



University of Houston  
 Graduate College of Social Work  
 Child Welfare Education Project

# CWEP NewsLine

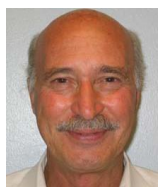


CWEP Website

<http://www.sw.uh.edu/communityoutreach/cwep.php>

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## Director's Comments

“The deadline for this legislative session is quickly approaching, and major decisions still loom for the legislators. Important choices need to be made about redistricting, budgeting, education, healthcare, and human services. All of these resolutions will have significant impact for the clients that we serve in child welfare. As current or future social workers in the field of child welfare, you must be familiar with these issues that directly impact the services that you can offer to your clients. The best way to understand these issues is to be familiar with the legislative process and with how you, as an individual, can advocate within that system. You must become partners with community advocacy groups and work with them to improve the resources that are available for your clients. Although we are approaching the end of the session, your voice can still have an impact on many of the pressing needs that face our state. These include Medicaid and CHIP funding, Mental Health funding, Family Planning Services, Adoption Subsidies, Protective Day Care, Relative Support, and as I mentioned before Education funding. It is only through consistent and loud advocacy in one voice that we will be able to minimize the impact on the clients we serve who have little or no voice. They rely upon us to be their advocates. Have a great summer and keep your eyes on this legislative session and very possibly the special session that may come.”

*Joe Papick, CWEP Director*

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# BOOST FOR CHILD WELFARE REFORM

## George Sheldon to run ACF



This is the best news for child welfare reform at the federal level since at least the start of the Obama Administration: George Sheldon, former director of the Florida Department of Children and Families and one of the nation's most successful reformers, is about to become the top federal official in charge of child welfare policy.

[The job titles are long and complicated](#) but the bottom line is that by mid-June Sheldon will be running the Administration for Children and Families within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Sheldon and his predecessor, Bob Butterworth, led the largest transformation of an American child welfare system in recent decades, turning Florida from *the* national example of failure into, relatively speaking, [a leader in doing child welfare right](#).

Under their leadership, entries into foster care were reduced significantly and [independent evaluations](#) found that child safety improved. (Sadly, the reforms are now in danger, thanks to a *Miami Herald*-fueled foster-care panic in Florida. Sheldon's successor has not been aggressive enough in countering the panic.) The implications for federal child welfare policy are profound - and all good.

- For starters, Sheldon championed the [waiver from federal funding restrictions](#) that allowed the state to divert more than \$100 million per year in federal foster care funds to better alternatives. So this gives a big boost to those who want Congress to restore HHS' authority to issue such waivers, and it's a huge blow to the child welfare establishment types who have been trying to ["Yes, but..." child welfare finance reform to death](#).
- Another hallmark of Sheldon's leadership is openness. He and Butterworth took DCF out of the bunker. So we may see support for things like efforts to open child welfare court hearings in states where they're still closed (in Florida they've been open for decades.)
- As DCF secretary Sheldon [banned the use of foster children in drug trials](#) – and got absolutely no help from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Now he can pursue the same goal nationwide, and push states to curb the misuse and overuse of psychiatric medication on foster children in general.
- And one more thing about Sheldon: He believes in taking responsibility for failure, not just credit for success. I can't imagine George Sheldon tolerating Bryan Samuels' effort to [let the foster care system off the hook](#) for the harm it does to so many of the children who pass through

**While maintaining his former role with the Florida Department of Children and Families, State Legislatures asked George Sheldon to discuss state strategies that contributed to the increase in adoptions and other innovations in foster care\*.**

**State Legislatures:** How were children in the foster care system in Florida faring prior to the focus on prevention, reducing the numbers of children in care, and increasing adoption? How many children were in the system?

**George Sheldon:** In the past, abused and neglected children in Florida were removed from their families and put into foster care for their safety. A lot of the children, including young children, were placed into group foster homes. Not enough foster families were available to take children. Because of high caseloads, case managers could not give enough individual attention to each foster child. As of December 2006, prior to Governor Charlie Crist taking office, Florida had 29,255 children in foster care.

**SL:** What was the role of the federal waiver in the effort to safely reduce the numbers of children in care? What are the lessons learned—the challenges and successes - from the federal waiver from which other states can benefit?

**Sheldon:** ...**The major challenge is fully implementing our commitment to family-centered practice.** Mothers, fathers and other relatives need to become involved right from the start in discussing what's best for the child, the services needed for the family, and the goals that parents should achieve to safely keep the child at home or be reunited with the child. Listening to family members with respect, and reassuring them the state is more interested in helping them create a safe home environment than taking away their child, is our approach to family-centered practice. Getting families to talk about issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health and poverty that may be contributing to their child's abuse or neglect can empower parents, especially if they are given a chance to shape the solutions. The Department of Children and Families is conducting extensive training so that child protective investigators and case managers are well-versed in and capable of applying the family-centered practice. Protecting children remains the department's top priority. When children must be removed from a home because of dangerous circumstances, we don't hesitate. Even so, removing children from parents is the exception, not the rule, and happens in only 1 of every 20 cases.

Perhaps the biggest lesson is the importance of transparency and accountability. A strong community buy-in is critical for both awareness and investment in resources to safely keep more children with their families, recruit more high-quality foster families and achieve more adoptions of children in foster care. It is necessary to have honest and open community dialogue about the needs of abused and neglected children and their families, who often struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, economic stress and domestic violence. This includes releasing information and talking about what happened when mistakes are made, as well as proactively developing solutions for problems and challenges we discover.

**SL:** How has Florida's privatization of child welfare services benefited children in foster care?

**Sheldon:** **Florida's community-based care allows our communities to take ownership of the outcomes of the children living there.** In the past, foster children were seen in isolation as wards of the state. But the state is not a good substitute for a parent. Our many community partners—from law enforcement to judges, guardians ad litem, community-based care lead agencies, service providers, educators and child advocates—now have more of a stake in achieving permanency for their abused and neglected children.

**SL:** What are some adoption promotion strategies that Florida used to increase the numbers of children adopted from foster care?

**Sheldon:** Our philosophy in Florida is to never give up on finding a family to adopt a foster child. We can't give our foster children the sense of belonging or the unconditional love and understanding they so desperately crave. But we are determined in our conviction that there are loving, caring families willing to

open their homes and their hearts to our children, enough for each and every one of our children to find a forever family.

For example, our new “Longest Waiting Teens” project helped spur the adoption of teenagers from foster care, and 26 of 103 foster youth identified, which includes siblings, have been adopted. We try to convince teenagers in foster care, who otherwise would age-out at 18, not to give up on finding an adoptive family that will be there for them throughout their lives. One of the longest waiting teens, Dalton Rosenberg, was 16 and in foster care for six years, before being adopted by a family that already had adopted another teen from foster care.

The Explore Adoption public awareness campaign, led by Governor Crist, Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp and the Governor’s Chief Child Advocate Jim Kallinger, has spotlighted the importance of finding “forever families” for foster children. Floridians can access profiles and photos of children available for adoption at [www.adoptflorida.org](http://www.adoptflorida.org). The day-to-day work of connecting foster children with adoptive parents and successfully moving the adoptions through the courts was performed by adoption counselors through community-based care partners and judges throughout Florida. Beautiful, professionally taken photographs of children and youth in foster care who are available for adoption and waiting for a “forever family” are shown in “Heart Gallery” displays throughout the state.

We also use the family finders model of doing extensive and thorough searches for any family members that a foster child may be unaware of, but who may be out there, willing to adopt that child.

**SL:** What kinds of policy approaches would you recommend legislators consider as they examine foster care in their states with a goal of safely reducing the numbers of children in foster care?

**Sheldon:** Lawmakers must pass state laws that permit working with the families of abused and adopted children, to acknowledge their strengths, help them overcome their weaknesses and safely keep more families together. This requires legislatures to provide adequate funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment, domestic violence prevention and services and economic support. Even when states’ budgets are tight, funding the programs that prevent child abuse and neglect and help families is vital.

**SL:** What are the Department's goals for Florida's foster care system in the years ahead?

**Sheldon:** There always will be children coming into our care. We should continue to do everything we can to safely return children to their families. But if that’s not possible or safe to do, we must quickly give children permanency through adoption or placement with relatives.

We are committed to offering substance abuse and mental health treatment, domestic violence prevention and services, and the economic assistance needed by children and families to prevent or treat the underlying causes of child abuse and neglect.





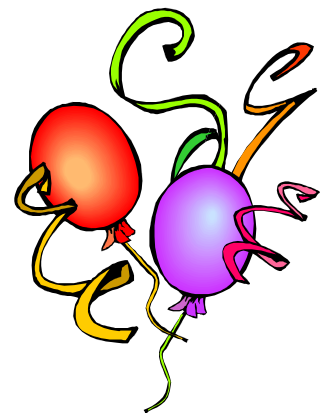
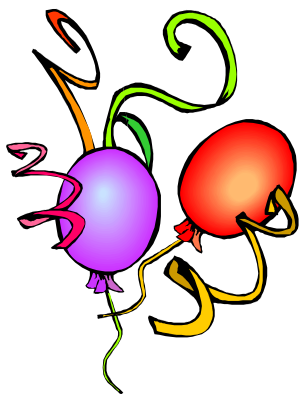
# CONGRATULATIONS

We are so proud of our CWEP students who graduated in May 2011!



Left to Right: Rebecca Cole, Becky Butler, April Martinez, Nicole Royal, April Salinas, Lakeisha Jones, Angelle Johnson, Akasha Kerr, and Bella Alex (*Field Instructor*) – Renatta Kost is not pictured

## New Hall of Fame Inductee



**Dalen Dilieto**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



## SOCW 7397: Supervision & Consultation in SW

*...a summer elective highly recommended by CEWP*

**Course Description:** Philosophy, principles and methods of supervision and consultation used in clinical practice and administrative planning.

Through achieving the course objectives, you will also learn to:

1. **Improve your skills to further your career development;**
2. **Develop a third-person perspective when working with your supervisor;**
3. **Identify communication strategies in promoting effectiveness in the helping process with a supervisee, supervisor, consultant or consultee.**

Instructor is Brent LoCaste-Wilken, LCSW, CEAP, Manager of the Employee Assistance Program at Texas Children's Hospital. Brent said, "Every social worker can look back over his/her career and identify the contributions of good supervision, but few ever get any formal training on how to be a good supervisor. In a world of moment by moment change, increasing ethical challenges, political upheaval, global diversity, and overwhelming clinical demands, supervision and consultation can be the hallowed sanctuary for support, direction, and professional development. Take this course to develop skills and build credential for your career development."

*-Dr. Cheung-*

## May is National Foster Care Month

Building Connections Through Meaningful Family Engagement

Nearly 424,000 American children and youth are currently in foster care. National Foster Care Month is a time to acknowledge these youth and the family members, foster parents, volunteers, mentors, child welfare professionals, and policymakers who help them find permanent homes and connections.

The Children's Bureau and Child Welfare Information Gateway are supporting National Foster Care Month through a website for child welfare professionals with the theme "Building Connections Through Meaningful Family Engagement." The website includes:

- Resources about building connections with families, youth, siblings, schools, and community partners to help youth achieve permanency
- Personal stories and photos from Kids Central, Inc., one of the Children's Bureau Family Connection grantees
- Links to digital stories from the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, which include youth and child welfare workers sharing their experiences
- National Foster Care Month widgets to add to your organization's website

[www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth](http://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth)

# **SUPERVISION IN CHILD WELFARE**

## **Report & Video Access**

Now Available from the November 2010 symposium, *Supervision: The Safety Net for Front-Line Practice*\*:

- **Final Report**

- Includes several examples (bolded and in a different font) that provide some guidance on supervisory and service improvements

- **Action Brief**

- Succinctly highlights the supervisory challenges and outlines the Recommendations for Action

- **Symposium Presentation Videos**

- Provide important information for the field
- Catalyst for enhancing supervisory practices

**CEUs are available to social workers who view the video through NASW's Continuing Education and Training Center.**

**Reports may be downloaded at:**

<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news-events/supervision-the-safety-net-for-front-line-child-welfare-practice.html>

**Additional Resources Available at:**

[www.SocialWorkPolicy.org](http://www.SocialWorkPolicy.org)

*\*This was a collaborative undertaking among NASW's Social Work Policy Institute and its Center for Workforce Studies & Social Work Practice, and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute with Casey Family Programs as a contributing partner.*

# EVENTS

**Save the Date**

**May 24-27, 2011**

**Title IV-E National Roundtable**

**On the Water near Houston**

**For more information contact: [www.uhd.edu/cfs](http://www.uhd.edu/cfs)**

**University of Houston and the University of Houston-Downtown**  
**713.221.2737**

## CWEP Calendar of Events

<http://www.sw.uh.edu/communityoutreach/cwep.php>

### Summer 2011

#### May

24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>

- TITLE IV-E CHILD WELFARE ROUNDTABLE IN GALVESTON, TX  
*STUDENT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED*

30<sup>th</sup>

- MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY

31<sup>ST</sup>

- Classes Begin for Summer

#### June

10<sup>th</sup>

- GCSW/ Licensing Prep Class

10<sup>th</sup>

- New Applicant's Deadline to turn in CWEP Application for Fall 2011

13<sup>th</sup>

- Field Educational Contracts Due

#### August

9<sup>th</sup>

- Field Grades Due