Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

Over 81 Years of Child Welfare Leadership!

2018-2019 Executive Summary

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

Mission: strengthen child welfare services to 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.

Degree programs: Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)  
Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)

Administered by:  
University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work

Participating Schools:

CWEB:  
• 18th Academic Year  
• 1,217 Graduates  
• Employed in 88% of Pennsylvania counties

CWEL:  
• 24th Academic year  
• 1,435 graduates  
• 18% of Pennsylvania child welfare workforce  

99% county participation in CWEB/CWEL programs  
40% of counties benefit from CWEL leadership  
Many current child welfare trainers/consultants are CWEL graduates  
Two counties have a CWEB graduate in an agency leadership position
Program Evaluation:
• Annual review of administrative and survey data to evaluate how students/graduates perceive their preparation for child welfare work
• Response rates:
  • County Administrators: 91%
  • School Administrators: 81%
  • Current Students: 81%
  • Graduates: 50%

¬ 11% of CWEL students participated in the CWEB program
¬ 100% of CWEL students remain in the agency where they completed their post-CWEB commitment
¬ 69% of CWEB graduates and 97% of CWEL graduates remain employed in child welfare services one-two years post graduation

“The CWEB program allowed me the opportunity to live two days a week in the life of an actual child welfare social worker. It also allowed me the opportunity to work closely with clients and see the ways of the world and life through their perspective.” (CWEB Graduate)

“The program isn’t so much about learning new material as it is about learning a new way of thinking.” (CWEL Student)

“I think out (CWEB) students are enthusiastic about their future work in the field and that helps the students focus and bring more energy into the classroom” (School administrator)

“The CWEB program is a tremendous recruitment tool for our workforce. The CWEL program provides a wonderful opportunity for our agency staff- and helps with the retention of staff! We are seeing an increase interest among candidates across our many program offices to apply and seek agency approval.” (County Administrator)

Racial disproportionality in child welfare:
• In 2018, African American children made up approximately 13% of the U.S. child population, but represented 22% of the foster care population\(^1\)\(^2\)
• Pennsylvania’s foster care population is comprised of 34% Black of African American children, even though they are only 13% of the state’s population\(^3\)
• The CWEB and CWEL programs work to ensure that the workforce is reflective of the population served with 19% of program participants identifying as African American.


Changing Landscape of Child Welfare Services:

- Legislative/statute changes, increases in substance exposed infants/addicted parents, and turnover tax the system
- However, new modes of practice (data driven decision making, predictive analytics, evidence-based interventions) and new funding legislation bring new opportunities
- Despite these challenges, graduates’ ratings of organizational climate has not changed
- Supervision is still highly valued, but morale and employee involvement are areas of improvement
- Work load and opportunities for advancement continue to be challenges

CWEK Students:

- Gain valuable information about systems, policies, service mandates, and intervention strategies
- Transmit their experiences and knowledge of child welfare policies and procedures within provider agencies that may have limited to no understanding of child welfare services
- Encouraged to:
  - Gain experience with new service modalities or interventions
  - Work with different client populations
  - Gain knowledge of other service settings
  - Mentor CWEK students and colleagues

CWEK Part-time students are close to half the CWEK population.

Part time students:

- Face challenges in managing work/life/school balance
- May have limited field placement options and less freedom in course selection
- May be at a greater risk to drop out

However, full-time students may have difficulty transitioning back to full-time work.

Online coursework has been presented as a solution to this issue, but has its own set of considerations:

- Little flexibility in due dates and completion of require assignments
- Synchronous courses involve designated meeting times
- Community-based field requirements are required
## Overall Recommendations:

Increase availability of accredited social work programs and depth of undergraduate child welfare curriculum:
- Development of Child Advocacy Studies: students complete one child welfare course and a public child welfare internship. Additional courses in Child Advocacy Studies is available in an on-line hybrid form.

Include additional accredited schools of social work:
- Increasing schools would allow for greater student access, reduce student commuting time, and decrease program costs
- Include branch campuses of schools to increase options for CWEL students

Participation by CWEB/CWEL graduates in the implementation of practice changes as a results of major revisions to PA’s child abuse laws.

Development of CWEB/CWEL advisory network to provide input on emerging program issues.

## Program Specific Recommendations:

### CWEB:

- Provide additional guidance to students and program administrators on civil service exam requirements
  - Detailed diagram illustrated various civil service and non-civil service scenarios in CWEB handbook and on CWERP web page
  - Discussions around civil service occur during annual school visits
  - Enhance student and school awareness of difference between civil service and non-civil service counties and how this impacts county hiring practices
- Increase county participation in CWEB program
- Improve successful job placement following graduation:
  - Ongoing assistance from CWERP faculty in identifying vacancies, facilitating referrals for interviews, and counseling graduates regarding employment
  - Collaboration with state civil service counties and merit hire counties
- Improve dissemination of child welfare career development opportunity through CWEB and CWEL to prospective and current participants

### CWEL:

- Focus on agency work environment and additional opportunities for graduates to use advanced skills:
  - Participate in state wide workgroups on implementation of new legislation
  - Involvement in ongoing organizational effectiveness/CQI processes within counties
- Increase support to part-time students:
  - Encourage county agencies to provide flexible scheduling, modified work assignments, field work outside the agency
  - Counties are actively involved when issues arise with a student
  - Enforcement of part-time academic load
- Inclusion of advance level child welfare coursework in school curricula, particularly in evidence-informed and evidence-based practices
  - Offer courses targeted toward effective family engagement and teaming practices, motivational interviewing skills, enhanced assessments, and evidence-based practices
  - Inclusion of trauma-informed care principles in child welfare curricula

Website: [https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-education-and-research-programs](https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-education-and-research-programs)