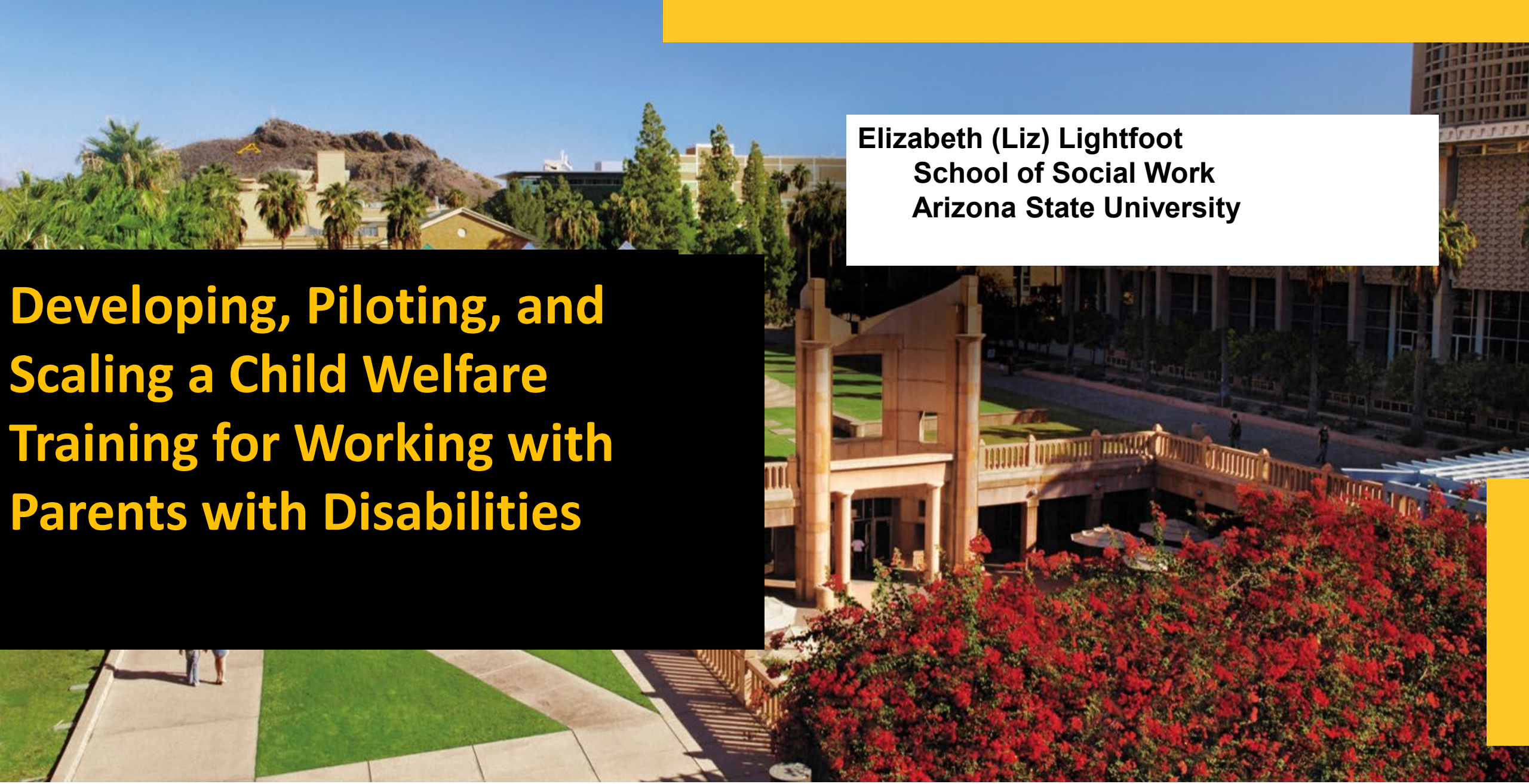

Developing, Piloting, and Scaling a Child Welfare Training for Working with Parents with Disabilities

Elizabeth (Liz) Lightfoot
School of Social Work
Arizona State University

ASU Charter

ASU is a comprehensive **public research university,** measured not by whom it excludes, but by **whom it includes** and **how they succeed;** advancing **research and discovery** of public value; and assuming **fundamental responsibility** for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the **communities it serves.**

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Agenda

Child Protection Involvement of Parents with Disabilities: What We Know

Overview of Two Social Service Workforce Training Projects

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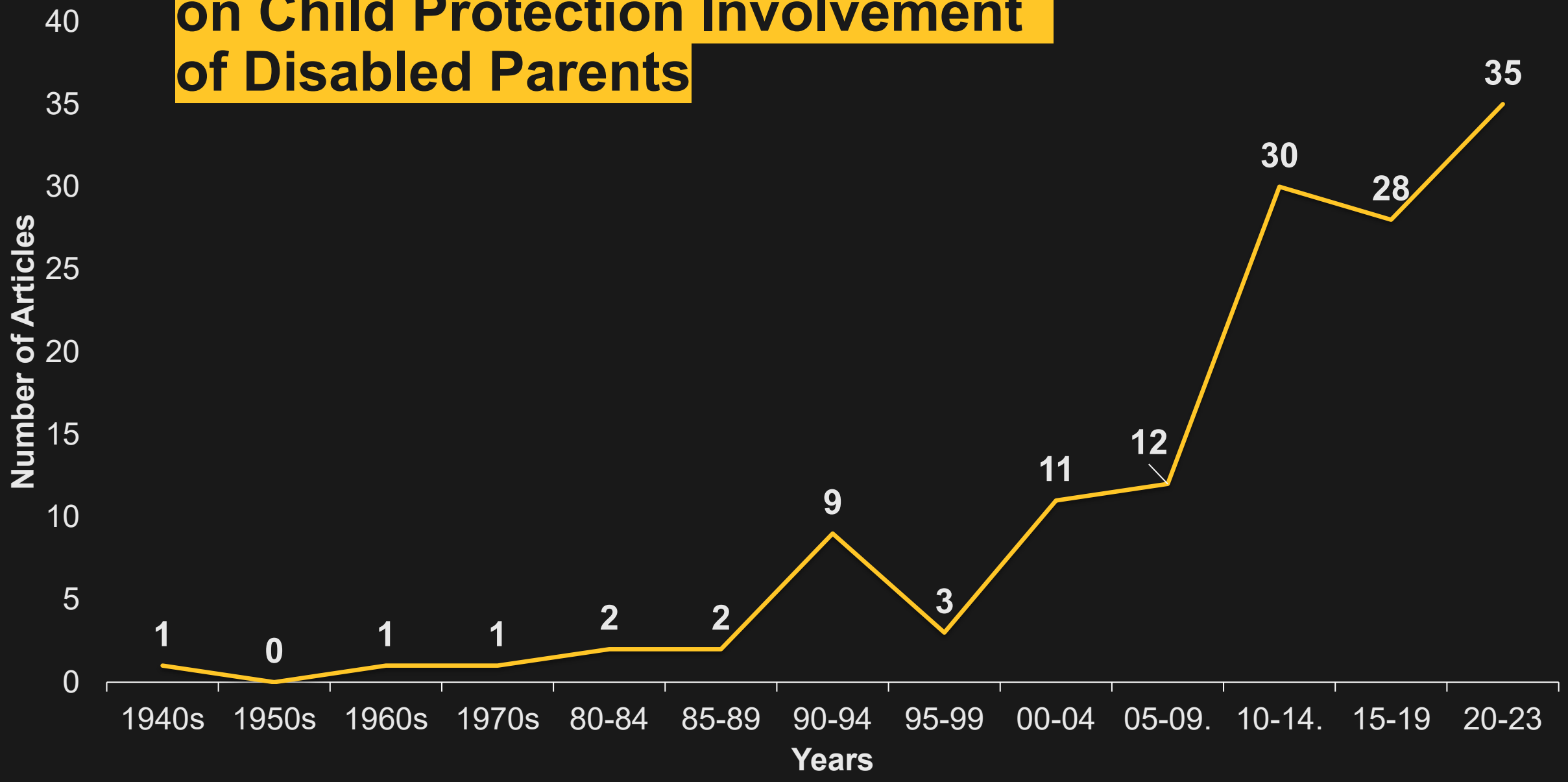
Growth in International Research on Child Protection Involvement of Disabled Parents



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Sharp rise in research on child welfare involvement 2000-2020

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

TASP
The Association for Successful Parenting
a chance to parent

National Research Center *for* Parents with Disabilities
Parents Empowering Parents
Padres Empoderando a Padres

1996

2006

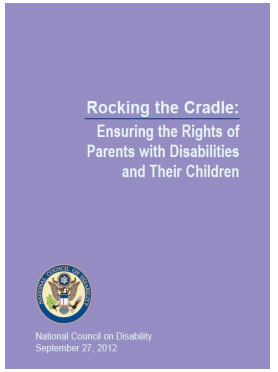
2008

2009

2012

2017

iassidd
International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



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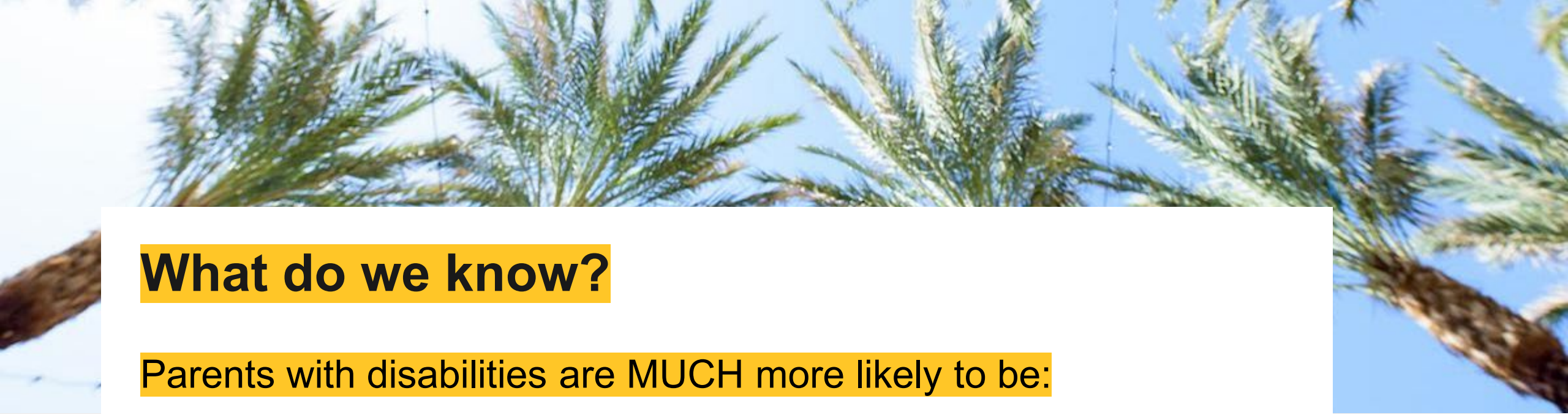

What do we know?

Parents with disabilities are MUCH more likely to be:

1) reported for abuse or neglect

2) have abuse or neglect substantiated

3) have their children placed in foster care

4) have their parental rights terminated

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We also know. . .

Child protection workers and social service workers **get little training** in universities or at their agencies on supporting parents with disabilities

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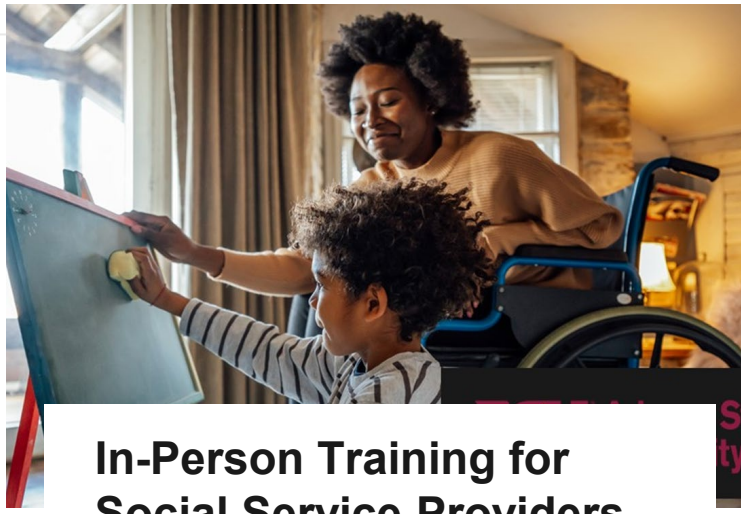
Two Related Projects

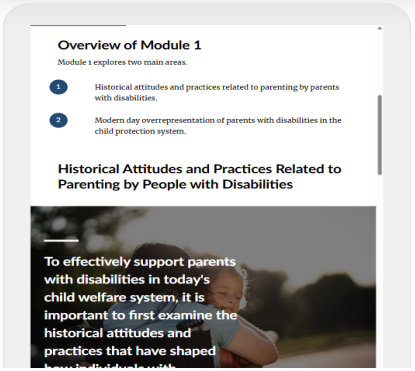


In-Person Training for Social Service Providers

90 Minute In-Person Training

User-Friendly Guide

Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council



Online Training for Child Protection Workers

One hour interactive online training

National Research Center *for* Parents with Disabilities

Parents Empowering Parents
Padres Empoderando a Padres

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Eight Core Concepts and Frameworks

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Parental Supports

Parental Risk Factors ≠ Child Endangerment

“Good Enough” Parenting Standard

Presumption of Unfitness Bias

Universal Design

Disability Rights Framework

Social Model of Disability

Disability Justice Framework

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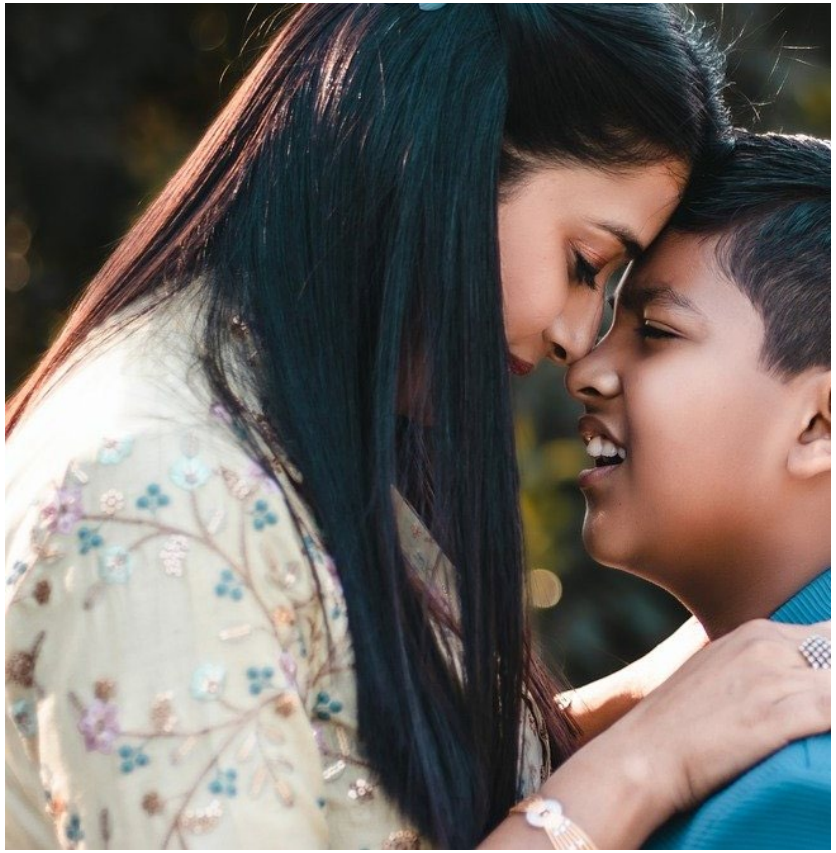
Can Training Change the Knowledge and Attitudes of Social Services Providers about Working with Disabled Parents? A Pretest-Posttest Study



Testing the In-Person Trainings

What We Did

• 90-minute training grounded in lived experience and research
• Focused on eight core concepts (supports, good enough parenting, bias, disability frameworks), as well as history, policy, and best practices
• Pretest–posttest design at 4 sites (n = 97)

What Else We Did

• Made a User-Friendly Guide (downloaded more than 1,000 times last year)
•Presented this 15 more times across the state of Arizona
•Recorded the training and put it on YouTube (more than 2,500 viewers!)

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Key Outcomes

Increases in disability-related knowledge
Increases in practice confidence

Top Concerns BEFORE Training	Top Concerns AFTER Training
Child Safety Parent's Ability to Parent Lack of Appropriate Services	Lack of Parental Support Lack of Resources to Provide the Family Discriminatory Policies and Practices

Implications

From presumed unfit → presumed competent

https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2025.2573401

Online Training for Child Protection Workers

- Using Articulate 360
  - Allowed us to build **interactive training**, not just static slides
  - Gave us a way to **embed evaluations and knowledge checks**
  - Fit with the **type of training users are already familiar with**
  - Easy for us to **update and maintain content over time**
  - Less than an hour

Overview of Online Training Content

Very Interactive

Historical & Current Inequities

- Eugenics Movement
- Institutionalization
- Child Protection Involvement

Policy Context for Child Protection

- State Statutes
- ADA & DOJ/DHHS Guidance
- Sec 504 of the Rehab Act

Core Concepts & Frameworks

- Parental Support
- Presumption of Unfitness Bias
- Three Frameworks for Understanding Disability

Best Practices & Resources

- Parenting Interventions
- Child Welfare Practice Modifications
- Appropriate Documentation
- General Best Practices

Child Protection Worker Focused

All apsects of the training are designed directly for the child protection workforce

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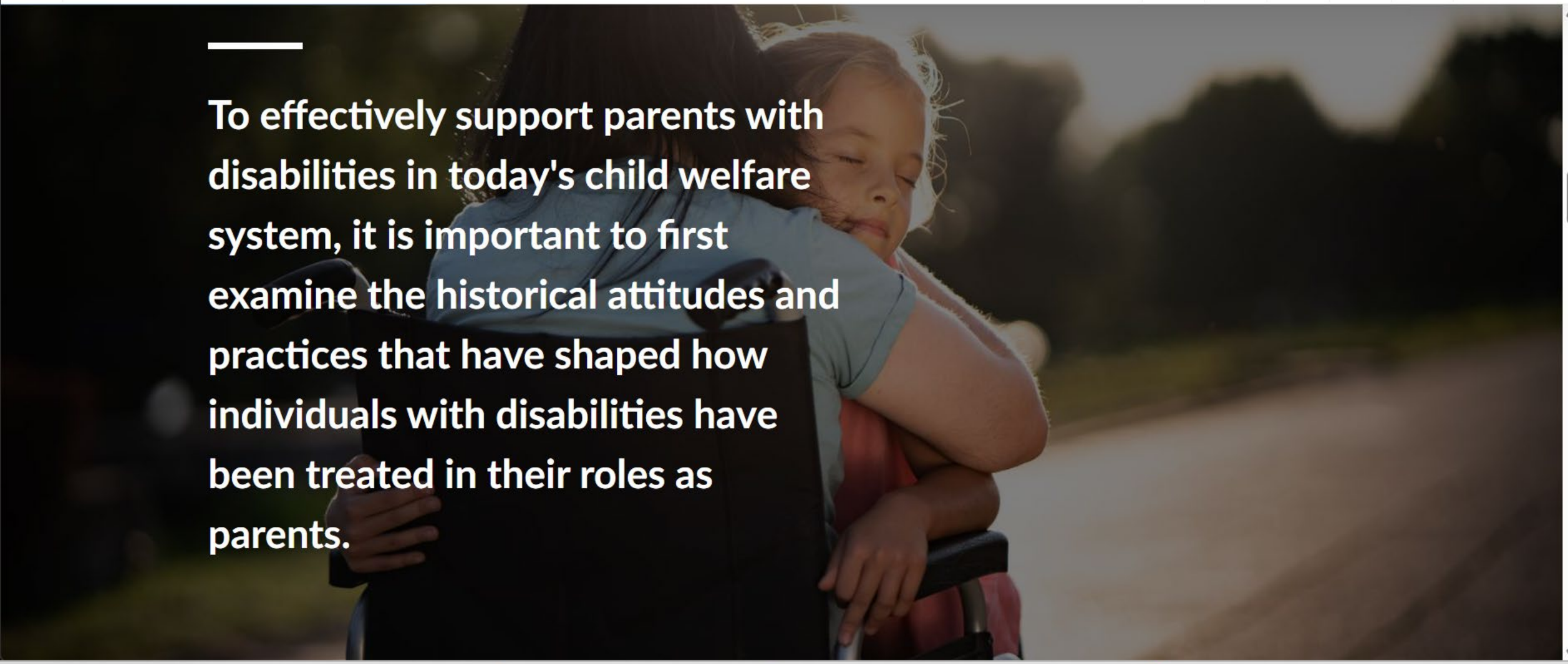
Module 1: Background | Rise 36

https://rise.articulate.com/authoring/T0azaVEzZxOOdxOkcq07zaFH3Z6dLOky/lesson/vHf1Epk3Su_jW8wY8Zab7tCddj15...

School

Lesson Preview

Edit



Search

73°F
Sunny

1:02 PM
3/7/2026

Child Welfare Practice Modifications

In this next section, we focus on four key areas of child protection practice that are essential when working with parents with disabilities. These approaches reflect legal protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The strategies introduced here help ensure that child protection decisions are based on facts, not assumptions.

REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS TO POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES	FAIR ASSESSMENTS	EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	APPROPRIATE REFERRALS FOR PARENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Child welfare agencies and courts must make reasonable modifications to ensure equal access to their services for individuals with disabilities. These changes are required unless they would fundamentally alter the nature of the program.

Next Steps

Roll-Out with Arizona Department of Child Safety (testing built in)

AZ DCS Specific Training

Update Based on Feedback

Make Full Version Available Freely

Referenced in Talk

Links

Lightfoot, E., & Dangle, P. (2026). The state of the research on parents with disabilities' involvement in the child protection system: A comprehensive review. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 1-20: https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/JSPSDJZXHWWVSBGFPHY9/full?target=10.1080/15548732.2026.2633416

User-Friendly Guide and Video: https://sites.google.com/asu.edu/lizlightfoot/home/parents-with-disabilities

Training Evaluation Article: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0312407X.2025.2573401