What is CAST?
Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) is an evidence-based 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:
  - 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
- Child Protection caseload inflation and insufficient workforce preparation lead to high staff-turnover— as high as 90% turnover in some jurisdictions

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

How Can I Learn More About CAST?

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

References:
1. Child Advocacy Studies Program. Available at: https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/child-advocacy-studies