

Child Welfare Education Project CWEP Newsline



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Inside the issue

Director's Corner	Pg. 2
Announcements	Pg. 3
Student Profiles	Pg. 4/5
Alumni Spotlights	Pg. 6-9
News in Foster Care	Pg. 10
Faculty Profile	Pg. 11

UNIVERSITY OF
HOUSTON
GRADUATE COLLEGE
OF SOCIAL WORK



<http://www.sw.uh.edu/community/cwep/current-students/index.php>

Director's Corner

Arnitia
Walker

Compassion Fatigue and the Importance of Self-Care

Child protective workers are some of the most flexible and understanding people you will ever meet. They are great communicators who learn to persevere in numerous and unimaginable challenging family matters. But, child protective workers, even the most seasoned ones, also face tough obstacles on a daily basis. Child protective workers regularly deal with compassion fatigue or secondary trauma. They are continuously charged with the task of protecting vulnerable children and working with adults who are facing a number of problems. It affects them emotionally, physically, and mentally. They are expected to give much of themselves and ultimately feel as though they receive nothing in return. On a daily basis, caseworkers are charged with the task of dealing with the traumatic events of others. The work is ongoing and it seems unending. It is natural for them to want to “fix” things that may not be easily “fixable.” It is important that workers are able to identify the symptoms of compassion fatigue, which may include feelings of depression or worthlessness. There are ways that a worker can take care of him/herself when feeling as if there is no end to a client’s ongoing situations:

- Take care of yourself and balance your personal and professional life.
- Enjoy outings with friends and family.
- Try to leave work at work. (It will be there when you return)
- Exercise, dance, swim, run, jog, etc.
- Spend time with children (they are actually a lot of fun!)
- Take a vacation
- Shop
- Get a massage
- Cook your favorite meal
- Listen to music or watch a comedy on television or at the movies
- Create a healthy support system
- Take deep breaths
- Learn to say “no”
- Get enough sleep
- Spend some time alone to meditate or pray
- Have a meaningful conversation with someone and don’t discuss work

We all know that it is difficult to provide services to children and families when you are dealing with your own emotional issues. Therefore, self-care is an important factor in a profession that can be quite challenging and demanding.

Advisor Tip from Brunessia Wilson

Students should utilize Support Services, i.e. LEO MENTORING, as much as possible!

Announcements

CONGRATULATIONS 2014 CWEP GRADUATES!

Nicole
Robinson
December
2013

Yolanda
Westbrooks
December
2013

Sara
Medina
Ferrell
December
2013

Theresa
Anderson
May
2014

Mary
Nduwke
May
2014

Phi Alpha Honor Society Induction Dinner Announcement

I am pleased to inform you that CWEP students Theresa Anderson and Sara Ferrell have been admitted to Phi Alpha Honor Society. The induction dinner will be held on Friday, March 28, 2014 from 6 to 8:30 at the Rockwell Room, M.D. Anderson Library. Sandra Lopez will also be honored that evening during the ceremony for her retirement at GCSW. If you are interested in attending, the cost is \$20 per person. Please contact Dr. Patrick Leung for more information. pleung@central.uh.edu

-Dr. Leung

Course Schedules!

Attention all GCSW students! The course schedules are out now for Summer 2014 and Fall 2014! You can check them out at <http://uh.edu/socialwork/current-students/msw-course-schedules/index.php>.

The following child welfare-specific classes are offered:

- Trauma Treatment for Children during Summer II with Professors Amtsberg and Taylor. This course will take place June 3, 5, 10, 12, and 17 from 8:00a.m.-4:00p.m. (Open Elective)
- School Social Work during Fall semester (professor TBD) on Tuesdays from 8:30-11:30a.m. (HBSE Elective)
- Child Abuse and Neglect during Fall semester with Professor Wilson on Tuesdays from 1:00-4:00p.m. (HBSE Elective)

Student Profiles

Travis
Macher

1. Tell us about yourself.

I'm 28 and a Libra. I was born in Anderson, South Carolina and lived most of my life in the small town of Hartwell, Georgia. I worked 7 years in a restaurant in the kitchen, and I used to ride a motorcycle until it was stolen in 2009. I graduated from the University of Georgia in May 2009 with my BSW. Since August 2009, I've been in Texas, where I moved when I got a job at the Children's Home Boys and Girls Country, and I started at the GCSW in the fall of 2013 as an Advanced Standing student. I will graduate in December 2014.

2. What motivated you to join the MSW program?

I wanted to get my MSW because I am interested in adoptions and foster care. I have hopes of maybe opening my own agency one day. I am hoping that CWEP will open the door for me to work with foster care and adoptions at CPS.

3. Tell us about your achievements working with children and in child welfare.

As a member of a church youth group, I helped with Vacation Bible School (VBS). I volunteered as a tour guide for a children's water festival at Athens Technical College. I mentored two boys through Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS) and two boys through the Communities in Schools (CIS) organization. I interned as a school social worker in Hart County, GA for my undergraduate. I spent a summer as a group counselor at Boys and Girls Country of Houston. I am currently interning as a school social worker at High School Ahead Academy.



Travis Macher

Student Profiles

Kari
Alanis

1. Tell us about yourself.

I've been married for 24 years. My husband and I have two children together – my daughter, who is a sophomore in high school, and my son, who is a fourth grader. I am originally from the San Francisco Bay Area. We moved to Katy when my daughter was a year old when my husband was offered a position in Houston. I'm a former bilingual and ESL teacher and my second language is Spanish. I have taught high school, elementary school, and adult students. After graduating from college, I worked as a flight attendant for Pan Am before pursuing a career in teaching.

2. What motivated you to join the MSW program?

I seriously considered applying to an MSW program for many years. I waited because I didn't think I had enough life experiences to be successful in the program. Now that I am a little more mature, I feel grounded and ready for the challenges ahead in the MSW program at the University of Houston. My primary purpose for joining the MSW program is to gain the skills necessary to counsel kids and help them reach their life goals. I feel very privileged to be part of the U of H and CWEP families.

3. Tell us about your achievements in child welfare.

My most important achievement in child welfare occurred when my husband and I agreed to allow our fifteen-year-old nephew to live with us and attend high school. Another youth shot our nephew in the abdomen while walking to school one morning. We moved him from the San Joaquin Valley of California to the Bay Area to help him escape gangs. Today, he is alive and well and a father of four kids!



Kari Alanis

Alumni Spotlights

Jarita
Wharton

1. What was your experience when you were attending the Graduate College of Social Work?

I was not sure of what I had gotten myself into initially because there is a big gap from when I got my Bachelors of Social Work and obtaining my Masters of Social Work degree, meaning I had not been in college for "some" years. However, I embraced the challenge and went in with a positive attitude. Once I found my routine, I realized it was the best decision I made. With the encouragement of my then Program Director, Debra Emerson, I got into the CWEP Program. I was so inspired by the professors and the GSSW (now GCSW) staff. Everyone was always friendly and encouraging you to keep moving forward to succeed. I was appreciative and took advantage of all the resources CWEP had to offer (LEO, Symposiums, etc.). I learned a lot about others, and a lot about myself. There is a phrase I use with my staff all the time now: when we face challenges, good or bad, look at it from a perspective of "growth and development." My experience in the GSSW program enhanced my knowledge and skills along with growth and development. GSSW reunited the desire to be the "social change" agent and empower others.

2. What are some of the ways in which you have been involved with CWEP over the years?

When we have CWEP students come out to the outlying counties or if there is a staff member going through the program, I give them words of encouragement and let them know I am available and cheering them on. I have also been a field instructor in the past.

I read the CWEP Newsletter as I am always looking for trainings/symposiums to attend that will enhance my knowledge and skills. I also utilize the website for continuing education to attend topics of interest. Finally, I participate in the surveys/program evaluations pertaining to CWEP program when I receive an email from one of the professors and/or students.

3. Please describe your current position and some of the challenges you find in your work.

I have been with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services since 1993. I am currently an Investigative Program Director in the outlying counties; I cover Austin, Colorado, Waller, Fort Bend, Matagorda, and Wharton Counties. I have seven units in which I am responsible for about sixty-three staff members when the units are filled. We are a program in which we receive intake referrals alleging some form of child abuse and neglect in which we investigate to determine if abuse has occurred and ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

Every day is a challenge in a good way as no one family is the same; every family is different and unique in their own way. There is no one plan that fits all. You have to look at each family individually and seek out the strengths within the family unit. Being in the outlying counties, resources are limited and there is no (metro) transportation for our families to get from point A to point B. The other challenge is maintaining staff, as this job is challenging and being in investigations, there will be days when your day might not end until late in the evening, along with being available to handle our own after hour's calls. However, the agency is growing with technology where caseworkers are being provided the resources to be mobile to better serve our clients.

Alumni Spotlights Continued...

4. What advice do you have for current CWEP students?

Take advantage of every opportunity to grow and develop. Have a positive attitude, as attitude is everything. Develop a strong support system and take care of "self". We are always willing to take care of others, however, in this profession make the decision to prioritize "self-care". Find your balance, be good to you, and continue to enhance your knowledge and skills, as the field of social work is so diverse with many opportunities.



Jarita Wharton

Alumni Spotlights



1. What was your experience when you were attending the Graduate College of Social Work?

I had a very positive experience at the GCSW. Although the work was challenging and I had been out of school for approximately 16 years, I felt very supported by the professors, administrative staff at GCSW, CWEP staff (field liaison and instructors) and of course, my DFPS peers and managers.

2. What are some of the ways in which you have been involved with CWEP over the years?

I participated with the CWEP Evaluation Committee and assisted Dr. Leung with compiling information from DFPS. Also while employed as a CPS On the Job Training (OJT) Supervisor, I have worked with numerous CWEP students while they completed their internship at CPS-Region 6. I have also provided information to staff members who had interest in the CWEP Program and shared my experiences, and hopefully encouraged them to apply for the GCSW Program as well as the CWEP stipend.

3. Please describe your current position and some of the challenges you find in your work.

I am currently a CPS Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Negotiator for Region 6. I along with one other person in the position are responsible for coordinating and negotiating PCA and Adoption benefits with families who are currently in the process of obtaining permanent custody of children in the legal custody of DFPS. Since I am fairly new to this position, the challenge is learning a new position and ensuring I am providing the most accurate information to the families. I do have great support from my coworker who has been in the position for several years, as well as the Financial/Eligibility team that I work closely with.

4. What do you feel are some of the most important rewards in your work?

The most important reward is negotiating benefits with a family who has opened their home and hearts to children in need. It is a wonderful feeling to hear the caregivers express their love and excitement for providing a "forever" home to the children in Region 6. I am also incredibly fortunate to work with great staff and an amazing manager.

Alumni Spotlights Continued...

5. What advice do you have for current CWEP students?

Take advantage of all of the opportunities at the GCSW; there are wonderful professors and staff available to provide the best learning experience you can have. While in the CPS internship, participate in every experience you can as a large part of learning this job is observing and experiencing. Finally, plan to take the licensure exam for the LMSW as soon as you graduate. The longer you wait, the more you will have to refresh your memory on key components of the exam.



La Shawn Roberts-Deckard

News in Foster Care

Foster Care Redesign is a new buzzword to pay attention to! Well, not totally new. The Foster Care Redesign project got underway in 2010, in an effort to figure out what was working, what was not working, and what could be improved in the foster care system in Texas. In 2012, the results were synthesized and a game plan designed to reorganize how we look at foster care. In late 2013, implementation began. The new system is now in place in parts of North and West Texas, but the project is a multiyear endeavor that will slowly be coming across the state in phases. Learning a little about it will be important for CPS workers in the near future!

It is a new way of organizing the foster care system under a single contractor in a geographic area. That contractor is responsible for providing the full continuum of care services offered by foster care as well as locating foster homes and other living arrangements to take in youths. The goals of this radical new system are to keep foster children closer to home and connected to their siblings and communities; to the quality of care and outcomes of children in the foster care system; and to reduce the number of times children move while in foster care.

This change will obviously mean big changes for Texas, but they should be welcome changes. One of the major things it will do is eliminate the service level system, which will not only mean fewer moves for youth, but also it will move the emphasis from reporting “bad” behaviors of children in the system to reporting positives instead. It will also place more emphasis on achieving permanency, which will help get youths back to their families faster. While these changes will hopefully prove positive for the system, remember that all change takes time and bureaucracy is not the fastest of movers. Be patient with the changes, and help Foster Care Redesign be successful when it comes to your department!



Paige Reitz

Faculty Profile

Vanessa R.
Shippard

Meet, the New CWEP Field Supervisor!

1. What did your career in CPS/child welfare look like before joining the GCSW?

I worked in the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services before I got my MSW, and I graduated from the GSSW (now GCSW) in 2003 with my MSW. I retired from the Texas DFPS in Region 6 in 2013, after 28 years of service. My experience at CPS included investigations, Family Based Safety Services, conservatorship, and foster/adoption work. I served as a Risk Manager during my last 3 years at CPS, where I trained and mentored, and I analyzed casework. I also served on various committees and boards, including the Regional Child Death Review Board and Process Workgroups.

2. What brought you to the GCSW?

I obtained my MSW for the University of Houston and I want to help other students by offering my experiences with GCSW. I also want to share the knowledge that I have gained through my numerous years of experience with CPS.

I am dedicated to making the students' experiences with The Child Welfare Education Program one of the best experiences at the Graduate College of Social Work. Working at the GCSW gives me the opportunity to continue to interact with CPS staff, but in a different atmosphere.

3. What do you like most about your job so far?

I like the hands-on experience of getting out and meeting with the students in their field placements. Hearing about what they are learning and their experiences in the Internships is fantastic.

4. What are you most excited about in working with the GCSW?

I've presented information to two classes since my 2-month tenure at GCSW, and I was thrilled that the students were so interested in hearing the information I provided about the CPS system. I am most exciting about teaching the Crisis Intervention Course in the fall.



Vanessa R. Shippard