

# CWTAP Quarterly

*Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program  
Eastern Washington University*

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## Director's Corner

Dear CWTAP Community,

In June Eastern will graduate CWTAP students from both our Vancouver part-time and Cheney full-time programs. The majority of these graduates are not yet employed by Children's Administration and will be seeking work very soon. All of our non-employee graduates completed our CWTAP elective winter quarter (2018) which covered Regional Core Training topics. Our graduates will have completed most, if not all, RCT content by the time they graduate.

Of course with graduation come new cohorts of students. CWTAP is currently in the midst of interviewing and admitting students to our cohorts around the state; Vancouver part-time, Everett part-time advanced standing, Spokane part-time advanced standing, Cheney full-time first year and advanced standing.

Eastern's CWTAP is pleased to have sponsored all students wishing to attend the Children's Justice Conference in Spokane this year. Students are grateful for the additional learning opportunities available at the CJC and their feedback has been very positive.

Please see inside for more about our CWTAP elective and the ways we are infusing RCT content into student learning, including an innovative court testimony simulation created by Gerry Charvat.

Thank you for your support of CWTAP.

Sincerely,

Diana Patterson LeBlanc

## Important Dates

**May 28**  
Memorial Day



**May 7 - 8**  
Children's Justice Conference  
**June 16 - June 24**  
Break

## Alumni Spotlight

*Laura Caruso, MSW  
by Erinn Havig*

This issue's alumni article features Laura Caruso. Laura graduated from the Vancouver MSW program in 2015. In her earlier professional years, Laura worked as a teacher's assistant in schools with low income and ESL families. These early experiences gave her insight into how families who were receiving welfare assistance lived and her career was devoted to supporting the children and families she worked with. Laura's original state employment actually began with the Community Services Office (CSO) in HR and transitioned into a call center position. Her knowledge and capabilities around navigating financial services and benefits were valuable when she transitioned to Children's Administration in 2011 as a CFWS worker. Her CA career path, influenced by her need for new learning in CWTAP, led her to CPS and FAR programs and after graduating, she entered her current position as a Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS Investigator.



Laura reports that her MSW has "made her a better and more humble person and social worker." Most people realize how challenging working in child welfare can be. Laura's reflection is that "working in child welfare has made me rethink what is necessary in my life. I value more making memories and gaining experiences." Laura would like to further her career in social work and participate in humanitarian activities back in her native country.

When asked to share some advice for current students and new employees to child welfare, Laura had excellent insights to offer. "Be compassionate and have integrity in your work. Remember these are people's lives that we are affecting and we should always be culturally sensitive and respectful when we go into a person's home. You can never ask too many questions or spend too much time listening to them. Because of the stressors in working in child welfare, it is very important to be able to separate your personal and professional life. Participating in self-care will allow you to be more productive and effective in your work. Don't be afraid to ask your peers and co-workers for help. This is difficult but also very rewarding work we do."

Laura is also the mother of two boys ages 13 and 20. She enjoys traveling and doing anything outdoors such as running and hiking. She volunteers at Peace Health in the Stepping Stones children's program and at the 2016 and 2017 Stepping Stones bereavement camps. She also helps co-facilitate the Survivor of Suicide (adult) Support Groups. Laura is an amazing example of a strong, positive and committed social worker. We are lucky to have her working for Children's Administration.

## Student Spotlight

### *Teresa Zarate-Castellanos – CWTAP Hybrid Program - Spokane* by Gerry Charvat

Teresa is a CWTAP student in the Spokane Hybrid program. She is finishing her first year in the 3-year part-time program. Teresa had originally been accepted into the full-time program but requested to switch to the Hybrid program to support her new career as a public child welfare social worker.

Teresa obtained her BSW from Eastern Washington University in 2015. As part of her program she did an internship at Early Head Start in Spokane, WA. That experience led her to become a Family Support Coordinator at the Martin Luther King Jr. Head Start center. She enjoyed her time there but recognized in herself a desire to do even more for children and families. While working at MLK, one of her coworkers began to describe what she referred to as a “dream job” in public child welfare. This really sparked an interest for Teresa. She took a “leap of faith” and applied for a Social Service Specialist (SSS) 1 job at Children’s Administration. She was offered the job in March 2016 and accepted it knowing it was only a 1-year position. The timeframe fit nicely with her desire to get her MSW at EWU and in 2017 she was accepted into the Cheney Full-time MSW program. At nearly the same time her supervisor recognized her hard work and hired her as a permanent Social Services Specialist 2 as a Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS) worker! Thankfully, EWU offered a Hybrid program that could accommodate her full-time work and she quickly switched to the part-time program. Teresa stated that promoting from a SSS1 to a SSS2 was a huge transition as it meant that she would no longer be in a supportive role but rather carrying her own CFWS caseload. She said the transition was a challenge but was made manageable by having a supportive supervisor and a unit she could go to with any and all questions.



Balancing full-time work with her MSW program can be challenging but the key to her success has been having a strong routine. Early on she recognized that she could not just go straight home from work and expect herself to do homework, so now after work she goes to the gym and then it is straight to the Spokane Riverpoint Campus library, which is open 24 hours! Teresa has been with Children’s Administration for 2 years now and enjoys the work. With school and work she remains extremely busy but to maintain balance she is committed to working out at her local CrossFit gym and maintaining the important relationships she has built there.

## CWTAP Elective



### *Regional Core Training (RCT) Topics by Gerry Charvat*



Last November the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence implemented new Regional Core Training (RCT) curriculum for new hires. This new curriculum included a week in Seattle devoted to interviewing and court simulation. CWTAP was able to send a Faculty Field Instructor (FFI) to the inaugural cohort to learn the new curriculum and model and bring it back to the classroom for the RCT elective. This winter, FFI's Erinn Havig

and Gerry Charvat taught the RCT elective for Hybrid CWTAP students in Vancouver and for full-time students in Cheney. Erinn and Gerry worked closely with Alliance coaches to ensure the curriculum was current and accurate. The elective, as part of the CWTAP course of study, went beyond a training, as students were expected to complete real world assessments and comprehensive evaluations under the close supervision of their Agency Field Instructors (AFI's) and FFI's. Students in Spokane were also able to participate in a simulated contested Dependency Trial before Commissioner Michelle Ressa with lead questioning by Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Katie Christopherson and cross by Legal Intern Jordan Schaper. The students were able to provide testimony and get immediate feedback from the Commissioner, attorneys, and key Children's Administration (CA) supervisors. The simulation materials were provided by the Alliance and the line of questioning was developed by former AAG Sarah Delaney Hillman.



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### Helpful Links

Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence: [www.allianceforchildwelfare.org](http://www.allianceforchildwelfare.org)

National Association of Social Workers: <https://www.socialworkers.org>

Child Welfare League of America: [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)

Children's Defense Fund: [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

Child Welfare Information Gateway: [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

Casey Family Programs: [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families: [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)