

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs



2024-2025 Annual Report

School of Social Work

University of Pittsburgh

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs
Annual Report
of the
Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program (CWEB)
and the
Child Welfare Education for Leadership Program (CWEL)
July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025

The Child Welfare Education and Research Programs are a collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators.

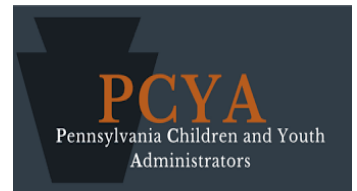


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Greetings

From the Dean

The School of Social Work has been dedicated to the professional development of child welfare practitioners and policy makers since its inception in 1918. This long-term commitment to children and families through education, advocacy, child protection, family support, and community building is evidenced throughout the programs that comprise our child welfare continuum. Workforce development has remained a constant focus throughout our history. We have received state and national recognition for our contributions to the child welfare system and recognize the generous internal and external support that has enabled our work. We highlight our ongoing efforts to enhance the public child welfare workforce through professional social work education in each annual report of the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and the Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) programs. This edition describes the work of the twenty-fourth year of CWEB and thirty years of CWEL.

The sustained commitment by the Department of Human Services and the University of Pittsburgh assures that Pennsylvania remains a national leader in child welfare education, training, organizational development, and practice improvement. We thank the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators for their steadfast support and partnership. Our work together remains critical to preparing social work professionals to meet the complex demands of child welfare practice and become leaders for the next generation.

Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Social Work

From the Principal Investigator

We are proud of the achievements of the CWEB and CWEL programs and the contributions we make to the public child welfare system in Pennsylvania. Our focus on workforce development, best practice, and continuous quality improvement remains consistent and unwavering. We continue to be gratified by the tenacity and accomplishments of our child welfare students and graduates. Their service on behalf of children, families, and communities has our deepest appreciation. We recognize the persistent socioeconomic and personal challenges met by many children and families and strive to build a child welfare system that is well-prepared to address their complex needs. A competent, well-supported workforce is vital to this mission.

At present, one thousand four hundred and thirty-three (1,433) CWEB students have entered the county agency system, and one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five (1,795) students have graduated from the CWEL program. It is to Pennsylvania's credit and the University of Pittsburgh's leadership that a pathway of professional education for the public child welfare workforce has been in existence for over a quarter of a century. We extend sincere thanks to our partnering schools, the county child welfare agencies, and the Office of Children, Youth and Families for their continued dedication to workforce development. Together, we continue to prepare and support exemplary child welfare professionals who perform demanding, fulfilling, and essential work. It has been my honor and privilege to be part of this endeavor since 1997.

Helen Cahalane, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW
Principal Investigator

Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates

And

Child Welfare Education for Leadership

Mission and Goals

Our Mission

The Child Welfare Education and Research continuum includes two distinct degree education programs, Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL). Administered by the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, the mission of these programs is to strengthen child welfare services to Title IV-E eligible children and families in Pennsylvania by increasing the number of educated professionals and equipping them to deal with the increasingly complex demands of public child welfare practice.

Our Goals

- Addressing the vacancy and turnover rates among public child welfare employees and the recruitment and retention challenges in the Pennsylvania child welfare workforce;
- Recruiting undergraduate students throughout widely dispersed locations to prepare persons for public child welfare employment;
- Assisting in the retention of public child welfare staff already serving Title IV-E eligible children and families by making graduate education with a focus on child welfare studies more readily available;
- Providing academic and curricular support for child welfare studies to university programs;
- Providing a career ladder within public child welfare and assisting in the long-term career development of child welfare professionals;
- Engaging in efforts to promote the development of knowledge and skills in evidenced-based practice for child welfare professionals;
- Conducting research and evaluation focused on evidence-based child welfare practice and the impact of social work education; and
- Advocating for practice improvement within the child welfare system through education, ongoing training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, organizational development, and support provided by competent, committed, and confident child welfare professionals.

Introduction

Recruitment and retention of public child welfare personnel has been recognized as a problem not only in Pennsylvania, but nationwide for more than two decades. National studies have concluded that “insufficient training” is among the factors contributing to the difficulties in retaining child welfare personnel. Research findings document that professional education is one of the strategies within a comprehensive, system-wide set of interventions that can reduce turnover, improve services, enhance staff morale, and reduce costs.

This report marks the completion of the twenty-fourth (24th) full academic year of operation for the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program and thirtieth (30th) full academic year of operation for the Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) program in Pennsylvania. Both have become remarkably integrated into the fabric of public child welfare throughout the state, with 99% of counties in the Commonwealth participating in CWEB and CWEL (for CWEB county participation see [Appendix F](#), for CWEL county participation see [Appendix H](#), Chart 2).

The need for both the baccalaureate and graduate-level child welfare education programs is described and their basic designs are included in Pennsylvania’s federally approved Title IV-B plan. Federal financial participation is based upon federal Title IV-E regulations contained in 45 CFR, Ch. II, Part 235 and Ch. XIII, Parts 1355 and 1356.

Background

Child welfare has been a vital component for social work practice at the University of Pittsburgh since as early as the 1917-1918 academic year. The following timeline provides an historical overview of key events in the University's legacy of child welfare education and training.

2/28/1787	Pittsburgh Academy established
1819	Renamed Western University of Pennsylvania
1908	Renamed University of Pittsburgh
1912	Founding of the U.S. Children's Bureau, the first government agency dedicated to the welfare of children ¹
1917-1918	First child and family-focused courses offered through the University of Pittsburgh, Division of Social Work: <i>The Child and the Community</i> and <i>The Family</i> . Two faculty comprise the Division of Social Work, which sits within the Department of Sociology.
1918-1919	Five faculty members provide 10 courses, including <i>Public Care of Dependents, Defectives and Delinquents</i> .
1919	First accreditation. No other school in the US has an earlier first accreditation date.
1932	First record of study materials for training agency workers on visiting children in foster homes and conducting foster home studies. Director of the Division of Social Work engages in an "Adoption Study" in collaboration with the Public Charities Association of Pennsylvania.
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A more formalized child welfare program of study begins within the Division of Social Work. Course listings include <i>The Field of Child Welfare, Institutional Child Welfare, Problems of Adoption, Social Case Treatment in Child Welfare, Child Guidance</i> and <i>Field Work in Child Welfare</i>. A "Child Welfare Institute" entitled "Child Behavior and Foster Care" is offered.
1936	"Child Welfare Institute" entitled " <i>Programs for Child Caring Institutions</i> " is offered.
1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Pittsburgh announces the creation of the School of Applied Social Sciences, the University's 18th separate School. School of Social Work introduces a master's level curriculum focused on child safety and well-being.

¹ U.S. Children's Bureau, *The story of the Children's Bureau* https://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/sites/all/themes/danland/danblog/files/Story_of_CB.pdf

1938-1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School of Social Work continues classroom courses and practicum placements related to children, child welfare and child development. • One of the first multidisciplinary teams focused on child protection is established at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh in the late 1950s-early 1960s, with which the School of Social Work is closely affiliated • University of Pittsburgh becomes part of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education in 1966 ²
1971	School of Social Work receives the first of an uninterrupted number of federal, state and foundation child welfare training grants that continues to the present.
1972	Children and Youth Concentration is introduced at the master’s level and becomes a curriculum model adopted by other schools of social work across the country.
1986	Three-year grant received from the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect to establish the Interdisciplinary Child Abuse and Neglect training program.
1991	Five-year competency-based, interdisciplinary training grant received from the United States Children’s Bureau to advance the Title IV-B interdisciplinary agenda of building a child welfare curriculum, enhancing school/agency partnerships, and providing training at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty members from Child Development and Child Care, Nursing, Medicine, Law, Psychology, Public Health, and Social Work participate as a team.
1992	Title IV-E pilot projects initiated with several Western PA counties to assist in developing a Title IV-E training model to address child welfare workforce issues and shape the School’s curriculum.
1995	The Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) program is established to provide long-term educational opportunities for public child welfare employees in PA
1998	Funding received from the United States Children’s Bureau for a two-year project designed to demonstrate the efficacy of developing a state-wide opportunity for potential child welfare employees (“persons preparing for employment” in the federal Title IV-E regulations).
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program initiated to provide child welfare education and training to persons preparing for a child welfare career. • School of Social Work assumes leadership and administrative responsibility for Pennsylvania’s Child Welfare Training Program providing pre-service and in-service training to all public child welfare employees and many private agencies.

² 1966, Special Sess. No. 3, July 28, P.L. 87, § 2. 24 P.S. § 2510-202, PA ST 24 P.S. § 2510-202. Current through 2015 Regular Session Acts 1 to 70

2003	Pennsylvania's child welfare training and education model acknowledged as being "...the most comprehensive, integrated and sophisticated program seen to date" by the Administration for Children and Families.
2004	Pennsylvania's child welfare education and training programs described as an outstanding model for other states to emulate by the Administration for Children and Families.
2005	Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program receives the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) Quality Award.
2006	CWEL program graduates its 500 th MSW recipient
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School of Social Work receives its 110th grant of external funding since 1971, expressly for child welfare education training, research, faculty development and curriculum development. CWEB, CWEL and the PA Child Welfare Training Program (CWTP) highlighted as one of Pennsylvania's key strengths during the second round of the CFSR. CWEB program graduates its 500th BSW/BASW recipient
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pennsylvania begins a two-year effort to improve the Commonwealth's child protection laws. First meeting of the PA Task Force on Child Protection ["Task Force"] held in January ³. Testimony provided to the Task Force by University child welfare faculty in May ⁴. The PA Child Welfare Training Program receives the Academic Excellence Award from the American Public Human Services Association. CWEL graduates its 1000th MSW recipient. CWERP PI receives the NSDTA Career Achievement Award. PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) officially changes its name.
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWERP continuum highlighted in NASW publication highlighting the 100th anniversary of the Children's Bureau⁵. Governor Tom Corbett signs 10 child protection bills into law, the first pieces of a comprehensive legislative package for PA's children and following the recommendations of the Task Force. Signing event held at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center⁶.
2014	On-line course, <i>Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania</i> , publicly released by the Child Welfare Resource Center (www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu)
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development series, <i>Trauma-Informed Principled Leadership</i>, initiated with Bloomsburg University and University of Pittsburgh CWEB students. CWEB program graduates its 1000th BSW/BASW recipient

³January 26, 2012

⁴May 31, 2012

⁵Zlotnik, J.L. (2013). University-agency partnerships to advance child welfare. In K. Briar-Lawson, M. McCarthy & N. Dickinson (Eds.), *The Children's Bureau: Shaping a century of child welfare practices, programs and policies* (pp. 275-292). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

⁶December 18, 2013



⁷ P.L. 115-123

Program Descriptions

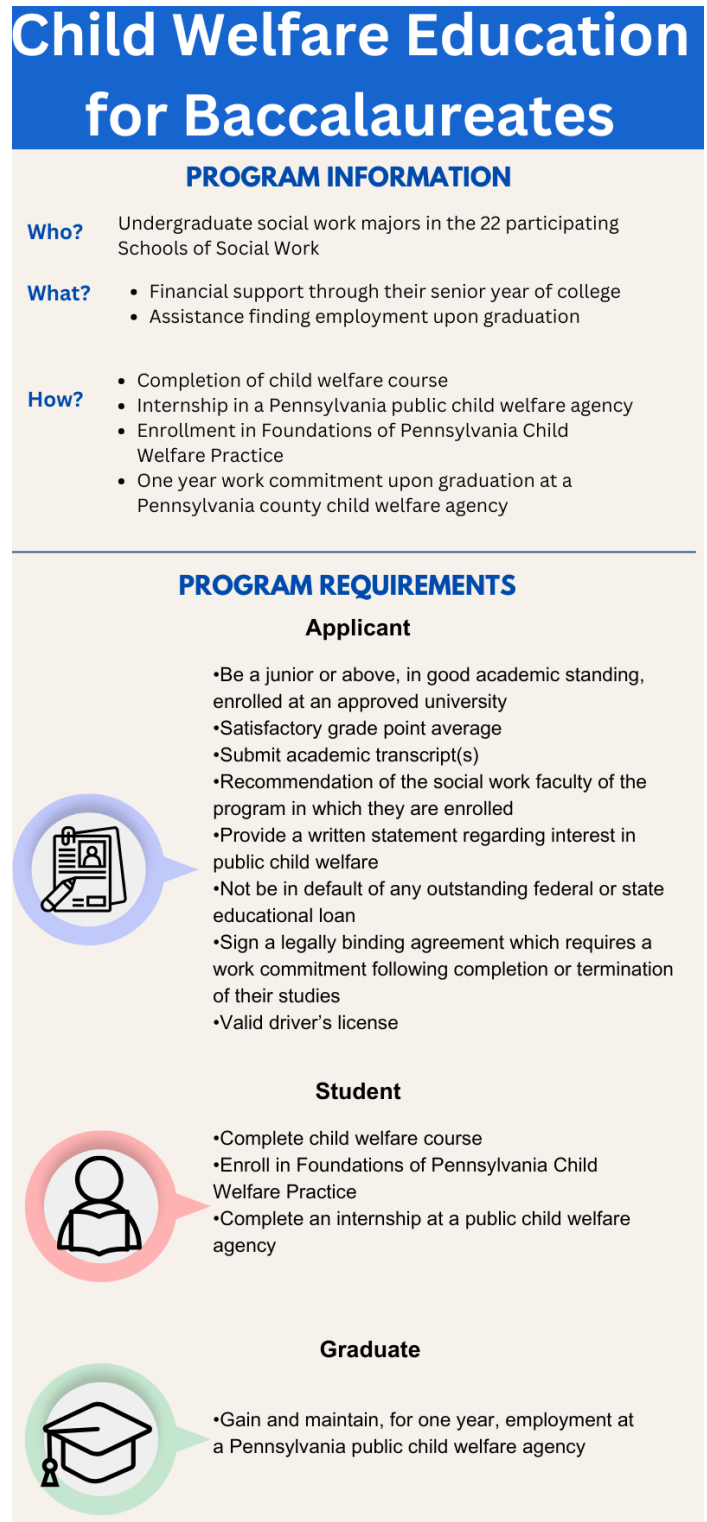
Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program (CWEB)

Designed to recruit and prepare students for a career in public child welfare, CWEB is offered to undergraduates at 22 schools throughout Pennsylvania. Figure 1 illustrates the program requirements.

CWEB admissions, in general, have been comprised of white, female students. In the past four years, male students in the CWEB program range between 7 and 10% and are predominately white.

To date, 1,433 students have graduated from CWEB; completing internships and obtaining employment in 97% of Pennsylvania counties. Students nearing graduation receive assistance with their employment search. County child welfare agencies benefit immensely from the program because it addresses a critical child welfare workforce need by providing skilled, entry-level social workers who come to child welfare with academic knowledge and exposure to front line child welfare practice gained through their internship experiences and *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice* training.

Figure 1. Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Requirements



**Child Welfare Education for Leadership
 Program (CWEL)**

The CWEL program provides substantial financial support for graduate-level social work education. Any Pennsylvania county children and youth agency employee is eligible to apply to participate in the CWEL program. See Figure 2 for CWEL program requirements.

Since its inception, CWEL has funded students from 64 counties and 13 Pennsylvania schools on both a full- and part-time basis. CWEL admissions consist primarily of white females. Over the past four years, male CWEL admissions ranged from 7-13% and were also predominately white. Figure 3 displays the trend of part-time and full-time admissions.

Figure 2. Child Welfare Education for Leadership Requirements

Child Welfare Education for Leadership

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Who? Caseworkers, supervisors, managers or administrators of any Pennsylvania county children and youth agency

What?


- Salary and benefits for full-time CWEL students
- Tuition, fees, and other expenses for both full and part-time students

How?

- CWEL applications
- Resumes
- Personal statements
- Agency approvals
- Admission to one of the approved schools
- Signed agreements


PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Applicant




- Employed at a Pennsylvania public child welfare agency for at least two years
- Satisfactory work performance evaluations
- Accepted for graduate social work study by one of the thirteen approved schools
- Approval of their employer and (if accepted for full-time study) be granted an educational leave by their employer
- Current resume
- Written statement regarding the application of graduate study to their work
- Not in default of any outstanding federal or state educational loan
- Sign a legally binding agreement requiring a work commitment following completion or termination of their studies

Student



- Complete child welfare course work while maintaining satisfactory academic progress in an affiliated MSW program
- Complete an internship at a child and family serving agency

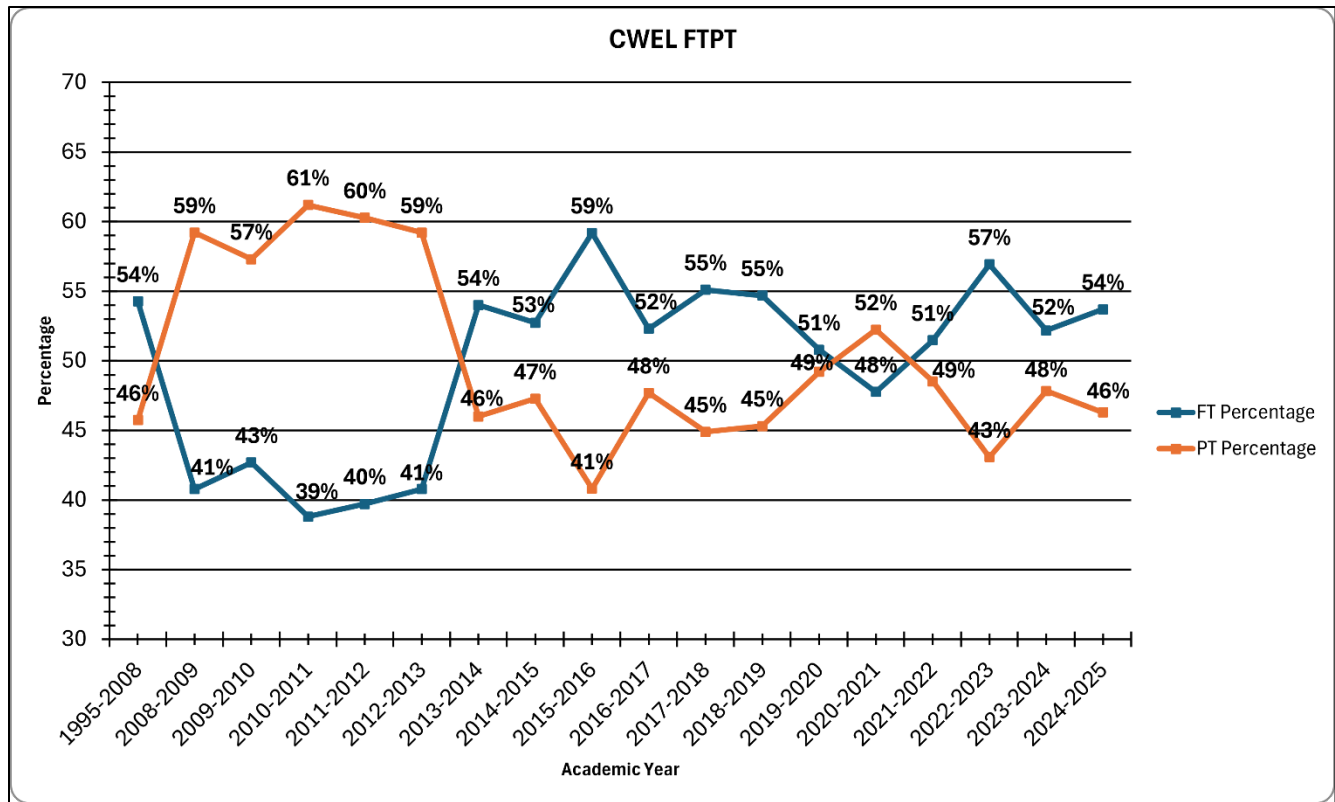
Graduate



- Maintain, for amount of time that educational funding was received, employment at the sponsoring Pennsylvania public child welfare agency

Highlighting the career ladder for public child welfare employees, approximately 17% of CWEB graduates have entered the CWEL program thus far. CWEB alumni

Figure 3. Admissions to CWEL by Enrollment Status



made up 10% of the CWEL student enrollment during the 2024-2025 program year.

Since CWEL’s inception, 1,795 child welfare professionals have earned graduate social work degrees. The program has annual retention rates averaging 92%.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare and CWEB/CWEL Enrollment

We are committed to understanding and addressing issues of racial equity and social justice, particularly as they relate to the child welfare system. We acknowledge that the United States child welfare system was built within a societal context shaped by racism and systemic injustice. Given the long-standing impact of racism and injustice in the lives of Black and brown children, families, and communities, it is crucial to dismantle the ways in which race is intertwined at every level of child welfare services.

It is well known that children of color are overrepresented in the United States child welfare system⁸. African American children made up approximately 13% of the U.S. child population, but represented 33% of the foster care population^{9,10}. Disproportionate representation is evident across all levels of child welfare services, particularly in substitute care. According to a 2025 report by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, children who are Black, Hispanic (of any race), and of multiple races had higher-than-expected CPS referrals, including substantiated reports of abuse and neglect, as well as valid GPS allegations¹¹.

While solutions for the disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system are complex, we recognize that it is crucial for the workforce to be reflective of the populations served. Child welfare workers who understand, appreciate, and/or share in the background, culture, language, and customs of a family are better

⁸ Dettlaff, A. (ed) (2021). *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system*. Springer.

⁹ US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2025). *The AFCARS Dashboard*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau. https://tableau-public.acf.gov/views/afcars_dashboard_main_page/mainpage?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y

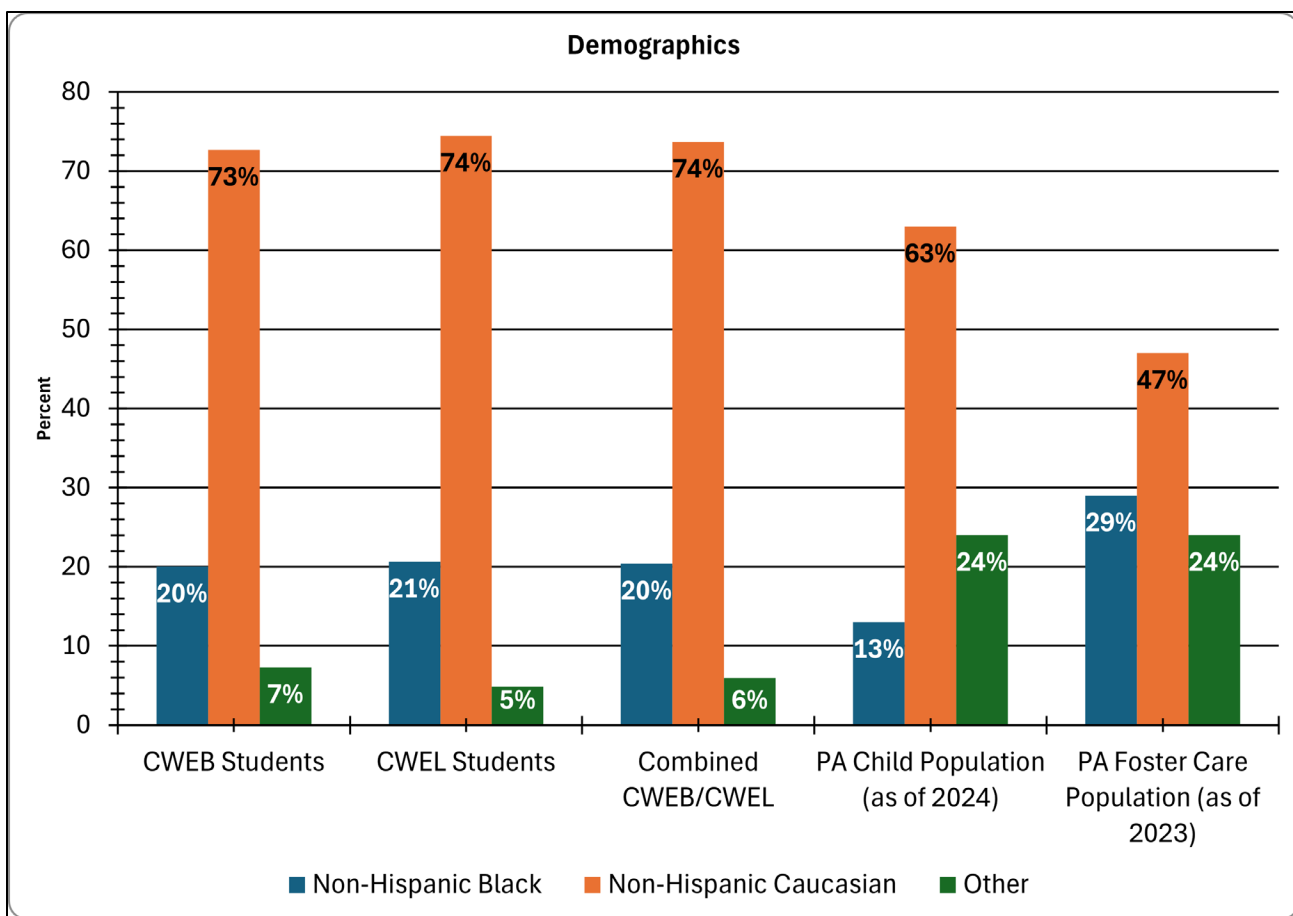
¹⁰ The Annie E. Casey Foundation (n.d.), KIDS COUNT data center. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race?loc=40&loct=2#detailed/2/40/false/37/68.69.67.12.70.66.71.72/423.424>

¹¹ Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (2025). *State of the Child 2025 – Pennsylvania*. Harrisburg, PA: author. Retrieved from <https://www.papartnerships.org/report/state-of-the-child-2025/>

equipped to holistically understand a family’s needs, appropriately provide services, and facilitate better outcomes ¹². Supporting a diverse workforce in developing practice and leadership skills is critical to addressing disproportionality in child welfare.

Within the CWEB and CWEL programs combined, Non-Hispanic Black students represent 20% of participants. Figure 4 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the Pennsylvania child population and those of CWEB/CWEL participants.

Figure 4. Demographics of PA Child Population and CWEB/CWEL Participants



CWEB students are recruited from the general population of our partnering Schools of Social Work. This arrangement provides the opportunity to collaborate with

¹² Barbee, A.P. & Antle, B.F. (2021). Workforce development strategies to address racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare systems. In Dettlaff, A.J. (ed.), *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system*. Springer.

our school partners in developing and implementing strategies that help facilitate the recruitment of students into the CWEB program. This year, CWEB continued focused recruitment sessions and shared the information with all partnering schools. The recruitment sessions were welcomed by faculty and staff and were well-received by students. Partnering schools are recruiting students into CWEB by targeting high school students who have an interest in human services at admissions fairs and even hosting a “summer camp” for high school students to present social work as an option when they reach college. Schools are also offering degree completion programs and have seen an increase in transfer students. The schools are connecting with community social workers to increase awareness of their programs and share stories of students and graduates to showcase the education a social work student receives. We will continue to partner with the Schools of Social Work in our consortium to promote child welfare as a career pathway through participation in the CWEB program.

Administration

The CWEB and CWEL programs have been administered by the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh since their inception in 2001 and 1995, respectively. Part III-A of the Project Description and Implementation provides background information. In addition to providing the opportunity for undergraduate and graduate level social work degree study on both a full-time and part-time basis, the School of Social Work provides academic and curriculum support for the other 21 undergraduate universities and 12 graduate schools eligible to participate in the CWEB and CWEL programs. The total number of participating school programs is 24, with 11 schools at the undergraduate level only, 11 university programs enrolling both undergraduate and graduate students, and two programs at the graduate level only.

Slippery Rock University welcomed new CWEL students this academic year. Bloomsburg University received full accreditation by CSWE during this time and their

participation in the CWEL consortium is being explored. We are look forward to welcoming Bloomsburg into the CWEL consortium in the near future. The University of Pittsburgh added an online MSW program in the 2025-2026 academic year which welcomed new CWEL students in the Fall 2025 semester. With the addition of the online MSW program at the University of Pittsburgh, the CWEL program is able to reach additional counties that may not have access to a campus-based program based on their location.

As discussed in the previous Annual Report (see <http://tinyurl.com/y5e587tu>), the integration of six Pennsylvania State System universities was approved in July 2021. The newly integrated schools of Pennsylvania Western University (or PennWest, formerly California University, Clarion University, and Edinboro University) and Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (formerly Bloomsburg University, Lock Haven University, and Mansfield University) have begun enrollment into their respective programs. Overall, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, which includes eight of our partnering schools of social, saw an increase in enrollment for the Fall 2025 semester and an increase in transfers from community colleges¹³. However, PennWest is struggling with enrollment, having a 2.64% decrease in Fall 2025 that contributed to staff furloughs at California University and Clarion University¹⁴. The University of Pittsburgh experienced an increase in both undergraduate and graduate enrollment for the 2025-2026 academic year¹⁵. With the addition of the seven new undergraduate schools (Alvernia University, Cedar Crest College, Elizabethtown College, Lancaster

¹³ Hensil, K. (2025, October 7). *Passhe universities increase enrollment*. PASSHE Universities Increase Enrollment. https://www.passhe.edu/news/releases/2025-10-7_PASSHE-universities-increase-enrollment-set-retention-record.html

¹⁴ Stepler, K. (2025, October 28). *Union: PennWest to furlough more than a dozen employees*. TribLive. <https://triblive.com/local/regional/union-pennwest-to-furlough-more-than-a-dozen-employees/>

¹⁵ Jones, S. (2025, October 3). *Nearly 1,300 more first-year students help boost overall enrollment by 4.5%*. <https://www.utimes.pitt.edu/news/nearly-1300-more-first>

Bible College, Messiah University, and Misericordia University), the CWEB program welcomed 15 new students. This increased enrollment enabled the program to reach new counties for practicum placements and employment of graduates.

The CWEB and CWEL faculty conduct annual meetings with each approved university program, including branch campus locations, and maintain ongoing contact to discuss academic programs, issues, and progress. The legal agreement for each student contains a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) waiver which permits the sharing of academic information. The CWEB and CWEL faculty and staff have hundreds of contacts with faculty and students from the other schools throughout the year and provide instruction and academic advisement within the School of Social Work to University of Pittsburgh students.

Fiscal administration includes reimbursement to county employers of full-time graduate students for salaries and benefits, reimbursement to students for books, payment of tuition and fees at all approved educational institutions and, where appropriate, travel expenditures and fellowship payments. These payments are advanced by the University as they become due. The University, in turn, invoices the Commonwealth and is reimbursed from a combination of state and federal funds.

A series of formal agreements provide for the students' enrollment arrangements, reimbursement for allowable expenses, and the required post-education work commitments. These include the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Department of Human Services and the University of Pittsburgh; a series of agreements between the University and each of the other 23 approved institutions of higher education; and agreements between CWEB students with the University or among CWEL students, their respective county employer, and the University. Agreements for full-time CWEL students specifies the employers' responsibility to maintain benefits and

grant educational leave to students and the reimbursement for CWEL student salaries and benefits.

To accomplish these tasks, approximately ten full-time equivalent faculty and staff have been engaged. All program faculty teach regular courses, provide academic advising to students, and oversee internships. In addition, the CWEB and CWEL faculty are responsible for assisting in program evaluation. The faculty and staff listing is contained in [Appendix K](#).

Academic Program Approval and Curriculum

All the schools participating in the CWEB and CWEL programs are fully accredited by both the Middle States Association of College and Schools (MSACS) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The 24 approved schools and their accreditation dates are listed in [Appendix B](#). A graphic representation showing the location of the participating schools is included in [Appendix C](#).

All approved undergraduate schools are required to offer at least one child welfare course and internships in county child welfare agencies. Approved graduate programs are required to offer at least two graduate-level child welfare courses and child welfare-focused internships. The continuing availability of these courses and internships is verified by the CWEB and CWEL Academic Coordinators who consult regularly with the approved schools regarding practicum assignments, specific courses, student registrations, and student progress. Team conferences are held for problem-solving and solution-building as needed to support student success.

The 2024-2025 course offerings of the 22 undergraduate schools participating in CWEB and the 12 graduate school programs participating in CWEL are shown in [Appendix D](#) (CWEB) and in [Appendix E](#) (CWEL). These course listings referenced

above do not include internships, for which a minimum of 400 clock hours is required at the baccalaureate level and 900 at the master's level.¹⁶

CWEB students are strongly encouraged to participate in the Pennsylvania State Civil Service County Social Casework Intern program in conjunction with their school and the county agency in which they are completing their placements. This option requires 975 hours of internship. The advantage of this option for the student and agency is that upon completion of the official County Social Casework Intern program and graduation, the student is eligible to begin work immediately in the agency, typically as a Caseworker II, through a promotion process within the Civil Service system. Of the 36 CWEB students who graduated during the 2024-2025 academic year, 14 (39%) exercised the State Civil Service Social Casework Intern option. Although not required, participation in the civil service option is beneficial to many participants and county agencies.

Commitment and Recoupment of Funds

All students enrolled in the CWEB and CWEL programs have a contractual work commitment to public child welfare upon graduation. For CWEB graduates, the commitment is one calendar year of service for one academic year of support¹⁷. For CWEL graduates, the commitment is the amount of time equal to the length of the educational leave for full-time CWEL students and equal to the proportion of the full-time length of the degree program they have completed as part-time students¹⁸. Students who received support for only a portion of their program have a pro-rated work commitment proportional to the support they received. During the period of this report, all 36 CWEB graduates obtained employment in a county child welfare agency and 52

¹⁶ Council on Social Work Education (n.d.). Prepare for your education: Social work education at a glance. Available at <https://www.cswe.org/students/prepare-for-your-education/>

¹⁷ 45 CFR, Ch. II, §235.63 (b) (5)

¹⁸ 45 CFR, Ch. II, §235.63 (b) (1)

CWEL students completed their degree programs. Both sets of graduates engaged in public child welfare work.

The full amount of the financial support paid to the student or on the student's behalf must be reimbursed whenever a CWEB or CWEL graduate fails to complete his or her work commitment. This provision is contained in the agreement each student signs either with the University (CWEB students) or with the University and county of origin (CWEL students). During the 2024-2025 program year, two CWEB students withdrew or were terminated from the program after receiving financial benefits, some after beginning their period of commitment payback. In general, baccalaureate-level students are just beginning their professional career path and it is not uncommon for undergraduates to underestimate the rigor and complexity of child welfare work. This discernment process for undergraduate students may lead them to discover that child welfare is not a fit for their professional goals. Ideally these decisions should be made prior to a student's start within the program.

Retention is tracked in two ways: the number of students not completing the program and the number of graduates not completing their work commitment. Across both programs, the student loss rate is 4.5%. In addition to the low rate of students leaving the program before completion, an even smaller number of graduates do not finish their contracted work commitment. The CWEB program has had 114 individuals out of a total of 1,433 graduates (7.9%) not complete the work commitment whereas the CWEL program, has had 24 individuals out of a total of 1,795 graduates (1.3%) not complete their work commitment. These situations, together with the actions being taken are summarized in [Appendix A](#).

Among the CWEB graduates (2023-2024) who have recently satisfied their legal work commitment, 67% remain in the agencies. Overall, 38% have exceeded their

commitment by over two years. Increased familiarity with the program, more focused selection criteria and stronger case management has contributed to these highly positive outcomes. The number of CWEL graduates who have discontinued child welfare work for all reasons over the life of the program averages 8.4% per year. This figure includes retirements, permanent disability determinations, and, in some cases, serious illness or death. We believe that these consistently high retention rates across time is a strong indication of the success of our professional education programs and the steadfast commitment to the work of child welfare among our participants.

The employment/retention of all students exiting the program will continue to be monitored as required in Section II, G, 14 of the Program Description and Implementation, and by PL 103-432 which was enacted by the United States Congress during the first CWEL program year and which applies to graduates funded after October 1, 1995.

Despite the loss of some participants, both the CWEB and CWEL programs have a strong record of retention. Nevertheless, there are real reasons behind each of the post-commitment departures. Some are highly personal and involve significant life events and circumstances that are unrelated to child welfare work. Others involve issues of practice and/or organizational climate. We include additional information regarding agency departures later in this report. Fortunately, many root causes of turnover can be remedied, though some are more difficult to address than others. We are committed to working with county agencies to focus on organizational-level solutions that can assist in the recruitment and retention of qualified child welfare professionals.

Deliverables

The workforce in Pennsylvania continues to be strengthened by the social work education provided through the CWEB and CWEL Programs. Since the start of the program, a total of 1,433 undergraduate students received targeted education to prepare them for child welfare careers through the CWEB program. The CWEL program developed 1,795 child welfare leaders by providing graduate level education. Close to 50% of all county child welfare agencies presently have a CWEB or CWEL graduate in a senior leadership position.

Both the CWEB and CWEL programs are valued by Pennsylvania child welfare agency leaders. Many have integrated the programs into their recruitment and retention efforts. Faculty connect with county administrators and regularly engage in collaborative discussions to increase participation. Both statewide and county specific CWEL information sessions are held with interested county staff to review application requirements, share program information, and encourage participation.

The CWEB team expanded its recruitment efforts this year as seven new schools joined the program. Classrooms and student forums were visited both in person and virtually to share information and answer student questions about CWEB. In total, 30 recruitment presentations were provided to an audience of more than 300 social work undergraduate students. We maintain an active presence to keep child welfare alive and vibrant as a choice for young professionals interested in impactful work within human services.

A series of detailed webpages (<https://tinyurl.com/ytr4vke3>), a program email address (cwerp@pitt.edu) and a toll-free phone line [1 (866) ASK-CWEL/1 (866) 275-2935] are available for those interested in learning more about the CWEB and CWEL programs. Additionally, both programs are accessible through the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) website (<https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/>). The CWEB and

CWEL webpages include a Student Handbook for each program as well as “Frequently Asked Questions” to clarify program information and address common concerns. A Facebook page is offered to promote community and highlight student achievements.

CWEB faculty and staff hosted five virtual meetings for students throughout the academic year providing program updates, support, information, and an opportunity to connect with their CWEB peers. CWEL student meetings were held in both the fall and spring to provide program updates and share current topics in child welfare practice. This year’s fall meeting focused on moving into supervisor/leadership roles and the spring meeting covered perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Topics are rotated every semester to address student interest and promote a culture of learning focused on policy and practice issues in child welfare.

The University delivered the following products and work efforts during 2024-2025 program year in accordance with the approved Project Description and Implementation plan:

- Previous annual reports were posted on the CWERP website and made available to all county administrators, DHS officials, CWEB and CWEL academic partners, and other interested state and federal officials.
- CWEB and CWEL program and application materials were posted on the CWERP website for all counties, participating schools, and interested parties to access.
- Program evaluation instruments were distributed to all participating counties, schools, current students, and a sample of graduates from both CWEB and CWEL as part of the annual program evaluation, the results of which are described later in this report.

- Faculty/staff meetings were held with participating school programs beginning in the fall of 2024 and continuing through the spring of 2025. These meetings are summarized in Tables 1-4 below and include virtual forums with current students, academic faculty, and academic program administrators.
- Additionally, hundreds of inquiries were managed from potential students, current students, graduates, agency administrators, county commissioners, other states, and other colleges and universities.

In the 2024-2025 program year, the CWERP faculty and staff conducted presentations, contributed to scholarly publications, and engaged in community service. Their works include the following:

Presentations:

Blagg, R., Paul, M., Collins, P.P., & Perry, M. A. (2024, October). *Engaging child welfare workforce data to improve outcomes*. Presentation at the 2024 NSDTA Annual Education Conference: Beyond the Horizon: Shaping the Future of Workforce Development. Albuquerque, NM.

Chen, S. & Perry, M. A. (2025, January). *Examining factors influencing attitudes toward evidence-based practice among child welfare professionals*. Poster presentation at the Society for Social Work and Research 29th Annual Conference. Seattle, WA.

Perry, M. A. & Gadsden, D. (2024, October). *Do Black female child welfare professionals need capes?* Presentation at the 2024 NSDTA Annual Education Conference: Beyond the Horizon: Shaping the Future of Workforce Development. Albuquerque, NM.

Perry, M. A. & Gadsden, D. (2025, April). *It's not as easy as we make it seem: Experiences of Black female caseworkers*. Presentation at the 2025 CWLA Conference: Inspiring Change, Igniting Progress. Washington, DC.

Reiss, D., Perry, M. A., O'Hare, M., & Abrams, Q. (2024, October). *Exploring the role of staff in improving the digital lives of youth in care*. Presentation at the 2024 NSDTA Annual Education Conference: Beyond the Horizon: Shaping the Future of Workforce Development. Albuquerque, NM.

Rawls, B. (2025, May 6 & 8). *Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders: Recognizing Risks, Impacts, and Interventions for Families* [Two-part online webinar offered through the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center].

Rawls, B. (2025, April 4). *Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders: Understanding Impacts, Risks, and Prevention for Maternal and Child Health*. Continuing education training at the 2025 Western PA Lactation Consultant Association Spring Conference.

Rawls, B. (2024, October 24). *Overcoming Challenges in Child Welfare* [Moderated session]. CSWE 2024 Child Welfare Track Meeting, Kansas City, MO.

Rawls, B. (2024, October 8). *How Physical Health Impacts Mental Health & Vice-Versa*. [Educational training for Black individuals living with Multiple Sclerosis] UPMC Magee and the National MS Society.

Rawls, B. & Gentry, B. (2024, June 20). *Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders: Interventions to Preserve the Family and Reduce ACES*. [Continuing education training] 32nd Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference Pocono Manor, PA.

Scholarly Endeavors as PI/Lead Investigator:

Perry, M. (Principal Investigator). *Supporting Superwomen: Emotional Labor, Gendered Racial Microaggressions, and the Superwoman Schema in Black Female Child Welfare Professionals*. University of Pittsburgh, Center on Race and Social Problems, 2021-2024

Perry, M. (Lead Evaluation Investigator). *Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Analytics (QIC-WA)*. Cooperative Agreement with the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health & Human Services. Evaluation Lead for Public Sites; 2023-2028 (PI: Todd Franke, UCLA)

Co-Author Publications:

In print:

Reiss, D. M., Perry, M. A., Gomez, R. J., Tomlinson, C., & Reddish, N. (2025). Exploring the role of independent living workers in how youth in care access and utilize technology. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-025-01018-w>

Data Briefs:

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (July, 2024). *Data Brief 2: CWEB Post Hire Interview: Effective Supervision*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (October, 2024). *Data Brief 3: CWEB Post Hire Interview: Experiences of Newly Hired Caseworkers*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (April, 2025). *Data Brief 4: CWEB Post Hire Interview: Positive Family Interactions*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (June, 2025). *Data Brief 5: CWEB Surveys: Perceptions of Child Welfare*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

Awards/Recognitions/Consultation:

Dr. Brooke Rawls: was recognized as the MVP (Most Valuable Professor) by the Pitt Women's Lacrosse Team. The MVP program recognizes and honors Pitt faculty and staff who have made an impact on our student-athletes' lives academically and personally.

Helen Cahalane:

Career Achievement in Child Welfare Award, Council on Social Work Education (2025)

Mentorship:

Dr. Brooke Rawls mentored two undergraduate students who were selected to present their work at The Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors Conference in March of 2025.

Professor Laura Borish mentored a graduate student who was honored with the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work Kim and Larry Davis Direct Practice Award for Outstanding Ability to Engage in Research Informed Practice and Practice Informed Research.

Rachel Winters mentored a graduate student who presented her research titled:
“Leveling Up” Traditional Social Work Education at the 2025 PA-NASW Conference in
October of 2025.

Peer Reviewer:

Marlo Perry:

Journal of Public Child Welfare (Jan & April 2025)

Journal of Adolescent Research (Sept 2024)

Child Welfare (April 2025)

Proposal Reviews:

NSDTA (April 2025)

NCCAN (September 2024)

Momentum Scaling Awards (November 2024)

Pitt SSW Stier Awards (April 2025)

CWEB and CWEL Student and School Forums

Table 1. CWEB Student Zoom Meetings

Fall 2024/Spring 2025
September 12, 2024
October 10, 2024
November 8, 2024
January 23, 2025
March 13, 2025

Table 2. CWEL Student Meetings

School Program	Date of Fall Visit	Date of Spring Visit
Bryn Mawr College	10/17/2024	3/24/2025
California University	10/14/2024	3/24/2025
Edinboro University	10/14/2024	3/24/2025
Kutztown University	10/16/2024	3/24/2025
Marywood University	10/16/2024	3/26/2025
Millersville University	10/17/2024	3/24/2025
Shippensburg University	10/17/2024	3/24/2025
Slippery Rock	10/14/2024	3/26/2025
Temple University	10/16/2024	3/24/2025
University of Pennsylvania	10/16/2024	3/24/2025
University of Pittsburgh	10/14/2024	3/26/2025
University of Pittsburgh-Bradford	10/14/2024	3/26/2025
Widener University	10/17/2024	3/26/2025

Table 3. Meetings with CWEB School Faculty

School Program	Date of Visit
Alvernia University	9/9/2024
Cedar Crest College	9/10/2024
East Stroudsburg University	9/9/2024
Elizabethtown College	8/29/2024
Juniata College	9/11/2024
Kutztown University	9/6/2024
Messiah University	9/18/2024
Millersville University	9/17/2024
Misericordia University	9/25/2024
Penn West University California	10/9/2024
Penn West University Edinboro	10/9/2024
Shippensburg University	9/11/2024
Slippery Rock University	8/8/2024
Temple University	2/28/2025
Widener University	9/24/2024

Table 4. Meetings with CWEL School Faculty

School Program	Date of Visit
Bryn Mawr College	2/7/2025
Penn West University California	2/5/2025

Penn West University Edinboro	2/5/2025
Kutztown University	2/12/2025
Marywood University	2/6/2025
Millersville University	6/9/2025
Shippensburg University	2/3/2025
Slippery Rock University	2/4/2025
Temple University	2/13/2025
University of Pennsylvania	2/7/2025
West Chester University	2/12/2025
Widener University	2/4/2025

The CWEB and CWEL programs place a high value on the voice of the students participating in our programs. Focus groups with CWEB and CWEL students are scheduled during the Spring of the 2025-2026 to further define the areas of improvement mentioned in the program evaluation surveys and brainstorm ways to improve the programs. The results of these focus groups will be discussed during Continuing Quality Improvement meetings that occur on a quarterly basis for the CWEB and CWEL programs.

The Changing Landscape of Pennsylvania Public Child Welfare

Like many child welfare systems across the country, Pennsylvania’s workforce encountered challenges during the 2024-2025 program year as our nation continued to emerge from the confines of the pandemic. Although the immediate impact of the pandemic faded, the longer-term effects on the workforce remained noticeable in 2024-2025. While maintaining vital operations, some child welfare agencies experienced a dramatic decline in their staff complement. The same held true among provider agencies, drastically decreasing the availability of services for children and adults alike. Many individuals decided to leave the human services sector across systems of care which has impacted both public and private child welfare agencies. Issues related to basic needs and economic supports have continued to confront many families which provides an additional area of concern for the child welfare workforce.

An increase in suspected child abuse reports as well as those meeting criteria for general protective services occurred in calendar years 2023 and 2024. These rises were anticipated due to the increased contact between children and mandated reporters in education, medical, and community settings following the re-opening of our communities. The total reports for suspected child abuse in calendar year 2023 remained lower, however, than in the year prior to the pandemic.

Previous annual reports have referenced the major shift in Pennsylvania's child welfare system operations that occurred over a decade ago following the public exposure and subsequent legal proceedings that emanated from a long-standing child abuse travesty. We refer readers to the 2012 special investigation report cited here for information regarding this highly publicized case¹⁹ and to the policy and statutory recommendations of the Task Force on Child Protection formed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly²⁰.

Despite the ongoing challenges of turnover in the child welfare workforce, new opportunities to employ more efficient and effective modes of practice, including the use of virtual technology, data-driven decision making, predictive analytics, and evidence-based interventions have emerged. The passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act²¹ in February of 2018 and the implementation of the state-level FFPSA Prevention Plan brought additional opportunities and expectations to the child welfare workforce. In addition, Pennsylvania continues to move toward implementation of a universal assessment to better identify family and child needs, strengths, risk factors,

¹⁹ Freeh, Sporkin & Sullivan, LLP (July 12, 2012). "*Report of the Special Investigative Counsel Regarding the Actions of the Pennsylvania State University Related to the Child Sexual Abuse Committed by Gerald A. Sandusky*"

²⁰ *Child Protection in Pennsylvania: Proposed Recommendations, Report of the Task Force on Child Protection*. Full report and Executive Summary available at http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/publications.cfm?JSPU_PUBLN_ID=285.

²¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/title-iv-e-prevention-program>

and safety considerations to guide child welfare intervention and service planning. Increased emphasis has been placed on youth and family voice and representation in the child welfare system. There is greater recognition of the need to educate the legislature on the basics of child welfare and the work of caseworkers. Plans are underway for Pennsylvania's next Child and Family Services Review to occur in 2026. (See <https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CFSR.htm>). These are welcome changes and actions that require the time, investment, and expertise of the workforce.

Evaluation

Introduction

Each year online surveys are sent to schools participating in the CWEB and CWEL educational programs, current students and those who have recently graduated, and the county agencies that employ them or provide practicum placements. These surveys gauge utility and quality of the curricula and practicum experiences, opportunities for improvement, and the organizational culture of their work environment. This information is shared with CWEB and CWEL partners, including agency administrators, school faculty, and CWEB/CWEL faculty and staff to inform and help improve the quality of services, curricula, and working environments.

All surveys are web-enabled. Throughout the year, emails and instructions are sent to current students, recent graduates, long-term graduates, and CWEB/CWEL schools and counties with information on how to access their surveys, which are located on a secure server. A standard follow-up protocol is in place to try to obtain a minimum 50% response rate for each group of respondents. Response rates are reported below. Datasets were cleaned prior to analysis, with usable surveys having at least 50% of the questions answered. Surveys not meeting this threshold were dropped from the analyses. What follows are the findings from the 2024-2025 evaluation.

Table 5. Return Rates by Survey Type

Respondent Group	Number Surveys Sent	Number of Usable Surveys	Response Rate (%)
County	70	39	83% (n=58)
Current Students	170	101	60% CWEB (n=24) 59% CWEL (n=77)
Recent Graduates	84	50	51% CWEB (n=19) 66% CWEL (n=31)
Long Term Graduates	93	35	38% (n=35)
CWEB/CWEL Schools	56	37	83% (n=37)

Current CWEB and CWEL Students

Survey procedures and methods

Details about the survey overview and demographics of the respondents can be found in Figure 5. In addition to the scaled items, three open-ended questions asked about positive aspects of the program, areas for improvement, and qualities that may help prospective CWEB/CWEL students succeed in the program.

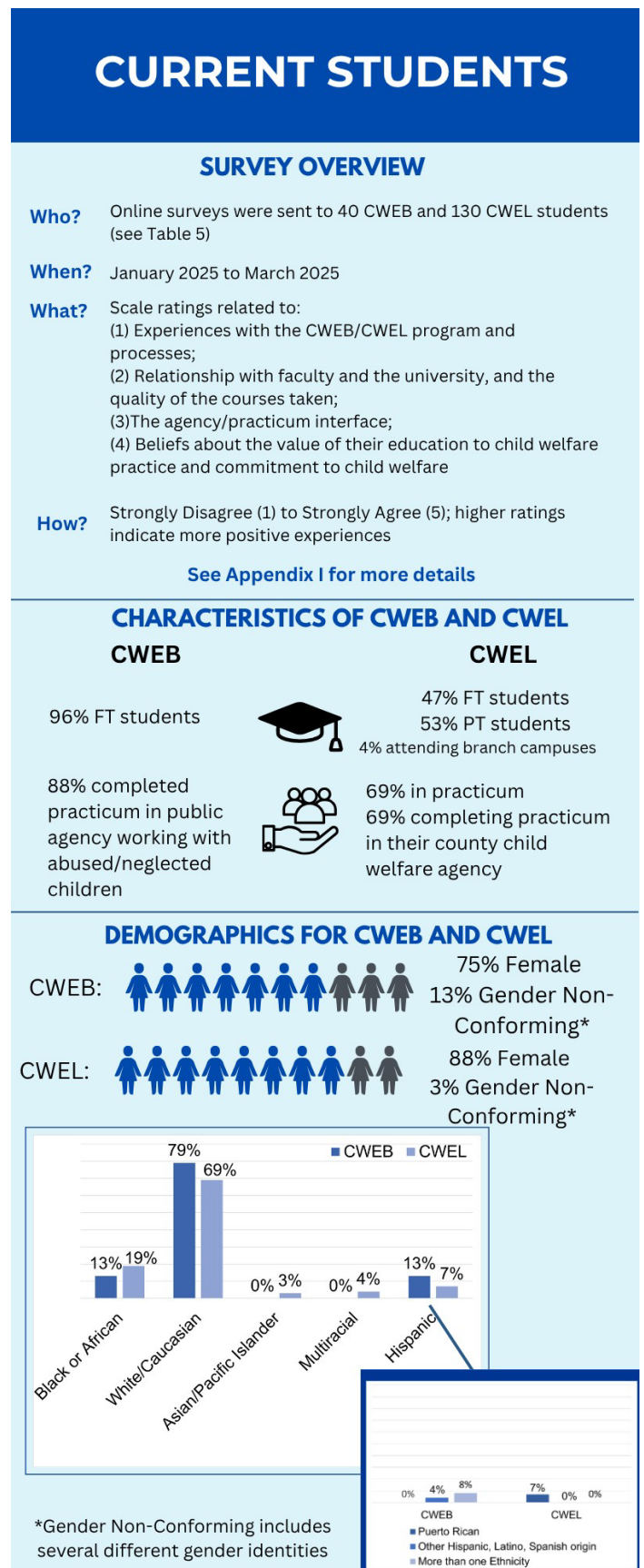
How do students perceive their program?

CWEB and CWEL students highly value their professional education. Using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 having the lowest value and 10 the most value, respondents were asked, “What is the value of the CWEB or CWEL program to the public child welfare system?” The average score for the CWEB students was 9.13 ($SD=1.12$), and the average score for the CWEL students was 9.54 ($SD=0.86$). Responses to this question, as well as each survey item (rated on a 1-5 scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) can be found in Table 1, [Appendix I](#). Table 1 displays the responses of

the CWEB students, as well as both the full-time and part-time CWEL students. All three subgroups report being satisfied with the degree program, the agency and practicum interfaces, some of the degree processes, and aspects of their practicum experiences. Satisfaction ratings and statistically significant findings are shown in Figure 6. The only significant difference between CWEB and CWEL students this academic year was regarding using the handbook to answer questions. CWEL students were more likely to use the handbook to answer their questions, which may reflect the differences in how students' problem solve and take in information. CWEB and CWEL students perceived support from the program faculty and staff remain high. Both programs strive to be fully available to students from the time of application to graduation.

Comparing full-time and part-time CWEL students, part-time students rated their academic advisor's familiarity with the CWEL program significantly lower than full-time students. This finding may suggest that

Figure 5. Survey Overview and Description of Current Student Respondents



part-time students might not have as much access to their advisors and advisors potentially viewing part-time students similar to full-time students regarding their availability, course load capacity, and flexibility to complete practicum hours.

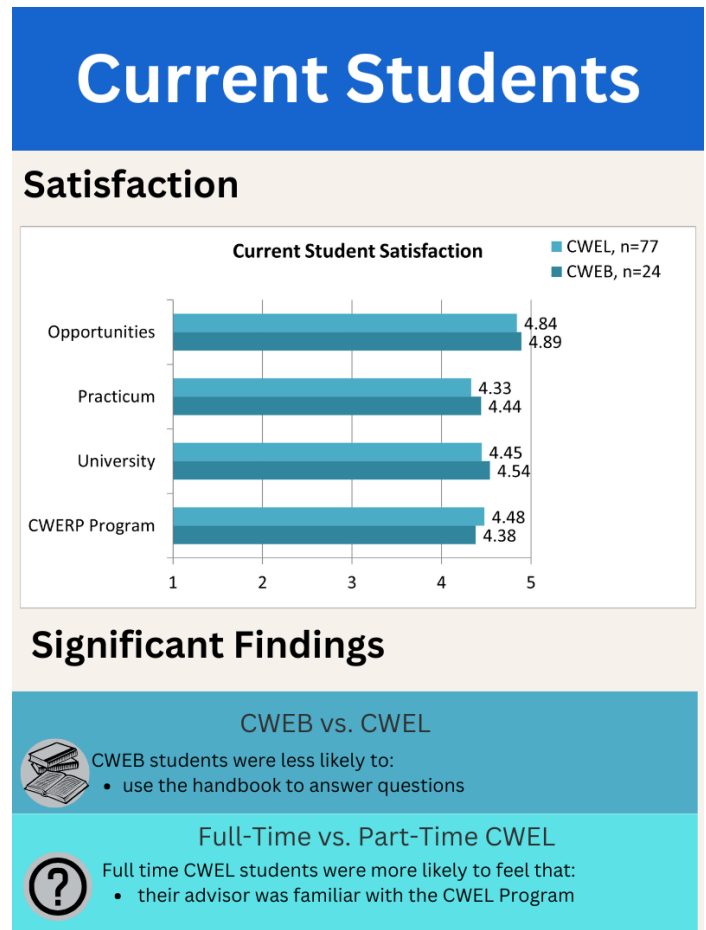
Open-ended responses

CWEB and CWEL students were asked three open-ended questions to obtain more in-depth information regarding their opinions on their educational programs. The main findings are discussed below.

When asked about the positive aspects of CWEB, students discussed the financial advantages of the program as well as their practicum placement. CWEB

students perceived that having an internship in a county child welfare agency prepared them for their career in child welfare and their ability to connect to the communities they will serve. For example, one student shared, *“While working in a public CYS, I have learned a lot about the other employees and their specific backgrounds. There are very few other employees who have done the CWEB program, and when I am shadowing those specific employees, I can see it being presented in their work that they do. They know when to be compassionate and when to be serious and stern. They take more initiative to hold community events and fundraisers for certain things, which I find extremely admirable. I think that the specific aspect of the CWEB program that is particularly positive is helping and supporting future {workers} ease into the child*

Figure 6. Current Student Results



welfare system.” Similarly, CWEL students appreciated the opportunity to participate in the program, citing the financial benefits as the only way they would have been able to complete a master’s degree in social work. CWEL students also discussed learning new skills and developing a new mindset concerning the child welfare population. CWEL students talked about learning trauma informed skills and other aspects of social work. An example of this learning was shared by a CWEL student: “...*Working in this field I have learned so much just from my day to day job but now having courses to help further educate me has been so helpful. I believe working in the field and returning to school has really helped me connect the dots in the information I am learning, which for me makes it easier to process and understand.*”

Students were also asked in what areas the CWEB and CWEL programs can be improved keeping in mind areas that can’t be changed due to federal regulations. Overall, CWEB students didn’t have many suggestions for improvement. A few students discussed their frustration with the new stipend disbursement, wanting more opportunities to learn about CWEB before applying, and having a centralized way to track internship hours. Similar to CWEB students, the majority of CWEL students didn’t have any recommendations for the program. A few CWEL students did suggest some areas for improvement, including having more choices for electives, clarity around obtaining a practicum placement, and allowing work-based practicum placements.

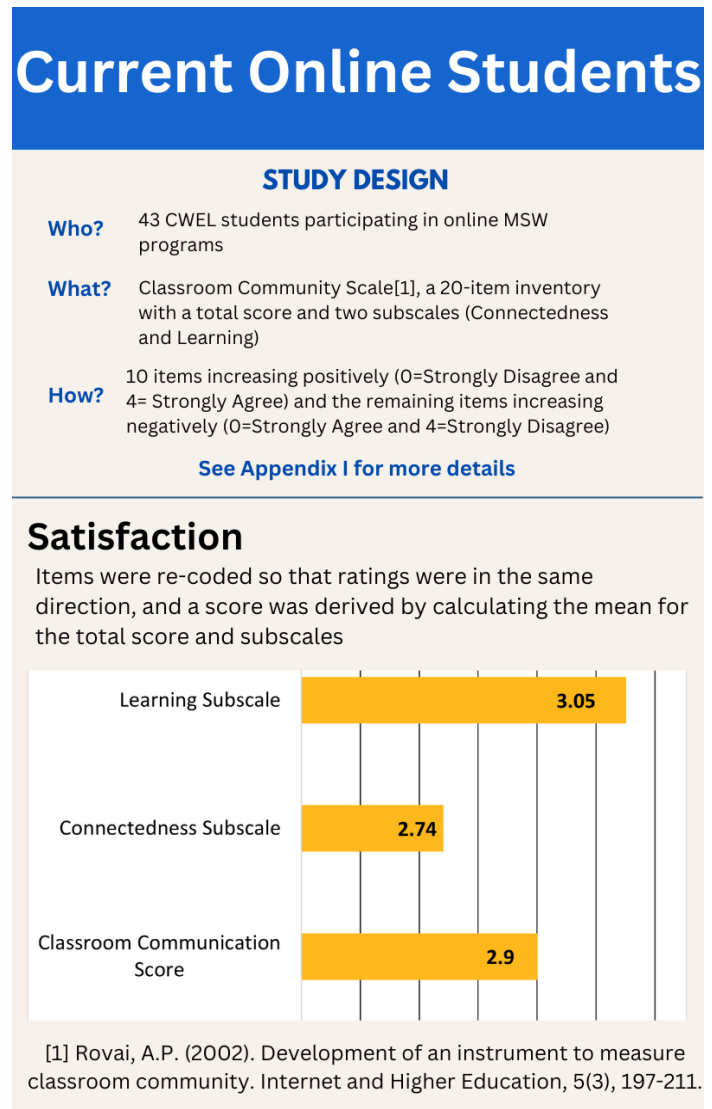
Online CWEL participation

The recommendation to have the ability to complete the CWEL program online has been suggested in previous years, due to lack of easy access to MSW programs in some parts of the state. This option brings additional considerations, however, such as scheduling time to complete online coursework and adjusting working hours for synchronous learning activities. In response to this need and the changing nature of higher education, CWERP is offering a completely online MSW program option through

partnerships with PennWest, Temple, Shippensburg, and Widener Universities. Details of an additional survey to capture the unique experience of online MSW students can be found in Figure 7. Of note, online learning is a fit for some students and not for others. We include information regarding the challenges and opportunities of online learning in the information sessions offered to potential applicants in order to provide applicants with a realistic view of online programming.

Individuals rated their overall Satisfaction, Connectedness, and Learning positively, suggesting a good online learning experience. Since the 2019-2020 academic year, when the Classroom Community Scale was introduced, the Connectedness subscale has been rated lowest each year. This finding suggests that face-to-face interactions between students and faculty may be more conducive to a feeling of belonging in the learning space. Since the CWEL students are surveyed multiple times throughout their academic career, we will look to see if these ratings change over time or remain constant.

Figure 7. Online Student Description and Results



Recent CWEB and CWEL Graduates

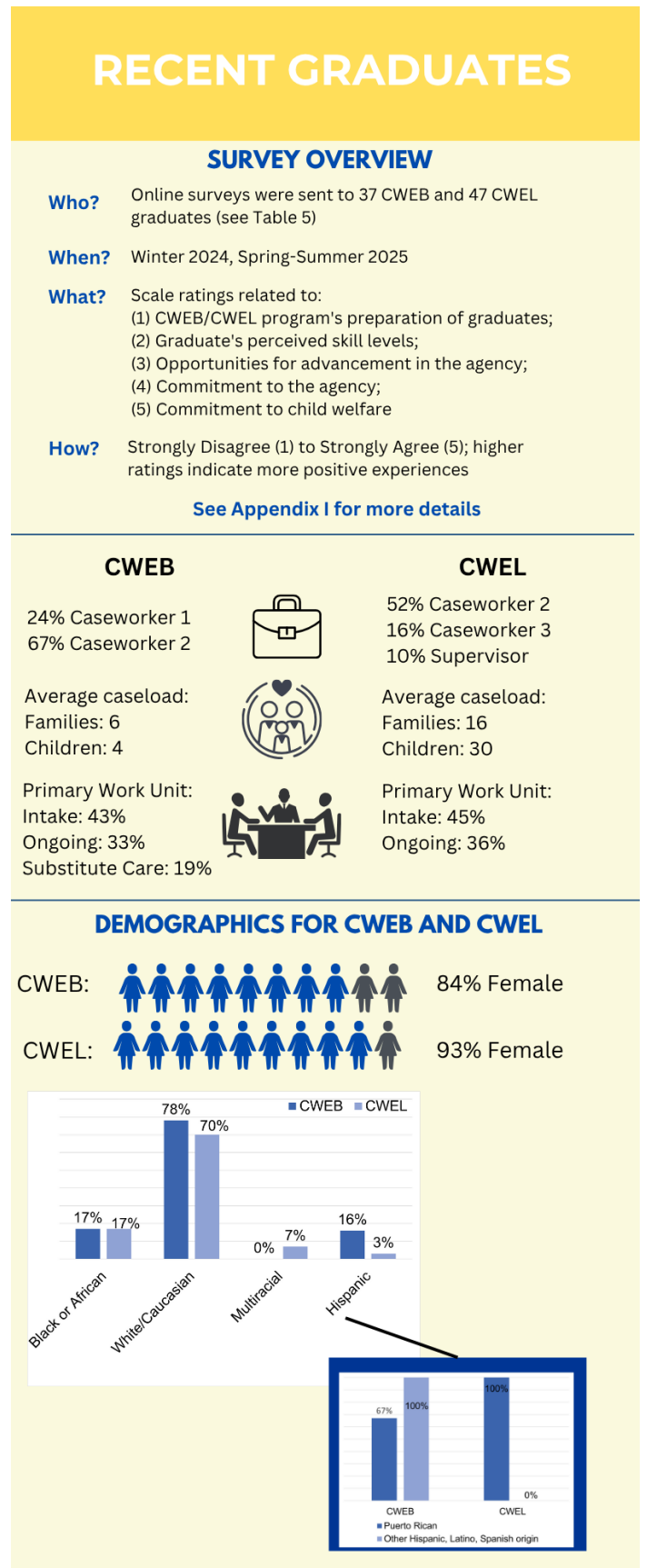
Survey procedures and methods

The survey overview and demographics of the respondents can be found in Figure 8. In addition to scaled items, four open-ended questions ask about the positive aspects of the program, the contribution of their practicum placement on their professional development, advice for future students, and areas of program improvement.

How do recent graduates perceive their program?

CWEB and CWEL graduates highly value their professional education. Using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 having the lowest value and 10 the highest value, respondents were asked, “What is the value of the CWEB or CWEL program to the public child welfare system?” The average score for the CWEB students was 9.21 ($SD=0.98$), and the average score for the CWEL students was 9.26 ($SD=1.32$). Responses to this question, as well as each survey item (rated on a 1-5 scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) can be found in Table 2, [Appendix I](#). The recent graduate survey is comprised of

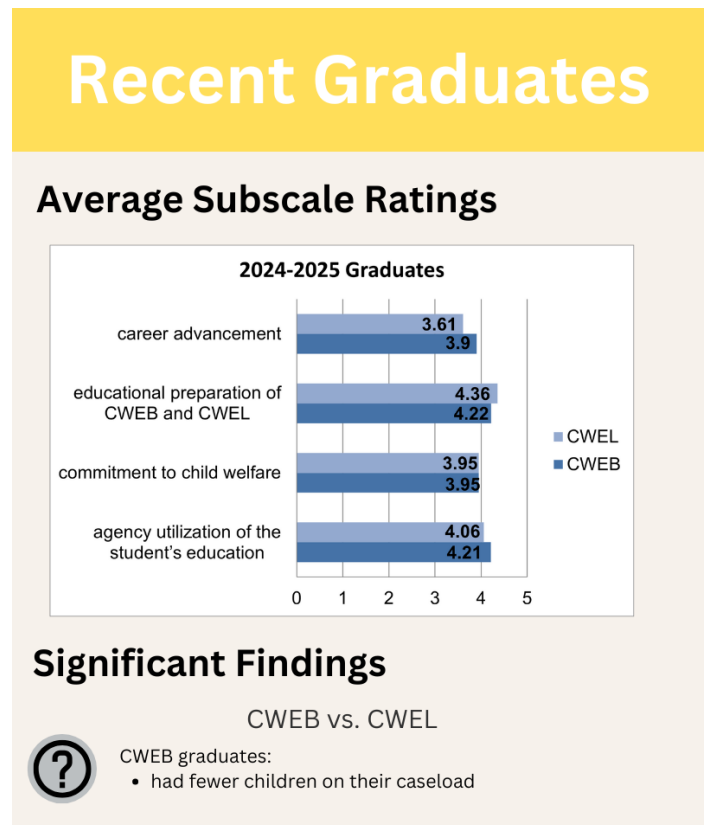
Figure 8. Survey Overview and Description of Recent Graduate Respondents



four subscales: (1) career advancement; (2) educational preparation of CWEB and CWEL graduates; (3) commitment to child welfare; and (4) agency utilization of the graduate's education. Subscale ratings and statistically significant findings are shown in Figure 9.

The two most striking differences between CWEB and CWEL graduates are on the "career advancement" and "agency utilization of student's education" subscales, with CWEL graduates rating them markedly lower than CWEB graduates. These lower ratings suggest that more attention should be focused at the agency level to improve the career outlook for CWEL graduates, as this is a key contributor to retention. Discussion should occur early in the process, ideally when the worker is applying to CWEL. County agencies are advised to explain the opportunities CWEL graduates will have when they receive their MSW degree to provide a realistic expectation of potential roles and responsibilities before starting the program. Prospectively thinking about how to utilize new knowledge and skills may begin to widen thinking beyond "promotion." Involving CWEL graduates in agency-level initiatives such as improving recruitment and retention, evidence-based practices, and trauma-informed care are just a few of the options to give CWEL graduates the opportunity to apply their enhanced skillset to benefit the agency and the families they serve.

Figure 9. Recent Graduate Results



Open-ended responses

Graduates expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the CWEB/CWEL programs and discussed the support from program faculty and staff, along with the financial benefits, as being assets of the programs. CWEB and CWEL graduates emphasized how the education programs helped them in their careers in child welfare. CWEB graduates talked about the program providing them firsthand experience and the ability to gain employment right after graduation:

“The financial support was significant and was the reason I applied to the program. I started college with a different goal, but having CWEB as an option in my last year would allow me to take off work during my internship and focus solely on my schooling. But the most positive aspect has been working in child welfare. I would have never gone into the child welfare field without the CWEB commitment, and I would have missed my calling. I love my job, the agency, my co-workers, the families, and the supportive nature of our work.”

CWEL graduates, on the other hand, reported that their educational program helped them acquire new skills and see the families on their caseload in a new way:

“Completing the CWEL program was an absolutely transformational experience. I gained tremendous knowledge and perspective, particularly about the macro-level challenges our clients face. The program also created many opportunities for deep reflection which have allowed me to grow both professionally and personally. I enjoyed being part of a learning environment with many motivated, engaging, and talented students and educators.”

Both CWEB and CWEL graduates found great value in their practicum experiences. CWEB graduates spoke about their time in their practicum increasing their confidence and educating them on the duties of a child welfare caseworker:

“Observing other caseworkers in the field allowed me to understand the process and get a grasp on what I will be doing. Working on cases independently and with my supervisor gave me hands on experience to develop better time management skills, dictation, and understanding of child welfare as a whole.” CWEL graduates interning in different areas of child welfare spoke of how this experience expanded their knowledge and awareness of issues facing individuals involved with the agency:

“One of the most impactful aspects of my practicum was working directly with older youth who were re-entering care after being discharged or signing themselves out. This experience deepened my understanding of the unique challenges they face, including housing instability, mental health needs, and gaps in supportive services. It pushed me to develop stronger engagement strategies, advocate more effectively, and apply trauma-informed and strength-based approaches in real time. Having regular supervision also gave me the space to reflect on my practice, receive feedback, and grow both clinically and professionally.”

CWEL graduates interning outside their county child welfare agencies talked about how their practicum experiences can be translated into the work they do with children and families on their caseload. The CWEL graduates also talked about how their practica highlighted the importance of collaboration among professionals to best serve families.

When asked about areas of improvement, CWEB graduates wanted more clarity in the timing of the stipend and more discussion on when to start the process of looking for a full-time job. CWEB graduates also suggested changing the timing of the bimonthly Zoom calls since they couldn't attend because of class or their internship placement. CWEL graduates reported issues with obtaining appropriate practicum placements, which echoes the comments from the current CWEL students. As seen in previous

years, CWEL graduates also wanted more options for electives and the ability to obtain additional certificates.

CWEB graduates suggested that those interested in the CWEB program should embrace the experiences and ask questions: *“...Child welfare can be overwhelming, there is so much to learn. You may feel like you don't belong, you will never learn all the stuff (operating systems, paperwork, duties, etc...), you might even have an existential crisis (I did) but keep moving forward. Keep asking questions, keep taking notes, and keep talking to your fellow workers and supervisor. I am continually reminded by everyone that it will take two years before I really have a good grasp of my job, but I will always come across new opportunities to learn throughout my career. Just keep asking for help. When they offer you your first case, you might think "I'm not ready, I'm not ready" (again, me), but that is when the real learning begins, and the true joy starts.”*

CWEB graduates encouraged new students to complete the 975-hour practicum to gain more exposure to the child welfare agency. CWEL graduates encouraged those entering the program to step outside their comfort zone concerning classes and practicum placements. CWEL graduates also wanted new students to build their social support network and to plan their work and practicum in advance. Graduates recommended that CWEL students advocate for themselves: *“My advice to a CWEL student starting the program is to take full advantage of the support and resources offered academically, professionally, and financially. Stay organized and plan ahead, especially when balancing work, classes, and internship requirements. Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself when it comes to your learning goals and be intentional about using your field placement to explore areas of growth, even if it's outside your comfort zone. Lastly, lean into the experience.”*

Long-Term CWEB and CWEL Graduates

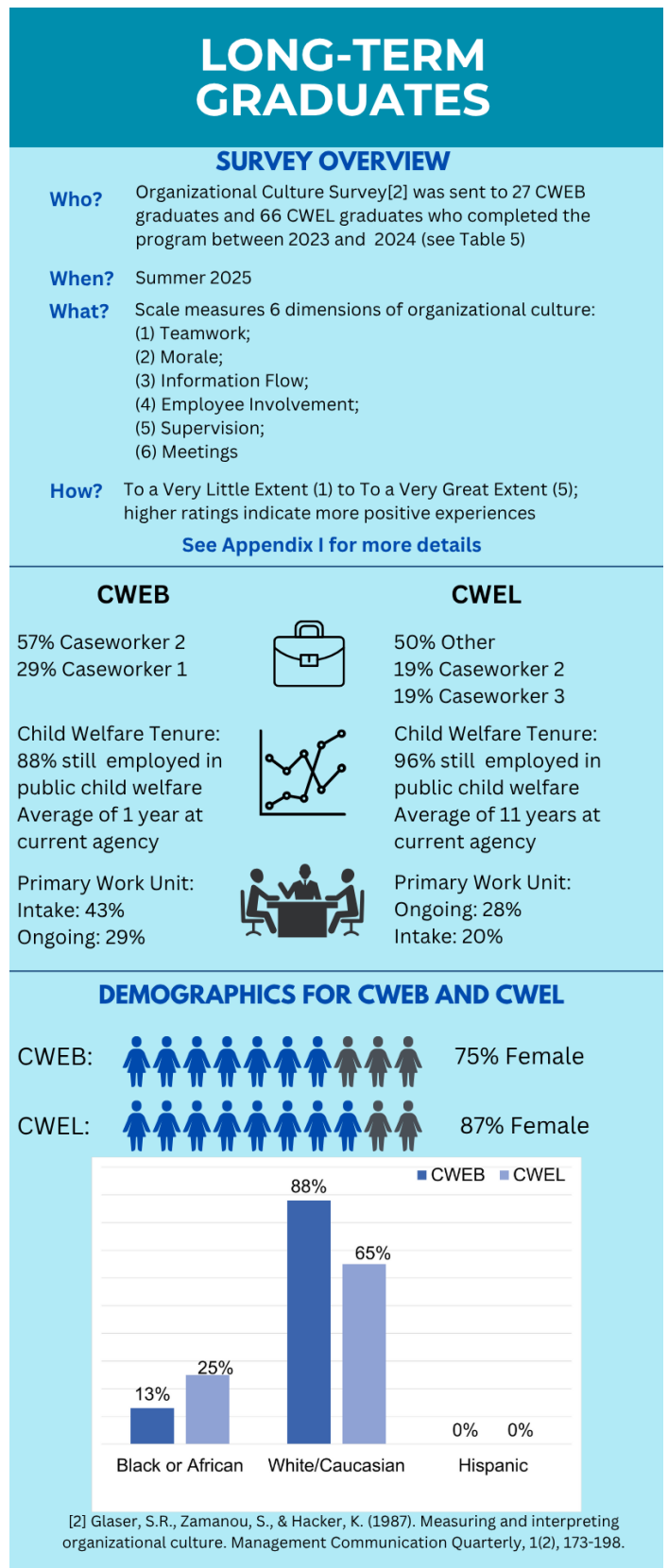
Survey procedures and methods

Details about the survey overview and demographics of the respondents can be found in Figure 10. In addition to scaled items, four open-ended questions ask long-term graduates about their professional development opportunities, mentoring colleagues, and their ability to lead new initiatives in their agencies.

What do the long-term CWEB and CWEL graduates say about the climate of child welfare agencies?

Both CWEB and CWEL graduates were neutral about their work climate, with CWEB graduates feeling slightly more positive than CWEL graduates. This year, the most positive climate scores were related to Supervision for both CWEB ($M=4.12$) and CWEL graduates ($M=3.82$). These ratings suggest that CWEB and CWEL graduates are receiving adequate supervision and value the guidance they receive in the agency. The lowest rating was for Morale for both CWEB ($M=2.90$) and for CWEL graduates ($M=2.50$). The high turnover and caseloads

Figure 10. Survey Overview and Description of Long-Term Graduate Respondents



prevalent in child welfare as a whole may be contributing to these low levels of morale for long-term graduates.

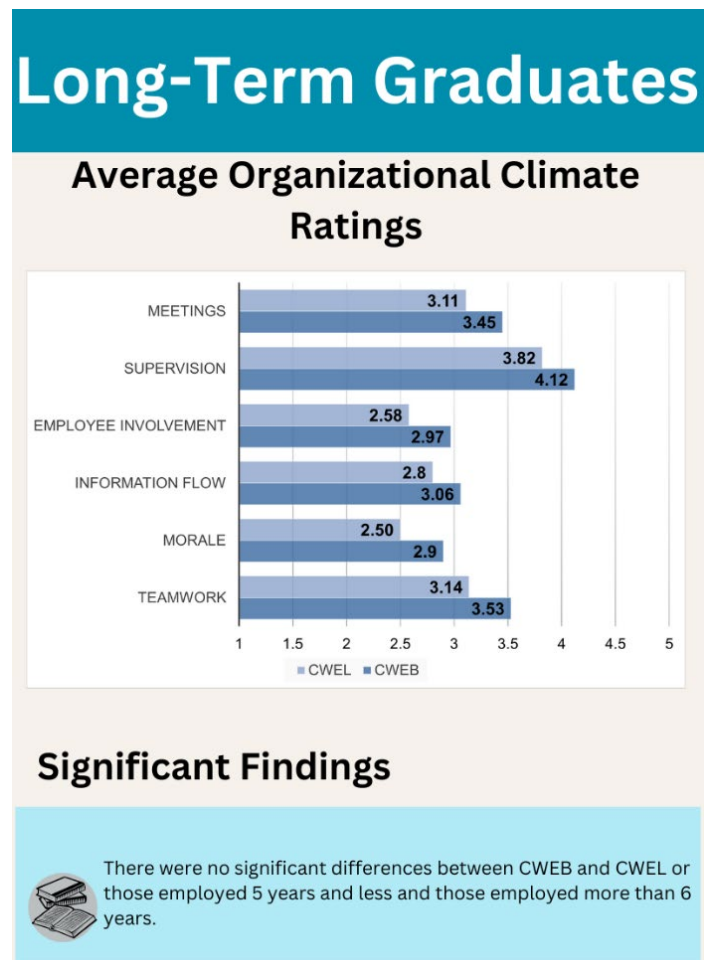
Organizational climate ratings were compared according to respondents' tenure in public child welfare (five or fewer years or more than five years). Although the ratings were neutral for both groups, respondents who worked in child welfare for more than five years rated most of the domains lower than those who have been working in child welfare for less than five years. The only exception was those who worked in public child welfare more than five years rated Information Flow ($M=2.97$) and Supervision ($M=3.97$) more favorably.

Open-ended responses

Long-term graduates discussed participating in trainings, advocating for other workers, and working to preserve and reunify families on their caseloads. They described a variety of professional development opportunities. These activities included taking the program analyst exam and participating in action committees. Long-term graduates are also working toward social work licensure or have obtained licensure. One long-term graduate completed "Manager Bootcamp" training to provide extra skills in supervising child welfare caseworkers.

Many long-term graduates have trained and mentored new caseworkers and interns. Graduates can share their expertise, offer advice, provide guidance, and

Figure 11. Long-Term Graduate Results



feedback on work-related tasks. Long-term graduates reported allowing new hires to shadow them while doing intake and being a resource for interns and new hires.

Long-term graduates have shown leadership in their agencies in a variety of ways. The graduates participated in job fairs at local high schools to promote the agency, oversaw evidence-based practices, and became the point of contact for the Every Student Succeeds Act in their county. One long-term graduate provided trauma training to outside organizations.

Partnering Schools of Social Work

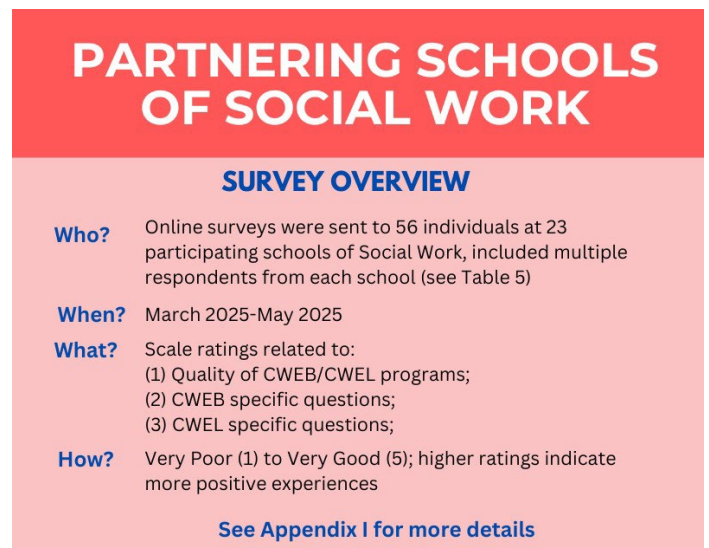
Survey procedures and methods

The survey overview can be found in Figure 12. In addition to the scaled questions, open-ended questions asked respondents to describe student caliber, positive elements of the CWEB/CWEL programs, and problems or suggestions for program improvement. In the second part of the survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of an array of core competencies and traditional criteria to select CWEB students. Results of these items can be found in the Core Competency section below.

How do Pennsylvania schools of social work view the CWEB and CWEL programs?

Responses indicate that school administrators continue to be satisfied with the quality of the CWEB and CWEL programs, as seen in Figure 13. Ratings for both programs were high, with item averages hovering around 4.5 or above. School administrators recognized the contributions of CWEB/CWEL students to the learning

Figure 12. Survey Overview for Partnering Schools of Social Work

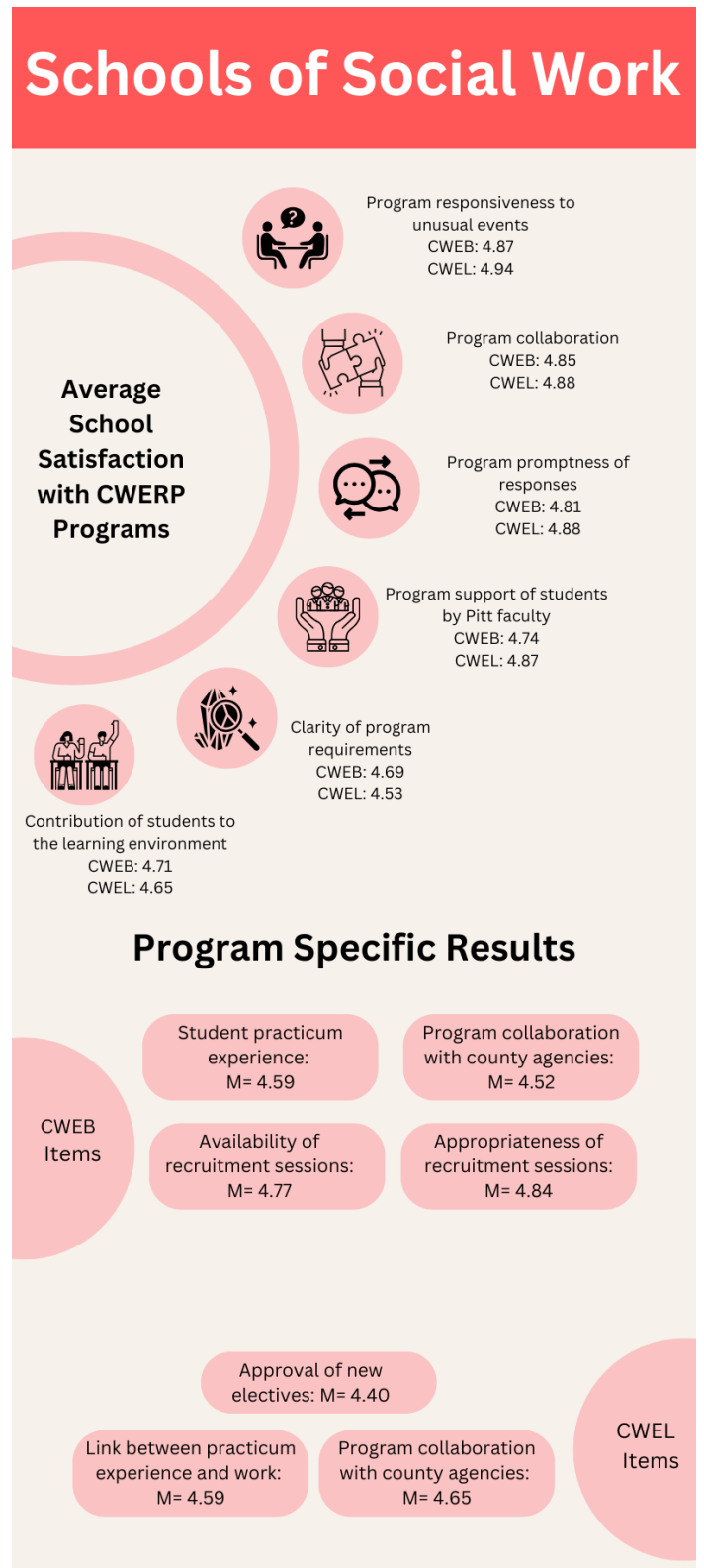


environment by rating that item highly for both programs. Historically, CWEL students are highly rated for contributing to the learning environment because of their years of experience in child welfare. Much like their CWEL counterparts, CWEB students' experiences in their practicum placements enable them to provide unique input into the classroom setting by sharing the realities of working with children and families.

Open-ended responses

School administrators described CWEB and CWEL students as high-caliber students that are dedicated to service. CWEL students are valued for their classroom contributions, as illustrated by one respondent, *"CWEL students contribute to the classroom learning environment and add valuable real-world experience that benefits their peers."* CWEB students were praised for their desire to learn and their passion for the work, evidenced by one administrator, *"This academic year 24-25 CWEB students are very motivated to learn and grow their skill set within the Departments of Human Services system in each county. There have*

Figure 13. Partnering Schools of Social Work Results



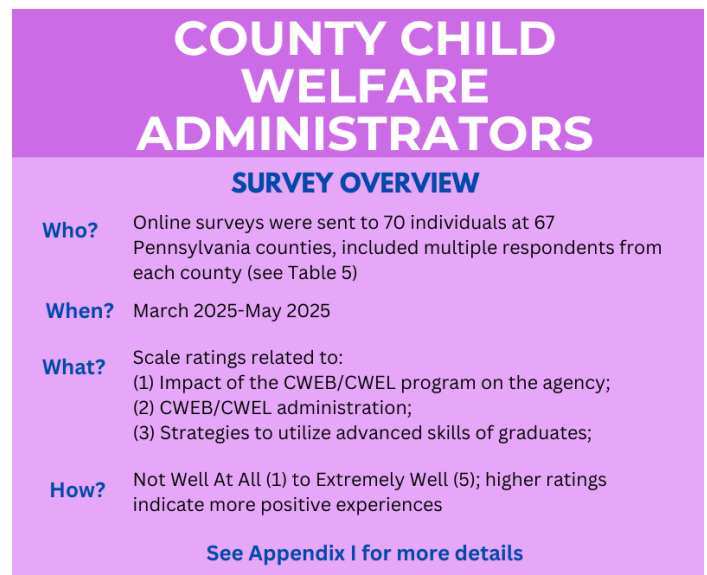
been some unique learning opportunities made available to our students in various counties this year. I am proud of the effort these students are making and I hope they have a long career in the child welfare system.” School administrators did note that part-time CWEL students seem to struggle with their multiple commitments:

“Sometimes, students are overwhelmed and find it difficult to manage work, field placement and coursework”. When discussing the positive aspects of the CWEB program, school administrators noted the financial benefits and the experience and training received during their internships. CWEL school administrators talked about the collaborative relationship they had with CWEL program administrators, the support CWEL students received, and the overall opportunity the CWEL program provides for county child welfare workers.

County Child Welfare Agency Administrators [Survey procedures and methods](#)

Details about the study overview can be found in Figure 14. Agency directors were asked how well CWEB graduates are prepared for child welfare work, the impact of the CWEB/CWEL programs on their agency, the administration of the CWEB/CWEL programs, and the strategies they utilize to retain graduates. Additionally, agency directors were asked to rate CWEB and CWEL graduates on a series of core competencies. The results from these items are discussed in the Core Competency section below.

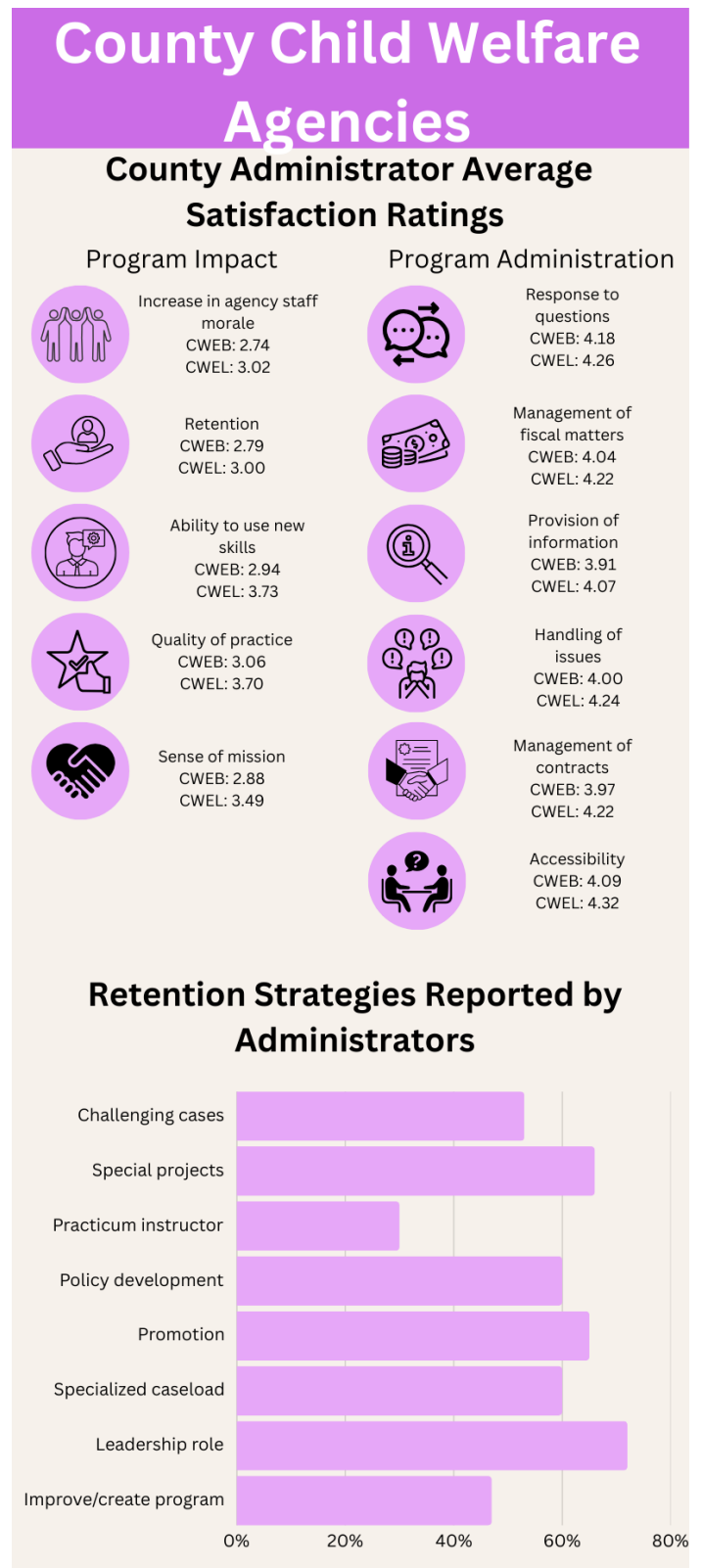
Figure 14. Survey Overview for County Child Welfare Administrators



How do child welfare agency administrators view the CWEB and CWEL programs?

County administrators acknowledge the value of CWEB/CWEL for their agencies by rating these programs on the higher end of the scale (CWEB: $M=4.49$; CWEL: $M=4.72$). Administrators rated the impact of CWEB between “slightly well” and “moderately well”, but the impact of CWEL was rated between “moderately well” and “very well” as seen in Figure 15. The CWEB program was rated lower than the CWEL program in every aspect of program impact. This finding may be related to the difference in maturity between CWEB and CWEL graduates. CWEB students, even after completing a yearlong internship in a county child welfare agency, still lack confidence in their skills as caseworkers because of their short tenure on the job. These are young, budding professionals who are new to child welfare practice and just beginning their career. CWEL graduates, however, have been employed at the agency for at least two years and can more readily apply their newfound skills to their current caseloads. A difference between these two groups is expected.

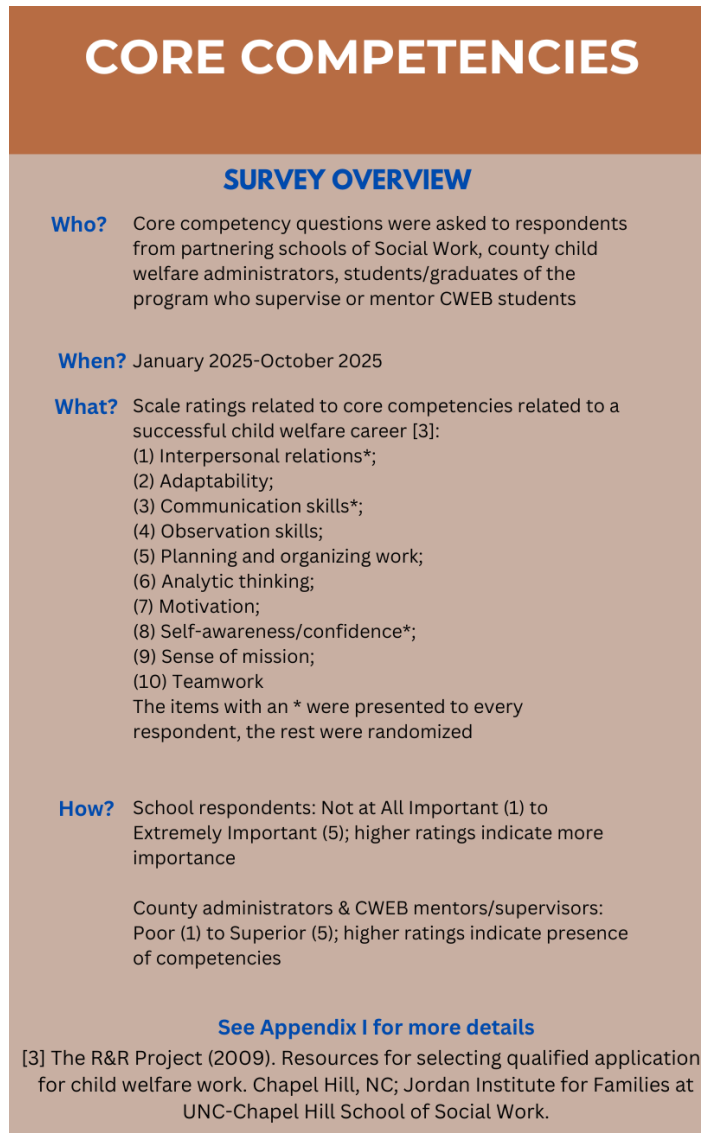
Figure 15. County Child Welfare Administrator Results



County administrators rated CWEB graduates between “moderately well” and “very well” in terms of their preparedness to work in child welfare. In fact, county administrators rated CWEB graduates’ readiness to carry a caseload highest of all the competencies (M=4.19). Responses to this question can be found in Table 3, [Appendix I](#).

Graduates of the CWEB and CWEL programs are seen as valuable assets to the county child welfare workforce. County administrators utilize the skills of these well-educated workers for special projects, challenging cases, leadership roles, and policy development as shown in Figure 15. County administrators were presented with a list of potential initiatives that may be occurring in their agencies and were asked to rate their CWEB/CWEL graduates’ involvement in these initiatives. Graduates were involved in almost all of the activities listed. County administrators also mentioned CWEL graduates being involved in the mentorship of new workers. The full list of these initiatives along with the ratings can be found in Table 4, [Appendix I](#).

Figure 16. Survey Overview for Core Competencies



Core Competencies

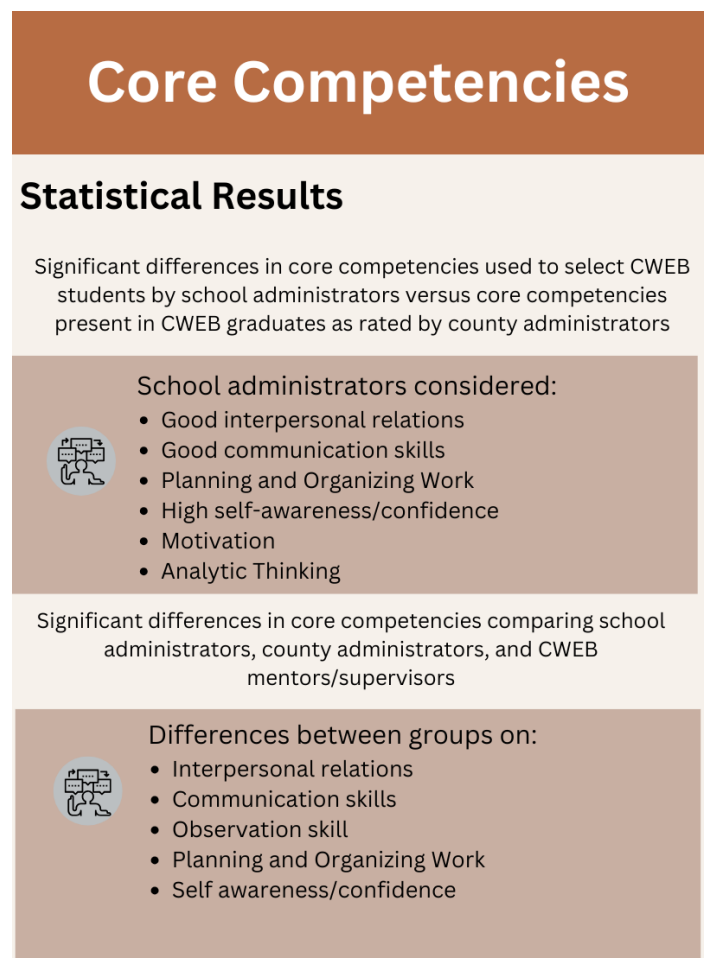
Survey procedures and methods

Details about the survey overview can be found in Figure 16. In addition to the core competencies, school administrators were asked to rate the importance of six traditional criteria when selecting CWEB students – student GPA, writing ability, faculty recommendation, financial need, engagement in extracurricular activities, and interest in working with children and families. CWEB mentors/supervisors were identified from the pool of current part-time CWEL students and from recent and long-term CWEB and CWEL graduates who indicated that they mentor/supervise CWEB students in their agencies.

How do county/school administrators and CWEB mentors/supervisors rank CWEB program participants on the core competencies?

Responses indicate that school administrators value the core competencies for selecting child welfare workers but place equal value on some of the traditional markers of qualification. Similarly, county administrators and CWEB mentors/supervisors rated CWEB graduates around the “Fair” to “Good” range on the core competencies. The full list of the core competencies along with the ratings can be found in Table 5-8, [Appendix I](#).

Figure 17. Core Competency Results



A series of statistical analyses were conducted to explore the following: 1) did agency respondents rate CWEB and CWEL graduates differently on the 10 core competencies; 2) were there differences between the core competencies that school respondents looked for in CWEB applicants and the core competencies the agency respondents saw in CWEB recent graduates; and 3) were there differences in the ratings of core competencies in CWEB participants when comparing school administrators, agency administrators, and CWEB mentors/supervisors? Agency administrators rated CWEL graduates higher than CWEB graduates on most of the competencies, highlighting their enhanced skills and education that results from advanced study and years in the field. However, agency administrators rated CWEB graduates similar to CWEL graduates on “*observation skills*” (M=3.70). This finding may suggest that CWEB graduates’ social work education and practicum experience provides them with the skills to properly assess the situations with the families on their caseloads. Overall, school administrators felt that they considered every competency highly when looking for potential CWEB students, whereas county administrators rated the CWEB students lower on the actual presence of core competencies. Domains where statistically significant differences were found can be seen in Figure 17. These results suggest that even though schools rated core competencies highly about selecting students to participate in the CWEB program, county administrators aren’t necessarily seeing these skills in graduates as they enter the workforce. This disconnect may reflect a difference in the definition of the competency in a student versus that of a professional child welfare worker.

Since starting data collection on these core competencies, we have reported that county agency administrators and those that supervise/mentor CWEB students within the agency rated CWEB students differently. County administrators rate the students higher than supervisors/mentors. This trend was not seen in this academic year’s data.

Figure 18. Proposed Career Pathway for CWEB/CWEL



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Piktochart
 make information beautiful

In fact, county agency administrators rated CWEB students lower than supervisors/mentors on “interpersonal relations” ($M=3.44$), “planning and organizing work” ($M=3.30$), “analytic thinking” ($M=3.22$), and “motivation” ($M=2.60$). One possible reason for these differences is that county administrators are becoming more involved in the day-to-day supervision of CWEB graduates and

students, providing a more realistic sense of graduates’ skills and abilities.

Overall Summary

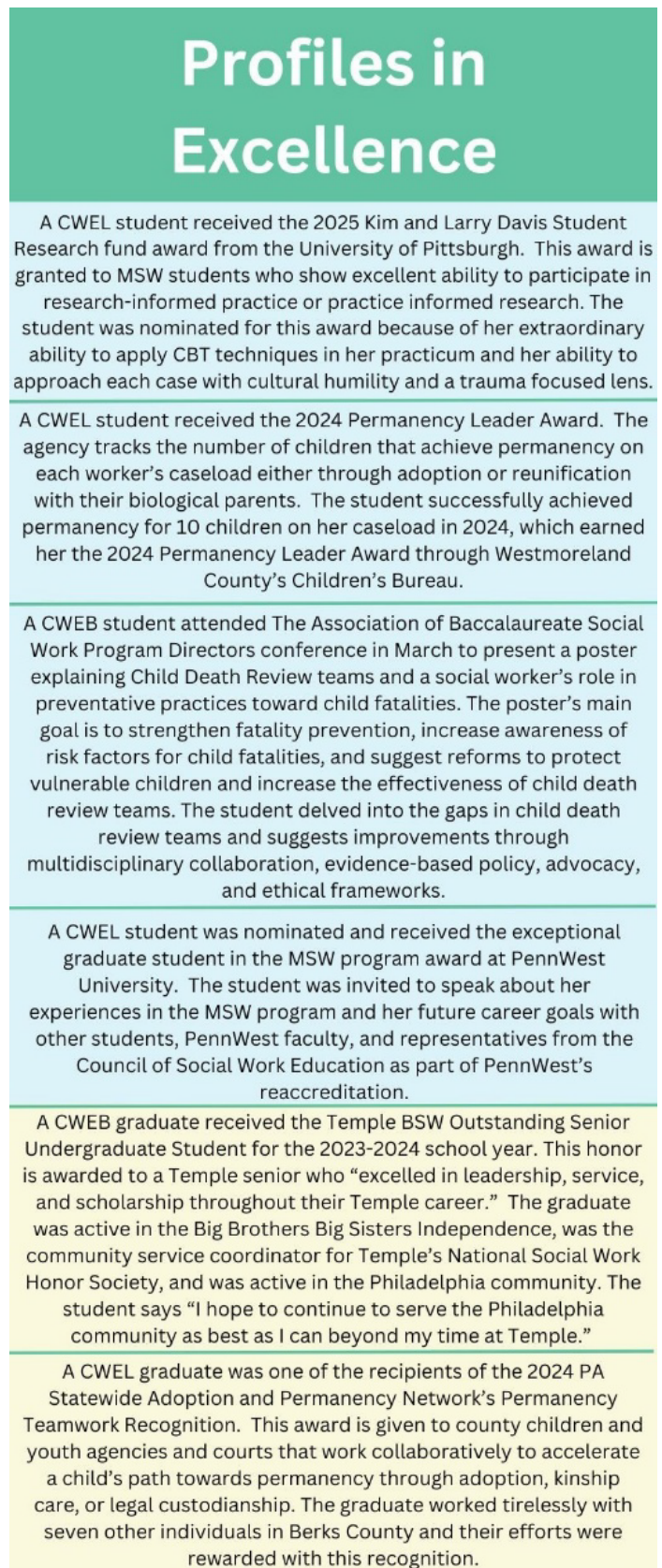
Is there a career pathway?

One of the goals of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which a professional education and career pathway is in place for the child welfare workforce, and how recruitment at the undergraduate level can help foster a long-term career in public child welfare. The ideal education and career pathway for a child welfare professional is shown in Figure 18. Participation in the CWEB and CWEL programs ensures a well-educated and explicitly trained workforce, which will elevate the quality of casework

practice in the Commonwealth. Almost seven percent (6.5%) of the current CWEL student respondents reported that they received their degrees through the CWEB program. The majority of these CWEL students (80%) are still working at the agency in which they did their post-CWEB work commitment. In fact, 40% (27/67) of Pennsylvania's county child welfare agencies have a CWEL graduate in a leadership position within the agency. These data illustrate that the proposed career pathway is a viable way to support agency retention of workers.

Caseworker vacancies will always pose challenges for Pennsylvania's child welfare agencies. County child welfare agencies, overall, continue to struggle to retain and replenish their workforce. Child welfare caseworkers take on a significant responsibility by working for the safety, permanency, and well-being of Pennsylvania's children. These skilled workers often feel that their efforts are not recognized by the agency and the community at large as seen by this quote: *"As child*

Figure 19. Profiles in Excellence



welfare remains a county administered agency in PA, it is extraordinarily difficult to reward CWEL graduates and retain them...We have multiple management staff that are CWEL graduates, master's level and licensed, and essentially they are looking to leave the agency after their commitment due to not feeling valued for our qualifications by our county...it becomes very difficult when there is very little support from the state regarding how counties operate...".

Because of turnover and difficulties hiring new staff, CWEB and CWEL graduates have higher caseloads and fewer opportunities to utilize their new skills, as evidenced by this comment, *"It would be wise to use the skills more fully as they are developed and to offer more opportunity to show case those skills as well as opportunities to advance."* County administrators have created unique ways to retain their staff including retention bonuses, investing in job and skill development, providing forensic interview training, and creating specialized positions to work on distinctive aspects of child welfare such as interstate studies and child profiles. Utilizing the specialized skills of CWEB and CWEL graduates not only increases retention but revitalizes their interest in the job: *"Staff collaboration in various daily workings of the Agency as well as participation in special projects has increased interest, especially when the task has allowed for use of their education/training."*

The partners of the Title IV-E education programs continue to praise the CWEB and CWEL programs and students. They acknowledge the value of these programs to the Commonwealth. County administrators are eager to hire CWEB graduates and welcome CWEB interns. Administrators are also using CWEL as a way to recruit new workers into the agency and retain existing workers. The CWEB and CWEL programs provide Pennsylvania's county child welfare agencies with a mechanism for building a well-educated workforce and provide an opportunity to infuse core social work values into casework practice. CWEB graduates are seen as more knowledgeable about child

welfare laws and policies and more prepared to carry a caseload upon hire than other new hires. These attributes of CWEB graduates make them an asset to county child welfare agencies, who can assign a caseload to a new CWEB graduate, thus reducing the burden on existing caseworkers in the agency. With the addition of seven new CWEB schools and more CWEB graduates, counties have a larger pool of skilled graduates for employment.

CWEB and CWEL program participants are extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in these beneficial educational opportunities. CWEB participants talk about the benefit of completing a child welfare practicum and the advantages of Foundations training in preparing them for their career in child welfare. CWEL participants acknowledge their growth in social work skills and their ability to impact families on their caseloads with their knowledge.

CWEB and CWEL students continue to thrive both academically and professionally. Close to 30% of CWEB and CWEL current students, recent graduates, and long-term graduates have received an award or recognition in the past year. An impressive 50% were on the dean's list, graduated with honors, or became a member of a national honor society. Many participants were recognized for accomplishments in their county agencies by receiving praise from supervisors, administrators, families on their caseloads, promotions, or creating new initiatives within their county agencies. CWEB/CWEL graduates have received professional awards such as the CASA caseworker of the year, CAC award, BSW student of the year, just to name a few.

Since promotions, raises, and opportunities for advancement may be difficult for some counties to offer to CWEL graduates, it is important for county administrators to create meaningful opportunities for this group of child welfare workers to utilize their newly developed skills in the agency. Counties may consider creating mentoring

programs where more senior CWEB/CWEL staff provide assistance and guidance to new caseworkers. Another option could be to generate peer connections among CWEB/CWEL graduates and those starting the new CWEB/CWEL programs as an additional level of support for new CWEB/CWEL students. Counties can also find other ways to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of their CWEB and CWEL employees such as internal awards or recognition. These types of recognition can boost the morale of our graduates and let them know they are valued by their agencies. With the implementation of the Family First Services Prevention Act, counties should consider utilizing their CWEB and CWEL workers to help spearhead the continuous quality improvement requirements of selected evidence-based practices. CWEB and CWEL graduates also have the skills to help implement the Universal Assessment and support youth and family engagement initiatives. CWEB and CWEL graduates have unique skills that enable them to create positive change in the child welfare workforce – to keep them engaged and interested in the work takes concerted support and creative thinking on the part of supervisors and county administrators. These efforts provide the county with numerous benefits, including a workforce that is positively reinforced for the impactful work they do on a daily basis.

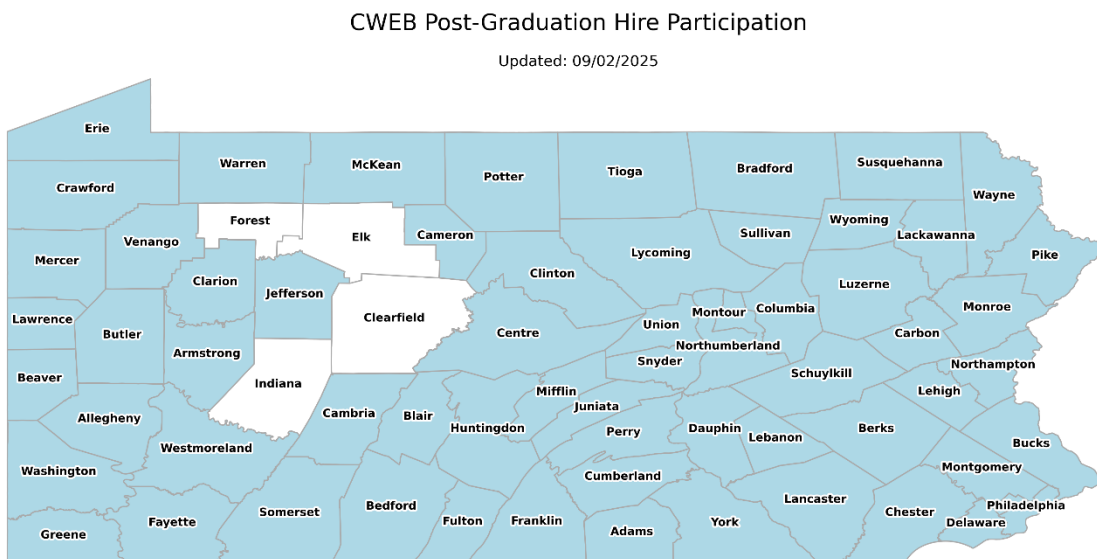
Discussion

CWEB

After twenty-four years of operation, the CWEB program has made a remarkable impact: twenty-two universities, 65 counties (offering internship and/or post-graduation employment), and 1,433 graduates. Strong collaboration has enabled the program to prepare individuals for work in public child welfare and increased the recruiting of CWEB graduates by county agencies. Figure 20 shows the impact of the CWEB program on the county child welfare workforce.

As a result of their internship experiences, CWEB graduates have exposure to the various aspects of child welfare casework with some participants carrying a small caseload while interning. This prepares them for entry-level work in child welfare and the beginning of a meaningful career. CWEB graduates have entered the child welfare workforce in 94% of the counties in Pennsylvania, demonstrating the strong impact our undergraduate education program continues to have on child welfare workforce development across the Commonwealth.

Figure 20. CWEB Post-Graduation Hire Participation



The analysis of evaluation data over the past 24 years has been key to identifying areas for program improvement. We refined our admission criteria and review processes to include interviews for particular applicants to better gauge their interest and fit in child welfare practice. The CWEB Internship Guidance tool has been well received by students and county practicum instructors, ensuring CWEB students

experience the varied tasks of a child welfare professional while connecting their learning to the core Social Work competencies. This appreciation can be seen in this quote from a CWEB student: *“The CWEB program's guidelines for our internship help our supervisors direct our training, and that direction is highly valuable. I am learning so much about this field....”* The CWEB program provides intensive case management that has increased enrollment of students in the state-mandated competency and skills-building training, *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice*. CWEB students are assigned to a Training Liaison at their internship county and a Regional Resource Specialist at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center who assists them with enrollment in Foundations and the initiation of their certification training record.

CWEB students are invited to participate in supportive bi-monthly Zoom calls with CWEB program administrators from the University of Pittsburgh. In this reporting period, four Zoom meetings were held with participation averaging about 10 CWEB students per session. A quarter of CWEB students who participated in an initial meeting also participated in follow-up meetings. Despite varying the days of the week the Zoom meetings are scheduled, some CWEB students still experienced conflict with their practicum or class time. CWEB graduates recommended having Zoom meetings during the lunch hour since they are not in the field during the lunch hour at their practicum sites. For the 2025-2026 academic year, the Zoom meetings will be held twice a year (one at the beginning of each semester) with the option to view a recording if students are unable to attend. New topics of discussion were developed for meetings during the 2024-2025 academic year to address the interests and concerns of CWEB participants.

Navigating the county hiring process continues to present challenges for students. Pennsylvania counties fall into one of two hiring categories: Civil Service and Merit Hire. Currently, over 60% of counties follow the standardized processes of the

Pennsylvania State Civil Service Commission when hiring new employees²². The remaining counties have been granted permission to create their own merit hiring processes which can be distinct to each county. CWEB faculty work closely with students to help them understand and navigate both Civil Service and Merit Hire employment processes so that they have employment options in counties throughout the state. Additionally, some counties contract their child welfare services to outside agencies. While these contracted agencies offer child welfare services, they are not classified as public child welfare positions and, thus, do not fulfill the CWEB employment requirement. CWEB faculty help students understand and navigate both Civil Service and Merit Hire employment processes, while also identifying contracted positions, so that students have valid employment options across counties statewide.

Close follow-up by the CWEB Academic Coordinator and the CWEB/CWEL Agency Coordinator has resulted in most graduates securing county agency employment within 60 days of graduation. We continue to make concerted efforts to connect graduates with agencies and provide technical support for portfolio development and interviewing skills. County agencies are eager to hire CWEB graduates and welcome them into the workforce.

Despite best efforts, a career in public child welfare is not for everyone. Occasionally, a student is ambivalent about accepting a job in a county public child welfare agency and decides not to follow through with securing employment. When students fail to fulfill their contractual obligation, the CWERP program initiates a targeted collection procedure to recoup funds dispensed on their behalf. Repayment can be discontinued for those who are initially in default but subsequently become employed in public child welfare. To reduce the number of students that have to repay their CWEB funds, we created an interview protocol with CWEB graduates once they

²²See <https://www.scsc.pa.gov/About-Us/Pages/Commission-Mission-Statement.aspx>

are employed in a county child welfare agency for 90 days to provide additional support and notify the program if a graduate is struggling during their work commitment.

Suggestions for CWEB program improvement and our action plan are summarized in the Recommendations section of this report. Some suggestions are new, while others are ongoing or have been addressed.

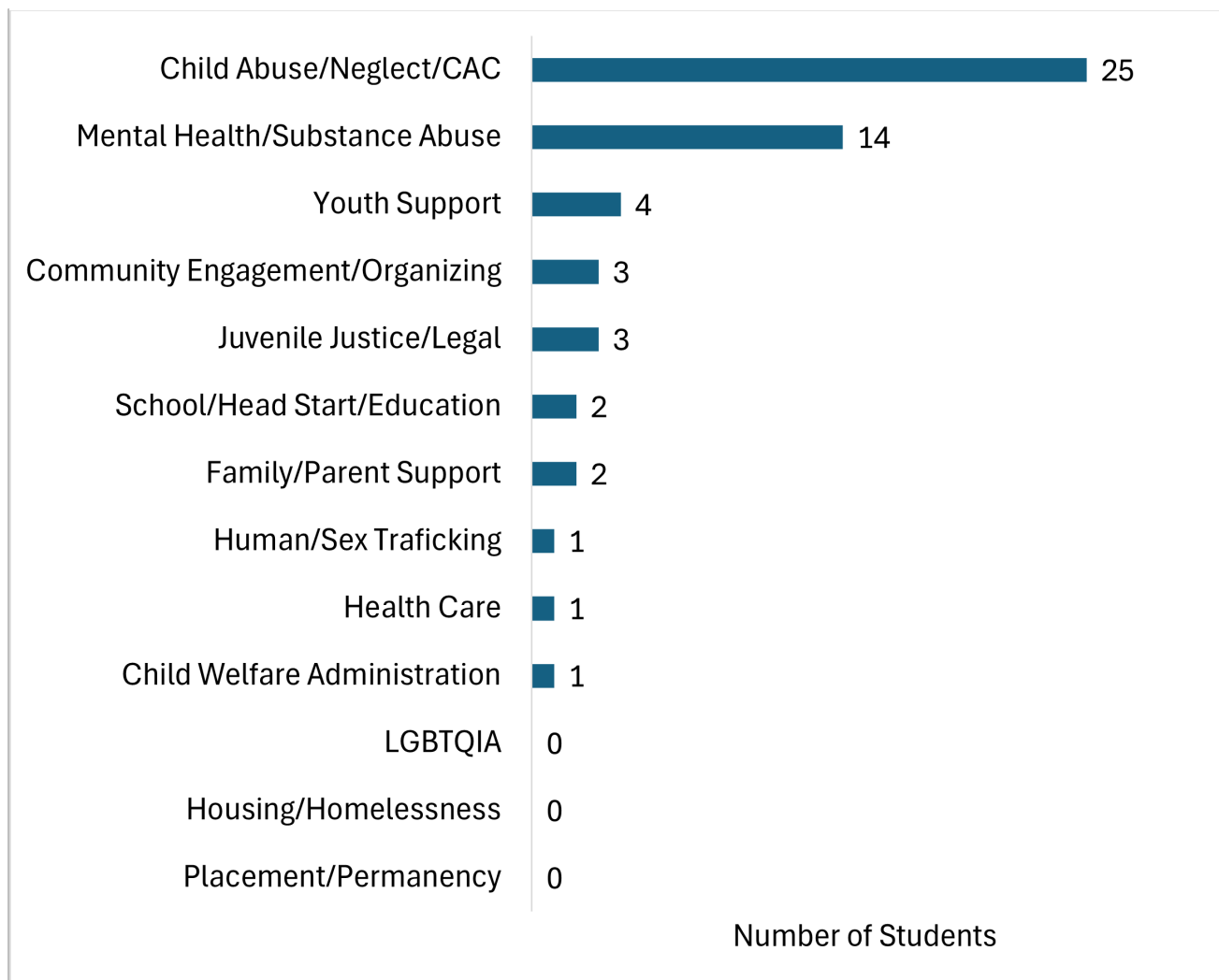
CWEL

After 30 years of operation, the CWEL program continues to recruit students and counties while maintaining close, collaborative working relationships with the Department of Human Services, students, county agencies, and schools of social work in Pennsylvania. The number and diversity of counties has increased over time. To attract a more diverse applicant pool, CWEL offers virtual information sessions. These sessions provide more flexibility and convenience for potential CWEL students to receive program information by utilizing a virtual platform. Further, we have responded to concerns regarding school program availability in certain areas of the state by including the fully online MSW programs offered by several schools in our consortium. Feedback indicates that the CWEL program is well-administered, user friendly, and is credited as having a long-term impact on public child welfare practice as an incentive to improve worker retention.

CWEL students contribute to human service programs in both the public and private sector through active engagement in practicum work in a variety of community-based agencies. Practicum experiences serve dual purposes for CWEL students by providing skills and knowledge of various systems to share with their colleagues and offering the experience and insight of the child welfare system to the practicum agencies. CWEL graduates continue to speak highly of their practicum experiences

and the knowledge gained in different community and state-level agencies. Figure 21 illustrates the breadth of programs that benefit from the skill and expertise of our child welfare students.

Figure 21. CWEL Practicum Placement Types



This was the second year of implementation for licensure reimbursement for both CWEB and CWEL graduates. CWEL graduates talked about their gratitude for this opportunity. In fact, fifteen CWEL graduates have accessed this incentive and have taken the licensure exam this year. A concerted outreach was made with CWEB graduates to notify them of this opportunity for licensure reimbursement as well.

Baccalaureate-level licensure is relatively new in Pennsylvania, with the regulations added to PA Code and adopted in August 2020. We continue to strongly encourage our graduates at both the undergraduate and graduate level to pursue social work licensure.²³ This can serve to not only support the profession, but also strengthen the qualifications existing within the child welfare workforce.

A primary goal of the CWEL program is the development of leadership within child welfare. We follow the career path of our participants and observe that CWEL graduates currently hold county agency management/administration positions in 44% (31/67) of Pennsylvania counties. Of note within that group, eight of our CWEL leaders were also previous CWEB graduates. In addition, many CWEL graduates and current CWEL students hold supervisory positions or roles that involve mentorship, quality assurance, and practice initiatives such as teaming and conferencing. Of note, 9 CWEB-only graduates also occupy high-level county leadership positions.

We applaud the promotion of our graduates into these key leadership roles and the new vision and energy that they bring to public child welfare. Figure 22 illustrates this impact and includes leaders among both the CWEB and the CWEL programs. Efforts continue to be directed toward gathering comprehensive data on leadership activities among our graduates as we believe that the data shown below is an underestimate of the actual leadership being displayed by our program graduates.

Narrative responses gathered during the program evaluation contain several suggestions. These responses are obtained through open-ended comments on the

²³ See <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dos/resources/professional-licensing-resources/licensure-processing-guides-and-timelines/social-workers-guide>

Organizational Climate

One prominent and persistent theme concerns the climate, salaries, job classifications, assignments, and opportunities for career development which graduates of the CWEL program encounter upon their return to the county agencies. The following key points have been repeated by multiple respondents and noted consistently in our annual program evaluations:

- difficulty in negotiating assignments that capitalize on the returning worker's new skills, knowledge, and advanced training;
- lack of differentiation in job classifications among workers with and without graduate degrees;
- lack of salary incentives in most counties;
- hostile, skeptical, and jealous reception workers sometimes face upon return to their agency after graduation;
- scarcity of opportunities for promotion in many counties;
- lack of opportunities for leadership and/or a voice in decision making;
- the sense that advanced educational achievement is not matched with respect and growth opportunities.

In some counties, returning graduates have been embraced and invited to participate in creative and challenging assignments that are advantageous to both the worker and the agency. Participation in Quality Services Reviews (QSRs), membership in committees associated with Pennsylvania's Practice Improvement Plan, membership in specific workgroups (i.e., Family First Prevention Services Act implementation, universal assessment, Diversity Taskforce, TA Collaborative, CWIS, ongoing enhancements to Supervisor Training for new as well as existing supervisors) are a few of the projects that benefit from the expertise of CWEL graduates. Many graduates are also involved in practice initiatives such as the early developmental screening of young

children, family teaming and conferencing (e.g., Family Group Conferencing, Family Teaming, Family Group Decision Making), family finding, and enhancing the use of data-driven decision making. Efforts to achieve equity and inclusion within the child welfare system and the use of evidence-based treatments to prevent higher levels of care and out-of-home placement are important areas where CWEL graduates can be agency champions and leaders. CWEL graduates are invited to become mentors and supervisors of CWEB students in their agencies; many assume prominent roles in leading youth and family engagement practices, and others are active in continuous quality improvement initiatives within their counties. Many current trainers and consultants of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center are CWEL graduates. Graduates are also members of statewide committees and workgroups. Others have involved themselves in the education of future child welfare professionals by becoming adjunct instructors at schools of social work and/or supervisors to CWEB interns.

The contrast in the moods of those graduates who have enrichment opportunities and those who do not is stark. One group of graduates speaks of long-term commitment to public child welfare, and the other group is thinking of alternative ways they can serve children and their families where the opportunities may be a better fit with their skills. Graduates rarely speak of defaulting on their commitments; when they do contemplate other options after completion of their commitments, such as moving to employment with private providers or other human service entities, they do so with sadness for the most part. **The CWEL faculty views the comments of graduates about agency climate as representative of the key deciding element in child welfare employee retention.** Our research, and that of others, strongly supports this finding. Counties and agencies that ignore or minimize these concerns should not be surprised by the loss of valuable staff. Nor should administrators and agency leaders embrace the false assumption that advanced education serves as an inoculation

against turnover. While there is extensive research evidence of the importance of non-salary factors in retention, the results of this and previous reviews affirm that salary remains a particularly important issue in Pennsylvania. **Along with supportive agency working conditions, adequate compensation is critical to the stability of our child welfare workforce.**

Worker Retention

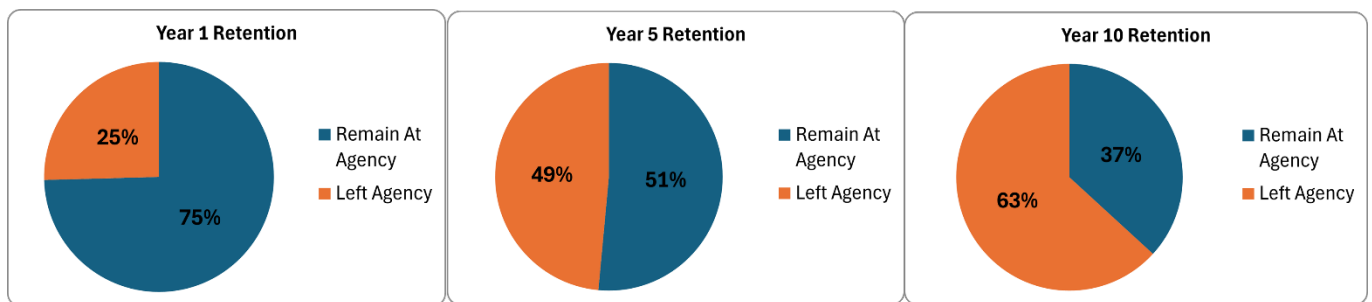
Well-educated and skilled professionals who serve children at risk and their families will benefit public child welfare wherever they practice and will return the investment made on their training by the taxpayers many times over. However, a major opportunity is lost when agencies do not take full advantage of the skills, optimism, and enthusiasm of the returning workers. Retention has always been one of the goals of federal funding for child welfare training and is central to the mission of the CWEB and CWEL programs. It is well known from research conducted over two decades ago that workers who are skilled in the services they are asked to provide and who receive strong agency support have higher retention rates²⁴. All indications suggest that CWEB and CWEL students have received excellent training and education. It remains for the partners in this enterprise to be creative, innovative, and energetic in following through with organizational change after the graduates' return. The 12 or more months CWEB students and the 20 or more months full-time CWEL students spend in educational preparation is very modest when compared to the many years their potential child welfare careers will span following graduation.

CWEL has a remarkable record of retention. Of the 1,795 graduates who have completed the program, only 24 have failed to complete their work commitment over a 30-year period. Another 1,163 have resigned after completing their commitments for all

²⁴ Jones, L.P. & Okamura, A. (2000). Reprofessionalizing child welfare services: An evaluation of a Title IV-E training program. *Research on Social Work Practice, 10*(2), 607-621.

reasons. Again, these reasons include not only voluntary departures from child welfare employment, but also retirement, death, permanent disability, relocation of a spouse, and a variety of other unique circumstances. This represents an overall loss rate of only 8.4% a year for the life of the program. Figure 23 below illustrates retention among our graduates at one, five, and ten-year intervals post-commitment. The average commitment period is approximately 1½ years. This commitment calculation includes individuals who were awarded advanced standing in their academic program by virtue of having a BSW/BASW degree, those who completed a full, two-year academic program, and those who obtain CWEL funding for only a portion of their academic studies. Figure 23 illustrates that of those whose commitment ended over 10 years ago, almost 37% remain in their agencies nearly 12 years after graduation (1½ years average commitment plus 10 years post-commitment). This does not include those who continued in the child welfare arena in other agency settings.

Figure 23. Long-term Commitment of CWEL Graduates



The research literature on long-term retention of workers with no legal work commitment clearly shows the importance of agency climate, quality of supervision, intrinsic worker fulfillment, job satisfaction from appropriate assignments, and personnel

policies, along with salaries, as some of the keys to long-term retention^{25,26,27}.

Unfortunately, there is little that CWEB or CWEL alone can do about any of these important factors. It is critical for the Department of Human Services, the University, county agencies, and PCYA to work together in implementing multiple strategies to address organizational and workforce issues. Organizational effectiveness interventions provide a structure for defining, assessing, planning, implementing, and monitoring workforce development strategies²⁸. While implementation at both the state and county levels is highly political and often difficult, we believe that our longitudinal research on the retention of CWEL students and our expertise in organizational effectiveness can inform this important work. The Center for States, Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) have provided leadership in workforce development for child welfare. (See; <https://ncwcia.childwelfare.gov/s> and <http://www.ncwwi.org>). The importance of organizational factors is also highlighted in the ongoing work of the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD).²⁹ We can learn much from these current and prior initiatives. The recently released National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW III) Child Welfare Workforce Study further illustrates how training and professional development can influence knowledge, practice, job satisfaction and

²⁵ de Guzman, A., Carver-Roberts, T., Leake, R., & Rienks, S. (2020). Retention of child welfare workers: Staying strategies and supports. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 14(1), 60-79.

²⁶ Glisson, C. and Green, P. (2011). Organizational climate, services, and outcomes in child welfare systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(8), 582-591.

²⁷ Glisson, C. and Hemmelgarn, A. (1998). The effects of organizational climate and interorganizational coordination on the quality and outcomes of children's service systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22(5), 401-421.

²⁸ Basso, P., Cahalane, H., Rubin, J., & Kelley, K.J. (2013). Organizational effectiveness strategies for child welfare. In H. Cahalane (Ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Child Welfare Practice* (pp. 257-288). New York: Springer.

²⁹ See <https://www.qic-wd.org/project-overview>

turnover within the child welfare workforce.³⁰ The National Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement (NCWCIA) has created a series of Peer Innovation and Insight Network Groups (PIINGS) to enable child welfare affiliated organizations the ability to exchange ideas, insights, and innovations to enhance the outcomes for children and families involved in child welfare services³¹. The most recent addition to the PIINGS is the Creating & Sustaining the CW Workforce group where participants can discuss how to attract and retain talent, build workforce capacity, and invest in workforce development.

Full-Time Versus Part-Time Education

The subject of the advantages and disadvantages of full and part-time study continues to surface among the CWEL students. We have made the following points in previous annual reports and repeat them here. Clearly, full-time versus part-time enrollment is one of the areas in which county differences occur. We acknowledge that workforce size and capacity is one of the primary factors driving county-level decision making about approval for an employee to attend school. We also understand that collective bargaining agreements may influence permissions and the selection process. We recognize the authority of County Commissioners to enter into contractual agreements regarding their county agency staff. We also note that there is no doubt from student evaluations and the many years of collective wisdom among our partnering schools that the educational experiences of full-time students are clearly superior. Full-time students have many more opportunities to interact with their academic advisors and other faculty outside of class sessions, more time to network with other students,

³⁰ Elgin, D. J., Barbee, A. P., McCarthy, M. L., Kluckman, M., Ringeisen, H., & Dolan, M. (2025). *Child Welfare Workforce Onboarding, Training, and Professional Development*. OPRE Report #2025-078. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <https://acf.gov/opre/report/child-welfare-workforce-onboarding-training-and-professional-development>

³¹ See <https://ncwcia.childwelfare.gov/s/public-piing-page>

more time available for academic research and study groups, more choice of elective courses, more time to engage in assignments, and more options for completing their internships. They can do this with less commuting, less stress from work-related responsibilities, less conflict between work schedules (e.g., court appearances) and class schedules, and less time away from their family responsibilities.

The tuition for full-time completion of a degree is also less than for part-time study. Full-time students require only half as much time or less to complete the CWEL program. This means a quicker return to full productivity in the agency. Part-time students often take as long as four years to complete, and there is a higher rate of academic disruption (and sometimes program discontinuation) among part-time students compared to full-time students. Three to four years is an extraordinary amount of time for students to balance the demands of child welfare work, academic studies, and the other responsibilities in their lives. Our experience over the past 30 years confirms that part-time students are at a substantially higher risk for program discontinuation compared to full-time students.

A frequent agency concern with full-time study for CWEL students is whether the agency can fill the position while the student is away for full-time study. The counties that have hired replacements have experienced no major difficulties and have been able to do so without any financial cost because of the reimbursement they receive for the salary and benefits of the trainee in school. Schools and students almost unanimously favor the full-time model. Of the withdrawals from the program prior to graduation, seventy-four percent (74%) were part-time students. Our discussions with these students confirm that the challenges inherent with part-time study, such as stress and scheduling, were the determining factors. These are serious, costly, and unnecessary losses. Even the most conscientious caseworker and diligent student can manage only a finite number of competing demands for time, attention, and action before something

gives way. For most every child welfare professional (and certainly not exclusive to those in school), the sacrifices most often made are those that are personal, such as advanced education, self-care activities, time with family, and other forms of fulfillment.

Another county agency concern with full-time study is the belief that part-time students are likely to have higher retention rates after graduation. There is absolutely no evidence for this contention. By far, the greatest number of complaints and the most impassioned concerns from part-time students are that they are not permitted to engage in full-time study. These students are angry, bitter, under pressure from their families, sleepless at night because of their worries over the children in their caseloads, and some express a determination to resign as soon as their commitments are completed. We have witnessed this during the history of the CWEL program and know from our collaborative work with other IV-E programs across the country that high levels of stress among part-time students is a universal phenomenon. **We believe that only authorizing part-time study is a shortsighted and counter-productive agency policy.**

Part-time study while working full-time is difficult even under the most ideal circumstances. The competing responsibilities of work, home, and school are encountered by all part-time, working students. This reality is compounded for child welfare students by the demands of the job (i.e., court dates, unanticipated emergencies, staff shortages). During the past several years, these stressors have continued to be amplified by budget crises, increased incidents of racial injustice, and the overall unpredictability of our national political landscape. Additionally, the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the resulting economic and personal losses along with a client population besieged by opioid addiction, has overloaded the capacity of the child welfare system. These issues are not unique to Pennsylvania.

As a primarily rural state, Pennsylvania has many counties with a low population density. The size of the county agency workforce ranges from 700 in the most populated urban area to a workforce of four in one rural county. Clearly, in smaller counties a reduction of even one individual in full-time study represents a huge loss for the workforce. Full-time study may not be feasible. For part-time enrollment to be viable and more satisfying for participants, both counties and schools need to be flexible with scheduling and provide enhanced supports to assist employees/students in the balancing of multiple responsibilities. This is a necessary workforce investment.

Online degree programs are often viewed as a solution for decreasing the stress associated with part-time study. While offering accessibility, online coursework of quality and merit is both rigorous and time-consuming. Students and agency administrators must be careful of the misperception that online course work is synonymous with no disruption to work responsibilities or to family life. Practicum placements are required and synchronous courses involve the same designated meeting time as in-person classes. There is often little flexibility regarding due dates and completion of required assignments. Our small pilot study conducted with CWEL students enrolled in an on-line child welfare course several years ago found that although the students valued the convenience of the online option, they missed the interpersonal connection with their faculty and peers and would have preferred face-to-face contact.³² The validity of these preliminary findings were reinforced during the pandemic when most universities were operating remotely. Convenience aside, most students and faculty prefer in-person learning and find it more conducive to knowledge and skill development when safety measures are maintained.

³² Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (2017, November). *Ready to learn? An analysis of online education and training*. University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

Administratively, only full-time students may be used by the University in generating the substantial matching funds it contributes to balance the project's budget. The CWEL program began as a largely full-time program. In the 2024-2025 academic year, nearly one-half (46%) of the newly admitted students were part-time. This serves to potentially reduce the total number of students who can participate, reduces the federal contribution to the program, and increases the state matching funds required.

Academic and Personnel Differences

Another concern which all four partners must constantly struggle with is differences in policies or requirements. With personnel policies differing across county agencies, CWEB and CWEL students in the same classroom may be subject to contrasting requirements when compared to their program peers. Curricular requirements or academic calendars among the schools may differ enough that students from the same county (but not attending the same school) also have contrasting requirements. These differences include variation in internship policies, such as expectations for employment-based practicum placements, who can be appointed as a practicum instructor, and the amount of practicum hours required in the concentration and/or foundation year(s).

The CWEB and CWEL faculty are keenly aware of these differences and seek to assist our partners in being aware of alternative approaches that might be helpful. But in the final analysis, uniformity is not the goal. These are not seen as fairness issues. As long as the Title IV-E regulations are being followed, the effort has been to allow for local conditions and needs to guide local decision-making. This is true for county agencies and among schools of social work. Workers in some counties are employed under union conditions. Others are not. Small counties face somewhat different personnel issues than larger ones. Some counties enjoy a relatively stable workforce with very few open positions; others are chronically understaffed. Child welfare salaries

vary across the state. Counties operate under a range of governance structures (commissioners, mayors, and county executives) that exert a strong influence on policies and procedures for the human services workforce. Changes in county agency administration can often bring changes in policy and practice related to employment-based practicums and flexible working conditions. Participating school programs can set their own practicum policies as long as they meet the minimum criteria established by the Council on Social Work Education.³³

College or university calendars control social work department and school schedules. The number of child welfare students in each school influences the number of child welfare courses that can be offered. Minimum enrollment targets are established that determine whether a particular course can be run in a given term or not. Some schools or departments of social work operate under strict operational policies that are controlled by a centralized university administration that determines which courses can be offered, in what format, and how often they can be placed on the academic calendar. Consequently, students and others who observe some differences are quite correct and refer to a diversity that is neither possible nor desirable to control centrally. It is always the goal of the CWEB and CWEL programs to provide:

1. Easy access to the programs for trainees, counties, and schools;
2. Equitable distribution of resources that assures as many schools and counties can participate as possible;
3. Streamlined administrative procedures and timely reimbursements;
4. Strict observation of Title IV-E regulations;

³³ Council on Social Work Education (2022). *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for Baccalaureate and Master's Social Work Programs*. See Educational Policy 3.3: Signature Pedagogy – Field Education, section 3.37 regarding work-based field placements. Available at www.cswe.org

5. Full disclosure of all aspects of the program's operation among the partners and to the public;
6. As little interference as possible with selection of trainees and implementation models by counties and with schools in their admission processes;
7. Recognitions of the achievements and contributions of our students;
8. Recommendations for workforce improvement.

Recommendations

We are committed to continuous quality improvement and understand that no successful program is static. Areas for ongoing focus in both programs and the action steps completed or in progress are summarized below.

CWEB

- 1. Improve successful outcomes for students by refining admission criteria and participant selection**
 - Student transcripts and a personal statement regarding the desire to pursue public child welfare added to the application packet (completed)
 - Competency-based rating instrument used to assess CWEB applications (completed/ongoing refinement when indicated)
 - Periodic review of interrater reliability (ongoing)
 - Interviews held with a sample of applicants (ongoing)
- 2. Further guidance to university faculty on the details of civil service requirements and other technical aspects related to county internship and employment**
 - Targeted discussions during informational meetings with schools and students (ongoing)

- Discussions to include that CWEB students completing internships within non-civil service counties can also register as a county casework intern, so they are eligible for jobs in civil service counties (ongoing)
- “Frequently Asked Questions” posted on CWERP website (completed; updated as needed)
- Diagram of civil service/merit hire internship pathway included in student handbook (completed; updated as needed)
- CWEB presence at annual statewide events (ongoing)

3. Maintain participation in Civil Service Social Work Internship program

- Outreach to schools and students regarding the benefit of completing 975 hours of internship (e.g., civil service standing, ability to complete foundation training as part of internship, greater marketability for hiring, transition into Caseworker II position) (ongoing)
- County agency support for extended internship by CWEB students (ongoing)
- Flexibility among county agencies to also support the host school’s requirement for internship hours, which is often between 400-600 hours. Extended internship requirements can be a deterrent to CWEB applicants (ongoing)

4. Increase successful program completion among “at risk” students (e.g., academic challenges, those experiencing unanticipated life events, foster care alumni)

- Ongoing outreach and case management to students by CWEB faculty and staff (ongoing)
- Regular collaboration with school faculty (ongoing)

- Targeted interventions for individual students (ongoing)

5. Increase county participation in the CWEB program

- Collaboration with counties through CWEB information sessions that include CWEB program faculty and staff, as well as Practice Improvement Specialists and Regional Resource Specialists from the Child Welfare Resource Center (ongoing)
- School-county-program collaboration in the practicum process, including the use of the CWEB Internship Guidance tool jointly developed between county agency staff and CWEB program staff (ongoing)
- Presentations at state-level meetings in addition to other workgroups addressing recruitment/retention/workforce issues (ongoing)
- Informational sessions and reference to CWEB Internship Guidance tool (ongoing)

6. Improve CWEB student enrollment in mandated child welfare skill and competency-based training, *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice (“Foundations”)*

- Case management system pairing CWRC Resource Specialist with each CWEB student (in place and ongoing)
- Enrollment in *Foundations* during the CWEB students’ senior year and initiation of training record to document completion of modules in effect (ongoing)
- Collaboration with county Training Liaisons (ongoing)

7. Improve leadership and professional development skills

- Students encouraged to develop leadership and self-care skills during their academic/practicum experience (ongoing)
- Bachelor-level licensure in PA (Act 179 of 2014; adopted August 2020). Candidates can apply to take the qualifying exam at <https://www.pals.pa.gov/#/page/default>
- Plan for enrollment in CWEL program (ongoing)

8. Improve successful job placement following graduation

- Assistance by CWEB/CWEL Agency Coordinator and CWEB/CWEL Program Manager in identifying county casework vacancies, facilitating referrals for interviews, and counseling regarding employment (ongoing)
- Collaboration with SCSC and merit hire counties (ongoing)
- Follow-up protocol with CWEB grads (ongoing)

9. Address issues that arise in the transition to employment

- Follow-up protocol for new graduates (ongoing)

10. Improve dissemination of child welfare career development opportunity through CWEB and CWEL to prospective and current participants

- Dissemination of realistic job preview video (completed)
- Informational sessions at participating schools (ongoing)
- Informational sessions with county agencies (ongoing)
- Collaboration with CWRC Regional Teams (ongoing)

CWEL

1. Alteration in commitment time for part-time students

- We note this issue for clarification: There is no option for an alteration in the legal commitment period for part-time students. The part-time student commitment period is pro-rated to avoid a longer commitment time and to promote equity. The commitment time for all participants begins upon graduation and is not subject to delay.

2. Expansion of commitment time for all participants

- This is precluded by federal Title IV-E regulations [45 CFR, Ch. II § 235.63 (b) (1)]

3. Increase county agency support for part-time students

- County agencies are encouraged to provide flexible scheduling, modified work assignments, and opportunities for practicum work outside the agency (ongoing)
- County state agencies providing work-based practicums are encouraged to offer flexible work scheduling to
- When difficulties arise involving a particular student, the county is actively engaged in problem solving and solution-building using a teaming model (ongoing)
- The CWEL program actively enforces a part-time academic load for part-time students. Part-time students may not assume full-time study, regardless of the source of tuition/fee payment, while participating in the CWEL program to complete school sooner (ongoing)

4. Continued focus upon agency working environment and opportunities for graduates to use their expanded skills and abilities within the agency and at the state level

- Targeted intervention with agency supervisors and administrators; collaboration with CWRC Practice Improvement Specialists/Regional Teams (ongoing)
- Feedback to administrators (ongoing)
- CWERP faculty participation in state and national recruitment, retention, and workforce development initiatives (ongoing)
- CWEL graduate involvement in ongoing organizational effectiveness/CQI processes within counties (ongoing)
- Inclusion of CWEL graduates in state-wide practice and policy initiatives (i.e., PIP, FFPSA, Universal Assessment subcommittee(s), Quality Service Reviews, organizational effectiveness work, curriculum development and quality assurance committees, CWIS) (ongoing)

5. Supervision and mentorship of CWEB program participants

- CWEL graduates are encouraged to provide supervision and mentoring to CWEB students/graduates at their county agency (ongoing)
- County agency directors are encouraged to utilize CWEL graduates as practicum instructors, task supervisors, and mentors to CWEBs (ongoing)

6. Permission for students to major in administration or macro practice

- Students in a current administrative or managerial position are permitted to pursue an administrative or macro track. Those in direct service positions must focus on direct practice. This policy is in keeping with federal expectation that trainees are being prepared for best practice in that aspect of IV-E services to which they are assigned (ongoing)

- Students may take administration courses as electives; those approved for macro study are encouraged to take practice courses (ongoing)
- Continued exploration of cross-over option between direct practice/clinical and macro practice specializations among school programs (ongoing)

7. Increase in full-time student enrollment

- Counties are encouraged to permit full-time enrollment and hire replacement staff using the reimbursement received for the salary and benefits of the school trainee (ongoing)

8. Inclusion of advanced level child welfare coursework in school curricula, particularly in evidence-informed and evidenced-based practices

- Curricular consultation and technical assistance to schools (ongoing)
- Offering of courses targeted toward effective family engagement and teaming practices, motivational interviewing skills, enhanced assessment, trauma-informed care, and evidence-based practices (ongoing)
- Continued review of potential child welfare course offerings (ongoing)

9. Enhance involvement of graduates in state-level policy and practice initiatives

- Link graduates to statewide practice improvement initiatives (ongoing)
- PA's implementation of FFPSA services, Sex Trafficking & prudent parenting legislation, involvement in CFSR/QSR reviews, trauma-informed practice, and Universal Assessment work provide significant opportunities for graduates to become involved in high-level activities impacting the child welfare system (ongoing)

- Increase and sustain efforts to better integrate the CWEL and CWRC programs (ongoing)

10. Gather more detailed information regarding the career trajectory of CWEL graduates

- Efforts to develop a comprehensive workforce database for the public child welfare agencies in PA continue. We intend to provide a dashboard for each county, region, and the state at large (ongoing)
- CWEL graduates have been incorporated into the follow-up study protocol.

Overall Recommendations: CWEB and CWEL Programs

1. Increase CWEB enrollment

- A target of 50 participants is aspirational.
- Enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities has decreased an estimated 3.5% according to fall 2021 figures, totaling a two-year decline of 7.8% since 2019. This represented a loss of nearly 500,000 undergraduate students in the 2021-2022 Academic Year alone, continuing a historic trend that began with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although enrollment in both undergraduate and graduate programs has been trending downward over the past decade, the pandemic “turbocharged” the decline at the undergraduate level. This drop has been worse at community colleges and public, four-year institutions. Community colleges, which traditionally enroll more low-income students and students of color, have seen decreased enrollments by nearly 15% since 2019.³⁴ Additional

³⁴ See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltietzel/2021/11/18/updated-figures-show-college-enrollment-falling-further-behind-last-year/?sh=67cff30a447d>;
<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/26/1048955023/college-enrollment-down-pandemic-economy>;
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/10/26/college-enrollment-down/>;
<https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2021-10-26/college-enrollment-on-track-for-largest-two-year-drop-on-record>

data confirms that more Americans are forgoing higher education, with an estimated decline of 9.6% nationwide since 2010. A decrease of 17% has been observed in Pennsylvania since this time.³⁵ The “demographic cliff”, illustrated by a drastic decline of graduating 18 year olds, is estimated to start in 2026 thereby shrinking the pool of potential undergraduate students and increasing competition amongst institutions of higher education to enroll these students. It is expected that Pennsylvania will have a 17% decrease in high school graduates by 2041.³⁶

- We will continue active recruitment efforts to increase child welfare interest among undergraduate social work majors.

To this end, we expanded the CWEB program by including an additional seven PA schools of social work effective in the 2024-2025 academic year.

- As previously noted, there has been a marked decline in undergraduate student enrollment across the country and Pennsylvania is no exception. It remains to be seen whether the consolidation of six universities in the PASSHE network will have positive benefits for CWEB enrollment. As with most major transitions, it may take several years until new norms are established. There is also a finite number of students coming into higher education.

2. Maintain CWEL enrollment at approximately 150.

³⁵ See <https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics>

³⁶ Marcus, J. (2025, January 9). *The number of 18-year-olds is about to drop sharply, packing a wallop for colleges - and the economy*. The Hechinger Report. https://hechingerreport.org/the-impact-of-this-is-economic-decline/?utm_source=PublicSource&utm_campaign=d805f13913-Roundup_Jan%2B9%2C%2B2025&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-9b2daafe37-337458061&mc_cid=d805f13913&mc_eid=c5e128fdf9

- Partnering schools value our child welfare students. Online course work has offered students more flexible learning forums. Evaluation data has shown that increased tenure at admission is related to retention among graduates of CWEL, serving as reinforcement of the decision several years ago to increase the minimum amount of agency tenure to two years for CWEL eligibility.
 - In 2008, OCYF granted approval for regional office staff to participate in CWEL. The opportunity for state employees allows additional trainees to benefit from the program.
- 3. Add another component to the CWEL program to recruit new county employees. These persons would never have worked in a county CYS before but would be trained and would have the same length of work commitment as that currently required of CWEL students.**
- The provision in the federal Title IV-E regulations which permits the training of persons “preparing for [public child welfare] employment” provides this opportunity. A principal advantage is cost savings; the cost to the Department would be the non-federal match. The potential impact on the CWEB program must be carefully considered, however. It is possible that increasing the number of masters-prepared individuals might significantly limit the opportunity for bachelor-level graduates to obtain county employment. See 45 CFR, Ch. II §235.63 (a).
 - From 2019 through 2023, this option was available to University of Pittsburgh MSW students through a workforce excellence award from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI). It concluded with the last cohort of graduates in August of 2023. The University of Pittsburgh/Child Welfare Education and Research Programs was one of seven sites across the country

selected for this award. Specific to partnership with Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families, fifteen MSW students completed coursework leading to the certificate in Children, Youth and Families, completed an advanced-level internship at the county, and entered into a contractual obligation for employment with Allegheny County following graduation.

4. Inclusion of additional social work degree programs in Pennsylvania as they become fully accredited.

- Increasing the number of schools has allowed for greater student access, reduction in student commuting time, and a reduction in program costs. The recent expansion of the CWEB program to an additional seven schools is noted above. This expansion was preceded by the inclusion of East Stroudsburg University in the CWEB consortium in the 2018-2019 academic year.
- Several graduate programs have been approved for the CWEL program since its inception, including the University of Pittsburgh's Bradford campus (2002), Kutztown University (2007), the joint Millersville-Shippensburg program (2010), and Slippery Rock University in 2024. Online programs at nine MSW schools are approved.
- The MSW program at Commonwealth University received CSWE accreditation and subsequent approval of a Substantive Change for the addition of an online MSW program effective January 2026. We are currently in the process of finalizing an agreement for Commonwealth University to join the CWEL school consortium. A projected start date for CWEL enrollment at Commonwealth University is the 2026-2027 academic year.

5. Participation by CWEB/CWEL graduates in the implementation of practice changes following new legislation.

- CWEB and CWEL students remain in an excellent position to support and assume leadership in practice changes and system reform. Local, regional, and statewide opportunities exist for participation in efforts addressing policy and practice change in the child welfare system. Additional opportunities for larger system involvement include work related to the implementation of FFPSA, the enhanced use of antipoverty/concrete supports to divert child welfare system involvement, implementation of a statewide universal assessment tool, enhancement of youth and family engagement practices, monitoring of legislation/interventions targeting human trafficking, operationalization of Plans of Safe Care, trauma-informed practice, and continuous quality improvement initiatives to list a few.

6. Incorporation of trauma-informed supervision at the county level.

- Current students and graduates speak poignantly about needing supervisory and peer support to manage work-related stress, and of the impact of secondary trauma upon their ability to remain in child welfare. We believe it is critical to address this issue. Revisions to the Supervisor Training Series developed by CWRC placed increased emphasis on this workforce need.

7. Transition support and ongoing connection among CWEB and CWEL graduates.

- All graduates benefit from ongoing connection and support, and coaching is particularly important for CWEB graduates who are new to public child welfare. Additionally, portfolio and resume development are essential. We have seen great success with the implementation of a voluntary post-hire contact with child welfare consultants at three months, six months, and nine months post-hire.

- Transition back to the county agency is a distinct issue among CWEL graduates and is most problematic for those who have been full-time students. Increased attention has been paid to preparing these students for their return to the agency. Greater network support and participation in transition groups for returning students are helpful strategies. All graduates are encouraged to join special workforce or task groups through the PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC). Practice Improvement Specialists from CWRC are assigned to counties throughout the state and actively engage with CWEB/CWEL graduates to provide support and enlist them in practice initiatives. Many graduates share their expertise on a statewide level by becoming trainers and/or workgroup members through CWRC.

8. Reimbursement to counties for 100% of the salaries of full-time students and for fringe benefits at the same level that the Department currently reimburses counties.

- When the CWEL program was initiated, it was decided to reimburse counties for only 95% of full-time students' salaries. It was hypothesized that counties would pass the 5% reduction along to students and this amount in aggregate would be used as part of the non-federal matching funds required under IV-E regulations. However, this approach was quickly abandoned. First, it became evident that federal authorities would classify contributions as "private funds" which are prohibited except under very obtuse rules this approach could not meet. Secondly, several counties continued to pay the workers their full salaries even though the counties were reimbursed as only the 95% level. Adding to this is the burden of the very low salaries that so many CWEL students earn. Those students with families find the 5% salary reduction very difficult to endure, and

the inability to receive overtime pay while a student also creates a financial change.

9. Increase the caliber of the PA child welfare workforce at the front door.

- Increase educational requirements for casework positions
- Develop specific county child welfare casework classification within the State Civil Service System
- Continue to advocate at the county, state, and federal level that salaries must be adequate to compensate for the demands and responsibility of public child welfare jobs
- Develop racially equitable, race conscious, trauma-informed child welfare systems that create a community of inclusion, support, and learning for the workforce, recognizing that supervisors, middle managers, and administrators are critical to retention and that a diverse workforce better reflects the population served by child welfare agencies
- Infuse organizational effectiveness strategies into agencies through CWRC Regional Teams
- Maintain and expand the CWEB and CWEL programs so that advanced education and support for professional development remain key components of PA's child welfare system.

Conclusions

The faculty and staff of the CWEB and CWEL programs sincerely believe the Department and the counties can rightfully be proud of the continued achievements of our child welfare education programs. Pennsylvania is a leader in workforce development and is fortunate to have an integrated education, training, and practice

improvement program continuum dedicated to the child welfare system. We are gratified to be part of this remarkable venture and partnership, and sincerely acknowledge that the contributions of many others are what guide, shape, and sustain these highly acclaimed programs.

The county children and youth service administrators have been unfailingly responsive as individuals, and through their organization, the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators. The Department of Human Services has continued to strongly endorse the CWEB and CWEL programs. We thank Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, Secretary of the Department of Human Services. A special thank you to Laval Miller-Wilson, Deputy Secretary of the state Office of Children, Youth, and Families, for his support and partnership. We appreciate our ongoing connection with Natalie Bates, Chief of Staff. We also express gratitude to our OCYF Program Monitors, Carrie Keiser and Diane Michel, for their thoughtful oversight and steadfast support of our work.

Our academic partners have made major contributions to the success of our programs and that of our students. Admissions, registrations, invoices, graduations, academic schedules, course listings, internships, and dozens of other details must be coordinated and carefully attended. The State System of Higher Education has enabled eleven state universities with accredited undergraduate social work programs to become members of the consortium. The United States Children's Bureau, and especially its Region III office in Philadelphia, has continued its strong support, not least of which is extensive funding of both the CWEB and CWEL programs.

We are proud that the CWEB and CWEL education programs have been recognized as key strengths in Pennsylvania during all rounds of the federal Child and Family Services Review. Our graduates have assumed leadership roles in practice initiatives throughout the state and actively contribute to shaping the future of child

welfare services on the local, state, and national level. Graduates are providing direct service, serving as managers and supervisors, mentoring junior colleagues, contributing to training curricula, conducting quality improvement programs, leading race equity initiatives, participating in child fatality/near fatality reviews, and working as child welfare trainers and/or consultants. We are proud that an increasing number of our child welfare graduates have assumed teaching roles in Schools of Social Work throughout the state of Pennsylvania, many as adjunct professors, others as part-time clinical faculty, and some as Directors of Social Work programs.

Finally, no number of contracts, agreements, budgets, reports, curricula, faculty or any other of the myriad of academic and administrative components of this project could produce a successful outcome without exceptional students. The vast majority of the CWEB and CWEL students selected to participate in these programs have been exceptional achievers academically, as well as leaders among their peers. They have distinguished themselves through their dedication to working with society's most vulnerable children and families, and in circumstances that involve daily exposure to upsetting situations and overwhelming crises. As always, we salute them with sincere admiration. The students' investments, energy, vision, and contributions to the child welfare system are more responsible than anything else for the continued success of the CWEB and CWEL programs.

A note of gratitude goes to the CWERP team members who make countless contributions to our program operations throughout each year. Your work is very appreciated and touches the lives of our students, their colleagues, and the community.



Appendices

- A. [Table I. Student and Graduate Departures from Programs and Recoupment](#)
- B. [Table II: Participating School Programs](#)
- C. [CWEB and CWEL School Participation Map](#)
- D. [Table III: Undergraduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of Approved CWEB Schools, 2024-2025](#)
- E. [Table IV: Graduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of Approved CWEL Schools, 2024-2025](#)
- F. [CWEB County Participation Map, 2001-2025](#)
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- H. [CWEL Overview, 1995-2025](#)
- I. [Program Evaluation Data Tables](#)
- J. [List of Supplemental CWEB and CWEL Materials Available Online](#)
- K. [Child Welfare Education and Research Programs, CWEB/CWEL Faculty and Staff](#)



Appendix A

Table I. Student and Graduate Departures from Programs and Recoupment

Table I.
Student and Graduate Departures from Programs and Recoupment

School	Total	CWEB Total	CWEL Total	Departure Reason: Employment	Departure Reason: Withdrew from School / Program	Recoupment Status: Collection Initiated	Recoupment Status: Obligation Satisfied
Bloomsburg University	15	15	0	10	5	10	5
Bryn Mawr College	5	0	5	0	5	2	3
California University	22	18	4	13	9	11	11
Edinboro University	18	13	5	9	9	8	10
Kutztown University	18	15	3	10	8	4	14
Lock Haven University	16	16	0	8	8	4	12
Mansfield University	16	16	0	14	2	5	11
Marywood University	28	2	26	6	22	8	20
Millersville University	6	3	3	1	5	3	3
University of Pennsylvania	6	0	6	0	6	2	4
University of Pittsburgh	42	15	27	17	25	12	30
Shippensburg University	21	17	4	11	10	6	15
Slippery Rock University	11	11	0	7	4	5	6
Temple University	38	19	19	18	20	15	23
West Chester University	13	11	2	7	6	5	8
Widener University	21	7	14	8	13	10	11
TOTALS	296	178	118	139	157	110	186

Appendix B

Table II

Participating School Programs

Table II
Participating School Programs

School	MSACS	CSWE	CWEB Only	CWEB/ CWEL	CWEL Only	Entry into Program
Alvernia University	2032-2033	BSW 2/2028	X			2024
Bryn Mawr College	2027-2028	MSS 6/2032			X	1995
Cedar Crest College	2030-2031	BASW 2/2032	X			2024
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, Mansfield)	2032-2033	BSW 10/2025	X			CWEB 2001
East Stroudsburg University	2025-2026	BSW 6/2027	X			2018
Elizabethtown College	2027-2028	BSW 6/2032	X			2024
Juniata College	2030-2031	BSW 2/2029	X			2024
Kutztown University	2025-2026	BSW 10/2026 MSW 10/2026		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2007
Lancaster Bible College	2025-2026	BSW 2/2028	X			2024
Marywood University	2025-2026	BSW 10/2025 MSW 10/2025		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995
Messiah University	2030-2031	BSW 2/2027	X			2024
Millersville University	2027-2028	BSW 6/2027 MSW 2/2030		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2010
Misericordia University	2031-2032	BSW 2/2028	X			2024
Pennsylvania Western University (California, Edinboro)	2032-2033	BSW 6/2033 MSW 10/2025		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2004 (California), CWEL 2006 (Edinboro)
Shippensburg University	2026-2027	BSW 6/2027 MSW 2/2030		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2010
Slippery Rock University	2028-2029	BSW 2/2030 MSW 6/2031	-	X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2024

School	MSACS	CSWE	CWEB Only	CWEB/ CWEL	CWEL Only	Entry into Program
Temple University	2027-2028	BSW 6/2026 MSW 6/2026		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995
University of Pennsylvania	2031-2032	MSW 6/2033			X	1995
University of Pittsburgh	2029-2030	BASW 6/2028 MSW 6/2028		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995
West Chester University	2028-2029	BSW 10/2027 MSW 10/2029		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2001
Widener University	2025-2026	BSW 2/2029 MSW 2/2029		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995

Appendix C

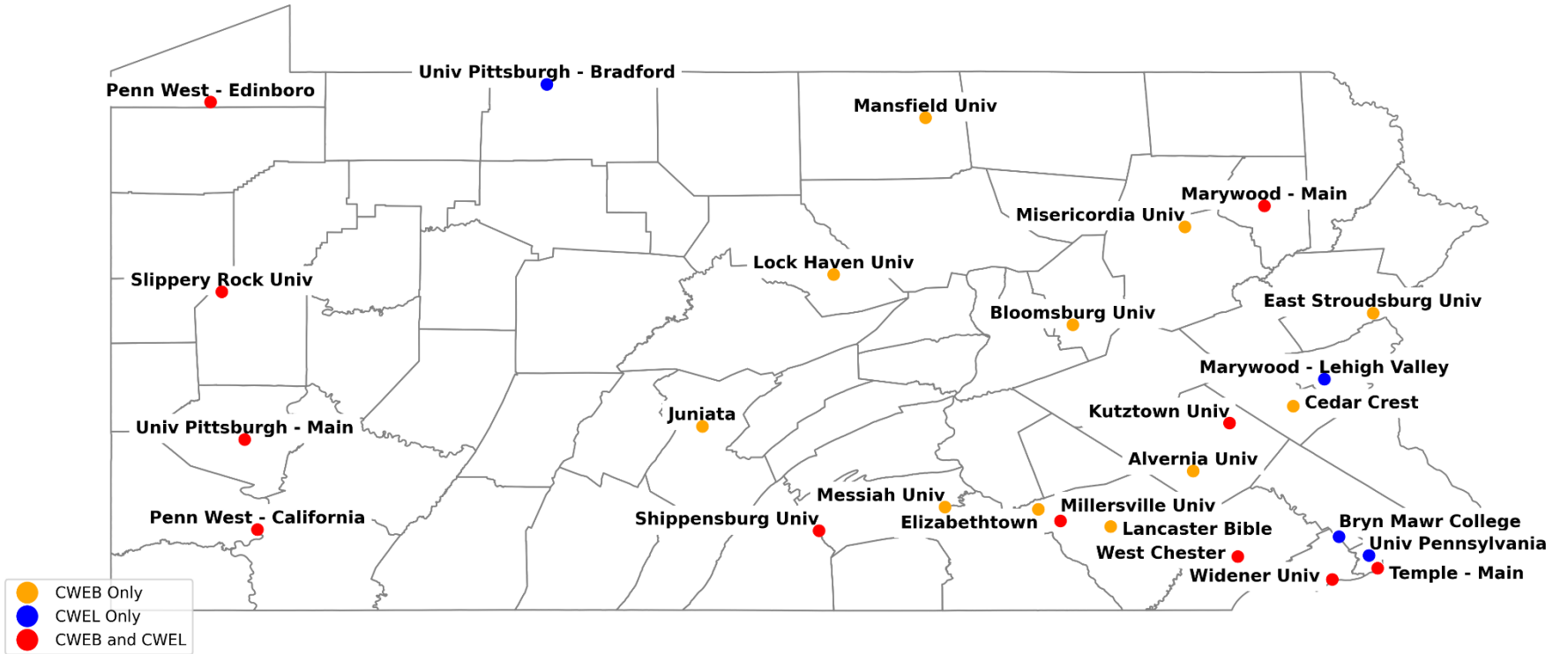
CWEB and CWEL
School Participation Map

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

Participating Schools

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs Participating Schools

Updated: 08/26/2024



Appendix D

Table III

Undergraduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of
Approved CWEB Schools

2024-2025

Table III
Undergraduate Child Welfare Course Offerings
of
Approved CWEB Schools for 2024-2025

School	Course Title
Alvernia University	Social Services to Children
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania: Bloomsburg University	Child Welfare
PennWest: California University	Child Welfare
Cedar Crest College	Child Abuse, Maltreatment and Neglect in Childhood and Adolescence
East Stroudsburg University	Child Welfare Services
PennWest: Edinboro University	Child Welfare
Elizabethtown College	Course in Development
Kutztown University	Child Welfare and Social Work Practice
Juniata College	Child, Youth, and Family Services
Lancaster Bible College	Social Work and Child Welfare
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania: Lock Haven University	Child Welfare
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania: Mansfield University	Child Welfare
Marywood University	Children's Rights and Societal Responses
Messiah University	Course in Development
Millersville University	Social Work and Child Welfare
Misericordia University	Child Abuse and Neglect
Shippensburg University	Introduction to Child Welfare
Slippery Rock University	Introduction to Child Welfare
Temple University	Child Welfare Policy
University of Pittsburgh	Child Welfare Services ³⁷
West Chester University	Child Welfare Practice and Policy
Widener University	Families at Risk

³⁷ In addition to the undergraduate course, *Child Welfare Services*, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate students can register for the graduate courses *Child and Family Advocacy*, *Child and Family Policy*, and *Children and Families at Risk* (shown in Table II, [Appendix C](#)) as electives, with the permission of the BASW Program Director and the students' academic advisor.

Appendix E

Table IV

Graduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of
Approved CWEL Schools

2024-2025

Graduate Child Welfare Course Offerings: Approved CWEL Schools 2024-2025

Bryn Mawr College, Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research

Child Welfare Policy, Practice and Research
Clinical Social Work Practice with Children and Adolescents
Social Work with Substance Use Disorders
Trauma Informed Social Work with Children and Adolescents
Family Therapy: Theory and Practice
Child & Family Well Being Integrative Seminar
The Queering of SW for Practice with LGBTQIA + People (And Everyone)

PennWest University (California and Edinboro Campuses)

Social Work Practice with Children and Youth
Practice in Substance Use
Trauma Theory and Interventions
Social Work Practice in Justice Systems
Treating Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

Kutztown University, Department of Social Work

Social Work Interventions with Substance Abusing Populations
Maltreatment in the Family
Child Permanence and the Family-In-Environment
Practice of Family Group Decision Making
Social Work Crisis Intervention with Families
Assessment Methods for Social Workers: Children and Adolescents
The Fundamentals of Trauma-Informed Care
Clinical Approaches to Trauma-Informed Practice
Trauma-Informed Practice with Systems
Motivational Interviewing Strategies: Implications for Gender and Addiction
Family Mediation in Advanced Social Work Practice

Marywood University, School of Social Work

Critical Issues in Chemical Dependence
Child Welfare Practice and Services
Family Focused Social Work Practice
Social Work Perspectives on Trauma
Social Work Practice with Children/Family
Principles and Practices of Trauma Informed Care
Women's Issues and the Practice of Social Work
Mindfulness Skills for Social Work Practice
Human Sexuality

Millersville/Shippensburg Universities, School of Social Work/Department of Social Work and Gerontology

Child Welfare
Children and Youth at Risk
Addictions in the Field of Social Work
Behavioral Health
Social Work Administration and Supervision
Advanced Trauma Informed Practice
Trauma Informed Therapy

The University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy and Practice

Policies for Children and Their Families
Practice with Families
Practice with Youth who are Marginalized
Practice with Children and Adolescents
Substance Abuse Interventions
Social Work Practice & Trauma
Clinical & Macro Child Welfare Practice
Integrative Seminar in Child Welfare

Temple University, School of Social Work

Alcohol and Substance Abuse
Assessment and the DSM-IV
Policy on Families and Children
Emotional Disorders of Children and Adolescents
Trauma Informed Social Work
Children and Families in the Social Environment
Human Trafficking
Loss & Grief

University of Pittsburgh

Children and Families at Risk
Child and Family Policy
Social Work Practice with African American Families
Direct Practice with Children and Adolescents
Intimate Partner Violence
Child Maltreatment
Social Work with Substance Use and Other Addictive Disorders
Social Work Practice and Traumatic Stress
Social Work Practice with Families

Slippery Rock University

Trauma Informed Practice
Families Impacted by Trauma
Behavioral Health Services in Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice
Intervention for Sexual Assault & Interpersonal Violence

West Chester University, College of Education and Social Work

Child Welfare: A Resilience and Trauma-Informed Approach
Substance Use Disorders
Motivational Interviewing in Social Work
Seminar in Social Work: Family Violence
The Theory and Practice of Self-Care
Child Welfare Services and Policies
Trauma Informed Social Work

Widener University, Center for Social Work Education

Advanced Social Work Practice with Families
Biographical Timeline
Social Work Practice with Addicted Persons and Their Families
Social Work Practice with Children and Adolescents
Social Work with Urban Youth
Children & Families at Risk
Social Work in Prisons and Community Reintegration
Grief and Loss Across the Life Cycle

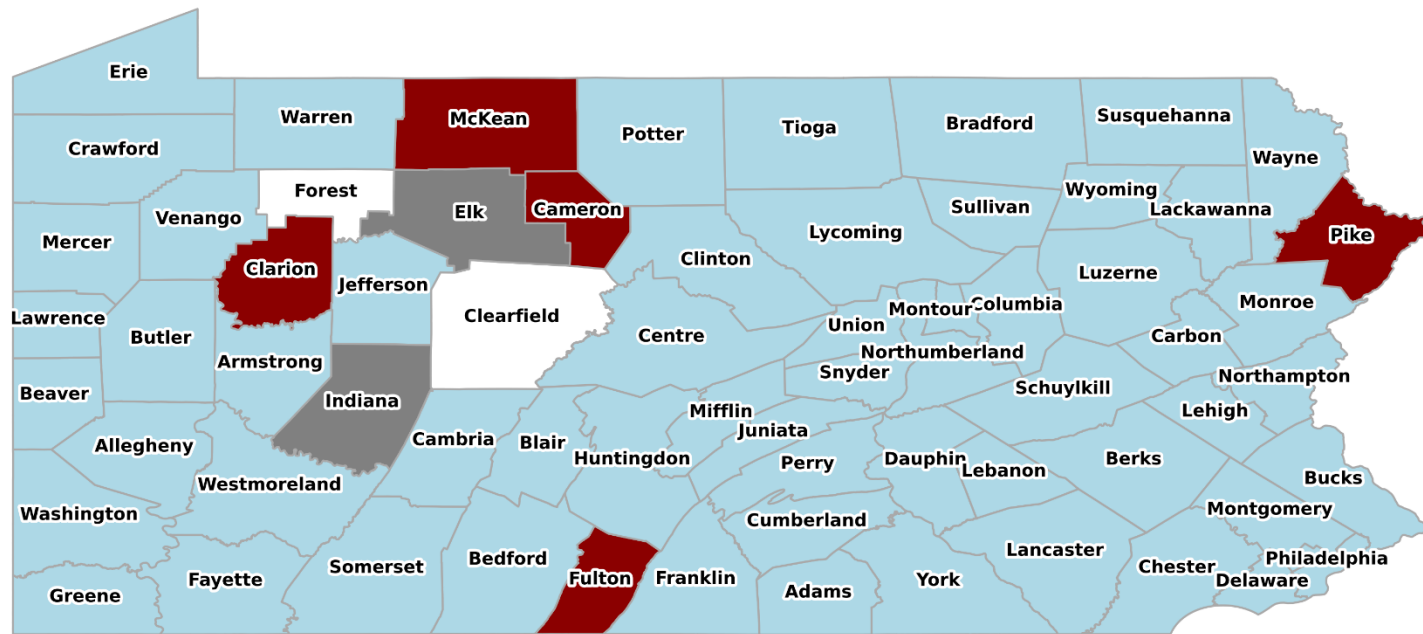
Appendix F

CWEB County Participation Map

2001-2025

Counties Providing Student Internships and/or Employment for Graduates of the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program

Updated: 09/02/2025



□ No CWEB Internship or Post-Grad Employment History ■ CWEB Internship History ■ CWEB Post-Grad Employment History ■ CWEB Internship and Post-Grad Employment History

Appendix G

CWEB Overview

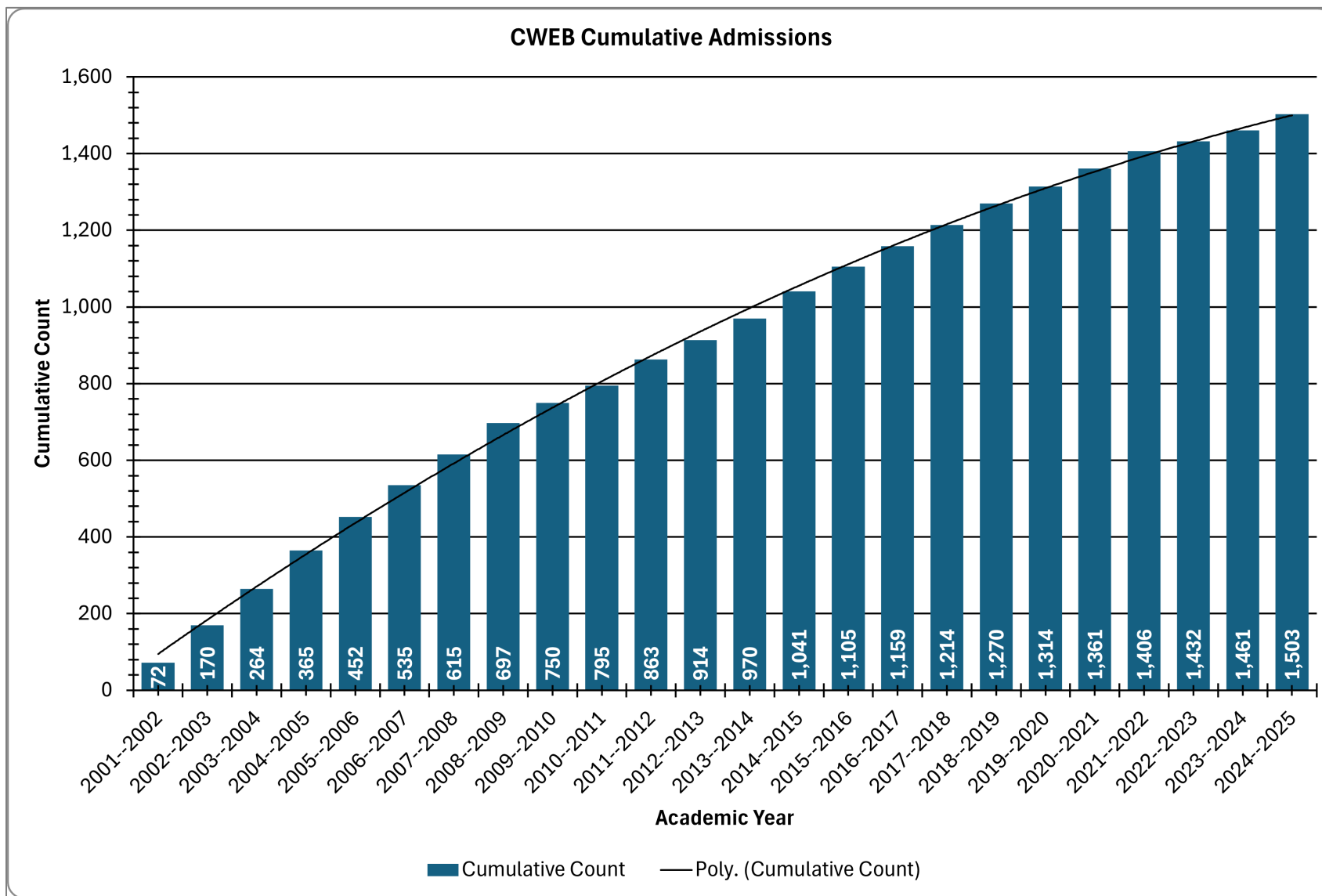
2001-2025

Charts 1-2

Chart 1

Child Welfare for Baccalaureates

2001-2024 Cumulative Admissions (Projected Through 2025)



Appendix H

CWEL Overview

1995 - 2025

Charts 1-2

Chart 1

Child Welfare Education for Leadership

1995-2024 Cumulative Admissions (Projected Through 2025)

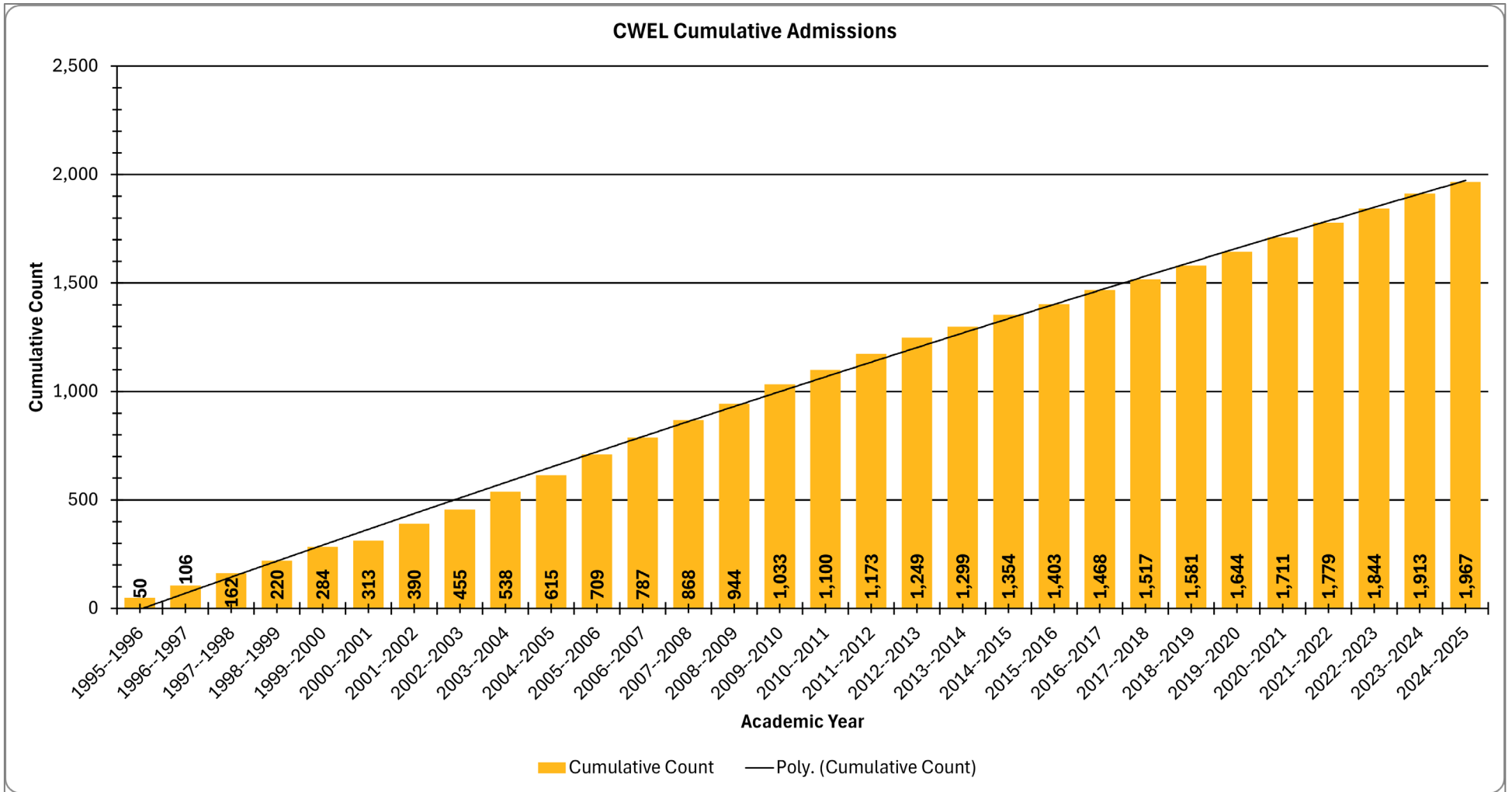
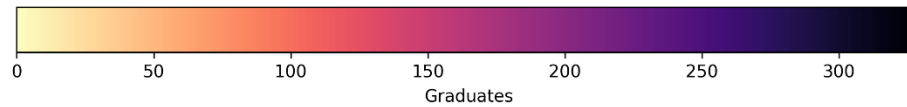
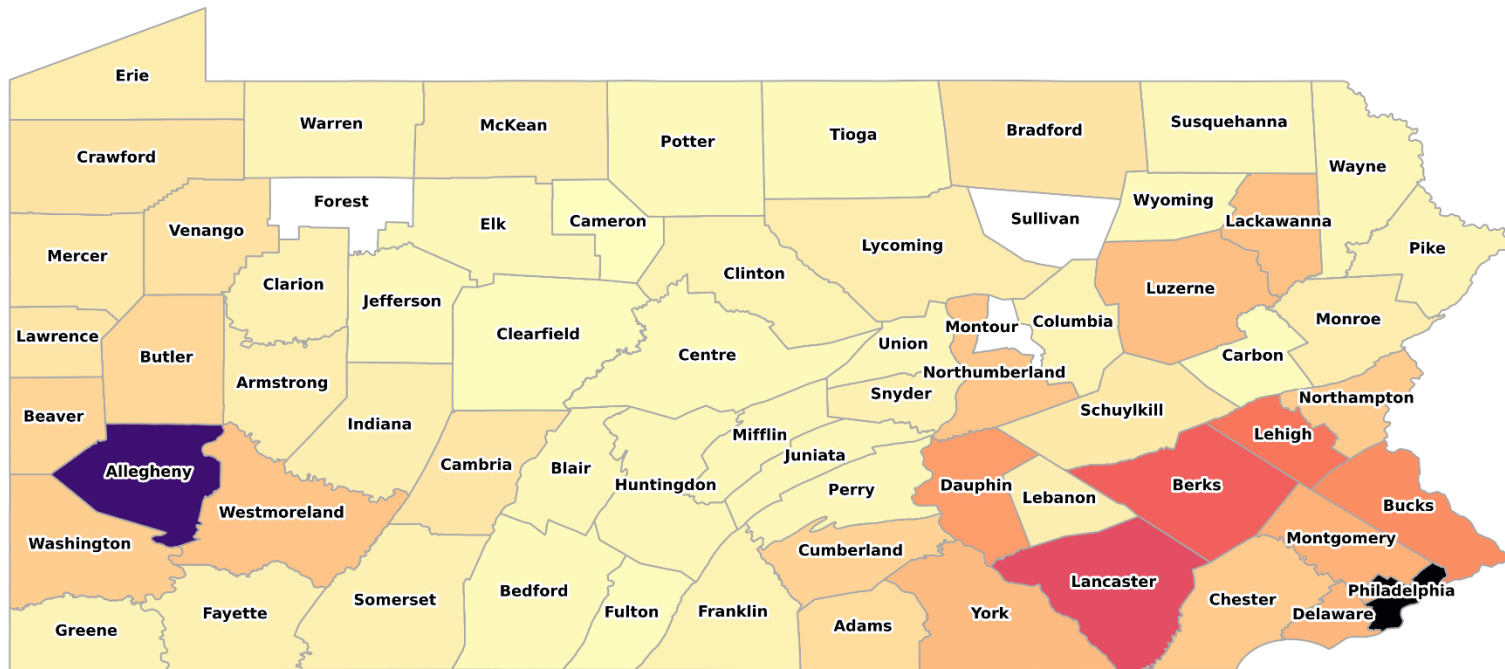


Chart 2 CWEL County Impact Historical Number of CWEL Graduates by County

CWEL County Impact Historical Number of CWEL Graduates by County

Updated: 09/02/2025



Appendix I

Program Evaluation Data Tables

Table 1**Average Scores per Item by Program Type and by Status for Current Students**

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4=Somewhat Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

Item	CWEB n=24	CWEL, Full-Time n=36	CWEL, Part- Time n=41
<i>CWERP Program Processes</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>
The program information clearly explains the CWEB/CWEL program	4.08 (1.14)	4.44 (0.81)	4.41 (0.81)
The application form instructions are clear	4.54 (0.93)	4.53 (0.81)	4.61 (0.49)
I understood the contract	4.21 (1.10)	4.56 (0.88)	4.41 (0.84)
The website is easy to use	4.17 (1.11)	4.08 (1.00)	4.15 (0.94)
I use the handbook when I have a question	3.41 (1.30)	4.06 (1.19)	4.20 (0.88)
The faculty (University of Pittsburgh) respond to my phone calls/email	4.82 (0.85)	4.53 (0.93)	4.72 (0.65)
The staff (University of Pittsburgh) respond to my phone calls/email	4.83 (0.83)	4.56 (0.93)	4.66 (0.68)
The faculty (University of Pittsburgh) helped me when I had a problem	4.71 (0.90)	4.59 (0.91)	4.69 (0.68)
The staff (University of Pittsburgh) helped me when I had a problem	4.68 (0.89)	4.64 (0.90)	4.00 (1.31)
<i>Current Degree Program</i>			
My academic advisor is familiar with the CWEB/CWEL program	4.35 (0.94)	4.43 (0.82)	3.95 (1.09)
The child welfare courses that I have taken are relevant	4.61 (0.94)	4.43 (0.95)	4.51 (0.78)
The faculty who teach the child welfare courses relate the content to practice	4.70 (0.93)	4.29 (0.86)	4.54 (0.70)
I have been able to apply what I learn in the class to practicum/internship or job	4.52 (0.98)	4.58 (0.55)	4.78 (0.48)
<i>Practicum/Internship Experiences</i>			
I have felt supported in the process of arranging my practicum/internship	4.19 (1.03)	3.94 (1.35)	4.00 (1.31)
I have received good supervision in the practicum	4.33 (1.16)	4.47 (1.02)	4.52 (0.81)
I was able to try new ideas or skills from class in my practicum	4.48 (1.03)	4.47 (1.11)	4.33 (1.02)
This practicum/internship has been a valuable learning experience	4.76 (0.89)	4.59 (0.96)	4.36 (1.00)

Item	CWEB n=24	CWEL, Full-Time n=36	CWEL, Part- Time n=41
<i>Agency/Practicum Interface</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>
My practicum supervisor is familiar with the requirements of the CWEB program	4.00 (1.30)	--	--
My practicum supervisor is familiar with the requirements of the State Civil Service Exam	4.10 (1.12)	--	--
I was able to easily arrange the time needed to go to classes	--	--	4.00 (1.20)
I was able to easily arrange the time needed to do my practicum placement	--	--	3.70 (1.36)
My agency was able to accommodate my return in the summer	--	4.50 (0.91)	--
When I returned in the summer, I had supplies to do my work	--	4.59 (0.73)	--
<i>Value of the Degree to the Child Welfare</i>			
My degree will help me to contribute to child welfare	4.91 (0.42)	4.83 (0.56)	4.84 (0.44)
I will be able to use what I am learning when I am employed or return to a child welfare agency	4.96 (0.21)	4.81 (0.71)	4.82 (0.46)
The CWEB or CWEL program gave me an educational opportunity that I would not have had otherwise	4.74 (0.69)	4.89 (0.40)	4.79 (0.58)
The CWEB or CWEL program has positively impacted my development as a social work professional	4.91 (0.29)	4.94 (0.23)	4.76 (0.54)
The CWEB and CWEL program should be made available to more students and child welfare workers	4.91 (0.29)	4.89 (0.40)	4.87 (0.41)
Using a scale from 1-10, with 1 having the least value and 10 the greatest value, what is the value of the CWEB of CWEL program to the public child welfare system?	9.13 (1.12)	9.50 (0.94)	9.58 (0.79)

Table 2**Average Scores per Item by Program Type for Recent Graduates**

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4=Somewhat Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

Item	CWEB n=21 Average (SD)	CWEL n=31 Average (SD)
My program prepared me for working in a child welfare agency	4.29 (1.31)	4.06 (1.00)
My skills were equal to better than other caseworkers not in the program	4.15 (1.27)	4.42 (0.72)
I have a better understanding of the complex problems of our families	4.10 (1.25)	4.42 (0.67)
My education has helped me to find new solutions to the problems that are typical of our families	4.05 (1.15)	4.32 (0.70)
I am encouraged to practice my new skills in my position	4.48 (1.21)	4.13 (1.02)
I am encouraged to share my knowledge with other workers	3.95 (1.24)	4.16 (0.93)
I am given the opportunity and authority to make decisions	4.10 (1.25)	3.90 (1.14)
There is current opportunity for promotion in my agency	3.35 (1.12)	3.33 (1.32)
I can see future opportunities for advancing in my agency	3.85 (1.09)	3.73 (1.23)
I plan to remain at my agency after my commitment period is over	3.86 (1.01)	3.94 (1.21)
My long-term career plan is to work with children and families	4.24 (1.04)	4.58 (0.72)
I would recommend my agency to others for employment in social work	4.35 (1.14)	4.13 (0.78)
I would recommend public child welfare services to others looking for employment in social work	4.05 (1.16)	4.00 (0.83)
I have seriously considered leaving public child welfare (lower scores=greater commitment)	2.15 (1.04)	3.03 (1.35)
If I were not contractually obligated to remain in public child welfare for my commitment, I would leave (lower scores=greater commitment)	2.14 (1.15)	2.68 (1.51)
On a scale of 1-10, with 1 having the least value and 10 the greatest value, what is the value of the CWEB and CWEL program to the public child welfare system	9.21 (0.98)	9.26 (1.32)

Table 3**Average Scores per Item for County Child Welfare Administrators: CWEB Graduate Preparedness**

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4=Somewhat Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

Item	Average (SD)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates are more prepared to carry a child welfare caseload	4.19 (0.67)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates need less support in completing the tasks of a child welfare caseworker.	3.56 (0.97)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates can better cope with the emotional aspects of child welfare casework.	3.50 (0.81)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates have a better understanding of the laws and policies governing county child welfare agencies.	3.97 (0.70)

Table 4**Average Scores per Item for County Child Welfare Administrators: Graduate Involvement in County Initiatives**

(1=Never Involved; 2=Sometimes Involved; 3=Involved Half the Time; 4=Involved Most of the Time; 5=Always Involved)

Item	Average (SD)
Racial diversity, equity, and inclusion	3.68 (1.29)
Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE)	3.40 (1.34)
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)	3.66 (1.26)
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	3.62 (1.23)
Quality Service Review/ Children and Family Services Review (QSR/CFSR)	3.25 (1.44)
Trauma-Informed Care	4.11 (1.05)
Family Group Decision Making/Conferencing and Teaming/Family Engagement	3.75 (1.20)
Organizational Effectiveness Initiatives	3.60 (1.31)
Recruitment and Retention	3.32 (1.48)
Family Finding	3.56 (1.28)

Table 5. School Administrator's Ratings of Core Competencies

Core Competency	Mean
Interpersonal Relations (n=26)	4.54
Adaptability (n=7)	4.14
Communication Skills (n=26)	4.38
Observation Skills (n=8)	4.13
Planning and Organizing Work (n=7)	4.29
Analytic Thinking (n=7)	4.14
Motivation (n=8)	4.13
Self-Awareness/Confidence (n=26)	4.42
Sense of Mission (n=8)	4.25
Teamwork (n=7)	4.14

Table 6. School Administrator's Ratings of Traditional Selection Criteria

Traditional Indicators	Mean
Interest in Working with Children and Families (n=26)	4.50
Faculty Recommendation (n=26)	4.12
GPA (n=26)	3.62
Writing Ability (n=26)	3.96
Engagement in Extracurricular Activities (n=26)	2.62
Financial Need (n=26)	3.31

Table 7. CWEB and CWEL Core Competency Ratings by Agency Administrators

Core Competency	CWEB Mean	CWEL Mean
Interpersonal Relations	3.44 (n=34)	3.88 (n=34)
Adaptability	3.30 (n=10)	3.89 (n=9)
Communication Skills	3.44 (n=34)	3.85 (n=34)
Observation Skills	3.63 (n=8)	3.70 (n=10)
Planning and Organizing Work	3.30 (n=10)	3.90 (n=10)
Analytic Thinking	3.22 (n=9)	3.70 (n=10)
Motivation	2.60 (n=10)	3.90 (n=10)
Self-Awareness/Confidence	3.30 (n=33)	3.88 (n=33)
Sense of Mission	3.64 (n=11)	3.90 (n=10)
Teamwork	3.78 (n=9)	4.33 (n=9)

Table 8. CWEB Mentors/Supervisor's Core Competency Ratings for CWEB Program Participants

Core Competency	CWEB Mean
Interpersonal Relations	3.57 (n=23)
Adaptability	2.80 (n=5)
Communication Skills	3.30 (n=23)
Observation Skills	3.29 (n=7)
Planning and Organizing Work	3.50 (n=4)
Analytic Thinking	3.29 (n=7)
Motivation	3.33 (n=6)
Self-Awareness/Confidence	3.26 (n=23)
Sense of Mission	3.57 (n=7)
Teamwork	3.78 (n=9)

Statistical Testing and Results

Current Students

Significant differences between CWEB and CWEL, Part-Time and Full-Time CWEL were determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

Table 9

Statistically Significant Results Comparing CWEB to CWEL

Item	t value	p value
I use the handbook when I have a question	-2.72	.008

Table 10

Statistically Significant Results Comparing Full-Time to Part-Time CWEL

Item	t value	p value
My academic advisor is familiar with the CWEB/CWEL program	2.14	.036

Recent Graduates

Significant differences between CWEB and CWEL was determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

Table 11

Statistically Significant Results Comparing CWEB to CWEL

Item	t value	p value
I have seriously considered leaving public child welfare (lower scores=greater commitment)	-2.47	.017
Number of children seen in a typical month	-3.58	<.001

Core Competencies

Significant differences between School Administrators and County Administrators on the ratings of core competencies for CWEB graduates were determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

Table 12

Statistically Significant Results Comparing Core Competencies of CWEB Graduates as Rated by School Administrators Versus County Administrators

Item	t value	p value
Interpersonal Relations	-5.97	<.001
Communication Skills	-4.97	<.001
Planning and Organizing Work	-4.12	<.001
Analytic Thinking	-2.36	.034
Motivation	-7.42	<.001
Self-Awareness/Confidence	-5.43	<.001

To establish if there are any significant differences between CWEB Mentors/Supervisors, County Administrators, and School Administrator, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed. In the Kruskal-Wallis H test, mean ranks are used to determine if there are any differences between the groups (e.g., school administrators; agency administrators; CWEB supervisors/mentors). These ranks can be used to determine the effect of the role of the respondent to the CWEB student on the ratings of the core competencies. It is important

to note that this statistical test will not determine where the differences between the groups lie, just that a statistically significant difference was observed. Anything less than a .05 is considered statistically significant.

Table 13
Statistically Significant Results of Kruskal-Wallis H Test Comparing Core Competencies of CWEB Graduates as Rated by, School Administrators, CWEB Mentors/Supervisors, and County Administrators

Item	Mean Ranking	H value	p value
Interpersonal Relations	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 48.85 County Administrator: 52.02 School Administrator: 86.23	24.64	<.001
Communication Skills	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 42.15 County Administrator: 55.27 School Administrator: 83.65	23.28	<.001
Observation Skills	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 11.50 County Administrator: 16.58 School Administrator: 22.75	6.13	.047
Planning and Organizing Work	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 13.25 County Administrator: 14.20 School Administrator: 22.71	6.03	.050
Self-Awareness/Confidence	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 41.96 County Administrator: 53.26 School Administrator: 84.23	25.83	<.001

Appendix J

Supplemental CWEB and CWEL Materials Available
Online

[Child Welfare Education and Research Programs |
School of Social Work \(pitt.edu\)](#)

- CWEB and CWEL Applications
- CWEB Frequently Asked Questions
- CWEL Frequently Asked Questions
- CWEB Student Handbook
- CWEB Expense Reimbursement Guide
- CWEB Informational Video
- CWEB FAQs Video
- CWEB Internship Guidance
- CWEB Flyer
- Child Welfare Realistic Job Preview Video
- CWEL Student Handbook
- CWEL Expense Reimbursement Guide
- CWEL Flyer
- Fall 2025 CWEL Orientation Presentation
- Program Evaluation Instruments
- Social Work Licensure
- Social Work Licensure Flyer
- Funded Internships (Allegheny County)

Appendix K

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

CWEB/CWEL Faculty and Staff

Name	Position Title	CWEB/CWEL Percent of Effort	Employment Dates
Helen Cahalane, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW	Principal Investigator	52%	1/20/97-present
Laura Borish, MSW, LSW	CWEB/CWEL Agency Coordinator	90%	7/1/18-present
Joseph DiPasqua, MA	Program Administrator	78%	6/16/14-present
Yvonne Hamm, BA	Senior Program Administrator	98%	6/28/10-present
Alicia Johnson, Ph.D., LSW	CWEL Academic Coordinator	97%	7/1/20-present
Marlo Perry, Ph.D.	Research Associate Professor	25%	8/1/10-present
Brooke Rawls, Ph.D., LCSW	CWEB Academic Coordinator	100%	7/19/21-present
Michael Schrecengost, MPPM, CMA	Chief Fiscal Officer	42%	3/3/03-2/28/25
Tyler S. Verin, MPA	Assistant Director of Finance, Human Resources & Administration	60%	5/13/24-present
Melissa Williams, MSW	Child Welfare Program Manager	100%	3/3/25-present
Robert Winners, BS	Student Records Data Manager	100%	1/1/23-present
Rachel Winters, M.A.	Senior Evaluation Coordinator	48%	3/16/09-present





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