



# CHILD WELFARE, REIMAGINED: A POLICY WORKSHOP FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

This event for state legislators was made possible in collaboration with Casey Family Programs, whose mission is to provide, improve — and ultimately prevent the need for — foster care. CSG Midwest and Casey Family Programs thank the Robert R. McCormick Foundation for its generous donation of the beautiful meeting space at Cantigny Park for this two-day workshop.

**June 6-7, 2024 (With Evening Opening Reception at Host Hotel on June 5)**

**Location: The Robert R. McCormick Foundation’s Cantigny Park | Wheaton, Illinois**



## Officers of the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference Health & Human Services Committee

Rep. Susan Concannon, Kansas, Co- Chair | Sen. Julie Morrison, Illinois, Co-Chair

### Workshop Agenda

#### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5 | OPENING RECEPTION | CHICAGO MARRIOTT NAPERVILLE

**5:30-7:30 p.m.** This reception is open to all participants in the “Child Welfare, Reimagined” policy workshop. Complimentary food and drinks will be provided throughout the reception, and you will have the chance to meet other attendees and begin building relationships in advance of the workshop. The reception will be in the Bailey/Hobson Room at the Chicago Marriott Naperville, the host hotel for this workshop.

#### THURSDAY, JUNE 6 | DAY 1 OF THE WORKSHOP | CANTIGNY PARK

**7:25 a.m.** **Departure from Chicago Marriott Naperville to Cantigny Park**  
A bus will take participants from the Chicago Marriott Naperville to Cantigny Park. Please meet at the front of the hotel by 7:15 a.m. Contact CSG Midwest’s Tim Anderson at 630.200.7635 if you have questions about transportation or need assistance.

**7:45-8:30 a.m.** **Breakfast**  
A buffet breakfast will be available for everyone at Cantigny Park.

**8:30-8:50 a.m.** **Welcome & Introductions**  
Robert R. McCormick Foundation Vice President Andrés Torres will provide a welcome to Cantigny Park. Officers of the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference Health & Human Services will welcome all attendees. We also will go around the table for brief introductions by all participants.

- 8:50-9:30 a.m.**      **Understanding the Successes and Challenges in Child Welfare: What the Data Tell Us**  
To help frame subsequent discussions on improving practices and policies, the workshop will kick off with a look at some of the national trends, critical data on Midwestern states' child welfare systems, and how this information can be used by state legislators.  
*Featured Presenter:*  
**Ms. Kristen Rudlang-Perman**, *Senior Director, Data Advocacy, Casey Family Programs*
- 9:30-10:15 a.m.**      **What is the Role of a Well-Functioning Child Protection Agency?**  
Participants will explore this fundamental question — and why it is central to driving improvements in policy and state-funded systems — with a leading national expert.  
*Featured Presenter:*  
**Ms. Christine Calpin**, *Managing Director, Public Policy, Casey Family Programs*
- 10:15-10:30 a.m.**      **Break**  
Feel free to step outside and enjoy the grounds of Cantigny Park.
- 10:30-11:30 a.m.**      **Roundtable Discussion & Dialogue**  
What stands out to you about the data on child welfare systems? Or the elements of a well-functioning child protection system? What experiences or lessons from your own state or community, including through your work as a legislator, have informed your thinking on how to improve child welfare systems?  
*Discussion facilitators:*  
**Rep. Susan Concannon**, *Kansas*  
**Sen. Julie Morrison**, *Illinois*
- 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**      **Lunch**  
A buffet lunch will be offered to all. This also is a chance to continue the dialogue on “reimagining” child welfare systems, either inside at our lunch roundtables or outside on the beautiful grounds of Cantigny Park.
- 12:30-2 p.m.**      **Safety and Prevention: Moving Upstream to Support Families**  
The afternoon will kick off with a presentation by the head of the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit organization dedicated to the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, an expert-led discussion will explore ideas for how states define child maltreatment and why this matters, as well as how policy leaders can effectively support families by directing resources toward ensuring families have what they need, when they need it, in the communities where they live — before families find themselves in crisis. Participants will learn about and discuss opportunities available to states to support children and families through federal funding and policies such as the Family First Prevention Services Act and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants.  
*Featured Presenter:*  
**Dr. Melissa T. Merrick**, *President & CEO, Prevent Child Abuse America*  
*Discussion Facilitator:*  
**Ms. Christine Calpin**, *Managing Director, Public Policy, Casey Family Programs*

2-2:15 p.m.

**Break**

Feel free to step out and enjoy the grounds of Cantigny Park.

2:15-3:30 p.m.

**Fostering Permanency for Vulnerable Children: Policy Strategies for States**

It is not uncommon for children to spend years away from loving families and to linger in the “deep end” of child welfare systems — for example, in foster care and congregate care before aging out. Crucial to a reimagined system is finding “forever homes” for these children. This session’s featured presenter has worked for more than 30 years on behalf of abused, neglected and vulnerable children, and she now leads a foundation that has pioneered a promising model for finding the right homes for children waiting much too long to find permanency. That model is Wendy’s Wonderful Kids. The presentation will be followed by a roundtable discussion on how to improve permanency, safety and long-term outcomes in child welfare systems.

*Featured Presenter:*

**Ms. Rita Soronen**, *President & CEO, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption*

*Discussion Facilitator:*

**Ms. Christine Calpin**, *Managing Director, Public Policy, Casey Family Programs*

3:30 p.m.

**Return to the Chicago Marriott Naperville**

6-8 p.m.

**Dinner for All at Granite City Food & Brewery**

Everyone is invited for a complimentary dinner and drinks at Granite City Food & Brewery, 1828 Abriter Court in Naperville. It is a half-mile walk from the Chicago Marriott Naperville (host hotel). Starting at around 5:30 p.m. CSG Midwest staff will guide all attendees from the hotel to the Granite City restaurant. Additionally, CSG Midwest staff will be available to transport attendees by car from the hotel to the restaurant. Please contact CSG Midwest’s Tim Anderson at 630.200.7635 if you have questions or need assistance.

- 7:25 a.m.**                    **Departure from Chicago Marriott Naperville to Cantigny Park**  
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- 7:45-8:30 a.m.**            **Breakfast**  
A buffet breakfast will be available for everyone at Cantigny Park.
- 8:30-9:30 a.m.**            **Challenge and Opportunity: How States Can Ensure Child Safety and Prioritize Family Support and Prevention in Their Child Welfare Systems**  
The Family First Prevention Services Act ushered in a new era of child welfare policy. It's left to the states, however, to take advantage of the new opportunities under this landmark federal law as part of a reimagining of child welfare systems. This morning's featured presenter will share policy ideas and innovations with legislative attendees.  
*Featured Presenter:*  
**Dr. Gretchen Cusick**, *Research Fellow, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago*
- 9:30-10:30 a.m.**         **Promising Ideas and Innovations in the Midwest: Spotlight on Iowa and Indiana**  
Indiana and Iowa have implemented various strategies to improve family and child outcomes and have engaged those with lived experience in these efforts. Leaders, including those with lived experience, from these two states will discuss implementation of these recent reforms, the role of those with lived experience, and how these reforms can positively impact vulnerable families and children.  
*Featured Presenters:*  
**Ms. Janee Harvey**, *Director, Division of Family Well-Being and Protection, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services*  
**Ms. Kayla Powell**, *alumni of foster care and Youth Development Coordinator, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services*  
**Mr. David Reed**, *Deputy Director, Child Welfare, Indiana Department of Child Services*  
**Mr. Jarrod Hummer**, *parent and lived experience advocate*
- 10:30-10:45 a.m.**        **Break**  
Feel free to step outside and enjoy the grounds of Cantigny Park.
- 10:45-11:30 a.m.**        **Roundtable Discussion & Dialogue**  
Participating legislators will have the chance to share their takeaways and perspective from the morning's first two sessions. We also welcome comments from participants who would like to share their personal or lived experiences with child welfare and foster care, and how those experiences have shaped the policy work they do as legislators.  
*Discussion facilitator:*  
**Mr. Russell Woods**, *Senior Director, Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs*
- 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**   **Lunch**  
A buffet lunch will be offered to all. During this time, too, legislators are welcome to reach out to staff at The Council of State Governments and Casey Family Programs about research or technical assistance they may want regarding next steps for improving child welfare systems in their states.

- 12:30-1:15 p.m.**      **Prioritizing Child Safety and Preventing Placement in Foster Care for Non-Safety Reasons**  
Myriad factors result in families coming to the attention of state child protective services. They range from laws on mandatory reporting and state definitions of child neglect, to individual family situations such as substance use disorder and youth mental health. This session will explore those factors as well as ideas for states to prioritize child safety and ensure those families most in need of child protective services are engaged.  
*Featured Presenters:*  
**Dr. Chereese Phillips**, *Senior Director, Research Services, Casey Family Programs*  
**Mr. Steve Christian**, *Consultant, Casey Family Programs*
- 1:15-2 p.m.**      **Promising Ideas and Innovations in the Midwest: Kinship in Michigan**  
Following a change in federal regulations, the state of Michigan recently became the first U.S. state to get federal approval for implementation of kin-specific licensing standards. Participants will explore the opportunities presented by this new federal regulation as well as how states can more broadly ensure kin caregivers have support to care for children in their homes.  
*Featured Presenter:*  
**Ms. Jessica Sweet**, *Caregiver Recruitment, Support and Development Manager, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services*  
**Ms. Rachel Willis**, *Director, Bureau of Out of Home Services, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services*
- 2-2:30 p.m.**      **Closing Discussion and a Look Ahead**  
The two-day workshop will close with an opportunity for participants to share their thoughts on how to use the information learned from the event's presentations and discussions in their home state. Also, beyond this workshop, how can Casey Family Programs and/or The Council of State Government be a resource to you in your work?  
*Discussion facilitators:*  
**Rep. Susan Concannon**, *Kansas*  
**Sen. Julie Morrison**, *Illinois*

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*For copies of presentations and other resources from the "Child Welfare, Reimagined" workshop, please contact CSG Midwest's Tim Anderson: [tanderson@csg.org](mailto:tanderson@csg.org)*