

# Child Welfare Education Project

## CWEP NewsLine



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**Arnitia Walker**  
Director  
(713) 743 1873  
[amitchell@uh.edu](mailto:amitchell@uh.edu)

**Monit Cheung**  
Principal Investigator  
(713) 743-8107  
[mcheung@uh.edu](mailto:mcheung@uh.edu)

**Patrick Leung**  
Evaluator  
(713) 743-8111  
[pleung@uh.edu](mailto:pleung@uh.edu)

**Vanessa Shppard**  
Field Coordinator  
(713) 743-1873  
[vshppard@central.edu](mailto:vshppard@central.edu)

**Patricia Taylor**  
Curriculum Coordinator  
(713) 743-8081  
[Ptaylor2@uh.edu](mailto:Ptaylor2@uh.edu)

**Brunessia Wilson**  
CWEP Student Affairs  
Coordinator  
(713) 743- 8147  
[bwilson3@uh.edu](mailto:bwilson3@uh.edu)

**Emilio Ontiveros**  
Stipend Coordinator  
(713) 743-8143  
[Fontinveros@uh.edu](mailto:Fontinveros@uh.edu)

**Claire Crawford**  
CWEP Research  
Assistant  
NewsLine Editor  
[Ecac967@yahoo.com](mailto:Ecac967@yahoo.com)

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**  
GRADUATE COLLEGE of SOCIAL WORK

## Director's Corner

### Amitia Walker



November is **National Adoption Month**. During this month, Children's Protective Services makes plans to finalize pending adoptions and to celebrate the families who adopt.

Adoption is the goal for children who have been permanently removed from their biological parents. Unfortunately, due to numerous circumstances, these children will never return home. Through court proceedings, parental rights are terminated, therefore making the child eligible to become legally adopted. DFPS staff works diligently to ensure that children do not linger in the foster care system once parental rights have been terminated.

The children may be adopted by relatives or non-relatives. The child has a caseworker who visits regularly and prepares him/her for the transition from foster care into adoption. Services are provided to both the child and the adoptive family to assist them with this process. Adoptive families make a commitment to raise these children into adulthood. This commitment ensures that the child or children will have safety, well-being and permanency.

Celebrations are planned across the state of Texas in honor of these events. Please refer to page 8 for a list of events within Region 6.

## Introducing: the 2014/15 CWEP Research Assistants!



From left to right: Paige Reitz, Claire Crawford, Halie Domingue, Ann Webb, Shu Zhou, Dr. Cheung, Dr. Leung, and Julia Huang

### Field Tips

Vanessa Shippard

- ✓ KEEP CALM
- ✓ Research
- ✓ Be neat and organized

### Advising Tips

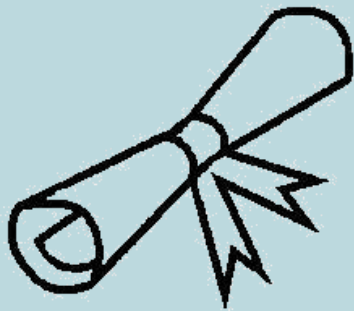
Brunessia Wilson

- ✓ Reminder: December graduates, don't forget to apply for graduation
- ✓ Students, I know this is a busy time of the semester with papers and projects due, but do not forget to do "Self - Care"



# Congratulations to our December CWEP Graduates!

Oree Anglin, Meredith Atkinson, Carlos Diaz, Travis Macher, Alisha Matthews, & Ashley Monie



Although graduate school went by quickly, I am looking forward to applying what I have learned and getting back to work. I will miss the amazing professors and wonderful students that taught me so much. -

**Travis**



I am looking forward to graduating from the GCSW in December and am excited about finding new ways to implement the knowledge I have gained from the program with my CPS clients. - **Meredith**



I will forever be indebted to the CWEP program. CWEP made it financially possible for me to achieve one of my biggest goals. Moreover, the experience gained will stay with me for a lifetime. Thanks CWEP! -

**Alisha**



I am super excited that I will be graduating in a few months from the Graduate College of Social Work. This journey has been full of ups and downs, but I wouldn't change it for the world. I am ready to embark in the world of Social Work so I can help as many people as I can. - **Ashley**







## Staff Spotlight

Bella Alex

I have served as Field Instructor for CWEP students for about 6 semesters. In this capacity, I help CWEP students see the CPS work through a Social Work lens. I am able to apply the same passion in instructing the students that I had for the children and families in my thirty years of service at CPS.

Prior to this, I worked for CPS and retired after 31 years of service. I began my career with CPS in 1980. I worked my way up from caseworker to my last position as a Program Administrator my last 11 years. Primarily my area of expertise was in the investigation stage. However, I worked in pretty much every stage of service, including adoptions. Currently, I am also employed with Texas Children's Hospital. I am a social worker on the TCH Child Protection team. I act as a liaison between the hospital and CPS. I work with the children who are brought into the hospital and abuse/neglect is suspected. The greatest reward in this work is when, because of our intervention, a child's life is changed for the better.

My advice for the CWEP students is:

**Do this job because you care; otherwise it won't work well for the children.**

# Alumni Spotlight

## Rebecca Cole



### 1. What is your current job position?

I am a psychiatric response clinician with the Memorial Hermann Psychiatric Response team. Previously, I was a CVS –IV Worker for a conservatorship unit in Austin, Waller, and Colorado Counties for 6 years.

### 2. How did CWEP or your MSW program prepare you for your job?

The MSW and CWEP programs expanded my knowledge of child welfare while educating me on clinical social work. My CPS experience along with my MSW and CWEP education has provided me with the additional education, resources, and knowledge support working in the clinical social work field. Child maltreatment is a significant variable influencing mental health and substance abuse issues in adults and the trickle down effects that it has on the persons and relationship in their environment.

### 3. Tell us about your achievements in your work.

Since graduating, I have presented for CASA of South Central Texas educating new volunteers on mental health. I use every opportunity to education my current co/workers on child welfare and mandating reporting. I have maintained connection and communication with some of the youth I worked with while at CPS. I have been able to be a mentor in their lives which has been equally fulfilling. I am in clinical supervision and look forward to sitting for my clinical exam. Some of the kids that I worked with at CPS have contacted me when they need feedback and guidance. I am glad that I have been able to provide a mentoring role to these individuals.

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

I'm very proud of being a social worker. I feel that the CWEP education has supported me in becoming a strong clinician. I believe it is advantageous if you are on seeking education in macro or clinically social worker to take a class in opposite track to develop a fuller perspective. I utilized the LEO mentor for support with writing my papers. My CPS supervisor was very engaged in my educational decisions thus creating open communication and support for flexibility with participation the program. I appreciate the relationships with my peers and GCSW/CWEP faculty that I developed and maintained since graduation.

In September, I attended a Victim Impact Statement Training to learn the information that criminal justice officers and nonprofit agency professionals are receiving about Victim Impact Statements (VIS). I've summarized some of the main points below:

- **A Victim Impact Statement is a document written by the victim of a crime detailing how he/she was emotionally impacted by the crime.** Victims may include people indirectly affected by the crime, including relatives or significant others. The VIS's purpose is not to provide factual information regarding the victim's view of the crime but rather to empower the victim by allowing him/her to put on paper how the crime emotionally and physically affected the victim's life and family.
- The VIS serves multiple purposes throughout the criminal justice process. In addition to empowering the victim, the VIS should be taken into consideration by the District Attorney and the judge prior to sentencing. The VIS follows the offender for the rest of his/her life as part of the criminal file and provides additional information to parole officers. The victim can indicate via the VIS that he/she wishes to be contacted if and when the offender is placed on parole, is released after completion of a sentence, is executed, or escapes from a correctional facility.
- A VIS should be provided to the victim within 10 days of indictment. Very few VIS's are ever returned (approximately 14%). The low return rate is due to several factors, including:
  - 1) The victim does not see the benefit of completing the VIS
  - 2) The victim is overwhelmed with paperwork, and the VIS gets lost in the mix
  - 3) The victim survived sexual assault or domestic abuse by an offender he/she knows and does not feel comfortable completing the VIS
  - 4) The victim is a child and does not understand the VIS or feel comfortable completing the form regarding abuse by an offender the child knows
  - 5) The victim does not understand the VIS form

Professionals in the training discussed several solutions to the challenges of VIS completion and attainment. When working with child victims, it was suggested that:

- 1) Victims' parents should be educated about the importance of the VIS
- 2) The VIS should be explained simply and thoroughly to the child with completion assistance provided if necessary
- 3) Special child-friendly VIS statements (bilingual versions provided upon request) are available and allow children to express their emotional outcomes more easily and creatively than the basic adult versions.

**Completion of the VIS by child victims will ensure better child safety for years following a crime and allow the child and the family more involvement in the criminal justice process.**

# National Adoption Month Events



City/County	Date	Time	Location	What's Happening?	Participating/Invited	Contact Info
<b>Adoption Day event Liberty/Chambers Counties</b>	Nov 17	10 AM	Liberty County Courthouse, 1915 Trinity, Liberty, TX	National Adoption Day	CPS, CASA, other community stakeholders	<a href="mailto:Christine.vien@dfps.state.tx.us">Christine.vien@dfps.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Adoption Day event Montgomery County</b>	Nov 19	10:30 AM	Montgomery County Courthouse 301 N Main, Conroe, TX	National Adoption Day	CPS, faith-based partners, Sam Houston State University, CASA, and other organizations	<a href="mailto:Leshia.fisher@dfps.state.tx.us">Leshia.fisher@dfps.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Adoption Day event Brazoria County</b>	Nov 20	8:30 AM	Brazoria County Courthouse 111 E. Locust, Angleton, TX	National Adoption Day	CPSA, CASA Other community stakeholders	Stephanie Sammons (281) 997-4714 <a href="mailto:Stephanie.sammons@dfps.state.tx.us">Stephanie.sammons@dfps.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Adoption Day event Ft. Bend County</b>	Nov 21	8:30 AM	Fort Bend County Justice Center 1422 Eugene Heimann Circle Richmond, TX	National Adoption Day	CPS, CASA, other community stakeholders	<a href="mailto:Lindsey.moss@dfps.state.tx.us">Lindsey.moss@dfps.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Adoption Day event Galveston County</b>	Nov 22	9 AM	Galveston County Courthouse, 600 59th Street, Galveston, TX 77551	National Adoption Day	CPS, CASA, other community stakeholders	Debra Ross (409) 766-5944 <a href="mailto:Debra.ross@dfps.state.tx.us">Debra.ross@dfps.state.tx.us</a>
<b>Dispro/ CPS Adoption Calling Out Ceremonty</b>	Nov 23	3 PM	Harbach Ripley Neighborho od Center 6225 Northdale, Houston, TX 77087	Adoption Calling Out Ceremony	Houston Dispro Committee & DFPS Open to public	"Sister Mama" Sonya Roberts-Lucas (832) 277- 1584





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# National Association of Social Workers

President Obama signed into law H.R. 4980, the ***Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act***, bipartisan legislation aimed at reducing child sex trafficking, increasing adoptions and improving child support collections. The bill was introduced in the House by Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI), Ranking Member Sander Levin (D-MI), Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Dave Reichert (R-WA), and Ranking Member Lloyd Doggett (D-TX).

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act will encourage states to combat sex trafficking among youth in foster care, promote normalcy for foster youth, help move more children from foster care into adoptive homes or the homes of relatives, and increase the amount of child support provided to families in which one parent resides outside of the U.S. The legislation is fully paid for, and is expected to reduce the deficit by \$19 million over the next 10 years. The following are key provisions of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act.

## ***Title I: Protecting Youth at Risk of Sex Trafficking***

- Requires state child welfare agencies to identify, document, and determine appropriate services for children in foster care or who are otherwise involved in the child welfare system who are victims of child sex trafficking or at risk of becoming victims.
- Requires state child welfare agencies to promote "normalcy" for youth in foster care allowing them to more easily participate in age appropriate social, scholastic and enrichment activities.

## ***Title II: Improving Adoption Incentives***

- Improves the adoption incentives program and extends it for three years. It also extends the Family Connection Grant Program for one year.

## ***Title III: Improving International Child Support Recovery***

- Requires states to make necessary changes to implement the Hague Convention in enforcing international child support cases, increasing the amount of child support collected for families.
- Requires data standardization within the child support enforcement program, improving administration. This would streamline the child support programs with federal programs including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child welfare, Unemployment Insurance and food assistance programs such as SNAP.
- Requires all states to implement electronic processing of income withholding, as most states already do; this will improve the collection of child support and save taxpayers \$48 million over 10 years.
- Creates a task force to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of the child support enforcement program.

Text provided by NASW. For more information about the Act, [click here](#).