

Mark Testa, Ph.D., M.A.

Professor, UNC School of Social Work at UNC-Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill, NC, US

Sandra Reeves Spears and John B. Turner Distinguished Professor

Dr. Testa is an architect of innovative reforms in the fields of child protection and foster care at the state, regional and federal levels. As a research director for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in the 1990s, his leadership and policy analysis led to a federal child welfare demonstration that enabled the state to provide funding to families who became legal guardians of related foster children to help pay for the children's care. Such federal subsidies had never been available to relative caregivers prior to this change. Results of the demonstration prompted Congress to act on the findings and pass legislation that created the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGap) as part of the "Fostering Connections" Act that was signed into federal law in 2008. Testa's 2010 publication "Fostering Accountability" is considered a strategic model for demonstrating how administrators and practitioners can build valid evidence for their successes in improving child and family outcomes and for holding them accountable for actions to protect children from abuse and neglect. Testa helped to draft language for the proposed federal "Social Impact Partnership Act," which is designed to encourage private investors to fund social and public health interventions and projects that aim to improve outcomes for at-risk individuals. Testa has received multi-million dollar grants and contracts as well as multiple appointments to various state and national expert panels and committees charged with overseeing efforts to move vulnerable children more quickly into permanent homes. He also continues to lead or co-lead several investigations aimed at ensuring the well-being of children. As the author or co-author of four books, a dozen book chapters, 2 dozen refereed journal articles, as well as countless reports, lectures and conference papers, Testa continues to strengthen efforts to advance evidence-informed solutions. He created the "Wicked Problems of Child Welfare Institutes" with Children's Home Society of America, a national consortium of child welfare agencies. They brought together child welfare experts, service providers and government officials with one primary goal in mind: To encourage and disseminate sustainable solutions that are grounded in evidence and that positively affect young lives that come into contact with state child protective systems.

Education/Learning, Health and Wellness, Health Care - Providers, Public Policy, Non-Profit/Charitable, Social Services, Research

Foster Care, Adoption Services, Poverty Research, Children's Aid

Fostering Connections Resource Center

University of Chicago

Ph.D. Sociology

University of Chicago

M.A Sociology

Wesleyan University

B.A. Sociology

Appointed Member

Serves as the N.C. Governor's appointed member of the Permanency Innovations Initiative Oversight Committee, a non-standing committee for the N.C. General Assembly

Principal Investigator

Currently serves as Principal investigator for the evaluation of the Illinois IV-E waiver demonstration of child-parent therapeutic interventions for foster children, age birth to 3-years-old

Board Chair

Chair of the Leadership Team and Advisory Board for the National Quality Improvement Center on Adoption/Guardianship Support and Preservation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Expert Panel Member

Currently a Member of the Expert Panel appointed under the B.H. vs. Sheldon Consent Decree, United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division

Co-Investigator

Co-Investigator of the Third National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW-III), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under sub-contract with RTI, International

Awards

Dr. Testa has received numerous awards for his scholarship and public engagement, including the UNC School of Social Work Excellence in Research Award, Angel in Adoption from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption 2002 Excellence Award for Applied Scholarship and Research on kinship care and permanence.

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