Mind the Gap Webinar Series | Session 3 | April 29, 2015

A Service of the Children’s Bureau

MIND THE GAP NATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES, Session #3

Children's Corps: A Dynamic Approach to Child Welfare Worker Recruitment, Screening & Selection

Barry Chaffkin, Viviane deMilly, Liv Anna Homstead, Jessica Black - Children’s Corps

Cy Orfield, Assistant Divisional Director – Jewish Child Care Association

Kathryn Hall, Senior Case Planner – Children’s Corps 2013

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

Changing . . .

Leading . . .

Learning . . .

A Service of the Children’s Bureau
Today’s Session

• Introduction

• Dynamic Recruitment, Screening & Selection of Child Welfare Workers
  o Background
  o Context, Information-gathering & Planning
  o Core Features, Development & Implementation
  o Progress, Impact & Outcomes
  o Challenges & Accelerators
  o Lessons Learned, Tips & Takeaways

• Q & A

• Closing & Next Steps
Workforce Development Framework
To Support Staff and Advance Improved Outcomes for Children, Youth & Families

Workforce Development Planning Process

- Analyze Workforce Supply & Demand
- Identify Need: Organizational Assessment
- Gather Data: Environmental Assessment
- Identify Gaps
- Close the Gaps: Implement Workforce Development Components
- Monitor & Evaluate
- Continuous Quality Improvement

Workforce Development Components

- Leadership
  - VISION, MISSION, VALUES
- Community Context
- Organizational Environment
- Professional Development & Training
- Incentives & Work Conditions
- Recruitment, Screening & Selection
- Education & Professional Preparation
- Supervision & Performance Management
- Job Analysis & Position Requirements

Mind the Gap Webinar Series | Session 3 | April 29, 2015
A Service of the Children’s Bureau
Recruitment, Screening & Selection

• Proactive recruitment of a broad and diverse pool of candidates using characteristic-based criteria

• Realistic portrayal of the work

• Valid selection criteria for candidates who are qualified; aligned with job requirements, and reflecting the diversity of language, culture, geography, race and ethnicity in communities
Background: Children’s Corps

- CC utilizes a 3-prong approach to ATTRACT, PREPARE, AND SUSTAIN high quality workers.
- Today we are going to focus on the 1st element of the model so that you come away from this session with specific and doable recruitment, screening and selection strategies that can be applied in your various contexts.
What is Children’s Corps (CC)?

- A program inspired by Teach for America and adapted by Fostering Change for Children to strengthen the child welfare workforce through the specialized selection, training, and support of new workers on the frontline.
The Purpose

- **Support the system**
- **Improve retention**
- **Improve outcomes**
- **Foster future leaders**
3-Prong Approach

Recruitment

Training

Support
Elements

1. **Strategic Recruitment & Selection**
   - Recruit from higher education institutions/major online job sites.
   - Application and interview processes screen for specific characteristics.
   - Selected members make 2-year commitment to the field.

2. **Pre-Service Training**
   - Members immersed in 4-week Summer Training Academy.
   - Training includes both shadowing at agencies and dynamic, interactive classroom learning.

3. **Ongoing Training and Support**
   - Members have structured support systems from FCFC staff, mentors, and current Corps members/alumni.
Context, Information Gathering & Planning Process
NYC Context

- Privatized system
- Approx. 11,000 children/youth in foster care
- Average length of stay is 2.28 years
- Approx. 25,000 children receive preventive services
- # of preventive cases increased 16% between July 2013 & July 2014
Worker Turnover & Vacancy Rates

• The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reports that annual turnover rates of child welfare staff is estimated between 30-40% nationwide

• The average tenure of a worker is less than two years (GAO, 2003)

• Surveys of 42 states found that vacancies for foster care and adoption workers stay open about 13 weeks

• In New York State, annual turnover rates range from 30%-40% within agencies
Impact of Worker Turnover

• Turnover impacts children and families.
• Turnover impacts permanency for youth.
• Turnover impacts the organization.
• Turnover impacts the staff.
Impact on Children and Families

- **Negative impact on children’s safety and permanency**
  - Delay in timeliness of investigations
  - Decreased worker contact
  - Insufficient time to make thorough assessments

- **Decrease in timeliness, continuity, and quality of services**
  - Insufficient information in case files left behind by others

- **Decreased quality and continuity of relationship**
  - Worker/family/child/foster family
  - Within the family
  - Worker/foster parent trust, self-esteem, sense of control

National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2006; Strolin, McCarthy, & Caringi, 2007; Flower, McDonald, & Sumski, 2005; Folman, 2000; Practice Notes NC Division of Social Services; Hess, Folaron & Jefferson, 1992; Unrau & Wells, 2005
Impact on Safety

Lower turnover = Less abuse

- 9% turnover = 6.1% rate of re-abuse
- 23.4% turnover = 14.9% rate of re-abuse

NCCD, 2006
Impact on Permanency

Decrease in Caseworker Turnover Increases Chances of Permanency for Children

- **74.5%** chance of permanency with one caseworker per year
- **17.5%** chance of permanency with two caseworkers per year
- **1%** chance of permanency with more than three caseworkers in one year

Flower, McDonald & Sumski, 2005
Impact on Youth Permanency

Having to change workers made me feel…

- **Unstable**
- **Unsafe**
- **Like I couldn’t trust**
- **Abandoned**

Strolin-Goltzman, Kollar, & Trinkle, 2010
Impact on Organizations

Costs of training to replace each worker who leaves in New York: $24,000

Lawson & Claiborne, 2005
Impact on Staff

- Increased vacancies
- Increased workload for those who stay
- Decreased morale
- More turnover
Why do workers leave?

- Inadequate training
- Inadequate supervision
- Organizational environment
- Not the right fit
- Job pressures
- Low pay

childwelfare.gov
How Children’s Corps Got Started

“A dollar and a dream”
Taking a risk to make a difference

1) Literature Review
2) Focus Groups with service users
3) CSSP Feasibility study on applicability of Teach For America model on child welfare
4) Collaboration with a School of Social Work (CSSW)
Core Characteristics

- Empathetic
- Persistent
- Critical Thinking
- Resilient
- Interpersonal Skills
- Flexible
- Teamwork
- Nonjudgmental
- Curious
- Organized
- Passionate
- Self-Aware
- Writing Skills
- Courageous
Core Features, Development & Implementation

• Recruitment
  o Basic description/overview
  o Target Population
  o How we do it

• Screening & Selection
  o Basic description/overview
  o Application
  o Interview

• Next Steps

• Agency Partners and Placement
What attracts people to Children’s Corps?

Applicants are drawn by the:

• Way child welfare is marketed
  o Opportunity to making a difference in the lives of children & families
  o Being part of a movement
• Prospect of summer training
• Ongoing support provided
• Being part of a cohort – peer support
• Opportunities for professional development
• Prospect of becoming a future leader in the field
What Corps Members Say

“Children’s Corps provides support, training, and mentorship—they don’t just throw you into the field and expect to know everything about child welfare. In fact, you’re not expected to know anything about child welfare, really. The work is difficult, stressful, and honestly draining, but definitely rewarding and empowering.”

“After reading the blog and getting a glimpse of what last year’s members endured, I was sold on the idea and felt almost empowered to work in child welfare. I also thought that the support and training provided by Children’s Corps would allow me to effectively help children in need.”

“I was drawn to CC because of the supportive, team-based approach to the work and the promise of continued training.”
Timeline & Current Status

Recruitment
- Sept-Feb

Interviews
- Dec-Feb
- Feb-April
- May-June
- July
- August

Training
- Applications
- Placement
- Start Date
Recruitment

In our recruitment efforts we aim to:

• Attract a diverse group of motivated individuals committed to working with vulnerable populations
• Provide a realistic portrayal of the work
• Find individuals who are the “right fit”

378 Applications → 144 Interviews → 50 Slots
Recruitment: Who

Look for:

- Individuals with diverse majors and degrees
- Individuals who are social justice- and service-oriented
- Individuals who have the 14 characteristics identified as being important in this work
- Child welfare knowledge & experience is a plus but having the characteristics is more important
- Multilingual candidates
Recruitment: How

Career Fairs
Information Sessions
Online Job Postings
  - Career development websites at schools
  - Idealist, NY Nonprofit Press, NASW

Social Media
  - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

Word of Mouth

Partnerships
  - City Year
  - BSW Scholars Program

Strong Relationships
  - AmeriCorps
  - CUNY/SUNY Schools
Screening and Selection

I. Application
II. Interview
Application Requirements

- Legal Resident
- CC Blog
- BA degree
- RJP
Application Components

1. Screening Assessment
2. Demographic Information
3. Education & Experience
4. Short Essay Questions
5. Letter of Intent
6. Resume
7. 3 References
8. Affirmation
Application Scoring

Readers look for:

• Core characteristics
• Writing skills
• Other languages spoken
• Related degrees
• Related experiences
Interview Design

Interview consists of 4 components

1. Group Interview
2. Individual Interview
3. Case Review and Inquiry
4. Written Summary
Interview Scoring

• Teams rate applicants on specific characteristics for each component of the interview
• Each team comes to a consensus on ratings for all 4 components
• Individual interview is weighted x2
Post-Interview

• All interviewers discuss each applicant
• Final decisions are made at the end of each interview round
• Accepted applicants are informed and asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
### Stats Across 5 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class of 2011</th>
<th>Class of 2012</th>
<th>Class of 2013</th>
<th>Class of 2014</th>
<th>Class of 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong># Schools</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Job Sites</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># On-Campus Events</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Applications Received</strong></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Interviews Scheduled</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Size</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non Local</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Placement Matching Process

When placing new members, consider:

• Preferences
• Experience
• Language
• Location
• Degrees
• Agency need
“Progress lies not in enhancing what is, but in advancing toward what will be.”

Khalil Gibran
CC aims to impact the system by...

Child welfare system

- Raising awareness
- Improving retention
- Sharing information
- Improving outcomes for families
Sharing Information

We help the system by:

• **Identifying gaps** in service and system needs.
• **Sharing** information, resources, and practices.
• **Providing support** to address organizational challenges.
Raising Awareness

• Informing the public about the child welfare system and the impact on children and families.
• Informing professionals about job opportunities in the field they may not have otherwise considered.
Improving Retention

Retention rates

- CC annual retention 2013: 92%
- CC avg retention: 88%
- NYC avg retention: 60%
Developing Future Leaders

- **51%** of our alumni continue to work at their placement agency for at least a 3rd year
- **70%** of our alumni are currently pursuing or have completed related Master’s degrees
Growing in Size and Impact

Expanding our class size

- 2011: 23 members
- 2012: 27 members
- 2013: 37 members
- 2014: 50 members

Increasing our agency partnerships

- 2011: 9 partners
- 2015: 16 partner

Our 84 Corps members in the field have touched the lives of over 1,000 children, youth, and their families.
Challenges & Accelerators

[Image of a post-it note with the word "IMPOSSIBLE" with the "I" crossed out and replaced with "POSSIBLE"]
Accelerators

- Increased agency buy-in with proven success
- Referral of friends/family to the program by CC members
- Greater cultivation of relationships and partnerships
- Targeted recruitment
Challenges

- Fluctuating needs of the system
- Consistency with application scoring & interview rating
- Changes in agency leadership and/or middle management
- Interview restrictions
- CC places 1x/year; agencies have vacancies year-round
- Placing MSWs can be challenging
- Bridging the gap with HR
- Evaluating impact of our program
- Lack of resources
Lessons Learned & Tips
What Have We Learned?

- Recruiting local is helpful and important
- Being transparent about the work
- Utilizing behavioral interviewing
- Using feedback loops builds trust and helps the system as a whole
- Understanding agency cultures helps makes placements successful
- Ability to adjust to the needs of the system is necessary
- Being adaptable and open to learning contributes to the program’s success and growth
Takeaways

- Take the risk
- Conduct a strong needs assessment
- Identify worker characteristics you find essential
- Utilize creative and purposeful marketing
- Develop and maintain solid relationships with public and private partners
- Create a cohesive and supportive cohort amongst new hires
- Use current staff to recruit and support other staff
- Be open and flexible in your recruitment and selection process
Creating Opportunity for Future Leaders

Members Serve As…

- Program Ambassadors
- Training Facilitators
- Dedicated Professionals
- Mentors
Questions? Comments?
Additional Resources


• Topical Reference List: http://ncwwi.org/files/NCWWI_Recruitment_Screening_Selection_Reference_List.pdf

• Collection of Realistic Job Previews: https://www.childwelfare.gov/learningcenter/video-series/rjp/
Mind the Gap
Upcoming Sessions

LEARNING EXCHANGE #3
Wednesday, May 6, 2015 from 3-4 pm ET
- Follow-up webinar offering deeper interaction between presenters and participants
- Facilitated discussion designed to enhance critical thinking on workforce topic

WEBINAR SESSION #4
- July 30, 2015: Job Analysis & Position Requirement Strategies
  - The Universe of Competencies in Action
Contact Us

CHILDREN’S CORPS

Barry Chaffkin: barry@fosteringchangeforchildren.org
Viviane deMilly: viviane@fosteringchangeforchildren.org
Jessica Black: jessica@fosteringchangeforchildren.org
Liv Anna Homstead: livanna@fosteringchangeforchildren.org

NCWWI

Sara Munson: smunson@ssw.rutgers.edu
Sharon Kollar: skollar@albany.edu
Thank You!

Connect with Us

www.NCWWI.org