



# The Child Welfare Advocate newsletter



## Upcoming Events:

April 2  
5 - 7:30pm

Child Welfare Expo | Knicely Conference Center



April 24  
9 - 11 am

Training | Trauma-Informed Skills to Improve Behavior Management Effectiveness in the Classroom and Beyond | This training is fully booked

May 19-21

2026 Title IV-E Round Table Conference | Hosted by Metropolitan State University of Denver

## Quarterly Recap

- LCCWEAR offered two educational trainings as part of our Applied Learning Series. This series provides an opportunity for growth and professional development and is open to students and human services professionals (see page 6 for additional information.)
- The IFTTC presented to the Vision Multi-Agency Council Meeting which was held at LCCWEAR. These meetings focus on collaboration between service providers to address community needs.
- Our Intro to Child Welfare course continues to attract students across disciplines. This semester was the largest cohort ever, with 109 students enrolled.
- Our collaboration with KVC Kentucky continues as we collect data to identify strategies for preventing child maltreatment.
- Our Integration Specialist and GRA participated in Read Across America, a school-focused event promoting literacy among children.



## A Note from the Director

April marks National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time when communities across the country renew their commitment to ensuring that every child grows up in a safe, stable, and supportive environment. At the LifeSkills Center for Child Welfare Education and Research, we believe that prevention begins with connection—bringing together researchers, practitioners, educators, and community members to work toward a shared goal: strengthening families and protecting children from harm. As an applied research center, our mission is not only to study the challenges facing children and families, but to actively partner with the community to develop practical solutions, inform policy, and build systems that prevent the maltreatment of children before it occurs.

Throughout this month, we invite our partners and community members to join us in raising awareness, recognizing the importance of prevention, and celebrating the collaborative work happening across our region. One of the highlights of this effort is our Annual Child Welfare Expo, taking place on Thursday, April 2 at Western Kentucky University's Knicely Conference Center.



The Expo brings together agencies, professionals, students, and community advocates who are committed to improving the well-being of children and families. We encourage you to attend, connect with others doing this important work, and help us continue building a strong alliance dedicated to preventing child maltreatment and supporting thriving families. Truly, child welfare belongs to all of us. Together, through awareness and action, we can strengthen families and create communities where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Austin Griffiths, Ph.D., CSW; LCCWEAR Director

## Child Welfare Analytics Collaborative

The Division of Prevention and Community Well-Being (DPCWB) coordinates statewide efforts focused on preventing child abuse and neglect while promoting healthier, more resilient communities across the Commonwealth. DPCWB works closely with community partners to strengthen local collaboration and prevention services for children, families, and communities.

Within the DPCWB, Dr. Mohsen Tabibian, the Senior Data and Quality Control Analyst with the Child Welfare Analytics Collaborative at the LifeSkills Center for Child Welfare Education and Research (LCCWEAR), focuses on strengthening prevention efforts through data integrity, system oversight, and program analysis. DPCWB and Mohsen's work supports programs such as Kentucky Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (KSTEP), Community Collaboration for Children (CCC), and Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team (START) by monitoring data quality and identifying service alignment issues. By improving accuracy, supporting prevention services are delivered effectively and that decision-makers have reliable information to guide policy and practice.



Mohsen Tabibian, Ph.D., Senior Data & Quality Control Analyst

## Integrated Family Trauma Treatment Clinic

The IFTTC was created to provide primary and secondary prevention efforts to families who are at risk of or currently have involvement with child welfare. We seek to prevent children from entering foster care, support family reunification efforts, and in cases where children cannot be with their birth families, improving placement stability within the out of home care setting. Our clinic intervenes with all types of families including birth families, foster families, adoptive families, and families where relatives or fictive kin are caring for kids.



The main goals are to improve caregiver-child relationships and increase long-term placement stability by addressing risk factors for placement disruption. In addition to family intervention, we also provide trainings to members of the community as well as professionals who serve families in ways to increase coordinated trauma-informed interactions.

Heather Webb, MSW, LCSW;  
IFTTC Manager



## Child Welfare Preparation

At Western Kentucky University, Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students in the Child Welfare Preparation (CW-PREP) program are preparing to protect children and strengthen families across Kentucky. Recognized during Child Abuse Prevention Month each April, these students receive specialized training and commit to working with the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services after graduation.



CW-PREP graduates serve in all 120 Kentucky counties as Child Protective Services investigators, ongoing case managers, and Recruitment and Certification (R&C) workers supporting foster and adoptive families. They investigate reports of abuse and neglect, ensure child safety, support families through difficult circumstances, connect them with resources, advocate in the court system, and collaborate with schools, healthcare providers, and community partners. Students commit to two years of service after graduation, though many continue careers in child welfare well beyond that time, driven by a strong commitment to the safety and well-being of Kentucky's children. Thank you CW PREP students for your commitment to KY.

Monica Hines, EdD, MSW  
CW PREP Coordinator

## Training Resource Center

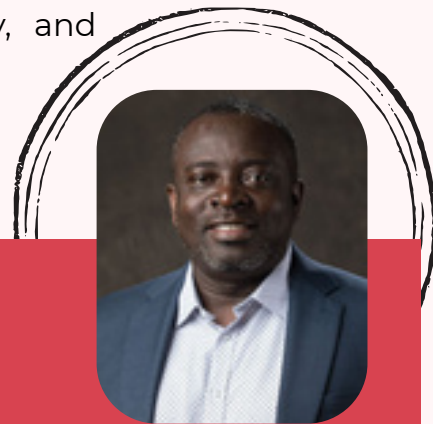
The Training Resource Center helps prevent child abuse by equipping foster/adoptive/kinship caregivers with the knowledge, skills, and support needed to provide safe, nurturing homes. Through our programs, caregivers receive quality education, often from a lived experience perspective. These programs strengthen caregiver capacity, reduce disruptions, and promote healing.

Our trainings include mandatory courses and additional training. Increasing caregiver knowledge of trauma and teaching de-escalation and co-regulation helps prevent re-traumatization and reduces the risk of abuse. Additionally, support from Network teams helps caregivers maintain their own well-being. Emotionally resourced caregivers are better equipped to meet children's needs safely and consistently.

By investing in education, connection, and skill-building, we proactively address risk factors for child abuse and strengthen protective factors for safety, stability, and resilience.



Crystal Palmisano-Dillard; TRC Director



## Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Daniel A. Boamah is an Associate with LCCWEAR, a Licensed Certified Social Worker, and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at Western Kentucky University. He earned his Masters of Science in Social Work and Ph.D. from the Kent School of Social Work and Family Sciences, University of Louisville.

He has many years of clinical practice experience with underserved and highly traumatized communities including youth in the child welfare system, immigrants and refugees, and persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). His mezzo/macro practice focus has been to build the capacity for practitioners to provide culturally and linguistically responsive interventions to individuals and families through clinical supervision, consultation, and training. His research focus is on addressing the structural and racial inequities in child welfare, Blacks, immigrants, refugees, and IDD fields.

At LCCWEAR, Dr. Boamah efforts span from research innovation, funded training programs, community series leadership, to dissemination of research findings at regional and national conferences. These endeavors demonstrate his sustained commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families through LCCWEAR while elevating WKU's profile in child welfare scholarship and practice.



## Staff Spotlight

Rachel Wyatt, MSW, LCSW, is a macro-focused social worker and serves as the Evaluator for LCCWEAR. She is also an instructor in the Department of Social Work and a third-year doctoral student in the Kent School of Social Work and Family Sciences at the University of Louisville.



In her role as evaluator, Rachel supports child abuse prevention by helping LCCWEAR's partners understand what is happening in our communities and how services can better support families. She works with data from surveys, interviews, and program outcomes to identify service gaps, highlight community strengths, and examine where systems can improve. This information helps agencies make informed decisions about training, programs, and resource allocation. By translating research and evaluation findings into practical insights, her work helps child welfare professionals and community partners strengthen prevention efforts that support families earlier and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect.



## Sponsor Spotlight



World Wide Technology (WWT) partnered with Western Kentucky University (WKU) and Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) to transform how preventative services are delivered to families across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This initiative focused on modernizing critical applications that support child welfare outcomes, ensuring staff have the tools to monitor and deliver services efficiently. With the decommissioning of the legacy data center, a migration to a modern cloud environment was essential to maintain uninterrupted service and safeguard data integrity.

By expanding the partnership to include Amazon Web Services (AWS), the team leveraged a secure, enterprise-grade cloud infrastructure that scales with program needs and delivers global reliability. This collaboration enabled a seamless migration, reduced technical debt, and improved operational performance, laying a strong foundation for future innovation. The project positioned the Commonwealth to take full advantage of cloud-native capabilities, ensuring systems are resilient, scalable, and adaptable to evolving constituent requirements.

Since the migration, the team has explored advanced enhancements made possible by the cloud environment, including artificial intelligence and automation tools that streamline workflows, optimize decision-making, and enhance preventative service delivery. This modernization not only strengthens the operational efficiency of CHFS and WKU staff but also improves outcomes for Kentucky families by enabling faster, more data-driven support. Through this strategic partnership, WWT, WKU, CHFS, and AWS are delivering a future-ready platform that combines innovation, technology, and social impact, demonstrating the transformative power of cloud modernization in public service.

## Community Engagement Series

### Trauma in Adults

This training offered students and professionals a clear, engaging overview of trauma; covering its prevalence, assessment, and key debates like repressed memories. Led by Dr. Matthew Woodward, participants explored evidence-informed strategies to reduce trauma-related distress and effectively support those impacted.



### Trauma in Children and Adolescents

This training was open to anyone interested in preventing and addressing trauma in children and adolescents. Led by Lori Dowdy, MSW, and Gail Dick, participants learned how trauma impacts young people and discovered practical, evidence-informed strategies to respond effectively.



### Reflective Supervision Event with DCBS

The University of Kentucky Center on Trauma and Children (UK CTAC) trained 184 Family Support workers at the Department of Community Based Services in Reflective Supervision. The course focused on equipping supervisors with trauma-responsive, resilience-building strategies and tools to address secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and moral distress.

