



100 years of serving our nation's children and families

Formal Education or School of Life: What Are the Best Credentials for the Child Welfare Workforce?

Centennial Topical Webinar Series

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Cassandra Gregory

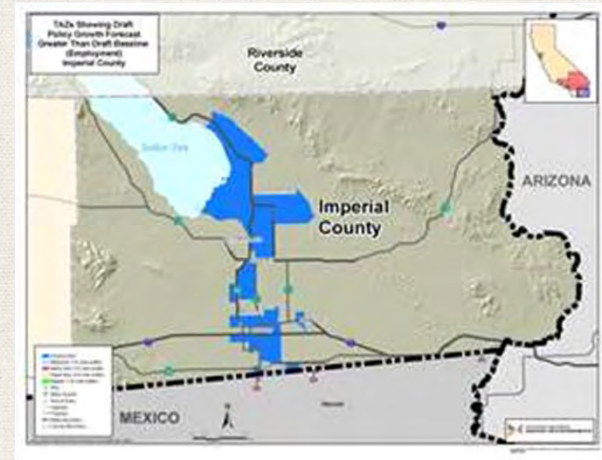
- Social Worker Supervisor I
- Independent Living Program Coordinator
- SDSU Field Instructor/Title IV-E Interns
- 25 years in Child Welfare
- Eligibility Worker/GAIN (CalWorks)/Child Protective Services
- Associate in Behavioral Science
- Bachelor's and Master's education

California Counties



County of Imperial

- Unemployment rate, 24.6%
- High School graduates, 62.3%
(percent of persons age 25+)
- Bachelor's degrees or higher, 12.2%
(percent of persons age 25+)
- Median income \$38,685



4,597 Sq. Miles

POPULATION: 174,528

Hispanic, 80%

White, 13.7%

African American, 2.9%

Asian, 1.3%

American Native, 0.9 %

Other, 0.1%

Two, 0.6

Child Welfare Services, County of Imperial

- 1 Deputy Director
- 3 Program Managers
- 8 Social Worker Supervisors
- 43 Social Workers
- 9 Social Worker Assistants
- 4 Staff Service Analyst
- 1 Systems Service Analyst
- 16 Clerical Support

12 Master's Level Workers:

- 6 Masters in Social Work
- 5 Marriage and Family Therapy
- 1 Masters in Public Administration

*** In addition 6 Child Welfare employees are participating in the current SDSU/MSW Title IV-E Program**

Prior to completing my MSW...

- Experience was hands-on
- 20+ years with Department of Social Services
- 12 years in Child Welfare
- Public Child Welfare Training Academy-
Social Worker Core Training &
Supervisor Core Training
- Forensic Interviewer Training

Why get a Master's in Social Work?

- Something was missing in my work.
- Training opportunities were great but nuggets of crucial information in my work with children and families.
- My leadership opportunities within Child Welfare.
- I wanted to learn to make a difference.

What did I take from the MSW Program

- Collaboration
- Effective Communication
- Best Practice and Evidence Based Practice
- Teamwork
- Client/Family Centered Approach
- Methods to my Madness!!!

How I'm making it different, now!

- Engaging youth/families.
- Ensuring collaboration.
- Effective partner in multidisciplinary teamwork.
- Integration of SW values in Supervisor and Field Instructor roles.
- Connecting youth and families back to their communities and natural support systems.

What are the Best Credentials for the Child Welfare Workforce?

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CalSWEC Title IV-E Program, San Diego State University

SDSU is one of 21 schools currently in the CalSWEC consortium providing a Title IV-E MSW program

491 MSW Title IV-E students at SDSU since 1993

64 of the students are currently still in school

381 Graduates (out of a possible 427)

89.2% graduation rate

Of the 381 Graduates:

- 46 - Working and in the process of completing payback
- 300 - completed payback (out of a possible 335)
- 89.5% complete payback

SDSU Retention in CWS, Post-MSW

300 Title IV-E Graduates completed work payback

- 174 - new to CWS
- 126 - San Diego Co. CWS employees while in the MSW IV-E

Payback number of years vary due to policies (16-completed 36 months of payback; 6-completed 48 months)

78 graduates were not tracked after completing 2 years

Post- Payback CWS employment

- 37 completed or are still working 10-17+ years
- 58 more have completed or are still working 5-10 years
- 27 of these 95 students are still working as SD County CWS

Of those still able to be tracked in San Diego County CWS: 149 are working at the SD County CWS today

CWS Employee MSW Students

SDSU-San Diego County CWS

1994-2003 First Ten Years

120 Total Employee Students

9 Did not graduate

120 Employee students graduated 93%

Received Leave of Absence w/right to return

118 Completed payback 98%

2004-2012 Second Ten Years

47 Employee MSW students Total

21 Still in School (4-Year MSW part-time Program)

19 Graduated (out of 26) 73%

If taking a leave w/NO right to return

7 Did not graduate

8 Completed payback (out of 17) 47%

One thing we know...

“No state and no community has developed a Child Protective Service program adequate in size to meet the service needs of all reported cases of child neglect, abuse and exploitation.”

De Francis, V. (1967). Child protective services: A national survey. Denver: American Humane Association.

Still true 45 years later...

Frequent Key Issues in CWS

- Retention of workers
- Performance-outcomes
- Satisfaction
- Ability to mitigate stress, burnout, secondary trauma
- Organizational culture
- Structural racism, fairness and equity, disparate treatment for families of color
- Levels of experience, education, and training

Experience Without Formal Social Work Education in Child Welfare

BENEFITS

- Knowledgeable of agency procedures and practices
- Accumulated wisdom from years of experience with families
- Shared learning and development from co-workers
- Learned on the job ways of handling the demands and stress of the work

LIMITATIONS

- Knowledge of child welfare practices gained in a specific agency culture
- Wisdom gained from working with families acquired through specific practices learned on the job
- Reinforcement of certain beliefs, attitudes and practices

Social Work Education

CORE AREAS

- **Values:** justice orientation, rights orientation,
- **Knowledge:** of human development, social policies and practices, evaluation tools
- **Skills:** the application of knowledge guided by values
- **Internships:** to integrate learning in a specific context

BENEFITS

- Holistic perspective of individual and family development in context
- Multiple world views of human development; respect for cultural diversity
- Knowledge of various approaches to working with people
- Skills in engagement, assessment, planning, evaluation
- A conscious repertoire of interventions

What are the potential benefits from Social Work Education?



For the individual worker

- Advanced knowledge, skills, value-guided practice
- Potential for increased roles in CW



For the CWS agency

- More skilled professional staff
- Partnership with university
- Move from traditional efforts to creative approaches



For the families and communities

- Greater involvement in decisions affecting their daily life
- Community-driven health, safety, well-being efforts
- Partnerships with CWS, universities for community-driven evaluation approaches

Re-thinking Possibilities

In the Centennial spirit of the
Children's Bureau, for the next
100 years...



What does shipbuilding have to do with Child Welfare?

In the early days, ships were built using wood because people knew that wood floated. Iron wasn't used because any piece of iron would sink.

"The law of floatation was not discovered by contemplating the sinking of things, but by contemplating the floating of things which floated naturally, and then intelligently asking why they did so."

Thomas Troward

The Dore Lectures on Mental Science 1909



Reframing the Issues

- Purpose: What is the intent of a public commitment for child protection?
- Spirit: What inspires persistence and dedication in workers?
- Meaning: What creates individual and collective energy for change?
- What is essential for well-being of children and families?

Purpose

What is the intent of a public commitment for child protection?

To ensure that all children and their families have the opportunities to live healthy and hopeful of fulfilling their human potential.

Spirit

What inspires persistence and dedication in social workers?

When they have the opportunity to utilize their knowledge and skills to be effective in supporting families; fulfilling their personal reasons for being in social work; feel connected to the people they serve; encouraging and positive work environment... making a difference!

Meaning

What creates individual and collective energy for change?

When working together results in a positive change; seeing that effort is consistent with values of alleviating injustice, improving the welfare of people, belief in a larger purpose that benefit others... Experiences that build trust and a sense of success.

What is essential for well-being of children and families?

- Requires individual and collective effort
- Requires conscious attention to the capacity of people to desire health and wellness
- Place-based, community building develops meaningful social connections among people
- Mutual efforts allow unique abilities and skills to be shared for a common purpose, minimizes power differences, increases possibilities
- Inspiring education, meaningful work, opportunities to play, a present and future orientation

Fostering Well-Being

For Families:

- If we want to support families to experience health and wellness; to care for one another, to pursue hopes and dreams, to fulfill their potential, we need to focus our efforts on the well being of communities and transforming neighborhoods; **healthy families reduce events of child abuse.**
- Young people and their families need not only to have a voice in matters that concern them but the opportunity to determine their future. **Empowerment supports changes for the better through advocacy and action.**

Commitment to Public Service

Responsibility of CWS Agencies and Universities

"The achievement of excellence can only occur if the organization promotes a culture of creative dissatisfaction..."

Lawrence Miller

Author on Organizational Management

...and then allow workers to be innovative!

At the heart of the problem...



All the people like us are we, and everyone else is They.

Rudyard Kipling

Creating Different Kinds of Partnerships

- SDSU Title IV-E Program is exploring ways to address family and community well-being by engaging in new preparation experiences for social work students in child welfare;
- Exploring and entering into new ways of utilizing field placements to create opportunities for students (especially, student-employees) to engage in meaningful change efforts in organizational delivery of services, in proactive prevention and differential response building;
- Identifying purposeful efforts in neighborhoods with persistent challenges to safety, stability and well-being;
- Direct partnering with families and their neighborhoods.

SDSU Title IV-E Emerging Efforts

The premise of preparing new social workers for child welfare services requires besides experience in the agency:

- Do meaningful work to change conditions together with families;
- **Developing a community-based practice in order to learn directly from families the environmental realities in which they live;**
- Developing an empathic consciousness for the hopes and desires of families situated in poverty and with multiple cultural world views;
- **Developing skills to work together with families and neighborhoods to improve conditions; “client-driven”, community-focused**
- Create opportunities for children and families to grow and thrive;
- **Learning to be situated to time and space; place-based community work;**
- **To see oneself as part of the same struggle instead of apart from families**

It is not enough to understand, or to see clearly. The future will be shaped in the arena of human activity, by those willing to commit their minds and their bodies to the task.

Robert F. Kennedy



The premise of new efforts in preparing social workers

The goal is not to do work that can be replicated but rather specific to **Place**, with unique histories, conditions and possibilities...

Require Title IV-E students in traditional settings seek to **do innovative work** developed by their own efforts in partnership with families and communities...

Using existing data to **choose areas of work** that have high poverty rates, high child abuse reports, and particularly with culturally diverse communities...

Foster attention to their emotional strengths **to cultivate empathy, develop partnerships, and make meaningful efforts to change difficult conditions.**

Imperial County Partnership

- Evolved from a mutual desire to meet the community and county CWS need to be more successful in serving families.
- Agreed to utilize the field experience required of the MSW program for employee students (equivalent to 100 hours/week of staff time).
- Team internship focused on improving family engagement by implementing a Family Group Conferencing approach. Support from Casey Family Programs, Regional Office, San Diego.
- Required agency changes: protocols and procedures, established a unit, became part of the county's System Improvement Plan.
- Judges, District Attorneys, Public Defenders, engaged communities, Quechan Tribe, to educate and explain approach.

Imperial County CWS

“Families as Partners”

- Direct family experiences with FGC increased conscious awareness of proactive and family-directed ways to resolve safety and permanency.
- Serving predominantly 80% Mexican American families in poverty; empowerment, culturally consistent incorporation of extended family.
- New MSW student employees will continue to deepen the work as Family Group Conferencing is utilized as their placement.
- Challenges inherent in establishing a different way of working taxed the employees while being a student but accomplished organizational changes, utilized new knowledge and practices, and worked both internally within their organization, with the courts, and with their communities to support families.

San Diego County CWS East Region

“Partnership with Residents”

- Goal to increase safety, reduce child abuse, violence, build stability and well-being.
- Initiated an internship with MSW student-employees to work with residents of a 150-unit apartment complex
- Increase attention with residents to engage interest in improving safety for the children
- Worked with police and community partners to improve safety around the perimeter of the complex; reduce crime, vandalism

San Diego County CWS East Region

- The apartment complex is a location with high rate of calls for police and child abuse reports.
- Mixed population – 50/50 Latino, White, low-income
- Increased safe activities, owner improving playground. onsite, coordination with manager, health oriented activities, resources, participation of multiple community organizations as partners.
- Continuing into the third year with new interns and with greater attention to housing stability, safer living and resident organizing to increase support for one another.

National City Westside

- Holistic effort to improve child, family and neighborhood well-being
- Initial partners: hunger coalition, environmental health coalition, public health, city council/vice mayor, family resource center, university, business, financial institutions
- Community dilemmas; high crime, child abuse rates, domestic violence, poverty, food insecurity, environmental hazards, poor safety paths to school
- Engage local universities for children to experience K2College goal

National City Westside

“Neighborhood Well-Being”

- Long standing neighborhood of predominantly Mexican-American families
- Incorporating school based support services through MSW interns to serve children and families involved with CWS or at risk of involvement
- Building a coalition of partners interested in supporting families, to increase neighborhood leadership, parental involvement, increase educational success
- Working on developing college savings accounts for all children entering kindergarten

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Formal Education or School of Life: What are the Best Credentials for the Child Welfare Workforce?”

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Important Message

No simple answers to complex questions



Long Term Dialogue/Debate

Should social work degrees be required for child welfare staff?

Social Work and Child Welfare Connections

- Rooted in the Children's Bureau
 - Social workers - Four out of the first five directors (1912 to 1952)
 - Federal support for social work education and training part of federal child welfare programs (1935)
- Child welfare as a field of social work practice (CWLA, 1982)

Social Work and Child Welfare Connections

- Social work leadership in child welfare practice, policy, research and education
- Relevance of social work education to child welfare competencies

Standards for Practice

- Intent in the late 1970s to tie policy change to professional standards for practice (COA)
- Implementation of Public Law 96-272 disconnected from implementing practice standards
- Subsequent laws address services but not who provides them

Results

- Workforce crisis declared
- Complex needs require skilled practitioners
- Workforce issues effect service quality (CSFR/PIPs)
- Media attention highlights systemic problems
- Class action lawsuits drive practice reform

Documenting the Problem

- GAO Study (2003, 2004)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation Report (2003)
- Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care Report (2004)
- Child and Family Service Reviews
- APHSA Surveys (2001 & 2005)

Documenting the Problem

- Cornerstones for Kids (2006)
- NASW Study of Child Welfare Social Workers (2003)
- NASW Study of Licensed Social Workers (2006)
- National Child Welfare Workforce Policy Workgroup
- Recruitment and Retention Grants

What Issues to Consider?

- Relevance of education and training
- BSW/MSW differential
- Availability of social workers
- Practice outcomes
- Retention
- Attraction to the field
- Career ladders and professional growth opportunities

Assuring the Sufficiency of a Frontline Workforce (NASW study)

- Continue to attract professional social workers to work with children and families
- But retaining them is a problem!
- Issues relate to:
 - Work environment
 - Levels of compensation
 - Safety
 - Vacancy rates
 - Non-social workers
 - Outsourcing of functions

Question

What will it take to develop and retain a competent, committed workforce with the caseload size and knowledge and skills to get the work done?

Systematic Review of Retention Research

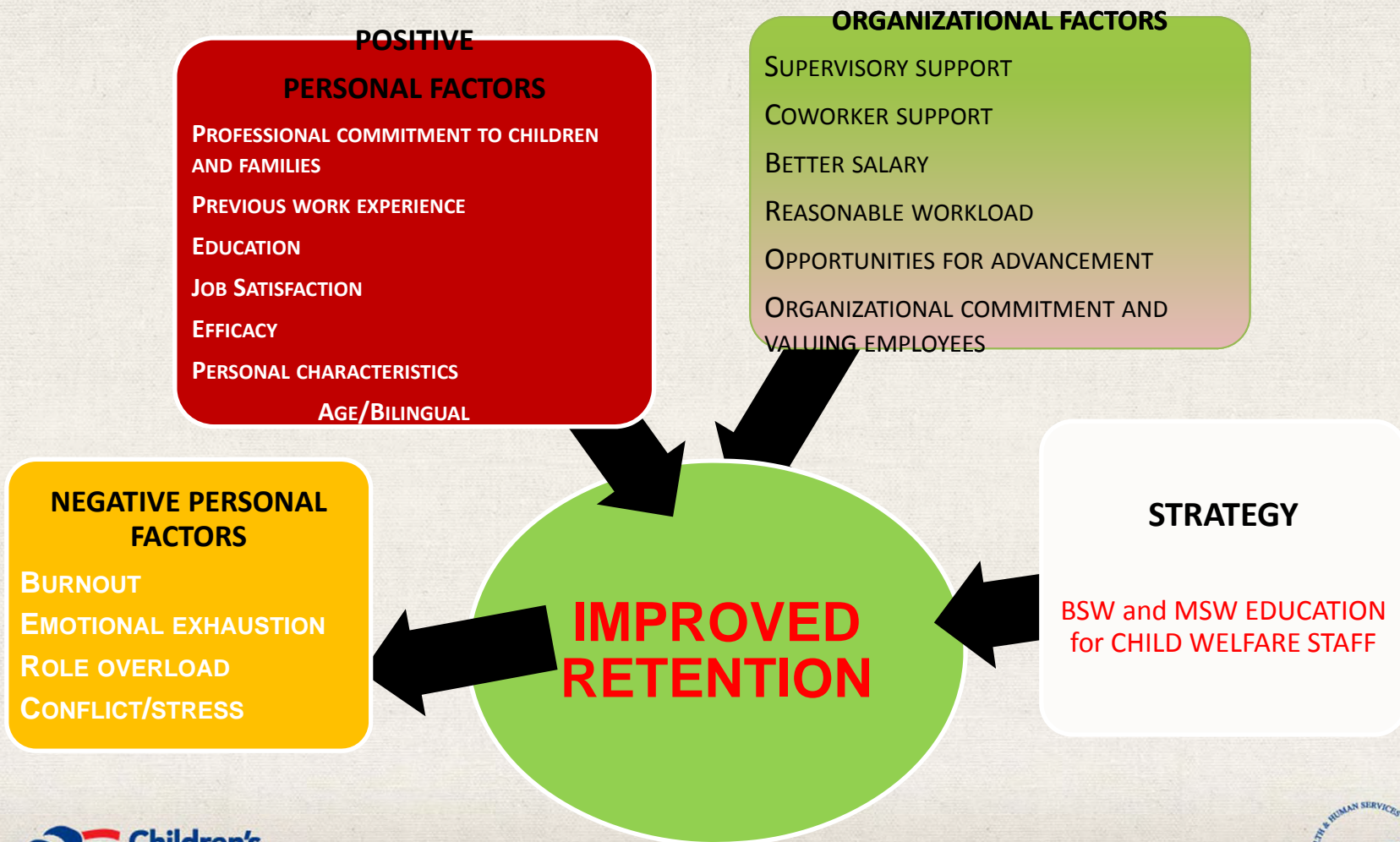
Factors Influencing Retention of Child Welfare Staff: A Systematic Review of Research

Zlotnik, DePanfilis, Daining & Lane (2005)

Supported by a Grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Human Services Workforce Initiative to the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research in collaboration with the U of MD School of SW



What Strategies and Conditions Influence the Retention of Staff in Public Child Welfare?



Retention Factors

- Personal Factors
 - Commitment to child welfare
 - Personal experience (age & bi-lingual)
 - Previous experience
 - Wanting to work with children and families –
 - Goodness of fit

Retention Factors

- Education
 - Social work – more likely
 - Social work specialized in child welfare – most likely
 - Less education and less relevant education – less likely
 - Huge variation in qualifications of staff nationally
 - 10% masters to 60%
- Self-efficacy
 - Perceived competence and human caring

Retention Factors

- Organizational factors
 - Quality supervision
 - **Attributes of supervisors – skills in mentoring, high level of practice knowledge**
 - Manageable workload
 - Peer support
 - Feeling valued
 - Opportunities for advancement
 - Safety and resource availability
 - Salary and benefits – people who leave make more \$\$

Retention Factors

- Quality Supervision
 - Attributes of supervisors
 - Skills in mentoring
 - **High level of practice knowledge**
 - Workers that stay attach to supervisors
- Professional social workers who stay don't report supervision problems (NASW, 2004)
- If you want Social Work Supervisors – hire social workers and then promote them.

Elements of Supervisory Practice

Administrative Supervision

Provide leadership to unit ◇ Select and train staff ◇ Manage performance and workflow ◇ Communicate agency priorities and policies

Educational Supervision

Case staffing and reviews ◇ Provide professional development and application of training ◇ Monitor practice ◇ Promote evidence-based practice ◇ Promote ethical and culturally competent practice ◇ Promote teamwork

Supportive Supervision

Prevent and address secondary trauma, burn-out and stress ◇ Anticipate and address safety and risk factors ◇ Build and maintain morale and job satisfaction ◇ Create a learning environment and opportunities for peer support

Strategies to Impact Retention

- Most common – improved training, but does it work – is anyone studying it?
- Most studied -- Title IV-E education for child welfare practice (different models)
 - Better service outcomes
 - Better attitude toward kids and families
 - Self-efficacy
 - Commitment to the agency
 - Feeling valued
 - Special job title/position

Negative Factors

- Burn-out
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Depersonalization
 - Lack of personal accomplishment
- Negative organizational environment can lead to or reinforce personal factors
- Work and family life imbalance
- Lack of commitment – no “goodness of fit”

Staff Turnover and Child Abuse

- Study comparing California counties
- High functioning counties
 - lowest turnover rates
 - best paid staff
 - **compliance with recognized practice standards**
 - low rates of re-abuse.
- Lowest functioning counties
 - Highest turnover
 - Lowest staff pay
 - Highest rates of re-abuse
 - http://www.cps.ca.gov/workforceplanning/documents/06.02_Relation_Staff.pdf

A Social Work Degree

- The Research is Inconsistent
 - Those with the least relevant and/or least education – most likely to leave
 - Those with MSWs most likely to leave (Yankeelov, et al., 2008)
 - Some studies only looked at those with social work degrees
 - Barth, et al.(2008) - % of degreed social workers slightly less than 40%

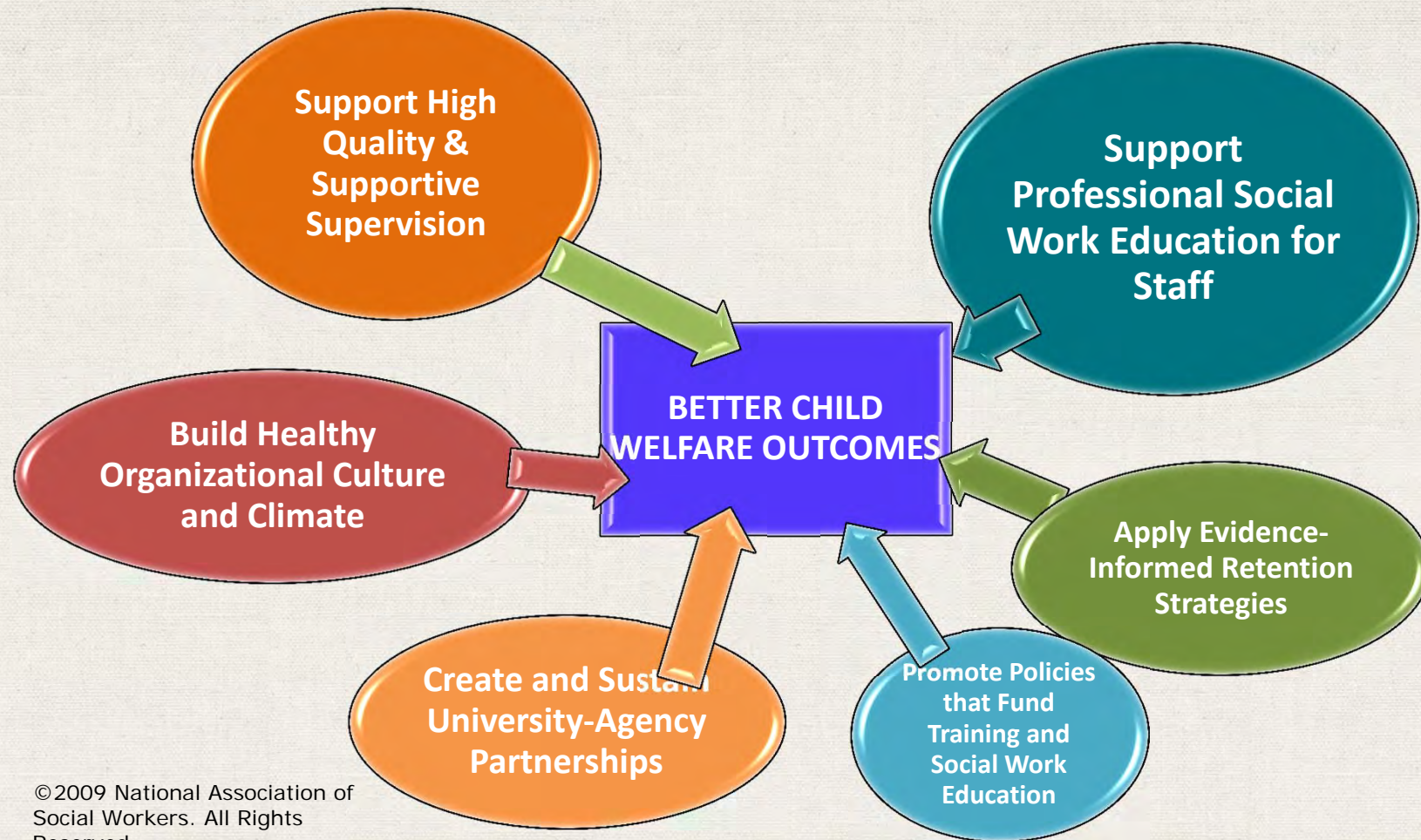
A Social Work Degree

- What can account for differences
 - Different study questions
 - Agency expectations of the employee – what is the job?
 - Other job options
 - Service delivery environment
 - **Supervision**
 - Ethical practice

A Social Work Degree

- A social work degree and specialized child welfare training –
 - Improved outcomes for children
 - Retention
 - Knowing the job
 - Less pre-service and in-service training required
 - Towards cultural competency
 - Ethical practice
 - Person-in-environment orientation

Linking Workforce and Outcomes



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Policy Opportunities

- **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act Reauthorization (P.L. 111-320)** includes a provision (Sec. 106(d) “to include data on numbers of CPS personnel, average caseloads, education and training requirements, demographic information, and workload requirements.”

Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being for Children and Youth Receiving Child Welfare Services - ACYF Information Memorandum, Issued 4/17/12

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1204.pdf>.

Title IV-E Training -- CHILDREN’S BUREAU’S CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL at

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/index.jsp?idFlag=0.

Topics covered by Title IV-E training funds can be found in Sections 8.1H 8 and 21

Questions to Ask

- People seeking child welfare employment should ask - *Is it what I really want to do? Do I have the prerequisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to prepare to do this job?*
- Staff selecting applicants for child welfare positions should ask -- *Does the candidate have the professional commitment and experience to take on this job and deal with the related stress?*

Questions to Ask

- Child welfare supervisors should ask -- *Do I have the knowledge and skills to provide support and case-focused supervision to my staff and do I have support from my superiors?*
- Agency administrators should ask -- *Does the agency provide the necessary supports—supervisory, career ladder, working environment – that will attract workers and keep them at the agency?*

Questions to Ask

- Universities, especially social work education programs, should ask -- *Can we strengthen our partnership with state and local child welfare agencies to provide education and training to current and prospective staff and to develop and implement research and program evaluation efforts that can help to guide agency practices?*

Resources

- **Supervision: The Safety Net for Front-line Child Welfare Practice**
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news-events/supervision-the-safety-net-for-front-line-child-welfare-practice.html>
- **Factors Influencing Retention of Child Welfare Staff: A Systematic Review of Research**, Zlotnik, DePanfilis, Daining & Lane (2005) --
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/publications/iaswr-publications/iaswr-child-welfare-workforce-initiative.html>.
- **Investing in the Social Work Workforce** <http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/news-events/social-work-policy-institute-releases-new-report-on-needed-workforce-investments.html>.
- **Policy Brief: Educating Social Workers for Child Welfare Practice** – posted soon to www.SocialWorkPolicy.org
- **NASW Center for Workforce Studies** - <http://workforce.socialworkers.org/> &
- **National Study of Licensed Social Workers**
http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/children/NASW_06_Children.pdf.

Resources

- **Child Welfare Workforce Policy Workgroup** convened by CDF/CR and funded through Cornerstones for Kids
http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/DocServer/CW_Workforce_Report_2.pdf?docID=3563
- **Strengthening University/Agency Research Partnerships to Enhance Child Welfare outcomes: A Toolkit for Building Research Partnerships**
<http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/9-IASWR-CW-Research-Partners.pdf>
- **Child Welfare Workforce and Training Resources**
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/workforce/>
- **National Child Welfare Workforce Institute** <http://www.ncwwi.org>
- **APHSA – Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance**
<http://www.napcwa.org/PPCWI/ppcwi.asp>

Resources

- **Report from the 2004 Child Welfare Workforce Survey: State Agency Findings (February 2005)** – available from <http://www.aphsa.org/Home/Doc/WFExecutiveSummary.pdf>.
- **Child Welfare (2009, vol.88, Issue 5)** Special Issue on Recruitment and Retention in child welfare.
- **IV-E Child Welfare University Agency Partnerships**
<http://louisville.edu/kent/projects/iv-e>
 - Subscribe to the IV-E Listserv
 - Attend the IV-E discussions (Child Welfare Symposium) at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting – upcoming on November 9, 2012 in DC in conjunction with the CSWE APM <http://www.cswe.org/Meetings/2012apm.aspx>

Discussion

For more information

(including a copy of today's slides and a webinar recording)

<http://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/webinars>

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