

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs



2020-2021 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



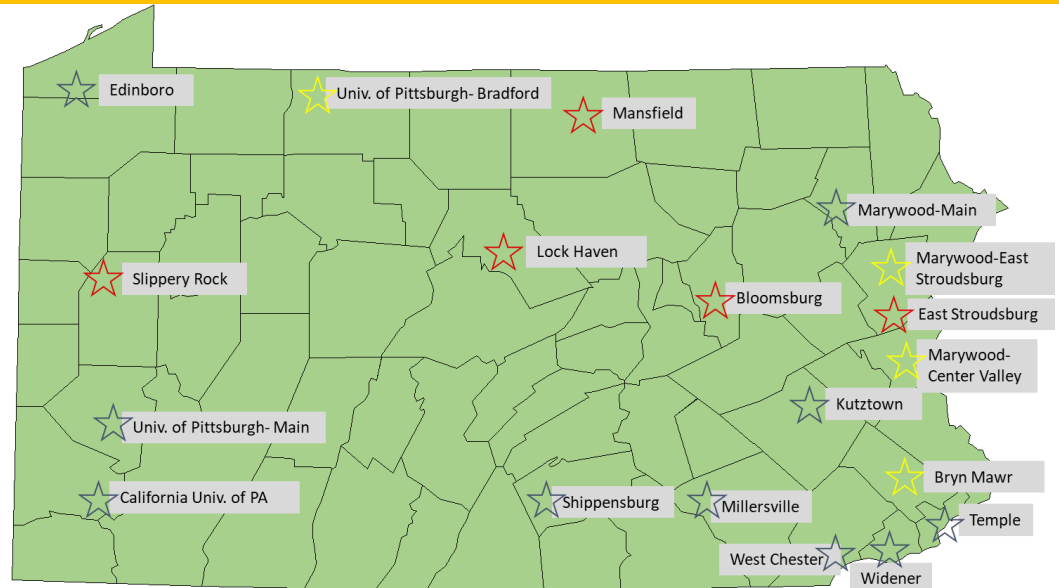
University of Pittsburgh



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



Participating Schools:



CWEB:

- 20th Academic Year
- 1,300 Graduates
- Employed in 93% of Pennsylvania counties



CWEL:

- 26th Academic year
- 1,541 graduates
- 20% of Pennsylvania child welfare workforce



99% county participation in CWEB/CWEL programs

43% of counties benefit from CWEL leadership

Many current child welfare trainers/consultants are CWEL graduates

Seven CWEB graduates occupy high-level agency leadership positions



Program Evaluation:

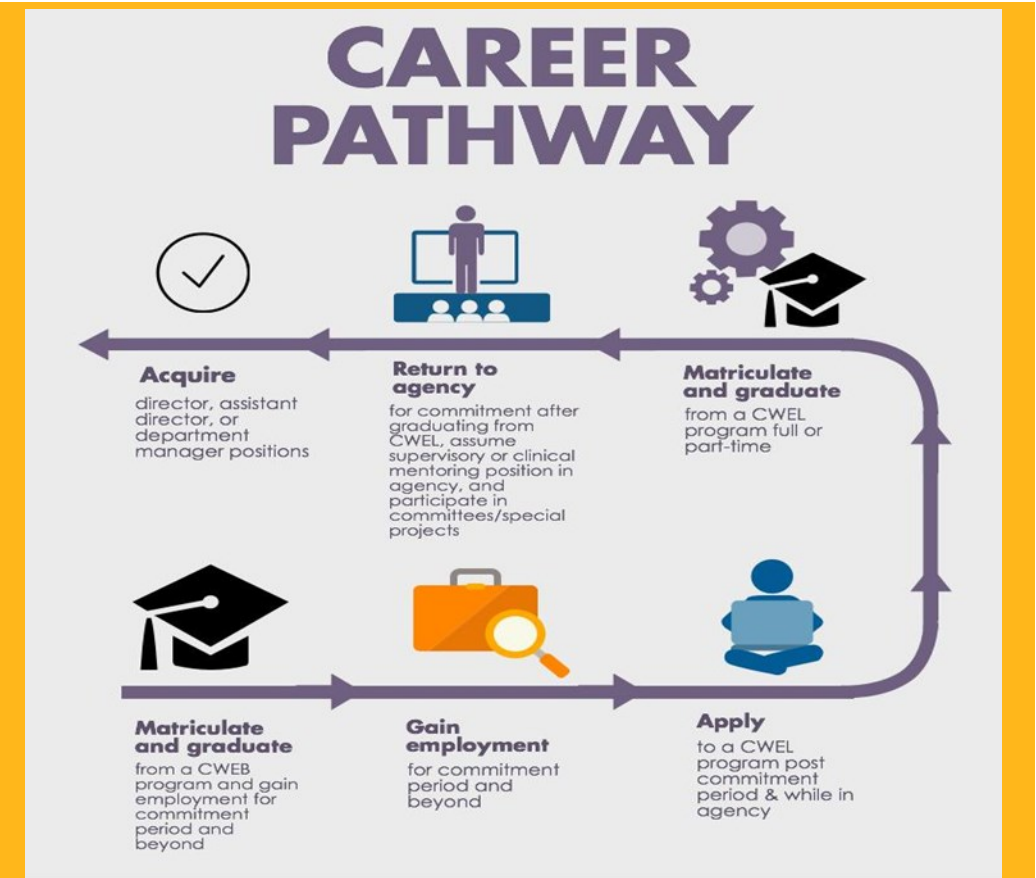
- Annual review of administrative and survey data to evaluate how students/graduates perceive their preparation for child welfare work
- Response rates:
 - County Administrators: 82%
 - School Administrators: 94%
 - Current Students: 58%
 - Graduates: 46%

“The CWEB program was a great way for me to “hit the ground running” when I was hired on with the agency.” (CWEB Long-Term Graduate)

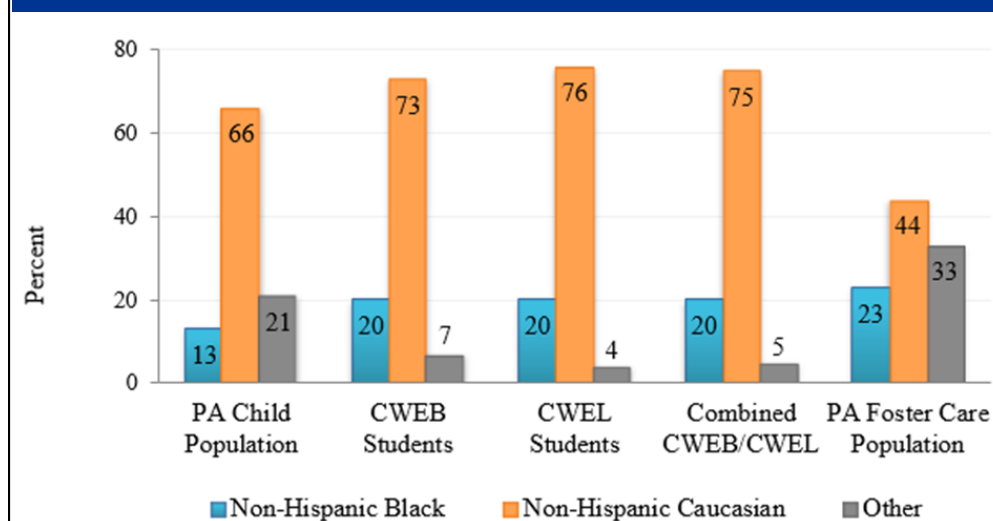
“The CWEL program promoted personal and professional growth in my ability to work with others, understand the complex issues that families encounter, and changed my frame of thinking in relation to how to provide services to families..” (CWEL Recent Graduate)

“The CWEL students come with a solid foundation in social work practice; they have clear goals and ideas for how they would like to continue to grow in the field.” (School Administrator)

“This program {CWEL} has been very successful at our agency and we hope it can continue to educate professionals in the child welfare system.” (County Administrator)



- 13% of CWEL students participated in the CWEB program
- 91% of CWEL students remain in the agency where they completed their post-CWEB commitment
- Of those who completed a survey, 73% of CWEB graduates and 100% of CWEL graduates remain employed in child welfare services one-two years post graduation



Racial disproportionality in child welfare:

- In 2020 African American children made up approximately 14% of the U.S. child population, but represented 23% of the foster care population^{1,2}
- Black children and children of multiple races in Pennsylvania were placed in foster care population is 2x the rate of the general population³
- The CWEB and CWEL programs work to ensure that the workforce is reflective of the population served with 20% of program participants identifying as African American.

¹US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau (2019). *The AFCARS Report. Preliminary estimates for FY2019 as of June 23, 2020*. Washington, DC: Children’s Bureau.

²The 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>

³Pennsylvania Population. (2020). Retrieved 2020-08-26, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/pennsylvania-population>.

CWEL Graduate: Received the Caseworker of the Year Award for 2020. Concerning her work in child welfare she shares ".... A critical realization for me has been that people are the experts of their own experience and both connection and acceptance yield healing."

CWEL Student: Received a heartfelt thank you from a family who received their kin from the state of Virginia because of months of work completed by the student at her internship at the Interstate Compact Unit in Harrisburg

CWEL Graduate: Awarded the L. Diane Bernard Award for Human Sexuality Projects by completing her internship at Project Silk of the Lehigh Valley, a LGBTQIA+ drop in center for youth. Her internship experience has also enhanced my own understanding of sexual and gender development. As a Social Worker, by embracing and understanding my own identity and position, I can use my voice in a way that encourages the voice of youth in their own exploration of sexual and gender development.

CWEL 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 CWEL students and colleagues

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

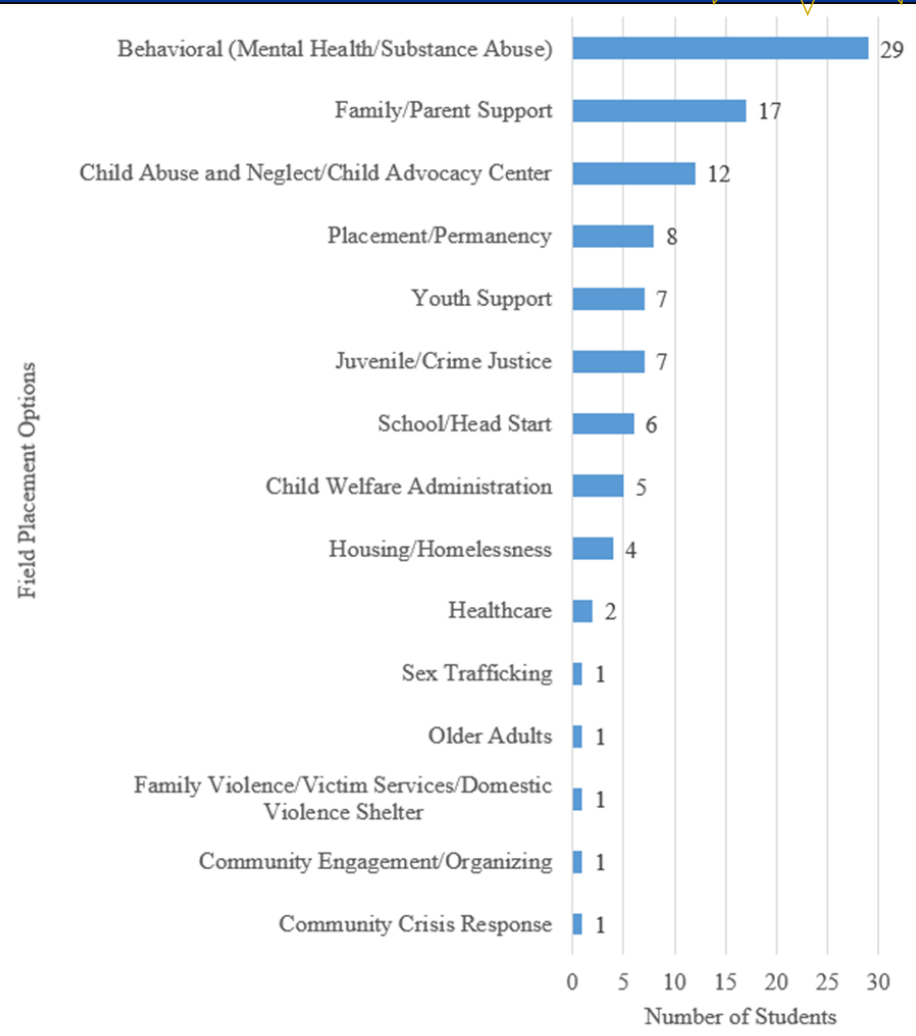
Part time students:

- 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.

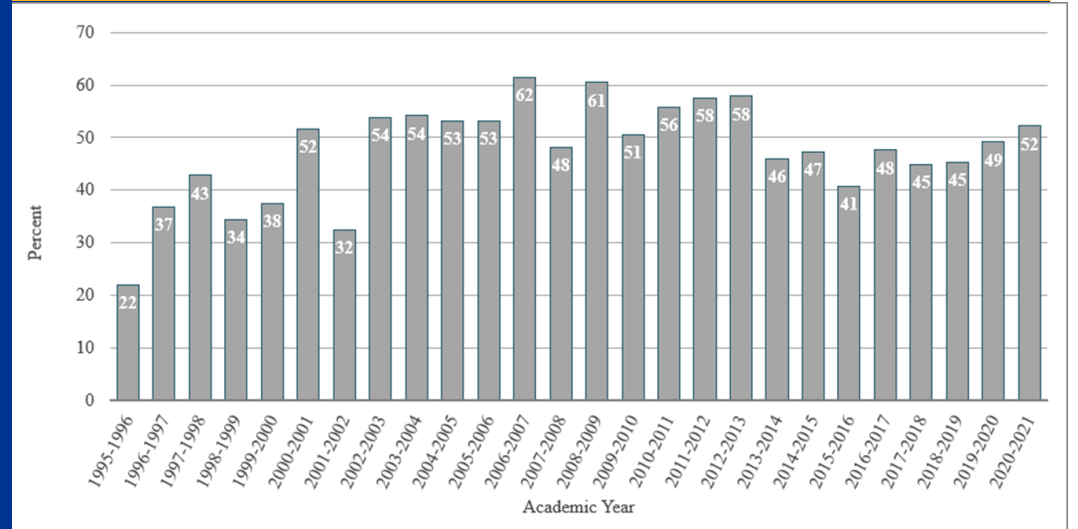
Online coursework has been presented as a solution to this issue, but has its own set of considerations:

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



Changing Landscape of Child Welfare Services:

- Legislative/statue changes, increases in substance exposed infants/addicted parents, and turnover tax the system
- Pandemic has resulted in new demands, new stressors, and an increased responsibility for supporting families and children in unprecedented times
- A 28% decrease in suspected child abuse reports from 2019 to 2020 has raised deep concern about child and family well-being in the absence of mandated reporters who come in contact with children in education, medical, and community settings
- Much of the child welfare workforce across the state operated remotely during this review period, providing on-site staffing in shifts, conducting essential investigations and safety assessments, assuring child-family visitation, and following public health protocols to the best of their ability.
- At the same time, 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, are available
- Despite these challenges, graduates' ratings of organizational climate has not changed





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.

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

- Increasing schools would allow for greater student access, reduce student commuting time, and decrease program costs
- MSW programs at Slippery Rock University and Bloomsburg University are in the process of obtaining full CSWE accreditation

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

Transition support and ongoing connection between CWEB and CWEL graduates.

Incorporation of trauma-informed supervision at the county level.

Program Specific Recommendations:

CWEB:

- Increase county participation in CWEB program
 - Collaboration with counties through CWEB information sessions that include CWEB program faculty and staff, as well as Practice Improvement Specialists and Resource Specialists from the PA Child Welfare Resource Center
 - School-county-program collaboration in the field practicum process
 - Presentations at PCYA & CCAP meetings
- 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
- Addition of follow-up support protocol for new graduates

CWEL:

- Focus on agency work environment and additional opportunities for graduates to use advanced skills:
 - Targeted intervention with agency supervisors and administrators; collaboration with CWRC Practice Improvement Specialists
 - Feedback to administrators
 - CWEL graduate 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
 - Continued review of potential child welfare course offerings

Website: <https://www.socialwork.pitt.edu/researchtraining/child-welfare-education-and-research-programs>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Pennsylvanias-Child-Welfare-Education-and-Research-Programs-248773981860868/?ref=bookmarks>