Evidence Based Practice in Child Welfare in the Context of Cultural Competence
Executive Summary
June 11, 2007

The Problem
In child welfare, we have long discussed evidence-based practice (EBP) as well as cultural competence but we rarely ask, “What works for children and families of diverse populations?” On June 11, 2007, researchers, practitioners, agency administrators, legislators, policy analysts and community representatives from different localities, states and national organizations came together with the goal of spurring ongoing discussion and activities to integrate EBP and cultural competence in child welfare policy and practice. The following recommendations were derived from a qualitative analysis of the meeting proceedings.

Observations and Recommendations for Action
From the work done on June 11, 2007, the following overarching recommendations emerged.

- Evidence-based practice is a process of working together with the family; this is a cornerstone for implementation.
- Community involvement is the essential foundation for culturally competent policy, practice and research.
- Community resource needs are critical; beginning to deal with these needs is a fundamental aspect of culturally competent policy, practice and research.
- Child welfare agency active involvement is essential for success on all fronts.
- Coordination of efforts and services is a major point of concern and can be successfully addressed.
- Dissemination and knowledge integration are needed in all arenas, including the community, the workers, agency staff, and educators.
- Policy and legislation are important for supporting and maintaining practice change, particularly in child welfare which is so heavily regulated by legislation and agency procedures.
- The research that produces the evidence for practice comes from varied sources, different approaches, involves a variety of foci, and ranges greatly in cost and design. Consequently, this research can be supported in many different ways.

At some point, it will be unethical NOT to do culturally competent EBP. Australia, the United Kingdom and others have done a lot of work in this area; they may provide some models for how to proceed.

Conclusion
In order to be effective, culturally competent evidence-based practice in child welfare must be rooted in community participation with equal voice in all aspects of research, practice and policy. The terms for and approach to this involvement may vary, but the message of sharing decision making and mutual respect is the immutable core of effective strategies for intervention. Coalitions between researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and community members are likely the most successful vehicle for establishing priorities and accomplishing change. Additionally, research that integrates research-to-practice translation and uses marketing strategies for dissemination will facilitate implementation in practice. Change should progress on all fronts simultaneously to form a holistic approach to transforming practice and families’ experience of the child welfare system.

Reported by: Susan J. Wells & Meredith S. Daniels
Contact: MS Daniels: sdaniels@umn.edu
University of Minnesota School of Social Work
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Participants:
Ms. Susan Ault  Mr. Harvey Kawasaki  Mr. Nealcheng X. Thao
Rev. Alfred Babington-Johnson  Ms. Suzanne Koepplinger  The Honorable Patricia Torres Ray
Dr. Lew Bank  Ms. Lynne K. Lewis  Mr. Khatib A.F. Waheed
Dr. Ralph S. Bayard  Ms. Anita Light  Prof. Esther Wattenberg
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Ms. Iris Bell  Dr. Duncan Lindsey  The Honorable Royce West
Dr. Carl C. Bell  Ms. Sue Lohrbach  Ms. Lorraine White
Ms. Linda Billman  Mr. Eric Marts  Ms. Kim White
Dr. Harold E. Briggs  Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey  Ms. Nina Williams-Mbengue
Mr. Daniel Capouch  Ms. Patricia McKenna  Mr. Charles "Dee" Wilson
The Honorable Toni Carter  Dr. Ruth G. McRoy  Ms. Terri Yellowhammer
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Mr. John Hudson  Dr. Carol W. Spigner
Ms. Eva Jackson  Dr. Sue D. Steib
Ms. Joyce James  Ms. Erin Sullivan-Sutton
Dr. Catherine Jordan  Mrs. Carolyn Sweets

Reported by: Susan J. Wells & Meredith S. Daniels  University of Minnesota School of Social Work
Contact: MS Daniels: sdaniels@umn.edu