



MCWEP

MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

DIANE S. FALK, PH.D., MSW
CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION INSTITUTE

DAWN KONRADY, ED.D., LSW, MBA, MA
DIRECTOR AND CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION INSTITUTE

JOSEPH EVERETT, MSW
PROGRAM COORDINATOR, CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION INSTITUTE





Child Welfare Education Institute Staff

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS
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Diane S. Falk, Ph.D., MSW

Co-Principal Investigator, Child Welfare Education Institute

Dawn Konrady, Ed.D., LSW, MBA, MA

Director and Co-Principal Investigator, Child Welfare Education Institute

Joseph Everett, MSW

Program Coordinator, Child Welfare Education Institute



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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 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.



Descriptive Data - 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.

SUMMARY DATA ON STUDENTS ACCEPTED TO MCWEP

	# 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%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	19	153
	# 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%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	19	153
	# 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%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	19	153



	# of Students								
DCP&P TITLE	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
SFSS1/CWS	5	8	4	2	4	3	3	4	33 (33%)
SFSS2	14	10	16	14	15	18	17	15	119 (78%)
LOM	1	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1 (1%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	19	153
	# of Students								
YEARS AS SUPERVISOR	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
1-5 years	8	5	6	9	6	9	9	10	62 (41%)
6-10 Years	8	8	13	2	7	7	5	4	54 (35%)
11-15 years	4	4	1	5	5	3	4	2	28 (18%)
16-20 years	----	1	----	----	1	2	2	2	8 (5%)
>20 years	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	1	1 (1%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	19	153
	# of Students								
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Kean University	----	----	----	----	----	6	5	5	16 (10%)
Monmouth University	6	6	7	7	6	5	4	4	38 (25%)
Rutgers University	8	7	8	5	8	5	7	5	48 (31%)
Stockton University	6	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	35 (23%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	19	153
	Students Who Separated from MCWEP								
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	Cohort 8	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Kean University	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
Monmouth University	----	1	1	----	----	----	----	----	2 (1%)
Rutgers University	----	----	----	1	----	----	----	----	1 (1%)
Stockton University	----	----	1	----	1	----	----	----	2 (1%)
TOTAL	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	5 (3%)



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

Atlantic East:	5
Atlantic West:	4
Atlantic/Burlington/Cape May Area:	0
Bergen Central:	4
Bergen South:	5
Bergen/Hudson Area:	1
Burlington East:	3
Burlington West:	1
Camden Central:	3
Camden East	6
Camden North:	3
Camden South:	6
Camden Area:	0
Cape May:	2

Cumberland East:	1
Cumberland West:	1
Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem Area:	0
Essex Central:	6
Essex North:	1
Essex South:	6
Essex Area:	1
Gloucester East:	2
Gloucester West:	2
Hudson Central:	3
Hudson North:	1
Hudson South:	5
Hudson West:	3
Hunterdon:	0

Hunterdon/Mercer/Somerset/Warren Area:	2
Mercer North:	5
Mercer South:	7
Middlesex Central:	2
Middlesex Coastal:	9
Middlesex West:	2
Middlesex/Union Area:	0
Monmouth North:	4
Monmouth South:	4
Morris East:	3
Morris West:	4
Morris/Sussex/Passaic Area:	2
Newark Center City:	5
Newark Northeast:	3

Newark South:	2
Ocean North:	5
Ocean South:	3
Ocean/Monmouth Area:	0
Passaic Central:	6
Passaic North:	9
Salem:	4
Somerset:	3
State Central Registry:	5
Sussex:	1
Union Central:	5
Union East:	1
Union West:	3
Warren:	2



MCWEP Applications/Acceptances/Completions

	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





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 2019-2020 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):

Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Competencies	Mean Score							
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
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.	4.71	4.71	4.82	4.94	4.38	4.94	4.75	4.58
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.	4.29	4.47	4.55	4.76	4.38	4.76	4.75	4.47
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.	4.43	4.65	4.36	4.82	4.31	4.82	4.88	4.58
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.	4.29	4.41	4.45	4.76	4.19	4.76	4.88	4.42
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.	4.43	4.35	4.36	4.71	4.38	4.71	4.88	4.53
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.	4.43	4.35	4.45	4.71	4.13	4.71	4.50	4.53
7. I am able to identify the impact of secondary traumatic stress (STS) on child welfare workers and employ appropriate interventions.	4.43	4.41	4.27	4.71	4.31	4.71	4.75	4.58
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.	4.57	4.71	4.36	4.71	4.25	4.71	4.63	4.47



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	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86	4.86	4.78	4.72
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	4.93	4.78	4.94
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	4.86	4.78	4.94
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	4.64	4.64	4.44	4.72
5. I can demonstrate the ability to identify evidence-based practice in child welfare supervision.	4.00	4.83	4.85	4.67	4.79	4.79	4.67	4.78
6. I am able to demonstrate an understanding of the stages and key issues in the implementation of change initiatives.	4.67	4.92	4.45	4.53	4.71	4.71	4.78	4.89
7. I am able to understand the relationship of creating a learning culture to staff retention and performance..	5.00	4.83	4.45	4.80	4.71	4.71	4.89	4.83
8. I am able to describe interactional clinical supervision and discuss how it would be implemented in a public child welfare setting.	5.00	5.00	4.92	4.67	4.79	4.79	4.67	4.94
9. I can describe and apply strategies to foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued.	4.33	4.58	4.45	4.67	4.79	4.79	4.67	4.89
10. I am able to describe the impact of trauma on worker retention and list strategies to mitigate the stress of secondary trauma.	3.67	4.58	4.18	4.87	4.86	4.86	4.56	4.94



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 consists mainly of 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 is administered to assess the meeting's effectiveness. Mean scores for each of the items were above 4.0 in nearly all cases, indicating that students are highly satisfied with their experiences in the Learning Community. The following data represent information gathered from each of the three in-person Learning Community Meetings that took place during the 2019-2020 academic year. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our June in-person meeting was cancelled. Instead, we invited MCWEP students to meet virtually for discussion and support during that very difficult time period. Though we did not use a formal evaluation mechanism for that meeting, students did express appreciation for the encouragement they received in that virtual meeting.





Learning Community Evaluation Results

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
August 15, 2019 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to MCWEP mission/purpose/structure • Keynote Speaker – Christine Norbut Beyer, Commissioner, DCF • Recognition of MCWEP Graduates • “Understanding the Transitioning Client” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.6
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.6
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.5
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.4
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.6
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.6
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor	4.6
		8. The content of this learning community was helpful to me as an MSW student	4.5
November 8, 2019 9:00am – 4:00pm Kean University Union, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided discussion in Cohorts • “Understanding Migrant and Refugee Struggles: Developing an Informed Approach” • “Self-Care as More Than a Cliché: Caring for You in Action” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.4
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.4
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.3
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.3
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.3
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	3.9
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.3
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.2

Table continued on next page.



Learning Community Evaluation Results (continued)

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
February 21, 2020 9:00am – 4:00pm Stockton University Atlantic City, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cannabis Legalization: Implication for Child Welfare” • “Cannabis in New Jersey: Medicine, Child Protection, and Social Justice” • Myers-Briggs Personality Type Test and Discussion • Team-Building Activity 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.5
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.4
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.4
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.4
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.2
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.3
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.2
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.2



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?
4. What was the most important thing you took away from today’s Learning Community Activities?

Themes were identified in a content analysis of student responses to these open-ended questions. Examples of the students’ comments are provided for each theme.

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

Theme
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

Content/Material Covered

- Having the Commissioner speak was a great show of support for MCWEP program.
- I learned an enormous amount about the LGBTQI+ community.
- The self-care/team building were very interesting and informative.
- Education surrounding cannabis advocacy and social policy impact on diverse communities.

Sense of Community and Support

- We got to see the newcomers while saying goodbye to the graduates. It’s inspirational and really made me feel part of something bigger than myself.
- It brought all of us together to share experiences and challenges, as well as solutions regarding school.
- Connecting with other students in the program to discuss how they are coping with school, work, family, etc..

Development of Skills and Resources

- I’m definitely going to use the self-care tips and presentation provided.
- I enjoyed the personality inventory training to use and bring back to the office.
- The marijuana speakers were very informative and will definitely impact my future practice positively..



What Suggestions Would You Offer to Improve This Learning Community?

Themes
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

Suggestions for Topics and Issues Students Would Like Addressed in the Learning Community

- 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.

Suggestions for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities and Activities

- Presentations from MCWEP alumni.
- More interactive and group activities.
- Continue to use films and movies.

Various Practical and Logistical Issues

- 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?

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

Integrate/Apply Content to Practice

- 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 Content with Staff/Supervisees

- 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.

Further Exploration or Research into Area of Content

- Learn more about marijuana and related issues.
- Seek more knowledge about the impact legalizing marijuana will have on our families and our work.



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

Theme
Valuable Information
Direction for Future Practice
Hope, Encouragement, and Support

Valuable Information

- Self-care is antidote for stress relief.
- Learning about the trauma experienced by immigrant diaspora.
- Learning about the effects and impact of marijuana. Also, learning about the legalization of marijuana

Direction for Future Practice

- The information I learned about working with the LGBTQ population will be implemented in my practice.
- Self-care, needing to take time for myself and not just saying it.
- I will definitely look at cases differently when cannabis is involved.

Hope, Encouragement, and Support

- We are all feeling the same and gone through same things.
- A sense of togetherness
- The team-building activity definitely helped me meet people today.



Summary of Student Feedback

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 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 interactive group activities, 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 2020-2021 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.





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 in a questionnaire given to them at the end of the Academic Year.

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.

The following tables describe themes identified in students' responses to the open-ended questions and the frequency with which those themes were mentioned. Following the tables are specific examples of students' responses, in their own words.

What Are the Strengths of MCWEP?

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

Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff

- 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.

Knowledge Gained; Academic/Professional Enhancement

- 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.



Program Design and Structure

- 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?

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

MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective

- 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.

Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning

- 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 those above me. MCWEP has made me more a more well-rounded person in many aspects of my position such as trusting but verifying and supporting policies with evidence-based practices
- The Learning Community helps to put all that we are learning into perspective when it comes to supervising.



- 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 Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses

- 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?

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

Various Logistical/Structural Issues

- 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.
- MCWEP should allow staff to use educational leave time when there is time needed for group work, etc.. Sometimes we needed to meet with our groups to prepare for presentations or some extra time to use for papers. Not having this time provided and trying to squeeze this is on top of working full time from was very difficult.
- The only thing about MCWEP that I could pinpoint is the amount of hours for the internships, especially the first year general practice one. I think it is very good to go to other agencies and have that experience, but I do think that at least in my case it was not necessary to be interning 16 hours plus a week for two semesters. I think one day per week at another agency would have sufficed to round my perspective. I just feel that if there was some way to get some credit for the work experience that we have would be great.
- I think a requirement of MCWEP should be those who participate are required to mentor future MCWEPs and support them as they participate in the program. I also think there should have been a bit more opportunity to take other electives while participating in MCWEP.



The Need for MCWEP Remains/Program Should be Continued or Expanded

- 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?

All students responding to this question answered "yes," they did feel they were being prepared to play a role in transforming New Jersey's Public Child Welfare System. Only a few students expressed any reservation. 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. Samples of their responses are given below:

- 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.



Summary of Students' Feedback

In summarizing students' responses to the open-ended questions that constitute our overall program assessment, there is a largely positive trend in terms of the program's strengths. It is clear that the program strengths more than balance the challenges. Students perceived the program as being very supportive, especially because of their MCWEP colleagues, MCWEP staff, and the DCF administration's consistent support for the program. Students were very grateful for the educational information and skill attainment they are gaining through MCWEP and are transferring that knowledge to their local offices. They perceive the Learning Community in particular as a strong asset of MCWEP, reporting that they gain a lot of confidence, information, support, and camaraderie through its quarterly meetings. Students also indicated that the structure of MCWEP was a strength in itself, specifically that program design takes into consideration their work responsibilities. They also indicated that being able to use educational leave was very helpful. The data suggests that fieldwork, along with the knowledge that they are obtaining through their core courses, the specialized information in the MCWEP electives, and the information relayed in the Learning Communities is preparing participants to be more impactful supervisors. Students also mentioned how they are already sharing the information they are learning with those they supervise in local offices and also with the families they work with, either directly or indirectly. They support the transformation goals of New Jersey's public child welfare system and report an eagerness to be part of that process.

Despite their overall enthusiasm for the program, students identified several areas where the program could be strengthened. A few students discussed the continued need for MCWEP, even suggesting that it might be expanded in future years. Students requested a number of other miscellaneous logistical and programmatic changes, related mostly to their fieldwork requirements and educational leave time, citing the large volume of work they are already responsible for in the office and the classroom. Indeed, students continue to report difficulty juggling the multitude of demands on their time.

Progress on Last Year's Recommendations

In the 2018-2019 MCWEP Annual Report, three recommendations were made in order to improve students' experiences. The first recommendation evolved from MCWEP students' comments in multiple evaluations that they sometimes feel overwhelmed with the competing demands of their offices and schoolwork. We had planned to conduct another survey of participants, specifically aimed at discerning how students make sure their responsibilities are covered when class and fieldwork take them out of the office. Although we were not able to carry out these plans for a formal survey, students experienced drastic changes in work and school routines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MCWEP staff frequently served as liaisons between university partners, fieldwork agencies, DCP&P staff, and students. In this process, we learned a lot about the challenges that our students were experiencing, and helped find unique solutions and adaptations for a variety of difficult situations.

The second recommendation from the 2018-19 report was to expand the roles and usefulness of MCWEP graduates, developing opportunities for them to implement their knowledge and skills in service of the child welfare system. A group of volunteer MCWEP graduates have been formed into a work group that has assisted DCP&P in the evaluation and revision of some of its policies. At the beginning of the 2019-20 year, there was discussion of possible additional avenues by which our MCWEP students and graduates could be given opportunities to utilize their skills and contribute to the continuing growth and transformation of DCP&P. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, focus turned from such new initiatives and toward adjustments needed in response to the pandemic.

The third recommendation from the 2018-19 report was to continue our focus on making the Learning Community an engaging, beneficial, and stimulating experience for all MCWEP participants. We made substantial progress on this front. We incorporated creative meeting formats, new topics, various learning modalities, and expert guest speakers. Student feedback in this report makes it clear that these adjustments were appreciated. We continue to have a flexible stance when planning Learning Community content and modalities, which allows us to respond to pressing issues and invite engaging guest speakers when the opportunity arises. For example, our last meeting of the 2019-2020 Learning Community was held virtually in order to provide support to program participants in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

MCWEP has cultivated and expanded its many strengths, which will continue to shape the direction and institutional capacity of the program in the future. In 2019-2020, MCWEP has had the opportunity to reflect upon the structure of the program, the needs and strengths of the students, and the demands of the agency as it continues to evolve.

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 matriculate in graduate courses while still being able to engage in work responsibilities. MCWEP also reinforces the need for impactful leadership and supervision through specialized electives and consistent connection between core social work courses and the future vision of DCP&P. As DCP&P moves forward in its efforts to become a trauma-informed organization, MCWEP provides students with knowledge of trauma-focused work and catalyzes the infusion of this knowledge from the mid-level out. 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 peers. Finally, the program consistently encourages students to actively engage in the reform effort of the New Jersey public child welfare system, and this year recommends renewed efforts to get students involved that effort.

The following recommendations are made based on student feedback and MCWEP staff deliberation for the 2020-2021 academic year:

1. Continuing our efforts to adapt to the new realities of life and work in the age of COVID-19, it is our goal in the coming year to examine all our mechanisms of communication and education. This will include continued exploration of virtual modalities for the Learning Community and elective courses. We are committed to revisiting program policies around field placements and online coursework due to the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. In the 2020-2021 annual report, we plan to reflect the changes that were made, discuss their impact, and make recommendations on whether such changes will be permanent or temporary.
2. A conversation about race and racism was elevated to new levels of national prominence in 2020. In response, MCWEP is committed to integrating this topic into our program whenever possible and appropriate. The Learning Community seems a natural venue for further discussion and examination, as well as plans for action. Public child welfare systems have historically struggled with racial disparities, so it seems vital that we add our voice to the national conversation.

Among MCWEP's greatest strengths is the persistent partnership between New Jersey's public child welfare system and the academic community, with the consistent support from professional organizations like NASW. As the recommendations for enhancement are implemented, MCWEP will carry on its improvement and enhance 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 toward improving and enhancing the lives of New Jersey's children and families.



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