

NEWS RELEASE

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Laurier to host conference on child and family welfare

Finding a Fit – Family Realities and Service Responses will offer family and worker views

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WATERLOO – A conference on child and family welfare will offer an array of perspectives – sometimes competing, sometimes complementary – of parents and front-line service providers involved in Canada’s care system. The one-day conference, organized by The Partnerships for Children and Families Project and held at Laurier on August 27, will explore recent research and debate issues in child and family welfare and children’s mental health.

The conference will review findings of various studies aimed at understanding the lives and service experiences of families involved with child protection, residential children’s mental health and intensive children’s mental health services. Conference participants will engage in discussions about how to move forward with positive changes to child welfare and children’s mental health services.

“It’s a chance for parents and case workers to hear one another other and talk about their different perspective,” says Gary Cameron, research director for the partnerships. “Our child and family workers are being asked to serve an increasing need and it’s not often that we get to hear the family point of view.”

The conference includes an overview presentation, a family panel and eight workshops on the following:

- *Stories of mothers and children welfare* –16 mothers share their experience with researchers and service providers about their lives and what happened to them once they became involved with child welfare.

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- *Invisible lives: The experiences of parents receiving child protection services* – highlights interviews with families receiving protective services.
- *Good helping relationships in child welfare: Co-authored stories of success* – presents worker and client perspectives over time, with a specific focus on positive interpersonal processes and how they were developed.
- *Removing my child: Mothers talk about having a child placed in foster care* – mothers tell of their daily lives, their responses and perceptions of care.
- *Family Talk* – presents factors that contribute to making a positive difference in the lives of families.
- *Siege and response: Families' everyday lives and experiences with children's residential mental health workers* – explores challenges facing children and their families following residential treatment.
- *Caring for children and families: The experience of employees* – discusses the perceptions of employees with four child welfare organizations and three children's mental health agencies, and the actions organizations can take to reduce stress and turnover.
- *Bridging or maintaining distance* – 26 pairs of service providers and parents contrasts their perspectives with official notes in agency files in an effort to see three versions of the events and bridge the understanding of all those involved.

The conference begins with registration at 8 a.m. and welcoming remarks at 9 a.m. in room 1E1 Laurier's arts building. Two hundred and sixty people are registered to attend, including service providers, parents, academics and policy representatives, and organizers are no longer accepting participants.

The Partnerships for Children and Families Project is a five-year Community University Research Alliance funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Laurier and area agencies. The research focuses on families and children who are served by children's aid societies and children's mental health services in Southwestern Ontario. The goal is to foster improvements in existing child welfare and mental health policies, delivery, administration and programming.

For more information on the partnerships or conference, please visit www.wlu.ca/pcfproject.