13th Annual Title IV-E Child Welfare Roundtable

The 13th annual Title IV-E Child Welfare Roundtable was held May 28-29 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.

Eileen Mayers Pastzor, Professor of Social work with California State University-Long Beach, was the keynote speaker. Pastzor served as the national program director for foster care, kinship care and adoption for the Child Welfare League of America.

Aric Bostick, a Texas State graduate and one of America’s top youth success and leadership speakers, conducted a motivational session. Jane Burstain, a senior policy analyst for the Center for Public Policy Priorities presented data from her extensive research on Child Protective Service employee turnover. Monit Cheung, Professor of Social work at the University of Houston, principal investigator of the Child Welfare Education Project and associate director of the Child and Family Center for Innovative Research, conducted a stress reduction session for the roundtable participants. June Lloyd and members of her staff from the Administration for Children and Youth, Federal Region VI, led the federal-state-university dialogue.

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 300 qualified and dedicated public child welfare practitioners over the last 12 years.

Next year’s Roundtable will be June 3-4, 2010 at the T Bar M Ranch in New Braunfels. If you have a presentation or a panel from your state or your partnership and would like to present next year, please contact Dr. Nancy Chavkin at nancychavkin@txstate.edu. If you have suggestions for keynote presenters, please also let us know.

Powerpoint files are available by request for selected presentations. Please contact Ms. Elena Gibson at mg42@txstate.edu and she will send you these files if you cannot download them from the web page.
List of files:

**Eileen Mayers Pasztor**
- Challenging Assumptions about Child Welfare Work

**Jane Burstain**
- Turnover and Retention (Power Point Presentation)

**Monit Cheung**

**Brenda Moore**
- Community Drug Courts: A Child Protection Resource (Power Point Presentation)

**Jessica Salinas and Tracy Staats**
- Circles of Support: An Innovative Approach to Aging Out (Power Point Presentation)

**Sherry Gomez**
- Turnover (Power Point Presentation)
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

1. Field Focus Group

What’s New
Sharing Tools of the Trade and things that work well with student interns:

- Chris Johnson – Passed out information on a book that she uses to help with supervision issues: “Interactional Supervision” By Lawrence Shulman (1993). Dr. Shulman also has a website that has 7 modules discussing issues in interactional supervision.
- Martha Wildberger – Passed around a book that is a useful tool in discussing cultural issues with social work students: “Child Abuse and Culture: Working with Diverse Families” by Lisa Aronson Fontes (2005). Also passed out a hand-out for a Case Staffing Activity that can be used during supervision.
- Holly Durham and Lorie Quirk - Discussed that they are piloting mentor groups to support new workers in Dallas/Fort Worth area. The groups are available to new employees (up to six months) on a voluntary basis. Sometimes caseworkers are referred by their supervisors. Groups meets 1-2 times a month, and they get feedback from the group about what topics the group would like to cover. For example, the group recently indicated that they would like more information on the court process, so Holly and Lorie are arranging for a court professional to speak at one of the meetings. They also prepare a “Helper’s Tool Kit” for new workers and students transitioning from university to full-time child welfare practice.
- Rae Wilson – Code of Ethics is included in the Field Manual, and this is addressed when meeting with each field instructor. Each week, students are given a different ethical dilemma to discuss with their field instructor. It is not always child welfare-centered, but always about ethics and ethical issues. Students get the dilemma on Monday, have the week to discuss it with their field instructor, and then the student presents it to field seminar class the next Monday. In small groups, students discuss the matrix. By the end of the semester, each student has presented at least one ethical dilemma. This promotes discussion on ethical dilemmas not only with the students but also with the field instructors in various agencies throughout the community.

While discussing “Tools of the Trade,” there was also discussion of:

- Using an online database to keep track of field agencies available for students – can be difficult to maintain and keep current. Some universities still use paper hand-outs. Basic discussion of how students are placed for field.
- Need for stipend students and new employees to get along during training. There is sometimes a need to do some additional training with students on how to behave with other new employees, as students sometimes have an
attitude that they know more than employees. Sometimes the Academy Manager can provide additional training.

**What's Needed**
The group identified several things that might be helpful in the future:

- It’s helpful to discuss Tools of the Trade and share ideas.
- It may be helpful to bring in current field students to get current feedback about their experience in field.
- It may be helpful to get 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?

**What’s Next**
Leadership of this group was discussed and participants were given the opportunity to nominate themselves as co-chairs. However, no one volunteered so the co-chairs will stay the same for next year. For next year’s Roundtable, we will look into the possibility of having current field students and/or someone from program to speak during our focus group. Participants are also encouraged to bring tools/ideas to share with the group.

2. **Evaluation Focus Group**

**What’s New**

**IV-E Impact**
Data for this evaluation was obtained from 13 Texas databases
Some explanations don’t work for Child Welfare – like 2 or fewer placements, (ex. Work harder)
What will we do with the data other than discuss at roundtable?
Feds – rumblings about IV-E and capping – therefore data like Patrick’s could serve as protection for the IV-E program.
Audience for this data/evaluation is Congress, Feds - ACF
Need greater follow-up with IV-E stipend students – although some agencies may not want to do this.

**What’s Needed**
2 questions posed:
- How do we use data?
- How do we improve IV-E program?
New Mexico uses data as a leverage to give leave to current employees to pursue MSW. We need proof that this is worthwhile. Dr. Saulsberry cited that data has more positives than negatives.
Rural vs. Urban issues - take data and give to universities and CPS administrators who know the field and can cull out information from the evaluation and share with legislature rather than publish the work. But before we do this we need to work on interpretation of data.

Support of IV-E program – Dr. Leung’s evaluation shows positive correlation between retention and better outcomes for children and families.

Focus on retention and outcomes data from Texas State is positive because we do retain workers longer.

Need region wide research. Data supports impact on IV-E on outcomes. Where are IV-E students now? How do we massage data? Texas State knows their retention rate is much better. Texas CPS has retention rate on stipends – can track where student is and comparing graduation date where they are still employed, last date of employment. Carol Allen can do aggregate report. Texas State students are staying a long time.

Carol’s preliminary observations from 6 semesters of data:
   Seeing info from HHSC data
   Employment data and date of graduation and date of termination
   Out of 500 – only 3 with termination date

UT at Austin – have lists by names, time post graduation

BSW & MSW – recruitment

BSWs – large percentage going back for MSWs

Retention of IV-E students will have a correlation with higher turnover in general.

Louisiana – IV-E student gets hiring preference. Texas does the same

Payback with months of service – Texas has this

Louisiana HR currently does not have turnover data on IV-E stipend students but maybe training does.

Karen asked if there is anyway Patrick can be part of Texas CPS retention committee.
Texas CPS needs Patrick’s input on stipend databases.

UT and Texas CPS need to integrate efforts. Carol can talk to her states on gathering this data (she is currently doing this in Access). It could be powerful data for all states to pull together. Texas State looks at retention rather than turnover.
Texas wants to get stipend data for last 9 years.

Develop best practices

Use data to develop child welfare competencies within universities.

We will not compare schools or regions but we need statewide data. Must be politically sensitive about this . . . although eventually we will need to do so . . .

Get at data – a system that works but doesn’t muddy water

States can replicate the Texas study – it needs to be done in other Region IV states

What’s Next

- Pass e-mail sheet for sign-up
- Each representative talk to state’s administration and connect with Carol
- Keep in contact with each other
- Karen B. will get with other states not in work group Oklahoma and Arkansas
- Need best practices on how IV-E stipend programs are administered
- Group reviewed slides – need to explain the 2\textsuperscript{nd} hypothesis on children re-entering care. We’re assuming the cases in the study were open cases.
- Variable – satisfaction with salary
- Valued as an employee
- Need to review literature to support our claim
- Reword #3 conclusion. #3 finding is negative – we need to find an explanation
- Data was not separated out between in-home services and out-of-home services and not separated out
- Data on date till retirement is needed
- Send project (power point) out to committee members and let us write notes and send back to Patrick. Circulate to other agency/university staff.

3. Partnership and Administration Focus Group

What’s New

Handbook - Thomas Palmer, DFPS TX, reports that the Handbook that provides Federal Title IVE information and process is close to publication. It was discussed that this handbook would provide assistance to those participating in the Title IV E program since we do not have the step by step manual that was requested last year developed yet. The handbook that is near publication includes the following:
- explains the Title IVE program
- has links to various requirements and federal law information
- information that is TX specific on how to administer the program (other states would find this information beneficial too
- an electronic billing instrument is provided to the universities subsequent to the quarterly Title IV E population rate becoming available

There was some discussion regarding the budget and how rates are based on the previous year. All realize that it may be a little off for the current year but it is the best way, identified so far, on how to get a projection. The Fed’s primarily look at the cost allowable items and monitor to ensure that the proper method is being used to calculate the direct and indirect costs. The University needs to know that enough money is coming into the program to pay out what is needed to be paid by the university with an example being the salaries. It is important to know that they are teaching to the program and the percentage of their time is calculated correctly.

*Competency Based Caseworker Training* – Louisiana is now doing competency based caseworker training. They are looking at getting the hiring practices changed to reflect this change.

**What’s Needed**

*Additional representation from other states* - Group determined that we need to try and encourage participation in the group of those from other states that review the federal program like Thomas does for Texas.

*Advocate for change in eligibility criteria* – Joe Papick, Univ. of Houston, posed a question to the group regarding Title IV E and the population rate declining. The Title VI E funding is still tied to the 1996 inflation rates which has led to a dwindling of the available funds. Thomas indicated that this issue is being considered. The group determined a need to advocate for a change in the way determination is calculated that would take into consideration the current economy rather than the economic conditions of 1996. This would increase the eligibility numbers. Some states declare a 100% saturation rate because all children are at risk at some time or another. The audit finding for this was struck down. In inquiry regarding the other states represented revealed that LA was at 70% which is higher than their usual 65%. LA is now at 45% where they were at 35% a year ago. Janis Brown, as Director of Federal Funding, would be the one to direct this concern to in Texas. Thomas committed to sharing with her this committee’s concerns.

*Six month or quarterly meeting between contracts and university partners* – Joe Papick presented the issue that was also brought up last year to have an opportunity for university partners and contracts to meeting more frequently throughout the year. It is believed that some problems could be avoided by them being able to share information about potential changes on a more frequent basis. This also brings up the inconsistency among the various partnerships across the state. The question was posed on how other states handle communication with contracts.

*Louisiana* – They model their Title IV E program after Kentucky where a lead university contracts with the state and then that university has sub-contracts with
other universities in the state. There is 1 lead university and 6 contracting universities in LA. They feel that this provides consistency for the Title VI E program across the state and saves money for students. There is also more uniformity in the budget planning for indirect and direct costs. This is new for them and the first time they will be putting together the budget with this type of structure. This is why they are very interested in any budget forms and can assist them in this process.

_Arkansas_ – They have used the model with one lead and contracting universities for 6 years now. They have one lead university in Fayetteville and 9 subcontracts. One of the contracts is for a pre-service and the other for a field contract. Debra Heard, Fayetteville UARK, developed a field training manual that is used so that field is consistent across the state. They have field trainers who are university employees. They mentor worker and supervisors for 1 year. Most of these field trainers are MSW but they have some that are BSW but working directly under the supervision of a MSW. They are very particular regarding who they recruit for these positions and prefer to recruit those that have prior child welfare experience. There are 3 field trainers for 9 counties.

_Mentoring_ – in Texas there are various mentoring programs that are being utilized in the regions. Most of these are done with agency staff and do not have university involvement. However, in Region 3 they are providing mentoring groups with CPS staff and have seen some success.

_University representation_ – Some feel that a small internal committee or representative is needed to participate with contracts and be a part of the budget discussions so that university input can be provided.

_Contracting with private universities_ – Having a state university contract with a private university to provide a stipend program is not new to Texas or the others states. It was discussed that when originally done between UT and Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio for the Protective Servicers Training Institute (PSTI) it was a desire to have all the MSW programs participate in the Institute. That motivation has changed for recent partnerships between state and private universities that are being established today, many of which only have BSW programs. Given that some rural universities do not have Master's programs, participating in a stipend program for graduate school is not a realistic option for many of our staff across the state. A partnership between UTA and Lubbock Christian College has recently been established. Other states have also been participating in their partnerships between private and public universities. The state is not involved in this agreement. All matching funds have to come from the public university as no private university funds can be used for the match.

_Means to identify students between university and agency_ – the federal law prohibiting the transmittal of social security numbers by electronic means has created some difficulty in communication between the universities and the agency.
regarding students. The university uses a student ID number but the state does not recognize that number. We need a system that can provide consistency for both while protecting students’ sensitive information.

**What’s Next**

*Next year format* – The group really like the open format that was used this year. All agreed that the discussion was lively and that much was to be learned by hearing how the various states are administering and partnering for Title IV E.

*Action item* – an email will be sent to everyone in this group who provided his/her email address as soon as the handbook is finalized. It will be sent to Texas partners and those from other states as well. Claudia Triche, NSU of LA, would also like to receive a copy of the billing form.

**4. Curriculum Focus Group**

**What’s New**

Suzanne Irvin, Academy Manager for Region 8 provided an update on the new training curriculum. The implementation date for the use of the new curriculum has been pushed back, but a specific start date has not been decided. The new curriculum is skills based and once the identified skills have been shared with the individual academies, the curriculum committee would like to focus on activities and assignments that could be utilized to teach the skills specific to agency needs. As an agency co-chair, Suzanne agreed to keep the committee members updated and share the identified skill set when that information is available.

**What’s Needed**

A general consensus of both agency and university partners is the writing deficits that we see in students and newly hired employees. The discussion focused on ways to provide structured writing opportunities and the need for specific, detailed feedback, at least initially. University partners see writing deficits in class assignments, and agency partners observe the issues in journal entries as well as writing assignments related to BSD-On the Job Training Activities. The academy is looking at having all information submitted on-line with the opportunity to review and provide feedback based not just on content, but to include composition. University Partners discussed current assignments focused on documentation and how to utilize creative means to get students involved such as viewing portions of a film in class and having students document what they observed. The use of grading rubrics was discussed for both academic assignments as well as BSD assignments. Agreement on what was needed encompassed Suzanne providing the committee with the skill set identified for focus in BSD.

**What’s Next**
Course Syllabi to be shared among committee members to look at current assignments and activities that might focus on documentation issues as well as certain components of the skill set when it is shared. Also we will invite PSTI representative to join with us to discuss trainings currently offered dealing with the issues discussed, or providing input on identified areas of needed development.

5. Employment & Retention Focus Group

What's New

Jane Burstain's Discussion

- INV & ongoing (FBSS/CVS) are two separate focuses requiring two different skill sets and personality types. All recruiting tools are geared for social workers. Need to identify recruiting tools to identify applicants for INV staff.
- Recommendation for BSW/MSW promotion from CPS worker II to CPS worker III - shorter certification process.
- Acknowledge burnout upfront in trainings - identify other career options/paths for the trainees.
- Why do people stay? Factors: less engaged from the beginning/less responsive to supervisors/training. Some staff may not be suited to the work. Staff need social support & commitment to job & organization.
- Salary alone will not keep employees. Salary is an indicator of employee's value within the agency.

What's Needed and Next

- PAN/ABLE - there are outcomes of the test now - recommended/not recommended
- BSD - a recommendation wanting DFPS/CPS to take into account BSW/MSW degrees to expedite training. The pros/cons of doing this were discussed
- Creating a profile in AccessHR forces stipend students to lie about having a degree - need to check into this - occurring in region 4/5