

# Child Welfare Education Project

## CWEP NewsLine



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## Director's Corner

Amitia Walker



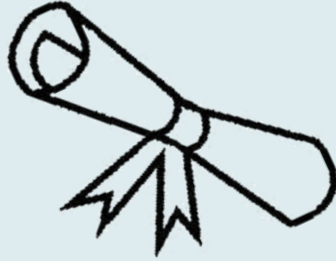
According to the Department of Family and Protective Services, adoption occurs when a child legally joins a family that is different from their birth parents. There is a huge push to increase the number of finalized adoptions within Region 6. Thanks to the hard work being done by CPS staff, the number of children placed in adoptive homes continues to grow each year. Fortunately, DFPS partners with area private adoption agencies and other community organizations that also assist in placing children in “forever” homes. When children are removed from their birth families it is often traumatic. Adoptive families make such a huge difference in the lives of children by offering them a loving and permanent home.

Placing older children in adoptive homes is also a goal of the agency. Many of these youth have special needs, including medical, emotional and physical. Resources are available to assist with this particular population before and after they are adopted.

We as professionals in the child welfare field must do our part to ensure that each and every child in the care of the state has a safe and stable “forever” home.

# Announcements

- April is Child Abuse Prevention Month! **Don't forget to wear blue!**  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/?hasBeenRedirected=1>



## **Congratulations to our CWEP Graduates!**

December 2015

Saleeta Curl

Tovie Davis

Sonya Fowler

Shaunquette Garrett

Sahmahrah Ochu

Elizabeth Wade

May 2016

Kari Alanis

Virginia Pierre

Savannah Stevenson

### Advising Tip: Brunessia Lewis

- ✓ Always explore your options and have a back-up plan!

### Field Tips: Vanessa Shippard

- ✓ Avoid missing work.
- ✓ Get along with others.
- ✓ Stay out the grapevine.

## My First CWEP Symposium by Shu Zhu

As a Doctoral Research Assistant for Child Welfare Education Project (CWEP), I am very fortunate to get free access to CWEP events and activities for free. Last semester, in October 2015, I participated in my first CWEP symposium on the topic of traumatic events and de-escalation.



First of all, I was impressed with the high qualifications and excellent performances of the two presenters. As detectives at the Pearland police department, Detective Cecil Arnold and Detective Chad Rogers have not only experienced intensive professional events dealing with traumatic events but also have received relevant educational backgrounds through their Master's Degrees in Criminal Justice. As a result, they were able to apply factual and abstract knowledge and information into a variety of real cases and link the examples back to the topic. They possess excellent communication skills. In addition, it was refreshing to hear them explain familiar

social work skills, such as active listening, from their professional point of view as police officers. They helped me think about how to utilize “minimal encouragement” and “effective pauses” in a different way. Moreover, the interactive style of the symposium has helped me to focus and memorize the content effectively. The questions asked by the presenters, such as “What would you do?” and “How does this person feel?” stimulated my thinking. Although such a heavy topic could easily lead the audience to feel down or defeated, the room was often full of laughter. I appreciate the presenters' appropriate use of humor, which emphasized the discussion and eased the tension of a difficult subject. We had the chance to share our own experiences and feelings and were given the opportunity to ask questions throughout the symposium. It was a great opportunity for me to learn from other social work students and practitioners as well.

Finally, the highlight of the symposium was definitely hearing about the real criminal cases that the presenters have worked on before. The last example given was the Pearland hostage situation on New Year's Eve 2010. In addition to an introductory verbal explanation, they also showed us many inside sources such as pictures, audio, and even videos from the case! All of the vivid visual aids brought made us feel as if we were experiencing the case firsthand and facilitated our learning experience. The symposium ended with some TV interviews with the involved parties, such as the hostages and their families and friends. Everyone's sharing made me think and understand better how one traumatic event can affect each person differently.

Overall, I enjoyed my first CWEP symposium a lot and hope to attend more in the future. What a fun educational experience! I am thankful for such great off-campus learning opportunity. For more information about the “Pearland hostage situation,” please see the following links: [Police: Houston area bank standoff ends, all hostages safe \(CNN\)](#) & [New Year's Eve Bank Standoff Comes to End in Texas \(abc\)](#)

# Student Spotlight

Tovie Davis



## Congratulations!

Tovie, a CWEP student who graduated in December 2015, has been named the new Foster Adoptive Home Development (FAD) Program Director. Tovie has been a FAD supervisor for 10 years and has been with the agency for 25 years and counting. Read more about Tovie in her own words below

I am excited about being in the MSW program. I have always had an interest in returning to school, but due to having children, I did not feel that the time was right. I took advantage of the opportunity once they graduated. I feel that by obtaining a MSW it will assist me in enhancing my skills and allow me to do a better job here at CPS. It will also assist me in moving up the career ladder.

I think that the collaboration between DFPS and U of H is a great one. It allowed me to continue to work while attending school. I have been employed by DFPS since 1985. I began as an investigative worker. In 2005, I became a Supervisor and just recently, I was promoted to a Program Director position.

My work has been very rewarding here at CPS. I once worked with a single woman who wanted to adopt a young child. We developed a wonderful working relationship, and I was able to encourage her to adopt an older child who had been waiting for quite some time for a family. She was willing to give the child a chance and to this date, the adoption continues to be successful.



# Alumni Spotlight

## Travis Macher



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

I am a conservatorship specialist I caseworker.

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

CWEP gave me the opportunity to meet many great people that have continued to support me at CPS. It provided a network of some really wonderful people that I can turn to. Most importantly it keeps me connected with my social work values and encourages me just to know that I am not the only one at CPS with a MSW.

The MSW program is wonderful and I miss learning from all the experienced teachers. Many times during the day I have to think back on the skills I learned while in the MSW program to help me do my job more effectively and to truly make a positive impact. The importance of taking the time to focus on my own needs has truly been valuable to keep from burning out. Although I do not get to have long therapeutic sessions with those I work with, I do find that crisis intervention techniques and skills from brief therapies come in handy. I often find myself using motivational interviewing when working with parents to try to encourage them to work services. I am very thankful for the many skills learned through the MSW program, and I use them to better support the families I work with each day.

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

My main goal for working at CPS was to learn, and I am truly learning new things every day. I am thankful for the opportunities I have to learn at CPS and know that they will be useful for my future.

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

Do your best and remember to take time for self-care. Your MSW skills will come in handy, but you have to use them. Your CWEP community is willing to help out and they best understand what you are experiencing. Lastly, success can be appreciated in many different ways; Focus on the small accomplishments in each day.

# Alumni Spotlight: Ashley Smalls



## 1. What is your current job position?

I am currently a Foster/Adoption Development Worker in Harris County. I have been in this position since June 2014. I have been employed with the Department of Family and Protective Services for 5 years.

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

I feel the MSW program helped expand my knowledge on how to better serve my agency and the clients I work with. In this work you must find creative ways to help families and through the information I learned I am better equipped to think outside of the box to better serve the families I work with. The CWEP program helped me expand my knowledge about child welfare and exposed me to all the different resources that are available in the community.

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

The advice I would give to a current CWEP student is to gain as much knowledge and skills as possible so that they can utilize them in your everyday work when working with the children and families we serve. I would also recommend the Leo mentor program that is available to CWEP students, this is a great resource for students who need help with writing papers. I would advise the CWEP student to have open communication with their Supervisor, because he/she will be there to support you through the process. I would encourage anyone who is currently in the program to enjoy the process and take every opportunity to engage not only with our individual families, but the community as well. I would encourage students to be aware of the resources that we have in the community. The knowledge that is provided by the GCSW will be a benefit in a many way that you will notice while in the program and after you graduate.

# CWEP Staff Spotlight

## Claire Crawford



**What is your current position with CWEP? How long have you been working in this position? What prior experience(s) did you bring with you to this position?**

I am currently working as a Graduate Research Assistant for CWEP, a position I have had for about a year and a half now. Though I had done some social science research and a good bit of academic writing prior to this position, I had very little knowledge of child abuse and neglect. Being an assistant for this wonderful team has been so professionally rewarding and informative.

**2. What have been the greatest rewards working in the CWEP family?**

I love that I get to learn about new topics so frequently through CWEP students, faculty, and staff. I think my proudest moment in this position was when we completed the CWEP Annual Report and Educational Resources for Fiscal Year 2015... a combined total of more than 500 pages of program descriptions and evaluations! It's one thing to learn about evaluation in class, but it's completely different to be involved in the reporting and evaluating processes of a real program. I was so proud to have been part of the tangible product displaying the program's progress and effectiveness.

**3. What advice do you have for our CWEP students?**

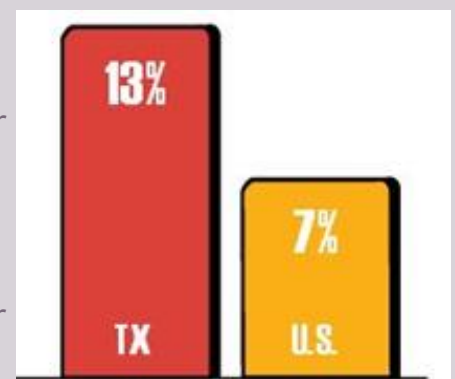
My advice to CWEP students is to take advantage of the resources the GCSW offers during your brief time here. You are surrounded by award-winning faculty, students with a wealth of diverse experiences, a new and very accessible Dean of the GCSW, and seemingly endless ways to be involved in clubs and organizations. Everyone is busy and has a personal life, but it's important to remember that many of your greatest professional and personal connections and relationships are available to you right here and now if you choose them.



# Policy Update: Children's Health Insurance

Lack of insurance can have many serious short- and long-term consequences for children and their families, including more frequent illness, missed diagnoses, missed school, poorer grades, higher rates of hospitalization, and higher rates of emergency room visits. Though uninsured child rates have decreased in this state since 2008, Texas still hosts the second highest uninsured child rate in the nation with 13% (888,205) of its children uninsured.

This problem disproportionately affects the most vulnerable children in Texas. Demographically, poorer children, minority children, and undocumented immigrant children are more likely to lack medical insurance than other children. Low-income families are three times as likely to have uninsured children when compared to middle and upper class children. More than half of low-income children who are eligible for insurance coverage through Medicaid or CHIP still remain uninsured, largely due to their parents' lack of insurance coverage. Low-income families must prioritize their spending carefully and may be more likely to spend income on basic, immediate needs such as feeding and housing their children than on health insurance, which can seem more



Uninsured Child Rate, 2013

abstract and future oriented. As a result, these families may find themselves in a serious financial deficit after an unexpected child illness. In addition to impacting families negatively, the state's costs can become very high when children are receiving care at emergency clinics rather than preventative care covered under insurance. Society as a whole suffers when children are uninsured since children may be less educated and less healthy as adults, decreasing their social capital and their ability to contribute to the economy.

\* All information gathered from: State of Texas Children. (2015). *Center for Public Policy Priorities*. [http://forabettertexas.org/images/KC\\_2015\\_SOTCreport\\_web.pdf](http://forabettertexas.org/images/KC_2015_SOTCreport_web.pdf)