

Supporting Transition to Work as a Child Welfare Retention Strategy

Worker turnover in child welfare is high. This is costly for child welfare programs, and impacts continuity of services to children and families. Although recent graduates largely intend to stay in the field of child welfare, a number of them leave as soon as stipend payback requirements are met.

What is happening during this transition to work period that is causing them to leave the field?

Retention studies have found that job satisfaction and intent to stay in the field are influenced by:

- Satisfaction with social work education
- Level of organizational support
- Professional development opportunities
- Degree of preparation for the realities of child welfare work
- Work-related burnout



What can be done to support child welfare workers transition to work?

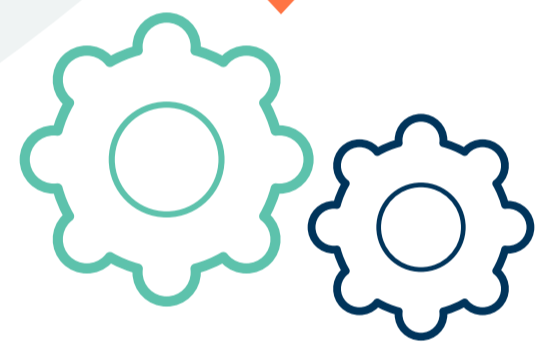
Ensure graduates can use their social work education to support their work.

- Make the curriculum relevant and timely
- Develop working partnerships between schools of social work and child welfare programs
- Foster transfer of learning through field placements



Provide adequate and realistic preparation for the work.

- Equip graduates with a realistic understanding of child welfare work
- Help graduates develop skills to negotiate the realities of child welfare work
- Provide graduates with opportunities for transfer of learning



Support staff through supervision and positive workforce culture.

- Provide regular reflective supervision
- Encourage mentoring relationships and peer support
- Help graduates build skills to navigate organizational climate



Create opportunities for professional development.

- Support graduates in identifying and planning a career path
- Provide regular learning and growth opportunities
- Recognize strengths of individuals and teams
- Encourage opportunities to be creative
- Empower staff to advocate and affect positive change

Support workers with stress and burnout.

- Proactively address organizational factors that contribute to stress and burnout
- Revise or eliminate organizational policies or practices that contribute to moral distress
- Engage in reflective practice
- Encourage and model self-care

Supporting graduates as they transition to work will improve retention in child welfare.

A strong, well-prepared, and experienced workforce will help create positive outcomes for children and families. If schools of social work and child welfare programs work together to support transition to work, workers will be better prepared, more supported, and more likely to remain in the field.



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