

Mark Testa

Director of the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) and Associate Professor

Office locations:

Urbana: 1010 W. Nevada Street, Suite 2080

Chicago: 150 North Wacker Drive, Suite 2120

Phone numbers:

Urbana: 217-244-1029

Chicago: 312-641-2493

Email: mtesta@illinois.edu

Educational and Professional Background

Dr. Testa earned his bachelor's degree in Sociology from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, graduating with honors in 1972. He studied social welfare policy in 1973 at the University of Stockholm, Sweden. While pursuing graduate studies at the University of Chicago, he worked as a budget and planning analyst in the Illinois Bureau of the Budget from 1975 to 1977. He later received an A.M. from the University of Chicago in 1980 and a PhD in Sociology in 1983.

For 30 years, Dr. Testa has provided leadership on research and public engagement to improve the lives of children and families involved in the income assistance and child protection systems. While working on his doctorate, he served as the Associate Director of the Children's Policy Research Project at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration (1978-1981) and as a Research Associate at the National Opinion Research Center (1982- 1984). In 1984, he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. During this period, he was a co-principal investigator with William Julius Wilson on the Family Structure and Poverty in the Inner City Project (1985-1988) and co-principal investigator with Margaret Rosenheim on the Public World of Childhood Project (1986-1999).

In 1994, he accepted a joint-appointment between the School of Social Service Administration and the State of Illinois to become the Research Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). This joint-appointment continued after he joined the faculty of the University of Illinois School of Social Work. In 2002, the School and the DCFS consolidated the Office of the DCFS Research Director into the Children and Family Research Center, an independent research organization created jointly in 1996 by DCFS and the University of Illinois. He has served as the Director of the Research Center since 2002.

Professor Testa is the architect of several major child welfare innovations in Illinois, including the Home of Relative Reform in 1995 and the federal Subsidized Guardianship Demonstration in 1997. He is currently leading the evaluations of replications of the Illinois subsidized guardianship demonstration in the states

of Wisconsin and Tennessee. His sustained contributions to child welfare innovation resulted in his becoming Principal Investigator of *Fostering Results* in 2003 – a public education campaign funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts to improve federal financing and accountability in foster care.

Professor Testa has received numerous awards and honors for his research and public service. He is the recipient of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption 2002 Excellence Award for Applied Scholarship and Research on kinship care and permanence. In 2004 he received the Blue Bow Award for research and leadership in improving systems of care for children from the Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois; in 2005 he received the University of Illinois Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement; and in 2006 he was nominated by Senator Dick Durbin and received the Angel in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. He also serves on numerous federal committees and philanthropic boards as part of his effort to improve outcomes for children and families involved in our nation's child welfare systems.

Dr. Testa currently teaches Advanced Child Welfare [SW580] and a new PhD course,

Research and Practice Interests

Dr. Testa's research interests include kinship foster care, adoption and guardianship, childhood social indicators, computerized information systems, adolescent parenthood, and child and family policy. His practice interests stem from his former role as Research Director for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and his current role as Chair of the Board of Directors of Family Focus, Inc., an early childhood and family support organization that serves children and families in Chicago and its surrounding areas.

Current Research

Dr. Testa is the Principal Investigator of the research program of the Children and Family Research Center. Each year, the research program is updated in consultation with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the *B.H.* plaintiff's attorneys from the Illinois American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Some of the major research topics for 2007 and 2008 in which Dr. Testa is directly involved include: the annual report on the conditions of children in or at risk of foster care in Illinois, evaluation of post-adoption and guardianship services, study of placement instability, the Illinois Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration, and the development of child well-being and foster youth-in-transition surveys. At the national level, he is a member of the federal advisory group for the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being. He is also the Principal Investigator for the evaluations of the subsidized guardianship replications in the states of Tennessee and Wisconsin (in collaboration with Westat). In addition, he is overseeing the Center's partnership with The Pew Charitable Trust's *Kids Are Waiting* Campaign and is the child welfare expert for Fostering Court Improvement, a project that promotes agency-court collaborations across the country in the use of data to improve child

welfare outcomes (in collaboration with the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia).

Recent Publications

- Testa, M. & Smith. (In Press). "Prevention and Drug Treatment." Paxon, C. & Haskin, R. (Eds.) *The Future of Children: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*.
- Testa, M. & Poertner, J. (In Press). *Fostering Accountability: Using Evidence to Guide and Improve Child Welfare Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Testa, M., Bruhn, C. & Helton, J. (In Press). "Comparative Safety, Stability, and Continuity of Children's Placements in Informal and Formal Substitute Care Arrangements." In Webb, M. B., Dowd, K., Harden, B. J., Landsverk, J., and Testa, M. F. (Eds.). *Child welfare and child well-being: New perspectives from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Testa, M. (2008). How the bear evolved into a whale: A rejoinder to Leroy Pelton's note contesting Mark Testa's version of national foster care population trends, *Children and Youth Services Review*, doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2008.10.009
- Koh, E. & Testa, M. (2008). Propensity score matching of children in kinship and non-kinship foster care: Do permanency outcomes still differ?" *Social Work Research*, Vol. 32, No.2 8, pp.105-116.
- Ryan, J., Testa, M. & Zhai, F. (2008). "African American Males in Foster Care and the Risk of Delinquency: The Value of Social Bonds and Permanence." *Child Welfare*, Vol.87, No. 1, pp. 115-140.
- Testa, M. (2008). "New Permanency Strategies for Children in Foster Care." Pp. 108-124 in Lindsey, D. & Shlonsky, A. *Child Welfare Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.