

**Child Welfare League of America
Recommended Caseload Standards**

The following recommended caseload standards are excerpted from the *CWLA Standards of Excellence for Child Welfare Services*. The standards can be ordered by going to www.cwla.org/pubs or calling 800-407-6273.

The **recommended caseload standards for child protective services** are as follows (*CWLA Standards of Excellence for Services to Abused or Neglected Children and their Families*, Revised 1999):

Service/ Caseload Type	CWLA Recommended Caseload/ Workload
Initial Assessment/ Investigation	12 active cases (families) per month, per 1 social worker
Ongoing Cases	17 active families per 1 social worker and no more than 1 new case assigned for every six open cases
Combined Assessment/ Investigation and Ongoing Cases	10 active on-going cases (families) and 4 active investigations per 1 social worker
Supervision	1 supervisor per 5 social workers

It should be noted that the caseload is based on new and active cases per month. In other words, new cases should not be added in a new month unless a comparable # of cases have been closed, assuming that the worker has a full caseload.

The **recommended caseload standards for family foster care services** are as follows (*CWLA Standards of Excellence for Family Foster Care Services*, Revised 1995):

Service/ Caseload Type	CWLA Recommended Caseload/ Workload
Foster Family Care	12-15 children per 1 social worker
Supervision	1 supervisor per 5 social workers

The number of supervisees assigned to a given supervisor should be determined by the training and experience of both the supervisor and supervisees.

Background

Setting standards and improving practice in all child welfare services have been major goals of the Child Welfare League of America since its formation in 1920. Since the inception of its program of standards development, CWLA has formulated child welfare standards, published in a series volumes, based on current knowledge, the developmental needs of children, and tested ways of meeting those needs effectively.

The preparation of standards involves an examination of current practices and the assumptions on which they are based; a survey of the professional literature and standards developed by others; and a study of the most recent scientific findings of social work and related fields such as early childhood development, education, mental health, psychology, medicine, psychiatry, and sociology, as they bear on child welfare practice. CWLA's preparation of standards involves the wide participation of local, state, provincial, and national agency representatives. The full formulation of standards follows an extended discussion of principles and issues by committees of experts in each area of service, the drafting of a preliminary statement, and a critical review by CWLA member agencies and representatives of related professions and other national organizations.

Purpose of Standards

CWLA standards are intended to be goals for the continuing improvement of services. They represent those practices considered to be most desirable in providing services to children and their families.

The standards are directed to all who are concerned with the enhancement of services to children and their families: parents; the general public, citizen groups, public officials, legislators, and various professional groups; those responsible for the provision of services; board members and agency staff members; agencies whose functions include planning and financing community services; state, county, or provincial agencies entrusted by law with functions relating to the licensing or supervision of organizations serving children; and federations whose membership requirements involve judgments on the nature of services rendered by member agencies.

Caseload/Workload Ratios

A U.S. Children's Bureau document, Workload Standards for Children and Family Social Services¹, differentiates caseload and workload measures as follows: (1) caseloads are defined as the amount of time workers devote to direct contacts with clients; and (2) workloads are defined as the amount of time required to perform a specific task.

Although the field could benefit from a standardized caseload/workload model, currently there is no tested and universally accepted formula. It is difficult to arrive at a specific figure for a given caseload/workload because of the wide range of agency settings in which a particular service is offered.

Yet, the CWLA standards most requested are those that provide recommended caseload and/or workload sizes. These ratios of client to staff members offer guidance based upon the field's consensus of what constitutes best practice. In each service volume, they are presented within the context of other recommended standards for staff qualifications and training, supervision, management support, etc. In combination, they provide some direction for agencies, public and voluntary, on how best to maximize the state-of-the-art in child welfare practice.

Child Welfare League of America Recommended Staffing Standards

Protective Services

Minimum Baccalaureate in Social Work, or a Baccalaureate in a closely related field.

Supervision Masters in Social Work.

Foster Care

Minimum Baccalaureate in Social Work preferably, or a Baccalaureate in a closely related field.

Supervision Masters in Social Work.

For further information, contact:

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Child Welfare Standards

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¹ Developing Workload Standards for Children and Family Social Services. Prepared by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co., in association with CWLA, for the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978.