



Center on Children, Families, and the Law

UNIVERSITY *of* NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

HELPING THE HELPERS

Our Mission

Helping the helpers: We provide an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to improve systems and outcomes for children and families.

About Us

The Center on Children, Families, and the Law (CCFL) is one of 58 departments, centers, programs, and institutes located within the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. CCFL was established in 1987 to serve as a home for interdisciplinary research, teaching, and public service on issues related to child and family policy and services. The knowledge of child and family issues we gain is used to educate policymakers, scholars, service providers, and the public. Our work serves as the primary basis for new local, state, and national legislation and has been cited in court rulings, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

A Letter from Our Director

I am writing this on the four-year anniversary of my first day as Director of the Center on Children, Families, and the Law. Walking into the CCFL office that morning, I clearly recall a mixture of anxiety and excitement tempered with an undeniable feeling that I was coming home.

I also remember feeling a great desire to continue the former directors' good work and a deep wish to honor their legacies with attention and dedication. Today, as I officially start my fifth year as Director, I still feel anxiety and excitement, but mostly, I feel gratitude. My gratitude is not only for our two former directors but also for every past and present member of the CCFL family. Sadly, CCFL's founder and first director, Dr. Gary B. Melton, passed away this year. We honor him and his remarkable life's work at the end of this report.

The CCFL family currently includes 75 dedicated faculty, staff, and graduate students. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were unable to gather for group photos. In the pages that follow, you will get to meet a few of my remarkable colleagues and see a brief sampling from just some of CCFL's many life-changing projects. While I am thrilled to introduce CCFL's project directors to you, please know that each one represents an entire group of talented, hard-working CCFLers, and they would have much preferred to have been pictured with all their team members, were that possible.



As an organization that helps the helpers, we are often behind the scenes supporting frontline workers. You will read how that support protects maltreated children, offers resources to families with special needs, provides legal advocacy for minors, assists individuals experiencing housing vulnerability, informs state and federal policy and programs, and improves the child welfare workforce. It is easy to see why I am so proud of and grateful for all the work that CCFL is doing.

If you are a current CCFL partner, thank you for your contributions to our work. We look forward to many more years collaborating with you. If you have not yet had the opportunity to work with CCFL, I hope the pages that follow encourage you to reach out and talk with me about how we might be able to work together very soon.

Gratefully,

Eve Brank

Eve Brank, J.D., Ph.D.
Director

Helping the Helpers

- ▶ Child Welfare Practitioners
- ▶ School Personnel
- ▶ Mental Health Practitioners
- ▶ Law Enforcement
- ▶ Judges and Attorneys
- ▶ Policymakers
- ▶ Service Providers
- ▶ Care Workers
- ▶ Respite Coordinators
- ▶ Community Leaders
- ▶ Tribes
- ▶ Local and State Agencies
- ▶ Probation Officers
- ▶ Basic and Emergency Needs Providers

How We Help



Needs Assessment



Training



Research and Data Management



Legal and Policy Analysis



Community Service Planning



Program Evaluation



Resource Information



Technical Assistance



Consultation and Capacity Building

Our Work Helps

- ▶ Families
- ▶ Maltreated Children
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Children and Youth in Foster Care
- ▶ Youth in the Juvenile Justice System
- ▶ Service Professionals
- ▶ Individuals Experiencing Homelessness
- ▶ Elders
- ▶ Individuals with Disabilities and their Families
- ▶ Caregivers
- ▶ At-Risk Populations
- ▶ The Community

Our Growth

1987



3 employees



1 grant

2020

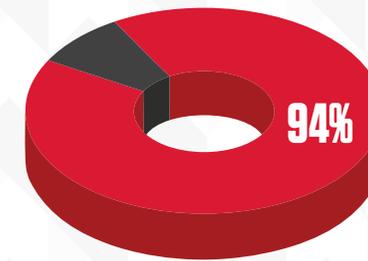


75 employees



54 grants

Grant Awards



CCFL's success rate for the 2019/2020 fiscal year

On average, CCFL annually:

- ▶ Trains **3,000** people
- ▶ Develops **7,000** hours of curriculum
- ▶ Provides **15,000** resources online

A sampling of our current funders includes:

- ▶ Bridge of Hope Child Advocacy
- ▶ Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children
 - Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties
- ▶ Health Forward Foundation
- ▶ Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
- ▶ Lancaster County
- ▶ Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts
- ▶ Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
- ▶ Nebraska Department of Education
 - Grand Island, Lincoln, and North Platte Public Schools
- ▶ Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
- ▶ The City of Lincoln
- ▶ United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County
- ▶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau
- ▶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ▶ Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services



Shelly Johnson

Project Director: Training for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, Protection and Safety Workforce

Years at CCFL: 20



I am moved and inspired by the training team’s passion, knowledge, and dedication. The comprehensive child welfare training we provide empowers case managers to develop their skills, support and engage families, and protect our most vulnerable population.



▶ Training for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, Protection and Safety Workforce

As schools shuttered due to the virus this spring, other virulent societal symptoms increasingly emerged. The pandemic’s smallest victims bore the devastating brunt of escalating abuse in their homes with no daily escape and decreased outside oversight. Within this crisis, child welfare workers courageously and creatively continued conducting child safety checks by any means necessary.

CCFL’s child welfare training project provides critical Child Protection & Safety (CP&S) training for Child and Family Services (CFS) Specialists with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services—Division of Children and Family Services (NDHHS-DCFS), Nebraska Tribal staff, and contracted child welfare staff.

Our dedicated training team offers a multi-disciplinary and collaborative approach with customized training that is comprehensive, engaging, and skill based, using experiential simulation to prepare case managers to succeed.

During the last year, CCFL has trained 11 CP&S groups consisting of 241 CFS staff and 25 Tribal staff in a 14-week training course that requires 297 key training hours per session. Additionally, CCFL has trained over 300 hours of professional development by delivering 67 in-service

sessions that addressed 27 unique training topics offered either in-person, through webinar, or online.

Despite receiving last-minute-word on a Friday in mid-March that all classroom instruction had to be moved to a Web-based format by Monday, the team never faltered. Due to their remarkable resourcefulness and rapid response, CP&S training has continued uninterrupted.

As trainees have adjusted to days spent in front of a computer, trainers have continued modifying and improving training through varying types of coursework, using innovative scheduling, and utilizing interactive tools and methods that help break up the day and enhance the learning process.

The pandemic’s extensive impact on Nebraska families will likely not be fully realized for years to come. What is known is this—child welfare workers deliver crucial support and safety to vulnerable children, often amid exceptionally daunting circumstances.

CCFL’s training team is passionate about providing the comprehensive tools and training that these heroic workers will need for their extraordinarily important mission.





Michelle Graef

Project Director: Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development; Nebraska's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project Evaluation

Years at CCFL: 28



The QIC-WD project weaves all of my training, interests, and past work experience together wonderfully: child welfare workforce, implementation science, and evaluation research. I am humbled to lead such a talented group of researchers on this initiative. It is exciting to think about how this project will improve conditions for child welfare workers across the nation. Our CCFL team excels at this work, and we cannot wait to see the results!



► Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development

The Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD) is a five-year cooperative agreement with the Children's Bureau, led by CCFL, to strengthen and improve the child welfare workforce using research to build knowledge in the field. The team partners with several national consultants and experts from four different universities to help achieve this goal.

Currently, the QIC-WD is working with eight selected public and tribal child welfare agencies across the country to address individual workforce challenges. The focus is on improving the child welfare workforce in four key areas:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Agency culture and climate
- Performance

Initially, the QIC-WD conducted an intensive needs assessment with each agency. The team then worked with each agency to identify a workforce strategy to implement and test in that jurisdiction. This past year, the QIC-WD has worked closely with each of the agencies to develop or adapt their selected intervention to their agency's specific situation, and then provide the necessary support to each agency for implementation.

Over the coming year, the QIC-WD will continue to assist each agency with its implementation and conduct rigorous research to evaluate each of the interventions' impact on worker outcomes and key child and family outcomes.



The QIC-WD also created the Child Welfare Workforce Analytics Institute, led by Megan Paul and Maggie Thompson. The Institute has built partnerships between child welfare program administrators and human resources personnel in eight additional child welfare agencies to leverage data more effectively to address critical child welfare workforce challenges.

Before COVID-19, the QIC-WD team regularly utilized virtual technology due to their collaborative work with numerous external partners. This technology helped them transition seamlessly when the pandemic put an abrupt halt to travel and in-person meetings.

The team further responded to the crisis by providing workforce supports, such as:

- collaborating with another Children's Bureau grantee to host a national webinar on virtual supervision in child welfare.
- administering coronavirus-related surveys at several sites to gauge the pandemic's impact on child welfare operations.
- holding a national webinar in May on coping with COVID-19 stressors, which was attended by over 500 professionals and exceptionally well-received.

As the QIC-WD cultivates a strong child welfare workforce, they are improving the quality of life for workers and children alike.



Child Welfare
Workforce Analytics Institute



Christine Henningsen

Project Director: Nebraska Youth Advocates

Years at CCFL: 7



Children are our greatest resource. I am driven by a need to help make sure their voices are heard, and our systems are designed to help them achieve and thrive, rather than exacerbate any problems they may encounter. I find strength in the passionate people I have the opportunity to work with, and the knowledge that we have no other choice but to succeed.



► Nebraska Youth Advocates

CCFL's Nebraska Youth Advocates (NYA) serves as a resource center for juvenile defense attorneys in Nebraska. It provides training, technical assistance, legislative advocacy, and resource development. Key objectives include showing that increased youth incarceration is costly and ineffectual to long-term goals, while actively promoting best practices within the juvenile justice system.

Best Practices:

- Avoid Net Widening: lower-risk youth being subjected to formal intervention.
- Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities and Disproportionate Minority Contact: the disparate treatment and overrepresentation of youth of color.
- Implement Timely Response: key decisions decided within 48 hours of the citation, as youth need immediacy to connect the act with the consequence.
- Expand Alternatives to Detention and Reduce Out-of-Home Care: offer community-based programs as an effective alternative to detention when appropriate.

NYA's attorneys have worked closely with community-based groups, stakeholders, and senators to amplify youth and family voices and provide accurate research regarding

the use of solitary confinement on youth in the juvenile court system. These efforts helped support the passage of Legislative Bill 230 in 2019, which put system-wide restrictions on this harmful practice, encouraging a focus on positive youth development instead.

They have also been instrumental in educating juvenile defense attorneys on changes to Nebraska law surrounding the sealing of juvenile records and working to mitigate the collateral, life-long consequences of a youth's involvement in the juvenile court system.

The pandemic has provided many new challenges that juvenile defense attorneys have had to navigate. These include remote hearings, difficult out-of-home placements, and not being able to meet in-person with their clients. However, the NYA center has found that this time has presented a unique opportunity to reach a broader audience through virtual webinars, allowing for greater collaboration with attorneys across Nebraska and throughout the country.

As they deliver training regarding new laws and advance the positive implementation of legislation, the NYA's attorneys remain deeply dedicated to providing ongoing advocacy for youth across Nebraska.





Kelli Hauptman

Project Director: Nebraska Resource Project for Vulnerable Young Children

Years at CCFL: 14



What excites me about our work with reflective practice is that it helps people where they are and therefore is broadly applicable. It addresses the internal workings of each person, and its effect can go far beyond improved performance in the office to positively impact a person's life holistically.



► Nebraska Resource Project for Vulnerable Young Children

CCFL created the Nebraska Resource Project for Vulnerable Young Children (NRPVYC) to improve the well-being of maltreated infants and toddlers in Nebraska. Healthy cognitive, social-emotional development in early childhood is foundational for life. The NRPVYC team provides training, resources, support, and evaluation services to child welfare and early childhood professionals to help meet the essential social-emotional needs of very young children who are at risk of experiencing trauma, abuse, or neglect.

NRPVYC activities focus on the areas of:

- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Reflective Practice
- Court Infusion

In its Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) efforts led by Samantha Byrns, NRPVYC provides therapist training programs in Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), supports a community of ECMH therapists, and provides outreach and training on ECMH to court and early childhood professionals. In its Court Infusion efforts, NRPVYC develops, assesses, and supports court projects in juvenile courts across Nebraska to improve outcomes for young children in foster care.

Formed in 2016, the Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice (NCRP) is also an integral part of the NRPVYC's



work and continues to grow in reach and impact. Led by NRPVYC's Jamie Bahm, the NCRP collaborates with key partners to support the early childhood and child welfare workforces in managing the stressful and emotionally intrusive nature of their work. Reflective practice focuses on how past actions, emotions, and experiences can impact a person's well-being. This practice can help to build awareness and manage current stressors more effectively. For professionals working with at-risk families, reflective practice is especially important in processing feelings and responses that, if ignored, could lead to burnout.

The NCRP supports and manages the reflective practice activities of 7 trainers, 11 mentors, and 14 consultants. In the past year, NCRP has managed 23 consultation groups and led or supported training of 94 individuals as part of its 8-month training program.

During the pandemic, NCRP's reflective practice training has become even more crucial as economic uncertainty, social isolation, fear, and anxiety have increased, compounding the daily stress already experienced by early childhood and child welfare professionals.

Each day, the NRPVYC is doing the life-affirming work of supporting the early childhood and child welfare workforces, enabling them to more effectively find safe solutions that will protect and nurture the littlest lives they serve.



Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice





Kate Stephenson

Project Director: Nebraska's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project Evaluation

Years at CCFL: 11



In our five-year evaluation, we have seen significant positive outcomes related to Nebraska's model of Alternative Response. We look forward to publishing to allow other jurisdictions to benefit from these findings. It is rewarding knowing that our report will contribute to child welfare research nationally!



▶ Nebraska's Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project Evaluation

When a state wants to make changes to existing child welfare policy—when the goal is to decrease the number of children in foster care while improving outcomes for children and families—where do they start? A great place is with systematic research, data analysis, and program evaluation.

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, provided the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services—Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) approval and funding for the Nebraska Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project. DCFS began implementing two demonstration programs, Alternative Response and Results Based Accountability.

That is where CCFL comes in with an amazing evaluation team who has been rigorously assessing these programs over the last five years. Data collection ran through June 2019, and they submitted their final evaluation report in December 2019.

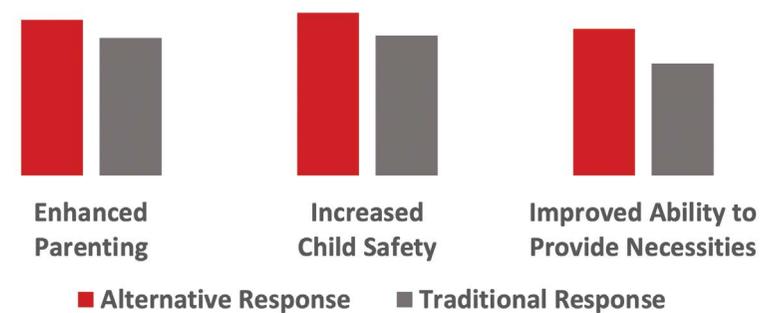
For most, survey analysis and spreadsheets may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about life-changing success stories in child welfare. However, to see if positive changes and proactive implementations are being achieved on behalf of children, a commitment to evaluation is vital.

In 2020, the evaluation team has been focused on submitting their findings to the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect and contributing to the ongoing analysis of Differential Response in child welfare research through publishing.

While switching to remote work has resulted in slight delays to their pre-pandemic submission and publishing deadlines, the evaluation team has exemplified a mentality of grace-giving collaboration and teamwork amid the uncertainty.

CCFL is proud of this project's significance and that it will help inform child welfare policy in Nebraska and across the nation.

**Caregiver Ratings of Skills Learned:
Alternative Response vs. Traditional Response**





Michelle Paxton

Project Director: Children's Justice Clinic

Years at CCFL: 12



Being a high-quality advocate for children requires specialized skills and training. In the CJC, I help students develop and sharpen these skills during their time in the program. I also see the transformative impact on children and families when they have a high-quality attorney in their case. When we help the students, we help the children, and it doesn't get better than that for me.



► Children's Justice Clinic

The Children's Justice Clinic (CJC) is a partnership between CCFL and the University of Nebraska College of Law to train third-year law students. The clinic launched in 2017 with the ambitious goal to elevate the standards of Guardian ad Litem (GAL) practice in juvenile court through clinical education.

In just three short years, the CJC has successfully changed the legal landscape of child welfare in the community by providing high-quality representation to abused and neglected children.

The CJC accomplished this impressive feat through a multidisciplinary approach that gives students a holistic view of how to represent children well, while interacting with the social workers and mental health professionals who are often involved in juvenile court cases.

In 2019-2020, students from the CJC attended court more than 232 times on behalf of their young clients to advocate for their best interests. The legal community is paying attention. According to Lancaster County Juvenile Court Judges, the CJC's Guardian ad Litem reports have

become the "gold standard," and the Honorable Judge Heideman notes that CJC GALs have "raised the bar" in his courtroom.

The CJC, along with other Nebraska stakeholders, was honored this year with the Community of Hope award. This recognition was for Nebraska's work in improving outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system.

As the coronavirus spread across the nation, the child welfare and juvenile justice system had to make significant shifts. Despite the ensuing health and safety restrictions, CJC GALs have worked diligently to offer legal support to children and families during this time.

Using virtual technology, they have enabled minors to still participate in their hearings when restricted from being physically present in the courtroom.

In this way, the CJC GALs are continuing to provide crucial counsel on behalf of their child clients, to ensure their safety, well-being, and legal representation.





Charlie Lewis

Project Director: Answers4Families; Nebraska Resource and Referral System; Answers4Families Projects

Years at CCFL: 15



What makes Answers4Families so special is that it facilitates diverse connections. It links individuals and families looking for solutions with organizations and professionals who can assist them, empowering them with the answers and resources they need.



▶ **Answers4Families**

Answers4Families (A4F) is a collaborative project by CCFL and partner agencies that provides invaluable support and resources to Nebraska families with special needs, across a wide range of topics. Developed as a simple Internet website 26 years ago, it has grown into a diverse and dynamic multi-platform information-hub, where families can access the answers and assistance they need.

Part of this hub is the Nebraska Resource and Referral System (NRRS), a key aspect of A4F for over 15 years. The NRRS is a database consistently updated with the most current contact information for community agencies and organizations that provide services to Nebraskans. As more families discover the NRRS, it continues to grow, with more than 15,000 individual searches occurring annually.

Excitingly, the NRRS is now an app available through Apple or Google Play. The app enables any user to locate a diverse selection of service providers and programs easily while saving favorites for quick access later.

With their dream of creating an interconnected resource database available 24 hours per day between partner

agencies realized, A4F staff's next goal is to expand this vision from a state model to a nationwide model where all individuals and families can benefit.

Another integral part of A4F is the Answers4Families Classroom, which offers 15 online courses. To date, over 1,000 medical personnel, home visitors, and respite coordinators have utilized Answers4Families Classroom, gaining valuable ongoing professional development.

The ability to share A4F with families and providers face-to-face was lost as meetings, fairs, and conferences were canceled for safety this spring. Thankfully, due to its existing platform, the team rapidly moved to video conferencing and webinar options.

There is an exponentially increasing need to offer even more support to Nebraska families during these trying times. Operating on a long history of collaboration, communication, and community-building to connect families to the resources they need, Answers4Families is already answering the call.





Jeff Chambers

Project Director: Community Services Division; Homeless Service System Planning; Homeless Coordinated Entry; Ending Homelessness Planning and Development; Iowa Parent Partner Evaluation

Years at CCFL: 28



We come to our work every day knowing that we are assisting our state and communities to create, build, and improve systems and programs that directly help those most in need of a hand up to a better life.



► Community Services Division

CCFL's Community Services Division is comprised of many related projects focused on community-based services for those in need of basic and emergency needs, including housing, food, and financial assistance. It has been at the forefront of several significant milestones in Nebraska over the last few years, including:

- establishing All Doors Lead Home: a homeless coordinated entry system that is recognized nationally for its ability to ensure that those experiencing homelessness have access to the entire housing service system, that they are assessed in a consistent manner, prioritized according to need, and referred to the most appropriate housing resource as soon as possible.
- partnering with the City of Lincoln, the Lincoln Homeless Coalition, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to effectively end veteran homelessness in the City of Lincoln.
- planning, developing, and obtaining funding for housing programs and services that will end homelessness for youth under age 24.

Responding to COVID-19, the Community Service's Homeless Service System team rapidly began:

- creating daily data reports on homeless shelter utilization across the state, COVID-19 cases within the shelter system, as well as daily unsheltered counts and locations.



- conducting weekly homeless shelter provider calls to coordinate efforts, identify needs, promote best practice, and provide guidance.
- delivering information, data, and technical assistance to State of Nebraska and local crisis response teams.
- producing plans, strategies, and programs for federal funding allocated to the State of Nebraska from the CARES Act and other federal and state resources.
- aiding the current homeless system grantees and partners in applying for federal waivers to meet HUD requirements.
- advising the philanthropic community on how resources can best be utilized during this crisis.

Partnering with the State, the City of Lincoln, and the Balance of State Continuum of Care, they are currently helping distribute approximately \$19 million in funding for housing and utility assistance programs that address the critical needs of Nebraska residents impacted by the pandemic.

This year has brought unimaginable hardship to many. CCFL's Community Services Division has remained ready and responsive through it all to help the helpers assist those most in need.



Looking Forward ▶▶▶

In recent news, CCFL and Lincoln Public Schools have partnered to launch LPS Project Prevent. Led by nationally recognized trainers of child welfare, education systems, legal systems, and mental health providers, this training series will be the first of its kind and uniquely tailored for school personnel.

The goal is to work together to create a trauma-informed and capable school district. Trauma training provided by CCFL trainers will be preventive and proactive, focusing on various topics that will enhance LPS personnel's professional skills and improve students' education. There is substantial research behind trauma capable training, with significant classroom results.

Trauma capable schools reveal a decrease in adverse outcomes, including:

- reduced stress levels for students and school personnel.
- diminished professional burnout and turnover of school personnel.
- less reactive interactions based on bias and judgment.
- fewer referrals related to student behavior concerns.
- lower student suspension and expulsion rates.

They also show an increase in positive outcomes, such as:

- raised awareness surrounding student experiences and needs.
- additional tools to meet student needs with accountability, dignity, and respect.
- greater emotional regulation and wellbeing for students and school personnel.
- more understanding and use of self-care practices by school personnel.
- higher student engagement in the classroom and overall academic success.

Collaborating with Lincoln Public Schools on this brand new, five-year initiative is exciting! CCFL looks forward to seeing the future impact LPS Project Prevent will have in strategically supporting school personnel as they educate and prepare students for life.



JOIN US

News of the pandemic has consumed 2020. Every life has been impacted, whether through the loss of normalcy, loss of income, loss of safety—or most devastatingly—loss of life. Amid massive uncertainty and nationwide need, it is natural for us to feel unsure how to respond and where even to start.

Still, we know that those who react with courage and a commitment to helping others can create considerable change. During difficult times, we must never dismiss the power of individual kindness and decisive action.

At the Center on Children, Families, and the Law, our mission is to help the helpers. Dedicated staff are working tirelessly on projects that provide protection, support, and resources more critical now than ever.

Due to the promise and possibility found within our incredible partnerships, CCFL remains confident and unwaveringly committed to continuing the critical work we are doing to improve the lives of children and families.

We see the resilience of those we help—the everyday heroes who are making a profound difference in countless ways. It is our job to support them.

Whether through collaboration or funding, we invite you to join us in **helping the helpers.**

▶▶▶ ccfl.unl.edu/about/giving

#WeAreCCFL

The CCFL family includes these 75 exceptional faculty, staff, and graduate students. We wish to thank them for their incredible dedication and commitment to helping the helpers. Due to the pandemic, we have been unable to take group pictures for this report or update portraits on our website. However, we will be adding new photos as soon as we are able.

▶▶▶ ccfl.unl.edu/faculty-and-staff

- Emily Arkfeld
- Jamie Bahm
- Sarah Barker
- Eve Brank
- Sally Buchholz
- Abby Burianek
- Tobias Burnham
- Samantha Byrns
- Meredith Cartwright
- Jeffrey Chambers
- Jessica Cook
- Danielle Crawford
- Madeline DeVeney
- Shelly Egge
- Mark Ells
- Terra Garay
- Angela Gebhardt
- Michelle Graef
- Angela Graham

- Chad Gressley
- Sarah Hansen
- Kelli Hauptman
- Christine Henningsen
- Mitchell Hesseltine
- Robert Hock
- Shelly Johnson
- Allison Jones
- Wendy Kahland
- Rachel Kloke
- Joseph Knott
- Jill Knox
- Alexandria Labenz
- Charlotte Lewis
- Mindy Liebelt
- Matthew Luther
- Melissa Mager
- Hicham Mahir
- Emma Marshall

- Fathiyyah Maryufani
- Gina May
- Danell McCoy Vaughan
- Timothy Menke
- Tari Miller
- Shailynn Mundil
- Alisha Nave
- Audine Oehm
- Kathryn Olson
- Lindsey Ondrak
- Pamela Ovwigho
- Denise Packard
- Halea Pacula
- Megan Paul
- Michelle Paxton
- Michael Reinmiller
- Joshua Rice
- Cassandra Roberts
- Krista Roebke

- Madison Sanders
- Leslie Schlecht
- Angel Shafer
- Paulette Sombke
- Lauren Sparks
- Joyce Starke
- Katharine Stephenson
- Katharina Stokes
- Cody Struss
- Barbara Sturgis
- Maggie Thompson
- Cheryl Turner
- Melissa Villarreal
- Laurie Voelker
- Stephanie Weddington
- Christine Wiklund
- Cheryl Yoder
- Stacie Zetocha

A Letter from Our Associate Director

Dr. Gary B. Melton's awards, honors, publications, and accomplishments over his 40-plus year career are extensive. With his recent death, the world has lost a tireless champion of child protection and mental health systems. Instead of reciting his many impressive accomplishments here, I want to memorialize Gary by highlighting something I learned from him in 1988.

One of my first memories of Gary was him talking about his vision to have a system for the protection of children in which it is "as easy for a parent to seek help, as it is for someone to report abuse." He often lamented the irony that there are hotlines to report abuse, but that there are not similar accessible ways for a parent in crisis to request immediate assistance before abuse occurs. He made it his life's work to eliminate that inconsistency. His approach placed him among the first advocates for reform of the child welfare system.



Gary recognized that the best way to prevent child maltreatment is to engage and involve many disciplines while primarily focusing on support efforts in smaller neighborhood demographics—not just state systems, regional areas, or cities as a whole. His experience showed him that neighborhood-based schools, churches, clubs, and recreational centers—or any places where people gather and share experiences with their children—can serve as helping communities and that strengthening them could prevent child abuse.

He believed in implementing methods to create, nurture, and support these existing communities to better the lives of children and their families. Successful examples of his efforts to enhance natural helping communities and neighborhood-based networks now exist and thrive all over the world.

Consistent with Gary's fundamental beliefs as our founder, CCFL's mission has evolved to the simple yet powerful statement that we "help the helpers."

Thank you, Gary, for your remarkable vision and leadership.

Gratefully,

Kathy Olson

Kathy Olson, J.D., M.A.
Associate Director



In Dedication to Dr. Gary B. Melton



The Center on Children, Families, and the Law's founder and first director from 1987-1994, Dr. Gary B. Melton, passed away on September 20, 2020. He leaves a legacy and lifetime of work that has advanced the child welfare field and improved the lives of children and families in Nebraska and across the world.





University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Center on Children, Families, and the Law
206 S. 13th Street, Suite 1000 | P.O. Box 880227
Lincoln, NE 68588-0227

**Center on Children,
Families, and the Law**

206 S. 13th Street, Suite 1000 | Lincoln, NE 68588
402-472-3479 | ccfl.unl.edu

  | @UNLCCFL

Portrait Photos: Michael Reinmiller