

# CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE FELLOWS PROGRAM (CWWEF)

## STUDENT HANDBOOK

2022-2023

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI)

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

In collaboration with

Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Family Services



National Child Welfare  
Workforce Institute



University of  
**Pittsburgh**  
School of Social Work



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# CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE FELLOWS PROGRAM

## I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the CWWEF program!

This handbook clarifies some frequently asked questions and includes requirements that you must take into consideration when planning your courses and field placement.

The Child Welfare Workforce Excellence Fellows (CWWEF) is a workforce development program funded by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) and the U.S. Children's Bureau. The purpose of the program is to prepare MSW students to enter the field of child welfare and is part of the Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (CWERP). The requirements described in this handbook are necessary for compliance with federal regulations and for effective program management. We take special interest in our students and are committed to supporting your professional growth and development.

### Contact CWWEF

University of Pittsburgh  
2009 Cathedral of Learning  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

<https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-programs/child-welfare-workforce-excellence-fellows-program>

### Helen Cahalane, PhD, ACSW, LCSW CWERP Principal Investigator and CWWEF Project Coordinator

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**Joe DiPasqua, MA**  
**Program Administrator**  
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- The Principal Investigator of the Child Welfare Education and Research Programs is **Dr. Helen Cahalane**. She is also the **CWWEF Project Coordinator and academic advisor for CWWEF students**. Dr. Cahalane will oversee your progress in the MSW program and in your internship(s) and is your main point of contact.
- **Joe DiPasqua** is your point of contact for fellowship payment questions and information needed from you as you move through the CWWEF program.
- **Professor Laura Borish** is the child welfare faculty member who manages issues related to practice improvement and post-graduate employment with the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Family Services (ACCYFS).
- **Professor Deborah Robinson** is the **School of Social Work Field Advisor** for CWWEF. She assists the program in securing internships and provides overall field support.
- **Tricia Underwood** is the **Internship Program Coordinator for ACCYFS**. She is your point of contact for any questions or concerns regarding the arrangement of your regional office placement within ACCYFS.

## II. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work is one of seven programs throughout the country awarded a “Workforce Excellence” grant by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute to prepare incoming and 2nd year MSW students for a career in public child welfare. The NCWWI initiative also focuses on implementing organizational change strategies within child welfare agencies, states, and tribes.

### **Child Welfare: A Profession, Not Just a Job!**

You are starting a journey as a social work professional in public child welfare. As a CWWEF student, you represent your profession, your school, the CWWEF program, and the child welfare system at all times, not just when you are completing your field placement, or later when you are working at ACCYFS .

Students are required to uphold and demonstrate the values of the social work profession and to follow the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers.

Please be aware that to remain in good standing in the CWWEF program, students need to follow the NASW Code of Ethics as well as meet CWWEF program, school, and NCWWI requirements. For example, this means providing documents and information as requested in a professional and timely manner, responding to emails and other communications quickly, staying in collaborative contact with CWWEF program faculty and staff, and submitting required information to NCWWI.

In the event that a CWWEF student does not follow CWWEF program requirements, the Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (CWERP) will hold a team decision making conference with the CWWEF student to develop a plan for the student to successfully meet all program requirements. All decisions concerning participation in CWWEF rest with the CWERP staff and faculty.

### III. COMMUNICATION WITH CWWEF

***Please Be Considerate When Contacting CWWEF!***

1. Before you contact us with a question, read this handbook – many of the answers to your questions are here!
2. Do stay in touch with us here at CWWEF. We will make sure to get your questions to the person who can help you and it is important to us to hear updates about your classes, field placement, and training (*'Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice'*).

- a) There are several requirements that you will need to meet after you have been admitted to the CWWEF program.

<b>Requirements Immediately Following CWWEF Admission</b>		
When you receive your CWWEF admission packet	Sign Contract via DocuSign	The contract is required for participation in CWWEF.  <b>You will receive an email with an electronic copy of your contract that you will sign through the DocuSign system during the CWWEF Orientation and Contracting Meeting.</b>
	Submit W-9 via email attachment	Send this document within two weeks of receiving your CWWEF admission packet to:  <b>Joe DiPasqua</b> <a href="mailto:jfd28@pitt.edu">jfd28@pitt.edu</a>
Before first semester in CWWEF Starts	Enter your Student Information online at <a href="http://www.cwerp.pitt.edu">www.cwerp.pitt.edu</a>	Funds will be restricted until this information is completed.

- b) Email and the web are the primary methods of communication between CWWEF and students. Students are responsible for monitoring their email regularly. Most emails from the CWWEF program are time sensitive and students are responsible for meeting deadlines.

### TIPS!

- Adjust filter settings to allow email from CWWEF faculty and staff.
- Regularly check “junk” or “spam” email folders for CWWEF messages.
- Add CWWEF program staff email addresses to your “safe sender” list when enrolling in the CWWEF program or when adding a new email address.

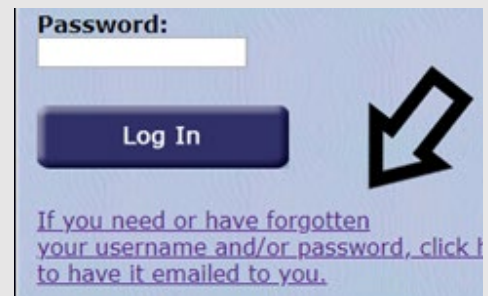
- c) **CWWEF STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM:** Every semester, students are required to submit their Student Information, including courses and field placement, to CWWEF at [www.cwerp.pitt.edu](http://www.cwerp.pitt.edu), whether taking classes that semester, or not. If you are not taking classes, you will enter “No Courses.”

- d) Your Student Information serves several functions and is necessary for academic tracking and CWWEF accountability to the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. This information includes data such as:

- Current, valid school and home email addresses
- Current valid school mailing address and permanent legal address
- Current valid home and cell phone numbers
- Classes and field being taken EVERY SEMESTER, including credit hours
- Days of the week attending classes (virtual or in-person)
- Internship site and days of the week you are in field
- Your anticipated graduation date

### Access to your CWERP Account

1. Access the Online Student Information system at <https://www.cwerp.pitt.edu>
2. Logging in:
  - a. Enter in the username that you created during the application process.
  - b. If you need or have forgotten your password, click on the message below and then enter the information requested to have your password emailed to you.



- If your address changes, complete and send in a new W9 form (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>) AND update your online Student Information.
  - If your name changes, complete and send in a new W9 (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>) AND contact Dr. Cahalane to let her know your new name.
  - If your email address changes, update your online Student Information.
- e) There are several other required periodic contacts with the CWWEF program. For your convenience, these requirements are shown in the following tables. Page references to the relevant locations in the Handbook are shown in the tables below.

<b>Remember to Check the Rest of the Handbook for Details</b> (This is just a quick overview for your convenience)			
<b>When</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Page/s</b>
<b>Every Semester</b> <b>Whether or not you have classes!</b>	Enter Courses in Student Information System (when you receive email notification)	Required before CWWEF funds become unrestricted	6
	Meet with Dr. Helen Cahalane	To register for courses and review progress in the CWWEF program	9
<b>Every September</b>	Enter data in the NCWWI data management system (when you receive email notification)	Required NCWWI evaluations	16
<b>During Course of Study</b>	Complete CWWEF Academic requirements and maintain graduate standing	MSW and Children, Youth, and Families Certificate program requirements.	9-13

**May Be Needed While You Are in CWWEF**

<b>Remember to Check the Rest of the Handbook for Details (This is just a quick overview for your convenience)</b>			
<b>When</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Page/s</b>
<b>As needed</b>	<b>Contact Dr. Helen Cahalane</b>	Withdrawal from class	10
		If you Add/Drop after you enter your Student Information	10
		Failed class/need to retake	10
		Academic Review or Probation	10
		You may need a leave from school	10
		Your expected graduation date changes	10
		You receive an incomplete grade	10
		To discuss issues related to your field placements	10-11
	<b>Contact Tricia Underwood</b>	To discuss issues related to your field placement at Allegheny County CYF	10
	<b>Update CWWEF Online Student Information</b>	You have a new mailing/email address	6-7
	<b>Contact Joe DiPasqua AND Submit a new W9</b>	Your name changes	6-7
<b>Contact Joe DiPasqua AND Submit a new W9</b>	You have a new address	6-7	



### III. CWWEF SCHOLARSHIP (updated for 2022-2023 AY)

Second-Year Students Graduating in April 2023: Once your contract is signed, you will receive \$16,250.00 for the academic year divided into two awards of \$8,125.00 for the fall and spring terms. \*Students may not extend the graduation semester to receive additional scholarship funds.

One-Year Advanced Standing Students Graduating in August 2023: Once your contract is signed, you will receive \$24,375.00 for the extended academic year divided into three awards of \$8,125.00 for the fall, spring, and summer terms.

These awards will be applied to your student account as a CWWEF scholarship. CWWEF program faculty and staff will work with the University financial aid office to ensure compliance with relevant federal and state laws. Your current financial aid package may be impacted by this additional funding and any implications will be shared with you.

### V. CWWEF ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

- a) CWWEF students must complete all academic and field assignments and requirements in a timely manner and maintain a passing grade point average. If you fail to maintain good academic standing each academic term you are enrolled in the MSW and CWWEF programs, this will result in the discontinuation of funding through the CWWEF program. Please refer to the MSW Student Handbook, Section 4 (MSW Program Policies and Procedures) for a review of administrative and academic policies at the School of Social Work <https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/academics/policies-handbooks>.
- b) CWWEF students are required to enroll in the Direct Practice concentration.
- c) All CWWEF students must also enroll in the Children, Youth, and Families certificate. You are required to take **Children and Families at Risk** and **Child and Family Policy**, in addition to two approved child and family-focused elective courses:
  - SWINT 2011-Social Work Practice with Families
  - SWINT 2035-Intimate Partner Violence
  - SWINT 2042- Social Work with Substance Use and Other Addictive Disorders
  - SWINT 2049-Direct Practice with Children & Adolescents
  - SWINT 2063-Child Maltreatment
  - SWINT 2072-Social Work and Traumatic Stress
  - SWINT 2096-Clinical Social Work with African American Families
- d) CWWEF students are also required to meet with Dr. Cahalane at least once every semester to register for courses and review progress in the CWWEF program.

- e) All CWWEF students are required to participate in a **monthly Child Welfare Seminar Series**. The purpose of the Child Welfare Seminar Series is to help students transfer the skills and knowledge obtained in the classroom to their agency field learning experience. Expert presentations, case studies, and facilitated discussions will be used to help apply learning to real-life experiences in child welfare practice. You will receive notice of the date, time, and place of each seminar at the beginning of the fall term. Any requests to be excused from a scheduled seminar must be made directly to Dr. Cahalane prior to the seminar.
- f) We are always happy to hear about your school related success. Additionally, sometimes students encounter academic difficulty during their graduate studies. We will work with you to help resolve any academic difficulties that may occur.

**Contact Dr. Cahalane if:**

- ❖ **You want to change your course load**
- ❖ **You want to take extended field**
- ❖ **You plan to withdraw from a course**
- ❖ **You have an incomplete grade**
- ❖ **You fail or must retake a course (or expect to)**
- ❖ **You have an Academic Review or Probation**
- ❖ **You may need a leave from school for any reason**
- ❖ **Your Grade Point Average falls below 3.0**
- ❖ **Your field placement changes**
- ❖ **Your expected graduation date changes or you wish to change it**

## VI. FIELD PLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS

- g) Only second-year and incoming one-year advanced standing students are eligible to participate in CWWEF during the 2022-2023 academic year. You are required to complete your specialized field placements **at one of the seven regional offices of the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth, and Families**. (See <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/About/Contact/Offices.aspx>).

During your CYF internship, you will gain exposure to various functions of CYF and have the opportunity to carry a caseload. You will also be expected to:

- **Start Foundations training (along with Allegheny County specific trainings) during summer 2022 before your specialized field placement in the Fall.**

### Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice

Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice is a 125-hour curriculum that is comprised of ten specific modules that provide new caseworkers with fundamental concepts needed to effectively work with children, youth, and families served through the public child welfare system. The curriculum includes online prework, some online content, in-person training sessions using simulation and a team-based learning format, and days in the field to enhance learning transfer. The total training time in Allegheny County is approximately 216 hours. As part of your concentration field placement experience, you are required to enroll in this competency and skill-based training to eventually be certified as a caseworker in Pennsylvania.

See <http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Foundations.htm> for information.

- **Participate in regional office and/or agency-wide Action Teams during your CYF internship.** This is an opportunity to gain macro social work experience in organizational development and effectiveness in child welfare. You will join a team as a member and gain exposure to agency change initiatives. Action Teams are facilitated by experienced staff of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center.
  - **Complete a special project that addresses an agency issue or initiative.** You will identify an agency issue of your choice and will be matched to a special project advisor. Projects start during the spring semester of your CYF internship. Presentations on special projects will occur during the last seminar session in April. You will receive additional information about special projects at the beginning of the Spring semester.
- h) Your field placements are your opportunity to begin applying what you have learned in classes to the field. We are interested in hearing about your work assignments, opportunities, and successes. We also understand challenges sometimes arise. You will work closely with Dr. Cahalane during the course of your field placement, and be connected to a mentor within the agency, in addition to your field instructor.

You will also be invited to attend “Peer Pod” sessions coordinated through the Mon Valley Regional Office leadership team. The purpose of these sessions is to create a support network among agency peers and share information to build resilience and a shared purpose in the work of child welfare.

## VII. EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT AND RECOUPMENT OF FUNDS

- a) You are subject to a **legally binding commitment to work for the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth, and Families (ACCYFS) for a period of one (1) calendar year for each academic year you received financial support under the CWWEF contract.**

Before any time may be counted toward fulfillment of agency commitment, all graduation requirements and all CWWEF academic requirements must be completed. On completion of the CWWEF program, you will receive a letter containing details of your commitment.

- b) The commitment to commence employment with the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families begins immediately following graduation and will not be waived or postponed (i.e., doctoral study, additional certification, etc.).

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

#### **Program Completion and Recoupment**

**Students who fail to graduate, leave the CWWEF program prior to graduation, are dismissed from the CWWEF program during their course of study, or fail to fulfill their entire commitment by maintaining their agency employment upon graduation, are obligated to repay the full amount of the scholarship paid to them or on their behalf during their enrollment in CWWEF.**

**Please note that commitment period must be completed in full or the total amount paid on the student's behalf becomes repayable.**

**Repayment amounts are not prorated.**

## **VIII. TRANSITION TO WORK**

- a) Transitioning into your child welfare career after graduation can be very new and exciting. As a CWWEF graduate and trained child welfare social worker, you can:
  - ❖ Utilize the specialized skills and knowledge you have gained in the program in different functions of the agency.
  - ❖ Make a meaningful impact on improving the well-being of children and families.
  - ❖ Move into leadership positions throughout the agency.

Additionally, you will continue to improve your casework practice, as you will be required by ACCYFS to complete ongoing trainings through the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center to maintain your caseworker certification.

- b) The transition from student to child welfare caseworker can be overwhelming and you might be met with some challenges:

- ❖ An increased caseload
- ❖ More responsibilities
- ❖ Higher expectations
- ❖ Vicarious trauma
- ❖ Compassion fatigue and burnout

**Please do not hesitate to reach out to Dr. Cahalane, Professor Laura Borish, your agency supervisor, or agency mentor if you are having difficulty with your transition.** The CWWEF program was developed to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and support needed to ensure they are prepared for a career in child welfare. CWWEF staff will continue to support and remain in contact with you during your post-graduate employment with ACCYFS and will be here if you ever run into any problems or issues.

### **From Student to Social Worker**

As you embark on your child welfare career, we hope that you will take advantage of the various opportunities within the county to engage in statewide initiatives, influence child welfare practice and policy, and provide mentorship to new caseworkers. Additionally, it is **highly recommended** that you pursue social work licensure, so that you can become a **Licensed Social Worker in the state of Pennsylvania**. The School of Social Work's VanKirk Career Center offers workshops and support on social work licensure. Please visit this website for more information: <https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/student-resources/career-services/career-development-workshop-series-schedule>.

### **Action Team Facilitators**

#### Team Evolution

Laura Borish

Christina Fatzinger

#### Team Inspiration

Jennifer Caruso

Jayme Toczylousky

by Melanie Sage, LICSW, PhD

 @melaniesage

# PASS the Licensure Exam

tips for social workers



### Plan Ahead

You can typically test a month before graduation, and you may need to schedule your test date a month in advance of that depending on availability.



### know your state

Some states require fingerprinting, registration with board in advance of the test. Collect forms early.



### multiple choice test strategies

Consider study strategies such as eliminating answers and identifying context clues (such as never, always, other absolutes, and key words).



### study the ASWB website

The website contains free sample questions, content study areas, pass rates, and test rules at the website- as well as optional paid practice tests and manuals.



### make it mobile

Social Work Lite is a free mobile test prep app. If you create written study materials, scan them as pdf and send them to your phone so you can study in waiting rooms.



### use free podcasts

The Social Work Podcast [socialworkpodcast.com](http://socialworkpodcast.com)

and Social Work Exam Prep [socialworkpodcasting.com](http://socialworkpodcasting.com)

Both offer helpful material for prep.



### use a buddy system

Find a fellow test taker and hold each other accountable. Schedule regular dates, quiz each other, break down content by the week and plan small rewards for accomplishments.



### enlist other help

If you are in clinical supervision ask your supervisor to help with a study plan and clinical review. Consider a local or online test prep workshop if you need more help.



### Study, plan, & relax!

Plan your test day ahead of time with directions and a comfortable time schedule. Consider mindfulness and breathing exercises to help with test anxiety.



more links and details at:  
[melaniesagephd.blogspot.com](http://melaniesagephd.blogspot.com)

*Good luck on your exam!*

## IX. NCWWI DATA TRACKING AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

- a) CWWEF students are required to input student data into the NCWWI Data Management System. This process is similar to the information you input into the CWERP Student Information System.
- b) Once you have signed your CWWEF contract, you will receive an email notification about being invited to the NCWWI Data Management System. Make sure you check your spam or junk mail folders for the email invitation. Follow the instructions to register for a NCWWI Student Profile. When your Student Profile is created, you will be asked to input the following data:
  - Demographics
  - Contact information
  - Child welfare work experience
- c) Once you are in the system, you will receive an email notification every September to review, update, and verify the above information. After you graduate from the CWWEF program, you will be asked to annually input and update your employment information post-graduation (Allegheny County, Office of Children, Youth, and Families) until your employment obligation is completed.
- d) NCWWI will also conduct interviews and distribute surveys before and after you graduate to evaluate the CWWEF program. Participation in surveys and interviews are voluntary. However, your participation will help NCWWI and the CWWEF program evaluate the effectiveness of the program in preparing MSW students for a career in child welfare and retaining child welfare caseworkers the field.

### **Students can update their profiles by following these steps:**

1. Log in to <http://myncwwi.org>
2. **Click on My Student Profile in the My University Partnership menu on the right side of the page.**
3. Review the information under the Demographics tab, Contacts tab and Child Welfare (CW) Work Experience tab of your profile.
  - a. If information has been entered for you already, a button should appear at the bottom of each tab for you to quickly indicate that the information is current.
  - b. If the information is not current or the information has not been entered, click the edit link for the tab you are viewing to update or enter your information.

## X. CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM TEAM

### Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth & Families

**Jacki Hoover, MSW**  
Deputy Director, CYF

**Betsy Caroff, MSW**  
Implementation Team Lead

**Andrea Rudek, MSW**  
Manager, Training Department

**Tricia Underwood, M.Ed.**  
Internship Program Coordinator / Child Welfare Trainer

### University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work

**Betsy Farmer, Ph.D.**  
Dean of the School of Social Work

**Alicia Johnson, Ph.D., MSW**  
Clinical Assistant Professor

**Helen Cahalane, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW**  
Principal Investigator and  
CWWEF Project Coordinator

**Marlo Perry, Ph.D.**  
Research Associate Professor

**Laura Borish, MSW, LSW**  
Clinical Assistant Professor

**Michael Schrecengost, MPPM, CMA**  
Chief Fiscal Officer

**Jennifer Caruso, M.Ed.**  
Field Assistant Professor

**Rachel Winters, MA**  
Senior Evaluation Coordinator

### National Child Welfare Workforce Institute

**Nancy Dickinson, Ph.D., MSSW**  
Project Team Lead

**Lyn Slater, Ph.D., MSW**  
University Partnership Liaison

**Teresa Buehler, MSW**  
Leadership Development Specialist

**Amy He, Ph.D., MSW**  
Evaluator



# WHY THE WORKFORCE MATTERS



## CHILD WELFARE WORK ISN'T EASY



- ✓ Demanding caseloads
- ✓ A high degree of uncertainty
- ✓ Life and death decisions
- ✓ Trauma for children and families
- ✓ Traumatic stress
- ✓ Bureaucratic system
- ✓ External oversight and scrutiny

The child welfare workforce provides services and supports to keep vulnerable children, youth, and families safe, stable, and healthy.



## TURNOVER IS COSTLY

Cost for each worker leaving an agency:

**\$54,000<sup>1</sup>**



Fewer changes in caseworkers ...



Increased chances of stability for families and permanency for children

## REDUCED TURNOVER MEANS

- ✓ Timely investigations
- ✓ More contacts/visits with children, families, and resource families
- ✓ Better service delivery
- ✓ Improved safety, permanency, and well-being

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS MATTER

Address workforce issues with multiple strategies based on principles of equity, tolerance, respect, and diversity.



CLICK HERE to view NCWWI's Workforce Development Framework



EFFECTIVE PRACTICE  
+ EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE  
= POSITIVE OUTCOMES



<sup>1</sup>Complete reference list: [https://ncwwi.org/files/Why\\_the\\_Workforce\\_Matters\\_References.pdf](https://ncwwi.org/files/Why_the_Workforce_Matters_References.pdf)

