

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **UWF, FamiliesFirst Network extends Child Welfare Training Program**

**Pensacola, Fla. – Nov. 17, 2016** – The University of West Florida Department of Continuing Education recently announced a three-year extension of the Child Welfare Training Program in partnership with FamiliesFirst Network. This is the longest any training entity has carried the program’s contract since it was privatized in 1999.

UWF has operated the Child Welfare Training Program since July 2006, helping child protection professionals recognize indicators of abuse, abandonment and neglect within families as well as provide services to create safe environments for children. The nine-week program is offered five times throughout the year for child welfare professionals employed with local agencies in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa or Walton counties, with more than 1,000 counselors and investigators certified to date.

“The program trains individuals to recognize children who are at their most vulnerable,” said Theresa Cserep, senior training specialist. “By training community members to be better informed about how to protect children and make families stronger, we make our community safer.”

By completing the training, participants can test to become certified as a Child Welfare Professional or a Child Welfare Licensing Counselor in the state of Florida. The program has a certification exam pass rate of 99 percent, the highest in the state.

“The Child Welfare training program meets the Division of Continuing Education’s mission and has exceptional results,” said Patti Spaniola, program director. “It gives our local agencies highly qualified employees to carry out the work of providing child welfare services to families in our region. The impact of helping children and families reach their potential and becoming productive citizens is taken seriously. It’s a result we may not see for a generation, but we intend to realize it as these children grow up to do significant work in our community.”

To learn more about the Child Welfare Training Program, visit the [UWF Continuing Education website](#).

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