



MIDWESTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas Tech University System

Course Syllabus: Child Welfare Policy and Practice

College of Health Sciences and Human Services

SOWK 3453 x40

Summer II: July 7-August 7, 2025

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of child welfare services from an historical, theoretical, and practice perspective. Services to children and their families are divided into support services or those which enhance family life, supplemental services that help the struggling family to maintain or regain balance and substitute services or those that provide for the child when the family cannot on either a temporary or permanent basis. Each service is considered from the point of view of etiology, rationale for the services, the provision of the services, how the consumer views the service, and trends that may affect future provision of the service. Services are also discussed in light of their provision for a variety of diverse populations.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define key features of the child welfare system (emphasis on Texas)
- Examine the historical development of services
- Identify unique needs and issues (human diversity)
- Examine the impact of social and economic forces
- Identify key concepts in child advocacy services
- Identify key children's services
- Analyze policy impact on children's services
- Analyze bio-psycho-social variables

- Discuss how services to children and families are provided along a continuum from the least intrusive (support services), to somewhat more comprehensive (supplemental services), to services that substitute, either temporarily or permanently, for their natural family (substitute services)
- Discuss trauma-informed care and explain the importance of a trauma-informed approach
- Discuss the history of the provision of services for children and their families in the United States
- Explain the role of the family in the lives of children, how these roles can break down and how they differ according to the influence of diversity
- Demonstrate an understanding of how such social issues as poverty, violence, drug abuse and homelessness impact children and their families
- Recognize the concepts of family preservation, family support and permanency planning and explain what each means to children and families
- Give a brief overview of such services as daycare, services in schools, counseling, court services, protective services, services to teen parents, foster care, adoption and residential services
- Discuss the impact of children's services on those they serve
- Speculate knowledgeably on the trends in the future of services to children and families given the current societal attitudes and political climate

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Required:

Crosson-Tower, C. (2018). *Exploring Child Welfare: A Practice Perspective* (7th ed.). Pearson.

- **List price: \$143.99** (prices may vary depending on the vendor)

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

- **List price: \$31.99** (prices may vary depending on the vendor)

Writing Assistance

Begin drafting assignments as early as possible and take advantage of the [TASP Learning Center](#). Located in Moffett Library, The Office of Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) offers a variety of resources designed to help students meet the demands of the college classroom. Their mission is to provide the necessary support to help students achieve academic success. Students are invited to bring any kind of writing to a session with a writing tutor. They do not provide an editing service; instead, they offer feedback and support to help writers develop into more effective communicators.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Grading

Table 1: Student achievement will be evaluated on the basis of written assignments, class exams, class participation, and class presentation.

Assignments	Percentage
Discussion Boards (6 averaged for total)	40%
Exams (4 averaged for total)	30%
Group Presentation	30%

Table 2: Weighted average will be used to calculate final grade.

Grade	Percentages
A	90-100
B	80 to 89
C	70 to 79
D	60 to 69
F	Less than 60

A grade less than C in this course is considered failing according to the Social Work Program Grade Policy, and the course will have to be repeated to count towards Social Work Major Requirements.

Discussion Board Participation:

For each week, the instructor will post question(s) on D2L for the class to respond. Unless specified otherwise, everyone should post an initial response to the question(s) and should also respond to at least two peers' posts. The discussion board is a mandatory component. Students are expected to participate actively throughout the summer sessions. Students are expected to write formally (no shorthand or text messaging abbreviations) and use APA format and referencing where appropriate. There will be general questions relating to the chapter(s), case vignettes, current events, and/or watching a video and posting your response. Thoughtful responses, constructive critique of fellow students, and meaningful participation are expected. Please keep in mind the discussion board is a formal assignment and part of your grade.

Because summer courses are significantly shortened, students are asked to read and respond to multiple chapters each week. To alleviate multiple due dates, I have addressed multiple chapters in each post assignment. Please read and follow the discussion board instructions and rubrics carefully and do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions.

Discussion Thread Participation:

As stated earlier, the discussion board is a mandatory component. Discussion questions will be posted on the discussion board each week. **Typically, your initial posts to the discussion assignments are due by 11:30 pm on Sundays and your responses to at least two peer's posts** (you may respond to as many peers' posts as you want) **are due by 11:30 pm on Mondays.** Due dates will change at times during the semester (specifically for the introductory and final posts) so it is the responsibility of the student to **follow the due dates listed in each post assignment.**

To help reduce the temptation to submit work written by AI, **after you make your posts on the discussion boards, you are required to copy your discussion post to a Word document and also submit it to an assignment folder for plagiarism and AI checking** by 11:59 after each discussion is due.

If anyone fails to do the initial posts and fails to respond to peers' posts for any two discussion threads he or she may be dropped from the course or assigned a failing grade for the course. Failure to submit posts to the assignment folder will result in a 50% point deduction.

I will review your posts and responses and give individual feedback when grading posts. I may respond in the discussion thread to a select few posts and/or responses or respond collectively to the class. This does not mean only the posts and/or responses of those to whom I respond are good and other posts and/or responses are not good. **Students are strongly encouraged to complete discussions early** as each discussion board will close at 11:30 on the reply due date. **No requests for late access will be considered** unless the student has submitted documentation through the Dean of Student's office proving incapacitation for the entire week that the discussion was available. ***Note: If needed, changes will be made in the syllabus while the sessions are on.***

Exams

Students will complete 4 exams by 11:30 pm on Sundays based on the required book chapters as indicated in the class schedule. The quizzes are open book and notes, but there will be only 60-80 minutes to complete them (depending on number of questions). **Exams cannot be made up if missed, and a grade of zero (0) will be recorded.** No requests for late access will be considered unless the student has submitted documentation through the Dean of Student's office proving incapacitation for the entire week that the exam was available.

Final

There will NOT be a final exam. The final project will be due in lieu of a final exam.

Final Project

APA style formatting is required for all written work in this course. Be sure to use appropriate APA style citations and references for any information you take from the textbook, handouts, reference materials, websites, or other outside sources while completing written assignments.

Description: During the first week of classes, students will be asked to organize into groups of **2 to 4** members for the purpose of creating group presentations for the course final project. You will post the names of your group members on the Group Presentation Selection Discussion Board for instructor approval **by July 13th.**

Groups will be required to meet at least once per week. Part of your grade will be based on your ability to work as a group so make sure when you are forming your groups that you find classmates who can schedule to meet at mutually agreeable times. During your first group meeting please review and discuss the syllabus Instructor Class Policies regarding plagiarism and use of AI. If you have any questions, please review the Plagiarism and APA help sections of the D2L course and then reach out to me for clarification. **On the first slide of your presentation please include a statement certifying that all members of your group understand and agree to abide by the plagiarism, AI, and academic dishonesty policies of this course and certify that the entirety of your submissions are original work by members of the group.** Please submit a separate Word document with a list of group meeting dates including start and end times and a description of what each group member contributed to the project.

Each group will be responsible for submitting a **PowerPoint** presentation, **including speaker notes to clarify slide content.** You should prepare your presentation just as you would if you were going to be presenting to a live classroom. In lieu of including speaker notes, groups who wish may choose to submit a video of all members presenting the slides. Please make sure that your full presentation and included speaker notes are visible in your submission and your discussion board post. As you may need to print the file to PDF with speaker notes to ensure that they are visible with each slide, you may turn in your presentation as a PDF.

Background Information:

The future of child welfare depends largely on the policies and programs that are designed to protect and serve children. Responsibility for the formulation and implementation of policies that work falls on the shoulders of those about to enter the field as well as veteran advocates and policymakers. Therefore, it is important for new child welfare workers to know the issues and begin to search proactively for solutions.

Several resources will be added to the Final Presentation Section of the course. You will be required to read and/or watch some of the resources and others will simply be available for you to access to help with your understanding and the development of your presentation. You are expected to utilize additional reference material in your final presentation.

The purpose of the presentation is to identify strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities in child welfare, or in your selected area of child welfare if you wish to specialize (i.e. foster care, juvenile justice, adoption, children in military families, etc.), and to present an accurate analysis, including AT LEAST ONE OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT that your group will investigate in its presentation.

Each group will create a PowerPoint Presentation and will submit it to the assignment drop box and also post it on the final discussion board.

Presentations must include names of group members, a summary of issues to be covered, strengths, challenges, issues, opportunities (including at least one opportunity for improvement), conclusion and next steps, at least two questions for class discussion, and a list of sources (references) that have been consulted (minimum of 5 sources). Sources must be appropriately cited throughout your presentation.

Grading will be based on the following criteria: accurate identification of current topics and issues in the child welfare field, connections to established best practices, issues are presented in a logical order, inclusion of verifiable background facts, examples, and sources that help the reader locate additional information, critical analysis, reflectiveness, engagement of class, selection of relevant professional and scholarly references, creativity, and effective method of presentation.

All members of a group will receive the same grade. If a group agrees to an alternative arrangement for grading, the group must submit this agreement in writing and signed by all the members prior to their presentation, subject to the approval of the professor.

Equal Division of Responsibilities: Please ensure that everyone contributes equally to the presentation, including organizing/planning, brainstorming ideas, researching, critically thinking through the case, preparing PowerPoint or other audiovisual aids, and, if you elect to submit a video, participating in the presentation recording (you may divide responsibilities among group members, but ensure that there is approximately equal participation over the entire list of responsibilities). ***If a member of the group is not participating equally, then the group is responsible for letting the instructor know at least 5 days prior to the presentation.*** Please do not wait until just before the presentation is to be made. The instructor may ask that member to do a separate, individual assignment.

Late Work

Assignments may only be submitted while their assignment folder is open. Many assignments in this course close at the end of the week and may not be submitted late. Students are responsible for checking due dates in the syllabus and D2L and should ask questions as soon as possible and before the assignment is due. Late assignments submitted before their folder closes will be penalized ½ letter grade per 24-hour time period. Failure to submit any assignment within 7 calendar days of the due date will result in a failing grade for the assignment.

Discussions may not be completed after the discussion board closes. **If anyone fails to post an original discussion or replies for 2 or more assignments, they will be dropped from the course or will be given a failing grade.**

Make-Up Work/Tests

Make-up work will only be considered in cases of university excused absences or verifiable emergencies. Students will not be allowed to complete discussions late or take make-up exams after the original exam has been given.

Important Dates

Deadline for August graduates to file for graduation: June 23rd

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" July 23rd

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Voids](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Students are responsible for checking emails and logging onto D2L regularly to ensure that messages from the instructor and fellow students are received in a timely manner. Students who wish to meet with me face-to-face should schedule an appointment in advance via email catherine.earley@msutexas.edu.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as in the Academic Success Center. **Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!** There are many places to access your class. Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

All students registered for courses in the Social Work Department are expected to adhere to the responsibilities, and behavior as articulated in both the [Student Handbook](#) and the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) [Code of Ethics](#). An essential feature of these codes is a commitment to maintaining intellectual integrity and academic honesty.

This course requires that work submitted for a grade by students – all discussions, process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, final works, etc. – will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups as directed by class assignment instructions. This means that the following constitute violations of academic honesty: a student has another person/entity do the work of any portion of a graded assignment for them, which includes using the work of another student as a template, purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, and/or **using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, or any generative AI assistance such as GrammarlyGO, Grammarly Premium, etc.).** I have a **zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, or collusion,** and violations will result in substantial penalties, including a failing grade (zero) on the assignment with no make-up opportunity and/or a referral to the Dean of Students.

Repeated **accidental or willful cheating, plagiarism, or collusion or use of someone else's words, ideas, or evidence without attribution will be met with a failing grade in the course and a referral to the Dean of Students,** regardless of whether the first occurrence was in this course. If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Students are expected to display professional decorum at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, respecting classmates and the instructor. In this regard, it is expected that students will not engage in unprofessional behaviors in or in relation to the class. Students should prepare appropriately for discussions and refrain from causing disruptions to the class and course discussions.

Professional Expectations of Student Behavior

Midwestern State University Department of Social Work is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to foster and evaluate professional behavioral development for all students in social work courses. The Department of Social Work also bears a responsibility to the community at large to produce fully trained professional social workers who consciously exhibit the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession of social work. The values of the profession are codified in the NASW Code of Ethics. Given this context, all students taking classes in the social work program will be expected to exhibit the following ethical standards of behavior.

1. **Accountability:** Complete reading assignments, participate in class discussions, and submit assignments on time.
Participate in group activities and assignments at a comparable level to peers.
Complete work in a timely fashion and according to directions provided.
2. **Respect:** Treat all your peers, your instructors, and all those you encounter, with dignity and respect at all times.
Give feedback to peers in a constructive manner.
Approach conflict with peers or instructors in a cooperative manner.
Use positive and non-judgmental language.
3. **Confidentiality:** Treat any personal information that you hear about a peer or an instructor as strictly confidential.
Maintain any information shared in class, dyads or smaller groups within that unit.
Use judgment in self-disclosing information of a very personal nature in the class. (Class time should not be used as therapy or treatment. If students feel the need to talk about issues they are struggling with, they may consult with their instructor to receive a referral for counseling.)
Never use names of clients or disclose other identifying information in the classroom.
4. **Competence:** Apply yourself to all your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, meeting all deadlines as given by your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.
Seek out appropriate support when having difficulties to ensure success in completing course requirements.
Take responsibility for the quality of completed tests and assignments.
Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede your effectiveness with clients.
5. **Integrity:** Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.
Academic: Commit yourself to learning the rules of citing others' work properly.
Do your own work and take credit only for your own work.
Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed.
Accept and benefit from constructive feedback

Submission of Papers: Students will submit their written assignments on paper and electronically. Electronic copies will be subject to plagiarism analysis and will be kept in an electronic file for future reference. A student may not submit the same paper, or essentially the same, paper, project, assignment, or finished project to an instructor, which has been submitted to another instructor, unless specifically authorized by both instructors to do so.

6. **Diversity:** Strive to become more open to people, ideas, and creeds that you are not familiar with. Embrace diversity.
Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, or stereotyping.
Exhibit a willingness to serve diverse groups of persons.
Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact.
7. **Communication:** Strive to improve both verbal and written communication skills as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also with creating client records.
Demonstrate assertive communication with peers and instructors.
Practice positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills with peers and instructor: (body language, empathy, listening)
8. **Social Justice:** Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all populations at risk.
Demonstrate an understanding of how institutional and personal oppression impede the experience of social justice for individuals and groups.
Strive to learn about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Midwestern State University Values:

People-Centered – Engage others with respect, empathy, and joy.
Community – Cultivate a diverse and inclusive campus environment.
Integrity – Always do the right thing.
Visionary – Adopt innovative ideas to pioneer new paths.
Connections – Value relationships with broader communities.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. Two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process.

Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "*Run. Hide. Fight.*" which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

Midwestern State University seeks to provide a safe, healthy, pleasant environment for its faculty, staff, and students. To this end, the use of tobacco products, including smoke and smokeless tobacco, and the advertising, sale, free distribution, and discarding of tobacco products shall be prohibited in all indoor and outdoor facilities and in all university vehicles. The policy extends to faculty, staff, students, vendors, guests, and visitors.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

Course Schedule:

Online delivery with asynchronous interactions between students and students and teacher, interactive discussions, and assignments.

D2L will be used throughout the semester. The course materials (syllabus, discussion board, and other course items) will be posted onto D2L. Power points will consist of materials from the textbook and other sources.

Course Changes:

Although much thought, study, and research has gone into designing the course and learning opportunities, often the most significant learning comes in unexpected moments. The instructor cannot predict these times but responds to them. Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Child Welfare Policy and Practice Course Schedule

(The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus schedule as needed.)

Week & Dates	Chapters/Readings	Assignments
<p>Week 1 (Intro)</p> <p>July 7 – 10</p>	<p>Course Introduction</p> <p>Chapter 1 Children: Our Most Important Resource</p> <p>ACE Study</p>	<p>- Discussion board 1 due July 9th (both posted on the discussion board & submitted as a Word Document to the assignment folder)</p>
<p>Week 1 (continued)</p> <p>July 7 – 13</p>	<p>Chapter 1: Children: Our Most Important Resource</p> <p>Chapter 2: The Changing Family</p> <p>Chapter 3: Children and Families in Poverty</p> <p>Chapter 4: The Impact of Violence and Addiction on Children</p>	<p>- Selection of group member(s) and topic for final project Due July 13th</p> <p>- Discussion board 2</p> <p>- Exam 1 (Ch. 1, Ch. 2, Ch. 3, Ch. 4)</p>
<p>Week 2</p> <p>July 14 – 20</p>	<p>Chapter 5: Children Against the Backdrop of War: Assessing the Needs of Military Families</p> <p>Chapter 6: Trauma-Sensitive Educational Settings</p> <p>Chapter 7: Child Abuse and Neglect: Protecting Children When Families Cannot</p> <p>Chapter 8: Family Preservation or Child Placement? Serving the Child's Best Interests</p>	<p>- Discussion board 3</p> <p>- Exam 2 (Ch. 5, Ch. 6, Ch. 7, Ch. 8)</p>

Week & Dates	Chapters	Assignments
<p>Week 3</p> <p>July 21 – 27</p>	<p>Chapter 9: Juvenile Court Justice: Promoting the Rights and Welfare of Children and Families</p> <p>Chapter 10: Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting</p> <p>Chapter 11: Children in Family Foster Care</p>	<p>- Discussion board 4</p> <p>- Exam 3 (Ch. 9, Ch. 10, Ch. 11)</p> <p>- (Optional) Final presentation outline due July 23rd</p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p>July 28 – August 3</p>	<p>Chapter 12: The Adoption of Children</p> <p>Chapter 13: Children in Residential Settings</p> <p>Chapter 14: Our Children's Future</p>	<p>- Discussion board 5</p> <p>- Exam 4 (Ch 12, Ch. 13, Ch. 14)</p>
<p>Finals Week</p> <p>August 4 – 7</p>		<p>- Discussion board 6 due August 5th (Individual replies due August 7th)</p> <p>- PowerPoint Presentation due August 5th</p> <p>-Presentation video or speaker notes due August 5th</p>