



**A CHILDREN'S SERVICES CORPS:
LESSONS FROM *TEACH FOR AMERICA*
FOR BUILDING THE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE**

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Center for the Study of Social Policy
1575 Eye Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
and
55 Exchange Place, Suite 400
New York, New York 10005
www.cssp.org

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Mary Lee Allen, Director
Child Welfare and Mental Health
Children's Defense Fund

Chris Myers Asch, Founder
U.S. Public Service Academy

Uma Ahluwalia, Director
Department of Health and Human Services
Montgomery County, Maryland

Richard P. Barth, Dean
School of Social Work - University of Maryland

Freda Bernatovicz, Director
University of Southern Maine, Edmund S. Muskie School
of Public Service, Institute for Public Sector Innovation

Mary Bissell, Partner
ChildFocus

Elizabeth Black, Executive Director
Office of Child Permanency
Tennessee Department of Children and Families

David Crampton, Assistant Professor
Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences
Case Western Reserve University

Nancy S. Dickinson, Director
Jordan Institute for Families
School of Social Work,
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

Ira Cutler, Co-Director
Cornerstone Consulting Group

C. Emily Feistritzer
National Center on Alternative Certification

Peter Goldberg, President and CEO
Alliance for Children and Families

Kim A. Holmes, Project Manager
Teach For America Feasibility Study,
Center for the Study of Social Policy

Sanford (Sandy) Horwitt
Author and Consultant

Judith Meltzer, Deputy Director
Center for the Study of Social Policy

Sarah Navarro, Associate
Center for the Study of Social Policy

LaJean Ray, Director
Fatima Family Center

Susan Robison
Connexus, Inc.

Paul Schmitz, President and CEO
Public Allies, Inc.

Lisbeth (Lee) Schorr, Senior Fellow
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Director, Project on Effective Interventions
Lecturer in Social Medicine, Harvard University

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PREFACE

Teach For America (TFA) began a national movement to eliminate education inequality by focusing on attracting new college graduates to the teaching profession. TFA has created a corps of recent college graduates with demonstrated high academic achievement in diverse subject majors, various career interests, and a willingness to commit a minimum of two years to train and teach in low-income urban and rural areas – places where teacher shortages were the greatest. TFA was founded on the theory that socioeconomic challenges in low-income communities result in students coming to school with a wide range of needs and disadvantages. The schools they attend have limited capacity in teaching talent, technology, and financial resources to compensate for the challenges that students present, contributing to the rapid erosion of public education and deteriorating student outcomes. National priorities have exacerbated the problem; the necessary policies, practices, and investment have not been made to alter the downward trajectory of the teaching profession, address the insufficient number of qualified teachers, or improve America’s overall poor education landscape – all obstacles that have caused the public education system to languish over many decades.

Similarly, public child welfare has been in need of an invigorated and high-quality workforce for decades. Today, the situation in many places is dire as increased numbers of vulnerable children and families face greater adversities and require more help to solve their complex problems. The challenges of creating a qualified and stable child welfare workforce are strikingly similar to those of the education system – attracting candidates for positions, training and retaining high-quality workers, filling a leadership vacuum, and finding ways to improve and alter the public image of the profession. Evaluating and addressing child welfare workforce issues is complex, but the TFA model and its beginning impact in the educational sphere provides intriguing lessons for child welfare to consider in addressing its many problems.

Struck by some of the similarities in the challenges facing both education and child welfare, The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) conducted a feasibility study on the applicability of the TFA model to child welfare. The study sought to determine if applying some of the lessons from the TFA model could help to (1) create a diverse child welfare workforce with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of low-income, disadvantaged children and their families; (2) provide a new pathway for those who would not otherwise choose a career in this field; (3) develop a strong leadership pipeline; (4) help change the way the child welfare profession is currently perceived; and (5) become a networked force for sustained change in defining the roles, responsibilities, and outcomes in child welfare.

The idea of adapting or replicating the TFA model for child welfare, in whole or in part, was expected to be met with fierce resistance by the child welfare field. Many experts previously cited multiple reasons – including credentialing, the system’s inability to handle an influx of young, “unqualified” workers and the continued “de-professionalization” of the work – for the infeasibility of the TFA model as a vehicle to attract and retain a qualified workforce. The clear parallels between the challenges faced by both systems, including initial reactions to the TFA model by the education field in its early days and the skepticism of the model’s potential application in a child welfare system, provided the platform to conduct the study.

In May 2008, CSSP convened a group of influential and knowledgeable stakeholders in and outside the field to participate in a Round Table discussion about the feasibility of adapting the TFA model for child welfare; the framework for an adapted model; the options, if any, to pursue; and impediments to moving forward. The Round Table participants represented a wide range of perspectives and included national leaders in child welfare, public system administrators and trainers, academics from child welfare and education fields, experts on human resource issues, social entrepreneurs, nonprofit leaders, writers, evaluators, and other strategic thinkers. Unexpectedly, the majority of Roundtable participants supported and was open to examining several new ideas, including the TFA model for a child welfare “corps,” referred to as the Children’s Services Corps (CSC) for the purpose of this paper.

This monograph attempts to fairly and accurately represent the discussion and views of the Round Table participants although the conclusions and recommendations are those of the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The monograph provides background information on TFA successes, challenges, and impact through the years, examines lessons extrapolated from TFA in relation to child welfare, and presents options for future consideration. The paper is intended to challenge traditional thinking and serve as a foundation and starting point for reframing approaches to both child welfare service delivery and its workforce problems. It was in the spirit of thinking anew that this work was begun and the ideas in it were developed.

I. BACKGROUND

Child welfare experts and researchers have spent decades studying systemic deficiencies to gain insight into people’s motivations for choosing child welfare as a profession, their reasons for deciding to remain in or leave the profession, and the promising strategies for increasing recruitment and reducing worker turnover. Unfortunately, these many decades of studies have yielded few, if any, large-scale reforms to ease the workforce shortage or sustainable approaches to build and sustain the necessary human capital in the long term.

If the nation had deliberately designed a system that would frustrate the professionals who staff it, anger the public who finance it, and abandon the children who depend on it, it could not have done a better job than the present child welfare system...Marginal changes will not turn this system around.

Justice for Children: A National Call to Action. National Judicial Leadership Summit on the Protection of Children. September 2005. Originally from the 1990 National Commission on Children.

Attracting and retaining a child welfare workforce is hardly a new concern. This problem has deep roots in public policy decisions and has been identified as intractable for decades.¹ At the beginning of the 20th century, the child welfare system's workers were primarily professionals with advanced social work degrees,² and social work was viewed as a prestigious field.³ Merging child welfare with public assistance, which traditionally placed less emphasis on the educational qualifications of staff, began the steady decline in the way the profession was viewed.⁴

Earlier studies conducted on the dearth of child welfare workers have identified the shortage as "chronic." More contemporary research over several decades identifies the worker shortage as a "crisis." Additionally, this crisis is not confined strictly to child welfare. Every human service area is competing for qualified workers, and the recruitment outlook for all human service jobs remains bleak.

America's Labor Shortage and the Impact on Child Welfare

Nobel Laureate and University of Chicago economics professor James Heckman notes, "Both the quality and quantity of the [U.S.] labor force are not keeping pace with the demands of the skill-based economy...Labor force quality, as proxied by education, has stagnated and has already reduced American productivity growth. Moreover, the U.S. labor force skills are poor. Over 20 percent of U.S. workers are functionally illiterate and innumerate."¹ Fewer workers and less well-educated workers create a very real challenge for America.

James J. Heckman and Dimitri Masterov. "The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children" Working Paper. The University of Chicago. September 30, 2004.

¹See Appendix A for excerpts of other selected studies conducted on child welfare recruitment and retention over 40+ years.

² Alvin L. Schorr, "The Bleak Prospect for Public Child Welfare." *Social Service Review*. (March 2000). 124-136.

³ Alberta J. Ellett, "Human Care, Self-Efficacy Beliefs, and Professional, Organizational Culture Correlates of Employee Retention in Child Welfare." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA. (2000). Leslie Leighninger and Alberta J. Ellett, "Deprofessionalization in Child Welfare: Historical Analysis and Implications for Social Work Education." Paper presented at the annual program meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Orlando, FL (March 7, 1998).

⁴ "Research Roundup: Child Welfare Workforce." Child Welfare League of America. (September 2002). 2.

The thesis of this paper is that the TFA theory of change and the organization's experience to date may provide a springboard to think beyond the child welfare status quo and redefine "workforce" and child welfare system. Through the combination of its teacher corps efforts, increasing its alumni base, working alongside communities, and generating the interest and support of the private and nonprofit sectors, TFA has built both capacity and public will to impact the education system and student outcomes. In a relatively short period of time, TFA has transformed the way America's college students, the public, and others view the teaching profession. TFA's message and reach have also helped the public gain a better understanding of the importance of a quality education for every child. A new Children's Services Corps (CSC), based on lessons learned from TFA, may have the potential to act as a similar catalyst to create positive change in child welfare.

II. TEACH FOR AMERICA

A. History

At its inception in 1990, Teach For America was a revolutionary idea. With the goal of "One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education...,"⁵ TFA was launched by Princeton student Wendy Kopp, as an extension of her senior thesis topic. At that time, the U.S. Department of Education released statistics indicating 70 percent of inner-city and rural fourth graders could not read at even a basic level, and children growing up in low-income communities were seven times less likely to graduate from college than those in high-income areas.⁶ Kopp determined that it was possible to start a nationwide movement to close the education gap and provide those students who lived in poverty with an equal opportunity to receive a quality education. She posited that many of her "me" generation could be enticed to join such an effort – a domestic version of the Peace Corps⁷ – and that education equality would become her generation's civil rights movement.⁸ Within a little over one year of the completion of her thesis paper, TFA's first class of 500 new teachers selected from 2,500 applicants and 100 different colleges was dispersed into six low-income communities across the country. Although the new corps was spread across geographic regions and worked under very challenging conditions, members felt part of something larger – a national network that demanded social justice and educational reform.⁹

⁵ Teach For America: Mission and Approach.

http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/mission_and_approach.htm. [Retrieved November 16, 2007].

⁶ Wendy Kopp, *One Day All Children*. Public Affairs, NY Perseus Book Group, Cambridge, MA. (2003).

⁷ Molly Ness. *Lessons to Learn: Voices from the Frontlines of Teach for America*. RoutledgeFarmer: New York, NY. (2004). xiii.

⁸ In telephone conversation with Wendy Kopp, President and Founder and Cynthia Skinner, Director of Research and Development, Teach For America. (August 3, 2007).

⁹ Molly Ness, *Lessons to Learn; Voices from the Frontlines of Teach for America*. (2004). 5.

B. Today

Today, over 7,300 first- and second-year corps members teach in 35 rural and urban areas across the country.¹⁰ The TFA network exceeds 24,000 college graduates of diverse backgrounds who have reached over 3 million students. The 2009 corps members are 70 percent Caucasian, 9 percent African-American, 7 percent Latino/Hispanic, 7 percent Asian American, 5 percent Multi-ethnic, 2 percent Other (Non-white), and 0.4 percent Native American.¹¹ TFA is now the nation's largest provider of teachers for low-income communities.¹²

TFA employs more than 1200 staff serving as recruiters, researchers, trainers, and curriculum developers.¹³ A budget of over \$148 million¹⁴ supports the regional offices and staff, the staff of their Summer Institute that provides basic teacher training and preparation, and the seven organizational operating areas (Finance and Infrastructure, Growth Strategy and Development, Human Assets, Marketing, Public Affairs, Program, and Regional Operations and Regions).¹⁵

C. Mission and Theory of Change

TFA enlists many of the nation's most promising future leaders and outstanding college graduates to teach in rural and urban high-need schools. TFA intends that its corps members become lifelong leaders in TFA's mission to expand educational opportunity on an equitable basis. TFA's approach to changing this dynamic is to:

1. Recruit, select, prepare and develop outstanding recent graduates to teach in low-income urban and rural public schools and go "above and beyond traditional expectations" to overcome the challenges of poverty despite the current capacity of the school system;
2. Address problems and provide insight about real solutions through added commitment from corps members' direct experience; and

¹⁰ Teach For America: What We Do. <http://www.teachforamerica.org/whatwedo.htm>. [Retrieved July 20, 2009].

¹¹ Teach For America: Diversity in the Corps.

http://www.teachforamerica.org/admissions/our_commitment_to_diversity.htm#diversity. [Retrieved July 29, 2009].

¹² Teach For America: History. http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/our_history.htm. [Retrieved July 29, 2009].

¹³ Teach For America: Our Staff. <http://www.teachforamerica.org/careers/index.htm>. [Retrieved July 31, 2009.]

¹⁴ Projected 2009 operating budget from 2009-2010 Teach For America Press Kit.

http://www.teachforamerica.org/newsroom/documents/2009-10_Press_Kit_Updated_07.20.09.pdf. [Retrieved July 29, 2009].

¹⁵ Teach for America: Our Organization. http://www.teachforamerica.org/careers/our_organization.htm. [Retrieved July 29, 2009].

3. Attack challenges of poverty, build the capacity of school systems, and work to change prevailing ideology through alumni who eventually become the nation's leaders in education and across all sectors.

The lynchpin in the TFA theory of change is that selected corps members are able to attain high levels of success with their students because they have what TFA believes is the greatest potential to maximize student achievement.

Importantly, TFA has built a continuous *leadership* pipeline that flows into the public education system, increasing the organization's impact. TFA reports that the percentage of alumni working and studying in education has consistently grown. One in 10 incoming corps members report that teaching is not one of his or her career options,¹⁶ but appropriately 66 percent end up working and studying in the education field after their two-year commitment.¹⁷ Over 360 former TFA teachers are leaders in the education field.¹⁸ For example, a former TFA corps member, Michelle Rhee, is currently Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools, where she is leading reform in a system that serves 70,618 students in over 235 schools.¹⁹

A third critical lever in TFA's theory of change is *growth* and the actions of its *alumni*. As some TFA corps members rise to leadership roles in education, others lead in other professions (law, medicine, social work, public policy, investment banking, the judicial system, politics, and more) and their positions of influence in large networks keep the spotlight on educational inequities. TFA alumni have become a formidable and growing group that exerts leadership to level the educational playing field by influencing others toward a deeper understanding of poverty and the need to fight for education reform. The TFA theory of change holds that, when there are enough corps members with a common TFA experience and leadership positions in every sector of society, a critical mass will be reached, and the collective power and influence of alumni will alter America's national priorities, elevating education among them.²⁰ TFA's goals, by 2010, are to double its budget and have generated 800 school leaders, 12 prominent social

¹⁶ Teach for America: Alumni Impact. http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/our_impact/alumni_impact.htm. [Retrieved February 26, 2009].

¹⁷ Ibid. [Retrieved July 30, 2009].

¹⁸ Teach for America: 2008 Annual Report. http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/annual_report.htm.17. [Retrieved July 31, 2009].

¹⁹ Unpublished data from the official enrollment audit for the 2008-2009 school year. Office of the State Superintendent of Education. July 2009.

²⁰ Molly Ness, *Lessons to Learn: Voices from the Frontlines of Teach For America*. RoutledgeFarmer: New York, NY 10001. (2004).

entrepreneurs, and 100 elected officials, including members of Congress and judges.²¹ The organization's ambition is to be the number one employer on every top college campus and to field a corps of over 4,000 by 2010.²²

D. Recruitment

At first, TFA selected 12 racially diverse people to visit college campuses and inspire students to join the TFA cause. At each school, recruiters also identified two senior-year high academic achievers as campus representatives to sell the corps experience to their high-performing peers. Well-placed news articles about the TFA model began to appear and generated enthusiasm for the recruitment effort. At Carlton College, for example, 100 of the 450 graduating seniors signed up to attend an informational briefing about TFA. Recruiting was the first step toward creating a "movement."²³

Recruitment efforts are anchored by appealing to candidates' desire to have immediate and lasting impact.²⁴ TFA uses this strategy to motivate college graduates who seek a way in their early years to make a social contribution with tangible results, perhaps before beginning a new and potentially more lucrative career.

From the beginning, TFA cultivated its reputation on college campuses as an elite public service organization.²⁵ Positions in the corps are highly competitive, and TFA had an acceptance rate of only 15 percent in 2008.²⁶ Selection and service as a corps member is viewed as a substantial resume item, and graduate school and employer partnerships²⁷ further enhance the appeal of corps participation.

²¹ Teach For America: Alumni Impact. http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/our_impact/alumni_impact.htm. [Retrieved February 26, 2009].

²² In telephone conversation with Wendy Kopp, President and Chief Executive Officer and Cynthia Skinner, Director of Research and Development, Teach For America. (August 3, 2007).

²³ Wendy Kopp. *One Day All Children*. Public Affairs, NY Perseus Book Group, Cambridge, MA. (2003).

²⁴ In telephone conversation with Dena Blank, Vice President of Alumni Affairs, Teach For America (February 26, 2008).

²⁵ One Round Table participant noted that the elitism often associated with TFA is in the recruitment of elite candidates, not that the teaching profession is viewed as elite service, which is an important distinction in considering adapting the TFA model for child welfare.

²⁶ Megan Greenwell. "Applicants Flock to Teach For America." *The Washington Post*, December 6, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/05/AR2008120503884.html>. [Retrieved July 27, 2009].

²⁷ Teach For America has formal partnerships with several top-rank graduate schools of law, medicine, business, public policy, and social work. For more information, see http://www.teachforamerica.org/alumni/grad_school_partnerships.htm. Additionally, TFA partners formally and informally with employers to provide corps alumni with jobs after their commitment is complete. For information, see http://www.teachforamerica.org/alumni/employer_partnerships.htm.

2009 Profile of TFA Corps Selected from 35,000 Applicants

1. Average SAT score was 1333; 30 percent people of color;
2. 25 percent received Pell grants;
3. GPA average of 3.6;
4. 89 percent had at least one previous college leadership position; and
5. 70 percent graduated from “the most competitive,” “highly competitive,” or “very competitive” schools as defined by Barron’s Profile of American Colleges.

Teach For America: Corps Member Impact.

http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/our_impact/corps_impact.htm. [Retrieved July, 29, 2009.]

E. Influence and Expansion

Because of its focus on the enormous educational gap for children living in poverty and for racial minorities and the research supporting the importance of early learning in closing that gap, TFA launched an ambitious growth plan in 2005 with the goal of eliminating educational inequality in early childhood settings. In addition to the organization’s desire to increase its regular corps membership, TFA began a new Early Childhood Initiative for school years 2007-2008 and recruited, selected, and placed a cohort of corps members in early childhood classrooms. This Initiative began when a number of child development experts, Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman and others concluded that one-half of the achievement gaps evident at the end of high school are present before children start kindergarten. To meet the need for trained early childhood staff, TFA developed a differentiated training program that still is within their larger “teaching as leadership” framework. Training for this initiative is overseen by a prestigious advisory board whose members are experts in the early childhood education field. TFA expects their early childhood corps to quadruple from 112 members in 2007 to 477 members, expected to reach more than 8,000 students who are in their first school experience in 2010.²⁸ TFA believes that this Initiative’s strength and size will serve as a catalyst for broader reform efforts in early childhood education.

...knowing that change is possible, we feel a great sense of urgency. We have no choice but to ensure, through our individual and collective efforts, that one day, all children in America have the educational prospects to fulfill their dreams.

Wendy Kopp, TFA Founder and Chief Executive Officer 2006 [on TFA’s expansion plan]

²⁸ Teach For America: Special Initiatives.

http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/special_initiatives/early_childhood_initiative.htm. [Retrieved February 25, 2009].

F. Teach For America and the Educational Establishment

TFA has accomplished much, but the one of the goals of this feasibility study was to understand both the successes as well as the obstacles faced along the way. In the early years, its survival seemed questionable. Young college graduates without a background in education were not generally viewed as viable resources to address the nation’s teacher shortage and the glaring educational inequity in low-income areas. The education establishment (school administrators, teachers and unions) said it was an ill-conceived and even dangerous reform which threatened to further deprofessionalize teaching. The initial training through the Summer Institute, while intense, was more often than not insufficient to prepare young people for the very difficult jobs they were taking. Over the years, TFA has adapted to both improve its Summer Institute and develop an infrastructure of coaches, mentor and supports for young teachers throughout their two-year experience. They have also understood the importance of professional teacher education and now link corps members to graduate school teacher training programs to support their further development. Engaging school systems to use TFA corps members began slowly but has grown exponentially in recent years. Once extremely controversial, the idea has gained growing acceptance, and TFA and its corps members have become a collective force for long-term impact and a powerful voice for change in education.

Generally, the Teach For America teachers are much less excuse-bound and more entrepreneurial and creative. [In 2006] I’ve got 1600 teachers [from Teach For America] affecting 70,000 or 80,000 kids, and I keep ramping it up.

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor, New York City Schools
“2006 Annual Report.” Teach for America.

III. PARALLEL CHALLENGES FACE THE CHILD WELFARE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION WORKFORCE

The challenges of the nation's education system mirror many in the child welfare system. Like child welfare and its demographics, the nation's public schools have chronic workforce shortages and are under-resourced, particularly in high-need communities. In the most under-served neighborhoods, workers in both child welfare and education play prominent roles in children's and families' lives.²⁹ Both systems want and require a more diverse and skilled workforce than they are currently able to recruit, suffer from high levels of worker burnout and turnover, and have an urgent need to create new pathways for leadership development.

Multiple life circumstances that bring children to the attention of child welfare agencies also make it difficult for vulnerable children to achieve success in school, and this situation has serious implications for their future as productive adults with successful lives. Increasingly, more families remain in or near poverty.³⁰ Almost one out of every four American children lives in a neighborhood with a high poverty rate.³¹ As the U.S. faces economic challenges, the number of families losing their jobs, homes, and health care and falling into poverty or deeper poverty is escalating. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that the nation's continuing economic problems have caused at least 40 states to propose or enact reduced services to their residents, including some of their most vulnerable families.³² Teachers and child welfare workers alike are forced to compensate for these socioeconomic problems that are not within their control as well as for all the weaknesses in their own service systems.³³

In December 2008, a *Washington Post* article reported that local child welfare workers noted a rise in the number of child abuse and neglect investigations, and many of these cases were connected to families who were trying to make ends meet by doing without basic needs like heat, electricity, food, and medicine.

Donna St. George and Petula Dvorak. *The Washington Post*.
"Child Neglect Cases Multiply as Economic Woes Spread."
(December 29, 2008).

²⁹ Teach For America: Regions. <http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/regions/index.htm> [Retrieved 11/19/07].

More than 80 percent of the students reached by TFA teachers qualify for free or reduced price lunch, and the overwhelming majority of students are African American or Latino. All the districts served are classified as "high need" local education agencies by the federal government.

³⁰ Lawrence Mishel et al., "The State of Working America," Economic Policy Institute. Washington, D.C. (2004-2005).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Nicholas Johnson, Phil Oliff, and Jeremy Koulisch. "Facing Deficits at Least 40 States Are Imposing or Planning Cuts that Hurt Vulnerable Residents". Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (February 10, 2009).

³³ "The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform." Annie E. Casey Foundation, Human Services Workforce Initiative. March 2003.

In the U.S., one child is abused or neglected every 35 seconds, and 905,000 children were identified as abused or neglected in 2008.³⁴ Child welfare workers, often with little training, inadequate support and high caseloads, are daily responsible for making difficult and critical decisions about children's safety and their futures. Their decisions can determine the fate of an already overwhelmed family, separate children from parents, and too often strand children in foster care or group homes indefinitely, creating lasting and potentially devastating consequences.³⁵ On the positive side, it is the work of highly skilled and dedicated workers that can also lead to stability and safety for children and positive changes for both children and their families that support their well-being and healthy development.

Public and nonprofit agencies report that the greatest concerns for the child welfare field (and other human service disciplines) are the increasing number of children who need services and the lack of qualified staff to provide them.³⁶ A telephone survey of college seniors majoring in liberal arts and social work, conducted in 2002 by Princeton Survey Research Associates on behalf of the Brookings Institution's Center for Public Service, revealed that "the next generation of human services workers is best characterized as uninterested, uninformed, and apprehensive about the industry." Additionally,

graduates of the nation's top 100 colleges and universities had given less consideration to human service jobs [child care, child welfare, juvenile justice, youth services, and employment and training services] than their peers; and of those who had very or somewhat seriously considered the field, top-tier graduates were far more likely to say they only intended to stay in the job one or two years.³⁷

The same study found that 18- to 34-year-olds with fewer than five years experience in public human services were more likely than their longer-serving, older colleagues to view public human services, including child welfare, as a professional dead end.³⁸

According to Doug Nelson, President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, "...those who are in the U.S. workforce employed to provide child protection, child welfare, child care, youth services,

³⁴ "Children in the United States," 2008. Children's Defense Fund. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-data-repository/cits/children-in-the-states-2008-all.pdf>. (Retrieved July 29, 2009.)

³⁵ "The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform." Annie E. Casey Foundation, Human Services Workforce Initiative. March 2003. 1.

³⁶ "Who's Taking Care." *Advocasey*, Annie E. Casey Foundation. Vol. 6, No. 1. (Spring 2004).

³⁷ Paul C. Light, "The Health of the Human Services Workforce." Center for Public Service, The Brookings Institution and the Wagner School of Public Service, New York University (March 2003). 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 24.

employment counseling, and juvenile justice are not stable enough, experienced enough, trained enough, paid enough, supervised enough, equipped enough, nor valued enough to do their jobs as effectively or efficiently as they should or as many wish they could.”³⁹ Already experiencing a workforce crisis, child welfare is in a talent war and cannot successfully compete without radical changes in its approach to developing and sustaining a workforce for now and for the future.

Unlike the education system, which consists primarily of schools, administrators and teachers, child welfare services are delivered by a complex system of public and private organizations at the state, county, and local level. The federal government plays a major role in providing a child welfare policy framework and financing, but the primary responsibility for child welfare services rests with states and in some places local governments. Specific procedures, practices and funding streams, as well as other factors, vary by state and by locality (although the child welfare system is less locally driven than the public education system). While everyone knows what a teacher is and the basic responsibilities of a teacher’s job, there is no standardized definition of a child welfare worker and there is a much more diverse set of expectations, responsibilities and professional qualifications attached to the child welfare workforce. This diversity of responsibilities, skills required and definitions of the child welfare workforce has in some ways made it even more difficult to think and act on solutions to the workforce challenges in that system.

States and jurisdictions have tried multiple strategies, including developing hiring competencies, using more realistic job portrayals, and offering recruitment bonuses, to find and retain adequate numbers of qualified workers. Research studies have produced evidence of promising practices, but statistics and recommendations on ways to move forward are often conflicting. An Annie E. Casey Foundation study concluded that “although some approaches [to recruitment and retention] fall into clear categories, no one strategy to recruit and retain child welfare staff stands out and none purport to offer a single ‘silver bullet’ solution.”⁴⁰ But while the proposed solutions vary, almost all experts agree that an inability to find and retain qualified and effective child welfare staff creates enormous complications for improving outcomes for children and families. Further, the impact of the nation’s current economic crisis on state and local governments threatens to exacerbate the insufficient number of trained child

³⁹ “The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform.” Annie E. Casey Foundation, Human Services Workforce Initiative. March 2003. 1.1.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 30-31.

welfare workers. At least 38 states and the District of Columbia have made or have proposed making cuts affecting their state workforces.⁴¹

IV. LESSONS LEARNED FROM TFA AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO CHILD WELFARE

At its boldest, this feasibility study was designed to explore whether one could successfully create a Children’s Services Corps or similar initiative modeled after the TFA corps. While we have concluded that the possibility remains a viable option to further develop and design, it is also clear that there are important lessons from the Teach For America model that should and can be applied to less radical efforts to improve the child welfare workforce. These lessons are important for child welfare agencies to consider even as work continues to flesh out the potential of a TFA-like Children’s Services Corps.

Lesson #1: *Effective recruitment requires developing and deploying sophisticated and active marketing campaigns linked to a sound communications strategy.*

We think Teach For America is the best college recruiting organization in the U.S.

Shannon McFayden,
Head of
Human Resources and
Corporate Relations,
Wachovia Corporation

From the beginning, TFA recognized the importance of a highly visible and targeted marketing campaign. TFA determined that there were two primary marketing objectives: changing the image of teaching as “soft,”⁴² and persuasively showing that the highest academic achievers in the “me” generation could impact social injustice by teaching, even if only for a period of two years. TFA’s strategy in these marketing objectives was to portray TFA as (1) a highly selective organization and (2) an organization in which a single person can contribute to a national revolution. Through a targeted, strategic approach to “sell” the idea and through the use of clear understandable language, TFA succeeded in making teaching, a once unpopular career choice, an attractive avenue for young college graduates who wanted to make a difference. TFA’s recruitment efforts and recruitment messages were national in scope, but campus-specific strategies were used for colleges and universities in every region of the country. TFA now has enormous brand awareness, enabling easier and more sustainable recruitment streams, supporting the organization’s fundraising strategies, and accommodating TFA’s growth plan.

⁴¹ Nicholas Johnson, Phil Oliff, and Jeremy Koulisch. “Facing Deficits at Least 40 States Are Imposing or Planning Cuts that Hurt Vulnerable Residents.” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (February 10, 2009).

⁴² Wendy Kopp. One Day All Children. Public Affairs, NY Perseus Book Group, Cambridge, MA. (2003).

By contrast, public child welfare agencies lack deliberate, consistent, and visible messaging and recruitment efforts. There is no national marketing or recruitment effort to increase the visibility, importance of, and worker's attainment of personal fulfillment in child welfare work on a scale anywhere comparable to TFA. When agencies do recruit, efforts are done usually through modest outreach to more traditional networks, such as schools of social work responsible for training undergraduates or graduates through Bachelor's of Social Work (BSW) or Master's of Social Work (MSW) degree programs. There has been little effort to use a marketing campaign and effective broad-based communications strategy to link the work of the child welfare system to the desire of young people to impact key areas of inequity and social justice.⁴³

Lesson #2: *Use alumni and peers as the visible faces of recruitment efforts, provide financial incentives to recruiters, pay attention and be responsive to potential candidates, and incorporate the key message of being part of a movement in which it is possible to make a difference.*

By approaching the recruitment process as a campaign tied to a national movement and carried out primarily by other young people, TFA has succeeded in creating a culture of competitive achievement that attracts thousands of committed and highly academically qualified candidates to this work.

TFA uses networks of college students and alumni to actively recruit on every major college and university campus in the country. TFA hires a minimum of two college peer staff to maintain an active recruitment presence on campus throughout the school year. The on-campus recruiters establish and track recruitment targets, and their efforts are supplemented by alumni supporters. Financial incentives are provided to the recruiters for exceeding recruitment targets, and effective and varied recruitment materials are accessible to both recruiters and applicants. In addition, TFA's human resource operation is accessible, timely, and customer-friendly. For example, in January 2008, an email sent to the recruitment website generated three follow-up letters requesting information and encouraging the completion of the application by the February 15, 2008 due date. When a completed application was not received, a follow-up survey was sent. Emails continued throughout 2008 and in early 2009 encouraging submission of an application for the 2009-2010 school year.

⁴³ The New York City Administration for Children's Services began a new, targeted advertising recruitment campaign using a more rigorous screening process on March 10, 2008. In June 2008, ACS Commissioner John Mattingly reported that the campaign had spurred a significant increase in job applications, which was the first goal. He also reported that the trainers indicated that the trainees seemed to be much stronger, but that it was too soon to judge whether worker retention rates were affected.

Strategic support and use of peer networks to enhance recruitment, use of financial and other incentives for meeting recruitment goals, and meticulous attention to customer service and regular communication with candidates are strategies rarely or only periodically employed by child welfare. Becoming part of a “movement” is central to the motivation of young people to enlist in programs like TFA but is almost never part of child welfare recruitment. Creating a similar public message tied to impact will be essential to the success of the proposed CSC and is an important element to add to child welfare agencies’ existing recruitment and hiring efforts. As one former TFA corps member, who also was a Round Table participant, stated, “TFA teachers are placed in situations that are extremely difficult, and there are instances when school principals and others try to undermine the teachers’ efforts. What sustains the teacher is the knowledge that they are a part of a larger movement for change.” The consistent attention to carefully crafted and targeted marketing campaigns that center on the movement, combined with timely and friendly responses to candidate inquiries, and the use of strong peer networks, are powerful mechanisms with potential to yield significant results for the child welfare workforce.

Lesson #3: *Establish and use clear, consistent, and rigorous selection criteria based on traits that are linked to outcomes for determining and hiring qualified candidates.*

The initial criteria to determine the best candidates for TFA were developed after research, interviews with professional educators, and direct observation of master teachers with a proven track record. TFA continues to work on identifying key personal traits that best predict candidates who will be successful in overcoming challenges and producing results in the classroom. At every stage of its recruitment and selection effort, TFA strives to make decisions based on a candidate’s likelihood to produce measurable advancement in students’ academic achievement. According to TFA, there is no one profile of an ideal applicant. The TFA admissions model is rigorous and attempts to gain a holistic view of each candidate through competencies, including a written application, telephone interview, observation of sample teaching and group activities, problem-solving ability, personal interview, recommendation letters, and college transcripts. The process designates a score for every applicant on each of the identified competencies in the model. Evaluators are trained in the correct and consistent use of the competency assessment tool. Each candidate’s score is multiplied by a coefficient in line with that competency’s history of producing the desired impact.

Over time, TFA has refined its selection criteria through experience and constant re-examination of the qualities that are shown by data to correlate with teachers’ success. TFA now focuses on ten primary criteria, which the organization’s evidence suggests are the best predictors of successful TFA teachers. These criteria include:

1. Achievement – demonstrated past achievement and measurable results in academics and/or extracurricular activities;
2. Leadership – demonstrated leadership in past activities;
3. Perseverance – optimism and perseverance in the face of challenges;
4. High expectations – high expectations for students and a deep commitment to helping them meet those expectations;
5. Critical thinking – makes thoughtful linkages between cause and effect and generates relevant solutions to problems;
6. Problem-solving and organizational ability – juggles multiple projects and has the ability to manage the demands facing teachers successfully;
7. Influencing and motivating others – moves others to take action;
8. Respecting the culture and communities of low-income students and families and operates with humility;
9. Professionalism and integrity – operates professionally and with integrity, and is able to meet basic writing standards; and
10. Proficiency in basic writing standards.⁴⁴

According to Wendy Kopp, TFA offers positions to every candidate who can meet their rigorous selection criteria. Seventy-nine percent of applicants in 2007 were rejected because they did not score sufficiently high enough against the TFA selection competencies and success criteria.⁴⁵

Many of the traits identified by TFA as predictors of success also have been identified by a number of other high-performing organizations. The trait that appears consistently across sectors is that of academic achievement, which also has been shown to be related to leadership, a central component of the TFA Theory of Change. In a number of highly effective companies, injecting the workforce with new employees who have intelligence and leadership skills have had a profoundly positive effect on co-workers and on the whole organization.⁴⁶

Too often, child welfare systems' candidate review and hiring processes are flawed and are not sufficiently linked to an understanding of what qualities make for successful workers. Child welfare systems need to develop and continuously refine the criteria for worker selection that are linked to the outcomes for children and families they want to achieve. Once developed, these criteria need to be rigorously and consistently applied in the selection of workers for child welfare. Based on an analysis of results over time, the established criteria should be evaluated for effectiveness and refined accordingly. Round Table participants also emphasized that the criteria for worker qualities need to reflect what is already known about what works in communities, and the experience of those who receive services. Collaborating with communities and recipients to define the characteristics and skills needed by an effective

⁴⁴ Teach For America: Who We're Looking For.

http://teachforamerica.org/admissions/who_were_looking_for.htm. [Retrieved July 29, 2009].

⁴⁵ In telephone conversation with Wendy Kopp, President, TFA and Cynthia Skinner, Director of Research and Development, TFA. (August 3, 2007).

⁴⁶ Justin Menkes. *Executive Intelligence*. Harper Collins Publishers, LLC: New York, NY. (2005). 273.

worker could enhance not only recruitment but should guide training, supervision and worker support.

Lesson #4: *Use data and research to continuously monitor impact, and track the identified traits linked to worker success in achieving defined outcomes.*

TFA's management team tracks data and evaluates the impact of its work regularly. The focus on data has grown, and now the organization "obsessively collects data about the performance of its teachers in the classroom."⁴⁷ TFA also seeks independent and rigorous evaluations to help measure the organization's impact and provide a mechanism for continuous improvement. In her book, Wendy Kopp stated that teachers come to TFA ready to help their students achieve academically, but not all succeed.⁴⁸ Through research on the corps and direct classroom observation, evaluators began to see shared characteristics among the most successful corps members. Such corps members:

- Set clear goals for their students;
- Motivate students and their families to work hard toward these goals;
- Work relentlessly to accomplish the job; and
- Constantly assess their own effectiveness and work to improve their performance over time.⁴⁹

TFA hired a psychologist to deconstruct the personal attributes of these corps members in order to determine what characteristics most influence success in the classroom and gains for students. The psychologist identified key factors that "distinguished great teachers from the merely good – the most noticeable of which was having a strong internal locus of control – distinguishing between what they can and cannot control – and then working to change every factor they can."⁵⁰ For example, if one teacher's student falls behind in math – not because of aptitude, but because he lives in a crowded house, the teacher will try to get the student into a more suitable environment for doing homework.⁵¹ In addition, TFA focuses its teacher training institutes and support on building the capacity of teachers to become leaders and to take initiative within and beyond the classroom to achieve TFA goals as well as on specific skills related to being effective classroom teachers.

While some child welfare researchers and experts have identified professional qualifications and personal qualities they believe result in longer job tenure for caseworkers, very little research exists that clearly links worker traits to documented outcomes for the children served

⁴⁷ In telephone conversation with Cynthia Skinner, TFA Director of Research and Development and Dena Blank, Vice President for Alumni Affairs, TFA. (February 26, 2008).

⁴⁸ Wendy Kopp. *One Day All Children*. Public Affairs, NY Perseus Book Group, Cambridge, MA. (2003).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant. *Forces for Good: The 6 Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA. (2008). 140-141.

⁵¹ Ibid.

by child welfare systems.⁵² Studies that look at caseworker characteristics primarily have been focused on the system factors that influence recruitment and retention or on competencies, and not on the personal traits of the workers. Design models are sometimes used to select child welfare workers based on best fit for the organization; these models identify key employee characteristics, including initiative, adaptability, decision-making ability, personal responsibility, compassion, and team-work skills, among others. Some research indicates that these characteristics can better predict those workers who are more likely to succeed and stay longer in the profession.⁵³ However there is little evidence that ongoing data collection is routinely used to refine selection criteria or to design a training and support system based on data-supported results that encourage workers to act in ways that are linked to success.

The TFA model provides an example of tackling a societal challenge from a new angle. The child welfare field should consider the potential to study, identify, and correlate worker attributes and selection criteria that are linked to high-quality work and successful outcomes. Ongoing data collection, used to develop more effective and targeted recruitment and worker selection processes and refined over time, would also be an important element of a CSC. Knowledge of the personal traits that correlate with effectiveness could also lead to a redefinition of child welfare worker's scope and responsibility.

Lesson #5: *Select child welfare workers whose values are aligned with the child welfare mission-driven environment.*

TFA recognized the critical importance of mission and values in its model and identified several core values deemed essential to the work. They are:

- Relentless pursuit of results – assumption of personal responsibility;
- Sense of possibility – bold and optimistic thinking;
- Disciplined thought – reliance on experience and data to learn and make future choices rooted in the mission;
- Respect and humility – knowledge of the limitations of one's own experiences and the consequent pursuit of diverse perspectives; and
- Integrity – alignment of actions with beliefs, self-evaluation, and action for the common good.⁵⁴

⁵² Thomas E. Lengyel, Susan Hornung, and Patrice Heinz. "Prospects and Promise for a National Child Workforce Database." (Briefing paper) Severson Center and Department of Research and Evaluation Services, Alliance for Children and Families. (2001).

⁵³ Freda Bernatovicz. "Child Welfare Caseworker Competency Based Screening Resource Guide," Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (February 2005). "Improving the Child Welfare Workforce: Lessons Learned from Class Action Litigation," Children's Rights and National Center for Youth Law. (February 2007). www.youthlaw.org and www.cornerstones4kids.org.

⁵⁴ Teach For America: Core Values. <http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/corevalues.htm>. [Retrieved May 19, 2008].

Although the profession of social work operates within a values framework, it is only recently that child welfare leaders have begun to recognize the importance of shared values in the effective administration and delivery of child welfare services. The jobs of teachers and child welfare workers are similarly value-laden and thus, an effective workforce for either profession must be able to articulate and share the mission and values of the organization. There is a clear lesson that commitment to a shared vision both promotes and supports successful team work and contributes to the accomplishment of bold goals. In the experience of one Round Table participant, workers who either do not understand the organization's values or do not share them may not utilize assets that already exist or respect the established organizational value system. Values alignment with communities and families is also critical. Child Welfare systems need better ways to ensure that candidates understand and share the organization's values as a pre-requisite for doing the work.

Lesson #6: *The quality of pre-service training academies can impact the effectiveness of new workers, but training alone is insufficient.*

One of the most controversial aspects of the TFA model has been its reliance on a summer pre-service training institute to transform college graduates with no prior teaching experience into teachers capable of leading a classroom. In an article in *Educational Horizons* in 1992, Gary Clabaugh wrote, "Discarding the thoughtful, thorough and progressive preparation characteristics of all expert professions, Teach For America coaxes half-committed aspirants through just five weeks of summer crash work in pedagogy...From ignorance to competence in just thirty days of preparation!"⁵⁵

Teach For America is designed to attract not only the most talented people on the college campus, but individuals who have a passion to make a contribution. They may lack teacher training, but we easily can compensate with instructional models and data delivery systems. You can't buy a work ethic. You can't buy intelligence and enthusiasm. You can't buy hope. At the end of the day, all that stuff is priceless.

Paul Vallas, Superintendent
Recovery School District and New Orleans
2008

In the early years of TFA, the teacher preparatory training was somewhat haphazard and of uneven quality. The Summer Institute did not set accurate expectations, and TFA corps members did not think adequate training or sufficient professional development opportunities were provided. Over time, the focus and content of the Summer Institute has improved significantly and TFA's visibility keeps the training and curriculum under scrutiny by researchers and experts in the teacher preparation field.

⁵⁵ Gary Clabaugh. "Teach For America." *Educational Horizons*. (Spring 2002).
<http://www.newfoundations.com/Clabaugh/CuttingEdge/TeachforAmerica.html>. {Retrieved May 19, 2008}.

In response to criticism and its own measures of teacher effectiveness, TFA has since modified its Summer Institute and consistently monitors and evaluates its training programs. For example, Program Directors, regionally-based teacher support staff, are now assigned to work with corps members throughout the school year. An experienced teacher preparation team now leads the development of the curriculum and training for the Summer Institute. The approach is based on what is known about successful teachers in low-income communities. At the curriculum core are six basic strands of content.⁵⁶

1. Teaching as leadership
2. Instructional planning and delivery
3. Classroom management and culture
4. Diversity, communities, and achievement
5. Learning theory
6. Literacy development

Like TFA, many state and local child welfare agencies hire new staff right out of college, frequently without any undergraduate social work or human service preparation. The TFA Summer Institute is more intensive than most states' Child Welfare Training Academies, which provide time-limited pre-service training to new social workers, most of whom come to the job with no prior training or experience.

By contrast with most state and local child welfare agencies, TFA invests heavily in ongoing support throughout the first two years of a corps member's employment. In addition, corps members are linked to professional educational settings from the start of their tenure and must now enroll in more traditional teacher preparation and certification programs to support their ongoing professional development. Each corps member is assigned a Program Director who provides support, guidance, and feedback during the TFA experience. These mentors help prioritize corps members' focus on improvement to ensure that they have meaningful tools and resources on an ongoing basis to build the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary for classroom success. TFA also provides each corps member with initial and long-term instructional plans tailored to state standards and school district curriculum for each grade and subject area, diagnostic tests and ongoing assessments, and student achievement tracking tools. Corps members meet in content- and/or grade-level specific learning teams led by successful teachers, including TFA alumni. These seminars are the primary venues for professional collaboration and support among corps members. In addition, corps members are personally observed in the classroom and provided with follow-up coaching at least four times per year. According to Wendy Kopp in 2007, TFA spends approximately \$20,000 in training and support on each corps member.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Teach For America: Training. <http://www.teachforamerica.org/corps/training/htm>. [Retrieved March 5, 2008].

⁵⁷ In telephone conversation with Wendy Kopp, President, TFA and Cynthia Skinner, Director of Research and Development, TFA. (August 3, 2007).

By contrast, most child welfare systems currently lack the capacity or resources to provide much ongoing support to new (and existing) workers. New child welfare workers often complain about their lack of preparation to do their jobs and the lack of structured support after the completion of pre-service training. As affirmed by research results in a multi-year university-agency partnership, the Social Work Education Consortium of New York, child welfare systems need more than trained social workers.⁵⁸ Honing in on high-quality partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors, philanthropic organizations, and professional schools could help provide some of the much needed support and professional development of the workforce.

For both the development of a CSC and for existing child welfare workforce practices, one of TFA's clear lessons is that intensive training must be supplemented with high-quality coaching and mentoring following classroom training. Too often, child welfare workers receive pre-service training but any subsequent coaching and mentoring is episodic and dependent on the time, interest and skills of their colleagues. Similar to programs developed by TFA, new workers need competent, consistently available coaches or mentors and to be linked with professional development opportunities to provide ongoing support for their work and in many states, to prepare them to meet state licensing/certification requirements. Partnerships with child welfare training professionals, schools of social work, and other professional schools are essential.

A major task of creating and testing a Children's Services Corps would be the development of a research-based curriculum to give workers the skills and preparation for their jobs. Developmental work is needed to assess the strengths and the weaknesses of existing pre-service training programs and to use that knowledge to create an intensive training program and curriculum for CSC members. The known inadequacies of much of existing pre-service training suggest that designing a standardized core curriculum aligned with the mission, outcomes, and desired attributes of a successful Children's Services Corps also could be useful for application to the traditional child welfare workforce.

⁵⁸ Hal A. Lawson and Nancy Claiborne. "Planning to Reduce Workforce Turnover in New York State's Public Child Welfare System: Developing Knowledge, Lessons Learned, and Emergent Priorities." Social Work Education Consortium. (2005).
<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/ohrd/swec/pubs/Five%20year%20compendium%20of%20SWEC%20work.pdf>
[Retrieved July 31, 2009].

Lesson #7: *Alternative routes to traditional certification and overcoming union and civil service restrictions are possible.*

One of the early concerns about TFA and a potential barrier to its child welfare application is the need to conform to state licensing and certification standards and to meet union and civil service rules and restrictions. In most states, employment in public child welfare systems is governed by state or local civil service protection and in some states and localities, the workforce is unionized. Candidates for employment are chosen from civil service registries, either on the basis of passing a preliminary competency test and/or being certified based on educational or other requirements. The presence of civil service restrictions is frequently cited as an obstacle for creating non-traditional entry points for public sector employment through something like a Children’s Services Corps.

Evidence from TFA, however, suggests that licensing, civil service and union barriers can be overcome. First, in many systems today, the only degree requirement for a child welfare worker is a college degree. According to a child welfare workforce study, fewer than 15 percent of child welfare agencies require either a bachelor’s or master’s degree in social work.⁵⁹ In states where there is a requirement for an educational background in social services, it may be possible to negotiate exceptions based on enrollment in an intensive summer training institute and commitment to ongoing professional courses in the first years of hire. It also should be possible to develop alternative pathways to certifications needed to meet civil service requirements. This would necessitate individual negotiation in any potential pilot states.

Another potential challenge to a Children’s Services Corps is union opposition to hiring corps members. Again, this barrier existed for TFA when it began. However, through direct work with the unions, concerns have been, for the most part, successfully addressed. Many of the cities in which TFA operates, including New York City, Washington, D.C., and Newark, New Jersey, are highly unionized. In these jurisdictions, corps members are required to join the union, pay union dues, and meet all of the union requirements. While union leadership originally opposed the TFA concept, deliberate engagement efforts in the startup period and beyond with the American Federation of Teachers and other organizations, forged workable partnerships and successful relationships with teachers’ unions and other stakeholders in education.

One of the important lessons of TFA is that it is also possible to create and support alternative pathways to professional certification. The 2002 passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, a standards-based education reform effort, required states to ensure that teachers, including TFA corps members, are certified and “highly qualified” and held school districts accountable for compliance and results. NCLB defines a “highly qualified” teacher as one who holds a bachelor’s degree, has full state certification, and has demonstrated, typically by

⁵⁹ “Minimum Education Required by State Child Welfare Agencies, Percent, by Degree Type, 1998.” *State Child Welfare Agency Survey*. Child Welfare League of America. (1999).

passing a test or completing undergraduate coursework, subject-area competence in each subject taught. Teachers who participate in an alternative route to teacher certification may be considered to meet the full state certification requirements for highly qualified teacher status if they are permitted by the state to assume the functions of a regular classroom teacher and demonstrate satisfactory progress toward full certification in their programs. By working with state licensing and certification boards, TFA was able to develop alternative pathways to certification for corps members.

For school districts to fulfill the requirements of NCLB, they must hire TFA corps members through state-approved alternative certification programs. These programs require that corps members meet specific requirements and demonstrate proficiency in the grades and subject areas they will teach. The program requirements vary by region and by position, but in most cases, they call for corps members to pass subject-area tests before teaching and, during the school year, to participate in ongoing coursework. TFA works with school districts, states, and schools of education to ensure that corps members have access to coursework, test information, and preparation tools to meet all requirements. In many regions, TFA has established partnerships with graduate schools that enable corps members to obtain their master's degrees in education.

Similarly, many states require that child welfare workers meet established certification or licensing standards. In child welfare, credentialing, training, and supervision are inconsistent among the states. According to the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) that monitors laws and regulations of certain levels of social work practice, 27 states allow social workers at various levels to work with a provisional or temporary license and continuing education requirements range from 15 to 50 contact hours per year. Experience and annual supervision requirements range from 100 hours for a licensed clinical social worker in Connecticut to between 3,600 and 4,000 for a licensed clinical social worker in New York and Pennsylvania.⁶⁰

A new Children's Services Corps would need to work with state regulatory bodies to ensure that relevant standards are met. In addition, the Children's Services Corps could establish relationships with professional schools as part of an ongoing accreditation plan; Master's degree partnerships might also be cultivated, as modeled by TFA. Using alternative programs as a way to make progress in increasing both the number and the professional skills of the child welfare workforce should be possible, as demonstrated by TFA and supported by recent studies.⁶¹ Based on the discussion and enthusiasm expressed by Round Table participants, one of whom was an expert on alternative certification programs, creating and supporting alternative routes to certification tied to ongoing learning and professional development is not an insurmountable barrier.

⁶⁰ "Social Work Laws and Regulations Database." Association of Social Work Boards.

<https://www.datapathdesign.com/ASWB/Laws/Prod/cgi-bin/LawWebRpts2DLL.dll/EXEC/0/0kb71o01tp43y2196x4gg1tbbdxu>. [Retrieved July 29, 2009].

⁶¹ Zeyu Xu, Jane Hannaway, and Colin Taylor. "Making a Difference?: The Effects of Teach For America in High School." National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, the Urban Institute. (March 2008).

Lesson #8: *System and worker accountability structures are essential to success.*

While TFA connects corps members to many resources, ultimately corps members are responsible for ensuring they meet the required standards and for covering the related costs. Key to TFA's theory of change is that corps members are also held accountable by the organization for attaining certain measurable levels of student achievement in their individual classrooms.

Round Table participants noted the importance of having a system performance and workforce accountability structure. A Children's Services Corps modeled on the TFA theory of change would need to articulate clear, ambitious and realistic performance standards and outcomes and hold workers accountable for achieving them. The CSC would also need adequate resources for worker development related to the achievement of those outcomes.

Lesson #9: *Financial incentives can help to recruit and sustain a more diverse workforce.*

Ninety-five percent of the students that TFA serves are African American and Latino/Hispanic and living in low-income communities. Part of the TFA model is the recruitment and fostering of the leadership of individuals with diverse racial, socioeconomic, and academic backgrounds with the aim of creating corps members that are racially and culturally sensitive to the students, families, and communities in which they work. TFA has strong recruitment efforts at historically black colleges and universities and at all of *Hispanic Magazine's* Top 25 Colleges for Hispanics. TFA also advertises in media targeted at college students of color and has built relationships with organizations that have a broad reach among these populations.

To ensure that qualified individuals of all economic situations are able to join the corps, TFA offers financial aid packages ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 in transitional grants and no-interest loans. Currently, 60 percent of corps members receive aid. These loans and grants help corps members until they receive their first paychecks, and TFA covers major expenses during the Summer Training Institute⁶²

As a charter member of AmeriCorps, TFA provides access to eligible corps members to receive loan forbearance and interest payment on qualified student loans, as well as an education award of \$4,725 at the end of the first year of service.⁶³ This financial assistance not only provides a hiring incentive, but it is also used in partnership with educational programs to help promote and finance post-graduate education and ongoing professional development for corps members.

⁶² TFA corps members earn the same salary and benefits as other beginning teachers in their districts.

⁶³ TFA cannot guarantee AmeriCorps benefits because of the renewal cycle timing difference between when TFA hires and when new AmeriCorps grants are announced.

Child welfare agencies similarly struggle to develop a workforce that is economically and culturally similar to the populations it serves. Because workers' backgrounds frequently do not reflect the cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity of the children and families they serve, they often find it difficult to develop meaningful relationships with their clients.⁶⁴ Child welfare systems on their own and/or through affiliation with a new Children's Services Corps could begin to use financial assistance strategies similar to TFA's to attract a more economically and culturally diverse staff.

Lesson #10: *Partnerships with professional and graduate schools and employers in multiple fields are effective recruitment incentives, and career placement assistance for alumni can help build the leadership network that is necessary for broader system reform.*

Teach For America and the Kennedy School at Harvard share a simple yet powerful belief: that each of us can make the world a better place. At the Kennedy School, Teach For America alumni can build upon the insight and experience gained in the classroom to prepare to become leaders in solving our country's most compelling social and public problems.

David Ellwood, Dean and
Scott M. Blank Professor
of Political Economy
John F. Kennedy
School of Government
Harvard University

The TFA Career and Leadership Center offers all the services of a traditional university career center and more. The Center offers employers access to former TFA corps members through a job posting service, resume collections, career listserv access, and career fairs. All of these services are free for prospective employers, and employers who hire TFA corps members through the Center do not pay recruiting or placement service costs.

TFA has developed graduate school partnerships with over 100 graduate programs including 19 top-ranked business schools, 39 government and public policy schools, 49 law schools, 38 medical schools, and 27 math, science and engineering schools, all of whom offer benefits for corps members and alumni. These arrangements include two-year deferrals to participate in Teach For America, course credit for corps

experience, waived application fees, and special scholarships and awards.⁶⁵ In public policy and social services, TFA has developed graduate school partnerships with a number of universities.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "Components of an Effective Child Welfare Workforce to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families: What Does the Research Tell Us?" Children's Defense Fund and Children's Rights Inc. (August 2006).

⁶⁵ Teach For America: Grad school partnerships.

http://www.teachforamerica.org/alumni/grad_school_partnerships.htm.

⁶⁶ Among the social service graduate schools that provide deferrals and scholarships targeted to TFA alumni are Syracuse University; University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration; Washington University in St. Louis, George Warren Brown School of Social Work; and University of Denver, School of Social Work. Partnerships with public policy schools include Duke University, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy; Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government; University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy; Brandeis University, Heller School for Social Policy and Management; Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs; Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health; George Washington University, School of Public Policy and Public

Creation of such partnerships helps to recruit corps members, provides ongoing professional development opportunities, and offers pathways for leadership development.

TFA also has developed partnerships with other employers to provide leadership career paths for corps members who do not wish to make teaching their career. TFA has influenced top companies to encourage their new recruits to serve in the TFA corps prior to beginning their employment at the company. In 2008, more than 20 leading employers—including JP Morgan, Google, Goldman Sachs, McKinsey & Company, Bain & Company, Credit Suisse, KPMG, Morgan Stanley, Wachovia, General Electric and Accenture—offered benefits, such as job deferrals, summer internships, and others, specifically for TFA corps members.⁶⁷

With its Election Initiative, TFA develops future public office holders, providing another avenue to influence education policy and practice, part of TFA’s long-term change strategy. This initiative aims to cultivate interest in and provide resources for alumni who wish to hold elected office.

For those who want to continue their education careers, TFA fosters structured relationships with graduate schools of education to offer professional development opportunities to build skills.⁶⁸ The Center also helps TFA corps members to access resources necessary to effectively navigate the public and charter school recruitment and selection systems and those that result in principal placement.

The direct applicability of TFA’s career development strategies to the workforce challenges in child welfare and specifically to a Children’s Services Corps depends in part on how broadly or narrowly we construe the child welfare workforce and its future needs. If the only applicable job to be considered for CSC members is that of a direct case-carrying social worker, than issues related to tenure and continuity of workers present potential barriers that need consideration.

Administration; Georgetown University, Public Policy Institute; Indiana University, School of Public and Environmental Affairs; Johns Hopkins University, the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies; New York University, Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs; Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs; Tufts University, Fletcher School of International Affairs; Tulane University, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine; University of Michigan, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy; University of Pennsylvania, Fels Institute of Government; University of California-Berkeley, Goldman School of Public Policy; the University of Southern California, School of Policy, Planning and Development; and many others.

(http://www.teachforamerica.org/alumni/grad_school_partnerships.htm).

⁶⁷ TFA corps members are a highly selective group with excellent academic credentials. They would likely be highly competitive degree candidates and job applicants without the TFA experience. The leadership development component of TFA, however, makes these candidates even more desirable for post-TFA employment.

⁶⁸ In the education field, partnerships include Columbia University, Teachers College; Harvard University, Graduate School of Education; Pace University, School of Education; Arizona State University, Master’s in Educational Administration and Supervision; Boston College, Lynch School of Education; Brown University, Master’s in Art in Teaching or Master’s in Urban Education Policy; Fordham University, Graduate School of Education; University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Master’s in School Administration; Michigan State University, PhD in Education Policy, Educational Psychology and Educational Technology, Measurement and Quantitative Methods, Educational Administration and Curriculum; and the Association of Montessori International/USA, among others.

Unlike classroom teachers, who change every year for a child, continuity in a child welfare worker for the life of a case is preferred. Research suggests a relationship between continuity in caseworker employment and improved permanency outcomes for children in the child welfare system.⁶⁹ Studies indicate that frequent worker turnover affects outcomes for children in multiple ways, including delaying reunification and permanency efforts. Delayed permanency decisions can have catastrophic, life-long impacts on a child's development.⁷⁰ Worker turnover and staff shortages limit the frequency of worker visits with children and hamper the agencies' ability to attain key federal safety and permanency goals.⁷¹ Turnover disrupts the continuity of available services, particularly when newly assigned caseworkers have to conduct or reevaluate educational, health, and safety assessments due to poor or inadequate information in case files left behind by others. Yet child welfare systems nationally have an estimated worker turnover rate between 30 and 40 percent annually, and the average tenure for child welfare workers is less than two years.⁷² The Round Table participants, while cognizant of this issue, do not believe it to be a major barrier for moving forward for several reasons. First, it is possible and in fact desirable to think about and define new roles for child welfare workers and new ways to organize the work to ensure continuity in engagement, relationship and progress without solely relying on the model of one case worker responsible for everything. Second, even within a narrow construct of the work to be performed, the need for developing opportunities to attract young people to the field and to create pathways for new leadership is an acknowledged problem requiring creative solutions.

The Round Table also emphasized the need to think creatively about a redefinition of the child welfare workforce as part of the development of the CSC. There are a broader range of functions not currently carried out by the traditional child welfare workforce that could be

⁶⁹"HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff." GAO-03-357. U.S. Government Accountability Office. (March 31, 2003).

⁷⁰Kids who spend extensive time in foster care have physiological and emotional problems from the impact of uncertainty, and they do poorly on nearly every predictor of making a successful transition to adulthood when they exit the system without a permanent family. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, "KIDSCOUNT Data Book." July 2007) Children who have multiple child care workers show slower development. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, "The Unsolved Challenge of System Reform: The Condition of the Frontline Human Services Workforce." (March 2003). 18.)

⁷¹ Connie Flower, Jess McDonald, Michael Sumski, "Review of Turnover in Milwaukee County Private Agency Child Welfare Ongoing Case Management Staff." (January 2005). A Milwaukee County study of children who entered care in calendar year 2003 through September 2004 and exited to permanency had a lessened chance of permanency achievement depending on the number of worker changes they experienced. Children entering care during the time period who had only one worker achieved permanency in 74.5 percent of the cases. As the number of case managers increased, the percentage of children achieving permanency substantially dropped, ranging from 17.5 percent for children who had two case managers to a low of 0.1 percent for children who had six and seven case managers.

⁷² "Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff." GAO-03-357. U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2003).

On the contrary, TFA's retention rate is 91 percent for corps members who complete their two-year commitment. This represents 89 percent of those who return for a second year and is higher than the estimated average for first-year teachers in low-income communities in general (86 percent). ("No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children." National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Washington, D.C., 2003.

www.nctaf.org/documents/no-dream-denied_full-report.pdf.)

performed by energized corps members willing to make a time-limited commitment to this work with explicit partnerships for further professional and/or career development. One possibility for the Children's Services Corps that was discussed by Round Table participants would be to use corps members to complement the work of traditional child welfare workers. These positions, for example, could perform key (and often unfunded) support functions within public agencies or in community agencies, schools, and early care and education settings. This work would center on prevention with the goal of building supports to keep children and families from entering the child welfare system. A mission for the CSC could be broader than child protection but perhaps focused on the goal of having every child grow up in a safe and stable family.

New Roles for Child Welfare Workers:
Change Inside the Massachusetts System

As reported by one Round Table participant, Massachusetts is experimenting with re-organizing its child welfare cases using teams of professionals working together rather than the traditional 1:1 worker caseload ratio. Social workers in a unit share responsibility for all of the cases in that unit, with a primary and secondary worker assigned to each case. Any one worker in the unit is prepared to step in and respond when needs arise. Within the Massachusetts scenario can be seen roles for Children's Services Corps members to provide support and be supported by team efforts; these roles include child or family advocates, teen mentors helping with the transition to adulthood, or resource family support workers. Children's Services Corps members might be trained to facilitate family team meetings, an emerging best practice in child welfare work that requires the infusion of new talent. There are also a range of community-based support functions around which the work of a Children's Services Corps could be structured.

Lesson #11: *In the beginning, have a big picture theory and vision but have a targeted and measurable focus.*

One of the factors in TFA's success was its big picture message of change coupled with a clearly defined focus to recruit and place teachers in high-need areas. TFA did not attempt to address all national educational issues but used its work as an entry point for broader reform. Today, however, using its theory of change and its success, TFA is contributing to progress on an overhaul of the nation's education system. Round Table participants supported keeping a defined focus on applying the lessons of TFA to child welfare workforce recruitment and retention issues and in a similar vein, using that as an entry point for broader change. Round Table participants acknowledged that workforce issues, ultimately, cannot be addressed in isolation of the system's own constraints, although an increase in both the quantity and quality of workers who have a shared vision of success could have impact.

Learning from the TFA experience, building a Children's Services Corps for child welfare with talented, creative recent college graduates would help meet the current need for staff to take on this challenging work but could also have important corollary benefits. If the lessons of TFA hold true, a Children's Services Corps would raise the profile of child welfare work, attract young people to the profession, create an alumni network to maintain advocacy, and establish long-term interest in and connection to the nation's most at-risk populations among future leaders.

Lesson #12: *Organizational culture is important and the design of a CSC should provide an organizational home that is committed to system change.*

TFA created a new national organization that has a clear and compelling social change agenda and culture, which has contributed to its success. A clear lesson in thinking about the applicability of TFA to child welfare is the need to find an organizational home for this work that has a social change agenda and can capture and nurture young people's idealism and desire for positive change. One Round Table participant who has direct experience with public child welfare systems noted that currently the "child welfare system is not an impact player and young, idealistic people who enter are often sabotaged and become disillusioned." The group also expressed their concern that the public child welfare system very well could be the most difficult vehicle for a Children's Services Corps to navigate for a number of reasons, including the powerful special interests of the system that have little incentive to help bring about change. Participants determined that consideration should be given to pursuing other points of entry for new workers, such as in the nonprofit sector with community-based partners or by attaching to community-based child welfare reform initiatives like the Annie E. Casey *Family to Family* initiative or broader-based community reform initiatives like the newly proposed Promise Neighborhoods. Other Round Table participants suggested that rather than creating a wholly new organizational home to develop and implement a CSC, a national public service organization should be examined as a potential home for this work.

V. OPTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Like public education, child welfare systems struggle to achieve positive outcomes for children and families and many facets of their policy and practice are currently under intense scrutiny and demand for reform. Round Table participants strongly reinforced that restoring families in crisis, providing help and hope, and ensuring the safety and equal opportunity for all of America's children must be a national priority. This is true for all children but especially urgent for children and families involved with public child welfare. This goal requires a flexible and more comprehensive approach to providing services to children and families and a workforce and resources equal to the task. The concept of a Children's Services Corps based on the lessons of TFA provides an opportunity, and even a mandate, to think differently about the child welfare mission and its workforce and to explore new job categories, functions, and responsibilities that will yield better results for children.

While this initial exploration suggests both the feasibility and interest in the design of a Children's Services Corps, Round Table participants also recognized that this idea is not a "silver bullet" to solve all child welfare workforce issues. Similarly, all agreed that an improved workforce alone will not solve the multiple complex issues of child welfare reform.

One option for moving forward, advanced by several Round Table participants, seeks a new, broader definition of the child welfare workforce to encompass not only the roles of traditional caseworkers but other community-based functions to support and enhance the traditional child welfare work with children, families, and other caregivers.

The options discussed in the next section are not mutually exclusive; each has merit for future consideration but all require developmental steps. Round Table participants expressed willingness and enthusiasm to continue participation in future development of the ideas leading to field-testing of applications of the TFA model to the child welfare workforce.

Option 1: *Incorporate TFA strategies on marketing, recruitment, selection, and support into existing state and local child welfare workforce recruitment and retention programs.*

There is convincing evidence that TFA strategies for marketing and recruitment, including utilizing new media avenues like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and others, have helped put more qualified teachers into the classroom in high-need areas. Such media could be utilized to gauge the interest of rising and graduating seniors at selected colleges and universities in learning more about opportunities to work in the child welfare field. Developmental steps include:

- Create a targeted marketing campaign.
- Test the effectiveness of the marketing campaign as a recruitment strategy.
- Recruit a network of peers and other young people to become the visible faces of recruitment.
- Identify and use selection processes and criteria based in research on candidate attributes that are correlated with successful outcomes for children and families.
- Establish recruitment incentives through developing partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors and with educational and financial support institutions.

Option 2: *Develop an operational and business plan to pilot-test a new Children's Services Corps.*

This option uses the developmental steps in Option 1 but goes beyond simply incorporating successful strategies into current state and local efforts. It envisions work to expand the definition of the child welfare workforce and to create, train and pilot-test a Children's Services Corps. Based on the TFA experience, the pilot test must be small enough to be manageable and serve as a learning opportunity but large enough to provide momentum for a national movement. When TFA was launched, all experts advised that there be no more than 50 members, but Kopp did not think that number constituted a movement. Using TFA as a model, the Children's Services Corps trial would need to be larger than 50 people and may need to involve more than one site.⁷³ Possible next steps include:

- Identify an intermediary to work with experts to develop a business and operations plan.
- Identify roles and define the job(s) and job responsibilities to be performed by corps members, including the exploration of new job categories and supervision models.

⁷³ Wendy Kopp. One Day All Children. Public Affairs, NY Perseus Book Group, Cambridge, MA (2003).

- Identify and structure working partnerships with three to five jurisdictions interested in pilot-testing specific roles and responsibilities of a Children’s Services Corps.
- Carry out the developmental steps indicated in Option 1 to survey college graduates and create effective marketing messages targeted to mission and outcomes.
- Use data on successful child and family outcomes to identify selection processes and criteria based on research on candidate attributes.
- Identify training partners and develop a high-quality pre-service training institute that incorporates the leadership elements of TFA training and the skill development necessary for successful child welfare work.
- Develop the government, business and community partnerships necessary to provide recruitment incentives and support.
- Develop academic partnerships to provide career development opportunities for continued learning and professional development of corps members.
- Develop a framework for the mentoring and support structure necessary for each pilot.
- Negotiate national and local relationships with unions to support the work.
- Negotiate alternative paths to certification and licensing within each pilot site.
- Build a research, data collection, and evaluation plan from the start.
- Develop a timeline for each step, including an annual five-year budget, and sources of funding for all elements of the pilot.
- Identify potential partners and other stakeholders.

Option 3: *Link to the proposed Promise Neighborhoods or another existing community change or public service initiative.*

One possible option for pilot site selection would be to closely align a Children’s Services Corps with the concept of President Barack Obama’s federal initiative “Promise Neighborhoods,” which is an idea inspired by the achievements of the Harlem Children’s Zone. The Harlem Children’s Zone seeks to engage all resident children and their families in an achievement program based on tangible goals in the areas of education, health and mental health, employment, and parenting. The Promise Neighborhoods initiative is proposed to target defined struggling neighborhoods to help improve outcomes and opportunities for children and families. Children’s Services Corps members could be a vital link between families and children in the child welfare system and the Promise Neighborhoods programs; there is a range of

community-based support functions around which the work of the CSC could be structured. Another possibility includes linking this work to other community-based child welfare reform initiatives, which are testing new service delivery models in selected communities.

A third avenue is to ally with a nonprofit organization whose mission is to encourage and provide opportunities for young people to engage in public service (such as Public Allies) for the next step of developmental work.⁷⁴

Option 4: *Conduct a pilot program based in public school settings that is linked to child welfare system.*

Interviews with TFA alumni and other teachers highlight the need for teachers to have additional support for children and families at risk of entering or already in contact with the child welfare. Teachers frequently express frustration with the lack of coordination among the various agencies that touch the lives of their students and their families. A Children’s Services Corps attached to local schools could provide the link that is needed for a more comprehensive approach to meeting service needs of individual students that are essential to their learning success. Knowing, understanding and being able to support a child’s personal circumstances while designing educational plans can help teachers better serve students and help students achieve academic success.

An example of the potential of a partnership between education and child welfare is illustrated by a 2008 study conducted in New York City on chronic school absenteeism which concluded that (1) schools in high-poverty districts benefit from strong relationships with community-based organizations providing parent outreach and assistance to families and (2) 50 to 100 schools with high rates of chronic absenteeism in high-poverty districts should be identified to establish “executive-level” partnerships with outside organizations to “put solutions into action.”⁷⁵ Here, the possibility of linking to outside community change initiatives is reiterated. A CSC initiative based in local schools in neighborhoods with high numbers of child welfare cases could help prevent families from direct involvement with public child welfare agencies while supporting children’s ability to attend, learn and succeed in school.

⁷⁴ Public Allies aims to “advance new leadership to strengthen communities, nonprofits and civic participation” by “demonstrating our conviction that everyone *can* lead, and that lasting social change results when citizens of all backgrounds step up, take responsibility, and work together.” For more information, see Public Allies’ website at www.publicallies.org.

⁷⁵ Kim Nauer, Andrew White, and Rajeeve Yerneni. “Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families: Community Strategies to Reverse Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades and Improve Supports for Children and Families.” Center for New York City Affairs, The New School For Management and Urban Policy. (October 2008). 5-6.

Option 5: *Tap into TFA or similar organizations' alumni to identify candidates for child welfare professional recruitment, training, and leadership development.*

The 20,000 individuals who have served as TFA corps members throughout the organization's history are a potential target pool to be recruited to the child welfare workforce for both direct service roles and as pipelines for future leaders. As has been discussed throughout this paper, the TFA mission and messages of social justice and reducing inequity based on race and social class resonates well with the child welfare mission of safety, permanence and well-being for all children and with the priority to identify and reduce racial disproportionality and disparity in treatment, services, and outcomes. While a sizable portion of TFA alumni have remained in the education profession, many leave teaching to explore other careers and some of these young people should be targeted for the child welfare profession. According to Dena Blank, TFA's Vice President for Alumni Affairs, many alumni are motivated to continue in a different aspect of public service. Their greatest motivation comes from knowing they will have the opportunity for "impact." TFA believes its alumni base could create a natural candidate pool for child welfare work and other human service careers. The strength and size of the TFA alumni network may have high payoff for recruiting candidates for graduate social work programs targeted for child welfare workers. The TFA alumni network can also be targeted to identify and develop future workers, supervisors, managers, and leaders for the field.

VI. CONCLUSION

The immediate need to recruit and retain a high-quality child welfare workforce that can meet the expanding needs of the nation's most at risk children and families is not an abstract challenge. The TFA model may offer seeds of hope and practical lessons for success. At the very least, we recommend that the child welfare field incorporate the marketing, recruitment, training, support, and partnership lessons of TFA into their existing work. But we also believe there is evidence to support simultaneously moving forward to pilot-test a Children's Services Corps. Creating a Children's Services Corps provides an opportunity to help ease the child welfare workforce crisis but as important, an opportunity to redefine worker roles and responsibilities, identify and utilize unused talent, create new accountability structures, identify future leaders and provide a greater focus on investment in proven strategies to help children and families. It is our hope that a core group of partners can be attracted to invest in, build on and move forward with this work. The demands for action are urgent and solutions will require a willingness to test new approaches to the longstanding child welfare workforce challenges.

Appendix A Illustrative Text from Selected Research Studies

Below is text from a few selected research studies over the years on child welfare recruitment and retention that illustrate the time and effort devoted to this subject.

- 1960 Children’s Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services issued a report on the child welfare staffing shortages nationwide and urged “aggressive recruitment and retention strategies by the states.”⁷⁶
- 1992 The National Governors’ Association (NGA) issued a report that stated, among other findings, that the majority of frontline employees – social workers, teachers, nurses, counselors, and eligibility workers – who are charged with delivering services have neither the information nor the authority to develop comprehensive solutions to families’ complex problems.⁷⁷
- 2003 A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report highlighted the need to focus on recruitment and retention as child welfare agencies’ difficulties in finding and keeping a competent staff impairs the child welfare system’s ability to perform critical case management functions.⁷⁸

In response to the GAO report, the federal Administration for Children and Youth (ACY) noted that the Agency was beginning to explore the effectiveness of child welfare staff training programs, with an emphasis on lessons learned and best practices.⁷⁹

- 2004 All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, completed the first round of Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), the Congressionally-authorized “new approach to monitoring state child welfare systems,” which measure specific outcomes and systemic factors, including the effectiveness of staff and recruitment and retention. No state was found to be in “substantial conformity” in all the outcome or systemic factors. The performance data availability, however, were not adequate to the management and evaluation needs of programs, leaving child welfare systems without a clear idea where positive results could be identified and validated. States’ subsequent development of their Program Improvement Plans (PIPs), the framework for reform, also yielded little evidence of forward progress.
- 2005 A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that child protection, child welfare, child care, youth services, employment counseling, and juvenile justice workforce is

⁷⁶ “In Search of Staff for Child Welfare.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau. (1960).

⁷⁷ Linda McCart. “Investing in Family Self-Sufficiency.” National Governors’ Association, Human Resources Policy Studies Center for Policy Research. (1992).

⁷⁸ “Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff.” GAO-03-357. U.S. Government Accountability Office. (March 2003).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

insufficiently stable, experienced, trained, paid, supervised, equipped, and valued to do their jobs as effectively or efficiently as they should – or as many of them would wish they could.⁸⁰

- 2005 A study on the private agencies that provide safety services for the Milwaukee County child welfare agency found that worker turnover negatively affects permanency outcomes for children and established a relationship between the number of welfare workers assigned to a child and that child's time in foster care.⁸¹
- 2006 The Government Accountability Office issued another report stating that one of the three most critical issues facing child welfare agencies is recruiting and retaining caseworkers.⁸²
- 2007 The Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Committee on Ways and Means, stated in a public hearing, "There are a number of obstacles that undermine the ability of the child welfare system to ensure safe, nurturing and permanent homes for children in the foster care system. Overcoming these obstacles is critical to achieving positive outcomes for our most vulnerable children. This hearing will be the first step toward reviewing our nation's child welfare system, and its capacity to ensure the safety of children and to provide necessary resources to families in crisis."⁸³
- 2007 In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Committee on Ways and Means, the President and CEO of Casey Family Programs William Bell, testified, "It is documented that dangerously high caseloads severely hinder caseworkers' ability to focus on the health and well-being of children in our care."
- 2007 KIDS COUNT Report, data show more than 700,000 of America's children spend time each year in foster care.⁸⁴ African American children are disproportionately placed in the system and experience a disparity in services.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Advocasey*. (Spring 2004).

⁸¹ Connie Flower, Jess McDonald, Michael Sumski, "Review of Turnover in Milwaukee County Private Agency Child Welfare Ongoing Case Management Staff." (2005). <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/cswe>.

⁸² "Challenges Facing the Child Welfare System." U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2006.

⁸³ Hon. Jim McDermott, Chairman. Congressional Hearings, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, 110th Congress. 2nd Session. (May 15, 2007).

⁸⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation. "KIDS Count Report." (2007).

⁸⁵ "African American Children in Foster Care: HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care." GAO-07-816. U.S. Government Accountability Office. (July 2007).

Other Excerpts from Multiple Studies Over 36 Years

- 1970 “...author determines that frustration and fatigue expressed by social workers had caused 8 of the 12 new workers to leave the agency...”
- 1989 “...report provides summary of problems affecting the child welfare workforce and identifies barriers to recruitment and retention of well-qualified staff...”
- 1990 “...study analyzes turnover data and reports that turnover was especially high for workers in the first year...”
- 1991 “... article focuses on concern about quality service delivery in light of the child welfare workforce crisis...”
- 1993 “...open-ended responses show reasons some students will not work in public child welfare include the work being too difficult, risks too great, fear of burnout...”
- 1995 “...agreement between administrators and policymakers that the current child welfare system is plagued with multiple problems...”
- 1996 “...pressing need to develop national movement to re-professionalize child welfare; urgency is amplified by changing context of complex problems child welfare workers must address...”
- 1997 “...barriers to effective child protective services identified as growing caseloads, increasingly complex social problems underlying child maltreatment, and on-going systemic weaknesses in day-to-day operations, including difficulty in maintaining a skilled workforce...”
- 1998 “...child welfare caseworkers routinely deal with high levels of risk; more than 70 percent of frontline caseworkers are victims of violence or threats of violence leading to a loss of agency workers...”
- 2000 “...paper highlights the child welfare workforce crisis and problems of recruitment and retention...”
- 2001 “...study gathers data on workforce challenges in child welfare and effective recruiting and retention practices...”
- 2002 “...national meeting identifies need to strengthen the child welfare workforce...”

	<p>“...study notes promotions from within coupled with an upgrade in skills may also be a solution to the [child welfare] workforce crisis...”</p> <p>“...research tries to answer question of what researchers can do to combat the child welfare workforce crisis...”</p>
2003	<p>“...study of recruitment and retention in child welfare illustrates that agencies face a number of challenges in recruiting and retaining workers and supervisors...”</p> <p>“...findings indicate there is a serious concern about the human service workforce...”</p>
2004	<p>“...study explores workforce crisis plaguing children and family services; highlights need for renewed focus on frontline workers....”</p>
2005	<p>“...study recommends creating structures to more systematically study workforce issues and rigorously evaluate recruitment and retention strategies [that are] launched....”</p> <p>“...review reinforces that to address recruitment and retention problems, there is no one answer....”</p>
2006	<p>GAO Report on Disproportionality finds disproportionate number of children of color in child welfare system and disparities in the services they receive...</p>

In addition, listed below is a sampling of sections of Children’s Bureau child welfare training grants provided to address child welfare recruitment and retention (2003-2008).

“...among project goals, training facilitators will train teams to use a turnover prevention inventory, research briefs on recruitment and retention...”

“...project is anticipated to show that a more competent and stable workforce will ultimately benefit children and families, as low staff turnover is a factor in improved outcomes for children and families...”

“...proposal to create a curriculum and training initiative that targets recruitment and retention of child welfare staff in response to troubling turnover rates, replacing child welfare staff members who accept early retirement, and the need to expand the workforce to achieve Child and Family Services Review standards...”

“...materials developed aimed to impact the child welfare workforce crisis, specifically improving worker recruitment and retention, especially professionals of color...”

All of the above referenced studies represent a mere fraction of completed studies on the challenges of child welfare recruitment and retention.

Appendix B
Teach For America Regions⁸⁶

Atlanta	Las Vegas Valley
Baltimore	Los Angeles
Bay Area	Memphis
Charlotte	Miami-Dade
Chicago	Mid-Atlantic
Colorado	Milwaukee
Connecticut	Mississippi Delta
Dallas	Nashville
D.C. Region	New Mexico
Eastern North Carolina	Newark
Greater Boston	New York
Greater New Orleans	Phoenix
Greater Philadelphia-Camden	Rio Grande Valley
Hawai'i	South Dakota
Houston	South Louisiana
Indianapolis	St. Louis
Jacksonville	Tulsa
Kansas City	Twin Cities

⁸⁶ Teach For America: Regions. <http://www.teachforamerica.org/about/regions/index.htm>. [Retrieved July 7, 2009].

Appendix C Research Studies on Teach For America

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) completed a brief summary of five studies that include data on Teach For America, three of which were published in peer-reviewed journals. The summaries follow.⁸⁷

1. Laczko-Kerr, I., and Berliner, D. (2002). The effectiveness of Teach For America and other under-certified teachers on student academic achievement: A case of harmful public policy. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 10 (37).

<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n37>.

This study compared student achievement for 110 matched pairs of recently hired under-certified and certified teachers from five low-income school districts in Arizona. Elementary teachers whose students took the mandated state achievement test (3rd grade and above) were matched within schools and districts according to the teachers' grade level and highest degree. The study found that 1) students of certified teachers significantly out-performed students of teachers who were under-certified on all three subtests of the SAT9 – reading, mathematics and language arts; and 2) students of TFA teachers did not perform significantly different from students of other under-certified teachers.

2. Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D., Garlin, S.J., and Heilig, J.V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach For America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13 (42).

<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n42>.

This study reviewed achievement test data (the TAAS, SAT9, and Aprenda for Spanish-speaking students) in reading and mathematics for over 132,000 students and 4,400 teachers in grades 3-5 over six years in Houston, Texas. Controlling for various factors, the study found that certified teachers consistently produced significantly stronger student achievement gains than uncertified teachers (including Teach For America teachers). TFA teachers' effectiveness improved as they became more prepared, but few of them stayed in the district. On average, over the years studied, 69 percent of TFA teachers left by the end of their second year of teaching, and 88 percent left by the end of their third year.

3. Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., and Wykoff, J. (2006). How changes in entry requirements alter the teacher workforce and affect student achievement. *Education Finance and Policy*, 1 (2): 176-216.

This study examined the effectiveness of 3,766 new teachers who entered teaching in grades 4-8 through different pathways in New York City. The study found that, compared to students of

⁸⁷ National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.
<http://www.ncate.org/documents/research/TFAResearchSummary.pdf>.

new teachers who graduated from teacher education programs, students of new TFA recruits scored significantly lower in reading/language arts and about the same in mathematics (worse in grades 4-5 and better in grades 6-8). These results were similar to those of other teachers from non-traditional routes, including the New York Teaching Fellows, temporary license holders, and teachers from out of the country.

Like the Houston study, TFA teachers' effectiveness generally improved as they became more prepared. By the second year, when most are certified, the negative effects disappeared for elementary math and middle school reading. However, TFA teachers continued to exert a significant negative influence on their students' reading scores. By their third year, the effect was still negative but not statistically significant. Also like the Houston study, Boyd, et al. found that most TFA teachers left after their second year of teaching. By year three, 73 percent of TFA teachers had left, and by year four 85 percent had left, compared to approximately 50 percent of other non-traditional entrants and 37 percent of college prepared teachers.

4. Kane, T.E., Rockoff, J.E., and Staiger, D.O (March 2006). *What does certification tell us about teacher effectiveness? Evidence from New York City. Working Paper 11844* (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.)

Using the same database as Boyd and colleagues New York City study, Kane et al. compared entrants into New York City schools by different categories of initial pathway and certification status. This study found that in math and reading, students of first year teachers did worse than those first year teachers who were regularly certified. The authors included teachers licensed through "transcript review" and temporary permits in the same group as college-prepared teachers, thus minimizing the effect of teacher preparation.

The study also found that the negative effects were generally reduced or eliminated in math as teachers finished their training and certification and gained experience. However, in reading, the initially uncertified groups of teachers continued to have a negative effect for all three years (for Teaching Fellows and other uncertified teachers), and for two of the three years (for TFA). Like the other study, very high attrition rates were found. By year four, close to 90 percent of TFA recruits were gone, close to 60 percent of other uncertified teachers were gone, about 50 percent of NYC Teaching Fellows were gone, and just over 40 percent of "regular certified" teachers were gone.

5. Decker, P.T., Mayer, D.P., and Glazerman, S. (2004). *The Effects of Teach For America on Students: Findings from a National Evaluation*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

This study compared the academic gains of students taught by Teach For America corps members with the gains of similar students taught by other teachers, both new and veteran, in the same schools and grades. The study, which used a random assignment design, most sought to answer the question, Do TFA teachers improve (or at least not harm) student outcomes relative to what would have happened in their absence? The study had a number of interesting

findings. From the perspective of TFA, the findings clearly show that the organization is making progress toward its primary mission of reducing inequities in education – it supplies low-income schools with academically talented teachers who contribute to the academic achievement of their students. The success of TFA teachers is not dependent on their having extensive exposure to prior teacher practice or training. Even though TFA teachers generally lack any formal teacher training beyond that provided by TFA, they produce higher student test scores than the other teachers in their schools – not just other novice teachers or uncertified teachers, but also veterans and certified teachers.

The work, conducted Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., however, is the only impact study completed to date. The results show that students of Teach For America teachers outscored their schoolmates on math achievement tests and matched their average performance in reading. In a survey conducted by the research firm Policy Studies Associates, 93 percent of principals who manage Teach For America teachers report a high level of satisfaction with them, including that they are well prepared and that they have a significant and positive impact on their schools and on student achievement. Sixty-one percent regard Teach For America teachers as more effective compared with other beginning teachers in their schools with respect to their impact on student achievement.

6. **Xu, Z., Hannaway, J., and Taylor, C. (2008). *Making a Difference?: The Effects of Teach for America in High School*. Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, the Urban Institute. <http://www.CALDERcenter.org>**

This study, conducted by the Urban Institute’s CALDER Research Center, reviewed the impact of TFA corps members on high school students. Researchers analyzed North Carolina student exam data from 2000-2006 to examine differences between the impact on student achievement of TFA corps members and other comparison groups composed of non-TFA corps teachers. The study found that TFA corps members have a positive effect on student achievement relative to other teachers, including those who are fully certified in their subject areas. The incremental impact of having a TFA corps member was three times the incremental impact of having a teacher with three or more years of experience, especially in math and science. The authors of the study noted that the findings do not necessarily mean that there is no value to teacher training. They concluded that it was possible that the teachers that TFA recruits and selects would be even more effective with pedagogical training.

Appendix D Reference List

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