



**SELECTED RESOURCES ON THE EFFICACY OF SOCIAL WORK FOR
PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE**

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*Prepared by: Joan Levy Zlotnik, Ph.D., ACSW, Director, NASW Social Work Policy Institute
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1. Albers, E., Reilly, T. & Rittner, B. (1993). Children in foster care: Possible factors affecting permanency planning. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*. 10(4):329-341. - This study shows that **child welfare staff with BSW and MSW degrees are more effective** in developing successful permanency plans for children who have been in foster care for more than two years.
2. Anderson, Dinah Gattis (1994). Coping strategies and burnout among veteran child protection workers. Doctoral Dissertation, University of South Carolina. - A study of 151 seasoned line child protective caseworkers and their supervisors from all areas of South Carolina corroborated the findings of other researchers that “excessive workload, poor administrative support and bureaucratic constraint” contributed to worker stress, burnout and turnover. The study also find **that social work education (particularly graduate social work education) reduces workers burnout**, a major cause of staff turnover.
3. Bagdasaryan, S. (2012). Social work education and title IV-E program participation as predictors of entry-level knowledge among public child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(9), 1590-1597. **Findings supported that newly-hired child welfare workers' with MSWs scored higher on tests of child welfare knowledge compared to those with other degrees Title IV-E training program participation was related to higher scores among MSWs.**
4. Barbee, A. P., Antle, B., Sullivan, D. J., Huebner, R., Fox, S., Hall, J. C. (2009). Recruiting and retaining child welfare workers: is preparing social work students enough for sustained commitment to the field? *Child Welfare*, 88(5), 69. This article presents results of an evaluation of a specialized BSW child welfare education program (PCWCP) implemented in the state of the Kentucky. Results found that PCWCP graduates were significantly more likely to:(1) accept a case for investigation; (2) intervene proactively; (3) act consistently with the risk rating of the case (i.e. they unsubstantiated more low-risk cases, substantiated more moderate-risk cases, and continued more high-risk cases); (4) set a goal for adoption rather than return to parents after 12 months in out-of-home placement; (5) place children in kinship placements and adoptive homes rather than residential and emergency shelter placements; (6) visit children in out-of-home placement regularly; (7) be rated satisfactory by

foster parents; (8) complete past due referrals quickly; and (9) establish a permanency goal.

The authors concluded that social workers who received the PCWCP implement more best practices and "actually do a better job than those without the PCWCP program."

5. Booz-Allen & Hamilton. (1987). The Maryland Social Services Job Analysis and Personnel Qualifications Study, Executive Summary. Baltimore: Maryland Department of Human Resources. - This study found that the "overall performance of MSW's was significantly higher than non-MSW's" and that "education, specifically holding an MSW, appears to be the best predictor of overall performance in social service work." **MSWs were found to be best prepared to do more complex tasks** and the study recommended that the **state would be better off to hire MSWs and invest in the education of MSWs** than to just provide inservice and preservice training to generic staff.
6. Chabot, M., Fallon, B., Tonmyr, L., MacLaurin, B., Fluke, J., Blackstock, C. (2013). Exploring alternate specifications to explain agency- level effects in placement decisions regarding aboriginal children: Further analysis of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect Part B. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 37(1), 61-76. This article built upon the analyses presented in two companion papers using data from the 1998 and 2003 cycles of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS-1998 and CIS-2003) to examine the influence of clinical and organizational characteristics on the decision to place a child in out-of-home care at the conclusion of a child maltreatment investigation. The authors argued that both the education level of workers and the level of centralization in the intake process were proxy variables for inequity of resources across agencies and that these results support the conclusion that underfunding of child welfare agencies is related to higher rates of formal placements in the child welfare system. In addition, **the authors suggest that agencies that have access to more workers with social work education might reduce the likelihood that a child will be placed in out-of-home care after an investigation.**
7. Child Welfare League of America. (1990). Florida Recruitment and Retention Study. Washington, DC: Author. - This study was requested by the Florida legislature after a well-publicized child abuse death. Current and former staff of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services were interviewed. **Workers without educational preparation for child welfare work were most likely to leave before one year.** This study links to research by Hess, Foloran & Jefferson, "Effectiveness of Family Reunification Services: An Innovative Evaluative Model." *Social Work*, 37(4), 304-311, which found that worker turnover was a major factor in failed reunification efforts.
8. Cicero-Reese, Bessie & Black, Phyllis (February, 1998). Research suggests why child welfare workers stay on the job. Partnerships for Child Welfare, February 1998, vol. 5 #5. This study examined the **reasons child welfare workers remain in their positions longer than two years**. It found that two factors were decisive, aside from concern for children and satisfaction in helping children. These factors **were social work education** and climate of the work environment including supportiveness of supervisors and peers. Eighty-one percent of those who stayed had completed at least one social work degree.
9. Cortis, N., & Meagher, G. (2012). Social work education as preparation for practice: Evidence from a survey of the new south wales community sector. *Australian Social Work*,

65(3), 295-310. Based on data from a large survey of nongovernment sector workers in New South Wales (n = 661), multivariate analysis indicated that any level of qualification in a human service field improved employee self-ratings of preparedness. **However, having a Bachelor level degree or higher in social work had the greatest effect, improving preparedness more than any other individual, job, or organisational characteristic. The findings renew support for social work as the key foundation for practice roles in the nongovernment sector.**

10. Cyphers, G. (2001). Report from the Child Welfare Workforce Survey: State and county data and findings. Washington, DC: American Public Human Services Association. www.aphsa.org. Details the APHSA, CWLA, Alliance survey of child welfare agencies, highlighting **effective strategies, including university/agency partnerships to recruit and retain staff.**
11. DePanfilis, D., & Zlotnik, J. L. (2008). Retention of frontline staff in child welfare: A systematic review of research. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 995–1008. Looked specifically at studies that used retention as a variable and concluded that there is no definitive answer to the question of whether a social work degree should be required for child welfare work.
12. Dhooper, S.S., Royse, D.D., and Wolfe, L.C. (1990). Does Social Work Education Make a Difference? *Social Work*, 35(1): 57-61. - This article describes a study of social service workers in Kentucky that found that **staff with social work degrees, either BSW or MSW, are better prepared than those workers without social work degrees.** This study replicated aspects of the Booz, Allen & Hamilton study.
13. Faller, K. C., Grabarek, M., & Vandervort, F. (2009). Child welfare workers go to court: The impact of race, gender, and education on the comfort with legal issues. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(9), 972-977. This study examines perceptions of 425 public and private agency child welfare workers from one state in terms of their level of comfort with the court work components of their jobs. **Workers with a social work education had higher court comfort levels at baseline and six months, when compared to those with criminal justice or other education.** In the multivariate analysis, there were no significant differences in level of comfort with court work based upon worker characteristics at baseline. However, at six months on the job, **predictors of comfort with child welfare work** were being white and being male; **having a social work education approached statistical significance. When change in comfort level was examined, the only significant positive predictor of court comfort was having a social work education**
14. Franke, T., Bagdasaryan, S., & Furman, W. (2009). A multivariate analysis of training, education, and readiness for public child welfare practice. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(12), 1330-1336. The current study adds to the knowledge base in this area by evaluating a pre-service training program for 469 newly hired workers at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. A repeated measures analysis of pre- and post-training tests indicated **that participants in Title IV-E funded programs performed significantly better at both time points. Similarly, both level of education**

(having a Master's degree) and the discipline in which the degree was received (social work) significantly predicted better performance on both the pre- and post-tests.

Workers without such Title IV-E training and educational backgrounds were able to make up ground during agency-sponsored training and performed better at post-test when compared to their pre-test scores. Implications for training in public child welfare and future research in this area are discussed

15. Harrison, Selma Garrett. (1995). Exploration of factors related to intent to leave among child welfare caseworkers. Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University. This study of 226 public child welfare workers in Franklin County, Ohio found 9 variables which predicted **worker retention. Among the most important of these were training, having had an internship in public child welfare as part of their preparation**, agency support (including strong supervision) and psychological rewards. Workers who believe their knowledge, skills and professional education were underutilized were most likely to leave.
16. Lieberman, A. A., Hornby, H., & Russell, M. (1988). Analyzing the educational backgrounds and work experiences of child welfare personnel: A national study. *Social Work*, 33(6), 485-489. A national study of 5000 child welfare personnel that analyzed educational level and preparedness for practice. Authors state that **data from this study consistently found that BSW practitioners are consistently better prepared for practice than their non-social work counterparts.**
17. Olsen, L. & Holmes, W. (1982). Educating child welfare workers: The effects of professional training on service delivery. *Journal of Education for Social Work*. 18(1), 94-102. - This study, based on an analysis of the data from the 1977 National Study of Social Services to Children and their Families, found that **workers with social work education were more effective in service delivery than workers with BA degrees or other graduate degrees.**
18. Perry, R. E. (2006). Do social workers make better child welfare workers than Non-Social workers? *Research on Social Work Practice*, 16(4), 392-405. A proportionate, stratified random sample of supervisor and peer evaluations of child protective investigators and child protective service workers is conducted. ANOVA procedures are used to test if performance scores on a multitude of items differ for workers with university degrees in social work, psychology, sociology, criminology, education, business, and other fields. The ratings of social workers' skills and competency do not statistically differ from those workers with other educational backgrounds on 20 measures of performance. Conclusion: Findings suggest that the educational background of child welfare workers is a poor predictive variable of their performance as evaluated by supervisors and peers. However, more research is needed to determine if performance evaluations of workers are positively correlated with successful service outcomes with clients. * Note: This journal includes several articles disputing the methodology and findings of this study.
19. Rome, S.H. (1997). The Child Welfare Choice: An Analysis of Social Work Students Career Plans. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*. 3(1). pp. 31-48. - The student membership of the National Association of Social Workers were surveyed to identify their interest in a career in child welfare. **Opportunities for financial support such as loan forgiveness or stipends,**

and exposure to child welfare practice during their social work education program are important factors in helping them to choose child welfare as a future career.

20. Rubin, A., & Parrish, D. E. (2012). **Comparing Social Worker and Non-Social Worker Outcomes: A Research Review.** *Social Work*, 57 (4): 309-320. doi: 10.1093/sw/sws015
Ten studies in the child welfare field (Dhooper, Royse, & Wolfe, 1990; Fox, Burnham, Barbee, & Yankeelov, 2000; Fox, et al., 2003; Franke, Bagdasaryan, & Furman, 2009; Gansle & Ellett, 2002; Hopkins, Mudrick, & Rudolph, 1999; Jones, 2002; Jones & Okamura, 2000; Robin & Hollister, 2002; Rosenthal & Waters, 2004) compared social workers and their counterparts on scores on exams measuring knowledge and merit or competency and skills pertaining to child welfare practice. Social workers, trained in Title IVE programs fared better in all 10 studies.

21. Russell, M. (1987). *1987 National Study of Public Child Welfare Job Requirements*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine, National Resource Center for Management and Administration. - This study of child welfare workers looked at the minimum educational requirements in states and the relationship between educational requirements, job functions and staff turnover and vacancy rates. **The findings suggest that turnover is consistently higher in states that do not require any kind of degree for child welfare positions and is consistently lower in states that require an MSW.** This also relates to service delivery issues as raised in the Hess, et. al article cited above.

22. Ryan, J. P., Garnier, P., Zyphur, M., Zhai, F. (2006). Investigating the effects of caseworker characteristics in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 28(9), 993-1006. This article presents the results of a study that examined the impact of caseworker factors including turnover rate, racial match between child and caseworker, and whether or not the caseworker hold an MSW, on a child's length of stay in the child welfare system and family reunification. **The results show that children assigned to an MSW-level caseworker spent significantly less time in out-of-home placement (an average of 5.15 months less) than children who were not assigned to an MSW-level caseworker.** No significant relationship was found between MSW and the likelihood of achieving family reunification. When the caseworkers were divided into three groups by race (white, Hispanic, and African American) some changes in the relationships were found. When Hispanic caseworkers were examined alone, having an MSW was no longer associated with a significant decrease in out-of-home placement. When white caseworkers were examined alone, an MSW significantly increased the likelihood of family reunification. **The authors concluded that possession of an MSW seems to be a significant factor, to a degree, in child welfare outcomes. They suggest that child welfare systems should develop strategies to recruit and retain employees with MSWs.**

23. Scannapieco, M., Hegar, R. L., & Connell-Carrick, K. (2012). Professionalization in public child welfare: Historical context and workplace outcomes for social workers and non-social workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(11), 2170-2178. This article presents the results of an evaluation study on the impact of a social work degree on child welfare workers' self-reports of competency and knowledge. **10,000 public child welfare workers** in Texas, about one third with degrees in social work, were surveyed after completion of a basic skills

development job training (BSD) which they participate in at the beginning of their employment, then again 18 months later, and again after 3 years with the agency. **The study found that compared to non-social workers, workers with social work degrees reported being more knowledgeable about community resources, perceived their training as more beneficial, reported a more complex understanding of the foster care system. Workers with social work degrees were also found to be more likely to remain employed at CPS for at least three years and to express commitment to the field of child welfare.**

24. Smith, E. M. & Laner, R. (1990). Implications of prior experience and training for recruiting and hiring CPS staff. Arizona Department of Economic Security, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. This cross-sectional survey of 179 **child welfare supervisors and case managers found that MSWs have lower burn-out rates than BSWs or other MAs.**

For More Information Contact:

Joan Levy Zlotnik, Director, NASW Social Work Policy Institute, jzlotnik@naswdc.org
Traci LaLiberte, Executive Director, Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, University of Minnesota, lali0017@umn.edu