

**FY 2021-2022**



**FLORIDA  
INSTITUTE  
FOR CHILD  
WELFARE**

AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



College of Social Work  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida

# ANNUAL REPORT

**Submitted to:**

Governor Ron DeSantis  
Wilton Simpson, *Senate President*  
Chris Sprowls, *Speaker of the House*

October 1, 2022



# FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS



PARTNERSHIPS



RESEARCH & EVALUATION



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & TRAINING



POLICY ANALYSIS

**October 1, 2022**

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



**FLORIDA  
INSTITUTE  
FOR CHILD  
WELFARE**

AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

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, expenditures, and research and evaluation efforts for FFY 2021- 2022. The Institute experienced an expansion this past year through Senate Bill 1326, and this report describes the strategies currently underway to address the mandates tasked to the Institute. We also provide research-informed recommendations for improving and enhancing child welfare practice and programs. Additional highlights in this report include a focus on partnerships, engagement with the Department of Children and Families, and strides in research.

In addition to our established affiliate network, a specialized advisory committee (the GROW Center Advisory Committee) was convened of child welfare experts around the state. Members will serve three-year terms and provide non-binding strategic guidance and advice to us as we execute the components of our new mandates. These partnerships assist the Institute by providing relevant workforce initiatives and robust research to inform child welfare policy and practice throughout the state.

Earlier this year, the Institute advised and offered our support to the Department on issues related to their child welfare pre-service training overhaul, and the Family First Prevention Services Act implementation, including technical assistance and training throughout the regions.

Our team continues to make strides in research in multiple areas, including topics related to the child welfare workforce, youth and young adults within the system, and the exploration of the needs of young mothers in maternity homes. Our research team led components of the work mandated in Senate Bill 80, which explored life skills and other supports for the youth and young adults who are aging out of our foster care system.

In addition, we hosted our annual symposium in May, which centered workshops across four tracks: preparation, recruitment/onboarding, workforce well-being and support, and organizational efforts.

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**

# 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, 2021 through September 30, 2022. The purpose of this report is to present the implementation efforts to date for our current mandates and ongoing research and evaluation work and to provide current research findings and policy and practice recommendations. It also provides an overview of our new mandates as outlined in Senate Bill 1326. Within this report is a summary of the budget expenditures for the state FY 2021-2022, a plan for utilization of carry-forward resources, and a projected budget for next year.

The Institute maintained partnerships with the Department of Children and Families (DCF, Department), sheriffs' offices who administer child protective services, and the community-based care (CBC) lead agencies. The child welfare workforce was already experiencing sustainability challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues. This has re-affirmed the urgency and importance of sustainable enhancements to the overall workforce (preparation/recruitment, professional support and career development, and organizational culture shifts). The Institute designed an approach through the GROW Center with every intention to bridge the gap between strategic initiatives and continuous quality improvement through evaluation efforts.

The investment in child welfare workforce research over the past few years rendered findings which contributed to our GROW Center solutions to the persistent issues within organizations. Since the new appropriation in 2021, the Institute expanded and cultivated old and new partnerships with the overall goal of transforming the child welfare workforce from the **classroom** to **casework** to **developing competent leaders** throughout the state. The next section is a description of the work from this past year and what lies ahead for the Institute, which includes the latest developments of the GROW Center and the research infrastructure we adopted to meet the needs of the desired growth statewide.



## Overall Recommendations

### Equitable Incentivization of Workers in Research and Evaluation

As a research-based Institute that highly regards the lived expertise of those within the child welfare system—youth, families, professionals—we rely on their voice to help inform our work. Especially as we seek feedback from Florida’s busy child welfare workforce, it is important that we compensate them for their time. At present, incentives (e.g., gift cards) may be offered to child welfare employees in private agencies (e.g., community-based care agencies), but not those working at the Department due to gift acceptance ethics. This creates an equity issue, but also hinders our recruitment efforts. For example, in our Alliance for Workforce Enhancement initiative, response rates to the baseline survey were higher at Site 2 (69%), compared to Site 1 (41%); incentives were prohibited at Site 1.

This recruitment challenge introduces potential bias into our studies, as those state workers who agree to participate may not well represent the experiences of the larger population of workers. Though it is true that we are seeking feedback from DCF employees because of their professional experience, participation in studies is not a job responsibility. Further, federal regulations dictate that participation in studies be voluntary. Thus, the Institute cannot compel workers to share their experiences in our studies. Multiple Institute staff and members of our Affiliate Network have voiced incentive-related concerns to Institute leadership.

Though this incentive challenge has always been present, it is now a more acute concern given the Institute’s new mandates that focus on the workforce. The Institute respectfully requests legislative support in ameliorating this issue (e.g., by granting an exception to Ch. 112.313 for state workers participating in Institute-conducted or -funded work).

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## Continued Legislative Focus on Older Youth and Young Adults, to include Incorporation of Youth Voice

In FY 2021-2022, the Institute's priority research topic, in alignment with recent legislation, focused on **supporting foster youth and young adults for success**. As a result, the Institute and its partners conducted multiple studies, with varying nuanced foci, to better understand the current state of support for these youth and provide recommendations for improvement. Overarchingly, the Institute recommends that Florida continue to support and conduct research and evaluation toward best meeting the needs of older youth in care and that youth voice and expertise be included in all new initiatives that impact their care.

### Specific recommendations include:

- ❖ Statewide permanency analyses revealed that older youth, particularly, transition age youth, make up a very small percentage of children who achieve permanency, therefore the Institute recommends a more comprehensive look at the quality and alignment of independent living services programs. [Read more here.](#)
- ❖ Evaluation of Florida's approach to life skills development showed day-to-day efforts are inconsistent. Although expected to lead skill development with their foster youth, caregivers receive different levels of resources, support, and training to do so, resulting in mixed reports of confidence in their ability to support their youth in this way. The Institute recommends the Department and CBCs collaborate to develop a

range of supports for caregivers.

[Read more here.](#)

- ❖ Child welfare-involved mothers struggle to overcome their adverse experiences and transition to independence after exiting maternity homes; therefore, the Institute recommends that extended foster care become more accessible to this vulnerable, two-generation population. [Read more here.](#)
- ❖ Youth report various levels of connectedness and experiences of relational permanence in their interpersonal relationships; yet almost all reported more negative perceptions of relationships with professionals. The Institute intends to address this with professional development opportunities through the GROW Center, though it also recommends the Department incorporate this sort of relationship building in the pre-service revision activities. [Read more here.](#)

To this end, the Institute is currently funding evaluations of several novel interventions for this population, including HOPE Court and Follow the Love, as well as of the FLITE Center and its unique approach to care in the Broward County community. Further, a longitudinal study of youth who transition out of care is under development, with an expected launch of July 1, 2023.

## Collaboration Toward Improved Data Collection Efforts

In FY 2021-2022, several Institute studies required the use of Departmental data and, in each instance, Department representatives were responsive, helpful, and collaborative. Still, data collection, and subsequent data retrieval for analyses, is challenging with Florida's complex system. First, there are numerous data collection mechanisms within and between agencies, and not all relevant information is sent "upstream" to the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). In our collaborations with the DCF, they were unable to provide certain child variables within FSFN due to inconsistent collection. Related, not all data are captured in an easily accessible way. For example, when the Institute undertook the Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST, Tool) validation study, regional partners had to gather and redact hundreds of hardcopy Tools, which then had to be entered into data analysis software. Not only does this process place a burden on our child welfare partners and increase risk of human error when transferring data, from a practical standpoint, this process would indicate that information is not easily available to professionals in the field.

Given our experiences with Departmental data, Institute researchers and affiliates have made data-related recommendations to the Department within individual reports (e.g., conducting quality assurance checks, electronic data collection). In addition, our Institute researchers have made several recommendations regarding new or improved collection of demographic data that could support more nuanced analyses.

The Institute is aware that Florida will eventually be transitioning from FSFN to a new software, Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS), and that data planning and management is a current priority. The Institute appreciates these efforts and would welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on those efforts toward continuing our collaborative partnership with the DCF during that transition.

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# Human Trafficking Screening Tool

Section 787.06, Florida Statutes reads:

*“The Legislature finds that human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. Victims of human trafficking are young children, teenagers, and adults. Thousands of victims are trafficked annually across international borders worldwide. Many of these victims are trafficked into this state. Victims of human trafficking also include citizens of the United States and those persons trafficked domestically within the borders of the United States. The Legislature finds that victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor.”*

As the OPPAGA (2017) report stated, DCF and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) have not fully validated their Tool. It is extremely difficult to identify commercially sexually exploited (CSE) children due to various reasons, yet a validated screening tool would be a good start to providing more accurate data and providing appropriate treatment.

Shortly after OPPAGA's report, in 2017, the Institute began collaborating with the DCF to determine the utility of the Tool. The final report on that work [can be found here](#). Further, in 2019, Institute researchers conducted psychometric testing with the HTST using a non-random sample of 248 completed assessments from disparate areas around the state. Ultimately, the Tool was unable to be validated due to lack of reliability. Therefore, until reliability is established, the tool should not be considered valid. However, the Institute recommended that with additional screener training, subsequent data collection, and new analyses, validation is possible.

Importantly, there are some differences in the Tool and its implementation by DCF and DJJ. Only DCF-administered Tools were included in the initial validation analysis.

In the most recent phase of our HTST work, the Institute conducted individual interviews and small group interviews with DCF designated HTST screeners to better understand their experiences implementing the Tool, including their perspectives and interpretations of the Tool itself. The findings resulted in several recommendations directed toward the DCF, which are [expounded upon in this report](#). The Institute is currently collaborating with the DCF and its partners to support them in making updates to the Tool, as well as screener training. Following implemented changes and new data collection, the Institute could attempt re-validation.

It is important to note that the HTST was initially developed as a conversational guide for screeners, with processes in place to hold follow-up multidisciplinary staffings if a screener indicates that a youth is likely a victim of trafficking, or if the screener is unsure. As screeners shared in the interviews and focus groups, there are a number of contextual factors (e.g., youth's level of cooperation) that could influence how the HTST is completed. For example, if a youth is not forthcoming with information, a screener may report “no” to some indicators, but in their professional judgement, still have concerns about victimization status and note at the end of the Tool that they are “unsure” if a youth is being trafficked.

Per the screeners we spoke to, this should instigate a multidisciplinary staffing of the case, in which further information is gathered to inform the final status (i.e., verified, unsubstantiated, no indicator) and offer appropriate supports to the youth.

Thus, while it is important to continue to refine the HTST and training practices toward Tool validation, the Institute does not recommend that the HTST be used as sole determining factor of youth trafficking victimization at this time.

## Family First Prevention and Services Act – Kinship Care Services

In FY 20-21, the Institute partnered with the DCF on the creation of an Inventory of kinship practice in Florida. As Florida readied for the implementation of the Family First Prevention and Services Act, the Institute set out to assist the Department to have their Kinship Navigator Programs accepted onto the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) and rated as Promising, Supported, or Well Supported, as a rating supports the Florida's ability to drawdown Title IV-E prevention funding. Of note, there are currently no Kinship Navigator Programs that meet criteria for this designation. The Clearinghouse has specific requirements and, due to emergent issues, the State has not been able to be added to the Clearinghouse yet. That goal remains as the Institute continues to assist partners with the requirements, including evaluations and outcome-related published manuscripts.

For child welfare agencies that endeavor to build enough evidence for their kinship services programming, the Institutes offers the following recommendations:

- ❖ Attrition of participants in kinship navigator services was a persistent issue throughout this work; therefore, it is vital that organizations consider this ahead of time and create contingency plans for their evaluation goals. Thorough tracking of study participation—including assignment to groups and attrition—is critical.
- ❖ Consider the use of quasi-experimental designs, While randomized controlled trials are not impossible, practical barriers can arise that obstruct their full execution.
- ❖ Collect appropriate baseline measures to demonstrate group equivalency. Although the Clearinghouse does not require random assignment for a quasi-experimental design, they do require the evaluation of a treatment and a comparison condition.

As Florida organizations work to achieve a promising, supported, or well-supported Clearinghouse designation for their Kinship Navigator programs, the Institute is available for consultation regarding program evaluation.

# Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Institute leadership is currently developing a new, five-year strategic plan. The plan will identify specific goals and objectives that define the vision for our priorities and way of work, as well as measurable strategies to guide our specific activities and decision-making. Further, it will incorporate our expanded emphasis on workforce, while maintaining our position as a research-based Institute. Below are the goals and objectives for the 2023-2028 strategic plan. The full plan will be available on the Institute's website in January 2023.

## Goals and Objectives

### Goal 1 | Remain a data-driven and objective advisor on child welfare related policies and practices:

- ❖ **Objective 1.1** | Provide consistent processes for the rendering of data-informed recommendations and decision making
- ❖ **Objective 1.2** | Curate comprehensive evidence to inform program, policy, and research decisions
- ❖ **Objective 1.3** | Maintain methodological fidelity of all research and all program implementation

### Goal 2 | Increase the statewide and national visibility of the Institute toward becoming a model for collaborative research and programming for the child welfare community:

- ❖ **Objective 2.1** | Establish implementation science as the guiding process for Institute program development
- ❖ **Objective 2.2** | Use strategic communication and outreach to increase Institute engagement with child welfare partners and build support for high quality evidence-informed programs
- ❖ **Objective 2.3** | Cultivate legislative partnerships toward collaborative, iterative policy development

### Goal 3 | Establish the Institute as a learning organization:

- ❖ **Objective 3.1** | Establish implementation science as the guiding process for Institute program development
- ❖ **Objective 3.2** | Use strategic communication and outreach to increase Institute engagement with child welfare partners and build support for high quality evidence-informed programs
- ❖ **Objective 3.3** | Cultivate legislative partnerships toward collaborative, iterative policy development

### Goal 4 | Optimize translational research to inform the systemwide adoption and engagement of new policies, practices, and programs/initiatives:

- ❖ **Objective 4.1** | Evaluate GROW Center workforce initiatives and training opportunities
- ❖ **Objective 4.2** | Center community voice and lived expertise within all phases of research and program development
- ❖ **Objective 4.3** | Cultivate ongoing relationships with partners at the local, statewide, and national level

### Goal 5 | Invest in the child welfare workforce towards sustaining a thriving professional environment with enhancements in job satisfaction, career development, and effective skill utilization:

- ❖ **Objective 5.1** | Enhance child welfare workforce stabilization
- ❖ **Objective 5.2** | Increase professionalization of the child welfare workforce
- ❖ **Objective 5.3** | Enable and promote child welfare leadership development and capacity building



**SECTION II**

**THE  
GROW  
CENTER**

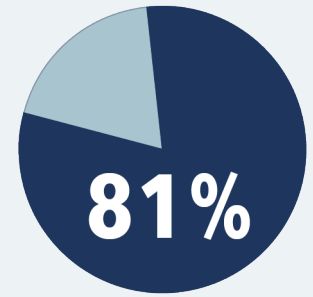


## THE GROW CENTER

The Florida Study for Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF) longitudinal workforce study (2015-2020) rendered findings that serve as a cornerstone of the GROW Center. This study 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 career 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.

The vision of the GROW Center is to prepare and support Florida's child welfare workforce from **CLASSROOM** (Academic Innovation) to **CASE WORK** (ALIGN) to **COMPETENT LEADERSHIP** (the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement). The research analyses conducted in the FSPSF, Residential Group Care Quality Standards, and the Early Childhood Court Evaluation rendered significant findings. Much of the research points to the importance of building professional capacity within our child welfare workforce to meet the complex needs of vulnerable families, supporting the onboarding and hiring process, and investing in ongoing well-being of the workforce.

These and other research findings indicate the need for improved workforce preparation and support. The following section defines the Institute's response to these needs by highlighting the effort and activities of each GROW Center initiative and its Advisory Committee. It also includes insight



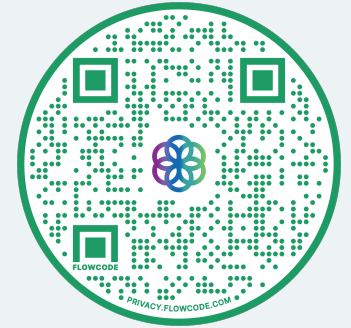
**OF NEWLY HIRED  
FRONTLINE WORKERS  
LEFT WITHIN 3.5 YEARS,  
WITH THE MAJORITY LEAVING  
WITHIN THE FIRST 18 MONTHS.**

### THE GOAL:

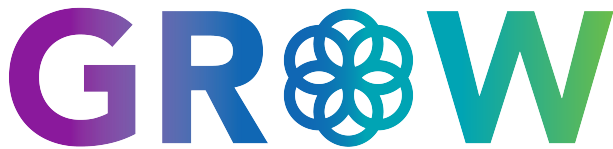
To create a continuum of learning opportunities and ongoing support for college students, recently trained personnel, and middle and upper management positions working in child welfare agencies to enhance learning and build capacity towards meaningful and systemic change within the statewide child welfare workforce.

into additional measures taken by the GROW Center to support the DCF in their efforts to enhance the pre-service training. To this point, the GROW Center expanded its stabilizing initiatives and efforts to not only focus on providing both the Department and community-based care lead agencies professional development resources, but also recommendations for innovating recruitment and preparation.

LEARN MORE:



FLORIDA INSTITUTE FOR CHILD WELFARE



Greater Resilience Of the Workforce

Preparing and supporting Florida's child welfare workforce from **CLASSROOM** to **CASE WORK** to **COMPETENT LEADERSHIP**



CLASSROOM

CASE WORK

COMPETENT LEADERSHIP

RESOURCES:

THE GROW CENTER

Resource	Reach
<a href="#">GROW Center One-Page Overview</a>	Read: 64
<a href="#">GROW Center Logic Model</a>	Read: 195
<a href="#">GROW Center Implementation Plan</a>	Read: 269
<a href="#">GROW Center Logic Model Narrative</a>	Read: 114
<a href="#">GROW Center Website</a>	Page Visits: 2,082
<a href="#">Introducing the GROW Center (video)</a>	Views: 233

## Academic Innovation

To truly professionalize the child welfare workforce, students in social work and other academic programs should be prepared through knowledge gained but also understand the complexities and realities of working with vulnerable families. The Academic Innovation (AI) initiative is working to achieve this through a comprehensive approach: creating child welfare exposure opportunities for students, organizing strategic child welfare engagement events to generate interest and create networking opportunities, and implementing robust instructional innovation across disciplines.

Changes to the curriculum are the initial focus of the GROW Center's Academic Innovation agenda and is being led by the Florida State University (FSU) College of Social Work (CSW) in collaboration with other university affiliates. Child welfare issues will eventually be infused intentionally as a component of all courses through a Problem-based/Case-based Learning (PBL/CBL) teaching method, which is an empirically proven approach to educating professionals working in highly complex systems of care, e.g., health care, law, business. Moving to PBL/CBL pedagogy is a major and transformative re-direction of Florida university social work programs.

The proposed teaching methodology is a focused effort to provide social work and other interdisciplinary students with enhanced real-life training that will better prepare them to engage with the demands of working with children and families in any social work area, but specifically in child welfare. It also seeks to improve the availability and recruitment of well-prepared candidates for the workforce, increasing workforce stability and sustainability through the preparation of resilient and informed social workers.

This curriculum innovation encompasses the implementation and evaluation of an innovative educational approach intended to enhance the preparation and training of students poised to enter the child welfare workforce and engage meaningfully with children and families involved in the child welfare system. To achieve this goal, the two overarching objectives are: 1) design, implement, and



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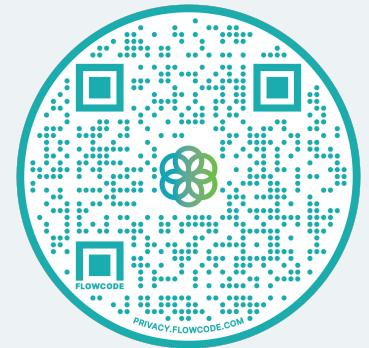
### THE VISION:

Provide students with the necessary skills to effectively navigate real-life practice challenges by transforming the classroom into an engaging and collaborative case-based learning environment that supports the development of advanced problem-solving skills, complex reasoning, ethical decision-making, and student-driven learning.

evaluate an innovative and interactive Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Case-Based Learning (CBL) instructional approaches into social work curricula; and 2) design, implement, and evaluate a shared learning opportunity across disciplines, specifically criminal justice, law, and family and child sciences.

The aim is to enhance the transfer of knowledge gained through teaching to skill acquisition and retention. This can be accomplished by providing pre-service real-to-life case exposure to 1) optimize the development of needed social work skills; 2) strengthen student self-efficacy and resiliency; 3) increase students' motivation to be lifelong learners; 4) improve decision-making and cognitive reasoning skills; 5) enhance their competence to effectively navigate; and 6) address complex family cases and systems.

LEARN MORE:



PRE-SERVICE REAL-TO-LIFE CASE EXPOSURE  
LEADS TO:



**DEVELOPMENT  
OF NEEDED  
SOCIAL WORK  
SKILLS**



**SELF-EFFICACY**



**RESILIENCY**



**MOTIVATION  
TO LEARN**



**DECISION-MAKING  
AND COGNITIVE  
REASONING SKILLS**



**COMPETENCE  
TO NAVIGATE  
COMPLEXITY**

## Highlighted Achievements

Consisting of faculty, staff, students, and individuals with lived expertise, the curriculum innovation leadership team made significant progress in the first year of the project timeline. There were several notable accomplishments and adjustments based on emergent needs. Below are summaries of the first year's highlighted achievements and efforts to build faculty capacity and buy-in. Also included is the vision for the upcoming year with target dates as well as a project concept map.

### Target Dates for Piloting New Courses:

- ❖ Spring semester 2023: SOW 4341 Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families; SOW 5308 Social Work Practice I; SOW 4650/5656 Child Welfare Practice
- ❖ Additional courses will be selected for summer and fall semesters of 2023.
- ❖ See [Appendix E](#) for the Academic Innovation Concept Map for additional information.

During the first year of the project, a faculty leadership team was established to address project goals. The team worked with the FSU Center for Advancement of Teaching (CAT) to discuss the introduction of problem-based learning into the curriculum and to identify pilot courses to introduce this new teaching methodology. This shift in curriculum towards more interactive and interdisciplinary teaching methods was promoted at all faculty meetings during the 2021-22 academic year and was introduced to the Academic Affairs Committee for a discussion of how it may benefit students. Faculty were asked to collaborate in the development of cases that will be used for PBL/CBL in CSW courses. In addition, faculty were invited to participate in PBL/CBL training and were financially incentivized to do so.

Members of the leadership team met individually with faculty to learn about their perspectives and answer questions and concerns as they consider using PBL/CBL in their courses. Members of the leadership team also worked with instructors who will implement the first pilot courses to develop course activities that use PBL/CBL techniques.

The team also worked with CAT to establish project objectives and define project outcomes to be facilitated by PBL/CBL. Partnerships were established with FORECAST (Foundations for Outreach through Experiential Child Advocacy Studies Training), the FSU College of Motion Picture Arts, CapSource, and the Florida Center for Interactive Media to develop educational assets and learning activities that will help facilitate experiential learning for the students. To prepare faculty for the use of this pedagogical approach, two FORECAST training courses were hosted for CSW faculty to gain experience in this teaching method.

### IMPORTANT DATES:

**2023 Spring Semester** - three Social Work classes will be piloted (Social Work Practice with Individuals & Families, Social Work Practice, Child Welfare Practice)

**2023 summer and fall Semesters** - additional courses will be selected for implementation

In conjunction with CSW faculty, the team created 17 cases to support instruction. Through partnerships with the College of Motion Picture Arts and FCIM, these cases are being produced into high-quality videos that will facilitate PBL/CBL for the pilot courses to be offered in Spring 2023. Course activities related to these cases will be deployed in the Canvas learning management system using tools provided by CapSource, a company that specializes in experiential learning opportunities using open cases and live cases to expose students to real-world challenges. Their involvement includes case development, assignment and rubric creation, and live case facilitation.

Finally, the faculty leadership team identified FSU partners for interprofessional collaboration activities for year two of the project and are in the process of establishing memoranda of understanding to ensure expectations, timelines, and deliverables are clearly communicated and agreed on. The initial FSU partners for the interprofessional collaboration are the College of Nursing, College of Education, College of Arts & Sciences—Department of Psychology, College of Criminology and Criminal Justice, and College of Medicine.

## Next Steps

The first three courses will be implemented during Academic Year 2022-2023. The faculty leadership team will collect data and complete a preliminary analysis that compares these classes with classes taught with typical pedagogy. Additional next steps are to adapt three more courses for instructional innovation using PBL/CBL; to complete the filming of long videos for all 17 case studies; to offer additional faculty training; to contract with external evaluators to validate initial evaluation data; and to align all initiatives with the Florida Certification Board (FCB) and the Department's child welfare pre-service training content.

Faculty from at least seven other FSU disciplines will create instructional materials around interprofessional collaboration. These faculty will seek college level approval from their disciplines, while exploring the best way to integrate into their existing curriculum. A lecture series and interprofessional immersion event are also planned outcomes. In 2023, the college plans to use several professional networks, including the GROW Center Advisory Committee and the Institute's Affiliate Network to recruit early adopters of these materials across the state.

Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) focuses on developing students' understanding of the factors that lead to child maltreatment and the currently existing responses to incidents of child abuse and neglect. CAST, with the Zero Abuse Project, offers support and evidence-based learning objectives of curriculum around child welfare. FSU will be a CAST implemented program and is seeking approval in the Zero Abuse Project's certification track. This will make FSU the first approved program in Florida. Discussions are underway with CAST on how FSU can support other universities to also be implemented or approved.

# Evaluation

The curriculum innovation team created a logic model that is linked to the larger GROW Center goals and outcomes of increasing worker preparation and self-efficacy, improving worker well-being and job satisfaction, and establishing advanced and diverse competencies among workers. During the initial development and implementation of the PBL/CBL courses, the evaluation focus is on more proximal outcomes. Specifically, the team will focus on the faculty and student experiences with the PBL/CBL courses, including several key outcomes.

In line with the course objectives, two key goals of the PBL/CBL courses are: 1) to assimilate basic knowledge, values, and skills for social work practice; and 2) to form self-directed learning habits and skills so students will be prepared to engage with children and families throughout the state of Florida.

**With that, the team developed the following evaluation questions regarding faculty:**

1. Is there a significant difference in the PBL/CBL pedagogical knowledge of instructor participants who receive PBL/CBL professional development training? The team will also seek to test if PBL/CBL professional development can deepen the instructor’s content knowledge of their teaching area.
2. Will PBL/CBL teaching methodology training increase instructor self-efficacy in using the teaching model?
3. Is there a significant increase in instructor satisfaction with teaching a PBL/CBL course versus teaching the course as usual?

The Institute is working with the CSW team to incorporate additional feedback mechanisms that

can inform the broader roll-out of the re-designed curriculum (e.g., barriers/facilitators to faculty uptake).

**In addition, the evaluation team developed the following evaluation questions regarding students:**

1. Is there a significant difference in student outcomes between students who received the content using different pedagogical methods?
2. Is there a significant difference in course satisfaction between students who engage in PBL/CBL courses versus students who engage in the same courses taught in the traditional format?

Specifically, with students, evaluators will assess confidence in practice skills, deep learning (e.g., motivation to engage with and use strategies), multicultural awareness/knowledge, and satisfaction.

During the pilot phase, data will be gathered and used to make continuous adjustments to curricula delivery. Following dissemination to other social work programs, an external team will evaluate the new curricula across social work programs in Florida.

## RESOURCES:

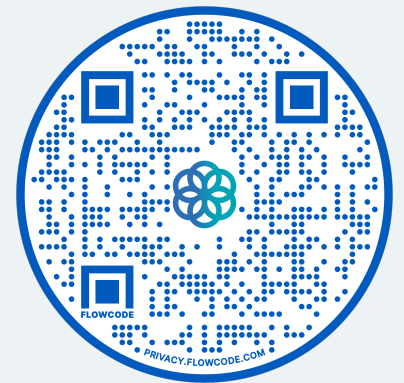
ACADEMIC INNOVATION	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">AI One-Page Overview</a>	Read: 12
<a href="#">AI Website</a>	Page Visits: 220
<a href="#">Introducing Academic Innovation (video)</a>	Views: 27

# ALIGN

ALIGN (Advance, Learn, Innovate, Grow, and Network) will serve as a learning community for child welfare professionals with the goal of providing career long professional development opportunities that include coaching, mentoring and avenues for specialization and certification. In collaboration with DCF, the Institute is creating a clear path for professional development and credentialing, as well as clear paths for child welfare professionals to receive supplemental support in their ongoing work. ALIGN is a learning community that offers holistic support for child welfare professionals and advancement opportunities throughout their career. Child welfare professionals who join this community receive support through training and onboarding enhancement activities, opportunities for specialization through advanced certification courses, as well as ongoing mentoring and coaching. The ALIGN community will offer myriad specialty areas for the child welfare professional to take courses, learn about relevant issues, and gain experience in problem solving to become more confident in their approach and feel supported throughout their learning pathway. Trainings offered through this platform will supplement the professional’s ongoing certification and career and leadership development.



LEARN MORE:



## THE VISION:

Cultivate a learning community of professionals who benefit from enhancement of skills as well as comprehensive support as they advance in their child welfare careers. ALIGN is a learning community that offers holistic support for child welfare professionals and advancement opportunities throughout their career.



# Highlighted Achievements

## ADVANCED CERTIFICATIONS

Research is clear that substance use disorders, domestic violence, mental health, and concomitant trauma are often the leading reasons families enter the child welfare system. The field also recognizes that while there are adverse childhood experiences, there are also positive experiences that can be identified as strengths.

Advanced certification courses (AdCerts) will facilitate the implementation of a cohesive and progressive path of professional development that meaningfully connects to pre-service training. These courses will provide a university-led, evidence-based, trauma-informed, engaging training that will increase child welfare workers' preparation and self-efficacy to handle the complexity of their caseload. It is important to be not only trauma-informed but also trauma-responsive, an understanding that is integrated into all AdCerts. These ongoing courses will engage child welfare workers and give them new knowledge, technical assistance, and support throughout their advancement up the career ladder (for eligible DCF employees). Completion of AdCerts will build expertise and specialization, ideally resulting in both improved worker job satisfaction and advanced and diverse competencies within the workforce.

Currently, there are three professional certification courses in development: STARS (Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies), an in-depth overview of domestic violence, and Understanding Substance Use in Family Systems. Detailed information about each of these advanced certification courses can be found in subsequent sections.

The advanced certification courses offered by the GROW Center are intended for statewide use by child welfare professionals from the DCF, community-based care lead agencies, and law enforcement organizations. To streamline processes for accepting applications and delivering the courses to a variety of professionals, the GROW Center leveraged technological resources to facilitate equitable access to both the application and content.

The GROW Center is utilizing Survey Monkey Apply as the [secure application portal](#). The user-friendly online application forms make it easy to manage the entire application process from beginning to end. The system allows the admissions review team to organize applications, automate workflows and handle communications in one place, so informed decisions can be made to select the best candidates for each of the AdCert cohorts.

The GROW Center purchased a cloud-based Learning Management System (LMS) called iSpring Learn. Utilizing a LMS designed to support employees, the GROW Center will facilitate courses, learning tracks, trainings, and the knowledge base. The LMS allows users to access content on computers, tablets, and phones so they can learn in a variety of settings. The GROW Center will have 1-2 iSpring Learn Certified Professionals to serve as LMS experts on staff.

## STARS: Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies Advanced Certification

Developed with input from the DCF leadership, lead agency representatives, case management service representatives, and other stakeholders for child welfare professionals, STARS is a university-led, evidence-based, trauma-informed, engaging workforce resilience training that will motivate, educate, and improve the skills of the child welfare workforce to improve child safety.

The Institute contracted with the Institute for Family Violence Studies (IFVS) at FSU to complete content development for the certification. The GROW Center and IFVS worked closely to ensure the content, format, and resources included in the STARS Advanced Certification are helpful for the child welfare workforce and that they consider the

capacity of individuals in the workforce to complete all course requirements.

The course addresses coping, stress management, secondary trauma, and primary trauma, as well as explores how trauma history interferes with learning. Participants will build better resilience skills for families.

STARS provides concrete tools for growing child, parental, and family resilience. The course includes 12-18 hours of self-paced, online course content with two virtual, synchronous sessions with a university faculty member to practice and reinforce learned skills. Participants will have additional opportunities to connect with peers and a coach.

The six-chapter online course will launch in October 2022 with an inaugural cohort of 40 individuals maximum. A STARS overview can be accessed in [Appendix F](#).

### Next Steps

**FLORIDA INSTITUTE FOR CHILD WELFARE**  
**ALIGN**  
Advance • Learn • Innovate • Grow • Network

**FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
1851

- SEPTEMBER 6, 2022**  
APPLICATIONS FOR THE FIRST COHORT LAUNCHES
- OCTOBER 31, 2022**  
THE FIRST COHORT GAINS ACCESS TO COURSE CONTENT
- FEBRUARY 3, 2023**  
FIRST SYNCHRONOUS FACILITATED TRAINING
- FEBRUARY 20, 2023**  
MAKEUP SESSION (FIRST SYNCHRONOUS FACILITATED TRAINING)
- MAY 24, 2023**  
SECOND SYNCHRONOUS FACILITATED TRAINING
- MAY 31, 2023**  
MAKEUP SESSION (SECOND SYNCHRONOUS FACILITATED TRAINING)

## Domestic Violence Advanced Certification

The Institute engaged the IFVS to create a domestic violence (DV) professional certification for Florida child welfare professionals. Based on input from leadership from the DCF, lead agency representatives, case management service representatives, and other stakeholders, the course will address domestic violence perpetrator tactics, child welfare professional response to domestic violence, understanding the needs of domestic violence survivors, engaging a trauma-informed child welfare professional response to domestic violence, and promoting safety and preventing secondary trauma. Like its STARS predecessor, the DV advanced certification course will include 12-18 hours of self-paced, online course content with two virtual, synchronous sessions with a university faculty member to practice and reinforce learned skills. Participants will have additional opportunities to connect with peers and a coach.

### Next Steps

The curricula is being developed and will be designed, beta-tested, and launched by July 2023.

## Understanding Substance Use in Family Systems Advanced Certification

The goal of this AdCert is to increase participants' understanding of best practices with child welfare-involved families who experience detrimental consequences of using substances. With greater knowledge about the impact of substance use on families and how to best approach the problem, professionals in child welfare are better equipped to quickly identify the needs of families, increase family-centered collaboration, streamline processes and, ultimately, alleviate workload constraints.

The Institute contracted The Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families, and Children (CFC Center) to complete content development for the certification. The GROW Center and the CFC Center are working closely to ensure the content, format, and resources included in the AdCert are helpful for the child welfare workforce and that the capacity of individuals in the workforce to complete the course is considered.

Developed with input from the DCF leadership, lead agency representatives, case management service representatives, and other stakeholders for child welfare professionals, the Understanding Substance Use in Family Systems Advanced Certification course is a university-led, evidence-based, trauma-informed, engaging training that through the Understanding Substance Use in Family Systems' Support Model – PLEASE (Plan, Listen, Engage, Assess, Support, and Evaluate) provides an evidence-based approach to family engagement. In addition to family engagement, the model focuses on cultural humility, curiosity, and empathy, and **uses methodologies such as:**

- ❖ Person-centered
- ❖ Strength-based
- ❖ Behavior management principles
- ❖ Cognitive-behavioral intervention

Through a blended digital and direct instruction approach, professionals are provided a framework to better engage families who experience substance use disorders.

### Next Steps

Curriculum development will continue through the end of the 2022 calendar year and the course is expected to begin in Summer 2023.

## Evaluation of Certifications

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
**Shamra Boel-Studt, Ph.D., MSW**  
 Florida State University

The Institute has a contract with Dr. Boel-Studt, an affiliate, to develop an evaluation plan and conduct the evaluation of the development of AdCert courses and their impact on learners' gained knowledge and utilization of their skills in the workplace.

### The purpose of the AdCert evaluation is to:

1. apply findings from a formative evaluation to inform curriculum design and implementation;
2. develop guidance for future AdCert trainings addressing additional topics relevant to child welfare practice; and,
3. apply findings from an initial summative evaluation to identify emerging impacts, areas for improvement, and recommendations for further evaluations of AdCert trainings with attention to linkages with the GROW Center's intended outcomes.

A formative evaluation will assess fidelity (whether training was delivered as it was intended), identify problems with program implementation, and establish readiness for a summative evaluation.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Formative evaluations connect observed responses (e.g., learning outcomes) with program input and activities. Importantly, the current evaluation will also focus on understanding and describing developmental processes (e.g., curriculum design, collaboration with stakeholders, establishing training teams, decision-making) drawing upon concepts of developmental evaluation<sup>4</sup> and trainees' engagement with the online and in-person components of the training program.

The initial summative evaluation will assess short-term impacts and outcomes<sup>5</sup> associated with the specific AdCerts' and GROW Center's outcomes. The evaluation will also pilot approaches to evaluating intermediate outcomes and, to the extent possible examine both short-term and intermediate outcomes. The summative evaluation will help inform future evaluation methods and measures. Drawing upon Kirkpatrick's model for evaluating training programs,<sup>6,7</sup> the study will focus on the first three outcome levels—reaction, learning, and behavior. Each outcome level serves as a precursor to the next outcome level. For instance, a learner's positive reaction will facilitate learning and knowledge and skill acquisition to determine whether behavioral changes can be attributed to the training. The reaction level assesses how trainees think and feel about the training (reaction to training). Learning refers to the resulting change in trainees' knowledge and competency (achievement of learning) and behavior assesses the extent of behavior change or the implementation/application of learning in practice.

The evaluators will collect a variety of data: semi-structured interviews with development teams; review of training documents; user data from the learning management system (e.g., engagement data, training quizzes); and surveys and focus groups with users.

### Current Status

The evaluation team has met regularly with both the IFVS and the CFC. The evaluation plan is nearly finalized, including formative and summative methods, measures, and timeline. Currently, the team is collaborating with the Institute to determine the best approach for collecting data (e.g., within and outside of the LMS). The FSU IRB application was submitted in September, with approval anticipated shortly. The team will begin evaluation efforts with the STARS pilot, launching in October 2022.

### Next Steps

The major next steps include receiving IRB approval, finalizing the STARS evaluation measures, initiating the initial phase of the formative evaluation (e.g., curriculum review, stakeholder interviews), and monitoring the collection of data to be used for the summative evaluation. The evaluation team will apply similar methods used for the STARS evaluation to

evaluate the Understanding Substance Use in Family Systems AdCert. The CFC team plans to finalize the curriculum by early December 2022. The evaluation team will finalize the evaluation plan including selecting measures and determining the data collection timeline once the curriculum and plans for the course are finalized.

## MYALIGN (CAREER LONG COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT)

MyALIGN, a customized digital platform for the child welfare professional, aims to provide support by leveraging technology to create streamlined access to resources, establish a networking and coaching community, and provide real-time data on worker well-being. It is a multi-faceted software as a service (SaaS) mobile-app and web-based cloud solution. This centralized and individualized hub will house career-long learning opportunities and holistic ongoing support for college students, recently trained personnel, trainers, and middle and upper management positions working in child welfare agencies. The goal of MyALIGN is to offer the child welfare professional community a centralized hub with easy access to myriad supports and opportunities to network, take courses that supplement their ongoing career development, learn about relevant issues, enhance well-being, and gain experience in problem solving to become more confident in their work and feel supported throughout their learning pathway and career progression.

The vision is to cultivate a learning community of professionals who will benefit from enhancement of skills as well as comprehensive support such as coaching, AdCert offerings, leadership development, reflective supervision, trainings, and well-being and

resiliency building resources as they advance in their child welfare careers.

During this reporting period, the Institute engaged [eCare Vault](#) as a partner to develop the MyALIGN Hub and customize workflows to fit the Institute’s identified needs, onboard users, and provide ongoing support.

### THE VISION:



## Four Phases

This project has four distinct phases, with plans to roll out the product to users in the spring of 2023. The Institute and eCare Vault are currently in phase 1 of the project (Discovery, Analysis, and Development) and are working together to determine how best to design MyALIGN for the Institute’s goals. eCare Vault’s technology is highly configurable and can be customized and deployed to meet a variety of needs and use cases.

### Phase 1: Discovery, Analysis, and Development

- ❖ Elements of Phase 1 include discovery and analysis sessions with key stakeholders, workflow planning sessions, integration scoping, and platform personalization

### Phase 2: Technological Solution Customization

- ❖ Elements of Phase 2 will be informed by determinations made during Phase 1

### Phase 3: Pilot of a Phase 1 roll-out

- ❖ Phase 1 roll-out is scheduled for spring 2023, for a limited number of child welfare professionals (pre-service employees [CPIs & CMs] and trainers)

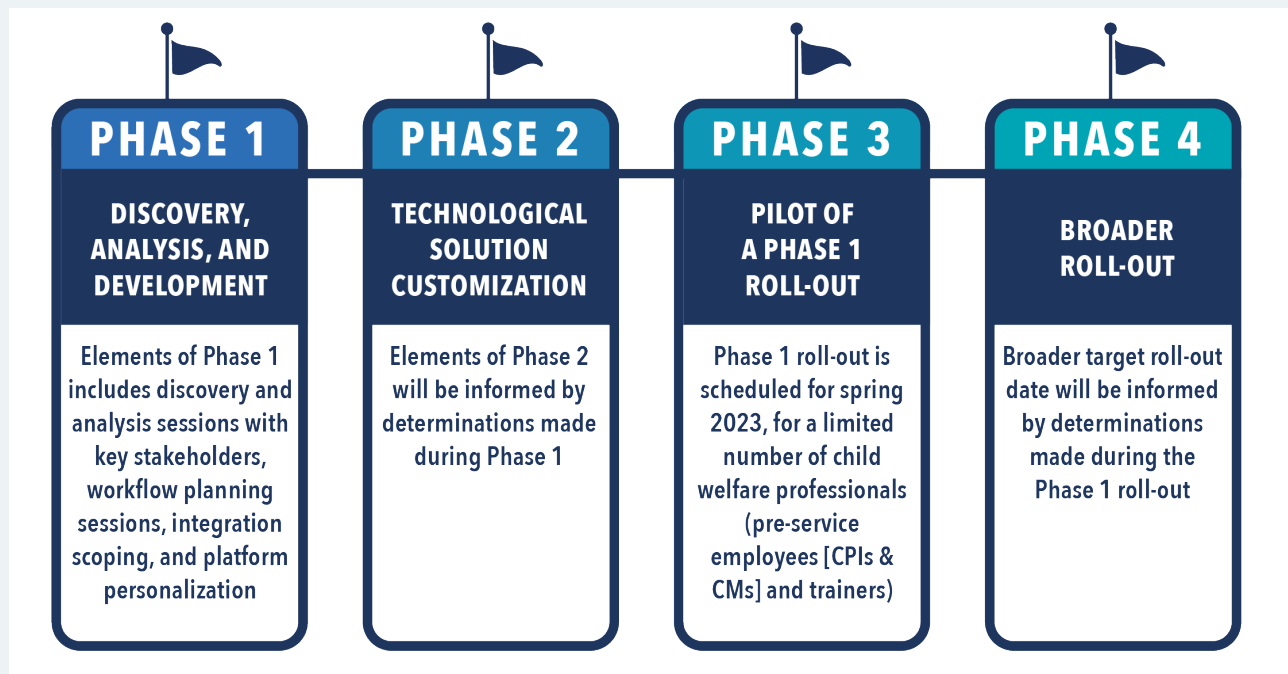
### Phase 4: Broader Roll-out

- ❖ Broader target roll-out date will be informed by determinations made during the Phase 1 roll-out

## Highlighted Achievements

Starting in July 2022, the Institute and eCare Vault consistently adhered to a series of weekly sessions and have secured participation from relevant stakeholders and contributors as appropriate (e.g., GROW Center Advisory Committee, the DCF Office of Well-being, community-based care lead agencies, a sheriff’s office representative, Florida Coalition for Children, etc.), to better understand the key requirements of each aspect of MyALIGN, uncover collaborative opportunities with other stakeholders, define must-haves vs. nice-to-haves, and to describe the vision for interaction among systems.

## THE PHASES:



## Next Steps

### The MyALIGN Implementation Team will:

1. provide feedback, suggestions, and insight on the Discovery Scope and identified Discovery Outcomes.
2. select a coaching model and develop a plan for alignment for the identified user groups specific needs.
3. identify and recruit users to participate in user Interviews.

## MyALIGN Evaluation

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
**Erin King, Ph.D., LCSW**  
 University of West Florida

### Overview

To support the development of MyALIGN, specifically regarding data-related infrastructure, the Institute contracted with our affiliate Dr. Erin King as a mental health and well-being expert. Dr. King is responsible for identifying and recommending mental health and well-being domains and concepts to be measured, both standardly within the MyALIGN platform and separately as part of the larger MyALIGN evaluation. Subsequently, she will identify and recommend specific measures for the identified domains. In the event validated measures do not exist, Dr. King will begin the initial development of measures.

### Current Status

Collaboratively, Dr. King, Institute leadership and eCare Vault developers identified a range of constructs of interest to be measured, specifically those centering on well-being, critical thinking, decision making, and emotional intelligence. Currently, they are determining the best way to measure each domain, while minimizing burden on users. Discussion related to engagement and gamification within the app, as well as use of

assessments to link users with appropriate levels of resources, is ongoing.

### Next Steps

After a review of relevant assessments/measures of constructs of interest, final identification of the measures to be integrated into the MyALIGN platform will be completed. Discussion with eCare Vault staff will involve determining where these measures will be integrated and how often they are to be repeated. The IRB approval process and informed consent will be the next steps for preparation of the launch of the MyALIGN evaluation process prior to beginning data collection.

## RESOURCES:

ALIGN	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">ALIGN One-Page Overview</a>	Read: 21
<a href="#">ALIGN Website</a>	Page Visits: 335
<a href="#">Introducing ALIGN (video)</a>	Views: 71
<a href="#">STARS AdCert Website</a>	Page Visits: 673
<a href="#">STARS Handout 1 (Overview)</a> <a href="#">STARS Handout 2 (Course Outline)</a> <a href="#">STARS Handout 3 (For Supervisors)</a>	
<a href="#">STARS Introduction Video</a>	Views: 122
<a href="#">STARS Sample Resource 1 (Strengths)</a> <a href="#">STARS Sample Resource 2 (Stress)</a> <a href="#">STARS Sample Resource 3 (Resilience)</a>	

# Alliance for Workforce Enhancement

The Alliance for Workforce Enhancement Initiative (AWE) provides specialized capacity building to child welfare organizations. Florida’s child welfare system has experienced persistent challenges with workforce stability.

Based on the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute’s (NCWWI) Workforce Excellence Sites, the Institute created the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement to create an opportunity for specialized capacity building for Florida’s child welfare system. 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.

Through a 3-year partnership, the selected AWE sites receive tailored technical assistance, ongoing well-being and resiliency sessions, and leadership development. This initiative is 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. Implementation Science phases include Exploration, Preparation, Implementation and Sustainability.

The [exploration phase](#) includes a comprehensive organizational health assessment, known as the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement Inventory.

The [preparation phase](#) includes a focus on strategy and vision. At this point, the organization works collectively to establish a strategy and vision for their workforce initiative and prepares a plan for change.



**THE VISION:**

Prioritize leadership development and organizational well-being within child welfare agencies across Florida.





## IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE PHASES:



The **implementation phase** is the execution of the change plan within the organization.

The **sustainability phase** creates mechanisms within the organization which will support the continuation of the strategies that have been implemented.

The Institute facilitates the matriculation of all sites through each phase of the Implementation Science framework. With the AWE initiative's emphasis on building internal capacity, the work is largely carried out by the agency through teaming. The teaming approach to this work reinforces that collaborative visioning and problem-solving lead to better outcomes. People are more likely to take calculated risks that lead to innovation if they have the support of a team behind them. Working in a team encourages personal growth and accountability through each phase of the process.

First, a Strategy Team is convened in order to create a feasible and realistic plan to shift their workforce. Concurrently, as the Strategy Team works together on the preparation phase of the work, well-being and retention group sessions will be offered organization wide. It is the hope of the AWE team that this investment in the overall well-being of the organization contributes to their ability and bandwidth to create and carry out their change plan.

The Action Team is convened next and implements the vision created by the Strategy Team. It is possible to have multiple Action Teams, depending on the necessary actions steps.

At the start of year two, the AWE Initiative will launch a year-long Leadership Academy that will be exclusively focused on developing leaders at the sites. Participants in the Leadership Academy will receive robust content that has been curated and evaluated by the NCWWI. Each participant in the Leadership Academy will be assigned a coach for the duration of the Academy, as well as six months post Academy.

## Highlighted Achievements

The Alliance for Workforce Enhancement initiative has engaged with two child welfare demonstration sites: a public child welfare service center focused primarily on child protective investigations, and a private community-based care organization focused primarily on ongoing case management, licensing and adoption.

### DEMONSTRATION SITE ONE

A kickoff well-being session was provided to this site, and a customized journal was given to the agency participants to assist in processing vicarious trauma they may experience in the course of their daily work and to cultivate an approach to improved well-being.

During the exploration phase, an organizational assessment resulted in a full report of quantitative and qualitative findings. Site One has established a Strategy Team. The Strategy Team, is composed of 7-10 individuals within the organization who have influence in their agency role. This team meets monthly throughout the course of the partnership alongside the Institute team lead.

### DEMONSTRATION SITE TWO

Site Two is currently in their exploration phase and is completing an organization-wide assessment to determine the baseline of their workforce. This private child welfare agency has multiple contracts with case management agencies that will also be a part of the AWE Initiative. Currently, this site is constructing their Strategy Team, that will include participants to represent all agency site locations. The Action Teams will be smaller and more localized to each site, as geographic area and workforce needs vary.

## Next Steps

All leaders who enter the Leadership Academy will receive executive coaching; therefore, the next step is coach selection. The selected coaches will complete a 9-week coaching program hosted by NCWWI to prepare them to effectively develop the skills desired of the Academy cohort. With the AWE Initiative's emphasis on building internal capacity, identifying coaches from within the organization will be prioritized. Additionally, the AWE Initiative includes the provision of ongoing well-being and retention group sessions for each site by expert consultants. The procurement process to contract with an entity that has expertise in supporting the well-being and retention of child welfare professionals is nearly complete. Once the contract is executed, expert facilitators will lead well-being and retention groups at each demonstration site for their staff.

## Evaluation

### CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

**Karen Randolph, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

**Dina Wilke, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida State University

The development of the AWE Initiative is informed via implementation of two demonstration sites and accompanying evaluation. The evaluation includes two distinct components—an outcome evaluation and a formative evaluation. The purpose of the outcome evaluation is to show whether intended agency-based outcomes were achieved. Agency-based outcome findings will be primarily used to determine if agencies experienced demonstrable change in specific areas (to be determined by site) following participation in the AWE Initiative. Collectively, agency-based outcome

findings will be used to determine if the AWE Initiative is contributing to the GROW Center’s outcomes. The formative evaluation is being used to document program development and assess how well the AWE program was implemented in the demonstration sites. The formative evaluation is being completed in four phases, mirroring the implementation science principles: 1) AWE program development and demonstration site recruitment; 2) baseline assessment and program planning; 3) program implementation; 4) post-test and sustainability. Phase 1 has been completed and the second phase of the evaluation is currently underway.

### NEXT STEPS

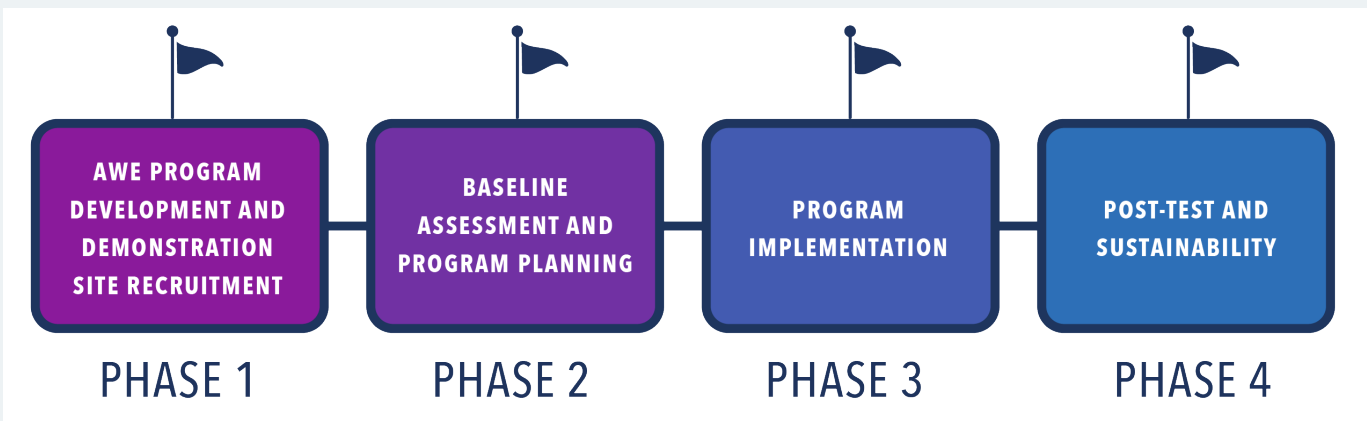
All phase one data were collected and analyzed. A final report of findings will be provided to Institute leadership by late 2022. For site one, the next step is planning for the formative evaluation of the identified change initiative. For site two, the next step is to complete the baseline assessment. For both sites, the evaluation team is preparing for formative and outcome evaluations of the upcoming well-being initiative and Leadership Academy. As this

program spans multiple years, the final report of the formative evaluation is expected in summer 2025, with progress reports prepared throughout the demonstration period.

### RESOURCES:

AWE	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">AWE One-Page Overview</a>	Read: 18
<a href="#">AWE Website</a>	Page Visits: 186
<a href="#">Introducing AWE (video)</a>	Views: 42
<a href="#">AWE Introduction Presentation (slides)</a>	

### EVALUATION PHASES:



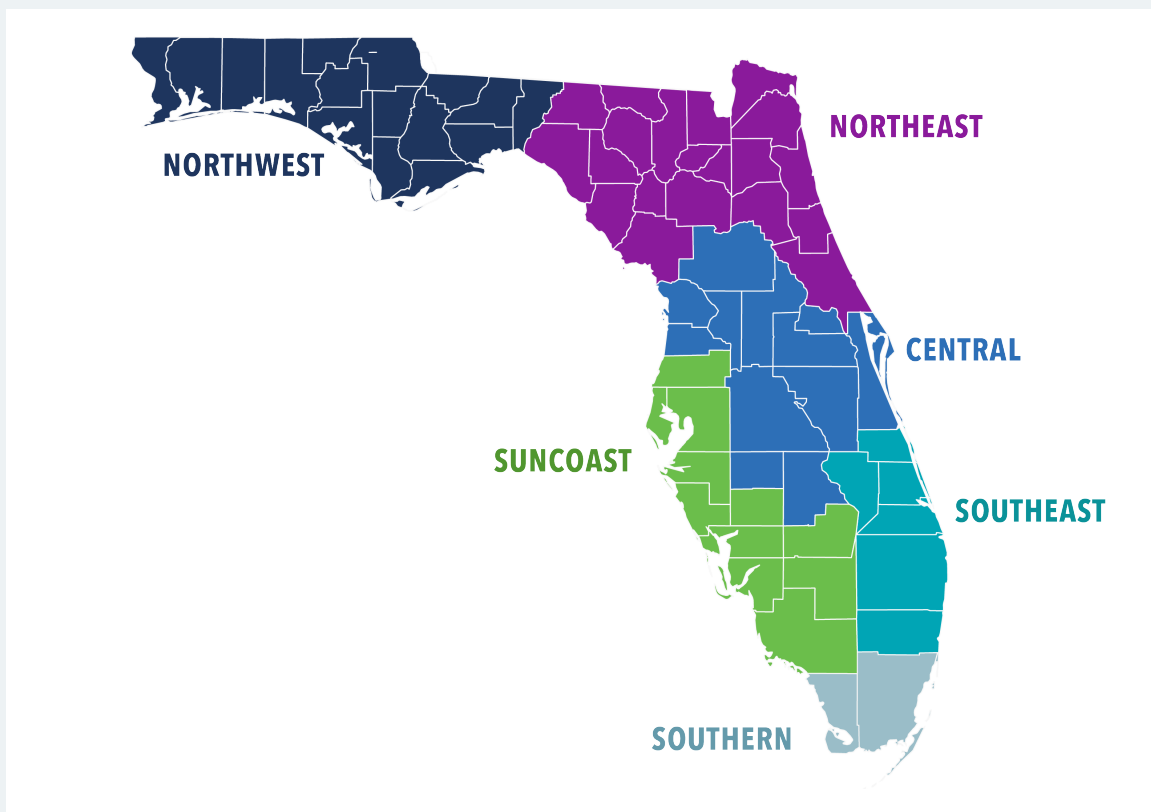
# GROW Center Advisory Committee

The GROW Center Advisory Committee (GCAC) brings together statewide volunteers who have invaluable expertise and experience to contribute to the transformation of the child welfare workforce in the state of Florida. The GCAC serves to provide informed guidance, professional expertise, stakeholder experience, and advice to GROW Center staff. GROW Center Advisory Committee members bridge the gap between organizations and child welfare professionals while advocating for GROW Center initiatives. The vision statement leading the Committee’s work asks members to promote, uphold, and advocate for the GROW Center’s innovation of child welfare curricula, support of child welfare professionals, and transformation of the child welfare workplace throughout Florida.

## THE VISION:

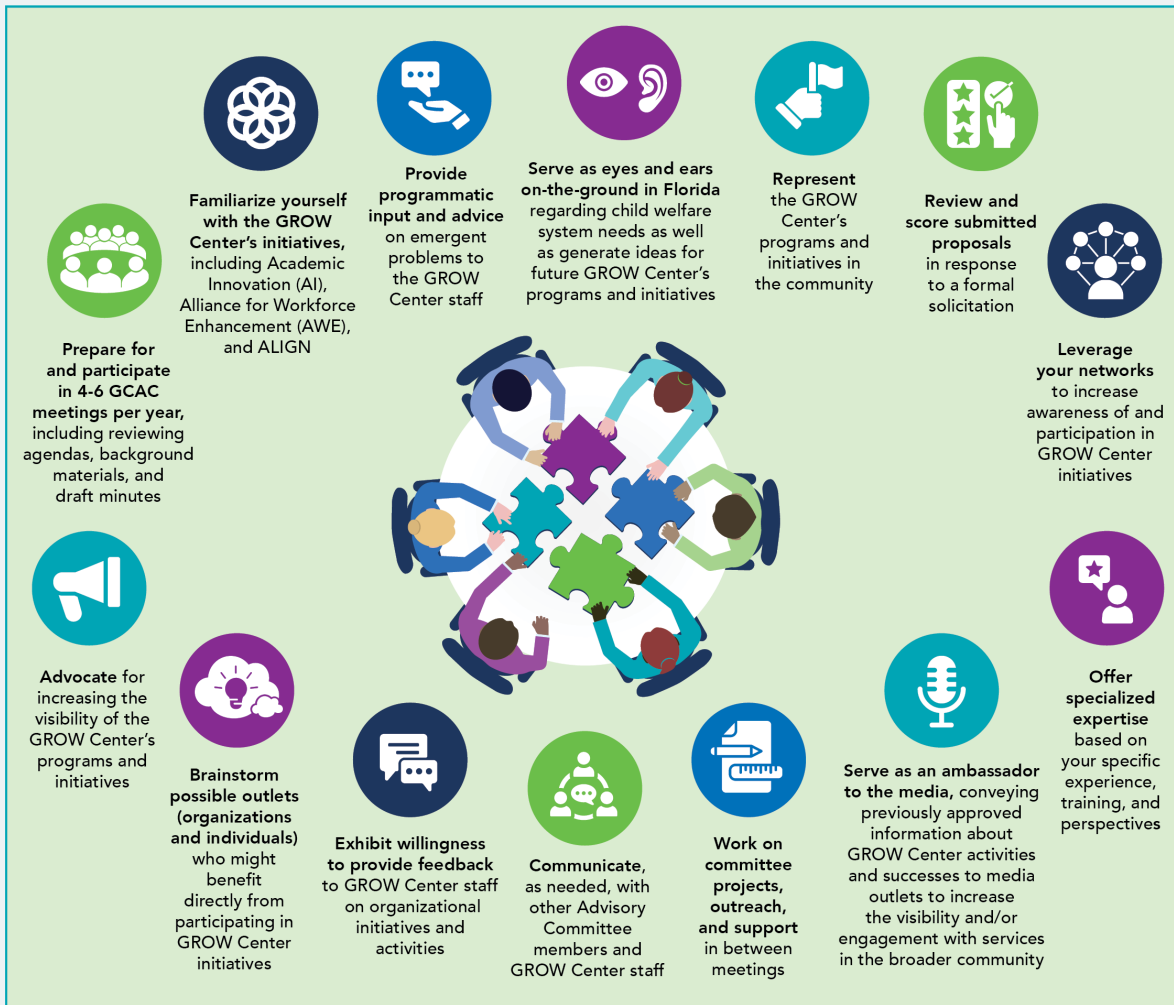
Promote, uphold, and advocate for the GROW Center’s innovation of child welfare curricula, support of child welfare professionals, and transformation of the child welfare workplace throughout Florida.

## GCAC REPRESENTATION:



The Committee is organized to ensure that each members’ activities and decisions are in the best interest of the GROW Center, with the election of a Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. For the inaugural year of the GCAC, the Institute’s Program Director of Professional Development serves as Chair, ensuring sufficient guidance is provided to the Committee as they begin to layout their work and the path forward. In future years, the member elected as Committee Chair will exemplify a commitment to the GROW Center and Institute’s missions, while similarly, the Vice-Chair will offer support and leadership when needed. The Advisory Committee Secretary will be appointed to their position by the Institute. The expectations of Committee Members include programmatic advising and input, leveraging of networks to spread awareness of the GROW Center, serving as ambassadors to increase visibility and engagement within the broader community, and other critical activities which serve to represent the GROW Center’s programs and initiatives in the state.

## GCAC DUTIES:



## GROW Center Advisory Committee Member Selection Process

In FY 2021-2022, 19 GCAC members were selected, with representation from all six Department regions: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Suncoast, Southeast, and Southern. The committee is made up of university partners, the DCF and the Florida Coalition for Children employees, organizational leadership members, sheriff offices representatives, a parent advocate, and representatives from direct-service provider organizations. Members were selected through a rigorous application process, where selection committee members reviewed written responses and rated each applicant using a standard rubric. Selection decisions were made based on applicants' expertise and their described willingness to contribute to the transformation of the child welfare workforce in the state of Florida. Detailed information on committee members' contributions can be found in the subsequent section and [Appendix H](#).

## Meetings

Four quarterly GCAC meetings will be held during FY 2022-2023, with two virtual meetings occurring in FY 2021-2022. The first meeting was held on May 12, 2022, where an informational orientation for all new members was conducted. The second meeting was held on June 30, 2022. The GCAC Secretary created a GCAC Teams Channel to ensure cross-communication and information sharing is available in a streamlined manner for all members. All GCAC meetings are recorded and minutes are provided via Teams for each member to access and review. GCAC meeting minutes may be found in [Appendix I](#).

## Work Groups

A brief needs assessment and survey was conducted shortly after the committee's formation to capture communication and support needs, as well as members' areas of interest. The survey was also intended to capture members' opinions on how to expand our conceptualization of the audiences we are targeting and supporting through the GROW Center. Members of the GCAC were split into five workgroups based off their responses in an area of interest survey.

### The workgroups are:

1. Recruitment, Retention, Resiliency and Well-being
2. Leadership and Development
3. Coaching and Supervision
4. Training and Curriculum Design
5. Policy and Systems Change

Workgroups are tasked with proposing programming or interventions within these contexts for the future of the GROW Center. The finding from the brief needs assessment may be found in [Appendix J](#).

The overall purpose of these workgroups is to innovate the methods for recruiting, retaining, and developing individuals who work in the child welfare system. For example, the retention workgroup focuses on what supports, what programs, what interventions, what resources are needed in the context of retaining and recruiting professionals. The policy and systems change workgroup focuses on policy or system change that better support child welfare professionals. The GCAC can be leveraged to provide real-time insight into the ever-changing needs of the workforce.

SECTION III

**RESEARCH  
CONDUCTED BY  
THE INSTITUTE**

# RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE INSTITUTE

Over the past year, the Institute's research and evaluation work increased exponentially, both in staffing and output. The Institute firmly believes that our workforce initiatives can only be successful if we simultaneously incorporate the experiences and needs of those we serve into our work. As such, in addition to the evaluations of all major GROW Center initiatives, the Institute has established three major topical areas of focus within child welfare: serving youth, serving families, and changing systems. The following section provides an overview of the activities of the Affiliate Network over the past year, as well as a summary of current and recently completed research and evaluation projects.

## THE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PILLAR:

The Institute has three goals when it comes to Research and Evaluation:

**Goal 1:** Develop and support translational research projects that contribute to the scientific knowledge base related to child safety, permanency, and child and family well-being.

**Goal 2:** Establish an institutional culture that enables the Institute to become a national leader in child welfare research.

**Goal 3:** Support the development of and access to essential resources for relevant and high-quality child welfare research.

## RESEARCH AREAS:



**SERVING YOUTH**



**SERVING FAMILIES**



**CHANGING SYSTEMS**





# Affiliate Network

Since the Institute’s inception, the [Affiliate Network](#), comprised of faculty, researchers, and other partners around the state, played an integral role in the execution of Institute research and evaluation. This year was no exception, particularly given the exponential growth of the Institute. As of September 2022, the Affiliate Network is comprised of 37 members, representing 16 universities and 5 organizations. During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Institute expanded the network’s expertise through onboarding of faculty from multiple disciplines, as well as organizational representatives.

## AFFILIATE UNIVERSITIES:



## Communication and Activities

The Institute continues to prioritize engagement of current affiliates. The monthly Affiliate Advisor is a specific e-newsletter that provides updates on Institute activities; relevant announcements (e.g., upcoming conferences, funding mechanisms, calls for papers); and updates on affiliate-led projects and contributions. The newsletter continues to be a platform for affiliates to request collaborations from one another. For additional information about the [Affiliate Advisor](#), please see Section VII: Communications and Dissemination.

New to the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Network will hold quarterly Lunch and Learn sessions, led by an affiliate and open to the public. The first of these sessions will be held on October 11, 2022, when Dr. Morgan Cooley, recipient of the first Affiliate Award for Translational Research, provides a summary presentation and hold a question-and-answer session on their project: [A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida](#).

Another additional approach to affiliate engagement this year is the formation of Affiliate Workgroups. A group of four affiliates will work together on one mutually agreed upon topic of interest, a one-time need, or informal research. At the conclusion of the workgroup, a final product (e.g., summary of project and findings, plan for future research, webinar or training) will be provided to the Institute. As of September 2022, the first workgroup, led by Dr. Martie Gillen of the University of Florida, convened virtually and is focused on youth transitioning out of care.

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

## Meetings

Quarterly conference calls were held with the affiliates to provide updates on legislative news, Institute funded research projects, Institute programming, and the overall growth of the Institute. In addition, the conference calls serve as a platform for affiliates to present their current projects, discuss future plans, and request, if needed, support from other affiliates. During this reporting period, conference calls were held in December 2021, March 2022, and August 2022, with our annual in-person meeting in June serving as the fourth quarterly meeting.

The goals for the in-person annual meeting are to create dialogue, provide announcements, identify gaps in research, disseminate research findings, and propose future research priorities in areas mutually agreed upon by the affiliates. This year's annual meeting was held in Tallahassee in June 2022. The all-day meeting featured guest speakers from Casey Family Programs and the DCF. Affiliates participated in discussion around developing the Institute's Guiding Principles and voiced their suggestions on the direction of the Institute. The affiliates also had preliminary conversations around three workgroup topics: Workforce Recruitment, Engaging Parent Voice, and the aforementioned Youth Transitioning Out of Care.

To review minutes from the conference calls and annual meeting, see [Appendix D](#). For additional information about the annual meeting, please see the Events section in Section VII: Communications and Dissemination.

# Senate Bill 80

## Evaluating Florida's Approach to Life Skill Development among Youth in Foster Care

### CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

**Michael Henson, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

**Hyunji Lee, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

### PROJECT TEAM:

Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Lisa Schelbe, Ph.D., Florida State University

Colleen McBride, M.A., Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Kristine Posada, MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Katie Ropes-Berry, Ph.D., MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Database (NYTD). The project team regularly consulted with independent living experts, as well as a youth with lived experience in foster care, to guide the evaluation through completion. At its conclusion, the evaluation will provide an assessment of the state's current approach to helping youth in foster care develop life skills for self-sufficiency and present recommendations for enhancement, with particular attention given to the caregiver role.

### MANDATE:

Assess Florida's current approach to developing independent life skills among youth transitioning out of Florida's foster care system.

## OVERVIEW

In 2021, Chapter 2021-169, Section 21(1), Laws of Florida, {SB80} mandated the Institute to assess Florida's current approach to developing independent life skills among youth transitioning out of Florida's foster care system. Following meetings with the DCF leadership, independent living and methodology experts, and House legislative staff, the Institute developed an evaluation plan to address the mandate. Using a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation team examined existing documentation (e.g., current policies and procedures) and conducted surveys, individual interviews with stakeholders, and secondary analysis of data from the National Youth in Transition

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

While Florida is currently engaged in efforts to ensure that foster youth have the skills needed to become self-sufficient and independent after care, the evaluation identified areas that require improvements at various systemic levels. Both Florida state statutes and DCF policy have established a framework of responsibilities and requirements (i.e., completion of various life skills assessments) through which life skills development can be implemented, monitored, and assessed across the state. However, some guidelines and requirements are vague and lack definition, making it difficult to translate policy into practice. While the evaluation team was unable to obtain comprehensive statewide data on the completion of policy requirements, data

from other sources (i.e., surveys, NYTD data) suggest that life skills requirements are being implemented inconsistently. Further, due to unclear policies, there is variation in how life skills development is implemented across CBC lead agencies.

The evaluation also found that day-to-day life skills development efforts are inconsistent. While caregivers are expected to take the lead in life skills development per DCF CFOP 170-17, surveys and interviews found that they receive different levels of resources, support, and training to help guide their efforts. Child welfare professional surveys found respondents had mixed confidence levels in supporting, training, and assisting caregivers with life skills responsibilities. Results of the secondary data analysis of NYTD data showed that many current foster youths have not received independent living skills assessments, nor services for life skills development. Former foster youth interviews reflect these inconsistencies, with many participants describing their experiences with life skills development in care as differing between caregivers and placements. Some said they had placements and caregivers that provided no life skills development. When they did receive life skills development, it was often only in a few areas and the quality varied. Many described how their inconsistent life skills development during care contributed to short- and long-term challenges they faced transitioning out of DCF custody and into independent living, such as accruing large amounts of debt due to limited financial and budgeting knowledge.

## NEXT STEPS

The final report has been drafted and is under review with Institute leadership as well as expert consultants. Feedback will be incorporated to refine the comprehensive final report. We look forward to submitting this report to the Governor and the legislature by November 1, 2022.

# Permanency Outcomes of Florida's Foster Youth

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

**Hyunji Lee, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

**PROJECT TEAM:**

Kasey Longley, Ph.D., MS, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## OVERVIEW

Chapter 2021-169 Section 21(2), Laws of Florida, {SB80} mandated the Institute to analyze permanency outcomes in the state. Specifically, the legislation charged the Institute with identifying patterns in cases regarding: 1) length of time to achieve permanency; 2) types of permanency outcomes experienced by children entering foster care at different ages; and 3) how the types of permanency and the length of time to achieve permanency vary based on the status of the rights of the parents of the children. The team finalized the evaluation plan and shared it with legislative staff in November 2021. The research team worked collaboratively with representatives from the DCF to obtain and understand the data needed for analyses.

## MANDATE:

Analyze permanency outcomes in the state (length of time to permanency, types of outcomes at different ages, impact of the status of the rights of the parents).

After excluding several youth with missing or otherwise problematic data, the total analytic sample included all youth who entered foster care in Florida from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017 through FFY 2021.

**Sub-samples were created to answer the specific mandated research questions:**

- 1. What are the frequencies of permanency outcomes? (Section 21, 2a.1)**
  - A. Within two years of entering foster care?
    - Are there differences by child age at entry into foster care?
  - B. After two years of foster care?
    - Are there differences by child age at entry into foster care?
- 2. Among families in which parental rights were terminated ... (Section 21, 2a.2-3)**
  - A. What is the length of time between entry into foster care and termination of parental rights?
  - B. What are the frequencies of permanency outcomes for children?
    - Are there differences by child age at the time of termination of parental rights?
  - C. How long did it take to achieve permanency?
    - Are there differences by child age at the time of termination of parental rights?

## KEY FINDINGS

The researchers examined permanency outcomes among the entire sample, with sub-analyses conducted for youth who achieved permanency prior to and after two years in care. Over two-thirds (67.9%) of children in the total sample ( $N = 52,774$ ) achieved permanency at some point in time, primarily through reunification, followed by adoption, and finally guardianship, which is reflective of national trends.

### *Frequency of Permanency Outcomes Within and After Two Years*

Within two years of entering care, 24,869 youth achieved permanency. Among those, the majority (61.5%) were reunified, followed by permanency to guardianship (21.5%) and to adoption (17.0%). The researchers found differences in permanency type by child age at time of entry into care. Specifically, children who were adopted were significantly younger when entering care than those who achieved permanency via reunification or guardianship. Children who achieved guardianship were significantly older at entry into foster care than reunified children.

After two years of entering care, 5,179 youth achieved permanency. Among those, the majority were adopted (68.2%), followed by reunification (18.3%) and guardianship (13.5%). The researchers found differences in permanency type by child age at time of entry into care. Again, children who were adopted were significantly younger when entering care than those who achieved permanency via reunification or guardianship. Children who achieved guardianship were significantly older at entry into foster care than reunified children.

### *Permanency Following Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)*

The researchers also examined permanency outcomes specific to children whose parents' rights were terminated ( $n = 13,961$ ). Researchers conducted separate analyses for youth with both parents' rights terminated (92.8%) and one parent with termination (7.2%).

Among youth who experienced both parents' termination of parental rights, the mean time to TPR was approximately 15.2 months. Nearly 91 percent of youth with both parents with TPR achieved permanency through adoption followed by reunification (6.9%) and guardianship (2.2%). Regarding age at time of TPR, children who were adopted were significantly younger at time of the TPR than those who achieved permanency via reunification or guardianship. Additionally, children who achieved guardianship were significantly older at time of TPR than reunified children. The average time to permanency for youth who experience both parent TPR is nearly 22 months. Notably, time to permanency was longer for reunification, which is logical given that there would be a potentially lengthy legal process toward reinstatement of rights.<sup>8</sup> There was no difference between time to permanency between guardianship and adoption. For both reunified and adopted children, there was a positive relationship between age and time to permanency, indicating that as age increases within those groups, so does time to permanency.

Among youth who experienced termination of rights of one parent, the mean time to TPR was approximately 12.9 months. Over two-thirds of youth achieved permanency through reunification (68.5%) followed by guardianship (18.3%) and adoption (13.2%). Regarding age at time of the TPR, children who were adopted were significantly younger at time of TPR than those who achieved permanency via reunification or guardianship. The average time to permanency for youth who experience one parent's TPR is approximately 14.2 months. Among this group, time to permanency was significantly shorter for children who achieved reunification, compared to adoption and guardianship. Though again, there was no difference between time to permanency between guardianship and adoption. There was no significant correlation between a child's age at TPR and time to achieve permanency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the current findings, the Institute offers the following recommendations for consideration:

1. The legislature should continue its focus on the experiences and needs of older youth in care.
2. Researchers should examine longitudinal data, when available, to assess the impact of COVID-19 more accurately on permanency outcomes.
3. The DCF should incorporate quality assurance checks of permanency-related data.
4. The DCF should consider more nuanced collection of race and ethnicity data.
5. Future research should be conducted to understand the co-occurrence of multiple forms of maltreatment.

The researchers conducted additional exploratory analyses of relationships between permanency outcomes and initial reason for removal, initial placement type, recurrence of maltreatment, and re-entry into care. Preliminary findings of these supplementary analyses were included in the final report to the legislature on October 1, 2022. Currently, the researchers are applying more sophisticated analytic techniques that can provide a more comprehensive assessment of how permanency outcomes are associated with multiple factors (e.g., age at entry, TPR, placement type, removal reasons, re-entry into care, recurrence of maltreatment). Within this work, the researchers will refine the supplementary analyses and preliminary findings included in this report. A final supplemental report will be provided to legislative staff on or before January 15, 2023.

# Serving Youth

## Human Trafficking Screening Tool

### LEAD RESEARCHER:

**Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Jessica Pryce, Ph.D., MSW**

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### PROJECT TEAM:

Bushra Rashid, MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Keishann Corley, MPA, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## OVERVIEW

To address the needs of vulnerable youth, the Florida Legislature enacted the Safe Harbor Act of 2012,<sup>9</sup> to encourage the expansion of resources available to sexually exploited youth, including short-term safe housing availability and use. In 2014, the Act was expanded to require that the DCF and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) develop a set of instruments to better identify, assess, and place human trafficking victims. In 2015, the Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST, Tool) was piloted, and implementation occurred in 2016. In 2016, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) expressed concern that the HTST was not being used as intended and recommended the DCF evaluate the Tool.<sup>10</sup> At this point, the Institute was involved to assess and conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the HTST by frontline workers involved in casework of suspected or verified human trafficking cases.

First, Institute researchers developed and disseminated an online survey in December 2017 to Florida's CPIs and

dependency case managers to assess frontline child welfare workers' experiences with human trafficking cases.<sup>11</sup> While over 80 percent of screeners found the HTST to be at least somewhat useful, participants reported several common concerns, including: 1) the Tool is too long; 2) the indicators are too broad; and 3) a scoring guide is needed.

Building on this work, Institute researchers performed psychometric testing on the HTST using de-identified data provided by DCF.<sup>12</sup> Initial findings suggest that when two items are removed (i.e., evidence of forced tattooing/branding, evidence of forced labor), the HTST measures two factors: environmental risks (e.g., running away, deceptive payment practices) and sexual exploitation (e.g., unsafe online activity, receiving compensation for sexual activity). In addition, a latent class analysis found three distinct classes of risk: 1) low risk; 2) runaway and environmental risk; and 3) sexual exploitation risk. That these classes of youth closely mirror the two-factor structure lends additional evidence of promise of the Tool's utility in identifying youth human trafficking victims.

## FINDINGS:

Despite the lack of reliability, there was promising evidence that the Tool could be validated in the future. With additional screener training, subsequent data collection, and new analyses, validation is possible.

Despite this, the reliability of the HTST is low, meaning there was a lack of consistency among individual indicator items; each may be capturing something unique about youth involved in human trafficking. Anecdotally, researchers noted during data entry that there were many inconsistencies in the ways in which screeners input data, which could be due to individual screeners' misperceptions of items or problems with the Tool itself. Given that, as a rule, instruments cannot be valid if they lack reliability, the HTST in its current form and typical use is not valid. Despite the lack of reliability, there was promising evidence that the Tool could be validated in the future following improved training with screeners on how to understand and implement the HTST. The Institute suggested that with additional screener training, subsequent data collection, and new analyses, validation is possible.

The current phase of the Institute's HTST work was a qualitative exploration of how screeners implement the Tool. Individual interviews ( $n = 26$ ) focused on the lived professional experiences of designated screeners using an exploratory, phenomenological approach.<sup>13</sup> Focus groups/small group interviews ( $n = 10$ , 5 groups/interviews) implemented cognitive interviewing<sup>14</sup> to allow small groups of designated screeners to provide feedback on the HTST itself. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis.<sup>15,16</sup>

## KEY FINDINGS

Overall, screeners were pleased with the training they received for the screener role, but there were some reports of feeling unprepared to use the HTST. Screeners identified that not regularly conducting screenings using the Tool can impact the ability to be conversational during interviews while still completing a comprehensive assessment. The time between screenings was identified as challenging to screener self-efficacy with the use of the Tool. Screeners expressed interest in screener-friendly data collection

methods (e.g., "cheat sheets") or additional skill-building experiences to increase self-efficacy. A vast majority of screeners reported that they use the Tool as a guide rather than a checklist. Though screeners acknowledge that their interactions with youth vary depending on the circumstances, they utilize multiple rapport-building techniques to engage with the youth; however, they noted that these are not guaranteed to be successful. Focus group participants articulated that they regularly reword Tool items, or the flow of items, to not only make the screening more conversational but to make the youth feel more comfortable (e.g., starting with broad questions before narrowing to specific concerns). Screeners made suggestions for item revisions or additions, but no suggestions were consistent enough to warrant strong recommendations for changes to the Tool. In addition, some Tool language was identified as potentially revictimizing for youth while some screeners felt areas to document contextual details were needed.

Importantly, in phase two of the Institute's HTST work (i.e., psychometric testing), there were two "evidence of" indicators that did not align with the factor structure of the scale: evidence of forced labor and evidence of forced tattooing/branding. The present data illustrates this could be due to challenges with the sub-items for these indicators (e.g., too vague, not comprehensive enough). Discrepancy in screeners' or youths' understanding of particular items could lead to inaccurate data captured on the Tool and could have influenced statistical findings in the prior report.

Limitations to the study include self-selection bias and small focus group sample size, both overall and within groups. The qualitative methodology requires acknowledgment that these results cannot be generalized to all screeners in Florida.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Institute made six overarching recommendations to the DCF regarding the Tool:

1. Develop a robust training catalogue to include additional content on how to administer the Tool.
2. Include text boxes for each major section to document contextual information.
3. Make the HTST an electronic tool.
4. Determine how to best assess risk among particularly vulnerable populations.
5. Consider the addition of items to provide context to the evidence of forced tattooing/branding subsection.
6. Consider rewording certain items or response items.

Importantly, the HTST was initially developed as a conversational guide for screeners, with processes in place to hold follow-up multidisciplinary staffings if a screener indicates that a youth likely or definitely is a victim of trafficking, or if the screener is unsure. As screeners shared in the interviews and focus groups, there are a number of contextual factors (e.g., youth’s level of cooperation) that could influence how the HTST is completed. For example, if a youth is not forthcoming with information, a screener may report “no” to some indicators, but in their professional judgement, still have concerns about victimization status and note at the end of the Tool that they are “unsure” if a youth is being trafficked. This should instigate a multidisciplinary staffing of the case, in which further information is gathered to inform the final status (i.e., verified, unsubstantiated, no indicator) and offer appropriate supports to the youth. Thus, while it is important to continue to refine the HTST and training practices toward Tool validation, the Institute does not recommend that the HTST be used as sole determining factor of youth trafficking victimization at this time.

## RESOURCES:

HUMAN TRAFFICKING SCREENING TOOL	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">HTST Project Website</a>	Page Visits: 277
<a href="#">Child Welfare Workers’ Experiences of Screening for Human Trafficking Victimization (Final Report)</a>	Published: 9/16 Read: 2
<a href="#">Child Welfare Workers’ Experiences of Screening for Human Trafficking Victimization (Executive Summary)</a>	Published: 9/16 Read: 3



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

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
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**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
**Shamra Boel-Studt, Ph.D., MSW**  
 Florida State University

## OVERVIEW

Early pregnancy and parenting are related to educational, financial, and social disruptions for young adults and increase the risk of poor developmental outcomes for their children. The 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. **This project aimed to gain knowledge about maternity homes for pregnant and parenting young mothers in Florida and their impact on maternal and child well-being, specifically to:**

1. describe the program models, services, and target population served in maternity homes in Florida.
2. document the services that maternity home residents receive and how these services contribute to maternal and child well-being after program exit.
3. gain insight into mothers' and providers' experiences with maternity homes and

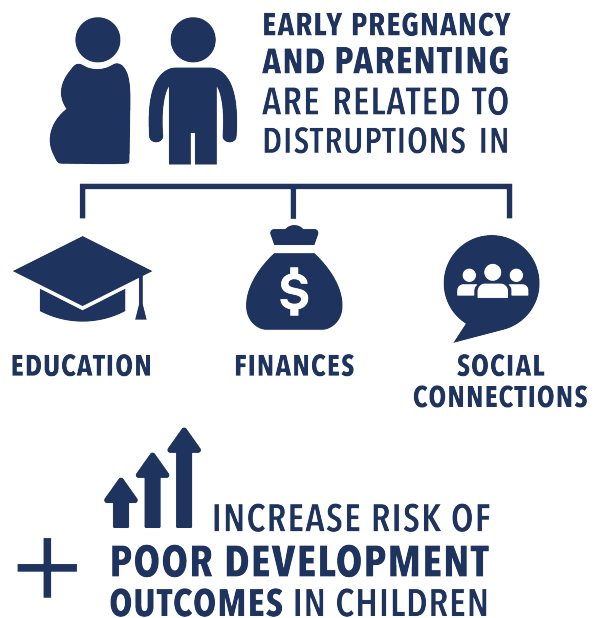
perceptions of service impact within the context of young mothers' lives.

This project is significant because only when we understand how maternity homes operate; the population served, including mothers' history of CPS involvement; the services provided; and service impact, can decisionmakers develop appropriate, responsive services to meet the needs of young mothers.

Using a multitiered, mixed methods approach, the researchers:

**Convened a stakeholder advisory panel to inform the overall study.** The panel included the executive directors of each participating maternity home, at least one additional staff member from each home, and two young mothers currently living in an independent living program who had experience living in a maternity home.

## EARLY PREGNANCY DISRUPTIONS:



**Conducted program reviews.** Four of the nine maternity group homes licensed by the DCF (as of June 2021) provided program documents. Programs were diverse in terms of location (i.e., Broward, Duval, Lee and Marion Counties) and operations (e.g., newly- and well-established homes, and variation in eligibility requirements, staff stability, supervision levels, program services). The researchers obtained documents available publicly (e.g., website) and through maternity home directors (e.g., program manual, handbook) and used a data extraction tool to pull relevant data.

**Surveyed mothers with maternity home experience.** An online Qualtrics survey, available in both Spanish and English, of maternity home graduates and those no longer receiving services was conducted (*N* = 36). The surveys provided preliminary evidence of the role of maternity home structure and services on maternal and child outcomes.

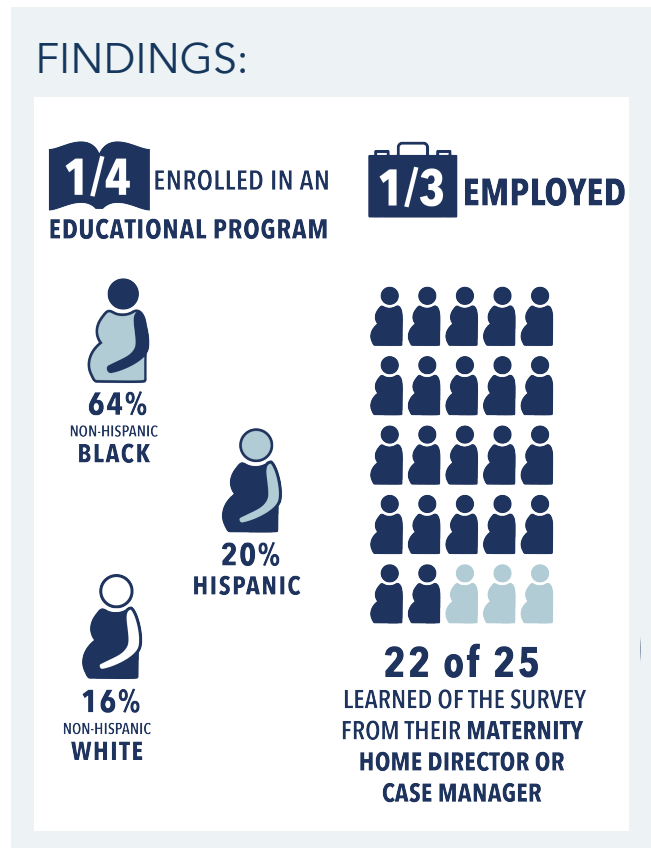
**Interviewed mothers with maternity home experience.** All mothers who completed a survey were invited to participate in a follow-up interview to gain insight about how and why mothers’ experiences with maternity homes shape their and their children’s development and well-being. Twenty-nine (89%) mothers completed an interview.

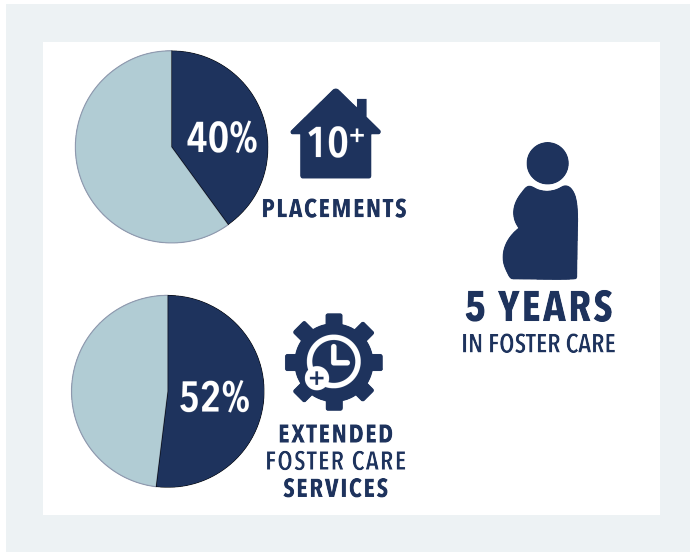
**Interviewed maternity home providers.** Staff from the four participating maternity homes were invited to participate in small group interviews to identify key characteristics of maternity homes and indicators of well-being important to measure when evaluating maternity home effectiveness. Ultimately, between two and six staff participated in an interview, including executive directors and direct care staff (*N* = 16).

Notably, most mothers had experience in foster care, so the researchers limited the analytic sample to mothers with foster care experience who completed a qualitative interview (*n* = 25). They included all provider small-group interviews.

## KEY FINDINGS

Most mothers were in their late teens or early twenties, and identified as non-Hispanic Black (64%), Hispanic (20%), and non-Hispanic White (16%). Mothers were generally socioeconomically disadvantaged. Nearly half experienced homelessness in their lifetime and 16 percent had exchanged sex for food, money, drugs, or shelter. Nearly one-fourth were currently enrolled in an educational program and one-third were employed, most commonly in the service industry. Mothers averaged approximately 5 years in foster care, with 40 percent experiencing 10 or more placements. Approximately one-half of mothers were currently living in independent living programs. Twenty-two of the 25 respondents learned of the survey from their maternity home director or case manager. A full 52 percent (*n* = 13) of mothers were receiving extended foster care services compared to the national average of 25 percent of youth with foster care experience.<sup>17</sup>





Participating maternity homes serve pregnant and parenting teens between ages 11 and 21, including mothers in the foster care system. Program goals and missions prioritized 1) helping teen mothers establish safety; 2) developing positive parenting skills; and 3) preparing for independent living.

**Core services include:**

- Needs assistance for mothers and their children
- Access to health care
- Case management (e.g., individual service plans and goals)
- Parenting classes
- Life skills training
- Counseling or therapy
- Nutrition classes
- Vocational training
- Childcare
- Transportation

From the mothers’ perspective, most reported receiving independent living skills, educational assistance, counseling or therapy, medical coordination, childcare assistance, and friendship within the home. Still, only one mother shared that she was prepared for self-sufficiency upon maternity home exit. Interviews with mothers and providers illuminated the context around mothers’ experiences with maternity homes.

**INTERVIEW FINDINGS:**

Theme	Summary
Adversity, crisis, and rejection	Mothers faced high levels of adversity, stress, and rejection. Unplanned pregnancies often exacerbated mothers’ delicate balance of resources and support. Providers recognized mothers’ difficult pasts and current situations. They viewed maternity homes as key opportunities to support mothers at critical times in their lives; they also recognized the difficulties in serving mothers with such complex, difficult histories.
Tension between useful programs and structured delivery	Together, the narratives of maternity home services and operation reveal the vital and intricate role that maternity homes serve for residents. Generally, mothers desired services and structure. At the same time, they wanted structure that was individual- and circumstance-specific. They also simultaneously wanted freedom and guidance to navigate early motherhood. Providers identified the difficulty of introducing structure given mothers’ histories of adversity, stress, and rejection. Providers identified mothers’ struggle between structure and independence and viewed structure as central to successful parenthood.
Unfulfilled aspirations for connections	Mothers and providers both wanted mothers to develop connections within and outside of the maternity home. However, the circumstances that led mothers to the maternity home placement (e.g., unplanned pregnancy, rejection from family) commonly led to mothers’ hesitancy to trust others. Moreover, their lack of trust, coupled with unhealthy ways of handling conflict (e.g., fights), contributed to high “drama” in the homes and early departures for mothers and staff members alike.

Theme	Summary
Slow progress toward independence	Mothers and providers voiced similar goals for mothers, primarily, to live independently through acquiring necessary education and skills. Both also recognized inevitable “hiccups” in meeting goals. Yet, mothers had lower standards of success (e.g., staying alive and maintaining custody of child) while providers defined success through continued, measurable progress towards goals. Both groups also recognized the need for additional services (e.g., driver’s license preparation) to promote independent-living success.

Limitations to the study include the use of convenience sampling and a small sample size impeding the generalizability of the findings. The researchers surmise the sample overrepresents maternity home providers with more experience and with more established programs as well as a more advantaged sample of mothers than the broader population of mothers with maternity home experience.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the limited sample size and limited generalizability, the following implications are suggestive only and subject to additional study.

1. Policymakers interested in meeting the needs of young mothers in maternity homes may want to consider establishing a statewide network to oversee maternity homes and allow providers to connect with one another.
2. Providers can emphasize the application of program content to help mothers recognize that program engagement will contribute to smoother transitions after they leave the homes.
3. Additional training of frontline providers might

increase skills to work with mothers successfully thereby increasing job satisfaction and decreasing turnover.

4. Providers should anticipate and prepare for untimely departures and could discuss the realities that mothers will face outside of the home while working with mothers to put the necessary supports in place. Celebrating and rewarding progress (however small) and helping mothers develop future-oriented thinking may lengthen stays and contribute to more successful transitions after exit.
5. Our finding that mothers struggle to overcome their adverse backgrounds and transition to independence after exiting maternity homes suggests the importance of extended foster care particularly for this vulnerable, two-generation population. Encouraging participation can facilitate healthier mother and child outcomes.

## RESOURCES:

### MATERNITY GROUP HOMES

Resource	Reach
<a href="#">Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination (Final Report)</a>	Read: 23



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

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 Florida Atlantic University

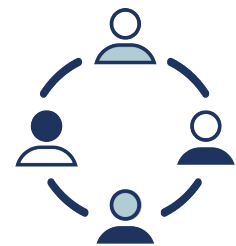
**PROJECT TEAM:**  
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youth in foster care who are receiving independent living services in southeast Florida. Using photovoice methodology, youth explored their feelings and experiences with self-advocacy, self-determination, and connectedness to others. 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. Participants were given the opportunity to communicate their experiences and were empowered as active co-researchers in telling their stories and producing documentary photography.

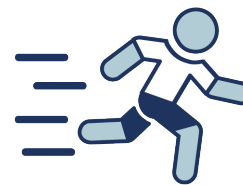
## THIS PROJECT EXPLORED YOUTHS' FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES WITH:



**SELF-ADVOCACY**



**CONNECTEDNESS TO OTHERS**



**SELF-DETERMINATION**

## OVERVIEW

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—reinforce the need for strengths-based and empowerment-oriented approaches when working with this population. To better facilitate transition toward adulthood, attention to youths' needs and their active engagement in planning prior to exiting care is a priority. This participatory action research (PAR) study examined the experiences of

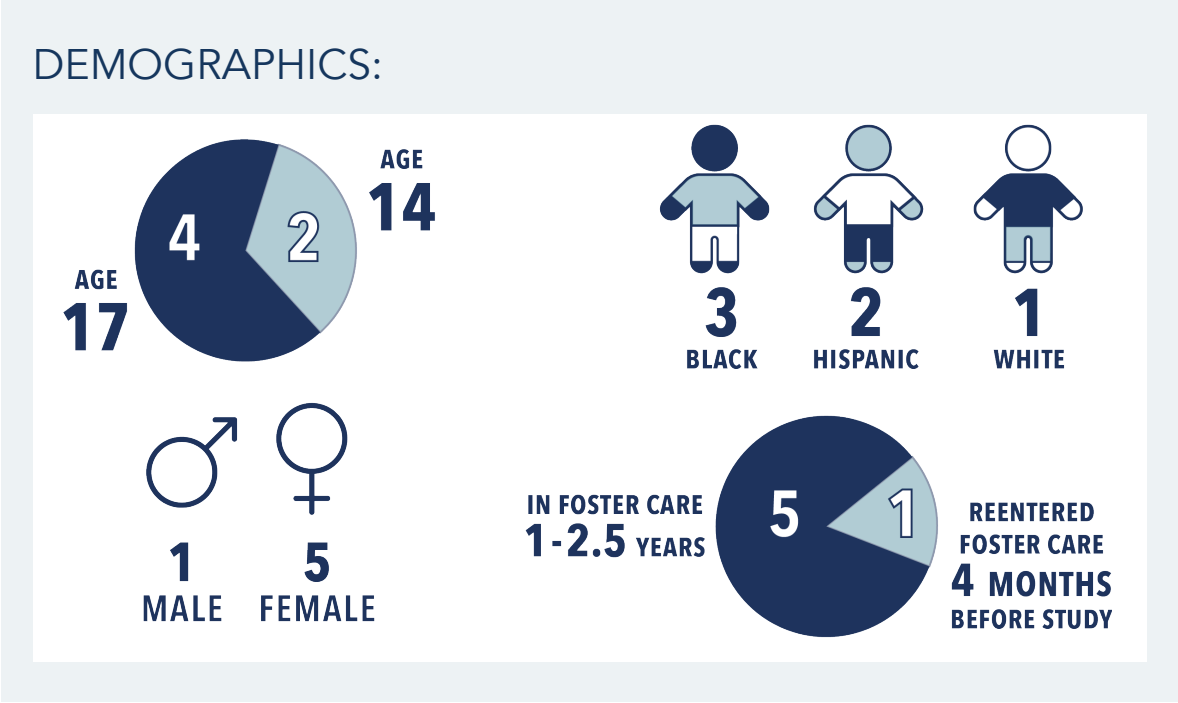
The final sample included six diverse youth in foster care who had experience with independent living services in southeast Florida. This sample size is appropriate for the methodology.<sup>18,19,20</sup> Three youth identified as Black, two as Hispanic, and one as White. The majority (n = 4) were age 17 and two were age 14. Five of the youth in the sample identified as female and one as male. Of the six youth, five had been in foster care for 1 to 2.5 years and the sixth youth had reentered foster care four months before this study began.

Two data collection groups were implemented across two data collection sites: Group A and Group B. This resulted in seven hours of data collection with Group A and six hours of data collection with Group B - totaling 13 hours of time spent with youth in conversation and analysis of study topics.

Session one focused on introducing the study, informed consent/assent, digital camera distribution and training, and refining the research questions with youth input. In sessions two through four, youth convened to share and discuss photographs they created to represent their experience and generated themes. Discussion in

groups was also guided by a semi-structured interview guide, which aided youths' identification of their needs and recommendations for improving services, as well as explored platforms for engaging with the community stakeholders that youth identified as important. Youth were offered refreshments and monetary incentives as compensation for participation. Analysis procedures followed the stages of photovoice methodology described by Wang and Burris.<sup>19</sup>

Notably, through a partnership created with Theatre Lab in the FAU College of Arts & Letters, youths' narratives and photography formed the basis for a student theatre company and professional artists to tell youths' stories through performance art for community stakeholders (e.g., caseworkers, judges, attorneys, foster parents, service providers, etc.) to attend. This performance occurred May 22, 2022.



## KEY FINDINGS

Through youth photos, various prompts, and emerging discussions, the researchers explored findings of the three deductive themes (i.e., self-determination, connectedness to others, self-advocacy). Two inductive themes also emerged: 1) an interdependence among the primary domains, and 2) the impact of trauma experienced by youth. Specifically, there was a salient interdependence observed among each of the primary domains (self-determination, connectedness to others, self-advocacy), which occurs in the context of youths' experiences of trauma, and how that influences youths' experiences and preparation for independent living.

Youth described self-determination as: "*strength,*" "*resiliency,*" "*hard work,*" "*what keeps you pushing,*" "*motivation,*" and "*telling people this is who I want to be.*" Still, high levels of vulnerability and stress influence their self-determination, such as when things happen to them. They experience vulnerability through lack of involvement in decision-making and the pressure of looming negative repercussions (e.g., "*...you make one wrong decision...[DCF] hold[s] it against you...*").

Youth emphasized the importance of connection to others: their family of origin, other youth in foster care, friends at school, and, for two youth, child welfare partners (e.g., GAL and house parents). Connections were characterized as comforting, normalizing, instrumental, and empowering, which also reinforces the emerging theme of interdependence among the three study domains explored within this project (e.g., relationships are a mechanism for self-determination and self-advocacy to occur). Youth reported various levels of connectedness and experiences of relational permanence in their interpersonal relationships; yet almost all reported more negative perceptions of relationships with professionals in their life (i.e., caseworkers, attorneys, judges, GALs, therapists). All youth expressed challenges with building relationships

and expanding social support, including distrust in connecting with others. Though this could be due to past experiences of trauma, ongoing relational problems with child welfare professionals could exacerbate youths' reluctance to engage with others.

Regarding self-advocacy, youth described experiences wherein they felt the foster care system and child welfare professionals constrained their voice. They stated that they want platforms to share their needs, preferences, and desires. Related, research suggests that when youth are more involved in planning their case and transition, they are more satisfied with their experiences; yet youth may not consistently have this opportunity.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, a primary and unique platform option was also developed in collaboration with the FAU Theatre Lab in the College of Arts & Letters. Theatre Lab @Center partners with organizations serving at-risk youth to put the concerns of today's youth in the most prominent position they have – theatre. This partnership provided an opportunity for the perspectives, photographs, and recommendations created by youth in the study to become the material for a devised theater piece 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. Youth and community partners (e.g., judges, caseworkers, administrators, foster parents, teachers, service providers, etc.) were invited to attend to hear and receive youths' stories through this medium and engage in dialogue about direct practice and policy implications. Two youth, several housemates, and their house parent, were able to attend, as well as an audience of approximately 60 other community members. Using information from the youths' social action statement, additional venues for this performance will continue to be identified in collaboration with youth and child welfare partner groups.



ORIGINAL ARTWORK BY YOUTH



“THE FIRES KEEP COMING”

*So this is life, right? This is your body [in the center]. These are challenges, you know, those bomb things, firework things [the small dots]? That’s the fire starting. But you don’t know what it is because it’s so small. So you don’t even know it’s coming. And there are just SO MANY of them [fires]. They just keep coming. [Moderator: You’re saying the fires keep coming?] What would an example of a fire be? That they would put me back into this [system].*



“CAN YOU TRUST IT?”

*So people always say you’ll never fail, never give up, all this stuff. But [look to the left side of picture]. See all that [shaded space]? That’s your life, all the struggles you’ve been through. And then you come up [move to look at the text on the wall] to somebody telling you this. “You will never fail.” Should you trust that now? Why should you accept it now, if you haven’t been told that in the beginning?*



“SILENCED”

*Animals don’t have their own voice. They can’t speak to you. And you know how there’s those commercials where the dogs are upset? That’s what that face is making. Like they’re being abused and they can’t speak. They’re silenced. And I feel like it’s messed up that people do that to their dogs. And kids are abused, just like a dog. And they’re locked up, chained up like a dog. And then they put them into a pound. Like we’re put into foster care. And I feel like it’s messed up. Shouldn’t be happening.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest youth both need and desire more than independent living services or programming in order to prepare for their future. Finding ways for the child welfare system to build and support the capacity for relationships may be a key aspect of supporting youths' self-determination and self-advocacy. Though the study's small sample size limits generalizability of the findings, **the in-depth data informed several implications and recommendations:**

1. Child welfare and associated professionals need to understand that youth often internalize negative feelings that come from the high-stakes nature of foster care.
2. Professionals may need to consider that current trauma-informed care practices may not be sufficient or equitably meeting the needs of youth who are facing continued adversity and/or those processing prior and ongoing trauma.
3. Shared decision-making (SDM) can provide a set of principles and guidelines for professionals to better collaborate with youth. Professionals using SDM must embody multiple values including support for self-determination, preferences, and knowledge of youth or families they are working with, while also recognizing the importance of relationships and relational autonomy.<sup>22</sup>
4. Professionals need to maintain a high level of awareness of what it takes to meet the needs of youth in foster care, particularly those facing higher levels of trauma or adversity. Youth may require support above or beyond what would meet the standards of what professionals consider typical or normative.
5. Child welfare professionals should receive training, coaching, or other types of support (e.g., time or opportunities for relationship-building or self-care) for learning how to balance

the compliance aspects of working within the child welfare system with the needs for building transformative relationships with youth who are in a vulnerable environment and at high stakes point in their life.

6. Frontline workers cannot bear the brunt or responsibility for making change when the system is not always set up for supporting or reinforcing SDM, healthy attachments, relationships or connections to family or culture, and other important aspects of a healing environment.

An executive summary and full copy of the report with more than 20 youth photographs and narratives, as well as table of youth recommendations, will be available on the Institute's website in November 2022.

# Follow the Love Pilot Project - Strengthening Relational Permanency for Foster Youth in Florida Child Welfare Systems

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

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**PROJECT TEAM:**

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## OVERVIEW

Florida has yet to operationalize the concept of relational permanency for older youth in foster care and has yet to fully engage youth in discussions and decision-making around supportive connections. The Selfless Love Foundation (SLF), a Florida-based organization that promotes foster youth voice, approached the Institute about collaborating on a new relational permanency initiative. The SLF, with a team of collaborative partners, launched the Follow the Love – Youth Relational Permanency initiative (FTL) to address these current gaps in the field.

**Follow the Love aims to:**

1. Enhance Florida’s child welfare systems’ understanding and prioritizing of relational permanency.
2. Improve the number and strength of youth’s supportive adult connections.

3. Increase the engagement of transitioning youth in permanency planning and decision-making.

FTL includes youth engagement and strengths-based training to participating child welfare agencies, by training and deploying FTL Facilitators to implement FTL with youth ages 16 and 17 years old, who are in non-kinship out-of-home placements. These FTL Facilitators are Guardians ad Litem, clinicians, or independent living or youth well-being specialists. The FTL team is currently collaborating with three pilot agencies: Family Support Services of North Florida, Community Partnership for Children, and Heartland for Children. The Institute is funding the initial evaluation of FTL.

## PROJECT COLLABORATION:










The FTL team is currently collaborating with three pilot agencies: Family Support Services of North Florida, Community Partnership for Children, and Heartland for Children. The Institute is funding the initial evaluation of Follow the Love.

## CURRENT STATUS

**As of June 2022, the three pilot agencies reported the following number of FTL Facilitators and participating youth in this quarter:**

- ❖ Family Support Services of North Florida - 11 youth, 4 facilitators

## PARTICIPANTS:

	YOUTH	FACILITATORS
	 11	 4
	 20	 3
	 20	 2

- ❖ Community Partnership for Children - 20 youth, 3 facilitators
- ❖ Heartland for Children - 20 youth, 2 facilitators

Trained FTL Facilitators use the Youth Connections Scale and Permanency Pact to support strengths-based conversations with youth about past and current relationships. Facilitators began meeting with youth, completing the Youth Connections Scales, and identifying potential supportive connections identified by youth.

The evaluators noted that implementation of FTL has been slow at each agency, as evidenced by a return rate of 67 percent of the Youth Connection Scales. The team met in July to identify strategies to increase engagement in the FTL process, including the use of a fidelity checklist. There are no preliminary findings to report at this time.

## NEXT STEPS

The team is continuing to work with the three pilot sites as well as onboarding a second round of pilot sites and modifying practices based on lessons learned so far. The team will provide quarterly updates to the Institute, with a final report due June 30, 2023. The final report will include final implementation and process-related outcomes, preliminary youth outcomes, and other information that might inform the expansion of the FTL initiative.

# HOPE Court: An Explanatory Case Study of Restorative Practices in Child Welfare

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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FLITE Center

## PROJECT TEAM:

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Angela Yehl, Psy.D., Nova Southeastern University

James Pann, Ph.D., Nova Southeastern University

Tammy Kushner, Psy.D., Nova Southeastern University

## OVERVIEW

HOPE Court is a new and restorative approach to the dependency system for youth aging out of the foster care system without an intact family. HOPE Court is a problem-solving court that applies restorative practices to ensure a safe space where youth can be heard and co-create their futures. It is designed to empower youth aging out of foster care by increasing the connection, compassion, and community they require to become self-sufficient adults. The Broward County Children's Services Council is funding the programmatic efforts of the Hope Court and the Institute is funding the initial evaluation of HOPE Court. The evaluation findings could provide an evidence-informed model for replication in other jurisdictions, with anticipated low costs and high benefits, that utilizes and values the community itself as the mechanism for healing and enhances the effectiveness of the state's current approach to preparing youth for self-sufficiency.

## CURRENT STATUS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The team began implementing HOPE Court prior to the Institute's involvement. The evaluation team used an embedded single-case design to examine the implementation of HOPE Court with this initial cohort of youth (Cohort 1,  $n = 10$ ). Specifically, the evaluators aimed to understand how: 1) restorative practices are utilized in a dependency court process; 2) youth and stakeholders experience a dependency court program that utilizes restorative practices; and 3) restorative practices impact youth and stakeholders in the dependency system. The team submitted the final report on Cohort 1 to the Institute, which highlighted the major finding that HOPE Court shifts from the adversarial model typically present in dependency court.<sup>23</sup> **Specifically, HOPE Court is:**

- ❖ Youth-centered (i.e., increased youth voice)
- ❖ Collaborative, as evidenced by frequent, quality contact
- ❖ Supportive, by providing youth a reliable network of trusted adults during transition out of care

## EVALUATION:

The evaluation findings could provide an evidence-informed model that utilizes and values the community itself as the mechanism for healing and enhances the effectiveness to the state's approach to preparing youth for self-sufficiency.

Cohort 1 youth completed over two years in the HOPE Court program and, as of June 1, 2022, have transitioned to a typical court schedule, as statutorily required. Cohort 1 youth may voluntarily request circles or hearings at any time and remain supported by their individual team members.

The Institute is supporting the evaluation of Cohort 2. Participants have been selected and consented. The adult support team (i.e., child welfare professionals) has been identified for the project and received training in June 2022. Teams of adults for each youth have been assigned and a schedule of all programming through June 2023 has been created.

## NEXT STEPS

The HOPE Court team will engage in continued adult team training, research team meetings, data collection, and team collaborations. Youth programming will begin, which will include circles, legal processes, independent living skills workshops, and virtual vision board planning. The team will provide quarterly updates to the Institute, with preliminary Cohort 2 findings provided in June 2023. A final report will follow by September 2023.

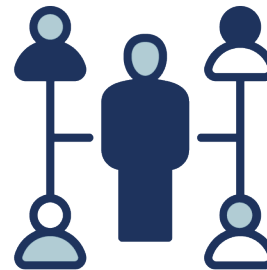
## BENEFITS OF HOPE COURT:



**YOUTH-CENTERED**



**COLLABORATIVE**



**SUPPORTIVE**

# Serving Families



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

### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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Florida Atlantic University

### PROJECT TEAM:

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Heather Howard, Ph.D., LCSW, Florida Atlantic University

## OVERVIEW

Comfort calls are one part of the Statewide Unified Plan developed from section 409.1415 *Florida Statutes*. 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 and parents
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
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 section 409.1415 Florida Statutes. This mixed methods study is examining the initial effectiveness and implementation of comfort calls in the southeast and central regions of Florida, as reported by birth parents, foster parent/kin/fictive kin caregivers, and child welfare professionals. 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 and central regions of Florida, and results will be shared with all regions in Florida.

The investigators also plan to work with the DCF to examine the long-term impact of comfort calls in the future. It is hoped that this project will provide pilot data on the 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.

## PRIORITY ISSUE:

These calls represent a statewide priority and legislative mandate that partnerships between birth and foster caregivers are important and beneficial.

## CURRENT STATUS

The initial data collection strategy included surveys with multiple partners involved in the planning and implementation of comfort calls. Despite significant efforts throughout the project period, the researchers experienced recruitment challenges, as well as challenges in maintaining a consistent point of contact at the DCF due to turnover. Though several foster caregivers, comfort call facilitators, and administrators completed initial surveys, response rates were very low. Notably, no birth parents participated.

The principal investigator collaborated with co-investigators and community partners to redesign the project into a mixed method study, to include the original survey data and qualitative focus groups or interviews with child welfare administrators, call facilitators, foster caregivers, and birth parents. In addition, recruitment for birth parents has been extended across the state. The survey data, although limited, will be included and the Principal Investigator will reach out to see if a DCF partner can provide comfort call completion numbers for the two regions involved, as well as the state for further context. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in summer 2022.

## NEXT STEPS

Although the researchers were planning to submit their final report on September 30, 2022, the principal investigator has had challenges recruiting parents into the study and requested additional time to extend the data collection and analysis period. The Institute supports this decision to ensure parent voice is included and granted a short extension. The final report will be submitted to the Institute by October 28, 2022 and made available on the Institute website in December 2022.



# A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Authentic Family Engagement and Strengthening (AFES) Approach

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**PROJECT TEAM:**

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Corey Best, Mining for Gold, LLC

## OVERVIEW

The Authentic Family Engagement and Strengthening (AFES) approach is a flexible, multi-faceted child welfare approach developed to address the needs of Black families impacted by child welfare services and reduce removals of Black children from their homes following a maltreatment investigation. The AFES approach was a product of a larger community-engaged racial justice project which included social service providers and administrators, community members, and families harmed by racial discrimination who engaged in purposeful conversation to identify a comprehensive and strengths-focused approach for empowering Black families. The AFES approach was piloted in Broward County, with results indicating a significantly lower number of removals when comparing a group of child maltreatment investigators who received racial justice and family engagement training and coaching compared to units who did not participate in training or coaching.

This mixed-methods study examines child welfare workers’ perceptions of the:

1. presence of systemic and racial discrimination in the child welfare system.
2. presence of workers’ racial justice values and the impact of these values on workers’ interactions with families involved in child welfare services.
3. impact of racial justice and family engagement training on workers’ interactions with families involved in child welfare services.

The secondary purpose of this research is to examine the perceived effectiveness of targeted racial justice and authentic family engagement training and coaching with a small group of child welfare workers in:

1. promoting self-reflection and awareness of racial discrimination and systemic racism.
2. reducing racial discrimination when working with families.
3. prioritizing relationships over services when working with families impacted by the child welfare system.
4. empowering Black families who are involved in the child welfare system.

The current study includes child welfare workers from Palm Beach, Duval, and Alachua Counties, and a retrospective evaluation of investigators from Broward County in order to provide a multi-site sample. Research phases and products include developmental research (Phase 1), training curriculum development (Phase 2), and coaching guide development (Phase 3).

## CURRENT STATUS

Despite the researchers’ best efforts and continuous interactions with the DCF, they experienced several challenges in receiving approval for the original

project. The project team received encouraging feedback from the DCF that the proposal is realistic and feasible; however, the researchers grew concerned that they submitted a human subjects IRB application in February and are still waiting for approval as of September. In addition, based on some of their initial work to develop the training and continue the project, they identified potential avenues for creating a more meaningful or impactful project.

With this, the researchers approached the Institute in September 2022 regarding a substantial shift to the project. The new multi-pronged project will include:

1. A conceptual article on justice-centered child welfare practice, using initial data and ongoing data collection and research that has been compiled while waiting for DCF approval.
2. A participatory action qualitative research project promoting voices of those impacted by child welfare/foster care and child welfare professionals to derive recommendations for promoting justice-centered practice in a real-world setting.
3. A co-constructed community project or pilot using the voices of those with lived expertise and those in the child welfare workforce to promote or create a justice-centered shift in current child welfare practice (e.g., a community information-sharing campaign; a legislative proposal to formalize a shift in the language we use to talk about families impacted by child welfare services; a peer-support or diversion-type program as an alternative to court for families impacted by investigation and mandated to services). This could be incorporated into work being done at the Institute's Alliance for Workforce Enhancement demonstration sites.
4. A letter of inquiry for WT Grant, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, or a similar organization to continue/expand this work and a commitment to submit to at least two different funding opportunities.
5. An Institute-hosted workshop or lunch-and-learn event to disseminate the process and findings.

## NEXT STEPS

Although the researchers were planning to submit their final report on September 30, 2022, the principal investigator has had trouble recruiting parents into the study and requested additional time to extend the data collection and analysis period. Institute leadership approved the researchers' request to amend the project, which should have minimal temporal and financial impact. The researchers will provide a comprehensive updated plan to Institute leadership for review in October 2022. Project completion is still anticipated to occur in fall 2023.

# Kinship Caregiving

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## PROJECT TEAM:

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Kristine Posada, MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

Colleen McBride, MS, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## OVERVIEW

The emphasis of kinship care is to keep the child or children connected to their extended family, and, if possible, out of the child welfare system. Kinship navigator programs (KNPs) were initiated to provide information regarding benefits, services, supports, and programs available to kinship care families to provide a safety net for kinship caregivers who may be unfamiliar with or unable to access the appropriate services to maintain a strong placement. Since 2018, the DCF received funding through the Administration for Children and Families to support ongoing Kinship efforts throughout the state, including evaluation of services in collaboration with the Institute.

The Children's Home Network (CHN) and Kids Central, Inc. (KCI) provide several services for kinship care families. These services include kinship caregiver-specific services, such as peer support, mental health services, childcare support, support groups, and peer-to-peer navigation, as well as several programmatic support services, such as family-finding, collaborating with community agencies, dedicated kinship navigator, legal services, information about services, and intake and needs assessments. Based on the findings of the Institute's 2019 Kinship Inventory study, these two programs were recommended to be evaluated further

to enhance their chances of receiving a Promising rating by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

Subsequently, during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021-2022, the DCF contracted the Institute to carry out three objectives: 1) review Children's Home Network's 2012-2015 evaluation and subsequent manuscripts; 2) continue the process and outcome evaluation of Kids Central, Inc.'s Kinship Navigator Program; and 3) conduct secondary data analyses examining kinship care placement and child-level outcomes.

## CURRENT STATUS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

An overview of the current status of each objective, including preliminary findings, is provided in the following sections.

### *Children's Home Network Materials Review*

The researchers reviewed CHN's final evaluative report and all published manuscripts related to the kinship program submitted to academic journals since 2015 as well as the submission reports from the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse. The Evaluation Report indicated a large sample size ( $N = 1551$ ), a well-developed logic model, and a comprehensive preliminary report on the effectiveness of the kinship model. Though initially designed to be a randomized controlled trial, this evaluation would more appropriately be considered a quasi-experimental design. Specifically, the randomization process lacked clarity in how participants were assigned to groups. Caregivers were randomly assigned to a condition based on their county of residence (Pinellas or Hillsborough) and their kinship caregiver type (formal or informal); the kinship service model varied by location. Thus, not every kinship caregiver had an equal chance at being assigned to each type of service

group. Further, the unequal sample sizes between groups nullifies the randomization.

The Institute recommends Children’s Home Network divest themselves from referring to the study as a randomized controlled trial and instead consider this a quasi-experimental design, which does not require random assignment. Still, CHN must include a treatment and comparison condition and measure baseline equivalency by controlling for variables out of balance at baseline—i.e., with unequal allocation between the groups.

### *Kid’s Central, Inc. Kinship Navigator Program Evaluation*

The Institute began the KCI evaluation in 2020. During the current contract period, the Institute continued recruitment and data collection toward completion of both the process and outcome evaluation of the kinship program. Specifically, the researchers renewed the IRB application; completed follow-up interviews with KCI staff; recruited an additional 50 kinship caregivers to participate in the evaluation; and collected 20 additional baseline data files and 14 follow-up data files.

Preliminary findings related to the Kinship programs processes were informed by initial ( $n = 8$ ) and follow-up ( $n = 5$ ) interviews with staff, particularly as their perceptions relate to the program’s logic model.

#### **Preliminary findings:**

- ❖ **Time at Kids Central.** Most of the staff have been with Kids Central, Inc. for more than three years, with some indicating having been with Kids Central, Inc. for 10 years and beyond. One staff member left the agency in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. In addition, the leadership indicated they are trying to add more staff to their team.
- ❖ **Experience with Kinship Caregivers.** Many of the staff noted that they have worked with kinship care families through the KNP at for multiple years, with many staff having multiple years of experience working with kinship caregivers.
- ❖ **Benefits of the KNP.** Staff perceive numerous benefits of the KNP, including ACCESS Florida benefits, legal services, and support groups. During the follow-up interviews, KCI staff noted that the interest in the support groups declined and maintaining interest and engagement in the support groups was one of the biggest challenges during the past year. These staffers suggested that the needs of the incoming kinship caregivers have shifted, as the caregivers are younger and often still working full-time. In addition, the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have also changed the dynamics of the support groups.
- ❖ **Needs of Families.** Staff perceive that families’ needs are centered on the ACCESS Florida benefits program and noted the difficulties they as staff experience in providing this service to kinship caregivers. During the follow up interviews, the focus was on the changing composition of the kinship care families utilizing the program.
- ❖ **Connecting with Families.** Staff noted connecting with families is an important component of the KNP, yet with the high caseloads and the lengthy assessments, this can be difficult. Staff noted that, on average, case managers have around 20-30 active cases assigned based on the county. During the follow-up interviews, several of staff noted that turnover influenced the caregivers and the program, with one suggesting that recruitment into the program might have been impacted due to staffing changes.

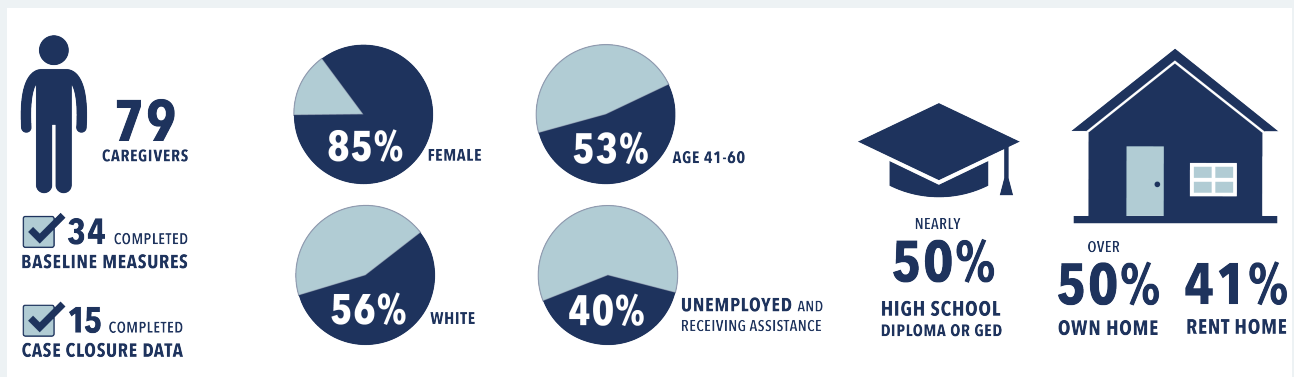
❖ **Staffing Needs.** Staffers noted during the initial interview that the program seemed to be functioning well, specifically related to the staffing needs. Still, several indicated there may need to be more case managers or specific personnel for the ACCESS Florida benefits to assist the team with addressing all the needs of the families. During the follow-up interviews, staffing needs were also discussed at length.

Preliminary findings related to the kinship programs' outcomes are derived from quantitative measures collected by KCI at the start and closure of a case. As of this writing, there are 79 caregivers enrolled in the evaluation; 34 completed baseline measures, and 15 completed case closure data. Most participants identify as female (85%), White (56%), and between 41 and 60 years of age (53%). Nearly 50 percent report having a high school diploma or GED. Over 50 percent own their home, while 41 percent rent. Forty percent report being unemployed and receiving some form of assistance.

Almost all the kinship caregivers felt generally unsure of what services to use, suggesting the need for increased guidance from case managers or kinship care navigators. Most kinship caregivers were concerned for

their well-being in the last year, with about half feeling frustrated because they did not know how to navigate various systems (i.e., medical care, insurance, assistance with utility bills). Though frustrated, 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 they were doing a good job of raising their relative child. Each of the kinship caregivers reported feeling they were doing what is in the best interest of their relative child and that they looked forward to spending time with their relative child.

## PRELIMINARY EVALUATION FINDINGS:



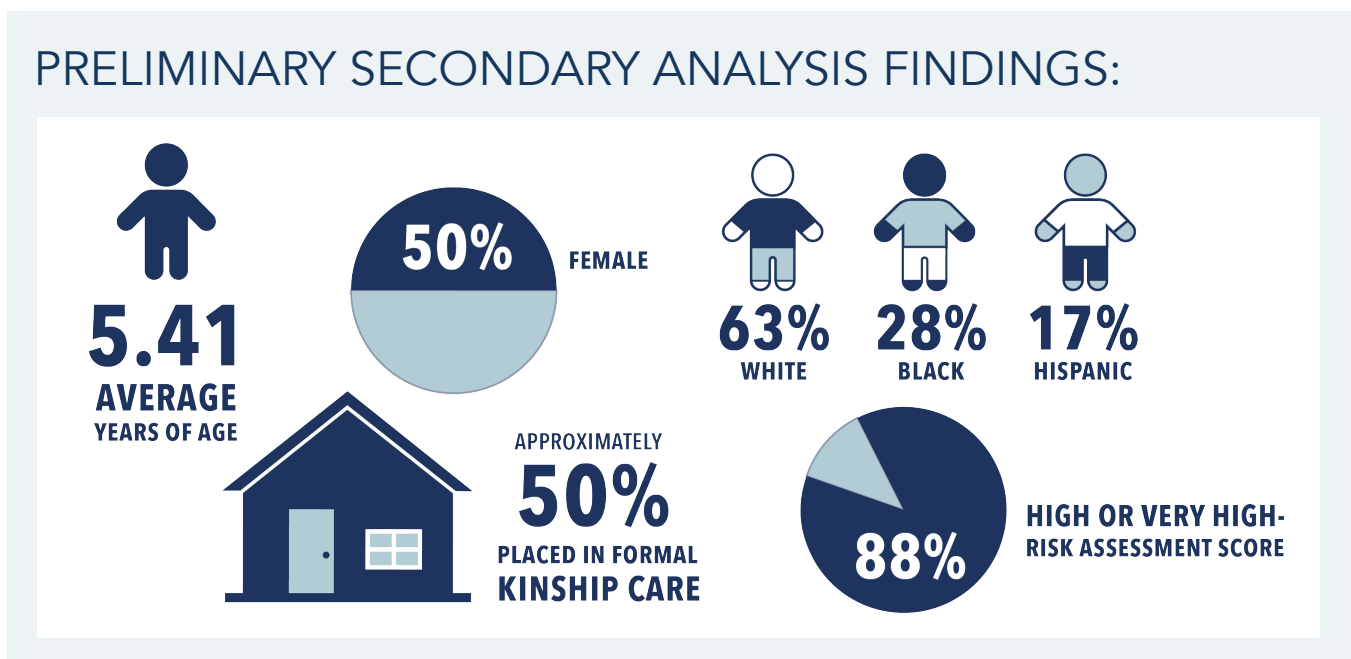
## Secondary Analysis of Kinship Placement and Child Outcomes

The principal investigator conducted a secondary data analysis of administrative data provided to the Institute, specifically analyzing child-level outcomes (i.e., safety, permanency, well-being) across the state based on kinship services available. Notably, given the recent updated kinship guidance within Senate Bill 96, as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers decided to look at pre-2020 data. The researchers held several collaborative meetings in fall 2021 and spring 2022 with the DCF to ascertain the availability of kinship-related variables and narrow the analytic scope accordingly. Following the completion of the DCF’s required data security training and execution of a data sharing agreement, the DCF provided the data to the principal investigator on May 6, 2022.

Approximately half of the sample of youth identified as female, with an average age of 5.41 years. Most of the sample identified as White (63%), while 28% identified as Black, and 17% as Hispanic. Approximately half of

the youth were initially placed in formal kinship care, with a majority of these youth (88%) having a high or very high-risk assessment score.

Initial analyses indicate significant relationships exist between initial placement type (i.e., non-kinship foster care, kinship care) re-entry into care within 12 months ( $\chi^2 = 11.083, p < .001$ ); placement moves ( $t = 35.552, p < .001$ ); length of stay in days ( $t = 11.787, p < .001$ ); and permanency outcomes ( $\chi^2 = 465.17, p < .001$ ) with children initially placed in kinship care having significantly better outcomes on each of these measures compared to children initially placed in foster care. While there were significant differences on each of these measures based on CBC lead agency, the level of services available within each agency was not a predictive factor. This indicates that agency-level factors need further exploration to determine what influence these have on child-level outcomes.



## NEXT STEPS

This report was submitted to the DCF September 30, 2022 and included:

1. A complete summary of the CHN materials review, including recommendations for CHN to consider based on the assessment for additional manuscripts.
2. A preliminary report on the KCI evaluation, including both process and outcome findings.
3. A manuscript draft of the child outcomes analysis.

Importantly, the Institute plans to fund the remaining work to be completed on the KCI analysis, with cooperation from the DCF and KCI. The principal investigator recommends ongoing recruitment through June 2023 to ensure a sample size of 100 participants, 50 per treatment condition (Enhanced Services and Treatment as Usual). Allowing time for case closure and follow-up measures, a final outcomes report is anticipated in spring 2024. During that time period, the researchers will also complete the process evaluation, which includes document and data reviews of administrative data; ongoing semi-structured interviews with staff and focus groups with kinship caregivers; and client surveys soliciting information on program objectives, services provided, length of time of services, client characteristics, and client satisfaction.



2021-2022

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP  
AWARD RECIPIENT

# Latent Profiles of Foster Parents and Their Associations with Intent to Disrupt Placement and Turnover

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Taylor Dowdy-Hazlett, Ph.D., MSW**  
Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## OVERVIEW

Foster parents serve a critical role in the child welfare system's functionality, providing needed placement, stability, and care for children requiring out-of-home care. However, foster parents report being dissatisfied with fostering,<sup>24</sup> and 30 to 60 percent of foster parents quit their roles each year.<sup>25</sup> This has negative consequences for youth in care, resulting in placement disruptions and ongoing placement moves. In the United States, more than 690,000 youth are placed in out-of-home care, with an average length of stay around two years. Half of the youth who remain in out-of-home care for longer than two years will experience a placement change,<sup>26</sup> and, regardless of time in care, children's disruption rates range from 30 to 95 percent,<sup>27,28</sup> causing a continuous cycle of instability for youth.

### The current study aimed to:

1. Examine associations between foster parent demographics, child demographics, and placement characteristics with foster parent intent to a) disrupt foster placement and b) quit foster caring.
2. Explore subgroups of foster parents based on indicators related to support, parenting practices, stress, coping, and burnout, and identify at-risk profiles related to placement instability.

The researcher recruited foster parents to participate in a cross-sectional survey, which included questions about the foster parent (e.g., age, race, gender), the foster home (e.g., number of current foster youth, number of biological children), and the foster child (e.g., age, gender, permanency goal). A series of instruments were used to capture data related to stress, coping, support, and youth/foster parent characteristics.

## KEY FINDINGS

Participation included 363 foster parents throughout the states of Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. Much of the sample resided in Florida ( $n = 243$ , 64.3%) and held a regular foster care license ( $n = 287$ , 75.9%). Most foster parents identified as female ( $n = 333$ , 92%), White ( $n = 295$ , 82.2%), and married ( $n = 268$ , 73.8%), with a little over half being employed full-time ( $n = 206$ , 56.7%) and earning over \$61,000 a year ( $n = 217$ , 59.8%). The mean age was 43 ( $SD = 11.63$ ). Regarding foster youth, there were more male foster youth ( $n = 189$ , 52.1%) followed by female ( $n = 167$ , 46%), and non-binary ( $n = 1$ , .3%). Most of the youth had siblings in care ( $n = 150$ , 65.8%); however most were not placed with all their siblings ( $n = 96$ , 39.7%). Thirty-nine percent ( $n = 141$ ) of youth were residing in the first placement. Most youth did not have a mental health diagnosis ( $n = 268$ , 73.8%) and most frequently permanency goals were set for adoption ( $n = 150$ , 41.3%).

Four hierarchical linear regressions were conducted, two for each outcome variable, due to measuring intent to turnover and intent to disrupt placement utilizing two different scales. In the first turnover scale, foster parents of color, older foster youth, youth whose goal



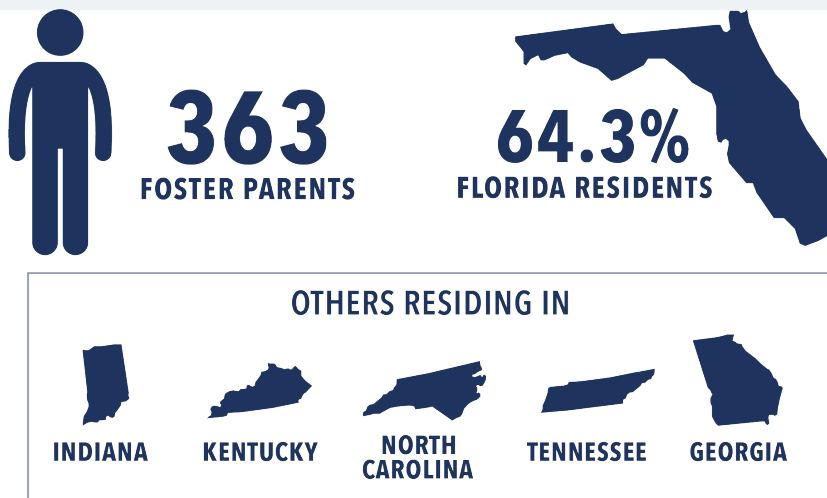
was adoption, and youth residing in the foster home longer were all predictive of foster parents' intent to turnover. In the second turnover scale, foster parents who made less than \$60,000 a year had 1) youth residing in the home longer; 2) youth with behavioral issues; and 3) higher intentions of turning over. Among the two scales, the only variable that remained the same for predictability of turnover intention was the length of time in the foster home, that is, as the youth resided longer in the foster home, the turnover intent was higher. The higher turnover intention could be associated with the foster youth's permanency goal, which was also predictive of turnover intent. In both intent to disrupt scales, foster youth behavioral issues and age were predictive of intent to disrupt placement, which is consistent with extant literature, identifying behavioral issues as the main reason for placement disruption.

The researcher also explored foster parent profiles based on indicators associated with parenting practices, support, stress and coping, and quality of fostering. A latent profile analysis resulted in a 3-profile solution: Resourceful, Strained, and Disadvantaged Foster

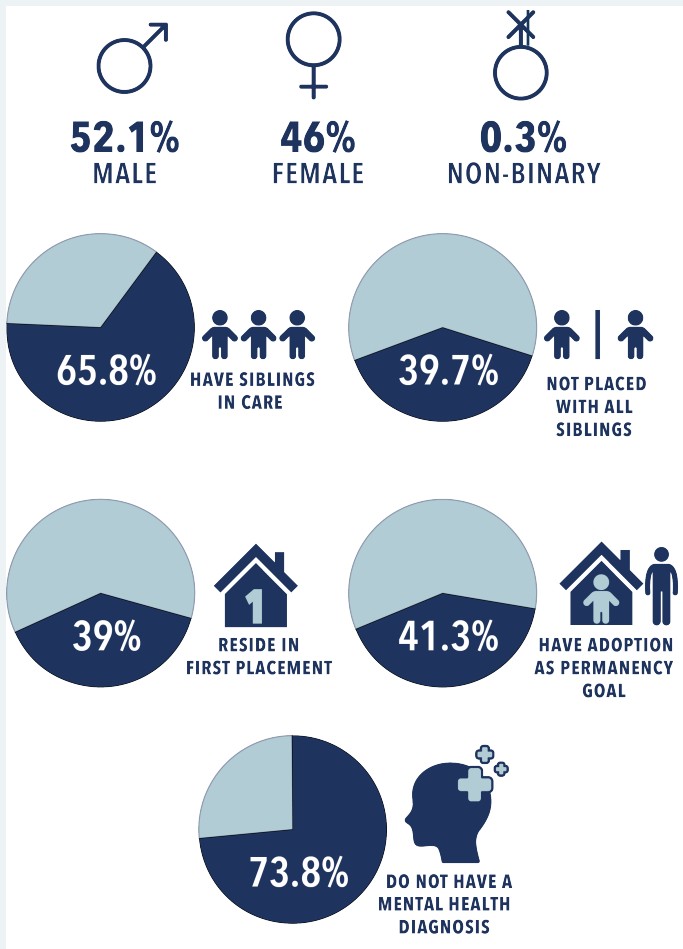
Parents. Surprisingly, The Resourceful Foster Parents did not find the pre-service training to be as valuable as the Strained and Disadvantaged Foster Parents, however, they were better able to manage feelings of burnout, parenting stress, secondary traumatic stress, which could be due to higher levels of social support and coping abilities.

There were significant differences across profiles on scores related to intent to turnover and disrupt placement regarding distal outcomes. Those in the Strained Foster Parent profile scored significantly higher (e.g., higher intent) than those in the Resourceful profile, and Disadvantaged Foster Parents had higher scores than Resourceful and Strained Foster Parents. These results show that for foster parents who have limited support (e.g., social and systemic), coping abilities, and compassion satisfaction but high symptoms of burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and parenting stress, turnover and placement disruption may be a way to escape the stress of foster parenting. For foster parents who are faring well in these areas, the risk of intent to turnover and disrupt placement is reduced.

## FOSTER PARENT PARTICIPANTS:



## FOSTER YOUTH PARTICIPANTS:



2. Why foster parents opt to disrupt placement versus turnover, and vice versa, to understand the differences in these actions. Moreover, an exploration into the differences should be explored in association with factors known to predict placement instability.
3. Interventions and training related to enhancing support services for foster parents. Specifically, what supports foster parents need related to social and systemic supports, and then explore interventions to enhance those supports.
4. Interventions to decrease burnout and STS symptoms in foster parents and train foster parents on appropriate coping and self-care strategies to aid in decreasing symptomology.
5. Training-related to skills to manage youth behavior.
6. Creation and validation of instruments to measure intent to disrupt placement or turnover.

Given findings that foster parents struggle to manage their roles and child behaviors effectively, the researcher also suggested 1) increasing opportunities for respite care to decrease burnout; and 2) exploring training and support options, such as creating foster parent networks, support groups, or mentorship programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Limitations include the use of proxy measures for turnover and self-selection bias among the sample.

**The researcher made several recommendations for more nuanced future research on this topic, including exploration of:**

1. Different measures associated with parenting practices, that is, the closeness between foster parents and youth and authoritarian parenting approaches, and how these impact turnover and disruption.

# Changing Systems

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

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
**Riaan van Zyl, Ph.D.**  
 University of South Florida

**PROJECT TEAM:**  
 Kerry Littlewood, Ph.D., University of South Florida  
 Lodi Lipen, MSPH, University of South Florida  
 Amy Nourie, MS, University of South Florida  
 Andrea Combrink, MPH, University of South Florida

### OVERVIEW

In October 2019, the CBC lead agency in Circuit 10, Heartland for Children, convened a task force to address high turnover rates among their case management staff. Concurrently, a research team from the University of South Florida (USF) conducted a study on turnover. During the study, the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the way child welfare workers provided services, necessitating and highlighting the need for a follow-up study. The Institute funded this follow-up study, with the purpose to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on workforce disruptions in Circuit 10. 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

**In comparing factors related to turnover before and during the pandemic, survey responses indicated:**

- ❖ Two factors were similar before and during the pandemic: impact of remote work on job satisfaction and ability to cope with stress. Both of these factors had identical mean scores before and during COVID-19 for those who completed the survey.
- ❖ Several factors were lower (i.e., more problematic) during COVID-19 than before. Most notably were the “availability of case managers for mentoring/shadowing opportunities” and the “overall amount of work.” Both of these differences were trending towards statistical significance ( $p = .05$ ).
- ❖ Three factors were rated higher during COVID-19 than before, including “my commute to work,” “my ability to concentrate at work,” and “fairness experienced at work.” Still, differences were small and non-significant.
- ❖ A series of multiple regression models on work experience items by age as well as categories of race/ethnicity and gender, did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with ratings of work experiences prior to or during COVID-19. Similarly, responses from the listening

sessions did not highlight any demographics or case level characteristics that impacted turnover rates before and during COVID 19. However, supervisors noted that case managers experienced varied comfort levels with working virtually. It also became clear that one of the major issues impacting turnover rates both before and during COVID-19 was low pay.

Several strategies were implemented by Heartland for Children’s leadership and administrators to improve retention. Supervision, training, and the development of incentives were important to improve retention according to participants in the listening sessions. Case managers acknowledged how much “the little things” meant to them. Highlighting superior practice or recognizing case managers’ efforts seemed to have a positive impact on case managers. Providing recognition was greatly appreciated by staff. Another factor that participants in the listening sessions noted as impacting turnover and retention was how workers are trained and supported in their practice. Supervisors and administrators noted that they were also triaging more difficult or complex cases to those who received more training. This way, newly trained workers would not be responsible for overly complex cases before they felt ready to perform certain tasks. Supervision was an important factor that contributed to culture and climate issues relating to retention.

Although fewer hotline calls occurred during the pandemic, it was evident that child maltreatment was not declining. Much of the reduction in child abuse reporting was due to online schools and the inability for usual reporters to interact with children on a daily basis. One case manager noted that although the reporting numbers seemed lower, the abuse taking place during this time seemed more severe. Parents seemed better able to attend virtual meetings and counseling than face-to-face, but there were some

comments that noted some parents doing better, and some doing worse with virtual visits.

The case study revealed that not all practice is better when conducted virtually. Participants in the listening session noted tasks that were best performed by means of virtual communication included birth parent and family engagement. Prior to disruption, case managers often had difficulty getting parents to attend visits. Virtual visits helped provide more convenience to the birth parent who could now use their smart phone to connect for a visit. Still, participants felt apprehensive about performing risk and safety assessments virtually.

## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE RETENTION:



**SUPERVISION**



**TRAINING**



**INCENTIVES**



**RECOGNITION**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study is limited by the low response rate to the survey and lack of generalizability of the qualitative findings. Still, researchers concluded that: 1) no standard policies or procedures to guide virtual and in-person work during the COVID-19 pandemic existed; 2) incentive strategies to improve culture and climate were sporadic; and 3) internal and external communication flows were inconsistent.

### **The researchers made several recommendations for practice:**

1. Build foundational infrastructure on virtual and in-person policies and practices.
2. Design, implement, and evaluate an incentive program to improve culture and climate.
3. Develop and implement communication flows to improve important relationships within the system and with external stakeholders.

A final report will be made available in November 2022 on the Institute's website.



## Translational Research of Fort Lauderdale Independence Training & Education (FLITE) Center in Broward County, Florida

### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Fabio Naranjo, Ph.D.**

Barry University

### CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Stephen Ferrante, Ph.D.**

Group Victory, LLC

## OVERVIEW

The Fort Lauderdale Independence Training and Education (FLITE) Center was created to comprehensively and simultaneously address the multiple needs of youth aging out of the foster care system and struggling to transition to independent living. The target population includes youth and young adults who experienced multiple years in dependency, several placements, and numerous child welfare workers. The FLITE Center engages youth following their 13th birthday to advance their life skills and future thinking, and at their 17th birthday to prepare their exit from the foster care system as part of the aging out process.

In recent years, the FLITE Center began working with other vulnerable or marginalized groups of youth, including those experiencing homelessness; victimized by human trafficking; or identifying as lesbian,

gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+). As a neutral entity, the FLITE Center chairs Broward County's Transition to Independent Living (TIL) System of Care (approximately 20 agencies) and TIL Life Coach Initiative (approximately 60 life coaches). In this capacity, the FLITE Center leads provider collaboration, staffs transitional youth, and measures client and system outcomes.

This role positions FLITE Center as the identified and impartial community leader for TIL services among at-risk youth. Annually, FLITE Center serves approximately 1,500 diverse youth. As a novel approach to serving youth transitioning from care, the evaluators will complete a mixed methods evaluation of FLITE Center's programming. This initial evaluation will identify promising practices within the FLITE model that could be considered for policy and practice recommendations statewide.

## CURRENT STATUS

The researchers have engaged FLITE Center leadership and staff to determine evaluation parameters and specific tasks. As of September 2022, a final evaluation plan, including a FLITE logic model was submitted to the Institute. The Barry University IRB application was delayed, but submission is imminent.

## NEXT STEPS

The IRB application will be submitted and approved, and evaluation activities will commence in the next quarter, including the start of secondary data collection and analysis.

A final report will be submitted to the Institute in April 2023.



## Empowering Child Welfare Workforce: Supporting Child Welfare Student Interns and Agency Supervisors through Group Supervision, Tuition Sponsorship, & Stipend

### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Courtney Wilson, Ph.D., LCSW**  
Florida International University

### CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Michelle-Ann Rhoden Neita**  
University of Illinois-Chicago

### PROJECT TEAM:

Hui Huang, Ph.D., MSW, University of Texas at Arlington

## OVERVIEW

Existing interventions to address turnover focus on either supporting prospective child welfare workers in their post-secondary education or changing child welfare agencies through organizational interventions. There are gaps in the existing interventions, and the Empowering Child Welfare Workforce (ECW) project intends to address the gaps. The ECW project aims to increase retention in child welfare workforce through a three-component intervention: 1) tuition sponsorship and stipend for social work student interns in child welfare agencies; 2) manualized biweekly group

supervision for social work student interns in child welfare agencies; and 3) manualized monthly group supervision for supervisors in child welfare agencies. The project participants will include a small cohort of BSW student interns placed in child welfare agencies and a small cohort of supervisors from child welfare case management agencies. The group supervision will be provided from August 2022 until May 2023 (i.e. fall 2022 and spring 2023 semesters). The researchers hypothesize that participants' positive experiences with the ECW project will be associated with less stigma towards child welfare-involved parents, less secondary traumatic stress, higher levels of self-efficacy and empowerment, and higher levels of intention to stay in child welfare. Five waves of data will be collected to test the hypotheses. The ECW project could provide the child welfare field with a manualized approach to conduct group supervision among student interns and agency supervisors, as well as create a model for providing student interns clinical support that involves the collaboration between the university and agencies.

## PROJECT GOAL:

There are gaps in the existing interventions, and the Empowering Child Welfare Workforce project intends to address the gaps. The ECW project aims to increase retention in child welfare workforce through a three-component intervention.

## CURRENT STATUS

The Florida International University IRB approved the study in July 2022. As of September 13, 2022, seven students and ten supervisors were recruited for the project. All supervisors and students have completed the program baseline survey wave 1 via Qualtrics. The supervision manual has been developed and finalized. Students and supervisors attended a program orientation and were informed of the program's requirements for participation. All participants signed a consent form to confirm their participation in the project.

## NEXT STEPS

The next steps include conducting the second and third wave of quantitative data collection; conducting a 2-hour focus group with the BSW students; conducting a 2-hour focus group with supervisors from agencies; and interviewing field instructors of each BSW student. Additionally, the team plans to obtain feedback on the manual.

A final report will be submitted to the Institute in April 2023.



# Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

**Dina Wilke, Ph.D., MSW**  
Florida State University

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

**Melissa Radey, Ph.D., MSSW, MA**  
Florida State University

**PROJECT TEAM:**

Lauren Stanley, Ph.D., MSW, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## OVERVIEW

The Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF) findings serve as a cornerstone of the developing GROW Center. The FSPSF principal investigators continue to perform analyses to inform GROW Center operations and are preparing FSPSF data files for public use.

## CURRENT STATUS

The researchers met with each of the major GROW Center initiatives’ teams to ensure understanding of available FSPSF data that can be leveraged for their activities. They have provided rapid data response to several Institute-identified emerging issues as requested. Further FSPSF analyses allow for continued dissemination of findings through Institute research briefs and peer-reviewed publications and presentations, which bring visibility to the Institute as a leader in child welfare workforce reform. Research briefs published in FY 2021-2022 are included as [Appendix K](#).

The researchers have identified the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect as the likely repository for the FSPSF data in the future and have

established several core files necessary for eventual public distribution of datasets.

## NEXT STEPS

The FSPSF principal investigators will provide the Institute with quarterly progress reports, as well as new research briefs which are shared publicly on the Institute’s FSPSF webpage and communications platforms. This year, the researchers are completing additional analyses on client violence, burnout, and difficult cases experienced by workers, as well as survival analyses. Additional analyses will be conducted at the request of the Institute. Finally, the researchers will continue to work on data repository-related tasks (e.g., creating codebooks for each wave, data cleaning and integrity checks, submission of documentation to repository).

## RESOURCES:

FSPSF	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">FSPSF Project Website Page</a>	Page Visits: 422
<a href="#">Why do they Leave and Where do they Go? (Research Brief)</a>	Read: 4
<a href="#">What is Turnover? (Research Brief)</a>	Read: 31
<a href="#">Impacts of Client Violence on Child Welfare Worker Health (Research Brief)</a>	Read: 21
<a href="#">Collection of FSPSF Research Briefs</a>	Read: 89

# Supporting Florida Doctoral Students with Interest in Child Welfare: A Needs Assessment

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Michae' Cain, MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

survey closed in September 2022, after several more responses were received.

## NEXT STEPS

The principal investigator will clean and analyze the data and provide a report to Institute leadership by December 2022. The report will include data-informed recommendations for Institute consideration as well as outline potential future research avenues to supplement this initial needs assessment.

## OVERVIEW

As part of the Institute's focus on academic innovation, Institute leadership is seeking information on how to best support emerging child welfare scholars in Florida and incorporate them into Institute work. While some literature exists on needs and supports for doctoral students in social work<sup>29,30</sup> the Institute seeks to understand the specific needs of child welfare-focused doctoral students. Through our stakeholders, it is known that these emerging scholars are housed in multiple disciplines, including social work, child and family sciences, and economics. Researchers developed a survey to gather comprehensive feedback across disciplines.

## CURRENT STATUS

Following piloting and FSU IRB approval, the survey was launched in late spring 2022. Although the initial focus was on students in Florida, the response rate was low and primarily included doctoral students within social work. The researchers amended the protocol to narrow the eligibility criteria to include only social work students but expanded recruitment nationwide. The



**SECTION IV**

**UPCOMING  
RESEARCH**

## UPCOMING RESEARCH

The Institute is preparing for another robust year of research and evaluation activities in addition to the ongoing evaluations of SB 1326 initiatives, and the completion of the mandated independent life skills evaluation. We will grant two Priority Research Awards on the topic of Transformational Leadership, as well as two Affiliate Awards for Translational Research, to inform our future GROW Center and research and evaluation activities.

**There are a number of projects planned to begin this year, which are briefly summarized below and more fully described later in this report:**

- ❖ Exploration and evaluation of innovative training strategies under consideration for multiple GROW Center initiatives, including virtual reality and simulation labs.
- ❖ Research that prioritizes the voices of those involved in the child welfare system, including studies involving 1) parents, to inform strategies to provide effective services and interventions that are responsive to the context of their lives; 2) foster parents, to improve retention toward creating a more stable system of care; and 3) photovoice methodology, to promote community participatory action methodologies that can authentically promote voices of those with lived expertise (e.g., workers, youth, families).
- ❖ Intervention research to address trauma among foster youth.
- ❖ Evaluations of novel interventions delivered at Heartland for Children, including the Permanency Primer program and sexual safety interventions.

In addition, we have several projects that are newly underway or launching shortly. These projects are described in this section.

# Project Descriptions

## The Effectiveness of Children’s Home Society’s CaseAIM Program

### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Lauren H.K. Stanley, Ph.D., MSW**  
Florida Institute for Child Welfare

### PROJECT TEAM:

Melissa Radey, Ph.D., MSSW, MA, Florida State University

Dina Wilke, Ph.D., MSW, Florida State University

## OVERVIEW

Children’s Home Society (CHS), in collaboration with the Microsoft Corporation, developed CaseAIM in response to calls for enhanced worker support and programmatic changes to address staffing challenges and improve worker effectiveness.<sup>31</sup> According to CHS administrators, case workers spend 75 percent of their time completing administrative tasks; therefore, the central aim of the CaseAIM program is to increase case managers’ direct contact with caregivers and their children by providing support for administrative tasks.

In 2018, the Institute completed a mixed-methods evaluation of CaseAIM.<sup>32</sup> The evaluators concluded that, while CaseAIM is a promising model of organizational support for case managers, further evaluation is needed to determine CaseAIM’s impact on outcomes for children, families, and case managers. Following some changes to CaseAim implementation, CHS leadership requested a new evaluation of the model.

CaseAIM has two services that will be under review for the current evaluation: 1) the CaseAim support team, designed to assist with case management responsibilities; and 2) a specially designed mobile phone application to assist with case manager documentation.

**The researchers will implement a mixed-methods evaluation to answer the following questions:**

1. Do CaseAIM services improve case manager and client outcomes?
2. Are CaseAIM integrated services more effective in promoting case management outcomes than mobile phone application only services?
3. How do case managers describe the impact of CaseAIM on their work?

The researchers will analyze quantitative administrative data provided by CHS to answer questions one and two, as well as collect and analyze qualitative interview data from case managers to answer question three.

## NEXT STEPS

This project began in September 2022. Initial tasks include gaining IRB approval, obtaining and cleaning data from CHS, and conducting preliminary quantitative analyses. Research assistants will be onboarded and trained (October 2022) to conduct qualitative interviews with case managers in November 2022. Participants will be recruited, and interviews will be conducted November 2022 through February 2023. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be conducted in early March 2023. Results will be disseminated in late Spring 2023.

# A Longitudinal Examination of Youth Aging Out of Care

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
**Martie Gillen, Ph.D., MBA**  
 University of Florida

## OVERVIEW

In 2021, the Florida Legislature passed SB 80 which outlined a series of initiatives aimed at improving the state's child welfare system. Section 21(1) mandates the Institute to assess Florida's current approach to developing independent life skills among youth transitioning out of the state's foster care system. Prior to and throughout the evaluation planning process, stakeholders provided feedback that longitudinal data are not routinely collected for youth who are transitioning out of care.

Building on the success of the Institute's first longitudinal research project, the FSPSF, the Institute plans to fund a new five-year longitudinal study. Institute affiliate Dr. Martie Gillen is leading evaluation planning efforts, including consulting with the SB80 independent life skills evaluation team and youth and professional expert consultants, to compose a methodologically rigorous evaluation that prioritizes ongoing follow-up data collection with youth in various stages of exiting the foster care system.

## CURRENT STATUS

In addition to reviewing existing research, Dr. Gillen has hosted or attended several meetings regarding the longitudinal study, including with youth with lived expertise, scholars who have led similar successful studies, and Florida-based experts, to inform the

development of the research proposal. She submitted a draft proposal in September 2022, which will be finalized following Institute feedback.

## NEXT STEPS

Dr. Gillen will provide a final study proposal to the Institute by October 31, 2022. A formal planning period will occur in the first half of 2023, with the study officially commencing on July 1, 2023. The evaluation plan is being developed in distinct phases by fiscal year, for up to five years. Pending funding, the Institute will support the execution of the evaluation plan through completion.

# Perceptions of Acceptance and Rejection among LGBTQ Former Foster Youth

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Lauren Herod, MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## NEXT STEPS

In fall 2022, the researchers will finalize the study plan and determine appropriate staffing. The Institute will seek to include individuals with lived expertise on the research team (i.e., an LGBTQ-identified former foster youth) as personnel or a paid consultant. Data collection is expected to begin in early 2023.

## OVERVIEW

Previous research indicates lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system,<sup>33,34</sup> and experience unique challenges with respect to transitioning from care.<sup>35</sup> Following a comprehensive review of literature on both the experiences of LGBTQ youth engaged with the child welfare system and accepted best practices regarding working with LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care, Institute researchers identified several priority topics to explore (e.g., experiences of acceptance and rejection). The researchers are planning a multi-phase, mixed methods study to gain an understanding of child welfare-related experiences of LGBTQ-identified former foster youth in Florida.



2022-2023

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP  
AWARD RECIPIENT

## It Takes a Village: An Examination of Educational Enrollment Among Transition-Age Youth in Foster Care

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**  
**Khalilah L. Caines, LCSW**  
University of Central Florida

### OVERVIEW

The transition to adulthood can be challenging at best; however, for the more than 17,000 young adults that exit from foster care each year in the United States, this transition comes with additional challenges. Research continuously highlights the negative impact emancipation can have on key areas for success into adulthood. The social and economic impact of emancipation prompted federal efforts to improve services and resources available to this population. Despite these efforts, this group of young adults continues to experience lower rates of educational attainment when compared to peers of the same age. The state of Florida has a longstanding history of engaging in innovative approaches to improve educational outcomes for youth in care. While these initiatives improved educational outcomes, there continues to be a lag in educational attainment for youth in foster care when compared to the general population with variance by location. This dissertation utilizes the Social Developmental Model to identify county-level risk and protective factors for educational enrollment (secondary, vocational/technical, and

postsecondary education) for youth in foster care at the age of majority. Multiple data sources will be merged into one data set and linked at the county level. Multiple regression models will be used to test the association between county-level characteristics and educational enrollment for transition-age youth in foster care. Findings from this study will have implications for child welfare and education policy, research, and practice to support communities that serve this vulnerable population.

### NEXT STEPS

As part of her dissertation fellowship with the Institute, Ms. Caines will provide progress updates on her dissertation in December 2022 and March 2023. A final report to the Institute is expected in June 2023.





2022-2023

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP  
AWARD RECIPIENT

# Surviving Good Intentions: A Retrospective Examination of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Amy Nourie, MS**

University of South Florida

## OVERVIEW

This dissertation seeks to explore the impact of the Florida Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program from the perspectives of former foster youth. It specifically asks how were former foster youth impacted by the Florida GAL Program and how did this program affect their future outcomes? The research will include several qualitative methods guided by a feminist lens, to retell the youth's personal stories. Also, focus groups will be conducted with Guardian ad Litem volunteers and staff, respectively, to pinpoint the specific areas necessary to help children, as well as the child welfare workforce, which can be used to improve outcomes through policy initiatives.

## NEXT STEPS

As part of her dissertation fellowship with the Institute, Ms. Nourie will provide progress updates on her dissertation in December 2022 and March 2023. A final report to the Institute is expected in June 2023.

# Exploring the Influence of Child Welfare Work on Workers' Support Systems

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

**Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW**

Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## PROJECT TEAM:

Ali Korber, Florida Institute for Child Welfare

## OVERVIEW

When applied to workers, a social ecological framework would suggest that there are reciprocal impacts between a workers' professional and personal lives. Within the context of child welfare work, this relationship is readily apparent in the abundance of research examining work-life balance,<sup>36,37</sup> including within Florida. Consistently among the FSPSF sample, workers experienced challenges with work and family life balance, with most noting that it would be challenging to begin or maintain a romantic relationship as well as raise children. Among workers who left their job within two years, 15 percent cited personal reasons, primarily a family relocation or lack of work-life balance.<sup>38</sup>

Research examining the impact of "frontline" work—primarily focused on law enforcement, healthcare, and emergency service work—suggests that job-related factors also impact those within the worker's personal network, such as their families. Still, there is a lack of empirical literature that specifically explores how child welfare work influences a worker's personal network. Despite much research on how child welfare work influences the worker, there is a lack of research that includes the perspectives of their personal networks—

partners, children, friends. This is a significant gap given that many child welfare workers in the FSPSF sample reported relying on these personal networks for support.

To address this research gap, the researchers will conduct a qualitative study exploring the experiences of support networks of child welfare workers in Florida. Findings could inform a more comprehensive approach to workforce reform efforts by incorporating the experiences of those who support our child welfare workers in their everyday lives.

## NEXT STEPS

The researchers compiled a literature review on existing research in this area and will develop a research study proposal in fall 2022, with an anticipated study start date of January 2023.



SECTION V

**TRAINING AND  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE**

# TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

## Trainings

### Partnering with Families to Seek Racial Justice in Child Welfare

**TRAINING DATE:**  
Friday April 29, 2022

#### OVERVIEW

As child welfare professionals, we are confronted with racial, cultural, and parenting differences that may challenge our worldview. This webinar focused on variables that drive racial disparity and how cultural humility and a strength-based approach are key ingredients to increased authentic family engagement. Operating through the lens of justice, participants learned to build skills necessary to nurture partnerships with families and communities.

#### FACILITATORS & ATTENDEES

The Florida State University College of Social Work and the Center for Study and Promotion for Communities, Families, and Children presented the webinar on behalf of the Institute. The two facilitators were:

- ❖ Corey Best, National Child Welfare Advocate & Founder of Mining for Gold, Inc.
- ❖ Joy McClellan, DSW, LCSW-QS, MSW Program Coordinator & Senior Instructor Florida Atlantic University College of Social Work and Criminal Justice

There were 120 participants that attended the webinar. Eight child welfare professionals were able to earn CEU's through the Florida Certification Board and 68 licensed professionals earned relevant CEUs by attending this webinar.

**PARTNER:**



**Florida State University**  
Center for the Study and Promotion for Communities, Families, and Children

#### RESOURCE:

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES TO SEEK RACIAL JUSTICE	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">Webinar Recording</a>	Views: 5

# Parent Engagement and Motivation to Change: Tips for Practice

**TRAINING DATE:**  
Friday June 17, 2022

## OVERVIEW

Authentic engagement with families involved in the child welfare system is a recommended best practice. This webinar explored how motivational interviewing supports engagement. The presenters reviewed its components and applications with parents who often experience feeling coerced to engage in conversations and services.

## FACILITATORS & ATTENDEES

The Florida State University College of Social Work and the Center for Study and Promotion for Communities, Families, and Children presented the webinar on behalf of the Institute. The webinar had two facilitators:

- ❖ Jennifer Luther, Program Manager for the Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families, and Children at Florida State University.
- ❖ Schyler Brumm, Program Manager for the Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families, and Children at Florida State University.

For this webinar, 160 professionals attended and 34 CEUs were provided for licensed clinicians and 17 Certified Child Welfare Case Managers or Certified Child Welfare Protective Investigators received credit through the Florida Certification Board.

## PARTNER:



## RESOURCE:

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES TO SEEK RACIAL JUSTICE	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#">Webinar Recording</a>	Views: 52

# National Spotlight Webinar: Building Resilience for Child Welfare Professionals

**TRAINING DATE:**  
**Friday September 23, 2022**

## OVERVIEW

After reviewing information about the STARS (Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies) Certification, the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) asked the GROW Center and the Institute for Family Violence Studies to conduct a webinar highlighting resiliency tools for the Florida child welfare workforce. As part of Workforce Development month, this webinar discussed ways to build resilience for child welfare professionals. Participants learned about tools and resources available to help them and their clients respond with resilience in the face of challenges. Attendees engaged in practical approaches for coping with personal and workplace stress. The session was interactive and provided space to collaborate with colleagues to discuss tactics to normalize struggle and build connections.

## FACILITATORS

- ❖ Lyndi Bradley, Program Manager for the Institute for Family Violence Studies at Florida State University.
- ❖ Merina Cameron, Training Specialist for the Institute for Family Violence Studies at Florida State University.

## PARTNER:



National Child Welfare Workforce Institute  
LEARNING, LEADING, CHANGING

## RESOURCES:

### BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

#### Resource

Sample Resource:  
[Always Remember your Strengths](#)

Sample Resource:  
[Your Brain's Happy Chemicals to Fight Stress](#)

Sample Resource:  
[Characteristics of a Resilient Person](#)

# The 2022 Guardian ad Litem Virtual Volunteer Conference

**CONFERENCE DATES:**  
**June 14, 2022 and June 16, 2022**

## OVERVIEW

The 2022 Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Virtual Conference – “Building Resilience and Inspiring Connections” was hosted by the Florida Guardian ad Litem Foundation through the sponsorship of Sunshine Health and the Institute.

## FACILITATORS & ATTENDEES

The Institute’s GROW Center Virtual Engagement & Learning Coach, John Sheetz, presented a one-hour virtual training called Engaging in Reflective Supervision Practice. The virtual training had 351 attendees on June 14, 2022 and 185 attendees on June 16, 2022.

The Institute’s GROW Center Innovation and Immersive Learning Manager, Derrick Stephens, presented a 1.5-hour virtual training on Skills to Train Compassion and Build Resilience. The virtual training had 412 attendees on June 14, 2022 and 240 attendees on June 16, 2022.

## PARTNERS:



## Technical Assistance

### Florida Certification Board Provider Approval

In February 2022, the Florida Certification Board (FCB) approved the Institute as a continuing education provider (provider number 5429-A). All current and future child welfare related offerings are approved by the FCB for continuing education credits from the GROW Center. The Institute is also working on an endorsement pathway for the GROW Center's AdCerts. The endorsement will allow CPIs, case managers, child welfare supervisors or trainers, who currently hold a valid provisional certification from the FCB, to obtain an endorsement that denotes expertise in a particular subject area, e.g., trauma and resiliency, substance use, domestic violence.

### DCF Pre-Service Redesign

In April 2022, the Program Director of the GROW Center joined a group of training and supervisory representatives from DCF, lead agencies, and law enforcement to discuss a plan of action for drastically overhauling the current child protective investigator and case manager pre-service curriculum and training structure. A workgroup was formalized and work to complete the redesign began in May 2022. The GROW Center is working alongside this workgroup to create opportunities for support (virtual reality implementation, standardized first year training content) and alignment (MyALIGN interventions, networking, and resources).

### HB 615: Human Trafficking Course Development for Foster Parents and Case Managers

In March 2022, the DCF reached out to the GROW Center for assistance with the development of a mandatory human trafficking training for all foster parents and case managers. The GROW Center worked with the Department to update existing content and create an online, interactive course to meet this legislative requirement. The course was reviewed by members of the GROW Center Advisory Committee who have experience as case workers, foster parents, and law enforcement to capture feedback and made appropriate adjustments to the content. The course went live in July 2022 and can be accessed through the DCF.

#### RESOURCE:

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING COURSE

Resource

[Prevent Human Trafficking Training](#)



## Family First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA) Technical Assistance

The Institute contracted with the USF to work with the CBC's, their stakeholders, the DCF (regional and state), and the Institute to identify gaps in FFPSA implementation and provide or link appropriate supports to ameliorate those gaps. The facilitators worked with CBC regional teams, primarily the Northwest Region and Citrus Health, and helped develop prevention plans complementary to the overall Florida FFPSA State Plan. Technical assistance was customized to the needs of the local CBCs and DCF regions with focus on expanding IV-E eligibility, reimbursement models, basic understanding of the legislation, cost benefit analysis of evidence-based program implementation, and creative funding and resource development mechanisms to ensure sustainability. The USF team worked with existing DCF teams to ensure compatibility of message and open communication.

While the contract was not renewed in July 2022, the USF team continues to utilize these relationships to cultivate awareness that they are a statewide resource for FFPSA, prevention, and culture change. They will specifically continue to work directly with training staff (DCF, sheriff's offices, and CBC) to identify integration points for discussions of evidence-based programs and prevention as a practice in both pre-service and ongoing training.

## Critical Incident Rapid Response Team

The Director of the Institute continues to serve on the Critical Incident Rapid Response Team (CIRRT) Advisory Committee and attends quarterly meetings. 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 and rapidly determine the need to change policies and practices related to child protection and improve Florida's child welfare system. The 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. The Director engaged with the CIRRT on each of their quarterly calls.

## Statewide Interagency Workgroup

The Program Director for Administration continues to sit on the Statewide Interagency Workgroup and attends the meetings monthly. 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 multidisciplinary 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.

The 5-Year Interagency Agreement for 2022-2027 has not yet been finalized but is operating under an agreed upon extension. An addendum, developed by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, that addresses the needs and provision of services for children with developmental disabilities is also being reviewed and considered for inclusion.

Monthly trainings are offered for workgroup members to learn about services offered or about particular issues (e.g., human trafficking). Each quarter, a data report reflecting the number and types of cases that are staffed at the local, regional, and state levels is provided.

## Human Trafficking Screening Tool

In their July 2022 report, OPPAGA noted that the Institute's findings regarding the HTST were consistent with those of other researchers and recommended that the DCF adopt the Institute's recommendations.<sup>39</sup> The Institute is currently supporting the DCF in these efforts via the Program Director of Science and Research's participation in a workgroup with the DCF and the DJJ, as well as other relevant human trafficking stakeholders, to amend the Tool. Following these changes, as well as updated DCF-provided training for screeners, the Institute plans to collaborate with the DCF to analyze a new sample of de-identified Tools for validation purposes.

## Early Childhood Court

The Institute completed its second evaluation of Early Childhood Court (ECC) in September 2021 and included a summary of the evaluation and recommendations in our 2020-2021 Annual Report. Since its completion, the evaluators have disseminated the findings to multiple audiences. In December 2021, the evaluators provided a comprehensive virtual presentation of findings to the ECC statewide workgroup. In June 2022, the Institute ECC team presented the findings of both Institute-led ECC evaluations at the 2022 National Organization of Forensic Social Work Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. Finally, in September 2022, the University of South Florida ECC team presented the evaluation findings at a joint conference held by the Division for Early Childhood and the International Society on Early Intervention in Chicago, Illinois.

In addition to continuing to disseminating evaluation findings, at the request of the Office of Family Court (formerly the Office of Court Improvement), the Institute recently agreed to provide data analysis support to update findings on permanency and other outcomes of youth served by ECC. This work will begin in fall 2022 in preparation for the legislative session.

### RESOURCES:

EARLY CHILDHOOD COURT	
Resource	Reach
<a href="#"><u>2020-2021 Early Childhood Court Evaluation Deliverable #3 (Final Report)</u></a>	Read: 197
<a href="#"><u>2020-2021 Early Childhood Court Evaluation (Executive Summary)</u></a>	Read: 25



SECTION VI

**COMMUNICATIONS  
AND DISSEMINATION**

# COMMUNICATIONS AND DISSEMINATION

The Institute continues efforts to publicly disseminate information on topics and opportunities related to child welfare issues, the workforce, and vulnerable families. Our communications focus this year was twofold: to translate in-house research and share recently published data pertinent to our affiliates and constituents, as well as new marketing initiatives related to the Institute's professional development offerings and events.

The introduction of our marketing goals, as well as the increased activity in all areas of the Institute, broadened our audience and outreach methods. The Communications Team increased the number and types of messages sent, while strategically adopting appropriate language and messaging techniques to engage a much wider audience of child welfare leaders, organizations with whom we partner, frontline child welfare professionals, affiliates, and other researchers across the state and country.

In 2021-2022, the Institute's communications activities, engagement, and reach dramatically increased across all avenues of outreach. The Communications Team implemented new projects, increased activity on all our public-facing platforms, and created a new level of professionalism for all our published products.

The following section explores outcomes for the Institute's direct email campaigns, public publications, social media accounts, podcast series, video content, website, and events.

## Email Campaigns

The Institute utilizes Constant Contact to plan, create, and send email campaigns to specialized distribution lists of contacts who are strategically contacted for specific messages. Email campaigns fall into the following broad categories: monthly newsletters, important Institute news and updates, marketing materials, event invites, and specialized targeted messaging.

In the period from October 1, 2021 to September 15, 2022, the Institute:

- ❖ Created and sent **69 email campaigns**
- ❖ Sent **48,079 total emails**
- ❖ Organized **1,876 contacts**
- ❖ Added **+ 497 new contacts**
- ❖ Maintained an average open rate of 28% (Industry Average = 32%)

## Monthly Matters

Monthly Matters is an e-mail newsletter distributed each month to the Institute's subscribers. The newsletter generally focuses on a theme or topic of awareness and offers resources as well as updates from the Institute, our initiatives, and partners.

**The following information was compiled for October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022.**

- ❖ Total Issues Sent: 9
- ❖ Total number of Monthly Matters emails sent: 11,990
- ❖ Average Open Rate: 27.25%
- ❖ Average Click Rate: 11% (Industry Average = 1%)

## Institute Insights

Institute Insights is a quarterly pdf newsletter distributed through email. Each issue features a message from the Institute's Director as well as in-depth updates on important Institute activities related to legislative research, affiliate updates, Institute initiatives, plus a spotlight on any new resources from the Institute and/or its partners. An archive of past issues is also available on the Institute website to the general public and can be accessed at any time.

**The following information was compiled for October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022.**

- ❖ Total Issues Sent: 3
- ❖ Total number of Institute Insights emails sent: 3,945
- ❖ Average Open Rate: 27.7%
- ❖ Average Click Rate: 22.7%

## Affiliate Advisor

The Affiliate Advisor is a monthly e-newsletter that is distributed directly to Institute Affiliates. Each month an Affiliate is highlighted. This communication offers information on opportunities, upcoming affiliate meetings, as well as summaries of recent events and other pertinent news.

The following information was compiled for October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022.

- ❖ Total Issues Sent: 11
- ❖ Total number of Institute Insights emails sent: 472
- ❖ Average Open Rate: 52.7%
- ❖ Average Click Rate: 26.3%

## Publications

To translate information generated by in-house research, as well as to provide in-depth details about initiatives and other resources, the Institute regularly publishes a variety of documents: reports, executive summaries, handouts, research briefs, calls for proposals, 1-pagers, graphics, etc.

Thirty-two documents were uploaded and publicly posted to the Institute's Issuu account. Additional documents were privately shared among specific constituent groups (including status updates, informational handouts, marketing and recruiting texts, reports, presentations, etc.). The following summary contains information on the publicly available publications from October 1, 2021 to September 15, 2022.

### 32 Total Publications:

- ❖ 5 Reports and 13 Briefs
- ❖ 2 Executive Summaries
- ❖ 2 Infographics
- ❖ 4 Calls for Proposals
- ❖ 6 Additional Resources

### Analytics:

- ❖ These documents were read a total number of **4,764 times**:
  - ❖ **3,302 reads** (69% of total) were from documents directly embedded in the Institute website, emails, or social media posts.
  - ❖ **1,462 reads** (31% of total) were accessed through traffic driven from Issuu.com.
  - ❖ There was a **14 percent increase** in the total number of reads over the previous year (4,180).
- ❖ All Institute publications had **15,485 impressions** (the number of times our publications were linked to on the Issuu network).
- ❖ There were **239 publication clicks** (number of times readers clicked a link included in a publication) and an average read time (amount of time readers spent in a document before closing it) of almost 7 minutes (this indicates a high level of engagement in the documents).
- ❖ Seven percent of total reads came from international sources, with top international readership from Canada (42), the Philippines (37), the United Kingdom (19), and South Africa (18).



# Social Media

Over the last year, the Institute increased our presence and content on our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). After gaining additional staff on the Communications Team, the focus on utilizing the Institute’s social media accounts was made a priority. As a result, the frequency of posts dramatically expanded past the previous posting schedule in 2021 and prior. Recently, we also created a Linked-In Company account to expand our reach to different audiences. All these platforms have been used effectively to share our resources (such as podcast, research reports, newsletters), communicate the Institute’s activities (events, webinars, milestones), engage the child welfare workforce and leadership, and build a reputable presence among the child welfare professionals in Florida and nationally.

As the Communications Team increases marketing activity for GROW Center initiatives, the use of social media to engage new audiences, specifically frontline workers, will become increasingly important to the strategic communications plan and activities.

## Facebook



- ❖ Total number of Posts: 158
- ❖ Total Followers: 888
- ❖ Page Reach: 20,492
- ❖ Page Likes: 789
- ❖ Page Visits: 1,377
- ❖ Followers/audience Demographics:
  - ❖ 86.2% women and 13.8% men
  - ❖ The top three follower age groups are: 35–44, 45–54, and 25–34 years old
- ❖ Geographical location of followers/audience:
  - ❖ The top cities in Florida where our followers reside are Tallahassee (18.9%); Pensacola (3.4%); Tampa (2.4%), Jacksonville (1.9%).
  - ❖ Followers are based in United States (95.1%); (United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Nigeria make up the remainder)

## Instagram



- ❖ Total number of Posts: 121
- ❖ Total Followers: 268
- ❖ Page Reach: 5,191
- ❖ Page Likes: 790
- ❖ Page Visits: 591
- ❖ Followers/audience Demographics:
  - ❖ 84.5% women and 15.5% men
  - ❖ The older millennials (25 – 34 years) are predominant, followed by age ranges of 35-44, 45 –54, and 25 –34
- ❖ Geographical location of followers/audience:
  - ❖ The top cities in Florida where our followers reside are Tallahassee (23.5%); Jacksonville (4.9%); Tampa (3.7%), and Miami (2.2%)
  - ❖ Followers are based in United States (85.1%); Nigeria (1.5%); India (1.1%); and other areas (12.3%).

## Twitter



- ❖ Total number of Posts: 1,363
- ❖ Total Followers: 262
- ❖ Page Impressions: 20,677
- ❖ Total Mentions: 77
- ❖ Page Reach: 14,718
- ❖ Page Visits: 17,980
- ❖ Top 6 Topics/keywords used: Child, Welfare, Podcast, Professionals Health, Mental, and Youth
  - ❖ *These top keywords highlight the focus of our tweets over the year and reinforce the goal of our communication.*
- ❖ Top 10 Hashtags that attracted traffic: #cwworkforce, #ficwsymposium2022, #menshealthweek, #fsucsw, #fathersday, #socialwork, #minoritymentalhealth, #mentalhealthmatters, #humantrafficking and #childwelfare.

## LinkedIn



- ❖ Created: July 2022
- ❖ Total Followers: 106
- ❖ Follower Job Functions: 18% Education; 17% Business Development; 12% Community and Social Services; 11% Healthcare Services; 6% Research; 4% Human Resources; 32% Other Job Functions
- ❖ Follower Locations: 77% Florida-based; 23% Other
- ❖ Follower Industries: 32% Higher Education; 20% Nonprofit Organization Management; 12% Mental Health Care; 5% Government Administration; 4% Hospital & Health Care; 2% Individual & Family Services; 25% Other Industries
- ❖ Page Views: 129
- ❖ Highest performing post:
  - ❖ Organic Discovery: 302 Impressions; 202 Unique Impressions
  - ❖ Organic Engagement: 27 Engagements; 9.1% Engagement Rate

# Social Media Content

## MONTHLY THEMES

Each month, the Institute explores a monthly theme recognized in the child welfare field to engage our followers (child welfare workforce, students, partners, affiliates etc.) and provide relevant resources that will contribute to the development of the child welfare system.

Month	Theme
January 2022	Human Trafficking Month
February 2022	Black History Month
March 2022	Social Work Month
April 2022	National Prevention of Child Abuse Month
May 2022	Mental Health Awareness and National Foster Care Month
June 2022	Reunification and Pride Month
July 2022	Hurricane & Disaster Preparation and Minority Mental Health Month
August 2022	Children’s Vision and Learning Month
September 2022	Child Welfare Workforce Development Month

## INSTITUTE RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES:

The Institute aimed to engage and empower the child welfare workforce in FY 2021-2022 through various campaigns that promoted and shared the Institute’s activities, events, and resources. Major campaigns promoted over the year include:

Subject	Number of Posts	Reach	Engagement
2022 Symposium	97	21,308	1,200
Institute Webinars	19	1,166	47
Institute Research Resources	16	1,572	69
Passions and Patience: Stories from the Frontlines of Child Welfare (documentary film project)	29	989	154
Child Welfare Professional of the Year Award	11	12,761	636
The GROW Center	20	3,438	190
STARS (Strength, Trauma, Resilience Studies) Advanced Certification	8	1,429	55
Announcement of the Institute’s Director Transition	6	1,761	245
Podcast Season 4	31	4,481	226
Podcast Season 5	22	2,508	97

## Podcast Series

The FL Child Welfare Podcast Series reached a new milestone in its run. At five seasons, the series now hosts 25 episodes, available on every medium for podcast hosting (SoundCloud, Apple Music, Spotify). In this reporting period, the Institute premiered Season 4 and Season 5.

### Season 4 – Transition-Age Foster Youth Get Plugged Into Resources

- ❖ Host: Dr. Elizabeth Wynter
- ❖ Producer: Marianna Tutwiler
- ❖ Sound Engineers: Isabella Cring, Ryan Rezaian
- ❖ Description: This special series was designed for youth and young adults who have experienced foster care with the intention of connecting them to resources that they may be qualified to receive. Each episode hosted a youth with lived experience in the system in order to better connect with the audience.

#### SEASON 4:



Episode	Guests	Plays
<a href="#">Episode 1 - Love Life Skills</a>	Stephanie Savely, Kaitlynn Hanson	250
<a href="#">Episode 2 – Need Money?</a>	Brandie McCabe, John Watson	218
<a href="#">Episode 3 – Aging in to Stay Plugged in</a>	Keri Flynn, Demarco Mott	185
<a href="#">Episode 4 - Tuition Waiver To 28!</a>	Lisa Jackson, Dina Santos	201
<a href="#">Episode 5 – Need Food?</a>	Patricia Grogan, Rayla James	147
<a href="#">Episode 6 – Stay Healthy &amp; Wise</a>	Jennifer Edgson, Diamond Whitley	168

## Season 5 – Child Welfare Technology Solutions – Saving Time Where It Matters Most

- ❖ Host: Dr. Jessica Pryce
- ❖ Producer: Marianna Tutwiler
- ❖ Sound Engineers: Isabella Cring, Ryan Rezaian
- ❖ Description: Experts across Florida’s child welfare system spoke on technological innovations, the impact of new software to improve efficiency in child welfare, and the use of state-of-the-art virtual reality trainings to better prepare child welfare professionals to work with families.

### SEASON 5:



Episode	Guests	Plays
<a href="#">Episode 1 - "There's an app for that" - CASAIM Technology</a>	Morgan Ryan, Brianna Kobayashi	148
<a href="#">Episode 2 – Clearing Red Tape – Stabilify Software Improvements in Child Welfare</a>	Jackie Gonzalez, Esther Jacobi	137
<a href="#">Episode 3 – Virtual Reality – Preparing Child Welfare Professionals for the field</a>	Molly Tierney, Kellee Hicks	169

## Upcoming Season

In the upcoming season of the Florida Child Welfare podcast, Dr. Lisa Magruder, Program Director of Science & Research, will host and lead discussions about specific Institute research projects and incorporating youth voice ethically into research. The first episode will explore participatory action research and highlight the importance of including lived expertise in child welfare initiatives. The following episodes will discuss Institute projects through this lens. In this season we aim to feature youth liaisons who partnered with research projects to get a firsthand look at youth experiences and perspectives during the research process.

## Past Seasons

Analytic information from over the past year shows that previous seasons continue to regularly gain additional listeners, even when episodes were first published three years ago.

Season	Additional Listens Over the Past Year	Current Total Listens
<a href="#">Season 1</a>	+ 1,804	4,881
<a href="#">Season 2</a>	+ 1,297	2,920
<a href="#">Season 3</a>	+ 503	1,120

Additional analysis of the analytic information allowed the Communications Team to strategize content to best engage listeners. In upcoming seasons, we plan to utilize this information to ensure the podcast is accessible and interesting for an increased number of listeners:

- ❖ In season 5, the Communications Team adapted a traditional interview format that provides a more focused approach. These changes were reflected in the positive engagement received.
- ❖ In season 4, to better reach the intended youth audience, the Institute partnered with youth with lived expertise to provide an outlet for them to share their experiences and hopefully reach other former foster youths. This was a necessary change from the more scholarly approach of the previous season and reflects the Institute’s commitment to incorporating youth perspectives.

## Video

YouTube:



[@FloridaInstituteforChildWelfare](https://www.youtube.com/@FloridaInstituteforChildWelfare)

In the 2021–2022 timeframe, the Institute started reinvigorating our video content. The Communications Team increased the number of videos produced, varied the content of our videos, and created video content that was interesting to a wider audience (moving away from research-based interviews to content geared towards child welfare frontline professionals and leadership). Most Institute video projects are hosted on our YouTube channel, but additional video content to our social media platforms is being added to best connect with users and increase our engagement.

The following data summarizes analytics from the Institute’s YouTube channel:

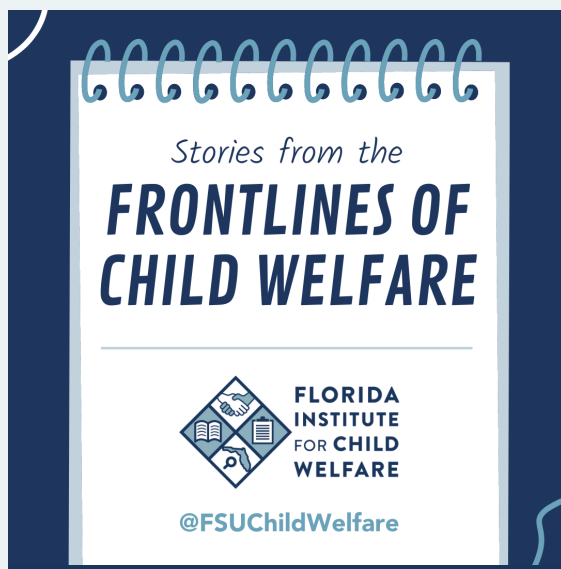
- ❖ Overall Views: **24,700** (999% increase from last year)
- ❖ Current Subscribers: **257** (202 gained since October 2021)
- ❖ Watch Time: **2,100 hours** (821% increase from last year)

## Key Projects:

### PASSION & PATIENCE: STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINES OF CHILD WELFARE

- ❖ Runtime: 36:52
- ❖ Released: June 10, 2022
- ❖ Views: 404
- ❖ Description: For this documentary interview project, the Institute made connections with individuals working in the frontlines of child welfare. The Institute’s media technicians traveled to several locations in Florida to interview CPIs and specialists, with the intention of learning about the major challenges they face in the field. In these interviews, frontline workers shared their perspectives on the current state of the child welfare system - both the good and the bad - but most importantly, they share their passion for working with families from a strengths-based perspective. We would like to specifically thank our DCF partners and Heartland for Children for lending their time, voices, and office space.

### PASSION & PATIENCE



### NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION



### NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION: AN OVERVIEW & ROLEPLAY DEMONSTRATION

- ❖ Runtime: 20:05
- ❖ Released: June 6, 2021
- ❖ Views: 18,130
- ❖ Features: Janelle King & A'Miracle Smith
- ❖ Description: This video was created as part of the 2021 Symposium and released during the previous year but garnered large quantities of views since October 1, 2021. Currently, the video hosts 18,130 views. The video’s popularity can be attributed to the relevance and importance of the information shared. Leadership began negotiations with Janelle King in September to create more learning opportunities on non-violent communication techniques which will likely result in a combination of webinar and online e-learning content for frontline workers.



# Website

The Institute's website, [ficw.fsu.edu](http://ficw.fsu.edu), is the main platform for sharing the Institute's information. The current website (hosted by Florida State University) has been in place since the Institute's inception. The Communications Team maintains the current site and has also been developing a new website in collaboration with the Florida Center for Interactive Media over the past year. The revitalization of the website is explored below.

## Current Website

Currently, the website serves as a portal for all the Institute's news and resources, and hosts pages for important projects and initiatives. The following data are from October 1, 2021-September 15, 2022:

- ❖ Users: 10,516 (84.6% new, 15.4% returning)
- ❖ Sessions: 16,740
- ❖ Average Session Duration: 2:15
- ❖ Average Pages Visited per Session: 2
- ❖ Pageviews: 33,895
- ❖ Access Through:
  - ❖ Organic Search: 57.4%
  - ❖ Direct Links: 32.1%
- ❖ Most Popular Pages:
  - ❖ Home Page: 6,611
  - ❖ Directory: 2,337
  - ❖ Partnerships with the Department of Children and Families: 2,033
  - ❖ The GROW Center: 2,027

## Future Website

The goal of the redesigned website is to provide a more user-friendly experience that enhances the Institute's mission, vision, and resources. The site will be visually engaging, with an emphasis on easily understood graphic materials that will appeal to a boarder audience and will be organized topically to ensure that site navigation is intuitive, and exploration is encouraged. In addition, the new website will feature a robust document library system, where all the Institute's publications will be stored. The library will have a keyword search function and a complex filter tool that will allow users to explore the Institute's published documents easily and thoroughly.

**The new website is set to launch in fall 2022.**

## Events

### 2022 Symposium: Promoting Workforce Resilience

#### OVERVIEW

The Institute's Annual Symposium took place in Tallahassee on May 9 and 10, 2022. The topic, Promoting Workforce Resilience, was explored with special attention given to the influences of the great resignation due to the pandemic. Nearly 100 attendees listened to keynote lectures and workshops covered topics related to preparation, recruitment, and onboarding; holistic well-being of workers; workforce support; and organizational efforts. Attendees collaborated and networked with experts and leaders in child welfare from across the state and country. With our new FCB provider status, 18 child welfare continuing education units were provided to frontline professionals and 6 CEUs were provided to professionals with a therapeutic license to practice in Florida.

#### 2022 SYMPOSIUM:



#### KEYNOTES

##### *Dr. Dina Wilke, Tales from the Frontline: Findings from the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families*

Dina J. Wilke, PhD, is a Professor at Florida State University and a Faculty Affiliate with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare. In her keynote address, Dr. Wilke discussed key findings from the FSPSF focusing on factors that influence turnover, retention, and well-being among Florida's child welfare workforce. Dr. Wilke also addressed the next steps and how the findings from the study inform workplace strategies around Florida.

Additionally, Dr. Wilke co-presented a breakout session with Dr. Melissa Radey and Dr. Lisa Magruder focused on client violence among child protective service workers.

##### *Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer, The Child Welfare Workforce Crisis: What if We Are "Forcing" the Wrong "Work?"*

Dr. Amelia Franck Meyer is the founder and CEO of the national non-profit, Alia Innovations. In her keynote presentation, Dr. Franck Meyer discussed how most child welfare agencies and organizations are facing a shortage of qualified candidates, a trend that is exacerbated by long-time skilled staff leaving in large numbers—often leaving the field entirely. As she showed, the solutions are neither easy, nor short-term, nor familiar; additionally, Dr. Meyer suggested the child welfare workforce is on a trajectory to even greater instability and unsustainability if significant adjustments are not made now. Facing the facts of the

current and predicted conditions is a beginning step, but the solutions will require fundamentals shift in purpose, approach, and in what teams are asked to do. Dr. Frank Meyer showed why these shifts in approach are necessary to attract and retain the right team members and to innovate current ways of working.

Dr. Franck Meyer also hosted a breakout session focused on strategies for building resilience for child welfare professionals.

## OTHER PRESENTERS

There were an additional 20 presenters at the Symposium. These presenters included Institute affiliates, DCF leadership, and national experts.

## THE FOUR TRACKS

### ❖ Preparation, Recruitment, and Onboarding

Innovate ways to prepare, recruit, onboard, and retain child welfare professionals using virtual reality, simulation, and pioneering research.

### ❖ Holistic Well-being of Workers

Create holistic ways to promote the well-being of child welfare professionals, particularly considering COVID-19, workers' life-work balance, and mental health.

### ❖ Workforce Support

Support the child welfare workforce in meaningful ways, such as leadership development and peer support.

### ❖ Organizational Efforts

Improve organizational efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and dealing with client violence.

## SYMPOSIUM TRACKS:

TWELVE WORKSHOPS ACROSS

# FOUR TRACKS



PREPARATION,  
RECRUITMENT, &  
ONBOARDING



HOLISTIC WELL-  
BEING OF WORKERS



WORKFORCE  
SUPPORT



ORGANIZATIONAL  
EFFORTS

## CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Each year during the Symposium, the Institute recognizes leaders and innovators in the child welfare workforce for the important, yet often challenging, work they do every day to help children and families thrive. For our Fourth Annual Institute Child Welfare Professional of the Year Awards, the Institute received nominations from colleagues, supervisors, partner providers and family members for child welfare workers who exemplify the use of innovation, forward-thinking, out-of-the-box approaches to promoting resilience personally and professionally. The six award honorees were as follows: Bethany Alexander (Case Manager Supervisor of the Year), Deanna Warfle (Case Manager of the Year), Kelli Estrada (Specialist of the Year), Andrew Eicher (Innovative Specialist of the Year), Becky Hall (Child Protective Investigator Supervisor of the Year), and Ivana Ruiz (Child Protective Investigator of the Year). Honorable mentions included Christina Gagum and Katrina Deronde.

## SERVICE INITIATIVE

A core tenant of the Institute is service to children and families in Florida; as such, the Institute engages in service initiatives throughout the year. During the Symposium, staff and attendees participated in a diaper drive benefiting the Tallahassee Area Foster & Adoptive Parent Association, which supports foster parents in 13 counties throughout the Big Bend Area.

## CWP AWARD WINNERS:



**BETHANY ALEXANDER**



**ANDREW EICHER**



**KELLI ESTRADA**



**BECKY HALL**



**IVANA RUIZ**



**DEANNA WARFLE**

# Affiliate Annual Meeting

## OVERVIEW

The Annual Affiliate Meeting was held on June 23, 2022, at Turnbull Conference Center in Tallahassee, Florida. This meeting was a gathering of the Affiliate Network members and provided a space for these individuals to learn from each other and share ideas for future collaborations.

Thirty-two individuals registered, and all attended, including guest speakers.

## KEYNOTES

The keynote presentation by Casey Family Programs included speakers Jessica Hanak Coulter, from the Strategic Consulting Team, and Dr. Peter Pecora, the Managing Director of Research Services. The presentation was titled **"Collaborating for Systems Change."** The presentation discussed three main topics: *Keys to Collaboration*, *Early and Enough Engagement Source*, and *Equitable Evaluation*.

James Weaver from the Department of Children and Families presented **"Collaborating with DCF: What Researchers Should Know"** as the plenary presentation. Affiliates were invited to ask detailed questions regarding data sharing and gained several helpful tips for working with the DCF.

## WORKGROUPS

The affiliates held preliminary conversations around three workgroup topics: *Workforce Recruitment*, *Engaging Parent Voice*, and *Youth Transitioning Out of Care*. These workgroups were an initial gathering and used to gauge the interest of the Affiliates. Because of conversations at the annual meeting, those interested in Youth Transitioning Out of Care will continue their collaboration through the fall months.

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# APPENDIX A: INSTITUTE FY 2021-2022 AND PROJECTED FY 2022-2023 BUDGETS

## FY 2021-2022 Budget

The Institute received an additional \$10 million appropriation that stemmed from the 2020 legislation in SB 1326. Additional funds (\$418,916) were awarded to the Institute from outside contracts with ZERO to THREE, and the Department of Children and Families. To thoughtfully and prudently plan the implementation of the new initiatives required by the statute, the leadership team:

- ❖ Met with stakeholders to determine gaps and needs of the workforce
- ❖ Interviewed potential contractors and initiated contracts
- ❖ Created new positions and hired talented professionals
- ❖ Developed a thoughtful implementation plan for creating the GROW Center and its three initiatives
- ❖ Determined a robust research agenda to inform the GROW Center’s direction
- ❖ Planned for the evaluation of each of the GROW Center’s initiatives
- ❖ Developed realistic budgets for research, professional development, and administration activities
- ❖ Determined an accounting mechanism for each of the three budgets and the significant increase in contracting for services

Nearly \$5 million was expended during the reporting period, of which nearly \$3.3 million was provided to entities with expertise in developing advanced certifications and researchers at universities. See Tables 3a-c for contracted expenditures. Working with the Provost and FSU facilities, an agreement was settled on the renovation of a 10,000 square foot space owned by FSU. The Institute’s portion of the cost was \$1 million.

TABLE 1: Fiscal Year 2021-2022 E&G Operating Budget

General Operating Budget	\$10,907,899	
	Budget	Available Balance at End of Year
Salaries	\$936,131	\$743,855
OPS	\$516,518	\$208,171
Other	\$25,000	\$25,000
Expense	\$9,455,250	\$3,985,842
Carry Forward FY 20-21	\$251,956	\$205,979
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,907,899</b>	<b>\$5,168,847</b>

## Contracts Received and Awarded in FY 2021-2022

During this reporting period, the Institute received \$418,916 in contracts from outside entities. The DCF provided continued funding (\$268,916) for ongoing research projects related to kinship navigation programs and residential group home quality standards.

Table 2 depicts externally funded projects in FY 2021-2022.

## Projects Funded by the Institute in FY 2021-2022

During FY 21-22, the Institute funded eight research projects (\$371,360), five initiatives related to the GROW Center (\$2,856,456), one for FFPSA technical assistance (\$37,137), and various subject matter experts to support different projects.

TABLE 2: Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Externally Funded Research and Evaluation Projects

Project	Project Period	Total Award	Principal Investigator	Funding Entity
Inventory of Kinship Practices	1/1/2021 to 9/30/2021	\$87,284.00 <sup>1</sup>	Anna Yelick	Florida Department of Children and Families
Inventory of Kinship Practices	1/3/2022 to 6/30/2022	\$84,856.00	Anna Yelick	Florida Department of Children and Families
An Assessment of Quality Standards for Florida's DCF Licensed Residential Group Homes	7/1/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$96,776.00	Shamra Boel-Studt	Florida Department of Children and Families
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$268,016</b>		

<sup>1</sup> \$37,643.41 were expended in FY 22

TABLE 3A: Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Projects Funded by the Institute – Research and Evaluation

Research and Evaluation						
Project	Project Period	Expenditures	Encumbrances	Total Award	Principal Investigator/ Contract	Entity
A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida	6/1/2021 to 9/30/2022	\$2,000.00	\$5,999.00 <sup>1</sup>	\$9,999.00 <sup>2</sup>	Morgan Cooley	Florida Atlantic University
A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services	6/1/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$30,000.00	\$18,000.00 <sup>3</sup>	\$50,000.00 <sup>4</sup>	Marianna Colvin	Florida Atlantic University
Assisting Youth in Foster Care in Developing Life Skills to Become Self-Sufficient Adults: Plan for Evaluating Florida’s Efforts	3/15/2022 to 6/20/2022	\$30,467.00	\$0	\$30,467.00	Martie Gillen	University of Florida
A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Authentic Family Engagement and Strengthening Approach	1/10/2022 to 6/30/2022	\$33,400	\$0	\$33,400.00	Morgan Cooley	Florida Atlantic University
Follow the Love Pilot Project – Strengthening Relational Permanency for Foster Youth in Florida Child Welfare Systems	3/21/2022 to 6/30/2022	\$99,479.00	\$0	\$99,479.00	Annette Semanchin-Jone	The Research Foundation for SUNY on behalf of the University at Buffalo
HOPE Court: An Explanatory Case Study of Restorative Practices in Child Welfare	3/21/2022 to 6/30/2022	\$48,015.00	\$0	\$48,015.00	Melissa Green	FLITE Center
Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination	6/1/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$49,500 <sup>5</sup>	\$0	\$50,000.00	Melissa Radey	Florida State University
Translational Research of Fort Lauderdale Independence Training & Education (FLITE) Center	6/8/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$16,678.00	\$33,322.00 <sup>6</sup>	\$50,000.00	Fabio Naranjo	Barry University
<b>Total Research and Evaluation Cost</b>				<b>\$371,360</b>		

- 1 Encumbrance carried over into FY 23 due to request for a no-cost extension by the PI
- 2 \$2,000.00 of the award total were expended previously in FY 21
- 3 Encumbrance carried over into FY 23 due to request for a no-cost extension by the PI
- 4 \$2,000.00 of the award total were expended previously in FY 21
- 5 \$500.00 of the award total was previously expended in FY 21
- 6 Encumbrance carried over into FY 23 as the project period extends into FY 23

TABLE 3B: Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Projects Funded by the Institute – Professional Development

Professional Development						
Project	Project Period	Expenditures	Encumbrances	Total Award	Principal Investigator/ Contract	Entity
Discovery and Analysis for MyALIGN Solution Development for Florida Institute for Child Welfare GROW Center	4/27/2022 to 6/10/2022	\$13,338.00	\$0	\$13,338.00	Heather Zacker	eCare Vault
Florida Institute for Child Welfare Platform	10/4/2021 to 7/1/2022	\$224,892.00	\$0	\$224,892.00	Tara Orłowski	Florida Center for Interactive Media
Project WAKE-UP: A Combined Problem-Case-Based Curriculum Innovation and Redesign	12/17/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$752,672.00	\$0	\$752,672.00	LaTonya Noël	Florida State University
Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies Professional Certification (STARS) Advanced Certification	9/2/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$988,116.00	\$0	\$988,116.00	Karen Oehme	Florida State University: Institute for Family Violence Studies
Child Welfare SUDs Systems Support and Training	10/15/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$877,438.00	\$0	\$877,438.00	Ellen Piekalkiewicz	Florida State University: Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families, & Children
<b>Total Professional Development Cost</b>				<b>\$2,856,456.00</b>		

TABLE 3C: FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE INSTITUTE – ADMINISTRATION

Administration						
Project	Project Period	Expenditures	Encumbrances	Total Award	Principal Investigator/ Contract	Entity
Technical Assistance for Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation	11/1/2021 to 6/30/2022	\$30,000.00	\$7,137.00 <sup>1</sup>	\$37,137.00	Pamela Menendez	University of South Florida
Consultant Services	7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$5,188.75	\$17,636.25	\$22,825.00	Various consultants with subject-matter expertise <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Total Administration Cost</b>				<b>\$59,962.00</b>		
<b>Total Research and Evaluation Cost</b>				<b>\$371,360</b>		
<b>Total Professional Development Cost</b>				<b>\$2,856,456.00</b>		
<b>Total Administration Cost</b>				<b>\$59,962.00</b>		
<b>Total Projects funded by the Institute in FY 2021-2022</b>				<b>\$3,287,778.00</b>		

1 The PI did not fulfill deliverable submission to be paid for their final deliverable

2 Consultants include Devin Coleman, Zuleka Henderson, Elizabeth Wynter, Brandie McCabe, and Diamond Whitley

# Projected Fiscal Year 2022-2023 E&G Operating Budget

The FY 2022-2023 operating budget is \$10,909,422 and the initial allocations are depicted in Table 4.

In spring of 2022, Institute leadership established three working departments within the Institute – Administration, Professional Development, Research - each with its own program director and staff. Working budgets were established for each department and an internal accounting system was developed.

**Administration** has a budget just under \$1.5 million to cover personnel costs for leadership, administration, and

communication staff as well as general administration expenses such as computers, software, and licenses, symposia and other meetings, travel, conferences, etc.

**Professional Development**, which primarily is comprised of the three GROW Center initiatives, has the largest budget allocation with just over \$6.5 million.

The **Research** department allocated just under \$3 million for personnel, general research, legislative mandates, and research associated with GROW Center activities.

We anticipate a shift in the budget allocations in the future as the initial investment costs associated with the GROW Center initiatives will soon be completed and the initiatives will be underway in the field. The research costs related to the initiatives will increase and general research expenditures will decrease.

TABLE 4: FY 2022-2023 General Operating Budget

General Operating Budget	\$10,909,422
	Budget
Salaries	\$1,286,814
OPS	\$2,138,268
Other	\$1,000,000
Expense	\$6,484,340
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,909,422</b>
FY 2021-2022 Carryforward	\$5,168,846

TABLE 5: Internal Department Budgets

Department	Total Budget	Personnel/General Expenses	Distribution of Budget Items			
Administration	\$1,469,000	\$1,469,000				
Research	\$2,956,055	\$1,070,500	General Research: \$1,086,649	AI: \$50,000	ALIGN: \$677,906	AWE \$71,000
Professional Development	\$6,567,527	\$1,135,250	AI: \$2,129,000	ALIGN: \$2,893,277	AWE \$410,000	

## Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 Projects Funded by the Department of Children and Families

The Institute currently has a contract with the Department of Children and Families to fund the kinship navigator program research project through September 30, 2022. Beginning October 1, 2022, the Institute will fund this important project. Correspondence was provided to the Department in mid-September stating this intention.

The Department finds Dr. Boel-Studt’s work on the quality standards invaluable and continues to support our work on this project.

TABLE 6: Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 Research Funded by the Department of Children and Families

Project	Project Period	Total Award	Principal Investigator	Funding Entity
Inventory of Kinship Practices	7/1/2022 to 9/30/2022	\$34,989.00	Anna Yelick	Florida Department of Children and Families
An Assessment of Quality Standards for Florida’s DCF Licensed Residential Group Homes	7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$95,780.00	Shamra Boel-Studt	Florida Department of Children and Families
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$130,769.00</b>		

## Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 Projects Funded by the Institute

Since July 1, 2022, we have entered into 13 contracts worth \$4 million with entities to conduct research and evaluation activities and carry out GROW Center initiatives. Several more contracts are expected to be procured once current negotiations and or discovery phases are completed or Invitations to Negotiate have solicited an appropriate vendor.



TABLE 7A: Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 Projects Funded by the Institute – Research and Evaluation

Research and Evaluation				
Project	Project Period	Total Award	Principal Investigator/ Contract	Entity
An Evaluation of AdCert Trainings for Child Welfare Professionals	7/1/2022 to 6/20/2023	\$186,084.00	Shamra Boel-Studt	Florida State University
Assisting Youth in Foster Care in Developing Life Skills to Become Self-Sufficient Adults: Plan for Evaluating Florida's Efforts	7/21/2022 to 10/30/2022	\$15,234.00	Martie Gillen	University of Florida
A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Authentic Family Engagement and Strengthening Approach	7/21/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$41,697.00	Morgan Cooley	Florida Atlantic University
Empowering Child Welfare Workforce: Supporting Child Welfare Student Interns and Agency Supervisors through Group Supervision, Tuition Sponsorship, and Stipend	9/15/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$200,648.00	Courtney Wilson	Florida International University
Follow the Love Pilot Project – Strengthening Relational Permanency for Foster Youth in Florida Child Welfare Systems	8/23/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$140,402.00	Annette Semanchin-Jones	The Research Foundation for SUNY on behalf of the University at Buffalo
HOPE Court: An Explanatory Case Study of Restorative Practices in Child Welfare	7/21/2022 to 10/1/2023	\$154,550.00	Melissa Green	FLITE Center
MyALIGN Development and Evaluation Planning	8/2/2022 to 12/1/2022	\$10,694.00	Erin King	University of West Florida
Affiliate Award	Winter 2023 – for 12 months	\$50,000.00	Recipient TBD	Entity TBD
Affiliate Award	Winter 2023 – for 12 months	\$50,000.00	Recipient TBD	Entity TBD
<b>Total Research and Evaluation Cost FY22-23</b>		<b>\$980,078</b>		

TABLE 7B: Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 Projects Funded by the Institute – Professional Development

Professional Development				
Project	Project Period	Total Award	Principal Investigator/ Contract	Entity
AWE Leadership Academy Development and Facilitation	7/25/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$74,880.00	Patricia Mosher	Tricia Mosher Consulting, Inc.
MyALIGN eCare Vault Collaboration	7/12/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$1,657,380.84	Heather Zacker	eCare Vault
A Combined Problem-Case-Based Curriculum Innovation and Redesign	(date will be updated when executed)	\$1,146,679.00	Craig Stanley Lisa Schelbe	Florida State University
Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies Professional Certification (STARS) Advanced Certification	7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$170,592.00	Karen Oehme	Florida State University: Institute for Family Violence Studies
Domestic Violence Child Welfare Advanced Certification Program	7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$592,560.00	Karen Oehme	Florida State University: Institute for Family Violence Studies
Understanding Substance Use in Family Systems Advanced Certification	7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$559,633.00	Ellen Piekalkiewicz	Florida State University: Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families, and Children
<b>Total Professional Development Cost FY22-23</b>		<b>\$4,201,725</b>		

TABLE 7C: Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 Projects Funded by the Institute – Professional Development

Administration				
Project	Project Period	Total Award	Principal Investigator/ Contract	Entity
Florida Institute for Child Welfare Website Management	9/15/2022	\$35,445.00	Tara Orłowski	Florida Center for Interactive Media
Consultant Services	7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	\$14,700.00	Various consultants with subject-matter expertise	
<b>Total Administration Cost FY22-23</b>		<b>\$50,145.00</b>		
<b>Total Research and Evaluation Cost FY22-23</b>		<b>\$980,078</b>		
<b>Total Professional Development Cost FY22-23</b>		<b>\$4,201,725</b>		
<b>Total Administration Cost FY22-23</b>		<b>\$50,145</b>		
<b>Overall Total for Contracted Expenses</b>		<b>\$4,354,499.09</b>		

## FY 2021-2022 Carry Forward

The Institute had \$5.1 million in unspent E&G funds at the end of the budget period. A spending plan was approved by the Board of Governors to use the carryforward monies. Nearly \$1.4 million has been earmarked over a 2-year period for several research initiatives. Short descriptions for each follow.

## Research Initiatives

**Simulation Lab Exploration.** The Institute conducted a literature review of simulation labs’ use, primarily in academic and/or child welfare settings. The Institute research and evaluation team will continue to explore how simulation labs could be implemented in Florida. Exploration activities may include travel to existing simulation labs in the U.S., conducting focus groups with the current Florida child welfare workforce regarding their perspectives of simulation labs and potential utility, and

the development of evaluation plans for programming strategies identified by the GROW Center team.

**MyALIGN Assessments.** Currently, Dr. Erin King, an Institute faculty affiliate at the University of West Florida, is assisting MyALIGN staff with identifying and implementing appropriate worker well-being measures for the MyALIGN platform. The Institute will continue to fund Dr. King's time on this project and bring in additional support as needed.

**Virtual Reality Evaluator.** The GROW Center leadership is interested in incorporating virtual reality into its programming. Although the Institute plans to hire several full-time faculty to conduct these types of evaluations in the future, they will not be on-boarded in the near future. Therefore, the Institute will need to contract with an affiliate or other SUS researcher to engage in evaluation planning and execution for programming strategies identified by the GROW Center team.

**Parent engagement.** Drs. Melissa Radey and Lenore McWey, both faculty at the Florida State University, have submitted a formal research proposal to examine child welfare-involved parents' perspectives on their safety nets. The central goal of the study is to understand safety nets, including public and private sources and programs, to inform strategies to provide effective child welfare services and interventions responsive to the context of parents' lives. They will determine (a) how safety nets operate; (b) parents' decision-making processes in engaging with informal and formal resources; and (c) how safety nets contribute to family outcomes.

**Foster parent retention.** Although there is a growing body of research related to recruiting, training, licensing, and supporting new foster parents, as well as federal efforts to enhance training content and availability of training to foster parents and child welfare agencies, there are several questions or gaps that may limit the capacity of child welfare systems to create a more stable and even ideal foster care system. Dr. Morgan Cooley,

faculty at Florida Atlantic University and an Institute affiliate, along with the Institute and several colleagues, has developed a list of potential research gaps and submitted them to the Department of Children and Families for their consideration regarding pressing needs. The Institute plans to fund a translational research project derived from this list toward the goal of better supporting foster parents in Florida.

**Foster Youth Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy.** Given the high trauma exposure rates among foster youth, effective interventions are needed to alleviate associated negative outcomes. Cognitive behavioral intervention for trauma in schools (CBITS) was developed to reduce symptoms of distress and build skills to improve youth's ability to handle stress and trauma in the future, fostering resilience on the individual, family, and community level. CBITS promotes the individual resilience factors of cognitive flexibility and active coping by using cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques to challenge maladaptive thoughts and teach problem-solving coping strategies, which produces more adaptive and behavioral responses to stress. Currently, a team of researchers led by Dr. Tanya Renn of Florida State University, is working in collaboration with Boys Town North Florida to do an open pilot that assesses the feasibility and acceptability of CBITS for foster youth in a group home setting. The open pilot recruited 20 youth into the study. Data from this study will provide information on the adaptations needed to create a more appropriate intervention for delivery in the group home setting, as well as key barriers and facilitators that impact the feasibility and acceptability of CBITS for foster youth in the group home setting. As a next step to the open pilot, the research team is interested in conducting a small-scale randomized control pilot incorporating the adaptations to the delivery of CBITS to examine short-term outcomes among foster youth who are residing in a group home. The Institute would use these allocated funds to support this next step in the pilot process.

**Permanency Primer.** Heartland for Children is a community-based care lead agency in Florida under the direction of Institute affiliate Teri Saunders. Heartland is piloting a new program called “Permanency Primer,” which uses seasoned child welfare professionals to be “translators” and coaches for parents. They explain the dependency process to child welfare-involved parents so they can better understand each step, what is expected of them, and the “unspoken” rules and interpretations of those in the system. The overarching goals of the program are to 1) increase reunification rates, and 2) decrease time to reunification. Heartland has asked the Institute to provide evaluation services for this new program.

**Sexual Safety.** In recent years, Heartland has been working to increase sexual safety in foster homes. Thus far, they have brought in a national consultant, refreshed their foster parent training, implemented sexual safety conversations in the homes, and begun implementation of the Diana Screen of all new foster caregivers. Heartland has asked the Institute to provide evaluation services to ascertain if and how these interventions are increasing sexual safety in foster homes.

**Photovoice Research.** The Institute is committed to conducting research and evaluation that utilizes community participatory action methodologies, including photovoice. Several Institute affiliates have conducted photovoice research within child welfare, and building on the success of those projects, the Institute will collaborate with the Florida State University procurement office to develop an Intent to Negotiate (ITN) specific to a photovoice research project to be conducted in Florida and involving the experiences of those within the child welfare system (e.g., workers, youth, families).

**Pre-symposium workshop.** The Institute holds an annual symposium each year. For the FY22-23 symposium, the Institute plans to gather both its faculty affiliate network and its GROW Center Advisory Committee prior to the

symposium for tailored programming, and to increase networking and collaboration among these two groups of Institute stakeholders.

## Professional Development and Administrative Initiatives

Just over \$3 million has been allocated for two fiscal years to assist the Department of Children and Families redesign their pre-service training, develop an advanced certification on parent communication and engagement, customize virtual reality scenarios and provide a train-the-trainer training to the Department, and various other professional development opportunities such as webinars, e-learning modules, and resource videos.

To be expended by June 30, 2023, \$350,000 has been set aside for administration activities, (furniture, equipment, and IT services for the new renovated space, and staff development for all Institute staff). A little over \$200,000 will be spent on professional development activities within the ALIGN initiative.

## APPENDIX B: INSTITUTE STAFF

At the time of the FY 2020-2021 Annual Report, the Institute employed eight full-time staff and eight part-time staff. Since October 2022, an additional 12 full-time and 9 part-time staff have been hired.

For **Administration**, two full-time people were hired in January 2022 to assist with the administration and accounting of the budget and additional contracts. To disseminate the additional research findings, expand our social media outreach, and create branding for the GROW Center initiatives and marketing activities, one full-time and three part-time positions were added.

In the **Research Department**, four full-time and six part-time positions were employed to conduct the mandated evaluations, begin evaluation plans for the GROW Center initiatives, and other various research activities.

The **Professional Development Department** is adding new positions. A Program Director was hired in late October 2021 and five full-time and one part-time person have been onboarded since March 2022.

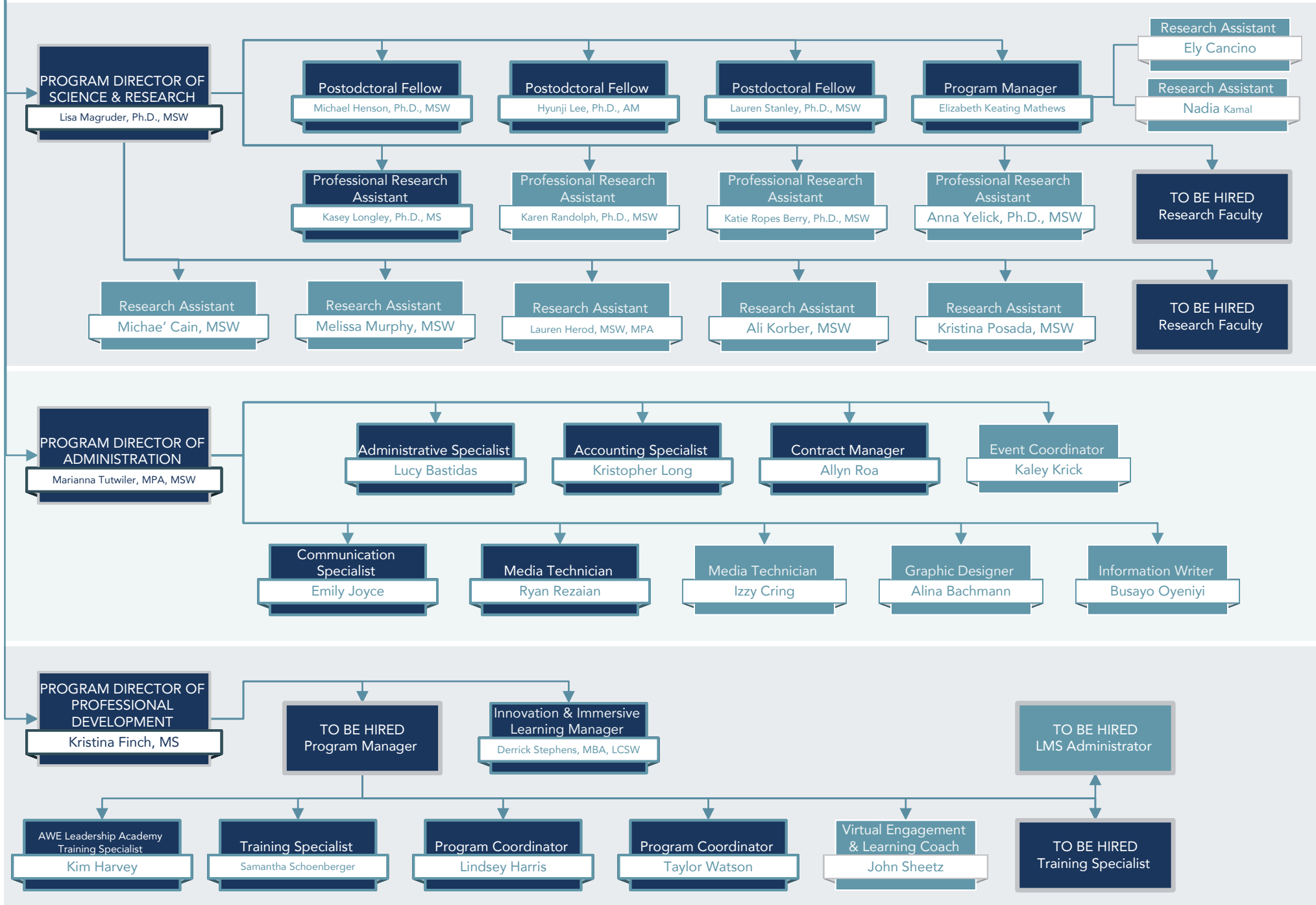
The leadership team met with the FSU Human Resources team in August to strategize designing an effective organizational structure to ensure successful outcomes for the Institute. We are working closely with them to recruit experienced professionals and expect to be fully staffed by summer of 2023.

**DIRECTOR**

Jessica Pryce, Ph.D., MSW

**CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

September 2022



**PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF SCIENCE & RESEARCH**

Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW

Postdoctoral Fellow  
Michael Henson, Ph.D., MSW

Postdoctoral Fellow  
Hyunji Lee, Ph.D., AM

Postdoctoral Fellow  
Lauren Stanley, Ph.D., MSW

Program Manager  
Elizabeth Keating Mathews

Research Assistant  
Ely Cancino

Research Assistant  
Nadia Kamal

Professional Research Assistant  
Kasey Longley, Ph.D., MS

Professional Research Assistant  
Karen Randolph, Ph.D., MSW

Professional Research Assistant  
Katie Ropes Berry, Ph.D., MSW

Professional Research Assistant  
Anna Yelick, Ph.D., MSW

TO BE HIRED  
Research Faculty

Research Assistant  
Michae' Cain, MSW

Research Assistant  
Melissa Murphy, MSW

Research Assistant  
Lauren Herod, MSW, MPA

Research Assistant  
Ali Korber, MSW

Research Assistant  
Kristina Posada, MSW

TO BE HIRED  
Research Faculty

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION**

Marianna Tutwiler, MPA, MSW

Administrative Specialist  
Lucy Bastidas

Accounting Specialist  
Kristopher Long

Contract Manager  
Allyn Roa

Event Coordinator  
Kaley Krick

Communication Specialist  
Emily Joyce

Media Technician  
Ryan Rezaian

Media Technician  
Izzy Cring

Graphic Designer  
Alina Bachmann

Information Writer  
Busayo Oyeniyi

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Kristina Finch, MS

TO BE HIRED  
Program Manager

Innovation & Immersive Learning Manager  
Derrick Stephens, MBA, LCSW

TO BE HIRED  
LMS Administrator

AWE Leadership Academy Training Specialist  
Kim Harvey

Training Specialist  
Samantha Schoenberger

Program Coordinator  
Lindsey Harris

Program Coordinator  
Taylor Watson

Virtual Engagement & Learning Coach  
John Sheetz

TO BE HIRED  
Training Specialist

## APPENDIX C: CONTRIBUTIONS BY INSTITUTE AFFILIATES

Below is an accounting of several of our affiliates' meaningful contributions toward Institute-specific initiatives. In the spring of 2022, we reviewed applications of people interested in becoming an affiliate. After a rigorous review, four new affiliates were accepted and are noted below.

**Dr. Shamra Boel-Studt**, Florida State University, leads the Quality Care Standards for Residential Group Care project, as well as the initial evaluation of the GROW Center Advanced Certifications. She served as co-principal investigator of the *Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination*.

**Dr. Marianna Colvin**, Florida Atlantic University, served as the principal investigator of A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services. She is co-investigator on two additional projects: 1) *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*; and 2) *A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Authentic Family Engagement and Strengthening Approach*.

**Dr. Morgan Cooley**, Florida Atlantic University, is principal investigator on the Affiliate Award for Translational Research project *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*. She is the 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 an Institute award review team member.

**Sarah Dickinson**, University of South Florida, joined the Network in 2022.

**Dr. Martie Gillen**, University of Florida, served as the mandated University of Florida expert consultant on the Institute's SB80 independent life skills evaluation (*Evaluating Florida's Approach to Life Skill Development among Youth in Foster Care*). She is leading the development of the Institute's next multi-year study, *A Longitudinal Examination of Youth Aging Out of Care*.

**Chris Groeber**, University of South Florida, led FFPSA technical assistance and was a co-investigator of the Institute-funded project *COVID-19 Workforce Disruptions: Implementation Drivers to Promote Change, a Follow-up Study on Child Welfare Workforce Retention*.

**Dr. Hui Huang**, Florida International University, developed the initial proposal for the 2022 Priority Research Award study, *Empowering Child Welfare Workforce: Supporting Child Welfare Student Interns and Agency Supervisors through Group Supervision, Tuition Sponsorship, and Stipend*. Dr. Huang resigned from the Network in summer 2022 after accepting a faculty position at the University of Texas at Arlington but remains a co-investigator on the project.

**Jim Jolley**, Florida Network for Children's Advocacy, joined the Network in 2022.





**Dr. Michael Killian**, Florida State University, is the lead evaluator and statistician for the College of Social Work curriculum redesign project.

**Dr. Erin King**, University of West Florida, is leading the development of mental health and well-being measures included in MyALIGN programming and evaluation. Dr. King also served as an Institute award review team member.

**Rene' Ledford**, Children's Home Society of Florida, is a member of the *Youth Transitioning Out of Care* affiliate workgroup and the GROW Center Advisory Committee. She also supports the CaseAim evaluation in her role at Children's Home Society.

**Khalilah Louis-Caines**, St. Leo University, was a recipient of the 2022-2023 Dissertation Fellowship Award for her dissertation, *It Takes a Village: An Examination of Educational Enrollment among Transition-Age Youth in Foster Care*. She is also a member of the Youth Transitioning Out of Care affiliate workgroup.

**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. She and her team have presented their findings to both Florida and national audiences.

**Dr. Fabio Naranjo**, Barry University, is the recipient of the fall 2021 Affiliate Award for Translational Research, for his current project, *Translational Research of Fort Lauderdale Independence Training & Education (FLITE) Center in Broward County, Florida*.

**Karen Oehme**, Florida State University, is leading the development of the Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies Certification (STARS) and Domestic Violence advanced certification courses.

**Dr. Melissa Radey**, Florida State University, was the principal investigator of *Maternity Group Homes for Young Mothers in Florida: A Mixed Methods Examination*. She continues as co-investigator of the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families. In the upcoming year, she will lead a study on parent engagement and serve as a consultant on the CaseAIM evaluation. Dr. Radey also served as an Institute award review team member.

**Teri Saunders**, Heartland for Children, collaborated with affiliate Dr. Riaan van Zyl on his study, *COVID-19 Workforce Disruptions: Implementation Drivers to Promote Change, a Follow-up Study on Child Welfare Workforce Retention*. In the upcoming year, the Institute will collaborate with Ms. Saunders on two evaluations (*Permanency Primer and Sexual Safety*).

**Dr. Heather Thompson**, Florida Atlantic University, is co-investigator on two projects: 1) *A Platform for Social Action: Engaging and Supporting the Voice of Youth in Foster Care Receiving Independent Living Services*, and 2) *A Mixed Methods Examination of Comfort Call Implementation in South Florida*. Dr. Thompson also served as an Institute award review team member.

**Dr. Lisa Schelbe**, Florida State University, is a co-investigator on multiple Institute projects: *Academic Innovation, Evaluating Florida's Approach to Life Skill Development among Youth in Foster Care*, and

*Follow the Love – Strengthening Relational Permanency for Foster Youth in Florida Child Welfare Systems.*

**Stephanie Scott**, United Way of Broward County, joined the Network in 2022.

**Dr. Riaan Van Zyl**, University of South Florida, served as Principal Investigator the 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).

**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, serving as lead site evaluator for both demonstration sites. In the upcoming year, she will serve as a consultant on the CaseAIM evaluation.

**Dr. Courtney Wilson**, Florida International University, joined the Network in 2022. He is the principal investigator of the 2022 Priority Research Award study, *Empowering Child Welfare Workforce: Supporting Child Welfare Student Interns and Agency Supervisors through Group Supervision, Tuition Sponsorship, and Stipend*.

# APPENDIX D: MINUTES FROM INSTITUTE QUARTERLY AFFILIATE CONFERENCE CALLS AND THE ANNUAL MEETING

## Affiliates Meeting

Thursday, December 9, 2021

### Attendees

Leslie Meskin, FGCU	Marianna Colvin, FAU	Rene Ledford, CHS
April Steen, Warner	Ann Perko, IFVS	Erin King, UWF
Chris Groeber, USF	Morgan Cooley, FAU	Hui Huang, FIU
Teri Saunders, Heartland for Children	Lisa Schelbe, FSU	Shamra Boel-Studt, FSU
Ying Zhang, Ounce of Prevention	Michael Campbell, St. Leo University	Martie Gillen, UF
Marleen Milner, SEU	Michael Killian, FSU	Khalilah Louis-Caines, St. Leo University
Heather Agazzi, USF	Heather Thompson, FAU	Jessica Pryce, FICW
Kristina Finch, FICW	Lisa Magruder, FICW	Lucy Bastidas, FICW
Marianna Tutwiler, FICW		

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### Executive Updates

*Jessica Pryce* welcomed the affiliates to the call and provided executive updates. She introduced *Kristina Finch* as the new Program Director of Professional Development and the Director of the GROW Center. *Jessica* announced the Institute’s Symposium will be held at the FSU Turnbull Center on May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The Symposium will focus on innovations in the workforce.

### GROW Center Updates

*Kristina Finch* provided an update on the three parts comprised of the GROW Center. This included academic innovation, ALIGN and the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement (AWE).

### Institute Updates

*Marianna Tutwiler* gave an update on the Institute’s additional staffing and new hires. Since the last affiliate quarterly call, the Institute has welcomed four new staff. We plan to hire additional staff for our communications team as well as an accountant, a grants compliance analyst and program managers. Updates were also given regarding our renovation plan. The institute has submitted a renovation plan to FSU for approval. The timeline for renovation is expected to be complete for Fall 2022.

### Affiliate Updates

*Lisa Magruder* gave an update of our current affiliates and their collaboration with the Institute and new and upcoming projects.

The Authentic Family Engagement and Strengthening Approach (PI: Cooley, Co-I: Colvin) is a multi-county project, that will explore workers’ perceptions of racial justice, their racial justice values and how that impacts their work; develop a training curriculum and coaching guide to help workers engage in

self-reflection around racial discrimination and systemic racism; reduce discrimination in their work with families, prioritize relationships; and empowering Black families in the system. Two other projects mentioned were Follow the Love (Co-I: Schelbe) and HOPE Court (FLITE Center/NOVA).

*Lisa* mentioned the newly finalized schedule for regularly occurring research awards will be included in the next affiliate advisor but will also be available on our [website](#) in the new year.

*Lisa* announced there were three calls for research. A last call for the Affiliate Award for Translational Research, in which the next round will be released in spring 2022. A Priority Research Award for Innovations in Workforce Resilience and an upcoming Dissertation Fellowship for \$5,000 in February 2022 that would begin in the fall semester in August 2022.

*Lisa* also announced the Institute will be calling for presentations from our Affiliates for our 2022 Annual Symposium in January, as well as a call for posters from Doctoral Students or Post-docs.

*Lisa* provided an update on the Maternity Homes Project with Dr. Radey.

### **Closing**

In closing, along with giving our affiliates the opportunity to express any concerns, needs, and or updates, Jessica thanked our affiliates for joining the meeting and then the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 1:00 PM.



## First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2022 Affiliates Meeting

Thursday, March 10, 2022

### Attendees

Kenisha Thomas, FAMU	Rene Ledford, CHS	Lucy Bastidas, FICW
Ann Perko, IFVS	Heather Thompson, FAU	Hyunji Lee, FICW
Erin King, UWF	Diane Scott, UWF	Lisa Magruder, FICW
Morgan Cooley, FAU	Alison Salloum, USF	Melissa Murphy, FICW
Hui Huang, FIU	Melissa Radey, FSU	Kristina Finch, FICW
Joy McClellan, FAU	Danielle Doss	Allyn Roa, FICW
Riann Van Zyl, USF	Martie Gillen, UF	Jessica Pryce, FICW
LaTonya Noel, FSU	Shamra Boel-Studt, FSU	Kristopher Long, FICW
Gihan Omar, Citrus Health	Kimberly Renk, UCF	Kasey Longley, FICW
Maxine McGregor, UCF	Jessica Felix-Jager de Weaver	Elizabeth Keating-Mathews, FICW
Marianna Colvin, FAU	Marleen Milner, SEU	John Sheetz, FICW
Teri Saunders, Heartland for Children	Heather Agazzi, USF	Michael Henson, FICW
Khalilah Louis-Caines, St. Leo University		Katie Berry, FICW

### Executive Updates

*Jessica Pryce* opened the meeting at 1:02pm. She welcomed the affiliates to the call and introduced everyone to an icebreaker.

### GROW Center Updates

*Lisa Magruder* introduced Dr. Latonya Noel and she gave an update on the Wake-Up project. Ann Perko also provided an update on behalf of the Institute for Family Violence Studies.

*Kristina Finch* updated the affiliates on the advanced certifications that will be provided by the Institute. She mentioned that these ad certs will serve as credit for case managers and CPI's.

*Kristina* announced that she is currently reviewing the GROW Center advisory committee applications. The selected members will be notified April 15<sup>th</sup>.

*Kristina* announced that the Alliance for Workforce Enhancement initiative launched its first pilot in late February with the Leon County Services Center.

Dr. LaTonya Noel and Dr. Kenisha Thomas volunteered their time and expressed their interest in being part of a sub-group or committee to meet to provide feedback on workforce resilience.

## Symposium Updates

*Jessica Pryce* announced the symposium will be held in person at the FSU Turnbull Conference Center on May 9<sup>th</sup> & May 10<sup>th</sup>.

*Lisa Magruder* mentioned that there are four tracks and 12 workshops and described a few of the workshops and the topics that will be presented at the Symposium. *Lisa* announced that Dr. Dina Wilke will be our keynote speaker.

*Kristina Finch* announced that registration for the Symposium will open at the end of the month.

## Affiliate Updates

*Lisa Magruder* provided several updates. The new Program Manager of Research, Elizabeth Keating-Mathews was introduced. She will be serving as the primary contact for all affiliates.

Senate Bill 64 is an internship program for foster youth aged from 18-26, that will be providing employment opportunities or internship opportunities to provide them life skills.

The Spring 2022 round of affiliate award applications will be open until April 15<sup>th</sup>. The request for proposals can be found in the last affiliate advisor.

The newest priority research award recipient is Dr. Hui Huang from FIU. Her research proposal was titled "Empowering Child Welfare Workforce: Supporting Child Welfare Student Interns and Agency Supervisors through Group Supervision, Tuition Sponsorship and Stipend."

There is a current call for a dissertation fellowship. It can be found in the last Affiliate Advisor. The deadline is March 21<sup>st</sup>. Please reach out to Elizabeth if you need more information.

A survey will be sent out for doctoral students in Florida with an interest in child welfare. We are interested on how to best support our emerging scholars in the area. The survey will be sent out in the next few weeks.

A poll was conducted on the call on whether to have the annual affiliate meeting in person, virtual or hybrid. The results indicate that we will meet hybrid.

## Affiliate Updates

*John Sheetz* mentioned he has been working with the Florida Guardian Ad Litem program for three years. He is looking for people to implement supervision in all circuits in Florida.

*Maxine McGregor* announced they have a new director at UCF. A career fair will be held on April 4<sup>th</sup>, from 3-6pm for BSW and MSW students.

*Kenisha Thomas* mentioned that FAMU has their Dorothy Henderson Scholarship Program currently with 112 students. She discussed their mission is to revamp the program to track what the students accomplish and to track their financial stability. The Dorothy Henderson Scholarship Program is a campus-based support program for homeless, adopted and former foster care students attending FAMU. The program assists students with housing, education and academics, finances and employment and supportive relationships through community connections.

*Hui Huang* expressed her interest for the on-campus programs related to Unconquered Scholars.

## Closing Remarks

In closing, along with giving our affiliates the opportunity to express any concerns, needs, and or updates, Jessica thanked our affiliates for joining the meeting and the meeting was adjourned at 1:47pm.



**FLORIDA  
INSTITUTE  
FOR CHILD  
WELFARE**

**Eighth Annual Affiliate Meeting**

**June 23, 2022**

Turnbull Conference Center, Tallahassee Florida

**Attendees**

<b>Affiliates</b>	<b>Institute</b>	<b>Institute</b>
Sarah Dickinson, USF	Lucy Bastidas	Kellee Matheny
Maxine McGregor (UCF)	Kristina Finch	Samantha Mistrot
Ann Perko (FSU)	Lisa Magruder	Kristine Posada
Martie Gillen (UF)	Elizabeth Keating-Mathews	Celeste Putnam
James (Jim) Jolley (Florida Network for Child Advocacy Centers)	Kaley Krick	Samantha Schoenberger
Gihan Omar (Citrus Health)	Kasey Longley	Lauren Stanley
Kenisha Thomas (FAMU)	Hyunji Lee	Derrick Stephens
April Steen (Warner)	Michael Hensen	Marianna Tutwiler
Melissa Radey (FSU)	Taylor Watson	<b>Guest Speakers</b>
Fabio Naranjo (Barry)		Jessica Hanak-Coulter (Casey Family Programs)
		Peter Pecora (Casey Family Programs)
Teri Saunders (Heartland for Children)		James Weaver (DCF)

**Welcome and Overview of the Agenda**

Dr. Lisa Magruder gave a brief overview of the day and introduced the two keynote speakers, Jessica (Jess) Coulter, Strategic Consultant with Casey Family Programs Florida. Dr. Peter Pecora, Managing Director of Research Services Casey Family Programs.

**Keynote Presentation and Discussion**

Casey Family Programs presented and led a discussion on three topics: 1) Keys to Collaboration; 2) Early and Enough Engagement; and 3) Equitable Evaluation. Jess serves to coordinate across the state of Florida to collaborate for systems change. Dr. Pecora is working to deepen his skills and acknowledge in fostering collaboration across various agencies, communities, and include those with lived expertise. Systems change is the primary focus in fostering collaboration, authentically engaging those with lived experiences, and research gaps to consider.

“I do not move in a direction before I consider what it might mean for that parent.” -Jessica Hanak-Coulter

**Keys to Collaboration:**

**Family and community:** How do we engage families and communities in partnership? How do we engage those that the work we do directly impacts?

**DCF Research Partnerships:** How do we meaningfully engage stakeholders including families and communities?

**Collaboration opportunities:** It is necessary to elevate:

- ❖ voices of those with lived experiences within the community at every level
- ❖ and address racial justice at every level
- ❖ findings to improve practice and policy
- ❖ lived experience to have a voice that can be heard. For example, in Casey’s work, these experts helped present the findings and what they meant to them as foster care alumni because they had been there for the journey.

Other opportunities include increasing the number of advocates around research process and housing and supports for alumni as they transition out of foster care.

At state and federal levels, many laws were passed because there were data to support the sweeping change. That would not have happened if foster care alumni and lived expertise were not involved throughout the process.

Foster care alumni served an important role in Dr. Pecora’s research as they: identified what questions should be asked and in what order; helped formulate data collection methods; and assisted in the design of policy. Foster care alumni were also involved in the presentation of findings to policy makers.

“We cannot shortchange researchers in both time and dollars if we truly want researcher to make changes in communities. Because of this we have been speaking to funders to step up their support.” – Dr. Pecora

Challenges - you must be able to pay people to honor their time and adequately compensate their time.

Different practice areas need to be brought together in order to address the root cause and broaden the lens. We often think we know the solution or the right questions to ask, but if we engage the community, we are more likely to have better questions and better solutions.

“How can we craft research involving foster care alumni to a solution? If we share our power with community members, we are more likely to create far better research and far better questions.” –Jess Coulter

### **Discussion**

- ❖ Anticipating system barriers is key to this research. If our allies such as housing programs are not on the same page, the efforts we are putting forth will not be as effective.
- ❖ How does research relate to practice? If you want research to be effective, implementation must be supported. Hard conversations about representation in social work research, application, and policy must take place.
- ❖ It is important to keep at the forefront, that the individuals we work with who have lived experiences are lived experts.
- ❖ There is innate power differential when seeking expertise from those with lived experiences because we set their worth in the pay, we deem their experiences are worth.

Although we can involve lived experts, sometimes the researchers must complete the data collection and do their own individual work. As an example, to involve lived experts with the research and to



create authentic connections, Dr. Pecora described that they meet at least once a month with paid parent consultants to establish the connection to achieve work.

Are we being authentic in our engagement with the community? Early and enough? Sometimes this community engagement is new for those participating and additional support is needed. Foster care alumni in prior studies were recruited to call other foster care alumni for surveys and research. There are positive results in having lived experts recruit others with child welfare involvement to get participation.<sup>1</sup>

Something to consider: some lived experts may want jobs in child welfare research. What are the processes or requirements to make this happen to involve their expertise in the field?

Make it real for people. Use the perspective of lived experts to explain the findings. Example: foster care alumni explained that the increased findings of depression and anxiety in welfare involved children is warranted when you come home and see a caseworker's car parked in your driveway. It engrains the worry of the "what if" individuals involved welfare systems live in.

### ***Equitable Evaluation***

Credible evidence only comes from quantitative data and research... but there is a time and place for qualitative research. Qualitative research captures details and context in ways that quantitative research may not.

Evaluators have a moral imperative to contribute to equity.

- ❖ This is in all aspects of the evaluative process
- ❖ Diversity of teams is necessary but not sufficient

You must have funding to support the data collection, dissemination, and implementation needed to make sure these policies and practices are put into place. Cultural context is tangled up in the structural design of all that is done in child welfare. Evaluation efforts risk reinforcing the negatives within the system.

"With layers of institutional and systemic racism in child welfare, we must pay attention to gender, race, and other equitable group differences." - Dr. Pecora

### ***Discussion:***

- ❖ Where is the healing? What good is a survey and its finding when there is not an opportunity for healing? A survey does not mean much when individuals of differing demographics are surveyed to "check a box" rather than applying the information gathered for that group's well-being.
- ❖ Giving participants a voice in HOW they would like to be engaged rather than defining it for them.
- ❖ Race equity and policy
- ❖ Statewide parent voice group
- ❖ Parent Advocates for Transformation and Healing
- ❖ Are we stripping the stories or using the stories?
- ❖ Long term engagement
- ❖ Asking for feedback how they would like to be engaged

**Research Gaps to Consider in Applying These Strategies**

What is the best method to involve others in this research to promote better outcomes for families?

Purpose of building 21<sup>st</sup> Century research agenda to support child and family well-being: form broad-based coalition of research partners to identify research gaps to support child welfare, articulate research in a relevant way, identify and implement strategies for conducting research to close gaps, assist agencies in implementing policy to practice.

High-priority gaps in research have been identified as 1) community-based prevention; 2) child protective services and prevention of foster care; and 3) out-of-home care.

**Institute Guiding Principles Discussion**

Lisa Magruder led a group activity in which attendees moved around the room in groups and used large poster paper to draft their ideas for the Institute's Guiding Principles. Participants were asked to use the ideas from the Casey Family Programs session, along with their own experiences, to write down examples, practical applications, and/or suggested language that could be incorporated in the Guiding Principles. Here are a few of the recommendations:

- ❖ The Institute builds trust with the communities we serve:
  - Define diversity and privilege
  - Become more embedded in the community. Diversity needs to become more diverse. A greater deal of representation (meaning) within a community and family.
  - Join community boards – find out what communities need
  - Allow individuals to define representation – meet people where they are most comfortable
  - Empower communities, when we are engaging with those within the communities treat them as they have the potential to be future researchers, because they do!
  - Self-reflect – “how is our authenticity being received?”
  - Implement trauma-informed interviewing skills
- ❖ The Institute honors the expertise of those with lived experience:
  - Validating expertise through their compensation and structuring compensation.
  - Ask “how do you want to be compensated?” money, gift cards, food, training/education etc.
  - Standardize the process of compensations
  - Empower lived experts with additional benefits of training to invest in the participants.
  - Youth Advisory Board – define their roles, new voices, larger reach, include community members who work with families
  - Make no assumptions, know things based off knowledge
  - Can we invest in these participants to create a more diverse workforce/ set of next front-line workers?
  - The Florida Institute for Child Welfare has the perfect opportunity to change the dynamic between funders, professionals, and communities.

- ❖ The Institute acknowledges and addresses system dysfunction:
  - Ask “What is **our** dysfunction?”
  - Identify where the dysfunction is...
    - Staff/leadership turn over, lack of consistency etc.
  - Identify what problems come with change, ask “Is change going to be a problem?” and anticipate the difficulties with change.
  - Value local solutions – culture, norms, traditions
  - Upfront and transparent declaration of organizational values, specifically related to DEI work
- ❖ The Institute promotes action and accountability:
  - Creating long term relationships and contacts, lasting relationships take time to build especially from “outside the community”
  - As community guides and researchers ‘What do you think of us?’ “How did we do with your community?”
  - How are we communicating? Who is the Institute? Expand representatives (e.g. CBCs, mental health organizations, service providers)
  - Promote and support inter-university research – include service providers

### Collaborating with DCF: What Researchers Should Know

After lunch, James Weaver with DCF spoke on the process of initiating research including DCF. He stated that most requests do not require an IRB application. Key people involved include:

- ❖ Jeanette Betancourt: coordinates DSA process and drafts agreements.
  - This is the individual to contact for all initial meetings to begin research with DCF.
  - The first meeting will cover info including what you want to examine, how, and other details. Jeanette and Robin will work together to get the proper data per request.
- ❖ Robin Preston: pulls, prepares, and transmits data.
  - Assists in the process of meetings, first calls, etc. to initiate data sharing.
- ❖ Hans Soder: Data Reporting Unit Manager
  - Approves research and data requests align with DCF’s policies.

**Important Note:** The DCF form is required to be completed but can be modified to some extent. You can request data to be delivered within a certain time frame, but it is not guaranteed. When examining data, something to consider is that DCF knows where a child lives and is placed, but they often do not know where the abuse or report occurred.

### Annual Review and Updates

Elizabeth Keating-Mathews provided the affiliates with information about updates to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); reviewed the annual goals for the Network; provided details about Affiliate participation and expectations; announced upcoming important dates; and defined affiliate work groups.

Every year the Institute maps out the year guided by our goals to build a stronger Affiliate Network. This year, the focus is on growing the affiliate participation to help connect people throughout the state. There are 34 affiliates with signed MOUs. In addition to reconnecting our network, the Institute will also

provide a platform to promote affiliate work and achievements, host or advertise educational opportunities, and reach out to affiliates for support should the Institute need it. Information is generally shared with the Network through quarterly meetings and the Affiliate Advisor.

**Quarterly Meetings** – We will gather to provide institute updates and highlight affiliate work. Additionally, we may have announcements for upcoming funding opportunities, request Affiliate participation in upcoming projects, or other quarterly news. Meetings will be held in August, November, and February, they will be virtual and plan for these meetings to be about 2 hours long.

**Annual Meeting** – Next year we will hold this meeting the day after the Institute’s Annual Symposium. We will provide annual updates on different initiatives and plan for the upcoming year (like we are doing today).

**Lunch and Learn** – This is a new initiative we are offering is for Affiliates and their local communities. We will host two virtual and two in-person lunch and learn events to provide an educational space for our affiliates. The virtual option will be hosted and marketed by the Institute, the in-person option will be coordinated with the Institute and a local area contact. Our goal is to provide a platform for affiliates to share their work to all other affiliates and community partners in their area.

**Monthly Matters** – This is the Institute Newsletter. We work with our communications team to highlight the work produced by the Affiliate Network. Each month the newsletter is themed, and affiliates are asked to provide a short write up that fits the theme. Some topics in the past have been Disaster Preparedness and the child welfare system, Suicide Prevention Week, Children’s Vision and Learning Month, African American History Month, and more.

**Affiliate Advisor** – this is the Affiliate monthly newsletter. This newsletter is where you will find all the information specific to the Affiliate Network. Past Advisors have included announcements of Affiliate Award applications, upcoming Institute events like the Symposium, calls for publications, and highlights of Affiliate work and achievements.

**Ad Hoc Webinars** – throughout the year, the Institute offers webinar opportunities to many audiences. Affiliates with expertise in certain areas will be asked to lead or join a webinar.

**Key dates to remember:**

**Quarterly Meetings** - August 4, November 3, and February 2

**Annual Meeting** - May 2023

**Lunch and Learn**

- ❖ In Person – September and March
- ❖ Virtual – December and June

**Work Groups**

Lisa Magruder introduced three workgroup topics for today’s meeting – Recruitment, Engaging Parent Voice, Youth Transitioning out of Care. Conversations were initiated by Teri Saunders, Melissa Radey, and Martie Gillen, respectively. Elizabeth Keating-Mathews will follow up with any group members who may wish to continue a work group throughout the year.

Questions posed to generate conversation within groups-

- ❖ What is your interest in this topic?

- How does your work intersect with this topic?
- ❖ What are the pressing concerns?
  - Nationally? Statewide? Locally?
- ❖ What initiatives are in place to understand or address concerns?
  - Research? Programming?
- ❖ What available resources are untapped?
  - Nationally? Statewide? Locally?
- ❖ What don't we know about this issue?
  - How can we learn more?

Key discussion points from each group are listed below.

### **Workforce Recruitment**

- ❖ Increase in vacant positions, which are common in mental health and advocacy positions.
- ❖ Workforce recruitment is an important aspect, and how we recruit will impact the longevity of workers in agencies.
- ❖ Investing opportunities and time in our workers is essential; people want to feel appreciated and be given opportunities.
- ❖ Implement a certificate program at more universities that allow students to experience the field before they graduate, and if they still want to work in the field, they will be waived the field-service training requirement.
- ❖ It is recommended that the program be flexible to working individuals and offered online at your own pace.
- ❖ The Florida Certification Board needs to provide more leeway for people interested in projects like home studies; people need to be eased into the field.
- ❖ Supporting newly promoted supervisors and allowing workers to have some flexibility in their schedule – possibly allowing for a few days of remote work.

### **Engaging Parent Voice in Research and Evaluation Efforts**

- ❖ Meeting them where they are at. This could mean many things. It is important to be mindful that parents are typically moving from crisis to crisis and tend to be under a lot of stress and scrutiny from various life stressors (government, foster care system, DCF, family, society).
- ❖ Meet them whenever and wherever. Sometimes this also means staying for as long or as little as they have time for. This might be 15 minutes or a full-hour interview. Any insight into their day-to-day life is helpful and useful for collecting data.
- ❖ Provide “phases” to create rapport and connection with the participants. This might look like meeting with them initially for 15 minutes before the full interview is conducted. Then, also following up with participants shortly after the interview for a follow-up.
- ❖ Incorporate Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques within the interview questions. Motivational Interviewing is a counseling method that promotes empathetic listening skills and empowerment focused approach. Motivational Interviewing allows the participant/client to

explore their current ambivalence in connection with their personal values. Although this is typically a counseling approach, researchers could incorporate parts of the MI framework to formulate interview questions to further engage the participant. MI is used in various institutional settings to work with individuals.

- ❖ Cultivate trust
- ❖ Barriers to care – Again, understanding the various barriers and challenges a parent is facing in their current life and how this could impact their future engagement or participation in research.
- ❖ Incorporating questions such as “What would make you feel even more successful?” This is a strengths-based approach that gives the parent the opportunity to share what is working well for them and additionally, what are some things that would assist them with reaching their goals. Another question could be, “What would make your life **easier**?” Again, being mindful of the language we use during interviews to establish trust and allow the parent/participant to discuss the positive aspects in their life rather than only focusing on what is NOT working.
- ❖ Transportation - lack of transportation poses a great challenge. If there are transportation difficulties, a parent may be at a higher risk for missing important medical appointments, mandated therapies, work, or other appointments in general. If researchers are not planning on meeting parents face to face, then it is important to assess what is the best way to connect with them based on their schedule, resources, and needs.
- ❖ Assist with obtaining basic needs – Many times a lack of basic needs not being met could be the common denominator to an individual's larger problem. If they do not have stable transportation, that could impact the job they have, childcare services, educational opportunities, etc. Therefore, if there was a way to allocate funds and/or ways for researchers to assist with connecting the participant directly with resources at the end of an interview then this could potentially create more trust and aid in research data depending on if the resources changed the participants needs in any way.
  - SNAP connection
  - Kinship care
  - Direct link to community resources
- ❖ Compensation – What does the parent need?
- ❖ Working with other case managers to establish rapport and minimize stress for parents
- ❖ Researchers could partner up with already established case managers or clinicians to work with parents. Due to highly stressful lives, busy schedules, transportation, and communication barriers, this might create more ease for the parent to engage in research projects. However, there could be potential negative aspects to this idea. Not all parents will have a safe or positive relationship with their case workers or counselors, and this could pose a potential threat for them.

### Youth Transitioning Out of Care

- ❖ Youth ages 16-17 are at risk of not obtaining the skills they need to succeed once they age out of the foster care system.
- ❖ Outcomes:
  - Youth leaving the system often have an altered brain status as the brain does not fully develop until 25.
  - The concept of a forever family is different for youth in the system and is not always adopted.
- ❖ There have been barriers to the term “aging out,” – which is a term that is commonly used by policymakers and researchers.
  - Youth typically do not understand what that means, which makes it important during an interview to use different verbiage.
  - It is recommended to ask the youth questions like “where are you at right now in your life?” This will help avoid any potential barriers in the research.
- ❖ Life skills training:
  - Underdog Dreams – Cognigram is used to track attention, learning, psychomotor function, and working memory.
  - The question of whether there could be practices that inhibit life skills training early on (before the age of 13)?
  - First Start Academy is a program that is offered at a few universities that help foster youth before the summer going into the 9th grade learn various life skills and experiences in the college environment, which helps transition them into college.
  - Teach skills through virtual reality, which allows them to make mistakes in a safe environment before they are faced with the situation in real life.
  - Implement groups within agencies that focus on skills like cooking, grooming, cleaning, etc.
- ❖ Lack of Resources
  - Resources that are supposed to be provided to the youth aging out of care are sometimes challenging to obtain.
  - Workers often misinterpret policies, resulting in youth not receiving what they are supposed to.
- ❖ Collaborating with youth
  - Allow them to be in control of their own decisions.
  - Once they have learned the various life skills, it is important to allow them the space to be independent, which will empower and enable them to grow.

### Closing Remarks

At the conclusion of the meeting, Lisa Magruder called everyone back from their workgroups. She offered thanks to everyone who attended and wished them safe travels on their return home.



## First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2022 Affiliates Meeting

August 4, 2022

### Attendees

Alison Salloum, USF  
Dina Wilke, FSU  
Elizabeth Keating-Mathews, FICW  
Erin King, UWF  
Fabio Naranjo, Barry  
Gihan Omar, Citrus Health  
Jessica Pryce, FICW  
Jim Jolley, FNCAC  
Kasey Longley, FICW  
Kenisha Thomas, FAMU  
Khalilah Louis-Caines, St. Leo

Kimberly Renk, UCF  
Lisa Magruder, FICW  
Lisa Schelbe, FICW  
Marianna Colvin, FAU  
Maxine McGregor, UCF  
Melissa Radey, FSU  
Mike Campbell, St. Leo  
Morgan Cooley, FAU  
Rene' Ledford, CHS  
Stephanie Scott, United Way Broward  
Yolanda Machado-Escudero, UNF

### Welcome

Elizabeth Keating-Mathews opened the meeting at 10:02am and welcomed Affiliates to the call.

### Faculty Line Updates

Lisa Magruder spoke about the upcoming faculty hiring this fall. She stated the Institute will be hiring for 12-month research faculty positions. We will be prioritizing skills in the 3 GROW focused areas (Academic Innovation, Professional Development, and Organizational Development). We will be notifying the Affiliate Network when the job posting opens and will be opened until filled.

### Workgroup Format

Lisa Magruder reviewed the Affiliate Workgroup structure. She is looking for groups that will use their based-on skill and interest and resulting in a form of final product (white page, research proposal, etc.) She requested any affiliate interested in joining a group to email Elizabeth Keating-Mathews. The three groups the Institute is looking to start are Workforce Recruitment, Engaging Parents in Research and Evaluation Efforts, and Youth Transitioning Out of Care. Workgroup topics are not limited to these three topics. Lisa stated the workgroups may have an opportunity to collaborate with the GROW Center Advisory Committee.

### Affiliate Updates

Elizabeth Keating-Mathews spoke on the new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) language and reiterated affiliate participation. She reminded the affiliates of the scheduled meetings, completion of the annual survey, and the monthly Affiliate Advisor. She also discussed the upcoming Lunch and Learn opportunity, asking affiliates to think ahead, and if interested to join to email her. Elizabeth reminded



the group to complete the annual survey. Elizabeth shared a tentative calendar of events for the 2022-2023 fiscal year which included a save the date for the Institute Symposium.

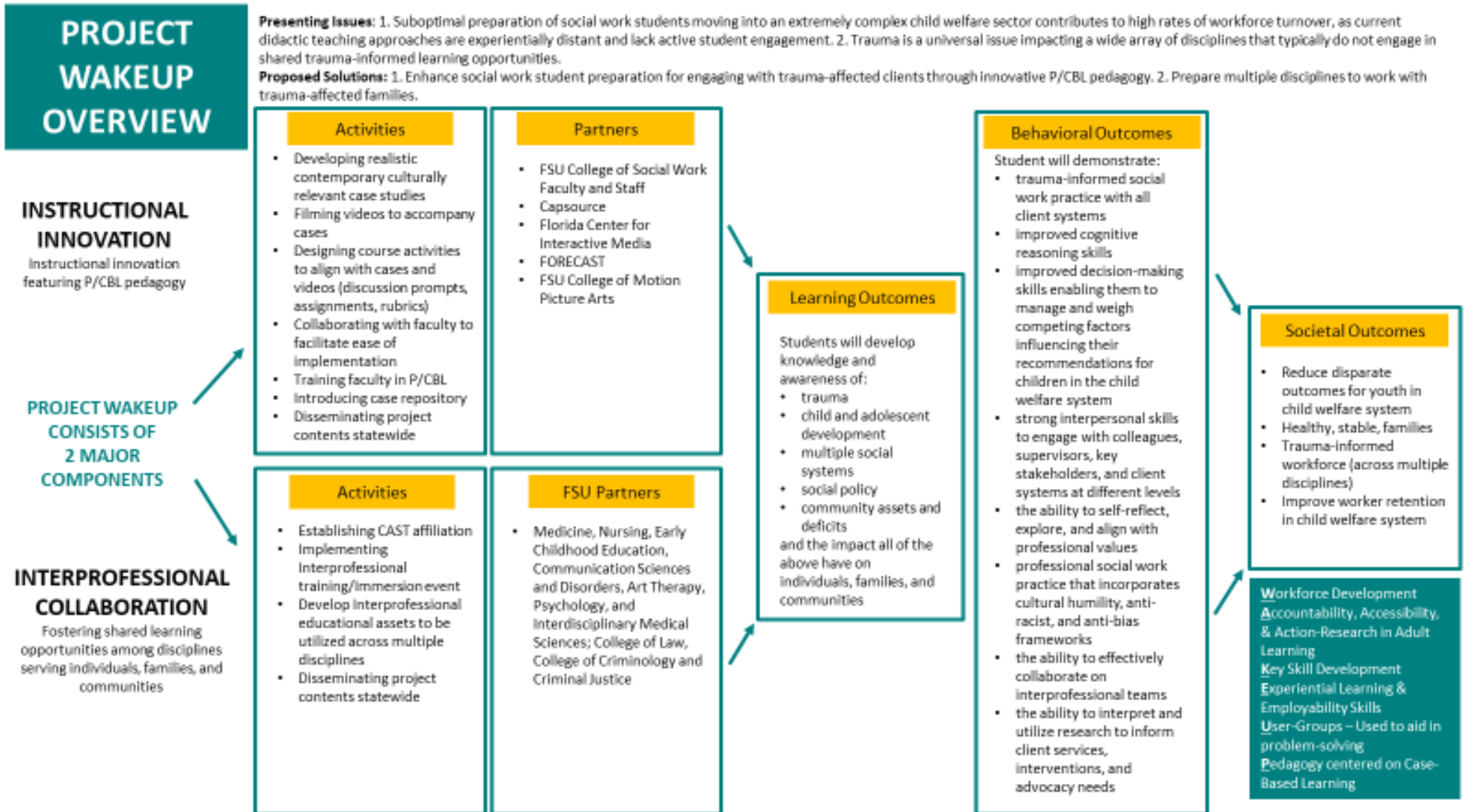
### Open Mic Updates

Elizabeth Keating-Mathews opened the call to Affiliates to provide updates, ask questions, or request collaboration. Elizabeth Keating-Mathews gave a shot out to Khalilah Louis-Caines (St. Leo University) who was awarded the 2022-2023 Dissertation Fellow for her dissertation titled “It Takes a Village: An Examination of Educational Enrollment Among Transition-Age Youth in Foster Care”. Stephanie Scott (United Way Broward) spoke about her program Keeping Families Together, which is a training program for families within the child welfare systems. Additionally, she spoke on a train-the-trainer program with Florida Blue Foundation, Moffett Cancer Center, Orlando Health, and United Way Broward County that just completed their pilot program to train healthcare professionals. The program is based on using a cultural lens in patient care. Dr. Fabio Naranjo (Barry University) spoke about the FLITE Center project and the research plan that is funded by the Institute. Lisa Magruder spoke on behalf of Teri Saunders, who is looking for evaluation support for two programs (Permanency Primer and Sexual Safety) at Heartland for Children. Morgan Cooley spoke about early conversations about the Foster Parent Recruitment Center. She is preparing a mock proposal to share with the Center.

### Closing Remarks

Jessica Pryce stated the Institute is preparing the Annual Report, due to the Governor on October 1<sup>st</sup>. She reminded the affiliates of the DCF Children and Families Summit and if they are attending to let the Institute know. Elizabeth Keating-Mathews announced that the Institute has one registration scholarship from DCF to attend the Summit. Dr. Pryce also talked about the Institute’s overall outcomes and logic models and reminded affiliates that they can provide comment and feedback. Elizabeth Keating-Mathews closed the meeting at 10:38am.

# APPENDIX E: ACADEMIC INNOVATION CONCEPT MAP



# APPENDIX F: STARS OVERVIEW

## STRENGTH, TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE STUDIES CERTIFICATION OR STARS

Developed with input from DCF leadership, lead agency representatives, case management service representatives, and other stakeholders for child welfare professionals, STARS is a university-led, evidence-based, trauma-informed, engaging workforce resilience training that will motivate, educate, and improve the skills of the child welfare workforce to improve child safety.

- STARS is expected to launch on October 17, 2022. Registration will open in September 2022.
- Eligible participants include child welfare case managers and child welfare protective investigators with at least 1 year with the organization.
- Application process will include a required letter of support from supervisors and a required statement of intent from potential child welfare professional participants.
- Course will address coping, stress management, secondary trauma, and primary trauma (trauma histories interfere with learning).
- Builds better resilience skills for families.
- Provides concrete tools for growing child, parental, and family resilience
- 12-18 hours of self-paced, online course content with 2 virtual, synchronous sessions with a university faculty member to practice and reinforce skills.
- Offers opportunities for participants to connect with peers and a coach.
- A certificate of completion will be issued from Florida State University upon completion of the course.
- Eligible for CEU's by the Florida Certification Board and connected to advancement criteria on the DCF Career Ladder.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### *Chapter 1 Traumatic Life Experiences and Health Impacts*

Explain the importance of the child welfare professionals' role in working with persons affected by trauma.

- Identify how cultural, social, and environmental factors influence children's and adult experience of trauma.
- Define different types of trauma.
- Describe polyvictimization in children.

- Examine the impact of trauma on children, parenting, and family relationships

### ***Chapter 2 Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences and Relational Health***

- Explain Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Discuss how the Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) can encourage healthy child development
- Describe the public health approach to preventing and addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Identify the therapeutic options and child welfare interventions for helping clients who recover from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

### ***Chapter 3 Trauma-Informed Skills and System Collaboration***

- Use trauma-sensitive methods of communication to increase the likelihood of shared understanding between client and professional.
- Describe basic strategies of motivational interviewing.
- Identify the differences between sympathy and empathy.
- List the guiding principles of trauma-informed care for child welfare service systems.
- Identify ways to improve partnership and collaboration across systems.

***First In-Person Training*** - Will focus on practicing trauma-informed communication skills and motivational interviewing

### ***Chapter 4 Preventing Secondary Traumatization/Vicarious Trauma***

- Describe typical workplace stressors
- Define and recognize the impact of and primary and vicarious/secondary trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue
- Identify risk and protective factors for primary trauma, and vicarious/secondary trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue
- Identify new skills, including coping strategies and self-care, to prevent and address workplace stress
- List steps that leadership can take to improve response to workplace stress

### ***Chapter 5 Partnering with Families: Building Family Resilience***

- Define and describe characteristics of resilience.
- Identify steps to engage in successful partnerships with families that elevate voices of children, youth, and families.
- Identify strength-based approaches that build physical and psychological safety of children, youth, and families.

- Learn the six protective factors that build resilience in children, youth and families and help them heal from trauma.
- Identify steps to deliver services and social supports to children, youth and families that promote resilience.
- Examine the factors that help children, youth, and families with posttraumatic growth.

### **Chapter 6 Resilience Toolkit: Practical Tools to Reduce Stress**

- Examine various research-based stress management techniques.
- Learn how each stress management technique works to improve functioning and increase resilience.
- Learn to practice each technique.
- Understand how stress management techniques can be provided to clients to help build resilience skills.
- Understand how such techniques can be used by child welfare staff to help build resilience skills.

**Second in-person training** - Will focus on practicing skills for successful engagement with and building safety for children, youth, and families; assessing and preventing secondary traumatization in child welfare staff and practicing tools that build resilience for clients and child welfare staff.

### **OVERVIEW: STARS**

- The overall learning objectives for the STARS Professional Certification curriculum include:
- Understand that trauma is nearly universal and is considered a public health issue because of its potential impacts
- Describe the mental, physical, and behavioral health problems connected to childhood maltreatment
- Understand what constitutes individual trauma and related issues including traumatic stress theory, complex trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), polyvictimization, and PTSD
- Understand how stress from ACEs can affect the developing brain and behavior
- Recognize common short term and long-term responses to trauma
- Recognize why child welfare professionals should understand the concepts of trauma and resilience
- Be familiar with research on the components of resilience, along with individual skills that promote resilience
- Use a strength-based, culturally competent approach to interacting with individuals and families who have experienced adversity
- Integrate knowledge about trauma and resilience into a trauma-informed practice
- Be prepared to work in trauma-informed and trauma-responsive organizations

# APPENDIX G: MYALIGN TIMELINE

Timeline	Milestone	Outcomes	Deliverables	Start Date
Week 1	Define Prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource</li> <li>• Availability</li> <li>• Timeline</li> <li>• Phase Identification</li> </ul>		July 18, 2022
Week 2-7	Discovery Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Journey Map</li> <li>• Workflow Analysis</li> <li>• High Level Requirements</li> </ul>	Deliverable 1: Completed July 29th  Deliverable 2: Completed Aug 26th	July 25, 2022
Week 8-13	Define Discovery Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional Design Specs</li> <li>• Technical Design Specs</li> <li>• Acceptance Criteria</li> </ul>	Deliverable 3: Due Sept 30th	Sept 12, 2022
Week 14-24	Build / Configure Phase 1 Minimal Viable Product		Deliverable 4: Due Dec 30th	Oct 24, 2022
Week 24	Prepare Prototype Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial User Feedback</li> <li>• Analysis</li> </ul>		Jan 9th 2023

## APPENDIX H: GROW CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Name	Organization	Region
Angie Abbot	Safe Families Coalition	Suncoast
Barbara Byrne	Evidence-Based Associates	Southern
Ryan Capote	Department of Children and Families	Southeast
Devin Coleman	Devin Coleman and Associates	Northeast
Lisa Coy	Center for Child Welfare	Suncoast
Natalia Giordano	Florida International University	Southern
Amy Hines	Department of Children and Families	Headquarters
Dr. Ken Killian	Pasco County Sheriff's Office	Suncoast
Dr. Erin King	University of West Florida	Northwest
Bethany Lacey	Boystown South Florida	Southeast
Rene' Ledford	Children's Home Society	Central
Elizabeth McMullen	Office of State Court Administrators	Northwest
Dr. Patricia Nellius	Florida Coalition for Children	Northwest
Nathan Scott	FL Department of Health 12th Circuit	Suncoast
John Sheetz	Florida State University	Northwest
Nicola Smith	Communities Connected	Central
Karen Turcotte	Children's Network of SW FL	Southern
Tia Walton-Walker	FSU Autism Institute	Northwest
Dr. Dina Wilke	Florida State University	Northwest

# APPENDIX I: GCAC MEETING MINUTES

## GCAC Virtual Orientation

Thursday, May 12, 2022, at 10:30 AM

### Attendees

Amy Hines	Jessica Pryce	Lucy Bastidas
Angie Abbott	John Sheetz	Marianna Tutwiler
Barbara Byrne	Karen Turcotte	Natalia Giordano
Bethany Lacey	Kellee Matheny	Nathan Scott
Devin Coleman	Kenneth Kilian	Nicky Smith
Dina Wilke	Kristina Finch	Rene Ledford
Elizabeth McMullen	Lisa Coy	Ryan Capone
Erin King	Lisa Magruder	Tia Walton-Walker

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### First Meeting Welcome and Introductions

*The meeting was called to order at 10:30am on Thursday, May 12, 2022 by Kristina Finch. The meeting minutes were prepared by Kellee Matheny.*

All attendees introduced themselves, mentioning their organization affiliations and position titles.

*Kristina Finch* gave an overview of today's meeting as according to the attached agenda. Additional information regarding meeting materials will be provided in a follow-up email to all GCAC members.

### Background of SB 1326, Development of GROW Center, and GCAC Mission and Expectations

SB 1326 appropriated the FICW with a small amount of funds in 2020. In 2021, these funds grew tremendously, tasking the FICW with initiatives including the GROW Center.

The GROW Center has three main programs which are outlined in the GCAC Handbook (included in follow-up email). The mission of the GCAC is to create a positive impact in the child welfare workforce by lending expertise and sharing ideas from across the state to provide quality resources to impacted



workers. Additionally, the GCAC is tasked with the equitable distribution of these resources throughout the child welfare workforce. Please see the GCAC Handbook to view member expectations.

It is expected that all GCAC members will advocate for and spread the word for all GROW initiatives.

#### Questions:

*John Sheetz* asked if the GROW colors have a deeper meaning, to which *Kristina Finch* responded that they represent growth and blooming—both of which are overarching GROW Center goals.

### Communication and Information Sharing Protocols

The GCAC is expected to serve as a united front to offer guidance and consultation moving forward in GROW initiatives. We ask that you do not create marketing material as consistent messaging is important in creating this united front. If you have marketing ideas, please contact *Kristina Finch*.

### Extent and Limits of Authority

Advisory members have the authority to vote on recommendations to inform the direction of GROW initiatives.

### Conflicts of Interest of Protocol

*Marianna Tutwiler* discussed the policies and annual disclosure outlined below.

Policy 1: Confidentiality. Financial data, organization innerworkings, upcoming GROW initiatives that have not yet been publicized, etc. is to be kept confidential and not disclosed. No project information, dates, or other initiatives are to be discussed outside of GCAC meetings.

Policy 2: Conflict of interest. Many GCAC members sit on boards that may wish to apply for GROW funding. If this is to occur, GCAC member(s) with conflicts of interest must recuse themselves from voting on recommendations for the respective project. The same applies if a family member or staff member may be closely related to a fundable project. Please speak with *Kristina Finch* or *Marianna Tutwiler* if you have any conflicts of interest throughout your involvement with the GCAC.

An Annual Disclosure Form will be provided by the FICW for all GCAC members to sign, acknowledging their understanding of and commitment to these policies.

#### Questions:

*John Sheetz* asked if there is a procedure for excusing oneself from projects to which you may have a conflict of interest. *Marianna Tutwiler* responded that an email should be sent to *Kristina Finch* explaining the conflict of interest and stating their recusal from the respective project.

*John Sheetz* asked if the Florida Sunshine Law reaches this group. *Kristina Finch* and *Marianna Tutwiler* responded that all information will be available on the website, including meeting minutes and other public records.

*Dina Wilke* asked if GCAC members may apply for funding. *Marianna Tutwiler* responded that they may apply but would need to recuse themselves from any related proposal discussions within the GCAC.

*Kristina Finch* added to email her at [kfinch@fsu.edu](mailto:kfinch@fsu.edu) with any potential recusals to ensure ethical compliance in GCAC discussions regarding potential conflicts of interest.

## Travel Reimbursement Overview

Please note that there will always be a virtual option to attend GCAC meetings, but in-person attendance is highly preferred.

*Lucy Bastidas* discussed the procedure for travel reimbursement related to FICW and GROW center involvement. For travel reimbursement, please email Lucy Bastidas at [lbastidasvallejo@fsu.edu](mailto:lbastidasvallejo@fsu.edu) to request a reimbursement form.

Once the form is submitted and approved, a reimbursement check will be mailed to the address you listed on the reimbursement form. Reimbursement is based on mileage at 45 cents per quarter mile. Please ensure correct and accurate information is included on the request form. All travel accommodations including flights and lodging are to be booked by the FICW. Airfare cannot be reimbursed if paid for out of pocket by any GCAC member.

*A meeting break was called by Kristina Finch at 11:08 AM. The meeting was reconvened at 11:15 AM.*

## Developing a Clear Scope of Work

*Kristina Finch* stated that the GROW Center is directly charged with impacting the child welfare workforce by helping to better prepare and stabilize the worker. Ideas for initiatives need to focus on worker impact as worker impact in turn impacts the child. GCAC must consider how resources, or lack thereof, impact CPIs, case managers, guardian ad litem, group home leaders, hotline workers, etc. Think: what workers do not receive sufficient attention and support? Who are we struggling to reach with appropriate resources? We must also consider and strive to meet equitable distribution of these resources. Currently, programs may be designed for certain areas, leaving others floundering— it is the GROW Center’s goal is to make sure all areas have the necessary resources to succeed and that all areas have equal access to these resources.

*Karen Turcotte* noted that support workers (including transportation workers) are often forgotten.

*Kristina Finch* discussed areas of interest listed in the GCAC Handbook. If you are particularly interested in any area, please apply to join the subcommittee to help advise and develop initiatives to improve the area. Surveys regarding this matter will be sent in a follow-up email.

Suggested areas of interest not listed in handbook: community awareness partnerships (*Nathan Scott*), consideration of special needs children in training and curriculum (*Tia Walton-Walker*), retention and resiliency crossover/collaboration to reduce number of areas of interest (*Nicky Smith*), leadership development (*Dina Wilke*), leadership skills (*John Sheetz*)

“Homework”: select your areas of interest (rank 1-3) and denote if there is an area that you do not wish to be part of. Committee assignments will then be created by FICW staff. GCAC members will be notified of their committee assignments.

## Chair and Vice-Chair Election Process

The Chair and Vice-Chair are to meet with Kristina Finch regularly to discuss the status of GROW Center initiatives, craft purposeful agendas, set goals, examine committee productivity, etc. Appointed Chair members are to act as partners and share position workload to ensure successful GCAC meetings. You may self-nominate or be nominated by other GCAC members for either position.

*John Sheetz* self-appoints as Vice-Chair.

A follow-up email will include a survey for anonymous nominations for the Chair position. The majority vote will be appointed Chair. The appointed Chair will have the opportunity to discuss the role with Kristina Finch and determine if the role is within their capabilities.

### **Future Meeting Locations**

Subsequent GCAC meetings are to be held quarterly on the second Thursday of each quarter. Tentative dates can be found on page 3 of the GCAC Handbook. Dates are subject to change. Each meeting is expected to last between three and four hours, starting at 10:00 AM. Meeting locations are TBA. Possible locations include Orlando, Tampa, and Tallahassee.

If GCAC members cannot attend in person, a virtual meeting option will be available. However, in-person availability is highly preferred.

### **Expectations for Next Meeting and Closing Remarks**

Please note that all documents and presentations discussed in today's meeting will be included in a follow-up email.

The follow-up will include a survey for Chair nominations, survey for meeting locations, meeting date updates, survey for area of interest subcommittee rankings, travel forms, and all reviewed/mentioned documents. A recording of this meeting will also be shared.

Thank you for your work with the institute and your commitment to the GROW Center. With your help, we can "make change and not just noise" within the child welfare workforce.

The next meeting will be held on June 9, at 10:00 AM. If in person, lunch will be together and self-provided. Location is TBA depending on follow-up survey results.

Contact Kristina Finch with any questions at [kfinch@fsu.edu](mailto:kfinch@fsu.edu) or her cell (786-371-5601) on weekdays.

*The meeting was adjourned by Kristina Finch at 11:59 AM.*



Thursday June 30, 2022, at 10:00 AM

### Attendees

Nicky Smith	Kenneth Kilian	Erin King
Kristina Finch	Dina Wilke	Patricia Nellius-Guthrie
Derrick Stephens	Tia Walton-Walker	Amy Hines
Marianna Tutwiler	Lisa Coy	Barbara Byrne
Natalia Giordano	Angie Abbot	Rene Ledford
Ryan Capone	Devin Coleman	John Sheetz
Karen Turcotte	Kellee Matheny	Taylor Watson

### Welcome and Introductions

*The meeting was called to order at 10:00am on June 30, 2022, by Kristina Finch. The meeting minutes were prepared by Taylor Watson.*

*Kristina Finch gave an overview of today's meeting as according to the attached agenda.*

Any GCAC Members and/ or presenters who were not present at the first meeting introduced themselves.

### GROW Program Updates

#### Academic Innovation Program (AI)

The main goal is to properly prepare individuals at the BSW and MSW levels that will enter the child welfare workforce in various capacities.

Another component is redesigning the curriculum so that there will be a true- and real-life based exposure to the complexities of what the child welfare profession is like. The intent is to create a better-informed pipeline of students that have a desire to pursue child welfare as a career.

The Development of Interprofessional Collaboration and content curriculum is identified within interprofessional partners from schools and colleges all throughout the university. This will likely play a role in the child welfare journey.

All social work programs throughout Florida will identify what early adopters are looking forward to seeing as this project expands into the schools and colleges. A dissemination plan is being developed to share the new created curricula with other Florida social work programs. The Florida Institute of Child Welfare will ensure that this project will travel above and Florida State University.

*Erin King* questioned who to contact if interested in the curriculum redesign project.

*Kristina* replied to contact Dr. La Tanya Noel as she is the principal investigator, and she is interested in hearing from people in the field.

*John Sheetz* also stated “There is a timeline as of yesterday on the minor. It looks like the courses that we will be revamping will fit along with the second year interprofessional course to qualify for a CAST minor. We will be able to offer that CAST as a as a nationally recognized program. If anyone is interested, and you want to understand more, reach out to LaTanya or myself.”

## Interprofessional Topics

### Questions

*Karen Turcotte* noted that attention should be drawn to one of the Interprofessional topics on slide number 4 regarding Forensic Interviewing. She stated this topic conflicts with the strategy that individuals in the Child Welfare field works with regarding our protective investigators and case managers. A criminalizing conversation should not be held because our work is in the civil section not in the criminal section. She feels just a bit leery about the language and more feels more comfortable having motivational interviewing as opposed to forensic interviewing.

*John Sheetz* replied to *Karen* stating “That’s really good feedback and I will provide this insight to my team. The idea here was that we really want these topics to be interdisciplinary. The theme would help people understand what the boundaries of forensic interviews are, when might those be used, how that process might work to give a better understanding to the student.”

*Natalia Gordiano* asked, “Is there a racial justice/social justice framework for these topics now?”

*Kristina Finch* replied “With new legislation regarding the education of racial issues, we must be cognizant of the issues. However, we know that racial and social issues are paramount to address with child welfare workers and professionals in the child welfare field.”

*Karen Turcotte* suggested including Human Trafficking on the Interprofessional topic list.

*Kristina Finch* replied “The Florida Institute of Child Welfare recently worked with The Department of Children and Families to create a Human Trafficking course for foster parents and case managers. The most important concept is that students receive exposure to this topic because it is a much-needed topic.”

*John Sheetz* stated that with Institute funding, 600 GAL volunteers across the state were trained on various aspects of human trafficking.

### **AWE Project: Alliance for Workforce Enhancement**

A program where three-year sites are on boarded. Each site gets a comprehensive organizational assessment to understand the health of each specific organization. The goal of the AWE Initiative is to enhance workforce well-being through specialized leadership development and adaptive technical assistance at the organizational level.

#### **Leadership Academy**

The Institute is working with two consultants and a site team to implement a Leadership Academy. Individuals that are interested in participating in the Academy will be selected by organizational leadership. Our first site, the Leon County Service Center, launched in February. The Florida Institute for Child Welfare is working with Nisha Little, the Administrator. Nisha, along with our team, will help identify individuals that should be enrolled in the Leadership Academy. It is a yearlong program where five months of online work is completed, then face-to-face interactive courses are scheduled. A coach is also assigned to the student and will receive coaching sessions twice a month.

#### **Partners for Strong Families**

The second pilot is the community-based care lead agency for Alachua and surrounding counties, Partners for Strong Families. Their sites will be launched July 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> in Gainesville, Live Oak, Starke and Trenton, FL.

#### **Advance, Learn, Innovate, Grow and Network (ALIGN)**

ALIGN is a Professional Development program. Our focus initially for ALIGN, is the development of 3 advanced certification courses. Those courses are Strength, Trauma and Resiliency, which is a professional certification. The first course where applications will be available is September 2022. GCAC members will be notified. The second course that is being developed is the Substance Use Disorder and Family Systems course.

#### **MyALIGN Digital Platform**

*Derrick Stephens* introduced the MyALIGN Digital Platform, explaining that it is a Multifaced centralized user hub via a mobile app and web-based cloud solution. This will provide holistic ongoing support and numerous training opportunities. MyALIGN will offer access to a myriad of support and opportunities to network, complete courses, enhance well-being and feel supported within themselves throughout their career progression.

There will be three phases: Phase 1: Mobile App Platform, Phase 2: Web Based Platform, Phase 3: Coaching Component. MyALIGN is also building a network of coaches statewide with different skills and expertise to assist frontline professionals.

#### **Questions**

*Rene Ledford* asked Is there an opportunity for data integration with LMS's that providers have, e.g., sharing training completion/transcript info?

*Derrick Stephens* answered "There is excitement around the ability to collect data but safeguarding confidentiality. We know that there will be come concern about who receives the data, and we will address that moving forward."

*Angie Abbott* questioned Will organizations get admin accounts for tracking training? Will it offer CEUs for certification renewal? Can it house DCF annual mandatory compliance training?

*Kristina Finch* replied “Who we allow to view data in this system is locked down pretty tight. We want to make sure that at no point in time do participants or users feel like there may any intention, or opportunity for anything to be used against them punitively. We want to make sure that everything remains external to any organization or agency.”

*A meeting break was called by Kristina Finch at 11:31 AM. The meeting was reconvened at 11:46 AM.*

## Perception Survey Summary & Workgroup Homework

### Brief Needs Assessment Findings

*Kellee Matheny* introduced the Needs Assessment and Perception Survey findings.

Twelve GCAC members responded to a survey. Key concepts identified were Needed Support, Communication Expectation, and Preferred Work Style.

The first objective of this survey was to determine each individual’s initial needs as a GCAC member. The second objective was to expand the conceptualization of who the child welfare workplace really is to help us broaden our target population for future initiatives.

A standard communication tool will be created so that all GCAC members can receive biweekly information.

### Roles for GROW Initiative Consideration

To determine other potential roles that the GROW Center initiatives should focus efforts on, the survey asked about additional roles other than CPIs and case managers. According to the survey results, the top five roles that members feel are under supported are Hotline workers, Family Support Workers, Residential Facility Staff, Trainer/Staff Development, and Child Welfare Program Manager/Administrators.

### Work groups

*Kristina Finch* briefly focused on what each workgroup would address. For example, she stated “The retention workgroup can focus on what supports what programs, what interventions, what resources do these individuals need in this context to retain them or to recruit them? If you were in the policy and systems change bucket, what policies and systems change could happen to better support?”

The overall purpose is also to create programming or outcomes for these individuals. These are simply recommendations for to achieve objectives. The goal is that each of work group will establish some sort of a lead.

### Questions

*Dina Wilke* asked “What if we feel like we need to do some data collection to be able to do our objectives, i.e., Can we talk to people on the hotline or family support workers and ask them what kind of training needs they have. Do we have resources available or are the programmatic recommendations or interventions conversation in October sufficient to say we have established a plan for data collection?”

*Kristina Finch* replied, stating “There is a connection between research policy and practice. The GCAC, the affiliate network, and the Institute will have the ability to provide some of these recommendations in our reports and report that this is what the field is looking for. This is what the next phase of our support should be reaching out to. I will be meeting with legislative staff after our October meeting, and it is my hope that we will be able to provide the recommendations and findings.”

### **Expectations for Next Meeting & Closing**

The next meeting will be held in person on October 14<sup>th</sup> in Tampa. The location will be determined later, and a detailed itinerary will follow. Workgroups that need additional assistance should contact Taylor to schedule a meeting with Kristina.

At the GCAC’s final meeting in 2023, the committee will vote for a GCAC Chair.

Contact Kristina Finch with any questions at [kfinch@fsu.edu](mailto:kfinch@fsu.edu) or her cell (786-371-5601) on weekdays.

*The meeting was adjourned by Kristina Finch at 12:37 PM.*



# APPENDIX J: GCAC NEEDS ASSESSMENT



## Grow Center Advisory Committee | Brief Needs Assessment Findings

Kellee Matheny, BS

Lisa Magruder, Ph.D., MSW

June 28, 2022

Florida Institute for Child Welfare  
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850-644-4751

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## Overview

To assist in the development of the newly created GROW Center Advisory Committee (GCAC), the Florida Institute for Child Welfare (Institute) developed a brief needs assessment, with two primary objectives. The first objective of was to determine the initial needs and expectations of GCAC members. The second objective of the survey was to understand how the Institute might expand its conceptualization of roles included in the child welfare workforce, and therefore included in GROW's target population. Current GROW Center and GCAC initiatives focus on those often considered to be the "frontline" of child welfare (e.g., case managers, CPIs, supervisors). Institute leadership is interested in better understanding what other roles should be considered for inclusion in the workforce and what types of supports those roles need. The GCAC represents one group of constituents who can provide insight into this potential expansion.

## Methodology

The FICW developed a brief needs assessment that was disseminated to all 19 GCAC members on June 14, 2022. The survey closed on June 21, 2022 with a total of twelve responses. Short-response qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.<sup>1</sup> Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and descriptive statistics are provided below.

## Results

### OBJECTIVE 1: INITIAL NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

#### Needed Supports

GCAC members need two overarching things to feel supported: communication and collaboration. Most respondents spoke to the need for clear communication, including clarity of expectations. Two respondents specifically noted an expectation being set for "manageable workload[s]" and "reasonable time frames for projects." Respondents also expressed a need for effective communication logistics, including timely notification of meetings and provision of pertinent materials. Related, several respondents shared the importance of receiving information relevant to their GCAC work, such as current programming. One participant shared their expectations on multiple communication-related needs:

*Communication and clear expectations. There is so much that can change in the system that it will be helpful to know about initiatives that are occurring around the state so there is no duplication of efforts and rather improved coordination, so recommendations are impactful and achievable.*

In terms of collaboration, respondents shared that they would like "teamwork," and opportunities to give to and receive feedback from other GCAC members. Two individuals shared that they need collaboration from FICW specifically (e.g., opportunities for Q&A, "administrative support when needed").

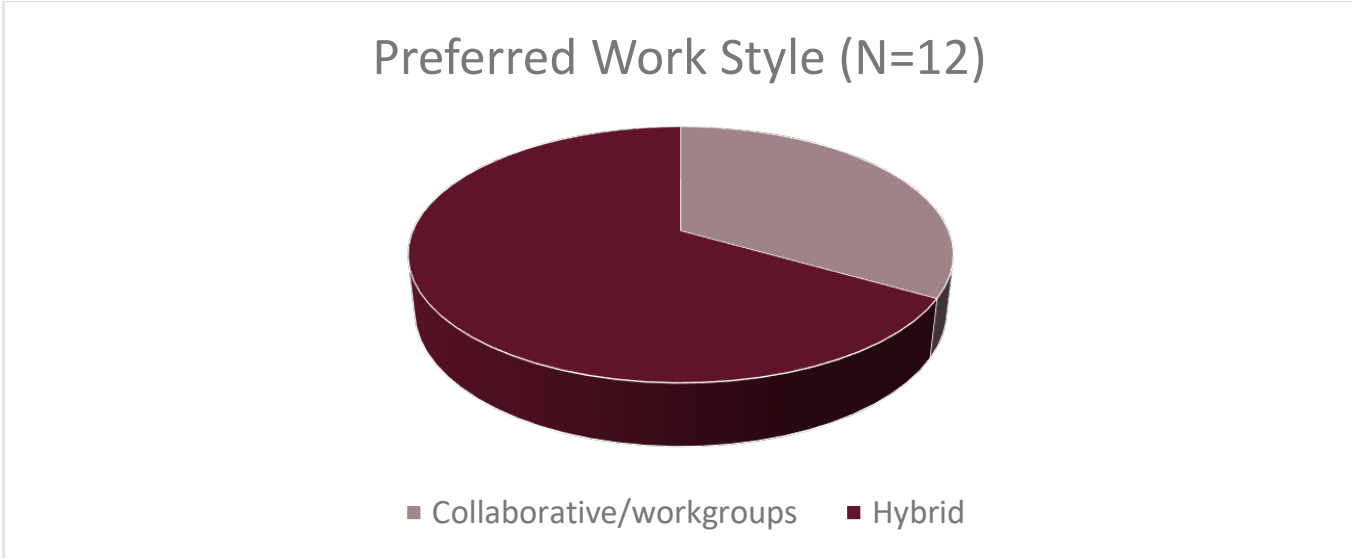
#### Communication Expectations

The majority of respondents indicated that they prefer communication that is "clear, concise, and to the point." Written communications are most preferred, which can help promote clear expectations. In addition to written material, several respondents also indicated an interest in verbal updates or face-to-face meetings. Several participants shared their desired frequency of communication, which ranged from "overcommunication" to "periodic" and "regular" e-mail updates. Only two participants provided specific content requests, including GCAC updates from leadership and topically relevant opportunities for training (e.g., "Training opportunities (even those outside of the FICW) that will help us learn more and do the work [required by] our workgroups").

#### Preferred Work Style

One-third of respondents indicated their preferred work style is collaborative/workgroups ( $n=4$ ), while two-thirds indicated they prefer hybrid work (combination of collaborative and independent work). Notably, no respondents reported preferring independent work.

<sup>1</sup> Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa



**Additional Questions or Concerns Regarding GCAC Needs and Expectations**

Additional feedback from six members yielded similar findings to those noted in previous sections. Respondents expressed their needs for clear expectations regarding their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, respondents spoke to expectations regarding goals and timelines around workgroup deliverables. One respondent specifically stated:

*I need clear expectations around deliverables and deadlines. If those are realistic it makes things much better. It would also be helpful for there to be opportunities for information sharing across workgroups. I also want to have some fun while doing this work. Things are hard enough already.*

In addition to clear expectations, respondents expressed interests in collaborative efforts across the committee and with the Institute as a whole. One respondent suggested the sharing of topical materials and training opportunities. These initiatives may be made possible through concise and collective communication between all parties involved with the Institute.

**OBJECTIVE 2: EXPANDING GROW CENTER SUPPORTS**

**Expanding Workforce Conceptualization**

At least two respondents endorsed each role for consideration for the GROW Center’s workforce initiatives. The majority of participants endorsed consideration (i.e., responded “yes”) for several roles. See Table 1.

Several additional roles for consideration were specified, mostly administrative roles (e.g., “admin staff,” “Rev Max, QA...other CBC/CMO and DCF positions that do not require CWP certification,” “quality assurance”). Singularly mentioned roles included: service providers who work with child welfare-involved families, parent and youth advisory committees, and independent living staff.

**Table 1. Roles for GROW Initiative Consideration**

Role	Freq (n)
Hotline	61.5% (8)
Family Support Worker	69.2% (9)
Residential Facility Staff	53.8% (7)
Trainer/Staff Development	84.6% (11)
Child Welfare Program Manager/Administrator	76.9% (10)
Foster parent/adoptive parent/kinship caregiver	46.2% (6)
Guardian ad litem	30.8% (4)
Judge	38.5% (5)
Attorney	30.8% (4)
Researcher	15.4% (2)

**Perceptions of Lacking Workforce Support by Role**

Participants were asked to identify supports currently lacking in their respective areas for each of the roles they endorsed for consideration as part of the workforce. See Table 2. Note, if a participant responded “Not Sure/I Don’t Know” for a specific role, they were excluded from analyses for that particular role.

**Table 2. Lacking Supports by Role**

Role	Training regarding the populations they serve	Cross-training with system partners	Career-building opportunities	Leadership development	Well-being support
Hotline (n=3)	33.3% (1)	66.7% (2)	66.7% (2)	66.7% (2)	66.7% (2)
Family Support Worker (n=6)	66.7% (4)	83.3% (5)	100% (6)	66.7% (4)	100% (6)
Residential Facility Staff (n=6)	50% (3)	100% (6)	100% (6)	83.3% (5)	100% (6)
Trainer/Staff Development (n=9)	44.4% (4)	66.7% (6)	77.8% (7)	77.8% (7)	88.9% (8)
Child Welfare Program Manager/Administrator (n=8)	50% (4)	50% (4)	50% (4)	75% (6)	87.5% (7)
Foster parent/adoptive parent/kinship caregiver (n=6)	83.3% (5)	100% (6)	33.3% (2)	33.3% (2)	100% (6)
Guardian ad litem (n=4)	75% (4)	100% (4)	50% (2)	50% (2)	75% (3)
Judge (n=5)	80% (4)	100% (5)	40% (2)	40% (2)	80% (4)
Attorney (n=4)	50% (2)	75% (3)	25% (1)	50% (2)	50% (2)
Researcher (n=2)	100% (2)	100% (2)	50% (1)	50% (1)	0% (0)

## Additional Questions or Concerns Regarding the Conceptualization of the Child Welfare Workforce

Only three individuals shared additional thoughts related to the conceptualization of the child welfare workforce. Responses included ensuring focus on the field as a whole; being mindful of unique needs by role, while emphasizing the importance of cross training; and maintaining “focus on authentic engagement, empathy and trauma responsive care.”

## Summary and Recommendations

Most GCAC members who participated in this initial needs assessment emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration. Based on these findings, we make the following recommendations for GCAC operations:

- **Develop a communication protocol that is shared with GCAC members.** Determine the frequency with which GCAC leadership will communicate with members and through what mediums. We recommend regular email communication to promote clarity among the members as part of the strategy.
- **Determine face-to-face meeting frequency for GCAC.** Members highlighted their desire for collaboration, and several indicated face-to-face meetings would be helpful. Face-to-face meetings could help foster cohesion and unity within the committee, especially given the emphasis on collaboration and preferred hybrid work styles. At a minimum, a schedule should be determined for full GCAC meetings. Given that individuals rarely provided feedback on desired frequency of these types of meetings, we suggest GCAC leadership request specific feedback on this from members, though quarterly meetings would be in alignment with the FICW affiliate network meeting schedule. We suggest exploring members’ expectations regarding in-person, virtual, or hybrid face-to-face meetings.
- **Continue to monitor member satisfaction with GCAC processes.** As work is already underway, continue to evaluate GCAC operations, including member satisfaction. In particular, examining how workgroups are operating would be useful in identifying best practices and/or necessary changes for future workgroups.

In exploring how to expand our conceptualization of the workforce, all role types were endorsed for inclusion by at least two GCAC members. Roles with 50% endorsement or more include:

- Trainer/Staff Development
- Child Welfare Program Manager/Administrator
- Family Support Worker
- Hotline
- Residential Facility Staff

In assessing for needed workforce supports, cross-training with system partners and well-being were notable needs across multiple roles. In fact, at least two-thirds of respondents reported cross-training as necessary for every role. This was similar for well-being supports, with the exception of researchers. Still, training regarding populations they serve and career- and leadership-building opportunities were also prevalent needs, though endorsement varied by role. Based on these findings from GCAC representatives, we recommend:

- **The FICW consider the expansion of the GROW Center’s conceptualization of the child welfare workforce.** Although this needs assessment only represents a sample of one group of constituents, it provides the FICW with initial evidence for expansion of our definition of the child welfare workforce. The FICW should include these items within its planned annual workforce survey to ascertain the perspectives of another, larger constituent group to triangulate findings.
- **The GCAC leadership should prioritize cross-training and well-being supports for workgroup efforts.** Though all types of supports are needed, establishing workgroups around these topics would support needs identified for the most roles.

# APPENDIX K: FSPSF RESEARCH BRIEFS

THE FLORIDA STUDY OF  
PROFESSIONALS FOR

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## CONTACT US

Questions or comments regarding findings can be directed to the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families Principal Investigator, Dr. Dina Wilke, at [dwilke@fsu.edu](mailto:dwilke@fsu.edu).

## WHY DO THEY LEAVE AND WHERE DO THEY GO?

JUNE 2022

### BACKGROUND

Child welfare professionals provide essential, mandated services to protect children from abuse and neglect. The high-stakes nature of child welfare work together with hostile clients, high caseloads, and extensive, time-sensitive documentation requirements contribute to high levels of turnover.<sup>1</sup> Worker turnover impacts families through less contact with workers and disrupted worker-client relationships,<sup>2</sup> and studies of youth aging out of care suggest that turnover also leads to a reluctance to trust workers.<sup>3</sup> However, a degree of turnover is inevitable and can be healthy for individual workers, organizations, and broader society.<sup>4</sup> Yet, estimated annual turnover rates of 20-40 percent in child welfare far exceed the 10-12 percent deemed optimal or healthy.<sup>5</sup>

This research brief will examine the destinations of workers who leave their baseline child welfare positions and their reasons for departure.

### METHODS

The current study used the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families (FSPSF) dataset ( $N=1,500$  workers recruited during pre-service training) to examine departure from baseline agencies within the first three years after hire. Overall, 1,009 departing workers provided enough information to determine their job status and destination and 885 workers provided their reasons for departure. Departing workers were assigned to one of the following categories: **a)** departed to a different child welfare agency, **b)** departed to the health and human services (HHS) sector (e.g., mental health), **c)** departed to a position outside of the HHS sector (e.g., hospitality), **d)** departed without a plan for full-time employment, **e)** left the labor market (e.g., not job seeking).

Those who left their agencies indicated up to 10 reasons for departure from a list of 39 options, and then were asked to identify the primary reason for departure from among those selected. Workers' primary reasons for departure were grouped into broad categories: job responsibilities, agency environment, supervision, career opportunities, personal reasons, and some other reason, including involuntary departures.

### FINDINGS

#### DESTINATIONS FOLLOWING DEPARTURE

**Figure 1** displays the immediate destinations of workers following departure from baseline agencies: 23 percent moved to a different child welfare agency. Nearly equal proportions of workers, 29 percent and 25 percent, exited to a different HHS field or a position outside of HHS, respectively. Approximately 17 percent of workers

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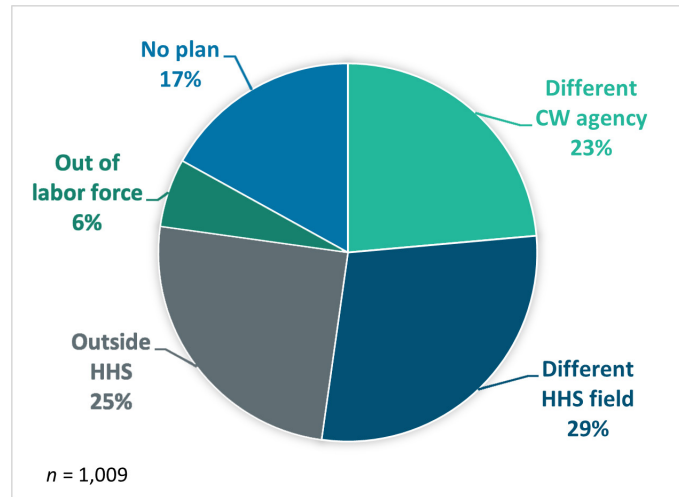
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left without a plan for employment and were either seeking work or working part-time jobs, and 6 percent were out of the labor force and not seeking employment.

**REASONS FOR DEPARTURE**

Across all waves of data collection, workers indicated the most common reason for departure was associated with the job responsibilities (27%). Examples of this category include working too many hours, having too many cases, or the work being too emotionally difficult. The second most common reason for departure (24%) was agency-related, usually unreasonable expectations and little concern for workers. Similar percentages of workers left due to career opportunities outside of child welfare or personal reasons (15% and 14% respectively). Slightly less than 10 percent of leavers did so because of concerns regarding supervision, indicating, for example, that their supervisor had unrealistic expectations or was not available. Further, departure did not change over time.

*Figure 1: Destinations for Departures from Baseline Positions*



**Table 1** provides the primary reason for departure provided by workers' destinations. For almost all destinations, the most common reason for departure was associated with the job responsibilities. The one exception was for workers departing to a different child welfare agency; the most common reason for departure for those workers was associated with the agency environment.

*Table 1: Reasons for Departure by Worker Destination*

	Job Responsibilities	Agency Environment	Supervision	Career Opportunities	Personal Reasons	Other
Different CW Agency	22%	<b>29%</b>	9%	16%	14%	10%
Different HHS Field	<b>36%</b>	22%	8%	16%	9%	9%
Outside HHS	<b>29%</b>	25%	8%	15%	11%	12%
No Plan	<b>24%</b>	19%	11%	9%	21%	17%
Out of Labor Market	<b>20%</b>	14%	11%	14%	34%	8%

**DISCUSSION**

Overall, findings suggest high levels of turnover among newly-hired workers. By three years, almost 60 percent of workers had left child welfare with very few returning to the field. Job destinations and the reasons for departure of exiting workers indicates that much turnover may be preventable. Most departing workers left without a plan or entered other closely related HHS fields, suggesting they may have stayed in child welfare under different conditions. Workers leaving without a plan or to related HHS fields, particularly within the first 12 months, suggest that early supports for workers transitioning from training into casework could have maximum impact for retention efforts.





### CONTACT US

Questions or comments regarding findings can be directed to FSPSF Principal Investigator, Dr. Dina Wilke, at [dwilke@fsu.edu](mailto:dwilke@fsu.edu)

## IMPACTS OF CLIENT VIOLENCE ON CHILD WELFARE WORKER HEALTH

DECEMBER 2021

### BACKGROUND

Child welfare workers encounter high rates of physical and non-physical violence initiated by clients.<sup>1,2</sup> The workplace consequences of this violence can be grave, including decreased worker productivity; increased job turnover;<sup>2</sup> compromised child safety;<sup>3</sup> and compromised worker physical and psychological health. This research brief presents results from in-depth interviews with child protective investigators ( $n = 18$ ) and dependency case managers ( $n = 15$ ) who had a range of experiences with client violence.

### METHOD

We randomly selected 50 child welfare workers from each of two groups: those who experienced physical violence by clients and those who did not. A total of 35 workers participated including 19 who reported physical violence and 16 who did not. The interview covered perceptions of client violence, examples of physical and non-physical incidents, and health consequences resulting from these incidents. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis followed by narrative analysis to uncover event sequencing.<sup>4,5</sup>

### FINDINGS

#### VIOLENT INCIDENTS

All workers except one experienced at least one incident that they defined as client violence, which typically included clients yelling, cursing or using slurs, using verbal threats, or cornering workers. About one-half ( $n = 15$ ) experienced verbal violence frequently or “*at every removal*” while others described events occurring a couple times a year or less ( $n = 18$ ). Twelve workers reported experiencing physical violence, including clients throwing objects, and grabbing, pushing, or charging workers, and typically, experienced only one episode. Workers did not describe physically violent incidents as more problematic than non-physical ones.

#### HEALTH OUTCOMES

About one-third of workers indicated client violence did not influence their health, one-third described moderate symptoms (e.g., stress, increased awareness) and the remaining one-third described severe symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, insomnia).

#### ATTRIBUTES INFLUENCING HEALTH OUTCOMES

Workers commonly described three attributes that defined their experiences with client violence—spontaneity, personal nature of the violence, and workplace support and response.

##### *Spontaneity of Violence*

Approximately one-half of workers described incidents in which client violence was a one-time, spontaneous event. This violence typically occurred during child removals or following

court proceedings pertaining to parent-child contact. The other half of workers described calculated violence. Workers perceived clients strategically maneuvering situations and relationships to gain control. In some incidents, violence centered around specific threats made via voicemail, social media, or social networks.

##### *Personal Nature of Violence*

About one half of workers perceived the violence as personal attacks while the other half considered incidents situational attacks based on their positions as child welfare workers. When clients invaded personal media space (e.g., posting messages on a worker’s social media platform), arrived at workers’ homes, or intimidated workers by revealing knowledge of personal information (e.g., presence of children, presence of spouse, home addresses), workers often felt under personal attack. Workers who felt under attack because of their child welfare responsibilities discussed being perceived as “*baby snatchers*” or “*bad guys*” with a bad reputation. For example, one worker who removed a newborn from her mother’s care at the hospital explained, “*I believe she would’ve acted that way [yelling, throwing items] with anybody. I don’t think it was just me personally.*”

Events themselves did not always define the perceived nature of the violence. Workers described similar incidents in which one worker felt under personal attack and another worker did not. For example, although one worker perceived a racial slur as a personal attack, another explained a slur as an attack to her as a child welfare worker regardless of her identity. Attacks interpreted as personal elicited more fear than other attacks.

##### *Workplace Support and Responsiveness to the Incident*

Agency or law enforcement responsiveness and support influenced workers’ experiences of client violence. About one-half of workers felt completely supported because of proactive efforts to prevent violence and the responsiveness when violence occurred ( $n = 17$ ). The remaining workers felt moderate levels of support ( $n = 9$ ), or were uniformly upset about the lack of appropriate preparation (e.g., not allowing accompaniment on a visit) or dismissiveness of the violence ( $n = 7$ ). Supported workers described supervisors

and agency administrators who took incidents seriously by encouraging workers to file restraining orders or facilitating case transfers. These workplaces also encouraged the use of law enforcement. Typically, those who felt fully supported described supervisors who proactively provided procedural knowledge and emotional support. Workers felt supported when colleagues validated their actions in violent incidents.

Disappointment in responsiveness generally focused on agencies, and, less often law enforcement, not taking incidents seriously, not debriefing with workers, not filing incident reports, and normalizing violence. Multiple workers expressed feeling personally insulted, particularly when they believed supervisors and administrators prioritized completing cases above worker well-being.

**DOMINANT NARRATIVES**

Figure 1 displays the most common narratives for client violence and its impact on worker health. High agency support and responsiveness most frequently yielded no health impacts; moderate support most frequently yielded moderate health impacts, and low support most frequently yielded severe impacts. In no instance—regardless of whether incidents were perceived as planned or personal—did a participant report both high agency support and severe health consequences. Among those who reported severe health outcomes, incidents were always perceived to be planned, personal, or both. Workers with severe health consequences commonly perceived calculated, personal attacks without agency support, which most often involved threats to harm workers.

In contrast, workers who reported no health consequences commonly expressed that attacks were spontaneous and situational, not personal. Agencies were proactive in encouraging workers to bring backup (e.g., colleague, law enforcement) and responded quickly and comprehensively. Workers in this group had fewer health consequences in part because they attributed the incident to the situation.

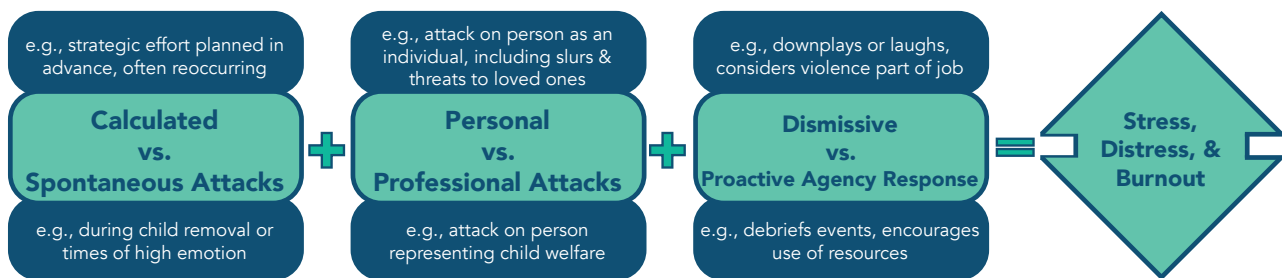
**IMPLICATIONS**

Findings on workers’ experiences of client violence have implications for agency practice and policy. Agencies could benefit from developing standardized protocols to define, prevent, and address client violence. Agency personnel across positions can inform protocol development to reflect the reality of frontline situations and administrative cost constraints. For example, although working in teams for all client contact may be ideal,<sup>6</sup> cost constraints may mean that teams work only in situations with heightened risk of violence (e.g., child removals).

Findings highlight the importance of considering workers’ feelings of threat and safety in responding to violence. When client violence occurs, protocols can help agencies support workers and assess perceptions of the incident to inform effective response strategies. Protocols can also include direction for frontline workers in reporting incidents and for supervisors in debriefing with frontline workers at multiple timepoints post-violent incident. For example, supervisors should immediately debrief with workers to assess incident details, including the worker’s perspective of spontaneity and personal nature of the attack. Related, supervisors can prioritize worker input regarding strategies to restore feelings of safety. Supervisor and workers can co-develop a support plan and periodically review it to reassess needed supports.

In addition to protocols, workers and supervisors could benefit from training on what constitutes client violence and how to handle incidents. Findings indicated that participants interpreted similar types of incidents differently. Training provides a mechanism for workers to understand their professional role in client’s lives (e.g., “[we] don’t meet these people on their best days”) while also identifying clients and situations in which they are most vulnerable. Workers discussed client tactics to incite aggression (e.g., slurs, nondescript threats) and may benefit from discussing strategies to maintain calm and de-escalate situations in the midst of attacks that may feel personal.

**FIGURE 1: The Impact of Attributes of Client Violence for Worker Psychological Health**



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THE FLORIDA STUDY OF  
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## WHAT IS TURNOVER?

MARCH 2022

### CONTACT US

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## BACKGROUND

The effectiveness of public child welfare services has long been impacted by instability in its workforce. Turnover among child welfare workers is a significant national struggle that has profound consequences for vulnerable children and families. Although some level of turnover is unavoidable and even healthy, reducing preventable turnover among frontline professionals is one of the most critical issues in the field today. However, although the concept of turnover seems self-evident, the impact of staff departure likely depends on the stakeholder. Florida's child welfare system is a public-private partnership, and many provider organizations deliver law enforcement or social services in addition to child welfare programs. This allows frontline workers to change jobs but remain in their agency or leave agencies but stay in the field of child welfare. This research brief will examine the job mobility of workers hired into child protective investigator or dependency case manager positions using three different ways to examine turnover.

## METHOD

The Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families is a prospective longitudinal study of a cohort of frontline staff hired into the Florida child welfare workforce. The FSPSF is a state-wide study of newly hired workers who began employment between September 2015 and December 2016. A total of 1,500 trainees provided baseline data, representing 84 percent of all new hires across Florida during that time.

An electronic survey was sent to participants at 6-month intervals. During each survey, participants were asked if they remained employed in the same role and same agency they identified in the previous survey. Those who said "no" to either item were asked a series of follow up questions on their new employment (if any). This enabled us to determine at each wave of data collection if a worker remained: 1) in their original child welfare position; 2) in their original child welfare agency; and 3) in the field of child welfare. The results presented below represent departure over the course of the 3.5 years of data collection.

## RESULTS

### ORIGINAL CHILD WELFARE POSITION

One way to think about turnover is to focus on the unit level. Previous research has identified that frequent changes in caseworkers delays permanency decisions and impacts other child and family outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Beyond its impact on clients, departure of frontline staff also affects the remaining workers who must assume additional caseload responsibilities. Staff departure is a key reason why caseloads of those who remain often significantly exceed recommended guidelines, which is a driver for departure.<sup>2,3</sup>

Results examining departures from baseline positions indicate that the first 18-months of employment represent the most challenging period. Nearly 20 percent of workers departed their position within the first six months following baseline, which includes 2-3 months of pre-service training. The highest period of departure from a baseline position was between 6-12 months when nearly 24 percent of workers left their position, and 60 percent had left by the 18-month point. Overall, almost 91.5 percent of all workers hired left their positions by the end of 3.5 years.

### ORIGINAL HIRING AGENCY

A second way to think about turnover is from the agency perspective. The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute estimates that the financial costs to agencies of child welfare worker turnover are significant. In 2017, they estimated it cost \$54,000 per employee to recruit, on-board, and train new workers.<sup>4</sup> However, since most organizations providing child welfare services in Florida also provide other social or law enforcement services, it is possible for workers to move to other positions within their agency. Moreover, opportunities for promotion and career development are often reasons why workers remain in their organizations.<sup>5</sup> While these types of changes don't mitigate the impact of departure at the caseload level, they do allow organizations to retain skilled workers trained in local policies and procedures.

The patterns for departure from baseline agency are similar to baseline position departure as most workers who left their positions also left their agencies. Eighteen percent of workers left in the first six months, and the highest period of agency departure was between 6-12 months (22%). Further, about 56 percent of workers left their original hiring agency by the 18-month point. Overall, about 83 percent of workers left their agency by the end of the study.

**FIELD OF CHILD WELFARE**

A third way to think about turnover is to consider departure from the field of child welfare. The state of Florida has invested in a common curriculum to train all child welfare professionals and identified competencies that when met, result in workers acquiring a professional certification. These credentials allow workers to move throughout the child welfare system for new positions and allows agencies to hire skilled workers without significant training costs. In this case, one agency’s loss is another agency’s gain, but the larger child welfare system retains experienced staff and the workforce has opportunities for career development.

The results examining departure from the field of child welfare suggest that while the general patterns remain the same, it was not uncommon for workers to leave positions or agencies but move to other child welfare roles and continue providing services to children and families. For example, by 18-months post baseline, 60 percent of workers left their original positions, but only 39 percent left the child welfare field. By the end of the study, 65.5 percent of workers departed child welfare compared to 91.5 percent who left their baseline position and 83 percent who left their baseline agency. This suggests that of those who left their baseline positions, nearly 40 percent remained in child welfare.

**DISCUSSION**

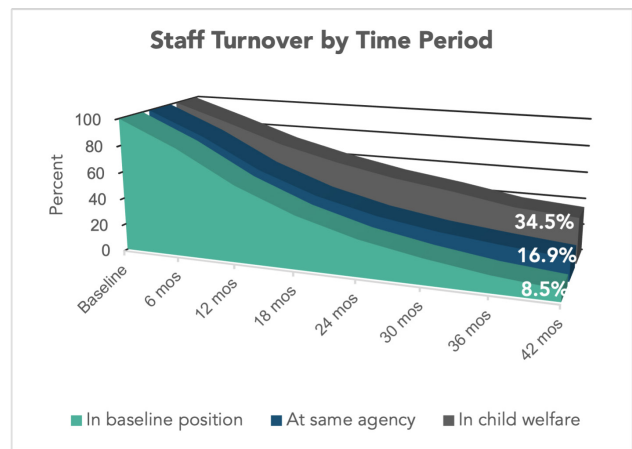
Figure 1 displays findings from various ways to consider worker turnover. Overall, no matter how we examined employee departure there were significant human resource losses. However, considering whether departing workers leave their unit, the agency, or the field may point to different goals and retention strategies over time. Agency leaders would benefit from being cognizant of different types of turnover. For example, agencies may not want to simply prioritize unit turnover if it means that qualified workers are prevented from moving into other child welfare services or promoted into leadership positions. In fact, workers may progress naturally in the organization to enhance their professional development. Agency leaders could consider an optimal tenure for frontline staff and develop career pathways as a strategy to encourage retention.

Time is another consideration when determining retention strategies. The striking number of workers who left within the first six months may indicate a need to focus on recruitment, training, or on-boarding activities to increase retention among early-career workers. Similarly, nearly 25

percent of workers left their position and/or agency between 6-12 months post baseline. Different retention strategies may be called for that address well-being and support as workers develop strategies for successful engagement with difficult cases.

A great deal is known about the consequences of turnover, including the significant costs to children and families and remaining staff when workers leave frontline work. However, some turnover is inevitable and even beneficial as workers deserve the opportunity to advance their careers. Supporting children, families, and workers during times of employee transition is an essential task of agencies regardless of the reasons for departure.

**Figure 1: Staff Turnover by Time Period**



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