



College of Education and Human Development

Counseling & Development  
4400 University Drive, MS 1H1, Fairfax, Virginia 22030  
Phone: 703-993-2087; Fax: 703-993-5577  
<http://gse.gmu.edu/counseling/>

**EDCD 797.002:  
Families & Child Welfare System  
1 Credit, Spring 2015  
9 AM – 4:30 PM  
Saturday, February 28 & Saturday, March 7  
Enterprise Hall 173**

Instructor: Asha B. Sutton, PhD, LMFT

Office hours: As needed

Email address: [asutton5@gmu.edu](mailto:asutton5@gmu.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

**A. Prerequisites/Corequisites**

Prerequisites: EDCD 660; EDCD 602; EDCD 603

**B. University Catalog Course Description**

Provides an overview of emergent counseling literature pertaining to counseling parents, children, and families involved in the child welfare system. Topics include an exploration of national child welfare data; client experiences in the system; historical and contemporary federal and state child welfare policies; challenges faced by families involved the system; cultural, diversity, and social justice considerations; counseling considerations for working with families involved in the child welfare system; and professional development.

**C. Expanded Course Description**

This course will provide an introduction to counseling parents, children, and families involved in the child welfare system. Readings, discussions, and course activities will be used to explore the following topics: interpretation of national data about the child welfare system; awareness development of the experiences of families in the child welfare system; sociohistorical perspectives of the child welfare system and guiding policies; and therapeutic approaches relevant to working with parents, children, and families involved in the child welfare system. Students will further develop case conceptualization and clinical skills related to counseling parents, children and families involved in the child welfare system. Consistent with the mission of the Counseling and Development Program, students will fortify their professional knowledge and self-awareness that incorporates multiculturalism, advocacy, leadership, social justice, and internationalism.

**LEARNER OUTCOMES or OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to enable students to:

- Improve ability to interpret national statistics on children welfare data and discern implications for therapeutic work.
- Gain critical insight into the experiences of individuals involved in the child welfare system.
- Articulate notable historical events in the sociopolitical treatment of families involved in the child welfare system.
- Demonstrate an awareness of personal assumptions about parents, children, and

families involved in the child welfare system.

- Conceptualize potential mental health concerns and clinical considerations for parents, children, and families involved in the child welfare system.

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:**

1. EDCD 797 is a special topics course and meets the requirement that all master's students take 2-3 credits of special topics course work. This 1-credit course will contribute to counseling students' knowledge of a particular population of clients.
2. EDCD 797 fulfills the requirements of the following professional organizations:
  - Virginia Department of Education requirement for school counseling licensure that candidates understand the knowledge, skills and processes of individual counseling.
  - Virginia Department of Health Professions requirement that Licensed Professional Counselor candidates complete graduate study in theories and techniques of counseling and psychotherapy.
  - Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) core requirement described in Section II.K.e: Helping relationships: An understanding of counseling and consultation processes.
  - American Counseling Association Code of Ethics requirement that counselors establish counselor education and training programs that integrate academic study and supervised practice.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

NONE: assigned readings provided via Blackboard.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

#### *Introductory Reflection Paper (20% of total grade)*

As you begin learning about families in the child welfare system, it is important to get an idea the recent historical trends that exist at a national level in the child welfare system. The Adoption and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) collects case-level information from state and tribal title IV-E agencies on all children in foster care and those who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement.

Review the data for Fiscal Years (FY) 2012 and 2013 and reflect upon the following:

- What overall trends do you notice based on the data in the reports?
- Based on the data in the individual reports as well as between the two reports, what are some positives that you can identify? What are some challenges that exists?
- What populations are not included in the reports but should be considered?
- Your initial hypotheses for understanding the current trends in the child welfare system.
- How can this information help to inform your understanding of the system and the needs of the families in the system?
- What outstanding questions does this data leave you with?

**Please submit this introductory paper by Blackboard via SafeAssignment to the instructor before February 28, 2015. The paper should be approximately 3-5 pages in length (double-spaced) ) and adhere to APA (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) format.**

*Small Group In-Class Activity (10% of total grade)*

On Day 2 of the course, you will assemble in a group of 4-5 people and develop a creative, informal presentation that will be presented to the full class toward the end of Day 2. As a group, you are to do the following:

- Select a counseling approach that you have been exposed to in other courses and discuss the approach's use with either the general population of families involved in the child welfare system or a specific sub-population of families in the system.\*
- Describe the benefits of the approach.
- Describe the limitations of the approach.
- Based on the selected approach, what is your role as a counselor to the families that you serve?
- In what ways does the approach consider cultural differences?

\*Amongst others, theories you might consider selecting may include: cognitive behavioral therapy, psychodynamic theories, existential-humanistic, rational-emotive behavior therapy, Gestalt, family systems, narrative, feminist, multicultural counseling or perhaps even an integration of multiple theories.

*Prezi Presentation (50% of total grade)*

Your final assignment will consist of a Prezi presentation. In your presentation, you need to select one sub-population involved in the child welfare system and conduct outside research. You will present on the following:

- Quantitative experiences of the population based on federal and/or state child welfare data
  - Note if your population is not reported upon in the databases, identify a peer-reviewed journal article that provides some quantitative data on the population.
- Qualitative experiences of the population within the child welfare system
  - If there is not sufficient research available on the population hypothesize what the population's experiences may be.
- Unique challenges that the population faces
  - Address social, economic, political, racial/ethnic, and cultural challenges
  - Make a clear connection for what the challenges mean for the population's involvement in the child welfare system.
- Considerations and recommendations for addressing the needs of the selected population within a child welfare framework.
  - Address both macro (e.g. policy and community based programs) and micro considerations (e.g. therapeutic approaches/interventions).

You can access Prezi by going to [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com).

For more information and tutorials on how to create a Prezi presentation, see the following Youtube presentations:

Prezi Tutorial: Simple steps to a great prezi - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmgF-dLXv58>

Prezi Tutorial: My First Prezi - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArGh6FurR0Q>

**All Prezi presentations should be submitted via email to Dr. Sutton ([asutton5@gmu.edu](mailto:asutton5@gmu.edu)) on or before March 28, 2015. Adhere to APA (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) format. A minimum of one article from a peer-reviewed journal, or one book chapter should be cited.**

Participation (20% of total grade)

Students in Counseling & Development courses are expected to demonstrate a high level of participation consistent with graduate-level education. Students are expected to: be on time and present for the duration of the class; demonstrate engagement (ask questions, share thoughts); be respectful and attentive; and demonstrate preparedness for the weekend course. Within our abbreviated time together, it is to your benefit and for the class's benefit to engage in healthy, respectful conversations.

Grading

Introductory Reflection Paper (20% of total grade)

Small Group In-class Activity (10% of total grade)

Prezi Presentation (50% of total grade)

Participation (20% of total grade)

In accordance with the George Mason University Grading Policy, the following grades may be achieved: A [100-97]; A- [96-94]; B+ [93-91]; B [90-87]; B- [86-84]; C [83-80]; F [79 and below]

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

APA Format: Students in Counseling & Development courses are expected to use APA style (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) for written papers.

### Electronic Devices

**Turn off and put away all electronic communication devices during class.** Cell phones, pagers, and other communicative devices are not allowed in this class. Please keep them stowed away and out of sight. Laptops or tablets (e.g. iPads) may be permitted for the purpose of taking notes only. Engaging in activities not related to the course (e.g. gaming, email, chat, text, etc.) will result in a significant deduction in your participation grade. **Notify the instructor prior to class if you have an emergency situation that requires accommodation.**

### Attendance

In accordance with the policies of the Counseling and Development Program, on-time attendance at every class meeting is expected. Late arrival to class will be considered an absence. Due to the short nature of this class, **any unexcused absences will result in loss of course credit.** Attendance is required for all classes. Excused absences are permitted for illness, religious holidays, or emergency situations only; documentation is required for the absence to be considered excused. Work-related absences are not considered excused.

### Course Requirements

Each student is expected to: (1) attend each class, (2) complete all reading assignments before class, (3) arrive on time and stay for the entire class period, (4) participate in discussions and in-class work groups, (5) regularly check GMU email, and (6) submit or access documents via Blackboard as assigned.

### Assignments

Unless otherwise noted, the assignments for the course are to be **submitted via** (1) an electronic copy prior to the beginning of class on the date due via SafeAssignment on the course Blackboard site. Late homework assignments will be subject to a penalty of 20% for each day late. Additional assignments and/or assessments may be added at the instructor's discretion.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a violation of both the George Mason University code of honor and the expected professional dispositions of the Counseling & Development Program. The GMU English Department has developed the following statement regarding plagiarism: "Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinion, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through the use of accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or end notes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting. Student writers are often confused as to what should be cited. Some think that only direct quotations need to be credited. While direct quotations do need citations, so do paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information formerly unknown to the writers or which the writers did not discover themselves. Exceptions to this include factual information which can be obtained from a variety of sources, the writer's own insights or findings from their own field research, and what has been termed common knowledge. What constitutes common knowledge can sometimes be precarious, and what is common knowledge for one audience may be so

for another. In such situations, it is helpful to keep the reader in mind and to think of citations as being reader friendly. In other words, writers provide a citation for any piece of information that they think their readers might want to investigate further. Not only is this attitude considerate of readers and establishes credibility, it will almost certainly ensure that writers will never be guilty of plagiarism.”

#### **TASKSTREAM REQUIREMENTS: Not applicable for this course**

#### **George Mason University Policies and Resources for Students**

- Academic integrity (honor code, plagiarism) – Students must adhere to guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- Mason Email – Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, division, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- Counseling and Psychological Services – The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops, and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- Office of Disability Services – Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor in writing at the beginning of the semester <http://ods.gmu.edu/>.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- The Writing Center (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- University Libraries (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Libraries provide numerous services, research tools, and help with using the library resources [See <http://library.gmu.edu/>].

#### **PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) code of ethics requires counselors and counselor trainees to maintain standards of professional competence and possess good moral character. The George Mason University Counseling & Development Program has adopted a set of professional performance criteria that is consistent with the ACA code of ethics. Please refer to these dispositions, which may be found at <http://gse.gmu.edu/counseling/policies-resources/>.

#### **CORE VALUES COMMITMENT**

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website <http://gse.gmu.edu/>.**

## Proposed Class Schedule

Class	Date	Topics	Reading	Assignment
1. Saturday	February 28, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Introductions</li> <li>b. Current Knowledge</li> <li>c. Examination of AFCARS Reports</li> <li>d. Client Experiences in the System</li> <li>e. Historical Context of Federal Policies</li> <li>f. VA Child Welfare Policies</li> <li>g. Processing/Wrap-up</li> </ul>	<a href="#">AFCARS FY2013 Report</a>  <a href="#">AFCARS FY2012 Report</a>  Dumbrill, 2006  Child and Family Services Manual – Chapter 3	Introductory Reflection Paper (submitted by Blackboard before the start of class)
2. Saturday	March 7, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Thoughts/Reflections from Day 1</li> <li>b. Contemporary Challenges Faced by Families in the System</li> <li>c. Counseling Considerations: Culture and Diversity</li> <li>d. Counseling Considerations: Therapeutic Approaches (Small Group Activity)</li> <li>e. The Role of Social Justice</li> <li>f. Avoiding burnout and other professional challenges</li> <li>g. Final Thoughts/Reflections/Questions/Comments/Concerns</li> </ul>	Rivaux, James, Wittenstrom, Bauman, Sheets, Henry, & Jeffries, 2008  de Boer & Coady, 2007  Ryan, Garnier, Zyphur, & Zhai, 2006  Shin, 2005	
				By March 28, 2015: Prezi Presentation

## ASSESSMENT RUBRIC:

### Prezi Presentation

#### Assignment Description (from syllabus)

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**This assignment is worth 50% of the total course grade.**

#### Grading Rubric:

In accordance with the George Mason University Grading Policy, the following grades may be achieved:

A [100--97]; A-- [96--94]; B+ [93--91]; B [90--87]; B-- [86--84]; C [83--80]; F [79 and below]

An "A" Prezi presentation is one that:

- Is clear, well written, well organized, and creative
- Demonstrates thoughtful comprehension and critique of data and journal articles
- Demonstrates integration of knowledge from the course, and integration into potential clinical



application

### **Required Readings**

- Adoption and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). (2014). The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2013 Estimates as of July 2014 (21). Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport21.pdf>
- Adoption and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). (2013). The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2012 Estimates as of July 2013 (20). Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport20.pdf>
- de Boer, C., & Coady, N. (2007). Good helping relationships in child welfare: Learning from stories of success. *Child and Family Social Work, 28*(9), 32-42. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2006.00438.x
- Dumbrill, G. C. (2006). Parental experience of child protection intervention: A qualitative study. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(1), 27-37.
- Rivaux, S. L., James, J., Wittenstrom, K., Bauman, D., Sheets, J., Henry, J., & Jeffries, V. (2008). The intersection of race, poverty, and risk: Understanding the decision to provide services to clients and to remove children. *Child Welfare, 87*(2), 151-168.
- Ryan, J. P., Garnier, P., Zyphur, M., & Zhai, F. (2006). Investigating the effects of caseworker characteristics in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review, 28*(9), 993-1006. doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2005.10.013
- Shin, S. H. (2005). Need for and actual use of mental health services by adolescents in the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*(10), 1071-1083. doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2004.12.027
- Virginia Department of Social Services' Child and Family Services Manual – Chapter 3: Complaints and Reports  
[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/cps/intro\\_page/manuals/08-2014/section\\_3\\_complaints\\_and\\_reports.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/cps/intro_page/manuals/08-2014/section_3_complaints_and_reports.pdf)

### **Additional Readings/Resources**

- Aarons, G., & Palinkas, L. (2007). Implementation of evidence-based practice in child welfare: Service provider perspectives. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 34*(4), 411-419. doi:10.1007/s10488-007-0121-3
- Allen, M., & Bissell, M. (2004). Safety and stability for foster children: The policy context. *The Future of Children, 14*(1), 49-73. doi:10.2307/1602754
- Arredondo, E., & Perez, P. (2003). Expanding multicultural competence through social justice leadership. *The Counseling Psychologist, 31*(3), 282-289. doi:10.1177/0011000003031003003

- Bell, C., Wells, S., & Merritt, L. (2009). Integrating cultural competency and empirically-based practices in child welfare services: A model based on community psychiatry field principles of health. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 31(11), 1206-1213.
- Benkert, R., Peters, R. M., Clark, R., & Keves-Foster, K. (2006). Effects of perceived racism, cultural mistrust and trust in providers on satisfaction with care. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 98(9), 1532-1540. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2569718/pdf/jnma00196-0134.pdf>
- Casey Family Programs (2007). Disproportionality in the child welfare system: The disproportionate representation of children of color in foster care. Retrieved from [www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/fostercarecolor.pdf](http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/fostercarecolor.pdf)
- Children's Bureau - <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>
- Fernandez, E. (2007). Supporting children and responding to their families: Capturing the evidence of family support. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 29(10), 1368-1394. doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2007.05.012
- Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Otis, M. (2007). The predictors of parental use of corporal punishment. *Family Relations*, 56(1), 80-91. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00441.x
- Harris, M. S., & Courtney, M. E. (2003). The interaction of race and ethnicity, and family structure with respect on the timing of family reunification. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 25(5/6), 409-429. doi:10.1016/S0190-7409(03)00029-X
- Hill, R. (2004). Institutional racism in child welfare. In J. Everett, S. Chipungu, & B. Leashore (Eds.), *Child Welfare Revisited* (pp. 57-76). New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Kapp, S. A., & Propp, J. (2002). Client satisfaction methods: Input from parents with children in foster care. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 19(3), 227-245. doi:10.1023/A:1015580015223
- Lee, C., & Ayón, C. (2004). Is the client-worker relationship associated with better outcomes in mandated child abuse cases? *Research on Social Work*, 14(5), 351-357. doi:10.1177/1049731504265833
- McLanahan, S., & Percheski, C. (2008). Family structure and the reproduction of inequalities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 257-276. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134549
- Mink, G. (1990). The lady and the tramp: Gender, race, and the origins of the American welfare state. In L. Gordon (Ed.), *Women, the state and welfare* (pp. 92-122). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Slaughter-Defoe, D. (1993). Home visiting with families in poverty: Introducing the concept of culture. *The Future of Children*, 3(3), 172-183. doi:10.2307/1602549

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (USDHHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Administration on Children, Youth, & Families (ACYF), & Children's Bureau. (2013). *Child maltreatment 2012*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>

Virginia Department of Social Services Child and Family Services Manual– August 2014  
<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/index2.cgi>

Wells, S., Merritt, L., & Briggs, H. (2009). Bias, racism, and evidence-based practice: The case for more focused development of the child welfare evidence base. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 31(11), 1160-1171. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.09.002

