



University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work,
Child Welfare Education and Research Programs



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

*This research is funded by the PA Department of Public Welfare,
Office of Children, Youth and Families.*

Data Brief 1: April 2024

CWEB Post Hire Interview: The Benefits of the Foundations Training

Introduction

The post hire interview protocol was initiated in August 2020 to provide additional support to CWEB graduates as they enter their county child welfare agencies for employment. The goals of this project can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Interviews are completed by a former county child welfare administrator who is also a CWEL graduate. Interviews are completed once a CWEB graduate is employed for at least 90 days with follow-up interviews at six months, nine months, and up to a year. After the CWEB graduate's commitment is complete, the interviews are concluded. Graduates are encouraged to maintain contact with CWEB program staff and others they have identified in their network of supports.

Figure 1. Goals of the Interview Protocol

Goal 1: Support	Provide graduates with extra support as they start their child welfare career
Goal 2: Intervene	Acknowledge and reinforce the positives that are occurring in the workplace. Identify graduates who are struggling and connect them with the CWERP County Liaison for intervention
Goal 3: Retain	Increase retention time among graduates

In September 2022, the interview questions were revised to comprise two tracts: initial interviews and follow-up interviews. The addition of a specific question concerning the Foundations training was added to the initial interview in April 2023.

Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice provides CWEB participants with practical, evidence-based practice in core competencies involved with working in child welfare. Through competency-based training, real-world application through simulation practice, and team-based learning, graduates are fully prepared to enter the workforce as a child welfare caseworker. CWEB students are enrolled in Foundations training during their internship and are encouraged to complete as many modules as possible prior to graduation. By completing these modules prior to graduation, it enables CWEB students to start carrying cases when they are hired in a county child welfare agency.

Research

A total of 247 interviews have been completed since the start of the project. Twenty-three graduates were asked the question regarding Foundations training. To determine CWEB graduates' perception of the Foundations training, they were asked this question during their 90 day post hire interview:

Q42: We know that training alone can't prepare a caseworker for everything they will encounter in the field and that this is multifaceted work. What are some examples of how your Foundations in Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice training did help to prepare you for your work in the field? (probe: feeling comfortable with court; simulation training on engagement, permanency and concurrent planning; completing safety and risk assessments; family services planning; distinguishing between CPS and GPS)

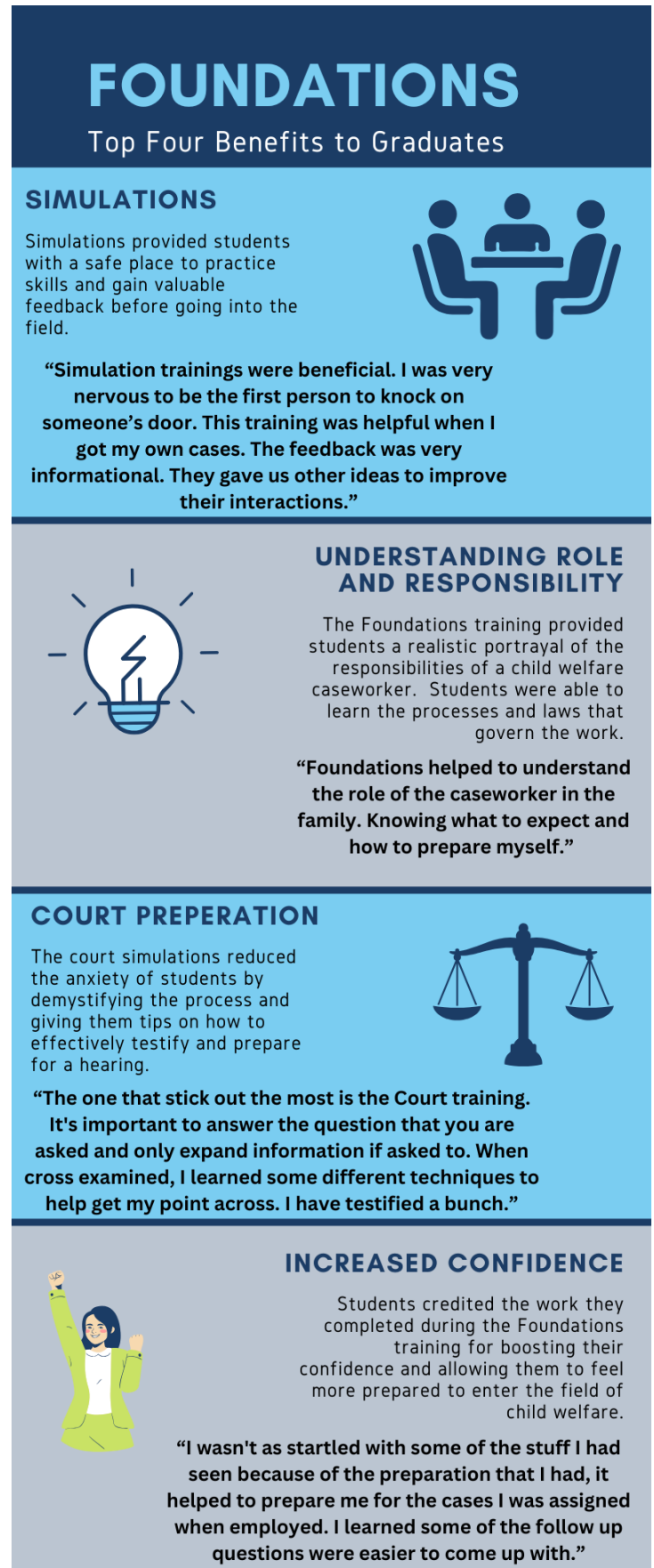
Responses were read and grouped into themes by two independent reviewers. Any conflicting themes or coding was resolved by a consensus of the two reviewers.

Results

A total of six themes were identified in the interviews:

- **Increased confidence**

Figure 2. Main Interview Themes



- **Legal/court preparation**
- **Simulations**
- **Feedback**
- **Team-based learning**
- **Understanding role and responsibilities**

The four most commonly found themes are discussed in detail in Figure 2.

Discussion

Results from interview data identified that graduates noted that the simulations component of Foundations training was particularly useful in gaining real-world experience to later translate into casework practice once employed. Through creating a safe environment for trial and error, graduates had the support from trainers to put their knowledge into competency-based practice for evaluation and receive feedback on their actions for later use.

Another theme identified was the improved understanding of the role and responsibilities involved in casework. This entailed not only duties in-office, but also key elements of family collaboration and contact that acted not only as a tool for better practice, but also as a safeguard to protect the graduate from possible conflict or hostile engagements.

Legal/court preparation was another key theme identified in the interview responses. Court is a well-known stressor and area of insecurity for many caseworkers, especially those without prior exposure to any role involving legal proceedings. By having the tools and preparation from trainers within these simulations, graduates were able to familiarize themselves with the procedures and responsibilities required of them prior to the high-stress pressure of actual legal practice in real court cases during employment.

Though increased confidence was mentioned at a lower rate, it is possible that increased confidence was in active development as students learned new skills and transferred them to the field, even when not mentioned specifically during the interviews.

It should be noted that themes were coded only if they were directly mentioned in the interview response, or the gist of the response matched a theme. Other concepts or themes may have been pertinent to a student, but they didn't mention them during the interview. These themes may also change as we receive more responses to the interview question.

Citation for this report:

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (2024). Data Brief 1: CWEB Post Hire Interview: The Benefits of Foundations Training. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

For questions about this project or for further information, please contact Rachel Winters, Senior Evaluation Coordinator at rrw14@pitt.edu or 412-624-3838.

For more information on Pennsylvania's Title IV-E education programs, Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates, and Child Welfare Education for Leadership, including Annual Reports, program descriptions, and FAQ'S please go to our webpage: <https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/child-welfare-education-and-research-programs>