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# University - Based Child and Family Policy Consortium Newsletter

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## Consortium Member Spotlight: Erikson Institute

By Angela Fenoglio, Doctoral Student, University of Minnesota

For this member spotlight, I spoke with Dr. Jon Korfmacher, Associate Professor and Director of the Child Development PhD Program at the [Erikson Institute](#).

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

**Could you tell me a bit about Erikson's work and your role at the center?**

Erikson Institute is an accredited independent graduate school in applied child development with a focus on the birth through age 8, although our focus has expanded since introducing our social work degree. We've been around since 1966 so we recently celebrated our 50th birthday. Erikson started as a training program for Head Start teachers when that program was initiated, but we developed a master's degree program fairly quickly. Our master's degrees were initially granted by Loyola [University in Chicago], but around the year 2000 we received accreditation to award them ourselves. We currently provide master's degrees in child development, early childhood education, and most recently in social work.

We also have a doctoral program in child development, which we conduct in conjunction with Loyola University in Chicago. That program has been around since 1986 and is a much smaller program than our master's program. It's a somewhat unusual arrangement -- students take about half their coursework at Erikson and half at Loyola and their degrees are conferred by Loyola -- but our affiliation is to Loyola's graduate school and we're not connected to any particular department. Our campus is three floors of an office building so we're basically self-contained and Erikson is one of the few places where students can actually get a masters in child development. We don't have the resources of a large university, but the tradeoff is that our small classes give students a more intimate experience, and they're more connected to the faculty.

We have a strong focus on applied work, so rather than having labs our faculty's research and scholarship is almost all field-based. We do a lot of work with services and programs in Chicago. Barbara Bowman, who was one of our founders, said that she saw the city of Chicago as our laboratory. We have a Center for Children and Families where we provide clinical services to families with young children. We have a director of policy and a research center that's focused on child and family policy as well. We also have the Technology in Early Childhood Center that studies technology and the effects of media on young kids.

**Could you talk a bit about your role at the institute and what brought you to Erikson?**

I'm an associate professor, so I'm one of the faculty here and I direct our doctoral program. I've been here since 1998. Since I was a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, where I worked with Byron Egeland on his and Martha Erickson's home visiting program, I've been interested in how families and young children experience services and support. It was important to me to find that institution that shared my interests, and a lot of the more traditional child development and developmental psychology programs didn't have that applied focus. My mission and Erikson's mission fit well together, so I'm very happy to have found this place.

**The Consortium seeks to inform social policy that optimizes child and family wellbeing. What were your institution's motivations in becoming a Consortium member, and how does the institute's work fit into that mission?**

We came to the Consortium when it was recommended by a colleague. I looked it up and was really impressed with the other members of the Consortium and its focus on early career scholarship, and its promotion of careers within child development that have a more applied bent. It took a few years for me to talk Erikson into joining, because our budget is always very carefully considered, but I thought that this was a good group to be affiliated with, that it would be good for our graduate students to know about the resources that the Consortium offers.

**You've talked about several of the institute's programs but are there any specific issues or projects that you'd like to highlight?**

I primarily study home visiting, specifically early childhood prevention-based home visiting or parent support programs. I've been studying that in different ways since I was a doctoral student; I've always found it an incredibly interesting idea that these services are designed for people who don't necessarily think that they need them. The thing with prevention programs is that people aren't coming to you in search of help with some identified issue or problem; rather, you're coming to them and saying I think there are ways we can support you in this vaguely defined task of being a parent, or raising your children, or helping to promote your children's development. I've always been fascinated by what makes families want to join these programs, and how to define the quality elements of these programs. Home visiting programs have existed now for decades, and there's a continuing thread that they generally result in positive outcomes, but the effects are modest and there's a constant debate in the field about how to strengthen them. The tool that is typically used to study these types of effects is randomized control trials, and the issue with RCTs is that although they're considered the gold standard, and they give you a good comparison, they kind of simplify the story. They give you limited answers to a pretty complex question. So what we're trying to do with our research and development platform is to take more innovative research methods, such as Bayesian methods, to conduct effectiveness trials that are a bit more nimble. We hope to use these methods to understand more targeted questions, like which program works best for whom. We're trying to bring these methods into home visiting and more broadly into applied developmental services. We're one year into a 5-year grant in collaboration with Johns Hopkins and James Bell Associates and it's been a really exciting endeavor.

Another big project we have is an [early math initiative](#), which is focused on helping preschool teachers be more comfortable teaching math, science, and engineering concepts to young children. It turns out that a lot of people who go into early childhood education don't feel comfortable teaching relatively basic math concepts. So we have a project working to train teachers to be able to do that.

Another project that might have more direct policy implications is the implementation of the [Early Development Instrument \(EDI\)](#) in certain Illinois communities. It's a simple screening tool that preschool teachers fill out. Our goal is to have the EDI on every single four-year-old in a community, which yields very broad-based population measures that can give you a snapshot of how children are doing. You can then take that data and feed it back into the community through events such as parent cafes or feedback sessions, and by working with stakeholders you can start to map findings to different areas of the community to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and what we can do to better serve children.

**How would you recommend that Consortium members learn more about the work at Erikson?**

I would suggest that they look at our [website](#)! We recently relaunched our site and while it's a bit of a work in progress I think it's the best way to stay in touch. We also have an active [twitter feed](#) so I recommend that as well.

## Past Consortium Webinars

A recent Consortium webinar, entitled "**Bridging Research and Policy: Insights from American Association for the Advancement of Science Congressional Fellows**," was held on April 9th. The webinar featured presentations by Drs. Elizabeth Day, Emily Douglas, Rashmi Nair, and Catherine Paolucci, doctoral fellows who were staffers in Congress in 2017.

[Watch here](#)

A recent Consortium webinar, entitled "**Looking at Latino Families' Access to Early Care and Education Through Multiple Dimensions**," was held on May 23rd. This webinar featured presentations by an expert panel from the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families, including Danielle Crosby, Lina Guzman, and Michael Lopez. Yvette Sanchez Fuentes of Child Care Aware served as a discussant.

[Watch here](#)

A recent Consortium webinar, entitled "**Coding as a Developmental Playground: Computational Thinking and Robotics in Early Childhood**," was held on May 3rd. The webinar featured a presentation by Dr. Marina Umaschi Bers of Tufts University.

[Watch here](#)

The Consortium does not host webinars during the summer. The 2018-2019 webinar series will begin in the fall. If you are interested in helping plan or presenting a Consortium webinar during the upcoming academic year, please see the information below in the [announcements section](#) on how to submit a proposal.

## Consortium Membership

The CFP Consortium invites new university-based programs to join.

Consortium membership is available at the institutional level and includes, but is not limited to, university-based centers and programs that represent the social, behavioral, and health sciences fields, including anthropology, economics, education, human development, psychology, public health, public policy, and social work. All persons affiliated with a member institution (e.g., faculty, staff, students) benefit from Consortium membership. Please share this information with colleagues who might be interested in having their institution join the Consortium.

For more information on how to join, please contact [Patricia Barton](#) or visit the [membership information](#) page of the Consortium website.

## Announcements

**The Consortium Welcomes a New Member**

The [Erikson Institute](#) is a new CFP Consortium member. The Erikson Institute is an independent institution of higher education offering graduate programs in child development, social work, and early childhood education. Erikson also offers professional development and continuing education opportunities, supports community programs, and participates in multiple policy and leadership initiatives. See the Spotlight column above to learn more about the Consortium's newest member!

**Submit a Webinar Idea for the 2018-2019 Series!**

Are you interested in helping plan or presenting a webinar for the upcoming 2018-2019 webinar series? We are excited to continue our online submission process that makes it easy for anyone to submit a brief webinar proposal online. To learn more, please review the [webinar submission guidelines](#) on the Consortium website. Once you're ready to submit an idea, please complete this [google form](#) and we will be in touch within two weeks to begin the webinar planning process.

**Share Your Center's Work With the Consortium**

Calling all Consortium member directors! Would you like to highlight the work of your center, institute, department, or program in an upcoming Consortium newsletter? We are looking for Consortium members whose leader(s) are willing to do a brief interview with one of our columnists to share the work of your center in a future newsletter. We hope this new feature will help Consortium members learn more about one another and open up new avenues for collaboration. If you would like your center to be featured in an upcoming spotlight column in the newsletter, please contact [Patricia Barton](#).

## Member News & Resources

The following news items were submitted by Consortium members for inclusion in the newsletter. If you have announcements, news, or resources that you would like included in the next Consortium newsletter, please send them to [Patricia Barton](#).

After more than 30 years of service, Christina Groark, Ph.D. has retired as Director from the University of Pittsburgh's Office of Child Development. Shannon Wanless, Ph.D., assumed the role of Director effective July 1, 2018. Dr. Groark is a founding member of one of the University of Pittsburgh's first university-community collaborations, the Office of Child Development. She was also a founding member of the University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium. Dr. Groark has always been at the forefront of providing innovative solutions to difficult social problems through research, education, practice, and policy. Dr. Wanless has been named the Director of the Office of Child Development by Valerie Kinloch, Ph.D., the Renee and Richard Goldman Dean of the School of Education. Dr. Wanless has been involved with the School of Education since 2011, serving as the Associate Professor in the Department Psychology. She is also the Associate Director of Research at the Office of Child Development, where she has overseen more than \$1 million in grants and sponsored research since taking on the role in 2017. Wanless' research, work, and values are interwoven with the mission of the Office of Child Development. As the new Director, Wanless will continue to connect research and practice, and practice with research, to improve the lives of families and children. A full announcement is available [here](#).

Dr. Aysenil Belger has been named the new director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Belger directs the Neurocognition and Imaging Research Lab in the UNC Department of Psychiatry and also heads the Clinical Translational Research Core within the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center of the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities. She has served as a faculty member at UNC for 18 years. Her research recently has included studying abnormalities in young children with autism, as well as children and adolescents at high risk for schizophrenia. Her lab explores the behavioral and neurophysiological underpinnings of sensory and cognitive impairments. She said the guiding principles of her research are rigor, reproducibility, impact, and translation. A full announcement is available [here](#).

The Columbia Impairment Scale (CIS) is most reliable for those who exhibit high levels of functional impairment, according to a study recently published by researchers from the [Georgia Health Policy Center](#). In the article, "[Measuring Functional Impairment in Children and Adolescents: Psychometric Properties of the Columbia Impairment Scale](#)" published May 22 in [Evaluation & the Health Profession](#), the authors say that the CIS is a viable measure for the ongoing efforts to establish a national epidemiologic surveillance system to track the prevalence and impact of serious emotional disturbances in children and adolescents.

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska recently hosted a national symposium in collaboration with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine on ways to support young children learning English. Videos, powerpoints, and additional resources from the symposium are now available on the [Buffett Institute's website](#).

**National Observances Quick-Guides for Social Media**

There are many national health observance days, weeks, or months. The savvy professional can use these observances as opportunities to promote health messages, programs, and policies.

The [Center for Leadership Education in Maternal and Child Public Health](#), a [HRSA-funded Center of Excellence](#) at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, has created 50+ "[Quick-Guides](#)" to help you take advantage of national health observances and guide health promotion efforts, especially when using social media. Most messages, materials, and facts can be adapted to fit many audiences, and there is also a [video tutorial](#) to help you learn how to use these Quick-Guides.

Quick-Guides include topics like [American Heart Health Month](#), [Every Kid Healthy Week](#), [Walk to School Bike to School Day](#), [National Breastfeeding Month](#), and many more.

Please use and pass along to others who may want to promote these national health observances, especially those who might be new to using social media!

**Call for Papers: Measuring Quality in Early Care and Education: Past, Present, and Future, a Special Issue of Early Childhood Research Quarterly**

This special issue is soliciting manuscripts describing rigorous studies that either: (a) offer novel syntheses of past efforts to define and measure classroom quality, or (b) provide new empirical evidence of current and recent measurement strategies, or (c) present rich descriptions of innovative approaches for conceptualizing and assessing classroom quality in the future. The full call for papers and additional information is available [here](#). Submissions will be accepted through September 30, 2018.

## Conferences

### Open Calls for Conference Submissions

**Now Accepting Submissions: Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting: March 21-23, 2019 in Baltimore, MD**

The submission site for SRCD's 2019 Biennial Meeting is now open. Empirical, theoretical, historical, methodological, policy, application, and translational submissions from investigators around the globe in all disciplines related to the field of child development are welcomed. The Society encourages submissions from researchers at all career stages including graduate and undergraduate students.

Submissions are due by August 16. [Click here](#) for more information.

For additional conference listings or to submit a conference listing, please see the [conferences page](#) on the Consortium website.

## Internships, Fellowships, & Job Postings

### Postdoctoral Positions and Fellowships

[Post-doctoral Fellow, Early Childhood Education Institute, University of Oklahoma-Tulsa](#)

[Post-doctoral Fellows Program for Faculty Diversity, University of Maryland, Baltimore County](#)

[Postgraduate Associate, Zigler Center in Child Development & Social Policy, Yale University](#)

[Postdoctoral Associate, Institute for Social Research and Data Innovation, University of Minnesota](#)

### Job Opportunities

[Multiple Open Positions at Illinois Action for Children](#)

[Two Tenure Track Faculty Positions in Formative Education, Boston College](#)

[Assistant Professor in Developmental Psychology, Boston College](#)

[Professor in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#)

[Assistant Professor in Developmental Psychology or Learning Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University](#)

## Submit to the Newsletter!

We are always accepting member news, resources, event and job listings, and other relevant material to highlight in the newsletter. Newsletters are published quarterly.

Please send suggestions and submissions to [Patricia Barton](#).

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