



LIFESKILLS CENTER FOR CHILD WELFARE
EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Advocacy, Collaboration, and Innovation:

The LifeSkills Center for Child Welfare Education and Research

**Dr. Austin Griffiths
Western Kentucky University**

Child Welfare Oversight and Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, October 13th, 2021
Frankfort, KY

A Child Welfare Trajectory – Austin Griffiths

Practice/Education

- CPS/APS for DCBS 6+ years
 - 2007-2013
- MSW at WKU in 2011 (Title IV-E)
- Employed at WKU in 2013
- PhD at UK CoSW in 2017
- Asst. Professor at WKU in 2018
- Creation of Center in 2019

Applied Research

- Pilot study in 2015
 - Voices of former CW workers
- Ongoing collaborative work with DCBS since 2016
- Large needs assessment ($n=877$) to capture feedback in 2016
- Current focus on workforce supports, health and wellness, interventions, etc.



Building an Alliance: LifeSkills Center for Child Welfare Education and Research

- Established on June 21st, 2019
 - as the “Center for Child Welfare Education and Research”
- *Mission:* Supporting the development of child welfare professionals to serve Kentucky’s families and children
- We believe that we can do more, together.

Partnering with LifeSkills, Inc.

- A shared focus on improving the lives of families and children through service.
 - LifeSkills is a trusted partner and a premium health care provider in Kentucky.
 - Immediate increase in capacity and resources to enhance our work with community agencies
 - Office space, supports for research and scholarship, hiring of graduate research assistants and Manager, etc.
 - Opening of doors to share resources and knowledge, facilitate applied research and collaborations, develop and utilize evidence-based practice.

LifeSkills and Pennyroyal Center, Merger Data



 **875**
Total Employees

26
Service Locations

 **95 Million**
in Total Revenue

50+
Services & Programs

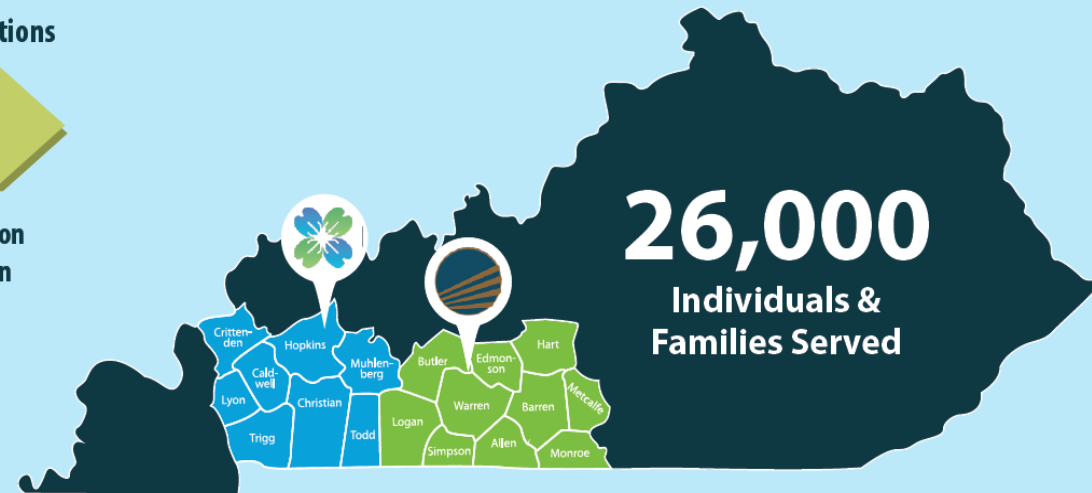
 **155,000**
Medicaid Covered Lives

91
Licensed Clinicians

Impact Data for Combined Operations

18 Total Counties Served

Caldwell	Allen	Simpson
Christian	Barren	Warren
Crittenden	Butler	
Lyon	Hart	
Hopkins	Edmonson	
Muhlenberg	Logan	
Todd	Metcalfe	
Trigg	Monroe	



 **BEDS**
Available

189 Addiction Treatment
32 Crisis Treatment

125

Foster Care
Providers

8 Sites

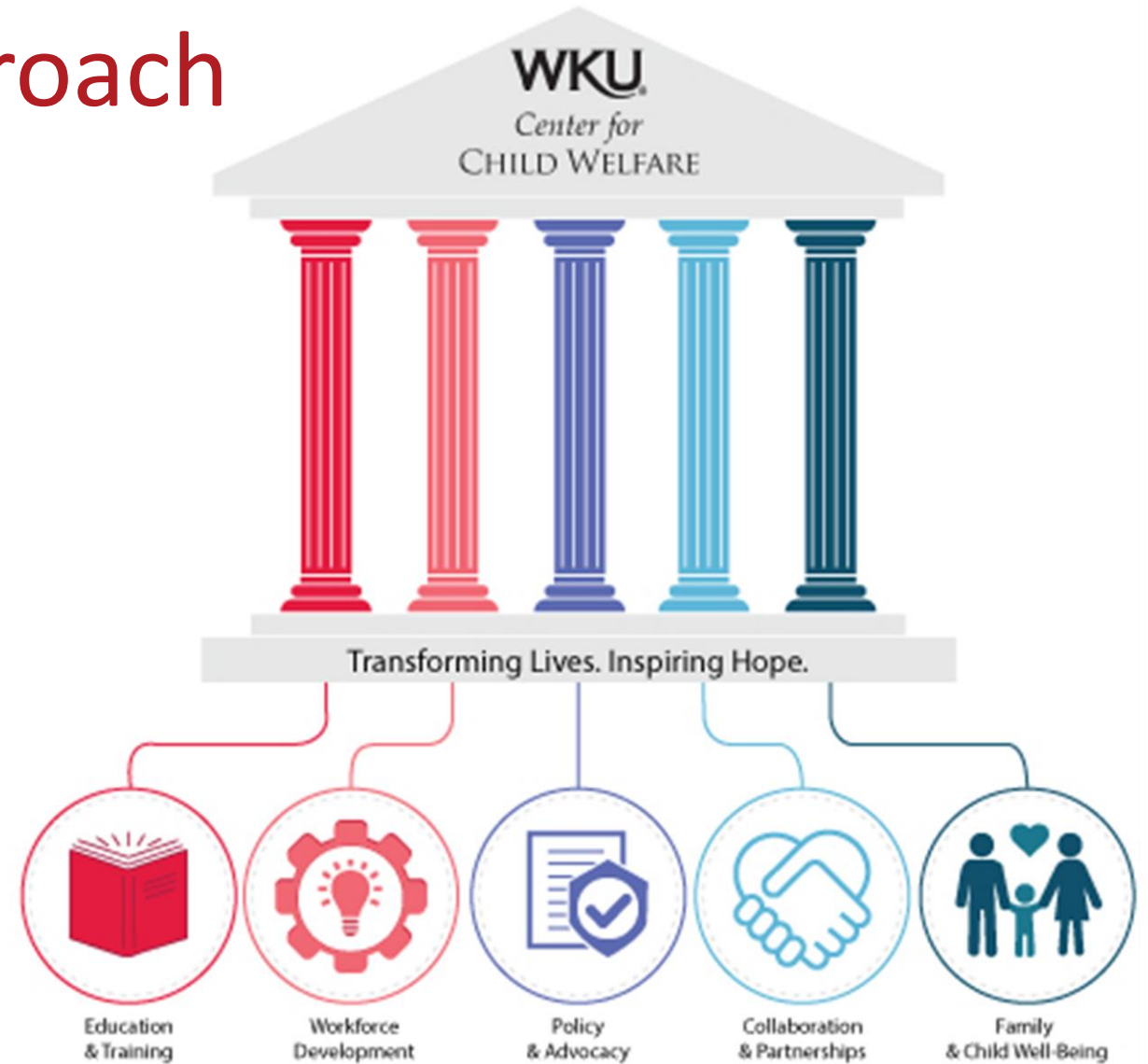
Employing 210 Individuals
with Disabilities



Partnering with
147 Schools
(across 21 districts)

Five Pillar Approach

- Education & Training
- Workforce Development
- Policy & Advocacy
- Collaboration & Partnerships
- Family & Child Well-Being
 - Each pillar is led by a member of our Leadership



Leadership



Director,
Dr. Austin Griffiths



Dr. Daniel Boamah



Dr. Patricia Desrosiers



Dr. April Murphy



Dr. Dana Sullivan

Scholars



Dr. Matt Woodward



Dr. Brian Weiler



Dr. Kimberly Green



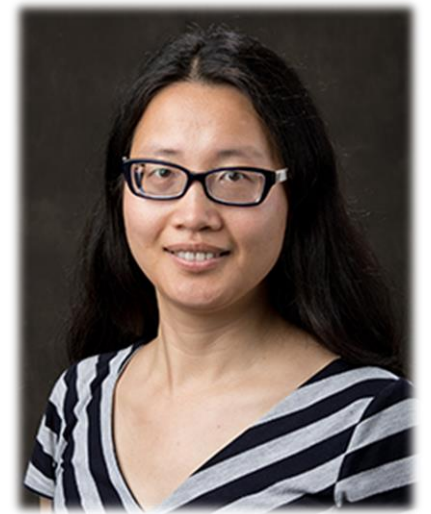
Dr. Kim Link



Dr. Jenni Redifer



Dr. Diane Lickenbrock



Dr. Qingfang Song

Research Affiliates



Mr. Oliver Beer



Dr. Whitney Cassity-Caywood

Graduate Research Assistants



Ms. Lindsey Powell



Ms. Alecia Hatfield

Supporting the DCBS Workforce



**REDUCING UNREASONABLE
EXPECTATIONS**



**SUPPORTING THE
WORKFORCE DIRECTLY**

"I'm going upstream to tackle the guy who's throwing all these kids in the water."

-Dan Heath, Upstream, p.1

Reducing Unreasonable Expectations

- Proactive, Preventative, Community-Based, Long Withstanding
 - Forging a Community Alliance
 - Creation of the LCCWEAR
 - Development of the Community Engagement Series
 - Interdisciplinary regional hub for creating and facilitating applied research
 - Examples of Applied Research
 - GIFT Initiative (Group Intervention for Families with Trauma) – Evidence-based treatment for parents with trauma, working to break generational cycles of abuse
 - The Beacon Project- Creating opportunities for foster care alumni at WKU
 - Dissemination of Knowledge
 - Translational research, trainings, infographics, social media, videos, etc.
 - The Child Welfare Advocate, The Kentucky Legislative Spotlight
 - Harnessing the passion and resources of this regional area
 - Proof of concept established, significant progress in only 2 years

Supporting the Workforce Directly

- Advocacy, Collaboration, and Innovation
 - Annual Awards Ceremony
 - Hosting 2022 National Title IV-E Roundtable
- Preparing Future Child Welfare Practitioners
 - Child Welfare Career Expo
 - PCWCP, CFL, and...
 - Working with WKU's XR Lab to develop a patented interactive simulation platform that will shape the future of child welfare education and training.
- Building Partnerships to Create Evidence-Based Solutions
 - Needs Assessments, Contracts, Program Evaluations, etc.
- Cutting edge research, an example...
 - The *Kentucky Child Welfare Workforce Wellness Initiative* is receiving international attention.





THE KENTUCKY CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE WELLNESS INITIATIVE



Healthier Workforce, Healthier Community

An interdisciplinary effort designed to improve child welfare worker response to job stress.



Worker Benefits
Physical Health
Mental Health
Overall Well-Being
Work-Life Balance

Community Benefits
Improved Services
Better Outcomes
Reduction in Costs
Accountability
Policy and Practice



TEAM
KENTUCKY



CENTER FOR CHILD WELFARE
EDUCATION AND RESEARCH



LifeSkills
Premium Healthcare Services

THE KENTUCKY CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE WELLNESS INITIATIVE



CHFS
KENTUCKY
Cabinet for Health and
Family Services

Healthier Workforce, Healthier Community

**An interdisciplinary effort designed to improve
child welfare worker response to job stress.**

**Based on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration's Eight Dimensions of Wellness.**

Participation during work hours.

Subjective and objective measurements.

Use of acclaimed biometric analytic technology.

Utilization of a mindfulness-based intervention.



**TEAM
KENTUCKY**



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Thoughts on the KCWWI

Profound job stress in child welfare:

- An international problem, for decades
- Not a secret, not limited to Kentucky
- Why workers leave their positions
- Negatively impacts families and children
- Thank you to Team Kentucky!

- Novel approach to collecting data on the presence and physiological impact of job stress in CWs
- Remote, virtual, accessible, flexible
- Developing a cost-efficient protocol
- Finishing data collection for Cohort 1
- Cohort 2 will begin soon
- Evidence = advocacy
- Policy and practice implications

Closing Thoughts



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- “The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Department for Medicaid Services.”