

NASW Supports DPHHS Division Of Child And Family Services Appropriations For Adequate Numbers Of Workforce To Meet National Standards And Address The Current Work Load.

- It is a Public Responsibility To Ensure Legal And Physical **Protection Of Children Where There Is Abuse, Neglect, And Abandonment** and When The Family Is Unable To Provide Or Protect. We expect our **public, taxpayer-funded systems to step in, to protect these children**, to treat them humanely and to restore them to a family, with their own, or, if necessary, a new one. **This is not only a social obligation, it is the law.**
- **A Well Trained, Reliable, And Experienced Workforce** Is A Critical Element To Making Children Safer.
- Currently The Division Of Child And Family Services (CFS) Front Line Workers **Carry Case Loads Ranging From 25 – 40 Cases.**
- A group called Children's Rights (childrensrights.org) is currently engaged in **lawsuits in 12 states** child and family services programs and believes that "litigation brings the power of the court into the implementation of system reform". Approximately 20 states have been held in receivership.
- NASW Advocates for An **Increase Of Approximately 40 Field Staff State Wide.**
- The **Cost Of Providing Adequate Staffing And Increasing Child Safety Is:**
 - Approximately \$1,216,330 in general funds the first year and 1,156,330 in the second year. Total for the biennium = **\$2,372,660**
- To Increase The CFS Workforce To Meet National Standards And Address The Current Work Load, Which Includes An Increase In Methamphetamine Use In Montana, **NASW Advocates That The**

Following Child Welfare League Of America Standards Be Considered.

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

The **recommended caseload standards for child protective services** are as follows:

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

The **recommended caseload standards for family foster care services** are as follows:

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

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

Protective Services

Minimum: Baccalaureate in Social Work preferably, or a Baccalaureate in a closely related field with training to increase skills.

Supervision: Masters in Social Work.

Foster Care

Minimum: Baccalaureate in Social Work preferably, or a Baccalaureate in a closely related field with training to increase skills.

Supervision: Masters in Social Work.

Currently approximately 30% of the CFS workforce in Montana holds a baccalaureate or Masters degree in Social Work.

The 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.

Child Welfare Workforce

Information from Written Testimony presented by
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Training, Competency and Quality Child Welfare Services

A number of studies have documented the critical connections between training, competency, and quality child welfare services.

- In 1982, a study based on an analysis of the data from the "1977 National Study of Social Services To Children and Their Families" found that workers with social work education were more effective in service delivery than workers with bachelor of arts (BA) degrees or other graduate degrees.[1]
- In 1987, Booz-Allen & Hamilton Inc. found that the "overall performance of MSWs [master's in social work] was significantly higher than non-MSWs," and that "education, specifically holding an MSW, appears to be the best predictor of overall performance in social service work." [2]
- In 1990, a study of social service workers in Kentucky found that staff with social work degrees, either BSWs or MSWs, were better prepared than those without social work degrees.[3]
- In 1992, a study on the "Effectiveness of Family Reunification Services" found that, in nearly 40 percent of the cases reviewed, insufficient or inadequate caseworker training or experience was a contributing factor in preventing family reunification.[4]
- Those findings were confirmed in a 1993 study that found child welfare staff with BSW and MSW degrees were more effective in developing successful permanency plans for children who were in foster care for more than two years.[5]

The connection of workforce quality to family outcomes was further documented in a March 2003 report by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO). The report, "HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff," states, "A stable and highly skilled child welfare workforce is necessary to effectively provide child welfare services that meet federal goals. [However] large caseloads and worker turnover delay the timeliness of investigations and limit the frequency of worker visits with children, hampering agencies' attainment of some key federal safety and permanency outcomes." [6]

Worker Turnover

- The GAO found that turnover rates of child welfare staff—which affect both recruitment and retention efforts—has been estimated at between 30 percent and 40 percent annually nationwide, with workers' average tenure being less than two years.[7]
- Turnover rates vary greatly among agencies. In a child welfare workforce survey conducted in 2000, 36 agencies reported annual turnover rates between zero and 20 percent, while 23 agencies reported rates between 50 percent and 60 percent.[8]
- One Texas state official reported that because of high turnover, caseworkers with only three years of experience are commonly promoted to supervisory positions, which has caused additional problems. Some newly promoted supervisors have requested demotions because they feel unprepared for the requirements of their jobs, and the caseworkers they supervise have complained of poor management and insufficient support.[9]
- In Arizona, a wide gap developed between the demand for child welfare services and the availability of qualified staff to meet this demand. Because of personnel shortages, the Department of Economic Security (DES) was, in some recent years, unable to respond to as many as 25 percent of child abuse and neglect reports deemed appropriate for investigation statewide.[10]

Training and Workforce Turnover

The good news-bad news about turnover is that, according to a 2000 workforce survey, states estimated that nearly 60 percent of turnover is preventable.^[11] One way to prevent turnover, which has been documented by a number of studies, is by hiring better-trained staff.

- A study based on the 1987 National Study of Public Child Welfare Job Requirements found that turnover is consistently higher in states that do not require any kind of degree for child welfare positions, and is consistently lower in states that require an MSW.^[12]
- A 1990 study in Florida found that workers without educational preparation for child welfare work were most likely to leave within one year of being hired.^[13]
- A 1994 study in South Carolina found that social work education (particularly graduate social work education) reduces workers' burnout, a major cause of staff turnover.^[14]
- A 1995 study in Ohio found that, among nine variables predictive of worker retention, three of the most important were: training; having had an internship in public child welfare as part of preparation; and agency support (including strong supervision).^[15]
- A 1998 study examining the reasons child welfare workers remain in their positions longer than two years found that in addition to concern for, and satisfaction in, helping children the two most decisive factors in employee retention were social work education and the climate of the work environment, including supportiveness of supervisors and peers. More than 80 percent of those who stayed beyond two years had completed at least one social work degree.^[16]

Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program

The Title IV-E child welfare training program represents a much greater federal investment in the child welfare workforce than Title IV-B. Created as part of the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980, Title IV-E is a valuable tool to address the child welfare-staffing crisis and ensure that staff have the competencies necessary to perform their jobs.

Under the program, the federal government demonstrates its support for training by providing an enhanced federal match of 75 percent (other administrative costs are matched at 50 percent) to fund training programs both for current and prospective child welfare staff. In addition to short-term and long-term training and direct financial assistance to students, this funding also may be used for curriculum development, materials and books, and incentives for recruitment.

Although the program was created in 1980, it was not until the early 1990s that Children's Bureau staff became aware of the real opportunities provided by Title IV-E training funds.^[17] In fiscal year 1990, Title IV-E provided about \$44 million to states to train child welfare workers.^[18] By fiscal year 2001, 49 states received \$276 million in Title IV-E training reimbursements. These reimbursements ranged from a low of approximately \$1,400 in Wyoming to a high of more than \$59 million in California, with the median reimbursement approximating \$3.1 million.^[19]

University-Agency Training Partnerships under Title IV-E

According to the GAO report, the university-agency training partnerships, funded by Title IV-E, present promising practices for addressing the staffing crisis in child welfare. It is a finding with which HHS concurred: "[A]lthough few in number, the ACF funded university and State child welfare agency partnerships referenced in this report have had a positive impact on State child welfare agencies' ability to recruit and retain child welfare staff."^[20]

These partnership programs are designed to prepare social work students for careers in the child welfare profession, and to develop the skills of current workers. The programs require that students receiving stipends for the study of child welfare commit to employment with the state or county public child welfare agency for a specified period of time. The length of the contractual employment obligation—usually one to two years—and the curriculum content each program offers, differ by state and sometimes by university.

A survey conducted in 1996 found that 68 university social work programs in 29 states were accessing IV-E funds for BSW and MSW education.^[21] Today, it is estimated that partnerships

exist in over 40 states, and use more than \$50 million, to prepare workers for the challenges of child welfare service delivery.[22]

While relatively few in number, available studies on the impact of Title IV-E training partnerships suggest that they improve both worker retention and worker competence.[23]

Improved Worker Retention

One study, which tracked four groups of students who participated in a training partnership, found that 93 percent continued to be employed in the child welfare profession—and 52 percent remained with public agencies—well beyond the minimum required by their employment obligation.[24]

Findings were similar in evaluations of programs in Kentucky and California. Evaluations in both states found that more than 80 percent of participants remained with the state agencies after their initial work obligations concluded. In Kentucky, whose collaboration includes nine of the state's undergraduate social work schools and the Cabinet for Families and Children, state officials attribute their retention rates, in part, to the intensive coursework, formal internships, and rigorous training included in the curriculum of the training partnerships. California's collaboration consists of the state's 15 graduate schools of social work, the Department of Social Services, county welfare directors, and the California Chapter of NASW.[45]

In Texas where six universities offer both BSW and MSW stipends, five offer BSW stipends only, and one offers only MSW stipends graduates of one participating program were surveyed. The survey found that 70 percent of respondents were still employed with the agency after their contractual employment obligation expired.[26]

Improved Worker Competence

The program evaluations in Kentucky and California suggest that the training partnerships improved worker competence. In both states, evaluations found that staff hired through specially designed Title IV-E programs performed better on the job and applied their training more deftly than employees hired through other means.

Controlling for undergraduate grade point averages, the Kentucky study found that those who completed the training scored better on the agency's test of core competencies. Kentucky supervisors reported that they considered students certified by the partnership to be better prepared for their jobs than other new employees.[27]

The California study reported that students who participated in the partnership training scored higher on a test of child welfare knowledge, reported greater competency in their work, and had a more realistic view of child welfare work than those who had not participated.[28]

In Louisiana, research found that Title IV-E participants score higher on child welfare competency exams than control groups, have higher rates of retention with the agency, and score higher on supervisor evaluations of their work preparation.[29]

Endnotes

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