**14th Annual Title IV-E Child Welfare Roundtable**

The 14th Annual Title IV-E Child Welfare Roundtable was held June 3-4, 2010 at the T Bar M Ranch in New Braunfels.

More than 100 participants from every state in Federal Region VI (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) attended the two-day conference to foster Title IV-E funded Agency/University collaborations. Such collaborations prepare social work students for public child welfare practice in the federal region. Participants explored topics including, national, regional, and state perspectives on child welfare, collaborative training models and regional Title IV-E program evaluation results.

Carmen Nazario, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was the keynote speaker this year. Ms. Nazario has been an assistant professor at the Inter American University of Puerto Rico, where she taught social policy and coordinated the Social Work Practicum at the School of Social Work. She was Associate Commissioner for Child Care in the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families under President Clinton and also later became the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). She has held a number of national leadership roles, including Vice President of the Board of Directors of the American Public Welfare Association, President of the National Council of Local Public Welfare Administrators, and Secretary of the National Council of State Human Service Administrators. A native of Bayamon, Puerto Rico, Ms. Nazario was awarded her Master of Social Work degree from Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work in 1973.

Ms. Nazario opened her address by saying that the Obama Administration was committed to supporting child welfare and the collaboration between universities and state agencies. She noted that when she took her post a year ago she had three priorities: (1) working toward alleviating poverty and helping families achieve economic success through support systems, but going beyond support to find ways to help improve early education and build community; (2) aggressively promoting children’s health and development to ensure every child an education, nurturing family, medical care, and good nutrition; and (3) improving institutional capacity to deliver services, making children and families the center of policy and programs. These efforts include focusing not just on program monitoring, Ms. Nazario said, but on how programs will benefit children and families. To achieve this requires using technology more effectively, reaching out to underserved and emerging communities, and working more effectively with partners by breaking down “silos.” Ms. Nazario noted that the Department of Health and Human Services is applying this sense of cooperation and interoperability outside the Department as well, working with Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and Education to identify different programs that serve the same overall ends so that each departmental program is not viewed as a separate silo but an integral part of the whole. Ms. Nazario noted that several reforms going forward are important to keep child welfare from going back to the old days when too many children lingered in foster care. She said that change for the sake of change is not what is wanted, but rather change to maximize services, noting the extension of federal support to children coming out of foster care to age 21; extending and changing kinship guardianship policies; and improving education and health care assistance. Ms. Nazario emphasized that federal partners are here to provide technical assistance to universities and local agencies, engender dialogue, and serve as a resource. Ms. Nazario concluded with words of encouragement, commending each attendee for their contributions to system change. Each social work graduate, she said, represents another person who is committed to changing and remodeling what is possible.

An education panel of representatives from all of the states in Region VI detailed to all participants how the Title IV-E program is executed in their states and how they integrate agency education guidelines and requirements with university requirements. Special topic groups also met under the general subject of “Supporting Workers/IV-E Partnerships” to discuss such areas of interest as Effective Mentoring, Retaining a Strong Workforce, Building and Managing a IV-E Budget, Implications of Budget Cost Allocations, Creating a New IV-E Partnership, Addressing Diversity in the Workplace, and Strengthening Supervision.

Additional discussions included a panel of graduates of Region VI IV-E stipend programs who shared their views on how they benefited from their graduate training and carried social work concepts into field work. In another discussion, Liz Kromrei, Director of Services at Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, addressed issues around the implementation in Texas of the Fostering Connections Act. Mark Sandel, Associate Professor at Texas Woman’s University, led a discussion about identifying and utilizing strengths in child welfare work. Jane Burstain, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Public Policy Priorities, addressed the topic of child death from abuse and neglect, focusing on intervention and prevention of poverty and teen pregnancy. Dr. Katherine Selber, Professor at Texas State University and advocate on behalf of military troops and families, and Mitzi Wood, Family Advocacy Intervention Specialist at Randolph Air Force Base, discussed programs at Texas State and at Randolph that underscore family and child welfare needs of active duty military families and those leaving military service and transitioning to civilian life.

The purpose of the Roundtable is to foster Title IV-E funded agency/university collaborations that prepare social work students for professional public child welfare practice. These collaborations provide stipends for university students, funds for curriculum innovation, and salaries for staff and faculty. The Texas State/Texas Department of Family and Protective Services collaboration has educated approximately 323 qualified and dedicated public child welfare practitioners over the last 16 years.

Further discussion about next year’s Roundtable is in the works and details will be forthcoming.

Click on the hot-linked summaries on the Title IV-E Roundtable Web page for some of the topic discussions from the conference. If you have difficulty downloading the presentations, email [ccf@txstate.edu](mailto:ccf@txstate.edu) ,and we’ll email them to you.

**FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES**

**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.

**Partnership and Administrative Issues**

**Co-chairs: Joe Papick, Cyndi Reed**

**What’s New**

* A new University partner in West Texas expressed an interest in developing a BSW Stipend Program. We discussed some of the processes and connected them with their appropriate contact with DFPS.

**What’s Needed**

* Continue to find ways to strengthen the partnership through perhaps a quarterly meeting between DFPS and University Partners and perhaps develop a frequently asked question and answer (FAQ) information process that would be available to all.

**What’s Next**

1. State Office will explore setting up quarterly meetings between DFPS and Universities.
2. The regional office in the West Texas area will explore with the University the possibility of starting a new stipend program.
3. Federal Region VI office will explore the possibility of addressing a frequently asked questions process.
4. The Partnership and Administrative Committee should explore writing up steps for new Universities to develop stipend programs excluding the budget process.
5. Kathy White and Joe Papick are co-chairs of the committee for next year.

**Curriculum**

**Co-Chairs: Sonja Arredondo, Suzanne Irvin, Rhonda Smith**

**What’s New**

Texas training for newly hired employees and stipend students is changing. A job task analysis was completed to determine what caseworkers in each stage of service were doing, and what skills and information were needed to successfully do the tasks. The new training will focus on these core tasks and move from a theory or education based training to a skill based training focus. Some of the major changes include actual practice in the classroom utilizing tablet pc's; from 8-9 am students will review information and what needs to be completed and what will be covered daily. An on-line assessment is planned on a daily basis. The trainer will have access to assessment results to determine the BSD student's understanding of the previous day's content and the need for clarification or further information. This is an essential component since each day of curriculum builds on the previous day. Statewide implementation is scheduled for October 10, 2010, but Austin is currently doing a pilot of the new curriculum. Arkansas’s new employee training is run totally by the University. The University person developing the program and implementing the training works closely with the agency, but there have been numerous technical issues. A great deal of “learning by trial and error” has occurred. Concerns expressed that in Arkansas, new employees attending class with a full caseload despite the agreement that this is not to occur. New Mexico representative also discussed issues related to training and quality assurance. New Mexico will have four days of classroom based training and then one day of computer training every week.

**What’s Needed**

Look at the problems associated with the pilot of the new training curriculum. No built in way to handle class absences as well as no learning time in place for those areas of curriculum that need reinforcing. The pilot program is already running behind schedule as no flexibility is built into the training schedule. In Texas, stipend students do not have tablets to utilize in the training and this puts them at a disadvantage although they will supposedly be issues laptop computers to use. All states said that there have to be some rules implemented related to appropriate computer use during training. Also need to have the “buy in” of supervisory staff to support new employee learning as well as technical staff to assist with computer system updates so that there is access to updated cases and in sufficient numbers.

**What’s Next**

Arkansas has agreed to serve as a consultant for anyone interested in “what not to do with computer based training set-up”. Texas will provide feedback on what has worked and what does not work and problems that will impact the ability of stipend students to successfully complete the internship and training. Need better, ongoing communication regarding successful implementation steps initiated by each of the partnership members both from the agency and university perspective.

**Evaluation**

**Co-Chairs: Donald Baumann, Patrick Leung**

**Issues:**

* Where are the Title IV-E graduates? Can we use database to identify the status of the graduates?

**Evaluation/Research Questions:**

* Identify graduates who are still employed?
* Did the graduates complete the payback?
* What happened to the graduates who left?
* What is the expected graduation date of the student? The data will be used by DFPS to identify those who need to payback.
* What is in the system to enforce/regulate the payback system?
* What is the turnover rate for Title IV-E?
* For the graduates who left, are they still working in child welfare? If so, where?
* What percentage of Title IV-E are promoted?
* How many of the Title IV-E graduates received waiver from the PAN/ABLE tests?
* How many students were dismissed before getting to BSD? Or graduating from BSD? Before hiring?
* Of those who are Title IV-E, how many transfer to other parts of DFPS (leave CPS & go to Adult Protection for example)?

**Issues & Solutions With Database:**

* Agency has a database & each university also has a database. The goal is to combine information from both databases. What information is important to maintain? (Carol Allen will send fields on state database & Dr. Patrick Leung will ask for comments). Want 2 interns (UT)-Carol Allen & De’Quinna Moore will look at the database. Agency Database is from 2006, but university databases go back further. Intern could help clean up database & update agency database.

**What’s Needed:**

* Quantitative Piece is done & qualitative piece is in progress.
* How “payback” is captured? (time vs. monetary).
* Lack of communication between state & university. Student usually maintains communication with university, or do they?
* Identifiers needed (i.e. Employee ID).
* Barriers-name changes, etc.
* Needed: FT/PT Volunteer (Intern).
* Develop a proposal.

**What’s Next:**

* Submit proposal to state office to further our work.
* “Fatherhood Initiative”-addressing fathers in the lives of their children & their cases.
* Who are our workers? What are their attitudes toward present or absent fathers? We can’t determine this next step if we don’t have any data to support this.
* Research: 50/50 from fed & state.
* Brock Boudreau from DFPS will serve as co-chair with Patrick Leung for next year.

**Suggested Solutions:**

* Sample (current employees).
* Standard Identifier.
* Share cost (between states of hiring/contracting with designated university to develop/maintain database).
* How does university currently track “paybacks”? (Don’t re-invent wheel).
* Alumni database.
* Proposal needed.