



# MCWEP

## MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2015 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 Stockton University MSW Program. The 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 the work with at-risk children and families and more effective leaders in promoting exemplary practice within New Jersey's public child welfare system.

This program evaluation covers the months of August 2014 – August 2015. 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 three cohorts of MCWEP, which includes 40 DCP&P supervisors, 16 casework supervisors, and one local office manager. The majority of students are women (88%), and as a group, they have an average of 8.5 years of supervisory experience with DCP&P. Approximately 31% are African American, 29% are Latino, and 33% are Caucasian. The MCWEP students are divided between the three consortium schools and represent about 54% of DCP&P local and area offices.



**Descriptive Data** - A total of fifty-eight (58) students were funded during the first three years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1, 2, and 3.

### SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS

	# of Students			
AGE GROUP	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	TOTAL
30-35	7	3	1	11
36-40	6	5	10	21
41-45	4	4	5	13
46-50	2	3	3	8
>51	1	3	1	5
TOTAL	20	18	20	58
	# of Students			
GENDER	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	TOTAL
FEMALE	18	16	17	51
MALE	2	2	3	7
TOTAL	20	18	20	58
	# of Students			
ETHNICITY	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	TOTAL
African American	8	7	3	18
Caucasian	6	8	5	19
Latino	6	3	8	17
Other/Unknown	----	----	4	4
TOTAL	20	18	20	58
	# of Students			
DCP&P TITLE	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	TOTAL
SFSS1/CWS	5	8	4	17
SFSS2	14	10	16	40
LOM	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	20	18	20	58

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	# of Students			
YRS In Current Position	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	TOTAL
1-5 years	8	5	6	19
6-10 Years	8	8	13	29
11-15 years	4	4	1	9
16-20 years	0	1	0	1
>20 years	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>58</b>

  

	# of Students			
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	TOTAL
Monmouth University	6	6	7	19
Rutgers University	8	7	8	23
Stockton University	6	5	5	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>58</b>

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

Atlantic West: 2	Camden North: 2	Mercer North: 3	Monmouth South: 1	Passaic North: 4
Bergen Central: 1	Camden South: 1	Mercer South: 1	Newark Center City: 1	Salem: 1
Bergen South: 3	Essex Central: 2	Middlesex West: 2	Newark Northeast: 2	Somerset: 1
Bergen/Hudson Area: 1	Essex South: 3	Morris East: 1	Newark South: 1	State Central Registry: 1
Burlington East: 1	Gloucester West: 2	Morris West: 3	Ocean North: 1	Sussex: 1
Cape May: 2	Hudson Central: 1	Morris/Sussex/Passaic Area: 1	Ocean South: 1	Union Central: 1
Camden Central: 2	Hudson West: 1	Monmouth North: 1	Passaic Central: 4	Union West: 2



### MCWEP Anticipated Graduation Dates – Cohort 1

Anticipated Graduation Date	# (%) of Students in Cohort 1 Graduating	% of Cohort 1 Graduated, by Date
May 2014*	2 (10%)	10%
September 2014*	1 (5%)	15%
December 2014*	2 (10%)	25%
July 2015*	6 (30%)	55%
December 2015	4 (20%)	75%
May 2016	5 (25%)	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20 (100%)</b>	

### MCWEP Anticipated Graduation Dates – Cohort 2

Anticipated Graduation Date	# (%) of Students in Cohort 2 Graduating	% of Cohort 2 Graduated, by Date
May 2015*	1 (6%)	6%
December 2016	4 (24%)	30%
May 2017	5 (29%)	59%
July 2017	7 (41%)	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17** (100%)</b>	

### MCWEP Anticipated Graduation Dates – Cohort 3

Anticipated Graduation Date	# (%) of Students in Cohort 3 Graduating	% of Cohort 3 Graduated, by Date
May 2016	1 (5%)	5%
July 2017	8 (42%)	47%
December 2017	10 (53%)	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19** (100%)</b>	

\*Indicates students who have already graduated

\*\*One student withdrew from the program prior to graduation



## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

### Competency-Based Assessment

Program assessment in MSW education focuses on student outcomes (the extent to which students demonstrate competencies and associated practice behaviors), rather than inputs (curriculum content). Similarly, assessment in the Masters Child Welfare Education Program 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 will 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 teach 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 2014-2015 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:

Trauma - Informed Child Welfare Practice Competencies	Mean Score		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
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
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
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. 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
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
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
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
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



### 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:

Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision Competencies	Mean Score		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	5.00	4.83	4.85
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
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. I am able to describe key child welfare workforce issues, trends, and challenges from a national perspective.	4.00	4.66	4.85
5. I can demonstrate the ability to identify evidence-based practice in child welfare supervision.	4.00	4.83	4.85
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
7. I am able to understand the relationship of creating a learning culture to staff retention and performance.	5.00	4.83	4.45
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
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
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



### 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 online discussion board, students respond to discussion threads posted by Learning Community Faculty Coordinators. The second component involves quarterly in-person meetings where students have opportunities to gain further education, disseminate information in group presentation format, and engage in process evaluation.

After each Learning Community Meeting, an evaluation was administered to capture how effective the meeting was. Mean scores for each of the items were above 4.22 in all cases, indicating that students were highly satisfied with their experiences in the Learning Community.

The following data represent information gathered from each of the four (4) Learning Community Meetings that took place during the 2014-2015 academic year:

### 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, 2014 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>• Keynote Speaker – Allison Blake, Commissioner, New Jersey DCF</li> <li>• Success in graduate school – Recognition of Graduates</li> <li>• “Self-Care for Overall Success”</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.57
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.61
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.52
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.52
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.57
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.59
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor	4.48
		8. The content of this learning community was helpful to me as an MSW student	4.59
October 10, 2014 9:00am – 4:00pm Monmouth University West Long Branch, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided discussion in Cohorts</li> <li>• “Immigration Inventories” &amp; Discussion</li> <li>• Group/Student Presentations “MSW Curriculum Basics”</li> <li>• “The Social Construction of Difference, Cultural Competency, and Child Welfare”</li> <li>• “Ethics &amp; Confidentiality”</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.36
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.38
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.25
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.22
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.31
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.31
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.37
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.35



### 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)
March 13, 2015 9:00am – 4:00pm Stockton University Galloway, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided Discussion – “Lessons Learned from 1<sup>st</sup> MSW semester”/”Dealing with Burnout among Staff”</li> <li>• “Frontline to National Landscape”</li> <li>• Student Panel Presentation “Best Practices in Field Placement”</li> <li>• Myers-Briggs Personality Type Discussion</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.52
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.50
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.45
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.47
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.50
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.33
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.32
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.37
May 29, 2015 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided Discussion – “Transfer of Learning from MSW to DCP&amp;P”</li> <li>• Guest Speaker – Lauren J. Silver, PhD – “System Kids”</li> <li>• “Trust and Decision-Making in CPS”</li> <li>• “Professional Self-Care – Part II”</li> </ul>	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.57
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.75
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.53
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective	4.57
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.59
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.69
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.61
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.60



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?

The following tables report the themes identified in a content analysis of student responses to 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**

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Support/Camaraderie from fellow colleagues and MCWEP staff	26
Timely and Relevant Topics	20
Professor/Guest Lecturer/Student Presentation	18

#### **Support/Camaraderie from Fellow Colleagues**

- The spirit of “community.” It is always so helpful to speak with my peers and the “check-in” times are the best!
- Being able to share difficulties we have at the office is so helpful.
- This is such a great chance to catch up with fellow students who understand the pressure we face.
- I enjoyed the professors’ energy and support as we try to make it through the program.
- The bonding time with colleagues I haven’t seen in months. It’s calming to be with my support system.

#### **Timely and Relevant Topics**

- I really enjoyed the presentation from the students about immigration – the toolkit we received will definitely be helpful. I thought this presentation was very relevant to CP&P work with immigrant population. It provided me with a better understanding of the misconceptions, trauma exposure, and the recent influx of this problem.
- I really enjoyed hearing about “system kids.”
- The information about the presence of bias in the child welfare system.
- The articles and presentations about supervisory behaviors will really raise retention and morale.
- The topic was excellent and can be immediately implemented.
- Great topics! Very relevant and interesting.
- The strengths are the lectures that related to job functions and how we can transfer information to our staff.
- It can never be overstated: the opportunity to interface with peers, catch-up, and share school/work/life experiences with each other.



**Professor/Guest Lecturer Presentations**

- Informative educators!
- Professor exudes confidence and enthusiasm, which is infectious.
- The panel was excellent! I took away a lot of advice and information on how to be more effective with my studying.

**Suggestions for Improvement Identified by MCWEP Students**

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
More suggestions for self-care and academic improvement	11
Further information on specific topics relevant to Child Welfare Social Work practice, i.e. Native American children in foster care, clinical social work, human trafficking, etc.	7
More information on Team Building/Increasing Staff Morale/Decreasing Burnout	5

**More Suggestions for self-care and general academic improvement**

- I would like to know more tips for learning for your specific learning style and tips on taking notes.
- Rather than just speak on self-care, have actual activities that we can use with our staff as well as ourselves.
- I think one of the learning communities should be just about relieving stress.
- Helping with time management and constructing study guides.
- Information on self-care and mindfulness can be increased and continuous.

**Further information on specific topics relevant to Child Welfare Social Work practice**

- We need new information on teenage human trafficking and how we can work within the confines of our system to help.
- More information on girls in gangs and the best interventions to use with them in the child welfare system.
- I feel like we as a group need to know more about Native American children in the child welfare system.
- More information on Clinical Social Work... We should know more about this important area.
- I would really like to know more about Motivational Interviewing and other evidenced-based interventions.

**More information on Team Building/Increasing Staff Morale/Decreasing Burnout**

- Suggestions on how to manage your staff while you are out of the office on your internship. Helping them deal with the stress of you being gone and additional workload for them.
- How we can use the strengths-based approach to keep our employees motivated to do this work and keep our teams functioning well.
- Team building and increasing staff morale are areas I would like to learn more about. We struggle with this daily in my office.



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

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Self-Care with staff and self	16
Race/Cultural Competence/Immigration Best Practices	26

#### Self-Care with self and staff

- I will incorporate self-care more intentionally.
- I will be reinforcing self-care with my staff on a consistent basis.
- I will definitely be incorporating self-care into my unit meetings.
- Using the self-care workshops we get with my staff during my unit meetings.

#### Race/Cultural Competence/Immigration Best Practices

- After this learning community I will be able to serve immigrant families in a more complete and effective way and work with my staff to do the same.
- I will be immediately utilizing the immigration information in terms of seeing immigration through the eyes of the immigrants with whom I work.
- The materials I received will be so helpful to share with my staff when we are working with families we serve who have been affected by immigration issues.
- I will be more conscious of the role that race might play in decisions regarding clients. I will be checking myself to see if race is affecting any of my decisions with families.
- I will be discussing concerns about minority over-representation with my supervisors.

#### Summary of Student Feedback

Students overall indicated that they were pleased with the Learning Community meetings. 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 and maintaining motivation. Students from the third MCWEP cohort overwhelmingly appreciated the support and advice garnered from the first two MCWEP cohorts. They indicated that combining the three cohorts for at least a portion of the learning community fostered a sense of hope and encouragement that was motivating and uplifting. Students indicated that they enjoyed the subject matter of the Learning Communities and the guest speakers that came throughout the year. They also indicated that they particularly enjoyed the presentations given by their peers in the program.

The students also thoughtfully offered suggestions for improvements. They indicated that they would like more information on self-care/work/life balance and how to incorporate this into DCP&P. They would like information and suggestions for navigating DCP&P procedures and gaining support in their local offices for their educational pursuits. Students also suggested several specific topics that they would like to see presented at the MCWEP Learning Communities. Examples include human trafficking, Native American families, clinical social work skills, and domestic violence.



## 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 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 were candid in their responses to the questionnaire. Their voices will receive full consideration as MCWEP moves ahead to another year of operation and develops a plan of strengthening its components.

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.

*Question: What are the strengths of MCWEP?*

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Support Received – students, staff, administrators	10
MCWEP Structure	8
Information/education/skills/knowledge	7

### Support Received

- We become a family. We help each other grow and are there to support each other. We have each other to learn from, and also depend on.
- MCWEP is a supportive, educative, and important program that allows Child Welfare Supervisors and Case Work Supervisors to enhance their abilities and knowledge in an extremely supportive environment.
- The sense of community and friendships developed with others in the agency who are going through the program together.
- Building a community of support, offering additional guidance and insight, providing encouragements, reinforcing our leadership potential.
- The bonding and support the program affords students with a unique set of priorities was positively impactful.





**MCWEP Structure**

- The program offers the opportunity to Supervisors to work and study. The pace is hectic but it is rewarding.
- MCWEP is an excellent way to further your education and potentially advance your career without the burden of extensive student loans.
- The program is very organized and runs very well. The communication between the students and MCWEP coordinators is excellent.
- MCWEP allows you to obtain a Master’s degree as a full time employee without the stress of finding the time within your work schedule.
- MCWEP allows DCP&P supervisors and casework supervisors the opportunity to obtain their MSW in a manageable flexible way such as providing educational leave for field placement and to attend class. Without this, it would be impossible to obtain my MSW.
- The variety of options regarding schools/programs to attend and schedules to develop. Very helpful.
- The Learning Communities provide the knowledge and skills that enhance the information we are all learning in our MSW programs. The information is specialized just for us. This is so helpful.

**Information/education/skills/knowledge**

- A major strength is that the program is committed to increasing the professionalism of staff. Education in the profession that is catering to the needs of the child welfare worker/supervisor.
- I feel as though I am receiving excellent instruction from MSW programs that is transferrable anywhere in the US.
- Allows Child Welfare Supervisors and Case Work Supervisors to enhance their abilities, knowledge, and strengths in order to provide our most vulnerable populations with the best practices suitable for their particular needs.
- The program promotes better case practice through education.
- MCWEP provides the education needed to do the job more effectively.
- It’s a great learning experience. The program allows for growth and provides an excellent learning experience.
- The strengths of MCWEP are the program continuously provides knowledge about the child welfare system. It allows us the opportunity of sharing this information with our staff to enhance our case practice within the organization. I relay this information to my staff constantly through meetings and trainings.
- MCWEP not only teaches you how to become a more effective social worker, it helps you understand how interconnected social work is with child welfare. The skills I’m learning are invaluable.

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

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses	14
MSW Program Experiences	10
Learning Communities	7



### The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses

- The elective in Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision was specific to the needs, issues, and concerns of the child welfare practice, and I learned a great deal. The natures of our clients' situations are all centered on trauma. We should all be making decisions with the consideration of past, present, and the possibility of future trauma.
- I enjoyed both the trauma course and the leadership course. Both were very useful and needed for the roles we play at DCP, particularly being a CWS for an intake team.
- I cannot believe how it has made a difference from who I was 3 years ago to now. I understand trauma now (clinical trauma) and have learned how important it is to provide the correct services for families. I have also learned how to provide guidance and supervision as learned in the leadership course.
- The leadership and trauma classes were instrumental in relating what is learned to the work we do. Clinical Supervision is of great importance as it forms a strong alliance and produces better outcomes.
- The leadership course as well as the trauma course were very impactful for me. It allowed me to look at the way I was supervising my unit, it allowed me to change the way I was looking at a case, and most of all these courses has changed my way of thinking.
- After taking both trauma and leadership courses, I feel differently about the MSW program. Both classes need to be taught to every supervisor, not just MCWEP. These classes are truly in tune with what it is to work for DCP&P. The classes provide the language necessary to make changes in how we deal with families as well as how to effectively supervise.

### MSW Program Experiences

- The MSW course work has provided me with tools I can utilize with clients and supervisees. The course readings help me to understand negative client behaviors and I have a better understanding of psychiatric evaluations. The MSW courses are providing me skills to better work with supervisees and create an environment of learning.
- I just started the MSW program but I immediately noted how this program reminds you to critically examine each case situation and you become more aware of the injustice, lack of services, and overall community impact on the people you serve.
- Throughout my MSW program I have become more enlightened to the oppression and discrimination in the United States and around the world. I am able to recognize educational and systemic oppression and discriminatory practices.

### Learning Community Meetings

- The self-care seminars at the Learning Communities have encouraged me to remind my workers and supervisors that they are incapable of providing effective intervention if their own baggage is too heavy. This was an invaluable lesson learned in this supportive environment.
- The Learning Community meetings are great because they give us MCWEP students the opportunity to compare notes, discuss the nuances in our different offices and counties and get and give feedback on challenges and strengths that we all experience.
- The Learning Community meetings are a good way to debrief about what we are learning as the different universities have different approaches. The professors at the Learning Community help us apply what we are learning to our work and explore how it is relevant and how we can use it.
- The MSW coursework is reinforced in the learning communities. Hearing about how others are impacting change gives me ideas as to how I can impact change.

**Question: Is there anything about MCWEP you would like to change?**

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Field Placement Structure	8
More Local Office Support for MCWEP	7
Suggestions for Learning Community	5



**Field Placement Structure**

- It is extremely difficult to perform field practice outside of the agency when contact with DCP&P clients is prohibited. I find myself constantly having to terminate early with my clients and I believe this is a hardship on my clients and the field agency.
- The internship process should be revised. It is just so difficult to be out of the office three days per week and then be responsible for all the work at the office.
- The internship should return to block placements. Leaving the office for a couple of days is more disruptive for everyone involved.
- Job sharing would have been very helpful. Office preparation beyond the manager, i.e. buddy supervisors, workers so that they are adequately prepared.
- I feel that we should be allowed to do our internships with the Division. I intend to retire from the state and I feel that I should be able to work in unfamiliar areas of DCP&P so that it will strengthen my practice within the work that I do for the Division.

**More Local Office Support for MCWEP**

- I think the program is great and very supportive. However, I feel there needs to be more support from the LOM and Area office. Leadership states they're supportive until it comes down to a conflict with the schedule and MCWEP.
- The struggle for me is the lack of support from my local office initially. I feel more communication with office managers and case work supervisory staff, not in the program, is needed.
- MCWEP participation should be supported at the workplace; it often feels that participation is punishing. Leaders tell us that our supervisors need to be supportive; don't tell us - tell the managers and supervisors.

**Suggestions for Learning Community**

- Perhaps the Learning Community could be a shorter day. I often find the long day very hard especially because it is yet another day out of the office that our LOMs hold us accountable for.
- The Learning Communities can be utilized to discuss case practice issues/policy that are not aligned with what we are learning. They can serve as an avenue to revisit policy and take the information back to DCP&P.
- The online portion of the Learning Community is unnecessary. We are already so busy, this causes additional stress. It does not seem to be directly beneficial.

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

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Yes	29
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. Samples of their responses are given below:**



- Yes! The program is preparing me to think in more clinical terms when interacting with families/supervisees or discussing cases. I am taking advantage of teachable moments with supervisees.
- As a casework supervisor, my participation alone in such an educational undertaking is motivational to staff. As I share (transfer of learning) in certain work settings, I can sense inspiration which hopefully leads to improved outcomes for both workers and their assigned families.
- Yes, I feel prepared and I am accepting the change. I appreciate that our child welfare system is a learning organization.
- Yes, I do feel I am preparing for a bigger role. My skills are being enhanced and further developed in order for me to take on a mentoring and leadership role. I am also gaining more confidence in myself and my ability to produce change
- I strongly feel I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey's public welfare system. I can now recognize certain concerns sooner than before such as possible trauma in children, etc.. I am more aware of Children's Rights and understand the NASW ethical principles that are important to abide by. I believe that I can provide information to higher levels of management on what is needed to continue to move New Jersey's Child Welfare System in the right direction.
- Yes! I feel much more competent in areas where I feel transformation needs to take place.
- Absolutely! I am a different supervisor. I can now determine the difference when working with providers and assessing families for services.
- I absolutely believe that I can play a crucial role in the transformation of our agency. By implementing clinical supervision and passing on knowledge obtained in my MSW classes, I have been able to guide my workers to a more gentle and family focused way of "doing business." I feel that I have grown tremendously as a result of the MCWEP program not only as a supervisor, but as a person overall. The program has renewed my passion for social work and given me the skills I needed to lead a unit and empower my workers to effect change.
- I do feel like I am playing a role however I don't believe that my office appreciates that about what I am doing—sometimes the pushback is disheartening. I feel like I am responsible to share my learning experience with those I supervise, so not only am I getting better at what I do, but so are they.

### **Summary of Students' Feedback:**

In reviewing students' responses to the open-ended questions, it is clear that the program strengths more than balance the challenges. Students are very grateful for the educational information and skill attainment they are gaining through MCWEP and hope to transfer that knowledge to their local offices. They feel as though the opportunity to be a MCWEP student has been a significant life event. They discuss how their thought processes regarding working with clients, staff, Child Welfare systems, and policy have changed as a result of being in an MSW program and being a part of the MCWEP Learning Community. Students perceive the program as being very supportive, especially the support of their MCWEP colleagues, the MCWEP staff, and DCF upper level administration's belief in their abilities. Students perceive the Learning Community in particular as a strong asset of MCWEP. They note that they gain a lot of confidence, information, support, and camaraderie through the Learning Community quarterly meetings. Students indicate 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 mention how MCWEP has strengthened their supervisory skills by helping them to work more effectively with their workers and supervisors to understand the impact of trauma and social justice issues as related to Child Welfare. They observe that being exposed to these ideals will help transform and professionalize New Jersey's public child welfare system.

Despite their overall enthusiasm for the program, students identified several areas where the program could be strengthened. Students frequently discussed the difficulty they were having managing their field placement schedules with their work schedules and discussed the merits of moving to a block placement structure using temporary job replacement or job sharing. They felt that having to miss several days a week for field placement, though extremely informative, was creating some anxiety regarding the amount of work they perceived they were missing in the office. Students also discussed the need to have the MCWEP elective courses structured differently as the quick pace of the summer course felt stressful to students and precluded them from retaining some of the material. Students discussed having both of the courses operate as face-to face courses. Finally, 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.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2015-2016 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 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 students indicated in their evaluations that they felt very supported by upper level administrators from DCP&P. However, for the third consecutive year, they indicated that on the local level, some administrators and managers are not supportive of their involvement in MCWEP. The evaluations showed that students would like to see more involvement and support from mid-level DCP&P local and area office administration, 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 they 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 office administration throughout their tenure in MCWEP, particularly in relation to the field component of the program. Therefore, it is recommended that information sessions organized by MCWEP staff occur for local and area DCP&P administration, in order to provide further information and answer questions about MCWEP. It is also recommended that these same administrators be invited to participate in portions of the Learning Community meetings, in order to gain a better understanding of the students' involvement and the overall vision of MCWEP.
- The 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*). In the past, students did report that the large amount of important information they received would be better absorbed in a course formatted longer than six weeks. Therefore, MCWEP professors extended the length of the class to 10 weeks. In this year's evaluation, students still indicated that moving from an online format to a traditional classroom format would be helpful in absorbing the large amount of important material. The students this year still noted that they enjoyed the courses and lauded them as one of the best parts of MCWEP and of their MSW programs. However, they have expressed a desire for more contact with each other and the professors surrounding class material. The MCWEP electives continue to evolve as faculty incorporate assessment information into course revisions. This year, *Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare* will be revised to include more contact by including two synchronous online sessions in the curriculum to encourage additional contact with classmates and the professor and to engage further with the material. A new assignment will also be added which asks students to complete a project on Transformational Learning or Clinical Supervision that they will present during a Learning Community meeting in the upcoming fall semester. This extended project will help students apply concepts they learned in the course to their work environments thereby engaging fully with the material to facilitate the learning process.
- As we continue to refine our curriculum for the Learning Community meetings, we have taken note that students indicated on their Learning Community evaluations that they would like to see more skill-based instruction on self-care and academic improvement as well as current Child Welfare topics of interest such as Native American/First Nations People in foster care, clinical social work, and human trafficking. Based on these assessment results we plan on incorporating additional activities and skills workshops that they can engage in and take back to their own units and use with their own teams. We will also continue to invite guest speakers that can provide information on current child welfare topics of interest and relevance to our students.



Since its inception 3 years ago, MCWEP has accomplished a great deal, including the graduation of twelve DCP&P supervisors with their MSW degrees. 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.







# MCWEP

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