

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs



**2021-2022 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



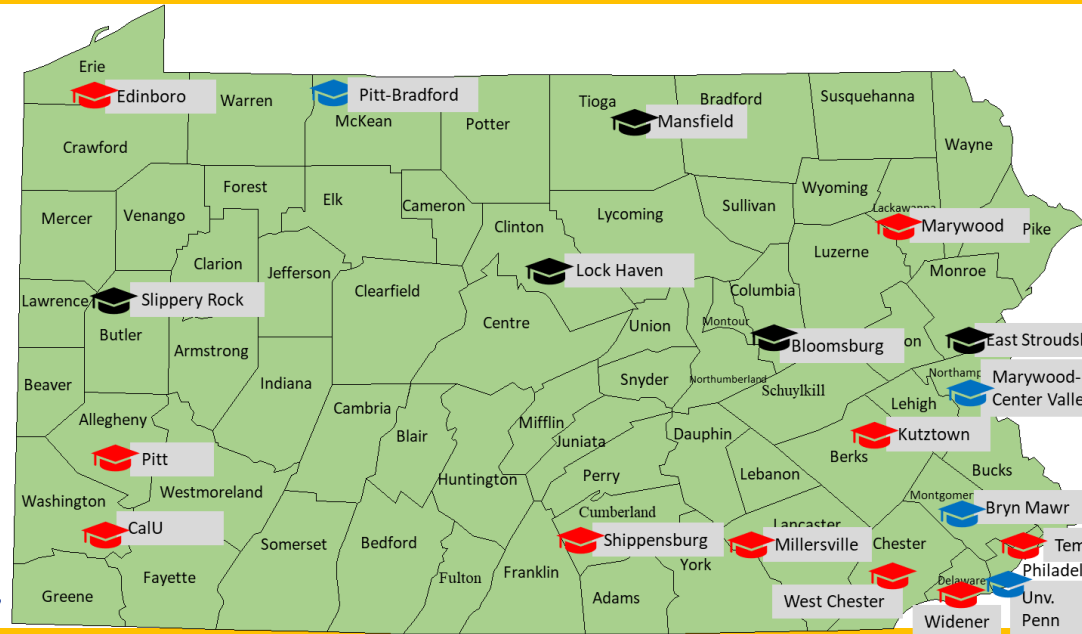
University of Pittsburgh



pennsylvania
 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



Participating Schools:



CWEB:

- 21st Academic Year
- 1,339 Graduates
- Employed in 93% of Pennsylvania counties



CWEL:

- 27th Academic year
- 1,613 Graduates
- 20% of Pennsylvania child welfare workforce



99% county participation in CWEB/CWEL programs

49% of counties benefit from CWEL leadership

Many current child welfare trainers/consultants are CWEL graduates

Two CWEB graduates occupy high-level agency leadership positions



Program Evaluation:

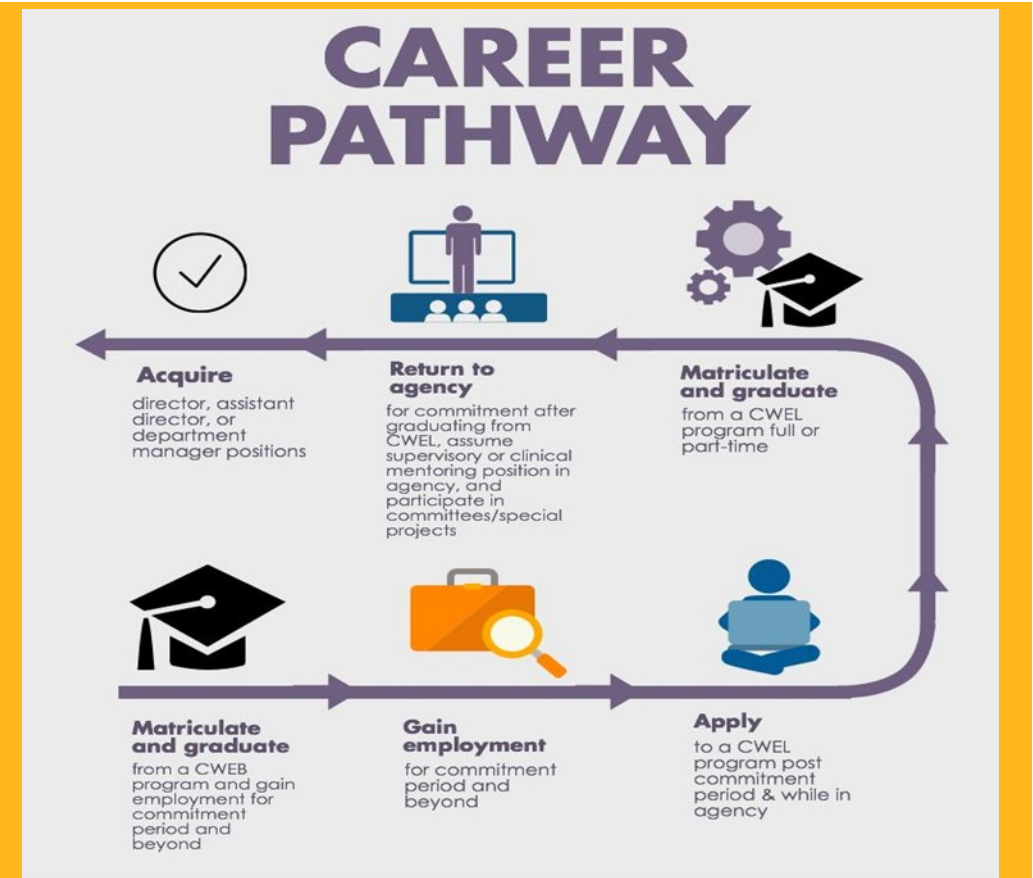
- Annual review of administrative and survey data to evaluate how students/graduates perceive their preparation for child welfare work
- Response rates:
 - County Administrators: 82%
 - School Administrators: 82%
 - Current Students: 68%
 - Graduates: 51%

“The internship portion of the CWEB program prepared me the most for my current job. It gave me the confidence and skills I needed to start taking a caseload on my first day of work.” (CWEB Recent Graduate)

“CWEL was one of the greatest programs and accomplishments that I have been blessed to be a part of thus far. I have 2 other Master's Degrees but being in this program helped me grow in unimaginable ways..” (CWEL Long-Term Graduate)

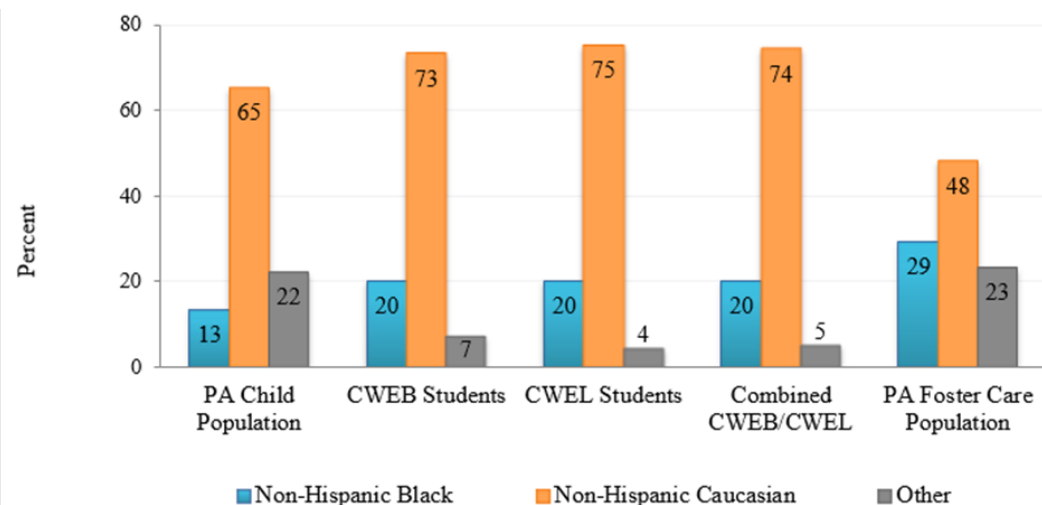
“Students who complete CWEB field placements get excellent hands-on experience. I think, in part, this is because the child welfare departments recognize that they are also training potential future employees.” (School Administrator)

“These programs are an opportunity to enhance the learning and professional development of students who demonstrate an interest in Child Welfare as well as enhancing their vision to contribute new thoughts and projects to ever changing policies and practices of Social Work.” (County Administrator)



- 7% of CWEL students participated in the CWEB program
- 86% of CWEL students remain in the agency where they completed their post-CWEB commitment
- Of those who completed a survey, 69% of CWEB graduates and 95% of CWEL graduates remain employed in child welfare services one-two years post graduation

Demographics of PA Child Population and CWEB/CWEL Participants



Racial disproportionality in child welfare:

- In 2021, African American children made up approximately 14% of the U.S. child population, but represented 22% of the foster care population^{1,2}
- In Pennsylvania, Black children were 4.5x more likely to re-enter foster care and 4x more likely to remain in foster care when compare to White children.³
- The CWEB and CWEL programs work to ensure that the workforce is reflective of the population served with 20% of participants in each program identifying as African American.

¹US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2020). *The AFCARS Report. Preliminary estimates for FY2021 as of June 28, 2022*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-29.pdf>

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&loc2=2#detailed/2/40/false/37/68.69.67.12.70.66.71.72/423.424>

³ Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (2022). *2022 State of Child Welfare: A system under stress: Examining how to better support Pennsylvania's child welfare system and the children and families it serves*. Harrisburg, PA: Porchlight Project. Retrieved from: <https://www.papartnerships.org/report/report-2022-state-of-child-welfare-september-2022>



CWEL Student: Received the "Spotlight Award" at Franklin County CYF for "tirelessly supporting her families and co-workers." Her supervisor went on to say that the county received two calls in a month documenting her warm, patient and supportive demeanor.

CWEL Graduate: Participated in Allegheny County's Leadership Fellowship Program, looking at teens and transition age youth in care and how their outcomes vary based on placement type. The analyses yielded targeted solutions that are going to be piloted and eventually implemented county wide.

CWEL Student: Developed a proposal to promote the development of leadership competencies by strengthening supervision and providing strategic planning on workforce recruitment, retention, and development. The proposal will be included in updates to Pennsylvania's public child welfare governing code.

CWEL Graduate: Actively participates in the Strengthening Black Families Subcommittee to research the effectiveness of different intervention models for equitable decision making with black and brown families. The graduate also participates in the Black Empowerment Committee, which provides support, networking, career advancement, recruitment and retention for black staff at the child welfare agency.

CWEL Students:

- Continued challenges in completing field hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Work-based field options were increased and online learning modules were permitted to count toward field hours
- Gain valuable information about systems, policies, service mandates, and intervention strategies
- Benefit from experiencing the provider end of child welfare work
- Field experiences enable CWEL students to bring valuable information back to their county child welfare agency and prepares them to participate in new child welfare related initiatives

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

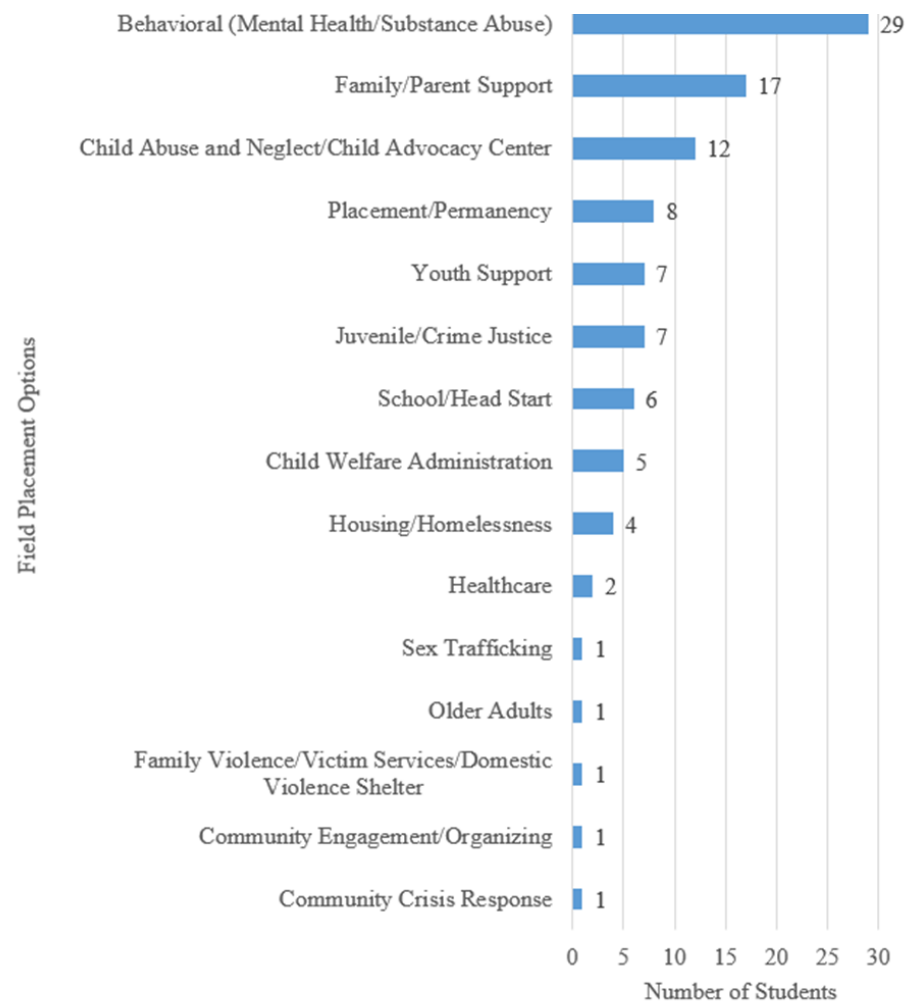
Part time students:

- Face challenges in managing work/life/school balance
- May have limited field placement options and less freedom in course selection
- Over the life of the program, 78% of withdrawals prior to graduation have been part-time students

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 required assignments
- Synchronous courses involve designated meeting times
- Community-based field requirements are required
- Students tend to prefer face-to-face contact with instructors and peers

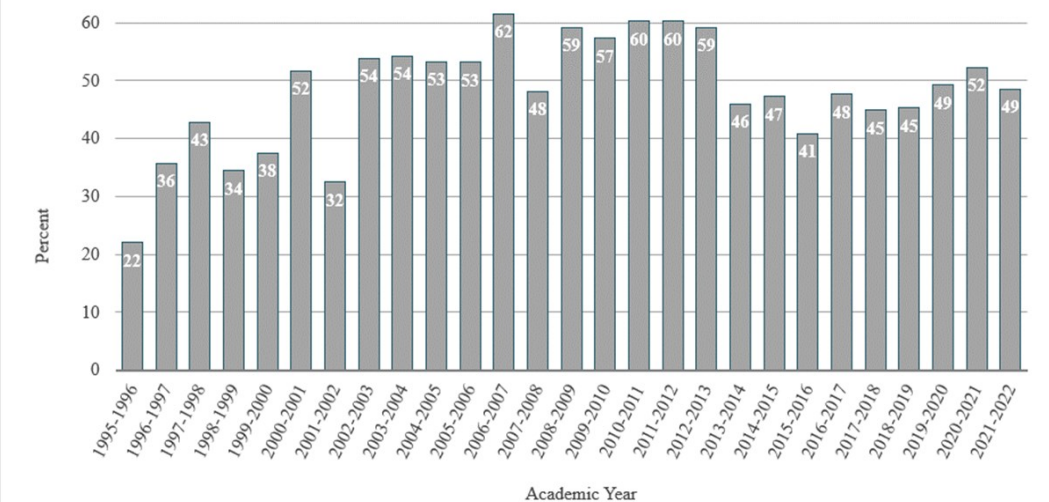
CWEL Field Placement Types



Changing Landscape of Child Welfare Services:

- Implementation of mandatory coronavirus vaccinations by some counties resulted in terminations and county agency transfers for some CWEL and CWEL graduates
- A predicted increase in suspected child abuse and neglect referrals increased the stress on the child welfare system
- Turnover in both public and private child welfare agencies continue to be an issue
- However, new modes of practice (virtual technology, data driven decision making, predictive analytics, evidence-based interventions) are a welcome addition to enhance child welfare work
- Passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act in February of 2018 and the implementation of state-level FFPSA Prevention Plans brings additional opportunities and expectations to the child welfare workforce
- Pennsylvania plans to implement a universal assessment tool to enhance the workforce's ability to identify family and child needs, strengths, risk factors and safety considerations.

Child Welfare for Education for Leadership: 1995-2022 Admissions Part-Time Trend





Overall Recommendations:

Increase availability of accredited social work programs:

- Consolidation of 3 Pennsylvania state schools in the western portion of the state (Clarion, Edinboro, California University of PA) and north central region (Lock Haven, Mansfield, Bloomsburg) may provide a benefit to the CWEB program by establishing one Director of Field Education over the partnering schools.
- MSW programs at Slippery Rock and Bloomsburg are in the process of obtaining full accreditation. Partnerships with these programs will be explored once accreditation status is received.

Incorporation of trauma-informed supervision at the county level.

Transition support and ongoing connection among CWEB and CWEL graduates.

- The post hire contact program with CWEB students has been a great success
- A similar program is being proposed for CWEL graduates in the next academic year

Program Specific Recommendations:

CWEB:

- Further guidance to university faculty on the details of civil service requirements and other technical aspects related to county internship and employment
 - Targeted discussions occur during school visits and informational meetings
- Increase county participation in CWEB program
 - Informational sessions with county child welfare agencies including CWEB faculty and staff and Program Improvement Specialists from the Child Welfare Resource Center
 - Creation of CWEB Internship Guidance document to provide counties with suggestions for potential field experiences for CWEB students
- 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
 - Post hire interviews with CWEB graduates
- Improve dissemination of child welfare career development opportunity through CWEB and CWEL to prospective and current participants

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

CWEL:

- Opportunity for students to focus on administration or macro practice:
 - Students can take administration courses as electives; those approved for macro study can take direct practice electives
 - Explore cross-over options between direct practice and macro practice specializations among schools of social work
- Increase in full-time enrollment:
 - Encourage county agencies to permit full-time enrollment and hire replacement staff using the reimbursement for the CWEL participant
- Inclusion of advanced 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 additional child welfare course offerings
- Gather more information on the career trajectory of CWEL graduates
 - Development of a comprehensive database for public child welfare workers in PA including a dashboard for each county in the Commonwealth