

2019 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

Social Work

Moderator: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, MSSW, Ph.D.

April 11, 2019, 2:00-5:30 p.m.
Inman 211

2:00 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.

Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Trafficking Detection and Treatment Policy in TN

Paige Eber, Catherine Lucas, Olivia Shaw

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

This presentation will offer an analysis of House Bill 682, which states that health care professionals who primarily provide emergency care shall have protocols requiring training in detection and treatment of victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking. This includes determining a screening protocol to identify these victims, documentation of related injuries, and referring these victims to local resources. While the stigma around sexual assault has recently declined, the issues of domestic violence and human trafficking remain harshly viewed by society. This bill would create programs to help identify these victims by requiring the emergency medical providers to have training on these issues. However, there is a lack of specification in the level of training the emergency care providers would receive. Because this is left up to the organization to determine for itself, there is a possibility that the training could be severely lacking what is actually necessary to help those who need it. There is also a section releasing the provider from liability in case of failure to detect the issue, which is important but additionally can cause less motivation to guarantee that proper training is in place. This presentation will analyze the bill's strengths as well as provide any suggestions that are important to the social work profession.

2:20 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.

Supporting Adverse Childhood Experience Training in Schools

Kennedy Corely, Molly Carroll, Seth Landers, Alexis Sweeney,

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

The research findings presented in this convocation will discuss the Senate Bill 0064 proposed in Tennessee's 111th General Assembly. This bill would require all K-12 teachers, assistant Principals, and principals employed by the local board of education to participate in adverse childhood experiences training at the start of each academic year. This training is step towards lessening numbers of juvenile delinquency, school drop-out rates, students placed in alternative schools and so many other crises. This bill would enforce teachers, assistant principals and principals to obtain a trauma informed mindset. This mindset addresses Adverse Childhood Experiences, which are defined as a stressful, traumatic, abusive event within one's early-life. Nearly 72% of all adolescents will experience one ACE before the age of eighteen. Included will

be the strengths and weaknesses of SB0064, a critical discussion about how it relates to social work ethics and values, as well as recommendations to strengthen the proposed bill. If passed, this bill will positively impact all students and teacher personnel across the state of Tennessee.

2:40 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

H.R. 119

Khyesha Leverett, Antoinette Lavender, Chloe Nusbaum, Emily Ramsey
Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, police were more likely to enforce physical contact on blacks (5.2%) and Hispanics (5.1%) than whites (2.4%). Legislation has been introduced that attempts to advocate for these marginalized communities. Police brutality is a national issue and this bill helps to support those who are the most vulnerable. In 2014, the Death in Custody Reporting Act was passed. According to H.R. 1447, "...the State shall report to the Attorney General, on a quarterly basis and pursuant to guidelines established by the Attorney General, information regarding the death of any person who is detained, under arrest, or is in the process of being arrested, is en route to be incarcerated..." (pg. 1). Some of the information required in reporting name, age, gender, ethnicity, and race. This presentation will provide an analysis of H.R. 119, sponsored by Rep. Cohen of Memphis. This bill establishes a national protocol for reporting, collecting, and compiling information on incidences in which deadly force is used by a police officer. The strengths of this bill are: it requires vital information about the incident to be reported, a central compilation of statistics on a growing crisis. The limitations include the lack of data being collected. While this bill demonstrates a chance for accountability and serves as a great opportunity, it has the potential to create distrust within information and data collection from the police and government. This bill connects to social work values within the context of service and dignity and worth of the individual.

3:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.

Senate Bill 0665: Juvenile Justice to Stop Solitary Confinement

Yashica Bedford, Bailey Jo Carter, Derica Cole, Gracyn Martin
Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

Solitary confinement is defined as the practice of isolating an incarcerated individual for extended time in a small space away from human contact. The use of solitary was largely discontinued in the United States in 1890 as being "inhumane", yet was re-implemented in the 1980's during the "War on Drugs". Today, there are over 100,000 inmates living in solitary, the state of Tennessee is #5 on the list of most solitary-housed inmates across the U.S. Because of inadequate reporting, there is no known number of how many juvenile inmates are living in solitary. Housing juveniles in solitary has been proven to cause damage to mental health, brain development, behavioral patterns and overall wellbeing. Tennessee is one of seven states in the U.S that has no set time limit that a juvenile can reside in isolation; meaning they could reside in solitary for an extended amount of time. Representative Jesse Chism of Memphis has recently brought forth Senate Bill 0665: The Juvenile Justice to Stop Solitary Confinement Act. Passing this bill would strictly limit the use of solitary in Juvenile facilities in TN, set safe time

management, enhance training and establish reporting requirements. In correspondence with all six of the social work values, this piece of legislation aligns with the morals of the National Association of Social Workers. It is clear that solitary is a destructive tool used across America, hopefully, with SB0665 there is space to change the way Tennessee attends to the Juvenile Justice System.

3:20 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.

Mental Health Counseling for Juvenile Offenders: An Analysis of H.B. 0988

Alexa Owens, Rebecca Winstead

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

Each year, 2 million children and adolescents are arrested, and research has shown that at least 7 in 10 of these youth have a diagnosable mental health disorder (National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.). Additionally, 1 in 10 of these children and adolescents also meet criteria for substance use disorders. In light of uncertainty of how to deal with these startling statistics, researchers have begun studying how various treatments and programs may be useful in helping these youth. In addition to research, legislation addressing the needs of juvenile offenders has increased in recent years. H.B. 0988, introduced to the Tennessee General Assembly by Representative London Lamar seeks to provide mental health counseling to each child or adolescent in a juvenile detention center or shelter care facility at least one time per week. Furthermore, this mental health counseling must be administered by a mental health professional who is licensed or certified. This presentation will provide an analysis of H.B. 0988 and the impact the legislation may have on children and adolescents who are in contact with the juvenile justice system in Tennessee. All children and adolescents deserve access to proper mental health resources, regardless of their criminal record, in line with the social work value of maintaining the dignity and worth of every individual. More so, mental health services should only be increased for those at such high risk for mental health issues, rather than continuously punishing these individuals. H.B. 0988 seeks to provide these resources to vulnerable youth.

3:40 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

House Bill 0150

Beth Marrero, Ray Rizzo, Alan Whitley

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse in 2016 there were 1, 186 opioid-related overdose deaths in Tennessee. Deaths from synthetic and prescription opioids have also increased, from 72 to 395 deaths and from 516 to 739 deaths. In 2015 Tennessee providers wrote 118.3 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons, that is 7.8 million prescriptions that were written in 2015. Research shows opioids as a psychoactive analgesic drug prescribed for pain relief and palliative care. Opioids have an addictive potential and there is an effort in controlling prescriptions needed to avoid misuse and dependence. In response to the opioid crisis, Representative Cameron Sexton introduced House Bill 0150 and Senator Bo Watson introduced Senate Bill 0194 on January 28, 2019. These bills create a healthy discussion around alternative medications and treatments in order to prevent a vulnerable individual from falling into the

depths of addiction. As introduced, the bill defines “alternative treatments”, for purposes of the requirement that prescribing physicians explain reasonable alternatives to opioids, as including chiropractic care, physical therapy, acupuncture, and other treatments that relieve pain without the use of opioids. This bill would mandate healthcare professionals to have these discussions that can potentially save lives and treat individuals with the values defined by the National Association of Social Work. Patients will be treated with dignity and worth and it is the integrity of a team of professionals to have that alternative discussion that can limit deaths and prevent a path of destruction that opioid addiction can cause.

4:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Analysis of House Bill 0405/Senate Bill 0170

Evie Lambadis, Morgan McKean, Tayviana Scott

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

According to Zare et al., (2018), Adverse childhood experiences are defined as exposure to poverty, violence, discrimination, man-made and natural, disasters, traumatic medical events, violence, discrimination, poverty, dysfunctional families, and tragic family events and prolonged parental absence. About 6% of children between the ages of 6 and 11 have been diagnosed with either depression, anxiety, or both (Zare et al., 2018). Around this age children should be enjoying their childhood and making friends in school. Instead they are experiencing different types of traumas which may cause some children to act out in inappropriate ways at home and, more often, in school. To address the challenges of inappropriate behavior at school that stem from the experience of trauma and stress, Senator Katrina Robinson and Representative Harold Love Jr. have introduced a bill that will require each local board of education to adopt a policy requiring schools within local education agencies to perform an adverse childhood experiences assessment before suspending or expelling a student or requiring a student to attend in-school suspension or alternative school. The positives and negatives of this legislation will be presented as well as recommendations to accommodate other issues that students deal with.

4:20 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.

Fictive Kinship Care

Lindsay Gaston, Allison Gilliland, Penaly Than

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

There are 8,000 children in the foster care system in the state of Tennessee. There are less than 4,000 foster families willing to provide homes for foster children. Less than 50% of foster children are placed with a relative. Relatives and other significant guardians are a valuable source of support and connection for children. Kinship caregiving exists for children both inside and outside of the child welfare system. Relatives may offer to care for a child to keep them out of foster care. Fictive kinship is a term used to describe forms of kinship not based on blood or marriage ties. They have emotionally significant relationships with the child that could have the characteristics of family relationships. Evidence suggests that being placed with relatives or other significant guardians can help reduce the trauma of being removed from home, and federal and state child welfare efforts prioritize placing children with relatives when possible. This

presentation will offer an analysis of House Bill 1150 that expands the kinship foster care program beyond placement of children with relatives, to include placement with fictive kin. This would authorize fictive relationships participating in the kinship foster care program to receive foster care payments and benefits. House Bill 1150 is consistent with Social Work professional values of the importance of human relationships, social justice, and dignity and worth of a person. These values are embedded in this bill, and support the need of this bill to come to pass.

4:40 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Child Placing Agency - Family Partnerships

Jessica Barna, Kendra Estes, Elizabeth Ratajczak, Sarah Shelton, Anne McCall Stansberry

Faculty Advisor: Jennifer Crowell Thompson, Ph.D.

In the past decade, the number of Tennessee children anxiously awaiting adoption has increased over 55%. In 2018, there were over 14,000 children in the custody of Tennessee's Department of Children's Services. Despite the good work of child welfare professionals, research indicates children permanently removed from their families, who are not swiftly adopted, are more likely to endure homelessness, experience chronic physical and mental illness, and become victims of physical abuse and sexual violence. In light of these data, any potential barrier to the placement of a child with a loving family should be of grave concern. As introduced, House Bill 0836 and Senate Bill 1304 would work to prohibit a privately licensed child-placing agency from being required to fulfill any placement for foster care or adoption the agency believes to be contradictory to its written religious or moral convictions. The limitations of this legislation are clear in that the bearing of an agency's religious convictions could exclude qualified foster and adoptive parents for any number of subjective or arbitrary judgments. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence affirming children thrive in a stable, loving family regardless of composition. House Bill 0836 and Senate Bill 1304 are inconsistent with the professional values of Social Work outlined by the National Association of Social Workers and as such should be opposed by our professional community. We, as social workers, must act to preserve the futures of Tennessee's children. For these youth, the journey to a happy, healthy adulthood literally begins at home.