



MCWEP

MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM
2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors are grateful for the cooperation of the students who took the time to give feedback on their experiences with the Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP). Without their input, this report would not have been possible. We would also like to thank our MCWEP partners, including the Graduate Program Academic Coordinators, faculty, and staff at Monmouth University, Rutgers University and Stockton University. For the coming academic year, we would also like to welcome the faculty and staff of Kean University as our fourth partner institution in the MCWEP consortium. We are grateful for their perseverance and the opportunity to offer a new academic option to students in the Northern region of the state. Additionally, the support received from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), the Office of Training and Professional Development, and the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers has been essential for the ongoing success of this project. We would also like to thank the Director and staff of the Policy Unit at DCP&P for their support and interest in engaging MCWEP students in meaningful exchange from within.

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program especially thanks Allison Blake, Ph.D., MSW, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, for her extraordinary vision for improving the lives of New Jersey families through the education and training of the workforce. Commissioner Blake's support and encouragement has been present and unwavering.

We are grateful for the financial support provided to this project by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families. Finally, we are thankful for the support of Stockton University, without which this project and report would not have been possible.



INTRODUCTION

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP) is a partnership among the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF), the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NJ), and a consortium of four graduate social work programs – The MSW Programs of Kean University, Monmouth University, Rutgers University, and Stockton University. In the Spring of 2016, we welcomed Kean University's Master of Social Work Program to the Consortium. However, Kean's first cohort of MCWEP students will enter in the Fall 2017 semester, so no data included in this report pertains to Kean University. The MCWEP partnership was formally initiated in June 2012, when the project was funded by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

The intent of MCWEP is to enhance the knowledge and skills of supervisors who are currently employed at the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), through completion of a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW). Through participation in MCWEP, DCP&P supervisors broaden their perspectives on social work and child welfare (including evidence-based public child welfare practice), develop advanced clinical skills, and deepen their supervisory skills so that they become more confident supervisors and mentors in their work with at-risk children and families and more effective leaders in promoting exemplary practice within New Jersey's public child welfare system.

This program evaluation covers the months of August 2016 – July 2017. In evaluating the project, the perspectives of the students were sought to capture the academic and experiential components of the program. This report includes data from respondents in five cohorts of students accepted into MCWEP. At the time of this report, that includes 64 DCP&P supervisors, 23 casework supervisors, and 5 local office managers. The majority of students are women (85%), and as a group, they have hundreds of years of combined supervisory experience with DCP&P. Approximately 38% are African American, 28% are Latino, and 26% are Caucasian. The MCWEP students are divided among the three consortium schools and represent 75% of DCP&P local and area offices.



Descriptive Data - A total of ninety-three (93) students were funded during the first five years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS





Number of Students Admitted from DCP&P Local and Area Offices:



Anticipated Graduation		

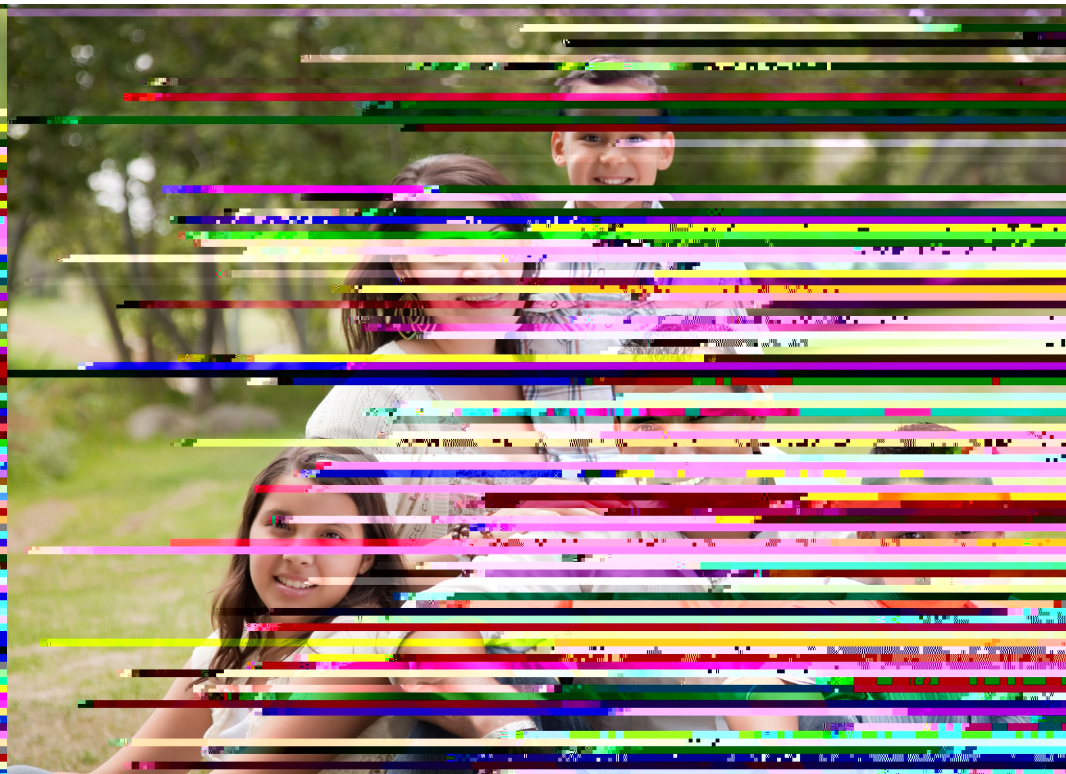


PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Competency-Based Assessment

Program assessment in MSW education focuses on student outcomes (the extent to which students demonstrate competencies and associated practice behaviors), rather than inputs (curriculum content). Similarly, assessment in the Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP) is focused on student attainment of a set of competencies and associated practice behaviors. Under the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), all MSW graduates are expected to have mastered certain competencies. In addition, each participating MSW program has its own direct practice/clinical concentration and has developed a set of advanced MSW competencies to guide learning in the classroom and field. All students in MSW programs are assessed for mastery of the CSWE competencies and the specific advanced competencies established by their MSW programs. To assess the additional mastery of competencies required by MCWEP, we use the specialized competencies that students develop through their participation in MCWEP. These competencies specifically address the Division of Child Protection and Permanency requirements that child welfare supervisors have an exceptionally well-developed perspective on the knowledge base in social work and child welfare practice, are able to effectively use clinical skills and theories, and are able to supervise effectively in an organization where workers regularly make difficult decisions that affect the lives of vulnerable children and families. These two sets of competencies, trauma-informed child welfare practice behaviors and leadership and supervision in child welfare practice behaviors, are developed in two elective courses all MCWEP participants are required to take prior to graduation. These two sets of competencies are also rehearsed and reinforced during the sessions of the Learning Community.

MCWEP students completing one or both courses during the 2016-2017 academic year rated their own mastery of these specialized competencies. The following summarizes the results of those self-assessments.





Assessment of Student Learning – Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the listed statements regarding Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice Behaviors. Mean scores are reported below (1 = Very Much Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Very Much Agree):





Assessment of Student Learning – Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the listed statements regarding Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision Competencies.
 Mean scores are reported below (1 = Very Much Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Very Much Agree):

Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision Competencies	Mean Score				
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86
2. I am able to describe key qualities of leaders and the impact on child welfare systems and staff.	4.33	4.75	4.45	4.93	4.93
3. I can demonstrate an understanding of the role of ethics and the systems perspective in leadership behavior as a supervisor.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86
4. I am able to describe key child welfare workforce issues, trends, and challenges from a national perspective.	4.00	4.66	4.85	4.47	

4.47



Learning Community Assessment

The Learning Community is an integral component of MCWEP designed to enhance students' MSW classroom and field learning experiences and meaningfully connect these experiences to child welfare practice and supervision. The purpose of the MCWEP Learning Community is to foster a state-wide network of MCWEP participants to disseminate educational information related to child welfare and encourage dialogue among participants regarding MSW education and translation of educational outcomes to workforce experiences. The Learning Community also provides an avenue for process evaluation of the needs of student participants in MCWEP.



Learning Community Evaluation Results (continued)

Learning Community	Activities		



The Learning Community evaluations also included open-ended questions. These questions were:

- 1.



Further Information and Follow-up on Issues Addressed in the Learning Community

- I would like to see MCWEP students have a larger role in DCP&P policy and administration, the hopes of continuing and initiating change
- Trainings on specific case laws affecting DCP&P
- More activities on case practice issues
- More ways to incorporate learning ov3 (wpfpec13.5 (ninru2i07o>>> BDC hipinuunqs)Tj-13RITE0u5 Td(•)Tj5 0 Ti1 1 rg/G(thTf0 Tc Tc pply9>>>)Tj toum>>>en)Tj/myalT>>>d F



- I will be more thoughtful when reviewing documentation
- I plan to integrate some of this information that I learned into my work and with staff
- Will be more cognizant of resources for LGBT clients
- I will be able to engage the transitioning client more effectively
- Utilize the immigration policy we learned about
- Continue to challenge the status quo, and utilize new techniques

Share Content with Staff/Supervisees

- Promote self-care for myself and my workers
- I will implement the self-care materials during my unit meetings
- Use team building activities with my unit
- I will be able to draft proposals on policies that need to be changed—this will empower me and my staff
- I will continue to share the information from the Learning Community with my staff
- Use the techniques outlined on how to effectively present information to my staff
- I will be able to provide my caseworkers/clients with information on transgendered population, health and services

Further Exploration or Research into Area of Content

- Stress management and self-care
- We could have some training on PTSD, STS, and compassion fatigue
- Give suggestions on integrating self-care

What Was the Most Important Thing You Took Away from Today's Learning Community Activities?

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Valuable Information

- A better understanding of the differences between policy procedure, and practice]TJ/C20 1 Tf3-.35 0-.354 3d00250003 >Tj/TT2 1 Tf1.35 0 Td[(Anform)-18.7 (ation)regarding policy w



Summary of Student Feedback

In sum, students indicated that they value and benefit from all the information and materials disseminated in the Learning Community. This reflects the significant time and effort that MCWEP faculty put into planning and arranging these meetings. Students also expressed strong appreciation for the sense of community and support aspect that is one of the most consistent strengths of our Learning Community, and MCWEP as a whole. We continue to devote time at each meeting to foster this strong sense of solidarity and collegiality between the cohorts and with program staff. Students also seem interested and encouraged to engage in further exploration and research into areas of interest, aiming to promote change in their units and across the organization. The students also related that they will continue to transfer the skills and knowledge gained through their MSW courses to their staff and also apply it to their own practice in child welfare. This has been a consistent finding of our Learning Community assessment over time, and connects with one of its objectives: to facilitate meaningful transfer of learning from students' MSW courses to DCP&P practice. Students are eager to apply their learning, whether specific content areas or practice approaches, to their work setting and with their supervisees. Students voiced a clear appreciation for their colleagues' support, and the desire to offer support to both colleagues and supervisees. Students expressed a longing for additional information, more guest speakers, time to connect with agency leadership and ideas for self-care within the child welfare environment.

Additionally, the students provided feedback related to the areas of content, learning modalities and topics for which they have preferences. This feedback will be integrated in the 2017-2018 Learning Community and beyond. As the Learning Community curricula is explored, adjusted, and solidified, student feedback has been perhaps the strongest guiding input for improvement. The Learning Community environment has been a laboratory for MCWEP staff and faculty to explore effective pedagogical strategies and have meaningful impact with a captive and invested audience of engaged MSW students and DCP&P supervisors.



- I believe that the support of the staff is absolutely instrumental. It keeps the students focused and motivated when frustrations and concerns arise.
- The individuals involved are a part of ensuring the MCWEP program runs smoothly. Joe and Dawn are extremely supportive and always willing to help resolve an issue or find an answer.
- The one thing I find to be beneficial for this program is the connection you make with our supervisors and CWS, going through this process with others in the same field of work. You can share ideas and express your frustrations with the group and they will understand you and provide you with helpful tips to make it work.
- Allows for a community of people to share and provide feedback to those just coming in while also helping as you go through the program. It is a supportive community. I was



How is MCWEP preparing you to be a more impactful supervisor?



- I believe that the coursework and Learning Community meetings provide me with an abundance of information that allows me to better assess cases as well as to provide more efficient leadership to staff.
- I feel a tremendous impact in regards to how I have changed my thought process and ensure I am more engaged with the development and training of the new staff coming in. I



Learning Community and Elective Issues

- I believe that the Learning Communities were long and would have liked to see them shortened or lessened in frequency. The reason I say this is because we are already out of the office for field and our classes and at times having this to attend brought stress especially when I felt very behind in my office work.
- Trauma and Policy for Stockton should not be offered together. Both classes are phenomenal. I feel there would be more benefit to offering them separately due to the amount of information provided.
- There should not be any assignments when Learning Communities are missed. Honestly, we work hard and have plenty to do. It's a bit frustrating and extremely inconsiderate to create random assignments when we as students are already working very hard to complete this course.
- The Learning Communities should only be a 1/2 day of educational training or maybe start at 9:30 am or 10 am and end at 3:30 pm. Also, it would be better if they were not on a Friday.
- I find that the summer experience has been difficult to maintain a focus and it is extremely long.
- I would strongly recommend not requiring staff to take both Policy and Trauma classes during the same semester. Students are not able to possibly read all that is assigned in these two classes and therefore are not receiving the true benefits of these classes. Towards the end, student are no longer striving to do their best but just to get the work done. No one is learning from the demands of these two classes being held together, and this should change.

Feeling Overwhelmed/Stressed Due to Workload and Lack of Local Office Support

- Time out of the office is hard. Our work is just piling up and it adds to the stressors of an already difficult job. It is hard to implement key learned information in a rushed and stressful arena.
- Although I hate to identify an issue without identifying a solution, the amount of pressure MCWEP students feel to obtain the required internship hours while trying to keep up with work and hope you don't miss anything and get disciplined or something like that, is immense. It is really hard to manage the stress. The workload isn't lessened at the local office and you feel the resentment from the local office staff and management when you hint you are having trouble keeping up.
- Should be better support at the local offices. Some managers don't provide support at all.
- There should be much more push on the local offices so they become more accommodating. We are still responsible for the same amount of work as other supervisors that are not in school or internship.
- It's impossible to produce quality of work and handle high caseloads when we in the office only two and a half days a week.

Field Placement Hours and Restrictions

- Yes, allowing supervisors to accept field placements in their towns so it will help them with their own personal responsibilities.
- The hardest part so far is the internship. I don't think that the "amount" of time in internship and out of the office equates to the effect we imagine it is having on us.
- The amount of hours required for internships. This should be reduced to an amount that allows Division supervisors to gain experience in other agencies, but also allows the supervisor to remain in the office for a majority of the week. Division supervisors are not leaving to gain employment in these agencies, therefore the amount of time spent in the internships should be reduced.
- Yes- field has been the largest challenge. There has to be a better way. We should be able to remain in county, in our office even. We have interns in the office, but we cannot be one. I understand that you get a richer experience at another agency, which I did and love. But TIME is of the essence and we do not have enough.



- I think there should be more opportunities for field placements. I understand that the purpose of MCWEP is to mold us into better DCP&P workers and for us to help improve the agency, but I feel that even allowing us to be placed in field placements that aren't directly contracted or directly utilized by or referred to with DCP&P, doesn't mean they can't provide an advantage to the agency.

Do you feel you are being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey's public child welfare system?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Yes	34
Yes, but Expressing Frustration/Reservation Due to Perceived Barriers/Lack of Opportunity	5
No	0

All students responding to this questions answered "yes," they did feel they were being prepared to play a role in transforming New Jersey's Public Child Welfare System. However, some students expressed that while they felt prepared, they expressed frustration and worry that they might not be given the opportunity to put their new knowledge, skills, and perspective to use at DCP&P. This finding reflects student responses to other questions above, as well as verbal feedback from conversations in the Learning Community. It is also consistent with feedback from previous years' reports. There were various reasons why students reported feeling prepared, and why they might feel some reservation or frustration. Samples of their responses are given below:

- I believe that I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of DCP&P. DCP&P has been in transformation for the last 10 years; and a lot of the change has been difficult due to the way of thinking for seasoned DCP&P employees that are not moving forward with the change. It is important for the MCWEP graduates to continue to implement change within their unit, first and hopefully, the office.
- I do feel that I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey's public child welfare system. The Division has been incorporating more social work concepts into their policy and procedures. Therefore, it is imperative that leadership is aware of the foundation of these concepts in order to truly assist in the implementation of the concepts.
- Yes- I have learned a tremendous amount of information about macro-level systematic issues. I would love to be able to make the changes needed to support the children and families we serve. Unfortunately, my position will only allow me to impact my unit and office if my LOM is in agreement.
- I am motivated to be a part of the changes needed and being implemented for the betterment of the families and children we serve. You cannot obtain an MSW and not want to be a part of the transformation of New Jersey's Public Child Welfare System...be the change you want to see in the world!
- While we have so many ideas and have done so much research, leadership does not ask for our input. While I will use the MSW, I have realized that DCP&P does not view us in that aspect and my ideas/thoughts are not useful for DCP&P. I have informed leaders at DCP&P of my research and classes, and yet my statements have been overlooked. We had a meeting with the Policy Unit—but what ever came of that? It's almost as if they want DCP&P employees to have their MSW but remain stagnant in their positions and practice in local offices. This is why some in the MCWEP program are looking to outside ventures. DCP&P seems to have doors closed for MCWEP students.
- I do not think MCWEPers are used in surveys or opinions related to the welfare system reform. I do believe we are a valuable source of information and ideas, as we are still involved in the heart of the welfare system. Supervisors are still connected to the community and families, we are aware of the flaws, the services that can be increased, what is needed, and what new trends are forming in the different counties.





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The Learning Community has two components in which MCWEP participants are expected to be involved. In the bi-weekly online discussion board, students respond to discussion threads posted by Learning Community Faculty facilitators. The second component involves quarterly in-person meetings where students have opportunities to gain further