In April 2012, the Diversity Task Force hosted its annual Spring Event in several regions throughout the state of Pennsylvania. Dr. Annette Cremo and her staff from Performance Plus Training, Consulting and Coaching, LLC, were the presenters for the “Embedding Diversity into Family Engagement Strategies” workshops. With over 130 participants from all disciplines within the child welfare system, the Spring Event was given great reviews by those who attended.

Throughout the course of the training, participants discussed topics including: The Portrait of an Engaged Family, What We Strive For, Communication Breakdowns, Generational Differences, Communications Styles, and Engagement Techniques. Participants were actively involved in exercises which demonstrated how communication styles, generational differences, and personality styles affect how we, as professionals, serve families as well as work with other professionals. The training was an eye-opening experience in how personal styles and experiences directly affect how one perceives and reacts to situations.

With an ever changing population serviced by child welfare professionals, the Diversity Task Force works diligently to bring annual trainings that will positively impact how we serve our communities. For additional information regarding the Diversity Task Force, please visit our website at [http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/DiversityTaskforce.html](http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/DiversityTaskforce.html) or contact the DTF Co-Chairs Cindy Milian cmilian@countyofberks.com; Cindy Gore lcg7@pitt.edu (717) 795-9048 ext. 203.
TO ALL RESOURCE CENTER CONSULTANTS AND TRAINERS

As you know, to be approved to train a Resource Center curriculum, interested parties must first attend a Training on Content (TOC). To support our dedicated trainers/consultants, Resource Center leadership discussed holding TOCs on the weekend, on a case-by-case basis. According to leadership, staff will send correspondence to selectees to solicit feedback for date(s)/time(s) that suit the majority. If a TOC suits the majority of selectees, this information will be submitted to leadership for consideration to assess staff impact. Next steps would then be communicated to selectees. The number of hours allotted to a TOC will generally represent the total number of hours associated with a curriculum. As always, when necessary, more than one content-specific TOC will be held to meet the needs of selectees.

CONSULTANT AND TRAINER INSURANCE REMINDER

Please remember to submit renewal policies for your commercial general liability and auto insurances. The University of Pittsburgh requires that current policies be on file at least three weeks prior to a scheduled training or consultation.

If you have been scheduled to train or provide consulting services and we do not have a current policy on file, we will not be able to utilize your training and/or consulting services, and your training/consulting opportunity will be rescinded.

Renewals can be emailed to Sue Castles at skc17@pitt.edu, faxed to 717-795-8013 or mailed to The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, 403 E. Winding Hill Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 to the attention of Sue Castles.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REMINDER

In order to remain active as a Consultant or Trainer with the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, 6 hours of professional development need to be completed for each fiscal year. July 1, 2011 began a new fiscal year. Please remember to complete your professional development hours by June 30, 2012.

We would like to announce a new opportunity to complete professional development hours through the Resource Center. Historically, you were unable to receive professional development hours for attending the Development of Trainers (DOT) workshop. The DOT workshop recently went through a major revision and is no longer focused solely on trainers, but consultants as well. All new trainers and consultants with the Resource Center will go through the same training, which is titled 820: The Development of Trainers and Consultants Training. It is a 2-day workshop with a third day of participant presentations. If you would like a refresher or simply want to become more familiar with the role of the trainer or consultant, you are welcome to attend, with the bonus of fulfilling the professional development hours requirement.

Trainings attended at the Resource Center will be tracked in Encompass. If you attend child welfare related workshops outside of the Training Resource Center, please forward a copy of your certificate of attendance to Sue Castles at skc17@pitt.edu, fax to 717-795-8013 or mail to 403 E. Winding Hill Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.
Barbara Huggins

Barbara Huggins was born in the small, but famous, town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Even though she grew up in a small rural town, she managed to get a hunger for adventure and exploration.

Barbara entered foster care when she was eight years old. After four different foster home placements, she aged out at the age of 21. She found a permanent connection in her final foster home with Lisa. She has thirteen years of personal experience with the child welfare system, and has a lot to share including memories, advice and insight into how things work. She enjoys sharing about what it has been like transitioning into adulthood, and her experiences in some of her foster homes. Recently, it has become important for her to share how foster care has had a lasting impact on her emotionally and in regards to identity.

Even though her childhood had been difficult, her sense of adventure and exploration stuck with her. She spent her first semester of college in Stirling, Scotland. Somehow, she did this while still being a foster youth. She really appreciated having this valuable and rare opportunity. Barbara kept busy in college and made a lot of friends in Philadelphia. In 2009, she graduated from Arcadia University. Even though she was not a perfect student, she learned a lot about herself.

After graduation, she decided that Philadelphia was where the action was, and stayed close to a church that had become a part of her extended family. She was a foster care caseworker for three years, and this provided her with an idea of what the other side of the fence was like. She then moved onto her real passion of speaking in front of people and coordinating the South East Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board.

In 2012 she became a Youth Quality Improvement Specialist for the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center in Mechanicsburg, PA. She trains brand new caseworkers with the hope that she can inspire them into activism and changing the system from a grass roots level.

Amy Warnagiris

Amy Warnagiris joined the Curriculum and Trainer Development Department of the Resource Center on May 14, 2012 as a Supervisor. Amy brings 14 years of experience designing, developing, implementing and evaluating training programs as a consultant to State and Federal Government agencies and private sector companies. Her work has focused on incorporating training best practices and on helping organizations to introduce technology into their training programs. Amy earned a bachelor's degree in English from Dickinson College and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling at Messiah College. She lives in Harrisburg, PA with her husband and their three canine companions. In her free time, Amy enjoys kayaking, cycling, gardening and sewing.
Currently, the Northeast (NE) Regional Team finds itself in transition. Recently, Joshua Foose, our Training Specialist for the NE Region, moved on to a new position outside of the Resource Center. Those of you who knew and dealt with Joshua on a frequent basis knew him to be readily available and willing to answer any question you had or assist you in tackling any problem. As we wish Joshua well in his new position, we also want to assure you that we will continue to strive to be there for all of you.

We currently are working toward filling the vacant Training Specialist position in the NE Region. During the time of the vacancy in our team you can contact Jessica Shiffler, the Southeast Regional Team Training Specialist, jms37@pitt.edu or myself, Jody Price, the Northeast Regional Team Supervisor, jlp78@pitt.edu. Both of us can be reached by phone at the Resource Center, 717-795-9048. Thank you for your patience and continued commitment to the Resource Center.

**CONSULTANT AND TRAINER BIRTHDAYS**

### JULY

- 3 - Cindy Milian
- 7 - Michael Gill
  - Joan Mosier
- 9 - Robin Chapolini
- 18 - Dennis McCurdy
  - Lisa Walker
- 20 - Ron Bell
- 21 - Evelyn Lopez
- 23 - John Amato
  - Leasia Ayers-Caswell
- 24 - Paul Wildermann
- 27 - Trisha Gadson

### AUGUST

- 2 - Lester Michael Goodman
- 6 - Bruce Schaffer
- 11 - Chuck Laudermilch
- 13 - Anne Shenberger
- 18 - Kathleen Moore
- 20 - Carol Wikerd
- 21 - Tom Trafalski
- 22 - Debbie Leasure
- 24 - Marc Bluestein
  - Rhonda Farley
- 31 - Marilou Doughty
The third phase of this research study, the caregiver interviews, began in June 2010. A total of 30 counties were randomly selected to participate in this phase of the research project based on their location in the state, the amount of data they had entered into the Developmental Screening Database (ASQ Database), and what group of children were being screened. Caregivers were randomly selected from the Developmental Screening Database and asked to participate in the study by their Child Welfare Services (CWS) caseworkers. Interviews occur primarily in the caregivers' homes and take about an hour to an hour and a half to complete. Caregivers are compensated with a $40 gift card for their time.

Introduction:

In September 2008, the state government implemented a policy that all children under age 3 who are substantiated for maltreatment, be screened using the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ™;Squires et al., 1999) and its Social-Emotional version (ASQ:SE™; Squires et al., 2003). The ASQ is a series of age-appropriate questionnaires designed to identify children who need further developmental evaluation. The primary objective of this screening initiative is to identify children with concerns and refer them to early intervention for further evaluation.

Views from the Road: Interviewer Experiences

Seven of our interviewers were asked to respond to questions regarding their experiences in the field. Their responses are below.

How did this opportunity bring you back to your direct service days?

Chuck: “It provided a “Reality” experience; reading and doing are two very different things.”

Congratulations to Huntingdon, Butler, & Luzerne counties for successfully completing their caregiver interview quotas!
A long line of anecdotal information tells us that caregiver social support is an important component for successful parenting. In fact, when looking at the recurrence of child maltreatment, DePanfilis and Zuravin (1999) found that deficits in social support had a strong relationship with time to recurrence of maltreatment, which echoes an earlier literature review conducted by DePanfilis (1996) examining evidence that social isolation presents an increased risk of child neglect in families. More recent studies show the positive influence of social support on parenting behaviors (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Green et al., 2007). Ortega (2002) posits that the size of social networks is inconsequential; instead, it is the caregivers' perceived satisfaction with existing networks that determine the quality of parenting. Informal support (places of belonging), friends, and family who convey acceptance and empathy for caregivers can significantly impact caregivers’ lives (Manji et al., 2005). With an increased awareness of child risk and safety, protective factors such as social support and positive family functioning are accessible and cost-efficient means of family support. Social service organizations can provide valuable programs to at-risk families. Caregivers value the help they receive from social service organizations (Manji et al., 2005) and just attending some sort of service has been shown to reduce the recurrence of child maltreatment (DePanfilis & Zuravin, 2002). The CWS agency can play a critical role in referring caregivers to available community services. However, with the increased demands on child welfare caseworkers and decreased funding for social services, this aspect of social work may become more difficult to accomplish.

**Research:**

Research is being conducted by the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work to understand county, child, and family needs concerning screening and early intervention. A total of 30 counties were selected for this portion of the study, and so far data has been collected in 29 counties.

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**Renee:** "I recalled what it was like to knock on someone’s door and to be uncertain of what was behind it; going into someone’s home and taking in your surroundings, and needing to assess your own safety needs while there."

**How were you able to have a different kind of experience with child welfare clients?**

**Wendy:** "It was so nice to be able to join with families and not have to think about how I was going to try to change them. I got to be present with them and listen deeply without having an agenda."

**What have you learned from this work?**

**Mary Beth:** "The parents of these young children want the same thing I want for my child—to be happy, healthy, and to have a good life. But achieving this goal is much harder for them due to the fact that poverty makes everything so much harder."

**Chuck:** "It struck me how isolated these families are; the system does a very poor job connecting caregivers to the larger community thus providing them with nurturance and support."

**Kathy:** "I learned that all our efforts, statewide, of moving toward a stronger, strengths-based method of working with families, are working. With a few exceptions, most of the families felt that their caseworkers cared for them and were committed to their family being successful."

**What has been the most satisfying element of this work?**

**Oswald:** "The most satisfying element had to be the apparent perception of several caregivers that I, in the role of an interviewer, was someone to whom they could express their hopes and fears."

**Renee:** "Meeting people and hearing some of the struggles and how a few have successfully overcome or are managing the struggles in their lives. I interviewed a few parents who were dealing with life threatening illness, and they had the most amazing positive attitudes and hope for the future."

**What were you most impressed about as a result of learning more about the caregivers and their lives?**

To view all the interview responses, visit our Facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/PAs-Developmental-Screening-Project/176308225746918
The data represents 301 caregivers across the state of Pennsylvania.

**Measures:**

The Protective Factors Survey is a 20-item measure created by the FRIENDS Network in collaboration with the University of Kansas Institute for Education Research and Public Service to provide feedback to child protective service agencies for improvement and evaluation purposes (FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2008). Caregivers rated each item on a scale from 1 (none/strongly disagree) to 7 (always/strongly agree). The survey has five subscales: family functioning/resiliency, social emotional support, concrete support, nurturing and attachment, and knowledge of parenting/child development. Scores for the family function/resiliency, social support, concrete support, and nurturing and attachment subscales were derived by calculating the means of the items. Since the last subscale comprises five unique items, means and medians were calculated.

**Results:**

In general, caregivers felt that they had strong emotional bonds with their children, as evidenced by the high rating on the Nurturing and Attachment subscale. However, their feelings toward their family’s (defined as caregiver and children; caregiver and partner; caregiver and relatives for this study) ability to cope in times of stress was on the lower end of the scale with a rating of “about half the time.” Caregivers felt comfortable in their knowledge of how to obtain services for basic needs (higher rating on concrete support subscale), but rated their availability of social support a little lower on the scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Results of the Protective Factors Survey Subscales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Functioning/Resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing and Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concrete Support</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Kathy:** “The families had overwhelming positive attitudes of their lives despite the dire circumstances in which they were living, and they still had hopes and dreams for their children.”

**Mary Beth:** “How resourceful families are and can be and how hard they worked to try and maintain a home for themselves and for their families.”

**Any lessons learned?**

**Wendy:** “Always take a snack with you and use the restroom when one is available, because you never know when you are going to be stuck in the middle of nowhere!”

**Oswald:** “I was reminded of the importance of being flexible.”

**Kathy:** “GPS is not always accurate; always have more than one method of locating a family. Have a good, working cell phone, and be comfortable in different surroundings. In the rural areas, call and verify directions with the family.”

**Coordinating a Statewide Research Project: Tips from the Project Coordinator**

- Persistence is important with contacting caregivers. Despite the outcomes of the initial call, always be willing to call back at a later time.

- Alternate forms of communication, such as text messaging and social networking sites, are a wonderful resource to utilize.

- Maintain strong working relationships with your contacts within the child welfare agencies, as they can provide you with insights on the caregivers and give you tips on how best to contact them.

- When scheduling interviews, ask the caregivers for landmarks that make their house noticeable. It will greatly help the interviewers find the residence without incident.

- Calling caregivers the day before a scheduled interview has enabled us to maintain a high completion rate.
The ratings for the five individual items that comprise the Child Development/Knowledge of Parenting subscale were all rated highly. The means and medians can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of the Individual Items of Child Development/Knowledge of Parenting Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate Knowledge of How to Parent</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of How to Help Children Learn</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s Misbehavior is Unintentional</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Praise for Child’s Good Behavior</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Control when Disciplining Child</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Development/Knowledge of Parenting Subscale

Summary:

The results from the Protective Factors Scale, along with anecdotal information provided by the research interviewers, show that the caregivers in this study have a small amount of social support. Since caregivers reported feelings of isolation to the research interviewers, the study team has been providing caregivers with brochures for Families & Communities United, which brings families and agency representatives together to discuss how to best serve families in various systems across Pennsylvania. More information can be obtained by visiting the group’s website at http://www.fcu.pitt.edu. With the research suggesting that social support is an important protective factor against child maltreatment, development of social networks and increasing caregivers’ satisfaction with their social contacts may be a viable resource in reducing maltreatment and recurrences.

References:


Citation for this report:

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (2012). From isolation to social connections: The role of the child welfare caseworker (Report No. 9). Pittsburgh, PA:

For questions about the study or for further information, please contact Rachel Winters, Research Coordinator, at rrw14@pitt.edu or 412-624-3838.
“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

~ Nelson Mandela ~

Former President of South Africa

In partnership with families, communities, public and private agencies, we prepare and support exceptional child welfare professionals and systems through education, research and a commitment to best practice.”