



# MCWEP

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## LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

Co-Principal Investigator, Child Welfare Education Institute

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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 Kean University, Monmouth University, Rutgers University and Stockton University. 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.

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program especially thanks Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, for her ongoing support of efforts to improve the lives of New Jersey families through



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. This program evaluation covers the months of August 2019 – July 2020. Kean’s first cohort of MCWEP students entered in the Fall 2017 semester, so this is the third annual program evaluation that will include data from Kean University MCWEP students. 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. 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 eight cohorts of students accepted into MCWEP.



- A total of one hundred and fifty-three (153) students were funded during the first eight years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1 – 8.

	# of Students								
AGE GROUP	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
30-35	7	3	1	1	5	3	4	0	24 (16%)
36-40	6	5	10	5	2	10	5	6	49 (32%)
41-45	4	4	5	4	5	8	6	6	42 (27%)
46-50	2	3	3	5	6	0	4	4	27 (18%)
>51	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	12 (8%)
	# of Students								
GENDER	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
FEMALE	18	16	17	11	17	17	17	18	131 (83%)
MALE	2	2	3	5	2	4	3	1	22 (17%)
	# of Students								
ETHNICITY	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
African American	8	7	3	9	8	14	11	8	68 (44%)
Caucasian	6	8	5	2	3	2	4	5	37 (24%)
Latino	6	3	8	4	5	4	5	6	41 (27%)
Other/Unknown	----	----	4	1	3	1	----	---	9 (6%)




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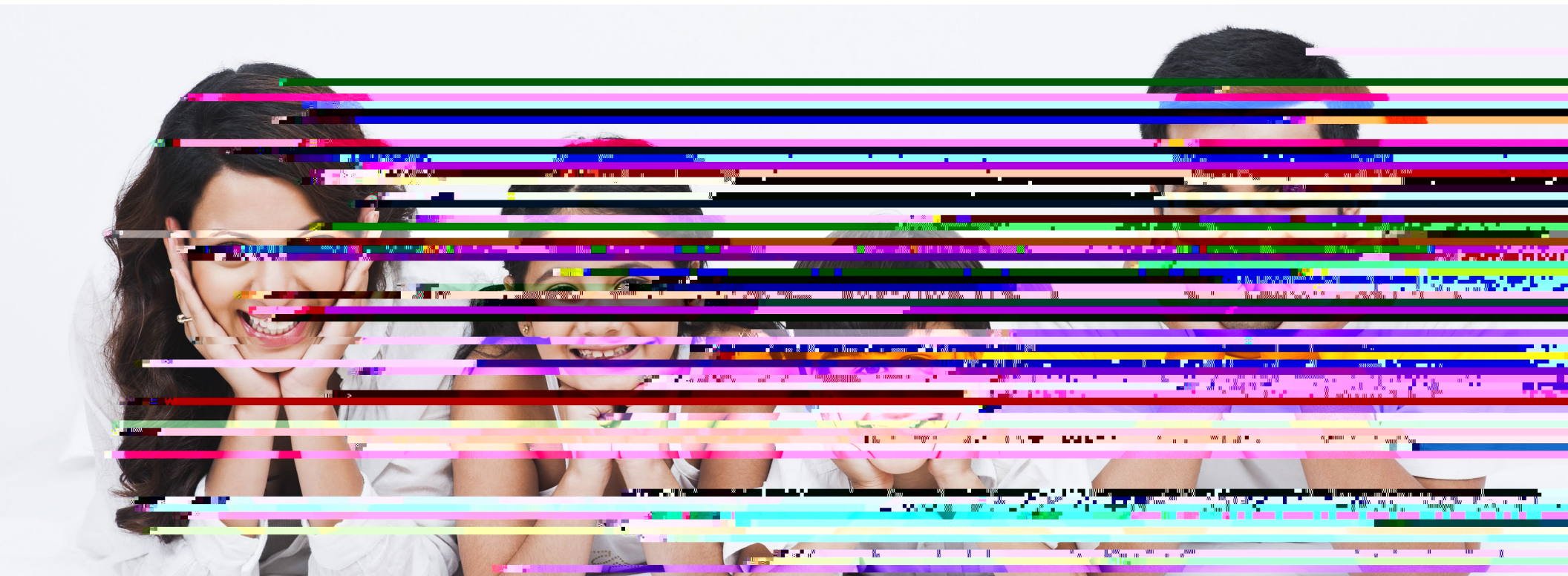
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	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	All Cohorts
# of applicants	26	22	28	20	22	26	26	26	196
#/% offered and accepting traineeship	20 (77%)	18 (82%)	20 (71%)	16 (80%)	19 (86%)	21 (81%)	20 (77%)	19 (73%)	153 (78%)
# terminated prior to completion	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	5
# completing traineeship	20	17	17	15	18	20	1	0	108
# not graduated yet	0	0	0	0	0	1	20	19	40







## 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 2019-2020 academic year rated their own mastery of these specialized competencies. The following summarizes the results of those self-assessments.











August 15, 2019 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center			





- 1. In your opinion, what were the strengths of this Learning Community?
- 2. What suggestions would you offer to improve this Learning Community?
- 3. What will you do differently in your practice/employment as a result of this Learning Community?
- 4. What was the most important thing you took away from today's Learning Community Activities?

**In Your Opinion, What Were the Strengths of This Learning Community?**

Content/Material Covered
Sense of Community and Support
Development of Skills and Resources for Child Welfare Practice
Linking MSW curriculum & Learning Community content to Child Welfare Practice



### What Suggestions Would You Offer to Improve This Learning Community?

Suggestions for Topics and Issues Students Would Like Addressed in the Learning Community
Suggestions for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities and Activities
Various Practical and Logistical Issues

- More topics about self-care and time management.
  - We should discuss vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress.
  - More LGBTQ topics. The current political environment, how it affects our work, and what we can do.
  - Focusing on hot topics that impact social work and child welfare is the way to go. Future topics could focus on shaping old leadership minds. Problem solving up the management line. Advocacy on policy change within state systems.
  - Discussing community collaboratives or building on community partnerships with schools, police, hospitals, etc..
  - How to incorporate human rights and social justice advocacy into DCPD policy.
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- Presentations from MCWEP alumni.
  - More interactive and group activities.
  - Continue to use films and movies.
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- Plan events outside the winter time when it's so cold.
  - Do team-building activities as icebreakers at the beginning of meetings to build rapport among the group..





**What Will You Do Differently in Your Practice/Employment as a Result of This Learning Community?**

Integrate/Apply Content to Practice
Share Content with Staff/Supervisees
Further Exploration or Research into Content Area

- Work differently with LGBTQ community by supporting and advocating.
- I will reevaluate cases that involve marijuana to assess the impact on risk.
- Apply what I have learned about marijuana when working with clients who are prescribed medicinal marijuana .
- Reopening my eyes and way of thinking when supervising cases and working with clients who are immigrants.
  
- Share LGBTQ info and practice info with my supervisees.
- Motivate others to get involved and educate based on information learned.
- Utilize info regarding personality types in supervision role.
- I will be using that team-building activity with my unit.
  
- Learn more about marijuana and related issues.
- Seek more knowledge about the impact legalizing marijuana will have on our families and our work.





In sum, students indicated that they value and benefit from the information and materials disseminated in the Learning Community. This reflects the significant time and effort that MCWEP staff 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



1. What are the strengths of MCWEP?
2. How well do you think MCWEP is preparing you to be a more impactful supervisor at DCP&P (consider your MSW coursework, The Learning Community Meetings, and the MCWEP electives, if taken [Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice, and Child Welfare Leadership & Supervision] all as a part of MCWEP)?
3. Is there anything about MCWEP that you think should be changed? If so, what and why?
4. Do you feel you are being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey's public child welfare system? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about MCWEP?

Students offered a great deal of insight about the program, their experiences, and their aspirations for moving forward in the organizations transformation. Their ideas and trepidations are a major component in our considerations for MCWEP program enhancement.

#### What Are the Strengths of MCWEP?

Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff
Knowledge Gained; Academic/Professional Enhancement
Program Design and Structure

- Very supportive and knowledgeable community that understands the challenges of being a student, a social worker and a child protective supervisor.
  - MCWEP provides a community of support for students who are all going through the graduate program and need support and sometimes guidance to make it through.
  - MCWEP is a support system to assist in easing the stress of work/school life. They are available to give directions when needed as well as ensure your comfort while succeeding in the program.
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- The MCWEP program has literally reshaped my view on child welfare, social work, and leadership in CPP. I don't believe I would have even valued the information obtained in a MSW program without already being a part of CPP and being in the MSW program. The information I was given throughout my education was easily and immediately pertinent to my work, which might have been lost if I were obtaining my MSW prior to CPP.
  - MCWEP allows supervisory staff with DCP&P the chance to enhance their education as well as skill set in the work we do with children and families everyday; making for better outcomes.
  - Furthering my social work education has strengthened my skills and knowledge in social work, child welfare, and childhood trauma, enabling me to better educate those I supervise and better incorporate social work principles and skills into my supervision.



- Without the MCWEP opportunity I don't know that I would have gone back to school on my own or been able to without the educational leave component. I genuinely feel like if I would have completed my MSW anyway outside of MCWEP, I would have not had the time, opportunity, focus, or take-away that obtaining my MSW through MCWEP allowed me to do..

**How is MCWEP Preparing You to be a More Impactful Supervisor?**

MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective
Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning
The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses

- MCWEP has taught me how to be comfortable in the uncomfortable and to learn how to view situations through different lens. MCWEP has taught me how to take care of myself (selfcare) before I can be of any help to anyone else.
- The program increased our confidence in utilizing the techniques that research has shown to be effective. In addition, I have a better understanding of the underlying needs of many of our families and how to use the best approach to engage and serve families.
- The MSW coursework allows me to speak from a place of greater knowledge and depth in my work. I enjoyed enhancing my Social Work knowledge and embraced having theory to go with my extensive practice background.
- Completing my MSW, my understanding of childhood trauma, domestic violence, oppression, income inequality, empathy...and so much more has completely changed. I no longer view my role as a type of law enforcement holding perpetrators of abuse accountable anymore. I see my role as an expert in social problems who is assessing safety by seeking to understand and alleviate the micro and macro level factors that lead to the abuse, neglect, and family crisis. I really cannot stress enough how this program has changed my perspective in what CPP does as well as reframes my past work to help me understand how I can continue to improve professionally and promote my staff to continue improving.
- I am pushing my staff to redirect their energies from documenting abuse and neglect through investigations and actually implement more preventative measures to hopefully put ourselves out of a job one day.
- I have learned skills and techniques to assist me with working with people I supervised, my peers, and thore how6 (randhe I super)  
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- It provides the knowledge and education to further teach and strengthen our workers assessment skills. I think by having the opportunity to work while attending this program gives many of us the insight to apply the theories and practices being taught in the program and applying them to the field.
- The Learning Communities often provide great relevant, current, and timely topics such as marijuana legalization and how it relates to Child Protection..
- The two elective courses, Trauma in Child Welfare and Child Welfare Leadership & Supervision prepared MCWEP students in identifying the various forms of leadership and obtaining an understanding of how to best lead staff/workers/units in the local office. Being mindful of leadership styles allows supervisors to adjust and develop techniques to best motivate staff. Trauma in Child Welfare also impacted how supervision is carried out at the local level as case decisions determine the trajectory of a family’s success or failure. Understanding how trauma impacts individuals and families allows supervisors to dig deeper and identify core issues/problems individuals and families face.
- A lot of insight was gathered from completing the classes this summer in Supervision in Child Welfare and Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice. The classes were very impactful. The knowledge gained from these classes has been implemented into my daily work.
- The Child Welfare Leadership & Supervision course this past summer could not have been more timely during this pandemic. It gave me confidence, strength, and tools to utilize to lead my unit during this extremely stressful time. The Trauma course relates to every fiber of Child Protection work—it should be mandatory for all staff in my opinion.

**Is There Anything About MCWEP You Would Like to Change?**

Various Logistical/Structural Issues
The Need for MCWEP Remains/Program Should be Continued or Expanded

- Although leadership at the local office level is reminded yearly of the responsibilities that a MCWEP student faces (balancing school, field placements and work), there are still issues surrounding coverage and negative comments by staff not affiliated nor familiar with the program.
- The costs of books can be very expensive and it would be great if MCWEP could cover this expense. I’m sure with the current budget situation that will not be an option. Perhaps professors could offer PDF versions of the material to cut down the cost.
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- I believe that the MCWEP program should continue to be funded and that eventually all supervisors and CWS should have to complete the program because it's so valuable. It teaches skills that will benefit DCP&P as well as assist in servicing the children and families of New Jersey.
- Funding for MCWEP should be reinstated, as it benefits the agency as a whole. Although the agency is faced with financial deficits brought on by the COVID pandemic, cutting vital programs such as MCWEP will have a negative impact in the long run.
- I think it should be mandatory for supervisors and leadership to have their MSW and if they do not have it, they should participate in MCWEP. This is an investment in our staff and families that promotes critical thinking, leadership, evidence-based practice, and cultural competency. I think it should be opened to Case Practice Specialists as well, as they are supposed to be the tuning forks of the local offices to guide case practice.

### **Do You Feel You Are Being Prepared to Play a Role in the Transformation of New Jersey's Public Child Welfare System?**

- Being part of the MCWEP program definitely has prepared me for how the agency is transforming and how child welfare is viewed. The MCWEP program is aligned with the agency's mission in truly identifying and understanding a family's underlying needs as well how the surrounding community impacts families.
- Absolutely! I have gained so much knowledge and skill as a result of being in MCWEP. I have learned a lot about advocacy and the importance of research. This program has made me into a true social worker and I truly believe the benefits of the program will enhance the work I do and empowerment of those around me to do better when working with our families and community partners. I am more trauma-informed and have learned skills and techniques for making positive changes, even if they are small changes within my unit and hopefully my agency.
- Yes, I believe the program positions us to be at the frontline of the transformation of NJ's public child welfare system. I believe this opportunity gives us the knowledge and education to strengthen and build on our workers assessment and critical thinking skills.
- I do feel that I have been prepared to play a role in the transformation that is happening. I think the education has rounded my perspective and impacted the lenses that I can view a family through. I have already started to try to move the needle by working on forming a race equity committee in my office. I feel that my experience with MCWEP has prepared me for that. I am able to research and articulate my ideas better. The MCWEP experience has impacted my view of families and allowing them to be autonomous and how I view safety vs. risk. I am also very aware and speak with my workers often about the power that the Division has and to be mindful of that with families.
- Absolutely. I now have access to updated data and updated evidence-based research and practice that I did not even know existed before. I have a stronger understanding of mental health, systemic oppression, childhood trauma, domestic violence...and the list goes on and on. This is because I was offered the time, opportunity, and resources to do this. I thought I was doing good work before because I was dedicated and committed, but my work ethic and commitment to the mission was not resulting in outcomes that kept me motivated or made more significant changes for my families. Now I am motivated, recalibrated, and focused on helping my staff connect the day to day tasks they do with the bigger picture of why they're asked to do them and how these tasks will benefit their families. I am helping my staff better see the importance of and value in what they do and that is what will motivate them to keep moving forward.







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.

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 education, disseminate information in group presentation format, and engage in process evaluation.

After each Learning Community Meeting, an evaluation was administered to capture how effective the meeting was. Students typically expressed satisfaction with their experiences in the Learning Community.

The following data represents information gathered from each of the four (4) Learning Community Meetings that took place during the 2013-2014 academic year: