

Child Welfare Education Project CWEP Newsline

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UNIVERSITY OF
HOUSTON
GRADUATE COLLEGE
OF SOCIAL WORK



Director's Corner

Youth who receive out of home care face numerous challenges as they transition into adulthood and independent living. The departure from state care can be frightening for some. Research shows that youth aging out of foster care are less likely to complete their secondary education, more likely to become a parent at a young age and depend on social assistance, become unemployed or underemployed, incarcerated, homeless, suffer with substance abuse issues, and have mental health problems.

Youth require various resources and ongoing support to assist them with this developmental milestone. These include education, employment, housing, health services, daily living skills, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, and computer/Internet skills. Adult caregivers are responsible for assisting youth and emerging adults in building a foundation for a successful transition to adult life outside of foster care. We can also gain valuable information from foster care alumni in order to

determine the needs of our youth. We must partner with the youth to develop a plan that builds on their

strengths while supporting their needs.

Let us not take for granted that they will be ready for the “real” world simply because they age out of foster care. We need to ensure that we are providing them with the much needed tools and strategies that they will need in order to become successful adults. Remember, foster children have dreams too!

Arnitia Walker



CWEP Director

CWEP Faculty Spotlight



What is your position in the CWEP/CPS family?

I am the Field Coordinator for the CWEP program. Since the program is a collaboration with Children's Protective Services, my charge is make sure that students are placed in field experiences that nurture and protect children while supporting and strengthening their families. I view this work here at the Graduate College of Social Work as a natural progression from doing the work I have been so passionate about at CPS to teaching others to become as passionate about the work as I have been in my career.

What originally got you involved with CPS?

My entire career has evolved around working with children in various ways. I started at Children's Protective Services in 1999 with the goal of staying for two-three years. I had no idea the work would consume me like it did. I began as a supervisor in an investigation unit which I found to be exciting and very rewarding work. Then, after five years, I wanted to understand what was happening to my families after the initial investigation, after they came into conservatorship. It was five years later that I was sitting at my desk and this position came to my email. I truly believe that, had it not come, I would be retiring from CPS. I was not seeking to leave. I think it was my destiny to be blessed to be able to teach and promote the work that I love so much.

As you look forward to retirement, what can you say about your time here with CWEP?

I have thoroughly enjoyed my work with CWEP. My coworkers, the GCSW staff, and the professors have made it like family here. All have contributed to my growth so that I could come to work focused and excited about wanting to come to work. I will miss my purple office. I will miss my students. But I will not be giving up the work. CPS is in my blood. I hope I have been able to pass that passion on to my students.

Kathy Clark

Field Supervisor

CWEP Student Spotlight

What is your current job position (if you are working at CPS)? Or, tell us about yourself.

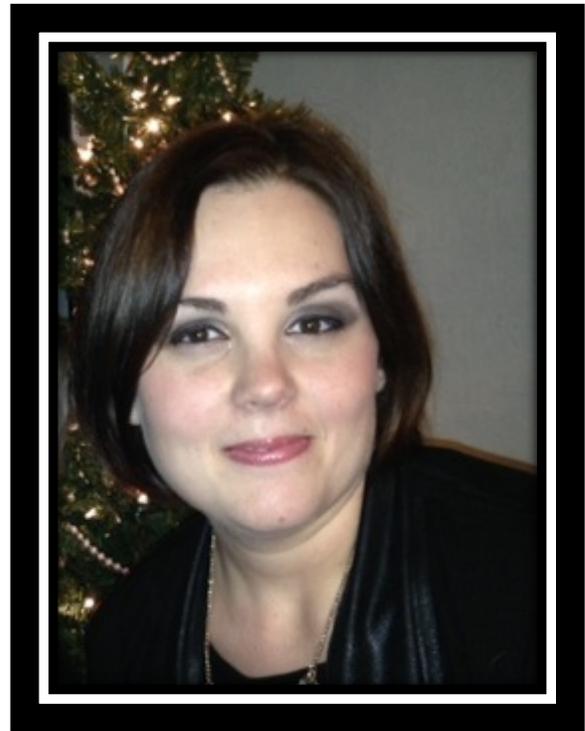
I am currently a Kinship Caregiver Specialist in Montgomery County. Prior to that, I worked as a conservatorship caseworker in the disproportionality program of Harris County for over three years. Before I started at CPS, I worked for Cypress Fairbanks ISD and received a BA in Psychology from UT-Austin.

What motivated you to join the MSW program, and what made you decide to pursue child welfare specifically?

I knew that I wanted to go back to school to get a degree but I was not sure if I wanted to pursue an MSW or an LPC. After working at CPS for a couple of years, I decided to join the program because I felt that an MSW degree would allow me to learn skills that I could use to better assist my clients. I also like how an MSW opens up a large range of potential jobs and areas of specialization.

Tell us about your achievements in child welfare.

One of the things that I am most passionate about is ensuring the well being of kids in the foster care system. I have loved forming relationships with the kids on my caseload and being an advocate for them in a system that often focuses on safety over wellbeing. I have worked hard to find them permanent homes when they were unable to return to their parents and have enjoyed watching them grow.



Meredith Atkinson

DSM-5 Changes

Unless you have been living under a rock, you know that the DSM has changed. Even the way it is written, not DSM-V but DSM-5, makes it easier to change, terming the next edition DSM-5.1, then 5.2, and so on. So assume that over the course of your burgeoning career you will see many more changes to the DSM. These will probably be posted online.

A website sponsored by the American Psychiatric Association will give you the major changes and some background, as well:

<http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/changes%20from%20dsm-iv-tr%20to%20dsm-5.pdf> . Check it out.

Insurance companies will probably not be requiring the DSM-5 until October 1, 2014, unless their software kicks in earlier, and, in that case, clinicians will be expected to use the new codes immediately.

VERY IMPORTANT for GRADUATES in 2014: The licensing exam will include the DSM-IV only until December, 2014 and after that, you will be tested on the DSM-5. So, if you graduate in 2014, don't delay taking the LMSW exam or you will have to be proficient in the DSM-5.

The major changes in the DSM-5 include dropping of the AXIS I-V system; NOS is now "other specified or unspecified"; retardation is now intellectual disability; and hoarding is a new separate disorder. Trauma and stressor-related disorders criteria have changed significantly and reactive attachment disorder is delineated into two subtypes. Autism spectrum disorder has some controversial changes that have been in the news for several months and refinements have been made to the criteria for oppositional defiant disorder. Gambling disorder is now included in the substance-related disorders and the DSM-5 does not separate the diagnoses of substance abuse and dependence as in DSM-IV. Personality disorders have not changed from those in DSM-IV but that is under study and may change in the future.

Other changes are planned as many of the disorders are "under study." So get ready for your future and study up on the DSM-5.



*Patricia Taylor, PhD,
LCSW*

CWEP Faculty Spotlight

What are your past experiences with CPS and current role with CWEP?

My initial interaction with CPS was through my first field placement back in the early 90's. I was assigned to Verna McIntyre's investigative unit (she just retired recently). We would shadow the investigators when they went out on their cases. It was an eye-opener for sure. I remember a case where the caseworker and I had to drive our cars so each of us could have 2 cars seats to safely pick up the children. That didn't happen that day, but other MSW students and I developed a presentation that we gave to middle school students about CPS. When we asked the question, "What does CPS do" for families, their answer was, "take children away." In reality, less than 1% of the cases result in removals. I learned a great deal from my CPS internship experience, including myth busting.

Currently, I handle the stipends for the CWEP students as a part of my position as Director of the Office of Community Projects. The world of financial aid at a university can be quite challenging. My goal is to get students their stipends as quickly as possible each semester. It's the behind the scenes relationships that help with that process. When a student calls or comes in to ask about their stipend, I get in touch with my contacts and see if we can quickly resolve any issues.

What have been the greatest rewards working in the CWEP or CPS family?

Knowing that in the long run, we are positively impacting children, whether it's through more MSWs working at the agency or interacting with the CWEP staff, children are the top priority. As for CWEP staff, all work very hard for the students to make sure their GCSW experience is a great one. And their commitment to children and families is unprecedented.

What advice do you have for our CWEP students?

Stay the course, work hard, and know that graduation will come. Enjoy your experience as best as you can. And be proud to be a social worker.

As your retirement comes up this year, what reflections do you have on your career in CPS/child welfare and with the CWEP family?

I started my career a little later than most although I've always worked with children in my previous positions. I look back and believe that I've made a positive difference in people's lives, at least I hope so. I will miss the CWEP staff as well as the GCSW staff and faculty. They are my friends and will remain so. So now, it's on to the next adventure.

Ann McFarland

