Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
School of Social Work
University of Minnesota

CW360°

a comprehensive look at a prevalent child welfare issue

Safety | Permanency | Well-Being

Child Welfare and Technology
Spring 2011

From the Editors

In 2010, the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) held a conference on placement stability featuring Peter Pecora. During the conference Dr. Pecora was asked how technology could be harnessed to enhance child welfare practice. The question was intriguing and resonated with staff at CASCW as well as with the many child welfare practitioners with whom we work. As we conducted some preliminary research to learn more about how technology is being used in child welfare, we found that there were both great innovations as well as considerable gaps in practice knowledge. Therefore, the 2011 issue of *CW360°* is dedicated to exploring how the field of child welfare currently develops, utilizes, and evaluates its interaction with technology.

The preparation for each issue of *CW360°* begins with an extensive literature review and exploration of best practices in the field. Then, CASCW staff and editors engage individuals who emerged as leaders or who had a unique contribution to the issue's topic. For the current issue on technology, the challenge is greater than in years past as there has been less written in the formal literature about child welfare use of technology. That said, we certainly found key individuals who are passionate about this area and are doing innovative work. The field of child welfare has a history of studying innovation from other fields and adapting practices to fit child welfare. Technology is no exception. As you read articles written by authors from fields other than child welfare, it is important to consider how their work might be applied to your specific practice setting.

As gains in the use, availability and reliability of technology continue, the field of child welfare finds itself at a crossroads. The question is whether the field responds to changing technology by choice or by inevitability. It is undeniable that technology presents challenges to the field. Perhaps more important than challenges, technology offers the field of child welfare opportunities to enhance, improve and make more effective our work with families and children. This issue of *CW360°* addresses both the challenges faced and successes celebrated related to technology.

As in previous editions, *CW360°* is divided into three sections: overview, practice and collaborations and perspectives. You will find articles reflecting an array of topics on child welfare and technology ranging from information communication technology and social media to data integration and gadgets. We hope you read this issue with an open mind considering topics that may be useful to you in your practice, research or policy work.

We invite readers to join CASCW staff and *CW360°* contributors Dale Fitch, Frances Allegra, and Pat Smith for our half day conference on **April 21, 2011 at 8:30 a.m.** dedicated to discussing child welfare and technology. A youth panel from Our Own Words, Minnesota's Adoptee Advisory Committee, will also speak about their experiences with technology while in out of home placements. The conference can be viewed via web stream from any location. The conference will also be archived and available for viewing after the conference. To access web streaming registration information or the web stream archive of the event, visit our website at www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascw/events

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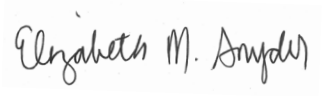

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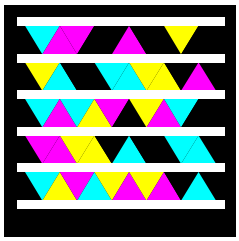


Throughout this issue of *CW360°* you will see electronic tags like the one above. Tags can be read using free tag reader applications with mobile devices like SmartPhones. Simply download a tag reader application on your mobile device, scan a tag, and you will be lead to the web page associated with the article.

Registration is now open for the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare's twelfth annual **free** child welfare conference

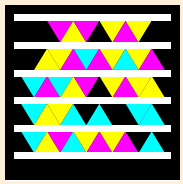
Social Media, Smartphones, and Safety: How Technology is Changing Child Welfare Practice

April 21, 2011: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Johnson Great Room, McNamara Alumni Center
University of Minnesota

Registration available through
Thursday, April 14, 2011

Individuals may view the program either in person, by individual Web stream, from their own computer, or at a remote off-site location at a group Web stream setting. Off-site participants are encouraged to email questions throughout the program. Please note we will not be offering the program via ITV/VPC.



For more information and to register to attend in person or via Web stream, please follow this link:

http://socialmediasmartphonesandsafety.eventbrite.com

socialmediasmartphonesandsafety.eventbrite.com

Table of Contents

Overview

Child Welfare and Technology

Walter LaMendola, PhD

Technology in child welfare has a long and contentious history. At the first conference on technology use in the human services in 1987, a number of the presentations dealt with computer systems in use in child welfare. (LaMendola et.al., 1989) In government, one of the largest investments in statewide and national computer systems in the United States was directed toward the support for the development of Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS). The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), and other large-scale voluntary systems like the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) followed and currently accompany SACWIS systems. In addition, the proliferation of sources of data and their ubiquity has led to the development of the Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG). The CWIG is an example of how data is gathered from many other sources today, organized, and filtered back to users through social media such as email and Facebook. Some organizations in the non-profit sector of child welfare, such as the Child Welfare League of America, were also among early technology users. However, like many other human services, smaller child welfare organizations are often still among the latest adopters, as scale, price, staffing and skill often are barriers.

The government systems like SACWIS are generally systems of compliance and regulation, not designed to serve the needs of workers. The knowledge and experience of workers has not usually been included as a basis for design, and the worker's practices are not recognized as important elements in organizing interactions with the systems. This issue of CW360° is not about our record with large-scale systems though it does encompass efforts like CWIG. This group of articles generally deals with what is an emerging paradigm in child welfare technology, one that will certainly have important effects on the practice of child welfare as well as the environment in which it finds itself. The technology applications discussed here have begun to infiltrate the field much as they have infiltrated our everyday life.

A casual reader of this issue of *CW360°* will notice as they skim through the articles that *networking* appears everywhere. In fact, all of the articles and the application descriptions contained here deal with social practices of *networking*. This publication is a case in point that we live in a *network society* now, a society quite different than those that came before it, and that all of child welfare is now a part of it. Manual Castells has defined a *network society* as a society where key social structures and activities are organized around electronic information networks (Castells, 2010). Because that observation may seem strange to some of us, it could be helpful to start with a brief sketch of *networking* as a set of social practices that permeate our everyday life, the themes of which resonate throughout this publication.

An important theme to note is that networking is a mode of organizing social relations that is radically different than what we have known in an age of community. A "community" has usually been defined as a group of people interacting primarily face to face and living in a common location. Community is also a term used to refer to groups that share common values. In Table 1 below, *networking* is contrasted with *community* as a way of highlighting significant features of what you will read in this issue of CW360°.

The first contrast in Table 1 points out that community denotes stability and proximity. In the United States, agreements about where one community starts and another ends are often advertised with markers on the highway. But networking is driven by data not dirt. Networking is denoted by episodic exchanges of data, such as texting, usually performed while people are mobile and at various distances from one another. It is also the case that networking is often done without much knowledge about the other persons who are sharing – such as when one expresses their opinions on a foster parent blog – while community involves strong, persistent ties with others over time. Community has coherence over time and members share a sense of belonging often accompanied by notions of a common history and a collective narrative. Networking proceeds in steps and jumps, iteratively, (see "Life as a foster child"@sqiudoo.com) each step integrating prior features practiced by participants (see "@adoptuskids.com") creating a history and identity that emerges from the flow of social relations and shared data (the National Foster Youth Action Network on Facebook is an example). Features of social media appear in child welfare and are revised depending on the flow of reactions from participants. (A recent example can be found at http://www.hcjfs.hamilton-co.org.)

Finally, there is a sense in which community is locality bound, embedded in local traditions, customs, and culture whereas networking actively seeks connections. Community institutions, such as child welfare agencies, are closed systems and a few of the articles within this publication describe their struggles to become open to connections. But network participants freely connect across agencies, systems, people and geography. The openness that energizes networking and the ease with which it is accessed is particularly attractive to youth. In a most direct manner, it can satisfy some need for attachment: it empowers them and provides them with identity. In this sense, networking naturally lifts youth out of their context and opens them to connect to different forms of individually constructed relationships.

Personal relationships are important in networking, especially so to youth. Actually, some observers argue that relationships are more important than ever in networking because they are social capital in networking. As a result, networking practices emphasize interaction with as many people as possible, and strangers can easily become friends. In effect, while networking increases affiliation, it also increases risk, especially to youth – in our case, already vulnerable youth - who are learning how to deal with rejection and acceptance, affirmation and exploitation, beauty and truth.

Table 1: Community and Networking Compared

Community	Networking
Stable	Episodic
Coherent	Iterative
Embedded	Connected
Belonging	Identity
Strong ties	Weak ties
Grounded	Mobile
Common history	Emergent history
Collective narrative	Collective data

...some observers argue that relationships are more important than ever in networking because they are social capital in networking.

Continued on page 12

Child Welfare in the Network Society

Neil Ballantyne

The network society

In the network society, the influence of digital networks can be felt in every domain of social life. Child welfare is no exception. Leaving aside the widely publicised antisocial and criminal uses of the Internet (e.g. cyberstalking, identity theft, child pornography and sexual predation) there have been growing concerns about its more subtle influence on family and social life. Some worry that the amount of time people spend online may be impacting face to face time with friends and family or that the increasingly permeable boundaries between home and work might compromise the quality of family life

I'm writing this article shortly after the release of the docudrama *The Social Network*: a film about the rise of Facebook from its beginnings in 2003 as a Harvard University student website to its global success - via several lawsuits – as the world's leading online social network site for people of all ages. The movie grossed almost $200 million dollars in the three months since its release. Even more startling are the statistics associated with the rise of Facebook. Global membership of Facebook currently stands at 600 million users. To put that figure into perspective, the total number of Internet users in the world in 2002 was less than the current membership of Facebook.

It's likely that the explosive rise of Facebook will eventually be viewed as a small and relatively insignificant element in the emergence of what Manuel Castells (2001) has described as the network society. In the network society, social and organisational structures are increasingly based on global networks mediated by digital information and communication technologies. Networks, Castells argues, are the new social morphology of our times and are increasingly associated with large scale economic, governmental, media and even criminal organisations. Castells has focused most of his research on the evolution of the network society at a global level, but other researchers – such as Barry Wellman at Netlab (http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/) and the research group associated with the Pew Internet American Life Project (http://www.pewInternet/) - have tracked the impact of the network society on everyday social life.

Table 1: Benefits and Risks of New Media (FCC, 2009)

Benefits	Risks
Accessing educational content	Exposure to exploitative advertising
Acquiring technological literacy	Exposure to inappropriate content
Developing skills in content development	Impact on health
Communicating with family and peers	Impact on behaviour
Improving health	Harassment and bullying
Removing barriers for children with disabilities	Sexual predation
	Fraud and scams
	Inappropriate self-disclosure
	Compromised privacy

Networked families

The Internet is currently used by almost 2 billion people worldwide, or almost 29% of the world's population. (Internet World Stats, 2010). Over 80% of Americans have Internet access, and most have constantly connected, broadband enabled, multimedia access. According to the Center for the Digital Future (2010), the average American citizen spends 19 hours per week online: almost double the figure reported in the year 2000.

> ...the benefits of technology don't arise automatically; they are shaped by the influence of social actors

In contrast to earlier media portrayals of the Internet as the province of depressed, socially isolated, male, nerds, the Internet and new media are family technologies. Indeed families with children are more likely than others to have access to the Internet and to own two or more computers.

In one survey the majority of American adults agreed that technology permits their families to be as close, or closer, than their families were when they grew up (Kennedy *et al.*, 2008). The same survey found that American families use a fluid blend of cell phone and Internet technologies to stay connected and coordinate busy working and family lives. Most respondents stated the Internet had not altered the amount of time spent with friends and family, and the majority were satisfied with family life. There was evidence that Internet time seemed more likely to be taken from time spent watching television (especially for young adults). However, the impact of the Internet on blurring the boundaries between home and work was also evident: one in five of those employed say the Internet has increased the amount of time spent working from home, and one in ten that it had increased the amount of time spent working from the office.

The evidence of the above survey, and a series of qualitative case studies discussed by Horst (2010), presents a relatively reassuring picture of adaptation to the new media landscape. However, Horst (2010) also highlights the '*deep ambivalence*' felt by parents about the prominence of new media in the lives of their children and about their role as guides and regulators.

Networked children

Although the demographics of social networking sites like Facebook have changed markedly, children and young people were early settlers: 93% of U.S. teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 were online in 2009 (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zichuhr, 2010). In 2009 the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a Notice of Inquiry calling for evidence on *Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Media Landscape*. The notice called for comments on the benefits and risks associated with new media in the context of the growing number of *networked* technologies providing children and young people with interactive access to a relatively unregulated media environment and *mobile* technologies that can be utilised under the radar of adult supervision. The notice of inquiry included a list of the perceived benefits and risks that seemed to be associated with new media (Table 1). See also Livingstone & Haddon

Continued on page 12

Using Data for Child Welfare System Improvement: Lessons Learned from the California Performance Indicators Project

Daniel Webster, PhD, Emily Putnam-Hornstein, PhD, and Barbara Needell, PhD

Introduction

The child welfare system is increasingly being held accountable for the public support it receives. Continued federal funding is contingent upon using outcome data to demonstrate that the system is functioning well or is at least making progress toward targeted goals (Administration for Children and Families, 2000). Researchers have long argued for the concept of better child welfare practice guided by performance measures (Barth, 1997; Jamieson & Bodonyi, 1999), and significant examples exist of large-scale performance indicators (Needell, et al., 2010; Wulczyn, et al., 2000). However, even in light of federal mandates and the wealth of data routinely collected, it is an ongoing challenge to help public child welfare staff effectively use the information to guide their policy and practice efforts.

The U.C. Berkeley Performance Indicators Project has had success in meeting this challenge. In collaboration with the California Department of Social Services, the Project has helped the child welfare system move toward greater transparency and accountability and has been instrumental in the state's continuous quality improvement. Outcome data drawn from the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) and made publically-available on the Project's website (http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/) provide a foundation for coordinated efforts in all counties across the state to assess system performance, develop plans for improvement, and monitor their progress

This paper briefly discusses some of the main themes underpinning the Project's success including: altering attitudes to help social workers become data fans, collaborating with state partners and other key stakeholders to support system change, and extending the Project's influence through advocacy at the national level for accountability reform, data linkages, as well as training the next generation of child welfare professionals to be skilled users of outcome data.

Altering Attitudes

An important first step toward system reform begins with adjusting attitudes about the importance of data. A common sentiment among child welfare staff at all levels is that, while they are inundated by data, the information is not useful for planning or practice decisions. Their skepticism is rooted in experiences where existing data systems used by the agency were designed for other purposes and do not seem to have the capacity to provide answers to actual programmatic concerns. It is therefore critical to address these negative opinions and begin to recast organizational culture so that the uses and merits of data are valued rather than dismissed (Webster, Needell, & Wildfire, 2002).

Through multiple forms of technical assistance (e.g., onsite consultation, web video conference, voice and email), and with support from funders such as Casey Family Programs, the Stuart Foundation, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Project has encouraged regular use of publicly-available, longitudinal data to guide policy and practice efforts, and public child welfare in California has moved decisively in that direction. State and county staff who were formerly intimidated, skeptical, and resistant to the use of data have learned that information drawn regularly from the state data system is a form of feedback on the impact of their efforts. Moreover, they have begun to understand that the relationship among competing outcomes must be taken into account when evaluating performance and that measures, viewed in isolation, are profoundly limited (Usher, Wildfire, & Gibbs, 1999). Regular use of outcome data, and growing familiarity with the trends in their county's performance have also enabled these professionals to critically respond with confidence and credibility to reports (e.g., newspaper articles) that may have misused data to draw biased, incomplete, or inaccurate portrayals of county child welfare efforts.

> Staff now embrace the notion that "data" are your friends.

Changed attitudes and behaviors are clearly evident in the steady increase of users who log on to the Project's website. Analysts across the state are showing greater technical sophistication, and the Project has begun to work with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago in providing trainings on "Advanced Analytics for Child Welfare Administration" to teach event history analysis and other powerful statistical techniques (Chapin Hall, 2010). Staff now embrace the notion that "data are your friends."

Forging Partnerships

Another important component of the Project has been to forge partnerships with state and county departments of children's services. Overcoming the inertia of a large bureaucratic system is not tenable without clear understanding of a proper course of action and the ability to mobilize stakeholders toward a shared vision. Experts in child welfare research have recognized for over a decade the value of fully-longitudinal data as the optimal means to monitoring systemic outcomes (Wulczyn, 1996;

Continued on page 13

Controlling Their Story: Protecting the Privacy of Foster Care Youth

Dale Fitch, PhD

What we know

Youth in foster care are oftentimes told that all the information in their record is confidential. Furthermore, information in that record can only be shared in accordance with agency policy or State and Federal law. Youth also know that some of their information is shared with their foster parents, physicians, and school personnel, but they do not always know the extent of that sharing. Our public child welfare agencies are diligent in protecting information for which they are accountable as they view a youth's life and safety as being dependent upon it. Unfortunately, even a youth's own words can be viewed as 'hearsay' in some settings and their perceptions of what their lives are really about become a matter of 'what's in the file,' instead of what comes from their lips.

Most of us do not live our lives with others controlling the information about our lives. We can choose to tell our own stories in whatever manner we desire. We might be embarrassed on occasion, but we fundamentally live and tell our life stories knowing that it is one of our fundamental rights.

In this environment it is no wonder that our foster care youth turn to the Internet, and social media in particular, to regain their voice, reconnect with society, and begin to control the story of their lives. If so, what do we know about this phenomenon? How many youth, foster youth or not, participate in social networking sites, what risks do they face, what opportunities can they experiences, and what steps can be taken to minimize risks they may encounter? This essay will explore those questions and offer recommendations for consideration.

What we may not know

A 2010 PEW research report indicates that 93% of American teens have Internet access, and, of this number, 73% use a social networking site, a figure which has increased significantly compared to a 65% rate in 2008 (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Internet access is increasing through the use of smart phones whether their own or a friend's. Much of this essay will refer to the work of Danah Boyd, a Fellow at Harvard University's Berkman Center for Internet and Society Social Media and a Researcher at Microsoft Research New England, one of the foremost ethnographic researchers of online social media. Fundamental to this online phenomenon is the issue of privacy and the role it plays in our foster youths' lives.

What is Privacy?

Privacy is fundamentally about how we control our information. I initially broached this concept several years ago in "Client-Controlled Case Information" before Facebook was even created (Fitch, 2004). Privacy is not about hiddenness or concealment. It is about sharing what we want to share, with whom, and how (Boyd, 2010a; Donath & Boyd, 2004; Noam, 1997). The 'how' in this essay focuses primarily on Internet social media, but it can be any technology facilitated communication, e.g., email or tweeting. Research in this area has focused on e-commerce applications, yet the theoretical underpinnings of information privacy extend to all technology-facilitated communication. The principal-agent perspective (Pavlou, Huigang, & Yajiong, 2007) is one such framework the components of which have several affinities with our foster youth, such as, *perceived information asymmetry*, i.e., the public organizations in my life may know more about me and my family than I know. Or, what they think they know may not be accurate; nevertheless, it is their version of my story that has become the official public record. Also, *fears of opportunism*, i.e., how can the person with whom I am communicating use my own words against me? For example, the person who wants to be my "Friend" may not be who they say they are, e.g., an abuser masquerading as another foster youth.

> Privacy is not about hiddenness or concealment. It is about sharing what we want to share, with whom, and how.

Youth in foster care are faced with the predicament that most of what is known about them is controlled by others. The child welfare agency, the juvenile office, or the mental health agency all have extensive files that contain their life stories. To access their own information, forms have to be filed out, clearances provides, permission given (Fitch, 2004). No wonder foster youth turn to the internet to tell their stories (Boyd, 2007). They *want* to have privacy. They want to control their own story.

The risks and benefits

The risks in unguarded sharing of personal information are patently obvious: a perpetrator can locate a youth and continue their abuse, a predator can find new victims and begin grooming them, youth may find themselves the victims of cyberbulling with potentially fatal consequences. Some risks may not be obvious. The geographic location feature unveiled in Facebook in 2010, "Places," allows you to see where your Friends are and also displays where you are. Unwittingly, a family living in fear of domestic violence has just made their location known.

In the face of these risks, what are the benefits? Can the "Places" feature ward off feelings of anomie among youth who already

Continued on page 13

Decision Making in Child Protection and Child Welfare: Some Considerations for Information Technology

John Fluke, PhD

Children and families receiving child protective and child welfare (CPCW) services are always found in some stage of a case process or decision making continuum. For a given child or family the actual process of service provision in CPCW agencies is quite complex and frequently takes place over an extended time ranging up to several years. At each stage in the continuum the case workers and supervisors employed by the agency, and sometimes other stakeholders as well, must make a range of decisions regarding the case. Because these decisions are so critical, many CPCWS agencies focus considerable attention on the development and application of assessment tools intended to help guide the worker and supervisor through the decision making process. These guides serve as decision making supports. Providing such support around decision making in CPCW is an obvious function of information technology. Decision supports at the worker level include simple functionality such as automated assessment formats and calculations, or linked rapid access to training materials that help describe appropriate policy and practice tied to the decision point, ranging to supports that might incorporate higher level algorithmic intelligence to help guide an interview. Information technology based decision support also extends to supports for decision making at the level of program management and administration. However, before considering what decision support technology might entail, it may be useful to review the state of CPCW technology in general.

Child Protection and Child Welfare Information Technology

The underpinnings of the current state of CPCW information technology originate from the mid 90s when the federal government offered funding to encourage states to develop information systems to support workers and improve program data. The initiative is known as the State Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) (Administration for Children and Families Action Transmittal (ACF-OISM-001), February 24, 1995). At the time, a major concern was computer literacy of CPCW staff. Among other goals, the introduction of this technology was expected to assist workers to improve their decision making by automating decision assessment technology. These systems were also intended to increase the availability and quality of data used for program management and research.

As these systems unfolded over the course of the last fifteen years many state agencies engaged in large scale efforts to convert legacy systems to the SACWIS requirements or to develop new systems. On the positive side this has resulted in the development of both state and national information system infrastructure focused on collecting and maintaining records of child welfare case activity. These systems have helped to create opportunities to improve the overall quality of data, increased the participation of states in the major federal data collection programs (NCANDS and AFCARS), improved the quality assurance of the programs, contributed to the availability of data for research and evaluation, and supported a range of functions related to the operation of CPCW agencies. Given the relative stability of SACWIS systems, it may now be time to focus much more attention on development of decision support technologies.

Child Welfare and Decision Support Technology Theory

According to Alter (1994) Decision Support System (DSS) technologies are aspects of information technology (IT) that have the following characteristics: they support decisions, are interactive, are used by the target user group, support semi-structured or unstructured decisions, are easy to use, are flexible, usage is mind expanding, contain broad data bases, and they have an evolutionary design process.

That said, DSS theory encompasses competing ideas: (1) that reality can be known and understood as it truly is and that systematic methodology can be employed to address it; and, (2) that reality is not knowable but can be examined using systemic methodology. The first approach is more consistent with structured problems and the second with unstructured problems. In other words, good decision support should help us to understand what has happened but also what might happen under certain rigorously defined assumptions.

From a cognitive decision process perspective, Brookes (1994) offers a view of DSS theory drawing from Simon's (1956) work on bounded rationality. The theory starts with the recognition that although the domain of decision making is potentially broad, it is self-limited. It is within this boundary that DSS development entails building supports to address the range of decision making activity. The first decision making activity is problem recognition and the last is to monitor action. According to Brookes both of these activities are types of attenuation or the ability to broadly scan through information resources. The activities that fall between these including diagnosis, alternative generation, and evaluation are supported by amplifying information for detail and processing alternative scenarios. Other major elements of this scheme include technical capacities to access references, to navigate the DSS environment, and to control

the DSS environment. Within each of these areas, a set of functionality is described. For example, under amplification DSS functions include factual data retrieval, inferential data retrieval, soft data intelligence, model building, what-if retrieval, pattern matching for related situations, and comparison.

Current SACWIS systems that take the characteristics of DSS systems into account are limited to one or two features of the more comprehensive approach advocated in DSS design summarized above. As mentioned above, assessments are the most common implementation of decision support technology for CPCW at the worker level. Their incorporation of assessments into SACWIS systems is based on a fundamental assumption that the presence of these tools on the information system will act to increase the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the decision making process. Hence, decision making behavior will improve. Unfortunately, this is not a given regardless of how well formed, research based, or how well staff are trained in a given assessment. In part this is due to the intrinsic error associated with assessments (Munro, 2005).

The CPCW field has struggled to take advantage of the knowledge gains and progress regarding decision-making research, focusing exclusively on efforts to correct errors through building risk and safety instruments rather than understanding the source of the errors. One approach to addressing the knowledge gap is the integrated conceptual framework of the Decision-Making Ecology (DME) General Assessment and Decision-Making model (GADM) which takes human error as the starting point and suggests decision making needs to be understood within a bounded semi-rational context. In the framework (Baumann, Dalgleish, Fluke & Kern, 2011) the four features of decision-making are: 1) the *range of decisions* made by the decision makers, referred to as a *Decision Making Continuum*, 2) the assessment, 3) the influences on the decision makers that determines the psychological *process* of decision-making, and 4) the consequences of the decision. One contributory problem to DSS development is that CPCW managers and policy makers have limited means to explore the consequences of decisions which could result from systemic shifts in the decision making behavior of the people they manage; the focus of this paper related to information technology. Nevertheless, progress is apparent in developing DSS for administrative and management functions

Several states, not-for profit organizations, and universities have developed administrative level DSS frameworks, most of which rely on the underlying infrastructure of the state SACWIS systems and take advantage of similarities in basic child protection and child welfare databases. Among these are the utilization of On-line Analytic Processing (OLAP) in Utah, the development of the publicly available comprehensive **Child Welfare Dynamic Report System** developed by the California Department of Social Services and University of California, Berkeley (http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/), the SafeMeasures® by the Children's Research Center (http://www.nccd-crc/nccd/initiatives/safemeasures.html), the ROM Reports (Results Oriented Management) by School of Social Work, University of Kansas (http://www.rom.ku.edu/), the Texas **Data-Enhanced On-line Management Support** (DEMOS) and OLAP reports (Schoech, Basham, Fluke, 2006), and the publically available Colorado Disparities Resource Center dynamic reports (https://www.aha-cprc.com/disparities/countySplit/Colorado/).

> **Given the relative stability of SACWIS systems, it may now be time to focus much more attention on development of decision support technologies.**

While the DSS examples above rely on mostly static analyses or attenuation from the Brookes (1994) design features, the Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data infrastructure developed by Chapin Hall and now utilized in many states represents a more comprehensive DSS that emphasizes forecasting and simulation of placements tied to risk adjustment and economic analysis. Another example of higher level analyses is found in the DSS data base developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development's Child, Youth and Family (Mansell, 2006). Their focus is examining scenarios regarding initial decisions including screening. Both these approaches take advantage of underlying theoretical and practical constructs in systems, economics, and decision making behavior combined with advances in the analytic techniques that have a demonstrated applicability to child protection and child welfare. Policy and finance planning are supported by these systems. These represent advances over static systems in the analysis of "wicked" problems. However, this is just the beginning of efforts to address such complex problems as the consequences of errors in CPCW decision making and the scaling up of evidence based practices.

What's needed to make further progress is a much more active program of DSS research, development, and implementation specific to child protection and child welfare. Further, there is a need for more workforce development among child welfare professionals to prepare them to use and become active participants in ongoing development. Much of the developmental work in this area has been driven by the availability of software applications modeled after business and medical applications. While there is much to be learned by applying the lessons from these fields, the needs of CPCW may not be as generalized when it comes to addressing specific problem domains. One way to jump start this type of development is to include an R&D component in the SACWIS regulations. Regardless of the mechanisms, improving the utility of information technology in CPCW will ultimately hinge on incremental developments in decision support since decisions are what CPCW systems do and must do better.

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Enhancing the Reach and Outcomes of Child Welfare Programs through Social Media

Kathy Ledesma, MSW, and Vanessa Casavant, BA

AdoptUSKids is a project of the U.S. Children's Bureau of the Administration of Children and Families. The project has used social media to support its mission to increase public awareness of the need for foster and adoptive families and to assist states, tribes and territories to recruit, retain and connect foster and adoptive families with children

AdoptUSKids' use of electronic media to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families began in 2002 with a single electronic vehicle, the photolisting website http://AdoptUSKids. The website has grown considerably over the years to its current 5,000 daily visitors. At any given time, 9,000 active profiles are split almost equally between families, who want to adopt children and who have approved home studies, and children waiting to be adopted. To date, more than 30,000 children and 25,000 families have been registered on AdoptUSKids, with some 15,000 (2,800 in FY 2010 alone) previously photolisted children adopted.

Each year since 2004, the Children's Bureau, AdoptUSKids and the Ad Council have collaborated to produce public service advertisements (PSAs) with the theme "you don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent." In 2007, this campaign expanded to include a YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/AdoptUSKids) where the PSAs could be seen and shared. This first foray into social media opened the door for AdoptUSKids to develop its current multi-faceted social media presence.

The key to any successful social media outreach campaign is to develop a clear, consistent communications strategy based on who the target audience is and what information they're seeking. Without taking time to do this, it's hard for an agency to know what social media tools are going to be the best for supporting its mission.

AdoptUSKids learned this lesson through experimentation in 2008 with a blog at http://AdoptUSKids.blogspot.com. The goal of the blog was to establish a discussion with families at all stages of the adoption process, but what AdoptUSKids failed to understand was how blogs are used in conversation. The discussions were non-linear, fast, and very difficult to monitor with some posts garnering more than 80 comments. While the response revealed the desire for a public forum to discuss issues related to adoption and foster care, AdoptUSKids' ability to monitor and respond to a conversation of that magnitude through a blog was virtually impossible.

AdoptUSKids took away from the blog experience four key lessons that informed its movement forward with social media —

1. Just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should.
2. Develop a clear communications strategy and goals before implementing a new outreach tool.
3. Identify the rules of engagement before the conversation gets going.
4. Pick outreach platforms with tools that are consistent with project and purpose.

The key to any successful social media outreach campaign is to develop a clear, consistent communications strategy based on who the target audience is and what information they're seeking.

Fundamental rules of engagement that have been crucial in managing AdoptUSKids' social media presence and include —

- Know the tone and personality AdoptUSKids wants to project to our audience.
- Monitor and contribute to the discussion by providing proactive customer service and telling AdoptUSKids' story in a way that builds trust and reassurance.
- Know the lingo and culture of the online community.
- Keep AdoptUSKids' online communities inviting places for exchanging ideas, tips, and encouragement by posting regularly.
- Learn from others, both inside and outside of child welfare, about new ways to successfully use social media.

With more than 2,500 followers, AdoptUSKids' Facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/AdoptUSKids has established itself as a virtual support room helping retain families who might otherwise abandon adoption from foster care. Families and child

Continued on page 14

AdoptUSKids

AdoptUSKids conducted a survey of professional child welfare staff in 2010 that showed interest in and openness to using social media for recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families. Nearly 35 percent of respondents (n=746) already use social media for professional purposes; 58.6 percent of respondents said they would use social media if they had access to it at work. A top barrier identified by respondents to using social media for recruitment and retention is not feeling comfortable or skilled in how to use it. To address this barrier, the National Resource Center for Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents at AdoptUSKids offers technical assistance (TA) to public child welfare agencies for developing social media strategies. Contact 1-888-200-4005 or info@AdoptUSKids to learn more about TA on social media and AdoptUSKids' other free services.

(http://AdoptUSKids/images/professionalResourceCenter/documents/AdoptUSKids RecruitmentModelsand Strategies.pdf)

Mobile Technology in Caseworker Visitation: Utility, Engagement and Professionalism

Helen Cahalane, PhD and Rachel Fusco, PhD

Within child welfare an emphasis is placed upon improving access to benefits of technology for caseworkers yet little research has been devoted to the use of technology in the field and its impact upon practice. The Child Welfare Education and Research Programs of the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work is evaluating the use of mobile technology among foster care caseworkers in Pennsylvania by using a mixed quantitative-qualitative design. The evaluation has two primary objectives: 1) to describe current visitation policy and practice; and 2) to examine how the use of technology in the field impacts family engagement, job satisfaction, and a sense of professionalism. This two-phase study will be completed in September, 2011.

Semi-structured interviews with two caseworkers from each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties were conducted to gather baseline information regarding current agency policies and procedures. Information regarding engagement strategies, perceived barriers to engagement, advice to new caseworkers, and the needs of both kin and non-kin foster families was obtained. Several themes emerged from these interviews. Caseworkers described engagement strategies such as their use of self and allowing the client to take the lead, as well as the importance of following through and providing consistency in their work with families. Engagement barriers, such as the negative view clients sometimes have toward children's protective services and the mental health and substance abuse issues that often co-occur with maltreatment, were noted in addition to demographic differences between workers and clients. Respondents also offered advice to new caseworkers in order to prepare them for the work. Responses included the importance of being flexible, being cognizant of the negative perception of child welfare, and having an awareness of child development. Caseworkers also discussed the need for awareness of loyalty issues, such as youth to birth parents, kin to birth parents, and foster parents to the child welfare system.

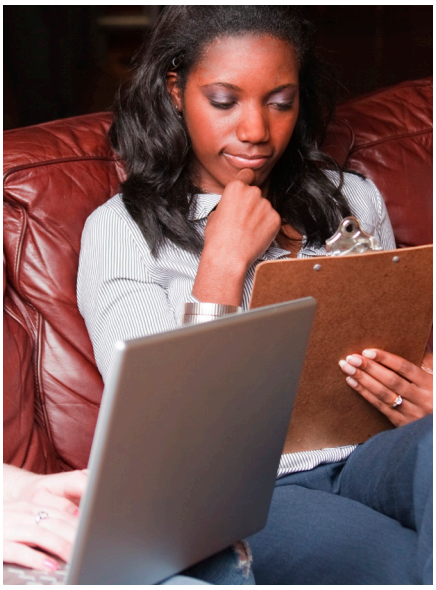
Phase Two of the study involves the use of technology in the field. Four hundred electronic notebooks have been distributed to foster care caseworkers across the state. To ensure results that most accurately reflect the state as a whole, a random sample of counties was developed to determine the distribution of laptops and to designate control counties. County demographic data such as per capita income, state region, population size, poverty level, percentage of children, and county classification (urban or rural) were utilized for sampling. Child welfare workforce numbers, visitation percentage rate by county, caseworker to family ratio and the number of notebooks available were also included in the sampling equation. Three counties were excluded from the sample, resulting in 32 intervention counties and 32 control counties. Supervisors were asked to select a defined number of foster care caseworkers to participate and to consider positive work performance and varying lengths of agency experience in selecting staff.

Intervention group caseworkers participated in eight hours of training prior to using the electronic notebooks. Half of the training focused on the technical use of the notebooks while the other portion focused on core engagement strategies. The engagement curriculum was informed by the qualitative results from the Phase One interviews.

Does the use of mobile technology result in less indirect time and more meaningful interaction with clients? Should child welfare systems invest increasingly scarce capital resources into technological innovation?

Caseworkers completed a demographic questionnaire, a use of technology scale, and the Revised Human Caring Inventory (RHCI; Ellis, Ellet & DeWeaver, 2007), a measure of their current job satisfaction, sense of professionalism, and level of engagement with families on their caseload.

Intervention group caseworkers will use notebooks to collaboratively review and revise Family Service Plans with the youth and family on site. Additionally, caseworkers will obtain electronic signatures from clients, take photographs, and enter case notes. After six months of notebook usage, both the use of technology scale and the RHCI will be completed again. At Time Two, demographic data and the RHCI will be completed by workers in the control counties. Pretest and posttest scores from the intervention group will be analyzed to measure changes across the period under study. Posttest scores on the RHCI scale will be compared between groups to measure differences in job satisfaction, sense of professionalism,



and family engagement. A sample of intervention group caseworkers will be asked to participate in a focus group in order to obtain additional information regarding their experience of using mobile technology and the factors that may influence the diffusion of technological innovation. Focus groups with agency administrators are also planned to explore perceptions of the challenges and opportunities of adopting mobile technology.

Results from this study will inform caseworker policy and practice regarding the use mobile technology as well as contribute to a greater understanding of factors which influence engagement during visitation with children and families. Does the use of mobile technology result in less indirect time and more meaningful interaction with clients? Should child welfare systems invest increasingly scarce capital resources into technological innovation? It is anticipated that the results from this study will contribute to a larger conversation regarding the diffusion of technology within child welfare and provide evidence to support quality interaction with children and families in the child welfare system.

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Child Welfare and Technology
Continued from page 4

The features of this new form of socializing are all around us, but we often don't recognize them until they are brought to our attention. In networking, individuals are compelled to actively construct social bonds, and the yearning for bonds results in high rates of networking among youth. Identity is risky business for our youth because in networking identity relies on self-publication, exposure, and an awareness of the relations with others that must be managed by the individual. These are relationships that are intense but ephemeral, mobile, and where trust is constructed and produced as a social relation. This challenges us to educate youth about networking relationships.

We have created an enormous expansion of objects in the social world. In many developed countries, socialization is now based on the use of cars, cell phones, texting, and websites –transportation and communication technologies of all types – on people on the move rather than people in place. The density of social contacts blurs boundaries. Ubiquitous networking advances the possibility of new evils and the necessity for new ethical approaches. Surveillance, for example, becomes feasible though simple GPS applications (see the Kids Connect description below). People leave trails of data everywhere, detritus from networking practices that become databases parallel to the official database collections found in child welfare systems. And databases are the mother lode for queries that select, exclude, and separate. These collections of individual items have become primary instruments of the market and media and child welfare. Their use can reposition identity - note the example of finding biological parents given in this issue - as well as support insights and decisions. They have the capability to immediately portray position, mood, desire, disaster and accomplishment. It is also the case that long-standing child welfare organizational and social barriers are breached as meaning is now attracted to individuals and their network activities. Into the breach are the questions raised in this issue of *CW360°*. They are important markings in a vision of child welfare today: How are meaning and identity for youth in the child welfare system generated in a networking society? What are acceptable limits and conditions of increased flexibility and risk? How do youth form and maintain trusting and lasting relationships? How do youth build, maintain and alter social ties? What means, tactics, and strategies do we use to nurture healthy, safe, loved and loving children in our networking society?

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Child Welfare in the Network Society
Continued from page 5

(2009) for a list of opportunities and benefits based on over 400 research studies of children's Internet use in Europe.

There are a growing number of well-grounded literature reviews uncovering the ways in which children and young people make use of the Internet and new media (e.g. Biegler & boyd, 2010; Byron, 2008; Ito *et al.*, 2010; Livingstone & Brake, 2010; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Rideout *et al.*, 2010). Whilst we must keep in mind that the Internet is a moving target and that outcomes may alter as it continues to evolve, the findings to date are broadly reassuring. Youthful engagement with social media and social networking sites open up new opportunities for relationship building, identity play, informal learning, and creativity (boyd, 2008; Ito *et al.*, 2010; Livingstone, 2009).

There are however risks associated with exposure to Internet *content*, inappropriate *contact*, and risky or threatening *conduct* (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). In Europe around 15% to 20% of online teenagers report having experienced a degree of distress or a feeling of being uncomfortable or threatened online (Livingstone, 2009). However, the more extreme risks are relatively rare and - in spite of media reporting - young people's use of the Internet and social networking sites does not seem to have led to an overall increase in sexual predation (Internet Safety Technical Task Force, 2008). An important caveat, especially significant for the population groups with whom child welfare workers are engaged, is that the children and young people at greatest risk online are the same young people who are at risk offline: young people with low self-esteem, relationship difficulties, with unstable home backgrounds, or who have experienced physical or sexual abuse (Biegler & boyd, 2010; Livingstone & Brake, 2010).

Child welfare in the network society

As the network society continues to evolve, the challenges and issues for child welfare professionals are likely to expand. How should child welfare professionals respond? Firstly, they need to recognise that childhood is, and has been for many years, mediated by technology (Livingstone, 2009). Mobile telephones, social networking sites and other social media are all important tools for the enactment of identity play, informal learning, and adolescent risk taking. If child welfare professionals are to have a role in helping parents and young people negotiate the benefits and risks of the online world, they need to be informed about the evidence on normal and problematic online behaviour. This need is especially acute for *at risk* children and children in the public care system (Ballantyne, Duncalf & Daly, 2010; Livingstone & Brake, 2010).

Secondly, there may be real opportunities to harness social networking and social media to offer outreach or follow up services to children, youth and parents. These kinds of online services would be in addition to rather in place of face to face work, and they would need careful and sensitive planning informed by what we know about behaviour on social media sites. However, some early studies suggest there may well be scope for careful experimentation (Colon & Sinanan, 2010; Greidanus & Everall, 2010).

Finally, in a report surveying expert opinion on the influence of the Internet on the future of social relations 85% of the experts agreed the social benefits would far outweigh the negatives over the next decade (Anderson & Rainie, 2010). However, the benefits of technology don't arise automatically; they are shaped by the influence of social actors (See Fischer (1992) for a discussion of the social shaping of technology). For child welfare professionals with a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of the network society, there are opportunities to use their voice to promote *social practices* with technology that empower children, sustain family life, and build social capital. At the end of the day promoting child welfare in the network society will not be a technological matter; it will be – as it always was - a moral and ethical one.

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Using Data for Child Welfare System Improvement: Lessons Learned from the California Performance Indicators Project
Continued from page 6

Wulczyn, Kogan & Dilts, 2001) and have pointed out problems with measures mandated in the Child and Family Service Reviews (Courtney, Needell, & Wulczyn, 2004; Schuerman & Needell, 2009). The Project's principal investigator (PI) was able to successfully communicate these ideas to state and county partners working to create a statewide outcome and accountability system (California Department of Social Services, 2001). The dialogue resulted successfully in a continuous quality improvement system that uses a publically-available data source as the foundation to inform and monitor reforms along with fully-longitudinal outcomes supplementing flawed federal measures in outcome reports to counties. The PI's regular participation on state executive committees helps ensure that the shared vision is maintained, and her technical assistance to the state in an appeal that led to dismissal of federal sanctions incurred from the first CFSR is testament that a state need not be penalized for pursuing the proper course of action.

Collaboration is also critical for keeping system reform on track. The Project works closely with the state Child Welfare Data and Analysis Bureau (CWDAB) in producing quarterly outcomes reports for all counties. Among coordination efforts is a bi-weekly production web-conference where Project staff confer with CWDAB on progress in generating reports from the latest data extract, quality assurance concerns, and other data issues. This partnership has enabled efficient analysis modification in response to changes in the underlying data system and shared input on the development and reporting of new outcome measures.

Moving Forward

The Project continues to pursue other avenues of moving the field forward in its use of data. One such avenue is to advance reform at the national level through data advocacy. Recently the Administration for Children and Families, responding to years of repeated advice (Courtney et al., 2004; Government Accounting Office, 2004; Pew Commission, 2004; Wulczyn et al., 2001), issued a notice of proposed rulemaking and solicited input that could potentially lead to federally utilized or collected data that are fully-longitudinal. Such a change could yield improved federal performance measures, and encourage more states to pursue data reporting systems similar to the one used in the Performance Indicators Project. The Project has begun partnering with Casey Family Programs to capitalize on these and other important opportunities for change in many states.

Another development moving the Project forward is the linkage of child welfare records with information from other large administrative data systems. These data linkage efforts have merged child welfare allegation, case, and foster care information with vital birth and death records, with additional linkages forthcoming. The integration of these population-level data sources presents an exciting opportunity for expanded analyses including comparisons of maltreated children with other children born in California who have not had child welfare contact, the ability to track early childbirth among the current population of foster children, and the ability to examine the relationship between reported child maltreatment and subsequent death. A research agenda unfolding from this work has already begun to generate knowledge and answer important questions to enrich the work of the Project and the field in years to come (Putnam-Hornstein, Webster, Needell, & Magruder, J., in press).

Finally, it is important to prepare the next generation of professionals to enter the field ready to implement data-guided reform. It is necessary to continually develop human capital by increasingly raising the skill level in the use of data (Wulczyn, et al., 2005). A step in this direction is the Project's work with Chapin Hall to deliver "Advanced Analytics" trainings to analysts currently in the field—and the Project has taken a pivotal next step by extending the education process to aspiring professionals. A Project staff member has also developed and currently instructs a year-long graduate research methods course required at the UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare. This course incorporates performance measures from the Project with a focus on linking outcomes to practice. The course prepares Title IV-E MSW graduates to be well-versed in specific county performance measures and goals, to be sophisticated consumers of research contributing to the evidentiary base of child welfare practice, and thus be poised to become future child welfare leaders who possess the appreciation and skills to apply outcome data to improve practice. After piloting the effort at Berkeley, plans are underway for the curriculum to be adopted by schools of social work throughout California, and Project staff will be available to provide consultation and support to universities in other states seeking to improve graduate training.

Applying data toward child welfare system change is a challenging prospect. But success resulting from the Performance Indicators Project has shown that key elements have the capacity to move a field in a desired direction.

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Controlling Their Story: Protecting the Privacy of Foster Care Youth
Continued from page 7

feel disenfranchised by society due to their status? Indeed, while our online 'friends' are usually no more than acquaintances otherwise, they do represent real connections to others in the physical world and online social media may provide a mechanism for connectiveness not otherwise available to youth (Heer & Boyd, 2005). For example, music is a visceral experience and represents an aspect of our taste and values that may be difficult to convey in words. Now, a youth who uses Napster can find their Facebook friends who share similar musical tastes. This can happen IF the youth gives permission, i.e., controls, for the two applications to communicate with each other. In sum, a youth controls their online experience thus gaining knowledge about a peer who may share similar tastes.

The prohibition approach to safety

Coming up with a policy that prohibits Facebook or MySpace use does little to deter youth who can quickly turn to other sites, e.g., Friendster, Tagworld, Black Planet, Bebo, Asian Avenue, Piczo, Faceparty, Mixi or MiGente, which only illustrates the point that prohibitions will not protect our youth; they need guidance and support in how to use these sites in such a way that preserves their health and safety. Furthermore, prohibiting the use of online social media avoids dealing with the underlying issues (Boyd, Marwick, Aftab, & Koeltl, 2009). If anything, the online postings of our youth may be revealing problems or shortcomings in our existing systems of care that deserve our attention.

Strategies for safety

While, social network sites have guidelines for protecting privacy, youth employ other measures to thwart the prying eyes of parents,

Continued on page 14

such as, pseudonyms. Others use multiple identities depending upon the intended audience - the straight-laced profile for their public audience and their 'real' profile known only to select peers.

Many youth already employ the 'would I want my mom to read this' strategy. As such, some information ends up on Facebook, some in MySpace, with a balance of information showing up on Twitter and other venues.

Some teens go to the extent of deactivating their Facebook accounts each time they log out so their friends cannot post comments, while others delete every comment or photo, a term referred to as "whitewashing" (Boyd, 2010b).

A good comprehensive resource for youth online safety is ConnectSafely, (http://www.connectsafely/).

Conclusion

If youth involved with child welfare need assistance in using online social media, to whom should we ask they turn? The youth on their own who may place themselves at risk? Peers who are adept at the technology, but who may lack an understanding of the ramifications of making a foster youth's private life public? Or should the assistance come from child welfare workers, juvenile officers, guardians ad litem, foster parents, and judges, who recognize the youth's right and need for privacy balanced with the opportunity for self-determination? Who is going to help our youth in foster care 'control their story'? More importantly, who do our youth perceive to be their audience? As Boyd (2007) describes the phenomenon, our youth are creating an online personae that may or may not align with their offline world. What does that discrepancy tell us about the services goals we have identified for our youth? What can we then, in turn, learn about ourselves?

Surely one day Facebook will be referred to as an antiquated social networking tool and the next 'cool thing' will take its place. However, what will not have changed will be our need to guide our youth in how to use that tool letting them know the opportunities and risks that it entails.

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Enhancing the Reach and Outcomes of Child Welfare Programs through Social Media
Continued from page 10

welfare workers gather daily to offer advice and support. AdoptUSKids receives up to 33 comments per day on posts, with staff monitoring daily to answer questions and address concerns.

On Twitter at http://twitter.com/AdoptUSKids, where AdoptUSKids has more than 3,000 followers, there has been great success in outreach with the help of the Ad Council and Home Front Communications in hosting live question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions with adoption experts, former foster youth, and adoptive parents. The sessions are held on a specific day and time using the hashtag #AdoptUSKids.

AdoptUSKids' YouTube channel now hosts 30 videos which include the Public Service Announcements (PSAs) as well as inspiring stories about adoption from foster care. The YouTube videos are also used as content for the AdoptUSKids website, Facebook page, and Twitter account. Videos on the channel have been viewed more than 90,000 times, with people leaving comments about how they have helped dispel myths and assumptions about adoption from foster care.

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Administrative Data, Situational Awareness, and Child Maltreatment Decision Making

Melissa Jonson-Reid, PhD and Brett Drake, PhD

Scenario #1: A child welfare worker is doing a first home visit with a family. The worker has been unable to access useful data from the state computer system because she does not have a computer she can use in the field. Even had she been so equipped, the state computer system is very cumbersome, does not cross-talk with other systems, has substantial missing data, and since written case notes are never transcribed into the system, the available data are not very informative.

Scenario #2: A child welfare worker receives a new case while in the field. Using her laptop she quickly accesses summaries of the family's prior contacts with child protection, learning that the family has prior referrals for both neglect and physical maltreatment by the mother's paramour, whom the prior worker felt might pose a safety threat to workers. Law enforcement data show that he has had a series of assault convictions. Notes from the prior CPS worker show that Mom has been very cooperative in the past and has especially benefited from concrete assistance. Youth services records show that the oldest child has recent juvenile court involvement and missed a hearing the prior week. Income maintenance records indicate that the family's TANF will run out next month. Health records show that the mother had a recent emergency room visit for injuries which the physician coded as resulting from violence.

Of the two above hypothetical examples, the first is commonplace, while the second is an illustration of what is possible. It takes little imagination to see the tremendous benefits to assessment, service planning and case management that such a situation would bring. This article will explore both how little we are getting from administrative data and what we should be expecting.

Lack of cross-sector linkage

In some states, CPS data systems are so cumbersome that CPS workers have trouble getting data from their own agency. In most states, CPS workers are able to access data from within CPS but not from other state agencies, such as income maintenance, division of youth services, or the department of health. Beginning steps are being taken to integrate some or all of these databases (e.g., South Carolina). Such information could improve child safety. In particular, low-information cases, such as those involving pre-verbal children, would benefit greatly from such data.

Technical Barriers

There are no longer any insurmountable technical barriers preventing administratively held data from being accessed by staff in the child welfare system. Failures in this area are due to inattention to this opportunity, poor system design, or funding restrictions – not technology. With a system in place, the issue becomes access to the information in the field. Many states use laptops in the field for workers to input information, but we know of no state coming close to exploiting the laptop as a real-time tool for getting information to the worker in the ways the second scenario above suggests.

> We need to stop asking "Where's the case file?" and need to start asking "What information do I need to keep this child safe?"

Funding

The funding required to realize this vision need not be prohibitive. Servers capable of housing data are no longer expensive, and programming, while expensive in the private sector, can be offset through partnerships with academic institutions or sometimes done with expertise at the agency. British Columbia, for example, is taking the step of establishing a single system to store health, education, social services and justice data in the same system (BCCLA, 2010). While such systems require initial investment, centralization and economies of scale may well reduce costs in the long run.

Legal and Ethical Barriers

There are existing legal barriers in some states to different divisions (e.g. child protection and health) sharing information with each other. These laws need to be revisited. Child safety is a sufficiently important goal to create a "need to know" for state agencies that are jointly responsible for the safety and well-being of children. Far more serious ethical and legal issues arise and warrant discussion with regard to the possibility of data sharing outside of CPS with community practitioners. Should a physician be allowed to access prior CPS report history, arrest records, or state emergency room data in making a decision to report suspected maltreatment? Such access poses obvious privacy concerns but would likely lead to lives saved

Lack of Creativity

We simply don't have our heads in this century. We need to stop asking "Where's the case file?" and need to start asking "What information do I need to keep this child

Continued on page 26

Mobile Technologies and Child Welfare

Sid J. Schneider, PhD and Marneena Evans

Mobile technologies are engaging new parents in child neglect prevention programs, serving as the medium for health promotion campaigns for children, and playing an increasing role in the work of child welfare agencies. This article provides a brief overview.

Interventions for parents

A program called "Planned Activities Training" (Bigelow et al, 2008) offered new mothers five face-to-face parenting skills training sessions designed to reduce the risk for child neglect. Coaches called some of the participants between sessions to reinforce the training. These participants carried cell phones to ensure that the coaches could reach them reliably at any time. The cell phone-based coaching appeared to be effective at motivating new mothers to remain in the program.

In a similar program (Burke Lefever et al, 2008), researchers identified adolescent mothers at high risk for neglectful behaviors and gave them cell phones if they did not already have them. Counselors then called the new mothers to monitor their parenting experiences. The cell phones allowed the counselors to offer advice to the new mothers and to spot potentially neglectful behaviors before harm occurred.

Another intervention (Kim et al, 2010) aimed at parents experiencing depression suggested that telephone-based psychotherapy can improve wellbeing. The telephones in that program were not necessarily cellular ones.

Other interventions rely on texting rather than calls. The National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition sends text messages to mothers throughout their pregnancy and their babies' first years. This program (text4baby) is intended to sharpen the mothers' parenting skills and prevent potential neglect.

Interventions for young people

Survey results (Stout, 2010) from the Pew Research Center suggest that half of American teenagers send at least 50 text messages a day. Accordingly, several programs have relied on texting as the method for reaching young people with health-related messages.

One program (sextext.com) helps adolescents with texts about sexual behavior, relationships, and sexually transmitted disease. The company Mobile Health Interventions (healthtxts.com) provides a range of health-promotion programs via text messaging, such as one to help young diabetics (Franklin et al, 2008). Another program (doc2me.com), for people of all ages, offers customized weekly text message tips about diet, lifestyle and heart health.

Data collection and case management

As smartphones and tablets have become more versatile and lighter and networks have become faster and more widely available, powerful mobile technology-based solutions have emerged for child welfare workers.

In 2008, Our Kids, a Florida nonprofit corporation, created the OK Connect system (Child Welfare League of America, 2009), which employs laptops and smart phones. The Florida Department of Children and Families received funding to take the system, now called Mobile iSACWIS, statewide. This mobile case management system provides child welfare workers with secure access to their case files from any location. They can enter data and visitation notes that are transferred directly into the state SACWIS database.

The FAMcare system (famcare.net) is a case management solution that caseworkers can access using desktop or laptop computers, smartphones, and tablets. Because the system is web-based, child welfare agencies do not need many IT resources to start using it.

The goal of these systems is to decrease caseworkers' paperwork burden while conducting a home visit, to help caseworkers verify information, and to connect families with resources. During home visits, caseworkers may take a picture of the child, which is stamped with the date, time, and GPS coordinates to verify the home visit and condition of the child. A case list application can let the worker see when visits are past due.

Other states are also looking to mobile technology to enhance their child protective services. The Michigan Department of Human Services (WILX, 2010) recently launched a smart phone application that connects caseworkers and the general public to DHS resources. The application allows anyone to report child abuse by phone or email with the press of a button. It also provides information on applying for DHS services or becoming a foster parent.

As smartphones and tablets have become more versatile and lighter and networks have become faster and more widely available, powerful mobile technology-based solutions have emerged for child welfare workers.

The future

Currently, three out of four mobile subscribers use an ordinary cell phone, not a smartphone (comScore, 2010b), but the adoption of smartphones is accelerating. Clearly, the role of mobile technologies in the child welfare field will grow.

Continued on page 26

Supporting Foster Families with Internet and Communications Technology

Jerry Finn, PhD, MSW

As Internet-based communication becomes increasingly integrated into family life, new sources for support as well as social problems related to information and communication technology (ICT) use is becoming more common. One goal of foster care is to promote the attitudes and skills that will prepare and support children as they move towards independence. In today's technological society, this must include comfort and skills with ICT.

Foster children are at-risk of not developing ICT skills due to residential instability, educational discontinuity, and emotional and /or behavioral problems associated with child abuse and family disruption (Orme, 2001). A variety of programs have been developed to reduce the digital divide for foster children (see for example: the San Diego Futures Foundation, http://www.sdfutures/events/recentevents.html) and much progress has been made. These programs, however, often provide only hardware and software along with minimal training. Evaluation of a pilot program of Casey Family Services, *Building Skills Building Futures,* suggests that effective programs must include —

- access to hardware and software,
- fast Internet connection,
- ICT software skills training
- Internet search and evaluation techniques
- ongoing technical support and encouragement
- the support of community-based training, mentors and caseworkers to develop ICT skills for families in which foster parents are not interested in learning to use ICT (Finn, Kerman & leCornec, 2004).

Downside: There is considerable evidence that use of ICT places people at risk of negative consequences (Southworth, Finn, Dawson, Fraser & Tucker, 2007). Risks include a range of difficulties such as cyberbullying , sexting, gaming addiction, exposure to pornography, and family arguments regarding ICT use (Finn & Kerman, 2003). The exponential increase in use of social networking sites has exposed all youth to these risks. Many foster children may be especially vulnerable to ICT dangers due to their history of trauma and attachment difficulties.

Child welfare organizations can help foster children and foster families deal with these issues by —

- Making assessment of technology use and problems a *regular* part of casework services,
- Educating foster parents and foster children about dangers inherent in ICT,
- Promoting discussion between foster parents and foster children about the appropriate use of ICT,
- Providing parental control software that limits children's computer time and access to Internet sites to children's appropriate developmental level,
- Linking foster families to online resources that educate about ICT dangers. See, for example, Safe Kids (http://www.safekids.com/), NetSmartz (http://www.netsmartz/KIDS/nsrules/whofriend.html), GetNetWise (http://www.getnetwise/), Wired Kids (http://www.wiredkids/), and Cyber Tip Line (http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=169).

In order to realize the potential advantages of ICT to strengthen interactions between families and workers, agencies must consciously incorporate ICT into agency policy and case management practice.

Online Child Welfare Services

One pilot study of foster parents found that 44% of foster parents given access to ICT emailed with their caseworkers (Finn, Kerman, leCornec, 2004) and the vast majority of foster parents who did have email communication with their caseworkers were very satisfied. There is considerable evidence that many consumers wish to communicate with health and social service providers online (Finn & Schoech, 2009, Fox, 2011). When discussing difficult topics, many youth prefer ICT to face-to-face or telephone communication (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005). Online services offer many advantages in terms of access, convenience, promoting more open and equalitarian communication, and providing time for more considered and thorough communication. Researchers have also, however, raised concerns about effectiveness, confidentiality, appropriate assessment, and ethical and legal issues related to online therapeutic services. (Zack, 2007).

Child Welfare Agency Considerations: In order to realize the potential advantages of ICT to strengthen interactions between families and workers, agencies must consciously incorporate ICT into agency policy and case management practice. This would include —

- Development of web-based ICT infrastructure that is reliable, secure and confidential for both workers and consumers.

Continued on page 26

State Progress in Sharing Data between Courts and Child Welfare Agencies

Victor Eugene Flango, PhD

Improved Outcomes for Children

Timely permanency for children in foster care depends upon both child welfare agencies and courts. Although they each have different roles to play, both partners must achieve their goals if safety, permanency and well being outcomes are to be improved. Outcome measures help courts and child welfare agencies identify best practices, diagnose areas where they need to improve, and establish a baseline from which to measure the success of their improvement efforts.

To determine the extent to which outcomes are improving, child welfare agencies employ a set of outcome measures used in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. Court performance measures in child abuse and neglect cases, compatible with the child welfare measures, were developed as a collaborative effort between the American Bar Association, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges with support from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation (2004) and then field tested before being released as the "Toolkit" (2009). Outcome measures to meet the ASFA goals of safety and permanency necessitate cooperation between courts and child welfare agencies to be successful. Some of the process measures, especially timeliness, can be generated by courts and child welfare agencies separately, but if *either* fails to meet timelines, the total time to permanency is affected. Consequently, data from both are necessary to get a complete picture of how states are progressing in terms of achieving timely permanency for children. Results from Child and Family Service Reviews have shown conclusively that states that have the best collaboration between courts and child welfare agencies have better outcomes for children. (William Stanton, personal communication, 2009)

Unless the outcome measures can be produced efficiently and cost effectively, they will not be used to promote best practices or to affect policy change. Electronic exchange is the most efficient and effective way of sharing information. Electronic data exchanges provide both courts and child welfare agencies with timely, complete and accurate information upon which to make decisions promoting child safety, permanency and well-being.

Implementation Issues for States

Courts and child welfare agencies desiring to exchange data have the following issues to address —

- ***Governance*** In the child welfare language, this translates as getting the right partners to the table to discuss the purposes of data exchange, the obstacles to data exchange between courts and child welfare agencies, and the resources and support available to overcome those obstacles.
- ***Strategic Planning*** Assuming states know about the potential of data exchange for improving the lives of children, the next step toward implementation is joint planning between courts and child welfare agencies. All of the stakeholders need to be involved in the planning and involved early. As always, expectations need to be managed and time frames kept realistic. The planning needs to include mapping of the court and child welfare processes to determine at what stages of the processes particular exchanges need to take place.
- ***Policy Challenges.*** One of the most persistent policy challenges has to do with privacy and confidentiality of child welfare and court records. One extension of the problem of privacy and confidentiality is how to enforce privacy and public access rules agreed to after the data leaves the court and child welfare agency and is transmitted to other agencies.

Electronic data exchanges provide both courts and child welfare agencies with timely, complete and accurate information upon which to make decisions promoting child safety, permanency and well-being.

Data Exchange Standards

Data exchange standards go a long way toward overcoming these challenges. Standards mean that data can be exchanged regardless of the type of computer hardware courts and agencies have. An added bonus is that standard data elements mean that technology vendors will find it more profitable to include required data elements in the case management systems they sell to the states. Fortunately, a national standard has been adopted by the justice community for the exchange of critical data using —the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM). By standardizing the semantics or meaning of content in data exchanges, NIEM ensures that different information systems will understand data elements in the same way. Moreover, there are technological solutions in NIEM that address problems of confidentiality in data that are retransmitted.

With a small amount of funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (US Department of Justice), NCSC convened a meeting of state and national experts on October 23-24, 2007 to extend the NIEM model to child

Continued on page 26

Virtual Visitation and Child Welfare

Annette Semanchin Jones, MSW

Technology is transforming the way providers in many fields deliver services to families. Although there is substantial anecdotal information about new innovation and technologies to augment services to children and families in child welfare, very few of these innovations have been studied or discussed in the academic literature (Child Welfare League of America, 2007). One strategy that could supplement child welfare practice is virtual visitation, which is defined as the use of videoconferencing, webcams and other internet-based technology for providing services to children, youth and their families at remote sites. Even though virtual visitation has not yet been studied in child welfare, other fields have been developing alternatives to face-to-face delivery of services for decades and have established an evidence base for these practices. Research in the fields of telemedicine, telemental health, family law, criminal justice and early intervention has shown promising results regarding the use of virtual visitation,

Technology and Parental Visitation

Philadelphia correctional facilities have successfully pioneered the use of virtual visitation to maintain contact between prisoners and their families (Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006). Evaluation results to date have shown that inmates who participated in the program showed better behavior compared to those not in the program; reported high satisfaction with the program; and maintained more positive connections with their children, families and communities (Crabbe, 2002). Beginning in Utah, virtual visitation is also used in custody cases to supplement face-to-face visits and court-ordered phone contacts between a noncustodial parent and a child (Flango, 2003). Some legal scholars suggest that virtual visitation can be a safe and effective way to maintain parent-child contact in child custody cases in which domestic violence is also a factor (Saunders & Oehme, 2007).

Telemedicine and Telemental Health

Over half the states in the U.S. allow for some reimbursement of telemedicine services through Medicaid or private insurers, particularly to improve access to specialized health care in rural areas and to reduce transportation costs (Center for Telehealth & E-Health Law, 2010; Patel, 2010) Several systematic reviews have examined hundreds of studies of telemedicine that indicate high patient and provider satisfaction, positive patient-provider interaction, and some evidence of efficacy and cost effectiveness of this approach. However, much of the current research focused on pilot studies suggesting that more research is needed to examine the long-term or routine use of telemedicine (Currell et al., 2000; Hailey, Roine, & Ohinmaa, 2002; Mair & Whitten, 2000).

Research in the fields of telemedicine, telemental health, family law, criminal justice and early intervention has shown promising results regarding the use of virtual visitation.

Researchers have also found several potential benefits to telemental health (also called telepsychiatry, webcounseling, teletherapy or eTherapy), including: increased flexibility and accessibility for clients; providing access to highly specialized therapists as well as making it feasible for practitioners to specialize; and increased satisfaction and comfort level for some clients (Gingerich, 2010). Studies of adolescents, in particular, indicate wide-scale acceptance and excitement from this age group about receiving "virtual" services through technologies.

However, other scholars raise the following concerns about telemental health services: lack of non-verbal cues that may increase miscommunication (for non-visual modes of delivery); concerns around confidentiality of online technology; and challenges around equity and access for clients who need to have access to and skills for telecommunications technology (Gingerich, 2010).

Early Intervention Services

Through a Steppingstones grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Utah began a Virtual Home Visit project to offer early intervention services in very rural areas to families with children with disabilities (Family Center on Technology and Disability, 2010). Preliminary results from a pilot evaluation indicated that parents, children, and service providers were all highly engaged throughout the visits (Family Center on Technology and Disability, 2010). Analysis of the data comparing family-worker interactions between the two virtual and traditional modes of visits indicated that interactions were similar but that providers gave parents more feedback as they engaged with their children in virtual visits for most of families in the pilot.

Conclusion

Although child protective systems have not adopted virtual visitation technology as rapidly or pervasively as other fields, many child welfare jurisdictions have begun to expand their use of technology in serving families and children, including the use of electronic, audio, video and internet technologies (Tregeagle & Darcy, 2008). Child welfare agencies might build on the existing evidence base on virtual visitation

Continued on page 27

Social Networking and Adoption

Eileen Fursland

Increasing numbers of adopted teenagers are turning to the internet to trace and contact members of their birth families, often without completely realizing the complexity of what they are doing or where it could lead. Birth parents, too, are tracing and contacting their children who were adopted years earlier and approaching them via the internet. Adoption professionals are facing new challenges and having to help and support families and individuals through experiences they never imagined.

Social networking allows individuals – both adoptees and birth relatives – to work outside of the adoption agency's established role in family finding and preserving confidentiality, mediating the exchange of information, and providing guidance and support.

Some of today's adopted teenagers were adopted at a time when no-one had heard of Facebook. But the powerful search capabilities offered by the internet have changed everything. It's now sometimes possible to trace someone without knowing their surname. An unusual first name or combination of names, perhaps together with a date of birth or a town, is enough in some cases.

Other new technologies make it easy to find someone in the real world as well as the virtual world. Location-based services linking mobile phones to social networking profiles make it possible for someone's online "friends" to know exactly where they are, as will digital cameras and camera-phones which encode data about the geographical location where the photograph was taken. Facial recognition technology makes it possible to search the internet for matches of a photograph. These and other developments have huge implications with regard to confidentiality and the precautions people should take if they don't want to be traced

Adolescence is a time when many adopted children become curious about their birth families. Some will decide to search for information or answers on the internet - often in secret.

Not surprisingly, contact made in this way has the potential to be destabilising and disturbing for the young person. The internet is a risky and unpredictable way to initiate contact, particularly when the young person keeps it secret. Sometimes the contact proves damaging or dangerous. For some, the communication can re-awaken upsetting memories of previous abuse and trauma. It may include accusations, recriminations and/or hurtful and abusive messages (from one side or both). Sometimes one person rejects the other.

When the adoptive parents discover what has been going on they are often shocked, horrified and concerned for the child's emotional wellbeing. Sometimes they fear the effect the contact could have on their family relationships.

In some cases difficulties resolve eventually; the adopted young person benefits from getting answers to his or her questions and from finding someone with whom he is genetically connected. Some are able to form positive relationships, particularly with birth brothers and sisters.

Alternately, there have been a number of cases in which adopted teenagers have left their adoptive families and gone to live with birth relatives, at least for a while. If there is a crisis, social workers need to try to encourage adopters not to give up on their relationship.

Facebook is changing adoption. Adoption professionals need to prepare adopters, adoptees, and birth parents for the possibility of what might happen.

Facebook is changing adoption. Adoption professionals need to prepare adopters, adoptees, and birth parents for the possibility of what might happen. They should also be ready to support families struggling with the fall-out from unmediated contact.

If adoptive parents talk to their child from an early age about his adoption, his early life and his birth family, he will see that they accept the importance of his "other" family; that this does not upset them. It also means the birth parents are not surrounded by a sense of mystery and the child is less likely to form an idealized picture of them.

However, the urge to find out is a powerful one. Adoptive parents need to do all they can to try to make sure that when their child is curious, he will turn to them rather than doing some late-night secret digging on the Internet. Some children will be satisfied with some up-to-date news or answers to their questions. Others may have a strong desire for some direct contact with their birth relatives before they are 18. This may not be what the adoptive parents would have chosen, but if they can accept his wishes and be involved, this affords their child at least some support, protection and safeguards through the contact.

Adoption professionals will increasingly need to be prepared to support adoptive families in which the adopted young person feels strongly that they want to trace birth relatives and perhaps have a reunion - even if they are not yet 18.

All of these developments put the question of contact in childhood into sharp relief. It may be that, in future, professionals may need to re-assess the importance of setting up and supporting safe contact with birth family members throughout an adopted child's childhood, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so

Continued on page 27

Some Thoughts Before You Tweet: Guidance for Public Agencies Considering a Social Media Presence

Stephanie Zierten and Jess Weiss

Social media tools such as Blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and MySpace are all the rage for users, corporations, and now for government organizations. These tools provide incredible opportunities for government agencies to internally collaborate and communicate as well as engage with citizens. However, if your organization is considering using social media to engage with constituents, you must first address some of the practical, policy, and legal implications of this developing medium. To date, few child welfare agencies have utilized these social media tools. This article provides a format for thinking through some of the possibilities and realities regarding social media use . (See the article by Miller on page __ of this publication for an example).

There isn't a one size fits all social media strategy.

Why

Begin by determining the agency's primary goals. Are you hoping to engage a certain population, to increase agency standing and goodwill, or to develop a social media presence as the "go to" experts on a given issue? Answering these questions will help you hone in on the particular tool or tools for meeting your organization's goals (e.g. video sharing versus micro blogging). There isn't a one size fits all social media strategy.

Social Means Social

Social media tools provide not only a means for government entities to directly share information with citizens, but also a means to listen to citizens' concerns and suggestions. In the social media world, users expect that their comments will actually be reviewed and addressed. After your social media campaign is off and running, continue to nurture and grow your presence at your selected social media sites or risk dissipating the goodwill accumulated by your agency.

The Conversational Norms of Social Media May Not Always Be Clear, But Make it So

When government goes to where the citizens are communicating, for example, by creating an agency Facebook Page, it may be unclear to the users whether the site is actually controlled by the agency or by the third party social application. It's important for agencies to examine the social media site's Terms of Service (TOS) and Privacy Policy to understand how the information is used by the site and the risks the agency accepts by agreeing to host applications with a third party social media provider.

We suggest that any agency using social media consider updating its website policies, such as its Privacy Policy and Terms of Use (TOU) or Terms of Service (TOS), to insure that the policies are consistent with the agency's presence on third party applications, as well as to distinguish the boundary as to where the agency controls the data (e.g. data on the agency's website or hosted blog) from where the agency does not ultimately control or store the user generated content (e.g. on the agency's Facebook page).

Social Media Isn't Always Pretty

Although social media's two-way communication provides an opportunity to show the responsiveness of government, sometimes user generated content may contain critical comments or complaints. Given First Amendment protections, in many instances agencies may not edit or sensor germane comments, regardless of how negative those comments may be.

We suggest that agencies work with their legal counsel to develop Terms of Comment to post alongside any social media used by the agency that accepts user generated content. The Terms of Comment describe the purpose of the site, when comments are welcome, notice that the site is moderated, the limitations of the site, and the limitations on postings. Agency personnel will need to be appointed to monitor the user generated content to ensure that comments are regularly and reliably posted consistent with those Terms. If you are allowing comments on a third party provider application, such as Facebook, Agency counsel should also review the application's TOS or TOU to ensure that the proposed agency's Terms of Comment can indeed be consistently implemented in compliance with the site's TOS.

Develop an Internal Social Media Participation Policy

An agency should consider developing some internal policies before it fully embraces the use of social media. For example, a Social Media Participation Policy, which may be a new policy or an amendment to the agency's existing Acceptable Use Policy, should at a minimum outline the expectations for the following three scenarios: (1) the use of social media when it is an official part an employee's job function (e.g. the employee writes a blog on behalf of the agency); (2) the employee's personal use of social media at work; and (3) the employee's personal use of social media outside of work when not using agency IT resources. We suggest working with your entity's human resources department and legal counsel to ensure that the policies align with your existing workplace policies and comport with any legal requirements.

To paint the full picture, we also suggest that you work with your communications, information security, and legal teams to address the other issues presented by social media (such as meeting an entity's records retention requirements, avoiding defamation or other claims, meeting accessibility obligations, and managing intellectual property rights). By creating a coordinated and vetted approach that involves the various stakeholders at your agency, you will be able to develop a foundational approach that can hopefully flourish and grow as fast as the ever changing social media landscape.

This Article does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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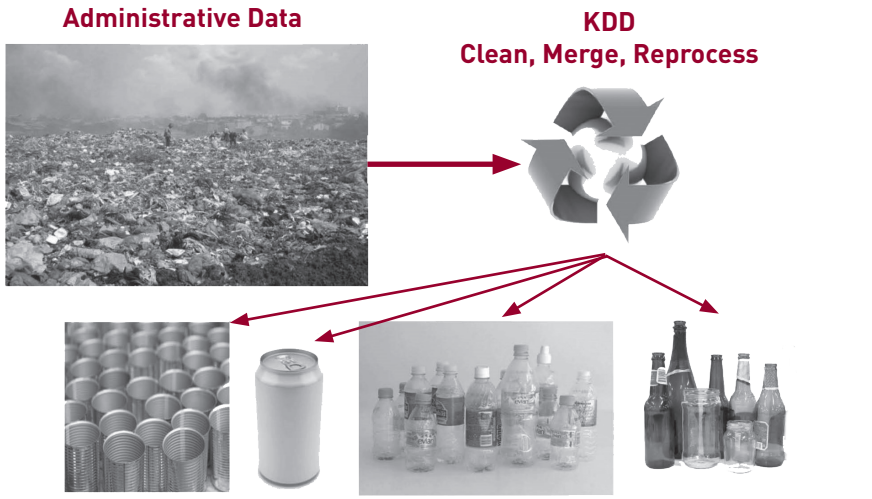
The information contained in this article does not constitute legal advice. If you wish to obtain legal advice, you should consult an attorney in your agency or organization concerning your particular situation and facts.

Building a Secure Federated Government KDD Information System from the Bottom up for Child Welfare Practice, Policy, and Research

Hye Chung Kum, PhD, MSW, MS

Knowledge Discovery and Data mining (KDD) is the area of computer science that tries to generate an integrated approach to extracting valuable information from data by combining ideas drawn from many disciplines. KDD has been defined as, "the nontrivial process of identifying valid, novel, potentially useful, and ultimately understandable patterns in data" (Fayyad et al. 1996). The goal is to discover and present knowledge in a form that is easily comprehensible to users in a timely manner (Kum et al. 2009; figure 1). A key characteristic particular to KDD is that it uses operational data. In child welfare, operational data is administrative data collected by various child welfare agencies. Applying the full KDD technology to child welfare can greatly enhance federal, state, and local government practices as it can effectively share information between many diverse entities. KDD technology allows for consistency and diversity at the same time. To effectively address the many local problems, diversity is a must while accountability requires consistency of measurements (Duncan et al. 2008).

Figure 1. Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining (KDD)



Integrated data systems of multiple agencies that touch the lives of children and families receiving CW services can be an important source of information for child welfare policies and practices. Currently, there are a handful of ongoing university based projects that use administrative data for CW research and policy in collaboration with their state agency (see sidebar). Most projects have some characteristics of a KDD information system. For one, all use administrative data. There is also some ongoing process, monthly to annually, to maintain and update a data system which is later used to extract information. However, although most projects have been in existence for some time, many are still in their infancy in terms of realizing the full potential of KDD technology. Many of these systems lack comprehensiveness as well as ease of access. The lack of information can only be overcome by integrating data from multiple agencies, while access to information must be expanded to cover multiple modes of access.

To move in this direction, the projects need to involve information system experts within computer science departments and the iSchools on campus. Partnering with information system experts, we must invest in efforts to build a flexible federated government data system that can take information out from the government legacy systems and utilize it in child welfare practice, policy, and research. A federated data system is one in which data from multiple agencies is loosely networked together so that information can be easily shared and linked as needed. The two main hurdles to building such a system are (1) privacy concerns and the laws in place to protect individual confidentiality and (2) the physiology of administrative data that is fragmented and short lived with limited data that have questionable reliability.

The importance of privacy protection cannot be over stated. Finding the appropriate balance between the benefits of linking data and the privacy of individuals will require efforts in both the policy and technology front. On the technology front, developing better systems for linkage while preserving privacy will allow our society to reap the benefits of linkage while avoiding its harm. Such research can build in security locks in the integrated data systems up front eliminating the danger of breach of confidentiality all together. On the policy front, a better understanding of privacy, the dangers of exposure, the required level of protection, and guidelines for proper IRB practices are needed.

It is the nature of data, *only data that is used regularly is reliable*. Most government data are rarely used and quickly end up in the piles of useless legacy data. Good decision support systems for local and state agencies must be deployed at the back end of the government information systems to divert such data. Once these data have served their immediate purpose, data need to be carefully filed away in the decision support system making it accessible for other approved uses. The decision support system should have three modes of access. First, a public dynamic website should provide comprehensive

Continued on page 27

http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/

http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/

http://www.fosteringcourtimprovement/state_websites.php

http://www.chapinhall/

http://www.cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/research/minnlink/default.asp

http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/index.html

http://www.rom.ku.edu/

Social Networking: Risks and Opportunities for Youth

Sonia Livingstone, PhD

The past few decades of innovation in forms of online communication – email, chat rooms, blogging, and text messaging – have, in the past couple of years, come together in a new 'killer application,' the social networking site. Thus, technological convergence enables social convergence combining the desire to connect with others, to experiment with the presentation of self, to construct intimacy, to share experiences and, most simply, to gossip about Saturday night all in one relatively straightforward application.

Young people, including many children 'at risk' or in some way involved in child welfare, have seized this new opportunity with such relish that it must surely force society to reflect that, hitherto, it has failed to provide for their intense but substantially unmet need to be in touch with others. Young people desire to be in touch with both wide and intimate circles of friends all the time even while talking, studying, eating or when in bed. And now they can.

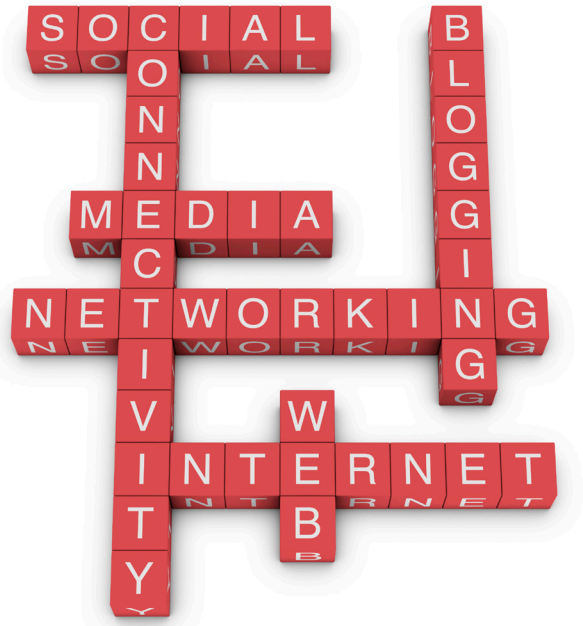
What does this mean? Drawing on my survey work and interviews with children reported in *Children and the Internet* (Polity Press, 2009), I wish to draw out the interplay of opportunities and risks emerging for social networking youth. For social networking is neither simply good nor bad for young people, including youth involved in child welfare; much depends on how it is used and how society responds to its potential.

Although in principle children could use social networking to connect globally – recall how a kind of grand system of pen pals was initially envisaged – for the most part, they connect locally. Most contacts are with people they already know face to face. Most contacts are, therefore, with people like them. Few take the opportunity to overcome boundaries of otherness or prejudice. And contrary to popular fears, few set out to meet 'strangers,' especially adult strangers.

Young people instead, fundamentally, embed themselves in a network of known peers and, while the boundaries of this network have some fascination (friends of friends, and friends of friends of friends…), what is most significant is the horizontal nature of this social communication. Peer to peer communication becomes all absorbing, and vertical relations – with parents, other adults, those who are much older or younger – take second place.

Social networking is primarily used to extend face to face communication into the many occasions when children cannot be co-present with their friends. It is used for phatic communication – communication that merely says, I am here, you are in touch, we share something. This matters and should not be misunderstood as time-wasting. Previous generations passed notes in class, or spent hours on the telephone, or hung around on street corners.

However, since social networking is largely phatic, this may explain the failure of many efforts of well intentioned adults to harness this activity for the benefit of education or civic participation; for the most part, such efforts succeed only in sustaining social relations among the already-engaged and rarely do they meet public policy objectives of a more ambitious kind. Phatic communication isn't intended to communicate significant content, and if young people have something significant to say, whether of a personal or public nature, they'll generally pick up the phone or arrange a meeting just as would older people. Contrary to popular fears, they have not lost all sense of privacy – often they are acutely aware of controlling who they say what to – although they may make different decisions about what to reveal to whom than their parents might wish.



For social networking is neither simply good nor bad for young people, including youth involved in child welfare; much depends on how it is used and how society responds to its potential.

Although communicating content is not so important, the element of display does matter. *MySpace*, and some other sites that permit a visually creative display of the self, is greatly valued especially by younger children, who love the chance to play stylistically with self-representation – adding images of hearts and flowers, or fast cars and celebrities. *Facebook*, and other sites with a pared down, clean look and feel, instead favour the display of connection and activities – numbers of contacts, latest photos, fun applications. This display of the self encourages youth to experiment, even to take risks.

Some reveal too much, some try out new sides of themselves, or seek intimacy unwisely. Observing adults must ask if they prefer such experimentation to occur online or offline, but they are unlikely to succeed in preventing it altogether. Compared with the offline experimentation that could also get children into trouble, online experimentation is risky in some new ways. Messages and images can be rapidly distributed, easily manipulated, permanently retained; thus the unintended consequences of online experimentation can be considerable. In a minority of cases, such consequences are harmful, opening the door to sexual exploitation, bullying and other invasions of privacy.

Since, worryingly, the signs are that it is children who are already vulnerable due to their life circumstances, who take such risks online also, it seems that while many learn to cope and become resilient through the relatively safe play afforded by online communication, those already 'at risk' become even more vulnerable. In the closed worlds of social networks, where peers rather than parents mediate, the challenge is for those concerned with children's welfare to find some sensible means of intervention, as and when necessary.

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A Challenge to Child Welfare Professionals: Using New Communication Technologies with Young People and their Families

Susan Tregeagle, PhD

Communication is a core skill in child welfare practice, yet few social workers are taking advantage of the revolution brought about by new communication technologies (Sapey 1997; Tregeagle and Darcy 2007). The Internet is an important vehicle for communication which is used actively in the community and by other human service providers (Christensen, Griffiths et al. 2004). It has been shown to enhance communication in some settings by facilitating self-disclosure and the development of identity & relationship (Bargh, McKenna et al. 2002; Ben-Ze'ev 2004). Internet use for social networking is increasingly popular among disadvantaged young people and families. This article challenges social workers to responsibly re-examine their use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in communicating with service users and warns of the risks in failing to do so.

The reasons that many workers have been reluctant to use computers with service users are complex. Computers were initially used in human services for management purposes which social workers identified as disadvantaging service users. Databases have been associated with: strengthening 'governance' ,cost cutting, monitoring productivity, directing information flow, and controlling recipients of public assistance by detecting overpayment or fraud(Henman and Dean 2004). More recently, computer databases have been criticized as shaping 'proceduralised social work knowledge' (Parton 2008).

Social workers may also harbor real concerns about computer-mediated communication. ICT has the potential to distort communication and to open service users to 'online exploitation.' Computer mediated communication is different from face-to-face contact, and the implications are not well understood. Self-disclosure may be increased on line, but so may deception. Some individuals are reluctant to use ICT, such as older family members. Children may be more vulnerable to online-predators. Social workers, themselves, sometimes have poor ICT skills, or communication habits.

There are, however, some misconceptions which may underlie willingness to use ICT**.** The first is that disadvantaged families don't have access to computers or online skills. Use of computers varies internationally; however, studies of service users show the vast majority of families had access to the Internet (McLaren and Zappala 2002; Tregeagle 2007). Despite problems caused by the cost of software, Internet connection and technical support, some families were very dependent on the Internet. They found innovative ways of using the Internet. Examples included mothers using Instant Messaging to keep children in contact with violent fathers.

ICT can open opportunities for participation of service users, allowing family members to initiate communication. ICT can allow service users to time interactions so that geographical, social embarrassment and emotional distance can be overcome.

A second limitation is the belief that computer-mediated communication is not appropriate to professional practice. This view underestimates the advantages that the Internet may bring. ICT can open opportunities for participation of service users, allowing family members to initiate communication. ICT can allow service users to time interactions so that geographical, social embarrassment and emotional distance can be overcome . ICT assists service users to overcome limitations in literacy and 'status' differences. ICT may allow service users to better prioritize issues and communicate those issues most important. Furthermore, service users may be able to exercise greater control over what is written about them and who has access to it.

When using computers and the Internet, social workers should understand that —

- Service users may use technology differently from workers. For example, families using child welfare services are unlikely to use e-mail as workers do (They may not routinely check communication or have the necessary literacy required.).
- There are subtle communication differences between face to face and computer-mediated modes. ICT should be used as part of a wider relationship, interspersing face to face contact with an on-line relationship
- Social workers have a duty of care to service users and have obligations to follow up electronic communication. Workers own on-line communication habits, such as disinclination to respond immediately, maybe problematic.

Service users need to be educated regarding Internet safety. See www.cybersmart.gov.au. It is also important to be vigilant about new learning about Internet-based communication. We are yet to fully appreciate the implications of communication over the Internet (Wyn, Cuervo et al. 2005 p.4) An important reason for social workers to use ICT for communication is to assist service users to be more broadly engaged with the wider community.

In their consideration of ICT, social workers must include the possibility that they may contribute to ongoing exclusion of service users' dominant ways of communicating. "The people to be worried about are those who are growing up in a digital age but who are not learning these sophisticated information-gathering and information-processing skills, or creating things on their own based on what they learn and share with others (online) (Palfrey and Gasser 2008p.241)." Social workers

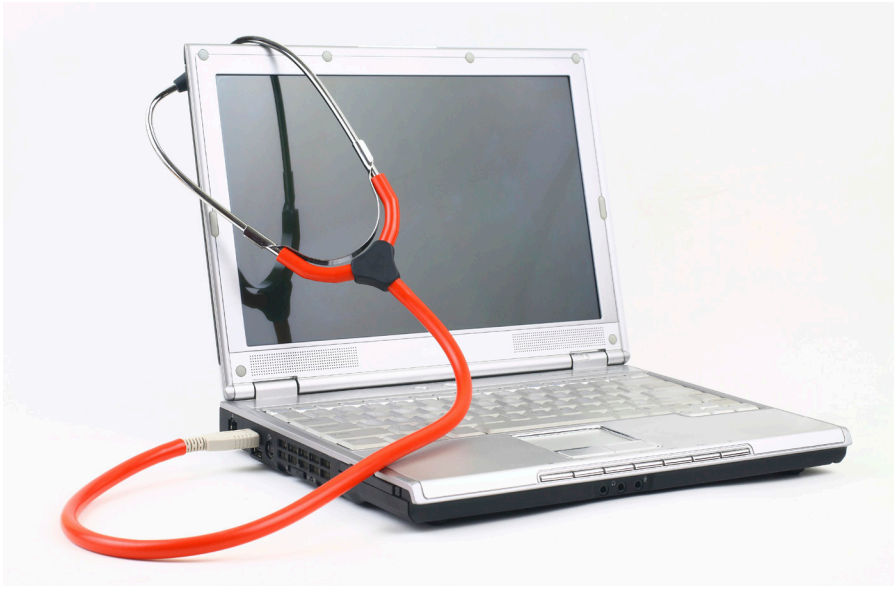
Continued on page 27

Electronic Medical Passports for Improving Outcomes for Children in Foster Care

Ron L. Mitchell, MSW, and Toni M. Rozanski, MSW

The Federal Government's Children & Family Services Review (CFSR) requires child welfare agencies to ensure children in foster care receive quality and timely medical/dental evaluations and treatment. Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) has developed a database referred to as the Medical Passport System (MPS) to house children's medical/dental information, track appointments, and share information with placement and medical/dental providers

DDHS set up a single entry point for tracking children entering out-of-home care. This was important due to requirements for initial medical screenings and to begin gathering each child's medical history in a timely fashion. SACWIS data entry generally occurs a few days or more into a case for a variety of reasons. DDHS staff enter children's information into MPS generally the same day they are removed from home. Once the SACWIS system is updated, the MPS downloads information from SACWIS to ensure both systems have the same data, such as date of birth, name spelling and so on. Downloads occur overnight on a daily basis, and the MPS automatically displays each child's demographic information, as well as the names and contact information for each child's placement and caseworker. This allows data entry staff to easily share important information as it is obtained with these parties. Data entry staff indicate if a child is required to use a medical home foster care clinic, jointly established between DDHS and a local medical care network. Children within a designated zip code range are required to use the clinic unless they are able to continue to see their own historical providers. This process allows most children consistent medical care while in out-of-home placement.



When a child is added to the system, the system automatically calculates the Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) appointments and populates those in the system. The system was also set up to track appointments for pregnant teens and children requiring specialized medical services, such as chemotherapy. The personnel at the foster care clinic have access to the system, are able to input appointment information into the system directly and make notes into the system following a child's appointment. Because DDHS contracted with the vendor to provide medical care management for all children in out-of-home placement, lawyers for both organizations found that sharing this type of information did not violate the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The system automatically prints out form letters to providers when an appointment is due. The letter indicates the type of appointment, such as specialty or dental, the due date for the appointment, and whether the appointment is required to be held at the foster care clinic. These forms are then mailed to the placement address to prompt placement providers to schedule necessary appointments. The system generates additional form letters after appointments' due dates have passed. These letters request information regarding the appointments be sent back to DDHS. The returned information is then sent to a nurse for review and to update the child's medical records. The system tracks receipt of information so additional letters continue to be generated until information is received. When a child is seen at the foster care clinic, records are automatically received by DDHS eliminating the need to gather information from the placement providers. Another system feature is the ability to view a child's list of completed, pending and canceled appointments. When a child returns home, the system automatically deletes all future appointments.

> Although it is early in the implementation of the program, there is an opportunity for improving medical outcomes for children in care.

The system also populates a tickler system so that staff gather children's medical/dental histories. Once the medical/dental information is entered into the SACWIS system, the staff use information found in the MPS system to mail out the completed histories to placement providers. If a child moves while in care, DDHS staff members are reminded to send out the history to the new placement provider. A DDHS contracted partner has access to the records and the ability to update the history records when a child has an appointment completed, whether at the foster care clinic or elsewhere. If a child returns home before the time frame is due for completing the medical/dental history, the system reads the return home from the SACWIS system and removes the child from the tickler system.

Although it is early in the implementation of the program, there is an opportunity for improving medical outcomes for children in care. The plan is to expand the program to track mental health appointments as well in the near future.

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Administrative Data, Situational Awareness, and Child Maltreatment Decision Making
Continued from page 15

safe?" This problem goes beyond actions within child welfare. Physicians frequently have to determine if they should order long bone scans for children with injuries which might or might not be due to maltreatment (Lane & Dubowitz, 2007). Currently, they can only look at records from their own hospital. If physicians had access to some kind of information regarding prior CPS reports, prior arrests and visits to other hospitals, they might well be able to make far more informed decisions. Imagine policy makers with fingertip access to who is being served, how those services are provided over time and which other agencies also serve the same children. We could track costs across systems and understand if more effort in one area resulted in savings for another.

The failure to access currently existing data puts children (and workers) at risk. States should be applauded as they move forward in this area, and it does not seem unreasonable to hope that progress will continue and perhaps accelerate in the foreseeable future.

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Mobile Technologies and Child Welfare
Continued from page 16

Smartphones will help child welfare agencies keep in touch with foster and adoptive parents; monitor the wellbeing of children such as those currently or formerly in foster care; and provide caseworkers with access to educational, health, and juvenile justice information. Social networking via smartphones (comScore, 2010a) will have increasing applications in the child welfare field. Smartphones will allow foster and adoptive parents to network and support each other; allow foster children to interact and to seek information and support regarding their mental and physical health; provide advice and support to new parents to enhance their parenting skills; and open new avenues for research.

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Supporting Foster Families with Internet and Communications Technology
Continued from page 17

- Development of an agency culture that views ICT as a valuable tool for helping foster families. Development of agency policies about the appropriate use of ICT between workers and consumers. When appropriate, facilitating ICT communications between foster children and members of their families of origin.
- Development and/or referral of foster families to ICT resources that support foster parents and foster children.(The National Foster Parent Association "Foster Parent Links" http://www.nfpainc/content/index.asp?page=LINKS&nmenu=4).

A few human service agencies are beginning to expand their role in regard to foster youth to include development of information technology as a "life skill" that is important for successful transition to adulthood. These programs face challenges in finding the best way to involve foster families, integrate technology into casework activities, train foster families in the use of ICT for communication and support, protect foster children from dangers related to ICT, and deliver these services in a cost-effective manner. This requires child welfare agencies to have increased awareness of the extent to which both the benefits and difficulties of ICT are part of the lives of foster families as well as program planning and educational efforts that include ICT training for both human service workers and consumers.

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State Progress in Sharing Data between Courts and Child Welfare Agencies
Continued from page 18

welfare data. This working group of experts developed into the Court/Child Welfare NET (National Exchange Template) Task Force. (See Flango 2009 for a description of the process and a summary of the benefits of data exchange and also http://www.ncsconline/childwelfarewiki.)

The data exchange package for the dependency petition was recently field tested in Vermont. The national standards proved to be very helpful indeed. Approximately 65% of the information in the template was able to be taken from the template and used for the Vermont dependency petition. Another 31% of the information could have been used but was not required in Vermont's dependency petition. Only 4% of the information required in Vermont was not already contained in the national template.

A national template of data elements permits states to evaluate a prepared standard list of data elements for applicability to their particular situation and perhaps consider some that they may not have thought about. For example, Texas has prepared a comprehensive set of data requirements that could profitably be reviewed by other states considering data exchange (http://www.courts.state.tx.us/oca/texdeck/txdeck-home.asp). One set of data elements on the list considered the type and dosage of medications children were taking so that judges could consider the possibility of children being over-medicated. Whether or not states want to require adoption of these data elements for all courts, the inclusion of these data elements in the menu permits states to review them and make their own decisions about which to use. Part of that decision involves demonstrating how the data elements can be used in reports to the court and child welfare agency. For example, with the basic data on relationships available, TexDeck (Texas Data-enabled Courts for Kids) can produce a "genealogy" chart for complex cases that illustrates the various relationships and living arrangement of children with different caretakers. The chart can show a child living in a household with his or her mother and a significant other, for example, but label the child's biological father and legal father as well.

Data Sharing in the States

About half of the states have implemented data exchanges between courts and child welfare agencies, and more are planning to do so. In addition, nine states transmit data in one direction— from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting

System (AFCARS) to courts (www.fosteringcourtimprovement.).

Colorado and Utah are furthest along in the process of implementing comprehensive, two-way, data exchanges —

- Colorado's Family Justice Information System (FAMJIS) is exchanging data used to construct outcome measures of safety, permanency, due process, and timeliness with the Department of Human Services in real time and is one of the most fully developed data exchange systems in the country.
- Utah is another state with a sophisticated data exchange system. The court information system (CARE) has a direct interface with the child welfare data system (SAFE) such that each can view (read only) data from the other system. The web-based juvenile justice system provides access not only to courts and child welfare agencies, but also to schools.

Kentucky and New Jersey exchange data through periodic file transfers. Kentucky shares data on children under the jurisdiction of the Foster Care Review Board with the courts and child welfare agencies through weekly downloads from TWIST, the child welfare data system. New Jersey employs a manual file electronic file exchange. Illinois and New York exchange data by shared access, but only in specific geographic areas of their respective states.

Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island are working on shared access systems that are not yet fully implemented. In Connecticut, courts and child welfare agencies have identified the data elements they wish to exchange. Massachusetts is developing an electronic 'bridge" that would allow court data to be exchanged between the Probate and Family Court and the child welfare agency. Rhode Island is seeking to implement the nine key performance measures. Data will be sent electronically every night from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' "Banner" case management system to the Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST) and vice versa. Data from RICHIST will also be sent to a "dashboard" to inform family court judges about placements and case plans.

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Virtual Visitation and Child Welfare
Continued from page 19

while also addressing on-going concerns of confidentiality and privacy, as well as using these technologies to supplement rather than replace face-to-face worker visits with families and children. Child welfare agencies, particularly those serving remote and rural counties, might greatly enhance their ability to work effectively with families. The field of child welfare seems well positioned to learn from the adoption of virtual visitation in other fields and to advance the necessary policy and practice shifts to incorporate these new strategies in child welfare.

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Social Networking and Adoption
Continued from page 20

It is now widely accepted practice, informed by research, that adopted children need information about their family origins and that they benefit from openness rather than secrecy around their adoption and birth family. And now openness has become more crucial than ever.

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Building a Secure Federated Government KDD Information System from the Bottom up for Child Welfare Practice, Policy, and Research
Continued from page 22

summary statistics that are of general interest. Second, a private login based individual level data should be provided to approved staff for drill down capability. Training and changes in organization culture in CW agencies to use data in their daily jobs will be just as important as making the data available. When data get incorporated into the daily activities of local agencies that generate the data, administrative data will become much more reliable for other purposes. Finally, a secure federated multi-agency data system with privacy protection should be available for approved use in policy analysis and research.

Conclusion

Strong partnerships between government agencies and interdisciplinary teams at public universities can lead to successful implementation of comprehensive KDD information systems for child welfare while providing a priceless opportunity for research. Public universities are the natural homes for such systems because (1) they are under the public oversight of state legislatures who are ultimately responsible for policies that govern state agency data, (2) they have access to child welfare experts as well as information system experts required for building and maintaining such a system, (3) they have the flexibility and scale that most non-profit organizations or government agencies do not have, (4) the potential of the data system can be maximized and leveraged by giving researchers in child welfare and information systems full access, and (5) they can leverage the training of the next generation of government information specialists who will be versed in child welfare, technology, and data to build and maintain these systems cost effectively.

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A Challenge to Child Welfare Professionals: Using New Communication Technologies with Young People and their Families
Continued from page 24

are well placed to consider the impact of ICT on communication. Social workers need to cautiously engage with ICT for communication. To fail to do so denies service users important communication possibilities and may further disenfranchise them.

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Finding Family on Facebook

Celeste Bodner and Daniel Knapp

"It was amazing to get to meet my sister that I hadn't known and her kids and her husband," says 17-year-old Marissa (name changed to protect the identity of the young person), who has experienced nine different placements in her past six years in the foster care system. "Having family that you've never met is hard — and then to meet them is mind blowing!"

Stories abound about the effect of social networking sites like Facebook on today's teens. For the past few years, FosterClub, the national network for young people in foster care, has become aware of what seems to be an increasing number of stories about young people finding, or being found by, their biological family.

To gain a better perspective on how the internet is being used to locate and reconnect family members who have been separated through foster care, FosterClub recently launched a poll on its website. Seventy-nine young people from foster care (age 24 or under) responded. While the poll is not scientific, it points to the need for further investigation into, and action on, this issue that clearly impacts young people and alumni of the foster care system.

Using the Internet to Find Family

The Internet has been identified as a useful tool for child welfare professionals looking to locate lost relatives who might serve as permanency options for foster youth. In Oregon, child welfare worker Sarah Kopplin uses new technology to sleuth out family members of foster youth. In one case, she found 106 relatives of a 12-year-old who previously had no known family connections. "These (children) are the most lonely, the most hopeless. They've been in care so long or moved so often that they've lost their family of origin," says Kopplin, whose clients include children who've been in foster care for up to 10 years. (State of Oregon, 2010).

But what happens when young people take the search into their own hands? An overwhelming majority — 74% — of the young people who responded to FosterClub's poll had used the internet to search for a family member. Many reported restarting lost relationships and strengthening others. But clearly, the fact that relatives can be found using new technology doesn't ensure a happy ending for all young people.

"There was only one time where I tried to contact my bio mom. I sent her a Facebook message that said, "I love you, I hope you get the help you deserve." And she basically wrote back and said hateful and mean things, and it was not a good interaction at all."

Some youth indicated that social networking allowed them to communicate with relatives despite geographical boundaries. An additional cited advantage was how the internet provides an opportunity to maintain emotional boundaries.

"It is the only way to have any kind of communication because we are in so many different cities and states such as: a sister in Ohio, a sister in Nevada, my brother in Kentucky a sister in Hawaii, and the tribe is in Alabama and I live in Kentucky. I look forward to phone calls, emails, texts, or other postings on Facebook and MySpace to see pictures and comments."

"Facebook allows me to keep in contact with siblings while keeping a safe distance. I'm not sure if I'm ready for a face-to-face or normal relationship with them."

According to the poll, Facebook and texting are the communication vehicles of choice, with just over 44% of young people using each technology weekly or more often to connect with family. Many youth attest to the value of the Internet as a tool to help them establish permanence in their own lives.

Often, however, it is not the young person or alumni of foster care who initiates the contact. In many cases, those who have experienced foster care are the ones being found.

"A few weeks ago, I was on my Facebook page, and all of a sudden, a friend request came through. I looked to see who it was and the name popped up … [it was] my biological mother's name so I immediately knew it was my sister that I had not seen or talked to since I was 3 years old. I was very shocked that she even knew my name. I friended her and we began chatting about our lives and where we are now. "

"I was found through Facebook by my father I haven't heard from since I was three... it brought some very deeply rooted insecurities that I am working out now... I block those I want nothing to do with."

> An overwhelming majority — 74% — of the young people who responded to FosterClub's poll had used the internet to search for a family member.

The majority of the young people said they benefited positively from reconnections with relatives through the Internet. Thirty-five percent said both good and bad came with it, while only 12% ranked their reconnections as disappointing.

Ready or Not

Many stories indicated young people are not prepared for contact initiated by a family member. Despite the frequency with which young people and alumni are using the internet to locate disconnected family members, or the frequency by which they are being found, little or no preparation is

Continued on page 36

Transcription Technology in Child Welfare

Jennifer Heldt

As budgets shrink and case loads expand, child welfare agencies often look to technology for ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing workforce. Amongst a myriad of other cost saving measures implemented during my years in child protective services, the availability of transcription services was one of the most unique and convenient innovations in the use of time and technology. The transcription service allowed workers to leave a voice mail containing case notes or other narratives. The messages were recorded, transcribed and sent back to the worker via email, usually within 24 hours.

How it Works

At my agency, all workers received a password and a wallet-sized card with instructions on how to use the service. I attended an optional half-hour training that the company offered in person or online. The card explained how to pause, listen, fast forward and rewind while leaving a message, just as you would with a hand-held recorder. The worker could also give instructions or formatting to the transcriptionist, such as "New paragraph." or "Jennie. That's J-E-N-N-I-E." It took time and practice to get used to leaving those long-winded messages. Initially, it was awkward speaking formally, as you would write a case note, instead of the conversational way you would describe a case to a co-worker.

The transcription company guaranteed that messages would be transcribed and emailed to the worker within 24 hours. Oftentimes, transcriptions were completed the same day. The child welfare worker received an email notifying them that their transcription was complete. The worker would then log on to a secure website and receive a word document version of the narration, which could then be copied and pasted into electronic documents or case notes within the agency database.

Challenges

Issues of privacy and confidentiality were of major concern for many workers. The transcription service incorporated two protections for privacy. Firstly, the company and its transcribers were located out of state, so there was little likelihood that any of their workers would be able to recognize individuals being described in the notes. Secondly, all emails were password protected and encrypted. As an added protection, workers were encouraged not to use identifying information, such as full names, birth dates or social security numbers.

Of course, by de-identifying narratives, the workers were then compelled to spend time editing and revising transcriptions, which could significantly decrease the time-saving benefits of using the service. When workers took the time to narrate, edit, copy and paste data into cumbersome forms, it could seem more efficient for workers to spend the time typing it up themselves. Eventually, the service developed matching forms including court reports, assessment narratives, and case notes which could be saved directly to the state database. It is unfortunate that these mergeable forms were not developed earlier in the roll-out of the program. By the time they became available, many workers were already soured on the transcription service and chose to continue business as usual.

Another cost of the transcription service that should be recognized is the cell phone minutes that workers use. At times, I would narrate for over an hour, pausing the recording (but still using minutes) while I collected my thoughts. The transcription option also blurred the line between work and personal time. I know I am not the only worker who spent unpaid time at home, transcribing case notes or finishing a court report while making dinner or doing laundry. Furthermore, the quality of my completed narratives was admittedly less than if I had typed them myself. In other words, it's difficult to speak as eloquently as one types.

As an intake or investigative child welfare worker, I often visited several families in the course of the day. Between visits, I was able to sit in my car and narrate notes.

Benefits

I used the transcription service a lot. I liked the flexibility of working from anywhere, recording observations just after the fact, opening emails with a complete narrative and copying it into a form. It's true that many of the benefits that I saw from the transcription service could also be gained from a portable electronic device, such as a laptop or hand-held recorder, but these devices can be cumbersome. As an intake or investigative child welfare worker, I often visited several families in the course of the day. Between visits, I was able to sit in my car and narrate notes. Usually, the notes were transcribed and emailed to me by the time I returned to the office. I would spend a few minutes editing and then copy information into the appropriate forms. It felt like I was getting a lot done each day.

In the end, I'm not sure how cost-effective or efficient the transcription service was for the agency. Most workers never tried the service or tried it briefly but chose to continue typing their own narratives. I was one of the few workers who utilized the service on a daily basis. It made my life easier and probably saved me time in the long run.

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Youth and Technology Use: A Treatment Foster Parent's Perspective

Sarah Seaman and Amelia Franck Meyer, MS, MSW, LISW, APSW

We currently have a 17 year old foster son (whom we will call "Joe") who is "addicted" to technology. When Joe came to live with us, we informed him of specific family rules in regard to technology.

We have a cell phone that we use as our house phone that Joe may use to contact his mom, grandparents, friends, social workers, etc. Joe knows to ask our permission to use the phone and to let us know who he is calling. Unless we have an issue, the topic of the conversation is private. We are not sure that he will be allowed to have a personal cell phone while he is with us, but we have considered it as a special reward or gift. While he is living in our home, we would pay the monthly bill and would help him transfer the phone to his own account upon leaving our home.

Challenges of having a cell phone are monitoring with whom Joe would communicate and the cost and liability for the charges of the phone. If we got a phone for Joe, he would know who he could and could not contact on the phone and would know that we could check the numbers called online. If Joe ran up a cell phone bill or lost his phone, the liability would be ours as foster parents. It would be nice to have access to Joe when he's away from home, but since Joe's time away from us is very limited, it doesn't seem that the pros outweigh the cons.

Joe is allowed to go online while at home but only in common areas of the house. He has given us the username and password for his e-mail and Facebook accounts, and I check these regularly. We do not allow Joe to have any devices that allow him unlimited access to the internet. iPod Touch, PSP, Tablets, etc. are not allowed while living in our home. I would advise other foster parents to carefully protect passwords, not only to the computer but to the secured wireless router, and advise your neighbors to make sure that their wireless networks are secure, too.

Joe loves to work on computers, which is a great life skill and hobby of his. For these reasons, he is allowed one computer in his room to "tinker" with and use for homework. This computer is NOT allowed to be hooked up to the internet and must be shut off at lights out time. We had one issue with Joe sneaking in a wireless adapter for the computer and hacking into someone's unsecured wireless network to go online at night. At that point, we removed the computer from his room. After a few weeks of no computer in his room, we allowed him to have it during awake times to tinker or to do homework, and he has to bring the tower out of his room at 9 p.m. for "lights out" time.

If there is a particular program/file/game that Joe wants on his computer, he just asks to be able to download it to his flash drive and then upload it on to his computer. Whatever he is downloading is approved by us first and is done on a computer in plain sight. We have also explained to him the consequences in the event he relapses and abuses the privilege.

A positive we have seen in relation to technology is that Joe has been able to keep in touch with his mom, step dad, friends, and other relatives through Facebook. This has been a big help with Joe. The positive can also be negative in that I don't know his friends from his old town and am not sure which ones are positive influences and which ones are not. I do keep in touch with his mom and consult her when I see he has added a new friend.

My advice to a new foster parent in regard to technology is to use it to your advantage but don't abuse the power it possesses. Technology is EVERYWHERE, and if you ban it from your house and foster child, they will rebel even harder to gain access where they can. Give them a little slack but make sure they know that you will be checking up every now and then. With Joe, technology is a privilege and, when used as a consequence, can be dramatic; however, it is not the only consequence we use. We make sure he knows that we respect his love for computers and his drive to work on them, so we have to be sure that the consequence fits the offense. We don't take away computer privileges because he didn't do the dishes.

My advice to a new foster parent in regard to technology is to use it to your advantage but don't abuse the power it possesses.

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A Court Process Report System (CPRS) for Civil Child Abuse and Neglect Cases

Michelle Barclay, Esq., Christopher Church, Esq. and George Li, MS

One of our best Georgia CASA users just accepted a new job in a neighboring state starting a new CASA program in Auburn, Alabama. "I'll have to get a new user ID and password to access CPRS in Alabama, right?" She was shocked to learn CPRS only exists in GA. For our team, it was a wonderful moment. One of our users just took for granted that this sort of information should be at one's fingertips. It has taken us 10 years to get here. We think every state should be easily sharing this level of information between the judicial and the executive branch today.

CPRS is a carefully negotiated, hard won, shared information system between the judicial and the executive branch in Georgia. CPRS pulls information out of Georgia's SACWIS system, named SHINES, and sends it to the judicial branch to be displayed for local court users. The information is a subset of the data in SHINES and includes case plans, relative search information, assessment recommendations, visitation schedules, medical and educational information on each child in foster care, documents that would normally be shared via paper.

The benefits of accessing information electronically cannot be overstated. Appropriate court personnel can prepare outside of traditional business hours, allowing everyone to ensure a child is getting what he or she needs. CPRS houses all of this information, so it is distributed and shared in a more timely matter, sometimes in real-time.

Another benefit of sharing information is accountability. When many eyes are on a case plan, quality improves. We can all make sure relatives have been searched, found and ruled in or out as a placements or a resources.

Christopher Church conducts a user training session

We can hold the contractors doing family assessments to high standards. Many courts reported a consistent absence of visitation plans within case plans. After confirming this deficit and diagnosing a training issue in SHINES, we shared these findings with our child agency partners. Now our team regularly distributes to the agency leadership in all regions a list of cases with missing visitation plans.

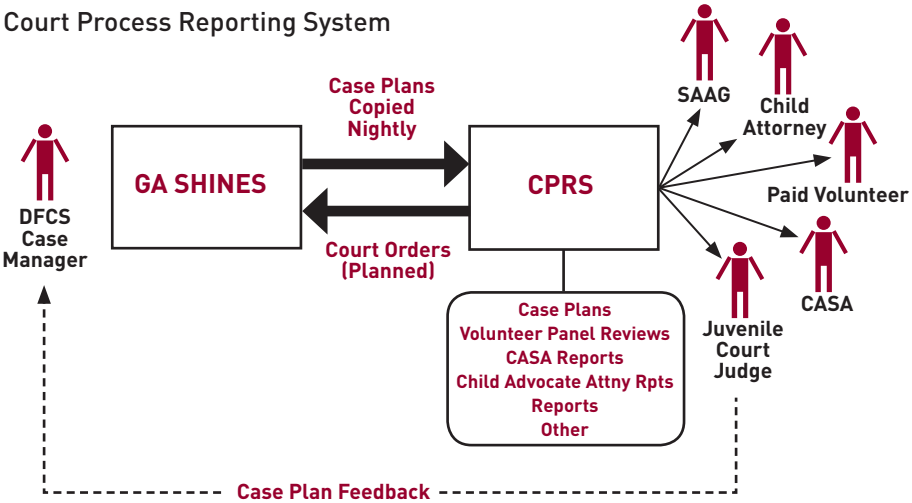
The benefits of accessing information electronically cannot be overstated. Appropriate court personnel can prepare outside of traditional business hours, allowing everyone to ensure a child is getting what he or she needs.

CPRS allows the court users to run helpful reports for judges and managers, answering queries to identify all foster children who are eligible for independent living services, or all children with TPRs, or all children zero to three. These reports can be run at the state or county level.

Presenting this information affects practice. The Cold Case report uses a statistical model to identify which children currently in care stand the greatest likelihood of aging out of foster care before achieving permanency. Upon seeing the Cold Case report for the first time, a juvenile court judge was compelled to determine the current status of the children reported. Without the report, the judge likely would not have viewed those cases until their next court date.

We attribute our successes to two factors: our focus on users' needs and an agile

Court Process Reporting System



Continued on page 36

Measuring Return-On-Investment in Lives: A Model from Florida

Frances Allegra, CEO and Pat Smith, CIO

Imagine you are a child welfare case manager. What would be the value of knowing that the children assigned to you are safe? What would be the value of knowing where they are? What if you were in court and the judge asked for a copy of the child's school performance and you were able to instantly access it on your laptop? Imagine you are a supervisor of six case workers. What is the value of knowing that the 100 children you are responsible for are safe and visited in their homes, without fail, every 30 days? What is the value of seeing a recent photo taken in the home? What if you could quickly determine which child had received a failing grade or missed a medical appointment? In Miami, all of this, and more, is possible today.

Today's business leaders and successful entrepreneurs would find it beyond belief that child welfare and child protection services are still managed in much the same way that they were managed fifty years ago. Caseworkers juggle a truckload of papers and triplicate, obsolete forms. Once completed, forms require additional data entry and other inefficient processes that undermine any notion of efficiency and innovation in a case worker's day. Thanks to some frustrated business leaders who founded our Board of Trustees, the application of current off-the-shelf technologies to the practice of child welfare was mandated.

Our Kids is proud of our consistent attainment of high marks of performance in statewide standards in child safety that are a direct result of the introduction of innovative technologies. Rather than intimidating our workforce with new technologies and dramatic changes to their routine, our case workers are motivated, enthusiastic and tell us that "I feel like I can get my job done for the first time in three years." (K. Sanchez, personal communication, November 2008).

The genesis of these changes grew from a heartbreaking tragedy of a missing five year old in Miami. For almost two years, the state's case worker lied to a judge that the child was doing fine with her caregivers. In reality, the case worker never visited the child. When the lies were discovered, the tragedy of Rilya Wilson became a national media story (Canedy, 2002; "Foster care system," 2010; Shepard, 2010, July, 29).

Silver Lining

Rilya's case inspired us to create a solution to prevent a similar tragedy. As a result, we learned that safety, well being and permanency can be measured, tracked and improved with cutting edge, readily available and affordable technologies.

OK Connect

In 2008, we launched *OK Connect*, our two device solution supporting a mobile workforce in Miami and the Florida Keys. We armed case workers with smart phones, laptops and software to give them the tools common to mobile professionals in many industries. The smart phones are 3G and loaded with GPS technology, cameras and case data. Caseworkers now use their phones to document a monthly home visit with the child's picture, indelibly stamping it with the time, date and location of their visit. The picture is securely and wirelessly sent to Florida's SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System) system where it becomes part of the official record.

Karen Sanchez, Egghead Award winner with OK Connect tools

ASK (Agency Secure Knowledge)

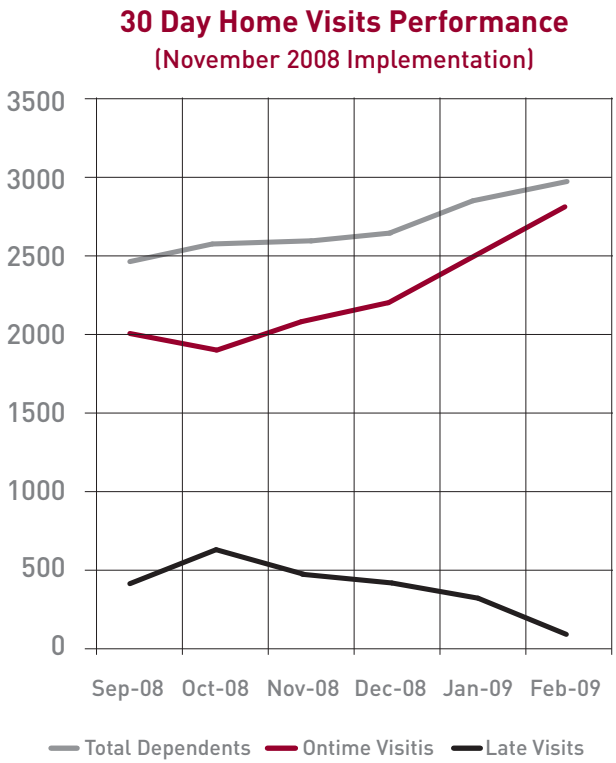
In preparation for the visit or a court hearing, the case manager can tether the smart phone to his/her laptop and view scanned images of the documents in his/her case files using *ASK* or search the internet. *ASK* is a virtual case file that today contains over five million scanned and indexed documents (Comsquared). The ability to tether saves money and acts as an air card for ubiquitous Internet connectivity.

Business Intelligence Performance Dashboards (Mindshare)

We reformatted existing data using business intelligence tools. Today case managers and supervisors have web-based dashboards that drive higher compliance with performance metrics. Today staff can plan their time more effectively and reduce the risk of more tragedies. Notifications of missing visits are automatically sent to supervisors for immediate action.

How We Got Here

Our Kids technology initiatives started as top-down projects as part of our Board's strategic planning process. We were agnostic about the solution or type of technology. A steering committee of stakeholders was charged with making key decisions and keeping the project on track and on budget. Several workgroups met monthly to execute the project. Once the steering committee had agreed to the scope



Continued on page 37

GIS and Child Welfare in Louisiana

Michael Dailey and Joseph V. Keegan

Geographic Information System (GIS) is a technology that has excellent potential for child welfare practice. Louisiana child welfare practitioners have implemented GIS into their menu of assessment and management tools. This brief article summarizes the lessons learned from the Louisiana GIS experience.

GIS is an information management system that stores, presents and analyzes data referenced by geography. It stores and displays data like a multi layer cake. Looking down from the top, you can see through all layers. The bottom layer is a map of Louisiana with cities, roads, rivers, and parish boundaries. The second layer of the map comprises 4,300 stars, one for each foster child, placed on the map by the child's current address. A third layer comprises squares for every school in the state. Subsequent layers are biological parents, in-home service parents, adoptive homes, foster homes, mental health facilities, residential treatment facilities, psychiatric facilities, day care centers, etc. One can add and remove layers from the map to get a picture of information with a range of complexity. Even geographical features, such as streets, rivers or parish boundaries, can be added or removed from display.

GIS presents data visually which enhances quick understanding from a practice and analysis level. A GIS map of foster children shows dark clumps of stars in many cities reflecting large foster care concentrations. The spatial presentation, or clumps of stars, allows the user to quickly see patterns and gaps in the data. GIS maps the location of a specific foster child or quantities and density of foster children in cities or parishes. It even allows comparisons of distance between locations, such as the location of placement to removal location.

GIS further enhances analysis. First, data storage supports traditional statistical analysis. The report function generates data sets subject to statistical analysis. Second, GIS can generate spatial information, such as distance between the foster child and her biological parent. Distance is a critical support or barrier to visitation. Caseworkers can use this information to make placement and service delivery decisions. Aggregate analysis of the distance between foster children and their parents over time might be a strong predictor of parental involvement. Washington State piloted GIS in its case management IT system to integrate the spatial information of GIS into child welfare decision making at the worker level (http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/fall05articles/bringing-foster.html Downloaded 12/15/2010). Finally, visual-spatial analysis simplifies complex information to its core levels. The visual inspection of the GIS presentation and analysis often suggests solutions. The concentration of foster children in one rural parish contrasts with the other rural parishes. A potential solution would be evaluating the safety decisions at removal and the safety level required for reunification.

Louisiana is in the beginning stages of GIS utilization. The presentation of foster care data is a critical piece utilized. Five disasters (four major hurricanes and one oil spill) placed a premium on being able to identify day care centers, foster children, foster parents, and parents of foster children in relationship to disaster locations. These data enhance pre-disaster planning and post-disaster recovery. Louisiana foster care uses a 24-year-old legacy system that has many "erase and replace" location fields. This issue increases the difficulty of analyzing time related location changes.

Five disasters (four major hurricanes and one oil spill) placed a premium on being able to identify day care centers, foster children, foster parents and parents of foster children in relationship to disaster locations.

The use of GIS to facilitate and improve case decision-making is available. Staff have the capacity to search for foster homes based on the location of removal and child's school. Limiting the GIS map to foster homes, users may point and click to drill down to specific areas and see available foster homes. A report of foster homes with space for placement is updated daily and available in data or map formats. Using the same process, child welfare staff can locate services in relation to current client location, including day care centers, psychiatric hospitals and other providers.

Implementation has been the biggest challenge for GIS use. This is an area where the IT tool has significantly prefaced the staff readiness capacity. An integrated child welfare system is in process. Staff currently utilize several systems to store and use case specific data. While partially integrated into the option of choices, GIS is not integrated into the core systems and policy. These tools could be better utilized with proper training and management.

The visual inspection of the GIS presentation and analysis often suggests solutions.

Increasing use of GIS requires a three-pronged approach. First, Louisiana needs to build better case examples for the uses of GIS. Second, the connectivity and security processes require better integration into current systems and mobile worker technology. This is in process. Finally, staff need GIS specific training. This becomes difficult as Louisiana is balancing the many clinical, CFSR/PIP, and GIS training needs with time needed for casework.

Louisiana sees itself in the nascent stages of GIS development. The core tool is present and available for staff. The access and integration of the tool is a bit unwieldy, but becoming better.

Michael Dailey, PhD, is a Policy Director for the Office of the Governor in Louisiana. From direct care in residential treatment centers for abused youth to directing community based organizations to serving as Deputy Secretary for Louisiana's Department of Children and Family Services, Dailey is committed to improving the lives and opportunities of children in need. His work has focused on developing and implementing methods for accountability, program and management development, and key applications of core program and policy research

Joseph V. Keegan, MSW, LCSW-BACS, has worked in child welfare for 30 years. Currently serving as a Child Welfare Administrator for Louisiana, he has experience as a practitioner in child protection investigations, foster care, in-home services and adoptions. He was the CFSR Coordinator for the 1st round and data lead for the second round. Joe has been on the team that implemented an outcomes dashboard for Louisiana child welfare services. Joe also served as adjunct faculty for the Louisiana State University School of Social Work.

Getting to Ground Truth: The Child Welfare Doppler Radar

Christopher Church, Esq. and Andrew Barclay, MSME, MSEE

The term 'ground truth' is military slang used to describe the need for reconciling information contained in intelligence reports with what is actually happening on the front lines. In Georgia, a group of child welfare professionals have embraced this idea determined to get to ground truth. What has been dubbed 'The Child Welfare Doppler Radar' is the most recent effort to do just that.

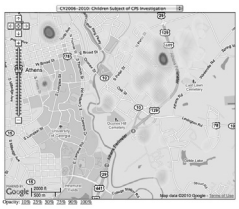
Thanks to the Child & Family Services Review (CFSR) and our Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) leadership, most social services supervisors in Georgia know how many children in their county were adopted within twenty-four months, or reunified in twelve, or emancipated after spending at least three years in care. The Children's Bureau requires states to collect and share standardized data regarding the children and families who receive child welfare services. After years of negotiation between Georgia's Court Improvement Program, DFCS, and Georgia's Office of the Child Advocate (state ombudsman), the data are now shared with Georgia's judicial branch, and summary statistics are posted publicly at www.fosteringcourtimprovement.

That we live in a data driven world is evident. Yet in this data driven world, connecting the front line workers to child welfare data in a meaningful way is increasingly challenging. Foremost among the impediments is simple geography.

An attorney representing DFCS in Waycross, Georgia will be less interested in statewide trends than those in Ware County, for which Waycross is the county seat. Even more, a case manager in Southeast Atlanta will be less interested in Fulton County trends than those of Thomasville Heights, a rather notorious neighborhood in Fulton County with a lot of agency presence. In other words, the more local the data, the more meaningful the review, and you can't get more local than a census block.

The Child Welfare Doppler Radar, like its counterpart in weather, displays the intensity of some activity in an area. The street addresses of children reported as victims of child abuse and neglect are geocoded and processed into intensity maps using binned kernel density estimation. The intensities of child and report characteristics (e.g. age, substantiation, response type) are compared to each other and to characteristics of the general population of children. The density estimates are displayed as a transparent pseudocolor overlay layer on Google maps for interactive viewing in any web browser. Because the source data are precise latitude/longitude point locations, audiences see concentrated sources of maltreatment at the precision of a single home on a satellite view.

It comes as little surprise that stakeholders can immediately identify the 'hot spots' in their community. In map number one of Clarke County (see page 43 for color version), the case managers pointed to the spot north of the University of Georgia campus and called out the apartment complex by name. They did the same for the area west of campus: "That's that trailer park right between the airport and UGA!" A fair, and typical, question of the stakeholders is, "What do you want us to take away from these maps?"



Map Number One, see page 43

These two communities account for much of the formal investigations of child abuse and neglect by Clarke County DFCS. The maps further allow stakeholders to compare variables side-by-side, as demonstrated on page 43. Map Number Two measures the intensity of 'Family Support Cases' – services. Almost all the family support cases in Clarke County are concentrated in the trailer park between the airport and UGA identified above. There are few, albeit some, family support cases in the apartment complex north of campus. Furthermore, the substantiated cases of abuse and neglect are largely concentrated in the apartment complex north of campus and rather sparse in the trailer community. 'What accounts for these differences in a community?' is the type of question the maps raise.

The experience above is not unique to Clarke County. There are 'hot spots' (and 'cold spots' with high child population and little agency activity) in every community. Among the 'hot spots,' there are always differences in characteristics and in agency response.

In December of 2010, after exploring the maps with stakeholders from metro Atlanta, we offered a preview of what's to come: "Race/ethnicity will be the next data added to the maps." A case manager told us not to waste our time: "You've already shown me that with these maps." While race/ethnicity overlays will still be added (always check anecdote against the data), it was clear the frontline case manager had meaningfully connected to the data. For two bureaucrats in Atlanta, that was one step closer to ground truth

Yet in this data driven world, connecting the front line workers to child welfare data in a meaningful way is increasingly challenging.

Georgia's current efforts to model a statewide differential response protocol. One key feature of this protocol is that there is no formal finding of abuse and neglect: no investigation, no victimization report, and no substantiation of the allegation. Rather, the family receives an assessment and is provided family support

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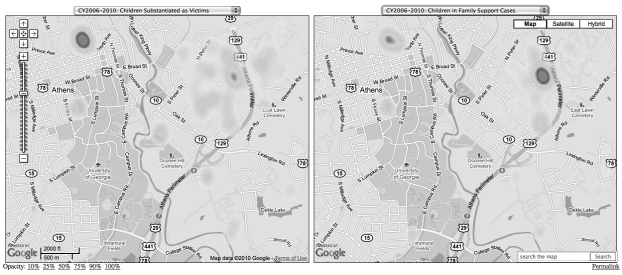
Andrew Barclay works as a full-time volunteer technical consultant, providing technological and statistical support to Georgia non-profit and governmental agencies. He is the co-founder of the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic at Emory University School of Law, and of Fostering Court Improvement, and non-profit providing statistical analysis to juvenile court stakeholders.



Map Number Two, see page 43

Using Social Media in Child Welfare

Roxann Miller

In early 2006, the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families launched a multi-faceted marketing campaign to recruit foster and adoptive families for children in foster care. While the campaign flourished, the economic crisis negatively impacted funding. These challenges created an opportunity for the Department to look at innovative ways to explore and expand its communication outreach and family recruitment.

A 2009 report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that one in five Internet users searched for political information, posted their views about issues, or engaged in another civic activity on a social network. In addition, nearly every federal agency has its own YouTube channel.

In March 2009, the Department launched its own YouTube channel with the belief that it is especially important in the child welfare arena to have the ability to control the content of messages about Child Protective Services (CPS) and other Department programs on the Internet. Prior to launching the Department's YouTube channel, a search for "Arizona CPS" might bring stories from disgruntled former clients. Now, when someone searches for "Arizona CPS" the Department's YouTube channel shows at the top.

The purpose of launching the channel was to give the Department the opportunity to communicate to the general public, child welfare stakeholders and staff in a new way, reaching people from every corner of the state (even the nation and the world), delivering content appropriate to the Department's goals and vision. The YouTube channel also —

- Reflects the Department's branding logo and tagline
- Contains no advertising
- Allows videos to be rated, embedded in other websites and syndicated
- Does not accept postings from outside users
- Does not allow commenting or video responses

What does YouTube do for Child Welfare workers?

- Allows for foster and adoptive parent recruitment to occur anytime – 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Gives the public access to information from the agency side. This could include presenting CPS and foster care in a more positive manner.

- Empowers the public to be better informed about child welfare issues.
- Allows the public to engage with child welfare professionals online.
- Increases efficiency by delivering messages faster and more effectively than ever before.

Currently the Department has a variety of child welfare related videos on its YouTube channel, including —

- Reach Out Your Hand http://www.youtube.com/azdesgov#p/u/1/KONlP07rYHs
- National Adoption Day 2009 http://www.youtube.com/azdesgov#p/u/4/1hDOuuEQrO8
- What Does Family Mean to You? (2010 Foster Care Month) http://www.youtube.com/user/azdesgov?feature=mhum#p/u/12/AKIi9lzP0fY
- Reunification Day http://www.youtube.com/azdesgov#p/u/12/18A_-KhFzXc
- COX Communication Volunteers Brighten CPS Children's Rooms http://www.youtube.com/azdesgov#p/a/u/3/r3ulPwHTrsU
- It's Not Just a Job - A Realistic Preview of a Career in Child Protective Services http://www.youtube.com/azdesgov#p/u/10/oZ-vXw3-604

Since its launch, approximately 83,000 people have viewed the Department's YouTube videos. The videos on foster care and adoption are among the most viewed, second only to the series of videos on unemployment benefits.

Reaching Out to Community Partners

It is critical that partnerships with faith-based and non-profit organizations are strengthened to ensure our shared resources are creatively and effectively utilized. Toward that goal, the Department is also a partner with www.arizonaserves, a web site established by Governor Janice K. Brewer in her 2010 State of the State Address. The purpose of Arizona*SERVES* is to connect the resources of faith-based and non-profit organizations to the needs of Arizona's most vulnerable citizens.

Arizona*SERVES* stands for **S**ervice, **E**ngagement, **R**esponsiveness, **V**olunteerism, **E**ncouragement and **S**upport. The Department has specifically developed a variety of downloadable resources for faith communities in the areas of foster care participation and preserving connections by enhancing visitation experiences for children and families, elder independence and grandparents raising grandchildren, the provision of free or reduced cost child care services through existing licensed facilities, and transportation for the underserved.

A Social Media Caveat

Despite all the positive results social media has had in recruiting foster and adoptive

Continued on page 37

Finding Family on Facebook
Continued from page 28

being provided to help them prepare for these reconnections.

"I found my little brother who I lost contact with for about 3 years. It was weird because so much stuff had happened, I didn't know what to say or what was ok to ask. After a while I stopped contacting him because it was too hard to see how his life turned out and how different we were. We had nothing but abuse in common and that was all I was reminded of when we talked."

Many of the relationships with siblings and other relatives are fraught with emotional baggage. Without support in navigating the reconnection, there is great risk that opportunities for hopeful reconnections are lost. Worse, there were stories of young people who faced rejection all over again when they tried to reach out. Furthermore, young people from foster care have often had confusing and disjointed relationships and can find it difficult to know how to maintain proper boundaries or to maintain healthy relationships.

"I did write two of them letters as to how I felt about how they treated me and about all the things they did wrong to me… Police called me about one of them saying the family would press charges if I contacted them again."

Over a quarter of the young people reported having received unwanted contact from a relative. In some cases, reconnections can even turn dangerous. Twenty-one percent of the young people said they had faced situations while reconnecting to family that they would describe as causing harm to their physical, financial, or emotional safety.

In absence of policy and support from child welfare regarding connections with family on the internet, young people and alumni are devising their own strategies to keep themselves safe. Half of the respondents said they use strategies such as blocking or ignoring friend requests, and 38% used the strategy of increasing their privacy settings for the purpose of avoiding contact with certain relatives. However, 35% indicated they had never needed to edit their settings because of family members.

What's the Role of Child Welfare?

One third of the young people who responded to our survey reported not telling their caseworker about their reconnections with family or only telling their caseworker after contact had been made. Of concern is that 20% of the youth reported using the internet to connect with family with whom they believe they were not supposed to have contact. But this is not to say that young people do not want support in reconnecting; the majority (64%) reported that it would have been helpful to have someone mentor them about connecting with biological family - either before or during the reconnection.

Very few states have documented policies about youth usage of the Internet or specifically addressed interactions between youth and relatives using technology. The speed at which new technology moves has left child welfare's inbox full of emerging questions:

Who is responsible for monitoring a child's communication with relatives over the internet?

Does a video chat count as a visit? How about IM or texting or email or a Facebook posting? What permissions are required for a young person to publish their own photos or information on the Internet? Could young people become more active partners in family-finding efforts?

There are many challenges and few easy answers at the intersection of new technology and foster care. But the train's left the station, and as long as child welfare lags behind, foster youth and alumni are being forced to make their way with these issues largely on their own. Child welfare must get on board and consider these concerns. The payoff for young people in care is arrival to greater permanency outcomes and safer, healthier relationships that profoundly impact their lives.

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FosterClub's mission is to lead the efforts of young people in and from foster care to become connected, educated, inspired and represented so they can realize their personal potential and contribute to better outcomes for their peers. Learn more at www.fosterclub

A Court Process Report System (CPRS) for Civil Child Abuse and Neglect Cases
Continued from page 31

approach to adding new features. Sharing the case plan data was our only goal in building CPRS. Every additional feature has originated from an exchange with an end-user group. These users know the challenges faced throughout the state. When announcing in a regional agency meeting that CPRS would become the repository for electronic versions of Court Orders, a room of 150 case managers broke into applause.

We continually solicit new ideas and put bounties on system defects. We engage our users in designing our system and deploy new features into the field quickly to gauge their usability and effectiveness. Our project sponsor, a juvenile court judge highlighted the difficulty of tracking changes in large case plans. In response we incorporated a change tracking feature, of which he said "...the ability to do snapshots to be able to monitor when changes are made is the only thing which allows me to keep current. I have to use this or I would have no way to keep up."

What does the future hold for CPRS in GA and elsewhere? We will continue to improve the quality of reports, to develop new and more customizable reports for our users, add to the over 650 data elements that we already share with our child welfare agency, and we plan to automate the transfer of court orders to the SHINES system. Our hope is that our user base continues to grow which can only positively affect the child welfare work in GA.

Michelle Barclay has been the director of the Supreme Court of Georgia's Committee on Justice for Children, Georgia's Court Improvement Program, since 1996.

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George Li has been leading development for Georgia's Court Improvement Program for the past eight years and also served as the Application Architect for Georgia's SACWIS system.

Measuring Return-On-Investment in Lives: A Model from Florida
Continued from page 32

and objectives, an important next step was branding the projects.

The brand, whether it was *OK Connect*, *ASK,* or *Mindshare*, creates support, unifies and rallies the team and ensures consistency. Once we have identified a potential solution, we pilot ideas to discover problems and obtain feedback. Early failures are expected and are used to build front-line support as problems are resolved.

Eggheads Spread the Word

Even though these projects are started by a top-down approach, the success was driven by the case worker. Branding is furthered by using performance contests to identify spokespersons. Nicknamed "Eggheads," our contest winners become our champions, early adopters, and self-appointed trainers. Critical to success is early community engagement designed to educate stakeholders about our agenda and the project's vision without over-promising results.

Every project begins with equal amounts of skepticism and enthusiasm. We have found that privacy fears, coupled with the fear of change, can be lethal to a project. By involving stakeholders and frontline workers at the beginning of the project, skeptics can become believers, and potential saboteurs can be thwarted. In our *OK Connect* project, for example, we held focus groups and let case managers choose the brand of phone and laptop. We specifically recruited "techno-phobes" as members to participate in our workgroups. We listened to fears at every gathering, internal meeting or forum available. Some of the common fears we heard were —

- Case managers would feel like "big brother" was watching.
- Fear that staff would be spending time during a visit staring at a computer rather than interacting with the child, thus disrupting the quality of the interaction.
- Concern that new equipment may cause staff to exceed work schedules according to wage and hour laws because the new technology enabled them to work more than 8 hours per day.
- Fear of privacy and security issues, if laptop or phone is lost or stolen or information on it (We encrypted laptops and protected them with a tracking device).
- Fear that expensive equipment would put caseworkers at risk when visiting dangerous neighborhoods.

We addressed each of these concerns head-on and accentuated the benefits. For example, smart phones provide case workers with an alert button that signals their location if they are in trouble and provide automated mileage tracking, automated reminders, texting, and email.

Support from Florida's Governor

Our proof-of-concept for the project was so successful it caught the attention of Florida's Governor, who publically supported the idea. The Governor's support inspired the state agency to allocate $6.3 million to bring it to scale statewide (Carey, 2010). It has since been adopted and implemented across Colorado.

Yet, despite these compelling facts and efficacy, some of our Florida colleagues are still considering whether the cost of outfitting front line staff with blackberries, laptops and internet connectivity is worth the cost.

Return on Investment (ROI): Priceless

In 2002, our Board set a vision to never allow a tragedy like Rilya Wilson's to happen to a child on our watch. In 2005, we took responsibility for 5,000 children's cases. In 2007, we proved we could keep them safe with readily available and reliable technology. In 2008, we convinced staff to change their jobs and embrace the solution. In 2009, we convinced the Governor and state officials we had the logical solution to a potentially frequent, serious and deadly problem. In 2010, Colorado agreed.

It is our experience that the value and benefits greatly outweigh its cost. In a short period of time, these projects transformed staff into a technologically-savvy, highly-motivated workforce that embraces new technology and the accountability the technology brings without reservation (Nunziata, 2009; "Our kids caseworkers," 2009; Our Kids Videos, 2009; Polaneczky, 2010).

So, what is the ROI? Are children safer children in foster care? Yes. Is the workforce more engaged and productive? Absolutely. Peace of mind for Florida's citizens? You bet. The investment? About $6 per child, per month.

The Future is Bright

Our success has inspired us to take on new frontiers in Juvenile Court. Rather than missing school waiting for a judge to call the case, imagine if children could appear in court via Skype from school? Rather than waiting for an attorney's paralegal to enter court hearing data into SACWIS, imagine if an attorney's in-court notes could be captured instantly and simultaneously uploaded into SACWIS by using digital pens? Court documents account for 40-50% of the essential paperwork that moves a child through the foster care system. Imagine if all court documents were created and captured instantly with digital pens?

Winston Churchill is credited with saying "a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Tearing down systemic obstacles in child welfare with technology has made us opportunistic optimists. We plan on continuing to challenge old assumptions with new ways of thinking and working.

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Using Social Media in Child Welfare
Continued from page 35

homes, there is also a need for awareness and education for families and staff about internet safety. Issues of confidentiality and safety must be addressed regarding Facebook comments and posting photos of children on photo sharing sites where children are in out of home care and safety threats exist. Older children who come into care may also have their own Facebook pages prior to removal. Attention needs to be given to assess if there are safety issues that may need to be addressed if information is posted that identifies a child's location or other personal information.

Overall, the world of social media has many positive benefits for child welfare workers to utilize. Some may offer information, such as the AZDES YouTube page. Others may provide community and support to foster parents, such as www.fostercarecentral. It will take time to fully evaluate the potential of this emerging medium.

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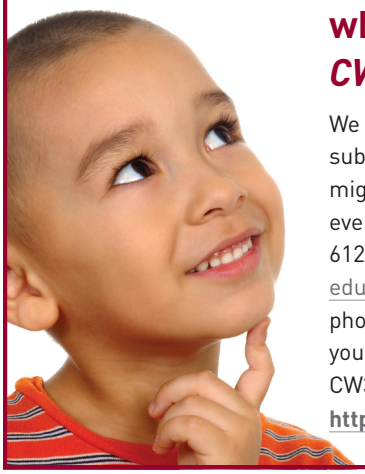

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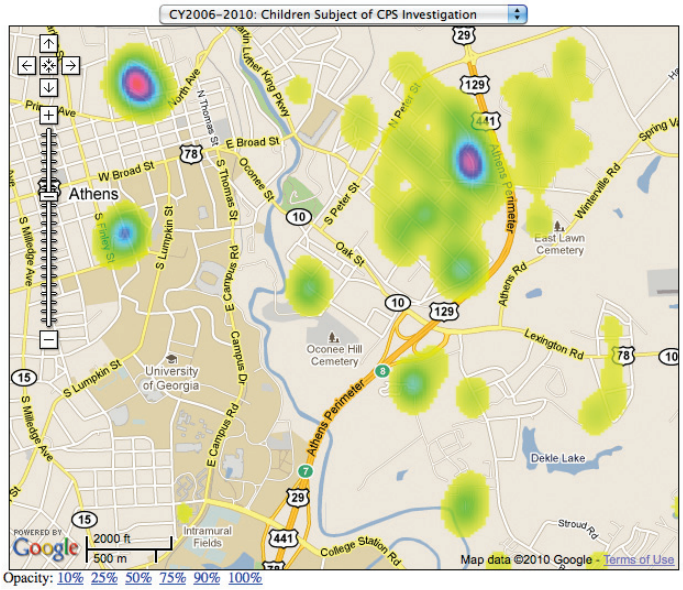
Child Welfare 360° (CW360°) is an annual publication that provides communities, child welfare professionals, and other human service professionals comprehensive information on the latest research, policies and practices in a key area affecting child well-being today. The publication uses a multidisciplinary approach for its robust examination of an important issue in child welfare practice and invites articles from key stakeholders, including families, caregivers, service providers, a broad array of child welfare professionals (including educators, legal professionals, medical professionals and others), and researchers. Social issues are not one dimensional and cannot be addressed from a single vantage point. We hope that reading *CW360°* enhances the delivery of child welfare services across the country while working towards safety, permanency and well-being for all children and families being served.

Screen shots continuted from page 34.

Map Number One: Clarke County



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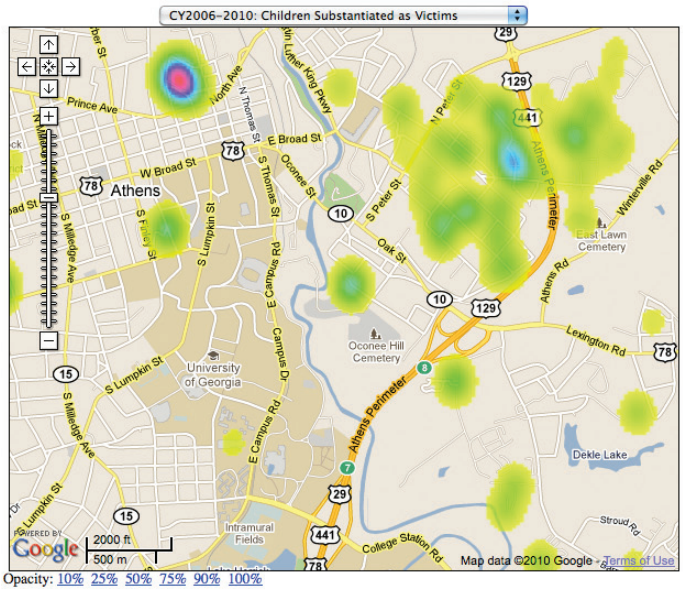
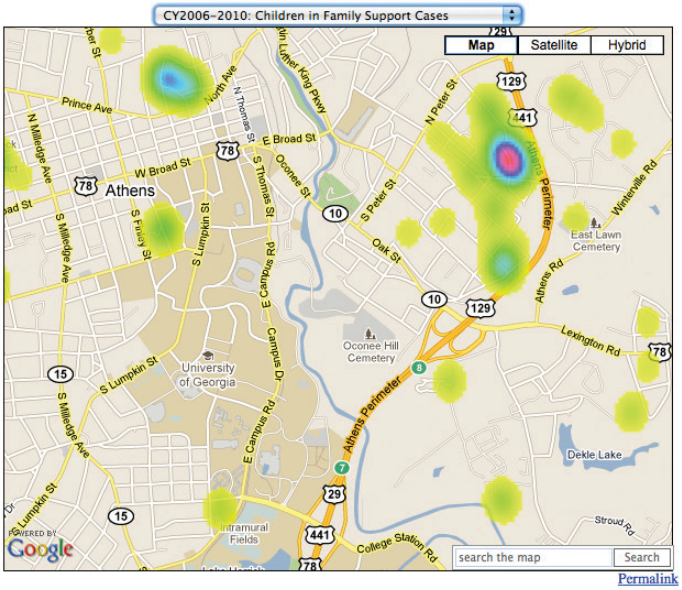
Map Number Two: Family Support Cases





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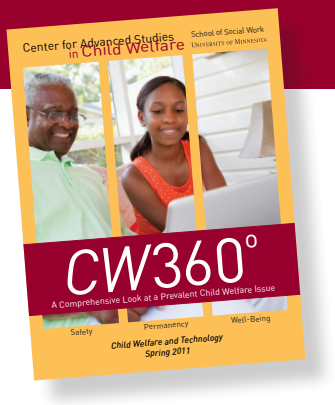

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In This Issue of *CW*360⁰

- An overview of child welfare within the "Network Society"; what does child welfare look like in the era of cell phones, social networking and social media
- The ways collecting and sharing data can improve the child welfare system
- Considerations around privacy and confidentiality in child welfare associated with technology
- An overview of existing tools such as digital recording devices, electronic notebooks, SmartPhones and software that have been put to use in child welfare practice
- The story of a multi-county child welfare agency that has developed and implemented innovative technologies
- Ways youth in out of home placement have used social media to stay connected to family, professionals and one another
- A treatment foster parent's perspective on youth and technology
- The ways technologies have enhanced data sharing between court and agencies
- The possibilities for virtual visitation and child welfare

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a comprehensive look at a prevalent child welfare issue

Feature Issue: Child Welfare and Technology, Spring 2011

Executive Editor: Traci LaLiberte
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Design: Heidi Wagner
Layout: Connie Burkhart

Acknowledgements: The following people have been instrumental to the creation of this publication: Tracy Crudo, Scotty Daniels, and Katie Haas

CW360° is published annually by the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW), School of Social Work, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. This issue was supported, in part, by grant #439481, 000000013744 from Minnesota Department of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division.