**Center for Children and Families**

**Texas State University-San Marcos**

**14th Annual Title IV-E Roundtable, Federal Region VI, June 2010**

**Field Focus Group**

**Co-chairs: Christine Johnson, Tanya Rollins, Martha Wildberger**

**WHAT’S NEW:** *Tools of the Trade*

Sharing Tools of the Trade and things that work well with student interns:

1. UTA has started giving new field students a turtle magnet as an introduction to working in the field of social work. Turtles are considered the mascots of social work, because *“they are hard on the outside, soft on the inside, the progress that they make is slow, and it is only made when they stick their necks out”* (coined by Dr. Eileen Mayers Pasztor at last year’s Roundtable).
2. A vignette was shared with the group. This vignette is used to help students examine the micro, macro, and mezzo level of a situation and to identify the protective and risk factors in a case. This vignette can be used at the beginning and at the end of a field placement, to see how a student has progressed.
3. A Field Activity Guide was provided by New Mexico State University. This activity guide provides guidelines for the practicum experience, and explains the roles of everyone involved and the general requirements for all field students. This provides consistency for the field experience.
4. Finding different ways to help students develop their assessment skills was discussed, and one representative mentioned utilizing various types of questionnaires to help students develop their assessment style (utilizing both close-ended and open-ended questions).
5. A recent Title IV-E graduate discussed a technique that was used in her graduate level field seminar class that was very helpful in developing her problem-solving skills and her ability to approach situations confidently and professionally. In the graduate class, each week students were given a case scenario. Students were required to write a 2-page paper, identifying the key players in the scenario, the presenting problem, why it's a problem, and the ethical issues involved. Students then had to identify 2 solutions, the pros and cons to each solution, and then finally had to draw a conclusion to the scenario.
6. The University of Houston is piloting a program where CPS employees who are completing their MSW degree can complete their field placement in their current job. This pilot program is being monitored by CSWE. Former CPS employees volunteered to provide the field instruction for these employees, and so far it is working out well.
7. UTPA utilizes split placements, where students complete half of the field seminar class one semester and half the next semester. In class, they are asked to find relevant articles and then discuss the articles using a theory-based approach.

*Title IV-E Survey*

At the Mid-Year Roundtable, the focus group wanted to get feedback from agency personnel on how Title IV-E students differ from regular employees. Joe Wicker, OJT Supervisor, developed and distributed a short survey to Texas DFPS staff, and received feedback regarding Title IV-E students in Texas. The results of the survey were distributed and discussed in the group. If anyone would like to see the raw data from the survey, please contact Martha Wildberger or Joe Wicker.

*Other Field Issues/Concerns*

1. Field textbooks - discussion on the use of textbooks in the Field Seminar class and how students respond to the textbooks. Several people do not use a textbook at all in the seminar class because there is not enough time and too much to cover, and some use part of the textbook. The consensus was that few people rely heavily on a textbook for the Seminar class.
2. Preparation for licensure - discussion on how students are prepared for licensure. Some universities provide practice sessions/tests, and one university offers a 16 week class focusing entirely on preparing for the licensure test. As a result, the percentage of graduates who passed the test went up.

**WHAT’S NEEDED:**

The group identified several things that might be helpful in the future:

1. The group would like an opportunity to e-mail any suggestions they have about upcoming plans for the Field Focus group. If anyone has suggestions, please e-mail Martha Wildberger (mw38@txstate.edu).
2. It’s helpful to discuss Tools of the Trade and share ideas, and the group would like to do that again next year.
3. It may be helpful to discuss the structure of the Texas training program, as it moves from a theoretical focus to a more application-based approach.
4. In addition to the survey, it may be helpful to get further feedback from program: Are there things that we need to be teaching students in field to prepare them for work in child welfare? What are the new trends? What new skills are needed? What can universities do to better prepare students for a career in child welfare? A suggestion was made to have a small panel of agency personnel at the next meeting to facilitate a discussion on the above questions.

**WHAT’S NEXT:**

Chris Johnson, previous Co-chair of the Field Committee, has been promoted to another position and has left the Field Committee to join a different committee. Leadership of this group was discussed and participants were given the opportunity to nominate themselves as Co-chairs. Estela Sosa Garza (UTPA) volunteered to co-chair this committee (along with Tanya Rollins and Martha Wildberger) for next year.

For next year’s Roundtable, we will look into the possibility of having a panel of agency representatives at the field focus group meeting to provide feedback on how Title IV-E students are doing once they become employees. Participants are also encouraged to bring tools/ideas to share with the group.