

# Child Welfare Education Project

## CWEP NewsLine

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

# Director's Corner

Amitia Walker



The Department of Protective and Regulatory Services is undergoing a major transformation. Their main focus at this time is child safety, permanency and well-being. The goal is to move children forward into permanent homes in a timely manner.

This new process will be field driven and guided by employee input. DFPS will build on relationships with community agencies in an effort to prevent child removals.

As a result of this major transformation, new CPS caseworkers will spend less time in the classroom and more time in the field to allow them more time to spend with the families they serve. They will each be assigned a mentor who will accompany them during their first several months on the job.

The Human Resources Department is working hard to ensure that the best possible candidates are recruited and hired. Strength-based training has been created for Supervisors. Agency administrators will look at retention as well and are making it a priority to have a conversation with all new employees within their first year of hire. There is a huge push to reduce caseloads and improve the state's computer system. The Office of Child Safety has been created and is charged with analyzing data and helping protect children from death and serious injuries.

The agency will also work closely with Title IV-E partner colleges and universities within the state to enhance their collaborations. The Title IV-E program at the UH GCSW, which is going into its sixteenth year of existence, is proud to announce that over 160 MSW students have successfully graduated.

## Announcements

- Don't forget: April is Child Abuse Prevention Month!  
[https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/?utm\\_source=Gateway&utm\\_medium=Listserv&utm\\_campaign=NCAPM15](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/?utm_source=Gateway&utm_medium=Listserv&utm_campaign=NCAPM15)
- New resource to guide work with victims and witnesses:  
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/victims-and-witnesses/working-with-victims->

## Field Tips

Vanessa Shippard

- ✓ Make an everlasting impression.
- ✓ Show determination and zeal.

## Advising Tip

Brunessia Lewis

- ✓ Students: Always double check your fee bills to aid in a smooth transition from fall to spring semester.

# “Child Abuse: A National Epidemic”

## A Seminar by Sargent Bill Davis

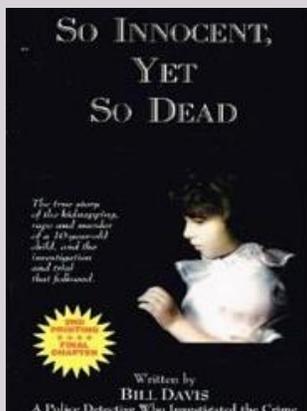
Summary by Vanessa Shppard: On February 6, 2015, Retired Sgt. Bill Davis presented a seminar to Children’s Protective Services employees and University of Houston MSW students, titled “Child Abuse: A National Epidemic.” Sgt. Davis spoke about sexual abuse, incest, drug use, rape and relationships between CPS and law enforcement.



Sgt. Davis is a retired Police Detective of the Beaumont Police Department and author of the true crime novel, *So Innocent, Yet So Dead*. He was one of the detectives that investigated this horrible kidnapping/murder crime. A ten-year-old girl was kidnapped at a flea market in Beaumont in front of several hundred people who did not realize she was being kidnapped. Later that day, the suspect, Rex Powell, raped and murdered her and then dumped her body under a creek bridge in southern Newton County, Texas. Through some miraculous events, members of law enforcement were able to develop sufficient leads to procure a warrant, and Bill handcuffed Rex Powell within forty hours of the child’s disappearance.

After Powell was convicted and sentenced to death, Bill began writing the book *So Innocent, Yet So Dead* while the perpetrator was sitting on death row. After witnessing Powell’s final minutes and seconds that led to his execution, the final chapter was written. Sgt. Davis hopes that reading this book will save lives: “Our greatest tool in protecting our children is awareness. I believe that reading this book will heighten your awareness and increase your ability to protect our greatest resource, our children.”

The book, which has sold over 30,000 copies, is currently available in hard copy and on Amazon.com.



# Student Spotlight

Tennille Whitlock



## 1. What is your current job position?

My current position is a Conservatorship caseworker II. I have been with the agency for 1 year as of 03/03/15.

## 2. What motivated you to join the MSW program?

My main motivation to join the MSW program was that I could be in a position to empower others, advocating on policy levels, and impacting children and families in a positive manner. I also wanted to further my education to be able to give back in experience by teaching adjunct to undergraduate BSW students.

## 3. Tell us about your achievements in child welfare.

I have only been with the agency for a short time but I believe my greatest achievement was helping to reunify a family. Also, just hearing the family say, "Ms. Tennille, you really care about our lives" has been by far the greatest achievement.

## 4. Other comments:

The CWEP program is a great program. It opened doors for me and encouraged me to network with other professionals and to advocate not only for those that can't speak for themselves but for me as well. I would definitely recommend both the GCSW and CWEP to anyone that has a passion and desire to do the work and service that others cannot do.

# Alumni Spotlight: Matthew Broussard



## 1. What is your current job position?

I am currently the Assessment Services Manager with Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults. I have been in that position since October 2014. I have worked for HCPS as a manager since 2005.

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

I feel like I gained lots of valuable experience at DFPS prior to enrolling in the MSW program. I had a good deal of practice experience and could focus my studies on those areas in which I needed the most growth to succeed as a social worker. With the MSW program I studied theories and was able to use that knowledge to back up the real world experience and think at the macro as well as micro level. I received a broader range of experiences outside of DFPS in community projects and internships. This allowed me to provide more well-rounded services to the clients that I serve. My experiences at the internship at Juvenile Probation and DFPS helped me to secure my current position. I now work with a variety of agencies which include Juvenile Probation, MHMR and DFPS.

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

I've worked with youth since before I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1989. I've had jobs in head injury residential treatment centers, educational settings in a museum and working with youth in foster care. I investigated sexual abuse for DFPS for 7 years and completed my MSW while working in that position with the assistance of the CWEP program. **My job with DFPS gave me the experience and confidence I needed to do ANY job.**

Once I left DFPS, I began working for a Child Placing Agency serving youth in foster care and foster parents. I taught classes to foster parents, helped certify and supervise new foster parents and was involved in arranging new placements in the agency. I worked my way up to supervising social worker, and then Acting Director of this child placing agency office in Houston called Trinity Foster Care. In this position I gained a wealth of knowledge regarding child placement and the foster care system from the perspective of the non-profits rather than the state. It allowed me to continue to work with the same child population that I served at DPFS.

**Matthew Broussard (continued)**

After leaving Trinity I was hired with Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults. HCPS began as a child welfare board. HCPS is now government department within Harris County which serves youth in foster care, adults in need of a court appointed guardian, and serves those families who could benefit from services but are not DFPS-CPS custody. Within the last 10 years, I've worked on the prevention side of social services for youth. I've strengthened the CYD grant program (funded by DFPS prevention division called PEI) so that youth in at-risk communities of Gulfton (77081) and northern Pasadena (77506) receive free services to prevent them from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. I've worked with Juvenile Probation and DFPS to develop an integrated crisis intervention program called TRIAD Intake Diversion. This program prevents youth and families from entering the child welfare and juvenile justice system in a coordinated fashion. Services are provided 24 hours a day and the collaborated services we've worked on has been a boon to Harris County families. I collaborate with MHMR, Juvenile Probation and DFPS.

I've been a founding partner member of the Linkup 40 Assets conference which serves 1500 youth per year in the Houston area. It is an interactive youth development conference that focuses on helping youth to develop assets that will help them succeed rather than focus on what risk factors they have. I have supervised MSW interns at HCPS since 2005. I do my best to challenge them to take on projects and learn skills outside their comfort zone. This allows me to help them to learn to be more seasoned social worker, to whom I'd like to refer clients.

My newest position at HCPS is to design a new program service model with integrates services more fully between Harris County Juvenile Probation, HCPS, and MHMRA of Harris County. The integration will continue outside the crisis intervention setting to include assessment, wrap around case coordination and case management.

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

I would advise them to seek field placements outside of DFPS which are outside of their comfort zones. This allows students the opportunity to work in a difficult job under the supervision of a Master's level Social Worker while learning from their mistakes. It may also give a student the opportunity to choose their career path.

# Staff Spotlight

Julia Huang



**1. 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 have been working as a research assistant with Dr. Monit Cheung for 7 months. I got my Bachelors of Social Work degree and minor with Biomedical Laboratory Science at Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan. I was a medical social worker at a hospital in Taiwan. I worked with a medical team to assist children with brain tumors and their families at in the hospital's Pediatric Neurosurgery Department. Additionally, I have had some experience working with children and family violence cases in the hospital's emergency room. Almost 80% of children in Taiwan with brain tumors received their treatment plans in our department. I have great enthusiasm for working with children and families to deal with various crisis situations and long-term health care plans, such as addressing feelings/emotions following diagnoses, adjusting to their diagnoses, financial impact of treatments and illness, talking to family members about diagnosis and future treatment plan with doctors, coping with the diagnoses, grief and loss issues, coordinating resources, cooperating with agencies and organizations outside the hospital, transitioning to life after surviving cancer, and pediatric hospice care. These experiences are precious and valued in developing my social work knowledge and advanced learning in the United States.

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

The greatest rewards working in the CWEP family is that I am not only working but also learning. Further, I feel very supported by the CWEP family. During the last 7 months, I have worked on projects with Dr. Cheung regarding child welfare work. Dr. Cheung also encourages me to attend trainings and conferences to get more learning experience. No matter how busy she is, Dr. Cheung is always willing to spend time teaching me, guiding me and answering any questions from work and learning. As a graduate student, I get lots of extra learning experiences from her. Moreover, I have received support from Mrs. Walker, Dr. Leung and other graduate and doctoral assistants. When I feel frustrated, depressed and anxious about learning or issues in life, they always empower me and give me positive energy to keep going. As an international student, this support is so important for me. I really appreciate having fruitful experiences from working in CWEP, and I am thankful being a part of the CWEP family.

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

“Open your mind to learn and to accept any challenges” is advice I would like to give to encourage our CWEP students. You never know where the opportunities are and what will happen in the future. One of things you can do is open your mind to learn and to accept challenges when you are a student. No matter whether you are successful or not, you can gain something during the process. Never give up when you are frustrated in a challenging situation. You must learn something from every event. And these various experiences will help to develop a better you.

# Child Abuse Prevention Month

**Wear Blue - Child Abuse is  
Preventable!**

**April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.**

**On April 10, 2015, Wear Blue to School, to Work, with  
your Club, and with your Family and show your support.**

*Don't forget to post photos of wearing blue to our Facebook page!*

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PCAT is the Texas Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America

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