

# Effective Practices in Academic-Agency Partnerships for CWS Research: Reflections of a Fortunate Researcher

Richard P. Barth  
Dean and Professor  
University of Maryland School of Social Work

Presented to the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Leadership Symposium on  
Evidence Based Practice  
San Diego, CA

January 28, 2008

# My Goals for This Presentation

- A brief review of CALSWEC R& D
- Effective Partnerships
  - A developmental perspective on researchers
    - Adopt a researcher
  - A developmental perspective on CWS managers
    - MST with CWS managers
- Research Agenda Musings
- Looking Back And Looking Ahead

# History of CALSWEC R&D

- 1980 UC Berkeley has 1 student in a public CWS agency
- 1980-1990 Development of BASSC, CALSWEC, and the TITLE IVE Stipend Program (partnership of UC, CSU, Private SSWs, CWDA, and Zellerbach)
- Early 1990s, “Curriculum R& D” Program Begins:
  - Breakthrough: “research should inform teaching”

# Impact of R&D Model

- 1 to 3 million dollars in support for CWS research in California
  - Early research on kinship care
- Mark Courtney's Wisconsin foster care study and the multi-state study
  - Major policy changes
- Lots of curriculum binders on shelves
- Many More well-trained CWS researchers

# Uniqueness of CALSWEC R & D

- The University of Minnesota has funded dissertation research through their IVE collaborative
- Class Action Lawsuits and IVE Waivers have funded substantial R&D at the University of Illinois
- University of Maryland has organized IVE collaborative research teams and faculty

# How does an Effective Partnership Work?

- Honesty Re Starting Points
  - We don't care about that question
  - Answering your question is not going to lead to a publication or my keeping my job
  - The answer to that question is not knowable with the existing resources
- Solution Focused Longterm View
  - Let us help you identify a way to ask that question that would be at least somewhat useful and will represent a step toward more useful research

# Agency Needs: Research 2 Practice

- Findings that fit the policy context
- Findings that improve efficiency
- Findings that can be communicated clearly
- Findings that are cost-effective
- Findings that suggest ways to improve services

# Faculty Needs: Continuity & Training

- NIH K-Award Model
  - Five years of support
  - Indication of training plan along with research plan
  - Consultation from national mentors
- Implications
  - Consider 3-Year Projects
  - Emphasize excellence not breadth

# 3 Common Understandings Needed for a Research to Practice Partnership

- Researchers have a “need to know” under HIPPA and FERPA
- Randomization is not unethical unless you **know** that the control group will receive inferior outcomes (not just less of an intervention) or you have another way to find the answer to the question
- There can be surprising results but not surprising disclosure of the results

# Successful Partnerships Are About People-in Environment and Roles

- Congruence with Beliefs and Values
- Primary Unit Role Fulfillment
- Local Organizational Role Fulfillment
- Regional or State Role Fulfillment
- National Role Fulfillment

# A Developmental Perspective: The CWS Researcher

- Early Career (the descriptive years)
  - Searching for “least publishable unit”
    - “found” information hunt
  - Deferential and involved (hands on)
  - Developing instruments that are reliable or familiarity with instruments to collect new information
  - Building new administrative data sets that have long term promise of explaining outcomes of child welfare services

# A Developmental Perspective: The CWS Researcher

- Mid Career (the intervention years)
  - Aware of the issues and appropriate research methods to study them—a rare balance
  - Testing Intervention Models Based on Prior Descriptive Research
    - Use instruments that are reliable or familiarity with instruments to collect new information
    - Use focus groups and client data to test interventions
    - Use administrative data to follow cases across systems of care (e.g., to criminal justice or TANF)

# A Developmental Perspective: The CWS Researcher

- Late Career
  - Caught between new findings and reminiscences
  - Foraging in the mental sea weed patch for old ideas that might be useful again
  - Policy focused
  - Opening doors for the next generation

# Adopt a CWS Researcher Today!

- They may be a pain in the butt
- They may need a long term subsidy
- They may abandon you and go work in another county or on another topic
- They may embarrass you
- Some disruptions may occur
- Every CWS researcher needs a lifetime agency to socialize them and help them overcome their PD[issertation]SD.

# A Developmental Perspective: The CWS Manager

- Early Years
  - Optimistic about the possibilities of research
    - Hoping to prove that pet ideas are true
  - Remembers some research s/he read in graduate school
  - May be able to recall a statistical method or the meaning of *reliability* or *p-value* or both
  - May have some respect for senior faculty researchers
  - May yield to staff complaints about the extra work that researchers create

# A Developmental Perspective: The CWS Manager

- Mid-Career
  - Less optimistic about the possibilities of research
  - Doesn't need research as much because...
    - Now knows that pet ideas are true (if still believes in a truth)
  - Has opened windows for many research projects but not seen any information blowing back in
  - Concerned about performance indicators
  - Sees need for major changes but not sure how to study them
  - Likely to be true partner with research team

# A Developmental Perspective: The CWS Manager

- Late Career
  - Waiting for the magic call to go work for a foundation
  - Knows that research is the only thing that can CWS from riding the pendulum
  - Understands the power of the anecdote
  - Can shape a pro-research culture in the agency but not likely to be much involved
  - Sees need for major changes but not sure how to study them

# Providing Multisystemic Research Therapy to CWS Agency Managers

- You may have to knock on the door often or get a police escort
- Motivational interviewing may be needed
- Training of CWS Managers is slow but as long as they remain in recovery they can learn to read bar charts and survival curves
- 6-months of training is not enough
- Relapses of understanding are common

# How Does an Agency Get its Questions Answered?

- Build administrative data
- Integrate administrative data across agencies
- Build routinized structures for collecting additional information
  - Create expedited procedures for obtaining access to sensitive information
- Have an expectation that practices be evidence-informed
- Reward collaboration with researchers
- Hold the messenger harmless

# What to Expect from CWS Researchers

- High Quality
  - Research proposals should draw on the nation's greatest expertise
  - 3 years of focus on a project
  - Multiple agency research and
    - homogeneous samples within agencies

# Expect Specified Models

- Creating *fully specified* models
  - Clarify what the research should include
  - Hold researchers accountable:
    - to including everything that is needed or, at least,
    - being clear about what is missing and
    - indicating why the results have to be carefully interpreted



- A fully specified model for locating the lost watch would include the location where it was last seen!

# What to Expect from CWS Researchers

- Measurement of Need for Services
  - Requires CWS Researcher's conceptualization and measurement expertise
  - Requires agency resources to get or facilitate measurement
  - Requires agency storage of measurement data

# Expect Mixed Methods

- Administrative data:
  - Looking Where the Light Is (story)
  - Strong on Representativeness
  - Weak on Measurement
- Program manager interviews
- Worker focus groups
- Client interviews
- Observation



# An Effective Research Agenda

## APHSA CWS POSITIONING INITIATIVE

- What are the critical tools, guides, materials and templates that support a research agenda; e.g. MOUs with research centers?
  - Many of these have now been developed and they have become implicitly part of common law
  - There are still some issues regarding the “right to publish”
- How often and for what reasons should a research agenda be updated?
  - When people or policies or resources change

# An Effective Research Agenda

## APHSA CWS POSITIONING INITIATIVE

- What are the purpose, objectives, principles and outcomes of an effective research agenda?
  - Answer important questions
  - Improve the agencies capacity to answer more important questions
  - Improve the researchers capacity to answer more important questions

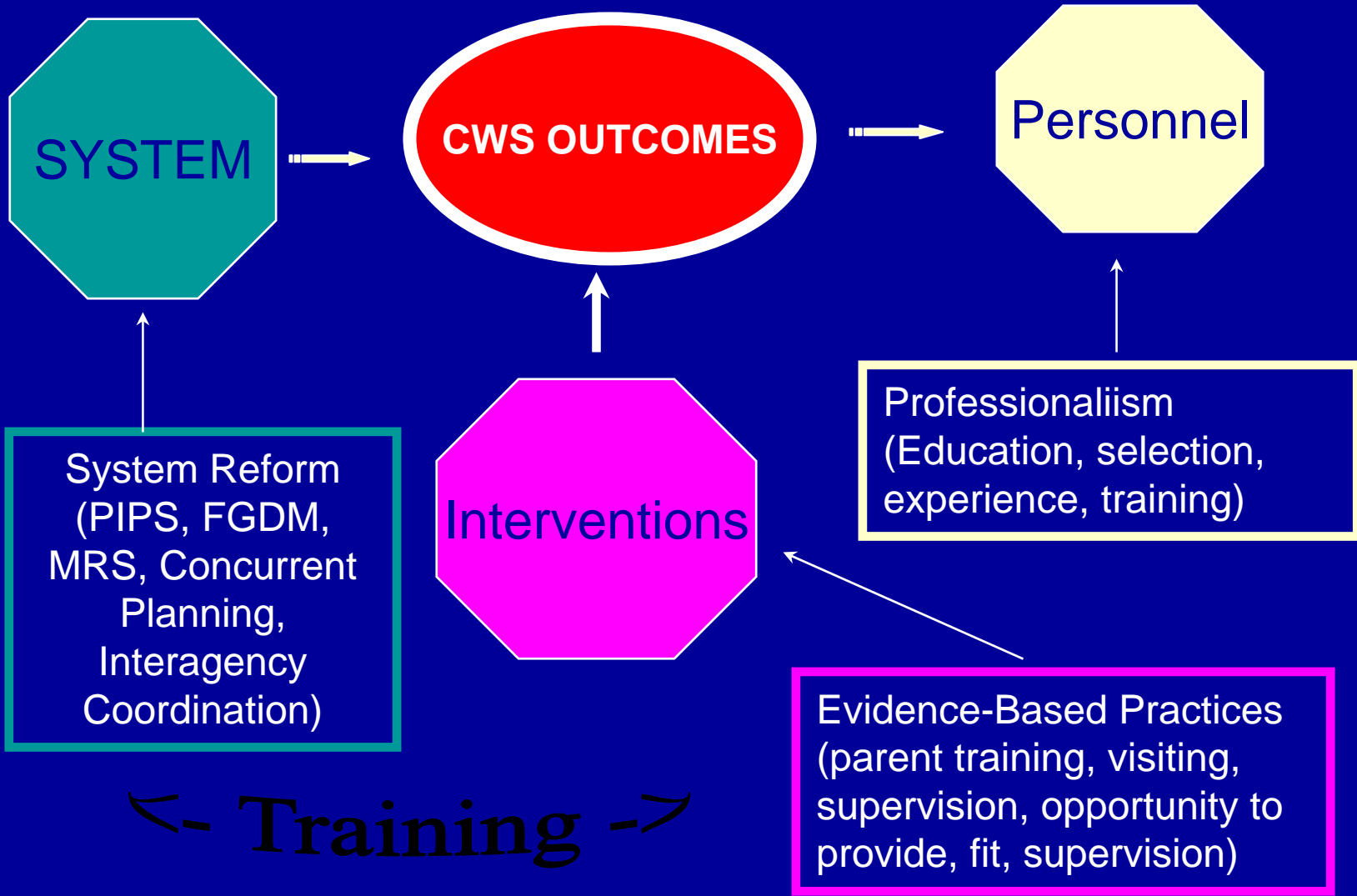
# An Effective Research Agenda

## APHSa CWS POSITIONING INITIATIVE

- Who are the critical “audiences” of research and what do they need and value?
  - Policy makers
  - Program managers
  - Line staff (filtered through training)
  - Other researchers
  - Clients who could benefit from better informed services
  - Schools of Social Work

# Research to Outcome Domains

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



# Resources for a Research Agenda

## APHSA QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- What are the agency resources and/or capacities required to develop, implement, monitor and continuously improve your research agenda?
- Strong IT capacity
- Knowledge of research language and concepts (e.g., cohorts, randomization, event history analysis)
- Shepherds of the research process
- Translators from Research to Practice

# The Child Welfare Research Agenda for California: Musings I

## Safety

- Safety studies will be extraordinarily difficult to do well unless we develop a better measure of safety and expensive:
  - CA needs a measure of the **severity of abuse** (to understand re-reports and re-removals that are conducted in order to prevent more serious maltreatment)
  - CA needs a self-report measure of maltreatment in a survey (to assess **undetected abuse**)

# The Child Welfare Research Agenda for California: Musings II

## Permanency

- Permanency studies are the least difficult to conduct
  - They must be conducted by **age group** and **presenting problem** for entering care
  - We have lots of description:
    - It's time for demonstration projects on placement stability and reunification

# The Child Welfare Research Agenda for California: Musings III

## Well-Being

- Well-being studies are extraordinarily difficult and expensive:
  - requiring analyses of prospective surveys (e.g., NSCAW or a CA-SCAW),
  - integration of administrative records that offer some measures of pre-existing conditions and post-service conditions

# Child Welfare Research Agenda for California: Musings IV (Overlooked Opportunities)

- **Parent Training and Education**
  - Who delivers it? How is it financed?
  - Is it based on an assessment of the family's need?
  - Is it developmentally sensitive to family's needs?
    - Are there specialized programs for newborns and, also, for adolescents
  - How is the attendance?
  - Is it an ESI or does it have characteristics suggesting a ESI
- **Supervision of Visitation**
  - What do workers do during visits to home?
  - What do CWWs do during visits to foster/group homes?
  - How does this compare to what we want them to do?

# Quarter Century Rear View

- Moldy files in the “basement” of San Mateo DSS
- Tables to Graphs
- County A, B, C
- Performance Indicators
- CWS/CMS Website

# Quarter Century Rear View

- Randomized Clinical Trials
- Integrated Data Across Agencies
- Mixed Methods
- TRUST re security and sensitivity of partners

**WE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS!!!**

# Looking Ahead

- Trust that research will matter to agencies
- Moving beyond administrative data regarding routine processes to measures of “need” and “benefit”
  - Statewide surveys
  - Severity of abuse
  - Behavioral indicators
- Agency generated research

# Thank You for this Privilege

## Any Questions?

### Partial References

- Barth, R. P. (1986). Time limits in permanency planning: The child welfare worker's perspective. *Children and Youth Services Review, 8*, 133-144.
- Barth, R. P., & Berry, M. (1989). Child abuse and child welfare in California. In M. Kirst (Ed.), *Conditions of children in California* (pp. 225-256). Stanford, CA: Policy Analysis for California Education.
- Barth, R. P., Snowden, L. R., Ten Broeck, E., Jordan, C. T., Barusch, A. S., & Clancy, T. (1986). Contributors to reunification or permanent out-of-home care for physically abused children. *Journal of Social Service Research, 9*, 31-46.
- Berrick, J., Needell, B., Barth, R. P., & Jonson-Reid, M. (1998). *The tender years: Toward developmentally sensitive child welfare services*. New York: Oxford.
- Grossman, B. G., Laughlin, S., and Specht, H. (1991). Building the commitment of social work education to the publicly supported social services. In K. H. Briar, V. H. Hansen, & N. Harris. (Eds). *New Partnerships: Proceedings from the National Public Child Welfare Training Symposium*. Miami: Florida International University.
- Harvath, T. A., Flaherty-Robb, M., White, D. L., Talerico, K. A., & Hayden, C. (2007). Best practices initiative - Nurturing partnerships that promote change. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing, 33*(11), 19-26.
- Hurlburt, M., Barth, R.P., Leslie, L.K., Landsverk, J.A. & McCrae, J.S. (2007). Building on strengths: Current status and opportunities for improvement of parent training for families in child welfare services. In R. Haskins, F. Wulczyn, & M. B. Webb (Eds.). (pp. 81-106). *Child protection: Using research to improve policy and practice*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Jenkins, S., & Mattaini, M. A. (1992). The Center-for-the-Study-of-Social-Work-Practice - a Profile. *Research on Social Work Practice, 2*(2), 133-142.
- Mullen, E. J. (1998). Linking the university and the social agency in collaborative evaluation research: principles and examples. *Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare, 7*(2), 152-158.