

# Child Welfare Education and Research Programs



Over 86 Years of Child Welfare Leadership!

## 2023-2024 Annual Report

School of Social Work

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University of Pittsburgh

**Child Welfare Education and Research Programs**  
**Annual Report**  
of the  
**Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program (CWEB)**  
and the  
**Child Welfare Education for Leadership Program (CWEL)**  
**July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024**

The Child Welfare Education and Research Programs are a collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators.

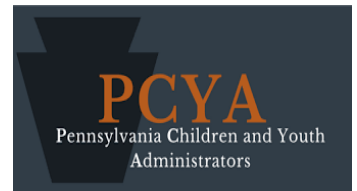


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## **Greetings**

### **From the Dean**

The School of Social Work has a longstanding commitment to children, youth, and families and to the professional development of the child welfare workforce. We recognize that the core of child welfare work involves protecting children, as well as providing support to families and communities, and that a social work education is the best preparation for the complexity of the job. We highlight our ongoing efforts to enhance the public child welfare workforce through professional social work education in each annual report of the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and the Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) programs. This edition describes the work of the twenty-third year of the CWEB program and twenty-nine years of the CWEL program. This sustained commitment by the Department of Human Services and the University assures that Pennsylvania remains a national leader in child welfare education, training, organizational development, and practice improvement.

We thank the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators for their steadfast support and partnership in public child welfare workforce development. Our work together remains critical to preparing social work professionals to meet the challenges of our economic, social, and political landscape.

Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, Ph.D.  
Dean, School of Social Work

### **From the Principal Investigator**

We are proud of the achievements of the CWEB and CWEL programs and the contributions we make to the public child welfare system in Pennsylvania through workforce development, best practice, and continuous quality improvement. We have witnessed tremendous accomplishments by our child welfare workforce and have deep appreciation for their service on behalf of children, families, and communities. We recognize the persistent challenges met by children and families related to their physical, psychological, economic, and social well-being, and strive to support a child welfare workforce that is well-prepared to address these complex needs. We acknowledge that long-standing issues of racial inequity, systemic racism, and oppression require our sustained focus and commitment as we work toward building an antiracist child welfare system. A competent, well-supported workforce is vital to this mission.

At present, one thousand three hundred and ninety-seven (1,397) CWEB students have entered the county agency system and one thousand seven hundred and forty-three (1,743) students have graduated from the CWEL program. During the current academic year, approximately 171 CWEB and CWEL participants are engaged in social work studies. It is to Pennsylvania's credit and the University of Pittsburgh's leadership that a pathway of professional education has been available to our public child welfare workforce and sustained for over a quarter of a century. We extend sincere thanks to our partnering schools, the county child welfare agencies, and the Office of Children, Youth and Families for their continued dedication to workforce development. Together, we continue to prepare and support exemplary child welfare professionals who perform demanding, fulfilling, and essential work.

Helen Cahalane, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW  
Principal Investigator

## Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates

And

## Child Welfare Education for Leadership

### **Mission and Goals**

#### Our Mission

The Child Welfare Education and Research continuum includes two distinct degree education programs, Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL). Administered by the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, the mission of these programs is to strengthen child welfare services to Title IV-E eligible children and families in Pennsylvania by increasing the number of educated professionals and equipping them to deal with the increasingly complex demands of public child welfare practice.

#### Our Goals

- Addressing the vacancy and turnover rates among public child welfare employees and the recruitment and retention challenges in the Pennsylvania child welfare workforce;
- Recruiting undergraduate students throughout widely dispersed locations to prepare persons for public child welfare employment;
- Assisting in the retention of public child welfare staff already serving Title IV-E eligible children and families by making graduate education with a focus on child welfare studies more readily available;
- Providing academic and curricular support for child welfare studies to university programs;
- Providing a career ladder within public child welfare and assisting in the long-term career development of child welfare professionals;
- Engaging in efforts to promote the development of knowledge and skills in evidenced-based practice for child welfare professionals;
- Conducting research and evaluation focused on evidence-based child welfare practice and the impact of social work education; and
- Advocating for practice improvement within the child welfare system through education, ongoing training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, organizational development, and support provided by competent, committed, and confident child welfare professionals.

## **Introduction**

Recruitment and retention of public child welfare personnel has been recognized as a problem not only in Pennsylvania, but nationwide for more than two decades. National studies have concluded that “insufficient training” is among the factors contributing to the difficulties in retaining child welfare personnel. Research findings document that professional education is one of the strategies within a comprehensive, system-wide set of interventions that can reduce turnover, improve services, enhance staff morale, and reduce costs.

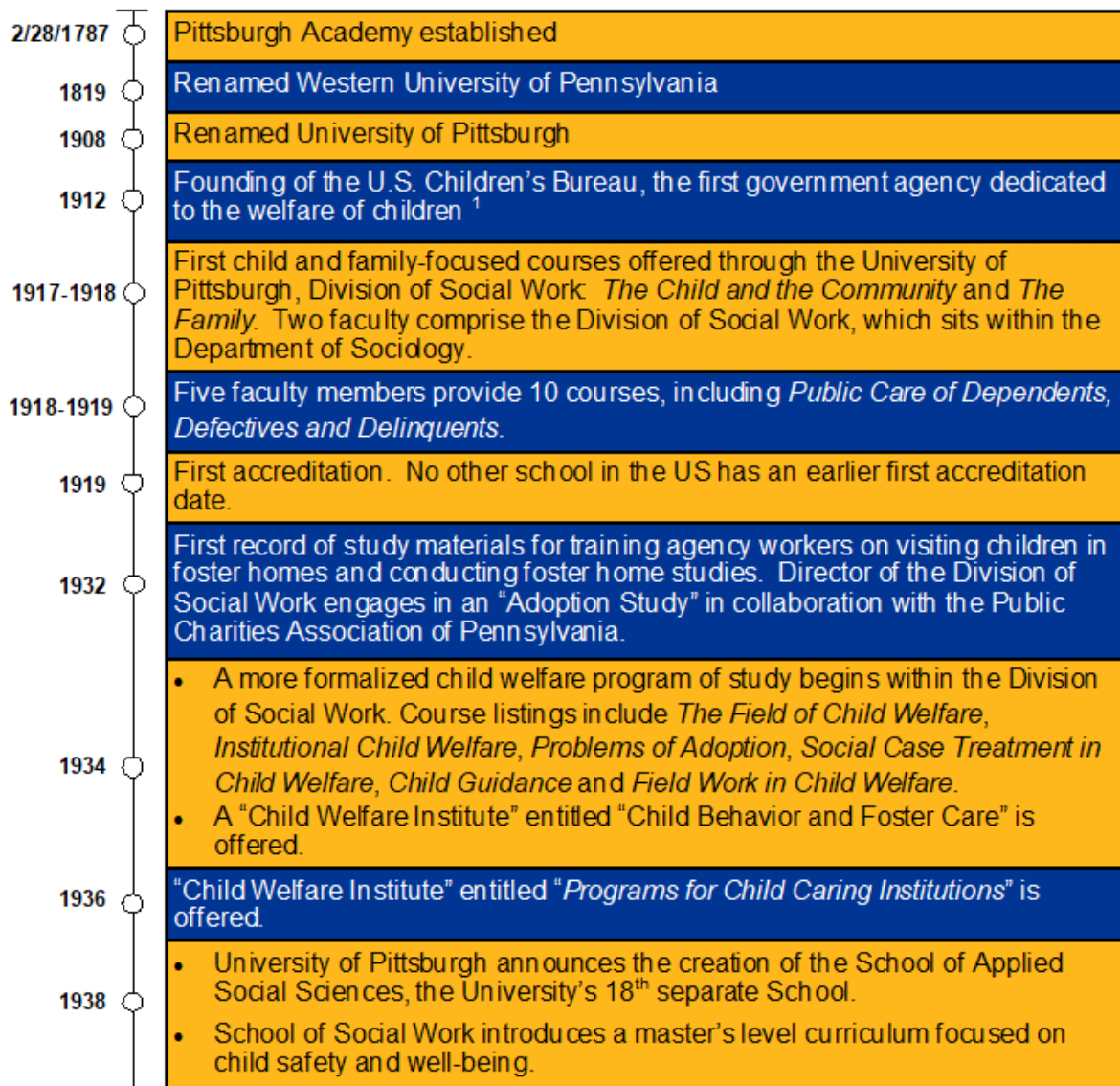
This report marks the completion of the twenty-third (23<sup>rd</sup>) full academic year of operation for the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program and twenty-ninth (29<sup>th</sup>) full academic year of operation for the Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) program in Pennsylvania. Both have become remarkably integrated into the fabric of public child welfare throughout the state, with 99% of counties in the Commonwealth participating in CWEB and CWEL (for CWEB county participation see [Appendix F](#), for CWEL county participation see [Appendix H](#), Chart 2). CWEB and CWEL continue to demonstrate their effectiveness in addressing the significant issue of preparatory and advanced education for the child welfare workforce by providing CWEB graduates and returning CWEL graduates to over 3,754 caseworker positions in Pennsylvania’s county child welfare agencies. Currently, CWEB/CWEL graduates or currently enrolled CWEL students occupy over 23% of the state’s public child welfare casework positions. CWEB and CWEL graduates and current CWEL students are also in leadership positions across the Commonwealth.

The need for both the baccalaureate and graduate-level child welfare education programs is described and their basic designs are included in Pennsylvania’s federally approved Title IV-B plan. Federal financial participation is based upon federal Title IV-E regulations contained in 45 CFR, Ch. II, Part 235 and Ch. XIII, Parts 1355 and 1356.



## **Background**

Child welfare has been a vital component for social work practice at the University of Pittsburgh since as early as 1917. The following timeline provides an historical overview of key events in the University’s legacy of child welfare education and training.



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Children’s Bureau, *The story of the Children’s Bureau* [https://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/sites/all/themes/danland/danblog/files/Story\\_of\\_CB.pdf](https://cb100.acf.hhs.gov/sites/all/themes/danland/danblog/files/Story_of_CB.pdf)

1938-1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The School of Social Work continues classroom courses and practicum placements related to children, child welfare and child development.</li> <li>• One of the first multidisciplinary teams focused on child protection is established at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh in the late 1950s-early 1960s, with which the School of Social Work is closely affiliated</li> <li>• University of Pittsburgh becomes part of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education in 1966<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
1971	School of Social Work receives the first of an uninterrupted number of federal, state and foundation child welfare training grants that continues to the present.
1972	Children and Youth Concentration is introduced at the master’s level and becomes a curriculum model adopted by other schools of social work across the country.
1986	Three-year grant received from the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect to establish the Interdisciplinary Child Abuse and Neglect training program.
1991	Five-year competency-based, interdisciplinary training grant received from the United States Children’s Bureau to advance the Title IV-B interdisciplinary agenda of building a child welfare curriculum, enhancing school/agency partnerships, and providing training at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty members from Child Development and Child Care, Nursing, Medicine, Law, Psychology, Public Health, and Social Work participate as a team.
1992	Title IV-E pilot projects initiated with several Western PA counties to assist in developing a Title IV-E training model to address child welfare workforce issues and shape the School’s curriculum.
1995	The Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) program is established to provide long-term educational opportunities for public child welfare employees in PA
1998	Funding received from the United States Children’s Bureau for a two-year project designed to demonstrate the efficacy of developing a state-wide opportunity for potential child welfare employees (“persons preparing for employment” in the federal Title IV-E regulations).
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program initiated to provide child welfare education and training to persons preparing for a child welfare career.</li> <li>• School of Social Work assumes leadership and administrative responsibility for Pennsylvania’s Child Welfare Training Program providing pre-service and in-service training to all public child welfare employees and many private agencies.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> 1966, Special Sess. No. 3, July 28, P.L. 87, § 2. 24 P.S. § 2510-202, PA ST 24 P.S. § 2510-202. Current through 2015 Regular Session Acts 1 to 70

2003	Pennsylvania's child welfare training and education model acknowledged as being "...the most comprehensive, integrated and sophisticated program seen to date" by the Administration for Children and Families.
2004	Pennsylvania's child welfare education and training programs described as an outstanding model for other states to emulate by the Administration for Children and Families.
2005	Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program receives the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) Quality Award.
2006	CWEL program graduates its 500 <sup>th</sup> MSW recipient
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School of Social Work receives its 110<sup>th</sup> grant of external funding since 1971, expressly for child welfare education training, research, faculty development and curriculum development.</li> <li>CWEB, CWEL and the PA Child Welfare Training Program (CWTP) highlighted as one of Pennsylvania's key strengths during the second round of the CFSR.</li> <li>CWEB program graduates its 500<sup>th</sup> BSW/BASW recipient</li> </ul>
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pennsylvania begins a two-year effort to improve the Commonwealth's child protection laws. First meeting of the PA Task Force on Child Protection ["Task Force"] held in January <sup>3</sup>. Testimony provided to the Task Force by University child welfare faculty in May <sup>4</sup>.</li> <li>The PA Child Welfare Training Program receives the Academic Excellence Award from the American Public Human Services Association.</li> <li>CWEL graduates its 1000<sup>th</sup> MSW recipient.</li> <li>CWEL PI receives the NSDTA Career Achievement Award.</li> <li>PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) officially changes its name.</li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CWELP continuum highlighted in NASW publication highlighting the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Children's Bureau<sup>5</sup>.</li> <li>Governor Tom Corbett signs 10 child protection bills into law, the first pieces of a comprehensive legislative package for PA's children and following the recommendations of the Task Force. Signing event held at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center<sup>6</sup>.</li> </ul>
2014	On-line course, <i>Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania</i> , publicly released by the Child Welfare Resource Center ( <a href="http://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu">www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu</a> )
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development series, <i>Trauma-Informed Principled Leadership</i>, initiated with Bloomsburg University and University of Pittsburgh CWEB students.</li> <li>CWEB program graduates its 1000th BSW/BASW recipient</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup>January 26, 2012

<sup>4</sup>May 31, 2012

<sup>5</sup>Zlotnik, J.L. (2013). University-agency partnerships to advance child welfare. In K. Briar-Lawson, M. McCarthy & N. Dickinson (Eds.), *The Children's Bureau: Shaping a century of child welfare practices, programs and policies* (pp. 275-292). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

<sup>6</sup>December 18, 2013



<sup>7</sup> P.L. 115-123



**Program Descriptions**

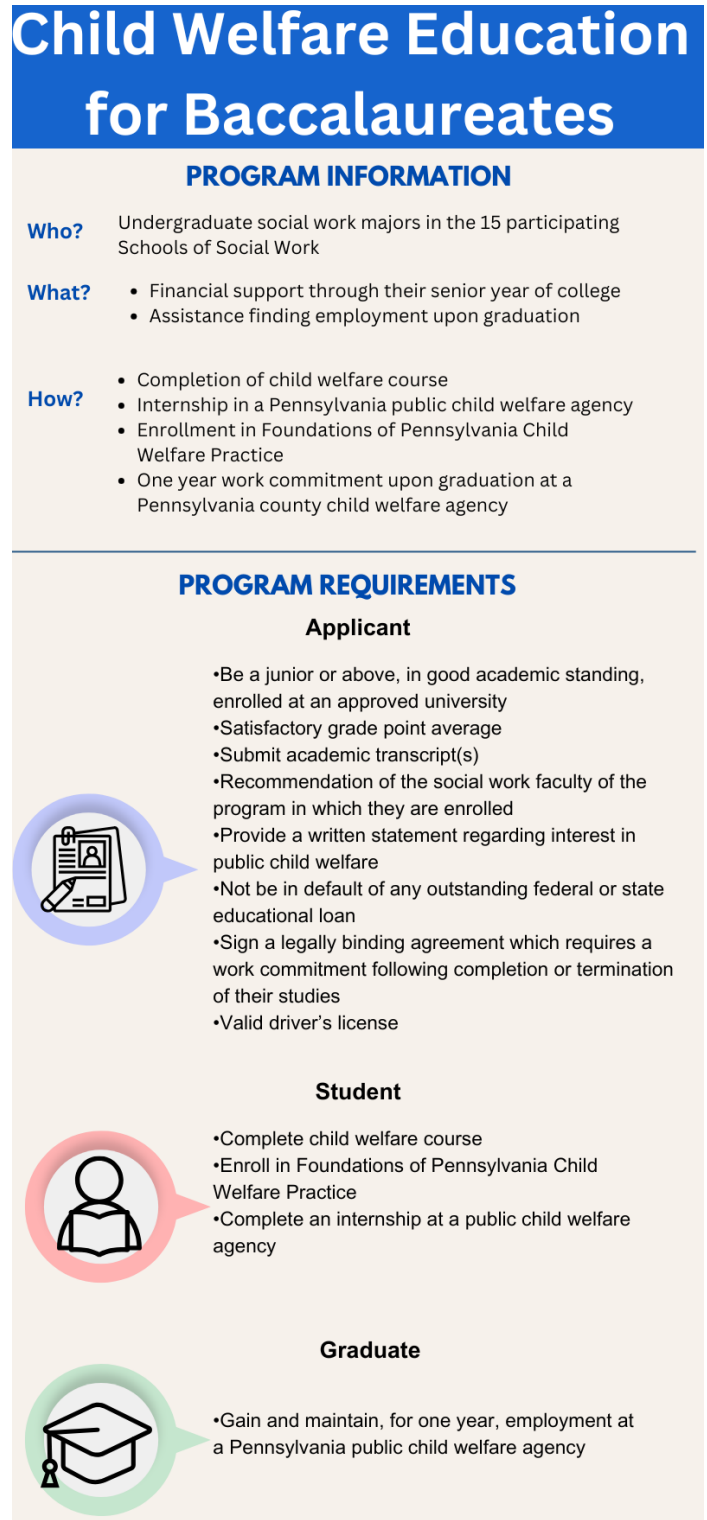
***Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program (CWEB)***

Designed to recruit and prepare students for a career in public child welfare, the CWEB program is offered to undergraduates at 15 schools throughout Pennsylvania.<sup>8</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the program requirements.

CWEB admissions, in general, have been comprised of white, female students. In the past four years, male students in the CWEB program range between 7 and 9% and are predominately white.

To date, 1,397 students have graduated from CWEB; graduates have completed internships and obtained employment in 95% of Pennsylvania counties. Students nearing graduation receive assistance with their employment search. County child welfare agencies benefit immensely from the program because it addresses a critical child welfare workforce need by providing skilled, entry-level social

**Figure 1. Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Requirements**



<sup>8</sup> The planning process to include an additional 7 undergraduate school partners in the CWEB consortium occurred throughout the 2023-2024 academic year. Final approval granted on July 11, 2024.

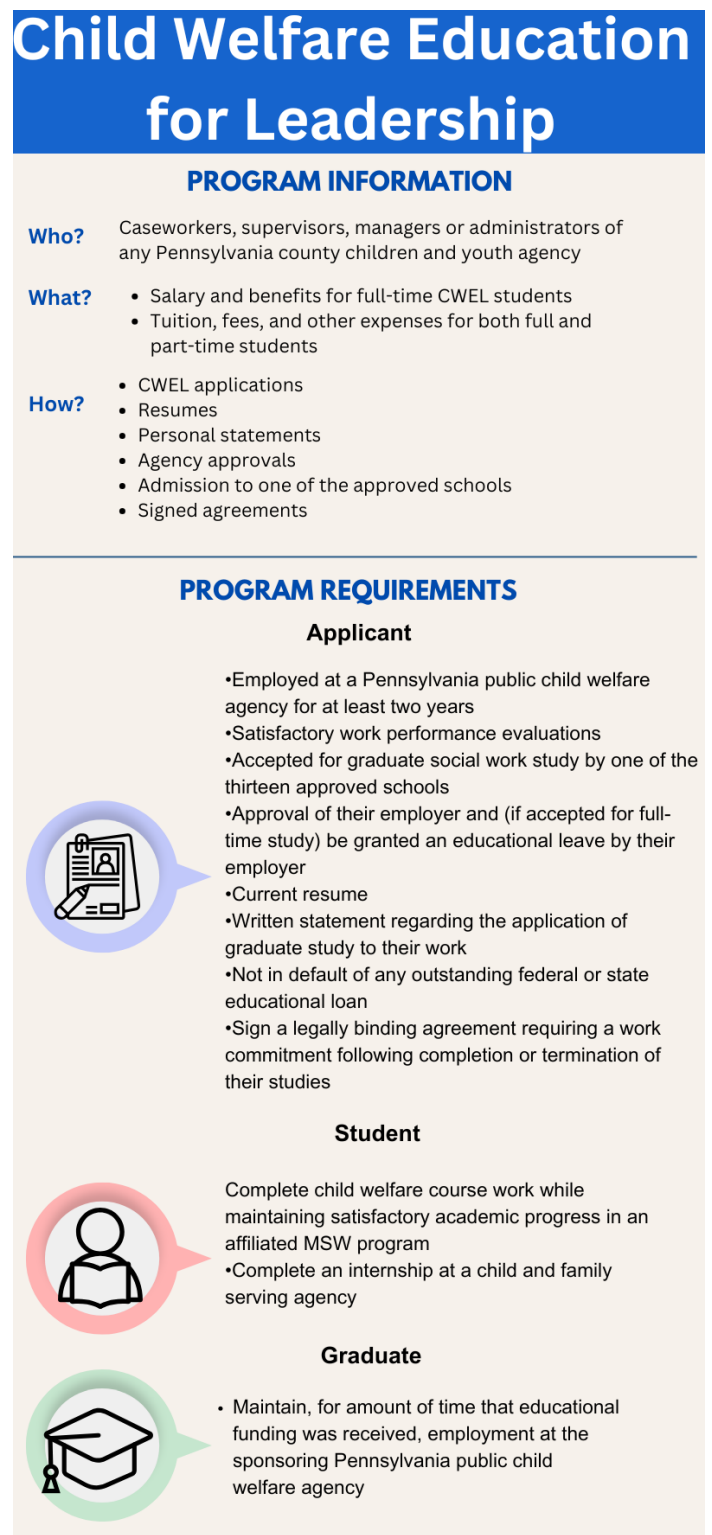
workers who come to child welfare with academic knowledge and exposure to front line child welfare practice gained through their internship experiences and *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice* training.

### **Child Welfare Education for Leadership Program (CWEL)**

The CWEL program provides substantial financial support for graduate-level social work education. Any Pennsylvania county children and youth agency employee is eligible to apply to participate in the CWEL program. See Figure 2 for CWEL program requirements.

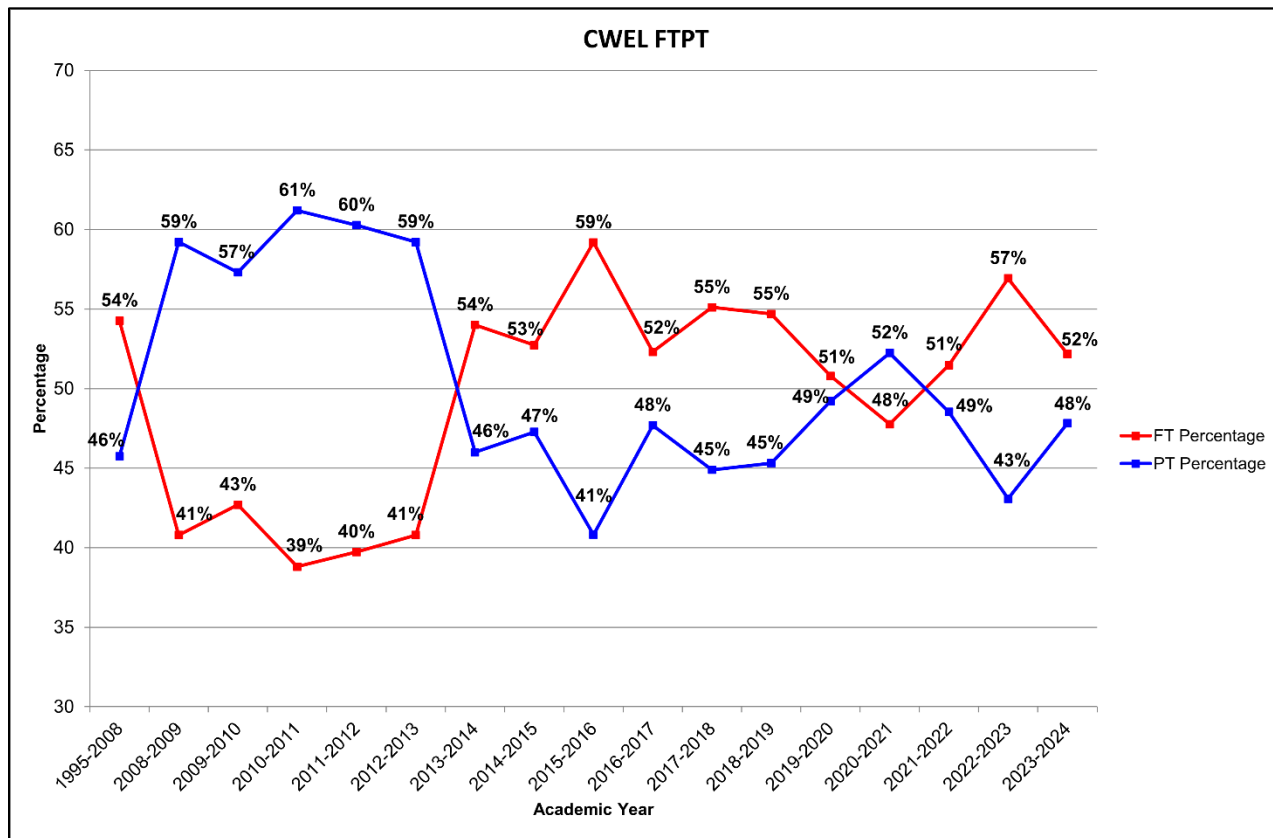
Since its inception, CWEL has funded students from 64 counties and 13 Pennsylvania schools on both a full- and part-time basis. CWEL admissions consist primarily of white females. Over the past four years, male CWEL admissions ranged from 7-10% and were also predominately white. Figure 3 displays the trend of part-time and full-time admissions.

**Figure 2. Child Welfare Education for Leadership Requirements**



Currently, 19% of the Pennsylvania child welfare workforce consists of a CWEL graduate or a current CWEL student. Highlighting the career ladder for public child welfare employees, approximately 17% of CWEB graduates have entered the CWEL

**Figure 3. Admissions to CWEL by Enrollment Status**



program thus far. CWEB alumni made up 9% of the CWEL student enrollment during the 2023-2024 program year.

Since CWEL’s inception, 1,743 child welfare professionals have earned graduate social work degrees. The program has annual retention rates averaging 92%.

**Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare and CWEB/CWEL Enrollment**

We are committed to understanding and addressing issues of racial equity and social justice, especially as it relates to the child welfare system. Given the long-standing impact of racism and societal injustice in the lives of black and brown persons

it is crucial to dismantle the ways in which race is intertwined in all levels of child welfare services. We also acknowledge the societal context of racism and white privilege that is part of the foundational history of the United States child welfare system.

It is well known that children of color are overrepresented in the United States child welfare system<sup>9</sup>. In 2022, African American children made up approximately 14% of the U.S. child population but represented 23% of the foster care population<sup>10,11</sup>. Disproportionate representation is striking across all levels of child welfare services and is particularly evident in substitute care. According to a 2023 report by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, there were 19,287 Pennsylvania children served in the foster care system in 2022<sup>12</sup>. This number represents a decrease of more than 1,200 children from 2021 and the lowest rate in the last five years. Children who are Black, Hispanic (of any race) and of multiple races had higher than expected CPS referrals including substantiated reports of abuse and neglect as well as valid GPS allegations. When reviewing foster care data, Black children were more than 6 times more likely to re-enter foster care and more than 3.5 times more likely to remain in foster care when compared to White children<sup>12</sup>. More recent data released in December 2024 reveals that both White children and Black children in Pennsylvania have disproportionately higher rates of valid GPS allegations relative to their representation in the general child population<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Dettlaff, A. (ed) (2021). *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system*. Springer.

<sup>10</sup> US Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (2024). *The AFCARS Report. Preliminary estimates for FY2022 as of May 9, 2023*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau.  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/afcars-report-30>

<sup>11</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation (n.d.), KIDS COUNT data center. Retrieved from  
<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race?loc=40&loct=2#detailed/2/40/false/37/68,69,67,12,70,66,71,72/423,424>

<sup>12</sup> Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (2023). *The 2023 State of Child Welfare in Pennsylvania: Strengthening the Child Welfare System for Children, Youth and Families*. Harrisburg, PA: author. Retrieved from <https://www.papartnerships.org/resources-publications/reports/>

<sup>13</sup> Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (2024). *State of the Child 2024 – Pennsylvania*. Harrisburg, PA: author. Retrieved from <https://www.papartnerships.org/report/state-of-the-child-2024/>



While the solutions for the disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system are complex, we recognize that it is crucial for the workforce to be reflective of the populations served. Child welfare workers who understand, appreciate and/or share in the background, culture, language, and customs of a family are better equipped to holistically understand a family's needs, appropriately provide services, and facilitate better outcomes<sup>14 15</sup>. Supporting a diverse workforce in developing practice and leadership skills is critical to addressing disproportionality in child welfare.

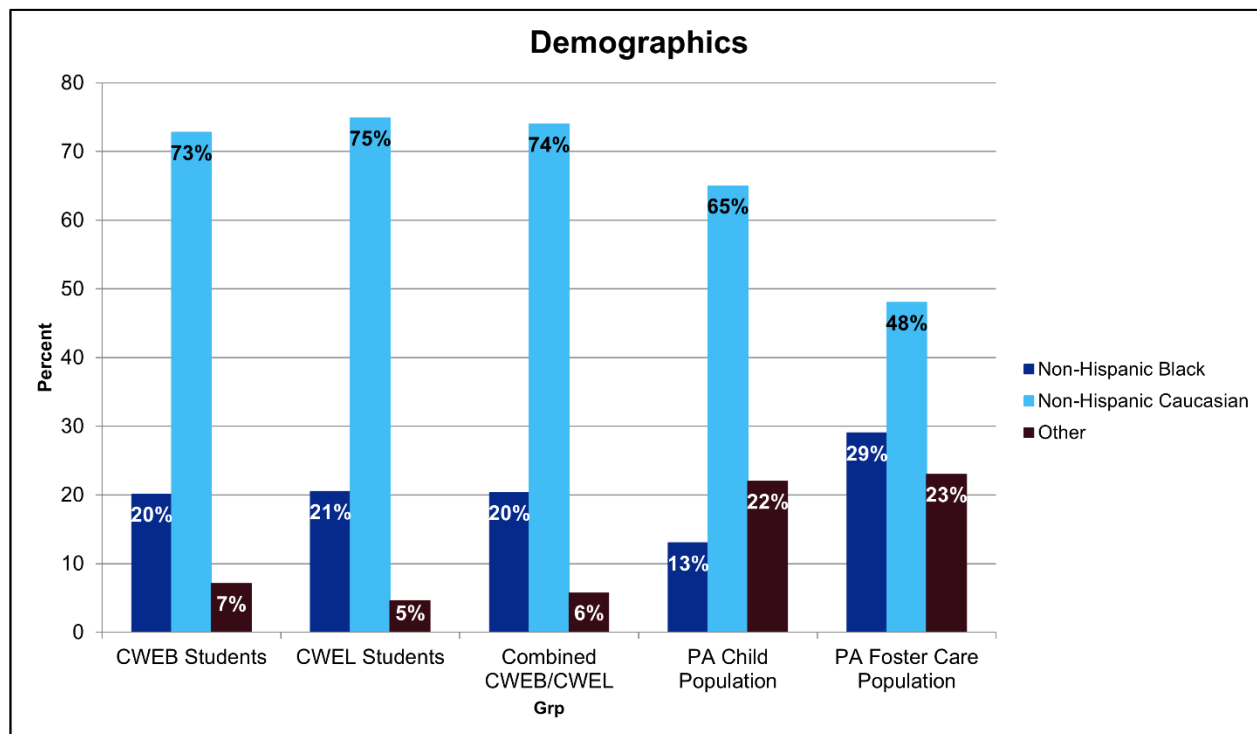
Within the CWEB and CWEL programs combined, Non-Hispanic Black students represent 20% of participants. Figure 4 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the Pennsylvania child population and those of CWEB/CWEL participants.

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<sup>14</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2016). Racial disproportionality and disparity in child welfare. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/racial\\_disproportionality.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/racial_disproportionality.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Barbee, A.P. & Antle, B.F. (2021). Workforce development strategies to address racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare systems. In Dettlaff, A.J. (ed.), *Racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system*. Springer.

**Figure 4. Demographics of PA Child Population and CWEB/CWEL Participants**



CWEB students are recruited from the general population of our partnering Schools of Social Work. This arrangement provides us the opportunity to work with our school partners in developing and implementing strategies that help facilitate the recruitment of diverse students into the CWEB program. This year, CWEB instituted recruitment sessions specifically targeting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) and shared the information with all the partnering schools. The recruitment sessions were welcomed by the partnering schools and were well received by students. Partnering schools are recruiting more diverse students into CWEB by coordinating with their diversity offices to invite students to social work classes. Schools have created articulation agreements with local community colleges, so students have a clear path to completing their BASW/BSW degrees. Information about the CWEB program was shared with potential students during open houses and during outreach with high school

students. One school described improving the climate on campus in response to the Senator Haywood ENOUGH Report<sup>16</sup> which aspires to end racism on state university campuses. Another school hosted a “social work summer camp” to provide information about the social work profession to high school students. One school collaborated with local community colleges to provide a smoother pathway to higher education. Moving forward, we will continue collaboration with our partnering Schools of Social Work and employ effective strategies to recruit diverse child welfare students.

### **Administration**

The CWEB and CWEL programs have been administered by the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh since their inception in 2001 and 1995, respectively. Part III-A of the Project Description and Implementation provides background information. In addition to providing the opportunity for undergraduate and graduate level social work degree study on both a full-time and part-time basis, the School of Social Work provides academic and curriculum support for the other 14 undergraduate universities and 12 graduate schools eligible to participate in the CWEB and CWEL programs. The total number of participating school programs is 17, with 4 schools at the undergraduate level only, 11 university programs enrolling both undergraduate and graduate students, and two programs at the graduate level only.

Slippery Rock University welcomed their first cohort of CWEL students starting in the 2024-2025 academic year. Bloomsburg University received full accreditation by CSWE in June. The CWEL program anticipates welcoming new CWEL students at Bloomsburg for the 2025-2026 academic year.

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<sup>16</sup> Haywood, A. & the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (2024, January.) ENOUGH: Listening tour to end racism on PASSHE campuses. Report on racial harassment at state system schools. Retrieved from: [www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/phrc/documents/education/2024\\_Haywood\\_ENOUGH\\_Report\\_012222024.pdf](http://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/phrc/documents/education/2024_Haywood_ENOUGH_Report_012222024.pdf)

As discussed in the previous Annual Report (see <http://tinyurl.com/y5e587tu>), the integration of six Pennsylvania State System universities was approved in July 2021. The newly integrated schools of Pennsylvania Western University (or PennWest, formerly California University, Clarion University, and Edinboro University) and Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (formerly Bloomsburg University, Lock Haven University, and Mansfield University) have begun enrollment into their respective programs. PennWest saw another decline in undergraduate admissions, however, they saw a gain in graduate admissions<sup>17</sup>. To combat declining undergraduate applications, PennWest received a two-year grant to provide direct admissions to high school students through the Niche platform<sup>18</sup>. This new path to admission will allow high school students to receive acceptances with scholarship totals without completing an application to PennWest. Overall, Commonwealth University has experienced a growth in new students across all campuses since its integration over three academic years ago.<sup>19</sup>

The CWEB and CWEL faculty conduct annual meetings with each approved university program, including branch campus locations, and maintain ongoing contact to discuss academic programs, issues, and progress. The legal agreement for each student contains a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) waiver which permits the sharing of academic information. The CWEB and CWEL faculty and staff have hundreds of contacts with faculty and students from the other fifteen schools

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<sup>17</sup> Wheeler, J. "The Plan to Boost Enrollment and Retention." *Cal Times*, [www.caltimes.org/11037/showcase/the-plan-to-boost-enrollment-and-retention/](http://www.caltimes.org/11037/showcase/the-plan-to-boost-enrollment-and-retention/). Accessed 3 Dec. 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Aiken, M. "PennWest, Two Other Pa. State Universities Begin Directly Admitting Students to Bolster Enrollment." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 22 Nov. 2024, [www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2024/11/21/pennwest-direct-admissions-enrollment-niche/stories/202411210126](http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2024/11/21/pennwest-direct-admissions-enrollment-niche/stories/202411210126).

<sup>19</sup> Commonwealth University. "Commonwealth University Begins 2024-25 Academic Year with Enrollment Increases across All Campuses." [Commonwealth University begins 2024-25 academic year with enrollment increases across all campus](http://Commonwealth University begins 2024-25 academic year with enrollment increases across all campus) | Commonwealth University. Accessed 3 Dec. 2024.

throughout the year and provide instruction and academic advisement within the School of Social Work to University of Pittsburgh students.

Fiscal administration includes reimbursement to county employers of full-time graduate students for salaries and benefits, reimbursement to students for books, payment of tuition and fees at all approved educational institutions and, where appropriate, travel expenditures and fellowship payments. These payments are advanced by the University as they become due. The University, in turn, invoices the Commonwealth and is reimbursed from a combination of state and federal funds.

A series of formal agreements provide for the students' enrollment arrangements, reimbursement for allowable expenses, and the required post-education work commitments. These include the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Department of Human Services and the University of Pittsburgh; a series of agreements between the University and each of the other 16 approved institutions of higher education; and agreements between CWEB students with the University or among CWEL students, their respective county employer, and the University. Agreements for full-time CWEL students specifies the employers' responsibility to maintain benefits and grant educational leave to students and the reimbursement for CWEL student salaries and benefits.

To accomplish these tasks, approximately nine full-time equivalent faculty and staff have been engaged. All program faculty teach regular courses, provide academic advising to students, and oversee internships. In addition, the CWEB and CWEL faculty are responsible for assisting in program evaluation. The faculty and staff listing is contained in [Appendix K](#).

## **Academic Program Approval and Curriculum**

All the schools participating in the CWEB and CWEL programs are fully accredited by both the Middle States Association of College and Schools (MSACS) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The 17 approved schools and their accreditation dates are listed in [Appendix B](#). A graphic representation showing the location of the participating schools is included in [Appendix C](#).

All approved undergraduate schools are required to offer at least one child welfare course and internships in county child welfare agencies. Approved graduate programs are required to offer at least two graduate-level child welfare courses and child welfare-focused internships. The continuing availability of these courses and internships is verified by the CWEB and CWEL Academic Coordinators who consult regularly with the approved schools regarding practicum assignments, specific courses, student registrations, and student progress.

The 2023-2024 course offerings of the 15 undergraduate schools participating in CWEB and the 13 graduate school programs participating in CWEL and shown in [Appendix D](#) (CWEB) and in [Appendix E](#) (CWEL). These course listings referenced above do not include internships, for which a minimum of 400 clock hours is required at the baccalaureate level and 900 at the master's level.<sup>20</sup>

CWEB students are strongly encouraged to participate in the Pennsylvania State Civil Service County Social Casework Intern program in conjunction with their school and the county agency in which they are completing their placements. This option requires 975 hours of internship. The advantage of this option for the student and agency is that upon completion of the official County Social Casework Intern program and graduation, the student is eligible to begin work immediately in the agency, typically

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<sup>20</sup> Council on Social Work Education (n.d.). Prepare for your education: Social work education at a glance. Available at <https://www.cswe.org/students/prepare-for-your-education/>

as a Caseworker II, through a promotion process within the Civil Service system. Of the 26 CWEB students who graduated during the 2023-2024 academic year, 10 (38%) exercised the State Civil Service Social Casework Intern option.

### **Commitment and Recoupment of Funds**

All students enrolled in the CWEB and CWEL programs must repay the educational benefits by completing a work commitment in public child welfare. For CWEB graduates, the commitment is one calendar year of service for one academic year of support<sup>21</sup>. For CWEL graduates, the commitment is the amount of time equal to the length of the educational leave for full-time CWEL students and equal to the proportion of the full-time length of the degree program they have completed as part-time students<sup>22</sup>. Students who received support for only a portion of their program have a pro-rated work commitment proportional to the support they received. During the period of this report, all 26 CWEB graduates obtained employment in a county child welfare agency and 70 CWEL students completed their degree programs. Both sets of graduates proceed to engage in public child welfare practice.

The full amount of the cash paid to the student or on the student's behalf must be reimbursed whenever a CWEB or CWEL graduate fails to complete his or her commitment. This provision is contained in the agreement each student signs either with the University (CWEB students) or with the University and county of origin (CWEL students). During the 2023-2024 program year, three CWEB students withdrew or were terminated from the program after receiving financial benefits, some after beginning their period of commitment payback. In general, baccalaureate-level students are just beginning their professional career path and it is not uncommon for undergraduates to underestimate the rigor and reality of child welfare work. This discernment process for

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<sup>21</sup> 45 CFR, Ch. II, §235.63 (b) (5)

<sup>22</sup> 45 CFR, Ch. II, §235.63 (b) (1)

undergraduate students may lead them to discover that child welfare is not a fit for their professional goals. Ideally these decisions should be made prior to a student's start within the program.

We track retention in two ways: the number of students not completing the program and the number of graduates not completing a work commitment. Among both programs combined, the student loss rate is 4.4%. Despite the low rate of students leaving the program before completion, some graduates do not finish their contracted work commitment. The CWEB program has had 114 individuals out of a total of 1,397 graduates (8.1%) not complete the work commitment whereas the CWEL program, has had 21 individuals out of a total of 1,743 graduates (1.2%) not complete their work commitment. These situations, together with the actions being taken are summarized in [Appendix A](#).

Among the CWEB graduates (2022-2023) who have recently satisfied their legal work commitment, 50% remain in the agencies. Overall, 39% have exceeded their commitment by over two years. Increased familiarity with the program, more focused selection criteria and stronger case management has contributed to improved outcomes. The number of CWEL graduates who have discontinued child welfare work for all reasons over the life of the program averages 8.4% per year. This figure includes retirements, permanent disability determinations, and, in some cases, serious illness or death. We believe that these consistently high retention rates across time is a strong indication of the success of our professional education programs and the steadfast commitment to the work of child welfare among our participants.

The employment/retention of all students exiting the program will continue to be monitored as required in Section II, G, 14 of the Program Description and Implementation, and by PL 103-432 which was enacted by the United States Congress



during the first CWEL program year and which applies to graduates funded after October 1, 1995.

Despite the loss of some participants, both the CWEB and CWEL programs have a strong record of retention. Nevertheless, there are real reasons behind each of the post-commitment departures. We include additional information later in this report. Fortunately, many root causes of turnover can be remedied, though some are more difficult to address than others. We are committed to working with county agencies to focus on organizational-level solutions that can assist in the recruitment and retention of qualified child welfare workers.

### **Deliverables**

Pennsylvania's child welfare education programs continue to be a tremendous asset to workforce development in the Commonwealth. To date, 1,397 CWEB graduates have received preparation for child welfare work and started employment in one of the state's 67 county agencies. The CWEL program has supported 1,743 child welfare professionals in earning master's degrees in social work. Currently, close to 50% of all county child welfare agencies have a CWEB or CWEL graduate in a senior leadership position.

Child welfare agency administrators value and support the CWEB and CWEL programs. County leaders often reach out to express interest in bringing more CWEB interns to their agencies and hiring CWEB graduates. They view the CWEL program as a way to both develop leaders within their agencies and to attract new employees. CWEB and CWEL program faculty conduct both individualized county meetings with new leaders and those who are innovating novel approaches to staff recruitment and retention. CWEL information sessions are held with interested county staff to review application requirements, share program information, and encourage participation.

Vigorous recruitment efforts continued during the 2023-24 program year. The CWEB team, along with faculty members from each partner school, held 30 recruitment sessions and met both in person and virtually with over 300 students throughout the academic year. Many of the recruitment sessions were recorded by the school partners to share with additional students. The *CWEB Internship Guidance* document, created during the 2022-2023 academic year, was shared widely with students, practicum instructors, and school personnel. The guidance, which includes lists of child welfare practice activities, tasks, and experiences, serves as a resource for students when developing their Practicum Learning Plan.

A series of detailed webpages (<https://tinyurl.com/ytr4vke3>), a program email address ([cwerp@pitt.edu](mailto:cwerp@pitt.edu)) and a toll-free phone line [1 (866) ASK-CWEL/1 (866) 275-2935] are available for those interested in learning more about the CWEB and CWEL programs. Additionally, both programs are accessible through the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) website (<https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/>). The CWEB and CWEL webpages include a Student Handbook for each program as well as “Frequently Asked Questions” to clarify program information and address common concerns. A Facebook page is offered to promote community and highlight student achievements.

CWEB faculty and staff hosted bi-monthly virtual meetings for students throughout the school year. Students received program updates, support, information, and an opportunity to connect with their CWEB peers. The meetings were recorded for students unable to attend. CWEL student meetings were held in both the fall and spring to provide program updates, share information, and obtain student feedback. This year’s fall meeting focused on trends in social work and the spring meeting was dedicated to social work licensing. An incentive to promote licensure among our CWEB and CWEL graduates was put into place effective December 2023. Graduates are now

eligible to receive a modest, one-time stipend toward costs incurred in pursuing the LBSW or LSW in Pennsylvania.

The University delivered the following products and made these efforts during 2023-2024 program year in accordance with the approved Project Description and Implementation plan:

- Previous annual reports were posted on the CWERP website and made available to all county administrators, DHS officials, CWEB and CWEL academic partners, and other interested state and federal officials.
- CWEB and CWEL program and application materials were posted on the CWERP website for all counties, participating schools, and interested parties to access.
- Program evaluation instruments were distributed to all participating counties, schools, current students, and a sample of graduates from both CWEB and CWEL as part of the annual program evaluation, the results of which are described later in this report.
- Faculty/staff meetings were held with participating school programs virtually beginning in the fall of 2023 and continuing through the spring of 2024. These meetings are summarized in Tables 1-4 below and include forums with current students, academic faculty, and academic program administrators. Focus groups were held with CWEB and CWEL students in the fall, the details of which are described below.
- In addition to the specific activities noted above, hundreds of inquiries were managed from potential students, agency administrators, county commissioners, other states, and other colleges and universities.

In the 2023-2024 program year, the CWERP faculty and staff conducted presentations, contributed to scholarly publications, and engaged in community service. Their works include the following:

Board Appointments, Mentorship Activities and National Committees:

Borish, L. Appointment to the Blueprints Headstart/Early Headstart Policy Council of Washington County.

Cahalane, H. Appointment to the Advisory Committee of the Horizon Scholars Program. University of Pittsburgh Educational Outreach Center, Office of the Provost.

Cahalane, H. Reappointment to the Advisory Board of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Cahalane, H. Selection Committee for the 2024 Lifetime Achievement in Child Welfare Award, Child Welfare Track of the Council on Social Work Education.

Cahalane, H. & Rawls, B. Membership on the Planning Committee for the Child Welfare Track Annual Meeting, Council on Social Work Education.

Johnson, A. Appointment as a Community Advisory Board Member to First Steps and Beyond, a community collaborative focusing on Black infants and mothers in Allegheny County.

Johnson, A. (February 2024) Mentorship of a CWEL student who received the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Darrell P. Wheeler Student Resource Award for outstanding efforts in service to the school, university, and/or community.

Awards:

Rawls, B. 2024 New Pittsburgh Courier's Fab 40 Under 40

Presentations:

Borish, L. (2024, June). *Brain development in young children*. Presentation at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference. Poconos, PA.

Cahalane, H. (2024, March). *Pitt Horizon Scholars: Broadening horizons while empowering youth*. Panel presentation at the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Community Engaged Scholarship Forum, University of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh, PA.

Perry, M.A., Zajac, J. J., Reiss, D., & Thurston, S. (2023, October). *Are they learning effectively? A comprehensive approach to curriculum evaluation*. Presentation at the

Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB)  
Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL)  
Progress Report and Program Evaluation  
January 2025

National Staff Development and Training Association Annual Education Conference.  
Pittsburgh, PA.

Rawls, B. (2024, June). *Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders: Interventions to preserve the family and reduce ACES*. Presentation at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference. Poconos, PA.

Thurston, S., Henderer, A., & Perry, M.A. (2024, May). *Applying a race equity lens to research and evaluation in workforce development*. Presentation at the Human Services Workforce Development Evaluation Symposium. Los Angeles, CA.

Winters, R., Cahalane, H., & Rawls, B. (2024, March). *The effect of post hire support on retention for baccalaureate social workers in child welfare*. Presentation at the 41st Annual Conference of the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Directors, New Orleans, LA.

#### Peer Reviews and Research:

Cahalane, H. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, Peer Reviewer

Cahalane, H. 2024 National Research Conference on Early Childhood/Administration for Children and Families, Proposal Reviewer

Cahalane, H. External reviewer for promotion of child welfare faculty member, University of Michigan School of Social Work

Perry, M. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Peer Reviewer

Perry, M., 2024 Human Services Workforce Development Evaluation Symposium, Proposal Reviewer

Perry, M. 2024 National Staff Development and Training Association Annual Education Conference, Proposal Reviewer

Perry, M. *Supporting Superwomen: Emotional Labor, Gendered Racial Microaggressions, and the Superwoman Schema in Black Female Child Welfare Professionals*. University of Pittsburgh, Center on Race and Social Problems. Principal Investigator 2021-2024

Perry, M. Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Analytics (QIC-WA) Cooperative Agreement with the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health & Human Services. Co-PI and Evaluation Lead for Public Sites, 2023-2028 (PI: Todd Franke, UCLA)

#### Certifications:

Winters, R.: Qualtrics Core XM recertification, May 2024

CWEB and CWEL Student and School Forums

**Table 1. CWEB Student Zoom Meetings**

Fall 2023/Spring 2024
September 14, 2023
November 10, 2023
January 25, 2024
March 29, 2024
May 3, 2024

**Table 2. CWEL Student Meetings**

School Program	Date of Fall Visit	Date of Spring Visit
Bryn Mawr College	10/17/2023	3/27/2024
California University	10/16/2023	3/25/2024
Edinboro University	10/16/2023	3/25/2024
Kutztown University	10/16/2023	3/27/2024
Marywood University	10/17/2023	3/28/2024
Millersville University	10/17/2023	3/27/2024
Shippensburg University	10/17/2023	3/27/2024
Temple University	10/16/2023	3/27/2024
University of Pennsylvania	10/16/2023	3/27/2024
University of Pittsburgh	10/17/2023	3/25/2024
University of Pittsburgh-Bradford	10/17/2023	3/25/2024
West Chester University	10/17/2023	3/27/2024
Widener University	10/20/2023	3/29/2024

**Table 3. Meetings with CWEB School Faculty**

School Program	Date of Visit
Commonwealth University	10/18/2023
East Stroudsburg University	9/7/2023
Marywood University	10/11/2023
Millersville University	10/3/2023
Penn West University California	9/13/2023
Penn West University Edinboro	9/13/2023
Shippensburg University	10/6/2023
Slippery Rock	9/7/2023
Widener University	9/7/2023

**Table 4. Meetings with CWEL School Faculty**

School Program	Date of Visit
Bryn Mawr College	2/29/2024
Penn West University California	1/29/2024
Penn West University Edinboro	1/29/2024
Kutztown University	1/30/2024
Marywood University	1/29/2024
Millersville University	1/29/2024
Shippensburg University	1/29/2024
Temple University	1/31/2024
University of Pennsylvania	2/1/2024
West Chester University	2/7/2024
Widener University	1/31/2024

### **Focus Groups**

#### CWEB

Students were asked what the program could do to better prepare them for internships and a career in child welfare. Students felt CWEB faculty and staff did a wonderful job explaining the program, however, suggestions to improve the student experience included:

- Virtual meetings prior to starting in the program to prepare students for the coming year
- Letting students know when they should begin looking for their internship
- Having students attend Foundations training in the summer before their classes begin since demands during the academic year often limit participation
- Share with students how the stipend disbursement works so they can plan financially
- Offer agency visits and Caseworker shadowing opportunities for students before they come into the program
- Focusing a student meeting on self-care and time management for child welfare professionals

## CWEL

CWEL students shared the tremendous positive impact the CWEL program is having on their professional development and on their child welfare practice. Students are gaining knowledge in the classroom that is changing the way they view families. Their awareness of social problems and its impact on families has changed their perspectives and the way they approach their work. Learning about the impact trauma has on children, youth, and families has caused students to be more empathetic and practice in a trauma-informed manner.

The CWEL student meetings are appreciated for providing opportunities to check-in with CWEL faculty and staff, develop community with other students, and learn about resources. The session held in the spring of 2024, presenting an overview of the social work licensing process, was valuable to the students. Students want to be able to view the recorded session again as they prepare for licensing. A request from several students was to begin scheduling an evening session for future rounds of student meetings.

### **The Changing Landscape of Pennsylvania Public Child Welfare**

Like many child welfare systems across the country, Pennsylvania's workforce encountered challenges during the 2023-2024 program year as our nation continued to emerge from the confines of the pandemic. Although the immediate impact of the pandemic faded, the longer-term effects on the workforce became noticeable in 2023-2024. While maintaining vital operations, some child welfare agencies experienced a dramatic decline in their staff complement. The same held true among provider agencies, drastically decreasing the availability of services for children and adults alike. Many individuals decided to leave the human services sector across systems of care which has impacted both public and private child welfare agencies.



An increase in suspected child abuse reports as well as those meeting criteria for general protective services occurred in calendar years 2022 and 2023. These rises were anticipated due to the increased contact between children and mandated reporters in education, medical, and community settings following the re-opening of our communities. The total reports for suspected child abuse in calendar year 2023 remains lower, however, than in the year prior to the pandemic.

Previous annual reports have referenced the major shift in Pennsylvania's child welfare system operations that occurred over a decade ago following the public exposure and subsequent legal proceedings that emanated from a long-standing child abuse travesty. We refer readers to the 2012 special investigation report cited here for information regarding this highly publicized case<sup>23</sup> and to the policy and statutory recommendations of the Task Force on Child Protection formed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly<sup>24</sup>.

Despite the ongoing challenges of turnover in the child welfare workforce, new opportunities are emerging to employ more efficient and effective modes of practice, including the use of virtual technology, data-driven decision making, predictive analytics, and evidence-based interventions. The passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act<sup>25</sup> in February of 2018 and the implementation of the state-level FFPSA Prevention Plan bring additional opportunities and expectations to the child welfare workforce. In addition, Pennsylvania continues to plan for operationalizing a new universal assessment to better identify family and child needs, strengths, risk factors, and safety

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<sup>23</sup> Freeh, Sporkin & Sullivan, LLP (July 12, 2012). "*Report of the Special Investigative Counsel Regarding the Actions of the Pennsylvania State University Related to the Child Sexual Abuse Committed by Gerald A. Sandusky*"

<sup>24</sup> *Child Protection in Pennsylvania: Proposed Recommendations, Report of the Task Force on Child Protection*. Full report and Executive Summary available at [http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/publications.cfm?JSPU\\_PUBLN\\_ID=285](http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/publications.cfm?JSPU_PUBLN_ID=285).

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/title-iv-e-prevention-program>

considerations to guide child welfare intervention and service planning. Increased emphasis has been placed on youth and family voice and representation in the child welfare system. There is greater recognition of the need to educate the legislature on the basics of child welfare and the work of caseworkers. Plans are underway for Pennsylvania's next Child and Family Services Review to occur in 2026. (See <https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CFSR.htm>). These are welcome changes and actions that require the time, investment, and expertise of the workforce.

## **Evaluation**

### **Introduction**

Each year online surveys are sent to schools participating in the CWEB and CWEL educational programs, current students, graduates, and county agencies that employ them or provide practicum placements. These surveys gauge utility and quality of the curricula and practicum experiences, opportunities for improvement, and the organizational culture of their work environment. This information is shared with CWEB and CWEL partners, including agency administrators, school faculty, and CWEB/CWEL faculty and staff to inform and help improve the quality of services, curricula, and working environments.

All surveys are web-enabled. Throughout the year, emails and instructions are sent to current students, recent graduates, long-term graduates, and CWEB/CWEL schools and counties with information on how to access their surveys, which are located on a secure server. A standard follow-up protocol is in place to try to obtain a minimum 50% response rate for each group of respondents. Response rates are reported below. Datasets were cleaned prior to analysis. Usable surveys had to have at least 50% of the questions answered. Surveys that did not meet this threshold were dropped from the analyses. What follows are the findings from the 2023-2024 evaluation.

**Table 5. Return Rates by Survey Type**

Respondent Group	Number Surveys Sent	Number of Usable Surveys	Response Rate (%)
County	69	39	63% (n=42)
Current Students	177	102	50% CWEB (n=13) 59% CWEL (n=89)
Recent Graduates	95	61	52% CWEB (n=14) 66% CWEL (n=45)
Long Term Graduates	95	28	38% (n=36)
CWEB/CWEL Schools	55	22	53% (n=9)

### **Current CWEB and CWEL Students**

#### Survey procedures and methods

Details about the study design and demographics of the respondents can be found in Figure 5 below. In addition to the scaled items, three open-ended questions asked about positive aspects of the program, areas for improvement, and qualities that may help prospective CWEB/CWEL students succeed in the program.

#### How do students perceive their program?

CWEB and CWEL students highly value their professional education. Using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 having the lowest value and 10 the most value, respondents were asked, “What is the value of the CWEB or CWEL program to the public child welfare system?” The average score for the CWEB students was 9.08 ( $SD=1.12$ ), and the average score for the CWEL students was 9.08 ( $SD=1.48$ ). Responses to this question, as well as each survey item (rated on a 1-5 scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) can be found in Table 1, [Appendix I](#).

Table 1 displays the responses of the CWEB

students, as well as both the full-time and

part-time CWEL students. All three

subgroups report being satisfied with the

degree program, the agency and practicum

interfaces, some of the degree processes,

and aspects of their practicum experiences.

Satisfaction ratings and statistically

significant findings are shown in Figure 6.

CWEB students were more likely to feel that

the program will enable them to grow as a

social work professional and positively

impact child welfare by utilizing their

knowledge in their county child welfare

agency. Since CWEB students are new to

the child welfare profession, these views are

in line with their passion for child welfare

work and excitement about utilizing their

newly acquired skills to help the children and

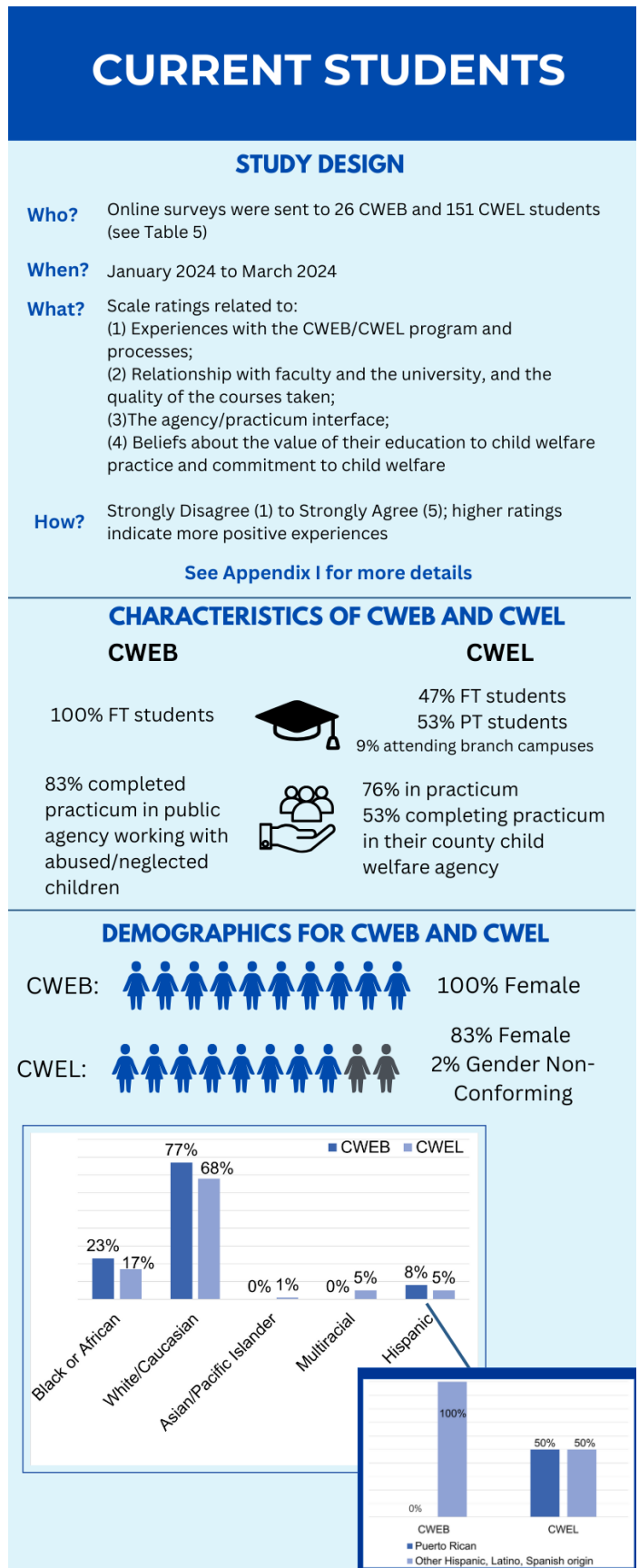
families they will encounter as a child welfare

caseworker. In contrast, CWEL students

have been in a county child welfare agency

at least two years prior to starting their

**Figure 5. Study Design and Description of Current Student Respondents**



program. This group of students may have a more realistic perspective on how their skills and knowledge will be utilized in their roles within the county child welfare agency.

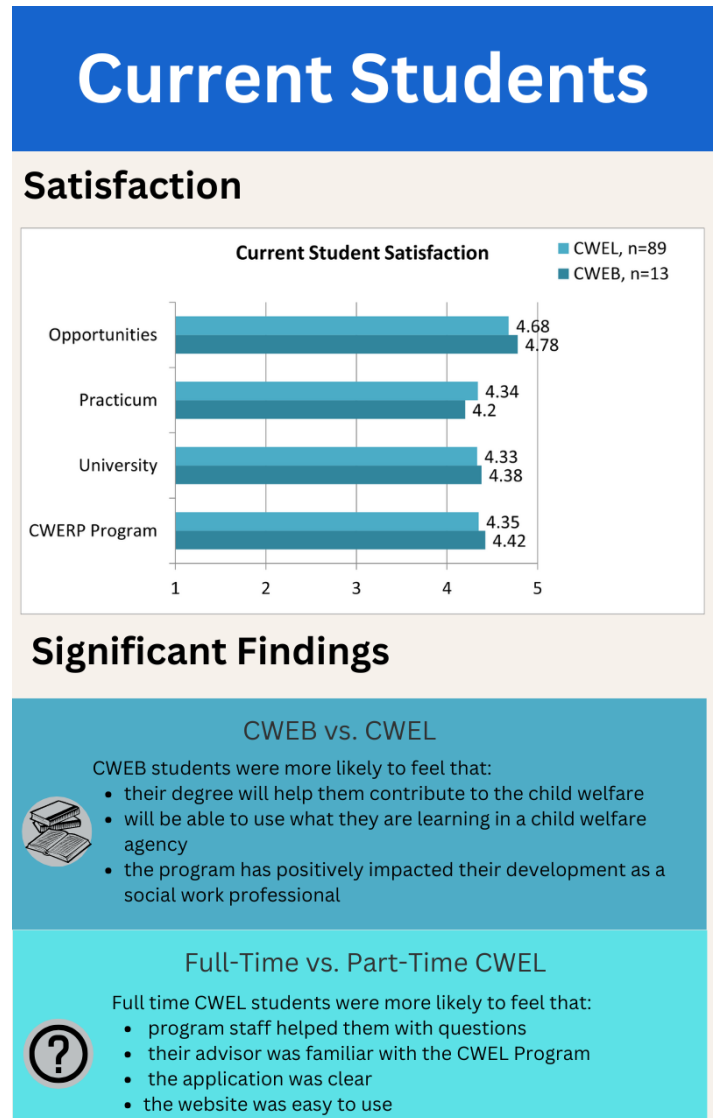
Comparing full-time and part-time CWEL students, significant differences point to the levels of support and understanding of processes for full-time students. Since full-time students have an educational leave from their duties in the county child welfare agency, they have more time to seek out help when needed and educate themselves on the processes of the program.

### Open-ended responses

CWEB and CWEL students were asked three open-ended questions to obtain more in-depth information regarding their opinions on their educational programs. The main findings are discussed below.

When asked about the positive aspects of CWEB, students discussed the financial advantages of the program as well as the program preparing them for a career in child welfare. CWEB students felt that having an internship in a county child welfare agency prepared them for their career in child welfare and their ability to connect to the communities they will serve. For example, one student shared, *“The CWEB alum at my agency are the most dedicated and passionate workers in the agency. They are truly committed to the profession and*

Figure 6. Current Student Results



*in it for the long haul. I believe that the CWEB program gives students a solid foundation that is immersive for learners and provides learners with unique opportunities. I am forever grateful for this program.*” Similarly, CWEL students appreciated the opportunity to participate in the program, citing the financial benefits as the only way they would have been able to complete a master’s degree in social work. CWEL students also discussed learning new skills and developing a new mindset concerning the child welfare population. CWEL students talked about learning leadership skills and applying a social work perspective in their work. An example of this learning was shared by a CWEL student: *“The ability to obtain my MSW has expanded my knowledge and insight on understanding diverse populations. This increased understanding and application of skills learned will dramatically increase my effectiveness with helping the families of my county as a child welfare worker.”*

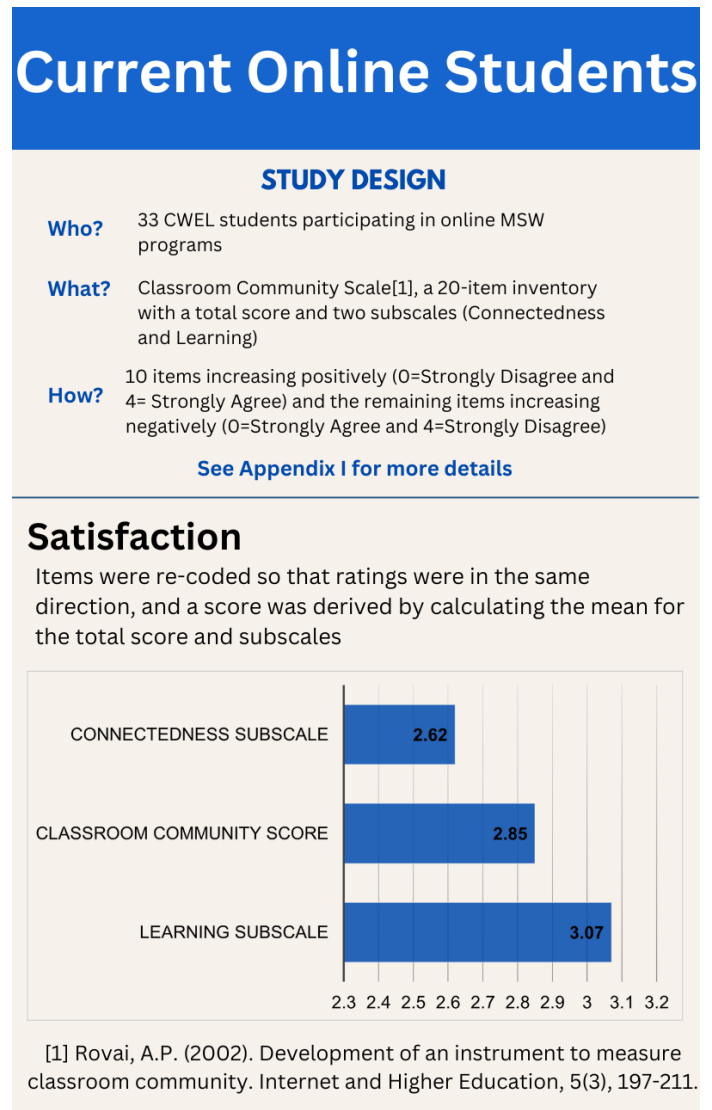
Students were also asked in what areas the CWEB and CWEL programs can be improved. CWEB students discussed issues with the distribution and amount of their stipend. A new process for distributing stipends was initiated this academic year which impacted the timely receipt of the stipend for some CWEB students. Other CWEB students reported that the overall amount of the stipend doesn’t reflect the current financial landscape, with most of the money covering travel costs to their internship sites. CWEL students talked a lot about practicum placements this year. In general, the availability of practicums in community-based agencies has been complicated by the overall workforce crisis within human services. CWEL students reported that they had difficulty finding adequate practicum placements, desired practicum placements outside their county child welfare agency, and challenges balancing practicum, coursework, and working full-time.

## Online CWEL participation

The recommendation to have the ability to complete the CWEL program online has been suggested in previous years, primarily due to lack of easy access to MSW programs in parts of the state. This option has additional complications, such as scheduling time to complete online coursework and adjusting working hours for synchronous learning activities. In response to the preference for online learning among some program participants, the CWEL provides support for the completely online MSW programs offered through partnership with Millersville, PennWest, Temple, Shippensburg, and Widener Universities. Details of the additional survey for online MSW students can be found in Figure 7.

Individuals rated their overall Satisfaction, Connectedness, and Learning positively, suggesting a good online learning experience. Since the 2019-2020 academic year, when the Classroom Community Scale was introduced, the Connectedness subscale has been rated lowest. This finding indicates that face-to-face interactions between students and faculty may be more conducive to a feeling of belonging in the learning space. Since the CWEL students are surveyed multiple times throughout their academic career, it will be interesting to see if these ratings change

**Figure 7. Online Student Description and Results**



over time. The program also recognizes that online study may be a fit for certain individuals, but not for others. To this end, the CWEL team has included a section in our County Information Sessions regarding issues applicants should consider in determining whether online learning is their best choice.

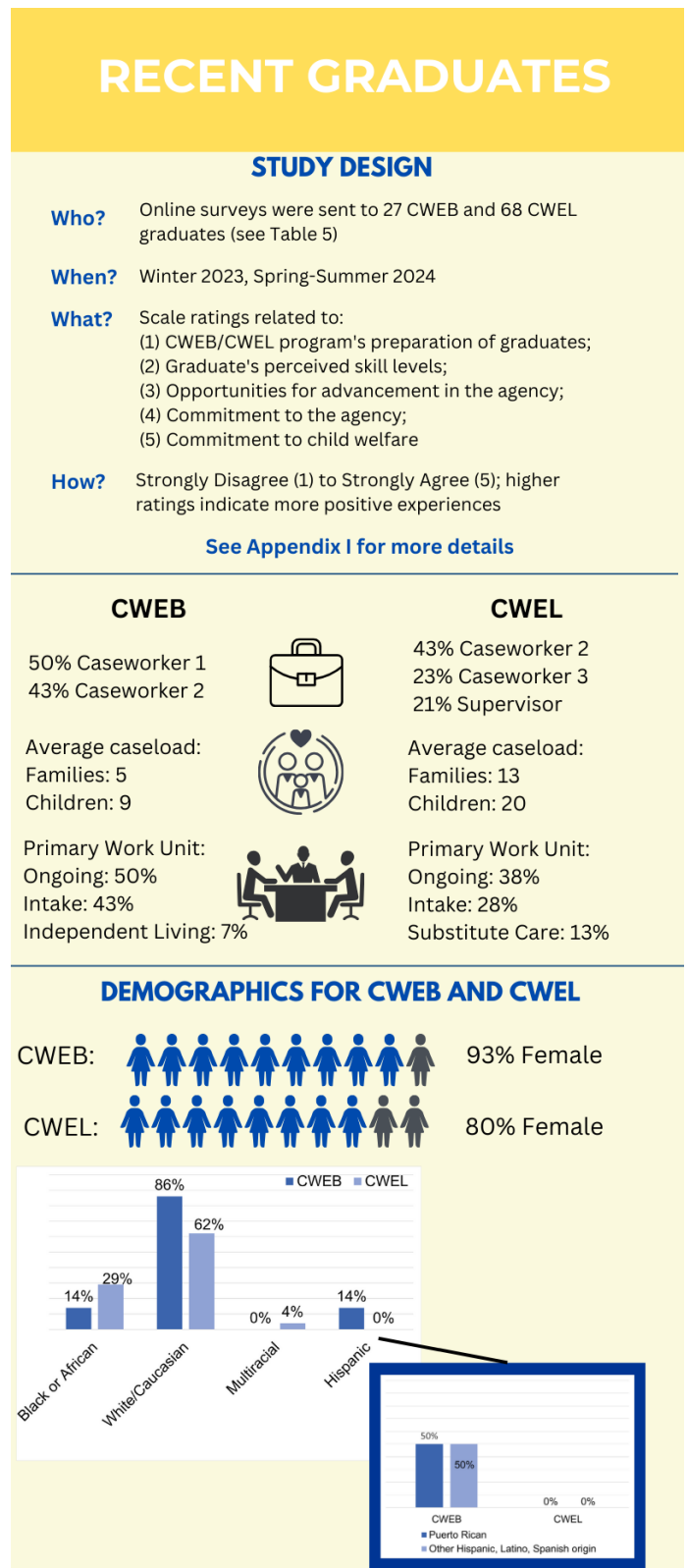
### Recent CWEB and CWEL Graduates Survey procedures and methods

The study design and demographics of the respondents are detailed in Figure 8. In addition to scaled items, four open-ended questions ask about the positive aspects of the program, the contribution of their practicum placement on their professional development, advice for future students, and areas of program improvement.

### How do recent graduates perceive their program?

CWEB and CWEL graduates highly value their professional education. Using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 having the lowest value and 10 the highest value, respondents were asked, “What is the value of the CWEB or CWEL program to the public child welfare

**Figure 8. Study Design and Description of Recent Graduate Respondents**



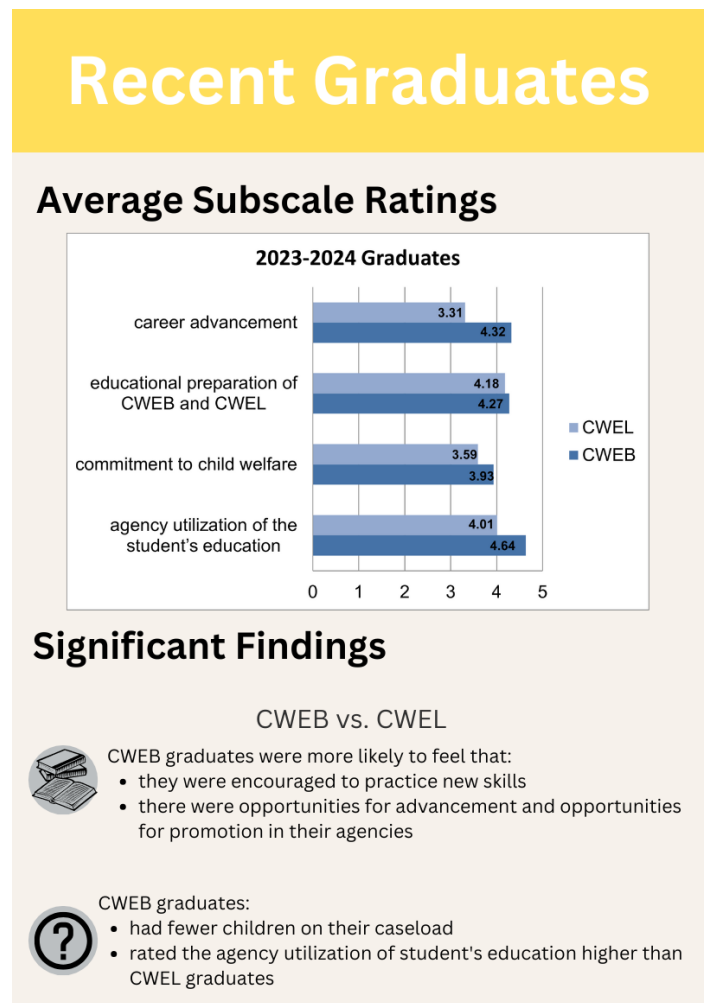


system?” The average score for the CWEB students was 8.71 ( $SD=1.68$ ), and the average score for the CWEL students was 8.69 ( $SD=2.19$ ). Responses to this question, as well as each survey item (rated on a 1-5 scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) can be found in Table 2, [Appendix I](#). The recent graduate survey is comprised of four subscales: (1) career advancement; (2) educational preparation of CWEB and CWEL graduates; (3) commitment to child welfare; and (4) agency utilization of the graduate’s education. Subscale ratings and statistically significant findings are shown in Figure 9.

Graduates of both CWEB and CWEL felt that their respective programs prepared them for working in the child welfare system. With the implementation of the CWEB internship guidance document, which is shared with CWEB students and practicum instructors, CWEB students may be getting a more well-rounded practicum experience thereby making them feel more prepared to work in child welfare.

The two most striking differences between CWEB and CWEL graduates are on the “career advancement” and “agency utilization of student’s education” subscales, with CWEL graduates rating them markedly lower than CWEB graduates. These lower ratings suggest that more attention should be focused at the agency level to improve the career outlook for CWEL graduates, as this is a key contributor to retention. Discussion should occur early in the process, ideally when the worker is applying to

Figure 9. Recent Graduate Results



CWEL. Prospectively thinking about how to utilize new knowledge and skills may begin to widen thinking beyond “promotion.” Involving CWEL graduates in agency-level initiatives such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression, and trauma informed care will give CWEL graduates the opportunity to apply their enhanced skillset to benefit the agency and the families they serve.

### Open-ended responses

Graduates expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the CWEB/CWEL programs and discussed the support from program faculty and staff along with the financial benefits as being advantages of the programs. CWEB and CWEL graduates emphasized how the education programs helped them in their careers in child welfare. CWEB graduates talked about the Foundations training and the practicum experience as fully preparing them to work in a county child welfare agency: *“This program gave me the ability to observe the field that I wanted to be in prior to graduation. I was able to learn and interact with professionals on a weekly basis in addition to being able to discuss what I observed in the classroom.”* CWEL graduates, on the other hand, reported that their educational program helped them acquire new skills and see the families on their caseload in a new way: *“I loved learning intervention techniques, an understanding of the complexities of people and their systems, and the opportunity to learn about policy that helps/ hurts/ and drives people to engage in certain behaviors.”*

Both CWEB and CWEL graduates found great value in their practicum experiences. CWEB graduates spoke about their time in their practicum increasing their confidence and educating them on the duties of a child welfare caseworker: *“My agency allowed me to tailor my internship to my own interests and they let me take initiative in scheduling shadowing with different workers.”* CWEL graduates interning in

their own agency appreciated the opportunity to experience work in different units and see how all the units in their agency work towards a common goal: *“My final year I was able to see how other departments operated and how it coincided with my department and the amount of overlap we all had, but was not aware of.”* CWEL graduates interning outside their county child welfare agencies talked about how their practicum experiences can be translated into the work they do with children and families. They also talked about being able to network with other professionals within their county.

When asked about areas of possible improvement, CWEB graduates wanted increases in the monthly stipend and in the time to find employment in a child welfare agency. CWEB graduates also suggested being more involved in the planning and scheduling of the bimonthly Zoom calls. CWEL graduates reported issues with obtaining appropriate practicum placements, which echoes the comments from the current CWEL students. As seen in previous years, CWEL graduates also wanted more options for electives and the ability to obtain additional certificates.

CWEB graduates suggested that those interested in the CWEB program should embrace the experiences and prepare for the time commitment upon graduation: *“...Be patient and grow! I was so nervous and flustered my first 2 weeks in the field because I was not expecting to hear and see all that I did. I knew this was what I wanted to do in the end, so I understood I had to be patient and grow as an individual within my field and with my fellow caseworkers!”* CWEB graduates encouraged new students to complete the 975-hour practicum to gain more exposure to the child welfare agency.

CWEL graduates encouraged those entering the program to step outside their comfort zone concerning classes and practicum placements. CWEL graduates also wanted new students to be patient and give themselves grace through their education. Graduates recommended that CWEL students utilize their new skills and knowledge

with their clients: “...I would also encourage those who graduate to fully embrace what they have learned and use it for the better of everyone around you... not just your clients at work but in your personal life as well. The world would be a better place if we all just judged/shamed less and loved a little stronger and more fiercely.”

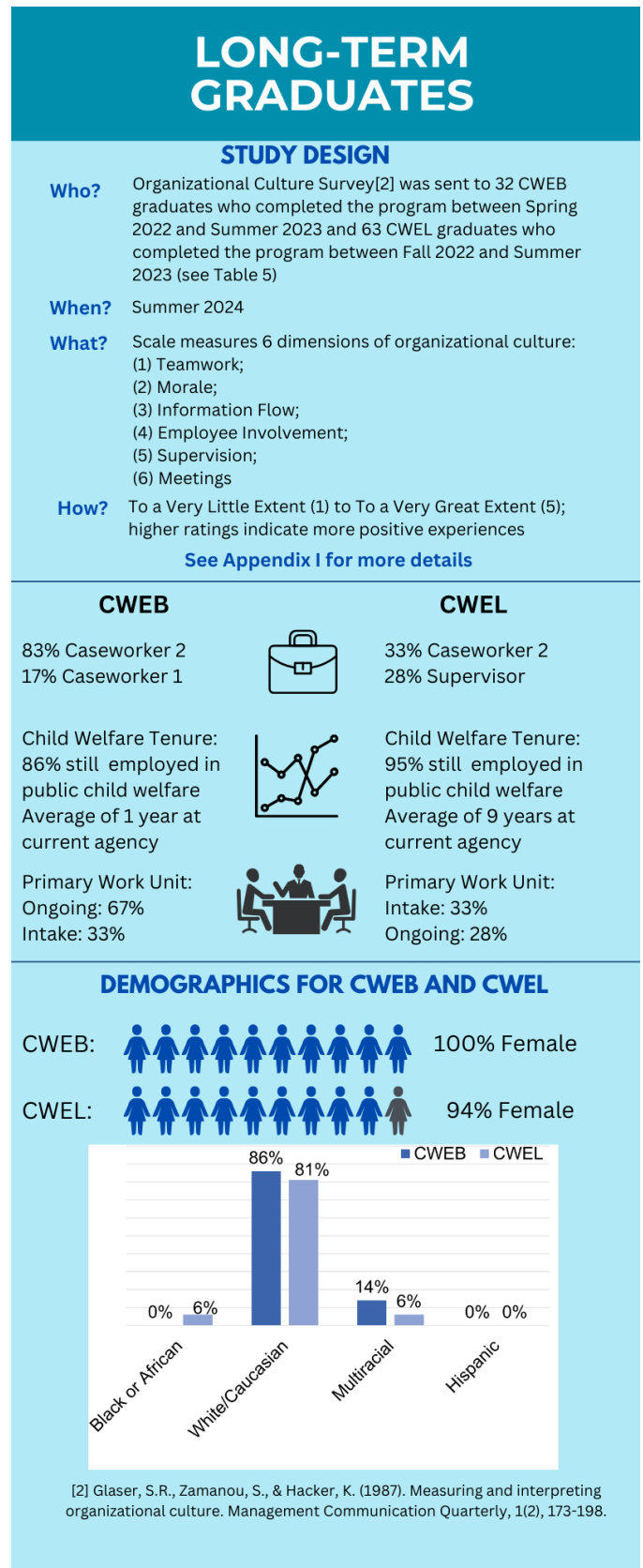
### Long-Term CWEB and CWEL Graduates Survey procedures and methods

Details about the study design and demographics of the respondents can be found in Figure 10. In addition to scaled items, four open-ended questions ask long-term graduates about their other activities that contribute to child welfare, their professional development opportunities, mentoring colleagues, and their ability to lead new initiatives in their agencies.

What do the long-term CWEB and CWEL graduates say about the climate of child welfare agencies?

Both CWEB and CWEL graduates were predominately neutral about their work climate, with CWEB graduates feeling slightly more positive than CWEL graduates. For respondents this year, the most positive

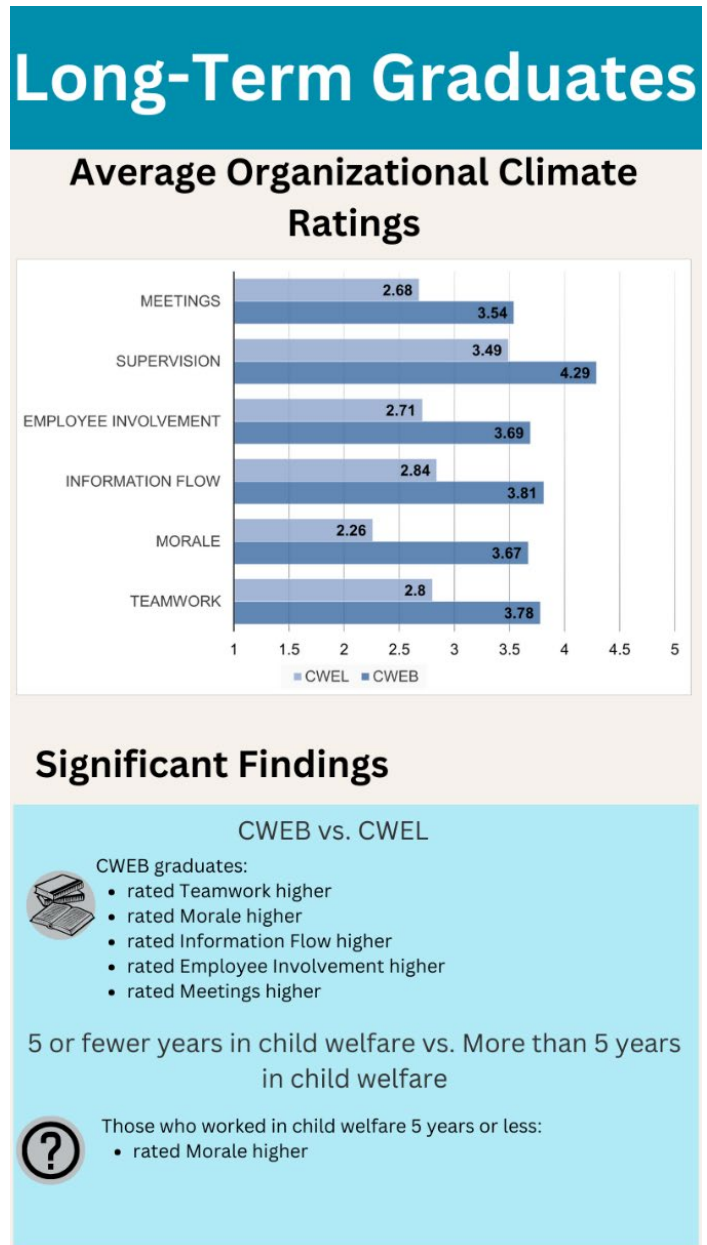
**Figure 10. Survey Design and Description of Long-Term Graduate Respondents**



climate scores were related to Supervision for CWEB graduates ( $M=4.29$ ) and for CWEL graduates ( $M=3.49$ ). These ratings suggest that CWEB and CWEL graduates are receiving adequate supervision and value the supervision they receive in the agency. The lowest rating for CWEB graduates was related to Meetings ( $M=3.54$ ). This may indicate that CWEB graduates don't perceive that they have a voice in meetings or disagree with how meetings are conducted. For CWEL, the lowest rated item was Morale ( $M=2.26$ ). The high turnover and caseloads prevalent in child welfare may be contributing to these low levels of Morale for CWEL graduates. Subscale ratings and statistically significant findings are shown in Figure 11.

Organizational climate ratings were compared according to respondents' tenure in public child welfare (five or fewer years or more than five years). Although the ratings were neutral for both groups, respondents who worked in child welfare for more than five years rated all the domains lower than those who have been working in child welfare for less than five years.

**Figure 11. Long-Term Graduate Results**



## Open-ended responses

Long-term graduates discussed participating in trainings, developing new initiatives within their counties, and advocating for improvements in child welfare. They described a variety of professional development opportunities, such as becoming proficient in team conferencing, receiving training on mental health first aid, “conquering the courtroom,” and various leadership trainings. Long-term graduates are also working toward social work licensure or have obtained licensure. One long-term graduate completed the Plans of Safe Care and Hope Navigation trainings.

Many long-term graduates have trained and mentored new caseworkers and interns. Graduates can share their expertise, offer advice, provide guidance, and feedback on work-related tasks. Long-term graduates reported allowing new hires to shadow them while doing intake and being a resource for interns and new hires.

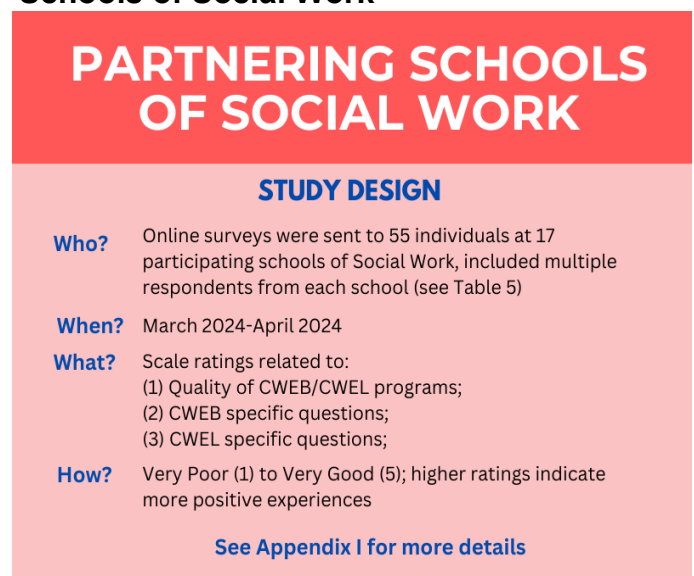
Long-term graduates have shown leadership in their agencies in a variety of ways. They have instituted new initiatives in their county agencies, advocated for their clients and coworkers, and implemented new training programs. One long-term graduate developed a pilot program to more effectively support families impacted by substance use. Of leadership, a long-term graduate stated: *“I lead by example by putting my best foot forward and always thinking about the safety and/or benefit of the child.”*

## Partnering Schools of Social Work

### Survey procedures and methods

The study design can be found in Figure 12. In addition to the scaled questions, open-ended questions asked respondents to describe student caliber, positive elements

**Figure 12. Survey Design for Partnering Schools of Social Work**



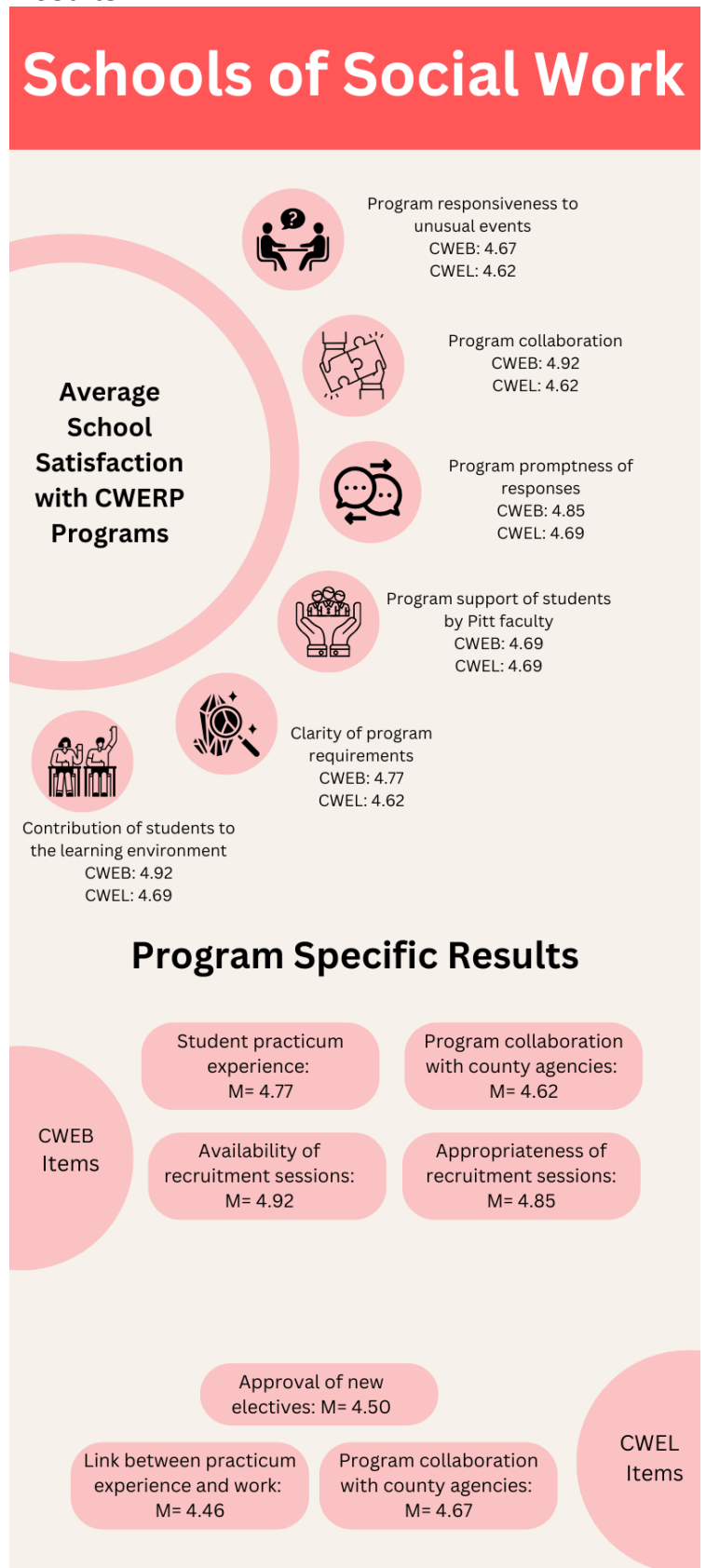


of the CWEB/CWEL programs, and problems or suggestions for program improvement. In the second part of the survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of an array of core competencies and traditional criteria to select CWEB students. Results of these items can be found in the Core Competency section below.

*How do Pennsylvania schools of social work view the CWEB and CWEL programs?*

Responses indicate that school administrators continue to be satisfied with the quality of the CWEB and CWEL programs, as seen in Figure 13. Ratings for both programs were high, with item averages hovering around 4.5 or above. School administrators recognized the contributions of CWEB/CWEL students to the learning environment by rating that item highly for both programs. Historically, CWEL students are rated highly for their contribution to the learning environment because of their years of experience in child welfare. Much like their CWEL counterparts, CWEB students' experiences

**Figure 13. Partnering Schools of Social Work Results**



in their practicum placements enable them to provide unique input into the classroom setting by sharing the realities of working with children and families.

### Open-ended responses

School administrators described CWEB and CWEL students as high-caliber students that are dedicated to service. CWEL students are valued for their classroom contributions, as illustrated by one respondent, *“The CWEL students are consistently excellent members of our community. The faculty praise their strengths and their ability to connect learning in the classroom to applied learning in the community.”* CWEB students were applauded for their desire to have a meaningful impact within the social work profession, evidenced by this comment from an administrator: *“The current year CWEB student is the top of her cohort. She could do any type of social work but she chose CYS. She believes that she will learn so much, it is a great entry into social work and she can make a difference. She truly wants to make a difference.”*

School administrators did note that part-time CWEL students seem to struggle with their multiple commitments: *“The current CWEL students appear to be very strong academically, although some struggle with the balance of work and school.”* When discussing the positive aspects of the CWEB program, school administrators noted the financial incentives and the exposure to other human service agencies that CWEB students receive during their internships and subsequent employment. CWEL school administrators talked about the collaborative relationship they had with CWEL program administrators, the support CWEL students received, and the overall opportunity the CWEL program provides for county child welfare workers.



## County Child Welfare Agency Administrators

### Survey procedures and methods

Details about the study design are provided in Figure 14. Agency directors were asked how well CWEB graduates are prepared for child welfare work, the impact of the CWEB/CWEL programs on their agency, the administration of the CWEB/CWEL programs, and the strategies they utilize to retain graduates. Additionally, agency directors were asked to rate CWEB and

CWEL graduates on a series of core competencies. The results from these items are discussed in the Core Competency section below.

### How do child welfare agency administrators view the CWEB and CWEL programs?

County administrators acknowledge the value of CWEB/CWEL for their agencies by rating these programs on the higher end of the scale (CWEB:  $M=4.56$ ; CWEL:  $M=4.55$ ). Administrators consistently rated the impact of the CWEB and CWEL programs between “slightly well” and “moderately well” as seen in Figure 15. The CWEB program was rated lower than the CWEL program in every aspect of program impact. This finding may be related to the difference in maturity between CWEB and CWEL graduates. CWEB students, even after completing a yearlong internship in a county child welfare agency, still lack confidence in their skills as a caseworker because of their short tenure on the job. CWEL graduates, however, have been employed at the agency at least two years and can apply their newfound skills to their current caseloads.

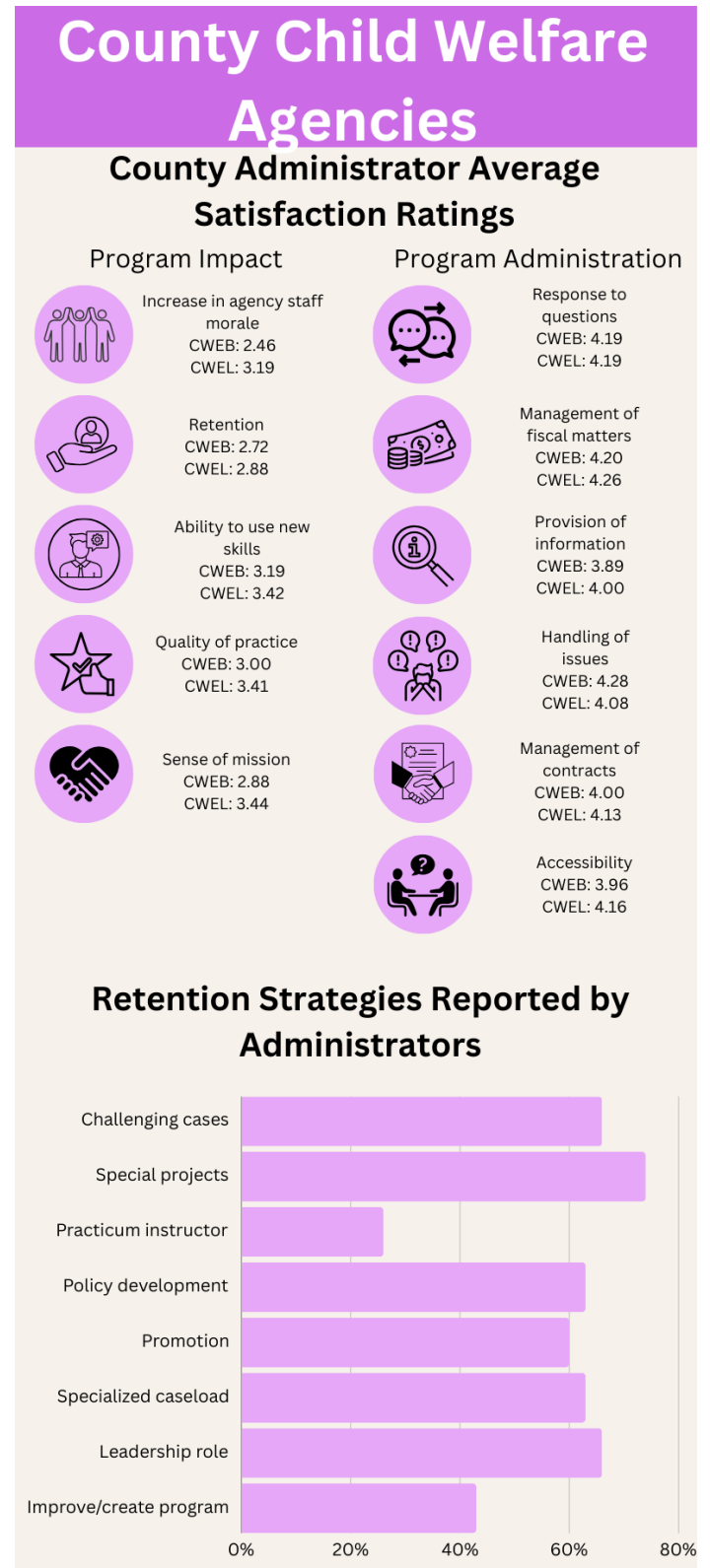
**Figure 14. Survey Design for County Child Welfare Administrators**



County administrators rated CWEB graduates between “moderately well” and “very well” in terms of their preparedness to work in child welfare. In fact, county administrators rated CWEB graduates’ readiness to carry a caseload highest of all the competencies (M=4.00). Responses to this question can be found in Table 3, [Appendix I](#).

Graduates of the CWEB and CWEL programs are seen as valuable assets to the county child welfare workforce. County administrators utilize the skills of these well-educated workers for special projects, challenging cases, leadership roles, and policy development as shown in Figure 15. County administrators were presented with a list of potential initiatives that may be occurring in their agencies and were asked to rate their CWEB/CWEL graduates’ involvement in these initiatives. Graduates were involved in almost all of the items listed. County administrators also mentioned CWEB/CWEL graduates being involved in participating in clinical unit work. The full list of these initiatives along with the ratings can be found in Table 4, [Appendix I](#).

**Figure 15. County Child Welfare Administrator Results**



## Core Competencies

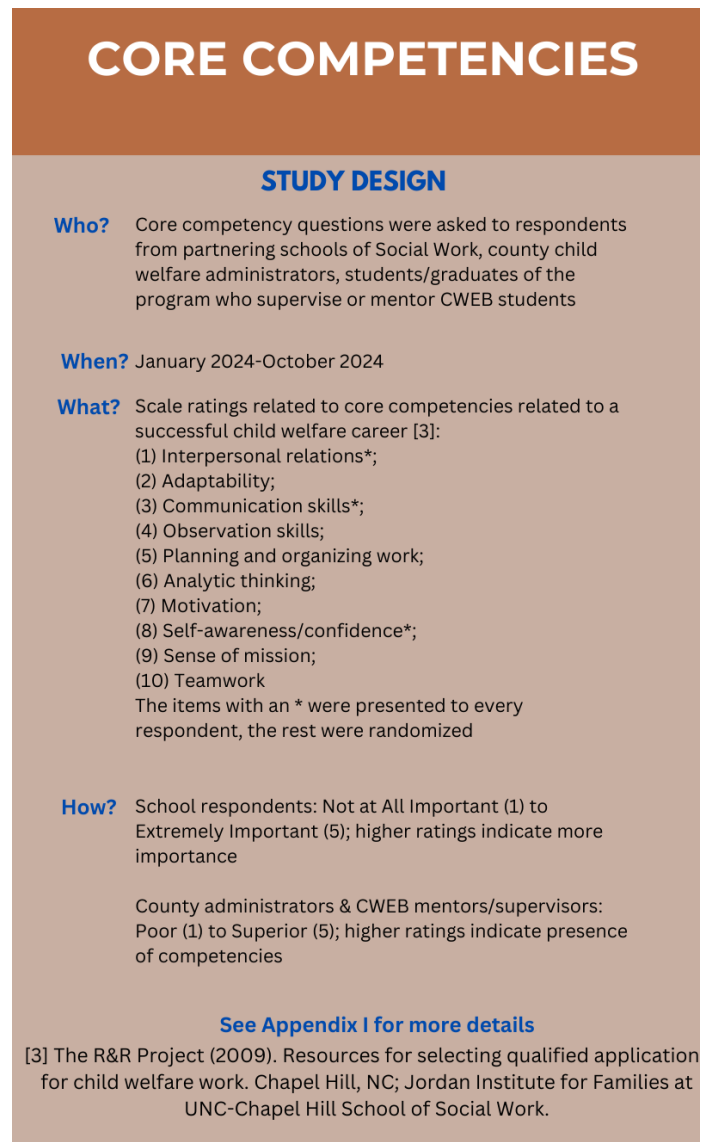
### Survey procedures and methods

Details about the study design can be found in Figure 16. In addition to the core competencies, school administrators were asked to rate the importance of six traditional criteria when selecting CWEB students – student GPA, writing ability, faculty recommendation, financial need, engagement in extracurricular activities, and interest in working with children and families. CWEB mentors/supervisors were identified from the pool of current part-time CWEL students and from recent and long-term CWEL and CWEL graduates who indicated that they mentor/supervise CWEB students in their agencies.

### How do county/school administrators and CWEB mentors/supervisors rank CWEB program participants on the core competencies?

Responses indicate that school administrators value the core competencies for selecting child welfare workers but place equal value on some of the traditional markers of qualification. Similarly, county administrators and CWEB mentors/supervisors rated CWEB graduates around the “Good” to “Very Good” range on the core competencies. The full list of the core competencies along with the ratings can be found in Tables 5-8, [Appendix I](#).

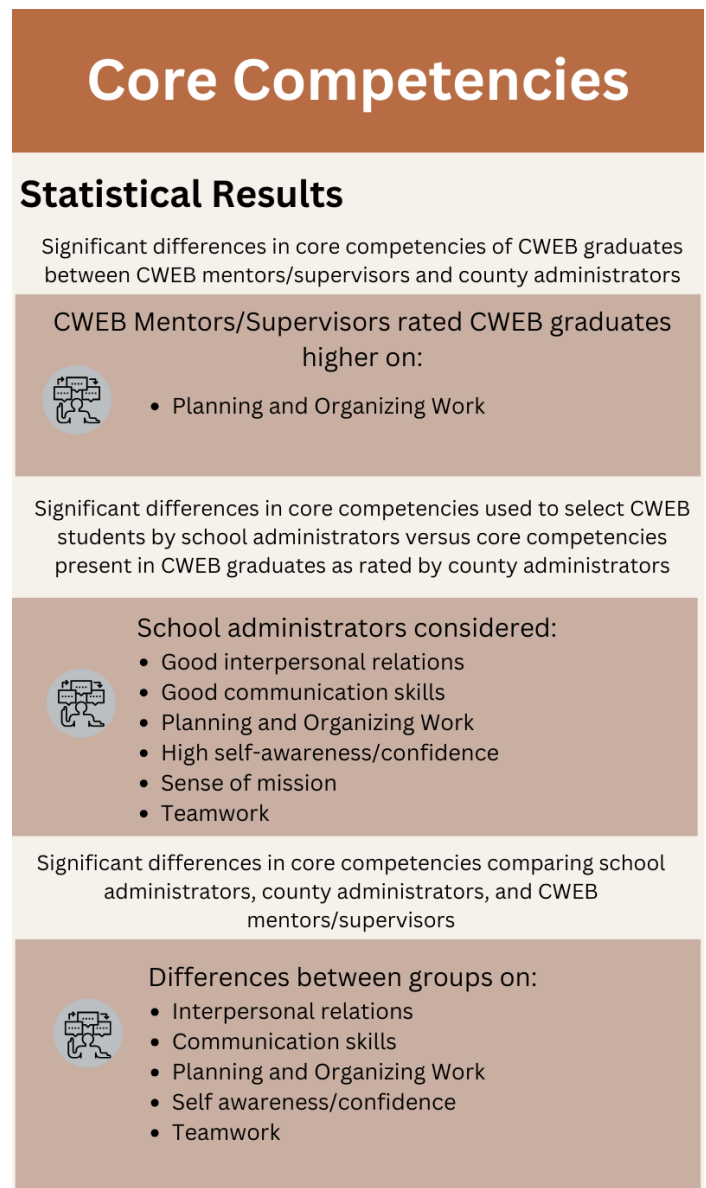
**Figure 16. Survey Design for Core Competencies**



A series of statistical analyses were conducted to explore the following: 1) did agency respondents rate CWEB and CWEL graduates differently on the 10 core competencies; 2) were there differences between the core competencies that school respondents looked for in CWEB applicants and the core competencies the agency respondents saw in CWEB recent graduates; and 3) were there differences in the ratings of core competencies in CWEB participants when comparing school administrators, agency administrators, and CWEB mentors/supervisors? Agency administrators rated CWEL graduates highly on most of the competencies, highlighting their enhanced skills and education that results from advanced study and years in the field. However, agency administrators rated CWEB graduates similar to CWEL graduates on

“*analytic thinking*” (M=3.50) and “*teamwork*” (M=3.80). This finding may suggest that CWEB graduates’ social work education enables them to process case information and make adequate decisions. CWEB graduates contribute to their agencies by successfully working in their units and other areas of the agency in a team environment. Overall, school administrators felt that they considered every competency highly when looking for potential CWEB students, whereas county administrators rated the CWEB

Figure 17. Core Competency Results



students lower on the actual presence of core competencies. Domains where statistically significant differences were found can be seen in Figure 17. These results suggest that even though schools rated core competencies highly in regard to selecting students to participate in the CWEB program, county administrators aren't necessarily seeing these skills in graduates as they enter the workforce. This disconnect may pertain to a difference in the definition of the competency in a student versus that of a professional child welfare worker. Another possible explanation for this difference in perspective may be that county administrators expect new graduates to perform at a higher level than is reasonable for individuals who are just beginning child welfare work and learning how to transfer their knowledge into real-world practice.

Since starting data collection on these core competencies, we have reported that county agency administrators and those that supervise/mentor CWEB students within the agency rated CWEB students differently. County administrators tended to rate the students higher than their supervisors/mentors. This trend was not observed in the data for academic year 2023-2024. In fact, county agency administrators rated CWEB students lower on "*planning and organizing work*" ( $M=2.75$ ), "*communication skills*" ( $M=3.42$ ), and "*self-awareness/confidence*" ( $M=3.21$ ). These results suggest that county administrators are becoming more involved in the day-to-day supervision of CWEB graduates and students.

## Overall Summary

### Is there a career pathway?

One of the goals of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which a professional education and career pathway is in place for the child welfare workforce, and how recruitment at the undergraduate level can help foster a long-term career in public child welfare. The ideal education and career pathway for a child welfare professional is displayed in Figure 18.

**Figure 18. Child Welfare Career Pathway**



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Participation in the CWEB and CWEL programs ensures a well-educated and explicitly trained workforce, which will elevate the quality of casework practice in the Commonwealth. Almost seven percent (6.7%) of the current CWEL student respondents said that they received their degrees through the CWEB program. The majority of these CWEL students (83%)

are still working at the agency in which they did their post-CWEB work commitment. In fact, 45% (30/67) of Pennsylvania's county child welfare agencies have a CWEL graduate in a leadership position within the agency. These data illustrate that the proposed career pathway is a viable way to support agency retention of workers.

County caseworker vacancies will always pose challenges for Pennsylvania's child welfare agencies. These agencies are struggling to retain and replenish their workforce. Child welfare caseworkers take on a significant responsibility when working to support families and assure the safety, permanency, and well-being of Pennsylvania's children. These skilled workers often feel that their efforts are not recognized by the agency and the community at large as seen by this quote: *"...Being in child welfare meant being very overworked, underpaid, under-appreciated, not valued, and seen as a cog in a machine. They say to practice self-care but there is no time when you are constantly working overtime and on call...."* Because of the increase in turnover and difficulties hiring new staff, CWEB and CWEL graduates have higher caseloads and difficulty fully utilizing their new skills, as evidenced by this comment, *"...I don't know if "enhanced skills" is proper terminology. Education is great - but it's far removed from the reality of the everyday in child welfare."* County administrators are creating unique ways to retain their staff including retention bonuses, investing in job and skill development, providing specialized units for workers to practice new skills, and creating specialized roles that are based on the needs and strengths of workers. CWEB and CWEL graduates can have a direct impact on the recruitment and retention of qualified child welfare caseworkers by providing county leadership feedback on the needs of direct service workers along with suggested solutions.

The partners of the Title IV-E education programs continue to praise the CWEB and CWEL programs and students and acknowledge the value of these programs to the Commonwealth. County administrators are eager to hire CWEB graduates and

welcome CWEB interns. Administrators are also using CWEL as a way to recruit new workers into the agency. The CWEB and CWEL programs provide Pennsylvania's county child welfare agencies with a mechanism for building a well-educated workforce and provide an opportunity to infuse core social work values into casework practice. CWEB graduates are viewed as more knowledgeable about child welfare laws and policies and more prepared to carry a caseload upon hire than other new hires. These attributes of CWEB graduates make them an asset to county child welfare agencies who can assign a caseload to a new CWEB graduate, thus reducing the burden on existing caseworkers in the agency. With the addition of seven new CWEB schools, county child welfare agencies have the potential to welcome more interns and workers in the 2024-2025 academic year.

CWEB and CWEL program participants are extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in these beneficial educational opportunities. CWEB participants talk about the benefit of completing a longer internship in child welfare and the benefits of the Foundations training in preparing them for their career in child welfare. CWEL participants acknowledge their growth in social work skills, their ability to impact families on their caseloads with their knowledge, and the opportunities to advance within their agencies.

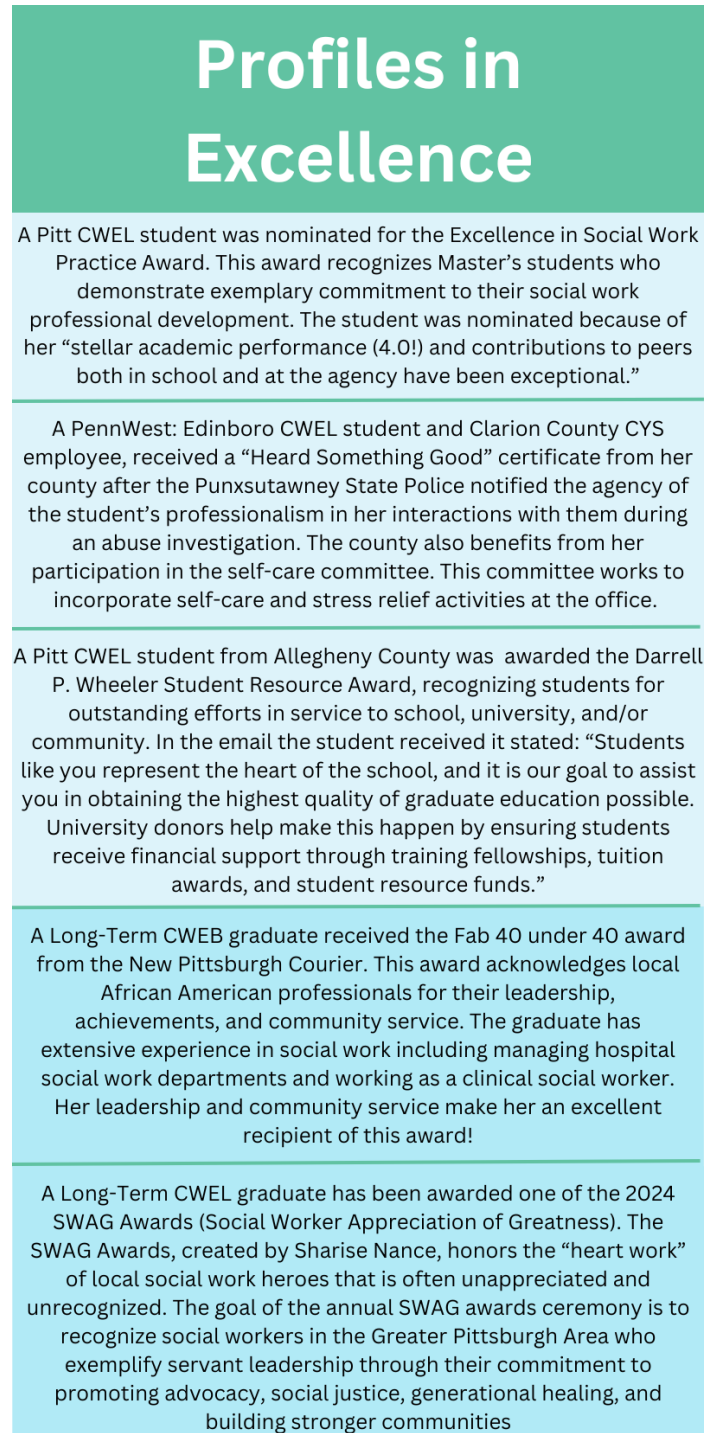
CWEB and CWEL students continue to thrive both academically and professionally. Close to 30% of CWEB and CWEL current students, recent graduates, and long-term graduates have received an award or recognition in the past year. A notable 44% were on the dean's list, graduated with honors, or became a member of a national honor society. Many participants were recognized for accomplishments in their county agencies by receiving praise from supervisors, administrators, families on their caseloads, promotions, or creating new initiatives within their agencies. CWEB/CWEL graduates have received professional awards such as the Pam Cousins Award, the



John Wilson Shining Star Award, Excellence in Service Award, and the Power of Work Advocacy Award, just to name a few. Other accomplishments of our CWEB and CWEL program participants can be seen in Figure 19.

Since promotions, raises, and opportunities for advancement may be difficult for some counties to offer to CWEL graduates, it is important for county administrators to create meaningful opportunities for this group of child welfare workers to utilize their newly developed skills in the agency. Counties may consider creating mentoring programs where more senior CWEB/CWEL staff can provide assistance and guidance to new caseworkers. Another option could be to generate peer connections among CWEB/CWEL graduates and those starting in the CWEB/CWEL programs as an additional level of support for new students. Counties can also find other ways to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of their CWEB and CWEL employees such as internal awards or recognition. These acknowledgements can boost the morale of our graduates and let them know they are

**Figure 19. CWEB and CWEL Accomplishments**



valued by their agencies. With the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, counties should consider utilizing their CWEB and CWEL workers to help spearhead the continuous quality improvement requirements of selected evidence-based practices. CWEB and CWEL graduates also have the skills to help implement the Universal Assessment and support family engagement initiatives. CWEB and CWEL graduates have unique skills that enable them to create positive change in the child welfare workforce – to keep them engaged and interested in the work requires support and creative thinking on the part of supervisors and county administrators but will provide the county with numerous benefits in return.

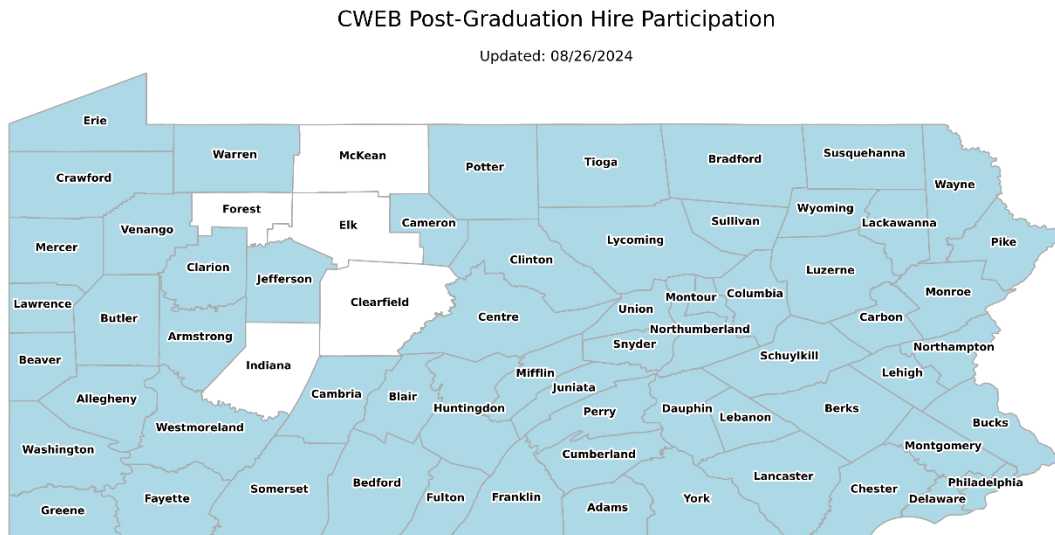
## **Discussion**

### ***CWEB***

After twenty-three years of operation, the CWEB program has made a remarkable impact: fifteen universities, 62 counties (offering internship and/or post-graduation employment), and 1,397 graduates. Strong collaboration has enabled the program to prepare individuals for work in public child welfare and increased the recruiting of CWEB graduates by county agencies. Figure 20 shows the impact of the CWEB program on the county child welfare workforce.

As a result of their internship experiences, CWEB graduates have exposure to the various aspects of child welfare casework with some participants carrying a small caseload while interning. This fully prepares them for entry-level work in child welfare. CWEB graduates have entered the child welfare workforce in 93% of the counties in Pennsylvania, demonstrating the strong impact our undergraduate education program continues to have on child welfare services across the state.

## Figure 20. CWEB Post-Graduation Hire Participation



The analysis of evaluation data over the past 23 years has been key to identifying areas for program improvement. We refined our admission criteria and review processes to include interviews for particular applicants to better gauge their interest and fit in child welfare practice. The internship guidance tool has been well received by students and county practicum instructors, ensuring CWEB students experience the varied tasks of a child welfare professional prior to starting their professional career. The CWEB program provides intensive case management that has increased enrollment of students in the state-mandated competency and skills-building training, *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice*. CWEB students are assigned to a Training Liaison at their internship county and a Regional Resource Specialist at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center who assists them with enrollment in Foundations and the initiation of their certification training record.

CWEB students are invited to participate in supportive bi-monthly Zoom calls with CWEB program administrators from the University of Pittsburgh. In this reporting period, six Zoom meetings were held with participation averaging about 5 CWEB students per session. Close to a quarter of CWEB students who participated in an initial meeting also participated in follow-up meetings. Despite varying the days of the week the Zoom meetings are scheduled, some CWEB students still experienced a conflict with their practicum or class time. New topics of discussion were developed for meetings during the 2024-2025 academic year to address the interests and concerns of CWEB participants.

Navigating the county hiring process continues to present challenges for students. Pennsylvania counties fall into one of two categories: Civil Service and Merit Hire. Currently, over 60% of counties follow the standardized processes of the Pennsylvania State Civil Service Commission when hiring new employees<sup>26</sup>. The remaining counties have been granted permission to create their own Merit Hiring processes which can be distinct to each county. CWEB faculty work closely with students to help them understand and navigate both Civil Service and Merit Hire employment processes so that they have employment options in counties throughout the state. Additionally, some counties contract their child welfare services to outside agencies. While these contracted agencies offer child welfare services, they are not classified as public child welfare positions and, thus, do not fulfill the CWEB employment requirement. CWEB faculty work closely with students to help them understand and navigate both Civil Service and Merit Hire employment processes, while also identifying contracted positions, so that students have valid employment options across counties statewide.

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<sup>26</sup>See <https://www.scsc.pa.gov/About-Us/Pages/Commission-Mission-Statement.aspx>

Close follow-up by the CWEB Academic Coordinator and the CWEB/CWEL Agency Coordinator has resulted in most graduates securing county agency employment within 60 days of graduation. We continue to make concerted efforts to connect graduates with agencies and provide technical support for portfolio development and interviewing skills. County agencies are eager to hire CWEB graduates and welcome them into the workforce.

Despite best efforts, a career in public child welfare is not for everyone. Occasionally, a student is ambivalent about accepting a job in a county public child welfare agency and decides not to follow through with securing employment. When students fail to fulfill their contractual obligation, the CWERP program initiates a targeted collection procedure to recoup funds dispensed on their behalf. Repayment can be discontinued for those who are initially in default, but subsequently become employed in public child welfare.

Suggestions for CWEB program improvement and our action plan are summarized in the Recommendations section of this report. Some suggestions are new, while others are ongoing or have been addressed.

## **CWEL**

After 29 years of operation, the CWEL program continues to recruit students and counties while maintaining close, collaborative working relationships with the Department of Human Services, students, county agencies, and schools of social work in Pennsylvania. The number and diversity of counties has increased over time. To attract a more diverse applicant pool, CWEL offers virtual information sessions. These sessions provide more flexibility and convenience for potential CWEL students to receive program information by utilizing a virtual platform. Further, we have responded to concerns regarding school program availability in certain areas of the state by including the fully online MSW programs offered by several schools in our consortium.

Feedback indicates that the CWEL program is well-administered, user friendly, and is credited as having a long-term impact on public child welfare practice as an incentive to improve worker retention.

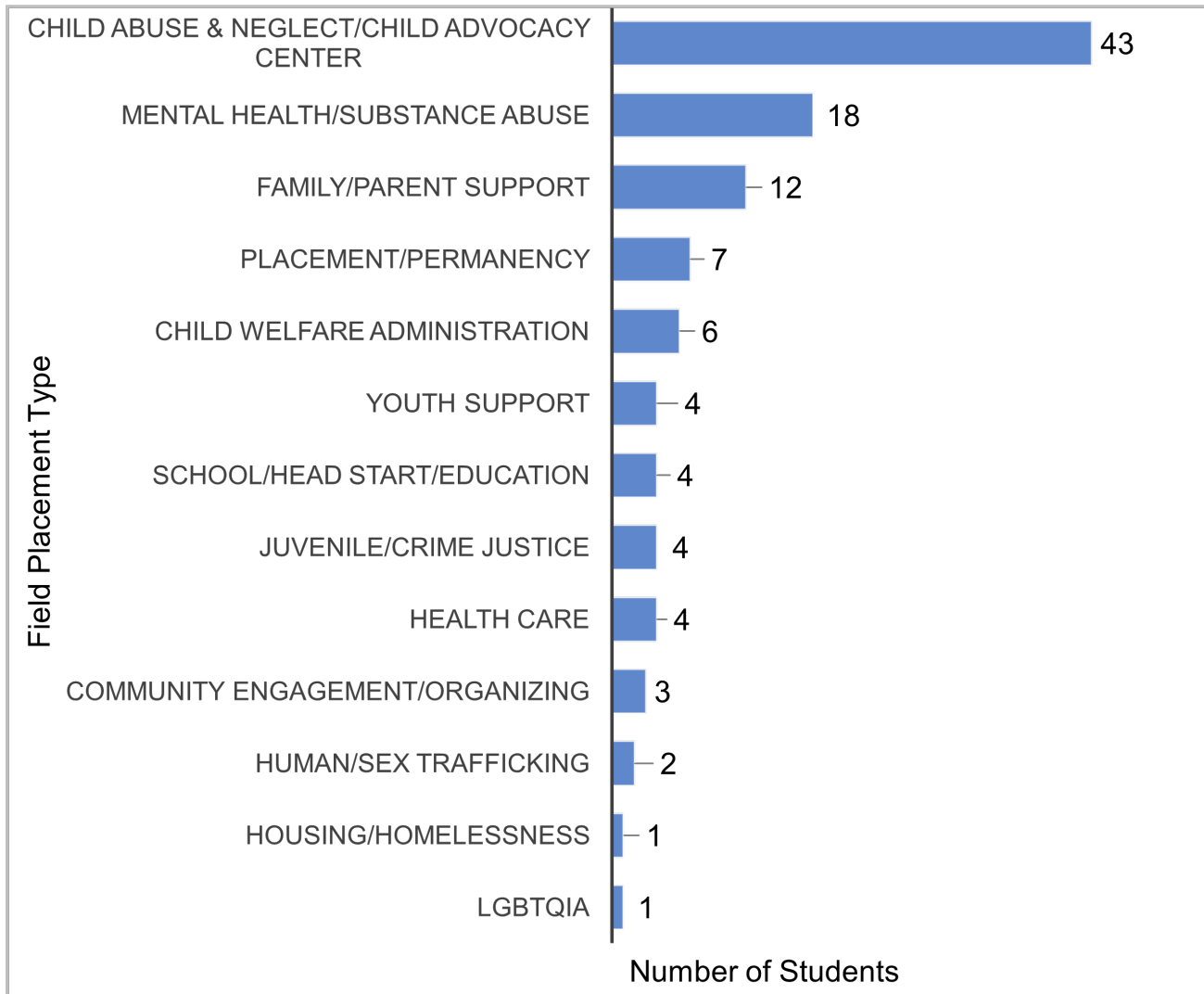
CWEL students contribute to human service programs in both the public and private sector through active engagement in practicum work in a variety of community-based agencies. Practicum experiences serve dual purposes for CWEL students by providing skills and knowledge of various systems to share with their colleagues and offering the experience and insight of the child welfare system to the practicum agencies. CWEL graduates continue to speak highly of their practicum experiences and the knowledge gained in different community and state-level agencies. Figure 21 illustrates the breadth of programs that benefit from the skill and expertise of our child welfare students.

This was the inaugural year of implementation for licensure reimbursement for both CWEB and CWEL graduates. CWEL graduates talked about their gratitude for the opportunity to have the licensure reimbursement. In fact, seven CWEL graduates have participated in this program. A total number of 12 CWEL graduates have taken the licensure exam this year. A concerted outreach was made with CWEB graduates to notify them of this opportunity.

A main goal of the CWEL program is the development of leadership within child welfare. We follow the career path of our participants and observe that CWEL graduates currently hold county agency management/administration positions in 45% (30/67) of Pennsylvania counties. Of note within that group, eight of our CWEL leaders were also previous CWEB graduates. In addition, many CWEL graduates and current CWEL students hold supervisory positions or roles that involve mentorship, quality assurance,

and practice initiatives such as teaming and conferencing. Of note, 12 CWEB-only graduates also occupy high-level county leadership positions.

**Figure 21. CWEL Practicum Placement Types**



We applaud the promotion of our graduates into these key leadership roles and the new vision and energy that they bring to public child welfare. Figure 22 illustrates this impact and includes leaders among both the CWEB and the CWEL programs. Efforts continue to be directed toward gathering comprehensive data on leadership activities among our graduates as we believe that the data shown below is an underestimate of the actual leadership being displayed by our program graduates.





## Organizational Climate

One prominent and persistent theme concerns the climate, salaries, job classifications, assignments, and opportunities for career development which graduates of the CWEL program encounter upon their return to the county agencies. The following key points have been repeated by multiple respondents and noted consistently in our annual program evaluations:

- difficulty in negotiating assignments that capitalize on the returning worker's new skills, knowledge, and advanced training;
- lack of differentiation in job classifications among workers with and without graduate degrees;
- lack of salary incentives in most counties;
- hostile, skeptical, and jealous reception workers sometimes face upon return to their agency after graduation;
- scarcity of opportunities for promotion in many counties;
- lack of opportunities for leadership and/or a voice in decision making;
- the sense that advanced educational achievement is not matched with respect and growth opportunities.

In some counties, returning graduates have been embraced and invited to participate in creative and challenging assignments that are advantageous to both the worker and the agency. Participation in Quality Services Reviews (QSRs), membership in committees associated with Pennsylvania's Practice Improvement Plan, membership in specific workgroups (i.e., Family First Prevention Services Act implementation, universal assessment, Diversity Taskforce, TA Collaborative, CWIS, refinement of Supervisor Training for new supervisors) are a few of the projects that benefit from the expertise of CWEL graduates. Many graduates are also involved in practice initiatives such as the early developmental screening of young children, family teaming and

conferencing (e.g., Family Group Conferencing, Family Teaming, Family Group Decision Making), family finding, and enhancing the use of data-driven decision making. Efforts to achieve race equity and inclusion within the child welfare system and the use of evidence-based treatments to prevent higher levels of care and out-of-home placement are important areas where CWEL graduates can be agency champions and leaders. CWEL graduates are invited to become mentors and supervisors of CWEB students in their agencies; many assume prominent roles in leading youth and family engagement practices, and others are active in continuous quality improvements initiatives within their counties. Many current trainers and consultants of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center are CWEL graduates. Graduates are also members of statewide committees and workgroups. Others have involved themselves in the education of future child welfare professionals by becoming adjunct instructors at schools of social work and/or supervisors to CWEB interns.

The contrast in the moods of those graduates who have enrichment opportunities and those who do not is stark. One group of graduates speaks of long-term commitment to public child welfare and the other group is thinking of alternative ways they can serve children and their families where the opportunities may be a better fit with their skills. Graduates rarely speak of defaulting on their commitments; when they do contemplate other options after completion of their commitments, such as moving to employment with private providers or other human service entities, they do so with sadness for the most part. **The CWEL faculty views the comments of graduates about agency climate as representative of the key deciding element in child welfare employee retention.** Our research, and that of others, strongly supports this finding. Counties and agencies that ignore or minimize these concerns should not be surprised by the loss of valuable staff. Nor should administrators and agency leaders embrace the false belief that advanced education serves as an inoculation against

turnover. While there is extensive research evidence of the importance of non-salary factors in retention, the results of this and previous reviews affirm that salary remains a particularly important issue in Pennsylvania. **Along with supportive agency working conditions, adequate compensation is critical to the stability of our child welfare workforce.**

### Worker Retention

Well-educated and skilled professionals who serve children at risk and their families will benefit public child welfare wherever they practice and will return the investment made on their training by the taxpayers many times over. However, a major opportunity is lost when agencies do not take full advantage of the skills, optimism, and enthusiasm of the returning workers. Retention has always been one of the goals of federal funding for child welfare training and is central to the mission of the CWEB and CWEL programs. It is well known from research conducted over two decades ago that workers who are skilled in the services they are asked to provide and who receive strong agency support have higher retention rates<sup>27</sup>. All indications suggest that CWEB and CWEL students have received excellent training and education. It remains for the partners in this enterprise to be creative, innovative, and energetic in following through with organizational change after the graduates' return. The 12 or more months CWEB students and the 20 or more months full-time CWEL students spend in educational preparation is very modest when compared to the many years their potential child welfare careers will span following graduation.

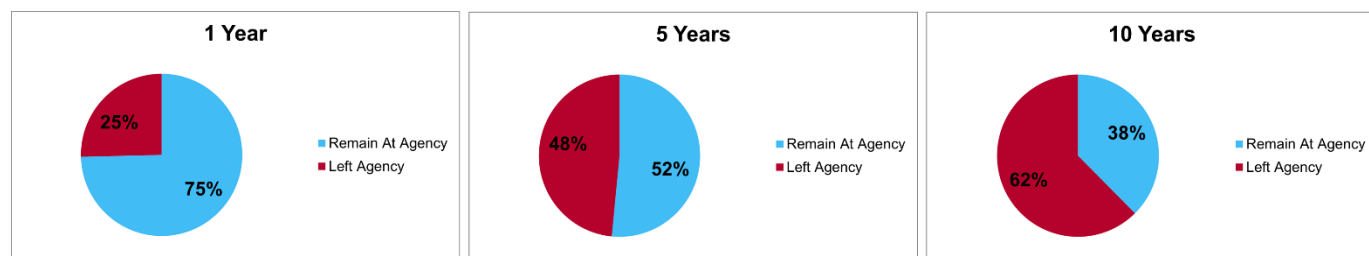
CWEL has a remarkable record of retention. Of the 1,743 graduates who have completed the program, only 21 have failed to complete their work commitment over a 29-year period. Another 1,119 have resigned after completing their commitments for all

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<sup>27</sup> Jones, L.P. & Okamura, A. (2000). Reprofessionalizing child welfare services: An evaluation of a Title IV-E training program. *Research on Social Work Practice, 10*(2), 607-621.

reasons. Again, these reasons include not only voluntary departures from child welfare employment, but also retirement, death, permanent disability, relocation of a spouse, and a variety of other unique circumstances. This represents an overall loss rate of only 8.4% a year for the life of the program. Figure 23 below illustrates retention among our graduates at one, five, and ten-year intervals post-commitment. The average commitment period is approximately 1½ years. This commitment calculation includes individuals who were awarded advanced standing in their academic program by virtue of having a BSW/BASW degree, those who completed a full, two-year academic program, and those who obtain CWEL funding for only a portion of their academic studies. Figure 23 illustrates that of those whose commitment ended over 10 years ago, almost 38% remain in their agencies nearly 12 years after graduation (1½ years average commitment plus 10 years post-commitment). This does not include those who continued in the child welfare arena in other agency settings.

**Figure 23. Long-term Commitment of CWEL Graduates**



The research literature on long-term retention of workers with no legal work commitment clearly shows the importance of agency climate, quality of supervision, intrinsic worker fulfillment, job satisfaction from appropriate assignments, and personnel policies, along with salaries, as some of the keys to long-term retention<sup>28,29,30</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> de Guzman, A., Carver-Roberts, T., Leake, R., & Rienks, S. (2020). Retention of child welfare workers: Staying strategies and supports. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 14(1), 60-79.

<sup>29</sup> Glisson, C. and Green, P. (2011). Organizational climate, services, and outcomes in child welfare systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(8), 582-591.

<sup>30</sup> Glisson, C. and Hemmelgarn, A. (1998). The effects of organizational climate and interorganizational coordination on the quality and outcomes of children's service systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22(5), 401-421.

Unfortunately, there is little that CWEB or CWEL alone can do about any of these important factors. It is critical for the Department of Human Services, the University, county agencies, and PCYA to work together in implementing multiple strategies to address organizational and workforce issues. Organizational effectiveness interventions provide a structure for defining, assessing, planning, implementing, and monitoring workforce development strategies<sup>31</sup>. While implementation at both the state and county levels is highly political and often difficult, we believe that our longitudinal research on the retention of CWEL students and our expertise in organizational effectiveness can inform this important work. The Center for States, Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative and the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) have provided leadership in workforce development for child welfare. (See <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/topics/workforce-development>; <http://www.ncwwi.org>).

#### Full-Time Versus Part-Time Education

The subject of the advantages and disadvantages of full and part-time study continues to surface among the CWEL students. We have made the following points in previous annual reports and repeat them here. Clearly, full-time versus part-time enrollment is one of the areas in which county differences occur. We acknowledge that workforce size and capacity is one of the primary factors driving county-level decision making about approval for an employee to attend school. We also understand that collective bargaining agreements may influence permissions and the selection process. We recognize the authority of County Commissioners to enter into contractual agreements regarding their county agency staff. We also note that there is no doubt from student evaluations and the many years of collective wisdom among our partnering

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<sup>31</sup> Basso, P., Cahalane, H., Rubin, J., & Kelley, K.J. (2013). Organizational effectiveness strategies for child welfare. In H. Cahalane (Ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Child Welfare Practice* (pp. 257-288). New York: Springer.

schools that the educational experiences of full-time students are clearly superior. Full-time students have many more opportunities to interact with their academic advisors and other faculty outside of class sessions, more time to network with other students, more time available for academic research and study groups, more choice of elective courses, more time to engage in assignments, and more options for completing their internships. They can do this with less commuting, less stress from work-related responsibilities, less conflict between work schedules (e.g., court appearances) and class schedules, and less time away from their family responsibilities.

The tuition for full-time completion of a degree is also less than for part-time study. Full-time students require only half as much time or less to complete the CWEL program. This means a quicker return to full productivity in the agency. Part-time students often take as long as four years to complete, and there is a higher rate of academic disruption (and sometimes program discontinuation) among part-time students compared to full-time students. Three to four years is an extraordinary amount of time for students to balance the demands of child welfare work, academic studies, and the other responsibilities in their lives. Our experience over the past 29 years confirms that part-time students are at a substantially higher risk for program discontinuation compared to full-time students.

A frequent agency concern with full-time study for CWEL students is whether the agency can fill the position while the student is away for full-time study. The counties that have hired replacements have experienced no major difficulties and have been able to do so without any financial cost because of the reimbursement they receive for the salary and benefits of the trainee in school. Schools and students almost unanimously favor the full-time model. Of the withdrawals from the program prior to graduation, seventy-seven percent (77%) were part-time students. Our discussions with these students confirm that the challenges inherent with part-time study, such as stress and

scheduling, were the determining factors. These are serious, costly, and unnecessary losses. Even the most conscientious caseworker and diligent student can manage only a finite number of competing demands for time, attention, and action before something gives way. For most every child welfare professional (and certainly not exclusive to those in school), the sacrifices most often made are those that are personal, such as advanced education, self-care activities, time with family, and other forms of fulfillment.

Another county agency concern with full-time study is the belief that part-time students are likely to have higher retention rates after graduation. There is absolutely no evidence for this contention. By far, the greatest number of complaints and the most impassioned concerns from part-time students are that they are not permitted to engage in full-time study. These students are angry, bitter, under pressure from their families, sleepless at night because of their worries over the children in their caseloads, and some express a determination to resign as soon as their commitments are completed. We have witnessed this during the history of the CWEL program and know from our collaborative work with other IV-E programs across the country that high levels of stress among part-time students is a universal phenomenon. **We believe that only authorizing part-time study is a shortsighted and counter-productive agency policy.**

Part-time study while working full-time is difficult even under the most ideal circumstances. The competing responsibilities of work, home, and school are encountered by all part-time, working students. This reality is compounded for child welfare students by the demands of the job (i.e., court dates, unanticipated emergencies, staff shortages). During the past several years, these stressors have continued to be amplified by budget crises, increased incidents of racial injustice, and the overall unpredictability of our national political landscape. Additionally, the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the resulting economic and



personal losses along with a client population besieged by opioid addiction, has overloaded the capacity of the child welfare system. These issues are not unique to Pennsylvania.

As a primarily rural state, Pennsylvania has many counties with a low population density. The size of the county agency workforce ranges from 700 in the most populated urban area to a workforce of four in one rural county. Clearly, in smaller counties a reduction of even one individual in full-time study represents a huge loss for the workforce. Full-time study may not be feasible. For part-time enrollment to be viable and more satisfying for participants, both counties and schools need to be flexible with scheduling and provide enhanced supports to assist employees/students in the balancing of multiple responsibilities. This is a necessary workforce investment.

Online degree programs are often viewed as a solution for decreasing the stress associated with part-time study. While offering accessibility, online coursework of quality and merit is both rigorous and time-consuming. Students and agency administrators must be careful of the misperception that online course work is synonymous with no disruption to work responsibilities or to family life. Practicum placements are required and synchronous courses involve the same designated meeting time as in-person classes. There is often little flexibility regarding due dates and completion of required assignments. Our small pilot study conducted with CWEL students enrolled in an online child welfare course several years ago found that although the students valued the convenience of the online option, they missed the interpersonal connection with their faculty and peers and would have preferred face-to-face contact.<sup>32</sup> The validity of these preliminary findings were reinforced during the pandemic when most universities were operating remotely. Convenience aside, most students and faculty prefer in-person

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<sup>32</sup> Child Welfare Education and Research Programs (2017, November). *Ready to learn? An analysis of online education and training*. University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

learning and find it more conducive to knowledge and skill development when safety measures are maintained.

Administratively, only full-time students may be used by the University in generating the substantial matching funds it contributes to balance the project's budget. The CWEL program began as a largely full-time program. In the 2023-2024 academic year, nearly one-half (48%) of the newly admitted students were part-time. This serves to potentially reduce the total number of students who can participate, reduces the federal contribution to the program, and increases the state matching funds required.

#### Academic and Personnel Differences

Another concern which all four partners must constantly struggle with is differences in policies or requirements. With personnel policies differing across county agencies, CWEB and CWEL students in the same classroom may be subject to contrasting requirements when compared to their program peers. Curricular requirements or academic calendars among the schools may differ enough that students from the same county (but not attending the same school) also have contrasting requirements. These differences include variation in internship policies, such as expectations for employment-based practicum placements, who can be appointed as a practicum instructor, and the amount of practicum hours required in the concentration and/or foundation year(s).

The CWEB and CWEL faculty are keenly aware of these differences and seek to assist our partners in being aware of alternative approaches that might be helpful. But in the final analysis, uniformity is not the goal. These are not seen as fairness issues. As long as the Title IV-E regulations are being followed, the effort has been to allow for local conditions and needs to guide local decision-making. This is true for county agencies and among schools of social work. Workers in some counties are employed under union conditions. Others are not. Small counties face somewhat different

personnel issues than larger ones. Some counties enjoy a relatively stable workforce with very few open positions; others are chronically understaffed. Child welfare salaries vary across the state. Counties operate under a range of governance structures (commissioners, mayors, and county executives) that exert a strong influence on policies and procedures for the human services workforce.

College or university calendars control social work department and school schedules. The number of child welfare students in each school influences the number of child welfare courses that can be offered. Minimum enrollment targets are established that determine whether a particular course can run in a given term or not. Some schools or departments of social work operate under strict operational policies that are controlled by a centralized university administration that determines which courses can be offered, in what format, and how often they can be placed on the academic calendar. Consequently, students and others who observe some differences are quite correct and refer to a diversity that is neither possible nor desirable to control centrally. It is always the goal of the CWEB and CWEL programs to provide:

1. Easy access to the programs for trainees, counties, and schools;
2. Equitable distribution of resources that assures as many schools and counties can participate as possible;
3. Streamlined administrative procedures and timely reimbursements;
4. Strict observation of Title IV-E regulations;
5. Full disclosure of all aspects of the program's operation among the partners and to the public;
6. As little interference as possible with selection of trainees and implementation models by counties and with schools in their admission processes;
7. Recognitions of the achievements and contributions of our students;
8. Recommendations for workforce improvement.

## **Recommendations**

We are committed to continuous quality improvement and understand that no successful program is static. Areas for ongoing focus in both programs and the action steps completed or in progress are summarized below.

### **CWEB**

#### **1. Improve successful outcomes for students by refining admission criteria and participant selection**

- Student transcripts and a personal statement regarding the desire to pursue public child welfare added to the application packet (completed)
- Competency-based rating instrument used to assess CWEB applications (completed/ongoing)
- Periodic review of interrater reliability (ongoing)
- Interviews held with a sample of applicants (ongoing)

#### **2. Further guidance to university faculty on the details of civil service requirements and other technical aspects related to county internship and employment**

- Targeted discussions during informational meetings with schools and students (ongoing)
- Discussions to include that CWEB students completing internships within non-civil service counties can also register as a county casework intern, so they are eligible for jobs in civil service counties (ongoing)
- “Frequently Asked Questions” posted on CWERP website (completed; updated as needed)

- Diagram of civil service/merit hire internship pathway included in student manual (completed; updated as needed)
- CWEB presence at annual PA Association of Social Work Education (PASWE) meetings held in conjunction with PA-NASW (ongoing)

### **3. Maintain participation in Civil Service Social Work Internship program**

- Outreach to schools and students regarding the benefit of completing 975 hours of internship (e.g., civil service standing, ability to complete foundation training as part of internship, greater marketability for hiring, transition into Caseworker II position) (ongoing)
- County agency support for extended internship by CWEB students (ongoing)
- Flexibility among county agencies to also support the host school's requirement for internship hours, which is often between 400-600 hours. Extended internship requirements can be a deterrent to CWEB applicants (ongoing)

### **4. Increase successful program completion among “at risk” students (e.g., academic challenges, those experiencing unanticipated life events, foster care alumni)**

- Ongoing outreach and case management to students by CWEB faculty and staff (ongoing)
- Regular collaboration with school faculty (ongoing)
- Targeted interventions for individual students (ongoing)

### **5. Increase county participation in the CWEB program**

- Collaboration with counties through CWEB information sessions that include CWEB program faculty and staff, as well as Practice Improvement Specialists

and Regional Resource Specialists from the Child Welfare Resource Center  
(ongoing)

- School-county-program collaboration in the practicum process, including the use of the CWEB Internship Guidance tool jointly developed between county agency staff and CWEB program staff (ongoing)
- Presentations at PCYA & CCAP meetings in addition to other workgroups addressing recruitment/retention/workforce issues (ongoing)
- Informational sessions and reference to CWEB Internship Guidance tool (ongoing)

**6. Improve CWEB student enrollment in mandated child welfare skill and competency-based training, *Foundations of Pennsylvania Child Welfare Practice (“Foundations”)***

- Case management system pairing CWRC Resource Specialist with each CWEB student (in place and ongoing)
- Enrollment in *Foundations* during the CWEB students’ senior year and initiation of training record to document completion of modules in effect (ongoing)
- Collaboration with county Training Liaisons (ongoing)

**7. Improve leadership and professional development skills**

- Students encouraged to develop leadership and self-care skills during their academic/practicum experience (ongoing)
- Bachelor-level licensure in PA (Act 179 of 2014; adopted August 2020).  
Candidates can apply to take the qualifying exam at

<https://www.pals.pa.gov/#/page/default>)

- Plan for enrollment in CWEL program (ongoing)

#### **8. Improve successful job placement following graduation**

- Assistance by CWEB/CWEL Agency Coordinator in identifying county casework vacancies, facilitating referrals for interviews, and counseling regarding employment (ongoing)
- Collaboration with SCSC and merit hire counties (ongoing)
- Follow-up protocol with CWEB grads (ongoing)

#### **9. Address issues that arise in the transition to employment**

- Follow-up protocol for new graduates (ongoing)

#### **10. Improve dissemination of child welfare career development opportunity through CWEB and CWEL to prospective and current participants**

- Dissemination of realistic job preview video (completed)
- Informational sessions at participating schools (ongoing)
- Informational sessions with county agencies (ongoing)
- Collaboration with CWRC Regional Teams (ongoing)

### ***CWEL***

#### **1. Alteration in commitment time for part-time students**

- We note this issue for clarification: There is no option for an alteration in the legal commitment period for part-time students. The part-time student commitment period is pro-rated to avoid a longer commitment time and to promote equity. The commitment time for all participants begins upon graduation and is not subject to delay.

## **2. Expansion of commitment time for all participants**

- This is precluded by federal Title IV-E regulations [45 CFR, Ch. II § 235.63 (b) (1)]

## **3. Increase county agency support for part-time students**

- County agencies are encouraged to provide flexible scheduling, modified work assignments, and opportunities for practicum work outside the agency (ongoing)
- When difficulties arise involving a particular student, the county is actively engaged in problem solving and solution-building using a teaming model (ongoing)
- The CWEL program actively enforces a part-time academic load for part-time students. Part-time students may not assume full-time study, regardless of the source of tuition/fee payment, while participating in the CWEL program to complete school sooner (ongoing)

## **4. Continued focus upon agency working environment and opportunities for graduates to use their expanded skills and abilities within the agency and at the state level**

- Targeted intervention with agency supervisors and administrators; collaboration with CWRC Practice Improvement Specialists/Regional Teams (ongoing)
- Feedback to administrators (ongoing)
- CWERP faculty participation in state and national recruitment, retention, and workforce development initiatives (ongoing)
- CWEL graduate involvement in ongoing organizational effectiveness/CQI processes within counties (ongoing)



- Inclusion of CWEL graduates in state-wide practice and policy initiatives (i.e., PIP, FFPSA, Universal Assessment subcommittee(s), Quality Service Reviews, organizational effectiveness work, curriculum development and quality assurance committees, CWIS) (ongoing)

#### **5. Supervision and mentorship of CWEB program participants**

- CWEL graduates are encouraged to provide supervision and mentoring to CWEB students/graduates at their county agency (ongoing)
- County agency directors are encouraged to utilize CWEL graduates as practicum instructors, task supervisors, and mentors to CWEBs (ongoing)

#### **6. Permission for students to major in administration or macro practice**

- Students in a current administrative or managerial position are permitted to pursue an administrative or macro track. Those in direct service positions must focus on direct practice. This policy is in keeping with federal expectation that trainees are being prepared for best practice in that aspect of IV-E services to which they are assigned (ongoing)
- Students may take administration courses as electives; those approved for macro study are encouraged to take practice courses (ongoing)
- Continued exploration of cross-over option between direct practice/clinical and macro practice specializations among school programs (ongoing)

#### **7. Increase in full-time student enrollment**

- Counties are encouraged to permit full-time enrollment and hire replacement staff using the reimbursement received for the salary and benefits of the school trainee (ongoing)

**8. Inclusion of advanced level child welfare coursework in school curricula, particularly in evidence-informed and evidenced-based practices**

- Curricular consultation and technical assistance to schools (ongoing)
- Offering of courses targeted toward effective family engagement and teaming practices, motivational interviewing skills, enhanced assessment, trauma-informed care, and evidence-based practices (ongoing)
- Continued review of potential child welfare course offerings (ongoing)

**9. Enhance involvement of graduates in state-level policy and practice initiatives**

- Link graduates to statewide practice improvement initiatives (ongoing)
- PA's implementation of FFPSA services, Sex Trafficking & prudent parenting legislation, involvement in CFSR/QSR reviews, trauma-informed practice, and Universal Assessment work provide significant opportunities for graduates to become involved in high-level activities impacting the child welfare system (ongoing)
- Increase and sustain efforts to better integrate the CWEL and CWRC programs (ongoing)

**10. Gather more detailed information regarding the career trajectory of CWEL graduates**

- Efforts to develop a comprehensive workforce database for the public child welfare agencies in PA continue. We intend to provide a dashboard for each county, region, and the state at large (ongoing)
- CWEL graduates have been incorporated into the follow-up study protocol.

## **Overall Recommendations: CWEB and CWEL Programs**

### **1. Increase CWEB enrollment**

- A target of 50 participants is aspirational.
- Enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities has decreased an estimated 3.5% according to fall 2021 figures, totaling a two-year decline of 7.8% since 2019. This represented a loss of nearly 500,000 undergraduate students in the 2021-2022 Academic Year alone, continuing a historic trend that began with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although enrollment in both undergraduate and graduate programs has been trending downward over the past decade, the pandemic “turbocharged” the decline at the undergraduate level. This drop has been worse at community colleges and public, four-year institutions. Community colleges, which traditionally enroll more low-income students and students of color, have seen decreased enrollments by nearly 15% since 2019.<sup>33</sup> Additional data confirms that more Americans are forgoing higher education, with an estimated decline of 9.6% nationwide since 2010. A decrease of 17% has been observed in Pennsylvania since this time.<sup>34</sup> The “demographic cliff”, drastic decline of graduating 18 year olds, will start in 2026 thereby shrinking the pool of potential undergraduate students and increasing competition amongst institutions

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<sup>33</sup> See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltietzel/2021/11/18/updated-figures-show-college-enrollment-falling-further-behind-last-year/?sh=67cff30a447d>;  
<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/26/1048955023/college-enrollment-down-pandemic-economy>;  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/10/26/college-enrollment-down/>;  
<https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2021-10-26/college-enrollment-on-track-for-largest-two-year-drop-on-record>

<sup>34</sup> See <https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics>

of higher education to enroll these students. It is expected that Pennsylvania will have a 17% decrease in high school graduates by 2041.<sup>35</sup>

- We will continue active recruitment efforts to increase child welfare interest among undergraduate social work majors.
2. To this end, we were granted approval for a pilot expansion of the CWEB program to include an additional seven PA schools of social work effective in the 2024-2025 academic year.
  3. **Maintain CWEL enrollment at approximately 150.**
    - Partnering schools value our child welfare students. Online course work has offered students more flexible learning forums. Evaluation data has shown that increased tenure at admission is related to retention among graduates of CWEL, serving as reinforcement of the decision several years ago to increase the minimum amount of agency tenure to two years for CWEL eligibility.
    - In 2008, OCYF granted approval for regional office staff to participate in CWEL. The opportunity for state employees allows additional trainees to benefit from the program.
  4. **Increase depth of undergraduate child welfare curriculum among schools through the development of a certificate in Child Advocacy Studies in collaboration with the National Child Protection Training Center.**

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<sup>35</sup> Marcus, J. (2025, January 9). *The number of 18-year-olds is about to drop sharply, packing a wallop for colleges - and the economy*. The Hechinger Report. [https://hechingerreport.org/the-impact-of-this-is-economic-decline/?utm\\_source=PublicSource&utm\\_campaign=d805f13913-Roundup\\_Jan%2B9%2C%2B2025&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-9b2daafe37-337458061&mc\\_cid=d805f13913&mc\\_eid=c5e128fdf9](https://hechingerreport.org/the-impact-of-this-is-economic-decline/?utm_source=PublicSource&utm_campaign=d805f13913-Roundup_Jan%2B9%2C%2B2025&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-9b2daafe37-337458061&mc_cid=d805f13913&mc_eid=c5e128fdf9)

- Undergraduates currently complete one child welfare course and a public child welfare internship. The second of three courses in Child Advocacy Studies have been developed in an on-line, hybrid format. Providing these courses across schools will strengthen the child welfare course options for students and has the benefit of providing an elective option for students outside of social work who receive little, if any, content on child abuse/neglect.

**5. Add another component to the CWEL program to recruit new county employees. These persons would never have worked in a county CYS before but would be trained and would have the same length of work commitment as that currently required of CWEL students.**

- The provision in the federal Title IV-E regulations which permits the training of persons “preparing for [public child welfare] employment” provides this opportunity. A principal advantage is cost savings; the cost to the Department would be the non-federal match. The potential impact on the CWEB program must be carefully considered, however. It is possible that increasing the number of masters-prepared individuals might significantly limit the opportunity for bachelor-level graduates to obtain county employment. See 45 CFR, Ch. II §235.63 (a).
- From 2019 through 2023, this option was available to University of Pittsburgh MSW students through a workforce excellence award from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI). It concluded with the last cohort of graduates in August of 2023. The University of Pittsburgh/Child Welfare Education and Research Programs was one of seven sites across the country selected for this award. Specific to partnership with Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families, fifteen MSW students completed coursework leading to the

certificate in Children, Youth and Families, completed an advanced-level internship at the county, and entered into a contractual obligation for employment with Allegheny County following graduation.

**6. Consideration of including additional private, accredited undergraduate social work programs in the CWEB consortium.**

- Many of the schools presently participating in CWEB have small enrollments. The potential for increased participation exists if additional schools meet requirements and are approved.
- As previously noted, there has been a marked decline in undergraduate student enrollment across the country and Pennsylvania is no exception. It remains to be seen whether the consolidation of six universities in the PASSHE network will have positive benefits for CWEB enrollment. As with most major transitions, it may take several years until new norms are established. There is also a finite number of students coming into higher education.

**7. Inclusion of additional social work degree programs in Pennsylvania as they become fully accredited.**

- Increasing the number of schools has allowed for greater student access, reduction in student commuting time, and a reduction in program costs. East Stroudsburg University joined the CWEB school consortium in the 2018-2019 academic year. Several graduate programs have been approved for the CWEL program since its inception, including the University of Pittsburgh's Bradford campus (2002), Kutztown University (2007), and the joint Millersville-Shippensburg program (2010). Online programs at six MSW schools are approved.

- The MSW programs at Bloomsburg and Slippery Rock Universities received CSWE accreditation in June 2024. Slippery Rock has joined the CWEL consortium and Bloomsburg is in process.

**8. Participation by CWEB/CWEL graduates in the implementation of practice changes following new legislation.**

- CWEB and CWEL students remain in an excellent position to support and assume leadership in practice changes and system reform. Local, regional, and statewide opportunities exist for participation in efforts addressing race equity in the child welfare system. Additional opportunities for larger system involvement include work related to the implementation of FFPSA, movement toward adopting a statewide universal assessment tool, enhancement of family engagement practices, implementation and monitoring of legislation regarding human trafficking, operationalization of Plans of Safe Care, trauma-informed practice, and continuous quality improvement initiatives to list a few.

**9. Incorporation of trauma-informed supervision at the county level.**

- Current students and graduates speak poignantly about needing supervisory and peer support to manage work-related stress, and of the impact of secondary trauma upon their ability to remain in child welfare. We believe it is critical to address this issue. Revisions to the Supervisor Training Series developed by CWRC placed increased emphasis on this workforce need.

**10. Consideration of a doctoral-level child welfare education option.**

- This recommendation can provide an additional evaluation arm for the Department and further our mission of establishing evidence-based child welfare practice across the state. CWERP is in an excellent position to facilitate doctoral education. A reasonable objective over time might be one (1) doctoral student in

each of the five (5) schools with a doctoral program. Work commitment issues require detailed discussion among all parties.

### **11. Transition support and ongoing connection among CWEB and CWEL graduates.**

- All graduates benefit from ongoing connection and support, and coaching is particularly important for CWEB graduates who are new to public child welfare. Additionally, portfolio and resume development are essential. We have seen great success with the implementation of a voluntary post-hire contact with a child welfare consultant at three months, six months, and nine months post-hire.
- Transition back to the county agency is a distinct issue among CWEL graduates and is most problematic for those who have been full-time students. Increased attention has been paid to preparing these students for their return to the agency. Greater network support and participation in transition groups for returning students are helpful strategies. All graduates are encouraged to join special workforce or task groups through the PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC). Practice Improvement Specialists from CWRC are assigned to counties throughout the state and actively engage with CWEB/CWEL graduates to provide support and enlist them in practice initiatives. Many graduates share their expertise on a statewide level by becoming trainers and/or workgroup members through CWRC.

### **12. Reimbursement to counties for 100% of the salaries of full-time students and for fringe benefits at the same level that the Department currently reimburses counties.**

- When the CWEL program was initiated, it was decided to reimburse counties for only 95% of full-time students' salaries. It was hypothesized that counties would



pass the 5% reduction along to students and this amount in aggregate would be used as part of the non-federal matching funds required under IV-E regulations. However, this approach was quickly abandoned. First, it became evident that federal authorities would classify contributions as “private funds” which are prohibited except under very obtuse rules this approach could not meet. Secondly, several counties continued to pay the workers their full salaries even though the counties were reimbursed as only the 95% level. Adding to this is the burden of the very low salaries that so many CWEL students earn. Those students with families find the 5% salary reduction very difficult to endure, and the inability to receive overtime pay while a student also creates a financial change.

**13. Increase the caliber of the PA child welfare workforce at the front door.**

- Increase educational requirements for casework positions
- Develop specific county child welfare casework classification within the State Civil Service System
- Continue to advocate at the county, state, and federal level that salaries must be adequate to compensate for the demands and responsibility of public child welfare jobs
- Develop racially equitable, race conscious, trauma-informed child welfare systems that create a community of inclusion, support, and learning for the workforce, recognizing that supervisors, middle managers, and administrators are critical to retention and that a diverse workforce better reflects the population served by child welfare agencies

- Infuse organizational effectiveness strategies into agencies through CWRC Regional Teams
- Maintain and expand the CWEB and CWEL programs so that advanced education and support for professional development remain key components of PA's child welfare system.

## **Conclusions**

The faculty and staff of the CWEB and CWEL programs sincerely believe the Department and the counties can rightfully be proud of the continued achievements of our child welfare education programs. Pennsylvania is a leader in workforce development and is fortunate to have an integrated education, training, and practice improvement program continuum dedicated to the child welfare system. We are gratified to be part of this remarkable venture and partnership, and sincerely acknowledge that the contributions of many others are what guide, shape, and sustain these highly acclaimed programs.

The county children and youth service administrators have been unfailingly responsive as individuals, and through their organization, the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators. The Department of Human Services has continued to strongly endorse the CWEB and CWEL programs. We thank Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, Secretary of the Department of Human Services. A special thank you to Laval Miller-Wilson, Deputy Secretary of the state Office of Children, Youth, and Families, for his support and partnership. We appreciate our ongoing connection with Natalie Bates, Chief of Staff. We also express gratitude to our OCYF Program Monitors, Carrie Keiser and Diane Michel, for their thoughtful oversight and steadfast support of our work.

Our academic partners have made major contributions to the success of our programs and that of our students. Admissions, registrations, invoices, graduations,

academic schedules, course listings, internships, and dozens of other details must be coordinated and carefully attended. The State System of Higher Education has enabled eleven state universities with accredited undergraduate social work programs to become members of the consortium. The United States Children's Bureau, and especially its Region III office in Philadelphia, has continued its strong support, not least of which is extensive funding of both the CWEB and CWEL programs.

We are proud that the CWEB and CWEL education programs have been recognized as key strengths in Pennsylvania during all rounds of the federal Child and Family Services Review. Our graduates have assumed leadership roles in practice initiatives throughout the state and actively contribute to shaping the future of child welfare services on the local, state, and national level. Graduates are providing direct service, serving as managers and supervisors, mentoring junior colleagues, contributing to training curricula, conducting quality improvement programs, leading race equity initiatives, participating in child fatality/near fatality reviews, and working as child welfare trainers and/or consultants. We are proud that an increasing number of our child welfare graduates have assumed teaching roles in Schools of Social Work throughout the state of Pennsylvania, many as adjunct professors, others as part-time clinical faculty, and some as Directors of Social Work programs.

Finally, no number of contracts, agreements, budgets, reports, curricula, faculty or any other of the myriad of academic and administrative components of this project could produce a successful outcome without exceptional students. The vast majority of the CWEB and CWEL students selected to participate in these programs have been exceptional achievers academically, as well as leaders among their peers. They have distinguished themselves through their dedication to working with society's most vulnerable children and families, and in circumstances that involve daily exposure to upsetting situations and overwhelming crises. As always, we salute them with sincere

admiration. The students' investments, energy, vision, and contributions to the child welfare system are more responsible than anything else for the continued success of the CWEB and CWEL programs.

A note of gratitude goes to the CWERP team members who make countless contributions to our program operations throughout each year. Your work is very appreciated and touches the lives of our students, their colleagues, and the community.



## **Appendices**

- A. [Table I. Student and Graduate Departures from Programs and Recoupment](#)
- B. [Table II: Participating School Programs](#)
- C. [CWEB and CWEL School Participation Map](#)
- D. [Table III: Undergraduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of Approved CWEB Schools, 2023-2024](#)
- E. [Table IV: Graduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of Approved CWEL Schools, 2023-2024](#)
- F. [CWEB County Participation Map, 2001-2024](#)
- G. [CWEB Overview, 2001-2024](#)
- H. [CWEL Overview, 1995-2024](#)
- I. [Program Evaluation Data Tables](#)
- J. [List of Supplemental CWEB and CWEL Materials Available Online](#)
- K. [Child Welfare Education and Research Programs, CWEB/CWEL Faculty and Staff](#)



# Appendix A

Table I. Student and Graduate Departures from Programs and Recoupment

Table I.  
Student and Graduate Departures from Programs and Recoupment

School	Total	CWEB Total	CWEL Total	Departure Reason: Employment	Departure Reason: Withdrew from School / Program	Recoupment Status: Collection Initiated	Recoupment Status: Obligation Satisfied
Bloomsburg University	15	15	0	10	5	10	5
Bryn Mawr College	5	0	5	0	5	2	3
California University	21	18	3	12	9	10	11
Edinboro University	15	13	2	7	8	6	9
Kutztown University	18	15	3	10	8	4	14
Lock Haven University	15	15	0	8	7	3	12
Mansfield University	16	16	0	14	2	5	11
Marywood University	28	2	26	6	22	9	19
Millersville University	6	3	3	1	5	3	3
University of Pennsylvania	6	0	6	0	6	2	4
University of Pittsburgh	38	15	23	16	22	10	28
Shippensburg University	20	17	3	11	9	6	14
Slippery Rock University	10	10	0	7	3	5	5
Temple University	38	19	19	18	20	15	23
West Chester University	13	11	2	7	6	5	8
Widener University	21	7	14	8	13	11	10
<b>TOTALS</b>	285	176	109	135	150	106	179

# **Appendix B**

## Table II

### Participating School Programs



**Table II**  
**Participating School Programs**

School	MSACS	CSWE	CWEB Only	CWEB/ CWEL	CWEL Only	Entry into Program
Bryn Mawr College	2027-2028	MSS 6/2032			X	1995
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, Mansfield)	2024-2025	BSW 10/2025	X			CWEB 2001
East Stroudsburg University	2025-2026	BSW 6/2027	X			2018
Kutztown University	2025-2026	BSW 10/2026 MSW 10/2026		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2007
Marywood University	2025-2026	BSW 10/2024 MSW 10/2024		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995
Millersville University	2027-2028	BSW 6/2027 MSW 2/2030		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2010
Pennsylvania Western University (California, Edinboro)	2024-2025	BSW 6/2025 MSW 6/2025		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2004 (California), CWEL 2006 (Edinboro)
Shippensburg University	2026-2027	BSW 6/2027 MSW 2/2030		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2010
Slippery Rock University	2028-2029	BSW 2/2030 MSW 6/2024	-	X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2024
Temple University	2027-2028	BSW 6/2025 MSW 6/2025		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995
University of Pennsylvania	2031-2032	MSW 6/2025			X	1995
University of Pittsburgh	2029-2030	BASW 6/2028 MSW 6/2028		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995
West Chester University	2028-2029	BSW 10/2027 MSW 10/2029		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 2001
Widener University	2025-2026	BSW 2/2029  MSW 2/2029		X		CWEB 2001 CWEL 1995

# **Appendix C**

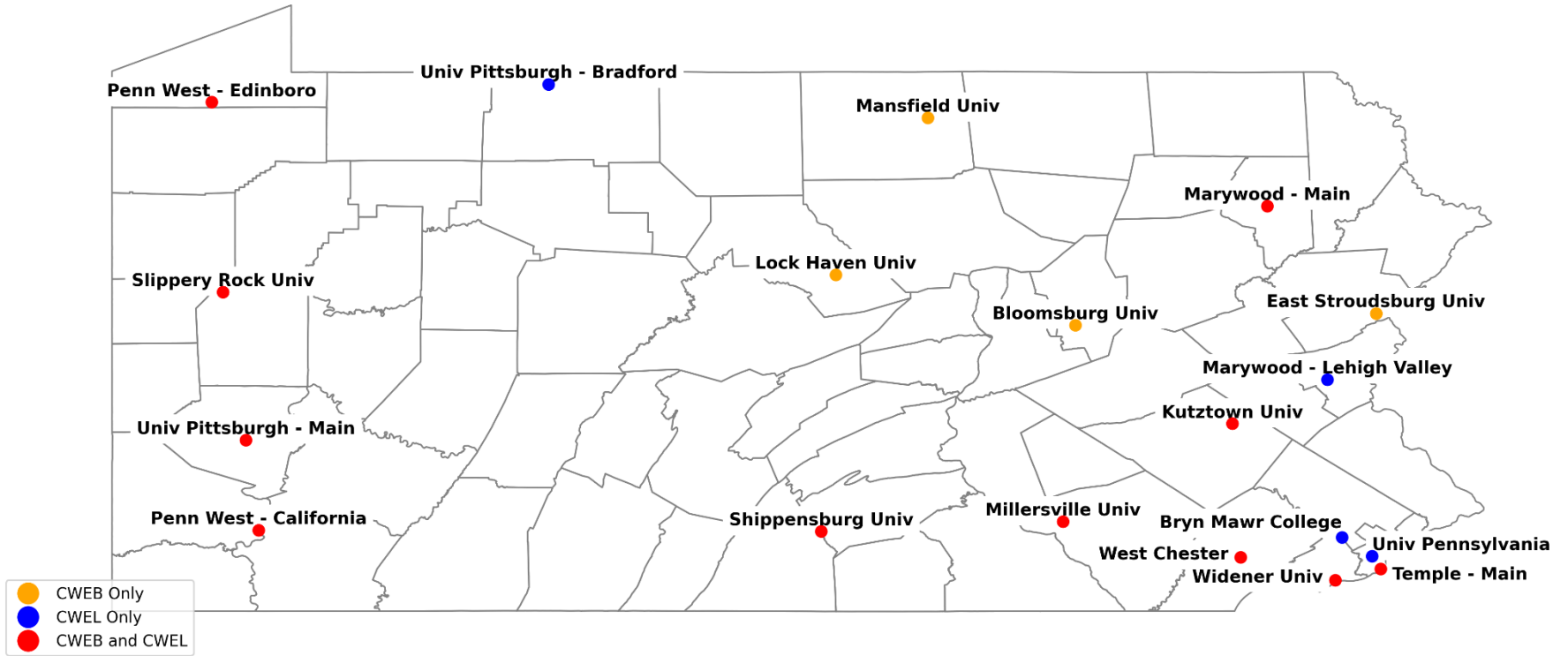
CWEB and CWEL  
School Participation Map

# Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

## Participating Schools

### Child Welfare Education and Research Programs Participating Schools

Updated: 11/15/2023



# Appendix D

## Table III

Undergraduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of  
Approved CWEB Schools

2023-2024

**Table III**  
**Undergraduate Child Welfare Course Offerings**  
**of**  
**Approved CWEB Schools for 2023-2024**

School	Course Title
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania: Bloomsburg University	Child Welfare
PennWest: California University	Child Welfare
East Stroudsburg University	Child Welfare Services
PennWest: Edinboro University	Child Welfare
Kutztown University	Child Welfare and Social Work Practice
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania: Lock Haven University	Child Welfare
Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania: Mansfield University	Child Welfare
Marywood University	Children's Rights and Societal Responses
Millersville University	Social Work and Child Welfare
Shippensburg University	Introduction to Child Welfare
Slippery Rock University	Introduction to Child Welfare
Temple University	Child Welfare Policy
University of Pittsburgh	Child Welfare Services <sup>36</sup>
West Chester University	Child Welfare Practice and Policy
Widener University	Families at Risk

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<sup>36</sup> In addition to the undergraduate course, *Child Welfare Services*, University of Pittsburgh undergraduate students can register for the graduate courses *Child and Family Advocacy*, *Child and Family Policy*, and *Children and Families at Risk* (shown in Table II, [Appendix C](#)) as electives, with the permission of the BASW Program Director and the students' academic advisor.

# Appendix E

## Table IV

Graduate Child Welfare Course Offerings of  
Approved CWEL Schools  
2023-2024

## **Graduate Child Welfare Course Offerings: Approved CWEL Schools 2023-2024**

### **Bryn Mawr College, Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research**

Child Welfare Policy, Practice and Research
Clinical Social Work Practice with Children and Adolescents
Social Work with Substance Use Disorders
Trauma Informed Social Work with Children and Adolescents
Family Therapy: Theory and Practice
Child & Family Well Being Integrative Seminar
The Queering of SW for Practice with LGBTQIA + People

### **PennWest University (California and Edinboro Campuses)**

Social Work Practice with Children and Youth
Practice in Substance Use
Trauma Theory and Interventions

### **Kutztown University, Department of Social Work**

Social Work Interventions with Substance Abusing Populations
Maltreatment in the Family
Child Permanence and the Family-In-Environment
Practice of Family Group Decision Making
Social Work Crisis Intervention with Families
Assessment Methods for Social Workers: Children and Adolescents
The Fundamentals of Trauma-Informed Care
Clinical Approaches to Trauma-Informed Practice
Trauma-Informed Practice with Systems
Motivational Interviewing Strategies: Implications for Gender and Addiction
Family Mediation in Advanced Social Work Practice

### **Marywood University, School of Social Work**

Critical Issues in Chemical Dependence
Child Welfare Practice and Services
Family Focused Social Work Practice
Social Work Perspectives on Trauma

Social Work Practice with Children/Family
Principles and Practices of Trauma Informed Care
Women's Issues and the Practice of Social Work
Mindfulness Skills for Social Work Practice
Human Sexuality

**Millersville/Shippensburg Universities, School of Social Work/Department of Social Work and Gerontology**

Child Welfare
Children and Youth at Risk
Addictions in the Field of Social Work
Behavioral Health
Social Work Administration and Supervision

**The University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy and Practice**

Policies for Children and Their Families
Practice with Families
Practice with Youth who are Marginalized
Practice with Children and Adolescents
Substance Abuse Interventions
Social Work Practice & Trauma
Clinical & Macro Child Welfare Practice
Integrative Seminar in Child Welfare

**Temple University, School of Social Work**

Alcohol and Substance Abuse
Assessment and the DSM-IV
Policy on Families and Children
Emotional Disorders of Children and Adolescents
Trauma Informed Social Work
Children and Families in the Social Environment
Human Trafficking
Loss & Grief

**University of Pittsburgh**

Children and Families at Risk
Child and Family Policy
Social Work Practice with African American Families
Direct Practice with Children and Adolescents
Intimate Partner Violence



Child Maltreatment
Social Work with Substance Use and Other Addictive Disorders
Social Work Practice and Traumatic Stress
Social Work Practice with Families

### **Slippery Rock University**

Practice Skills Following Crises
Practice Skills in Forensic Social Work
Trauma Informed Practice
Families Impacted by Trauma
Behavioral Health Services in Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice
Intervention for Sexual Assault & Interpersonal Violence

### **West Chester University, College of Education and Social Work**

Child Welfare: A Resilience and Trauma-Informed Approach
Substance Use Disorders
Motivational Interviewing in Social Work
Seminar in Social Work: Family Violence
The Theory and Practice of Self-Care
Child Welfare Services and Policies
Trauma Informed Social Work

### **Widener University, Center for Social Work Education**

Advanced Social Work Practice with Families
Biographical Timeline
Social Work Practice with Addicted Persons and Their Families
Social Work Practice with Children and Adolescents
Social Work with Urban Youth
Children & Families at Risk
Social Work in Prisons and Community Reintegration
Grief and Loss Across the Life Cycle

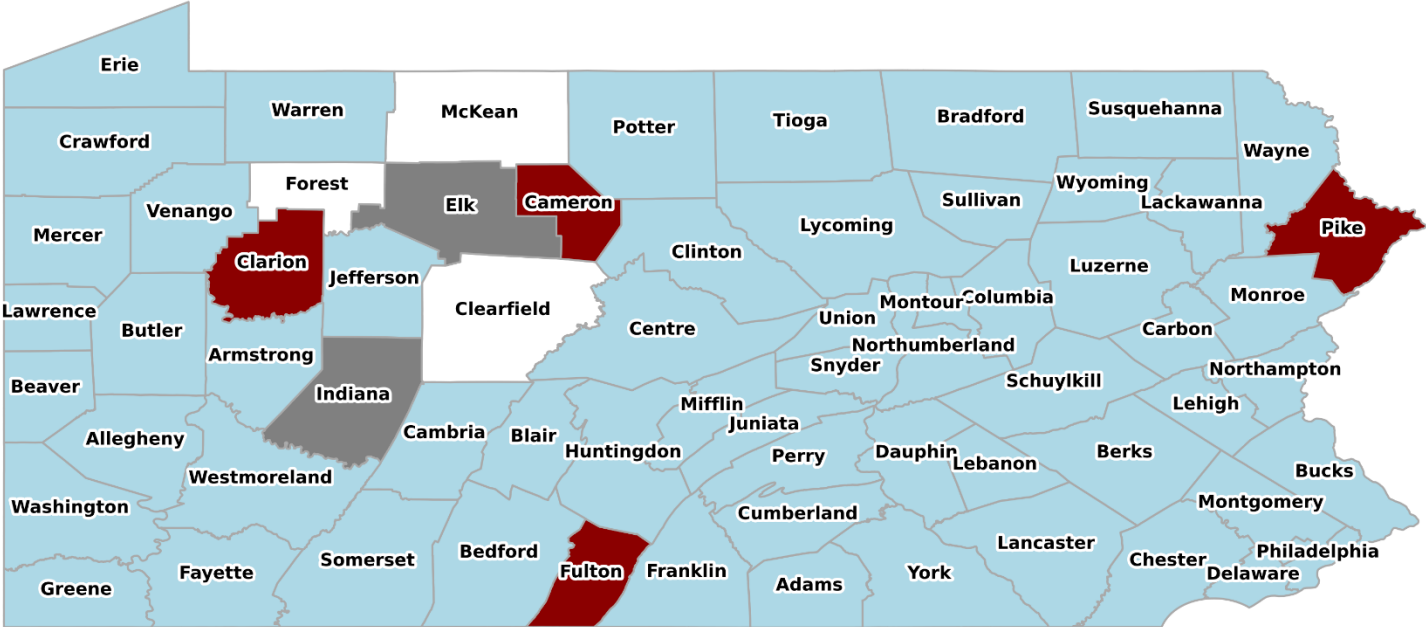
# Appendix F

CWEB County Participation Map

2001-2024

# Counties Providing Student Internships and/or Employment for Graduates of the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates Program

Updated: 08/26/2024



Legend:  No CWEB Internship or Post-Grad Employment History  CWEB Internship History  CWEB Post-Grad Employment History  CWEB Internship and Post-Grad Employment History

# **Appendix G**

CWEB Overview

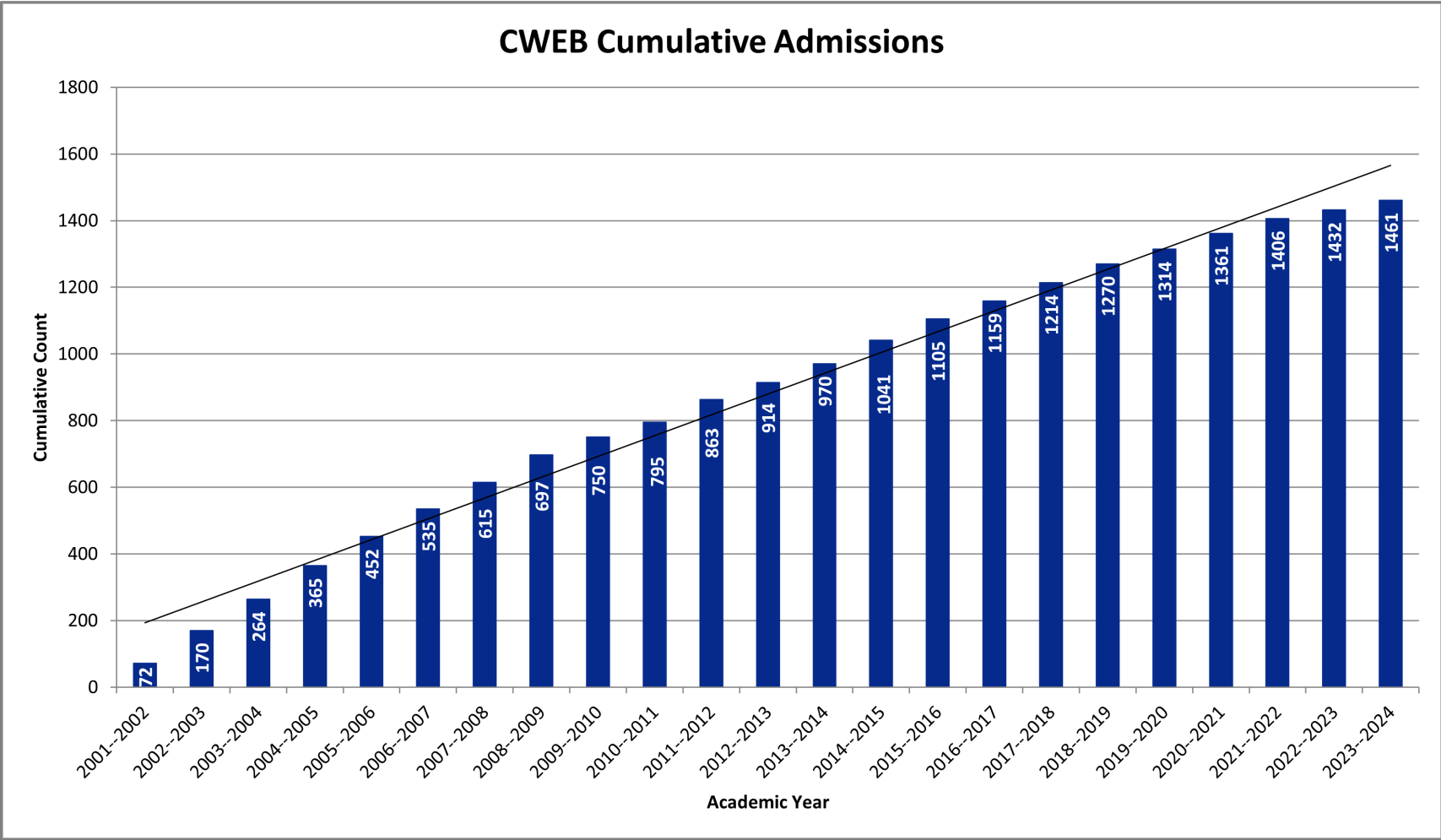
2001-2024

Charts 1-2

### Chart 1

### Child Welfare for Baccalaureates

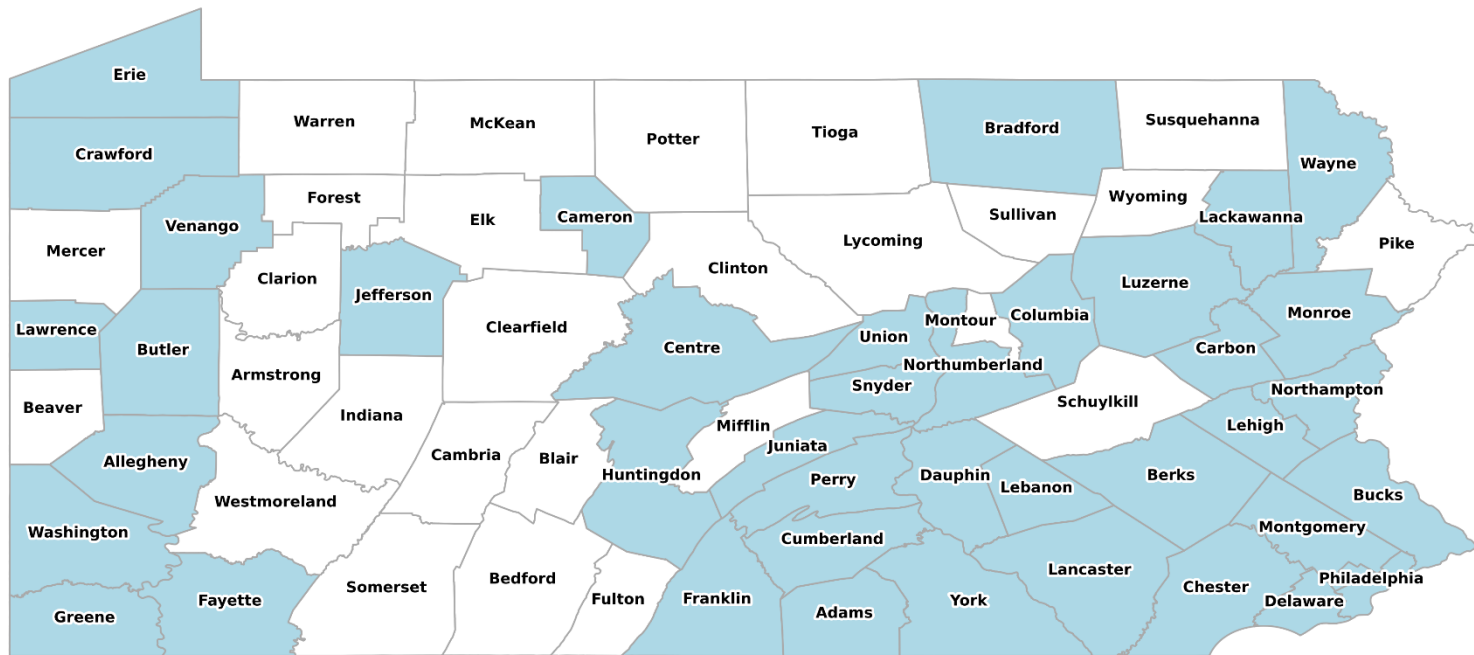
### 2001-2024 Cumulative Admissions (Projected Through 2025)



## Chart 2 CWEB Post-Grad County Employment Hiring County for Graduates- Fall 2018 thru Summer 2024

### CWEB Post-Graduation County Employment Hiring County for Graduates: Fall 2019 through Summer 2024

Updated: 08/26/2024



Recent CWEB Grad Hired
  No Recent Hire History

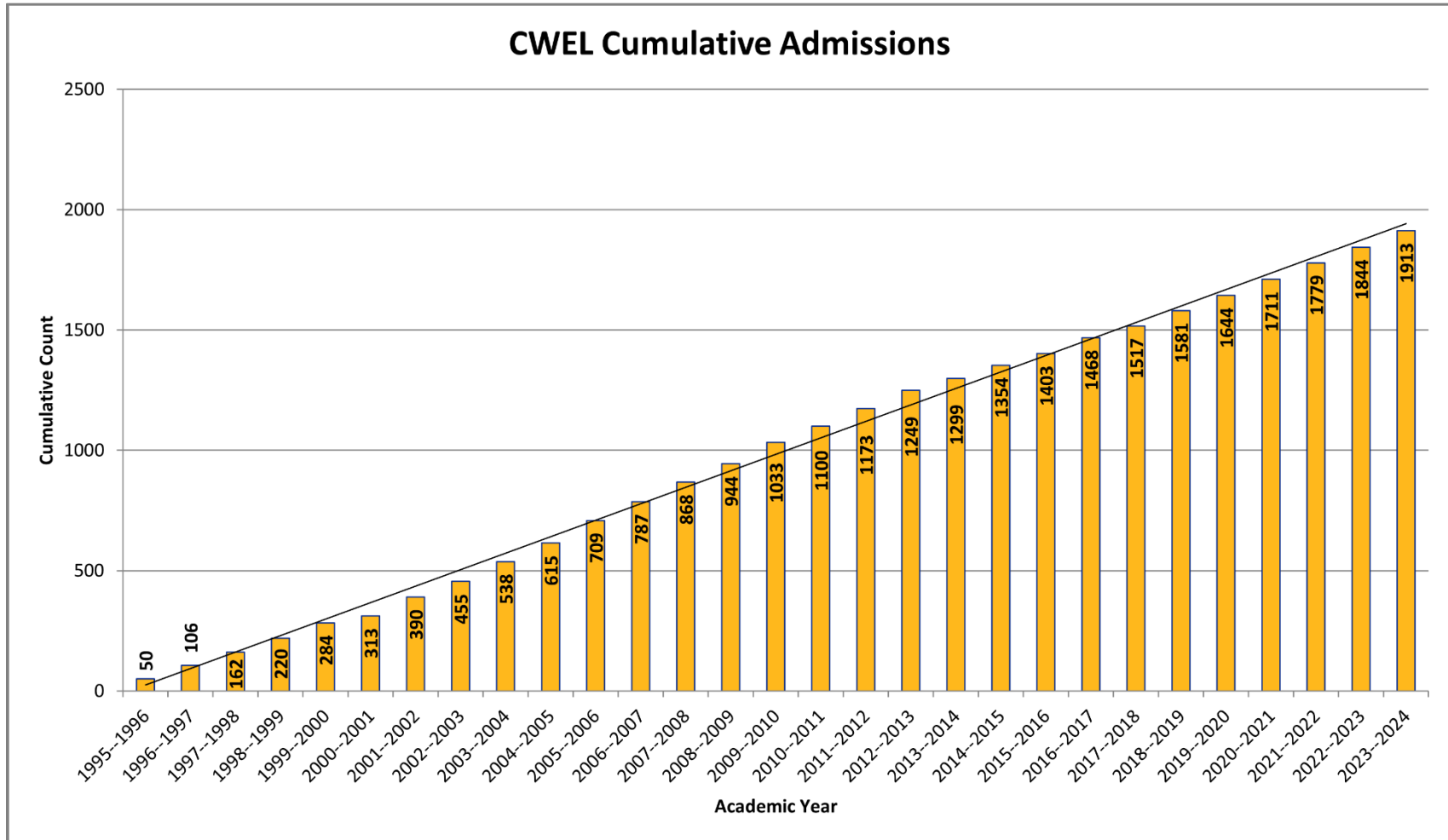
# **Appendix H**

CWEL Overview

1995 - 2024

Charts 1-2

**Chart 1**  
**Child Welfare Education for Leadership**  
**1995-2024 Cumulative Admissions (Projected Through 2025)**

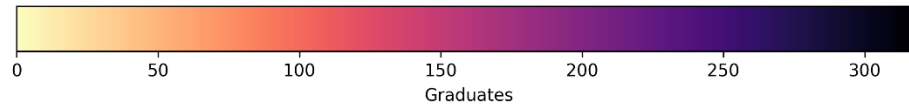
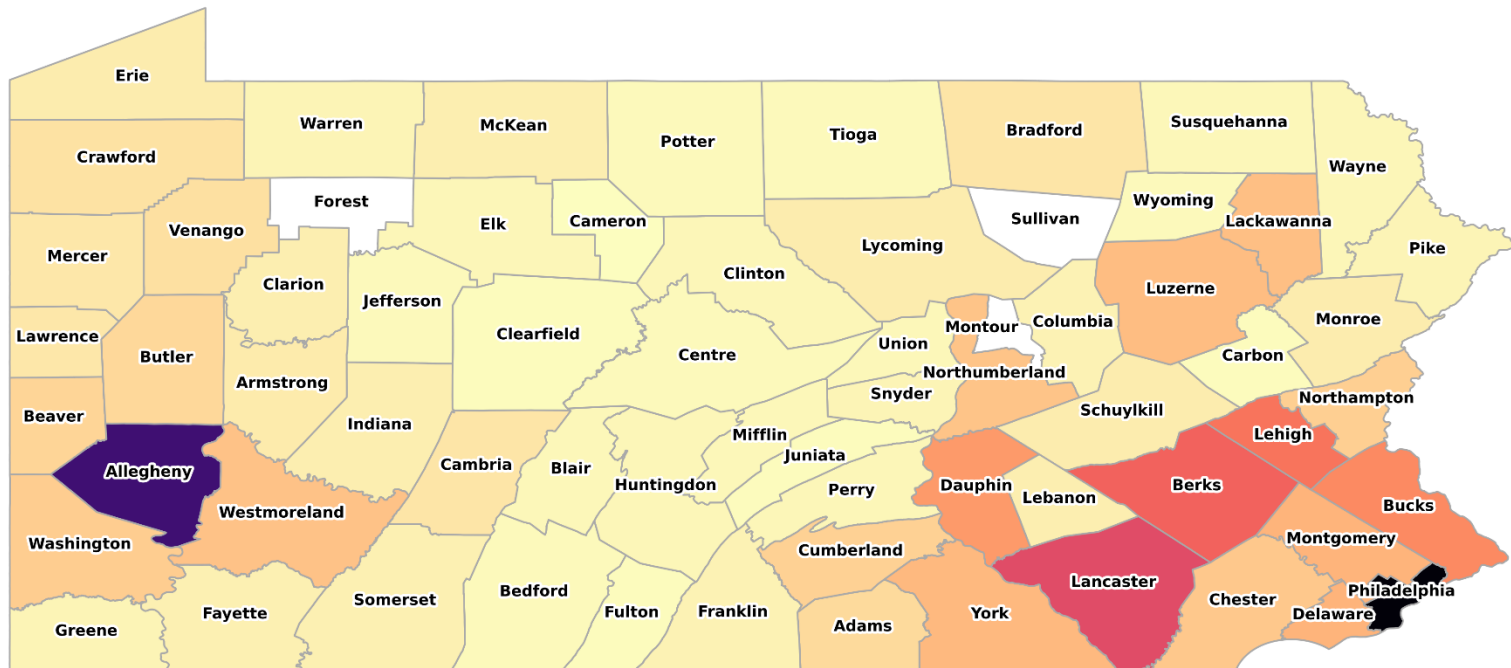




## Chart 2 CWEL County Impact Historical Number of CWEL Graduates by County

### CWEL County Impact Historical Number of CWEL Graduates by County

Updated: 08/26/2024



# **Appendix I**

## **Program Evaluation Data Tables**

**Table 1****Average Scores per Item by Program Type and by Status for Current Students**

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4=Somewhat Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

<b>Item</b>	<b>CWEB n=13</b>	<b>CWEL, Full-Time n=42</b>	<b>CWEL, Part- Time n=47</b>
<i>CWERP Program Processes</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>
The program information clearly explains the CWEB/CWEL program	4.23 (1.30)	4.45 (0.89)	4.43 (0.83)
The application form instructions are clear	4.62 (0.87)	4.62 (0.73)	4.26 (0.97)
I understood the contract	4.38 (1.12)	4.50 (0.86)	4.47 (0.80)
The website is easy to use	4.08 (1.44)	4.43 (0.77)	3.96 (1.00)
I use the handbook when I have a question	3.31 (1.55)	3.80 (1.23)	3.80 (1.14)
The faculty (University of Pittsburgh) respond to my phone calls/email	4.62 (1.12)	4.62 (0.71)	4.50 (0.76)
The staff (University of Pittsburgh) respond to my phone calls/email	4.62 (1.12)	4.63 (0.71)	4.41 (0.82)
The faculty (University of Pittsburgh) helped me when I had a problem	4.54 (1.13)	4.60 (0.81)	4.27 (1.02)
The staff (University of Pittsburgh) helped me when I had a problem	4.50 (1.17)	4.75 (0.60)	4.34 (1.03)
<i>Current Degree Program</i>			
My academic advisor is familiar with the CWEB/CWEL program	4.23 (1.30)	4.50 (0.83)	4.02 (1.10)
The child welfare courses that I have taken are relevant	4.38 (1.12)	4.45 (0.99)	4.36 (0.82)
The faculty who teach the child welfare courses relate the content to practice	4.54 (1.20)	4.35 (1.05)	4.27 (0.90)
I have been able to apply what I learn in the class to practicum/internship or job	4.42 (1.24)	4.52 (0.83)	4.35 (0.82)
<i>Practicum/Internship Experiences</i>			
I have felt supported in the process of arranging my practicum/internship	3.67 (1.61)	3.64 (1.43)	3.59 (1.43)
I have received good supervision in the practicum	4.36 (1.29)	4.69 (0.81)	4.32 (0.98)
I was able to try new ideas or skills from class in my practicum	4.36 (0.92)	4.59 (0.84)	4.52 (0.89)
This practicum/internship has been a valuable learning experience	4.55 (0.93)	4.69 (0.78)	4.38 (0.94)

<b>Item</b>	<b>CWEB n=13</b>	<b>CWEL, Full-Time n=42</b>	<b>CWEL, Part- Time n=47</b>
<i>Agency/Practicum Interface</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>	<i>Average (SD)</i>
My practicum supervisor is familiar with the requirements of the CWEB program	4.33 (0.99)	--	--
My practicum supervisor is familiar with the requirements of the State Civil Service Exam	4.20 (1.03)	--	--
I was able to easily arrange the time needed to go to classes	--	--	4.00 (1.22)
I was able to easily arrange the time needed to do my practicum placement	--	--	3.75 (1.43)
My agency was able to accommodate my return in the summer	--	4.57 (0.69)	--
When I returned in the summer, I had supplies to do my work	--	4.63 (0.93)	--
<i>Value of the Degree to the Child Welfare</i>			
My degree will help me to contribute to child welfare	5.00 (0.00)	4.78 (0.65)	4.64 (0.61)
I will be able to use what I am learning when I am employed or return to a child welfare agency	5.00 (0.00)	4.66 (0.76)	4.66 (0.48)
The CWEB or CWEL program gave me an educational opportunity that I would not have had otherwise	4.23 (1.17)	4.59 (0.95)	4.64 (0.76)
The CWEB or CWEL program has positively impacted my development as a social work professional	4.92 (0.28)	4.68 (0.85)	4.62 (0.74)
The CWEB and CWEL program should be made available to more students and child welfare workers	4.77 (0.44)	4.85 (0.43)	4.72 (0.54)
Using a scale from 1-10, with 1 having the least value and 10 the greatest value, what is the value of the CWEB of CWEL program to the public child welfare system?	9.08 (1.12)	9.07 (1.80)	9.09 (1.14)

**Table 2****Average Scores per Item by Program Type for Recent Graduates**

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4=Somewhat Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

<b>Item</b>	<b>CWEB n=14 Average (SD)</b>	<b>CWEL n=47 Average (SD)</b>
My program prepared me for working in a child welfare agency	4.43 (0.76)	4.11 (1.16)
My skills were equal to better than other caseworkers not in the program	4.50 (0.94)	4.15 (1.07)
I have a better understanding of the complex problems of our families	4.36 (0.75)	4.33 (0.99)
My education has helped me to find new solutions to the problems that are typical of our families	4.50 (0.76)	4.33 (0.94)
I am encouraged to practice my new skills in my position	4.64 (0.84)	3.91 (1.26)
I am encouraged to share my knowledge with other workers	4.57 (0.65)	4.07 (1.08)
I am given the opportunity and authority to make decisions	4.71 (0.73)	4.04 (1.25)
There is current opportunity for promotion in my agency	4.29 (1.33)	3.04 (1.65)
I can see future opportunities for advancing in my agency	4.36 (0.50)	3.57 (1.36)
I plan to remain at my agency after my commitment period is over	3.64 (1.22)	3.38 (1.11)
My long-term career plan is to work with children and families	3.57 (1.09)	3.94 (1.07)
I would recommend my agency to others for employment in social work	4.21 (0.98)	3.57 (1.21)
I would recommend public child welfare services to others looking for employment in social work	4.21 (1.31)	3.78 (1.17)
I have seriously considered leaving public child welfare (lower scores=greater commitment)	2.57 (1.34)	3.46 (1.28)
If I were not contractually obligated to remain in public child welfare for my commitment, I would leave (lower scores=greater commitment)	2.57 (1.40)	2.98 (1.17)
On a scale of 1-10, with 1 having the least value and 10 the greatest value, what is the value of the CWEB and CWEL program to the public child welfare system	8.71 (1.68)	8.69 (2.19)

**Table 3****Average Scores per Item for County Child Welfare Administrators: CWEB Graduate Preparedness**

(1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Somewhat Disagree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4=Somewhat Agree; 5=Strongly Agree)

Item	Average (SD)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates are more prepared to carry a child welfare caseload	4.00 (0.80)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates need less support in completing the tasks of a child welfare caseworker.	3.69 (1.05)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates can better cope with the emotional aspects of child welfare casework.	3.62 (0.85)
When compared to other new caseworkers, CWEB graduates have a better understanding of the laws and policies governing county child welfare agencies.	3.88 (0.71)

**Table 4****Average Scores per Item for County Child Welfare Administrators: Graduate Involvement in County Initiatives**

(1=Never Involved; 2=Sometimes Involved; 3=Involved Half the Time; 4=Involved Most of the Time; 5=Always Involved)

Item	Average (SD)
Racial diversity, equity, and inclusion	3.67 (1.24)
Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE)	3.56 (1.25)
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)	3.35 (1.33)
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	3.60 (1.38)
Quality Service Review/ Children and Family Services Review (QSR/CFSR)	3.33 (1.59)
Trauma-Informed Care	4.00 (1.24)
Family Group Decision Making/Conferencing and Teaming/Family Engagement	3.55 (1.36)
Organizational Effectiveness Initiatives	3.55 (1.40)
Recruitment and Retention	3.38 (1.52)
Family Finding	3.52 (1.36)

**Table 5. School Administrator's Ratings of Core Competencies**

<b>Core Competency</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Interpersonal Relations (n=13)	4.77
Adaptability (n=5)	4.40
Communication Skills (n=13)	4.46
Observation Skills (n=3)	4.33
Planning and Organizing Work (n=5)	4.60
Analytic Thinking (n=3)	4.00
Motivation (n=4)	3.75
Self-Awareness/Confidence (n=13)	4.23
Sense of Mission (n=2)	5.00
Teamwork (n=4)	5.00

**Table 6. School Administrator's Ratings of Traditional Selection Criteria**

<b>Traditional Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Interest in Working with Children and Families (n=13)	4.69
Faculty Recommendation (n=13)	4.15
GPA (n=13)	3.69
Writing Ability (n=13)	4.08
Engagement in Extracurricular Activities (n=13)	3.15
Financial Need (n=13)	3.46

**Table 7. CWEB and CWEL Core Competency Ratings by Agency Administrators**

<b>Core Competency</b>	<b>CWEB Mean</b>	<b>CWEL Mean</b>
Interpersonal Relations	3.67 (n=24)	4.07 (n=30)
Adaptability	3.57 (n=7)	4.10 (n=10)
Communication Skills	3.42 (n=24)	3.93 (n=30)
Observation Skills	3.60 (n=5)	4.33 (n=9)
Planning and Organizing Work	2.75 (n=8)	3.80 (n=10)
Analytic Thinking	3.50 (n=8)	3.50 (n=8)
Motivation	3.67 (n=6)	4.29 (n=7)
Self-Awareness/Confidence	3.21 (n=24)	4.00 (n=30)
Sense of Mission	3.44 (n=9)	4.00 (n=8)
Teamwork	3.80 (n=5)	3.88 (n=8)

**Table 8. CWEB Mentors/Supervisor's Core Competency Ratings for CWEB Program Participants**

<b>Core Competency</b>	<b>CWEB Mean</b>
Interpersonal Relations	3.77 (n=22)
Adaptability	3.38 (n=8)
Communication Skills	3.55 (n=22)
Observation Skills	3.67 (n=3)
Planning and Organizing Work	3.88 (n=8)
Analytic Thinking	3.40 (n=10)
Motivation	3.60 (n=5)
Self-Awareness/Confidence	3.23 (n=22)
Sense of Mission	3.40 (n=5)
Teamwork	3.60 (n=5)



## Statistical Testing and Results

### *Current Students*

Significant differences between CWEB and CWEL, Part-Time and Full-Time CWEL were determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

**Table 9**

### **Statistically Significant Results Comparing CWEB to CWEL**

Item	t value	p value
My degree will help me to contribute to the field	4.41	<.001
I will be able to use what I am learning when I am employed or return to a child welfare agency	5.13	<.001
The program has positively impacted my development as a social work professional	2.42	.019

**Table 10**

### **Statistically Significant Results Comparing Full-Time to Part-Time CWEL**

Item	t value	p value
My academic advisor is familiar with the CWEB/CWEL program	2.18	.033
The program application instructions are clean	1.98	.05
The website is easy to use	2.47	.015
The staff (University of Pittsburgh) helped me when I had a problem	2.03	.047

### *Recent Graduates*

Significant differences between CWEB and CWEL was determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

**Table 11**

### **Statistically Significant Results Comparing CWEB to CWEL**

Item	t value	p value
I am encouraged to practice my new skills in my position	2.50	.018
There is current opportunity for promotion in my agency	2.57	.013
I can see future opportunities for advancing in my agency	3.27	.002
I have seriously considered leaving public child welfare (lower scores=greater commitment)	-2.24	.029
Number of children seen in a typical month	-2.90	.006
Subscale: Agency uses educational expertise	2.84	.007
Subscale: Opportunity for advancement	3.65	<.001

### *Long-Term Graduates*

Significant differences between CWEB and CWEL and those employed 5 years and under to those employed 6 years and over were determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

**Table 12**

### **Statistically Significant Results Comparing CWEB to CWEL**

Item	t value	p value
Teamwork	2.82	.009

Morale	3.36	.003
Information Flow	2.22	.036
Employee Involvement	2.17	.040
Meetings	2.42	.023

**Table 13**  
**Statistically Significant Results Comparing 5 Years of Employment and Under to 6 Years of Employment and Over**

Item	t value	p value
Morale	2.27	.033

*Core Competencies*

Significant differences between CWEB Mentors/Supervisors and County Administrators on the ratings of core competencies for CWEB graduates were determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

**Table 13**  
**Statistically Significant Results Comparing Core Competencies of CWEB Graduates as Rated by CWEB Mentors/Supervisors Versus County Administrators**

Item	t value	p value
Planning and Organizing Work	2.91	.011

Significant differences between School Administrators and County Administrators on the ratings of core competencies for CWEB graduates were determined by conducting t-tests with anything less than .05 considered statistically significant.

**Table 14**  
**Statistically Significant Results Comparing Core Competencies of CWEB Graduates as Rated by School Administrators Versus County Administrators**

Item	t value	p value
Interpersonal Relations	-5.13	<.001
Communication Skills	-3.91	<.001
Planning and Organizing Work	-4.97	<.001
Self-Awareness/Confidence	-3.19	.003
Sense of Mission	-2.91	.017
Teamwork	-5.29	.001

To establish if there are any significant differences between CWEB Mentors/Supervisors, County Administrators, and School Administrator, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed. In the Kruskal-Wallis H test, mean ranks are used to determine if there are any differences between the groups (e.g., school administrators; agency administrators; CWEB supervisors/mentors). These ranks can be used to determine the effect of the role of the respondent to the CWEB student on the ratings of the core competencies. It is important to note that this statistical test will not determine where the differences between the groups lie, just that a statistically significant difference was observed. Anything less than a .05 is considered statistically significant.

**Table 15**  
**Statistically Significant Results of Kruskal-Wallis H Test Comparing Core Competencies of CWEB Graduates as Rated by, School Administrators, CWEB Mentors/Supervisors, and County Administrators**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean Ranking</b>	<b>H value</b>	<b>p value</b>
Interpersonal Relations	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 38.02 County Administrator: 41.81 School Administrator: 70.08	16.92	<.001
Communication Skills	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 37.05 County Administrator: 43.32 School Administrator: 65.42	11.82	.003
Planning and Organizing Work	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 17.63 County Administrator: 12.81 School Administrator: 24.90	8.07	.018
Self-Awareness/Confidence	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 33.43 County Administrator: 45.73 School Administrator: 61.54	10.82	.004
Teamwork	CWEB Mentor/Supervisor: 8.30 County Administrator: 10.27 School Administrator: 19.50	8.94	.011

# Appendix J

Supplemental CWEB and CWEL Materials Available  
Online

[Child Welfare Education and Research Programs |  
School of Social Work \(pitt.edu\)](#)

- CWEB and CWEL Applications
- CWEB Frequently Asked Questions
- CWEL Frequently Asked Questions
- CWEB Student Handbook
- CWEB Expense Reimbursement Guide
- CWEB Informational Video
- CWEB FAQs Video
- CWEB Internship Guidance
- CWEB Flyer
- Child Welfare Realistic Job Preview Video
- CWEL Student Handbook
- CWEL Expense Reimbursement Guide
- CWEL Flyer
- Fall 2024 CWEL Orientation Presentation
- Program Evaluation Instruments
- Social Work Licensure
- Social Work Licensure Flyer
- Funded Internships (Allegheny County)

# Appendix K

## Child Welfare Education and Research Programs

### CWEB/CWEL Faculty and Staff

Name	Position Title	CWEB/CWEL Percent of Effort	Employment Dates
Helen Cahalane, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW	Principal Investigator	52%	1/20/97-present
Laura Borish, MSW, LSW	CWEB/CWEL Practicum Placement and Agency Coordinator	90%	7/1/18-present
Joseph DiPasqua, MA	Program Administrator	78%	6/16/14-present
Yvonne Hamm, BA	Senior Program Administrator	98%	6/28/10-present
Alicia Johnson, Ph.D., LSW	CWEL Academic Coordinator	97%	7/1/20-present
Marlo Perry, Ph.D.	Research Associate Professor	25%	8/1/10-present
Brooke Rawls, Ph.D., LCSW	CWEB Academic Coordinator	100%	7/19/21-present
Michael Schrecengost, MPPM, CMA	Chief Fiscal Officer	42%	3/3/03-present
Tyler S. Verin, MPA	Assistant Director of Finance, Human Resources & Administration	60%	5/13/24-present
Robert Winners, BS	Student Records Data Manager	100%	1/1/23-present
Rachel Winters, M.A.	Senior Evaluation Coordinator	48%	3/16/09-present



Thank  
you!



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