



# MCWEP

MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM  
2013 ANNUAL REPORT

*LESSONS LEARNED AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT*



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## 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 three graduate social work programs – The Monmouth University School of Social Work MSW Program, the Rutgers University School of Social Work MSW Program, and the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey MSW Program. The partnership was formally initiated in June 2012, when the project was funded by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, although considerable groundwork had already been done prior to receipt of funding.

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 will 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 the work with at-risk children and families and more effective leaders in the continuing transformation of New Jersey's public child welfare system.

This first annual program evaluation covers the months of August 2012 – August 2013. In evaluating the project, the perspectives of the students were sought to capture the academic and experiential components of the program. In the future, input will also be sought from consortium members, the students' field instructors, DCF partners, and program alumni. This report includes data from respondents in the first cohort of MCWEP which includes 20 DCP&P supervisors, casework supervisors, and one local area manager. The majority of students are women (90%), and as a cohort they have 6.5 years of supervisory experience with DCP&P. Approximately 40% are African American, 30% are Latino, and 30% are Caucasian. The MCWEP students are divided almost equally between the three consortium schools and represent about 36% of the local offices in DCP&P.





**SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS**

**Descriptive Data**

Twenty students were funded during the first year of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students in our first cohort.

Age Group	# of Students
30-35	7
36-40	6
41-45	4
46-50	2
>50	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Gender	# of Students
Female	18
Male	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Ethnicity	# of Students
African American	8
Caucasian	6
Latino	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

DCP&P Title	# of Students
SFSS1/CWS	5
SFSS2	14
LOM	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Years in Current Position	# of Students
1-5 years	8
6-10 years	8
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	0
>20 years	0

Social Work Program	# of Students
Monmouth University	6
Rutgers University	8
Richard Stockton College	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

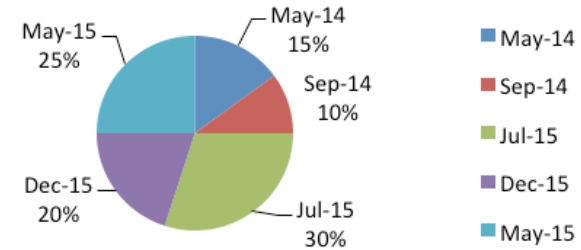
DCP&P Supervisors accepted into the first MCWEP cohort are from the DCP&P Local Offices:			
Atlantic West: 1	Essex South: 2	Newark Adoption: 1	Somerset: 1
Bergen Central: 1	Mercer North: 1	Newark Center City: 1	Union Central: 1
Bergen South: 2	Middlesex West: 1	Newark Northeast: 1	
Cape May: 1	Morris West: 1	Passaic Central: 2	
Camden Central: 1	Monmouth North: 1	Passaic North: 1	



### Anticipated MCWEP Cohort Graduation Dates

Anticipated Graduation Date	# of Students Graduating	% of Students Graduating
May 2014	3	15% (15%)
September 2014	2	10% (25%)
July 2015	6	30% (55%)
December 2015	4	20% (75%)
May 2016	5	25% (100%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

### MCWEP 1st Cohort Graduation Dates



### MCWEP Students' Field Placements 2012-2013

Student	School	Program Type	Location
1	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Traditional Program (Field 2)	Mental Health Association of Essex County
2	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Traditional Program (Field 1)	Family Success Center/JPM – Elizabeth, NJ
3	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Advanced Standing	Hunterdon County Family Success Center
4	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Traditional Program (Field 2)	Plainfield Family Success Center
5	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Advanced Standing	Family Service Bureau of Newark
6	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Traditional Program (Field 2)	Northward Family Success Center
7	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Traditional Program (Field 2)	Innovative Specialists Inspirational Services – Montclair, NJ
8	Rutgers Intensive Weekend	Traditional Program (Field 2)	Alternative to Domestic Violence – Hackensack, NJ
9	Monmouth University	Traditional Program (Field 1)	Case Management Organization/DCP&P Pilot Collaboration



## 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) will focus on student attainment of a set of competencies and associated practice behaviors. Under the Council on Social Work Education's 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), all MSW graduates are expected to have mastered ten competencies and forty-one associated practice behaviors. Students who have an undergraduate degree in social work must have demonstrated mastery of forty-one practice behaviors associated with the ten competencies by the end of their undergraduate studies. Students whose undergraduate degree is not in social work must demonstrate mastery of the 41 practice behaviors in the foundation year (or years) of their MSW work. Although we have not collected this data in the first year of MCWEP, in our next program assessment we plan to include both student self-efficacy ratings and field instructor ratings of the degree to which MCWEP students master these foundation competencies and practice behaviors.

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. Since these advanced competencies will not be the same across the three MSW programs comprising MCWEP, MCWEP will use the specialized advanced practice behaviors that students develop through their participation in MCWEP. These practice behaviors 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 teach clinical skills and theories, and the ability 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 practice behaviors, 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 practice behaviors are also rehearsed and reinforced during the sessions of the Learning Community.

The following reports the self-assessment of these two sets of advanced practice behaviors for the six (6) students who have completed one or both courses as of August 2013.



### 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. There were seven (7) total students responding to the survey. (One non-MCWEP student’s responses are included.) Their responses are as follows:

Trauma in Child Welfare Competencies	Very Much Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither Agree nor Disagree 3	Agree 4	Very Much Agree 5	Mean Score
1. I am able to integrate the concept of “child traumatic stress” in case practice and supervision by knowing what types of experiences constitute childhood trauma and utilize a trauma informed lens to manage child welfare cases.	0	0	0	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)	4.71
2. I am able to apply knowledge of how traumatic experiences affect brain development and memory and understand the relationship between a child’s lifetime trauma history and his or her responses through comprehensive case planning.	0	0	1 (14.3%)	3 (42.9%)	3 (42.9%)	4.29
3. I can articulate how trauma has an impact on the behavior of children over the course of childhood and how child traumatic stress is exacerbated over time by ongoing stressors (including separation from/loss of caregivers, and/or foster placement) in a child’s environment and within the child welfare system.	0	0	0	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	4.43
4. I am able to identify and promote the utilization of trauma-sensitive interventions such as strategic referrals to timely, quality, and effective trauma-focused interventions and trauma informed case planning with multi-disciplinary teams.	0	0	0	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	4.29
5. I can articulate how the impact of traumatic stress can be prevented and/or mitigated by trauma-informed responses of child welfare workers and child welfare systems.	0	0	0	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	4.43
6. I am able to consider how cultural factors influence the manner by which children may identify, interpret, and respond to traumatic events during the case practice process.	0	0	1 (14.3%)	2 (28.6%)	4 (57.1%)	4.43
7. I am able to identify the impact of secondary traumatic stress (STS) on child welfare workers and employ appropriate interventions.	0	0	0	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	4.43
8. I support Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) goals of safety, permanency, and well-being by increasing skills to effectively serve children and families (biological and resource) in the child welfare system that have experienced traumatic stress.	0	0	0	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)	4.57





### 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. There were three (3) total students responding to the survey. (One non-MCWEP student's responses are included.) Their responses are as follows:

Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision	Very Much Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither Agree nor Disagree 3	Agree 4	Very Much Agree 5	Mean Score
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	0	0	0	0	3 (100%)	5.00
2. I am able to describe key qualities of leaders and the impact on child welfare systems and staff.	0	0	0	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	4.33
3. I can demonstrate an understanding of the role of ethics and the systems perspective in leadership behavior as a supervisor.	0	0	0	0	3 (100%)	5.00
4. I am able to describe key child welfare workforce issues, trends, and challenges from a national perspective.	0	0	0	3 (100%)	0	4.00
5. I can demonstrate the ability to identify evidence-based practice in child welfare supervision.	0	0	0	3 (100%)	0	4.00
6. I am able to demonstrate an understanding of the stages and key issues in the implementation of change initiatives.	0	0	0	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	4.67
7. I am able to understand the relationship of creating a learning culture to staff retention and performance.	0	0	0	0	3 (100%)	5.00
8. I am able to describe interactional clinical supervision and discuss how it would be implemented in a public child welfare setting.	0	0	0	0	3 (100%)	5.00
9. I can describe and apply strategies to foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued.	0	0	0	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	4.33
10. I am able to describe the impact of trauma on worker retention and list strategies to mitigate the stress of secondary trauma.	0	0	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	0	3.67



## 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.

The Learning Community has two components in which MCWEP participants are expected to be involved. In the bi-weekly online discussion board, students are expected to respond to discussion threads posted twice per month via an online educational discussion site. 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 effectively the process is working for the MCWEP participants. The mean scores for each of the Learning Communities were never below 4.58 on each of the indicators, indicating that 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 2012-2013:

**Quantitative Results**

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree
August 22, 2012 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation to MCWEP mission/ purpose/structure</li> <li>• Success in graduate school – “Road Map to an MSW”</li> <li>• “Self-Care for Overall Success”</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.88
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.82
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.59
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.76
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.88
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.88
		7. The content increased my knowledge of the program.	4.82
October 12, 2012 9:00am – 4:00pm Monmouth University West Long Branch, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided discussion</li> <li>• Group/Student Presentations “MSW Curriculum Basics”</li> <li>• “The Social Construction of Difference, Cultural Competency, and Child Welfare”</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.63
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.63
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.58
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.63
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.68
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.58
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.63
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.68

*continued on the next page*



**Quantitative Results...continued**

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree
March 1, 2013 9:00am – 4:00pm School of Social Work Rutgers University New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided Discussion – “Lessons Learned from 1<sup>st</sup> MSW semester”</li> <li>• Student Group Presentation “Domestic Violence Policy and Practice”</li> <li>• “Field Placement Pedagogy” Discussion/Activity</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.95
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.95
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.89
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.89
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.89
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.84
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.95
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.89
May 30, 2013 9:00am – 4:00pm The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey Galloway, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided Discussion – “Transfer of Learning from MSW to DCP&amp;P”</li> <li>• “Decision Making in Child Welfare” Lecture/Discussion</li> <li>• “Simultaneously surviving in an MSW program and Child Welfare Agency – Lessons Learned/ Future Goals”</li> <li>• Book of Advice Activity</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.85
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.90
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.80
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective	4.85
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.85
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.85
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.85
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.90

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

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?





**Students overall indicated that they were pleased with the Learning Community meetings. They listed several strengths:**

- Students felt as though they enjoyed the support of fellow MCWEP colleagues during the Learning Communities. A sense of camaraderie has been fostered among the cohort and students indicated that that this aspect of the program appears to be very instrumental in reducing stress.
- Students also appreciated the support from the MCWEP staff and the upper level administration from DCF. They indicated that the staff's optimism and enthusiasm helped them to believe that they can complete the program and continue to be successful at DCP&P.
- Students indicated that they enjoyed the subject matter of the Learning Communities and the guest speakers that came throughout the year.

**The students also thoughtfully listed suggestions for improvements:**

- Students suggested that there be more opportunities to integrate what they gain the Learning Communities to their work at DCP&P. They indicated that there just didn't seem to be any time to implement new ideas.
- Students thought that it would be helpful to have more DCP&P administrators at the Learning Communities.
- The students responded that connecting to current events more would be very interesting and helpful as well as incorporating more information and skills that could be useful in their roles as supervisors.

**The following table reports the themes identified in a content analysis of the open-ended questions and the frequency with which the themes were mentioned. Following the table are examples of the students comments in their own words.**

**Strengths Identified by MCWEP Students**

Strengths	Frequency Mentioned
Support/Camaraderie from fellow colleagues	29
Student Presentations	10
Professor/Guest Lecturer Presentations	10
Support from MCWEP Staff	6

**Support/Camaraderie from fellow colleagues**

- Being encouraged by hearing that others are going through the same things that I am
- It is so helpful to feel connected to the MCWEP community. We are all in the same boat and support is so unique and valuable
- The best part of these meetings is when we go around the room to "check in". I find this time so insightful.
- This is a very supportive group. I truly feel that everyone in this room wants success for me.
- Hearing the experiences of other students makes me realize that I'm not alone.
- It is very helpful to be with people that are going through the same experience as I am. Getting to know my peers, networking, and offering support is so important.



- When we discuss our experiences in our classes it gives us an opportunity to see that we aren't alone in our struggles or experiences.
- The Learning Community camaraderie and information sharing allows me not feel isolated in my learning process. Excellent!

**Suggestions for Improvement Identified by MCWEP Students**

Suggestions for Improvement	Frequency Mentioned
Practical applications of coursework to work at the Division	7
More DCP&P representation	6
Connection of current events to DCP&P practice and policy	5
More academic tips/suggestions for success.	4

**More Practical Applications of Coursework to Work at the Division**

- I would like to learn more about supervision techniques tied into our MSW work that we could use at the Division.
- More in-depth conversations about applying what we learn from a supervision lens in dealing with obstacles.
- How we can handle struggles in the office, using our newly learned skills from our MSW programs.
- It would helpful to talk about how to apply Human Behavior to my work at the Division.

**More DCP&P Representation**

- It would be nice to have a representative of DCP&P at some of our Learning communities for Q&A.
- If a DCP&P administrator could be at one of our meetings it would be helpful to relay some of our concerns to them directly.
- More recognition from administration about our problem we are facing in our local units.
- Suggestions and feedback from DCP&P on how to best transfer our learning experiences to our local units in ways that they will accept them.

**Connection of current events to DCP&P practice and policy**

- I think it would be helpful to do role-plays on what supervision should look like in our field placements. We could use real-life events/scenarios and put together role-plays and then get feedback on how well we incorporate the lesson learned in MCWEP and MSW programs.
- Occasional emailing community events and current event stories that MCWEP students should be aware of or participate in.
- More information on what is happening in field placements and how we can use our field placements to make change in our units.

**More Academic Tips/Suggestions for Success**

- More tips for on-going self-care strategies and techniques





- More presentations from MCWEP students who have special techniques, i.e. Family Team Master Coach
- More speakers from the community as well as from various schools presenting on different topics relevant to child welfare.

#### Practice Changes as a Result of Learning Communities Identified by MCWEP Students

Practice Changes	Frequency of Responses
Reflection on own practice	13
Translation of coursework to role at DCP&P	8
Communication for Improvement of Supervision with workers	6
Cultural competency	5

#### Reflection on Own Practice

- I will be working on reminding myself and colleagues of the passion we have for this work.
- It is ok to make mistakes, you just have to learn from them.
- Fieldwork has been so important to furthering my skills as a supervisor.
- I will be thinking more deliberately about leadership and how I translate these skills.
- I will be more aware of the decision-making process and how I engage it with employees and clients.
- I need to incorporate more patience and organization/time management.

#### Translation of Coursework to Role at DCP&P

- I will continue to use the knowledge I am getting at the Learning Communities and in class for staff development.
- I will help my employees be aware of the decision-making process and self-care.
- I will listen more and help workers to use the decision-making process in their work with clients.
- I often take the lessons learned from my MCWEP colleagues and try to take them back to my office and use their tactics and suggestions.
- I am encouraging my workers to be more aware of Human Behavior theories.

#### Communication for Improvement of Supervision with Workers

- I will encourage my employees to use listening skills I've learned in my practice classes with their clients and families.
- I would like to set up more effective communication with my workers during our meeting time.
- I will encourage my workers more and use incentives like we are encouraged at our learning communities.
- I plan on using my supervision meetings to dig deeper with employees to find their underlying concerns .



### **Cultural Competency**

- I will be using this Cultural Competency information with my workers.
- It will be great to focus on cultural competence to ensure they are aware and practicing the skill.
- I will be attempting to use the information on cultural competence to improve how I interact with my workers.

### **OVERALL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

**To elicit information about current students' perceptions of the MCWEP program as a whole – MSW programs' curriculum, MCWEP elective courses, field placement experiences, and the Learning Community meetings, students were asked to respond to several open-ended questions, as follows:**

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 in Child Welfare, 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?

**In reviewing students' responses to the open-ended questions, it is clear that the program strengths more than balance the challenges. Most frequently mentioned were:**

- Students perceived the program as being very supportive, especially the support of their MCWEP colleagues, the MCWEP staff, and the DCF upper level administration's belief and consistent support in their abilities.
- Students were very grateful for the educational information and skill attainment they are gaining through MCWEP and hope to transfer that knowledge to their local offices.
- Students appear to perceive the Learning Community in particular as a strong asset of MCWEP. They mention they gain a lot of confidence, information, support, and camaraderie through the Learning Community quarterly meetings.
- Students also indicated that the MCWEP structure was a strength in itself. Students indicated that the way MCWEP was designed took into consideration their work responsibilities. They also indicated that being able to use educational leave was very helpful. In addition, the field placement options (in particular, the block placement offered at Stockton College) was very helpful in their attainment of their MSWs.
- Students indicated that MCWEP is preparing them to be more impactful supervisors through the knowledge that they are obtaining through their core courses, the specialized information in the MCWEP electives, the information relayed in the Learning Communities, and through their field placements in agencies outside of their normal work environments.
- Students also mentioned how they are already sharing the information they are learning with their workers in their local offices and also with the families they work with, either directly or indirectly. They discussed envisioning the transformation goal for New Jersey's public child welfare system and were eager to be a part of that.



**Despite their overall enthusiasm for the program, students identified several areas where the program could be strengthened:**

- Students identified a need for less work assigned by MCWEP and the Learning Community citing the large volume of work they are already responsible for from their MSW programs as well as from their offices.
- Students also suggested more involvement from their managers (LOM and Area Directors), so that these managers understand the program and how to support supervisors involved in MCWEP.
- The students additionally thought it would be a good idea to open up the program to more caseworkers who were interested in getting their MSWs.
- Finally, students suggested alternate timing of the two MCWEP electives. The students described having the two electives in the summer as feeling rushed to obtain the information and they were feeling unsure of their ability to retain it.

Students were candid in their responses to the questionnaires administered at the conclusion of their first year in MCWEP. Their voices will receive full consideration as MCWEP moves ahead to another year of operation and develops a plan of strengthening its components.

Out of 20 possible participants, 18 students responded to the assessment. The following tables describe themes discovered through the open-ended answers to the questions and then specific examples of students' responses are detailed.

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF MCWEP STRENGTHS**

In response to the first open-ended question, "what are the strengths of MCWEP," students offered a number of responses, which were then analyzed for themes. The tables below summarize these themes and indicates the frequency with which they were mentioned. Following the tables are examples of students' comments in their own words.





### Strengths Identified by Students

Strengths	Frequency Mentioned
Received support	14
Information/education/skills/ knowledge	11
Learning community	9
MCWEP structure	5

#### Support Received

- I am appreciative of the bond I have established with my fellow MCWEP cohort members at my school.
- Along with the DCP&P members are the staff and supports that make us complete. The support and team efforts provided to us primarily by Dawn and Dr. Lewis are unbelievable. Their encouraging words and shared knowledge means a lot. They are genuine in their interest to see us succeed and for that I am grateful.
- The support given by the Commissioner and the acknowledgement of the importance of this education and how it will impact on the staff of DCP&P and its families it services.
- The connection I have to the 19 other people that are involved in exactly the same situation I am. The other MCWEP students know how it feels to work so hard at school and not always be recognized as an accomplishment at work. But as a community, I know that I can reach out to them for support.
- During the challenging moments, sharing this experience with colleagues who understand my plight of managing family life, work life, and the task of fitting in self-care, makes it a little easier to bear.
- The liaisons and professors are extremely responsive. To date, I haven't asked a question that hasn't received a timely response. The support team build around the MCWEP program is energetic and approachable. The treasure of professionals built into the program is amazing!

#### Information/Education/Skills/Knowledge Received as a Result of Being in MCWEP

- The strengths of the MCWEP program are providing supervisory staff with the opportunity to gain clinical skills. Acquiring these skills adds tools to our tool belt that help us team better with families.
- I think that this educational opportunity has improved my critical thinking as it pertains to the service we provide our families.
- I see things under a different light in part because I have the opportunity to bounce ideas with DCP&P colleagues regarding case practice and theory.
- The information that I am learning through the program is moving my case practice and supervision in a more clinical direction, which is a direction that the agency is heading.
- The most important strength is the education and learning experience, I am receiving from this process.



### **The Learning Community**

- The learning community is a strength in that it allows for all us to come together collectively to debrief and offer support.
- The learning community is an excellent piece of the program. Within this community we are able to share our experiences with one another without judgment. All members are encouraging and supportive of each other. This bond formed is special as it is between other DCP&P employees. I look forward to our quarterly meetings to catch up on each other's stories and experiences
- I was worried about how I would fit MCWEP and the learning community into a full time job and school. But it has been the most beneficial and rewarding part of this experience. THANK YOU!!
- The one that stands out most to me is the support group that is created by participating in the quarterly meetings.
- The strength of the learning communities is great. The support and peer consultation found in these communities are excellent. It is wonderful to be part of a cohort and sharing in the learning experience, learning both in the classroom and with my colleagues has been a strength.
- The meetings allow us to discuss any concerns, weakness, worries, and accomplishment we are facing by returning to school after being out for so long.
- It provides us with a venue to speak freely and honestly about the achievements and stress we are experiencing while furthering our education.

### **MCWEP Structure**

- I appreciate that the program was tailored in a fashion in which my work responsibilities were taken in to consideration.
- I find the fact that educational leave is provided extremely beneficial, as most of us would be unable to complete the program without this benefit.
- I think MCWEP is structured really well. I like the quarterly meetings, ability to attend classes part time, and the block placement option.
- The MCWEP community is a strength by itself. The sense that things are taken care of and you do not have to worry about things like requesting educational leave through the state.
- MCWEP also allows for us to get educational leave and complete our internships, which many that are not in this program have difficulty doing so.
- I appreciate the field placement being outside of DCP&P. It helps to see what is going on in other agencies and how they operate.



**Themes Identified by MCWEP Students**

<b>How is MCWEP Preparing You to be a More Impactful Supervisor?</b>	<b>Frequency Mentioned</b>
By providing educational experiences through MCWEP and MSW courses	16
Field Placement Experiences	6
Enhanced Self-Knowledge has Impacted my Supervision	5
Educational Knowledge has Impacted my Work with Families	3
Educational Knowledge has Impacted my Workers	2

**Providing Educational Experiences Through MCWEP and MSW Coursework**

- I have obtained additional theoretical and practical experience that will strengthen my managerial skills
- The Trauma course that I took this summer has opened my eyes to the fact that trauma exist and should be addressed in timely manner.
- After taking this course [Trauma] I have recognized the effects that trauma have on children. Therefore, I have made diligent efforts to ensure that my staff address trauma and that service providers are also aware of our children's trauma history so that they can receive appropriate services.
- More importantly, the trauma course made me realize that our own staff experience trauma as a result of the work we do. It is important for upper management to recognize this issue so that we can effectively provide services to our families.
- I've completed both classes that are in direct relation to the work we do at the Division and both I would rank as the most relevant and important of my masters degree.
- The eye opening moments I had in Trauma in Child Welfare will stay with me throughout my career. The Leadership class also helped me put into context what kind of supervisor I am and what kind I aspire to be.
- The subject matter I have been exposed to has given me a new perspective in how I look at things, as well as how I present things to my subordinates. I have been able to case conference from a whole other perspective. I am able to discuss the "why" we do things, and am able to explain it from a policy and legislative perspective.
- The coursework has provided me with a better understanding of systems and has provided me with the ability to look at the system objectively, implement and or suggest change when needed and support my suggestions and ideas with prior research and evidence based practices.
- The Learning Community and my MSW courses have provided me with an understanding of social work practice and how I can bring that to my investigators.





### **Field Placement Experiences**

- Through my Internship experience I have also been incredibly lucky to experience other aspects of social work and have built many community relationships.
- I am able to use my field experience and combine it with my newly acquired knowledge of social work to assist and guide my team of supervisors and workers under my line of supervision.
- The supervision in my field placement is also quite different and I have learned things there that I have incorporated, moving from a very task oriented conference, to one that really examines how we are making the decisions we are making and feeling comfortable with a sound decision after a real concrete clinical conference that goes beyond simply tasks that need to be done.

### **Enhancing my Self-Knowledge Impacts my Supervision**

- The information we learn helps us better understand where the field has come from, different management styles, why the agency operates in a certain way and gives us ways to dig deeper.
- I think MCWEP is preparing me to be a more impactful supervisor because it provides a safe environment for me to enhance my skills
- I have already seen a change in my supervision, it has connected all of the trainings and memos and so on that we have received at DCP&P.
- MCWEP has without a doubt prepared me to become a more impactful supervisor as I now see things in a more clinical way.
- Has helped me expand my perspective on child welfare issues.

### **Educational Knowledge has Impacted my Work with Families**

- Knowledge gained will be trickled down to those we supervise making the agency a more impactful organization for our families.
- I am able to think about different factors that influence our family's problems rather than addressing issues at face value. I feel more driven to assist my staff provide effective service to be able to empower the families that we service.
- With the new information and support I have gained in MCWEP, we have an increased comfort in family centered casework again because we have looked at the case differently and realizing the decision is sound based on many factors not just because it is what the family wants (this was some of the resistance I was hearing before-that family centered would sacrifice safety because we would just do what the family wants)

### **Educational Knowledge has Impacted my Workers**

- The clinical perspective is helping me as a supervisor to use more effectively my comprehensive skills, engage my workers more efficiently, be able to change behaviors and resolve emotional problems.
- It has made me a better supervisor as I am able to improve the development of the workers under my supervision.
- There are so many things that I've learned then applied with my workers or shared with the management team. The importance of recognizing secondary traumatic stress and burn out is something I am constantly on the lookout for now.

**Themes Identified by MCWEP Students**

<b>Is there anything about MCWEP you Would Like to Change?</b>	<b>Frequency Mentioned</b>
Change the amount of extra assignments	4
DCP&P suggestions	4
Timing of MCWEP electives	2
Suggesting a writing course	2

**Change the Amount of Extra Assignments**

- If I could change anything it would be to lessen or take out completely the added assignments. Although not much, I think it just adds to our already overwhelming schedules including class assignments, work, and internship requirements.
- I honestly don't think I would change anything except the assignments. I liked when the group did a presentation on domestic violence like they had to do for class.

**DCP&P Suggestions**

- Please consider making the information sessions mandatory for CWS and LOM who have staff in MCWEP. CWS and LOM lack the familiarity surrounding the structure of the three schools field placement and the purpose of the learning community. Maybe LOM and CWS can have information sessions on how to support staff in the MCWEP program (within the local office).
- The only thing which I feel could improve is the involvement of upper level management in the program. While I have been very fortunate to take part in this amazing opportunity, several of my former co-workers have not been denied the chance to even submit an application past the LOM level.
- So far, I am satisfied with the way the program is running....I would love to see that workers are included in the program.
- I think that the MCWEP program should eventually be open to workers in some capacity as well; however they should be with the Division for over a certain amount of time in order to be eligible to apply.

**Timing of MCWEP Electives**

- I think that the summer Trauma in Child Welfare and the Social Policy course I took in the summer should be offered during the regular semester as they were very intense and overwhelming.
- I would change the having MCWEP student complete two electives through the summer. Both were extremely overwhelming. There was a large amount of information received with many assignments and tests, but it was unclear if was able to retain the wealth of information received in both classes in such a short period.



### Suggesting a Writing Course

- A writing course in the first year would have been helpful because for many if not all of us, we have been out of school for many years and could definitely have benefited from a writing course focusing on APA.
- Adapting the APA style of writing has been challenging.

### Themes Identified by MCWEP Students

Do You Feel You Are Being Prepared to Play a Role in the Transformation of New Jersey's Public Child Welfare System?	Frequency Mentioned
Yes	18
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. The reasons why and descriptions as to how they were being prepared differed. A sample of their responses are given below:**

- We are no longer the old DYFS but are becoming client centered, and strength based, all of which are qualities which are consistently reinforced in all our classes.
- I feel that we are being prepared to provide some of the services in house instead of just being a broker for the family to services. Skills learned help in the assessment process and getting to underlying needs.
- I believe the MCWEP program is definitely preparing DCP&P staff for the transformation of the welfare system. This newly attained knowledge will assist in promoting positive change to the organization and the families and communities we service.
- Yes, the manner in which this program is teaching us to think is different than what is actually occurring in our local offices. Rather than looking at problems, I find that I’m looking for solutions in an effort to improve the service that DCP&P offers.
- MCWEP has also forced me to look at the big picture and challenge old procedures that may no longer be relevant. I question old assumptions and try to brainstorm what is best rather than what we have always done. This helps the family to view us as a team looking out for their best interests.
- The role that I hope to play in transforming DCP&P is to educate to the “old school DCP&P staff” that we are partners and not bosses of our families.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

MCWEP has many strengths which will continue to form the foundation of the program into the future. The program has been successful in providing an avenue for transfer of knowledge from social work programs to the DCP&P workforce for these supervisors. The structure of the program allows students flexibility to be able to concentrate on school while still being able to have consideration of their work responsibilities. MCWEP also reinforces the need for impactful supervision through specialized electives and consistent connection between core social work courses and the future vision of DCP&P. The implementation of the Learning Community component encourages students to gain confidence as social work professionals, exposes them to new research and literature in Child Welfare, and provides support and camaraderie among their fellow peers. Finally, the program consistently encourages students to engage actively in the transformation goals for New Jersey's public child welfare system.

**To address the most central challenges that MCWEP faces, the following recommendations are put forth based on student feedback and MCWEP staff deliberation:**

- The 20 students completing the program evaluation indicated that they gained helpful and important information in the two electives offered by MCWEP (Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare). Students did report that the large amount of important information they received would be better absorbed in a course formatted for longer than six weeks. After discussion among the MCWEP staff, it is being suggested then that the two MCWEP child welfare courses be re-configured from six to twelve weeks during the summer sessions.
- The students also indicated in their evaluations that they would like to see more involvement from DCP&P area and local managers and directors, particularly from those who have staff involved in MCWEP. They would like for these individuals to be exposed to the mission and goals of MCWEP in a forum where the managers and directors would be able to ask questions and gain full understanding of the program. The students would also like to see support from DCP&P local and area managers and directors as they continue to move through the program. After further discussion it is being suggested that information sessions occur for local and area DCP&P managers and directors to be held by MCWEP staff in order to provide further information and answer questions about MCWEP. It is also suggested that local and area managers be invited to participate in portions of the Learning Community meetings to gain a better understanding of the students' involvement and overall vision of MCWEP.

In the twelve short months of its existence, MCWEP has accomplished a great deal. Among MCWEP's greatest strengths is the partnership between New Jersey's public child welfare system and the academic community, with consistent support from professional organizations like NASW. As the recommendations for enhancement are implemented, MCWEP will carry to improve and refine its goals. Bringing DCP&P supervisors back to school to pursue social work education continues to fan the flame of passion for child welfare among this great workforce. MCWEP hopes to maintain this important partnership with DCF as we all work to improve and enhance the lives of New Jersey's children and families.





# MCWEP

**MASTERS CHILD WELFARE  
EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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