

The Real Deal in Child Welfare Training

ADVERTORIAL

Real Collaboration for Real Outcomes



Collaboration: Partnership, alliance, teamwork, joint effort, working together to achieve a common goal. The mere idea suggests something positive may happen if we do this. The use of collaboration in child welfare can be seen throughout history in the 'village concept.' It takes many eyes, ears, hands, and rolled-up sleeves to influence positive, lasting change. It's no surprise that increased synergistic collaboration, through meaningful, dedicated partnerships, is a critical step in changing the trajectory for children and youth impacted by the child welfare system.

What's interesting is the seemingly increased focus on collaboration of late, particularly the messaging around cross-sector collaboration in child welfare. This stands to serve as a reminder that we need to work together, collaborate more, and leverage partnerships to their fullest potential. When it comes to protecting kids and supporting families, we need partnerships that serve to modernize child welfare by seeking different perspectives, considering all possibilities, and embracing out-of-the-box approaches.

A promising partnership has emerged between the University of Illinois, Springfield (UIS) Child Advocacy Studies (CAST), Child Protection Training Academy, and Creative Information Technology Inc. (CITI). This partnership is a creative mash-up designed to infuse technology innovation throughout child welfare learning environments and target opportunities to enhance practice areas,

such as the assessment process with modern tools and current research, building from the foundational UIS learning model. This arrangement provides university students hands-on learning using technology tools like those they will encounter in the workforce. The experience also enhances their understanding of the importance of comprehensive case documentation and data collection, while informing future technology enhancements. A partnership with UIS in this capacity is a natural fit considering their focus on simulated and experiential learning.

For nearly five years the Child Protection Training Academy has been conducting simulation training for new investigators from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. At the same time, the UIS CAST curriculum has been preparing the next generation of frontline workers to better respond and report suspicions of child maltreatment using Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and case simulations. PBL is a model that emerged decades ago in the healthcare profession; a form of decision-making to improve detection and diagnosis. Later, other disciplines recognized the value of this tool, translating it throughout healthcare, law enforcement, and higher education.

The UIS CPTA integrated PBL into the classroom training for new investigators and into the experiential learning process in their residential simulation labs and mock courtroom.

Early evaluation of the PBL/Simulation model indicates that students and professionals are focusing on the life of the case, increased awareness of safety and risk, and elimination of decision-making based on incomplete information or assumptions. This kind of decision-making is critical in any profession but even more so when a child's life is at stake. As many state program improvement plans (PIPs) as part of Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) indicate, quality assessment and workforce development are key areas of improvement where the UIS-CITI partnership will focus. Quality assessment and worker skill development are critically fundamental to child protection and child welfare decision-making. Supervisors and workers need better supports that move beyond information collection and guide critical thinking in assessment practice.

Like a decadent multi-layer cake, some of the most impactful partnerships have many levels where collaboration happens. From the local workforce to statewide partnerships, to Federal and state collaborations for promising practices, folks are getting together to make a difference in child welfare.

A new federal website grew from discussions about simulation training for the child welfare workforce and now highlights the Child Protection Training Academy model for other states and jurisdictions interested in developing similar programs. The "Keeping it Real" website on the Children's Bureau's Capacity Building Center for States features numerous videos and publications meant to provide a blueprint for simulation training and implementation strategies.

Beyond the initial focus, plans include creating a collaborative approach to decision-making across multiple systems within child welfare and human services and intersecting systems, such as law enforcement and medical professions, to enhance the collection

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and exchange of case information. This approach considers system stakeholders through each unique lens and provides a multifaceted view of families we mutually serve.

A primary goal of this approach is to strengthen child protection practices, emphasizing a collective vision in the identification of and response to needs and strengths. After all, the village is not just one neighborhood, it's the entire community.



For more information about the **Simulation Training in Child Welfare**

For more information about the **CITI Child Welfare Capabilities** visit www.citi-us.com/state-and-local/unify

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Betsy Goulet is a Clinical Assistant Professor and Director of the UIS Child Advocacy Studies Program (CAST) in the College of Public Affairs and Administration.



For over thirty years, Dr. Goulet has worked in child protection, serving as the founding director of the Sangamon County Child Advocacy Center, and working as the Children's Policy Advisor to the Illinois Attorney General. She also started the State Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers in Illinois and served as the organization's first president.

Through a contract with Illinois Department of Child and Family Services, Dr. Goulet developed a new model for child protection training that emphasizes experiential learning and the use of a Residential Simulation Lab and mock courtroom on the UIS campus. She has presented nationally and internationally on the Child Protection Training Academy and has consulted with several states who are interested in replicating the model. The Journal of Public Child Welfare recently published the first research article on the model "Moving from Procedure to Practice: a statewide child protection simulation training model."

Dr. Goulet also serves as the principle investigator for a federal SAMHSA grant in partnership with the University of Missouri St. Louis. The FORECAST grant trains CAST faculty from around the country in trauma-informed practices.

Dr. Goulet's research with Dr. Ted Cross was published in an international book on Mandated Reporting in 2015 and a new book chapter on Mandated Reporting, co-authored with Dr. Cross will be released in 2020.

Rachael Kerrick-Brucker, MSW is the Associate Director of the HHS State and Local Practice division with Creative Information Technology Inc. (CITI). Before joining CITI,



Rachael spent 21 years in public child welfare working to make a difference for kids and families in Illinois.

Prior to joining the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) in 1997, Rachael worked in the private sector as a child welfare caseworker and later served as a caseworker at IDCFS where she held various other positions, including Deputy Director of Permanency Practice and Associate Deputy Director of Information Technology Services.

Rachael was an active policy writer and co-authored various key policies in Illinois, worked closely with the agency's Office of Legislative Affairs, and was a significant contributor to policy on safety and risk assessment, family finding and kin connections, foster youth bill of rights, and enhanced permanency practice. Rachael was a child welfare certified trainer and contributor to numerous staff development curricula.

Rachael was a lead subject matter expert on the Illinois SACWIS and served as the product owner of IDCFS case management systems. Rachael led the Illinois Technology Advancement Stakeholder Committee (ITASC) formed to improve practice through child and family centered technology. Rachael continues to serve child welfare in her role with CITI as part of a talented and dedicated team collaborating to make a difference.