



NCWWI University Partnerships Transition-to-Work Strategies

Why Focus on Transition to Work

Schools of social work and the child welfare agencies they partner with must actively implement strategies that support transition to work to assure long-term workforce retention.

Previous evaluations of NCWWI traineeship graduates found that job satisfaction is directly related to intent to stay in child welfare, particularly during the first few years after graduation. Factors that influenced job satisfaction included:

1. Satisfaction with social work education
2. Organizational support
3. Opportunities for professional development
4. Preparation for the work
5. Work-related burnout

Social work programs, in partnership with child welfare organizations, must support students' transfer of learning from the social work classroom to the field by providing students the opportunity to develop skills to effectively navigate the realities and challenges of child welfare work. Retention-focused strategies begin with recruiting students to social work and child welfare practice and continue as social work graduates commit to long-term careers in child welfare.

NCWWI university partnerships have identified strategies to support transition to work and the long-term retention of traineeship graduates. Some of these innovations are included below.

Strategies to Support Transition to Work

Reflective Practice and Self-Care

- Provide regular supportive supervision to students and to graduates during their transition to work
- Integrate reflective learning opportunities into courses, field work, and professional seminars



- Help students and new workers develop and use individualized self-care plans
- Hold workshops and group seminars focused on developing self-care skills
- Include students and graduates in supportive cohorts
- Provide opportunities to develop awareness and skills related to racial equity and tribal sovereignty in the workplace and with clients

Professional Development

- Ensure agency pre-training requirements are completed as a part of the social work degree
- Provide opportunities for students to learn together and with graduates, faculty, and agency staff
- Give students and new graduates opportunities to participate in projects that stimulate creativity and their commitment to advocate for system and organizational change
- Utilize individual professional development plans (IDP) developed by students that include their experience as a student and carry through their transition to work
- Offer opportunities for students to develop as child welfare leaders
- Help students prepare for work by addressing licensure, civil service testing, résumé writing, and job interviews

Mentoring

- Support students and graduates in developing informal and formal mentoring relationships
- Ensure mentors include peers, colleagues, alumni, veteran child welfare workers, and child welfare leaders
- Match students with mentors who will serve as transition coaches
- Give graduates the opportunity to serve in informal and formal mentoring roles
- Make sure mentors are available to support management of job challenges, secondary traumatic stress, and professional self-care
- Provide students and graduates of color access to mentors from similar backgrounds and communities
- Establish mentoring opportunities to support the development of awareness and skills that promote equity and inclusion and support navigating systems and organizations that are racist



Curriculum and Field Placements

- Add content to courses in policy, leadership, and management that provides skills and tools for child welfare workers to transfer learning and addresses challenges in child welfare practice
- Provide learning experiences that support a realistic understanding of child welfare work and the development of skills to negotiate the challenging aspects of child welfare work
- Make sure course work and field placements include opportunities to learn about oppression, disparity, and power differentials and their impact on racial equity and tribal sovereignty
- Design field placements and service-learning opportunities to include rotations that require students to use a range of competencies and skills in a variety of child welfare roles
- Ensure field placements promote building competencies and skills to address the daily challenges of practice issues in child welfare work
- Engage students in projects that address agency needs and provide access to agency leaders and administrators for feedback and implementation. These opportunities prepare them for potential new roles and responsibilities after graduation.