



*Learning, Leading, Changing*

# **NCWWI's Child Welfare Traineeships: Twelve Comprehensive Program & Innovation Summaries**

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute

© May 2011, updated June 2012



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## Acknowledgements

This collection of traineeship program profiles represents a collaborative effort by the partners of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) — University at Albany/SUNY, the University of Denver, Fordham University, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Portland State University, and University of Southern Maine—and the dedicated leaders of the twelve traineeship programs who agreed to be interviewed and lend their perspectives and resource materials to this report. Thanks also to Rea Gibson, Jordan Institute for Families, UNC Chapel Hill, for her design assistance.

The NCWWI is funded through a Cooperative Agreement with U.S. DHHS, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau, Award No. 90CT0145. Special thanks to Randi Walters, Children’s Bureau Project Officer, and to Robert Lindecamp, Child Welfare Program Specialist (CB/ICF), for their continued support.

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### **Recommended citation:**

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (2011). *NCWWI’s child welfare traineeships: Twelve comprehensive program & innovation summaries*. Albany, NY: Author.

**For more information:** Please visit the NCWWI website at [www.ncwwi.org](http://www.ncwwi.org)

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## A. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2008, the Children’s Bureau created 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 contracted by the State to provide case management services traditionally provided by public child welfare. The NCWWI envisions a child welfare workforce that is

- strengthened by professional education and leadership development;
- supported by organizational practices that mirror systems of care principles;
- led by middle managers and supervisors who engage workers in designing and delivering effective services; and
- skilled at delivering promising practices that improve outcomes for children, youth and families.

To promote effective child welfare practice and leadership development, the Institute is undertaking a number of activities, including

- Developing and delivering leadership training for mid-level managers and supervisors;
- Engaging and facilitating national peer networks;
- Identifying and strategically disseminating effective and promising workforce practices;
- Administering child welfare professional education traineeship programs; and,
- Advancing knowledge through collaboration and evaluation.

NCWWI partners include nine Universities - University at Albany/SUNY, the University of Denver, Fordham University, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Portland State University, and University of Southern Maine - and the National Indian Child Welfare Association.

### **MISSION AND PURPOSE OF TRAINEESHIPS**

Although the Children’s Bureau has directly administered traineeships for a number of years, the NCWWI became responsible for this work in 2008, including conducting a process to select social work program partners and administering and evaluating these professional education stipend programs throughout the five years of the project. The intent of these traineeships is to increase the knowledge and skills of individual stipend recipients—especially related to leadership development—address the workforce challenges of local child welfare systems, and

build the capacity of college and university social work programs to prepare students for positive, culturally competent, and productive careers in child welfare.

University partners will provide: (1) a traineeship program that provides financial assistance to select trainees; (2) an educational program that increases the knowledge and skills of individual stipend recipients to address the needs of children, youth and families served by child welfare agencies; and, (3) the development and improvement of child welfare curricula and programs to promote timely graduation of trainees, to increase their skill level, professional practice and leadership ability, and to support retention in the child welfare workforce.

To that end, traineeship programs will

- Innovate and improve their child welfare offerings;
- Provide additional supports for trainees that assist in completion of degrees and retention in the field of child welfare;
- Allocate at least 65% of project funds directly to student trainees;
- Participate in a multi-site evaluation; and
- Participate in peer networks with other program participants.

Trainees are 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 work in a child welfare agency upon graduation. Trainees also will be provided with opportunities for peer-to-peer networking and other online learning experiences.

## **SELECTION OF TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM PARTNERS**

In December of 2008, a Request for Proposals for Child Welfare Traineeship Projects in BSW and MSW programs was formally issued by the NCWWI. Eligible applicants included CSWE accredited social work bachelor (BSW) and masters (MSW) programs located in the following educational institutions:

- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education;
- Private institutions of higher education;
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and,
- Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Traineeship program applicants were encouraged to identify and include creative/unique features in their projects, and to be particularly attentive to understanding and addressing diversity within the workforce, local agency workforce needs, the preparation of future child welfare leaders, Systems of Care (SOC) principles, and the guiding principles of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR).

In April of 2009, after an extensive process of peer review, and final review and recommendations from the Children's Bureau, nine programs were selected to receive funds for each of five years to support professional education for current or prospective child welfare practitioners either enrolled or planning to enroll in accredited BSW or MSW programs:

1. **Briar Cliff University** (Iowa) (BSW)
2. **Case Western University** (Ohio) (MSW)
3. **Clark Atlanta University** (Georgia) (BSW)
4. **Portland State University** (Oregon) (MSW)
5. **Salem State University** (Massachusetts) (BSW)
6. **University of Illinois-Chicago** (MSW)
7. **University of Maryland** (Combined BSW/MSW)
8. **University of Montana** (Combined BSW/MSW)
9. **Yeshiva University** (New York) (MSW)

In the fall of 2009, additional funds were made available from the Children's Bureau to support the selection of three additional traineeship programs:

10. **New Mexico State University** (BSW/MSW)
11. **Northeastern State University** (Oklahoma) (BSW)
12. **University of South Dakota** (BSW)

The initial nine traineeship programs' field placements and other project components began Fall 2009. The additional three traineeship programs began Fall 2010.

## **EARLY EVALUATION OUTCOMES**

A comprehensive plan for data collection and evaluation of the traineeship projects was developed under the leadership of the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver. Through semi-annual data collection using a Stipend Student Inventory, the evaluation is collecting data on the outcomes related to student competencies as well as employment and retention in the child welfare workforce.

In the first two years, more than 150 students have been awarded stipends through the NCWWI's 12 traineeship programs, and more than 100 of these students have completed a MSW or BSW degree. All of the students that completed a social work degree in the first year of the project were able to obtain child welfare positions (with the exception of a small group of BSW students who elected to defer their employment obligation in order to pursue an MSW degree).

The summaries that follow are an attempt to take stock of the uniqueness and creativity of the traineeship programs as they are being developed and implemented. They incorporate information gleaned from application materials, semi-annual reports, in-depth interviews with program PIs, and state and federal data regarding the child welfare systems and communities served by each project. They provide a snap-shot of the goals and initiatives of each program as they undertake their work to develop or enhance pathways from social work education in the university setting to social work practice in the field and a career commitment to child welfare work.

## **B. TWELVE TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM SUMMARIES**

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## BRIAR CLIFF UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Briar Cliff University, Department of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Sioux City, Iowa</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Siouxland (Iowa, South Dakota and Nebraska counties and cities contiguous to Sioux City, Iowa)</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Siouxland Indian Child Welfare Traineeship Project: Developing Native BSW Child Welfare Workers for Native Families (SICWTP)</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW Students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The traineeship project represents a collaboration between Briar Cliff University (BCU) Department of Social Work, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and five regional Tribes (Omaha, Ponca, Santee Sioux, Winnebago, and Yankton Sioux) to increase the number of professionally educated child welfare workers with Tribal backgrounds. Although Native children and families have consistently been overrepresented in the area's child welfare population, as Project PI Heather Craig-Oldsen, MSW, CSW explains, "I don't recall us actually having a Native student since 1999, and I believe those two women might have actually been the first."

Currently, in the Sioux City Service Area (which includes 33 counties in Northwest Iowa), there is one Native American social worker on staff at the DHS office, and only 6 of the 168 workers employed by Boys and Girls Home, the largest private agency contracted to provide child welfare services, are Native American. Tribal social services also report a lack of professionally trained child welfare staff.

In order to address the underrepresentation of Native child welfare professionals in and around Sioux City, Iowa, BCU's traineeship project is focused on identifying, recruiting and supporting five Native BSW students annually for the five years of the project.

### STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED

All participating students are Native American. Students transfer to the school's BSW program from local community colleges and begin to receive stipends in their junior year. As PI Craig-Oldsen revealed, the Department of Social Work "decided it would be hard for first-year BSW students to fully commit to child welfare so early in their social work education, so we mainly ended up selecting juniors for participation in the project."

BCU identified an Advisory Committee for this project that is made up of representatives from DHS, the five regional tribes and representatives from Boys and Girls Home. This group identified a team meeting format for the interview and

selection of students. This format allows students to involve family and tribal supports in the interview process engaging them as primary supports for students success. The advisory committee has expanded to include students after the first group was admitted. The committee has played an important role in building partnerships to support internships and future employment of trainees.

Students' field placements begin in their final year of school, BCU has developed field placement experiences that include experiences in both DHS and tribal agency settings. This experience in both settings is unique for the traineeship students at BCU. Following graduation, traineeship students commit to working in Siouxland, either in Tribal settings, DHS or a private contract agency providing child welfare services such as Boys and Girls Home.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

There are a number of unique aspects to the BCU traineeship project:

### ***Addressing Disproportionality***

Certainly, the most distinguishing feature of the BCU traineeship project is its focus on disproportionality, and preparing Native workers to serve Native children and families. According to PI Craig-Oldsen, "the community has been working diligently at addressing disproportionality, as DHS and local Tribes have come together to combat this issue. But because this is a significant problem here, it was critical that our school work with them on this issue as well." Hence, as a result of the traineeship project, the school, DHS and the five Tribes have come together and built a true collaboration. PI Craig-Oldsen notes that "it's been years since we'd had a real collaboration with DHS, and this project helped move us into a full partnership with the public agency, as well as with the Tribes."

All of the BCU trainees, along with Craig-Oldsen, are active members of the Iowa Breakthrough Collaborative, and the Community Initiative on Native Children and Families (CINCF), groups that are addressing disproportionality of Native children in out-of-home care. The group "meets with state legislators and child welfare agency administrators and directors, so this is an excellent opportunity for the students to engage with child welfare, Tribal and state leaders on an important issue facing the system in which they will be working."

### ***Providing Additional Supports and Opportunities***

Project staff have also recognized the importance of providing traineeship students with additional supports, because of the challenges associated with transferring from a community college and adjusting to the new pace and workload of the University. To provide this critical support net, the Director of Field Education, the Project Director and Advisors meet regularly with the students. In this way, according to PI Craig-Oldsen, "the students feel very connected to their new school, and know how to access and navigate the higher education structure's chain of

command. We want them to develop leadership skills, so we ensure that they have this important one-on-one time with the leaders of their own social work program." Beginning in the 2010-2011 academic year, students have had bi-monthly opportunities to participate in child welfare luncheons. Child welfare leaders, resource parents and practitioners from the community are invited to these luncheons providing students opportunities for additional learning through informal interaction.

### **Ensuring Student Recognition**

Finally, in addition to providing opportunities to trainees, this project has identified a number of ways to acknowledge traineeship students. These include kick off dinners at the beginning of the academic year that recognize the important first steps these students are making: several are the first in their family to attend college and, in most cases, will be the first or only Native social work professional in the child welfare agencies where they intern and, later, work. The first "kick-off" dinner was held at the start of the 2009 school year, and guests included the six students, each of whom brought a family member; the President of the University; a state senator; a Native American advocate and member of the traineeship Advisory Committee; representatives from the offices of other state officials, who all brought congratulatory letters for the students; the two 1999 Native American alumna who also serve on the Advisory Committee, and who presented the students with prints made by a local artist who champions education. After receiving words of encouragement and praise from many of these guests, each of the six students presented the University with a Statement of Commitment, publicly expressing their dedication to social work and a professional career serving vulnerable children and families in the child welfare system. As PI Craig-Oldsen contends, "we really wanted them to begin experiencing social work in front of high powered community and education members, so they could see that what they have chosen is such important work, and respected by so many different leaders in our community."

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

The Department of Social Work has developed *Indian Child Welfare*, a one-hour independent research course with an emphasis on Siouxland tribes. As the University transitions from a term calendar to semester calendar in 2011, this course will be combined with a similar one-hour course *Social Work and the Law*, adding in additional content related to preparation for court. Students also take an existing Child Welfare elective. The instruction in this course is augmented using child welfare leaders as guest speakers. Finally, the Department has also reviewed the Native American content in each of its Foundation courses, and made modifications to strengthen their tribal child welfare focus.

### **OBSTACLES**

The Advisory Group and the faculty initially planned for a gathering place for this traineeship student group. Interestingly, early on in the project it was recognized

that traineeship students did not have a place where they can gather together on campus. As PI Craig-Oldsen explains, "we worked with the broader university community about welcoming our traineeship students, with the Director of Multicultural Programming, but as of right now, we just don't have a nice space for them to gather. Interestingly, though, when we brought this issue back to the students themselves, and asked them if they wanted a place only for Native students, or a space for all minority groups to come together on campus, they chose the latter. So already, even though they are very new to the school and could easily have chosen to connect only with other Native students, they are interested in reaching out, and making connections with other minority groups."

In the first two years of the project considerable effort has gone into providing supports to traineeship students. Even with additional support students have been challenged in successfully meeting the academic expectations at BCU. In addition some students have struggled with life challenges in a number of areas including parenting, grand parenting and other family responsibilities as well as financial hardship. BCU faculty continues to work collaboratively with students, their support systems and tribal partners to understand and respond to the specific needs of this student group. Students have been allowed to take leaves from the program to attend to outside responsibilities with the hope that when they return they will have a greater chance of success.

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

In the short-term, the BCU traineeship project is focused on enhancing outreach and recruitment of Native American students and supporting the students to successfully make the often difficult transition from community college coursework to the University's BSW program.

- Craig-Oldsen is committed to providing traineeship students opportunities to be a part of the State and National social work community. Students have been recognized through the following contributions: Students have assisted Craig-Oldsen in presenting about the program at the 2009 BPD (Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors) conference in Atlanta, GA and at the Iowa NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Symposium in 2010.
- In June of 2010 BCU hosted the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) regional conference, in which faculty and traineeship students participated.
- In October of 2010, a traineeship student assisted Craig-Oldsen in a presentation at the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) annual meeting in Portland, OR. The presentation focused on the benefits of infusing gerontology content into social work practice and policy courses. The student presented from the perspective of a child welfare student with a focus on issues of cultural competence.

- In the fall of 2010 traineeship students developed a cultural responsiveness workshop for both fellow students and employees of DHS. One of the trainees has continued to provide monthly cultural responsiveness training to DHS staff, at the request of the Service Area Manager.
- In the spring of 2011 one of the trainees co-presented with the PI at the National Indian Child Welfare Association's annual conference in Anchorage, Alaska. The presentation focused on the challenges and successes of the Siouxland Indian Child Welfare Traineeship Project.

In October of 2010, BCU also sponsored a focus group, facilitated by a national trainer, Denise Gibson (Kansas Children's Alliance), who is the master trainer/consultant for the Partnering for Permanence and Safety Model Approach to Partnerships in Parents (PS:MAPP) program (the sole training program used in Iowa and also used in parts of Nebraska). Tribal leaders, public and private agency staff, trainees, faculty, and resource parents participated in a process to identify ideas for creating more Native-friendly resource parent training. Representatives of the University of South Dakota traineeship program were also invited to participate. One of the trainees has taken the responsibility of leadership of this project and plans to continue working with what she has named the *Native American Foster Home Initiative* (NAFHI). NAFHI volunteers will meet with the Kansas Children's Alliance staff and C.E.O. this spring to formalize a longer-term working agreement designed to provide improvements to the PS:MAPP program.

In the second year of the project, BCU began collaborating with the University of South Dakota's traineeship project. In September of 2010, BCU's faculty, community Tribal partners, and trainees participated in the University of South Dakota's Systems of Care training. This was mutually-beneficial, as BCU's emphasis on Indian child welfare assisted the national trainers in their improvement of the training relative to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

The BCU traineeship project also has a number of long-term goals. According to PI Craig-Oldsen, "we hope to be pioneers in this work, and to use the coming years to examine what we're doing through this project to better understand three things - (1) the best methods of recruiting Tribal students for careers in social work and child welfare; (2) the factors that contribute to retaining Tribal professionals in predominantly Euro-American settings; and (3) best practices in teaching Indian child welfare content within the context of a BSW curriculum."

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## CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Case Western Reserve University, The Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS)</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Cleveland, Ohio</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Northeast Ohio</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Ability-Based Child Welfare Training Fellows</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>MA Students (Social Administration)</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The traineeship project at Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) is focused on increasing the number of public child welfare employees in Northeastern Ohio with Master's degrees. Currently, only 15% of the staff at the largest county child welfare department in the region (Cuyahoga County) hold Master's degrees. The MSASS project hopes to increase this number by providing seasoned child welfare professionals with a social work education that prepares them to assume positions of upper management and leadership in their current public child welfare agencies.

The School offers an ability-based Master's Degree program (ABLE: Ability Based Learning Environment), which structures the achievement of critical child welfare competencies (as developed by the Ohio Institute for Human Services) around a framework of eight abilities: Intentionally Use Yourself; Apply Social Work Methods; Integrate Social Work Values and Ethics; Value a Diverse World; Think Critically; Communicate Effectively; Advocate for Social Justice; and, Succeed in the World of Work.

As a cohort, traineeship students attend MSASS's weekend Master's degree program, which allows social service professionals in Northeast Ohio to overcome the typical barriers of time and finances to pursue a Master's degree in Social Administration, Child, Youth & Families Concentration (equivalent to an MSW degree) by attending classes one weekend per month for three years (Intensive Weekend Program).

The MSASS has contributed \$1.2 million to the project, allowing for the funding of four additional traineeship students, tuition costs not covered by the grant, and additional faculty and staff time.

### STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED

Traineeship students have all been employed in child welfare for at least three years. As Project PI Victor Groza, PhD, MSW, explains, all participating students are "people already employed in the field, very experienced folks who were going

into our weekend intensive program. Their stories and photos are up on the website<sup>1</sup> I created for the project. As you can see, they are all incredibly committed to this work, and a diverse group." Current and previous traineeship students have been employed in three different county agencies (Lake County, Summit County and Cuyahoga County) in a range of child welfare positions: Child Protective Services Caseworker; Caseworker in Specialized Adoption Unit for Older Youth; Caseworker in Placement Services/Kinship Department; Supervisor of specialized units; Social Services Supervisor; and Senior Manager.

Most students' field placements are provided at their place of employment, but in different departments or projects. Some students elect to conduct their field work in other child serving agencies. Students propose their field placement assignments in their application materials for the graduate program. A field faculty advisor has been specifically hired and trained to help students in their learning, including developing portfolios to document their learning.

PI Groza notes that student and agency feedback has been incredibly positive: "they love it, they're just so thankful - it's what we hear all the time now. They're just so thankful for this project. We've had a strong, preexisting relationship with these agencies for more than two decades, so it was easy to apply for the project, hear back that we'd been accepted in May, and then get our ideal students into the program for August - we just had such a strong infrastructure in place already, we could get everything in place quickly. Now, the first year cohort is helping socialize the second year cohort into the Intensive Weekend program and the expectation of graduate students at MSASS."

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

There are a number of innovative aspects to the MSASS traineeship project.

### ***Strengthening the Current Child Welfare Workforce***

The most unique feature of the MSASS project is that it supports professionals who are currently employed in local child welfare agencies, and who have demonstrated at least a three year commitment to the work. As PI Groza notes, "we went to people already employed in child welfare, folks interested in our weekend program, so they were a ready pipeline into the agencies, and we could count on them staying not only for their three-year payback period, but much longer, so they could become leaders of their agencies."

### ***Expanding Professional Networks***

One of the other distinguishing features of the MSASS traineeship project is that students move together through the Master's degree program as a cohort. This approach offers a number of benefits. It allows students to expand their professional

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<sup>1</sup> The website address is <http://msass.case.edu/faculty/vgroza/CWFP.html>

child welfare network, as their fellow weekend students become professional contacts during the week. It encourages more in-depth learning, as reading assignments and classroom dialogue become enriched by students' professional experiences and knowledge sharing. PI Groza asserts that "students can build upon the connections they are making with other traineeship students in their work during the week. They have new people they can reach out to, both in their own agencies, and their regional networks."

### ***Providing Additional Opportunities for Professional Development***

Through monthly field seminar meetings, all students engage in a yearlong group learning and some students participate in a research project using statewide automated child welfare information systems (SACWIS) data to better understand Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) processes, Systems of Care and the use of data to inform other child welfare issues. Field seminar meetings include opportunities for students to participate in professional and leadership development activities. All students develop individual learning portfolios that help demonstrate the level of achievement in the eight Abilities in the context of the child welfare competencies. Unlike the typical field model where student meet field instructors once or twice a semester, the MSASS Child Welfare Fellows meet with the field instructor monthly. These meetings are as a group and additional individual meetings are held to help specific students with their learning.

All students in field are required to include 16 hours each semester of professional development activities, and fellows are provided with funding to attend one conference a year to enhance professional development.

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

MSASS added an Ability and Competency monthly field seminar (described above) which helps students integrate fieldwork and coursework as they develop their yearlong group learning project; discuss the intersection of the eight Abilities and related child welfare competencies; incorporate leadership development concepts; and, produce their individual portfolios. This field seminar also features different professionals who come to speak on a range of different child welfare topics. In addition, students are required to take a specialized course dealing with leadership, management and supervision that has been developed by the MSASS.

The School has modified its existing Child Welfare Practice course to include CFSR and Systems of Care content as well as to assure that it addresses issues public child welfare workers face.

### **OBSTACLES**

Although the current traineeship cohort is one-third people of color, there is only one male student. According to PI Groza, "our biggest issue right now is to figure out a way to attract more men to our Master's degree program. It's fairly diverse

racially and ethnically, but we only have one male student right now, and it would be great to have more of a mix in the group. Also, the largest metropolitan county is undergoing county government restructuring that is having a tremendous impact on the child welfare agency. The ensuing chaos, and the death of a child welfare worker this year, has increased the stress already encountered by public child welfare workers."

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

The MSASS traineeship project hopes to provide students with the tools required for them to become child welfare leaders in the region, and beyond. As PI Groza explains, "because we've been really strategic about who we've recruited - since we wanted folks who were supervisors or had a strong likelihood of becoming supervisors after they finished the program - we're hoping to see a real long term commitment to working in these child welfare agencies, and eventually leading them."

Additionally, the project has created a renewed energy and excitement about social work and increased the number of applicants to the weekend program at MSASS. The School is hopeful this trend will continue. As PI Groza points out, "becoming a traineeship site has had a ripple effect. Some applicants who hadn't explored our Child Welfare Fellows program or didn't get accepted into it became so interested in the school because of it, that they applied and got into the school and are just paying their own way (and we do make it a little easier for them, since we offer a 25% discount for working in a public agency). These current students are so excited about the project that they are going back to their agencies and getting their colleagues interested in us. And we even had one student who didn't get an award, but wanted to do the program anyway, and that student figured out a way to pay for it."

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## CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Clark Atlanta University, Whitney M. Young, Jr., School of Social Work (WMYJSSW)</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Atlanta, Georgia</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Metropolitan Atlanta</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>The Next Generation Child Welfare Traineeship (NGCWT)</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Whitney M. Young, Jr., School of Social Work (WMYJSSW) at Clark Atlanta University is the oldest school of social work at a historically black college or university in the country. The School utilizes an Afrocentric perspective and autonomous social work practice model guided by humanistic values. It focuses on developing students with a heightened sense of social consciousness to be creative, responsible social work professionals committed to eradicating poverty and oppression and advocating for social change, while preserving the heritage of African-American people.

The school's traineeship project is focused on preparing and supporting eight BSW students per year to fill critical workforce needs in Georgia's Department of Human Services, Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). According to the Kenny A. Consent Decree of 2005, Fulton and DeKalb counties (serving metro-Atlanta) must reduce worker caseloads to 12-17 cases, provide 160 hours of pre-service training and 20 hours of annual in-service training, and require BSW degrees for newly hired caseworkers. However, a recent review indicates that Georgia still needs to "focus attention on worker stability and manageability of caseload sizes as they are critical to sustaining the advances the State has made."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Statewide Assessment conducted as part of the state's 2007 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) found that "there is a need for additional numbers of qualified, well trained and well compensated DFCS staff as well as decreased caseloads and/or workloads per worker."<sup>3</sup> However, most recent data indicate that additional staff are still needed: many caseworkers consistently have more than 20 cases,<sup>4</sup> the Department has 20 vacancies posted outside the metro-Atlanta region, and metro-Atlanta counties have implemented a centralized hiring process in

<sup>2</sup> Period VI Monitoring Report, Kenny A. v Perdue, July 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008. Retrieved 11/20/09 from [http://www.childrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/2009-06-19\\_kenny\\_a\\_period\\_vi\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.childrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/2009-06-19_kenny_a_period_vi_final_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). *Final Report: Georgia Child and Family Services Review, September 5, 2007*. Washington, DC: US DHHS, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved 11/20/09 from [http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR-DFCS\\_CommonFiles/CFSR%20GEORGIA%20FINAL%20REPORT%202007.pdf](http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR-DFCS_CommonFiles/CFSR%20GEORGIA%20FINAL%20REPORT%202007.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services. (2008). *Outcomes measures and results: Child welfare*. Retrieved 11/20/09 from [http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR-DFCS-publication/07\\_2008\\_OM\\_CW\\_State.pdf](http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR-DFCS-publication/07_2008_OM_CW_State.pdf)

mandating that at least 15 caseworkers per month be hired in anticipation of staff turnover.

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

Social work students take “Child Welfare Programs and Services” course in the spring semester of their junior year. This has created a pool of up to 25 students to recruit into the NGCWT project during their senior year.

Students in the first two cohorts are all African-American, and hail from every region in the country According to project PI Margaret Counts-Spriggs, Ph.D, the "students are very committed to working with this population to bring about lasting change; they are all rising seniors with an expressed interest in child welfare, and, in fact, two students were involved with child welfare services when they were children. So there’s a real deep commitment to this work.”

As PI Counts-Spriggs explains, “our school’s alumni and longstanding connections have really helped us to get this traineeship project off the ground.” To provide students with private agency field experience, the school partnered Families First, “one of the oldest private nonprofit agencies in the city. In fact, at the initial onset of the Project, their Director (now retired) was a graduate of our school, as was their Research Administrator, who was a recent doctoral student graduate. Both were very eager to support this project.” In addition, the school has developed a policy-level field placement at the Children's Bureau Regional Program Unit in the Administration for Children and Families Regional Office in Atlanta (Region 4). As PI Counts-Spriggs notes, “A member of our school’s adjunct faculty is employed as a supervisor in that office, and has also been a key supporter of the CAU Next Generation Child Welfare traineeship Project.” Finally, the school has partnered with the DFCS to provide students with county-level public agency field placements, which, as PI Counts-Spriggs notes, “was easy to do, since we also have a Title IV-E program for our graduate social work students, and a thirty-year plus history of placing students and graduates with DCFS. Thus, our relationship with DFCS was well-established to introduce this new partnership.”

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

The NGCWT offers a number of distinct components:

### ***Providing Rotational Field Placements at the Community, State and Federal Levels***

The traineeship project provides students with the opportunity to experience three different professional child welfare settings – private non-profit organization, public agency, and federal regional office – in one year. This rotational system allows students to spend seven weeks in a policy-related setting at the Atlanta-based Regional Office of the Administration for Children and Families; seven weeks in a private child welfare agency (either Families First or Grady Health System); and 16 weeks in a local DFCS office. As PI Counts-Spriggs puts it, this unique experience

provides students with “exposure to the child welfare system at three different levels – federal, state/county and community-based – and lets them try to figure out where they fit best, since they get to see the how the same issues play out in three different settings.”

### ***Using a Didactic Approach to Teaching CFSR and SOC Principles***

The project uses monthly colloquia to provide an in-depth understanding of the policies and practices that influence the child welfare system, and introduce critical standards and principles, including CFSR outcomes and Systems of Care (SOC) framework. Monthly colloquiums also include the history of child welfare, documentation, ethics, understanding grants, and organizational culture. This approach also emphasizes collaboration and collective thinking on methods to address critical child welfare issues, as students form groups to work on strength-based, solution-focused projects that address specific CFSR outcomes, and present their work at the end of the school year. Completed projects are entered into a program competition, and the winner acknowledged in the school’s “Hall of Fame.”

### ***Providing Professional Coaching and Mentoring***

Faculty members supporting the traineeship project have significant child welfare expertise and leadership experience. PI Counts-Spriggs and Mary Ashong provide academic advisement, professional coaching and mentoring, and field placement support, as well as assistance with resume writing, interviewing skills and employment searches.

Because the field lacks male and bilingual staff, this traineeship project has also focused on ensuring that these students have the role models they need to be successful in their work. The project strives to place male students with male field placement supervisors if available, in order to provide these students with additional opportunities for mentoring and coaching.

### ***Developing Post-Graduation Networks and Tracking***

The Program is developing a listserv for traineeship project graduates to exchange knowledge and information, as well as a semi-annual newsletter showcasing graduates accomplishments. The project will also collaborate with the Office of Student Affairs to track employment activities of graduates for two years following completion of their studies. Traineeship graduates will be invited to return to the school and share their experiences with current traineeship students and attend annual reunions to showcase their successes in the child welfare field. Finally, the project is developing an assurance reminder system to generate payback reminders to ensure traineeship recipients fulfill these commitments.

## **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

The school currently offers two child welfare courses – *Child Welfare Programs and Services* and *Issues in Child Welfare: Abuse, Neglect and Investigation* – and

students are introduced to child welfare policies through the course *Social Welfare Policies and Services*. Over the first two years of the project, courses have been reviewed and strengthened through assuring that they address the child welfare competencies identified by the NCWWI evaluation group. As noted previously, students are also required to attend monthly colloquia and develop and present group projects designed to explore various child welfare topics and help them transition from their academic setting to the frontline workforce.

## **OBSTACLES**

The NGCWT has experienced some challenges with its rotational field placement system. In the first two years of the project, the ultimate success of this rotational model has required considerable flexibility on behalf of agencies and much support from faculty. Both agencies and faculty members have had to come together to create meaningful experiences for students that also meet the needs of the placement agencies.

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

Initial outcomes are promising. Five of the eight students in the first cohort have taken a one year deferment of their employment obligation to obtain an MSW. In the fall of 2010, the remaining three were either employed or in the process of interviewing for positions in child welfare.

In the near-term, the school hopes to recruit more male students into the traineeship project in the coming years. Additionally, the traineeship project hopes to develop students' research and presentation skills. As PI Counts-Spriggs explains, "we want them, as a group maybe, to write a paper or article, maybe in the *New Social Worker*, about their experience. And we hope they can demonstrate and integration of their research skills into policy and practice, to really understand the value of that. So we're also going to be encouraging them to make presentations at child welfare conferences, or at BPD."

Long-range, PI Counts-Spriggs contends that the project hopes to develop "dedicated social workers who fulfill their payback requirements and engage in child welfare as talented professionals, because they have been provided with a diverse pool of child welfare opportunities and have seen that there is more to the field, to this work, than a frontline position at a public agency." The school would also like to strengthen the rotational field placement system so that it can be replicated at other schools of social work and possibly other areas of practice within the BSW Program Field Placement Office. According to PI Counts-Spriggs, "although there may not be a federal agency within the immediate vicinity of a BSW program, there may be a state- or county-level policy department that impacts child welfare, and could provide the same policy-level experience as our rotation in Region 4 does. If we hadn't had a federal level placement nearby, we could have looked to a state-level DHR policy rotation of some sort. The point is to show

students that there is more than one agency and path into the field of child welfare, even though not really being provided with a multi-faceted field experience has historically been the norm. Down the road, I see this rotational model as something that could be integrated in all social work programs, not just child welfare. Gerontology does this a little, but, really, we could do more of this in every social work specialty – it helps students develop a better idea of how they want to develop professionally.”

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## NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>New Mexico State University, School of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Las Cruces, New Mexico</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>New Mexico and Southeastern Texas</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Hispanic Child Welfare Training Project</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW &amp; MSW Students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The New Mexico State University's School of Social Work seeks to prepare students for practice with a chronically underserved, Spanish-speaking population. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *2010 KIDS COUNT Data Book*,<sup>5</sup> the State of New Mexico ranks 46th out of 50 states on a range of child condition measures, including infant mortality, child death rate, teen birth rate, school drop-out rate, poverty and unemployment. More than one-half of the state's child population is Hispanic, as is the population of children in foster care.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the school is located 40 miles from the US-Mexico border in an areas called "Borderland," where a high number of Mexican-American children and families live in unincorporated communities which are typified by substandard housing, lack of roads, police and fire protection, and other infrastructure services such as water, sewer and electric.

In terms of enrollment, the University reflects the demographics of the state, as it is one of the nation's largest Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), and nearly one-half of the students in the School of Social Work identify as Mexican American. However, most of these Spanish-speaking students have never taken a formal Spanish course, as they grew up speaking Spanish only with their family and friends. As a result, most of the students in the School of Social Work - native and non-native speakers alike - are in need of professional and technical Spanish language instruction to allow them to read, write and communicate effectively as social work professionals in Borderland and other underserved, Spanish-speaking areas of the state. Without this specialized instruction, the term "bilingual" has little meaning in the hiring process, as these students are unable to communicate with their clients in Spanish about complicated medical, legal, psychiatric and other systemic issues.

To meet this need, the School's Hispanic Child Welfare Training Project supports six traineeships a year for BSW or MSW students with a focus on Spanish language competency related to legal, health, child welfare and mental health concepts. Presently, considerable effort is being invested in developing and implementing a

<sup>5</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). 2010 KIDS COUNT Data book: State profiles of child well-being. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/DataBook/2010/OnlineBooks/2010DataBook.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2011). *Child welfare outcomes 2006-2009: New Mexico context data*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/downloads/pdfs/new%20mexico.pdf>

social work curriculum in Spanish. Additionally, students are placed in field placements with Spanish-speaking field instructors and participate in field seminars that are conducted in Spanish only. As co-PI Stephen Anderson, PhD, offers, "we're really expanding the discussion of cultural competence to include a focus on language competence as well, which is key in terms of fully serving the population in needs of services here. There is no standard for bilingual social work, and we'd like to help develop one."

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

Traineeship students must have a working knowledge of Spanish and an interest in child welfare. Given the state demographics, as co-PI Anderson explains, "it is not surprising that many of the prospective students have delayed going to college, maybe have already had children and have care responsibilities for their parents or relatives. Many came back to school in their late twenties or thirties, or have been recipients of welfare services, and many are the first one in their family to attend college. So our students are a little different from the typical college student, and often they are working full time and going to school full time, and struggling with managing it all, and there's stress and difficulties involved with achieving their goals, so the stipend portion of the traineeship is meaningful to them."

The School has an affiliation agreement with the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, whereby BSW and MSW students are placed throughout the state in foster care, adoption, in-home services and child protection programs with Spanish speaking supervisors. As co-PI Roditti notes, "we already have a close partnership with our local child welfare agency, and, in fact, the Division Chief is currently one of our MSW students. And basically we're the major training partner with the Department, as we do all of their training for staff as well as their core training." Overall, co-PI Anderson relays that "the response from the state has been very positive. The main criticism of our School has been that we haven't paid enough attention to language issues, so this project has been well received and welcomed by our local community, as well as students."

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

The *Hispanic Child Welfare Training Project* offers a number of innovative components:

### ***Providing Social Work Education to Hispanic Students***

This project is unique demographically, as the trainees are all Hispanic or proficient Spanish speaking students who are preparing for their social work careers working with Spanish-speaking clients. Although the Social Work program has historically had a large number of Spanish-speaking students, those students haven't been very confident with their translation skills. As co-PI Roditti explains, "Many students and professionals speak a Spanish that is spoken at home, but they don't speak the Spanish that deals with professional issues. For example, a child welfare worker

might need to explain to a client something about their court challenges, and they may know the word in English, but not in Spanish. It's the same with medical and behavioral health terminology - we need students to work with clients on higher levels professionally since they really have to make that bridge between the two languages for their clients." Hence, a portion of the traineeship funds also provide students with additional funding to take extra courses in Spanish if necessary.

### ***Infusing Spanish Language Competencies into the Curriculum***

This project incorporates child welfare, social work and language competency using the field as a signature pedagogy integrating all three components. The child welfare community needs social workers who can converse in Spanish, as well as able to translate the medical, legal and psychological language. Hence, this traineeship focuses on increasing students' Spanish language proficiency and developing a standard for bilingual social work practice. Students take a summer Spanish language course, and the overall focus of the project is on technical and professional terminology with additional focus on child welfare, mental health and legal terminology. As co-PI Anderson relays, "truly unique features will come out of this program - the focus on language competencies, and that we can say these graduates meet a standard in terms of what they can do professionally in the Spanish language. And that standard can then be used by agencies to inform how they hire and who they hire - to root the term bilingual in a set of real standards that will provide for more competent practitioners. And then all of this can translate into a certificate program in language competency for social work professionals that can be replicated elsewhere."

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

Stipend students enrolled for 2010-2011 experienced a class in *Spanish for Social Work*, a child welfare field placement, a weekly all-Spanish integrative field seminar, and courses in both child welfare practice and child welfare policy. Additionally, the traineeship project translated significant parts of text books and articles for student use due to the lack of BSW- and MSW-level materials about child welfare in Spanish. For example, the project translated all of the US Department of Health & Human Services' *Child Maltreatment Annual Report* into Spanish so that students could become fluent in the use of those kinds of terms and concepts.

Because field work is such a major component of the project, the faculty members on the project have participated in BSW and MSW curriculum changes. Foremost among this work has been the linkages made between courses in the curriculum to the field. Both on a graduate and an undergraduate level, field materials now reflect that integration in learning contracts and assignments.

## **OBSTACLES**

Because few of the public agency social workers are fully literate in the Spanish language, the project's biggest challenge continues to be the field instructors' level of Spanish proficiency, and their willingness to speak Spanish in the field, given the fact that there are a number of disincentives to doing so. As co-PI Roditti mentions, "there is a disincentive for someone to identify themselves as having the ability to work in Spanish, as the work just piles on for them. In addition, there are varying levels of competency, so it can be harder for some workers to do so than others. So there is a sense on the frontline that bilingual workers are just exploited – they have a larger workload, get called on frequently to help others, and it can feel like too much on top of an already high workload."

The project had to replace a student into another part of the child welfare agency 20 miles south of Las Cruces in order to provide the student with access to a more proficient Spanish-speaking child welfare worker and her clients. The course syllabus and learning contract have been translated into Spanish to give students and instructors the opportunity to practice using technical and academic Spanish terms, but, overwhelmingly, instructors still seem to prefer using the English version of these materials, which limits students' opportunities to continue developing and practicing their Spanish skills.

Additionally, as noted previously, there are few social work or child welfare texts available in Spanish, and the project has had to spend time and resources on translation to ensure comprehensiveness of their course offerings.

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

In the near term, the project is planning a *Hispanic Child Welfare Symposium* in September, and will be hiring a bilingual MSW student to help with the planning and logistics. The project is currently revising its Hispanic Child Welfare Field Syllabi to include child welfare competencies and its competency-based student assignments using a grading matrix, both of which will be used this coming year.

The project also plans on developing focus groups with Spanish-speaking foster parents, in collaboration with their public child welfare agency partners, and revising the syllabus for its *Spanish for Social Workers* to enhance its child welfare content. The project has hired Spanish speaking students to assist with the translation of book chapters, tables and case scenarios that will be used.

In the future, the project is also considering conducting its interview process in Spanish and involving students in doing foster parent recruitment and training in Spanish for the local child welfare agency.

Longer term, the project hopes to establish and define what bilingual professional social work is, and its related competencies. Co-PI Roditti explains that "even

though I don't think we can change the system entirely, little by little, I hope we can move it forward towards real cultural competency, which means real language competency as well. I wanted to do this project to add whatever small amount of our knowledge and expertise to the greater good, and develop a real standard for bilingual professional social work in child welfare."

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## NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Northeastern State University, Department of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Tahlequah, Oklahoma</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Northeastern Oklahoma &amp; Tribes</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Child Welfare Specialization Trainee Program</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW Students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

In a state where 9% of the child population and nearly 9% of the foster care population is Native American,<sup>7</sup> Northeastern State University's traineeship project aptly focuses on leadership and cultural competency related to Indian Child Welfare, both in terms of recruitment and job placement of Native American students and in terms of curriculum content. With its eight BSW traineeships each year, according to PI Virginia Whitekiller, MSW, EdD, the project "is mainly focusing on diversity in the workforce. Primarily because of our institutional history and its location, we are reaching out to a diverse group of Tribes in Oklahoma and giving preference to the recruitment of Native students. We are also building relationships with the Tribes so that our students can return to practice there."

The NSU main campus is located in the capital of the Cherokee Nation and is within 100-miles of many other tribal headquarters. Approximately 30% of the surrounding county is American Indian, as are the NSU student population and the Bachelor's of Social Work program. As PI Whitekiller relates, "we are in the heart of the Cherokee Nation, our university has historically served Native communities and we have the highest enrollment of Native students at any university in the United States. So our thought was - if we build it (a program that focuses on Tribal Child Welfare), they will come. It just makes sense."

Additionally, the project seeks to address a chronic shortage of child welfare workers with social work background in both the state child welfare system - the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Child and Family Services Division, and Tribal Child Welfare Programs throughout the state. As PI Whitekiller explains, "a major workforce challenge has been the continual hiring of workers without social work degrees. There are too many people who come into child welfare with an accounting degree. They go through the core training, which is two to three weeks, then are launched into the field to do child welfare social work, and they lack the academic foundation and knowledge of the work. I hear this all the time, and now

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2011). *Child welfare outcomes 2006-2009: Oklahoma context data*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/downloads/pdfs/oklahoma.pdf>

it's an even greater challenge, because we're implementing a new practice model, based on a social work foundation. And it's difficult to implement this model when many of the workers and the supervisors do not have a background in social work."

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

In its first year, the project supported nine students, five of whom were Native American. PI Whitekiller notes that "while some students had had child welfare experience - working as social work aides doing transport of kids, overseeing family visits, etc. - we also have some traditional age students who are coming in through junior college." She further explains, "Our partners are the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and they have the largest Indian Child Welfare Program in the United States. The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokees is also involved in our traineeship. They are both separate political entities and have large child welfare systems. We are also looking to form partnerships with the Muscogee Creek Nation and are going to visit smaller Tribes for their input and support as well. Additionally, we are partnering with our county child welfare agencies where we have longstanding agreements for practicum and hiring, mainly in the 15 counties in Northeastern Oklahoma. We are also looking at developing relationships with private contractors for practicum placements and other program components."

Thus far, according to PI Whitekiller, their collaborators are "very excited about it. They feel that it is such a privilege to be a part of this project. And we feel that way too. We are honored to be a part of this national traineeship program, because we've had a social work program for a long time, and we place so many students in child welfare in our state, so to be a part of a group doing curricular development in child welfare, and to have the opportunity to focus in on leadership and Indian Child Welfare, well, it's just really important to us."

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This *Child Welfare Specialization Trainee Program* offers a number of unique components:

### ***Focusing on Indian Child Welfare***

As described above, one of the most impressive aspects about this project is its outreach to and connection with the Native American Community in Oklahoma, both in terms of partnerships as well as student recruitment. In addition, trainees are required to take a specific Indian Child Welfare course, and regularly participate in professional conferences to enhance knowledge and build professional relationships with Indian Child Welfare systems. A 2-day Native American leadership seminar was offered to trainees in October 2010, which was supported by the Cherokee Nation administration and had several speakers representing various tribal affiliations. In November of 2010, trainees attended their second conference, the Oklahoma Indian Child Welfare Conference.

### **Addressing Leadership**

Trainees in this project are required to take a specific *Leadership and Supervision* course.

### **Providing a Child Welfare Specialization Certificate**

The project also offers students the opportunity to receive a child welfare certification. As PI Whitekiller explains, "the child welfare specialization means that students are getting the biggest bang for their buck. They will have a BSW degree plus the specialization of 11 hours, so they will be really prepared and marketable. We already have several elective courses in place but are also going to be adding more. We have developed a course sequence program that speaks to diversity and other issues related to child welfare, which will be rotated each semester to both our urban and our rural campuses."

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

This traineeship project is integrating child welfare content into all of their courses, and specifically including a greater focus on Systems of Care and the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). Program staff have worked to develop online summer courses that adhere to the new EPAS standards, including: *Family/Child Welfare Services, Youth Offenders, Adolescence, and Family Social Work*. The *Indian Child Welfare and Leadership and Supervision* workshops, as well as the syllabi for *Child Welfare and Child Maltreatment* courses, have been revised to meet the new CSWE core competencies.

### **OBSTACLES**

According to PI Whitekiller, "the only current challenges are those that involve students' interests to enter into what they often view as the very stressful world of child welfare. However, this seems to balance out with those who see this as their life's work with or without the traineeship assistance." In addition, "reaching out to tribal entities requires repetition and patience to 'institutionalize' resources that are available to them outside of their bureaucratic educational offerings. A final program concern is that the four year duration of our traineeship program may just begin to scratch the surface of making a difference in our trainees and their influence in the their programs of employment, and we'll want and need time to do more."

### **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

In the near term, the project hopes to be able to place Native American students in tribal child welfare agencies. Additionally, PI Whitekiller hopes that "when students leave our program, they will be armed with a strong foundational knowledge of social work and a child welfare specialization, so that they will understand what child welfare really encompasses. I hope they will come out of our program with an air of confidence when going into leadership roles because they will have been engaged in the cutting edge aspects of the field, since they will have been connected to the national dialogue through this project. At the BSW-level,

although they are known to be generalist practitioners, they can leave here having specialized in something, confident that they actually know more about a particular population given their coursework and field experiences. We don't want them to be a 'jack of all trades, master of none' – not this time. With this traineeship, we are giving students a generalist degree but with a real specialty, even though that sounds like an oxymoron."

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## PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Portland State University, School of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Portland, Oregon</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Oregon</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Culturally Responsive Leaders: A Child Welfare Traineeship Grant</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>MSW Students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The traineeship project at Portland State University's School of Social Work addresses and complements current efforts to professionalize child welfare services, develop strategies to address disproportionality across the child welfare system, and increase cultural diversity and responsiveness in child welfare agencies. To begin with, the state's public child welfare system has experienced staff turnover rates of 12-15%, the nine tribal child welfare systems in Oregon have reported significant staff and leadership turnover in recent years, and 40% of the current workforce is set to retire in the next 10-15 years. In addition, only 17% of caseworkers and 18% of supervisors hold master's degrees. Finally, the workforce lacks diversity, with over 80% of current staff being Caucasian. This is particularly true in the ranks of supervisors and managers.

The project focuses on creating a pathway for culturally competent emerging leaders in tribal, state, and private contract agencies serving child welfare to obtain advanced degrees in social work. It provides professional preparation necessary for them to deliver culturally competent supervision and culturally responsive program planning, implementation and evaluation. The project is administered within the school's Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services and provides funding for seven traineeship students per year.

### STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED

The School of Social Work engaged a number of partners to strengthen and support its traineeship project, including the state child welfare agency; nine federally recognized tribes; the Native American Youth Association; the Native American Rehabilitation Association Northwest; Self Enhancement, Inc.; the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization; El Programa Hispano; and state Indian Child Welfare Act service units throughout Oregon.

The first group of selected traineeship students was experienced and diverse. As Richard Hunter, PhD, PI for the project in its first year, explained, "Of the seven students we're funding, all are working in public or tribal child welfare. Four are currently managers or supervisors, and so we're working to keep them moving up in their agencies, and three are likely to move into supervisory leadership positions in

the near future. All of our students are people of color – Hispanic, African American and Native American. Some of them have been in child welfare for the last ten plus years, while others moved into their management positions relatively quickly after they started. There are four female and five male students, and they are either in their advanced clinical year, or their generalist year, although one student is just getting started in a three-year part time schedule.”

In the second year, three additional students were chosen out of 14 qualified applicants. After just one year the program has become widely known across the state of Oregon in communities of color and Tribes. The traineeship program, in many cases, has helped a number of people to decide to return to graduate school.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This traineeship project has a number of unique features:

### ***Emphasizing Culturally Competent Leadership***

This traineeship project simultaneously addresses two critical child welfare concerns – cultural competence and effective leadership. All selected trainees are people of color, poised to take on or expand leadership positions in their organizations. According to former PI Hunter, “we’ve really placed an emphasis on developing a culturally diverse group of leaders in child welfare. Our program is supporting people of color who are on their way to being supervisors or other leaders in their organizations. In this way we’re addressing disproportionality issues that exist not just for the kids we serve, but for staff as well. We know children of color are disproportionately taken into care and stay for longer periods of time. And we also know that the system isn’t led by folks from their own communities. So we have reached out to the tribal agencies, and to other agencies serving African Americans, Hispanics and immigrants, and are working hard to provide support so that folks from their own communities can achieve MSW degrees and help lead our child welfare programs. And we’re working on developing competencies for this type of culturally competent leadership.”

### ***Providing Managerial-level Field Placements***

To maximize transfer of learning, and ensure field experiences that are meaningful and challenging, the School of Social Work explored and secured mid-level management field placements for its traineeship students in the public agency's Central Office (either in traditional management opportunities, or on special initiatives for diverse populations and ethnic groups) and other community agencies providing contracted services to Native American, Hispanic/Latino, African American and immigrant children and families.

### ***Developing Leadership Portfolios***

Each student will develop a Leadership Portfolio that will represent an ongoing assessment of leadership skills consistent with the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework and Ladder. This includes reflection on selected competencies and

learning from field and academic experiences. This is triangulated with field placement learning objectives focusing on leadership and cultural responsiveness. These portfolios will be used as a tool to guide personal reflection and dialogue with project staff and fellow trainees throughout their participation in the program.

## **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

Students in the second year of the program are required to participate in the School's Social Service Administration and Leadership Advanced Practice track, which emphasizes supervisory management and leadership skills in terms of clinical supervision, effective leadership principles, program planning, systems change, communications, budgeting, implementation and program evaluation. The track also focuses on social justice and diversity, and offers instruction by lead faculty with broad child welfare experiences.

Additionally, traineeship students will be required to attend a monthly seminar featuring presentations by faculty, tribal and public child welfare leaders and community partners to aid in the development of the knowledge and skills necessary for culturally responsive child welfare leadership. As former PI Hunter noted, "this seminar will help create a sense of community for our students, which is really key to retention." In the second year of the project, students heard from Dr. Carol Wilson Spigner, former Children's Bureau director, and created a peer learning model for the seminar allowing students to present on their own leadership work. For example, one student presented his work as the manager who is staffing the Governor's Task Force on Racial Equity in Child Welfare.

The School also offers a number of elective courses relevant for traineeship students, including *Introductory and Advanced Child Welfare Policy and Practice; Abuse and Trauma; Diversity and Social Justice; the Indian Child Welfare Act; Theories of Leadership and Change; and Working with Involuntary Clients.*

## **OBSTACLES**

One significant challenge identified by this project is the impact of current economic issues, specifically a hiring freeze in Oregon, on the availability of employment opportunities for trainees to meet the employment obligation. Despite this, two of the three graduates in the first year obtained positions. Through working with the state's child welfare personnel office, the remaining student was hired into a temporary position, which has since become permanent. A second challenge was the untimely death of Dr. Hunter, the founding PI of this program. Program continuity was maintained when Dr. Katharine Cahn (formerly the Co-PI) assumed leadership of the program.

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

In the short-term, the team at PSU is focusing on increasing the child welfare-specific content available within the School's Social Service Administration and

Leadership Advanced Practice track. As former PI Hunter explained, “We’ve had a Title IV-E program since the mid-1990s, but this project is a new attempt to bring leadership content into our program in another way. We want to have a greater infusion of child welfare policy and practice specifically in our leadership and management track. We’ll be working towards this internally, and there will be tribal and agency input through our advisory board.”

Of critical importance for this project is the retention of traineeship students in their respective agencies following graduation. The project is also focused on enhancing pathways for tribal child welfare staff to obtain their MSW: “We’d like to continue to bring more tribal workers into our program, and be able to give more stipends to students working at tribal child welfare agencies”

On a larger scale, the project anticipates outcomes that will foster leadership related to the development and implementation of more culturally competent services within the child welfare system. Students are engaging in statewide initiatives and are encouraged to pursue culturally competent approaches in their work at the agencies. Similarly, one of the traineeship project’s other long-range goals is working towards the identification of strategies to nurture and retain a culturally competent and responsive workforce. This includes identifying strategies for supporting culturally diverse staff and articulating principles of practice for supporting and retaining culturally diverse managers.

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## SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Salem State University, School of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Salem, Massachusetts</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Massachusetts's BSW Child Welfare Scholars Project: Addressing the Regional Workforce Needs Across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW Students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) has a strong and historic commitment to providing pathways to MSW education for its current workers. The entry level requirement for a frontline position at DCF is a baccalaureate degree; however, a relatively small number of newly hired workers hold a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree. While the state's social work programs graduate about 200 students with BSW degrees, DCF hires only approximately 28 BSWs each year, despite evidence that BSW graduates have a strong retention rate at DCF.

With regard to DCF needs, there has often been a shortage of qualified child welfare workers in the southeast, northeast and western regions of the state. Although the Boston region offers four BSW and MSW programs, all of these opportunities are set in expensive private colleges and universities. Additionally, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services has embraced the Systems of Care (SOC) approach for its Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) and other systems it oversees including DCF, requiring the child welfare workforce to quickly develop and enhance SOC-oriented child welfare competencies.

The Salem State University BSW Child Welfare Scholars Project is a traineeship project designed to increase the number of BSW-educated child welfare workers; address some of the state's regional child welfare workforce needs; and advance the integration of a SOC approach in child welfare practice through a targeted collaboration with two other public BSW programs at schools of social work in three regions of the Commonwealth.

### STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED

As noted above, this traineeship project involves three separate BSW programs (Salem State University, Bridgewater State University and Westfield State University) in three different regions of Massachusetts (Northeast, Southeast and Western) and three separate public child welfare offices in the three corresponding regions: Northeast - Lynn Area Office; Southeast – Taunton/Attleboro Area Office; Western – Robert Van Wart Center in Springfield), and the Massachusetts Child

Welfare Institute (MCWI), which is funded by DCF. As project PI, Cheryl Springer, PhD, LICSW, explains, “So much of our educational partnerships with child welfare agencies is about relationships, and good relationships don't happen suddenly. We've been able to build upon 20 years worth of relationships with the Department. We are standing on the shoulders of those relationships to pursue this project, and so much work has been done to set up a process that is authentically collaborative.”

According to PI Springer, “Each institution identified its minimum criteria for selection, which included a 3.0 average, entering the senior year in a BSW program, reference letters from faculty, and a field readiness application. By the second recruitment year, we developed applications that included a required essay and a response to case material specific to System of Care principles. In addition, we established a selection process that enacted the commitment to collaboration among those involved in the *Massachusetts BSW Child Welfare Scholars Project*. Applications for the *Project* are reviewed by regionally-based selection committees, each consisting of a representative of the BSW educational program, a representative from the local DCF office where the students will complete their field practica, and a representative from MCWI. Each committee reviews applications, interviews students, and selects at least two students to receive NCWWI funding.”

Every effort is made to recruit and accept scholars who will diversify the future child welfare workforce, especially with regard to linguistic skills, ethnicity, age, and gender. As PI Springer notes, “Our first two cohorts of six students each were all strong candidates with a declared interest in child welfare practice and placement at a DCF office. The cohorts have been diverse in ethnicity, gender, linguistic competence, and age. Several were transfer students from community colleges where they happened to have faculty with strong child welfare connections. Some students had their own history with child welfare services, yet were ready to reflect on and use their personal experience in a professional manner.”

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This traineeship project has a number of unique features:

### ***Expanding the State's Systems of Care Efforts***

As PI Springer maintains, “In the last two years, Massachusetts' human service agencies have been involved in a Court-ordered Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) that focused on the SOC approach. Several faculty members from Salem, Bridgewater, and Westfield state universities were involved in CBHI efforts to encourage institutions of higher education to integrate SOC principles and perspectives into their curricula. Therefore, there was an existing familiarity with the SOC perspective and beginning efforts to develop and implement curricular changes.” Dr. Lisa Johnson, assistant professor at Salem State and the BSW Child Welfare Scholars Project Coordinator, has developed and taught a classroom-based course entitled *Systems of Care for Child Welfare Practice*. The course was offered

as an elective for BSW students at Salem State in spring semester 2011. Content from the syllabus has been adapted and used in different ways in our partnering BSW programs: at Westfield, the content is infused into a required field education seminar and, at Bridgewater, the content is infused into a current child welfare elective. The Project is currently examining the optimal time to introduce this content: before, during or after field education practica. And according to PI Springer, "our introduction of SOC content has proved to be of great value: as the result of periodic hiring freezes at DCF, one of our graduates was readily hired by a non-profit, DCF-contracted agency involved in CBHI and seeking employees familiar with the SOC philosophy and framework."

### ***Partnering with 2 Other Universities to Provide BSW Education***

As noted above, the project is a formal partnership among three public BSW programs. According to PI Springer, "This is the first time there has been any kind of collaboration among three public colleges that offer BSW education in our state. There has never been a formal Title IV-E partnership with the federal government funding formal BSW and MSW education - the Massachusetts Child Welfare Institute (MCWI), established in 2004, is a state-based educational assistance program established in. And although the state has a long history of supporting current child welfare workers for MSW education through partial tuition reimbursement, this is the first time focused true focus has been brought to BSW education for child welfare practice."

While this partnership is the first of its kind, it has not been a difficult transition. As PI Springer notes, "When the Massachusetts BSW Child Welfare Scholars Project started, I had already been working with the directors of the other two state BSW programs through the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, and both of those schools already had solid relationships with the state child welfare agencies, and with the child welfare offices in their respective regions. Subsequently, there has been a change in one of the social work school's leadership and multiple changes in structure and personnel at DCF, we have been able to sustain positive working relationships. Spreading our resources throughout the state made a lot of sense - to us, and to DCF, as there is a more likely match for post-BSW hirings in separate regions of the state."

### ***Partnering with the Public Child Welfare Agency in Student Selection***

The application review and interview processes have evidenced true regional partnerships between the educational institution in each region, the DCF regional offices, and the MCWI. A regional team (with representatives from each of these entities - a faculty member from the regional BSW program, to date, someone directly involved in field education; a MCWI staff member with an MSW degree; and the internship coordinator from the participating DCF office, also holding an MSW degree) - participates in the review of applications. The teams review all of the application materials, select applicants for interviews, interview selected

applicants, and make the final decision. The approach has ultimately strengthened agency-university partnerships and enhanced the credibility of all participants.

### ***Providing Support for Trainees Pre and Post BSW Education through a Mentor Matching and Distance Education Activities***

All BSW trainees participate in child welfare-specific field seminars that include non-trainees also placed in DCF settings, allowing for information sharing and peer support regarding their field placements. All trainees are required to attend three events related to the *Project* during the course of the academic year (see below for description of activities). The *Massachusetts BSW Child Welfare Scholars Project* provides ongoing professional development to former scholars by matching them with mentors who are graduates of the *MCWI MSW Fellowship Program*. The matching occurs as the former BSW student/scholars begin their professional careers in child and family welfare. The development of networks of support between and among BSW and MSW students and workers promotes the professional development of both groups and creates a stronger social work foundation from which to better serve children and families. The mentor matching is currently underway for the first cohort of BSW graduates who were hired in September 2010 and have completed all of their core DCF requirements and probationary periods. The project is also currently developing a protocol for the mentoring relationship.

As PI Springer explains, “We have been collaborating with the MCWI on this plan for their MSWs who have been supported through the MCWI to become mentors for our BSW graduates when they are employed at DCF. We already know that re-entry into the child welfare workplace can be a difficult transition, and BSWs are often expected to hit the ground running instead of getting the same support as a ‘green’ employee. We aim to have the recent graduates meet their future mentor during the DCF ‘core training’ period and stay connected to them afterwards. Their mentor will be within their same region, even if we can’t match everyone within the same office.”

### ***Including Students in Established Social Work Recognition Activities***

This traineeship project is now an established member of the MCWI Educational Collaborative. BSW traineeship students take part in all formal student-centered events sponsored by the MCWI Educational Collaborative, including the Welcome Dinner, Leadership Dinner, and Graduation Celebration. All six of the 2010-2011 BSW trainees were invited to the MCWI Welcoming Dinner (October 2010), which was the second year that the BSW Scholars were included in this event by MCWI. The BSW Child Welfare Scholars’ participation in this event helps lay a strong foundation for their involvement with DCF and its initiatives related to professional education. In addition, students met as a cohort during Social Work Month (March 2011) when MCWI sponsored its annual Leadership Dinner, which focused on leadership and resilience and was attended by BSW and MSW students alike.

Finally, as was true last year, the trainees were included in the MCWI Graduation Celebration in May 2011. A BSW trainee also participated in the “Graduates Panel” designed to provide graduates an opportunity to reflect on their professional education and its influence on their future child welfare practice. The event not only serves to acknowledge the accomplishments of the BSW and MSW graduates but to lay the foundation for continued integration of BSW and MSW child welfare education.

## **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

All BSW trainees are in their final year of coursework. In addition to the standard academic program, trainees will be required to participate in three academic and field-related activities for completion of their traineeship.

The syllabus for *Systems of Care for Child Welfare* has been developed by project faculty from Salem State in collaboration with faculty and field educators at all three BSW program partners. It was reviewed by MCWI and DCF staff who teach as adjuncts in the Salem State BSW Program, as well as faculty and field colleagues in the NCWWI Faculty Peer Network. As noted previously, the syllabus has been used in three different ways since fall 2010: as a stand-alone classroom-based elective required for the trainees at Salem State; infused into a required field education seminar for all students including trainees at Westfield State; and infused into an existing child welfare elective which was a required elective for trainees at Bridgewater State.

To date, discussions among faculty teaching this course have focused on the “gap” between course content and students’ experiences in their current field practica. Acknowledging and articulating this gap and its inherent tension have been important aspects in all three models for addressing the content. The gap has been more apparent for the students who are learning the content as part of their field education seminar (at Westfield). Collaborating faculty have considered the optimal time to introduce this content into child welfare education. Teaching the content presents a valuable opportunity to address the ordinary tension between the ideal and the realities of “best practices.” Collaborating faculty are continuing to discuss whether the content and the inherent tension are best introduced before, during, or after field education practica.

## **OBSTACLES**

As mentioned above, there are inherent challenges in initiating, developing and implementing curricular changes across institutional boundaries, and with so many partners. One of the other major areas to be addressed is the continuing lack of knowledge and attention within DCF about the value of BSW students as future child welfare workers. According to PI Springer, “In the recent cohort of new workers participating in the pre-service, core training, our four graduates were the

only BSW-educated participants present, and they noticed the absence of similarly educated professionals.”

Since August 2009, DCF has been experiencing major fiscal cuts and subsequent layoffs at all staff levels along with periodic hiring freezes as well as a major restructuring of the agency. Additionally, as PI Springer notes, “because of these changes, there is understandably significant anxiety regarding the students we have now being able to find available open positions. We continue to try to strategize about that. But our relationships with DCF are very solid, so we’ve been able to address this issue together. And the area offices have been incredibly cooperative, making sure students have great field instruction, and there has not been on mention of students not being able to complete their education as a result of the restructuring and layoffs. But we have had to do work containing the inevitable anxiety that comes with this economy. We will have to deal with what that means for our cohorts - some students will ease right into where they did their practicum, while others won’t be able to.” Although four out of six of the May 2010 graduates were offered positions with DCF, they were not hired until September 2010. A fifth graduate had taken a position in a contracted agency but in the Spring of 2011 was hired by DCF. The cohort of trainees who graduate in May 2012 is likely to face some of the same challenges. As PI Springer explains, “DCF does not review employment applications until the applicant can produce a transcript verifying the completion of a baccalaureate degree – there are no exceptions to this policy. Moreover, we have already been informed that DCF will not be considering any hires or re-hires in May and June 2012. Thus, the first *possible* employment opportunities for our May 2012 graduates will not occur until July 2012, and hiring at that date is not guaranteed.”

Recruiting applicants with a 3.0 GPA is emerging as a significant challenge, as is making the workplace commitment and continuing wariness regarding the real possibilities for employment at DCF. The GPA requirement appears more salient; however, the project will not lower this requirement but is planning to target students who are at an earlier point in their undergraduate education and focus some recruitment efforts on them in the hope that early awareness of the scholarship opportunities might motivate some students to maintain a higher GPA.

Finally, geography also presents a major challenge in terms of finding the time and means to bring the trainees together as often as planned. The project continues to work on this issue, but has had to compensate for this deficit by connecting some of the 2010 graduates with current students (four out of five of the current students have their practicum in the same offices in which 2010 graduates are now working). As PI Springer relates, “It’s been a challenge to find the opportunities to bring all of our students together. We’ve had to dovetail those activities with events that already exist. For example, at conferences, we have lunch with all of the students

together and will continue to use these opportunities as well as the events with MCWI as means for all students to get together out of their regional comfort zones.”

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

As PI Springer notes, the project is “really introducing BSW education to DCF, so we need to think about and discuss what we need to be doing differently, what are the plusses and minuses of how we’re implementing this project. We are in the process of figuring out where are our ‘sister’ systems, and maybe looking to California and other states for how they have done it with their BSW programs, and taking the lessons learned back to our work here.”

Additionally, the project has engaged MCWI and DCF in preliminary discussions about how to create opportunities for the field instructors who are working with BSW students across the state to come together. The project is also continuing to make efforts to address the challenge of bringing students together to learn from one another, despite the barriers of geographic distance and differences in the classroom and field schedules. Finally, in the coming months, the project will be implementing its mentorship component, as former MSW fellows are matched with the first cohort of BSW child welfare scholars.

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## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>University of Illinois at Chicago, Jane Addams College of Social Work (JACSW)</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Chicago, Illinois</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>Chicago, Illinois</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Jane Addams Child Welfare Traineeship Project (CWTP)</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>MSW students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Recent data indicate that the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has a vacancy rate of 10% and that 71% of the private Purchase of Service (POS) agencies have turnover rates greater than 20%. The traineeship project led by the Jane Addams College of Social Work (JACSW) at the University of Illinois at Chicago is designed to address these workforce challenges. The Child Welfare Training Project (CWTP) represents a collaboration between JACSW, DCFS, ChildServ (private POS agency), Jane Addams Hull House Association (JAHHA, a private POS agency), the Illinois African American Family Commission, and the Child Care Association of Illinois. The project provides financial assistance to eight students in their final year of the MSW program who have committed to a career in child welfare.

The CWTP is focused on building a more seamless and timely pipeline from social work education into the child welfare field. Specifically, the project focuses on core child welfare priorities identified by DCFS, including systems of care, trauma-informed practice, building protective factors and addressing the overrepresentation of children of color. Traineeship students complete field placements in one of three specially designed field units at DCFS, ChildServ and JAHHA that promote training and transfer of learning around these core themes. Finally, the project also incorporates curriculum material from the DCFS core caseworker training into the MSW curriculum. At the completion of their MSW program the traineeship students take the Illinois Child Welfare Worker Licensing Exam. Through an agreement with DCFS, students who successfully pass this exam and complete the course and field work are considered to have fulfilled the pre-service required training for employment at DCFS or POS agencies.

### STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED

All students are enrolled in the program's Child and Family Concentration, and have completed the foundation coursework in the MSW program. According to project PI Alan Dettlaff, PhD, MSW, "the students selected have demonstrated a long-term commitment to child welfare. We wanted the most committed students in our field of practice with children and families to receive traineeship stipends."

JACSW has a strong relationship with DCFS leadership. The private agencies offering field placements to CWTP students - ChildServ and JAHHA - are two of the top performing agencies in Illinois, and have longstanding relationships with JACSW and DCFS.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

The CWTP has a number of unique components:

### ***Developing a Dynamic Steering Committee***

JACSW has invited a Steering Committee to participate in the selection of the traineeship students and oversee the process of curricular innovation and development. Steering Committee membership is diverse, and includes traineeship project staff; representatives from DCFS, ChildServ, Jane Addams Hull House Association, the Illinois African American Family Commission, and the Child Care Association of Illinois; birth parents (from the DCFS Birth Parent Advisory Council); former foster youth (from the DCFS Youth Advisory Board); and, foster parents (from the DCFS Foster Parent Advisory Council).

### ***Aligning Curriculum & Field Education with Child Welfare Agency Priorities***

JACSW developed its traineeship project to mirror the priorities of DCFS and its partner agencies. As PI Dettlaff explains, "We worked very closely with the state to focus in on their priority areas in our traineeship program, specifically by including Systems of Care, Trauma-informed Practice, Building Protective Factors, and Addressing Disproportionality into our curriculum design and field placement opportunities. And, in doing so, we're teaching students to respond to those priorities in their future jobs." PI Dettlaff notes that "we really used a lot of feedback from DCFS and the private agencies - we wanted to make the program one that would address the gaps they had determined were most pressing."

To that end, the CWTP developed three specialized field placement units -at DCFS, ChildServ and JAHHA. Each field placement will provide 2-3 students per year with experience in their foster care units, as that has been identified as the service area in the greatest need. As PI Dettlaff relates, "our field placements have been designed to ensure that students' experiences in field lead to the achievement of the core competencies outlined in our grant application." In addition, because all traineeship students are placed in foster care units, they are able to connect with their fellow students on this work, enhancing their transfer of learning.

Finally, an Integrative Seminar has been developed to facilitate students' integration of their field and classroom experiences and reinforce the priorities of DCFS. Ten sessions will be held throughout the year, which will be facilitated by the project PI and project field liaison. To strengthen transfer of learning in core areas, students will have the opportunity to present cases and facilitate group

discussion. Field instructors and other guest speakers will be invited periodically to share their experiences working in the child welfare system.

### ***Incorporating Child Welfare Agency Training Curriculum***

The CWTP incorporates curriculum material from the DCFS core caseworker training into the MSW curriculum through a newly developed elective course. According to PI Dettlaff, "the elective we've developed incorporates all of the foundational elements of the DCFS training, which means that our students, upon graduation, are immediately eligible for the exam and exempt from taking the DCFS preservice training. They've already received all necessary content through this course. And that eliminates a huge barrier. It used to take six weeks for them to complete the training, and then they'd have to sit for the licensing exam. Which meant it would be months before an MSW graduate was actually able to get to work. But now that's all completed by the time they graduate. It's the first program of its kind in the state, and DCFS is planning on building upon our model for the other schools of social work they're connected to."

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

As noted above, traineeship students participate in a ten-session *Integrative Seminar* to facilitate the integration of field work and classroom experiences. In addition, the elective course noted above is designed to meet the DCFS core caseworker training requirements. Finally, the Steering Committee has reviewed and revised all courses involved the traineeship project to ensure course content addresses child welfare core competencies and the current priorities in the field.

### **OBSTACLES**

According to PI Dettlaff, the most challenging aspect for the CWTP thus far is the revisions that are continually made by DCFS to their pre-employment training curriculum. While these changes are necessary to provide new employees with the most current and relevant information, this has meant that the content of the newly developed *Advanced Child Welfare* course is continually under review and revision. Keeping up with changes has been time-intensive.

### **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

Initial outcomes from this project are promising. The cohort of students that graduated in the spring of 2010 passed the licensing exam and are all employed in child welfare positions.

Because the project is the first in Illinois to incorporate agency training requirements into the MSW curriculum, most important to PI Dettlaff and his team is that traineeship students receive the critical child welfare training they need to successfully pass the child welfare employee licensing exam and transition into the child welfare workforce immediately after graduation. With their initial success they are now providing leadership and sharing their model with other social work

educators across the state. In the long term, PI Dettlaff and his team also hope that the project will result in a "core group of students who are knowledgeable about child welfare's core competencies, but also well trained to respond to the specific pressing needs of agencies serving children and families in Illinois."

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## UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Baltimore, Maryland</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>City of Baltimore</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Child Welfare Traineeships: A Model for Child Welfare Workforce Development in Urban Areas</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW &amp; MSW Students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

In a comparison with the 14 other urban cities,<sup>8</sup> Baltimore City has the highest percentage of African American residents (63.5%), and the highest percentage of single female headed households (56%). In terms of child welfare statistics, Baltimore City has the second highest rate of entry into foster care (8.5 per 1000), the highest rate of children in foster care (26.4 per 1000), and the highest rate of African American children in foster care (31.8 per 1000). Baltimore City also has the lowest reunification rate (36.1%), and the second lowest rate of exits to permanency (69.3%). However, the child welfare system (Baltimore City Department of Social Services, or BCDSS) also boasts a number of systemic strengths, as it has the highest percentage of children placed with relatives (40.2%), and the lowest proportion of children placed in congregate care settings (10%).<sup>9</sup> When compared to other jurisdictions within the State of Maryland, BCDSS serves children and families with more complex needs, and is charged with responding to the second highest number of maltreatment reports in a given year.<sup>10</sup> Finally, although BCDSS employs the largest number of child welfare staff in the state, and handles more than half of all child welfare cases, it has the fewest MSW-level professionals on staff and has historically had greater difficulty attracting and retaining a professional, well-trained workforce.<sup>11</sup>

In responding to this complicated mixture of strengths and challenges, this traineeship project seeks to double (from 14% to 28%) the proportion of program graduates who successfully complete their employment commitment to BCDSS. To that end, the project will select participants from the School's pool of Title IV-E students and support 12 MSW and three BSW students for each of the five years of the grant.

<sup>8</sup> Casey Family Programs. (2011). *A Comparison of Urban Jurisdictions: Child Welfare & Demographic Indicators*. Washington, DC: Casey Family Programs Data Advocacy and the DC Child and Family Service Agency. Retrieved from: [http://cfsa.dc.gov/DC/CFSA/Publication%20Files/Doing%20Good/Urban\\_Comparisons\\_FY09.pdf](http://cfsa.dc.gov/DC/CFSA/Publication%20Files/Doing%20Good/Urban_Comparisons_FY09.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Maryland Department of Human Resources. (2011). *Maryland child welfare services statistics: Appendix A*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from: <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/co/pdf/February2011.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> University of Maryland, School of Social Work. (2007). *Maryland child welfare workforce recruitment, selection and retention study*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from: [http://www.family.umaryland.edu/ryc\\_research\\_and\\_evaluation/publication\\_product\\_files/final\\_reports/MarylandCWWorkforceStudyReport2007.pdf](http://www.family.umaryland.edu/ryc_research_and_evaluation/publication_product_files/final_reports/MarylandCWWorkforceStudyReport2007.pdf)

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

According to the traineeship Project Director (PD), Debra Linsenmeyer, LCSW-C, “In our first cohort, we had 3 BSW and 9 MSW students. They were all female and were recruited from the Title IV-E pool, folks who had already expressed interest in child welfare. We want them to gain skills specifically in urban child welfare practice, and commit up front to go to Baltimore City. Our students are 80% African-American, which is consistent with the population in Baltimore City. We really want to have students share the same demographics as the population they are serving. Mainly students are traditional-age, but there are some who have come back to school after a number of years in the workforce. Some have experience in social services, but no one has done traditional child welfare work yet. They are obligated to work one year for each year of support. Some are advanced MSW students, others are first year MSW students or BSW students who are interested in pursuing an MSW.”

The School initially engaged two partners in this project: BCDSS and the *Family Connections* Program through the School of Social Work's Ruth H. Young Center for Families and Children. Recently, the collaboration has been expanded to include a partnership with Morgan State University.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This traineeship project includes a number of unique components:

### ***Paying Special Attention to the Recruitment of Students of Color***

A primary goal of this traineeship project is ensuring that the participant pool closely reflects the diversity of the primarily African American population served by the BCDSS. As a result, the project is taking steps to ensure that its students reflect the demographics of the urban setting in which they will work by identifying potential applicants applying to the School from Maryland's Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

### ***Using Innovative Screening Techniques***

Prospective students are required to participate in screening sessions where they receive detailed information about the nature of public child welfare services, respond to a realistic child welfare employment video, complete a self-evaluation of their “goodness of fit” with the public child welfare mission and work requirements, and discuss the important values related to family-centered practice in child welfare. Faculty observe and record responses to assist in the selection process.

### ***Preparing Students for Urban Child Welfare Practice***

This project primarily focuses on the preparation of students for urban child welfare practice. According to PD Linsenmeyer, “the School collaborates with BCDSS and the *Family Connections* Program in Baltimore to identify the knowledge, skills and

key competencies necessary for social workers practicing in an urban child welfare system, and we are revising field instruction and our child welfare curricula accordingly."

### **Providing Field Instruction in Small Student Units**

Field instructors are located with a unit of 8 students of varying levels (BSW, first year MSW, and advanced MSW) at a local DSS office providing kinship care services to children in the agency's legal custody. A total of six advanced MSW students participated in a field placement unit at the *Family Connections* program.

### **Training in Motivational Interviewing & Trauma-Informed Practice**

As PD Linsenmeyer explains, "We're training field instructors in motivational interviewing skills, (1) to help them focus on engagement as relevant in child welfare; and (2) because substance abuse is such a large proportion of the presenting issues for families, and motivational interviewing has had a positive effect on outcomes with this population. So by training field instructors in these techniques, they'll use the language (e.g., readiness for change, etc.) and skill base with our traineeship students. And we're interested in seeing how this will make a difference in the students' work down the road." A plan has been developed for these field instructors to receive monthly consultation with a faculty member who has expertise in utilizing motivational interviewing techniques in direct practice as well as the theoretical underpinnings of the model. During the 2010-2011 academic year, there was more of an emphasis on teaching the model to students and assisting students in the application of the concepts to their work with families.

For the first full year of project activities, the project also focused on *Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice* for the winter training event. *Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice* remains a priority area for curriculum development, and students will participate in two workshops in Spring 2011 based on the *Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit* developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Students will be encouraged to utilize trauma theory to understand the needs of families and children in urban areas and intervene with these families utilizing trauma specific assessment and intervention tools. Project faculty have begun discussions with other faculty regarding strategies to increase trauma content in existing courses and the possibility of developing more trauma-specific courses as well.

### **Providing Mentoring & Peer Networking for Students to Increase Retention**

The project will support a professional social work mentor with public child welfare experience who will develop a support network for the child welfare trainees. This individual will meet with students, maintain an online discussion board, link students to necessary academic support services, and work closely with BCDSS to match students with available child welfare positions. Following graduation, the mentor is responsible for supporting graduates' adjustment to their new child

welfare positions by offering additional mentoring and identifying and providing additional training workshops. A Title IV-E faculty member has been identified for this position and will assume responsibility in July 2011.

### **Using an Embedded Evaluation to Assess Impact on Recruitment & Retention**

The project also includes an embedded evaluation process to track and evaluate students throughout the phases of the project to gain a better understanding of which components best promote their recruitment and retention in public child welfare positions within Baltimore City.

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

BSW are required to enroll in *Policies, Programs and Services for Children and Families in Child Welfare*. MSW students are required to choose the *Family and Children Specialization* program and enroll in three courses: *Clinical Practice with Families and Children in Child Welfare*, *Children and Social Services Policy*, and *Research in Child Welfare*. The School, in collaboration with the BCDSS and the *Family Connections* Program, also created evening workshops on evidence-based practice in urban child welfare settings, with different content to be developed and offered each year. According to PD Linsenmeyer, “We’re developing these workshops to focus on specific topics regarding urban child welfare practice, such as disproportionality of kids in foster care, drug affected newborns, children with incarcerated parents, motivational interviewing, mental health interventions, etc. We will offer other critical child welfare content through these workshops as new topics are identified by our advisory committee.” The workshops’ topic content, knowledge and skill competencies, and bibliographies are being organized into syllabi that will be made available to the faculty at both Universities who teach child welfare course content at the BSW and MSW levels.

### **OBSTACLES**

The project has mainly focused on streamlining and better organizing the processes associated with their ongoing partnership with BCDSS. According to PD Linsenmeyer, “In such a big agency, it can be a challenge to get things to run smoothly, to interview the students in a timely way, get them placed in units where they can do the most good. So we’ve really wanted to develop a good relationship with human resources, and are continually working on that. We’re also going to do a presentation for the agency leadership in the city to help smooth things over and further develop our working relationship.”

### **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

In the short term, as PD Linsenmeyer notes, “We hope to better support students so that once they become employees they are able to identify what additional training they or their supervisors need. Also, we also want to see how our motivational interviewing training for instructors has made a difference.”

It has been a goal of the project steering committee to encourage and support an active role for the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS) in the project. One achievement has been the expedited interview and selection process the agency implemented in order to move spring and summer graduates of the project into child welfare positions. As a result, six project graduates are now employed by the agency providing a range of child welfare services to children and families in Baltimore City. An on-going project goal continues to be the strengthening of its critical collaborative relationship with BCDSS.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TRAINEESHIP PROJECT, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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## UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>University of Montana , College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences, School of Social Work,</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Missoula, Montana</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>State of Montana</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>University of Montana Child Welfare Traineeship Program</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW &amp; MSW students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The traineeship project of the School of Social Work at the University of Montana addresses a number of issues that impact the delivery of child welfare services in Montana, including a lack of child welfare staff with social work degrees, insufficient training for new child welfare employees, and communication and transportation barriers posed by the state's vast and rural geography.

At nearly 150,000 square miles, Montana is the fourth largest state in the country. However, with only 6.2 persons per square mile, the state has the third lowest population density in the country. Montana's Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) is divided into five regions, with central offices great distances apart (in Billings, Miles City, Helena, Great Falls and Missoula), making it difficult for staff to engage in inter-agency collaboration and coordination, and for staff in more rural or remote areas to access training and other skill-building opportunities. Of the 389 current staff employed at the CFSD, 272 employees (70%) do not possess a BSW or MSW degree. In addition, child protective specialists only receive two weeks of classroom-based training in child abuse and neglect. Finally, although Native Americans comprise roughly ten percent of the state's population, Native American children are overrepresented in the child welfare population: they represent one fifth of the victims of child abuse or neglect,<sup>12</sup> one-third of the children in foster care,<sup>13</sup> and 40% of the youth in Montana's juvenile detention facilities.<sup>14</sup>

To address these challenges, Montana's traineeship project is designed to increase social work program accessibility and enhance curricula and transfer of learning activities to comprehensively address CFSD and tribal child welfare training needs and coordinate with the state's Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The project will support 5 BSW and 2 MSW students per year who commit to a career in child welfare. According to project PI Jim Carangi, PhD, MSW, "We only have 380 caseworkers statewide, so when I say we're adding 35 workers overall through our traineeship project, even though it sounds like a relatively small number, we're actually talking about increasing the workforce by ten percent and increasing

<sup>12</sup>US Department of Health and Human Services. (2006). *Child Welfare Outcomes 2003*. Washington, DC: the Children's Bureau. Retrieved on December 1, 2009 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo03/state\\_data/montana.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo03/state_data/montana.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Montana Board of Crime Control. (2007). *Juvenile Justice: 2007 Annual Governor's Report*. Helena, MT: Author. Retrieved on December 1, 2009, from <https://mbcc.mt.gov/JuvenileJustice/JJReports/%2707annualgovreport.pdf>

caseworkers with MSWs from 30% to 40%. Low numbers, maybe, but really high impact.”

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

For the project's first year, BSW students were recruited from the schools in the western part of the state (University of Montana at Missoula, Salish Kootenai College, Flathead Valley Community College and Blackfeet Community College), and in years two through five, students who have completed two years in human services, psychology and sociology will be recruited from central and eastern area schools (Montana State University at Bozeman and Billings, University of Great Falls, and Carroll College) as well. MSW traineeship recipients are being recruited from current students at the University of Montana's School of Social Work who have worked at CFSD for at least one year or are in their second year of the program. PI Caringi notes that students are “mainly brand new MSWs and BSWs who are drawn to the field, but then again, we also have an older worker who has been in field for 25 years and is coming back for a degree and some supervisors and new caseworkers seeking degrees as well.”

The School of Social Work has partnered with the CFSD and tribal child welfare offices for traineeship applicants and field placement sites. In addition, the National Native Children's Trauma Center and the Indian Family Research Center provide consultation on course development and other traineeship activities. According to PI Caringi, “The traineeship program has already made a huge impact in our state. Folks rarely applied to Title IV-E before this program, but the addition of the traineeship funds has made a huge difference in terms of heightened awareness and encouraging more Title IV-E students to enroll. We basically help them achieve their degree and they make a commitment to stay for four years. This project has made a big difference in Montana. For the state to be included at the table in working in this, well, it's just made a difference in terms of the state seeing themselves as potential contributors, and they feel fortunate to be a part of it. We do too. I meet regularly with the Region V administrator (Commissioner), and discuss all of these things. We already had a partnership through the Title IV-E program, and this traineeship project has only enhanced it, so we can make more of an impact in our work together. We're anticipating a bumper crop of new applicants and trying to recruit from psychology programs.”

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This traineeship project includes a number of unique components:

### ***Creating Student Support and Learning Teams***

The School is developing Support and Learning Teams (SLT) for each traineeship student to ensure a stable community of learning and practice. As PI Caringi explains, “Our student support and learning teams include the student, academic advisor, someone from the school (me), and someone from the agency to support

them. We're supporting them from a secondary stress perspective by knowing what is going on in their work, talking about it, trying to help change it, providing comprehensive supervision that way." Students may also request additional members, such as tribal elders, to be part of their team. SLTs meet twice per semester, and as requested by the student. Additionally, PI Caringi notes that "we call them on the phone, check in with them after their commitment period, four times per year after their commitment ends. This helps us learn what we can be doing to support them over time, and how we can revise our program to strengthen it."

### ***Implementing Organizational Design Teams***

In order to improve public child welfare agency staff retention and training, Regional Design Teams (DTs) are being developed to identify and address child welfare workforce needs and improve the workplace. These DTs are based in the CFSD regional offices and function as both learning and training systems, focusing on specific workforce and workplace improvements as they relate to the principles and activities of the state's System of Care (SOC), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), and PIP. PI Caringi maintains that "We took lessons from design teams and retention research. It doesn't make sense to develop workers who then leave, so we're using design teams to simultaneously improve the workplace while students are engaging in their traineeships. We're adapting this work, so that it'll become part of the child welfare curriculum. We've turned our attention to the formation of child welfare workers, and also leaders, through our design team intervention and the training. From an action learning perspective - and we've really been guided by action learning and the work of Kurt Lewin - the best way to understand the system is to try to change it. And we're starting to bring all of that all together into one project."

### ***Addressing Geographic and Financial Barriers through Distance Education***

The School of Social Work is working with the University's School of Continuing Education/Extended Learning Services to offer the second two years of the Schools' BSW program to students from Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell. This program incorporates both technological (Blackboard, Elluminate!) and traditional (in-person classes) educational activities and offers a hybrid model that is being integrated into the MSW curriculum in years two and three of the traineeship project, allowing for greater access to social work education for residents in the central and eastern regions of Montana. Other cooperative agreements with other colleges will be developed so that students can complete much of their education closer to their homes. In-class learning activities will be clustered together, so that students are able to come to campus less often. PI Caringi explains that "We've just really focused on engagement with tribal social services, and making BSW and MSW degrees accessible. This is a huge state, and it's hard to get to the folks in the rural areas. Most of our turnover is in Missoula and Western Montana, because those folks have other places to go; in the rural counties, they really don't go anywhere because there are no other opportunities

available to them. But of course that doesn't mean things are good there, simply because the turnover rate is nonexistent. So we're committed to improving the System of Care networks throughout the state, which are extensive and vast, and really an intricate system due to the tribes and how far apart everything is." In addition to reducing travel time for students, these distance education efforts will reduce the financial cost of the School's BSW and MSW programs, ultimately ensuring that more students are able to pursue their social work degree with the use of Title IV-E funds alone.

## **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

The traineeship project has allowed the School of Social Work to accelerate expansion of its distance education strategies. Web based versions of existing child welfare courses, including *Child Abuse and Neglect; Social Work and Law; Ethics and the Helping Professions, and Children and Youth at Risk*, are on-line or are in the process of being created. A number of new hybrid (combination of on-line and traditional face to face) courses will be in place by the end of the fifth year. These include *Indian Child Welfare Practice; Child Welfare Trauma; Workplace Management; and Design Team Facilitation*.

## **OBSTACLES**

Recruiting and supporting students of color, specifically Native students continues to be challenging and an area that this project is investing effort through developing relationships with tribal colleges and social service agencies. Due to the size of the state, and the comprehensive nature of the traineeship project, a lack of additional funding to hire project staff has been a challenge. As PI Caringi offers, "We're such a vast state, so I could use more funding towards other parts of the work. I'd love to be able to hire someone else to help me with this, even one day a week. But that doesn't exist right now, so we have to make do with existing resources."

Issues at the public agency, such as small office size and vacancies left unfilled, have posed difficulties for the project as well. According to PI Caringi, "Feedback has been very positive overall. There are concerns sometimes, of course, as in 'How are we going to support the students, if our agency is so small?' or 'There's a hiring freeze going on right now, and a ten percent vacancy level, how is the economy going to impact this project?'"

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

All three of the students who completed their degrees during the first year of this project obtained employment with CFSD. Design teams are in place in two CFSD offices and allow for a mechanism to address issues through organizing and mobilizing employees to improve the workforce and workplace conditions. Both of the current Design Teams have identified legal issues as top organizational concerns. During 2010 the University of Montana was a leader in convening a conference "Through a Child's Eyes," which focused on developing strategies for

working with dependent and neglected children. The conference was well attended by a number of disciplines and all four district court judges.

In addition, the School of Social Work has joined with CFSD to improve Montana's Child Abuse and Neglect (MCAN) training. The traineeship project will continue this work and develop new curricula for the MCAN, expanding it from two to six weeks and allowing for transfer of learning weeks and activities in between each of the training modules. Project faculty members were recently invited to speak with the State CFSD management team and State Director about the traineeship program.

In the short-term, this Traineeship project will focus on recruitment, specifically making outreach to attract more male and Native American students. By the end of the project, the School would also like to have propelled its students into child welfare leadership positions at state and tribal agency offices. According to PI Caringi, “We hope to see an increase in the workforce, because folks want to go into child welfare. And we hope to see those folks to become leaders. Five years from now, I want to see one of the administrators be one of our traineeship students. I’d also like to see our graduates get to work in tribal settings throughout Montana, and become leaders there.”

The project has also set out to collect enough data regarding the Design Teams and the Student Support and Learning Teams that they can be implemented with confidence on a national scale. As PI Caringi explains, “Longer term, I think the design team approach, which has already shown to be efficacious to reduce turnover in New York State, will become a best practice over time. It’s just so logical that these teams will be helpful around the country, for a variety of different workforce and practice challenges. I also think that the support and learning teams are just good social work practice, so other folks might be able to use this approach easily in every state. I’d just really hope to have more incorporation of action research and learning across the country.”

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## UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>University of South Dakota, School of Health Sciences, Social Work Program</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Vermillion, South Dakota</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>State of South Dakota &amp; Tribes</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>South Dakota Child Welfare Traineeship Project (SDCWTP)</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>BSW students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

South Dakota is composed of wide rural expanses and nine federally recognized Tribal nations. Although 13% of the state's child population is American Indian, American Indians are overrepresented in its child welfare system, as American Indian children comprise nearly one half of all child victims of maltreatment (48.9%), and more than one half of the foster care population (52.8%).<sup>15</sup> Additionally, although American Indian children represent the largest group of children waiting to be adopted (45.9%), American Indian children get adopted at lower rates than their white counterparts (38.9% versus 41.3%).<sup>16</sup>

Given these geographical challenges and child welfare statistics, the state has piloted an initiative designed to transform the current system into one that more fully embraces Systems of Care principles. As a result, the child welfare workforce will need to be prepared for positions in child welfare that support the Systems of Care framework. The traineeship project at the University of South Dakota's Social Work Department seeks to address these issues by supporting six students per year. As project PI Debra Norris relates, "The biggest challenge is preparation for rural practitioners, and to ensure that we get as many well-prepared social workers into the 'Hinterland,' which is the middle swath of our state. The majority of our Native American population and federally recognized reservation areas are there, and it's the largest geographic area of our state. But, wow, the travel involved just to access the services they need - folks have to go great distances to locate providers. And there's also a struggle in relation to the sovereignty of our Native American reservations - so a lot of things complicate the delivery of child welfare services. Another challenge has been how to employ strategies to attract degreed professionals to those areas, due to the geographic isolation. And, of course, the best way to attract professionals to those areas is to attract incoming students FROM those areas to get their degrees in social work, and then return to work where they live. They will be more apt to stay and practice there, if they lived there in the first place. But of course that also comes with its challenges, since then the students are

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2011). *Child welfare outcomes 2006-2009: South Dakota context data*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <http://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/data/downloads/pdfs/south%20dakota.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

all incredibly far away from their families and friends during school, if they matriculate here. But with this traineeship grant, we can figure out how to get better at the recruitment and support of these rural and Tribal students and fill this current void."

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

The SDCWTP makes a concerted effort to recruit Native American students and students from rural areas of the State. According to PI Norris, "we hope to attract students from other institutions, possibly to transfer into our program and this project, or to begin their studies here, so we are working with tribal universities on recruitment. For example, there is a social work program on the Pine Ridge Reservation, which is furthest west and south. We hope to visit with them and do some problem solving to put together the infrastructure for recruiting students into the traineeships." Additionally, the project is focusing on recruitment of current child welfare workers and paraprofessionals. Only students who have completed 60 hours of paid or volunteer experience will be considered for traineeship slots. Students must complete the *Child Welfare* course and one additional concentration course prior to being admitted to the traineeship project. Students are provided training on Systems of Care, and then field placement opportunities within one of South Dakota's Tribal child welfare agencies or state Child Protective Services in rural and reservation areas.

The project partners with the South Dakota Department of Social Services, Division of Child Protection in Vermillion, Lutheran Social Services in Sioux Falls, and the Head Start Program on the USD campus, for students' field placements. Additional field placement opportunities are being secured with the state's Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Community Mental Health Services; Indian Health Services; and other rural and tribal child welfare agencies. As PI Norris explains, "The public agency has been very excited and supportive of this project. But we are trying to figure out how this partnership can also help deal with the other barriers we encounter in our recruitment and support of students, such as housing, transportation, etc. We're in the Southeast portion of our state, so to get out to the rural reservation areas can take a three to six hour drive, and we're trying to think of other ways to partner with these existing agencies and programs so we can effectively cover that geographic area."

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This traineeship project has a number of unique features:

### ***Strengthening the Rural & Indian Child Welfare Workforce & Practice***

As PI Norris notes, "we are really looking at building up the workforce in rural and tribal areas, at beefing up rural and Indian Child Welfare practice. And we're also trying to put together best practices in working with American Indian and rural

families." To date, the project has established an internship with one of South Dakota's tribal agencies.

### ***Develop Concentration & Certificate in Child Welfare Reflective of SOC Principles***

The project is working towards establishing a concentration and certificate in child welfare that adheres to the guiding principles of Systems of Care. The addition of the 3 required child welfare courses have essentially achieved the concentration, but because of Board of Regent changes to course delivery and the addition of MSW program to the social work department, the certificate process has been delayed. As PI Norris relates, "we are helping state to forward on Systems of Care, and how it will impact Indian Child Welfare services. We are working with the State on training in Systems of Care. We visited with two key state officials to move it forward, and they allow our students to participate in their trainings too. In future years we'll partner with them to set up training sites in the middle swath of the state." The project enjoyed success with the September 2011 *Systems of Care Training* which brought faculty, trainees and child welfare and mental health professionals together, and also included Briar Cliff University faculty, trainees and tribal partners, allowing for greater integration of content related to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

### **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

Eighty percent of the core curriculum will include material on Indian Child Welfare, and a summer session course is being developed specifically on this topic as well. We plan to offer classes online or at distant locations or in a hybrid form to increase accessibility. As noted above, the project is also developing a child welfare concentration (and hopefully a certificate) with the addition of three courses, including Social Work with Native American families and Core Competencies in Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice. The project is increasing competency-based course content by meeting with state and tribal child welfare agencies to identify critical training issues for child welfare practice, having students, faculty and field supervisors attend and participate in Systems of Care and family team meeting group trainings, and developing child welfare competency scales to administer in the child welfare classes.

In addition to this coursework and training opportunities, trainees have been offered training in mediation and conflict management. Project faculty are also working with the BSW Faculty Learning Collaborative in looking at the Core Competencies for Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice. The project is considering adding this course and offering it as an elective for undergraduate and graduate students and adding it as a requirement for trainees, which would complete the coursework for the Child Welfare Certificate. Finally, project faculty are continuing to build the *Social Work with Native American Children & Families* course.

## OBSTACLES

The program only has two professors right now, which makes it challenge to move all project components forward in a timely fashion. Additionally, the state economic conditions have presented other obstacles: "We anticipate securing work for our students the State's public child welfare agencies may be difficult due to the statewide budget reduction of 10% across the board for all state entities. The state is also combining two divisions (social services and human services) at the state and regional office levels. This impact of the restructuring on available positions is unclear. Also, how are these state agencies going to be able to deploy someone to work on this with us, if they are looking at cutbacks and these budget issues." Finally, as PI Norris maintains, "Finding students who will commit to public child welfare and complete their field placements in rural and reservation areas can be difficult. Housing and distance is a problem for students in the rural and reservation areas and the students who wish to be trainees often know these challenges well. So we are challenged in terms of our recruitment of returning professionals and Native American students, as it is difficult to attract both groups because of the distance to our university, and the requirements of being admitted to and actively completing our degree program here."

## NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES

Over the coming months, this traineeship project will continue to work with the Trauma Collaborative to add the Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice Course to its curriculum, while also working to establish its *Certificate in Child Welfare* and finalize the syllabus for *Social Work with Native American Children & Families*. Project faculty will present on *Rural and Reservation Child Welfare in South Dakota* at the 36th National Institute on Social Work and Human Services in Rural Areas in Louisiana in July 2011. Additionally, as PI Norris explains, "All of our students have added the required project classes whenever possible, but there have been difficulties with rural placements being so far away. Our students have secured public/non-profit child welfare placements, but we continue to need to work with our partners in rural areas to secure affordable safe housing for our students to make these placements realistic options for them."

Longer term, the traineeship project would like to "get together a manual or training supplements for workers to use to help guide best practices in child welfare, and help move our state forward into ICWA compliance. We also want to help Tribal agencies strengthen their working relationships with the state, so we want to embark on some cross-agency trainings, and use these supplemental best practice manuals to help foster better understanding/orientation toward working across agencies for the common good, and bring everyone to the table." Overall, the traineeship project is "just very excited about the process and being involved with the national scene. We need to figure out how you move through all of the different pieces of this puzzle to put something into place that really helps kids and families in such a diverse, and geographically complex state."

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## YESHIVA UNIVERSITY TRAINEESHIP PROJECT

<b>TRAINEESHIP PARTNER</b>	<b>Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>New York, New York</b>
<b>AREA SERVED</b>	<b>New York City</b>
<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>Child Welfare Traineeship Project Serving Hispanic Families</b>
<b>TARGET TRAINEES</b>	<b>MSW students</b>

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The traineeship project of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University addresses the need for bilingual and professionally educated child welfare staff in New York City. Recent budget cuts have resulted in the elimination of scholarship funds for graduate social work education for employees at New York City’s Children’s Services (NYCCS). In addition, there is a need for bilingual child welfare caseworkers and culturally competent child welfare programming, given the growing number of Hispanic children in the country (from 17% of the population in 2000 to 22% of the population in 2008<sup>17</sup>), and their similarly increasing representation in child welfare services both nationally and in New York State (14% of the victims of maltreatment in 2000<sup>18</sup> to 20.8% of the victims of maltreatment in 2007<sup>19</sup>; 17% of the children in foster care in 2003<sup>20</sup> to 20% of the children in foster care in 2008<sup>21</sup>).

Selected trainees are professionally committed in that they have 2-5 years of experience in public child welfare and are bilingual. They enroll in the MSW Plan for Employed Persons (PEP), attend either full or part time and earn a Certificate in Child Welfare Practice with a special emphasis on working with Hispanic families.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> National KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2009). *Data Across States: Child population by race*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loct=2&by=a&order=a&ind=103&dtm=424&ch=a&tf=35>

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002). *Child Maltreatment 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm00/cm2000.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> US DHHS. (2009). *Child Maltreatment 2007*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm07/cm07.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> US DHHS. (2006). *The AFCARS Report: Interim Estimates for FY 2003 as of June 2006 (10)*. Washington, DC: US DHHS. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from

[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/tar/report10.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report10.htm)

US DHHS. (2005). *Child Welfare Outcomes 2003*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cwo03/cwo03.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> US DHHS. (2006). *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2008 Estimates as of October 2009 (16)*. Washington, DC: US DHHS. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from

[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/tar/report16.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report16.htm) New York State Office of Children and Family Services. (2009). *Facts About Children in Foster Care in New York State - 2008*. Retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/fostercare/stats.asp>

<sup>22</sup> Pending New York State approval.

## **STUDENTS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED**

In the first two years a diverse group of traineeship students was selected. Fifty percent of the students are bilingual, Spanish speaking. They have between two and 20 years experience in the field, and are employed at Children's Services or affiliated agencies. The School has partnered with the NYCCS on numerous aspects of the project, including applicant selection, field placement opportunities, and scheduling. As PI Ortiz Hendricks explains, "We've had an incredibly strong partnership with the city, Because the students make a two-year commitment post-graduation to work at Children's Services, it's really important that our relationship is strong and collaborative."

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

This traineeship project has a number of unique components:

### ***Using Innovative Student Selection Procedures***

Upon admission to the School of Social Work, NYCCS employees with two to five years of experience in child protective services are invited to apply for the CCWP. Project team members, in collaboration with NYCCS's training academy (Satterwhite Academy), select six students each year to receive traineeship stipends. Selections are made through rating applications, group and individual interviews, review of a writing sample and using the Landsman Scale. Additional applicants enter the traineeship program as regular PEP students and are eligible for financial aid and other scholarships.

### ***Collaborating with the Public Agency for Flexible Scheduling and Fieldwork***

The School has negotiated flexibility and support from NYCCS to ensure the success of the traineeship project. NYCCS has committed to allowing students to attend classes each week without reducing their salaries or increasing their workloads, and providing all of the students with field placements that do not interfere or conflict with their regular workload and assignments. Because of the impact of recent economic challenges, NYCCS could not release some of the students to participate in the program full time. Wurzweiler has allowed for these students to participate in the program part time. Project staff, including the field director, meet with NYCCS on an ongoing basis to plan for field placements and assure students have the opportunity to complete the program.

Field placements have included opportunities for students to complete first year placements in their current jobs with new assignments. Students participate in completely new field placements in their second year in the program.

### ***Developing Child Welfare Certification Serving Hispanic Families***

The CCWP certificate is an acknowledgement of a special focus on child welfare policy and practice with Hispanic families, and of their commitment to the field of child welfare. The CCWP will be presented to students who have completed the

following program components: Orientation Seminar; child welfare-specific MSW core coursework; field placement in child welfare working with Hispanic families; specialized MSW elective coursework; Professional Enrichment Seminars; Capstone Community Research Project; Transition Seminar; and peer networking and mentoring activities.

## **IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM**

All students are invited to attend a special summer *Orientation Seminar* in June and July, to help prepare them for the expectations and structure of the traineeship program. The seminar includes an overview of (a) the values and ethics of the social work profession; (b) Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) principles; (c) leadership development utilizing SOC principles; and (d) culturally competent child welfare practice.

Child welfare content has been infused in foundation courses. The required yearlong foundation practice course has incorporated principles of culturally competent child welfare practice with a focus on the disproportional representation of children of color in the child welfare system. The project is also developing two new, CFSR-driven courses - *Foundations of Culturally Competent Child Welfare Practice* and *Evaluating Child Welfare Practice* - and will share the curricula with other schools of social work in the NYC-area. In the required research course, *Social Work Practice and Evaluation*, taken in the second semester, there is a specific focus on evaluation of child welfare practice.

The course of study for trainees culminates in a capstone community research project in the last semester of a student's program. The purpose of the capstone essay is to instill leadership qualities in the trainees and to keep them actively engaged in their careers in child welfare thus further promoting retention in child welfare. Student trainees select a child welfare related problem facing communities of color, research the causes of the problem and propose solutions based on Systems of Care principles. Because of the focus on “disproportionality” during the foundation practice year, trainees are encouraged to address this topic in their capstone essay, allowing trainees to specifically identify their role in reducing disproportionality.

Students are required to take four electives. Trainees are encouraged to take the following established electives: *Child and Family Welfare*, *Social Work Practice with Children*, *Family Systems* and *Social Work Practice with Trauma and Interpersonal Violence*. Additional electives are available that could enhance practice knowledge for trainees include *Substance Abuse*, *Law and Social Work*, *Social Work Practice in Schools*, *Evidence Based Mental Health Practice*, *Community Mental Health* and *Immigration*.

PI Ortiz Hendricks notes that, “All students are in the same *Foundation Practice* class with a well-known adjunct faculty member who is also very experienced in

child welfare, and is also their faculty advisor. So they start off together, and are led by someone who's quite knowledgeable in the field. And for the most part, they get to travel together as a cohort, which increases their ability to support and encourage one another throughout the program”

Citywide *Enrichment Symposia*, designed to enhance the educational experience, are organized by NYCCS for all social work students and field instructors on subjects relevant to child welfare practice. Symposia include a range of guest speakers and faculty from all the Schools of Social Work with students in NYCCS placements who share research and best practices in working with children and families of color, and encourage advocacy and leadership in undoing the disproportionate representation of African American and Latino children in the child welfare system.

In addition all trainees participate in *Social Work Practice Seminars* designed only for the Wurzweiler trainees. These emphasize professional behavior, school policies, professional values and ethics, field work competencies, professional writing, and clinical engagement of difficult clients.

## **OBSTACLES**

The primary challenges faced by this project have been related to the need to be flexible in response to the economic challenges faced by the School, NYCCS and students.

## **NEXT STEPS & OUTCOMES**

In November of 2009, Wurzweiler hosted a symposium on *Latin Children and Families in Child Welfare*. Over 100 child welfare workers attended to hear representatives from the Committee on Hispanic Children and Families, NYS Office of Children and Family Services and NYCCS managers speak about how best to serve the Latino community. In March of 2011, Wurzweiler hosted a conference, *Clinical Perspectives on Real Cases*, which was open to the entire child welfare community.

New York State has recently identified child welfare competencies. The competency document was written by a group of faculty members from several social work schools in the New York City area and by NYCCS professional staff. This traineeship project is currently engaged in assessing the relevance of these competencies. These competencies were not yet established when the traineeship project began, however the implementation of these competencies in social work education will be a focus as the project moves forward.

The first group of student trainees will graduate in May of 2011. PI Ortiz Hendricks hopes that the traineeship project results in greater visibility of Hispanic issues related to child welfare, and a better understanding of the promising practices and policies to best serve this population. According to PI Ortiz Hendricks, “I’d like to figure out what is in the interest of Latina families, to really learn more about what Latina families are

thinking when they contact Children’s Services, so that we help them in the ways they need us to. All too often, we don’t have the same goal or set of steps to get us there. A Latina family may think they can get a specialized school for their child when he's in need of some help, while Children’s Services end up giving them a group home placement for their son. A big disconnect exists. There’s a huge communication gap that needs to be addressed, and I hope that this project helps with that.”

She is also hopeful that the project will develop expert practitioners who are prepared to tackle these sorts of challenges as managers and leaders at NYCCS. As PI Ortiz Hendricks puts it, “I want to see a cohort of bilingual, MSW-prepared graduates leave the school to be leaders in child welfare and effect change in the system. They are all going to be trained in undoing racism and in disproportionality issues, so I’d hope to see a real change in the overrepresentation of African-American and Latina children in child welfare, and see quality services provided to all kids and families, especially minority groups. I hope our students will be change agents. I want to see racially- and culturally-relevant practice emerge, and hear that they really start to apply cultural competence standards in their work.”

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## C. CONCLUSION

The comprehensive summaries provided in this report offer a snapshot of the uniqueness and creativity of the NCWWI's 12 traineeship programs during their first two years. They highlight the goals and initiatives of each program as they strive to develop or enhance pathways from social work education in the university setting to social work practice in the field and a career commitment to child welfare work.

These summaries provide a detailed overview of the myriad innovative efforts of these twelve traineeship programs. Traineeship curricular innovations address a number of pressing child welfare themes - leadership, cultural and linguistic competency, workforce development, trauma and systems of care – by developing new courses as well as infusing relevant child welfare content into existing courses. Traineeship programs have also employed a range of different approaches to enhance student learning, including the use of portfolios, participation in professional conferences, capstone research projects, and the development of enrichment seminars on child welfare practices. Strategic collaborations with public and private child welfare agencies have led to field partnerships that support students as they prepare for child welfare careers. Finally, as students enter the workforce, traineeship programs are responding to their needs for continued support through the development of a variety of post-graduation supports.

These 12 traineeship programs are not static or complete; they will continue evolve in the coming months and years as they take stock of ongoing evaluation findings and make use of professional peer networking feedback and support. While this report will continue to be updated to include these additional activities and findings, supplemental publications will also be prepared to highlight traineeship innovations in more detail, as well as evaluation findings regarding student preparation, recruitment, and retention in the child welfare field.

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