



MCWEP

MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT



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LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors are grateful for the cooperation of the students who took the time to give feedback on their experiences with the Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP). Without their input, this report would not have been possible. We would also like to thank our MCWEP partners, including the Graduate Program Academic Coordinators, faculty, and staff at Kean University, Monmouth University, Rutgers University and Stockton University. Additionally, the support received from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), the Office of Training and Professional Development, and the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers has been essential for the ongoing success of this project.

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program especially thanks Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, for her ongoing support of efforts to improve the lives of New Jersey families through education and training of the workforce. Commissioner Beyer's vision for transforming New Jersey's child welfare system is strong and encouraging.

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



INTRODUCTION

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP) is a partnership among the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF), the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NJ), and a consortium of four graduate social work programs – The MSW Programs of Kean University, Monmouth University Rutgers University, and Stockton University. This program evaluation covers the months of August 2018 – July 2019. Kean’s first cohort of MCWEP students entered in the Fall 2017 semester, so this is the second 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 seven cohorts of students accepted into MCWEP.



Descriptive Data - A total of one hundred and thirty-four (134) students were funded during the first seven years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1 – 7.

SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS

	# of Students							
AGE GROUP	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
30-35	7	3	1	1	5	3	4	24 (18%)
36-40	6	5	10	5	2	10	5	43 (32%)
41-45	4	4	5	4	5	8	6	36 (27%)
46-50	2	3	3	5	6	0	4	23 (17%)
>51	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	9 (7%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	134
	# of Students							
GENDER	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
FEMALE	18	16	17	11	17	17	17	113 (84%)
MALE	2	2	3	5	2	4	3	21 (16%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	134
	# of Students							
ETHNICITY	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
African American	8	7	3	9	8	14	11	60 (45%)
Caucasian	6	8	5	2	3	2	4	32 (24%)
Latino	6	3	8	4	5	4	5	35 (26%)
Other/Unknown	----	----	4	1	3	1	----	9 (7%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	134



	# of Students							
DCP&P TITLE	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
SFSS1/CWS	2	6	3	2	4	3	3	23 (17%)
SFSS2	14	10	16	14	15	18	17	104 (78%)
LOM	4	2	1	----	----	----	----	7 (5%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	134
	# of Students							
YEARS AS SUPERVISOR	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
1-5 years	8	5	6	9	6	9	9	52 (39%)
6-10 Years	8	8	13	2	7	7	5	50 (37%)
11-15 years	4	4	1	5	5	3	4	26 (19%)
16-20 years	----	1	----	----	1	2	2	6 (4%)
>20 years	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	134
	# of Students							
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Kean University	----	----	----	----	----	6	5	11 (8%)
Monmouth University	6	6	7	7	6	5	4	34 (25%)
Rutgers University	8	7	8	5	8	5	7	43 (32%)
Stockton University	6	5	5	4	5	5	4	30 (22%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	20	134
	Students Who Separated from MCWEP							
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Kean University	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
Monmouth University	----	1	1	----	----	----	----	2 (2%)
Rutgers University	----	----	----	1	----	----	----	1 (1%)
Stockton University	----	----	1	----	1	----	----	2 (2%)
TOTAL	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	5 (4%)



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

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

Hunterdon/Mercer/Somerset/Warren Area:	1
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:	1
Newark Center City:	4
Newark Northeast:	3

Newark South:	1
Ocean North:	5
Ocean South:	2
Ocean/Monmouth Area:	0
Passaic Central:	5
Passaic North:	9
Salem:	4
Somerset:	2
State Central Registry:	4
Sussex:	1
Union Central:	4
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	All Cohorts
# of applicants	26	22	28	20	22	26	26	170
#/% offered and accepting traineeship	20 (77%)	18 (82%)	20 (71%)	16 (80%)	19 (86%)	21 (81%)	20 (77%)	134 (79%)
# terminated prior to completion	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
# completing traineeship	20	17	17	15	9	0	0	78
# not graduated yet	0	0	0	0	9	21	20	50





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 2018-2019 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
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
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
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. 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
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
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
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
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



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
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86	4.76	4.78
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	4.82	4.78
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	4.59	4.78
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	4.53	4.44
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	4.71	4.67
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	4.53	4.78
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	4.94	4.89
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	4.82	4.67
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	4.88	4.67
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	4.88	4.56



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 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 four Learning Community Meetings that took place during the 2018-2019 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 10, 2018 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to MCWEP mission/purpose/structure • Keynote Speaker – Carmen Diaz-Petti, Assistant Commissioner, DCP&P • Recognition of MCWEP Graduates • “Child Welfare in Uganda: Challenges/Considerations” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.8
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.7
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.7
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.6
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.7
		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	4.5
		8. The content of this learning community was helpful to me as an MSW student	4.6
November 2, 2018 9:00am – 4:00pm Kean University Union, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided discussion in Cohorts • “Self-Care as More Than a Cliché: Caring for You in Action” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.2
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.3
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.1
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.2
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.2
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.2
		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

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 15, 2019 9:00am – 4:00pm Stockton University Atlantic City, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “MCWEP: Frontline to National Landscape” • “From Field Placement to the Unit: Transfer of Learning and Connecting Best Practices” • Myers-Briggs Personality Type Test and Discussion • Team-Building Activity 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.1
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.1
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.0
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.0
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.1
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.0
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.1
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.0
June 14, 2019 9:00am – 4:00pm Monmouth University West Long Branch, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team-Building Activity • “Report from NASW-NJ Conference and National Title IV-E Roundtable Attendees” • “Beyond the Question of Color: Expanding the Concept of Diversity in Child Welfare” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.7
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.8
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.6
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective	4.7
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.7
		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.	4.8
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.7



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?

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.

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

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Content/Material Covered	40
Sense of Community and Support	36
Development of Skills and Resources	18
Linking MSW curriculum & Learning Community content to Child Welfare Practice	11

Content/Material Covered

- Strength of learning community is bringing together speakers with diverse backgrounds and expertise to share their wealth of knowledge.
- The speaker from Uganda was amazing. Such an incredible opportunity to be in her presence and hear her knowledge.
- Useful information provided about self-care and its importance in our field.
- I loved this learning community due to the Title IV-E presentation and transfer of learning presentation because this is the purpose and driving force of the program.

Sense of Community and Support

- It was important hearing everyone else's stories, as they were very similar to my experience.
- Networking with other MCWEP participants and sharing ideas for our work with DCP&P.
- I enjoyed the team building and the chance for MCWEP members to bond and vent.
- As always I like the support of my peers in the learning community. Today's interactive exercise is another example of a caring environment.



Development of Skills and Resources

- Speaker from Uganda was very interesting – showed a different side to intercultural and international social work.
- Practical use of self-awareness for my personal self-care.
- Working in groups and presenting helped to prepare for class presentations.

Linking MSW Curriculum and Learning Community Content to Child Welfare Practice

- Application of what we are learning in MSW program directly to supervision/self-care.
- Presentations were related to our primary jobs and roles.

What Suggestions Would You Offer to Improve This Learning Community?

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Suggestions for Topics and Issues Students Would Like Addressed in the Learning Community	32
Suggestions for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities and Activities	24
Various Practical and Logistical Issues	20

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

- Self-care, stress management, and time management.
- An actual self-care activity, such as meditation – even it was just 30 minutes or something.
- More information about supervision and leadership. That is always useful.
- How to adjust to life (work, home life, etc.) after we graduate. What’s next?
- A presentation or seminar about how to write papers effectively.
- Topics related to changes in child welfare due to the widespread use of medical marijuana.
- Any interesting things related to our work – mental health, addiction, trauma, worker retention, etc..



Suggestions for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities and Activities

- Incorporate more films and movies.
- Guest speakers on various topics always bring an interesting perspective to the learning community.
- Do more group activities and interactive things.
- I think decompressing longer sessions could be helpful because they can become repetitive and drag on.
- More open discussion topics.

Various Practical and Logistical Issues

- Continue to offer food and coffee.
- These should be a half day instead of a full day.
- All Learning Communities take place in New Brunswick or another neutral location.

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

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Integrate/Apply Content to Practice	42
Share Content with Staff/Supervisees	32
Further Exploration or Research into Content Area	8

Integrate/Apply Content to Practice

- Be more conscious of trauma and self-care for myself and for my workers.
- As a MCWEP student I have a new lens and view of case work; also the leadership material was great and is assisting me with clinical supervision to achieve better outcomes.
- Create time for self-care more often than I do currently. Talk to my supervisees about self-care.
- Utilize supervision (clinical) model.
- Incorporate trauma lens in work with families.
- Use my personality type to work with my supervisors and workers/colleagues more effectively.



Share Content with Staff/Supervisees

- I will use the self-care assessments with my workers.
- As soon as I went through the binder, it made me think of doing a portion about self-care at my next unit meeting.
- Spend more time talking about secondary traumatic stress with staff.
- As a result of the learning community, some of the interventions I have learning in my field placement I will use with my unit.
- Keep in mind the idea of a “single story” and ensure transfer of this knowledge occurs at the local office.

Further Exploration or Research into Area of Content

- I have an increased interest in cross-cultural social work studies.

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

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Valuable Information	29
Direction for Future Practice	16
Hope, Encouragement, and Support	15
Tangible Skills	11

Valuable Information

- The significance and importance of self-care personally and professionally.
- I learned a lot about the practice of child welfare social work in Uganda.
- The deeper meaning of self-care—going well beyond the standard definition.
- Important information on the Family First Act.
- The information on video game addiction.

Direction for Future Practice

- I won’t make assumptions about any culture. Assumptions create barriers and make our work more difficult. Being open to listen and hear our families is the way.
- As a supervisor I not only need to manage my own self-care but monitor my staff’s balance of self-care.
- Re-prioritize self-care in my own work.
- I had a glimpse of how my life really looks and that I need to put my wellness first at this time.



Hope, Encouragement, and Support

- It felt good to meet my fellow MCWEPs, exchanging phone numbers, and meeting those who have graduated.
- I was happy to encourage the newest 7.0 cohort!
- There is a lot of support in the MCWEP community. We are not alone—we have an entire DCP&P family!

Tangible Skills

- Self-care assessment tool will be utilized with my workers.
- Tips for presentations. For example, I need to know my subject and express ideas clearly to the audience.

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 2019-2020 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	Frequency Mentioned
Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff	22
Knowledge Gained; Academic/Professional Enhancement	13
Program Design and Structure	12
Learning Community Meetings	6

Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff

- I appreciate all the support from everyone involved in the MCWEP program and I feel like everyone involved, especially Dawn and Joe, want all of the MCWEP students to succeed and have our best interests at heart. I can see that a lot of thought and hard work has gone into making this program a success and I am proud to be a part of this program.
- The strengths of MCWEP lie in multiple people being accepted into each institution at once, creating cohorts of support. Trying to juggle work demands, grad school demands, and life’s uncontrollable occurrences can be cumbersome, so having a team of support has been everything to me. The supportive administration also helps in that they understand what we do at DCP&P as well as the demands of graduate school, so the advice given has been paramount during difficult times.
- Support of staff and peers. Opportunity to be transparent, be understood and not be judged. Sense of community and family.
- I believe the biggest strength of MCWEP is the linking of supervisory staff from throughout the state with each other. The community and networking provides support and camaraderie while we go through this challenge of balancing school on top of all of our other responsibilities. Additionally, I believe it will create a bond that will continue long after we all complete the program, which will support our efforts to be positive change agents within the agency.



Knowledge Gained; Academic/Professional Enhancement

- MCWEP provides the opportunity for supervisors to increase their social work skills and knowledge to improve the case practice. MCWEP includes educational work in the clinical field to enhance our skills.
- MCWEP reignites passion within seasoned DCP&P employees.
- This program strengthens my ability to assess underlying needs and develop case plans with appropriate evidence-based interventions..

Program Design and Structure

- MCWEP allows full-time employees to continue their graduate education part-time, in a manner that supports continued success at work and encourages a transfer of learning.
- MCWEP unites colleagues from across New Jersey in a way that promotes greater consistency of case practice for DCP&P.

Learning Community Meetings

- MCWEP learning communities provide a venue for colleagues to network and exchange ideas.

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

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective	19
Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning	17
The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses	7

MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective

- I believe it has enhanced my social work skills and has expanded my perspective on the needs and the impact of the intergenerational trauma that most of our families have endured. It has increased the knowledge on how the macro, mezzo, and micro systems affect the families' functioning.
- MCWEP's impact on my supervision revealed itself during my second year; I realized and had to face how biased and jaded my perspective of "helping people" was as well as my perception of clients. I now approach all facets of case practice with a social work lens. I also manage my staff with a greater self-awareness as well. Gaining understanding in the impact of transference and countertransference has been very helpful in maintaining composure during volatile interactions as well as being self-aware when my assessment, behaviors, approach and actions are compromised.
- Through my field placement, I am gaining knowledge in the area of homelessness, and resources available to individuals facing this challenge. I have already brought back this knowledge to support the work that is occurring within my local office.
- Coursework has led to insights around person-environment dynamics as well as systems of oppression that are negatively impacting families we are working with, as well as theoretical perspectives that have changed the lens through which we are viewing some of these individuals/families.



Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning

- The education and experiences that I have been exposed to during MCWEP has been very beneficial. It has given me a better understanding of the challenges and struggles that our families face every day. It has taught me to advocate for the families under my supervision and provide them with the help that they need. I have been able to directly apply the knowledge that I have learned in the classroom to case practice. It has made me a better supervisor.
- I immediately applied concepts learned in the Trauma course in my conferences with workers and continue to utilize these concepts in my current role as Case Practice Specialist. The trauma curriculum changed the lens through which I view cases. I have encouraged workers to use the Adverse Childhood Experiences questionnaire with the parents they work with in order to better understand parents’ behaviors.
- MCWEP is benefitting me a great deal as a supervisor. I am better able to guide my workers with the children and families we serve. I am more compassionate and am gaining a greater understanding of social work practice.

The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses

- Trauma in Child Welfare has really opened my eyes in terms of why our clients act and react in situations and this class has changed my mindset in terms of how I now think and react to not only the clients but to my staff. I am now working on changing the mindset of my staff when they come to conference cases in terms of blaming our clients and focusing my staff on the client’s traumatic experiences instead of blaming and becoming frustrated with the clients. Trauma in Child Welfare has been the most informative and challenging course I have taken thus far in the MCWEP program.
- I have a better approach with my workers and utilize the theories that we used in the Leadership and Supervision elective.
- I have used concepts from the Child Welfare Leadership & Supervision course by searching for feelings when conferencing cases with workers who appear to be experiencing emotional reactions/responses to clients or situations.

Is There Anything About MCWEP You Would Like to Change?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Various Logistical/Structural Issues	11
Learning Community and Elective Issues	9
Field Placement Issues	8

Various Logistical/Structural Issues

- The distance traveled to class can be exhausting at times, especially after working before going to class, it would be a great idea to only have to travel to school one day of the week instead of multiple times a week.
- The design of summer classes is something that should be revisited. It was an extremely tough summer sacrificing the demands of class and trying to have a summer.

Learning Community and Elective Issues

- I think it would be helpful to continue bringing back MCWEP alumni to the learning communities. Perhaps they could be offered training hours for this? I believe this would



provide additional support/encouragement to currently enrolled MCWEP students, promote more extensive transfer of learning opportunities, and provide networking opportunities.

- I think the learning communities should be half a day. While a couple of the earlier “workshops” have been helpful, others have not. The morning “support group” sessions are redundant at times and have become complaining sessions for my cohort.

Field Placement Issues

- It should go back as it was before, where students were able to take off fully for a time to complete their internship. It is a hardship in busy offices to be out so many days per week.
- MCWEP should develop their own pool of suitable internships. My first internship was excellent and definitely developed my clinical skills. My current internship is more case management, which I enjoy but is not pushing me to grow as much.

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 questions 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:

- Yes, I do feel that I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey’s public child welfare system. Upon completion of the program I will see myself being a great asset to the public child welfare system because of my growing knowledge of the field as well as my dedication in making a positive change to those families involved with the system.
- I believe the I am being prepared though MCWEP to play a role in the transformation of NJ’s public child welfare system by being better educated and prepared to develop workers and engage and service families/children. The more challenging aspect is implementation of the skills and knowledge received through the MCWEP experience while working in the local offices which operate very differently, even within the same county.
- Yes. I believe that MCWEP brings together like-minded child welfare professionals who are already passionate about their work and eager to make far-reaching changes. The additional concepts that are learned through the universities and at learning communities serve to further stoke this passion and stimulate innovative ideas. The MCWEP program has made me feel like I can make a difference in transforming New Jersey’s public child welfare system simply by my interest in making a change and the transfer of learning that I institute at my local office.
- I definitely feel I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of NJ’s public CWS. I now know how to advocate effectively, how policy is implemented, understand more about human behavior, and am familiar with various theories as well as clinical techniques for working with vulnerable people.



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 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 possibility of having the MCWEP elective courses structured differently, as the increased demand during the summer session felt stressful to students and precluded them from retaining some of the material. Students requested a number of other miscellaneous logistical and programmatic changes, related mostly to their fieldwork requirements and the Learning Community, 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 2017-2018 MCWEP Annual Report, four recommendations were made in order to improve students' experiences. The first recommendation evolved from students' comments in multiple evaluations that they desired changes to the modality of the summer elective courses exclusive to MCWEP (Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare). We have continued to monitor this situation because student feedback seems to change from year to year, depending on the unique needs and character of various cohorts. Due to the limited negative feedback received this year, we have decided to continue with the current course format. A 12-week format, with some class sessions being offered online at the discretion of the professor.

The second recommendation from the 2017-18 report related to difficulty integrating field placement experiences with their responsibilities as supervisors for DCP&P. It was suggested that MCWEP staff conduct a survey of students to catalog their experiences with field placement and office duty expectations. We did conduct this survey and are now analyzing the results. We hope that, in consultation with DCP&P, we might use this information to revise MCWEP field placement policies, as well as local office expectations and understanding of program requirements.

The third recommendation from the 2017-2018 report was to formalize the curriculum of the Learning Community. After further reflection and discussion, we decided that such an effort would be futile and detrimental. With four MCWEP cohorts overlapping in the program at any given time, having a firm curriculum plan is impossibly complex. In addition, the needs of new students vary from those who are about to graduate. Maintaining a flexible stance when planning Learning Community content is generally beneficial for students. This allows us to respond to pressing issues and invite engaging guest speakers when the opportunity arises.

The final recommendation from the 2017-2018 report was that we develop opportunities for MCWEP graduates to implement their knowledge and skills after graduation. This is an effort in which MCWEP and DCF have a common interest, as both are strengthened by harnessing and engaging the enthusiasm and expertise of MCWEP graduates. We have made significant progress on this goal during the 2018-2019 academic year. 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. Furthermore, the potential for collaboration is growing since a key position within the DCF Office of Training and Professional Development is now occupied by a MCWEP graduate who is continuing to foster the agency's effort to utilize and engage those who have completed our program.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2019-2020 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 2018-2019, 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 2019-2020 academic year:

1. Continuing our efforts to support the MCWEP students who sometimes feel overwhelmed with the competing demands of their offices and schoolwork, we hope to gain more information about the way students are currently addressing this challenge. This will take the form of another survey of MCWEP participants, specifically aimed at discerning how students make sure their responsibilities are covered when class and fieldwork take them out of the office. Results of this effort will be shared in the 2019-2020 annual report.
2. In the coming year, it is our goal to continue to foster the efforts of the subset of MCWEP graduates who continue to seek opportunities to serve the public child welfare system. Thus, it is our aim in the 2019-2020 academic year that MCWEP and the DCF continue to partner to expand the roles and usefulness of MCWEP graduates. This includes nourishing existing efforts, and also investigating other 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.
3. Lastly, we plan in 2019-2020 to continue our focus on making the Learning Community an engaging, beneficial, and stimulating experience for all MCWEP participants. Creative meeting formats, new topics, various learning modalities, and expert guest speakers will all be considered. We want to ensure that our students continue to look forward to the Learning Community and benefit maximally.

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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