A Continuum of Programs Dedicated to Child Welfare Workforce Development

PA Child Welfare Resource Center
Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates
Child Welfare Education for Leadership
A Collaborative Endeavor

- University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth & Families
- Pennsylvania Children & Youth Administrators
Pennsylvania Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC)
- Training & Technical Assistance
- Organizational Effectiveness & Practice Improvement

Degree Education Programs
- Undergraduate Education (CWEB)
- Graduate Education (CWEL)
CWERP Leadership

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OUR MISSION

To strengthen child welfare services to at-risk 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.
OUR GOALS

• Address vacancy & turnover rates among public child welfare employees

• **Recruit** undergraduate social work students through widely dispersed locations in order to prepare persons for public child welfare employment

• Assist in the **retention** of public child welfare staff by making graduate MSW education more readily available
GOALS, continued

- Provide **academic & curricular support** for child welfare studies to undergraduate and graduate programs
- Assist in providing a **career ladder** within public child welfare and **long-term career development** for child welfare professionals
- Engage in efforts to promote the development of **evidenced-based/evidence-informed practice skills** for child welfare professionals
GOALS, continued

• Advocate for **practice improvement** within the child welfare system through education, ongoing training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, organizational development, and support

• Contribute to **improved outcomes** for children and families through research and evaluation
Nationwide: The Public Child Welfare Workforce

- Less than ⅓ of staff have a formal social work education (15% BSW; 13% MSW)
- 30-40% annual worker turnover
- Average worker tenure < 2 years
- Many supervisors: 3 years experience
- Average caseload = 24-31 cases
  (CWLA recommendation = 12-15 cases)
The Public Child Welfare Workforce, continued

- Caseload Acuity: high rates of substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, HIV/AIDS
- 70% of front-line workers have encountered actual violence or threats of violence
- Average salary = $33,000

- Social Work education has been identified as the best predictor of overall performance in child welfare work.
- U.S. General Accounting Office has identified the use of university-child welfare agency partnerships as a promising practice in addressing the nationwide crisis in the public child welfare workforce.
The Case for Better Trained Workers

• Able to handle more complex caseloads
• Able to perform tasks more competently
• More effective in developing permanency plans for children
• Experience greater job satisfaction
• Less likely to leave agency when working conditions include:
  - high quality supervision
  - suitable job assignments
  - equitable personnel practices
  - opportunities for learning & advancement
  - respect for abilities
Skills Required for Successful Child Welfare Outcomes

- Responsiveness to multiple and often unexpected problems
- Tenacity in navigating a complex maze of state and federal regulations within a county-administered system
- Ability to engage involuntary clientele
- Ability to function in highly stressful conditions
- Ability to negotiate conflicting job demands
- Ability to deal with a critical public and more negative, than positive, media attention
Interrelated Issues in the Child Welfare Workforce

- High worker turnover
- High vacancy rates
- Increased workload for remaining workers
- Poor service delivery
PA’s Title IV-E Education Programs

• Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)
• Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)
CWEB/CWEL Profile: 2018-19

Statewide, 99% of counties participate

**CWEB**
- Established 2001
- 65 active students
- 1100th grad in 2017
- 1,213 grads have entered the county child welfare system since CWEB began

**CWEL**
- Established 1995
- 127 active students
- 1,442 grads to date
- 13% of active CWEL students are also CWEB grads
Pennsylvania Degree Education Programs

Preparing for Employment

Undergraduates

Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)

15 Schools

Those with > 2 Years Employment

Graduates

Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)

12 Schools
The Career Ladder

And Beyond.....
Assume administrative role
Remain beyond commitment period

Third Rung:
Assume supervisory / clinical mentoring role
Start commitment period after graduation

Second Rung:
Matriculate and graduate from CWEL
Be employed for commitment period & beyond

First Rung:
Commence employment in PA county agency
Matriculate and graduate from CWEB
CWEL: The Second Rung

- Financial support throughout degree for approximately 150 students annually
- Child & Family focused field placement
- Child & Family focused coursework
- Professional growth & development
- Readiness to assume management roles
CWEL: The Second Rung (2)

• By May 2019:
  – 1,442 CWEL graduates in total
  – 23% of all county child welfare positions occupied by a CWEB graduate, a CWEL graduate or current CWEL student
  – 99% of counties participating

• Increasing enrollment of CWEBs in CWEL
  – 21% of CWEL students over the 2009-2018 academic years were CWEB grads
CWEL Admission Requirements

Application Requirements

Applicants must:

- Have been employed at a Pennsylvania public child welfare agency for at least two years
- Have at least satisfactory work performance evaluations
- Have been accepted for graduate study by one of the twelve approved schools
- Have the approval of their employer and (if accepted for full-time study) are granted educational leave by their employer
- Complete a written statement regarding the application of graduate study to their work
- Not be in default of any outstanding federal or state educational loan
- Sign a legally binding agreement which requires a work commitment at the sponsoring county child welfare agency following completion of their studies

Student Requirements

Students must:

- Complete child welfare course work
- Complete an internship at a child and family agency

Graduate Requirements

Graduates must:

- Maintain, for two years, employment at the sponsoring Pennsylvania public child welfare agency
CWEL Online Pilot Counties

- Bedford
- Blair
- Clinton
- Huntingdon
- Jefferson
- Juniata

- Mifflin
- Potter
- Sullivan
- Tioga
- Warren
MSW Program

- Eligible students can enroll for an MSW degree at Council on Social Work Education accredited programs on a full or part-time basis
  - Eligible to have advance standing if you have an undergraduate degree in social work
- Students select concentration/specialization after enrollment
  - Direct Practice
  - Child welfare-specific courses
- Internship as signature pedagogy
  - Sites that serve IV-E eligible children, youth and families
  - Internship and work hours must be separate
Participating Universities

- **CWEL Approved Schools**
  - Bryn Mawr College, California University, Edinboro University, Kutztown University, Marywood University, Millersville University/Shippensburg University, Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburgh, West Chester University, and Widener University
  - Enroll on a full time or part-time basis

- **Two Fully Online Schools, Part-Time**
  - Temple University
  - Widener University
Myths About Online Learning

• It is easy
• The quality is lower
• Online students do not meet with instructors
• It is for younger and more tech savvy students
Online Educational Structure

- Synchronous (happening at the same time)
- Asynchronous (not happening at the same time)
- Virtual information sessions
- Orientation to online education and platform
- Live check-ins
Online Programs
CSWE 2019 Key Findings

• Demographic Background (n = 1400)
  – 84% are part-time students
  – Older (30+)
  – Worked more (6 years or more)

• Employment Outcomes
  – Work in government positions
  – Rural or smaller communities
  – Focus on children and families, specialization in substance use

Demographics: Surveyed 1400 MSW Graduates

Temple Fully Online Option

- Three year part-time program
- Class size 15-20 students
- Synchronous classes one day each week
- Asynchronous work during the week
- Advising session
- Three day residency program for orientation
- Instructors are full time faculty
- Field is self-referred, needs CWEL approval
- [https://cph.temple.edu/online-master-social-work](https://cph.temple.edu/online-master-social-work)
Widener University

- Three year part-time program
- Primarily asynchronous
- Office hours by appointment
- Class size 18-20 students
  - Synchronous projects together
- Taught by full-time faculty
- Field is self-referred; needs CWEL approval
- https://onlineprograms.widener.edu/msw/masters-of-social-work
Students: Consider the following

- What is your learning style?
- How much flexibility do you need in your schedule?
- How much accountability and contact do you need to be successful?
- Internship sites are self-generated, need CWEL approval
Next Steps for Prospective Students:

- Explore Temple and Widener’s online MSW programs
- Attend an orientation session
- Apply to Temple or Widener
- Obtain approval from your county agency
- Complete the online CWEL application
County Administrators: Consider the following

- How will you operationalize leave for online program instruction time?
- How many employees per office can be enrolled?
- How will you accommodate internships?
- What policies will you create?
Counties have successfully accommodated students by:

• Providing flexible work schedules
• Protecting students’ time on class days
• Supporting their field placements in the local community
• Acknowledging students’ commitment to their professional growth and development
Post CWEL: The Third Rung

- Return to agency
- Complete commitment period
  - All but 13 grads have completed commitment since 1996
  - 8% loss rate per year over the life of the program (for all reasons, including death, retirement, disability, relocation out of state, & job departures from CYF)

- Seeking:
  - Opportunities to advance
  - Opportunities to apply education
  - Recognition of knowledge and skills
Leadership By IV-E Grads

- **County With IV-E Graduate As Current Administrator or Assistant Administrator**
Program Evaluation

- All funded programs conduct an annual evaluation
- Participant feedback is crucial to the ongoing viability of the CWEB and CWEL programs
- You will be contacted as a current student as well as a graduate
- Giving back assures that the program remains vibrant for those you follow you
Research & Evaluation Faculty and Staff

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- Mary Beth Rauktis, PhD •
  Research Assistant Professor

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✫ Oakland/Mechanicsburg (primary office in Oakland)
Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

- University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work

- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth & Families

- Pennsylvania Children & Youth Administrators
Thank You