

Foreword

This book is a welcome addition to the field of child welfare. The past several decades have seen an increased emphasis on research and evaluation in both public and private child welfare settings. This research and evaluation on child welfare issues is occurring in academic as well as public and private child service agency settings. It is incumbent on those of us who seek to improve the lives of children and their families to seek empirical evidence to support our practice. With limited resources, we must identify promising and evidence-based practices to serve as a basis for effective assessment, interventions, and policies. Whether information collection involves simple client satisfaction surveys, analysis of data in administrative databases, or more complex randomized control studies, certain processes and procedures are important to follow to know that the information produced is valid and reliable.

Research Methods in Child Welfare by Amy Baker with Benjamin Charvat is a well-written and comprehensive book that discusses the underlying philosophy of research, offers important considerations regarding research ethics, and provides easily understandable information related to different aspects of the conduct and dissemination of research and evaluation data. Early chapters provide an overview of the child welfare context within which research is conducted; later chapters provide step-by-step coverage of re-

search issues on problem formulation, design, measurement analysis, and dissemination of research findings. The authors identify the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches and contexts within which research and evaluation in child welfare is conducted, providing useful guidance on the implementation of future research.

Evaluation and research in child welfare settings is not as straightforward as research in a laboratory setting. In the social sciences, many factors influence both how data may be gathered and how that data may be understood. The Child Welfare League of America supports the goal of this book—to inform child welfare practitioners, researchers, and policymakers about issues related to research in a child welfare–specific context. This book will be of value to both the private and public child welfare sectors and will assist us all in better serving vulnerable children and families.

Christine James-Brown, president and CEO
Child Welfare League of America