



# NCWWI BSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned

October 2008 – September 2013

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## Acknowledgements

This publication represents a collaborative effort by the partners of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI)—University at Albany/SUNY, the University of Denver, Fordham University, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Portland State University, and University of Southern Maine. Thanks to Sara Munson and Sharon Kollar for editing and Rea Gibson, Jordan Institute for Families, UNC Chapel Hill, for design assistance.

NCWWI is funded through a cooperative agreement with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau, Award No. 90CT0145. Special thanks to Randi Walters, Children’s Bureau Project Officer, and Robert Lindecamp, Child Welfare Program Specialist (CB/ICF), for their support.

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### Recommended citation

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (2013). *NCWWI BSW traineeship program: Legacies & lessons learned*. Albany, NY: Author.

### For more information

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## I. Executive Summary

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**Theme 1 – Start Early:** Begin the processes of planning and implementation of the child welfare workforce development project as soon as possible. They said it works best when there are existing collaborations or networks to build upon so that the university-community groups can move into action phases quickly.

**Theme 2 – Build Bridges:** This was one of the most strongly emphasized recommendations of the BSW traineeship programs. Traineeship projects require the ability to consider not only system level changes, but the links or “bridges” between these systems, including new and strengthened relationships. It also requires the project to understand the development of student skills and entry to employment. The responsibilities of social work educators extends beyond graduation into support for alumni during the first two years post-graduation and inclusion of alumni as leaders in future workforce development processes.

The links among the internal and external parts of traineeship programs (curriculum, field, administration, community field agencies, communities, and policy planning) are highly complex. To execute the project requires multiple pathways of coordination and collaborative change. To make inroads in one area often requires extensive coordination with other components of the project.

It is important to note that one does not build a bridge overnight, let alone a network of bridges. Those who set about to focus on social work education as a vehicle for a strengthened child welfare workforce must realize that it will take a long time to complete the work, and it is important to recognize and celebrate smaller steps of development. The project is built one part of a bridge, one bridge, and one network at a time. These small steps move the work forward.

**Theme 3 – Rev Up Resources:** It takes resources to engage in this work. Some of these are substantive resources such as program funding and faculty release time, while others are collaboration and social support resources. For example, student support is important for child welfare traineeship participation and can include access to housing, transportation, and social support for navigating new learning experiences in child welfare settings. There is also a need to help advocate with community agency colleagues for sufficient staffing, access to bilingual staff, and opportunities for trainings directed toward new and long term hires.

**Theme 4 – Value Diversity:** Continued attention must be paid to building a more diverse workforce, as well as a workforce that is well educated for working with diverse people.

**Theme 5 – Be Innovative:** BSW traineeship programs provide opportunities for true innovation. Examples include a new Spanish social work child welfare specialization, as well as a rotating child welfare field placement model. Future planners and educators must continue to take risks and support true innovation that can be demonstrated with new

courses, curriculum processes, field sites, collaborative trainings, and other products and processes.

**Theme 6 – Recognize BSW Goodness of Fit:** The majority of child welfare agencies will hire new workers who have undergraduate degrees. Child welfare workers can be better prepared when they use generalist practice skills including generalist multiple system interventions that utilize strength-based client characteristics. Within multiple system interventions, students can work directly with children at risk of out of home care, parents, kinship care providers and other community services agencies. Students can also be prepared for entry level macro practice so as to begin to affect system and policy change. Their skills in procuring and linking people with community resources are essential for child welfare practice with families living in poverty and those with multiple resource needs.

**Theme 7 – Keep Going:** The five years devoted to this project are only the beginning of a longer term process of change. The work has been started (theme one), some of the bridges are built (theme two), diversity processes are enhanced (theme four), and innovations are well underway (theme five). There is a need for continued instrumental and collaborative social support for continuing the journey toward strengthening social work education (including traineeships) toward a child welfare workforce that is skilled and retained over time.

## II. Introduction

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In 2008, the Children’s Bureau funded the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) to build the capacity of the nation’s child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for children, youth and families through activities that support the development of skilled child welfare leaders in public and tribal child welfare systems, and in private agencies that are contracted by the state to provide case management services that are traditionally provided by the public child welfare system. To achieve this, NCWWI launched three major training initiatives: one for mid-managers, one for supervisors and one for students – the Traineeship program.

The purpose of the NCWWI Traineeship program was to support professional education for current or prospective child welfare practitioners in accredited BSW or MSW programs. A major goal for the Traineeship program was to develop educational experiences that would teach and reinforce core competencies in areas of child welfare practice and leadership. Trainees were expected to participate in a field placement at a child welfare agency, enroll in relevant courses to prepare for professional service and leadership in child welfare, and work in a child welfare agency upon graduation. Traineeship schools were expected to innovate and improve their child welfare curricular offerings and were encouraged to provide additional supports for trainees to support completion of degrees and retention in the field. The traineeship program needed to be particularly attentive to addressing diversity within the workforce, local agency workforce needs, preparing future leaders, and understanding systems of care principles.

Twelve Traineeship programs were funded: 5 BSW, 3 joint BSW/MSW and 4 MSW programs.

The **NCWWI BSW Traineeship Programs** were charged with:

- Creating a legacy document that captures innovative and successful strategies used by the BSW Traineeship Programs at multiple levels, especially “lessons learned” that may help others developing future child welfare workforce projects.
- Applying “lessons learned” data to multiple system linkages and levels, including students, schools of social work, child welfare agencies, and regional/national areas.

The document is organized by domains using a system focus and provides recommendations based on successful innovations and strategies that were common across NCWWI’s BSW traineeship programs at the individual student level, at the organizational level for schools, at the organizational level for agencies and tribes, and at the regional and national level.

In each section, the perspectives of the BSW traineeship programs’ leaders are noted in italics.

### III. BSW Traineeship Programs: Legacies & Lessons Learned

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The main themes of our collective legacies and lessons learned are incorporated in the system level analyses that follow. The systems include individual level (Students), Organizational level (School of Social Work), Organizational level (Child Welfare Agency/Tribal Agency), and Regional and National levels.

#### Individual Level: Students

##### I. Recruitment & Selection

One of the most important things the BSW traineeship programs learned was that recruitment should be started as *early as possible*. Selection must be guided by a set of student characteristics and procedures. Utmost, the student needs to be *interested* in working in child welfare. There needs to be a clear plan and process for screening and selecting traineeship students. This should be set up well ahead of time. Additionally, it works best to expose all social work students to child welfare practice within mainstream courses and all-student invited educational events. Examples include:

##### \*Clark Atlanta University (CAU):

*Faculty talked with social work students about child welfare traineeships in early program courses such as Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare Policy. The purpose was to help students get a beginning understanding of child welfare. Many students had inaccurate and/or negative misperceptions about child welfare practice. CAU faculty showed students a realistic job preview video produced by the University of Denver about what it is like to be a child welfare worker*

*In addition, this historically black university provides traineeships to African American students who represent every region of the country. Thus recruitment included African American students. Another goal was to increase students' cultural competencies for working with African American children and families.*

##### \*University of South Dakota (USD):

*USD faculty reviewed student transcripts to identify courses that addressed working with children and families, scanned the student's personal statement (part of the program application process) and examined volunteer/paid experiences involving work with children and families. These three actions provided additional self-reported assurance of commitment to the student's traineeship application. Points were awarded according to the classroom preparation, personal statement, and volunteer or paid experience involving children and families.*

*The USD project particularly emphasized increasing cultural competencies of students who are working with Native American children and families. They worked with Tribal communities to recruit Native American students.*

*The program exposed all USD social work students to child welfare, resulting in a 20% increase in students' interest in working in child welfare. This traineeship project was created to allow students to join the traineeship project for one semester of support during their field experience because many students get excited about child welfare during their program. These students take additional classes and are invited to sit in on the webinars with the full time trainees. Each year the number of field-supported trainees grew.*

**\*University of Maryland (UMD):**

*MSW and BSW traineeship stipend students were recruited from Maryland's historically black colleges and universities. The traineeship program had a specific focus on retention in urban child welfare practice settings (NCWWI, 2012).*

*With a goal to increase retention in urban child welfare systems, the process began with a thorough and realistic practice screening process during student recruitment. In these screening sessions, students received detailed information about the nature of public child welfare services, responded to a realistic job preview video, completed a self-evaluation of their "fit" with public child welfare mission and requirements, and discussed values related to family-centered practice in child welfare. Project faculty members observed the process and recorded responses to assist in the selection of trainees.*

**\*University of Montana (UMT):**

*The University of Montana recruited Native American students and prepared child welfare trainees/scholars for culturally competent practice with Native American children and families including an emphasis on child welfare practice in rural settings. Additionally, UMT offered specific recruitment and selection information:*

- 1. Developed a trusting relationship with the public and private child welfare systems. Supervisors from the local child welfare office were part of the screening and selection committee.*
- 2. Current and past students were key ambassadors and were invited to classes and to meet individually with interested students.*
- 3. The Administrator of Montana's Child and Family Services Division presented to undergraduate classes. The presentation content included child welfare as a career.*
- 4. Screening of students is a process. Students need consistent input and evaluation throughout their academic career.*
- 5. Hired two Cultural Consultants to support recruitment of students from Tribal communities and to help retain these students while they attended the University. The consultants are assisting the school with developing relationships with the Blackfoot Tribes Child Welfare Services (NCWWI, 2012).*

## **2. Avenues for Student Support**

Students need to be connected with a lot of services and someone has to have the time and charge to make these connections. This requires traineeship programs to have a program coordinator who is different from a faculty advisor, field instructor or liaison. The coordinator links the traineeship program with students, the social work program, field sites, and the community. This person functions as a navigator, linking students with NCWWI program staff, webinars, meetings, and university student services.

### **3. Field Experiences: Facilitating Factors & Barriers to Overcome**

There are many benefits to exposing students to a variety of child welfare work settings. Field experiences in child welfare settings increased student exposure to the child welfare profession in ways that were more accurate and “real” portrayals of the field. Further, agency supervisors’ experiences with social work students made positive impressions.

#### ***Facilitating Factors:***

##### \*Clark Atlanta University:

*CAU exposed students to public and private child welfare providers at local, state and federal levels by using an innovative field model. Students rotated across state child welfare, private child welfare, and federal child welfare oversight agencies.*

##### \*University of South Dakota:

*USD developed new relationships that facilitated innovative field placements in Native American communities. This often included Native American students.*

*The USD Project was able to partner with Oglala Lakota College (OLC) and provide stipends for their students who stay on the reservation, participate in shared classes with the USD trainees and complete their field work in tribal child welfare agencies. It is the hope of the project to have USD & OLC students placed together in state and tribal CPS offices in the future.*

#### ***Barriers to Overcome:***

##### \*Salam State University (SSU):

*SSU had some challenges in getting a mentorship program going. BSW Scholar graduates were matched with graduates of the Massachusetts Child Welfare Institute MSW Fellowship. This mentorship program developed to provide support around the following challenges and needs identified by new workers: court testimony, child removals, time management, self-care, organizing/managing paperwork, workload expectations, managing office politics, and the need for a ‘go to’ person other than the supervisor. Students also learned about developing a ‘thick skin’ and became aware of having been protected as a student.*

##### \*New Mexico State University (NMSU):

*At the beginning of the project, the agency professionals did not always understand the importance of placing NMSU stipend participants with workers who were able to serve Spanish speaking families. One student was placed with a worker who did not speak Spanish so that student did not have the opportunity to be challenged by having to communicate in Spanish with clients. Additionally, although there are some bilingual workers in the community, there is a need for standards of practice. Bilingual workers who serve Spanish-speaking clients may be highly proficient or may barely know how to have simple conversations. Our students have been challenged to develop a great deal of bilingual ability. When our alumni enter the child welfare field with increased capacity to serve Spanish speaking clients, services will be more culturally competent. These traineeship*

*alumni will hopefully mentor the next generation of students once they are able to supervise social work student interns.*

**\*University of South Dakota:**

*Leadership changes within the universities and tribal communities were major barriers that were overcome through the reliance on strong relationships. USD continues to struggle with housing in the rural and reservation areas of the state and continues to address these issues.*

**\*University of Montana:**

*Barriers included: (a) finding available, experienced and skilled practicum supervision was an issue at times, due to workload in the public child welfare system; and (b) agency turnover also resulted in a lack of available supervision and experienced social workers to guide trainees. This barrier will be addressed when NCWWI graduates enter child welfare practice as they are expected to eventually become resources for enhanced supervision.*

#### **4. Transition to the Workforce**

BSW students in the traineeship programs appeared well trained and prepared to make positive impressions and impacts within child welfare worksites, showed promise for competent child welfare practice, and were a good fit with the workforce needs of the child welfare field.

Support for new child welfare workers is critical. It is not enough to just expose students to child welfare, graduate them, and then stop being involved with them. Universities and agencies need to work together to support students through their most vulnerable time for leaving – the first few years of their initial professional child welfare employment.

**\*University of Montana:**

*The trainees were trained well and had sufficient exposure to public child welfare thus they were able to “hit the ground running” in positions immediately after graduation.*

**\*University of South Dakota:**

*USD formalized support through partnerships and a shared cost for training. The USD traineeship project has allowed the USD BSW program, Oglala Lakota College and the state Division of Child Protection Services to share training and begin the process of partnering.*

**\*New Mexico State University:**

*The Local CYFD office supported our traineeship project and the agency showed appreciation for the students. Students who considered themselves bilingual before their participation in the project expressed surprise regarding how much they learned during the project.*

**\*Salem State University:**

*BSW programs are a natural resource for child welfare professionals. BSW students have the skills and abilities necessary to move directly into child welfare work after graduation. There needs to be a continuing dialogue between BSW programs and public child welfare agencies (e.g., the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families) regarding the*

*specific advantages of hiring individuals with BSW degrees, particularly when these individuals have completed an internship with the agency.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*One of the innovations of the USD Project has been to connect students with professionals in the field (e.g. training together on Systems of Care approaches; have CPS professionals teaching and training in the classroom; and have students (trainees and others) participating on advisory boards for the local CPS office).*

## **5. Barriers to Transition to Child Welfare Employment**

Transition to employment was a shared concern across BSW traineeship programs. While some students were hired in their original field sites, programs reported that some of their students were having difficulties getting jobs in a time of budget cuts and leadership changes.

\*University of Montana:

*The UMT program “got the students fired up about changing the system” but when once they were hired, students were loaded up with work, had insufficient support, and were not encouraged to suggest change. Current child welfare has a “static atmosphere” that struggles with change and creativity can be stifled. It is important that students are prepared for this atmosphere when they go to work in child welfare agencies.*

*Because of turnover, at times, trainees who graduate do not get a chance to acclimate to the agency. In the short run, graduates provide relief to the agency but this hinders the longevity of employees. UMT faculty are having continuing conversations about this subject and are working to inform students about what to expect upon entering the agency.*

\*New Mexico State University:

*Although bilingual students were appreciated and there was clearly a need for bilingual social workers, there was very little effort by the agency to recruit bilingual social workers. Students who graduated had difficulties getting jobs. To combat this challenge, the NMSU traineeship program helped students prepare for the application and interview process and provided students with information about job openings through e-mail. NMSU social work educators also met with the state public child welfare agency Human Resources unit professionals in Santa Fe. The educators gave the HR professionals the names of their stipend participants and, while the HR staff did not promise to hire the students, they agreed to consider students’ participation in the traineeship program as a plus, and to carefully review the students’ application packets so they could at least interview them.*

\*Clark Atlanta University:

*During Fall Homecoming events, the program brought together the alumni from the project to get feedback on their transition to work and their support needs. For example, reported needs were for increased quality of supervision, reduced workload, and increased salaries (NCWWI, 2012).*

## **6. Post-graduation Supports**

The role of the schools of social work includes more than simply educating students; they need to be part of the collaborative effort to change child welfare systems so they have the resources and the capacities to support their workers. Schools of social work must engage in extended roles with community agencies and alumni; working together for active policy and system support and change.

Traineeship projects must extend to graduates and new child welfare workers so as to support them through the first few years when they are most likely to leave child welfare practice.

\*Salem State University:

*Turnover of students entering employment is less of an issue than finding employment. SSU has supporters within the child welfare agencies who tend to hire NCWWI students first; however, more supporters are needed. As a result, the program recommends marketing and program promotion be done early in the project development process.*

\*University of Montana:

*After graduation faculty continue to be supportive and provide mentorship for alumni. This is accomplished through informal meetings or through formal endeavors by providing clinical supervision to achieve licensure.*

*Project resources accelerated expansion of distance learning options allowing for project presence across the state. Additionally, “two plus two” partnerships have been developed with tribal community colleges (NCWWI, 2012).*

\*University of South Dakota:

*USD has enjoyed success with the South Dakota Division of CPS. State USD does the field experience in a full semester block placement at the end of coursework completion and, as a result of CPS increasing their paid internships in child welfare offices across the state, many students have enjoyed a state-supported internship that led to employment. Training all students in Systems of Care and with professionals in the CPS field has proven effective in professionalizing the CPS field.*

\*University of Maryland:

*The project surveyed traineeship alumni that were in the workforce to determine their interest in and need for training (NCWWI, 2012).*

\*New Mexico State University:

*We had a number of continuing education events. We gave both our graduate and undergraduate students an equal opportunity to participate and I think that was a good thing because BSW and MSW level social workers work at different levels and our community needs both to have this kind of training.*

## Organizational Level: Schools of Social Work

### I. Support for Faculty

*Continuity of leadership* within and across the university is key to the success of traineeship programs. This means that there is continuity of support for teaching, resource linking, and planning/collaborating roles. These traineeship programs require a large time commitment; therefore, time for engaging in the tasks needs to be protected. It is important for program leaders to recognize faculty's hard work and progress in innovative NCWWI program development. Additionally, participants called for an understanding of the NCWWI project across the School. They recommended the School leaders ensure that they hire child welfare experts for program involvement, including those teaching child welfare content.

\*Salem State University:

*In order to move forward through changes in field services and administration, programs need to be prepared with strong relationships. In a transition, programs also need to make sure that the project is still connected with the Chair or Director of the Department [or School].*

\*Clark Atlanta University:

*When internal changes occur in a program community agencies need know that there is still a connection to the leader(s) and that there is continuity to continue to build and maintain relationships.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*The biggest struggle for the University of South Dakota's Traineeship Project has been leadership changes. During the award period, USD had 5 separate department chairs in social work and 3 separate Deans in the School of Health Sciences. We would like time to do the work and increased recognition for it. Leaders should recognize the work in child welfare reaches beyond service and reward the efforts appropriately within the university community and department workload documents.*

\*New Mexico State University:

*There is a need for all faculty involved in the project to develop a good understanding of all project requirements in case someone in the team has to leave the project, the others can step in and continue with the project without interruption or detrimental consequences. Programs should also recruit child welfare experts.*

## **2. Curriculum Innovation & Development**

NCWWI BSW traineeship programs developed a plethora of innovative curriculum enhancements. Selected examples include: a Spanish speaking child welfare specialization, new social work education courses, other child welfare specializations, teaching teams, rotational field models, and mentoring programs. There were numerous special trainings and events to support and child welfare staff. Often these events and curriculum changes were open to the whole student body so as to enhance a collective understanding of child welfare practice in today's world. Some schools included BSW and MSW students as well as field liaisons, supervisors, and others from the field agencies and child welfare policy planners. Examples of topics for the seminars included Systems of Care (SSU, USD), Motivational Interviewing (UMD), and a Safety Assessment Model (SAMS) that stresses family strengths and child well-being (UMT). The University of South Dakota delivered

state CPS training that included topics such as intake and family assessment, cultural competency with Native families, and kinship care, foster care, and adoption services. They also conducted trainings on behavioral management and the AFCARS reporting system.

\*New Mexico:

*A big challenge for bilingual (Spanish/English) social work students and bilingual social workers in general is that when they work with a Spanish speaking client, the documents they had in front of them were usually in English. This meant that they were translating the written English text in their head, asked the client for information in Spanish, the client answered in Spanish, and the worker had to translate their notes to English for the client's file. This was a very challenging process and it was not likely to be completely accurate. Taking the time to translate those agency forms that are used most often into Spanish improved uniformity of services. The students translated many agency documents to Spanish and this provided more uniformity and reduced the amount of time required to think through the translation process. Having the forms in Spanish also helped because if the family were literate, the form was shared with the family, so they saw what the worker was asking.*

*The NMSU social work education traineeship project consisted of: 1) an immersion course to get students to develop and practice child welfare and social work terminology in Spanish, 2) a field experience where students had to complete all assignments in Spanish, and 3) discussions of their field experiences conveyed in Spanish during a practice seminar course. The program had both graduate and undergraduate student participants. A child welfare course was developed in Spanish to provide students the opportunity to develop and practice the legal, health, child welfare, and mental health language used in the child welfare system. Students were placed with Spanish-speaking field instructors and field seminars were conducted in Spanish (NCWWI, 2012).*

\*Salem State University:

*SSU developed a new hybrid (some content online, some content face to face) System of Care course. The SSU traineeship program worked with three social work education programs for collaborative field settings and some shared coursework. This was the first and only cross-campus collaboration regarding a specific curriculum topic. Cooperation was easily obtained, but collaboration was made difficult by the fact that there was no existing infrastructure and one of the institutions was involved in major shifts in the oversight of their BSW and field education programs. We worked through this challenge by developing good working relationships and maintaining contact.*

\*University of Maryland:

*UMD hosted an intensive two-day training for field instructors and traineeship students in motivational interviewing to develop skills for engaging families served by the child welfare system. The training used standardized cases. Live supervision was utilized and training interviews were taped so that students obtained additional clinical supervision feedback (NCWWI, 2012).*

\*University of Montana:

*UMT developed on-line versions of two existing courses and a new on-line course on trauma informed practice. The on-line courses reached trainees in rural areas and enhanced course enrollment flexibility for students.*

*Student learning teams were used to support students. Teams consisted of the students' advisors and others. The team met twice per semester. They discussed tough situations, celebrated successes, and supported student learning. They also addressed secondary traumatic stress in the child welfare workforce (NCWWI, 2012).*

**\*University of South Dakota:**

*USD established a Specialization in Child Welfare. In addition, a new "Social work with Native Children and Families" course will now be required in the BSSW program.*

*Field students were trained in "Circle of Courage: Reclaiming At-Risk Youth" an indigenous model of community and individual care. There was a lecture by Dr. Suzanne Cross from Michigan State University on historical trauma. This occurred along with a performance of "The Great Hurt: A Readers Theatre"; this is a performance by the faculty of the College of Saint Scholastica.*

**\*Clark Atlanta University:**

*Students completed a unique rotational field placement. They experienced three different professional child welfare settings. Across one academic year, students were placed in a private nonprofit organization (6 weeks), a public agency (12 weeks) and a federal regional office (6 weeks).*

### **3. Incorporation of Child Welfare Competencies**

Child welfare competencies were built into students' course and field learning experiences in the BSW traineeship projects.

**\*University of South Dakota:**

*The USD child welfare course concentrated attention on the competencies of the field. The attention to specific competencies within the designated class worked well. For example, overarching perspectives and models were taught within practice and theory classes including: Strength's Based Practice approaches, Systems of Care, Family Group Decision Making, and Mediation Skills.*

### **4. Role of the Field Department**

Field departments are "absolutely essential" for developing child welfare traineeships. Many of these contributions are found throughout this report, including in curriculum content (above).

**\*University of South Dakota:**

*The inclusion of the Field Director was critical to the USD traineeship project. Trainees were placed only in NCWWI appropriate agencies and the rural and reservation placements could not have happened without active Director of Field outreach and partnerships.*

### **5. Role of the SSW Administration**

As noted above, continuous and supportive administration is essential to executing a BSW traineeship project.

\*Salem State University:

*Ensure the program has organizational support from the Chair and Dean. Get the understandings of support in writing and with some bite behind them so faculty have the time, support and finance necessary to do the program well.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*Administrative support is vital to the sustainability of partnerships made possible through the traineeship project. Recognize the work in child welfare reaches beyond service and reward the efforts appropriately within the university community and department workload. Administrative support translates into a number of activities:*

- *Release time for faculty to coordinate State CPS, university and Tribal CPS and university efforts.*
- *Continued financial support for joint trainings between students and professionals.*
- *Additional funding for travel for rural/tribal field placements and face to face meetings of stakeholders and consumers of service.*
- *Financial support for faculty to continue to work nationally with traineeship networks, tribal communities and experts.*

## Organizational Level – Child Welfare Agency/Tribal Agency

### **I. Recruitment & Selection of Field Instructors**

Recruitment of field instructors begins with leveraging faculty networks and asking existing field instructors who they would recommend for new field instructors. This allows traineeship program staff to draw upon the professional networks of existing field instructors. Some contacts for possible field instructors were drawn also from university hosted trainings that included field instructors, students, and child welfare workers who were not (yet) field instructors. Finally, some schools of social work directly educated new public child welfare workers who could eventually be seasoned enough to serve as field instructors.

The BSW traineeship programs worked towards increasing the diversity of the students and people served in internship settings, such as people who are African American, Native American/American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino. For example, many established relationships with agency and community leaders where prospective field instructors lived and/or worked. Schools hosted training events that helped bring together students, existing field instructors, and child welfare workers who may be interested in becoming field instructors.

\*University of South Dakota:

*USD hosted system of care trainings that included state of South Dakota child welfare workers.*

\*University of Montana:

*UMT was fortunate to have the National Native Children's Trauma Center on campus. Our PI worked extensively with the Center. His work improved understanding of child welfare work with tribal communities and helped create new partnerships.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*USD was very fortunate to have professionals in the field eager to work with students, especially Child Protective Services professionals. Matching student to agency is a key strategy in recruiting field instructors. Rural, reservation and CPS Field Placements covering itinerate offices are best facilitated by matching students to the challenges of their environment. There are some students who ought never to be placed in small towns where access to shopping and recreation may be 3-4 hours away. Additionally placement in areas that service itinerate offices should never be done during the winter months of spring semester. Pairing students in remote rural placements is a good strategy because placing the appropriate student in the "best fit" agency is an excellent way to recruit field instructors.*

## **2. Nature & Range of Field Placements**

Students' exposure to child welfare practice may contribute to a better trained and longer retained child welfare workforce. Methods of exposure often included shared university, community, and agency trainings. Students who learn about "real" child welfare are more likely to be interested in working in child welfare settings. Entering students often had negative, inaccurate, and stigmatizing views of child welfare practice. When students get balanced, strength-based, and accurate information they express more interest in working in child welfare. Further, the BSW programs' emphases on students of color offers hope for increasing minority workers in child welfare. This could contribute toward more culturally competent child welfare practice.

\*Clark Atlanta University:

*CAU used an innovative new internship rotation model. Traineeship students were placed in regional private child welfare agencies, state public child welfare agencies, and a federal public child welfare policy unit.*

\*University of Maryland:

*University of Maryland (UMD) placed students in urban, high risk communities so as to potentially increase the number of social workers who would continue to work in agencies that service the area.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*Training professionals and students together has opened many doors and avenues for supportive partnering.*

## **3. Agency Support for Students**

There are a number of informal and formal ways that child welfare agencies can support students. Informal exchanges between traineeship students and child welfare professionals enriched student learning experiences. Paid student internships are also a way for agencies to support students, as is prioritizing the hiring of traineeship students.

\*University of South Dakota:

The child welfare agency professionals wanted to hire USD students in every opening. This provided the University of South Dakota more attention and a little bit of funding to reconnect and establish partnerships with results that turned heads. New CPS workers in the public state system were more and more composed of our undergraduate alumni. That is a *major outcome* of the project.

Our South Dakota Field experience is a full semester block placement. The child welfare agencies provide many training and or workshop opportunities to our students. Students also experience the full range of case management by being able to assume a small case load in the agencies. They are provided a state car and they can submit for per-diem reimbursement for being off site during scheduled work days.

Also, a lot of students' learning "took place in the hallways" when students and agency workers met for shared trainings sponsored by the USD School of Social Work.

\*Salem State University:

*Some of SSU area offices provided interns with group supervision in addition to individual supervision. Group supervision, when BSW and/or MSW students are together in groups from different schools, is very helpful and is a positive support for students. Agencies also support students by encouraging attendance at trainings.*

*BSW Scholar graduates are matched with graduates of the Massachusetts Child Welfare Institute MSW Fellowship program. This mentorship program was developed to provide support around the challenges and needs identified by new workers. These included court testimony, child removals, time management, self-care, organizing/managing paperwork, workload expectations, managing office politics, and the need for a 'go to' person other than the supervisor, as well as developing a 'thick skin' and the awareness of having been protected as a student.*

#### **4. Facilitating Factors & Barriers within the Agency**

Relationship "bridges" are a way to overcome many complex systemic barriers that can interfere with innovative practice development in field sites. Some of these included natural linkages that emerge from shared trainings between faculty, students, and child welfare professionals.

\*University of Montana:

*The current public child welfare administrator in MT has been very receptive to UMT offers to assist with grants, help prepare legislative testimony, and provide training. In addition, it is the hope of the UMT traineeship program that a workforce study will give the public child welfare agency insight and methods to curb turnover and thus improve the climate for both workers and trainees.*

\*New Mexico State University:

*Students contributed to major change impacts at the agency when they were able to better communicate with Spanish-speaking families. Also, many agency materials were translated into Spanish. An example is the foster family application form which could play a role in increasing the chances of recruiting Spanish-speaking foster families.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*The University of South Dakota hosted shared trainings in the agency sites. The more they shared trainings, the more open the state Division of CPS staff was in regard to distributing information to state CPS workers from the NCWWI website. This was a big step in the state opening themselves to any type of university intervention in the field.*

*In an effort to address the barriers of public child welfare heavy workload and bureaucracy limitations schools and agencies should work together to make inroads in policy and practice and work together to use advocacy skills as social workers.*

## Regional & National Level

### **1. Collaboration Challenges & Opportunities**

The best collaborations are with child welfare professionals, other community services providers, and community residents, including children and families served by the child welfare system. The BSW traineeship programs built new and stronger linkages with people, agencies, and communities.

\*Salem State University:

*SSU engaged in productive collaborations with other schools of social work and with the Massachusetts State Department of Children and Families, as well as several local offices. These collaborations allowed the traineeship program to make some progress in demonstrating the value of hiring BSW graduates who completed their internships at DCF. SSU built a regionally-based application and selection process that included representatives from each partner educational institution, the MA Child Welfare Institute, and the local DCF offices at which the students would be interning.*

\*Clark Atlanta University:

*We used rotating field internships across local, state, and federal level child welfare settings, as well as in both public and private child welfare agencies. Much collaboration took place among university and community members (and students!) to make this rotation model work.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*We need to take advantage of the community college pipeline. There is a need for increased information from community colleges (especially colleges with human services programs) regarding the types of field internships students may complete before entering undergraduate programs. Forging stronger connections with community colleges creates an opportunity to begin recruiting future child welfare workers at an earlier stage of their education.*

### **2. Benefits & Impact of Partnership with NCWWI**

Partnering with the NCWWI provided a stimulus for building new infrastructures and innovations many of which are likely to be sustained. The message was, "Once a bridge is built, it is likely to stay in place for some time." The NCWWI program *extended the linkages*

among stakeholders. One participant said, “The bridges kept getting longer and longer” (as more and more stakeholders began to come together).

The BSW traineeship programs *learned and re-learned the importance of relationships and resources* through their interactions with NCWWI. They learned how complex it is to begin to make paradigm changes across networks of educational and services systems. They reported that they also re-discovered that change takes a long time and strongly emphasized the need for a *forward and collective vision* to keep educators and child welfare professionals on a unified developmental pathway.

\*Salem State University:

*SSU developed a three-school model of collaboration in MA. This helped really strengthen the relationships.*

\*University of Montana:

*UMT worked closely with tribal and rural community leaders. NCWWI supported momentum to help the program further enhance their internship links with tribal programs and rural programs.*

\*New Mexico State University:

*NMSU was able to develop a child welfare course in Spanish and gave our students two semesters of direct practice experience with Spanish-speaking clients. NCWWI funding was instrumental in helping NMSU faculty developed a Spanish language child welfare traineeship specialization. Educators recruited bilingual (Spanish/English) social work students and helped them to increase their bilingual capabilities by providing them the opportunity to become familiar with the technical Spanish language relevant to child welfare. This project allowed educators to embrace the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students. It also helped students to increase their knowledge and skills so they can go back to their community and more effectively serve families in need.*

\*University of Maryland:

*UMD was able to strengthen their mission to prepare social workers for practice in urban areas. NCWWI helped support enhanced efforts to prepare students to work in high risk, urban areas which can contribute to better child welfare workforce retention and more culturally competent services with urban residents.*

\*Clark Atlanta University:

*NCWWI was the stimulant for development of an innovative field rotation model, i.e., placements of social work students in regional private child welfare agencies, state public child welfare agencies, and a federal policy making child welfare unit.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*USD increased collaboration with tribal leaders and members, including Indian Child Welfare agencies. Shared trainings involved child welfare professionals, field liaisons, field supervisors, policy makers, and educators which provided opportune times for students, faculty, and child welfare workers to discuss issues and strengthened linkages with tribal services (NCWWI, 2012). Additionally, resources from NCWWI were shared with everyone*

*involved in the lives of children and families and USD was able to train the supervisor for the regional economic assistance division in Systems of Care. The USD Project would not have happened without the assistance and support of the NCWWI initiative.*

### **3. Innovations to Build Relationships & Collaborations**

As noted above, BSW traineeship programs worked hard to strengthen external relationships, including links with tribal and rural communities. They described clear educational outcomes, such as innovative field models, a child welfare concentration track in Spanish, new course specializations, new courses and shared training events. Among their many options, BSW traineeship project participants each identified the following as their most important innovation.

\*Clark Atlanta University:

*Our innovation was the rotation field model – rotating across private, public, local, state, and federal child welfare sites.*

\*University of Montana:

*We succeeded in enhanced links with tribal and rural programs. These provide means and partnerships to influence agency culture and reduce staff turnover. This will ultimately help in both retention and recruitment and improve the agency’s work with children and families.*

\*Salem State University:

*We developed collaborations between institutions (three schools of social work, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, and local area offices) on curriculum and field while also maintaining unique features of each school.*

\*New Mexico State University:

*We created a Spanish language child welfare course and conducting field seminars in Spanish is an innovation that can potentially have a long term positive impact on our social work community. Bilingual (Spanish/English) social workers are needed and this model can be duplicated not only for other child welfare traineeship projects but for social work education in general.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*We offered shared trainings that involve child welfare professionals, field liaisons, field supervisors, policy makers, and university and community college educators. These shared trainings allowed university educators to join with the state Division of CPS team. The project provided support necessary to strengthen linkages with tribal services by sharing courses with tribal college BSW program. Putting the infrastructure in place has made it possible to keep dreaming and scheming.*

## **Other Themes & Recommendations**

### **I. Considerations for Future Traineeship Projects**

\*Salem State University:

*Have more activities for students to be involved in: Set up more opportunities for students to meet face-to-face and participate in a shared learning experience (e.g., webinars, online course). Work more closely with the local CYFD office to gain their support for the project.*

\*New Mexico State University:

*There are no current child welfare instructional textbooks available in Spanish. Most current information is in English, and translating articles is time consuming and probably inadequate. Bilingual social workers are needed. Bilingual students are using their bilingual skills beyond being able to engage with clients by communicating in their own language. Students are being asked to take the role of translators and interpreters and that requires a different set of skills.*

*It is critical to work with the state agency from the beginning to negotiate consideration of graduates for the possibility of an interview for available jobs. Some graduates had very little experience and they were competing with applicants who had a lot of experience and the people making personnel selections were not aware of the scope of the project. This was fixed at the end but should have been addressed at the beginning.*

\*University of South Dakota:

*We would have liked have the partnership with Oglala Lakota College in place from the start of our traineeship project.*

## **2. Additional Advice for New Traineeship Programs**

BSW traineeship projects described the need for relationships, resources, and time so as have sufficient energy to devote to an innovative project involving complex and bureaucratic educational and child welfare institutions.

\*University of South Dakota:

*There is no single entry point for our work together with the agencies. We have to have a network of contact points to form a real partnership. We need to help shoulder some of the burden. We can help by engaging with community folks and we can help them to engage with the university folks. We need to be able to expend time and energy and even dollars – put them on the table to be shared. So we learned to think way outside of the university and CPS Division box and provide avenues of collaboration.*

\*Salem State University:

*Be sure to collaborate with the local child welfare agency and, to the extent possible, with the state child welfare system. Try to get the agency/system to agree to at least interview, if not offer, positions to program graduates. Find out the workforce needs of the public child welfare system. Understand what the current infrastructure is for general internships and the capacity for BSW/MSW-level field instructors in the public child welfare system.*

## **3. Vision for Supportive Child Welfare Agencies**

The BSW programs developed the following vision for child welfare agencies in supporting social work students before and after graduation:

- Interactive training: *Staff and students learn together in “special topic” trainings. These are ongoing opportunities for practitioners and students to connect. These*

*networking opportunities are not limited to child welfare. The system can “kick the door open” so that all students and faculty are invited. It can be in a structure ranging across systems. Students and others could give formal presentations. There could be increased contact between professionals of a number of agency sites, e.g., mental health, court, domestic violence, or any services system agency.*

- *Workload: Child welfare workers and others are given jobs that are “realistic” – doable workload, good supervision and support, release time to learn about evidence-based practice models and to engage in innovative planning.*
- *Pro-active planning and a continuum of services: Although it is true that crises can sometimes lead to short term system changes for more effective services, the ideal system would have ongoing proactive planning. It would be less “reactive”. There would be time and mechanisms to engage in proactive planning. Service recipients and a host of key stakeholders would have a voice in the planning.*
- *Peer involvement/leadership: The practice model would have a continuum of services from crises intervention to proactive prevention programs. It could include peer leadership and involvement. There is a need for stronger child and family voices.*

## IV. Summary & Conclusion

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Future traineeship project leaders should

1. **Start** the planning processes **early**;
2. **Build** relationship and systemic **bridges**;
3. **Rev up resources** and supports for students, faculty, and community agencies;
4. **Value diversity** by enhancing access, inclusion, and cultural competencies of present and future child welfare workers;
5. **Be innovative** in social work education courses, specializations and field internship designs
6. **See BSW programs as a good fit** with entry to, and future leadership of, child welfare services; and,
7. **Keep going**. It is important to know that the system changes take a long time and we are not done building social work education students who are well trained and resilient child welfare workers.

There will be a continued need for well-trained undergraduate social workers as the BSW students of today become the child welfare supervisors and leaders of the future.

*We laid the foundations of workforce change ... But our work is not done. We have more bridges to build ... and to finish. This work has really just begun. In fact, this is NOT a legacy document because our work has truly just begun. This document reflects a strong, formative process in a much longer term, intensive, collaborative effort.*



## V. References

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