureau

- The CFSR process was inherited but embraced wholeheartedly.
- The Children’s Bureau (CB) is making some changes in its resource center operations (with proposals due soon) with the idea of creating an overarching center for the system. There would be ten National Child Welfare Resource Centers with a single point of entry through Center for Organizational Improvement (OI) for the state to ask for on-site training/TA. There would be an internal work group for oversight and the OI would also have evaluation responsibility.
- There needs to be a loop of review/assessment/T-TA to move forward with system improvement.
- The three CB-funded Quality Improvement Centers – are models that are working well in regions.
- Through the CFSR and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) process became aware of data issues (differing definitions for outcomes used across states) and need to address that as well as differing definitions of maltreatment.
- Issues of prevention and in-home services are neglected, and the CB has put proposals forward to have more resources in this area through the doubling of CAPTA.
- Also need to look at adoption incentives and bonuses for the hardest to place children.
- The administration is proposing flexible funding to let states experiment for five years.
- Need to re-examine the structure since entitlement funding neither rewards nor punishes good practice. Both the administration’s proposal and Herger’s proposal would reward good stewardship of federal funding and match the funding structure to good case practices.
- Need to look across systems, e.g. the CB funded nine “systems of care” grants and is looking to work more closely together with SAMHSA. There is also a need for better coordination between child welfare and TANF. Beyond the “systems of care” grants there is inter-agency collaboration on the Green Book, through the Child Abuse and Neglect Consortium and the Interagency Child Abuse and Neglect Task Force. The Surgeon General is planning to convene a fall meeting on child abuse prevention from a public health perspective.

Implications for Development of Best Practices: Strategies for Workforce Development

Pamela Day, Child Welfare League of America

- The CFSR findings indicate that child welfare workers are not effective in interpersonal relationship skill building, family engagement and assessment, and building meaningful roles for fathers and for kin.
- Need a balance between process/procedure and interpersonal skill building.

- Workers need to come to agencies prepared – some models train workers and then they wait in a pool until an opening occurs.
- *Rethinking Child Welfare Practice Under ASFA* is a useful monograph that provides guidance and resources for quality child welfare practice.
- We need to take some bold steps – call for national practice standards that states must meet, including caseload standards – rather than pretending that they are not important. These could be tied in with the CFSTRs, agency accreditation, or both.
- Workforce improvements have been legislated in Kentucky, Delaware, Arizona – we need to look at where states have been successful.
- Need to look at nurturing the next set of leaders – can we build another child welfare leadership center or program?
- We need to make it appealing for people to want to do child welfare work.

Cynthia Woodside, National Association of Social Workers

- NASW recently surveyed its Child Welfare Specialty Practice Section members in regard to child welfare workforce issues. Most of the respondents were providing direct services.
- These NASW members, all with social work degrees (mostly MSWs), indicated that they had lower caseloads (average of 19 families), higher salaries, and longer tenure and are more pleased with the quality of supervision they receive than the general child welfare workforce. The average retention was three times longer for those with social work degrees. Only 11% of the respondents wanted to leave and \$44,000 was the median salary.
- 69% of the respondents indicated that they have social workers for supervisors so that they speak the same language.
- The biggest challenges for workers are the issues that the children and families in child welfare face and the biggest rewards are the success that families achieve.

Debra Linsenmeyer, University of Maryland School of Social Work, Education for Child Welfare Practice Program.

- The University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) was actively involved in the state's self-assessment process for the CFSTRs as well as training of reviewers and stakeholders. The on-site CFSTR review was an encouraging professional experience.
- IV-E faculty served on committees related to the development and implementation of the PIP.
- Research suggests that social work education offers the right set of competencies – but we need to make that better known and have the outcome measures to demonstrate it.
- Need to have on-going systematic reviews of the curricula to ensure relevance and an advisory committee to integrate classroom and field work. Units in public child welfare agencies also then should provide input back to the university.
- In regard to a research agenda – we need to examine what works for whom and under what conditions? – What are the component pieces of interventions like “family to family” that are critical for effective practice? What are the components of effective supervisory practices?

Major Points and Recommendations

- Image of Child Welfare and its Workers
 - Capitalize on current opportunities – NASW Image campaign, *Judging Amy*
 - The profession and families involved in the child welfare system need to come together to demand quality for effective outcomes.
 - Need for a ‘media blitz’ of good things happening and back it up with data.
 - Need to build leadership academies in training supervisors and administrators.
- Social Work and Child Welfare
 - Need to continue to validate that social work is the right degree for the job.

- Need to look at combination of skills, knowledge and personal attributes.
 - Need to ensure that curricula are constantly reviewed and relevant to real world practice.
 - Need to both assess the numbers of child welfare workers needed in a state and/or locality and assess the capacity of social work education programs to meet those needs. IV-E training alone will not meet capacity. Need to look at other mentorship models and how the university can contribute to training, education and quality practice in multiple ways.
 - Need to gear up to bring in new workers, supervisors and administrators as many retirements are slated for the next 5 to 10 years.
- Resources
- Need to develop more effective mechanisms so that resources available from T/TA centers are visible to social work education programs, and are reflected in curricula.
 - There is a need for leadership development and to ensure that supervisors and administrators (not just front-line workers) are oriented to new practice modalities.

BACKGROUND AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

As background for the meeting, IASWR created a list of resources that might be helpful. They both address broad-based recommendations (e.g. the Pew Commission Report) and specific analyses of the Child and Family Services Reviews. Additional materials on child welfare workforce issues can be found by visiting the website of the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (www.iaswresearch.org) or specifically its Child Welfare Workforce Initiative at <http://www.charityadvantage.com/iaswr/images/ChildWelfareWorkforceInitiative.doc>; or find out about the National Association of Social Workers Child Welfare Initiative at <http://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/initiatives/childWelfare/naswDoing.asp>, or workforce "Fast Facts" at Child Welfare Workforce Fast Facts http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/updates/082003_a.asp.

For information on the Pew supported Fostering Results project, visit www.fosteringresults.org to find out about their education and outreach initiative, work in ten states (CA, AZ, TN, MO, WI, IA, TX, NY, OH, CT) and work with the media to help them understand the need for child welfare improvements related to financing and court reform, including the role of workforce issues, <http://www.fosteringresults.org/results/emergingissues.htm>.

Recent Recommendations on Child Welfare Workforce Improvements

Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care

Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence and Well-being for Children in Foster Care – the Report of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, released May 18, 2004. <http://pewfostercare.org/research/docs/FinalReport.pdf> includes CHILD WELFARE FINANCING recommendation #6:

6. To promote innovation and constant exploration of the best ways to help children who have been abused and neglected, the Commission recommends that the federal government:

- *Expand and improve its successful child welfare waiver program;*
- *Continue to reserve funds for research, evaluation, and sharing of best practices; and*
- *Provide incentives to states that make workforce improvements and increase all forms of safe permanence for children in foster care. (p. 30)*

Lucile and David Packard Foundation

Children, Families, and Foster Care, Future of Children, VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1 - WINTER 2004 http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs-info2825/pubs-info.htm?doc_id=209538

Recommendation – Transforming Frontline Practice – The courts and child welfare agencies should restructure their organizations and adopt practices that support individualized planning build continuity into the relationships between judges, caseworkers, children, and families in foster care. (p. 24)

Annie E. Casey Foundation

"The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Condition of the Frontline Human Services Workforce", March 2003, <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/hswi/>. This report commences the Foundation's effort to address the critical condition of the workforce, including the child welfare workforce, that helps care for America's most disadvantaged children and families. The initiative highlights the urgent need to recruit and retain workers who have the appropriate training and support to make crucial decisions that affect families.

General Accounting Office

"Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff" <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03357.pdf> is a report from the General Accounting Office, requested by Congressmen Stark and Greenwood, that cites high caseloads and related administrative burdens, (which may take between 50 and 80 percent of the workers'

time), as well as lack of supervision and training as impacting both their ability to work effectively and their decision to stay in the child welfare profession.

Resource Information on Findings from the Child and Family Service Reviews

1. From the Children's Bureau's Website

Changing the Culture of the Workplace

Closing Plenary Session - Annual Meeting of States and Tribes
January 29, 2003, remarks by Jerry Milner
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/changing_culture.htm

Children's Bureau: *Child and Family Services Reviews*

State Final Reports <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/staterpt/index.htm>

Summary of the Results of the 2001 and 2002 Child and Family Services Reviews

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/2002cfsrresults.htm>

Results of the 2001 and 2002 Child and Family Service Reviews

ACF, 3/12/03 Power Point Presentation www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/results/

2. Center for the Study of Social Policy

Improving the Performance and Outcomes of Child Welfare through State Program Improvement Plans (PIPS), and is available at http://www.cssp.org/uploadFiles/2515_CSSP_FINAL.pdf.

3. General Accounting Office

Child and Family Services Reviews: Better use of data and improved guidance could enhance HHS's oversight of state performance, April 2004 GAO-04-333
<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-333>.

4. Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services

Child and Family Service Review: Examining Outcomes

<http://www.evaluationstation.org/news/pdf/Action%20Agenda%20-%20Aug%2002.pdf>

5. National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development and the Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health American Institutes of Research

An Analysis of Mental Health Issues in States' Child and Family Service Reviews and Program Improvement Plans, April 2004

http://www.air-dc.org/tapartnership/advisors/childwelfare/resources/CFSR_analysis.pdf

6. National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice What Is the Service Array in Child Welfare?

http://www.cwresource.org/services_serviceArray.htm

7. National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

Child and Family Service Reviews

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/rcnews.html#Anchor-News-49575>

8. National Resource Center on Child Welfare Training & Evaluation

University of Louisville Kent School of Social Work 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>.