

**SILBERMAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
AT HUNTER COLLEGE  
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

Practice Issues in Child Welfare  
796.53  
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Office Hours: By appointment only

## **Course Description and Overview**

### **PURPOSE**

Practice Issues in Child Welfare is an elective, which focuses on three critical core areas of child welfare practice with children, youth, and families, namely:

- Meaningful family and youth engagement in child welfare;
- Child traumatic stress in child welfare
- Effective evidence based practices in child welfare.

This advanced course extends the foundations of child welfare practice by deepening the knowledge, applying it to a specialized issue or population group, and by refining the analytic practice skills in these abovementioned three areas needed to more critically synthesize and interpret the complexities of child welfare practice. The course explores practice dynamics, patterns, and changes through a closer look at real life child welfare practice issues, forces of oppression and the paths to social, economic, and political justice relevant to a special population. The focus on

Children, Youth, and Families includes the recognition of the needs of diverse groups within this group or those affected by the issue.

**Objectives:**

1. Students should be able to successfully and meaningfully engage families.
2. Students should be able to successfully navigate difficult conversations with youth and parents - i.e., productively confronting a parent with lack of progress, productively confronting a young person who is, say, not attending school, so that the client is treated with empathy, but held accountable for their behavior and engaged in partnering to change the behavior.
3. Students must be able to continually assess progress throughout the life of the case, understanding that change is incremental, and objectively determining when the pace of change is appropriate, stagnant, and to be able to adjust service plans accordingly.
4. Students should learn and be able to teach real life behavior management skills (i.e., how to help a parent build a behavior chart, re-arrange their schedule to accomplish household tasks, what the parent should say/do when the teen comes home after curfew, how to handle it when the teen talks back to the parent, etc.).
5. Students should be able to help a parent identify root problem behaviors and triggers, and develop behavior management strategies that are realistic and achievable, and where the consequences are meaningful and fit the behaviors needing to change.
6. Students should be able to understand the implications

- of stress and trauma on the lives of children, youth, and families affected by the child welfare system.
7. Students must know what evidence based practices have proven usefulness in child welfare and what language to use, and how to frame problems.
  8. Students should be able to use evidence based practices, objectively measure a client's progress in changing behavior.
  9. Students should be able to orally explain a client's progress - expressing a professional opinion on major child welfare decisions, using evidence to support their position (i.e., this child should be reunified with the parent because...the goal should be changed in this case because...), using a tone that is factual, professional, and focuses on judgment of behaviors rather than judgment of character, and using clear, concise, and appropriate language.
  10. Students should demonstrate skill at self-assessment, recognizing his/her role and efficacy as a change agent.
  11. Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to write concise, grammatically correct, factually accurate and robust reports on client progress (i.e., report to the court)

## **COURSE THEMES**

Introduction to Practice Issues in Child Welfare

Meaningful Youth and Family Engagement in Child Welfare

Child Traumatic Stress in Child Welfare Practice

## Effective Evidence Based Practices in Child Welfare

### **Expectations Concerning Student Performance and Criteria for Evaluation of Student Performance**

#### **Attendance:**

Students are expected to attend all sessions of the class and to notify the instructor (via email) if they will be unable to attend. Absence for more than **two** classes will constitute a no credit for the course.

#### **Use Of Technology in Class and for the Class:**

The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College recognizes that portable technology, such as laptop computers, cell and “smartphones” and personal digital assistants (PDAs), in the classroom can be a valuable learning aid and can be necessary to student life. However, in this class, given the nature of practicing, practice, all devices are banned. Unless you are responsible for a child or someone else’s medical well being please turn your cell phone completely off while in class.

#### **Grading:**

The Silberman SSW at Hunter College grading system is Credit, No Credit and Honors for “A+” work; students may request a letter grades in writing from the instructor. Credit will be assigned on the basis of written work and class participation. Honors will be given for superior performance in all three of the following: 1) style and content of written work, 2) creative use of assigned and outside readings in papers, and 3) contribution to class discussions. Late papers are not permitted, nor are incompletes given for the course.

## **Academic Integrity:**

This course and its instructor adhere to the College and School policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities, observance of religious holidays, incomplete grades, plagiarism and students' evaluation of the course and its instruction as stated in the Hunter College School of Social Work Student Handbook. Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

## **Instructor Availability**

I am available by appointment only. Please use email to contact me (my email address is listed on page one) or if you must call leave a message at (917) 940-5455 and I will return your call.

## **Readings:**

Students are encouraged to read widely. Without a broad and critical examination of the literature, they will be unable to grasp the course content, to contribute to class discussions, or complete the assignments. An extensive bibliography, organized by class session is part of this syllabus. Journal articles are also available in the Library's stacks. You should become familiar with the following journals, among others, which have content on child welfare policy, in order of importance, they are:

Child Welfare  
Families in Society  
Social Work  
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry  
Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal  
Children & Youth Services Review  
Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare  
Social Service Review

Also you will want to become familiar with Social Work Research and Abstracts and familiarize yourself as well with the Encyclopedia of Social Work for articles on related topics such as poverty, child welfare, family and children's services, social policy, etc. These sources are not to be used as primary sources, but as a place to begin your search.

The following web sites are also critical to your learning in this course and you are strongly encouraged to review them:

[www.nccwe.org](http://www.nccwe.org) National Center for Child Welfare Excellence

<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/> - New York State Office of Children and Family Services provides for the public child welfare functions of the state and administers the federal grants for services directed at meeting the special needs of New York's most vulnerable citizens.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/home/home.shtml> - The New York City Administration for Children's Services protects New York City's children from abuse and neglect. Along with our community partners, Children's Services provides neighborhood-based services to help ensure children grow up in safe, permanent homes with strong families.

[www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/) - U.S. Children's Bureau

[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) - Child Welfare Information Gateway provides access to information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families.

We will spend the first 15 minutes of each session critically discussing contemporary issues in child welfare that you have observed in print or other popular media -- please come prepared for each class to discuss these.

Although no one is likely to read everything that is on the reading list, students are advised to read in sufficient depth to appreciate and understand the impact of multiple factors on seeking and delivering assistance. Experience has demonstrated that students who are more widely read, and who incorporate their reading into their work, practice more competently.

## **Blackboard Information and Requirements**

This course will be taught via a combination of teaching methods: live in-class sessions and asynchronous web-based presentations. In addition, the class requires at least one hour of learning on Garymallon.com each week – weekly use of the discussion board; viewing of films on the website; and weekly assignments – students **MUST** sign every comment written on the discussion board.

## **Required Texts:**

Collins, J., Decker, K., Ko, S. (Eds). (2011). *Effectively Addressing the Impact of Child Traumatic Stress in Child Welfare*. CWLA: Washington, DC.

Mallon, G.P. & Hess, P. (Eds). (2014). Child welfare for the twenty-first century: A handbook of practices, policies, and programs (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). New York: Columbia University Press.

## **Session 1**

### **Introduction and Orientation to the Course**

- Texts, Assignments, Course Expectations
- The Language of Child Welfare: Safety, Permanency, & Well-Being
- What is Child Welfare Practice? Clinical, C.O.P.D. and OML perspectives
- Overview of National Statistics in Child Welfare - AFCARS

### **Sessions 2, 3, 4, & 5**

#### **Meaning Family Engagement**

Where do our Families Come From/ How did they get to be there?

How to Engage Families who experience Triple Threat: Substance Abuse; Domestic Violence; and Mental Health Issues under a dense umbrella of Poverty

Culturally Responsive Practice with Children, Youth, and Families

#### **Required Readings:**

Reading from Child Welfare Gateway

[www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_engagement/f\\_fam\\_engagement.2.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_engagement/f_fam_engagement.2.cfm)

Readings from NRCPPFC

[http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/info\\_services/family-centered-practice.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/info_services/family-centered-practice.html)

RISE Readings

Select Readings from Women Who Shop Lift and Prostitute  
Bossard et al in McCarthy & Dickenson Book



Bossard et al chapter in Mallon & Hess  
Ryan Chapter in Mallon/Hess  
Postmus Chapter in Mallon/Hess  
Dore Chapter in Mallon/Hess  
Rivera Chapter in Mallon/Hess

**Sessions 6, 7, 8, & 9**  
**Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice**

**Required Readings:**

Readings from National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
<http://nctsnet.org/>

Readings from Child Welfare Information Gateway  
[www.childwelfare.gov/responding/trauma.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/trauma.cfm)

From the Editor: Trauma Informed Child Welfare—  
Remembering Robert

Effectively Addressing the Impact of Child Traumatic  
Stress in Child Welfare Special Forward by Robert S. Pynoos,  
John A. Fairbank, and Christine James-Brown

Introduction—Addressing Trauma to Promote Social  
and Emotional Well-Being: A Child Welfare Imperative  
Bryan H. Samuels

Trauma Adapted Family Connections: Reducing  
Developmental and Complex Trauma Symptomatology  
to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect  
Kathryn S. Collins, Frederick H. Strieder, Diane DePanfilis,  
Maureen Tabor, Pamela A. Clarkson Freeman, Linnea Linde,  
and Patty Greenberg

Trauma-Informed Forensic Child Maltreatment  
Investigations  
Donna M. Pence

Addressing the Impact of Trauma Before Diagnosing  
Mental Illness in Child Welfare  
Gene Griffin, Gary McClelland, Mark Holzberg, Bradley  
Stolbach, Nicole Maj, and Cassandra Kisiel

Complex Trauma and Mental Health in  
Children and Adolescents Placed in Foster Care:  
Findings from the National Child Traumatic  
Stress Network  
Johanna K. P. Greeson, Ernestine C. Briggs, Cassandra L.  
Kisiel, Christopher M. Layne, George S. Ake III, Susan J. Ko,  
Ellen T. Gerrity, Alan M. Steinberg, Michael L. Howard,  
Robert S. Pynoos, and John A. Fairbank

Screening for Trauma Exposure, and Posttraumatic  
Stress Disorder and Depression Symptoms  
among Mothers Receiving Child Welfare  
Preventive Services  
Claude M. Chemtob, Sascha Griffing, Erika Tullberg,  
Elizabeth Roberts, and Peggy Ellis

Linking Child Welfare and Mental Health  
Using Trauma-Informed Screening and  
Assessment Practices  
Lisa Conradi, Jeffrey Wherry, and Cassandra Kisiel

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout in  
Child Welfare Workers: A Comparative  
Analysis of Occupational Distress Across  
Professional Groups  
Ginny Sprang, Carlton Craig, and James Clark

A Grassroots Prototype for Trauma-Informed  
Child Welfare System Change  
James Henry, Margaret Richardson, Connie Black-Pond,  
Mark Sloane, Ben Atchinson, and Yvette Hyter

Creating Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Systems

Using a Community Assessment Process  
Alison Hendricks, Lisa Conradi, and Charles Wilson

Promising Practices and Strategies for Using  
Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice to Improve  
Foster Care Placement Stability: A Breakthrough  
Series Collaborative  
Lisa Conradi, Jen Agosti, Erika Tullberg, Lisa Richardson,  
Heather Langan, Susan Ko, and Charles Wilson

### **Sessions 10, 11, 12, & 13** **Evidence Based Practices in Child Welfare**

#### **Required Readings:**

**Review NRCPCF Website on Evidence Based Practices**  
<http://nrcpfc.org/ebp/index.html>

#### **[The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare \(CEBC\) Webinar](#)**

The CEBC makes available archived webinars it has sponsored on evidence-based practice. Presentation materials are also available for download.

#### **[Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare in the Context of Cultural Competence](#)**

This webpage from the Gamble-Skogmo Chair in Child Welfare and Youth Policy at the University of Minnesota provides links to the following resources: online EBP-Cultural Competence Learning Modules; EBP-Cultural Competence pages, containing the proceedings, videos, and presentations of a Forum held at the University in June 2007; and suggestions on how to hold a meeting regarding EBP and cultural competence for child welfare professionals and community members.

[http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/G-S/EBP-CC\\_Modules/index.html](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/G-S/EBP-CC_Modules/index.html)

## **California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC): Evidence-Based Practice**

The California Social Work Education Center's website contains an area on Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) that highlights their work with various partners to support the effective implementation of EBPs and building of evidence for new practices. An introduction to EBP is provided, as well as tools and additional resources.

**<http://calswec.berkeley.edu/evidence-based-practice>**

**Session 14 – May 10th**

**Wrap Up/Presentations**

**Assignment: To Be Determined after Class Discussion**