



NCWWI MSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned

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Table of Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	4
II. MSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned	5
Individual Level: Students.....	5
Organizational Level: Schools of Social Work.....	9
Organizational Level: Child Welfare/Tribal Agency	12
Regional & National Level	15
III. MSW Traineeship Program Descriptions & Signature Innovations	18

I. Introduction

In 2008, the Children’s Bureau funded the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) to build the capacity of the nation’s child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for children, youth and families through activities that support the development of skilled child welfare leaders in public and tribal child welfare systems, and in private agencies that are contracted by the state to provide case management services that are traditionally provided by the public child welfare system. To achieve this, NCWWI launched three major training initiatives: one for mid-managers, one for supervisors and one for students – the Traineeship program.

The purpose of the NCWWI Traineeship program was to support professional education for current or prospective child welfare practitioners in accredited BSW or MSW programs. A major goal for the Traineeship program was to develop educational experiences that would teach and reinforce core competencies in areas of child welfare practice and leadership. Trainees were expected to participate in a field placement at a child welfare agency, enroll in relevant courses to prepare for professional service and leadership in child welfare, and to work in a child welfare agency upon graduation. Traineeship schools were expected to innovate and improve their child welfare curricular offerings and were encouraged to provide additional supports for trainees to support completion of degrees and retention in the field. The traineeship programs needed to be particularly attentive to addressing diversity within the workforce, local agency workforce needs, preparing future leaders, and understanding systems of care principles.

Twelve Traineeship programs were funded: 5 BSW, 3 joint BSW/MSW and 4 MSW programs.

The **NCWWI MSW Traineeship Programs** were charged with:

- Creating a legacy document that captures innovative and successful strategies used by the MSW Traineeship Programs at multiple levels, especially “lessons learned” that may help others developing future child welfare workforce projects.
- Applying “lessons learned” data to multiple system linkages and levels, including students, schools of social work, child welfare agencies, and regional/national areas.

The document is organized by domains using a system focus and provides recommendations based on successful innovations and strategies that were common across MSW Programs at the individual student level, at the organizational level for schools, at the organizational level for agencies and tribes, and at the regional and national level.

II. MSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned

The main themes of the MSW Traineeship Programs' collective legacies and lessons learned are incorporated in the system level analyses that follow.

Individual Level: Students

I. Recruitment & Selection

There are three issues to consider that need resolution before the recruitment and selection process begins. The first is to determine the type of student that is the target of recruitment. For example, students with an interest in child welfare are targeted differently than public child welfare employees without a professional social work degree. The second is to determine what areas of child welfare the program will serve. Options include: services in the public sector, services in the private sector, tribal services or a combination of services. The third is to determine the outcomes to be achieved. For example, if a goal of the traineeship program is to improve services to Spanish speaking child welfare populations then recruitment efforts must focus specifically on Spanish speaking students. Once the target is determined, child welfare settings need to be defined as well as the outcomes to be achieved in each program. Only then can recruitment strategies be developed and implemented.

There are two primary approaches to recruitment. General recruitment is raising awareness of the project to the entire community of students. This can be achieved by posting flyers, developing a website linked to admissions, getting the school newspaper to write a story about the project, and building academic advisor knowledge about the program. Targeted recruitment is a process of recruiting a potential candidate who fits the profile as specified by the outcomes the program wants to achieve. For example, if the program wants to create supervisory leaders in public child welfare, the program would target supervisors but not case workers. Both general and targeted recruitment are important. Both approaches to recruitment work best and take fewer resources if they build on existing recruitment strategies and activities. Schools with strong community child welfare partnerships will have the most success in recruiting a pool of potential students for child welfare traineeships.

As a traineeship program builds recruitment strategies it should concurrently build the selection criteria for choosing participants. In one program that focused on leadership, all students were required to write a leadership essay in addition to the routine admissions documents. In another program students were selected based on their Spanish language abilities. The criteria for selection must be explicit and clear; it is a best practice to have a committee of child welfare faculty and agency representatives develop the criteria and then be involved in selecting candidates for the project. As part of selection, an evaluation of the student commitment to child welfare must be made. Programs have students sign promissory notes that require them to complete a year in their agency for every year they receive funding (for example, if they are funded 2 years they must remain in their agency 2

years after graduation); and the note is forgiven if they fulfill the requirement but if they violate the terms then they are responsible for repaying the entire stipend or an amount proportionate to the completion of time served.

As part of the selection process, the role of the child welfare agency must be specified. In some projects, the agency is part of the selection committee. In other projects, the agency nominates potential candidates and then child welfare faculty choose the best candidates. Agency partners strongly endorse the idea that they be part of the selection committee so there can be a dialog about the strengths and weaknesses of potential candidates. Agencies may have information about the candidates that is not available to the school of social work at the time of selection. What is critical is that a process be in place to engage the child welfare agencies in recruiting and selecting candidates for the traineeship program.

2. Avenues for Student Support

Providing support to students is an important part of the traineeship project. This support can take many forms, including financial assistance, specialized trainings, and peer support. The traineeship programs provide financial support through stipends to students who are interested in pursuing careers in child welfare or who are already working in child welfare.

An additional method of student support is to use a professional social work mentor with public child welfare experience to develop the support network for the child welfare trainees. This mentor meets with students, maintains an online discussion board, and links students to academic support services. Following graduation, the mentor supports graduates' adjustment to child welfare positions by offering additional mentoring as well as identifying and providing additional training workshops.

Support and Learning Teams (SLTs) is another method through which students are supported before and after graduation. The teams include the student, academic advisor, a representative from the school, and a representative from the agency. SLTs are based in a secondary stress perspective that includes knowing what is going on in the student's work, talking about it, trying to help change it, and providing comprehensive supervision. Students may also request additional members, such as tribal elders, to be part of their team. SLTs meet at least twice per semester but can meet more often, as requested by the student. Traineeship program staff also check in with students during their commitment period and four times per year after their commitment ends.

Many programs offer specialized courses in addition to regular coursework (see Curriculum Innovation for specific descriptions). One university has all students participate in eight hours of professional development via workshops every semester to enhance their learning and some programs offer additional writing support as needed. A field faculty advisor is hired and trained to help students in their learning, including developing portfolios and a poster to document their learning. As licensing is a hurdle that is difficult to overcome for many students, another source of support by some programs is to offer assistance to their students in becoming licensed. Varying models are used, with some hiring an outside consultant to provide licensing workshops and other utilizing faculty to provide them. Some programs also purchase study guides that students review onsite.

Support of students continues after graduation. The types of support offered after graduation include peer networks, monthly meetings of program graduates for networking and assistance with job hunting strategies, webinars, formal alumni meetings including meetings that focus only on the child welfare trainee graduates, and other resources to continue to enhance the students' skills and knowledge.

3. Field experiences: Facilitating factors and barriers

Several strategies are used across programs to facilitate trainees' success in field placements. Each participating university provides field placements to students to prepare them to work in child welfare. Trainees in all of the programs complete their field placements in a child welfare agency. One program places students in one of three "field units" which were developed for this project. The programs vary in their emphasis; for example, one university focuses on developing leadership skills in tribal or state child welfare, another focuses on work with Spanish speaking families and translating agency forms into Spanish, while a third was targeted to building the leadership skills of seasoned child welfare professionals. In addition, some programs work with the local child welfare offices to arrange flexible work schedules for students in their field placements, thus allowing for students currently employed in child welfare to participate more easily.

Field instructors and field agencies are instrumental in the development of traineeship programs and they must be involved in ongoing assessment and evaluation of the program. This collaboration with field instructors and field agencies can lead to improved communication between the university and agency partners, as well as strengthen the field experiences of students. Agency partners stress the importance of communication and information sharing between the school and the agency administration as the key to developing quality field placements that create a productive experience for the student. Agency administrators also suggest that when programs require a student project that the agency be involved in the development phase so that the student may be directed to a project that is already in process or something that the agency needs help with at that particular time. Agency partners suggest that when the student and agency needs are aligned, the quality of the field placement will be enhanced.

Specialized field instruction and field seminars are another opportunity for reinforcing child welfare knowledge in the field placement. Several programs provide a specialized field liaison to their child welfare trainees. This liaison delivers a higher level of individual attention and individualized mentoring. Trainees in several programs also participate in field seminars specifically designed for this program. Specialized field seminars include seminars that incorporate information on culturally responsive leadership or seminars that are held in Spanish. Many of the programs hold field seminars exclusively with students placed in child welfare settings in order to strengthen learning related to child welfare. Others utilize field seminars to facilitate integration of theory and field in a number of areas, including trauma-informed services, urban child welfare practice, systems of care, and motivational interviewing techniques.

4. Transition to the Workforce: Formal & Informal Supports

The most common type of formal programming is collaboration with the child welfare agency on some aspect of joint curriculum development, most frequently around the mastery of child welfare practice competencies. Some programs collaboratively develop curriculum that enable the graduate to complete foundational required job training while in school through the development of a specific course and to subsequently take and pass the state child welfare competency exam. Another school, in partnership with other schools of social work and the local child welfare agency, used a set of collaboratively developed competencies as a guide for curriculum development and the evaluation of field instruction. After graduation, MSW graduates are provided with opportunities to meet as a group and provide support to each other during the transition back to work. Another school sought to promote post-graduation peer support through participation of program fellows in monthly meetings at their agency during the course of the traineeship.

All MSW programs report informal engagement and contact with graduates who often reach out when they face challenges or career “crossroads”, such as finding a job. One school is beginning to move to formal programming by asking alumni to return as mentors for incoming students.

When planning activities for transition and post-graduation, it may be important to take into consideration that the transition experience will be different depending on the target group that the traineeship program has selected for recruitment. There are generally three broad categories of graduates: those new to the child welfare workforce, those who are already employed and return at a line level, and those already employed who return as supervisors or to other leadership positions. Further, there are other groups among the MSW programs targeted for recruitment that may have different needs for transition necessary to ensure transfer of learning to the workplace such as leaders of color, students with linguistic competence in Spanish, and those with cultural expertise for work with a particular population. Each group will experience unique challenges during the transition phase that have implications for post-graduate planning.

Agency partners voiced the concern that upon transition, they did not always have staff qualified to provide the level of supervision required for new graduates to obtain their licensure hours and would like to see the schools continue to engage with them to find a solution to this issue.

Evaluation data from the NCWWI Traineeship Program supports the recommendation that future traineeships build into their programs transition and post-graduate support programming. The following is a list of potential questions to be addressed by future traineeship program evaluations:

1. Are there differences in the transition experience for graduates who are new to child welfare and those returning to work? If so, what are they?
2. Are there differences in the transition experience for graduates from schools that have long standing collaborative relationships with child welfare agencies and those schools who are in early stages of collaboration?
3. Are there differences in the transition experiences when the traineeship programs are targeting supervisors and managers? If so, what are they?

4. Are there differences in the transition experiences when schools formally collaborate on curriculum development with the child welfare agency?
5. Are there differences in transition for those in urban versus rural child welfare agencies?

Organizational Level: Schools of Social Work

I. Faculty Support

Faculty activities relative to the child welfare traineeships are in some ways similar to those of any faculty. Traineeship faculty advise students, teach classes or lead seminars, and serve as liaisons to student placements. But that similarity can obscure a world of difference. The role of faculty support for child welfare trainees is demanding. Traineeship faculty play a central year-round role in the recruitment of students into the program, development of placements, support of placements, and the return (or entry) of the student to practice upon graduation. This year-round relationship combines many roles (recruitment, advising, field liaison, teaching, new curriculum development, administration, planning) more typically filled by multiple persons in the case of other (non-traineeship) social work students.

To meet these demands, traineeship programs need to include financial support for faculty time dedicated to recruitment, retention, education, and support for job placement for child welfare students. Faculty in our traineeships benefit from the funded time to develop or adapt courses to reflect child welfare specific topics. Examples include trauma-informed practice, motivational interviewing, urban practice, rural practice, culturally responsive agency leadership and, the location of curriculum materials for practice in Spanish. Faculty use the funded time to work actively with the agency, developing relationships critical to recruitment of students into the program and support the transition to work.

Faculty who are not actively involved in the traineeship benefit from support in meeting the needs of child welfare social work students in their classrooms. Traineeship programs support faculty by providing child welfare oriented curriculum materials that can be infused in general classes. In addition, faculty not familiar with child welfare sometimes need support in developing helpful and informed ways to talk about child welfare work inside a context of social work practice, values, and social justice. Faculty may want to make sure the projects they assign students are consistent with the goals of the child welfare training program. In some programs, students report disparaging attitudes towards child welfare from some social work faculty, or an absence of knowledge or content about tribal or public child welfare in general policy and practice courses. Traineeship faculty may find themselves in the position of educating colleagues, offering child welfare policy and practice materials, and offering more helpful and empowering language to understand the role social workers play in the field of child welfare.

In addition to the support for such work offered through the traineeship grant, faculty involved in traineeships benefit from participation in peer networks, such as webinars, in-person meetings at CSWE and other professional conferences, and the annual meeting supported by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. The students themselves are a source of support for traineeship faculty and the faculty of the larger school. The

expertise of students with child welfare experience enriches classes. Traineeship program faculty can collect and provide feedback from these students to help the curriculum become more relevant to child welfare.

2. Curriculum Innovation & Development

A review of the traineeship programs' activities and outcomes as they relate specifically to curriculum development indicates that the first step of this process is for faculty and partnering child welfare agencies to review overall MSW curricula in order to identify gaps, along with areas for elaboration and updating. For instance, core content on significant topics may be infused or strengthened throughout already existing MSW curricula which benefits all students, not just trainees. Examples of this core content include: children's mental health; child well-being; trauma-informed practice; motivational interviewing; child maltreatment; and substance abuse.

Some traineeship programs target particular populations and develop innovative specialized curricula to prepare trainees for practice with tribal or Latino populations. Typically, traineeship students complete the basic MSW requirements in their schools with enhancements such as: additional specialized courses that focus on child welfare topics such as adoption, child welfare leadership, child welfare research, Systems of Care, Child and Family Service Reviews, evidence-based community child welfare practice, evidence-based direct child welfare practice, child welfare supervision; and additional specialized seminars narrowly focused on jurisdiction-specific child welfare topics, such as laws and policies.

Finally, curricula for trainees often includes innovative assignments; for instance: development of learning portfolios documenting their progress in achieving the program's competencies; writing a capstone assignment on the development of their work with a family or families; poster presentations to show their developmental process on one or more competencies; and poster presentations of capstone child-welfare-related research projects.

Overall, the capacity of social work education programs to prepare students for positive, culturally competent, and productive careers in child welfare is improved through these curricular innovations shaped by the collective experience of faculty, trainees, and community partners.

3. Incorporation of Child Welfare Competencies

NCWWI's evaluation team provided the traineeships with a set of child welfare competencies that were evaluated on an on-going basis for all students and graduates. Field Instructors who participate in the evaluation are also asked to use these competencies in evaluating student performance in the field. In addition, there are a number of other national, state and local competency standards available for use in the training and education of child welfare workers. The short-term goal for competency-based training and education is to assure the public that child welfare workers have the necessary knowledge, values and skills to work in the field. Long-term goals include building a professional workforce that will effectively work with clients within the context of state and local laws and resources.

Some social work schools plan their training programs and curricula around state competency requirements and this is the case for a number of the traineeship programs. Programs collaboratively develop curriculum with the child welfare agency that enable the graduate to complete foundational required job training while in school and to subsequently take and pass the state child welfare competency exam. Additionally, some traineeship programs focus on leadership skills using the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework.

Overall, competency-based learning is widely used in the child welfare field and many of the traineeship schools have extensive prior experience with infusing the competencies into their curricula. For those schools with less experience, the NCWWI competencies afford an important introduction to the concept. An important issue raised by the traineeship programs is the need to integrate child welfare competencies with CSWE competencies and practice behaviors. One MSW program has begun this work. A concern was raised about the rapidly multiplying sets of state and local competencies. As an alternative, the Children's Bureau may want to use the data from these programs with the aim of creating a national model that can be easily linked to the CSWE competencies and practice behaviors.

4. Role of Field Department

As the “signature pedagogy” of social work education, field education plays a vital role in ensuring the success of the child welfare traineeship program. In addition to the usual field office resources, a number of schools recommend providing additional field related support to students in these projects.

First, it is important to secure field placements that allow students without a child welfare background to learn about child welfare practice. This can be a challenge if the public agency has rules about whether students can carry cases or has limitations regarding staff providing field instruction. Some schools in the project found that the field education office must provide for field instruction directly or arrange for an outside social worker to provide the instruction. In programs where students are already employed as social workers in their child welfare agency, the challenge becomes securing field learning opportunities that are different from the student's current job and that challenge them to learn in new areas. In both instances field offices must develop a close working relationship with the child welfare agencies. Much like other field placements for social work students, traineeship programs need to ensure that the placement provides enough meaningful learning activities for the student. Challenges emerge when issues of student safety are not addressed or assigned tasks are not at the level expected for an MSW field placement. Programs want students to be useful but at the same time have a responsibility to ensure the quality of the educational experience.

In addition, many programs offer specialized seminars and other learning opportunities for students enrolled in the project. Special topics such as culturally responsive leadership in child welfare, trauma informed practice, and motivational interviewing were covered where it was determined that there was a specialized learning need or a gap in the curriculum. The faculty liaison role takes on additional importance in many projects. One school hired a specialized faculty liaison that provided additional mentoring on a monthly basis to all students involved in the program. Monthly meetings are held in each participating child

welfare agency to allow for ongoing mentoring and to build a network among participating students who were at various stages in their educational program.

No single model will work in all projects but it is vital that field education offices be involved from the beginning in the design of the project and that they be supported with additional resources as needed to achieve program success.

5. Role of the SSW Administration

All MSW traineeship programs provide examples of clear and concrete supports for the Traineeship from both their school administration and/or the administrators of Title IV-E funded stipend programs concurrently being administered in their schools. This support made a difference for traineeships by allowing them to enhance programming and provide a number of additional supports for students and faculty. It is important to note that private and public schools have access to different kinds of tangible and intangible resources.

Some schools of social work provide tuition support, workload relief, administrative support and money for travel for faculty and students to attend meetings and conferences. Some schools are able to match funds and some provide funding to cover the trainees' entire tuition. Some faculty receive course release in compensation for time spent on administering the traineeship and some schools provide funding for the annual Chicago meeting so those funds could be used to support other traineeship activities. Trainees are encouraged and funded by some schools to attend professional meetings and present at local, state or national conferences.

Some schools also provide funding to offer enrichment seminars that included other students, agency workers and trainees (e.g. "Undoing Racism"). One school was also given access to support staff that assisted in the design and the printing of professional posters free of charge.

Traineeships in schools with Title IV-E programs benefit from shared resources such as a doctoral student assistant able to assist with the traineeship evaluation activities such as data collection. Enrichments offered by the Title IV-E programs, such as licensing preparation seminars, were open to traineeship students. Courses developed by Title IV-E funded programs were also made available to traineeship students.

Organizational Level – Child Welfare Agency/Tribal Agency

1. Recruitment & Selection of Field Instructors

Increasing caseloads and agency work expectations take their toll on field instructor recruitment. Additionally, depending on the agency and geographic location, there are few or even no concrete incentives for being a field instructor in many child welfare agencies. Traineeships devised a variety of ways to overcome these barriers for the benefit of students and ultimately for the enhancement of the partnership between universities and agencies. These include: offering enrichment seminars that count toward licensing requirements; groups for sharing ideas with field instructor peers and faculty members; and, increased access to faculty and school resources.

An important intangible incentive is the positive sense of self that field instructors experience knowing that they are training the next generation of child welfare professionals. For many field instructors, even small offerings from the schools such as a chance to discuss the course syllabi with faculty and having their ideas heard by the schools can go a long way in enhancing positive attitudes. The traineeship schools were quick to build reciprocal relationships with agency field instructors in an effort to both recruit new field instructors and maintain those with years of experience.

Cooperation from agencies with regard to assigning time for field instructors to meet with and supervise students is crucial. Some agencies used task supervisors to fill in for a limited number of certified field instructors. This worked well when the task supervisors and field instructors were in frequent communication. Ultimately, the field instructor was responsible for the overall assessment of student needs, but task supervisors held an important role for student education. In the instances where the agencies were not able to provide field instructors the schools were called upon to use their resources for supporting students' field supervision.

2. Nature & Range of Placements

Child welfare provides a variety of placement opportunities to meet a range of students' educational needs. Traineeship programs found opportunities for creativity both within the agency and in community partners to fulfill CSWE educational guidelines and stretch students in their professional education. For example, within the public child welfare agency, students were encouraged to use data to understand practice patterns through creating excel spreadsheets and tracking patterns in long-staying cases, including the presentation of those data to colleagues. Others have developed projects or special programs that made a lasting impact on the agency. Examples of this kind of project include: development of a Youth Advisory Committee, instituting and staffing permanency round tables, designing programs for youth at the point of transitioning from the system, and developing medical passports that provide continuity and availability of medical information and prescriptions during a child's journey through foster care. Agency partners stress the importance of their involvement at the project development stage in order to guide the student in a way that aligns with current projects or areas the agency needs particular help in.

By contrast, experienced child welfare trainees are sometimes given placements in community partner agencies. This allows them to see practice from a different lens and develop in-depth clinical or treatment skills and knowledge to improve their ability to practice and lead in the agency. Examples of such placements include: mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence programming, and community-based agencies serving particular cultural communities.

3. Agency Supports for Students

Agencies play an important role in successful traineeships, especially when it comes to recruitment and retention of qualified staff and dedicated support from their own resources to assure student success and learning. Hosting field placements was the most common example of agency dedication, with support for agency staff who served as field instructors or task supervisors for students placed with their agencies. When MSW supervision

resources were scarce, innovative partnerships provided a faculty-based field instructor to make the link to social work education, while an agency-based task supervisor with legal authority to carry cases offered the opportunity to work with specific families and instruction on agency and court practice and culture.

Agencies also support placements by developing employed social work field placements for staff so there would be no loss of income while in a new educational setting. Some agencies provide paid work release (at least one day) while staff were in school, and others strengthened that release by funding temporary staff to backfill, covering the caseloads to reduce role strain on students torn between casework and coursework. Agencies also found no-cost ways to strengthen the student experience, including sending faculty and students to child welfare meetings and conferences and providing opportunities for students to be part of emerging programs and projects.

4. Facilitating Factors & Barriers within the Agency

Each traineeship program collaborates with child welfare services in their state or county to provide field placements for their trainees. In general, the field agencies express appreciation for the specialized and intensive training offered by the projects. They feel that the stipend programs were meeting specific needs that they were seeing in their offices (such as the need for bilingual workers or the need for leadership training). One program also developed specialized field placement units to meet the areas of greatest needs as identified by the local agency.

Yet there are also barriers that need to be overcome. Programs report a variety of barriers, including a lack of available supervisors for the field students, a lack of timely communication with the field program (e.g., when a student was having a difficult time), and difficulty in having to negotiate with multiple offices regarding field placements. Other barriers include small office size in rural areas and unfilled vacancies in the field agency. However, these barriers were only experienced by a handful of programs and most feel that the collaboration with the field agency went smoothly.

One program reports that they provide a field instructor for all the stipend students (as well as the Title IV-E students) in their child welfare placement. The field instructor is a university employee who meets with the students on a weekly basis for supervision. The local agency provides an office to the field instructor so that the instructor has the ability to meet with students at the local agency and could also connect with the site-based supervisors. The student is also assigned a task supervisor from the agency who assigns the students their day-to-day tasks. This has the additional advantage of allowing the program to utilize task supervisors who were not licensed social workers, and consequently expand the number of supervisors available. However, some students did mention that they would have preferred for their task supervisor to also be a social worker, as they felt that the approach taken by the supervisor would have been different.

5. External Partnerships

Schools report a range of partnerships with the child welfare agencies such as pre-existing community research collaborations, relationships that were already in existence yet needed

revitalizing, and some having to develop new partnerships all together. Some programs built on the partnerships already developed through their Title IV-E stipend programs.

Close collaboration with the child welfare agency from early in the project is of utmost importance in building a stipend program. All programs stress that partnerships with the agency require on-going maintenance and relationship-building activities on the part of the school and stress the importance of agency participation in the selection of students. One school convened quarterly meetings at the state level to troubleshoot issues that emerged around payback of the traineeship stipend or field issues. Agency partners emphasize that in their view, the most successful traineeships will be those that view the school, the student and the agency as a team that uses a shared decision-making model throughout the traineeship.

Key to initiating or sustaining partnerships with child welfare agencies is an understanding of how the agency operates at the state and county level and which unit has decision-making authority over what kinds of decisions. There are different types of negotiations that are dependent on the structure of how the child welfare agency is administered in each state or county. For example, in one situation the placements and contact persons were at the county level but the state made decisions about what workers could participate and who would be hired. In another instance, each county maintained its own child welfare office, so that negotiations had to be held with each county separately.

Difficulty for the graduates in obtaining employment is a barrier encountered by several programs. In at least one situation, the local agency wanted to hire the project's graduates, but the state personnel office was not sending the names for consideration for the position. In this situation, the candidates that were sent to the local office for consideration had more experience working with children but did not have experience in child protective services. The state agency worked with the project to increase the likelihood that the project's graduates would be sent to the local hiring official, but the state agency was also limited by its personnel regulations.

Regional & National Level

1. Collaboration Challenges & Opportunities

Formal and informal collaborative opportunities across traineeships offer faculty and traineeship staff vehicles for troubleshooting and problem-solving. Teleconferences that facilitate substantive conversations and reflection on program activities resulting in a product, such as this legacy document, are useful. Overwhelmingly, the most useful collaborative opportunity mentioned by faculty was the Annual Chicago Meeting, which allowed face-to-face contact and sharing of innovations and collaborative projects.

Collaboration across traineeships that involves the sharing of collective knowledge is identified as supportive to the administration of traineeships. Schools report adapting strategies first developed by other schools into their traineeships. Collaborative products (e.g., [Promising Approaches & Strategies](#); [Collection of Syllabi](#)) are used as resources for improving the implementation of traineeship programs, for developing curriculum, as a tool and resource to encourage other faculty to use child welfare content in their courses, and as

supplements to other projects faculty were working on. One school working with a sister school in China sent the model syllabus materials as a curriculum development resource.

In regard to opportunities for students, the NING site (a social networking website) was one way for students to develop a collective professional identity outside of their school and connect to other traineeship students. Webinars developed particularly for students also support and enrich the work of the traineeships. One program collaborated with a webinar presenter to translate the presentation (Cultural Humility) into Spanish. Having the traineeship program dedicate faculty to provide mentorship for tribal students in order to develop and present at NICWA was an invaluable support.

2. Benefits & Impact of Partnership with NCWWI

The benefits of being part of NCWWI allow traineeships *access to resources* such as webinars and evaluation data that enrich individual program activities and assist schools in evaluating their programs. The provision of a *program evaluation* through the collection of aggregated data that crossed programs was a tool used for program assessment and development by the traineeships.

Schools also report being able to draw upon competency and curriculum projects conducted, facilitated and disseminated by NCWWI. All schools and students are provided with, and evaluated against, a competency framework of basic child welfare skills developed through NCWWI. Several schools also accessed and used the NCWWI leadership competencies as a frame of reference for advanced placements and a leadership seminar.

Each traineeship program identified specific ways that participation in NCWWI was unique to the development of individual programs:

*Case Western University:

If we were to identify the one way in which our participation as part of NCWWI was critical, we would say the yearly conferences. There can be no substitute for face-to-face connections, even in an age of virtual meetings and advanced technology.

*New Mexico State University:

We have not engaged in much collaboration, I wish that we had done more of it! We have benefitted from having the guidance of NCWWI leaders in structuring the program, for example, in identifying ways to increase the placement rates of our students post-graduation. It has provided us with resources and information for both faculty and students.

*Portland State University:

The NING helped students develop a strong sense of identity and common professional cause with peers across the nation. We would also name the wider latitude in student selection and service-payback guidelines provided by these IV-B traineeships over our pre-existing IV-E program.

*University of Illinois at Chicago:

If we were to identify the one way in which participation as part of NCWWI was critical for our Traineeship program, we would say it is the collaboration across programs and the

sharing of information regarding innovations and strategies to facilitate student success. Our program has learned much from the experiences of other programs and has adopted some of these strategies to improve our own program.

***University of Maryland:**

If we were to identify the one way in which participation as part of NCWWI was critical for our Traineeship program, we would say that it was the opportunity to be involved with the national program activities. There was particular value in our participation in the national evaluation for the NCWWI funded traineeships and, as a result, to receive information regarding the national evaluation findings, and compare them with the outcomes of our traineeship. NCWWI's focused evaluation allowed for the collection of useful information across the traineeships in terms of struggles, accomplishments, and ultimately, lessons learned. The opportunity to participate in a national learning community focused on the preparation and development of public child welfare workforce was unique and enhanced our program in many ways, formally and informally, through peer network conversations, structured interaction at national meetings, webinars, and the ability of our students to connect to other trainees through the student peer network. Our students had an opportunity to develop leadership skills through their participation in the NING and through presentations at the NCWWI board meetings.

***Yeshiva University:**

The resources of NCWWI including the on-line resources, access to Gateway resources, access to colleagues with experience working with the Children's Bureau, have all helped the faculty become more dedicated to child welfare workforce development. The financial resources available to our program allowed us to give substantial stipends to students who might not have been able to participate in the program without this assistance.

III. MSW Traineeship Program Descriptions & Signature Innovations

The Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) Child Welfare Training Fellows Project: Case Western Reserve University

The Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) Child Welfare Training Fellows project targeted public child welfare systems in Northeast Ohio (Cuyahoga, Lake & Summit Counties in particular). Over the project period we provided masters level training for 25 public child welfare workers (5 students per year) in our weekend format (Intensive Semester). The Mandel School has an innovative ability-based master's program (ABLE, Ability Based Learning Environment). Using our "eight abilities framework," we developed a plan for how to achieve child welfare competencies developed by the Ohio Institute for Human Services within our Child, Youth and Families Concentration. Participants in this project (hereafter called Fellows) were taught to be leaders and managers in public child welfare, using the competencies as a tool for specific skills they need to be effective leaders and managers.

Innovative aspects of this project include hiring a field faculty advisor to not only provide supervision but also to: develop weekly seminars featuring speakers; professional and personal leadership development activities; assist with projects for students at the agency; and oversee the development of portfolios to document student learning in the eight abilities. We also gave students \$500 per year while they were students to pursue additional professional development opportunities by attending a conference. Each student developed a portfolio that documented their learning and gave a poster presentation about the specific ability or abilities where they had the greatest growth.

Over five years MSASS contributed \$1,277,522 to the \$1,827,522 initiative. The contribution included awarding scholarships to cover tuition costs not covered by the award for each participant in the project as well as faculty and staff time given to the project. We continually evaluated this initiative to improve the performance and success of participants in order to assure timely graduation as well as evaluating participants' skill levels, the child welfare curriculum in our master's program, and the professional practice, leadership and management skills of participants.

"If our program were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students, the school, and for the child welfare field, we would say..." *it was having them develop posters that addressed one or more abilities as related to child welfare competencies. For our school, it would be the opportunity to network with other schools focusing on child welfare. For the field, it is improving the quality of the workforce that will affect both the organization and the services delivered.*

The Hispanic Child Welfare Traineeship Project: New Mexico State University

The Hispanic Child Welfare Traineeship Project, a project of the New Mexico State University School of Social Work, provides Spanish-speaking social work students who are interested in child welfare with the opportunity to improve their bilingual skills. The primary goal of the Hispanic Child Welfare Traineeship project is to develop linguistically and culturally competent child welfare workers. Trainees receive specialized coursework and training in child welfare and complete a one year placement in a supervised child welfare practicum setting.

Before beginning their child welfare practicum, the trainees take a class on Spanish for child welfare workers. This course provides students with the opportunity to develop and practice legal, medical, psychological, and other social work-related terminology in Spanish. Participants are placed in a Spanish language seminar for two semesters giving the students a total of three semesters of professional Spanish language immersion. For their field placement, stipend recipients are placed in a child welfare setting with social workers who provide services to monolingual Spanish-speaking families.

Some of the tasks that students have been able to assist with during their social work practicum placement include: interpreting for Spanish-speaking families during family-centered meetings, interpreting for social workers and clients during home visits, translating documents from English to Spanish for their agency, providing needed services to Spanish-speaking clients in their own language, comforting Spanish-speaking children who come into the child welfare system, and explaining rules and regulations that are written in English to clients who do not speak English.

The students and agencies who have participated in this project feel that it has been very successful and met an important need in the community. Tabitha Nieto, an MSW student who received the Hispanic Child Welfare stipend last year, shared a memorable experience of working with a man who found out that he was the father of a three month old girl who was in the custody of child protective services. Ms. Nieto stated, “After months of working with the father, he finally told me he did not understand the forms he had signed. I translated the forms that he had already signed. He said “now I know what is expected of me as a father.” These types of stories happen too often in the field, and being a bilingual social worker with [the local agency] helps Spanish-speaking families understand their rights. This to me is the true meaning of social work.”

“If our program were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students, the school, and for the child welfare field, we would say...” our class on Spanish for Child Welfare Workers was the most important innovation at New Mexico State University. It has helped reinforce child welfare knowledge in our students while also preparing them in professional language skills needed in child welfare. We also provided our field seminar in Spanish to reinforce the learning from the class.

The Culturally Responsive Leadership Traineeship Program: Portland State University

The Culturally Responsive Leaders program is the NCWWI child welfare traineeship program hosted by Portland State University's School of Social Work. Designed to support current and future child welfare leaders from diverse backgrounds, this program provides a stipend of \$11,000 per student per year, plus customized advising and placements. In addition to participating in the School's Leadership track, students gather on a monthly basis in a seminar that promotes peer learning and provides mentorship specific to their needs and career goals. Graduates of the Culturally Responsive Leadership program now serve in leadership roles with national, state, private and tribal child welfare programs.

"If our program were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students, the school, and for the child welfare field, we would say..." that the seminar on leadership for culturally responsive students, which emphasized leadership competencies, and provided mentors for students of color in negotiating intersecting cultural and professional identities, was a powerful core of our program.

Jane Addams Child Welfare Traineeship Project: University of Illinois at Chicago

The Jane Addams Child Welfare Traineeship Project provides financial assistance to select students in the final year of the Master of Social Work program who are committed to a career in child welfare. Selected students participate in an educational program designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to address the complex needs of children and families in Illinois who come to the attention of the child welfare system. In addition to core knowledge and skills, the training program provides enhanced training in priority areas of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS): systems of care, trauma-informed practice, building protective factors, and addressing the overrepresentation of children of color. Upon completion of the traineeship, students complete a minimum of one year of employment in a public or private child welfare agency.

The Jane Addams Child Welfare Traineeship Project is a collaboration of the Jane Addams College of Social Work, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, ChildServ, Jane Addams Hull House Association, the Illinois African American Family Commission, and the Child Care Association of Illinois. Through this collaboration, students receive enhanced training in specially developed field units that reinforces the curriculum and provides opportunities for students to develop and practice their skills.

A steering committee consisting of the project partners, Jane Addams faculty, and additional community stakeholders oversees the process of selecting students and identifying curricular improvements to be responsive to emerging needs and issues facing children and families in Illinois. Eight students are selected each year, and each student receives a stipend of \$9,000.

“If our program were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students, the school, and for the child welfare field, we would say...” *it is our partnership with the state child welfare agency that allows students to complete the agency’s foundation training program for new caseworkers as part of their curriculum and take the child welfare employee license examination prior to graduation. This has greatly facilitated our students obtaining employment upon graduation, as well as providing them with necessary skills to be effective in their positions.*

The NCWWI Traineeship Project at the University of Maryland School of Social Work

The NCWWI Traineeship Project at the University of Maryland School of Social Work has focused on the development of an integrated coursework and internship experience that prepares BSW and MSW students for social work practice in urban child welfare systems. Field Instructors and students have received training in motivational interviewing, trauma-informed child welfare practice, and other content areas focused on the needs of children and families in urban areas that are served by the public child welfare system. The project has allowed the school to develop experiential methods for teaching motivational interviewing in the classroom (live supervision) and integrate it into the field placement through the efforts of the trained field instructors. The curriculum at the School of Social Work has been impacted by the inclusion of motivational interviewing in social work practice classes and an elective course that has been developed on *Urban Issues in Child Welfare*. Students are required to accept employment in one of the urban jurisdictions of the state after graduation.

“If our program were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students, the school, and for the child welfare field, we would say...” *it was the development of a comprehensive strategy for teaching and implementing motivational interviewing skills into the child welfare curriculum already developed for Title IV-E students. The existing curriculum both in the classroom and in seminars aligned with Maryland’s child welfare competencies has resulted in a strong knowledge base in public child welfare practice for our Title IV-E participants.*

The NCWWI resources enabled us to extend our motivational interviewing training beyond the classroom setting (“knowing”) and into the field placement, with a focus on strategies for moving students toward proficiency in their mastery of motivational interviewing skills (“doing”). With the commitment of the five year traineeship, the approach was deliberate and incremental. In the first year, program faculty and field instructors received training in motivational interviewing concepts and focused on developing their own practice competency in motivational interviewing. In year two the focus shifted to introducing motivational interviewing to child welfare students, further developing the faculty’s proficiency using standardized patients in public child welfare case scenarios; and on reinforcing motivational interviewing approaches to child welfare practice in field instruction sessions with students. In years three and four, we were able to experiment with live supervision models, working with students in small groups with specific focus on implementing motivational interviewing skills differentially throughout the life of the child welfare intervention.

Evaluation by students participating in the live supervision has been overwhelmingly positive; students report much improved ability to understand and embrace their role as an “interventionist” with their child welfare clients, and significant movement in their ability to use the skills in interviews with standardized clients to engage their clients and move them toward commitment to change. Because the program employs faculty field instructors, the reinforcement of this learning occurs in the field instruction setting in public child welfare agencies.

Additional outcomes of this innovation in the way we teach motivational interviewing are that the initiative has informed the inclusion of motivational interviewing content in the overall MSW curriculum and that the program is now collaborating with the child welfare agencies to adapt training to existing child welfare workers and supervisors in local public child welfare agencies to adapt the training model for seasoned child welfare practitioners.

Child Welfare Traineeship Project Serving Hispanic Families: Yeshiva University

Wurzweiler School of Social Work was the only New York School of Social Work awarded a child welfare traineeship grant from the U.S. Children’s Bureau. This was a very exciting opportunity for Wurzweiler and its partner, New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). Trainees accepted into this project were helped to develop their leadership skills to promote and deliver excellence in child welfare services to Hispanic families in NYC.

Students from ACS and provider agencies were admitted to this project for two years of full-time graduate education or three years including a part-time year of study. Trainees were given two different field placements as well. Students completing the program received an MSW degree with a Certificate in Child Welfare Practice (CCWP). The project offered scholarships to all trainees ranging from \$7,500 to \$15,000 a year. Child welfare workers from preventive or foster care agencies that have contracts with ACS were eligible to apply. Bilingual Spanish/English language skills and bicultural Hispanic applicants were preferred but a commitment to develop culturally competent child welfare practice knowledge, skills and values was of equal importance for acceptance into this project.

All trainees enrolled in specialized coursework infused with child welfare content and received a certificate (CCWP) upon graduation that involved eight key program components: (1) Orientation Seminars, (2) Child welfare specific MSW core coursework, (3) Field placements in child welfare, (4) Specialized MSW elective coursework, (5) Professional enrichment seminars, (6) Capstone Community Research Project, (7) Transition seminars, and (8) Peer Mentoring and Networking.

By May 2013, twenty-three scholarship recipients had graduated from Wurzweiler. There remain two scholarship recipients who will graduate in May 2014, and Wurzweiler will continue to offer scholarships to child welfare workers in the future. In addition to these 25

child welfare graduates, another 20 – 25 non-scholarship recipients will meet the criteria for a Certificate in Child Welfare Practice by graduation.

The project organized a special series of enrichment seminars focused around the disproportionate number of children of color in the child welfare system. Each of the eight sessions took place in a different NYC university, and were generally well-attended by a minimum of 100 ACS or child welfare participants. A bibliography on disproportionality in child welfare practice was the last activity in this series. We also held annual Spring Conferences here at Wurzweiler on Latino Children and Families, and developed an elective course in Working with Latino Children and Families.

“If our program were to identify the one innovation in our program that was most important for students, the school, and for the child welfare field, we would say...” the traineeship brought to the faculty a more in-depth understanding of the national issues related to student training and child welfare workforce challenges. This allowed for consideration of policy implications and the need for advocacy in the area of child welfare workforce development. It also gave us increased ability to convey to our students how important their role is, from a national perspective, in working with child welfare clients. The traineeship assisted in taking our training and education out of a solely local arena which advanced student education.

Collaboration with other traineeship programs was extremely useful especially in the area of competencies. It brought to light the importance of developing national competencies and their potential use in developing the next generation of child welfare professionals.