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## Child Advocacy Studies, or CAST, is an academic major, minor or certificate program that focuses on child maltreatment

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### What is CAST?

Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) is an evidence-based<sup>1</sup> **academic major, minor** or **certificate** program that focuses on **child maltreatment**. A CAST minor can be paired with any related academic major (e.g., Criminal Justice, Social Work, Psychology, Medicine, Law) to prepare the student for the **real-world intersection** of the two disciplines.

Established in 2004 and implemented in over 90 **academic programs** in 30 states, CAST:

- Offers an innovative, engagement-based academic curriculum involving:
  - Hands-on **experience**
  - Practical **skill-development**
  - A focus on **community & career**
- Prepares graduates to:
  - **Recognize variables** leading to child maltreatment
  - **Identify existing systems** that react to child maltreatment
  - **Develop a multidisciplinary approach** to respond effectively to cases of child abuse & neglect in its varying forms

### Why is CAST Important?

- Cases of maltreatment are rising:<sup>2</sup>
  - **10% increase** in the number of children who received a child protective services (CPS) investigation or alternative response from 2013 (3,184,000) to 2017 (3,501,000)
  - An average of **72 annual responses** per CPS worker in 2017
  - **3.5 million children** received an investigation or other CPS response, at a rate of **47.1 children per 1,000** in the population
  - The average CPS response time to children in need is **76 hours** (3.2 days)
- Frontline Child Protection employees lack skills to effectively and appropriately meet the needs of children<sup>3</sup>
- Child Protection caseload inflation and insufficient workforce preparation lead to high staff-turnover— as high as **90% turnover** in some jurisdictions<sup>4</sup>

### The Result?

Child maltreatment cases are **mishandled** due to:

- Ineffective training & insufficient skill-development in Frontline Child Protection employees
- High staff-turnover, which affects state budgets & inflates response times for cases due to understaffing

## The Solution:

CAST:

- Builds **competencies & core skills** for identifying, investigating, reporting, & responding to maltreatment instances
- Prepares the workforce with ethical, **trauma-informed care** approaches to mitigate polyvictimization, while recognizing underlying **cultural/social values** pertinent to investigation & evidence collection
- Establishes **resiliency** tactics to ensure long-term employment
- Develops or uses community systems & **multidisciplinary** or **cross-agency collaborations** to best meet needs



*CAST is a proven solution with 6 publications indicating the program's efficacy<sup>5</sup>*

## How Can I Learn More About CAST?

- Visit the Zero Abuse Project (ZAP) website: [www.zeroabuseproject.org/CAST](http://www.zeroabuseproject.org/CAST)
- Contact the Zero Abuse Project Director of Child Advocacy Studies, Tyler Council, EdD: [tyler@zeroabuseproject.org](mailto:tyler@zeroabuseproject.org) | 651.714.4673 x 708

### References:

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