



University	University of North Dakota (UND) Department of Social Work
BSW/MSW Program	Combined BSSW/MSW program
Public Agency Partner	North Dakota Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
Project Title	Recruitment & Retention of Child Welfare Scholars to Meet Critical Workforce Shortages in North Dakota’s “Oil Patch.”
Location	Grand Forks, North Dakota
Area Served	North Dakota’s “Oil Patch” - Prioritizes Divide, Dunn, McKenzie, Mountrail, Stark, Ward, & Williams Counties & the Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara (MHA) Nation.

Scope & Focus

The University of North Dakota’s Department of Social Work (UND), in partnership with the North Dakota Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), recruits residents of affected western North Dakota communities, funding approximately 18-22 BSSW and MSW trainees (*Child Welfare Scholars*) over five years, to meet the increasingly critical child welfare workforce shortage in the oil boom-impacted region of the state.

Main Elements & Components

Student Recruitment & Selection: Recruitment efforts are targeted (but not limited to) individuals in the current child welfare workforce, including supervisors and parent aides, and focus on current and potential students in or from Oil Patch communities. Staff conduct outreach activities with human services offices in western North Dakota. Oil Patch residents may be served in their communities by the MSW Distance Program (which serves both foundation and concentration students) and by the BSSW Distance Program. *Child Welfare Scholars* are selected based on criteria related to their commitment to child welfare in the Oil Patch.

Child Welfare Placements: *Child Welfare Scholars* are placed in either County Social Service agencies, Tribal Social Service agencies, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or in one of the regional Human Service Centers in North Dakota. Primary roles include child protective services, foster care and adoption services, and family preservation services at the county child welfare agencies. *Scholars* currently working in a child welfare agency can request to do their internship at their place of employment if that experience differs from their current work position. The Field Instructor cannot be their current work supervisor and they must demonstrate a plan that will show how their internship time is protected from their work time, and is not with the same client population (e.g., an intern might engage in child protection work if her/his regular job is foster care). This helps assure that



students are gaining significant new learning experiences to advance their career in the desired direction.

Course Work Requirements/Curricular Enhancements: Child Welfare Scholars have access to a more concentrated child welfare curriculum than regular BSSW or MSW students. The Child Welfare elective is required, as is approved elective content covering trauma-informed and motivational interviewing in child welfare contexts. For the culminating research projects, *Child Welfare Scholars* are required to complete a project relevant to child welfare practice in consultation with their faculty advisor. Both BSSW and MSW-level *Scholars* are required to undertake their field internships (450 and 500 hours, respectively) in an approved child welfare agency in one of the targeted jurisdictions.

Student Supports: Strong preparation and retention of *Child Welfare Scholars* is accomplished using numerous supports, including intensive and specialized advisement by faculty and mentors in the field, a concentrated child welfare curriculum combined with additional training, and support and follow-up through key career transitions (classroom to field setting, field setting to employment, and post-employment). The program continues to develop and refine these activities and processes with active involvement of trainees who have graduated. The program supports students and graduates to attend annual child welfare conferences, and to engage in web-based training.

Work Requirements/Transition to Work Supports: A requirement of this process is the commitment by trainees to work in one of the targeted oil-boom affected jurisdictions after successful completion of their degree. In addition, *Child Welfare Scholars* are required to participate in meetings with their advisor each semester, to enroll in identified electives for a concentrated child welfare curriculum, to attend the state's annual Child Welfare Conference, and to participate in other enhanced trainings and support activities developed for cohorts of Child Welfare Scholars. Upon graduation, program staff follow up with students formally for three years on at least a semi-annual basis. Staff are working with graduated trainees to develop social media-based peer support networks, and formally reunite graduates and scholars annually for training and activities at the state's annual Child Welfare Conference. Graduates are very active in assisting in the development and sustainability of post-graduation supports for trainees.

Partnership and Change

In addition to having a NCWWI University-Agency Partnership, North Dakota is participating in several NCWWI service areas including the Leadership Academy for Deans and Directors (LADD) and the Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS). They also receive services from the LINKD (Leading Information-sharing Networks, Knowledge Management and Dissemination) and Evaluation teams.

In a state where there has been no systematic supervisory coaching or training program, partners are working together to implement NCWWI's Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS), and are utilizing lessons learned to re-tool the existing Title IV-E stipend program to better support rural and reservation-based students to better meet chronic workforce shortage needs. Additionally, faculty and staff have developed a more concentrated child welfare curriculum, and work with graduated trainees to develop and implement pre- and post-graduation trainee supports.

Real Story from the Field



A NEW FRONTIER FOR CHILD WELFARE IN RURAL NORTH DAKOTA

As an MSW student at the University of North Dakota, Skye Albert received a NCWWI traineeship that sent her to work in a rural part of the state that was facing a child welfare crisis. Skye not only tackled the unique challenges facing the county, but inspired her MSW program to re-think how they prepare students to work in the field.