I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course explores the history of societal and organizational responses to children and families at risk of child abuse and/or neglect. It blends policy and practice perspectives to study federal and state policies, child welfare service options, the service access continuum, and organizational issues. Additionally the course reviews the social work process related to the delivery of services through mandated and voluntary child welfare programs.

Based on an ecological approach to viewing families and children within their environmental context, the course provides an opportunity for students to explore applications of practice methodologies and policy models. The course broadly defines child welfare services to include prevention, child protective services, out-of-home-placement, reunification services, and adoption.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

At the completion of the course the student should be able to:

1. Identify the historical context from which contemporary child welfare policies and programs emerged.
2. Know the incidence and etiology of neglect and abuse of children.

3. Understand the services offered through prevention, child protective services; out-of-home placements including kinship care, foster care and group care; reunification services, independent living, and adoption.

4. Recognize the legal responses to child abuse and neglect allegations at the local, state, and federal levels.

5. Identify strengths and limitations of the child welfare system designed to serve families and children.

6. Analyze policy and practice responses in terms of their effect on children and families.

7. Understand the roles of public and private agencies in child welfare.

8. Become aware of one’s own feelings regarding parents and families who abuse or neglect their children.

9. Recognize the need for children to have and/or maintain connections with family members.

10. Recognize the role of poverty in the definition and expression of neglect statutes.

11. Acknowledge the need for culturally sensitive practice in child welfare programs.

12. Appreciate the role of social workers in delivering services to mandated clients and the stresses inherent in a process that has prevention and protection aspects.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Required Texts


   Sign up for the free, online policy newsletter of the Child Welfare League of America: Children’s Monitor
   http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/monitoronline-optin.htm
Review the Child Welfare League of American Standards of Excellence overview for each topical area from:
http://www.cwla.org/programs/standards/cwsstandards.htm

Other assigned and recommended readings as listed for each class: see Blackboard system.

2. Course Assignments and Grading Policy

10% Class Participation: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate meaningfully in class discussions.

15% Reading Summary: Students will select one class for which they will outline the readings and email copies to their colleagues at least three days in advance. The result will be a folder of notes for each student to have as a reference. Date selected during Class 2.

25% Critical Issues Debate: Students will work in pairs to prepare a debate of critical issues in child welfare. One student will argue the affirmative; one will argue the negative view. Topics include, but are not limited to,

a. Risk of removing a child from his/her home vs. risk of leaving a child in his/her home
b. Protecting children vs. preserving families
c. Cost of prevention vs. cost of treatment
d. Hiring a professional workforce vs. hiring an available workforce
e. Privatizing child welfare services vs. maintaining a strong public agency

Debates will be held in the class that covers the topic. Each debate will last 20 minutes—5 minutes for each student to establish his/her position; 5 minutes for each student to rebut the position of the other student. A schedule will be established Class 3.

25% Critical Issues Paper: Students will individually prepare a paper presenting a balanced view of the issue they debated in class. The paper, 6-8 pages, will cover both sides of the debate. Due one week after the debate.

25% Media Coverage: The public primarily learns about child welfare through coverage in print and on television and radio, plus internet sources. Write a 6-8 page paper analyzing the coverage in two communities. Discuss the potential effect on the child welfare agency including staff hiring, foster parent recruitment, placement rates, funding, and other issues. Printed
articles or links to audio and/or video will be presented in an appendix.

Due Class 14.

All written assignments will be in APA style.

3. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

4. Class Expectations

Please refer to the NCSSS Announcements or the MSW Program Handbook for Academic Requirements for information regarding scholastic and behavioral requirements. It is expected that students will demonstrate communication skills consistent with the NCSSS graduate education standards. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer and adhere to the APA format. It should be carefully edited by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.
CLASS SCHEDULE

PART I: HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO CHILDREN IN NEED AND THE CURRENT CONDITION OF CHILDREN

Class 1  HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: Understanding the American response to children from colonial times to the early 20th century.

Required Readings


Historical evolution of child welfare services, Mallon & Hess, p. 10—46.

Class 2  THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES: Exploring problems underlying child welfare, understanding economic issues, and serving children and families through a system designed in the 19th century while struggling to handle problems of the 21st century.

Required Readings


Kids Count for the United States 2011. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. For a national profile see:

Poverty overview—print two (2) charts/sections:

Foster care statistics:
http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/foster.cfm

National child welfare fact sheet:

Major legislation in child welfare:
http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/otherpubs/majorfedlegis.cfm
PART II: SERVICE OPTIONS IN CHILD WELFARE

Class 3 & 4 PREVENTION AND FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAMS: Providing home-based services for families at risk of abusing or neglecting their children.

Required Readings

Class 3

Prevention of physical child abuse and neglect, Mallon & Hess, p. 270—289

Recognizing child abuse and neglect:
http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/first_responders/chapter2.cfm


Time for Reform: Investing in Prevention:

Class 4


Overview of family preservation, Mallon & Hess, p. 319—334.

Community family support meetings: Connecting families, public child welfare, and community resources, Mallon & Hess, p. 102—117.

Class 5 & 6 CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES: Assessing risk and safety, identifying abuse and neglect, and recognizing resilience in children. Looking at child protective service provision from the family perspective.

Required Readings

Class 5

Child protective services, Mallon & Hess, p.290—301.

Assessment of children, youth, and families in the child welfare system, Mallon & Hess, p. 87—101.


Engagement in children, youth, and family services, Mallon & Hess, p. 72—86.

Class 6


Engaging families and communities: The use of family team conferences to promote safety, permanency, and well-being in child welfare services, Mallon & Hess, p. 118—128.


Class 7 & 8 FOSTER CARE, KINSHIP CARE, AND GROUP CARE SERVICES: Determining the appropriate use of out-of-home care, understanding the development and implementation of permanency planning initiatives, and recognizing current problems in foster care. Understanding the health, mental health, education, and family connection needs of children and youth in care.
Understanding the effect of policy and practice on overrepresentation and disproportionality of minority children in care.

**Required Readings**

**Class 7**

Foster care today: Overview of family foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 504—517.


**Class 8**

Healthcare needs of children and youth in foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 129—147.

Educational needs of youth in foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 185—204.


Children with disabilities in the child welfare system, Mallon & Hess, p. 173—185.

Sibling issues in child welfare practice, Mallon & Hess, p. 536—547.

Overrepresentation of children and youth of color in foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 623—634.

Home visiting programs may help reduce child maltreatment: [http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issue id=40&articleID=627&keywords=home%20visiting](http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=40&articleID=627&keywords=home%20visiting)
Class 9: PERMANENCY SERVICES: Recognizing that reunifying families begins when the child is removed; understanding the unique practice skills necessary to reunify and preserve reunited families; and reviewing policy implications.

Required Readings

Defining and achieving family reunification, Mallon & Hess, p. 378—392.

Facilitating permanency for youth: The overuse of long-term foster care and the appropriate use of another planned permanent living arrangement as options for youth in foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 488—503.


Family reunification practice with families who abuse drugs, Mallon & Hess, p. 335—348.

Post-permanency services, Mallon & Hess, p. 583—598.

Family reunification: What the evidence shows?  

Recommended Readings

Immigrant children and youth in the child welfare system: Immigration status and special needs in permanency planning, Mallon & Hess, p. 655—664.

Family Reunification Annotated Bibliography, Research to Practice, CWLA:  

Research Roundup: Family Reunification, Research to Practice, CWLA:  
http://www.cwla.org/programs/r2p/rrnews.htm

Class 10 GUARDIANSHIP AND ADOPTION SERVICES: Differentiating agency, independent, open, and subsidized adoptions; understanding the basis of adoption law; and looking at outcomes related to adoption. Recognizing guardianship as a permanency option for some children and youth.

Required Readings

Evolution of private guardianship as a child welfare resource, Mallon & Hess, p. 405—422.

Customary adoption as a resource for American Indian and Alaska Native children, Mallon & Hess, p. 423—431.

Adoption disruption: Rates, correlates, and service needs, Mallon & Hess, p. 452—468.

Birth mothers whose parental rights are terminated: Implications for services, Mallon & Hess, p. 469—481.

**Recommended Readings**


**Class 11 INDEPENDENT LIVING:** Looking at the unique issues confronting youth emancipated from the child welfare system.

**Required Readings**

Runaway and homeless youth, Mallon & Hess, p. 228—245.

Promoting youth development and independent living services for youth in foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 573—582.


PART III: DIFFERENTIAL AVENUES TO SERVICE

Class 12  SERVICE CONTINUUM: Understanding that entering the child welfare system can occur through mental health, juvenile justice, education, social service, or health systems. Recognizing the role of the court in child welfare decision making.

Required Readings

Role of the legal and judicial system for children, youth, and families in foster care, Mallon & Hess, p. 687—706.

Substance abuse issues in the family, Mallon & Hess, p. 335—348.


Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. Crossover Youth Practice Model: http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pm/practicemodel.html Read overview and click on ‘Practice Model’ for full document.

PART IV: ORGANIZATIONAL AND POLICY ISSUES

Class 13  ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS: Understanding that the selection and training of child welfare staff and foster parents, plus the organizational and supervisory structure of agencies affects the quality of services and outcomes for children and families.

Required Readings


Accreditation of child welfare organizations, Mallon & Hess, p. 728—740.

Strategic planning for child welfare agencies, Mallon & Hess, p. 719—727.
Components of an Effective Child Welfare Workforce to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families: What does the Research Tell Us?

Class 14 POLICY AND FUNDING ISSUES: Recognizing the impact of federal and state laws and policies as well as funding priorities on the delivery of child welfare services.

Required Readings

Child Welfare financing 101:

CWLA legislative agenda:

Child welfare issues—read 3:
http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/Issues.htm

Legislative Alerts—read 3:
http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/alerts.htm

Child Welfare timeline:
http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/otherpubs/majorfedlegis.cfm#dlink