MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

We hope that each of you are doing well despite all that our world is experiencing.

Over the past few months, our Institute has remained fully operational and continues our work of enhancing the child welfare system from multiple angles: research/evaluation, policy, and training. It is our goal to do our part in improving the lives of the vulnerable children and their families in our communities.

We are maintaining our commitment to racial equity this year through a partnership with the Office of Early Learning. This work focuses on providing ongoing training and coaching with 17 early learning coaches across the state, with the overall goal of creating better educational outcomes for children of color under the age of 5. We will keep you posted on that work.

Additionally, our work was expanded through Senate Bill 1326 and we will work with DCF to create a career ladder for their workforce. Our Institute will also design an initiative focused on child welfare workforce well-being and enhancement. Stay tuned for developments on these exciting projects.

Last month, we virtually hosted our annual meeting with our statewide affiliates. Our affiliate network has continued to expand and they have contributed their time and expertise to several research-related videos, reports, and infographics. Rather than hold our annual symposium in May, we are hosting a series of virtual “Lunch & Learn” sessions this fall. The theme is: Partnering with Families. More information is forthcoming, but please hold the following dates: September 1, 8, and 15 at noon. We look forward to having lunch with you those days!

Next month, we will begin to prepare our annual report due to Governor DeSantis on October 1. We enjoy articulating the work that our team and affiliates have accomplished this past year. Stay tuned for our 2019-2020 annual report.

Lastly, the first season of our podcast: Child Protection Caseworker Support is still available on various streaming options. We will record Season 2 this Fall. If you are interested in contributing to our next season, please let us know. We are exploring the role of technology, innovation, and virtual tools that can enhance our child welfare practice.

Stay safe and well!

SPECIAL TOPIC

The Atlantic Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30 and creates an annual opportunity for Florida’s child welfare system to navigate several challenges. Due to flooding, disruptions in road travel, and other hazardous conditions, hurricanes can reduce family visitation. Housing instability and family relocation also create difficulties for visit coordination.

This hurricane season, there is the compounded challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which already has caused issues for family visitation. Child welfare advocates say that “America’s foster care system, which relies on in-person contact and human connection, is struggling under the weight of this unprecedented period of isolation, which is risking the well-being of children, foster parents, and biological parents.”


The Institute has put together several resource materials to support child welfare professionals during this unforeseeable time.

We recently posted two new videos—one by faculty affiliate Dr. Jennifer Marshall on Hurricane Response for Vulnerable and Medically Fragile Populations during COVID-19 and another by former affiliate Julie Steen on the Effects of Disasters on Florida’s Foster Families.

This month’s infographic from the Institute reveals more on the impacts of disasters, such as hurricanes, on the child welfare system. Also included are links to educational resources that are available to child welfare professionals and the families they serve to help navigate these storms. In addition, the infographic lists several of our affiliates with expertise in preparation for and the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations.

We are also maintaining a resource page for supporting families during the ongoing health pandemic.

AFFILIATE SPOTLIGHT

In challenging times, it is especially important to acknowledge the high points, so in this particular issue we are taking the opportunity to spotlight four of our affiliates.

The Office of Research Development at Florida State University (FSU) has awarded funding to three faculty affiliates from the FSU College of Social Work to support projects that examine impacts of the ongoing pandemic.

Dr. Michael Killian’s project seeks to develop and pilot a telehealth intervention for adolescents who have received a heart transplant.

Dr. Melissa Radey’s project will examine the economic, social, and health impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable single-mother families.

Dr. Dina Wilke’s project aims to analyze qualitative data collected from surveys with health and human services workers to explore the impact of COVID-19 on their physical, emotional, and financial well-being, and professional responsibilities, as well as impacts on their clientele. Dr. Wilke’s team includes Dr. Melissa Radey (co-Principal Investigator), as well as Institute staff Dr. Lisa Magruder and Dr. Anna Velick.

Read more on these upcoming projects on the College of Social Work’s news page.

Institute faculty affiliate Dr. Lisa Schelbe was recently announced as Editor for the The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) publications APSAC Advisor and the APSAC Alert. The APSAC editorial team is prioritizing issues that cover a wide range of topics relevant to child maltreatment. Dr. Schelbe’s research focuses on young people transitioning out of foster care and services to assist with their transition out of care. She recently recorded a video with the Institute on Intergenerational Transmission of Childhood Maltreatment.

Learn more about Dr. Schelbe’s new role with APSAC.
Recruitment and retention of the workforce continue to be problematic for the Department of Children and Families, community-based care agencies, and service providers. High staff turnover puts vulnerable children at greater risk for recurrence of maltreatment and impedes timely intervention and ultimately permanency. Workforce attrition estimates range across the state continues to range between 25-60%.

In an effort to address the retention issues, the Institute launched the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF) in 2015. FSPSF is a five-year longitudinal study of 1,000 newly hired CPIs and case managers to study the individual conduct and organizational influences on child welfare employee retention, and ultimately, child and family outcomes.

Read the FSPSF’s new research brief: Workers’ Views on the Use of Technology.

In collaboration with the Institute and the Florida Coalition for Children, the Florida Department of Children and Families established a core set of quality standards for licensed group homes (Group Care Quality Standards Workgroup, 2015). The Department engaged the Institute to develop and validate a comprehensive assessment tool, the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment (GCQSA). Faculty affiliate Shamra Boel-Stubit, Ph.D., serves as the Principal Investigator and faculty affiliate Hui Huang is the project’s Co-Principal Investigator. The GCQSA is a multi-dimensional, multi-informant assessment of research-informed quality practice standards. The final phases of validation will focus on construct validity and inter-rater reliability. Additionally, an outcomes development pilot study will focus on exploring potential outcomes measures to be used in conjunction with the GCQSA for Florida’s residential programs. Together, these measures can be used to document and facilitate high quality and effective residential services.

Read the GCQSA’s latest research brief: Re-visioning Residential Care Services for Children and Youth — The Family First Prevention Services Act & the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment.

Formally recognized in June 2008, Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed each July and was created to bring awareness to the unique struggles that underrepresented groups face regarding mental illness in the United States. Bebe Moore Campbell was an American author, journalist, teacher, and mental health advocate who worked tirelessly to shed light on the mental health needs of underrepresented communities.

People and language evolve, and Mental Health America has chosen to remove the word “minority” from its annual toolkit and use the designation “BIPOC” to more fairly honor and distinguish the experiences of Blacks, Indigenous People, and People of Color (BIPOC). BIPOC communities face disproportionate inequities in mental health care due to systemic barriers, uninforming or inappropriate care, and trauma resulting from historical adversity. Growing data also shows that the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately impacting communities of color in America.

Health inequities are avoidable inequalities in health care that many racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups may experience. Factors that drive health inequities are associated with social, economic, and environmental disadvantages. The conditions in the places where children are born, grow, live, play, learn, and age have significant impacts on the health outcomes of individuals, families, and their communities. On Our Sleeves™ is a movement to transform children’s mental health by Nationwide Children’s Hospital. The linked video features a conversation with LeAnna Cooper, LSW, to raise awareness and work towards health equity for all.

The identities of LGBTQ+ BIPOC are multi-dimensional which can compound the trauma experienced. Civil rights advocate Kimberlé W. Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” to describe the way systems of power exclude and oppress people with minority and marginalized identities. Far too often this is the experience for people of color who identify as LGBTQ in foster care, who face higher rates of harassment, trauma, and disruptive placements. To understand the impact of trauma, intersectionality is key. Human Rights Campaign’s All Children - All Families project is helping to bring awareness to the importance of intersectional LGBTQ-inclusion in adoption and foster care agencies.

This month we are covering intersectionality and mental health disparities on our social media pages, so be sure to follow along.

The Institute would like your feedback on the resources we provide online through our website and our social media. Your feedback will help the Institute to continue to provide quality resources that are relevant to the interests of all of our stakeholders. The survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

Click here to complete a brief survey to help the Institute better serve your professional needs.

The Institute homepage highlights virtual conferences, webinars, and other opportunities for the child welfare field that take place online.

- COVID-19: Child Welfare Placements in an Uncertain Time July 29, 2020 2:00–3:00pm ET
- Safety Matters - Helping Families Affected By Substance Use Disorders and Domestic Violence Move From Survivors to Thrivers July 30, 2020 2:00–3:30pm ET
- Florida Network of Child Advocacy Centers Krimes Against Kids Virtual Conference August 5 – 7, 2020
- Crimes Against Children Virtual Conference 2020 August 10 - 13, 2020
- COVID-19: Improving Outcomes for Older Youth in Child Welfare August 12, 2020 2:00–3:00pm ET
- Innovations Exchanges - Inclusivity, Racial Equity, and Community Engagement August 18, 2020 3:00–4:00pm ET
- Bringing Resilience Home FFTA 34th Annual Conference on Treatment Family Care September 23 - 24, 2020

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