

**The University of Tennessee  
College of Social Work  
BSSW Program**

**SW 461 – Child Welfare I: History, Programs, and Policies**

**FALL 2006 (3 credit hours)**

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**Program Mission**

The BSSW Program at the University of Tennessee exists to fulfill a need for disciplined, highly educated and trained generalist social workers to help people improve their social functioning in a technologically complex, culturally diverse, and rapidly changing world without borders. There is a focus on the reciprocal relationships between persons and their environments. Social workers are doers; they are problem-solvers who are able to intervene in multiple-level systems and perform various professional roles. Their actions are guided and informed by a broad knowledge-base, code of ethics, and professional values. Social workers are educated and trained to do things right as well as to do the right thing.

The mission of the BSSW Program is to develop generalist social workers who are strategic thinkers, life-long learners, and opinion shapers. The knowledge-base, skills, and values necessary for generalist practice are taught in an environment that fosters professional development and prepares students for critical thinking throughout their careers. We are dedicated to preparing practitioners for the challenges of today's complex pluralistic world. Since the amount of knowledge doubles approximately every five years, what is taught today may soon be obsolete. Our challenge, therefore, lies in the on-going development and implementation of a curriculum that prepares and energizes students for generalist practice today and in the future.

**Program Goals**

Provision of education and training that enable students to become generalist social work practitioners who:

- are committed to advancing social and economic justice and the principles, values, and ethics that guide the social work profession
- are committed to evidence-based practice
- are grounded in systems theory and operate within a person-in-the-environment framework
- use the problem-solving process to intervene in multiple-level client systems
- have an understanding of human diversity, special populations, and domestic and international challenges, that informs practice interventions
- use critical thinking, evaluative, and leadership skills to address the needs of a complex, changing global world
- are committed to continuous development of professional self

**Course Objectives:**

The objectives of this course are to provide students the opportunity to understand and analyze:

- the current and historical context of child welfare policies and programs in Tennessee and the United States;
- the relationship of racism and poverty to child welfare;
- the impact of child abuse, neglect, and co-occurring issues on children and families;
- Attachment theory and its implications in child psychosocial development and in child welfare practice;
- Systems theory as it applies to families and child welfare practice
- the guiding principles of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services practice model with

particular attention to:

1. The “one child-one worker” seamless service delivery system
  2. Permanency planning and the use of “concurrent planning” for permanency
  3. Family-centered practice and engaging families
  4. The strengths perspective as basis for assessment
  5. The use of “child and family team meetings”
  6. Culturally competent child welfare practice;
- state and federal policies and programs that outline the scope of practice in child protective services (CPS), foster care services, adoptions, and juvenile justice.

### **Behavioral Objectives**

Upon completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- discuss the current child welfare philosophy and structure of the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services;
- identify and describe each of the roles of the child welfare team of professionals in Tennessee including:
  1. Child Protective Services (CPS)
  2. Foster care
  3. Adoption
  4. Juvenile justice
- discuss situations that warrant involvement of the various professionals listed above and the impact of each role on interventions with families;
- explain the legal definitions of child abuse and neglect, laws related to reporting child abuse, and reporting requirements in Tennessee;
- discuss social work values with regard to child welfare practice;
- demonstrate the ability to engage in critical thinking and problem solving regarding child welfare through successful completion of class activities and assignments;
- discuss the value of implementing evidence-based child welfare practice.

### **Course Description**

SW 461 is a study of the child welfare system that examines history, policies and programs, both state and federal, pertinent to child maltreatment and juvenile justice.

### **Course Rationale**

This course is designed to prepare students for entry-level child welfare practice. A focus on best practices will increase students’ knowledge and skills for evidence-based, culturally competent, strengths-based, and family-centered child welfare practice.

### **Disability Services**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability please contact the Office of Disability Services at 2227 Dunford Hall at (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

### **Honor Statement**

An essential feature of the University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic dishonesty. By enrollment in this class, you pledge that you will neither knowingly give, nor receive, any inappropriate assistance in academic work in SW 461, thus affirming your own personal commitment to honor and integrity (*Hilltopics*).

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Class will be cancelled only if the University is closed due to inclement weather. Campus and local radio and TV stations will be notified so that appropriated announcements may be made. If class is cancelled, any

assignments due that day will be due the next time class meets.

### **Instructor's Policy**

Any assignments and/or exams that are not completed will be recorded as "0". Only in case of a verified emergency will make-up examinations or assignment extensions be permitted. If there are extenuating circumstances, the instructor must be informed **prior** to the date/time of the exam or the due date of the assignment.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive punctually. Attendance will be taken in each class session. Because emergencies and illnesses do occur, you will be allowed up to **3** absences during the semester. For each additional absence five (5) points will be deducted from the student's final course grade. Being late to class two times will equal one absence.

### **Course Requirements**

The course format will be a combination of lecture, speakers, video, class discussion and activities. Students are expected to read, critically analyze, and discuss readings. Participation in class is a requirement and **students should come to each class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that class session.**

### **Grading**

Students will be evaluated by total points earned in this course as outlined above. No extra credit is permitted in this course. The grading scale by total points is as follows:

180-200	A	140-149	C
170-179	B+	120-139	D
160-169	B	118-below	F
150-159	C+		

### **Required Text**

Downs, S., Moore, E., McFadden, E., Michaud, S., and Costin, L. (2004). *Child welfare and family services: Policies and practice* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

## **Assignments**

### **Research Paper (50 points)**

Write a 10 to 12 page analytical/research paper about one of the major child welfare issues covered in the course. (You must discuss your topic with the instructor before writing the paper.) Possible topics include: racism, poverty, addiction, homelessness, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. Other topics may also be acceptable. Your paper should be APA style using a 12-point font (page one is the title page & the last page is the reference page; an abstract is not needed). You should use at least 5 or more current peer-reviewed research articles for references. Your paper should address:

- the issue to be researched
- overall scope of the problem
- etiology of the issue
- a thorough analysis of the issue considering the "family-centered" child welfare practice approach
- best-practice intervention strategies according to current literature

Your paper will be evaluated on the clarity and strength of your writing (including grammar, punctuation, and syntax), use of APA style, and the breadth and strength of your analysis (including the appropriate use of source materials).

### **Brian A. Settlement Agreement Reaction/Critical Analysis Paper (25 points)**

The *Brian A. Settlement Agreement* is required reading for the course. The Settlement Agreement may be

accessed online at:

<http://tennessee.gov/youth/federal/settlement/>

For the Critical Analysis Paper you will write a 5 to 7 page paper focusing on:

- The implication of the conditions that resulted in the lawsuit and subsequent agreement (What was going on that made a lawsuit necessary? Or, was the lawsuit necessary at all? Why do you think it was or wasn't needed? Be sure to consider both the working environment for practitioners as well as services for children and families.)
- The potential parallels and conflicts between the *Brian A.* agreement and the Social Work Code of Ethics. What are the potential similarities and inconsistencies? How could you manage these as a child welfare practitioner?
- Do you think the *Brian A.* settlement agreement can work to improve the well-being of children and families who use the child welfare system in Tennessee? If so, how? If not, why? What else is needed?

### Exams (2 @ 50 points each)

There will be 2 exams for this course. Tentative dates for these exams are: October 19 and November 30.

### Readings

In addition to assigned readings from the textbook, there are several articles designated on the syllabus which are also required readings. These articles can be accessed through the folder "Required Readings" under "Course Documents" on Blackboard.

### Blackboard Online Assignments (25 points)

Participation in all online assignments/discussions is required for all students.

There will be 5 of these assignments worth 5 points each. The first of these assignments is due on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Subsequent Blackboard assignments & their due dates will be announced in class. These assignments will be opportunities for students to engage in critical analysis and thoughtful dialogue of course concepts that emerge in classroom discussions and course readings.

## Tentative Course Outline

**August 24**                      Course Introduction  
    Review syllabus and assignments  
    **Assignment: Respond to discussion board assignment #1 before next class (August 29<sup>th</sup>)**

### *Unit I*

*History of child welfare policies and programs in Tennessee and the United States*

**August 29**                      History of child welfare in the United States  
    **Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 1**  
    **Blackboard assignment #1 is due before class starts**

**August 31**                      History of child welfare in Tennessee  
    **Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 2**

### *Unit II*

*Child welfare in the current social and political context*

- September 5** Globalization  
International child welfare issues  
**Assignment: Read Unicef & International Social Service (2004). Improving protection for children without parental care: A call for international standards.**
- September 7** Oppression  
Racism  
Poverty  
Homophobia & Heterosexism  
Other “isms”  
NASW Code of Ethics & Social Work values  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 5**
- September 12** Consequences of oppression  
Violence  
Family violence  
Community violence  
War & terrorism  
Addiction  
Homelessness  
**Assignment: Read Mendel (2005). Double Jeopardy: Why the poor pay more. Advocasey (by the Annie E. Casey Foundation).**
- September 14** Overrepresentation of children of color in child welfare  
Contributing factors  
**Assignment: Read Hines, Lemon, Wyatt, & Merdinger (2004). Factors related to the disproportionate involvement of children of color in the child welfare system: a review and emerging themes. Children and Youth Services Review, (26), 507-527.**
- September 19** Practice strategies  
Strengths perspective  
Cultural competence  
**Assignment: Read Shim & Haight (2006). Supporting battered women and their children: Perspectives of battered mothers and child welfare professionals. Children and Youth Services Review, (28), 620-637.**  
**Assignment: Respond to discussion board assignment #2 before next class (September 21)**

**Unit III****Current child welfare policy in the United States**

- September 21** Prevention services  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 3**
- September 26** Day care & child development programs  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 4**
- September 28** Family preservation  
Family reunification  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 8**

**October 3** Evidence-based practice/"Best practice"  
Family-centered practice

**October 5** Family-centered practice continued

#### *Unit IV*

##### *Current child welfare policy in Tennessee*

**October 10** Brian A. Lawsuit  
Brian A. Settlement Agreement  
**Assignment: Read the Brian A. Settlement Agreement**

**October 12** Fall Break!

**October 17** Tennessee Department of Children's Services Practice Model  
Nine Guiding Principles

**October 19** **Exam I**

#### *Unit V*

##### *Child welfare services and issues*

**October 24** Court intervention with children and families  
Juvenile court  
Family court  
Criminal court  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 6**

**October 26** Juvenile delinquency  
Status offenses  
Emancipation  
Custody & Visitation issues  
Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)  
**Assignment: Brian A. Settlement Agreement Critical Analysis**  
**Paper is due at the beginning of class today**

**October 31** Protecting children from abuse and neglect  
Mandatory reporting  
Co-occurring issues  
Domestic violence  
Substance abuse  
Attachment disorder  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 7**

**November 2** Child neglect  
Child abuse  
Emotional abuse  
Sexual abuse  
Physical abuse  
**Assignment: Read Mennen & O'Keefe (2005). Informed decisions in child welfare: Using attachment theory. *Children and Youth Services Review* (27),577-593.**

- November 7** Foster Care  
Permanency planning  
Concurrent planning  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 9**
- November 9** Types of foster care  
Kinship care  
Foster parents  
Therapeutic foster homes  
Residential group home  
Independent living services
- November 14** Adoption  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 10**
- November 16** Juvenile Delinquency  
Categories of juvenile offenders  
Risk factors  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 11**
- November 21** Intervention strategies in juvenile delinquency
- November 23** **Thanksgiving!**
- November 28** Ethics and Advocacy in child welfare  
**Assignment: Read Downs et al., chapter 12**
- November 30** **Exam II**
- December 5** Course evaluation & wrap up  
**Assignment: Research paper is due at the beginning of class**