



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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On behalf of the University of Illinois School of Social Work, I would like to welcome all of you to the Illinois Predictive Analytics Forum. I very much appreciate you taking the time to come together today to explore ideas and possibilities in this emerging area, and I regret that a last-minute family health issue precluded me from joining you personally.

I am extremely impressed by the breadth and quality of the participants for today's forum. Our participants include innovative researchers, Illinois state child welfare leaders, advocates, community agency leaders, and others – for what I am sure will be a very thoughtful and important discussion. I know that regardless of the institution you represent or the particular type of work in which you engage, all of you share a deep commitment for developing strategies to improve the well-being of children and their families.

Our forum today occurs in the ongoing difficult context of how to improve services for the many children and families affected by child abuse and neglect. State and community agencies daily face daunting challenges in responding to such issues, and they reach out in many directions for expertise and resources to help them perform as well as possible. The research community is one important avenue of support, and it is our goal to foster the development of higher-impact research collaborations that can be assistive. In particular, we see the possibility, and indeed the responsibility, to bring innovative research to bear on these issues – in partnership with state and local agencies and other community stakeholders.

Predictive analytics, as well as the systemic use of data to inform practice and policy more generally, offer increasing promise in this realm. We are at a juncture where both data processing and aggregation capabilities and new analytic techniques are converging in very promising ways, and we are fortunate today to have assembled so many talented people immersed in usefully navigating these new possibilities. I am especially gratified that we have participants from many Illinois research institutions with long histories of child welfare research leadership, including Chapin Hall Center for Children, Northwestern University, University of Illinois Chicago and UIUC. Although we often travel diverse pathways in our work, we are united by our interest and enthusiasm for collaboration around these problems.

I particularly would like to thank the team that brought this meeting together: Robin Lasota and Tami Fuller from our School of Social Work and Mary Nam and Lina Millett from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Monico Whittington-Eskridge of DCFS also has been a continual source of ideas and support not only in this event but in developing broader state and university partnerships on child welfare issues.

In addition to organizing the entire forum and bringing you together, the team has brought in a great set of panelists to address the application of predictive analytics in diverse settings: Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, the state of California, the state of Wisconsin, and New York City. Our speakers really are at the cutting edge of this emerging line of applied research. Your programs include additional information on each of our speakers, but I would like to welcome

- Emily Putnam-Hornstein, Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Southern California and Erin Dalton, Deputy Director, Office of Analytics, Technology, and Planning, Allegheny County Department of Human Services – who have been engaged with projects in Allegheny County and California
- Michelle Rawlings, Bureau Director, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and Tami Fuller, Director, Children and Family Research Center, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, who will discuss work in Wisconsin, and
- Dana Weiner and Brian Chor from Chapin Hall Center for Children, who will discuss predictive analytics work on which they are engaged with the New York City Administration for Children's Services

I am sure we all will gain a great deal from their expertise and insights. With that, I again would like to turn this over to Robin Lasota, who has been the driving force in bringing this forum together. Please enjoy your day.



Dean and Professor