BY SHANNON DALE

In the last 10 years, the Social Work Research Center, housed in the School of Social Work within CSU’s College of Health and Human Sciences, has conducted innovative research that has yielded significant enhancements to local and national social work practice. Director Marc Winokur, Ph.D., Assistant Director Helen Holmquist-Johnson, Ph.D., and Statistician/Methodologist Rebecca Orsi, Ph.D., operate the center with a focus on providing data-driven results for social work interventions and programs.

The SWRC is best known for its research on kinship care, a term referring to children placed with grandparents or another family member when the parents are unable to care for them. Through extensive study of the latest research and a published Colorado-based study, the SWRC has found that children in kinship care have fewer behavioral problems, fewer mental health disorders, better well-being, and less placement disruption than do children in foster care.

“There has been an increase in Colorado in the placement of children with kin,” says Winokur. “We have probably contributed to this trend through our work with state and county child welfare agencies in providing them with evidence that this practice is safe and effective.”

Working with the Campbell and Cochrane Collaborations has brought international recognition for the SWRC. By analyzing more than 20 years of research on kinship care, SWRC compiled the best available evidence into one systematic review. This has been especially helpful for child welfare practitioners who are more likely to read an easily accessible source for the latest research on kinship care than sort through all of the research on their own.

The SWRC is happy to announce its most recent grant, which provides an opportunity to evaluate Colorado’s Title IV-E Waiver Program from 2013-2018. With 43 Colorado counties already participating, the grant provides flexible funding for counties to test new approaches to delivering services to the community.

“The project is just getting started, but we are excited to evaluate child welfare interventions that provide kinship supports, family engagement, permanency roundtables, trauma screening, and trauma treatments,” says Winokur.

Social work researchers find placement with kin a good option for children in need

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