Research Opportunities & Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning in Child Welfare: What do we know so far?

- Horwath and Thurlow (2004) define experiential learning within the context of social work training as the process of “providing the learner with opportunities to develop knowledge, values and skills by pro-actively linking theory, research and practice wisdom to an actual situation” (p. 10).

- The researchers note four advantages for incorporating experiential learning in child welfare training:
  - Allows students to explore ways that theories and research inform practice
  - Students can develop skills in using their theoretical (classroom) knowledge in practice settings, hopefully enhancing their confidence and competence
  - Enables students to consider the ways that their personal & professional values and beliefs influence judgments and;
  - Developing their skills as reflective practitioners increases their ability to manage in a changing landscape
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- A key feature of experiential learning is the ability to construct environments that are as realistic as one would find working in the field.
- Dr. David Gaba indicated that simulations are “a technique, not a technology, to replace or amplify real patient experiences with guided experiences, artificially contrived, that evoke or replicate substantial aspects of the real world in a fully interactive manner” (2004).

Environments

The Value of CAST Research

- Informing the Field
- Generating awareness about CAST
- Providing research opportunities for students
- Partnerships with Stakeholders
Classes are taught by professionals from multiple disciplines. Lectures are also given by faculty from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center on Child Abuse and Neglect as well as other professionals working in the community. Internship opportunities are available.

Courses Offered for Minor (21 hours)

Complete 5 Required Courses:
- CAST 3013: Perspectives on Child Maltreatment and Child Advocacy
- CAST 3113: Global Child Advocacy Issues
- CAST 3214: Child Advocacy: Professional and System Responses to Child Maltreatment
- CAST 4014: Child Advocacy: Responding to the Survivor of Child Abuse and Survivor Response
- CAST 4084: CAST Capstone Experience

Choose 1 elective course:
- CAST 3213: Child Exploitation, Pornography, and the Internet
- CAST 3313: Sociology of Child Poverty
- CAST 3413: Gender, Violence, and Society
- CAST 3513: Child Advocacy Research Studies
The Value of CAST Research

The USC Upstate CAST study compares the responses of CAST students ready to graduate and DSS case workers. They use two case studies and we assess their responses in the following areas:

• System Response
• Corroborating Evidence
• Risk and Protective Factors
• Knowledge of Poly-Victimization

In collaboration with three CAST Universities: USC Upstate, University of Illinois Springfield, and Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, AR.

“Merging University learning and Children’s Advocacy Centers” Dr. Lisa Johnson
The Value of CAST Research: 
Topics to Explore

- Job preparedness
- Turnover/retention
- Critical decision-making competency
- Assessment of experiential training
- TOL – from the Classroom to the Field
- Trauma and ACEs in the CAST courses
- Job satisfaction