

Rutgers University's Center on Violence Against Women & Children (VAWC)

The mission of VAWC is to strive to eliminate physical, sexual, emotional, and other forms of violence against women and children and the power imbalances that permit them. VAWC strives to accomplish this mission through multidisciplinary research, education, and training that impacts communities and policies in New Jersey, USA, and throughout the world.

Since 2007, VAWC has evolved as a place where people from the academic, nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors meet to collaborate on research, education, and training. VAWC has grown exponentially under the leadership of Drs. Judy L. Postmus, Sarah McMahon, and Cassandra Simmel, and a strong staff, whose work is recognized at state, national, and international levels. In addition, Drs. Postmus, McMahon, and Simmel are all faculty at the Rutgers University School of Social Work.

VPA focal person



Cassandra Simmel, MSW, PhD

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Dr. Cassandra Simmel is an Associate Professor at the Rutgers University School of Social Work in New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA. Dr. Simmel's primary areas of interest in research and teaching involve child welfare policies, programmes, and services as well as the long-term developmental and mental health outcomes of child maltreatment. Her interests span both domestic and international child welfare programmes and interventions. In addition, she has a particular focus on adolescents who are involved or at risk of involvement with the child welfare system.

Since 2010, Dr. Simmel has held an appointment with New Jersey's Department of Children and Families, serving as Lead Consultant for Research and Evaluation. In addition, in the autumn of 2013, she joined VAWC at the Rutgers University School of Social Work, and is currently the Acting Co-Director. In May 2014, she will co-lead the Study Abroad programme in Cluj, Romania, which is a structured course for Rutgers University's Master of Social Work (MSW) students who wish to learn firsthand about the evolution of this country's response to at-risk populations in the post-Communist era.

Prior to her position at Rutgers University, and complementing her longstanding interest in child and youth policy, she was a Society for Research in Child Development Child Policy Research Fellow for three years at the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation at the Administration for Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services. In this position, she implemented and oversaw several research projects related to child welfare, child maltreatment, and Head Start research. In addition, she developed a strong interest in the intersection of science and policy, particularly in how research can be translated and disseminated toward advancing the development of and advocacy for policies that serve vulnerable populations. Dr. Simmel earned her BA, MSW, and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.