



# FLORIDA INSTITUTE FOR CHILD WELFARE

AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

## FY 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

*Submitted to:*

Governor Ron DeSantis

Wilton Simpson, *Senate President*

Chris Sprowls, *Speaker of the House*

**October 1, 2021**



College of Social Work  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida

## Mission

The Florida Institute for Child Welfare seeks to promote safety, permanency, and well-being among the children and families of Florida that are involved with the child welfare system. To accomplish this mission, the Institute sponsors and supports interdisciplinary research projects and program evaluation initiatives that contribute to a dynamic knowledge base relevant for enhancing Florida's child welfare outcomes. The Institute collaborates with community agencies across all sectors and other important organizations in order to translate knowledge generated through ecologically valid research, policy analysis, and program evaluation.

October 1, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor  
PL-05 State Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of Florida State University and the Florida Institute for Child Welfare, I submit this annual report, which includes Institute activities, budget plan, and research and evaluation efforts for FFY 2019-2020. Research-informed recommendations are included, as well as our plans to move our new mandates forward.

The statewide affiliate network continues to expand to involve faculty with an interdisciplinary focus. These partnerships have assisted the Institute with providing the most robust and relevant research to inform child welfare policy. Over the past year, we created a workgroup of affiliates who will provide specific technical assistance towards Florida's implementation of the Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA). We are actively partnering with State officials with FFPSA implementation challenges, including offering multi-part trainings sessions to our child welfare workforce as they prepare for this new policy.

This year, our team made strides in research in multiple areas, including the child welfare workforce, kinship care services, and the early childhood courts system. In addition, we hosted our annual Symposium, which focused on supporting youth and young adults who are aging out of our foster care system.

Our child welfare system is creating a safer community for our children and their families, and it is our privilege to contribute to this work.

Sincerely,



Jessica A. Pryce, Ph.D., MSW  
Director  
Florida Institute for Child Welfare

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## SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with section 1004.615, Florida Statutes, the Florida Institute for Child Welfare (hereafter referred to as the Institute), submits this annual report to the Governor. The Institute was created to provide research and evaluation that contributes to a more sustainable, accountable, and effective child welfare system. This report covers the period of October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 and provides current research findings and policy and practice recommendations. In addition, there is a summary of activities and an update on the budget expenditures for the state FY 2020-2021. The Institute has maintained partnerships with the Department of Children and Families (hereafter referred to as DCF, Department) and the community-based care (CBC) lead agencies.

The inherent challenges of using research to inform the legislative process cannot be overstated. The Institute continues to bridge the gap between the creation of knowledge and its utilization. Working to ensure that child welfare research is both rigorous and useful to policymakers to enhance evidence-based decision making is the Institute's foremost goal.

The purpose of this report is to present a rigorous analysis of our child welfare system and to provide research-informed recommendations that can assist in the development of Florida's long-term social policy goals. The investment into child welfare workforce research for the past few years has rendered findings which support the creation of a robust system of professional development and support for child welfare professionals. In 2021, the Institute received an additional \$10 million in recurring appropriation to implement a robust and comprehensive approach to professional development. The next section is a description of the work that lies ahead for the Institute, which includes the creation of the GROW Center focused entirely on facilitating greater resilience within our workforce.

## SECTION II: THE GROW CENTER

The vision of GROW (Greater Resilience of The Workforce) is to prepare and support Florida's child welfare workforce from **classroom** to **case work** to competent **leadership**. The research analyses conducted this past year (Florida Study for Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF), Residential Group Care Quality Standards, and the Early Childhood Court Evaluation) have rendered very significant findings. A summary of those findings and next steps will be found later in this report (pp 9-18). The majority of the research points to the importance of building capacity within our child welfare workforce to meet the complex needs of vulnerable families, children in foster care and group care, and those children who are between the ages of zero and three.

The FSPSF findings serve as a cornerstone of the developing GROW Center. This longitudinal study of Florida's child welfare workforce (2015-2020), the FSPSF found that 81 percent of newly hired frontline workers left their original agency within three-and-a-half years, with the majority leaving within the first 18 months. Workers in the study reported they primarily departed due to job responsibilities (e.g., complex caseloads, emotional difficulty of the work, inability to utilize skills) or the agency environment (e.g., unreasonable and inconsistent expectations of workers, few opportunities for advancement). Other departure reasons included supervision challenges (e.g., lack of supervisor availability), personal reasons (e.g., lack of work/life balance), or other career opportunities (e.g., better work opportunities elsewhere). In addition, physical and emotional well-being declined for workers over the first 12 months of employment, and particularly within the first six months. Despite most well-being measures stabilizing by

18 months, none returned to baseline. These and other available research findings indicate the need for improved workforce preparation and support.

### [ALIGN | Advance, Learn, Innovate, Grow, Network](#)

This work will be facilitated by the new ALIGN initiative, a resource for students and child welfare professionals to *Advance, Learn, Innovate, Grow*, and *Network* with other students and child welfare colleagues statewide. ALIGN is designed to be an upstream approach to innovate the classroom experience at the university level, as well as the ongoing cultivation of a community which offers holistic support for the individual and professional advancement opportunities throughout their career.

To truly professionalize the child welfare workforce, students in social work and other interdisciplinary programs should not only be better prepared through the knowledge gained but also have a better, experiential understanding of the complexities of working with child welfare-involved families. The redesign of the BSW and MSW curricula led by the FSU College of Social Work in collaboration other university affiliates is the initial focus of the GROW Center's academic innovation agenda. Over the next two years, the College will develop a robust curriculum to educate students more effectively. Child welfare will be intentionally infused as a component of all courses through Case-Based Learning—an empirically proven approach to educating professionals working in highly complex systems of care, e.g., health care, law, business.

Once these students graduate and become professionals in the child welfare workforce, the ALIGN platform will prioritize the support they need in their jobs. In collaboration with DCF, we are creating a clear path for professional development and credentialing, as well as clear avenues for child welfare professionals to receive support in their ongoing work. The ALIGN platform will offer myriad opportunities for the child welfare professional to take courses that grant them a specialization in a content area, learn about relevant issues, and gain experience in problem solving to become more confident in their approach and feel supported throughout their learning pathway. More importantly, the goal is to create a sense of community among the learners through online discussion rooms, encouragement texts, assignments, or questions by trainers via text or email, and regular check-ins by coaches and mentors. Child welfare professionals need innovation to capture their imaginations of what is truly possible in their work, so ALIGN will provide unique e-learning, blended with in-person sessions, multimedia, audios, videos, and interactive case scenarios, along with trainers with dedicated office hours to help learners process what they've learned and how to apply it.

### [Alliance for Workforce Enhancement \(AWE\)](#)

The new path forward will create transformative changes with how professionals are educated, prepared, and supported. Simultaneously, the GROW Center will also include a focus on organizational well-being. Florida's child welfare system has experienced persistent challenges within their organizations. Based on the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's (NCWWI) Workforce Excellence Sites, the Institute created the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement (AWE), in order to create an opportunity for specialized capacity building for Florida's child welfare system. Through a 3-year partnership, the selected AWE sites will receive tailored technical assistance and leadership development. The sites selected to participate in the AWE Initiative will receive specialized leadership development and adaptive technical assistance to address the workforce challenges the organization is facing. A team of AWE consultants will work with the

organization (and their community partners) for the duration of the project (three years) to assist in achieving outcome-focused goals and objectives with the overall vision of enhancing the organization/system and developing capacity within the organization to achieve innovation and change towards intended outcomes. This initiative will be executed using principles driven by implementation science and NCWWI's [workforce development framework](#) that outlines key components of assessing and addressing organizational and workforce well-being. The project's components include a comprehensive assessment to determine organizational strengths and areas in need of change, the co-creation of a plan to address the challenges identified through the assessment, guided implementation activities, project evaluation, and sustainability planning.

The well-being of an organization is often contingent on leadership capacity which is why this Initiative will offer a robust Leadership Academy for child welfare professionals as well as ongoing well-being, resiliency and retention sessions. The first year of the AWE initiative partnership will focus on organizational health assessment, identification of change initiatives, and well-being and resiliency coaching. The second year will include participation in the Leadership Academy, which will run concurrently with the implementation of the overall change process for organizations. The third year will have an emphasis on sustainability planning and equipping the agency to continue the work they started with the AWE team.

More information about the GROW Center will be available on November 1, 2021.

## **SECTION III: FLORIDA INSTITUTE FOR CHILD WELFARE**

### **Institute Affiliate Network**

In FY20-21, 44 affiliates contributed to the network, representing 15 universities and 6 organizations. During this time, the Institute expanded the network's expertise through onboarding of faculty from multiple disciplines, as well as organizational representatives.

The Institute also prioritized engagement of current affiliates. First, we began a monthly e-newsletter specifically for affiliates, which highlights Institute activities; relevant announcements (e.g., upcoming conferences, funding mechanisms, calls for papers); and provides updates on affiliate-led projects and contributions. The newsletter also serves as a space for affiliates to make requests or to solicit collaborations from one another. Second, we began an affiliate-only funding stream to provide financial support to promising and practice relevant child welfare research in Florida. The inaugural award was granted to FAU affiliates Drs. Morgan Cooley, Heather Thompson, and Marianna Colvin for their proposal *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*. This project is described further below.

Additional affiliate contributions can be found in [Appendix D](#).

#### **Affiliate Meetings**

Quarterly conference calls were held with the affiliates to provide an update from the Institute's program director, legislative and/or research updates from the director, and a presentation on research or evaluations conducted by the Institute or affiliates. During this reporting period, conference calls were held September 2020, December 2020, and April 2021.



The Institute holds an annual face-to-face meeting, with the objective of creating dialogue, providing announcements, identifying gaps in research, disseminating research findings, and proposing future research priorities in areas mutually agreed upon by the affiliates. This year's annual meeting was held virtually in June 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and adherence with CDC recommended guidelines. The virtual meeting allowed the affiliates to gather and discuss topics regarding the Institute; past, present, and future research projects; and for the affiliates to share their individual projects and news from their universities or agencies. To review minutes from the conference calls and annual meeting, see [Appendix E](#).

## Workgroups

### Critical Incident Rapid Response Team

The director of the Institute sits on the Critical Incident Rapid Response Team (CIRRT) Advisory Committee and attends quarterly meetings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last several meetings were virtual. The CIRRT reports provide an immediate, multiagency investigation of child deaths that meet the statutory criteria for review. Investigations are conducted to identify root causes, rapidly determine the need to change policies and practices related to child protection and improve Florida's child welfare system. CIRRT reviews consider the family's entire child welfare history, with specific attention to the most recent child welfare involvement and events surrounding the fatality. The Institute's role on the CIRRT Advisory Committee has been centered on providing relevant research and identifying areas of potential research that could prevent and mitigate the risk of child fatalities.

### One Voice IMPAACT Statewide Workgroup

Professional Research Assistant Colleen McBride began attending the One Voice IMPAACT (OVI) monthly statewide meetings in May 2021. OVI serves as an advocacy group for youth in foster care. Meetings are attended by transition-age youth, and generally focus on providing updates on OVI's work. Transition-age youth are encouraged to join local OVI youth councils and participate in leadership training programs. These meetings often have guest speakers present on relevant academic research or legislative developments.

## SECTION IV: RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE INSTITUTE

### Completed Research and Evaluation

#### Preliminary Exploration of Mindfulness-Based Training for Child Welfare Workers

Affiliate Dr. Marleen Milner (Department of Social Work at Southeastern University), in collaboration with Heartland for Children, developed, implemented, and evaluated a program to train child welfare workers to use mindfulness-based strategies to moderate the impact of work-related stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout. This pilot program included a half-day training on compassion fatigue, self-care, and mindfulness followed by nine weeks of instruction, small group support, and guided mindfulness practices. The purpose of this project was to investigate whether workplace mindfulness-based strategies can serve to support and sustain the well-being of child welfare workers and reduce the high turnover rate among frontline staff.

Initial plans to launch the program in August of 2020 were delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. When it became clear that the conditions for meeting face to face would continue to be unfavorable for some time

to come, it was decided to launch the program in January, hoping to capitalize on workers' intentions for the new year.

Case managers were recruited from the network of child welfare agencies under the administration of Heartland for Children, the lead agency for community-based care for Polk, Highlands, and Hardee Counties in Florida. Pre and post measures used to evaluate the outcomes included the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL5),<sup>1</sup> the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS10),<sup>2</sup> the Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form,<sup>3</sup> and the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS).<sup>4</sup> A comparison group made up of supervisors and case managers took the pre-test and post-test. Focus groups were conducted with participants following the intervention to solicit feedback on their experiences and suggestions for future interventions.

### *Key Findings*

The small sample size presented challenges in detecting statistical significance between pre- and post-test measures, though effect sizes for several of the subscales suggest that the intervention may have had a positive effect on the participants. Although direct intervention and comparison group comparisons were not worthwhile given the small sample, it is noteworthy that while the comparison group experienced a decrease in Compassion Satisfaction and increase in Compassion Fatigue as evidenced by medium effect sizes, the intervention group experienced decreases in Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress, with significant findings and a large effect size for Burnout. In addition, though not statistically significant, the intervention group experienced increases in mindfulness as evidenced by a large effect size.

Throughout the intervention, workers were dealing with COVID-19 impacts (e.g., remote work with clients, working from home, increased sense of isolation). Participants reported enjoying the Zoom sessions as a way to connect with one another. Higher than typical caseloads caused participants to miss sessions due to case obligations. Heartland for Children's administrative staff confirmed increased turnover during the intervention, meaning some participants left the agency while others had to take on additional cases due to those co-worker departures. During the focus group discussion, participants discussed how challenging they found it to make time for an additional meeting, and to find time and quiet space to develop new daily habits.

### *Next Steps*

While this preliminary study was too underpowered to clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of mindfulness-based training to ameliorate compassion fatigue and increase compassion satisfaction and mindfulness, the findings do show promise. As a next step, Dr. Milner recommends a well-powered, wait-list controlled study of an abbreviated workshop style training with the availability of brief practice sessions supported within the work environment.

### **Early Childhood Court Evaluation**

Per Florida Statute 39.01304 (2) (2020), "the Office of the State Courts Administrator [OSCA] shall contract for an evaluation of the early childhood court programs to ensure the quality, accountability, and fidelity of the programs' evidence-based treatment." ZERO TO THREE (ZTT) contracted with the Institute to develop and execute an evaluation plan to address this statute. The Institute, in consultation with ZTT and OSCA's Office of Court Improvement (OCI), determined that the priority was evaluating the effectiveness of therapeutic modalities related to parenting and the parent-child relationship.

To address the evaluation priorities, the Institute conducted two distinct but related evaluation initiatives: 1) a mixed-methods evaluation of the effectiveness of therapeutic modalities, and 2) a qualitative

exploration of the perspectives of ECC-involved caregivers and providers regarding the therapeutic services and benefits of Early Childhood Court. Initiative one included individual interviews ( $N = 13$ ) with a survey ( $N = 6$ ) of parent-child therapeutic services clinicians, as well as examination of secondary data provided by OSCA regarding families who did ( $N = 128$ ) and did not receive ( $N = 677$ ) Child-Parent Psychotherapy, a common therapy ordered for ECC-involved families. Initiative two included individual interviews with parents and members of their self-identified therapeutic network (i.e., foster parents and ECC team members/providers). The researchers triangulated data from all sources to identify key findings. Findings should be interpreted with caution due to small sample sizes and non-generalizable methodologies (i.e., qualitative interviews).

### *Key Findings*

Overwhelmingly, clinicians reported using Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and Circle of Security-Parenting (COS-P) as primary modalities for ECC-involved families. Though fidelity in service provision is desired, clinicians indicated that working with ECC-involved families involves taking a client-responsive approach as opposed to following rigid protocols. Clinicians did describe ways in which they follow “protocol,” including the general use of COS-P, utilization of CPP fidelity forms, and reflective supervision. To assist in delivering quality services to ECC-involved families, most clinicians engage in and are satisfied with reflective supervision—which was described as helpful in improving confidence and success in service delivery as well as supporting the emotional needs of the provider. Outside of clinicians, other professional team members indicated a need for this type of support.

Participants indicated multiple factors influence therapeutic service delivery, including:

- ◆ *Parental Factors:* Participants expressed the need for empathy for parents experiencing **substance use**, with clinicians noting the necessity of balancing a parent’s need for services with their ability to meaningfully participate in treatment. Participants emphasized that **parental readiness for change and general level of participation** are indicative of “success” in ECC, particularly as it relates to the parent-child relationship.
- ◆ *ECC Factors:* Clinicians shared varied and sometimes **insufficient orientation to ECC** and their team. Some participants—including a parent—expressed there is **no uniform trauma lens** among team members. For clinicians, these challenges emerge when the **therapeutic goal timeline is longer than the “child welfare goal” timeline** of parents’ cases. While some parents may need more time to work their case plans, clinicians and care team members shared that some clients referred to ECC are **not a match for services**. Further complicating service delivery is a **lack therapeutic providers** for ECC-involved families.
- ◆ *Relational Factors:* Both clinicians and parents emphasized the importance of support from their **judges**. While relationships with **child welfare workers** and **community coordinators** were more varied (i.e., positive and negative experiences), interactions with **attorneys** appear to be the most strained. Several clinicians and care team members spoke to the importance of facilitating a positive relationship between **parents and caregivers**.
- ◆ *COVID-19 Factors:* Clinicians shared how pandemic disruptions changed their way of work (e.g., adapting to **virtual training and therapeutic sessions**), but also **expanded their service reach**. Though virtual services were sometimes described as more convenient, some parents felt it did

not allow them to fully experience ECC. **Parents' pre-existing challenges were exacerbated** by the pandemic and **disruptions to in-person visitation** created new emotional challenges.

### *Next Steps*

The Institute submitted a final evaluation report to OSCA and ZTT in September 2021. The report included several recommendations, including:

- 1) allowing the use of multiple therapeutic modalities within ECC
- 2) standardizing system-wide data collection
- 3) clarifying processes regarding client eligibility for services
- 4) developing policies and procedures regarding the incorporation of therapists' professional expertise
- 5) re-evaluating compensation practices for clinicians
- 6) improving team member orientation to ECC
- 7) exploring the expansion of reflective supervision to non-clinician team members
- 8) implementing increased supports for caregivers

The evaluation team identified several areas for future evaluations to explore, including assessment of:

- 1) variation in therapeutic services related to both processes and outcomes
- 2) challenges in CPP implementation, specifically as it pertains to working with multiple family members in a single session
- 3) how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts therapeutic services
- 4) the potential significance of clinicians having a professional background in child welfare

The full report will be available to view on the Institute's website on November 1, 2021.

## Ongoing Research and Evaluation

### Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families

The Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF), a longitudinal study of Florida's child welfare workforce (2015-2020), continues to produce valuable findings. During FY20-21, the FSPSF team authored several peer-reviewed manuscripts and presented findings at the Society for Social Work and Research's annual conference. One presentation was a collaboration between the FSPSF and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) teams, as both groups prepare their data for public availability. In addition, the FSPSF team's ongoing work on client violence attracted University media attention, resulting in both a written piece<sup>5</sup> and radio interview<sup>6</sup> with the researchers.

### *Key Findings*

The team conducted new analyses related to worker profiles and retention.<sup>7</sup> The sample ( $N = 912$ ) included those who remained in their child welfare positions at wave 2 (6-months post-baseline). The researchers used latent profile analyses to determine distinct worker profiles based on job demands (reverse scored to reflect the positive concepts of role balance and role compatibility); job resources (organizational, supervisory, and co-worker support); and personal resources (self-esteem, family support, and coping).

The researchers found five distinct worker profiles, where high measure scores are more desirable: floundering (9%, low scores on all measures, except coping); surviving through supervision (23%, low scores on job demands and resources, except supervisory support); surviving through role (20%, high job demand scores); surviving through support (35%, high job resources scores); and thriving (13%, high scores on all measures).

- ◆ Findings suggest a continuum of worker experiences relative to job demands and resources.
- ◆ Profiles held true regardless of role (i.e., case manager or child protective investigator).
- ◆ The only individual characteristic of impact was years of work experience. Participants with more work experience were more likely to be members of the extreme groups (i.e., floundering and thriving).
- ◆ Only 31 percent of floundering workers remained 12 months later (at wave 4) compared to 73 percent of thriving workers.

There appears to be an additive effect of fewer job demands and greater resource levels on increased retention. As opposed to a singular strategy for increasing retention among newly hired workers, organizations might improve retention by addressing one or more of the malleable demands or resources.

#### *Next Steps*

The FSPSF findings serve as a cornerstone of the developing GROW Center. The Institute will continue to support the FSPSF principal investigators in conducting analyses to inform GROW Center operations. For example, they will conduct a nuanced examination of worker-reported difficult cases at different time points in workers' careers, which will inform ALIGN interventions (e.g., PBL scenarios used in the curriculum redesign, future AdCert topics). Further analyses will also allow for continued dissemination of findings through Institute research briefs and peer-reviewed publications and presentations, which bring state and national visibility to the Institute as a leader in child welfare workforce reform. Finally, the principal investigators will work toward making de-identified FSPSF data publicly available to other researchers to increase the translational impact of the study. This will allow for increasingly rapid analysis and publication of Florida-based data to continue to inform our state's policies and practices.

### **Residential Group Care Quality Standards**

Effective July 1, 2017, Section 409.996 (22) of the Florida Statutes was amended, requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF or Department) to develop a statewide accountability system for residential group care providers based on measurable quality standards. The accountability system must be implemented by July 1, 2022. In collaboration with the Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) and the Florida Institute for Child Welfare (FICW), the Department established a core set of quality standards for licensed group homes. The Department engaged the FICW to develop and validate an assessment tool—the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment (GCQSA)—designed to operationalize the quality standards. The GCQSA will serve as the core measure for the Statewide Accountability System. The quality standards initiative draws upon research and empirically-driven frameworks to transform residential services through the integration of research-informed practice standards, ongoing assessment, and continuous quality improvement. The statewide validation study and the inter-rater reliability and agreement study were completed in 2021.

The purpose of the validation study was to examine construct validity, which refers to whether the GCQSA measures what it was designed to measure (residential care quality). The GCQSA is the first instrument of its kind, thus no comparable instrument exists. Researchers instead examined correlations between GCQSA scores and eight domain-specific single item indicators, which represent “direct, straightforward definitions of core constructs being validated,”<sup>8</sup> as well as seven program-level indicators (i.e., the number of physical restraints, hospitalizations, staff injuries, youth injuries, staff turnover, law enforcement calls, runaway episodes). Data were collected from the full population of DCF licensed group homes and shelters. The regional licensing teams facilitated the assessment following the existing annual re-licensure timeline for residential group homes.

The purpose of the inter-rater reliability study of the GCQSA was to evaluate whether the instrument provides a consistent representation of quality across raters. Inter-rater reliability (IRR) and inter-rater agreement (IRA) are used to determine whether a measure provides a consistent representation of a construct regardless of who is completing the measure. Licensing teams from five service regions (Central, Northwest, Southeast, Southern, and Suncoast) participated in the study. The Northeast region has only one licensing specialist and, therefore, was ineligible to participate. However, the aim is to provide information that is generalizable across the state. In each region, at least six group homes were assessed by two raters using the GCQSA.

### *Key Findings*

- ◆ To examine convergent validity, correlations between GCQSA scores and single item indicators were examined. All correlations were positive, moderate to large, and statistically significant, providing strong overall evidence of convergent validity. The final results support that the GCQSA scale scores provide a valid measure of quality residential care.
- ◆ The median number of past year incidents (i.e., program-level indicators) were low. However, the mean number of certain types of incidents varied considerably by program, including calls to law enforcement to intervene, youth runaway episodes, and staff turnover.
- ◆ Several mean GCQSA domain scores demonstrated negative, small to moderate correlations with program incidents, which suggests higher quality ratings within certain domains are associated with fewer incidents occurring at the program-level.
- ◆ Most consistently across domains, programs that had higher scores on the quality standards reported significantly fewer youth hospitalizations, law enforcement calls, staff turnover, and runaway episodes. Quality ratings were not associated with physical restraints, staff injuries, or youth injuries. Overall, these results support programs with practices that more consistently align with the quality standards experience fewer incidents, providing further evidence supporting the validity of the GCQSA scores.
- ◆ Among the five forms of GCQSA, most domains showed acceptable IRA. Therefore, the IRA findings lend support for aggregating ratings from multiple raters of the same title to provide a composite score on quality of residential care. The strong IRA between licensure specialists lends support for having one licensure specialist rate each residential program.

### *Next Steps*

To date, the GCQSA represents the most rigorously developed and tested assessment of quality for residential care. The project is on-track to meet the legislative mandate to complete the Statewide

Accountability System by July 2022. During the FY2021-2022 project phase, the project team will collect outcomes data from a sample of youth in residential care to examine correlations with quality standards. This analysis identifies which standards are most strongly related to helping youth achieve positive outcomes in residential care. In addition, the project team will focus on finalizing the GCQSA (e.g., scoring, reporting, interpretation) and developing and testing the statewide accountability system.

### **Kinship Navigator Programs**

In FY 20-21 the Department of Children and Families funded phase III of the ongoing Inventory of kinship practice in Florida (Kinship Project Phase III), allowing the Institute to continue research and evaluation of kinship practices. For Phase III, the Institute had two primary objectives: complete a manuscript with Children’s Home Network and begin the evaluation of Kids Central, Inc.’s Kinship Navigator Program.

The Institute sought to work directly with Children’s Home Network on the development of a child outcome-related manuscript to assist in their pursuit of gaining a Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse (Prevention Services Clearinghouse) rating of *promising*, *supported*, or *well-supported* evidence. However, during this project there were unanticipated barriers related to data availability. The Department and the Institute agreed to a different objective: the development of a generic evaluation plan framework to determine the readiness and capabilities of a program seeking recognition from the Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

#### *Objective 1: Generic Evaluation Plan Framework*

A generic evaluation plan framework was provided to the Department in September 2021 as a tool to assess a program’s readiness for an evaluation as well as the rigor of the proposed evaluation prior to funding such an evaluation. It introduces the Prevention Services Clearinghouse recommendations and requirements for assessing programs for review and provides the Department with:

- ◆ A Readiness for an Evaluation form that provides a checklist for determining areas of strength and areas of improvement prior to an evaluation.
- ◆ A detailed description of the requirements of evaluations, subdivided by research-related headings.
- ◆ A checklist to determine the strength of a submitted evaluation plan and the areas needed to improve the evaluation plan based on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse recommendations.

#### *Objective 2: Kids Central, Inc. Evaluation*

With the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and creation of the Prevention Services Clearinghouse, it has become critical that kinship programs have strong evaluations to determine the effectiveness of services. Kids Central, Inc. implemented their kinship navigator program in 2010, though it has undergone adaptation and revision since that time. The Institute collaborated with Kids Central, Inc. in Kinship Project Phase II to develop an evaluation plan based on the current functioning of the program. That evaluation plan was submitted to and approved by the Department. During FY20-21, as part of Phase III, the Institute began the evaluation, utilizing a mixed methods approach for the process evaluation (to determine functioning) and an experimental design for the outcome evaluation (to determine effectiveness). The evaluation aims to answer the following questions:



- 1) What are the differences in...
  - a. **Child safety** for children placed in kinship care families receiving the kinship navigator program compared to children placed in kinship care families receiving services as usual?
  - b. **Child permanency** (stability of placements) for children placed in kinship care families receiving the kinship navigator program compared to children placed in kinship care families receiving services as usual?
  - c. **Adult well-being** (emotional and mental health) for kinship caregivers receiving the kinship navigator program compared to kinship caregivers receiving services as usual?
  - d. **Referrals** for kinship care families receiving the kinship navigator program compared to kinship care families receiving services as usual?
- 2) How likely are kinship care families that are referred to services **accessing** those services among kinship care families receiving the kinship navigator program compared to kinship care families receiving services as usual?

Recruitment for the evaluation began in March 2021, with eight staffers and five kinship caregivers recruited into the process evaluation for semi-structured interviews and focus groups, respectively. There are currently 38 participants enrolled in the outcome evaluation. To ensure adequate power for statistical analyses, the Institute recommends recruitment continue until a minimum of 200 kinship caregivers are enrolled.

#### Process Evaluation Preliminary Findings

Staff indicated that one of the most utilized services was ACCESS Florida benefits and suggested that obtaining these benefits requires technological savvy, with case managers often assisting kinship caregivers with the application process. Peer support was another identified need of families, with both short-term and ongoing support groups being highlights for the kinship caregivers.

Staffers noted that connecting with families was critical to the success of the kinship care family, with the case managers providing support and direction during the visits. However, staff also noted the burden of some of the programmatic tasks are related to assisting the kinship caregiver, particularly the volume of paperwork necessary during each visit. Some staff indicated a need for either more case managers or specific personnel to assist with the more technical tasks (e.g., ACCESS benefits). Still, the staff overwhelmingly held the perspective that the program was functioning well.

Only one focus group with caregivers has been completed at this time, thus preliminary results are not yet available.

#### Outcome Evaluation Preliminary Findings

Only 9 of the 38 currently enrolled cases have completed baseline data; therefore, preliminary outcome results are extremely limited. Recruitment should continue through at least September 2022 to ensure a sufficient number of cases enroll in the evaluation. Preliminary results were provided to the Department in September 2021 to present a snapshot of the assessments and provide a sense of what should be expected to be included in the report on baseline measures. At this time, results cannot be utilized to assess program effectiveness, as this is not a representative or complete sample.



Of the nine cases with baseline data, four are enrolled in Tier 1 (services as usual) and five are enrolled in Tier 2 (enhanced kinship services). Almost all the kinship caregivers seem to feel generally unsure of what services to use, suggesting the need for guidance from case managers or kinship care navigators. Regarding demographic information, every kinship caregiver was able to provide health insurance for their relative child. One caregiver did not have insurance for themselves. The majority had at least one other adult who lived in the home and most kinship caregivers noted having at least one person they can rely on for some form of support. However, only half of the caregivers noted that the other adult in the home assisted in the care of the relative child.

Regarding adult well-being, the majority of the kinship caregivers were concerned for their personal health in the last year, with about half of the kinship caregivers feeling frustrated because they did not know how to work within the systems (i.e., medical care, insurance, assistance with utility bills). Though frustrated, all nine of the kinship caregivers reported having a good relationship with their relative child. The majority felt that it was rewarding to raise their relative child and they were able to cope with the stress and responsibilities of their role as kinship caregiver. Most kinship caregivers reported feeling like they were doing a good job of raising their relative child. Each of the nine kinship caregivers reported feeling like they were doing what is in the best interest of their relative child and reported that they looked forward to spending time with their relative child. However, the majority of the kinship caregivers felt at least some fear that their relative child would make poor life choices.

### COVID-19 Workforce Disruptions: Implementation Drivers to Promote Change, a Follow-up Study on Child Welfare Workforce Retention

In October 2019, the lead community-based care (CBC) agency in Circuit 10, Heartland for Children, convened a task force to address high turnover rates among their case management staff. A research team from the University of South Florida assisted the task force with the following three study objectives:

- 1) provide a comprehensive literature review on staff turnover of child welfare organizations
- 2) investigate the turnover rates at the Community Based Care lead agencies across Florida
- 3) develop protocols used to gather information about the retention and turnover for child welfare workers.

During the time USF conducted the study on turnover, the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the way child welfare workers provided their services, which highlighted the need for a follow-up study. The Institute funded this follow-up study, the purpose of which was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on workforce disruptions in Circuit 10. The present phase of the study consisted of an archival study, a survey, and listening sessions. The archival study explored existing resources and supports to child welfare during disruptions. The survey identified existing considerations (pre-COVID-19) influencing the child welfare workforce. The listening sessions were conducted with case managers, supervisors, and leadership in child welfare to better understand disruption and turnover.

#### Key Findings

- ◆ There are no standard policies or procedures guiding the virtual and in-person work during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◆ There are sporadic incentive strategies in place to improve culture and climate.
- ◆ Internal and external communication flows are inconsistent.

Researchers recommend:

- ◆ building foundational infrastructure for virtual and in-person policies and practices
- ◆ designing, implementing, and evaluating an incentive program to improve culture and climate
- ◆ developing and implementing communication flows to improve important relationships with the system and with external stakeholders.

#### *Next Steps*

The Institute has been involved in several projects in which the impacts of COVID-19 on health and human services and the child welfare system in particular. In addition to the present project, the FSPSF team previously explored COVID-19 workforce impacts (*Examining the Health, Economic, and Professional Impacts of COVID-19 on Health and Human Service Workers*). COVID-19 service impacts also emerged in the most recent evaluation of Florida’s Early Childhood Courts. In Fall 2021, the Institute plans to establish an affiliate workgroup to triangulate findings and consider potential implications for policy and practice.

### **Human Trafficking**

The Institute began collaborating with DCF to validate the Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST, Tool) in 2017. In Summer 2019, our team completed psychometric testing with the HTST using a non-random sample of 248 completed assessments from disparate areas of Florida. Ultimately, the Tool was unable to be validated due to lack of reliability. We suggested that with additional screener training, subsequent data collection, and new analyses, validation is possible. With that, in 2020, we collected qualitative data to explore screeners’ interpretation and implementation of the Tool. Interviews were completed in Spring and Summer 2020. Focus groups were conducted in early Fall 2020.

#### *Preliminary Findings*

Qualitative data analyses are in progress. Anecdotally, in both interview and focus groups, participants shared similar critique of several items—primarily around sexual maltreatment. Participants also shared the different ways in which they use the Tool to contextualize their responses, which may help us uncover why some screeners would respond “yes” to an item while another would say “no.” These are areas we will explore further in nuanced analyses. These preliminary findings, as well as an update on project progress, were shared with the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability in May 2021.

#### *Next Steps*

Although progress on this project has been slower than anticipated, the Institute is committed to the investigation of this important topic. Once data analyses are completed, a report will be provided to both the Department of Children and Families as well as the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

At this time, given the promising psychometrics of the Tool, we anticipate our recommendations will be primarily training-related, with a suggested course of action for follow-up data collection and analysis to re-assess reliability.

## SECTION V: UPCOMING RESEARCH

### Priority Research Awards

In FY20-21, the Institute established Priority Research Awards. Two awards are granted following a competitive request for proposals each spring. Proposals must be relevant to the annual priority topic identified by the Institute and have clear potential for impacting policy or practice recommendations. In Spring 2021, the Institute released the inaugural request for proposals for research on supporting foster youth and young adults for success. We solicited proposals that emphasized strengths-based approaches and incorporated youth voice when feasible. The review committee evaluated proposals for significance, innovation, approach (e.g., sound methodology), degree of strengths-based orientation, inclusion of youth voice, team capacity, and clarity. Two awards were granted for \$50,000 each, with project periods running from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

### A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services

The life experiences of youth in foster care, such as separation from parents, family, and friends; changes in their school or community activities; and threats to their mental well-being due to experiences prior to or during foster care,<sup>9,10</sup> reinforce the need for strengths-based and empowerment-oriented approaches when working with this population. Research suggests that youth who have transitioned out of care may struggle with mental health, economic stability, ability to form healthy relationships, and academic or occupational success.<sup>11,12,13</sup> To better facilitate transition toward adulthood, attention to youths' needs and their active engagement in planning prior to exiting care is a priority.

The purpose of this participatory action research (PAR) research study is to examine the experiences of youth in foster care who are receiving independent living services in Southeast Florida. Using photovoice methodology, youth will be asked to explore their feelings and experiences with: (a) self-advocacy, (b) self-determination, and (c) connectedness to others. These three focus areas were developed collaboratively through multiple conversations between child welfare caseworkers, administrators, and youth in foster care in Southeast Florida as a means to address the gaps in independent living services and needs of youth in care. The findings of this research will be shared with child welfare administrators and professionals with the intent of translating youths' voices in ways that will enhance future independent living services in the areas of self-advocacy, self-determination, and connectedness. In addition to the benefit of informing potential practice, legislation, and priorities for independent living services, primary implications of this study include 1) self-advocacy and empowerment for participating youth; and 2) achieving community change through social action.

Community engagement platforms to facilitate youths' voice being heard is designated as a core deliverable of the research process. A primary and unique platform option has also been developed in collaboration with the Florida Atlantic University's Theatre Lab in the College of Arts & Letters. Theatre Lab @Center partners with organizations serving at-risk youth to put concerns of today's youth in the most prominent position they have—theatre. This partnership provides an opportunity for the perspectives, photographs, and recommendations created by youth in the study to become the material for a devised piece of theatre developed and performed by a student theatre company in conjunction with professional artists to create a deeper community understanding of the lives and experiences of youth in care. Community stakeholders (e.g., judges, caseworkers, administrators, foster parents,

teachers, service providers, etc.) will be invited to attend to hear and receive youths' stories through this medium and engage in dialogue about direct practice and policy implications. Contingencies to preserve this platform are in place to accommodate COVID-19 safety protocols.

This project is being led by Florida Atlantic University affiliates Drs. Marianna Colvin (Co-Principal Investigator), Morgan Cooley (Co-Principal Investigator), and Heather Thompson (Co-Investigator), along with their colleagues Dr. Heather Howard and Jill Carr. A final report will be submitted to the Institute by June 30, 2022.

### Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) provides funds for states to mitigate poor maternal and child outcomes among early parents. Maternity homes, one mitigation approach, receive FFPSA funds; However, little is known about the operation and impact of maternity homes in Florida. The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to gain knowledge about maternity homes for pregnant and parenting young mothers in Florida and their impact on maternal and child well-being. Prominent stakeholders invested in promoting family and child well-being identify the need to examine services for pregnant and parenting teens,<sup>14</sup> including the disproportionate sub-population of young mothers aging out of care.<sup>15</sup> This project responds to these calls that have thus far been left unanswered.

The project has three aims: 1) to describe the program models, services, and target population served in maternity homes in Florida, 2) to document the services that maternity home residents receive and how these services contribute to maternal and child wellbeing after program exit, and 3) to gain insight into mothers' and providers' experiences with maternity homes and perceptions of service impact within the context of young mothers' lives. To complete the aims, the researchers are using a multi-tiered, mixed methods approach by convening a stakeholder advisory panel, conducting program reviews, surveying former maternity home residents, and interviewing both maternity home providers and former residents. Findings can inform service delivery through providing a descriptive picture of current services, associations between service receipt and outcomes, and an understanding of how and why young mothers receive the services that they do.

This project is being led by Florida State University affiliates Drs. Melissa Radey (Principal Investigator) and Shamra-Boel Studt (Co-Principal Investigator). A final report will be submitted to the Institute by June 30, 2022.

### Affiliate Award for Translational Research

#### A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida

Comfort calls are one part of the Statewide Unified Plan developed from Florida Statute 409.1415.<sup>16</sup> Comfort calls are facilitated phone calls made by a child welfare agency representative and foster parent/kin/fictive kin caregiver to the birth parent(s) within 12-48 hours after a child is removed from their home. These calls are intended to: 1) comfort children; 2) initiate early conversation between foster caregivers and birth parents with the intent to establish a positive coparenting relationship from the beginning of the placement; and 3) share pertinent information about the child's needs as they begin out-of-home placement.

These calls represent a statewide priority and legislative mandate that partnerships between birth and foster caregivers are important and beneficial. Implementation research is needed to examine the process

of how comfort calls are implemented into real world child welfare practice settings with existing practices and multiple, often complex, priorities in meeting the needs of families. Effectiveness research is needed to examine whether comfort calls are perceived as meeting the initial goals of Florida Statute 409.1415.<sup>16</sup> The results of this initial implementation-effectiveness evaluation will be used to enhance future comfort call implementation and evaluation efforts and staff training in the Southeast region of Florida, and results will be shared with all regions in Florida. The investigators also plan to work with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) to examine the long-term impact of comfort calls in the future. It is hoped that this project will provide pilot data on initial implementation and effectiveness, as the investigators plan to use this pilot data to seek future funding with the hopes of increasing the knowledge base and scalability of comfort calls.

This project is being led by Florida Atlantic University affiliates Drs. Morgan Cooley (Principal Investigator), Heather Thompson (Co-Investigator), and Marianna Colvin (Co-Investigator), along with their colleague Dr. Heather Howard. A final report will be submitted to the Institute by November 30, 2021.

## **SECTION VI: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING**

### **Office of Early Learning**

Building on work begun under contract in 2019, the Office of Early Learning contracted with the Institute in July 2020 to investigate and address race equity issues at a coalition level. While the initial plan was for the technical assistance to be provided on location with the coalition staff, COVID-19 restrictions required that the consultations be provided via Zoom. Three racial equity consultants met monthly with 12 early learning coalitions to educate staff about historical foundations of racism, implicit and explicit bias, and culturally responsive practices and decision making using an equity lens for changing policies. The consultants guided the coalitions to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Co-creating guiding principles and values for collaborative relationships
- 2) Increasing awareness among early learning coalitions' leadership of racial inequity in their own lives and work
- 3) Clearly defining and understanding the multiple dimensions of racism
- 4) Identifying how individual racial identity development impacts positions of power
- 5) Co-creating a racial equity vision and strategy/plan

A process evaluation was conducted to determine preliminary perspectives from coaches and program participants on the feasibility, tolerance, and value of engaging in a racial equity coaching program. Data collection tools included participant assessment and feedback surveys, focus groups, interviews, monthly check-in calls with and observational reports from coaches. The data, at this phase of the program, was used to increase responsiveness of the program to meet emergent participant and coach needs. Participants provided feedback on their experiences, allowing coaches to employ strategies that met individual group's needs; the coaches' feedback allowed the Institute to assess existing resources and make adjustments to support successful implementation.

Short-term outcomes and progress toward program goals were also assessed. This was achieved through thematic analysis of all participant and coach qualitative data collected through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other Year 1 data collection tools. A post-assessment was also distributed to assess any

group-level changes regarding racial attitudes, openness to challenging conversations, and social advocacy. The culmination of these activities was a list of recommendations for improving future iterations of the program concerning implementation and evaluation.

### Key Findings

The formative and process evaluation of this program evinced several notable findings about successful implementation of a race equity coaching program in ELC organizations. Among these findings was the almost universal sentiment among participants about the value of having conversations about race and racism within their organizations and the desire to affect change in their regions. Ultimately, the goal is to create these types of conversations in child welfare agencies. The following are insights that emerged from this evaluation:

- ◆ **Building community & trust among organization members is at the center of race equity progress.** The coaches began by helping ELC groups build trust and rapport amongst each other and with the coach before embarking on the work of co-creating a race equity plan and vision. Those groups with early signs of stronger group cohesion expressed a readiness for action earlier than those with tension and distrust.
- ◆ **Diversity adds depth and value to the conversations.** Groups that had diverse racial and ethnic representation shared the value of hearing from one another to gaining and adopting a new perspective. At the same time, diverse groups pose challenges for maintaining safety and promoting healing in these conversations, as the experience of talking about race and racism differ between white participants and participants of color. Therefore, it is important that this work is facilitated by skilled leaders with the awareness and capacity to engender equity of voice in diverse groups.
- ◆ **Foundational knowledge & shared language are critical to preparing for action.** ELC workgroups required a shared understanding of systemic racism and its history, as well as race-equity terms and definitions to build the foundation for co-creating a race equity vision and plan for their organization.
- ◆ **Sustainable change is a process, not a one-size-fits all strategy.** Through the learning and building community process that occurred over this first year of the program, the coaches were able to help organizations assess race equity in their organizations and co-create preliminary strategies for addressing issues salient to their specific organizations. As the program progressed, the process of evaluating race equity and developing responsive strategies looked different for each ELC based on their assets and interests.

### Next Steps

The Institute will endcap this work by publishing a clearinghouse of resources and tools to help organizations understand what long-term race equity work entails. This resource guide is meant to provide a summary of existing information, resources, and tools, as well as contact information for professionals with knowledge of child-serving systems in the state of Florida and the expertise to facilitate organizational race equity work.

## Selfless Love Foundation

In 2019, the Florida Coalition for Children and the Selfless Love Foundation (SLF) launched the One Voice IMPAACT (OVI) engagement seminar, which encouraged foster youth to use their “voice” to make changes for current foster youth.<sup>17</sup> In 2020, OVI became an independent initiative directed by the SLF with the aim to continue to promote youth voice and engagement across Florida. Specifically, OVI aims to provide opportunities for these youth to meaningfully participate and be heard regarding foster care policy and practice.<sup>18</sup>

Believing that successful youth engagement may improve youth outcomes, the SLF approached the Institute regarding the development of an evaluation plan of their initiative. Following multiple meetings with SLF leadership, the Institute developed a mixed-methods formative evaluation plan aimed to discover the current functioning of the OVI initiative. A formative evaluation would gather evidence regarding the initial short-term and intermediate outcomes, as outlined in the OVI logic model. The findings could guide the SLF in adjusting functioning, as necessary, as well as provide a foundation for a more in-depth summative evaluation.

## Family First Prevention Services Act

### Webinar Series

The Institute partnered with [Alia Innovations](#) to provide a [four-part webinar series](#) on employing innovative strategies as Florida implements the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Topics covered by the training include: rethinking how to keep children safely with their parents, managing organizational change, creating a trauma-competent organization, and the role of leadership and healing. Over 150 people attended each of the first three webinars. Attendees were professionals from community-based care lead agencies (42%), DCF (18%), providers (8%), Institute affiliates and partners (12%), and 20 percent were from other entities. Sessions were held monthly starting in July; the fourth webinar session will be held October 26, 2021.

### Targeted Technical Assistance

The Institute, as a collaborator with the Florida Department of Children and Families, contracted with two experts from the University of South Florida to provide technical assistance to the Department (regional and state), community-based care lead agencies and their stakeholders, to identify gaps in FFPSA implementation and provide or link to appropriate supports to assist. Beginning October 2021, the facilitators will work with CBC regional teams to develop prevention plans complementary to the overall Florida FFPSA State Plan. Technical assistance will be customized to the needs of the local lead agencies and DCF regions with a focus on expanding IV-E eligibility, reimbursement models, basic understanding of the FFPSA, cost benefit analysis of evidence-based program implementation, and creative funding and resource development mechanisms to ensure sustainability. The experts will work with existing DCF teams to ensure compatibility of message and open communication.



## Training Webinars

### Community Participatory Action Research: An Approach for Co-Creating Youth and Parent Leadership, and Agency

The Institute's research agenda for FY 2020-2021 centered around racial equity. One of the Institute's research awards provided funding for the Children's Services Council of Broward County to conduct a Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) project to address racism and its resulting racial disparities in the system. Using equitable practices, the CPAR project connected child welfare professionals with the community members they serve along with researchers from the Children's Services Council.

The CPAR project was transformative for the parents involved in the child welfare system, transition age youth, system professionals, and researchers. Their collaboration resulted in increased leadership and agency for the youth and the parents who helped co-identify and co-create several systemic improvements for the child welfare system. A panel of transition age youth, parents, and system professionals who worked together as co-researchers provided a webinar attended by 58 participants to learn how they might conduct a similar project in their communities.

### Microaggressions

The Institute is committed to investing in racial equity research and educating ourselves and our stakeholders to make organizations more inclusive and strive to achieve greater racial equity. To this end, the Institute engaged Shanna Katz Kattari, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, to conduct two webinars focused on microaggressions for Institute staff and stakeholders.

## Racial Equity Technical Assistance for the Institute

Zuleka Henderson, Ph.D., LMSW, engaged with the Institute in anti-racism and cultural healing training sessions. Institute staff attended workshops with Dr. Henderson to learn and apply strategies for conducting personal and organization antiracist assessments. Institute team members are forming and working in affinity groups and consulting with Dr. Henderson to achieve our established antiracist and organizational goals. This work will continue into 2022.

## Annual Symposium: Supporting our Foster Youth and Young Adults for Success

The Institute hosted our fourth annual research symposium on May 26 and 27, 2021. The topic, *Supporting Foster Youth and Young Adults for Success*, was explored by expert speakers, panelists, and child welfare professionals who discussed programs, services, and resources available to assist our youth and young adults as they transition to independent living after they turn 18. Both days featured a panel of youth and young adults with lived experiences who shared their voices to provide the audience with information and perspectives for symposium attendees to consider integrating into their work. The first day's theme was Building Relationships—speakers discussed academic research and initiatives about relational permanency and the importance of having a consistent and committed adult in a young person's life. Day 2 focused on how to help young adults access services and provided an overview of the programs and services offered by the Department and community-based agencies. For more information about the symposium along with linked resources, visit the [FICW website](#).



## Institute Podcast Series

In 2020-2021, the Institute published two seasons of our podcast series, *Season 2: Re-Imagining Child Welfare through Technology and Innovation* and *Season 3: Perspectives on the Family First Prevention Services Act*. Both seasons are available on the Institute's Apple Podcast, SoundCloud, Spotify, and YouTube accounts.

The second season premiered in January 2021. It had five episodes which featured guest speakers who are visionary leaders in child welfare. These experts discussed how different topics in technology, creativity, and collaboration are changing and innovating child welfare practice:

- ◆ Episode 1: Innovations to Enhance the Frontline
- ◆ Episode 2: How the Assessment Response Team Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness in Case Management
- ◆ Episode 3: A Deeper Look at how Community Participatory Action Research Includes Parent and Youth Voices to Improve Child Welfare
- ◆ Episode 4: Social Worker-Client Relationship in the Digital Age
- ◆ Episode 5: CaseAIM: Reimagining the Future of Foster Care

The third season recently finished airing in September 2021. Guests discussed how the FFPSA will impact Florida's frontline professionals and families in four episodes:

- ◆ Episode 1: Overview of the Family First Prevention Services Act
- ◆ Episode 2: How will the FFPSA Change my Work with Families?
- ◆ Episode 3: Revisioning Residential Care Services for Children and Youth: FFPSA and the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment
- ◆ Episode 4: Collaborating in Order to Meet the Evaluation Criteria of the Title IV-E Clearinghouse

Episodes in season two and three have been listened to nearly 4,000 times across Institute platforms. Listeners are primarily from the United States (with a majority in Florida), but 6 percent of all listeners are international (most commonly from Canada, Germany, the UK, and Australia).

Editing of the fourth podcast season on connecting transition age youth to resources is underway; episodes will premiere in January 2022.

## Institute Contact Information

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## SECTION VII | APPENDICES

### Appendix A | Institute FY 2020-2021 and Projected 2021-2022 Budgets

The Institute received a \$1 million appropriation for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Additional funds (\$504,987) were awarded to the Institute via contracts with the Office of Early Learning, ZERO to THREE, and the Department of Children and Families. The Institute had \$186,989 in unspent E&G funds at the end of the budget period. For FY 2021-2022, FSU released the seven percent statutory reserve per section 1011.45 Florida Statutes that was previously held in carryforward funds back to all colleges, institutes, centers, and departments. A spending plan has been submitted to the Board of Governors to use the anticipated carryforward balance of \$250,956 to fund a portion of the building renovation necessary for the Institute’s forthcoming expansion.

**Table 1: Fiscal Year 2020-2021 E&G Budget**

| <b>Operating Budget (Salaries, OPS, Expenses)</b> |                 |                                      | <b>\$879,516</b>   |
|---|-----------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
|   | <b>Expenses</b> | <b>Available Balance at year end</b> |                    |
| Salaries  | \$468,213       | \$37,256                             |                    |
| OPS   | \$97,590        | \$35,724                             |                    |
| Other Expenses                                    | \$174,338       | \$40,260                             |                    |
| <b>Research and Evaluation</b>                    | \$128,376       | \$73,749                             | <b>\$202,125</b>   |
| <b>Total E&amp;G Budget</b>                       |                 |                                      | <b>\$1,081,641</b> |

**Table 2: Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Funded Research and Evaluation Projects**

| <b>Project Name</b>   | <b>Award Dates</b>         | <b>Award Amount</b> | <b>Principal Investigator/<br/>Affiliate</b> | <b>University/ Organization</b>     |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Racial Equity Training for the Office of Early Learning <sup>1</sup>  | 7/15/20<br>to<br>6/30/2021 | \$267,703           | Jessica Pryce                                | Florida Institute for Child Welfare |
| An Assessment of Quality Standards for Florida's DCF Licensed Residential Group Homes <sup>2</sup>                            | 7/1/20<br>to<br>6/30/2021  | \$105,955           | Shamra Boel-Studt                            | Florida State University            |
| Inventory of Kinship Care Practices <sup>2</sup>  | 1/1/21<br>to<br>9/30/21    | \$87,284            | Anna Yelick                                  | Florida Institute for Child Welfare |
| Zero to Three: Evaluation of Florida's Early Childhood Court <sup>3</sup>   | 1/1/21<br>to<br>9/30/21    | \$150,000           | Lisa Magruder                                | Florida Institute for Child Welfare |
| A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida   | 6/1/21<br>to<br>11/30/21   | \$10,000            | Morgan Cooley                                | Florida Atlantic University         |
| A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services | 6/1/21<br>to<br>6/30/22    | \$50,000            | Marianna Colvin                              | Florida Atlantic University         |
| Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination   | 6/1/21<br>to<br>6/30/22    | \$50,000            | Melissa Radey                                | Florida State University            |

<sup>1</sup> Funded by OEL

<sup>2</sup> Funded by DCF

<sup>3</sup> Funded by Zero to Three

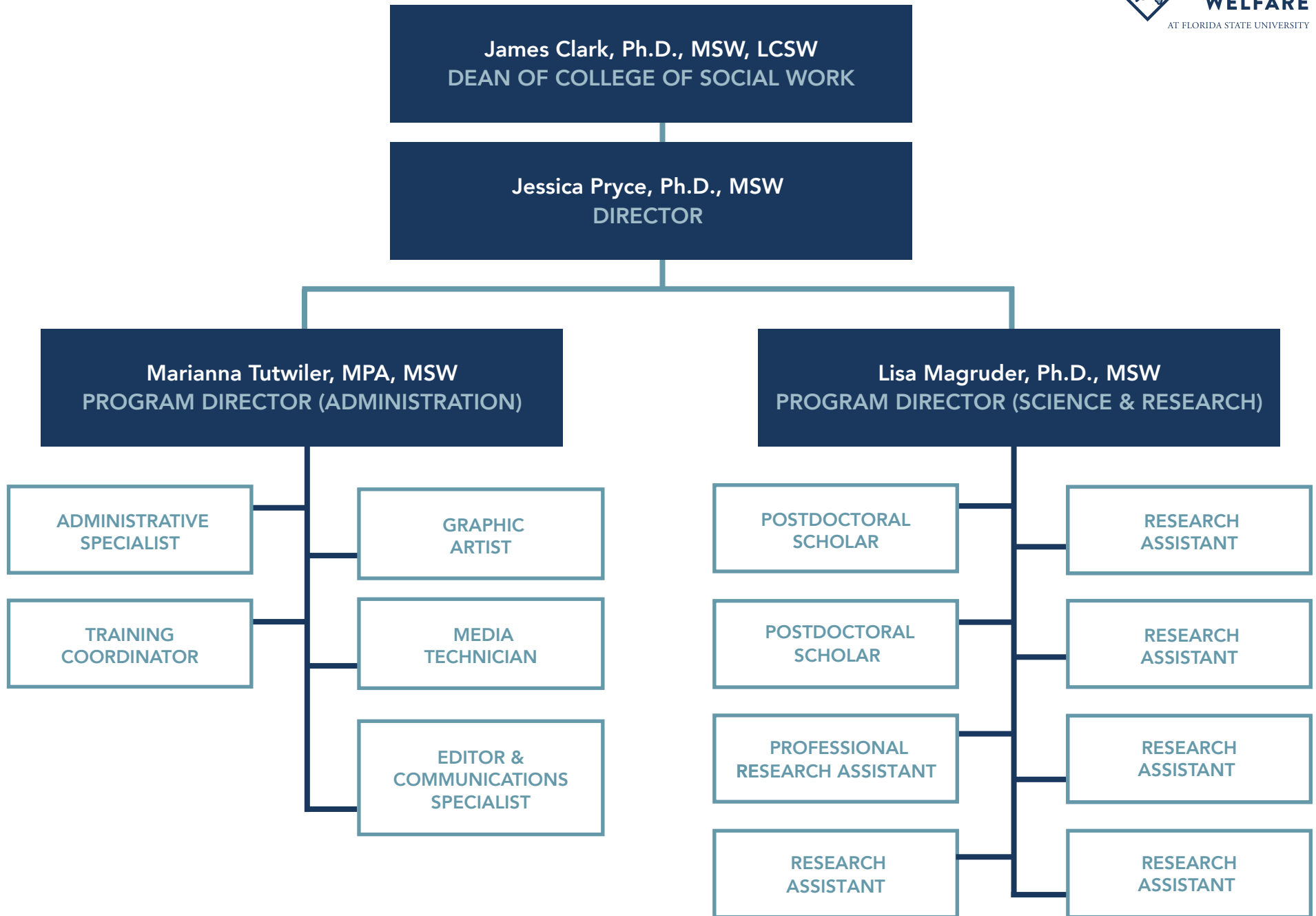
|  |                          |          |               |                             |
|--|--------------------------|----------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Preliminary Investigation of Mindfulness-Based Training for Child Welfare Workers  | 12/1/20<br>to<br>5/31/21 | \$5,886  | Teri Saunders | Heartland for Children      |
| COVID-19 Workforce Disruptions: Implementation Drivers to Promote Change, a Follow-up Study on Child Welfare Workforce Retention | 3/15/21<br>to<br>9/30/21 | \$13,265 | Riaan Van Zyl | University of South Florida |

**Table 3: Fiscal Year 2021-2022 E&G Budget**

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>Operating Budget (Salaries, OPS, Expenses)</b> | <b>\$11,130,488</b> |
| Salaries  | \$1,046,557         |
| OPS   | \$ 456,298          |
| Other Expenses                                    | \$3,455,000         |
| Emergent Research/ Evaluation                     | \$1,752,000         |
| SB 1326 GROW Center Programming and Evaluation    | \$4,420,633         |

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

2021

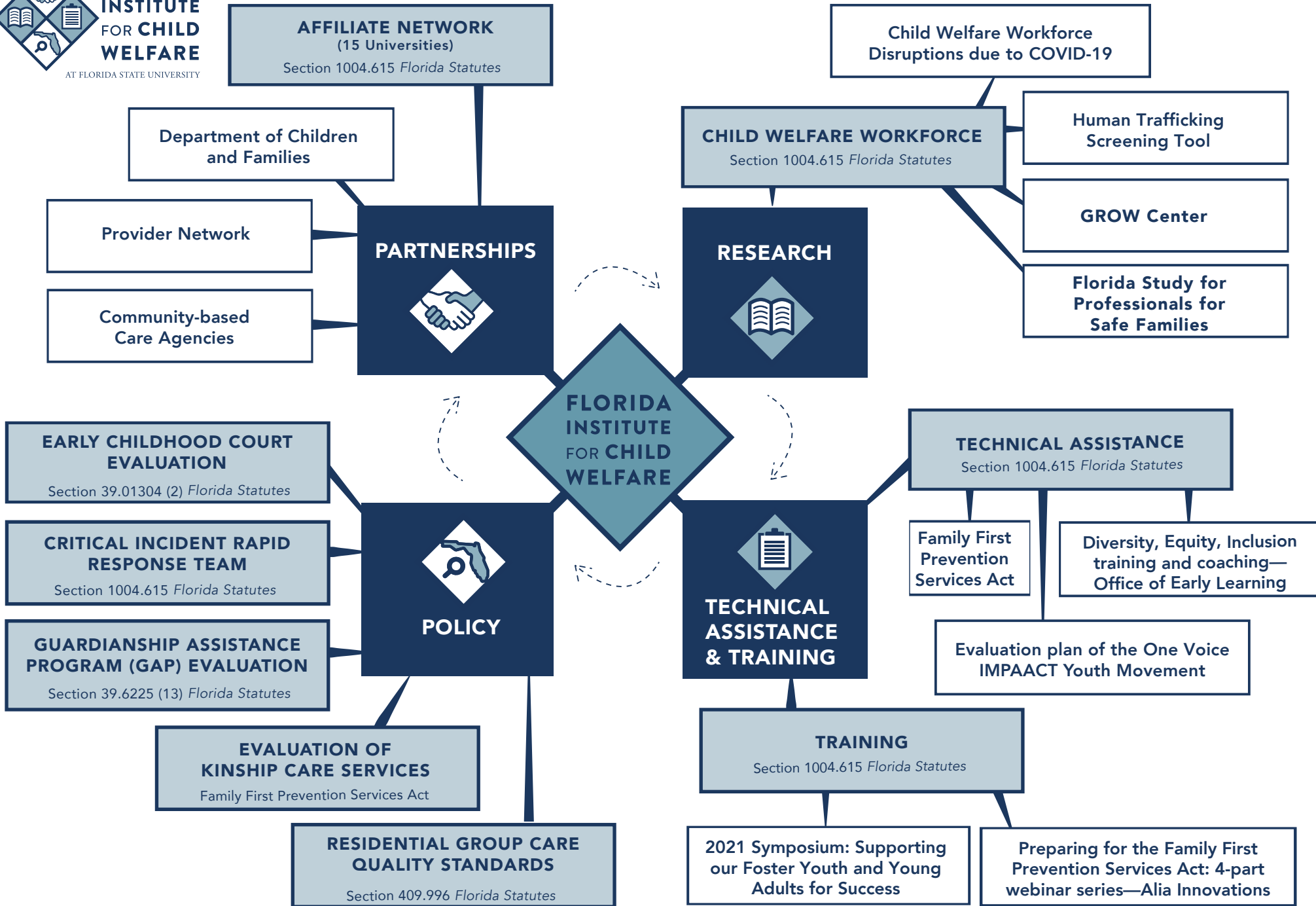


# FFY 2020-2021 Activities



**FLORIDA  
INSTITUTE  
FOR CHILD  
WELFARE**

AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



## Appendix D | Contributions by Institute Affiliates

Below is an accounting of our affiliates' many meaningful contributions.

**Dr. Shamra Boel-Studt**, Florida State University, leads the Quality Care Standards for Residential Group Care project. She is co-Principal Investigator on the Priority Research Award project *Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination*. In addition to serving on the FFPSA workgroup, she was a guest on the Institute's podcast episode *Revisioning Residential Care Services for Children and Youth: FFPSA & the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment*.

**Dr. Michael Campbell**, St. Leo University, served on the FFPSA workgroup.

**Dr. Marianna Colvin**, Florida Atlantic University, is co-Principal Investigator on the Priority Research Award project *A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services*. She is Co-Investigator on the Affiliate Award for Translational Research project *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*.

**Dr. Morgan Cooley**, Florida Atlantic University, was a member of the FFPSA workgroup. She is Principal Investigator on the Affiliate Award for Translational Research project *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*. She is co-Principal Investigator on the Priority Research Award project *A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services*. Dr. Cooley also served as a reviewer for the Institute's Dissertation Fellowship Award.

**Dr. Martie Gillen**, University of Florida, was a member of the FFPSA workgroup.

**Chris Groeber**, University of South Florida, was a member of the FFPSA workgroup and will lead the Institute's technical assistance efforts for DCF. He was a guest on the Institute's podcast episode *How Will the FFPSA Change My Work with Families?*

**Dr. Hui Huang**, Florida International University, was a member of the FFPSA workgroup.

**Dr. Michael Killian**, Florida State University, served as co-Investigator on the ZERO TO THREE-funded evaluation of Florida's early childhood courts.

**Khalilah Louis-Caines**, St. Leo University, was a member of the FFPSA workgroup. She also served as a reviewer for the Affiliate Award for Translational Research and the Priority Research Awards.

**Dr. Jennifer Marshall**, University of South Florida, was a sub-awardee on the ZERO TO THREE-funded evaluation of Florida's early childhood court, leading the qualitative subcomponent of the evaluation.

**Dr. Marleen Milner**, Southeastern University, completed an Institute-funded project, *Preliminary Investigation of Mindfulness-Based Training for Child Welfare Workers*, in collaboration with affiliate Teri Saunders (Heartland for Children).

**Karen Oehme**, Florida State University, is leading the development of one of the first Advanced Certification (AdCert) offerings for ALIGN. The Institute for Family Violence Studies will create the Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies Certification (STARS) which will be a 30-35 hour interactive course, with checkpoints for advancement into virtual reality and in-person training.

**Dr. Melissa Radey**, Florida State University, continued as co-investigator of the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families. She is also Principal Investigator on the Priority Research Award project *Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination*.

**Dr. Karen Randolph**, Florida State University, is a member of the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement team and will serve as the formative evaluator for the program. She was a guest on the Institute's podcast episode *Social Worker-Client Relationship in the Digital Age*.

**Dr. Kim Renk**, University of Central Florida, contributed ideas to initial planning of the GROW Center's reflective supervision and consultation strategy.

**Teri Saunders**, Heartland for Children, collaborated on projects with Drs. Marleen Milner (*Preliminary Investigation of Mindfulness-Based Training for Child Welfare Workers*) and Riaan van Zyl (*COVID-19 Workforce Disruptions: Implementation Drivers to Promote Change, a Follow-up Study on Child Welfare Workforce Retention*).

**Dr. Lisa Schelbe**, Florida State University, served as a reviewer for the Priority Research Awards.

**Dr. Heather Thompson**, Florida Atlantic University, is Co-Investigator on the Priority Research Award project *A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services*. She is also Co-Investigator on the Affiliate Award for Translational Research project *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*.

**Dr. Dina Wilke**, Florida State University, continued as Principal Investigator of the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families. She is also a member of the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement team and will serve as the site evaluator for the program's demonstration sites.

**Dr. Riann Van Zyl**, University of South Florida served on the FFPSA workgroup. He was Principal Investigator on an Institute-funded project, *COVID-19 Workforce Disruptions: Implementation Drivers to Promote Change, a Follow-up Study on Child Welfare Workforce Retention*, in collaboration with affiliate Teri Saunders (Heartland for Children).





## Second Quarter of Fiscal Year 2021

### Affiliates Meeting

Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 1:00 PM

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#### Attendees

Leslie Meskin, FGCU

April Steen, Warner

Ann Perko, IFVS

Erin King, UWF

Chris Groeber, USF

Morgan Cooley, FAU

Hui Huang, FIU

Dina Wilke, FSU

Teri Saunders, Heartland

Rene Ledford, CHS

Heather Agazzi, USF

Ying Zhang, Ounce of  
Prevention

Michael Campbell, St. Leo

Marleen Milner, SEU

Marianna Colvin, FAU

Lisa Schelbe, FSU

Heather Thompson, FAU

Shamra Boel-Studt, FSU

Martie Gillen, UF

Karen Randolph, FSU

Michael Killian, FSU

Khalilah Louis-Caines, St. Leo

Marianna Tutwiler, FICW

Jessica Pryce, FICW

Shaniece Green, FICW

Lisa Magruder, FICW

Jai McClure, FICW

Katie Berry, FICW

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#### Executive Updates

Jessica Pryce welcomed the affiliates to the call and provided executive updates. She invited the new affiliates to introduce themselves: Leslie Meskin with Florida Gulf Coast University and April Steen with Warner University.

Jessica followed up with an update on the Workforce Well-being Enhancement initiative. The bill that supported the WWE project was vetoed; however, the Institute has leveraged funding to move forward. We have accomplished a theory of change, thinking about our outcomes and what to focus on whether it is CBC's, the provider network, DCF, etc. We are gathering insight from CEO's, CBC's, and leadership at the DCF and the regional managing directors on how to enhance the WWE. Our aim is still July 1, 2021 for our kickoff date. This spring, the Institute will be having a Request for Applications (RFA) for sites to be a part of the WWE process. Marketing materials will also be available this spring.

Next it was mentioned that the Institute's previous 5-year strategic plan is ending, and we are in the process of preparing the next 5-year strategic plan. Any affiliate who is interested in previewing our draft, please let us know. We want to align our four pillars of partnerships, research and evaluation, policy analysis, and training and technical assistance. The strategic plan will forecast what the Institute will be focused on the next five years. We will send out an email when the strategic plan is drafted completely for preview.

Lastly, Jessica shared that legislative partners are discussing a primary prevention system to identify families and keep them out of the system. Discussions are centered on establishing a demonstration project.

## **Institute Update**

*Marianna Tutwiler* gave an update on the Institute's season two of our podcast series: Reimagining Child Welfare through Technology and Innovation. Season two has officially wrapped up and it consists of 5 episodes. Listen here. <https://ficw.fsu.edu/podcast>. We are also recording a couple for season three for the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

Updates were also given regarding current and new contracts that the Institute is embarking upon. The ZERO TO THREE (ZTT) contract is being constructed from a federal grant for an Early Childhood Court evaluation. This ZTT contract will be launching in January 2021. We have a state grant being continued but with an evaluation for a phase three for the Kinship Navigator Program. We also have a couple of affiliate contracts underway: Marleen Milner and Heartland are piloting a mindfulness project and Dr. van Zyl at USF is looking at the impact of COVID on workforce turnover. We are completing the Selfless Love Foundation contract with Dr. Wynter, and we have completed the final phase of the Guardian Assistance Program (GAP) evaluation with Martie Gillen and Morgan Cooley. Marianna also cited that the USF Pre-Service Training report has been finalized.

## **Affiliate Updates**

*Lisa Magruder* gave a brief update of our current affiliates and their collaboration with the Institute and current projects. She highlighted Dr. van Zyl and his upcoming Covid-19 evaluation project, along with Karen Oehme and her new certification training on Human Trafficking. More updates to come on our next quarterly call. Chris Groeber briefly discussed the technical assistance the Institute is considering providing to the DCF regarding the FFPSA). Afterwards Lisa expounded further on our recent job opening for a Postmaster Fellow and a Professional Research Assistant.

## **Closing**

In closing, along with giving our affiliates the opportunity to express any concerns, needs, and or updates, Jessica gave two more brief updates on our Office of Early Learning (OEL) project and highlighted the Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) with Dr. Sue Gallagher's project.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:35 pm.



## Third Quarter of Fiscal Year 2021

### Affiliates Meeting

Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 11:00 AM

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#### Attendees

Fabio Naranjo  
Kimberly Renk  
Melissa Radey  
Gihan Omar  
Alison Salloum  
Maxine McGregor  
Leslie Meskin, FGCU  
Ann Perko, IFVS  
Morgan Cooley, FAU  
Dina Wilke, FSU

Rene Ledford, CHS  
Heather Agazzi, USF  
Ying Zhang, Ounce of  
Prevention  
Michael Campbell, St. Leo  
Marianna Colvin, FAU  
Heather Thompson, FAU  
Martie Gillen, UF  
Marianna Tutwiler, FICW  
Jessica Pryce, FICW

Shaniece Green, FICW  
Lisa Magruder, FICW  
Jai McClure, FICW  
Katie Berry, FICW  
Taylor Dowdy, FICW  
Emily Joyce, FICW  
Kayla Towle, FICW  
Melissa Murphy, FICW

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#### Executive Updates

*Jessica Pryce* opened the meeting at 11:03, she welcomed the affiliates to the call and went forth with executive updates.

SB 92 and HB1473 are both moving favorably.

HB1473: The Chair of Children & Families sub-committee has a particular interest in youth who are aging out. This bill will ask the Institute to partner with the University of Florida. We will obtain data regarding where these youth are ending up, services they access, and outcome data of where these youth end up as they age out. The US Department of Health & Human Services issued an Information Memo regarding permanency for the well-being of children and youth, that the Florida House Chair & sub-committee would like to emulate for Florida (see attached memo). This report would illuminate what Florida is doing for transition age youth and provide a better understanding of their outcomes. There will also be an evaluation component required in this bill.

SB92: The Florida Legislature would like to build a family well-being system in Jacksonville at the Family Support Services of North Florida (FFSNF). They are a CBC lead agency that is likely to be chosen to “pilot” a family well-being framework. The Senate staff is interested in appropriating funds on a recurring basis, that will be able to build capacity for leadership and that shifts mindsets about primary prevention. The Family First Act will be a huge change in Florida. It aims to prevent youth that are coming into our system from entering traditional foster care. SB92 is taking a slightly different approach.

It will compliment Family First, but the goal is to determine what can we do upfront. How can we keep biological families together and strengthen families, so they never come into our system to begin with? SB92 is allocating monies to meet these goals. Jessica has been tasked to speak with the House to propose a corresponding bill. They have already identified a non-profit that is reporting this work, changing mindsets, and pulling money to the upstream of our system and strengthening families. Jessica is collaborating with them to get more information about outcomes work they have already accomplished and will provide that to the House.

Jessica stated that last year's appropriation that was almost funded for systematic efforts through Florida's child welfare system, is up again for potentially \$5-10 million that would be reoccurring. This will afford the Institute to begin the initiatives that were designed a year ago and to do work mentioned above. Session is nearing its end for this year and then the governor reviews the approved bills and budget. The Institute is cautiously optimistic.

Jessica next gave an update on the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement (AWE) initiative previously known as Workforce Well-being Enhancement. AWE is a capacity building initiative that is set to launch from the Institute. The Institute is currently in design mode, and the team has been meeting since July 2020. The plan is to design a leadership academy for organizational capacity. Within the next month or so we hope to share our logo, get conversations started, and set an official launch date. The AWE initiative has been patterned after the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute and their workforce excellence sites. They have been very integral in helping with the design of the AWE initiative.

## **Institute Update**

*Marianna Tutwiler* gave updates for the Institutes 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium and the Annual Affiliate's meeting.

The Florida Institute for Child Welfare 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium will be virtual this year. It will be split into two half days. 12 pm to 4 pm on May 26 and 8:30 am to 12:30 pm on May 27. This year's theme is "Supporting our Foster Youth and Young Adults for Success". The Institute's primary focus this year with the symposium, is all about the transition age youth and how we can support them.

Day 1 (May 26, 2021) is geared towards relational permanency. Dr. Greeson will convey the use of her research on relational permanency. Eric Pritcher from Foster Club will speak about how to create a permanency pact to support youth. The National Association on Council for Children & Families will talk about adolescent brain science and how to engage youth. Pat O'Brian will be our keynote speaker for the first day.

Day 2 (May 27, 2021) is about the resources available to assist transitioning youth. Cal Walton, the Department of Children & Families Statewide Independent Living Specialist, will be a speaker. Dr. Elizabeth Wynter, the Executive Director of the Selfless Love Foundation, will moderate a youth panel as well as host a workshop. Other workshop hosts will be Kerri Flynn from Embrace Families, and a co-hosted research workshop with Dr. Schelbe and Dr. Jackson. Lexie Grober, an advocate, author, and motivational speaker with lived experiences, will be the Closing Keynote speaker for the second day.

Marianna announced that the recipient of our child welfare priority research award will have the opportunity to present at the symposium on what their research will entail. Also, the Institute's 2021 recipients of the Child Welfare Professionals awardees will be announced.

The annual affiliates meeting that is normally tacked on with the NASW conference will not happen this year. This year's annual affiliates' meeting will be held virtually and is tentatively set for June 10. During this meeting we are hopeful that we will be able to give a positive update regarding the legislative bills mentioned earlier. We will also be reaching out for potential presenters from our affiliate community for the annual meeting this year.

## Affiliate Updates

*Lisa Magruder* relayed updates on research project opportunities, affiliates, MOU's, and current and future staffing opportunities.

- The application period has closed for FICW's Transitional Research Award and the Priority Research Award. The plan is to notify all the applicants with in the next few weeks with a start date for the projects to begin June 1.
- The Institute is accepting rolling applications for affiliates as we are always interested in recommendations for new affiliates. Applications are reviewed bi-annually in March and September.
- Lisa informed affiliates that it was time to renew MOU's. This year, the plan is to do renewals for a two-year period. If the two-year extension is inconvenient or there needs to be a change in representation, please email Lisa at [lmagruder@fsu.edu](mailto:lmagruder@fsu.edu). A Qualtrics survey will also be sent for any affiliates profile changes and or updates.
- The Institute is currently seeking a Post-Doctoral Scholar. The closing date for this opportunity is May 11. The Institute also has future openings that will be ongoing for Research Assistants and Dissertation Fellowships. For more information regarding these opportunities, visit [ficw.fsu.edu](http://ficw.fsu.edu), click on the "About the Institute" tab, then on "Join Our Team".

## Open Mic

- Fabio Naranjo with Barry University was acknowledged as an affiliate who joined the meetings for the first time.
- Morgan Cooley drew attention to a call for proposals for Adolescents & Social Workers Journal, where she is an editor. They will be seeking soon an Ad-hoc Reviewer. If you are interested, please reach out to Morgan at [cooleym@fau.edu](mailto:cooleym@fau.edu) for more information.
- Rene Ledford talked about the CHS read a book campaign that they currently have going. It is a program where volunteers read a children story via video that will be posted to social media, as a service to families. If anyone is interested in volunteering to read, please refer to the flyer attached to the email.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:31 am.



## Sixth Annual Florida Institute for Child Welfare

### Affiliate Meeting

June 10, 2021

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#### Attendees:

John Sheetz  
Karen Randolph  
Chris Groeber  
Yolanda Machado-Escudero  
Marleen Milner  
Riaan van Zyl  
Martie Gillen  
Rene' Ledford  
Khalilah Caines  
Teri Saunders  
Kimberly Renk  
Amy Rubinson

Michael Killian  
Heather Agazzi  
Anna Yelick  
Fabio A. Naranjo  
Morgan Cooley  
Erin King  
Melissa Radey  
Heather Thompson  
Fabio A. Naranjo  
Maxine McGregor  
Martie Gillen  
Hui Huang

Marianna Colvin  
Gihan Omar  
Jessica Pryce  
Katie Berry  
Colleen McBride  
Kasey Longley  
Michae Cain  
Emily Joyce  
Marianna Tutwiler  
Melissa Murphy

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#### Welcome and Introductions

*Dr. Pryce* welcomed everyone to the call and proceeded to provide updates of legislative priorities.

#### Legislative Updates

The Institute has had an annual appropriation of 1M for each of the last 5 years. However, with a recent legislative recurring appropriation, the Institute will be operating with an \$11M budget annually. This new additional appropriation will significantly change the mission and vision of the Institute. The Institute is seeking collaborative partnerships to co-create the new focus and implementation of the intent of SB 1326. Senate Bill 1326 has a three-pronged approach. The first approach is a Curriculum Re-design which will incorporate a problem-based learning pedagogy. We are seeking early partners from other Florida universities to assist with the development of the curricula. This curriculum redesign will be initiated at the FSU College of Social Work and then piloted to other Florida schools of social work. The second approach is a child welfare professional development network which will provide a comprehensive support system to Florida's child welfare workforce. This development network will offer professional certification, specialized training, and coaching support. Once this child welfare professional development network is up and running, Florida will be the first and only state with this

continuous education and supportive network for Child Welfare professionals. The third approach will be a specialized capacity building through targeted technical assistance that is informed by Dr. Dina Wilke and her team from the findings of the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. Both studies have informed the initiative for workforce support now known as the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement (AWE). The intent is to issue a Request for Applications and have the selected CBC lead agency(s) participate in this 3-year process, where they will learn what their challenges are to address. The AWE team will provide targeted technical assistance to find solutions to those challenges.

With this increased appropriation from the Florida Legislature, the Institute is also mandated to fulfill Senate Bill 80. Effective October 1, 2021, with a report due in 2022, the Institute is mandated to evaluate the state's efforts to assist youth in foster care to develop life skills that lead to self-sufficiency in adulthood and to analyze the permanency outcomes for transition age youth in Florida. It is the vision of the Institute to not complete just yearlong research and evaluations, but to think larger and conduct multi-year research and evaluation for multi-year impacts.

### Research Updates

*Dr. Lisa Magruder* allowed time for each Institute funded projects to be briefly described by one of their research team members. Institute funded projects include:

**COVID-19 Workforce Disruption** by Dr. Riaan van Zyl was conducted in Circuit 10, in partnership with Heartland for Children, Children's Home Society, Devereux, and One Hope United. The purpose of this study is to explore the impacts of COVID-19 on workforce disruptions in Circuit 10. The study methodologies are a survey, case study, and archival analysis. No data have been fully analyzed.

**Mindfulness-Based Training for Child Welfare Workers** by Dr. Marleen Milner is a pilot project in Polk County, that partnered with Heartland for Children. The purpose of this project is to investigate whether an abbreviated mindfulness-based training could mitigate the effects of fatigue and burnout on child welfare workers. The findings were not significant due to the low number of participants and COVID disruptions, but data do indicate promising outcomes for further future studies.

**A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida** by Drs. Morgan Cooley and Marianna Colvin. Dr. Cooley noted that this project is the initial stage of research. This study will focus on comfort calls facilitated with a child welfare worker, foster caregiver, and birth parent(s), with the child(ren) being involved in that call when possible. Recent statutory changes require the inclusion of birth parents in case planning and early partnership between foster care parents and birth parents. This study will look at what is the satisfaction with this call that is to take place within the first 12 to 48 hours of the child(ren)'s removal from their birth parent(s) and moved to the foster care home or kin home. Another part of this study looks at the implementation of these calls, and how the case workers felt they were trained and prepared, and how they felt the comfort calls were structured.

**Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Method Examination** by Drs. Melissa Radey & Shamra Boel-Studt. Dr. Radey shared that this project began in June 2021 and stated that the study will provide a descriptive picture of how many maternity group homes there are, their effectiveness, and what is occurring in the homes with respect to services being provided. Using Qualtrics, young mothers who have left a maternity group home whether through graduation or their own volition will be surveyed. The analysis will survey the services they received and collect outcome



data. Qualitative interviews will also take place with previous mothers of these home and providers of these homes to collect data for what is going right and what may need to change for better progression within group homes in Florida.

**A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services** by Drs. Marianna Colvin and Morgan Cooley. Dr. Colvin shared that this project is in its early stages and is focusing on transitioning youth ages 13-17, their experiences and perception of independent living services. This project focuses on three identified areas of emphasis: self-advocacy, self-determination, and connectedness for this transitioning aged population. The research is applying a participatory action research design, using voice methods, photography, and other creative expressions.

Externally funded projects consist of:

**2020-2021 Early Childhood Court Evaluation** by Drs. Lisa Magruder and Jennifer Marshall. Dr. Magruder explained that this is a second part evaluation that focus on the effectiveness of within Early Childhood Court's (ECC) parent child therapeutic modality, focusing primarily on fidelity, by using mixed methods. The contract is funded by Zero to Three and interviews have been conducted with 13 ECC affiliated clinicians across the state to obtain more information on their background, training, their orientation to early childhood court, and their approaches to treatment. The next step is to send out a survey to providers that will seek to determine the fidelity of the mentioned major models in the qualitative data. Dr. Michael Killian is providing a secondary data analysis on Child Parent Psychotherapy related outcomes. Dr. Jennifer Marshall with the University of South Florida is exploring parents' therapeutic networks within Early Childhood Courts. She has been interviewing parents and their identified therapeutic team members.

**Child Welfare Workers' Experiences of Screening for Human Trafficking Victimization in Florida's Youth** by Dr. Lisa Magruder is a follow-up qualitative study. This is a study of child welfare worker screening for human trafficking among Florida's youth. The analysis and interpretation is expected to be completed this summer.

**Kinship Navigator Program Evaluation, Phase 3** by Dr. Anna Yelick and partnering with Kids Central, Inc., have recruited 22 cases to determine the functionality and effectiveness of the Kids Central's kinship navigator program. This information is collected from the kinship caregivers, focus groups, and staff interviews. Targeted outcomes are based on the requirements of the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. This study began in March 2021 and more findings will come in the next 18-24 months.

**Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Coaching and Training Program Evaluation** Dr. Pryce is the PI and Dr. Katie Ropes Berry serves as the evaluator for this Office of Early Learning contract. This three-year project involves twelve Early Learning Coalitions (ELC) across the state and utilizes both formative and process evaluations. The formative evaluation looks at what are the barriers and strengths of the racial equity coaching. How the coaching activities impact participants' personal and professional growth is also being evaluated. There is a monthly check-in with the three coaches of these 12 ELC's to better gauge how the groups are progressing. Some lessons learned through this study are that messaging is important, ELC leadership needs to be meaningfully engaged, and that diversity adds depth and value to the conversation about race and racism.



## Affiliate Network Development

Lisa welcomed and introduced the Institute new affiliates.

- Christine McCauley Ohannessian, Ph.D.
  - Florida State University | Family & Child Sciences
  - Department Head/Chair and Professor
- Amy Rubinson, Ph.D.
  - Educate Tomorrow, Chief Program and Research Officer
- John Sheetz, MSW, FCWP
  - Florida State University | College of Medicine
  - Trainer
- Derrick Stephens, LCSW, MBA
  - Florida State University | College of Medicine
  - Researcher

Dr. Magruder provided a brief update of the 2021 affiliate survey, where 24 surveys were completed. Along with mentioning upcoming opportunities for affiliates, opportunities such as curriculum re-design, longitudinal research awards, and emergent research and evaluation funding were discussed. Affiliates were given the opportunity to provide any updates for their own research and evaluation.

Wrap up, closing remarks were given and Dr. Pryce adjourned the meeting at 2:17 pm.



## Fourth Quarter of Fiscal Year 2021 Affiliates Meeting

Thursday, September 16, 2021 at 1:00 PM

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### Attendees

Kimberly Renk, UCF  
Melissa Radey, USF  
Gihan Omar, Citrus  
Alison Salloum, USF  
Maxine McGregor, UCF  
Jennifer Marshall, USF  
Derrick Stephens, FSU  
Ann Perko, IFVS  
Morgan Cooley, FAU  
Dina Wilke, FSU

Marleen Milner, SEU  
Riann van Zyl, USF  
Khalilah Caines, Saint Leo  
Erin King, UWF  
Chris Groeber, USF  
Rene Ledford, CHS  
Michael Campbell, St. Leo  
Marianna Colvin, FAU  
Heather Thompson, FAU  
April Steen, UCF

Karen Randolph, FSU  
John Sheetz, FSU  
Martie Gillen, UF  
Michael Killian, FSU  
Marianna Tutwiler, FICW  
Jessica Pryce, FICW  
Lisa Magruder, FICW  
Colleen McBride, FICW

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### Executive Updates

Jessica Pryce opened the meeting at 11:02. She shared with affiliates a draft of a one-page write-up on the GROW (Greater Resilience of the Workforce) Center, a workforce development initiative which will address all components of SB1326. Jessica noted that FICW is searching for a director for the GROW Center and invited affiliates to contact the institute if they had recommendations for individuals who might suit the role.

The GROW Center will be housed at FICW and will cover three areas of workforce development: social work curricula redesign, leadership development, and workforce enhancement.

1. The first component, *Innovating the Learning Experience*, is a project that will redesign child-welfare curriculum, changing how child welfare is taught to students. The project will start at FSU's College of Social Work (in partnership with USF); Jessica encourages other universities to participate in the redesign. The goal is to distribute the new curriculum statewide.
2. The second component, *Supporting the Professional*, will be accomplished through ALIGN (Advance, Learn, Innovate, Grow, Network). ALIGN is an online learning-management platform where students and professionals will be able to track certifications and trainings in which they participate through the GROW Center. This will be a cornerstone of our vision of supporting child welfare professionals throughout their careers.

3. The third component, *Transforming the Workplace*, will be addressed through the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement (AWE). The AWE initiative will partner with CBCs and public agencies, as well as sheriff departments, over a three-year period. During this partnership, AWE will conduct an organizational health assessment, assist in strategic planning, and provide robust leadership training. AWE will also provide well-being and resiliency workshops for members of the partner agencies.

Jessica shared a draft of the GROW Center's logic model.

- Situation: high turnover and burnout rates; limited social and intellectual capital within the professional workforce; a lack of professional support; insufficient leadership training
- Inputs: Staff, consultants, DCF and CBC leadership, providers, academic affiliates, infrastructure, funding
- Activities: Sustaining academic partnerships around curriculum redesign, offering training and technical assistance to agencies, creating pathways to leadership, providing mentoring and coaching opportunities, cultivating partnerships between FICW and DCF/CBCs
- Participants: Students, frontline professionals, managers and supervisors, members of the broader child welfare workforce
- Outcomes
  - Short-term: increased connection and communication between individuals
  - Intermediate: increased professionalization and organizational well-being
  - Long-term: improved child welfare workforce that ultimately has positive repercussions for children and families

Jessica asked for feedback from affiliates on the one-pager and the logic model:

- Derrick Stephens suggested including DCF leadership as “participants” within the logic model. Jessica suggested that offering professional supports and leadership training to this group could be a long-term goal of the initiative.
- Rene Ledford asked whether the AWE team would be partnering with CBCs that offer case management. Jessica mentioned that an organization must serve as a “lead applicant” to the AWE program and that the lead applicants will bring their partners along with them. Case management agencies are not currently permitted to be lead applicants, but the vision is that they will be partners with adjacent CBCs.
- John Sheetz asked about whether ALIGN would use existing child welfare curricula and/or align the new learning-management platform with existing professional-development systems. Jessica noted that DCF has indicated that they are interested in trying to streamline these systems.
- Derrick Stephens asked about the involvement of people with lived experience in the child welfare system. Jessica noted the importance of consulting with such individuals in the development of the GROW Center and suggested that members of this group may serve on advisory committees. Additionally, the GROW Center team could include people with lived experience (e.g. as trainers).

## Institute Update

*Marianna Tutwiler* noted that 60 – 65 percent of FICW’s annual appropriation will be put towards the GROW Center and that the remaining percentage will be put towards the research and administration teams. The Institute anticipates doubling our size within the next six months, growing from 14 staff to 28, and then expanding to a staff of 35-40 within the next 18 months. The research team will expand to include more researchers, research assistants, and an assistant director of research. Planned additions to the administrative team include an accountant, contract manager, and administrative assistants. We will also be developing and formalizing a communication team. To accommodate this planned growth, Marianna is working with the facilities department to renovate a 10,000 square-foot space for our use.

We have several curriculum contracts underway. Our advanced certification programs will be 10-11 months long and will be both synchronous and asynchronous (each program will have both in-person and e-learning components). Planned certification program topics include trauma and resilience, substance-use disorders, domestic violence, and mental health.

## Affiliate Updates

*Lisa Magruder* updated affiliates on research and evaluation activity at the Institute. Much of our research work will be focused on the GROW Center, particularly the outcomes mentioned in the logic model. We will be undertaking evaluations of each of the components outlined in SB1326, as well as any technical assistance and training activities that the Center develops. Lisa invited affiliates who are interested in assisting with research related to the GROW Center to contact her.

We are evaluating life skills training programs for youth transitioning out of care, as mandated in SB80. A statewide evaluation of permanency outcomes will also be conducted.

Lisa welcomed two new postdoctoral scholars. Michael Henson graduated from Wayne State University, and will be working on the life skills evaluation and the AWE evaluation. Hyunji Lee joins us from the University of Pittsburgh; she will be starting with the Institute in October.

We have just finished an evaluation of early childhood courts. We are finishing Phase 3 of a kinship program evaluation.

We anticipate providing an affiliate award for translational research. The award will be open to affiliates’ particular areas of expertise, although we will be focusing on any connections to the topics related to the GROW Center. The RFP for the award will be released at the end of September or in early October.

Lisa asked affiliates to send her any updates to their directory pages if they have not done so already.

## Open Mic

- Maxine McGregor asked whether and how suicide prevention training could fit into pre-service training. She pointed out that many frontline workers are unprepared to address suicide, and that youth aren’t necessarily getting the prevention services they need. Several other affiliates concurred. Jessica agreed and mentioned that that could be part of the ALIGN initiative.
- Derrick Stephens shared a link to a promotional documentary for his nonprofit organization that works with foster youth, Underdog Dreams.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 pm.

## Appendix F | Institute Dissemination Activities

The Institute continues our efforts to publicly disseminate information on topics related to child welfare issues and vulnerable families, with a focus on translating in-house research as well as recently published data pertinent to our affiliates and stakeholders. This year, we increased our reach across all of our platforms—directed email campaigns, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), digital publications, streaming (YouTube, SoundCloud, Apple Podcasts, Spotify), and via our website—and increased direct engagement through expanding our podcast audience and training session enrollment.

This year, we also started publishing executive summaries for our more complex research projects (a short summary of the most important findings drawn from project final reports) and began a strategic planning process to update our website to improve usability and transparency.

### e-Newsletters

Over 1,300 people receive our electronic newsletters: *Monthly Matters* and *Institute Insights* (distributed quarterly). *Monthly Matters* highlights important Institute news (about research, our affiliates, upcoming Institute events/opportunities) as well as relevant opportunities and information from other child welfare organizations in Florida and nationally (including ways to get involved, webinars, events, calls for research, etc.). *Institute Insights* provides updates on important Institute news, affiliates' accomplishments, a research topic of note, special topics for considerations, calls for proposals, and legislative updates.

There was a three percent increase in subscribers since last year (from 1,000 to over 1,300) and the Institute has sent out over 27,000 emails. Notably, the click-through rate (which measures contact engagement) on *Monthly Matters* and *Institute Insights* is 21 percent, which is 6 percent higher than the expected industry standard of 15 percent.

An archive of *Institute Insights* is available on our website: <https://ficw.fsu.edu/newsletter-archive>

### Social Media

Our reach on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram continued to grow during FY20-21. The Institute utilizes these platforms to provide direct information and social sharing with the child welfare workforce. Various content is incorporated into dissemination across these platforms, such as updates on Institute news and opportunities for engagement or involvement, news articles, videos, podcasts with subject matter experts, and newsletters.

Over the last year, the Institute's Facebook account had a reach of 13,153 (the number of people who saw any content from our page) and our Instagram account had a reach of 350. In addition, our follower demographics diversified—while 94% of our total Facebook audience (729 page Likes) is from the United States, 6% of our followers are international (from nine additional countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Nigeria). Our Instagram page, newly created in September 2019, now has 188 followers.

The Institute's Twitter account had over 16,600 impressions (number of times users saw a Tweet), was mentioned (tagged) nearly 100 times in other tweets, had nearly 2,700 profile visits, and had a 16 percent increase in the number of followers.

### Publications

The Institute's efforts to disseminate digital publications has also greatly expanded in reach. Over the last year, the Institute published 35 documents, including:

- 9 reports
- 1 BriefLit
- 2 Research Briefs

- 3 Executive Summaries
- 5 Infographics
- 15 additional resources (including Institute Insights, podcast transcripts, marketing documents, calls for research, etc.)

These digital documents were read 4,180 times; 55 percent of our reads were from documents directly embedded on our website (indicating direct Institute website visits) while 45 percent were accessed through outside links on the Institute's Issuu.com account (@fsuchildwelfare; through social media and newsletter shares). This represents a 195 percent increase in number of reads over the previous year (2,141 reads).

In addition, over the past year the Institute's digital publication readership diversified internationally, with nearly 12 percent of our reads coming from outside of the US (with top readership from Canada, the Philippines, and India).

The Institute's publications had 18,695 impressions (the number of times our publications were linked to on the Issuu network); an increase of 196 percent from the previous year. The number of publication clicks (number of times readers clicked a link included in a publication; indicates engagement) increased 210 percent.

### Digital Streaming

Seasons two and three of the Institute's podcast series was the focus of our streaming dissemination efforts. Please see the Technical Assistance section for additional information about reach.

### Direct Dissemination

Efforts to directly disseminate and translate knowledge/information to our stakeholders was accomplished by hosting several trainings and our annual symposium. Please see the Technical Assistance section for additional information.

## Appendix G | Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to the mandated workgroups, the Institute serves on additional workgroups in order to participate in discussions relevant to our work, stay connected with stakeholders, and provide technical assistance if needed.

### Statewide Interagency Workgroup

The program director of administration attended and represented the Florida Institute for Child Welfare at the Statewide Interagency Workgroup monthly meetings for the past five years. This Workgroup reports to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet and operates under the Cabinet *Interagency Agreement to Coordinate Services for Children Served by More Than One Agency*. This Agreement is a multi-level approach to resolve complex needs of children that are unable to be resolved by traditional multi-disciplinary teams. The Agreement focuses on children who are involved, or at risk of becoming involved, in more than one agency system and utilizes Local, Regional and State Review Teams to assess and resolve needs.

The Statewide Interagency Workgroup is comprised of state-level representatives from eight child serving agencies that could be involved in a dependent or delinquent child's care and provision of services. Additional representatives include the Executive Office of the Governor, SEDNET, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator. Since 2016, the Workgroup created a statewide infrastructure to resolve cases that involve multiple agencies or are complex, established a standardized process for case escalation, and established agency expectations for sharing protected health information and cost sharing.

In 2019, the Workgroup developed a more sophisticated mechanism to capture data about the number of youth and their characteristics who were reviewed by the local and regional teams. From July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, there were 1,844 local review team staffings for a total of 618 unduplicated children. Most were male (58%) and white (60%) and most were in the physical custody of their parent at the time of staffing. Seventy-nine percent of the total unduplicated children staffed had prior involvement with DCF abuse investigations. In addition, 38 percent had an open DJJ case and 40 percent had an open DCF investigation.

There were 258 lockout youth staffed with a local, regional, or state review team. 183 lockouts were resolved by the initial or follow-up staffing, and 165 of the 183 resolved lockout youth were diverted from entering the child welfare system. A total of 372 youth had case resolution during the fiscal year. Of the 258 lockout youth:

- 105 had mental health issues
- 82 were DJJ lockouts
- 33 were post adoption lockouts
- 31 were "other"
- 7 were Florida Network (CINS/FINS) lockouts.

The Workgroup is currently updating the 5-year Interagency Agreement for 2022-2027.

### Dependency Court Improvement Panel

As an extension of her work on the Early Childhood Court (ECC) evaluation, Dr. Lisa Magruder served as an Institute representative on the ECC Recidivism Protocols Workgroup. This workgroup, led by Judge Alicia Latimore (9<sup>th</sup> Circuit) and coordinated by Leigh Merritt with the Office of Court Improvement (OCI),

is part of the Dependency Court Improvement Panel. The goal of the workgroup was to develop protocols to address recidivism (i.e., re-removals) within ECC cases. Dr. Magruder's role on the workgroup was as one of several writers who provided substantive content to the protocols. Dr. Magruder also met with Leigh Merritt and her colleagues at OCI to discuss ways in which they can best capture data for future analysis efforts. The DCIP unanimously voted to approve the protocols in May 2020.

### Prevention Advisory Council

In the spring of 2021, Chris Lolley, Director of the Prevent Child Abuse Florida (PCAFL), convened Florida's first Prevention Advisory Council. The goal of the council is to increase public understanding, ownership, and investment in child abuse prevention and advocate for needed resources to achieve the goals of preventing abuse and neglect, promoting child well-being, and strengthening families. The council will make recommendations to Prevent Child Abuse Florida related to strategic planning and implementation, advocacy, training, evaluation, and funding of PCAFL's programming. Along with numerous other Florida stakeholders, the Institute's Program Director of Administration serves on the Council to represent the Florida Institute for Child Welfare.

This group of experts not only includes representatives from state agencies but critically, those of parents, of youth served by the system, and of those closest to the people providing the services as well. The PCAFL intends to have this workgroup remain informed on the latest initiatives, plans, and goals for pushing the envelope of primary prevention, equipping parents for the often-difficult job of parenting, and in guiding efforts to transform Florida's system of care into a "Child and Family Well-being" system as opposed to a Child Welfare system.



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