

# CSTP Conference Call

February 16, 2017  
10:00-11:00 a.m. CST  
Online

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**Meeting called by:** Child Support Training Partnership (CSTP)  
**Facilitator:** Child Welfare Research & Training Project (CW RTP) – Iowa State University (ISU)  
**Attendees:** Child support trainers from across the United States (see below for names/states)

## *Minutes*

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**Agenda item:** Recap of Last Meeting **Presenter:** Paula Burns (Iowa)

### **Discussion:**

After taking roll call and learning fun new facts about various states (see the list of participants at the end), ISU Trainer Paula Burns provided a recap of the last CSTP meeting, which was held in November and was attended by 32 representatives from across the country. Detailed [minutes](#) from that meeting have been posted on the forum. At the end of the call, partners were asked to share what keeps them up at night. A similar [thread](#) has been posted on the forum, and you are invited to join the discussion.

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**Agenda item:** Spotlight Organization: Michigan **Presenter:** Kirsten Thompson

### **Discussion:**

This quarter's "spotlight" organization is Michigan Child Support, which is part of the state's Department of Health and Human Services; Training Manager Kirsten Thompson spoke on the program's behalf. While technically a contractor, Kirsten has been with the Michigan Office of Child Support for 16 years. She supervises the training and technical writing teams, who handle all of the training and communications for their customers.

**Facts and Figures:** Michigan Child Support handles approximately 850,000 cases with annual collections of roughly \$1.4 billion. For every \$1 spent on the program, they collect \$6.25 (cost effectiveness). Customers who are served by the program vary widely: some are located in urban areas (Detroit, Lansing, Flint, Grand Rapids), but most are located in rural areas. Thirty percent of the overall caseload comes from Wayne County (Detroit). There are about 2,600 child support users spread out all over the state.

**Offices:** In Michigan, child support orders are established through the judicial system. The Office of Child Support (OCS), a IV-D agency, retains administrative control, while field staff set up cases—they take applications and receive IV-A and IV-E referrals. The OCS has two locations: Lansing and Detroit. Prosecuting Attorney staff are responsible for case establishment, while Friend of the Court staff enforce orders. Both offices are located in all 83 counties. The OCS also includes nine trainers and three technical writers: five are state employees, while seven are contractors. The trainers travel around the state to eight different sites, many of them located in the southeast portion of the state (around Detroit). One of the challenges Kirsten faces is trying to reach other parts of the state. Many workers have to travel to get to a training location.

**Current Training:** Classroom training includes the following courses: Introduction to Child Support and MiCSES (Michigan Child Support Enforcement System), Support Specialist, Prosecuting Attorney, Friend of the Court Financials/Enforcement, Intergovernmental, and some advanced financials. In addition to classroom training, staff conduct webinars for new releases to the computer system (MiCSES), web-based training, conference presentations, monthly web conference calls, and some virtual training sessions for remote offices. Current training is driven by new employees, quarterly MiCSES releases, policy changes, and requests made through the Help Desk. New topics that are expected to drive training in the future include contract requirements (performance measures tied to federal incentive factors and biennial customer service training) and Michigan's Child Support Strategic Plan (attempting to shift attitudes among child support users—treating families as a holistic unit rather than payee vs. payor).

**Four Pillars Strategy:** Kirsten has created a strategy to meet these new training goals based on (1) retention: on-demand training at the moment of need (Gottfredson) and after-class follow-up—practicing recalling information; (2) evaluation: implementation of a learning management system (LMS) and use of Kirkpatrick’s higher levels of evaluation; (3) performance: targeted training to maximize performance goals and using evaluation to determine more effective training methods; and (4) integration: collaboration with end-users and exploring the use of LLAMA (Lot Like Agile Methods Approach).

**Conclusion:**

Kirsten provided her contact information for anyone who wanted to visit with her after the meeting: [thompsonk19@michigan.gov](mailto:thompsonk19@michigan.gov) or @Userchamp on Twitter.

She cited the following sources during her presentation, if anyone is interested in learning more:

- [Five Moments of Learning Need](#) (Conrad Gottfredson and Bob Mosher)
- [70-20-10 learning model](#) (Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo, and Robert A. Eichinger)
- [The Kirkpatrick Model](#) (Don Kirkpatrick)
- [LLAMA](#) (Megan Torrance)

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
✓ Post related materials to the forum (if desired)	Kirsten Thompson	ASAP
✓ Find a spotlight organization for next quarter	Paula Burns	ASAP

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**Agenda item:** Customer Service Newsletter **Presenter:** Martha Stewart (Iowa)

**Discussion:**

ISU Trainer Martha Stewart discussed the customer service newsletter that she co-authors for Iowa’s Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU) staff.

**Background:** Martha explained that ISU-CSRU tries to do a face-to-face training on some aspect of customer service every year. The challenge is finding something new to cover and making it meaningful for the audience. Trainers are constantly looking for new topics and ways to make customer service training more engaging. Past trainings have included Connections=Collections (taking a proactive approach to contacting customers rather than waiting for them to contact you when problems arise), Colors Personality Assessment (understanding what motivates other people and how to effectively communicate with colleagues and customers), Conversational Strategies and Interviewing Techniques (negotiating with customers and helping to keep them on track), and Body Language and Voice Tone. ISU trainers have also used recorded phone calls from the old customer service call center as examples of “the good, the bad, and the ugly.” Last year, ISU conducted a face-to-face training that focused on human psychology and the impact of poverty on cognition, behavior, and adverse childhood experiences. And this spring, ISU trainers will be conducting a prison re-entry simulation for child support workers from around the state.

**Origins:** In 2013, ISU-CSRU decided to create a customer service e-newsletter. The main objective was to keep customer service on people’s radar beyond the annual training and expand customer service to include topics such as self-care, success stories, humor, inspiration, and new ideas about human behavior. Training staff wanted the newsletter to be meaningful but also light, intriguing, and fun—something people would actually look forward to reading. Martha noted that the average “open rate” for the newsletter is 92 percent. Two trainers are responsible for producing the newsletter, which is published quarterly.

**Format:** The trainers take turns creating content for the newsletter. They use a pre-designed template (shown in the video recording) that includes a header with live links to ISU-CWRTP. The color scheme is based on ISU’s school colors (cardinal and gold). Every newsletter opens with a thought-provoking essay that is season-specific, followed by a section devoted to recent findings in customer service research and another that provides insights into the Colors Personality Assessment. Every newsletter also includes a “tips” section that features personal interest stories from CSRU and other child support staff, as well as inspirational quotes and humor. The newsletters often generate positive feedback from field

workers. In addition to helping keep customer service on the radar, the newsletter also serves to unite CSRU field staff, supervisors, and leadership in an uplifting way.

**What Others Are Doing:** Valerie Fletcher, Training Supervisor for Ohio’s Office of Child Support, commented that her organization does something similar with a business quarterly that reaches out to all of their county agencies. Ohio’s child support program is state-supervised, county-administered. The newsletter provides similar information but is not necessarily customer service-oriented. It covers the latest news, “did you know” facts, training information, and other topics related to the program in general. The objective is keep county agencies in the know about what’s going on.

**Conclusion:**

Links to the four most recent [customer service newsletters](#) have been posted to the forum, if you’d like to take a closer look at the template and content. Martha is also happy to share links to additional (or all) newsletters.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
✓ Post links to ISU’s customer service newsletters on the forum	Paula Burns	N/A

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**Agenda item:** Training Tools: e-Newsletters **Presenter:** Abby Stanek (Iowa)

**Discussion:**

**Overview:** ISU’s Voluntary Paternity Affidavit Outreach Coordinator Abby Stanek presented on various tools that you can use to create an e-newsletter. She publishes a newsletter every other month as a way to update groups about new training materials, news, and what’s happening within her program. One advantage of using a newsletter is that your audience can read it at any time and that you can send it as often as you want based on their needs. Although some templates cost money to use, an e-newsletter can still be a cost-effective way to supplement training. For example, Abby recently used a newsletter to train hospital and child support staff on updates to the paternity affidavit process. The newsletter included important information about completing a paternity affidavit and how to fix common errors. The objective was to help employees become better at helping parents complete the process. An e-newsletter can also be used to remind groups about information, proper protocols, etc.

**Options:** Abby discussed both fee-based and free e-newsletter services. The best-known tools are Constant Contact and MailChimp. The two are very similar in design and use--both provide list management, online templates, drag-and-drop email creation, scheduled emails, and e-news analytics and statistics. Constant Contact offers a free 60-day account (no credit card required). The basic subscription plan ranges from \$20/month to \$90/month, based on number of contacts. ISU has about 5,000 contacts and pays roughly \$60/month. For a higher monthly rate, Constant Contact will create a customized template with additional features. You can also take advantage of a monthly pre-paid subscription (a good option if you have to pay based on your fiscal year budget). MailChimp is completely free as long as you have fewer than 2,000 contacts. You can send up to 12,000 emails per month. If you have 2,000-5,000 contacts, the rate is approximately \$50/month. For more than 10,000 contacts, the rate is roughly \$75/month. You can either pay as you go or subscribe to a monthly plan. The service includes an online calculator to help you determine the average monthly cost based on number of contacts and number of emails sent.

**Free Tools:** Abby also provided information about free newsletter services; however, she noted that many email servers limit the number of messages that you can send per day. If you reach the sending limit, the server will stop sending email. The Google Chrome Store offers two tools: Newsletter Creator for Gmail and Gmail Email Marketing and Newsletter Creator. The first option is free to download. It adds a button to your Gmail menu that allows you to send individual e-news. It features drag-and-drop editors and allows you to create mailing lists from your Gmail contacts. You can also track e-news analytics in order to show the value of using an e-newsletter to stakeholders. The second option includes similar features. It is also free to download. You can try out both options and then decide which one works best for you. Once you make a decision, you can uninstall the other Google extension. If you use Microsoft Outlook, you can create newsletters in Publisher and then attach them to an email message. Publisher allows you to tailor information, letter content, visual material, etc. to fit your individual training needs. You can save the file as a .pdf and then add it as an attachment. This is a good option if you have individual email addresses; just remember to use a blind carbon copy to avoid sharing your contacts with other people. You can also tailor the content of the email message itself to fit your audience. For additional information, Abby recommended searching Google for “e-newsletter online tools” or visiting Pinterest for design and layout ideas.

**What Others Are Doing:** Kirsten Thompson noted that Michigan uses GovDelivery, a cloud solutions provider for government agencies.

**Conclusion:**

Abby cited the following sources during her presentation, if anyone is interested in learning more:

- [Constant Contact](#)
- [MailChimp](#)
- [Newsletter Creator for Gmail](#) (free)
- [Gmail Email Marketing and Newsletter Creator](#) (free)
- [Microsoft Publisher](#) (free)
- [GovDelivery](#)

<b>Action items</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
✓ Post links to ISU's paternity affidavit outreach newsletters on the forum	Abby Stanek	N/A

**Agenda item:** Questions/Comments **Presenter:** Paula Burns

**Discussion:**

Paula reminded attendees to visit the online forum. You can find information related to today's meeting there. You can also find information about upcoming conferences, including calls for proposals (CFPs). The meeting ended with the following question: "What do you do that helps you relax?" ISU trainers like to read "junky" magazines and visit "junky" websites. Kirsten Thompson (Michigan) enjoys a class of wine or going for a walk—or both. Joe Banken (Minnesota) likes to visit local micro-breweries. But Zach Ulrich (Alaska) had the best answer by far—drone photography! Hopefully, he will post some images on the forum (hint, hint). All are welcome to contribute to this discussion online.

**Conclusion:**

The next CSTP meeting will be held in May 4, 2017 (May the Fourth Be with You!), 10-11 a.m. CST. More details will be sent via email.

<b>Action items</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
✓ Post video recording/minutes/chat transcript from 02/16/17 meeting	Paula Burns	ASAP
✓ Respond to discussion boards	All participants (optional)	Ongoing

## **Other Information**

**Attendees:**

<b>State/Territory/Tribe</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Fun Fact about Your State</b>
Alaska 	Zack Ulrich	Alaska is the perfect location for drone photography!
Delaware	Bob Dreibelbis	
Iowa 	Kate Goudy-Haht, Grant Nason, Ginger Monroe, Abby Stanek, Martha Stewart, Bethany Burdt, Paula Burns	RAGBRAI is an annual 7-day bicycle ride from the west coast of Iowa to the east coast. It's the oldest, largest, and longest recreational such event in the world.
Louisiana 	Debbie Roeten Vickers	It's Mardi Gras time in Louisiana!

Michigan 	Kirsten Thompson	Wherever you stand in Michigan, you are never more than seven miles from water.
Minnesota 	Ericca Bakke and Joe Banken	Minnesotans love to fish, and they love to eat walleye. The state also has largest urban sculpture garden in the country.
New Mexico	Betina McCracken	
New York	Penny LaRocque	
Ohio	Valerie Fletcher	
New Mexico	Betina McCracken	
South Dakota	Kathy Piersol	
Utah 	Allyson Dopp and Casey Cole	Utah has the greatest snow on earth!
Vermont	Paul Wolf	
Wisconsin - Oneida Tribe	Delia Smith	

If your name and state/tribe/territory are not listed here, you may have joined after introductions or used the phone line to connect to the meeting. Feel free to email [Paula Burns](#) to adjust the minutes accordingly.

A transcript of the chat that took place online during the meeting is also available at the [CW RTP](#) website.