Workforce Wellness Initiative – Child Welfare Center

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WKU, home to Kentucky’s first child welfare center, is launching an initiative to study the health consequences of frontline child welfare workers.

Amy Bingham has details in this week’s View from the Hill.

Dr. Austin Griffiths \ Center for Child Welfare Ed. & Research

Dr. Kim Link \ School of Nursing and Allied Health

Dr. Tania Basta \ Dean, College of Health and Human Services

“Improving the lives of families and children is the mission of the Center for Child Welfare Education and Research which was established here at WKU in 2019. Now the Center is launching research that will better the lives of child welfare workers here in South Central Kentucky.

“There are a number of centers focused on child welfare in the country but we are the first in Kentucky and we’re really excited about that.”

Since June of 2019, Austin Griffiths has been the director of the Center for Child Welfare Education and Research at WKU.

“To us it matters that we’re building kind of an alliance and we’re bringing the community together.”

One of the Center’s first grant funded efforts is called the Kentucky Child Welfare Workforce Wellness Initiative. The two year project involves using a device to track how local child welfare workers respond to psychological stresses.

“We’re very interested in their work day so when they have a stressful event occur we want to see how their body’s responding to that.”

It’s the type of applied research that involves a collaboration of several departments on campus.

“This is a great example of a multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary research center that pulls from not only multiple faculty here in our college, from nursing, social work, communication sciences disorders but also from across campus and Ogden with psychological sciences.”

With Kentucky ranking number one in child abuse cases, it’s no wonder child welfare professionals face significant job stress.

“We have really high rates of child maltreatment. This is an issue and it’s been an issue for a long time but this is something we are focused on.”

The Center provides a multi-dimensional approach to address conditions that negatively impact Kentucky’s families and children.

“The timing of creating this center that’s looking to try to improve the health of children and families is so needed and so timely.”

“WKU is partnering with Lifeskills and Kentucky’s Department for Community Based Services to conduct the research which Griffiths says will build a model that is of national interest.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

To find out more about WKU’s Center for Child Welfare Education and Research, email [childwelfare@wku.edu](mailto:childwelfare@wku.edu).

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