Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

Over 80 Years of Child Welfare Leadership!

2017-2018 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:
- 17th Academic year
- 1,162 graduates
- Employed in 88% of Pennsylvania counties

CWEL:
- 23rd Academic year
- 1,383 graduates
- 17% of Pennsylvania child welfare workforce

Pennsylvania

99% county participation in CWEB/CWEL programs
37% of counties benefit from CWEL leadership
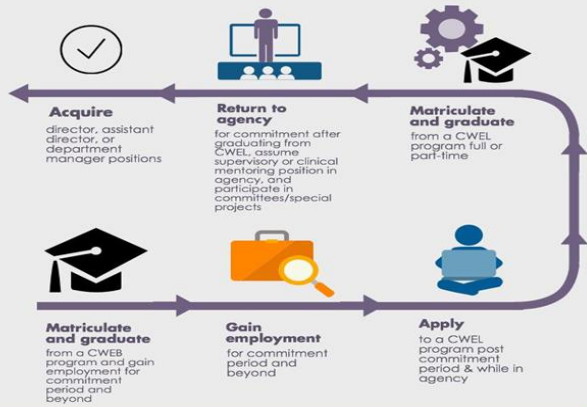22% of current child welfare trainers/consultants are CWEL graduates
Two counties have a CWEB graduate in an agency leadership position

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: 80%
  - School Administrators: 86%
  - Current Students: 77%
  - Graduates: 56%

CAREER PATHWAY

Acquire
director, assistant director, or department manager positions

Return to agency
for commitment after graduating from CWEL, assume supervisory or clinical mentoring position in agency, and participate in committees/special projects

Matriculate and graduate
from a CWEL program full or part-time

Matriculate and graduate
from a CWEB program and gain employment for commitment period and beyond

Gain employment
for commitment period and beyond

Apply
to a CWEL program post commitment period & while in agency

- 15% of CWEL students participated in the CWEB program
- 93% of CWEL students remain in the agency where they completed their post-CWEB commitment
- 90% of CWEB graduates, and 100% of CWEL graduates remained employed in child welfare services one-two years post graduation

"...{CWEB} has been a great way to enter into child welfare in a supportive and positive learning environment and I feel confident in applying and working as a case worker within child welfare when I graduate." (CWEB student)

"CWEL is an amazing educational opportunity that results in child protective workers who are more knowledgeable of the issues our clients face and more empathetic when working with families." (CWEL Graduate)

"{CWEB students} reflect a commitment to both their education and engagement with children and their families" (School Administrator)

"These programs are so beneficial to the child welfare system, as graduates return to the agency with improved skills and knowledge. They are willing to share what they have learned with others in the agency. They are more committed to strength based, family focused work to effect change. They drive incremental change in families that lead to better outcomes for children." (County Administrator)

Profiles in Excellence

CWEL Graduate: Presented data at national organization to showcase the need to use data to sustain change in child welfare. Also worked with local family court to create a child friendly waiting area in the court house.
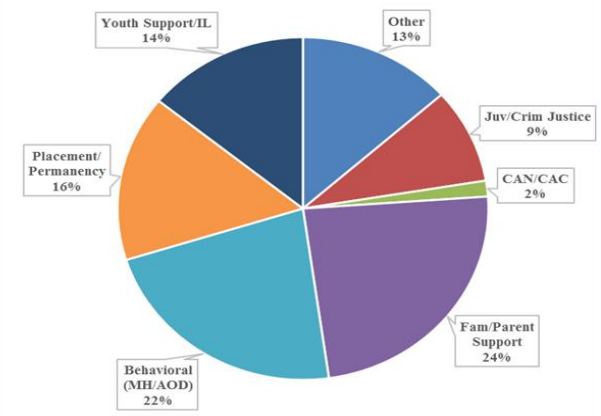
CWEB Student: Received two scholarships to help fund her education. Both scholarships are awarded based on academic excellence.

CWEB Student: Received the inaugural "Social Work Research Award in Undergraduate Social Work" for her grant funded literature review on shootings of African Americans by police.

CWEL Student: Initiated a program for returning summer CWEL students to reduce caseloads and increase mentorship to junior caseworkers. Program is planned to expand to other regional offices after the successful pilot.

CWEL Students - Field Placement Types (N=91)

- Youth Support/IL 14%
- Other 13%
- Juv/Crim Justice 9%
- CAN/CAC 2%
- Placement/Permanency 16%
- Fam/Parent Support 24%
- Behavioral (MH/AOD) 22%

CWEL Students:
- Gain valuable information regarding systems, policies, service mandates, and intervention strategies
- Transmit their experience and knowledge of child welfare policies and procedures within provider agencies that may have limited to no understanding of child welfare services
- Participate in:
  - State Quality Service Reviews
  - Committees associated with Pennsylvania's CPSL Implementation and Practice Improvement Plan
  - Specific workgroups/program initiatives
- Mentor CWEB students and colleagues

Changing Landscape of Child Welfare Services:
- Pennsylvania passed 23 new pieces of legislation in 2012, increasing referrals to child welfare as much as 200% in some counties
- On-going nationwide opioid epidemic increased the rate of substance exposed infants and overdose deaths of biological parents
- Despite these challenges, graduates' ratings of organizational climate has not changed
  - Supervision is still highly valued, but morale and employment involvement are areas of improvement
  - Work load and opportunities for advancement continue to be challenges
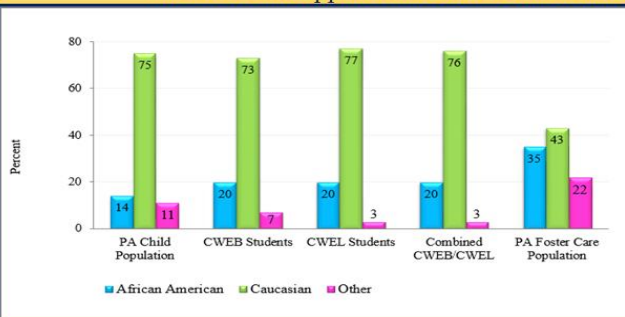
Racial disproportionality in child welfare:
- In 2017, African American Children made up approximately 14% of the U.S. child population, but represented 23% of the foster care population[1,2]
- Pennsylvania's foster care population is comprised of 35% Black or African American children, even though they are only 13% of the state's population[2,3]
- 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

CWEL Part-time students are well over a third of 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 required assignments
- Synchronous courses involved designated meeting times
- Community-based field placements are required
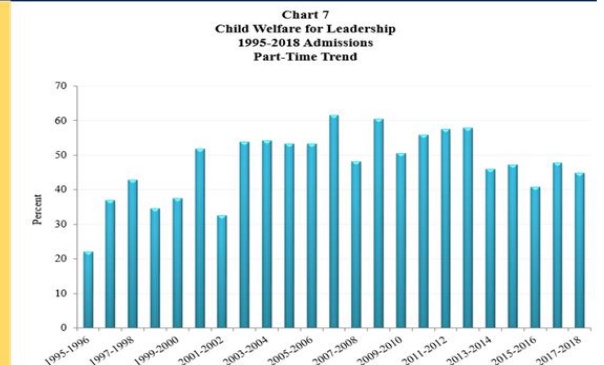
[1] US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2018). *The AFCARS Report. Preliminary estimates for FY2017 as of August 10, 2018*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb

[2] The Annie E. Casey Foundation (n.d.), KIDS COUNT data center. Retrieved from http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/4201-population--children-age-0-17-by-race-and-ethnicity#detailed/2/any/false/133,11/144,107,9,167,172,4,185,12/9030,9031

[3] Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (2018). *State of Child Welfare 2018*. Harrisburg, PA: Porchlight Project: Retrieved from https://www.papartnerships.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-SOCW-Pennsylvania-July-2018.pdf

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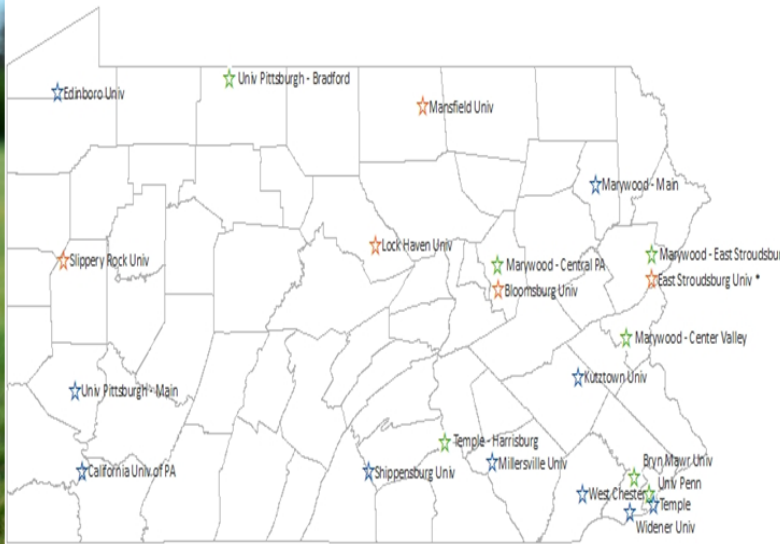
Increase availability of accredited social work programs and depth of undergraduate child welfare curriculum:
- Development of Child Advocacy Studies: students complete one child welfare course and a public child welfare internship. Additional courses in Child Advocacy Studies is available in an on-line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

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 result of major revisions to PA's child abuse laws.

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

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
- Improve leadership and professional development skills
  - Pilot program at the University of Pittsburgh to fully prepare students for child welfare work by engaging CWEB students in their practicum course with a targeted curriculum regarding secondary trauma; race consciousness; leadership; self-care
  - Mentoring opportunities for CWEB graduates by CWEL graduates (particularly male, Hispanic, and African American) provides an increased sense of confidence in completing complex tasks and responsibilities
  - Case management system was developed in which CWEB students are assigned to a Regional Resource Specialist at the Child Welfare Resource Center who facilitates the student's enrollment in Charting the Course their senior year and initiates the training record to document the completion of the educational modules

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
  - Enforcement of part-time academic load

Child Welfare Education and Research Programs
University of Pittsburgh
School of Social Work
2009 Cathedral of Learning
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

www.socialwork.pitt.edu/research/child-welfare/index.php
1-866-275-2935