

National Association  
of Counsel for Children

# Child Welfare Law Specialist Evaluation

## Final Report

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## Abstract

This evaluation report assesses the impact of the National Association of Counsel for Children’s (NACC’s) Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) certification, using a mixed-methods, participatory action research (PAR) approach. The study engaged 333 child welfare professionals (139 CWLS, 148 non-certified, 46 in qualitative interviews) and centered lived experience perspectives in both design and interpretation. Quantitative and qualitative analyses examined the certification’s influence on representation quality, training, compensation, specialization, and diversity.

The CWLS credential was associated with several advantages. Certified professionals had more years of experience, were more likely to specialize solely in child, parent, or agency representation, and were more often trained through national organizations. CWLS attorneys earned higher incomes in both child welfare and other areas of legal practice, with 51.6% earning above \$100,000 compared to 43.9% of non-certified peers. They also demonstrated more consistent and higher performance across procedural and statutory advocacy skills.

Analyses of 23 quality indicators showed that CWLS scored higher on 12 indicators, including filing appeals and applying knowledge of child development to their legal advocacy. A five-factor model of representation quality—comprising Advocacy and Procedural Competence, Legal Knowledge, Client-Centered Communication, Individualized Case Planning, and Holistic Approaches—revealed that CWLS outperformed in four of the five domains. However, non-certified professionals scored slightly higher than CWLS on client-centered communication, highlighting an opportunity for enhanced focus on relational and communication skills in the credentialing process.

Despite its strengths, the CWLS program showed lower racial and ethnic diversity compared to non-certified peers, underscoring potential accessibility barriers. The report recommends expanding outreach, emphasizing client-centeredness in skill development, and addressing equity gaps in certification access.

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## Executive Summary

As the CWLS certification program neared 20 years of activity and expansion, NACC enlisted the assistance of an evaluation team led by Dr. Stef Sloan, founder of the Participatory Action Research Collective (PARC), to conduct an extensive study on the program's effectiveness and impact. This evaluation rested on prior work conducted in 2023 by Dr. Sloan pertaining to the development of a logic model (see Figure 1), conducting an equity audit of the CWLS program, and the design of this evaluation. The primary evaluation methods included a detailed survey and focus group analyses. A total of 139 CWLS and 148 non-certified child welfare law professionals responded to the evaluation survey, with an additional 25 CWLS and 21 non-certified individuals participating in focus groups and interviews. Evaluation findings are accompanied by two additional complementary reports — the *Methodological & Technical Report* and the *Lived Expertise Data Report*.

## Demographics

Survey demographic data showed meaningful differences between the CWLS and non-certified groups, including:

### Professional Characteristics

- On average, CWLS attorneys have been in the field longer than those in the non-certified group.  
*What It Means* — The CWLS credential might be more enticing to those who have been in the field longer or it might be serving to retain child welfare law professionals in the field.
- The CWLS group included more judges and/or judicial officers compared to the non-certified group.  
*What It Means* — The CWLS credential might promote career advancement in the direction of holding judicial positions or certification is sought by those in judicial positions as a valuable credential.
- There were more non-certified professionals in an administrative or supervisory role compared to the CWLS group.  
*What It Means* — Administrative or supervisory career advancement is likely not hindered by the absence of the CWLS credential.
- CWLS are more likely to receive training from national sources and from a broader variety of training avenues compared to non-certified child welfare law professionals who were more likely to report receiving in-house training.  
*What It Means* — The CWLS credential might promote access to a broader array of training opportunities and facilitate continuing education at both the local and national levels.
- CWLS were more likely to specialize in representing only children, only parents, or only the agency, whereas non-certified attorneys were more likely to represent both parents and children within their practice.  
*What It Means* — The CWLS credential might promote representation specialization, allowing attorneys to focus on representing one population rather than being spread across serving multiple populations.
- There were slightly more CWLS representing child welfare agencies than in the non-certified group.  
*What It Means* — The CWLS credential might facilitate access to positions representing the child welfare agency.

### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- The CWLS group was less racially and ethnically diverse than non-certified group, particularly in representation of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and mixed race/ethnicity child welfare attorneys.  
*What It Means* — The CWLS credential might be less appealing or accessible to racially and ethnically diverse child welfare law professionals.

## Disability Status

- There are similar rates of those who indicated that they have a disability across CWLS and non-certified groups.
  - What It Means* — Child welfare law professionals with disabilities are effectively accessing and obtaining the credential and that efforts to make the credential accessible to those with disabilities are successful.

## Compensation

- CWLS are more likely to earn higher incomes for child welfare representation and for other types of law.
  - What It Means* — The credential appears to be associated with increased earning potential, not only for child welfare law, but also for other types of law.

## Quality Indicator Statistical Analyses

Statistical analyses of representation quality indicators showed the following differences:

- CWLS had higher average scores on 12 out of 23 quality indicators, specifically across legal advocacy and statutory expertise skills.
  - There were no group differences for 4 of the 23 quality indicators, and for 7 of the 23 indicators, non-certified attorneys had higher average scores.
    - What It Means* — CWLS had higher average scores for almost half of all quality indicators, which highlights a potential advantage of the credential in strengthening representation quality.
- Across quality indicators, CWLS law professionals had more consistent scoring patterns overall, as compared to non-certified professionals that had more variability and fluctuation in scoring patterns.
  - What It Means* — The CWLS credential has potential to yield greater consistency in child welfare representation.
- CWLS demonstrated statistically higher scores in the areas of filing appeals (or referring cases out for appeal) and applying knowledge of child development in legal advocacy, as compared to non-certified attorneys.
  - There were no statistically significant group differences on individual quality indicators in favor of the non-certified group.
    - What It Means* — The CWLS credential can increase knowledge related to child development and filing appeals and promotes the incorporation of such knowledge into practice.
- For three of the five best predictors of overall quality using regression analysis, the CWLS group scored significantly higher than non-certified attorneys, specifically in the areas of discussing mental health evaluations, advocating for supports and accommodations, and referencing statutes and case law in oral advocacy. Group differences in the other two best predictors of overall quality, namely helping clients understand the reasons behind decisions and advocating for individualized case plans, were not statistically significant.
  - The non-certified group scored higher in translating client wishes to legal advocacy and telling the story from the client's point of view; however, these variables were weak in their prediction of overall quality and thus not included in the top five predictors.
    - What It Means* — The CWLS credential has a demonstrable impact on some indicators of quality, particularly those related to procedural and statutory advocacy, but non-certified professionals demonstrate advantages with client-centered skills. Given that the CWLS exam does not measure communication skills, this finding could suggest an opportunity for more emphasis on skills such as ascertaining and infusing client wishes into legal advocacy.

- With the five-factor model of representation quality using regression and factor analysis, CWLS scored higher in four of the five quality categories: Advocacy and procedural competence, legal knowledge and statutory expertise, individualized case planning, and holistic approaches.
  - Consistent with prior analyses using regression and factor analysis, the non-certified group scored better on client-centered communication that included quality indicators of translating client wishes into legal advocacy and helping clients understand the reasons behind decisions.

***What It Means*** — Repeated analyses highlighted the impact of the CWLS credential on a variety of quality indicators, yet there seems to be more emphasis amongst the non-certified group to use and apply certain client-centered approaches.

## Background/Purpose

Bringing the CWLS certification program from an idea to a reality was made possible by the vision and commitment of NACC staff and now-Emeritus Board members including Professor Don Duquette, Christopher Wu, Marvin Ventrell, and Daniel Trujillo. As this evaluation reveals, their many years of effort to establish and then seek recognition and funding for this credential have positively influenced the field and the experience of legal representation for children and families. As a result of these dedicated efforts, in 2001, the American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on Specialization recognized, for the first time, that child welfare law is a distinct specialty area of legal practice:

*“Child Welfare Law is the practice of law representing children, parents, or the government in all child protection proceedings including emergency, temporary custody, adjudication, disposition, foster care, permanency planning, termination, guardianship, and adoption. Child Welfare Law does not include representation in private child custody and adoptions disputes where the state is not a party. Lawyers certified in Child Welfare Law must be knowledgeable in the state and Federal laws applicable to child protection and foster care. A specialist must also understand relevant principles from child development and psychology regarding individual and family dynamics and appropriate treatment modalities for child abuse and neglect and be capable of recognizing the professional responsibility and ethical issues that arise out of the client’s status. Lawyers certified in Child Welfare Law should also be proficient in the skills of interviewing and counseling child clients.”*

A 2003 grant from the U.S. Children’s Bureau helped NACC pilot the first ever ABA-accredited national attorney certification for this sector. Following the pilot, NACC certified its first class of Child Welfare Law Specialists (CWLS) in 2006. Today, it continues to oversee this process, which includes managing certifications and recertifications, and ensuring credential quality standards. From 2006 to 2024, the population of CWLS has grown to over 600.

Today, the CWLS program continues to strive to meet its founding purpose: to enhance the quality of legal representation and competency in child welfare cases, and in turn, improve outcomes for children and families who encounter the child welfare system. The certification serves as an avenue for professional advancement in the field of child welfare law, and maintains child welfare law as a complex and highly specialized practice. Obtaining the CWLS credential requires an initial application phase during which multiple eligibility and application components are collected and verified including: A resume/CV detailing substantial involvement in the field, showing at least three years practicing law and that at least 30% of each of the three years prior to application were spent specifically on child welfare law; a demonstration of continuing legal education in the field; submission of a writing sample that demonstrates legal analysis; submission of good standing and disciplinary history documentation; and receiving favorable reviews from at least four attorneys and a judicial officer. (In most states NACC may also certify attorneys who have chosen instead to work in this field as judicial officers, law faculty, law firm directors/executives, or policy advocates.) The initial application phase is then followed by a comprehensive written examination based on NACC’s publication, *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and Agencies in Neglect, Abuse, and Dependency Cases*, more commonly referred to as the Red Book.

The recertification process occurs every five years, as CWLS re-apply to maintain the credential (no re-examination or writing sample are required for recertification). Costs associated with the credential include the application fee (\$400 for NACC members; \$525 for non-members) which includes the exam as well as a copy

of the Red Book; an annual renewal fee of \$120, and \$300 for the recertification process every five years. The credential is available to child welfare professionals in all jurisdictions, excluding Maine, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

As the CWLS certification neared 20 years of activity and expansion, NACC enlisted the assistance of an evaluation team led by Dr. Stef Sloan, founder of the Participatory Action Research Collective (PARC), to conduct an extensive study on its effectiveness and impact. PARC specializes in mixed-methods participatory action research (PAR) approaches to evaluation and research, with a focus on child welfare, courts, child maltreatment prevention, and family well-being. (See Appendix A for more information about PARC.) The evaluation rested on prior evaluation work conducted in 2023 by Dr. Sloan pertaining to the development of a logic model (see Figure 1), conducting an equity audit of the CWLS program, and the design of this evaluation.

# CWLS Logic Model

FIGURE 1: Child Welfare Law Specialist program logic model

INPUTS		OUTCOMES			EVALUATION METRICS
Who We Impact	Individual	Systems	Equity-Centered	Measuring Success	
<b>NACC's Mission</b> NACC advances children's and parents' rights by supporting a diverse, inclusive community of child welfare lawyers to provide zealous legal representation and by advocating for equitable, anti-racist solutions co-designed by people with lived experience.	<b>CHILDREN, PARENTS, &amp; FAMILIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger families with more protective factors</li> <li>Increased access to high-quality representation (i.e., more experienced legal advocates, less turnover of professionals assigned to case) across all stages of a case</li> <li>Increased access to justice and due process within child welfare proceedings</li> <li>Increased client awareness of rights and enhanced self-efficacy</li> <li>Increased perceptions of procedural justice</li> <li>Increased safety for children, permanency, stability, and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased removals, increased reunifications, and increased prioritization of family integrity</li> <li>Increased wellbeing during across childhood and through the transition to adulthood</li> <li>Increased access to basic needs and concrete supports (public benefits, housing, food, medical care, etc.)</li> <li>Increased family and community stability for children and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased access to gender-affirming and culturally responsive representation</li> <li>Improved child welfare outcomes for Black and Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ children and families</li> <li>Increased access to cultural humility</li> <li>Increased engagement of youth and parent voice as foundation for co-design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>positive perceptions of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>youth-centered representation</li> <li>procedural justice</li> <li>cultural humility in representation</li> </ul> </li> <li>engagement of child and parent voice and/or perspective within and across legal proceedings</li> <li><b>knowledge</b> of legal and procedural rights</li> <li>prioritization of family integrity and permanency in advocacy</li> <li>safety and wellbeing</li> </ul>	
	<b>CWLS Certification Program Resources and Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leveraging certification to foster professional specialization, recognition, and standards for high-quality child welfare representation</li> <li>Exam preparation and certification-specific knowledge building</li> <li>Credential management, oversight, quality assurance, and infrastructure management (recordkeeping, testing, etc.)</li> </ul>	<b>ATTORNEYS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased child welfare law professional competency</li> <li>Increased number of certified attorneys</li> <li>Increased professional success and growth</li> <li>Increased retention and tenure in the workforce</li> <li>Increased value and recognition of high-quality representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded workforce of skilled attorneys</li> <li>Increased professional value of high-quality representation and specialized credentials</li> <li>Increased retention of child welfare lawyers</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased cultural humility, knowledge, and competency</li> <li>Increased access to growth, development, and compensation opportunities</li> <li>Increased diversity and representation within the field of child welfare law</li> <li>Increased ability to challenge racism and discrimination</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Organizational Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child welfare law continuing education, technical assistance, and training</li> <li>Annual child welfare law conferences</li> <li>Membership, national professional networks, and state-specific networking</li> <li>Policy and systems change efforts, strategy, and cross-systems advocacy</li> <li>Youth engagement and National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation (NACCLR)</li> <li>Educational and advocacy publications</li> </ul>	<b>JUDGES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More effective case proceedings</li> <li>Higher quality judicial decision-making</li> <li>Improved procedural functioning</li> <li>More briefing of issues and application of law to facts</li> <li>Better adherence to Federal law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased recognition of client-directed representation as the preferred model</li> <li>Decreased backlog</li> <li>Improved court processes for child welfare involved children and families</li> <li>Culture and values shift related to the importance of high-quality child representation</li> <li>Increased value of youth and parent voice in court proceedings</li> <li>Better preservation of appealable issues and better case law to guide judicial decision-making</li> <li>Increased awareness of institutional rights during case proceedings</li> <li>Improved child welfare system decision making across individual cases</li> <li>Improved legal service delivery systems</li> <li>Reduced removals and placements into care</li> <li>Increased awareness of child's rights and Federal law</li> <li>Increased investment of state and federal funds toward promoting and supporting child welfare law specialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased cultural humility, knowledge, and competency across judicial proceedings and decision-making</li> <li>Judicial decision-making that aims to reduce racial disproportionality in the child welfare system</li> <li>Increased value of co-designed, youth and family voice-led advancements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>knowledge</b> of child welfare best practices and cultural humility:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>judge representation amongst CWLS professionals</li> <li>judge attendance at NACC training events, conferences, webinars, etc.</li> <li>judicial awareness of children's rights</li> </ul> </li> <li>judicial <b>behavior</b> that reflects child welfare best practices and cultural humility                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>judicial decision-making and engagement</li> <li>case resolutions</li> <li>hearing quality</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>court capacity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effective and efficient court processes</li> <li>court backlog and burden</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>CHILD WELFARE AGENCY &amp; SYSTEM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More efficient resources dedicated to case resolution</li> <li>Increased child and family safety, permanency, and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased racial disparities and overrepresentation in the child welfare system</li> <li>Increased application of cultural humility across the child welfare domain</li> <li>Increased value of youth and parent voice across child welfare systems change efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased racial disparities and overrepresentation in the child welfare system</li> <li>Increased application of cultural humility across the child welfare domain</li> <li>Increased value of youth and parent voice across child welfare systems change efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>child welfare professional law awareness of procedural rights</li> <li>accountability for ensuring family integrity and child-centered decision-making</li> <li>agency solutions tailored to the individual needs of the child</li> <li>team collaboration centering individualized needs of the child (ren)</li> <li>child removal rates and racial disproportionality in jurisdictions adequately served by certified attorneys</li> </ul>		

## Evaluation Approach

### Evaluation Goals and Aims

In alignment with the CWLS program’s logic model, evaluation activities were designed to measure efficacy and impact related to the certification’s role in promoting professional specialization, standards for high-quality child welfare representation, and child and parent impacts of CWLS-facilitated representation. The evaluation also explored the impact of the certification on outcomes as related to youth, parents, and families, the broader professional landscape, judicial decision-making, and systemic impacts on the child welfare and justice systems. To better understand the unique impact of the CWLS certification, the evaluation utilized a comparison group of non-CWLS attorneys across all data collection efforts.

The CWLS evaluation considered a variety of potential outcomes and hypotheses of the credential, and considered individual, systems, and equity-centered impacts. The following section outlines the outcomes and hypotheses considered by population.

#### LOGIC MODEL OUTCOMES — CLIENTS: YOUTH AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

TABLE 1: Logic model outcomes and hypotheses explored for youth and parents/caregivers

Individual	Systems	Equity-Centered	Hypotheses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger families</li> <li>• Increased access to high-quality legal representation across all stages of a case</li> <li>• Increased access to justice and due process within child welfare proceedings</li> <li>• Increased client awareness of rights and enhanced self-efficacy</li> <li>• Increased perceptions of procedural justice</li> <li>• Increased safety for children, permanency, stability, and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased removals, increased reunifications, and increased prioritization of family integrity</li> <li>• Increased wellbeing across childhood and through the transition to adulthood</li> <li>• Increased access to basic needs and concrete supports (public benefits, housing, food, medical care, etc.)</li> <li>• Increased family and community stability for children and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to culturally responsive representation</li> <li>• Improved child welfare outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQIA+ children and parents</li> <li>• Increased access to practices of cultural humility</li> <li>• Increased engagement of youth and parent voice as the foundation for co-design</li> </ul>	<p>Children, parents, and families who experience representation from a CWLS attorney will experience increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive perceptions of child welfare legal proceedings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Youth-centered representation</li> <li>◦ Perceptions of procedural justice</li> <li>◦ Access to cultural humility in representation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Engagement of child and parent voice and perspective within and across legal proceedings</li> <li>• Knowledge of legal and procedural rights</li> <li>• Prioritization of family integrity and permanency in advocacy</li> <li>• Positive perceptions of safety, permanency, stability, and wellbeing</li> </ul>

## LOGIC MODEL OUTCOMES — CHILD WELFARE ATTORNEYS

TABLE 2: Logic model outcomes and hypotheses explored for child welfare law attorneys

Individual	Systems	Equity-Centered	Hypotheses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased child welfare law professional competency</li> <li>• Increased number of certified attorneys</li> <li>• Increased professional success and growth</li> <li>• Increased retention and tenure in the workforce</li> <li>• Increased value and recognition of high-quality representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded workforce of skilled attorneys</li> <li>• Increased professional value of high-quality representation and specialized credentials</li> <li>• Increased retention of child welfare lawyers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased cultural humility, knowledge, and competency</li> <li>• Increased access to growth, development, and compensation opportunities</li> <li>• Increased diversity and representation within the field of child welfare law</li> <li>• Increased ability to challenge racism and discrimination</li> </ul>	<p>CWLS attorneys and the child welfare law discipline will experience increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge across core competencies and cultural humility skills</li> <li>• Behavior that reflects cultural humility skills:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Advocacy for client's cultural practices</li> <li>◦ Engagement in reflexivity and peer consultation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Behavior that reflects core competencies and child-centered practices</li> <li>• Compensation and upward mobility options at the state and local levels for CWLS</li> <li>• National and state CWLS attorney prevalence</li> <li>• Diversity amongst CWLS attorneys</li> <li>• Retention rates of child welfare attorneys</li> </ul>

## Evaluation Methods

### Participatory Action Research (PAR) Approach

Participatory Action Research approaches prioritize the perspectives and experiences of individuals most impacted by the programs, services, and systems. PAR methods are intended to promote equity and power-sharing amongst participants and collaborative meaning-making and framing of evaluation findings.

There are numerous perspectives to consider in the evaluation of the CWLS credential, including clients, attorneys, peer advocates, judges, agency staff (e.g., case managers, investigators, agency attorneys, administration), community-based service providers, and individuals from inter-connected systems. While perspectives are likely to differ between and among these groups, PAR methods help make sense of the data and anchor narratives in the perspectives of those most impacted (i.e., Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, LGBTQIA+ individuals, those impacted by poverty and/or domestic violence).

For this study, the evaluation team sought to include a variety of voices and perspectives yet root all aspects of the evaluation in the convergent voices of youth and parents/caregivers. This evaluation centered those with child welfare system lived expertise in a number of ways, including:

1. Engaging in co-design with NACC's *National Advisory Council on Children's Legal Representation* (NACCLR) by identifying, discussing, and defining key evaluation constructs and research questions;
2. Engaging in bi-weekly collaboration with an evaluation oversight team consisting of an NACCLR member, NACC staff, and a Casey Family Programs representative;
3. Engaging individuals with lived expertise in all data collection efforts, both qualitative and quantitative;
4. Engaging individuals with lived expertise in meaning making of evaluation results; and
5. Retaining individuals with child welfare system lived expertise as primary researchers for the study.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods, participatory action research approach, meaning that quantitative and qualitative data were used. As such, participatory visual approaches served as the evaluation anchor and functioned as an opportunity for co-design and collaboration with youth and families who have experienced child welfare legal proceedings. Upon collection of all data types, the research team then synthesized, analyzed, and triangulated all quantitative, qualitative, and visual data.

Participatory and qualitative approaches consisted of:

- Ripple Effects Mapping (four virtual sessions) — A visual participatory approach (see Appendix B for a description of the method)
- Qualitative interviews
- Qualitative virtual focus groups

Quantitative approaches consisted of:

- Quasi-experimental case comparison approach
- Survey data collection and analyses
- Independent T-Tests
- Regression analyses
- Exploratory Factor Analyses

## Lived Expertise Methods and Approach

A total of 416 youth and parents with child welfare system lived expertise were engaged using Ripple Effects Mapping (REM), qualitative interviews, and surveys between May and October 2024. REM was used to generate qualitative insight about experiences and challenges with child welfare legal representation, while also generating data that heavily informed the development of the lived expertise and law professional surveys. An in-depth description of the lived expertise sampling approach, methods, and results can be found in the *Lived Expertise Data Report* and the *Methodological & Technical Report*.

## Law Professional Methods and Approach

A total of 333 law professionals were also engaged in the evaluation using REM, qualitative interviews, and surveys across seven months in 2024. REM and qualitative interview data were used to provide more detail about survey findings, particularly related to examining potential explanations for group differences. Further information about law professional sampling approach, methods, and results can be found in the *Methodological & Technical Report*.

The following table provides an overview of analytic approaches based on data type:

### ANALYTIC APPROACH

TABLE 3: Analytic approach by data type

Data Type	Collection Approach	Analytic Approach
Participatory, qualitative, visual	Ripple Effects Mapping focus groups	Thematic Analysis
	Qualitative interviews	
Participatory, qualitative	Traditionally facilitated focus groups	
Quantitative	Descriptive survey: Lived Expertise	Demographics Descriptive statistics
	Quasi-experimental case comparison design:	Demographics Descriptive statistics
	Law Professional Surveys	Independent T-Tests Regression analyses Factor analysis

## Institutional Review Board Procedures and Oversight

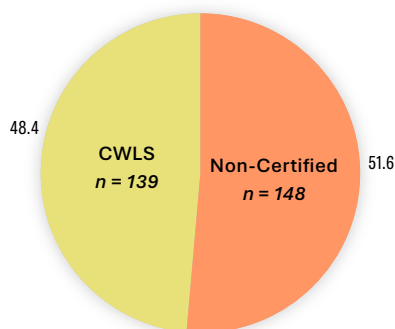
Given that the study utilized human subjects, including those who were likely to have had adverse and traumatic experiences with the child welfare system, great care was taken to ensure that best practices were utilized for the protection of human subjects. An Institutional Review Board was enlisted to provide review, approval, and oversight to all evaluation study practices and protocol. The evaluation study was determined to meet minimal risk requirements in accordance with 21 CFR 56.110 and 45 CFR 46.110 under the research Category 6 and Category 7. (See Appendix C for IRB approval documentation.)

## Law Professional Participant Demographics

### Child Welfare Law Professional Sample

The total law professional sample was comprised of survey participants and qualitative participants (i.e., focus groups and interviews). To maintain anonymity of qualitative participants, demographics are reflective of survey participants only.

FIGURE 2: Law Professional survey sample



The following table details all law professional participants by type of engagement, and total participation rates.

### LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANTS

TABLE 4: Law professional evaluation study participants

Type of Engagement	CWLS	Non-Certified	Total
Qualitative (Focus Groups/Interviews)	25	21	46
Quantitative (Survey)	139	148	287
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>333</b>

## Professional Characteristics

### Role in the Field

Law professionals were asked about their profession in a screening question, in which they were asked to identify whether they worked as a child welfare lawyer, a judge presiding over child welfare cases, or in a field related to child welfare law. For those who did not meet those three criteria, there was an option of selecting “no” which terminated the survey. Individuals who indicated their profession as lawyer, judge, or in field related to child welfare law, were invited to proceed with the survey. Upon providing informed consent, participants were asked to indicate their profession by selecting “attorney,” “judge,” or “other.” Participants were able to select more than one option.

**ROLE<sup>1</sup>****TABLE 5:** *Child welfare law professional survey responses to “Role”*

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Attorney	121	87.05	131	88.51
Judge	12	8.63	5	3.39
Other	6	4.32	14	9.46
Missing	0	0	3	2.03

There were relative role similarities for CWLS and non-certified law professional groups, however over double the rate of CWLS identified the role of “Judge”, as compared to non-certified professionals, and slightly more non-certified professionals identified their role as “Field related to child welfare” in the screening question or “other” in the role question. CWLS who indicated their role as “other,” described their profession as CIP Director, consultant, director of a law firm, and court staff attorney. For non-certified attorneys, there was considerably more variation in responses within the “other” category, including CASA, child welfare state agency, educator, law professor, court administration, and advocacy organization.

**Who They Represent**

Participants were asked to describe the populations they represented, if applicable. CWLS and non-certified samples were largely similar, with slightly more CWLS representing child welfare agencies as compared to non-certified professionals, and considerably more non-certified professionals representing a mixed case-load of parents and children. This could indicate that the CWLS credential supports client specialization or being able to concentrate one’s efforts in representing a specific population. More CWLS representing the agency could indicate that the credential supports that specific career pathway.

**REPRESENTATION<sup>2</sup>****TABLE 6:** *Child welfare law professional responses to who they represent*

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Parents	10	7.19	8	5.41
Children	33	23.74	35	23.65
Parents and children	8	5.76	21	14.19
Kinship caregivers	13	9.35	13	8.78
Child welfare agency	40	28.78	34	22.97
Someone else	12	8.63	12	8.11
Missing	18	12.95	18	12.16

For those who indicated that they represent “someone else,” respondents indicated other types of work, including:

- 1 Participants were able to select more than one role, and therefore total counts will exceed the number of respondents counted for this item.
- 2 Participants were able to select more than one role, and therefore total counts will exceed the number of respondents counted for this item.

- Policy attorney
- Unrelated caregivers
- Judicial staff attorney
- State education agency representation
- Foster parent representation
- Law enforcement
- Policy attorney
- Tribal representation
- Administrative role only

## Practice Type

While there were similarities across CWLS and non-certified professionals working in a law firm/organization and as a solo practitioner, significantly more non-certified attorneys indicated working in an administrative or supervisory role than that of CWLS. Similar to prior questions, more CWLS indicated serving as a judge or judicial officer than non-certified professionals. The number of those who reported serving as a judicial officer in this question also differed from the reported Role, which could indicate a distinction between “judicial officer” and “judge.”

### PRACTICE TYPE<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 7: Child welfare law professional responses to primary types of practice they engage in

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Law practice, organization, or agency	78	56.12	82	55.41
Solo practitioner	28	20.14	23	15.54
Judicial officer	10	7.19	1	0.68
Administrative or supervisory role	4	2.88	15	10.14
Policy or academic position	3	2.16	5	3.38
Other	7	5.04	12	8.11
Missing	9	6.74	10	6.71

Write-in responses in the “other” category included law school legal clinic, nonprofit agency, county or district attorney’s office, government, and public defender.

*Public defender* was not an explicit option within the survey, yet qualitative data suggest that this was a missed opportunity. Several qualitative child welfare law professional participants indicated that their jurisdiction used the public defender model and that their caseload reflected equal portions of child welfare and criminal cases. Of those public defenders who participated in qualitative interviews ( $n = 4$ ), they were not certified and were unlikely to be familiar with the CWLS credential.

## Length of Practice

Omitting missing data, the average length of practice for child welfare professionals who have obtained their CWLS is 18.78 years, as compared to 14.80 years for non-certified respondents. For the populations of those

3 Participants were able to select more than one role, and therefore total counts will exceed the number of respondents counted for this item.

reached by this survey, CWLS have more years of experience as compared to non-certified child welfare law professionals. Given that the CWLS credential requires having practiced for a minimum of three years to obtain the credential, length of practice was examined by range, indicating some group differences. Even after accounting for non-certified attorneys ineligible for obtaining certification (n = 12, 8.11%) and similar rates of missing data amongst groups, CWLS were more frequently represented in higher experience categories.

## YEARS OF PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

TABLE 8: Years of practice by group

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
2 years or less <sup>4</sup>	0	0	12	8.11
3 – 5 years	2	1.44	8	5.41
6 – 10 years	15	10.79	27	18.24
11 – 15 years	23	16.55	23	15.54
16 – 20 years	28	20.14	17	11.49
21 – 30 years	32	23.02	25	16.89
31+ years	7	5.04	6	4.06
Missing	32	23.02	30	27.27

## Reasons for Practicing Child Welfare Law

Finally, child welfare law professionals were asked to describe primary reasons for practicing child welfare law, with the option to select multiple motivations. Both groups were remarkably similar in their responses. The non-certified group indicated “*compensation*,” “*professional advancement*” and “*training and education*,” at slightly higher rates than CWLS, which points to an untapped opportunity to highlight the ways in which the credential promotes some types of professional advancement in both income and upward mobility and also provides access to high-quality training and education. There were similarities between CWLS and non-certified professionals who indicated “*something else*,” with qualitative responses indicating an enjoyment of working with children and a desire to affect systems-change within the child welfare system.

## REASONS FOR CONTINUING TO PRACTICE CHILD WELFARE LAW<sup>5</sup>

TABLE 9: Child welfare law professional reasons for continuing to practice child welfare law.

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Compensation	33	23.74	45	30.41
Colleagues	48	34.53	47	31.76
Passion about making a difference	106	76.26	114	77.03
Training and Education	32	23.02	37	25.00
Professional Advancement	25	17.99	29	19.59

4 Given that the CWLS credential requires a minimum of three years practice experience there were no individuals from that group with less than three years of experience.

5 Participants were able to select more than one reason, and therefore total counts will exceed the number of respondents counted for this item.

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Serving the field	73	52.52	79	53.37
Something else	20	14.39	21	14.19
Missing	8	5.76	9	6.08

## Sources of Continuing Education and Training

To examine group differences related to preferred avenues for training and education, survey participants were asked to identify their primary sources of training, which are presented in duplicated counts, as respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

CWLS were slightly more likely than the non-certified group to use national professional organizations such as the ABA and NACC for training, which is not surprising given the inherent connection between such organizations and the attainment of the credential. Non-certified professionals were more likely to receive “in-house” training, in which professional development and training opportunities are facilitated by the employer. This points to an important opportunity for NACC to identify state- or jurisdictional- specific trainings in states with low CWLS representation to bridge awareness of the credential and build value for connecting professionally across employers and jurisdictions.

### SOURCES OF TRAINING<sup>6</sup>

TABLE 10: Child welfare law professional survey responses to primary avenues of training

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Professional organizations (e.g., ABA, NACC, NCJFCJ)	99	71.22	93	62.83
State court improvement program	65	46.76	53	35.81
State bar	38	27.34	48	34.43
In-House Organizational training	55	39.57	70	47.29
Somewhere else	3	2.16	0	0

## Geographic Location

Law professional survey participants were asked to indicate the state in which they practice. Geographically, the CWLS and non-certified groups are similar, with more non-certified representation in states lacking certified CWLS in 2023, such as Maryland, Indiana, and Illinois. States such as California, Georgia, and Louisiana include more responses from CWLS than non-certified professionals.

6 Participants were able to select more than one avenue, and therefore total counts will exceed the number of respondents counted for this item.

## STATE

TABLE 11: Child welfare law professional state demographics

\* Indicates states with the highest representation of child welfare law professionals (CWLS and non-certified) who indicated practicing in a rural or low-density area.

	CWLS Survey Representation (n = 139)		2023 CWLS Representation Total (n = 598)		Non-Certified Survey Representation (n = 148)	
	(n)	% <sup>7</sup>	(n)	% <sup>8</sup>	(n)	% <sup>9</sup>
Alabama	1	0.72	1	100.0	0	0
Alaska*	1	0.72	3	33.33	4	2.70
Arizona*	5	3.6	12	41.67	7	4.73
Arkansas	2	1.44	14	14.29	1	0.68
California*	24	17.27	184	13.04	11	7.43
Colorado	4	2.88	16	25.0	4	2.70
Connecticut	1	0.72	12	8.33	1	0.68
Delaware*	1	0.72	9	11.11	0	0
Dist	3	2.16	11	27.27	5	3.38
Florida	1	0.72	1	100.0	2	1.35
Georgia*	16	11.51	80	20.0	4	2.70
Hawaii	0	0	1	0	0	0
Idaho	1	0.72	8	12.5	0	0
Illinois	0	0	0	0	3	2.03
Indiana	0	0	0	0	6	4.05
Iowa	2	1.44	8	25.0	2	1.35
Kansas	1	0.72	2	50.0	0	0
Kentucky	0	0	0	0	0	0
Louisiana*	10	7.19	25	40.0	0	0
Maine*	0	0	0	n/a	2	1.35
Maryland*	0	0	0	0	9	6.08
Massachusetts	0	0	2	0	4	2.70
Michigan	0	0	9	0	6	4.05
Minnesota	1	0.72	1	100.0	3	2.03
Mississippi	1	0.72	2	50.0	0	0
Missouri	2	1.44	8	25.0	2	1.35
Montana*	1	0.72	2	50.0	2	1.35
Nebraska	0	0	0	0	1	0.68
Nevada	2	1.44	6	33.33	3	2.03
New Hampshire*	1	0.72	3	33.33	2	1.35
New Jersey	2	1.44	5	40.0	1	0.68
New Mexico*	3	2.16	16	18.75	3	2.03
New York	1	0.72	6	16.67	1	0.68
North Carolina	3	2.16	24	12.5	1	0.68

	CWLS Survey Representation (n = 139)		2023 CWLS Representation Total (n = 598)		Non-Certified Survey Representation (n = 148)	
	(n)	% <sup>7</sup>	(n)	% <sup>8</sup>	(n)	% <sup>9</sup>
North Dakota	0	0	2	0	0	0
Ohio*	3	2.16	4	75.0	7	5.34
Oklahoma	0	0	0	n/a	3	2.03
Oregon	2	1.44	2	100.0	1	0.68
Pennsylvania	0	0	0	n/a	3	2.03
Rhode Island	0	0	0	0	0	0
Puerto Rico	0	0	0	0	1	0.68
South Carolina	2	1.44	6	33.33	1	0.68
South Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tennessee*	8	5.76	28	28.57	2	1.35
Texas*	10	7.19	31	32.26	9	6.08
Utah*	3	2.16	31	9.68	0	0
Vermont	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	1	0.72	1	100.0	1	0.68
Washington*	2	1.44	4	50.0	5	3.38
West Virginia	1 <sup>10</sup>	0.72	0	n/a	2	1.35
Wisconsin*	0	0	1	0	3	2.03
Wyoming*	3	2.16	6	50.	3	2.03
Missing	15	10.79	0	0	17	11.49

## PRACTICE IN A RURAL/LOW-DENSITY AREA

TABLE 12: Child welfare law professional demographics for practicing in a rural or low-density area

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Yes	45	32.37	47	31.76
No	81	58.27	86	58.11
Not sure	1	7.19	10	6.76
Missing	3	2.16	5	3.38

Representation in rural and low-density areas is also relatively similar for both the CWLS and non-certified groups, with slightly higher proportions of CWLS “not sure” as to whether their practice area would be considered rural or low density. Qualitative interviews frequently noted the unique challenges faced by those who practice in rural or low-density areas, including combatting insular court practices, few resources for clients, and the small number of available attorneys leading to increased caseloads. Both CWLS and non-certified

7 Percentage in this column reflects the proportion of the total CWLS survey sample (n = 139) by state.

8 Percentage in this column reflects the proportion of CWLS survey respondents (n = 139) in relation to the overall CWLS population (n = 589) by state.

9 Percentage in this column reflects the proportion of the total non-certified survey sample (n = 148) by state.

10 Currently NACC does not certify individuals in West Virginia. It is possible that this response reflects a relocation or was made in error.

interview participants discussed challenges related to serving rural or low-density areas, and noted that the isolated nature of these jurisdictions is a barrier to awareness about the CWLS credential.

## Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity for law professional participants are reported in the following table.

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

**TABLE 13:** Child welfare law professional race and ethnicity demographics

*\*Indicates response from those who selected “another group” and provided write-in content*

	CWLS Survey Representation (n = 139)		Non-Certified Survey Representation (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
<b>Asian</b>	6	4.32	4	2.70
Asian Indian	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	1	0.68
Filipino	1	0.72	1	0.68
Japanese	0	0	1	0.68
Korean	2	1.44	0	0
Malaysian*	1	0.72	0	0
Vietnamese	2	1.44	1	0.68
<b>Black or African American</b>	7	5.04	14	9.46
African American	6	4.32	12	8.11
Black*	0	0	1	0.68
Ethiopian	0	0	0	0
Haitian	0	0	0	0
Jamaican	1	0.72	1	0.68
Nigerian	0	0	0	0
Somali	0	0	0	0
Trinidad*	0	0	1	0.68
West Africa*	0	0	1	0.68
<b>Hispanic/Latinx</b>	3	2.16	8	5.41
Cuban*	0	0	1	0.68
Guatemalan	0	0	0	0
Mexican	1	0.72	3	2.03
Puerto Rican	2	1.44	3	2.03
Salvadoran	0	0	0	0
Spanish*	0	0	1	0.68
<b>Indigenous or Alaska Native</b>	2	1.44	3	2.03
<b>Middle Eastern or North African</b>	0	0	2	1.35
Lebanese	0	0	1	0.68

	CWLS Survey Representation (n = 139)		Non-Certified Survey Representation (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Egyptian	0	0	0	0
Iranian	0	0	0	0
Iraqi	0	0	0	0
Israeli	0	0	0	0
Palestinian	0	0	0	0
Syrian*	0	0	1	0.68
<b>Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander</b>	0	0	1	0.68
Chamorro	0	0	0	0
Fijian	0	0	0	0
Marshallese	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian	0	0	0	0
Samoan	0	0	0	0
Tongan	0	0	0	0
<b>White</b>	111	79.86	104	70.27
English	25	17.99	8	5.41
German	2	1.44	9	6.08
Irish	5	3.60	2	1.35
Italian	1	0.72	0	0
Polish	2	1.44	0	0
Scottish	1	0.72	0	0
<b>Indicated more than one race</b>	12	8.63	22	14.86
<b>Prefer not to answer</b>	6	4.32	7	4.73

Both groups had similar proportions of Asian law professionals, as well as comparable proportions of those who preferred not to disclose their racial or ethnic identity. There was greater representation of Black or African American professionals in the non-certified group, as well as Hispanic and Latinx professionals. The non-certified group contained nearly double the number of law professionals who indicated more than one race or ethnicity, as compared to the CWLS population. White individuals comprise the majority of both groups, with a slightly higher number in the CWLS group. The CWLS group also contained slightly less representation from Indigenous or Alaska Native child welfare law professionals and was missing representation of Middle Eastern or North African professionals.

Overall, the CWLS survey population was not as racially and ethnically diverse as the non-certified population, which could indicate that the certification process is less accessible or less pursued by Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Middle Eastern or North African, Indigenous or Alaska Native, and mixed-race/ethnicity child welfare law professionals. This finding is consistent with observations from the 2023 CWLS Equity Audit, in which qualitative data highlighted possible systemic barriers to pursuing certification for diverse child welfare law professional populations. The over-prevalence of white professionals in both groups

underscores the vast systemic barriers for professionals with diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds to pursue child welfare law in general.

Qualitative data from this evaluation also pointed to perceptions about lack of certification accessibility or awareness for those with diverse racial or ethnic identities. For instance, interview participants described increased cumulative financial burdens experienced by African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Indigenous child welfare attorneys that prevented them from perceiving the CWLS credential as a viable option. Further details about these insights are provided in the Recommendations section of this report.

## Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

TABLE 14: Child welfare law professional sexual orientation demographics

\*Indicates self-describe/write-in content

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Straight/heterosexual	113	81.29	119	80.41
Lesbian or gay	8	5.76	2	1.35
Bisexual	7	5.04	10	6.76
Queer	1	0.72	3	2.03
Pansexual	0	0	1	0.68
Ace*	1	0.72	0	0
Prefer not to answer	6	4.32	9	6.08
Missing	3	2.16	4	2.07

### GENDER IDENTITY

TABLE 15: Child welfare law professional gender demographics

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Female/woman	114	82.01	116	78.38
Male/man	19	13.67	25	16.89
Nonbinary, genderqueer, or not exclusively male or female	1	0.72	2	1.35
Another gender	1	0.72	0	0
Prefer not to answer	3	2.16	2	1.35
Missing	1	0.72	3	2.03

When examining gender demographics, both groups are female dominated, with slightly higher representation in the CWLS group. Men also constitute a slightly higher proportion of the non-certified group, possibly indicating that the credential may not be as appealing to men in child welfare law. Both groups revealed minimal to no representation of gender-diverse law professionals (e.g., transgender, non-binary, gender queer populations). The lack of LGBTQIA+ representation was also consistent regarding sexual diversity, as both groups had

relatively low representation of those who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, or asexual. Overall, diversity in SOGIE characteristics is minimal for both CWLS and non-certified child welfare professionals, with equal representation in both categories.

## Disability Status

Participants were asked to state whether they self-identify as having a disability. Both CWLS and non-certified groups had relatively similar proportions of those who identified as having a disability, which were small, relative to the general population. In the 2023 CWLS Equity Audit, disability status was identified as a potential area of consideration for accessibility in the certification process. While there are established systemic barriers for disabled individuals entering the field of law in general, those who identify as having a disability are present in the CWLS and non-certified survey populations at similar proportions, which suggests that accessibility efforts in the certification process are effective at reducing barriers related to disability status.

### DISABILITY STATUS

TABLE 16: Child welfare law professional disability status demographics

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
No	125	89.93	133	89.86
Yes	13	9.35	11	7.43
Missing	1	0.72	4	2.70

## Compensation

Law professional survey participants were asked to provide information about compensation from both child welfare law practice as well as other types of law.

### COMPENSATION FROM CHILD WELFARE LAW

TABLE 17: Child welfare law professional compensation demographics for child welfare law practice

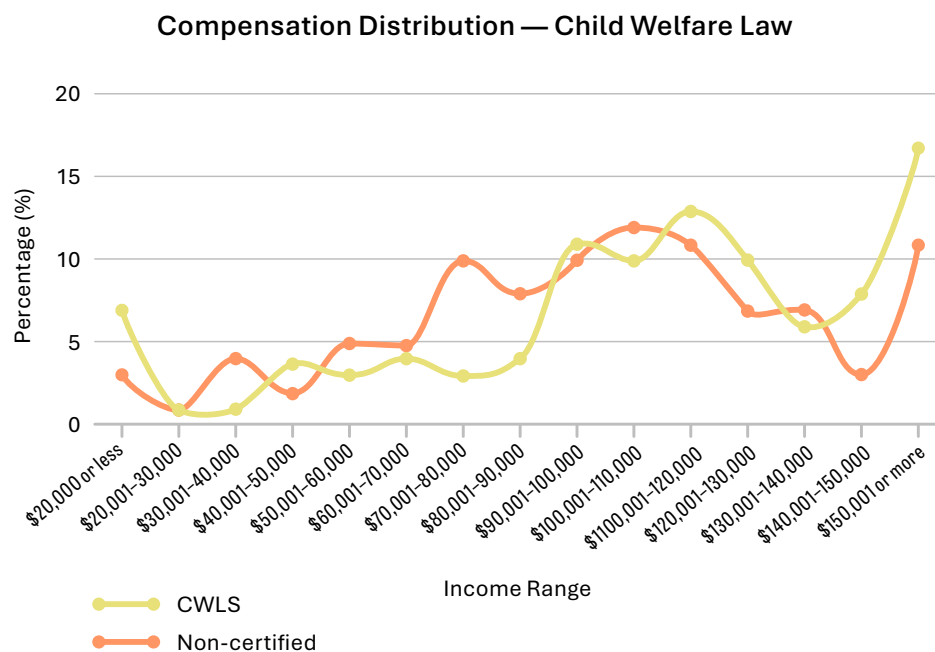
	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
\$20,000 or less	8	5.76	4	2.70
\$20,001-\$30,000	1	0.72	1	0.68
\$30,001-\$40,000	1	0.72	5	3.38
\$40,001-\$50,000	4	2.88	3	2.03
\$50,001-\$60,000	3	2.16	6	4.05
\$60,001-\$70,000	5	3.60	6	4.05
\$70,001-\$80,000	4	2.88	13	8.78
\$80,001-\$90,000	5	3.60	9	6.08
\$90,001-\$100,000	12	8.63	12	8.11
\$100,001-\$110,000	11	7.81	15	10.14
\$110,001-\$120,000	15	10.79	14	9.46
\$120,001-\$130,000	11	7.81	9	6.08

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
\$130,001-\$140,000	7	5.04	9	6.08
\$140,001-\$150,000	9	6.47	4	2.70
Over \$150,000	19	13.67	1	9.46
Missing	24	17.27	24	16.22

The average salary for CWLS was \$105,435 as compared to \$98,790 for their non-certified counterparts. When controlling for cost of living and role, CWLS had higher compensation in general as compared to non-certified child welfare attorneys. For CWLS, 51.59% of the sample were compensated at \$100,000 or above, as compared to 43.92% of the non-certified sample. For the highest earners, those who specified an annual income of over \$150,000, CWLS were represented at a higher rate, at 13.67% making over \$150,000 per year as compared to 9.46% of non-certified attorneys. This evidence suggests that the CWLS credential has impacts on earning potential in child welfare law. The following graph highlights these group differences.

### COMPENSATION DISTRIBUTION — CHILD WELFARE LAW

FIGURE 3: Income distribution for CWLS and non-certified child welfare law professionals



Given the comparatively low pay of child welfare law in contrast to other types of law practice, it is common to augment income by practicing some other type of law. Compensation yielded from practicing other types of law was also explored.

## PRACTICING OTHER TYPES OF LAW

**TABLE 18:** Child welfare law professional survey responses for practicing other types of law

	CWLS (n = 23)		Non-Certified (n = 37)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Do not practice other types of law	64	46.04	59	39.86
Practiced other types of law in the past	27	19.42	28	18.92
Currently practice other types of law	24	17.27	37	25.0
Missing	24	17.27	24	16.22

Non-certified child welfare law professionals engage in the practice of other types of law more readily at 25% as compared to about 17% of the CWLS population. Given the income disparities in child welfare law practice, particularly for those practicing in rural areas, it is not surprising that a slightly higher rate of non-certified professionals would augment their income with other types of law practice. That said, both groups practice other types of law, which means that achieving the credential does not necessarily preclude interest in or need to augment one's law practice entirely. For those who stated they currently practice another type of law, time allocation did not differ by certification status: both CWLS and non-certified participants indicated that an average of 63% of their time was spent in child welfare law, with the remaining 37% spent practicing another type of law.

## COMPENSATION FROM OTHER TYPES OF LAW

**TABLE 19:** Child welfare law professional compensation from other types of law

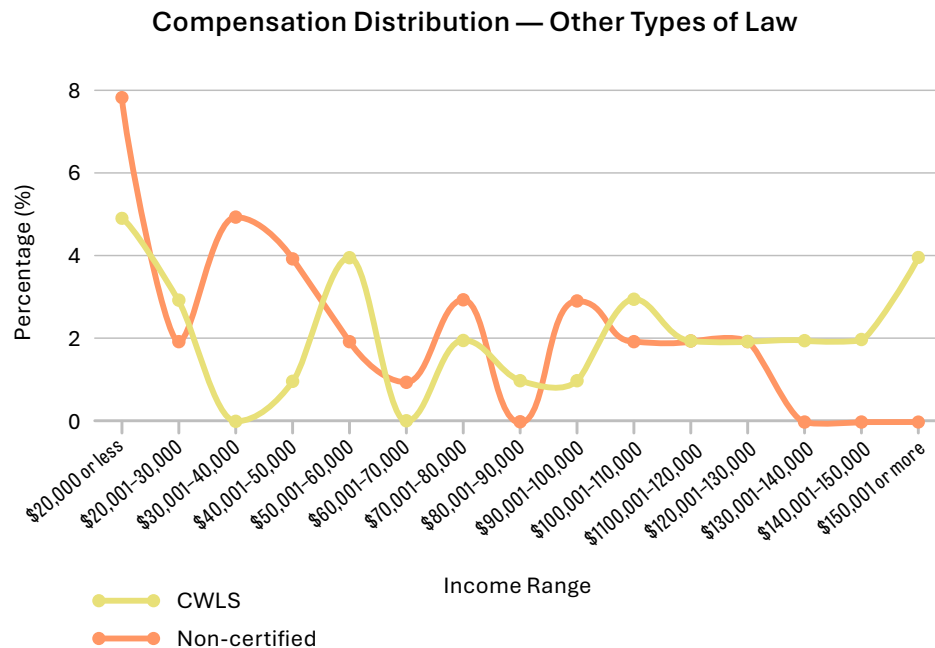
	CWLS (n = 23)		Non-Certified (n = 37)	
	(n)	% <sup>11</sup>	(n)	%
\$20,000 or less	5	21.74	8	21.62
\$20,001-\$30,000	3	13.04	2	5.41
\$30,001-\$40,000	0	0	5	13.51
\$40,001-\$50,000	1	4.35	4	10.81
\$50,001-\$60,000	4	17.39	2	5.41
\$60,001-\$70,000	0	0	1	2.70
\$70,001-\$80,000	2	8.70	3	8.11
\$80,001-\$90,000	0	0	0	0
\$90,001-\$100,000	0	0	3	8.11
\$100,001-\$110,000	2	8.70	3	8.11
\$110,001-\$120,000	0	0	2	5.41
\$120,001-\$130,000	0	0	2	5.41
\$130,001-\$140,000	2	8.70	0	0
\$140,001-\$150,000	1	4.35	0	0
Over \$150,000	3	13.04	2	5.41

11 Percentages reflect the percentage of those who indicated they currently practice another type of law.

For income generated from practicing other types of law, 34.79% of CWLS earned \$100,001 or more, as compared to 24.34% of non-certified professionals. Non-certified child welfare attorneys were also represented more in lower income brackets for compensation generated from practicing other types of law as compared to CWLS. These findings indicate that the CWLS credential has an impact on earning potential across both child welfare and other types of law.

## COMPENSATION DISTRIBUTION — OTHER TYPES OF LAW

FIGURE 4: Group comparisons of compensation from practicing other types of law



## Peer Consultation

Survey participants were asked to state whether they had access to individuals for peer consultation, and whether they seek peer consultation. Given that the law professional sample was yielded primarily through professional groups and organizations, it's not surprising that both groups had high rates of access to, and use of peer supports for consultation. The CWLS group indicated slightly higher access to, and use of peer consultation compared to the non-certified group. Yet, differences were not substantial.

### PEER CONSULTATION

TABLE 20: Access to and use of peer consultation by group

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Access to Peers	104	74.82	107	72.3
Regular Use of Peers for Consult	103	74.1	107	72.3

## Sought for Advice, Support, or Technical Assistance/Training

Child welfare law professionals were asked whether they were sought out to provide advice, support, or technical assistance/training to others in their communities to examine whether the CWLS credential had any impact on perceptions of or reliance upon their expertise in the field. Results indicate that the CWLS credential does not necessarily impact this area, as both groups reported similar engagement for such opportunities.

### SOUGHT FOR ADVICE, SUPPORT, OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/TRAINING

TABLE 21: Trends related to being sought out for advice, support, or technical assistance/training

	CWLS (n = 139)		Non-Certified (n = 148)	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Often	76	54.68	74	50.0
Sometimes	29	20.86	37	25.0
Never	2	1.44	3	2.03
Missing	32	23.02	34	22.97

## Conclusion

Overall, demographic information provided insight into key similarities and differences between CWLS and non-certified law professional survey samples. An examination of demographic findings indicates that the CWLS credential provides an advantage for some types of advancement and specialization, yet lack of the CWLS credential may not be a hinderance for obtaining supervisory or administrative positions. There is strong evidence to support the credential's positive impact on earning potential, both for child welfare law and for other types of law practice. One prominent observation from the demographic and qualitative data pertains to racial and ethnic diversity in the field. Within the CWLS population measured in this evaluation, there is less representation of Black and African-American and Hispanic/Latinx professionals, and small differences in representation amongst Indigenous and Alaska Native populations. Overall, some evidence supports the utility of the CWLS credential to promote upward advancement and retention, and to connect the child welfare law workforce with a variety of national training and networking opportunities.

# Child Welfare Legal Representation Quality — Group Comparisons

## Survey Development

Consistent with the Participatory Action Research approach, which was foundational to this evaluation, individuals with lived expertise were engaged as study participants, as well as for the purpose of developing survey constructs and questions to capture the CWLS credential impact.

## Identification of Key Constructs

Survey constructs refer to the broader categories of phenomena captured by survey questions. Prior to developing survey questions, it is essential to examine and deconstruct the kinds of topics to prioritize for exploration. To determine the most essential topics for exploration, individuals with lived expertise were engaged through the NACCLR, REM focus groups, and qualitative interviews to get a sense of the most important topics to explore from the perspectives of those most impacted. From these conversations, broad categories were determined, which included constructs such as *cultural humility*, *showing empathy for the client and family members*, and *prioritizing individualization*. Some constructs were derived specifically from the CWLS exam preparation (Red Book content) yet were also independently examined and vetted by individuals with lived expertise.

## Development of Survey Items

Upon identification of primary constructs, individuals with lived expertise were then engaged throughout the process of developing survey questions. Focus groups, qualitative interviews, and research team meetings including individuals with lived expertise were used to phrase, examine, and edit survey question wording. Over a series of several months, the research team, in collaboration with individuals with lived expertise, refined and tested survey questions. (See *Appendix D for survey content*.) Once developed, both the lived expertise and law professional surveys were imported into Qualtrics for dissemination. Further information about survey validation can be found in the Methodological & Technical Report.

## Legal Representation Quality Survey Items

Analyses were conducted to explore whether the CWLS credential yields meaningful differences with the quality of child welfare law practice, and to better understand such quality differences. Child welfare law professional participants were asked to respond to survey questions related to the quality of their practice, specifically the frequency in which they applied skills such as cultural humility, client-centered communication, legal advocacy strategies, and statutory expertise. Survey items asked attorneys to self-rate the frequency with which these skills were utilized (i.e., “Every case,” “most cases,” “some cases,” “never,” and “N/A”). The following table shows the survey items used to capture child welfare representation quality.

## QUALITY INDICATORS

TABLE 22: *Quality items measured by the law professional survey*

Item	How often the attorney...
1	Meets with clients prior to legal proceedings
2	Reminds clients of meetings and court dates
3	Debriefs with clients after legal proceedings
4	Helps clients understand the reason(s) behind decisions
5	Translates client wishes into legal advocacy
6	Applies knowledge of child development in legal advocacy
7	Advocates for individualized case plans
8	Asks about family and fictive kin
9	Reframes negative narratives applied to the client
10	Helps tell the story from the client's point of view
11	Advocates for the supports and accommodations needed to help the client be successful
12	Helps advocate for children's education (e.g., IEP access, school stability, records transfer, disciplinary matters)
13	Advocates for meeting cultural or identity-related needs
14	Reviews mental health evaluations conducted in cases
15	Discusses mental health evaluations with clients
16	Utilizes mental health evaluations in legal advocacy
17	References statutes and case law in oral advocacy
18	References statutes and case law in written advocacy
19	Inquires with clients about whether they have Native American heritage
20	Advocates for placements across state lines using ICPC or other legal authority
21	Files appeals (or refer them for appeal) when necessary
22	Makes objections to the record when necessary
23	Advocates for kinship placement

Omitting missing data, the final dataset included responses from 202 participants, categorized by certification status, with 98 participants in the CWLS group and 104 in the non-certified group.

### Individual Quality Indicators

Average mean scores on individual quality indicators were examined to determine trends and group differences. The following table illustrates that the CWLS group had higher average scores than the non-certified group on 12 of the 23 indicators, with two statistically significant differences. The non-certified group demonstrated higher average scores on 7 of the 23 quality items, with no statistically significant group differences. For 4 of the 23 indicators, there were no group differences.

## INDIVIDUAL QUALITY INDICATORS — COMPARISON OF AVERAGE SCORES

TABLE 23: Group comparisons of individual quality indicators

\*Indicates statistically significant differences

CWLS Higher	Non-Certified Higher	No Group Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translates client wishes into legal advocacy (5)</li> <li>• Applies knowledge of child development in legal advocacy (6) *</li> <li>• Reframes negative narratives applied to the client (9)</li> <li>• Advocates for supports and accommodations needed to help client be successful (11)</li> <li>• Helps advocate for children's education (IEP access, school stability, records transfer, disciplinary matters, etc.) (12)</li> <li>• Advocates for meeting cultural or identity-related needs (13)</li> <li>• Discusses mental health evaluations with client (15)</li> <li>• Utilizes mental health evals in legal advocacy (16)</li> <li>• References statute and case law in oral advocacy (17)</li> <li>• References statute and case law in written advocacy (18)</li> <li>• Files appeals (or refers for appeal) when necessary (21) *</li> <li>• Makes objections to the record when necessary (22)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminds clients of meetings and court dates (2)</li> <li>• Debriefs with clients after legal proceedings (3)</li> <li>• Helps clients understand the reasons behind decisions (4)</li> <li>• Helps tell the story from the client's point of view (10)</li> <li>• Reviews mental health evaluations conducted in cases (14)</li> <li>• Inquires with clients about whether they have Native American heritage (19)</li> <li>• Advocates for kinship placements (23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meets with clients prior to legal proceedings (1)</li> <li>• Advocates for individualized case plans (7)</li> <li>• Asks about family and fictive kin (8)</li> <li>• Advocates for placements across state lines using ICPC or other legal authority (20)</li> </ul>

Examining group comparisons of average scores provides preliminary, but incomplete insight into performance across individual indicators. Statistically significant group differences provide more robust evidence for quality differences by group, highlighting that CWLS consistently perform better at *applying knowledge of child development in legal advocacy* and *filing appeals (or referring them for appeal) when necessary* than their non-certified counterparts.<sup>12</sup> While there were a variety of mean differences between CWLS and non-certified law professionals, these results indicate that when it comes to incorporating knowledge of child development and filing appeals, the differences between the two groups are substantial and cannot be explained by chance, and that the differences are greater than the .05 threshold. As such, based on the survey data, it can be concluded that in contrast to non-certified attorneys, **CWLS report using knowledge of child development in legal advocacy and filing appeals (or referring for appeal) more than non-certified professionals, to a statistically significant degree.**

These results also suggest that while CWLS attorneys excel in procedural and statutory domains, non-certified attorneys might prioritize interpersonal and client-driven aspects of practice. Additionally, quality indicators such as *meeting with clients before legal proceedings* and *debriefing with clients after legal proceedings*, while favorable to the non-certified group, showed more variability in scores, suggesting that there might be

12 An independent t-test was performed to compare the average scores of CWLS and non-certified survey respondents to determine statistically significant group differences and to explore the size of such differences. Statistically significant differences were found in scores for *File\_Appeals*  $t(200) = 2.63$ ;  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 0.37$  and *ChildDev\_Advocacy*  $t(200) = 2.66$ ;  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 0.37$ .

less consistency with how these skills are practiced by non-certified practitioners. In contrast, CWLS demonstrated more consistent scoring patterns, particularly for procedural skills. Further, there were no statistically significant differences in favor of non-certified attorneys.

## Relationship Between Individual Quality Indicators and Overall Quality

### **Best Predictors of Overall Quality**

To build upon the quality of evidence for group differences, a regression analysis was performed to:

- Identify key skills and competencies that predicted overall quality;
- Ascertain which specific skills contributed most to overall quality; and
- Determine whether there were group differences in predictors of overall quality.

To understand whether there are differences in overall quality of legal representation for CWLS and non-certified professionals, it is first necessary to examine which indicators most strongly predict overall quality. A regression analysis was performed to identify key skills and competencies that most strongly predicted overall quality of legal representation, with the model explaining 88.7% of the variance in overall quality.<sup>13</sup> This high R-squared value indicates that quality items collectively provide a strong explanation for overall representation quality, which not only speaks to the robust nature of the quality items utilized in the evaluation but also yields more confidence in the findings of these analyses.

### **BEST PREDICTORS OF OVERALL QUALITY**

**TABLE 24:** *Items that were the best predictors of overall quality*

*\*Indicates statistically significant differences for CWLS group*

- Discussing mental health evaluations with clients\*
- Advocating for the supports and accommodations needed to help the client be successful \*
- Helping clients understand the reason(s) behind decisions
- Referencing statutes and case law in oral advocacy\*
- Advocating for individualized case plans

Several variables emerged as significant predictors of overall quality, highlighting the importance of both procedural and client-centered skills in considering child welfare representation quality. *Discussing mental health evaluations*<sup>14</sup> was the strongest predictor of overall performance, demonstrating the importance of an attorney's ability to interpret and communicate evaluation findings with clients as integral to quality representation. *Advocating for client supports and accommodations*<sup>15</sup> also contributed significantly to overall representation quality suggesting that promoting and facilitating clients' access to resources and supports plays a key role in achieving high-quality outcomes for clients. Additionally, *helping clients understand the reasons behind decisions*<sup>16</sup> was a significant predictor of overall quality, emphasizing the importance of the ability to break down and communicate complex case information to the client, and translating key events and decisions in accessible ways.

13 (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.887, F = 97.17, p < 0.001)

14 *Discuss\_MHEval* (β = 0.41, p < 0.001)

15 *Accommodations\_Advocate* (β = 0.34, p < 0.001)

16 *Understand\_Reasons* (β = 0.29, p = 0.002)

Other significant predictors of overall representation quality included *referencing statutes and case law in oral advocacy*<sup>17</sup> and *advocating for individualized case plans*.<sup>18</sup> These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of child welfare legal representation quality, where both procedural expertise and interpersonal skills contribute to overall performance.

Notably, some variables did not emerge as significant predictors, including *translating client wishes into legal advocacy*<sup>19</sup> and *telling the story from the client's point of view*.<sup>20</sup> While non-certified attorneys scored slightly higher on these indicators using regression analysis, they were weak predictors of overall quality and were not included in the five strongest predictors listed in Table 24. Despite their weak predictive associations with overall quality, the results showed a slight trend toward non-certified attorneys performing better than certified counterparts in client-centered skills. This trend was also found in other analyses. While client-centered skills are important components of child welfare law representation, their weaker associations with overall quality suggest that other skills may play a more central role in determining overall quality of child welfare legal representation.

Overall, the results point to skills that might carry more weight for high-quality performance among child welfare lawyers, provide insights as to the most pertinent skills on which to focus continuing education and training, and inform ways in which child welfare attorney quality might be measured, weighted, and interpreted. This insight also helps frame group comparisons related to quality indicators, as client-centered communication and interpersonal skills are vital, but representation also requires strong procedural advocacy and expertise for the most optimal outcomes for clients.

### **Group Differences Amongst Overall Quality Predictors**

To examine group differences related to overall quality, independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores of CWLS and non-certified attorneys across all quality items and the composite measure of overall legal representation quality. The results revealed several statistically significant differences between the two groups, highlighting distinctions in skillsets and competencies associated with certification status.

CWLS demonstrated significantly higher mean scores in procedural advocacy and statutory expertise items. For instance, *referencing statutes in oral advocacy*<sup>21</sup> and *discussing mental health evaluations*<sup>22</sup> were both significantly higher for CWLS, indicating greater proficiency in incorporating law into oral arguments and communicating findings of mental health evaluations to clients. Similarly, *advocating for client supports and accommodations*<sup>23</sup> was also significantly higher for CWLS, suggesting that they are more adept at advocating for client-specific accommodations, resources, and needs.

In contrast, non-certified attorneys exhibited comparable or slightly higher scores on variables related to client-centered communication. For example, *translating client wishes into legal advocacy*<sup>24</sup> was higher for non-certified attorneys when using regression analysis, indicating that they place greater emphasis on incorporating clients' wishes into their advocacy strategies. While this particular quality item did not as strongly influence overall quality and was considered a weak predictor, this area highlights a comparative weakness

17 *RefStatute\_Oral* ( $\beta = 0.18, p = 0.035$ )

18 *Individualize\_Plans* ( $\beta = 0.22, p = 0.014$ )

19 *Wishes\_Advocacy* ( $\beta = 0.09, p = 0.089$ )

20 *Articulate\_POV* ( $\beta = 0.07, p = 0.102$ )

21 *RefStatute\_Oral* ( $t = 4.32, p < 0.001$ )

22 *Discuss\_MHEval* ( $t = 3.87, p < 0.001$ )

23 *Accommodations\_Advocate* ( $t = 3.45, p = 0.001$ )

24  $t = -2.14, p = 0.034$

within the CWLS group as compared to non-certified attorneys and shows an emerging pattern in non-certified professionals faring slightly better on client-centered skills. Differences in client-centered skills that were stronger predictors of quality, however, such as *helping clients understand the reasons behind decisions and advocating for individualized case plans*, were not statistically significant, suggesting that both groups perform similarly in these areas.

## Five-Factor Model of Child Welfare Legal Representation Quality

### Five-Factor Model of Quality

Prior analyses performed provided information related to group differences across individual quality indicators, and comparisons across the items that mattered most for overall quality. One consistent insight across all analyses was that CWLS professionals fared better on statutory and procedural advocacy and applying skills related to mental health evaluations, child development, arguing for client needs to be met, and statutory expertise. Some findings were less consistent across analyses. For example, CWLS scored higher than non-certified attorneys on *translating the client wishes into legal advocacy* when simply comparing average scores on individual factors. However, when analyzed using regression and factor analysis, CWLS scored slightly lower than non-certified attorneys on this variable. Statistical analyses using more sophisticated multivariate approaches can account for greater nuance than examining an individual variable alone, and therefore result in different statistical outcomes. Grouping variables together provides information not only about the single variables, but how they function and behave with other variables, which can, as in this case, yield different, more complex results about a particular variable. Further investigation was required to understand how certification status impacted group differences in clusters of quality indicators.

To better understand how CWLS compared to non-certified attorneys on groupings of skills, factor analysis was performed to uncover latent dimensions that cluster related skills together. Groupings and trends were then examined to determine if there were performance differences by certification status. Overall, factor analysis demonstrated relationships between, and groupings of, quality indicators and illuminated group differences within the framework of skill clusters.

Two models were tested — a three-factor and a five-factor model — with the five-factor model explaining 85% of the variance (as compared to 72% for the three-factor model). The five-factor model provided more nuanced and distinct dimensions of lawyer quality and accounted for a greater portion of the variance, demonstrating its utility for informing group differences. A full explanation of the factor analysis methods, procedures, and findings can be found in the accompanying *Methodological & Technical Report*.

The following table illustrates the five distinct factors with the highest-loading<sup>25</sup> quality items. Not all quality items were strongly associated with clusters, which indicated that they functioned more independently than in relationship to other items.

25 “High-loading” indicates that the item is strongly linked to the factor and “low-loading,” in contrast, means the item is not strongly linked to the factor (grouping of variables).

## FIVE-FACTOR MODEL

TABLE 25: Five-factor model of child welfare representation quality and associated quality items

<p><i>Factor 1: Advocacy and Procedural Competence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates for supports and accommodations needed to help the client be successful</li> <li>• Advocates for meeting cultural or identity-related needs</li> <li>• Discusses mental health evaluations with client</li> <li>• Utilizes mental health evaluations in legal advocacy</li> <li>• Makes objections to the record when necessary</li> </ul>
<p><i>Factor 2: Legal Knowledge and Statutory Expertise</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References statute and case law in oral advocacy</li> <li>• References statute and case law in written advocacy</li> </ul>
<p><i>Factor 3: Client-Centered Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps clients understand the reasons behind decisions</li> <li>• Translates client wishes into legal advocacy</li> </ul>
<p><i>Factor 4: Individualized Case Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates for individualized case plans</li> <li>• Asks about family and fictive kin</li> </ul>
<p><i>Factor 5: Holistic Approaches</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps advocate for children’s education (i.e., IEP access, school stability, records transfer, disciplinary matters)</li> <li>• Reviews mental health evaluations conducted in cases</li> </ul>

*Factor 1: Advocacy and Procedural Competence* emerged as the strongest predictor of overall quality. Similarly, *Factor 5: Holistic Approaches* also significantly predicted overall quality. While the earlier regression model using individual variables identified specific skills that strongly predicted overall quality, the five-factor model produces a more holistic view by capturing how clusters of related skills collectively impact overall quality. Together, these analyses illustrate both the granular and overarching drivers of child welfare legal representation quality, offering a comprehensive understanding of the skills and competencies that matter most.

### Five-Factor Model Group Differences

The factor analysis served as a data-reduction technique, grouping individual quality variables into broader latent constructs or dimensions. By identifying these distinct dimensions, the factor analysis simplified the dataset, reducing the redundancy among individual variables and providing a clearer framework for examining group differences between CWLS and non-certified attorneys. In addition, a regression analysis was also performed to determine if the five-factor model adequately predicted overall quality, which achieved an R-squared of 0.990, explaining nearly all variance in the outcome. Given that the model was a good fit for the data, and adequately predicted overall quality, it was considered an effective approach for examining group differences.

The CWLS group scored higher on four of the five factors:

- Advocacy and Procedural Competence
- Legal Knowledge and Statutory Expertise
- Individualized Case Planning
- Holistic Approaches

### **Factor 1: Advocacy and Procedural Competence**

*“They [the child welfare system] would fault me for not having the things I needed. I just needed help. I needed someone to help me get access because I wasn’t getting nowhere with anyone else. My lawyer had people in his office who could help me with all that so by the time I had court I could show all the things I improved. This helped me win my case I think.”* — PARENT PARTICIPANT

For Factor 1: *Advocacy and Procedural Competence*, higher scores for CWLS indicate that the certification equips lawyers with stronger procedural and advocacy skills, such as effective use of mental health evaluations in legal advocacy, making objections, and the ability to integrate cultural humility as an integral component of advocacy. Notably, the quality indicator of *advocates for meeting cultural or identity-related needs*, was associated with the factor related to legal advocacy and procedural competence. This means that demonstrating cultural humility as an attorney is closely linked (from a statistical perspective) to advocating for meeting the client’s needs, discussing and utilizing mental health evaluations, and making objections. This outcome was somewhat surprising, as cultural humility can serve a range of functions such as impacting client-attorney trust, communication and relationship building, and promoting best-fit outcomes and decision making for the client.

*“They didn’t understand my culture or religion, but it was part of what my case was about. [My attorney] was only annoyed when I brought it up instead and said it would make more trouble for me to talk about it in court.”* — PARENT PARTICIPANT

Given that cultural humility was most closely linked to advocacy, it can be inferred that cultural humility is a foundational skill upon which legal advocacy skills rest. Further, it can be deduced that cultural humility skills are also fundamentally linked to advocating for clients’ needs to be met and ensuring that the court is using accurate interpretations of mental health evaluations to understand the client. In sum, the five-factor model illuminates the most optimal ways in which cultural humility skills function, which is infused intentionally throughout legal advocacy rather than as isolated skills. **With CWLS’ higher scores in this area, the findings suggest that CWLS might be more equipped to address racism, discrimination, and racial disproportionality in the child welfare system.**

### **Factor 2: Legal Knowledge and Statutory Expertise**

*“Use the law — really use it and hammer it. Those details can make all the difference [in the success of the case].”* — LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

CWLS also scored higher on *Factor 2: Legal Knowledge and Statutory Expertise*, which demonstrates the impact of the certification on knowledge, recall, and confidence in referencing legal statutes during oral and written arguments. Further, this factor highlights how statutory expertise in both oral and written communications is necessary for overall representation quality. These two items functioned together but were not redundant to one another in the statistical model, which highlights the importance of strong oral and written statutory expertise to ensuring quality child welfare representation. **Given that the CWLS group scored**

higher on this factor compared to non-certified attorneys, it can be inferred that the credential is effective at preparing professionals for comprehensive and strategic use of statutory knowledge.

### **Factor 3: Client-Centered Communication**

*“I like to give clients the opportunity to tell the story on their terms. I make space for the client to talk about their life and their experiences, and how this has impacted them. I have to really slow down and try not to rush the client to give basic facts.”* — LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

Group differences for *Factor 3: Client-Centered Communication*, were small and not statistically significant, yet slightly favored non-certified attorneys. This skills cluster included the quality items of *helping clients understand the reasons behind decisions* and *translating client wishes into legal advocacy*, which shows the interconnectedness between making complex legal decisions accessible for clients and ensuring advocacy strategies are shaped by the wishes of clients. Group differences indicate that non-certified attorneys may focus more on interpersonal communication than CWLS, who may focus more on procedural elements. While these group differences were small, they illustrate an opportunity to incorporate client-centered communication skills into the CWLS examination or related training and technical assistance.

### **Factor 4: Individualized Case Planning**

*“My lawyer cared about me, my parents, and my siblings and it meant so much to me. He was my lawyer but he knew that we were all struggling because of this and I was able to tell that he was fighting for me.”* — YOUTH PARTICIPANT

For *Factor 4: Individualized Case Planning*, CWLS scored higher than non-certified attorneys, illustrating the impact of the certification on competence related to *individualized case planning* and *inquiring about family and fictive kin* for the purpose of engaging kinship caregiving and advocating for family-specific needs. The connection between these factors demonstrates the importance of ensuring that legal case strategy reflects family-specific needs, leverages family strengths, and centers family-driven decision making. Given that the CWLS group scored higher in this domain, there is emerging evidence to reflect the credential’s ability to foster these skills.

### **Factor 5: Holistic Approaches**

*“[The mental health evaluation] basically said I was still using even though I wasn’t and also said I had no hope of ever staying clean. It also said all kinds of things that weren’t true like that I refused to attend services. I had been going to my meetings and staying in therapy and I had done all of the things I was told to do. The woman basically sat down with me for 15 minutes, asked me some questions, and then wrote pages and pages about me. It was really hard to come back from.”* — PARENT PARTICIPANT

There were also group differences found for *Factor 5: Holistic Approaches*, favoring the CWLS group, demonstrating the certification’s impact on fostering multidisciplinary skills such as reviewing and understanding mental health evaluations and advocating for client’s educational needs. Notably, the quality indicator of *reviews mental health evaluations conducted in cases* did not group with *discussing* and *utilizing* mental health evaluations, which indicates that reviewing mental health evaluations is a distinctly different skill than integrating that same information into advocacy. Reviewing mental health evaluations requires an attorney to make sense of information presented in mental health evaluations, whereas utilizing mental health evaluations in legal advocacy requires translational skills to apply and embed this information into the case strategy. Effectively reviewing mental health evaluations relies upon an attorney’s multidisciplinary skills to decode and comprehend mental health evaluation language and findings. Therefore, this factor captures an attorney’s contextual knowledge and capabilities across disciplines such as mental health and education. Group

differences with this factor highlight the CWLS credential’s ability to build multidisciplinary contextual knowledge and skills as a vital indicator of overall child welfare representation quality.

*“When I had to move schools, it was harder to get them to follow my IEP.*

*My attorney was able to make sure the school provided me what I needed.”*—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

## Conclusion

To investigate child welfare legal representation quality differences between CWLS and non-certified attorneys, several statistical methods were used. The results highlighted that CWLS scored higher on self-rated incorporation of child development knowledge and filing (or referring out) appeals, as compared to non-certified attorneys. Further, CWLS demonstrated significantly higher scores for three of the five best predictors of overall quality, including discussing mental health evaluations, advocating for client supports and accommodations, and referencing statutes and case law in oral advocacy. The non-certified group did not have statistically significant differences in any individual quality predictor using regression analysis, but did show slight differences in translating client wishes into legal advocacy.

Factor analysis was used to build upon emerging group differences, simplify the dataset and group related skills into broader dimensions, and facilitate a more nuanced understanding of child welfare representation quality. Factor analyses revealed that lawyer competencies can be conceptualized along five distinct dimensions: *Advocacy and Procedural Competence*, *Legal Knowledge and Statutory Expertise*, *Client-Centered Communication*, *Individualized Case Planning*, and *Holistic Approaches*. Group comparisons demonstrated that CWLS performed better than non-certified attorneys on four of the five factors, indicating that the certification is enhancing skills across:

- Advocacy and procedural competence;
- Legal knowledge and statutory expertise;
- Individualized case planning; and
- Holistic approaches.

CWLS did not perform higher on client-centered communication; instead, results showed slight, non-statistically significant differences favoring non-certified attorneys for that factor.

The findings of this study offer critical insights into child welfare law practice and demonstrate the overall impact of the CWLS credential on representation quality.

## Limitations

This portion of the CWLS evaluation examined the competencies of child welfare lawyers, focusing on the differences between CWLS and non-certified child welfare attorneys, and explored the dimensions of representation quality through factor analysis, subgroup comparisons, and regression analyses. The analyses performed, while providing valuable insights into child welfare legal representation quality, are subject to several limitations.

First, the cross-sectional nature of the dataset limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships between variables and lawyer performance. Further, the reliance on self-reported data for the quality variables introduces potential biases, including social desirability bias and inconsistencies in self-assessment. Lawyers may overestimate or underestimate their skills, which could skew the results. Findings could be improved by analyzing attorney self-reports alongside client feedback (e.g., by using the lived expertise survey items and comparing attorney/client dyads).

The methodological approach also poses certain challenges. Although the five-factor model improved upon the original model by isolating five distinct dimensions of lawyer quality, the interpretation of factors remains somewhat subjective, particularly for variables with moderate loadings on multiple factors. Additionally, while the factors provided a more parsimonious representation of the data, they may have oversimplified complex constructs. Further validation of these factors, such as through confirmatory factor analysis, is necessary to ensure their robustness and applicability across different samples.

## Logic Model Alignment

### ATTORNEYS — INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL OUTCOMES

TABLE 26: Summary of evaluation findings to support individual-level outcomes of CWLS credential

Hypothesized Outcome	Evaluation Finding
Increased child welfare law professional competency	CWLS scored higher for individual quality indicators such as integrating knowledge of child development and filing appeals. Regression analyses highlighted that CWLS scored higher in three of the five best predictors of representation quality, including discussing mental health evaluations, advocating for client support and resources, and referencing statutes and case law in oral advocacy. Factor analyses revealed that CWLS scored higher in four of the five quality domains, including advocacy and procedural competence, legal knowledge and statutory expertise, and individualized case planning, and holistic approaches.
Increased number of certified attorneys	Not measured by this evaluation
Increased professional success and growth	There were mixed findings for this outcome. The larger numbers of judges in the CWLS group indicate the credential could impact upward mobility. The greater number of CWLS focused on representing only one party in their child welfare practice (primarily the agency, children, or parents), support the potential impact of the credential on practice specialization. Finally, higher levels of compensation for CWLS for both child welfare law and other types of law practice highlight the impact of the credential on earning potential.
Increased retention and tenure in the workforce	While this was not directly measured by this evaluation, preliminary evidence suggests that the credential might be helpful for promoting retention and tenure.
Increased value and recognition of high-quality representation	There were mixed findings for this outcome. There was little difference between the CWLS and non-certified groups related to being sought out by the community to provide advice, support, or technical assistance/ training. Yet, higher earning potential for those in the CWLS group highlights the possible impact of the credential on monetary recognition.

### ATTORNEYS — SYSTEMS-LEVEL OUTCOMES

TABLE 27: Summary of evaluation findings to support systems-level outcomes of CWLS credential

Hypothesized Outcome	Evaluation Finding
Expanded workforce of skilled attorneys	While this was not measured directly by this evaluation, the evaluation included individuals who were in the process of obtaining the CWLS credential, highlighting growth toward expanding the workforce of skilled attorneys through the credential.
Increased professional value of high-quality representation and specialized credentials	Interview data suggest that there is growing awareness on behalf of child welfare law professionals of the value of specialized credentials. Amongst non-certified professionals, the consensus was that the CWLS credential was an asset to the field, even if the individual did not choose to seek certification.
Increased retention of child welfare attorneys	While this was not directly measured by this evaluation, preliminary evidence from group comparisons of the average length of practice suggest that the credential might be helpful for increasing retention. Further, higher compensation amongst CWLS could also serve to promote retention.

## ATTORNEYS — EQUITY-CENTERED OUTCOMES

TABLE 28: Summary of evaluation findings to support equity-centered outcomes of CWLS credential

Hypothesized Outcome	Evaluation Finding
Increased cultural humility, knowledge, and competency	Factor analysis findings demonstrated that CWLS scored higher in advocacy and procedural competence, particularly on skills related to cultural humility. This evidence suggests that CWLS not only have enhanced recognition of cultural humility in their practice, but more comprehensive integration of such skills across legal advocacy.
Increased access to growth, development, and compensation opportunities	CWLS were more likely to receive training and continuing education from national entities, as well from a wider variety of sources, suggesting that the credential promotes access to development, learning, and networking. Further, CWLS earn higher compensation for both child welfare law and other types of law practices, highlighting the impact of the credential on earning potential.
Increased diversity and representation within the field of child welfare law	In comparison to non-certified professionals, CWLS are less racially and ethnically diverse, particularly with Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and multiracial professionals. CWLS and non-certified groups had similar rates of individuals with disabilities, and gender and sexual minorities.
Increased ability to challenge racism and discrimination	Factor analysis findings related to cultural humility skills highlight the impact of the credential on infusing cultural humility throughout legal and procedural advocacy. These findings suggest that CWLS might be more equipped to address racism, discrimination, and racial disproportionality in the child welfare system.

## ATTORNEYS — SUCCESS METRICS

TABLE 29: Summary of evaluation findings to support attorney success metrics of CWLS credential

Metric	Evaluation Finding
Increased knowledge and behavior across core competencies and cultural humility  Increased advocacy for client's cultural practices	Statistical testing across individual quality indicators and factor analysis findings provide evidence to support that the CWLS credential is increasing knowledge across core competencies and cultural humility. Relationships between quality indicators, both in regression analysis and factor analysis highlight the credential's impact on promoting skills that are interconnected and contribute to overall representation quality. Further, evaluation evidence supports the utility of the credential for increasing advocacy for client's cultural practices. One relative weakness found within the evaluation for both CWLS and non-certified law professionals pertained to inquiring about Native American heritage. Both groups were relatively weak on this quality indicator.
Increased use of techniques that mitigate bias	As indicated by factor analysis, CWLS performed better overall with factors that included reviewing, discussing, and utilizing mental health evaluations in legal advocacy and case strategy. Given that mental health evaluations have the potential to yield and exacerbate bias, group differences related to these skills demonstrate that the credential is increasing the use of techniques that mitigate bias. Further, evidence related to CWLS' higher scores with making objections, applying statutes and case law in oral and written advocacy, and filing appeals, indicates that the credential is building foundational knowledge and strengthening application of techniques that can mitigate bias.
Increased engagement in reflexivity and peer consultation	Both CWLS and non-certified attorneys ranked similarly in engagement in peer consultation, with slightly higher rates of CWLS stating that they utilize peer consultation.

Metric	Evaluation Finding
Increased advocacy for fidelity, assurance of reasonable efforts, and child-centered decision-making	There were statistically significant group differences, favoring CWLS, for the application of child development knowledge in legal advocacy. Further, the CWLS group scored consistently better than non-certified counterparts across quality indicators related to procedural advocacy and statutory expertise. This evidence suggests that the credential is effectively promoting skills to ensure child-centered decision making. While this evaluation did not directly measure assurance of reasonable efforts, group differences in filing appeals, making objections, and utilizing oral and written statutory expertise highlights the potential for the CWLS credential to promote adherence to this foundational legal requirement.
Increased awareness of the importance of compensation-driven actions for rewarding and retaining CWLS professionals (systemic attitude and behavior change that improves compensation practices)	While this evaluation did not specifically measure systemic attitudes and behavior changes related to compensation, evaluation evidence highlights that CWLS are receiving higher compensation than non-certified counterparts, which demonstrate the credential's impact on promoting CWLS compensation growth and investment in high-quality child welfare attorneys. <sup>26</sup> Qualitative data also supports the observation across the field that compensation is improving. While these shifts cannot be specifically attributed to the CWLS credential itself, higher rates of compensation for certified professionals certainly indicate that the credential may be playing a role in upward trends.
Increased compensation and professional upward mobility options at the state and local levels for CWLS attorneys  Increased CWLS professionals receiving compensation, bonuses, and promotions	There were mixed findings related to the credential's facilitation of a career pathway in child welfare law. CWLS in the evaluation sample contained more judges, agency representation, and attorneys that specialized in serving specific populations. That said, the non-certified group included higher rates of those in administrative and supervisory roles. While the evaluation did not specifically measure promotions or bonuses, compensation differences between groups strongly support economic upward mobility for CWLS.
Increased national growth of certified, high-quality representation  Increased national and state CWLS attorney prevalence	National and state CWLS prevalence and growth rates were not evaluated given the need for longitudinal examination, yet evidence supported the role of the CWLS credential in promoting high-quality representation.
Increased diversity amongst CWLS attorneys	Growth rates of diversity amongst CWLS were not measured in this evaluation, given the need to examine that indicator longitudinally. However, evidence from this evaluation highlighted that the CWLS population was less racially and ethnically diverse than the non-certified population captured in this survey.
Increased retention rates of child welfare attorneys	Retention rates were not directly measured in this evaluation, yet given that CWLS have been in child welfare law practice longer on average than non-certified counterparts, there is the potential for the credential to impact retention.

26 The study did not investigate change in compensation trends over time and whether compensation increases are occurring industry-wide.

## Recommendations

The CWLS evaluation yielded a significant amount of data and evidence that the credential is making positive impacts on quality of representation. The following section details recommendations for making certification advancements and demonstrating future impact.

### Expanding the Credential's Reach

#### Help Law Professionals See the Benefit

The CWLS evaluation not only aimed to determine the benefits of the CWLS credential; it also sought to understand barriers related to obtaining the certification. One primary barrier was related to the lack of perceived benefit, particularly when practicing in a geographical area without existing CWLS professionals.

*“We use a public defender model here which means half of my case load is criminal defense. It doesn’t make sense to me to spend so much time and energy on getting a certification that only helps me with half of my case load.”* —LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

As evidenced by the evaluation results, there are opportunities to help law professionals fully understand the benefit of the credential, such as:

- The credential directly improves legal skills regardless of practice discipline, such as:
  - Legal knowledge and statutory expertise
  - Advocacy and procedural competence
  - Enhanced skills related to individualized case planning
  - Engagement of multidisciplinary skills
  - Application of child development knowledge
  - Application of cultural humility skills
- The credential improves earning potential across all areas of law
  - CWLS earned more in the field of child welfare law than their non-certified counterparts, were more likely to be in higher earning brackets, and also had higher earnings in supplementary law practice.
- CWLS preparation directly impacts practice and increases confidence:
  - Qualitative data from certified child welfare law professionals highlighted the role of preparing for the certification exam as directly impacting the quality of their practice.<sup>27</sup>

*“I still refer to the Red Book and my notes that I took while I was studying for the test. I took the test a few years back but just last week I had a tricky case and remembered something that I wrote down while I was studying. I went back to my notes and was able to use that information to help me with my case.”* —LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

### Increase Diversity and Enhance Pathways

Building upon the findings from the 2023 Equity Audit, this evaluation found that non-certified populations were more racially and ethnically diverse than the CWLS population in this survey. Qualitative data examined potential reasons behind this, which yielded contradictory findings. When comparing certain geographical areas, such as Georgia, California, Texas, and Louisiana, there were similar rates of racial and ethnic diversity across the CWLS and non-certified law professional populations. Notably, in Georgia and Louisiana,

<sup>27</sup> The exam is based on the contents of NACC’s publication, *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and Agencies in Neglect, Abuse, and Dependency Cases*, more commonly known as the Red Book.

certification application and maintenance fees are covered by the state, and California has the highest proportion of CWLS whose fees are covered by their employer. Yet, from a national perspective, there was less diversity amongst the CWLS population than non-certified. This indicates that in areas where CWLS have a strong presence, the same barriers to diverse recruitment and credentialing do not exist. Conversely, in geographical areas with fewer CWLS there may be decreased awareness, perceived value, and access to the credential.

*“I didn’t even know about this certification. Nobody I know has that and we just kind of keep to ourselves in this state. It’s not like I have bad perceptions of it, but I just don’t know anything about the CWLS.”* — LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

## Create Affinity Groups

There is an opportunity to make concerted efforts to promote the credential in geographical areas with fewer CWLS, particularly to highlight the existence of the credential and the value-add. One finding from the 2023 Equity Audit suggested that there might be more structural barriers for Black/African American, Indigenous, and Hispanic child welfare law professionals which prevent them from seeking the credential. For instance, experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace, or pay disparities, might make it harder to prioritize seeking certification.

Affinity groups could help build community among racially and ethnically diverse and gender-diverse child welfare attorneys. Leveraging of affinity groups for those preparing for the credential, and also for those who have achieved the credential, could combat barriers posed by structural inequalities in the field and buffer against cumulative stress and strain.

*“As a gender-diverse child welfare attorney, I always have to be prepared for extra layers of difficulty on the job. How will I be treated by the judge? How will my client be treated? It’s a lot more stress in addition to this field already being very stressful and difficult. On top of that, the pay makes it really hard to pursue certification. If my partner didn’t make a good income, I wouldn’t be able to feed and house myself on what I make.”* — LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

## Subsidize Costs for Under-Represented Groups

Non-certified law professionals reported that cost was a primary reason why they chose not to pursue the CWLS credential. Many also noted that their employer did not subsidize the cost, and that they perceived little impact on economic attainment as a result of achieving the credential. While some cost-offsetting measures should happen at the systems level, there are opportunities to also augment costs at the individual level. For instance, NACC could direct fundraising efforts toward identifying donors interested in sponsoring the certification costs and prioritize applicants who might face identity-related barriers. Such targeted fundraising efforts toward subsidizing certification costs could show donors the direct impact of their donation, while also improving diversity amongst the CWLS population. Rather than presenting cost subsidies as scholarships, a donor campaign of this nature could provide low- or no-cost certification applications and/or renewal fees for under-represented populations.

*“My employer doesn’t pay for it anymore and I couldn’t afford to maintain it, so I let my certification lapse.”* — LAW PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT

## Communicating the Value-Add to States

There is an opportunity to use evaluation findings to facilitate buy-in and investment from state entities such as the Court Improvement Program or workforce development funds, and philanthropic donors who wish to

invest in child welfare improvements. In addition, efforts can be made to ensure that currently available Title IV-E funds are being used to support efforts to enhance legal representation quality as a federally endorsed approach to promoting high-quality legal representation in child welfare (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2017).

Findings from the CWLS evaluation study highlight numerous and considerable impacts on child welfare representation quality that would be of benefit to state entities. Evidence from this evaluation highlights that there are empirical differences in representation quality when comparing CWLS to non-certified child welfare law professionals.

- Certified attorneys consistently outperformed their non-certified counterparts in procedural and statutory dimensions, suggesting that the CWLS certification program successfully fosters these critical competencies, and is therefore a worthwhile return on investment in the form of promoting higher-quality representation within the community, reducing systemic burden within the child welfare and court systems, and promoting protective factors for families that prevent maltreatment.
- There is a connection between quality of legal representation and cost savings related to prevention or reduction of foster care placement and the prevention of surveillance and lengthy child welfare system involvement.<sup>28</sup>
- As evidenced by the evaluation findings, CWLS were found to be more frequently advocating for client-specific supports and accommodations, as compared to non-certified counterparts ( $t = 3.45, p = 0.001$ ). When attorneys can support clients in accessing resources and basic needs, the family is able to build protective factors that prevent child maltreatment in the future. Using a protective-factors lens, the actions of high-quality attorneys can promote family stability, which is a cost savings to the state.

Key points that can be communicated to states and donors alike include:

- Certified attorneys show strengths in procedural, legal, and holistic advocacy dimensions;
- The CWLS credential significantly impacts professional preparedness; and
- CWLS performed better than their non-certified counterparts in skills such as procedural advocacy and competence, legal knowledge and statutory expertise, advocating for individualized case plans, using a multidisciplinary lens to incorporate mental health evaluations and educational advocacy, application of child development knowledge, use of cultural humility, and filing appeals.

## Better Understanding Skills

The CWLS evaluation also highlighted the ways in which groups of skills might be better understood, taught, and measured. The following section details findings related to skill gaps, opportunities, and implications for practice.

### Communication Skills

CWLS were more effective at incorporating knowledge of child development in legal advocacy than non-certified attorneys. There is an opportunity to build on this advanced skill promoted by the certification to scaffold higher-quality communication skills. Knowledge of child development could also be incorporated into promoting an understanding of how youth brain development and trauma impact the way information is heard and interpreted. Further training could facilitate the development of strategies that strengthen the ability to not only communicate, but check for understanding, and promote information retention for youth clients.

<sup>28</sup> Thornton, E., & Gwim, B. (2012). High-quality legal representation for parents in child welfare cases result in improved outcomes for families and potential cost savings. *Family Law Quarterly*, 46(1), 139-154.

In their self-described abilities, using the five-factor model, CWLS demonstrated greater competencies in four of the five measured areas, all except for client-centered communication, where non-certified attorneys performed slightly better. While these differences were small and not statistically significant, it was the only area in which non-certified professionals outperformed CWLS using that model. This presents an opportunity to provide skill development related to client-centered communication practices, particularly regarding how well client perspectives are understood and integrated. Skills such as translating client wishes into advocacy, engaging in problem solving, and helping clients develop realistic expectations of the legal process could dramatically improve client-centered communication.

CWLS, who demonstrated strengths in procedural and statutory dimensions, would benefit from additional emphasis on client-centered communication, particularly the micro-skills that comprise client-centered communication, to ensure their practices remain grounded in the needs and perspectives of the children and families they serve. In addition, the survey tools developed alongside individuals with lived expertise, could serve as a potential resource for attorneys to receive valuable feedback from clients. Further recommendations about the use of the survey tools will be covered in subsequent recommendations.

## Use of Mental Health Evaluations

Throughout the co-design process, individuals with lived expertise noted the importance of mental health evaluations; attention to these documents and use of them within advocacy were distinguished as separate skills. When mental health evaluations were not appropriately critiqued and incorporated into the legal strategy, adverse and avoidable consequences resulted for the client. As such, the development of the law professional survey conceptualized the review, discussion, and incorporation of mental health evaluations as separate and distinct skills.

This is an important insight, not only for CWLS certification preparation and training, but for the field at large. Factor analysis, namely the five-factor model, demonstrated that discussion of mental health evaluations and incorporation of such information into legal strategy, were both related to procedural and legal advocacy. The reviewing of mental health evaluations was related to holistic case management, meaning the attorney's ability to apply multidisciplinary skills such as knowledge of mental health, trauma, and education to better understand the client and client's needs. In contrast, discussing and utilizing mental health evaluations was related to the skill of incorporating such information into the legal strategy. Factor analysis demonstrated that CWLS were more adept at these skills across the board, indicating that the certification, in many ways, facilitates the development and application of these distinct skills.<sup>29</sup>

There is an opportunity to incorporate this knowledge and awareness into supplementary trainings and technical assistance. Findings related to mental health evaluations particularly demonstrate the certification's ability to promote advanced and nuanced skills that affect multiple quality domains.

## Opportunities for Future Research and Evaluation

### Promoting Tools for the Field

The survey instruments designed for this evaluation, anchored in lived expertise, provide a way to incorporate feedback from clients that is consistent with lived expertise definitions of representation quality, alongside

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29 Statistical testing by group for individual indicators showed that the non-certified group showed slightly higher, non-significant scores than CWLS for reviewing mental health evaluations. Yet factor analysis demonstrated that when considered as a group of skills under the factor of holistic approaches, CWLS scored statistically significantly higher than non-certified professionals for this factor.

a complementary instrument for law professionals to self-evaluate. While this evaluation was not able to segment the experiences of clients based on the certification status of their attorney, there remains opportunity to leverage these tools for continued assessment of quality.

It is recommended that the law professional survey (see Appendix D) and the lived expertise survey (see Lived Expertise Data Report Appendix D) be made available to child welfare law professionals for the purpose of promoting client feedback, engagement of individuals with lived expertise, and industry application of the quality indicators informed by lived expertise.

## Further Group Comparison Studies

The law professional survey demonstrated promising empirical application for the field, toward the evaluation of child welfare representation quality and use in understanding CWLS credential impacts. It is recommended that the law professional survey and the lived expertise survey be distributed to law offices (for use by their attorneys and clients) for testing alongside each other so that two additional insights can be gleaned:

1. Examining survey response differences from individuals with lived expertise based on the certification status of their attorney; and
2. Examining client and attorney perspectives regarding representation quality to determine key differences in the ways in which attorneys self-rate, and the perspectives of clients.

Doing so would enable further testing of the validity and reliability of the survey instruments, while also lending valuable insights for the impact of the CWLS credential and the ways in which attorneys and clients perceive representation quality.

## Alignment with the Red Book

The content of *Child Welfare Law and Practice: Representing Children, Parents, and Agencies in Neglect, Abuse, and Dependency Cases*, commonly referred to as the Red Book, provided insight about certification exam preparation and content knowledge required for obtaining the CWLS credential. Further cross-walking of the Red Book content and quality constructs developed and measured in this evaluation could lend valuable insight as to overlaps of preparation material and the findings of this current and future evaluations. This would also help framing and dissemination of study findings and lend insight into the ways in which the co-designed tools uniquely depict the CWLS impact.

## Further Examination of Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were collected by means of Ripple Effects Mapping focus groups and qualitative interviews. These data were primarily analyzed for the purpose of supporting and describing quantitative evaluation approaches and addressing research questions unique to assessing gaps and opportunities for the CWLS program. Ninety-eight individuals participated in the qualitative investigation (52 individuals with lived expertise and 46 law professionals) which yielded a vast amount of qualitative data. There is an opportunity to use this data for further inquiry and to better understand those with child welfare representation lived experience side-by-side with child welfare attorney experiences. For example, themes related to similarities and differences in experiences could be explored, as well as barriers faced by attorneys that translated into case-level challenges for youth, parents, and kinship caregivers. While the qualitative sample were unrelated, meaning the lived expertise sample were not clients of the child welfare law professional sample, important insights could be gleaned regarding systemic inequities that both affect attorneys and clients, and the ways in which those experiences interact.

## Conclusion

The evaluation of the CWLS credential highlighted valuable and observable implications for individuals with lived expertise, the child welfare law profession, and the child welfare system at large. Rooted in the experiences of those with lived expertise, evaluation tools, approaches, and insights were yielded from the prioritization of those most impacted. Evaluation results clearly pointed to the ways in which the CWLS certification program is facilitating high-quality representation and promoting qualities defined by those with lived expertise as most important.

## Appendix A: About the Evaluation Team

### Participatory Action Research Collective

#### Research and Evaluation Consultants

*Specializing in Preventative and Pre-Petition Evaluation and Engaging Individuals with Child Welfare System Lived Expertise*



#### About Us

Participatory Action Research Collective (PARC) was founded by Stef Sloan, PhD, in 2022, to specialize in mixed-methods participatory action research and evaluation for child welfare law, justice, and family well-being initiatives. The team combines lived expertise and advanced evaluation methods to demonstrate preventative and pre-petition program outcomes and impact.

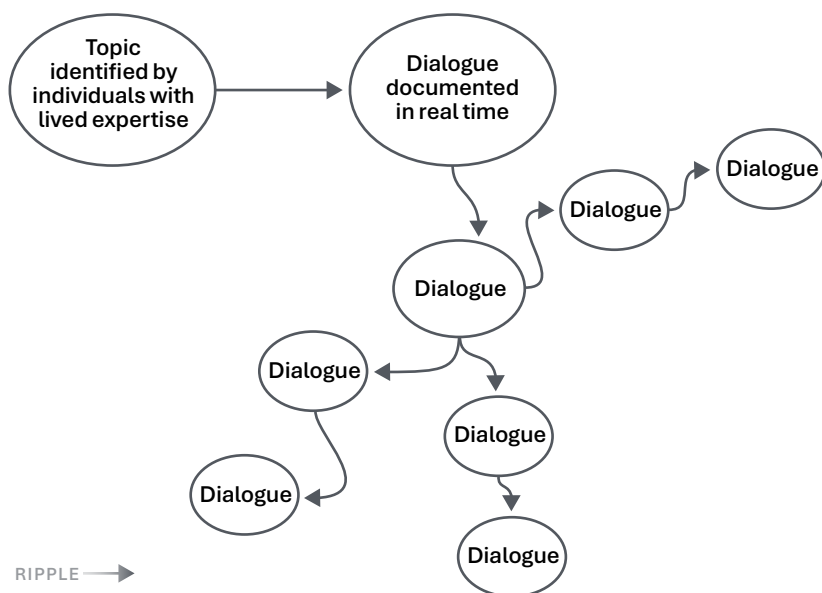
The PARC team includes researchers with experience in survey and instrument development and validation, advanced quantitative and statistical methods, visual participatory and qualitative methods, lived expertise engagement, data visualization, grant writing, facilitation, and reporting, and cost analysis. PARC team members also hold subject matter expertise in child welfare, child development, family systems, family trauma, protective factors, child maltreatment prevention, and child welfare forensic science. In addition, projects engage specialists in program design, report and graphic design, and strategic framing to ensure high-quality and effective dissemination of evaluation results.

The PARC team has conducted preventative and pre-petition evaluations for programs in a variety of states, as well as evaluated national child welfare law initiatives. Dr. Sloan and colleagues have also designed and implemented local preventative and pre-petition legal clinics, leveraged federal child maltreatment prevention funds to support program sustainability, and worked at the state and federal policy levels to advocate for the use of preventative and pre-petition legal services.

## Appendix B: Ripple Effects Mapping, Participatory Action Research, and Data Collection Resources

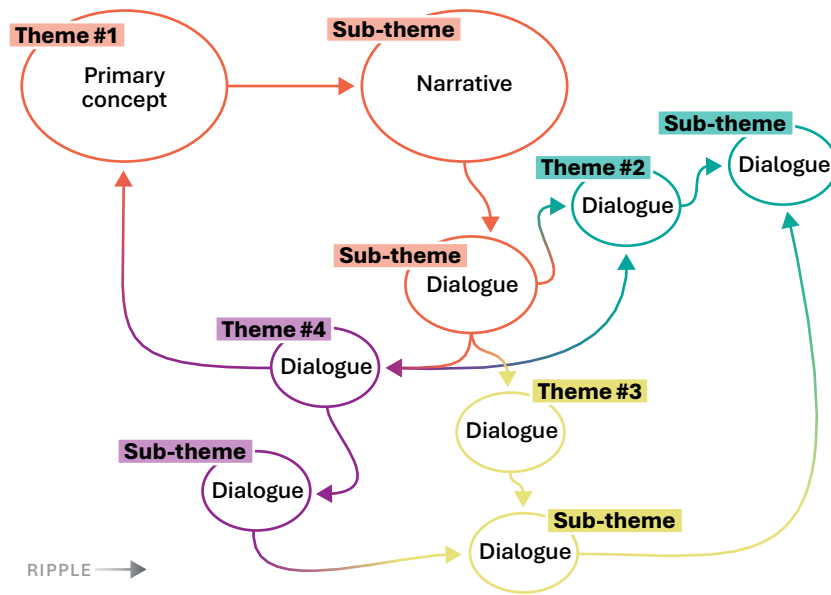
Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory action research method used to engage individuals in a collective meaning-making, focus group setting. REM is intended to engage all individuals that experience a program — in this case, the child welfare system — either directly or indirectly, to discuss benefits, insights, experiences, and challenges. Using visual data mapping in real-time, REM brings together individuals from varying perspectives and standpoints to discuss program experiences, outcomes, and impact. Participants engage in real-time meaning-making of the data, which ensures the use of anti-racist, equity-focused, power-sharing approaches that truly center the perspectives of those most impacted. Specifically, this method was deployed within this study by engaging participants in dialogue while the facilitator visually mapped their experiences, yielding rich qualitative and visual data. Through a mind-mapping exercise, participants discussed experiences related to child welfare lived expertise, experiences with legal representation, and overall reflections of the child welfare system, to generate insight about the scope of impact. REM data informed key aspects of the evaluation’s focus, survey development, and qualitative evaluation insights.

The following diagram shows how dialogue is captured in real-time in REM focus groups:



Visual data were analyzed to understand directional relationships between themes (ripples). Narrative segments (phrases uttered during the focus group) were then color coded based on themes generated during the narrative analysis process. The visual data were then collapsed and combined wherever overlapping or redundant codes were identified and then further reduced until there were no code redundancies were present in the data. Visual data were then further analyzed by isolating themes and sub-themes to examine inter-theme relationships and directionality. Visual data were then used to provide further insight into qualitative themes, particularly related to directional relationships between themes.

The following example shows how narrative segments are thematically coded and subsequently color coded, and the ways in which ripples provide insight into the interconnected nature of themes:



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## Appendix C: IRB Approval



April 25, 2024

Stef Sloan, PhD.  
Stef Sloan PhD LLC  
725 NE Todd George Road  
Lees Summit, MO 64086

Re: National Association of Counsel for Children  
Protocol Number and Study Title: NACC\_01; National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC)  
Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) Program 2024 Annual Evaluation  
Salus Number: 24253

Dear Stef Sloan, PhD.:

On **April 02, 2024**, Salus IRB determined this research involves no more than minimal risk and qualifies for expedited review in accordance with 21 CFR 56.110 and 45 CFR 46.110, under the following research category: Category 6 and Category 7

Using the expedited review process, the following actions occurred on the above referenced study:

Approved:

- Principal Investigator
- Investigative site(s)
- Protocol V1
- Informed Consent Document Youth\_Parent Focus Group\_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Informed Consent Document Law Professional Focus Group\_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Informed Consent Document Law Professional Survey Information Statement\_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Informed Consent Document Youth\_Parent Survey Information Statement\_V2, English version, with modifications made by Salus IRB
- Enrollment of Economically Disadvantaged
- Law Professional Survey dated 3\_7\_24
- Youth Parent Survey Questions dated 3\_13\_24
- Survey Recruitment Flyer
- Youth/Parent Focus Group Recruitment Flyer

Salus IRB does not require IRB review/approval on subsequent versions of recruitment or study material when only the study dates change, e.g., Subject Study Calendars, Recruiting Scripts, Subject Emails.

Study document(s) reflecting the modifications made by the Board are attached. In the event you wish to discuss any of the modifications, please contact our office. **Only copies of the Informed Consent Document containing Salus IRB approval may be used for enrollment.**

Salus IRB  
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## Appendix D: Child Welfare Law Professional Survey

The survey is displayed in true format to the export for scientific transparency and is thus visually inconsistent with the designed report above.

### Survey Flow

**Block: Screening question (1 Question)**  
**Standard: Information statement (3 Questions)**  
**Standard: Demographics (19 Questions)**  
**Standard: Professional Information (11 Questions)**

**Branch: New Branch**

**If Do you work as a child welfare lawyer, judge, or in a related professional field? Yes, I work in a field related to child welfare law Is Selected**

**EndSurvey:**

**Branch: New Branch**

**If Do you work as a child welfare lawyer, judge, or in a related professional field? Yes, I work as a judge and preside over child welfare cases Is Selected**

**Block: Judge Questions (7 Questions)**

**Branch: New Branch**

**If Do you work as a child welfare lawyer, judge, or in a related professional field? Yes, I work as a child welfare lawyer Is Selected**

**Block: Attorney Questions (7 Questions)**  
**Standard: Attorney Questions (7 Questions)**  
**Standard: Judge Questions (7 Questions)**

**Start of Block: Screening question**

**Q1 Do you work as a child welfare lawyer, judge, or in a related professional field?**

- Yes, I work as a child welfare lawyer (1)
- Yes, I work as a judge and preside over child welfare cases (2)
- Yes, I work in a field related to child welfare law (3)
- No (4)

*Skip To: End of Survey If do you work as a child welfare lawyer, judge, or in a related professional field? = No*

**End of Block: Screening question**

**Start of Block: Information statement**

## Q2 KEY INFORMATION

This research is to evaluate the impact of the National Association of Counsel for Children's Child Welfare Law Specialist Program. Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. Your participation will take approximately 30 minutes or less. You will be asked to take an online survey about your experiences as a law professional working with cases that involve the child welfare system. More detailed information on the procedures can be found below. There are no risks anticipated from taking this survey. There are no direct benefits for participating in this survey but you might feel a sense of agency when sharing your professional experiences. Your alternative to participating in this research study is not to participate.

---

## Q3 INTRODUCTION

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. We are conducting this study to evaluate the National Association of Counsel for Children's Child Welfare Law Specialist Program. We are asking questions about your experience as a law professional working with cases that involve the child welfare system. This will entail your completion of a survey. Your participation is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey may include some questions that seem personal or upsetting. The content of the survey should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Remember, you do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer and can end your participation at any time. This survey will help inform our report about the impact of the Child Welfare Law Specialist program. The report will describe the information you and other survey respondents provide, but your responses will be kept anonymous and no information that could identify you will be included. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of experiences with legal representation resulting from child welfare involvement. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. This survey will ask you for some identifying information such as the state and county you practice in, and the name of the organization you work for. It is possible, however, with internet communications, that through intent or accident, someone other than the intended recipient may see your responses. Ensuring Internet connection security will decrease the likelihood of this. If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail. Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to take part in this study and that you are at least 18 years old.

Sincerely, Stef Sloan, Ph.D.  
 Principal Investigator  
 Stef Sloan, PhD, LLC.  
 816-313-2207  
 drstefsloan@gmail.com

-----

Q4 Please make your selection

- I would like to take the survey (selecting this option means you agree to the above information statement). (1)
- I do not want to take the survey. (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Please make your selection = I do not want to take the survey.*

**End of Block: Information statement**

**Start of Block: Demographics**

Q5 We would like to know more about you. This section will include questions about your race, ethnicity, gender, background, profession, etc. This section includes 11 questions and will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

-----

Q6 Which of the following best reflects your **profession**:

- Attorney (1)
- Judge (2)
- Other (please describe): (3) \_\_\_\_\_

*Skip To: Q8 If Which of the following best reflects your profession: != Attorney*

-----

Q7 Who do you **represent** in child welfare law proceedings? (select all that apply)

- Parents (1)
  - Children (2)
  - Kinship caregivers (3)
  - Child welfare agency (4)
  - Someone else: (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q8 Which **state** do you practice in? (If you practice in more than one state, please select the state you primarily practice in)

- Alabama (1)
- Alaska (2)
- Arizona (3)
- Arkansas (4)
- California (5)
- Colorado (6)
- Connecticut (7)
- Delaware (8)
- District of Columbia (9)
- Florida (10)
- Georgia (11)
- Hawaii (12)
- Idaho (13)
- Illinois (14)
- Indiana (15)
- Iowa (16)
- Kansas (17)
- Kentucky (18)
- Louisiana (19)
- Maine (20)
- Maryland (21)
- Massachusetts (22)
- Michigan (23)
- Minnesota (24)
- Mississippi (25)
- Missouri (26)
- Montana (27)
- Nebraska (28)
- Nevada (29)
- New Hampshire (30)
- New Jersey (31)
- New Mexico (32)
- New York (33)
- North Carolina (34)
- North Dakota (35)
- Ohio (36)

- Oklahoma (37)
  - Oregon (38)
  - Pennsylvania (39)
  - Puerto Rico (40)
  - Rhode Island (41)
  - South Carolina (42)
  - South Dakota (43)
  - Tennessee (44)
  - Texas (45)
  - Utah (46)
  - Vermont (47)
  - Virginia (48)
  - Washington (49)
  - West Virginia (50)
  - Wisconsin (51)
  - Wyoming (52)
- 

Q9 What **county** do you practice in?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q10 Do you practice in a **rural** or **low-density** area?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Not sure (3)
- 

Q11 I work:

- For a law practice, organization, or agency (optional: what is the name of the organization?) (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - As a solo practitioner (2)
  - As a judicial officer (3)
  - In an administrative or supervisory role (4)
  - In a policy or academic position (5)
  - Other (please describe): (6) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q12 What is your **race** and/or **ethnicity**? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the spaces provided)

- Indigenous American or Alaska Native (1)
- Asian (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Hispanic or Latinx (4)
- Middle Eastern or North African (5)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (6)
- White (7)
- Prefer to self-describe: (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer (9)

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = Indigenous American or Alaska Native*

Q40 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Indigenous American or Alaska Native Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, Maya, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = Asian*

Q41 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Asian

- Asian Indian (1)
- Chinese (2)
- Filipino (3)
- Japanese (4)
- Korean (5)
- Vietnamese (6)
- Another group (enter, for example, Pakistani, Hmong, Afghan, etc.): (7)
- \_\_\_\_\_

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = Black or African American*

Q42 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Black or African American

- African American (1)
- Jamaican (2)
- Haitian (3)
- Nigerian (4)
- Ethiopian (5)
- Somali (6)
- Another group (enter, for example, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, Ghanian, Congolese, etc.): (7) \_\_\_\_\_

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = Hispanic or Latinx*

Q43 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Hispanic or Latinx

- Mexican (1)
- Puerto Rican (2)
- Salvadoran (3)
- Cuban (4)
- Guatemalan (5)
- Another group (enter, for example, Colombian, Honduran, Spaniard, etc.): (6)  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = Middle Eastern or North African*

Q44 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Middle Eastern or North African

- Lebanese (1)
- Iranian (2)

- Egyptian (3)
  - Syrian (4)
  - Iraqi (5)
  - Israeli (6)
  - Palestinian (7)
  - Another group (enter, for example, Moroccan, Yemeni, Kurdish, etc.): (8)
- 

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander*

Q45 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- Native Hawaiian (1)
  - Samoan (2)
  - Chamorro (3)
  - Tongan (4)
  - Fijian (5)
  - Marshallese (6)
  - Another group (enter, for example, Chuukese, Palauan, Tahitian, etc.): (7)
- 

*Display this question:*

*If What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply and enter additional details in the sp... = White*

Q46 Please specify: What is your race and/or ethnicity? -- White

- English (1)
- German (2)
- Irish (3)
- Italian (4)
- Polish (5)
- Scottish (6)

- Another group (enter, for example, French, Swedish, Norwegian, etc.): (7)

\_\_\_\_\_

Q13 Which **gender** best describes you?

- Male/man (1)
- Female/woman (2)
- Nonbinary, gender queer, or not exclusively male or female (3)
- Another gender: (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer (5)

Q14 Do you consider yourself to be transgender, non-binary, or another gender?

- No, I am not transgender (1)
- Yes, I am a transgender women (assigned male at birth and identify myself as a woman) (2)
- Yes, I am a transgender man (assigned female at birth and identity myself as a man) (3)
- Yes, I identify as non-binary, gender queer, or another term (4)
- Prefer to self describe: (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer (6)

Q15 Which of the following best represents how you think about your **sexual orientation**?

- Lesbian or gay (1)
- Straight or heterosexual (not gay or bisexual) (2)
- Bisexual (3)
- Queer (4)
- Pansexual (5)
- Prefer to self describe: (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer (7)

Q16 Do you have a mental or physical condition, impairment, or disability that affects daily activities or requires the use of equipment or technology?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Professional Information

Q17 This section will ask you questions about certification status, income, and questions about your professional background. This section includes 10 questions and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Q18 Have you obtained the Child Welfare Law Specialist credential?

- Yes, and my certification is current (1)
- Yes, but my certification has lapsed (please describe the reasons for not re-certifying):  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_
- I have an application in process (4)
- No (5)

*Display this question:*

*If Have you obtained the Child Welfare Law Specialist credential? = Yes, and my certification is current*

*Or Have you obtained the Child Welfare Law Specialist credential? = I have an application in process*

Q19 Did/does your employer offer additional resources, support, or compensation (i.e., time off, a bonus or increased salary) for achieving and maintaining certification?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Q20 Where do you most often receive **training** or **technical assistance** related to child welfare law? (select all that apply)

- Professional organizations (i.e., ABA, NACC, NCJFCJ, etc.) (1)
- State Court Improvement Program (2)
- State Bar (3)
- In-house organizational training (4)
- Somewhere else: (5) \_\_\_\_\_

*Display this question:*

*If Do you work as a child welfare lawyer, judge, or in a related professional field? = Yes, I work as a child welfare lawyer*



Q21 How long have you been practicing child welfare law? (in years)

---



---

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q22 Please select the range that best fits your annual compensation for **child welfare law**:

- \$20,000 or less (1)
  - \$20,001 - \$30,000 (2)
  - \$30,001 - \$40,000 (3)
  - \$40,001 - \$50,000 (4)
  - \$50,001 - \$60,000 (5)
  - \$60,001 - \$70,000 (6)
  - \$70,001 - \$80,000 (7)
  - \$80,001 - \$90,000 (8)
  - \$90,001 - \$100,000 (9)
  - \$100,001 - \$110,000 (10)
  - \$110,001 - \$120,000 (11)
  - \$120,001 - \$130,000 (12)
  - \$130,001 - \$140,000 (13)
  - \$140,001 - \$150,000 (14)
  - \$150,001 or more (15)
- 

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q23 Do you practice another type of law in addition to child welfare law?

- I currently practice another type of law (1)
  - I have practiced other types of law in the past (2)
  - No, I do not practice other types of law (3)
- 

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q24 Please select the range that best fits your annual compensation practicing **other types of law**:

- \$20,000 or less (1)

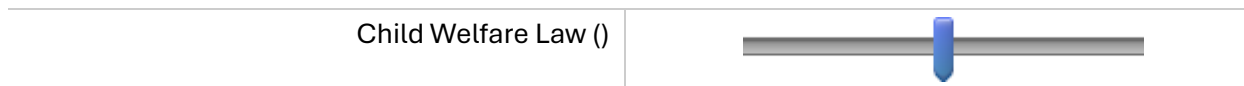
- \$20,001 - \$30,000 (2)
- \$30,001 - \$40,000 (3)
- \$40,001 - \$50,000 (4)
- \$50,001 - \$60,000 (5)
- \$60,001 - \$70,000 (6)
- \$70,001 - \$80,000 (7)
- \$80,001 - \$90,000 (8)
- \$90,001 - \$100,000 (9)
- \$100,001 - \$110,000 (10)
- \$110,001 - \$120,000 (11)
- \$120,001 - \$130,000 (12)
- \$130,001 - \$140,000 (13)
- \$140,001 - \$150,000 (14)
- \$150,001 or more (15)

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q25 Use the slider to indicate what **portion/percentage** of your practice is **child welfare law** versus other types of law:

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Q26 What drew you to the field of child welfare law?

---



---

Q27 What is most important to you when deciding to **continue** practicing child welfare law? (select all that apply)

- Compensation (1)
- Colleagues (2)
- Passion about making a difference (3)

- Training and education (4)
- Professional advancement (5)
- Serving the field (7)
- Something else: (6) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Professional Information

---

Start of Block: Judge Questions

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge

Q35 This section will ask questions about your role as a child welfare judge. This section includes 4 questions and will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

---

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge

Q47 How long have you been on the bench?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge

Q48 How long have you been hearing child welfare cases?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge

Q36 Before becoming a judge, what area of law did you practice?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge

Q37 When an attorney appears before you in a child welfare case, do you know whether or not the attorney has been certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Sometimes (3)

*Skip To: Q39 If When an attorney appears before you in a child welfare case, do you know whether or not the attor... = No*

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge*

Q38 Do you see a difference in advocacy skills for CWLS attorney's in comparison to non-CWLS attorneys? (for example: better oral advocacy, written advocacy, more citing of case law, more coherent arguments, etc.)

- Yes (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Judge*

Q39 Select the top three things that inform your decision-making in child welfare cases:

- Knowledge of child development in legal advocacy (1)
- Support and accommodations needed for the family to be successful (2)
- Meeting cultural or identity-related needs of the family (3)
- Information from mental health examinations (4)
- Relevant statutes and case law (5)
- The availability of kinship placements (6)
- Wishes of the child client (7)
- Case plans that meet the individual needs of the family (8)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Condition: Selected Count Is Greater Than or Equal to 1. Skip To: End of Survey.*

**End of Block: Judge Questions**

**Start of Block: Attorney Questions**

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q28 This section will ask questions about your role as a child welfare attorney. This section includes 6 questions and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney

Q29 Indicate how **often** you do the following:

	Every case (1)	Most cases (2)	Some cases (4)	Never (5)	N/A (6)
Meet with clients prior to legal proceedings (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remind clients of meetings and court dates (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Debrief with clients after legal proceedings (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help clients understand the reason(s) behind decisions (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Translate client's wishes into legal advocacy (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apply knowledge of child development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

in legal  
advocacy (6)

Advocate for  
individualized  
case plans (7)

Ask about  
family and  
fictive kin (8)

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q30 Indicate how **often** you do the following:

	Every case (1)	Most cases (2)	Some cases (4)	Never (5)	N/A (6)
Reframe negative narratives applied to the client (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help tell the story from the client's point of view (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advocate for the support and accommodations needed to help the client be successful (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help advocate for children's education (i.e., IEP access, school stability, records transfer, disciplinary matters, etc.) (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Advocate for meeting cultural or identity-related needs (5)

Display this question:

If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney

Q31 Indicate how **often** you do the following:

	Every case (1)	Most cases (2)	Some cases (4)	Never (5)	N/A (6)
Review mental health evaluations conducted in cases (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss mental health evaluations with my clients (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilize mental health evaluations in my legal advocacy (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reference statutes and case law in my oral advocacy (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reference statutes and case law in my written advocacy (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Inquire with clients about whether they have Native American heritage (6)

Advocate for placements across state lines using ICPC or other legal authority (7)

File appeals (or refer them for appeal) when necessary (8)

Make objections to the record when necessary (9)

Advocate for kinship placement (10)

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q32 Do you have access to peers for consultation?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

*Display this question:*

*If Which of the following best reflects your profession: = Attorney*

Q33 Do you consult with peers as needed?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
- 

Q34 How often are you sought out by others in the community to provide advice, support, or technical assistance/training?

- Often (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Never (3)

**End of Block: Attorney Questions**

---