



MCWEP

MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2016-17 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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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. In the Spring of 2016, we welcomed Kean University’s Master of Social Work Program to the Consortium. However, Kean’s first cohort of MCWEP students will enter in the Fall 2017 semester, so no data included in this report pertains to Kean University. 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.

This program evaluation covers the months of August 2016 – July 2017. 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 five cohorts of students accepted into MCWEP. At the time of this report, that includes 64 DCP&P supervisors, 23 casework supervisors, and 5 local office managers. The majority of students are women (85%), and as a group, they have hundreds of years of combined supervisory experience with DCP&P. Approximately 38% are African American, 28% are Latino, and 26% are Caucasian. The MCWEP students are divided among the three consortium schools and represent 75% of DCP&P local and area offices.



Descriptive Data - A total of ninety-three (93) students were funded during the first five years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS

	# of Students					
AGE GROUP	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	TOTAL # (% of Total)
30-35	7	3	1	1	5	17 (18%)
36-40	6	5	10	5	2	28 (30%)
41-45	4	4	5	4	5	22 (24%)
46-50	2	3	3	5	6	19 (20%)
>51	1	3	1	1	1	7 (8%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	93
	# of Students					
GENDER	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4		TOTAL # (% of Total)
FEMALE	18	16	17	11	17	79 (85%)
MALE	2	2	3	5	2	14 (15%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	93
	# of Students					
ETHNICITY	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4		TOTAL # (% of Total)
African American	8	7	3	9	8	35 (38%)
Caucasian	6	8	5	2	3	24 (26%)
Latino	6	3	8	4	5	26 (28%)
Other/Unknown	----	----	4	1	3	8 (9%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	93



	# of Students					
DCP&P TITLE	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	TOTAL # (% of Total)
SFSS1/CWS	3	7	3	2	4	23 (25%)
SFSS2	14	10	16	14	15	69 (74%)
LOM	3	1	1	----	----	5 (5%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	93
	# of Students					
YEARS AS SUPERVISOR	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	TOTAL # (% of Total)
1-5 years	8	5	6	9	6	34 (37%)
6-10 Years	8	8	13	2	7	38 (41%)
11-15 years	4	4	1	5	5	19 (20%)
16-20 years	----	1	----	----	1	2 (2%)
>20 years	----	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	93
	# of Students					
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Monmouth University	6	6	7	7	6	25 (27%)
Rutgers University	8	7	8	5	8	31 (33%)
Stockton University	6	5	5	4	5	21 (23%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	93
	Students Who Separated from MCWEP					
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Monmouth University	----	1	----	----	----	1 (1%)
Rutgers University	----	----	----	1	----	1 (1%)
Stockton University	----	----	1	----	1	2 (2%)
TOTAL	0	1	1	1	1	4 (4%)



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

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

Cumberland East:	0
Cumberland West:	0
Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem Area:	0
Essex Central:	4
Essex North:	0
Essex South:	3
Essex Area:	0
Gloucester East:	1
Gloucester West:	2
Hudson Central:	3
Hudson North:	0
Hudson South:	2
Hudson West:	1
Hunterdon:	0

Hunterdon/Mercer/Somerset/Warren Area:	1
Mercer North:	4
Mercer South:	3
Middlesex Central:	0
Middlesex Coastal:	9
Middlesex West:	2
Middlesex/Union Area:	0
Monmouth North:	4
Monmouth South:	4
Morris East:	1
Morris West:	3
Morris/Sussex/Passaic Area:	1
Newark Center City:	3
Newark Northeast:	3

Newark South:	1
Ocean North:	4
Ocean South:	1
Ocean/Monmouth Area:	0
Passaic Central:	5
Passaic North:	7
Salem:	3
Somerset:	2
State Central Registry:	1
Sussex:	1
Union Central:	1
Union East:	0
Union West:	2
Warren:	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%
TOTAL	20 (100%)	

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%
May 2016*	3 (18%)	24%
July 2016*	7 (41%)	65%
December 2016*	6 (35%)	100%
TOTAL	17** (100%)	

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%
TOTAL	19** (100%)	

MCWEP Anticipated Graduation Dates – Cohort 4

Anticipated Graduation Date	# (%) of Students in Cohort 4 Graduating	% of Cohort 4 Graduated, by Date
July 2018	5 (31%)	31%
December 2018	11 (69%)	100%
TOTAL	15** (100%)	

MCWEP Anticipated Graduation Dates – Cohort 5

Anticipated Graduation Date	# (%) of Students in Cohort 4 Graduating	% of Cohort 4 Graduated, by Date
July 2019	8 (44%)	44%
December 2019	10 (56%)	100%
TOTAL	18** (100%)	

*Indicates students who have already graduated

**One or more student(s) 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 (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 2016-2017 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
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
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
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. 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
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
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
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
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



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
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86
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
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. 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
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
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
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
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
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
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



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 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 is administered to assess the meeting's effectiveness. Mean scores for each of the items were above 4.20 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 2016-2017 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, 2016 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to MCWEP mission/purpose/structure • Keynote Speaker – Allison Blake, Commissioner, New Jersey DCF • Recognition of MCWEP Graduates • “DCF Policy-Making Procedures” by Lamonte Sanders 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.6
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.6
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.4
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.5
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.7
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.4
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor	4.3
		8. The content of this learning community was helpful to me as an MSW student	4.5
October 21, 2016 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided discussion in Cohorts • “Understanding the Transitioning Client” by Cameron Mazzeo • Group/Student Presentations “MSW Curriculum Basics” • “Immigration and Child Welfare: Policy Review Panel” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.5
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.5
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.3
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.3
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.3
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.4
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.3
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.3

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 17, 2017 9:00am – 4:00pm Stockton University Galloway, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Discussion – “Lessons Learned and Goals for Next Semester” • “What’s the Difference Between Abuse and Neglect According to the Law?” by Clinton Page • “Making the Most of Your Field Experiences” • Myers-Briggs Personality Type Discussion 	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.	4.7
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.8
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.7
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.7
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.7
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.7
June 3, 2016 9:00am – 4:00pm Monmouth University West Long Branch, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity – “Write Me A Letter” • “National IV-E Landscape and Transfer of Learning” • Reports from Students Attending the NASW Conference • Team-Building Activity 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.4
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.7
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.2
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective	4.3
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.4
		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.	4.3



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	71
Sense of Community and Support	30
Linking MSW curriculum & Learning Community content to Child Welfare Practice	16
Development of Skills and Resources	13

Content/Material Covered

- The presentation on policy development was very interesting
- I enjoyed the presentation and believe it would be beneficial in the Local Offices
- The presentation by Clinton Page was extremely informative – could have been longer
- I found the Title IV-E presentation to be most informative
- Having more knowledge about transgender community and immigration
- Awesome presentations, great information we can use at work

Sense of Community and Support

- Networking with peers, and talking about what they are doing in their offices and their coursework
- Meeting other people who are going through the same program and can share their experiences
- Positive feedback and sense of community
- Getting together, being able to see others going through the same challenge
- I like sharing information within the cohort about progression over the past year
- Time to speak with other MCWEPs is always good to alleviate stress, share similar concerns
- The support I receive from my cohort is amazing



Further Information and Follow-up on Issues Addressed in the Learning Community

- I would like to see MCWEP students have a larger role in DCP&P policy and administration, the hopes of continuing and initiating change
- Trainings on specific case laws affecting DCP&P
- More activities on case practice issues
- More ways to incorporate learning over in the office; more leadership courses
- I would like more information on applying the trauma lens to my staff

Various Logistical Issues

- We should distribute a list of everyone’s phone number in the cohort
- Provide food
- Half day events, local events
- Shorter day
- Coffee, this was a very cloudy and rainy day

Suggestions/Preferences for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities Various Logistical Issues

- Continue to invite guest speakers to cover various topics related to their job functions
- Continue to bring speakers from DCF
- Perhaps an interactive activity in both morning and evening session

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

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Integrate/Apply Content to Practice	32
Share Content with Staff/Supervisees	28
Further Exploration or Research into Area of Content	5

Integrate/Apply Content to Practice

- Use information learned this semester in the larger work environment
- I am going to implement information learning from the presenter, the team building activity, and the personality test
- I will call the Policy Unit when I have a question—I didn’t know I could do that
- Try to promote policy changes through the creation of focus groups or work groups
- Improve my direct practice skills with my clients



- I will be more thoughtful when reviewing documentation
- I plan to integrate some of this information that I learned into my work and with staff
- Will be more cognizant of resources for LGBT clients
- I will be able to engage the transitioning client more effectively
- Utilize the immigration policy we learned about
- Continue to challenge the status quo, and utilize new techniques

Share Content with Staff/Supervisees

- Promote self-care for myself and my workers
- I will implement the self-care materials during my unit meetings
- Use team building activities with my unit
- I will be able to draft proposals on policies that need to be changed—this will empower me and my staff
- I will continue to share the information from the Learning Community with my staff
- Use the techniques outlined on how to effectively present information to my staff
- I will be able to provide my caseworkers/clients with information on transgendered population, health and services

Further Exploration or Research into Area of Content

- Stress management and self-care
- We could have some training on PTSD, STS, and compassion fatigue
- Give suggestions on integrating self-care

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

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Valuable Information	44
Direction for Future Practice	15
Hope, Encouragement, and Support	11
Tangible Skills	10



Valuable Information

- A better understanding of the differences between policy, procedure, and practice
- Information regarding policy writing
- The points highlighted by the presenter on elements needed to make an abuse/neglect finding—he provided clarity on areas of conflict
- Knowing my personality and how it impacts me as a supervisor and the legal information
- New developments and changes in the law
- Immigration and LGBTQ presentations were both very informative

Direction for Future Practice

- Incorporate a discussion with my workers about proximity
- More encouragement for my supervisees, and encouraging self-care
- I want to use the challenge activity at my staff meeting to promote teamwork
- Engage my supervisees to be more culturally competent
- I would like to share info from the presentation with my staff
- Use an icebreaker activity and personality test to help with unit engagement

Hope, Encouragement, and Support

- Positive thoughts, and encouragement from MCWEP staff
- That I am not alone, my peers are experiencing the same challenges and changes
- A sense of encouragement—I can do this program!
- Knowing I'm not the only one who is...stressed, overwhelmed, nervous, excited

Tangible skills

- I can advocate for DCF Policy regarding Trauma-focused practice
- How to contact the policy unit and that they will take any call



Summary of Student Feedback

In sum, students indicated that they value and benefit from all the information and materials disseminated in the Learning Community. This reflects the significant time and effort that MCWEP faculty 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 guest speakers, time to connect with agency leadership 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 2017-2018 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	28
Knowledge/Academic Enhancement	17
Program Design and Structure	11
Learning Community Meetings	6

Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff

- The supportive environment of staff and students. As someone who was returning to school, I didn’t know a lot of things and needed extra support. MCWEP provided a safety net for me.
- Supportive people around you, including Dawn and Joe. I love having met leaders from other offices who have the same outlook towards their work. I now have definite contacts in at least six other offices for supportive leadership information.
- The strengths of MCWEP is building lasting friendships and supports, along with guidance by our leaders Joe and Dawn:)
- The support of MCWEP has made the process more manageable. Often time at this agency these educational programs are not supported by Local Office Managers and Leadership staff. Through MCWEP, students are better supported and advocated for. The team also offers guidance throughout the program especially when the student is trying to juggle the work load of both school and DCP&P.



- I believe that the support of the staff is absolutely instrumental. It keeps the students focused and motivated when frustrations and concerns arise.
- The individuals involved are a part of ensuring the MCWEP program runs smoothly. Joe and Dawn are extremely supportive and always willing to help resolve an issue or find an answer.
- The one thing I find to be beneficial for this program is the connection you make with our supervisors and CWS, going through this process with others in the same field of work. You can share ideas and express your frustrations with the group and they will understand you and provide you with helpful tips to make it work.
- Allows for a community of people to share and provide feedback to those just coming in while also helping as you go through the program. It is a supportive community. I was recently on medical leave, and there was no hesitation in making the leave from school happen quickly and smoothly. The support from the program leaders is exceptional.

Knowledge/Academic Enhancement

- It provides Supervisors with hands on skills with immediate practical application for their supervisees. It educates Supervisors with Social Work skills, and provides a thorough foundation knowledge base. It allows Supervisors to think outside the box, and understand social work, cultural competencies, and other issues from a global perspective.
- Fostering insight and education to make us better supervisors, which will impact the families served under DCP, by providing our supervisees with stellar supervision.
- I have been exposed to larger systematic issues that affect our community, state, country and globally. I was not aware of what is happening on a Macro level, and now I have been enlightened.
- MCWEP provides a class on trauma, which has been the most informative and job-specific class I have taken to date. The child welfare leadership class also provides information and helpful models for working effectively with the unit.
- Giving employees the opportunity at DP&P to learn about social justice and marginalized groups enhances a supervisor's knowledge and allows for more in depth supervision.
- Learning becomes very interdisciplinary as peers can address and discuss case practice issues from differing perspectives. Curriculum is sharply tailored to the needs of DCF staff. Enhanced understanding of the various aspect of social work including direct client contact as well as administrative functions.

Program Design and Structure

- Another strength of the program is the educational leave granted to attend class. I could not imagine attending a Master's program after work or on-line.
- I do not feel I would have been able to complete my masters without the support of MCWEP. Having the protected time to complete my field placement and courses was a big help as I am also a mother and wife.
- MCWEP allows Division supervisors to work towards a master's degree while maintaining full time employment, which is a strength as the demands of the job are considered in the design of the program.
- MCWEP obviously takes away the financial hardships of paying for a master's degree, as I had planned on getting my MSW at some point in my career. I am thankful for this, but also thankful that I am in a program which is designed specifically for child welfare supervisors and is working towards enhancing and improving the child welfare workforce.

Learning Community Meetings

- I also learned a lot during the Learning Communities and feel as though it has enhanced/developed me into a better leader/supervisor.
- The program coordinators and professors who are involved are the heart of the program. Their professionalism and clear passion for the work that they do are inspiring. I feel comfortable in asking questions as they want all of us to be successful.
- I also believe that the Learning Communities are a strength as they allow the students to network, as well as build strong, supportive relationships with others going through the same educational process. Additionally, it is a great way to share information with students quickly, related to social work and DCP.



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

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective	23
Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning, Especially Through Learning Community	15
The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses	14
Prepared, but Frustrated with Lack of Opportunities to Put New Knowledge and Skills into Practice	4

MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective

- The coursework that I have taken so far...has helped with teaming with families as the focus turns to the environment as opposed to just the individual.
- I think differently, process differently, and view the whole world, and life different. I feel that am ready for an administrative DCPD position at the executive level. I also feel I am ready to enact legislation in the field of Child Welfare.
- It has allowed for creative thinking to occur to handle the complexity of the work. Through MCWEP and my MSW coursework, I look to decision-making that will better assist children and families long term and not just a quick fix.
- As a supervisor I have learned how to address workers in a different way. I am more competent in the strength based model, I have a greater understanding of trauma and look at the families through a different lens. I have become more empathic to the families and situations that they are in. I look at things from a larger perspective, I ask more detailed questions and provoke the workers to look beyond the immediate.
- I believe it directly correlates with what we do on the job and plays in an important role in how we work and deal with our families. In the MCWEP program, you are looking at child welfare cases through a whole new lens and asking others to do the same.
- Since being in this program my entire perspective of how a family is impacted by their environment, social status, income, substance abuse, etc. has changed. I am a better supervisor because of this insight and growth, and able to share that with my supervisees. I help them see things through a different lens and perspective, and challenge them to see the strengths and help the family identify solutions.

Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning, Especially Through Learning Community

- The material translates immediately into our daily work. The knowledge that we are gaining is immediately bettering the lives of the families that we are working with.
- I think the Learning Communities are a great change to vent and get together with colleagues who are experiencing the same challenges and successes, and the presentations have been very informative. I am always trying to bring what I am learning back to the unit, therefore hopefully making changes not only through my supervision, but also through my workers and the work they will continue to do throughout their journey with the Division.
- I am transferring what I am learning in my classes (especially Trauma class) and using it during worker/supervisor conferences and Back 2 Basics sessions. My staff is benefiting from what I am learning.



- I believe that the coursework and Learning Community meetings provide me with an abundance of information that allows me to better assess cases as well as to provide more efficient leadership to staff.
- I feel a tremendous impact in regards to how I have changed my thought process and ensure I am more engaged with the development and training of the new staff coming in. I have taken a page from many of the books and articles I have read about social work theories to apply them
- Many times, I am able to share the information learned through classes and the MCWEP Learning Communities, which greatly benefits my staff and I, and in turn, the children and families that we work with.

The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses

- In all honesty, the two MCWEP electives were very useful and helpful in my supervisory role. I feel that all supervisors should be taking these two courses as it will give them a different perspective on how to interact with their staff.
- Trauma in child welfare has been an incredibly enlightening class. I am now looking at things in a totally different perspective.
- Both Electives (Trauma and Leadership) are helping shape the work that we do and the supervisors that we are.
- I was able to engage more, encourage my workers to be more informative, supportive and attempted to use some skills that I learned from the leadership class. In regards to the trauma, I was able to view investigations and refer families to more trauma informed services.

Prepared, but Frustrated with Lack of Opportunities to Put New Knowledge and Skills into Practice

- Typically, our agency has a tendency of being punitive and although I never considered myself to be this way, many of my co-workers continue to practice this way which negatively impacts their interaction with their staff. Whenever, I try to offer different options they are not very open minded and still focus on the cover your behind mentality, instead of finding other ways to assist their workers in improving their skills.
- Due to MCWEP, I want to impact social work at the macro level. This is because I feel DCPD cannot offer me a position that can contain the skill base I have mastered at MCWEP. I need to look beyond to do greater and better things.
- Although I have attempted to implement a change in thinking and accessing for my colleagues and investigators, change is difficult.

Is there anything about MCWEP you would like to change?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Learning Community and Elective Issues	15
Feeling Overwhelmed/Stressed Due to Workload and Lack of Local Office Support	10
Field Placement Hours and Restrictions	9
Various Logistical/Structural Issues	6



Learning Community and Elective Issues

- I believe that the Learning Communities were long and would have liked to see them shortened or lessened in frequency. The reason I say this is because we are already out of the office for field and our classes and at times having this to attend brought stress especially when I felt very behind in my office work.
- Trauma and Policy for Stockton should not be offered together. Both classes are phenomenal. I feel there would be more benefit to offering them separately due to the amount of information provided.
- There should not be any assignments when Learning Communities are missed. Honestly, we work hard and have plenty to do. It's a bit frustrating and extremely inconsiderate to create random assignments when we as students are already working very hard to complete this course.
- The Learning Communities should only be a 1/2 day of educational training or maybe start at 9:30 am or 10 am and end at 3:30 pm. Also, it would be better if they were not on a Friday.
- I find that the summer experience has been difficult to maintain a focus and it is extremely long.
- I would strongly recommend not requiring staff to take both Policy and Trauma classes during the same semester. Students are not able to possibly read all that is assigned in these two classes and therefore are not receiving the true benefits of these classes. Towards the end, student are no longer striving to do their best but just to get the work done. No one is learning from the demands of these two classes being held together, and this should change.

Feeling Overwhelmed/Stressed Due to Workload and Lack of Local Office Support

- Time out of the office is hard. Our work is just piling up and it adds to the stressors of an already difficult job. It is hard to implement key learned information in a rushed and stressful arena.
- Although I hate to identify an issue without identifying a solution, the amount of pressure MCWEP students feel to obtain the required internship hours while trying to keep up with work and hope you don't miss anything and get disciplined or something like that, is immense. It is really hard to manage the stress. The workload isn't lessened at the local office and you feel the resentment from the local office staff and management when you hint you are having trouble keeping up.
- Should be better support at the local offices. Some managers don't provide support at all.
- There should be much more push on the local offices so they become more accommodating. We are still responsible for the same amount of work as other supervisors that are not in school or internship.
- It's impossible to produce quality of work and handle high caseloads when we in the office only two and a half days a week.

Field Placement Hours and Restrictions

- Yes, allowing supervisors to accept field placements in their towns so it will help them with their own personal responsibilities.
- The hardest part so far is the internship. I don't think that the "amount" of time in internship and out of the office equates to the effect we imagine it is having on us.
- The amount of hours required for internships. This should be reduced to an amount that allows Division supervisors to gain experience in other agencies, but also allows the supervisor to remain in the office for a majority of the week. Division supervisors are not leaving to gain employment in these agencies, therefore the amount of time spent in the internships should be reduced.
- Yes- field has been the largest challenge. There has to be a better way. We should be able to remain in county, in our office even. We have interns in the office, but we cannot be one. I understand that you get a richer experience at another agency, which I did and love. But TIME is of the essence and we do not have enough.



- I think there should be more opportunities for field placements. I understand that the purpose of MCWEP is to mold us into better DCP&P workers and for us to help improve the agency, but I feel that even allowing us to be placed in field placements that aren't directly contracted or directly utilized by or referred to with DCP&P, doesn't mean they can't provide an advantage to the agency.

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	34
Yes, but Expressing Frustration/Reservation Due to Perceived Barriers/Lack of Opportunity	5
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. However, some students expressed that while they felt prepared, they expressed frustration and worry that they might not be given the opportunity to put their new knowledge, skills, and perspective to use at DCP&P. 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, and why they might feel some reservation or frustration. Samples of their responses are given below:

- I believe that I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of DCP&P. DCP&P has been in transformation for the last 10 years; and a lot of the change has been difficult due to the way of thinking for seasoned DCP&P employees that are not moving forward with the change. It is important for the MCWEP graduates to continue to implement change within their unit, first and hopefully, the office.
- I do feel that I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey’s public child welfare system. The Division has been incorporating more social work concepts into their policy and procedures. Therefore, it is imperative that leadership is aware of the foundation of these concepts in order to truly assist in the implementation of the concepts.
- Yes- I have learned a tremendous amount of information about macro-level systematic issues. I would love to be able to make the changes needed to support the children and families we serve. Unfortunately, my position will only allow me to impact my unit and office if my LOM is in agreement.
- I am motivated to be a part of the changes needed and being implemented for the betterment of the families and children we serve. You cannot obtain an MSW and not want to be a part of the transformation of New Jersey’s Public Child Welfare System...be the change you want to see in the world!
- While we have so many ideas and have done so much research, leadership does not ask for our input. While I will use the MSW, I have realized that DCP&P does not view us in that aspect and my ideas/thoughts are not useful for DCP&P. I have informed leaders at DCP&P of my research and classes, and yet my statements have been overlooked. We had a meeting with the Policy Unit—but what ever came of that? It’s almost as if they want DCP&P employees to have their MSW but remain stagnant in their positions and practice in local offices. This is why some in the MCWEP program are looking to outside ventures. DCP&P seems to have doors closed for MCWEP students.
- I do not think MCWEPers are used in surveys or opinions related to the welfare system reform. I do believe we are a valuable source of information and ideas, as we are still involved in the heart of the welfare system. Supervisors are still connected to the community and families, we are aware of the flaws, the services that can be increased, what is needed, and what new trends are forming in the different counties.



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. In addition, students report that the field placement experience, while difficult, was very enlightening and beneficial. 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 other areas where the program could be strengthened. This year's feedback included a pattern of concern from students about whether they would have the opportunity to use their new knowledge and skills to maximize their impact on the continuing transformation of New Jersey's public child welfare system. They also discussed some of the difficulties they experience because of some local office managers and other area administrators who do not fully support their MCWEP involvement, despite the endorsement and support of the commissioner. Students also discussed the need to have the MCWEP elective courses structured differently, as the quick pace of the summer session felt stressful to students and precluded them from retaining some of the material. Finally, students requested a number of 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 2015-2016 MCWEP Annual Report, three recommendations were made in order to improve students' experiences. The first recommendation evolved from students' comments in multiple evaluations that they desired the modality of the summer elective courses exclusive to MCWEP, (Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision) to have a more traditional format, with minimal virtual online content. Significant progress was made during the 2016-2017 year in modifying these courses for our students' benefit. The Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice course was modified to a traditional 12-week course with only 4 of the sessions being offered in an online format. The Leadership and Supervision course was also modified to expand the in-person face-to-face content to 4 sessions, as opposed to 3 the previous year. Feedback from students indicated that they are gaining skills from both of these courses that they feel are contributing them to being impactful supervisors. They indicate that the courses have led them (and by extension, their supervisees) to a deeper understanding of the children and families they serve.

The second recommendation from the 2015-16 report related to difficulty integrating field placement experiences with their responsibilities as supervisors for DCP&P. It was suggested that MCWEP staff conduct an anonymous survey of students to catalog their experiences with field placement hours, release time and office duty expectations. The results from the survey might then be used to revise MCWEP field placement policies, as well as local office expectations and understanding of program requirements. This survey has not been conducted yet, but will be integrated into the end of year assessment given to all MCWEP students at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Results and recommendations will be included in next year's program report.

The final recommendation from the 2015-2016 report was based on feedback from students on the Learning Community. Significant progress was made on this recommendation in the past year. Students requested that content in the Learning Communities be related to practice skills and utilize strong guest speakers. We pursued these exact changes over the past year in the Learning Community, and student feedback confirms that they appreciate this. Students also report enjoying and benefitting from a newly introduced module that focuses on team-building skills, as well as the addition of three new guest speakers and having MCWEP students present to the larger group based upon extracurricular learning workshops and conferences they attended.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2017-2018 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 2016-2017, 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, the national, evidence-based model employing the Core Concepts in Childhood Trauma (CCCT) 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 fiscal year 2017-2018:

1. Over the past few years, students have indicated in their comments a desire for change in the modality of the summer elective courses exclusive to MCWEP, (Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision). Anecdotal feedback from this year's group has continued to reinforce this trend: students desire that these classes be delivered in a more traditional format, with minimal virtual, synchronous, or online content. The professors who teach these courses have also expressed that this change in modality would be beneficial from an andragogical perspective. Therefore, during the 2017-2018 academic year, it is our goal to adapt and deliver both MCWEP elective courses in a 12-week traditional face-to-face format. At this time, only self-efficacy evaluations are used for these courses. Therefore, we also recommend investigating ways to enhance our approach to evaluation during the upcoming year.
2. Students continue to express concern over balancing field placement hours and their work responsibilities. Most students note that while they are granted academic leave time, they are not granted relief from responsibilities, and are still juggling their full time work load, simply in fewer hours each week. Students suggested that the required field placement hours be reduced because of their work experience; however, field placement hours are part of an accreditation standard that is not negotiable for MSW programs. Student concerns in this area merit continued MCWEP staff investigation and exploration of potential sources of relief. Last year's recommendation that MCWEP conduct an anonymous survey of students, in which they describe the structure of their field placement hours, academic release time, and office duty expectations, will be conducted this year. As noted above, this survey has not conducted yet, but will be integrated into the end of year assessment given to all MCWEP students at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Results and recommendations will be included in next year's program report. The MCWEP Consortium, including DCP&P leadership, will explore ways to help relieve and support students in whatever way possible.
3. Third, students consistently offer ideas and requests for specific Learning Community content. Each academic year, the MCWEP faculty continue to develop content to interest and benefit four cohorts of students simultaneously, over four years. In addition, we have developed a cadre of speakers who represent a diverse set of expertise, approaches, and child welfare content. The third recommendation for the 2017-2018 academic year repeats last year's suggestion: that we formalize a curriculum map of our Learning Community modules that can be repeated in sequence every four years, creating a consistent and sustainable plan. It is important to formalize this learning community curriculum to ensure that we are meeting the original Learning Community objectives. The curriculum will be flexible so that current issues can be addressed.
4. Finally, there was a small but significant pattern of feedback from students this year suggesting that they are looking for more opportunities to put their newly gained knowledge and skills to work for DCP&P. Some expressed frustration with pushback they have received in their offices, while others simply noted that their current positions do not allow them to fully utilize what they have learned. We continue to emphasize to students that the program is designed to make them more effective in their current supervisory roles, and student feedback suggests this is happening. A subset of MCWEP graduates, however, are seeking even more opportunities to help serve the public child welfare system. This is both an opportunity and a threat for MCWEP. At least one student cited this issue as a reason that some MCWEP participants might consider leaving employment with DCP&P. However, if the program fully embraces this desire of our students, it could strengthen the program and its legacy in multiple ways. Thus, it is proposed that the partnership between MCWEP and the DCF Policy Unit (utilizing MCWEP graduates to evaluate and revise DCF policies) be encouraged, revitalized, and expanded as much as possible. We also recommend 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.

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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